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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 RED HEIFER: A PRELUDE TO MOSHIACH

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

*There have been nine Red Heifers so far. The tenth, according to Maimonides, will be prepared by Moshiach. By recounting the history of the Red Heifer, Maimonides emphasizes its eternal relevance, even in the times of exile. Including a prayer for Moshiach in the laws of the Red Heifer reminds us to be “Moshiach-conscious” at all times, aware that until the Redemption we are incomplete and imperfect. The ashes of the Red Heifer, used to remove the spiritual impurity resulting from death, alludes to Redemption, the final and complete purification, the removal of any separation between G-d and the Jewish people.*

This week’s Torah reading begins with the ritual of the *Para Aduma* – the Red Heifer. One who had become *tamei* – ritually impure – through contact with a dead body could not enter the Temple. The ashes of the Red Heifer were used to purify those who had become *tamei*, enabling them to re-enter the *Beis HaMikdash* – the Temple.

Historically, there have been nine Red Heifers. The tenth will be prepared by Moshiach. Since everything

happens by Divine Providence, the connection between the tenth *Para Aduma* and Moshiach must be more than coincidental. Indeed, on an inner level, the mitzva of the Red Heifer must teach us something about how to bring Moshiach.

Maimonides alludes to this when concluding the laws regarding the Red Heifer. He says that “Nine Red Heifers were prepared from the time this mitzva was first commanded until the destruction of the Temple. The first was prepared by Moses, the second by Ezra and seven from Ezra until the destruction of the Temple. The tenth will be prepared by the King Moshiach, speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d’s Will.”

If Maimonides is simply telling us about the mitzva, why conclude with a prayer? We need to know the details of the Red Heifer’s preparation and use, not its history. But not only does Maimonides tell us how many there were and who prepared them, he also offers a prayer for the restoration of the ritual. Maimonides might have to mention that Moshiach will prepare the tenth Red Heifer, since elsewhere he

presents basic laws concerning Moshiach. But that still doesn’t explain why Maimonides himself offers a prayer in the middle of a law code. Also, at the very least, this prayer – “speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d’s Will” – belongs with the laws of Moshiach, not the laws of the Red Heifer.

We thus have three questions to answer: First, why does Maimonides recount a history of the Red Heifer? Second, why does Maimonides offer a prayer for the

coming of Moshiach when discussing the laws of the Red Heifer? And finally, what is the lesson for us about Moshiach?

To answer the first question, we must understand what was done with the ashes of the Red Heifer. After the animal was burned, the ashes were divided into three sections. One section was used to purify Kohanim who had become ritually impure – *tamei*. A second section was used to purify the rest of the Jewish people. Although they were not involved in the daily sacrifices, there were still times when an individual needed to enter the Temple. If he'd had contact with a dead body, he would need to be purified first.

The third section was set aside not to be used, but preserved, guarded and passed on. By giving us the history of the Red Heifer, Maimonides indicates that preserving the ashes is an eternal obligation, applicable throughout all the generations. In addition to having the ashes available to be used when they were needed, there's a separate mitzva that the ashes be preserved, that they simply be there. The "history lesson" tells us that the Red Heifer is not simply part of the past, interesting but irrelevant. Maimonides tells us that Moshiach will prepare the tenth Red Heifer to show that throughout history there was always an attempt to preserve and maintain the ashes. The Red Heifer is a continuous mitzva, its relevance eternal and not limited to just one time.

Maintenance and preservation of the ashes of the Red Heifer is an eternal obligation. But this mitzva cannot be observed until the coming of Moshiach. Therefore, the mitzva of the Red Heifer "demands," so to speak, Moshiach. The mitzva itself declares, "speedily may Moshiach be revealed," so that the ashes can be prepared. Only thus can the mitzva of preserving the ashes be properly and completely observed.

We still need to answer the second question, why Maimonides offers a prayer in a book of laws. As part of the same question, why does Maimonides offer the prayer out of place, in the laws of the Red Heifer instead of in the laws of Moshiach?

Now, there is an obligation to believe in the coming of Moshiach. But the commandment is not to have just a generalized belief. Rather, we are commanded to hope and long for, to anticipate the coming of Moshiach. Anything less, Maimonides explains, is tantamount to denial of the Torah and the prophecy of Moses. The mitzva to believe in, expect and prepare for the coming of Moshiach is thus eternally relevant and applicable throughout the generations.

What does it mean to expect, prepare and hope for the coming of Moshiach? This means one has to engender a feeling of incompleteness without Moshiach. One must feel he is missing something vital every moment Moshiach

is not visibly, physically present. We must have a continual hope and anticipation for Moshiach, because every moment Moshiach isn't here we experience a deficiency, sensing we lack something essential.

Therefore, when we encounter an idea, an event or even a law that relates to Moshiach, we immediately and automatically offer a prayer that Moshiach should be physically and immediately revealed. Because we feel incomplete and inadequate without the Redemption, whenever Moshiach is mentioned, even incidentally, we instantly – almost impulsively – pray for the reality of that for which we hope. When we want something, when we perceive we need something, when we feel this lack or insufficiency urgently, strongly and internally, we pray for it. We respond with anticipation and desire whenever it is mentioned, because our thoughts, emotions – our very essence – is connected with it.

This explains why the prayer for the coming of Moshiach, "speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d's Will," is included in a book of laws in general. This also explains why it is "out of place," so to speak, put specifically with the laws of the Red Heifer. In this way Maimonides explains and emphasizes **how** to anticipate, hope and long for Moshiach. Even when the concept of Moshiach arises in a secondary, indirect or insignificant manner, we respond primarily and forcefully to the mention of Moshiach. We should be so focused on Moshiach, so aware that we are insufficient and incomplete without the Redemption, that even an offhand comment elicits a prayer, that "speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d's Will."

But why specifically here, in connection with the Red Heifer? This answers our third question, what is the practical lesson for today?

In general, exile – our current situation prior to Redemption – is an aspect of *tumas meis* – the spiritual impurity resulting from death. Spiritually, we are exiled for our sins. These sins result from a lack of feeling, an insensitivity to the truth that, "You are attached to the Lord your G-d." Without that attachment – or awareness of that attachment – life itself is incomplete. We cannot be truly, "living, all of you, today," unless and until all our inadequacies, our sins, our spiritual impurities are removed and purified.

Thus, the ashes of the Red Heifer, used to remove the spiritual impurity resulting from death, alludes to Redemption, the final and complete purification, the removal of any separation between G-d and the Jewish people. When we feel the need for Redemption so keenly that we respond to even the off-hand mention of Moshiach with the prayer, "speedily may he be revealed, Amen, so may it be G-d's Will," we reveal our innate longing for and inner attachment to G-dliness.

*(Based on Likkutei Sichos 28:151-157)*

# ALIVE AND WELL

By Rabbi Yisroel Halperin, Shliach, Hertzliya

*If Chazal say that “Yaakov did not die,” then that is the reality, he did not die. If someone is skeptical and cites verses and Midrashim to support another view, the believing Jew says, “I am extrapolating this from the verse,” without any debates. He doesn’t argue. He doesn’t try to justify his position. He believes.*

**W**e are living in a time in which emuna plays a major role in the Chassid-Rebbe relationship. In the abnormal reality we are living in, as our physical eyes refuse to open up and see the Geula reality, we need to strengthen our emuna in general, and faith in what the Rebbe said in particular. At a time like this, a lack

of faith is liable to adversely affect the practical actions the Rebbe demands that we do.

What level of faith is required of us? The answer can be found in the sicha of Parshas VaYechi 5751, where the Rebbe refers to the ongoing life of Yaakov Avinu. Although Yaakov's life is not like the Rebbe's eternal life, we can still learn what real faith is, according to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe refers to the Gemara that states, "Yaakov did not die ... just as his children are alive, so too he is alive." He says, "When a Jew is asked: How can you say that Yaakov did not die when they eulogized and embalmed him and all the rest?"

"He replies: I am extrapolating this from the verse. I don't know about any *kuntzin* or politics. As to the question about the embalming, etc., he answers: I don't know about any eulogizers or gravediggers – I am extrapolating this from the verse, without Talmudic arguments. I only know what it says in the Torah: Just as his children are alive, so too, he is alive."

That sums up pure faith. If Chazal say that Yaakov did not die, then he did not die! If someone is skeptical and cites verses and Midrashim to support another view, the believing Jew says, "I am extrapolating this from the verse," without any debates. He does not argue. He doesn't try to justify himself. He believes.

## DOING AND NOT DOING

To believe with such *emuna p'shuta* (simple faith) is not so *pashut* (simple)! It takes effort that consists of two parts: doing and not doing.

The "doing" entails serious study of inyanei Moshiach and Geula. Learning, learning some more, on your own, in groups, and

trying to internalize what you learn. Trying to reach a point where we acknowledge that what the Rebbe says is utter truth that must be realized as the Rebbe said. That it can't be otherwise. And this can't be superficial but internalized.

Every horaa of the Rebbe needs to be related to with the utmost seriousness. If we don't live with it, that's a sign that we don't believe it with a p'nimius. We need to review what the Rebbe said, especially what he said in the last years, and get rid of any blemish in our faith. Our faith must be *glatt*.

The "not doing" is defined in the kuntres "All who go out to the war of the House of Dovid." This is a maamer of the Rebbe Rashab which was said to the talmidim of



Rabbi Yisroel Halperin

Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch. The Rebbe Rashab speaks of two fifty-year periods of war. In the first yovel, they will fight against those who "mock, Your enemies Hashem." This refers to fighting Haskala and Reform, which fought against the fulfillment of mitzvos. In the second yovel,

there is a war against "those who mock the footsteps of Your anointed one." This refers to religious Jews, even the ultra-Orthodox who keep Torah and mitzvos, who fight against the belief in Moshiach.

Parenthetically, the Rebbe said on Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sara 5745 that this kuntres was an open prophecy of the Rebbe Rashab. At the time he said the maamer, nobody could have imagined that there would come a day in which strictly observant Jews would have a weak belief in Moshiach and would fight against those who believe!

In that amazing kuntres, the Rebbe Rashab details the strategy of the army of the House of Dovid, the criteria which determine the profile of a soldier in this spiritual army. The Rebbe Rashab says that the number one problem in spiritual training is: *hanachos ha'olam* (worldly assumptions). When you accept worldly assumptions – not necessarily invalid assumptions that contradict the spirit of Torah, but assumptions that are anchored in the world of Torah and which get a seal of kashrus – you lose the spiritual aptitude to influence the world.

## IF YOU ARE MEKABEL, YOU CANNOT BE MASHPIA!

The word *olam* (world) is from the Hebrew root *helem* (concealment). There is a Talmudic principle that says as long as something is giving forth it cannot simultaneously be absorbing something. Spiritually speaking, as long as you are busy being mashpia, you are not being mekabel. The converse is also true. As long as you are absorbing from the world that conceals, you can't influence the world with the G-dly

***If he went to that same forum and immediately resolved to talk to them about the B'suras HaGeula without considering how they would react, just talking from his heart – what he said is accepted almost without any opposition. He was dumbfounded by the results. The only explanation is that when you operate based on the Rebbe's horaos, the Rebbe helps things be accepted.***

light, surely not the light of Moshiach, *oros d'Tohu*. When you accept worldly assumptions, since the mekabel is subservient to that which is mashpia on him, it is not possible to simultaneously influence the world with G-dly light. It's just impossible.

It's a subtle problem and many people fail to identify it in time and

get caught in it. There are innocent people who fail to grasp this idea: *if you are mekabel from the world's assumptions, you cannot be mashpia!* As soon as you are mekabel from the world of concealment, you cannot have the emuna p'shuta which is way above the darkness of galus.

Let's look at ourselves. Where do we go? How do we dress? How do we speak? What's our style of talking? What messages are we exposed to on a daily basis? If in all these areas we are influenced by the foolishness of the world, that spells doom to our pure faith.

Chazal say that when we are in a situation of *g'zeiros shmad* (decrees against religious observance) then we need to be extra zealous, to the extent that even if the gentiles wear shoelaces of a certain color, we cannot wear that color shoelace. Today, when emuna is so vital, we are in a state of *g'zeiros shmad* against emuna and we have to be extra zealous. Nothing can enter our house that represents the assumptions of the world.

