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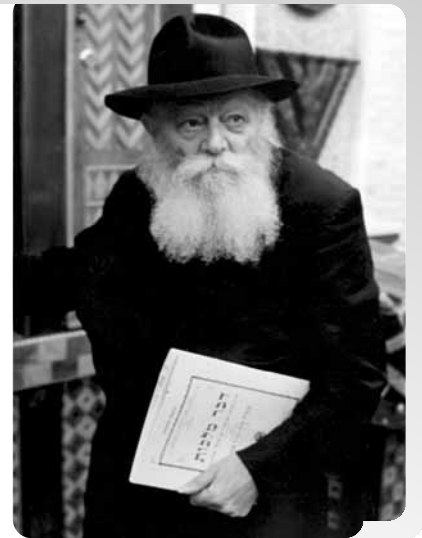
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TO KNOW G-D: IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO BELIEVE

LIKKUTEI SICHOS, VOL. 26, PG. 114-123
TRANSLATED BY BORUCH MERKUR



1. In the beginning of the book *Mishneh Torah*, in the [prefatory section entitled] “The Enumeration of the Mitzvos,” the Rambam says: “The first Mitzva of the Positive Commandments is to know that there is a Deity (*sh’yesh sham Eloka*), as it is said, ‘I am the L-rd, your G-d.’” With this Mitzva, the Rambam also begins the laws of his book *Mishneh Torah* [Laws of the Foundations of the Torah]: “The foundation of the foundations and the pillar of wisdoms is to know that there is a primordial Being (*sh’yesh sham Matzui rishon*) and etc.”

However, in the first law, the Rambam does not say that this knowledge (“that there is a primordial Being”) constitutes a **Positive Commandment**. Rather, he first discusses at length (throughout the course of five laws) **several** details regarding the “primordial Being” before he concludes (in Law 6): “The knowledge of this matter is a Positive Commandment, as it is said, ‘I am the L-rd, Your G-d.’”

It is thus understood that according to the opinion of the Rambam, the Positive Commandment of, “I am the L-rd, Your G-d,” is not only [the imperative to acquire] the general knowledge “that there is a Deity,” “that there is a primordial Being,” but it also includes [knowledge of] details pertaining to G-d (which he enumerates in the laws).

The Abarbanel explains (in his book *Rosh Amana*) – quoted in *Seifer HaMitzvos* of the Tzemach Tzedek [“The Mitzva of Belief in the Divine,” Ch. 1] – that according to the opinion of the Rambam, the Positive Commandment of Belief in the Divine is not simply [to believe] that the Deity exists, “that there is a Divine Being,” but that “the Deity, blessed be He, of Whom we **already** know that He exists – His existence is more primordial and more complete than

that of all the [created] existents and etc.” (as he elaborates on the topic).

([Of course, were the Positive Commandment of Belief in G-d no more than to believe in the notion that He exists] this would beg the question: How is it possible to count Belief in G-d as a **Mitzva** (a Commandment)? The entire concept of a Mitzva is only possible if there is a Being Who commands the fulfillment of the Mitzva. Thus, it doesn’t make sense to say that it is Mitzva to believe that there is a Being Who commands the fulfillment of Mitzvos.)

Thus, the Rambam prefaces the five laws concerning the existence of G-d [to his mentioning in Law 6 that “The knowledge of this matter is a Positive Commandment”], because the Mitzva of Belief in ([or] Knowledge of) the Divine requires that we know (at least) **these** details concerning [the nature of] G-d’s existence, [describing] how it is that He, may He be blessed, [exists in a way that] is “more complete than that of all the [created] existents and etc.”

2. Furthermore, the precise wording of the Rambam has been noted [see *Rosh Amana*, Ch. 17; *Seifer HaMitzvos* of the Tzemach Tzedek *ibid*, Ch. 2, end; and more – see FN 12], “**to know** that there is a Deity,” “**to know** that there is a primordial Being,” indicating that the Mitzva is **to know** with an intellectual knowledge, etc. (Similarly, the Rambam concludes – both in the Mitzva of the Knowledge of G-d [Foundations of the Torah 1:6] and the Mitzva of the Unity of G-d [*ibid* 1:7, end] – “The **knowledge** of this matter is a Positive Commandment” (not “the belief in this matter”).)

And on this basis, the Abarbanel addresses the question: How can we be **commanded** regarding a matter

of **beliefs**, “which are not acquired through will and choice”? He answers that the Rambam “did not count the nature of the belief and its truth as a Positive Commandment, but the **knowledge** of these matters and the **study** of them, which brings to the acquisition of beliefs.” Indeed, “this pursuit of knowledge, philosophical analysis, and the application of scrutiny, and this study...which give rise to beliefs...they formulate the will and the choice.”

Accordingly we can understand why the Rambam did not suffice with mention of the details concerning the existence of G-d (in Laws 1-7), which a Jew must know in order to fulfill the Mitzvos of Knowledge of G-d and the Unity of G-d, but he goes on to elucidate (in the later laws, until the end of the chapter) several matters concerning the Knowledge of G-d.

(Namely, the Scriptural proofs that “the Holy One Blessed Be He is not corporeal”; that the physical descriptions regarding G-d “written in the Torah” are “in accordance with the minds of mortals...it is all metaphor”; regarding the request of Moshe, “Please show me Your glory” [Sisa 33:18] and the manner by which his comprehension was “of the truth of existence,” **and etc.**)

For at first glance, how is it relevant to bring this **dialectic** in his book *HaYad* [i.e., *Mishneh Torah*], a book of “**halachos halachos**” [FN 18: the expression Rambam uses in the conclusion of his preface to his work *HaYad* [to strictly define its objective of encoding laws] – see the lengthy discussion in *Rosh Amana*, Ch. 19]?

According to the aforementioned we may assert that this is relevant to the obligation “to know,” for specifically when we know the terms of the dialectics regarding these laws, then the knowledge of G-d is in a manner of “**to know**” – not simply having faith, but an intellectual knowledge, etc.

Put differently: In order to fulfill the Mitzva of **Knowing** G-d, we must at least know the **foundational** “pursuit of knowledge, philosophical analysis, and the application of scrutiny” concerning the existence of G-d, which Rambam elucidates in this chapter.

3. We may assert that it is the Zohar that is Rambam’s source

(that the Mitzva of Belief in the Divine entails: a) not only the general knowledge that “the Deity exists,” but also

the details regarding the completeness of G-d’s existence; and b) that this itself must be in a manner of “**to know**” – notwithstanding the fact that the verse states only, “I am the L-rd, your G-d”).

[FN 20: Indeed, it is known that Rambam derives many laws from the Zohar. See *The Rambam and the Zohar* (Sinai, Vol. 32-34) by Rabbi Margalios for elaboration on this topic.] This is the text of the Zohar [from which the Rambam derives the above laws]: “You shall know that I am the L-rd, your G-d, etc.” [VaEira 6:7]. This Commandment precedes all other Commandments...to know Him, the Holy One Blessed Be He...that there is a Supernal Ruler Who is the Master of the world, Who created all the worlds, heaven, earth, and all their hosts” [Zohar II (Raaya Mehemna) 25a].

The wording of Rambam in his first law, in terms of content, is the [same as that] of the Zohar: “The foundation of the foundations and the pillar of wisdoms (‘This Commandment precedes all other Commandments’) is **to know** that there is a primordial Being (“**to know Him**, the Holy One Blessed Be He”) and that He is the cause of the existence of **all** that exists, and all the existents **of the heaven and the earth and that which is between them**, etc.” (“Who created **all** the worlds, **heaven, earth, and all their hosts**”). The same is true regarding the wording of the Rambam (in Law 5): “This Being is the G-d of the world, Master of all the earth” parallels the wording of the Zohar, “that there is a Supernal Ruler Who is the Master of the world.”

From this passage in the Zohar, the Rambam derives that “This Commandment” is connected with knowledge, “**You shall know...to know**,” and that it is not sufficient to have a general knowledge “that the Deity exists,” but we must know details regarding His existence, may He be blessed (from which we understand that “His existence is more primordial and more complete, etc.”). [FN 24: However, with respect to the knowledge that “Havaya is HaElokim” (the Mitzva of the **Unity** of G-d), this knowledge is “in general...in a general manner (Zohar ibid).]

Although the Zohar brings the verse, “You shall know that I am the L-rd, your G-d” [VaEira 6:7], as support (and not the verse, “I am the L-rd, your G-d” [Yisro 20:2, which Rambam brings, thereby seemingly detracting from this parallelism]), that is simply [explained on the basis of the

Specifically when we know the terms of the dialectics regarding these laws, then the knowledge of G-d is in a manner of “to know” – not simply having faith, but an intellectual knowledge.

particular context in which the passage appears in the Zohar]. Namely, the Zohar speaks about how Moshe Rabbeinu taught the Jewish people about the knowledge of G-d before the exodus from Egypt (in order that the Jewish people would believe “in all those miracles and acts of might that He wrought on Egypt” [see *Nitzuztei Oros LaZohar*, *ibid*]). Thus, the verse, “You shall know that I am the L-rd, your G-d,” was stated in the context of [events that were transpiring] **then**:

However, **our** obligation to fulfill the Mitzva is (according to the well known words of the Rambam [*Perush HaMishnayos*, Chulin Ch. 7, End]) in virtue of “the Mitzvos of the Holy One Blessed Be He through Moshe Rabbeinu, peace unto him (on Mount Sinai).” Thus, the **Commandant** regarding Belief in the Divine is derived from the verse, “I am the L-rd, your G-d.” Indeed, we find in the **Zohar itself** (in another place [Zohar III (Raaya Mehemna) 256b]): “**The first Commandment is ‘I am.’**”

(Of course, the fact that we learn the details regarding the **manner** by which the Mitzva is fulfilled from the verse, “You shall know that I am the L-rd, your G-d” (stated **before** the Giving of the Torah) is not a quandary, because in several places [see FN 30] we find that the concept of “the revelation of a matter” or details of a Mitzva are also derived from before the Giving of the Torah. [FN 31: See, for example, **Rambam**, end of Laws of Circumcision: Circumcision is greater than all the Mitzvos of the Torah, for thirteen covenants were made in its regard (all of which were said **before** the Giving of the Torah), whereas [only] three covenants were made [regarding the other Mitzvos] (all of which were made **after** the Giving of the Torah).]

4. According to all the above we can resolve a seemingly puzzling matter in the Rambam:

In the second chapter of Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, Rambam begins to speak about the Mitzvos of Love of G-d and Fear of Him, and he continues as follows: “What is the path to love Him and fear Him? That one should contemplate His great and wondrous deeds and creations and see in them His incomparable and infinite wisdom. Immediately he loves, etc., to know the great G-d, etc., and he will fear, etc. In accordance with these matters, I elucidate great principles of the acts

of the Master of the Worlds, in order that they should be an entranceway for the understanding individual to love G-d.”

Thereafter, throughout the course of **three chapters**, Rambam expounds on, “His great and wondrous deeds and creations”: one chapter [Chapter 2, Laws 3, end, through 8] about angels (which is a portion of the discussion of the Supernal Chariot), and the two subsequent chapters about “the Act of Creation.” He then concludes: “At the time when a person contemplates these matters and he recognizes all the creations...it increases love for the Omnipresent, etc., and he will be in awe and fear, etc.”

At first glance, it is not understood: It is true that “the path to love Him and fear Him” occurs “At the time when a person contemplates, etc.,” but the Rambam is a book of “*halachos halachos*” [i.e., it is strictly a legal work]. How is it appropriate, in *Seifer Mishneh Torah*, [to include] a lengthy discussion of details concerning “His great and wondrous deeds and creations”?

Irrespective of the fact that Rambam’s choice of words in *Seifer HaMitzvos* [Positive Commandant 3] suggests that the concept of, “one should contemplate His great and wondrous deeds, etc.,” defines (not only a means to prepare for the fulfillment of a Mitzva, but it is) the **act** of the Mitzva of love [of G-d] – that is, the commandment incumbent upon the person, *gavra* (subject), whereas the *cheftza* (object) is “that one should engage in thinking and contemplating His Mitzvos and His Utterances and His Deeds, etc.,”

following which, “love will result **perforce**” –

Nevertheless, this explanation is not sufficient, at first glance, to justify Rambam’s inclusion of it – a discussion of **matters** pertaining to the kind of contemplation that may arouse in a person the *cheftza*, “Love of G-d and Fear of Him” – in his work *Mishneh Torah* (*halachos halachos*). It belongs, rather, in philosophical texts and etc. The **law** is that one must contemplate “His great and wondrous deeds” and the like. However, the **description** of “His great and wondrous deeds” does not pertain, at first glance, to the **law** of the Mitzva of Love [of G-d], and hence, not to *Seifer Mishneh Torah*.

[To be continued be”H]

The law is that one must contemplate “His great and wondrous deeds” and the like. However, the description of “His great and wondrous deeds” does not pertain, at first glance, to the law of the Mitzva of Love of G-d, and hence, not to Seifer Mishneh Torah.

A DAILY DOSE OF MOSHIACH & GEULA: 21 - 27 SHVAT

*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

21 SHVAT: "ALL THE HONOR OF THE KING'S DAUGHTER WHO IS WITHIN" IN A DIFFERENT MANNER THAN OUR TIMES

"Old men and women shall yet sit in the streets of Yerushalayim."

(Zecharia 8:4)

"There shall again be heard in the cities of Yehuda and in the streets of Yerushalayim, etc., the voice of a bride" (Yirmiyahu 33:10-11)

Here, this matter seems to be in contradiction to "All honor [awaits] the King's daughter who is within" (T'hilim 45:14).

However, this prophecy was said regarding the time of the Resurrection of the Dead. At that time, the Evil Inclination will be nullified, at the level of, "He will cause even his enemies to make peace with him" (Mishlei 16:7).

Therefore, there will then be no need to be careful over "All honor [awaits] the King's daughter who is within" as we are now.

(Likutei Sichos, Vol. 21, p. 379)

22 SHVAT: THE YAHRTZAIT OF THE REBBETZIN CHAYA MUSHKA, WIFE OF THE REBBE MH"m – THE WOMEN ARE BEGINNING WITH SONG, TIMBRELS, AND DANCE EVEN IN THE TIME OF EXILE

Just as at the Exodus from Egypt, "the righteous women of the generation were certain that G-d would make

miracles for them, and they brought timbrels out from Egypt," so too with the Redemption from this final exile, when the righteous women must be certain, absolutely certain, that immediately mamash the True and Complete Redemption is unfolding, to the point that they are immediately beginning (in the final minutes of Exile) with song, timbrels, and dance over the True and Complete Redemption!

