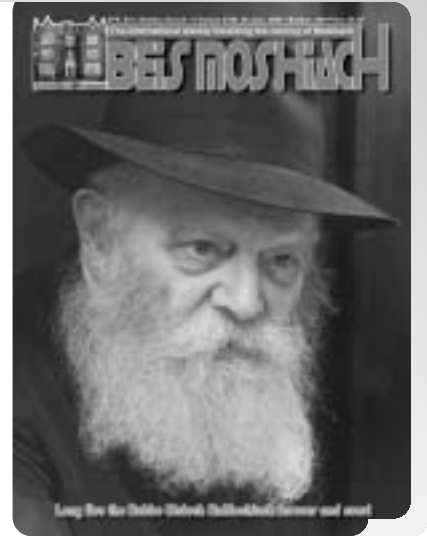


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### U.S.A

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

### ERETZ HA'KODESH

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

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

M.M. Hendel

### ENGLISH EDITOR:

Boruch Merkur  
editor@beismoshiach.org

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# BEYOND THE DESERT

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



[Continued from last week]

7. However, notwithstanding the fact that the eager anticipation of the Sages and Prophets for the life of the World to Come was a further continuation and advancement of their service out of **love**, there is still a higher level of service out of love that “not every Sage merits.” Namely, that which Rambam innovates in Law 2 regarding “the virtue of Avrohom our Father,” that one “acts in accordance with the truth [simply] because it is the truth.”

We may assert that the following is among the advantages of this approach:

When service of G-d is motivated by a regular love (that which is inherent to every Jew (and how much more so with regard to) – their Prophets and their Sages), then being involved in Torah and Mitzvos is **in order** to attain a bond with and the experience of cleaving to the Holy One Blessed Be He [i.e., an ulterior motive, albeit very subtle]. The involvement in Torah and Mitzvos is in a manner that is not for its own purpose and sake but for the purpose of attaining the object of desire, which is like something additional [to one’s service of G-d]. But when one’s service out of love is in a manner that he “acts in accordance with the truth [simply] because it is the truth,” this rules out not only service for the **purpose** of receiving reward; he does not seek out anything else in his service, not even that he should cleave to the Holy One Blessed Be He, which is the manifestation of the knowledge of G-d and the love of G-d. Rather, he “acts in accordance with the truth [simply] **because it is the truth**,” being the commandment and the will of G-d, for the fulfillment of the commandment of G-d is true unto itself.

Regarding this quality, the Rambam writes, “The virtue of this approach is **exceedingly great**” (and not as he writes in the preceding law, simply, “the virtue of the Prophets,” “the

virtue of the Sages”). Indeed, one cannot say regarding this quality that it is the virtue of **all** the Sages. On the contrary, as Rambam continues, “not every Sage merits it.” Rather, “it is the virtue of Avrohom our Father, whom the Holy One Blessed Be He called ‘His Beloved.’” For in order to attain this great quality (he “acts in accordance with the truth [simply] because it is the truth”), one must ascend to an extremely lofty level in the love of G-d.

8. According to all the above we can also shed light on our understanding of the spies and the generation of the desert:

The spies (and the generation of the desert in general) were, as mentioned above, “on an extremely lofty level,” “and they did not want to lower themselves [FN 59: for it is obvious that one must **ascend** in holiness] to enter the Land of Israel, to the order of service of “six years you shall sow your field, etc.” – a person plows, a person sows, etc. (as mentioned in Section 2) – for this order of service would not allow them to be involved in Torah study, etc., “properly.” The majority of their days would have been devoted, rather, to “matters that the body requires” [Rambam *ibid* 9:1]. They wanted to remain and proceed and to **journey and ascend** in the order of life in the desert, for good things were amply provided there, as mentioned above (*mahn* from the heavens, water from the Well of Miriam, and the Clouds of Glory that traveled with them, as noted above). They had no distractions from the service of G-d; they were able to sit freely to seek out tranquility and to **increase** in wisdom to merit the life of the World to Come, **resembling** how “the Jewish people – their Prophets and their Sages [included] – eagerly anticipated, etc., in order that they may rest, etc. They will [then] find themselves calm, etc.”

However, notwithstanding the fact that their will and

desire for the latter experience in the desert constitutes a lofty level in cleaving to G-d – service out of love – nevertheless, entry into the Land of Israel brings to a higher level still. Namely, fulfilling the commandments of G-d without any personal interest at all: “acting in accordance with the truth [simply] because it is the truth.”

But in order to attain this level, it requires an even loftier love of G-d. And since the spies and the generation of the desert wished to remain in the desert and did not want to enter the land, this indicates that they still had not attained this level of complete rapture and exaltedness in the love of G-d.

Thus, the Jewish people remained in the desert in a state of being removed from all obstacles from the ultimate experience of Torah study and cleaving to G-d, enjoying rest and calm in order that they may “increase in wisdom.” For in such a state they would attain the perfection of the soul’s cleaving to G-d, etc. [FN 61: Accordingly we can explain also the commentary of *HaAsara Maamaros* (cited above in FN 28) that the generation of the desert has no need for the World to Come, although it was explained above that their will and desire to remain in the desert is an example of “the Jewish people – their Prophets and their Sages [included] – eagerly anticipated, etc., in order that they shall merit the life of the World to Come.” For by being in the desert in actuality for forty years, they traveled and ascended from strength to strength until they attained a superior height while being

below, a soul in a body. Indeed, the level of life in the World to Come for souls (for the most part), whereby “the righteous sit...and they derive benefit from the ray of the Divine Presence” (Rambam Laws of Repentance 8:2), is a degradation and a descent for them for which they have no need (to note from *Shaar Maamarei Razal* on the beginning of Perek Cheilek regarding the various levels of the World to Come, but this is a separate discussion) —from the address of Shabbos Parshas Shlach 5747.] Afterwards, in the following generation, a new generation and a new level, they entered the Land of Israel to fulfill the commandments of G-d, both with regard to the entry itself into the Land as well as the fulfillment of Mitzvos that require action there, for specifically in this is perceived the concept of “acting in accordance with the truth [simply] because it is the truth.”

In fact, we may assert that this is the meaning of the words of Yehoshua and Kaleiv in response to the assembly of the entire Jewish people [FN 61\*: Our Torah portion [i.e., Shlach] 14:8. See *Likkutei Torah* on our Torah portion, pg. 38c.]: “If G-d is **desirous** of us, He will bring us, etc.” [From the latter verse we see] that entry into the Land is connected with “G-d is **desirous** of us”; this is the desire and will of G-d. Of consequence then, its fulfillment reveals that “G-d is **desirous of us**,” the cleaving

of the Jewish people to G-d in a manner that is loftier than the rapture brought about through the “increase in wisdom” in the desert.

[To be continued be”H]

*Notwithstanding the fact that their will and desire for their experience in the desert constitutes a lofty level in cleaving to G-d, nevertheless, entry into the Land of Israel brings to a higher level still. Namely, fulfilling the commandments of G-d without any personal interest at all.*

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# THE TINY DOT

ITTY CHAZAN

They were barefoot. All of them. Sandals and slippers were kicked off freely, as the kids surged forward. It didn't matter the activity, the tree house, tropical slides, or hot air swings. For at the foot of each play yard game, were piles and piles of sand. Sand purchased exclusively for playtime. Sand to protect the scorching heat from burning their feet.

The sound of Portuguese filled the air, as exuberant students of the Beit Chaya Mushka Recife Brazil school, enjoyed recess.

Yet one child was absent. It wasn't his first time either. It was actually his third consecutive absence. Calmly, I entered the office to express my concern and phoned their home.

The father greeted me, and in response to his child's absence, he claimed, "I am not sending my child back to your Beit Chabad School ever again. I want my child to be Jewish, but my goodness! – what in the world are you teaching them? No, no, this is definitely not my choice of a school. My five-year-old will continue in the Jewish city school in the morning. After all, there are no commitments there. They accept Jews and children with Jewish fathers. They don't put fanciful thoughts into kids' heads. This is definitely not for us. We just want our kids to be Jewish. But you— you've been giving way, way beyond. I've had it, and I want him out!"

My phone was dangling precariously. What ideas? Which commitments? Why the sudden outcry of protest? I furiously searched for a reason that warranted this extreme reaction to pull their child out of Beit Chabad.

"Please, Senhor, kindly explain to me, what terrible indoctrination has taken place in school that necessitates you to take your child out?"

"My boy, the apple of my eye, my darling child, insists that we buy a mezuzah, like the one in Beit Chabad that he loves to kiss. After all, he insists, if we're Jewish, why can't we have a mezuzah like the rabbi does?"

Are you kidding? You want the whole world to know that we're Jewish? You want me to loudly and proudly proclaim my identity on a doorpost? With all due respect

to your wonderful Beit Chabad and its activities, our son will no longer join your Talmud Torah."

It's hot in Recife. One hundred degrees, humid, wet, twelve months a year, seven days a week. At that moment, the heat escalated dangerously, as I searched for help to try and save one more beautiful Jewish neshama. One hour later, I ended the conversation with these words:

"There is a little dot inside each Jew. It is known as the Pintele Yid – the little Jewish dot or spark. When your child, because of the Torah he is studying, will not come home with a shikse, you will remember it's the little dot. When one day, a Jewish power is felt resonating and vibrating in his home, you will know it's the Jewish dot. And now, I am privileged to once again work with your precious Jewish child."

Many months flew by, and his son learned assiduously. He was smart and perceptive, and loved to study. His mannerisms were calm and mature. A great kid! And then one day this child was absent. I immediately phoned home, and this time, the response was swift and sharp.

"My son came home requesting a yarmulke. Do not talk to me, do not respond, for I fear you will convince me once again to send him back to you. I respect your work, but my child! My child will not carry these outdated ideas in or on his head. Don't answer me, and don't attempt to change my mind – it's my final decision." I stared at the quiet phone line, saddened and crying for this Jewish child.

Several months later, we moved back to New York from Brazil, and this family moved to Tampa, Florida. This six-year-old child was enrolled in first grade public school. Their three-year-old daughter, too young to attend public school, desperately needed a place to study. Ah – Chabad to the rescue! And so, Shluchim Rabbi and Mrs. Dubrawsky of Tampa welcomed the three-year-old daughter with open arms.

At the annual Purim Party at Beit Chabad, Father and Mother took their son out of Public School to watch the performance of their three-year-old daughter. As they

entered the doorway of school, their six-year-old stopped short in his tracks, pointed excitedly to the wall and cried out, "What, look at the Rebbe's picture on the wall! The same Rebbe like in my school in Recife! What is this? My sister gets to go to a school with the Rebbe and I do not?! It's not fair! I want to go to a Jewish school too! I want to go to Beit Chabad! I am never going back to public school again. I only want to go to a Jewish school!"

The parents were shocked! No words could entice nor lure their child to return to public school. With no choice at hand, the parents took their six-year-old son out of public school and enrolled him into the Beit Chabad.

The family moved back to Recife. The father now proudly belonged to the Chabad Shul board, their children were enrolled in Beit Chabad, and their commitments in Yiddishkait flourished.

They came to New York for a visit, and they visited us personally in our home. The father stood up, and asked my husband for t'fillin as he hadn't put them on that day. He then pulled out a yarmulke from his pocket, looked at us, and smilingly said, "Do you remember the conversation of the little dot? Well, now you are witnesses to my little Jewish dot. I put on t'fillin every day, my wife does her Mitzvot, and biggest of all – we keep Shabbos and kosher!"

\* \* \*

The picture of the Rebbe on the wall, in Recife and in Tampa, those sparks of life generated from our Nasi HaDor and our Rosh B'nei Yisroel, gives life physically and spiritually to every man, woman, and child.

We in Recife, after many years of schooling this boy, saw concealment, not exactly a happy ending. We in Recife, after all those years of Chabad Talmud Torah, saw an end to the light of Mitzvos in this child.

The Rebbe sees all those little dots, and places shluchim in strategic arenas to touch the dots. There is no concealment by the Rebbe; there are no unproductive endings in the Rebbe's eyes. There is never wasted energy! There is only one path to one goal. It's the path of running after the General of all the little dots.

