

CONTENTS



The international weekly heralding the coming of Mashiach
BEIS MOSHIACH

4 | BEYOND THE DESERT (CONT.)

D'var Malchus / Likkutei Sichos Vol. 33, pg. 85-94

6 | REACHING THE MOUNTAINTOP

Moshiach / Rabbi Naftali Estulin

10 | 'I DON'T WANT MONEY; I WANT A PROMISE FROM THE REBBE!' (CONT.)

Stories / Rabbi Betzael Wilschanski

14 | WHAT ABOUT THE TORAH SOURCES THAT SAY THAT THE INGATHERING OF THE EXILES WILL BE THROUGH THE GENTILE KINGS?

Focus / Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo

16 | TOMCHEI T'MIMIM: MADE IN BRAZIL

Shlichus / BenZion Sasson

23 | THE POWER OF A STORY

Miracles Stories / Nosson Avrohom

25 | SECRET MIKVA IN TASHKENT

Memoirs / Rabbi Shneur Zalman Chanin

28 | MOSHIACH IS OUR MOTTO IN LIFE! (CONT.)

Profile / Menachem Ziegelboim

34 | THE ENEMY WITHIN

Shleimus HaAretz / Shai Gefen

36 | 'THEY ARE ADDING WHILE WE ARE DECREASING'

Feature / Shneur Zalman Berger

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BEYOND THE DESERT

LIKKUTEI SICHOS VOL. 33, PG. 85-94
TRANSLATED BY BORUCH MERKUR



2. In the teachings of Chassidus (the inner dimension of the Torah) it is explained [Likkutei Torah Shlach 37b, 38b, citing Kabbala texts – see FN 20] that the fact that the spies did not want to enter the Land of Israel was actually on account of their greatness of stature in the service of G-d; they did not want to enter the Land of Israel because they refused to degrade themselves with the lifestyle of “six years you shall sow your field, etc.” [B’Har 25:3], being occupied in physical and coarse matters, reflecting the saying of Rashbi: “Could it be that a person plows, etc., and sows, etc. – what will become of Torah [study]?” [Brachos 35b]. Their will and desire was to remain secluded in the desert (as a continuation of the Giving of the Torah), cut off from the life of settling [the land], without the hardship of earning a livelihood and etc. (for G-d provided their needs in the desert by means of the *mahn* (manna), food from the heavens [B’Shalach 16:4 ff.], water from the well of Miriam [Rashi, Chukas 20:2], and through the Clouds of Glory, which escorted them, killing the snakes and scorpions, pressing their clothes [Rashi, B’Haalos’cha 10:34, Eikev 8:4], and etc.). In fact, this is the true way to study Torah and to cleave to G-d, as reflected in the saying of our Sages, “The Torah was only given to (be expounded by) those who eat *mahn*.”

(They failed to recognize, however, that – even in comparison to the virtue of cleaving [to G-d] and etc. that was achieved in the desert – there is a greater advantage in

servicing G-d through the way of life in the Land of Israel, namely, the fulfillment of Mitzvos that depend on the land, and Mitzvos that require action in general.)

Accordingly, we may say that the concept mentioned above – that we learn that ten Jews are considered a sanctified assembly specifically from the mention of the term “assembly” with regard to the spies – alludes to the fact that

The resolution of the opinion of Rebbi Akiva – that “The generation of the desert has no portion in the World to Come” – is that they have no need for the World to Come. On the contrary, they are above it.

the sin of the spies is not to be understood in the simple sense; they merely were mistaken in considering the path they had chosen (mentioned above) as the principal pathway in the service of G-d. [FN 28: To note that, although the Mishna (Sanhedrin 108a) states that the spies have no portion in the World to Come, it is implied in Zohar III (Raaya Mehemna) 376a that they do have a portion in the World to Come. It is known that the resolution provided by the text *Asara Maamaros* (Maamer Chikur Din 2:8), among other places, of the opinion of Rebbi Akiva (Sanhedrin *ibid*) – that “The generation of the desert has no portion in the World to Come” – is that they have no **need** for the World to Come. On the contrary, they are above it. (See *Likkutei Levi Yitzchok Igros* pg. 358 ff). See

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 23 pg. 102, where this topic is discussed.]

But considering their greatness of stature and their prodigious level in the service of G-d – moreover (and this may be deemed primary), their efforts to influence the Jewish people in this matter – this was a great and severe sin.

3. Furthermore, we may assert that the fact that the source of the conduct of the spies is within the realm of holiness is alluded to and derived also from the fact that the people of the generation of the desert remained in the desert for forty years [FN 29: as this is expressed in several places (in the Written Torah as well as the Oral Torah), although in actuality it was less than 39 years. See the commentary of Rashi (on our Torah portion 14:33).] but they did not live a life of suffering and hardship. On the contrary, they lived a life of tranquility, for the entire forty years they had *mahn* as sustenance and water from the well of Miriam and etc., the Clouds of Glory protected them and etc. (as mentioned above).

At first glance, this was the argument and will of (the spies and) the generation of the desert: to remain in the desert and not to enter the Land of Israel. So how is it appropriate that their request was fulfilled and they remained in the desert in tranquility, the cloud being upon them day and night, etc.?

(Moreover, according to what is known [FN 30: see *Likkutei Sichos* ibid pg. 98 ff., where it is discussed] that the concept of the punishments of Torah is to **correct** the blemish resulting from the sin, to the extent that the state [after the punishment] would be rendered the opposite of the concept of sin, it is extremely wondrous that in the topic at hand their will was not annulled and their sin was not corrected and negated [by means of compelling] entry into the land).

Rather, they were directed in accordance with their will, the entire generation remaining all their years in the desert! Even if you want to say that as a result of their sin they were not deserving entry into the Land of Israel (for since they rejected the Land of Israel, they did not merit entry into it), nevertheless, how can we explain that the punishment should be that they would remain in the desert in a life of tranquility, etc., within the Clouds of Glory and with Moshe and Aharon at their head and etc.?)

On the basis of the explanation provided above (according to the inner dimension of the Torah), we may assert the following reason for the matter: [Striving to attain and remain steeped in] the elevated spiritual status of the desert (which was their intent and it was for the sake of Heaven) **is not an error**. (It is just that through that approach – and as an outgrowth of it – something **mistaken** resulted.)

That is to say that residing in the desert within the Clouds of Glory and etc. unto itself has holiness, but they [erroneously] considered this to be the ultimate purpose – although this virtue is (must be) a **preparation** to entrance into the Land of Israel. For in order to arrive at the lofty phase of entry into the Land of Israel, the preparation and certification brought about through spending forty years in the desert is required.

[To be continued be"H]

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REACHING THE MOUNTAINTOP

BY RABBI NAFTALI ESTULIN, SHLIACH, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

When we are coming close to the peak of the mountain, while the job of climbing becomes much harder, it is specifically at this point that we can perceive the special nature attached to every growth and shrub. Now, a moment before we take the summit, and especially since we are so close, we need to have greater appreciation for everything that can possibly be done to hasten the Redemption.

I once heard from the well-known chassid and shliach, R. Shmuel Dovid Raichik, that when he was with the Rebbe Rayatz during the summer of 5699, he heard the Rebbe say that the greatest challenge in climbing a mountain is when the person gets close to the top. It is especially at the moment when we are about to reach the summit that every rock, every shrub, every protrusion that we can get our hands on, has additional importance.

Furthermore, the Rebbe Rayatz says that this is literally happening now as we approach the coming of Moshiach, when every little mitzva

that a Jew does becomes doubly important.

During these days, after we have heard from the Rebbe MH"M that we are in the loftiest and most auspicious time for the coming of Moshiach, with certain aspects of the Redemption already beginning – we are literally standing close to the mountaintop; another minute and we're there.

Yet, specifically at such a lofty moment, we reveal new difficulties and concealments that have not existed since the sin of the golden calf, when the children of Israel reached the conclusion that “we do not know what has become of this

man Moshe.” Then, as now, “men of Moshe” are confronted by sizable portions of the Jewish People, who claim that since they don't see Moshe Rabbeinu with their flesh eyes, they have to proclaim that they “made a mistake” and change course *ch”v*.

The common link here is the feeling that we're talking about the most difficult times, as with the person who climbs the mountain for a long time, now standing right before the peak, yet he is unable to reach it.

In connection with this point, we must remember that on the one hand, we cannot give up hope, while on the other hand, we cannot be complacent. We must look for those tiny shrubs and protrusions that can help us to reach the mountaintop and go out of the exile.

As is known, in matters of holiness, we must work in order to attain the objective. There is the concept of getting a “free lunch,” but in matters of holiness, we need to toil.

In preparation for Yud Shvat 5720, the tenth anniversary of the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz, the Rebbe sent a general letter to all Anash with arousing words leading up to the day of the hilula. The

Rebbe emphasized in his letter that since this marks the tenth yahrtzeit, there applies the general principle of “the tenth shall be holy.” In clarification of this point, the Rebbe added that despite the fact that the tenth is holy in any event, even without effort, “this is all the more so through avoda with our own initiative.”

When this letter reached the chassid, HaRav Shlomo Zevin, he wrote to the Rebbe that “the tenth shall be holy” apparently has no relevance to a person’s avoda, as when you already have nine, the tenth comes automatically. He compared this to *S’firas HaOmer*, which we are commanded to count for fifty days, but in practice, we count only forty-nine days, as the fiftieth day comes by itself.

In a letter from the 19th of Shvat 5720, the Rebbe replied that the concept of “by itself” can only be with the number fifty, which is connected to the purification of the Divine attributes. However, when we’re talking about the tenth, which corresponds to *S’firas HaMalchus*, there is no “by itself.” The Rebbe continues to explain that even in the case of tithing animals, when the person counts nine and the tenth is sanctified at the moment that it comes out of the sheepfold, even without any action taken by the person counting, nevertheless, this does not happen by itself, but through an action. The difference is that the action taken by the sanctified object is sufficient, with no need for any additional action by the person himself.

The point that we can learn from the Rebbe’s letter is that when we’re talking about “malchus,” which refers to the Rebbe in general, especially in connection with acceptance of the sovereignty, nothing happens “by itself.” We have to take action, to work hard, and then we will succeed in

reaching the peak.

It can also be said that regarding our outreach activities on the Rebbe’s *mitvtzaim*, we have gotten so used to doing them, we can say that they happen “by themselves.” Only the Moshiach Campaign cannot be done “by itself,” as we constantly encounter new difficulties and the *yetzer ha’ra* always finds a variety of explanations as to why it is neither advisable nor appropriate to publicize here and now the Rebbe’s announcement of the Redemption.

Thus, when we talk about “malchus,” there’s no “by itself”; everything has to come through



avoda.

On the other hand, however, we have been promised that when we will do the avoda, we will immediately reach the level of “the tenth shall be holy,” to the point of “the tenth [red] heifer that Melech HaMoshiach will make – may He speedily reveal, Amen, may it be His will.”

Since I mentioned Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik earlier, I recall that I asked him once if it is true what I had heard that he doesn’t agree with the saying of “Yechi Adoneinu.” Rabbi Raichik was a truly *pnimius’dike* Jew, of whom the

Rebbe Rayatz once said that one should be a “maven” in the level of his *p’nimius*. He expressed resentment at my question, raised his voice with much emotion, and cried, “It’s true that I don’t stand up after every davening and proclaim ‘Yechi,’ but when someone in the minyan says ‘Yechi Adoneinu’ after davening, I join in with great fervor!”

Rabbi Raichik’s forceful reply and inner character stands before me every time I stand before the *amud* and proclaim “Yechi Adoneinu.”

Furthermore, when I daven at a Chabad center and several of those in the minyan don’t vigorously say “Yechi,” I recall the shock on Rabbi Raichik’s face when he heard that there were those who said he deliberately refrained from proclaiming “Yechi Adoneinu.” Weighed in comparison to the words of the Prophet, “Why when I came, was there no man, and I called and there was no one to answer?” I ask in anguish: Why when I proclaimed, was there no one to answer?

I can recite by heart all the excuses uttered by certain Anash members against saying “Yechi,” and the common denominator is the claim that the additional involvement in the subject of Moshiach is liable to drive Jews away from Lubavitch. I have no intention of relating to this claim, which is wrong both in fact and outlook. However, even if there was some basis to this claim, why is it that even in Chabad circles, in a minyan comprised solely of Chabad chassidim, they refrain from saying “Yechi,” and don’t even respond after someone who does say?

This reminds me of the joke about that *gabbai* who didn’t understand why the *shamash* of the shul got so much honor and respect, while in spite of everything that he did for the community and shul, he

received no such honor. The gabbai's wife then came up with an idea. "Since you say 'yes' to everything your friend, the shamash, says," she said, "people see that you don't have your own opinion, and therefore, they don't give you any respect. Here's my advice to you: The next time when the shamash says something, you say the opposite, and then everyone will know that you do have your own opinions, and they'll show appreciation for you." The next evening, the night of Rosh Chodesh, the shamash pounded the bima before Shmoneh Esrei, and called out, "Yaaleh V'Yavo!" The gabbai then proceeded to rush up, pounded the bima, and cried out, "No Yaaleh and no Yavo!" (literally, he should neither rise nor come).

On Shabbos Parshas Acharei-K'doshim 5751, the Rebbe spoke at length about the need to bring the Alef – **Alufo shel olam** (Master of the World) – into the galus, thus turning the galus into geula.

In note 118 of this sicha, the Rebbe explains something marvelous: The Rambam writes about the coming of Moshiach that "all s'farim are filled with this matter." Yet, at first glance, when we peruse various Torah texts, we see that most of them do not deal with Moshiach's coming, and some of them even deal with the subject of galus – the opposite of geula!

