

5

THE MYSTERY OF GIMMEL TAMMUZ

D'var Malchus

7

THOSE OPPOSED TO SHEITLACH ARE 'OF NO CONSEQUENCE'

The Rebbe's Letters

8

SOUL ENCOUNTERS THROUGH MIVTZA T'FILLIN

Mivtzaim

12

THE LONE JEW

Shlichus | By Eli B.

16

ALONE IN INDIA IN SEARCH OF THE TRUTH

Profile | H. Ben Yishai

24

THE HARSH TRUTH ABOUT THE CONVERSION UPROAR [CONT.]

Feature | Interview by Nosson Avrohom

30

THE DYNAMIC OF TURNING DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

Moshiach & Geula | Boruch Merkur

32

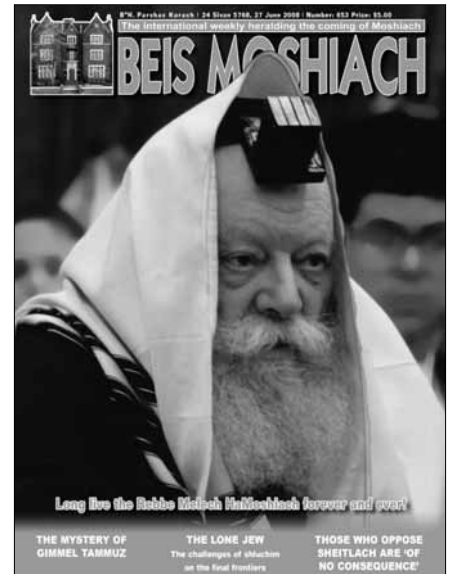
MIRACLES IN THEIR PUREST SENSE

Feature | A. Avraham

38

SALUTE TO OHR MENACHEM AT 3RD ANNUAL DINNER

News



USA

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

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
M.M. Hendel

ENGLISH EDITOR:
Boruch Merkur
ed@beismoshiach.org

HEBREW EDITOR:
Rabbi Sholom Yaakov Chazan
editorH@beismoshiach.org

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Sivan 28 - Gimmel Tammuz Magbis

B.H. Sivan 15, 5768

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

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

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

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

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

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THE MYSTERY OF GIMMEL TAMMUZ

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Past events that occurred on Gimmel Tammuz reveal its inner meaning for our time. The Torah reading of Korach always occurs around Gimmel Tammuz. Korach rebelled not against the institution of a Kohen gadol, but the appointment of Aaron. He wanted the Kohen gadol to be totally separated from the people, and Aaron was a pursuer of peace. Joshua's silencing of the sun allowed the Jewish people to sing G-d's praises instead of the forces of nature. The miraculous relationship of the Jewish people with G-d channels G-dliness into the physical realm. The release of the Previous Rebbe from Communist imprisonment is also a miracle, one that proved that the "Moses of the generation, who is the Moshiach of the generation," unites the spiritual and physical.

In almost every year, Gimmel Tammuz – the third of Tammuz – occurs in proximity to the Torah portion of Korach. Prior to our generation, two miracles, both critical to Jewish history, occurred on Gimmel Tammuz: Joshua commanded the sun to be silent, and the Previous Rebbe, who had been condemned to death by the Communists for teaching Judaism, was freed from imprisonment. Since everything occurs because of Divine Providence, there must be an inner connection between Joshua's commanding the sun to stop, the Previous Rebbe being released and Korach rebelling against Moses. And of course the connection reveals an insight into the times of Moshiach, as the Previous Rebbe indicates (see Likkutei Dibburim, vol. 4)

We must first ask about the Torah reading itself. Why is it called "Korach," considering that Korach rebelled against Moses, against the Torah, against G-d?

Obviously, Korach's perspective and the Torah's perspective are different. Korach attacked the appointment of Aaron as Kohen gadol – high priest. He argued that since all the people are holy, why should Aaron be separated and elevated above everyone else? And yet, we see from events that he himself wanted to be Kohen gadol. On the one hand, he attacks the institution of the Kohen gadol; on the

other, he aspires to the office himself.

Actually, what he was attacking was not the institution of the Kohen gadol, but the appointment of Aaron to that office. The Kohen gadol is supposed to be separated from all other Jews, removed from matters of this world and dedicated to matters of holiness. But through this separation, the Kohen gadol becomes a conduit for G-dliness, enkindling, enflaming and enlightening other Jews with a great love for G-d, from the depths of their soul.

Korach protested against this. He wanted the Kohen gadol to be lofty, set apart, totally separated from the world. In his view, the Kohen gadol should have no interaction with or influence on material existence. Korach saw a clear distinction between the upper realms and the lower realms, between Jews devoted to holiness and Divine service, such as the Kohanim, and Jews engaged with the world at large. Even though the everyday pursuits gave those Jews an opportunity to perform mitzvos, Korach reasoned there should be no connection.

Although G-d did intend there to be a separation between upper and lower, this was not the ultimate goal of appointing a Kohen gadol. Rather, the true purpose was to kindle the flame of the soul, to arouse a great love for G-dliness in other Jews. One would normally think such a connection between the upper and lower, between the spiritual and physical, is impossible. The natural, logical objection had to be convincingly and completely refuted. Korach's controversy demonstrated the true nature of Aaron and the reason for his appointment. The Torah portion is named after Korach, for although he created conflict, it served to reveal a higher level of unity.

This is also the theme of Joshua's command to the sun. When Joshua told the sun to be silent, it complained that then there would be nothing to sing G-d's praises. Joshua answered that he himself would sing G-d's praises. What does this mean? The very existence of the heavenly bodies testifies to G-d's majesty. Celestial motion – the movement of the spheres – is a natural song glorifying the Creator. Thus, the sun protested that if it was silent, how could nature praise its Creator?

To this Joshua answered that the song of the Jewish people, in acknowledgment of G-d's miracles on their behalf, was a higher form of praise. For there are two types of praise: one is that of nature and the world at large; the other is that of the Jewish people. The Jewish people have a miraculous relationship with G-d, one that transcends nature and creation. The very existence of the Jewish people is a conjunction of the spiritual and physical. They are the channel of G-dliness into the world. (As Korach said, all the people are holy.) Thus, the order of nature is sometimes nullified for the sake of the Jewish people. Such an open miracle reveals their special

relationship with the Divine. When the Jewish people then acknowledge this, their song reveals the inner purpose of the laws of nature. It makes creation complete. So, although the sun's song was negated from an external perspective, its silence enabled the Jewish people to sing of G-d's miracles, thereby revealing the true unity of the spiritual and physical.

This theme is repeated in the history of the Previous Rebbe, who was freed on Gimmel Tammuz. His miraculous deliverance affected the world around him. The very communists who had arrested him and sentenced him to death, while still at the height of their power, were forced to set him free. According to the "natural order" of things, a mighty empire intent on suppressing religion should easily succeed. When Soviet Russia decided to persecute the Previous Rebbe, there should have been no opposition. Yet the opposite happened. Indeed, the release of the Previous Rebbe was a greater miracle than the silencing of the sun. Here, those who objected to Judaism, who denied a connection between the upper and lower spheres, still had the power of speech. Both the communists and Korach, each in their own way, represent the ultimate in opposition; they actively sought to disrupt the conjunction of the spiritual and the physical. Yet ultimately, they served to bring about miracles that irrefutably proved that a leader of the Jewish people was the conduit for G-dliness. "They believed in G-d and His servant Moses" means simply that the leader of a generation – its Moses, its Moshiach – serves as the head that directs, influences and guides, connecting and uniting the Jewish people with their Source Above.

This of course is the task of Moshiach. The portion of Korach and the incidents of Gimmel Tammuz contain a valuable lesson for us. Each event of Gimmel Tammuz began with a concealment, a denial of the leader as the unifying intermediary. Korach rebelled against Aaron, the sun protested against Joshua, and the communists imprisoned the Previous Rebbe. Each event eventually led to a greater revelation of the G-dliness within the world. Neither natural phenomenon nor the actions of man can truly hinder a Jew's Divine service.

Our task, the result of our Torah and mitzvos, is to reveal the inner unity of the spiritual and physical. In the days of Moshiach, all flesh will see G-dliness. Therefore, nothing can truly silence or arrest our Divine service. That which appears to oppose the task of the Jewish people, such as Korach and the events of Gimmel Tammuz (the sun's protest and the denial of leadership) is a test. Through such a test we are to reach a stronger and higher level of Divine service. Then, for the Jews, and indeed the whole world, there will be light and joy, gladness and honor.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 8, pp. 114-122)

THOSE WHO ARE OPPOSED TO SHEITLACH ARE 'OF NO CONSEQUENCE'

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.
HYacinth 3-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
19 Cheshvan, 5715
Brooklyn, N.Y.

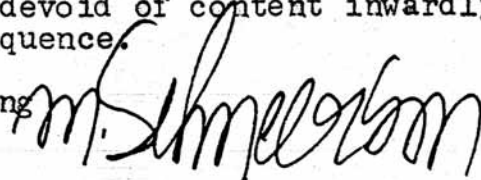
Mrs. Sylvia Borenstein
5974 Hutchison
Montreal, Que.

Blessing and Greeting:

I was very pleased to receive your letter of Nov. 3d, in which you write the good news that you have ordered a Shaitel during your recent visit in New York. The Almighty will surely fulfill His promise, as it is written in the holy Zohar, that it will bring Hatlocho to you, your husband and children in good health and prosperity, especially in your case, where in addition to the deed itself there is also a Kiddush Hashem. I am sure you will wear it with joy, and as the Baal Shem Tov emphasized the importance of serving the Almighty with joy, and G-d's blessings will be even greater.

I want to add my prayerful wishes that the Almighty grant you the Zechus to be instrumental in making your friends and acquaintances follow your good example, which you will support also by other forms of influence. Not only does the Shaitel show the true Jewish spirit of adherence to our laws and customs, but it also shows strength of character and will and the power of conviction, not being swayed by external influences and the opinions of people who are rather devoid of content inwardly and even outwardly are of no consequence.

With blessing



SOUL ENCOUNTERS THROUGH MIVTZA T'FILLIN

41 years have passed since the Rebbe announced Mivtza T'fillin and since then, millions of Jews have put on t'fillin thanks to the thousands of Chassidim and T'mimim who stand at their posts in the heat and in the cold, through rain and through snow, in the morning and in the afternoon, encountering Jews all over the world and enabling them to perform this vital mitzva.

THE PARATROOPER'S STORY

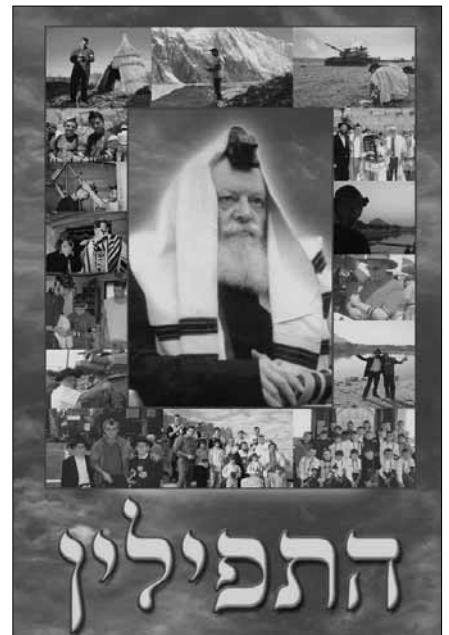
I was among the first wave of IDF soldiers who approached the Kosel when it was liberated. Hardened Israeli soldiers were visibly touched by the miraculous salvation. This momentous occasion in Jewish history pierced through to their hearts and aroused their feelings. Paratroopers leaned against the Wall and cried.

