

3

ASSUAGING G-D'S FIERCE ANGER

D'var Malchus

6

BRINGING THE REBBE TO THE BUSINESS WORLD

Feature | Nosson Avrohom

15

WHY WE REJOICE ON LAG B'OMER

Moshiach Geula | Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Ginsberg

18

YECHEZKEL THE WINE MAKER

Profile | Nosson Avrohom

26

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A PARADE

Lag B'Omer | D. Rotem

28

DAYS OF MOSHIACH OR THE DEPTHS OF DARKNESS?!

Moshiach & Geula | Rabbi Elazar Kenig

32

COMING CLOSE TO HASHEM IN A FARAWAY LAND

Shlichus | Eli Shneuri

37

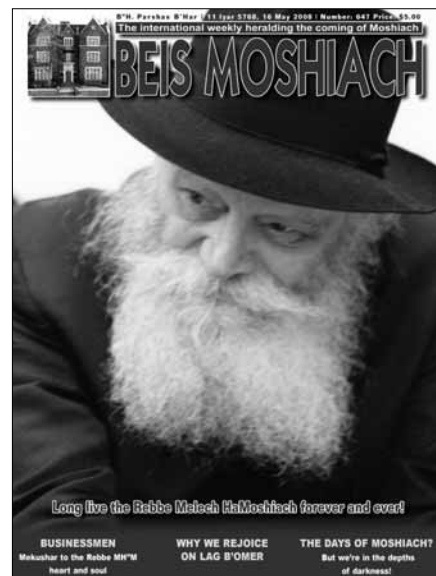
WHAT DO THE PROFESSORS SAY?

Science & Geula | Prof. Shimon Silman

40

THERE IS NO SHLICHUS WITHOUT THE SHLUCHOS

Shlichus | Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz



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ASSUAGING G-D'S FIERCE ANGER

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Theft is compared to idolatry. G-d's fierce anger remains as long as there are wicked people – thieves. Idolatry also angers G-d. All other sins can be corrected by a positive action, restoring the original situation. Theft requires more; it requires t'shuva.

This week's Torah reading contains one of the two admonitions against stealing. As our Sages explain, in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shall not steal" means kidnapping. In this week's Torah reading, "Thou shalt not steal" prohibits the theft of money.

Regarding such theft, our Sages declare that stealing is comparable to idolatry. A thief is like an idol-worshipper. When the Sages use such an expression, it's not just a metaphor to indicate the seriousness and severity of the transgression. Rather, it indicates a similarity between the essential nature of such a violation and that of idolatry.

Why, of all transgressions, is monetary theft akin to idolatry? What unique feature do they share? The question has a practical urgency: when Moshiach comes, all forms of idolatry will be removed. Indeed, removal of idolatry is a prerequisite for Redemption, as we acknowledge thrice-daily in the Aleinu prayer: "... therefore we hope to You, L-rd our G-d, that we may speedily behold the splendor of Your might, to banish idolatry from the earth – and false gods will be utterly destroyed ... Then all the inhabitants of the world will

recognize and know that every knee should bend to You ... and they will all take upon themselves the yoke of Your kingdom ... And it is said: The L-rd shall be King over the entire earth; on that day the L-rd shall be One and His Name One."

Of course, when Moshiach comes thievery and other such activities will also cease. In a general sense, this is understandable, since every transgression is a violation of G-d's Will, and thus idolatry in miniature. In the era of Redemption, when "all eyes will see" and "the whole world will be filled with knowledge of G-d," fulfilling G-d's commandments will be the automatic and natural thing to do. Recognizing and feeling G-d's presence will prevent such violations.

Idolatry is the paradigm, the beginning of all transgressions. In a sense, all others are simply parts, greater or lesser segments of idolatry. At this level, every moment we **don't** violate a commandment, we destroy a little piece of idolatry, and thus bring Moshiach closer. By negating the negative, so to speak, we bring the positive: by not stealing, we reveal G-dliness.

Still, since the Sages declared there to be a direct correspondence, there must be a special connection between theft and idolatry. Stealing, an act between one person and another, parallels idolatry, an act between man and G-d. This point of comparison, this essential aspect that theft and idolatry share, emerges from the prohibition to steal from a condemned idolatrous city: When an entire city is enticed into idolatry, Torah commands that the inhabitants be killed and its contents burned. Since there might be a temptation to save some of the valuables, the Torah warns us not to take anything belonging to the condemned city. Even though the death penalty applies to the inhabitants, their possessions are not like lost objects.

Here, the prohibition against stealing is very specific: one may not take any object from a city condemned for idolatry. One might think that such objects are ownerless, and thus free. But the Torah ordained differently: all the items of a condemned city are prohibited. Since we are prohibited to take them, taking them would be stealing.

The Sages also provide a reason: such a theft keeps G-d's "fierce anger" in the world. "As long as there are wicked people in the world, there is fierce anger in the

world.” The wicked people referred to cannot be the idolaters themselves, since they have already been killed. Rather, the wicked are those who would take the possessions of the idolaters, the contraband of the condemned city. Thus, the Sages conclude, “When the wicked are removed from the world, G-d’s fierce anger is removed from the world. Who are these wicked? Thieves.”

We now have the following correspondence: just as idolatry inhibits Redemption, so stealing, specifically from an idolatrous city, inhibits the removal of G-d’s fierce anger from the world. On the other side, just as removing idolatry is a prerequisite for Redemption, as we acknowledge in the Aleinu prayer, so too, removing the wicked – the thieves – is the prerequisite for removal of G-d’s fierce anger. (Obviously, only the severest transgression brings G-d’s “fierce anger” into the world in the first place. The greatest sin against G-d is idolatry. Idolatry arouses G-d’s fierce anger, but stealing keeps it in existence, preventing Redemption.)

What differentiates stealing from other sins? Generally, a sin exists only as long as a person is sinning. For example a person who eats non-kosher food violates the laws of kashrus only while he is eating. When he’s not eating treif, he’s not violating a commandment. Similarly, a person who hits someone else has transgressed only at the moment he strikes the other person. But so long as a stolen object has not been returned, the thief is still and continuously stealing. Once the stolen object is returned, the thief no longer transgresses. From then on, the individual no longer violates the prohibition. *But he has not retroactively repaired the past.* That requires *t’shuva*.

In most cases, the sin has a limited lifespan, so to speak. When one stops violating the mitzvah, the sin ceases to exist. Therefore, G-d’s anger ceases when the transgression ceases. With most transgressions, G-d’s anger depends on the action, stopping when the sinful action stops. True, from the moment of the violation, the individual is obligated to do *t’shuva*. But the sin itself, having ceased to be, has no lingering effect on the world.

But theft, like idolatry, is different. Even when one stops acting in a sinful manner, the sin continues to exist. A thief’s resolve to never steal again, by itself, does not remove or correct the sin itself. As long as he does not do *t’shuva*, G-d’s fierce anger remains in the world. Similarly, one does not have to be worshipping idols every moment of the day to provoke G-d’s fierce anger. That idolatry exists, that one in fact worships idols, even if that isn’t happening right now, is sufficient to arouse G-d’s fierce anger. The effect of theft or idolatry continues even when the individual is no longer stealing or worshipping idols. G-d’s fierce anger remains so long as the wicked remain. And there’s only one way to remove or transform the wicked: *t’shuva*.

What is true about theft is also true in a more limited sense about every transgression: until we do *t’shuva*, G-d’s displeasure persists. With every sin comes the imperative to do *t’shuva*. As important as *t’shuva* is in general, it becomes ultimately significant in bringing Moshiach; as the Rambam rules, the Jewish people will eventually do *t’shuva* and immediately they will be redeemed. When considering other transgressions, a person may reason that, since he will definitely do *t’shuva* anyway, it’s acceptable to delay it. The delay may seem especially justified if one becomes involved in other good things.

Or, one can resolve to do something good, a mitzvah. But there’s no urgency to fulfill the resolution; we may become busy with other interests. However, since delaying *t’shuva* sustains G-d’s “anger” in the world, such conduct is improper. G-d’s displeasure stays beyond the moment of transgression; it remains continuously; delay affects not just the individual, but the entire world.

Our *t’shuva* becomes responsible for removing G-d’s displeasure and transforming the world. Doing good benefits not only the individual, but the entire world. And once one does *t’shuva*, its effect also continues onward. Everything depends on our actions. We, through our *t’shuva* and positive actions, can bring the ultimate Redemption one moment sooner.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 17:205-214)



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BRINGING THE REBBE TO THE BUSINESS WORLD

By Nosson Avrohom

In the course of outreach work done at the exclusive Neot Afka and Tzahala neighborhoods in northern Tel Aviv, I had the occasion to sit down with a few businessmen for a Chassidishe farbrengen along with shliach, R' Ido Rahav. These businessmen, who only recently discovered Chassidus and the Rebbe, amazed me, their manner of speech reminiscent of old-time mashpiim or Chassidim who have been mekusharim for generations. Each told of how they became acquainted with the work of Chabad as well as the miracle stories they experienced.

These were seasoned businessmen who all claim that since they have become acquainted with the Rebbe and returned to tradition, they earn more, they are more relaxed, and their personal and business lives have changed radically for the better. The stressed-out ones among them became calmer and the pessimists became optimists.

When I asked them how difficult it is to convey this to their friends, they answered almost unanimously: There is no need for explanations. These are things they can see. "Those who knew us before can easily see the difference; we are talking about tremendous happiness."

Indeed, everything is ready for Geula, I thought. When a successful businessman, who wasn't born into a religious home and who never received a proper Jewish chinuch, someone who is as pragmatic as they come, for whom self-confidence is everything, puts his reliance upon a bracha he opens to in the *Igros Kodesh* – and we are talking about large sums of money – that tells us that something big is going on here. It has become a phenomenon. Hundreds of businessmen from the top echelons are striking roots and becoming mekushar to the Rebbe. I sat with three of them and heard where it began and why.

The first one I interviewed and the oldest of three was Mr. Yossi Bibas, who lives in northern Tel Aviv, and among other things has a shipping company, one of the biggest transport companies in the country. Last year it grew even bigger as he became observant and mekushar to the Rebbe. He began wearing tzitzis and a kippa.

Of course, he stopped working on Shabbos, and all this was because of a series of miracles that he saw in his business, thanks to the brachos he opened to in the *Igros Kodesh*. He recently brought a

Lubavitcher Chassid into the company offices, so that the entire running of the company will be "on a higher plane."



The conversation with three businessmen went on for hours. The three of them represent hundreds of businessmen who have recently discovered the beauty of Chassidus and are mekushar to the Rebbe MH”M heart and soul.

“My first connection with Chabad and the Lubavitcher Rebbe began many years ago when I went to New York to visit my daughter. Some time before this, I had registered her in Touro College for business

management. I was not religious but I registered her in this Jewish college with a religious orientation when a friend recommended it.

“When I visited her at the end of the 80’s, someone asked me whether I had heard of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I said that I had and he suggested that I meet with him, ‘People from all over the world, Jews and non-Jews, important people and ordinary people, go to see him.’

“I had heard about the Rebbe often in Israel, even from those who were not exactly enamored of religious Jews. I decided to take him up on his suggestion and the following Sunday I stood in 770, just out of curiosity, in order to see the legend for myself. Back then I was not at all religious and I went just to see what everybody was talking about.

“My wife and I were taken aback by the long line of people. We had never seen anything like it. I was impressed by all the different kinds of Jews I saw – young and old, Chassidim and tattooed youth – all waiting respectfully. It was snowing and cold. After a long wait my wife wanted to leave because she couldn’t stand the cold, but I insisted on staying and she thanks



Rav Ido with his mekuravim.

me for this today. I was so curious to see what made people so enthusiastic about the Rebbe.

"After a few hours we were facing the Rebbe. It was before my son was drafted into the army and we decided to ask for a bracha for him. I remember it as though it was today: the Rebbe's penetrating eyes accompany me since then. We were charmed. We were there for just a moment but it seemed like an eternity. Even without being religious you felt that the Rebbe is someone extraordinary."

Unfortunately, and Yossi admits he regrets this, the visit to the Rebbe and the tremendously positive impression he had, did not motivate him to make any actual changes in his life. However, his admiration for the work of Chabad grew and as someone who traveled a lot on business, he often met Lubavitchers. He was always amazed by them and told them so, but that's as far as it went.

"For years we ran the business from offices located at the airport. Lubavitcher bachurim visited us regularly to put on t'fillin with us and I would decline with some excuse. I didn't understand the importance of t'fillin. They didn't give up though. They kept coming back on a daily basis for years, but I always said no.

"One day, I don't know why, one of them decided not to give in. He gently but determinedly didn't leave until I had rolled up my sleeve for t'fillin. As he wrapped the t'fillin, he asked me where I lived, and when I told him Neot Afka he said, 'I have a friend who recently opened a Chabad house there. His name is Rav Ido Rahav. He's an interesting and great guy. You should meet him.'

"I told him, half smiling, 'Leave me alone. You'll make trouble for me and my wife. I don't have ties with rabbis. It doesn't interest me.' And

that's how the conversation ended.

"How surprised I was when a few days later I got a phone call from someone who introduced himself as Rav Ido. He wanted to meet me and my wife. That bachur was stubborn but I was also a hard nut to crack and I politely fended the rabbi off. Over the course of a year he called me several times with invitations, and I politely turned them all down. Each time I gave another excuse and I wondered where he derived the strength of purpose not to give up on me.

