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BEIS MOSHIACH

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U.S.A

744 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409
Tel: (718) 778-8000
Fax: (718) 778-0800
admin@beismoshiach.org
www.beismoshiach.org

ERETZ HA'KODESH

ת.ד. 102 כפר חב"ד 72915
טלפון: (03) 9607-290
פקס: (03) 9607-289

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

M.M. Hendel

ENGLISH EDITOR:

Boruch Merkur
editor@beismoshiach.org

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IN REFINING THE BODY, ALL JEWS ARE EQUAL

LIKKUTEI SICHOS VOL. 17, PG. 343-346
TRANSLATED BY BORUCH MERKUR



[Continued from last week]

4. We must understand: Since the principal payment of reward is in the time of (following) the Resurrection of the Dead, it is, therefore, understood that the reward of the Resurrection of the Dead is higher than the reward of the Garden of Eden. Now, how is it appropriate to say that the Garden of Eden is a reward for a higher manner of service (the grasp of Torah), which cannot be equal in every Jew, whereas the reward of the Resurrection of the Dead is for the performance of Mitzvos, a much more “simple” service and which is, therefore, inherent to all Jews? [I.e., why is the greater reward reserved for a lesser – more simplistic – service?]

The explanation of the matter:

Notwithstanding the fact that, superficially, the reason why all Jews are equal with regard to the realm of action is because action is the lowest of all the powers [of the soul] – it is something that does not require the feelings of the heart nor the understanding and comprehension of the brain – nevertheless, the inner reason of the matter is on account of the **advantage** that is associated with action, as the Mishna in Tractate Avos puts it: “Action is the main thing.”

The inner Supernal Intent [of Creation] is for Jews to make a dwelling for G-d, may He be blessed, in the **lower realms**, in this lowest-of-all worlds, of which there is no lowly realm beneath it [*Tanya* Ch. 36], as the saying goes, “The completion of a deed is first in thought” [“Lecha Dodi,” from the Shabbos prayers]. **This** intent is fulfilled primarily through the service of the performance of Mitzvos, which accomplishes the refinement and purification of the body and earthly

pursuits, as it is discussed at length in *Tanya*.

And since all Jews are, “the branch of my planting, the work of my hand,” [i.e., the hand] of the Holy One Blessed Be He, as expressed in Scripture (the proof cited in our Mishna), **every** Jew is aware of the Intent and fulfills it in actuality. With respect to “revelations” there are differences distinguishing one Jew from another (to such an extent that it can be that one is not a vessel for them [i.e., he is not even fit to receive “revelations”]). However, in connection with the Intent of G-d’s Essence [which is beyond Divine “revelations”], “to make for Him, may He be blessed, a dwelling in the lower realms,” which is felt in the **essence** of a Jew – in this respect, all Jews are equal. [FN 22: To note from the explanation (in *Torah Or* 14b, beginning with the phrase, “Chachmos BaChutz,” of 5694 (Seifer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim Vol. 2), Ch. 2) that the Luminary is revealed [i.e., the Source Itself is revealed], and therefore, the name of Heaven is commonly invoked by all.]

5. This is also the reason why the reward bestowed in the World to Come is specifically to souls in bodies:

With respect to the fact that the Divine Intent is that He should have a dwelling in the lower realms, this is also reflected in Jews, who are as one with the Divine Essence, in that the choice of the Holy One Blessed Be He in their regard is (not the choosing of their souls, but also) of their **body**. [FN 24: *Tanya* Ch. 49; discussed at length in *Seifer HaSichos Toras Shalom*, beginning on pg. 120.]

(Thus, also the Jewish body is an eternal existent which will never decompose, as is known that the Luz

Bone will never decompose and from the Luz Bone the entire body will be reconstructed in the Resurrection of the Dead. [FN: B'Reishis Rabba 28:3 and there it is elucidated; Zohar II 28b amongst others; Tosafos, words beginning with, "V'Hu" (Bava Kama 16b).]

Therefore, at the time when the service of refining and purifying the world is completed and the world will become a dwelling for G-d, may He be blessed, it will also be apparent how the Jewish people are the chosen ones of the Holy One Blessed Be He (also) with respect to their body, for which reason the eternal life of the World to Come pertains (also) to the body.

6. Accordingly it is understood why we preface this Mishna ("Every Jew") to the study of Tractate Avos:

In order to bring out how the fulfillment and the study of Tractate Avos, which brings about the refinement and purification of the coarseness of the body, is relevant to **every** Jew, we begin with, "Every Jew has a portion in the World to Come" (the World of Resurrection, souls in bodies), on account of the fact that (also) the **body** of "every Jew" is "the work of my hand," [the hand] of the Holy One Blessed Be He. In fact, specifically in the "**the work of my hand**" is the "**that I may be glorified,**" because it is specifically "the completion of a deed" that is "first in thought."

Therefore, no Jew can neglect it, not fulfilling the

Although superficially the reason why all Jews are equal with regard to the realm of action is because action is the lowest of all the powers of the soul, nevertheless, the inner reason is on account of the advantage that is associated with action.

words of the Fathers. This is a concept that is reflected in terms of both perspectives:

There is no body that **cannot** be refined. That is, since the body of **every** Jew is the work of the hand of the Holy One Blessed Be He, it is not **possible** that one cannot be refined. [With the exception of those "who have no portion in the World to Come" (Sanhedrin, Perek Cheilek, beg.), whose bodies perish. See FN 28.] Moreover, being the work of the hands of the Holy One Blessed Be He, it is certain that "He will not repel from Him any of the banished" [FN 29: Similarly, see *Toras Shalom* pg. 135 and see *ibid* pg. 11.]; it **will** surely be refined in the end.

On the other hand, this service is not too lowly for any Jew. On the contrary, the true expression of

"matters of piety" is in the service of refining and purifying the body [FN 30: See also pg. 417, later in the text. To note from the letter of his honor, the Rebbe Rashab, whose soul is in Heaven (published in *Kuntres U'Maayan* pg. 17; *HaYom Yom*, beg.): To draw the aspect of the depth and **inner dimension** of the Torah of G-d...to divorce ourselves from every evil and despicable character trait from among the natural characteristics, etc. (elucidated in the address of Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev, 5721).] It is specifically in "the work of my hand that I may be glorified," and as mentioned above, "The completion of a deed is first in thought."

(From the discourse and the address of Shabbos Parshas Acharai, 5733)

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KNOW WHAT TO ASK FOR

BY RABBI CHAIM ASHKENAZI

When writing to the Rebbe one needs to ask oneself this question: Am I deserving of a response from the Rebbe? What am I doing in terms of following the Rebbe's instructions and guidance? Do I forget the main thing every time I ask the Rebbe something, i.e., asking to see the Rebbe MH" M immediately?

"GO IN GOOD HEALTH!"

I have watched elder Chassidim write a letter to the Rebbe, wearing their jacket and gartel, their faces red with sweat beading on their brow. They write and erase and pay attention to every word so that none are superfluous or not perfectly truthful. They write one copy, then another, until they come up with a page with no mistakes and erasures. Then they put the letter in the mailbox and say, "*fohr gezunertheit*" (travel in good health).

After all this, they were full of great simcha and bitachon that the letter had arrived the moment it was sent, and that the Rebbe did whatever had to be done to help

the Chassid who wrote to him.

Obviously, before writing the letter they made the proper preparations. The Shabbos before writing the letter the avoda in davening and the learning of Chassidus were different than that of other Shabbasos.

The day they wrote the letter they obviously took a mikva and gave tz'daka and made sure that their davening that day was better than usual. They finished their shiurim in Chitas, Rambam, and all the shiurim that a Chassid has, or ought to have, like learning a maamer of the Rebbe, etc. They also noted where they stood regarding the Rebbe's horaos, like spreading Judaism.

There was no such thing as suddenly deciding to write a letter

to the Rebbe and sitting down to do so. They knew that much preparation was needed beforehand and often they would postpone writing to the next day because they felt that they weren't sufficiently prepared.

Sometimes, writing would be postponed and postponed until they finally sat down and wrote, or – they didn't write because they decided it was a pity to waste the Rebbe's time. Especially, if it was about a spiritual matter, as all is in the hands of Heaven except fear of Heaven...and all the more so if it concerned a material matter, should he be wasting the Rebbe's time on this? One could manage without that!

The entire writing process was such that it turned out that the writing wasn't only to achieve something through the Rebbe, whether materially or spiritually, but the letter was part of the Chassid's avoda. The writing and the preparations made beforehand removed many layers of dust and mud that had clung to the Chassid simply by being in this world, and as a consequence of worrying about making a living. The intense spiritual effort invested into writing to the Rebbe over a period of days, left an impression that lasted a long time.

THE ELDERS AND THE YOUTH

If someone did not merit to receive an answer within a reasonable period of time, he realized that he did not deserve an answer. He would make a spiritual accounting when reciting the bedtime Shma, etc.

If he received an answer from the Rebbe, it was a day of celebration. Such a day was sometimes marked by a farbrengen, to express gratitude for the Rebbe's relationship with him, for obviously, a minute of the Rebbe's time is invaluable. He would be even happier if he received a clear, detailed letter, and he also rejoiced about what was written between the lines. The Rebbe once said that it

was preferable if everybody wrote their letters personally, because he reads between the lines.

I also remember that people were particular about writing a pidyon nefesh on an unlined paper and in order for the writing to be straight would put lined paper underneath.

All I've described was with the g'dolei ha'chassidim. The talmidei ha'yeshivos would ask their mashpia for advice on how and what to write. The mashpiim would explain which things you could ask for advice on and a bracha for and which things were inappropriate to ask for – such as, if a young bachur asked for ahava and yira, or that he should be a baki b'Shas, or if he asked for pleasure in learning or for

t'shuva ilaa, etc.

At a certain point, the Rebbe asked that every talmid who wrote to him should enclose a report from the hanhala about his learning in Nigleh and Chassidus, keeping the s'darim, etc. And the Rebbe emphasized that although he would answer everybody, it was far more desirable to include this report.

The talmid received guidance as to how to prepare to write his letter and a conversation about what a Rebbe is and how to prepare to be a vessel worthy of a bracha. When the Rebbe's answer came, the talmid would take it to his mashpia for an explanation of the Rebbe's answer.

NOT A CASH MACHINE FOR BRACHOS

Today, the practice of writing to the Rebbe and putting the letter into a volume of *Igros Kodesh* has spread. Baruch Hashem, the Rebbe continues to guide us in this incredible way. As a result, writing to the Rebbe has become routine and easy, like the woman who wanted to buy a volume of *Igros Kodesh* from a Chabad house who called it, "the answer warehouse."

It's done in the same way that you can withdraw money from a cash machine, something a robot can do. And just as the money that is withdrawn from a cash machine is used up within a short time, so too writing this way to the Rebbe doesn't leave much of an impression.

There was a Chassid who went to the Rebbe Rashab and the Rebbe told him that he can't help him. The Chassid cried and then the Rebbe Rashab blessed him and explained that he could not help him before because the Chassid wasn't in the right spiritual frame of mind, but by crying and feeling broken, he had become a fitting receptacle for a



bracha.

The same is true in our situation. Chassidus explains that Hashem brings it about that a person has to ask for his needs from Hashem, sometimes through a tzaddik or Rebbe. The reason for this is so that the person will feel that there is a Creator of the world and will occasionally cleanse himself of the filth attached to him. Hashem can give without being asked, but as it says, "Hashem is close to all those **who call Him**, to all **who call Him in truth**."

It is seemingly not understandable, for doesn't someone who asks for health or long life or spiritual things truly want them? Otherwise, he wouldn't ask for it! But the point is not about what the **one who is asking** truly wants, but that the request for **material things** be according to Torah, because "**there is no truth except for Torah**" – to want material things in the manner that the Torah describes.

You don't complain to Hashem because you need something or other, as the Alter Rebbe told the Chassid who asked for a bracha for material things that he sorely needed: You are telling me only what you need, but you don't ask what you *are needed for!*

The Chassid fainted and afterwards remained with the Alter Rebbe in order to internalize this. Only then did he receive the Alter Rebbe's bracha and was successful.

WHO CALL HIM IN TRUTH

This request/calling is not included in the truth of Torah, because the Torah asks: what are you needed for? Rather, calling in the truth of the Torah is because you want to do what Hashem wants, and therefore, according to Torah, you are deserving, as a master must provide food for his slave and for the slave's wife and children, and he

must even provide the best for them, and even serve them first.

As the Rebbe says when explaining the reason we recite brachos before partaking of anything in this world, that by saying a bracha a person crowns Hashem with the words, "*Baruch Ata ... Melech ha'olam.*" And since we are Hashem's servants, we deserve material bounty.

When it comes to spiritual matters, to ask "in truth" means to

Let the letter writer ponder the fact that he is drawing the Rebbe's attention to himself. What does the Rebbe see when he looks at him? If he thinks that the Rebbe will not be very pleased by what he sees, then it's time to change.

recognize that spiritual acquisitions come through avoda and not by a person sitting with hands folded and receiving ahava and yira, t'shuva, d'veikus, hiskashrus, Chassidishe hergeshim, emuna, bitachon, etc.

It's said in the name of one of the g'dolim that he said that every Jew wants to be a baki B'Shas. There is nobody who *doesn't* want this, even the lowest of the low. But people want it on two conditions: 1)

that it happen overnight, 2) that he go to sleep and wake up a lamdan and Chassid.

Chassidim used to despise this and would mock it and compare it to the bounty in Egypt, about which the verse says, "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt **for free**," without avodas Hashem. That is why it says, "Hashem is close to all who call him in **truth**," namely, that the calling must be in truth that is built on the guidance of the Torah.

WRITING A LETTER-TRUE HISKASHRUS

When a person writes a letter to the Rebbe, he ought to ask himself: Do I deserve that the Rebbe should read this, never mind respond to it? What am I doing about the things the Rebbe says I should do? Am I forgetting the main thing in every request I ask of him, which is to want to see the Rebbe again now?