Nothing has changed in our run after Gimmel Tamuz. If anything, the run has become increasingly intense. And the Rebbe, whose messages pour abundantly from the Igros, reaches out to us with a truly personal unlimited

ticket of brachos and advice.

\* \* \*

Dina was bored. The watch ticked loudly as she fidgeted in her seat. The blackboard was filled with messages in chalk, yet they didn't captivate her thirsty heart. It wasn't that the teachers were boring; on the contrary, deep minds around her were absorbing, writing notes, and asking excellent questions.

They just didn't quench her soul, a soul born to Chabad parents. Suddenly, like a stream of lightning, her eyes glittered, and she was sure no one missed the loud wild thumping of her excited heart.

"Dina – is there something amusing in my Tanach lesson that you'd care to share with us?"

Teacher's sharp look nor mild rebuke did nothing to dampen her student's exuberance. For the tiny seed of an idea was now a giant stalk, catapulting Dina to action.

"Tell me, Mrs. Chazan," she began later that day. "Should I switch schools from my present excellent non-Chabad yeshiva to a Lubavitcher school? As a Lubavitcher, I feel it's time to learn in my own school and study Chassidus. I know that only Chassidus will quench my thirsty soul. Yet my parents insist that I continue in my current non-Chabad yeshiva. The battle to switch schools will be intolerable. Oh please advise me. What should I do?" My assistance to her was of course to lay the burden of her question on the captain who can shoulder the weight.

She asked the Rebbe for advice, and I, merely as her translator, explained the content of her answer.

"It is important to learn Chassidus, and every hour that one does not learn Chassidus, it is *avar z'mano batal karbano*. It cannot be made up."

"As I am not learning Chassidus, this is a sure sign that I must switch schools."

Seven days later, she again requested assistance. "The arguments at home are compelling, I wonder if it's worth it to switch schools at the expense of all this confrontation. I doubt I'll even be able to raise this kind of money for my own tuition."

I wonder if we are always aware, the extent of our

---

*There is a living  
Melech HaMoshiach  
and a living family of  
Chassidim who cry  
out with a supreme  
Achdus that we  
believe, we await,  
and may Hashem  
activate the  
revelation of the  
Rebbe Melech  
HaMoshiach now!*

---

lucky gift of always being able to ask the Rebbe for advice and brachos.

She opened a different seifer of the *Igros Kodesh*, and I translated for her the letter:

“You ask for my advice if you should switch schools from the yeshiva you are in to a Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Lud. The importance of learning Chassidus is so great that every hour that one does not learn Chassidus, it’s *avar z’mano batal karbano*.” We both looked at each other with Goosebumps on our arms. We stared wordlessly and incredulously, from the seifer, to the Rebbe’s picture, to each other. Two answers, clear as a compass in a desert.

She had her answers, and all battles were worth this fight and investment.

One week later she was back. In an agitated voice, she tearfully related that her parents adamantly refused to let her switch. “I know I received a super clear answer. But what should I do? My parents simply won’t hear of it. Please, please allow me to ask the Rebbe once more.”

She opened the *Igros* for the third time. This time, on the bottom of the page, the Rebbe writes, “I already answered you twice.”

The switch was made, and beautiful fruits are the produce of the Rebbe’s directive.

\* \* \*

Once again, Gimmel Tamuz hugs us on the calendar. It is up to us, to inspire, encourage, and support one another. And it is up to us to hold hands together. For we cannot do it alone.

And London Levi is the perfect example.

The boys would be coming in any moment now, thirsty, and surely not minding a snack. Huge coconuts were piled high in our laundry room in Recife. Our special fish knife, long as the 50-pound fish we used it on, also served as our coconut opener. With one mighty blow, the coconut is split, and is a favorite drink up in tropical Brazil.

And snacks to serve at this shiur? We couldn’t serve tuna sandwiches, as our tuna supply was depleted, and we only ordered once a year. We couldn’t serve bread, for there was a freeze on all flour. All stores hid their flour until the government would nullify the price freeze. As flour, a basic staple, was cheap, store owners hid their

supplies until prices would be raised. That meant I did not have any cakes to serve for refreshments either!

The bell broke into my thoughts, and Levi entered. My husband’s university study group was deep in their shiur, and Levi, a newcomer to Recife, joined this class with a passion.

Each student had its own story to tell. Levi lived in Rio de Janeiro. He had been temporarily hired to work in Recife. Prior to his coming, Levi traveled to London on a pleasure trip. One Friday afternoon in London, a bachur approached him, and asked him if he was Jewish. That was the first time since his Bar Mitzva that Levi put on T’fillin.

Suddenly, the bachur turned to Levi and said, “Tonight is Friday night. I’d like to invite you to our Shabbos dinner.” Levi smiled and continued. “Well,” I thought to

myself, “if this guy is unusual enough to invite me, a perfect stranger, to his private home for Shabbos, then I too will behave in an unusual manner and accept.”

That Friday night was the first time in my life that I ever sat at a Shabbos table. I know I will never again be the same.

When I heard that Lubavitch arrived on the shores of Recife, that the same type of Rabbi was here, like the one I met in London, I immediately signed up for classes and programs.”

Levi married in Recife, and my husband made their wedding. In their own hometown, their children attend the Jewish school, they eat kosher, and all due to the united effort of two rabbis, placed in strategic arenas by the Rebbe – to conquer the little dot.

**Gimmel Tamuz evokes a floodgate of t’fillos, T’hillim, and hisorerus.**

**Gimmel Tamuz opens wide the deepest yearning of our innermost soul.**

**Gimmel Tamuz is when we Chassidim hold hands in an unbroken chain of hiskashrus.**

**Gimmel Tamuz is the day we reaffirm our faith that with our Rebbe there is no concealment.**

There is a living Melech HaMoshiach and a living family of Chassidim who cry out with a supreme Achdus that we believe, we await, and may Hashem activate the revelation of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach now!

---

*“Well,” I thought to myself, “if this guy is unusual enough to invite me, a perfect stranger, to his private home for Shabbos, then I too will behave in an unusual manner and accept.”*

---



# DANCING TO GREET MOSHIACH

*When someone asks him: Why are you dancing, either he answers or those standing around who know answer, “What do you mean? Don’t you know what was written already in the newspapers that Moshiach already came? And he’s coming here immediately and taking all of us on a trip on clouds to our holy land and the third Beis HaMikdash to make the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva there! \* The following is a compilation of excerpts from sichos and aphorisms about dancing, and Geula, taken from a t’shura for the wedding of the Kali-Tovredovitz families.*

## GOING OUT WITH TUPIM

And the special and primary directive regarding song, as emphasized in the Shira of Miriam and the Shiras Devora:

Just as in the yetzias Mitzrayim, **“the righteous women of the generation were sure** that Hashem would do miracles and so they took out tambourines (or drums) from Egypt,” so too with the geula from this final galus: the righteous Jewish women must be sure – and they **are surely confident** – that the true and complete Redemption will come immediately, so that they **begin**,

**immediately** (in the final moments of galus) **with song, tambourines, and dancing, for the coming of the true and complete Redemption!**

(Hisvaaduyos 5752, vol. 2, p. 191)

## DANCING TO GREET MOSHIACH

And the main thing is to ensure that anywhere that there are Jews, there will be a Simchas Beis HaShoeiva ... and he brings with him simcha and a happy tune and happy things and happy news including the good news that Moshiach has already come! ...

And so it is obvious that then he will dance and rejoice with great joy, the joy of kabbalas p’nei Moshiach Tzidkeinu! And in a way that he is not embarrassed, on the contrary – he dances “before all Israel” to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

And when someone asks him: What’s going on? Why are you dancing so much all of a sudden? What’s the point of all this simcha?

He answers, or those standing around him who know answer: What do you mean? Don’t you know what it says already in the newspapers? – that Moshiach has already come! And he will arrive here immediately and take us all among all the Jewish people on a trip on clouds from heaven, to our holy land, and to the third Beis HaMikdash, to make the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva there!

(Sichos Kodesh 5752 vol. 1, p. 98)

## MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Dancing with the feet [is the] way you hurry and hasten the dancing to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu and the fulfillment of the promise “everlasting joy upon their heads.”

In other words, in addition to the fact that every action in Torah and mitzvos hurries and hastens the true and complete Redemption, including the promise of “everlasting joy upon their heads” – an action that is about joy emphasizes this even more in a way of “measure for measure.” From





the dancing and simcha you come to dancing to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu and “everlasting joy upon their heads.”

*(Hisvaaduyos 5747, vol. 4, p. 225 and the additions on p. 227)*

## DANCING IN THE NINE DAYS

The main thing is that from speaking about it we will dance immediately to the actual deed and there will be no questions whether it is permissible to dance in the Nine Days. This is because when Moshiach actually comes, “he points with his finger and says ‘this,’” and the true and complete Redemption will actually be there and so not only will it be permissible to dance but these days will be transformed into days of joy and holidays, and with greater strength (relative to the great descent).

*(Hisvaaduyos 5749, vol. 4, p. 98)*

## A DANCE THAT ENDS IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

From a dance, a dance that begins here, in the shul and beis midrash of the Rebbe, my father-in-law, Nasi Doreinu, and its continuation – in our holy land ... till the Holy of Holies, immediately!

*(Hisvaaduyos 5748, vol. 1, p. 346)*

## A CIRCLE DANCE FOR TZADDIKIM AND HAKAFOS WITH EVERY JEW

And from the beginning of the simcha of Simchas Torah in our holy land – in Yerushalayim the holy city and the Beis HaMikdash – we go to arrange hakafo in a way that Hashem makes a “circle dance” (like hakafo) for tzaddikim (“and all your people are tzaddikim”). And He sits among them ... and each and every one points with his finger, as it says, “and it will be said on that day, behold this is our God” (as it is also said in the verses of “Ata Horeisa”).

And one can say further that the

hakafof of the future will be in a way of u'faratzta within the very "dance for tzaddikim" –

A dance for tzaddikim in a way "that He sits among them" is still in a way of "measured and limited," since there is a difference between the tzaddikim who are dancing and Hashem Who is sitting among them in the center. The true perfection (in a way of breaking all bounds, measures, and limits) is when there is no difference between the dance of tzaddikim and Hashem.

This inyan will take place at hakafof – "that every Yid dances with Mahuso V'Atzmuso Yisborech," to be literally one with Mahuso V'Atzmuso Yisborech, "Yisroel and Hashem are all one," "Yisroel and the King alone."

Further, and most importantly, may it be at the hakafof of this Simchas Torah immediately.

(Hisvaaduyos 5751, vol. 1, p. 177)

## A DANCE IN GEULA IN A CIRCLE

Regarding the future it says that "then a young maiden will rejoice in a circle dance." I.e., there won't be the type of *rikud* where one is opposite the other, where they move apart turning their faces away, and then they move closer, face to face, etc., but the dance will be a circle dance, where there is no distancing and turning away but going round in a circle which is called a *machol*. And it says, "then a young maiden will rejoice in a circle dance," then, in the future there will be the type of simcha which is *machol*, etc.

That is, unlike now, when we have a *rikud* with one opposite the other, where there is turning away and moving apart and then moving together face to face. This is because any elevation to a higher level is impossible without this dance...and then a **young maiden** will rejoice in a circle dance, which is a dance going

around in a circle, etc. Namely, a higher elevation, the aspect of circular revelations, which encompass everything in a circle without any divisions.

(Maamarei Admur HaZakein – 5565 p. 219)

## TO INCREASE SIMCHA IN ORDER TO BRING MOSHIACH

Certainly there was simcha shel mitzva in previous generations for

*And when someone  
asks him: What's  
going on? Why are  
you dancing so much  
all of a sudden?  
What's the point of  
all this simcha?  
He answers: What do  
you mean? Don't you  
know what it says  
already in the  
newspapers? – that  
Moshiach has already  
come!*

simcha shel mitzva is an essential part of avoda, as it says, "serve Hashem with joy," "you served Hashem your G-d with simcha and gladness of heart," especially in the building of the Beis HaMikdash.

