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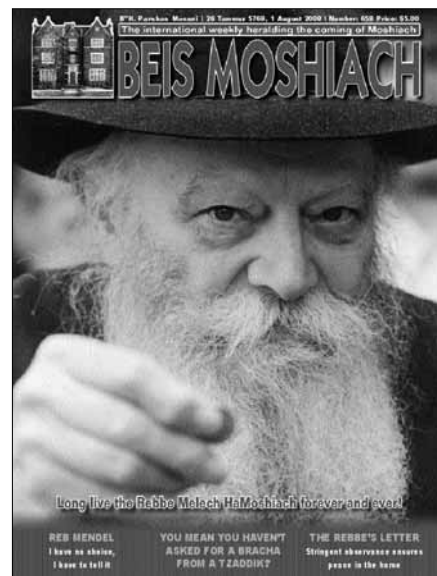
IF ALL THE OCEANS WERE INK...

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Insight | Interview by Nosson Avrohom



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STRINGENT OBSERVANCE ENSURES PEACE IN THE HOME

By the Grace of G-d
Purim-Koton, 5719
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Sholom uBrocho:

I duly received your letter, and this is in reply to your questions:

a) Whether you should insist on having the Chuppah 'outside.'

No doubt you mean having the Chuppah under the sky, which is the important thing, and this can often be done inside, since ~~in~~ many halls have a retractable, or removable, roof so that the Chuppah can indeed be under the sky.

I trust you will not have to 'insist' very much, but that this will be readily acceptable, for having the Chuppah under the sky is something which is connected with Mazzel. Inasmuch as the question concerns marriage, which makes the foundation for the everlasting edifice (Binyan adei-ad) for a happy home, surely everything should be done to fulfil all the aspects which are connected with Mazzel at the time of the Chuppah, and this is one of them, as is stated in many holy books.

b) On the matter of disagreement regarding furniture.

Generally speaking, in matters connected with the house furniture and furnishing and the like, the matters which our Sages call the 'mundane' aspects, one should consider the wishes of the future housewife. At the same time, it is clearly a matter of good sense not to get involved in debts which may be difficult to meet afterwards, all the more so as you have to undertake mortgage obligations, etc., as you write.

c) With regard conduct becoming a Yeshivah Bochur, etc.

The thing to keep in mind is that your conduct is bound to have an immediate influence on the conduct of your entire home, especially that of your wife, the Akeres Habayis. The father and husband sets the tone for the others to follow. In practice, when one tries to emulate someone else, even with the utmost effort, it rarely comes up to the full 100%. Therefore, it

is necessary so to conduct oneself, that after making allowances the copy not fall too short of the original, so that at least the minimum requirements of the Shulchan Aruch (even without Hiddurim) would be fulfilled.

This should be your guiding principle also, and even more so, in your meeting with other people, especially in your teaching position, and general standing in the congregation and community.

Referring specifically to the question of going to certain places of amusement, in view of the fact (in addition to the above considerations) that you have told your fiancée that you will ~~continue~~ discontinue this, you should bear in mind that if you do not practise as you preach, it will not only display a weakness on your part in matters of Yiras Shomaim, but your fiancée will consider it a precedent to further concessions and liberties in this direction.

d) You ask my advice as to how to ensure mutual peace and harmony in married life.

As you know, the Torah is the key to it, as it is written, "Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." In matters of the Torah pleasantness should be coupled with firmness, especially in such fundamental aspects of marriage as Taharas Hamishpocho, and all other things of Torah and Mitzvoth which the Torah requires with the utmost stringency. Yet, it is this very stringent observance that ensures the pleasantness and peace of married life, while capitulation or concession even 'temporarily' in these matters, 'in the interests of peace,' can only have lasting contrary effects.

Nowadays, environment and the people one mixes with, have a considerable effect on one's personal conduct and the conduct of the home. Therefore, one should always seek the company and environment of only such real friends as have a beneficial and encouraging influence in all matters of Torah and Mitzvoth, and introduce your fiancée into a similar environment.

With blessing,

*From the t'shura printed in honor of the wedding
of Shmuel Simpson and Golda Chasdan sh'y*

DELAYS IN THE JOURNEY

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Why is the Torah portion called “journeys” when most of the time in the desert they didn’t move? We learn that even “encampments,” interruptions or obstacles, are part of the journey. The 42 “journeys” in the wilderness parallel those of the Jewish people. One can advance, reach a higher level, without going forth. To journey, or go forth, means to travel to a completely new state of existence. Similarly, the encampments – the sojourns of the children of Israel among the various nations – are a descent into greater exile. Delays, even in friendly countries, impede the fulfillment of our true goal, transforming the world into a dwelling place for G-dliness. Nevertheless, the “encampments” are also part of the journey. Our descent into exile will lead to an ascent into Redemption. Moshiach’s delay is an “encampment” that should not discourage or depress us.

This week’s Torah reading, the last in the book of *BaMidbar* (Numbers), begins with the verse: “These are the journeys of the children of Israel when they left the land of Egypt.” The Torah then enumerates all the encampments of the Jewish people throughout their travels in the wilderness. This raises an important question about the Torah’s choice of words. Since it enumerates the encampments, it should have said, “These are the encampments of the children of Israel.” Why does it say, “These are the journeys”? We are given a list of the Jewish people’s campsites, not told about their travels.

The question is more than semantics. The narrative of the Torah is the paradigm for all Jewish history. What happened to that generation – the Exodus, the giving of the Torah, the forty years in the desert, and the entrance to Israel – happens in all ages and to every individual. Especially in our own day, as we stand on the threshold of the final Redemption, the events of that time will be relived.

So, a more logical phrasing would have been, “These are the encampments of the children of Israel,” especially since most of the time they weren’t traveling anyway. So when the Torah tells us, “These are the journeys,” it indicates something about the whole process. What was the purpose of both the travels and encampments in the wilderness? What was the entire process intended to accomplish? Clearly the intent was to reach the land of Israel. But an encampment is a resting place, the end of a journey, or a particular phase of a journey. We might think that when the Jewish people stopped, they had reached their goal, or if they traveled again afterwards, at least one of their goals. When the Torah

says, “These are the journeys,” it tells us that each stage – the encampments and the traveling – are part of a greater whole. In and of itself, coming to a particular resting place accomplishes nothing, and might even be a hindrance. Only as part of the ultimate goal, reaching the land of Israel, does a particular encampment or journey have significance.

But if this is the case, the Torah should have said, “This is the journey,” not “These are the journeys.” If it’s all one process, why does the Torah talk about “journeys,” in the plural?

The Baal Shem Tov explains that the forty-two “journeys” of the Jewish people correspond to stages in the life of the individual Jew. The names of the stages indicate aspects or levels of personal growth. For example, for a while the Jewish people encamped

In general, we can distinguish between “going” – the journeys – and “standing” – the encampments. “Standing” means remaining in the same place. Even when there is advancement, if we are still connected to where we were, we haven’t really moved forward. For example, one may be a beginning, intermediate or advanced student. Clearly, an “advanced” student is at a higher level than a “beginning” student. But he is still a student; going from “beginner” to “advanced” isn’t really moving forward. But when the student becomes a rabbi or teacher, he is in a completely new state. He has “journeyed forth,” going into a status unrelated to his previous situation. This is why the Torah says, “these are the journeys,” plural, because a Jew must constantly be moving forward. A Jew must always be going higher,

and not just from one level to another in the same place; a Jew must always be on a journey to a totally new stage, one without resemblance or comparison to the previous position.

Of course, there is a deeper implication, one relevant for our current situation and efforts to bring Moshiach. The statement “These are the journeys” means both going forth and leaving behind. That is, the journey to a new stage of existence, a transformed state, a more elevated level, requires that we uproot ourselves from where we were. We must leave behind completely our former circumstances and situation.

The Torah says, “These are the journeys of the children of Israel

when they left Egypt.” As the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad, points out, the Jewish people left Egypt as soon as they stepped foot outside the country. How many “journeys” does it take to leave? However, since the word for “Egypt” in Hebrew also means boundaries and limitations, the Torah is telling us something about our individual spiritual growth: in order to leave behind our limitations, the obstacles to our spirituality, we must take many steps, make many journeys. Each phase, each ascent, is a leave-taking, an uprooting and consequent elevation. And the encampments – our accomplishments in Torah, mitzvos and Divine service – are only temporary resting places, way stations on the journey. We must leave them behind and journey forth, go forward. We

The encampments – our accomplishments in Torah, mitzvos and Divine service – are only temporary resting places, way stations on the journey. We must leave them behind and journey forth, go forward. We camp, as the Jewish people did, not to “stand still,” but to gather strength and prepare for the next journey – the next transformation on the way to Moshiach, Redemption and the land of Israel.

at “*kivros ha’ta’avah*,” literally, the burial of desire. True wisdom leads to a great attachment to G-d. When wisdom overrules the emotions, the individual deeply and fully attaches himself to G-d. As a result, he has in effect buried his desire for material gain or pleasure. For this reason, the Jewish people camped at “*kivros ha’ta’avah*.”

Of course, at the actual encampment of “*kivros ha’ta’avah*,” the Jewish people angered G-d with their demand for meat. Before they buried their desire, it pushed them to challenge Moses and test G-d. From this we see that even negative things, acts that violate G-d’s Will, are still part of the journey. They, too, contain holiness and lead to the ultimate goal, entrance to the land of Israel.

camp, as the Jewish people did, not to “stand still,” but to gather strength and prepare for the next journey – the next transformation on the way to Moshiach, Redemption and the land of Israel.

What relevance does this examination of the opening verse of the Torah reading have for us today? It is well known that the forty-two journeys of the Jewish people in the wilderness allude not just to an individual’s life, but also to the life of the Jewish people in exile. For we are currently journeying through the “wilderness of the nations.” That being the case, our encampments – the sojourns of the children of Israel among the various nations – are a descent into greater exile. So long as we tarry, however friendly and supportive the country, we have interrupted and suspended our journey. Such a delay impedes and obstructs fulfillment of our true goal, reaching the land of Israel, that is, transforming the world into a dwelling place for G-dliness.

Nevertheless, the encampments, all of them, are also part of the journey. Even when we stop in undesirable places, where we “anger G-d” by our behavior – our assimilation or imitation of the

nations – we are still on the journey, still traveling toward the land of Israel.

The descent into exile is part of the process of Redemption. Through the descent – and only through the descent – the Jewish people ascend to a level higher than otherwise possible. The journeys through the desert – each of the forty-two encampments – were a descent leading to the ascent into the land of Israel. Our descent into exile will lead to an ascent into Redemption.

Thus, when we momentarily stumble – when something obstructs our observance or doubts hinder our devotion or our complacency impedes Moshiach – we should not despair. In our darkest moments, we must increase light and joy, that is, Torah and mitzvos. Moshiach’s delay is an “encampment” that should not discourage or depress us. Rather we should invest our anticipation, our joyful expectation with more enthusiasm and more vigor, knowing that we are in the final stage of our journeys toward Redemption.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 25, pp. 224-228)



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YOU MEAN YOU HAVEN'T ASKED FOR A BRACHA FROM A TZADDIK?

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

“This is not just another miracle that people say that they experienced,” he explains at the very beginning of the interview. “The miracle that we experienced is something that put me and my wife in an absolute state of shock and amazement. It even led the professor who treated our daughter to become extremely excited, confessing to us that he had never seen anything like this before in his life...”

The Hassons are a very familiar and distinguished family in Ashdod. They run a wholesale fruit and vegetable store, and are known to be most charitable, making considerable contributions to yeshivos and other Torah institutions. When I spoke with one

of the brothers last week, Mr. Shaul Hasson, he admitted to me that while he is not overly stringent in his religious observance, he is a descendant of a large family of rabbis and kabbalists extending throughout the Diaspora, and he feels a tremendous closeness to the

traditions of his forefathers.

We recently came to Mr. Hasson regarding the thrilling story that he experienced with his second daughter, in the merit of the blessing of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach.