"One Friday, I returned from work very late. I was anticipating the relaxing I would do after a week of hard work and exhausting business meetings. As I tried to find parking, I noticed a religious looking Jew with a reddish beard and a triumphant smile also trying to park his car.

"Now I know that our meeting was by Divine providence, but at the time I wondered how to escape him. He came right over to me and said, 'You're Yossi Bibas, right?' When I acknowledged that I was, he said, 'I've been looking for you for a year. You're coming to me for Shabbos.' He proceeded to inform me about my schedule for the next day and he spoke so persuasively, though at the same time he was modest and straightforward. It was hard to oppose him.

"If a colleague had spoken to me as he did, my reaction would have been completely different. I tried to tell him that my wife would not agree, but that didn't faze him. 'Don't worry! I already spoke to her.' Uh oh. He had already spoken to her and to my surprise, she had agreed!

"She told R' Ido that we would come for a brief visit and then leave. He agreed. We went, but the visit wasn't short. She was very impressed by Mrs. Rahav and I was impressed by him, from his inner

strength that radiated forth. Even when he said things that sounded like they were disconnected from reality, it sounded solid and credible.

"The next step was he asked to check our mezuzos. We agreed and discovered that four were not kosher. At first, we were very afraid of being swept up by him, but that is just what happened. My involvement with the Rebbe, through R' Ido, precipitated a tremendous change in me that all my friends and acquaintances notice."

What sort of change?

Before I met R' Ido, I was a dynamic, tempestuous person and that is what my home was like too. There was no peace, no serenity. Today, especially once I started davening every day and getting more involved, my personal life is much calmer. It doesn't negatively affect my work; on the contrary, becoming more involved in Judaism has doubled my profits since I stopped working on Shabbos.

"For example, I lost many former, loyal customers and I was afraid, but I have seen that it did not hurt me. On the contrary, Chassidus, as it appears in the Rebbe's teachings, is the most fascinating thing in the world to me. This outlook on life is simply fantastic. The Chassidic way of life, according to the Rebbe, is a complete life."

When Yossi goes on to relate two big miracles he experienced lately in his work, because of the Rebbe's brachos, he gets all excited.

"It's just unbelievable. I'm far from being naïve. I never believed in things that are supernatural. Miracle stories never made an impression on me, but the stories I'm going to tell you are true stories that actually happened and they shocked me.

"A year ago I was eating lunch and reading the business paper when I noticed an ad for a foreclosure sale on a property in Tel Aviv. For a long

time I had wanted to move my company's office and the ad piqued my interest. I figured that many people would attend the open house but it turned out that just me and one other person showed up.

"I was very surprised. Every property in Tel Aviv, especially in the center of town, is a gold mine. I checked it out and it seemed suitable. I found out that the other person who had shown up had served in the army with me, and after talking to him, he agreed to

showed up on the day of the public auction.

"The auction was supposed to begin at 12 and there I was, alone, standing facing the lawyer for the seller. I told him, 'Let's close the deal; there are no other interested parties.' He was obnoxious and said, 'According to the law I can sell you the property or not sell it to you. Due to the lack of interest in it, I have decided not to sell it to you.' All my attempts at persuasion did not help. He was stubborn and I left

he had fallen from the moon. What he was saying was removed from reality and went contrary to all the rules of business. I said sadly, 'Maybe the Rebbe was unsuccessful this time,' but he rejected this idea. 'If the Rebbe gives a bracha, the property is yours!' He repeated this confidently and I left with mixed feelings. Either he wasn't normal or he had to play the role of a supremely confident person.

"A few days passed and our plans to move were shelved. Life went on as usual. One morning, an old customer called. He owned a printing place in Tel Aviv. From the start of our conversation I remembered that his printing business was near the building I had wanted to buy and I told him the story. He said, 'Listen, I have a close friend that I know has a share in that property. Let me speak to him and I'll get back to you.'

"I was surprised but things moved so quickly after that that I didn't have time to digest it. The property he was talking about was the 450 meters within the larger property and he was willing to sell me his share. That enabled me to buy the entire building.

"The Rebbe's bracha proved itself. Within two months of the purchase, the price of the property doubled and then tripled. Just unbelievable. After I renovated the place, I was able to quickly rent all the offices that I didn't need, and this covered all my expenses.

"Do you understand what the Rebbe is about?" he said repeatedly. "Not only my personal life changed for the better, in terms of improving my relationship with my wife, strengthening my friendships with those around me, but business began to boom. When friends and acquaintances see me with a 'Yechi' kippa they can't believe it. People's jaws drop. They knew me as someone so far from things like this.

"I decided to take him up on his suggestion and the following Sunday I stood in 770, just out of curiosity, in order to see the legend for myself."



Mr. Yossi Bibas

give up his idea of buying it, which left only me.

"I spoke with R' Ido, who wrote to the Rebbe and the answer he opened to was positive. The property was 500 square meters and it also had another 450 meters under another owner, but when you bought the 500 meters you also had to buy the additional 450 meters because the latter were literally within the former. We checked it out and I discussed it with my partners and we decided to go forward. I

disappointed.

"Four months had gone by from the day I had first been to see the property until the day of the public auction. During this time I had come up with many plans regarding our move. When I went to R' Ido that night and told him what had happened, he smiled and said, 'What are you worried about? The Rebbe gave you his bracha and the building is yours.'

"I didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. I looked at him as though

Religion and I were polar opposites. Many people ask me whether a medical miracle took place in my family and I tell them all that the biggest miracle is that I discovered the Rebbe and I am sorry that I didn't discover him thirty years ago.

"I'll tell you a story that just took place, which to a great extent was the 'final straw' in my seriously getting involved with the Rebbe and Chabad. I have a son who has been living in Los Angeles for many years and I really want him to live here and to discover Chassidus, like me. For a long time I thought of buying him an apartment so that the day he decides he is selling his business and moving here, he will have a place ready for him.

"One day I was flipping through the 'for sale' ads in the paper and I saw that there's a house for sale in our neighborhood that was being sold by the executor of an estate after an old man who lived there died and left no heirs.

"I decided to pursue it, but like every step I take these days in business, I consulted with R' Ido and wrote to the Rebbe. The answer was positive and I went to the sale. When I got to the apartment I was disappointed to see a hundred people there. There were so many people they had to stand on the steps. I didn't think I had a chance but I caught myself and remembered that if the Rebbe gave me a bracha, the apartment was mine.

"I wrote my offer on a piece of paper and wrote on the side that if the price was higher, I was willing to increase my bid. The lawyer in charge of the sale announced that those who had offered less than a certain amount were out of the running because it was too low.

"Half the people left and then the public auction began. I reassured myself that with the Rebbe's bracha, the apartment was mine. The price went up and up until it reached the

point where I gave the highest amount. The gavel descended and the apartment was sold to me. People thought I was crazy but I felt terrific. I had already seen one miracle and if the Rebbe had blessed me that this apartment was mine, it was mine and it didn't make sense that I would lose thereby.

"When I arrived home the next day for lunch, my wife snickered and said repeatedly, 'With the help of Hashem, with the help of the Rebbe...'

"She told me that she had met the local fruit man who had also been to the auction and he said that I wasn't normal. He also told her that he had heard me say, 'With Hashem's help, with the Rebbe's help,' and he pointed out that everybody thought I had paid a crazy price.

"But very quickly, those who had laughed at me had to shut up. When I bought the apartment, the shekel price was linked to the dollar exchange rate. Back then, the dollar was four shekels and forty agurot, but since then it has taken a dive, and today, it's a little more than three and a half shekels. That means that I got a bargain. At the time of the sale, nobody thought the dollar would drop so low and so quickly.

"I was flabbergasted. It was an incredibly successful business venture. At the time of the final payment, I told my wife, 'Go back to the fruit guy and tell him there is a Creator of the world Who runs the show and there is a Rebbe who is G-d's emissary. What has to be is what happens and if the Rebbe gave a bracha, then it makes no difference what it looks like to us and it makes no difference at all what the rules of business are. Something surprising will always happen.

"Many businessmen who are close to me have also begun getting close to the Rebbe. I don't have to explain to them why it's good because they see it for themselves.

Since I stopped working on Shabbos, my profits on Friday doubled. Now I heard that they want to build an exclusive tower near the house I bought which already boosted the worth of the house by many percentage points. You just have to open your eyes and see the Rebbe and Geula that are already here. That is a fact."

* * *

Traditional Judaism was never far away from Mr. Refael Padida's life. Rafi, as he is known by his friends, had absorbed his ancestors' reverence for rabbanim and mekubalim. Although he does not wear a kippa, he always feels a strong soul connection to Judaism.

Rafi runs the Y.A. Technology Company, one of the biggest importers of medical electronic equipment in the country and he is a very successful businessman. He also says that from the day he began to get involved with the Rebbe and Chabad Chassidus he has been even more successful.

"It all began when my brother-in-law, who became a baal t'shuva, asked me to complete a minyan at R' Ido's Chabad house. I was hooked immediately. I quickly developed a warm friendship with R' Ido. I easily connected to him and to the messages he conveyed. Joining that one minyan led to my completing another minyan.

That was when forming a minyan was first being attempted and it was hard to get ten men every Shabbos. There was a good chemistry between R' Ido and the rest of us and since then with every encounter, farbrengen, shiur or project, I make more and more progress.

"I see the genuine Jewish love in the Chabad house within the Rebbe's sichos and letters too. It makes no difference what your background is and what your views are; the main thing is – you are a Jew. That's what amazed me and enabled me to connect to the Rebbe and Chabad in

such a deep way. There is a lot of honesty and simcha, and this is a way of life, not just for certain times, and that attracted me.

“One thing that put me off at first is that I come from a Sephardic background and I always loved to listen to the piyutim in shul, but in Chabad, the davening is more serious. But one day, when I opened a book in the Chabad house and learned about the close connection the Rebbe had with Baba Sali, I realized that all the approaches, as

time.”

Rafi, like Yossi and his friends, also saw open miracles thanks to the Rebbe’s brachos. Rafi, an intellectual by nature who doesn’t hesitate to ask questions when something makes no sense to him, doesn’t hide his excitement.

“Whatever I tell you is true; not made up and not a dream. I still find it hard to digest it because these miracles, which I saw and experienced, obligate me.

“Every week when I go to the

and he was losing more and more money. Everything he tried in order to get out of the mess failed.

“When he went to the Rebbe and asked for a bracha, the Rebbe told him to check his mezuzos. He checked them and saw that all were fine but his business continued to go downhill. One day, he remembered that he had another room that leads to a storage room that he went into on rare occasions and maybe he should check that mezuzah. When he went over to the door he found the mezuzah on the floor!

That’s when he understood what the Rebbe meant and he quickly put it back up. One hour later, he got a phone call with an invitation to attend an important business meeting. From that point on, his business flourished.

“When I read this story I thought, I learned from the Rebbe that from everything that you see and hear, you have to learn a lesson, because it’s by Divine providence that you saw or heard what you did. I also have a room that leads to a storage space and I never checked to see whether it had a mezuzah and whether it was kosher.

“When I returned home, I went over to that door and discovered, to my dismay, that there was no mezuzah. Sunday morning I asked R’ Ido to put up a mezuzah for me and from then on, I cannot describe the sudden change that has taken place. I began to feel that things were moving at a rapid pace. Offers began pouring in and the company, which was then in its infancy, began to take off. This story and what resulted, led me to the awareness that there is Divine providence in the world.

“It’s incredible how one story about the Rebbe that took place years ago, can have such an effect today. If I am asked whether I believe that the Rebbe is with us, I tell this story as proof that he is.

“I see the genuine Jewish love in the Chabad house within the Rebbe’s sichos and letters too. It makes no difference what your background is and what your views are; the main thing is – you are a Jew.”



Mr. Refael Padida

different as they are, all lead to one place. Today I understand that this is part of the approach of praying with great depth and sincerity.”

In the course of his narration, Rafi suddenly stopped and candidly said, “I’ll tell you the truth, it so attracts me that I am afraid that one day, really soon, I will buy a kippa and tzitzis and begin doing mitzvos. I have the warmest, supportive environment to do so and I have the inner awareness and acceptance that this is the truth. It’s just a matter of

Chabad house Erev Shabbos, I read the Geula booklet, *HaGeula, M’anyein V’Achshavi*. I really enjoy it. One week, when my business was suffering from problems with liquidity, I read an interesting story in this booklet about a Brazilian businessman who went from the United States to Brazil in order to start an electronics business, something somewhat similar to what I do. He invested a lot of money and believed that he would profit within a short time. But it didn’t happen

What more do you need? It's not a story that happened in Morocco or Tunisia decades ago, but something that happened in our generation, two years ago. I find the Rebbe's impact is astounding.

"I will tell you another story that I experienced when I was first starting out in business. When I decided to open the new business of importing electronic medical equipment, I knew that I was jumping into a sea of competition. I wasn't fluent in English and I wasn't proficient in all the ins and outs of the field, yet I decided to do it anyway.

"Many people who knew me and heard that I was going into this line, predicted disaster, but I had begun to recognize the Rebbe's power and I told everyone that I had written to the Rebbe and had received a bracha for the business and all would be fine. People looked at me like I was crazy but apparently the Rebbe's bracha had given me courage. Till this day I don't know how I had the nerve. I did all the correspondence word by word with the Hebrew-English dictionary. I worked for hours in order to respond to suppliers in various countries. Hashem led me to the right buyer shows.