I approached their commander, whom I knew from before and from previous wars when we fought

together in the Negev. He recognized me and immediately grabbed me and exclaimed, "It's ours!"

I was still standing there astounded at the scene, trying to gather the strength to absorb these great moments and in my mind's eye I envisioned the Kohanim and Leviim with their harps and trumpets; I imagined Yirmiyahu hugging these leonine warriors; I heard Rochel crying and yearning for her children.

I was suddenly aroused from my



The stories in this article are from a book that was recently published called *HaT'fillin*. The book contains letters from the Rebbe about the mitzva of t'fillin, stories about mesirus nefesh to do this mitzva, a chapter on bar mitzva, t'shuva, and t'fillin, and many stories about Mivtza T'fillin. The book is over 500 pages long and has nearly 100 photos of Mivtza T'fillin and illustrations of hanachas t'fillin throughout Jewish history.

reverie. A hush fell over the crowd as a group of senior officers arrived. Among them I saw my tall cousin

towering over the rest. I knew what his role had been in the victory of these six days. We fell upon one another and wept.

He tried to calm me and whispered, "I told you, I always told you, think of the Kosel, think of Yerushalayim."

Once the Wall was liberated, I returned there a few times. I love Yerushalayim and I

visit whenever the opportunity arises. On one of my visits to the Kosel, two men approached me. They were dressed as Chassidim and they asked me whether I had put on t'fillin that day.

I told them that unfortunately I wasn't raised to do so. They begged me to put on t'fillin and offered the t'fillin they held. I explained that I

had never put on t'fillin. On the day I became bar mitzva I took an oath on a Tanach and a revolver to be a loyal member of the Hagana.

They came back to persuade me to put on t'fillin for the sake of the unity of the nation. I told them that not only did I not know how to put them on, but it would be an embarrassment for the religion if I put on t'fillin that day when I had never done so before.

As soon as they left me, an officer and a bearded soldier came over. It was apparent from their dress that they were in the Reserves. They also begged me to put on t'fillin. I asked them whether they were from the Military Chaplaincy. They said no; they were ordinary soldiers like me.

The tall soldier grasped me by my shoulders, looked me in the eyes and said, "You are a Chabadnik, so why don't you put on t'fillin?"

I was stunned. I am, in fact, a descendent of Chabad Chassidim. I pointed towards Har HaZeisim and said that just a few weeks earlier the graves of my grandfather and great-grandfather had been found in the Chabad section. I asked, "How did you know?"

He smiled and said, "The smile and the seriousness in your eyes are distinctive in Lubavitchers. So please, put on t'fillin in memory of your ancestors."

As I was explaining that I don't know how to put on t'fillin, he began teaching me. He put the t'fillin on my left arm and on my head. I was



completely overcome by emotion and began to tremble like a leaf in the wind. When the soldier brought me a Siddur, I sobbed.

I am not ashamed to say that with those tears and putting on t'fillin for the first time, I was born anew. It was like an immensely precious lost item had been returned to me; as though I found myself for the first time.

THEY WILL FEAR YOU

The unit, in which Rabbi Yaakov Gloiberman served as military chaplain in the Peace in Galilee war was the first to penetrate Beirut. In that unit there was another military chaplain who was of Litvish background. When the latter asked R' Gloiberman what they could do to survive the intense hostilities, he answered that the only thing that could save them was the Mivtza T'fillin of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe had referred to the Chazal about t'fillin, when "the nations of the earth see ... they will fear you – these are the t'fillin of the head." The other chaplain joined in Mivtza T'fillin.

"One day," recalled R' Gloiberman, "we went out on a military action early in the morning. Before we left I put on t'fillin, even though, according to the plan, we were supposed to return in a few hours and I could have put on t'fillin and davened after the operation. Yet an inner voice whispered to me to daven before I left.

"Suddenly, as I was davening, some terrorists crawled out from a bunker which was only a few meters away from us. We were in utter shock, but then a miracle happened. They looked at us, focusing their gaze on the t'fillin, and they quickly raised their hands, holding a white cloth as a sign of surrender.

"Anybody who doubted the power of t'fillin had to concede the truth of the Chazal the Rebbe

quoted – that in the merit of t'fillin fear would fall upon them. There was no rational explanation for what happened."

PINTELE YID

Rabbi Shimon Elituv related:

I once asked someone who came to the Kosel to put on t'fillin and he angrily told me not to bother him. A Yerushalmi Jew standing nearby told me in Yiddish that from the look of his face he wasn't Jewish. I left him. Then I noticed that he was walking around restlessly and he finally came over to me and said, "Who said I'm not Jewish?"

His *pintele Yid* had been aroused by what the man said. After we spoke a little, and I explained about the mitzva of t'fillin and how important it is for every Jewish man to put them on, he agreed to put them on.

MIVTZA LULAV AND MIVTZA T'FILLIN

In his memoir, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Lau tells of an interesting meeting he had in a hospital as he was visiting someone.

I was talking to him when an older woman came in, someone I did not know, and she asked whether I was a rabbi. I said that I was and asked how I could be of help. "My son needs you," she said. "Can you visit him?"

I excused myself from the blind soldier I had been visiting and followed the woman. She led me to a room in the Neurosurgery Department and said, "This is Yehuda, my son."

On the bed lay someone whose entire head was bandaged; just his nose, mouth, and his eyes peering through. He looked like he had just had his head operated on. His entire body, from the chin down, was covered by a sheet and I had no idea what his condition was. He was

drowsing and seemed to be in the recovery stage immediately following an operation.

After a while, when he managed to focus on what was going on around him, he noticed me standing near his mother and he asked whether I was a rabbi. I told him I was.

"What time is it?" he asked.

I was surprised by this question and thought that he still hadn't

***Yehuda, who felt
he had been given
his life as a gift,
said, "I feel that I
owe Him
something in
exchange for my
life."***

gotten back to himself, but I looked at my watch and told him it was twelve o'clock. He asked me whether it was twelve o'clock midnight or was it noontime. I told him it was twelve noon.

"If someone did not put on t'fillin by noon, can he put them on?"

(I noticed that instead of using the expression, "*l'haniach t'fillin*," as is customary, he said "*lasim t'fillin*." In the bracha we say, "*asher kidshanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu l'haniach t'fillin*," and that's what everybody says, but I figured it was as odd as asking me the time.) I told him that you are permitted to put on t'fillin all day.

He went on to ask, "Tell me, if it's not possible to put them on the head, because of bandages, and it's only possible to put them on the arm, then do you put the arm t'fillin

on?”

That was an excellent question for a Talmudic discussion: are the hand t’fillin and head t’fillin mutually exclusive mitzvos or not?

This reminded me of Buchenwald. One of the men in the camp had hidden t’fillin shel yad under the wooden floor and he would put it on. With that picture in my mind, I told him that it was permissible, even without the head t’fillin. Hearing this, he took his left arm out from under the sheet and said, “Then put it on me.”

I did as he asked. I said the Shma with him and as he read the p’sukim he fell asleep. I gently removed the t’fillin from his arm and left the room. We ended up becoming friends and when he recovered I heard his story, which I had been curious about from our first meeting.

Erev Simchas Torah Second Lieutenant Yehuda and five other officers sat in the command car near the Suez Canal. Near them was a sukka mobile and two Lubavitchers invited them to come drink l’chaim and eat some cake in the sukka, and to say a bracha on the lulav.

They tried to refuse and explained that since as civilians they did not adhere to the laws of sukka they certainly did not now as a war was going on. The Lubavitcher on the truck did not give up; he tried to convince them, saying, “What do you care? You’re sitting there anyway and doing nothing. Come on up, it will take only ten minutes.”

They looked at one another and decided to take him up on his invitation. They had cake and a cup of wine and were getting ready to take the lulav when they heard a huge explosion. They all fell to the floor and felt their bodies to make sure they were all intact. When they looked out, they saw that their command car, where they had been sitting a minute before, was utterly destroyed by a direct hit.



Yehuda said to one of the Lubavitchers, “Surely, you people call what happened here a miracle.”

The Lubavitcher said, “And what would you call it?”

Yehuda, who felt he had been given his life as a gift in the merit of sukka and lulav, gave him a long look and said, “I feel that I owe Him something in exchange for my life,” as he pointed upward. “My life was saved because you insisted that we get on your truck and say the bracha on the sukka and the lulav.

The Lubavitcher suggested that he commit to putting on t’fillin. Yehuda wanted to do so immediately, but that wasn’t possible. It was Hoshana Raba and not a day that we put on t’fillin.

The Lubavitcher explained that when Yom Tov was over he could start putting on t’fillin.

“But I don’t know where I’ll be then,” and Yehuda went on to say that he didn’t have t’fillin. “I was

given t’fillin for my bar mitzva, but they are at home in the closet.”

The Lubavitcher asked him his name and for the number of his unit and promised that when Yom Tov was over, he would have t’fillin. And that’s what happened. Yehuda was already in Fayid, across the Canal, but the t’fillin reached him. He committed to putting them on every day.

In Fayid, in the part of Egypt that is considered the biblical land of Goshen, Yehuda was wounded in the spine and was taken by hospital to the Neurosurgical Department for an operation. When he opened his eyes in the hospital, the first thing on his mind was that he hadn’t kept his promise since he was wounded and he asked his mother to find a rabbi so he could ask two questions: Could he put on t’fillin at that hour and could he put on the t’fillin shel yad without the t’fillin shel rosh.

THE LONE JEW

By Eli B.

“It’s easier to deal with the Evil Inclination when you are part of a religious community,” says Rabbi Mendy Zaklos of Briansk. * “I believe that they listen in on me, but I don’t get excited about it since I know that I am not doing anything illegal,” says Rabbi Mordechai Scheiner of Birobijan. * Maariv published a positive article about Lubavitch, about the heavy personal price shluchim pay when they live in faraway places.

In order to get to the nearest mikva to Briansk, you have to take a train to Moscow and travel for eight hours. In Briansk, which is 379 kilometers away from Moscow and located on the Ukrainian border, there is no mikva and it’s not clear when one will be built.

“From Briansk, you have to travel so far by train, whereas in Yerushalayim, you can find a mikva five minutes from your house,” says Rabbi Zaklos. He seemed to be summing up their life in one sentence.

The meeting with Rabbi Zaklos took place in the Jewish Center in Moscow on the occasion of the celebration of the tenth year since the founding of the United Jewish

Communities of the CIS. The organization, led by businessman Lev Leviev, consists of 454 communities and is responsible for their development.

After half a year on shlichus, Rabbi Zaklos is able to get relief, even if only for a few days, from the difficult social estrangement he experiences in exile, on shlichus. He can eat and drink like a king and meet with his fellow shluchim, and have endless conversations which he calls, “everyday talk of an ordinary person,” which he yearned for in Briansk.

One of the topics that took center stage in these conversations was the difficulty in living a religious life in such remote

places. Only here, at the annual convention, do the shluchim allow themselves to blow off steam about what, for the rest of the year, is part of life – no mikva, the dearth of basic food products, the low salary, and of course, the loneliness. True, they choose to sacrifice their personal lives for their ideals, but everything has its price.