Let the letter writer ponder the fact that he is drawing the Rebbe's attention to himself. What does the Rebbe see when he looks at him? If he thinks that the Rebbe will not be very pleased by what he sees, then it's time to change.

These thoughts are along the lines of the story about R' Zalman Moshe HaYitzchaki, one of the elder Chassidim. The Rebbe Rashab once asked to speak to him. R' Zalman Moshe's face was red throughout the conversation.

Afterwards, when the Chassidim asked him what the Rebbe said, he said that he didn't know!

But you were standing there and listening?! They exclaimed.

R' Zalman Moshe said: I didn't hear a thing. The entire time only one thought preoccupied me: when will the Rebbe remove his holy eyes from my swine-like face.

One can connect with the Rebbe

through writing to him as always, and maybe even more so than in the past. However, it requires the appropriate preparations, just as the elder Chassidim used to make. The proper motivation is not only to get a clear answer, but to ensure that the writing and the receiving of an answer will have the desired effect on us, as is fitting for a mekushar. When letter writing is done properly, it puts the Chassid on the appropriate level.

DON'T BRIBE YOURSELF

It's a pity on anybody who does not use this opportunity properly. If you use the *Igros* like a cash machine and follow your own ideas – both with the question as well as

with the answer – then you are likely to lose the horaa and G-dly guidance in them.

The Alter Rebbe wrote in his introduction to *Tanya* that when he explains how reading and learning *Tanya* can be a substitute for yechidus, he is saying that this means you need to consult with the elders of your city, i.e., mashpiim.

This consultation is vital, because each of us is subjective and we can manage to find in the Rebbe's answer whatever we want to hear. Our intellects are blinded by the bribe of the animal soul and it's only with great difficulty that we can see the light which is good that

is hidden within the *Igros Kodesh*.

It's easy to write to the Rebbe these days and since everything is by Divine Providence, this gift was given to us for a reason. Since the ability to access evil and disgusting things is so readily available nowadays, maybe one balances the other. Of course, the good is always more powerful, since "the measure of good exceeds the measure of punishment." So let us take advantage of these moments to fulfill what it says, "shake off the dust and arise, wear garments of glory, my nation," and use this time to work on ourselves to do things right. Then we will merit to receive the ultimate response, with the True and Complete Redemption, now.

(From a Chassidische farbrengen)

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יחי אדונינו מורנו ורבנו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

HOW CAN 'THE REDEMPTION' ITSELF DRIVE G-D OUT OF ERETZ YISROEL?

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

In connection with the false celebrations throughout the Jewish world scheduled for the 5th of Iyar, we present the seventh installment of "Between Light and Darkness," Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo's provocative new guide for the perplexed regarding the establishment regime in Eretz Yisroel today and the tragic events they have brought upon the Jewish People.

THERE IS NO REASON FOR JOY ON THE 5TH OF IYAR

This terrible mistake has reached frightening proportions with the establishment of the 5th of Iyar as a day for saying Hallel with a bracha, and there are those who even read the Torah and say Haftora with brachos, make Kiddush with a bracha, and say "SheHechiyanu."

In addition to all that has and will be explained on this subject, this day represents independence neither in the material nor the spiritual sense, rather

merely a further descent in the manifold darkness of the Exile. Thus, in addition to this error and the damage that it causes in matters of faith, we also have the problem of saying brachos in vain (in Hallel, Haftora, Kiddush, and even in saying "SheHechiyanu"). Furthermore, many rabbanim in Eretz HaKodesh have issued halachic rulings that it is forbidden to make a bracha on Hallel this day (and on Yom Yerushalayim, as will be explained) and others who rule that it should not be said at all.

In connection with feelings of joy

associated with this day, even if they were an expression of appreciation for G-d's kindnesses with no regard for "nationalism," after such revealed miracles, especially after the Six Day War, these feelings must be expressed in the form of increasing in matters connected with G-d, He Who makes miracles, e.g., Torah study and other acts of holiness. However, in practical terms, we see that the "independence" celebrations not only bring the exact opposite, they increase the feeling of "my power and the strength of my hand," with little emphasis upon the self-sacrifice of those who fought.

Even though the highest ranking army officers admitted that "this was the hand of G-d" and everyone felt it, particularly the military leaders who knew the relative power on each side, how unrealistic the chances were for success, and how the conduct of the war and its results were totally supernatural, nevertheless, in actuality, the manner of the expression of joy on this day among many people in Eretz Yisroel has no connection to increasing in holiness through an expression of thanks to G-d, but the exact opposite.

[NOTE: Kabbala explains that the

holidays correspond to the S'firos: The three festivals corresponding to the three Forefathers – Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov – are Chesed, G'vura, and Tiferes; Chanuka and Purim (or Purim and Chanuka) correspond to Netzach and Hod; the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av correspond to Yesod and Malchus.

Accordingly, we see clearly that even if we're talking about the joy of miracles, it is forbidden to add a new holiday to the custom of saying of Hallel, etc. However, while all this is only according to their approach, the truth of the matter is that the pain, ruin, and destruction of religion caused by the declaration of "independence" supersedes any feeling of joy over the miracles (besides the fact that the miracles have no connection to this date at all, as the joy from a miraculous victory in war comes at its conclusion, unlike this date, which marks its commencement). Therefore, instead of searching for reasons why we don't celebrate the 5th of Iyar, we need to look into why Lubavitch hasn't established it as a fast day, since the founding of the "medina" in a manner "as all the nations" has delayed and postponed the Redemption for over half a century.]

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR CELEBRATIONS ON YOM YERUSHALAYIM EITHER

All this also applies regarding the customs of the day of the 28th of Iyar, as even those who are physically in the Holy City of Yerushalayim continue to say in their davening "Return in mercy to Yerushalayim Your city...and rebuild it as an everlasting edifice, soon in our days," concluding with the bracha, "Blessed are You, Hashem, who rebuilds Yerushalayim," and they also continue to say "Next Year in Yerushalayim," because even now Tzion and Yerushalayim are not ours. The Tzion of eating pork, drafting girls into the military, publicly desecrating Shabbos is not the Holy City for which we pray three times a day, "May our eyes behold Your return to Tzion in mercy." And when will Yerushalayim

be rebuilt? – When there will be "speedily establish therein the throne of Dovid Your servant." As things stand today, even though they are building material houses in Yerushalayim, this is not the Yerushalayim of which it is said, "joyful in the building of Your city."

This is besides the fact that in a practical sense, the Old City of Yerushalayim between the walls, especially Har HaBayis, is not in our hands, with its mosques and monasteries, and the Arabs in full command of the Temple Mount, desecrating the place of the Beis HaMikdash, while the government of



Israel willingly relinquishes r^l the large portions of Yerushalayim where the Arabs are in control. Such a situation recalls the words from the N'ila Prayer on Yom Kippur, "The holy city and the districts were a disgrace and scornful," and as we still say in shul each Tisha B'Av, "Comfort, Hashem our G-d...the mourning, ruined, despised, and desolate city. [NOTE: Even today, after the liberation of a portion of Yerushalayim from foreign hands, someone who comes to the Kosel and sees the destroyed remnants of the Beis HaMikdash still must rend his garments as a mourner (Shulchan Aruch

Orach Chaim 561:2), and even someone who sees just the Old City of Yerushalayim (without seeing the place of the Beis HaMikdash) must rend his garments over Yerushalayim. The Rebbe Rayatz writes (Igro Kodesh, Vol. 2, p. 205) that in present-day Yerushalayim with its theaters and the like, it is permissible to tear kria twice. Elsewhere, he states (Seifer Maamarim – Yiddish, p. 135): "So long as Jewish sinners are the leaders in Eretz Yisroel, all the physical structures are ruins."] The mourning because she is left childless, ruined of her dwellings, despised in her loss of glory, desolate without inhabitants. She sits with her head covered in shame as a woman barren of children. Legions have consumed her, worshippers of strange idols have possessed her, casting Your people Israel to the sword, wantonly murdering the pious of the Most High. Therefore, Tzion cries bitterly and Yerushalayim raises her voice, etc." And the comfort will only be "that You, Hashem... **and in fire You will rebuild her**" – so what's the reason for all the joy and praise on "Yom Yerushalayim"?

This is particularly troublesome when we consider the well-known fact that most of those who fell in the battle to free Yerushalayim (182 in number, may G-d avenge their blood) died because the Zionist leadership did not want to damage the mosques, where the legions lay fortified, at a cost of the loss of dozens of Jewish lives upon the altar of policymaking. Thus, the prayer, "My heart, my heart for the slain, my innards, my innards for the slain," takes on an additional meaning.

THIS IS CALLED "INDEPENDENCE"?

When we consider the matter carefully, we see the total error and how it conceals our faith when we define the situation in Eretz Yisroel today as "is'chalta d'Geula" or independence. For the truth is that even a poor and downtrodden Jew in some small town in Russia, Poland, or

Galicia, who has no idea what new decree will come upon him today, has greater Jewish pride and less of a *Galus'dike* feeling than the regime in Eretz HaKodesh. Even when this Jew goes out into the street, and sees the non-Jewish policeman and is frightened over what "mood" the policeman is in, nevertheless, he knows that only his body is in exile, whereas his soul is not in exile, with the full knowledge that a goy is a goy and a Jew is a Jew. If they ask him about Eretz Yisroel, he will answer with pride what it says in Rashi's aforementioned commentary on the first pasuk in Chumash – "of His own will He took it from them and gave it to us."

On the other hand, however, in Eretz HaKodesh, where the policemen and security forces are mainly Jews led by Jews, nevertheless, the government and the military commanders are in a far deeper inner exile, and therefore, they stand totally nullified before the non-Jew, fearful of telling him that Eretz Yisroel was given to us by G-d, and that every portion of it in non-Jewish hands constitutes robbery. They are afraid to carry out justice against the Arabs, who run wild and murder innocent Jews, frightened to do what they must do to preserve the lives of the people who dwell in Tzion. While they are physically in "the land of Israel," nevertheless, they remain "slaves," enslaved far worse than they were before.

THE "MEDINA" GOES FROM FAILURE TO FAILURE IN THE DARKNESS OF THE EXILE

All this they call "*is'chalta d'Geula*"! This is a case of "You don't have a day that is more cursed than the other," as in all matters, they have to ask the opinion of Washington, London, etc., chasing after the goyim and standing like poor people by their door, out of a "sense of inferiority" and loss of all self-respect of the genius of Yaakov until they fall down at their feet, agreeing to their pressure at the

rustling sound of a leaf. Even after the murderers and terrorists run to find favor in their eyes, they release these killers from prison, giving them weapons and money, thus enabling them to murder more Jews *r"l*.

Thus, when parts of Eretz Yisroel in Yehuda and Shomron, etc., are freed with revealed miracles, instead of surrounding them with high walls and making them into great Jewish cities, they chase after the non-Jews, begging and pleading with them to agree and take them back (including portions that their release directly endangers the security of millions of Jews), and then using soldiers to drive Jews out of their homes in order to give their inheritance to the goyim (and even with something so terrible, virtually no one makes a peep). They invite the murderer to come in and be master over us, unashamed to do this publicly and openly. Such shameful wretchedness and surrender before the non-Jew in a fashion reminiscent of **Canaanite slaves** has never been seen even in Chutz LaAretz, the place of literal exile.

This they call "independence" – surrounded by hundreds of millions of Arabs, a situation that has never before been so threatening in connection with the hatred of the nations of the world towards Israel and the fulfillment of the halacha "it is known that Eisav hates Yaakov" (and only G-d saves us from their hand, as "the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps"). We feel dependent upon the kindnesses of the non-Jews for money, weapons, etc., even with things that G-d gave us through open miracles, such as petroleum (in the oil fields of the Sinai Peninsula), we forced ourselves *r"l* to be dependent.

Anyone who opens the newspaper each day and looks at the front page knows as a proven fact that not only is this not "*is'chalta d'Geula*," it represents going from one failure to the next in the manifold darkness of the bitter Exile, endured by the entire Jewish People in every location – even in

Eretz HaKodesh. [NOTE: We see this as expressed in the dreadful "Who is a Jew?" Law of Return, which registers Gentiles as Jews, and how happy they are when a Gentile agrees to be registered as a Jew. There has never been a greater misfortune for the Jewish People than saying that a Gentile is a Jew, something that leads to illicit relationships with relevance in every generation. In Eretz HaKodesh, a situation of terrible assimilation prevails, particularly through the entry of hundreds of thousands of complete Gentiles from the former Soviet Union. All this demonstrates how very, very far we are in qualitative terms from "*is'chalta d'Geula*."]]

THE SH'CHINA HAS NOT BEEN IN EXILE SO LONG FOR THIS

The very fact that there are those who have made the painful and frightful mistake of believing that Jewish self-rule in Eretz HaKodesh is "*is'chalta d'Geula*" proves how deeply we are mired in this dark Exile, an Exile of unparalleled darkness. In the past, there were those who believed in Moshiach and the Redemption and those who didn't, but today, even some of those who do believe have exchanged the Redemption for a terrible Exile, and they don't understand that the Sh'china and millions of Jews have not been exiled so long for this.

The greater wonder comes when we consider the spiritual situation in Eretz Yisroel, with the inner outcry of hundreds and thousands of Jewish children, who have fallen prey to the "Hellenist" educational system that separates them from their Father in Heaven. This mode of education cuts them off from the traditions of their forefathers over generations, violates the belief in Torah and mitzvos, and instills a spirit of heresy, rebellion, and war against our time-honored affirmation that "Israel and the Holy One, Blessed Be He, are truly one." It's

unbelievable that we're talking specifically about the Holy Land educating a generation lacking in all basic concepts of Yiddishkait. Even when they speak to them about Jewish traditions, they present it as an inheritance of the past, some ancient relic from thousands of years ago that belongs today in a museum, wrapped and preserved in a case of glass on display, where people can look at it, but Heaven forbid, not to touch or make use of it.