"I was successful and the people around me as well as my competitors could not believe it. They thought the business would just be a fly by night venture, nothing more. As time went by I learned the language and how to run the business. Reality proved that bigger people than me, with a rich vocabulary and all the right connections, fell in places where I did not fall. No, it has nothing to do with my abilities. If you're not in this line and you are unaware of how important experience and connections are, you won't understand what I'm saying. I went to shows with no background and

no financial backing.

"I'll tell you something astounding so you can understand what I mean. At one of the shows that took place in China, I looked for a certain product but it was unavailable. Some of my competitors were also looking for this item and it was a matter of who would find it first, as he would sign the exclusive contract and be able to import it.

"As Shabbos approached, I resolved to stop my search and welcome the Shabbos in my hotel room. People who were there with me said, 'Rafi, you're not normal! Why did you spend so much money to come to China if you are giving up on the possibility of justifying this trip?'

"My friends continued searching and when they didn't find it, they went back home. Before I left, I decided to go attend a show that was not related to my line of business, just like that, out of curiosity. And it was there that I found what I had been looking for.

"It was a lesson in faith for me and for my competitors as well, for they realized that the secret to my success was keeping Torah and mitzvos.

"We see the Rebbe's miracles on a daily basis. The business is booming today, thanks to the Rebbe's brachos. You don't have to be a big Lubavitcher Chassid in order to sense that the Rebbe is with us, even if we don't see him. It's amazing how this connection to the Rebbe, even for someone who wasn't born and raised as a Lubavitcher, becomes so deep and affecting.

"The interesting thing is that I don't completely understand the whole subject of Moshiach and what state the Rebbe is in now, but one thing I know and believe. The Rebbe is Moshiach because he is the greatest Jewish leader of this generation and of all of Jewish

history. His teachings are complete and unifying and emphasize the most important things, blending diverse worlds, uniting opposites. His teachings are so broad that they attract so many different types of people, joining together in a breathtaking fashion concepts of man-and-man and man-and-his Creator. That is what Moshiach is about and that is the Rebbe.

"I've browsed many philosophies but Chassidus is the only recipe for a happy life."

* * *

Rafi had a deep connection with tradition from before, but Mr. Ariel Eisenberg, director of a large electrical services company which employs many people, did not observe anything, not even fasting on Yom Kippur. Religious Jews in black always turned him off. He stayed away from them. He was born to the Jewish people, but he felt no need or obligation to do anything about this.

The interesting thing is that he liked the Chabad movement and that is because he saw the difference between them and other religious Jews. On his trips he met up with shluchim time and again.

"I always knew that Chabad is a wonderful movement that is concerned about Judaism, whose people are all over, offering t'fillin and to check mezuzos, in a friendly way, with a smile and lots of understanding. My only connection with Judaism was at N'ila on Yom Kippur when my wife, who comes from a traditional background, would drag me to shul, but I didn't understand what was going on.

"After the blowing of the shofar at the end of the day, I went home, satisfied that I had done what I was supposed to do. Beyond that, I had no connection and there was no reason for me to connect. I was happy with who I was and happy with what I was doing and I wasn't

looking for anything.

“My connection to Chabad and R’ Ido began two years ago when I joined my wife to hear the shofar and on the way we noticed a tent that R’ Ido had put up for the t’fillos. We were happy that we didn’t have to go as far. As soon as we walked in, R’ Ido came over to us with a big smile and welcomed us.

“That was the first time I was entering a shul because usually, the shuls we went to didn’t have room and only those who had paid ahead

shul. The patience to explain every paragraph of the t’filla drew me in and the rest is history.

“R’ Ido visited me at home and put t’fillin on with me and suddenly I saw it wasn’t terrible and wasn’t hard. Later on I bought my own t’fillin and began putting them on every morning, becoming part of the Chabad house community. I learned that Judaism is not the private property of anyone, but it belongs to the Jewish people.

“When it’s done in a way of

amazing how the Rebbe takes every theological subject and after discussing it, he shows how it’s all about creating a better world, a more positive world.

“This awareness of the uniqueness of the Chabad movement is something I always had but now I understood it in depth and learned where it came from.

“When Gil Sassover, the famous Bohemian playboy, attended a farbrengen at the Chabad house, he explained why he was drawn to Chabad. He said that after his father died, he felt the need to say Kaddish. He went from shul to shul and each time they corrected him. One time, someone even offered to teach him how to say Kaddish if he called him in the afternoon. When he went to the Chabad house, he was welcomed. They explained patiently and not condescendingly what he needed to do. When you enjoy being somewhere, that’s where you’ll stay and that is why I am here.”

* * *

Ariel finished with a story that he recently heard from one of his employees who did not grow up with positive feelings about Chabad.

“I have a loyal worker who belongs to the knitted kippot group. One day, his father came down with an illness in which the eyesight deteriorates and all the doctors they went to said there was nothing they could do. It was an inevitable road to blindness.

“Before he went to the last appointment with his father with a top ophthalmologist, he decided to write to the Rebbe through the *Igros Kodesh* even though he didn’t believe in it. On a number of occasions I even heard him oppose the belief that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

“The Rebbe’s answer was that a doctor is only Hashem’s emissary to heal and Hashem is the Healer of all

“When it’s done in a way of kiruv, and not with scare tactics, it’s very hard not to get swept up in it. The few times that I got a tape of religious lecturers, I shut it off after a minute and threw it out.”



Mr. Ariel Eisenberg

of time were able to sit inside. And there I was, inside, and I immediately felt the difference. These were warm, welcoming people!

“That was the first time that I muttered something of the t’filla and wasn’t wishing to go home already. It was the first time that I felt good and thanks to that N’ila, I met R’ Ido who turned out to be a well-rounded person and a great guy.

“The following Yom Kippur I fasted and I spent the entire day in

kiruv, and not with scare tactics, it’s very hard not to get swept up in it. The few times that I got a tape of religious lecturers while driving on the road, I shut it off after a minute and threw it out.

“Today, after being involved with the Chabad house for a while, I learned that Chabad’s work around the world is sourced in a structured though creative body of teachings. This approach of accepting every Jew as he is I saw numerous times in letters and sichos of the Rebbe. It’s

flesh. He was stunned by the answer and even more when after being examined by the doctor, he told them that he had never seen anything like it with this illness, for the deterioration had miraculously ceased.”

The conversation with the three businessmen took hours. They represent hundreds of other businessmen who have recently discovered the beauty of Chassidus and are mekushar to the Rebbe MH”M with a hiskashrus that would not put born-and-bred Chassidim to shame.

These businessmen, each one completely different from one another whether in background, personality or worldview, are joining Chabad. What’s left for us to do is ask, anticipate, exhort and plead for the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH”M now!

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WHY WE REJOICE ON LAG B'OMER

By Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Ginsberg, Mashpia, Kfar Chabad

The simcha on Rashbi's Hilula has to be so great that it does not allow for any sorrow or pain, not even the sorrow and pain over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

The mashpia, R' Mendel Futerfas a"h related:

A group of the Baal Shem Tov's disciples were discussing Chassidus and the service of Hashem. They related stories about their holy Rebbe and one story followed another. As they did so, they yearned to see their Rebbe and this feeling intensified to the point that they resolved that they had to travel to see him immediately!

They hired a wagon to take them to Mezhibuzh and made an arrangement with the wagon driver, paying him nicely to motivate him to make every effort to get them to Mezhibuzh before Shabbos. The wagon driver promised that he would do his best to get them to their destination before Shabbos but he couldn't do more than that, since time was short and the roads weren't good, and all sorts of unexpected obstacles could arise. If everything went smoothly they had a chance to just make it there by Shabbos.

The Chassidim so yearned to

see their Rebbe that they decided to take a chance. They got on the wagon and began the trip, with the wagon driver prodding the horses to run faster.

Despite the wagon driver's efforts to please his customers, he was unable to satisfy them. The roads were difficult and they had to slow down. As the hours ticked by, their apprehensions grew. Would they make it to their Rebbe before Shabbos?

If the travel conditions were not difficult enough, another obstacle presented itself. A fancy coach belonging to a nobleman was on the road ahead of them and it was in no rush. It blocked the road and did not allow them to circumvent it, and so the Chassidim's trip took even longer.

Some of the Chassidim began sighing: After all the efforts we've made and all the bother we went to, it looks as though all the forces conspired against us to hold us up. Because of that coach traveling in front of us, we won't be able to realize our dream of spending

Shabbos with the Baal Shem Tov.

One of the Chassidim said, "Dear brothers, why are you sad? Why stew and worry? Didn't our holy master teach us that Hashem is the ultimate in goodness and kindness. Everything that comes from Him is utterly good. 'No evil goes forth from Him.' 'No evil descends from Above.' Hashem always deals kindly with His creations, even when to them, it seems the opposite.

"It is obvious that Hashem is only being kind to us now too, far more than we imagine, and I mean literally good!"

They all recognized that what he said was true and this calmed them down somewhat, yet it was still hard to accept. They so desired to spend Shabbos with the Baal Shem Tov and it looked as though they would not make it in time, all because of the nobleman's coach holding them up.

As they digested what the Chassid said, a group of drunken farmers suddenly appeared from a neighboring village and blocked the road. They fell upon every passerby, especially loaded wagons. The group could anticipate what lay in store for them, especially when they were obviously Jews.

With this additional factor, their final hope that they would make it to their Rebbe by Shabbos dissipated. Now, they had to pray

that at least they would make it through alive and unharmed.

However, when the nobleman's coach reached the area where the farmers were lying in wait, they could hear the nobleman strongly censure the wild men for their audacity. The farmers ran off, afraid he would catch them and punish them.

The road opened up and the nobleman's coach traveled onward, followed by the Chassidim in their wagon. After a few minutes, as

getting to the Baal Shem Tov. It was thanks to his coach, which at first had caused us so much anguish, that we arrived safely. It's like the stories the Gemara relates about Rabbi Akiva and Nachum Ish Gam Zu, for we merited to see that all is truly for the best.

* * *

The Rebbe writes, "There are a number of reasons given for the joy of Lag B'Omer. As for us, we only have what our Rebbeim told us, that it is because of the Hilula

out to Hashem, "ad masai?"

He was so affected by this that even on Rosh Chodesh and Chol HaMoed, despite not being allowed to mourn on these days, he would say Nachem, for he felt such anguish over the destruction of the Mikdash. It wasn't considered a sin for him to do so.

Nevertheless, when R' Avrohom HaLevi said the Nachem prayer on Lag B'Omer in Miron, Rashbi was annoyed. How could R' Avrohom mourn on his Yom Hilula? R'

Avrohom was punished for this. (Needless to say, we must demand the Geula on Lag B'Omer too, but it should be done in a positive frame of mind, though joy.)

The question is why, why was it acceptable for R' Avrohom to mourn on Yomim Tovim but not on Lag B'Omer? The Rebbe explains (*Likkutei Sichos* vol. 1, p. 287), based on the maamer of the Alter Rebbe, that for lofty neshamos like Rashbi, the Mikdash was not destroyed. Therefore, explains the Rebbe, on Rashbi's Yom Hilula, when all his good deeds and Torah are gathered together and effect salvation, it is forbidden to be sad.

Furthermore, says the Rebbe, there were other Tanaim and Amoraim who delved into p'nimius ha'Torah and were above this world, but Rashbi did not suffice with that. Although Rashbi was the "source of p'nimius ha'Torah" and this was seen in him more than the other Tanaim, at the same time his novel and unique contribution was to draw it down into the world in a visible way.

This is why, on his Yom Hilula, it is out of the question to mourn.



they traveled through a forest, the nobleman's coach veered to the side and the wagon with the Chassidim was able to surge forward. Miraculously, they made it to Mezhibuzh before Shabbos.

Now, said the Chassidim to one another, we got a lesson in faith. We saw with our own eyes that everything Hashem does is for our own good. If the nobleman had not been traveling in front of us, who knows whether we would have made it out alive, never mind

of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai."

The simcha on Rashbi's Hilula has to be so great that it does not allow for any sorrow or pain, not even the sorrow and pain over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. The Rebbe told the story several times about Rabbi Avrohom HaLevi, the student of the Arizal, who was so devastated by the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash that he would say the Nachem prayer (said on Tisha B'Av) every day, and he would cry

On Rashbi's day there can only be simcha.

* * *

The beginning of the revelation of p'nimius ha'Torah was through Rashbi. "Mattan Torah of p'nimius ha'Torah" took place on Lag B'Omer. When the depth of Torah is revealed, what is also revealed in the world is that ultimately everything is from Hashem who is good, and therefore everything is good.

This is the reason that starting from Rashbi, the day that marks the passing of a tzaddik, which is obviously a day of sorrow and a day that traditionally people fasted, became a day of simcha. Lag B'Omer, which marks the passing of Rashbi, is an illuminated and joyous day which cannot be marred by sorrow, even sorrow over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. Not only is it not a day of sorrow; it's a day of rejoicing like the simcha of a chassan and kalla.

On this day, Chassidim and Sephardim make farbrengens and seudos and say l'chaim and share divrei Torah, emphasizing the special quality of the day. This is because p'nimius ha'Torah revealed the true good that lies within even those things that are seemingly terrible, such as dying. P'nimius ha'Torah reveals the good in this, the completion of the avoda of the neshama within the body, the yahrtzait being the day that "all the deeds and teachings which he

worked on all his life" are gathered together, and they shine forth and are revealed down below too, and "effect salvation in the midst of the earth."