Several hundreds of thousands of Jews live in Moscow. There are many shuls, and kosher restaurants and stores, dozens of Jewish schools and cultural events. But there is no comparison between the capitol city and a large border city (432,000 residents) decimated by radioactivity from the days of the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor.

The Zaklos family is the only religious family in Briansk. Most of the Jews left the city and those who remain are influenced by Soviet culture; they’ve assimilated.

A small building serves as a shul. There is also a preschool and school. The rabbi’s wife periodically gathers the Jewish women for a women’s club and the rabbi meets with the businessmen. The lack of a mikva is only one detail of the complicated religious life this family lives. And the loneliness is very difficult.

There is no one in Briansk to relieve the Zaklos’ isolation. “It is easier to deal with the Evil Inclination when you are part of a religious community,” says Rabbi Zaklos who came to the city two



“The Jewish businessmen give us tz’daka as I would give a few sh’kalim to the poor in Eretz Yisroel.”

years ago. “Here, you live alone. After eight in the evening, there is no one to talk to. My family and I are home; there is nowhere to go. There are no restaurants and no meeting places.”

The kosher food situation is not simple either. “I am always fleishig. There are no kosher dairy products. There is only kosher milk when someone supervises the milking, once a week, thirty kilometers away in a nearby village. We boil the milk and give it to the children. That’s all there is.”

THE CHILDREN PAY

Jewish existence in Birobijan

(barely 4200 Jews) which is on the border with China, is not simple for Rabbi Mordechai Scheiner, his wife Esther, and their six children. The city is known as the autonomous Jewish capitol of the former Soviet Union, where Stalin planned to have all of the Jews of his empire live.

The family lives thousands of kilometers from Moscow, in a harsh climate, isolated from other Jewish communities, and forced to deal with a government that is reminiscent of a darker era, including the use of wiretaps.

“This house is the restaurant, the entertainment center, the school, and it also served as a shul for the first two years,” says Rabbi

Scheiner who comes from a family of religious Jews from Moscow who did not kowtow to the Soviet government. They refused to send their children to public school and to work on Shabbos and they were able to leave Russia for Israel at the end of the sixties.

“The social isolation is especially difficult for my wife and children. They are the true heroes of our shlichus.”

Rabbi Zaklos spoke about missing dairy products, whereas for Rabbi Scheiner, it’s meat. “My family waits eagerly for me to bring them meat from Moscow.”

The mikva problem exists in Birobijan too, but the difference is that in the past, they had to fly eight and a half hours to Moscow. Now, it’s a three-hour trip to nearby Chavrovsk. Rabbi Scheiner hopes to get donations so he can build his own mikva.

All these difficulties pale in comparison to the hardships imposed by the Birobijan government on Rabbi Scheiner, who is trying to develop Jewish life in the small town. He says that government officials, many of them Jews, are still under the influence of Soviet culture. “I





Rabbi Scheiner has similar difficulties and says, “When I am in Israel I always wonder whether to buy another pair of tefillin for the shul or sweets for the children. Many people don’t understand that this isn’t my private enterprise but I am there for them in order to develop a Jewish community.”

believe that they listen in on me but I don’t care since I know I am not doing anything illegal. It’s taking time for democracy to blossom here.”

HALF A YEAR WITHOUT COFFEE

As opposed to emissaries of the State of Israel and Jewish organizations who get generous salaries and good living conditions, shlichim of the Lubavitcher Rebbe have to deal with difficult financial situations. The Ohr Avner fund, headed by Lev Leviev, provides a monthly stipend, which totals about \$3000 on average, for personal expenses. This amount barely covers the high cost of Jewish living in places where there is hardly any Jewish infrastructure.

The center in Moscow expects every shliach to raise money from his community, especially from the wealthy members of the community. A shliach, who does not manage to get his community to donate, will have a hard time carrying out his shlichus, and they are not all successful.

Rabbi Zaklos says that the situation is far more complicated than the administration in Moscow realizes. “The Jewish businessmen give us tz’daka as I would give a few sh’kalim to the poor in Eretz Yisroel. They think everything ought to be free.”

Rabbi Scheiner has similar difficulties and says, “When I am in Israel I always wonder whether to buy another pair of tefillin for the shul or sweets for the children. Many people don’t understand that this isn’t my private enterprise but I am there for them in order to develop a Jewish community.”

So why do hundreds of religious Jews from Israel choose to go on shlichus to Russia, a complicated feat for a religious person? “If I didn’t believe in the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who thought this up and took responsibility for us, I wouldn’t dare go on shlichus,” says Rabbi Scheiner.

“I don’t spend time dwelling on

my problems and thinking about not having kosher chicken or that I haven’t had a morning cup of coffee in half a year, but on what to do to develop the Jewish community. It was my decision to be on shlichus. I was raised this way from my childhood. Despite the hardships, there is great satisfaction in this work. When you see a Jewish boy who, thanks to you, married a Jewish woman and had a chuppa, and now they have Jewish children, you feel you saved an entire world.”

WE NEED PARTNERS

Rabbi Dovid Mondshine, director of the Ohr Avner fund, which partially subsidizes the shlichim, says, “When a shliach goes to his city, his personal expenses and the expenses for his programs, are on us. As time goes by and the work develops, the funding is divided between the local donors and us.

“Our goal is to minimize the dependency between the center in Moscow and other cities. We encourage local communities to contribute, but we won’t lower the stipends. On the contrary, our stipends grow because of the natural growth of the programming. There are entire communities that are completely funded by us. Those are the facts.

“Lev Leviev said a while ago that a table cannot stand on one leg and we need additional partners. Reality shows that this is true and that we have managed to convey this message. We try to see to it that when it comes to personal expenses, the shlichim don’t have to ask for aid from their communities, so that all the donations go towards programming. The shlichim have a base of support and their work is able to continue even without community support.”

ALONE IN INDIA IN SEARCH OF THE TRUTH

By H. Ben Yishai

Hila Ariel of Beitar shared with me the moving story of how she became a baalas t'shuva and Chassid of the Rebbe:

I was raised on a collective yishuv in the Galil in a family where I am the oldest and I have two younger brothers. Our home's values were that of the Left, of belief in "my strength and the power of my hand."

My parents, children of Holocaust survivors and second generation in Eretz Yisroel, pushed us to achieve. I always felt that I had to be the best in the class, excel in my studies, and become a professional, perhaps a doctor. We looked down at religious people, but despite everything I wasn't the typical Israeli. I always felt different than the group.

My attraction for India began when I was about six. My uncle visited India and brought me back a sari. Since then I wanted to visit India. This desire remained hidden within me for a long time, but at a certain point it woke up and pushed me onward.

At age fifteen, in 5751, strange thoughts came to me, questions about the meaning and value of life. I asked myself: Why am I

alive? What is my purpose? Where is everybody running? Where do they want to go? Is anybody stopping to think about where? High school, the army, university, and then what? What does life want of me and what is life?

I had so many questions but nobody to ask. When I asked people around me I got superficial, unsatisfying answers.

Throughout high school I felt like I was in a transparent bubble, as though my life was passing through a black hole, in a vacuum that separated me from life. I felt that I was playing against my will on a fake, forced stage and so it wasn't important to me to put effort into my studies. Running after achievements seemed fraudulent to me and I rebelled, in my heart, against the lie I felt deep within.

When I finished high school I went to the army. I waited to be released and in the meantime I came up with a plan of working, saving money, and then going to India. I managed to get through my army service and my plan got under way. I worked for a few months, saved enough money, and bought an open ticket to India. I

went alone.

Today, India is much more developed, but ten years ago, progress hadn't arrived in India. There was no Internet or faxes and even telephones weren't that accessible. There were few Chabad houses, just one in Delhi the capitol and one in Poona (where I didn't go).

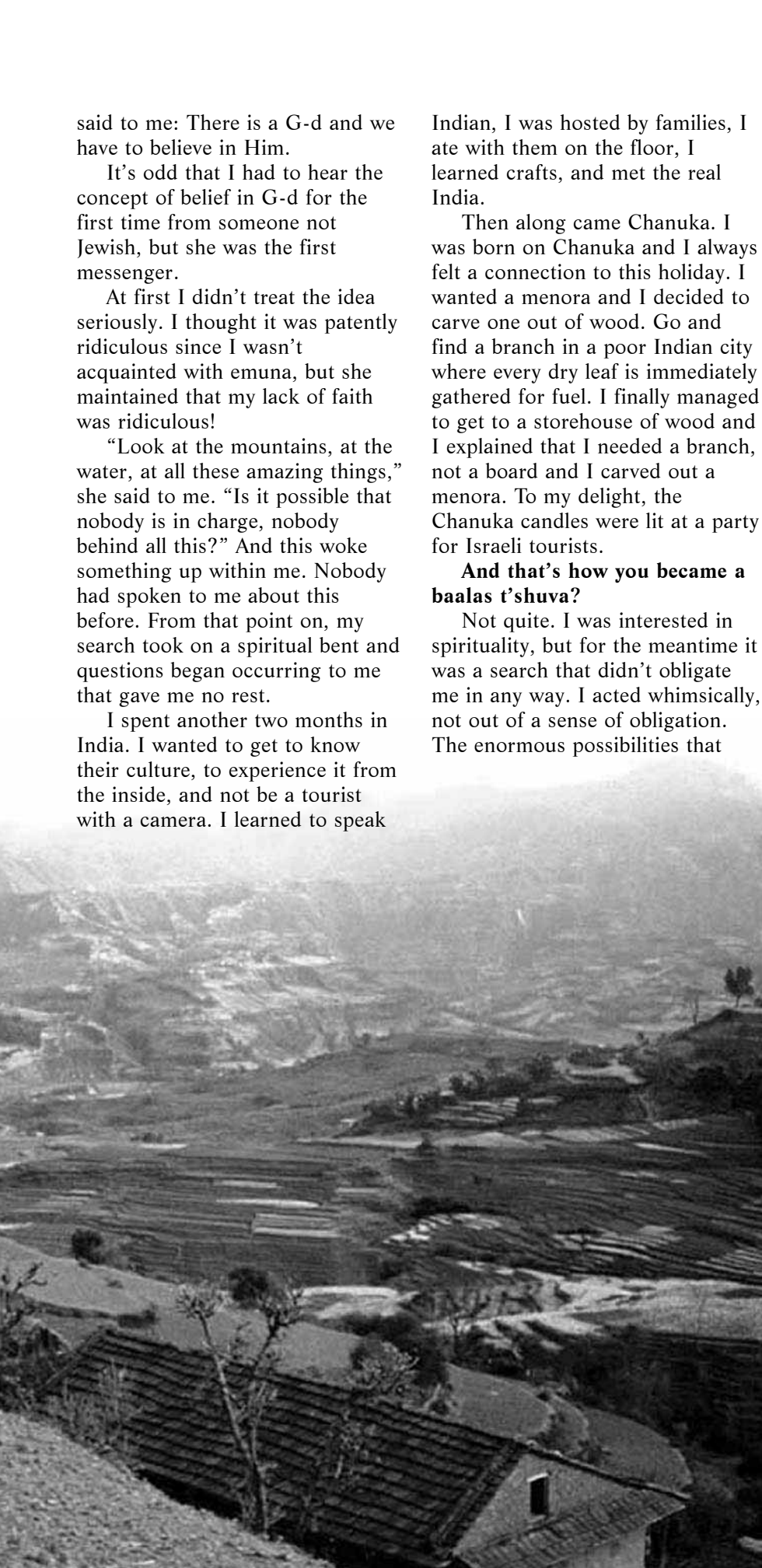
Did India satisfy your spiritual needs even temporarily?

