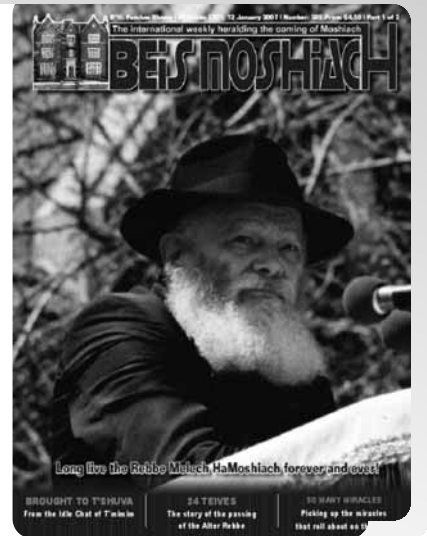


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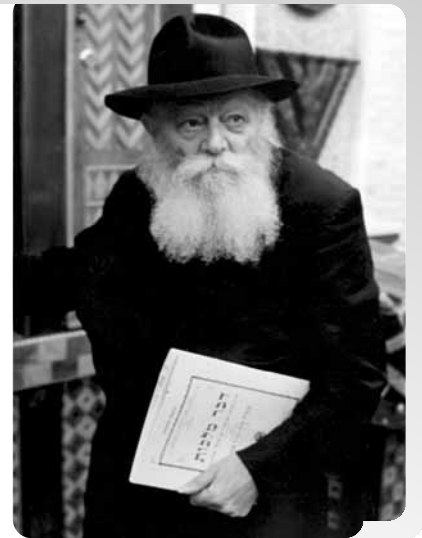
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TO REVEAL THE SECRET OF THE END OF DAYS

LIKKUTEI SICHOS, VOL. 10, PG. 167-172
TRANSLATED BY BORUCH MERKUR



[Continued from last week]

6. However, on that basis it is not understood: Since the state of Yaakov is dependent upon that of his children, why did the *Sh'china* **withdraw** from him only after he wished to reveal the *keitz*? They were in the same standing also prior to that (which is not the case with regard to the Jewish people and Moshe [for the Jewish people had experienced a descent after the sin of the Golden Calf]). Thus, from the outset there was no need for the manifestation of the *Sh'china* with regard to this matter [only to withdraw shortly thereafter].

Also in this instance we find a precedence with Moshe Rabbeinu:

When Moshe descended from the mountain, there were “two Tablets of Testimony in his hand.” However, “when he approached the camp and saw the Calf and the dances,” immediately, “they became heavy upon his hands” [Yerushalmi Taanis 4:5], “Moshe’s anger was kindled, and he flung the Tablets from his hands, shattering them” [Ki Sisa 32:19]. At first glance, what was innovated at that moment [to evoke Moshe’s anger]? The Calf was made prior to Moshe’s descent from the mountain. In fact, Moshe knew about it when he was on the mountain. **The Holy One Blessed Be He** alerted him that “they made for themselves a molten calf and etc.” (indicating that Moshe didn’t have any doubt about it). So why did the Tablets become heavy upon his hands and Moshe’s anger was kindled specifically when he **saw** the Calf and the dances?

Yaakov gave his descendants the ability that through their Divine service they should arrive at the revelation of the keitz, serving G-d free of the impediments of the gentile nations and the Evil Inclination.

The explanation: Throughout the entire duration of Moshe Rabbeinu’s ascent of the mountain he was removed from all matters pertaining to the lower realm; he had no connection with the world and worldly concerns. Therefore, the episode of the Calf did not affect him or his standing, even though it had already taken place in the world and he

knew about it from having **heard** about it (from the Holy One Blessed Be He) [see FN 23]. However, upon **descending** from the mountain and subsequently also **seeing** [Ki Sisa ibid] the Calf, this matter affected him to the extent that the Tablets became heavy upon his hands, Moshe’s anger was kindled, and he threw the Tablets [see FN 25].

Similarly, in our case: Notwithstanding the fact that also prior to Yaakov’s calling his sons, they were not fit for the revelation of the *keitz*, the *Sh'china* manifested itself also in the matter of revealing the *keitz*, for being that he was removed then from a connection with and a consideration of their standing, this did not affect him or move him. However, **when he wished to reveal to his children** the *keitz*, this constituted a connection and a bond with his children [and their unworthy status], which caused that “the *Sh'china*

withdrew **from him**.”

7. Nevertheless, since the concept of “gather and I shall tell you, etc.” is recorded in the **Torah**, it is understood that Yaakov’s wanting to reveal the *keitz* resulted in an effect manifest below. Indeed, this is an eternal Torah (teaching).

(For were it not so, the Torah, which was given to **every** Jewish person, would not have related that Yaakov **wished** to reveal the *keitz*, etc.) This principle – that the wish of the righteous does not return unanswered – is understood from other cases.

In fact, this too is exemplified in Moshe Rabbeinu. In general, Moshe and Yaakov represent the same concept, but “Yaakov is from the outside and Moshe is from the inside.” [FN 26: Tikkunei Zohar tikkun 13 (29a), elucidated in *Likkutei Torah* Parshas Pinchas, (second discourse with) words beginning, “Command the Jewish people,” etc.]

It is explained regarding Moshe Rabbeinu that (although he did not enter the land) through his prayer, “I entreated the L-rd...‘Pray let me cross over and **see** the good land” [VaEschanan, beg.] in order to effect in the Jewish people the concept of **seeing** G-dliness, he succeeded in channeling the concept of seeing [G-dliness] to the Jewish people [at least] in a manner that transcended [their consciousness]. He did not channel to them the aspect of seeing in a way that they internalized – as reflected in the conclusion of that passage, “And now, O Israel, **hearken** to the statutes” [ibid 4:1], indicating that (internally [i.e., consciously]) they would [only] have the aspect of **hearing** [G-dliness] – however, also

the aspect of seeing was channeled to them [but only] in a transcendent manner. [*Likkutei Torah* Parshas VaEschanan, beg. – see FN 29]

Similarly we may say that with regard to Yaakov (close to his passing [FN 30: following the example of Moshe’s channeling [G-dly abilities to the Jewish people] specifically close to the time of his passing (see *Ohr HaTorah* pg. 78))), although the *Sh’china* withdrew from him – for which reason he subsequently said, “Gather and **listen**, son’s of Yaakov” – nevertheless, by saying, “gather and I shall tell you” [FN 31: which, in a **general** manner, was accomplished by his **wish** to reveal the *keitz* (“and I shall **tell** you”), but there still needed to be “Gather and listen” (as in the case with Moshe – that in addition to “I entreated,” he needed to see the land, at least from a distance (*Likkutei Torah* ibid 3d; *Shaar HaT’shuva* Vol. 2 30b ff.; *Ohr HaTorah* ibid))), he gave his children (and their descendants thereafter, until “the end of days”) the ability that through their Divine service they should arrive at the **revelation** of the *keitz* in [at least] a transcendent manner ([which amounts to] service of G-d free of [the impediments of] the gentile nations and the Evil Inclination [see FN 31*])).

[To be continued be”H]

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A DAILY DOSE OF MOSHIACH & GEULA: 22-28 TEIVES

*Selected daily pearls of wisdom from the Rebbe MH”M
on Moshiach and the Redemption.*

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED BY RABBI PINCHAS MAMAN, SHLIACH, RISHON L'TZION, ERETZ YISROEL
TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

22 TEIVES: LEARN AND COMPLETE TORAH OHR AND LIKKUTEI TORAH

(In order to take action to bring about the days of Moshiach, we must accept good resolutions)...

This is particularly so when we also accept the good resolution of learning the entire seifer *Torah Ohr* and *Likkutei Torah*, all of its parts until their conclusion.

For through the Torah study in such matters, we further hasten the spiritual process of channeling down in actual deed.

(Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sara 5752)

23 TEIVES: THE SHMONEH ESREI TO BE RECITED OUT LOUD IN THE FUTURE TO COME (A) – A CONTRADICTION TO THE ESSENCE OF T’FILLA?

“Furthermore, it will also be understood that the matter of the silent *Shmoneh Esrei* is only in these times, when *nukva* (the female spiritual aspect) is on the level of *mekabel* and not *mashpia*, whereas in the Future, when it will be elevated to the level of *mashpia*, as the masculine aspect itself, the *Shmoneh Esrei* will then be recited with a loud voice. Indeed, there will then be “the voice of a bride.” This should suffice to understand the matter.

(Torah Ohr, concl. Parshas VaYigash)

At first glance, this requires some deliberation, since according to the inner teachings of Torah (the opinion of the Zohar), the matter of silent t’filla derives from the very essence of prayer, which is the ultimate level of *bittul b’metzius* in davening, the true quality of the *Amida*

prayer (corresponding to the world of Atzilus).

If so, how can it be that in the Future to Come, t’filla will be with a loud voice – a contradiction to *bittul*?

(Continued following day)

24 TEIVES: THE ALTER REBBE’S YAHRTZAIT

THE SHMONEH ESREI TO BE RECITED OUT LOUD IN THE FUTURE TO COME (B) – REVELATION OF THE QUALITY OF BITTUL

The explanation is that in the Future to Come, *bittul* will be at the ultimate level of perfection, to the point of “and the glory of G-d will be revealed and all flesh will see it together,” i.e., flesh in and of itself will “see” G-dliness; it will be revealed in every being that there is nothing else, no other existence [besides G-dliness]. Furthermore, within Israel there will be revealed that Israel and the Holy One Blessed Be He are completely “one,” in a way that their very being is the Essence, as it were, in a manner of “Who are the kings? The rabbanim,” i.e., their very being is the King. Then, the quality of complete *bittul* in davening will be revealed. Thus, t’filla will be in a loud voice – the concept of the revelation of the quality of *bittul*.

(Likkutei Sichos, Parshas VaYigash 5752)

25 TEIVES: INFLUENCING THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD TO FULFILL THE SEVEN NOACHIDE LAWS

Since our generation is the last generation of Exile and the first generation of Redemption, it has a special emphasis on the work of the Jewish People to influence

the nations of the world in all matters of goodness, justice, and honesty – through their fulfillment of the Seven Noachide Laws. This is a preparation that closely precedes the fulfillment of the destiny of “Then I shall turn to the nations in clear language, etc., to serve Him as one,” until “the whole world will have no involvement except to know G-d alone...as is written, ‘For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea’” (as the Rambam writes in the concluding words of his seifer).

(Shabbos Parshas Naso 5751)

26 TEIVES: GETTING B'NEI NOACH TO BE INVOLVED IN TZ'DAKA – TZ'DAKA MAKES ATONEMENT FOR B'NEI NOACH

...(and the instruction) to have an effect upon the nations of the world to be involved in tz'daka, as we see that it is much easier to carry out tz'daka activities, both in relation to the nations of the world and the Jewish People.

Furthermore, we should note the Talmudic debate on the obligation of the children of Noach with regard to tz'daka, and the explicit section in Gemara on the pasuk, “The kindness of the nations is a sin (*chatas*),” which concludes with the interpretation of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai: “Just as a sin offering (*chatas*) atones for Jews, similarly, tz'daka atones for the nations of the world.”

(Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5752)

27 TEIVES: THE SOUL OF MOSHIACH IS FROM THE HIGHER WORLD

It is written, “Tzion bears her sons,” and the birth of a

son alludes to the strength and fortitude (male) of the True and Complete Redemption, an eternal redemption through our Righteous Moshiach, not to be followed by exile. That is, the bearing of a son alludes to the birth (revelation) of the soul of Moshiach, which is on the most supernal level, from the higher world.

(Parshas Tazria-Metzora 5751)

28 TEIVES: MELECH HA'MOSHIACH IN S'DOM – THE LIGHTS OF TOHU IN THE VESSELS OF TIKKUN

Chassidus explains that the reason S'dom was punished to be utterly destroyed is because the conduct of S'dom – the opposite of peace and unity – is the path of the world of Tohu (Chaos), as Tohu is “each one on its own, branching out separately”... Furthermore, this is the concept of the ruin of S'dom and Amora, etc., in the manner of “breaking” the world of Tohu...with the objective of “destroying in order to build,” for the creation of the world of Tikkun, the concept of inclusion and unity, etc.

This is also what is said in the Midrash [on the pasuk], “I have found Dovid, My servant” – Where did I find him? In S'dom.” At first

glance, this is astonishing. How can it be possible for Dovid Malka M'shichei to be in S'dom of all places? However, this is said with respect to its inner quality, the revelation of the lights of Tohu. Therefore, “I have found him in S'dom” specifically, for this is the concept of Dovid Malka M'shichei, through whom there will be the revelation of the lights of Tohu (higher than measure and limitation), except that they are drawn specifically into the vessels of Tikkun.

(Likutei Sichos, Parshas VaYeira 5752)

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THE HISTALKUS

*The story of the passing of the Alter Rebbe, presented
for the Yom Hilula, 24 Teives.*

BY MENACHEM ZIEGELBOIM

PART I

Friday, Erev Shabbos kodesh: The members of the caravan did not smell the fragrant Shabbos foods cooking on that freezing morning, as they were accustomed to. Actually, they hadn't had decent cooked food for a few months. This was a time of wandering, being refugees in their land, fleeing the oncoming troops of the French army which numbered 800,000!

The invasion began in Tamuz of 5572 (1812). Shortly before that, Napoleon sent a final conciliatory offer to Czar Alexander I. When the message went unanswered, Napoleon ordered his army to advance into the Russian empire.

At first he encountered almost no significant resistance and he quickly reached the interior of Russia. Russian opposition was spontaneous and localized. General Mikhail Barclay the Russian commander, refused to fight since he feared defeat in a face-to-face battle. Several times he tried to set up a line of defense but each time he was preempted by the French before he finished all the necessary preparations, and he had to withdraw.

The Alter Rebbe, who feared a victory by Napoleon, fled his home in Liadi with about thirty members of the family and the g'dolei ha'Chassidim. The Rebbe's caravan

traveled a great distance, thousands of kilometers since the month of Av until that wintry Friday morning. Their goal was not to be under the power of Napoleon for even one day. The difficulties, physical and spiritual, the deprivation and the fear, were no consideration in the face of the Rebbe's order to quickly flee the French.

The Mittlerer Rebbe wrote about the difficult conditions under which they lived in those days. "The great cold and the enormous pressure and suffering from hunger and cold, having only bread and water, and we were in the smoke of the gentile homes. There is no galus harder than this."

PART II

Friday, 8 Teives 5573 (1812): It was white as far as the eye could see. A heavy snowfall covered the land and it seemed endless. Some of the snow had turned to ice. Shrieking winds intensified the cold.