And if that isn't enough, they took tens of thousands of Jewish orphans of G-d-fearing parents who were killed in the fires of Europe and took them out from under the wings of the Sh'china, forcing them to go against their religion, detaching them from Yiddishkait to the point of heresy and conversion *r"l*. Even among the new immigrants, including tens of thousands who were Torah observant in the Diaspora, most of whom are young people – the future of Am Yisroel, specifically **from the very moment they tread upon the Holy Land**, they left the Torah of the living G-d and its mitzvos. Instead of showing thanks and appreciation to G-d for His great kindnesses and miracles in bringing them to Eretz Yisroel, with the guidance of the government offices and institutions that absorbed them, they turned their back on G-d with a display of terrible and frightful ingratitude. *[NOTE: We recall the great tumult throughout the world during the anti-religious "Children of Tehran" Affair, even though it was nothing compared to what happened to the tens of thousands of Moroccan children, and no one uttered a word in protest.]*

CUTTING OFF THE CHILDREN FROM THEIR RELIGION WITH THE CONSENT OF THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES

This severance of tens of thousands of Jewish children from Jewish education was caused through our

many sins with the consent of Torah observant Jews. The facts are that if only secular leftist Jews had been involved in all this, it wouldn't get very far. Therefore, they incited and brainwashed a number of religious Jews, including some with long beards, and received their consent (by giving them a certain percentage of the children from the Youth Aliya Movement for their religious institutions). Afterwards, they proceeded to claim that since this Jew with a beard, a rabbi, sits quietly or signs something, this proves that the matter is pure, kosher, and holy (as

In the past, there were those who believed in Moshiach and the Redemption and those who didn't, but today, even some of those who do believe have exchanged the Redemption for a terrible Exile.

mentioned earlier regarding the conduct of Yeraboam ben Navat, who succeeded in getting tzaddikim to sign on acts of idol worship).

Then, when an uproar is raised against it in Chutz LaAretz, they claim that such protests are harmful to the raising of money for Israel Bonds, and thus hurt the cause of settling Eretz Yisroel. As a result, they use the settlement of the land in order to cut Jewish children off from Torah and Yiddishkait, scoffing at all that is holy in Israel, taking matters of light and turning them into total darkness.

These actions of "Your demolishers and Your destroyers" not only don't help in the protection of Eretz HaKodesh and its inhabitants, it **destroys it** by pushing G-d away, as it were.

HOW CAN THE REDEMPTION POSSIBLY DRIVE G-D OUT OF ERETZ HA'KODESH?

This can be compared to a great king who shows his tremendous love for a simple and lowly person by descending from his place of honor with all his ministers and bringing him into **his palace**, the palace of the king. Can you imagine this lowly person then saying that the palace is his and not the king's, and therefore, he acts there as he wishes, starting by driving the king out the palace in every way possible through a coarse mode of conduct, opposing the king's command every step of the way? From all the aforementioned, we can understand how the shocking claim of Redemption "little by little" with its ups and downs like the very first rays of the morning sun that do not shine all at once, and thus there is seemingly nothing to fear from the spiritual and material damage caused by the "State," as this is the nature of the Redemption *r"l*, is utterly groundless.

Even if the Redemption doesn't shine forth all at once, and first there must be some type of natural Redemption without Moshiach, followed by a miraculous Redemption, etc., how can the Redemption possibly be accompanied by "damage"? What relevance do "downs" have to the Redemption? How can **the Redemption itself** be the cause of such a frightful spiritual descent for millions of Jews? How can **the Redemption itself** cut out portions of Eretz Yisroel, give them to terrorists by driving Jews out of their homes, destroying synagogues, Talmud Torahs, and yeshivos? How can **the Redemption itself** drive G-d out of Eretz Yisroel?

A LIGHT UPON THE SEVEN SEAS

BY DANIEL GORDON

He was a Sabra and a musician who had done many things in his life. Following a string of hashgacha pratis incidents, he came to Chabad. When he encountered financial difficulties, he wrote to the Rebbe numerous times and each time, in a different letter, the topic was about ships sailing on Shabbos with Jewish sailors. After much vacillation, he started a shipping company that wouldn't employ Jews who would desecrate the Shabbos.

We've practically forgotten the days when ships were the main form of transportation for overseas travel. The Rebbe waged a battle for many years in the attempt to prevent Jews from desecrating the Shabbos on those ships. The Rebbe was concerned that Jews not desecrate the Shabbos by traveling on ships operated by a Jewish sailor or engineer. The Rebbe sent dozens of letters and messages to public and private personalities to prevent chilul Shabbos.

Unfortunately, those who stood to gain chose to ignore the issue, and it was never properly resolved. Today, when we travel by plane, we think there's hardly any reason to continue to

wage this battle against Shabbos desecration, but this is a mistake.

Hundreds and thousands of containers are shipped to and from Eretz Yisroel daily, via ships operated by Jews, and this includes on Shabbos! When a Jew sends a container via a ship run by Jews, he is apparently indirectly aiding and abetting chilul Shabbos.

A new battle to prevent chilul Shabbos by ship companies is presently being waged. Among those in the forefront of this battle is a Chassid from Kfar Chabad by the name of Erez Levenberg, who started a shipping company to transport cargo without desecrating the Shabbos.

Incredible hashgacha pratis led him from the music world to the world of Chassidus and from there, on the Rebbe's shlichus, to the world of shipping.

Erez's story begins at Kibbutz Gonen, which is near Kiryat Shmone, where he was born and raised to Judaism sans emuna. At the kibbutz, they observed certain traditions but removed all possible connections to G-d. For example, Kabbalas Shabbos was held Friday night long after sunset. The members of the kibbutz would gather, light candles, play the piano, and recite a blessing they composed, "May the Shabbos candle be blessed for us, for bringing us the news of restfulness, for the brilliance of your light brought purity, brilliance and clarity to our dwelling. May your holy flame accompany us in the garden, in the field, in the furrow during the days of hard labor, until you return and ignite within us the coming Shabbos."

One small point of light is what Erez remembers from his kibbutz days. Among the kibbutzniks was a Jew who was considered the "tzaddik of the kibbutz." He arranged a bar mitzva for all the boys and at the celebrations they put on t'fillin, had an aliya to the Torah, and even went to the Kosel. People were receptive to what he did but his work was only a small ray of light within the anti-religious atmosphere of the kibbutz.

Erez acquired his high school education in Kfar Blum. He began to discover an interest in music and began to play and perform, starting his musical career, which took off after he finished his army service. After he finished high school, he was drafted into the parachutists brigade, where he spent the next three years without any Judaism.

When he completed his army service, Erez registered in an academy for modern music, where he honed his skills over the course of a year in composition and musical production. At that time, he formed a successful band with a friend. The four members of the band performed in halls in Tel Aviv for nine years. Erez played the keyboard and was the lead singer of the band. His band played music with personal lyrics that touched the soul and managed to get some of its songs played on the radio until this very day.

The band was the focus of Erez's life at that time but it did not provide much in the way of money. For four years, he worked as a musician by day and a singer at night. Then he developed a unique healing method through song, which supported him comfortably.

What is the method?

“People who found it hard to open up and to organize their thoughts and feelings came to me and instead of listening to their story and advising them, they were asked to sing.”

Erez, who is gifted with a keen musical ear and a sensitive soul, tried to figure out what was going on by what he heard. He was successful and more and more patients lined up to see him.

* * *


Erez, who always felt a strong need to know himself, to develop and to find meaning in life, sought answers in courses on psychology and spirituality, in Eastern religions as well as Kabbala and Judaism, l'havdil.

“I felt a connection with G-d at that time, but I didn't think about the fact that I was Jewish.”

The Torah lectures and courses that he took made him more sympathetic towards Judaism. He enjoyed the ideas he encountered even though, for a long time they had no practical impact on his life.

One day he came across a page with the bedtime Shma and he began to read it every night, just like that, for no specific reason. But, as mentioned earlier, these courses were only a small percentage of the approaches Erez was exposed to in this period of time.

He and his partner decided to go to India where they could study Eastern religions from the source. Upon their arrival in India, they did a number of performances billed as, “A musical workshop,” and only



A Zim ship
anchored in
Chaifa port

then went on to tour India, each one on his own.

Erez visited Indian and Tibetan spiritual teachers and delved into their teachings. In each place he visited, he felt that there was some truth but that he hadn't reached Ultimate Truth.

When he arrived in Dramsala, he met a chareidi bachur wearing a dark suit who was hanging up signs announcing classes in Kabbala that were actually on Chassidus. Erez decided to try it out even though the Chabad house was far from where he was.

"I simply decided to expend some effort into this brand of mysticism too," he says.

He was disappointed with the Chabad house because instead of the class he anticipated, there was a video of the Rebbe with a translation and the people were invited to write to the Rebbe through the *Igros Kodesh*. Although he was annoyed, Erez couldn't help but be amazed by the Rebbe's work and he felt that the Rebbe was a strong personality.

At this period in his life, he had been visiting (l'havdil) many spiritual teachers, but when he looked at the Rebbe, he was truly amazed by the power he radiated.

Erez went to the Chabad house again but didn't feel any attraction to the place. Before he left, the shliach gave him a small T'hilim and Erez resolved to say his chapter every day. He didn't realize how much this visit would impact on him in the future.

From the time he landed in India, Erez felt a very strong draw to visit a famous guru in Lekanau. Towards the end of his visit in India and before returning home, he decided to go there for a week. This visit aroused stormy emotions within him.

He was simply captivated by the guru and his disciples. He felt that the ideas that they taught spoke to his heart, yet occasionally he felt that this wasn't the place for him. He didn't

know how to explain the feelings he had and continued to delve into the new ideas.

Erez and his partner met and went for a final tour to the Himalayan Mountains, from where they continued to New Delhi. With only one day left before their flight, they left their stuff in a hotel and went on the tour. What happened to them afterwards was described by Erez not only as incredible hashgacha pratis, but an event bordering on the miraculous.

Around him he saw religious Jews, "dussim" as they were derogatorily known, dressed in long, hot, black coats, and he felt a shock. He turned to Hashem and asked in all earnestness, "Do you want me to be like them?"

While they were still walking among the stalls on a crowded street, his partner met someone, seemingly a gentile, whom he knew in the past and with whom he had had business dealings. The two spoke and the man invited Erez's friend to visit at the hotel where he was staying. Erez was listening in and he mentally filed away the name of the hotel and the room number.

They continued to walk but they soon lost sight of one another in the

mass of humanity. Erez looked for his friend, to no avail. This is one of the largest cities in the world and so realizing that he was wasting his time, he decided to look for his friend at the hotel of the man they had met earlier. He remembered the address and went there.

At the hotel, he went straight to the right room and knocked on the door. To his surprise, a chareidi Jew wearing a suit and hat opened the door. Erez couldn't believe it and he immediately apologized for his error but the man, a Lubavitcher, thought otherwise and said, "It's not a mistake. There's a *Tanya* class going on here. You're invited!"

Erez felt fearful for he felt that the same Rebbe whom he had seen on the screen was pursuing him. He replied on the defensive, "What? You expect me to do t'shuva?"

When Erez returned home to Eretz Yisroel, he felt a terrible emptiness and lack of inner peace. He decided to travel in the Judean Desert for a few days. He would occasionally go there alone and walk among the streams, straightening out his thoughts and relaxing.

On the way, he stopped in Yerushalayim and his feet took him to the Kosel. He went over to the stones and felt a disturbing lack of inner peace. Around him he saw religious Jews, "dussim" as they were derogatorily known, dressed in long, hot, black coats, and he felt a shock. He turned to Hashem and asked in all earnestness, "Do you want me to be like them?"

This question expressed his inner turmoil. He merely sought some peace and wanted to know whether this was the way. A new thought occurred to him. "Maybe stop looking for what will fulfill you and try and see what you can do to fulfill others?"

This way of thinking was completely different than anything he had previously thought and the more he pondered it, the more he felt



Erez Levenberg – then and now



Erez Levenberg in the area of the port

calmed. Those “dussim” suddenly looked less strange to him. “They don’t just think about themselves. They’re not dressed that way for no reason. Something else preoccupies them.” And at that moment, the Jews davening around him looked like the best people in the world.

It was at this time that he firmly resolved, “I am a Jew and I came to the world in order to be a Jew. The time has come to do t’shuva.” This was a

hisgalus of his neshama, the turning point.

Erez went back to live in Tel Aviv and began learning “kabbala” in a non-kosher place in B’nei Brak, a place where you could “connect with Judaism without any obligations.” He began to keep mitzvos like Shabbos, kashrus, and putting on t’fillin and even married, but the approach in that place was “Judaism-lite.” The emphasis was on studying kabbala and mitzvos

were merely traditions one needs to keep.

After marrying, Erez and his wife moved to B’nei Brak. At a certain point, he felt that the kabbala school was fraudulent and he switched to a Litvishe yeshiva in B’nei Brak. At this yeshiva, Gemara and Halacha took up most of the day and Erez did well there. However, not long afterwards, he lost his trust in the rabbis of the yeshiva.

These rabbis would constantly attack other Jewish groups, including Chabad. He made his final decision to leave the yeshiva after one of the rabbis explained that putting on t’fillin in the central bus station was a “mitzva that came about via a sin.”

Having always been sympathetic towards Chabad and remembering the times he had put on t’fillin in the central bus station, Erez was offended. He decided that this approach was not for him.

One of his friends, a Lubavitcher, had convinced Erez to say Chitas and learn Rambam and when Erez told one of the rabbis of the yeshiva, he was surprised to hear that he wasn’t doing the right thing, for the Rambam could “confuse” him... Erez upped and left.

Erez’s Lubavitcher friend continued to be mekarev him and invited him to a farbrengen with Rabbi Zalman Landau at the Chabad yeshiva in Ramat Aviv. The farbrengen was a new experience for him and the Chassidus that Rabbi Landau said at the start of the farbrengen fascinated him.