The truth is that I quickly realized, in my first days there, that the scenery had changed but the main actor remained the same, searching, not satisfied... The feelings of a lack of purpose in life accompanied me as they did before and I couldn't run away from myself.

What was the turning point?

The first signpost was on my trip to Pushkar, a city holy to Indians. It's a small town built around a lake and it's a center of idol worship. It's full of idols with 300 houses of idol worship!

I thought it had a spiritual atmosphere that was so lacking in Israel, and I was very drawn to it. One night I sat on the steps to the lake and spoke with a gentile tourist I had met. She suddenly



said to me: There is a G-d and we have to believe in Him.

It's odd that I had to hear the concept of belief in G-d for the first time from someone not Jewish, but she was the first messenger.

At first I didn't treat the idea seriously. I thought it was patently ridiculous since I wasn't acquainted with emuna, but she maintained that my lack of faith was ridiculous!

"Look at the mountains, at the water, at all these amazing things," she said to me. "Is it possible that nobody is in charge, nobody behind all this?" And this woke something up within me. Nobody had spoken to me about this before. From that point on, my search took on a spiritual bent and questions began occurring to me that gave me no rest.

I spent another two months in India. I wanted to get to know their culture, to experience it from the inside, and not be a tourist with a camera. I learned to speak

Indian, I was hosted by families, I ate with them on the floor, I learned crafts, and met the real India.

Then along came Chanuka. I was born on Chanuka and I always felt a connection to this holiday. I wanted a menorah and I decided to carve one out of wood. Go and find a branch in a poor Indian city where every dry leaf is immediately gathered for fuel. I finally managed to get to a storehouse of wood and I explained that I needed a branch, not a board and I carved out a menorah. To my delight, the Chanuka candles were lit at a party for Israeli tourists.

And that's how you became a baalas t'shuva?

Not quite. I was interested in spirituality, but for the meantime it was a search that didn't obligate me in any way. I acted whimsically, not out of a sense of obligation. The enormous possibilities that

India opened up before me filled me up and confused me simultaneously. I threw myself into Eastern spirituality – Buddhism, yoga, meditation. I bought many books in English and spent hours reading them and thinking. It was a period of time in which I began to experience the spiritual dimension of the world, albeit the *l'umat zeh* (the side opposite to holiness).

I remember that I took part in a ten-day meditation seminar in which you maintain absolute silence. The amazing thing about all the Eastern teachings is that they talk about many things that are spoken of, *l'havdil*, in Judaism, especially in Chassidus.

(Years later, when I studied *Tanya* in Machon Alte, I knew that things were familiar to me from India, though they weren't quite the same. Some say that Eastern ideas are the gifts that Avrohom gave the children of Ketura.)

For example, the idea that this world is a world of falsehood, a world that covers over the true reality, is a central idea in Indian theology. With this new awareness – that the reality of the world isn't real – the direct conclusion is that with one's mind, one can change reality. One can decide whether to see it or not. In short, I really got into that.

Today I realize that one of the problems with getting involved in Eastern religions is that the difference between holiness and impurity is a very fine line. That is why many Jews are attracted to it. For example, one of the essential differences between the spirituality of India and our true spirituality is that we know that although the real and eternal world is Olam HaBa, we still have to live in this world and not be removed from it as they think.

Did you encounter Judaism in

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facing the glacier
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immerse in this
frozen water.
My fellow
traveler thought
I really wasn't
normal...***

India?

I went on to Katmandu in Nepal, and joined Chabad's Pesach seider and in preparing for it. When I finished helping prepare and everybody went to burn the chametz, I looked at them from the sidelines and thought how ridiculous Judaism seemed. I felt estranged from the experience, but I joined nonetheless.

What was the next stage for you?

I returned to Israel after Pesach but I continued living as though I was still in India. I made my family crazy. They thought I had satisfied my wanderlust and I would finally settle down and attend university like a good girl, but I preferred

sitting with a pile of books on philosophy and studying the secrets of life. My thirst to know, to understand the secret of life, just grew.

I studied a lot on my own and I also went to the Sinai with my brushes and paints. My family waited for me to get over it but I felt I had to return to India. I got ready for another trip, made some money and this time I took a Tanach. Before I went to the airport I went to my grandmother's house to say goodbye to her and the extended family. On my way out of her house I noticed a small Siddur on the shelf.

For some reason, the Siddur interested me and I felt I wanted to have it with me on my trip. I asked her whether I could have it and she had a very strong reaction: "What do you need a Siddur for? Your suitcase is heavy enough," etc. Everybody opposed the Siddur, but my grandmother finally agreed. So with the Tanach and Siddur, which for some reason gave me a feeling of security, I flew to India to continue my spiritual journey.

Was there a difference between the second trip and the first?

It was familiar to me and I felt at home, but this time I had harrowing experiences. I was on an intense search and I was open to everything.

I lived in two worlds: on the one hand, I was immersed in the "other side," on the other hand, I began to take an interest in Judaism, though without any intention of doing t'shuva. The "other side" creates confusion. Things that seem innocent are discovered to be dangerous because the difference between truth and falsehood is very fine.

I lived in Rishikesh and studied music and Indian songs. There was a group of Israelis there and we did Kabbalas Shabbos around a

bonfire with drums and guitars. Today, baruch Hashem there is a Chabad house in Rishikesh and Jewish programming.

I went to Chabad in Delhi for Pesach. It took six nerve-wracking hours on a dilapidated Indian bus (when the trip should have taken an hour and a half), but that's India.

This time as well, like the previous Pesach in Nepal, I experienced the holiday of Pesach. This time though, I got more into the telling of the Hagada. I was coming from the position of the "wise son" who wants to understand. The story of the Exodus spoke to me and I felt as though I was leaving Egypt.

Was this the turning point for you?

Not yet. There was still a long way to go and adventures awaiting me. I returned to Rishikesh and decided to realize a dream that I had. In order to explain, I have to give some background.

Rishikesh is on the Ganges River, which is also avoda zara. (They worship anything you can think of, trees, rocks, etc.) The sources of the river are in the Himalayan Mountains and my dream was to climb up to the source and immerse in the water there.

The source of the Ganges is located 4500 meters up. Six months a year it is covered with ice and only in the summer months does the ice melt, enabling it to be ascended by foot. In order to begin the trek you travel for two days by bus and jeep and get to a little place with some guest houses and eateries for the climbers. From there you begin the hike.

The trek takes about two days of mountain climbing up a steep slope, and progress is quite slow. Our plan was to get there by Shavuot and then to immerse. I



Some of Hila Ariel's work to spread Chassidus

met a girl who was willing to join me on this adventure, although she didn't quite understand the idea.

We began our climb in a thick woods surrounded by enormous cedar and cypress trees. All around were flowers and greenery. Little by little, as we climbed, the vegetation ceased, the color green disappeared and all that remained were snow-capped mountains, the clear sky, and rocks. The first night we slept on the road and in the morning we continued to climb.

There is a huge glacier at the source of the river, a wall of ice dozens of meters high. Beneath it is a cave and the river emerges from it (from the cave within the

glacier). The waters create a very large pool. The water, which comes from the melting glacier, sweeps along a lot of debris. Avalanches of ice constantly fall into the pool and the water is nearly frozen.

When we got there we stood facing the glacier and listened to the incredible stillness. We felt like we were on the top of the world.

The next stage in realizing my dream was to immerse in this frozen water. My fellow traveler thought I really wasn't normal to enter the frigid water, but I went in and immersed three times. It was so bitter cold that I was overcome by uncontrolled shivering. My friend wrapped me in a blanket. I continued to tremble for hours

afterward, my teeth chattered, but baruch Hashem, I didn't become sick.

As I said, this was Erev Shavuot and we went to light candles at the point where the mountain climbers stop for rest. There was a tent there of tourists who were willing to host us. We lit candles but did not know the bracha. We remained there for two days and didn't want to return to civilization.

Today I know and feel that Hashem protected me in the most fantastic way. I had been in forsaken places, a woman alone, not a local – all a recipe for trouble. Hashem took me, led me by the hand, and I emerged safely.

We didn't want to descend the

mountain too quickly as it was so magnificent. We went down slowly, making stops as we proceeded. Along the way are Indian tents that serve as very primitive kiosks. We stopped at the biggest kiosk in the area. This kiosk was well equipped. It even had a small gas burner, some potatoes, and blankets for rent for those who wanted to sleep.

We remained there for about a week and that is where I spent my first Shabbos with an angel who came down from the glacier. Friday afternoon an Israeli girl suddenly showed up and asked whether we planned on remaining there for Shabbos.

She had traveled with a group of Israeli tourists and since she was religious she had come down to keep Shabbos since her group had not agreed to wait for her and

It was the biggest turning point for me. I began to find direction even though I was still very confused. I felt very good about myself as though I had found a unique spiritual path that connected me to global spirituality. I was unaware of how far I had yet to go.

she couldn't stay there alone in the middle of the mountains. By Divine providence she found us there and was very happy since she had no time to go all the way down.

What do you remember of your first Shabbos?

It was Shabbos Parshas B'Haalos'cha, where it speaks about the lighting of the Menora in the Mishkan. That is what happened to me – Hashem lit my Menora. This first Shabbos was so significant in my life that I feel I have two birthdays, on Chanuka and Shavuos time. I have tried, since then, to mark Shabbos B'Haalos'cha and make a farbrengen.

The immersion I did was symbolic since the Torah is compared to water. Previously, Shavuos for me was associated with tractors, bundles of hay, a festive ceremony in the sports stadium and my mother's cheese cake. On the first Shabbos of my life we lit candles together with a bracha, davened three t'fillos, sat on a large rock and did Kabbalas Shabbos as we watched the sun set. We sang all the songs we knew and she showed me how to use the Siddur I had schlepped along with me faithfully.

We made "Kiddush" on mango juice and "HaMotzi" on two Indian pitot. We learned the parsha from my Tanach and even Pirkei Avos, and when we got to the Mishna, "don't speak excessively with women," a feminist debate began which lasted nearly until the sun set.

That was the first Shabbos and since then, I began keeping Shabbos. I didn't exactly know the halachos, but it was done with sincerity and kavana. I counted three stars and then I lit candles. I prepared to honor the Shabbos, cooking and cleaning and wearing white clothes that I bought in

honor of Shabbos. I stopped traveling and didn't call home on Shabbos, even though that was my regular time for calling.

The family caught on that something was happening and were frightened. They suspected I was becoming a baalas t'shuva and were afraid to ask me. I returned home before Rosh HaShana because it was important to me to be in Eretz Yisroel for Rosh HaShana.

Was it your new connection with Shabbos and the Holidays that finally pushed you to really change?

It was the biggest turning point for me. I began to find direction even though I was still very confused. I felt very good about myself as though I had found a unique spiritual path that connected me to global spirituality. I was unaware of how far I had yet to go.

I returned home with lots of "light" but without "vessels." I didn't even know there were vessels. I lived in my own delusional world with points of connection to reality.