Still, with simcha shel mitzva the main emphasis is on the type of avoda – that the avoda needs to be done with simcha, whereas what we are talking about here is that the

simcha to bring Moshiach is simcha for its own sake, pure simcha, avoda of simcha for the express purpose of bringing Moshiach.

Since this is so, the way to bring Moshiach is apparently – and not just apparently but this is the conclusion – by increasing in simcha, pure joy, simcha that will immediately bring Moshiach ...

The main thing is that instead of talking a lot about it and the debate, etc., they should actually begin to go forth and announce about increasing in simcha in order to bring Moshiach. Certainly through this they will actually bring Moshiach, and with the greatest speed: "He did not cause them to tarry for a blink of an eye." Try it out and it will be proven!

(At the end of the sicha, they sang the Hakafof Niggun of Rav Levi Yitzchok z"l and the Rebbe stood upright and danced with tremendous joy along with everyone, with simcha to bring Moshiach.)

(Hisvaaduyos 5748, vol. 4, p. 270)

## LEARN A DANCE TO GREET MOSHIACH

Use the final moments! ... If you are really preparing to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu (and you have already begun to learn a nice dance to dance to greet Moshiach ...) these are the final moments in which you can fulfill the mitzva of tz'daka.

(Hisvaaduyos 5747, vol. 1, p. 162)

## DANCING ON CLOUDS

Simply, the true and complete Redemption through Moshiach Tzidkeinu, in our time, soon in our days literally, "coming with clouds from heaven." And with him come all the Jewish people – while dancing on "clouds from heaven," a dance on earth and in heaven together – to our holy land.

(Hisvaaduyos 5747, vol. 1 p. 58)



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# KGB AGENT IN 770

BY SHNEUR ZALMAN BERGER

*For years, Rabbi Betzalel Schiff worked to locate the files of Chassidim in the KGB archives. One day, one of the top KGB officials asked to meet in person with the Chassid researching the files. And so, high in the terrifying castle which houses the Russian foreign service, this top official revealed his “theory of Chassidic revolutionaries.”*

## THEY SUFFERED BUT DID NOT YIELD

The Communist Revolution, which began in 1917, brought many tribulations upon the Jews of the Soviet Union. Shortly after the revolution, the government established the Yevsektzia, the Jewish section of the Communist Party, whose main function was to persecute the remaining religious Jews. Religious institutions, including shuls, yeshivos and mikvaos, were put under lock and seal. Rabbis, shoachim and mohalim, were arrested and exiled or killed.

The totalitarian regime ruled with an iron fist, persecuting anyone who opposed the communist ideology. This persecution was felt in every area of life, with every government agency working together led by the secret police (originally the Cheka,

which became the NKVD and later the KGB), which struck terror in the hearts of Soviet citizens.

A wide net of spies and informants throughout the country provided information for the secret police. This police force arrested and manhandled anyone suspected of counterrevolutionary activities. They arrested millions and shipped them off to detention camps, forced labor camps and psychiatric wards. Many ended up in Siberia, where they perished from cold and starvation.

Facing off against them, Chabad Chassidim – under the guidance and leadership of our Rebbes – fought for mitzva observance throughout the Soviet Union. The Chassidim suffered greatly, but did not yield. Many were exiled and others killed. The persecution was relentless, but the Chassidim continued keeping mitzvos and

studying Torah with mesirus nefesh. The secret police constantly tracked the activities of the Chabad Chassidim, who represented the only Jewish movement to stand strong.

In an unusual meeting in the Russian Foreign Office, a senior KGB official expressed his view on the Lubavitcher “military strategy,” which brought out such unique inner fortitude amongst Chabad Chassidim under the communist regime.

## “THE BOSS WANTS TO MEET YOU”

The following is in the words of Reb Betzalel Schiff, director of the SHAMIR organization for Russian immigrants:

In recent years, I worked together with an organization called “Memorial,” in order to extract the files of Chabad Chassidim from the archives of the KGB. I provided them with detailed information about Chassidim who sat in prison, and they would search and deliver to me the KGB files of their interrogations and alleged crimes.

This organization, which has semi-governmental status in Russia, works to “rehabilitate” and clear the names of the so-called “political criminals.” These are citizens found guilty of bogus crimes, because they held views contrary to communism. They helped me

uncover the files from some of the harshest years, 1935, 1938 and 1946, when many Chassidim were arrested.

There is no way that I could put into words the feelings and emotions, which I experienced while reading these interrogations. I was also instrumental in bringing great joy to families, who received rare pictures of their loved ones. For some, the picture in the file

was the only surviving picture of the patriarch of the family.

One fascinating point worth mentioning: In many files, the times written indicate that the interrogation began in the afternoon and continued until the next morning, and yet, despite the humiliations and tortures for more than 12 hours, the file remains very thin. This is because the person under interrogation refused to

finger other Chassidim and remained silent.

My contacts were mostly functionaries, however, one day (in 1992 or 93), I was approached by Mrs. Irina Osipova of the Memorial organization, who collected many KGB reports on Chabad Chassidim and published them in a book (*Chassidim B'Hatzolat HaAm*). She told me that "our boss," Mr. Alexander Nikolayevich, wanted to meet with me. I didn't know what he wanted and I hesitated over whether to meet with him or not. Therefore, I took the approach of doing nothing and waiting.

### IN THE LUBYANKA

After a few days, Mrs. Osipova reminded me that the boss wanted to meet me, and she added that he had served for many years as an expert on religion for the KGB. In this role, he had many connections with the heads of the KGB in the Ukraine, where many Chabad Chassidim sat in prisons.

Since I was doubtful of the productivity of such a meeting, I consulted the shliach of the Rebbe, Rabbi Berel Lazar. In the end, we decided that I should go to the meeting. Since the man was a veteran high ranking KGB official, I decided to present the four volumes of the *Seifer HaShluchim* to him, as a gift, to show what they tried to destroy.

They arranged an appointment for me in the Lubyanka, the KGB headquarters in the heart of Moscow. The very name of the place used to inspire terror in the hearts of Russian citizens. Many Chassidim underwent interrogations behind those walls and many were tortured and then sent straight to Siberia.

On a Friday afternoon, I found myself standing before the metal gate, through which many

Castle that houses the Russian Foreign Ministry



Chassidim passed on their way to the dreaded cellars. My heart began to race. I rang the bell, and a guard quickly opened the gate and directed me to Mischa, who worked for Memorial. Mischa asked me for identification, and then instructed me to wait.

He returned immediately, looking angry and upset. "The meeting won't take place here. Come with me, we have to go to the Foreign Office." I felt pressured, as it was getting late and Shabbos was approaching. I told him of my time pressure, but he told me that a car was already waiting, so we could travel immediately.

We passed the inner gate, and between the daunting outer gates, a car stood waiting. I sat down in the car, which had a police siren and the driver took off at breakneck speed.

### STRONG LOOKS

A few minutes passed, and we arrived at a tall, intimidating castle, built in an old-fashioned style, which houses the Russian Foreign Ministry. I walked to the office of Alexander Nikolayevich, and when I entered, I was shocked to see on his desk a number of books published by Shamir. Right off, he inquired as to how I go about selecting which files to seek out. I answered that I am a Lubavitcher Chassid, and I try to find the files of friends and relatives of my parents.

He interrupted me, "The Chassidim really did break the law. They set up chadarim and yeshivos, baked matzos and built mikvaos. For others, we had to invent excuses that they were spies for America or Japan."

I responded, "They did and they continue to do," as I handed him the book containing the pictures of

the shluchim and their families. I had placed bookmarks where there are shluchim who are grandchildren of those Chassidim who sat in Soviet prisons. "Here are the grandchildren of those people who you imprisoned," I said, and immediately added, "They always accused Chabad of opposing the government. The first Rebbe of Chabad sat in prison as an accused traitor. What kind of logic is there to assume that all seven leaders of Chabad opposed the government? The work of Chabad is to breathe life into Judaism, and not to be

***"What kind of logic is there to assume that all seven leaders of Chabad opposed the government? The work of Chabad is to breathe life into Judaism, and not to be involved in politics!"***

involved in politics!"

After paging through one of the volumes, Alexander began commenting to Mischa, who stood off to the side, about his impressions of the pictures in the book: "Look how they work; look at these families, these children. They all have powerful looks, and they look straight into the camera. They are calm and confident in what they are doing. Do you understand how they work? They have their own unique approach, and sadly, I only understood this

too late."

### THE IMPACT OF THE INTRODUCTIONS

After describing his impressions of the *Seifer HaShluchim*, he began to discuss the books published by Shamir. "Who is this Professor Branover?" he asked suddenly.

"He serves as the chairman of the organization, and I am the director. He is a good friend of mine. The goal of our organization was to bring to the Jews of the Soviet Union, those books which you prohibited them from reading."

"The Rebbe saw these books?" he asked as if spontaneously, and I responded in the affirmative. That is when he told me that he assumed the Rebbe instructed Professor Branover in how to write the introductions. In response to my quizzical look, he explained:

"For many years, I wondered why Chabad Chassidim expend such extraordinary efforts to smuggle prayer-books into the Soviet Union. In every synagogue here in Russia, there remain many siddurim, so why bother to send new ones from Israel to here? Only after I retired did I have the opportunity to explore the question in depth, and I realized that although the contents are the same, it is the introductions of Professor Branover, which threatened communism.

In my opinion, Branover wrote those introductions according to the instructions of the Rebbe. Even though we did not permit bringing such books into Russia, the Chassidim managed to smuggle small quantities of siddurim from time to time. These were sent to cities throughout the Soviet Union.

"Wherever these siddurim made their way, people read the introductions which instructed



**R' Betzael Schiff and Professor Branover in the Shamir offices**

them in how to use the old siddurim left in the synagogues from pre-communist days. That is how through a few siddurim, many Jews began to pray. From the information in the introductions, many Jews strengthened their religious observance, and nobody could stop them.”

## WHY IS 770 IN A BASEMENT?

I sat there amazed, while listening to the extraordinary impressions of a former top KGB official, regarding the impact of the Jewish books which I was involved in producing and disseminating with true mesirus nefesh to the Jews of the Soviet Union. The real surprise came later, when he told me the following:

“I was also in 770, and not by happenstance. This was when I traveled to the US as part of a government mission. I decided that I should visit the synagogue of the Rebbe of Lubavitch. I knew that it was the headquarters of the Chabad Chassidim who were active in the Soviet Union throughout the years.



**List of interrogations of R' Chaim Eliezer Gurevitch and prison picture**

“I had no trouble finding the synagogue, even though it was situated in a basement. You think Schneerson doesn’t have money? If so, why is the synagogue in a basement?”

I smiled. Instead of answering directly, I said that I was interested in hearing his opinion. He took out

a cigarette, lit up, and blew out a cloud of smoke. Then he continued, “I entered the synagogue, and I was shocked. The furniture is exceedingly simple, and the walls and lighting ordinary. The place teemed with life, but it didn’t look like the headquarters of such an important and influential movement. Where is the grandeur? Where is the suitable edifice?”

“Suddenly, I understood everything. You Chabad Chassidim are revolutionaries, partisans, who have your own way of doing things. In the exodus from Egypt, the Jews acted as revolutionaries. Slaves rose up against their masters and escaped the country. In order not to forget that they were revolutionaries, they ate matza for a whole year [actually, it was only a month – Ed.]. Rabbi Schneerson introduced the revolutionary lifestyle into his followers’ lives. He wants that you should use every means to see to it that Jews keep the mitzvos. You know good and well, what I am talking about.

“You mentioned earlier your first Rebbe, who sat in our prison, and this only proves my point – you people are a revolutionary movement, seven generations of revolutionaries. Your Rebbe tried to inculcate you with the way of revolutionaries and partisans. That is why he chose to place his synagogue in a basement like partisans who live underground.

“I, who saw so many interrogation files of Chassidim, can tell you that they operated like partisans. They worked in small groups, showed total dedication to their goal and total loyalty to their leader, as well as working in complete unity while displaying tremendous mutual concern.”