Erez was even more amazed by what happened afterwards, when Rabbi Landau drank some mashke. His style of speaking changed. He began to speak openly about himself and revealed to those present “the human being within and not just the rabbi within.” He spoke about his avodas Hashem, about the difficulties and confusion. He spoke straight to the heart and managed to win over Erez, who was so impressed by the

tremendous love the rabbi had for the Rebbe.

The farbrengen took place Thursday night and Erez decided that he had to learn in this yeshiva. Sunday morning he was there to learn Chassidus.

After two days in the yeshiva, Erez told his wife about the yeshiva and said, "I've come home. Chabad is my home."

"I felt that I had come home and that I wasn't going anywhere else," says Erez.

However, that's when he was tested. Erez learned that the healing through singing that he did was not halachically acceptable since many of his patients were women. The Chabad rabbis he consulted with said he must stop. That meant that he no longer had a livelihood. When he was still hesitant, he asked the Rebbe through the *Igros Kodesh* and the answer was about girls singing in shul at their bas mitzvah celebration. The Rebbe said this is an outright prohibition in the *Shulchan Aruch* that forbids a man from hearing a woman singing.

Despite the difficulty of this test, Erez told his patients that his practice was closed. Without a livelihood, he began to accrue debts with no way of paying them off. Then began a wondrous chain of hashgacha pratis that ultimately led to a special mission from the Rebbe, to his being a soldier in the battle against Shabbos desecration.

After being bereft of his livelihood, Erez wrote to the Rebbe and asked for help. The Rebbe's answer in volume 20 of *Igros Kodesh* dealt with traveling on ships on Shabbos operated by Jewish sailors. The Rebbe explained how this is absolutely forbidden and is outright Shabbos desecration.

Since Erez was a musician by profession and didn't see the answer to his money woes in this answer, he concluded that it was an instruction to study the laws of Shabbos or to

strengthen his Shabbos observance.

A few days later, Erez wrote the Rebbe again and after another few days he wrote yet again, and each letter he opened to had an answer about ships on Shabbos. Erez wracked his brains but could not understand what

connection he had with ships, especially when there are few passenger ships.

Erez reminded himself of a relative who worked in shipping things overseas and thought the Rebbe might mean he should work there. He raised

A SELECTION OF THE ANSWERS THAT EREZ OPENED TO:

You ask whether the rumor is correct, the rumor that it is forbidden to travel on Israeli ships that continue traveling on Shabbos Kodesh. As I wrote at length elsewhere, the way ships are run nowadays leaves no room for doubt.

And traveling by Israeli ships on Shabbos is absolutely prohibited. Not only that but this is public Shabbos desecration and in a brazen manner. And it also entails a shocking chilul Hashem before the nations. And all of this also pertains when the ship begins its journey even at the beginning of the week. (#4796)

* * *

I read your letter in great shock...your brother had in this (traveling via Israeli ship on Shabbos) a great test, and the shock is from the calm manner in which you write about this shocking matter...considering that this is like public chilul Shabbos, which corresponds to all the mitzvos... And the "reward" for this chilul Shabbos was – being present at the marriage of your sister! (#5534)

* * *

According to rumor, in another two or three weeks a ship will leave and not on Erev Shabbos, and there are those who say that all the tickets were sold already. And this is because most of the passengers want to spend the Yomim Nora'im, Rosh HaShana, Aseres Yemei T'shuva, and the Holy Day [Yom Kippur] in Eretz Yisroel, may it be built by Moshiach Tzidkeinu. Therefore, each day is crucial in publicizing that there is no heter to travel on these ships, and it is unbelievable that in order spend Rosh HaShana, etc., in the palace of the King of kings, Hashem, they will do something like this. Especially, as one who does this is...as per the ruling in *Shulchan Aruch* Yoreh Deia 2:6. See there. (#4624)

* * *

All this is not yet sufficient - there is yet another thing, that because of the publicity – it is even more serious than the aforementioned. Namely, that most of the esrogim, and most of the religious items that are brought from Eretz Yisroel here, are shipped via ships that belong to various agencies in Eretz Yisroel and which travel on Shabbos. And based on reports of those who traveled on them, and sailors too – they operate the ship on Shabbos as they do on weekdays, and this entails *hav'ara*, *k'siva*, etc., etc., and this is done with great publicity ... (#3834)



Piskei din about the prohibition of sending cargo via companies that desecrate the Shabbos



your new home ... may it be fulfilled, “change your place, change your mazal.”

For a while Erez worked in Manhattan, but the next response to a letter that he wrote to the Rebbe was, once again, about traveling on ships on Shabbos. Erez resolved not to rest until he figured out what this was about. He consulted with friends, rabbanim, mashpiim, and each one gave him an answer that didn't sit well with him.

One day, as he walked to 770, he had a flash of an idea. Maybe the Rebbe is referring to cargo ships and not passenger ships, as there are hardly any passenger ships but there are certainly many cargo ships!

There is chilul Shabbos when you transport cargo on Shabbos too. Thousands of shipments are made that entail chilul Shabbos and many of those sending the shipments are religious Jews. Erez saw the need to start a “kosher” shipping business that would not desecrate the Shabbos. How could he not have thought of this earlier?!

He began to do research and learned the field thoroughly. Together with his mashpia, he presented a detailed proposal to the Rebbe for starting a new company and asked for

the Rebbe's bracha. When the next letter he opened to was also about ships sailing on Shabbos, Erez realized he had hit the nail on the head.

Erez continued studying the field and how goods are shipped overseas and began laying the groundwork for a new shipping company. The Rebbe continued to guide him in dozens of letters about how to refrain from chilul Shabbos. For example, on 10 Av, the day Erez wrote the Rebbe a letter, he opened to the following letter dated 10 Av (volume 20, p. 371):

Surely you know about the situation, due to our many sins, in which ship owners will only obey the p'sak din in *Shulchan Aruch* if they see obvious rewards. More accurately, if they see that not obeying the halacha brings to a loss of money, meaning that the number of passengers and the sending of merchandise via their ships, will diminish.

It took a long time and much hard work until Erez founded the Shivas HaYamim (Seven Seas/Days) company and to find an investor for it in New York. The name of the company points to its purpose: the observance of Shabbos on all the seven seas and on all seven days of the week. The company has as its mission statement

this possibility in a letter to the Rebbe and asked whether this was what the Rebbe meant. The letter he opened to was also about refraining from Shabbos desecration and not to use ships that had Jewish sailors! Erez realized he had to look into this so he would understand what the Rebbe wanted of him.

In his attempts to stay above water financially, Erez and his wife went to the United States for the purpose of living in Crown Heights and finding work there. Before making such a move, he wrote to the Rebbe, and received this answer: **Your letter of 23 Iyar was received ... as far as moving to**

the goal of attracting as many customers as possible to its kosher shipping line and preventing chilul Shabbos, to give the Rebbe nachas.

In the course of their work, they discovered that there are numerous problems in Shabbos observance in the shipping field and that they had to find solutions. For example, the port of Chaifa desecrates the Shabbos while the port of Ashdod does not. Many people, who don't know this, prefer to use the port of Chaifa. And cargo shipped by plane, even by well-known airlines like El-Al and C.A.L. take place on Shabbos.

A number of Chabad rabbanim who are poskim are working on publishing halachic decisions that clarify the halachic problems involved in transporting cargo and the danger of desecrating the Shabbos thereby.

This new battle for Shabbos joins the rest of the Rebbe's battles in which we are sure that in the near future, we will see the fulfillment of "and he will fight the wars of Hashem and succeed."

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REB ZALMAN LEIB ESTULIN

BY SHALOM DOVBER FRIEDLAND

*A glimpse into the life of an amazing Chassid, Reb Zalman Leib Estulin, who passed on a little over a year ago, whose life was a string of stunning miracles and episodes. * Part 1*

INTERROGATION IN THE TRAIN STATION

Life for an observant Jew was fraught with danger under the Communist regime. This danger was magnified when traveling, due to the watchful eyes of the secret police. Reb Zalman Leib Estulin a"h once recounted an experience he had when traveling to Moscow:

My trip to Moscow, in the early 30's, was by way of the city of Smolensk. I had to disembark there, purchase new tickets, and board a different train to Moscow.

When I got off the first train, I started looking around for the ticket seller's booth. I dragged along my old wooden trunk, which contained all my worldly possessions, tallis and t'fillin, a few holy books, some clothes, and a bit of food for the trip prepared by my mother, Gissa Breina.

As I stood there in confusion, a few robust hooligans, who apparently coveted the contents of my trunk, walked over and sat down on it as they

continued to converse as though nothing untoward was going on. Apparently, their plan was that I would continue trying to make my travel arrangements, relying on them to keep an eye on my trunk, and then they would abscond with the "treasure."

I stood there at a loss. Where do I turn, who can I ask for assistance?

Suddenly, an officer of the NKVD passed by and gave me a piercing look. It wasn't very difficult to deduce the fact of my being Jewish, as I wore a full beard. Immediately, he called over a police officer and instructed him to arrest me and bring me to the NKVD office in the train station. When the policeman saw me hesitating, he asked me, "What are you waiting for? Where are your things?" I pointed to the box that the young toughs were sitting on. When they saw the police approaching, they ran off in a panic.

In the offices of the NKVD, I found myself facing a new trainee who was working under the supervision of a veteran officer. The two carried out a careful search of my person, where

they didn't find much, then they proceeded to check my luggage. After they emptied my trunk and they saw the food I brought along, they began to say jokingly, "We see you are in good hands. There are people looking out for you, eh?"

Suddenly, one of them encountered my t'fillin bag. "What is this," he asked.

I answered, "Those are t'fillin. They are used during prayer."

"We want see how you use them," they demanded.

I tried to get out of it by saying that it is prohibited to put them on for no reason, but they insisted. When I saw that my refusal might lead them to confiscate the t'fillin altogether, I felt I had no choice. I removed my hat, disclosing an old large yarmulke, and I put on the t'fillin.

The officer stared at me and then gave a hard tug on my beard. I screamed in pain, and in response he said, "I thought it was glued on." He continued to stare at me for a long time, and apparently he felt that I had an authentic Jewish appearance, because he suddenly blurted, "*Ti Rabin* (you are a Rabbi)."

In a country where everybody is supposed to be a "comrade," this represented a serious crime, so I said, "A Rabbi has to learn a great deal. In this country all the yeshivos are closed,

the teachers are not allowed to teach, so how can I become a Rabbi?"

"The devil knows where you are likely to get to," they responded, as they continued to ask, "Why do you need to wear all this nonsense, to pray and to grow a beard?"

"In order that it will be good for me in the other world," I answered simply.

"What do you mean by other world," they asked, thinking I was referring to foreign countries like America, which were called 'the other world' in Russian.

"We are all mortal and are not going to live forever," I began to explain. "I was referring to the world that comes after death, because after a person is buried, if he has good deeds in his hands, then he will have it good after death."

The officer began beating his own head with his fists, while screaming, "Oy, Oy!" Other officers from nearby offices began gathering to see what was going on. He continued to grab his head as he said in shock, "Listen to what this young fellow is saying. He is living his life now in order that he should have it good when he is lying in his grave. Youngsters his age are happy and joyful, partying and having fun, and he is destroying his youth so it should be pleasant in his grave. From which planet did you fall down?"

I tried to explain that I concluded that since no person lives forever, therefore, my life too would end, and as such, I need to worry now for the future. Obviously, I didn't convince them, but at least they realized that I was sincere in my convictions.

Suddenly, to my terror, I heard the commander discussing with one of his aides the possibility of putting me to work for the NKVD. The other man answered, "A person who spends his whole life worrying about how it will be in his grave – we will never make a human being out of him, and there will be no benefit to us from the likes

of him."

I almost breathed a sigh of relief, except that the commander decided to try his luck anyway. He said, "Listen, we need somebody who can get close to the enemies of the revolution."

"I am certainly willing to help the revolution," I exclaimed.

"How will you do that," inquired the commander.

"When I see a person who is trying to destroy government property, or a person tearing down signs against the revolution, I will scream, 'Police, grab him, he is against the revolution!'"

They laughed and said, "Do you think people are so stupid that they will try to fight us openly? For them we have enough people on the job. We need you to get close to the religious people."

They laughed and said, "Do you think people are so stupid that they will try to fight us openly? For them we have enough people on the job. We need you to get close to the religious people."

"Religious people," I asked incredulously, "What do you want from them? You see that I am a religious person, and that in no way undermines my loyalty to the government."

"You see," retorted the commander's aide, "I told you that until he gets to live it up in his grave,

he's never going to change."

They continued their interrogation asking me, "Tell us, where did you learn all of these things about paradise and t'fillin."

"I heard about it at home," I answered. When I saw that they didn't accept that answer, I told them the truth, "I had a teacher named Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen, and he taught me everything."

"Aha, and where is he now?"

I responded, "My Rebbe was a very smart man and had great fear of Heaven. I believe that he knew how to do anything, so I am sure that now 'he has fallen well' (a Russian expression referring to someone who has entrenched himself well in his position) into paradise."

They were disappointed and said, "He is lucky, because if he would have fallen into our hands, he would see where he would 'fall well.'"

"Tell us," they continued, "Do you keep the commandments?"

When I nodded my head in the affirmative, they persisted, "Surely, you keep all the commandments, even the commandments of Passover?"

"Yes," I answered, "Whatever I am able to keep."

"If so, tell us do you keep the commandment to eat matza that was kneaded with blood?"

The question shocked me. I did not believe that the despicable blood libels were still part of the gentile mindset. I restrained myself and reacted calmly, "Listen, you have been fed lies. Blood is forbidden for Jews to consume. Even a small drop of blood is prohibited. For example, if a drop of blood is found in an egg, we throw out the whole egg. So how is it possible, G-d forbid, for a Jew to eat actual blood?"

"Why is it prohibited to drink blood," the interrogator asked.

"It is forbidden because it is written in the Torah. If you want to know the reason, you have to ask Moshe

Rabbeinu,” I replied.

