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4

G-D'S RETURN WITH THE JEWISH PEOPLE FROM EXILE (CONT.)

D'var Malchus | Likkutei Sichos Vol. 9, pg. 175-183

6

A DAILY DOSE OF MOSHIACH

Moshiach & Geula

8

AN EXTRAORDINARY YOMIM NORAIM EXPERIENCE

Feature | Menachem Shaked

16

WHEN YOUR HEAD IS HELD HIGH, YOU SEE MUCH FURTHER

Thought | Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi

22

FATHERS AND SONS LEARNING TOGETHER

Chinuch | Yisroel Yehuda

26

'ARISE AND SING, THOSE WHO DWELL IN THE DUST'

Moshiach & Geula | Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo

28

AS THE SHEPHERD WITH HIS SHEEP...

Story | Tzipora Eren

32

SHLICHUS DIARY: NEW ZEALAND

Shlichus | Ben Tzion Sasson

38

GOING TO THE REBBE FOR TISHREI

Insight

42

TAKE PART IN THE REBBE'S WAR!

Shleimus HaAretz | Interview with Rabbi G. Akselrod by S. Gefen

44

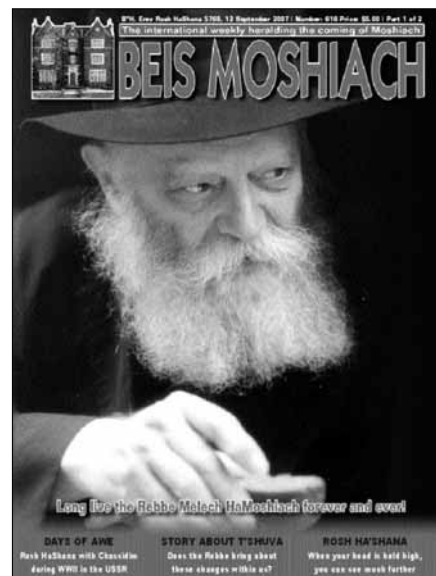
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Miracle Story | Nossan Avrohom

50

REACHING OUT TO JEWISH PRISONERS

Shlichus | Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz



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G-D'S RETURN WITH THE JEWISH PEOPLE FROM EXILE

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 9, pg. 175-183
Translated by Boruch Merkur

[Continued from last week]

b) The verse speaks about the redemption of **Jews**. Why then does Rashi conclude with, “Indeed, this concept is also found with regard to the gentile nations, etc.”?²

c) The quandary is even more puzzling. In order to cite proof that G-d will take every individual out of exile, it would have sufficed for Rashi to quote the words, “You...shall be gathered one by one,” omitting the words, “the Jewish people,” which appear at the end of the sentence [in the original Hebrew, making it seemingly extraneous here]. This inclusion indicates that Rashi wants to emphasize that the fact that “He personally needs to literally hold the hand of every single person [to extract each one] from his place [in exile]” is also applicable to the Jewish people [and not just the gentile nations].

(The latter is also inferred from the verse that is central to our discussion, “G-d, your L-rd, will return (with) your captivity” (according to the second interpretation), as follows. The fact that “He personally needs to literally hold the hand of every single person, etc.” is in virtue of the fact that G-d is “**your** L-rd.”³)

If so, why does Rashi follow this with, “Indeed, this concept is also found with regard to the gentile nations, etc.”?

d) Why is the lengthy discussion, requiring proofs from the works of the Prophets, etc., relevant **here**?

e) What does Rashi intend to add with the word “**literally**,”⁴ thereby negating the usual interpretation of G-d’s “hand,” mentioned in his commentary on the Torah portion VaEs’chanan?^{21*}

3. The answers to all these questions will emerge from a prefatory discussion of a concept that is common to all of the Patriarchs⁵ – that [it was said of them that] G-d is with them. The simple meaning of this statement is as follows. The Patriarchs enjoyed treatment from On High that was beyond the natural order, to the extent that **everyone** perceived that their success came from G-d.⁶ Thus,⁷ the verse emphasizes that G-d was with them (although He is omnipresent – “in the heavens above and upon the earth below”^{24*} – as it is written, “I fill the heavens and the earth”⁸), meaning that He was with them

and He protected them in a manner that was **plainly revealed**, [for which reason] they experienced [a miraculous degree of] success, etc.

The same principle applies to the Jewish people, even⁹ during the time of exile. The fact that it is apparent to all that G-d gives special attention to them [protecting them] – being one sheep among seventy wolves, but it remains safe¹⁰ – illustrates that G-d is with the Jewish people (as learned earlier regarding the exile to Egypt, the first (and root¹¹) of all exiles, “The L-rd will be **with you**”¹²). An example of the **latter** concept is what is said of the Jewish people when they are redeemed: “the Divine Presence is **with them**.”

It is understood, however, that this concept is distinct from what is referred to in the verse, “G-d, your L-rd,

there must be, “G-d, your L-rd, will return (with) your captivity.”

[To be continued be”H]

NOTES:

¹⁹ See Footnote 19 in the original.

²⁰ See Footnote 20 in the original.

²¹ Which is not the case in Rashi’s commentary on the beginning of the portion VaYishlach.

^{21*} 4:31.

²² VaYeira 21:22; Toldos 26:3, ibid 28; VaYeitzei 28:15.

²³ VaYeira ibid, Toldos ibid 28.

²⁴ See Rashi VaYeira ibid.

^{24*} See D’varim 4:39; commentary of Rashi ibid 4:35, etc. – see Footnote 24* in the original.

²⁵ Yirmiyahu 23:24.

²⁶ Although, **in general**, during the time of exile this [miraculous degree of] success is not readily perceived, as it was in the times of the Holy Temple, etc. – see Footnote 26 in the original.

²⁷ See Ester Rabba 10:11; Tanchuma Toldos 5.

²⁸ For which reason, in the descent to **Egypt** there needed to be the promise

“you will also go up” – from the 4 exiles (**Rashi** Shabbos 89b, entry beginning with the words, “I will descend”). And see [the discourse] beginning with the words, “The voice of my beloved,” of 5709 and the references there.

²⁹ VaYechi 48:21. Also with regard to the other exiles it is written (VaEs’chanan ibid), “He will not fail to grasp you with His hands” (which **echoes**, “He personally...holds the hand,” in Rashi’s commentary on the verse central to our discussion).

³⁰ For which reason Rashi cites the words, “(with) your captivity,” because this terminology proves (see above Footnote 16) “that the Divine Presence resides with the Jewish people...amidst the **suffering** of their exile,” and not just in a manner that resembles [what is suggested in the verse], “The L-rd will be with you,” which is said regarding the exile in Egypt. See Footnote 37.

The concept that G-d is found with the Jewish people in exile in order to protect them from the “seventy wolves,” on the other hand, means the exact opposite! He is there in order to help them; certainly He is not in “exile.”

will return (with) **your captivity** (and not “with you” and the like). The term **here** (that G-d’s “**return**” occurs with **your captives** (with **your return**, returning from exile)), indicates that prior to the redemption, G-d is (**restricted**, as it were, in the lands of the gentiles, and of consequence) distanced and expelled, as it were, from His “home.”¹³ The concept that G-d is found with the Jewish people in exile in order to protect them from the “seventy wolves,” on the other hand, means the exact **opposite!** He is there in order to **help** them; certainly He is **not** in “exile.”

Thus, Rashi says that here there is a different meaning to “the Divine Presence resides with the Jewish people...amidst the **suffering** of their exile.” Namely, that He is indeed **suffering**, as it were, from exile. Therefore,

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A DAILY DOSE OF MOSHIACH & GEULA:

24 ELUL - 1 TISHREI

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

Collected and arranged by Rabbi Pinchas Maman
Translated by Michoel Leib Dobry

24 ELUL: AVODA WITH KABBALAS OL

“And on that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives” (Zecharia 14:4).

“Oil” alludes to wisdom – serving G-d with understanding and logic (intellectual avoda), whereas the “foot” alludes to serving G-d out of *kabbalas ol* (accepting the yoke of Heaven).

Furthermore, the pasuk comes to teach us that [what is alluded to by] “foot” is superior to “oil.”

This is because Avodas Hashem with *kabbalas ol* is loftier than Avodas Hashem achieved through intellect and logic.

(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 1, pg. 103)

25 ELUL: BRINGING MOSHIACH NOW

The unique purpose and objective of our generation is to bring Moshiach speedily and immediately, “We Want Moshiach Now!”

In fact, this is no innovation, for every Jew davens and requests in the Shmoneh Esrei, “Cause the sprout of Dovid to grow speedily...for we hope for Your salvation all day” (throughout the entire day).

Thus, when the time for the Mincha prayer comes, and Moshiach has yet to arrive, we say this again. And if the Redemption is *ch”v* delayed until the evening, we repeat this prayer at Maariv!

(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 2, pg. 458)

26 ELUL: PUBLICIZING THE COMING OF MOSHIACH IN THE PAPERS

...In addition and most importantly, we should have (the coming of Moshiach) in actual deed. Furthermore, it should be that we already had it (in the past tense).

This is particularly so according to the well-known saying of our Rebbeim regarding publicizing the coming of Moshiach in the newspapers, as has actually occurred recently with the publicity in numerous periodicals throughout the world (and there should be a greater increase in publicity), for “Here comes (Melech HaMoshiach),” immediately – and he has already come – in actual deed, down in this physical world, revealed before the eyes of all mankind, and all the more so, “before the eyes of the entire Jewish People,” immediately, mamash.

(sicha, Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-VaYeilech 5751)

27 ELUL: WAITING AND BELIEVING WITH P'NIMIUS

In the Future, Melech HaMoshiach will arise and restore the kingdom of Dovid...and anyone who does not believe in him or does not await his coming... (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim, Chapter 11).

Believe in him – faith can be in an encompassing manner, as our Sages, of blessed memory, have said, “A thief breaking in (“in the framework of his occupation”) calls for G-d’s help.”

Furthermore, besides the faith in Moshiach, a person must also await his coming in its simplest sense, in a manner that it penetrates his inner nature.

protected the Jewish People so they could learn and daven, and “absorbed” the letters of prayer and Torah) – they will surely receive their reward, and return to be established in Eretz Yisroel.

(Seifer HaSichos II 5748, pg. 464)

29 ELUL – EREV ROSH HASHANA – THE BIRTHDAY OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK: THE ESSENCE OF MOSHIACH UNITED WITH THE ESSENCE OF THE INFINITE G-D

It can be said regarding Moshiach that in addition to the revelation of Moshiach’s name, to the point that he is connected with (the general level of) *yechida*, there is also the essence of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, which is literally one with the Essence of the Ein Sof (the Infinite G-d).

See the Tzemach Tzedek’s Seifer HaMitzvos on the mitzva to appoint a king: You have placed the Ein Sof Himself into Moshiach.

(Kuntres Yud-Tes Kislev 5752)

The spiritual elicitation that the Jewish People bring about on Rosh HaShana (the revelation of G-d’s sovereignty in the whole world) resembles the revelation in the Future to Come, which is the true intention literally rooted in G-d’s Essence – His desire for a dwelling place in the lower realms.

(Seifer HaSichos I 5749, pg. 351)

28 ELUL: SHULS IN THE FUTURE TO COME

“In the Future, the synagogues and battei midrash will be established in Eretz Yisroel” (Megilla 29a).

The meaning here is not only in reference to synagogues and battei midrash that exist today, at the time when the Redemption arrives, but also the synagogues and battei midrash that have existed throughout all the generations (even those that were destroyed).

Thus, the stones, the wood, and earth from which were made the synagogues and battei midrash (which

(the revelation of G-d’s sovereignty in the whole world) resembles the revelation in the Future to Come, which is the true intention literally rooted in G-d’s Essence – His desire for a dwelling place in the lower realms.

The maamer further explains that “there has already been something resembling this in the world at the time of Mattan Torah,” but this revelation was only for that time, etc., “until the appointed time of the end of days,” when there will be fulfilled the destiny of “And the glory of G-d will be revealed and all flesh will see it together, etc.,” likened to what can also be achieved on Rosh HaShana.

(Seifer Hisvaaduyos 5747, pg. 34)

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AN EXTRAORDINARY YOMIM NORAIM EXPERIENCE

A moving description by a Sanzer Chassid who spent Rosh HaShana with Chabad Chassidim during World War Two in the Soviet Union.

One day in Elul 5704 (1944), I heard from my friend Leibel Malach z”l (who was originally from Otrolinka near Warsaw) that on the upcoming Yomim Noraim there would be a minyan at the home of the amazing Chassid, R’ Berel Yaffe z”l in Chimkent. I was thrilled to hear the news and I said to R’ Leibel: If only I could be part of that

minyan.

He said that he couldn't guarantee it, because he wasn't one of the organizers, and they did everything with the utmost secrecy so that word wouldn't get out beyond a limited few. Of course, they were fearful of the danger in publicity. After all, we were in Russia and Chimkent is a big city with NKVD agents swarming everywhere.

In addition, R' Berel lived in a little hut that could not hold more than twenty people. However, as a loyal friend, R' Leibel promised to do what he could so that I could participate in this minyan on the Yomim Noraim. How could I miss this rare opportunity? I eagerly awaited his answer.

Who was R' Berel Yaffe? R' Berel Yaffe was from the Ukraine. Not only was he a distinguished Chabad Chassid but they said amazing things about his exemplary conduct, his holy ways, and his deep knowledge of Chabad Chassidus. He studied Nigleh and Nistar day and night, despite his sorry circumstances.

For 15 years he was expelled from his home and city by the Bolsheviks because of his "counter-revolutionary" activities. He suffered from hunger, torture, and persecution, like every exile being punished for such activities. Nevertheless, his spirit was not broken and he poured out his heart to his Maker in his painful isolation.

He lived in a wretched hut together with his young daughter. Generally, he did not leave his house. He was rarely seen outside except when he went to the market to buy something. He had hardly any friends since he was an exile and who would endanger himself to befriend an "enemy of the motherland" and a "counter-revolutionary" like him?

So he lived alone for 15 years, involved in Torah study and avodas Hashem, which gave him the

strength to withstand the hostile environment that surrounded him.

I asked R' Leibel why a minyan was being organized this particular year when there hadn't been one in previous years. He told me that since they were in the midst of a war and the NKVD was busy with other problems, the danger for the organizers and those who would attend the minyan had diminished.

In addition, it was felt that after millions of Russians had fallen on the German front with no end in sight, the atmosphere antagonistic towards religion had eased up somewhat. In order not to miss this opportunity, a few people, confidants of R' Berel,



R' Berel Yaffe

had decided with his agreement to organize a minyan for a few men.

In the meantime, I remained tense, as I hadn't gotten an answer from R' Leibel. I really yearned and prayed to Hashem that I would be able to daven on these holy days with the Chassid R' Berel. I felt that this would give support and encouragement to my broken heart to continue and not, G-d forbid, cave in, under the burdens and sorrows I had experienced these past five years.

Then one day, at the end of Elul, R' Leibel Malach appeared at my house with the news: I could join the

minyan. R' Leibel seemed like an angel of salvation and it was only embarrassment that stopped me from kissing him. The organizers had checked me out, to see if I was kosher from a "security standpoint," and baruch Hashem, I had passed.

My wife and I began preparing for the trip to Chimkent for Rosh HaShana. I felt like a Chassid who prepares to travel to his Rebbe. Indeed, my admiration for R' Berel was no less than that of a Chassid to his Rebbe. This was especially after I heard from R' Leibel (who was himself a Gerrer Chassid and an outstanding scholar, whose every word was weighed) how he spoke about R' Berel, about his Torah scholarship, his Chassidus, and his d'veikus to Hashem.

I must say that as soon as I began importuning R' Leibel to work on my behalf so I could join the minyan, I promised him that I would not be a burden on him as far as meals were concerned. I knew his situation and that he was poverty-stricken. I had to fend for myself during my stay in Chimkent.

How do you prepare for a trip in Russia during wartime? My wife and I made an exact count of how many slices of bread I needed, minimum, for two days and how many roasted potatoes. I had to consider my wife and my five-year-old child who were staying home, who also needed food to eat. Our figures had to be very exact.

When we finished calculating, my wife went to the market to buy the food for the three of us, for Rosh HaShana. In Russia you had to prepare everything in advance and could not wait for tomorrow, lest tomorrow the item you needed would not be available.

My wife managed to get the bread, potatoes and a little flour to make some cereal, poor man's food. This was the food we ate in this galus, year round, if we had it... And

so now the food for the trip was ready.

On the Shabbos before Rosh HaShana, when I went to daven in our minyan in Leningrad, two *b'nei Torah* that I knew approached me and asked me whether it was true that I was planning on going to Chimkent for Rosh HaShana, to R' Berel Yaffe. I told them this was correct and that I hoped Hashem would help me in this.

The two of them peppered me with questions: Since when are you a Lubavitcher? We know your father and grandfather and they were devoted Sanzer and Shinover Chassidim. Now you're suddenly involved with Chabad, which in our part of the world is unheard of? You're running away from us, all of a sudden, Erev Rosh HaShana? Who will we be left with, with the "shochet" G., who was known to consort with unsavory characters. He will be our chazan during this holy time?