Despite the fact that this story took place twenty-one years ago, Mr. Hasson still has difficulty containing his emotions as he describes those moments when he understood that a wondrous miracle had been performed for him. “This is not just another miracle,” he explains at the very beginning of the interview. “The miracle that we experienced is something that put me and my wife in an absolute state of shock and amazement. It even led the professor who treated our daughter to become extremely excited, confessing to us that he had never seen anything like this before in his life...”

“Prior to the birth of our second daughter, we honestly didn’t know what it means to worry. Besides routine examinations at hospitals or with our family physician at the

neighborhood health clinic, we had no conception of running around hospital corridors with concern, fear, and anxiety. Our first daughter was born healthy and easily, and as with all young couples, we were happy and fortunate to experience the great privilege of parenthood.

“This wonderful and special feeling was eventually replaced by heavy concern, constant tension, and the suffocating burning sensation we felt when our second daughter was born. It’s hard to describe what we went through.

“At the time of her birth, a team of doctors had already diagnosed her as having a certain defect. This initial ‘dry’ diagnosis didn’t tell us much. We understood from the doctors that our daughter had been born with some problem, and we hoped that with the passage of time, the matter would sort itself out and the problem would disappear on its own naturally. However, not only did this not happen, we quickly understood that we were facing a rather complicated battle. By the time our daughter had reached the age of three, she had already undergone several hospitalizations in Kaplan Hospital, located close to our home. When we detected that she

had an infection, we would race with her to the hospital, where she endured great physical pain in order to clean out the infection.

“The situation was absolutely unbearable, both for us and the child. Besides the tension and fear that accompanied every trip to the hospital for my wife and myself, it was also deeply painful to watch our daughter suffer so much with every hospitalization. When the doctors explained to us that she would eventually have to undergo an operation, as this was not a problem that could be remedied through her body’s natural growth and development – we immediately began searching for an expert in the field in order that if she actually did require an operation, it would be performed by the best surgeon available with minimal risk and discomfort.

“After making various clarifications and telephone calls, we came to Professor Farkash, a very prominent specialist in the field who was working at the time with the Shaarei Tzedek Hospital in Yerushalayim. Everyone referred to him as the number one expert in Eretz Yisroel on problems of this nature, and as parents genuinely concerned over the fate of their daughter, we spared no effort and brought our daughter to his ward in Yerushalayim. We presented him with all the diagnoses and the medical case history on our daughter. He conducted the standard examinations, and told us that based on what he could determine from his understanding of the test results, he was recommending that we leave her in the hospital in preparation for an eventual operation.

“He fulfilled his medical obligation, and proceeded to explain to us with great precision about the procedure of the operation he was about to do. His descriptions alone were enough to strike us with fear, as our hearts pounded frightfully with the anguish of worried parents. We spent two weeks with our daughter in the hospital, while the medical staff did its utmost to make the accommodations there as comfortable as possible. A series of pre-op x-rays then began, and a date for the operation had already been set.

“Those days were the most difficult we had ever experienced in our lives. All our thoughts revolved around one matter – the state of our daughter’s health.

“The night before the scheduled operation, filled with anxiety as I thought about our daughter in the hospital in Yerushalayim, where my wife and I were staying, I quietly made my way back home to Ashdod. My wife remained at the hospital to sleep there, while I made plans to return to Yerushalayim the following morning, when the operation would commence. The doctors’ words about how this would be a complicated operation, scheduled to take more than four hours to complete,



I remember the intensity of the feeling that gripped me at the moment that I understood that while there are doctors and medicine, there is also the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who can bring about such a drastic change with a single word. Not a bracha that the operation will turn out successful, but a bracha that there will be no need for the operation whatsoever.

flashed in my mind continually throughout the journey home.

“When I stopped at Bilu Junction near Rechovot, I saw an impressive looking Jew standing at the bus stop, someone who I had met before – Rabbi Elazar Tuito from Kiryat Malachi.

“It was eleven o’clock at night. I saw that Rabbi Tuito was looking for someone to ‘give him a lift,’ and so I decided to stop. We were happy to see one another, and quickly began a conversation. He asked me why I looked so downcast, and I proceeded to tell him the whole story about my daughter and the complicated operation she was scheduled to have the next morning. I admitted that I was very concerned whether the operation would be successful. He looked at me in the eye and asked, ‘Do you have a bracha from a rav or a tzaddik?’ I said that I didn’t. Suddenly, I was filled with embarrassment. While I was feverishly chasing after doctors, I had forgotten to do what my parents and grandparents would have done under similar circumstances.

“He asked me if I wanted to write a letter to a tzaddik. ‘Of course,’ I replied, and drove with him to the Nachlat Har Chabad neighborhood in Kiryat Malachi, where he lived. As we made our way there, he told me some amazing stories of wondrous miracles that occurred in the merit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s brachos. He gave me directions to the house from where we could send a letter to the Rebbe.

“In those days, unlike today when almost every home has a fax machine, we had to go the house of the local Chabad House director, Rabbi Lipa Kurzweil. I looked at my watch and saw that it was already half past midnight. Yet, despite the late hour, Rabbi Kurzweil greeted me warmly.

“I gave him my daughter’s name, her mother’s name, together with our names, and he sent the fax to the Rebbe’s office in New York. I departed from Rabbi Tuito and Rabbi Kurzweil as I started on my way home, and I suddenly began to understand what was happening

here. I felt that I was in the midst of some mystical process. After all, I had merely planned to drive back to my home in Ashdod after a fortnight of getting by on very little sleep. Yet, wonder of wonders, I stopped to give Rabbi Tuito a ride as he was standing at a junction late at night, and I thereby merited to send a letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I felt that this was a marvelous case of Divine Providence.

“I got into bed and fell into a deep sleep. The tremendous fatigue and exhaustion simply overcame me. I arrived at the hospital the following morning rather late. I estimated that I had come in the middle of the surgery, and I just couldn’t forgive myself for not seeing my child before she was brought into the operating room and to accompany her at those final tense moments.

“When I arrived at the entrance of my daughter’s room, I was surprised to see my wife there. She walked towards me and said, ‘Shaul, the doctors said that there’s no operation!’ Panic seized me. I was afraid that the situation was far more complicated than we had thought at the outset, or there had been some complications in the operation itself.

“My legs were shaking in fear. The feeling of deep concern gnawed away at the last shreds of optimism I had left. Suddenly, as I was talking with my wife and trying to understand the reason behind the cancellation of the operation, the surgeon Professor Farkash came in with a look of sheer amazement on his face and said, ‘Folks, you don’t understand what happened. Look at the girl’s x-ray from a week ago. You don’t have to be experts to see the huge black stain in the photograph. Yet, here’s the picture we took today just before the operation – it’s all white. The black stain simply disappeared! In all of my work in the medical profession, I have never

seen anything like this. It's a medical mystery.'

"The doctor was positively thrilled and deeply affected in the face of this discovery. If he had previously maintained his professional composure, he now allowed himself to release his emotions. The staff of the entire ward, the doctors and nurses who had accompanied us throughout our two-week stay in the hospital, all gathered together in our room with expressions of total incomprehension. The professor asked us to remain in the ward for an additional day, as he wanted to arrange another x-ray for the girl in order to confirm the results of the previous picture.

"We stayed one more day, the next x-ray produced the same clear white results as before – and we were released. The feeling of concern, sadness, and sorrow had been transformed to one of astonishment, joy, and happiness.

"During the first couple of days before we came home, I didn't make the connection between the dramatic

change and the request for a bracha that I had sent to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Due to the great joy that engulfed us, I recalled nothing apart from the fact that three years of pain and anguish had miraculously come to an end without any logical explanation.

"A few hours after we returned to Ashdod, the telephone rang. The call was from Rabbi Grossman of Migdal HaEmek. He informed me that he had received a fax with an answer from the Rebbe's secretariat meant for me.

"The Rebbe's answer: 'How can there be a Jewish home without t'fillin?' Suddenly, it all became clear to me. The miraculous change had occurred in the merit of the Rebbe's bracha!

"With great emotion, I told my wife, the rest of the family, friends and acquaintances, about the great miracle we had been privileged to see in the merit of the blessing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"Even today when I tell this story, twenty-one years later, I remember the intensity of the feeling

that gripped me at the moment that I understood that while there are doctors and medicine, there is also the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who can bring about such a drastic change with a single word. Not a bracha that the operation will turn out successful, but a bracha that there will be no need for the operation whatsoever.

"The very next day, I ran to the Judaica store to buy a good quality pair of kosher t'fillin, as per the Rebbe's request, and I have put them on every weekday ever since.

"Our daughter is now twenty-four years old, thank G-d completely healthy, as if she had never suffered from any medical defect," said Mr. Hasson, concluding his story. "This incredible miracle will accompany our family and me personally for the rest of my life. The only thing remaining for us to await and hope for is the imminent revelation of the Lubavitcher Rebbe as Melech HaMoshiach and that he will redeem us together with the entire Jewish People at the True and Complete Redemption."

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CHASSIDISHE MELAMED

*Rabbi Berel Mochkin tells fascinating stories about the life of his father-in-law's father, R' Yisroel Neveler a"h. * About the learning in Samarkand, the wonderful stories he told which implanted in them a love for Chassidus. * From a t'shura given in honor of the wedding of his son.*

IMAGE OF A "MELAMED"

R' Yisroel Neveler was my melamed in my childhood. He was my first melamed who taught me how to read when we were in Tashkent. By my reckoning, I must have been about four years old. He would come to our house to teach me.

When my parents and other families came to Tashkent during the terrible times of World War II, there was no Jewish school for children yet, since everybody was starving to the point of dying of starvation. Nobody had the wherewithal to organize something for the children.

Thank G-d, on account of my brother's efforts, we had what to eat. I'm nearly certain that the reason why my father took R' Yisroel to teach me a little Torah during the day was so he would

have at least one decent meal a day. I remember that he taught me the morning brachos with the *taitch* (Yiddish translation).

A bit later, when people were able to settle down, chadarim were created for all the children of Anash and I learned in "classes." I remember that first time I learned Gemara with R' Yisroel. There were two classes and when he taught one of them, the other class reviewed the lesson. I was six.

The way it worked was, on Thursday afternoon he would test us on what we learned during the week and then he would tell stories. R' Yisroel was known not only as a good teacher and man of action but also as a terrific storyteller. He knew how to tell a story so that you could picture it, as though it was taking place before your very eyes. He fulfilled the verse, "so that you tell the

latter generation," until they, in turn, tell it to their children...

I heard that when Anash left Russia and a few went to the United States still in the lifetime of the Rebbe Rayatz, that the Rebbe asked them, "How is Yisroel Neveler? Does he still tell stories as he used to do?"

A STORY ABOUT A FARMER AND A MISNAGED

I remember a story that he told us about the verse in T'hillim, "kindness and truth appoint, so that they will preserve him." The Hebrew word "*man*" (appoint) doesn't have an actual connection to the content of the verse and it would be simpler without it.

Regarding this, he told us about a Misnaged who said that the word "*man*" was not part of the T'hillim but something that someone wrote on the side, like a commentary on a verse, and that it referred to the manna that fell in the desert. The typesetter included it in the text.

A Chassid, hearing this was furious that the Misnaged could say such a thing and he related this parable:

Hashem created plants and seeds, flowers and trees and there is great wisdom in knowing how to plant a field, which seeds or flowers to plant near one another, etc. There was a famous agronomist who had students who studied this science and then traveled to various provinces in order to plant their own fields.

One of his students traveled to distant parts, to a large field belonging to a nobleman. The student's job was to plant the field as he was asked to do. Since it was a big job and one which entailed great responsibility, he was afraid to rely on his own

knowledge and he sent a letter to his teacher, asking him to direct him what should be grown where, etc.

The teacher prepared a map for him in which he explained where each plant should go. He made a mark on each seed or flower or tree which indicated what plant it was; the signs were circles or lines. There were whole circles and half circles, there were half

circles open on the right and on the left, vertical and horizontal lines, long and short ones, straight and diagonal ones. He sent this map to his student with a farmer as his messenger.