Many of us are exposed to the ways of the world from working at a Chabad house and similar activities. True, the Rebbe directs us to use all technological means to disseminate Judaism, but we must be extremely careful that these tools are used exclusively for outreach and not, G-d forbid, as something that ends up influencing us in negative ways.

As I mentioned earlier, the direct way to pure faith is through learning the Rebbe's sichos. Learning refines the person who learns, and when the learning focuses on inyanei Geula and Moshiach, the person begins to see Geula in the world.

Whoever works on influencing others certainly has dozens of examples that prove that when you

operate according to the Rebbe's guidelines, with utmost confidence, what you say is accepted.

In 5761, dozens of mekuravim and I went to the Rebbe for Tishrei. One of them decided that when he returned home he would begin keeping a fully observant life and would grow a beard and say Chitas and Rambam. He also decided to devote himself fully to publicizing the B'suras HaGeula.

For his work he often sits on very distinguished panels in circles where intellect rules the heart and at first it was very hard for him to stick to his resolution to publicize the B'suras HaGeula. After a number of attempts, he came to me and said in amazement that when he went somewhere and wondered how what he would say would be received and only then did he decide to speak, the results demonstrated that he would have been better off not talking. However, if he went to that same forum and immediately resolved to talk to them about the B'suras HaGeula without considering how they would react, just talking from his heart – what he said is accepted almost without any opposition. He was dumbfounded by the results. The only explanation is that when you operate based on the Rebbe's horaos, the Rebbe helps things be accepted.

If we open our eyes we will see the myriad miracles taking place. It's simply amazing how much the Rebbe is involved with every aspect of our lives. We have to respond in kind and instill the Rebbe in every area of our lives.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF ACHDUS**

The best gift we can give the Rebbe at this time is achdus. In the last sichos we heard from the Rebbe, the Rebbe emphasized the importance of achdus as a

preparation for the true and complete Redemption.

A quarrel needs two sides. A person can't be in an argument by himself. If we decided that we are not fighting, there won't be fights.

\* \* \*

Some families in Hertzliya asked me to organize a Shabbaton for them. Organizing a Shabbaton is a lot of work, but after I saw how much they wanted it, I looked for a suitable venue and we went to Miron. I wrote to the Rebbe about it and asked for his bracha. I asked what I should do on this Shabbos. The Rebbe's answer in the *Igros Kodesh* had explicit instructions about spreading Judaism especially among the youth and emphasized that there is a lot of work to do in this area.

In our group, which numbered close to fifty people, there were fifteen adult males and we held our minyan at the gravesite of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. That Shabbos there were hundreds of Chassidim from other Chassidic groups in

Miron, and our little group would have gone unnoticed if not for our Yechi yarmulkes.

We davened Mincha of Erev Shabbos and then proclaimed Yechi. If you know the chevra from Hertzliya, you know that their Yechi reverberated throughout the tziyun of Rashbi. The hundreds of Chassidim present were stunned by it.

Since we had no place to sit, we gathered on the steps that lead up to the second floor and we began learning *Torah Ohr*. We learned with a Lubavitcher chayus, making quite an impression on the Chassidim present. Some of them stood by and listened.

In the meantime, a room cleared out and when we finished learning we were able to daven Kabbalas Shabbos in that room including a Yechi-dance after Lecha Dodi and after the davening. This time we weren't alone; a few Chassidim joined us.

The next morning we managed to get a bench in the center and we began learning Chassidus. We

learned with such a chayus that by the end of the maamer there were many people listening in. For each one of us there were at least three Chassidim listening closely to Divrei Elokim Chaim.

Later in the afternoon, when I reviewed the maamer, "L'Havin Inyan Rashbi," many more people came to listen. I didn't hear complaints from a single one of them about Lubavitch. On the contrary, at the end of the maamer, when we proclaimed Yechi, I couldn't help but notice some of them proclaiming it along with us.

I will conclude as I began: when we believe with emuna shleima in everything the Rebbe said, especially the B'suras HaGeula and the Goel, in a way of "I am extrapolating this from the verse" without kuntzin and politics, then we will surely immediately merit to see it all with our physical eyes. And all the nations of the world will proclaim: *Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed!*



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# THE KGB SUPERVISED BOOK FAIR

By Avrohom Reinitz

***For two weeks, R' Hillel Zaltzman and R' Moshiach Chudaitov manned a book stall under the auspices of Chamah, at an international book fair that took place in Moscow. \* An exciting episode about spreading Judaism in an original way under the watchful eyes of Sasha and Pasha, two KGB agents who not only did not interfere but helped them spread Judaism!***

## RETURNING TO THE LION'S DEN?

It was an ordinary summer in 1989. In the course of my work for Chamah I met with a lawyer by the name of Martin Levine for the purpose of getting him interested in our work on behalf of Russian Jews and asking him for a donation. As with every meeting like this one, I told him about how Chamah came to be founded, the underground work in the early years, and the large scale work being done in Eretz Yisroel and the United States. I

mentioned that we were involved in publishing books in Russian and even produced a monthly publication in Russian that was distributed within Russia.

When he heard that we were involved in publishing Russian-language books, his face lit up. It turned out that in addition to his work as a lawyer, he dedicated his time to organizing international book fairs and just at that time he was working on a book fair that would be taking place in Moscow.

The fairs took place once every few years in various countries and

had even taken place in Moscow. After that fair, he said, those who published Jewish books left them in Moscow and brought joy to thousands of Jews throughout the Soviet Union. This is why he chose to hold the fair in Moscow again, in order to be able to leave thousands of s'farim there afterwards.

He suggested that we participate in the fair and offer Jewish books translated into Russian and then leave some of the books behind. I was surprised at this suggestion and accepted it with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I was thrilled with the idea of disseminating Jewish books in Moscow at an international book fair. It sounded like a dream. Could there be a bigger hafatza of Judaism?

On the other hand, I was very apprehensive. Eighteen years had passed since I had left Russia and I was still fearful of the communist regime. Although I hadn't snuck out as those Chassidim did in 1946-7, and my leaving Russia was perfectly legal and they merely stripped me of my Soviet citizenship (something which I did not regret), still... To go back there and disseminate Jewish books in Russian, Nigleh and Chassidus? It entailed going back into the lion's den, where I had been persecuted for many years and from where I had yearned to escape.

If this idea had been suggested to me a few years earlier, I would have absolutely rejected it. But at this time, winds of progress and openness began to blow in Russia. Gorbachev, who had risen to power a few years earlier, was using terms like *glasnost* (openness), *perestroika* (rebuilding) and other nice words that hinted at a new era. Even though Gorbachev took steps to build up trust with the Western countries, many didn't believe him and said he was merely preparing his next trap. After all, it was the Soviet Union...

I personally believed that Gorbachev wanted change and that was he going to try and make it happen. I remembered the period when Khrushchev rose to power and after he exposed all of Stalin's brutality he released most of the political prisoners. That's when I understood that in the Soviet Union you couldn't change things from the bottom-up. Demonstrations and protests wouldn't change anything and would only lead to arrests. But when someone on top decided to change, it was definitely possible.

The day would come, I thought, when an intelligent person would rise to power who appreciated the culture and ideology of the West, and he would bring about change. So when Gorbachev announced his goal of change and openness and people said he was a Russian trickster, I believed that he would make a revolution. I didn't care what his reasons for change were; the main things were freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

I was so enthusiastic about the possibility of change in Russia that I wrote the Rebbe that to the best of my understanding, the situation in Russia was improving. If in the fifties and sixties you could only dream of shlichim to Russia, at this time (in the early eighties) there were Chabad Chassidim who went to the Soviet Union under the auspices of Ezras Achim. They met with Jews and gave shiurim in private homes and brought s'farim and religious items.

In my opinion, I wrote to the Rebbe, we would soon be able to send shlichim to Russia for an extended period of time and young Lubavitchers should be



prepared for this so they would be ready when the time came. The Rebbe did not respond to this letter but baruch Hashem, what I wrote about came true.

I was in Martin Levine's office and I continued mulling things over. I remembered how we jealously eyed the few tourists who came to Russia. We were afraid to talk to them lest we be accused of ties with the West and betraying the motherland, but we were so envious of them. We thought: if only it were possible to get into their suitcases and cross the border. Tourists represented happiness and freedom to us. Today, he's here. Tomorrow, he's there. As for us, we are locked up here and who knows if we'll ever be able to get out.

Now I was being asked to go there, to return as a tourist. I would be a free citizen with American citizenship. Furthermore, I would be going to publicize Judaism in the center of Moscow in the most exclusive venue in that country: the All-Russian Exhibition Center in the restricted VDNH section of the city.

I so wanted to go but I was terrified! Then I reminded myself, why vacillate and worry when there's a Rebbe! We would write to the Rebbe and ask for his opinion and do as he said.

I thanked Martin Levine for his offer and asked him for details about the exhibit. I let him know that before giving him an answer I had to ask the Rebbe.

I wrote the details of the offer and included my doubts and submitted the letter to the Rebbe. To my great surprise, I received a positive, encouraging answer within a short time. The Rebbe was in favor of the trip! There is no joy like resolving doubts and I can't describe how thrilled I was after I got this positive answer. Nobody could understand how I felt then.

I immediately informed Martin

Levine that we were ready to be a part of the book fair and he included us on the list. We began getting ready for the trip. R' Moshiach Chudaitov joined me on the trip and we had to buy tickets, arrange for a hotel, etc. At the travel agency they told us that the only hotel we could stay at was the world-famous Rossiya Hotel, which was located opposite the Kremlin and was about a ten-minute walk from the main shul on Archipova Street. According to the exchange rate at the time which was 65 kopeks to the dollar, we paid \$119 a day for the hotel.

Many years later, after the Soviet Union collapsed, I went to Moscow with distinguished guests and we invited a professional guide to show us around. When we got near the Kremlin, the guide pointed at the Rossiya Hotel and said that this was the only hotel approved for important foreign tourists since all the rooms were bugged.

When an international convention of communist party leaders took place, they were assigned to this hotel and after they left, the KGB would work for months to listen and decipher all the conversations the guests had had during the course of the convention.

## **FIVE YEARS PACKED INTO ONE HANDOUT**

While preparing for the trip, we received an invitation to a special meeting with the Israeli consul in New York with all the participants in the book fair from the United States. The consul briefed us on how to behave in the Soviet Union, how to beware of the KGB, etc. I heard it all and laughed to myself. He's here to teach me how to act in the Soviet Union?

The consul said each stall should prepare a souvenir/handout that would be given to whoever visited the stall during the fair. I liked the idea and wanted to think up

something with a Jewish-educational message.

On Shabbos, when your head is free of weekday concerns, you get terrific ideas that you don't come up with during the week. Shabbos morning on my way to the mikva, I came up with an idea for an original Jewish handout: a small card with a five-year calendar with Jewish holidays. I could picture the card and next to each holiday the dates, the history, and halachos that pertained.

When I presented the idea to my friends, I said that in order to enable the calendar to "pass," we would have to include the Russian national holidays so it wouldn't look overtly religious but cultural. I said jokingly, you'll see that before five years are up, all these holidays will be no more.

On the other side of the card which was pocket-sized, we printed the Alef-Beis in print and cursive writing with nekudos and a few rules for reading. I knew that there were many young people in the Soviet Union who did not know of the existence of the Alef-Beis. I wanted this card to create awareness and longing and urge them to search further.

We found a special person who paid for the printing of the card and we printed close to 200,000 of them with lamination. We were unable to send all of them to the book fair in Moscow and we sent only 60,000 in 25 boxes. At the small stall we ordered for the fair there wasn't room for all the cards.

We asked the Hebrew Book Association, which agreed to take 15 boxes and store them at their stall. At our stall we had another ten boxes. The rest remained in New York and over the years we were able to send all 200,000 cards to the Soviet Union.

After the fair hundreds of additional cards remained in



***To our great surprise, Pasha, who had remained at the stand to supervise things, was a great help. Not only did he not interfere but he guided us and helped us in several ways. It was just unbelievable! A KGB agent helped us disseminate Torah and Judaism in the Soviet Union!***

the farbrengen, the Rebbe gave us a bottle of mashke along with a bracha for a successful trip. This served both to calm us and uplift us.