The refugees in the wagons tried to find some shelter inside as much as the thin walls could protect them... It would be Shabbos in a few hours. In ordinary times, preparations for Shabbos would be well underway with fragrant dishes being cooked as people looked forward to a few hours of holiness and rest. But here, now, who could dream of such pure pleasure at such

a time.

About sixty wagons entered Piena, a relatively large village located on the main road. It had about 300 large houses. People were sent to find out whether they could be hosted there for the next few days. They soon returned with the news that most of the men were gone, having been drafted to fight the French invaders. Those who remained were happy to host the refugees.

Dwellings were soon readied for the guests. Their hosts took care of all their needs including wood for heating, and it was gratis.

The Rebbe, his family and Chassidim, finished getting ready and the Shabbos Queen spread her wings and embraced the Creator's world, as though trying to protect them from the cries of combat, the sharpening of swords and the rivers of blood that poured in the terrible battles that were going on for six months and longer.

The Alter Rebbe, as leader of the Jewish people, did not allow himself to rest, although he sorely needed to after a protracted period of time wandering. His concern was focused on the Jewish people in the areas where the battles were raging. He assumed that the soldiers, French as well as Russian, vented their emotions on the helpless Jews wherever they were.

After Shabbos, the Alter Rebbe sent delegations for the purpose of raising money and arranging ways to help the unfortunate refugees. One delegation, headed by his son R' Avrohom Chaim, went to the Poltova-Cherson region in order to obtain the necessary support for the Jewish people, to raise them up from their devastation. A second delegation, headed by R' Pinchas Schick (Reizes) went to Vitebsk in order to arrange a committee that would collect all that was necessary in order to help Jewish refugees and get them back on their feet.

A third delegation, headed by R' Dovber, later to be the Mittlerer Rebbe, went to nearby towns, Haditch, Kremenchug, and Romanay for the purpose of

arranging suitable quarters for the family of the Alter Rebbe and the few Chassidim he had with him.

PART III

The Alter Rebbe did not enjoy tranquility in Piena for long. The difficulties of traveling, the physical conditions, the terrible cold, all these affected his health.

Only ten days after arriving in Piena, the Rebbe suddenly took ill. At first the family thought it was a simple winter illness, as a result of the harsh conditions, but as the days passed, the Rebbe became sicker and felt an overall weakness. His strength waned day by day.

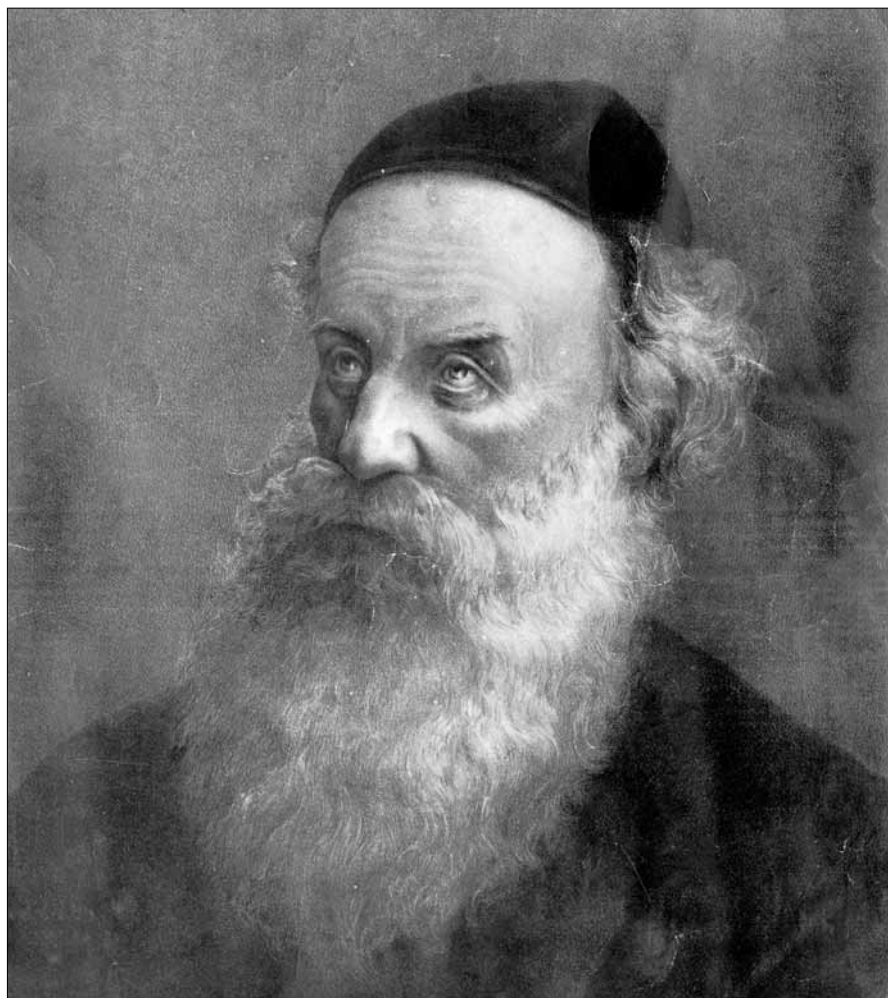
It was at this time that good tidings were heard on various fronts, that the hated French were

losing and out of their celebrated army only tens of thousands remained who were running in humiliation.

Viewed from the perspective of natural cause and effect, Napoleon's fall was due to his sitting in conquered Moscow as he waited in vain for the Russians to cave in. However, the Russian army continued its nonstop sabotage efforts and Napoleon had to leave Moscow. Thus began his long retreat. Additionally, at the battle of Maloyaroslavets, the Russian general Kutuzov, who replaced Barclay, forced the French to use the same route by which they had advanced eastward a few months earlier which had already been stripped of food supplies.

As he blocked the southern flank and prevented the French from using other routes, Kutuzov made use of frequent guerilla attacks, constantly striking at the weakest point of the French, their long supply lines. The Russian cavalry, in conjunction with mounted Cossacks, attacked and weakened individual French units. Providing supplies of food and weapons for the French soldiers became nearly impossible and many French soldiers began to desert. The Russian winter imposed additional difficulties on the French army as the soldiers and horses began to die of starvation, frostbite and exhaustion.

These were the ostensible reasons for the French defeat while the spiritual reason for Napoleon's downfall was the Alter Rebbe's determined battle against him. This war was a source of strife between the Alter Rebbe and other tzaddikim of his generation. The others hoped for Napoleon's success since his victory would mean material relief for the downtrodden Jews. The Alter Rebbe though, feared that Napoleon's success



would distance the Jewish people from their Father in heaven.

“On the first day of Rosh HaShana, before Musaf, they showed me from heaven that if Bonaparte wins, wealth would increase among the Jewish people, there would be relief and their dignity would be restored; but they would be separated, distanced, from their Father in heaven.

“However, if our master Alexander king of Russia would be victorious, although he would continue to oppress the Jewish people and the Jews would be downtrodden and the poverty would be great, because of this they would attach themselves to their Father in heaven.”

A fierce battle was waged between the Alter Rebbe and the Polish tzaddikim. The tzaddikim decided amongst themselves that the final decision would be made on Rosh HaShana during the blowing of the shofar. The tzaddikim of Poland intensified their spiritual efforts in preparation for the shofar blowing in order to finally close the mouth of the accuser.

The Alter Rebbe also prepared for the shofar blowing but he preempted the other tzaddikim. As soon as he got up Rosh HaShana morning he blew 100 blasts on the shofar while the other tzaddikim were still davening a hasty Shacharis. Rabbi Shneur Zalman tipped the scale in favor of the Czar.

The first to discern this victory was the Maggid, R' Yisroel of Kozhnitz. After Shacharis he took the shofar but as he began to blow it, he suddenly felt that the outcome had been decided. “That Litvak,” which is how R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi was referred to back in the home of the Maggid of Mezritch, “preceded us and was

victorious.”

The Mittlerer Rebbe wrote a letter shortly after that which said, “On Rosh HaShana he [the Alter Rebbe] called us and joyously said: Today I saw in my prayer that there is a change for the better up Above and we are victorious.”

PART IV

The Alter Rebbe grew sicker from day to day and as his son, the Mittlerer Rebbe testified, this illness was connected with diabetes which directly affected the functioning of the gall bladder. This was because of the tremendous bitterness that the Rebbe experienced while fleeing. The freezing cold which penetrated his bones only made

“I don’t see the beam now, but the word of Hashem that enlivens the beam,” said the Rebbe in shocking candidness.

things worse.

Within a few days his health had deteriorated and his family was helpless. On Shabbos, Parshas Shmos, the Rebbe grew weaker. During Shabbos, they heard him mention the name of Haditch and the name of the river which passes through the city and the nearby cemetery. Nobody knew what the Rebbe meant.

Throughout this time, the Rebbe’s lips continued to move as he was continuously involved in Torah and avoda, fear of heaven and fiery love of Hashem.

As Shabbos came to a close it was time to say Havdala. The Rebbe

was exceedingly weak and he said, “There is reason to say that Havdala is a biblical command while davening Maariv is optional. Time is short and so let us say Havdala before Maariv.”

A member of the household gave the Rebbe a cup of black coffee. The Rebbe found it hard to hold the cup and he was assisted by one of the daughters. It was not possible for him to drink the coffee after reciting Havdala and the coffee was spilled.

The Alter Rebbe’s grandson, later to be the Tzemach Tzedek, went over to daven Maariv. The difficult situation affected him, as he was then only a 24-year-old man, and he stood in a corner of the house and prayed a heartrending Maariv. It was said in a “tone” of bitterness and tremendous inner pain. When he finished, his grandfather called him over and gently reproved him:

“My master and teacher the Maggid said on the verse, ‘like the appearance of a sapphire stone and on the image of the throne was the image of man’ – according to the emotion man displays below, so he is shown from Above, so one should daven in a state of joy.”

The Rebbe also began davening Maariv, “with clear and settled mind and with wondrous d’veikus.”

A silent tension prevailed in the small cottage. The situation was bleak as they all knew that the Rebbe suffered. He never complained about physical pain or various discomforts. The first time was now, as he turned to the Rebbetzin with terrible, inner pain and said, “Gehinom in my stomach.” That said it all. Pain of Gehinom.

Suddenly, the Rebbe asked that they cut his hair. They looked for scissors, but because of their nonstop wandering they did not have a pair. The Rebbe, who had

waited all that time, said that probably their gentile host had scissors with which he sheared his sheep. Indeed, the goy took out a pair of scissors and they cut the Rebbe's hair.

The Rebbe called for his beloved grandson whom he had raised as his son.

"Menachem Mendel."

His grandson stood there in great fear.

"Do you see that beam?" said the Rebbe as he pointed at the beam of the house.

His grandson looked at the beam and did not understand the significance of the Rebbe's question. He remained silent, assuming the Rebbe would explain himself.

"I don't see the beam now, but the word of Hashem that enlivens the beam," said the Rebbe in shocking candidness.

Afterwards, the Rebbe asked for the family to gather round him.

"Whoever holds on to my 'doorknob' – I will benefit him in this world and the next."

It is also related that the Rebbe said, "Children, don't rely on me [because of my merits] because you will not find the door to my Gan Eden."

Later, the Tzemach Tzedek said that this level is higher than the level of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai, who before he died, cried and said that he did not know which road they would be leading him on, whereas here, the Rebbe knew where – to Gan Eden!

On Motzaei Shabbos, Parshas Shmos, 24 Teives 5573 (1813), "about half past eleven, the holy ark, light of Israel, anointed of Hashem, was taken captive and wanted in the heavenly academy...in one bond he was bound up with the Holy One, Blessed be He...it is to Him that he raised up his soul with joy and gladness of heart, as was seen clearly by those who stood there, who were amazed and astounded by the vision."

PART V

Long after midnight. Darkness reigned and the cold was bone-chilling. Sorrow, more precisely –

shock, was the prevailing emotion; shock over the passing of the Baal HaTanya, the great light who led the camp for sixty years, "and paved a smooth road and a broad path."

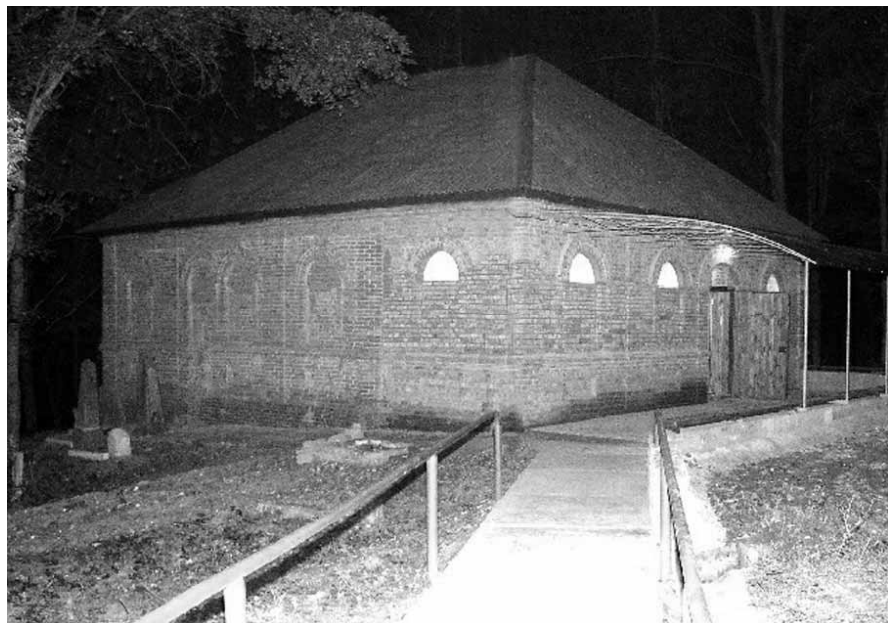
The Chassidim could not remain long in their mourning and sorrow. They had to bring the Rebbe to his final resting place. After some discussion, it turned out that the closest place where Jews dwelt was Haditch, a distance of ninety kilometers. It had a Jewish cemetery.

Now the family members understood what the Rebbe had meant when he mentioned Haditch on Shabbos and the river surrounding it and the cemetery there.

It wasn't a simple matter to bring the Rebbe to Haditch. The roads were covered with deep snow or slippery and dangerous ice. It was extremely cold and in addition, because of the war, policemen were stationed in towns and villages and conducted sudden searches of passengers, fearing spies traveling to bring information to the enemy.