## PROUD CHASSIDIC WOMEN

He paused for a moment and I said that I never looked at Chabad that way. However, he acted as if he didn't hear me, and continued expounding on his theory:

"When Chassidim sit together in 770, how do they eat? There is no tablecloth on the table, and they eat herring and salads and drink vodka. This is all there is to eat in America?! In reality, it is all part of the plan. The Rebbe wants them to feel like revolutionaries, that the food is not the main thing, but doing for Jews around the world is!

"I would like to point out that the Chassidic women have a unique Chassidic pride. The Rebbe did a lot to arouse this Chassidic pride in them, by holding special gatherings for them, where he addressed the ladies."

Once he brought up the subject of Chassidic women, I took the opportunity to lodge a special request. I mentioned that I received many files, but all were of men, whereas, I hadn't found a single file of any women. I asked him to help me find the files of the Chassidic women, and he told me that he would look into it for me.

Due to the fast approaching Shabbos, I had to ask Mischa to use his official vehicle to transport me to my hotel. As I sat in the car, I found myself humming the song of the Chassidim in Russia, "Mi Armiya Admura" – we are the army of the Admur/Rebbe.

## RESOLUTE IN THEIR FAITH

In the days following, I felt bothered that I hadn't had time to allow the fascinating conversation to continue. I decided to call the number he gave me, but the family members told me he went on vacation (dacha). To my surprise,

*"Your Rebbe tried to inculcate you with the way of revolutionaries and partisans. That is why he chose to place his synagogue in a basement like partisans who live underground."*

he called me back a few days later, and we again struck up a conversation. I told him about various signs and codes the Chassidim used to identify each other through the prison walls.

He laughed loudly, and said, "If you think into it, you'll find other means and codes that the Chassidim used."

I mentioned in passing that Mrs. Sarah Katzenelbogen, known as Muma-Sara, sat in Soviet prisons, and did not return from there. He

got the hint, and told me, "I looked but there are practically no files of women who sat in prison."

"However, I want to tell you something about your women. The men would 'sit,' and the young wives would remain resolute in their faith. The power of that faith left us, the KGB agents, stunned. With her husband in Siberia, a young wife continues to educate her children according to the Jewish Torah. We tried to offer the women our assistance, we offered free government day camp, and they refused. We tried to get them to integrate socially and in the workplace, and so let go of their Judaism, but they stubbornly kept their distance from the communist social circle. We wanted them to eat in the communal dining halls in the workplace, but they refused. When they felt the pressure becoming unbearable, they fled from their homes with their children."

\* \* \*

The conversation ended, and I was enthralled by everything I heard about the heroism of Chabad Chassidim, from the perspective of the man whose job it was to hound them, persecute them and try to sway them from the way of Torah.



Professor Yirmiyahu Branover



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# Sivan 28 - Gimmel Tammuz Magbis

B.H. Sivan 15, 5766

**To all Anash, Men and Women, G-d bless you.**

We are soon approaching the very auspicious day, Gimmel Tammuz. This day comes in close proximity with Sivan 28, the auspicious day that the Rebbe MH"M and the Rebbetzin arrived in the United States.

Obviously, these are very opportune days, especially when it is connected to the number ten, when one should again evaluate his or her "Hiskashrus" (connection) with the Rebbe, and more important, to utilize these special days to 'strengthen' the Hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

"KUPAS RABBEINU," was established with the full consent and blessing of the Rebbe, with its purpose and goal to make every effort that all of the Rebbe's activities, institutions etc. continue unchanged. By supporting Kupas Rabbeinu, one is actually participating in many of the Rebbe's activities, and thus strengthening their *Hiskashrus* to the Rebbe.

With this in mind, we therefore urge each and everyone of anash, men and women to support Kupas Rabbeinu in every possible way.

In this merit may we be "zoiche" that much before Gimmel Tammuz, the Rebbe will be revealed as Melech Hamoshiach and redeem us from this deep and bitter Golus and lead us all to the true and final Geulo, NOW MAMAOSH.

VAAD KUPAS RABBEINU

P.S. Please send all correspondence only to the above address.

You may also send Maimad, Keren-Hashono, Magbis etc. to Kupas Rabbeinu.

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# TO FIGHT UNTIL THEIR LAST DROP OF BLOOD

BY MENACHEM ZIEGELBOIM

*On the road waited the Rebbe's loyal secretary, the Chassid, R' Elchonon Dov Morosov (may Hashem avenge his blood). He looked downcast and he didn't have good news to relate. \* The story of the arrest that nearly took place but was averted, with G-d's help.*

## PART I

Not many know that aside from the Rebbe Rayatz's seven arrests, there was another potential arrest, an arrest that awaited him, but at the last minute did not take place. The Rebbe Rayatz himself wrote about this in a letter he sent a few days after he left Russia, when he was in Riga. In this letter, he poured out his heart as he recalled the events of those difficult days when he began his holy work.

**"I had to leave the country,"** the letter begins, as though the Rebbe is apologizing for leaving his Chassidim behind and on the frontlines. **"From the time of my arrest until the day I left, those were days of pressure and stress, great suffering and tremendous fear, but thanks to Hashem I survived. Praise Hashem for He is good."**

In this letter, the Rebbe briefly describes the travails he endured when he took the burden of leadership in Russia upon himself:

**"From the year 5682 (1921) in this month (Cheshvan) until Sivan 5687 (1927) almost no week went by without my working hard under the yoke of Torah and in open and hidden warfare with those who persecuted religion, the well-known Yevsektzia."**

## PART II

After the passing of the Rebbe Rashab on 2 Nissan 1920, the burden of leadership fell upon the shoulders of his only son, the Rebbe Rayatz. This was also the time, more or less, in which the communists and their willing helpers the Yevsekim (Jewish communists) began to stamp out the

spirit of Judaism in Russia.

It was as though the Rebbe Rashab was relinquishing his place in history and giving over the mantle of mesirus nefesh to his only son, the son who he raised to total dedication and mesirus nefesh, a truly worthy substitute.

The first year of mourning, until 1921, the Rebbe Rayatz spent in his room and hardly ever left except for davening, when there was an obligation to be the chazan. Apparently, the Rebbe was mustering his strength before going out to wage a most difficult war, the war between the holy Torah and its enemies. He was like a person who takes a deep breath before jumping into icy waters.

**"The first year, 5682, was a year of preparation and focusing for me,"** writes the Rebbe Rayatz. **"There is hardly a single city throughout Russia that I hadn't written to regarding chadarim, mikva, a rav, shochet."**

The Rebbe immediately began organizing for the great battle. He sent letters to any place that had a concentration of Lubavitchers throughout the Soviet Union. In these letters, the Rebbe asks about the precise situation of the religious institutions and people in light of the

new and difficult developments created by the communists.

From his loyal Chassidim the Rebbe asked for reports about mikvaos, whether there was a G-d-fearing shochet in the city; the state of education for children; and how the rabbanim were going about their duties as the oppressors mercilessly harassed them:

**"I did not rest until I achieved the goal. My goal was to strengthen those who studied Torah, with no regard for parties and without distinguishing between ages. To me it was the same whether to found a cheider, yeshiva, learning for the mature and elderly a shiur Gemara, Ein Yaakov, Mishnayos, or a Chevra T'hillim of simple people."**

Throughout that year, the Rebbe organized his office, including a few T'mimim and men, those Chassidim who swore to fight until their last drop of blood. Some quickly joined the work and left to various cities and towns in order to arouse their fellow Jews to continue preserving the ember of Torah and mitzvos; to continue giving their children a proper chinuch; not to stop using the mikva; and G-d forbid not to partake of foods that weren't perfectly fit to eat.

The situation continued to deteriorate both materially and spiritually, from day to day and from week to week. All suffered from material deprivation and starvation was rampant throughout the Soviet Union.

In addition, the communists single-mindedly sought to stamp out any vestige of Judaism. Their long arm reached everywhere.

Nevertheless, with Hashem's help, the Rebbe garnered success after success. At the end of that year, the Rebbe received reports that described the precise state of affairs in the Soviet Union. When the picture was clear, though certainly not rosy, the Rebbe

but who had since cooled off.

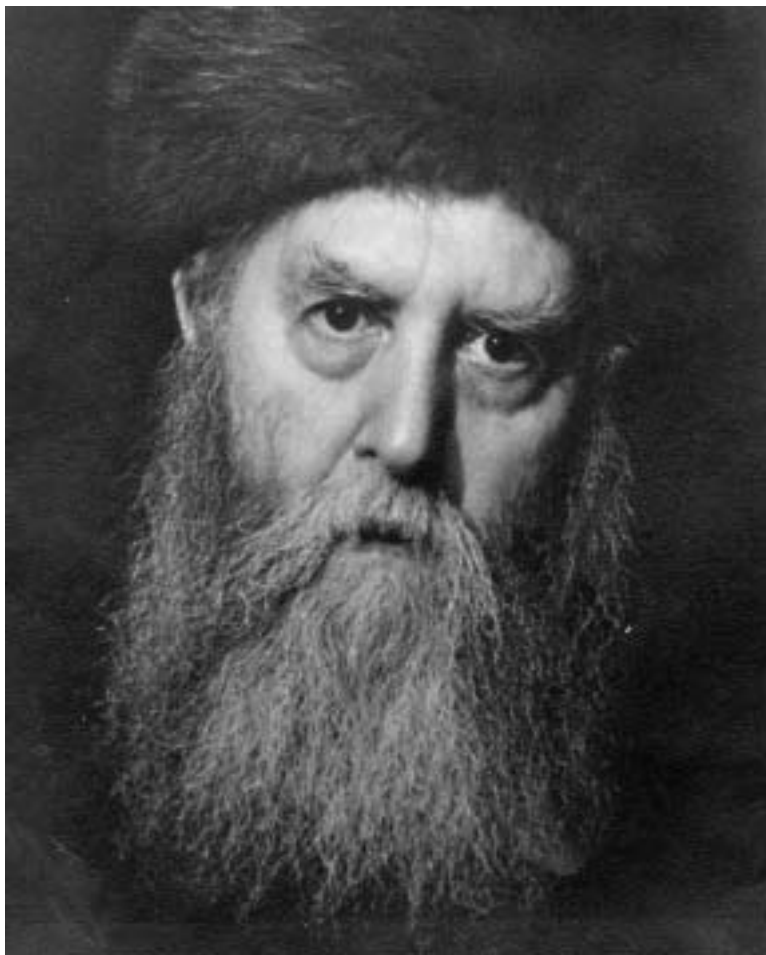
Just six months earlier, on a special visit the Rebbe made to their city, they had promised to get involved with all matters of spreading Torah, but now they said nothing could be done. "Better that the Rebbe wise up and bend his head until the fury passes," they advised, "than to wage open war against the party."

The Rebbe had to struggle bitterly due to his own financial situation. His trip from his home in Rostov to Moscow was paid for by means of a loan that he took in exchange for a note that he had to leave as a loan guarantee. If that wasn't enough, **"When I came to Moscow they looked at me like 'a beggar who had come to collect funds.'"**

Even after five years had passed since then, each time the Rebbe recalled those days, he would shed tears. All at once, it seemed as though all the gates had shut down with no possibility of getting out and bursting forward.

On this visit to Moscow, the Rebbe stayed with Rabbi Nechemia Ginsberg. In light of the complicated situation, both

organizational and financial, the Rebbe stopped all his work for a few days and began rethinking things. Already in his youth, his father the Rebbe Rashab had taught him to be organized and disciplined. Now, this enabled him to reorganize himself, to examine the various urgent problems and to prioritize them.



**The Rebbe Rayatz**

left for Moscow in order to begin repairing the walls that had collapsed in a relatively short period.

How disappointed the Rebbe was upon his arrival in Moscow at the beginning of 5683. He met with his former friends, those who had understood the importance of the battle and had offered him their help,

**“I decided that I had to overlook all the obstacles and put my soul on the line in work and action for the good of Torah, without considering what they would say about me.”**

During this difficult time, fateful days in which the tremendous communal work seemed ready to collapse, the Rebbe recalled what his father had told him in the name of his grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash – that the world says when you cannot go under go over, but *I* say, go over to begin with!