Meanwhile, the officers were paging through my Siddur. It was an old Siddur, which contained a prayer for the peace of the kingdom. The prayer begins with the words, “He Who grants salvation to kings.” One of the people present was Jewish, and he understood the meaning of the words. He reacted like he caught me in a crime, “Ho ho, you are against the revolution, because you pray for the peace of kings. Do you want the Tsar to return?”

I answered calmly, “The truth is I don’t say that prayer, and I don’t even look at it. Only because it is an old Siddur, it still has that prayer written inside. You yourselves know how much the Jews suffered under the Tsar’s rule, why would I pray for him to come back and torture us?”

The Jew took a pen and angrily crossed out the prayer.

“What do you really have to say about our government,” they asked.

“They do good things,” I said, “They provide bread coupons for the poor people who never had anyone care for them before. This is an act of great kindness, which is in accordance with the commands of the Torah.”

“You have that right,” they pressed on, trying to set a trap for me, “What do you say about all the rabbis and priests they sent to Siberia?”

Here, I was a little at a loss. I couldn’t support their wickedness, but if I were to criticize them, they were likely to send me there as well. I asked Hashem to put the right words into my mouth. In the end, I answered them that I thought the problem was rooted in a lack of faith. If they had faith, they

would realize what they were doing is wrong.

“And you think that will change,” stormed the interrogator.

“Certainly,” I replied, “When Hashem will show Himself with great miracles, everyone will begin to believe, as it happened with the ancient Egyptians.”

After it all, they told me that they wanted to place me under arrest. I asked them what they would gain by locking me in jail, and they responded in kind, “What will we gain by letting you go free?”

“What do you mean,” I protested, “I am on my way to Moscow to work, and this will strengthen the government.”

The officers responded with mockery, “That will really help us; we will be truly fortunate from your



R' Zalman Leib Estulin receiving a dollar from the Rebbe

work.”

Meanwhile, they contacted the police station in my hometown, Shumayatz, and requested information about me. When they heard the answers – namely that besides my being a Jew who is G-d-fearing and a batlan, I didn't represent a danger to their policies – they allowed me to go.

I calculated the amount of time left and I realized that I wouldn't be able to buy a ticket and still catch the next train. I told them that now I had a problem, because I didn't yet have a train ticket to Moscow, and if I waited on the long line, I would surely miss the train.

The policeman who had brought me to the interrogation agreed to escort me back, and when we reached the ticket counters, he took me to the head of the line, and in few minutes I had my ticket, and so I continued on to Moscow. Except for the lowlife who wouldn't let me enter his car because I was Jewish, the rest of the trip passed uneventfully, settling myself in a different car.

WORKING FOR A LIVING

In addition to his rich spiritual life, Reb Zalman Leib also had to provide for his material sustenance. He exemplified the fulfillment of the Talmudic dictum, “[It is preferable to] strip the hide of an animal carcass in the street, and do not come onto others.” As such, he did not hesitate to take on even the most difficult jobs.

When he first arrived in Moscow, Reb Zalman Leib worked as a construction worker, and after awhile he found easier work as a security guard in a factory. This job was particularly convenient for a Torah observant Jew, as it allowed for Shabbos observance and adhering to the proper times for prayer, because it did not entail much more than simply being present.

With much wisdom and cunning, Reb Zalman Leib arranged to avoid the need to transgress the Shabbos on the

job. Whenever possible, he would not come in on Shabbos, but even when he could not avoid coming in to work, he would find ways to circumvent any Shabbos transgressions. He would walk to work, and any other necessary tasks he would arrange before Shabbos.

If he worked in a government plant, there would be no way to avoid working on Shabbos, because after a few weeks, they would no longer accept his excuses and would file a complaint against him with the police. However, in factories that were considered privately owned, if the boss

“What do you think, we don't notice your behavior? We keep a close eye on you. We also know that you never answer the telephone or sign for deliveries on Shabbos, and now you are causing us problems with the clock.”

was decent about it he could allow the worker to stay away on Shabbos and profess to believe all of his excuses and illnesses. When the government inspectors would come to check the reports, he could claim he believes the worker and is not obligated to check up on him in the hospital to see if he is actually sick.

In cases where the worker looked obviously religious, the owners would usually be afraid to allow him to avoid work on Shabbos. They realized that nobody would believe that they truly fell for all of the stories about recurring

one-day illnesses, and thus they would likely be punished.

“I always had an obviously Jewish appearance, as well as a full beard,” Reb Zalman Leib would tell, “And yet Hashem helped me and I was always able to miraculously escape working on Shabbos.”

After a few weeks, the owners of the factory noticed that Reb Zalman Leib would regularly miss work on Shabbos, and they decided to hold a meeting to discuss the matter. During the meeting, they considered firing him, and there were those who argued that he should be reported to the police, since all the factories ultimately belong to the government and as such, an absentee worker is harming the financial standing of the government.

The manager of the factory, a decent Jew who liked Reb Zalman Leib, convinced the other board members to leave him alone. He argued, “If his only crime is that he observes his religion, and at the same time is particular that the factory should in no way incur any harm, then it is no big deal.” That is how he closed the case against him.

Later, Reb Zalman Leib found out that the manager owed a “debt” to Lubavitcher Chassidim. When he was a young man, he received a draft notice and traveled with his father to the Rebbe Rashab. After receiving the Rebbe's bracha, he miraculously managed to procure an exemption. He also would recount miracles he heard from his friends who were saved from similar circumstances through the blessings of the Rebbe Rashab.

Despite the tacit support of the factory manager, Reb Zalman Leib tried to avoid calling attention to the fact of his Torah observance. However, when faced with a test, he remained steadfast and did not succumb. This is illustrated by the following story, as told by Reb Zalman Leib:

Many times, my shift would be in the nighttime hours, so that my relief



R' Zalman Leib Estulin

would arrive in the morning. When my shift would be on a Friday night, I had to arrange everything before Shabbos. A vital feature of the factory was the wall clock, through which the workers knew when to begin work. Since the factories were considered government property, a worker who arrived late was stealing government funds.

At that time, wristwatches were not common, so the supervisors would watch the main wall clock, and as soon as the bell rang eight o'clock, they would begin to report the latecomers.

A worker who came twenty minutes late faced prison time, and each late minute counted towards that number.

Since the clock was not electronic, it needed to be wound up each day. When my shift would fall out on Friday night, I was careful to wind the clock before Shabbos.

One Friday night, at four in the morning, I was standing in the guard booth when I came to a startling realization. I jumped as if bitten by a snake. Oy, I forgot to wind the clock before Shabbos! My heart began pounding. What do I do? If a worker

who comes twenty minutes late faces imprisonment, someone who causes many workers to miss work, especially because of mitzva observance, is doomed.

I understood that this was a test from Heaven, and I resolved not to seek any leniencies. I would not desecrate the Shabbos, no matter what the consequences.

Morning arrived, and the workers were in a festive mood. The clock wasn't working, the bell didn't ring, and everyone was milling about. The workers came over and slapped me on the back saying, "Zalmanovka, good work, you should arrange to do this for us every day."

I was eagerly awaiting my relief, a gentile, to come and straighten out the mess. However, when he arrived, he sent me to the main office. "They are calling you to come urgently," he said.

When I reached the office, I stood silently in a corner. The administrators turned to me, "The cat is curled up in the corner, as if he doesn't know who ate the cheese."

I remained silent.

One of them continued, "What do you think, we don't notice your behavior? We keep a close eye on you. We know that you always set the clock before Shabbos. We also know that you never answer the telephone or sign for deliveries on Shabbos, and now you are causing us problems with the clock.

"We have no idea what to tell you. If it were anyone else, he would be dancing with the polar bears in Siberia, a long time ago. However, inexplicably, when it comes to you, every time we consider filing a complaint against, we are overwhelmed by pangs of conscience. Now, go home, but you should know that it is time to become a human being."

I raced to shul to catch the minyan, all the while giving praise to Hashem for his constant miracles.

[To be continued be"H]

THE CHAREIDIM: PART OF THE CONVERGENCE GOVERNMENT?

BY SHAI GEFEN

A BLOODY GOVERNMENT

Kadima is putting the finishing touches on its coalition “convergence government,” a government whose stated purpose is to expel thousands of Jews from their homes and give parts of our holy land to our murderers.

The ongoing acts of murder, Kassam missiles in the south, and the growing strength of the terror organizations, do not open their eyes to see the tragedy we are living through thanks to the Disengagement. The terrorists continue shooting at us while our government hides the truth from the public, i.e., that the missiles are landing in our cities and near strategic installations.

On Chol HaMoed Pesach, we were attacked in the center of our country, in Tel Aviv, leaving us with more dead and people maimed for life. That is when I thought of what the Rebbe said on Chol HaMoed Pesach 5750 when a Peres government was about to be established with the help of the Shas and Agudas Yisroel chareidi parties.

A representative from Ger, Rabbi Elimelech Naiman, came to convince the Rebbe not to oppose Peres’ government, while promising that if an agreement was made with terrorists that they would leave the coalition.

The Rebbe’s response was:

The publicity itself generated from the aforementioned party (Labor) taking the reins of government, not to mention their actually doing so, will further strengthen the Arabs. Who can foresee the consequences? This is why I think it is forbidden to allow this party to form a government even for a moment.

The Rebbe added a chilling line about the danger inherent in such a government:

And who knows whether, as we speak – “do not open a mouth [to the Satan]” – at this very moment, something did not happen to a Jew, Heaven forbid, for their hands are yet upraised [against us].

The convergence government is a bloody government, a government that plans to continue the madness of the disengagement government. The very talk about forming such a government is causing more and more terrorist alerts for the Security forces regarding possible terrorist attacks.

Not only do they not learn from previous and serious mistakes, they are attempting to continue the same tragic policies. Furthermore, some of those who will support this government that wants to destroy the land and its people are religious and chareidi parties.

All their claims that they will leave

the government at the last moment are baloney and the Rebbe dismissed such claims before, back on Chol HaMoed 5750. We saw how in the previous coalition, Mafdal and Ichud Leumi enabled Sharon to form a government, which he then used to destroy Gush Katif and northern Shomron.

Today’s terrible security situation will look rosy compared to what’s to come, and this time again it will be thanks to religious Jews. These are parties supposedly devoted to Torah and halacha, but they are destroying our land and endangering the lives of millions of Jews.

Even among ourselves, among Lubavitchers, there are still those who haven’t learned from their mistakes and who have repeated the same unsavory events that took place in 5750. They pervert what the Rebbe said and mislead innocent Jews into supporting these parties that bring tragedies upon us.

Also back then there were the clever ones who tried to purify the impure with 150 reasons and explained that this is really what the Rebbe wants. It is obvious that those who call upon us to vote for these parties are responsible for everything that will take place, may Hashem have mercy upon us.

We trust in Hashem that Hashem will protect His people. We must



intensify the fight and show people true daas Torah, doing all we can in a natural way so that this bloody government does not succeed along with its religious helpers.

AVADIM K'NAANIM OF THE 3RD CLASS

As the coalition negotiations take place and fights over the ideologies of the various ministries are going on, let us remind ourselves what the Rebbe said regarding coalition negotiations by the religious parties. It's hard to believe that the Rebbe said this over thirty years ago and not yesterday:

This fact alone (that they are given these portfolios) is very disturbing. Thanks to receiving these portfolios, they must do as they are told. It's just that the Left wants it to go through the datiyim, because then, when there are complaints, the Left can say that the datiyim are to blame.

And when the datiyim make a suggestion, they spit in their faces. And as usual, the datiyim don't regard it as spitting, but as gishmei bracha (rains of blessing). The same thing happens with every suggestion they make, they don't care what they say, to the point that they call them (it's even printed in the paper) "second class citizens."

But the truth is that this is a euphemism. Because in fact, they're far worse than that, and they really should be called "Avadim K'naanim of the third class."

As far as their claim that they promised them, for entering the government, that they wouldn't give back Yehuda and Shomron (without a referendum) – nonsense! They already decided to give back parts of Yehuda and Shomron, though it's possible they haven't yet told the religious representatives.

When they entered the government, a certain rav called the day they entered: a black day. But the

truth is it's only a black day for them, but for everybody else it is light, since by their entering the government "matters became clarified" and everybody could see what they are: men full of lies.

It's a great rachmanus on them, since they cause the Galus to drag on. What is clear is that the "is'chalta d'Geula" certainly did not begin. And when they say that a situation in which a Jew who puts on t'fillin is also a minister is the is'chalta d'Geula; it's just the opposite, since he uses the t'fillin in order to sell out Judaism and to do things that are the opposite of the existence of Judaism, r"l.

By entering the government it has become clear (aside from the fact that they are liars, also) that we can't say it's is'chalta d'Geula but just an intensifying of the darkness and Galus."

(Sicha Parsha Ki Sisa, Shushan Purim 5734)

PEACE WITH EGYPT

28 Nissan marked 24 years since the destruction of Yamit and our giving Sinai to Egypt. While many considered this a wonderful thing and the start of a movement towards peace with our Arab neighbors, the Rebbe saw it as the first of many withdrawals and a terrible tragedy.

In all the aid to terrorists, the arms smuggling, the funding for terrorists, Egypt leads the way. When the Rebbe screamed that Egypt was increasing terrorist activity against Israel, they didn't know what the Rebbe meant. The Rebbe yelled that the Camp David Accords would lead to Arab nations arming themselves even more, which would lead to a dangerous imbalance against Israel, but they all dismissed what the Rebbe said and hoped for the best.

Although over the years, they tried to hide the truth from us in order to make believe that the agreement with Egypt was stable, in recent years they have publicized more of the truth. It

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turns out that Egypt is an active partner of terror organizations.

Today, after the expulsion from Gush Katif, we all see how Egypt is aiding terrorists, directly or indirectly, allowing them to transport tons of weapons into the terrorist state next door.

Mr. Yuval Steinmetz, director of the Foreign and Defense Committees in the previous Knesset, was interviewed by *HaAretz* about the peace agreement with Egypt. He said some shocking things about what has been going on with Egypt since the Camp David Accords.

