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THE LOWEST ELICITS THE HIGHEST

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

There is an association between the Torah reading of Eikev and the month of Elul. Elul is a month of self-examination, prior to Rosh Hashanah. The name of the month is an acronym for the phrase, “I am for my Beloved and my Beloved is for me.” This indicates that the relationship between the Jewish people and G-d has two parts: an arousal from below – “I am for my Beloved” – elicits an arousal from Above – my Beloved is for me.” The name of the Torah portion has a double meaning; Eikev means both “heel,” indicating the lightest or lowest level of mitzvos, and “for the sake of,” indicating the end result of Divine service. This, too, parallels the two methods of Divine service. The term “Eikev” also has a double meaning in regard to Redemption.

The Torah reading of *Eikev* is always read the second Shabbos after Tisha B'Av. Sometimes, it is also the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Elul – the beginning of the month of Elul, the last month before Rosh Hashanah and the start of the New Year. (It is customary to say a special blessing for the new month on the Shabbos before it occurs. That Shabbos is therefore known as Shabbos Mevarchim – the Shabbos of blessing.)

The month of Elul, being the last month before Rosh Hashanah, is generally considered a time for ‘soul-searching’ and making a ‘spiritual accounting’ of one’s accomplishments and failures during the year. This is done as a preparation for Rosh Hashanah – the Day of Judgment. Since nothing occurs by coincidence, but everything happens by Divine Providence, there must be a reason for the proximity of the month of Elul to the Torah reading of *Eikev*. To understand the significance of the connection of Elul and *Eikev*, we first have to understand the special nature of the month of Elul.

Elul, as the last month of the calendar year, is an appropriate time to take stock of one’s spiritual state before entering Rosh Hashanah and the Days of Awe. Since Elul is the summation of the whole year, it must incorporate an individual’s entire Divine service,

as well. This concept of Divine service is expressed in the well-known declaration of our Sages that a person should approach each mitzvah – indeed, every aspect of life – with the attitude that “I was created solely to serve my Maker.” Every time we make a blessing, we acknowledge the nature of our relationship with G-d with the words, “Blessed are You, **King** of the universe.” Similarly, all our actions should be simply “for the sake of Heaven.”

The relationship with G-d can be expressed in one of two ways. When a Jew learns Torah and observes the mitzvos, this is an “arousal from below” that elicits a response from above. When a subject gladly and enthusiastically offers the king the “work of his hands” in fulfillment of the king’s command, the king naturally responds with encouragement and all manner of support for future endeavors. The response of the King – of G-d – is called an “arousal from Above.”

It’s important to note the order of the service. First is the “arousal from below” – the effort of the

and spiritual, needed to carry out his or her task.

Now that we have touched on the unique nature of the month of Elul, we need to turn our attention to the weekly Torah reading that often introduces the month of Elul, namely, the portion of *Eikev*.

The name of the Torah portion – *Eikev* – which is also the first word, is used here in a somewhat unusual manner. As a noun, “*eikev*” means “heel.” Jacob – Yaakov in Hebrew – was so named because he seized the heel – the *eikev* – of his brother. Rashi, the foremost Biblical commentator, explains the use of the word as follows: “If you will listen to the commandments of minor importance, which one tramples with his heel.” This means, if one is careful with the mitzvos that tend to be treated lightly, then G-d will keep His promise to the Jewish people, as the rest of the verse indicates.

However, as a conjunction, *Eikev* means “for the sake of” or “as a result of.” Other major commentators thus explain the beginning of the Torah reading as follows: “*Eikev* – For the sake of, as a result of – your listening to these laws, safeguarding and keeping them, the Lord your G-d will keep in mind the covenant and kindness with which He made an oath to your fathers.” In this sense, *Eikev* indicates the end or result – the concluding reward.

Since both meanings of the word – “heel” and “for the sake of” – appear in the same verse, obviously there must be a

connection between them. At first glance, however, these two meanings are contradictory: According to Rashi’s interpretation, “*Eikev*” indicates where one starts, at the lowest level of Divine Service, referring to the “lightest” mitzvos – the simple ones likely to be trampled upon. On the other hand, according to the other interpretation “*Eikev*” indicates the conclusion – the result of the completion of the Divine Service.

This apparent difficulty can be resolved by referring back to the explanation of the dual nature of the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people. The revelation of G-dliness, the reward for the completion and perfection of our Divine Service, is a response from above – “*V’dodi Li*” – “my Beloved is for me.” What elicits this response, arouses the King, so to speak? Precisely the Divine service involved with the lowest level, the mitzvos it’s easy to ignore and “trample with the heel.” It is through the “*Ani L’Dodi*” – “I am for my Beloved” – the intense, enthusiastic involvement in even the most seemingly

...We are like that servant, for we are in a position to demand – and therefore are obligated to demand – from G-d, how long? Until when will the Redemption be delayed?

servant, the human being; second, is the “arousal from Above” – the response of the King, of G-d.

This relationship is alluded to in the name of the month of Elul. In Hebrew, Elul is an acronym for a phrase from Song of Songs. Each of the four Hebrew letters of the word “Elul” stands for one of the four words in the following phrase: “*Ani L’dodi, V’dodi Li*.” This means, “I am for my Beloved, and my Beloved is for me.” (It is well known that the Sages considered the Song of Songs a metaphor for the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people.)

In the month of Elul, a month of *t’shuva* and reflection, the approach must first be “*Ani L’dodi*” – “I am for my Beloved.” Our thought, speech and action must express our commitment to our King; we must fulfill G-d’s commandments – the mitzvos – with renewed vigor and renewed strength. This naturally elicits the response of “*V’dodi Li*” – “my Beloved is for me.” G-d will then automatically, as it were, grant each individual the assistance, material

minor mitzvah – that one evokes the response “*V’dodi Li.*”

The conjunction of *Eikev* and Elul, the Torah reading and the month of preparation, reveals an inner significance of both. Similarly, the conjunction of *Eikev* and Elul reveals an important aspect of our contemporary situation – the time of the true and final Redemption. For, according to all signs and indications, now is the time when the declaration, “Behold, here Moshiach comes,” will be a reality.

Accordingly, *Eikev* can have a double meaning in regard to Redemption, for the phrase describing the time of Moshiach’s arrival is “*Ikvisa d’Meshicha*” – the *Eikev* of Moshiach.

Here, *Eikev* can mean the heel,

the lowest, most unworthy generation, the one enmeshed in a doubled and re-doubled darkness – a generation of chutzpah and arrogance. *Eikev* can also mean the end and completion, that is, the end of exile and the completion of all the Divinely ordained tasks necessary to prepare for the coming of Moshiach.

There is a practical lesson and implication to the above: In Elul, we must first perform our Divine Service in such a way to create an “arousal from below” – *Ani L’Dodi*. That will elicit an “arousal from Above” – *V’dodi Li*. In the same manner, since the Divine Service currently required of us is to prepare the world for Moshiach, we must approach our task, that is, perform mitzvos, with the

enthusiasm and intensity of an “arousal from below.” A loyal servant who has fulfilled the desire of the King and is only waiting to see his King and receive his reward becomes impatient if there are obstacles and delays. He demands, how long must I wait? We are like that servant, for we are in a position to demand – and therefore are obligated to demand – from G-d, how long? Until when will the Redemption be delayed?

And we are assured that G-d will respond, that there will be an “arousal from Above,” and immediately He will send our righteous Moshiach.

(Based on Seifer HaSichos 5751 Vol. II, pp. 750-763)

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TO LIVE REBBE!

Lessons in hiskashrus love for the Rebbe MH”M taken from a chapter in a new book about the life of R’ Reuven Dunin a”h.

TO TRULY BOND WITH THE REBBE

“When I was young and went to the Rebbe,” related R’ Reuven, “I decided that I had to hear the Rebbe better at farbrengens and so I hid under his table. One time, during a farbrengen, I saw that the Rebbe’s shoelace was untied. I crawled over and tied it. The Rebbe lifted the tablecloth a bit and said, “*A dank*” (thank you) and continued farbrenging.

“I said to myself: Thank you Hashem! I ask for nothing more.

“Then I heard the Rebbe speaking about a Jew’s mission in this world and I thought: How fortunate I would be, if only I were a nail in the Rebbe’s shoe! (At a later time R’ Reuven said: That thought that passed through my mind was somewhat arrogant for I do not even deserve to be a nail in the Rebbe’s shoe. Maybe the dust stuck to the sole of his shoe, and maybe not even that ...).”

“The depth of a Chassid – is the Rebbe,” is a Chassidic aphorism. Chassid and Rebbe are one entity so that you can’t even separate the two. To a Chassid like R’ Reuven it was absolutely true and not merely a saying. His subservience to the Rebbe was utterly true and serious. He was absolutely battul to every word the Rebbe said.

“You have to live the inyan,” he would say in his unique style. “And the inyan within the inyan is that you have to live the Rebbe.”

In a number of sichos the Rebbe says that all the Rebbeim are one continuation, a chain of revelation of G-dly light in the world. R’ Reuven referred to all the Chabad Rebbeim as “Rebbe.” He “lived” them all to the same degree. You could regularly hear him say, “The Rebbe writes this week in Likkutei Torah ...” when of course he meant the Alter Rebbe, or “the Rebbe says in Heichaltzu” when he was referring to the Rebbe Rashab.

“We have to absorb the understanding and awareness, deep inside of us, that the Rebbe is our brain and head and just as the brain in the head is the source for all the chayus of the body, so too, the Rebbe is the source of chayus for all of us.” This is what R’ Reuven emphasized repeatedly in his farbrengens.