The situation required finesse for these gentiles would not understand why they were taking the deceased faraway and could make trouble for them. After a lengthy consultation with the family and Chassidim, it was decided to seat the Rebbe on a winter wagon with sleigh runners, and have him sitting in his seat like a living man, with three people accompanying him: his grandson the Tzemach Tzedek, another grandson R' Menachem Nachum, son of the Mittlerer Rebbe, and one other person.

It was a long and arduous trip. Every so often they had to stop the wagon and enter a wayside inn in order to warm up a bit. The decided that while two entered the



The Ohel of the Alter Rebbe in Haditch after it was renovated in recent years

inn, the third would remain outside with the Rebbe.

One of the times, as the two men went into the inn and R' Nachum remained outside, he noticed, to his great amazement, that the Rebbe was raising his holy body as though wanting to alight from the wagon. He also noticed that the wagon itself was hovering in the air. A terrible fright overtook him. He did not know how the Rebbe moved from his place and what was the meaning of the sudden lifting up of the wagon.

He wanted to get down and flee but fear paralyzed him. R' Nachum, who was known as a man of broad intellect, steeled his mind and calmed himself. He understood that there was something important going on. He left the wagon and walked around it in order to see what had caused that strange thing to happen. He suddenly noticed a pig, impure and disgusting, standing underneath the wagon, as though trying to warm itself.

R' Nachum realized that the holy and pure body of the Rebbe could not tolerate the proximity of impurity and he chased it away. Then, as in some wondrous vision, the wagon settled back down in its place and the Rebbe returned to his place in peace.

At a later point, as they stayed at

a wayside inn, the innkeeper pointed out to the Chassidim, two men sitting in a corner of the inn and staring at them. The innkeeper divulged that these were robbers and he had heard them plotting to attack them. The robbers had seen the wagon outside with one man keeping guard and they assumed there was a treasure there.

*A miracle took place
and the robbers were
unable to catch up
with them. The more
they spurred their
horses on, the further
away the wagon was
from them.*

The two Chassidim got up and returned to the wagon and the horses galloped off. The robbers' suspicions were confirmed and they chased after the wagon. It was an uneven race since they had a heavy wagon while the robbers were on fast horses, yet a miracle took place and the robbers were unable to

catch up with them. The more they spurred their horses on, the further away the wagon was from them.

Some time later, the Alter Rebbe came to his grandson in a dream and thanked him for the mesirus nefesh he had to bring him to burial in Haditch, and in this merit he promised that he would be in his presence in the next world.

PART VI

At the end of the long trip, they arrived at the Jewish cemetery where the Alter Rebbe was buried in the frozen ground of Haditch in the Poltava district. "We made a roof of good wood and a large house and prepared bricks for a wall to be built in his honor," relates the Mitteler Rebbe, "like that over the graves of the Avos and great tzaddikim to whom people come to make pledges and pray there in their sorrow, for greater are tzaddikim in their deaths, etc."

Throughout the years, this place has been a holy one where Chassidim and other Jews gather to daven, in the merit of our great Rebbe, Shneur – two lights, who illuminated the Jewish world with two great lights.

(sources: Likkutei Sippurim (Perlov) p. 77 and on; Kisvei R' C. A. Bichovsky p. 119; Otzar Sippurei Chabad vol. 4 p. 331 and on; and vol. 15 p. 193 and on; Alfasi's HaChozeh M'Lublin; in many stories there are different versions that were researched by R' Shmuel Krauss in Beis Moshiah)

OUR APOLOGIES:

We apologize to our subscribers for not receiving their Beis Moshiah delivery this past Shabbos due to technical reasons beyond our control.



THE UNDERGROUND

THE IDLE CHAT

OF T'MIMIM

BY YAAKOV SHMUELEVITZ, SHLIACH IN BEIT SHAAN

*Thanks to Hashem and thanks to the Rebbe that enabled me to leave where I was and go to the light of Chassidus. Today, baruch Hashem, all my children attend Chabad yeshivos and mosdos and I pray to Hashem that all of them continue on this blessed road. * 5th and final installment.*

As I said in the previous chapter, all my underground friends switched to a Chabad yeshiva as soon as we graduated the Litvishe yeshiva. Actually, one bachur didn't switch immediately.

When we finished high school

he went to yeshiva Kol Torah, a famous Litvishe yeshiva in Yerushalayim. He said that he had Nigleh and Chassidus there too (even if it was here and there) and he could attend farbrengens, etc. I tried to convince him to attend a

Chabad yeshiva but he strongly maintained that he could be a Chabadnik and remain there.

I once invited him for Shabbos in Kfar Chabad and he agreed to come. He saw the davening, the study of Chassidus, the time for niggunim, farbrengen, and he really enjoyed it, but he still wasn't convinced. It was Motzaei Shabbos and we were sitting in the zal. It was late, nearly midnight and we were learning and talking but my friend was returning to Kol Torah the next day.

I made a last attempt to explain to him how special Tomchei T'mimim is and that the Rebbe Rashab picked the neshamos, but he was leaving.

Then I remembered a Chassidishe aphorism that I once heard that if you listen to even the “idle talk” of T’mimim in Tomchei T’mimim, it can lead you to do t’shuva. What this means to say is that bachurim in Tomchei T’mimim are mekusharim to the Rebbe not only when they learn and daven; even their idle talk expresses how

With a triumphant look, my friend said: Nu, what do you say now? This is Tomchei T’mimim? Bachurim fighting?

I called over one of those bachurim (a boy in my class) and asked him: What are you fighting about?

He explained to me: The other

bachur has a test in Gemara tomorrow and since I’m a Kohen, he wants me to bless him that he’ll do well on the test. I told him that I don’t agree to bless him because he has to put in the work, to learn and prepare for the test himself, and not rely on brachos. He says that he did put in the work but he wants a bracha that his work will pay off. I say that he has to really learn and know the material.

In short, said the bachur with a mischievous glint in his eye, I am running away so he will put in the work and he’s chasing me in order to get the bracha of a Kohen for success in his work.

When the bachur from Kol Torah heard this, he really liked it but he said it was just one incident.

A LATE-NIGHT DEBATE

Just then, we heard a group of bachurim from shiur Gimmel loudly arguing on the other side of the zal. Sharp words were exchanged and once again, my friend from Kol Torah said: What do you say about that – about the yelling?

I had to go over and listen in to find out what these older bachurim were arguing about. It turned out they were heatedly discussing how it was possible that some people (Yerushalmim) did not get up in the middle of the night in order to hear the broadcast of the Rebbe’s farbrengen. This so disturbed them that they were screaming and using negative words to describe these people.

When the bachur from Kol Torah heard that the fuss was over hiskashrus to the Rebbe, he decided that I was right. He switched to Tomchei T’mimim and so all of the bachurim from the Chassidic underground made the switch to Chabad yeshivos.

* * *



Yaakov Shmuelewitz (right) as a Tamim in Tomchei T’mimim

they are completely mekushar to the Rebbe’s ratzon, to mivtzaim, farbrengens, etc.

I told him this and said: You don’t have this in Kol Torah. True, you learn Nigleh there and maybe some Chassidus and farbrengens, but this – the idle talk of Tomchei T’mimim – you don’t have. For this it’s worthwhile switching to the yeshiva here in Kfar Chabad.

He listened, was a bit surprised, and then – about five steps away from where we sitting – a small quarrel erupted between two boys. One ran away while the other tried to catch him, and they were “fighting” in the zal. That’s all I needed – bachurim fighting!



Rabbi Shmuelewitz today

Another debate at that time took place between me and a good friend that I made in Kfar Chabad, Yisroel Gliss. Today he is a shliach in Dimona, but at that time he had just come from the high school in Lud to the zal in Kfar Chabad.

I told him at length and enthusiastically about the Chassidic underground, about the *Tanya* classes and farbrengens, about the mikva in the Arab village, about Shabbos when we only learned Chassidus – almost like in a Chabad yeshiva.

He listened and responded equally as heatedly that I had lost out by not learning in Lud. “You never met R’ Zushe Posner? Rav Abrams? Etc. etc.

Because of our discussions I was interested in seeing the yeshiva in

Lud. One Thursday night, after s’darim, I went to Lud and I met with R’ Zushe Posner, who for some reason adopted “this bachur” from Itri. We went to his house and began to farbreng. This went on for several hours and on many subsequent Thursday nights, actually, until this day.

Each time I meet with R’ Zushe he reminds me again and again that I have to spit out the “Itri in you,” and I get to hear some Chassidishe story or have another “unofficial” farbrengen.

With this conclusion of my memoirs I want to say this:

Often we meet bachurim from different groups, Litvish and Chassidic. We should take the opportunity to tell them about the great light of Toras HaChassidus

because you never know what an impact you will have. Maybe they will find it interesting and will learn and be mekasher to Toras HaChassidus, even raise a Chassidishe family, maybe even a Chabad house – and then their influence will be immeasurable.

In concluding these chapters I say thanks to Hashem and thanks to the Rebbe who enabled me to leave where I was and to go to the light of Chassidus. Today, baruch Hashem, all my children learn in Chabad yeshivos and mosdos and I pray to Hashem that all of them succeed and continue on this blessed path. May we, together with all the Jewish people, merit the coming of Moshiach, the hisgalus of the Rebbe, immediately now.

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THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK

In Lubavitch of old, it was said that miracles rolled about on the floors and nobody bothered to pick them up. In our times as well, there are countless miracles of the Rebbe MH”M that are not known. Beis Moshiach decided to pick some of them up and share them with the readers in the spirit of the Rebbe’s directive to publicize miracles as part of the preparation for Geula.

TEN YEARS AS A GIFT

Shabsi Weintraub relates:

The open miracle story that happened with the wife of the gaon Rabbi Meir Mazuz, rosh Yeshivas Kisei Rachamim, made waves when it happened. It was after the Rebbe blessed her with a bracha for a refua shleima and saved her life. Rabbi Mazuz constantly repeats the story and even wrote it up several times (it appears in *Shemen Sasson MeiChaveirecha*).

The story, in which I helped play a role, happened as follows. I was





**Rabbi Meir Mazuz, rosh yeshivas
Kisei Rachamim**

learning in Tomchei T'mimim in Kiryat Gat at the time. On Wednesday, 22 Elul 5750 I arrived in 770 for the first time. During Tishrei we experienced amazing encounters with the Rebbe. It was an indescribable experience for me, especially when this was my first Tishrei in 770 and the first time I was seeing the Rebbe.

I was in close touch with my friend, R' Shimon Weitzhandler, who was the librarian in the Chassidus Library in B'nei Brak. I would call him once in a while to report to him about the giluyim I witnessed.

The day after Yom Kippur was a Sunday and the line for dollars was very long, especially since it was Tishrei. After I passed by the Rebbe I went to one of the public phones on Kingston Avenue to call Israel and relate my Yom Kippur experiences. Before I could say a word, Shimon said, "The wife of R' Meir Mazuz had a stroke on the 4th of Tishrei and her situation is critical. The doctors gave up and say she will remain in a coma and that there's no hope. You must ask the Rebbe for a bracha!"

I told him that I had just gotten a dollar and how could I dare to get



on line a second time?

“There’s no choice, it’s pikuach nefesh. You must ask the Rebbe for a bracha on this auspicious day.”

My mind raced. I thought about asking another bachur who hadn’t gone by the Rebbe yet to ask for a bracha for her. I ran towards 770 and asked some of my friends to ask the Rebbe for a bracha for the wife of Rabbi Mazuz, but they all said they were incapable of saying a word to the Rebbe. I tried explaining to them that this was a matter of pikuach nefesh and they were not allowed to refuse...

When I saw that I had no choice, I thought – what would the Rebbe say to do? I decided to go past the Rebbe a second time for this important matter.

I stood on line again, trembling and wondering: what do I say to the Rebbe? How will I be able to say anything to the Rebbe? In addition, I felt pangs of conscience for being on line a second time. When it was finally my turn I stood there in fear and began to tell the Rebbe about the wife of Rabbi Mazuz who had a stroke and I said her name. I spoke in a whisper.

The Rebbe leaned over and listened and then gave me a dollar and said: **much success, good news, refua krova.** He said this in Ivrit and with the Sephardic pronunciation even though I had spoken in Yiddish.

Armed with this bracha I ran to call Israel again to report about the bracha that I had gotten. I noted that the Rebbe said “refua krova,” which meant the refua would be quick.

Tishrei was packed with experiences and without a minute to rest I forgot about the story. It was Sukkos with the sichos every night, Simchas Beis HaShoeiva till dawn, saying the bracha on the Rebbe’s



Dalet minim, etc.

One night I called my friend Shimon to tell him about my amazing time in Beis Chayeinu and he burst out with, “Shabsi, don’t ask! The Rebbe’s bracha was completely fulfilled! There was indeed a speedy refua which was completely above nature. Two days after you got the bracha she woke up. Her condition is good and she was released from the hospital. The doctors can’t explain what happened.”

I was thrilled at this news for I had been the shliach mitzva and had contributed towards greater respect for the Rebbe among the chareidim in B’nei Brak. Shimon said that Rabbi Mazuz was very touched by the bracha his wife had gotten and he wanted a video of it so he could hear for himself how the Rebbe said refua krova, as well as the dollar.

The story about the bracha and the miracle got around. When I returned to Eretz Yisroel there was a Siyum HaRambam at the Chabad house in Shikun Hei. Rabbi Meir Mazuz came in the Rebbe’s honor

and delivered the main address. Before he went to the event, I went over to him and told him everything that had happened and I gave him the dollar along with the video.

He was touched and couldn’t stop blessing me for doing what I did. At the siyum Rabbi Mazuz told the audience about the miracle and from then on, at every opportunity and at every event, as well as in his s’farim, he tells the story.

A year later, in Kislev 5752, I was a bachur on K’vutza when Rabbi Mazuz and his wife and daughter came to New York. He came to the Rebbe to thank him for the bracha and the miracle. I accompanied them. At dollars he was introduced by Rabbi Kuti Rapp and the Rebbe gave him many brachos and gave him and his wife nine dollars.

Mrs. Mazuz passed away Kislev 5761, ten years later. During the Shiva I went to be menachem avel together with Shimon. We sat with the rav who asked me to repeat what the Rebbe told me. Then he said, with tears on his face, “The Rebbe gave her ten years as a gift.”

CAST IN THE SEA

Shabsi Weintraub relates:

I heard an amazing story as I was distributing the Rebbe's Hagada (published by the Machon Toras Menachem) before Pesach. I went to s'farim stores in B'nei Brak including Rubinstein's in Gan Warsaw. The owner is a Gerrer Chassid who saw the Rebbe in 5751 and this is what he told me:

"I went for dollars many times. You know how the line was long and there was plenty of time to look around and see all kinds of Jews. One time the Jew standing next to me did not look like a Chassid. In order to pass the time he read a newspaper. We got into a conversation and I asked him what motivated him to come for a dollar."