“I see an existential conventional threat based on two military coalitions: the Egyptian-Saudis in the south and the Syrian-Iranians in the north. I am particularly concerned about Egypt. I think there is a real danger that Israel is sleeping and when it wakes up it will find itself facing a very difficult Egyptian military challenge.”

The interviewer: “We have peace with Egypt. This peace has withstood the test of time. It has given us 30 years of quiet!”

Steinmetz: “I suggest that we don’t accept Egyptian declarations of peace but examine the facts. The facts show that Egypt is building a mighty army. This is a country with no threats, no active border disputes and limited financial resources, yet it is investing billions in an army that absolutely dominates the Arab world and Africa. Why is Egypt doing this? The numbers are shocking. The size of the Egyptian air force is more or less the size of the Israeli air force, but the number of tanks, guns, ships, and missile launchers are far greater than ours. The Egyptian army is far larger than the Israeli army.

“However, in addition to the fact that Egypt has built a mighty force, over the course of 25 years, in the past 10 years something new has developed. Since the mid 90’s,

Egyptian doctrine, the Egyptian political indoctrination and the Egyptian war games are all aimed against Israel. Since the year 2000, Egypt has also been investing billions in its military infrastructure aimed at Israel. There are worrisome signs, perhaps extremely worrying, that I cannot discuss in detail.

“The optimistic view says that this entire huge operation is being built because the Egyptians fear us. However, there is the opposite interpretation: Egypt is preparing for war.

“If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, maybe it’s really a duck! If it looks like preparations for war and sounds like preparations for war, maybe it’s really preparations for war against Israel!”

The interviewer: “You believe that Egypt really wants to shrink Israel and revert it back to its natural size (i.e., pre 1967)?”

Steinmetz: “I am sure that if Egypt could wipe Israel off the map, it wouldn’t be opposed to doing so. I am in favor of peace with Egypt. I bless the improvement in diplomatic relations this past year, but I think that we cannot delude ourselves. There is a high probability that there will be a military clash between us and Egypt. We have to reckon with this.”

LET THE TRUTH COMES OUT

This past year was a difficult one, teaching us many lessons. Many have begun to sober up from the “is’chalta d’Geula” delusion and faith in the medina and its institutions. Even those who are still inclined to believe that it was a one-time mistake and that soon the government will change and the Malchus Mafdal will rule are beginning to understand that this is a rotten and corrupt government at its core.

It makes no difference what sort of coalition will form, whether Kadima

will go with Labor or Likud, for the results will be more or less identical.

The religious-Zionist movement is at a crossroads. After 58 years of galus will they liberate themselves from the medina-galus or will they continue to use the election slogan, “Maaminim B’Medina”?

On Yom HaAtzmaut they celebrated and prayed for their leaders, the very same leaders who are planning mass destruction of our land. They are the ones, who day after day and hour after hour, are uprooting every vestige of Judaism. It is only thanks to the Faithful Shepherd that the lamb survives among the seventy wolves.

The Rebbe often screamed and cried about all the tragedies and tzaros from the goyim coming because of that false belief that the medina is the “is’chalta d’Geula,” and how Hashem must, as it were, show that this is incorrect and is the cause of all tzaros.

In light of the terrifying things that we underwent this past year in Gush Katif, northern Shomron, and Amona and the destruction of mosdos Torah and chesed, when we saw what sprouted from a geula without a goel, we turn to our brothers whom we admire and say:

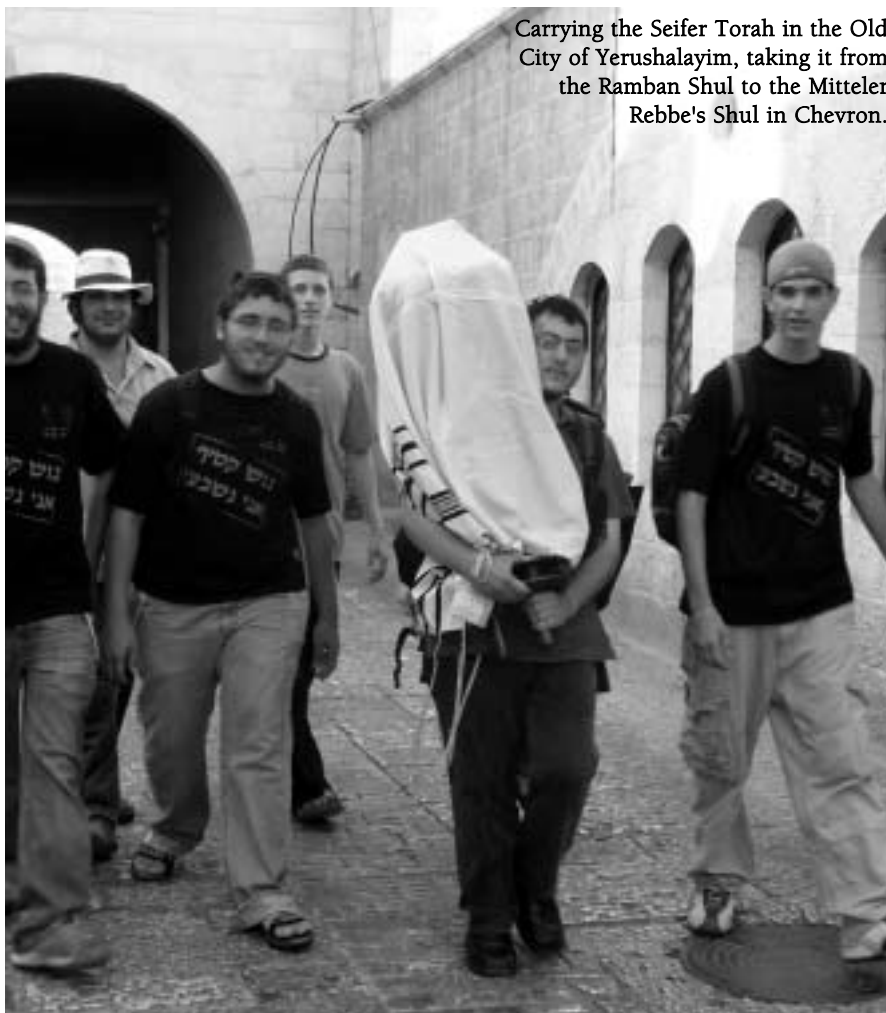
Remove the false gods from amongst you. The Zionist hope is not our hope and their flag is not our flag. This is the time to disengage from Zionism and to converge with pure faith. All the convoluted proofs and explanations are no longer relevant.

Baruch Hashem, there is a spiritual arousal among many people, especially among the youth, who know that their parents taught them lies, and now it’s our obligation to bring them word about the true Geula. This is the job the Rebbe gave us when he told us, “Do all that you can to actually bring Moshiach Tzidkeinu.” Let us complete the job now!

THE SEIFER TORAH FROM GUSH KATIF

BY ALIZA KARP

The Torah is the proof that the land is ours. The Elchonon-Ari-Hillel-Nati Seifer Torah made that statement with its repeated appearances throughout the Disengagement. When someone comes to evict you, you show him your deed of ownership.



Carrying the Seifer Torah in the Old City of Yerushalayim, taking it from the Ramban Shul to the Mittlerer Rebbe's Shul in Chevron.

I first saw Elchonon Hellinger in Hevron on Shabbos afternoon, well maybe that was the second time. During the Seuda at the Hachnasas Seifer Torah, Elchonon and friends were seated in the men's section and I noticed him when Danny gave him an honorable mention and he and his friends responded with noisy approval.

Now that I know the story of the Seifer Torah, I think Elchonon should have been the main speaker. But the event was set on the auspicious date of the Yahrtzait of Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, so the program centered on messages from her distinguished descendents who come every year on this date to Hevron.

My conversation with Elchonon on Shabbos afternoon was very short. Elchonon is deaf. He does communicate well, but you have to warm up a bit. I realized I would have to wait to hear his story. I wanted to hear it at a time when I could take notes and I could write him notes to facilitate ideas difficult to convey through lip reading and hand gesturing.

A few weeks after I met him, Elchonon was in New York in preparation for some medical treatments. Anxious to hear his stories I invited him to my house together with friends who were skilled at communicating with him.

When I asked about the Seifer Torah, Elchonon started at the

beginning. He first moved to Gush Katif before Pesach last year and was one of the first to settle in the abandoned hotel, Maoz HaYam, Palm Beach Hotel, near Neve Dekalim, which was later raided by top brass commandos outnumbering the hotel residents twenty to one. The conditions at the time Elchonon moved in were, shall be say, rough. Not lacking ingenuity, Elchonon managed to make things more comfortable for himself. For instance, he figured out that at night when the street lights were on, he could tap into their electricity so that he could have four fans to cool himself, in place of air conditioning.

As the officials were tightening the noose around Gush Katif, Elchonon managed to smuggle in many supplies. He rented a car for a few days. Traveling with an American passport and friends who had the same, they would cover their stash with personal affects and tell the checkpoint guards that they were tourists on the way to the beach in Gush Katif.

With the help of personalities such as Nadia Matar of Women in Green and Baruch Marzel of Baruch Marzel (he is in a class of his own) the hotel started to become more inhabitable and more people moved in. A large area was designated as a Shul. Elchonon felt it needed a Seifer Torah.

Before setting out to Eretz Yisroel, Elchonon had visited his friend Ari in Flatbush. He had noticed that Ari's family seemed to collect Sifrei Torah. The Sifrei Torah were not new but they looked like they still were usable. Elchonon called Ari and the family agreed to send one to Gush Katif. But how? It's not the kind of thing you send with FedEx.

It was the time of the Israel Parade in New York. Amidst fanfare, Dov Hikind was taking a group straight from the parade to the airport for a solidarity mission to Gush Katif. Ari tried to get someone in Hikind's group to take the Seifer Torah, but it was not an easy favor for people to agree to. Not only was

it heavy and valuable, it also needed to be handled with honor.

I am not sure who thought of it, but the boys came up with a great plan. Great because it worked! They rented two the local Crown Heights school buses and went to 770. Soon the busses were filled with bachurim who were happy to go to the airport to dance with the Seifer Torah that was headed for Eretz Yisroel, specifically to go to the endangered Gush Katif.

With all the fanfare, tens of bachurim with orange t-shirts showing beneath their suit jackets accompanying a Seifer Torah under a Chuppa, the people on Hikind's

When the boys first arrived in Gush Katif, they wanted to know where the rockets were. Elchonon told them that they did not need to look for the rockets, the rockets would find them...

mission were no longer in a position to refuse to take the Seifer Torah.

The Seifer Torah needed a fresh cover, Mantel in Yiddish. And one of the bottom handles had broken off. Elchonon and Ari decided that the Seifer Torah should be dedicated to two personalities whose dedication to Eretz Yisroel had cost them their lives, Hillel Lieberman of Elon Moreh and Nati Ozeri of Hilltop 26.

Time was short. The government was threatening to close Gush Katif to all visitors. Elchonon traveled to Yerushalaim. He ordered the cover with the names of Hillel and Nati. He was told to go to Avraham Hershkowitz to get Etzei Chaim,

wooden handles.

Elchonon told Hershkowitz that his Seifer Torah would be used in Gush Katif, but only if Elchonon could get back into Gush Katif before it was sealed off by the army. Within twenty minutes he was out of the shop with exactly what he needed. Elchonon later learned that Hershkowitz is considered the best in his field. Famous Rebbes come to him for their Etzei Chaim. The average wait for Hershkowitz's customers is two months!

The Mantle was ordered at one p.m. and picked up at seven. By the time he got to the central bus station, Elchonon had missed the last bus to Gush Katif, but he managed to hitch, Seifer Torah and all, back to the Moaz HaYam. "The Seifer Torah was beautiful," remembers Elchonon, "we get an Aron from somewhere and so many Lubavitcher S'farim. We had a real Shul in the hotel."

Meanwhile, back in New York, Eli Poltorak was busy for weeks forming a Chabad Yeshiva to be located in Neve Dekalim. Most Yeshivas take more than a few weeks to organize. I personally thought Eli was dreaming. In fact, I guess he was. Only his dream came true! A dozen students would be coming from America and other serious students would join them in Eretz Yisroel. They arranged to stay in the hotel. The Shul which Elchonon was so proud of would be their Beis Midrash.

Before the Yeshiva even got to Neve Dekalim, things started to heat up. The press reported 'right wing extremist fringe element settlers' from the hotel killed an Arab who was walking on the beach – the Arab came back to life. And then the hotel was stormed by riot police in full gear. The television footage was amazing, and because the violence was targeting those 'right wing extremist fringe element settlers,' the viewers felt safe, not realizing the security personnel should be targeting terrorists not Jews, and not realizing that when freedom of settlers is obstructed, freedom of all Jews in Eretz Yisroel is at risk. To



Inside the bomb shelter the bachurim were prepared with food and sleeping bags, ready for a lengthy siege.

refresh my memory of this incident while writing about it, I googled it and read on Ynetnews.com: “The wild saga by the hooligans, the brutes who were here has ended,” said Dan Harel, head of Israel’s Southern Command. “We will return to our routine lives and learn from this.”

When the assault on the hotel began, Elchonon ran to the Shul and took the Seifer Torah from the Aron. The picture of him sitting of the chair holding the Seifer Torah was widely published in the media. In an interview with israelreporter.com, Elchonon said: “The decision to take the Torah was to appeal to their souls as Jews, I tried to show them that we are not wild animals or the enemy; we are good Jews like they are. When they came crashing in they froze for a few seconds, some of them even bent down to kiss the Torah. I was going to walk out with the Torah and lead the Jews of the expulsion as was the case throughout history when Jewish communities were expelled, the Rabbis used to walk in front with the Torah.”

The calm did not last long. The Seifer Torah was ripped from Elchonon and he was carried out by four soldiers. Let’s just say, he did not go without resistance. He was handcuffed and put on the bus. Some of the captives were dropped on the roadside in the middle of nowhere, without shelter from the burning summer sun. Elchonon was taken for questioning. The police had



The bachurim went via Mitzvah Tank to Morag, a community south of Neve Dekalim, surrounded by Arabs, to put t’fillin on the soldiers.

mistaken him for someone else and lost their cool when they realized they had just made fools of themselves.