(Shabbos Parshas B'Shalach 5752)

23 SHVAT: MOSHIACH WILL WORK IN THE FUTURE TO COME SO THAT NO NATION RAISES ITS SWORD AGAINST ANOTHER

Among the appointed destinies of the True and Complete Redemption through Moshiach Tzidkeinu in connection with the nations of the world is "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Yeshayahu 2:4).

This matter will be achieved through the activity of Melech HaMoshiach himself, as is written at the beginning of the verse, "And he shall judge between the nations and reprove many peoples."

"The judge is Melech HaMoshiach...who will be master over all the nations, and who will reprove them and say to whom there has been found something undesirable: the defect has been corrected ... Therefore, there will be no war among nations because he will make peace

between them, and they will have no need for weapons of war, and they shall beat them to make from them tools for working the land” (Radak’s commentary on the verse).

(Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5752)

24 SHVAT: TOTAL G-DLY REVELATION IN THE FUTURE TO COME

The Midrash states that in the time of the Redemption, if a person goes to pick off a fig on Shabbos, the fig tree will scream out: “Today is Shabbos!”

The reason for this is that in the time of the Redemption, there will be a total G-dly revelation, and the entire Creation will feel the absolute reality of G-d.

The world itself – even the inanimate and vegetative – will feel that there is nothing in the world except G-d.

(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 11)

25 SHVAT: THE BLIND WILL BE HEALED FIRST IN THE FUTURE TO COME

And then there will also be the most complete healing of the Jewish People, even the “sagi nahor” (a euphemism for “blind”) Jews, as in the sayings of our Rabbis of blessed memory (B’Reishis Rabba 95): “The blind will be healed in the Future to Come, as is said, ‘Then the eyes of the blind will be opened.’” Furthermore, “when He will come to heal the world, He will first heal the blind” (Midrash T’hillim 146:8).

This is not in a way that excludes, G-d forbid, the physical power of sight, as they will indeed have the capacity to read and learn Torah, even in regular written letters – as everyone else.

(Shabbos Parshas Eikev 5751)

26 SHVAT: MELECH HA’MOSHIACH RULES AND REIGNS OVER THE WHOLE WORLD

“And he shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the land” (T’hillim 72:8).

In Rashi’s commentary on Parshas Balak, he explains that this verse [“and destroy the remnant of the city” (24:19)] refers to Melech HaMoshiach: “regarding Melech HaMoshiach does it say this, of whom it is said, ‘And he shall reign from sea to sea.’” Similarly, in the prophecy of Zecharia, which speaks in the commentary about Melech HaMoshiach: “Behold, Your king...,”

referring to Melech HaMoshiach, as it is stated, “and his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the land.” This concept is also brought in Rambam, “He will annihilate all the sons of Shais’ – this is Melech HaMoshiach, as it is stated, “and his rule shall be from sea to sea.”

The simple meaning is that Melech HaMoshiach will reign and rule over the whole world, and in the commentary of Ibn Ezra, “from the southern sea, called the Red Sea to the northern sea, which is the ocean, and from the river going out from Eden, which is the beginning of the east, until the ends of the land at the end of the west.”

(Likkutei Sichos, Parshas Balak 5751)

The Luz Bone, which did not derive benefit from the Tree of Knowledge, is higher than the concept of death, and from this bone, the body will be rebuilt in the Resurrection of the Dead.

27 SHVAT: SEUDAS MELAVEH MALKA – CORRECTS THE SIN OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

The homiletic explanation of the concept of the Seudas Melaveh Malka will be understood by prefacing it with what is written in the Beis Yosef, “There is a part of the body of man that only receives nourishment from food eaten on Motzaei Shabbos.” It is understood from this that there is an aspect in the Seudas Melaveh Malka that does not exist in the Shabbos meals, as this part of the body – *etzem ha’luz* (the Luz Bone) – derives no benefit from eating (including the Shabbos meals) except on Motzaei Shabbos.

This can be further explained according to what is written in Eliyahu Rabba (sec. 3) that *etzem ha’luz* did not partake of the Tree of Knowledge (since it “only receives nourishment from food eaten on Motzaei Shabbos,” and thus it does not benefit from the eating of the Tree of Knowledge, which occurred on Erev Shabbos).

“Thus it’s not in vein,” for the entire concept of death came as a result of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, and due to this sin, the world was punished with death. However, “*etzem ha’luz*,” which did not derive benefit from the Tree of Knowledge, is higher than the concept of death, and from this bone, the body will be rebuilt in the Resurrection of the Dead.

It can thus be said that this is the inner meaning of the Seudas Melaveh Malka: correcting the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge.

(Likkutei Sichos, Parshas B’Shalach 5752)

UNITING UNDER THE REBBE'S RULE

BY RABBI YOSEF CHAIM GINSBURGH, SHLIACH, ROSH YESHIVAS CHABAD,
AND RAV OF CHABAD COMMUNITY RAMAT AVIV, ERETZ YISROEL

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

I am here to make an announcement: There is no dispute among Anash! Anash are united, and the true inner concepts are agreed upon by all. The matter is simply that it is more revealed with some and less with others, one in this color and one in another. What does everyone agree upon? Everyone agrees with complete faith that the Rebbe shlita MH”M is chai v’kayam. Delivered at the Tzeirei Agudas Chabad “kinus achdus” in Yerushalayim.



Chassidim gather together here as brothers. All of us are connected in heart and soul. Each person has the central point and its outward expression, but the *nekuda* (central point) is faith, our faith that the Rebbe shlita MH”M is chai v’kayam. We want this gathering to bring out the faith that the Rebbe shlita will reveal himself in actual deed, in order that we can stand before the Rebbe and proclaim, “*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L’olam Va’ed!*”

I have come to this kinus despite the fact that many of my very close friends don’t understand what is the

meaning and purpose to my coming. However, I hope that after I speak my piece, all of us, even those friends of mine, will be able to open a little point of light in their hearts, and then we can actually leave here with some new perspective entirely.

I once heard from Rabbi Dunin, who was our mashpia in yeshiva, that he thought for many years that the main objective was Ahavas Yisroel (love for fellow Jews). He spent years watching how the Rebbe made a tremendous “koch” on this matter, but he said that he eventually came to the conclusion that Ahavas Yisroel is merely a means to an end, and the

end is **Achdus Yisroel** (Jewish unity). What’s the difference between Ahavas Yisroel and Achdus Yisroel? Achdus must revolve around a nekuda. There is no meaning to achdus without a nekuda around which everyone unites. Regarding Ahavas Yisroel, the Alter Rebbe says, “And if even he fails, he hasn’t lost the merit of loving one’s neighbor.” Ahavas Yisroel brings benefit in any case, but the true objective is unity around a nekuda.

Therefore, just as we proclaim, “*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L’olam Va’ed!*” the vessel for this must be “I accept upon myself to fulfill the mitzva of ‘Love

your fellow as yourself.”

When the Gerer Rebbe came for yechidus with the Rebbe during the *Mems*, the Rebbe told him that since we are in a time when every day we find matters representing the opposite of bracha *ch*”v, and in an increasing manner, the advice to combat this is by giving Jews a bracha – simply increase in brachos as much as possible.

Therefore, before I begin, I want to fulfill this instruction from the Rebbe and bless everyone – men, women, and children, all members of Anash, Lubavitcher chassidim everywhere – that they should have everything good in both material and spiritual matters, and that all their heart’s good wishes shall be fulfilled, primarily the inner wish that the Rebbe will be revealed immediately, mamash.

THERE IS NO DISPUTE AMONG ANASH!

We were just blessed with the birth of a son, and according to halacha, “a son is born, the whole family is healed,” and the whole family is the Chabad family. Therefore, what I want to say is in the form of an announcement: **There is no dispute among Anash!** Anash are united, and the true inner concepts are agreed upon by all. The matter is simply that it is more revealed with some and less with others, one in this color and one in another.

What does everyone agree upon? Everyone agrees with complete faith that the Rebbe shlita MH”M is *chai v’kayam*. Are there actually those who don’t think so? Are they unsettled when they hear that expression? The Rebbe himself writes “*shlita*” in connection with the Rebbe Rayatz after Yud Shvat!

Every chassid feels that the Rebbe is *chai v’kayam* – this is the nekuda that strengthens us. Is there anything

else that can strengthen chassidim? Would someone want to think that his child knew that the So-and-so Rebbe is “*shlita*” while his Rebbe *ch*”v isn’t? Is there even room to consider such a thing?

The Alter Rebbe writes at the end of *Igeres HaKodesh* 27, after explaining at length that the life of a tzaddik is spiritual, “and all those closer to the Sanctuary of G-d during his lifetime have precedence for a bracha.” Anyone who knows the tzaddik during his physical lifetime gets his brachos first. Is anyone prepared to place himself among those without such precedence – as one who did not know him during his lifetime? G-d forbid! Furthermore, does this mean that we have precedence in brachos over our children, since they never saw the Rebbe? G-d forbid! It is impossible to entertain such a thought!

Thus, the pure faith that the Rebbe is *chai v’kayam* is accepted by all of us. Calling the Rebbe *shlita* “leader of the generation” is the same thing as saying he is *chai v’kayam*. What does “leader of the generation” mean? Have we ever heard people referring to anyone else as “leader of the generation”? Since we haven’t, everyone agrees to the concept.

Our shlichus is also accepted by everyone, as these are the Rebbe’s explicit words in his holy sichos. The Rebbe said at the 5752 International Shluchim Conference that “the avoda of shlichus has been completed, and the main shlichus now is to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu.” What does this mean? The Rebbe states it quite simply: Every action we take on the ten Mitzva Campaigns, reaching out to other Jews, and spreading the wellsprings of chassidus outward must be according to two conditions. The first condition is that it must be instilled in the main shlichus with clear thought and intention on how these activities can lead to the

greeting of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

The second condition the Rebbe brings is that the shlichus to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu is the gateway through which all matters of shlichus pass. Will someone who wants to devote his whole life to the Rebbe and shlichus, and eventually reaches this gateway, find it closed *ch*”v? Inconceivable. All the chassidim are united in the knowledge that the only shlichus is to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

THE WORLD IS READY, AND WE HAVE THE RECEIPTS TO PROVE IT

The world is a state of hiding and concealment, but thank G-d, it’s possible to come with all the relevant receipts.

The world is ready, the Rebbe says, and this is what we see from the facts on the ground. We are in the location of the largest Jewish university in the world, filled and academics and scientists, and they’re thirsting to hear words of truth.

The world is looking to hear words of faith. If we don’t spread these words, then a variety of different klipos will come and say things even more amazing, and they’ll be accepted. All this is merely intended to encourage us that we have nothing to be concerned about or fear from the world, because we are saying the truth. We are saying the words of the Rebbe, and not making up things on our own.

So the world is ready, and in the inner sense as well. Hundreds of Jews are coming closer to Yiddishkait, and turning into chassidim, educating a new generation in the belief that the Rebbe shlita is *chai v’kayam*, without anyone uttering a word in protest. Thus, everyone is in agreement. The world is ready for the Redemption. The last and most important thing for us to give particular emphasis is that chassidim are ready. Every wedding

you attend has chassidim on both sides. Who says there's a dispute? The institutions may dispute with one another, and with G-d's help, they'll also make peace with another, but the chassidim themselves are truly united.

WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO?

What can we do? What is really demanded from us?

I want to say two things in connection to this. First, there is the conduct of the chassidim, and with their permission, I was asked to say what I have to tell them – rabbanim, askanim, mashpiim, institution directors, and Chabad House directors.

The Rebbe has placed us on the track, and the track leads us to the Redemption and the immediate hisgalus of the Rebbe. On this track, there is a framework and content. The framework is the Rebbe's institutions – not just some of the institutions, but every one of them without exception – and the content within this framework is: greeting Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

The Rebbe is dear to all of us, and all of us want to be on track. But this track must be a framework with content. It's impossible to take the content out of the framework and to turn the framework into the content. By the same token, the content must be cast into the framework. While sometimes there are exceptions, the whole objective is to make the exception the rule. We have to believe that there is no such thing as a framework of fifty, forty, thirty, or even twenty years ago without reaching the nekuda to which the Rebbe has brought us: to think and plan that in every action, every kinus, every awakening whatever it will be, the nekuda must lead to the greeting of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

If this is not the case, then there is neither framework nor content.

Furthermore, when earnest Jews come and feel the emptiness, crying out to Heaven, they can sometimes do things that are not so desirable. However, who is responsible for this? The one who emptied the framework of its content.

Now, the second thing I want to say to chassidim: The Rebbe wants us to think about everything in a new way – how it can lead us to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu. This means that if you make a kinus, and you use the same “Yechi” sign from the previous kinus, for example, that's not considered doing something to lead us to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu. That's not what the Rebbe meant. Just as you would bring a new speaker, and you would do something with a different style in order to give new vitality to the event, the same applies with “Yechi.” Both the Rebbe and the “shlita” require a new infusion of chayus. Indeed, this demands work and no one likes to work, but this is our true avoda in shlichus. In every action we do, we must invest considerable thought, particularly the main thought of how this action will elicit a totally new concept in Moshiach and the Redemption, something completely different.

Furthermore, when you see simple faith, the intellect is inclined to have contempt. We must know, however, that what is most needed today is simple faith. The fact that certain chassidim allow themselves to mock and show disgrace openly for those in whom this faith shines brightly is simply horrible! This is something that demands that we make a cheshbon nefesh right now, here and throughout the world: We must not even consider the possibility of having contempt for those who have the faith of chassidim. Perhaps you can't realize this now, but after a little “mashke” on Simchas Torah, you also say “Yechi” – so why are you mocking?

There's a video clip with the

Rebbe, where someone comes to him at Sunday dollars and says that he dreamt that the Rebbe came to him in a revelation, saying three times, “Egozim” (nuts). You have to see what respect and attention the Rebbe gave this person.

In a letter to someone who writes “his soul is in the hidden treasures of Heaven” in reference to the Rebbe Rayatz, the Rebbe himself writes, “I didn't want to assault his emuna, but since when do we give addresses to the Rebbe? Since when do we say that ‘his soul is in the hidden treasures of Heaven’”? However, despite the fact that this is the Rebbe's opinion on the matter, he didn't want to assault the emuna of a chassid, for whom “his soul is in the hidden treasures of Heaven” is a most holy reference. Yet, while this should apply all the more so to someone who says with simple faith, “*Shlita*” or “*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed!*” as it relates to his very life, nevertheless, such a person is subjected to disgrace and embarrassment. How is it possible to treat someone so terribly when he says these things? Furthermore, if we see someone disgracing a fellow chassid in this manner, we must take him aside and reprove him, saying that such conduct is not chassidic and is not befitting chassidim. It is contrary to the Rebbe's mode of conduct!