It was a long trip and on the way, the farmer slept in a roadside inn. There were other farmers staying at this inn and each of them spoke about the purpose of their trip. The farmer-messenger

said he was sent by the great agronomist and he was bringing a map for his student.

“Let’s take a look at it,” said the other farmers. When they opened it up and saw the various marks, some of them said the lines and circles weren’t appealing and they changed half circles to whole circles, short lines into long lines, etc. They did it in such a way that you couldn’t tell that someone had changed the teacher’s map.

When the student got the map he was unaware of the changes that had been made and so he planted the field according to what he read on the map. Obviously, he made a big mess of it.

That is how the Chassid explained to the Misnaged that his intellect was like that of the farmers when he offered his opinion about the holy words of the T’hillim.

R’ Yisroel told us this story when we were his young students and it remains engraved in my memory. However, since I was young, I don’t remember more stories or things that he told us. He spoke beautifully and would tell us Chassidishe *vertlach* and explain concepts to us. It’s a pity that his pearls were not collected.

WHAT DOES A CHASSID THINK ABOUT WHEN HE TIES HIS GARTEL?

What I will do is share some stories that I heard in his name, which I did not see written anywhere.

One time, he said: What kavana does a Chassid have when putting on a garTEL? He explained:

When he wraps it once, he thinks: You lowlife, you’re going to daven?!

When he wraps it a second time, he thinks: A chitzon like you, you’re going to daven?!



But when he wraps it a third time, he thinks: Still, I'm a Jew so I put on tallis and t'fillin and daven.

* * *

I also heard something that he said on the words in Nishmas, "until now Your compassion has helped us and Your kindness did not depart from us, and do not abandon us, Hashem our G-d,

forever." He asked, how are we so confident that He will not abandon us, perhaps our sins will cause us to be undeserving?

He explained it as follows: Until now, the fact that You helped us is only because of Your compassion and not in our merit; that You did not depart from us is only because of Your kindness and not because of our deeds.

Therefore, Hashem's kindnesses are never-ending. From His part, He never abandons us.

I WAS A FATHER TO ORPHANS

Rabbi Aharon Yaakov Schweil, member of the Crown Heights beis din, told me that when they were in Peking, Germany, they lived in the same building as R' Yisroel Neveler. Since they were three young orphaned brothers, R' Yisroel devoted himself to them to encourage them, as well as their mother, and they felt close to him.

The following story is interesting though not so understandable:

The t'fillin belonging to his brother, R' Isaac Schweil, disappeared. Since he felt close to R' Yisroel, he asked to borrow his t'fillin. R' Yisroel gave R' Isaac his t'fillin but told him not to wrap it up after davening but to bring them to him unwrapped.

R' Isaac thought that R' Yisroel had said this to make it easier for him and since he didn't find it a bother, he began to wrap them up himself. Then a strap tore. He was very frightened and didn't know what to do. He ran to someone by the name of Moshe who sold Jewish religious items and took a strap from him and put it in the t'fillin and began to wrap it, but the strap tore again.

He was completely shaken by this and didn't know what to do. Having no choice he went to R' Yisroel and told him what happened. R' Yisroel calmed him down.

I don't know why he was told not to wrap them. Some say that is what the Rebbe Rashab did and therefore, R' Yisroel did too.

THE REBBE'S CUSTOMS

R' Yisroel had some customs

RABBI DOVID ABBA LEVIN

R' Berel Mochkin relates:

My father-in-law was Rabbi Dovid Abba Levin (may Hashem avenge his blood), the son of R' Yisroel Neveler. We don't know much about him except that he learned in Tomchei T'mimim in Nevel as a chavrusa with R' Meir Itkin.

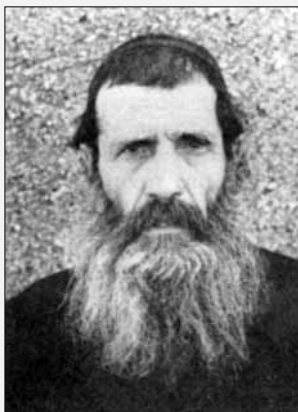
R' Meir Itkin related that R' Dovid Abba was younger than the other boys but he had a good head and his father, R' Yisroel Neveler, wanted his son to learn in the older class. He was also good hearted. In those days, they did not celebrate bar mitzvas, but when R' Meir became thirteen, my father-in-law arranged a bar mitzva celebration for him because he was an orphan and had nobody to look out for him.

He was drafted into the army in the summer of 1941 when the war broke out and he was 27. In Tishrei they received the only letter they ever got from him in which he wrote that he was near the city of Smolensk, surrounded by the enemy and it didn't look as though they would make it out alive. Based on this letter, they later set his yahrtzeit for 25 Tishrei.

Nothing further was heard from him or of him. He left two daughters and a pregnant wife. When his son was born, the mohel was R' Yisroel Neveler himself who also said the brachos. He wanted to name the baby Dovid Abba for the baby's father but since he didn't want to cause anguish to his daughter-in-law, he named him Yehoshua Zelig for her father.

My mother-in-law remained alone and raised her children herself. Despite the terrible hardships she raised them to Torah, chuppa and good deeds. The older daughter, Zelda a"h, married Rabbi Shlomo Dovber Nemenov, the son of the famous mashpia, R' Nissan, and they were on shlichus in Brunoy. Although they both died young, they raised a beautiful generation of Chassidishe sons and daughters.

My wife, her sister Sima, and her brother Yehoshua Zelig also raised Chassidishe families.



R' Yisroel Neveler

that he would do like the Rebbe Rashab. For example, he would move back in the Shmoneh Esrei after the first “*yehi ratzon*.” He would look at the face of the chazan during the Priestly Blessing, which is what all Anash do today, but back then, people did not know this and he was the only one who did this after seeing that the Rebbe Rashab did so.

When he reviewed Chassidus, he would hold a handkerchief, as the Rebbe did.

R’ Yaakov Schwei remembers that on Pesach, during “Pour out Your Wrath,” he would say it very loudly so that the entire building shook.

R’ Yaakov Schwei also told me that there are two letters from the Rebbe Rayatz to R’ Yisroel from the year 1948 (printed in *Igros*

Kodesh vol. 9). In the first letter, the Rebbe wishes him, “Hashem should grant us the merit to meet with much nachas, materially and spiritually,” but in the second letter the Rebbe does not mention that. From this he understood that they would not see one another. He knew that he would be passing on from this world.

CHESED AT THE TRAIN STATION

My brother-in-law Zelig Levin told me that on Shabbos Mevarchim, Rebbetzin Chana would stand on Kingston Avenue and watch as Anash walked to 770 to her son’s farbrengen. My brother-in-law was a young bachur at the time but she would stop him and talk to him.

She once told him that she

knew his grandfather, R’ Yisroel Neveler, well, because when she arrived in Poking on the train with many Lubavitchers, she was alone and had nobody to help her with her luggage. R’ Yisroel was schlepping his suitcases and when he noticed her, he left his suitcases and took the Rebbetzin’s luggage. He said that his two daughters would manage with his belongings but the Rebbetzin was alone. She always remembered this.

MENTIONING Z’CHUS AVOS

When I was in yechidus before I got engaged, I asked about a certain shidduch proposal. The Rebbe said: She is Yisroel Neveler’s grandchild...

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ב"ה

MY SHLICHUS IN MUSIC

By Nosson Avrohom

At age 11, Gil Akiviov was discovered to be musically talented. He appeared in a music festival for children and quickly became a star. He has spent his life composing music which comes from his heart and soul. He became acquainted with Chabad and today he is a Lubavitcher Chassid who composes Jewish music whose lyrics draw on teachings from Basi L’Gani and D’var Malchus.

If you follow what is happening in the music world, you can’t help but observe the revolution taking place along the lines that the Rebbe spoke about, that the world is ready for Geula. More and more leading singers in Eretz Yisroel, whose songs previously expressed estrangement from tradition, are dropping their galus music and producing CD’s with pure sources. Some of the songs even express longing for the Geula.

The public, which is enthusiastic over the change, is driving other singers who still haven’t changed their musical approach to embrace the new trend. If it’s what the public is buying, then they will sell it.

“Someone recently showed me an article written by a music critic in the paper *Zeman Tel Aviv* where he cynically notes the fact that if “Elokim” isn’t included in their songs, their CD won’t sell,” said R’ Gil Akiviov, a Lubavitcher singer and composer, who is one of the people leading the revolution.

Gil is someone who urged his friend Ovadia Chamama to produce his song, “Ana B’Ko’ach,” which was on top of the charts for weeks and led other singers to join this genre. He himself produced a CD that is built entirely on texts from the sources, although people around him thought it would bomb.

“People are longing for

something real and deep today,” he explains.

Gil grew up in a typical Israeli family in Petach Tikva. Art is very important to the Akiviov family. Two of his brothers are artists and his older sister plays the piano. At a young age, Gil joined the world of music and often played piano at home. He was the kid who sang for his friends at school at every opportunity. He spent hours upon hours listening to music and at a certain point he learned to play the piano.

“The main focus was on my two brothers. My parents and family didn’t take my musical talent seriously until I was 11.”

“I participated in a contest at a children’s festival in search of young talent. Thousands of kids came to be tested and I was thrilled to be accepted. I participated in forty performances of the festival throughout the country. Part of the time I sang as a soloist. I realized that I loved the field of music and that I would devote myself to it.

“I studied the piano and other instruments and composed and wrote songs. I built a studio in my house where I composed music and recorded songs.”

When Gil became of draft age, he knew he wanted to be part of the military band. He didn’t know much about Judaism. He wasn’t for it or against it. He left the army in the beginning of the 90’s and looked for a good studio that would be near his house where he could record the musical material he collected.

He went to Kfar Sirkin, which is near where he lived, and he found a studio run by R’ Nissim Molgan.

“Although he did not look like a Chabad Chassid at the time, he had the fire of a Chassid in him. We became good friends and it went way beyond a professional relationship. At that time he had just come from London and we

developed a wonderful friendship. He told me that he had gotten a big musical project and he wanted me to help him with the score. I agreed.

When we finished late at night, we went to his house. I saw that the walls of his home were decorated with pictures of the Rebbe and the Rebbe Rayatz. I began asking questions and got some answers.

“From then on, we didn’t speak only about music but also about the Rebbe and Judaism. Every once in a while he would play a song and tell me, ‘This is from the Rebbe,’ or he would mention insights or aphorisms he learned from the Rebbe’s teachings. I began to realize that there was something very deep in what he was saying. I felt that my delving into music was a sort of search for meaning. I sought to find shleimus. We had deep discussions and I felt I had discovered a wonderful world.

“He displayed astounding depth in the world of music too and he told me that it was explained in Toras HaChassidus. The more I delved into it, the more I realized that there was something special here. One day, when I arrived at the studio, I saw that a group of Chassidim had come with Avi Piamenta to record a CD of niggunim that the Rebbe had taught.

“Nissim told Piamenta to put t’fillin on with me. Avi, seeing that I was positive about it, put t’fillin on me and I felt good.

“Avi looked at me with his famous smile and said, ‘You don’t know what nachas you are causing in Heaven. For years they have waited for you to take this positive action.’ He said this candidly, with sincerity, and it made a tremendous impression on me. He gave me the feeling that I wasn’t discovering something new but was connecting

to my true self.

“When he said this to me, I was reminded of something that happened to me when I was eight years old. I had been critically injured in a car accident. A car plowed into me as I was riding my bike. I was unconscious for a while and I underwent complicated operations to enable me to return to normal life. The doctors called my recovery a medical miracle.

“I remember having the very strong feeling that I was watched from Above and this is what implanted in me then, the will to prevail. When R’ Piamenta told me that my putting on t’fillin caused nachas in Heaven, he inspired me. Sometimes we say things and don’t realize what effect they have. On the spot I resolved to put t’fillin on every day. If it really causes nachas in Heaven, I reasoned, I want to do it every day.