Despite all this, despite Rashbi's innovation, a yahrtzait still has an element of pain, for after all, the neshama can no longer be in the body and the person cannot learn Torah and do mitzvos anymore. The neshama completed its work along with the body and will get a reward but the body remains unable to do mitzvos.

Rashbi started the revelation of the inner and deeper dimension which was previously hidden and concealed, especially on Lag B'Omer, but some painful points still remained. From Rashbi, as time went on, more of the depth was revealed, more of the goodness that at first seemed to be the complete opposite of anything good. There was the period in which Kabbala was revealed with the Arizal and his holy disciples, the Baalei Shem and the hidden tzaddikim in the period preceding Chassidus. There was the wondrous revelation of the holy Baal Shem Tov and Toras HaChassidus; the revelation of the Alter Rebbe and the teachings of Chabad. Then each of the Rebbeim was a new G-dly revelation who continued to reveal more of the inner reality, finding and revealing the good hidden within that which seemed bad.

Yet, even after all these wondrous revelations, a bit of sorrow still remained. The spirit of impurity was not entirely eradicated. This is the job of Moshiach, to reveal the p'nimius of the "darkest of the dark" so that no darkness remains because "the **darkness itself** will illuminate."

Moshiach descends into the depths of sorrow. Moshiach's name, "leper of the house of Rebbi," expresses this. "He bore our illnesses and our pains he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by G-d and oppressed."

Moshiach is the revelation of the essence of p'nimius ha'Torah, the revelation of the p'nimius of everything! It is because he is so lofty that he can descend to the lowest of the low, enter it and reveal the true inner character hidden within. With Moshiach, there will be no room left for sorrow and for that reason, for Moshiach there is no possibility of histalkus of the neshama from the body, which despite the lofty aspects of the passing of a Tzaddik is still something painful as it is compared to the destruction of the Holy Temple. The job of Moshiach is to bring forth revelation from within the body, from within the darkness, and from within the material and physical, which we will experience fully with the complete revelation of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, immediately, now.

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YECHENZKEL THE WINE MAKER

By Nosson Avrohom

*How did he get involved in the wine making profession? It was amazing hashgacha pratis that enabled him to learn the secret of producing dry wine and gain the necessary knowledge to supply his customers with the wine they wanted. * I spoke with R' Yechezkel Springer, from the generation of the founders of Kfar Chabad, and he told me his fascinating life story.*

I visited R' Yechezkel Springer's wine cellar after Purim, when the activity level at his private wine press increases. This is where he makes quality kosher wines, made from grapes that he buys from the fruit store in Kfar Chabad. His additive-free wine attracts customers from all over the country. Most of them seek exemplary kashrus and appreciate good wine.

"Baruch Hashem, many people fancy this wine and are unwilling to use other wines," says R' Yechezkel with undisguised pride.

Three years ago a seider took place at a certain well-known inn out in the countryside. The owner also took part and he noticed

Chabad Chassidim pouring wine from bottles hidden under the table. He asked for a taste of the wine and from then on he became a regular customer of Springer wine.

After some persuasion, R' Yechezkel allowed us to accompany him to work and to watch him. One thing he didn't let us do, despite our nudging, was to enter the winery area.

I grew up in Kfar Chabad and one of my childhood memories is that the only bottles of wine we had at our seider table were Springer's. The rest of the year we bought other wines, but Pesach was different. When Rabbi Ashkenazi is away from home for Shabbos, he takes along Springer's wine. It

seems that back in Lubavitch they had special stringencies in wine production, beyond the usual stringencies, and Springer's wine has all of them.

For many years, R' Yechezkel raised turkeys. When he had difficulty supporting himself in this way, he turned to wine making.

"I looked for a field where I wouldn't be stepping on anyone's toes and that's how I came to make wine."

In the small winery that he made behind his house, he makes dry wines of the Carignon and Cabernet variety as well as low alcohol, sweet Muscat, and other types of wines and grape juice, for Pesach and year-round.

He recently began producing low alcohol wine. "Not everybody can drink the usual quantity of alcohol and many look for lighter wines."

R' Yechezkel was one of the first settlers in Kfar Chabad. He is a familiar and beloved figure on the local scene. He isn't young, yet he still can be seen pedaling along on his bicycle with his white beard blowing in the breeze. His day is highly structured. He rises at five in the morning, immerses in the mikva near his house, and prepares for davening.

At seven o'clock he gives a daily shiur in halacha for the people who daven in the minyan. He then goes home, eats breakfast, and goes to



work at the winery he started thirty-one years ago. His son, R' Yosef Yitzchok, helps him.

At noon R' Yechezkel rides his bike to the home of his longtime friend, R' Zushe Rivkin, the dairy farmer. The two sit and learn Gemara together. "R' Zushe makes a great kiddush Hashem. Reporters come and interview him about his Chassidic way of life and he shares Chassidic thoughts with all of them and teaches them what a Chassidic life is about." (Editor's note: This article appeared in Hebrew last year, before the passing of R' Zushe earlier this year.)

Then R' Yechezkel goes back home for lunch and a short nap, after which he returns to his winery. Then there is Mincha and Maariv and his other regular shiurim.

When you visit an elderly Chassid, even if you went to ask him about wine, you also ask about his long and interesting life. R' Yechezkel was happy to oblige. For two hours, between filling one bottle and another, we listened closely to his descriptions of village life in Galicia, heard what Jewish life was like in Siberia, and how he came to Chabad through the mashpia, R' Nissan Nemenov.

"I was born in Nisko, which is near Lizensk in Poland," began R' Yechezkel. "The Jewish community in the town was small but very close knit. There was no yeshiva and the bachurim learned in the local shul. The youth who finished public school and wanted to learn Torah, went to the shul.

"One of my first childhood memories was the plot of the priests who banded together to ruin the businesses of Jews and claimed it wasn't right that Jews should earn money off gentiles. They went from town to town and helped gentiles open similar stores to that of the Jews and brainwashed people not to

buy from Jews. Within a short time many Jews, who had lived well before, became poor and had to knock on doors for donations. In my youth I was in charge of directing those Jews who came to the town to collect money to the homes of the local Jews.

“I received a Chassidishe chinuch at home. In Galicia there were no misnagdim. My parents instilled in us simple faith in G-d. Except for the children of the rav and the shochet, who did not have to attend public school, all the children had to go to school. Unlike in Russia, we did not have to attend school on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

“I’ll never forget something that happened to me when I was a child. One day, we got a new physics teacher who was a big anti-Semite. In one of the lessons, a gentile boy who sat in front of me began to bother me. Although the teacher saw this, he ignored it and that me made angry. That the goyim tried to start up with us at recess time was one thing, but in the middle of class and in front of the teacher?

“I got up and hit the boy. The teacher sent me home and told me to come with my mother. My mother went and spoke with the principal. I don’t know what was said but from that day on, the gentile boy became my best friend. When I went to school on Sundays, he would run and bring me his notebooks so I could make up what I missed on Shabbos.”

Despite the trouble made by the gentiles, life for the Jews was generally fine. Life in the little Jewish community went on as usual until the winds of war began to blow and the cursed Germans started World War II and the Holocaust. R’ Yechezkel was a young man at the time but he clearly remembers those days.

“Erev Rosh HaShana we all fled to the surrounding villages in fear

of the German nonstop bombing. There was tremendous fear. Everybody realized that what was would no longer be. For Yom Kippur, since the bombing had let up somewhat, we returned to our town only to discover that the



R’ Yechezkel Springer in his youth

Germans had conquered it!

“The day after Yom Kippur, the Gestapo gathered everybody in the marketplace and announced that whoever had silver, gold, and copper should bring it. Whoever had these items afterwards would be shot. When everybody finished bringing their valuables, the Germans said that by the next day at noon, not one Jew would remain in the town.

“Our town was situated on the western side of the River Sam. On the other side was Russian territory. The Germans mocked us and said, ‘Go to the eastern side of the river to the Russian paradise.’ Indeed, many crossed the river and we did too.

“After a few days under Russian rule, the police came and asked us whether we wanted to remain in Russia or go somewhere else. My father innocently said that he wanted to go to America. The Russians considered this treason and decided to send us to Yakuta in distant Siberia. It turned out that this saved our lives.

“In Siberia the Russian government had a school for Polish children, including Jews. Since I was past my bar mitzva, I took my t’fillin with me. How do you put on t’fillin under Stalin’s government? Hashem did a miracle and I was able to put them on without a problem. Our school had a Jewish wagon driver whose job it was to be the school’s driver. He lived with his family on the school premises. Every day I went to his home for a few minutes and put on t’fillin and then went to class with no one the wiser.

How did you manage on Pesach?

“A Jewish friend and I were able to avoid chametz all Pesach. I discovered that one of the Jewish girls who attended the school was the daughter of the last melamed I had in Poland, and he lived not far from the school. He had lived with us every time he came to our town and I was sure he would be willing to host me for the seider.

“Before I asked, she had already told her parents that Springer learned with her and her parents invited me and my brother Yankel for the first two nights.

“What did we do the rest of Pesach? Hashem was with us. A Polish girl in our class was sick and she stayed in a special building that served as an infirmary which was heated with wood and was on the school grounds. In the cellar were potatoes belonging to the school and the sister of a Jewish friend who went to visit her, would go

down there and get a large supply of them. Then she would roast them in the oven that heated the sick girl's room. When they were ready, she would call her brother Dovid Kartegener and I, and we would eat till we were full."

Where were your parents?

"My parents lived in a small village about sixty kilometers away from the school. Forty kilometers were by regular road and another twenty were through thick forests. One day, I decided to go to my parents. I asked for permission and another two people joined me, a gentile boy and girl. We planned on walking since there was no transportation and the trucks that passed by could only take one person.

"After forty kilometers on the main road, the sun began to set. The girl was tired and couldn't continue walking at our pace. The gentile boy didn't care and he wanted to hurry up so he would get to the village before sunset. The girl and I walked the final twenty kilometers alone, as the sun set. It

was terrifying. It was dark in the forest and wild animals and wolves roamed. There were also camps for prisoners around there and sometimes dangerous prisoners escaped.

"My courage, versus the disloyalty of the gentile boy, became known later and caused a kiddush Hashem, for I had not abandoned the girl. A few days later, I was appointed to the committee of three people who supervised the kitchen. The committee consisted of me, and I was only 16, a Jewish lawyer, and a Polish journalist. When I was in charge, nobody dared to enter out of line.

"After finishing school, I went to work like the other students. I found a job at a power station which was managed by a Pole. The work consisted of shipping the wood which was cut in the forest, bringing it to the power station, and hacking it up into pieces a meter in size. When I asked the manager whether he was Polish, he said, 'Ask me what you want in Polish and you'll be answered...'

"I jumped at the opportunity and said that I was a religious Jew who kept the Sabbath. I said, 'Every worker has a day off every week. I want my day off to be on Saturday.' He agreed."

When the war was over and the Allies were victorious, it was possible to return to Central Asia. Young Poles who had fought against the Germans in a special unit formed by the Russians, left Siberia and went to Central Asia with the government's permission. Many Poles left the bitter cold of Siberia for the warmth of Asia, using this as an excuse.

R' Yechezkel, his brothers and his parents could also have gone but they didn't have the money for the trip and so they remained in Siberia. The miracles and hashgacha pratis they experienced up until then continued. They heard reports about many refugees who died of starvation or diseases that broke out where they lived. Entire families died tragic deaths.

Later on they heard that although the Germans had been defeated, people were still afraid to travel the roads alone. Russian soldiers returning from war were exhausted and the terrible things they had seen affected many of them psychologically and many of them robbed and attacked passersby. In that postwar environment, a group of Polish Jews banded together and planned on traveling together to Poland.

"We waited a year and then left. It was before Pesach and we were fortunate, for we left with a suitcase full of packages of matzos."

How did you get matzos at that difficult time?

"In those days, Russia received shipments of canned goods from the United States. My father, who died at that time, was a tinsmith by profession. My brother Yankel also learned the profession. They



R' Yechezkel's vats of wine

***“I said that I was
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agreed.”***

manufactured various utensils out of those cans and I – together with my third brother, R’ Itche (presently a mashpia in 770) – went around to the kolkhozes and bartered our utensils for potatoes and flour.

“We ground the wheat in a hand mill, also homemade. We kashered our ovens at home and made matzos. We also had some kosher for Pesach bottles of wine which we made out of raisins.

“Throughout the latter years of the war, we had white, fresh challos for Shabbos and candles and wine, things that were more precious than gold in those difficult times. Those who went through the experiences of those days will find it hard to believe, but Hashem watched over us, time after time, and took care of us in this wondrous way.”

White flour and wine during wartime?!

“Yes, and it was thanks to the gold mines in the area. The miners received their salaries in coupons. Each coupon was worth ten rubles. There were special stores in which they could buy various products that weren’t in the regular stores. My father was well-liked by one of

these miners and he bought us whatever we wanted.

“My father passed away right before we left Siberia. When the Shiva was over, the rest of us joined a group of Polish Jews heading for Poland. It was a long trip by freight train until we arrived at the port city of Stettin in Poland. In those days there was much uncertainty. Many refugees, Jews and non-Jews, wandered about in many cities and didn’t know what the morrow would bring.

“One of the Jews decided, for the meanwhile, to open a yeshiva program for Jewish boys until things settled down. My brother Itche and I learned there while our older brother Yankel looked for a job to support the family.

“After two weeks, we became aware of a certain yeshiva that organized Jewish youth up until age 20 to travel out of the country. We registered for this yeshiva even though I was already 21. We hoped that our mother would also be able to join us. What happened was, when she arrived at the Czech border she was not allowed to cross it and my brother Yankel remained with her in Poland while Itche and I continued to Prague.