I replied: Your complaints are somewhat justified, but I have a response. Since you mentioned the holy tzaddik of Sanz zt"l, I will tell you what he once said to the gaon, R' Shimon Sofer, the av beis din of Cracow, the son of the Chasam Sofer zt"l. R' Shimon Sofer once asked the Divrei Chaim of Sanz why it was that when his older brother, the K'sav Sofer, the av beis din of Pressburg, had gone to him, the tzaddik had not honored him in any special way. He had given him the

honor he would give any rav and av beis din. But when R' Menachem Mendel of Vizhnitz came, he went out personally to greet him and gave him great honor.

The Divrei Chaim answered: You know that the Beis HaMikdash was not built on Har Sinai, where the Torah was given. Rather, it was built on Har HaMoria, where Yitzchok was bound as a sacrifice. The Vizhnitzer Rebbe offers himself to Hashem as a korban and he is the pillar of avoda.

This is my answer to you, I said. During my five years here in Russia, as I wandered from place to place, I met many Jews of different groups, from Russia, Poland, and Lithuania, Chassidim and Misnagdim. Most of them made their peace with the decrees of the communists, though at first they did not want to. The only ones who did not make their peace with these *g'zeiros shmad*, who even jumped into the lion's den and were *moser nefesh* for the smallest thing, are the Lubavitchers, the ones you say I have fallen in with.

I am sure Shlomo HaMelech in Shir HaShirim (8:6), with his *ruach ha'kodesh*, was referring to them when he said, "for strong till the death is my love; though their zeal for vengeance is hard as the grave, its flashes are flashes of fire, the flame of G-d." Wherever I met them, all of them, without exception, they, their wives, and their children, were ready for literal self-sacrifice, without looking for excuses and leniencies. If

so, if I have the opportunity to daven with them and to pour out my heart in their presence before our Master on the holy days, could I miss such an opportunity?

The two of them did not continue trying to dissuade me from going, and with tears choking them up, they wished me a *k'siva va'chasima tova* from the depths of their hearts.

* * *

Erev Rosh HaShana: I prayed a silent prayer in my heart that nothing untoward would happen. If in every place and at every time a person needs Heavenly mercy, and if Chazal say that "all roads are in the category of danger," then all the more so on a trip in Russia by train which swarmed with NKVD agents. Their suspicious eyes darted everywhere and they wanted to know everything, even what you thought in your heart, and naturally, what was the purpose of your trip? Where are you going? When are you returning? Over the years I spent in Russia, I had endured these interrogations before.

I cast my burden upon Hashem, Who shepherded me from my very first day, and implored Him to guide me safely and allow me to reach my destination in peace. After all, I was going to a tzaddik for Rosh HaShana and was involved in a mitzva, and emissaries to do a mitzva are not harmed.

The trip was uneventful, thank G-d. If, during the two-hour trip, I was somewhat fearful, Hashem paid me back with the great joy of R' Leibel Malach when he saw me in his house and rejoiced so greatly, and "as waters reflect a face..." When two friends meet, especially during a difficult time, their joy is doubled and redoubled.

We ate a snack so as not to enter Yom Tov in distress and we went to R' Berel Yaffe's house. On the way we passed the Mosva River and immersed in honor of the holiness of the day. From there we went

The only ones who did not make their peace with these g'zeiros shmad, who even jumped into the lion's den and were moser nefesh for the smallest thing, are the Lubavitchers, the ones you say I have fallen in with.



R' Berel Yaffe (center) at a farbrengen in Samarkand. From right to left: R' Eliyahu Levin, R' Betzalel Shiff, R' Berel Yaffe, R' Chaim Zalman Kozliner, R' Feivish Hankin

directly to R' Berel.

R' BERELE

The hut was in an alleyway near a side street, concealed by tall cypresses, a place that was out of the purview of the NKVD's evil eye. When R' Leibel pointed out R' Berel's home from a distance, I immediately thought of the forced converts of Spain and Portugal and the places they hid in during the davening on the Yomim Noraim and the famous niggun for Kol Nidrei, which according to tradition was composed by *anusim*, a melody that we continue to sing till this day. I recalled all the descriptions, just as I had read them in my childhood.

There we were, standing at the threshold of R' Berel's home. R' Leibel knocked gently and when asked who was there, he answered, "It's me, Leibel." The door opened and R' Berel held out a hand in

greeting, first to R' Leibel and then to me.

With my hand in his, he asked me my name, about my father and where I was born. I told him everything, about my five-year-old son, Tzvi, who was born two months after the war broke out while I was already in exile in Stari Zapanda, in the Ukraine; how we traveled with him in Siberia, the Urals, and Tashkent, and that I prayed for Heavenly assistance that my wife and I would be able to raise him to Torah and fear of G-d. I told him of the miracles with my son, about the illnesses he had had, the travails we had experienced, and that I thanked Hashem for the past and prayed for the future.

R' Berel looked straight into my eyes and finally bestowed warm blessings upon me for my requests and wished me a good year and a *k'siva va'chasima tova* for me and all

the Jewish people.

* * *

I knew a little bit about the life of suffering this wonderful man had endured during recent years. He was alone after the passing of his wife in Chimkent, but his main suffering was due to Stalin's police, the NKVD, who kept a watchful eye on him. He had been exiled for "counter-revolutionary activity" and a person like that was under constant surveillance. His life was hell.

Although R' Berel did not break under the constant persecution, you could not say that it did not leave its mark on him. In his sad and tired eyes you could see the pain and torment. When he tried sometimes, while talking to people, to smile a little, it was a smile mixed with sadness. Although he tried to conceal his anguish and hide his feelings, he wasn't always successful. These were my impressions as I stood there, for

those few minutes, with my hand in his.

T'FILLOS ON ROSH HASHANA

The worshippers slowly gathered. The shochet (whose name I don't remember), who was going to be the chazan for Musaf, came in. He had a noble face. He looked sixty-something. He had a long flowing beard and warm and deep eyes. When I held out my hand in greeting, his refined look and his penetrating eyes aroused in me feelings of admiration. I felt that this was no ordinary person standing before me. Afterwards, I realized from his conversations with R' Berel that he was most proficient in the teachings of Chabad.

We were preparing for Mincha. R' Berel was the chazan and he davened in a voice choked with tears. Even a simple person like myself knew that his prayers were imbued with deep hidden intentions and came from the depths of his heart. You could see the emotion pent up in the faces of the worshippers, about 25 in number, most of them old-time Chabad Chassidim.

Slowly, voices saturated with pent-up tears could be heard. Tears glinted in people's eyes and all as one poured out their hearts to their Father in heaven for the suffering of individuals and of us all.

After the davening R' Berel sat down at the table along with the shochet and some old-time Lubavitchers and he gave over a Chabad talk, very little of which I understood. It was the first Chabad talk I had ever heard. Yet I was gripped by the feeling of great emotion that I merited this, at this time, in this place.

I know that I cannot possibly describe even a little bit of the two days of Rosh HaShana. R' Berel with his Shacharis and the shochet with his Musaf, aroused within us a

feeling that we were the emissaries of the congregation made up of our brothers and sisters who were presently in German crematoria and extermination camps, and they were pleading before us: Please, have mercy on us and tear down the walls of iron that separate us from our Father in heaven. Please arouse mercy on us before G-d that He say enough to our sorrows and tell our destroyers to desist, for in a little while, it will be too late...

These and similar thoughts preoccupied us throughout the davening.

Of course we tried, with all our strength, to restrain our feelings so they wouldn't burst forth in uncontrolled sobbing. R' Berel and the shochet made similar efforts, all without success. Every so often, the young Yaffe girl, R' Berel's daughter, who patrolled around the house looking out for the NKVD, the militia or other dangers, would motion to the congregation to rein in their emotions.

That is how we spent the two days of Rosh HaShana, and with Hashem's help, there were no unpleasant incidents.

PRAYER WITH A BUCHARIAN JEW IN CHIMKENT

I must tell you about an incredible experience I had on that Rosh HaShana. On the second day of Rosh HaShana, after returning from the davening at R' Berel's and after finishing the holiday "meal," we were very tired. R' Leibel said that since it was hard for us to go back for Mincha at R' Berel, whose house was three miles away, we should go to daven at the shul of a Bucharian Jew who lived nearby.

I immediately agreed, as I had heard much about these dear Jews and I had never had the occasion to spend time with them and to get to know their customs and way of life.

After we walked into the Bucharian shul and waited a few minutes, two people (apparently gabbaim) came over to me and to my surprise they suggested that I address the people. I immediately realized that this idea came from my friend, R' Leibel. At first, I adamantly refused, knowing where we were, in Russia, where every living being was suspected of being a counter-revolutionary and a spy, especially a foreign citizen like me. Why should I look for trouble and transgress the law?

When the men persevered, I gave them another reason for my refusal, that I wasn't comfortable with the language and I couldn't address them properly.

Then one of the elders came over, a distinguished looking man with a beard, and he said, "I will be the guarantor." In Russian mixed with Ivrit he said: I guarantee you that nothing bad will happen. Speak on this holy day to this broken congregation whose precious sons are on the frontlines against the greatest enemies of both the Russian nation and the Jewish people, the Germans. Many of us have already received word of our fallen loved ones in their defense of the Russian motherland.

Saying this, the old man removed one of these telegrams from his pocket. He always kept it with him so he wouldn't forget his pain for even a moment, a telegram about his beloved son who had fallen in battle.

As for my excuse about not having a common language, he suggested that I speak half in Russian and half in Ivrit and he would translate, for he knew both languages well.

The old man's heartfelt words convinced me and even the fear, which I had felt earlier, dissipated. I felt I could no longer refuse.

So I was led, almost against my will, to the lectern near the Aron Kodesh, and the old man stood at

my right side. Gripped by emotion I began to speak:

Dear brothers, we are in the midst of the Day of Judgment before the G-d of Yaakov, as we said in our prayers today, “and on the nations it will be said which to sword and which to peace, which to hunger and which to satiety, and creatures will be remembered on this day for life or for death.”

In this fearsome prayer, we expressed today, before the Creator of the world, the desire of nearly all the nations of the world, especially the unfortunate Jewish people, for that magic word: peace. If millions of soldiers from the nations of Europe are being killed now on the

Our people wallow in its blood before the eyes of the “enlightened” nations of the world.

My speech was translated into Bucharian by the old man. The impact of my words could be heard from the women’s section and tears flowed from the eyes of bereaved parents.

At the end of Yom Tov, after Maariv, another surprise awaited me...

ANOTHER EXPERIENCE THE SAME NIGHT

After Maariv of Motzaei Yom Tov, two Jews approached me and R’ Leibel, a father and his young son.

All of them, without exception were ready for literal self-sacrifice, without looking for excuses and leniencies. If so, if I have the opportunity to daven with them and to pour out my heart in their presence before our Master on the holy days, could I miss such an opportunity?

battlefront by the beasts of prey, the Germans, the tragedy our nation endures is a thousand times worse.

While our young people are being killed on the killing field on the Russian front against Hitler’s hordes, our brothers and sisters are being exterminated in the cruelest way, unprecedented in the annals of mankind and the history of the Jewish people, whose pages are saturated with the blood of the holy and pure throughout the generations.

The Germans set up crematoria and extermination camps throughout Europe in which millions of our people were destroyed and the annihilation continues at a rapid rate.

The son was going to be engaged that night and they were inviting us to the engagement party that would be taking place in another half-hour in their home. We did not refuse, for the simple reason that we were starving after our “meals,” and we could certainly expect to be fed at this party.

We were brought to their home and were given places at the table that was set with all sorts of delicacies. The groom himself passed platters with various pastries to us and invited us to sample them. When he saw us hesitating, he was taken aback and he said we should not worry since none of the food was forbidden.

Then R’ Leibel explained: My friend has a little boy at home who never tasted a pastry and he wants to bring it home for him.

When the groom heard this, he went to the kitchen and brought me two packages for my son. Then he asked us again to enjoy the meal. Indeed, we left the simcha feeling full and in a good mood, especially when this was a genuine Jewish simcha, with singing and enthusiastic dancing. After we left, I expressed my amazement to R’ Leibel about the strength of spirit and courage of these Bucharian Jews who remained loyal to G-d and His Torah, despite the treacherous, heretical Soviet sea that stood ready to drown them for twenty-five years now.

R’ Leibel said: The deep impression made by the Lubavitchers within the hearts of these Jews is readily apparent, and with Hashem’s help they will continue in this work.

YOM KIPPUR WITH R’ BEREL

Erev Yom Kippur arrived and once again, I was with R’ Berel. Those were two days packed with uplifting experiences for those who merited to be in that rarified atmosphere, as the rest of the world drowned in a sea of blood and fire and smoke.

R’ Berel himself led the prayers of Kol Nidrei and Maariv. We all shuddered as we thought of our loved ones. Where were they now? Were they still alive? What condition were they in? These thoughts churned within us and did not cease throughout the hours of prayer.

The davening concluded and R’ Berel, with his face still like fiery flames of holiness, began reciting a Lubavitcher maamer. He was completely immersed in his thoughts and his words penetrated our hearts, even though we did not understand anything but a tiny bit of what he said. From time to time he spoke

with the shochet, who was nearly the only one who understood him.

I wondered: Doesn't this fit the description by Chazal, "I recall when I sat behind Rav in front of Rebbi and there were sparks of flame going out of the mouth of Rav to the mouth of Rebbi, and from the mouth of Rebbi to the mouth of Rav, and I didn't know what they were saying" (Chulin 137).

This Lubavitcher talk lasted for an hour and more, and R' Berel, who knew well the problems of the time, continued and spoke about sanctifying G-d's name and self-sacrifice during this fateful time. He quoted the kabbalists on "Why did the neshama descend from a high place to a low pit? Because this

contemplation, as though it is simply impossible to deny G-d's oneness."

On the same topic, he quoted from the works of the gaon and Chassid, the holy R' Yosef Yaavetz, about whom the Chida wrote in his *Shem HaG'dolim* that he was the first tzaddik of the latter day Chassidim and he was one of those expelled from Spain in the year 5252/1492. This is what R' Yosef Yaavetz writes: Most of those who prided themselves on their wisdom and good deeds, betrayed their honor on the bitter day, whereas the simple people sacrificed their lives and their money for the sanctity of their Creator... However, those who were wise in their own estimation...when a powerful storm arose...and

prophet in his generation is like the heart which pumps blood and life to all parts of the body. The limbs closest to the heart receive the blood first and then those limbs that are further from the heart, and finally, the furthest extremities of the body, the hands and feet. The opposite takes place when the soul separates from the body, when the heart stops beating. Then the limbs furthest from the heart are the first to feel the cessation of the blood flow and life force.

This explains the question of prophets' disciples. We, who are far from the heart, from the source of prophecy, already feel it. Do you, who are closer to the source, also feel it? And Elisha answered, yes, and this is a sign that Eliyahu's ascent to heaven is very soon.

With words of encouragement and strength, R' Berel concluded his talk which entered deep into the hearts of his listeners.

When I left his room, I felt like my mind was overwhelmed. On the way back to R' Leibel's house, when I tried to review what I had heard from R' Berel, I could only remember snippets from this amazing talk. As much as I tried to concentrate on one topic, I could not. It was all confused. When R' Leibel asked me: What are you so lost in thought about, I answered: In *olam*, *shana*, and *nefesh*.

Yom Kippur morning we were back in R' Berel's house. To conclude, the truth must be said that I don't have the ability, with my poor writing, to describe even a fraction of our feelings on that holy day. I can only say with near certainty that all those who were present that day with that tormented Chassid – the upliftedness of spirit that was felt and all the holy experiences associated with that day, that place, and that Chassid – will never be forgotten.

"We are being exterminated in the cruelest way, unprecedented in the annals of mankind and the history of the Jewish people, whose pages are saturated with the blood of the holy and pure throughout the generations."

descent is for the purpose of an ascent."

He went on to quote the Baal HaTanya: "Sometimes the willful sinners of the Jewish people draw down very lofty souls that were in the depths of klipa, as it says in the Book of Reincarnation ... Therefore, even the lowest of the low and willful Jewish sinners will generally sacrifice their lives to sanctify G-d's name and suffer severe torture so as not to deny the one G-d. Even if they are boors and ignoramuses who don't know of G-d's greatness— And even the little that they know, they don't comprehend at all. They do not sacrifice their lives because of knowledge and contemplation of G-d at all, but without knowledge and

uprooted them from their faith and from their Torah... they said, "What is Hashem that we should serve Him."

R' Berele mentioned what the Ari z"l says on the verse in Melachim II, chapter 2, verse 5: "And the disciples of the prophets approached Elisha and said to him, do you know that today Hashem will take your master from upon your head. And he said, I also know, be still." This is surprising. Why did the prophets' disciples think that Elisha wouldn't know something that they knew when Elisha was a far greater prophet than they were? Elisha's answer is also surprising: I also know, be still.