In connection with this he would mention the Chassidic vort on the halachic expression, “*spike reisha v’lo yamus*” (can you cut off the head without it dying?!) and say: Is it possible for a Jew to be cut off, heaven forbid, from his head – from the Rebbe – and remain alive?

One of R’ Reuven’s oft-used

expressions was, “come, let us connect to the Rebbe *al emes* (for real).” In a shiur that he once gave in Raanana, he spoke with his rich style and used all his powers of persuasion to instill in his audience the idea that the Rebbe is Nasi Doreinu and he is the Head – the Rosh B’nei Yisroel.

One of the people present didn’t care for this kind of talk, and began arguing with him. R’ Reuven listened until the man finished and then said quietly but firmly, “When I saw that the Rebbe addressed his letters to ‘*B’nei U’Bnos Yisroel* (Sons and Daughters of Israel) wherever they are,’ that was enough for me to understand that the Rebbe is the Nasi HaDor.”

This was said so matter-of-factly and with such emuna p’shuta that of course, the words had their effect. When you see the truth, you don’t need proofs.

His student, R’ Yitzchok Ben-Ami said, “I once went with Reuven to a farbrengen in Natzrat and he spoke about the Rebbe the entire time. Some people were annoyed and they left in the middle. On our way back to Chaifa, I asked him why he spoke so much about the Rebbe when people left as a result. He said briefly, “It doesn’t matter how many stayed and how many left. People have to know that the *ikar* (main thing) is the Rebbe!”

THEY SHOULD KNOW WHO THE BALABUS IS

In a class on Chassidus that took place in his house, R’ Reuven once told about an experience he had when he went to the Rebbe in the 60’s which showed how the

Rebbe is the Rosh of everybody, in a way that goes beyond rational explanation.

“One night of yechidus I was in 770 and waiting for the Rebbe to leave his room and go home. When it was after midnight already, I waited for the Rebbe outside of 770. Suddenly, police cars blocked all approaches to 770, snipers went up on the roofs all around and a helicopter hovered above. Secret agents set up a human blockade on the steps leading to 770 and examined every inch.

“Then a few Rolls Royces pulled up and several men came out and went directly to the Rebbe’s room. Outside, the agents continued to keep guard and did not allow anyone to approach the area. After about half an hour, they all left.

“I was curious and so I went to the Rebbe (Reuven had the exceedingly rare privilege of unrestricted access to the Rebbe) and asked him who the people were. The Rebbe said they were from the Atomic Energy Commission. I asked the Rebbe what they wanted and the Rebbe said they had a question that they were unable to solve for a long time and so they came to consult with him.

“Did the Rebbe help them?” I asked.

“Yes,” said the Rebbe.

“Why? The dropping of the atom bomb was a terrible thing ...”

“Three reasons,” said the Rebbe. “First, their plans are for civilian reactors that are used for peaceful purposes. Second, the United States is a country that does chesed with Jews and I must help it. Third, so that they know who is the balabus ... (who is in charge).”

This insight, that the Rebbe is not only a tzaddik and spiritual leader, but the head and brain of us all and therefore, the balabus of everything – was part of R’ Reuven’s basic awareness of what a

Rebbe is. As someone to whom the truth was his guiding light, R’ Reuven Dunin was permeated with genuine bittul to the Rebbe. He knew his place in relation to the Rebbe and before any step he took, he thought of what the Rebbe would want of him.

To Reuven, bittul was absolute. In other words, there was nothing in the world that had importance aside from the Rebbe. To a mekurav who traveled with him to the Rebbe, R’ Reuven said on the plane: You have to take into account that when we arrive in

of a servant to his master and yet there was tremendous love like that of a son for his father. There’s no question that when it came to influencing Anash in Eretz Yisroel about the inyan of love for the Rebbe, R’ Reuven was successful.

This is what R’ Yosef Yitzchok Gurewitz of Migdal HaEmek has to say on this topic:

“The special thing I saw in R’ Reuven, what really ‘got’ to me about his personality was his tremendous love for the Rebbe. The first time I heard him farbreng, I encountered a phenomenon that

One of the people present didn’t care for this kind of talk, and began arguing with him. R’ Reuven listened until the man finished and then said quietly but firmly, “When I saw that the Rebbe addressed his letters to ‘B’nei U’Bnos Yisroel (Sons and Daughters of Israel) wherever they are,’ that was enough for me to understand that the Rebbe is the Nasi HaDor.”

New York we are just with the Rebbe. Near the Rebbe, Reuven Dunin does not exist.

By the same token, R’ Reuven said that once, at yechidus, he suddenly began to feel his legs. “At that moment, the moment I felt my legs, i.e. myself, I knew that the yechidus had ended.”

GENUINE BITTUL EXPRESSED IN THE FORM OF TRUE LOVE

R’ Reuven’s bittul was like that

was completely new for me, a phenomenon I was unfamiliar with till that point.

“Every Chassid loves the Rebbe and this is expressed in carrying out what the Rebbe wants. I always felt that my love for the Rebbe was expressed through all the routine things I did every day in following the Rebbe’s instructions. But to speak openly about feelings of love for the Rebbe – that I didn’t dare do. I felt it in a powerful way in my heart but it never burst forth. Deep inside, I even thought that it

was an inner Chassidic *hergesh* (feeling) that could not be expressed in words. Back then it wasn't standard practice to speak about things like this at farbrengens, and I was simply ashamed to do so.

"At that farbrengen, when I listened to R' Reuven, I heard things that were music to my ears. Ah, here was someone who finally managed to say it. This was proof that this *hergesh* *could* be spoken about in words. Then, for the first time in my life, I understood that

R' Reuven once said the following at an Elul farbrengen:

"I heard the Rebbe say that in the month of Elul, the king is in the field and he has a smiling countenance. The Rebbe said the word *shochakos* with the letter *shin* instead of the letter *sin* (which changes the meaning of the word from smiling to grinding). Since the Rebbe does not make mistakes, I think the reason is as follows.

"Let us try and imagine how you would feel if you faced a king and the king smiled at you. When

in 'and they believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant.'"

In connection with this he related an anecdote from the time before he had become a baal t'shuva and a Chassid:

"I was sitting on the tractor and I had the urge to do a prank on my friend who was standing nearby. I asked him to help me push the tractor because the tractor was stuck. My friend knew that he didn't have the strength to push something so heavy and he apologized and explained that a human being couldn't move a tractor. But I convinced him to try and he went behind the tractor and began to push it.

"At the same time, I released the clutch a bit and the tractor began to slowly move to the great amazement of my friend who was sure that he had been the one to move it."

R' Reuven said that this is exactly what the Rebbe does with us. "The Rebbe does all the work for us. The neshamos we are mekarev to Judaism are ignited by the Rebbe. It is through the mitvzaim that the Rebbe gave us to do that he gives us the feeling as though we are making things happen."

One of his mekuravim, Nesanel (Yoni) Saadi, said that R' Reuven never gave any of his mekuravim "marks" for achievement and there did not exist the concept of "promotion in rank" for the simple reason that when you work on the Rebbe's shlichus, there is no room for talk about marks and the like. For the same reason, whoever worked together with him never got the feeling that he was satisfied, a feeling that "I'm okay," because he wasn't the kind of person who gave that kind of feeling.

"He always taught us that we have to progress in our spiritual lives and that we cannot feel for an



these things could be uttered openly! That we could talk about our feelings of love for the Rebbe! It gave me a great feeling and from then on, I loved meeting R' Reuven."

With his every move R' Reuven expressed *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe. "It's not just what he said but mainly, how he said it," said one of his mushpaim. "We literally felt his bittul for the Rebbe, his feelings of awe and love for the Rebbe. One could say that he was totally 'addicted' to the Rebbe."

you stand looking at the Rebbe and the Rebbe smiles at you, do you suddenly feel like clapping? You tremble in fear and you are more likely to cry than smile. So what's the point? The Rebbe's smile 'grinds' you and cleanses you."

WITHOUT MARKS, WITHOUT PROMOTIONS

"With all due respect for all the other important factors," he would say, "we have to understand that our success depends first and foremost on the degree of strength

instant that we have ‘arrived.’”

“L’chaim, may we be the Rebbe’s donkeys!” Who would wish that if not Reuven Dunin? Hiskashrus to the Rebbe, he would explain to his mushpaim, is not limited to when one experiences a state of spiritual elevation. Even if you feel yourself to be on a low spiritual level, you still have to be mekushar to the Rebbe with all your might.

“Even if you’re a horse, at least be the king’s horse,” he would say in his colorful way. “What happens when the king’s horse trots down the street with the king on his back? Everybody bows to the king and look in awe at the horse too. And when the horse defecates, the king’s servants run up with **golden** shovels to clean it up. It’s a horse, yes, but it’s the **king’s** horse!”

TO FOLLOW WITH UTTER KABBALAS OL, LIKE SOLDIERS

This was the main theme of all his farbrengens, the demand to be truly battul to the Rebbe. His message was clear: In order to live like a real Chassid, you have to nullify all your desires and personal ambitions, both in the material and spiritual realms, and have one and only one agenda – to connect with the true source of light, to the Rebbe, and carry out his wishes. This was also the practical and main message of all his farbrengens – the need to follow the Rebbe’s orders with kabbalas ol and utter bittul.

One of R’ Reuven’s friends who lived in New York sent him an invitation to the bar mitzva of his son along with a plane ticket. R’ Reuven was happy at the opportunity to meet his friend and thrilled at the opportunity of seeing the Rebbe. As soon as he landed, he took a taxi to 770 in order to see the Rebbe.