“Avi looked at me with his famous smile and said, ‘You don’t know what nachas you are causing in Heaven. For years they have waited for you to take this positive action.’ He said this candidly, with sincerity, and it made a tremendous impression on me. He gave me the feeling that I wasn’t discovering something new but was connecting to my true self.”

“That was the beginning. From that point on, I began learning more about the Rebbe and Chassidus. I read a lot of stories about the Baal Shem Tov and other Chabad leaders. I attended farbrengens and my talks with Nissim delved deeper.”

Some of Gil’s good friends began becoming baalei t’shuva at that time. What especially thrilled him at that time was when he realized that his religious observance did not have to

cut him off from music. On the contrary, now he had to take his talents and use them for negina.

Gil had many exciting moments; there were incidents of Divine Providence and spiritual experiences that led him to live as an observant Jew. Gil shares two of these stories:

“I have an aunt who lives in Canada, where she became a mekureves of the Rebbe and Chabad. I always knew this but it didn’t mean anything to me until I myself became involved with Chabad.

“She once came to visit Eretz Yisroel. When I told her that I was also interested in Chabad, she was glad to hear this and she said that she would bring me a dollar she had gotten from the Rebbe.

“Two weeks went by and I still did not have the dollar. I met her a few times during that time period but I sensed that she was hesitant about giving me the dollar.

“I wasn’t willing to forego the opportunity to get a dollar from the Rebbe and one of the times that I saw her, I urged her to keep her promise. She brought me the dollar.

“I don’t know how to explain it but that night I dreamt an incredible dream. I’m not the type who has dreams but that dream is etched in me. In the dream, I saw the Rebbe accompanied by another Chassid, coming towards me with a smile and with so much Ahavas Yisroel. I felt that the Rebbe was taking me under his wing and in my great excitement I said, ‘You have no idea how much I love you...’ I felt that this had to do with the dollar. Since that day, my connection to Chabad went into high gear.

“I began attending the *Tanya* class given by Rabi Yariv Rom in Petach Tikva. I also spent Shabbasos and special days with Rabbis Tuvia Bolton and Avi Piamenta of Kfar Chabad, where I attended farbrengens. The one who urged me

to take the next step was R’ Rom, who knew that I was on fire within although I looked like a ‘good Israeli’ on the outside.

“He told me, ‘It’s a pity...step on the gas – you’re standing in place,’ and he sent me to the yeshiva in Ramat Aviv, which was just starting out. From there I went to learn in Tzfas.

“Another amazing thing that happened at that time, a story that gave me much chizuk had to do with my father. He had a tumor in his esophagus and they had me come home to communicate to me how serious it was. I was worried and from what I had learned thus far, I knew that tz’daka is a mitzva that can always help. I took a large sum of money and donated it in my father’s merit.

“That day, I decided to ask for the Rebbe’s bracha for my father. I wrote a letter but instead of putting it into a volume of *Igros Kodesh*, I put it into a *Tanya*. When I opened it, I saw that it was the *Igeres HaKodesh* and the words that stood out for me on the page were, ‘sowing tzadakos – brings forth salvations.’ I was inspired with tremendous hope.”

After learning for two years in Ramat Aviv and in Tzfas, Gil met his wife, who is also a musician. She learned at Machon Alte for baalos t’shuva in Tzfas. Before he married, he went to 770. There he wrote to the Rebbe and opened to an answer which made him feel that it was like the first yechidus a Chassid has in which the Rebbe tells him what his mission in life is. The answer was in volume 18, p. 156, where the Rebbe wrote to someone who wanted to take Chabad songs and use them in a choir. The Rebbe approves the idea but brings up some caveats.

“My first songs, and those that followed, were influenced by that letter. Today, this style of music is very common among recording

artists, but at that time, it wasn't a given that a CD with songs like "Ashrei Ish" and "T'filla L'Ani" would be popular enough to sell well. That's what captivated me about Chabad; you are a musician – don't abandon your music. It's your shlichus. Elevate it and bring it to a place of truth. That is what I did after I got that letter from the Rebbe. It's the same classic pop, guitars, drums, violins, and some harp, but the words are from the sources and the style enables the depth of Chassidus to be expressed in these songs.

"The shlichus that I see in music is first, to convey the Rebbe's messages through song, and to publicize the Geula as well as be

mekarev Jews to Hashem and the purpose of Creation. I have the ability to do so and I need to use it towards positive ends. Making songs from the maamer 'Basi L'Gani,' or from the words 'to publicize to all people in the generation' from the D'var Malchus, songs that play on the popular music stations – that is my shlichus.

"There is a musician by the name of Ovadia Chamama, the one who produced 'Ana B'Ko'ach.' He was the one who helped me out, at first, with the musical arrangements for some songs. He did not understand why I was taking all the words from T'hilim, for this was a new genre of music and he thought it wouldn't be successful. Today, it is very common

for singers to produce songs from the sources.

"I began accompanying his songs on the piano and I became his musical director. I sat with him for days and explained the inyan to him and when he got it, he decided to dedicate his fifth CD to songs of Eretz Yisroel. That is what is meant by 'the world is ready for Geula' – that you can have a singer who doesn't look religious, yet he can sing songs like these and have a broad following. People want music to give them meaning in life. Everybody, all kinds of people, are looking for depth, because the world is ready for Geula."

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MIVTZA T'FILLIN

BY BALABATIM

By Nosson Avrohom

*Every week, numerous T'mimim stand on the street and visit offices and stores, putting t'fillin on passersby or their regular "customers." In this article, we focus on married men who drop everything on Friday and "go on mitzvaim." We heard from them how they started out, how they handle irate people, and some wonderful stories. **
Part 1 of 2.

R' Ben-Tzion Reider, a businessman from London, told the following amazing story:

When the Rebbe announced Mivtza T'fillin just before the Six Day War, an acquaintance wondered why the Rebbe picked t'fillin over more "universal" mitzvos, like kashrus. That year I had yechidus and I asked the Rebbe this question.

The Rebbe gave me two reasons. First, in the tractate Rosh HaShana, the Gemara says that a Jew who puts on t'fillin, even one time, is in an entirely different category. Second, the Rebbe said, "When a Jew who lives in Miami will see pictures of Jews putting t'fillin on at the Kosel, he will want to put t'fillin on too."

Several years later, in 1974, I got a phone call from an American businessman who had invested in business in England and was a client of my accounting office. The local accountant in his office asked to speak to me about a few things and he wanted to know whether I would go to Miami to meet with him.

A few weeks later I arrived in Miami late at night. We arranged to meet for breakfast the following morning and I stayed in an apartment adjacent to that of my client. In the morning, to my surprise, the client who thought I was asleep knocked at my door to wake me up. When I did not respond and he got nervous, he opened the door and found me in

tallis and t'fillin, davening Shacharis. The accountant, a Jew, arrived and we sat down to breakfast. All I had was orange juice.

The accountant asked the client why I didn't eat and I said that I only eat kosher food. The accountant seemed surprised and the client told him that he had found me davening in a tallis and "something on his head."

The accountant said, "You put on t'fillin?"

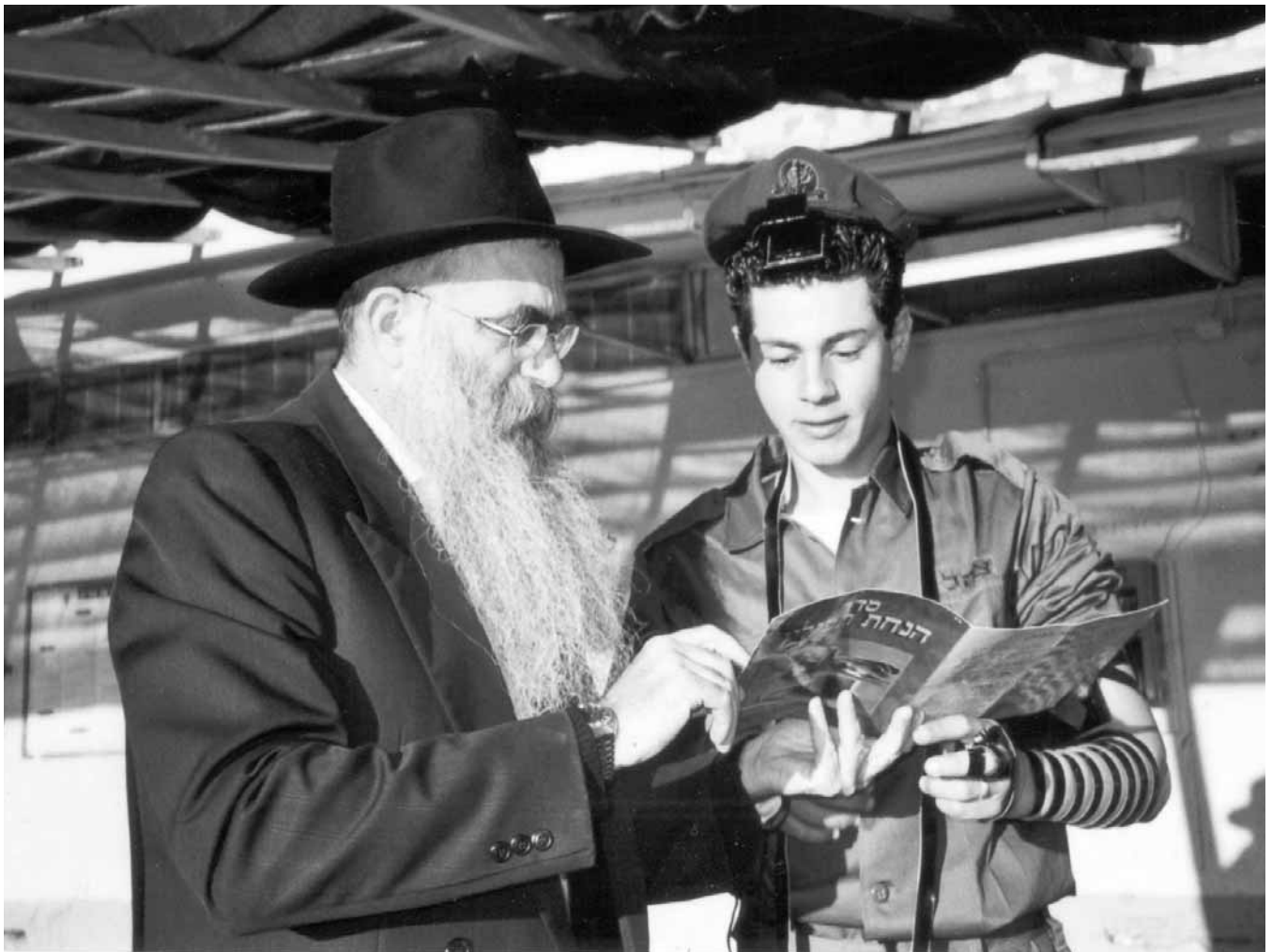
I said, "Yes, don't you?"

He said, "I haven't put on t'fillin since my bar mitzva in New York, fifty years ago. But I recently saw a picture of Jews putting on t'fillin at the Kosel and I wanted to put on t'fillin."

Those were the very words the Rebbe had said to me seven years before! After the meeting he put on t'fillin in my apartment.

* * *

There are thousands of stories like these. Just as in the early years, after the Rebbe announced Mivtza T'fillin, also today, 41 years later, thousands of men and boys are busy enabling Jews to put on t'fillin. All the people we interviewed for this article have been involved in Mivtza T'fillin since the Rebbe announced the campaign. Two of them began doing it at the end of the fifties! The four of them say that today



people are far more receptive even among groups that in the past were known for their opposition, such as members of kibbutzim.

Every week you can see numerous T'mimim out on mitzvaim, but we focused on balabatim this time, those married men with families who set everything aside on Friday in order to help people with this mitzva.