This is what he told me:

"A relative of mine became sick with cancer. I decided to come and ask the Rebbe for a bracha after I heard that he does miracles. When I passed by the Rebbe I asked that he transfer her illness to a goy as was the custom by tzaddikim of earlier generations. The Rebbe said: Why transfer the sickness? It says, 'And cast into the depths of the sea all their sins!'

"We were shocked by this surprising answer and when we returned home we began wondering what the Rebbe meant. After discussing it at length we decided to do a Tashlich ceremony in which we said the verse, 'and cast into the depths of the sea all their sins,' and to throw the sickness in the sea. We went to the ocean where my relative said the Tashlich service and shook her clothes, and the sickness disappeared."

* * *

The Gerrer Chassid went on to say:

This is what the man told me and I asked him, "So why are you here

now?"

The man smiled and said:

"After the illness disappeared the doctors wanted to give her medication to prevent the recurrence of the illness. My relative did not want to take the medicine because the illness had disappeared supernaturally thanks to the Rebbe's bracha and if she took the medicine it would be interpreted as lack of acknowledgement of the miracle and could cause harm. So I came now to ask the Rebbe whether my relative should take the preventive medicine."

The Rebbe leaned over and listened and then gave me a dollar and said: much success, good news, refua krova. He said this in Ivrit and with the Sephardic pronunciation even though I had spoken in Yiddish...

WHEN THE CHILD BECOMES BAR MITZVA

A little over six years ago, on the eve of 20 Elul 5760, the bar mitzva of Yosef Sorotzkin was celebrated. It was an especially moving occasion because Yosef, a sweet boy, was born with tremendous physical handicaps and with the tremendous efforts of his parents and his own strong will, he achieved what he achieved.

Emotions ran even higher as the grandfather of the bar mitzva boy, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Lau, then chief

rabbi of Israel, stood near his grandson and spoke. At the end of his speech he said with great emotion, "This is an open miracle and I must include you in it since I have to fulfill a shlichus and close a circle."

"Ten years ago, my wife and I and my daughter, the mother of the bar mitzva boy, visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It was Sunday, 17 Sivan 5750 during dollars. We told the Rebbe about Yossi's medical condition which was poor at that time and the doctors were very pessimistic.

We told the Rebbe the doctors' opinion and then, in opposition to everything everybody thought and said the Rebbe gave my wife another dollar and said: **When the boy is bar mitzva, give him this.** At that time, this seemed absolutely unrealistic but the Rebbe said it with such confidence that it gave us all a feeling of tranquility and bitachon.

Rabbi Lau removed the dollar from his pocket and said, "I hereby fulfill the shlichus the Lubavitcher Rebbe assigned me and my wife more than ten years ago. You can see that at the time I wrote on it, 'to give it on the day of the bar mitzva, for a bracha, to Yosef ben Miriam.'"

Rabbi Lau tearfully gave the dollar to his grandson and said, "The Lubavitcher Rebbe said to give this to you today."

After the celebration, Mrs. Miriam Sorotzkin, Yosef's mother, said, "After the Rebbe gave my mother another dollar for Yossi, my father and the Rebbe spoke about mikvaos.

"At the end of their discussion, the Rebbe turned to me, gave me a dollar and blessed me with much success and then gave me another dollar. 'Give this to the sofer who will write the parshiyos of the t'fillin for Yossi before his bar mitzva.' This, in essence, repeated the bracha he

had given my parents. I must admit that the bracha seemed very unrealistic yet it gave us renewed bitachon.

"I've been carrying the dollar for ten years. It has been moved from wallet to wallet. Now I've carried out the shlichus and have given it to the sofer who wrote the parshiyos for Yossi. When the sofer heard the story about the dollar he gave it back to us."

SPEEDY RECOVERY

Nachman Yosef Twerski relates:

Before Pesach in the 80's, as one of my cousins was taking the Pesach dishes out of the attic, a heavy box fell on him and broke his arm. He rushed to the hospital where X-rays showed that it was a bad break. In order to heal an ordinary cast wouldn't do. His hand had to be immobilized with a special cast that was wound around his body.

The doctors said the hand had to be immobilized in this way for two months and only then could they examine it to see whether they could switch to a regular cast. Naturally, the special cast was very uncomfortable and interfered greatly in his daily routine, far more than a regular cast. Right after Pesach he went for dollars on Sunday to ask for a bracha.

When it was his turn, he introduced himself to the Rebbe as a grandson of the Rachmastrivka Rebbe who was on friendly terms with the Rebbe's family when they lived in Nikolayev. He didn't have to tell the Rebbe about his medical condition since it was obvious.

The Rebbe gave him a dollar and after blessing him with the usual bracha he added, "refua shleima."

He began to leave and then the Rebbe called him back and firmly said, "Soon!" and gave him another dollar.

My cousin went home and in the

evening he began to feel strange pains in his arm in the area of the break. He remembered that the doctor had warned him that if he felt any unusual pains to hurry to the hospital, because sometimes there could be an inflammation and it had to be treated.

He was at the hospital shortly thereafter and reported to the doctor about the pain. The doctor removed the cast and sent him for X-rays to discover the reason for the pain. When the doctor returned with the X-rays, he had a look of astonishment on his face.

"I have no idea how this happened, but according to these X-rays your hand's healing jumped ahead six weeks! The knitting together process that should take two months finished today, only two weeks after the accident!"

AND IF THEY'RE GIRLS?

Another story from R' Twerski:

One of my cousins, who needed a bracha for children, went for dollars several times in order to ask for a bracha, but as he stood there he was unable to say a word. Since

he didn't ask, he wasn't answered. Each time the Rebbe gave him a dollar for tz'daka and said the usual bracha, and that was it.

One Sunday, at the beginning of Adar 5752, another relative went for dollars. When he saw my cousin he asked him why he had come and when he heard that he had come several times for a bracha for children but couldn't muster the nerve to say anything, he suggested they go together. He would ask for a bracha for my cousin.

That's what they did. The two cousins appeared before the Rebbe and one introduced the other and asked that he be blessed with a son. The Rebbe looked surprised and he asked, "A son? And if he has daughters?" and the Rebbe handed another dollar to my cousin and said, "There should be daughters."

A year later his wife gave birth to a girl and then another girl and then another girl... Today he has a number of daughters, each one being a separate miracle.

FOUR DOLLARS

Michael Reinitz relates:





Rabbi Yisroel Meir Lau at dollars

When I learned in Oholei Torah in Crown Heights, I would go with R' Shmuel Zohar to give shiurim in Staten Island to a group of mekuravim that we met on Mivtza T'fillin. After a long time, when we knew them well, we suggested that they come as a group to the Rebbe on Sunday for dollars.

They were excited about the idea and since most of them don't work on Sunday, we arranged to pick them up from their homes. When we stopped near one of the houses, we were witness to an altercation. The homeowners were hosting a young Israeli, a relative of theirs, and when they left for the bus they asked him to join them on the trip to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

He reacted with disdain. His disparagement of a tzaddik angered his hosts and they told him that if he didn't join them, he was no longer welcome in their home. After being threatened like that he boarded the bus but his attitude was not improved.

I sat down next to him and began

talking to him. After a few minutes of conversation he had calmed down and he began inquiring what they would be doing when they saw the Rebbe. I explained that we would be passing by the Rebbe and he would give him a dollar to give to tz'daka and he would bless us.

When he heard that the Rebbe gives brachos, and he heard some stories about brachos that were fulfilled, he asked whether he too could request a bracha. I told him he could but explained that there wasn't time for long requests and that he had to condense what he wanted to say into a few words.

He was quiet for the rest of the trip. Apparently he was thinking about how he would word his request to the Rebbe.

I stood behind him on line and when it was his turn I saw he was very emotional. He was so overwrought that he could not speak. The Rebbe gave him a dollar and blessed him with "bracha v'hatzlacha."

He was walking towards the exit

when the Rebbe called him back. The Rebbe gave him another four dollars and said, "Peace in the family, good news!"

After I got a dollar and bracha from the Rebbe, I went outside where I met the young man who was pale.

"How did he know?" he asked me in amazement. "How did the Rebbe know what I wanted to ask?" he kept repeating.

He told us that a few months earlier his father had passed away, leaving a large inheritance in Tel Aviv. The inheritance had stirred up a controversy among the brothers and the atmosphere among them was definitely not peaceful.

"The family situation really bothered me, and when I heard that you can ask for brachos, I decided to ask about that. When I got to the Rebbe I was so overcome that I was unable to say a word. The Rebbe knew though, and he blessed me with peace in the family!"

"How many brothers are you?" I asked.

He looked at the four dollars the Rebbe had given him and in wonderment he said, "Unbelievable, we are four brothers!"

Following this miracle, the young man's attitude towards Judaism changed completely. He joined the shiurim at his relative's home and began putting on t'fillin.

A SPECIFIC BRACHA

R' Leibel Groner relates:

In the middle of the night I received a phone call from a shliach who said, "I recently went to 770 with a wealthy supporter of mine along with his family. We stood on line for dollars and when it was our turn, I introduced him. The Rebbe gave him a dollar and said, 'This is for your donations to my shliach.' Then he gave the wife a dollar and

said, 'This is for your help and support of your husband who donates.'

Then the Rebbe turned to the first son, gave him a dollar, and said, "for your encouragement of your father and mother.' The second son got a dollar and the Rebbe said, 'This is for supporting your father.' The third son got a dollar and the Rebbe wished him success.

It was only after they went out and reviewed what the Rebbe had said that I noticed that the Rebbe said different things to each of the sons. The father was amazed by the Rebbe's ruach ha'kodesh, in addition to his refinement.

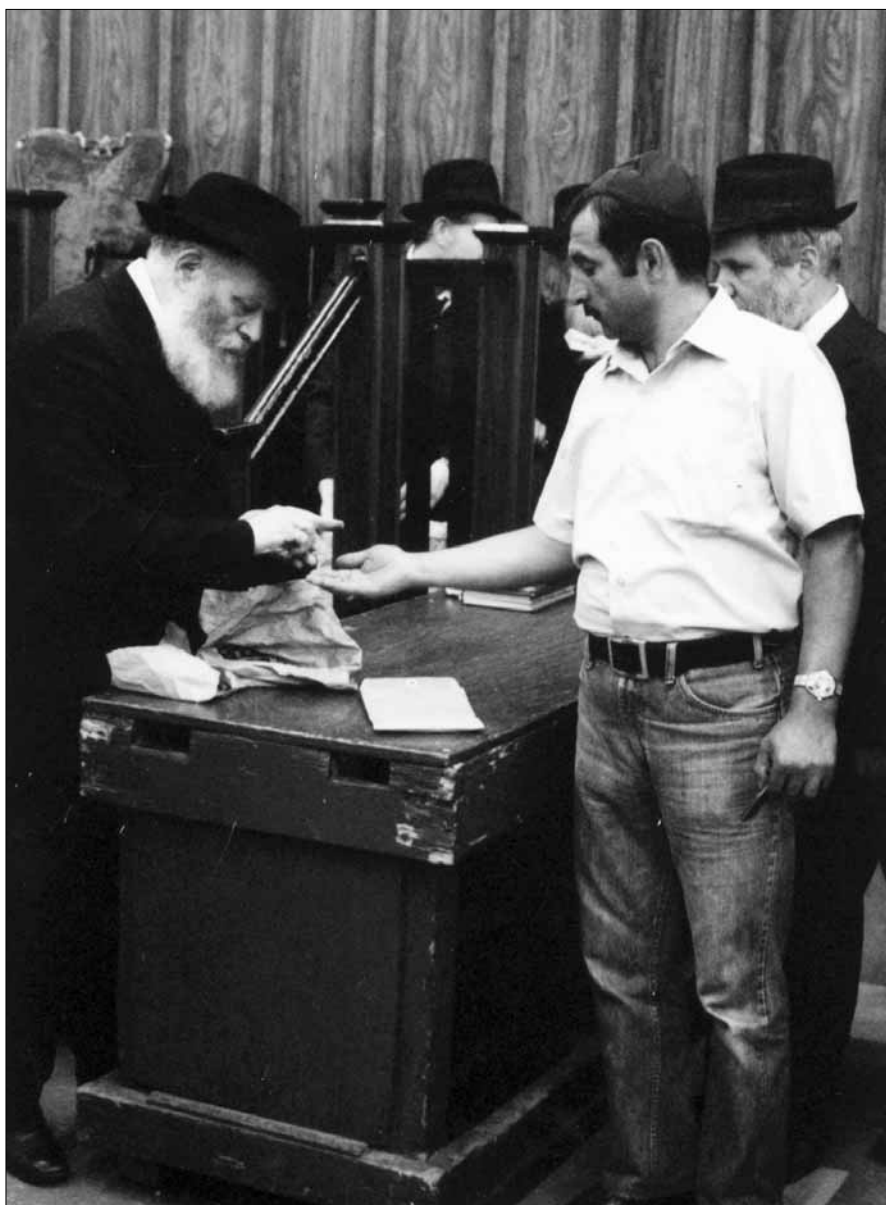
What was this about? It turned out that this was the couple's second marriage. Both of them were the parents of the first son, and so the Rebbe said, "For your encouragement of your father and mother." The second son was only the father's son and so the Rebbe had said, "this is for supporting your father." The third son was adopted and so the Rebbe only said, "hatzlacha."

FOR A SON

Hundreds of people contacted Rabbi Sholom Dovber Wolpo when he advertised his book about the bankruptcy of Zionism, *Bein Ohr L'Choshech*, for free to whoever stopped celebrating Israel's Independence Day. He heard many stories that could fill a book. One of these stories had to do with a bachur who learned in Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's yeshiva.

The bachur, Mordechai Miller, from the Har HaChoma neighborhood of Yerushalayim, who was born in the US, told him:

"I was born thanks to a bracha from the Rebbe. My father had four daughters and he very much wanted a son. My father is not a Chabad Chassid but he decided to go on



Sunday for dollars and to ask for a bracha for a son. The Rebbe gave him a dollar and said, 'For a son.' I was born a year later."

EVERY WORD PRECISE

Mrs. Sarah (Sufa) Rickman of Nachalat Har Chabad passed away in Iyar 5760 at the age of 99. In the final years of her life she was sick and was homebound. Her body was weak but her spirit was very strong and her mind remained clear till her final days.