Just as he arrived at 770, the Rebbe came from his house and entered 770. When the Rebbe noticed R’ Reuven he asked him: How could you leave Chaifa without a shliach?

For R’ Reuven this was enough. Within a few hours he was on the plane back to Chaifa.

He conveyed this message to his mushpaim. For example, at a farbrengen he said, “You have to know that ‘Chayalei Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu’ is not just a nice song. When a Jew speaks, he ought to speak the truth and certainly this is true for a Lubavitcher, which as the Rebbe once told me is something that was never defined or tested. When we say we are soldiers of the Rebbe; that means we are soldiers! The Rebbe spoke many times about what it means to be a soldier. Of course, this is expressed, first of all, in kabbalas ol and discipline, which is the foundation of avodas Hashem.”

Then a few Rolls Royces pulled up and several men came out and went directly to the Rebbe’s room. Outside, the agents continued to keep guard and did not allow anyone to approach the area. After about half an hour, they all left.

Along with the emphasis on the need to be devoted to the Rebbe, was the emphasis that the Rebbe is the Nasi HaDor and the nerve center of the Jewish people. This leads to the conclusion that just as the brain feels the pain in every limb, even a pain in the nail of the little toe, so too, the Rebbe feels the personal pain of every Jew. To a Jew like R’ Reuven, this message affected every moment and detail of his life.

At one of Reuven’s jobs, he worked with a grinding machine. While operating it, his hand got caught. He yelled for help but nobody heard him. When he realized that his hand was in danger of getting pulled in, he shouted: REBBE! And he was able to extricate his hand from the machine.

Someone once asked him whether he was taking proper care of his respiratory problems. R’ Reuven immediately answered, sure. When asked what he did, R’ Reuven said, “I go to the Rebbe.” Indeed, people who were close to him say that whenever he returned from the Rebbe, he had a long period of relief from his respiratory problems.

When this is your relationship with the Rebbe, needless to say, you ask the Rebbe’s advice about every personal matter. Mrs. N. Crombie relates:

“At the end of 5740 my husband and I returned from a trip abroad. We had an apartment in Chaifa, not far from Reuven. We wanted to live in a new place, a place with quality of life. We considered one of the yishuvim in the Golan Heights.

“At that point we wanted to know a little about Judaism but we didn’t know what it was exactly. An old friend referred us to the Dunin family from Chaifa and we realized that we lived very close to them.



The chair that Reuven Dunin prepared for the Rebbe

When we told Reuven that we were looking for a place to live that would be a religious area out in nature, he opened his eyes wide and asked, ‘What do you mean? A Jew has to live in a place where Divine Providence wants him to live. Only the Rebbe knows where that is. You can’t decide this on your own, without asking the Rebbe. That same night, when it was very late, we wrote to the Rebbe.’

TO REPORT TO THE REBBE ONCE IN TWO WEEKS

R’ Reuven would demand that his mushpaim write to the Rebbe on a regular basis and report about every mezuza they put up and every kitchen they made kosher. R’ Refael Levinson said, “Reuven once told me that we have to report to the Rebbe about everything we do. When I told him that I didn’t have the time to write, he said, ‘And yet we want the Rebbe to have all the time in the world for us!’”

There was a time when the Rebbe asked that Chassidim send in

reports of the outreach they did. Reuven farbrenge then and said, “There are those who say that they don’t have to send a report to the Rebbe because the Rebbe knows everything. ‘The Rebbe knows better than I do with how many people I put on t’fillin and what effect I had on them and so why should I send in reports?’ Yet these same people, if a member of their household is sick or some other negative thing happens, are suddenly afraid that the Rebbe doesn’t know all the details. They write to the Rebbe and even add the word ‘urgent’ on the envelope ...”

The Rebbe was R’ Reuven’s all-embracing existence. His entire life revolved around the Rebbe and the Rebbe was the main topic of his every conversation. When he noticed someone truly living with the Rebbe every minute, he did not hesitate to openly express his pleasure.

Rabbi Dovid Drukman, rav of Kiryat Mochkin, recalls a humorous incident that took place in the hallway of 770 when Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik happened to meet R’ Reuven Dunin:

“I don’t recall precisely what the topic of conversation was. I only remember that it had to do with an instruction the Rebbe gave. R’ Mentlik, who was known for his soft, calm demeanor, was irate and he exclaimed, ‘Why isn’t the Rebbe’s horaa being followed?’

“R’ Reuven, on the other hand, was like ‘Rabbi Akiva who laughed’ and so R’ Mentlik asked in surprise, ‘I am so upset and you’re smiling?!’

“R’ Reuven replied, ‘I take pleasure in seeing a Jew who cares so much about the Rebbe’s horaa.’”

R’ Dunin once heard one of the T’mimim who was called up for Maftir read the Haftora and say the words, “And My servant Dovid will rule over them and My servant Dovid will lead them forever,” with a special emphasis. R’ Reuven enjoyed it very much and at the farbrengen that took place after the davening, he said that when you read a verse that you believe in with all the inwardness of your soul, then this can be felt in the reading itself.

R’ Reuven always spoke about the need to make sure that if the Rebbe meets you, he should have a good reason to smile. He would often wish, “L’chaim! May we see the Rebbe smile!”

When he inspired people during farbrengens to be stronger in Chassidic practices, he almost always connected it to the subject of hiskashrus to the Rebbe. “How will you feel if you are immersed in stupidity in the privacy of your home when you suddenly realize that the Rebbe is waiting for you in the living room? Will the Rebbe have to wait for you a long time until you are dressed like a Chassid? The sorrow and pain you will feel at that moment is indescribable, so why not avoid it to begin with?”

When a fish head was brought to his table on Rosh HaShana, R’

Reuven would interpret the wording of the request (that other groups have the custom of saying), “We should be the head and not the tail,” as follows. “We should be to the head. And not – the tail!” In other words, we wish ourselves that we merit to be connected to the Rosh, i.e. the Rebbe who is the Rosh B’nei Yisroel. For if not, we are liable to be “tails.”

THE REBBE’S CHAIR

R’ Reuven’s belief in the Rebbe and in everything the Rebbe said, was absolute with not a smidgen of reservation and without mixing in his own opinion.

In a corner of his house was a special, royal chair that was for the Rebbe. R’ Reuven explained that the Rebbe once said that he would come with Moshiach to Eretz Yisroel. When he asked the Rebbe whether he would come to Chaifa too, the Rebbe said, “G-d willing, I will come to Chaifa too.” Then the Rebbe added, “It could even be tomorrow ...”

When he returned to Chaifa, R’ Reuven thought: If the Rebbe comes to our city, he will certainly want to visit his house which is the house of the Dunin family, and so I have to prepare a proper chair.

That’s the way R’ Reuven was, without *chochmas* and without convoluted thinking. If the Rebbe said so, then it would be so.

“Since belief in Hashem and Moshe Rabbeinu is a positive mitzva, this inyan must be ‘mesudar’ for us in our minds, at all times, all places, and all circumstances. At the same time, it is difficult to base one’s connection with the Rebbe solely on rational foundations. It is only when we are permeated with pure belief that the Rebbe is the revelation of G-dly light in the world, with all that that implies, and that we do not understand anything about the

Rebbe with our puny intellects – only then, can this bond be a truly lasting one,” he would explain.

At one of the yechiduyos, the Rebbe asked R’ Reuven to do something and the Rebbe began explaining why he wanted him to do it. R’ Reuven asked the Rebbe to stop explaining and said he wanted to do it only because the Rebbe asked him to and not because he understood why.

At a Yud Shevat farbrengen, to mark the day the Rebbe accepted the Nesius, R’ Reuven referred to the Rashi in that day’s Chitas in Parshas B’Shalach (Sheimos 14:4), that Moshe instructed the Jewish people to return in the direction of Egypt and they did not ask any questions or say, “How can we return? We must flee!” They listened to Moshe and said, “As for us, all we have is what ben-Amram (=Moshe) says.”

R’ Reuven explained at length that we have to nullify our desires and follow the Rebbe’s orders even if they don’t make sense to us. He would emphasize in his farbrengens, “What the Rebbe wants to say, he says explicitly, and what the Rebbe does not want to say, he does not say. There is no need to interpret the Rebbe.”

Someone who returned from spending Tishrei with the Rebbe, told R’ Reuven that on Rosh HaShana, the t’kios were hard to blow. He said, “The Rebbe managed to blow the shofar with difficulty.”

R’ Reuven said, “The problem is not with the Rebbe but with us. Obviously, if someone like me gets himself stuck in the shofar, the Rebbe would have to blow with great effort to get me out of there.”

“Just by learning the enormous amount of material the Rebbe gave us,” Reuven would say, “should be enough to change us completely.” Here is an excerpt from a letter he

wrote to one of his children. “It’s an unparalleled crime - our lack of immersion in the Rebbe’s words. Koshering meat begins with soaking, as it says in the HaYom Yom, to soak in the divrei ha’rav, and only afterwards do you salt and wash it.

“When I think of all the abundance, the quantity of talks that the Rebbe pours out on us, and the entire inyan of ‘the earth being full’ with ‘waters of pure knowledge’ – isn’t it obvious that our entire existence should become far more serious, with simcha and goodness of heart, but obviously more spiritual?”

HISKASHRUS THROUGH FULFILLING THE REBBE’S HORAOS

One of the horaos emphasized by the Rebbe is the enactment of the daily Chitas (Chumash, T’hillim, Tanya). Reuven would stress the obligation to learn Chitas every day and under all circumstances and he would explain how important this was to the Rebbe. To support his point, he would observe how in many of the Rebbe’s letters he directed the addressee to learn Chitas.