The Ari z"l says that the

WHEN YOUR HEAD IS HELD HIGH, YOU SEE MUCH FURTHER

By Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi (said at a Chassidishe farbrengen)

*Chassidim would say that as high as you can jump, you won't reach higher than your head. In other words, if you want to be elevated, you need to lift your head. * On Rosh HaShana, as we bless and are blessed "may we be the head and not the tail," let us wish and hope that we remember to connect to the Rosh B'nei Yisroel, who will raise our heads and lift us up above the vanities of the world into the Yemos HaMoshiach.*

WHO PUT THEIR HEAD DOWN BEFORE ME?

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok, the Rebbe's father, was once in Charkov to participate in a meeting of rabbis. The communist authorities invited them so that the rabbanim would tell the world that there was no religious persecution in Russia. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok spent several weeks there and stayed in a little room at a hotel.

They say he did not sleep on a bed but would nod off in a chair throughout that period of time. He said that he didn't know who had put his head down there before him (i.e., the spiritual state of anyone who might have slept on that bed previously) (related by R' N. Goldschmidt a"h).

This conduct contains an important message for us. Mesirus

nefesh for Judaism, for which Rabbi Levi Yitzchok was imprisoned and sent into exile, where he died after much suffering, characterized his life. However, many Chassidim at that time did likewise. I heard that R' Yochanon Gordon a"h, gabbai in 770 in the time of the Rebbe Rayatz, was once invited to a meal with the Rebbe Rayatz. At this meal he said that Anash in Russia would say:

Whoever sat in jail one time – that was his **chiyuv** (obligation) according to halacha. If he sat two times – that was **hiddur** (beautifying the) mitzva. If he sat three times, that was in the category of **mechezi k'yehora** (showing off). When the Rebbe Rayatz heard this, he laughed so hard that the spoon he held shook.

So the difficulties of imprisonment and exile were not unique to Rabbi Levi Yitzchok and many experienced them. Yet, not wanting to put his head down on the bed because he didn't know who had done so previously contains a special message for all who go in the ways of Chassidus.

The foundation of a Chassidic life, as explained in Chassidus, is **lifting up the head**. The purpose of hiskashrus to the Rebbe MH"M is so that he can "Raise up the head of

the Jewish people,” and “When you raise up the head of the Jewish people” – i.e., lifting the head to the proper height.

Why is the head afforded this special treatment? Aren’t the other limbs important too? What is this raising of the head that we are talking about?

THE BODY FOLLOWS THE HEAD

The Rebbe explains the importance of the head in connection with something surprising that Yaakov Avinu does when he “encountered the place (the place of the Mikdash) and slept there.” Before he lay down “he took from the stones of the place and placed them around his head.”

The Rebbe asks: Why did he only protect his head? Didn’t the rest of his body need protection? The answer is that if you protect the head, the rest of the body is naturally protected as well. If you don’t protect the head, it is very hard and nigh impossible to protect the rest of the body.

What does it mean when we say that a head is or isn’t protected? The law is that you must wear a helmet if you ride a motorcycle and every soldier on duty has to wear a helmet, because the head needs the greatest protection. If it is injured, the rest of the body is in danger.

Chassidus explains that a protected head is a head that is where a Jewish head is supposed to be. If the head is involved in matters of heaven, the rest of the body goes along. If the head is involved in seeking a higher standard of living, all the person’s powers and talents will be dragged along in that pursuit.

What the head is interested in is readily apparent. Someone, whose head is interested and takes pleasure in intellectual pursuits, won’t be found sitting at the table with people whose enjoyment in life is

gastronomical delights. Although intellectuals also eat, since food is not their world, they don’t belong among gourmands whose level of intellect does not enable them to understand and discuss intellectual matters.

The Rebbe Rayatz, for example, spent an entire Shabbos at a tavern in order to meet with a professor, to be able to ask him to try and annul a decree. The Rebbe describes what kind of a Shabbos it was for the Rebbe Rayatz, in which he had to be in the company of drunken gentiles, whose goal in life was to drink alcohol.



Based on this idea, we can understand the Gemara which says, “The body follows the head.”

Chassidim would say that no matter how high a person jumps, he cannot jump higher than his head. In other words, if you want to be elevated, you need to raise the head. If the head is involved in an elevated quality of life, then the entire body will enjoy this quality too.

The Rebbe said children should not dress up or act the part of an evil person because identifying with this person causes the child to think and feel like him, and if the head is

immersed in something negative, it can affect one’s general behavior.

IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE HEAD

The Rambam alludes to the idea of working on the head when he says that all mitzvos (connected with various limbs of the body) were given in order to correct one’s *deios* (character, attitudes). The Rambam says something similar in connection with immersion in a mikva – that the purpose is to enter the soul into the pure waters of knowledge. Chassidim said that this is why the most important thing to do is dunk the head because if you dunk the head in the water, everything is purified too.

The question is: to what or to whom are you bowing your head?

The answer lies in Gemara and halacha, where it says that one shouldn’t walk fully erect; one should lower his head because of the Sh’china.

So the person concerned for the welfare of his soul, who wants to succeed in his avodas Hashem, can attain a kind of spiritual helmet for his head by learning Torah and doing mitzvos like a businessman. As Chassidus explains on the words, “Whoever is *osek* (occupied) with Torah and chesed and t’filla” – it needs to be done like a *baal esek* (a businessman), who is fully immersed in his work. He is only interested in that which is connected with his business. All his thoughts and talk – even while he eats and drinks – revolve around his business. His head is in his business to the point that he dreams about it at night. Sometimes, he gets so involved, he forgets to eat.

That is how we are supposed to be involved in Torah, chesed, and t’filla. They should be our “business” which occupies our head day and night, even if most our time is taken up by making a living or other

matters.

There are stories of Chassidim, who were businessmen, who were preoccupied with Torah and mitzvos. Everything they did while working was with the feeling of longing for the moment they could get back to what really interested them. When a certain businessman asked the Rebbe for permission to leave his work and go and teach, so that his work would involve Torah study, the Rebbe said: Who says Hashem wants that? Perhaps your thirst for Torah and mitzvos while in business, your constant yearning for the set time you have for learning, is more precious to Hashem?

WHEN YOU ARE BOUND UP ABOVE

According to how involved the head is in k'dusha, to that extent will it lift a person entirely above this world. This idea was expressed regarding g'dolei Yisroel, for example, it would be said that one was a hands-breadth above the ground or three hands-breadths above the ground.

These were people who walked the same earth we do, but they lived in other worlds because their heads – i.e. their ideas and thoughts – were in lofty realms, above the earth.

R' Isaac of Homil was once at the home of Rabbi Yisroel of Ruzhin on Erev Shabbos and they sat and discussed lofty matters together. When the assistant came to say it was almost Shabbos, the Ruzhiner put down his pipe. R' Isaac said, "He went up above and I remained down below."

For Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, the "raising of the head" had an impact not just on spiritual matters but on his physical body. On a cold winter day he went to the mikva on the slope of a mountain. He walked the icy, steep path as though he was walking on level ground.

Two young men tried to copy

him, and they fell and badly hurt themselves. R' Meir explained that he didn't slip because *when you are bound up above, you do not fall down below*.

The inner meaning of what he said is that since his head was connected with what is Above, this affected him so that his feet did not slip down below. This is a very high level in which the body is nullified to the neshama.

Perhaps we cannot reach R' Meir's level but every one of us has the ability to prevent a spiritual falling by keeping our heads up. Then, naturally, as we walk down the street, the enticements all around us will hold no allure, because our heads are elsewhere and those other things are beneath us. Not only do they not attract us, we feel repulsed by them, as it says about the Maggid of Mezritch, that when he saw a woman dressed immodestly, he vomited!

This fits with what it says in *Tanya*, chapter six: a child craves and enjoys little, worthless things because his intellect is too limited to appreciate better things.

For example, a person walks with his young son on the street and the son sees things on the sidewalk and stops to pick them up or look at them. The father doesn't even notice them. This is not because the father is walking with his eyes closed. On the contrary, his eyes are open and more alert than his child's, which is why he is taking his son for a walk and not vice versa. Why doesn't the father notice the items that are fascinating to his son? Because we see what is important to us. This is true for the father, but the difference is in what we value. If the father would see a bundle of dollar bills on the sidewalk, he would surely stop and pick them up.

So when we say that if our heads are full of thoughts of k'dusha, there is no room or interest for physical

pleasures. It's not that a person doesn't see them; it's that he doesn't consider them to be of any value.

ROOSTERS OR PEOPLE?

Chassidus, and only Chassidus, enables us to reach a point where physical things hold no significance. Yes, you can distance yourself from physical pleasures by thinking that after 120 years, nothing will remain of them, and you don't take them to the grave, and they don't defend a person in the world of truth. However, this approach doesn't stop you from wanting these pleasures. You refrain from them because you calculated that they aren't worth it. Chassidus on the other hand, by explaining the absence of value in everything the world has to offer, shows a person that right **now** they are of no value, yet the cost is astronomical.

Thanks to this Chassidic line of thought, involvement in mundane things was anathema to Chassidim. The Rebbe Rashab said, for example, about the rav of Kremenchug (who was a Torah scholar) and complained to him about his business, "I've seen feet in galoshes, but this is the first time I'm seeing a head in galoshes...."

Chassidim would also mock those who sit in the sukka preoccupied with their food, saying they did not fulfill the obligation of sukka since their head and most of their body was in the plate and not in the sukka.

People immersed in material things were considered like the prince (in the famous parable) who went crazy and thought he was a rooster. The doctors were unable to cure him. A wise man came and sat with him in the chicken coop and acted like a rooster by eating seeds and crowing, until he managed to make friends with the prince and restore him to his rightful place at the king's table.

If we looked at the two men in the coop, we might not see a difference between them. Both said cock-a-doodle-doo and foraged for worms and seeds. The difference between them was in their way of thinking. The prince thought he was a rooster and thought only of seeds and water in his coop. The wise man knew he had entered the coop temporarily, in order to extricate the prince. The wise man constantly thought of how to attain his goal: getting the prince back to the table in the palace.

This is why we say the morning bracha, “who gives the rooster understanding,” because that is what it’s like in the big chicken coop,

available as dust. The comparison to dust teaches us that although delicacies will abound, we will regard them as dust, something of no value, which nobody bends down to pick up. This is the first step in the demand made of us to **live** with Moshiach – not just to anticipate him and ask for his coming, but to live the sort of life and the sort of high levels we will have in the time of Geula.

Since a person lives primarily what he sees, and this is far stronger than what he hears (which is why you can contest things that were merely heard, even if you heard them from reliable people), how can a person live with the truth of all

“Whoever sat in jail one time – that was his chiyuv (obligation) according to halacha. If he sat two times – that was hiddur (beautifying the) mitzva. If he sat three times, that was in the category of mechezi k’yehora (showing off).”

which is this world. Some of us are fixated on seeds, physical pleasures. The wise ones, those who learn Chassidus, know that temporarily, seeds (physicality) serve as their food although it is not fit for humans, and so their heads are focused on the task for which they entered the coop: to bring lots of roosters out of there to the king’s table which is set with an array of Torah and mitzvot.

THE CHABAD CHASSIDIC OPTICIAN

We’ll achieve perfection of this level in the era of Geula, when delicacies will be as common and

created things (that it is really the G-dly energy that gives it existence), when we can’t see it?

We **see** this truth in Torah and it is alluded to in Chazal in numerous places. For example, it says “ten, ten was the spoon” in the gifts of the N’siim. The two times it says “ten” allude to the Ten Commandments, which correspond to the Ten Utterances. In other words, through the Ten Commandments, the Torah, it is possible to **see** the Ten Utterances, the word of Hashem (“Let there be light. Let there be a heaven, etc.”) which creates and brings the world into existence, constantly, every day.

Because of the spiritual descent of the generations, we have stopped seeing the Ten Utterances by means of Torah. So in Hashem’s great kindness, He gave us the Baal Shem Tov and his successors, the Rebbeim and the Rebbe MH”M, and they set up a system to provide vision training and improvement.

We can obtain glasses for every age and level, and whoever wants to can come and be fitted for glasses. These will enable him to see the truth in Chazal within Nigleh of Torah through the teachings of Chassidus in which every maamer and verse loudly proclaims the Divine Utterances within Creation.

The idea that p’nimius ha’Torah functions like glasses to improve our vision is proven in the Zohar, where the wording is “come and **see**,” as opposed to Nigleh where it says, “come and **hear**.” The Rebbe says this is why the first maamer in *Likkutei Torah* starts with the words, “see that Hashem has given you the Shabbos.”

Chassidus can provide the glasses but a person has to take the first step and enter the Chassidic optician’s store. Even if the eye doctor would come to him, he would be required to sit still and drop all his running around after material pursuits so the eye doctor could fit him. If the person doesn’t tell him what he sees and how much he sees, the eye doctor won’t know if the strength (of his Chassidic glasses) is enough or he needs to increase it so he can finally see G-dliness.

BEING NEARSIGHTED =DANGER!

There’s a saying that says that three things must make an impact: **mashke** has to make you intoxicated, **money** has to make you crazy, and **Chassidus** has to refine you. If we see that this was not the result, then apparently, according to his body mass, he needed more

mashke, according to his appetites he needed more money, and according to his coarseness he needed more Chassidus.

In other words, he didn't yet find the right glasses, because Chabad Chassidus has the ability to provide for every prescription.

Perhaps this is what is meant in connection with the Beis HaMikdash, whose windows were narrow on the inside and wide on the outside. It was possible to look out of them and see what was outside, but the reverse, looking in, was not possible. That meant that someone who came to the Beis HaMikdash was actually coming to an optician where he received the glasses that enabled him to see the

can see the treasure, the G-dliness hidden within the material world.

Chassidus says don't allow your head to see things as they appear to someone nearsighted, someone who only sees the material world. In our generation the media try to catch the attention of the nearsighted by massive advertising for websites or products designed only for material pleasure and coloring it with loud, attractive colors.

In order to be saved from their net, we need to use Chassidic lenses which guide a person to raise his head. In Chassidus, proof is brought to show that this is man's primary task, for an animal is made in such a way that it cannot lift up its head and cannot view the sky. Man was

Whenever anything new comes our way, a style of dress, a way of life, a manner of speech or doing something, we first need to check out "whose head was in this" – was it the head of someone with fear of Heaven? A servant of G-d? A rav? Then that tells us that Torah rested its head here and this is for me. But if it's product of a non-Jew or (l'havdil) that of a Jew whose views are currently that of a non-Jew, what does it have to do with me?

We would avoid putting our heads down on a pillow of someone who had lice, even though there are various methods of removing them. Spiritually, it's much worse because someone afflicted with "spiritual lice," views that express undesirable values, cannot be easily gotten rid of, and even after you get rid of them, an impression remains.

One who protects his soul will keep his distance from them because prevention from contagion is easier and more effective than fighting infection, and this is done with the teachings of Chassidus. If a person feels that such worldly matters are beneath him to even hear about and they do not resonate for him (just as he does not relate to the behavior of animals or primitive peoples) then there is no need to fight to remove these things from him because to begin with, he did not allow them in.

Chassidim would also mock those who sit in the sukka preoccupied with their food, saying they did not fulfill the obligation of sukka since their head and most of their body was in the plate and not in the sukka.

world the way the Beis HaMikdash saw it, and not the way someone saw it who was immersed in the world from his end.

Viewing things from the perspective of the Beis HaMikdash means it's not the world that dictates to you how to see things, but the Torah, particularly p'nimius ha'Torah. Everybody knows that a nearsighted person would be a fool (or worse) if he drove a car or crossed the street, because he cannot see properly and he endangers himself and others.

A nearsighted person who can only see three feet away will not see a great treasure that is four feet away. When you give him glasses, he

created to walk erect, in a way that enables him to raise his head heavenward.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok taught us that sometimes we need mesirus nefesh for this, and it can be uncomfortable, like not sleeping in a bed for a few weeks, the main thing being not putting your head down where who knows who put his head and his ideas. Every effort must be made to protect the head, for "as the head goes, so goes the body." It's hot and uncomfortable for a soldier to wear a helmet, but he doesn't remove it, for his life depends on it.

BEING CONNECTED TO THE ROSH B'NEI YISROEL

To "lift up" your head above the lowly world is a constant challenge. There's no ignoring the fact that the world holds some attraction for us. With Moshiach's coming we will be uplifted and will take pleasure and be moved by that which suits our spiritual standing, for without the demand for material merchandise, it won't be marketed and available for sale, just like nobody is trying to sell

horses and wagons to those who have at least two cars.

As long as the material world threatens to flood us with waves of licentious materiality, we need help to keep our heads above water. Hiskashrus to the Rebbe – the **Rosh B'nei Yisroel**, and cleaving to his teachings and instructions, are what enable us to “protect our head” in these final moments of galus.

The Rebbe's head is above all limitations and is focused upon the infinite vastness of the Divine. The Rebbe Maharash alluded to this to the innkeeper in Lubavitch to whom the Rebbe promised many guests on Yom Tov. The man had cooked and

worked hard and waited for hours until the Rebbe's promise was fulfilled close to candle lighting time.

When he asked the Rebbe how he knew that many guests were coming when they were not visible in the distance, the Rebbe said: When you are high up, you can see much further!