From the very outset you must be forceful and not fazed by anything, willing to do what needs to be done. And when you make that commitment, Hashem helps. During these turbulent times, the Rebbe adopted this approach to life and took it on as the basis for his work. And that is notwithstanding what his friends and mekuravim kept advising – that there is nothing to be done when you see the wicked succeeding and that it was preferable to lie low.

The Rebbe contacted Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, a rav who served in Moscow, and demanded that he call to an urgent meeting, representatives from Minsk, Vitebsk, Charkov, Kiev, Yeketrinislav, Petersburg, etc. The Rebbe even wrote out for him the schedule for a full-day conference.

Rabbi Rabinowitz blanched. He realized what the Rebbe was up to: open war against the huge force of communism that was poised to destroy them.

“Rebbe, but how?” asked the rav.

The Rebbe was determined. There was a protracted silence, a silence of thought and contemplation.

Rabbi Rabinowitz shook his head no. “I am not willing to call a meeting,” he said. “I know the opinions of all the members – that at this time there is nothing that can be done and we must wait until the anger passes.”

For an entire week, negotiations were held by the Rebbe and Rabbi Rabinowitz, in the course of which they met three times. The Rebbe begged him to get things rolling but Rabbi Rabinowitz was fearful. He held that nobody but the Rebbe wanted to try to fight back. The Rebbe warned him that he himself would call them all to a meeting, but Rabbi Rabinowitz apparently did not believe him.

The Rebbe stood alone, leading the fray. He had to start from the beginning, sending invitations to the heads of communities to invite them to a meeting on a certain date at a certain location.

Only ten days went by and positive answers came in from all the cities, which made the Rebbe’s pure heart sing. **“How wonderful,”** he wrote.

On the appointed day, the representatives of the communities arrived and the Rebbe appeared before them and began to speak about his daring plan. The Rebbe set the foundation that they must continue and breathe the breath of Judaism into the Jews of the Soviet Union.

Then the Rebbe continued to explain his plan in detail and all those present accepted what he had to say. **“And that’s when the work began!”**

### PART III

One year passed since the meeting. It was Adar 5684. Once again, the Rebbe went to Moscow and arranged another meeting in order to sum up the first year’s work and prepare for the years to come. All was done with astonishing organization. The Rebbe himself, like a soldier in the front rank, found it necessary to give a detailed report about the work done including providing a precise accounting of the money that had been spent.

The Rebbe also relates that he tried to bring in new donors, especially the Joint, in order to help in the tremendous work that had to be done. The Rebbe fought on the inside and

outside, as well as against those who tried to sabotage the work in various ways.

The members at the meeting all expressed great satisfaction with the Rebbe’s work and praised his bravery and unique abilities. Some said that the work done in the past year, even under normal conditions, should have taken three or more years. The members of the council voted and elected the Rebbe as Chairman, trusting him to run religious matters in Russia as he saw fit.

The Rebbe was pleased. Even on the official front there was progress and now he had to utilize his abilities to even greater effect. The Rebbe packed his bags and planned to return to his home in Rostov in the hopes of spending that Shabbos in his father’s beis midrash. His father’s yahrtzeit would take place the following Shabbos and that was the most appropriate place to say Kaddish.

On the road waited the Rebbe’s loyal secretary, the Chassid, R’ Elchonon Dov Morosov (may Hashem avenge his blood). He looked downcast and he didn’t have good news to relate. A few days earlier the GPU had visited his house. (In his letter, the Rebbe tells the recipient, “This group is not known to you and you ought to praise G-d for that!”) They searched the house carefully and looked for the Rebbe in order to arrest him.

One of those present, Mr. Goldberg, heard from the leader of the pack that “when Schneersohn arrived” they would arrest him immediately and send him to exile.

No doubt, they had been following the Rebbe’s activities from the very beginning and they knew that he was occupied in strengthening religion and that he had hundreds of emissaries throughout the Soviet Union. If that wasn’t enough, he received large sums of money from abroad for this purpose. The head of the GPU gave the order to his men and instructed them

to wait for the Rebbe and arrest him upon his arrival.

This news was conveyed by R' Elchonon Dov and he added – in the name of his mother, wife, and household – that the Rebbe should protect himself and immediately return to Moscow, where he should wait things out.

The Rebbe had to turn around and head back to Moscow, relinquishing the short rest at home that he wished for, to be with his father on his yahrtzeit...

The Rebbe returned to Moscow without knowing how long he would have to remain there. He waited for additional information in order to plan his next move.

At this time, the Rebbe organized an alibi for his trip. He knew that one of the first questions he would be asked at the anticipated interrogation would be why did he go to Moscow. So he prepared an excuse by having a written and signed offer from the representatives of various shuls in Moscow, asking him to come and be their rav.

Days passed and the Rebbe knew that his enemies had all the time and patience in the world. After ten days had gone by, he decided to return home. On Yud-Alef Nissan 5684, at five in the afternoon, the Rebbe arrived in Rostov. Only one hour passed since he arrived and armed soldiers surrounded his house. They watched all who came and left, while another group searched the house meticulously.

After the search, began a lengthy interrogation, lasting the entire night. There were nearly twelve hours of searching and interrogating!

The head of the group of men searching the house approached the Rebbe and asked him to accompany him to prison. One of the mekuravim of the Rebbe's household was working on preventing the Rebbe's arrest, but the danger still lingered.

For the next six weeks, lengthy negotiations were conducted between the Rebbe and the GPU. In the end, a compromise was reached in which the wicked GPU agreed to leave the Rebbe alone on condition that he leave the city, along with his family and his court.

Another six weeks passed until the Rebbe was forced to leave his home, his father's court, the zal, the house, Gan Eden HaElyon, the mikva, and move to Petersburg (Leningrad, at the time). Accompanied by his daughter Shayna, the Rebbe arrived in the big city and began searching for a new place to live, a place where he could establish his new headquarters for

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the Rebbe organized  
his office, including a  
few T'mimim and  
men, those Chassidim  
who swore to fight  
until their last drop  
of blood.*

spreading Torah and Chassidus.

The Rebbe's family remained in Rostov, waiting to hear that new living quarters had been found and loans taken to provide money to move the furniture and the large library.

This forced relocation was the first blow the Rebbe endured in his work in support of Judaism.

#### PART IV

The Rebbe called his new home "A new place of exile," but he continued determinedly to be involved in the public good: **"The work continues according to its**

**character; it does not take my personal situation and matters into account."**

The Rebbe did all he could to conceal and obscure the far-reaching activities to avoid the eyes of "strangers." The Rebbe, experienced with arrests, was not afraid of another arrest; it's just that he had no time for it for there was so much work to be done.

The Rebbe was already well-known to the communists. The Yevsektzia kept a close watch over him while the secret police examined each letter and every person that entered or left the Rebbe's home.

Along with the Rebbe and his family, his loyal secretaries, the open and hidden ones, also moved for the purpose of continuing to help in the holy work.

Another year went by and in the winter of 5685/1925, the Rebbe convened another meeting of the rabbanim. They came to Moscow and the Rebbe detailed all the work that had taken place the previous year. This time the Rebbe was happy to tell them about developing a broad range of contacts with members of the Joint, which led to their providing significant support for his work.

The Rebbe's words were exciting to the representatives and they decided to elect the Rebbe officially as Chairman of the Vaad Rabbanei Russia. They even approved of the Rebbe's continued work in whatever ways he saw fit in order to maximize his effectiveness.

The new official position, and the Rebbe's intention to broaden the scope of the work, quickly became known to the secret police and they continued to shadow him. It was first two and a half years later that they dared to arrest the Rebbe and this part of the story is written in the history of the mesirus nefesh of Lubavitch.

# CITY UNDER FIRE

SHAI GEFEN

**“Hundreds of Kassams within a week” screamed the headlines the other week. How do you manage to live in a city that is on the frontlines of a war?**

First, it's hard to describe the miracles and wonders that take place here every day, every minute. Every rocket is a miracle and we all see this.

To answer your question, dealing with it is definitely difficult and complicated. It's tremendously hard to do anything. It's prohibited to hold large gatherings in Sderot. We've had to cancel events at two schools. We had an interesting program, a show about the Rambam, but under orders from Security, we had to cancel it.

As a shliach of the Rebbe, I must encourage the residents here. The situation today is such that there is no area where rockets do not fall. All of Sderot is exposed to Kassams.

**I've heard that many have left the city.**

Since the Kassams began landing in Sderot, starting five years ago, about 4000 people have left. Obviously, we encourage people to stay. Our job now is to encourage people, especially lately when more rockets are landing than ever before. The government is passive and so people need nonstop moral support and this is what we try to do.

**How are people's spirits?**

Although not many people have been physically injured, many have

been psychologically traumatized. People are terrified. Many have gone into shock. Children are frightened. The streets look like those in a ghost town. When you hear about it on the radio it sounds abstract but when you come here and see what's going on, it's another thing entirely.

This is a city in the midst of a war. A city shelled day after day, but

nobody cares. The government doesn't do a thing; they allow terrorists to shell Sderot with no repercussions.

They promised us that after the withdrawal from Gush Katif they would deal with them, but it's just the opposite. The p'sak in Torah is fulfilled b'hiddur that when you run from one place, the terror chases



Rabbi Pizem



after you to other places. People's sense of personal safety has completely deteriorated.

**How is your family doing?**

We don't have time to think about ourselves. People are constantly coming to the Chabad house. We are in the midst of mitvza mezuza. Mitvza T'fillin has also gotten a boost. Many people have begun attending shul in order to be strengthened. They know that when the rockets fall, the safest place is the shul.

We've had many miracles at our house. Kassams flew over our house. They exploded in an open area just meters away from the house.

People in Eretz Yisroel are unaware of the tremendous miracles constantly taking place here. Each Kassam is the story of a miracle.

**What's most amazing is the fact that the Defense Minister, Amir Peretz, is your neighbor, a resident of Sderot, and a personal friend for years. In interviews, he said he does not believe in force as an approach. What do you think about that?**

What *does* he believe in?

An incredible situation has been created here in which the Left promotes false messianism, and they're the ones who set the tone for the country. Then they go and accuse us of illusionary messianism! Time after time, we see who is right, who prophesied and was right, and who, on the other hand, lives in an illusion that has no basis in reality.

Look at how degraded the country is. The enemy is shelling the city that the Defense Minister lives in! We have the means to stop it but just don't do it. The Rebbe once told Rabbi Yolles z"l that after the State gives away land, it will turn into a despised nation. We have never seen such humiliation. Even third world

countries wouldn't allow it, wouldn't allow terrorists to shell a city in which the Defense Minister has his residence, with their goal being to injure the minister or his home.

**Have you tried speaking with Peretz?**

We used to speak a lot. We are personal friends, but I'm afraid he won't change. It's very hard to speak to him these days. There's a hunger strike going on here outside his home and we hope the public pressure will help.

**What are your plans for the summer?**

This year, for the first time, it looks as though we won't be able to run our camps in the city. We will have to take the children out of the city every morning, out of range of the Kassams, and this will cost us a lot of money. We're in the midst of working on the logistics. We aren't foregoing a thing and everything will be done so that all the activities will take place.

**Tell us about a special Kassam miracle.**

As I said, each Kassam is a big miracle. We see tremendous hashgacha pratis that "behold He does not slumber or sleep."

An interesting story that I recall now is when a Kassam landed in the parking lot of a building in the neighborhood, which is populated late at night and did great damage to the cars and everything around there. Thousands of pieces of glass and metal flew all around – yet nobody was scratched.

Afterwards, it turned out that the rocket that landed on the floor of the parking lot had flown to the second floor of one of the houses, entered through the window and exploded. Parts of the rocket fell into the water in the bathroom.

*Before the expulsion from Gush Katif, the residents of Israel were promised peace and quiet, but what has actually happened is that things have become worse. Hundreds of Kassam rockets, launched from Gaza, have landed in Sderot and yishuvim in the northern Negev in recent weeks. \* Shliach Rabbi Moshe Zev Pizem is in the line of fire. \* Shai Gefen spoke with him and heard a firsthand report.*

Many windows were shattered. In one of the houses, the electricity was cut and caused a short.