How did she merit such a long

life? Her good friend, Mrs. Chasia Toch, also of Nachalat Har Chabad, has the answer:

"I passed by the Rebbe for dollars and asked for a bracha for long life in good health for my friend Sufa Rickman. The Rebbe blessed her with long life. It was only after I left that I realized that the Rebbe did not say anything about health.

"She was very sick but she merited long life, seeing a fifth generation."

THE FALL OF BAVEL

BY SHAI GEFEN

THE END OF THE “KING OF BAVEL”

The execution by hanging of the former dictator of Iraq, Saddam Hussein on Shabbos, the 9th of Teives, is quite symbolic for us. Those who merited to hear the Rebbe speak at the beginning of the Gulf War, see another step taken in the process towards the true and complete Redemption.

As soon as the Persian Gulf crisis began, the Rebbe connected the crisis in Iraq with the “year in which Melech HaMoshiach is revealed” and he referenced the end of the Midrash – that Moshiach stands on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash and announces, “Humble ones, the time for your redemption has arrived.”

As the days progressed and the Gulf War began and missiles landed in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe continued to speak about the klipa of Bavel, which has no correction but can only be removed from the world (see the sicha of Bo 5751). In the sicha, which the Rebbe asked not to be publicized at that time, the Rebbe spoke about the fall and humiliation of the tyrant and that there ought to be destruction after destruction and churban and after churban in Bavel in a way of “Yerushalayim wasn't filled except from the destruction of Tzor (Tyre).”

16 years later, we are witness to the fulfillment of the Rebbe's prophecy, in a most amazing way. The klipa of Bavel was removed from the world, and when? On the eve of the day when the **King of Bavel** besieged Yerushalayim!

We need only recall the unusual sicha said in a yechidus for guests on 26 Nissan 5751, when the Rebbe said

the name of the enemy and described in detail the humiliation he was undergoing in a way of “smiting the Egyptians with their eldest,” to the

point that the Rebbe compared him to Haman and the miracle to the miracle of Purim and more... The Rebbe even said that people should rejoice in the



SLEEPING ON THE JOB:
IDF soldiers on a training mission



streets and not be ashamed, while publicizing the miracle, and whoever did not realize the magnitude of the miracle should have it explained in a pleasant manner until he understood.

We don't know why it had to take 16 years until this klipa that caused trouble for Israel and the world was finally eradicated. What we see is that the removal of this klipa from the world, in such a degrading manner, in a way of "smiting the Egyptians with their eldest" – that the Iraqi nation itself hung him – definitely proves how what the Rebbe says is fulfilled in its entirety even if many years go by.

This was a "small Geula" – all the more so with the prophecy of the Geula and the Besuras HaGeula which the Rebbe connected directly to the destruction of the kingdom of Bavel. If so, Saddam Hussein's execution is an inseparable part of the Geula process which we are experiencing.

As the Rebbe said, we should thank Hashem for the miracles and we should publicize them and dance in the streets, especially after the Rebbe asked us to publicize it as part of the inyan of hastening the Geula: "Hashem wanted to make Chizkiya Moshiach but did not because he did not say Shira."

Unfortunately, we don't remember well and thousands of events happened in the interim which dull the enormity of the miracle of the destruction of Malchus Bavel. Just a few years ago, just mentioning the name of Saddam Hussein made many people tremble in fear. He disturbed the tranquility of the leaders of our government and Intelligence experts because he, seemingly, had the power to directly threaten the residents of Eretz Yisroel.

Saddam Hussein, the man who saw himself as the reincarnation of Nevuchadnetzar, the one who destroyed the Beis HaMikdash, was executed on the eve of the day when "the King of Bavel besieged Yerushalayim."

May the same happen to all our

enemies who have arisen lately and threaten us. May they all go the way of Saddam Hussein!

HOW THE DISENGAGEMENT CAME TO PASS

Journalist for *HaAretz*, Aluf Benn, wrote a fascinating article about how the Disengagement Plan was hatched. Benn painstakingly describes how the decisions were made, revealing that the reason for it was in order to save Sharon from public humiliation in the wake of investigations, as well as the poor security situation.

His advisor, Dov Weinglass, suggested that he take the "big step" in order to bring hope to the people. The one who convinced Sharon to go for it was his son, Gilad, who realized that this was the only thing that would save his father from his legal woes and his lack of popularity.

This is not news as many knew long ago that the Disengagement Plan had one goal: to save Sharon! Yet it's frightening to read this in an article about how day after day, detail after detail, this plan was implemented that had no connection whatsoever with our security needs.

The big question is, how does a fragile country that faces such serious threats for its very existence, allow itself to rely on dubious leaders whose sole purpose is to save their own skin?

I spoke this week with a public figure who told me that in light of the situation these many years, when prime ministers use their authority to undermine Israel's security – as we saw in the recent war in Lebanon, where our government allowed Hezbollah to arm itself for the past six years, and in the south – the Knesset should limit the government's authority. As soon as the military leadership establishes that our security is compromised, as it was with the Disengagement for example, they should have veto power. I don't know if this suggestion is practical, but it definitely reflects the crisis we are in.

The Rebbe spoke about the fall and humiliation of the tyrant and that there ought to be destruction after destruction and churban and after churban in Bavel. 16 years later, we are witness to the fulfillment of the Rebbe's prophecy, in a most amazing way. The klipa of Bavel was removed from the world, and when? On the eve of the day when the King of Bavel besieged Yerushalayim!

Until the Disengagement, Israelis believed that our leaders put our security first, even if they make mistakes. Since the Disengagement and the failures in the north, large segments of the population are beginning to wake up to the reality that our leaders are corrupt. All they're interested in is themselves, whether their legal

problems and/or their public image in the world. It's time to stop them.

WE'RE GIVING THEM GUNS

The madness continues as though nothing happened. Not many noticed that this was the first time in history that a flag of the PA waved over the official residence of the prime minister of Israel, something that previous prime ministers did not dare to do. It marked the meeting of Abu Mazen and Olmert in which Olmert kissed him on each cheek.

Abandoning its citizens is something that has become official policy. Every resident of Sderot and of the settlements surrounding Gaza needs to know that as of now, as far as the government is concerned, they are fair game. Kassam rockets can land and Israelis must believe in a unilateral ceasefire. The army was ordered not to respond but to watch as attempt after attempt is made to murder the Jews of the western Negev.

If we have learned that we cannot rely on the prime minister, Foreign Minister Livni is attempting to put out her hooves and claim she is kosher. She has expressed her desire to move forward on a political plan to give terrorists the heart of our country and to expel one hundred thousand Jews from their homes. She plans on turning them into refugees as she did to the residents of Gush Katif.

"The handing over of parts of the State of Israel is aimed at preserving the country's democratic and Jewish character," Foreign Minister Tzippi Livni said Thursday. "To me this ideal is the realization of the values I was raised on," she added.

Livni announced her readiness to negotiate under fire, thus skipping the part of the Roadmap which obligates the dismantling of the terror infrastructure first, the only brake on the Churban Plan, which is the Roadmap.

If all that wasn't enough, we are told to expect the release of hundreds of terrorists, 500-1400, some with

blood on their hands, in exchange for a kidnapped soldier.

This is all for the purpose of preparing the ground for a withdrawal from Yehuda-Shomron while creating a false image of negotiations after the unilateral withdrawal failed in the most abysmal way. In order to achieve this, they are selling the Israeli public Abu Mazen as a peace broker and angel who fell from heaven. In order to hold on to this angel in white, the Israeli government authorized Egypt to transfer 2000 rifles and 2 million bullets to Abu Mazen.

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Palestinians in opposition to Abu Mazen have to say, who already announced that "the weapons will be used against the Occupation." One of the speakers promised "we will show the Israelis, very soon, these weapons that they delivered to the presidential guard, as it is against the Israeli occupation." In his words, "At least a third of the ranking officials in the Palestinian government belong to opposition organizations. They will see to it that we get those weapons."

He also said, "The weapons will not be used for an internal civil war, because we are sure that the shiny new weapons will end up in the hands of

the opposition forces and will be used against the Occupation and the Zionist enemy."

This sums up the achievements of Olmert and his government of one week!

BEWARE, THE KASSAMS ARE COMING!

The media spoke at length this week about flyers being spread throughout the cities of the south, Kiryat Gat and Ashdod, in which residents are warned to prepare for missiles being shot at them. The flyers, supposedly disseminated by the El-Aktza Brigades, told residents to leave their homes and to get their children away from the missiles that will soon land on them.

The flyers are apparently a gimmick of the Right, but unfortunately, the contents are correct. The threats on those cities are real and Intelligence is already talking about it happening, sooner or later.

It was reported that the Iranian government invested billions of shekels in building an army for Hamas in Gaza which includes bunkers and fortified buildings, just like in Lebanon. So why should the residents of Kiryat Gat and Ashdod feel calm?

It's amazing how each time a missile lands on a certain yishuv we are sure the problem is localized. We don't want to believe that the entire country is in danger. We choose to ignore the fact that the residents of Sderot are living through what many more throughout the south are going to experience.

This wicked government which doesn't place Jewish lives as priority number one is trying to minimize the severity of the problem, because it simply does not want to deal with the root of it. Maybe it's worthwhile for the residents, at least, to know that after opening the country before terrorists, they can expect them to come to their doorstep, even those who were sure that giving away land was just the problem of a few settlers and it was merely a matter of compensation.

AN OBITUARY FOR SADDAM: THREE STEPS THAT CHANGED HISTORY

RABBI YOSEF Y. JACOBSON

DEATH OF A TYRANT

The small, often helpless nation, whose obituary many an empire and tyrant craved to write for millennia, has instead emerged as the exclusive obituary writer of history. From the dawn of civilization till today, the Jewish people have observed firsthand the rise and fall of countless brutal empires and evil dictators who held the world in a grip of terror and then vanished.

Last Saturday morning, December 30, 2006, Saddam Hussein was executed. Our tiny nation takes up its pen once more to write the obituary of a man who inflicted untold measures of suffering on millions of innocents, a person who chopped off the ears and noses of dissidents, tortured children in front of their parents, gassed thousands to death and craved the extermination of the Land of Israel.

If there was any doubt as to Saddam Hussein's diehard hatred of Israel, it was dispelled by his declaration on the gallows: "Long live Iraq, Palestine is Arab!" For decades he had sown terror among Israelis — whether through his Scud missile salvos of the 1991 Gulf War or by bankrolling Palestinian suicide bombers.

"This is a regime," wrote Kenneth Pollack in *The Threatening Storm* about Hussein's government, "that will gouge out the eyes of children to force confessions from their parents and

grandparents. This is a regime that will crush all the bones in the feet of a 2-year-old girl to force her mother to divulge her father's whereabouts... This is a regime that will burn a person's limbs off to force him to confess or comply. This is a regime that will slowly lower its victims into huge vats of acid, either to break their will or as a means of execution... This is a regime that will drag in a man's wife, daughter, or other female relative and repeatedly rape her in front of him. This is a regime that will force a white-hot metal rod into a person's anus or other orifices. This is a regime that employs thallium poisoning, widely considered one of the most excruciating ways to die. This is a regime that will behead a young mother in the street in front of her house and children because her husband was suspected of opposing the regime. This is a regime that used chemical warfare... not just on the 15,000 killed and maimed at Halabja but on scores of other villages all across Kurdistan." (The author, Mr. Pollack, is a Middle East scholar who served two tours of duty in Bill Clinton's National Security Council.)

Saddam Hussein has now taken his rightful place alongside Hitler, Stalin, Lenin and Ceausescu, in the pantheon of failed brutal dictators. We Jews can add to the list of Pharaoh, Amalek, Sancheriv, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, Vespasian, and Titus — the great anti-Semites of yore who attempted to destroy our people and relegate our

seed to museum displays and history books. Yet, in reality, the reverse has transpired.

SADDAM'S HERO

Nor is the day of his execution insignificant. Saddam was hung last Saturday, on the 9th of the Hebrew month of Teives, one day before we commemorate the beginning of the destruction of Jerusalem in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, Saddam's greatest mentor. The 10th of Teives is the day 2400 years ago (in the 6th century BCE) when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, eventually destroying the First Temple, slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Jews, and rounding up the rest and sending them into exile. The 10th of Teives has since been established as a fast day among the Jewish people.

If you wish to know a person or a culture, look at its heroes. Saddam's arch hero, as he himself stated numerous times, was this king of ancient Babylonia, located in the territory of present-day Iraq. Nebuchadnezzar, a powerful and ruthless monarch, ruled Babylon and much of civilization for 45 years, and successfully rooted out Jewish existence in the Holy Land. Nebuchadnezzar built the legendary Hanging Gardens of Babylon and in testimony to his grandeur each brick was inscribed with Nebuchadnezzar's name.

Saddam Hussein pronounced himself as the heir to Nebuchadnezzar, and dreamed of restoring the Babylonian empire to its former size and glory. Saddam commissioned archaeologists to uncover and restore the ancient city of Babylon, its Hanging Gardens and Nebuchadnezzar's palace. Like the Babylonian King 2400 years earlier, each new brick was inscribed – this time with Saddam's name.

During the course of the dig, archaeologists uncovered a plaque on the ancient city gate proclaiming Nebuchadnezzar's greatness. Saddam ordered stonemasons to place another plaque on the opposite side of the gate – glorifying the greatness of Saddam Hussein.

Saddam named his nuclear reactor, the one destroyed by Menachem Begin in 1981, "Tammuz." Tammuz is the name of the Hebrew month when Nebuchadnezzar's troops breached the walls of Jerusalem on his way to decimating the capital of Israel.

Apparently, this was the frightening objective of the modern-day Tammuz reactor as well.

The Bible (1) compares Nebuchadnezzar to a lion, someone possessing the urge to control and rule the entire world, or jungle. The Bible tells of how the Babylonian king came to view himself as the equal of the king of kings, G-d. Surrender and defeat were deemed impossible in Nebuchadnezzar's mind, as those notions applied only to mortals, not to the sovereign of the universe. It seems that Saddam's psychological profile mirrored some of Nebuchadnezzar's (2).

A TALE OF TWO HISTORIES

We have very little comprehension of the ways G-d chooses to govern our world. The prophet Jeremiah spoke about this in very poignant terms (3): "Were I to contend with you, O G-d, You would prevail; yet I will still argue with You. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all those who

act treacherously enjoy tranquility? You have planted them and they have taken root; they grow, they even produce fruit."

The big question of why G-d allows innocent human beings to suffer horrendously by the hands of evil people never received an adequate answer in Judaism. The Jewish prophets, sages and rabbis knew very well that some questions would always remain unanswered.