I arrived before Rosh HaShana and I went to the small shul on my yishuv, where I heard the shofar. I decided to spend the rest of the Aseres Yemei T'shuva including Yom Kippur alone. I got permission to sleep in the apartment of a couple of friends who had gone to Sinai.

I didn't leave the house and I saw no one. I read T'hillim (without verbalizing it, like you read a book), did yoga and meditation, and fasted all day until I couldn't any more. I was used to fasting in India two days a week so it wasn't a problem for me, but despite all my efforts, I was unable to feel uplifted. Furthermore, I felt something was amiss.

That was the first Yom Kippur

that I fasted. The apartment was near a Sefardi shul and I could hear the piyutim through the windows, especially *Chatanu Lefanecha, Rachem Aleinu*. This piyut entered my heart in a way that I couldn't ignore. The streets reverberated with the t'filla and I began to feel something new, a subtle feeling that sowed a new light for me.

Now I know that I could have entered the women's section, but I didn't know that then. Instead of entering the shul, the t'filla entered me and affected me.

After Yom Kippur I went to a festival. It's an official event that people find out about by word of mouth. Everybody comes with their tent and blanket. I went, knowing the crowd already. There were two or three girls from the group who were further along in the t'shuva process than me. They seemed quite religious. One of the girls taught me the Sh'Hakol bracha.

I did Kabbalas Shabbos with them and then I left. I began working for a family on a farm near the yishuv Susia, south of Har Chevron. They were in the t'shuva process themselves and seemed very religious. The first night they gave me a book of Baal Shem Tov stories. I devoured it and couldn't sleep. I read it and cried, read it and cried. On the one hand they sound like fairy tales, but on the other hand, he was a real person who lived and did these miracles. I was blown away. I felt as though I had met the Baal Shem Tov.

I learned how to keep kosher from them, Shabbos and other halachos, much more than I had known until then. At some point, early on, they gently told me that it seemed to them that I was involved with avoda zara.

Wow! I felt like I was hit by a ton of bricks because I had simply not known what avoda zara is. I



Hila's children

asked them what they meant and they told me about the Golden Calf that was made by the Eirav Rav which moved and came alive through the forces of impurity. They explained that avoda zara has power like holiness does and that the forces of the sitra achra can appear good, like holiness, but they are not. This imaginary power can be very confusing and seem real and it is only with the power of Torah that we can truly become sanctified. This was an astounding revelation for me.

I was in shock! You mean everything I was doing until then was no good?! The entire spiritual path I had taken was forbidden?! It was hard for me to accept this after having invested so much only to discover that I was way off base.

That night I took the Rambam's *Seifer HaMada* and began reading it. The Rambam defines what avoda zara is, but I was still confused. I was still unsure but was inclined to think my hosts were right. An inner battle raged over which way I should go. Where was the Truth?

I took a T'hillim and opened it

at random and my eyes fell upon the verse 22:21, "save my *nefesh* from the sword, my *yechida* from the hands of the dog." I pleaded and said to Hashem: I want the truth and only the truth, here or there.

As I prayed I felt unequivocally, palpably, as though my neshama was emerging from a deep, dark pit, as though there was a deep, black abyss and Hashem was extricating me from it. Then I knew where I had to go and that was that. I was finished with India.

That was the final turning point. For the first time in my life I had a clear yardstick: This is good, that is bad. This is holy, that is impure. It certainly lit up my neshama and gave me serenity. That day I cut off my dreadlocks that I had grown for two years and threw them away.

I spent my second Shavuot in Tzfas. In open Divine providence I saw an ad in a local paper for Ascent of Tzfas and I went there. I stuck together with one of the madrichot and we went to the Abuhav Shul together in the Old City. Shavuot is one of the

occasions when they remove the holy Ari's Torah and read from it. I was very excited.

However, I had a hard time with the t'filla. T'filla b'tzibbur has rules and I didn't know them. I was constantly busy chasing the minyan, trying to figure out where they were up to and I wasn't too successful.

The next step was Machon Alte. After being on my own in nature I couldn't imagine how I would live in a dormitory, but I decided to try it out. The ancient olive trees in the entrance gave the place a charming quality and I stayed.

Today, baruch Hashem, I am married and have little children. I do illustrations and designs and have a graphics studio called Studio Ariel 770. I got amazing brachos from the Rebbe in the *Igros Kodesh* to spread the wellsprings through my work and I hope I give him nachas. Through my work, I ended up going back to India, not physically but through booklets and ads that Ascent puts out. The flyers that I design are distributed in Chabad houses in the Far East. I hope that the young tourists who get them can arrive at the truth more easily. That will be my reward.

Above all, I am full of thanks to Hashem that I have merited to come to Torah, Chassidus, and hiskashrus to the Rebbe MH"M.



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THE HARSH TRUTH ABOUT THE CONVERSION UPROAR

Interview by Nosson Avrohom

*In recent weeks there has been a great uproar following the invalidation of conversions from the government's Machon HaGiyur. Beis Moshiach spoke with Rabbi Gedalia Akselrod, formerly Av Beis Din in Chaifa, who has dealt extensively with the topic of conversions and who has fought against these fraudulent conversions. His opposition nearly lost him his job. He was questioned twice by the police for the crime of opposing these conversions and merited blessings from the Rebbe over the years. * Part 2 of 2.*

[Continued from last issue]

“YOU ALREADY BEGAN THIS GREAT MITZVA”

What letters and encouragement did you receive from the Rebbe about this?

A Chassid who sees the Rebbe's war over MiHu Yehudi and the Viennese conversions, does not have to wait for encouragement!

On Lag B'Omer 5744, the newspaper *Yom HaShishi* wanted to interview me about the war I was waging against conversions and the problems this caused me with those appointed over me. That year, my son Moshe, who is a shliach in Atlit now, was in 770 and I asked him to submit a note to the Rebbe asking whether I should agree to be interviewed. The interview could arouse a furor and those appointed over me did not like what I was doing and I was suffering as a result.

When my son submitted the note, Rabbi Groner told him that the Rebbe was going out to the parade and then to the Ohel and so he did not think I would receive a response that day. The Rebbe did in fact go out to the parade but before he went to the Ohel he went to his room for a few minutes and answered my question. Rabbi Groner looked for my son and told him that in the few minutes that the Rebbe was in his room he wrote a response to my letter.

The Rebbe's answer gave me much encouragement: **You have already begun this great mitzva, so what is the question now?**

In the interview I spoke at length about my battle and about the persecution I was suffering.

In 5746, something happened which nearly caused me to be fired. Because of a plea someone submitted to the Supreme Court, a

ruling was issued that a Reform conversion done in the US would be recognized in Israel and the person had to be registered as a Jew. This was a highhanded act of the Court; they were mixing in to rabbinic matters – so I decided to do something about it.

I got eighteen rabbis to sign a letter that was given to the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Religions. I asked them to take action so the Supreme Court ruling would not

go into effect since this decision was outside the purview of judicial jurisdiction and was nothing more than a power play mixing into rabbinical matters. The letter created a furor, including among those Knesset members who wear kippot. They called the letter a rebellion, no less.

The decision was made to get rid of me from my position as dayan. Plainclothes policemen questioned me twice, first at the beis din and then at home. I wrote

to the Rebbe about what was going on and noted that I was being investigated for rebellion.

I received an answer that same day through Rabbi Segal of Afula. The Rebbe said I should consult with a big lawyer. I went to a lawyer named Lifschitz, a Litvishe, religious Jew who had a law firm that represented big companies. He had dozens of lawyers working for him.

He agreed to take me on pro bono, and when I told him my story he said that although he did not deal with criminal law, he advised me that it was permissible to say, “The Supreme Court erred,” and not, “Don’t listen to the Supreme Court ruling.”

The episode that had begun with a great clamor, ended quietly. I called the committee of rabbanim, headed by Rabbi Simcha Kook, and I explained that it wasn’t just me but another eighteen rabbanim and this was a serious matter. Those rabbanim met with the government’s Attorney General, Mr. Yosef Charish, and he agreed to close the matter.

Then I was called by the chief rabbis to a meeting. They wanted to issue a letter of apology and asked me to sign it. When I opened the door to their office, the secretary of the chief rabbinate called me and said that I had a phone call from home. My wife told me that the Rebbe’s secretariat had just called with a bracha from the Rebbe, “I will mention it at the gravesite.” I was pleased by this sign from Heaven just as I was about to begin the meeting.

As I said, the chief rabbis wanted to issue a letter of apology about the letter we had sent to the government ministers, but I opposed this. I told them they had no right to apologize on behalf of



the eighteen rabbanim who had signed. They want to arrest me? Let them. I wasn't signing a letter of apology because there was nothing to apologize for.

The Rebbe's bracha helped and the whole furor faded away without an apology.

MAJOR PRESSURE ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND THE MEDIA

How can a dayan know whether a conversion candidate is sincere?

The dayan meets the candidate and looks into the reasons why the person wants to convert. You can see whether the person standing before you is sincere or just someone off the street who has a good reason to have him or herself registered as a Jew. The dayan has to make this determination.

Maybe the dayanim at these conversion institutes are truly impressed by the sincerity of the people who come to convert?

It's important to state that the rabbis at these conversion institutes do not claim they can

convert someone who announces he will not accept the yoke of Torah and mitzvos. They agree that a convert must commit to Torah, but they do the conversions in a way that the person converting feels no obligation to stand by such a commitment. They think it's a formality. They don't understand that immersion is not just a ceremony but a statement of commitment for the person's entire life.

Do you think anything will change?

I don't think this unfortunate situation is going to change. There is tremendous pressure from the newspapers and from the Prime Minister's office to convert as many people as possible, with the excuse that it's good for the country. The Machan HaGiyur under the Prime Minister's office will continue to operate and Rabbi Drukman's replacement won't do anything different.

What can be done though is the battei din throughout the country should not register them for marriage. I have seen that there are three cities already where they do not register these converts: Ashdod, Petach Tikva and Rechovot. What about other cities like Yerushalayim, Tel Aviv, Bat Yam, Cholon? If all cities follow their lead, these phony conversions will cease.

TO SAY THE TRUTH: YOU ARE GENTILES

How should we act towards the thousands of converts who think they are Jewish?

You have to tell them they are goyim and if the mother is not Jewish, then her children are not Jewish. These are fraudulent

They say that this approach began with Rabbi Goren, who was definitely proficient in Shulchan Aruch, and so who are they to contest it and seek stringencies? They also think it's good for the country – that the conversion of thousands of people will strengthen the country. That's what is going on.

conversions. If they sincerely want to accept the yoke of Torah and mitzvos, they can be converted of course, with all the stringencies and precautions.

There is no reason for a goy to wake up one morning and decide that he wants to keep Torah. There are rare instances in which we know that the person has a soul of a ger, you can see it in them. They truly feel their souls drawn towards the Jewish people, to Torah and mitzvos. Indeed, there are Lubavitcher gerim whose



Rabbi Goren



Demonstrating near the homes of religious Knesset members
Above: Knesset member Monia Shapiro. Bottom: Yosef Burg



children and grandchildren are genuine Chassidim. But to invite people to undergo the conversion process? Who ever heard of such a thing in previous generations?

The situation is ten times worse in the army, where they schlep soldiers to convert and help them through the process.

How can we understand the rabbanim who run these conversion institutes?