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

I would like to conclude with a few practical suggestions:

As the hearts of chassidim bled in the first days following Gimmel Tammuz 5754, spontaneously without consideration or qualification, all Chabad rabbanim in Eretz HaKodesh, or most of them at least, gathered together at the home of the secretary of the Chabad Rabbinical Court and issued a **unanimous decision** to continue with the proclamation of “Yechi.” Since then and until this very

day, there has never been a meeting of all the Chabad rabbanim in Eretz HaKodesh. There are rabbanim who represent communities with hundreds of chassidic families, providing them with spiritual guidance, presiding at their weddings, and they surely have what to say. How can it be that all Chabad rabbanim don't get together at least once or a few times a year to discuss the grave crises that have befallen us? Who's responsible for all this? This is not a case of inviting certain rabbanim and they don't come.

All of the Chabad rabbanim must meet together and break their heads until they put out some joint communiqué. They'll come to an agreement on some of the issues, not all of them, but the main thing is that we hear one word in the name of all Chabad rabbanim in Eretz HaKodesh! It's true that the Rebbe appointed the Chabad Rabbinical Court, but he didn't dissolve the rabbanim. When the Rebbe writes to Agudas Chassidei Chabad, stating that "the authority and concept of the conduct of Anash in Eretz HaKodesh is in the hands of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, foremost among them, (Vaad) Rabbanei Chabad," the Rebbe meant all Chabad rabbanim, and not just the Vaad, as the word "Vaad" is in parentheses! The Vaad's job is to get things moving!

Another suggestion is the simplest thing in the world: The Rebbe revealed and told everything to us. However, we don't know what the Rebbe said. We can argue on a certain matter for hours, but if we see that it's written in a sicha edited by the Rebbe himself, the whole argument ends right there. I suggest that both the *Beis Moshiach* and *Kfar Chabad* magazines provide a special weekly section with quotes from the Rebbe on Moshiach and the Redemption – each explaining them according to their understanding. At the very least, let's present the truth and say things exactly as the Rebbe stated them.

In the D'var Malchus sicha from Parshas VaYechi, the Rebbe says that the Yosef of our generation did not die since "These are the generations of Yaakov – Yosef." In the same way that "Yaakov did not die," "Yosef did not die." "And through bittul and hiskashrus, this matter will be achieved for each and every member of the generation – 'he did not die.'" The Rebbe gives us strength – these are the Rebbe's explicit words in an edited sicha – through bittul and hiskashrus, this matter will be

The world is looking to hear words of faith. If we don't spread these words, then a variety of different klipos will come and say things even more amazing, and they'll be accepted. We have nothing to be concerned about or fear from the world, because we are saying the words of the Rebbe.

achieved for everyone. Similarly, we find in the Rebbe's sicha on prophecy, when the Rebbe asks that we publicize to all the people of the generation that there is a prophet, in its simplest sense, and his prophecy is "Hineh Zeh Ba."

It doesn't make sense to you how "Hineh Zeh Ba"? Interpret it this way, explain it that way, or don't even explain at all. But at the very least, give over **the Rebbe's exact words!**

IN A PERSONAL TONE

One final word: We have recently printed an edition of the *Tanya* in a special room for Tzivos Hashem. This is the first *Tanya* in 5,205 editions that was printed in a room for Tzivos Hashem, an institution that the Rebbe established, a special edition out of an inner cry: "Ad Masai?" "When will the Galus end?" We are ready to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu! "Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach Lolam Va'ed!" – and this special edition was printed in one thousand copies with large letters to make it easier for children to study *Tanya* by heart. All of our friends and supporters may receive a copy of this special *Tanya* in return for a commitment to learn one chapter of *Tanya* by heart.

How does the learning of *Tanya* by heart help lead to the greeting of Moshiach Tzidkeinu? It's quite simple. The Rebbe writes in *HaYom Yom* that when we learn *Tanya* by heart, it purifies the street and the atmosphere. The Rebbe says that we need to open our eyes – so why aren't we opening them? – Because the air is not clean. As soon as we give over *Tanya* by heart with the clear intention that it will purify the world for us and our eyes so we can open them and see that the Rebbe has already revealed himself, we will surely bring about the hisgalus at the Complete Redemption, immediately mamash.

Therefore, since there is no dispute among chassidim, and with G-d's help, the institutions will also come to the conclusion that it is forbidden to be in dispute and all the rabbanim will sit together, we will all unite around the pure faith that the Rebbe shlita MH"M will immediately reveal himself and that the darkness and concealment in the world – "S'iz dahch altz hevel havalim ein od milvado (it's all sheer nonsense; there is nothing else besides Him)!"

SEEKING G-D IN PRISON

BY NOSSON AVROHOM

*For over thirty years, Rabbi Shimon Bekerman and Rabbi Yosef Neimark of Kfar Chabad have been visiting prisons throughout Eretz Yisroel. They reach places that professional teams don't get to and they put on t'fillin, speak about Judaism, and lift people's spirits, even arbitrating between prisoners when necessary. * "When we're there, we feel that the Rebbe is there with us," they say.*



Rabbi Yosef Neimark



Rabbi Shimon Bekerman

Joe has been in jail since the age of 14 because of a murder he committed. He was sentenced to 56 years behind bars. Rabbi Sholom Ber Lipskar is a shliach and the founder and chairman of the Aleph Institute, which takes care of Jewish prisoners in the US. In one of his meetings with Joe, he noticed a colorful tattoo on his left arm in the shape of a big Magen Dovid.

Rabbi Lipskar refrained from mentioned anything about it, fearing a negative reaction. At a certain point, Joe opened up to him and began telling him his life story. He concluded by saying, "I put on t'fillin every day thanks to my rabbi."

Joe, whose Jewish name is Yossele,

said that many years ago he saw the Rebbe farbrenging on television with subtitles in English. The Rebbe spoke about the importance of putting on t'fillin and Joe asked for a pair for himself. His fellow inmates made his life miserable when he put on t'fillin in his room. They even desecrated and destroyed his t'fillin in his presence and he was powerless to do anything about it.

From then on, he decided not to be the submissive Jew anymore. He began working out and he turned his body into a mass of muscles. In addition, in his ignorance of Jewish law and custom, he had a Magen Dovid tattooed on to his left arm where you place the t'fillin, and he



swore he would do all he could to obtain a new pair.

Joe told Rabbi Lipskar that he didn't know what it said in the t'fillin yet he went all out to obtain a pair. He finally got the approval he needed and he put the t'fillin on every morning.

Rabbi Lipskar related this story and then added, "In general, the Rebbe treated prisoners with special regard. When I brought a group of prisoners to 770 to a farbrengen, the Rebbe said they shouldn't all sit together so as not to draw attention to themselves."

When I told this story to Rabbi Shimon Bekerman, a distinguished Chassid in Kfar Chabad, he wasn't surprised: "Touching stories like these, with a few variations here and there, are our daily fare."

R' Bekerman knows what he's talking about since he has been visiting jails throughout Eretz Yisroel weekly for decades. Nevertheless, hardly anybody knows about his work. He is discreet and far from the spotlight, in a world where nothing counts unless it's publicized in the media. R' Bekerman sees this as his life's shlichus and he devotes himself to this work.

"It's enough to make a prisoner smile for us to realize that there is true significance to the work. That is our reward."

R' Bekerman began reaching out in jails in the 70's. He joined a group of men who went to prison 4 in Tzrifin, a military jail, where they cheered up soldiers every Friday, before Yomim Tovim and special dates in the Chassidic calendar.

"Every Friday about ten of us would go with twenty pairs of t'fillin and for two hours we would put t'fillin on many soldier-prisoners," remembers Rabbi Yosef Neimark, also from Kfar Chabad, who works with prisoners till this very day along with R' Bekerman.

“Today, many years after we began our work,” continues R’ Bekerman with open enthusiasm, “most of the prisoners put on t’fillin themselves. There is no wing in which you won’t find Chabad t’fillin that some prisoner puts on daily. A large part of the work that is left for us to do is to distribute Jewish material, review a point from a sicha, encourage people and conduct personal conversations with the inmates. Before Rosh HaShana we distribute jars of honey and before Pesach we give out Shmura Matza.”

In order to be sure that the prisoners use the matza Pesach night, R’ Bekerman distributes it right before Yom Tov, arriving home in Kfar Chabad minutes before Yom Tov

“It’s enough to make a prisoner smile for us to realize that there is true significance to the work. That is our reward.”

begins.

The connection with the inmates doesn’t begin and end with a Friday visit but develops into warm personal relationships, far beyond the call of

duty.

“Before last Pesach, a bank official who was in jail for tax evasion approached me. He was supposed to go on furlough for Pesach but he had no money to buy what the family needed. Being in jail meant he had no income any longer. I felt sorry for him and I filled up my car with groceries and went to his house and told his wife that her husband had ordered all this and had paid for it already. After Pesach, he went back to jail and when I met him, he ran and hugged and kissed me. “You saved me,” he said.

The fact that people slip up and are sent to jail, often leads to a double punishment. Often their livelihood is ruined and their family life crumbles. “We often serve as the intermediary between couples who are being torn apart due to the forced separation,” says R’ Bekerman. “Prisoners ask that I call their wives or children to say hello, give regards and support.”

Time spent in jail gives a prisoner an opportunity to think about his life. Those things which are the everyday problems of ordinary citizens, disappear from the horizon in the face of the fight for survival within prison walls. The stock taking causes many to turn to Judaism.

“In jail, all of them are Chabadnikim,” laughs R’ Bekerman. “Many of them say T’hillim on Shabbos Mevarchim. Many know the significance of Chassidishe special dates because we come and farbreng with them. Just recently, before the Kinus HaShluchim, we told them about the Kinus and explained what shlichus is and about how shlichus is a worldwide movement.

“We are also the ones they turn to with questions. Sometimes we are asked to arbitrate between inmates and even to separate them when they quarrel. Just lately I was walking in Tel Aviv when someone came over to me and hugged me and said I saved him when he was in jail.”

Rabbi Yosef Neimark relates:

One time, as I entered one of the wings to put t’fillin on with prisoners, I noticed a chareidi sitting and learning maamarim from the year 5700. He didn’t look like a Lubavitcher Chassid but I sat down to learn with him. After a few minutes I noticed that he was knowledgeable in Chabad Chassidus. When I expressed my curiosity, he told me about his past.

He said he had met a girl in Tzfas and together with Rabbi Rosenfeld of Machon Alte he had written to the Rebbe asking for a bracha for the shidduch, but he did not get an answer. He decided to marry her anyway. Not long afterward, the police uncovered certain criminal activities his wife had been involved with. She admitted it and he gave her an expedited get in Beis Din.

Some time after that, Rabbi Rosenfeld made him a shidduch with another girl from Machon Alte. This time, he was determined that without an answer from the Rebbe, he was not getting married! They wrote to the Rebbe and received a positive answer.

Before the wedding they asked for the traditional letter of blessing that the Rebbe sent for the chuppa, but the answer was delayed. He decided not to postpone the chuppa, relying on the first answer that he had gotten for the engagement.

Before the wedding a small argument erupted between him and the kalla’s parents because they wanted the chuppa to take place indoors according to Sephardic custom. As a mekurav to Chabad he wanted the chuppa to take place outdoors. He managed to convince them and the Rebbe’s answer arrived the day after the chuppa. The Rebbe referred to him as “Chassid.”

This man was in jail for a few days for a small crime. When I came again a week later, he wasn’t there anymore.



Rabbi Shimon Bekerman and a group of local volunteers at the Rikers Island jail.

The work that R' Bekerman and the rest of the Lubavitch crew do, make them quite close to the prisoners. When prisoners marry while still in jail (or on special leave), some of them insist on R' Berkman being their mesader kiddushin. A certain prisoner serving a life sentence without parole married in jail. He wanted only R' Bekerman to be the mesader kiddushin.

"A very deep and positive relationship has been developed with the prisoners. Some of them are allowed out only at night and someone has to take responsibility for them. I recently took responsibility for someone. I hooked him up with a Chabad house, rented an apartment for him, and found him a job. He joined the Chabad community and

helps the local shliach."

R' Bekerman fills the role of a Chabad house:

"I'll tell you something," said R' Bekerman after a long moment of silence. "A few years ago I took Rabbi Nechemia Schmerling from Kfar Yona with me to Tel Mond prison. Young people are sitting in jail there for various crimes, most of them serious. It was before Rosh HaShana and we wanted them to hear the Chassidic significance of this great day and the customs associated with it. At one point, thirty young men were sitting around us in one of the cells, listening closely.

"When I left the room, I saw one of the clerks in tears. She said, 'Kol ha'kavod to you. I don't know how

you manage to have them sit together for such a long time and get their full attention. When they go out for exercise in the yard, they go one by one, because otherwise they'll fight. That has been our experience. Psychologists and other professionals can't calm them down and then you come, with no professional experience, and keep them interested for an hour!"

Many times, during the course of the interview, R' Bekerman paused from telling stories and explained the importance of outreach in jails and about how the Rebbe helps every step of the way.

"Do you know what it means to visit a Jew in solitary confinement, who has given up on life, is cut off from the world, and to sit there and

explain the importance of eating Shmura Matza? How he's not allowed to despair because there is someone in the world, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, on whose shlichus we come, and he told us not to neglect him? When someone like this hears this message, his eyes light up. You've saved him.

"Unfortunately, the inmates don't come from one segment of society or from a specific background. There are religious Jews here who have slipped and fallen. Sometimes I meet religious Jews who are in jail for various crimes. They are very knowledgeable but have nobody with whom to share their Torah thoughts and they're frustrated.

"When you come and listen to what they have to say, you just can't measure this chesed. I remember a man in jail who refused to give his wife a get. He was a talmid chacham and nobody wanted to listen to him. When we spoke to him in learning, you could see how he lit up."

Many inmates who leave jail register their children in Chabad schools. Many of them get more religiously involved.

"In jail many of them connect to Tanya. Many times I've seen when families come and visit them and they show them the D'var Malchus that we give out each week."

* * *

Rabbi Bekerman is fully devoted to his work. The prisoners and their hardships are part of his life. Even when he goes to the Rebbe for Tishrei, which he has been doing for years, he takes *panim* from many inmates. And believe it or not, he even gets involved in visiting Jewish prisoners in New York!

Last Sukkos, R' Bekerman took a mobile sukka to an American jail. He stayed there all day and worked together with Rabbi Kasriel Kastel of Tzach in New York.

"I spoke to them in Ivrit and someone translated. There were Israeli

inmates there too who asked me to help them and we do what we can within our limited capabilities."

Towards the end of the interview I asked R' Bekerman from where he derives the stamina for this work which many prefer to stay away from.