Yet, Judaism always insisted that the ultimate story of history is a moral tale, not a random one. History, from a Jewish perspective, is a journey toward redemption, directed by a moral being. Though evil often claims titanic power in our world, causing us to feel that might is right and that power determines fate, we, the Jewish people, were chosen some four millennia ago to bear witness to an alternative rendition of history, a rendition in which morality and goodness ultimately prevail.

Our very existence is the proof of this. From the perspective of natural history in which the physically powerful prevail, the existence of the Jew is inexplicable. The Jew is the mysterious stranger in world history. The survival of a people without power, without a country, without an organized government, without an army, without any of those resources of material power that alone seem to count in human history, and its extraordinary impact and influence on the rest of the world, makes little sense. The Jew, then, bears witness to a higher form of history – a moral history, a Divine history, in which goodness and holiness, not might and material force, triumph and prevail.

AN ANCIENT LETTER

This view of history is dramatically depicted in the life of Saddam's hero.

The royal Babylonian dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar lasted for three generations. He reigned himself for 45 years (Nebuchadnezzar died 2,404

years ago, in the year 3363 since Creation). His son, Evil-Merodach, succeeded his father and ruled for 23 years. Evil's son, Belshatzar, ruled for two years and was defeated by the new Persian Empire (4).

The Talmud and the Midrash present a fascinating account of the moral-spiritual reason behind the Babylonian might (5).

Nebuchadnezzar, says the Talmud, served as a secretary and scribe for a previous Babylonian monarch. Once, when Nebuchadnezzar was absent from work, other royal secretaries of the king drafted a letter to be sent to the Jewish king of Judah, Chizkiya. This is how the letter began: "Greetings to King Chizkiya! Greetings to the city of Jerusalem! Greetings to the great G-d!"

When Nebuchadnezzar returned to work and discovered how the letter was written, he was furious. "You call Him 'the great G-d,' Nebuchadnezzar protested, "and you mention Him last?!"

In an isolated moment of moral and spiritual lucidity, Nebuchadnezzar insisted that the letter be redone, and written as follows: "Greetings to the great G-d! Greetings to the city of Jerusalem! Greetings to king Chizkiya!"

The problem was that the messenger had already been dispatched to Jerusalem with the first version of the letter in his hand. So Nebuchadnezzar ran out to call the messenger back and redo the letter. How far did he need to run? Merely three steps before he caught the messenger to give him a second version of the letter.

In the typical Jewish perspective on the deeper forces that govern the evolution of history, our sages see this episode as the ultimate cause for Nebuchadnezzar's royal success. In the merit of his taking three steps to honor the Jewish G-d, the monotheistic G-d that rules all of history and the entire world, the Midrash says, Nebuchadnezzar received the crown of

royalty for three generations!

Three steps to honor G-d resulted in three generations of sovereignty.

For an egomaniac like Nebuchadnezzar, who thought of himself as a god, those three steps constituted a quantum leap. Those three steps generated a revolution in the mystical divine process of history that gave him control over G-d's world for three generations and 70 years (6).

The Midrash does not mean to create this parallel only in a symbolic fashion. Our sages meant it seriously. It is clear from the words of the sages that if Nebuchadnezzar had taken four, five or six steps, the royal line would have continued to the fourth, fifth and sixth generations (thank G-d he didn't...(7)).

3 VERSIONS OF HISTORY

What a different view on history! If CNN, The New York Times or even Fox News were to report Nebuchadnezzar's rise to power, we might hear and read about the powerful and wise schemes the man employed to conquer the world. We might hear about the forces at play in the fields of politics, economics and culture that brought about this victory.

Journalists present us with the first superficial draft of historical events. Historians, blessed with hindsight, present us with yet a deeper glimpse into the forces that gave birth to those events. Yet both versions of history, deal exclusively with the external material forces at play, only those forces apparent to the human eye.

The Torah – the Bible, the Talmud, the Midrash and the Kabbala – came to the world to share with us a deeper understanding of historical events, a view seen from the perspective of the author of history Himself. In this rendition, the underlying power behind the evolution of the human race is G-d's invisible hand directing the world toward mending and redemption.

The tremendous power of

Nebuchadnezzar, for example, as seen from a Torah perspective, is essentially a moral tale, one that can be traced back to an isolated moment in his life when he chose to take three steps to honor the Creator of the world.

WHY ARE OUR STEPS DIFFERENT FROM HIS?

This is the reason for the universal Jewish custom that when we take three steps back at the conclusion of our daily prayers (at the end of the Amida, recited three times a day), we beseech G-d with the following prayer. "May it be Your will...that the Holy Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days."

The timing of this prayer seems strange. During the Amida prayer itself

*...So it was with
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the dustbin of history.*

we dedicate six separate blessings to beseech G-d for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and for the ultimate redemption. Why, after we have concluded the prayers and taken three steps backward to depart, do we suddenly begin to pray for the rebuilding of the Temple, as though we have forgotten to mention this earlier?

There is profound significance to this custom (8). How did Nebuchadnezzar acquire the might to destroy the Temple? Because he took three steps to honor G-d. So every Jew, each day at the culmination of his prayers, turns to G-d and says, "If that brutal tyrant merited the power to burn Your home just because he took three steps in Your honor, don't you

think that in the merit of my own three steps - and the three steps taken by millions of Jews millions of times for thousands of years - You should give us the power to bring forth the redemption and rebuild the third holy Temple in Jerusalem speedily in our days?!"

THE CURTAINS PART

Indeed, last Saturday, one day before we mourned once again the brutality of Nebuchadnezzar, history has for a brief moment penetrated the dense veil concealing G-d's moral presence in history. As a brutal dictator and an archetypal enemy of the Jewish people was reduced to a chapter in history, we were reminded that every tyrant gets his day, and that evil is powerful but not eternal. One day before we commemorated the success of Nebuchadnezzar in destroying Jerusalem, G-d has reminded us that while brutality may at times dominate, history was not apathetic to human suffering.

The biblical book of Daniel (9) describes the downfall of Nebuchadnezzar. "He was driven from mankind; he ate grass like oxen, and his body was washed by the dew of heaven, until his hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws."

And so it was with Saddam. He was driven into a hole, grimy and disheveled; he was reduced, like his ancient hero, to the dustbin of history.

Farewell, Saddam. Whenever you arrive at your final destination, say hello to Adolph from us. Tell him that millions of our children are walking the planet celebrating their belonging to a people that will forever celebrate the triumph of good over evil, of freedom over oppression and of kindness over brutality.

My thanks to Rabbis Benzion Krasnianski and Dov Greenberg for their contribution to this essay.

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[Continued on pg. 43]

SHLICHUS STORIES FROM NEW HAVEN

BY CHANIE NUSSBAUM

*Mrs. Faige Levitin and her husband Rabbi Sholom Dovber have been living in New Haven, Connecticut for 24 years, on shlichus. Most of their efforts are focused on Jews from Russia and they see much success in their work. * Mrs. Levitin tells us about their shlichus and about many miracles of the Rebbe they have experienced.*

Sixty years ago, the first shliach, Rabbi Moshe Hecht a”h, arrived in New Haven. He was utterly mekushar to the Rebbe Rayatz and then to the Rebbe MH”M. When he encountered difficulties at some point, the Rebbe gave him unusual reassurance, “My master, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, leads you by the hand.”

New Haven merited that the Rebbe said an entire sicha about Rabbi Hecht after his passing, and the shluchim there, the Levitin family among them, have merited to build the Jewish institutions in the city.

Faige and her husband, together with their children (four are already married), are continuing the work in New Haven with a special chayus for inyanei Moshiach and Geula. They do this as loyal soldiers of the Rebbe, with a humility and simcha that you don’t often find today.

Mrs. Levitin: “We are on shlichus in New Haven for 24 years now. We came with three children from Crown Heights in order to help build up Jewish life and institutions along with about another twenty shluchim who work in the area under the son of Rabbi Hecht a”h, Rabbi Yehoshua and his wife Blumie Hecht. Our efforts are focused primarily on Jews from Russia.

“We started a Kollel Tiferes Z’keinim for elderly men and Chochmas Nashim for elderly women. Through the seniors we connect with the children and grandchildren.”

Faige has many wonderful stories to relate:

“There was a woman who began to take an interest in Judaism and would come to us now and then. She

lived twenty minutes away from New Haven. She always hoped and prayed that Chabad would come to her area.

“Her prayers were answered and Rabbi Piekarski moved there and this strengthened her in her religious observance. Today she is the mother of three children who are religious.

“She once told me what motivated her to get involved. It was when she was sitting and watching television. She saw the Rebbe speaking about the importance of eating kosher food. On the spot she decided to keep kosher. One mitzva led to another!

“Each year we received shmura matza from the Rebbe. One year the matza arrived in the neighboring town shortly before Yom Tov. On Yom Tov, my husband walked a long way in order to get the matza.

“He passed a hospital and stopped to see if there were any Jewish patients. He found a Jewish woman who told him emotionally that she had prayed that she would be able to eat shmura matza that year on the first day of Pesach. Her prayers were answered. That year she had very special shmura matza while we received the shmura matza that the Rebbe sent only on Motzaei Yom Tov.

“There was a Jewish woman who became more involved in Judaism after attending our school. She had an only daughter who really wanted other children in the family. She wrote to the Rebbe and the answer

was: check the t'fillin. The t'fillin were checked and were kosher but the *battim* had a problem and were changed immediately. The Rebbe's bracha was fulfilled and she gave birth to a son. Today the entire family is completely Lubavitch."

The story about t'fillin reminded Faige about another story connected with t'fillin:

"The bachurim from the yeshiva once went on Mivtza T'fillin and encountered a couple where the husband was very preoccupied because they had just discovered that his wife had a serious disease. The bachurim suggested that he write to the Rebbe. A week later, when the bachurim came back, the woman told them excitedly, 'After we sent the letter I dreamed that I got a bouquet of flowers from the yeshiva and next to the bouquet was a letter from the Rebbe. When I woke up I felt much better. It wasn't just a dream because

subsequent exams showed that the disease had disappeared!'

This led to another story that Faige told about an illness that disappeared:

"There was a couple from Russia whose baby had a brain tumor. With our guidance they wrote to the Rebbe and put the letter in a volume of *Igros Kodesh*. The answer they opened to was an instruction to be careful about kosher food and checking the mezuzos. The family began to be careful with kashrus and had the mezuzos checked. Baruch Hashem, the tumor disappeared and the baby is fine. Since then the family has taken giant steps in their religious observance.

"One of the participants in my shiurim wanted to learn Kabbala. I brought her a sicha of the Rebbe that speaks about Kabbala and thanks to this, she became more involved in

Judaism. One time she told me that her daughter's friend was very upset since her son suddenly stopped walking.

"I suggested that they write to the Rebbe and so mother and daughter wrote a letter and put it in a volume of *Likkutei Sichos* in Russian. A short time later, the mother of the boy heard footsteps in the next room. She went to look and saw her son walking!

"I said to the daughter: tell your friend about the letter that you wrote to the Rebbe on her behalf. At first she hesitated but then she went and told her. This miracle made a big kiddush Hashem in the Russian community and was mekarev many other people to Judaism.

"Not surprisingly, another participant in my shiurim wanted to write to the Rebbe using the *Igros Kodesh*. She wrote to the Rebbe and a



Rabbi Sholom Ber Levitin with some of his family

JEWISH LIFE IN NEW HAVEN

In 1840, many Jews fled Bavaria and arrived in New Haven, Connecticut. They opened many stores and businesses in the city. Originally, prayer services were held in one of the stores, and later they constructed a large shul, "Mishkan Yisroel."

In 1852, Yehuda Kouro from Long Island donated a large, beautiful building to the shul.

In 1903, after the Kishinev pogroms, many Russian Jews migrated to New Haven.

In 1917, a Jewish mayor was elected,

Today, there are about 2,500 Jews living in the city and the community is growing. There are shuls, mikvaos, an eiruv, and kosher meat is available.

few days later she told everybody the miracle that happened. She said her son works in a factory that was about to close down and she asked the Rebbe for a bracha for employment for her son.

“What happened was, the owner of the factory ended up needing just one employee and he chose her son even though he spoke Russian and was the last to be hired!

“A woman who began coming to shiurim was lonely and she wanted to write to the Rebbe to ask for a bracha that she find a job in Pittsburgh. In the answer that she opened to, the Rebbe referred to a wedding. She had wanted to marry but hadn’t thought of that until then...

“Two days after she wrote the letter, Mrs. Piekarski received an e-mail from her friend in Worcester, Massachusetts with whom she hadn’t spoken in eight years. She was looking for a shidduch for a baal t’shuva who they were mekarev. She called me and I suggested this woman and they got married on 14 Kislev, the Rebbe’s anniversary.

“This mekureves was no longer thinking about Pittsburgh and she found work in Worcester where she had moved after she married. Today she has a wonderful Chassidische family, baruch Hashem.

“Students of Beis Chana went to a Jewish woman on Mivtza Neshek. As a result of the visit, the woman strengthened her commitment to Judaism and afterwards they discovered that she needed a refua shleima. With their guidance she wrote to the Rebbe through the *Igros Kodesh* and asked for a bracha.

“In the letter that she opened to, the Rebbe spoke about the importance of teaching Torah. How could the woman do that while homebound due to her illness? Along with the girls she found a solution. They decided to visit her every Friday night after candle lighting and she

would give a shiur.

“When I spoke to her recently she told me that she was getting better from week to week. Following the Rebbe’s directive had done her wonders.

“There is a man from Russia who lives here. The bachurim from the yeshiva went to him and brought him a calendar in Russian along with a picture of the Rebbe. These were the only Jewish things he had in the house. Then, on another visit, he told them he was very sick. My husband went to see him and he said that he had asked the Rebbe for a bracha for a refua shleima and had given a dollar to tz’daka.

“My husband put t’fillin on with him and he continued to do so regularly. A short time later the illness suddenly disappeared. The man began coming regularly to shiurim at the Kollel Tiferes Z’keinim and this was thanks to the dollar for tz’daka and the t’fillin.”

What are your everyday activities in New Haven?

“After the passing of the first shliach, Rabbi Moshe Hecht, the Rebbe said an unusual sicha. One of the things the Rebbe said was: **Even after his passing there must be a continuation and maintaining of the mosdos (that he was involved with on shlichus from the Rebbe Rayatz) and to the contrary with an additional and renewed chayus, ‘as his children are alive, so too he is alive.’**

“We try to fulfill this special directive by helping develop the mosdos here, Achei T’mimim, and Beis Chana, which are directed by Rabbi Yehoshua Hecht and his wife, with two other shluchim.