To him, Chitas was far more than material to study; it was a formula to run a proper life. He considered the verses and sentences that appear, by Divine Providence, in the daily portions as direct guidance from the Rebbe. The way Reuven would talk would be, “The Rebbe emphasizes to us in Chitas,” or “the Rebbe writes us in Tanya.”

When the Rebbe established the daily study of Rambam, this added another line to R’ Reuven’s repertoire, “The Rebbe recently explained to us in the Rambam ...” Not to mention direct messages from the Rebbe like the broadcasts of the Rebbe’s farbrengens. During

the time that the closest place to hear the live broadcast was in Chevel Taanachim, R' Reuven and his mekuravim would pack into Reuven's small car and drive an hour and a half each way in order to hear the broadcast. Reuven was particular to never miss a single broadcast.

At a later point, the broadcasts could be heard from R' Reuven's house. One time, someone called to find out whether the broadcast was already over. He asked R' Reuven, "Did the Rebbe finish speaking already?" R' Reuven's answer was, "The Rebbe did not finish; he paused."

All this led him to carrying out

farbrenge on this topic, he said that he used to know a newspaper vendor who, during peak hours, if he had to use the bathroom, would manage to do so in half his usual time. The message R' Reuven took from this was that when the Rebbe gives us an instruction to carry out, we have to be fully immersed in it and if we have something urgent to take care of, we should do so with dispatch.

This is an excerpt from a letter that he wrote to one of his children about the importance of going on mitzvaim. "Even if someone, for whatever reason, does not see himself as Moshe's emissary, nevertheless, a soul in a body is on

At one of the yechiduyos, the Rebbe asked R' Reuven to do something and the Rebbe began explaining why he wanted him to do it. R' Reuven asked the Rebbe to stop explaining and said he wanted to do it only because the Rebbe asked him to and not because he understood why.

the Rebbe's horaos with tremendous devotion. For a few years he owned a car that was a German make. When he was asked why he used a car made by the accursed nation, he said, "I think that if those lowlifes make such a good car, we should take advantage."

Later on, he found out that the Rebbe wrote someone that he was surprised that he bought German products, and he immediately decided to get rid of his car.

That is how he behaved and that is what he demanded of those around him. When he once

a mission from Hashem. So what does it mean when someone has no time for another?

"The proper way to provide goodness, help, consideration, and the utmost success, in our generation and situation, is only and foremost according to the Rebbe's guidance. He informed us about mitzvaim which means there is no other way. Hashem closed the mouth of the frum ones when the nation was already free of Egypt and were at Pi HaChiros and Pharaoh drew their hearts to their Father in Heaven, and nevertheless, they were told, 'and you, be quiet!'

This is the answer to the group of frum ones who wanted to daven."

One of the Rebbe's horaos that Reuven did not stop demanding was the horaa of having a mashpia to consult with on spiritual matters. He once said, "I took a certain Chassid as my mashpia and I consult with him a lot. Believe me, sometimes he talks "not to the point" and a thought comes to mind that maybe ... But then I tell myself, you made him as your rav? You believe in Hashgacha Pratit? Then do as he advises!"

A HOUSE FULL OF PICTURES

Chassidim treat pictures of the Rebbe with reverence and as a segula. Some people carry the Rebbe's picture at all times. The interesting thing is that the Rebbe himself spoke about the advantage of having a picture of the Nasi HaDor (referring to the Rebbe Rayatz) and said that it contains an inyan of "the shadow of the shadow" (a reference to the yechida of the soul).

When R' Reuven spoke about the importance of having a picture of the Rebbe, he would explain it simply by quoting the verse, "and your eyes should see your teacher."

In Reuven's home, the walls were full of pictures of the Rebbe. A visitor once asked why he had hung up so many. "What's this? A museum?"

R' Reuven wrote to the Rebbe and asked whether he should leave all the pictures up or not. The Rebbe answered, "Since you write that you have done this until now and you see success in this, and I receive good news from you, continue as you have been doing until now."

R' Reuven once explained it. "To me, every picture is the Rebbe. It brings back memories and therefore, all the talk in the house

begins and ends with the Rebbe. It's all the Rebbe."

The following incident, told by one of his mekuravim, explains this idea further:

"I once went to Reuven with a problem and asked for his advice. He was quiet for a long time and he looked at a picture of the Rebbe on the wall. I asked him why he didn't answer me and he said, 'I don't just want to talk. I want to know what to say.'"

R' Reuven considered a picture of the Rebbe as something very important. He once went to farbreng in a dining room of a Chabad yeshiva and a large picture of the Rebbe was hanging there that had become faded and creased over time. R' Reuven noticed this and began the farbrengen with a complaint about it. "I am sure that nobody here would want his own picture crumpled like that."

In his living room there was a huge picture of the Rebbe. R' Reuven would sit facing it and nobody would sit with their back to it. He once went to farbreng in someone's house and saw the host sitting with his back to a picture of the Rebbe. R' Reuven made mention of this during the farbrengen. "How could a Chassid turn his back on the Rebbe? How is it that you are not terrified of this?"

He analyzed the phenomenon thus, "A Chassid sits with a picture of the Rebbe behind him. What should I understand from this? That whoever enters the house will understand that the person sitting in front of the picture belongs to the Rebbe! But it's actually the opposite. The picture should hang in front of the person so that he will remember **to whom** he needs to be battul! Otherwise, the odor of *yeshus* (ego) wafts from it."

IF YOU'RE GOING TO 770 ALREADY, SEE THE REBBE!

An inseparable part of hiskashrus to the Rebbe is traveling to see him. R' Reuven would farbreng about this important subject and would explain the inyan at length with the Chassidic homiletic interpretation of the Gemara that says, "*Rebbi lo shana, Chiya minayin*" (literally; If Rebbi did not record this in the Mishna, where did Rebbi Chiya know this from), "Whoever lets a year go by without seeing the Rebbe – where does he have spiritual chayus from?"

He would also relate what he heard from the mashpia, R' Mendel Futerfas who saw a Chassid get off a plane after seeing the Rebbe and immediately turn around and buy a ticket to go back to the Rebbe.

One of the first steps that R' Reuven would take for someone whom he helped bring close to Judaism was to send him to the Rebbe. The great light there would do the rest of the work. That was his view and that is what he did, as many talmidim can attest.

Rabbi Yigal Pizem relates:

"In the first stages of my getting involved with Chabad, R' Reuven began convincing me at farbrengens to go to the Rebbe. He would say, 'Think it over well. Now we are in galus. The Geula is coming immediately and then the Rebbe will come here and will ask you where you were until now. What will you answer him?'"

"There were more farbrengens and more farbrengens until it finally clicked for me and I realized I had to go and see the Rebbe. He helped me financially too."

Another student of R' Reuven relates:

"When I went to his Chabad

house on 70 Hertzl Street for the first time, I said, 'Hello, are you Rabbi Dunin?'"

"He said, 'Sit and don't bother me.'"

"I waited for two hours. Then he asked me what I wanted and I said that I was sent there. He gave me a look and said, 'Tell me, will you do everything the Rebbe wants of you?' I had come from a Leftist kibbutz and didn't know anything about the Rebbe. I said, 'yes' weakly and he said, 'Good, apparently I don't have what to do with you – you have to go to Tzfas.'"

"We traveled together to Tzfas and on the way, on one of the sharp turns, he gave me another look and asked, 'Do you have a visa?' I said, 'I don't even have a passport.' Less than a month later, I had a passport and a visa and within a few days I went to the Rebbe."

At the same time, he would emphasize that to a genuine Chassid, the trip to the Rebbe required preparations and he insisted that you can't go to the Rebbe without the proper preparations as he learned from his mashpia, Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Kesselman. He did not like the idea of going to the Rebbe as part of a crowd activity.

The following story is one Reuven told as a way of proving the seriousness of the trip:

A Chassid wrote to the Rebbe that he was unsure whether to fly to the Rebbe since he was very busy. The Rebbe said he did not have to come. In the end, the Chassid went anyway. When the Rebbe saw him, he was obviously happy to see him. Seeing this, the Chassid dared to ask: If the Rebbe is so happy to see me, why did he tell me I didn't have to come? The Rebbe answered: If you were unsure, it was preferable that you

YOUR BEHAVIOR: A REFLECTION ON THE REBBE

“At one of my yechiduyos, I don’t know how the conversation got onto this topic but I told the Rebbe: You are Moshiach! And the Rebbe smiled.”

In 5742, R’ Reuven Dunin was asked by one of his mekuravim whether it was true that Chabad Chassidim say that the Rebbe is Moshiach. As he got into his car, R’ Reuven said, “Give me one good reason why not ...”

When Chabad was promoting the slogan, “*Hichanu L’Bias HaMoshiach*” (Prepare for the Coming of Moshiach), R’ Reuven once stood on a street of Chaifa where he could see these stickers on electric poles etc. A religious Jew came over to him and began to argue with him about it, asking what it was needed for.

R’ Reuven asked him: Tell me, how long do we know one another?

The man said: About forty years.

R’ Reuven said: When was the last time you spoke to me about Moshiach? If not for these stickers, we wouldn’t be talking about it today either!

For many years R’ Reuven had a special button pinned to his lapel, near his heart, on which it said “We want Moshiach Now.” He once walked into a shul in Meia Sh’arim wearing it and one of the people there noticed and asked why he wore it. R’ Reuven said: Listen, this is a shul and in a shul people try not to lie ... So tell me the truth – if not for this emblem, would you be thinking about Moshiach?