It's been a problem for nearly thirty years now and if we look at from a broader perspective, it's a

problem that began two hundred years ago, in the time of Napoleon, when Jews began throwing off the yoke of Torah and mitzvos and wanted to marry non-Jews. Their parents, who were afraid to have their sons marry non-Jewish women, ran to the rabbanim and this is how the modern day approach began to take form. The person seeking to convert merely declares or promises to take on Torah and mitzvos and they are given their conversion certificate.

Rabbi Drukman and other rabbanim involved in mass conversions say that this approach began with Rabbi Goren, who was definitely proficient in *Shulchan Aruch*, and so who are they to contest it and seek stringencies? They also think it's good for the country – that the conversion of thousands of people will strengthen the country. That's what is going on.

CHABAD SHOULD NOT HOST FICTITIOUS CONVERTS

What should we do when these spurious converts come to a Chabad house and want to participate?

It says that for the sake of keeping the peace we are supposed to give charity to gentiles, but we have to be very wary of them because those who undergo conversion need families to support them during the year they are undergoing the conversion process. They need places for Shabbos and Yom Tov so they can see how Jewish life is run. Chabad families are known for their hospitality and this is where they need to beware because we shouldn't become a party to this deception.

Again, I'm not talking about those who are genuinely interested in converting. Their seriousness is evident, as well as what they are willing to invest in order to become Jewish. I am talking about the 50,000 converts, many of whom never asked to convert but were invited to do so, or those who did it out of self-interest.

If a Jewish man and a non-Jewish woman, or vice-versa, come to a Chabad house and the shliach knows he can convince the Jew to leave her, it's a mitzva to do so. He must explain to him that

Again, I'm not talking about those who are genuinely interested in converting. Their seriousness is evident, as well as what they are willing to invest in order to become Jewish. I am talking about the 50,000 converts, many of whom never asked to convert but were invited to do so, or those who did it out of self-interest.

even if she wants to convert, she will be obligated to keep all of Torah and mitzvos and then he will have to do so too so as not to thwart her observance. Without that, there is no conversion.

Can these fictitious conversions hurt us in Lubavitch?

Of course! What's the question? These converts are registered as Jews and as a result, everybody can be harmed by this. For example, a Lubavitcher convert called me and asked whether it's true that when

converting, she had to accept Torah and mitzvos and keep them. I told her, yes. She said that she had converted at one of those places and nobody had told her she had to undertake the yoke of mitzvos. I told her that if she wanted to be a Jew, she had to go through the immersion for the sake of converting and not just for show. As long as she didn't do so, she was not Jewish.

There are many Lubavitchers and even rabbanim who do not know the halachos of gerus. When I organized the petition of the 150 rabbanim who signed that the convert must be a shomer Torah and mitzvos, people asked me whether that is indeed the halacha. There is lots of ignorance on this issue and I don't blame anyone. Before I was appointed dayan in Chaifa, I was a rav in Ramat Gan for many years and I had to give a shiur in Gemara, in halacha, prepare a siyum of a masechta for Erev Pesach, etc. Why would I study the laws of conversion? It didn't occur to me at all. Because of this ignorance there are rabbanim who think that after the fact, you can accept these conversions.

When you learn the Rebbe's sichos about Mihu Yehudi, do you see how the Rebbe foresaw this terrible state of affairs?

When I recently thought about the deteriorating situation, I connected the dots and was amazed to see how the Rebbe foresaw it all. Back then, I took part in some activities done by the Matteh for Shleimus HaAm, headed by Rabbi Shmuel Chefer. One day, when I saw he had stopped working on it, I asked him what happened. He said that in the last letter he had gotten from the Rebbe, the Rebbe said it pertained to the chief rabbinate and that is why he stopped.

Today I understand what the Rebbe meant. The Rebbe's war to amend the law of Mihu Yehudi was so that conversions done by the chief rabbinate should be according to halacha in all respects. Today it is clear that if the chief rabbinate does what it is supposed to do regarding conversions, the situation will be far better.

The Rebbe connects Shleimus HaAm with Shleimus HaAretz. With both of them we see tremendous deterioration lately. How are they connected?

It's very simple. The Rebbe says in the sichos of Mihu Yehudi that when the barrier separating the Jewish people from the nations is breached, the nation's borders are breached. This is something we see on a daily basis.

We learned in Pirkei Avos, chapter 5, Mishna 8, that the sword [war] comes to the world for the delay of justice, the perversion of justice, and for rendering a Torah decision not in accordance with halacha. If rockets are landing on us, we should look at the Mishna and we'll know why it is happening.

Is there anything else that can be done?

First of all, all efforts have to be made to amend the law of Mihu Yehudi. Until that happens though, we need to work on the rabbanim who register marriages.

If those rabbanim held a meeting and decided firmly and unanimously to stop registering those phony converts, it could permanently stop these conversions.

If we uphold conversions so they are according to halacha, then "I will give peace in the land," and there will be a strengthening of Shleimus HaAm, Shleimus HaTorah, and Shleimus HaAretz.

THE DYNAMIC OF TURNING DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

By Boruch Merkur

*Upon considering the “mourning and grief” that sin entails, not only does one abstain from sin, but it engenders an impassioned disdain towards evil, a repulsion from sin, as well as a strong compulsion towards doing Mitzvos. * Tracing the Rebbe MH”M’s instructions on how to perfect our Divine service in the Final Era.*

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMIC OF TRANSFORMING THE EVIL OF SIN TO GOOD

It remains unclear how one is able to attain this lofty state, transforming the world’s darkness and evil to light and good, without even having to sully oneself in the evil itself (as is the case with the typical penitent) but doing so from a distance, as it were, remotely, removed from the evil the entire time (the so-called righteous penitent). After all, at this point in the address, the Rebbe only mentions that the power for this transformation comes from the month of Adar.

The Rebbe, however, hints that there is the contributing factor of one’s intent. Namely, possessing

the knowledge of the existence of evil in the world: “since his service of Torah study and the performance of G-d’s Commandments is with greater fortitude (in light of the knowledge, in general, that the material world is a place that is predominantly evil ...), all matters of the world (including the particular veils and concealments) are thereby transformed to holiness...bringing...redemption and salvation.” It is enough to have knowledge of the presence of evil to effect this transformation.

Later in the address, the Rebbe develops this concept:

“When we learn from the laws of the Torah [many of which speak about detestable things, such as theft and manslaughter] that we find ourselves in a world where there is the potential for these scenarios to transpire (and we also learn about the punishments that result from them), we are forewarned that **from the outset** we should not become ensnared in them, knowing the undesirable outcomes they spawn.

“We may further posit that the latter entails not only abstention [from sin] but that one summons such strength in refraining from these matters, and in fulfilling other Mitzvos, that it **transforms** the darkness of the world (associated with these matters) and it gives rise, from the outset, to the virtue and advantage of light that emerges from darkness.”

Upon considering the “mourning and grief” that sin entails, not only does one abstain from sin but it engenders an impassioned disdain towards it, a repulsion from sin, as well as a strong compulsion towards doing positive actions (Mitzvos). Simply by contemplating the negativity brought about by sin, one can stimulate an emotional response that is reminiscent of the penitent, who actually did succumb to sin and

bears the guilt and regret for doing so, compelling him to change. Thus, from the outset, before one has erred and stumbled in sin, a person can transform the darkness to light.

DO NOT DESPAIR!

It is, therefore, clear that the call of the hour is to resist the temptation towards evil and remain righteous, and still harness the transformative powers of the penitent. However, one who has succumbed to sin should not despair. Rather, his need to repent and transform the darkness he introduced within himself and to the world is all the greater:

“How much more so in the case where one has a matter that requires correction. It is self-understood that in that event there must be the service of ‘extra care’²² towards transforming it to good, by means of adding with increased strength and increased might in the side of holiness, etc.”

No one is exempt from the responsibility to transform the world’s darkness to light. If one has done the opposite and added darkness, there is an even greater need for that person to reverse the damage done and correct it. As opposed to simply averting oneself from the area of his weakness, the advice is that he should actually put “extra care” into it, taking extra caution to be free of stumbling in that particular matter. And in general, “there must be an extreme strengthening in the fulfillment and the beautifying of the commandments, prohibitions, and Torah study, by means of perfecting one’s thought, speech, and action, as well as the service of G-d involving one’s body...thereby bringing about...a

revelation of G-dliness in the world.” Here the Rebbe emphasizes practical application, throwing oneself with extra devotion into serving G-d through Torah and Mitzvos, thereby transforming the world and making a dwelling place for G-d in the physical world.

TO FOUND INSTITUTIONS FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

The Rebbe concludes the address with a lengthy appeal to found institutions for Jewish education in the name of the Rebbetzin, of blessed memory, the central point of which is that

“when something undesirable has taken place, the cause of mourning and grief, we must give ourselves over with greater strength to the side of holiness, strengthening all activities...in Torah and Mitzvos ... It is clear that there is virtue in the efforts of the several individuals who, in connection with the passing [of the Rebbetzin] commit themselves towards founding institutions of Torah and Mitzvos – schools, and educational facilities for girls, Torah libraries, charity funds, and the like.”

In this manner, “the cause of mourning and grief” serves as a catalyst towards strengthening Torah and Mitzvos; the negativity associated with the passing of the Rebbetzin is transformed to good. Indeed, as discussed in the introduction to this column, the Rebbetzin’s passing marks the onset of the final stage towards the ultimate transformation of darkness to light, the true and complete Redemption.

NOTES:

²² See Shabbos 118b.

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MIRACLES IN THEIR PUREST SENSE

By A. Avraham

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

There's something special about the Chabad mikveh in Haifa. Even in Igros Kodesh, it is referenced more frequently than almost any other mikveh. The story just continues, as a chain of Heavenly miracles accompany the Chabad mikveh in the Red City throughout every stage of its construction. In honor of the dinner held for the mikveh renovation, those who experienced these miracles agreed to reveal their amazing stories to Beis Moshiach – miracles flowing as endlessly as water.

THE JOURNEYS OF THE MIKVEH

No one can possibly remain apathetic upon hearing the miracle stories in connection with the Chabad mikveh in Haifa, especially when he hears it from someone holding an infant and he suddenly realizes that the fulfillment of the miracle is sitting there right before him. Even those who have heard many miracle stories in their

lifetime will say that such a deluge of Divine salvation, affecting many families, is something that even the elders of the Galilee don't remember.

The story began several years ago, when there was a mikveh in Haifa's Ein HaYam district, containing one pool according to Chabad standards. The once tranquil neighborhood had turned over the passage of time into an

area inhabited primarily by the city's minorities, and visiting there even during the daytime became less and less pleasant – to put it mildly. This degree of self-sacrifice was still possible to bear, but when there was revealed a serious halachic problem at the site, stemming from a complicated technical error that could not be easily repaired, people were now forced to travel to mikvaos in other locations.

This situation continued until approximately twelve years ago. Then, at the initiative of Mrs. M. Cohen, who then lived in the Chabad community of Haifa, the decision was made to take action, to turn one of the pools at the central mikveh in the city's Hadar neighborhood, where the majority of the local Chabad community and other chareidi communities are concentrated, into a mikveh according to the standards and regulations established by the Rebbe Rashab, “*bor al gabbei bor*” (one pool over another). A great opportunity had presented itself, and it brought a sense of calm to the community over a period of several years.