“There was chaos. Some came from Holland to our refugee camp in Czechoslovakia and began to register boys who wanted to learn in the new yeshiva which they planned on starting. In those days, Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson was sent to Europe by the Rebbe Rayatz. The one who introduced us was Rabbi Elimelech Spalter a”h, who was with us when we left Poland.

“R’ Spalter told R’ Jacobson about our situation and that we wanted to learn Torah. He suggested that if we were serious about it, we should go to Peking, Germany, where there was a Chassidishe yeshiva. We were interested in going but we didn’t

tell any of our friends about our plans so that it wouldn’t become known to those who wanted to prevent Torah study among the young people in the group.

“Although I didn’t know what Chabad is, I davened at the gravesite of the Maharal of Prague and asked that I succeed in getting to a Chassidishe yeshiva. As I said, in Galicia there were no misnagdim, and I wanted to grow a beard like my father and ancestors, but in all the yeshivos in which I had learned, the rabbanim were Litvaks.

“When I arrived at the Chabad yeshiva in Germany, it felt wonderful. One day, I even met the melamed again, the one who used to live with us in our town and he recommended the Tzanzer yeshiva, where the physical conditions were better, but I refused, saying that a bit more meat wouldn’t win me over.

“I learned in the Chabad yeshiva for a year. This was my first opportunity to get a glimpse into the fascinating world of Chabad Chassidus. The teacher in the yeshiva was Rabbi Yisroel Neveler (Levin), who took every opportunity to tell a Chassidic story and its lesson. Rabbi Nissan Nemenov was the mashpia whose special personality and Chassidishkait taught me a lot. The physical conditions in yeshiva were trivial compared to the light that these great Chassidim radiated to the talmidim.

“After a year, the yeshiva moved to France, where we learned in Brunoy. The Chassid who had the most influence on me and was mekarev me to Chabad was R’ Nissan Nemenov. You could see his *iskafia* in eating. He would move his food from side to side, playing with it until he finally ate it. He was also a real oved Hashem. His preparations for davening were an avoda in themselves. His davening

was said out loud and very sweetly, and people from different groups would come just to watch him daven.”

R’ Nissan’s farbrengens also greatly affected the young R’ Yechezkel. He eagerly took in whatever R’ Nissan said.

In 1949, after asking the Rebbe Rayatz for a bracha, R’ Yechezkel and R’ Itche went to Eretz Yisroel. Their first stop was the immigrant camp in Beit Lid and from there they went to the transit camp in Beer Yaakov, then to “Tochelet,” which later became Kfar Chabad.

“We were the first group to settle in Kfar Chabad. We arrived at the beginning of the summer and began to renovate the abandoned Arab houses there. We used these houses at the beginning of the winter.

“My first job was in a shingle factory that was founded by the Jewish Agency near Kfar Chabad. Later on I began growing vegetables in partnership with Rabbi Dov Quinn a”h. Together we grew tomatoes, peppers, watermelons, and melons, but we didn’t profit thereby; we actually lost a lot of money. It was 1954 and I wrote to the Rebbe and asked him what I should do. I knew that the Rebbe wanted the Chassidim to work the land and I wrote him that I was just losing money and I already had three children that I had to support.

“One day, I saw coops that had come from America. I figured I could also build coops. I collected wood and in my yard I built coops for chickens and other birds. I’ll never forget that tumultuous time. With this too, I had no luck. I began raising chickens and the day the truck was supposed to come to take the chickens to be sold in the market, the Sinai war with Egypt began and the truck was mobilized by the military.

“I went to R’ Yitzchok Volvovsky, who had a horse and wagon, and we loaded the chickens on the wagon and drove to Rechov HaAliya in Tel Aviv and from there to the Carmel market, in order to sell them. But I incurred losses from the chickens too and once again, I wrote to the Rebbe that I was in trouble and didn’t know what to do next.

“The Rebbe answered that he hoped that the verse would be fulfilled, ‘open your mouth and I will fill it.’

“I understood from this that I had to make the coops bigger. Until then, the coops could hold about 400 chickens. I doubled the space and the number of chickens. But once again, when I tried selling the chickens, I had many losses.

“A personal friend of mine at the time, Rabbi Shlomo Kirsch, with whom I shared my plight, calmed me and said, ‘If the Rebbe said to double, you double, and you don’t have to see the fulfillment of the answer immediately.’

“And so it was. A year later I began to profit and I covered my debts by growing vegetables and raising chickens. After a short time, I raised about 2000 chicks. I wrote to the Rebbe and asked whether I had to make the coop bigger or leave it as is. I explained that if I enlarged it, it wasn’t clear that I would profit but the work would be much greater.

“The Rebbe answered that I should always seek to grow because one should want more parnasa, and also, there were mosdos that needed money. The Rebbe said I could expand, but not necessarily with chickens. I began raising turkeys, lots of them.”

R’ Yechezkel nostalgically recounted one episode after another in his life as one of the founders of Kfar Chabad. In the middle of his descriptions that he recounted with much Chassidic charm, he got up and



R’ Yechezkel and his son visiting Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim Lubavitch in Brunoy

went to the living room of his house and came back with a cartridge shell from a tank round. As I wondered what this was about, he smiled and said, "This is the memory I carry with me from the Six Day War, in which I fought. Whenever I look at this shell, I remember the miracles that Hashem did for me, helping me survive. I will tell you just one miracle out of many.

"Our job was to clean out the areas we conquered. One time, when our troop traveled by bus in the Sinai dunes, a convoy of tanks traveled behind us. Suddenly, with no logical explanation, the tanks passed us and then we heard an explosion. It turned out that the Egyptians had hidden small mines in the sand for the unarmored vehicles. I don't want to think about what would have happened if the tanks hadn't decided to drive past us."

This interview was constantly interrupted by phone calls from shluchim and Anash ordering wine for Pesach. His son, Yoske Springer, answered the phone, but sometimes R' Yechezkel himself was asked to take the order.

There are those who buy only Springer's wine year round, but when it comes Pesach time people are even more particular. They know that they can fully rely on his wine.

"With wine, Hashem's hashgacha is clear. There is no magic. You can do the same thing year after year and each year the wine comes out different."

R' Yechezkel is a classic example of a learned Chassid who is supported by the work of his hands, the kind of person we read about in stories about the Jewish towns of once-upon-a-time. Along with his memories of their years of exile in Siberia, he also remembers the first

time he tasted homemade wine, the raisin wine his parents made for Pesach.

During the interview, R' Yechezkel offered me a taste of the various wines he produces. They are definitely tasty and high quality wines.

"Our wine is made of grapes with no additives, both because of kashrus reasons and because of quality."

What made you think of starting a winery and how did you know how to make wine?

"We always made sweet wine at home. My wife a" had a good business sense. When raising chickens didn't work out and we thought about what to do next, she suggested going into the wine business. I sent a letter with this idea to the Rebbe and the answer I received was, 'Bracha.'

"I was happy because I knew that in similar cases the Rebbe would ask whether there was an encroachment on other people's businesses. If the Rebbe did not ask, that meant the Rebbe was fully in favor of the idea."

R' Yechezkel went to Rabbi Ashkenazi, the rav of Kfar Chabad, who supported the venture. "Giving kashrus certification to wine is complicated. Producing mehudar wine will be your contribution to the kashrus of Kfar Chabad," he said, and since then he has been involved with the winery.

"Chassidim were always particular that not only should a goy not come into contact with the wine but he shouldn't even see it. The uniqueness of the wine produced in Kfar Chabad is that the production is done entirely by the Springer family. No goy has seen it," explains R' Ashkenazi.

R' Yechezkel explained, "There were two men in B'nei Brak who produced wine who eventually decided to dissolve their

HASHGACHA PRATIS IN HIS WINE MAKING

As in everything in life, R' Yechezkel sees much hashgacha pratis in his wine making:

"A few years ago, after Pesach, someone who had bought some bottles of Cabernet wanted to exchange them for something else. We had nothing for him to exchange it for since our supply was used up. He wanted to return them because he said he had no use for them. As soon as he left, someone else came in and excitedly said, 'I never had such a Pesach before! I drank four cups and felt great! You must sell me some more bottles of Cabernet.'"

Another story:

"There was someone from Tel Aviv who had tasted our wine at Rabbi Gerlitzky and liked it very much. He wanted to order a large amount of wine at a good price. I was hesitant because selling him what he wanted meant I wouldn't have any left for my regular customers.

"That week I read a story that the Rebbe Rayatz wrote about a kolkhoz where everything grew well, while other places experienced drought. People wanted to pay them a lot of money for their produce but they chose to sell it to their regular customers at the usual price. What remained they sold at a reasonable price to the rest of the customers.

"I was taken aback by the hashgacha pratis in having read this at just this time. Of course I was no longer unsure about what to do."



R' Yechezkel delving into the "wine of Torah"

partnership, with one of them wanting to move from B'nei Brak. He thought of moving his stock to Kfar Chabad and that is how the 'shidduch' between us came about.

I learned the manufacturing from him and over the years we added our own techniques. What's most interesting is that he never ended up coming to Kfar Chabad.

"We manufacture another type of wine, a dry wine. We tried a number of times to figure out how to produce fine dry wine, but were unsuccessful. There are two stages in the manufacturing of this kind of wine. In one of the how-to books it says how to do it, but all our attempts failed.

"During one of the harvests, the grapes came on Thursday and we had to wait a day between one stage and the next because it was Shabbos and we couldn't work. We didn't know what would happen to the wine if we left it alone for a day. Anyway, after we finished the second stage, we realized it was all hashgacha pratis because the wine came out just the way we wanted. That's when we discovered that this was the secret – that you have to wait a day between the first and second stages."

* * *

After several hours I left with a fine bottle of wine. R' Yechezkel patted me fondly on the shoulder and said, "Our wine can be used on the altar." When he saw my surprised look he explained, "This is the only wine that is manufactured from grapes only, with nothing else added. The Beis HaMikdash will soon be built and we will bring wine to Yerushalayim to be used on the altar."

Amen, kein yehi ratzon.

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HOW TO PREPARE FOR A PARADE

By D. Rotem

*Building a float on the theme of Resurrection of the Dead, doing crafts with bottles and paper, using tens of thousands of shekels and huge banners. Who should be the counselors – girls or bachurim? Who do you need to ask for permits and when and how do you go about it? * Mrs. Meira Fisher, the shlucha responsible for organizing the Lag B'Omer parade in Hertzilya, shares her experience in organizing parades.*

Lag B'Omer is unlike any other event in the year. You need to invest a lot of resources and thought and advertise it all over, and it's all over in a few hours. In addition, it's a challenge getting the children to participate because they are tired from the activities of the night before, the bonfires and barbecues. In order to get them to come, you need some kind of gimmick, some attraction to get them out of the house.

Every year we invest more and more money into it, between ten and twenty thousand shekels (just for the gimmicks). That's aside from all the other expenses, the caps, booklets, flags, transportation, madrichim, drums, prizes, refreshments, and

advertising.

How do you organize a parade?

The first rule in organizing a new parade is: consult with an experienced shliach. The shliach usually arranges the permits from the police and others. When it's the first time you're doing a parade, they want to know every detail, but in the coming years you can get away with certain things. For instance, our floats require a special permit from the security sector when in a street full of children. Nevertheless, we have done it for many years and nobody bothers us.

When do you start preparing?

We begin preparing before Purim, at least as far as that year's gimmick. If we procrastinate, we can lose out

big time.

The problem with making a Lag B'Omer event in Eretz Yisroel is that two weeks before there is a certain national holiday that is widely celebrated. We have to impress the kids and schlep them to our event, which is why we have to put so much into the advertising with huge posters and have to have a car going around the week before making an announcement.

The budget is an important factor. When the shliach knows what his Lag B'Omer budget is, there's no reason why he can't organize it around Purim time, the earlier the better. It's important to work out all the details before going ahead with the plan and to limit the gimmickry – as fascinating as it might be – so that it's a dignified event with educational messages. If possible, it's advisable to see the performance of the performer you plan on having, in advance, so you won't have surprises when it's too late.

What messages should be publicized at the parade?

Out of the many nice ideas that are presented at Lag B'Omer parades, I ask myself: What is the most important? What theme will I promote at my parade? What floats will present the most important concepts about Judaism?

The answer is simple: Moshiach and Geula, the 10 Mivtzaim, as well as the mitvza of having a letter in a Torah scroll for children. The Rebbe is the one who has declared what

should be publicized out of the numerous mitzvot in Judaism.

We make a display of inyanei Moshiach with six children holding huge Moshiach flags leading the way, in addition to the small flags that each child is given. There are Moshiach balloons. Among the floats there is one on the Beis HaMikdash with a picture of the Rebbe. It's important that the floats have written explanations so people understand what they are seeing. Not everything that is obvious to you is understood by others.

The hardest part is building the big floats. How do you go about it?

Buying materials for the floats depends on your budget. We built most of the floats out of strong cartons which we covered with wallpaper. Throughout the year we preserve the float by wrapping it snugly in plastic wrap. We built Rashbi's cave out of boards, a butterfly net and a coating of paper paste.

You can also build a large float out of empty plastic bottles. You design it with the help of strong tape and cover it with paper paste. It takes two days to dry and it's hard like a rock. The disadvantage is that

it takes up more space in storage.