When the emergency people quickly showed up, they saw this house without any lights and no sounds of screaming as they heard from nearby homes. They broke into the house and found people sleeping

peacefully. They hadn't even heard any noise. There were big miracles. In a nearby room, a baby slept and nothing happened to him either.

In one of the houses, there was a little boy who had shrapnel flying over him and he was saved. This child had previous problems, unrelated to the shooting, in that he would choke in his sleep, so his parents couldn't sleep because they had to be at his side in case he choked. The doctors just couldn't diagnose the cause of the problem.

After the rocket landed near the boy, they came to the Chabad house to check the mezuzah. The mezuzah of the child's room was torn on the words, "and the days of your children." I said they must change the mezuzah immediately.

Then they gave me another mezuzah, from the parents' bedroom and that was also *pasul* in the word "to your son."

I met the parents months later and they were happy to tell me that all his problems had disappeared.

**What about the *shleimus ha'Aretz* aspect?**

People know that all the plans are very dangerous for the future of Am Yisroel. The halacha in *Shulchan Aruch* that "you go out with weapons so that the land won't be easy to

*Today everybody knows that the only solution is Moshiach. All beliefs have been shattered and on the street you hear people talking about Moshiach.*

conquer," is something we see on a practical level. We see that the fight is not that of a handful of settlers as the media tries to present it, but the problem of all of us, collectively, and a tremendous danger to us all.

People here feel like they're on a shooting range. It's just unbelievable. We left Gaza, they expelled thousands of Jews, they destroyed dozens of yishuvim, they burned shuls – and terror is increasing! Unfortunately, nobody in the government has the courage to change tactics even though we all know the truth.

Despite it all, we encourage people to stay because this is also part of the halacha – that you can't run away – as the Rebbe emphasized many times.

**I understand that you also work a lot among the *dati* community.**

We are involved with talmidim in the local Hesder Yeshiva and with the religious-Zionists, many of whom have sobered up from their illusions about the State. In recent months, we have distributed many copies of Rabbi Volpe's *Bein Ohr L'Choshech*, which presents the Rebbe's view about the Medina.

It's wonderful to see how bachurim in the yeshiva and their teachers are learning and discussing this book. They feel that a certain change has taken place and many are seeking a path and we have to give them the Rebbe's direction.

**In conclusion?**

We are not quiet for a minute. We are busier than ever with our goal being to provide encouragement and simcha. It's specifically now that we are working on preparing the city to greet Moshiach. Today everybody knows that the only solution is Moshiach. All beliefs have been shattered and on the street you hear people talking about Moshiach. What we hope is that after everything we've gone through lately, we will merit to immediately see the Rebbe, with kindness and mercy, with the true and complete Redemption.

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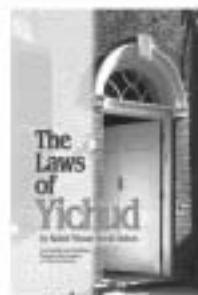
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# WON'T MOSHIACH COME ONLY AFTER THE REBUILDING OF YERUSHALAYIM?

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

*In response to requests by our readers, we now present the sixth 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 Gemara describes the order of the Redemption (Megilla 17b): "And why did they see fit to mention the Redemption in the seventh [bracha of the Shmoneh Esrei]? Rabba says: Since [the Jewish People] will be redeemed in the future during the seventh year [of Shmita], therefore they established it as the seventh [bracha]... as in the sixth [year], there will be sounds, in the seventh [year], there will be wars, and at the end of the seventh [year], the

son of Dovid will come. (And they explain that) war is also *is'chalta d'Geula*... And they saw fit to say [the bracha for] the ingathering of the exiles after the bracha for the seasons [in the Shmoneh Esrei], as is written, 'But you, mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people, Israel, for they will soon come.' And since the exiles will be gathered, there will be judgment upon the evil, as is said (Yeshaya 1:25): 'And I will turn my hand upon you and I will purge away your base metal,' and it is

written (ibid. 1:26), 'I will return your judges as in former times.' And since judgment has been made upon the evil, the heretics will be destroyed, including the wicked among them, as is said (ibid. 1:28), 'And transgressors and sinners will be crushed together and those who forsake G-d will come to an end.' And since the heretics will be destroyed, the honor of the tzaddikim will rise, as is written (T'hilim 75:11), 'And I shall cut down the pride of the wicked, so that the honor of the righteous will be exalted'... And where will their honor be exalted? In Yerushalayim, as is said (ibid. 122:6), 'Pray for the peace of Yerushalayim; may they that love you prosper.' And since Yerushalayim will be built, Dovid will come."

We see from this that in the order of the Redemption there will first be wars, which are already called "*is'chalta d'Geula*." Afterwards, Eretz Yisroel will again give forth its fruits, then there will be the ingathering of the exiles, the judgment of the wicked, the building of Yerushalayim, and only

at the end, the son of Dovid will come.

This Gemara stands as a halachic ruling, as the Beis Yosef brings in *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 118, that we arrange our prayers three times a day according to this Gemara. Even the other leading Torah authorities have understood that this Gemara stands as a halachic ruling. Rabbi Kalisher, of blessed memory, who suggested that sacrifices could be brought prior to the coming of Moshiach, writes in his responsa *Binyan Tzion* (Sec. 1): “Regarding what he writes there, where he explicitly contradicts the Gemara in Megilla, they say that since Yerushalayim has been rebuilt, Dovid will come... and since the prayer has come, the avoda comes...the arranging of the Shmoneh Esrei by the men of the Knesses HaG’dola shows that this opinion is nullified.”

## ANSWER:

1. As mentioned above, the bringing forth of fruits had already begun at least five hundred years ago in the time of the Beis Yosef, and surely when the settlement of Eretz Yisroel began more than a century ago. If so, the wars that **in your opinion** mark the actual *is’chalta d’Geula*, and their timing **before** the bringing forth of fruits took place, at the very least, even before the First World War. What connection does this have with the establishment of the medina?

2. Rashi’s commentary on the aforementioned Gemara – that the wars are called *is’chalta d’Geula* – is only **in the figurative sense**: “For even though this is redemption, it is **not redemption from exile**, rather redemption from the suffering that always comes upon us.” Thus, even if you want to say that “the wars” refers to the War of Independence in 5708, and the giving of fruits

seemingly began afterwards, this has nothing to do with redemption in the context of “redemption from exile,” only redemption from suffering. How can the medina become “the first blossoming of our redemption” because of these wars, and how can we possibly ignore Rashi’s clear commentary on this matter?

3. Rashi comments further that the wars are called redemption (in the figurative sense) only because they **redeem us** (finally) “**from the suffering that always** comes upon us.” However, to our great sadness, the wars fought by the medina have



not redeemed us from suffering. During the last half-century, there have been tens of thousands of bereaved families (*lo aleinu*) and hundreds of thousands of casualties from war and terrorism, and due to our many sins, these sorrows **always** continue and have not stopped for a moment, even now in our times.

4. Even according to what you say, the Gemara continues to state **explicitly**: “**At the end of the seventh [year], the son of Dovid will come,**” i.e., Moshiach comes before the period of the brachos that follow. If so, according to your

very explanation of this saying of our Sages, the son of Dovid must come immediately with the conclusion of the wars, i.e., before the ninth bracha of the seasons and the fruits, and certainly before the ingathering of the exiles that follows. Therefore, in your opinion, where is the son of Dovid? and can the ingathering of the exiles occur without him?

5. The *Turei Even* writes in his commentary on this Gemara that you must say that the son of Dovid comes in the eighth year. Besides the fact that the Gemara states that “at the end of the seventh [year], the son of Dovid will come,” the entire Braisa speaks about the changes that will take place in the world in the seven years prior to the coming of Moshiach. Then, in the seventh and final year, there is the concept of the wars, and thus, immediately upon the conclusion of these seven years, the son of Dovid comes, i.e., **before** the building of Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash and **before** the ingathering of the exiles. In simple terms, he comes **in order to achieve victory in the wars that began in the seventh year**, and according to the Rambam’s halachic ruling, he fights the wars of G-d and is victorious. Thus, even the *is’chalta d’Geula* of the wars is specifically through Moshiach.

6. Furthermore, you must explain the conclusion of this section of the Gemara, “And since Yerushalayim will be built, Dovid will come” according to what the Rebbe Rashab writes in his letters (Vol. 1, #130): “The coming of Moshiach will certainly be prior to the building of Yerushalayim and the building of the Beis HaMikdash, and the building will be through Moshiach and through the ingathering of the exiles, and then afterwards, there will be his kingdom – the kingdom of the

House of Dovid.” And this is this precise language of the Gemara, “and since Yerushalayim will be built, **Dovid** will come,” and it does not say **son of Dovid**, as Moshiach is called frequently by the name ‘son of Dovid’... When it says here, ‘Dovid will come,’ it refers to the kingdom, as is written, ‘and Dovid will reign over them’ (Yechezkel 37:24, see there in Metzudos), and it is safe to say that this then added another quality to him.” This is because “Dovid will come” means the complete kingdom of Dovid

Yerushalayim” in the *Bayis Chadash*’s commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim, Sec. 118): “For the throne of G-d is not complete except when the throne of Dovid is established in Yerushalayim...when Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash are rebuilt, then Dovid comes and sits on his throne, as is befitting a king when he sits on his throne of sovereignty in the city of his kingdom.”

7. Regarding your reference to the responsa *Binyan Tzion*, there is

i.e., the son of Dovid comes at the conclusion of the seventh year, long before the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash.

8. Even if according to what you have said, the order of events has proven itself, then when was **the judgment of the wicked**? In the meantime, the wicked are having a field day, “and your destroyers and those who have made you waste shall go forth,” and the events of the last year have proven that. Similarly, when have the **judges** been returned? Perhaps you’ll interpret the meaning of “And I will return your judges as in former times” as referring to the High Court of Justice, which only recently ruled that it is forbidden to disturb Arabs cultivating their land through the erection of the security fence against terrorists, but it is absolutely permissible to drive thousands of Jews from their homes and livelihood, and hand their inheritance over to those who murdered their children?

9. All this proves clearly that this mode of learning, which takes one word and builds upon it a slew of halachos in contradiction to the Rambam’s clear p’sak din, has no foundation, as it reveals a side of Torah that is not according to halacha.

10. I have no doubt that when someone says three times a day the bracha of “Redeemer of Israel” (which according to your interpretation of the aforementioned Gemara represents the redemption of “*is’chalta*” long before the coming of Moshiach), nevertheless, he doesn’t connect in his mind “Redeemer of Israel” with Ben-Gurion, Shimon Peres, or Ariel Sharon, rather he is davening for the G-dly Redemption with the erecting of the sukka of Dovid that has fallen, and more specifically,

## IMMIGRANT ABSORPTION – STATE OF ISRAEL STYLE

In *HaMadrish HaShomer*, published by Histadrut HaShomer, we find instructions on absorbing the students of the Youth Aliya Movement in the early years after the founding of the medina:

“Among our young people, we have met a number of religious students, particularly those being trained in the transit camps of the immigrant settlements. Our intention understandably is to bring them to the realization that **their faith in G-d defies logic and justification**, because religion...has no right to exist among those fighting for a progressive regime. However, the path of educating them towards this recognition is not a short one...In the period of organizing the group, no instructor has to tell the trainees that he wants to bring them to the abandonment of their religious faith... The main activity must come afterwards, based upon the explanation of the physical foundation of the world, which leaves no room for lofty supernatural powers... After this explanation, which does not include a direct attack upon religion, rather a removal of its underlying foundation, **the student will come to the realization on his own that there is no G-d, and he will abandon his religious faith.**”

over the entire Jewish People on the level of “definitely Moshiach,” which comes after the ingathering of the exiles. However, “the son of Dovid” comes before the building of the Beis HaMikdash, referring to the period when he is “presumed to be Moshiach,” prior to his complete sovereignty in Yerushalayim. We find an explanation of the connection between “and speedily establish therein the throne of Dovid, Your servant” and the bracha of “He Who rebuilds

no question that the Gemara’s statement that the avoda of offering sacrifices will only be after the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash is halacha. However, all this has no connection to the erroneous interpretation that “war is also *is’chalta d’Geula*,” as if this refers to any war (without final redemption from suffering) and Redemption from the exile (in contrast to Rashi’s commentary). This has no relevance to what you neglected to note from this Gemara,

the kingdom of Dovid – not the “Zionist” state that is establishing with its own hands an Al Qaeda state in close proximity to cities in Eretz Yisroel. Thus, you also must admit that the “seventh” bracha refers to the Redemption of Moshiach and not the redemption of the “medina.”