Over a decade passed, and evidently the decision from Heaven was that without miracles, it simply wouldn't happen...

A MYSTERY AND A SURPRISING ANSWER

The year was 5763. The community and Chabad Houses were in the midst of an impressive development program. Throughout the previous two years, another three families of shluchim had arrived, bringing young and refreshed spirit and breathing new life into the city on Mt. Carmel.

The problem was that none of these three new shluchim families, young couples that had already been married for three to five years, had yet to be blessed with children. This inexplicable phenomenon became especially prominent when it became known that another local Chabad couple suffered from a similar agony since their marriage two years earlier. Yet another family had only one child, trying for many years to bring another into the world without success.

One of the women, Mrs. C., wrote to the Rebbe, and received an amazing answer in *Igros Kodesh* (Vol. 7, pg. 222):

In connection with their question on the activities in the area of family purity...there is a mikveh regarding which Rabbi Dabruskin from Haifa wrote that he turns to me at their suggestion, and the repair demands an estimated amount of 150 Eretz Yisroel liras. Thus, in my opinion, this is also proper, and accordingly, it should be according to the required standards of the Rebbe Rashab, *nishmaso Eden*.

Mrs. C. decided to raise the issue at the weekly class in family purity, and it caused considerable commotion. One of the participants, Mrs. Yael Itach, who had also asked for children, received answers from the Rebbe dealing with the subject of mikveh **ten times!** Other women who had asked questions on a variety of issues also received similar responses. Around this same time,



The Chabad mikveh after recent renovations

one of the shluchim, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Wilschanski, **received the same answer dealing with the mikveh in Haifa!**

By the way, in another section of the aforementioned letter, the Rebbe mentions the name of the rabbi who had been in charge of the mikveh renovation twelve years ago. The responses left no room for doubt: Repairs to the mikveh in Haifa are to be made in accordance with Chabad standards.

THE “DECREE” BETWEEN THE UPPER AND LOWER

The Rebbe’s head shliach in Haifa, Rabbi Leibel Schildkraut, decided to bring the *mara d’asra* of Kfar Chabad, Rabbi Mordechai

Shmuel Ashkenazi, a well-known expert on the subject of mikvaos, to inspect the Haifa mikveh.

Rabbi Ashkenazi arrived, escorted by Rabbi Schildkraut and the Haifa mikveh supervisor and rav of the chassidic Sert-Vishnitz community, Rabbi S. Zoldan, who gave his authorization and supported the entire renovation process, “in order that every community will have a mikveh according to its own stringencies.” The inspection revealed that since the mikveh’s construction, “much water had streamed out.”

The topographic formation of Haifa, situated on Mt. Carmel, enabled the construction of buildings on the mountain with one

A MIKVEH BY CHABAD STANDARDS

There exist a number of possibilities for erecting a kosher mikveh for ritual immersion. Over a period of many years, people used springs and rivers, which are preferable for a variety of reasons. Detailed guidance on the construction of such a mikveh appears in the responsa of the Alter Rebbe. When the Rebbe Rashab moved to Rostov, where there were no springs of water, this presented the need to build a mikveh based upon a holding tank of rainwater.

A mikveh of this type is most complicated from a halachic point of view: The need to replace the mikveh water with clean water does not allow for immersing in rainwater alone, as rainwater does not fall every day in the amount necessary to fill the mikveh. The solution for this is to build an “otzar” (holding tank) of rainwater with a pool containing regular water (*mayim shauvim*) at its side, and to connect them via the process known in halacha as “hashaka.” When the two pools touch in such a fashion, it turns the pool containing regular water into water fit for immersion, which then can be replaced.

The ruling of the Rebbe Rashab was to build a holding tank of rainwater under the immersion pool, “*bor al gabbei bor*” (one pool over another). In other words, the floor of the immersion pool is the “roof” of the holding tank of rainwater, which has two holes connecting the immersion pool with the holding tank of rainwater. This ruling has several advantages, and foremost among them is the general prevention of a mixing between the water in the immersion pool and the rainwater in the holding tank, even when the immersion pool water is being changed.

In addition to this main ruling, there were several additional instructions and stringencies from the Rebbe Rashab and his successors in connection with the construction of the mikveh and the holding tank.

Among them:

The rainwater must reach the holding tank naturally (in order that it won’t turn into regular water), when, as it enters the lower pool, it is drawn “*al gabbei karka*” (above the ground). People generally used cylinders made out of concrete (or tar) with at least three handbreadths at the end from soft concrete. On the other hand, drawing the water

through pipes presented numerous problems, e.g., the Rebbe Rashab believed the angled pipes were a form of “receptacle,” since it appeared that they impeded the water. It is brought in a sicha from the Rebbe Rayatz that rainwater cannot come into contact with iron. In addition to the aforementioned, it is accepted today as a further stringency that the pipes should not be made from metal or plastic.

Over the years, when most of the world had begun to use mikvaos based on rainwater, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, aroused the need to repair the mikvaos in accordance with the standards of the Rebbe Rashab, which has many halachic advantages.

For example, one of the hiddurim that the Rebbe MH”M noted was that the ceramic tiles used to cover the mikveh floors and walls should not have any indentations or crevices, as this might turn them into “receptacles.” It was generally most difficult to obtain such smooth tiles. However, in the Haifa mikveh, Rabbi Feigelstock of Buenos Aires proposed a

brilliant solution: using synthetic surfaces designed for kitchens. These surfaces were totally straight on both sides, and the innovation was to glue them on **upside down**: Their upper smooth side was attached downward with a special adhesive, whereas the other side, which was totally straight albeit not smooth, was turned upward and could be stood on safely.

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entrance from a lower street and an additional entrance from a street located on a higher story. The old mikveh in the Hadar neighborhood was built on a quiet side street, and the Chabad mikveh was built on the structure's second floor.

However, due to the rapid development of the chareidi community in Haifa and the desperate need for construction, the city's Gerer chassidic community had recently received permission to build over the mikveh structure. The old building had grown four additional stories, housing the central beis midrash for the Gerer community, and its entrance – together with the entrance to the men's mikveh – was only from the upper street, Rechov Orlozorov.

The mikveh itself remained below, however, the system placed on the roof for collecting and drawing rain water now had to be “raised” by four stories. Even the inspecting rabbanim repeatedly emphasized that while the mikveh was absolutely kosher, the new system included several problematic details that were not in accordance with the Rebbe Rashab's approach:

a) Rain waters landed on a roof made out of tin; b) the waters were “drawn” from there below through a series of pipes set at angles and composed of different materials; c) the reserve holding tank was stopped with a rubber plug; d) even the system for drawing municipal water, both new and old, was altered in a fashion that creates various concerns. (See box for a more lengthy discussion of the subject.)

Rabbi Ashkenazi pointed out the problems and authorized Rabbi Boaz Lerner, a mikveh architect and representative of the Chabad Rabbinical Court in Eretz Yisroel on Chabad mikvaos, to oversee the renovation work. Thus, there was a need to build a new system for drawing the water and a separate



Rabbi Leibel Schildkraut (L) and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Wilschanski (R)

holding tank for rain water.

THE PIPELINE FOR SELF-SACRIFICE

The shliach, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Wilschanski, was recruited to fulfill the mission. It would be no easy task, as the conditions in the area compelled finding complicated and unusual solutions.

Building a concrete drainage channel of six stories (!) was a totally impossible idea. There was no other way except to create an alternative pipeline system for drawing the water. This posed a very serious problem: It had been many years since the production or import of piping to Eretz Yisroel made from material that cannot contract ritual impurity.

However, “impossible” was no answer when we're talking about a chassidishe building contractor, Haifa Chabad community member R. Yaakov Lisk, who gave his soul over to the job. He traveled the length and breadth of the country until he found, in a garage courtyard in Cholon under piles of mud and dirt, a “treasure” of old pipes made

from the desired and priceless material.

R. Yaakov loaded the merchandise, worked tirelessly to clean the pipes, and connected them himself. The miracle was revealed only at the conclusion of the job: The overall length of the pipeline was **exactly** enough – from the roof to the level of the mikveh. At the lower level, there was a need for one small piece of pipe with a smaller diameter, made from the same material. Only the Creator Himself knew how to locate a piece of pipe **with the exact measurements needed**, sitting in a bathhouse storage room somewhere in Haifa...

Now, they had to cover the roof – an area of several hundred square meters – with a substance that cannot contract ritual impurity. The first solution was to use a certain acrylic material. Later, when it became clear that this material peels and requires annual replacement, a covering was built from a sturdier material on a cement base in cooperation with the Ger community.

At this stage, there remained one

small problem: a few shekels to finance the renovation – about a hundred thousand of them to be more precise. A dinner was held in Haifa, organized by the local N'shei Chabad chairperson, the shlucha Mrs. R. Schildkraut, and with the participation of other shluchos – Lemberg, Rosenblatt, Wilschanski, and Sheffi. The evening's main speaker was Rebbetzin Toby Hendel of Migdal HaEmek, who explained the urgency of the mikveh renovation and making it suitable for use according to Chabad standards.

While considerable funds were raised at this event, there still remained a very large amount to cover. At this point, the organizers turned to two prominent chassidic philanthropists, R. Dov Leibman of Buenos Aires and the gaon, Rabbi Yitzchak Raitport of Boro Park, who donated the full amount required to complete the mikveh construction.

By the way, during this time period, the Disraeli family, which was then in need of some Divine salvation regarding “*zara chaya v'kayama*” (the blessing of children), again requested the Rebbe's bracha. If you haven't guessed by now, they received the bracha (the third family to receive that same bracha!). The wife remembered that in fact, she hadn't given her contribution yet towards the mikveh construction, and she immediately gave one hundred and fifty shekels to the fund. Just nine months later, she gave birth to another child.

“THE WATER IS ESCAPING DOWN THE SIDE”

After everything that was humanly possible had been done, it was now a matter of waiting for the rain to fall. It was the beginning of the winter, and the forecasters were talking about rain coming that night.

At midnight, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Wilschanski sat to write a letter to the Rebbe and inform him that the rains had just begun. He rubbed his eyes to see that he had received an answer in Vol. 6, pg. 203 – **two answers on the same page** about the repair and construction of a mikveh. The first letter explicitly mentioned about the mikveh repair with “rain water” as per the Rebbe Rashab's standards, and in the second letter, addressed to Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen Perlow, the Rebbe states, “I was shocked to read about the state of disrepair of the mikveh in their camp...”

Rabbi Wilschanski saw this as a clear hint that something wasn't right, and he decided to ask for another bracha. This time, he opened to a letter in Vol. 7, and he couldn't believe his eyes. The seifer had been opened to pg. 344, where there appears a letter from the Rebbe to Rabbi Perlow in continuation of the previous letter: “And it calmed my spirit that he

wrote that the mikveh's holding tank had filled to approximately nine hundred liters of rain water...”

In fact, the rain had come down with great force all night long, however, Rabbi Wilschanski understood that this had not been said for nothing. The following day, when he arrived at the mikveh, the manager on the premises saw him first and screamed: What did you do? All the water escaped down the side and spilled out!

After a few moments of puzzlement, the picture became clear: When the pipes for the drawing process were cleaned after they had been connected, they naturally used the pumped water from the fire hose. The regular drain was too high and in order to clear the puddle of excess water on the roof, they made a small hole in the side, through which even the rain water escaped.