The Rebbe explains that the truth is that all these s'farim actually do deal with the subject of

...However, even if there was some basis to this claim, why is it that even in Chabad circles, in a minyan comprised solely of Chabad chassidim, they refrain from saying "Yechi," and don't even respond after someone who does say?

Moshiach and the Redemption. It's just that certain s'farim require that you delve into the matter more and more, until you reveal that essentially they also discuss Moshiach and the Redemption.

Based on this explanation in the sicha, we find that when we place the "Alufo shel olam" into the galus, this reveals that the "gola" itself has actually been transformed into "geula."

In light of these words, when we look again and again into the Rebbe's sichos, we discover how even those sichos that seemingly have no connection to Moshiach and the Redemption – actually do deal inwardly with the Redemption.

One of the more interesting revelations that I have seen in the sichos is connected to the commemoration of the Rebbe's 104 years:

On the Shabbos before Yud-Alef Nissan 5751, *Shnas HaTzaddik* (the Rebbe's ninetieth year), the Rebbe emphasized that the eighteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is usually written as "Tzaddi" – without the *Kuf* at the end.

For anyone who had yet to notice this fact, the Rebbe continued the concept of *Shnas HaTzaddik* even into this year, "**Shnas HaTzaddik**," as the gematria of "Tzaddi" is 104. The Rebbe added that the Congressional resolution to establish Yud-Alef Nissan as a national day of education began with the number 104!

Thus, even during this year, "Shnas HaTzaddik," we must utilize all the strengths and brachos that the Rebbe gave during *Shnas HaTzaddik* in order to attain the final realization of the task that the Rebbe MH"M placed upon us and to bring the hisgalus of the Rebbe, immediately, mamash, when we will experience the fulfillment of the pasuk that we say at the conclusion of the Haftora of Acharon shel Pesach: "And you shall say on that day, '**Hodu Lashem Kiru Vi'shmo**'" (Praise to G-d, proclaim His Name) – everyone will be saying the Rebbe's *kapitel*!

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‘I DON’T WANT MONEY; I WANT A PROMISE FROM THE REBBE!’

*A compilation of stories about our Rebbeim and their Chassidim that were written down by R’ Betzalel Wilschanski. * From a t’shura by the Wilschanski family in Morristown. * Part 2*

HE DIDN’T HEAR A THING

One of the simple Chassidim of the Alter Rebbe, or of the Mittlerer Rebbe, made his living as a wholesaler of wheat. He was an honest and trustworthy man even in his dealings with gentiles. His reputation was such that even the gentiles, who would accuse the Jews of cheating them, all admitted that he was honest.

Once, one of the wealthy nobles (*poretz*) heard about this Jew, who had such a sterling reputation, and he decided it was worthwhile traveling especially to buy from him, as he needed a very large order. When the nobleman arrived at the home of the Chassid, he was engaged in prayer and his wife answered the door. When she heard what the man wanted, she told him that she could handle the sale and that it was not necessary to disturb her husband. When the *poretz* insisted that he only wanted to deal with her husband, she explained that he was busy praying.

The nobleman said, “Nu, let him interrupt for a few minutes and then he can return to his prayers.” The wife explained that it was impossible to talk to her husband during prayer because he didn’t hear a thing. The man refused to believe her and said that he is probably faking and pretending that he doesn’t hear, to which the woman responded, “Try it out yourself.” He took out a gun and fired it right next to the ear of the Chassid, who didn’t even flinch and it was clear that he hadn’t noticed. The nobleman saw that the woman told the truth and he picked up and left.

Later, after he finished davening, his wife told him about the *poretz* who came by wanting to make a large purchase, etc. The Chassid asked her, “so why didn’t you sell to him?” She answered, “He only wanted to deal with you.” Calmly, the Chassid responded, “In that case, he will surely return.”

A LUNATIC

In Cherson, I met a very elderly Jew from the town of Liepli. I asked him if he ever met Reb Yekusiel Liepler, and he told me that he hadn’t, but his grandmother knew him. He said that he once asked her about him and she said that he was a *meshugener* (a lunatic). When he asked her why she thought him crazy, she answered: A Jew that can sit the whole day in Tallis and T’fillin and doesn’t realize that the entire day has gone by is certainly a *meshugener*!

NO, THAT’S NOT IT

He also told me that Reb Yekusiel would meditate for an hour before starting “Hodu,” and only then would he start. After saying the first verse, he would interrupt himself and say, “No, that’s not it,” then he would meditate for another hour, start again, and again interrupt, saying, “No, that’s not it!” Afterwards, he would meditate again, begin again and finally continue. Obviously, there were times that he davened immediately, and there were times that it took him longer to get started.

WHY WAS HE SILENT?

It is known that the Tzemach Tzedek would send young men to

Reb Hillel Paritcher in order that he guide them in the ways of Chassidus. Reb Hillel had the custom that when he was invited to a *simcha* (a joyous occasion), he would bring along all of his protégés. There would be a special table set aside for them and he would farbreng for them, and anyone who wanted to listen in was welcome to do so.

Similarly, the Tzemach Tzedek would send young men to Reb Pesach Malastovker. (Reb Pesach was a close friend of Reb Hillel, even though he was younger. Reb Hillel was short and thin, whereas Reb Pesach was big and powerful. Reb Pesach was terribly poor, and he would call Reb Hillel, “the rich man,” because Reb Hillel learned Kabbala and Chassidus, and Reb Pesach only learned Chassidus.) However, Reb Pesach would not speak in public, except for his students. If anyone else was present, he would remain silent and would not utter a word.

Once, Reb Pesach was in Lubavitch, and after the Rebbe said the maamer, he went to review it for his students. One of the Chassidim wanted to hear the review from Reb Pesach, so he went to the place where he gathered with his students. However, to his surprise, he saw that Reb Pesach sat silently and didn't say a word.

After sitting for an hour in silence, one of Reb Pesach's disciples signaled him to go outside with him, and he said, “You should know that as long as you sit here, Reb Pesach will not speak. Therefore, it would be better if you leave, since you are not going to hear anything either way. But if you go, at least we will hear.” The Chassid listened to him and left. He later said that as soon as he left, he could hear that Reb Pesach started speaking.

A TZADDIK IN DEEDS

Reb Hillel Paritcher was extremely

punctilious and stringent in his mitzva observance. The Tzemach Tzedek said about him that it is already three hundred years since there was such a tzaddik in actual practice.

Amongst his stringencies was not to enter a room that had drawings of people on the wall. It wasn't necessary for him to actually enter the room to know if there were pictures. As soon as he opened the door a drop, he could sense if there was a picture, and he would not enter.

The man refused to believe her and said that he is probably faking and pretending that he doesn't hear, to which the woman responded, “Try it out yourself.” He took out a gun and fired it right next to the ear of the Chassid...

In each city that he traveled to, he had a set host where he would stay. One of his hosts would set aside a room for Reb Hillel, and before he arrived, would tell his son to clear all the pictures out of the room. One time, Reb Hillel arrived without advance warning. When the wealthy man heard the wheels of Reb Hillel's wagon outside, he immediately told his son to remove all the pictures from the room. The son hurried to take down the pictures, however, when Reb Hillel arrived at the door, he opened it a bit and didn't enter.

The man realized that his son must have left a picture in the room, and told him to go back and make sure he gets every, last picture. The son searched but couldn't find any pictures, yet Reb Hillel still stood at the door. The son searched again until he saw that there was picture hanging on the inside of the door, but since the door opened inward, it was hidden from view. After the son took the picture down, Reb Hillel entered the room.

(I heard this from the son of the wealthy man, who was the story's protagonist.)

SUPERFLUOUS AGGRAVATION

Reb Hillel had a practice not to spend Shabbos in a place where he had not spent a Shabbos previously. Once he arrived in a city where he had never stayed for Shabbos, and he took his lodgings in the home of a certain philanthropist. This wealthy man would always plead with Reb Hillel to stay for Shabbos, but he always refused. On this trip, he arranged things so that Reb Hillel would have no choice but to stay.

That Sunday, the day Reb Hillel was preparing to leave, someone went and told the authorities that a “gutter Yid” (a Chassidic tzaddik) is staying in the home of this wealthy person. At that time, there was a law prohibiting Chassidic masters from traveling around from place to place without a permit.

Since the man was wealthy, he had friends and contacts in the various government offices. When they heard about the complaint, they warned their friend that there would soon be visitors to his home looking for the tzaddik.

At that time, Reb Hillel was sitting in his room learning Chassidus, and he had five different volumes open on the table. Shortly before the police arrived, Reb Hillel stepped out to the outhouse and left

the s'farim on the table. The homeowner entered the room to warn Reb Hillel, and when he saw the books on the table, he closed them and put them on the shelf.

When the police came, they searched politely in all the rooms, but they did not check the bathroom. When they saw that nobody was there, they left.

After they left, Reb Hillel came out and did not say anything, but began to daven as usual. Afterwards, he prepared to leave. Before he left, he said to the host, "You saw I didn't want to be here for Shabbos, and now that I was here, you had to go through great aggravation."

WHO IS A CHASSID?

The Tzemach Tzedek once expressed himself about the following three Chassidim: Reb Avrohom Zhembiner (the teacher of Reb Shmuel Groinem Esterman), his brother Reb Dan and their uncle, Reb Zushe. He said, "Dani (that is how Reb Dan was called) is a 'Lamdan,' Ziske is a 'Yerei Shamayim' and Avremel is a 'Chassid.'"

Reb Avrohom Zhembiner had the custom to go on the night of Simchas Torah to the homes of all the residents of Zhembin and make Kiddush on wine. His student Reb Groinem would go along with him and Reb Avrohom would also say l'chaim in each house. Afterwards, all the heads of households would come to his house, where once again, he would make Kiddush.

"I toiled and labored to find some way in which this could pertain to me, but I couldn't find any."

Once, when they were all sitting in his house, he repeated what the Tzemach Tzedek said about his brother and uncle, but left out what the Rebbe said about him.

Reb Shmuel Groinem, a little tipsy at the time, asked, "And what did the Tzemach Tzedek say about Avremel?" (The people present wanted to give him a thrashing for treating his teacher with such familiarity, referring to him that way...)

Reb Avrohom asked him, "Did you hear?"

He answered, "Yes."

To which Reb Avrohom said, "It is true that the Tzemach Tzedek said about me, 'Avremel is a Chassid.' I toiled and labored to find some way in which this could pertain to me, but I couldn't find any. Thus, I concluded, that someone who sees the 'point' of Chassidus, even though he is only at the beginning of doing the work of avoda – he is already called a 'Chassid.'"

A MITZVA MEAL

Reb Avrohom Zhembiner was versed in the tractate Horiyus by

heart, and before every dinner, he would review it in its entirety and make a siyum, in order to turn supper into a Seudas Mitzva.

THE STONES TESTIFY

Reb Zushe Zhembiner (the uncle of Reb Avrohom) served as Rav in Korenitz (I think he was the son of Reb Zalman Korenitzer). Once, a plague struck the city. A number of children died r"l, and the people, as was the custom, ascribed it to their sins, particularly the sin of adultery with a married woman. They decreed a fast day, and proclaimed that every person in the city should come to the shul to pray.

On the night before the day of prayer, Reb Zushe sent his assistant to the cemetery and told him to bring stones and rocks from the grave of a certain individual, and to place them in the doorway of the shul, as well as the door to the women's section. Since it was late at night, the assistant was afraid to go to the cemetery, so Reb Zushe gave him his walking stick and told him not to be afraid. The assistant went, brought the stones, and placed them in the doorways as he was told.

The next day, all of the men came to shul, and one of them fell over the stones and died on the spot. Similarly, one of the married women fell over the stones in the doorway of the women's shul and she too died immediately. Afterwards, they investigated and discovered that the two were involved in an adulterous affair, and the plague ceased.

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WHAT ABOUT THE TORAH SOURCES THAT SAY THAT THE INGATHERING OF THE EXILES WILL BE THROUGH THE GENTILE KINGS?

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

In response to requests by our readers, we now present the third in a series of questions and answers from the seifer 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.

QUESTION:

The seifer *Shivas Tzion* (Vol. 2, p. 3) states in the name of the Malbim: "I have several proofs from the

simple interpretation of Tanach, according to Rashi's commentary, that the Redemption will blossom slowly, as the daybreak grows into the morning light. Furthermore,

Jews will first begin to settle in Eretz Yisroel with the permission of the upright and pious kings of the land, and the settlement of Eretz Yisroel will be prior to the coming of Moshiach." The Malbim also writes this in his commentary of Yeshayahu (66:7), and the Radak comments on T'hillim (146:3): "And so in the future, the Redemption of Israel will be through the Gentile kings."

ANSWER:

1. In his commentary on Yeshayahu noted above on the pasuk, "Before she went into labor," the Malbim writes **something else entirely**: "For long before the coming of the Redeemer, a **few**

people from the exile will gather and establish their residence in Yerushalayim. After dwelling there for many years, the travails of birth will come to them – the war of Gog and Magog – and then the great overall ingathering will begin.” On the first ingathering of a few people, he writes, “The time will not be again...which is **many years before the time of the Redemption**...only a few in number will establish residence there...people few in number.” If so, how does the Shivas Tzion write in the name of the Malbim that there will first be *is'chalta d'Geula*, especially when in his commentary of Yeshayahu, he emphasizes that we're talking about only a small number of people long



before the time of the Redemption?

2. Even with what is quoted in

the name of the Malbim, it is quite to the contrary, as it clearly states that there will only be “the settlement of Eretz Yisroel” prior to Moshiach’s coming, and he does not mention that this is the ingathering of the exiles.