So this year, on Rosh HaShana when we bless and are blessed “that we be the head and not the tail” (and this definitely doesn't mean that each of us should be the head because that's not a good situation when you have many “heads”), let us wish and hope that we merit to connect to the Rebbe who is the

Rosh B'nei Yisroel, who will lift us up above the vanities of the world to Yemos HaMoshiach, and that we merit to put our heads into those things which the Rebbe's holy head is in. A brief glance in the sichos shows that the Rebbe is involved in preparing the world – and the miniature world which is man – for Geula.

May we protect our heads so they are immersed solely in “pure waters of knowledge” and may we merit to soon see the fulfillment of the promise, “for the land will be full of knowledge of Hashem” with the true and complete Redemption.



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FATHERS AND SONS LEARNING TOGETHER

By Yisroel Yehuda

In Chabad communities in Tzfas, Kfar Chabad, Rechovot, Nachas Har Chabad, Lud, and Yerushalayim, many have joined the popular Avot U'Banim organization. This is the Avot U'Banim International program, founded and directed by Rabbi Dovid Hershkowitz of Yerushalayim, that facilitates fathers and sons to learn together in shul for an hour a week. It originated in Eretz Yisroel and now has over 1,300 affiliated locations in Israel, North America, England, and France. The movement is spreading to Anash around the country and the world. * We hope to soon hear of Avot U'Banim in Crown Heights, Morristown, Montreal, Toronto, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, Melbourne, London – wherever Anash communities are to be found.*

The worldwide Avot U'Banim movement has a promotional video clip featuring the 11-year-old Shloime, a boy who has everything. He's smart, has concerned parents, a nice home, games, and friends, but he lacks one thing – an involved father, a father who treats him with at least the same level of seriousness as he does his work and other involvements.

Shloime calls his father at work and asks to speak to him. His father says, "I'm very busy now, we'll talk at night, okay?"

On another occasion, Shloime calls his father's cell phone. His father says, "Listen, I'm in the middle of another conversation right now. We'll speak another time."

Late at night, when his father comes home, Shloime hands him a sum of money. When his father asks what it's for, Shloime says it's all his savings. "I see that you are very busy and your time is worth money. So I want to buy an hour of your time for myself."

The film drives home the point that some fathers have time for everything but their children. Their children learn that time with their own fathers can only be bought.

* * *

Seven years ago, the *mara d'asra* of the Chabad community in Tzfas, Rabbi Levi Bistritzky a"h, called the gabbaim of the Heichal Levi Yitzchok Shul. He told them that he



had heard about an idea of gathering together fathers and sons for an hour a week to learn together. He asked them to start a similar initiative in the Chabad community in Tzfas.

The gabbaim (Rabbi S.Z. Gruzman, R' Yoram Ma'uda, and R' Aharon Shiffman) organized the new program. Since then, it has picked up speed and has been adopted by some of the large Chabad communities in Eretz Yisroel and the world.

This idea first began with the International Avot U'Banim organization, whose goal is to unite all fathers and their sons for an hour of learning a week. All sorts of communities participate from knitted kippot to Neturei Karta.

Six years ago, the then-director of the Vaad in Kfar Chabad, Rabbi Menachem Lerer, organized a similar program. He was looking for a way to strengthen the father-son bond. Someone mentioned Avot U'Banim and that's all it took for him to get it off the ground. Since then, the Vaad of Kfar Chabad financially supports the program.

HOW DOES AVOT U'BANIM WORK?

What does Avot U'Banim offer?

Every father and son(s) is invited for an hour of learning during the week. It usually takes place Shabbos afternoon, though in other places it takes place Motzaei Shabbos or Thursday night.

During this hour, father and son are study partners. They can pick any topic they like: reviewing material taught in school, studying for a test, a sicha, etc. At the end of the hour, nosh is distributed and each child is entered into a raffle for a book or other prize.

At first glance, it sounds quite ordinary. Something like a Yeshivas Erev, but when you hear educators as well as parents talk about it, you begin to realize that this is something very special.

What's so special about this weekly learning?

"It's very simple," says R' Gruzman (who serves in three capacities: as a mechanech, organizer of Avot U'Banim in Tzfas,

and a parent who comes every week to learn with his sons). "At Avot U'Banim, the boy gets his father!"

"In today's day and age," explains a parent to *Beis Moshiach*, "it's very hard to give a child one's full attention. The home is busy with all sorts of things and when the daily tasks are finished, late at night, the child is already asleep and his parents are very tired. Although we all intend on giving our children the proper attention, it is often done halfheartedly. We talk to the child but our head is elsewhere.

"In this fantastic program, the father 'has to' leave himself and his burdens out of the picture. He has this one hour of the week, which he knows his son looks forward to. The external reasons are nosh, raffles, 'everyone is going,' etc. but the real reason is that the boy wants his father!

"The father goes to shul with his son and even before they get there, just the walking is something special for the child. It's like going to buy shoes for a child, for example, where the child finds the entire excursion an experience.

“They arrive at shul and they find the s’farim they need and sometimes they decide together which to take (and this is very important). The father sits down with his son and they learn together.

“To children, what people say is very important. For some boys, the very fact that their friends see them sitting with their fathers is what counts. See, he also shows up with his father. Fathers need to take this into account when they think they can’t make it. A child can feel inferior if he doesn’t manage to get his father to come with him to learn.”

R’ Aharon Halperin, an old-time mechanech and the one responsible for Avot U’Banim in Kfar Chabad, presents another perspective:

“This short study period can change the basis for a child’s thinking. In school, a boy knows that you learn because you have to learn. Then his father comes to learn and he doesn’t have a test coming up in Gemara, and he doesn’t need to be in yeshiva at eight in the morning. Abba, who

always does ‘important things,’ comes and learns for an hour with his son.

“What does this tell the boy? That learning is also something important, at least as important as banks and work, and Abba’s involvements. The son constantly hears about work, banks, and gemachs. To him, they are of primary importance.

“Now that his father devotes an entire hour to learning, this tells the child that learning is also very important! The boy will want to copy his father and when he learns, he will feel that he is also doing something important, something adults do.”

R’ Aharon didn’t mention this, but from what he said we understand that when arriving back home, it’s a good idea to talk with the rest of the family about the learning – what was learned, how it went, etc. These five additional minutes will solidify within the child the idea that learning is so important that even his father and the other adults talk about it. It’s a topic of conversation at home.

Another old-time educator that I spoke to explained:

“This time spent together is a foundation for listening and communication between father and son. One of the well-known psychologists tells of parents who came to him who were very involved in their professions. They had a fifteen-year-old son who simply refused to interact with them. They weren’t deemed worthy of his consideration.

“The parents told the psychologist about their son, how terrible they felt over the situation and about their fears for his future. Then the psychologist spent some with the son and the boy said, ‘When I was little, and I wanted to spend time with my father or mother, they had no time for me.

They were busy studying for a degree and with their careers. Now, I’m also busy. Now, I have no time for them.’”

What does the father get out of the learning?

“The father also benefits. When he learns with his son, he is informed about what is going on with him. Many parents only find out about their child’s progress at parent-teacher conferences or when they receive report cards, and that’s not enough.

“A father who attends Avot U’Banim knows how his son is progressing, week by week. Teachers say that they see an improvement in those children who join the program. The child knows that he will be learning with his father and that challenges him to know what he is taught in school and to give nachas to his father.

“The father, who knows where his son is ‘holding,’ pushes both the teacher and his son to do better. And the teacher, because of the father’s involvement, pays more attention to the child and his needs (that is the case in every profession – if someone is standing over you, things move).

“Aside from that, the relationship itself with his son gives the father satisfaction. Every father loves his son, and if fathers weren’t so busy and burdened, they would want to spend more time with their children. An hour a week with a child is enjoyable for the father, even if his son doesn’t know the material that well.

“Most importantly, because they learn together, the father becomes involved in his son’s life. He realizes that his concern for the child is not only in providing him with food and clothing but in his learning too. He gets to hear stories that he wouldn’t ordinarily get to hear because his son doesn’t relate them when people are only half-listening.

ONE HOUR A WEEK? THAT’S VERY LITTLE!

The Rebbe Rayatz writes:

My father proclaimed at a Farbrengen: Just as wearing T’fillin every day is a Mitzva commanded by the Torah to every individual regardless of his standing in Torah, whether deeply learned or simple, so too is it an absolute duty for every person to spend a **half-hour every day** thinking about the Torah-education of his children, and to do everything in his power – and beyond his power – to inspire his children to follow the path along which they are being guided.

(HaYom Yom 22 Teives)

“The father wants to hear the next installment in the story his son’s teacher is telling the class. At work, he becomes nervous at ten in the morning because he knows that his dear son is about to take a test in Chumash. His role is not merely one in which he asks, ‘What did you get on the test?’ This emotional connection between father and son deepens, and contributes a great deal towards their future relationship.”

Even the teachers benefit from the program. R’ Aharon Halperin says that often, parents will inform the teacher of something that wasn’t explained properly. “My son didn’t know this part and I asked another father who was sitting near us and it was the same with his son.” There are many such examples and they clearly show how valuable this once-a-week session is.

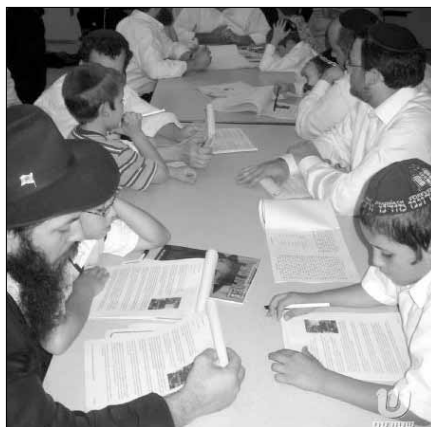
IT’S NOT A TEST

There are children who are not interested in the program. Some attend it but it doesn’t work out well. On this point all mechanchim are in agreement: In Avot U’Banim the father is not supposed to test his son on what he learned in school! The child will associate what is meant to be a wonderful, bonding experience with tension and will presumably refuse to cooperate.

What if the father wants to know what his son knows?

“It’s best if the child leads the Avot U’Banim hour,” says one parent. “It’s a good idea to ask him what he wants to learn, what material he is having a hard time with, and what needs more explanation. The child will see that his father came to help him, not to test him, and will usually accept the help. This way, the father gets the information he needs and the child gets the help he needs.

“I keep workbooks on the subjects being learned with me.



When we go to Avot U’Banim I suggest that we learn something additional to what he learned in school. A different explanation, something the Rebbe said perhaps. In older grades you can learn an easy Tosafos from *Shaarei Tosafos*. It adds a lot.”

In those areas where Avot U’Banim takes place on Shabbos, everybody can attend. When it takes place on a weekday, some parents have a problem. They can be occupied at that hour; some even work at that time. What should they do? How much needs to be sacrificed for Avot U’Banim?

R’ Aharon Halperin: “I know a father whose job requires visiting customers’ homes in the evenings. He told me that he does his best to keep Thursday nights free. This entails a mighty effort on his part. His son knows that his father comes home at ten o’clock every night, when he is nearly in bed, but on Thursday nights, his father comes home early, especially for him, at eight o’clock!

“Other parents send an older bachur or a grandfather with their son. And sadly, there are orphans and we make sure there is someone to learn with them.”

One teacher declared emphatically, “A father that doesn’t have even one hour a week for his son is in a bad state. Every father must sit with his son once a week in

addition to the hour on Shabbos!”

What if the father works at that time?

“The parent needs to do his utmost to make sure that hour is available to his son, and if all else fails, he must set aside another hour during the week to learn with his son.

“I cannot judge anybody, but in my experience as a teacher, and knowing my students, I know that this is extremely important and almost anything is worth sacrificing for it.”

What is a father to do if he has several sons?

Mechanchim think that the time should be divided among the children. Some parents have one of their sons learn with a friend in the same class along with that boy’s father. Another way of doing it is to learn something together with all the children, a sicha or something that pertains to all of them.

How many people are participating in the program?

“Baruch Hashem, we have over 200 pairs of fathers and sons coming every Shabbos,” says R’ Gruzman. “The parents think highly of the program and come in droves. The community supports it and we get regular donations of nosh and prizes from Keren Aryeh Leib, named for Rabbi Kaplan a”h, from Galgal HaKodesh, and Super-Chabad.”

In Kfar Chabad, about 150 parents participate and the proportion is similar in Rechovot, Nachala, Lud, Yerushalayim and elsewhere.

Says one parent, “Parents recognize the importance of Avot U’Banim, and thank the organizers for running it every week. The numbers grow with each new season. Surely, every hour gives the Rebbe nachas.”

‘ARISE AND SING, THOSE WHO DWELL IN THE DUST’

By Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo
Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

In response to requests by our readers, we now present the fifth in a series of excerpts from “V’Torah Yevakshu MiPihu,” Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo’s seifer on the Rebbe’s teachings regarding Chabad chassidus, its approach to emuna, and its various customs.



6. THE REVIVAL OF MOSHIACH AND HIS STATE OF ETERNAL LIFE FOR THE REDEMPTION OF ISRAEL

The Rebbe shlita himself explains in a sicha from Shavuot 5710 (Toras Menachem, Vol. 1, pg. 100): “While the order of things is that the Resurrection of the Dead will follow the coming of Moshiach, there are certain special individuals who will rise at the Resurrection before the coming of Moshiach. Foremost among them is my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, who will return clothed in a body, and he will come...and gather all the Jewish People and proclaim: The time has come to go out from the exile; come let us go to our Holy Land.”

The Rebbe also brought on numerous occasions the sources on what is explained in the holy Zohar (Vol. I, 140a) that there are tzaddikim who arise at the beginning of the days of Moshiach. The Gemara explains (Yoma 5a) that already at the beginning of the Redemption, “Moshe and Aharon will be with them.” Similarly, the Tosafos states clearly (P’sachim 114b) “that when (the Beis HaMikdash) will be rebuilt, Moshe and Aharon will be with us.” These sources prove that the great tzaddikim will actually arise at the beginning of the days of Moshiach (even though the general Resurrection will only take place forty years after the ingathering of

the exiles – Zohar I, 139a. See also Brachos 49a, Tanchuma 58:11).

In *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 2, pg. 518, the Rebbe writes: “There will soon be, ‘Arise and sing, those who dwell in the dust,’ and he will be among them, and the Rebbe will take us out of exile.” He adds by explaining that the Resurrection of certain individuals was also in the past, “and as is known, there are numerous stories in the Talmud, Midrash, and from tzaddikim who came back to life. As our Rabbis, of blessed memory, have said (Avoda Zara 10b), “the lesser one of you are able to revive the dead.”

We also find this innovation of the Resurrection of great tzaddikim taking place at the beginning of the

days of Moshiach in halachic texts. Similarly, the Aruch L'Ner (Nida 61b) explains that "in my humble opinion, it appears according to what is said (Yoma 5a) on how they [i.e., the Kohanim] will dress in the Future to Come – that Aharon and his sons will come, and Moshe is with them. The Gemara states clearly that when the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt and the Temple service will be restored, Moshe and Aharon and his sons will rise at the Resurrection of the Dead, even though it's not yet the time for the Resurrection in the entire world. For there is no difference between these times and the days of Moshiach, except for the subjugation of the [Gentile] kingdoms. Similarly, the Zohar mentions that at the time of Moshiach's coming, great tzaddikim will rise at the Resurrection of the Dead. Rabbi Yochanan states regarding this (Gemara Sanhedrin, beginning of Chapter 11) that they will give truma to Aharon HaKohen."

In the Ridbaz's halachic responsa, Vol. 3, Sec. 1069 (5644), he issues the following as a halachic ruling: "You have asked me, my dear friend, about the time of the Resurrection, according to what you have received from your fathers that it is close to the seventh millennium with the onset of the Shabbos of the world, which is [an era of] utter rest, etc. Thus, will the tzaddikim and the supremely pious that died in sanctification of His Name in the exile neither see the benefit of the Jewish People nor rejoice in their happiness?"

"Answer: I was bothered all of my days over this matter, until I saw the words of the Ritva, of blessed memory, in the name of his teachers, *nishmasan Eden*, that there are two Resurrections. There is a specific one for the tzaddikim who died in the exile, close in proximity to the coming of Moshiach, and they will merit all the days of Moshiach in body and soul, seeing the benefit of

the Jewish People and the building of the Beis HaMikdash, and they will rejoice in the joy in return for their avoda, etc.

"Then, there is a general one close to the onset of Shabbos as I have received, called the world of T'chiya (Revival), regarding which it is said, 'And many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken,' etc. I have seen again that it is accepted that there are two Resurrections, and on the first Resurrection, it is stated in the prophecy of Zecharia son of Berechiah, 'Old men and women shall yet sit at the gates of Yerushalayim.' It is further derived on the basis of identical expressions, where the pasuk here states, 'and they went on

These sources prove that the great tzaddikim will actually arise at the beginning of the days of Moshiach.

their staffs,' while it states in the story of Elisha reviving the dead, 'staff' – that each case of the use of the word 'staff' refers to a Resurrection of the Dead... Thus, we learn from the pasuk, 'Old men and women, etc., because of old age,' that it refers to the first Resurrection, as there will be no aging in the latter one, because Shabbos, which is an eternal state of rest, will immediately commence in a world that will be in a constant state of Shabbos. Remember this matter always, for it is a great comfort for those suffering the pain of the exile and the yoke of subjugation that their eyes will still see Tzion, a tranquil dwelling place, the palace on its proper site, and the customary

holy service speedily in our days. Amen."