“My husband and I work primarily with Tiferes Z’keinim and Chochmas Nashim. My husband has a shiur every day in the Kollel and I give a shiur twice a week to the ladies and on Wednesdays to girls.

“In the shiurim that I give at Chochmas Nashim, I speak a lot about Moshiach and Geula. At the Wednesday shiur we learn a sicha

ONE MITZVA LEADS TO ANOTHER

Faige recounts: Each year on Chanuka, the bachurim from the yeshiva host a Chanuka party for the residents in the local Achei T’mimim school. As a result of one such event, one of the women began coming closer to Judaism and started attending my classes regularly. However, her husband was not interested and remained on the sidelines.

A year later, she gave birth to her second son. After a few days, she called me when she realized that she had miscalculated the day of the bris, and had mistakenly planned it for the following day. My husband, who is in charge of brissim in the city, quickly got hold of the mohel Rabbi Shain from New York, and so, the bris was held shortly before sunset on the eighth day and her husband, the father, did not manage to make it in time.

When he heard about the bris of his son, which was almost not done in time, he became very emotional and to everyone’s surprise, he decided on the spot to have a bris done on himself!

One mitzva leads to another, and at that event, he decided to begin putting on t’fillin daily. Today, they live in Pittsburgh are full fledged baalei t’shuva.

And it all began with Mivtza Chanuka, which led to two brissim and then a complete transformation of a Jewish family.



Activities with children

from *Besuras HaGeula* and *P'ninei HaGeula*. We add a daily halacha as the Rebbe said to do in the *Igros Kodesh*. On Fridays, at a shiur that I give the girls after candle lighting, we learn a sicha from *Tiferes HaGeula*.

"At the weekly shiur for girls which takes place on Sunday at my home, we learn Tanya and inyanei Moshiach and Geula. I also have phone shiurim with ladies in inyanei Moshiach and Geula. The D'var Malchus is learned here with a chayus because we live with Moshiach and Geula. Yes, this is the main thing.

"There are bachurim who do mitzvaim with local Russian Jews, especially on Yomim Tovim. On Sukkos we have a big Simchas Beis HaShoeiva and we put up a huge sukka for Russian Jews. On Chanuka we have a public menorah as well as many programs and mitzvaim organized by the Chabad House. The girls go to the malls and set up tables with menorahs and other Chanuka paraphernalia.

"In yeshiva there is a big farbrengen every night of Chanuka. The talmidim go on Mivtza Chanuka

among the Russian Jews and among the Israelis. We also go to the universities and light the menorah with the students.

"There are girls here who arrange a Shabbos party for ladies who don't go to shul on Shabbos or otherwise celebrate Shabbos.

"My husband set up a 'bank' for t'fillin and mezuzos for whoever needs them."

Faige enumerates the other work being done in her area:

Batya Deitsch (who runs N'shei U'Bnos Chabad), the Katz family (who are involved in kiruv), the Yaffe family (who take an active part in all the activities), Mrs. M. Piekarski (mentioned earlier), Rabbi Chadakov and his wife (who are shluchim in the area), Rabbi Kalmanson and Rabbi Reinitz (who are very active in the yeshiva, mitzvaim, etc.) and Rabbi Gopin (the shliach in Hartford).

Faige also mentions the chavrusos for learning as well as the chesed organization run by women that sends food packages to new mothers or the women who are bedridden.

Do you work exclusively with

Russian Jews?

"The work is done with three groups: Israelis, Americans, and Russians. We personally work primarily with Russian Jews."

Faige is reminded of another touching story:

"One of the mekuravim who came to us via the Internet began to visit the Kollel Tiferes Z'keinim regularly. He said he wanted a bris for his fiftieth birthday. Knowing that his wife was opposed to this, he asked my husband to join him and together they drove for a few hours to F.R.E.E. that makes brissin. The bris was done and afterwards there was a big farbrengen.

"Surprisingly, when the wife found out about it, not only wasn't she angry but she also began to draw closer. After a while, they came to me for Shabbos and when she lit candles she couldn't stop crying.

"Many of the Jews who come from Russia do so deliberately since they don't want to live among Jews in Eretz Yisroel. They prefer big, comfortable America. But here too, we wait for them on the Rebbe's shlichus and they become acquainted with their Judaism."

Towards the end of our conversation, Faige told me about a miracle that happened to her personally:

"My daughter, who is now 15, was born on 27 Nissan, during the sicha that the Rebbe said, 'Do all that you can.' She was born with an inflammation in her eyes.

"When she was three weeks old, I went with her to New York in order to see the Rebbe and get a coin for her. Since I had just given birth and traveled, I didn't have a chance to write to the Rebbe about the problem with her eyes. I cleaned her eyes and we went past the Rebbe. The Rebbe passed the coin before her eyes and the inflammation disappeared."

A LIFE OF MESIRUS NEFESH IN SOVIET GEORGIA

BY SHNEUR ZALMAN BERGER

Beis Moshiach met with three brothers who are leaders and chachamim of the Georgian community in Eretz Yisroel. They are Chacham Yaakov, Chacham Moshe and Chacham Ben-Tzion of the Michelashvili family. They related their fascinating life story that began in the home of their father, Chacham Shabtai, in the Georgian town of Kulashi.

The Michelashvili family lived in Kulashi, a small town in Georgia where most of the people, three thousand in number, were Jews. As opposed to the iron fist that prevailed throughout the rest of Russia, the Soviet authorities in Georgia were not harsh rulers. Sh'chita was legal and circumcisions and chuppas were regular events. There was one area that the authorities cracked down on and that was Jewish chinuch. This was forbidden.

Chacham Shabtai Michelashvili insisted that a Jewish child must learn Torah. In the morning he worked as a shochet at the municipal slaughterhouse but when he returned in the afternoon, he would gather the

children of the community in shuls and private homes and teach them Tanach, Mishna, and Gemara.

"Our father had a warm Jewish heart," say his three sons in a nostalgic and fascinating interview that they gave *Beis Moshiach*. "When the opportunity arose to do a favor for a fellow Jew, especially a spiritual favor, nothing was difficult for him."

Chacham Shabtai was utterly devoted, body, soul, and financially, to bring Jews to do mitzvos whether to put on t'fillin, wear tzitzis, daven properly, etc. He put great efforts into this. Every so often he went on long trips and he took t'fillin, siddurim, and other ritual objects with him





The Michelashvili brothers

and at every center of Jewry that he reached, even if it was a forsaken town, he would gather the Jews and speak to them of Torah with words that came from the heart and revived their souls.

“Our father once told us about one of his trips,” said Chacham Yaakov. “It was Yud-Tes Kislev night when he arrived in a faraway town, forsaken materially and spiritually. When he met local people he told them it was the Chag HaGeula and he asked them to organize a large seuda in honor of the tzaddik.

“They were Jews who were wholehearted, who had a strong belief in tzaddikim. At the appointed time the shul was full. My father went up and recounted the story of the imprisonment and release while the people listened closely to every word he uttered. The farbrengen continued for many hours, into the night.

“At the end, my father stopped the flow of stories and in an emotional plea he said to the crowd, ‘Brother Jews! What use are these stories if you don’t know how to answer *amen yehei shmei rabba* properly? You don’t know how to go up to the Torah properly! So why did we sit here all night?’ At that point people were very inspired and my father exclaimed, ‘Tomorrow evening come here and I will teach you how to pray, how to have an aliya, and how to fulfill mitzvos.’

“The impression that he made was powerful. The next day, dozens of Jews came to learn how to pray and he patiently taught them Alef-Beis and vowels. He sat with them for many days until he began to see results. These Jews learned how to have an aliya and to say a bracha properly, to pray word by word, and some were even able to be the chazan.”

Chacham Shabtai Michelashvili’s

work was truly amazing. Thanks to his activities, the KGB caught him a number of times but with Hashem’s kindness those were only brief periods. Yet he wasn’t immune forever. One day they caught him red-handed as he taught Torah to eighty children. He and another five teachers were arrested and taken to the KGB offices in Tbilisi. He was sentenced to death but miraculously, the sentence was not carried out.

He was interrogated and tortured for a few months until, with the help of some Jewish acquaintances, he was released. He was warned not to teach children again.

Chacham Yaakov: “Despite this, my father didn’t give up. He knew they were following him, but he continued to teach Torah to children. He felt that he was an emissary from heaven to teach Torah, even with *mesirus nefesh*, and he continued to preserve the

Jewish flame so it would not be extinguished.”

In those years there was the famous Doctor's Plot in which supposedly, a group of Jewish doctors wanted to poison Soviet leaders including the cursed Stalin. Throughout Russia, many Jewish doctors were arrested as well as rabbanim and askanim.

Word of what was going on reached even the faraway town of Kulashi in Georgia. One night, the angels of death knocked on Chacham Shabtai's house and arrested him along with other chachamim and askanim. They were taken to a nearby town where Chacham Shabtai was interrogated about “his collaboration with the doctors.” The purpose of the interrogation was to extract information from him about his being a melamed.

Chacham Shabtai refused to say a word. He was threatened that they would burn him if he did not tell them who his students were and their addresses.

When they saw that the Chacham was not breaking, they began to torture him. They woke him up in the middle of the night and immersed him in cold water and then beat him. He accepted this suffering with love, knowing that thanks to his silence he was saving the parents of the talmidim from the punishment of a long jail sentence.

After months of suffering and torture, he was free to go home, and this time he was a broken man. His son, Chacham Yaakov describes those events.

“As a result of the torture, our father was paralyzed on his right side. For fifteen years he was bedridden. His mind was clear but it was hard for him to speak. He yearned to move to Eretz Yisroel but was unable to do so. A few months before the family was able to make aliya, he passed away.”

The brothers' names were put on the KGB black list. These lists were printed in the newspapers and citizens were warned not to have anything to do with them. “They are poisoning our young children,” said the paper.

The reason the communists insisted on educating Jewish children in communist schools was so that the young generation would not follow in the path of their fathers. They knew that school was the place where the next generation would be forged.

Due to their insistence on every child learning in a government school, a war was waged between those who were religious and the authorities. The war intensified and over time, having no choice, many children had to go to school, but in the afternoon hours they learned Torah in shuls or other secret places.

Chacham Moshe: “We had to go to the government school but in the afternoon and evening we studied Torah at home. My father and grandfather were devoted to our

A HISTORY OF GEORGIA

Georgia, until a few years ago, was one of the republics of the Soviet Union. It borders on Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the northern Caucasus.

According to the tradition of Georgian Jews, they are descendents of tribes who were exiled by King Shalmaneser. According to another tradition, their ancestors were exiled there by Nevuchadnetzar King of Bavel.

Over the centuries, the Jews of Georgia suffered as Christians and Moslems made their lives difficult. Many of them died al kiddush Hashem when they refused to convert.

After the Communist Revolution, the Soviets conquered Georgia. This was 1921 and thus ended Georgia's independence which had begun after the deposed reign of the czar.

With the Soviets in power, Jews began to leave the villages and towns for the big cities where there were large Jewish communities. It should be noted that all Georgian Jews lived in separate Jewish neighborhoods and non-Jewish families did not dare to live in their neighborhoods. This enabled them to keep mitzvos without assimilating with goyim and learning their ways.

They kept Torah without interference within the strong family units that are characteristic of Georgian Jews. This is why there was no intermarriage, unlike other countries. Likewise, Georgian Jews produced no informers and not one of them was a member of the cursed Yevsektzia.

During World War II, when European Jews were persecuted and millions were murdered, thousands of refugees came from conquered areas of Russia and found a haven in Georgia. Their fellow Jews took them in with open arms. Although Georgian Jews were poor, they graciously extended aid to the refugees.

chinuch.

"The big problem was Shabbos when we refused to go to school. There were years when it was possible to provide various excuses like being sick, the need to help out at home etc. but the authorities caught on after a while and their annoyance trickled down to the principals and teachers who did not want to hear excuses anymore. There were parents who were penalized because their children did not attend school on Shabbos.

"When my grandfather heard of just the possibility of our going to school on Shabbos he said sadly, 'All that I gave you, my dear grandsons, is worth nothing if you go to school on Shabbos.'"

So what did you do?

"Friday in Georgia was a day completely dedicated to preparing for Shabbos. We prepared all the food for Shabbos on Friday. My grandfather was always involved in preparing for Shabbos but he did not begin preparing until he managed, somehow, to send 'gifts' to the teachers of my brothers and myself so they wouldn't inform on us to the authorities. That is how instead of going to school on Shabbos, we davened in shul."

Chacham Ben-Tzion: "Young children were not allowed to go to shul, only boys from age 16, but we snuck to shul anyway and prayed."

Chacham Moshe: "In Kalushi, there were a few shuls. Seeing the shul where we prayed on Shabbos was a beautiful sight to behold as hundreds of Jews exited despite the nonstop persecution."

The three Michelashvili brothers grew up and followed in their father's ways. Officially, they worked in the mornings in sh'chita but in the afternoon and evening hours they went from house to house in order to teach Torah to children, to read the Shma, and put on t'fillin with people. They taught Chumash, Mishna, and

Gemara to those who were capable.

Chacham Ben-Tzion: "A small group of children gathered at each house and I gave a shiur for two hours and then went on to the next place where another group of children eagerly waited. There were times when I went from house to house from morning till late at night. In the morning I taught preschool children who were not required to attend school. In the afternoon and evening I taught older children who had been in

caught. They bribed one of the KGB men and each time they planned a raid on a certain street, the brothers were given advance notice.

If the KGB planned an ambush near a house where they were supposed to teach, the brothers didn't show up. It was truly a series of wondrous miracles.

The brothers' names were put on the KGB black list. These lists were printed in the newspapers and citizens were warned not to have anything to



Children of the Georgian community in Georgia. In the back, standing, are Chachamim Ben-Tzion, Yaakov, and Moshe Michelashvili and Chacham Refael Alashvili

school during the morning. The children were very interested in our lessons. Baruch Hashem we weren't caught, but parents of children would be called to the KGB offices and were warned."

At some point the secret police caught on to them and began to follow the brothers. This went on for a long time but despite it, they weren't

do with them. "They are poisoning our young children," said the paper.

Chacham Yaakov: "Those were rough years. It's not easy to describe the terrible situation which prevailed then. We weren't able to sleep as our worries did not allow us to, for perhaps in another moment the KGB would be knocking at the door and arresting us."

Where did you get the strength to continue to teach under such terrifying circumstances?

Chacham Moshe: "It's hard to describe it to someone who wasn't there. In wartime, every soldier has abilities he doesn't have in ordinary times. At that time we had the strength. There's no question that heavenly assistance and the merit of our Rebbeim stood by us."