3. Regarding what is written in the name of the Malbim that the Redemption will blossom slowly – just as we explained the Talmud Yerushalmi of “little by little” we can explain the Malbim. In other words, even the Malbim admits that the Future Redemption will start through Moshiach, though he adds that prior to Moshiach’s coming there will commence a state of redemption in the figurative sense, i.e., redemption from sorrows. It is this that will blossom slowly, followed by the coming of Moshiach. See Sec. 8 to the answer of the previous question.

4. Even according to the words of the Radak, there is no indication that the ingathering of the exiles will not be through Moshiach, rather, that the ingathering of the exiles **through Moshiach** will be with the goodwill of the nations of the world. See Sec. 1 to the answer of the next question.

ZIONISM – THE FALSE MESSIAH

In his seifer *Kovetz Maamarim* (vol. 1, p. 253), the gaon R. **Elchanan Wasserman**, of blessed memory, writes, “It is known that the Jewish People always suffer from two things: Externally from blood libels and internally from false messiahs, which first entice with promises of going to Eretz Yisroel, **but the end of all false messiahs is the conversion of tens of thousands of Jews**. Furthermore, one who takes a penetrating look at this will see that even in our times, there is such a false messiah that garbs itself in the well-known cult that speaks with its mouth about bringing people to Eretz Yisroel, **and in truth, it leads primarily to total heresy.**”

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TOMCHEI T'MIMIM: MADE IN BRAZIL

BY BENZION SASSON

*Entering the building of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in S. Paolo, Brazil, transports you from the characteristic Brazilian hubbub into a world of calm and quiet, holiness, and sincerity. It is difficult to connect the yeshiva with the surrounding neighborhood, which is one of the largest commercial areas in the city. This is the story of a successful yeshiva, which the Rebbe Rayatz wanted to start but didn't actually get off the ground until 11 years ago. * Another installment in the series about the work of the Shluchim in Brazil.*

"Papa" Samuel Klein is one of the most respected Jewish philanthropists in all of Brazil. A few years ago, he learned about the Chabad yeshiva in S. Paolo, Brazil, and he gave a large donation towards refurbishing the building. Thanks to him, the building is undergoing massive renovations. The building is four stories high, with 3500 square meters. As the repairs progress, additional wings of the building are inaugurated.

Not long ago, Samuel sat Shiva for a family member. One of the

visitors to console the mourners was the rosh yeshiva Rabbi Shamai Ende. At the exact same time, a number of highly successful businesspeople, men of means, who had dealings with "Papa," came to visit. One of them was a major philanthropist who gives vast sums to various community institutions and is considered one of Mr. Klein's main competitors.

The man began the conversation by enumerating the sums of money he disburses, listing all the various organizations he supports. When he

finished, "Papa" Samuel asked him, "You give to many organizations, but do you have a yeshiva of your own?" Before the man could even digest his words, he continued, proudly, "I have a yeshiva of my own," he said while looking pointedly at Rabbi Ende.

This seems to be the magical effect of the yeshiva, as it is a source of pride not only to the Chabad community, but to all of Brazilian Jewry.

Just crossing the threshold of the yeshiva is an experience worth savoring, as the sounds of Torah study can be heard on the street, despite the clamor of traffic on the busy avenue.

Entering the building of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in S. Paolo, Brazil, transports a person from the characteristic Brazilian hubbub into a world of calm and quiet, holiness, and sincerity. It is difficult to connect the yeshiva with the surrounding neighborhood, which is one of the largest commercial areas in the city.

After climbing three flights, I find myself at the entrance of the study hall, and the sight is awesome. The first thing to catch the eye is the aron built in the shape of 770. This is an original concept, which adds a Chassidic dimension to the students of the yeshiva, as every time they look up, their eyes and hearts are



with the works of the commentators scattered across the tables, toiling to clarify points in halacha.

Then there are, of course, the bachurim shluchim, sent to strengthen the atmosphere of learning in the yeshiva. Presently, they are paired up with the local boys, providing hands-on support.

Rabbi Labkowski and Rabbi Zajac (pronounced Zayentz) engage in answering the students' questions. As a graduate of the yeshiva, I find it especially moving to return and relive the sounds and sights. I find myself standing entranced, looking at a picture both familiar and new, now that I am coming from the "outside."

* * *

As recently as 11 years ago, this yeshiva was no more than a wild dream. For decades, the children of Anash studied in the Machne Yisroel Yeshiva in Petropolis, under the

directed towards the source, "the house of our life."

The hall is filled with students who are immersed in the atmosphere of Torah. I could hear a mix of languages, especially the Portuguese coming from the Rosh Yeshiva and Rav of the Chabad community, Reb Shamai Ende, as he worked to answer the question of a few

students.

On one side of the hall, sits Reb Dovid Naporstek, a teacher in the yeshiva, surrounded by young Bar Mitzva-age boys who listen intently as he explains the material.

Amid the roaring sound of learning one can clearly make out the older Smicha students, huddling over their large volumes of *Shulchan Aruch*

Talmidim of the yeshiva davening Shacharis with the aron kodesh in the form of 770 in the background



AUSTRALIAN-BRAZILIAN

A 17-year-old bachur with no knowledge of the language arrives in Brazil, only because his father decided that this place was suitable for him. He began learning like anybody else in the yeshiva and after two years, was fluent in Portuguese and was a respected figure in the yeshiva.

After those two years, he went to learn in Eretz Yisroel and then he returned to Brazil because the yeshiva's hanhala wanted him to be a shliach in the yeshiva. At the end of the year of shlichus, he started the second cycle of the yeshiva's smicha program where he did well. Finally, he is now an active worker on behalf of the yeshiva, part of the same yeshiva, where he grew and developed over the years. Today he is married to the daughter of the rosh yeshiva, and he lives in Brazil and is a part of the hanhala.

This is the story of Menachem Mendel Koncepolski, a story that definitely demonstrates the fruitful results the yeshiva produces.

It started in 5758, when Mendy's father was looking for a good yeshiva program for his son and it wasn't an easy decision to make. Then his father met the Menahel Ruchni of the yeshiva in Paulo, Rabbi Gurary, in Sydney, who told him about the yeshiva in Brazil and how good it is. The father, impressed by Rabbi Gurary, decided to send his son to the yeshiva.

Mendy, who wasn't quite 17 at the time, was a little apprehensive about the trip to Brazil. He had heard of the dangers there and about the low level of security in the country. In any case, a year later he landed in Brazil.

It wasn't easy at first. The language was strange and the mentality was unfamiliar, and he was a young boy who had to handle it alone. The one who cushioned him from the early difficulties was Rabbi Gurary in whose home he was hosted the first few months. With Rabbi Gurary's help and direction, he slowly began to acclimate to the yeshiva and the bachurim and he quickly picked up the language.

He divided his time between the class in Ivrit and independent study, and the hanhala helped him

throughout. He lived in Rabbi Gurary's house for six months. Only when he felt that the ground was firm under his feet did he move into the dormitory.

His early fears that he would get lost in the large crowd dissipated when he saw and felt the personal attention. Whenever he received words of encouragement, they always seemed to come at the right time and place.

After two good years of learning, Mendy left the yeshiva for a program appropriate for his age. He went to the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas for a year. At the end of the year, the hanhala of the yeshiva in Brazil asked him to come back and learn, this time as a bachur-shliach. They knew his good points, that he had already developed warm contacts with many people in the Jewish community, and that he had learned Portuguese.

His fond memories of his two years in Brazil motivated him to return, this time as a shliach.

His fond memories of his two years in Brazil motivated him to return, this time as a shliach. Mendy, who always liked to work and get involved, channeled his energy into helping the yeshiva, focusing primarily on running various "mivtzaim" during the year.

He finished smicha successfully while simultaneously helping tremendously in running and maintaining the yeshiva. At the conclusion of the year of smicha, Mendy became a member of the staff and devoted his time to the project of the new building.

Today, six years since his arrival in Brazil, he says in the interview for this article that without the support of the yeshiva he doubts whether he could have attained what he has thus far.

A few months ago, Mendy came full circle in Brazil, when he married the daughter of the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Gurary. The final Sheva Brachos coincided with the Chanukas HaBayis of the new study hall. Many philanthropists and donors of the yeshiva were present as well as the Rebbe's shlichim throughout the city and the talmidim of the yeshiva.

Mendy's story is unique but still, he is one of many who testify to the wonderful supervision and educational investment of the yeshiva's staff.



Talmidim of the yeshiva concluding Yeshivas Choref, 5758



Talmidim of the machon with Rabbi Ende, learning sh'chita

leadership of Reb Avrohom Binyamini. The yeshiva there, established decades ago with the blessing and guidance of the Rebbe, produced bountiful fruit for Brazilian Jewry.

Despite this, it was necessary to establish a branch of Tomchei T'mimim, since the format of the yeshiva in Petropolis is different than that of Lubavitch schools around the world. The Rebbe instructed that its entire focus be on kiruv of students who come from homes that are not observant. For this reason, the schedule and education are different than the yeshivos of Tomchei T'mimim.

Already at the start of the interview with Rabbi Ende, he points out that starting such a yeshiva in Brazil is something the Rebbe wanted for many years. It turns out that as far back as 1947, when the students of the Chabad yeshiva in Shanghai had to leave, Reb Yosef Weinberg traveled to Brazil to try to transplant the yeshiva there. However, the plan fell through.

The Rebbe's desire for a yeshiva in S. Paolo came up again forty years later, in 1987, when he asked that a yeshiva be founded. However, once again, the plan didn't come to fruition. A number of years passed, and in 1995, the oldest class in the

Chabad cheider reached high school age. The administration of the cheider realized that the time had come to do something about it. They wrote to the Rebbe. In the response they opened to in the *Igros Kodesh* was a letter which mentioned the name of the city, S. Paolo, and the importance of starting a yeshiva. That was the beginning of a long process accompanied by blessings and instructions from the Rebbe via the *Igros Kodesh*.

A while later, the yeshiva opened its doors, led by Reb Shamai Ende, backed by an administrative team including Reb Sholom Dovber Gurary, the philanthropist R' Shmaryahu Levinson, and R' Noach Gansburg.

Shortly after, Rabbi Dovid Raskin flew in from New York to check out the yeshiva and see if it comported with the spirit of Tomchei T'mimim, and as such, whether it could bear the name "Tomchei T'mimim Lubavitch." After spending a Shabbos in the yeshiva, he was greatly impressed and wrote a letter to the administration authorizing the use of the name. From that time on, the yeshiva is known as Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim Lubavitch – Ohel Menachem Mendel, S. Paolo, Brazil.

The yeshiva opened with sixteen students in a small house located in

one of the city's quiet neighborhoods. Despite its humble origin, success and results brought an increase in growth. After three years, the yeshiva had forty students. At that time, it became necessary to move, as the existing place was not suitable, especially as municipal law did not allow for a public institution at that location. On numerous occasions, city inspectors and police came in response to complaints from neighbors about "noise and disturbances." Each time, the yeshiva barely escaped closure.

Once, the police came, and this time they were determined to close the place down. The officers evacuated the boys and secured the building with lock and chain. They placed a police seal on the door prohibiting entrance and threatening to jail anyone who contravened the order.

"On the next day," recounts Rabbi Ende, "I arrived at the site and had no idea what we were going to do. I wrote to the Rebbe about the chain of events, and the answer was a letter of encouragement to the administration of one of the branches of Tomchei T'mimim.

"I saw then how the Rebbe is orchestrating everything, so I decided to act accordingly. I recalled that the building had another entrance which

the police had not locked. A few minutes later, the sounds of Torah study could be heard coming from the windows of the house. It was desolate for only one day.

“But the state of uncertainly returned. The neighbors, who realized what happened, called the police. For some reason, they did not respond for a few days. They didn’t bother to investigate until Erev Sukkos, when the building was empty due to holiday vacation, so they came and they left.”

In this manner, the yeshiva operated until it moved to its new, spacious home. Today, the yeshiva boasts a large, beautiful study hall, new classrooms, and dormitory housing for the bachurim shluchim and smicha students. Additionally, there is a huge library containing thousands of volumes on a wide array of Jewish subjects, a large dining hall, and there are more things in the works. This massive undertaking is run by R’ Menachem Mendel Koncepolski, who works tirelessly to provide for the material comforts of the students.

The move to the new location brought the material standards of the yeshiva to new heights. Reb Noach Gansburg, the administrator of the yeshiva, does his all to beautify the place and cause a kiddush Hashem and a kiddush shem Lubavitch.

Over time, a beautiful mikva was constructed to serve the students, as well as a heated pool, which is open during the breaks from learning. There is also a sports field, and the landscaping of the yard is breathtaking, complemented by tall trees.

Meanwhile, the student body reached fifty students, the good name of the yeshiva having spread throughout S. Paolo and all of Brazil. The yeshiva has a reputation, primarily, as a place of warmth where

the staff members provide personal attention to each student.

Rabbi Ende: “From the founding of the yeshiva until today, this place has served as a home for the students. We offer attention and personal involvement. At these age groups there must be a total investment in establishing the future of the student.”

Rabbi Gurary: “Many times, Rabbi Ende or one of the other staff will approach me and say, ‘I think this bachur is not happy. He seems depressed and something must be bothering him.’ The staff knows each bachur well, understanding his personal traits and nature. With this in mind they work to devise a strategy to facilitate his growth.”