"I had yechidus on 13 Shvat 5740. I asked the Rebbe for a bracha for personal matters and the Rebbe blessed me with success in mitvzaim. I understood from this that the bracha

Time spent in jail gives a prisoner an opportunity to think about his life. Those things which are the everyday problems of ordinary citizens, disappear from the horizon in the face of the fight for survival within prison walls. The stock taking causes many to turn to Judaism.

for my personal matters was dependent on my involvement in mitvzaim. I feel the fulfillment of the Rebbe's bracha. Wherever we go, we feel the Rebbe accompanying us, paving the way for us.

"I recently went down to the solitary confinement cells and visited one of the inmates there. He showed me two pages of *Igros Kodesh*, one side written in Yiddish, the other side in

Hebrew and he asked me to translate the Yiddish letter for him. I thought: How did he manage to get a volume in here? The Rebbe reaches everyone."

Rabbi Yosef Neimark has joined R' Bekerman all these years in his work. Until recently, R' Neimark has given a Tanya shiur at one of the jails. He was always equipped with a volume of *Igros Kodesh* and many prisoners with problems asked to write to the Rebbe.

"Many miracles have taken place. One day someone described his pathetic situation to me. His wife had filed for divorce and made serious accusations against him. His lawyer asked his wife's lawyer to delay the matter but he was told that process had been started and it couldn't be stopped. It was already working its way through the legal system.

"The inmate was despondent. After telling me all this, I suggested that he write to the Rebbe. He did so and he added that he was terribly despondent. The page he opened to in the *Igros Kodesh* had two letters and it seemed that one letter was for him and one for his wife.

"On the first page (volume 16, p. 74) the Rebbe wrote: **to rectify his broken and shattered spirits through Torah study.** It's interesting that a few months earlier, he had gotten a similar answer but that time the Rebbe spoke about learning Tanya in order to dispel sadness. The second letter on the facing page (p. 75) seemed to be addressing his wife. The Rebbe expressed surprise that she didn't understand what she should add.

"The inmate agreed to commit to studying Torah and he asked, since he could not contact his wife, that I do so on his behalf and see what I could do.

"I was very busy and I didn't manage to call her that week. The following Friday, I prepared myself mentally to be remonstrated with, for not making the call. What happened was, as soon as he noticed me he got



Inmates davening in jail

up, looking overjoyed. He told me that his wife had contacted him, of her own volition, and expressed regret for what she had done. She had told him that she had cancelled the legal proceedings and her request for a divorce. Not only that, she asked for his permission to register their children for a Torah education!

“On another occasion, someone came over to me who wanted to write to the Rebbe. There was a serious case pending against him in court. As we spoke, someone else came over to me and asked to write to the Rebbe. The latter was in tears when he told me that a court order forbidding him from entering his house prevented him from even speaking to his family, even by telephone. Both men sat down to write to the Rebbe.

“The first one finished writing and then opened *Igros Kodesh* volume 8 to pages 210-211. I could see that the Rebbe was also answering the second

man’s question: **In response to your letter of 28 Teives in which you write about your relationship with your wife, it is known how much our Sages stressed regarding peace between a husband and wife that if they merit, the Sh’china resides among them and therefore, you must send many friends to [mollify] your wife, that she return home and from now on, peace and consequently simcha, should reside in your home.**

“The Rebbe went on to say how much he needs to concede to his wife because these quarrels negatively affect the children and surely he could find the way to establish peace. The man read the letter and was stunned. On the spot he made some commitments in the spirit of the Rebbe’s answer, and after a while he happily related that all their differences were resolved.”

* * *

“A religious prisoner wanted to write to the Rebbe about some

personal matters. I explained how to write, what preparations to make. He did as I told him and opened volume 16 of the *Igros Kodesh* to page 146. I read the letter which had to do with Shabbos observance and went on to read the next letter. I commented that apparently the letter about Shabbos didn’t pertain to him. The man corrected me, telling me the letter certainly did pertain to him...”

Jail is not an ordinary environment and it presents shlichim with nonstop challenges.

“My grandfather, Yaakov Shneur Zalman Pevsner, a”h, told me that when he sat in jail for the crime of spreading Judaism in Russia, he deliberately made friends with the head of the gang in jail, a macho gentile whom all the prisoners feared. This goy made sure he could keep mitzvos without being disturbed by the non-Jewish prisoners.

“In Israel too, every wing has its uncrowned king and all the prisoners fear him. A few years ago, we went to a section which is considered tougher than the others. The prisoners are tougher and only a few of them were willing to put on t’fillin or to hear about Judaism. Since this was the situation, if we were in a rush, we skipped them.

“One Friday we had some extra time and we decided to go to this wing. When we entered the shul of this section, we found the ‘king’ saying T’hillim. He was willing to put on t’fillin and even told us that in his youth he had learned in a Chabad school. When we saw that he was happy to put on t’fillin, and even conducted a relatively friendly conversation with us, we asked him to call the other prisoners to put on t’fillin. A request from him is an order, and within minutes the shul was full of dozens of prisoners who rolled up their sleeves.

“After we were done, he took out a paper and wrote down his name and

his mother's name, his wife's name and her mother's name, and asked us to bless them. We suggested that he write to the Rebbe. At first he didn't understand what we meant, but after I explained, he sat down to write a letter which he put into a volume of *Igros Kodesh* that I had with me.

"After he began reading the answer, his eyes opened wide in astonishment and his jaw dropped. The Rebbe wrote: **At an auspicious time I will mention all those he wrote at the holy gravesite in accordance with what you wrote...and may you merit to bring the newly circumcised infant to chuppa, Torah, and good deeds.**

"That's just what I was saying T'hilim for, because my wife is expecting and I was praying that the birth go easily,' he exclaimed. I showed him how the Rebbe addressed him as 'involved in communal matters' because he brought all those Jews to put on t'fillin. He quickly called his wife and told her about the answer he

"When they go out for exercise in the yard, they go one by one, because otherwise they'll fight. That has been our experience. Psychologists and other professionals can't calm them down and then you come, with no professional experience, and keep them interested for an hour!"

had gotten.

"A few minutes later he convened all the prisoners of the wing and told them he had written to the Rebbe and about the answer he had gotten. For half a year after that, each time we went to that wing, dozens of them put on t'fillin, something that doesn't happen in any other wing.

"When I write to the Rebbe about personal matters," concluded R' Neimark, "I don't get an answer. I get an answer only when I write with the prisoners. I definitely see this as a message that the *hashpaos* come to us through our shlichus."

It was fascinating sitting with these two Chassidim, both of them no longer young, yet without any pretensions they forego their own comfort in order to help inmates who are considered the fringe of society. It's all to fulfill the Rebbe's ratzon. They don't speak about difficulties because for them, it all begins and ends with the Rebbe.

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NOW WE CAN ALL WIN THE BATTLE WITHIN

BY BORUCH MERKUR

*Being on the very threshold of Redemption, limitations on our service of G-d are crumbling. Now every Jew can make progress towards fully revealing his potential to be a Tzaddik, “as it will be fully manifest with the true and complete Redemption.” * Part 3*

The advice given here for one to “do his part in fulfillment of the oath..., ‘Be righteous,’” is: 1) to meditate on the abhorrence of evil and the greatness of G-d; and 2) habituate oneself to this mindset so that it becomes second nature. Nevertheless, there are no guarantees here; there is only a mere possibility of actually mastering our inner conflict against evil by extricating it from our being entirely, becoming wholly righteous, a Tzaddik. It seems, for the most part, that we are eternally doomed to contend with and confront the evil within.

But the Rebbe, in 5751 (1991) introduced a tremendous innovation in this regard that is unique to our times:

*Simply speaking, through the study of Torah in general and especially the inner dimension of the Torah, as it has been revealed in the teachings of Chassidus – including gazing at the face of a revered rabbi, at the illumination of his face (“the wisdom of man illuminates his face”²⁰) which lends itself to understanding the teaching ... – one becomes a vessel for the revelation of G-dliness in the world...the **revelation** within a created being of the power of the Divine Essence, regarding which it is said, “He alone possesses the power and ability to create ex nihilo, from absolute nothingness, etc.” (as explained in Igeres HaKodesh²¹ in the holy book Tanya).*

Beginning with this as it is expressed in the service of a Jew (as it is explained at the beginning of Tanya) – that he does not

*suffice with the service of “turn away from evil,” “do not be wicked,” but also, “Be **righteous**.”²² For notwithstanding that, “not every person merits to be righteous; a person does not have so much determination of choice in this matter, etc.,” being that he finds himself below, a soul in a body and an Animal Soul, in this physical, material world, nevertheless, since the power of the Divine Essence is in the physical body (of a Jew)...the ability is granted that even below we can achieve the highest levels, even, “Be righteous” (at least insofar as “he should do his part in fulfillment of the oath administered, ‘Be righteous,’ etc. Furthermore, habit, etc., becomes second nature, etc. And when he accustoms, etc., the principle is that self-impulsion induces heavenly inspiration. With all that, perhaps a spirit from above will descend upon him, and he will merit the aspect of spirit (ruach) rooted in some righteous individual, etc.”²³). In fact, we may assert that after all the matters which Jews have gone through throughout the course of generations – [having the effect] of refining and purifying [the world], etc. – now **every Jew** can achieve the highest levels, even, “Be righteous,” in a revealed manner (the revelation of “Your nation is composed entirely of righteous people”²⁴), as it will be fully manifest²⁵ with the true and complete Redemption.*

(Seifer HaSichos 5751 Vol. 2, pg. 532-533)

In this passage, the Rebbe first outlines the process whereby one is obligated to strive to fulfill the oath of becoming a Tzaddik, as discussed in *Tanya*. The power to pursue this virtually impossible mission, the Rebbe explains, stems from the very Essence of the omnipotent G-d, the highest possible level of G-dliness, and it extends specifically to the lowest possible level,²⁶ a person living in the physical world, a soul in a body. The Rebbe then qualifies the potential for success in this effort (in parentheses) by quoting Chapter 14 of *Tanya*: “With all that, perhaps, etc.” However, the latter part of this passage introduces the revolutionary notion that “now every Jew” can surpass the former expectation of sufficing with a mere attempt at fulfilling the oath, “Be righteous,” actually making progress towards fully revealing the potential of every Jew to be a Tzaddik, “as it will be fully manifest with the true and complete Redemption.”

Evidently, the toil of the Jewish people throughout the

course of history, struggling to serve G-d often through harsh tribulations and persecution, has left a profound impact on the world, “refining and purifying” it. Now the physicality of the world is becoming a fit vessel to contain G-dly revelations in preparation for the long-awaited Messianic Redemption. As a result, the obstacles in the path of man returning to his original state of purity and holiness are crumbling.

TORAH IS THE CURE

Just as, subsequent to the fall of man to the snare of the Snake, the Jewish people temporarily revisited man's original purity and holiness at Mount Sinai with the Giving of the Torah, so too the power for “every Jew” to rid himself of the evil within and to “achieve the highest levels, even, “Be righteous,” to reveal the essential goodness in each person – “Your nation is composed entirely of righteous people” – comes from “the study of Torah in general and especially the inner dimension of the Torah.”

This quality of Torah, empowering a person to transcend his present standing and limitations, is expressed in the context of the Alter Rebbe describing a person who fails to connect to G-d through contemplating G-d's greatness:

The thing that causes there to be an obstacle and a barrier, withholding the soul from the aspect of this nullification [to G-d] ... – though not every person merits...to become a chariot [to G-d] at the level of actual nullification, in a state of supernal love, by means of this meditation – the reason for this is the weakness of the power of the soul, which lacks the strength to extricate itself from its sheath and its prison [i.e., the body and the Animal Soul]. Namely, on account of that which is written, “strength stumbles on account of my sin,” for sin causes the strength of the soul to stumble and weaken, as it is written, “except your sins separating between you and your G-d.” This is not, however, speaking [solely] about actual sins per se, but merely on account of the physicality and materiality of the body, which makes a separating curtain, a boundary and border, restricting and clothing the soul until it brings it down, drawing it after it, leaving it unable to ascend and extricate itself from it ...

(Torah Ohr Parshas Yisro 67a)

The pure and holy soul, insofar as it is invested in a body (which, ever since the fall of man with the sin of the Tree of Knowledge and the Golden Calf, as discussed above, conceals G-dliness from the soul), may not be able to function in a way that is natural to it, to nullify itself to G-d in consummate devotion and love, even when contemplating G-d's greatness. It is important to emphasize, as the Alter Rebbe points out, that we are not speaking here about someone who sins (Rasha); it is merely on account of the fact that he is a physical being – he has a physical body and an Animal Soul – that sheaths his G-dly Soul from shining through (Beinoni). Therefore, he cannot feel his connection to G-d (as does the Tzaddik, who has surpassed the limitations of physicality, and experiences a “great love of G-d and of His holiness with perfuse affection and delight and superlative devotion, as

discussed above [in Tanya Ch. 9]”²⁷).

The Alter Rebbe then continues, in *Torah Ohr*, to discuss the cure for this spiritual ailment: the Torah:

Thus, the Torah was given to the Jewish people, for the Torah is called “strength,” as it grants power and strength to the G-dly Soul to prevail over the materiality of the body and the Animal Soul and their coarseness, and to go out of a locked up prison. This is the meaning of the verse, “G-d will grant strength to His nation; G-d will bless His nation with peace (b'shalom)”: Through Torah, which is called “strength,” peace is established – two instances of peace (“b'shalom” [read “Beis – the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which also signifies the number 2 – shalom”]), as our Sages say, “He establishes peace in the palace above and in the palace below.” “Peace” means connection. “In the palace above” refers to the aspect of the veritable revelation of the Infinite Light of G-d, blessed be He, within the G-dly Soul, to be bound to and devoted at the level of veritable nullification. “In the palace below” means the illumination of the powers of the G-dly Soul insofar as it is invested within the body and the Animal Soul, so that the body and the Animal Soul should not serve as an obstacle and a barrier. Rather, they should all agree and acquiesce to this unification “when one subdues or sublimates darkness to light.” Indeed, the Torah, which is called “strength,” is also called “weakness,” insofar as it weakens the power of the Other Side [i.e., evil], associated with the body, for “one regime shall become strong from the other regime,”²⁸ and “when this one rises this one falls.”²⁹

If the soul is cut off from its object of devotion and love, namely G-d, imprisoned as it were within the body and the Animal Soul, Torah has the power to reconnect it to its Source. Torah brings peace to the embattled G-dly Soul, struggling against the Animal Soul, by strengthening its connection to G-dliness and weakening the evil of the Animal Soul, subduing the coarseness of the physical body or even transforming its darkness to light.