The Ridbaz writes further in his seifer *Migdal Dovid* (83a): "I will write good tidings and words of tremendous comfort to those suffering from exile and the yoke of destruction, and those who died in sanctification of His Name and did not see the benefit of the Jewish People, the building of the Beis HaMikdash and its avoda, as the time of the Resurrection is the end of the sixth millennium...and thus, they did not see the benefit of the Jewish People. Indeed, they have said that there are two Resurrections – a specific one for those tzaddikim who died in the exile and did not see the benefit, in order that they should merit to see the benefit of the Jewish People, and a general one at the end of the sixth millennium. The scholars of the kabbala, the Ramban, the Rashba, and the Ritva all agree... It is the truth without question."

See the seifer 515 *T'fillos* (T'filla 2) by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, who composed a special prayer to revive Moshiach. See Sanhedrin 96b, which discusses how Moshiach is called "*bar niflei*," because the beginning of his birth was similar to a "*neifel*" (stillborn), whose birth was not completed, and the firmness of Moshiach is the restoration of the fallen (*nofeles*) sukka of Dovid. See the Malbim's commentary (Amos 9:11) that "the sukka of Dovid" is the leader of the generation from the House of Dovid that fell, and rising from his fall is the coming of the Redemption. (Thus is in accordance with what the Rambam writes (Hilchos Melachim, beg. of Chapter 11), "In the future, Melech HaMoshiach will **arise**," i.e., from falling.)

All this can possibly explain the reason why there is no contradiction between the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz on Yud Shvat 5710 and the belief that he is Melech HaMoshiach.

AS THE SHEPHERD WITH HIS SHEEP...

By Tzipora Eren

A story about t'shuva, presented for these days of t'shuva and for the birthday of the Tzemach Tzedek on 29 Elul.

PART I

"My G-d!" He trembled as he saw the glittering palace of the governor before him. "The ferocious dogs will rip me apart," he mumbled in terror and his heart raced. He imagined a volley of bullets aimed at him from the revolver of the guard.

He could hardly breathe and was about to retrace his steps. "I cannot, Rebbe. I simply cannot."

Then he remembered the holy name that the Tzemach Tzedek had given him before he left his beis midrash on his mission...

An arrogant anti-Semite lived in the beautiful palace on the hill. He made every Jew in the area tremble in fear, especially those who had to lease land from him.

He would demand the rental payment and throw hapless tenants into a pit if they were late in paying him.

He used every opportunity to mock them and to disturb their peace. He would scream wildly when he was drunk. Seeing a Jew infuriated him and he would yell insults and humiliate the luckless passerby.

The Jewish mode of dress particularly angered him when his Jewish subjects filled the marketplace to make purchases Erev Shabbos or Erev Yom Tov. He would surprise them as he appeared in his magnificent coach pulled by mighty horses. He rode past them shouting insults, and made sure to pass by their battei

midrash and shuls, vilifying all he saw.

The suffering Jews poured out their hearts to their Rebbe, "Rebbe, ad masai?"

PART II

The Tzemach Tzedek finished his maamer and went to his room, leaving his flock of Chassidim bedazzled by its depth. Some of them had seen his father-in-law, the Mittler Rebbe; the older ones among them had even seen the Alter Rebbe. Everyone turned to the maskilim, wordlessly urging them to explain the lofty ideas.

It was an atmosphere of spiritual elevation and it overpowered their *yeshus* (egos). If only they could remain in this holy place forever. If only the rays of majesty spread out to the dark exile and weakened the might of the wicked and subdued them. Perhaps then there would be an end to their misery.

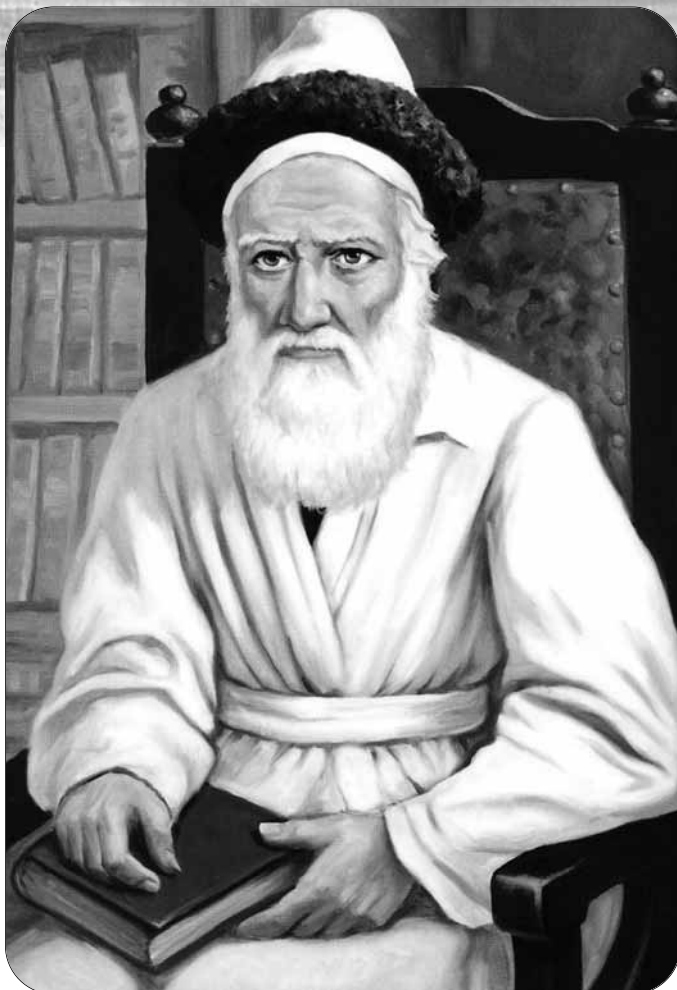
"L'chaim!" called out an old Chassid.

"L'chaim u'l'v'racha!" answered the Chassidim heartily. Their souls took pleasure in the G-dly secrets hidden within the words of their Rebbe. The mashpia revealed the depths of the holy words quite clearly, until they also sensed the intoxicating wine (i.e., *p'nimius ha'Torah*) deep in their souls.

He was able to paint a picture with words so that it seemed you could see them before your very eyes, live, and transforming you into a detail in it.

A Chassid noticed the gabbai enter and whisper something to one of the other Chassidim. The latter got up and followed the gabbai to the Rebbe.

"Rebbe!" the Chassid cried out as he recoiled in shock. The Rebbe had commanded him to visit the wicked governor and to



The Tzemach Tzedek

tell him the time had come to repent. “How can I do that? The dogs will rip me apart! The guard will kill me instantly as I approach! And if I still manage to make it to the palace, won’t he kill me before I give over the Rebbe’s message? How can I do this? How?”

The Chassid looked imploringly to the Rebbe. If only he could carry out this daring task. If only he could please the Rebbe.

The Rebbe’s noble face calmed him somewhat and he felt awed by the Rebbe’s gaze. “Could I be arguing against the Rebbe’s authority? Could I disagree with his holy order? What about the power of the *meshaleiach* (the one who sends)? His conscience bothered him.

“Rebbe, I will go right away on this holy mission.” He turned to leave the room, but the Rebbe’s soft, deliberate voice stopped him.

“As you approach the palace, you can think about the holy name I gave you. Meditate upon it as you enter and do not stop thinking about it until you leave the gate on your way out of the palace.”

The Chassid nodded and his eyes lit up. He felt overjoyed though other emotions were felt as well. He kissed the mezuzah and felt that an angel was accompanying him to protect him.

He heard a Chassidic melody from the hall he had left earlier. How sweet it was. He felt how his neshama was opening up. "Rebbe, I am going on your shlichus!"

PART III

He closed his eyes in order to concentrate on the holy name the Rebbe had given him, so as not to become confused by the palace and the dogs. He whispered verses and parts of a maamer as his heart raced.

He approached his destination, step by step. Without paying attention to the guards and the dogs he moved forward determinedly, as he focused on the holy name with all his might.

He heard a Chassidic melody from the hall he had left earlier. How sweet it was. He felt how his neshama was opening up. "Rebbe, I am going on your shlichus!"

His Rebbe's holy countenance was clearly revealed before him. He walked straight towards the figure standing opposite him.

"The Rebbe said it is time to repent," he blurted out to the portly man who sat facing him.

The governor was stunned by the bearded Jew who had suddenly appeared before him, without prior warning. There he was, in his palace. The nerve!

The Chassid closed his eyes, knowing that this was the critical moment. He focused on the holy name...

When he opened his eyes he observed signs of humility on the governor's supercilious face. He noticed that the hatred and pride

had dissipated. The fear one usually felt in his presence had vanished. Where were the vicious rants, the anger and arrogance?

"The Rebbe said it is time to repent..." echoed in the room and the figure of the Chassid slipped out without anybody noticing.

PART IV

It was an atmosphere of spiritual elevation. If only I could remain in his holy place forever. If only the rays of majesty spread out to the dark exile and weakened the might of the wicked and subdued them, for then perhaps there would be an end to my misery. This is what the

stranger in a low voice. He just now felt what a pure life can be, like a newborn baby.

Among those who knew who the stranger was, some dared to ask the Rebbe, "If in your holiness you are able to transform a person and lift him from the lowest pit to the highest height, why then, Rebbe, do we work so hard in our efforts of t'shuva? Why doesn't the Rebbe bring about these changes within us too?"

The Rebbe replied, "As a shepherd supervises his flock, having the sheep pass under his rod, so too Hashem supervises, looking with a general glance and with individual supervision, seeing that some sheep slide down while others climb the hills. Some turn to winding paths and some go straight ahead. Can the shepherd run after every one of them and bring them back?"

The Chassidim listened closely and wondered: Some go down into the depths of the valley in sins between man and his fellow, and some turn to the twisting paths of sins between man and G-d. Some climb high on rungs of arrogance and pride and some sink into the depths of despair, bitterness, and depression.

The Rebbe went on, "If a sheep is injured and falters; if it falls and cannot release itself from the brush on its own, will the shepherd's shouts help? Will the sheep be able to extricate itself from the brambles by the sound of the flute? Will the blasts of a horn help arouse it or guide it?"

The Chassidim were quiet, contemplating the Rebbe's words. The Rebbe concluded, "When a sheep is caught in the brush, the shepherd follows it and releases it gently and compassionately. Then he lifts it, taking it in his arms."

(P'ninei HaKeser vol. 3, p 444)

stranger who had just arrived at the beis midrash thought.

The rays of majesty did indeed spread forth and penetrate the walls of the palace and subdue the klipa, uproot and break it. Like pure water that permeates stone, the light of the yechida had penetrated his soul.

He put down his sack and sat down. "Oy," sighed the stranger. "If only there would be an end to my suffering, an end to my pains."

"L'chaim," called out an old Chassid.

"L'chaim u'l'v'racha," answered the other Chassidim heartily.

"L'chaim," repeated the

SHLICHUS DIARY: NEW ZEALAND

By Ben Tzion Sasson

*Most people think that a brief shlichus during the holiday season shouldn't be too difficult. However, once you're on the scene things look different – unexpected twists and turns, obstacles and miracles, along with shocking surprises. * The Tamim, Ben Tzion Sasson spent Tishrei 5766 in New Zealand, where he experienced shlichus on a whole new level. * Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur on the far side of the world.*

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand is known throughout the world as one of the most beautiful places on the planet, a veritable Eden on earth. This reputation is deserved when you factor in the gorgeous and diverse mosaic of panoramas all in one place: prehistoric rain forests, sky-high active volcanoes, snow-peaked mountaintops, sparkling clear blue waters flowing through stunning fjords, shooting geysers, massive waterfalls pouring into the ocean, golden beaches, glittering icebergs, endless fields of green dotted with wooly white sheep grazing

peacefully. All of this is topped off by vast expanse of sky, which explodes into intense colors during sunrise and sunset.

These magical vistas are spread over two large islands – the smaller of the two is 270,000 square kilometers, more than ten times the size of modern day Israel. All of this land houses only four million people, with seventy-five percent of the population concentrated in a number of larger cities, which leaves a lot of territory in its original natural state.

Being an island country on the far end of the earth, New Zealand is

cut off from the tensions, international struggles, and wars that affect the rest of the world. With its burgeoning farming and tourist industries, its laidback democratic political system, the natural beauty and quality of life, nothing seems to threaten the idyllic tranquility of this country (which doesn't even have any snakes or dangerous animals). It's no surprise then that the most common expression that you hear from the locals is, "No worries."

Our shlichus was to the city of Christchurch, capitol of the Canterbury region, which is the largest city on the southern island. The city is on the western coast of the island, surrounded by stunning views and the endless plains of Canterbury, with their rolling green hills extending to the ocean, which makes for a breathtaking contrast. The population of the city is close to 300,000 and it serves as a secondary entrance point into the country, particularly to the southern island.

SETTING OUT

Three years ago, the T'mimim Aaron and Maor Cohen opened a "Chabad House for Tourists" in the Canterbury region. The Chabad House is active mainly during the summer months, when many tourists visit the area, and it is run by bachurim who rotate every few months.

A month before the holiday

season, the plans for the trip started to take shape. Despite our concerns as to whether it was worth going this time of the year when the tourist season is slow, we decided to go for it. After a lot of logistical and financial preparations, as well as organizing the spiritual aspects, I set out alone and I would be joined by another bachur for Yom Kippur.

After many bureaucratic hassles, the flight was underway. I was carrying a large shipment of materials that would provide for all our needs throughout the month of Tishrei. During the flight, I was concerned about the possible problems at customs because I was bringing in food. In fact, enough food to last the whole month for myself and the many guests that we anticipated for Shabbasos and the holidays. I was worried since New Zealand is known as a place that is very particular when it comes to legal matters.

After a total of twenty hours in the air, I deplaned, exhausted and worried, whispering a silent prayer that I pass through customs quickly and successfully. However, one of the officers sent me off to a side room, where I was asked to sit and wait.

When the officer finally entered the room, he appeared particularly angry and hostile. He fired a series



Havdala following Rosh HaShana

of questions at me: Why did you come? Who sent you? What are you here for? What do you do? Who is funding your trip? Each question was repeated with many variations, in order to try to trip me up and complicate matters. I answered softly, trying to explain myself as well as possible considering my less-than-perfect English.

Suddenly, he started screaming at me that I was contradicting myself in my answers. My attempts to explain that he wasn't able to understand me properly due to my deficiency in speaking the English language were useless. Even an attempt to clarify the purpose of my

visit with the contact person who was supposed to meet me at the airport was unsuccessful. That being the case, he began opening all of my luggage and dumping out all the contents without any consideration. S'farim, food, clothing, and many other things were tossed about, much of it thrown on the floor and I wasn't allowed to touch anything.

I couldn't contain myself and asked him, "Why are you behaving this way? What did I do wrong that you are making such a mess?"

He gave me an angry look and just about screamed, "You want to know why I am behaving like this? It's because you came here with drugs."



I was stunned. After a brief moment to collect my wits, I responded, “Do you seriously think that a Jewish rabbi, who came to officiate at the holiday prayers for the local Jewish community, would bring in drugs?” He seemed to be thrown off for a moment. “Are you sure about what you are saying,” he asked in quiet voice.

“Please, check all the valises,” I offered.

He gave me a disbelieving look and his tone of voice changed dramatically. It was obvious that he was beginning to calm down. A few minutes later, two drug-sniffing dogs were brought into the room, and they began sniffing around me and my luggage. The officer saw the dogs remaining calm, and he calmed

the home of Udi, a local Israeli who was the contact person for everything pertaining to the trip. He was not home, but he had left the door open for me. After Maariv and Krias Shma I feel asleep, exhausted from the difficult trip.

ROSH HA'SHANA

After Shacharis, I loaded up all of my possessions into Udi's car, and we headed off to the Chabad House. When we reached the main thoroughfare in the center of the city, I recognized the office building that housed the Chabad House, from the pictures that the bachurim in New York had given me.

Since it had been some time since any bachurim had come to run

turned out that indeed there were practically no tourists visiting at this time of the year. I wondered whether to prepare a program for Rosh HaShana or not, but the Rebbe saw to it that the question resolved itself.

On the Sunday before the holiday, I found out about an Israeli girl touring the area who called to find out about a program for Rosh HaShana. When I got in touch with her, I found out that she was a religious girl looking for a place to spend the Yom Tov. I told her that I didn't know if I should try to put together a program because I hadn't located any Israeli tourists in the area, but I would be happy to do so and provide for meals as well. She told me that had met three other Israeli girls who were also interested. We made up to meet and work out a plan.