A wonderful added touch is including children who are dressed in costume. We have groups of girls dressed like pushkas with a coin as a crown. Another group is dressed up as cooks with aprons and hats, and they're on the Kashrus float. Then there are the candlesticks with flames on their heads that play an important role on the Shabbos table float.

The boys are dressed up as Kohanim at the Beis HaMikdash, as Sifrei Torah, and boys wear t'fillin and carry a mezuzah (that is almost their height). We once had a Har Sinai for Mivtza Torah – children with collars and a crown that are green with flowers around the Luchos. You can also have a bonfire with a hat as the fire and the costume in red and yellow.

The parade's success has a lot to do with those running it. How does that work for your parades?

We have separate groups of boys and girls and we have girls who call out the P'sukim together with the children. It's better to have girls since they can take boys under the age of nine, whereas the bachurim can only work with boys. At the rally we don't need madrichos since it isn't proper

for them to call out slogans in front of an audience that is partially comprised of men. During the actual parade, with all the music and drumming, it doesn't stand out.

In recent years, we brought bachurim since the girls didn't have the enthusiasm we wanted of them. I get complaints that shouting slogans is not modest. I have news for you: it's not the lack of modesty that causes the girls to use low voices, but the lack of caring, the lack of pride. As a girl, I went in the streets of Beit Shaan and shouted with the children: For a Jew kosher food tastes better!

We felt we were walking with the Rebbe and Rashbi and everybody had to know about the Rebbe and the mivtza. Those who are ashamed to shout have misplaced shame and this is the opposite of the purpose of the parade.

What's the most important thing to remember when planning the parade?

Our main goal is not that the children should attend (and not even the side benefit, that afterwards, the children will attend our camp and other activities) but to remember that we are hastening the Geula through the Rebbe MH"M.



DAYS OF MOSHIACH OR THE DEPTHS OF DARKNESS?!

By Rabbi Elazar Kenig

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

We have all heard the claim more than once: How can you possibly say that we are in the days of Moshiach? “Stop dreaming, look around you, and you’ll see that it’s ‘midnight’ – at the depths of the darkness.” The talk about the questionable “peace,” the frightful terrorist attacks that have occurred (may there be no more, G-d protect us) literally represents the ultimate darkness. Yet, then as today, the Rebbe commands us: Your loins girded, your shoes on your feet – be ready to feel that we are in the days of Moshiach.

In the general letter of Yud-Alef Nissan 5744, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, brings a wondrous explanation of the state of the Jewish People at midnight on Pesach night and its amazing connection to our times.

We learn from the Torah’s account of the Exodus from Egypt that the Redemption from Egypt came in two stages: The first stage was at midnight on the night of Pesach. According to its simple interpretation, the Jewish People had

already become free at that moment. Pharaoh had already told them explicitly in the middle of the night, “Go out from among my people.” You are released, go on your way... As far as we were concerned, two hundred and ten years of suffering had come to an end.

This was not only permission; it included a request and a demand on the part of the Egyptians. Take whatever you want, even your flocks and your herds, anything you desire – take and go. In the words of Rashi’s commentary: “You say, ‘One’? **Take two and go!**” Free people in every sense of the word.

However, the Complete Redemption had not been realized. As is known, that came only at the second stage, the following day at the noon hour, when the Jewish People actually went out in a triumphant procession, and left Egypt for all to see.

It turns out that Torah assigns great importance to this first stage. Despite the fact that this was not actually the Complete Redemption, the Torah demanded that we should already conduct ourselves at this stage at free people in every respect, and we should begin to live the Redemption. The command was to



eat the Pesach sacrifice with “your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand,” beginning to feel the Redemption while still holding in the middle of the first stage.

Despite the fact that in a technical sense, the Jewish People only went out from Egypt twelve hours later, the Torah demands that we put our shoes on and fasten our belts in order to enter an atmosphere of freedom and begin living the Redemption. And anyone who thinks that this is a simple matter, we have some news for him – we’re talking about a difficult task.

In practical terms, we must remember that in those wondrous moments of Redemption, they only saw signs of the Redemption, whereas the actual movement in the direction of the Exodus from Egypt had not yet begun. We mustn’t forget that in some respects, there were still Jews who acted in a manner that did not exactly point to Redemption.

The Torah relates about the great miracle of the slaying of the first born, noting that even a first-born Jew who was staying in the home of an Egyptian at midnight was not harmed whatsoever. G-d made the

distinction that he was a Jew, and He took pity upon him and kept him alive. However, this brings to light a startling fact that the Rebbe shlita reveals:

After nine plagues, after all of Egypt had already recognized the tremendous power of G-d Alm-ghty, after all the revealed miracles and wonders, there was still a situation where a Jew chose to make the Seder night in the home of an Egyptian...feeling comfortable and at ease in the merit of his connections with the Egyptians.

This means that it wasn’t so simple to feel the Redemption already. We simply assumed that the Jews, after seeing all the miracles and wonders, the miraculous plagues, believed and were happy leading up to the Redemption. However, it turned that this was no easy task. There were many Jews who died after the plague of darkness, because they weren’t worthy to be redeemed. Even at the slaying of the first-born, there were Jews who still maintained their connections with the Egyptians... (and it should be noted that they were also redeemed...) After all the miracles, it was still midnight. In the physical sense, they saw around them an atmosphere of midnight, physical darkness, even spiritual darkness – the depths of darkness.

However, as is known and as the Jewish People had already believed then, the truth is that the Redemption did indeed begin in those moments; there already was the Redemption in its most literal sense. The **avoda** that was demanded of them in those moments was simply to begin feeling it.

The Torah commanded that they should be already sitting at midnight with their shoes on their feet, despite the fact they actually only left twelve hours later... This was something that didn’t exactly highlight the ease

and pleasantness of the Redemption, but here is exactly where the avoda is hidden: to already feel the height of the Redemption in the depths of the night and the darkness.

As we look at these two stages of the Redemption – the Redemption that was already at midnight and the Redemption that was the following day at high noon – we can learn the most marvelous things in connection to our times. Our Sages, of blessed memory, have taught us two prominent instructions regarding the saying, “As in the days of your going out from Egypt, I will show you wonders.” First, there is the simple instruction about the conduct demanded of us even now to begin living the Redemption, even if darkness still continues to surround us.

This avoda of opening our eyes and beginning to living the Redemption pertains only to our times, for when the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt and the dead will be restored to life, there will be no need to make speeches and convince us to live in the days of Moshiach.

This means that we are in a very similar situation to the Jewish People in Egypt, at the stage of their Redemption at midnight. The Rebbe already proclaimed to us that we are in the days of Moshiach, even indicating the many signs testifying to this fact – the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, freedom for Jews throughout the world – and the signs continue to mount that we are in the days of Moshiach.

On the other hand, we have all heard the claim more than once: How can you possibly say that we are in the days of Moshiach? “Stop dreaming, look around you, and you’ll see that it’s ‘midnight,’ at the height of the darkness.” The talk about the questionable “peace,” the frightful terrorist attacks that have occurred (may there be no more, G-d

G-d forbid that there could be a situation whereby a Jew thinks that Moshiach will not come today. We are “broken” by the fact that we have still not reached the stage of absolute illumination.

protect us) literally embodies the ultimate darkness.

This applies not only in the physical realm, but in the spiritual realm as well. There has been a tremendous spiritual descent recognized in all respects, and there are many that show how dark things really are... Of course, the Rebbe's inner outlook reveals the splendor of the light that exists specifically within our generation. However, from an external point of view, we're still talking about the ultimate darkness, midnight. How is it possible to say that we are in the days of Moshiach?

This is exactly the avoda that we must fulfill. Then as today, the Rebbe commands us: Your loins girded, your shoes on your feet – be ready to feel that we are in the days of Moshiach. It is important to remember that this is an avoda that can only be done during the stage of “redemption at midnight.” At the next stage, “redemption at noon,” there will no longer be the avoda of opening our eyes, and there will be no need to teach one another. Everyone then will already see things

clearly. The avoda is specifically now, while still at the first stage, to feel the height of the Redemption during the height of the darkness, and the Rebbe shlita declares that we possess the strength to open our eyes.

We now come to another amazing and most important teaching for our times: It would seem that we have all been involved in countless arguments based on this point: How is it possible to call our times “the days of Moshiach”?

We indicate the many signs that prove the appointed destinies as prophesized have already begun. The Persian Gulf War, the beating of swords into plowshares, and all the other signs brought by the Rebbe MH”M, and many more signs appearing all the time.

On the other hand, there are those who will bring just as many signs that we are not just at the heels of Moshiach, but the heels of the heels of Moshiach. The darkness of our generation is one that has never existed before. In short, the two sides simply don't understand each other: The first side doesn't understand how the second lives the Redemption and doesn't see the exile, and the second side doesn't understand how the first lives in exile and doesn't see the Redemption *r”l*.

Despite the fact that Russia no longer makes any trouble, we are still disturbed that we have not yet attained the fiftieth gate of holiness. Even if there is just one Jew who doesn't feel the revelation of the fiftieth gate of holiness, we are (and must be) completely broken. G-d forbid that there could be a situation whereby a Jew thinks that Moshiach will not come today. We are “broken” by the fact that we have still not reached the stage of absolute illumination.

Together with our approval of this feeling, in fact, as a result of it, we properly sense the instruction of

the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, that specifically now we must begin to live the Redemption and be in a state of great joy with this knowledge. This is the very avoda that is required of us, and now is the time that we can “open our eyes,” because when everyone will see the Redemption clearly, we will not be able to “open our eyes”...because our eyes will already be open.

When it's written that our fathers were redeemed from Egypt in the merit of their faith, it's clear that this refers to the faith while still at the stage when they didn't see the Redemption clearly. This is the meaning of “Your faithfulness in the nights,” i.e., specifically when there is night, we need the existence and strengthening of faith. However, as the Rebbe shlita has stated, even now the Jewish People have “light in their dwellings,” i.e., the stage of “light in their dwellings” occurred even before the beginning of the Redemption. Yet, this is the avoda mentioned above that only now can be carried out.

In simple terms, the two complement one another: Specifically because we have “Your faithfulness in the nights,” we are happy with a tremendous sense of joy, and specifically because we are in a state of “Your faithfulness **in the nights**,” we are totally crushed. This poses no contradiction, and subsequently, there is no argument.

All of us are hoping, waiting, and certain that we will immediately see the revelation of the Redemption at the height of the day before all the nations, when the Jewish People will go out “with a high hand,” and “as in the days of your going out from Egypt, I will show you wonders” with the hisgalus of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, shlita, for all to see when we will proclaim before him: *Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed!*

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During a farbrengen in the mid-1970s, the Rebbe urged *Anash* to attend Machon Chana's fundraising dinner. The Rebbe then smiled and said "Whoever suspects that I am saying this because I am *nogei'ah b'davar*—personally biased—you're right, I am!"

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COMING CLOSE TO HASHEM IN A FARAWAY LAND

By Eli Shneuri

Photography by Meir Alfasi

Four touching stories, told in first person, about outreach taking place in India with young Israelis.

GOA, INDIA

For some reason, the village of Anjona in Goa, India, has become a magnet for Israelis who have left Israel and live here on a regular basis. In this village there is a market day every Thursday where people from all the nearby villages gather. Hundreds of people look forward to this day when they spread out their wares and urge passersby to buy in typical Indian fashion.

Thousands of people visit this market, including many Israelis. We set up a t'fillin stand just for them, decorated with a colorful Moshiach flag and we distributed pamphlets on Judaism. We divided the hours amongst us so that each of us was assigned two hours.

After a few months, we went on to shlichus in Vata Canal. Several times we arranged classes in nature, in the shade of a waterfall near lush vegetation and facing stunning mountain views. At one of these

events, a Jew who lives in a kibbutz in southern Israel came over to me. We chatted about inconsequential matters and then he suddenly asked me, "Do you remember that we met previously?"

I shrugged. I had seen so many people since then.

"Remember that we met at the market?" he tried to remind me. It wasn't comfortable but I really didn't remember him and I wondered why he was reminded of this now after a week of seeing each other. Why hadn't he mentioned it earlier?

"Remember that we asked you when Chanuka is?" he tried again, unsuccessfully. "Remember you were unsure of the secular date?"

Ah, I remembered.

"So let me tell you what happened. That Wednesday, when we went to the market, we said a few words to one another and parted. As we walked away from your stand you called out, 'Don't forget, it's almost Chanuka!'

"When we heard 'Chanuka,' we returned to the stand and tried to find out when it fell out. You were unsure of the secular date, but we figured it out. That was your part of the story. We knew that on this date, we would be far away from Jews and so we made our own menorah. We took a plastic bottle, cut it lengthwise, filled it with sand and put in eight shells in a row, with one higher one for the shamash.

"At the appointed time, my two friends and I met in our room in the guest house. One of us said the bracha out loud and lit the menorah. We were so happy to be able to do this mitzva, there, in the darkness, in galus.

"After the lighting, the three of us sat around and sang the Chanuka songs we remembered from home. We sang for a long time and we could be heard at a distance. Then we ate Chanuka foods, latkes, and doughnuts that we prepared ourselves.

"We heard a knock at the door which interrupted our singing. It was the owner of the guest house who asked us whether a woman could come in to see us. We said fine, and in came an Israeli girl.

‘Wow!’ she exclaimed. ‘I had no idea when Chanuka is, I had forgotten all about it. I was just walking down the road and I heard a familiar song and I came closer to hear it better and here I am! Can I join you?’