NOTES:

²⁰ Koheles 8:1

²¹ Chapter 20 (130b, top)

²² Nidda 30b, end

²³ Tanya Ch. 14

²⁴ Yeshaya 60:21

²⁵ Footnote 151 in the original: as our Sages said, “Every Jew has a portion in the World to Come, as it is said, ‘Your nation is composed entirely of righteous people, etc.’” (Sanhedrin Perek Cheilek, beg.), as is said before the recital of Pirkei Avos [a custom practiced throughout the summer months].

²⁶ in accordance with the fundamental principle in the realm of holiness, “the beginning is wedged in the end” (Seifer Yetzira 1:7).

²⁷ Tanya Ch. 10 15a

²⁸ B'Reishis Parshas Toldos 25:23

²⁹ Rashi ibid

TRANSFORM THE DARKNESS TO LIGHT

BY RABBI YAAKOV SHMUELEVITZ, MENAHEL OF THE CHABAD HOUSE IN BEIT SHAAN

Baruch Hashem, today we have three men's mikvaos that are open every morning in Beit Shaan and at a nearby kibbutz so all residents of Beit Shaan who want to immerse before Shacharis can do so. 20 years ago though, it wasn't this way at all. How the change came about is the subject of Part 3 of "Stories from My Chabad House."



The following story is the type of story I tell at the Shabbos table. This is also advice I offer to all Anash and shluchim whose children learn in Chabad schools and sometimes have to travel many hours back and forth.

It is very important to tell your children stories about life on shlichus so they will understand and even take pride in living in that city and in the work their parents do on the Rebbe's shlichus.

With the aid of stories, we transmit all the principles we believe in to our children. With Hashem's help, "even when they grow older, they won't veer from it" – they too will internalize the principles and the ways of Chassidus and shlichus.

* * *

There was a famous obstetrician who won a prize twenty years ago for the work he did at the clinic in Beit Shaan. Since he won the prize, he was

interviewed by a well-known Israeli newspaper about his work in the distant town and about his medical successes. At a certain point, the interviewer asked the doctor whether in that distant town he had met women who believe in superstitions. The doctor said: Superstitions – no, but a miracle of the Lubavitcher Rebbe – yes!

Then the doctor told of a couple from Beit Shaan who were married for six years but did not have children. Six pregnancies had ended in miscarriages and the doctors could not help them. The couple asked the Rebbe for a bracha, and the seventh pregnancy – the Lubavitcher one – was successful and they had a son.

The editor of the paper loved this story more than the other medical success stories and he gave the article the following headline: The 7th Lubavitcher pregnancy was successful.

I read the article and couldn't help smiling because we, the Rebbe's shluchim, were involved in the story. This is the story from our perspective:

When we arrived in Beit Shaan twenty-one years ago, a number of families were niskarev to the Chabad house, including that couple who had been married for six years and did not have children. This couple was the closest to us. They came to all the shiurim and programs, and the wife even ran a Tzivos Hashem club in one of the neighborhoods.

When we wanted to hear a live broadcast of a farbrengen or the Rebbe's sicha, and we still had no phone, we went to their house, where we heard the Rebbe's voice.

Throughout this time the couple continued to see many doctors in the attempt to have children. One doctor eventually told them that based on all the information he had, there was no

way they could have children. At this same time, they received a letter from the Rebbe with a bracha for children.

That year, Purim night, we went to their house to hear the broadcast. We heard the Rebbe's sicha of Taanis Esther. The couple, who did not understand Yiddish, went to sleep after hearing a portion of the sicha.

The next day, the wife said that that night she dreamt that she saw the Rebbe and the Rebbe told her, "by next Purim you will have a son." Although according to the doctors it was impossible, she believed there would be a miracle. The Rebbe had said so explicitly.

That year wasn't an easy one. It was a year of many treatments and near-miscarriages, hospitalizations, etc., but the miracle happened. She gave birth to a son a few days before Purim (it was in the seventh month of pregnancy).

Thanks to the miracle the entire family became even closer to the Rebbe, Chabad customs, hiddur in kashrus, etc., but then a strange shift took place. Each time we met the couple they had questions about Chabad. "Why do they daven late in Chabad?" "Why do you go on mivtzaim rather than sit and learn?"

I wasn't familiar with questions such as these in Beit Shaan (though I was familiar with them from other places). I wondered why they were asking these questions.

I finally found out that a certain "ben Torah" had moved to town and had begun giving shiurim. He did not have much respect for Chabad and he had no qualms about sharing his views with innocent people, such as this couple who experienced the Rebbe's miracle.

I wondered how to handle this situation. Should I get into a debate with this "ben Torah"? Try to convince him? I decided to take the approach I described in the previous article – that of Ahavas Yisroel.

One day I met him. It was our first encounter. I said "shalom aleichem" to him with a big smile and said, "I heard that you've come to Beit Shaan to spread Torah, etc." I told him that in a few days we were having a goodbye party at the day camp with about one hundred children, which the parents and important communal figures would be attending. I'm looking for a Torah personality to read the Lubavitcher Rebbe's letter that we received for this occasion, at the beginning of our event." I invited him

to come.

He agreed saying, "For Torah, of course I will come," and he got the honor he deserved. Everybody stood as he read the letter. Then he said a few words of his own in praise of the Chabad movement and all the Rebbe's holy work.

From then until this day, this person has been one of the Chabad house's best friends. He even traveled in the middle of the night to Kfar Chabad in order to watch a live broadcast of the Rebbe and he helped me and the Chabad house in dozens of ways.

In conclusion, there is a tried and proven method to prevent and eliminate interference from the opposition, and this can help with the differences of opinion among Chassidim. I'll give an example that I discovered many years ago when I was 9 or 10.

I lived in Yerushalayim and I sometimes met boys from another neighborhood who were not religious. These boys hurt me by what they said and even physically by hitting me. One time, before they started up with me, I asked them a question (how do you get to a certain street or a certain store) and surprisingly, they were suddenly polite and they helped me.

Why did that happen? Because as soon as you put the other person into a position of helper or someone who possesses knowledge, the tendency is for him to live up to that positive light; he doesn't need to prove himself in a negative way. Doing this helps prevent conflict.

So whenever a situation arises that looks like it bodes ill, you can initiate a friendly dialogue; you can ask something, request something, and see how that the other party is not a frightening enemy. He will be willing to help and even to further your goals, and by your approaching it this way, you will have been mekarev yet another Jew to the Rebbe's inyanim and hastened the Geula.



MOSHE EMES

BY SHNEUR ZALMAN BERGER

*Shabbos Parshas Shmos, three in the afternoon at the Ziv hospital in Tzfas. Shma and “Yechi” were recited by mashpia Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi and his sister, shlucha Malka Wilschansky, because they sensed that their father, Rabbi Moshe Ashkenazi, would soon pass on. * Rabbi Moshe Ashkenazi served as rav of the Chabad k’hilla in Tel Aviv for nearly fifty years and was a member of the hanhala of Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim Kfar Chabad-Lud. * Hundreds of Chassidim, rabbanim, mashpiim, shluchim, and T’mimim participated in his funeral.* His son Mordechai said, “You were a man of truth and you looked forward to the hisgalus of Moshiach in truth.” * Part 2 of 2*

[Continued from last week]

WITHOUT YECHI THEY’LL LOSE THEIR WAY

Spreading the Besuras HaGeula was something that burned in R’ Moshe’s bones. He took part in many events to greet Moshiach and to encourage the work in spreading the Besuras HaGeula. Despite his weakness and the difficulties, he went to these events to show his support.

“Without Yechi they will lose the way,” was something R’ Moshe said often in his final years. When at a farbrengen, a certain mashpia said that the most important thing in our day is the study of Chassidus and Moshiach is important but not something we have to focus on, R’ Moshe said, “I knew many Chassidim of the Rebbe Rashab and the Rebbe Rayatz who learned Chassidus. They learned Likkutei Torah and Torah Ohr, Tanya

and maamarim, but they were not mekushar to the Rebbe. They remained Chassidim but what about their children and grandchildren? They were lacking a Rebbe and therefore they did not continue in the ways of their fathers. That’s the case with Moshiach.”

R’ Moshe’s daughter married Rabbi Nachman Yosef Twersky, a distinguished Chassid in Crown Heights, and a son of the Admur Rabbi Yisroel Mordechai of Rachmastrivka z”l. When they told the Admur in 5753 that a proclamation had gone out against Chabad and it stated that “wicked people are saying that the Lubavitcher Rebbe is Moshiach,” he reacted sharply and added, “My mechutan, the gaon Rav Moshe Ashkenazi, is obviously not wicked and I know that he believes and says that the Rebbe is Moshiach.”

G-D-FEARING

R’ Moshe was a tremendous yerei Shamayim and a man of truth, and there are many stories to illustrate this. He was very particular about washing hands after sleeping and for davening and about saying a bracha with two head coverings. “He never said Hashem’s name without two head coverings. I once learned Chumash with just a yarmulke and my father yelled at me,” said his son Chaim.

“In recent years, when my father was hospitalized, he would wash his hands even if he napped briefly.

He also wore two head coverings when he davened in the hospital. One of the reasons we stayed with him 24-hours-a-day was in order to help him do these things which were engraved in his blood and soul.”

R’ Moshe was very particular about wearing a hat and jacket when he said morning brachos, when he said Birkas HaMazon, the bedtime Shma, etc. He was particular about this until the end, and didn’t ease up even when it entailed hardship and much effort.

Preparing for a mitzva was an immutable law to him, and his daughter Malka Wilschansky tells us about this:

“He prepared for every d’var mitzva, and did it slowly and with all particulars and hiddurim. He did so whether it was preparing to light the Chanuka menorah, checking the cleanliness of his hands and nails before washing, or the many hours he spent on b’dikas chametz and many other mitzvos.”

His preparations were known even outside Chabad, whether in Tel Aviv or in Europe, in places that he visited regularly on business. This was despite his desire to be discreet. For example, in the Nachalat Binyamin shul, until he was appointed rav, his regular place was on the west side of the shul, but when he was appointed rav by the Rebbe’s order, he began to sit on the eastern side but not in the rav’s place. This was because of tznius and humility.

This was the case when he regularly visited Milan, Italy. The mashpia R’ Yosef Yitzchok Gansburg, who lived in Milan in his youth, relates:

“Despite my young age, I can remember that each time R’ Moshe Ashkenazi, an important and known rav, came from Eretz Yisroel, he would sit on the side of

the shul and did not stand out, and he would daven with incredible deliberateness.”

When he went to Milan, he stayed at a cheap hotel since it was the only one that had a sink outside the bathroom. He said he could not stay in the hotel over Shabbos and so he was the guest of shluchim Rabbi Gershon Mendel and Mrs. Basya Garelik.

Mrs. Garelik says that Rabbi Ashkenazi is remembered in Milan



Rabbi Moshe Ashkenazi

despite the many years that have passed since the last time he was there on business:

“When my granddaughter became engaged to Sendy (Alexander Sender) Wilschansky, R’ Moshe’s grandson, the members of the community in Milan were excited. They all remembered him as an honest businessman who said a price and meant it. You didn’t bargain with him as you did with other businessmen since everybody

knew he was upfront.

“R’ Moshe’s preparations for davening became legendary here in Italy. Everybody remembers how he spent a long time checking the tzitzis of his tallis.”

The family relates that R’ Moshe was very particular about his tallis and t’fillin while flying and he held them on his lap during the flight. He refused to put them in a briefcase or in the overhead compartment of the plane. In this way he honored his tallis and t’fillin.

Truth was all important to him and he inculcated this in his sons and daughters. He simply could not say something that was not one hundred percent true.

Recently, in a conversation with a grandson about belief in the Rebbe MH”M, he explained why his deep emuna was expressed primarily in inward forms:

“They educated me in yeshiva to emes, and since I am certain that this [the Rebbe being Moshiach] is true, I am part of it and I support it, but I don’t feel that I’ve reached the requisite level of feeling that I can take part in activities publicizing this.”

His son R’ Chaim tells more about his father’s trait of emes:

“My father once lost a packet of diamonds in the exchange. He didn’t want to tell the insurance company because he knew that would mean an exhaustive investigation. After friends nagged him he presented his claim which was immediately approved. ‘But how come you’re not investigating me? It’s a large amount!’ he asked them.

“They showed him his personal file where it said that he was extremely reliable and incapable of lying. Insurance for diamonds is a complicated matter since huge

sums are involved that can disappear at any time, so before an insurance company gives an insurance policy, it thoroughly investigates the person being insured. They write their findings in a personal file. My father's file said he was honest."

R' Moshe considered a farbrengen holy and he did not

leave until it was over. He usually did not speak at a farbrengen unless he was asked something. He would sit with utter bittul before older Chassidim. He had bittul for his father-in-law and mother-in-law. Whatever they said was the final word, as far as he was concerned, and he did not debate them at all.



Rabbi Moshe Ashkenazi (left) with his father-in-law Rabbi Karasik (seated) and his son Mordechai (presently the rav of Kfar Chabad)

TZ'DAKA

R' Moshe excelled in the mitzva of tz'daka. "My father distributed a lot of tz'daka privately and he made sure that we, his children, knew that we have to give tz'daka, a lot of it," says his son Chaim. "As for his personal expenditures, he sufficed with the minimum. He hated it when money was wasted on nonsense."

On 9 Shvat 5710, his sister-in-law Rivka Chitrik and others sailed from Tel Aviv to New York. Rivka relates:

"I remember an interesting thing that happened on that trip. When we took a bus from Tel Aviv to the port, the hat of the bachur Yoel Kahn (later to be the chozer) flew out the window. My brother-in-law Moshe, who was wearing a new hat, immediately gave him his hat and said, 'When traveling to the Rebbe you wear a hat.'"

R' Chaim relates:

"My father had piles of checks that he received in exchange for loans which he did not cash. These were loans taken by Lubavitchers and my father knew it would be hard for them if he cashed the checks.

"For many years, every 11 Nissan, my father would give tens of thousands of dollars to his childhood friend, Rabbi Moshe Weber a"h, who would distribute the money to ten needy Torah scholars so they would have what they needed for Pesach. My father would ask R' Weber to write to the Rebbe about who he gave the money to, and the Rebbe responded in several letters, thanking and blessing him.

"For many years my father was considered an official dealer on the diamond exchange. In recent years he stopped working but continued



Teives of this year, Rabbi Moshe Ashkenazi cutting the hair of his three-year-old great-grandson for his upsherenish



Rav Moshe (right) and his son Rav Mordechai (left)

paying his membership dues so that twice a year, for Pesach and Rosh HaShana, he could enter the exchange and raise money from his friends for needy families.

“He began raising money for Rosh HaShana needs at the beginning of Elul, and after Purim he began raising money for Pesach. He went from office to office and

many doors were open to him since he was a familiar figure. He distributed the large sums of money he raised to Chabad and other organizations that help the needy for Yom Tov.