Mention must be given here to the outstanding staff and their contributions. There is the personal attention from the mashpia, R’ Zalman Zajac, the unique and in-depth classes by R’ Levi Labkowski, and then there is R’ Dovid Naporstek, who puts a lot into personal conversations with the students, as well as guiding the bachurim shluchim and the students of the smicha program.

In the yeshiva in S. Paolo, unlike most branches of Tomchei T’mimim, there are classes in secular studies. Most of the students come from homes that have become close to Yiddishkai, and these parents still place importance on a secular education. These classes were incorporated in accordance with standards of taharas ha’kodesh, along with the desire to keep the time spent on secular studies to a minimum.

The students live in a dynamic atmosphere of Geula and Moshiach. The joy and dancing to the singing of “Yechi” is a direct result of the daily study schedule of these topics. During these study sessions, the hall

is packed, and each Thursday the students study the D’var Malchus of the week in pairs.

Under the direction of the bachurim shluchim, each special date in the Chabad calendar turns into a special project, during which time, everyone is given the opportunity to make the proper spiritual preparations. The high point of the year is during the month of Tishrei, when most of the students travel to 770.

“The energy, enthusiasm and dedication that the Brazilians have when it comes to Moshiach you won’t find anywhere else,” says one of the shluchim in the yeshiva. “Here everyone is focused on the goal and do everything to bring about the revelation of the Rebbe. There are communities where you have to explain, to try to relate the subject to the native mentality, but here in Brazil they want Moshiach and do everything necessary to speed up his arrival.”

The credit for the positive Chassidic atmosphere felt in the yeshiva goes to a large degree to the bachurim shluchim mentioned previously. They come especially for extended periods to strengthen the yeshiva and to exert a positive influence. The young shluchim spend time learning one-on-one with the students, strengthening them in various areas, and bringing a fresh spirit into the yeshiva.

The shluchim, besides for their work with the students, are active in the larger community as well. Rabbi Ende recalls fondly the “tumult” that one of the early groups generated amongst the Jews of the city. Due to their presence, the outreach activities doubled and tripled in a brief time, and the good name of the yeshiva spread throughout Brazil. This inspired many people to send their own children to study there.



Lag B'Omer gathering arranged by talmidim of the yeshiva, in the spirit of Geula



Rabbi Shamaï Ende giving a shiur in the yeshiva in the early years

In the words of one of the rabbis: “The drastic change amongst the students was so profound that even we staff members were stunned. It started with Chassidic conduct, traveling to the Rebbe for Tishrei, mitzvaim, full participation in the voluntary study periods on the topic of Moshiach and Geula. But the main yield was that the boys began to grasp what exactly Tomchei T'mimim is all about. Thanks to the various groups of shluchim, we have published to date, eleven compilations of *chiddushei Torah* (original Torah insights), written by the students, the staff, and the

bachurim on shlichus and in the smicha program.”

Credit is also due the bachurim in the smicha program, which operates within the yeshiva. Who would believe that in Brazil, the smicha program would already have celebrated its third round of graduations? Who would believe that from S. Paolo, Brazil, there would go forth fully ordained rabbis, many of whom already serve in communities around the world?

This was an old dream of Rabbi Ende, who is greatly involved in rabbinic matters in the city. He serves

as the rav of the Chabad community and a member of the Beis Din of S. Paolo. “Although there are many smicha programs in the world,” he says, “each place has something unique to offer. I always felt that the traditional study of the material lacked an in depth study of the sources.”

Four years ago, he realized his dream with the opening of a smicha program with ten students from around the world. The syllabus includes in depth study of the Gemara and commentaries, as well as most of the commentaries on *Shulchan Aruch*. The first graduating class tested successfully by: Rabbi Yosef Feigelstock the Rav, Av Beis Din of the Chabad community in Argentina; Rabbi Y. Y. Yaroslavsky the Secretary of the Beis Din of Rabbanei Chabad in E. Y.; Rabbi Shmuel Havlin the Rav and Rosh Kollel of the Yavneh community in S. Paolo; Rabbi Gertzenstein of the Institute for Dayanus in Yerushalayim; and Rabbi Ende.

Over the years, the student body of the yeshiva with the help of the staff and bachurim shluchim, set up a huge network of mitzvaim, which focuses on activities carried out on Fridays and around the Jewish holidays. The huge city has close to 19 million residents, 60,000 of



Talmidim of the smicha program receiving certificates, sitting from right to left: Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Shamaï Ende; Rabbi Shmuel Havlin, Rosh Kollel K'hillas Yavne S. Paulo; Mashpia Rabbi Mordechai Zajac; Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Feigelstock, Rav in Argentina, Rabbi Yaroslavsky and Rabbi Hirsh Leib Begun, Menahel Mosdos Chinuch Lubavitch



Model of the yeshiva building presently under construction

whom are Jews. The mitzvaim activities cover all the areas of the city, whether independently or assisting the Chabad Houses spread throughout the city. The T'mimim also carry out home visitations, and bring the mitzvos of the holidays to the Jewish residents.

One of the most outstanding and successful mitzvaim has been the campaign to have every Jew purchase a letter written in a Seifer Torah. Rabbi Ende realized that the Rebbe's instruction that every Jew have a letter in a communal Seifer Torah was never implemented in S. Paolo. He initiated a campaign, but decided to take it a step further by having a Seifer Torah written for the unity of all the Jews in the country. As part of the campaign, the students traveled during their vacation throughout Brazil. They reached even the most far-flung places where Jews reside. A unique feature of the project was that

every person wrote his own letter (the women through an appointed proxy).

The boys met up with hundreds of thousands of Jews throughout Brazil, generating a huge spiritual awakening. Wherever the crew arrived, they saw to it to hold public gatherings of the local Jews to teach them the importance of writing a letter in a Seifer Torah. They also visited the children in their schools. Many Jews were inspired to put on t'fillin, many for the first time in their lives. Additionally, reports poured in of thousand of good resolutions to strengthen Torah and mitzvos observance.

At the end of the extended campaign, over 200,000 letters were written, and thousands of people put on t'fillin, in addition to hundreds of productive home visits as recorded in the final report of the campaign. Rabbi Noach Gansburg, who oversaw

the immense project, will never forget the day of the Hachnasas Seifer Torah in the Chabad yeshiva, which drew hundreds of participants. The many media outlets in S. Paolo and throughout Brazil covered the event, which fanned the flame of Jewish pride throughout the country.

* * *

When I ask Rabbi Ende about future plans, he smiles and says, "Currently, with the large plot of land we acquired, we definitely plan on growing and expanding. Our plans include a yeshiva g'dola, a yeshiva for baalei t'shuva with dormitory facilities and a mikva, as well as other ideas in the works."

This is the story of the yeshiva in Brazil, established in a city devoid of all outward signs of Jewishness, which now serves as a Chassidic-spiritual lighthouse for the tens of thousands of Jewish denizens.

THE POWER OF A STORY

BY NOSSON AVROHOM

I heard the following story from Rabbi Rachamim Nimni, director of Ohr Torah V'Chesed:

Every week I give a shiur on the weekly sidra based on the Rebbe's sichos at the home of a member of the Sephardic community in the neighborhood. Baruch Hashem, there's a nice crowd and many people get a taste of Chassidic teachings.

About a month ago, I sat down to a Chassidishe farbrengen in 770 and heard one of the speakers talk about the importance the Rebbe attributed towards miracle stories of the Rebbeim. About a week later, by Divine providence, I saw this same inyan mentioned in a sicha where the Rebbe expands on this idea on the importance of publicizing miracles. Since then, I decided to read a miracle story of the Rebbe at the beginning of the week so that I will have a story to relate when the opportunity presents itself.

The very week I started doing this, I heard an incredible story that happened to Rabbi Moshe Wolfson shlita, a well-known rav in Boro Park of the Emunas Yisroel Shul and mashgiach in Yeshivas Torah Vodaas. Rabbi Wolfson has had many miracles with the Rebbe.

One time, doctors found a blockage in one of the arteries of his heart. They faced a big problem because they were afraid that due to

the rabbi's weakness, he would not be able to withstand the procedure to correct it. On the other hand, if they did nothing, his health was endangered and he was vulnerable to a heart attack at any moment, if not worse.

They left the choice up to him and asked him to make a decision within a few days. These were



Rabbi Rachamim Nimni

difficult days for him and he decided to put his trust in Hashem. Each night, before going to sleep, he would say the verse, "Hashem, create a pure heart for me," and would pray for salvation.

Rabbi Wolfson decided to go to the Rebbe and ask for his advice and bracha, and one Sunday he

went for "dollars." Even before he opened his mouth, the Rebbe gave him two dollars and said, "Yehi ratzon that the verse, 'pure heart,' will suffice without an operation."

Rabbi Wolfson was stunned by this prophetic answer and despite his doctors' concerns he did not undergo the operation, and baruch Hashem, he is alive to tell this tale.

I repeated this story at my shiur in Flatbush. Some of the people at the shiur personally knew Rabbi Wolfson and they were all amazed by the story.

When the shiur was over and I left, I noticed a Jew standing on the street waiting to hitch a ride. I realized that he must have come from Eretz Yisroel because Jews don't hitch rides in New York as they do in Eretz Yisroel. I stopped for him.

The man asked whether I was heading towards Boro Park and I said that I was going to Crown Heights, but since it was late at night I would take him to Boro Park. During the ride, we got into a conversation and he asked me about myself and what I do. I told him about my work that I see as part of the shlichus-empire the Rebbe established.

When I mentioned the Rebbe, the man sighed. Now it was my turn to ask questions. The man launched

into a litany of complaints about Chabad, saying that the faith of Chabad Chassidim that the Rebbe is Moshiach is apostasy, Heaven forbid. He even brought examples from history about messianic movements that rose and fell, taking many Jews down with them.

I decided to tell him the miracle story that Rabbi Wolfson experienced, in fulfillment of my decision that I would tell a miracle story when the opportunity presented itself. I related the story and the man said, "Listen, I know Rabbi Moshe Wolfson. He can't possibly admire the Lubavitcher Rebbe the way you say he does. Tomorrow morning I plan on davening Shacharis with him and after davening, I will ask him whether this story is accurate. Give me your telephone number and if you were right, I'll call you back."

I gave him my phone number and we parted ways.

The next day the man called. He said he had asked Rabbi Wolfson and not only did Rabbi Wolfson

The man on the line apologized to me for what he had said the night before about the Rebbe...

corroborate the story, but he had spent a long time telling him additional miracles stories about the Rebbe, those that happened to him and those that happened to people he knows.

The man on the line apologized to me for what he had said the night before about the Rebbe. He added that his brother is a famous Litvishe rosh yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel who signed a letter against the Rebbe on some occasion, and that he himself is a mashgiach in a Litvishe yeshiva in B'nei Brak and has raised an entire generation of bachurim to oppose the Rebbe and his teachings.

He expressed regret for what he

had said and for his opposition to the Rebbe and wondered what he could do to make up for it. I suggested that he teach *Tanya* to his talmidim, but the man was reluctant to undertake that. He was afraid that he would be fired despite his position.

So I suggested that he include inyanim in Chassidus in his Gemara shiurim without the talmidim realizing that it was Chassidus. He agreed and I saw that he took this seriously. To make it easier for him, I bought him a set of *Lessons in Tanya*.

That night I went to 770 and told this story. One of the men there who heard the name I mentioned reacted strongly. Apparently, the man I had given the ride to was a big opponent of Lubavitch.

Just a few days later, I realized the wonderful hashgacha pratis in what had happened. The very week that I decided to relate stories about the Rebbe, the Rebbe showed me the power in storytelling.



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SECRET MIKVA IN TASHKENT

BY RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN CHANIN

*How do you dig a secret mikva? Definitely in the cellar of a building, on a side street, only at night, with hand-tools, and you secretly dispose of the dirt. * But a cement truck has to make its delivery to this little side street!*

TOP SECRET

As soon as Lubavitcher families began arriving in Tashkent, even before worrying about their personal needs, the Chassidim began taking care of the basics of our religion: founding a school for the little children, a yeshiva for the older bachurim, and a shul. The top of the list was building a mikva for women.

The g'dolei ha'Chassidim and askanim met clandestinely in order to figure out a plan and divide up the work. Is it a simple matter to build a mikva in Soviet Russia? Each step of the way was fraught with tremendous danger. They had to ensure that nobody found out about it, that nobody noticed that something illegal was going on.

In order to carry out this complicated project, they needed to find a building on a quiet street that they could get into secretly; the building had to have a cellar with a



side entrance; the earth in the cellar had to be soft so they could dig with hand-tools. They had to know ahead of time how they would remove the dirt and where they would dispose of it; they had to find an engineer to check every detail of the plan. And all this had to be done with the utmost secrecy.

The main problem, however, was obtaining cement in order to pour the foundation. Obtaining cement in

wartime was virtually impossible. Neither private people nor private companies had cement. In Soviet Russia, everything belonged to the state and all the companies manufactured cement for the government for the war to strengthen the frontline trenches and rearguard defenses.

So what did the Chassidim do? They gave the responsibility over to R' Chaikel Chanin, who, with his G-d-given talents would find a way of getting cement, and Hashem would help him succeed.

The one heading the construction was the gaon and Chassid, Rabbi Avrohom Eliyahu Plotkin, an expert at building mikvaos. He, together with a group of distinguished Chassidim – including Rabbi Nissan Nemenov, Rabbi Peretz Mochkin, Rabbi Yisroel Neveler, Rabbi Yona Cohen, Rabbi Avrohom Drizin, and Rabbi Mendel Futerfas – took part not only in planning the operation but personally toiled, along with some young men, in digging the pit for the mikva.

They manually dug the pit that would contain forty measures of water. They personally carried out the dirt in pails, each one heading in a different direction so they could scatter the dirt. However, the pit could not be filled with water

because they had no cement.