‘Of course we let her join us and we continued to sing until late at night, celebrating Chanuka to the best of our knowledge. The next day, when we gathered in the evening for the second lighting, the owner of the guest house came and said that a couple was looking for us. We couldn’t imagine who could be looking for us as we were touring and we hadn’t met anyone.

‘The mystery was solved a few minutes later when we heard knocking. The door was opened and there was an Israeli couple. The local Indians who heard our singing the night before and saw the menorah told every Israeli about ‘your holiday

when you light candles and sing all night.’ That was enough for them to remember that it was Chanuka. The Indians directed them to our place.

‘Other Israelis showed up who were directed to us by the Indians. So we fulfilled the mitzva of lighting the menorah with many other Jews. It was all because of what you called out to us in the market in Goa.’

* * *

From Vata Canal we continued to Pushkar. In Pushkar, we were told, there would be a camp for the children of shlichim in India. These children live isolated from other children their age. Their shlichus entails great mesirus nefesh, forgoing a normal childhood with friends and a normal school. Our job was to try and give them and the children from Dramsala (Dror Shaul) and Poona (Betzael Kupchik) chizuk.

Yossi, one of the people who works at the Chabad house, told me about something that happened to him. Every day, about two hours before sunset, he goes in search of Jews to put on t’fillin with them.

It’s almost impossible to walk down the street of Pushkar without an Indian or tourist shouting something at you. One day, as he was walking to where Israelis regularly congregated, he heard someone shouting something at him. He figured it was yet another Indian who wanted money out of him and he ignored the man, but the shouts grew louder.

Yossi turned around but his friend said, ‘Forget about him, it’s another nut.’ But Yossi located the person calling out to him. At an Indian restaurant across the way sat a large man with long hair. He asked to talk to Yossi.

Michael was from England and



“It was hard to face this truth at that stage of my life. I didn’t know how to digest this news but she went on to say, ‘You cannot continue in our footsteps. If you want your children to be Jews, you must marry a Jewish girl! If the mother is not Jewish, the children won’t be Jewish!’”

he began to recount, “I grew up in a Christian home. Like all my friends, I did as I pleased and had various adventures. One day, my mother wasn’t feeling well and her condition deteriorated. I knew her end was near and I stayed close to her bed, ready for anything she asked of me.

“In her final moments she managed to say, ‘I have a big secret to tell you.’”

Michael’s voice choked with tears and he recalled the scene.

“My mother told me, ‘My grandmother was a Jewish woman from Poland. After the Nazis conquered Poland, she fled to England and was saved but her entire family was killed. She was the sole survivor. Apparently, she

wanted to forget what had happened to her and she married a non-Jew. We lived our lives thinking we were gentiles. One day, my mother told me that I am a Jew. When it came time for me to marry, I married a non-Jew, your father. But I knew that my children are Jews since I am a Jew. Now the time has come to reveal this secret to you. You are a Jew, like me!’

“I was stunned by this revelation. It was hard to face this truth at that stage of my life. I didn’t know how to digest this news but she went on to say, ‘You cannot continue in our footsteps. If you want your children to be Jews, you must marry a Jewish girl! If the mother is not Jewish, the children won’t be Jewish!’

“A few hours later, she died.”

Michael told this story to us five times and each time he got all emotional. We were silent as we did not know what to say to him. We were also moved. Then he continued, “Unfortunately, I did not do as she said. I married a non-Jewish woman and had children with her. They are all gentiles! I left her and met another non-Jewish woman, but I am sure that in the end I will do as she asked.”

We pointed to the t’fillin that we were holding and we asked him if he knew what they were. He had never seen t’fillin before in his life. We suggested that he put them on and he agreed.

When it came time to say goodbye, he asked us to leave the kippa with him. We did so. Then we parted. This was another lost soul making its tortured way towards the truth.

* * *

One Shabbos when it was almost sunset, we were looking for a tenth man for Mincha. A young man named Nadav came by and he was happy to join us. He also had an aliya to the Torah.

After Shabbos, Nadav asked R’

Shimi Goldstein, the director of the Chabad house, to learn Chassidus with him. He asked to join the ongoing classes and said nothing should be withheld from him even if it was difficult.

Nadav quickly got into things, asking lots of questions that had bothered him for years. He got detailed answers.

At his last Shabbos meal before he returned to Eretz Yisroel, Nadav told his story to all the tourists. He grew up in a nonobservant home. He studied yoga and practiced it and read a lot of material on it and its practitioners. At the end of two years of training and “spiritual” attainments, he wanted to make further progress. He sought the source of yoga and found out that an important source was located in a Tibetan monastery. He decided to go there, leaving everything behind.

This wasn’t a pleasure trip full of exciting adventures. As far as Nadav was concerned, this was about Truth!

When he arrived at the monastery, he was accepted with open arms. He was happy to have arrived at the truth that he had sought. His feeling of satisfaction grew from day to day.

One day, as part of their studies and training, everybody was asked to bow down to an idol. “It will give you the strength to carry on,” they were told. Nadav felt his strength leave him.

“I felt as if shockwaves were passing through my body. I began to sweat and felt like I was in a state of shock. I felt a strong dizziness.”

They were asked to say something as they bowed. “I couldn’t do it. I felt a deep vacuum open within me, something that only the neshama truly understands. I began to run, eventually arriving at an Internet café in the area. I sat down and searched for something

Jewish, trying to muster my strength. I found the Birkas HaMazon. I opened it and began to read it, once, twice, three times. I was moved by every word. I felt that I was reconnecting to my neshama. Fresh strength began streaming through my veins, filling the emptiness.

“Afterwards, I realized that you don’t just recite the Birkas HaMazon any old time, but after you eat. I learned that there are brachos to say before eating too and I began to eat just to recite the brachos.

“The end was that I decided to leave. I knew I had erred. A Jew cannot worship idols. I traveled to Pushkar. I suggest that before all of you check out all kinds of other things, check out Judaism – it’s worth it!”

Nadav returned to Eretz Yisroel on Sunday and he is learning in a yeshiva there.

* * *

The Chabad house of Pushkar does a lot of outreach, making sure that it’s not all centered at the Chabad house but reaches out to all



of Pushkar. Every day, bachurim go on Mivtzaim in the local market and finish their rounds at the lake, which is also a regular, daily meeting place.

One day, as Yossi and I were on our way, we noticed an Israeli on the other side of the street to the Chabad house. As we approached him, I realized I recognized him. We had met previously in Goa and then again in Vata Canal. Yaron was his

name. I also remembered that he had refused any connection with us. Although all his friends visited the Chabad house, he remained in his room, refusing to visit a religious Jewish house.

Although we met on the street several times and spoke briefly, he did not visit us. This time too, although he was right there, across the street, he refused to come, not to mention put on t’fillin.

Nevertheless, we suggested that he put on t’fillin and as expected, he declined. Since, at the Chabad house of Pushkar, we had arranged some bar mitzva celebrations for guys from the kibbutzim who had only had a birthday party when they turned thirteen, we were alert to those who may never have put on t’fillin. I asked Yaron whether he had ever put t’fillin on in his life.

He said he had not. I asked whether even at his bar mitzva he had not put on t’fillin and again, he said he had not. “Are you sure?” I asked him, wanting to jog his memory.

“They didn’t make me a bar mitzva. I’m an atheist!”

“Aha, in that case, we won’t give up,” we told him, but it was hard. He just kept repeating that he was an atheist.

Throughout our conversation I warmly held his hand and he was uncomfortable. On the one hand, it wasn’t nice to get angry at us when we were being friendly. On the other hand, he wanted to leave. He finally invited us to visit him at his hotel room. “I have no problem with talking,” he said.

He may not have meant for us to show up in his room five minutes later but we didn’t hesitate. A few minutes after he went up to his room, we followed him. He was sitting on the balcony that was shared by the rooms of other Israelis who regularly visited the Chabad house. They were sitting there and



Yaron at his bar mitzva

“I couldn’t do it. I felt a deep vacuum open within me, something that only the neshama truly understands. I began to run, eventually arriving at an Internet café in the area. I sat down and searched for something Jewish, trying to muster my strength...”

chatting.

We sat near him and talked. He told us about the kibbutz and the atmosphere in which he grew up and about the bar mitzva that he was happy they did not make for him since “there’s no point” and he didn’t believe in it.

The sun began to set and I took the t’fillin out and held them. I was going to try in the last minutes of the day to put t’fillin on him, but he refused.

Time had almost run out but he no longer opposed me. The atmosphere was tense. Those present breathlessly watched the proceedings. We went back to the Chabad house with mixed feelings. A few hours later we heard whoops of joy from the entrance of the Chabad house.

“Tomorrow there will be a bar mitzva!” It seems that after he put on t’fillin, he had gotten into a debate with them about Judaism. They had tried to convince him that he had to have a bar mitzva because you can’t not have a bar mitzva, just

like you can’t not have a bris mila. It took a few hours and he was convinced!

We prepared a festive meal. The shlucha, Zelda made a magnificent bar mitzva cake. Word got out and the next afternoon, dozens of Israelis showed up. They all wanted to be a part of the celebration. It wasn’t every day that there was a bar mitzva in Pushkar.

It was very special. Yaron was emotional and guided by the shliach, Shimi, he said the bracha on the tzitzis for the first time. Then he put on t’fillin, absolutely willingly this time, and said the bracha on the t’fillin shel yad too. We were all touched as he covered his eyes to say Shma.

Yaron had his first aliya to the Torah and was showered with nuts from the women’s section. It was a tremendous simcha, a bar mitzva celebration for a thirty-year-old.

Yet another neshama who left the Holy Land in order to come close to Hashem and His Torah.



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WHAT DO THE PROFESSORS SAY?

By Prof. Shimon Silman, RYAL Institute and Touro College

“It is the way of ‘scientists’ in our time that it’s impossible to approach a discussion ...without bringing proofs that professor so-and-so also thinks the same way” --the Rebbe MH”M’ * In commemoration of the 56th yahrtzait of Rabbi Yisroel Aryeh Leib Schneerson z.l.

We often complain about the obstinacy and closed mindedness of scientists when it comes to discussing creation or even intelligent design. If we were to state our objection to the attitude of scientists in adhering to their belief in evolution and in refusing to consider the concept of intelligent design in the creation of the universe, we might identify the following five characteristics of the scientific community:

1. Tremendous self confidence, leading to a sense of entitlement and of belonging to an elite community of experts.

2. A monolithic community, with a strong sense of consensus, whether driven by the evidence or not.

3. A sense of identification with the group, akin to identification with a religious faith or political platform.

4. A disregard for and disinterest in the ideas, opinions and work of experts who are not part of the group.

5. A tendency to interpret evidence optimistically, to believe exaggerated or incorrect statements of results, and to disregard the possibility that the theory might be wrong. This is coupled with a tendency to believe results are true because they are “widely believed.”

But these are not my words. They are the words of Professor Lee Smolin, one of the most prominent theoretical physicists of our time. And he is not objecting to the scientific community’s belief in evolution (which Smolin himself appears to believe in). In his recent book “The Trouble with Physics,” after an excellent review of the history of modern physics and an explanation of the current problems of modern theoretical physics, in a chapter titled “How do you Fight Sociology?” he attacks the scientific community for its bias in favor of one theory (specifically, String Theory) over alternative theories. The above five points are part of his

summary of the attack.²

This is but one example of how the problems we have with science or scientists regarding matters of Torah and Judaism are actually problems within science itself. They are either problems that have to do with the limitations of science itself or with the practice of science by the scientific community. They are problems that scientists themselves complain about, usually not openly, however. Lee Smolin’s book is a rare example of a window opened into the inner workings of the scientific community. A rare example indeed.

We will discuss some of these problems and quote Lee Smolin and Professor Richard Feynman, one of the greatest theoretical physicists of the latter half of the 20th century. (This sounds like a long time ago, but Feynman died just 20 years ago.) Both Feynman and Smolin *happen to be Jewish*.

I must explain this phrase “happen to be Jewish.” Certainly being Jewish is not an incidental thing. In fact it is infinitely more significant than their being great physicists. But my point is that we are quoting Feynman and Smolin because the views of science that they expressed were purely from the point of view of science, not Judaism. Their background in and commitment to Judaism was, in fact, very weak and had little or no influence on their philosophy of science. Yet we will see from the

quotes from Feynman below, taken from his lecture “The Uncertainty of Science” and other lectures, as well as from Smolin’s book, some of the same ideas about science as those expressed by the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach in his sichos and letters. We will see the wisdom from above of the Rebbe MH”M reflected in the wisdom from below of some of the greatest scientists of our times. In quoting them from Feynman, we see that these are actually the ideas of science itself, expressed by some of its greatest masters.

On a deeper level, however, the Jewish soul - the Jewish life - in these scientists certainly influenced their scientific thinking. At one of our Moshiach and science conferences, Dr. Naftali Berg mentioned that when Einstein first published his Theory of Relativity, a certain Russian scientist who did not like the theory - and didn’t like Jews either - commented, “It is the Jew in Einstein that makes him come up with such crazy ideas.” As Dr. Berg pointed out, while this was an anti-Semitic comment, it is certainly true that it’s a quality of the Jewish soul, the Neshama, to sense a depth beyond what human intellect is capable of.

A major theme in the Sichos and Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach is that one cannot raise a question on the Torah from science because the Torah is absolute truth while, according to the way modern science defines itself: 1) science is based on assumptions – axioms – that can’t be proved, and 2) No law of science can be said to be valid with complete certainty, only with varying degrees of probability. This is especially the case since the development of Quantum Mechanics. Thus, there is no certainty in science.