Chacham Ben-Tzion: "Teaching Torah to children is our family tradition for generations. My grandfather had a Talmud Torah with 150 students. Although this was before the communist regime, to organize a Talmud Torah on that scale in Georgia was no simple thing."

"My father followed his father's example and taught children and that was under the communists and he had to do it secretly. And then we three brothers saw it as our obligation and privilege to continue the tradition despite the enormous difficulties."

Was there no period of calm?

Chacham Ben-Tzion: "There was a brief time when the teaching took place in the home of a wealthy Jew who agreed to endanger himself and host the shiurim. We had peace and quiet because the police were afraid to enter his house since he was a powerful man in town. For two years we taught Gemara and Chassidus with no interference and baruch Hashem, our talmidim are living throughout Eretz Yisroel and many of them are quite religious."

Did you teach adults too?

Chacham Yaakov: "Yes. Although the adults were usually busy making a living, we took advantage of times like a yahrtzeit or (l'havdil) a family simcha when many Jews gathered. They always honored a Chacham to speak at the beginning of the event. We would give an inspiring speech or tell stories of tzaddikim."

Chacham Moshe: Even today,

many years afterward, when I meet Georgian Jews, even if they don't know how to learn, they can repeat stories of tzaddikim that we told them at one event or another."

The Michelashvili's family connection with Chabad began generations ago. The family inherited from their grandfather a letter handwritten by the Alter Rebbe. The family guarded this precious letter but due to the persecution it was lost.

When emissaries of the Rebbe Rashab and the Rebbe Rayatz went to Georgia, the father and grandfather connected with them. The shluchim included R' Shmuel Levitin who was in Kutaisi, R' Sossonkin, R' Perlov, and R' Slavin (may Hashem avenge his blood).

Chacham Ben-Tzion: "As young boys we learned Chassidus with the Chassid R' Dovid Skolnik who came to Kulashi in the 60's. For five years we continued learning, two hours in the morning and two hours at night, and four hours on Shabbos."

Were there sifrei Chassidus in Georgia?

Chacham Yaakov: "Hardly any."

As we spoke, Chacham Yaakov showed me a small booklet. On the blue binding was handwritten, *Kuntres HaT'filla*. The pages of the booklet contained a nicely handwritten *Kuntres HaT'filla* and maamarei Chassidus of the Rebbe Rashab and Rebbe Rayatz.

"That's how we learned Chassidus," said Chacham Yaakov with tears in his eyes. "First we labored to copy the s'farim and then we pored over them."

"We wrote the maamarim while at work. The Chassid R' Dovid Skolnik lent me sifrei Chassidus and I copied maamarim from them. The writing took a long time and I did it while at the slaughterhouse."

"In order that later generations know what we went through in Georgia, I printed a booklet with a photocopy of our handwritten

booklet. I gave it to the members of my family so they would know of the mesirus nefesh for the study of Chassidus."

Over the years did shluchim of the Rebbe come to Kulashi?

Chacham Yaakov: "Today it is known that the Rebbe sent ritual items via the Israeli embassy in Moscow. The one who did the actual work was the first secretary at the embassy, Mr. Luba Eliav. He was a big help for Judaism in general and Chabad in particular. He would travel around the Soviet Union and in various ways give Anash different s'farim and ritual items."

Chacham Moshe: "Luba Eliav would come to Kulashi too. He would

A BRACHA THAT WAS FULFILLED

The Chassidim, R' Shmuel Levitin, R' Mordechai Perlov, and R' Avrohom Levik Slavin, went to the home of the grandfather of the Michelashvilis, Chacham Avrohom, for Pesach. They wanted to buy matzos from him that he baked by hand himself. They knew that Chacham Avrohom's matzos were baked with great hiddur.

At the meal prepared in honor of the distinguished guests, Chacham Avrohom told them what was on his mind. "My son Shabtai is married for a few years and does not have children." The shluchim wrote a letter to the Rebbe Rayatz and asked for a bracha for him.

A few weeks went by and then a telegram arrived from the Rebbe Rayatz who was in Riga at the time. "Within a year they will have a son," is what the telegram said. Chacham Shabtai did indeed have a son that year. "That son is me," said Chacham Yaakov, a resident of Kfar Chabad.



The three Michelashvili brothers upon their arrival in Eretz Yisroel



Chacham Shabtai

spend a few hours there and would distribute s'farim and t'fillin and then leave immediately. He never spent a night in Kulashi. A Jew who spoke to him was in danger. Anybody seen contacting him was quickly interrogated by the KGB about the nature of the connection between them.

"The Chassid Notke Berkahan once came to our city on the Rebbe's shlichus. He came from Riga, where he lived, in the guise of a tourist. In order to appear as a genuine tourist he stood in the center of the marketplace of Kulashi and began taking pictures. He was not aware of the fact that in a little town in Georgia a camera was a rarity. Passersby who saw him with a camera thought he was a spy and called the police. He was taken for interrogation and they found the *HaYom Yom* and sichos of the Rebbe in his bags.

"The Jews in town heard about this and after much effort and bribes, he was released. This was on Friday and people were afraid to host him since he was suspected of being a spy. One of the Jews who lived on the outskirts of town agreed to host him for Shabbos for the sake of the mitzva of Hachnasas Orchim. On Motzaei Shabbos we went to this man's house and R' Notke farbrenged with us and gave us s'farim and ritual objects that were hard to obtain."

Diplomatic ties between Israel and the Soviet Union were broken with the outbreak of the Six Day War. The Russians took sides in the war and so when Israel won, ties were cut.

The day the war began is when the Michelashvilis were granted permission to leave Russia. It was an open miracle. The brothers recount the story of the miracle of their exodus:

Chacham Moshe: "Fear of the authorities reigned supreme. There were also problems with parnasa since we didn't work on Shabbos, and we were also concerned about medical

י. ב"ה י. ב"ה י.
י. קונטרס
י. קונטרס ראשון י.

של כ"ך אבמור הרה"ק זצוקללה" נבא"מ ז"ע י.
הנה בהיות אשר כל אלו מאנ"ש שאלו ודורש איד מתפללים ובמה
עובדים ה" בעבודה שכלב זו תפלה אמרתי לפרט שיחתי קצת בענין
הזה ממה שנמצא בכתובים מכ"ך אבותינו רבותינו ה"ך זצוקללה" נע
אשר דבריהם דבר ה"ך אקינו יקום לעולם וחיים וקיימים כמאז כן
עתה ולא נדרכה אלא להזכרה בלבד ולעורר תלבב אנ"ש עליהם וגם
להגדפה באיזה מנינים לפי העת והזמן דעכשו אשר נתמלאו הלבבות כו'
וג"כ בכלל דבריהם ה"ך אשר רב טוב ורב אור לפון בדבריהם רק
צריכים לגלות כפי היכולת מצפונ דבריהם ה"ך להאיר ולהעיר ת נפשינו
ללכת לאורם אור חיי החיים האמיתית אשר זה ה' כל יתעב ונאמ"ס להחיותנו
ולהאיר בנפשינו אור וחיות אמיתי וממרו נפשם ממע"ג כידוע לכל
היודעים קצת מעטנהם ואנחנו צריכים לידבק בהם ובדבריהם ה"ך
ולחיות כלים לקבל בנפשינו ת האור כי טוב ולאורם נקע ונלך מעלה
מעלה כי חפץ ה' ע"י עבדיו ה"ך זצוקללה" ז"ע י. אבמור י.

בתמתי את זה בשנת תשכ"ב במוצאי
צ"י ר"י קולאשוני צ"י וצ"י מיכאלשוני שוח"ו

I wrote this copy of Kuntres HaT'filla in 1962 in Georgia – Yaakov Michelashvili

treatment for our father who was sick. We had no money for tickets to Eretz Yisroel and we were known as a family whose activities opposed the government. The thought of leaving for Eretz Yisroel was merely a dream.

“Then one day I got into a conversation with a Jew who was the attorney general of Georgia who said, ‘According to law you cannot be punished for wanting to make aliya but, as you know, if they want to, they can make false accusations against you and send you to Siberia for years. You need to tread carefully.’”

Chacham Yaakov: “After we got a visa from a relative who lived in Israel, I went with my cousin to Tbilisi in order to get an exit visa from the emigration office (OVIR). I first met with the Chacham of Tbilisi who also warned me that although I could enter the emigration office in peace, there was no guarantee that I would exit in peace.

“This was at the end of Iyar 1967, a Monday. We went to the emigration office and as soon as we walked in they told us to follow one of the officials. He entered an elevator which took us to the fourteenth floor where he had us enter an office and then he closed the door.

“We waited for a long time but no one came in. We began to worry but had no idea what was going on. At four in the afternoon a cleaning lady came in who innocently told us that senior officials were busy ‘with top secret matters’ and so they had no time to deal with us.

“At the time, we didn’t know what this was about and it was only later that we learned that a war had broken out that morning between Israel and her neighbors. The Soviet Union took the side of the Arabs and tensions in the offices ran high.

“At five o’clock a senior official entered the office with two assistants. He asked us what we wanted and when he heard that we wanted to go

to Israel, he was furious. He banged with both hands on the desk and screamed, ‘Why do you want to go to that cursed country?’ He continued yelling and cursing and my heart beat quickly and I felt very weak. I realized that the chances of our getting visas were nil and I hoped we could just get out in peace.

“After a long while the man calmed down and asked us for the documents that pertained to our request. He flipped through the paperwork and asked who wanted to leave. I explained that I and my family wanted to make aliya and my cousin had accompanied me in order to help me fill out the forms.

“‘And who is the old man standing behind you?’ he asked. I turned around and didn’t see anyone. I asked, ‘Which old man do you mean?’ He pointed at an old man standing behind me. He was quiet and then told one of his assistants to approve our request to make aliya.

“I felt so very weak due to the great emotions that overcame me that it was only thanks to my cousin that I managed to leave and get to a shul for Maariv. When we got there we found out that war had broken out with Israel. At Maariv I thanked Hashem for this great miracle, for enabling us to leave the vale of tears for Eretz Yisroel.”

Who was the old man in the office?

“I don’t know. I thought about it a lot and finally concluded that it was the Rebbe who came to extricate me and my family from Russia.”

The Michelashvilis leaving Russia made a tiny hole in the Iron Curtain. They were the first people from Georgia to receive the coveted visas and therefore their leaving was a happy occasion for the entire community.

The day they left, the entire community including the chachamim

and other people, women and children, congregated in the shul in order to say goodbye.

Chacham Yaakov: “At the end of Sivan we went to Moscow and from there we took a direct flight to Vienna. It’s hard to describe our emotions at the time. Friends and acquaintances feared for us and said, ‘It doesn’t make sense that just as the war ended with a political defeat for the Soviet Union, that they’re allowing you to leave. They can prevent you from leaving in a thousand ways.’

“No wonder then that we were terrified when a few minutes before the flight the pilot said that ‘as per an emergency request from the security service there will be a stop at the airport in Kiev.’ We looked at one another in surprise and fright. The plane landed and dozens of policeman and KGB agents boarded and conducted a thorough search. Nobody can understand how terrified we were during those two hours. It was only after the search had ended that the plane took off for Vienna from where we continued to Venice and then sailed for Eretz Yisroel. On 10 Tamuz we arrived on safe shores at the port city of Chaifa.

“My mother insisted that we move immediately to Kfar Chabad. Suddenly we felt how easy it was in Israel to observe mitzvos and learn Torah in freedom.

“We did not forget our brothers back in Georgia and we helped them a lot in obtaining visas and other documents. It was two years later, in 1969, when the big aliya of Georgian Jewry began.”

When the three brothers arrived, people were amazed to see Jews with such impressive Jewish appearances, who had come from the Soviet Union.

Chacham Ben-Tzion: “Two months after we arrived, we flew to the Rebbe in order to spend Yom Tov with him. We met R’ Shmuel Levitin in 770 who told us that on Simchas Torah the



An aliya in the Rebbe's minyan



At dollars

Rebbe told him prophetically that within a year the 'Georgians' will be here, and behold, the prophecy came true!

"The Rebbe gave us special treatment. At every farbrengen he waited until all three of us were present. One time, one of the brothers was delayed and the Rebbe asked where the third brother was...

"We asked the Rebbe whether to go into business or to continue our work among the Georgian community. The Rebbe's answer was 'continue your work in the ways of your fathers in Georgia.'"

Chacham Moshe: "The Rebbe told us not to change the customs we observed in Georgia. The Rebbe also told us to preserve our niggunim."

Chacham Yaakov: "When we had yechidus, the Rebbe told me not to change the nusach ha'tfilla we used in Georgia."

Chacham Ben-Tzion: "When I daven alone I use Nusach HaArizal and when I daven as the chazan I use the nusach we have used for hundreds of years."

In conclusion:

Chacham Yaakov: "I call upon Georgian Jews to farbreng and strengthen their Torah and mitzva observance with fear of heaven. Halevai in this z'chus the Rebbe will be revealed now!"

[Continued from pg. 31]

NOTES:

1) See the book of Daniel and its commentators. Cf. *Ner Mitzvah* by the Maharal of Prague.

2) Concerning the connection between Saddam and Nebuchadnezzar, see *Missiles, Masks and Miracles* by Charles Samuel.

2) Jeremiah 12:1-2.

4) See *Seder HaDoros* years 3319; 3364; 3386, and references noted there. These three generations are known in Jewish literature as the era of the "Babylonian exile." It was during this time that the center of Judaism moved from Israel to Babylon, or present day Iraq and became the primary center for Jewish life and learning for the following 1500 years. Even afterward, a large and viable Jewish community always existed in Iraq till the early 1950s. Today, there are few Jews left in

Baghdad.

5) *Sanhedrin* 96a; *Yalkut Shir HaShirim*; *Esther Rabba* chapter 3; *Zohar Truma* 175a. Quoted in *Rashi Yirmiya* 12:5. – The Talmud states that Nebuchadnezzar walked four steps, but all of the other sources quoted above (including *Rashi* to *Yirmiya* *ibid.*) state that it was a three-step trek (Cf. *Maharsha* to *Sanhedrin* *ibid.* who points this out, and *Mekor Chesed* to *Seifer Chassidim* 18:6.)

6) According to the Talmud *ibid.*, Jeremiah was lamenting particularly about the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. And the answer to his outcry was the story with Nebuchadnezzar taking three steps to honor G-d.

7) See *Sanhedrin* *ibid.* that an angel actually prevented Nebuchadnezzar from moving forward.

8) *Maharsha* to *Sanhedrin* *ibid.*

9) 4:30.