Along with seeing the positive aspect of these signs, R’ Reuven emphasized that they were superficial, after all, and although they are necessary, they must lead to the commensurate avoda p’nimis and not be instead of p’nimius. This is an excerpt from what he said at a farbrengen on this topic:

“When the Rebbe says, ‘and the earth will be filled with knowledge of G-d,’ what do you think? Do you think that you will hang up yellow posters from morning till night and this is what is meant by ‘filling the earth?’

“Boruch Hashem, all these superficial endeavors have caused a certain measure of awareness, but what about the p’nimius of the inyan? Are the external actions that are done without consideration for the people and without consideration for Moshiach, adding to the inyan of ‘My servant Dovid will rule them and be their leader?’

“Let us talk positively. There shouldn’t be a lack of understanding, heaven forbid. To me, the Rebbe was Moshiach from the very beginning, when I first saw him. So it makes me happy when this is spoken about in public, but do us all a favor: The Rebbe once told me personally, ‘Whoever is connected to me and does not fulfill what it says in Shulchan Aruch – that means he suspects that I don’t fulfill what it says in Shulchan Aruch.’

“So whoever represents the Rebbe, as Moshiach yet, should be careful that his conduct, even superficially, should be befitting the conduct of the Rebbe himself. And a Rebbe – as part of being the Nasi HaDor, and as part of being the Moshe Rabbeinu of the generation – is an Ohev Yisroel! First let us see genuine Ahavas Yisroel. If someone does not understand you and still doesn’t agree with you etc... - let us not have a competition about who is more right and more Chassidish. The truth, the light, even a little bit of it, will dispel a lot of darkness!”

stay home and there was no need to come.

It once happened that someone said to Reuven that he had the opportunity to go to the Rebbe then and there, an opportunity that he wouldn’t have again. Reuven said, “Fine, a small change will certainly take place in you, thanks to this. Even someone who goes to the Rebbe like a donkey, returns a horse.”

In a conversation he had with one of his mushpaim on the topic of preparing for the trip, R’ Reuven said, “Listen, if you’re going to 770 already, it pays to stop in and see the Rebbe!”

When he saw that the person didn’t know what he meant, he explained, “If you think that everybody there goes in for ‘yechidus’ (i.e. connects with the Rebbe on a personal level), you are mistaken. I remember, my friend, that I was taken aback when I saw people who went to the Rebbe with empty suitcases and shopping lists ... all organized! Afterwards, they explained to me that they had to cover the cost of the ticket ... So you see that there can be a situation in which you are already there with the Rebbe but you don’t go in for yechidus because you have all this nonsense in your head!”

R’ Reuven would say, “You could go to 770 to see the Rebbe’s feet, his body, his head and even his hat, but the Rebbe himself is above all that.”

When a visit to the Rebbe is conducted in a superficial way, it automatically affects what follows. At a farbrengen in the yeshiva in Kfar Chabad, Reuven spoke about the need to be with the Rebbe. He grabbed one of the bachurim and asked him, “Have you been to the Rebbe?” The bachur said he had and Reuven went on to ask, “So why did you return?”

THE REBBE SENT A MESSAGE

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

When the young man pulled the dollar out of his pocket and I saw the handwriting on it, I jumped as if I had been bitten by a snake. I immediately identified it as my handwriting. On the dollar, there appeared the words “I received from the Rebbe shlita on the 14th of Iyar, Pesach Sheini 5744.” To say that I was amazed would be an understatement. I tried to remove the dust from my memory. I couldn’t remain indifferent and tears poured down my cheeks for several long minutes.

When Rabbi Avraham Hershkop, better known by his nickname “Lemmy,” was called in by Rabbi Mordechai Gordetzky, the legendary chairman of the Nachlat Har Chabad community in Kiryat Malachi, to inform him that he had been chosen for the fourth slot in the joint list of candidates (the second Chabad candidate behind Rabbi Chaim Steiner) for the upcoming municipal elections, headed by incumbent mayor Motti Malka, it is impossible to say that he

was totally surprised. Not because he knew or suspected that such a thing was about to happen – on the contrary, he knew nothing about it. Up until a month ago, when he traveled to the United States for a family visit, including a stay at Beis Chayeinu – 770, he never imagined that he would be nominated for a realistic spot to win a City Council seat, nor did he dream of praying for Divine intercession on the matter.

Yet, just before returning to Nachlat Har Chabad from 770 three

weeks earlier, a matter of hours before traveling to Newark International Airport for his flight back to Eretz Yisroel, there occurred something simply amazing, out of this world – something that made him understand that the Rebbe is apparently asking him to accept a certain shlichus upon himself. All he had to do was to wait and he would realize what it all meant.

When Rabbi Gordetzky called him, the picture became crystal clear. R. Avraham Hershkop, who works for a living as the manager of the Kosher L'Mehadrin Department of the Victory store network, is an active member of behalf of Chabad community activities in southern Israel. He is among the founders of the “Ezras Achim” organization, which provides grocery assistance to needy families. He was also involved in the establishment of the Areivim crisis intervention project within Chabad, and other programs for the benefit of the general public.

“In the days prior to Yud-Beis Tammuz, our entire family (my wife, our three children, and myself) set out on a visit to the United States for a family simcha,” R. Avraham said as he began his story. “I am very stringent about being in 770 every year in order to get my batteries charged to full strength from the place that represents the source of vitality. This was also a welcome opportunity to take my

children around who had never been privileged to see the Rebbe with their own eyes and show them where the Rebbe davened, where he made farbrengens, and to bring up some golden memories from those sweet and wondrous days that we pray will return in all their glory and majesty. This was a wonderful chance to connect the children to the Rebbe.

“Throughout the week that we stayed in Crown Heights, I made certain to go to 770 every day with the children. We participated in the Rebbe’s minyanim and the farbrengens, and it was quite obvious that it left a powerful impression that accompanied them all the way back to Eretz Yisroel. It was a wonderful thing to behold, and I jumped at the opportunity to instill a deep-rooted and inner perception of what they learn throughout the year – things that up until now they had only heard about.

“On Sunday afternoon, the day before we were scheduled to depart

from New York, I went past the Rebbe’s holy room with my children, relating to them how the Rebbe would stand there for hours on end to distribute dollars and give blessings for success to thousands of Jews.

“The children were moved, and I’m not embarrassed to say that as I stood in the place where the Rebbe gave strength to thousands of Jews from all walks of life among the People of Israel chassidim and misnagdim, religious and secular, mayors, governors, government ministers and heads of state, people of great prominence alongside simple folk, I too felt a great flood of emotion and I expressed my earnest hope before my children that with G-d’s help, we will be able to see the Rebbe again. Looking back, my words came from the depths of my heart and with an intense longing. The children were also greatly inspired, particularly my son who is about to celebrate his bar-mitzvah

and began putting on t’fillin with a bracha during our visit to 770.

“On Monday morning, at around half past nine, just a few hours before our flight, I went into 770 with one of my children to daven quickly, while my wife waited for me outside ‘Beis Chayeinu’. Regrettably, I would be unable to daven in the Rebbe’s minyan, as the car due to take us the airport would be arriving in about half an hour. Immediately upon entering 770, the shul’s shamash, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Kievman, met me and said, ‘Hershkop, hold it a minute.’ He knew my name from the years when I was a regular guest in 770.

“‘Who’s Avraham Hershkop?’ he asked me. I was amazed by the question. ‘What do you mean ‘Who’? That’s me; my first name is Avraham.’

“‘Do you know anyone else called Avraham Hershkop?’ I said no. To the best of my knowledge, I’m the only Avraham Hershkop in

It’s never too late. The dollar that returned to its rightful owner after twenty-four years.



Chabad.

“When are you leaving?” he continued to inquire. I was a bit confused. I didn’t understand the purpose of this interrogation.

“In another half an hour,” I replied.

“Did you lose something in the last few days?” he continued with his questioning.

“At this point, I could no longer restrain myself and I asked, ‘Rabbi Kievman, why are keeping me in suspense? Is there something you want to tell me or ask me? Why beat around the bush?’

“Then, he dropped his ‘bombshell’ on me. I never dreamed anything like this would happen.

“There’s a bachur here who helps us gather the money that has been collected in the shul’s pushkas. Yesterday, when we checked the pushka for the Siyumei Rambam, we found a dollar with the name Avraham HersHKop written on it. It turns out that the dollar was received from the Rebbe shlita.

“The truth of the matter is that in those initial moments, I was rather confused. I didn’t recall that I had lost any dollars, and surely not dollars from the Rebbe. In the meantime, Rabbi Kievman called up that bachur and urged him to come to 770 as quickly as possible with the dollar. He arrived within twenty minutes.

“My son was standing near me, together with my nephew, HaTamim Yossi HersHKop, who was in 770 preparing for his wedding. When the young man pulled the dollar out of

“Today, twenty four years later, I was privileged to get back one of those dollars, which due to my shortcomings, I had managed to forget about.”

his pocket and I saw the handwriting on it, I jumped as if I had been bitten by a snake. I immediately identified it as my handwriting. On the dollar, there appeared the words ‘I received from the Rebbe shlita on the 14th of Iyar, Pesach Sheini 5744’. To say that I was amazed would be an understatement. I tried to remove the dust from my memory. I couldn’t remain indifferent and tears poured down my cheeks for several long minutes.