### **THE KGB VISIT OUR STAND**

The official opening of the fair was on a Tuesday but we had to be there on Monday in order to get the delivery we had sent and to set up the stall. We left the Thursday before and arrived in Moscow Erev Shabbos. The Rossiya Hotel where we stayed was huge and occupied an entire block.

After we arranged our belongings at the hotel, we called the American embassy and told

them that we had come from New York to take part in the international book fair. We explained that we were former Russian citizens and we were nervous. They took all our information and this made us feel secure.

On Shabbos we walked to the shul on Archipova Street and I felt spiritually elated.

On Monday we went to where the exhibition was going to be held. In order to describe how big the area was, I'll tell you that in order to get from building to building there was a small train for the visitors. We got on the train at the entrance and ten minutes later we were at our building.

The building was very large and you could get lost among the stalls. It was difficult locating our tiny stall, #429. It was almost invisible near the stands of Norway, Sweden and Denmark and other Scandinavian countries.

All sorts of official people circulated at the fair including organizers of the exhibit and the police in uniform and plain clothes, as well as KGB agents of course.

When we got to our stand, we saw that our stuff had been delivered. Before we opened the boxes three men in plain clothes came in. They looked around and after a minute, one left. We didn't know who these two men were who came to visit us. Were they organizers of the event or members of the secret service of the KGB? They were polite and they asked whether we had gotten everything. We told them that we hadn't opened the boxes yet and they said they would return shortly.

We opened the boxes and saw that the tapes hadn't arrived. We knew that in Russia this was standard practice and we assumed that the customs agents wanted them. We were upset about this because music can contribute a lot

to the atmosphere of a stall but we didn't dare to complain. We were satisfied that all the books had arrived.

As they promised, after we finished unpacking the boxes the two guys came back. They introduced themselves as Sasha and Pasha and said they would be with us throughout the exhibit. After they looked around and saw what we had unpacked, they began questioning us about who we are and what is Chamah.

We told them that Chamah is a Jewish organization whose purpose is to publicize Judaism wherever Jews are. They asked why we had set up a separate stand and hadn't sent representatives to the Hebrew Book Association, and we said that we were an organization that worked with Russian Jews and we felt we needed to be represented separately.

They moved on to deep questions, like what was Chamah's relationship with the demonstrations that took place in the West to promote Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. We said that our goal was to publicize Jewish culture and religion and we had nothing to do with demonstrations.

They asked us about Chamah's connection to Lubavitch. In accordance with instructions we had received from the Rebbe, we said that Chamah is an independent organization although we were closely acquainted with the Lubavitch movement, which is a movement whose only goal is to be mekarev Jews to Judaism with no political aims. They seemed to accept this and they said, "Yes, we know..." In the meantime, they saw the *Alef Magazine* and asked: Did you bring this? You publish this? We said yes and we asked: How do you know about *Alef*? They said, "We know."

Naturally, after questions like

those, as well as the way they spoke, it was clear to us that they were KGB agents. When they finished questioning us they said: Tomorrow is opening day and many people will come here. We will come and help you.

We were not thrilled by this. We had known we would be under KGB surveillance but we didn't imagine that we would have to host them at our stand all day! We tried to dissuade them and said we hadn't advertised in any media and we assumed that only a few people who were passing by would stop at our stall. However, they said: Don't worry, they'll find you!

In the meantime we set our books up on shelves, put a tallis over the refrigerator so the tzitzis hung on all sides and hung Jewish signs and pictures all over. Before they left we politely complained to them about the missing tapes. They asked: Do you have a tape recorder that would work on Russian wiring? Maybe we should bring you a tape?

I thought: That's all we need...

I said: Thanks, but we brought a transformer from the US and we think it will work. Sasha, who was in charge, said: As far as the tapes, don't worry about it. We'll bring them tomorrow.

We realized that Sasha wasn't a low-level employee but someone with connections both at the fair and at customs. I decided to bribe him. Since his red face indicated that he liked to drink, I asked his friend Pasha what Sasha liked to drink. He said: The quality doesn't matter, only the quantity.

That day we went to the department store that was for tourists only where they paid in foreign currency. They sold nice alcoholic beverages that were unavailable to the Russian citizen. We bought a big bottle of whiskey for Sasha.

We went back to the hotel with

mixed feelings. On the one hand, we were nervous about the presence of the KGB. On the other hand, I was excited about the opportunity of spreading Torah and Chassidus within Soviet Russia. All my fears from before the trip dissipated. Even when I was afraid that they would arrest us, I calmed myself with the thought that they wouldn't dare do that to American citizens for more than a few days.

Moshiach Chudaitov was more realistic and he said: You don't realize who you're dealing with here. It's the same KGB with the same methods.

## THE KGB AGENT ADVERTISED JUDAISM

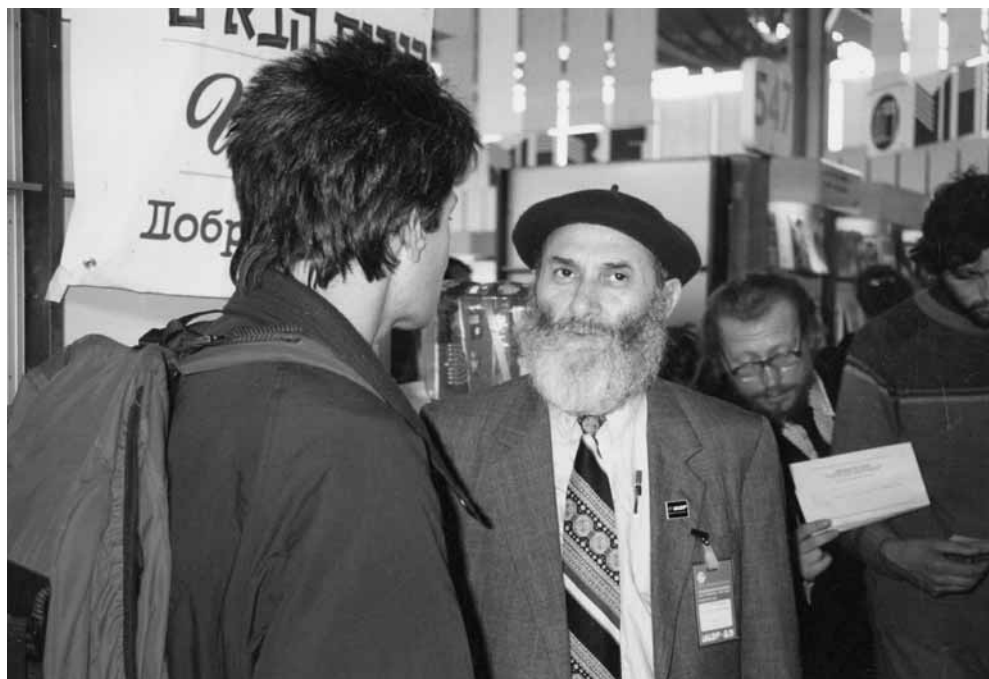
It was opening day and although we rushed to get there when the fair began at ten o'clock, we were a few minutes late. We entered the building where our stall was located and the place was crowded with hundreds of people. We got a bit lost trying to find our little stall. Then in the distance we saw a large crowd near one of the small stands.

We went to see what was happening there and to our surprise we saw the number 429 over the people's heads. That was our stall!

From a distance we saw Sasha motioning to us to come quickly and he called out: They're coming!

A path opened up and we entered the stall. You cannot imagine how amazed and thrilled we were. As soon as we walked in, Sasha gave us the missing tapes. We tried putting a tape into the tape recorder and we connected it to the electricity with a transformer but it didn't work. Sasha saw we had a problem and he said: Don't worry. I'll bring you a tape recorder that works with the local wiring. He ran somewhere and within half an hour he returned with a working tape recorder. We put a tape in with Chassidic music and the atmosphere at the stall became festive.

In the meantime, we took out the souvenir cards and the dreidels with the instructions for the game and began giving them out to dozens of people. People were pushing and all tried to enter the stall to see th



***What can happen already? If they arrest us, it will make a commotion and we will be released within days. But if Jews put on t'fillin, certainly the mitzva of t'fillin will stand by them and nothing will happen to them.***

so maybe you don't care if he takes one, but you have to stamp the cover because on their way out of the exhibit, they check people. If your stamp isn't there, they can detain him for stealing.

During the fair we were able to give away dozens of Jewish books to visitors at our stall so that by the last day, we had hardly any books left on the shelves.

As Sasha and Pasha anticipated, hordes of Jews came to our stall; hundreds every day. I looked around me and saw larger and nicer stalls belonging to the Scandinavian countries that were frequented by only a few people. It was amazing to see how Jews were inspired by Jewish items. They were indifferent to the attractiveness of the other stalls and their souls were drawn to our stall.

The calendar and dreidels also increased our popularity since, of all the stalls, ours was the only one that

gave out souvenirs to visitors.

Moshiach and I couldn't deal with all the visitors when many of them wanted to discuss Judaism. At the same time, we wanted to give out the dreidels and calendars. Pasha came to our aid and he gave out the souvenirs. It happened that visitors came from distant cities and Pasha asked them whether he could give them some dreidels and calendars so they could give them to their friends who hadn't come to the fair.

Of course we agreed, figuring that when that Jew went back to his town and told about his visit to our stall at the book fair and would give out the souvenirs, it would bring about a spiritual revival.

As I mentioned earlier, I hadn't managed to print many copies of the dreidel game in Russian and we soon ran out of copies. Pasha came to our aid once again and showed us where we could make additional

books. To our great surprise, Pasha, who had remained at the stand to supervise things, was a great help. Not only did he not interfere but he guided us and helped us in several ways. It was just unbelievable! **A KGB agent** helped us disseminate Torah and Judaism in the Soviet Union!

For example, when the pushing began, Pasha warned us: Only allow in groups of ten at a time; otherwise you won't be able to watch everyone and they will steal your books. Within a few days you won't have any books left.

Since one of our goals was to leave some of the Jewish books in Moscow, we hinted to some of the visitors that they could take some books. One time, Pasha noticed that someone had taken a book from the shelf and put it in his pocket. He came over to me and said: I see that you have many copies of that book

## AT THE FAIR

During the fair some interesting things happened:

A woman came over and asked: Do you have the "New Testament"? I said that I didn't understand what she was asking. She repeated her question and I sensed that she was a Jew who knew nothing. I told her: There is only one testament and that is the Torah of G-d, the Torah of the Jewish people!

Some people stood around me and nodded at my answer and said: There is only one covenant and that is the Torah. I said to the woman: you have to know that there is only one covenant, the Torah given by G-d. The so-called "New Testament" is something people made up.

One day, a Jew came by who introduced himself as a Jew for J. He offered us books on Christianity. I asked him: Did you ever learn Torah in the original? He said he had learned Torah in Russian translation. I told him: Learn Torah in the original, in Hebrew, and you will see how inaccurate the translation you read is. Since I didn't have time for a long conversation with him, I gave him the book on the Ramban's Debate that Chamah had recently translated into Russian and recommended that he read it.

Ten years later, someone by the name of Moshe (Leonid) came to our office in New York and asked for Chamah's help. He began telling his life story and I was amazed to hear him say that he had become a baal t'shuva and the turning point in his life began after he went to the book fair in Moscow where he had been given the Ramban's Debate.



**Rabbi Zaltzman talking to a visitor to the booth**



**The boxes of souvenirs in front of the stall and the tallis covering the refrigerator**

copies. Since I had printed the instructions on half a page, we printed them twice per page and the pages had to be cut. Pasha did this for us as we continued to distribute them.

Many of the visitors realized who Pasha represented and whom he worked for. They thought we didn't know and tried to hint to us that he was from the KGB and we should watch out. We told them that we knew but times had changed. They considered us naïve and said: You left twenty years ago and have forgotten but we don't believe that they can change.

I was so involved with the many visitors and the conversations I had with them that I forgot to eat. It was late and Pasha came to me and offered to buy me lemonade. He

said: You have nothing to worry about. There's nothing not-kosher about it.

I was amazed by his openness and knowledge and decided to ask him openly: How long have you been working for this department (i.e., the Jewish department of the KGB)? He said, two years.