That is how the ball started to get rolling. They came to the Chabad House, where they informed me that they had met another two Israeli guys. So, we started to make a list of supplies we would need along with the menu for the meal.

Parenthetically, one of my chief concerns was the fact that the electricity in the Chabad House was not working, and I had no clue how to deal with it. I was afraid that it would put a damper on celebrating the holiday properly. However, once again, I saw how the Rebbe looks out for his shluchim.

When we came back from our shopping trip for supplies, I was overjoyed to see that the lights were on in the Chabad House. It turns out that one of the Israeli backpackers happened to be walking down that street when he saw the sign for the Chabad House. Upon entering, he saw that there was no electricity and he immediately got to work. He so happened to be an electrician by profession, so it was only a matter of minutes before he

He gave me an angry look and just about screamed, “You want to know why I am behaving like this? It’s because you came here with drugs.” I was stunned...

down as well. He began to apologize, explaining that it seemed strange to him that a tourist had arrived in New Zealand for a month and someone else was funding his trip – it had seemed to fit the profile of a drug smuggler.

He asked me to explain why I had come to New Zealand, and I explained about the Chabad movement and the Rebbe MH”M, who looks out for every Jew in the world. When I finished, he replied laughingly, “Next time, when a member of Chabad passes through, I will know how to treat him,” and he let me go on my way.

After another brief flight, I reached the capitol city of Canterbury, where I took a taxi to

the Chabad House, it needed a lot of work to get it into shape for any activities. That Friday, my first day in New Zealand, I devoted to organizing the Chabad House.

I spent Shabbos in Udi's home, and for the meals I made do with a little of the food that I had brought with me. Despite the scarcity of food, the meal went nicely, with words of Torah, stories, and Chassidic niggunim. The following morning, after walking for an hour and a half, I arrived at the local community shul, where there were people already waiting. After brief introductions, we began Shabbos morning prayers.

Rosh HaShana was quickly approaching. After some queries it



Buying fish for the Rosh HaShana meals

got the electricity up and running.

After dividing the cooking chores amongst the tourists, I set out to shop for fish. Before I had even walked one block, I encountered another pair of Israelis. One of them turned to me and in English asked if I speak Hebrew. I answered them in fluent Hebrew and they seemed shocked. It turns out that they had arrived in the city a short time before and tried to locate a Jewish community or a suitable place to spend the holiday. When they were unsuccessful in their search, they decided to go shopping for their holiday needs in order to observe the days in their hotel room. They smiled from ear to ear when they heard that there was a Chabad House, with organized prayers and meals.

By the time I got back to the Chabad House, I was happy to see that the number of people which only yesterday was at a paltry three had now become fifteen. It was only one day ago that I had not even considered having public meals for Israeli tourists.

Two hours before Yom Tov, the kitchen was a beehive of hurried activity, which ended only minutes before sundown. After candle-lighting, we walked in procession towards the local community shul, as the passersby gave us astonished looks. The heart filled with joy and emotion as the old year passed through its final moments and the New Year came in.

I thought to myself about the retraction of the Divine life force that creates the worlds until the following day, as explained in *Tanya*, and that the very next day at the blowing of the shofar, we would crown Hashem as king and “draw down” a new revelation of the G-dly life force that is constantly creating the world every instant.

It was with those thoughts that I entered the synagogue, and—disaster. For a second, I thought that I had come to the wrong place. To my utter shock, I saw men and women sitting intermingled, and if that were not enough, standing on the Torah-reading platform was a female cantor with the musical notes

of the prayers on a music stand next to her, from which she read the words of the siddur, interrupting occasionally with remarks intended to “uplift the atmosphere.”

In my wildest dreams I could not have conjured up such a scene, and on Rosh HaShana, no less. Earlier, I had made contact with the president of the community to ascertain that there would be no problems, and now I had to make a decision on the spot with all eyes upon me.

Immediately, I decided to return to the Chabad House together with the group that I had brought with me. We left the synagogue in a huff. On the way back, we tried to analyze what we had witnessed, but we couldn’t quite believe it. We began davening with song and dance, which lasted for some time.

At the meal, we had close to twenty Israeli trekkers, who enjoyed every second of the four hours. It was a seuda filled with words of Torah about the deeper significance of Rosh HaShana, along with explanations of the mitzva of blowing the shofar from the perspective of Chabad Chassidus. At one point, I suggested that we sing a Chabad song, and before I even finished making my request, they all began singing “Yechi Adoneinu,” which continued with much gusto into the wee hours of the night.

Towards the end of the meal, Udi showed up and told me that the administration of the synagogue had promised that what had occurred that night would not repeat itself in the morning, and that they really hoped I would come along with the guests. We set out hopefully the next morning to the shul. It seems the locals got the message. The seating was separate, and the cantor was a more suitable choice. The services were conducted in an orderly fashion, with the visitors and the locals trying to integrate the prayers and singing.

In the late afternoon hours, the Israelis returned to the Chabad House for classes, which had more of a farbrengen atmosphere.

YOM KIPPUR

The second Shabbos I spent in the city passed happily and successfully, with a small group of tourists participating in the meals. During the following days, I made sure to publicize the times for prayer and the Seuda HaMafsekkes (the meal right before the fast begins) of Yom Kippur in all the places that Israeli tourists congregate.

One day, I was joined by the Tamim Yaakov Dan, who came to help out for the rest of the month.

After he got settled in, we began calling all the Israeli families living in the area in order to invite them to Yom Kippur services. That kicked off our frenzied preparations for the holiest day of the year.

On Wednesday, Erev Yom Kippur, we found ourselves at the Chabad House in a flurry of last minute preparations. A nice size crowd of Israelis was busy preparing the seuda. Meanwhile, we managed to do Kaparos with them. Since we had no chickens, we used money. In the afternoon, we gave out *lekach* (honey cake) that we had brought from New York, wishing all a good and sweet year.

Some time before the fast we

started the meal, which is the main mitzva of the day. The participants enjoyed a festive meal that they had helped prepare themselves. The discussion that developed during the seuda was on the topic of each person's personal Yom Kippur experiences. Each person shared reminiscences of Yom Kippurs past in their parent's homes. Many of those present got a new appreciation for Yom Kippur through hearing some of the Chassidic ideas about the significance of the day.

After Birkas HaMazon, we set of together to the shul, many of the tourists all dressed in white. The strange procession drew a lot of curious stares...

The shul was already packed with the local Jews and their families, many Israeli tourists who came on their own, as well as a nice number of Israeli families living in the area who came in response to our early publicity efforts. This time, there was proper separation, and the atmosphere was appropriately elevated.

At the entrance to the shul, a table was set up with hundreds of candles which had been lit by dozens of women who had come to join the services. It was obvious that for many of them this was a spiritual experience that only happened "once in a year," and for some, once every few years. The spiritual light helped dispel much of the spiritual darkness that has been the lot of this city for many generations.

When the Torah scrolls were taken out of the ark and the cantor began a "Kol Nidrei" that shook the walls, I felt overcome with emotion. It seemed to me that this was the first time that the people of this city would be part of Yom Kippur services carried out according to Jewish law. I looked around me and saw the wide range of Jews who had come for Kol Nidrei – businessmen alongside Israeli backpackers with

A UNIQUE CHALLENGE

During my trip to New Zealand, I was invited to give a lecture before a group called "Christians for Israel." Originally, I refused to even consider it, but the members of the local Jewish community pleaded with me, explaining how it would really benefit the community on many fronts.

I presented the question to various rabbanim and after being given a whole list of conditions it was decided that I should speak.

For an ordinary yeshiva bachur, this presented a difficult challenge, but I knew that I was fulfilling a shlichus of the Rebbe by focusing my talk on the Seven Noachide Laws. I prayed that I wouldn't inadvertently say the wrong thing, and that it should lead to a kiddush Hashem.

The hall was full with members of the group, and the manager of the hall introduced me to the crowd. I began my talk with the concept of shlichus, explaining who the Rebbe is and what is Lubavitch, and from there went on to explain the Rebbe's goal to bring the world to the universal values of righteousness and justice as a preparation for the final Redemption.

I ended with a story of the Baal Shem Tov, drawing a personal lesson for each individual to add even one good deed so that the world will be ready for the revelation of Moshiach.

The people listened attentively and seemed quite moved by the message, and the president of the organization expressed his appreciation by announcing that he was taking on a good resolution in honor of the new Jewish calendar year.





With backpackers in the Chabad House

dreadlocks; elderly locals alongside young children; raggedy Israelis alongside well dressed professionals. All of them looked into their siddurim feeling the awesome emotion of the day. This unique integration between people of varied backgrounds and social standings was expressed beautifully at the end of the services as everyone dispersed and wished each other a good year.

Many of the transient Israelis chose to spend their time during this holy day within the walls of the Chabad House, saying T'hillim or learning a sicha of the Rebbe about the significance of the day.

The high point of the day was obviously, the final prayer of the day, "N'ila." The shul was packed, and in a surprise move, the president of the shul asked me to lead the prayer. In order to get everyone into

the mood, I incorporated Chabad tunes along with Sephardic tunes, and many Jewish "folk" tunes which everybody was familiar with, so that they could all sing along and join in. Within seconds of starting each tune, the entire room became one unified voice calling out, "Open a gate for us, at the time of the closing of the gates."

Before the proclamations at the end of the prayer, I turned to the crowd and explained briefly in Hebrew and English how important it is to focus on the meaning of the words when we loudly proclaim these verses that express our readiness to sacrifice our lives to sanctify His Holy Name. Maybe I'm imagining it, but it seems to me that in all Chabad shul that I have ever davened in, I have never heard such emotion during the saying of the

verses "Shma Yisroel," "Baruch Sheim" and "Hashem hu HaElokim." To my ears, it sounded like a powerful scream from the depths of the heart.

One of the community elders went up to the reader's platform holding an ancient shofar. He blew a long blast that seemed to have the power to break even the most desensitized heart. This was followed by the emotional cry that erupted from the crowd, "L'Shana HaBaa b'Yerushalayim." At that point, I couldn't contain my tears, and when I looked around I saw that I was not the only one.

The prayers ended with a final round of song, and for many of those present it was the first time that they had experienced the holiness of the day, although they were far from their homes in the Holy Land, far from a place of holiness. At the conclusion of Maariv, the crowd gathered in the auditorium for Havdala, along with a light repast to break the fast. Afterwards, there was a mass Kiddush Levana ceremony, and everyone couldn't stop raving about their first proper Yom Kippur experience.

A short while later, we made our symbolic start on a sukkah as we went with a group of Israelis to look for a suitable place to build it in the courtyard of the Chabad House. It seemed to us that it should be a pretty simple undertaking, yet it turned out to be anything but simple.

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GOING TO THE REBBE FOR TISHREI

“AND THEY CONGREGATED TO THE KING SHLOMO, EVERY JEW, IN THE MONTH OF TISHREI”

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman Gafni,
Rosh Yeshivas Ohr T'mimim and
mashpia in B'nei Brak*

The month of Tishrei is called *yerach ha'eisanim*, as it says, “and they congregated to the King Shlomo, every Jew, *b'yerach ha'eisanim* on the *chag*, this is the seventh month.” This verse describes the Chanukas Beis HaMikdash, which was built by Shlomo HaMelech. The Chanukas HaBayis lasted from the 8th of Tishrei until after Sukkos.

The amazing thing about it was that they ate and drank even on Yom Kippur. The Gemara in Moed Katan says that all those who were there are destined for the World to Come.

This shows us that all the avoda of the month of Tishrei is connected with *yerach ha'eisanim*. “*Eisan*” refers to the essence of the soul. Another explanation is that “*eisan*” means something strong, and “*eisan*” refers to the future, as it is comprised of the Hebrew letters that are used to change a word to the future tense. The month of Tishrei has the strength to draw down the future revelation of the essence of the Jewish soul, the true and complete Redemption.

All these things mentioned in connection with *eisan* is aroused by the Rebbe MH”M in the month of

Tishrei. This is the reason for going to the Rebbe for Tishrei, because that is when there is the arousal of the essence of the soul. Staying with the Rebbe during this period of time is the aspect of *makifim* (encompassing revelations not yet internalized) and afterwards, all the spiritual abundance is drawn inward and from there we have the strength for the entire year.

This is also what Chassidus explains about “*v'dodi li*” (my beloved is to me), which refers to Tishrei – that the “*dodi li*” has an impact on all matters throughout the year.

In letters that the Rebbe wrote to Anash, he tells the parable of the Rebbe Rayatz – that when you go to the Rebbe for Tishrei, you bring a suitcase to fill up and when you go back home, you need to unpack it. This is what Tishrei is about – drawing down the necessary spiritual bounty for everything throughout the entire coming year. This is our goal, to bring the essence of Tishrei into our daily lives so that it enters and permeates our inner being.

I was once at yechidus in Tishrei and I asked the Rebbe something about what was said at the farbrengen. The Rebbe answered my question and said that since Tishrei accomplishes that all the things are drawn down for each and every day throughout the year, may this inyan also extend throughout the entire year.

As we know, every year a new revelation, that was never here before, is drawn down on Rosh HaShana. It

is a new and *atzmi*-essential light that was not present in any of the previous *giluyim* (revelations). This is why we go to the Rebbe at this time, to be able to receive the new light and *giluyim* in a deep and “*eisan*” way, and from there, to draw down the encompassing lights in an “inward manner” too.

All the years that I went to the Rebbe for Tishrei, I personally felt an *aliya* (elevation) and renewal in every way. I was there not only in the years when I had yechidus (more than seven times!), but in the years after that too.

Today, when we don't see the Rebbe, we still see *hiskashrus* increasing, whether it's through the *Igros Kodesh* or other means (and in a certain way it is more than the years when we saw the Rebbe). This comes from a longing for the Rebbe, like the inyan of the shofar described by the Zohar as “an inner voice that is not heard,” which arouses the essence of the soul and all hidden powers that cannot be revealed on their own.

One can say that this is what *hiskashrus* is about now –essential *hiskashrus*, the “*kol p'nimi*” that cannot be expressed except in our current circumstances. This is why, in the midst of all the concealment, we are able to attain an inner and essential *hiskashrus* that is revealed by a trip to the Rebbe.

Knowing how important and holy this month is, it is vital to make the effort to be with the Rebbe. As the Rebbe Rashab said, “Where can a

Chassid be on Rosh HaShana if not in Lubavitch?”

The main thing is that we should merit all the spiritual abundance and revelations that the Rebbe gives us each year in a way of “all who give; give with a good (i.e., generous) eye,” and may we merit to be proper vessels to receive all the enormous goodness that we get from the Rebbe.

TO EXCHANGE AND REFRESH THE SOUL FOR THE COMING YEAR

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Gurewitz, Mashpia in Yeshivas Bucharim

There is a story from the Mittler Rebbe that when he was seven years old he heard his teacher ask the neighbor, who was a doctor, “What’s new?” and the doctor answered, “We are deep in Elul and I still didn’t set up the leeches for the coming winter.”

In those days, they used to put leeches on an invalid in order to remove the blood and settle the blood pressure. These leeches were obtainable only in the summer. In the cold of winter they hid, so they had to be prepared in advance.

That day, when the boy went home, he came across a group of Chassidim who were sitting and

talking. At some point they burst out laughing.

The boy said sharply, “We are already deep in Elul and you still didn’t prepare the leeches, and that’s why you are laughing...”

The Chassidim were sure that he had heard this from his father, the Alter Rebbe. They understood it to mean that a leech sucks out the tainted blood and allows clean blood to circulate throughout the body. Elul is a time for cleaning and refining the body.

A short while later, the Alter Rebbe heard the commotion in *Gan Eden HaTachtan* and he went out to see what was happening. The Chassidim told him what his son had said. The Alter Rebbe smiled and said, “What comes to us through avoda, comes matter-of-factly to the children.”

Elul, for Chassidim in general and the T’mimim in particular, is a month of preparation for a trip to the Rebbe. The chayus that a balabus, young married man, or bachur need to absorb, in order to exchange and refresh their soul for the coming year, is through going to the Rebbe for Tishrei.

In our current situation, it is that much more important. If until 3 Tammuz we were able to obtain

chayus from a new maamer or sicha, today, one who really wants to refresh his blood and become purified must come “to see and be seen.” When you see thousands of Chassidim preparing all year with a chayus and excitement for a trip to the Rebbe, this shows how this trip is far more necessary than in years gone by.

On the one hand, we are living through very special times, as the Rebbe called them, “*hechste tzait*,” the peak time before the Geula, the very threshold of the Redemption. On the other hand, we are immersed within a double and redoubled darkness and the only place for us to renew our Chassidic blood is in Beis Rabbeinu Sh’B’Bavel.

Even if we still don’t see the Rebbe, we know there are senses that go far beyond sight, like when a person enters a dark room and he feels around and knows what is there. In 770 you feel and see the Rebbe in every corner. When you are close to the Rebbe you can take in all the things you absorbed throughout the year in a p’nimius’dike way, and most importantly, exchange the blood and change our very beings, to refine ourselves to greet Moshiach.