THE MILITARY FORTRESS

My father relates:

I had the job of getting the cement so we could pour the foundation of the mikva. I carefully began making inquiries about a cement factory and found out about a large factory in Tashkent that belonged to the military. I went to see the place for myself in order to come up with a plan about how to get cement from there.

What should I tell you? When I saw the place, my heart sank. It was a huge military fortress, where thousands of soldiers and civilians worked. The factory operated 24-hours-a-day producing weapons and other vital products, which were sent directly to the front. I wondered how little me could pierce this force of impurity.

I began sniffing around to see whether it was possible to buy cement, legally or illegally, but nobody wanted to risk the danger of being judged as a traitor or a spy who aided the enemy by stealing vital products from the army. After everything was ready for constructing the mikva, the pit was dug and the notches in the walls of the mikva ready, I went to the factory with another idea, in the hopes that Hashem would help me.

AN ORIGINAL IDEA

I stood a few blocks from the factory's main gate, from where all the trucks loaded with cement went out and I raised my hand in the signal of one seeking to hitch a ride. I thought that when I would be on the truck and could speak face to face with the gentile driver, I would be able to convince him to take the chance.

I stood there for hours, signaling to every driver who passed, but nobody paid attention to me. One

truck after another passed by and not a single driver stopped. I didn't know what to do. Time was passing and my fellow Chassidim were waiting impatiently and fearfully for cement. Would I really have to return to them empty-handed?

I stood there on the side of the road, bemoaning my situation and the situation of all the Chassidim who needed Heaven's mercy. I prayed in my heart, "Do it for Your sake if not for our sake. You are the One Who commanded us in the mitzva of tahara. Why do You make it so difficult for your people, Israel?"

That night we put people on guard to look out for anybody suspicious entering the neighborhood. I didn't sleep a wink that night. You can't imagine how terrified I was.

I stood there sadly and raised my hand yet again to signal to the driver to stop and take me, and wonder of wonders, the driver stopped and asked me where I was headed. When I told him one of the main streets of Tashkent, he agreed to take me. I got on the truck and sat next to the driver. The truck was especially large, and seemingly new, different than the other trucks I had seen.

THE UZBEKI DRIVER

We began to move while I tried to get into a friendly conversation

with the driver, to speak to him about his family, his wife, children, parents, and about his work as a driver and his parnasa. The driver, who was an Uzbeki, was open and friendly and he told me about his paltry salary that wasn't enough to support his family. He told me that he was hungry for bread and he didn't have decent clothes to wear.

I got up my courage and offered him a great deal in which he could make a lot of money in a short time. He raised his eyebrows quizzically. He was willing to do anything so he would have a few coins with which he could buy food and clothing for himself and his wife and children.

I warned him that this project was for Jews who believe in G-d and was a bit dangerous, but I promised him that my fellow Jews and I would pray for him and G-d would surely protect him. The driver was a religious fellow. He thought it over and then agreed to hear what I was suggesting.

I told him that I needed one truckload of cement to build a secret shul in the cellar of some building. I promised him 500 rubles for his efforts. His eyes nearly popped out of their sockets. Not only had he never seen such a sum in his life, he had never dreamed of such a large amount! He agreed.

He asked some technical questions: how would he be able to take a truck and drop off the cement and return without anyone noticing? How would he be able to take the big truck into a small side street that was narrow even for a horse and wagon? Who would unload the cement and how would they do so with the necessary speed?

I calmed him down, telling him it would all work out just fine and that I would take care of everything. We agreed to meet at the same spot the next day at 4 a.m., when he would

come with a truck full of cement.

EARLY MORNING DELIVERY

I headed straight for where the Chassidim waited for me. They didn't know what to think at that point and were more concerned about me than the cement, as maybe I had been arrested. After many hours of waiting for me, they rejoiced when I finally arrived.

I told them about my adventures and that I had managed to get cement that would arrive early in the morning, b'ezras Hashem. We had to round up healthy, strong young men, I said, who would unload the cement from the truck as quickly as possible.

That night we put people on guard to look out for anybody suspicious entering the neighborhood. I didn't sleep a wink that night. You can't imagine how terrified I was. Who knew what the goy did. Maybe he went back and

informed on me. Then not only would I be in danger but so would everybody involved. Once again, I prayed that the merit of the many should help us, especially when I was involved in building Jewish families on the foundations of purity.

With the hope that Hashem would watch over us, I went to the spot where I was supposed to meet the Uzbek driver, at 4 a.m.

PAILS FULL

I could see the truck from the distance. The driver stopped and I got in. He began driving very quickly in order to be able to get back in time without anybody noticing anything untoward. We approached the street where the mikva was being built and the side street was too narrow and the truck couldn't get in, so the driver stopped. We quickly arranged a line of men who transferred pails of cement one to the

next until the cellar.

I have no words to describe that amazing scene. It that reminded me of the description of the Korban Pesach and how the silver and gold vessels traveled up and down the line of Kohanim: Chassidim with beards, some graying, wearing gartels and big yarmulkes, tzitzis of many of them blowing in the wind, stood in a line and schlepped pails full of cement. In the line were Rabbi Avrohom Eliyahu Plotkin, R' Peretz Mochkin, R' Nissan Nemenov, R' Avrohom Maiyor-Drizin, R' Mendel Futerfas, R' Yona Cohen, and R' Ben-Zion Shemtov. They were sweating profusely, as they were unused to this manual labor, as well as from fear of arrest.

Baruch Hashem, it all worked out fine. The mikva was built according to the times and conditions of the place. It served Anash for the years that they were in Tashkent until they left Russia.



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MOSHIACH IS OUR MOTTO IN LIFE!

BY MENACHEM ZIEGELBOIM

*He is the rav of the fourth largest city in Eretz Yisroel (200,000 residents), member of the Beis Din Rabbanei Chabad in Eretz Yisroel. He also heads the Machon Oholei Shem that publishes early manuscripts and he is the author of s'farim. * We interviewed Rabbi Eliyahu Yochonon Gurary and asked him to tell us about his rabbanus, about his encounters with the Rebbe, and about his Chassidishe daas Torah on timely topics. * Presented for Shavuos, which is also called "Chag HaMorei Tzedek." Part 2 of 2*

A new young rav comes in – where do you begin?

I didn't show up with a definite plan in mind. Over time, I saw to it to fill the role with additional substance. I devoted most of my attention to teaching Torah and hafatzas Torah.

There are rabbanim who operate as a Chabad house – putting up mezuzos, putting t'fillin on people, encouraging kashrus, etc. I put the emphasis on spreading Torah, giving shiurim, and answering halachic queries.

I once went to 770 for Shavuos. It was early in the morning and I went down to daven in the large zal. Rabbi Binyamin Klein saw me and said that Rabbi Chadakov wanted to speak to me. I suggested going up after davening but he said I should go up immediately.

When I entered his office, Rabbi Chadakov began asking me questions about rabbanus. I knew he was asking with some reason in mind and he soon got to the point. He asked, "Do you write down all the questions you are asked in *Shulchan Aruch* as well as

your responses?" I said I did not. Then he told me to keep a record of them. It was clearly not Rabbi Chadakov's instruction but the Rebbe's instruction.

Afterwards, I thought about the significance of his instruction and concluded that my purpose in rabbanus centered on Torah. Throughout the years, I emphasized Torah study. I have been in Cholon for 17 years now and I give ongoing shiurim in Halacha, Gemara, and Jewish Thought, and I am careful not to miss them (except when I traveled to the Rebbe). Thanks to these shiurim, many families have drawn close to Judaism and Chassidus. Some of them now live in Kfar Chabad.

You took on a position in a huge neighborhood, how did you manage with the sheer volume of questions you were asked and with dealing with the community?

It's not simple. They came to ask me many questions and often I was afraid to pasken on my own until I did shimush (training) with Rabbi Shmuel Wosner, a leading Israeli posek.

A short while after my appointment, I was placed in charge of the marriage department of the rabbanut. This entails hard work and many complicated questions that pertain to family life. It wasn't easy



Standing before the Rebbe: Rabbi Gurary on the right with his son Yossi



Rabbi Eliyahu Yochonon Gurary, rav of Cholon and member of the Beis Din Rabbanei Chabad in Eretz Yisroel

handling it, but once again, I saw the *siyata d'Shmaya* and the help the Rebbe gave me.

In the office of the department sat Rabbi Yitzchok Glickman. He was a genius of the caliber of geniuses of previous generations. He had a complete grasp of all areas of the Torah. We sat together in the same room for about ten years and I learned a lot from him. He helped me with questions regarding marriage, checking out whether immigrants were Jewish – and thus, I did *shimush* daily with an outstanding Torah scholar.

Cholon is a big city and there were questions constantly being asked, regarding all aspects of life, and not just about *aveilus* (mourning)...

Did you receive answers from the

Rebbe during this period of your early years in rabbanus?

I received lots of encouragement and brachos. Whenever I passed by for “dollars,” the Rebbe blessed me with, “may you live long in your reign [as rav].” The Rebbe would also give me a bottle of vodka at “kos shel bracha.” And I received many answers.

What was your motto throughout your years in rabbanus?

As I said earlier, as soon as I started I put the emphasis on giving *shiurim* and my success was primarily in the constancy of these *shiurim*. That was only one aspect though, as I also devoted so much time to the marriage department, conducting all the correspondence and clarification regarding Jewish identity with *battei din* around the country. I made

chuppos every night because in those days there were hardly any rabbanim in Cholon.

I also wrote s'farim and started an institute called Oholei Shem Lubavitch in Kfar Chabad Beis.

You told us how being elected to the rabbanus in Kiryat Sharett was a surprise. As far as I know, the chief rabbinate of Cholon was also a surprise for you.

(Smiling): That's a long story. It was in 5759/1999. There were a number of candidates for the position of chief rabbi of Cholon, including some practicing rabbanim of neighborhoods in Cholon. I did not submit my candidacy.

At a certain point, I realized that the Rebbe wanted me to be rav of the city. I knew that the Rebbe was pushing for this over the years and I said to myself, if the Rebbe wants me as rav of the city, then I would jump into the race at the last minute. In fact, I submitted my candidacy a few hours before the deadline, but even after that I didn't promote myself.

The afternoon of the elections, in the midst of the commotion, I sat at home and didn't try to convince anybody from the election committee to vote for me. Of course, it was highly unlikely that I would win.

Some people tried to persuade me to withdraw my candidacy, including family members, who said, "What do you need it for?" I told them all that it wasn't about me but that the Rebbe wanted me to be rav of the city.

I wrote the Rebbe a letter and said that if the Rebbe wanted me to, I'd be rav. The answer I opened to in the *Igros Kodesh* was clear (see part 1 of the article).

Can you give us an example of how you saw that the Rebbe was pushing you towards being the rav of Cholon?

It was clear all along. In fact, it is the only way to understand how I got the position altogether. Today, in

hindsight, I realize that the Rebbe had this position designated for me from when I was a child, which is why the Rebbe inquired about my learning and what I was up to. It was all in order to push me towards rabbanus. I have no other explanation as to why, when the members of the hanhala of the yeshiva went to the Rebbe, the Rebbe inquired specifically about my learning.

Once I was in Eretz Yisroel, I was offered enticing rabbinic positions in Europe. When I wrote to the Rebbe about them, the Rebbe said, "**precedence to Eretz Yisroel.**" One

time, my wife wrote to the Rebbe about my rabbanus and the Rebbe marked the line and wrote, to "push him" to be rav of the city of Cholon.

I once wrote the Rebbe that perhaps I wasn't deserving of such a position. The Rebbe crossed off the words "perhaps I am not" and underlined the words, "deserving of this mantle."

How does the Rebbe view the position of a rav, aside from paskening and the like?

The Rebbe wants a rav to be a leader of his community, the mara d'asra. As I said earlier, the nature of

MACHON OHOLEI SHEM

Rabbi Gurary heads the Machon Oholei Shem, which prepares and publishes manuscripts of the Rebbeim and the g'dolei ha'Chassidim. If you visit Rabbi Gurary's home in Cholon you will be amazed by his huge Torah library. Apparently, his love for s'farim runs in the family.

His father's grandfather, the Chassid Rabbi Nosson Gurary was an avowed lover of s'farim. He had a giant library in his home and years later his s'farim were transferred to the Rebbe Rayatz's library.

His father owned a large s'farim store (four stories!), and whenever he was able to, Rabbi Yochonon visited the store and looked through the s'farim. That is how his own collection grew.

He himself has written s'farim including the *Toldos Yitzchok Isaac*, *HaSeifer B'Halacha*, *Tzitzis Halacha L'Maaseh*, and others. He received many instructions from the Rebbe regarding publishing s'farim. The Rebbe saw that he had received approbations from non-Chabad rabbanim and the Rebbe asked him why he did not receive approbations from Chabad rabbanim too.

"The Rebbe told me how to publish a book, how to name it, getting into all the nitty-gritty."

The Rebbe displayed a special fondness for his s'farim and once, when the production of one of his s'farim was delayed, the Rebbe asked him, "When is it coming out already?" – This was while the galleys were sitting for two years on the Rebbe's desk!

This love for s'farim spurred him to open the machon to publish s'farim. At its peak, 22 men worked at the machon, deciphering and editing the writing of the Rebbeim.

The machon has produced over 30 s'farim including: *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Admur HaZakein*, seven volumes of teachings of the Tzemach Tzedek on topics in Shas, *B'Kerem Chabad* – 2 volumes, *Shulchan HaMelech* – 3 volumes, *Oholei Lubavitch* – 4 volumes, *Oholei Shem* – 9 volumes, and more.