11. However, we still understand from this Gemara that the ingathering of the exiles apparently takes place after the giving forth of fruits and before the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. Since even according to the order in davening, the bracha of “He Who gathers the dispersed of His people Israel” does come before the bracha of “He Who rebuilds Yerushalayim,” is this not a contradiction to the order written

by the Rambam – that the ingathering of the exiles comes only **after** the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash? The explanation will be understood when we consider the language of the Gemara, which is quite clear in connection with all the other brachos, i.e., “Since the exiles have been brought in, judgment is made upon the wicked...and since judgment is made upon the wicked, the heretics are destroyed...and since the heretics are destroyed, the honor of the tzaddikim rises... and since Yerushalayim is rebuilt, Dovid comes.” Only in the matter of the ingathering of the exiles does the Gemara open with a question: **And why did they see fit to say** [the bracha for] the ingathering of the exiles after the bracha for the

seasons?” which apparently should have aroused a simple answer from the Gemara: “Since the land gave forth its fruits, the exiles will be gathered, etc.” Yet, this is the very question of the Gemara: If the ingathering of the exiles takes place after the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash and Yerushalayim, then why is the bracha on the ingathering of the exiles recited only after the bracha for the seasons, **which is not according to the order of events?** The answer is that the land giving forth its fruits is a sign that the ingathering of the exiles is close at hand, and therefore, immediately after the bracha for the seasons, we pray that this ingathering should not be delayed.

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# SAVED FROM 'THE STREET'

BY MENDEL TZFASMAN

This is the story of Zamir Asur, resident of Timrat. Timrat is located on the side of a mountain, about two kilometers north of Migdal HaEmek, overlooking a magnificent pastoral scene of the kibbutzim of the Emek.

Zamir used to be just like his neighbors. He did not step foot into the local shul and he kept his distance from the local shluchim (residents of the yishuv), Dovid and Dalia Tal.

However, today, Zamir goes to shul at the yishuv on Shabbos and the rest of the week he davens at the Chabad shul in Migdal HaEmek. With his encouragement, a minyan has started in Timrat for Mincha and Maariv on Shabbos.

In addition to being a regular participant at Rabbi Yitzchok Yadgar's shiurim (he is the shliach in Chevel HaTaanachim), he brings along other people with him to the shiur, residents of the yishuv. Zamir and his wife Rochel are now ardent Chassidim of the Rebbe MH"M. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. In order to understand this metamorphosis, we have to go two years back in time.

Mrs. Rochel Asur, who did not receive even a minimal religious education, began studying alternative medicine at a special school. Her involvement with "the energies within the material" as they put it and the "spiritual" as we say, awakened her love for the Creator. Her desire to

establish a lasting connection with Him led her to ask the lecturer – a baal t'shuva – deep questions about the purpose of life.

The fact that the homeopathic lecturer – whose basis for his lessons was taken from terminology like "combining the material and the spiritual," "treating the body's ailments

*Although obviously within the four cubits of the Jewish people, the gahs [street] involves permitted things, but it distorts and lowers a person from his level in a number of different ways.*

via the soul," and the like, demonstrating that he internalized the theories into his daily life – fascinated her, and she began to seek out her roots.

Her husband Zamir, who was in real estate, despite coming from a traditional background, wasn't

enthused by his wife's newfound religiosity and he began calling her "the rabbanit." However, he didn't stop her from pursuing what interested her.

Rochel began attending the shiurim of Rabbi Eliezer Gewirtz, shliach to Kfar Gideon and the kibbutzim of Emek Yizre'el, which take place in the home of one of the residents of Timrat. She also regularly attended the shiurim of Rabbi Menachem Dubroskin, mashpia in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Migdal HaEmek, where she learned of the miracles of the advisor and prophet of our generation through the *Igros Kodesh*.

Rochel bought a volume of the *Igros Kodesh* and her connection to the Rebbe became more personal.

At this time, Zamir's friends were offered a business opportunity to invest in a new high-tech company by the name of Od that had developed unique management software.

Investment in the company was supposed to provide great returns within a short time. As a good friend, Zamir began to help his friends build the business. He used his connections with banks in order to get mortgages and the like. He invested only small amounts of money.

Since he was such a help to them, the managers of the company made him a surprising offer – that he become a partner in the business! His smelled the potential to become

wealthy. The investment plan was already ready and the contract nearly signed. Thoughts of impending wealth were constantly on his mind.

A few days before signing the contract, some doubts began to surface. Something was bothering him and he didn't know what it was. His wife suggested that he consult with the "advisor of the generation." She explained how to write the letter, which Zamir did, explaining the offer as well as his apprehensions. He put the letter into volume 18 of the volume of *Igros Kodesh* and opened at random to page 481.

The word "gahs" – the name of the investment company – which appeared twice in the letter, caught his attention and distracted him from the rest of the letter. He took the nearest chair and sat down to calm himself. The truth was that he did not understand the meaning of the Yiddish word. It's not just a coincidence, he thought, as he began to read:

It is well known and famous that I am not at all pleased with it and for several reasons in addition to the fact that this trip entails a number of hardships and expenditure of energy and financial expenses, as well as expenditures of health.

As he became aware of the fact that the Rebbe was saying that he should not invest, the wall of coldness that he had maintained until that point, began to melt. In this letter, the Rebbe went on to say:

Additionally, there is much opportunity for each of Anash in Paris and its environs to act in accordance

with man's purpose, as the Mishna says, I was created to serve my Maker, i.e., going from strength to strength in Torah and mitzvos regarding yourself and regarding influencing others.

In addition to all of the above, when I looked at those who came here and the change in them, compared to their way of life before in Paris, I have to say that with most of them, the "fragmentation of their souls" has grown and grown. Much of their time is given to matters which – in their way of life before coming here – weren't at all necessary and they could have devoted this time to spirituality



or at least to things that have some purpose, and not waste time on trivial things, fleeting concerns, and even less than that.

In general, Chazal tell us that dwelling in cities is difficult – all the more so visiting a city in the United States, which is a country famous for its fragmentation of the soul, worldly assumptions, and the *tummel fun der gahs* [commotion of the street]. Although obviously within the four cubits of the Jewish people, the *gahs* [street] involves permitted things, but

it distorts and lowers a person from his level in a number of different ways.

If only most of Anash who came here from France listened to me, and with kindness and mercy with simcha and goodness of heart they return to Paris and its environs to fulfill over there their shlichus in strengthening Judaism in general and spreading the wellsprings in particular...

If only they publicized this in a way that it will affect others, including those who came here, to do all that was said above.

With blessings for good health and that with serenity, joy, and goodness of heart you will be involved in Torah and mitzvos where you are located now, and serve as an example to all of Anash who are there and also to those who are outside, to do so as well. It says, G-d made man straight and they sought many calculations. With blessings for good news in all the abovementioned.

The end of the story is that Zamir, despite being a newcomer when it came to bittul to the Rebbe and his directives, did not sign the contract (a miracle in itself), and began to "go from strength to strength" in Torah and mitzvos and influenced others as well.

A month later, he heard that the business had gone bankrupt. He thanked the Rebbe for saving him from financial loss and he and his wife became ardent Chassidim of the Rebbe, judge of our generation, advisor of our generation, and prophet of our generation.

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# A CHASSID FORGED IN FIRE

BY RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN CHANIN

*R' Chaikel had a relationship with many of the leading Chabad figures of the previous generation. He admired them and the feeling was mutual. This time, we will hear about R' Avrohom Elya Plotkin, a diamond who was polished in the factory which was Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch.*

## A DEAR FRIEND

One of my father's dear friends was the gaon and Chassid Rabbi Avrohom Elya Plotkin. My father loved him dearly and long after his passing in Paris in 1949, my father would sing his praises and repeat things in his name, relate stories about him, and learn a lesson from the *vertlach* he would say.

The friendship between my parents and R' Avrohom Elya's Rebbetzin continued after his passing. For example, in 1956, I received a set of Nach Mikraos G'dolos that Rebbetzin Plotkin sent me from the United States. It must have been difficult for her to send a package from the U.S. to France in those days, yet she made the effort despite being an older woman at the time.

When my parents arrived in the U.S., my father would call her and

visit her often to see how she was doing. And the Rebbetzin, despite her age, would visit my mother.

## A NEW STUDENT

In *Likkutei Dibburim* Volume 1 of the Rebbe Rayatz, it tells of a bachur who wanted to be accepted in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch. Each new talmid had to undergo an examination by two committees: the committee that tested the bachur in his learning and assessed his abilities and level of knowledge and the secret committee that checked out his middos. The two committees presented their findings and conclusions about potential students.

That year, the two committees presented a detailed list of talmidim who wanted to enter the yeshiva, and the Rebbe Rayatz, the acting menahel

of the yeshiva, gave the list to his father, the Rebbe Rashab. The Rebbe Rashab inquired about each talmid but took a special interest in a particular talmid.

The bachur was a lamdan and very talented and the committee that had tested him highly recommended him. However, the secret investigative committee said the bachur had coarse middos that were readily apparent even on his face.

When the Rebbe Rashab received this report, he read it several times, thought about it a long while, and finally told his son that despite the negative report from the undercover committee, the bachur would be accepted. However, the yeshiva needed to take him in hand and handle him properly.

All this took place in the middle of Cheshvan. The Rebbe Rayatz assigned the talmid a tough learning schedule and told the mashgichim of the Nigleh and Chassidus studies to keep a close watch over him.

On Rosh Chodesh Teives the Rebbe Rashab traveled abroad but he continued to keep abreast of how this bachur was doing. Around Rosh Chodesh Adar, when they began getting busy with checking the wheat for the shmura matza, the Rebbe wrote his son that all the hard, physical labor in connection with the

baking of the matza should be assigned to this talmid. He asked that he be kept informed about how the bachur was progressing in his work.

The Rebbe Rayatz wrote back to say that he had given that bachur all the hard jobs in going through the wheat kernels, setting up the millstones and grinding the wheat. For two weeks the bachur had no rest. He had no days nor nights and it was all taken care of in such a way that the bachur did not suspect that it was a result of a special order from the Rebbe Rashab.

In general, the talmidim in Lubavitch didn't have the word "why" in their vocabulary. What they were told to do, they did. The yeshiva had been founded on four principles: Truth, Love, Loyalty, and Devotion.

A talmid of the yeshiva was truly considered a son to the teachers. There was tremendous love among the talmidim as well as between the talmidim and those who ran the yeshiva and vice versa. The atmosphere of training and dedication ruled everything in the fullest sense, so obviously the yeshiva produced special products, with Hashem's help.

### SWEAT OF A MITZVA

Each talmid in the yeshiva helped bake the matzos but the hard work



**R' Avrohom Elya Plotkin**

was given to that talmid, once again. When it came time to prepare to bake the matzos on Erev Pesach, that bachur was given the job. In addition to all the hard jobs that he had done until that point, the Rebbe Rayatz assigned him the job of b'dikas chametz in the beis midrash and the yeshiva office, work that lasted until two-three in the morning. At seven a.m., he had to be at his post at the matza baking in order to kasher the oven.

When he finished all the work, after washing up and before Yom Tov began, around five in the afternoon, the Rebbe Rayatz told him to learn the maamer, "Sheshes

Yamim" in the *Siddur (Im Dach)* so that he would be ready to review the maamer with the Rebbe Rayatz the next morning at seven o'clock.

Although the Rebbe knew that the bachur was one of the people appointed to the tables during the seider and until after the seider, which didn't end before two a.m., and he would not have even fifteen minutes to learn, he still gave him this order in order to test him, to see how precious Chassidus was to him.

The bachur showed up at seven a.m. After much effort, he had learned the maamer well, according to his level of knowledge of Chassidus at that time. The Rebbe Rayatz learned the maamer over with him until eight o'clock, when he went to his father, the Rebbe Rashab and reported to him.