At the end of the day, as we closed our stall, we saw R' Yaakov Kritchevsky in the distance who had come to the fair with the Israeli delegation. R' Yaakov was older than us but we were friends from before we left Russia and we were happy to talk to him. We exchanged impressions of the fair. I suddenly noticed people congregating around our stall and I rushed over. Pasha came out and apologized: People came from far away and they were late for the fair and found your stall closed. I didn't want to disappoint them and so I gave them some souvenir cards and dreidels.

## MIVTZA T'FILLIN IN MOSCOW

When we returned to the hotel I couldn't sleep since I was so wound up by the events of the day. I felt it was a unique opportunity, maybe once in a lifetime, to spread Judaism in Russia, and with the help of the KGB no less. I recalled that the Rebbe Rashab said that in these generations, the world is compared to a wedding feast and you have to grab as many mitzvos as possible. I thought: What else can I do? I suddenly thought of the idea of bringing my t'fillin to the stall and offering visitors the opportunity to put on t'fillin.

When I made this suggestion to Moshiach he was shocked. This was religious propaganda in the heart of Moscow! The KGB agents were there with us all day and we would be endangering the visitors.

I don't know from where I got the strength but I said: What can

happen already? If they arrest us, it will make a commotion and we will be released within days. But if Jews put on t'fillin, certainly the mitzva of t'fillin will stand by them and nothing will happen to them.

In Chassidus we learn that the mind has to rule the heart, but I think that what happened there in Moscow was the absolute rule of the heart over the mind. I didn't think much. I worked according to my Chassidic feelings and the excitement I felt.

The next day we took our t'fillin along. When we got to the stall we took them out and raised them up high and offered people to put them on. The first person who came over and asked: "What's that?" was Pasha.

I told him they were called t'fillin. I translated that into Russian. I wanted to explain why they were called *t'fillin* in Lashon HaKodesh, but he asked: Is it from the same root as *t'filla*? I was flabbergasted by his knowledge of Hebrew and since we had become friendly, I hugged him excitedly and asked: Hey Pasha, you know Hebrew? Pasha said, Yes, I'm learning it.

It was the first time in my life that I felt so happy that I was sure that everyone in the world could envy me. I was standing in the center of Moscow, surrounded by communist police, with a KGB agent in charge, and was involved in Mivtza T'fillin! It was surrealistic – there in the center of the international book fair in Moscow, a public place, stood Jews in line, rolling up their sleeves for t'fillin.

While we were putting on t'fillin, a Belzer Chassid showed up who had come as a representative of an American book publisher at the Hebrew Book Association stall. When he saw us busy, he simply couldn't get over it and he began shouting in excitement, "*Vos iz dos? In Moscva!?*"



## MINCHA IN THE ROOM OF THE EDITOR OF OGONYOK

Many gentiles also visited the stall. It wasn't that Judaism interested them much; they wanted to interact with people from the West. Because the Soviet Union was a virtual prison, its citizens thirsted to know what was going on in western countries. Among our visitors were people from the weekly communist paper for youth, *Ogonyok*. Twenty million copies were printed and disseminated all over the Soviet Union.



The editor of *Ogonyok*  
visiting the Rebbe

They were excited to speak to us and when they heard that we published a magazine they offered to arrange a meeting with their editor-in-chief, Mr. Victor Korotich. In their attempts to persuade us to attend the meeting, they promised that when we would go to the newspaper's office, they would show us restricted video clips of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin and a video excerpt of the communist convention with the participation of Neo-Nazis and anti-Semites. Mr. Korotich was a liberal by nature and he fought anti-Semitism.

We accepted their offer and went to their offices. Mr. Korotich was not in the office at the time and we waited for him. It got late and we had to daven Mincha. Since there was an atmosphere of openness in Russia at that time, we dared to ask for permission to daven Mincha in the editor's office. They were happy to grant it and even asked us to pray for them that they succeed in their public work on behalf of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. I thought, certainly no Jew had ever davened Mincha in the offices of the editor of *Ogonyok* before!

He did not end up showing up that day and his men arranged another meeting for the following day. This time I went alone and Moshiach stayed at the fair. The editor welcomed me with open admiration and I interviewed him for our publication. During the interview I asked him what his opinion was about the political changes taking place and he said they had to fight for freedom of religion and freedom of speech.

A year and a half later, on 11 Tishrei 5751, Professor Branover brought Mr. Korotich for "dollars." Prof. Branover introduced him by saying: Although he is not Jewish, but Ukrainian, he fights against anti-Semitism.

"I myself was in Russia," said the Rebbe, "and I was a reader of *Ogonyok*, but many things have changed, seemingly for the better, since then. You are one of those who has the power to make the change to illuminate with the fire that is in your hands and to see to it that the fire is not a consuming fire but a fire that gives the strength to reach greater heights and bring good news.

"Hashem should help that you don't need to fight but the government itself will help you. There are good indications that the government is changing fundamentally regarding these matters (Jewish tradition) and not only does it not interfere, but it even helps."

He left and within a few minutes he had returned with some reporters from CBS. They were also amazed by this unusual sight in the Soviet Union and they immediately set up a camera and began videotaping the scene. They also interviewed us.

The following morning we got a phone call from friends in New York. They told us excitedly that they had seen the popular program *Good Morning America*, where they had given the book fair three minutes. Two of those minutes showed the t'fillin at our stall with a short interview with us.

The outstanding success of the previous day with the t'fillin had gotten me even more enthusiastic. I thought: A Jew does not stand still. You have to move forward. What am I doing tomorrow better than yesterday?

In the morning I told Moshiach my idea. We would take the bottle of mashke we had gotten from the Rebbe and give it out to the visitors as "mashke from the Rebbe." We would tell them that since it was Elul, we were giving out mashke to salute the New Year.

At first we were very nervous. Just a short while before, Gorbachev had spoken against drinking alcoholic beverages in public places because in Russia, gentiles got drunk and didn't work properly. How could we do this near the police and KGB?

Once again, the fire of Chassidus won the day. We brought the bottle of mashke and told visitors that the Lubavitcher Rebbe gave this mashke for the Jews of the Soviet Union. We told them about the Rebbe and they all said "mezonos" on the cookies that we brought from New York and l'chaim on the Rebbe's mashke.

We wished them all blessings for the New Year in the name of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Some women had come with little children. We gave them only mezonos and it was

touching to see these Jewish women enjoying hearing their children repeat the bracha after them, word by word. This was all in the presence of Pasha, the KGB man. What we experienced in those days was just incredible.

## A MOVING DRASHA IN THE MAIN SHUL

According to the schedule, the fair was supposed to end on Monday of the following week. Of course our stall would not be open on Shabbos but since we knew that many Jews would be visiting the fair on Shabbos, we decided to spread Judaism through the closed stall.

Friday afternoon, we closed the stall as usual and inside we set up a small table with a bottle of wine and challos covered by a nice challa cover. We hung up a sign that said: On Shabbos we don't work.

Since we had to walk a ways to get to the shul, we walked there on Shabbos morning wrapped in our talleisim as people do in Crown Heights and Kfar Chabad. Our excitement overcame all our fears. We figured that since an international event was taking place in Moscow that Jews were participating in, many young people would be attending the main shul, knowing that guests from abroad would be there.



A Belzer Chassid filming at the book fair



Rabbi Zaltzman putting t'fillin on with a visitor to the booth

Indeed, as we approached the shul, we saw dozens of young people standing outside the shul listening to Jewish music. We thought how sad it was that they wanted to see Jews from another world and went to shul for that reason, but they didn't know you can't use a tape recorder on Shabbos.

Throughout the davening, I thought of what could be done to help these young people. I went over to one of the gabbaim whom I had been friendly with before the davening, and I said I was a guest from the United States and I wanted to address the crowd. He agreed but he said I had to speak in Russian or I wouldn't be understood. I agreed.

I thought about how to get the young people into the shul. I asked Moshe Chaim Levin to call them in so they could hear the drasha. Within a short time, the shul was full of young Jews. It was Shabbos Parshas Ki Savo and I reviewed the Rebbe's sicha on "*reishis arisoseichem*" that Jews need to devote their first years to matters of holiness.

"This is the lesson that we must instill in our children, in our grandchildren, who are so precious to us, to dedicate them to matters of Judaism and holiness," I said passionately. "Now, as Russia is speaking about openness, a new era and democracy, there are more opportunities to dedicate the lives of young people to Torah and mitzvos."

The enormous excitement of the crowd, many of whom who had been moved to tears, had an effect on me and inspired me in return. I got off the bima with tears in my eyes.

I would sum up my trip to Moscow as follows: For the nearly two weeks that we were in Moscow, my fear dissipated and I acted as though I was in New York. I never felt such a powerful spiritual inspiration. In this article I tried to describe it a little bit but writing does not do justice to emotions. I can only say this, that in those two weeks I lived and felt the Chassidic saying, "standing a handbreadth above the ground." That is how I felt.

# BEGINNING WITH WORDS OF MATERIAL BLESSINGS

By Boruch Merkur

***“Since also ‘their bodies are holy,’ it is understood that the benefit that comes in the merit of the daughter of the leader of our generation is not only relevant to matters of the soul but also (in fact, first and foremost) relevant to matters of the body and individual concerns.” \* Tracing the Rebbe MH”M’s instructions on how to perfect our Divine service in the Final Era.***

## A NEW ERA BEGINS WITH A BLESSING

Upon the completion of the *Shiva*, the first seven days of mourning, the Rebbe spoke,<sup>23</sup> beginning with words of blessings, explaining that

“At the beginning of a new period or a new concept and the like, the Torah says that there must be ‘opening with a blessing’<sup>24</sup> ... How much more so when the new period follows the *Shiva*<sup>25</sup> and from now on ‘they shall have no further worry at all,’<sup>26</sup> only consolation, ‘Just goodness and

kindness,’<sup>27</sup> goodness that is apparent and revealed.”

The Rebbe speaks about the beginning of a “new period,” ostensibly referring to the stage that follows the *Shiva* in the custom of mourning, and the blessings he proceeds to impart are in response to all the blessings and consolation granted the mourner, the Rebbe, throughout the *Shiva*. However, in retrospect, knowing that four years later, on the Rebbetzin’s *yahrzeit* in 5752, the Rebbe cites the Rebbetzin’s passing as the onset of the final stage in the Rebbe’s leadership, the final stretch leading up to the true and complete Redemption, there is no doubt that the blessings that follow in the address of 5748 have further reach, opening the final era with a blessing to provide the necessary strength to succeed in the final mission, fusing G-dliness with the world so thoroughly that no distinction is detected between material existence and the very Essence of G-d.

The blessings the Rebbe gives are truly profound. The Rebbe suggests that the blessings are coming from none other than G-d Himself: “...it states in legal rulings and so on, founded upon the Written Torah, that G-d blesses all those who bless [others]: ‘I will bless those who bless you,’<sup>28</sup> ‘all those who bless [others] are blessed’<sup>29</sup> with the blessing of the Holy One Blessed Be He, ‘from His full, open, holy, and broad hand.’”<sup>30</sup> And the Rebbe goes on to explain at some length the particular virtues of G-d’s blessings — how G-d’s blessings are quantitatively and

qualitatively superior, for example, and how they are quickly fulfilled. The blessings are particularly of note, the Rebbe explains, insofar as they arise in the merit of the holy Rebbetzin, daughter of the Rebbe Rayatz, “the leader of the generation.”<sup>31</sup> And the Rebbe concludes by saying that the blessing should extend to

“the particular matters of each and every Jew...as well as the general concern, the imminent true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach ...

“And also that in the final few moments prior to the Redemption, every single Jew should experience, ‘Just goodness and kindness,’ goodness that is apparent and revealed, both with regard to spiritual matters as well as material concerns.”

Thus, the Rebbe’s blessing is intended not only to hasten the Redemption, as well as the goodness that it entails for every individual Jew, but also to grant a smooth transition into Redemption, with blessings of “just goodness and kindness, etc.,” even prior to the actual Redemption.