The four men we spoke to are:

Rabbi Boruch Menachem

Mendel Komer of Tzfas

Rabbi Menachem Yaakov Reinitz of Lud

Rabbi Shabtai Bloch of Tzfas

Rabbi Yosef Hartman of Nachalat Har Chabad

* * *

When did you begin doing Mivtza T'fillin?

Rabbi Komer: Ever since I got involved with Chabad in Canada and became aware of the importance of enabling Jews to put on t'fillin, as it is explained at length in the Rebbe's sichos and letters. These days I do mitzvaim on a daily basis at the Ziv hospital in Tzfas.

Back in Canada I also tried to do Mivtza T'fillin in hospitals. How come? Because one of the times I participated in a "yechida klalis" at the beginning of the 80's, the Rebbe said at the end of the yechidus that everybody should pass by to take a dollar and it could be given to tz'daka or to a shul or gemach. Then the

Rebbe added that it could also be given to a hospital. At that moment I felt the Rebbe was addressing me, for one thing, because before I became a Chassid I considered studying medicine.

In my work at the hospital, I get to do another mitzva, bikur cholim, and people are very agreeable about putting on t'fillin. When you visit a Jew who is feeling down because of his health, and you listen to him and take an interest, he doesn't refuse the t'fillin.

Rabbi Reinitz: The first time we began with Mivtza T'fillin was in 1958, when I learned in Toras Emes in Yerushalayim. That year marked ten years since the

establishment of the State and many people from all over the country went to Yerushalayim. They visited the area near our yeshiva, which was then on the border and close to the Mandelbaum Gate. This gate was a historic site.

When I saw the groups of students coming, I decided to do something and I invited them into

the yeshiva so they would hear about the Rebbe and Chabad. I'll never forget the first time I went over to the leader who led a group of kibbutznikim, dressed as I was in Yerushalmi garb and peios. I invited him to come into the yeshiva. He was stunned by the idea at first.

Later, it became a regular practice for the leaders of these

groups. The girls gathered in one room and the boys went to the beis midrash. We would buy drinks and food from Kiosk Isaac near the yeshiva. Rabbi Shmuel Halperin and Rabbi Herschel Eisenbach would speak to them about Chabad and the Rebbe. In those days, the famous Chabad niggunim were "Darkecha Elokeinu" and "Ki Anu Amecha," and we would teach them to sing these niggunim.

The highlight of the visit was their putting on t'fillin, of course. The kibbutznikim from the south and north were happy and enthusiastic about it.

A similar thing went on at the Hilula of Rashbi in Miron. We would join the T'mimim who came from the yeshiva in Lud. The Chassid R' Zushe Partisan Wilyamovsky would be waiting there for us. He would stand on the roof of one of the cars, where the police made their announcements, and in his unique style he would explain the significance of Lag B'Omer to the crowd.

We would stand down below and put t'fillin on the passersby. An anecdote that I remember – I would ask people if they wanted to put on t'fillin. The Chassid, R' Leib Cohen from Kfar Chabad said to me: Don't ask them that way because that causes them to be evasive. Just say, Yehudi, come put on t'fillin as a merit for Rashbi. I did that and got a much better response.

Today we do Mivtza T'fillin at the entrance to the main Chabad house in Lud. Many Jews put on t'fillin and even enter the Chabad house. Before we take off the t'fillin I tell them to repeat after me, "We Want Moshiach Now," and they're all happy to do so.

Rabbi Bloch: The first time I joined in Mivtza T'fillin was in

HOW CAN I WORK ON SHABBOS?!

Rabbi Reinitz relates:

I got to know a policeman by the name of Yitzchok after his father passed away. By putting t'fillin on him one time we developed a relationship. After a while, when he got more involved in religious observance, he faced a dilemma.

He was required to work according to a schedule established among the policemen at the station which included Shabbasos. Once he realized the importance of keeping Shabbos, he didn't know what to do about work. I wrote a letter with him to the Rebbe. The answer had to do with the 12 Tamuz farbrengen that was taking place at that time. I invited him to join me at the farbrengen in Shikun Chabad.

While at the farbrengen, he got a phone call from the station commander who promised to arrange work for him as an investigator for the police at Ben Gurion Airport, where the policemen do not work on Shabbos. But that wasn't all. His friends began mocking him since they didn't like the fact that he was given preferential treatment. He wrote to the Rebbe again and as we wrote he found out that since he spoke Romanian, the upper echelons at the police decided they need him to work as an immigration officer at Ben Gurion Airport, where you don't work on Shabbos and Yom Tov. He was overjoyed.

And this still wasn't all. He was an older single and he wrote to the Rebbe about finding his match. After some time, he got married to a woman whose parents live in Chevron. Their children go to Chabad schools.



1974 when I went to learn in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Kfar Chabad. A car driven by Rabbi Zalman Levin would set out and we bachurim would join him at the Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv.

These days I do Mivtza T'fillin at an old age home in Tzfas as well as by joining R' Komer in his work at the Ziv hospital. For years now, we've been doing mivtzaim at Ziv. Many of the staff have bought their own t'fillin and put them on themselves.

It's hard to say this, but people with medical problems lying in the hospital realize how nothing we are in the face of Divine Providence.

I'll never forget this story. One time, I went into one of the hospital rooms and a soldier was lying there with a slipped disc. He said he was sorry he could not put on t'fillin because he couldn't move. I didn't give up on him and after I worked on convincing him, he allowed me to put t'fillin on him as he lay in bed.

When he took off the t'fillin I went to other rooms in that wing and when I finished my rounds and went back to his room I was shocked to see him sitting on the bed with friends from his unit who came to visit him. When he saw me, he jumped up in excitement. He said he could not explain it but after he put on t'fillin his pain subsided.

Rabbi Hartman: I did Mivtza T'fillin long before the Rebbe officially announced it. It was 1959 and I was a talmid in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lud, which I went to from the Hesder Yeshiva in Kfar HaRoeh. We would go every Erev Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur to put t'fillin on with passersby on the streets of Tel Aviv. I remember that one year, Lag B'Omer night,



Rabbi Komer:
Being involved in mivtzaim brings bracha and success to the person involved with it, more than one can imagine. When a Chassid goes on mivtzaim, a man's emissary is like himself, and you can feel how the Rebbe is with you and guiding you.

we went with Rabbi Dovid Chanzin, Rabbi Berel Karasik, and the driver Yisroel Kook, to

Miron.

The police there did not have loudspeakers and if they had to announce anything they used our loudspeakers. We would call out to the masses, inviting them to put on t'fillin. Remember that in those days, most of the people who went to Miron were traditional.

Later on, in 1967, I lived in Kfar Chabad. From there we went every week to Tel Aviv and set up a stand near the small shul located opposite the big shul. As we traveled by train we would put t'fillin on with the passengers so they would at least say Shma Yisroel.

I'll never forget this story. It was two years after the Six Day War. I went over to dusty armored soldiers who had obviously just come from the Sinai. I went over to the toughest guy, a kibbutznik whose views were anti-religious, and asked him to put on t'fillin. He said, "When you go to the army, I'll put on t'fillin." He was upset and I said he was right. When he heard that, he instantly calmed down.

Once he calmed down I told him, "I agree to make a deal with you. We'll go to the army and you put on t'fillin. Do you really agree?"

He looked at me in astonishment and agreed. Just that day, before I left the house, I had gotten orders in the mail to report to the Reserves in Beloza, a dangerous outpost, especially during that War of Attrition, when many soldiers had fallen there.

When he saw it, he was shocked but he couldn't get out of it. His friends told him: You promised! He put t'fillin on first and the others followed.

For a long time I did mivtzaim at the army transport base [see article in issue #573] near Kiryat

He said, “I haven’t put on t’fillin since my bar mitzva in New York, fifty years ago. But I recently saw a picture of Jews putting on t’fillin at the Kosel and I wanted to put on t’fillin.” Those were the very words the Rebbe had said to me seven years before!

Malachi until it closed. Now we set up a stand in the center of town as well as at the entrance to the main high school.

How does a man with a large family find the time to go on mitzvaim regularly?

Rabbi Komer: It would be like someone saying, I have children to care for and I have to help out at home and so I can’t set times to learn Torah. It says in Chassidus, and the Rebbe

mentioned it often, that when you are involved in communal work, your mind and heart are refined a thousand times over. That means that when a man goes out on mitzvaim for an hour a week, it refines his mind and heart and in one hour of learning he can grasp the learning of a thousand hours!

Chazal say that more than the balabus does for the poor man, the poor man does for the balabus. Being involved in mitzvaim brings bracha and success to the person involved with it, more than one can imagine. When a Chassid goes on mitzvaim, a man’s emissary is like himself, and you can feel how the Rebbe is with you and guiding you.

When I was a new immigrant from Canada and my Hebrew wasn’t fluent I remember participating in a farbrengen in which the Rebbe complained about a shliach being asked a question and his not answering. “What are you afraid about?” asked the Rebbe. “Think for a minute and answer.” That’s what I do. When they ask me a question and I don’t know the answer, I think a bit and the answer comes to me and it is the right one. That’s not called having the Rebbe go along with you?

Rabbi Reinitz: When I had small children at home I had less time to be involved with mitzvaim, but even then, I helped a bit at home and in my free time I went on mitzvaim. My wife and I were convinced that my going on

mitzvaim brought bracha, parnasa, and health to the house. When a Chassid goes on mitzvaim, he can sense the “measure for measure,” how the Rebbe gives him an abundance of brachos.

I can testify to it. We have a large family and although my wife and I worked at ordinary jobs, we were able to support the family and marry them off with dignity. We always saw help from Hashem. The Rebbe pays back.

Rabbi Bloch: A Chassid ought to have the inner motivation to go on mitzvaim despite the difficulties. I got a lot of answers and encouragement from the Rebbe to go on mitzvaim, so considerations about helping out at home did not stand in my way.

As for Anash in general, it’s important to bring this up and to make the younger generation aware of the importance of mitzvaim. It depends a lot on the chinuch in the home and what sort of role model the child had. In my humble opinion, the Rebbe established that we have to go on mitzvaim and this is one of the things that has to do with the Rebbe-Chassid relationship. There’s no question that when someone goes on mitzvaim, in addition to this connecting him to the Rebbe, he merits to see blessing in his work and his children grow up in an atmosphere in which Abba goes on mitzvaim. Of course this has an effect on them.

[To be continued be”H]

**ADD IN ACTS
OF GOODNESS & KINDNESS
TO BRING MOSHIACH NOW!**

UP FROM THE DEPTHS

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz

Moshiach himself comes from the depths... Why is this so? So that Moshiach can elevate and rectify all levels, including the lowest of all to the peak of holiness and the Geula.

In several places in Chassidus (*Torah Ohr B'Reishis 4a*) and in sichos of the Rebbe (*Likkutei Sichos* vol. 18, p. 33 ff.) the analogy of a lever is used. In order to lift something heavy, you use a lever to lift it from underneath. If you would lift a building from the middle, the foundation would remain below.

In this column, we'll see how shluchim are able to "lift the building from its foundation" and be mekarev Jews, even those who are in faraway places, physically as well as spiritually.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM A DIVER?

I'll begin with a story from the mashpia R' Mendel Futerfas. During his many years in jail and exile in Russia, R' Mendel met all sorts of people. Many of them told him their life stories and from every story, R' Mendel learned a lesson in avodas Hashem.

One day, R' Mendel met a prisoner who used to be an outstanding soldier in the Russian army who served in the navy. His job was to dive deep under water, swim around and examine a sunken ship, commit every detail of it to

memory and then come up and report what he saw.

Then other divers would go down and tie ropes to every protuberance, based on his description. They would tie all the ropes to a huge balloon which they inflated, thus lifting the sunken ship to the surface of the water.

R' Mendel would say: This is how Moshiach will come. All the Rebbe's shluchim send out ropes, which are tied to every corner of the globe. The ropes are connected to the Rebbe. When the moment of Geula comes, the Rebbe will lift

himself and raise up all the Jews, from all over the world, to the true and complete Redemption, just like a lever lift from the foundation.