“In recent years, when walking was hard for him, he was accompanied by his grandsons. Last Elul, when his grandsons were in

770 and there was no one available to help him, he decided that despite his medical condition he had to continue his work. He went to the exchange every day, even when he did not feel well and had to take medicine so he could carry on.”

HIS FAMILY

Rabbi Moshe Ashkenazi merited that his sons and daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, go in the ways of Torah and Chassidus, many of them serving as shluchim. Indeed, R' Ashkenazi put a lot of effort into raising his children and grandchildren.

When his sons learned in Kfar Chabad, he would visit the yeshiva every Tuesday. He was not deterred by the heat of summer or the cold of winter. He wanted to keep tabs on his children and speak to the mashgiach and teachers. He also took an interest in his grandsons' learning. Whenever he went to a meeting of the hanhala of the Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lud, his grandsons were ready to greet him and to have him inquire about their learning and conduct.

His wife Devorah stood by his side. She herself was quite learned since, according to an instruction from the Rebbe Rayatz in her youth, she learned deep maamarim with the g'dolei ha'Chassidim. She also encouraged her grandchildren in their learning and was kept apprised of their progress.

In Sivan 5755, Rebbetzin Devorah suddenly passed away. When her son Nosson heard the shocking news, he too died. R' Moshe was greatly affected by this double tragedy but expressed no complaints to the Almighty.

In the final weeks of his life R' Moshe wanted to stay with his

daughter Malka Wilschansky in Tzfas. About a week and a half before he passed away, he had pneumonia and the resulting complications brought on a heart attack. He passed away on Shabbos 23 Teives and was buried the next day on the yahrtzeit of the Alter Rebbe.

He is survived by Rabbi Mordechai Ashkenazi, rav of Kfar Chabad, Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi, mashpia in Ohr Yehuda and his father's successor as rav in Tel Aviv, Malka Wilschansky, shlucha in Tzfas, and Esther Twersky, a renowned teacher who lives in Crown Heights.

Rabbi Yosef Shmuel Gerlitzky, shliach in Tel Aviv, relates:

17 years ago, askanim in Tel Aviv wanted to build a mikva according to the Chabad shita but there were non-Lubavitcher rabbanim who opposed this. In particular, there was one rav who strongly fought it with the argument that "something new is forbidden by the Torah."

The askanim who knew Rabbi Moshe Ashkenazi as a rav who could speak to other rabbanim, suggested that he meet with the opposing rav so he could convince him to agree that the mikva be built.

R' Moshe was willing and when I went with him to the rav, the rav immediately presented his side. R' Moshe looked at the big *chup* of hair on the rav's forehead and began shouting, "You have so much hair, where do you place the t'fillin on your head? You are a '*karkafra d'lo monach t'fillin*' (literally: a skull that never put on t'fillin). He repeated this a few times and then left, slamming the door.

The rav was terribly shaken by what R' Moshe said and instantly ceased his fight, agreeing that the mikva, that was built on Bar Kochva Street be built. This led to the construction of other Chabad mikvaos in Tel Aviv in later years.



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WHAT HAPPENED TO MR. PUTIN?

BY RABBI ZALMAN NOTIK, MASHPIA, YESHIVAS TORAS EMES, YERUSHALAYIM

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

Questionable dealings with countries belonging to the evil axis – Syria, Iran, North Korea – have been formed anew. In the recent war, Hezbollah terrorists surprised everyone with their newly acquired top-notch Russian manufactured missiles, and even more recently, we have heard about Stalin'esque eliminations of those opposed to the Putin government. The question we all have is: Who's derailing the Redemption train?



It has been more than fifteen years that the whole world has been on a great Redemption ride. Mankind in general has been galloping towards a new world order. All of Europe has been united, and it is difficult to remember today which was a Communist state and which was a capitalist country. The entire Western world united time after time to defeat those nations that decided to represent the (continually dwindling) museum of Galus by sending out their terror cells to the enlightened nations of the world.

Even among the Arab countries, there had been a considerable change in their relations towards countries such as Iran and Syria, and a desire to

shake off the fundamentalism prevailing there. Saddam Hussein is history, as he vacates the hangman's noose for the next in line: the president of Iran. Russia and the United States cooperated in a most befitting and praiseworthy manner in the war in Afghanistan against bin Laden and his crew, and also during the war in Iraq in the area of intelligence and in the actual fighting.

In more recent times, however, we have been hearing a different tune:

Russia has apparently lost its motivation to unite and merge with the Western nations. At every possible opportunity, President Putin has been making statements that are not

particularly in accord with the atmosphere of Redemption in which we find ourselves today. Suddenly, after a lengthy period during which its ballistic missile arsenal had been substantially reduced, when Russia destroyed more and more of its missiles, it has begun to rearm itself significantly.

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government.

The question we all have is: Who's derailing the Redemption train?

My dear friends, the answer is quite simple and in one word: Lubavitch!

Yes, yes, the answer is found in Lubavitch, and in the words of the Rebbe Rashab, *nishmaso Eden*, the conduct in the *zal* (the yeshiva study hall) has relevance to the conduct of the world at large.

Chassidus maintains that every spiritual influence to the nations of the world passes by way of the souls of the Jewish People. Am Yisroel represents the level of the head, from which there is drawn the spiritual influence to the nations of the world, which are at the level of the legs, and when the head is healthy, the legs are healthy. Furthermore, every level in Avodas Hashem that brings about a spiritual elevation and increase within Jews also has a resembling and parallel effect among the nations of the world in absolute terms, because Am Yisroel is the root and source of their vitality.

Within this hierarchal pyramid, there is another even higher stratum – and this is the conduct in Lubavitch: *“Un vahs es hert zich ahn in Lubavitch hert zich ahn in der gantzer velt”* (the feelings that reign in Lubavitch are felt in the whole world). The conduct within Chabad has an influence over the entire Jewish People, and through this conduct, all of mankind is affected.

In addition, the further we enter the days of Moshiach, the connection and influence of the spiritual levels of Lubavitch are projected with greater fortitude and revelation upon the entire Creation (for every aspect of the Redemption is a connection of the upper and the lower).

During the decade of the *Mems*, there began the tremendous concept of the “International Shluchim Conference.” Emissaries of the Rebbe MH”M shlita gather together and come to their life's source for a big and

welcome dosage of total unity, and the results are not long in coming. At the moment that a shliach from a certain country (who is the source of vitality for all the people of that country, including kings and presidents in its most literal sense) sits with the shliach from another country in a spirit of warmth and kinship, it also creates unity among their nations' leaders, commerce to remove feelings of hostility, etc. This concept is taken from the Rebbe's sicha at the 5750 International Shluchim Conference (sec. 10). It is simply a fact.

In recent years, the unity among

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Anash has been growing weaker, and the situation among the shluchim has been particularly discouraging. There are shluchim who are simply not interested in sitting together with their fellow shluchim from other countries. Compare this to what's happening in the world, and you can draw your own “happy and pleasant” conclusions.

We all remember the shocking words the Rebbe MH”M said in 5747: *“Der Samech Mem haht gezen az Lubavitch geit brengen Moshiach'n, haht er zich avekgelaigt oif der lang un der brait abi tzu ahpshteln Moshiach'n”* (the

Samech Mem has seen that Lubavitch is going to bring Moshiach, and it spanned the length and breadth – the main thing is to stop the coming of Moshiach).

Our Rebbeim taught us all the aforementioned on various occasions. All of us know the story that appeared in *HaKria V'HaK'dusha* about the gathering of all the yetzer ha'ras at a conference to help get stronger in their mission and to accept “good” resolutions:

One after another, all the representatives got up and told about their successes during the previous year, inciting and driving our fellow Jews off the good and proper path. Then, came the turn of the Chabad representative, who told with a gloomy and bitter expression on his face about his poor output – how many bachurim he took off the path because they didn't do “*iskafia*,” and obviously, their failure to implement the maamer of “*Heichaltzu*” as it should be.

After completing his rather boring presentation, the judges consulted secretly among themselves for a few long minutes, and then registered their decision: “The Chabad stories were the most important ones of all, as we all take in something from these minor successes. We translate the small events in Lubavitch into tremendous successes, on the level of a ‘little scratch’ on the brain – leading to a collapse of the larger systems of the body that draw from the brain.”

Brothers and friends! The Rebbe has placed upon us, Lubavitcher chassidim, the tremendous responsibility of bringing the hisgalus. We have a responsibility towards the entire Creation, and the measure of good is greater than the measure of punishment. Every improvement we make, even the very smallest, in our conduct – brings about great and far-reaching changes throughout the globe.

We happen to have a slight

problem, so let's work together and help each other come to a solution:

In relation to people from the outside – i.e., those not from Anash, kibbutznikim, etc. – we are experts in Ahavas Yisroel. When we sit with a kibbutznik at the Shabbos table on Friday night, and he pulls out a cigarette *ch"v* and smokes to his heart's content just to be annoying, we're prepared to restrain ourselves and take it. We'll invite him again for Shabbos, and we're truly sorry if he doesn't come.

And if we are invited to a Chabad evening on a kibbutz, and the kibbutz secretary addresses those assembled, in the presence of the Chabad speaker, and proceeds to "prove" that there is no G-d *ch"v*, will we get angry at him or will we continue to love him, give him a warm kiss on the forehead, and thank him despite his heretical opinions for giving us the opportunity to appear and speak about Chabad?

So why, in G-d's Name, is a Jew who learned seven or eight years in Tomchei Tmimim, whose children learn in Chabad institutions, who sets times for the study of nigleh and chassidus, not entitled to some warm and loving Chabad treatment, any less than a kibbutznik? Why?

Apparently, it's harder to fulfill the mitzva of Ahavas Yisroel when you say, "Love your fellow **who is as yourself.**"

Let's assume for the moment that this Tamim says something that you consider heretical. In your opinion, he hasn't upgraded his faith levels regarding how Melech HaMoshiach uplifts us in the sichos of 5751-5752. Does that mean you can't sit at the same table with him in an aura of mutual respect? How is it that all that Chabad-Lubavitch love of yours just evaporates when it turns out that the person standing before you had the "misfortune" of being a Chabadnik?

Those of you reading this are surely groaning and saying to yourselves: Yes, it's all true, but who are we to go around fixing Lubavitch? We have to turn to the askanim and talk to them...

Brothers and friends! Ahavas Yisroel relates to each and every one of us, the simple people (and the truth is that in our generation, there are no simple Jews whatsoever, as all of them are extremely unique – no need to elaborate). Each person must reveal the unlimited love for his fellow Jew in his soul that our Rebbeim embedded within us over seven generations with great self-sacrifice, and direct it towards those within our ranks, not just those outside.

As the Rebbe MH"M has taught us, every action taken by every individual throughout the world, even a minor deed, has influence over the whole Creation. This is because the entire Creation is an organism of one large body, where each individual cell, as it is created, effects the health of the entire body.

Similarly, we find in our discussion: Every improvement made by each one of us has an influence over all of Lubavitch, and thereby over the entire Creation.

Let's remember those simple and penetrating words that the Alter Rebbe writes in his *Igros Kodesh*: "A person must not think badly of his fellow in his heart whatsoever, and if it does enter his heart, he should push it away as he would thoughts of actual idol worship."

Therefore, we must publicize the announcement of the Redemption in every location with all our fortitude and vigor, because this is the only *shlichus* that remains – greeting Moshiach Tzidkeinu. Together with

this, we will love our brothers with all our heart and soul, embrace them, even if they're not kibbutznikim, as after all – they are our fellow Jews.

During these days, when every Anash member is organizing a spiritual gift in honor of Yud and Yud-Alef Shvat, commemorating the Rebbe MH"M's acceptance of the leadership, come let us give the Rebbe a gift that will bring him the greatest nachas.

Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu v'Rabbeinu melech HaMoshiach l'olam va'ed!



MACHON CHAYA MUSHKA

BY CHANIE NUSSBAUM

Mrs. Frumie Beckerman and her husband, Avrohom, arrived in Moscow 13 years ago and were the second shluchim family in the city. They began with almost nothing under the difficult conditions of those days and founded Machon Chaya Mushka for girls interested in acquiring knowledge of Judaism. It's hard to quantify the impact of their work but what we do know is that most of the Anash k'hilla in Moscow is a result of their work.

She came to us at Machon Chomesh in Moscow, a misguided Jew wearing a cross, the daughter of a priest. Yet, she came to us in order to get a higher education and free room and board in the capitol city no less.

Today she has an important job and is in a good environment that is warm to Judaism. One thing is for sure – she won't marry out. We are in constant touch with her. She lights candles every Friday, loves the holidays and fasts on Yom Kippur.

That's a small story about one girl from the Machon run by Mrs. Frumie and Avrohom Beckerman. He runs the school while she runs the dormitory and gives shiurim. From 15 girls in the Marina Roscha shul, the Machon has grown. Today more than 150 girls attend the school in its large building.

Frumie tells us about her shlichus:

We've been on shlichus in Moscow for 13 and-a-half years now. We were

the second family of shluchim after the Lazars. Today, Rabbi Berel Lazar is the chief rabbi of Russia. We came here at his invitation in order to open a school for girls, Machon Chaya Mushka.

It was shortly after the dismantling of the Iron Curtain. Because of the fall of communism, girls began coming to the famous Marina Roscha Shul in Moscow in order to learn about Judaism. It soon became apparent that these weren't isolated cases but a growing phenomenon and that a school was needed.

At first, madrichot came from Eretz Yisroel to staff the program and that's what the school consisted of: girls and madrichot. It was obvious they couldn't go on like that for long and the program was on the verge of closing. It was also because there was no curriculum and the girls who had already learned and gotten involved, left Moscow for Eretz Yisroel or the US.

Then, in 5753, Rabbi Berel Lazar called us and asked us to open the Machon.

I should mention that in 5751, as a single girl, I had been a madricha in Moscow in a summer camp for girls. My husband also had a shlichus background in Russia after working for a year and a half in Tashkent. So it wasn't like we were taken aback by the suggestion.

We arrived here half a year after we married and we officially opened Machon Chaya Mushka. I'd like to stop a moment and give some background information about the changes that took place over these years in Russia.

In the period following the fall of communism, people lived on small salaries and it was possible to accomplish big things with little money. Jews were feeling deeply inspired and they wanted to know about Judaism. However, as time passed, the economy stabilized and even grew strong. Investors from abroad invested here and the quality of life rose drastically.

At the same time, the wave of inspiration waned. It was harder to convince Jews to come to shul and to learn about Judaism. There grew a need to adjust the program accordingly. Until then we had taught the girls – in addition to intensive classes on Judaism – pedagogy and psychology from a Jewish perspective. There was a demand that we teach courses that would help the girls support themselves. That's when my husband came up with the idea of turning the school into an institution of higher learning.