### FIRST AND FOREMOST A BLESSING FOR MATERIAL MATTERS

The notion that the blessing is to apply “both with regard to spiritual matters as well as material concerns” is an appropriate segue into the Redemption, for the coming era promises a synthesis of both worlds. Spirituality no longer takes precedence over materiality. In fact, if there is any preference, it is on the side of the physical, as the Rebbe explains at length:

“...just as the Redemption from Exile is (primarily) with regard to bodily matters,<sup>32</sup> since the soul never went into exile – as is known from the statement of the leader of the generation,<sup>33</sup> the deceased’s father, in the name of his father, the Rebbe (Rashab), whose soul is in heaven – so too with regard to the bestowal of goodness and kindness in the last moments of Exile (as a preparation for the Redemption), the benefit must extend (not only to the spiritual concerns of the soul, but also and perhaps primarily) to the physical concerns of the body.

“And since not only are ‘their souls holy,’ but also ‘their bodies are holy’<sup>34</sup> ... it is understood that the benefit that comes in the merit of the deceased, the daughter of the leader of our generation, is not only relevant to matters of the soul but also (in fact, **first and foremost**<sup>35</sup>) relevant to matters of the body and individual concerns...and in a manner that is visible to our eyes of flesh, ‘pointing with one’s finger and saying “this.””

Given the inherent perfection of the soul, the main preparation for the Redemption is actually physical in nature. Thus, the blessings bestowed upon the Jewish people, at the very beginning of the Final Era, emphasize the primacy of the body, blessings that address our

material needs.

It is extremely difficult if not impossible to serve G-d properly when one experiences physical ailments and material insufficiencies, and therefore, health and an ample livelihood enables one to devote himself to G-d without distraction, etc. But perhaps there is an additional reason for the emphasis on “matters of the body and individual concerns,” independent of the concern of our service of G-d. That is, there must be the realization of blessings of material bounty simply as a preparation for the Redemption, initiating the transformation of the world we presently experience to one that resembles the future era, an era of material abundance and perfection.

### NOTES:

<sup>23</sup> *Seifer HaSichos 5748* Vol. 1, pg. 271 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Yerushalmi Chagiga 2:1; Zohar VaYigash, beg. See Footnote 1 in the original.

<sup>25</sup> See Footnote 2 in the original.

<sup>26</sup> Wording of Scripture: Yermiyahu 31:11.

<sup>27</sup> Wording of Scripture: T’hillim 23:6.

<sup>28</sup> Lech Lecha 12:3.

<sup>29</sup> See Sota 38b; Yerushalmi Brachos Ch. 8, end, cited in Tosafos, Chullin 49a, words beginning with “I will bless.”

<sup>30</sup> Third blessing of Grace After Meals.

<sup>31</sup> [The Rebbe MH”M views his own leadership as an extension of that of his father in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz.]

<sup>32</sup> Similarly with regard to the Era of the Resurrection of the Dead, for the concept of death is that the soul departs from the **body**, and in the time of the Resurrection also the body will live [again].

<sup>33</sup> The address of 3 Tammuz 5687, published in *Seifer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim* Vol. 1, pg. 175b and pg. 196, among other places.

<sup>34</sup> Zohar III 70b.

<sup>35</sup> To note that the Zohar quoted mentions “their bodies are holy” before “their souls holy.”

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# WINDING STRAPS IN THE ARTISTS' QUARTER

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

*After receiving his pension, he pondered on how he could fulfill his promise made during the height of the battle to spread G-dliness in the world. He decided to open an art gallery in the Old City of Tzfas, which would serve as a base to connect with Jewish tourists and visitors, and put t'fillin on with them. "My main thought focused on how to get as many Jews as possible on the Artists' Lane to put on t'fillin," says Rabbi Avraham Bar-Oner in a personal and moving interview.*

There is much nostalgic magic to be found in the crowded store of R. Avraham Bar-Oner of Tzfas. His shop is located on Artists' Lane

in the Old City of Tzfas, an attachment of attractive stone passageways and alleys, constituting a focal point that draws many

tourists from all over Eretz Yisroel and the world – and not necessarily for the Judaica items, jewelry, and pictures that are sold there.

With a warm and winning smile, even somewhat shy and reserved, and a full-bearded chassidic appearance, Rabbi Bar-Oner offers passers-by the opportunity to fulfill the mitzva of t'fillin. To the non-Jewish tourists and visitors, he hands them an informational brochure on the Seven Noachide Laws. It turns out that in this charming little nook, people who usually display alienation and detachment from Yiddishkait are influenced by the historic Jewish atmosphere of the Holy City of Tzfas, and they respond positively to his request.

Rabbi Bar-Oner has a strange and most unusual custom. After putting on t'fillin with someone or before he removes them, he asks the person to be photographed with him. Later, he will place the picture in the special database he has prepared on his computer. When we asked him to explain this custom, he smiled and gave a simple reply: "Just as I make an annual balance sheet as a shopkeeper, so too with my t'fillin activities. Every year, I try to put t'fillin on more people than the year before."

When Rabbi Bar-Oner speaks about quantity, one cannot fail to be amazed. According to his computations, he put t'fillin last year on 2,152 Jews! He writes a detailed report on the number of people that put on t'fillin and the special episodes he experienced, and submits it to the Rebbe by placing it a volume of *Igros Kodesh*. "You have to send a report to the m'shaleiach," he says with a modest smile.

It turns out that Rabbi Bar-Oner's customary reports to the Rebbe didn't start during the four years he has run his art gallery in

the Old City. At this point, we can begin telling his most remarkable and extraordinary life story.

Rabbi Bar-Oner was born on Kibbutz Kfar Glickson, joined the Israel Defense Forces as a paratrooper, and was wounded in a battle waged at Sinai Farm during the Yom Kippur War. At the height of the war, when he began to see miracles on the battlefield, he promised that if he would come out alive, he would return to the traditions of his people. He promised and he fulfilled. After he had come close to the light of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, he became a true chassid and established a chassidic family. Over the years, he served as personal secretary to the Rebbe's head shliach in Tzfas, Rabbi Aryeh Leib Kaplan, of blessed memory, and

among his responsibilities was to send regular weekly reports to the Rebbe.

I am quite certain that many people in the Chabad community of Tzfas simply don't know Rabbi Bar-Oner, a shy and introverted Jew who doesn't feel a need to stand out. However, it turns out that when it comes to matters pertaining to the Rebbe, he operates like a swift deer.

His great personal breakthrough came in his T'fillin Campaign activities. This began fifteen years ago with his participation in spreading the wellsprings of chassidus and the announcement of the Redemption at home games of the HaPoel Galil HaElyon basketball team at Kibbutz Kfar Blum, during their miraculous Premier League championship season. His second

breakthrough came when he went out to put t'fillin on thousands of IDF soldiers during the Second Lebanon War. He was everywhere with his pairs of t'fillin.

R. Avraham Bar-Oner spent the early years of his childhood with his Moroccan immigrant family on Kibbutz Kfar Glickson, located near Haifa. Despite the fact that his family descended from Torah scholars and great rabbis, it was specifically in Eretz Yisroel that the liberal kibbutz life managed to destroy their commitment to the path of their forefathers, and the children were educated like any other kibbutz member. Even when the family moved from the kibbutz and settled on Moshav Nativ HaShayara, they continued to conduct their lives with minimal traditional observance, except for



Receiving “kos shel bracha”  
from the Rebbe MH”M

fasting on Yom Kippur and token commemoration of the other Jewish holidays.

“One day, I discovered that we were descendants of Rabbi David ben Baruch, a great and prominent kabbalist in Morocco, in whose name dozens of synagogues for Moroccan émigrés in Eretz Yisroel are called. Regrettably, my family endured what thousands of other North African immigrant families endured, when they came to Eretz Yisroel and their Jewish roots were destroyed by the Israeli reality. I always had this investigative streak in me, trying to look at things from under their outer layer. When I was a boy, I remember situations when I thought to myself: How does the world exist? What is our mission in the world? When will it be possible to attain true satisfaction from our time in this world?”

“This entire process was one of self-searching. While this happened with most of my friends later in life, it began to develop with me during my early childhood. In 5733, I was inducted into the army, just as all my friends were. In which branch of the service? Naturally, the one where I’d see the most action. In those days, my friends and I had a lot of motivation, and I stubbornly asked to serve with the paratroopers, a select brigade that aroused much honor and admiration. A soldier who walked around with a red beret did so with his shoulders back and chest out, and received much adulation from all those around him. After the initial classification, I was sent to Platoon 890, then under the command of Mr. Yitzchak Mordechai.

“After a few months of back-breaking basic training, we were privileged to get a week’s furlough before we would return to the army as skilled fighters. The furlough was cut short after only two days with

the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. Even though I was not yet Torah observant, I decided to go to shul that night. Just as the Kol Nidrei prayers were beginning, my deputy commander came in and ordered me to get myself ready and be at the collection point within ten hours. When we got to the collection point, we didn’t know that war was about to start. We naively thought that we were about to go out on military operations behind enemy lines and utilize the techniques we had sharpened during the months of exhausting basic training.

“That very night, I appeared at our collection base at Beit Lid, where I met all the soldiers in my platoon, alert yet curious to know why we had been brought in so urgently. A few minutes later, when the commander came in to address the unit and started to instill some motivation within us, we understood that something was wrong. He then got right to the point and informed us that the Egyptians and the Syrians were about to attack. Already the very next day, we learned that the Egyptians had crossed the Suez Canal and the Syrians had taken Mt. Hermon. Our mission was to enter the Golan Heights and retake Mt. Hermon. At the last moment, just as we were boarding the northbound helicopters, the mission was cancelled and we traveled instead to Refidim at the border with Egypt.”

It seems that the many years that have passed since R. Avraham took part in that war have not dimmed the harsh visions and experiences that he endured on the battlefield. He sighs and goes to make a cup of herbal tea for each of us, and then he settles down with difficulty and begins to reveal his participation in one of the most dangerous battles in Israel’s military history – the battle

at Sinai Farm, where he lost most of his friends and commanders in the platoon. It appears that to this day, he has difficulty forgetting those blood-drenched hours when he and his friends turned into sitting ducks.

It was then in those hours filled with fear and dread, when most of his friends were killed or wounded, one after another right before his eyes, that he made the decision to return to the path of his Jewish tradition. He was unable to save his friends because they had been struck by Egyptian tank and artillery fire. When the war ended and the investigations began, it was discovered that Bar-Oner and his comrades were deliberately used as decoys to mislead the Egyptians, when they had no real chance of fighting back, as Ariel Sharon and his division retook the Suez Canal.

“We were unaware of the hard fighting and the numerous casualties that we had suffered on the battlefield. Back in those days, we were in a state of euphoria. The Israel Defense Forces was the strongest army in the Middle East, especially after the Six Day War and other retaliatory operations. We were only waiting for another opportunity to show our power to the world. I stubbornly went out to the frontline, despite the fact that I had just finished basic training. The commander saw that I was determined, and he agreed to relieve one soldier and put me in his place. Thus, we went out on two half-tracks behind the Akavish Route in Sinai, where we joined up with the troops of the Shaked reconnaissance patrol, which had already proceeded toward the Egyptians.

“During the night, some of the fiercest battles known in Israel’s military history had taken place there. Tanks against tanks. They managed to penetrate our tanks with direct hits. The situation was

not so simple. It was only then I began to realize that I was in the midst of a war where there was a serious chance I might not come back alive. The air was filled with fire, smoke, and the piercing screams of the wounded. There was great confusion that bloody night. The troops of the Shaked reconnaissance patrol were the first to move forward, and took the full force of the Egyptian firepower. All of their half-tracks, without exception, were severely damaged and most of their forces were killed.

“We were next in line to move

whenever he wanted. There was a sense of dread. We felt like cannon fodder. The rockets whizzed from every direction. Yet, out of this sense of blood-curdling uncertainty, there was first revealed within me the nekuda of faith in the Creator of the World.

“I made a vow that if I get off this battlefield alive, I will become a baal t’shuva and devote my entire life to G-d. At the moment that I finished making my vow, an Egyptian Sagger missile was fired and passed about three feet over our heads. We were sure that the

passed by us and absorbed the missile’s impact. It was a horrific scene. The entire tank crew was killed. I remember how the tank commander tried unsuccessfully to extricate himself from the burning tank with his last ounce of strength. These were sights that a person can never forget. It was only later that our armored tank divisions managed to cross the canal, detected the source of the artillery fire, and destroyed the Egyptian forces there. This adventure came at the cost of hundreds of our soldiers, and to this day, this battle arouses great debate over how critically important it was at that time.