“I remembered that I had learned in Morristown that year, and I would come to 770 quite often. This included my participation in many farbrengens, among them this farbrengen when I was privileged to receive a dollar from the Rebbe’s holy hand. Some time afterwards, someone broke into my closet, and several of the dollars that I had been privileged to receive from the Rebbe had been stolen from me.

“Today, twenty four years later, I was privileged to get back one of those dollars, which due to my shortcomings, I had managed to forget about.

“I was in a state of tremendous elation, as I went up to the office of one of the Rebbe’s secretaries, Rabbi Binyomin Klein, and told him the whole story that had just happened, holding the dollar in my hand. Even he was deeply moved, and he told me that he had heard many stories about how dollars from the Rebbe found their way to their rightful owners, but to an actual story such as this, he could only react with sheer amazement.”

In his heart, R. Avraham felt that the Rebbe is trying to convey some message to him. He didn’t know what, when, and how, but he knew that it would reach him sooner or later.

When Rabbi HersHKop returned home to Nachlat Har Chabad and was asked by Rabbi Mordechai Gordetzky to serve the interests of the Chabad community by running on the joint city council list of the incumbent mayor, the feeling of excitement intensified. His heart was engulfed by the realization that this was the shlichus he had received from the Rebbe when he was in 770.

Indeed, the Rebbe continues with greater strength and greater fortitude to lead the flock that he tends, and the Jewish People in general, even in these times. His blessing had already been bestowed in a manner of “Before they call, I will answer.”

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DO NOT READ PROMISED LAND, BUT LAND OF PROMISE

By C. Katz

This timeless story shared by Tzfas shlucha Rena Leichter, describes a mother's strength and courage to stand strong for Yiddishkait – a move which not only spared her entire family from assimilation, but led them to the warmth and light of Chabad.

In the late 1940's and economic conditions in Eretz Yisroel were very modest, to say the least. If you had a tomato, you were lucky. But for one family, who left the Holy Land and sailed to America seeking a better life, the only thing that was greener was the dollar.

It was 1948, and two neshamos, Chaim and Masha, were among those who had made their way to Eretz Yisroel, after losing most of their families in the Holocaust. They met, married and settled in Tel Aviv where they had four boys followed by a beautiful baby girl, whom they named after two of their grandmothers – Rishel and Rina — who had perished at the hands of the Nazis, yimach shmam..

The boys were learning in a

Talmud Torah, and the young girl was sent to Beis Yaacov. That was a rare move; most of their neighbors had decided to lead a secular life after the devastation of the war. At that point the economic situation in Eretz Yisroel was extremely tight — the stores were practically empty. There was nothing you could buy even if you had money and no one had money...

You could only buy with food stamps, which would allocate food based on the number of neshamos per family. Still, that was hardly sufficient.

Meanwhile, the little girl's uncle had immigrated to America and would send letters to her mother asking why she needed to live a difficult life in Eretz Yisroel. He and

his wife didn't merit to have children, but they would send packages and letters from America with an underlying message — 'why suffer in Israel — come to America!'

The little girl recalled her mother not wanting to hear any of it. "This (Eretz Yisroel) is the place for Jews," said her mother, with strong conviction. But her father, who carried the burden of parnasa, was always thinking about it...

"As a child, I don't remember how much my parents would discuss it. But it must have been every time they got a letter. And I guess one day they decided the family was going to America, where everything would be great...

"We were so excited and so was the whole neighborhood. It was the greatest attraction — the Solomon family was moving to America!!! We started selling things in our little apartment and packed.

"We came to America by boat after six or seven days at sea. We arrived in January 1960. Our uncle and aunt came to meet us. They already rented an apartment for us. It was huge — three rooms! In Israel we had one room so the new apartment was like a mansion.

"My uncle really put himself in the position of the-uncle-that-was-

here-to-help-us. He helped my father find a job and explained that here in America it is as different from Eretz Yisroel as from the old home in Poland. Here, he explained, children get a proper education in public schools. We were called the refugees. In their eyes we were so outdated and primitive – according to the ‘sophisticated’ American life.

“My uncle had already advanced himself. He was a senior accountant. He asked why we didn’t “advance” ourselves too. We were greenhorns. He said all the Jewish families were sending their children to public school. So we went to Public School Number 67! I was seven, my oldest

***We were called
the refugees. In
their eyes we were
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brother was maybe thirteen.”

As time went on, the father was busy trying to earn a living, and the mother was busy trying to sort out a new country, new lifestyle, new language and culture. Busy as she was though, there was still time to sit down with her daughter to ask her how school was going.

For a little girl that had been used to giving her mother nachas from her school in Eretz Yisroel, this was a difficult task. Instead of being in the third grade as she should have been, she had been put back into the first grade, as she hadn’t spoken or understood English.

“It felt very awkward and

unpleasant to disappoint her. But I didn’t know how to tell her here that I was a bright student bringing her nachas. My childish thoughts were – how can I make her happy?!

“I told her I liked when kids stood up and put their hand on their heart and said something and sang a song. I thought that would make her very happy.”

The little girl apparently did not know that these actions she enjoyed were the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of the American national anthem.

“She (my mother) heard this and was very, very, upset. She said ‘oy vey! I came to America to send my kids to the goyishe schools?’ It was a national thing (the pledge and song) but she was sure it was a prayer. She didn’t even ask what it meant. She immediately understood that she came to America to improve her situation and brought her children – the only descendants of a family killed over there . . . and instead of learning Yiddishkait, they were learning goyishkait.”

Immediately, the mother stopped sending her children to the public school. And while they were all at home, playing and wondering what their mother was going to do next, the strong woman boarded buses she wasn’t even familiar with. She didn’t even know where there were Yiddish schools. She asked neighbors and they said take this train and this train and that train and go here...

Well her mother found the yeshivos, but was quickly made to understand that in America, a Jewish school was completely private and didn’t get any money from the government – and that she’d have to pay tuition. She explained that she didn’t have a penny to pay, but the yeshivas – all of them — said they were sorry but she’d have to pay something.

Back at the house, meanwhile, the atmosphere was freilach. The

children were running around the house, enjoying themselves, trying to guess what would be.

“I remember one of the evenings that she was looking around, my uncle came over and told her, ‘what a chutzpah! I brought you over to help you and you took the children out of school.’ He threatened not to help anymore. The situation was tense. His support was important. “My mother told him, “they are my children and I’ll do what I want!”

She went to a school on Bedford, a Lubavitch yeshiva – and waited for the speech about having to pay money she didn’t have in order for the children to be accepted. But the speech never came. The boys were all accepted, given bus passes, told they would be provided with meals at the yeshiva – and whenever the mother had some money to pay, she could. Oh, and another thing, her daughter could go to school with his daughter.

This was the principal of one of the yeshivos the Rebbe had opened to accept Jewish neshamos, Rabbi Altein, sh”y. And that is how the family came to Lubavitch. And that is also how they came to understand the concept of a step backwards in order to launch forward.

Time passed and some years later, in 1973, the Rebbe sent 10 young couples on shlichus to Tzfas to help Rabbi Aryeh Leib Kaplan, a”h, make the first Lubavitch minyan in the holy city in our times. A newly married couple, Mrs. Rena Leichter and her husband, Rav Aaron, a”h, were among that group and have raised Chassidishe children and merited many Chassidishe grandchildren. Yes, the beloved shlucha who tells the beautiful story of a mother’s mesirus nefesh, is none other than the little girl, Rena. And she is sure that her mother, in Gan Eden, is still getting much nachas from the fruits of her connection to the Rebbe, MH”M.

TOP DOCTOR AND PROUD CHASSID

By Nosson Avrohom

*Dr. Gad (Gadi) Ben-Dror was born to an atheistic family and was completely estranged from Judaism. The one who set him straight was a Belgian gentile woman. He began to search until he found Chabad and became deeply mekushar to the Rebbe. * Dr. Ben-Dror is a top doctor in the internal medicine department of Ziv Hospital and is considered one of the greatest experts in Israel in infectious diseases, a field he studied because of a miracle he had with the Rebbe.*

SOUL DOCTOR

Within a few minutes of my interview of Dr. Gad Ben-Dror, he dispelled all the stereotypes many of us have of doctors. I quickly saw that Ben-Dror is not a cold, impersonal type but a truly nice, warm person. Dr. Ben-Dror works in the internal medicine department of Ziv Hospital and is considered one of the biggest experts in the country in infectious disease. He sees medicine as far more than a profession. It is his life's mission

which he dreamed about in his childhood.

There are few people in Maalot, Nahariya, and the surrounding yishuvim who don't know the beloved Lubavitcher doctor. In addition to being sought after on countless medical questions every day, he serves as a mohel who has circumcised thousands of children.

When I asked him what his patients think of his Chassidic appearance, he smiles. "I am often asked halachic questions because people think I'm the rabbi here.

They prefer being treated by a religious Jew."

The Lubavitcher dimension is not missing in his work. Although he dreamed about being a doctor in order to help people, he doesn't reject other options that could help his patients. In addition to how he handles patients, according to the Rebbe's advice, he always has a volume of Igros Kodesh on his desk through which many of his patients connect to the Rebbe.

More and more, Dr. Ben-Dror sees the Geula in the world of medicine. "The aphorism that the Rebbe promoted, 'think good and it will be good,' is written about in countless articles in prestigious medical journals. They prove how a sick person's attitude is a vital factor in his state of well-being."

CONFRONTED BY ANTI-SEMITISM

Dr. Ben-Dror was born fifty years ago in the Ramat HaChayal neighborhood of Tel Aviv which used to be the northern exclusive area of the city. As a northern Tel Avivian, he went to the Kol Yisroel Chaveirim School where he learned French in addition to the usual subjects.