There is an interesting letter that the Chassid, R’ Itche der Masmid a”h



sent his good friend, R' Yisroel Jacobson a"h, who had moved to America. This was when the Rebbe Rayatz was in Riga and Warsaw and R' Itche wrote, "It has been a long time now that you have not come to the Rebbe. The fact that you saw the Rebbe in America when he visited in 1930 – that is the 'king in the field' – but a Chassid needs to go to his Rebbe."

The Rebbe is everywhere and we connect to him throughout the year, but a Chassid must travel to be in the Rebbe's four cubits and get what he needs for the coming year.

There is a Chassidic vort on the Gemara, "*Rebbi lo shana, Chiya minayin*" – if you don't go to the Rebbe once a year (at least), where will your chayus come from? It should be a given that in order to live materially and spiritually, the place to derive chayus and life is the Rebbe's place, and all the avoda throughout the year is in order to go to the Rebbe.

May we merit, this year, to see the Rebbe MH"M here in Yerushalayim with the complete hisgalus.

THE SH'CHINA IS EXILED THERE

*Rabbi Sholom Ber Reichman,
Mashpia – the Anash Shul in Kiryat*

A groom once went to the Rebbe and the Rebbe asked him about the wedding preparations. The groom said that the apartment was ready and so were the furnishings. The Rebbe said: That's not what I meant. I was referring to the spiritual preparations, the maamarim of Chassidus, etc.

On another occasion, a different groom went to the Rebbe and the Rebbe asked him the same question about his preparations. The groom only responded regarding the spiritual preparations. The Rebbe told him he meant the material preparations.

This is the time of year when we are all getting ready to go to the Rebbe, and when we go to the Rebbe

we need to know that both the proper spiritual and material preparations have to be made.

When the Rebbe was in Paris to greet his mother, Rebbetzin Chana, the Chassid, Ben-Tzion Shemtov once saw him learning a topic in Nigleh. R' Ben-Tzion said there were important matters to attend to here, but the Rebbe said that if we don't learn here, we won't be able to show our face in New York.

In order to go to the Rebbe in New York, the proper preparations need to be made whether it's adding in Nigleh, adding in maamarim, inyanei Moshiach and Geula, mivtzaim, being mekarev people to the Rebbe, taking a pidyon nefesh from someone you know to the Rebbe.

It's a good idea to keep a daily diary of your trip to the Rebbe. Your Tishrei then is different, as the significance of every moment becomes more apparent and the experience remains etched in your memory for years to come.

When you are in 770, you need to value every minute of your time there. Every maamer that you learn there should be valued. It even pays to keep the booklets of maamarim that they give out in 770.

The importance of the trip is measured differently for each person. The mashpia R' Mendel Futerfas once said that when you go to the Rebbe, the point is not that you're going to see the Rebbe but that the Rebbe sees you. In 5747, when R' Mendel returned from the Rebbe in Teives, he explained that as soon as you return from the Rebbe you have to start preparing for the next trip.

All year long, a Chassid needs to be thinking about his next trip to the Rebbe. Whatever a Tamim learns throughout the year in yeshiva needs to be a preparation for going to the Rebbe. All our chayus throughout the year, and everything we do, need to be in preparation for the trip to the Rebbe.

18 years ago, the Rebbe said that in order to bring Moshiach, you need "pure simcha." When we have the privilege of going to the Rebbe for Tishrei, we see pure simcha only in 770. Although you would think the loss would be greatest there, since we don't see the Rebbe, it is specifically there that the simcha is greatest. In order to absorb this in an inward manner, there has to be diligent learning, mivtzaim, and proper t'filla.

What is the preparation: Proper speech, thoughts, and of course, action. Rabbi Sossonkin a"h once said to R' Binyamin Klein when the latter began his work as secretary, "You need to know that you are working in a place where the Rebbe reads minds." This awareness has the ability to compel us to step up to a much higher level.

In a letter, the Rebbe says the trip for Tishrei is to become refreshed. In order to get strength for the entire year, you go to refresh yourself at the Rebbe and get new kochos.

After the Rebbe Rayatz left Russia, Rabbi Yehuda Eber, who served as rosh yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, wrote that the shell of Tomchei T'mimim remained but the inner structure was lacking, which referred to a trip to the Rebbe (since it wasn't possible to go to the Rebbe at that time).

Every Tamim needs to know that the inner structure and the goal of Tomchei T'mimim is preparing to travel to the Rebbe.

Another point. We say in our prayers, "Bless us our father, all as one." All Chassidim are one body, and when we go to together to the Rebbe, it is obvious that he is our father and we receive all the blessings of the seventh month. The entire month of Tishrei turns into one long farbrengen. Being in the Rebbe's presence incorporates us all into one unit, for the Rebbe and the Chassidim are essentially one.

When you go to the Rebbe and the Rebbe looks at a bachur, it refines

him, just like entering the Holy of Holies. In the kuntres “Beis Rabbeinu Sh’B’Bavel” the Rebbe says that 770 is the place that everyone turns to.

When you go to 770, you are going in order to help bring about the *hisgalus* of the Rebbe as Moshiach, and your behavior has to match, including davening in the Rebbe’s minyan – Shacharis at ten o’clock and Mincha at 3:15. Even within 770 there’s work to do, like being mekarev and talking to bachurim who need inspiration. Share your feelings with others, and of course, be exceedingly careful with your thoughts, speech, and actions.

When you go to the Rebbe knowing that this is the place where the Sh’china was exiled, “and this is

mekarev to Chassidus. When we passed by the Rebbe for kos shel bracha, the Rebbe asked about them and gave me a bottle of mashke. He asked that we make a farbrengen in New York and a farbrengen in Eretz Yisroel. I saw that the Rebbe was pleased by our group and so we cannot be satisfied just by going ourselves, but have to be mekasher more and more people to the Rebbe.

In 5757 our family went to the Rebbe for Tishrei. People who saw me said that the fact that I went to the Rebbe with the entire family, gave chizuk to those living in Crown Heights to go to 770. There’s no question that when you put everything aside and go to the Rebbe with mesirus nefesh, it also gives chizuk to

in 5734 the Rebbe contributed a large part of the cost of the guests’ tickets, saying that those who come to him for Tishrei are his guests. The way the Rebbe conducted himself in Tishrei towards the guests was special. He davened in a minyan in the middle of the week [before the passing of the Rebbe in 5748, the Rebbe didn’t daven Shacharis with the minyan daily] because of the guests who came for Tishrei and it was obvious that the Rebbe was pleased that people came for Tishrei.

Tishrei is the time a Chassid has to make the trip, for this is the month in which we coronate the king, when the Ushpizin come, especially the Rebbe’s day on Simchas Torah, and we draw from these special days for the whole year.

Also now, when we don’t see the Rebbe, and this saddens us, we know what the Rebbe said about the Rebbe Rayatz – that holiness does not move from its place. This is all the more true for the Rebbe. So it is obvious that in 770 we continue to get all the Divine *hashpaa*, because it all comes through 770.

Under the present circumstances it is easy not to be careful about keeping to the times, but the Rebbe wants us to, and we have to make the effort out of *hiskashrus* and utter *bittul*.

The Rogatchover Gaon said to a Chassid who came to the Rebbe Rayatz in Leningrad that there’s a difference if a Chassid goes to Leningrad to the Rebbe or he goes to the Rebbe in Leningrad. He showed how this makes a difference in Jewish law.

This should be our perspective on going to the Rebbe, to know precisely how we’re going to receive the Divine bounty: are we going to the Rebbe and getting the essence, or are we going to Crown Heights and to the Rebbe as well, in which case we’re missing the point. The main thing is we should know how to come prepared to the Rebbe.

There is a Chassidic vort on the Gemara, “Rebbi lo shana, Chiya minayin” – if you don’t go to the Rebbe once a year (at least), where will your chayus come from?

the place of the future Mikdash,” it will hasten the full *hisgalus* of the Rebbe MH”M, and we will merit to go up to the third Beis HaMikdash, to see and be seen.

THERE IS NO CHANGE

Rabbi Gershon Mendel Avtzon

The foundational principle is the simple awareness that nothing changed, and just as Chassidim knew that only if you fulfilled all the conditions that the Rebbe established to go to him (with permission from *hanhala* and parents), did you go, the same applies now.

We also need to bring other people to the Rebbe. In 5748 I brought some people with me that I had been

those who are weaker and gives them a *chayus* to connect to the Rebbe.

Before a Chassid goes to the Rebbe he has to learn kuntres Beis Rabbeinu Sh’B’Bavel in depth. The Rebbe agreed to reveal the great holiness of 770 to us. In the past, Chassidim spoke privately about 770 in this way, but the Rebbe brought this out into the open, as he once said, you can learn from the walls of 770. What the great Chassidim did not merit, we merited, and this should spur us on to value every minute we get to spend with the Rebbe in Tishrei.

Throughout the years, the Rebbe wanted people to come for Tishrei and he encouraged people to come especially for Tishrei. I remember that

TAKE PART IN THE REBBE'S WAR!

Interview by Shai Gefen

*This week marks the beginning of the 30th year since the unfortunate Camp David agreement. * An interview with Rabbi Gedalia Akselrod, one of the directors of the Committee to Save the Nation and the Land.*

This week marks 29 years since the signing of the Camp David agreement in which Israel conceded land for the first time, and officially recognized as legitimate, the rights of a Palestinian people. How can we sum up what has taken place since then?

We have gone downhill ever since the government signed that unfortunate agreement. I remember that 40 years ago, before the Six Day War, everybody was terrified. It felt like one of the darkest times in our history.

Just one calm voice could be heard – that of the Rebbe MH”M. I was in the rabbanut of Ramat Gan at the time and we went to the stadium to designate an area for a cemetery for the tens of thousands we anticipated would be killed. On the way, we turned on the radio and heard the news about the liberation of the Kosel and how the Old City was conquered.

This year marks 40 years since the Six Day War and the start of the 30th year since the Camp David agreement. The difference is stark. During the Six Day War we were terrified and one voice, that of the Rebbe, calmed us. With the Camp David agreement, everybody was exhilarated and one voice – that of the prophet of our generation – warned of the dire consequences of this agreement.

What is going on with the government, now that we all see the tragedy they brought upon us?

After the Six Day War there were representatives of RaKaCH (the communist political party) who shouted that they should stop the attacks on the Arabs. At that time they knew that he was a Russian agent. Today, it's the whole government. Today the central parties have turned into RaKaCH, to lackeys of our enemies.

Is that an exaggeration, to say

that the Israeli government represents our enemies?

Unfortunately, that is the situation. We are people with our eyes open and this is suicide. Otherwise, how do you explain that Ehud Barak, who brought the disaster of Lebanon upon us, is the Defense Minister once again? How do you explain that Shimon Peres, who brought Arafat to us and ten thousand terrorists from Tunisia, has become the president?

It's not happening one hundred years after the terrible things they did, but within a few years, as the Jewish nation still bleeds. Just a few weeks ago, the Education Minister said they should put al-Nakba (“the catastrophe” – what Arabs call Israel's Independence Day) into the Israeli Arab textbooks – that we stole their land in the War of Independence. Is that normal? In a normal country they would hospitalize her in a psychiatric hospital!

Is there a rational explanation to what is going on?

The only logical explanation is that the Zionism that was founded on uprooting Torah and religion is continuing the process of destroying the Jewish people. Previously it was against the soul, and now it's against the body. Klipa can't stand that there's Jewish life in Eretz Yisroel.

Tens of thousands are getting

closer to Hashem and so the suicidal process of destruction continues apace. The same process that began 60 years ago with the establishment of the State, continues today. They are operating in a way of “lower than reason” by returning it all to the enemy, while conspiring against the settlers, bringing gentiles into the country, and removing the barrier between Jews and non-Jews with phony conversions. It is derived from the same klipa whose goal is “the name of Israel shall no longer be remembered.” So they don’t care if there is no more State; the main thing is if they successfully uproot it all.

One of the Rebbe’s main wars in the “wars of Hashem” is shleimus ha’Aretz. What can be done?

The first thing is spreading Judaism and Torah. Continuing to promote t’shuva in the world, for it is their intention to uproot it all. Second, a massive publicity campaign about shleimus ha’Aretz. The public needs to understand that the war against shleimus ha’Aretz is not a rational one, one that considers what is best for the Jewish people and their security.



The goal of the politicians is to destroy it all.

The explanation for what is going on today is simple. Since avodas Hashem is above nature and strengthening faith is “beyond reason” – and this is the avoda before Moshiach, as the Rebbe Rashab wrote – bitter will be the end of one who follows intellect in the time of *Ikvisa d’Meshicha*, so klipa today goes “below reason,” as only it can. This is our avoda in inyanei Moshiach, the eternal life

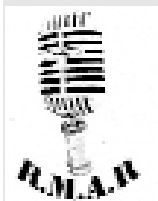
of the Rebbe who is *chai v’kayam*, and all the foundations of faith that are completely “beyond reason.”

So I urge Anash and the T’mimim to take part in this fight of the Rebbe in the “wars of Hashem,” to publicize it and make it constantly the topic of the day. It is everybody’s obligation to protest; everybody must be part of the Rebbe’s war. This is about our very lives.

In conclusion?

We need to make a cheshbon ha’nefesh about the situation and realize that this is all leading us to the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH”M. We need to publicize to one and all that the Rebbe is the prophet of the generation and we need to obey him, as we see how the Rebbe is right in everything he says.

Today, the eve of the Geula, is the best time to strengthen ourselves and others in inyanei Geula, so that all the Jewish people unite around the Rebbe’s malchus. With Hashem’s help we will proclaim together before the Rebbe, “Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L’olam Va’ed!”



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ONLY AN ANGEL COULD DO THIS

By Nosson Avrohom

A miracle story about the Lubavitcher Rebbe, as related by a Sanz-Klausenberger Chassid.

Despite his advanced age, it's almost impossible to catch Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Spitzer for an interview. R' Spitzer is a leading communal figure among Sanzer Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel, a member of the administration of Mosdos Sanz, and the director of Imrei Shefer in Yerushalayim.

R' Spitzer is a Chassidishe askan in the full sense of the word. He begins his day early in the morning and ends it late at night. In between, he serves as gabbai of the Sanzer shul in Yerushalayim and administrator of the yeshiva where he gives a shiur every morning.

After Maariv and supper, he has a chavrusa for the daily Daf Yomi. Although he is a Sanzer Chassid through and through, the Rebbe MH"M is an important figure in his life, and when he told about his first encounter with the Rebbe he cried for quite some time.

R' Spitzer witnessed the Rebbe's ruach ha'kodesh on a number of occasions. The most outstanding example, as far as he is concerned, is the heart-stopping miracle story that saved the life of his brother's only daughter, thanks to a clear bracha he received on her behalf in

yechidus.

By way of introduction to that story, R' Spitzer tells of his first meeting with the Rebbe, from which he emerged thunderstruck, teeth chattering and legs trembling with emotion.

"I loved davening in the Chabad shul when I was a child, the Baal HaTanya Shul in Yerushalayim, and spending time with great Chassidic figures, such as Rabbi Moshe Weber, Rabbi Avrohom Hirsh Cohen, and others. One of my childhood memories is of that Sunday when we heard the sad news about the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz and of the great mourning of the Chassidim.

"As great as their pain was over the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz, that is how great their joy was, one year later, when the present Rebbe took over the nesius. The Chassidim who had traveled to the Rebbe in the early years of the nesius were dumbfounded. They told of how they followed the Rebbe and barely slept nearly an entire month.

"The impression they left on their listeners was that the young Rebbe was an angel of G-d. I had a strong urge to meet him.

"Over the years, as I entered the world of askanus, I heard about the Rebbe's righteousness from various sources.

"In Kiryat Sanz in Yerushalayim, which I founded, lived a Jew who was born and lived in Australia. There he began to study to be a teacher and planned on converting and becoming a religious Christian.

"One day, he came across a newspaper clipping with divrei Torah from the Rebbe and he liked what he read. He sent a letter to the Rebbe and the Rebbe's answer inspired him to drop his plans of converting. He became a baal t'shuva and moved to Yerushalayim.

"As time passed, I realized that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was not merely another Torah scholar but really, an angel of G-d.

"At the end of the 70's, in the month of Sivan, I had the opportunity of flying to New York and attending the wedding of the daughter of the Sanz-Klausenberger Rebbe zt"l. I had to remain abroad for a month and on a Friday I went to my rebbe, who asked me where I would be spending Shabbos.

"I told him that I wanted to check out the Lubavitcher Rebbe. This was chutzpadik, as I am a Sanzer Chassid.

"The truth is that I really wanted to see how the Sanzer Rebbe would react to my request so that I would know his opinion of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. My Rebbe responded in



Rabbi Spitzer
receives a dollar
from the Rebbe.

amazement, “Hoo-aah, he is a very great man,” and encouraged me to go.

“I was happy about this and I arrived in Crown Heights on Erev Shabbos, where I was the guest of a relative, a Belzer Chassid. I told him that other than a bed to sleep in, I planned on spending the entire Shabbos in 770, watching the Rebbe. I did not tarry and long before sunset I was already stationed in 770.