“After breaking through the Suez, we traveled all night in the direction of Cairo. The Egyptian forces were in full retreat, and no one interfered with our forward progress. That morning, Cairo lay before us and our job was to reach Ismalia in order to catch the Egyptian commandos by surprise. According to our military intelligence, the commandos were waiting there, and it was our mission to take the ground.

“When we got there, I saw yet another miracle that clearly showed G-d is watching us. Just a moment after we nonchalantly got out of our vehicle, it was struck by a Sagger missile and exploded into fragments. I thought to myself at that moment that if we had been inside, it wouldn’t be hard to imagine what would have been left of us... The missile had exposed us out in the open, and we understood that despite the brilliant victories that had accompanied us in the last few hours, they wouldn’t let us off so easily here.

“Another bloody battle took place in this area, and many fine men in our platoon fell in the conflict. The backbone of our entire command was killed in the cornfields of Ismalia in our face-to-

***At the height of the war, when he began to see miracles on the battlefield, he promised that if he would come out alive, he would return to the traditions of his people. He promised and he fulfilled. After he had come close to the light of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, he became a true chassid and established a chassidic family.***

forward, and my vehicle was the first among the two that we had. It was at this point that I internalized and reconciled myself to the fact that my death was near. It was clear to me that our lot would not be any more pleasant than that of the Shaked forces. It was most difficult for us to return fire, as the enemy was well camouflaged and we couldn’t see them. The fear was great since we didn’t know the enemy was located. He could be looking anywhere and could strike you at the very next moment

next one would be more precise and hit us. Nevertheless, in time of war, you don’t pay attention to such thoughts and you keep moving. It’s seems absurd: On the one hand, you know that your end is near, but on the other hand, you press forward. The Egyptians fired another missile. We saw it heading straight for us. It was a matter of just another few seconds before it would hit us and we’d all be killed. Paralyzing terror seized us...

“Then, at the last possible moment, an IDF tank quickly



***“I made a vow that if I get off this battlefield alive, I will become a baal t’shuva and devote my entire life to G-d. At the moment that I finished making my vow, an Egyptian Sagger missile was fired and passed about three feet over our heads. We were sure that the next one would be more precise and hit us...”***

face encounters with Sudanese soldiers that the Egyptians had hired. The Sudanese were far more courageous than the Egyptians, and they showed no fear, fighting under mortal danger right down to the last man. They entrenched themselves well down in the ditches, their knapsacks filled with ammunition, as they fired at any IDF soldier who came near. The orders were to attack them. After a few minutes of fierce fighting, I was wounded by shrapnel from a grenade that was thrown in front of me. I was transported to a frontline base in

Refidim, and from there to Beilenson Hospital. After a few days of treatment, I was sent to rest at Kibbutz Ma’ale HaChamisha.”

Numerous pieces of shrapnel remained in R. Avraham Bar-Oner’s body, as an everlasting testimony to that terrible nightmare. Afterwards, he moved on to serve in a staff position on a paratrooper base near Ramle, under the command of Gen. Dan Shomron.

He had not forgotten his promise to G-d if he would get out of the blood-drenched war alive, nor the many miracles that he saw during the conflict. He decided that he would make a drastic change in his lifestyle. Even during his period of hospitalization and convalescence, it was clear to him that he was on the way to becoming a baal t’shuva. He didn’t wait until the end of his military service, rather at the first opportunity, he became acquainted with a religious soldier on the base, who taught him the basics of proper Jewish conduct.

“I felt that the words of Torah that he taught me, and his ways and customs in general, were the equivalent of cold water for a tired soul. I saw a calm and quiet Jew, something that strengthened me in my decision to make a change in direction. When I wanted to expand and deepen my knowledge, he suggested that I get in touch with a certain rabbi who he knew in B’nei Brak. He told me a lot of wonderful things about him. The name of the rav he suggested was Rabbi Shneur Zalman Gafni. One day, after we finished our work on the base, we traveled together to Rabbi Gafni’s house to meet with him. I immediately saw standing before me a Jew filled with much warmth and compassion. He listened to us with great patience. After a lengthy discussion, he gave the names of three people in Kfar Chabad. He told me that they would be able to

teach me what I was lacking.

“The three people were Rabbi Yossi Solomon, who taught me Chumash, Rabbi Moshe Rosenfeld, who taught me halacha, and Rabbi Ben-Tzion Cohen, who taught me chassidus. When I completed my daily responsibilities on the base, I would travel to Kfar Chabad and learn with them, and thus began taking considerable steps along the path of our forefathers. I found a beautiful world of purity and holiness. I wondered to myself why I had to go through the war and see such revealed miracles in order for me to accept a lifestyle that was so much better and more pleasant than what I had known up until now?!

“When I was released from my military service, I joined Rabbi Gafni’s yeshiva in Kfar Chabad, where I was quickly exposed with great intensity to the whole concept of ‘Rebbe.’ They would wake me up every time to hear the Rebbe’s sicha, and I would hear his voice and the powerful tones of the Rebbe’s speech. Even though I didn’t understand the content of his words, I was spellbound. Later, Rabbi Gafni sent me to serve as a math teacher in a Chabad school on Moshav Barosh, where they were looking for a first-grade teacher.

“I always had a burning desire to travel to the Rebbe, meet him face to face, and derive pleasure from the radiance of the Sh’china. After three months, when I had enough money in addition to my military discharge grant, I got on a plane en route to 770.

“It is hard to put into words what I sensed and experienced in Tammuz 5737, when I was privileged to see the Rebbe for the first time. This celestial feeling accompanied me for days on end. I felt as if I were a son who was meeting his father after not seeing him for many years.”

[To be continued]

# ‘I HAD TO LEAVE MY PLACE OF SHLICHUS’

By Shneur Zalman Berger

*Rabbi Abba Dovid Gurewitz, rav of Uzbekistan, who had to leave his place of shlichus, tells us about the sad chain of events that forced him to board a plane with a one-way ticket.*

Shliach, Rabbi Abba Dovid Gurewitz, chief rabbi of Uzbekistan, radiates optimism despite the enormous pressure brought to bear on him recently, to compel him to leave the country. He doesn't even know the precise reason for it. It is assumed that some people who previously worked for Jewish mosdos, like the Jewish Agency and local Jewish cultural centers, are the ones who conspired against him. They may have held grudges for being fired or because they want his money and beautiful mosdos.

The bottom line is Rabbi Gurewitz boarded a plane for Eretz Yisroel, where he is now, uncertain

about his future and the future of Chabad in Tashkent and Chabad of all of Uzbekistan and neighboring countries. The Chabad mosdos in Tashkent that were founded by Rabbi Gurewitz with the Rebbe's bracha over the past two decades are in imminent danger of falling apart. Hundreds of students and thousands of mekuravim will be left high and dry.

The primitiveness, bureaucracy and the Islamic terror in the country did not deter Rabbi Gurewitz, who was sent twenty years ago by the Rebbe to Tashkent, where he has been working tirelessly every since. He began working in Tashkent and

then he expanded to all of Central Asia. He has sent out matzos and religious items to the Jews of the countries under his watch and has local representatives who operate shuls and other mosdos.

Every so often, Rabbi Gurewitz and shlichim who work with him in nearby cities went to nearby countries in order to raise money for programs, religious items, and lots of support and encouragement.

During his first years in Tashkent, lack of funding was a major obstacle that he had to overcome by fundraising abroad. When the wheel of fortune turned and his former student, Lev Leviev, began to contribute personally and then through Ohr Avner, he was able to build magnificent mosdos, including the school where hundreds of students study. But the wheel continued to turn and the huge budget for the school, shuls, soup kitchen, shiurim for students, etc., led certain people to give negative reports to the government about them.

Although up until then there had been a problem with the legality of the rabbanus in Tashkent, the government had turned a blind eye. But now, instead of the great respect with which the government had generally treated Chabad and Rabbi Gurewitz, Rabbi Gurewitz was called repeatedly to OVIR, the emigration office, and was asked to leave the country. It happened time and again until Rabbi Gurewitz realized he had to leave and work on straightening things out from Eretz Yisroel.

**The media said that you were expelled from Uzbekistan. What caused them to expel you?**

I wasn't expelled. A misunderstanding led the government to pressure me to leave. That's typical of the media:

to publicize something before verifying it. And the story that the president's daughter wants to do construction on the lot of the shul is something I read for the first time in an article in an Israeli newspaper. I don't know who made that up.

In recent weeks I was called to OVIR twice and they required me to buy a ticket, which I did, but there are only two flights a week from Tashkent to Eretz Yisroel and in between they told me each time that they were sorry and I didn't have to go. The third time it happened was 1 Sivan, when the manager of OVIR told me that he had gotten an order to order me to buy a ticket.

I told him that I hadn't done anything illegal and I wanted to know why I had to leave the country. He apologized but said he had to follow orders. I realized that the pressure wouldn't stop and I agreed to leave, even though, as I sat at OVIR I got a phone call

from the Israeli ambassador in Uzbekistan, who told me that I didn't have to obey them. I decided that I couldn't go on like this with constant pressure to leave and not being able to do my work.

Unfortunately, certain people badmouthed me, making up stories, and nobody has told me what they said, so I went to the airport accompanied by an OVIR official to verify that I went to check-in. At customs, which in Uzbekistan is also done when you leave, they went beyond the norm in examining me. After they finished combing through every item in my suitcase, additional officials were called over to conduct another search.

It was only several days later that I heard that a certain Jewish woman who is known for her love of money, who makes up stories to tell the government, told the customs officials that I was leaving with gold and diamonds which I amassed in my years in Tashkent.

**Up until a few years ago, the local authorities afforded great respect to Chabad of Tashkent and to you especially, so what happened?**

It's hard to pinpoint what led to this mess, but the problems began ten years ago when Islamic terror organizations became a strong presence in the country and in order to limit their influence it was decided that all the religious organizations would be reorganized. The decision was made that any officially religious organization could exist in the country only if it had eight official branches in eight different locations.

I was apprised of this new law and it was a bolt from the blue. There had never been eight shuls in Uzbekistan in eight different locations! After great effort I was able to start other branches, but not eight of them and that ended my serving as chief rabbi of the country and the official representative of the Jews to the government.

Doing away with this position posed a problem for the tremendous work being done in Tashkent and throughout the country, and on many occasions it was necessary to oppose government people. When a rav from Tashkent wants to work in a distant town, it's not always accepted, but if the chief rabbi wants to work there, it's another story and the government cooperates.

Because of this new law, the institution of rabbanus was shut down. In the years that followed I worked with nonstop effort among various government figures in order to get things back to the way they were. On the one hand, it didn't help, but on the other hand, nobody stopped me from continuing to serve as the acting



Lev Leviev(right) with Rabbi Gurewitz and the president of Uzbekistan

chief rabbi. Nobody actually did away with the rabbinic organization which did so much work around the country.

That's the way things were until someone was fired from their job at the Jewish Agency and now they're writing articles against me on the government's official Internet site. Another person, the money hungry woman I referred to, who is associated with the local cultural center and nobody can stand up to her, has been making up lies even though after repeated investigations nobody has found

pressure for me to leave increased.

I won't get into the bureaucratic details here, but three months ago, officials from the justice ministry came to my office and began checking the paperwork for the money. They checked the bank statements again and again, the movement in the accounts, the receipts, etc., and I didn't know what they were looking for. All this paperwork is at the bank too.

They left without saying a word. It seems they are the ones who are saying that I did criminal acts, such as transferring undeclared

with the Israeli ambassador to Uzbekistan, who is close to the end of his tenure there, and with the next ambassador, who met with me in Israel for a few hours and promised to work on this.

I met with Rabbi Shlomo Amar, chief rabbi in Israel. We spoke about gittin because we work together with the chief rabbinate of Israel. Rabbi Amar praised our work in general and our work on behalf of kosher gittin in particular. We also spoke about this mess we are in and Rabbi Amar said he would try and help.