Aside from picking up some traditional Jewish stories and tidbits of Zionism, he was clueless about Judaism. His mother is from Hungary and his father from

Germany. His father made aliya in the thirties. Upon doing so, he changed his name from Sperlin to Ben-Dror so he could enlist in the British army where he served for a few years in Africa.

Dr. Ben-Dror reminisces, “In my childhood, I did not go to shul even though, at a later point, I found out that my grandfathers were very religious. But like many of that generation, the children were swept up in secular Zionism and they abandoned the religious life. My father was a man with a

strong work ethic. He would get up early every morning in order to work as a locksmith at the Argaz Company and he would return late in the evening.

“At home as at school, the atmosphere was very atheistic and liberal. Judaism was not a strong point at home, to say the least.

“When I finished high school I went to the army and served as a medic in the armored corps. I did a large part of my service at the Suez Canal. When I think about it today, I remember that I had a positive

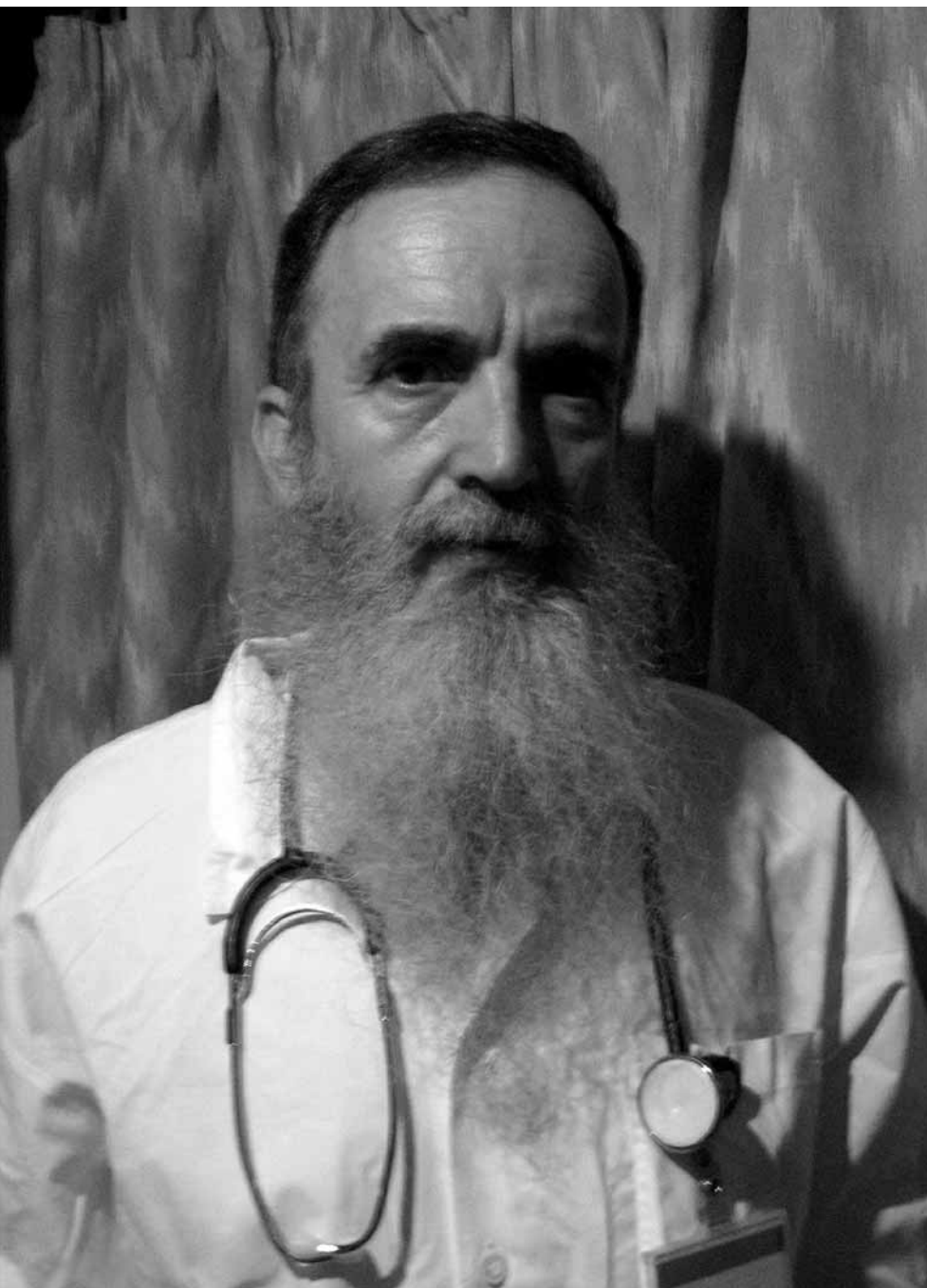
feeling about Chabad and the Rebbe because the Chabadnikim would come to us with doughnuts and mishloach manos as well as coins for tz’daka from the Rebbe. They were focused on their shlichus and had genuine simcha. I remember one time, as we danced in a circle, the thought occurred to me that if I were ever to become religious, I would be a Chabad Chassid.

“When I finished my military service I decided to study medicine. I had always wanted to help people in this way and I went to university in Belgium where I spent three years. While there, I strayed even further from my Jewish roots. When you’re in Eretz Yisroel, even though at home and in school you don’t hear about Judaism, about Torah and mitzvos, the fact that you live in a Jewish country exposes you to Judaism: Whether through television or radio, whether in the army, you are exposed to kashrus and Shabbos. In Belgium there was none of this.

“I used the French I had studied in school and devoted most of my time to the study of medicine. I felt a certain estrangement from my roots. The one who brought me back to reality was the gentile woman from whom I rented my apartment. One day, after arriving from vacation in Eretz Yisroel, I brought her some duty-free alcoholic beverages that she asked me to buy for her.

“She forced a smile and said, ‘You see, although you’re a Jew, we respect and admire you.’ Her use of the word ‘although’ reminded me that it doesn’t matter how much we want to act like them; they will always remember that we are the ones they are not supposed to like. Her way of putting it made me confront the real face behind the smiles.

“This didn’t stop me from



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continuing for a fourth year of studies in a small near town Hamburg, Germany. I felt very isolated there. I rarely met a Jew but I lived near a shul which was one of the only ones not destroyed on Kristallnacht.

"There were two Jewish families in town who were happy I had come so it was easier for them to form a minyan on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Other Jews came from a neighboring town so the tradition of prayer would not stop in this historic shul.

"Today I know that these Jews were not very knowledgeable but they had a strong desire to hold t'fillos in that shul. Every now and then they would knock at my door on Shabbos morning and ask me to help form a minyan.

"It was in Germany that I began to think about my Jewish identity and what the ramifications of my being Jewish are. The coldness of the Germans together with the thought that the murderers of many of my people, including my family, had come from them, made me wonder why we are persecuted.

"It was hard for me to remain a long time in Germany and after a few months of tortured thoughts, I

decided to return to Eretz Yisroel and continue my studies at Tel Aviv University. I still had questions about my identity and when I met my wife-to-be who worked in the laboratory at Tel HaShomer, we wanted to explore Judaism further. We decided to take a course in kabbala."

ON THE WAY TO CHASSIDUS

Dr. Ben-Dror was a successful sixth year medical student when he began to search for answers to the questions that bothered him. His acquaintance with Chabad began when he decided that he would do his internship at the hospital in Nahariya. The couple bought a home in nearby Maalot and Gad began working at the hospital in Nahariya. His first encounter with Chabad was with the shliach, Rabbi Yisroel Butman, Pesach night where he and his wife spent the Seder and loved the atmosphere.

"I can't put my finger on the moment I decided I was becoming a Chabad Chassid. It was a protracted process which I didn't fully control. In Maalot back then, there were hardly any Lubavitchers except for Rabbi Dov Liron, a shliach who now lives in Kiryot. Through him I began to get into the magical world of Chassidus and the Chabad movement. I would join him at shiurim given by Rabbi Shmuel Frumer of Kiryot and I loved the Chassidus that was taught.

"One of the moments that shaped me as a Chabad Chassid took place at one of these shiurim when R' Frumer said to me, 'If you grow a beard, you will get two mitzvos – that of growing a beard and that of being able to put on t'fillin in those moments that you save by not shaving.'

"I took him seriously. I needed a lot of courage to carry it out, to not

care what people said. Just at that time I was called up to the Reserves and I decided that it would be easier to make the change while in the army. And that's what I did. I left my beard unshaven like many soldiers do and when I returned to Maalot I stopped touching it. I also switched my kippa from a knitted one to a plain black one.

"My connection to the Rebbe and Chabad is really a process that is very hard for me to explain. Today in Maalot there are several Chabad families, a shliach and a k'hilla. But back then, the religious influence in the area came from a successful Hesder yeshiva as well as a wonderful knitted yarmulke community.