Moshiach himself comes from the depths, as the Midrash relates that Dovid HaMelech came from a family whose origin was Lot and his daughters, from Yehuda and Tamar, his daughter-in-law, from Boaz who married Rus the Moavite and from Yishai the tzaddik who shunned his son Dovid. Why is this so? So that Moshiach can elevate and rectify all levels, including the lowest of all to the peak of holiness and the Geula.

SHLIACH OSEH SHLIACH – UP TO 100 SHLUCHIM

A Tamim from Ramat Aviv is achieving incredible things in India. This is not the place to describe the decadence of India and its multitude of houses of idol worship. Only the Rebbe can find the shluchim to raise



The building where programs take place in Kasardivi, India

the sparks and errant souls from the bottom of the barrel, as in the analogy of the lever.

Ariel Rosenthal, a student in the Chabad yeshiva in Ramat Aviv relates:

“One year ago I decided to go to India with a friend named Shneur to find Jew in places where there are no Chabad houses. We went to Kasul, which is a magnificent place and a popular tourist spot. The shliach there, Danny Winderbaum, went to Eretz Yisroel for a few weeks and Tomer Gordo went to fill in for him. Tomer told us about Kasardivi, another tourist village located 20 hours away where there were many Israeli tourists but no Chabad presence.”

Ariel and Tomer went there and set up shop in a building in the village. They let the word out among the tourists that they could come for t'fillos and shiurim. At that point, neither Ariel nor Shneur were rabbis or shluchim; they simply combined touring with spreading Judaism. Nevertheless, many tourists came and they held conversations long into the night. They all knew that a Chabad house had been opened under the administration of Ariel Rosenthal and Tomer Gordo.

The next morning, a wealthy Canadian Jew showed up, a man around fifty. He told them that he was in that village for years and his dream was to buy a building for a Chabad house.

Well, within a few days a beautiful and spacious Chabad house was opened which included a huge yard. Unfortunately, at a certain point the Canadian regretted his investment and he took his house back, but shluchim continue to work in the village and even hosted a public seider for hundreds of tourists.

Now, Tomer divides his time between work with the tourists and fundraising to support the new

Chabad house in Kasardivi.

A GAMBLING PARLOR THAT TURNED INTO A SHUL

A few years ago, the people of the Chabad house in Dimona were looking for a suitable building for a Chabad shul. Rabbi Yisroel Gliss, the shliach in Dimona, scoured the neighborhood and found a large building built over a bomb shelter. He spoke with the landlord and found out that the building is used as a gambling parlor.

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R' Gliss explained to the landlord that if he gave the building for a Chabad shul, in the future, when his deeds would be weighed on a scale, all the cement and iron with which the bomb shelter was built would be placed together with his good deeds.

The man agreed and in exchange for a token fee, the gambling parlor was turned into a Chabad shul. Since by lifting a building from underneath the entire building is raised up, the next part of this story is no less elevating. The landlord's daughter began to take an interest in Judaism. She bought a siddur and

began keeping mitzvos.

Following a house call that R' Gliss made to her family, she began davening “at my father's place.” She went on to study at Machon Alte in Tzfas and married a Lubavitcher Chassid. As the Sages put it: From a deep pit to a high place.

THE LOWEST – IN TERMS OF SECURITY

Certain shluchim amaze us by how much they accomplish despite the difficulties and special circumstances. When you look at the work being done by the Chabad house of Sderot, it's hard to believe what is going on there. The conditions they work under are just not to be believed. The situation is so bad that even wealthy people, who used to make donations to the Chabad house, are standing in line to get food packages and assistance from the Chabad house.

The municipal relief agency can't handle the burden. The social workers stand and cry together with the needy, who tell them their stories. The Chabad house, run by Rabbi Zev Pizem, bravely bears the load and gladly and courageously helps, under fire, all those in need.

Today it's very popular to identify with and support the residents of Sderot, but we Chabad Chassidim have a brother there, a shliach of the Rebbe who represents us all. He is there for us and in our place. Let's help him out.

This is not the purpose of the column, yet I can't help but ask the dear readers to send a letter to the Chabad house in Sderot with words of encouragement, and if possible, money. Be a partner in elevating the world from the low and difficult place it is in now. Who knows, maybe from Heaven they will look down and see Chabad Chassidim helping out their brothers on the battlefield and have mercy on a pitiful people.

REB MENDEL: I HAVE NO CHOICE, I HAVE TO TELL IT

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Reinitz

*Every year, as 7 Tamuz approaches, R' Mendel Futerfas' yahrtzait, sweet memories of this legendary Chassid come to mind. His farbrengens, stories and sayings contributed tremendously to the chinuch of bachurim and men in Samarkand and many others in the western world. * R' Hillel Zaltzman tells us of R' Mendel's farbrengens.*

I had the privilege of farbrenging for many hours with R' Mendel, when he was in Samarkand. I visited him once every two weeks and we would sit and farbreng, one on one, for hours.

R' Mendel was a rare combination of a man of goodness and kindness, as well as a man of truth and kabbalas ol. He could not tolerate *blitos* (displays of piety) and superficial expressions were anathema to him.

There was a person in Samarkand who was punctilious in mitzvos but he did so in a showy manner. R' Mendel once said about

him in annoyance and disgust: That he's frum is good, but he is overly religious. R' Mendel said that when frumkait is obvious to all, it stinks.

R' Mendel himself was a role model of what he demanded of others. He was a Chassid p'nimi through and through. Although he was a baal mesirus nefesh and was punctilious in mitzvos and worked on his middos, on iskafia, etc., he always considered himself a plain Jew. He once told me about himself: Am I a Chassid? I just play the role of a Chassid...

It was only when we heard his ideas and aphorisms that we were

able to discern, between the lines, his incredible devotion to the truth and kabbalas ol. When he spoke about the importance of kabbalas ol, he would strongly censure us about our lack of kabbalas ol. He would always conclude with: How does the Rebbe describe a Chassid in his *yoman* (daily diary, which is how he referred to the *HaYom Yom*)? That he knows who he is ... and his deficiencies ... **and increases in discipline in the way of kabbalas ol!**

He would repeat that last line again and again: **and increases in discipline in the way of kabbalas ol!**

WHERE IS MY KABBALAS OL?

When he told us off, he did not exclude himself. He would often tell how he also needed to improve in the areas he was talking about. One time, when he spoke about the need for kabbalas ol, he included himself in the reproof:

"R' Berel Yaffe, (a Lubavitcher Chassid who lived in Samarkand and was known for his precision in Chassidic stories) once asked me to sit and listen to his stories and I didn't want to. I thought to myself:

A pity to waste my time on listening to stories.

“R’ Berel once caught hold of me and forced me to listen to a story. After hearing the story I understood how much you can lose by not listening to Chassidim who are older than you. R’ Berel is a Lubavitcher Chassid and he is older than me. Why didn’t I want to listen to him? Where was my kabbalas ol?”

This is the story that R’ Mendel heard from R’ Berel:

During World War I, many Jews were drafted into the armies of the warring nations. There was a young Jewish man who was drafted into the Russian army and served in Odessa, where his father-in-law’s brother lived.

After some time, his father-in-law received a letter from his brother in Odessa in which his brother told him that he had seen his son-in-law walking around with a girl. The father-in-law was devastated by this terrible news and although he wasn’t a Chassid, he went to the Rebbe Rashab, for he had heard of his greatness. He told the Rebbe about the letter he had received from his brother but the Rebbe did not react.

Some time later, he received another letter from his brother in Odessa in which his brother wrote that his

son-in-law continued to fraternize with that girl.

According to inquiries he had made, he had found out that the girl had an uncle in America and the couple was planning on fleeing there together.

The father-in-law was distraught over this news. He rushed to the Rebbe and asked the Rebbe what to do. If the couple fled, his daughter would remain an aguna for the rest of her life! The Rebbe did not respond. He just dismissed him by saying everything would be fine.

The father-in-law couldn’t understand the Rebbe’s equanimity and he returned home brokenhearted. A short time later he received another letter from his brother who wrote that he heard that the son-in-law and the girl had bought tickets to sail to America.

This time, the father-in-law went to the Rebbe with the letter and asked, “Rebbe, why don’t you advise me as to what to do?”

He placed the letter on the table and said, “Here is the letter. You can read what my brother said for yourself.”

The Rebbe moved the letter off his desk and said, “I hate reading other’s letters. These kinds of things happen to soldiers. Everything will be all right.”

The end of the story was that the couple boarded the ship which left for America, but at one of the stops the ship made along the way, the son-in-law disembarked and missed the ship when it left. Military police caught him and he was punished for deserting the army. After he finished his sentence, he returned home to his wife and remained a religious Jew for the rest of his days.

KABBALAS OL FOR THE DOCTOR

When we spoke at farbrengens about iskafia, which Chassidus demands, he said, “If only we had the kabbalas ol to do what the doctor said.”

In other words, we are not even holding by that low level of kabbalas ol.

“I” WITH BITTUL!

I once spoke with R’ Mendel about communal work regarding something I was involved with. In discussing it with him I said, “I did,” and “I said.” After a few minutes, R’ Mendel stopped me with a reproving look and said: Every two words you say “I” three times...

I continued to talk and since I was talking about something I was directly involved with, I wasn’t able to avoid the word “I.” Each time I used it, R’ Mendel stopped me and said: Again you’re saying “I.” Stop saying I!

I apologized and said: I’m talking about myself and in order to tell you, I have to say I!

R’ Mendel smiled and said: Right, sometimes you



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have to say I, but even then, the “I” doesn’t have to be noticeable. It has to be with bittul!

YES AND NO ARE EQUAL

One time I went to visit him, R’ Mendel told me: I wrote to the Rebbe that I submitted a request to leave Russia and once again, I was refused. In the answer I received, the Rebbe demanded very hard avoda: that the avoda of a Chassid has to be as the Baal Shem Tov said – that yes and no are equal to him. That means that I have to accept the refusal with the same joy I would have if they let me go!

In that letter, the Rebbe encouraged him not to despair, for in the end he would get out of Russia. When I went to congratulate him over receiving the visa, he reminded me of the Rebbe’s letter and said: Nu, it’s a very difficult avoda, to accept the refusal with the same feelings as the visa.

NU...

R’ Mendel once said to me that when you reach the age of 56 (Nun, Vav), the letters that spell “nu,” it’s a hint from Above. They are saying: Nu... In other words, when will you do t’shuva already?

A BACHUR OF OURS DOES NOT GIVE IN

A shidduch was suggested to a bachur. The girl’s mother told her daughter that he was a Chassidish bachur who was very particular about his mitzva observance. Since girls who weren’t quite Chassidic

went to the movies, her mother suggested that she tell the bachur that she was willing to accept all his religious practices but she still wanted to go to the movies.

The bachur consulted with my father who told him that they say in the name of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev that depression is not a sin but it can lead a person to places that the worst sin can’t lead him... Similarly, immersing in a mikva for a man isn’t a mitzva but what immersion in a mikva can lead to, the greatest mitzva can’t lead him to...

It’s the same thing here, said my father. You can say about the movies that going there may not be a sin. But where going to movies can lead to, the greatest sin can’t lead to.

The bachur thought perhaps he should compromise, since in those days, it was hard to find a religious girl, especially one who was willing to do everything the way he wanted, except for movies. When he discussed it with R’ Mendel, R’ Mendel reacted strongly: A bachur of ours cannot agree to compromises.

The bachur tried to explain, but R’ Mendel maintained that a bachur of ours cannot agree to compromises, it makes no difference about what.

WHILE LEARNING CHASSIDUS

R’ Mendel had a shiur with R’ Abba Pliskin in *Likkutei Torah*. R’ Mendel once told me that on more than one occasion, as they sat to learn a maamer, they opened the *Likkutei Torah*, learned the beginning of the maamer, and then a few minutes into the maamer they recalled the suffering of a fellow Chassid. They would discuss how to help him. Then they would remember that they were in the middle of a maamer and would continue learning.