Rabbi Gurary as part of a delegation of rabbanim in Cairo, Egypt for a siyum ha'Rambam

Eretz Yisroel, what do you think the role of Chabad rabbanim is today?

A Lubavitcher rav has different abilities than any other rav. This is apparent in answers the Rebbe often gave “to ask a Chabad rav” or “inquire of a Chassidische rav.”

Every rav zeros in on “what does the halacha say about this,” but a Chabad rav goes beyond that. He is also knowledgeable in the customs and way of life of a Chassid.

A Lubavitcher rav, aside from his knowledge of *Shulchan Aruch* and its commentaries, is also well versed in sichos, letters, horaos, yechiduyos, and even tzetlach (personal responses) from the Rebbe on various topics, and so it's easier for him to pasken on timely issues. When you ask a rav a timely question, for example, someone asked me about a compensation package in a certain mosad, whether you have to give one or not. The Rebbe writes that in principle, there is an inyan of *ha'anaka* (the Torah obligation to send off a Jewish slave with gifts) and one should give compensation.

This week I was asked about adoption, a very complicated and sensitive issue. There are many questions like whether it's preferable to adopt a Jew or a goy, a boy or a girl. You need to be aware of problems that can arise.

Everything comes up in the Rebbe's teachings: medicine, shidduchim, adoption, money matters, administrative issues, etc. The Rebbe's s'farim are replete with a full, rich, amazing derech in life. So the perspective of a Lubavitcher rav is not the same as that of other rabbanim, who need to struggle with weighing issues that are not dealt with explicitly in *Shulchan Aruch*.

Nevertheless, it seems as though the Chabad tzibbur, even rabbanim, are confused. There are so many questions without answers in matters concerning chinuch, medicine, emuna

the rabbinic position is according to the personality of the rav, and each rav emphasizes something else. I think that the first thing a rav must do is learn and teach.

Just as a doctor has to keep up with the latest medical breakthroughs, a rav's success hinges on his constant learning. When a rav learns, the community respects him more and it increases the kiddush Hashem of Chabad.

A rav must also be involved in hafatza of mitzvos and “spreading the wellsprings outward,” but success in these areas too, depend on Torah study. The more a rav learns, the more respected he is and the more he is listened to, his influence is greater and he is more capable of spreading the wellsprings.

What do you mean by a rav “being in charge,” being the balabus?

A rav must be strong, like the balabus over one's house.

Should a rav also be balabus over material matters?

He should be balabus in

everything, but practically speaking I don't think rabbanim need to be involved in material matters. The rav's job is to handle spiritual matters.

Chabad rabbanim have traveled to the Rebbe for Shavuos. Why Shavuos?

Since Pesach is a very busy time for rabbanim with numerous questions, they must stay home. Rabbanim took the opportunity of going to the Rebbe for Shavuos, when there are hardly any questions, in order to receive the Torah with him with simcha and p'nimius. This is why, in Lubavitch, they called Shavuos, “Chag HaMaTzos” (a play on the biblical name for Pesach, alluding to the abbreviation for Morei Tzedek, meaning halachic poskim.)

There is also the idea of receiving the Torah anew and when the rav goes to the Rebbe and the Rebbe gives the chayus for the entire year. This is essentially, receiving the Torah anew from the Rebbe.

We don't openly see how we are receiving the light from the Rebbe. As a Lubavitcher rav and member of the Beis Din of the Rabbanei Chabad in

and hashkafa. We could be hearing rabbanim louder and clearer and the rabbanim could be more forceful...

I agree with you. We don't see the Rebbe and we don't feel the Rebbe pushing us the way we used to. There's no question that the rabbanim also need a push.

At the same time, consider the fact that Chabad Chassidim are spread all over the world. There are rabbanim who have Lubavitcher k'hillos and rabbanim whose k'hillos are not Chabad. The rav's role and approach differs from place to place and there is no national policy to unite them.

The political and security situations in Eretz Yisroel are terrible. People are very down, and one would think that rabbanim could find fertile ground to make an impact, to unite people and ignite a fire of emuna...

On the one hand, rabbanim are not listened to here that much, partly due to the influence of the media. On the other hand, on a grassroots level there is a big hisorerus. Since I've come to Cholon there has been a tremendous awakening.

How do you see this?

Many yeshivos were opened as were Talmud Torahs and mosdos Torah. The mikvaos are full. Once upon a time only Lubavitchers used the mikva every morning, but now the mikva is open from four a.m. until afternoon and there are always people there. The shuls are also full and there are shiurim throughout the day. In the big shuls there are rabbanim who give shiurim.

Baruch Hashem, the Lubavitcher community has also grown. Today we have 40-50 Lubavitcher families in Cholon. Two more Lubavitcher rabbanim have taken positions as rabbanim here, Rabbi Pinchas Altheus in the Rasko neighborhood, and Rabbi Meir Halperin in Kiryat Avoda.

Both are very successful and beloved, and accepted by their communities. They work in the

marriage and kashrus departments of the rabbanus of Cholon. There are also four Chabad mikvaos in Cholon. Aside from this, there are other Chabad rabbanim: Rabbi Nachimovsky and Rabbi Pinkowitz, who spread Torah.

How do you manage all these roles: rav of the city, member of the Beis Din Rabbanei Chabad, giving shiurim, running Oholei Shem, and author of s'farim?

Baruch Hashem, I see a bracha in time. I write s'farim at night and during the day I deal with rabbinic responsibilities. In the afternoon, I give shiurim and when I have to sit on the beis din, I do so. Just today, we sat for four hours in dinei Torah at the beis din.

We are living in a time where, on the one hand, we don't see the Rebbe but on the other hand, it's the

I believe that everybody received and absorbed from the Rebbe and the p'nimius is equal in our hearts. Although there are different views, you must look favorably at everybody, because we are all children of one father and we are all brothers.



Rabbi Gurary looking for gravesites in Lubavitch before Perestroika



Rabbi Gurary receiving a dollar from the Rebbe

“hechste tzait,” right before the Geula...

I’ll tell you my “Ani Maamin” about today’s confusion. I think that everyone, without exception, is in a general sense equal in their hiskashrus to the Rebbe. All mean the

The love between one Chassid and another must be unlimited love and unconditional love. You cannot dismiss someone because of his views since you cannot know what is in someone’s heart.

truth and all want to fulfill the Rebbe’s wishes as the Rebbe really wants them fulfilled. There are various forms of expression with people reacting in different ways. One shouts, another internalizes, a third is pained, and a fourth puts the emphasis on simcha. But we have to walk the middle path, which is the Rebbe’s way.

I believe that everybody received and absorbed from the Rebbe and the p’nimius is equal in our hearts. Although there are different views, you must look favorably at everybody, because we are all children of one father and we are all brothers. The love between one Chassid and another must be unlimited love and unconditional love. You cannot dismiss someone because of his views since you cannot know what is in someone’s heart.

Why aren’t we hearing more from the rabbanim about how to spread the Besuras HaGeula?

It’s not a halachic matter but a matter of emuna and therefore, there cannot be any p’sak din about it. As I said, people react differently, each based on their type of hiskashrus to the Rebbe. You can’t lay down a clearly defined policy.

But as I said, despite the various views there must be love between Chassidim, real love.

What is the “bottom line” that we all need to adhere to?

First, everybody must believe that all the Rebbe’s inyanim continue as before, and that the leadership is ongoing – unlike certain groups who thought that Chabad was finished. On the contrary, if you notice how Chabad has developed in recent years, see how many shluchim have gone out, how many Chabad houses have opened, the growth in the yeshiva world, how many mosdos Torah have opened – you realize that the Rebbe is continuing to give us incredible kochos.

We must continue with the Rebbe’s inyanim, with the Rebbe’s derech, and do what the Rebbe wants.

The main shlichus is to prepare the world to greet Moshiach. How do we strengthen this inyan?

Simply by sitting and learning the sichos on Moshiach and Geula. Reviewing the sichos repeatedly and implanting them in our children so that they live with them. The Rebbe instilled the idea of Moshiach within us and we must live with it. Moshiach – this is the theme of all of life, and we Chassidim have to learn, nonstop, the Torah of Moshiach.

If we take for example, the inyan of learning inyanei Beis HaMikdash that the Rebbe spoke about for years, there is no group in the world that has learned the Rambam’s Hilchos Beis HaBechira like Lubavitchers. The Rebbe prepared us for Geula. This is the Rebbe’s koch.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

SHAI GEFEN

A FIFTH COLUMN

We recently celebrated Shavuot, when Hashem separated us from the nations and chose us to be His special nation. Sadly, the Chosen People do not acknowledge their chosen-ness and they readily agree to accept more and more gentiles into their midst, who did not commit to Hashem's Torah.

On Shavuot 5731, the Rebbe spoke about the tzaros that would result by allowing goyim into the Jewish people. The Rebbe spoke about the story in Megilas Rus, when Naomi did not agree to accept Orpa and convert her since Orpa did not agree to convert according to halacha. The Rebbe warned that bringing gentiles to Eretz Yisroel and having them enter the Jewish nation would create a fifth column.

The Rebbe asked that this sicha be translated into Hebrew and distributed everywhere. Naomi's "cruelty" and her insistence upon a halachic conversion prevented a terrible tragedy. Naomi did not take into consideration the fact that the Jewish people in its land needed more men and that Orpa's son would definitely serve in the Israeli army. She knew that Galyas serving in the army was dangerous, for he was a fifth column, and so she pushed Orpa off.

It's no secret that the I.D.F. is doing a terrible thing with its wholesale conversions. There is a "conversion campaign" to convert tens of thousands of gentile Russians. They send soldiers to quickie courses of a few weeks duration and upon their

return, they are converted by the military rabbinate. Those who know just a little about what is going on in the army are horrified. Unfortunately, this is happening not only in the army but also within some civilian sectors by religious people.

This serious problem starts with men who wear kippot who think that the way to solve the problem of goyim in Eretz Yisroel is to accept them among us. These are the ostriches who don't see our enemies. The Rebbe warned that bringing goyim into our nation in Eretz Yisroel would adversely affect our security and would breach all boundaries.

Amazingly, the more breaches in the divisions between Jews and goyim, the more we have seen our security compromised. When the Rebbe fought the decree of Mihu Yehudi, representatives of the chareidim fought the Rebbe and ruined attempts to amend the law by saying that this issue did not affect them. We all remember that.

Now, one of the things they are trying to hush up are chilling stories, which have recently come to light, about talmidim in yeshivos, who after they marry or upon becoming engaged, discover that they are goyim. Just last week I heard some of these stories that took place in distinguished Litvishe yeshivos. Who doesn't remember how the Rebbe screamed that the son-in-law of the rosh yeshiva might be a goy who learns Gemara, if G-d forbid, they do not amend the law of Mihu Yehudi.

The things taking place today are the fulfillment of a prophecy. What a pity that instead of chareidi public figures admitting they were wrong and acknowledging that the Rebbe is right, they continue to aid those things that oppose shleimus ha'Am and shleimus ha'Aretz.

A WARNING TO COLLABORATORS

An official investigation on possible police cooperation with underworld leaders has prompted demands for the resignation of top officials, including Police Commissioner Moshe Karadi. The Zeiler Commission sent letters to Karadi and 12 other officials, warning them of a June 6 deadline for them to defend themselves before the commission publishes its findings.

Karadi and his police led the expulsion from Gush Katif last summer. Take for example Negev Commander Niso Shaham from the police force. He was recorded on Channel Ten as cursing the protestors at Kfar Maimon, telling Border Guard officers to beat them with clubs in the "lower part of their bodies" and saying, "let them burn." He also said that he wants "lots of arrests," and used various vulgarities in referring to how he wanted them treated.

Despite all this, Shaham still serves in a senior position as Negev Commander with the full support of Headquarters. In the implementation of the Disengagement there were people more senior than him who were responsible for the moral crime and destruction, but they are either



politicians, who are motivated by political considerations, or military types who managed to keep their thoughts to themselves. Niso Shaham, on the other hand, is someone who, despite his publicized vulgar urging of violence, continues to serve in the Jewish police force and receives a salary from the state.

Karadi and his men are not the first ones to be punished after the Disengagement. We saw what happened to the man who orchestrated last summer's tragedy. He is lying comatose for months, and his son is about to serve a prison sentence. And Rabbi Yisroel Weiss, chief military chaplain, is no longer serving in that position after openly saying that soldiers should not refuse orders.

After the publicity about the warning letters sent to him and the public tumult this has caused, Karadi announced that he will continue to run the police force. He told the media that he should be remembered for his successful operation last summer. Get it?

To Karadi, the destruction of thousands of people's homes and communities are a reason to let him retain his position. He winks at the Left and reminds them why they should be grateful to him.

Apparently, Karadi forgot the maamer Chazal which states that whoever flatters a wicked person will ultimately fall into his hands and that the favors of the wicked are incomplete.

Karadi's good friend for decades is Rabbi Yigal Kirshnzaft, who begged Karadi on the eve of the expulsion not to go through with it, telling him, "One can acquire his world in one hour." At that meeting, the Rebbe's shluchim begged Karadi not to do this to his good friend of 30 years. But Karadi chose to serve the evil State.

Less than a year later, Karadi finds

himself in hot water. Nobody believed that the Zeiler Commission would reach the Police Commander, but we know that all those who headed the expulsion machine, the cabal that endangered Am Yisroel, will get their just desserts sooner or later.