We began working in this direction

and over the years, four tracks became available that were very much sought after: economics, foreign languages, psychology, and public relations. The girls leave the Machon with a profession as well as a deeper identification with their Judaism. Our primary goal is to stop assimilation.

In order for readers to understand what we're dealing with, they need to know that most of the girls who come to us know nothing about Judaism and their families are not religious. When the students get involved with Judaism they end up in a constant battle with their families.

* * *

Frumie and her husband work with a large staff of shluchim and shluchos who work night and day to be mekarev the girls. The wonderful staff members together with the Beckerman family provide a warm and supportive family for each of the girls.



Rabbi Avrohom Beckerman in Moscow

I asked Mrs. Beckerman if she feels fulfillment in her work, and she replied that her fulfillment is due to seeing the results of their work and that the work usually continues even after the girls marry.

After that introduction, let us hear some stories from Frumie:

There was a girl from Moscow who already made aliya. She went to Eretz Yisroel as part of a youth program, but her stay in Eretz Yisroel caused her to grow even more distant from Judaism. Meanwhile, her mother back in Moscow had gotten involved in Judaism. When her daughter returned to Moscow, the mother was extremely worried about her Jewish future.

Since she heard about the Machon, she asked that her daughter be accepted but she said we shouldn't tell her that it was a religious school because that would turn her off completely.

When the girl came for an interview, my husband told her that the school was for talented, successful girls and nobody forced the students to be religious.

"You have to decide on your own about where you're going from here."

She decided to attend our school but as expected, she was very cold to Judaism. She did only what she was required to do. There were certain things that she learned that had to be done like lighting candles Erev Shabbos, etc., but in her room she did

as she pleased.

Suddenly, three years later, her Jewish spark was ignited. Till this day we don't know just what inspired her aside from the kochos of the meshaleiach. Her friend who had gotten married suggested a shidduch for her, a Lubavitcher bachur from Petersburg. She consulted with my husband, who explained to her what marrying a Lubavitcher bachur entails.

The shidduch got under way and they got married. They lived for a year in Petersburg and then they decided that they also want to join the army of shluchim of the Rebbe but they needed to prepare for that. They went to Tzfas for a year. He learned in kollel and she learned at Machon Alte, then they returned to Russia. Today they are shluchim in a very distant city in Russia and are dealing with many hardships, but as loyal soldiers they are devoted.

She keeps in touch with us regularly. She recently called me to ask about her daughter who turned three. Could the mekuravim who came to their Chabad house pick her up as they used to do until now? I was amazed by her question. Even those from religious homes don't always consider this halachic question, and she, who had been so estranged from Judaism, was concerned about it. These are definitely the footsteps of Moshiach.

* * *

After decades of oppression,

Machon Chaya Mushka



Judaism is flourishing and thirteen years after we settled here, there are about one hundred Lubavitcher families. Many of them are graduates of Machon Chaya Mushka. Who would have believed ...

The work at the Machon is done by a staff of shluchim who work devotedly on behalf of the students. These shluchim are only part of the large Chabad community in Moscow.

Two years ago the decision was made to organize a group of ten students of the Machon and to fly to 770. The ones who were picked were those who were at a crossroads as far as religious commitment was concerned. We hoped that this trip would tip the scales.

One of the girls "seesawed." She loved the school and the atmosphere but her mother was very opposed to anything Jewish and she refused to accept the fact that her daughter was attending a religious school. The girl was torn between her love for the school and her relationship with her mother, who was so anti-religious.

Since she was a smart girl, she decided to join the group my husband was organizing and fly to 770. She knew a lot about Judaism by that point. She had studied for two years in our high school and another three years at the Machon and had to decide what her next move would be.

My husband put so much into this trip so that the group would get all that it needed both spiritually and materially. He got the best lecturers to deliver shiurim to them in 770 and arranged outings in New York.

The girls visited Chabad houses and they saw that the world of Chabad is much bigger than what they knew in Moscow. The timing of the trip was perfect since it was around 22 Shvat and the girls were able to see many modestly dressed Chassidic women who were otherwise "normal." They were exposed to a huge religious world.

Although the clever girl was

influenced for the good, she didn't discuss her impressions with anyone. Some time passed and then a shidduch was suggested who was a good Chassidishe bachur. Everything seemed fine but then her mother got involved. She told her daughter that a man with a beard was out of the question. Her only daughter would bring home someone with a beard?! No way!

She fought and wouldn't compromise. The girl had a hard time dealing with her but didn't break. She stood strong but the obstacles increased. Whenever we arranged to meet, it didn't work out. One time the mother was sick, another time her father was busy. Finally, after half a year which was extremely difficult for the girl, the mother came to Moscow to

The Rebbe also gave a bracha for a birthday and she suddenly remembered that it was her birthday that day. She was amazed.

meet the chassan.

The mother had a disgruntled look on her face, but she discovered that the boy wasn't so bad after all. He was normal and nice, even though he was a Lubavitcher and had smicha but no university degree, as she put it.

Then the father met the chassan and was similarly impressed. An entire year went by until they decided on a wedding. The girl underwent psychological bombardment throughout this year and I don't understand how she withstood it. She was Chassidish and strong in her beliefs but she also greatly respected her parents and tried to take their wishes into consideration as much as possible.

We got to work. My husband and I began to prepare the mother for the wedding. We told her we'd take care of everything. We just wanted her to know what sort of wedding her only daughter would be having.

With the help of Keren Ohr Avner that has a special fund to help kallos and chassanim, we took care of everything for the wedding. The parents came as guests (which is what happens with most of the Machon girls' weddings).

This couple is already married for half a year. They are definitely special, being Chassidish and especially serious, truly soldiers of the Rebbe.

There is another couple connected with our Machon that I want to tell you about. This is a couple that married a year ago.

The girl came to us from a distant city in Russia, about a ten-hour flight from Moscow. In the winter there is no sun there and in the summer there is no night. It's literally the end of the world. She had attended university in that city and came across some of our material which aroused her curiosity.

Her father is a goy and her mother has only a Jewish mother, so her connection to Judaism was tenuous. At the Machon she began to discover her Judaism, though she was very cold to it. It was only after a few years that she became friendly with some members of the staff. We put a lot into her. She left the Machon as a shomer Shabbos and kashrus, with a red diploma which in Russia means she was an outstanding student.

The story doesn't end there. She was hired by a big company and she rented an apartment and continued to be in touch with us. I would suggest shidduchim every once in a while but they didn't work out and she was already 25.

One day a shidduch was suggested to her and the boy came to meet her in Moscow. We tell the girls that these meetings are solely for the purpose of marriage (which needs to be explained

here) and that after several meetings you can know whether it's serious or not and so there's no reason to date excessively.

We saw that the shidduch was schlepping and we decided to exert pressure on the boy's rabbis so he would make a decision. The girl, at my suggestion, wrote to the Rebbe through the *Igros Kodesh* (which we do often with the girls after saying T'hilim and giving tz'daka, etc., and the girls get amazing answers).

The answer she opened to was one in which the Rebbe wrote to someone about the customs of a Chanukas HaBayis. It was clear to her that she was heading in the direction of building a home. The Rebbe also gave a bracha for a birthday and she suddenly remembered that it was her birthday that day. She was amazed and moved to hear that the Rebbe had blessed her in the letter for her birthday and to establish a Jewish home.

The couple decided to marry but since neither of them had money, they decided that two weeks after the wedding he would return to sit and learn and she would stay for another month to work in Moscow to make it easier for them to pay the rent and only then would she join him.

When she told me of their decision I was horrified; to separate two weeks after their wedding for a month's time? That would be awful! I told her this was unacceptable but didn't suffice with that; I called the rabbis at the yeshiva where he learned and they joined me in opposing this peculiar plan. They discussed what it means to

establish a Jewish home and how this decision was inappropriate.

In the answer she opened to in the *Igros Kodesh* before her wedding the Rebbe wrote: I was happy to hear that they set the date for their wedding in an auspicious time, and the Rebbe gave many brachos.

* * *

What about the shluchim?

Our lives revolve around the shlichus. When I eat, sleep, bathe the children, etc., my mind is busy with how to help this girl and what would be best for that girl... We're used to this after thirteen years. The Machon is our second home.

We used to be at the Machon nearly every Shabbos. If we stayed home for Shabbos the children would ask: When will we spend Shabbos at the Machon? In the past two years we instituted some changes since our oldest child, Menachem Mendel, is big and we felt that spending Shabbos with the girls was a problem. We either send him to a friend or make Shabbos at home. Lately it has become easier since Mendy went away to yeshiva and we can spend Shabbos at the Machon again.

We recently celebrated Mendy's bar mitzva. Everybody got involved. The entire Anash family in Moscow participated along with our family who came from Eretz Yisroel. It was very moving because Mendy is a Chassidishe boy who grew up his entire life on shlichus in Russia.

Since our extended family came from Eretz Yisroel, this was the first time the girls of the Machon could see what we had left behind in order to be on shlichus. It is quite a sacrifice.

At the beginning of our shlichus, whenever I traveled to Eretz Yisroel I would tell myself: That's it, I'm not going back to Russia! The people, the language, the mentality are all so different and they made it very hard to adjust. In addition there was the terrible loneliness.

However today, when I'm in Eretz

Yisroel, I look forward to returning to Moscow. I know it is one of the great kindnesses that the Rebbe does for us. It's no simple thing to get used to a shlichus despite the different location, language and mentality and to remember that there's so much work to be done.

Russian is a hard language for us though by now I manage quite well. In Russian, if you say the right thing but don't pronounce it just right, they don't understand you. But when you're so busy there's no time to spend on learning the language. You just pick it up and manage and move on.

I remember that at first it was very hard for me to prepare lessons for the girls. I myself don't know how I managed except to say it's the Rebbe who made it happen.

I mentioned my son's bar mitzva before. In the video we made, they saw my father, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Wolpo, me, and my sister Nechami (Wilhelm, a shlucha in Bangkok) passing by the Rebbe and the Rebbe saying to my father, "You should marry off your daughters and when you have grandchildren, give them the dollar."

We held on to the dollars all these years so we could give it to Mendy at his bar mitzva but unfortunately, the dollar disappeared. After the video they gave Mendy a different dollar from the Rebbe to continue the chain of shlichus and to show him that the Rebbe is thinking of him and we have to move forward.

* * *

Without knowledge of the language and contending with a foreign mentality as well as a tourist visa which makes life difficult, Frumi and her husband have done unbelievable work and they are still moving forward. When I called about this interview, I was told that a new shlucha had joined the Beckerman family – baby Chasia. She is named for the great-grandmother Chasia Pariz who was raised in Moscow and lived a life of mesirus nefesh for Torah and mitzvos.



Chasia

Col. Professor Moshe Sharon in an interview with Beis Moshiach:
‘TIME TO CLEAN OUT THE STABLES’

INTERVIEW BY SHAI GEFEN

The Iranian threat stands at the top of the list of concerns for the Israeli public. PM Olmert speaks continuously about this concern and a recent government session opened with this topic. Is there any connection between Iran and the ever-present terror that surrounds us?

There is a clear and solid connection. There are two motives which drive Iranian policy, one of which is religious in nature. Iran, as a Shiite country is guided by messianic fervor. They await the revelation of the 12th Imam, who disappeared over 1200 years ago, and are eagerly anticipating his arrival.

According to their religious doctrine, his coming can happen in one of two ways, either through natural means speeding his arrival or by way of an apocalyptic war with thousands or even millions of casualties, which will ignite the entire world. They call this messianic figure the “Mehdi,” which is an Arabic corruption of the word “Moshiach.” When the President of Iran, Ahmadenijad, spoke in the UN, he said later that there was a halo around his head as he spoke, and his meaning was clear to all in the know.

Are they likely to actually carry out their threats?

Iran will stop at nothing in its pursuit of nuclear weapons in order to forward their goals.

Iran utilizes the Hezbollah to do its bidding, as well as Syria, taking advantage of that country’s need for economic aid. Hezbollah can’t function without Iran and without the arms and training they receive from Iran. We are talking about land and air weapons, as well as rockets and missiles.

Since Iran has no border with Lebanon and they can’t land planes in Lebanon containing weapons, due to international oversight, they use Syria as the conduit to supply armaments and military experts to provide the

necessary training. Syria has established itself as the main enemy of Israel on the Golan front as well as the Lebanese front.

Another factor, which is no less a matter of concern, is that Chalad Mishel, a leader of Hamas, is stationed in Syria and serves as the liaison to the Lebanese and Syrian fronts. His main job is to incite Hamas against Israel in opening a new front to the south, which will threaten the entire southern region of Israel.

There have been recent reports about internecine fighting in Gaza.

BRIEF BIO

Colonel (Reserves), Professor Moshe Sharon was born in Chaifa 69 years ago. His family has resided in Eretz Yisroel for a number of centuries. He is professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies in Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is a former professor of Arabic at Bar-Ilan University. He served as the advisor to PM Menachem Begin on Arab issues. He also served as the chief of the department of Arab issues in the army head staff, holding the rank of Colonel. Other prior roles include; advisor to Security Minister Moshe Arens, and advisor to the administrator of the conquered territories.





How does this affect us?

The context for the internal conflict in the PA is control over arms and money. Money and weapons flow into the Gaza Strip, which confer great wealth on the political leadership, and that is what they are fighting over. The previous weekend, there were over 25 casualties.

You mentioned the southern front, which threatens to spill over from Gaza...

What took place in Gaza during the Disengagement was a terrible thing. Any expert on the Middle East, who is the least bit honest with himself, will state unequivocally that withdrawing from the Gaza Strip, and evacuating the IDF and the settlers, resulted in Gaza becoming part of the international terror movement. Gaza links up with the Sinai region, and Al Qaeda is operative in the Sinai.

Since the Disengagement, Al Qaeda has been infiltrating the area with fighting men and a great deal of arms. Iran is also investing tremendous resources to develop the military capacity within Gaza. As a result of the Disengagement, Gaza has turned into one of the main terror centers of the world.

Is Israel just standing off to the side and watching, like it did for years in Lebanon, or will it take military steps?

Israel is standing off to the side and forcing itself not to do anything in response to the massive terrorist buildup in Gaza. However, there is actually no real choice and Israel will be forced to go in and wage a broad military action in Gaza to retake control of the entire area. The entire southern region of Israel faces a clear and present danger if they do not do so as soon as possible.

Your views don't seem to be shared by the leadership in Israel.

There is not a single intelligent person in the world who knows the situation and doesn't think that it is necessary to deal with this burgeoning problem immediately. The military echelons are well aware of this. We are dealing with the future of the entire Jewish people. Long ago, the Lubavitcher Rebbe said what would happen and it's happening now. He foresaw us following a course of surrender.