“I am a Yerushalmi in my soul and I knew that a large crowd would come and I wouldn’t have a place to sit. I looked for a good spot to stand in so I could watch the Rebbe.

“An older Chassid came into the beis midrash and when I asked him to suggest where I should stand, he took me and said that the first two benches behind the Rebbe were for

guests. Since I was a guest, I could sit there. I tried to explain that I wasn’t a rav or a Torah scholar and didn’t deserve that honor, but he explained that in Chabad, rabbis and ordinary people are treated the same, ‘We look at the neshama.’

“I eagerly anticipated the Rebbe’s arrival and when he walked in with quick steps, standing tall, with a siddur held close to his side, chills went up and down my spine. I was overcome with emotion and I stood in wonderment for a long time. This image of the Rebbe entering the beis midrash is etched in my mind. I felt that I was seeing Melech HaMoshiach, an actual angel of G-d.

“I have two Lubavitcher sons, but I am not a Lubavitcher Chassid. I am a Chassid and mekushar of the Sanzer Rebbe, but I know that the

Lubavitcher Rebbe is someone lofty.”

That Shabbos was Shabbos Mevarchim Tamuz, and the next day, R’ Spitzer woke up early in order to get a place to say T’hillim in the Rebbe’s minyan. Later in the day he attended the Rebbe’s farbrengen and listened to the sichos kodesh and said l’chaim to the Rebbe.

His voice chokes up as he recalls that magnificent Shabbos. He is overcome with strong feelings of nostalgia for those days, which clearly continue to serve as a source of inspiration for him.

“The miracle story I want to tell you happened a few years later. I have a dear brother who lives in Chaifa, by the name of Elimelech, and he has an only daughter by the name of Tzipora. When this story

took place, she was a young girl. One day, she picked up a child, as she often did, and something strange happened. They bumped legs and she felt terrible pain. As the pain grew worse, she went to the local clinic, which referred her for more tests that revealed she had a malignant tumor in her right leg.

“The family was horrified. They took her from doctor to doctor, experts in the field, and they all gave the same diagnosis – that the tumor was so large and had spread to such an extent that they gave her only a month to live. Additional tests only confirmed their prognosis and the family was devastated. Their pain was compounded by the fact that she was their only daughter and overnight, their dreams had been shattered.

“However, despite the bleak prognosis, they continued taking her to experts in the field as well as alternative doctors. Sadly, every doctor confirmed the opinion of the previous doctors and their hopes of salvation faded.

“As time passed, they saw their daughter fading away before their very eyes, showing signs of weakness, tiredness, pain. The only thing the medical world could suggest was pain relief medications to alleviate her suffering a bit. The family doctor who treated her explained that this specific growth was of a highly malignant sort so that within weeks it would spread to the liver and kidneys and that would be the end of her.

“In Yerushalayim at that time was a distinguished Torah scholar by the name of R’ Leibel Friedman. He wrote *Tzidkas HaTzaddik*, which contains an exchange of letters that he had with the Chazon Ish regarding the dispute between the holy Ari and the Beis Yosef about how to write the letter Tzaddik.

“The Chazon Ish negated the Ari’s view on how it should be

written and supported the Beis Yosef, going so far as to rule that one who uses t’fillin and mezuzos written according to the opinion of the Arizal did not fulfill his obligation. R’ Leibel, a Sanzer Chassid, debated via correspondence with him at length until the Chazon Ish said R’ Leibel was right and admitted his error. Their correspondence is what his book is about. R’ Leibel’s wife worked in our house and knew about our niece’s illness.

“I recall that difficult period and the gloomy atmosphere, which was like Tisha B’Av, though Tisha B’Av is just one day and then there’s consolation, and here there was no consolation. It was a very sad time.

“R’ Leibel heard from his wife about our niece’s illness and Erev Shabbos, before Kiddush, he knocked at our door. I was quite surprised to see him there.

“I asked him what he was doing there and he said he had heard from his wife about our niece. ‘I’m telling you, there is no one in the world

who knows what to do in such cases, no one who can save her, except for the Lubavitcher Rebbe!’

“He half ordered and half pleaded with me not to delay but to buy a ticket on Motzaei Shabbos and to take the medical information with me and bring it to the Rebbe and receive a bracha. ‘Do not send letters. If you want your niece to remain alive, go and meet him yourself,’ he warned.

“His confidence was inspiring. I had already seen the Rebbe’s greatness from up close, but the running around to doctors and the whole sorry story had made me forget the option of turning to the Rebbe. On Motzaei Shabbos I could not get a ticket and I first arrived in 770 on Monday, where I saw the Rebbe davening in the small zal upstairs.

“I approached the secretary, Rabbi Binyamin Klein, whose father, R’ Menachem, I knew from Battei Ungarin in Yerushalayim, and I told him the story. He told me that the Rebbe was not receiving anybody at



Rabbi Spitzer in front of 770



Rabbi Moshe
Yaakov Spitzer

“That night, the Rebbe met with many people and despite this, he received me graciously and with a captivating smile as though I was the first person he was seeing that night.”

that time, but at night I should wait for the end of yechidus and perhaps I could enter. That is what I did.

“Late at night I saw the Rebbe. That night, the Rebbe met with many people and despite this, he

received me graciously and with a captivating smile as though I was the first person he was seeing that night.

“I told the Rebbe about my niece’s critical illness and when I finished, I wanted to show the Rebbe

her medical files. The Rebbe motioned that it wasn’t necessary and said, ‘Go to Professor Doors.’ The Rebbe asked whether I knew him and I said that I did. He was a surgeon at Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital.

“The Rebbe went on to say, ‘Go to him and tell him in my name that I am asking that he do the operation.’ I was shocked by the Rebbe’s decisive statement and dared to say that the doctor who had examined her had said that even if they amputated her foot, it wouldn’t help since the malignancy had spread and nothing could be done.

“The Rebbe made a dismissive motion with his hand and with a broad smile he said, ‘If he operates, all will be well, with Hashem’s help. Go home and relay the good news and she will yet enjoy nachas from her children.’

“I left the Rebbe’s room in an emotional turmoil. I was back in Eretz Yisroel on Wednesday and that same evening I went to the doctor’s office in Hadassah Ein Kerem. I told him the chain of events and he said that he had heard of the Rebbe’s greatness although he did not know him personally.

“He also said that according to the medical records, there wasn’t much of a chance that an operation would accomplish anything. On the contrary, her condition would only get worse. Nevertheless, he was willing to try, and that week she underwent the operation.

“What can I tell you... When I tell you what happened and recall that period of time, I shudder. The entire extended family sat outside the operating room, saying T’hillim, tense with dread over her welfare. At the same time, we had strong faith in the Rebbe’s clear bracha.

“After a few hours, when the operation was over, she was taken to the recovery room and we were told that the operation was very



Rabbi Spitzer with his Rebbe, the Admur of Sanz-Klausenberg

successful, to the point that even the medical team was astounded.

"A few days later she was released to her home in order to rest and recover. A few days after that, she had to go back to the hospital to have X-rays taken to see the results of the operation. The doctor who examined the results before and after the operation was flabbergasted and he told her, 'No human being did this, that's for sure. Only an angel could do this.'

"My niece told him the name of the surgeon, but the doctor smiled and said that even that wonderful doctor, with all respect due him, could not make this miracle and he repeated, 'Only an angel could do this...'

"The family and I knew good and well who that angel was.

"Today, over thirty years later, she is healthy, baruch Hashem, and lives like someone who never had any medical trouble at all. She married and as the Rebbe blessed her, she has nachas from her children. A few weeks ago she married off one of her children."

* * *

R' Spitzer began the interview with the great things he heard the previous Sanz-Klausenberger Rebbe say about the Rebbe, and he ended the interview with what he heard the Rebbe say about his Rebbe, the Admur of Sanz.

"Every time I went to New York to fundraise for the Sanzer mosdos which I run, I would visit 770. One time I arrived in time for Mincha

and I found myself standing right behind the Rebbe. When the davening was over, the Rebbe turned around and I took the opportunity to ask for a bracha in my work. The Rebbe blessed me that Hashem should help me and bless me with everything good.

"I was about to walk away when the Rebbe asked me how the Admur

of Sanz was doing. I told him that he needed a big refua, for at that time he was already very weak and not well. The Rebbe asked me for the Admur's name and his mother's name and he said he would mention it at the gravesite [of his father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz]. Then he added, 'We need him and we need his prayers.'

TODAY, WE GAINED A JEW

On one of my trips to New York to fundraise, I passed by 770 and said to my friend, let's go in and see what's happening in Lubavitch. We went in and someone came over with a bottle of mashke, asking the Chassidim to say l'chaim as per the Rebbe's instructions. He explained the reason:

Before Menachem Begin visited the Rebbe, a letter came to the secretaries from a Jew who lived in France, an ardent supporter of the revisionist Beitar movement. He cried to the Rebbe about his beloved son who was about to marry a non-Jew. All his attempts to dissuade him had failed. In his letter, he begged the Rebbe to help him to convince his son.

A few days later, Menachem Begin, who had been a leader of the Beitar movement, came for yechidus to the Rebbe. At the end of their meeting, he asked the Rebbe whether he could do something for him. The Rebbe showed him the letter he had received a few days before and asked him to change his itinerary and to stop off in France and use his powers of persuasion to convince the man to drop the non-Jewish woman.

Begin took this seriously and on his return to Eretz Yisroel he traveled via Paris and met with the young man. The young man, who had grown up in a Beitar-family and had enormous admiration for Begin, listened to him and was convinced.

This story had taken place two years earlier and now, another letter had arrived from the father, saying that after Begin had convinced his son, he had become interested in a Jewish girl and was about to marry her. They said that when the Rebbe received the letter, he said, "Today, we gained a Jew."

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REACHING OUT TO JEWISH PRISONERS

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

Every shliach knows that if there is a prison in his area, then that is part of his shlichus, to bring the Rebbe's message – as well as the ten mitzvaim, holiday joy, Torah, and good deeds – to those who are behind bars. This entails quite a bit of effort and sometimes some risk taking.

Near Beit Shaan is the Shateh jail which is surrounded by a high wall. There, behind the walls, are prisoners with life sentences who are broken, embittered, and regretful of their bad deeds. Their souls cry out for tikkun and t'shuva.

When I arrived in Beit Shaan, 21 years ago, the prison chaplain was Rabbi Dovid Teichtel, a Lubavitcher rav who felt the prisoners' pain and needs. He helped them endure their prison stay.

R' Teichtel arranged a permanent entry (and exit!) pass for me and he showed me around the prison, explaining the various departments to me. I got to meet the prisoners, hold shiurim, and I gave out doughnuts and mishloach manos (with the help of Tzach) on holidays. We slowly began to set up t'fillin centers, and prisoners made Chabad houses within the cells and within their sections of the prison.

I also met Rabbi Eliezer Gevartz, a shliach in Kfar Gideon and the Jezreel Valley, who also got involved in helping out upon R' Teichtel's request. He not only gave shiurim but also arranged holiday parties for

the prisoners (R' Gevartz is proficient on several instruments). He kept in touch with some of the (tough) inmates in friendships that produced some amazing results (see sidebar).

MY FIRST VISIT TO JAIL

The moment you pass the heavy iron gate into the jail, the air is different (one time, an inmate asked me if I also noticed the difference), as though time stopped. It's a dark, depressing atmosphere, as you would expect.

R' Teichtel led me to the most secluded area, the protective custody ward. In the local jargon it is referred to as the "X ward," which houses the most dangerous inmates.

Sometimes the protection is for the prisoner himself because of the fury of the other prisoners over his heinous crime or because of dealings with the interrogators.

In this ward, two cells cannot be opened simultaneously without special permission from the director of the ward (only he knows when yes and when no). If you want to give a shiur, you need to stand in the long corridor and speak loudly so that all the people with their ears to their jail cell bars can hear what you're saying.

Sometimes, the shiur will be interrupted by the sobbing of a prisoner who is moved by what is said. Sometimes there is a request, "Rabbi, come over here to #7, I want to see you." And sometimes

SOULS I'VE MADE

Rabbi Eliezer Gevartz relates: A few years ago I knew a prisoner in Shateh prison who was given a long jail term. He sincerely got involved in Judaism and at a certain point he asked that I visit his family in Chaifa and give them moral support. After he repeatedly asked me to go, I went to Chaifa where I met his wife and little children and told them about how he was getting more involved in Jewish practice.

They listened to every word and then the mother decided that she also wanted a change in life. The two children were registered in a religious preschool which caused the whole family to strengthen their observance of Torah and mitzvos.

In another case, an inmate who regularly attended a shiur I gave, did not want to miss the shiurim after he was released. He came to Kfar Gideon and became a member of our household and participated in many shiurim. He changed his life and his outward appearance. He began to grow a beard and to conduct himself as a Chassidishe young man. He eventually married and has a religious household in Yerushalayim.

there is also a nervous prisoner (or a hostile Arab) who shrieks, “Shut up already! I want to sleep!”

It is easier to distribute doughnuts there because there is no concern that people will grab too many. You hand over two doughnuts into each cell and they divide it among themselves. In other wings of the jail, where there are eight or sixteen inmates per jail cell, you go in with a box of doughnuts and you suddenly realize all you have left is a box.

Next to the X ward there is also the “national seclusion ward” and the detention cells ward, where you can meet the most closely guarded prisoners in the country. You usually cannot go right up to the prisoner but you leave the doughnut two iron gates away and yell out, “Chag Sameiach!”

One time I was told by the prison authorities that in the national seclusion ward there was a political killer and he needed a Megillas Esther. We had only a few parchment Megillos, so it was only after we had finished *leining* in the other wards that I brought him a Megilla. I wasn’t able to see this dangerous prisoner; I could only call out that I had brought him a Megilla and “Chag Sameiach!”

Afterwards, one of the wardens would go over, and with the help of a special hydraulic door handle he would open the bars from a distance and the inmate would be able to go and take the Megilla.

CHABAD HOUSE IN EVERY WARD

R’ Teichtel led me through the various wards. Each ward is designated for a particular type of prisoner, according to the severity of his crime and how much of their sentence they had already completed. They are also assessed to see whether they deserve a more open ward or can be paroled.

There is a rehabilitation ward where the prisoners are allowed to go to work every day and to return to their cells in the evening.

There is a shul in every ward. You can invite the prisoners to the shul for a shiur and to encourage them in their mitzva observance. As time went on, we found an outstanding prisoner in every ward who agreed to run a Chabad house in the ward or within his cell.

A prisoner like this is given a notebook by R’ Teichtel in which he writes down, every day, whoever put on t’fillin, who said T’hillim and the 12 P’sukim, and who attended a shiur. Some go further and mark down who washed their hands and who said *Birkas HaMazon*. R’ Teichtel is given all this information as is the Heavenly Throne, and it will speak well for the prisoners and for all the Jewish people who are imprisoned in galus. In the merit of these notebooks, we should merit the Geula shleima.

PESACH RELEASED ON CHANUKA AND CHANUKA RELEASED ON PESACH

R’ Moshe Akselrod, shliach in Atlit, adopted the prison in Atlit and does tremendous work there. He gives ongoing shiurim and personally accompanies many inmates on their way to Judaism and to t’shuva. I’ve met released prisoners in Beit Shaan who have told me enthusiastically about “HaRav Moshe from the prison in Atlit,” who looked out for them like a brother and even helped their families with food and financial support.

In the Atlit prison there was an inmate named Pesach. It was Chanuka when Pesach was released for his first temporary home visit. There was another inmate, also one of R’ Akselrod’s talmidim, whose

name was Chanuka. Chanuka was released for Pesach. Hence the heading, “Pesach released on Chanuka, and Chanuka released on Pesach.”

R’ Akselrod relates:

“We had a prisoner here who was a Russian immigrant who knew nothing about Judaism. I taught him the Alef-Beis. Then we circumcised him. At first he was called Yevgeny and then Yonason. He became more committed in his religious observance and began writing beautiful t’fillin and mezuzos under the guidance of a G-d-fearing sofer.

“When he was released he lived in Yerushalayim opposite the Zichron Moshe *shtiblach*. He said at the time that the transition from life in jail to life in Zichron Moshe, where he hears minyanim 24 hours a day, is like the transition from Olam HaZeh to Olam HaBa.

“Yonason got married and had a son. He married a second time and had a daughter. Then he got sick and died. May these lines in his memory serve as an *ilui nishmaso* for Yonason Feldman.”

Another story from R’ Akselrod:

“An inmate who completed his term in jail returned to his home in Chaifa, but half a year later he returned to us for another period of incarceration. In a conversation with him he told me that one day he got up in the morning and went to “work,” breaking into homes. Suddenly, he saw his teacher from jail, Rabbi Lior Eliyahu a”h (who lived in Chaifa at the time and gave shiurim in the Atlit jail), leaving his house.

“He thought in horror, ‘What? Will I rob on my rabbi’s street?’ and he went to a different street.

“Till this day, those who live on that street don’t realize how their living in the rabbi’s neighborhood protected them from a thief. May these lines serve as an *ilui nishmaso* for the Chassid Lior Eliyahu.”