After another fortnight of dry weather, the forecasters made another predication of rain. Rabbi Wilschanski took no chances this



Rabbi Mordechai Shmuel Ashkenazi checking another mikveh

time, and he went up on the roof to find that yet another puddle of water had formed due to a variety of reasons. He remembered all too well that it would not be appropriate to make another hole, but it was also absolutely forbidden to leave the puddle there!

Rabbi Wilschanski promptly called his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Feigelstock, rav in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and asked him what to do. The suggestion was made to try and dry up the waters...through heating elements. The heavens had already contacted the clouds, and strong winds were blowing. Together with R. Yaakov Lisk, Rabbi Wilschanski rushed down to the Gerer shul, took several large heaters and a couple of electric fans, and thus the waters that had collected on the roof quickly evaporated. The work was completed just as the first raindrops began to fall...

The rains came, Rabbi Wilschanski stood and watched to see that the water drawing was carried out in a halachically permissible manner, and then he called Rabbi Ashkenazi to receive telephone confirmation that the mikveh was kosher.

That very year, all five Chabad couples were blessed with children!

Emotional blessings of “Mazel tov” echoed throughout northern Eretz Yisroel, and the city of Haifa reveled and rejoiced.

THE BEST PREPARED HOLDING TANK IN THE WORLD

Indeed, the Chabad mikveh of Haifa was a reality, but without an “otzar” (holding tank) for reserve water. Every time that the water was changed, it became necessary to shut down the mikveh for several days until the tank could be refilled. The matter demanded repair, and

Rabbi Wilschanski again entered the picture. Together with the mikveh director, Rabbi Moshe Spitzer, they presented the plans for building the “otzar” to the Haifa Municipality for its approval.

The matter dragged on for at least four years in the offices of City Hall. Every time there was a need for further repairs, the plans had to be submitted all over again, until the long awaited permits finally arrived. Rabbi Aryeh Blimenthal, Agudat Yisroel representative on the city council, worked hard in obtaining these permits. Rabbi Wilschanski raised half of the money needed to build the holding tank, and the other half – about \$7,000 – was donated by Rabbi Shlomo Bistritzky from New York.

The night before the construction actually begun, a meeting was held with the building contractor. It should be noted that this was the last such meeting, as the contractor was already well past exhaustion from all the endless alterations to the building plans, failing to understand why they were so important. That night, however, the impression was that things finally appeared to be all wrapped up.

Then, Rabbi Boaz Lerner suddenly called Rabbi Wilschanski. He informed him that he had just received two answers from the Rebbe in *Igros Kodesh* about the building of a mikveh in Haifa (as mentioned in the introduction, the Haifa mikveh appears in *Igros Kodesh* more often than almost any other), and he felt that he had to make a serious inspection of what’s happening.

A few hours later, Rabbi Lerner appeared unexpectedly in Rabbi Wilschanski’s home. He looked at the plans, and immediately found several errors. He called in the engineer, carried out the necessary changes together with him, and ran

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the puddle there!***

the next day to City Hall to get municipal approval for the repair. Five months ago, the construction of the reserve holding tank was completed.

FACING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

After the tiring journey to prepare the mikveh, the Chabad shluchim of Haifa came to the conclusion that the time had come to arrange an overall renovation of the antiquated structure in order that it should not only be “totally kosher,” but also the utmost of splendor and magnificence in the material sense.

While the mikveh is in a state of complete repair, its many years in operation show on its walls and its overall appearance is not particularly inviting. In preparation for Gimmel Tammuz, a festive dinner will be held, and all the holy proceeds will go towards the full and total renovation of the entire mikveh level, including all the rooms and the entrance area, which will be rebuilt at the highest standards.

Now, everyone can become a part of the miracle!

(Much of the material for this article was provided by R. Ro'i Katz and Mrs. S. Disraeli.)

SALUTE TO OHR MENACHEM AT 3RD ANNUAL DINNER

Cheder Ohr Menachem – *mosad chinuch al taharas ha'kodesh*, held its annual dinner Sunday night, June 15th, at the Jewish Children's Museum in Crown Heights. Hundreds of friends and supporters came to express their appreciation and to contribute towards the yeshiva that is educating the *Meshichoi*, i.e. *tinokos shel beis rabban* to hiskashrus to the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach.

The evening began with Avigdor Tzeitlin and the Shir HaShirim Band's musical entertainment. Soon after, the Cheder Ohr Menachem Boys Choir made their first appearance. The choir led by T'mimim Shneur Maidanchek and Moshe Leib Notik, sang a medley of songs. They were roundly applauded.

Rabbi Aharon Ginsberg, dean of Gan Yisrael schools in Boro Park, was the emcee. He

welcomed one and all to the third annual dinner. Rabbi Dovid Nachshon, director of Tzivos Hashem and Chabad Mobile Mitzva Tanks in Eretz Yisrael, read the Rebbe's letter and concluded with Yechi.

The lights were dimmed and a video was shown of the Rebbe with children, interspersed with excerpts of sichos regarding chinuch and Geula. The video concluded with the Rebbe's



R' Yossi Popack (right) receiving an award



R' Chanina Sperlin



Rabbi Yosef Hecht



Rabbi Yaakov Schwei



Rabbi Dovid Kahanov and R' Oren Popper



Assemblyman
Karim Camara



Rabbi Dovid
Nachshon



Rabbi Aharon
Ginsberg



vigorous encouragement of the singing of Yechi. As the lights came on, Rabbi Ginsberg called upon Sholom Ber Hendel, the students' representative, who read the Rebbe's chapter of Tehillim verse by verse. He concluded with Yechi.

"The world stands on three things," said the emcee. "All of you here tonight know what Ohr Menachem has innovated in the world of yeshivos. Since we have already had the Torah and Avoda this evening, it is time for G'milus Chassadim."

Rabbi Ginsberg went on to describe the yeshiva, how it developed over the past year and what educational milestones it has achieved. He concluded by saying that the yeshiva needs its own building and he called upon its supporters to make this happen.

Member of the Beis Din and *Mara D'Asra* of Crown Heights, Rabbi Aharon Schwei spoke "on behalf of the rabbonim of the community and on behalf of the community as a whole," and blessed all the participants and supporters of Cheder Ohr Menachem. He described the yeshiva as instilling simcha, love and enthusiasm for Torah study and mitzvos in the children. He concluded by saying that Crown

Heights can be rightfully proud to have such a mosad in its midst.

Eli Slavin introduced the many politicians who attended the dinner. NY State Assemblyman Mr. Karim Camara spoke about the importance of investing tremendous efforts into education to provide children the tools to deal with life and any situation which arises, and that the state of New York owes thanks to all those who help educate the next generation of children.

Next was NYC Councilman Mathieu Eugene who said that long before he entered the world of public policy and politics he invested most of his energy into education "for a better tomorrow."

Mr. Camara distributed certificates from the Department of Education to three guests of honor: R' Yossi and Batsheva Popack, R' Chanina and Orly Sperlin, and R' Oren & Leora Popper.

Philanthropist, Shmuel Chanin was given a gift in appreciation for his efforts on behalf of Ohr Menachem. It was also a birthday gift since his birthday was that evening.

R' Chanina Sperlin received a plaque in commemoration of his tireless efforts on behalf of the

school. He blessed the crowd with the Priestly Blessing.

A silver gift was given to R' Popack. The lights dimmed and R' Popack could be seen on the screen speaking about the privilege he has of donating to Ohr Menachem. "It's a zechus for me to be a partner with a mosad that gives children Chassidishe values as the Rebbe wishes."

Sholom Dovber Liberow, son of the shliach in Flatbush, spoke in Yiddish. He thanked the staff, on behalf of all of the students, for their devotion. "In Parshas Shlach, the Rebbe explains that the mistake of the spies was that they mixed in their own views when on shlichus for Moshe Rabeinu and this led to their bitter end. The Rebbe says that the lesson for us is not to mix in our own ideas when on the shlichus of the Nasi HaDor. By focusing on the sole remaining shlichus, 'kabbolas p'nei Moshiach Tzidkeinu,' we will complete our shlichus with the true and complete Geula."

Rabbi Ginsberg noted that a Siyum HaRambam for the conclusion of the 26th cycle of daily study of three chapters was taking place around the world. Member of Tzivos Hashem, Mendel Gerlitzky, concluded the



The Ohr Menachem choir; Councilman Mathieu Eugene; Senator John Sampson; Senator Eric Adams



(From right to left) Rabbi S.I. Popack, Rabbi Y. Hecht, R' Y. Popack, R' M.M. Levin



R' Shmuli Chanin (right) receiving an award



R' Eli Slavin



A raffle for tickets to Eretz Yisroel; Sholom Dovber Liberow; Mendel Gerlitzky; Sholom Ber Hendel

Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvos.

The following speaker was Rabbi Yosef Hecht, shliach and rav in Eilat who referred to the Gemara in Bava Basra from which we learn how great is the responsibility of those involved in chinuch, "Dovid HaMelech's general, Yoav ben Tzruya, killed all the males in Edom. When he returned from battle, Dovid asked him why he had killed only the males. Yoav said that this is what he was taught by his teacher when he was a little boy, 'annihilate the males (zachar instead of zecher) of Amalek' – only the males and not the females.

"When the melamed was brought before Dovid, Dovid asked him how he taught the verse. The melamed said, 'annihilate the remembrance (zecher) of Amalek.' Young Yoav had not understood his teacher. Tosafos explains that the responsibility fell upon the melamed who needed to ensure that his student understands the text correctly."

Rabbi Dovid Kahanov, the Menahel Chinuchi of Ohr Menachem presented an award to R' Oren and Leora Popper as "Parents of the Year." The lights were dimmed and on the screen R'

Popper thanked the dedicated staff for educating the children to be soldiers of the Rebbe MH"M.

Rabbi Ginsberg thanked the members of the Vaad HaGashmi who do so much for the benefit of the yeshiva. The main course was served and State Senator John Sampson said a few words in praise of the development of the mosdos as a friend of the community.

Once again, the Cheder Ohr Menachem Boys Choir delighted the crowd with additional Chassidic melodies and concluded with Yechi.

A short video presentation

summed up the tremendous accomplishments of the mosad that began with 25 students and has grown to 150 students. An additional clip was shown of members of the Vaad HaRuchni, Rabbi Refoel Wilschansky, Rabbi Yitzchok Springer, Rabbi Berel Lipsker whose job it is to lay the ground rules which guide the members of the administration in carrying out the wishes of the Rebbe.

Member of the Vaad HaKahal, R' Leibish Nash called upon Senator Eric Adams who promised to continue helping the Jewish community. The evening closed with a

raffle of two tickets to Eretz Yisrael. Member of Tzivos Hashem, Yehuda Kalman Cadaner, pulled out the winning raffles.

During the course of the evening, Rabbi Ginsberg

told a fitting Baal Shem Tov story with which he brought in comparison to the Cheder Ohr Menachem cause. One winter night, the Baal Shem Tov's *chavraya kadisha* were learning in a dark room. The Baal Shem Tov came in and asked them why they

were sitting in the dark. They said that it cost several rubles to light up the room and they didn't have the money. The Baal Shem Tov went outside and showed his disciples how he miraculously lit an icicle which then illuminated the room.

Ohr Menachem is not just another yeshiva but one that is leading the way, showing how a

Chassidishe yeshiva is supposed to be run. Ohr Menachem radiates light, both near and far.



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