In a chilling and unprecedented sicha, the Rebbe promised that he would personally (referring to himself by name) fight against those who give away land. Amazingly, we have seen what has happened to prime ministers, starting with Begin, then Shamir, Netanyahu, Rabin, Barak, and Sharon. None of them finished their terms with honor. Some even ended their terms tragically and in dishonor. Harming our people and our land is quite risky!

As for Olmert and his colleagues, I would suggest that you learn from "Sharon's legacy" and see what is the end of the one who orchestrated the expulsion, how on the very day that he announced that he would continue his Disengagement Plan from Yehuda and Shomron, promising to serve as Prime Minister until 2010, he was felled. He often boasted and promised but we all know what his bitter end is.

Anyone who thinks that it won't happen to him, should know that there is no way around having to answer to G-d. Those who plan on participating in the Convergence Plan should be aware that it just isn't worth it, on a personal level. Remember the liar named Gonen who supported the Oslo Fiasco and is rotting in jail today. There was someone who led the Shas party, and he too is among those who brought Oslo upon us, and he too finished his political career prematurely and in great shame.

I'm not talking about Heavenly calculations, but we know that whoever plays around with our security and aids the enemy, the land simply spits them out, especially when the Rebbe said that he would fight against them.

In a chilling and unprecedented sicha, the Rebbe promised that he would personally (referring to himself by name) fight against those who give away land. Amazingly, we have seen what has happened to prime ministers, starting with Begin, then Shamir, Netanyahu, Rabin, Barak, and Sharon. None of them finished their terms with honor. Some even ended their terms tragically and in dishonor. Harming our people and our land is quite risky!

‘THEY ARE ADDING WHILE WE ARE DECREASING’

BY SHNEUR ZALMAN BERGER

*That is how Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski of Vilna responded to the mockery of one of the Lithuanian rabbis, over the fact that Chassidim made a new “Rosh HaShana,” referring to Yud-Tes Kislev. * At the convention of rabbis, in the year 5670 (1910), Reb Chaim Ozer proclaimed before the entire assembly and the Rebbe Rashab that the divide between Chassidim and Misnagdim no longer exists. Those words had great impact on the entire Jewish world. * A deep bond existed between the Lithuanian Torah genius and the Rebbes of Chabad as they joined forces in various struggles for the sake of Klal Yisroel. * The first of two installments deals with the important activities in which Reb Chaim Ozer took part together with the Rebbe Rashab. * Part One*

THEN THERE WERE NO QUESTIONS

Over the years, many Chassidim have seen the video of the encounter between the Rebbe MH”M and one of the Lithuanian roshei yeshiva from Eretz Yisroel, at the distribution of dollars. The rosh yeshiva raised the question about the “shocking rumor” that Chabad Chassidim do not sleep in the Sukka. In a unique departure from his usual conduct, the Rebbe responded quite sharply and expressed dismay over those attempting to renew the age-old dispute between Chassidim and Misnagdim. Especially, as the greatest Lithuanian leaders of the previous generation, amongst them Reb Chaim Ozer, maintained a deep connection with the Chabad Rebbeim:

Reb Chaim Ozer was a great lamdan and the Chief Rabbi of Vilna. He worked together with my father-in-law the Rebbe, and his father the Rebbe (Rashab) *nishmaso Eden*. And there were no questions about whether he had to ask anyone for “permission” or not.

In this matter, it will not help any effort from here, from the side that is affected. It is preferable that they find one of the students of Reb Chaim Ozer, who follows in his ways, and he

should write and raise a cry about this. He should also publicize the letters of Reb Chaim Ozer about the activities he carried out together with my father-in-law the Rebbe, and his father the Rebbe (Rashab) *nishmaso Eden*.

More than fifteen years have passed since then, and the Rebbe's suggestion has yet to be implemented.

Beis Moshiach Magazine has undertaken to lay out the wide spectrum of activities of the Lithuanian genius, who worked tirelessly in his massive efforts for the sake of the Jewish people, activities carried out with the full cooperation of the Chabad Rebbeim. They worked hand in hand, despite the substantive differences of views between the teachings of Chassidus and the Misnagdic approach to Judaism.

We recommend that the readers publicize these facts amongst those in the Lithuanian yeshiva community, so that they be aware of the truth that the dispute which originated in the early days of the Chassidic movement has long since passed from the world.

NON-STOP WORK

Reb Chaim Ozer (1863-1940) was one of the greatest Lithuanian Torah giants of the previous generation. Already in his youth, he gained renown as the "Ilui (prodigy) of Ivya (his hometown)," and was one of the outstanding students of Reb Chaim Brisker in the yeshiva of Volozhin, which he attended at the age of 15. At the age of 22, he was appointed a judge on the renowned Beis Din of Vilna, and in later years was elected to serve as the rav of the city. From that point on, he served as one of the primary guiding forces of Lithuanian Torah Jewry, in all matters personal and communal, Torah related or otherwise.


This article deals with the contacts Reb Chaim Ozer had with our Rebbeim.

* * *

One of the most difficult periods for the Jewish people in recent centuries was during the full-scale and bitter war, waged by the Torah Leaders and Chassidic Masters against the winds of apostasy and Zionism, which blew fiercely and conquered the hearts and minds of many of the youth. The captains of Torah-True Judaism understood with their farsighted view that the Zionists were not the champions of the "Zion" of holiness, but of licentiousness and decadence. Therefore, they marshaled their forces to stem the tide sweeping the nation towards Zionism. Those who stood at the forefront of this battle in Lithuania were Reb Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk, Reb Dovid Friedman of Karlin, Reb Eliezer Gordon of Telz, and Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski.

One of the deciding stages in the battle between the religious camp and the Zionists began with gathering of G-d-fearing rabbis in the city of Kovno, in Sivan of 1899. The Rebbe Rashab masterminded the event, and the participants included many eminent rabbis from the area. For Lithuanian Jewry, the stakes were high, as its yeshivos were filled with thousands of students who were prime targets for the Zionist movement.

At the closing ceremony of the convention, the rabbis issued a stinging proclamation against the Zionists, and this ratcheted up the



Reb Chaim Ozer
at a resort near Vienna

conflict between the two camps. The Zionists labeled the participants of the convention, "The Black Bureau."

In the winter of 1900, the rabbis of Kovno issued the seifer *Ohr LaYesharim*, which contained letters and proclamations condemning Zionism. Amongst the letters, there is a letter from the Rebbe Rashab against the Zionists (published in *Igros Kodesh Admur Rashab* vol. 1 p. 210).

In response to the seifer, the periodical *HaMeilitz* published a blistering diatribe against the work from Reb Shlomo HaKohen, the elderly rav of Vilna. In conclusion, they wrote, "Therefore, it is forbidden for any son of the Jewish people to

keep the seifer *Ohr LaYesharim* in his home, as per the prohibition, 'You shall not allow iniquity to dwell in your tents.'"

The Rebbe Rashab penned a response to this attack in a letter to the Chassidic philanthropist, Reb Yeshaya Berlin:

"The fact that *HaMeilitz* opened its mouth – do not pay attention to it, because when I wrote the letter, I knew the dogs would bark and cry out bitterly. I agreed to it anyway, because I saw the urgency in a matter affecting the foundation and preservation of the religion, which the destroyers are trying to weaken by digging underneath" (*Igros Kodesh Admur*

Rashab vol. 3 p. 125).

The Chareidi rabbis in Vilna felt trapped between the hammer and the anvil. They opposed Zionism, but the elderly rav of the city came out strongly against the seifer. Their dilemma resulted in resounding silence on the part of the majority, except for Reb Chaim Ozer and Reb Meir Noach Levin, who protested to Reb Shlomo over his shaming words, and compelled him to issue a retraction.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ENLIGHTENMENT

In the year 1900, Reb Chaim Ozer worked on a number of fronts together with the Rebbe Rashab.

In those years, the Association for the Dissemination of Enlightenment founded many schools throughout Russia. When they encountered financial difficulties, they applied for assistance from the French Organization for Jewish Settlement. After much deliberation, they were granted one million francs, a huge sum of money. It was clear to everyone that when the money actually arrived, the educational infrastructure of the Maskilim would grow tenfold, and the spiritual condition of Russian Jewry would decline even further.

The Rebbe Rashab began a massive campaign to try to cancel the promised grant. One of the tactics was to gather signatures of great rabbis on a letter to the organization. The Rebbe appointed Reb Avrohom Abba Person as his personal emissary in the matter, and he saw to getting the signatures of Reb Elya Chaim Meisel of Lodz, Reb Chaim Brisker and Reb Chaim Ozer, on the letter composed by the Rebbe.

The many activities done in cooperation with these rabbis, led by Reb Chaim Ozer, achieved the desired results, and in the end, most of the funding did not make it to the hands of the Maskilim. A letter on the subject, written in the handwriting of the Rebbe Rashab and addressed to Reb Chaim Ozer regarding this matter,

GREAT IN TORAH AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski was one of the Torah greats of Lithuania in the previous generation. He was born in the town of Ivya, Lithuania, to his father Reb Dovid Shlomo, who was rav of the town. He became known far, and wide, as the "Ilui of Ivya." Later, he studied in the Volozhin yeshiva, where he became close to Reb Chaim Brisker. This close relationship endured throughout their lifetimes.

At age twenty-one, he married the daughter of Reb Lazer (Eliyahu Eliezer) Grodozenski, son-in-law of Rabbi Yisroel Salanter and a posek in Vilna.

In 5647/1887, he was appointed as a judge on the renowned Beis Din of Vilna, and in later years, he became the rav of the city, and was active in the Torah and communal life of the city. In the book *Lithuanian Jewry*, it is stated that no public activity took place in the city without his participation.

Reb Chaim Ozer founded a network of Jewish schools that provided traditional Jewish education. He also founded the Orthodox Chinuch Committee of Poland and the Agudas HaRabbanim of Poland (during the years Vilna was under Polish rule).

He was one of the founders of the Agudas Yisroel movement. In 1929, he attended the Great Convention of Agudas Yisroel in Vienna, and was chosen as the honorary president of the movement. He also was a founding member and administrator of the Vaad HaYeshivos in Lithuania.

His approach to Torah learning was in the way of "charifus," and he wrote many halachic decisions. His halachic responsa were published in the three volumes of *Achiezer*.

Reb Chaim Ozer passed away in the month of Av 1940 after suffering from cancer for several years, when WWII was at its height but had not yet reached Lithuania. He merited a large funeral attended by most of Lithuanian Jewry and many war refugees from Poland, led by eminent rabbis of all the streams of Judaism.



Reb Chaim Ozer



The Rebbe Rashab

remains in the archive of the Rebbe Rashab.

Regarding this issue, Reb Chaim Ozer wanted to meet in person with the Rebbe Rashab, but it didn't work out. It was the summer of 1901, when both men were traveling in Western Europe. Reb Chaim Ozer thought the Rebbe would pass through the city of Koenigsburg in Germany, and he informed the Rebbe in a letter that they would meet there. However, the Rebbe did not end up traveling through the city and sent a letter in place of a meeting.

The Rebbe Rashab based his argument on the fact that these schools were destroying Jewish tradition, whereas the purpose of the organization was to help provide for the material needs of the Jewish people. In time, he changed the argument into a plea for material assistance for the Jews of Russia. At that time, the Rebbe Rashab was working to save Jews from starving by

setting up a Jewish factory in Dubrovna. To this end, he sent a letter to the Organization for Jewish Settlement, asking them to undertake the funding of this project. He sent the letter to various rabbanim to add their signatures, including Reb Chaim Ozer.

The strenuous efforts paid off, and the proposal actually became a reality. In 1902, a huge factory for spinning and weaving wool went up in the city of Dubrovna. The factory employed close to two thousand workers!

GREAT RESPECT FOR YUD-TES KISLEV

In honor of Yud-Tes Kislev 5662, the Rebbe Rashab, who was then in Moscow involved in communal affairs, sent a letter to his son the Rayatz about Yud-Tes Kislev. In the letter, he asks that they farbreng, "in celebration of the holiday, which redeemed with peace our souls ... This day is the Rosh HaShana for Chassidus...this is the day of the beginning of Your deeds." The Rebbe, in this letter, revealed for the

first time that Yud-Tes Kislev is the "Rosh HaShana for Chassidus."

The letter made a great impact and hundreds of copies were sent to each Lubavitch community. In his diaries, the Rebbe Rayatz recounts how he asked his father's secretary to put aside all the incoming mail about the "Maamer Rosh HaShana Shel Chassidus," as it was called then.

In Nissan of that year, the Rebbe Rayatz wrote a summary of the different responses, separating them by category, and he cites "four letters, which it's impossible to not set them in a category on their own." One of these is a letter from Vilna:

"When we received the holy epistle, we made a great feast in the Aptov Shul. One of the rabbis told the Gaon Reb Chaim Ozer about the holy letter on the subject of Yud-Tes Kislev – that it is the Rosh HaShana for Chassidus. This rabbi made a joke of it, saying that the Mishna only mentions four days as Rosh HaShana

and the Chassidim have five.

“Reb Chaim Ozer was upset with this rabbi, despite his being a member of the Rabbinical Court and was considered one of the great rabbis. This was because he had instituted a number of leniencies regarding the fast days of BaHa”B [the custom to fast a series of three fasts after the major holidays, on Monday, Thursday and the following Monday], as well as Yom Kippur Koton and other matters. This caused Reb Chaim Ozer a great deal of pain, and so, when he told him about the letter of Rosh HaShana of Chassidus, Reb Chaim Ozer responded:

“By them, it is increasing, and by us it is decreasing.”