A few minutes later, they would remember another Lubavitcher who also needed help. They stopped learning and discussed how to help him. That’s how they learned, with a few lines of the maamer and a few minutes discussing how to help people, until they got halfway through the maamer and it was time to daven.

“But while learning the maamer we managed to arrange several things,” concluded R’ Mendel with satisfaction.

HOW DO YOU PREVENT A BACHUR FROM DAVENING IN A MINYAN ON SHABBOS?

In Samarkand, the bachurim and young men would daven in a secret minyan that moved from place to place every few Shabbasos. R’ Mendel participated in this minyan as well as the yeshiva bachurim. We tried to

keep the existence of the yeshiva from becoming public knowledge.

There were times we had to make painful decisions. One Shabbos Mevarchim, the minyan was in my brother's house. In the middle of davening there were knocks at the gate. My sister-in-law went out to see who it was and saw that it was an older bachur who had become somewhat distant from the Chassidim.

He put on t'fillin and was shomer Shabbos, but he was cold when it came to Chassidishkait. Consequently, we were afraid to have him see the yeshiva bachurim. If we let him in, we'd have to hide

the bachurim and they would lose out on the minyan. So we decided that my sister-in-law would tell him that there was no minyan and that she had no idea where it was.

When R' Mendel heard about this, he was very upset and he said: How could you do that? The bachurim are occupied with Torah and avoda throughout the week, but you are concerned that they have a minyan on Shabbos too. Yet here comes a Jew who wants to daven with a minyan once a week, and you turned him away?!

In those days of terror, it wasn't always possible to make the right decision.

MORE RELIGIOUS WHEN YOUNGER

Although my father was older than R' Mendel by fourteen years, they were friends. R' Mendel once said to my father: Abrashke (Russian for Avremel), tell me the truth. When were you more religious, in your youth or now?

My father thought a bit and said: Definitely in my youth.

R' Mendel said: Me too. What's the reason for that?

My father said: The Alter Rebbe writes in chapter 13 of *Tanya* that when a person uses his animal soul for eating and drinking and other physical things, it makes him coarser.

R' Mendel liked this answer and said: You're right. I never thought of that.

AVERSION FOR A TIE

When R' Mendel saw me in a tie, he told me that after his wedding they suggested that he wear a tie. He had occasion to watch an old man, over eighty, trying to tie his tie. He extended his neck and worked hard on getting it just so.

This sight, said R' Mendel, was so disgusting to me that it caused me to have an aversion for ties.

BEFORE 120 AND AFTER

R' Mendel once told me: Some worry about what will be with them after 120. In jail in Siberia they davened that at least they should merit Jewish burial.

Believe me, I never worried what would become of me after 120; they'll do whatever they want. Instead of thinking what will be *after* 120, a Jew ought to be busy thinking: What will I do *until* 120?

WIPE IT OFF AND CARRY ON

There have been Chassidim who,



This sight, said R' Mendel, was so disgusting to me that it caused me to have an aversion for ties.

during farbrengens, told it as it is, without sugarcoating it. R' Zalman Moshe HaYitzchaki, for example, would often employ a spicy vocabulary and manner of speech. When he would sit on Shabbos and farbreng and would see men coming from home after they had eaten their Shabbos meal, he would say: Here they come, a pile of cockroaches...

One of those men once asked him: Why do you speak that way?

R' Zalman Moshe replied: It bothers you that I talk this way but what you do doesn't bother you?

R' Mendel, in addition to his pleasing aphorisms, had a sharp way of talking too, when he needed it. R' Moshe Nisselevitch, by way of contrast, was extremely eidel and never uttered an improper word. He would often criticize R' Mendel for his style.

At one farbrengen, R' Mendel turned to R' Moshe and said: I want to tell a story but I'm afraid that you will say, once again, that it's mockery. What should I do?

R' Moshe said: So don't say it!

A few minutes went by and R' Mendel said: It's a story with a good message and I want to tell it.

R' Moshe said: Restrain yourself!

In the end, R' Mendel couldn't hold back and he said: I have no choice, I have to tell it:

A Jew once took a long time with Kaparos and so, when he circled his head with the rooster, it left droppings on his head. What was he to do?

R' Moshe couldn't keep back his smile and he looked at R' Mendel in anticipation of the continuation of the story.

Said R' Mendel:

There's isn't much you can do. You have to wipe it off and carry on...

R' Mendel explained: When a Chassid is in the middle of davening, in the middle of avoda, and he suddenly has extraneous thoughts, "the rooster left droppings on his head," he has to know that there is no point in fighting the Evil Inclination. He simply has to wipe it up, without being fazed, and carry on.

LISHMA OR NOT LISHMA

When we spoke of communal work, R' Mendel told me: Don't say that you are doing it *lishma* (for the sake of Heaven). You should know that someone who works on behalf of others "l'sheim Shamayim," doesn't last. How many times can you work lishma?

On the other hand, if you work

in order to get a reward, you'll do it all your life.

Of course, R' Mendel did not mean that we should work for the sake of honor or reward, but that we shouldn't think that we are big tzaddikim who do everything for the sake of Heaven.

ARGUE WITHOUT HATRED

At one of the last farbrengens before R' Mendel left, some loaded topics came up and there were lively arguments about them. R' Mendel sat and observed from the side as the argument went on, and kept quiet, as though he wasn't noticing what was going on.

After a long period of silence, R' Mendel said to us: Keep arguing; you don't have to agree with one another. But don't hate one another! Arguing bring out the truth, but it must be done with love.

We felt that this was R' Mendel's parting blessing to us before he left Russia.

THE BEST YEARS

After I came to 770 I met R' Mendel and we began talking about our work in Russia. R' Mendel suddenly asked me: Hilke, what do you say – how does it seem to you here?

I told him honestly: It's all wonderful but it was better there.

R' Mendel agreed with me and said: What's the question? My best years were in jail.

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THE ARIZAL'S UNFATHOMABLE WISDOM: IF ALL THE OCEANS WERE INK...

*“If all the oceans were ink and all the heavens were parchment, and all the reeds were quills, it would not be enough to write my wisdom and teachings.” * Rabbi Yitzchok Luria Ashkenazi – yahrtzait 5 Av.*

HIS BIRTH

Although we don't have a detailed family tree for the Arizal, we know that he was a descendent of holy people, rabbanim and great sages. The family name was Luria, because in earlier generations they lived in France on the banks of the Luria River.

His father, Shlomo, went to Eretz Yisroel with his great teacher, Rabbi Klonimos, who was great in Nigleh and Nistar and they joined the small Ashkenazic community in Yerushalayim. Since they originated from Germany, his father became known as Ashkenazi. R' Shlomo married a woman from the Francis family,

an illustrious Sephardic family.

Their son Yitzchok was born in Yerushalayim in 1534. The legend is that Eliyahu HaNavi came in person to his bris and he chose the name Yitzchok and blessed him that he would reveal secrets of the Torah and disseminate them. He was later called by the acronym ARI, which stands for Ashkenazi Rabbi Yitzchok. His full name was Rabbi Yitzchok Luria Ashkenazi.

R' Shlomo died young when his son was a boy. Rabbi Klonimos supported the family materially and spiritually and the Ari learned Torah from him. After the passing of Rabbi Klonimos the

family remained without a source of income and they had to go to Egypt, where his wealthy uncle, R' Mordechai Francis, his mother's brother, lived.

The Ari learned with the great Radvaz and with Rabbi Betzalel Ashkenazi, author of the *Shita Mekubetzes*. At the age of fifteen, he married his cousin, the daughter of R' Mordechai Francis. He spent years in isolation as he studied the secrets of the Torah.

When his son turned three, the Arizal made a short visit to Eretz Yisroel and davened at the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Miron, where he cut his son's hair and stayed there three days. It is from him that we have the custom of cutting boys' hair at age three at the gravesite of Rashbi.

Upon his return to Egypt, when he was 36, Eliyahu came to him and told him he was soon to leave the world, and the Heavenly court said the time had come for him to reveal and spread the wellsprings of his teachings to the world. He was to go to Tzfas to reveal his teachings.

After about twenty years in Egypt, he left with his wife, children, and widowed mother and settled in Tzfas. He was no longer supported by his wealthy uncle, father-in-law, and he opened a business, spending a few hours at work each day in order to support his family. The rest of his time was devoted to Torah and mitzvos.

Tzfas was a vibrant spiritual city, full of sages. It was the City of the Kabbalists, where men studied Nigleh and Sod. When the Ari came, he joined a group of kabbalists who were disciples of the great Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, known by the acronym RaMaK.

A few months after he arrived in Tzfas, the Ramak passed away on 23 Tamuz 5700/1570. Before he died, he told his disciples that his successor would open channels of kabbalistic bounty that were never revealed hitherto. The Ramak did not say who his successor was; he only said “the one who merits to see the pillar of G-dly cloud going before my bier is the one to whom G-d spoke, to lead the flock.”

The Ari was young and new to the group and unknown to the mekubalim, but he was the one who saw the pillar of cloud, and based on where he saw the cloud rest, he indicated to the rest of the holy brotherhood where the burial should take place.

After the funeral, the kabbalists crowned the Arizal as their leader and he led them for two years until the day of his passing on the fifth of Av, 1572, when he was only 38.

INCREDIBLE GREATNESS

The Arizal's students describe him in unprecedented terms of praise, saying:

“A giant among giants of all

the generations, pious, modest, fear of Heaven and love of G-d filled his heart. He had all positive qualities and good deeds. An enormous tzaddik and incredible genius in Mishna, Talmud, Agados, Midrash, etc., and on everything he knew several explanations in *p'shat*, *remez*, *drush*, and *sod*. All these wisdoms were always ready at hand at any time.

“He merited that from Heaven they opened all the wellsprings of wisdom for him in prophecy and ruach ha'kodesh. Eliyahu HaNavi revealed deep secrets of the mysteries of the Creator and Creation, *Maaseh B'Reishis* and *Maaseh Merkava*. The souls of tzaddikim in the Supernal world

***“It would take me
80 years to teach
you what I saw up
Above in a few
hours.”***

revealed secrets of the Torah to him.”

He once said to his students, “It would take me 80 years to teach you what I saw up Above in a few hours.” He also said, “If all the oceans were ink and all the heavens were parchment, and all the reeds were quills, it would not be enough to write my wisdom and teachings.”

MIRACLE WORKER

The Arizal wrought miracles, healed the sick, and helped the needy achieve salvation. He sometimes used G-dly powers to strike the Jews' enemies with blindness.

He saw that which is hidden.

He knew the language of birds and the conversations of trees and grass, the language of angels and the language of the candle flames, and from them he knew secrets and the future.

He saw souls when they left bodies and in cemeteries and when they went up every Erev Shabbos to Gan Eden. He spoke to souls and spirits of earlier incarnations.

Being reincarnated is an opportunity the Heavenly court gives a person, after he dies, to rectify what he did wrong in his life and to make up for the deeds he did not do in his lifetime. The soul is sent back down to this world, being born in a new body.

The Arizal was great in this wisdom. He was able to discern the secret of everybody and everything's previous incarnations and even knew how to help souls achieve their rectification. He met with thousands of lost souls that wandered endlessly, souls that were unwanted even in Gehinom due to the great filth their souls accumulated in their lifetime. They went to him because they heard of his great holiness and asked him to rectify them.

HE READ FOREHEADS

He knew a person from the smell of his clothes. He could read faces and palms and interpret dreams. He told people what they did previously, what they did in the privacy of their rooms and what they thought; what sin they did in a previous incarnation and what they had come to this world to correct.

With his holy vision he saw that which is hidden. When he looked at a person's face he knew what they were thinking as well as the good deeds and sins they did from the day they were born and whose company they kept and

where they had been. He would tell them the rectification and t'shuva they needed. He gave each one a specific tikkun in accordance with their soul's source as rooted in Adam.

When he looked at a person's forehead he saw what his soul would learn in Gan Eden at night, because at night, when neshamos ascend to give an accounting about what they did that day, they also study Torah until the person wakes up. The Arizal would look at someone's forehead after sunset and know what his soul would study up Above and would tell the person that before going to sleep he should study that portion.