AXIOMS - “TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT”

Modern science has come to the

realization that no rational system of thought can be said to be absolute or “true”. Every such system must be based on a set of axioms or assumptions which people are free to accept or reject. The most dramatic example of this concerned the very concept of space itself, or geometry. For many centuries everyone accepted the system of Euclid that was based on *his* axioms. But in the 19th century a few mathematicians proposed their own sets of axioms yielding different geometries and it was understood that these new non-Euclidean geometries were just as valid as Euclid’s. They were later used by Einstein in his development of General Relativity.

This fundamental role of the axioms in any logical or scientific system, is expressed clearly and concisely by the great *Gaon* and Kabbalist, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneerson in a letter written to his sons, the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach and Rabbi Yisroel Aryeh Leib:

*“In mathematics, as well as in every intellectual matter, there must be two things: 1) elementary concepts and axioms, for example, that the whole is greater than any of its parts. 2) On this [foundation] all the mathematical ideas and theories are built. These two things are chochma and bina. Chochma is the basic concepts and bina is the ideas that are built on the basic concepts...”*³

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok continues the letter by explaining the Kabbalistic basis of this structure.

The point is that every logical system is of necessity based on fundamental assumptions called *axioms* which themselves are not *logical* but are adopted by convention i.e. people who like these axioms agree to use them, but there is nothing necessarily compelling about them. One is free to take them or leave them and replace them with his own axioms. (The logical part of intellect is the process of deriving

new statements and ideas from the axioms. In this process we can say that the conclusions are logically compelling i.e. if we follow the rules of logic then we are forced to say that the conclusions follow *from the axioms*.)

The realization that any logical system is ultimately based on some assumptions or axioms that are not “logical” but must simply be assumed, takes the wind of absoluteness out of any system of thought, scientific or philosophical.

This fundamental role of axioms has deep implications in understanding the difference between the sciences and Torah. The Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach discusses this in various *Sichos* and letters. For example, in one sicha he writes:

“It says,⁴ ‘If one tells you that the nations of the world have wisdom, you should believe it; if one tells you that the nations of the world have Torah, you should not believe it.’ From this very statement of our Rabbis...we can understand the difference between wisdom and Torah.

“In order to understand an intellectual concept one must have elementary concepts and rules of wisdom or, in the terminology of research, rules of logic. The rules of logic together with the elementary concepts necessarily imply the concept under consideration as a conclusion.

“Thus one is forced to draw the conclusion because of the elementary concepts and rules of logic. But the elementary concepts and rules of logic themselves have no foundation. There are no prior concepts that necessarily imply these elementary concepts and rules of logic as a conclusion. It depends only on one’s good will. If one wants to accept the elementary concepts then he accepts the conclusion. But if he doesn’t want to accept the elementary concepts he is free to choose not to

accept them and it follows that he will also not accept the resulting conclusion.

"This is one of the ways in which intellect itself forces us to include in our system a level which is higher than intellect. Inside the intellectual process itself it is felt that the point of origin of intellect is not intellect itself because the starting point of the entire intellectual process - the elementary concepts - are not forced upon us by intellect. Rather we use them because we like them. This is a matter of faith, an assumption.

"This then is the difference between wisdom and Torah. Accepting a science (*chochma*) depends on one's good will. If he likes the relevant rules of intellect, he draws a certain conclusion, but the science itself does not force him to. This is in contradistinction to Torah which means instruction.⁵ Torah teaches a person what he must do, what he may do and what he may not do. These are the three categories of the prohibited, the permitted and *Mitzva*. Furthermore, Torah requires that we transform the "permitted" into *Mitzva*.

"Torah teaches this in a manner independent of our acceptance (that if a matter suits us then we accept it). Rather, Torah instructs and demands that one conduct himself in a certain manner, independent of one's own desire.

"This is the meaning of the statement that 'If one tells you that the nations of the world have wisdom, you should believe it; if one tells you that the nations of the world have Torah, you should not believe it.' Wisdom, which is accepted because of one's will and desire to accept it, exists also by the nations of the world. If one accepts the axioms and rules of logic of the discipline, then he accepts the idea [which follows as a conclusion]. But Torah, which must be accepted regardless of one's agreement - such a thing does not exist among the nations."⁶

Thus, the point of view of modern science and mathematics is that any logical system is ultimately based on some assumptions or axioms that are not logical but must simply be assumed. One is free to accept any given axiom system but he is also free to reject it, thereby rejecting its conclusions.

WHAT DOES PROF. FEYNMAN SAY?

The Rebbe MH"M once wrote a lengthy argument against something allegedly based on "pure science," after which he commented, "It is the way of 'scientists' in our time that it's impossible to approach a discussion on such matters without bringing proofs that professor so-and-so also thinks the same way." He then quoted a certain professor to "support" his argument.

In the sicha quoted above, the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach made the point that the conclusions of science are not absolute but are valid only to the extent that the assumptions on which they are based (and the rules of inference) are valid, and one is free to accept or reject those assumptions

In the following quotes Prof. Feynman makes the same point:

"If they say to you science has shown such and such, you might ask, 'How does science show it - how did the scientists find out - how, what, where?'...And you have as much right as anyone else, upon hearing about the experiments (but we must listen to all the evidence), to judge whether a reusable conclusion has been arrived at....The experts who are leading you may be wrong....

"It is necessary and true that all of the things that we say in science, all of the conclusions, are uncertain, because they are only *conclusions*."

The main point in the Rebbe MH"M's sicha was that general wisdom or science does not tell one what to do, only that certain

conclusions follow from certain assumptions. Only Torah gives actual instruction to the person. This idea was also expressed by Feynman:

"Science as a method of finding things out...is based on the principle that observation is the judge of whether something is so or not.... The principle that observation is the judge imposes a severe limitation to the kind of questions that can be answered. They are limited to questions that can be put this way: 'If I do this what will happen?' There are ways to try it and see. [But] questions like, 'Should I do this?' and 'What is the value of this?' are not of the same kind....

"The common human problem, the big question, always is 'Should I do this?' It is a question of action. 'What should I do? Should I do this?' And how can we answer such a question? We can divide it into two parts. We can say, 'If I do this what will happen?' That doesn't tell me whether I should do this. We still have another part, which is, 'Well, do I want this to happen?' In other words, the first question - 'If I do this, what will happen?' - is at least susceptible to scientific investigation; in fact it is a typical scientific question....But the question 'Do I want this to happen?' - in the ultimate moment - is not....At the end you must have some ultimate judgment."

[To be continued be"H]

NOTES:

1 Igros Kodesh vol. 23, p. 129

2 Lee Smolin, *The Trouble with Physics*, Houghton Mifflin, 2006, p. 284

3 Likkutei Levi Yitzchok, Igros Kodesh, p. 250

4 Midrash Eicha Rabba 2, 13

5 Zohar III, 53b

6 Sichah of Shavuot, 5715 Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, pp. 561-56

THERE IS NO SHLICHUS WITHOUT THE SHLUCHOS

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

Many articles have been written about shlichus, but often people overlook the fact that every city with a shliach also has a shlucha. So now, for a change, some stories about the work and mesirus nefesh of women who are on the Rebbe's shlichus.

The story is told of a shliach who was extremely busy, day in and day out, whose wife felt he was neglecting his household. One day, she told her husband that a certain wealthy donor had called and said he would be stopping by the next evening at eight o'clock.

When the shliach heard that this man was going to be visiting, he dropped everything and focused on getting the house ready for him. Things that had been neglected for years were finally taken care of. Some paint here, flowers there, generally sprucing things up. The shliach also helped feed the children and put the little ones to sleep. He set the table with refreshments for

his guest and at 7:55 all was ready.

His wife left the house via a side door and approached the front entrance. She rang the bell and the shliach went to answer it, straightening his tie as he went.

The shliach opened the door and there was his wife. He was taken aback but his wife explained that she was a major donor to the Chabad house herself and the shliach could allow himself to take the time to talk to her, in a relaxed manner, about issues of importance.

A HOME FOR TEN CHILDREN

There's the well-known story

about Rabbi Manis Friedman who delivered a lecture to an audience of young, American, career women. During the question and answer session, one of the women asked the rabbi what his wife did. R' Friedman knew that if he said his wife was a housewife who raised their children this would not go over very well, to say the least.

Instead, he said, "My wife runs a home for unwanted children. She provides them with a warm home and takes care of all their needs from morning till night, from the day they are born until they are married."

The women applauded this incredible accomplishment and then the rabbi added that the children were their actually own. This drove home the point that raising a family is a career in itself and a vital mission.

THANKS TO THE BABYSITTER

Rabbi Noam Dekel, shliach in Yakne'am, relates:

There was a nonobservant girl who lived somewhere in the south of the country. One day, she was asked to babysit for the shluchim.

The girl was very impressed by the atmosphere in the house, by how the parents interacted with the children, the children's behavior, and how they helped their parents.

She went a few more times, and each time she noticed new and impressive things. One time, in a candid moment, she said to the shlucha, "I think that when I get married, I will have a house just like you do."

Years went by and the girl left the southern town. Then one day, she contacted the shlucha and said, "I am about to get married. I am still not religious, but I want to know who can teach me how to have a home like yours."

The shlucha referred her to a Chabad house near her, where she learned halacha, Chassidus, etc., and after she married, she and her husband moved to Yakne'am.

Today, her family is one of the outstanding families in our community. Her children travel every morning to learn in the Chabad school in Migdal HaEmek and she runs the Shifra-Puah organization here.

A CHESED ORGANIZATION ON WHEELS

R' Noam Dekel relates:

"Another woman who is very active here is Mrs. Hadas Kagan. In the past, she ran the culture/youth/sports center in Yakne'am, but she has been doing the Rebbe's work for 18 years now. She organizes all the chesed activities here and the distribution of food to the needy. She gets around in a wheelchair because of her handicap.

"This week, despite Mrs. Kagan's physical limitations, she printed the *Tanya* at five

kibbutzim in the area, and she organized a farbrengen and the regular shiur in *Tanya* for women."

I wanted to speak to this remarkable woman. Our conversation took place on her cell phone as she arrived at the gate of a factory and she told the guard to inform Yifaat that Hadas had arrived and needs to put the food for the needy in the trunk of her car. Then she told me about the farbrengen that took place in her house in honor of 24 Teives, where she committed to starting a *Tanya* shiur for the women of Yakne'am and kibbutzim in the area.

The first shiur had already taken place and there were tangible results. A woman from one kibbutz left with two cups for Netilas Yadayim, another member was learning the laws of Family Purity on the Internet ... And there, from her wheelchair, Hadas Kogan runs her empire, a chain of mitzvos and mekuravim to hasten the Geula.

A SCHOOL WITHIN A HOUSE ON THE SECOND FLOOR

From R' Dekel, I also heard about the Cohen family, who are on shlichus in Ocean City, Maryland. They are the sole Chassidishe family, three hours away from all other Jewish centers. I spoke with Mrs. Kochava Cohen.

"We have five children (each one a miracle, with the Rebbe's bracha) from the age of preschool through elementary school. Since we are far from other religious locations, we opened our own preschool and elementary school on the second floor of our home. We have terrific equipment for children of all ages.

"Every morning I wake up the children and urge them to get dressed, because at precisely 7:55 we go to school. When they are all dressed and ready, we go up the stairs...

"I have to be the teacher for all the subjects and for all the children, as well as the principal and mother. It's hard but we have to maintain a structure to the day. We are expecting another couple soon (and/or seminary girls) to help us out. We were also recently informed about the renovation of the old shul building and soon our school will move into a more suitable location.

"Sometimes, in the middle of the school day, tourists come to the Chabad house. I send one of the students to open the door of the shul for them, or my husband sells them kosher meat. This way, the entire family contributes towards spreading the wellsprings and hastening the Geula."

AN 11-YEAR-OLD TURNED A FAMILY INTO LUBAVITCHERS

Even young girls have amazing power.

One family, actually, a young couple, became baalei t'shuva and were somewhat connected to Chabad. They eventually became partners with the work of Chabad in their area. The one who convinced them to make this change in their lives was an eleven-year-old girl, the daughter of shluchim. She visited their house and following their conversations with her they decided to change their way of life and become Lubavitchers.

"The thing that most impressed us," said the couple, "was her determination. She never ate anything without the

“My wife runs a home for unwanted children. She provides them with a warm home and takes care of all their needs from morning till night, from the day they are born until they are married.”

Badatz hechsher. She never missed a Mesibas Shabbos or other event. She always knew how to express her beliefs pleasantly but firmly.”

THE WIVES OF SHLUCHIM – THE REAL STORY

These are just a few stories that are isolated pearls on a long chain of pearls, for the real story takes place every day in thousands of homes of shluchim and shluchos around the world. Their work entails unbelievable mesirus nefesh.

Sometimes women guide kallos when they themselves have just given birth. A young shlucha, married a month, hosts a group of

bachurim who came to help out. She calls her mother for some pointers on how to cook for a crowd for the first time in her life.

There are also shluchos who, despite not having stories about hosting 500 people for Pesach, have to deal with loneliness as they raise Chassidishe children without family or communal support, no friends or meals at parents or in-laws.

These heroic women encourage their husbands to do what they have to do while they remain at home, alone with the children. They are devoted to the Rebbe and put this devotion into action day in and day out. In the merit of the righteous women, we were redeemed and will be redeemed!

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