I am grateful to all those who help.

**In the meantime, what's happening there? Is money coming in? Are the mosdos open?**

The shliach Rabbi Dovid Kolton, whom I brought to Tashkent a few years ago, continues to work there. Money was left for the salaries of those who work at the school, shuls, and other mosdos. The mosdos are operating, but obviously if the situation continues, who knows what will happen... It's definitely not easy running mosdos with hundreds of children and dozens of employees this way.

**How do you think this will end?**

I will soon meet with the Uzbeki ambassador to Israel and tell him that for the sake of his country he cannot close down the mosad of rabbanus and expel the Rebbe's shliach. I will also convey to him that I did not do anything illegal.

I have written to the Rebbe many times throughout this ordeal and have received encouraging answers in the *Igros Kodesh*. I am hopeful that I will soon return to my shlichus and along with all the shluchim will hasten the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH"M.



**Rabbi Gurewitz with Jews in Andijan, Uzbekistan**

anything on me.

Nevertheless, they kept harassing me. For example, the money I get comes entirely from abroad and all the money that comes from other countries has to pass through a special committee that prevents terrorism and money laundering. Recently, they have been keeping the funds tied up in the committee. This has been going on for many months and the employees of the mosdos remained without salaries. Just recently some money was released, but the

money from abroad, but there have been no official charges. No person in the legal department came to me and said: You have committed a crime and you have to leave the country.

**Is anybody helping you out of this mess?**

Rabbi Levi Shemtov in Washington is working hard in government and diplomatic circles, including the ambassador of Uzbekistan to the United States. Lev Leviev met several times with Uzbeki figures. I personally spoke

# NO REPLACEMENT FOR OUR MOSHE RABBEINU

By Rabbi Yaakov Rogalsky, Rebbi United Lubavitch Yeshiva Crown Street

***The entire Jewish people know about the Rebbe's directives: the Rebbe speaks, technology spreads it, and the Chassidim and Shluchim teach it. The world is aware that there is one Nasi. But then Gimmel Tammuz comes along...***

It was a bright sunny day; no clouds in this area ever appear in the summer. There was a growing joyful anticipation among the entire populace. The forty days were completed. Moshe Rabbeinu was returning with the two *luchos* (*Mishpatim* 24: 12-18). As the day stretched on *simcha* was replaced with worry. "Why hasn't Moshe Rabbeinu returned?" Questions became filled with anxiety. Faces were absorbed with panic.

The skies started to thicken and a deep darkness hovered over the camp. There appeared a coffin in the sky (designed by the Satan) and it appeared that Moshe was lying dead in it (*Ki Sisa* 32:1; Rashi "For As For Moshe").

Terrifying doubts existed about the future. "How can we subsist in the desert without Moshe? How will we now be able to communicate with Hashem?" Fright ensued. The Holy Nation freaked out. The *Ibn Ezra* writes (Introduction to *Shmos* 32:1) that the Jewish people did not intend to worship an idol, G-d forbid. They felt they needed a concrete form through which they could serve Hashem. The *Ramban* says (*Shmos* 32:1) they sought a replacement for Moshe Rabbeinu to guide them. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch comments (*Shmos* 32:1) that the Jews waited until they saw themselves disappointed in their expectations. They came to the conclusion from their long

wait of Moshe returning that they could no longer expect their anticipation to be fulfilled. They gave up on their expectation. They doubted if Moshe Rabbeinu would return at all. The people demanded that which Aharon was to make – it was to take the place of Moshe and not Hashem. They presumed Moshe had an accident and had died. They wanted Aharon to give them a "Moshe" whom they could not lose.

A famous question is asked, "Why did the Yidden choose a golden calf to replace Moshe Rabbeinu?" Rav Yohnason Eybeshitz in *Tiferes Yehonason* replies (The Gutnick Edition *Chumash Shmos* page 237) that B'nei Yisroel knew that if Moshe had returned, Hashem would have spoken to Moshe from between the two cherubs that were on top of the Aron HaKodesh. They now decided to make their own cherubs so Hashem could speak to them. However their cherubs were not the faces of a child as in the Mishkan but rather the face of an ox (calf). This is because the face of an ox appeared on the left side of Yechezkel's *merkava* (chariot). Moshe is compared to the right side of Hashem as the

*pasuk* says “He led at Moshe’s right, the arm of His glory” (Isaiah 63:12). Without Moshe they assumed that Hashem was not relating to His people on the right side of the *merkava* but rather through the left side, through Aharon. Therefore they asked Aharon to “Make us gods (cherubs) that will go before us” (*Shmos* 32:1).

However, although their intentions cast their actions in a different light so that they do not appear quite as devastating, nonetheless, the Jewish people were wrong. This error was to such an extent that when Moshe pleads for Hashem’s forgiveness, Hashem answers, “Nevertheless in the day that I visit I will visit their sin upon them.” (*Shmos* 32:34) Rashi explains, “Now I have listened to you not to destroy them altogether, but always,

always when I will visit upon them their sins I will visit upon them a little of this sin (of the Golden Calf) together with the other sins. No punishment comes upon Yisroel in which there is not a little of the punishment for the sin of the Calf.”

In Jewish history there is a known fact that there is one main leader (Nasi) for each generation and not two leaders (Tractate Sanhedrin 8a). Rashi quotes this Gemara in *Parshas VaYeilech* (31:7) when Moshe calls to Yeshua and tells him that “you shall go with the people into the land that Hashem has promised to their fathers to give them.” In a further verse (31:23), according to Rashi: Hashem commands Yeshua and says to him “be strong and of good courage for you shall bring B’nei Yisroel to the land which I promised to them and I

will be with you.” *The Torah T’mina* explains (*VaYeilech* 31:7 notes 3 and 5) the difference between when Moshe spoke to Yeshua (the verse says “when you shall go”) and when Hashem speaks to Yeshua (the verse says, “You shall bring”). Since Hashem changed the language when He commanded Yeshua to when Moshe commanded Yeshua, Hashem saw that it was good only when there is one leader in each generation. Moshe tells Yeshua “you shall go” – you and the people: you are one of the people; but when Hashem says to Yeshua, “you will bring them” – you will be the head and the leader to them. As Rav Hirsh says on this verse, “There must be only one supreme speaker for any contemporary time.”

The Jewish people knew this fact that there is only one Nasi



per each generation. This fact started with the *Avos*, continued with Yosef when he said, “Hashem will consider you again and take you from *galus*” (*B’Reishis* 50:24) and then with Amram and Moshe. This continues throughout Tanach, The Anshei K’neses HaG’dola, the Tanaim, the Amoraim, and the Reish Galusa. When the Jews left Eretz Yisroel and resided in Bavel it was still known who was the leader of each generation: Rav, Shmuel, Abayei, Rava, Rav Ashi, etc. His directives were also known throughout the Jewish nation as we all lived basically in the same locality – one family close to each other. The situation

***This is the first time in history where there is an identical situation to the time period of the Golden Calf.***

got murkier when we started to disperse around the world. The *Rambam* writes in his introduction to the *Mishneh Torah* that after the redaction of the Talmud, “Yisroel became even more scattered throughout the lands of the Diaspora, dwelling as far as even the most distant lands. Strife increased world-wide and travel was made dangerous by the passage of warring armies. Torah study dwindled, for the Jews did not assemble in the yeshivos to study it in the thousands, as they had done formally. Instead those few individuals whom Hashem summoned from each city and land would gather and occupy

themselves with the Torah and in comprehending the works of all the preceding Sages. They enabled others to learn from them the paths of the law ... The Torah decisions of each area could not be disseminated to other Jews because of the distance of their localities and the difficulties of traveling.”

Each city and province had their leader. Each section had their branch of the tree and the people were not aware of the one trunk that produces these branches. The Torah and the directives of Rashi, for example, were not known to the rest of world Jewry for many months and possibly years later. This situation continued on for centuries. The clarity of one Nasi who directly taught and encouraged our people was not made possible until the recent advent of modern technology. The Rebbe gives a *farbrenge* and talks about that we have reached the time of our Redemption and it is heard throughout the world via satellite communication. The entire Jewish people know about the Rebbe’s directives: the Rebbe speaks, technology spreads it, and the Chassidim and Shluchim teach it. The world is aware that there is one Nasi.

But then Gimmel Tammuz comes along...

The *Rambam* writes in *Hilchos T’shuva* (*Perek 2. Halacha 1*), “What is complete *t’shuva*? This that comes to his hand that he has previously transgressed and it is possible for him to do again and he separates from it and he does not do it because of *t’shuva* (repentance)” This is the first time in history where there is an identical situation to the time period of the Golden Calf. The identity of the Nasi is known by the entire world, yet he is not

currently in our physical presence. We now have this chance to rectify the terrible tragedy that accompanies us throughout in our serving Hashem.

But there are those that will declare that Gimmel Tammuz is not identical to the time of the Calf. Then, Moshe Rabbeinu was still alive. For this the Rebbe Shlita MH”M, in explaining the *Midrash* that there is not a generation that does not have a person like Moshe, says in *Likkutei Sichos* (*Shmos*, Volume 26, page 7) that the spiritual life of Moshe remains forever in this physical world in which it is enclosed in the physical body of the Nasi of that generation. This occurs in every generation. The Rebbe also says in the *Sicha Shabbos Parshas Bo* 5752 Os 13, “From this it is understood the innovation of our generation – the ninth generation (from the Bal Shem Tov) – over all the previous generations (the eighth generation). Then there was a separation of the neshama from the body ... In our generation, the last generation of *galus* and the first generation of *Geula*, there is an additional more elevated perfection in a way that the souls are in bodies in order to receive in an internalized way ‘the uncovering of all lights.’ The souls are in bodies with no interruption at all.”

So when Gimmel Tammuz arrives we are given the clear opportunity to rectify everything. How? By not freaking out like we did the first time and by realizing that the Rebbe is still alive just as the Nasi Moshe Rabbeinu was at that time. With this and all the other preparations that we do, we shall certainly merit to have the complete *Geula* immediately.

# CAN EVERYBODY WRITE CHIDDUSHEI TORAH?

By Yisrael Yehuda

***One of the important aspects of Torah study is chiddushei Torah. The Rebbe often asked people to write chiddushei Torah, pilpulim, and he'aros. Does this also apply to balabatim who work for a living? \* How do you write chiddushei Torah? Do they suddenly pop into your mind? \* What is the purpose of writing chiddushim? What is the difference between a chiddush and a he'ara?***

## NOT PUBLICIZING SINS

What is the difference between a Chassid and a Misnaged? The mashpia R' Nachum Goldschmidt once put it this way:

When a Misnaged learns a daf Gemara and he has a question on Rashi, then Rashi is in trouble, because the Misnaged has a big question and Rashi has no response. However, this Misnaged has Ahavas Yisroel and he works for hours until he comes up with an answer in defense of Rashi. He's thrilled. With his righteousness and cleverness he

managed to extricate Rashi from his plight. That's no small thing! Obviously, a solution such as this that fell directly from heaven must be shared with others.

When a Chassid learns a piece of Gemara and he has a question on Rashi, he's perturbed. He knows that his lack of understanding comes as a result of his sins, which muddle his thinking and prevent him from understanding the subtleties of what he learns.

So the Chassid examines his deeds and cries out in t'shuva. Then the answer comes to him and the

Chassid is thrilled, for two reasons. One, he understands what he is learning, and two, it shows that his t'shuva was accepted. Will the Chassid now go and share his idea with others and show everybody that he sinned to the point that he did not understand Rashi?!

That is how R' Goldschmidt pithily summed up our traditional attitude towards printing and publishing chiddushei Torah. Chassidim always learned with kabbalas ol and with respect for the daf Gemara. Anything said by a Rishon and every s'vara (reasoning) in the Gemara were considered "Holy of Holies."

In general, in Chabad, they learned simply, without constructing pointless edifices of *pilpulim* (here used in the negative sense to suggest casuistry) and dubious savors. We are told that on several occasions, the Alter Rebbe resolved complicated questions in the Gemara by simply learning the daf in a way that was based on logic and understanding *p'shat* (the simple meaning) of the Gemara.