The Seifer Torah had been left in the hotel. It was rescued by Arik Yitzchaki and moved to Shirat HaYam, a town on the beach neighboring Neve Dekalim.

Within a few days, Poltorak came with his boys from the states. They arrived as things were getting tight at Kissufim Junction, the only entrance to Gush Katif, but they managed to get in. Once in, some of the boys did come and go for various reasons, getting back in which ever way they could find, even if it meant suffering a few scratches from the barbed wire fences. Poltorak found alternate accommodations for his students, with a separate cabin for his wife and himself. Rosh Chodesh Tammuz Yeshiva began. The Seifer Torah was moved back to Neve Dekalim to be with the Yeshiva.

When the boys first arrived in Gush Katif, they wanted to know where the rockets were. Elchonon told them that they did not need to look for the rockets, the rockets would find them. A few days later, as they were pulling out the rocket – which had just made a direct hit through the roof of Poltorak’s cabin – another rocket landed nearby.

Yeshiva student Shmueli

Albukerk, who came with Elchonon for the interview, was one of the students who arrived with Poltorak. Albukerk said, “Instead of watching for cars and traffic when you were out, you would be looking up and watching for Kassam rockets. The noise they made was frightening. Only Elchonon was not bothered by their high pitched whiz as they flew through the air on their deadly mission.”

After Davening and studying for six and a half hours every day, the students found plenty of opportunities to put Tefilin on both the numerous soldiers and the numerous beach lovers who had come to join the action.

The weeks passed and soon it was Shabbos Chazon, the day before Tisha B’Av, which was the day before the Disengagement. Many Chabadnikim gathered in the home of the local Shliach, Rabbi Yigal Kirshenzaft. Danny Cohen from Hevron was there. He offered to house the Seifer Torah, should the Disengagement eviction actually come to be.

Tragically the Disengagement did come to be. A monumental stain on the page of Jewish History 5765.

The Chabad Yeshiva put up one of the best resistances of the entire process. If two dozen boys could put up such a defense, the Hesder

Yeshivos surely could have blocked the entire Disengagement, had they not been worried about their future, a future which looks bleak in spite of their collaboration.

The Seifer Torah was with the boys locked in a bomb shelter. There was communication through a small window that concerned the army about making an all out aggressive attack. Plus the floor of the bomb shelter had a coating of oil which made an aggressive advance awkward. Finally the army did come in. They offered the boys to walk out with dignity or to be carried out like dogs. The boys answered they would be carried out with dignity!

Amidst confrontation and shouts of 'Yehudi Lo Migaresh Yehudi,' a Jew does not evict a Jew, the students were forced onto buses. The Seifer Torah went with them to Yerushalaim. Later in an email, Poltorak told me, "We really developed an emotional attachment to that Seifer Torah."

Elchonon and the other boys were inspired to continue their resistance. They participated in further anti-Disengagement activities,

not suitable for a Seifer Torah. After first coming to the Kotel, the first stop for most all Gush Katif refugees, the Seifer Torah was safely housed in the Ramban Shul in the Old City of Yerushalaim, waiting to re-locate.

When the final battlefield of the Disengagement was cleared, Elchonon focused once again on the Seifer Torah. Menachem Porter, a Chabad Hevron activist, came with a van and brought Elchonon, with a handful of the Poltorak Yeshiva students, and the Seifer Torah to Hevron. It was a good feeling for all involved to have the Seifer Torah, which had been evicted from the hotel and then evicted again from the Yeshiva, to come home to Hevron, where it will stay until the day it will return to Gush Katif, with G-d's help.

After careful examination, Danny realized that he would like the Seifer Torah repaired so it would be Kosher without a doubt.

The Seifer Torah was ready in time for Chaf Daled Shvat, and the grand Hachnasas Seifer Torah mentioned previously was held in Hevron. The parents of Nati Ozeri came to share in the Simcha. They

were particularly touched by the Seifer Torah in honor of son. Mrs. Ozeri told me Nati was her only son.

The Seifer Torah needed extensive work, the bill came out to be thousands of dollars. Elchonon and Ari decided it was a good investment and together they sponsored restoration. This Seifer Torah embodies the message that the Rebbe repeatedly stressed, the message of the first Rashi in Chumash, that Eretz Yisroel belongs to the Jews because G-d says so as recorded in the Torah. The Torah is the proof that the land is ours. The Elchonon-Ari-Hillel-Nati Seifer Torah made that statement with its repeated appearances throughout the Disengagement. When someone comes to evict you, you show him your deed of ownership. This Torah is the deed of ownership which proud Jewish youth carried in Gush Katif.

And now it sits in the Holy City of Hevron near the Maarat HaMachpela, bought by our father Avraham four thousand years ago, the very first Jewish real estate acquisition in Eretz Yisroel.

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FROM A GERMAN MONASTERY TO CHABAD IN CANADA

BY MENDEL TZFASMAN

The amazing story of an Israeli family, two of whose children grew up in the home of a Catholic priest in Germany. Their mother remarried a Canadian gentile and they were a hairsbreadth away from total assimilation. Today they are all ardent Chassidim and are mekusharim heart and soul to the Rebbe MH”M!



Barak (second from the left) at a farbrengen at the Chabad center of Hebrew speakers in Montreal

SUDDEN TEARS

I met him over three years ago at the Chabad house of Hebrew speakers in Montreal. It was Shabbos afternoon in the middle of Rabbi Chaim Shlomo Cohen’s farbrengen. He looked like a typical Israeli, not the type you would see at a Shabbos Mevarchim farbrengen. His kippa was having a hard time remaining perched within the mop of his hair. His weekday clothes stood out among the Shabbos garb of the talmidim, shluchim, and Anash who were gathered around the shliach.

One of the T’mimim, Yoni Chetzroni, didn’t take his eyes off him. I noticed a slight similarity between them and despite the different worlds their outward appearances represented, they looked like brothers. My suspicion was confirmed when I overheard one of the talmidim-shluchim whisper to him, “Nu, Yoni, did you ever imagine that your brother Barak would come to a farbrengen?”

Empty mashke bottles were strewn about on the tables. Barak Chetzroni was trying to compete with the shliach in saying l’chaim.

He didn't imagine that as he did so he himself was cutting the branch of *taavos* that he was sitting on.

One l'chaim and another l'chaim, and it looked as though something within him had moved. Suddenly he got up and as he held another cup of mashke, he turned towards a picture of the Rebbe hanging behind him and loudly said, "L'chaim, Rebbe. *Yechi HaMelech!*"

"Yoni," he said, turning to his brother with tears in his eyes, "look at what a Rebbe we have..."

A moment later, he sat down, wailing like a baby to the wonderment of everybody sitting there. The words beneath the Rebbe's picture said: "Moshiach promises: No Jew will remain behind in Galus."

A captivating *niggun gaaguim* was loudly sung in the attempt to drown out the wailing. At the end of the *niggun*, Barak began to speak to the shliach in German!

I listened in to the strange dialogue as the shliach responded in his mother tongue – Yiddish. This is what I managed to understand:

Barak: "Rabbi, what can I do in order to connect to the Rebbe?"

Wow, I thought. What a Chassidische farbrengen can accomplish even the angel Michael cannot accomplish! In my Galus mindset, I didn't realize what an effect a farbrengen can have.

"You must make a firm commitment not to go party for the next three months. Just three months," said the shliach.

Barak looked surprised. This is not what he had meant and he said, "But rabbi, I've gotta dance..."

"No problem," responded the shliach. "You can come to the Chabad house at night, put on

music and dance as much as you want."

The unbelievable took place and Barak agreed. My curiosity was aroused and I decided to get to know the family. This is the incredible story of their t'shuva.

A DANGEROUS MOVE

"We were born in Raanana," began Yoni (22) the younger of the brothers. "When I was seven, our parents divorced and we lived with our mother who worked as a tour

"You must make a firm commitment not to go party for the next three months. Just three months," said the shliach. Barak looked surprised. This is not what he had meant and he said, "But rabbi, I've gotta dance..."

guide. She accompanied tour groups, mostly from abroad, on trips around the country. The itinerary was planned according to the type of group it was and not surprisingly, many of the tours were to places of interest to Christians.

"We had no connection with Torah and mitzvos. It was only after I did t'shuva that I discovered that my grandfather was a religious Jew. For some reason I always felt attracted to religion and I asked my mother every day to tell me the

story of Shimshon HaGibor. Every night his bitter end bothered me and one time I asked her to end the story without telling me that he had died."

During the Gulf War, there was hardly any tourism and no money for their mother. Rina Chetzroni received an offer from a German priest, whom she knew from the many groups he had brought to Eretz Yisroel, to emigrate to Germany at least until the end of the war.

"There you will be able to work without being dependent on the Israeli economy," he said. She accepted his offer, especially since at that time Israeli citizens did not need visas for Germany.

She moved into the priest's house along with her sons. Barak was ten and Yoni was seven. Moshe, her older son, remained in Eretz Yisroel and did his army service.

The children became very attached to the priest. His position as well as the clothes that he wore, didn't bother them at all. On the contrary, they considered it a profession just like that of a rabbi. As for the clothing, they thought they were nice.

Every Sunday they went with the priest to church, where they met their school friends. They played with the many toys in the basement of the church. They loved going to church and Barak even planned on joining the choir. The fact that they were Jews didn't raise any red flags for them.

There were no clear boundaries between the German children and themselves. The only difference they saw was that they had been born in Israel while the other children were natives of Germany. Their mother did not teach them anything about Judaism since she didn't know much about it herself.



Moshe (left) on parachuting exercises



Barak and Yoni back then

AN AWAKENING

They were on their way to fully assimilating in German society when one morning, during a Christian holiday, the teacher asked the class to kiss the cross. The children happily took turns except for one child, Barak Chetzroni. The teacher tried to persuade him and the children urged him on. Barak didn't want to be different than everybody else but something prevented him from doing it. The teacher threatened, "If you don't kiss it, you'll have to leave the room."

Barak burst into tears and fled the classroom. Later on, the teacher tried to appease him and asked him to write her name and some basic

words in Ivrit. Barak took his revenge as he wrote down curses while telling her, "This means 'good morning' and this 'good evening' and 'this is your name,'" as he pointed at his Jewish revenge.

The Jewish spark had been ignited and the family suddenly remembered that it was forbidden to eat pork and rabbit. They did not know the reason why, but an inexplicable fear took hold of them whenever they considered eating that meat. This was in no small part thanks to the ongoing pressure from their classmates who unwittingly intensified the Chetzroni's Jewish pride.

When they went to the school cafeteria, they would always ask what meat was being served and when the answer was ham or rabbit, they gave various excuses why they wouldn't eat it. One time they were served "regular" meat and when they finished eating it their friends said, "So, how did you like it?" When they said it was fine their classmates laughed at them saying, "It was pork!"

Barak and Yoni remember going with their mother to synagogue on Yom Kippur. They also joined a

Pesach seider at a Reform temple.

A few years later, they returned home. Barak was over bar mitzva age. His strong stand against all his classmates continued but in a negative way. When Lubavitcher bachurim came to his school on Fridays to put t'fillin on with the boys, he was the only one who openly mocked them. Furthermore, those who agreed to put on t'fillin were mocked. The T'mimim didn't have nachas from him...

A SURPRISING TURNING POINT

When Moshe finished his army duty, he went to London to tour a bit before starting to work. He became friendly with a French girl who worked for a frum family as an au pair and Shabbos goy and they decided to marry.

Although Moshe was not at all observant, he refused to marry her before she converted. It was enough for him if she made some token commitments. The girl agreed and began to learn Hebrew with a Reform rabbi.

When once again it looked as though a member of the family was going to be lost to Judaism, Hashem sent a friend who told the couple that the conversion wasn't serious and would not be accepted in Israel.

Moshe took this warning seriously and he and his girlfriend decided to go to Eretz Yisroel and start an Orthodox conversion process. The stringent rules made things difficult for her and for a year she had to deal with protracted bureaucratic red tape. Only by year's end was she allowed to take a course on Judaism which she took daily for a few hours. Eventually, an adoptive frum family was found for her too.

"Sivan" was the Jewish name she

chose. She loved the Jewish religion and eagerly took on religious observance. One of the conversion laws is that the other half of the couple also has to take classes, so Moshe, unwillingly, took classes in Torah and halacha. He was quite opposed to the extreme approach his new wife had taken on. "This is not why I had her convert," he thought.

Their first child, Noam, was born a year later. One Shabbos afternoon Moshe packed a bathing suit and a tube.

"What are you doing?" asked Sivan.

"I'm taking Noam to the beach. Why?" asked Moshe.

"No way! He's going to grow up as a Jew, as I learned how a Jew ought to behave. You can go to the beach by yourself if you want!" Moshe was stunned.

Slowly Moshe got involved too, ironically, through his wife and gradually became observant. He did it slowly but surely. They sent their son to a Chabad preschool in Hod HaSharon where they lived at the time. The two year old came home from school with Chabad songs, such as "Yechi."

YONI MAKES CHANGES

Time went by and there were family upheavals, this time with their mother. She remarried a Canadian gentile with whom she moved to Canada and she lived in a small town, far from any Jews. No, she didn't ask him to convert. She didn't mind his being a gentile.

Her children did not mix in with her decision. She always told them a person is his own boss and can make his own choices. This is also why she didn't get involved when her son and daughter-in-law became religious. Barak, on the other hand, was furious. He hated

The teacher asked the class to kiss the cross. The children happily took turns except for one child, Barak Chetzroni. The teacher tried to persuade him and the children urged him on. Barak didn't want to be different than everybody else but something prevented him from doing it.

religion and religious people even more when his brother became a baal t'shuva.

"The Torah stole my brother from me. Now we won't be able to do things together any more," he complained.