On this subject, there is a letter from the Rebbe MH”M addressed to someone who asked a number of questions on Chabad customs, including that it is brought that Reb Chaim Brisker and Reb Chaim Ozer related to this matter [Yud-Tes Kislev] with great respect. The questioner points out that this doesn’t make sense and asks for the source for this.

The Rebbe responded:

Regarding how the aforementioned related to Yud-Tes Kislev – in that it is the Rosh HaShana for Chassidim and Chassidus – a copy of his diaries was given to be published by my father-in-law the Rebbe... Certainly, you are aware of the regular meetings between the aforementioned three [the Rebbe Rashab, Reb Chaim Brisker, and Reb Chaim Ozer], which were of a friendly nature, not necessarily over communal matters. Although, it is a shame that this is not known to the public in enough detail. Because, then certainly, it would cancel many of the sayings, questions, rebuttals, and arguments, which are not always grounded in holiness.

WE HAVE AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS

In order to appreciate the unique atmosphere between the Lithuanian

great and the Lubavitcher Rebbe at that time, it is worth citing a few incidents which demonstrate the great esteem in which the Rebbe Rashab held Reb Chaim Ozer.

In the month of Shevat 5662/1902, the Rebbe Rashab wrote, “The rav of Vilna has recently become very involved in communal matters. There is a correspondence between us and he promises to cooperate with the requisite energy” (*Igros Kodesh Rashab* vol. 3 p. 329).

At that time, when the philanthropist Reb Yeshaya Berlin traveled to Vilna, the Rebbe instructed him to visit Reb Chaim Ozer in his home.

In the year 5666/1906, there was discussion about electing a Chief Rabbi in the city of Petersburg, the second largest city in Russia. Reb Chaim Ozer was mentioned as one of the candidates amongst a host of others. In a letter to the wealthy Chassid, Reb Shmuel Michel Treinin, the Rebbe negates two of the candidates and then he writes, “Regarding what you wrote that Reb Chaim Ozer does not understand Russian [as he was from Lithuania]. It seems to me that he has a sufficient knowledge of Russian and German, and I already wrote to you about him. Regardless, he is a G-d-fearing man and he has forcefulness on key issues, which he wishes to rectify. As to the ones mentioned previously, he is a far better choice than them” (*Igros Kodesh Rashab* vol. 4 p. 133).

Ultimately, Reb Dovid Tevel Katzenellenbogen was chosen to be the rav of Petersburg.

Reb Shmuel Levitin, one of the honored Rabbanim in Chabad, corresponded with Reb Chaim Ozer during his tenure as the rav of Rokshik in Lithuania, and the two discussed halachic issues.

CRUCIAL DECISIONS

The first meeting between the Rebbe Rashab and Reb Chaim Ozer took place during the Rebbe’s visit to

Vilna in Nisan of 1907. Later, they met on numerous occasions at various rabbinic gatherings and conventions.

According to a law passed by the Russian Tsar, it was necessary to hold periodic conventions of rabbis in Petersburg. At these gatherings, vital decisions were reached to strengthen Jewish communities and institutions. However, the “official rabbis” also attended, and they would try to use their status to draft resolutions not in the spirit of traditional Judaism. Therefore, before each such convention, there was a great deal of concern, and the traditional rabbis had to prepare carefully.

In 1908, the government recognized the Chareidi organization Kneses Yisroel in Russia, under the leadership of Reb Chaim Ozer. When he informed the Rebbe Rashab, the Rebbe responded that it was now necessary to organize a meeting of rabbis, open only to singular individuals. The proposed gathering was pushed off repeatedly, and in the interim, Reb Chaim Ozer met with the Rebbe.

During the month of Av, 1908, the Rebbe wrote to his son the Rayatz:

Regarding Reb Chaim Ozer, you must meet with him (*Igros Kodesh Rashab* vol. 4 p. 316). The Rebbe enclosed in the letter copies of his correspondence with Reb Chaim Brisker.

Shortly after this letter, the Rebbe met himself with Reb Chaim Ozer, during the period that the Rebbe stayed in Koenigsberg, Germany. At this meeting, they agreed upon a preparatory gathering of the traditional rabbis to take place in Vilna, to plan their moves for the upcoming general convention of all rabbis in Petersburg. At the close of their meeting, the Rebbe Rashab asked Reb Chaim Ozer to apply for a permit to hold the earlier gathering.

In Iyar 1909, the preparatory meeting took place in Vilna. Twenty rabbis participated, including the



The Gaon Reb Chaim of Brisk – The Gaon, the Chafetz Chaim – Reb Levi Yitzchok Schneerson

Rebbe Rashab and his son the Rayatz, the Rebbe of Ger, Reb Avrohom Mordechai Alter, author of *Imrei Emes*, Reb Chaim Ozer, and other eminent Chabad and Chareidi rabbis.

Reb Chaim Ozer served as the Acting Chairman, and the supervisors were the Rebbe Rayatz and the philanthropist Reb Yosef Levin.

The general rabbinic convention took place in the month of Adar II 1910, in Petersburg. It included dozens of the greatest rabbis in Russia, which included Lithuania at that time, and among them the Rebbe Rashab and Reb Chaim Ozer. At the convention, they focused on issues relating to the rabbinate and communal life. For many rabbis from throughout Russia, it was the first opportunity to see the Rebbe Rashab and Reb Chaim Ozer working together.

The amazement grew when Reb Chaim Ozer addressed the gathering on the topic of Chassidim and Misnagdim. He explained that there was no longer any conflict, and it was necessary to work together. In his words, “The separation between Chassidim and Misnagdim has been nullified and passed from the world.”

His words made a great impression

on those who participated in the convention. In no time, the word spread to the communities of Chassidim and Misnagdim, far and near.

WORLD WAR I CANCELED THE CONFLICT

Recognition of rabbinic authority was an important matter, which came up for discussion at this convention. Until that point, every community had its own *rav*, as well as a government appointed rabbi to administer birth and marriage certificates. At the convention, representatives of each region in Russia were elected, and they decided unanimously that the authorities needed to recognize the real rabbis. Everyone agreed on this point, however, the government insisted that a rabbi must have a general secular education. On this issue, some held that there was no choice but to comply.

This time, Reb Chaim Ozer held a differing view from the Rebbe Rashab. The “modern” representatives felt that a rabbi should have a higher degree, and should speak perfect Russian. Most of the attendees leaned towards the view of Reb Chaim Ozer that a rabbi should have minimal secular knowledge as well as familiarity with

the Russian language, and he should handle the birth and marriage certification.

The minority view led by the Rebbe Rashab, held that a rabbi should be under no obligation except in the knowledge of Torah, and there should be a separate functionary to handle the certification.

Actually, there was no practical result of the resolutions passed by the convention. The protocols, which were handled by the Rebbe Rashab, were presented to the authorities. The officials in charge delayed dealing with the issue, each time with a different excuse. When they finally went to work on the matter, they did so with excruciating slowness, until the winter of 1914, the time of the Beilis trial, when the priorities of the Jewish community shifted focus. By the time the trial ended, World War I broke out, and all the differing views were sidelined in the face of the difficulties and tribulations facing the Jewish community in Russia.

THE PLOT WAS FOILED

Shortly before, in the summer of 1914, the government issued a decree to close all the traditional chadarim, which taught according to Jewish

tradition, and to replace them with “modern chadarim.” This decree came about due to the political efforts on the part of the Association for the Dissemination of Enlightenment.

In order to compensate the teachers who would lose their jobs, the Association for the Dissemination of Enlightenment offered to pay a half million rubles to the government to cover the compensation. The terrible decree was publicized throughout the Jewish areas, and was slated to go into effect on July 10, 1914 – 16 Tammuz 5674.

In an effort to annul the decree, a secret meeting took place, reported by the Rebbe Rayatz:

“At that time, a secret meeting took place in the presence of my father, the Gaon Reb Chaim of Brisk, the Gaon Reb Chaim Ozer, and two others. I was also present. I was charged with traveling out of the country together with another Jew, in connection with this decree. Shortly after, the world war broke out, and the plans of the Association for the Dissemination of Enlightenment were cancelled.”

On June 28/4 Tammuz 5674, the Austrian Crown Prince was shot by a Serbian rebel, igniting the old animosities between the European countries and leading to world war.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS

During the month of Nisan 5677/1917, the Rebbe Rashab began working to organize a general convention of rabbis. The discussions dragged on for a few months.

On Chol HaMoed Pesach, the Rebbe wrote to Reb Itze'le of Ponovezh, urgently calling for such a convention. In the letter, the Rebbe points out that he doesn't know the whereabouts of Reb Chaim Ozer, due to his wandering during the war years:

“This is the first time that I am approaching His Honor. I don't know where my dear friend Reb Chaim Ozer is currently. But you must certainly know.”

When the Rebbe found out where he was, in Yekaterinaslav, he renewed their correspondence. In one of his letters, the Rebbe writes, “I wanted to meet with Reb Chaim Ozer on the road between Rostov and Yekaterinaslav, but it did not happen. We will see what will be iy”H after the upcoming Yom Tov.”

On 16 Sivan, the Rebbe wrote to Reb Levi Yitzchok, “In my opinion, it is also essential that there be a preparatory meeting...and according to your letter, you told him [Reb Chaim Ozer] to write to me. Most likely the letter will arrive.”

The correspondence between the Rebbe Rashab and Reb Chaim Ozer continued throughout this period. A number of the letters dealt with the structure of the upcoming convention, its location, and the signing of Rabbanim on a public announcement calling to participate. They also considered the possibility of holding a pre-convention meeting of the eminent rabbis to plan their moves for the general convention.

Meanwhile, other groups organized to hold a different gathering in Moscow, and the Rebbe announced that he would not attend, but would only come to the general convention. On this subject as well, he corresponded with Reb Chaim Ozer, and together they reached important decisions regarding the convention.

The preliminary meeting took place in Petrograd [Petersburg became Petrograd from 1914 to 1924], during the days of 12-15 Av. The general convention, held also in Petrograd, was from 26-28 Av. This was a huge convention called for by the greatest Torah leaders of the time, including the Rebbe Rashab, Reb Chaim Ozer, the Chafetz Chaim, and others.

At the conclusion of the convention, they elected a committee in charge of arranging a convention to organize elections for the General Jewish Congress, which was to represent the Jews of Russia [this was

during the brief democracy in Russia prior to the Communist revolution].

Amongst those elected to the committee were the Rebbe Rashab, the Admur of Bobruisk, the Admur of Skver, Reb Avrohom Dovber Shapiro the rav of Kovno, Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski the rav of Vilna, the Chafetz Chaim, the Rogatchover Gaon, and other rabbis of cities small and large.

Signed on the general committee of the organization, those who actually ran the convention, are in order of appearance:

Reb Yaakov Yitzchok Rabinowitz the rav of Minsk, the Rebbe Rashab, Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski the rav of

WE WILL WAIT FOR THE ARRIVAL OF REB LEVI YITZCHOK

Due to the war, Reb Chaim Ozer was forced to leave his home and his city towards the Russian interior. He traveled the difficult wartime road until he reached Yekaterinaslav [now Dnieperpetrovsk]. In the Holocaust memorial book for Yekaterinaslav-Dnieperpetrovsk, it recounts how the residents of the city accorded him great honor.

At that time, the rav of the city was Reb Levi Yitzchok Schneerson, the father of the Rebbe, and the two were in regular contact and accomplished a great deal in communal matters.

Reb Shlomo Yosef Zevin recounted, “Once, Reb Chaim Ozer called a meeting of rabbis in his house to discuss a number of pressing issues. The people arrived, but he did not open the meeting. When those present urged him to begin, he responded, ‘The discussion will not begin until Reb Levi Yitzchok, the rav of the city, arrives.’”

Vilna, Reb Avrohom Dovber Shapiro the rav of Kovno, Reb Menachem Mendel the son of the Admur of Bobruisk, Reb Isser Zalman Meltzer the rav of Slutzk, and Reb Shmaryahu Yehuda Leib Medalia the rav of Vitebsk.

THE CONGRESS NEVER CAME TO SESSION

Early Elul of 1917, the rabbis appointed to the committee held a meeting. Following this meeting, there was continued correspondence between the Rebbe and Reb Chaim Ozer on the subject. At that time, Reb Chaim Ozer was working to create a bloc of various groups in order to win a larger mandate for the Orthodox in the projected elections, and the Rebbe's letters address this issue.

Many plans came and went concerning the planned convention. The Rebbe Rashab saw it as vitally

important that the convention be a smashing success for the benefit of all Russian Jewry, and Reb Chaim Ozer supported this view.

In the beginning of 5678, the Rebbe Rashab received a summons from the ministry of religion to come to Petrograd for a consultation. In the month of Cheshvan, the Rebbe set out, also hoping to meet with Reb Chaim Ozer in Petrograd to discuss the planned general convention. However, while he was traveling, the Communist revolution broke out and he only made it to Moscow, unable to reach Petrograd. Thus, the Rebbe returned home to Rostov.

Eventually, the Orthodox parties succeeded in organizing as a bloc in many places, and reaped great success in the democratic congressional election held in early 1918. However, the congress never came to session,

because immediately following the elections the Communists took power and did not recognize the Jewish representation elected under the previous government.

After the end of WWI and the Communist revolution, Reb Chaim Ozer returned to Vilna, then under Polish rule, and the Rebbe Rashab remained in Rostov under Soviet rule. Since we have no documentation of an ongoing connection between our Rebbeim and Reb Chaim Ozer in the years following, it appears that due to circumstances the correspondence stopped.

The connection began anew when the Rebbe Rayatz left the Soviet Union in 1927.

Regarding the contacts between the Rebbe Rayatz, the Rebbe MHTM and Reb Chaim Ozer – in the next installment.

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