If there was a question, it was carefully examined from all sides in order to ascertain whether it was true and correct. Every s'vara was substantiated by a source or basis of



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some kind. (This approach can be clearly seen in the Rebbe's teachings, where every quote cites a source, even when the sicha is quoting the verse, "In the beginning, Hashem created," which everybody knows.)

### **THE REBBE'S EDUCATIONAL SOLUTION**

Based on the foregoing, it is easy to understand why the elder Chassidim in the fifties were taken aback when the Rebbe asked that "*kanim*" (branches, like of the Menora) be appointed. The Rebbe said that every yeshiva should choose seven bachurim who were proficient in Nigleh and seven who were proficient in Chassidus. Every week, one of them was to say a

pilpul before his fellow T'mimim.

If you look in the index to the *Igros Kodesh* under the entry "chiddushei Torah," you will see how the Rebbe had a hard time convincing the elders of Anash to implement this. To them, the notion that a young bachur would get up and say a pilpul based on his own reasoning was completely out of the question.

However, the Rebbe did not suffice with that. Years later, the Rebbe began to ask all of Anash and the T'mimim to write he'aros and pilpulim of their own, to publish them periodically in pamphlets. The Rebbe himself notes that in the past we refrained from writing chiddushei Torah, but due to the spiritual descent of the generations, it became necessary to encourage and strengthen Torah study by those who are capable of deep Torah study.

Therefore, the Rebbe suggested a special educational solution for our generation by asking talmidim to write up their chiddushim, even if they aren't 100% sure that their chiddushim are in line with the absolute truth of Torah. It increases their chayus for Torah study, as well as that of their friends, in a way of "the jealousy of scribes (i.e., Torah scholars) increases wisdom." When their friends see that a he'ara was published with their friend's name on it, it inspires them to put more effort into their own learning so that they too can write a he'ara.

### **SHOULD ANASH WRITE HE'AROS?**

Over the years, the Rebbe continued to encourage this inyan, sometimes sharply. At any rate, this article is not a historical review about writing he'aros but a clarification of the topic of writing chiddushei Torah.

Surely many Chassidishe men are wondering whether writing chiddushei Torah pertains to them

too or whether it's just meant for outstanding individuals and scholars.

Some ask: How can we write chiddushei Torah when we are so busy and barely have time for Chitas and Rambam?

Did the Rebbe ask every Chassid, every balabus to write chiddushei Torah? Is this really for everyone? If so, how do we do it?

When you look into it, you discover that writing chiddushei Torah is not something "in the heaven" or "over the sea," but "very close to you, in your mouth, and in your heart, to do it."

On the first pamphlets of he'aros and chiddushei Torah they published, they wrote, "He'aros HaT'mimim" on the title page. When the Rebbe received it, he wrote "V'Anash," thus showing that chiddushei Torah are for Anash to write too. This is a clear directive to all of Anash to write chiddushei Torah. It's part of Chassidic life and a Chassidic home. It's what the Rebbe wants. In many additional *Sichos Kodesh*, the Rebbe asked Anash to write chiddushei Torah or at least he'aros in their learning.

### **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HE'ARA AND A PILPUL**

In order to write, we need to define for ourselves what the Rebbe wants us to write. What is a **he'ara**, what is a **pilpul**, and what is a **chiddush** Torah?

Generally speaking, **he'aros** are printed in journals of he'aros that have a longstanding tradition in Lubavitch. Oftentimes, "discussions" take place over many issues of the journal. He'aros are notes that point something out to the reader. They are easier to write and easier to learn too as they are short and usually are simply constructed.

A **pilpul** is something constructed in a more complex

manner. It usually includes a question or a series of questions and an answer that is comprised of a number of introductions. It gets into the heart of things and clarifies the bases that support proofs and s'varos, in order to construct a well-founded answer.

A **chiddush Torah** is something like that but more so, since a pilpul is also a chiddush that came to mind while learning and clarifying things. A chiddush has to be examined carefully and constructed according to what it says in the various sources and halacha.

### HOW DO YOU DO IT?

After having explained what he'aros and chiddushei Torah are, we can move on to ways of developing them. On the one hand, we will discover that it's simple and readily achieved so that even

someone who is busy, who finds only a little time for learning, can also produce he'aros and see fruits of his labor in Torah. On the other hand, there are no instant solutions.

Chazal say, "Torah does not endure except with one who kills himself over it." Chiddushei Torah don't fall from the sky. In order to arrive at a chiddush or even to make a he'ara, you have to invest yourself seriously into your learning. We are assured that if you make an opening the size of a needle, a doorway the size of a large hall will be opened before you, and you will be able to do what the Rebbe asked for in the best possible way.

The first rule is that a he'ara comes through learning, and more than that, through paying attention to what you're learning. If you just mumble your way through Chitas, it is unlikely that any chiddush will

occur to you, but if you learn Chitas attentively, and surely if you learn it in depth, you will be able to come up with many chiddushim.

However, the point is *not* to learn **in order** to make he'aros. That's not the Chassidic approach. The point is to focus on at least one subject from the array of subjects that we learn – Chitas, Rambam, D'var Malchus, Gemara, Ein Yaakov, etc., and give it a bit more of our attention and thought. When we learn in this way, questions and answers will naturally occur to us that will lead to he'aros.

The second rule is that anyone can write a he'ara, each according to his abilities. Someone with a sharp head will surely "uproot mountains and grind them together"; they will find contradictions from here to there and delve into every "crown" and "thorn" until he constructs a



beautifully constructed edifice. Someone who is more “straight-thinking” can find a simple question in Chitas and try to answer it. Who is greater than the Rebbe whose treasury of sichos includes the simplest questions, what the Rebbe called *klotz kashes*?

We too, every one of us, can examine a Rashi and surely find many places where, according to the rules of Rashi, it’s not understandable. That’s a he’ara! Someone else might compare a s’vara in the Gemara with a conclusion in *Shulchan Aruch*, while yet another person might answer a question of the Raavad on the Rambam and it’s a nice chiddush.

Practically speaking, one of the best ways is to join a shiur and pay attention to the questions that come up, to the difficulties that the maggid shiur sometimes leaves unresolved and the questions we have during the shiur. Often a question comes up and remains without a satisfactory answer, a question that – after checking it out ourselves and with the maggid shiur to see if it’s really a good question – can be the excellent basis of a he’ara or even a proper chiddush.

He’aros and chiddushei Torah arise naturally. As we learn, we usually have thoughts going through our minds, questions about what we are learning. Usually, if we don’t get stuck on the question, we prefer moving on. Often we chalk the question up to our lack of understanding the material properly, to our lack of concentration or to the lack of time to examine it more closely. We don’t attribute importance to our questions and just move on.

However, if we paid attention to our questions, we would see great success in our learning and far greater understanding. We should have pen and paper (or our computer) at hand. When a question

comes up, even if it seems trivial, we should write it down.

One day, when we have time, we will look over our notes, review the questions, and while looking for answers we will write a nice he’ara. If you want to be organized about it, you can have a page (or file) for every subject – Chumash, Rambam, Sichos, etc. Once in a while, when you decide to sit down and write a chiddush, you will have something to start with. The principle is to learn at least one subject thoroughly and note the questions that arise.

It’s a good idea to run your questions by someone knowledgeable to find out whether they are good questions, and then the answers, to ensure that they are solid.

## WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME?

It’s all good and well. We know that writing a he’ara or chiddush Torah is what the Rebbe wants, but we also like to benefit thereby. So, we should know that if we want a Chassidishe home, we should delve

into Torah. The contribution that chiddushei Torah make towards a Chassidishe life (not just one’s Torah life) is immeasurable.

First, as soon as he sits down to write a he’ara, the balabus moves beyond his usual learning and devotes a bit more time and importance to learning in order to research and present the issue properly. Furthermore, we begin “living” our learning. Suddenly, we find ourselves looking into s’farim, thinking various s’varos and it pushes us to invest ourselves more and learn more.

A chiddush that is worthy of being published preoccupies us because of the fact that it’s going out to the public and we have to present it properly. When we are preoccupied with divrei Torah, life is more refined and filled with Chassidishe content.

The Rebbe asked many times that chiddushei Torah and he’aros be printed in special journals. When one of these journals comes to our house and our name is there on a

## GO OVER TO THE BOOKCASE AND TAKE OUT SOME KOVTZEI TORAH

“A Lubavitcher communal figure, who works on spreading Judaism outside of New York, approached a Jew in his city and suggested that he send his son to a Chassidishe yeshiva. When the man answers that he isn’t interested because he wants his son to become a *lamdan* (scholar), the Lubavitcher stammers and doesn’t have a response. He himself learned for several years in a Chassidishe yeshiva and he learned diligently and was mechadesh in Torah etc. Nevertheless, when they make this claim, he stammers and has no answer.

“In his house he has Torah journals that were published by Chassidishe yeshivos, including chiddushei Torah that were written by the talmidim. When someone tells you that he is not sending his son to a Chassidishe yeshiva because he wants his son to be a lamdan, there’s a simple solution. Go over to the bookcase and take out some Torah journals and show them to him. Then ask him: Can he show you as many Torah journals that are the work of talmidim in other yeshivos? And even if he can, he should compare them...”

(sicha Mishpatim 5744)

he'ara we wrote (the Rebbe said the person's name should be printed with his he'ara) it naturally connects us to learning. We feel we belong to the world of learning and to more spiritual things that we thought. After all, we wrote a he'ara!

A chiddush Torah that is printed spreads Chassidishe light in the house. When the members of the household see the printed he'ara that the husband or father wrote, it affects the atmosphere of the home. Children are proud of their father. They see that their father learns Torah and as a result, Torah study becomes dear to them. This affects their chinuch in the long and short term.

Just like among the T'mimim, there is a "kinas sofrim" among balabatim too. As other balabatim see that so-and-so, despite his being busy with his work managed to come up with a chiddush that was printed, they are motivated to invest more in their learning. It adds Chassidishe chayus to the entire chevra.

The value of a chiddush Torah is greater for a married man than for a bachur in yeshiva. The bachur is constantly in a Torah environment. He is involved in learning and matters of k'dusha all the time and the chiddush Torah uplifts him and gives him extra chayus in his learning and Chassidishe life.

A married man who is not in the

world of learning, does not constantly "live" with shiurim and farbrengens. He has his set times for learning and only on special occasions does he participate in a farbrengen. Being involved with a chiddush Torah ignites the fire of Tomchei T'mimim in him. His thoughts turn towards learning while matters of this world lose some of their importance. He is involved in his work but his thoughts are on the he'ara he "has to finish." The he'ara puts him back in Tomchei T'mimim and is invaluable.

### THE REBBE RESPONDS, THE REBBE DEMANDS

Over the years, there were many responses from the Rebbe regarding writing he'aros. About a certain journal, the Rebbe said, "If it was printed a few months earlier, there would have been more people who learn Chassidus." On another occasion, the Rebbe said that journals of pilpulim should be published at least twice a year, in the winter and summer. "Once a year is good for Yom Kippur but when we're talking about journals of chiddushei Torah, they should be published more frequently, at least once every two or three months."

Presumably, many people who read this will wonder whether their chiddushei Torah are worthy of being printed. Their apprehension is

greater since they aren't as involved in learning as they used to be.

The Rebbe's response to this over the years was to tell people write and print chiddushei Torah even if the writer is not sure about their accuracy. In the sicha of BaMidbar 5751, os 12, the Rebbe says that every Jew can and **must** be mechadesh in Torah, to expand upon it. True, in previous generations they were careful but in our generation, due to the spiritual descent of the generations, we need to find ways of encouraging learning and this is why everyone must write, even if they are unsure that their chiddush is the truth of Torah:

**... we see in practice that through this there is an addition in the "the Torah should be made great and powerful" and in chayus and taanug in Torah study, whether for oneself, as we plainly see the benefit in one's Torah study when it has to be written for others, or for others ("the jealousy of scribes increases wisdom") – that this (the benefit therein) is the best indicator of its necessity ... - "The Torah should be made great and powerful."**

*In order to prepare this article, I spoke with Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac Landau, a maggid shiur in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Levkivker, one of the roshhei yeshiva, and Rabbi Moshe Orenstein, mashpia roshi in the yeshiva. They see hundreds of he'aros a year and I clarified the topic with them.*



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