The Rebbe Rashab was satisfied and said, "We planted, with Hashem's help, a tree that will make fruits. I



hope that he will be ‘absorbent in order to influence others.’ It may take a long time, but ultimately there will be many branches with many fruits and ongoing yields.”

Throughout that year, the bachurim learned in the large hall of the yeshiva, which was called the Big Zal. On Pesach, the zal turned into the dining room. The tables were arranged in a certain way and numbered. Each talmid was assigned a seat for the eight days of the holiday and each table had a mashgiach, who was referred to as the Memuneh.

On Acharon shel Pesach, during the seuda, the Rebbe Rashab said quietly to his son, while looking at that bachur, “Yosef Yitzchok! Look at what sweating for a mitzva accomplished. He has acquired an entirely different face. The coarseness has been removed and now one can see the face of a mentch.”

## DAAS TACHTON VS. DAAS ELYON

R’ Avrohom Elya Plotkin told my father a number of times about how talmidim were accepted into Tomchei T’mimim in Lubavitch and how hard it was for him to get accepted. He told about the tests that he had to take and how even after passing them successfully, they only accepted him after much effort.

R’ Avrohom Elya emphasized that although the Rebbe Rashab had two committees testing and checking out the bachurim that applied to the yeshiva, still, the final word as to whether a bachur was accepted belonged to the Rebbe Rashab. Sometimes, the committees did not properly assess the bachurim and recommended that they not be accepted, but the Rebbe, with his insightful eyes, said otherwise.

The Rebbe could immediately pick out the diamonds, even if they were covered with mud and were

*Before Moshiach comes there won't be pnimiyusdike men of great stature; only men of faith. And despite this, R' Yosef said it's all worthwhile even to be preoccupied with chitzonius, the main thing being that through this they bring Moshiach.*

unpolished. Over the years they saw how some of the talmidim that the hanhala had advised against accepting and the Rebbe said otherwise grew into great Chassidim, baalei mesirus nefesh who fulfilled the Rebbe's wishes through fire and water.

The story about how they wore down a certain talmid until they agreed to accept him in Tomchei T'mimim was one that R' Plotkin told my father without saying that it was about himself. But years later, when they left Russia, close to his passing, R' Avrohom Elya disclosed that the story about the “sweat of a mitzva” was about him.

## WHAT IS A CHAZAKA

My father also heard the following story from R' Plotkin:

R’ Avrohom Elya was one of the people in charge of arranging the Acharon shel Pesach meal for the talmidim in Tomchei T’mimim in Lubavitch. On Acharon shel Pesach 5666, the Rebbe Rashab ate the

Seudas Moshiach with the talmidim for the first time, as the Rebbe Rayatz relates in the *HaYom Yom* for 22 Nissan:

In 5666 (1906), a new procedure was adopted for Pesach in the Yeshiva Tomchei T’mimim in Lubavitch: The students ate the Pesach meals all together, in the study hall. There were 310 students present, seated at eighteen tables. My father, the Rebbe, ate the festive meal of Acharon Shel Pesach with the yeshiva students. He ordered that four cups of wine be given each student. He then declared, “This is Moshiach’s Seuda.”

In the years to follow, sometimes the Rebbe ate with the talmidim and sometimes he did not. Since R’ Avrohom Elya was the head of those appointed over the T’mimim, he had the z’chus of inviting the Rebbe to join the seuda. For two years in a row, he asked the Rebbe to join the talmidim and the Rebbe did so. However, when he asked the Rebbe for the third year in a row, the Rebbe refused, saying that three times makes a chazaka and he did not want there

## THE PILPUL THAT WAS LOST

R’ Plotkin related that when he was a talmid in Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Lubavitch the Rebbe Rayatz called three talmidim: R’ Plotkin, R’ Refael Kahn, the rav from Nevel, and Rabbi Dovber Rivkin, and told them to each write an inyan in Nigleh and submit it to the Rebbe Rashab.

The Rebbe told R’ Avrohom Elya to write on the topic of mikvaos. He said that the Rebbe Rayatz asked him to print the inyan he had written, but unfortunately, after everything he went through, being imprisoned and all the travails he endured, the writings were lost and no copy remained.

to be a chazaka to his participation.

Naturally, upon hearing this, R' Avrohom Elya was disappointed. After all the preparations and work, the Rebbe would not join the seuda with the T'mimim! But he immediately came up with a thought and said:

In the Gemara, there is a dispute between the Chachamim and Rebbi about how many times is called a chazaka. The chachamim say it's three times and Rebbi says it's two times. If according to Rebbi two times establishes a chazaka, that means that the two times the Rebbe already participated in the Seudas Moshiach with the T'mimim made a chazaka!

Hearing this reasoning, the Rebbe smiled and agreed to participate.

#### EMUNA BEFORE MOSHIACH

I heard from my father that one Shabbos during a farbrengen in Leningrad, R' Plotkin drank a lot of mashke and farbrenged. What he said made such a deep impression on my father that it reverberated in his ears for many years to come. R' Avrohom Elya demanded that despite the tzaros and daily hardships, they should continue to learn Nigleh and Chassidus on a regular basis every day. He said that the main thing was to have a set time to learn and the amount that was learned did not matter.

R' Avrohom Elya said that we all heard from the Rebbe that we are in the Ikvisa D'Meshicha and then he went on to quote the Gemara in Sanhedrin which says:



Ullah and Rabba said, "He should come, but I shouldn't see it" (because of the painful process that would unfold). Rav Yosef said, "He should come, and I should just merit to sit in the shade of the dung of his donkey."

In other words, some Amoraim said Moshiach should come but they were afraid because they knew of the great tzaros that would take place beforehand. They said, better I shouldn't be there at that time. But R' Yosef said: Moshiach should come and I will merit to sit in the shade of his donkey's dung. I accept upon myself all the hardships and degradation. As Rashi explains: Even

then I want it, as long as I get to see him.

R' Avrohom Elya explained this as a parable:

The donkey is the Torah and one must take the Torah study deeply within, to the point that it becomes "his Torah." The donkey's dung refers to *chitzonius*, superficiality, because emuna is something external, as we know that even a thief, while attempting to steal, prays to Hashem. This means that before Moshiach comes there will be a time with a lot of *chitzonius*, and truth and p'nimius in Torah will be lacking. People will live with simple faith. There won't be pnimiyuslike men of great stature; only men of faith. And despite this, R' Yosef said it's all worthwhile even to be preoccupied with *chitzonius*, the main thing being that through this they bring Moshiach.

And they, the simple Jews with faith, concluded R' Avrohom Elya, will be the ones to bring Moshiach.

#### GENIUS

My father also related that in 1946 while in Poking, Germany, they received the Rebbe's Hagada, which had been published for the first time. The first one to get the Hagada was R' Avrohom Elya Plotkin.

My father said that R' Avrohom Elya closed himself up in his room for three days and studied the Hagada from cover to cover. He exclaimed in amazement, "What genius— There never was such a gaon before!"



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# SOULS CONNECTING THROUGH SONG

BY MORDECHAI ZIEGELBOIM

I often spend Shabbos with shluchim in various cities of the United States as a chazan. Naturally, I join the Shabbos meals with the shliach along with his mekuravim. Each time I go, I hear wonderful stories.

A few Shabbasos ago I was in Las Vegas, where I davened in the new shul that was dedicated there. Shabbos afternoon, after Mincha, everybody went to one of the spacious rooms in the new building for the third Shabbos meal, and I joined them. At some point, the shliach Rabbi Yisroel Schanowitz quietly asked me whether I would sing another niggun for them before I left.

I said I would and when the time was right, I sang a Chabad niggun called "Niggun Poltava." By the time I finished, the niggun had penetrated my bones and without anyone asking, I began singing another niggun whose name I do not know but which I like very much.

As I sang this niggun, I noticed that one of the people sitting there was staring at me. He looked like he was hypnotized. It would not have been polite for me to stop singing and ask him why he was looking at me like that, so I continued singing.

Towards the end of the niggun, I saw that the man was agitated. As soon as it was quiet, he turned to the rabbi and asked, "Can I tell a story?"

When the rabbi gave him the go

ahead, he began.

"As you know," said the man, a member of the congregation, "last Pesach I wasn't here with you. During the holiday, my family and I had to be in Los Angeles with the shliach Rabbi Shlomo Cunin. During the holiday, he related some interesting stories but I found one of them particularly captivating. This is the story Rabbi Cunin told:

*At the end, that student came over to me and emotionally said, "Rabbi! You destroyed me with that tune. I'm wiped out. I don't believe this happened!"*

"Many years ago, at the beginning of the 70's," related Rabbi Cunin, "I was a young shliach who went occasionally, as per the Rebbe's instruction, to lecture at university campuses in various states around the country. This was during the hippie era. Campuses swarmed with students with radical ideas.

"I once gave a series of lectures at

Brandeis University in Massachusetts. As always, at lectures such as these, there is one person or sometimes a group of people whose goal it is to make the lecturer's life miserable with questions and comments and attempts to confuse him. The idea is to show him up as a fool.

"This time too, a troublemaker was present who decided to make me sweat while on campus. He maintained that he was an atheist, that he didn't believe in anything, that there was nobody and nothing running the show, and the world ran on auto-pilot. No matter what I said to counter his comments didn't work as he had devoted himself to the task of making me leave in humiliation.

"After some difficult days in which I butted heads with the students, that troublemaker playing a major role, I had an idea. I decided to teach them a Chabad niggun one morning. I began to sing the niggun alone, until the end.

"When I was done, I began singing it again, and even a third time, until I saw that people were catching on and slowly, the students joined in. I noticed that fellow sitting and listening. At the end, that student came over to me and emotionally said, "Rabbi! You destroyed me with that tune. I'm wiped out. I don't believe this happened!"

"What happened?" I asked in surprise.

"Here's the story," said the student.



The new shul – exterior



The new shul – interior



Rabbi Schanowitz doing Mivtza T'fillin



Rabbi Cunin

I grew up on a isolated ranch in the middle of nowhere in Iowa (a state known for its vast pasturelands for cattle). We lived in a private house that was half an hour away from the nearest home. I knew I was Jewish but that was all. As you know, I don't believe in G-d.

“My grandfather lived with us, my mother's father. He was an old man who had left Russia and emigrated to the U.S. Since he had no relatives other than my mother, he lived with us. He was a believer and he kept

kosher. He didn't eat from my mother's cooking. He ate fruits and vegetables and he had a small pot in which he occasionally cooked hard eggs or potatoes. I loved him even though the great difference in our ages didn't leave us a lot to talk about.

“One morning, as I got ready for the trip to school, my grandfather called me and placed me on his lap and said: I want to teach you something, an old tune, and don't forget it because one day perhaps it will help you.

“And then my grandfather began to sing a tune as I sat there on his lap. He sang it a number of times and I listened closely. Then it was time to go to school.

“When I returned home in the afternoon, I learned that my grandfather had passed away. He had had a severe heart attack. Maybe he felt that those were his final hours and that tune was a sort of bequest to me.

“Since then, I have tried many times to recall that tune that my grandfather sang to me that morning



but have not been able to. It's like it was erased from my mind.

"The years went by and my grandfather was just a memory and life went on. I came here to the university bereft of all faith and challenging many accepted beliefs. Nevertheless, I have often tried to remember that nice Jewish tune, but have never been able to.

"Sometimes I felt that it was on the edge of my tongue but when I tried to hum it, it evaded me. Now, when you sang that tune, I realized that *this is the tune my grandfather taught me!*"

*"My grandfather called me and placed me on his lap and said: I want to teach you something, an old tune, and don't forget it because one day it may help you."*

"Of course, from then on, the student no longer disturbed my lectures and he was much more open to hearing what I had to say," concluded Rabbi Cunin."

\* \* \*

Back to Las Vegas:

"Since Pesach I have been trying to recall that niggun, but could not. Now, when you started singing this niggun, I remembered that this was the niggun that Rabbi Cunin sang."

Silence reigned and then everybody began singing the niggun together, this time with even greater feeling.



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