Any thinking person – and you don't have to be a geopolitical expert on the Middle East – understands that if you leave the enemy unopposed, he will operate freely and has no incentive to cease operating as your enemy. If you give your enemy a prize and hand over a piece of your territory, evacuating your army plus ten thousand citizens, he has to be totally dense not to operate accordingly. I have no doubt that there will soon be long-range Katyushas incoming from Gaza if we do not proceed with a large-scale military campaign.

You served as the advisor on Arab issues to PM Menachem Begin during the Camp David accords. What is the role of Egypt today in all that is taking place in Gaza?

The Egyptians are openly aiding and abetting the arming of the terrorist forces in Gaza. We are not currently at peace with Egypt. In my view, it is more like a ceasefire that serves Egypt's interests. They know exactly what is being shipped aboveground and underground. The Israelis are certain that they are at peace with Egypt, because they are not waging outright war. However, the public is unaware that we have practically no relations with Egypt, except the occasional visits of Israeli leaders, who go to appease Mubarak, who in turn, berates them harshly and humiliates them.

Egypt is currently building up a

IDF Col., Professor Moshe Sharon, who served as an advisor to Menachem Begin on Arab issues and as head of the department of Arab issues for the army head staff, as well as holding other key positions, analyzes the current situation for the Beis Moshiach readers. He points out that the current threats facing Israel on all of its borders place us in clear and present danger. His solution is to clean house immediately and install a new political system dedicated to the security of Israel. Moshe Sharon also tells of his connections with the Rebbe MH"M.

massive army. In all the war games that are part of their training, the soldiers are told that this is a war with Israel. The terrifying arsenal that Egypt is amassing will all be aimed at Israel. Egypt is preparing itself for war.

There is talk now of returning the Golan Heights to Syria. Many ministers in the government have expressed support for such a move.

That is just more of the same warped policy of Israel throughout the years. The Arabs discovered a nice trick: if they say the word “peace,” the Israelis will jump to attention. There is no such concept as peace in the Arab lexicon. Peace means one step closer to the annihilation of Israel. All they want is to bring their weapons closer to the main population centers of Israel. They are not exactly interested in the pre-1967 territories. They just want to tighten the noose and bring their tools of destruction closer to the center of the country. A situation has developed, in this country, that all foreign policy is based on the mistaken foundation that when the Arabs make “peace,” we need to reward them with territory.

On December 15th, 1977, at the very beginning of the negotiations between Israel and Egypt in Ismailia, I had the opportunity to hold a brief conversation with then Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. He told me, “Tell your prime minister that this is a *souk* (market) and the merchandise is expensive.”

I repeated this to Menachem Begin, however, he and all later leaders failed to follow the rules of the bazaar. Each time, they acted stunned to discover that the Arabs don't adhere to the agreements they signed. Repeatedly, Israeli leaders involved in negotiating with the Arabs refuse to learn from experience, and they always repeat the same mistakes. They commit Israel to playing by the rules that the Arabs make up.

As someone involved in the Camp

David Accords, what is your opinion regarding the agreements that Begin signed to?

It was a terrible and horrific mistake. I felt that we could have retained a large portion of the Sinai Desert. Sadat didn't imagine for a moment that he would get it all back. I prepared a large report on the Sinai from a historical perspective for Begin at that time. Sadly, Begin got pulled in and that is why I left him. When Sadat

*Since the
Disengagement, Al
Qaeda has been
infiltrating the area
with fighting men and
a great deal of arms.
Iran is also investing
tremendous resources
to develop the military
capacity within Gaza.
As a result of the
Disengagement, Gaza
has turned into one of
the main terror centers
of the world.*

made a linkage with the issue of the Palestinians and Gaza during his speech, I passed a note to Begin that he should get up and walk out. To my disappointment, he did not heed my advice and the end result is known.

I suspect that he was mostly taken in by President Carter, who recently revealed his true colors as someone who is not a great lover of the Jewish people. The main lesson that we need to learn from that experience is that

we paid for something that does not exist. Today, there is no tourism and no cultural exchange.

But the approach continues till this day, despite the failures...

The prevalent belief in Israel is that we need to pay off the Arabs. The cost to Israel is that we are endangering our very existence and allowing the enemy to bring its weapons closer to the center of the country. We are paying a heavy price for a nonexistent commodity. The Syrians suddenly realized that they can also use the word “peace.” They also want that kind of peace.

So Israel is marching towards its own self-destruction?

If our righteous Moshiach does not come quickly and immediately, I don't foresee the continued survival of this country. Many are fearful in the face of the policies of every administration in this country since 1967, who have been working to create a state of affairs in which the state of Israel cannot survive. The current temporary administration which has risen to power is busy talking about how important it is to establish a Palestinian state. This represents a constant threat from light weapons and mortars, not to mention Katyushas.

In Yehuda and Shomron it is the same story and the same direction. The “Realignment Plan” means allowing the Arabs to evict the IDF and to bring their light and heavy weaponry to bear on vital interests, such as Kfar Saba, the airport in Lud, Natanya, B'nei Brak and Tel Aviv. The state of Israel is making itself into a narrow and indefensible strip of beach. There is a historical precedent in Eretz Yisroel of such a narrowly controlled area during the Crusades, a millennium ago, which had no chance for survival and was ultimately destroyed.

The question that everybody is

asking is how come they don't get it?

The leadership of this country does not behave according to the rules of the Middle East. They are operating according to the conventions that exist between Holland and Belgium. The situation in our region is not about territorial disputes, but a dispute over the very existence of the state of Israel. For example, if Hamas were to announce tomorrow that it is prepared to recognize the state of Israel, you can't imagine how the media and the leadership will praise them to the heavens.

You are negating as a matter of policy the Arab demand that we return the territory that we took from them?

Whoever loses territory in wartime does not get it back. Germany lost 41 thousand square miles to Russia and Poland – a huge area – and never got it back. Finland lost two entire regions to Russia, each one larger than the entire state of Israel, and had to absorb 400,000 Finns, who were expelled from there. The Germans had to absorb 12 million refugees. We don't have a territorial problem with the Arabs, but a battle for our very existence.

What do you suggest on the practical level?

We need to clean out the stables. From a political standpoint that means

to form a new political infrastructure in this country. To elect people who truly care about me, you, and our children. To care means to build an army of unlimited strength, to replenish all the stockpiles, to supply every necessary military means before spending on anything else.

It is essential to build a powerful military system and to discontinue the approach of concessions for fake peace. We need to rebuild our deterrence capabilities from scratch. This should be the highest priority for Israel. I believe this a realistic goal. The main problem is that everything here is built on politically driven ulterior motives. I proposed at the time – and it is still on record – that any Jew who is killed should have a settlement built and named after him, and anyone who is injured should have a new building dedicated in his name. If we had adopted that policy, we would have spared ourselves a lot of grief.

* * *

I heard that you had a connection with the Rebbe?

I was fortunate to merit that as well. Many years ago, I was offered a position in the university in Johannesburg, South Africa, to establish an institute for Jewish studies. I was facing a serious decision, and so I wrote to the Rebbe

which I sent from Yerushalayim with an emissary.

Within three days, I received a telephone call with the Rebbe's response, which contained two statements, 1) the suggestion is a good one, and 2) the decision should be in the affirmative. They explained to me that the meaning of the Rebbe's words was that I should accept the position immediately.

Although I am not a Chabadnik, I think he is the most important leader of our generation. On the subject of governmental public policy – we can see to what degree the Rebbe was right. During the period of the Camp David Accords, I kept tabs on his statements. He saw that it is forbidden to give the enemy the tools to destroy the Jews. The Rebbe addressed every detail which might endanger Israel. He spoke about how Israel must strive for independent and alternative sources of energy, and most importantly, not to give the enemy any strategic advantages, because every concession advances the cause of the enemy.

Just the other day I was in shul and during a conversation the people present spoke about the importance of remembering what the Rebbe said. His statements are those of a great political expert and a man of prophetic vision.

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NO COMPROMISE

The fascinating story of Yehoshua Bedrick, the first Orthodox (Lubavitch), and one of the youngest members, in New Hampshire State House of Representatives.

How does a 23-year-old Chabad Chassid become a member of the House of Representatives in the State of New Hampshire? This doesn't seem such a "derech ha'teva" thing to do. But sure enough, Yehoshua – Jason – Bedrick took his seat in the historical Representatives Hall in New Hampshire this year, representing the towns of Windham and Salem. He is the first Orthodox member in the House, and a Chabad Chassid at that!

A fourth-generation native of New Hampshire, Bedrick grew up in secular household and even attended a Catholic high school where he started the Interfaith Club and became the first non-Catholic to receive the Religious Studies Award on graduation day. His interest in politics developed in college about the same time as his interest in Yiddishkeit was growing as well. After spending many a Shabbos with the local Chabad shliach, Rabbi Moshe Bleich, he agreed to accompany Bleich and several fellow students on a free trip to Eretz Yisroel. He came back wearing a yarmulke and tzitzis.

After spending his post-graduate summer learning in Israel, Bedrick went to Crown Heights to learn in Yeshivas Hadar Hatorah. The Mashpia in Hadar Hatorah, Rabbi Wirberg, always speaks about how hatzlacha, success, stems from the Rebbe MH"M. If one is united with the Rebbe, and will write to him, he will be successful.

While in Yeshiva, Bedrick came over to him and said, "I have written a letter to the Rebbe. I would like to put

it in the Igros Kodesh."

Rabbi Wirberg questioned him, "What would you like, good health, a shidduch?"

"No," he answered, "I want to know whether or not I should run for the New Hampshire House of Representatives," was the reply.

"What? You're still a young man. Your place is in the Yeshiva," said Rabbi Wirberg. But nevertheless, they read the letter anyway. The Rebbe instructed Yehoshua concerning the betterment of his community, and other similar things. "Most probably this means that you should influence other boys here," said Rabbi Wirberg. "I am not going to be the one to send you out of the Yeshiva. Check it with Rabbi [Yaakov] Goldberg, the Rosh Yeshiva."

Bedrick came back and said, "Rabbi Goldberg said that this is the meaning – I should run for office." And thus started the most miraculous trend of events in the young life of Yehoshua Bedrick.

During the farewell farbrengen, it was stated, "What a chassidishe farbrengen can accomplish, even Malach Michael cannot accomplish." "Remember, Yehoshua, you are now the Rebbe's Shliach," Rabbi Wirberg said. "We give you a bracha that you will win, and you will bring a kiddush Hashem to New Hampshire."

Well, it was around a half-year later when this bracha came into fruition. Yehoshua took these words to heart –

that he is a Shliach of the Rebbe MH"M. What about all the handshaking during the campaign? A Chassid is careful not to shake hands with women. Therefore, Bedrick refrained from doing so. When some of his constituents heard about this, they couldn't believe that in the 21st century there is someone on earth who still refrains from shaking hands with women. Most importantly, some members of the Salem Women's Club were up in arms about such a practice. Fortunately, one of the husbands of a Club member was at the meeting where this strange handshaking practice was discussed: "I know Bedrick's parents. Let me ask them about this."

Rachelle Bedrick, Yehoshua's mother, spoke with him at length, explaining that because of his religion, Yehoshua is forbidden to touch women and that he wasn't going to compromise his religion to get ahead, just as he wasn't going to compromise his political values. Impressed, the gentleman returned to the Women's Club and related to them what he had heard.

The women were calmed, but not totally convinced. They wanted to hear from the candidate himself, which prompted Yehoshua to write them a letter. He wrote about the practice of *shomer negia* and why touch between men and women is considered holy. He assured them that this practice isn't a reflection of a second-class status for women in Judaism; on the contrary, he

discussed the leadership of Jewish women, such as Ruth and Esther, and noted that Hashem once told Avraham Avinu: "Whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says..." (B'Reishis 21:12) He ended his letter with the following:

When I began my campaign, many well-intentioned people counseled me to compromise my faith and shake hands with women, because to maintain shomer negia might give the wrong impression and hurt me at the voting booth. Their concerns were obviously legitimate, but I cannot compromise my faith, for what would I compromise next? I truly hope that this letter clears up any misconceptions I may have created previously and that when you decide whether or not to give your vote to me, you will do so based on my positions on taxes, traditional values, and limited government. Thank you.

With this, the Salem Women's Club was convinced. Yehoshua said he believes the support he received from the Salem Women's Club really made a difference. Barbara Elliot, co-president of the Club, and several of her female friends, voted for Yehoshua after reading his letter. "After they read this, my girlfriends understood it was not because he did not like women; it was because of his religion. They changed

Yehoshua's mother explained that because of his religion, Yehoshua wasn't going to compromise his religion to get ahead, just as he wasn't going to compromise his political values.

their minds and they voted for him," Ms. Elliot said, stating that she "would be proud to have Bedrick as a son." Ms. Elliot added that she voted for Bedrick because he is well-educated and espouses conservative values. But Chassidim understand that his success was from the Rebbe's bracha.

"My faith, out of respect for women, does not allow contact between unrelated men and women," Yehoshua says. He explains this on a daily basis to female colleagues who reach out their hands to shake his. Usually, that's the end of the conversation. But sometimes, when he

senses the woman isn't convinced, he adds: "If every man in the world were to keep his hands to himself, would it be a better world for women or a worse world for women?"

Yehoshua Bedrick is the first Orthodox Jew to be elected in New Hampshire, a state that is a home to fewer than ten Orthodox Jewish families, and where the Jewish people account for one percent of the population.

Yehoshua brings his own lunch to the legislative sessions because Kosher restaurant food is not available in Concord, the capital of New Hampshire. Black-bearded, Yehoshua never takes off his yarmulke and usually politely declines whenever a fellow legislator asks him whether he'd like to grab a bit to eat.

Taking oaths is also forbidden according to Jewish Law. As a result, in the swearing-in ceremony in Concord, Yehoshua substituted the words "I affirm" for "I swear."

Almost 4,500 Windham and Salem voters put their support behind Bedrick on election day, even though he missed several campaign events because they took place during Shabbos. In the end, after a recount, he beat his opponent by six votes.

Though living in New Hampshire, Yehoshua still spends almost every Shabbos with Rabbi Bleich or one of the other local shluchim. He visits Hadar HaTorah as often as possible, especially on Shabbos Mevarchim for Rabbi Wirberg's farbrengen. On Shabbos Mevarchim in Teives, Rabbi Wirberg invited him to give over the Rebbe's "Basi L'Gani" maamer from 5713. Yehoshua has only spent a couple months serving in office, but he's already spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus to New Hampshire's Jews. He hopes one day to help New Hampshire's head shliach, Rabbi Levi Krinsky, start a Jewish day school and grow the Jewish community there. As we know, with the Rebbe's bracha, anything is possible!



Yehoshua Bedrick shaking hands with Rudy Giuliani