THE ARIZAL'S TEACHINGS

The Arizal's teachings are vast. They were recorded by his close disciple Rabbi Chaim Vital and his son and spiritual successor, Rabbi Shmuel Vital; Rabbi Yaakov Tzemach; and Rabbi Meir Paprash. His teachings are contained in dozens of deep and wondrous s'farim. In addition, hundreds and thousands of commentaries were written on the

Ari's teachings.

The teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples and disciples' disciples are an ongoing explanation of the Arizal's teachings.

WHEN NOT TO LOOK

Rabbi Chaim Vital related:

One Shabbos I had strong pains in my eyes and it lasted for two months. There was no disease or medical problem with my eyes, so I asked the Arizal what it was about. He gave me two reasons for the pain. One reason was that I hadn't had the proper kavana when I recited Kiddush Friday night. (Kiddush is a segula for illuminating the eyes.)

Another reason he gave was: Throughout the davening you gaze at me. There are three sections of the davening where I have fearsome kavanos and it is not a good time to look at me, when I recite Shma, at Modim, and when I say, "Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh" in K'dusha.

The next day I refrained from looking at his face during these three times and was immediately healed.

BRINGING THE GEULA IN HIS TIME

In Rabbi Chaim Vital's introduction to his *Eitz Chaim* he writes:

Hashem did a wondrous kindness with us and sent the Ari from Heaven. He is like Rashbi in his generation. He revealed a little of his tremendous, wonderful wisdom that was not revealed since the days of Rashbi. Some of his ways and wonders that I personally saw were shocking; they had not been seen since the days of the Tanaim!

In *Shivchei HaAri* he says:

He was sent by G-d to bring merit to the generation and to illuminate the world with the light of the wisdom of the Zohar in its true meaning. His modesty caused him not to live long in Eretz Yisroel and he revealed his wisdom for only two years. If we had merited it, and he had been here for five years, he would have brought the entire world to complete t'shuva and the Geula would have happened in his days.

Sources: Shaar HaMitzvos on Parshas VaEschanan, Eikev, Shivchei HaAri, Shem HaG'dolim of the Chida, Kisvuni L'Doros, HaShabbos B' Kabbala U'B'Chassidus p. 199. I thank my son Boruch Yehuda for his assistance.

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A CHABAD RAV, NO 'ORDINARY' RAV

Interview by Nosson Avrohom

*The concept of “Chabad rabbanim” has expanded over the years. If in the not so distant past, Chabad rabbanim were rabbanim of Chassidishe k’hillos, in recent years there has been a quiet revolution. More and more Chassidishe young men are being appointed to important positions as rabbanim of cities, yishuvim, neighborhoods, and even of k’hillos that are not necessarily Chassidic. * Beis Moshiach spoke with three Lubavitcher rabbanim who serve as rabbis of yishuvim and moshavim in the north and south of Eretz Yisroel, and discussed their work, the difficulties they have to contend with, and the challenges they face. * Part 3 of 3*

[Continued from last issue]

Rabbi Lifsh: Today, ten years after we arrived, the moshav has grown and other groups have settled here. There are many more people who daven. It is no longer the intimate feeling we had

at first. We don’t hide anything and we speak about Moshiach openly. People know who Moshiach is and they know the words to Yechi. A few times a year we bring groups of men to liven things up. If one of the members of the group won’t start

singing Yechi, one of the yishuv members will!

There is no problem with talking about who Moshiach is. If people know you as a normal person, they’ll accept everything you say. In our community we have very wealthy people, businessmen, important officials, a general in the army, and they all readily accept it.

It’s easy to explain about Moshiach today. People relate to it and to a certain extent, they are just waiting for us to explain it. Just look at how many people want to write to the Rebbe today, and who actually see miracles and wonders.

There is a man here at the yishuv who helps me every year with the Menorah lighting and is very close with us. One day, his wife called and said that her husband has a kidney stone and he was in bad shape. He was hospitalized and the doctors operated twice but were unable to remove the stone because it was too small. They also injected him with something to dissolve the stone, but it hadn’t helped and he was feeling awful. He called me that day and I didn’t recognize his voice since it was so weak. He asked me to ask the Rebbe for a bracha for him and I did so.

The answer I opened to was in volume 8, where the Rebbe writes about kidney stones. He said not

PANELISTS

RABBI YOSEF CHAIM ROSENBLATT

Rav of the District Council of the Lower Galil and Yishuv Givat Avnei

RABBI TZEMACH AVROHOM

Rav of Yishuv Yinov in the Sharon

RABBI SHLOMO LIFSH

Rav of Yishuv Kfar Achim near Kiryat Malachi

to rush to operate but to drink the appropriate liquids to dissolve it. I immediately called Dr. Tal Nir and he told me that the best thing to drink is parsley juice.

I rushed to get him parsley juice and brought it to the hospital. A week later I met him riding his bike in the yishuv. When he saw me he shouted, "After you brought me the parsley, the stone came out immediately." He told this story at the Moshiach Seuda that year.

How successful are you in teaching Chassidus and Chassidic conduct?

Rabbi Avrohom: That's the difference between a rav and a rav who is a shliach. When you

realize that you're on shlichus, namely that you are there to transform another spot on the globe and prepare it for Moshiach, you get kochos from the Rebbe that help you overcome difficulties.

There is a sicha in which the Rebbe explains why moshavim and villages are the lowest "yerida ba'tachtonim." The Rebbe explains that a town has a certain definition. A certain number of people must live there in order to be called a town. The Rambam explains that a town is a place where 120 people live and there are ten professionals such as a doctor and judge. To be designated a moshav or village, you don't need a certain number of people.

The Rebbe spoke about Rabbi Zeira of Kfar Chanin. Why do we care where he came from? The answer is in order to teach us, who can live in a village? Only someone who is "zeira," small. And this is in order to make a dira ba'tachtonim for Hashem.

A rav who is not a shliach can work in a moshav only on a very small scale. He will give shiurim, walk first at funerals, speak at

memorials, and officiate at weddings. Maybe he'll prepare chassanim for their weddings. That's all. A rav who is also a shliach doesn't just fulfill routine rabbinic duties but is involved with everything, seeking to develop things and encourage people. He doesn't wait for other people to organize events and then show up to speak. Sometimes, even the logistical end of things is left for him to do.

Rabbi Rosenblatt: The truth is that it's very simple. The job of a rav is reactive. He can sit at home and wait for people to come to him with questions and problems, as well as do the things rabbis have to do and get a salary for it.

A Chassidishe rav is another type of person. He doesn't wait for people to come to him but goes out to the people. I recently heard about a girl from a nearby moshav that had lost consciousness. She was taken to the operating room for a simple operation to clear her breathing passages. The anesthesiologist put the needle in too deeply and caused some nerve damage.

The child did not wake up after the operation. Her bodily systems shut down and she was on a respirator. When I got to the house I felt the air of despair. I immediately took the mezuzos to be checked and found that the mezuzah of the entranceway was pasul. The words, "when you walk on the way" were touching.

When the parents heard about this they said that apparently their "way" in life needed a change and they decided to become observant. They ordered tefillin then and there, put up mezuzos, and prepared a big Seudas Hodaa three weeks later when their daughter woke up. The doctors said it was a miracle.



Rabbi Shlomo Lifsh

We don't hide anything and we speak about Moshiach openly. People know who Moshiach is and they know the words to Yechi.

The girl is presently undergoing rehabilitation and her condition is improving, baruch Hashem.

This family transformed their moshav and inspired everyone. If I hadn't heard about them and decided to visit them, nothing would have happened. A Chassidishe rav is trained in the ways of the Baal Shem Tov, who would make the rounds of the towns and be mekarev Jews; he did not wait for people to come to him.

A tragic story took place a year ago with a member of the yishuv by the name of Dror Sheck, whom I knew from when we studied together for his bar mitzva. He was murdered in the mountains on a tour of India. As they were looking for him, I went to the family to encourage them and to help out. The ones who dealt with the search for him and who brought his body back to Eretz Yisroel were the shluchim in Kasol at the time, Yoel Kaplan and Periel Kalimi.

The family didn't stop thanking me for all the support and they even wanted me to go with them to the airport to get their son's body and to be with them at that difficult time. The father said to me, "All the insurance companies make promises, but the ones who did the work were the shluchim of the Lubavitcher Rebbe." It was a big kiddush shem Lubavitch and it was mekarev many people in the yishuv to the Rebbe and to Chabad.

That's what a Chassidishe rav is, in a nutshell. He doesn't wait for people to come to him but goes out to the people and is mekarev them. Whenever I take a hitchhiker to the yishuv, I stay in the car with him for a while in order to discuss Judaism.

Rabbi Lifsh: A Lubavitcher

rav sees his position as a shlichus and his conduct is in "ways of peace." A non-Lubavitcher rav, when his children get older and there isn't a proper school for them, prefers to leave the yishuv to give his children a better education.

The Rebbe spoke a lot about the combined role of rabbanus and shlichus since a rav has a great influence and he can sometimes go places where a shliach can't get in. A rabbinic position is an official, respected position and he is invited and can enter even those places that are estranged from Judaism and have an influence there.

The Rebbe writes in the *HaYom Yom* of 10 Nissan:

Let us imagine that G-d were to give you an opportunity to save a Jewish community from extinction (G-d forbid), you would certainly be willing to risk your life for this and you would thank and praise Him for His great kindness in offering you an opportunity of such enormous merit.

In many places, if you ask to check the mezuzos, people will politely (or rudely) turn you

away, but when the rav of the yishuv comes it's different even when there is no prior relationship. This week I visited a family where the wife had been in many accidents and it was clearly no "accident." They were getting signs from Above to do something.

This week when she was in yet another accident, I went to their house to check the mezuzos and I saw that two mezuzos were missing in places that they hadn't thought of putting them up. When you go to their house and don't wait for them to come to you, you can save lives.

What are your future plans?

Rabbi Avrohom: The goal is to keep going and not stand still. We recently started a Yeshivas Erev at the moshav, which is a big thing. When I think back to when we first came here, something like this was utterly unrealistic.

We want to turn the moshav into a place that is receptive to Torah and mitzvos and identifies as such. We aren't stopping with Yinov. This year we had a parade in the neighboring moshav too, Geulim, and we hope that



Rabbi Tzemach Avrohom

When you realize that you are there to transform your place of shlichus and prepare it for Moshiach, you get kochos from the Rebbe that help you overcome difficulties.

intensive work will begin there as well.

There is also a beis midrash that we recently opened which is developing and we are always thinking about how to grow more.

Rabbi Rosenblatt: We don't sit back. Aside from our usual work, we plan on bringing more shluchim to the moshavim and yishuvim of the Lower Galil. Some more shluchim have already come in recent years like Rabbi Sholom Schneersohn in Sharona, my brother-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Hertzel in moshav Arbel, and Rabbi Shmuel Rosenberg in Tzomet Golani.

The goal is for every moshav to have a shliach. We do the large-scale activities but what is

needed is the personal relationship with every person and we need additional manpower for that. The more shluchim there are, the greater the impact on more people.

We are proud of the eighty boys (out of 250 people who come to daven in shul) who came from non-observant homes but whose bar mitzva preparations drew them close. They saw that a shul is a nice place to meet though of course we don't suffice with that.

Rabbi Lifsh: We also have plans to expand. We are currently going through a renewal. Many people are getting involved and we have shiurim for men and women. I have seen that gashmius has a great effect.

When you invite a family to eat a Shabbos meal with you, you can't imagine what an impact this has.

There was someone who came to us for the Shabbos meal by car. Although I knew about it, I didn't protest. He recently met a friend of mine and told him that because of that Shabbos meal that he enjoyed, he committed to eating kosher and to putting on tefillin every day.

We are planning on building a Lubavitcher mikva. We also do a lot through the district council to reach out to other yishuvim in the area, whether with Chabad clubs or programs in schools and we plan on expanding these activities.

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