Unlike Barak, young Yoni loved his new "religion teacher." Along with a close friend, they began competing over who was more religious. The first competition entailed who could keep more Shabbosos. Every so often, they would decide on a period of time that they had to attend high school wearing tzitzis. Every morning they would check each other out to see who had come with tzitzis. During the Tanach classes, they gave out kippot to their classmates.

When he turned 18, Yoni also went to Canada and also found a gentile girlfriend, but in this case

she broke it off when she found t'fillin and Jewish books in his closet.

"I don't want you divided between two worlds because of me," she said, and left.

Yoni began looking for a religious environment where he could spend Shabbos. By Divine Providence, he found the Chabad house for Hebrew speakers in Montreal run by Rabbi Chaim Shlomo Cohen.

The shliach, the community and the talmidim-shluchim treated Yoni wonderfully, but Chabad customs put him off. He was very perturbed by the late davening and by the constant referring to the Rebbe: "What's the problem, there are no other tzaddikim? The Rebbe is the only tzaddik around?" He wasn't ashamed to ask.

They explained to him that the Rebbe is a neshama klalis who incorporates all other tzaddikim. As far as davening late in the day, they explained that you first have to immerse in a mikva and learn Chassidus before davening.

"The hardest thing for me," says Yoni, "was to grow a beard and go on mitzvaim. I didn't want to grow a beard because I didn't want to change my appearance. And going on mitzvaim just didn't sit well with me.



Moshe at his pizzeria



Yoni learning



Moshe at Noam's bris



Chassidish nachas: Moshe's children

“One of the things that changed my way of thinking was a farbrengen with Rabbi Cohen in which he told of a Misnaged who had become a Chassid and later told of the enormous impact that Chassidus had had on him: ‘Before learning Chassidus, I wasn’t able to understand how Hashem could repay me in the World to Come for all the Torah and mitzvos that I did in this world. The conclusion I arrived at was that since Hashem is omnipotent, He could also create a special Gan Eden for me... But after I learned Chassidus I realized that it was only because He is omnipotent that Hashem allows a creation like me to remain in His world.’

“This story really got to me. I

completely identified with the protagonist of the story and I resolved to become a Chassid of the Rebbe MH”M.”

In the meantime, Yoni made sure that his nephew, Moshe’s son (for they had moved to Montreal), was a member of Tzivos Hashem. The counselors put a lot into the kids and the children of the Tzivos Hashem club switched to Chabad schools in Montreal, giving Chassidish nachas to their happy parents.

THAT’S HOW I MET HIM

When Barak heard about his younger brother’s newfound religiosity, he resolved to go to Canada and “take care of all those

who ruined his life. They don’t know who they’ll have to deal with. They made him grow a beard and he probably looks like a terrorist!”

When he finished school at Machon Wingate he gave up his dreams – touring New Zealand, bungee jumping and a parachuting course – and decided to study homeopathy in Canada. He asked Yoni to host him in his apartment but Yoni, a fresh baal t’shuva was afraid of the negative influence.

He consulted with his mashpia about what to tell his brother. In the answer that he opened to in the *Igros Kodesh* the Rebbe wrote that something cannot absorb while giving out flavor, which spiritually is explained to mean that while influencing others, he would not be influenced. The answer was clear to him.

Barak landed in Canada on Rosh HaShana and Moshe refused to pick him up from the airport. That upset him and so, when he went to Moshe’s house on Shabbos he refused to wash his hands for the meal even though his mother and her gentile husband washed their hands.

It wasn’t easy getting Barak to the Chabad house, but Yoni, following his mashpia’s instructions, did not get involved in arguments. Instead, he started a shiur in D’var Malchus in his apartment with the talmidim-shluchim and potential mekuravim.

Slowly, step by step, Barak began to melt and he agreed to a deal with Moshe that if he went to one Chassidus class at the Chabad center, Moshe would go with him to an exercise club for an entire week.

Before entering the Chabad house, Yoni grabbed Barak’s arm and said, “Barak, please, go in with an open mind without feeling you have to refute everything,” and

So Moshe, unwillingly, took classes in Torah and halacha. He was quite opposed to the extreme approach his new wife had taken on. "This is not why I had her convert," he thought.



First meeting of Barak and Yoni after doing t'shuva

Barak agreed. It was the maamer Basi L'Gani and the shliach explained the war between the G-dly soul and the animal soul.

Barak confronted the fact that all the pleasures he had pursued were animalistic. He loved the class and often attended the shiurim and farbrengens. It was at this stage of his life that I met him for the first time on Shabbos.

BUT IT'S FORBIDDEN

The next time I met Barak I didn't recognize him. He had grown a beard and had acquired a more refined look. He wore a black hat too. It was only when he called my name that I realized it was Barak.

"What's new with you, Barak?" I asked after I had recovered from the shock. He answered me in his characteristically brief way, "Baruch Hashem, everything's okay. The Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach is making sure that nobody stays behind!"

A mischievous smile played on his lips.

"After that farbrengen I arranged shiurim with the shluchim, learning each subject with another chavrusa. I learn: maamarim, *Likkutei Sichos*, *Tanya*, *Shulchan Aruch*, and even the *HaYom Yom*, which I heard



Barak today

intermittently at night on the answering machine. After work, I would learn Gemara with the last chavrusa. Sometimes we fell asleep over the s'farim.

"Rabbi Cohen, who has become my mashpia, suggested that I go to yeshiva in Seagate. I did, and after a few weeks, after opening to an amazing answer in the *Igros Kodesh*, I went back to the Chabad house. Now I am learning for smicha having finished most of the material already.

"My mother's husband, after lots of time spent on studying, has almost completed his conversion process through the rabbanim in Montreal and will be having his bris soon. During this process, he

learned that he is a descendent of Spanish conversos and that his original family name was Dayan!

"When he made this astounding discovery he told my mother, 'I feel that I had to descend so low in order to ascend to my source and true roots.'"

"As for my mother, that's a story onto itself. One Friday night, Noam asked her, 'Savta, how will you get home now? It's cold outside.'

"She said, 'I'm not walking sweetie, I'm going by car.'

"So Noam said, 'But you're not allowed to go by car on Shabbat!' and he opened a Chumash where it says, 'Keep the Shabbos day and sanctify it.'

"When she heard this, she was so moved that she picked Noam up, kissed him, and promised him she wouldn't travel on Shabbos any more.

"She lost the job she had just gotten as director at the 'Tourist Department – Middle Eastern branch.'

"You know the mashpia in Tzfat, Rabbi Zev Friedman and the shliach in Mill Basin, Rabbi Yehuda Friedman? I don't know them but in another month, G-d willing, I will be marrying their niece!"

DEMONSTRATION OF EMUNA

BY DANIEL GORDON
PICTURES BY MEIR DAHAN

An enormous demonstration of Kiddush Shem Lubavitch, attended by nearly ten thousand men, women, and children of all backgrounds, took place in Heichal Yad Eliyahu in Tel Aviv in honor of the Rebbe's birthday on Yud-Alef Nissan. For over four hours, the crowd heard divrei Torah and chizuk in the belief in Geula, from rabbanim, mashpiim, and public figures, along with music from the Miami Boys Choir, Yaakov Schwekey and others. Four hours of farbrenging, uplifted spirits and connecting to the Nasi HaDor, Moshiach of the dor.

The eve of the 11th of Nissan, in the Nokia stadium, "Yad Eliyahu."

The ten thousand seats fill up quickly with Chassidim, T'mimim and a wide spectrum of Jews. The atmosphere is one of great celebration. This is an evening devoted to farbrenging and inspiration in honor of the birthday of the Nasi HaDor, the Moshiach of the generation and the ultimate redeemer of the Jewish people.

The massive parking lot is filled

with buses, along with thousands of private vehicles from all across the country. Everyone here has come to be unified and strengthened, to farbreng and be inspired to greater levels of hiskashrus to the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, as well as to express the hope and belief that he will redeem us immediately.

Prior to the event, there was a massive advertising campaign throughout the country, which reached an estimated one and a half million people. The campaign itself

had a huge impact, as the Rebbe's voice singing "Tzama Lecha Nafshi," was broadcast over the government Kol Yisroel station, followed by a voice ad calling on everyone to come attend the event.

When Sunday, the 11th of Nissan arrived, people knew that this day is the birthday of the redeemer of the Jewish nation.

The ad campaign and the event itself was produced and organized by Matteh Moshiach.

The event opened with the MC, Rabbi Shmuel Alexander Sender Wilschanski, one of the Roshei Yeshiva of the Chabad Yeshiva in Milan, Italy, explaining the significance of the day. He pointed out that the birthday of the Nasi is not a private event, but is actually the birth of the entire generation.

Following his brief remarks, Rabbi Yosef Pizem, principal of the Chabad Talmud Torah in the Kiryot, led the assembly in saying the Rebbe's new chapter of T'hilim, chapter 105. The huge crowd rose to its feet, responding verse by verse.

Professor Yirmiyahu Branover then approached the lectern to invite the Rebbe to personally attend and lead the gathering, which he concluded with a heartfelt cry of Yechi... The entire crowd answered

Thousands fill the Yad Eliyahu stadium



with a tremendous roar and with great emotion, proclaiming “Yechi Adoneinu...” three times.

The program moved on to the speeches. The first speaker was Rabbi Y.Y. Wilschanski, Rosh Yeshiva of the Chabad Yeshivos in Tzfas and Chaifa, who focused on the need to be mekushar to the Nasi HaDor, to study his teachings and fulfill his directives. It is through this that we bring about his full revelation.

The MC then called upon the host of a popular political radio show, Matti Tochfeld, to provide the perspective of an investigative journalist. Tochfeld, who recently published an article on the subject of the Rebbe’s message of redemption and the Rebbe as a key newsmaker,

addressed the crowd:

“Thousands of years ago, we had an established leadership. We had patriarchs, leaders, prophets and the path seemed clear. Even so, Hashem told us that this was not the ultimate solution, but that one day we would have – Moshiach! We have, to date, failed to achieve this solution. Even now, when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances, we look to other options. We focus on elections, governments, political parties, judges and ministers while we have the solution at hand, waiting to be realized for thousands of years – Moshiach! Yes, the only solution to the current leadership crisis of the Jewish people is Moshiach.

“The solution is to be found here,

with us. As the Rebbe promises, he will arrive now, in our generation. This is a clear promise and a prophecy. There only remains for us to do the last remaining bit. We must pray, do mitzvos, and especially, eagerly await his arrival with absolute faith that the Rebbe will come to redeem us and lead us. We need to have leadership, the leadership of Moshiach.”

Afterwards, the lights dimmed and the Rebbe’s countenance lit up the stadium on a huge video screen. A brief collection of video clips, produced specially for the event, included a number of excerpted sichos on Moshiach and Geula, proclamations of “Ad masai” and “Yechi HaMelech,” and concluded with the Rebbe encouraging the



singing of Yechi Adoneinu. The crowd got to see firsthand the basis for the ongoing faith of Chabad Chassidim in the Rebbe as Melech HaMoshiach.

At this point, the MC introduced the musical acts. Moshe Laufer and his band led off with a medley which set the mood for the follow-up performances of Yaakov Schwekey, Yechiel Nahari, and the Miami Boys Choir led by Yerachmiel Begun. The performance featured many songs of Moshiach and Geula, including a new release from the Miami Boys Choir, “Ani Maamin.”

Following the musical interlude, Rabbi Gedalia Akselrod, Av Beis Din of Chaifa, spoke passionately about the greatness of Moshiach, beyond

even Adam HaRishon and Moshe Rabbeinu, as well as the fact of his eternal life.

He was followed by one of the leading fighters for Shleimus HaAretz, Eren Shternberg, the former spokesman for Gush Katif. He spoke about how the Rebbe foresaw the results of conceding parts of Eretz Yisroel. He concluded, “Let us tell all that our loyalty is only to Hashem and His Torah. We owe no loyalty to any army or government or to anyone else. If they work against Hashem and His Torah, and wage war against the Jewish nation – they will find us opposing them. We will not join forces with them. We must carry on the amazing tradition of Chabad to go out and bring the people close to

Our Father in Heaven.”

Rabbi Zalman Notik, Mashpia in Toras Emes, then addressed the crowd. His talk gave a farbrengen flavor to the proceedings, as he spoke about opening your eyes to Geula through learning the subject in Torah.

Once again the lights dim, and a brief film was shown, containing excerpts of sichos on Shleimus HaAretz. This was followed by another musical interlude, accompanied by a multimedia on-screen presentation.

The Mekubal, Rabbi Yoram Abergil received a warm welcome as he entered the hall. The MC introduced him, by recounting some of his efforts in spreading the wellsprings, and told of his recent

The dais



visit to 770, where he signed the P'sak Din that the Rebbe is Melech HaMoshiach. Rabbi Abergil held the audience spellbound as he spoke of the greatness of the Rebbe and his leadership.

The next speaker, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef, the eldest son of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, is already a familiar personage at chassidic gatherings. He too, spoke of the Rebbe's greatness and his concern for every single Jew, exhorting the crowd to carry on the true work of Chabad of reaching out to every Jew. He ended his remarks,

“We need to continue this work to the end, to strike the final blow, and through this, we will merit the True Redemption.”

Another musical interlude brought the crowd to its feet. The entire dais, including Rabbanim and Mashpiim, Shluchim and activists, formed a dance circle, which spurred the crowd to even greater heights of joy.

The surprise of the evening was the showing of a new film, produced and directed by Yigal Hoshia, made especially for the event. The film

depicts three miracles of the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh.

The MC closed the event with special thanks to the organizers, particularly Reb Shmuel Hendel, director of Matteh Moshiach, and Reb Yirmiyahu Kalifa, one of its main supporters, pointing out that this was the third such event, which constitutes a Chazaka. Hopefully, this Chazaka will spur on Moshiach not to wait any longer and come to redeem us, now.

(The speeches and videos can be viewed on the Internet site, www.Chabad.info)



Partial view of thousands who attended the Demonstration of Emuna