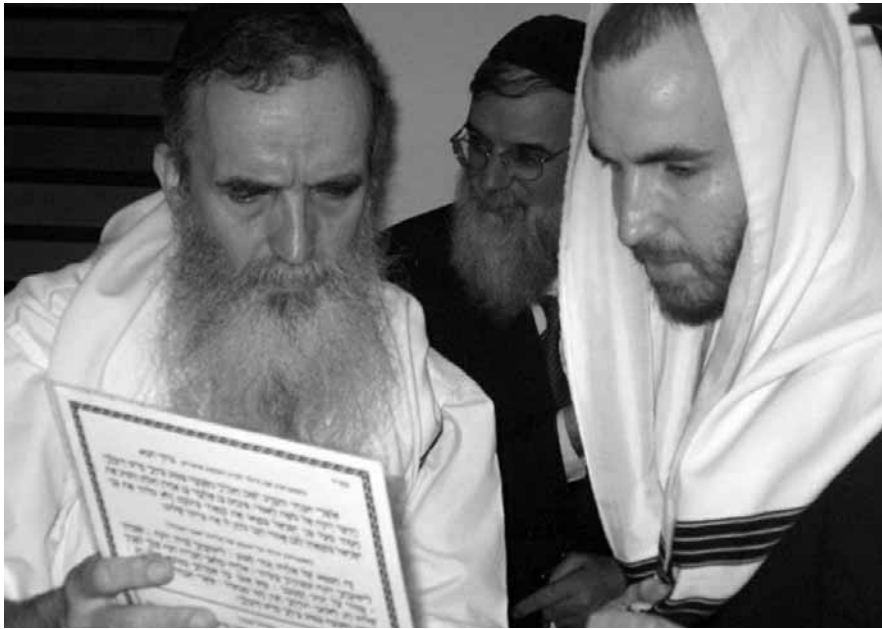
"Still, my neshama was drawn to Chassidus and to hiskashrus to the Rebbe. The first time I traveled to the Rebbe was in Tishrei 5748 with my oldest son, Yair and my chavrusa for Gemara, Rabbi Sinoni who is a rav today, in Chadera.

"My visit to the Rebbe was the final step that transformed me into a Chassid. I remember standing at a farbrengen, stunned. I couldn't open my mouth; I was in shock. One day, when dollars were being given out, I passed by with Rabbi Sinoni and when he asked the Rebbe for a bracha for children and parnasa and the Rebbe looked at him and answered 'amen' I was overcome with emotion.

"You quickly realize that the Rebbe is not just another rabbinic figure. He is way beyond an incredible genius, way beyond a mekubal who does miracles. The events of that Tishrei are engraved in me and I remember every minute I spent with the Rebbe."

THE REBBE SENT AN ANSWER WHEN I EMERGED FROM THE MIKVA

When Dr. Ben-Dror finished his



Dr. Gad Ben-Dror at a bris mila

residency at the hospital in Nahariya, he was certified as a full-fledged doctor. His spiritual search was being fulfilled through becoming a Chabad Chassid. Whenever he had an important question, he asked the Rebbe. For example, that year he wanted to reduce the number of daily hours he worked at the hospital so he could spend more time with his family, but his request was rejected. The fear was that other doctors would ask for the same thing. When he saw that he had no other recourse, he asked the Rebbe what to do.

A few days later he received a response with a bracha and he presented his request again for fewer hours of work. The incredible happened. The department head allowed him to work a $\frac{3}{4}$ day. When the other doctors heard about this, they complained. Why had they been refused and Ben-Dror approved? The department head admitted that he had no idea why he had done this, but Dr. Ben-Dror knew the reason.

The big story with the Rebbe is connected with Ben-Dror's

expertise in infectious diseases. The way he became a specialist is connected with an amazing miracle which he tells us himself:

"When I worked at the hospital in Nahariya, I got an offer from Rambam hospital in Chaifa to do a residency in South Africa in the field of infectious diseases. This would take five years of study after which I would run their clinic. It was a wonderful offer and I wrote to the Rebbe about it, but I did not receive an answer.

"I wasn't going to South Africa if the Rebbe did not approve and so I delayed giving a response and had to come up with excuses for the administration of the hospital in Chaifa. One day, they called me from South Africa and told me they wanted to know more about me and since one of their professors was going to be in Israel, they asked him to contact me so he could meet me.

"I agreed, and after a few days the professor arrived. When he saw me, he asked me whether I was religious and when I said that I was, he said: You look like a baal t'shuva, right?

"From the tone of his questions I realized he was Jewish and then our conversation turned to matters of Judaism rather than medicine. He told me that he had recently retired and he had come to Eretz Yisroel in order to study in a yeshiva and to strengthen his Jewish identity.

"At his request, I prepared a list of yeshivos for English-speaking baalei t'shuva for him, and that's how my 'interview' ended. They called me from the university a few days later and asked whether I had met him. When I said that I had, they wanted to know where he was.

"After he had received the list of yeshivos from me, he went that same day to one of the yeshivos and had completely forgotten that he was supposed to call the university back in South Africa with his impressions of me. In any case, even if he had remembered, he could only give them religious impressions, not medical ones.

"It suddenly struck me that this was the reason why the Rebbe's answer had been delayed until now. It was so that he would come to Eretz Yisroel and speak to me about Judaism and go to a yeshiva. This assessment seemed to be verified when a few days later I received a phone call from Rambam hospital, telling me that I could do a residency in infectious diseases with them too. Now I had to ask for the Rebbe's bracha again.

"When the request became more realistic it was already 5757. The Rebbe is not seen by us and so I asked one of the shluchim in Nahariya, Rabbi Boruch Wilhelm, who was going to the Kinus HaShluchim, to ask the Rebbe to let me know what I should do.

He flew to 770 on Thursday and Friday afternoon I went, as I always do, to the mikva. When I came out, I met one of the rabbanim, Rabbi Gurewitz, who said to me, 'Dr.

“He didn’t know why my face changed colors. ‘I am getting an answer from the Rebbe through you right now,’ I told him, and this time it was he who was taken aback.”

Gad, I must tell you something.’ I was surprised since I had never had a conversation with him before. Then he said: You are a doctor and I am learning the halachos of healing with the Rishonim and Acharonim and I saw something interesting that I have been looking into.

“I was curious to hear what he had found interesting and then he told me something that stunned me. ‘One of the things that all the poskim agree about is that if a doctor can master a certain specialty within medicine, he is obligated to do so.’ And he began explaining this at length.

“He didn’t know why my face changed colors. ‘I am getting an answer from the Rebbe through you right now,’ I told him, and this time it was he who was taken aback. I told him that just the day before I had sent Rabbi Wilhelm to ask the Rebbe for a bracha for me in order to know whether to do the residency or not and here he was, telling me about it ...

“The most amazing part of all is that when Rabbi Wilhelm came back he told me that at the very moment that we had our

conversation, he was reading my request to the Rebbe.”

A VIVID DREAM

Dr. Gad Ben-Dror began studying infectious diseases. For two years he traveled every day from his home in Maalot to Chaifa. Although medicine is a field which can look as though it contradicts faith, Dr. Ben-Dror has seen things that, according to his professional knowledge, are supernatural.

Every year, there is a conference of Lubavitcher doctors in Eretz Yisroel at Dr. Tal Nir’s where they share their experiences and stories that they had in their work.

“I have told this story numerous times but it moves me every time. There was someone married for ten years without children. The couple had gone to many conventional doctors and when that didn’t help, they turned to alternative

practitioners who made big promises but didn’t come through for them.

“The husband was a mekurav to Chabad and since he knew me, I once suggested that he write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh. I told him: Many people were helped with the Rebbe’s brachos in this way and with Hashem’s help, you will be helped too.

“He wrote and I wished him that with the power of his belief in the Rebbe’s bracha, with the addition of some good hachlatos, that the bracha would be fulfilled and he would have children.

“A few days later, on a Friday, he had a dream in which he was in 770 and he went by the Rebbe and got his bracha for children. The dream was vivid as though it was an actual vision, and he woke up and told his wife about it. She was skeptical and dismissed it as just a dream.

THE REBBE “GAVE IT” TO ME

A few years ago, a young Lubavitcher came to me and told me that a shidduch had come up for her but the boy had a certain medical problem. She asked me what the ramifications of this problem are and at what age do negative developments set in.

I told her what I knew and said that at an older age the problem could become more acute. Despite my informed opinion, she wanted to write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh. I was there when she opened to the answer and we were both taken aback by the Rebbe’s answer. I had never seen anything like this.

The Rebbe wrote that a doctor has permission to heal and not to predict the future and it turns out in this case that he [the doctor] spoke falsely. I remember the words which sent a chill down my back. The Rebbe had “given it to me” for giving my medical opinion about what would happen twenty or thirty years later. The Rebbe went on to recommend a vegetarian diet which would make it likely for him to be healed.

We were both stunned by this answer. I told her that as far as I knew, the problem was not one that could be cured but the Rebbe said otherwise.

The next day, when I arrived at work, I heard people talking about research that would make it possible to transplant a healthy gene, thus eliminating the medical problem at the source. I walked around in a daze for quite some time.



“When he went back to sleep he saw the Rebbe again in a dream. The Rebbe’s face was shining and his blue eyes penetrated to the depths of his soul. The Rebbe said that he wanted to give him a sign for his bracha so he would know that the dream was true. ‘Go to the Yahalom shul. The chazan will be Dov Glazer the lawyer and he will be up to P’sukei D’Zimra. When he finishes Nishmas, they will ask you to continue as the chazan.’

“The next day, he woke up a bit later than usual, because of the events of the night before. How amazed he was when he entered the shul and saw Glazer serving as chazan and he was davening the P’sukei D’Zimra.

“A few minutes went by and when he finished, the gabbai came over to him and asked him to continue as chazan. He couldn’t restrain himself. He got up and told everybody his dream then and there. Some of the people were skeptical and some believed it. That week, the city of Maalot buzzed with the story of his dream.

“A month later, his wife was pregnant but she miscarried. I told him the Gemara about a bracha

being effective on something kept hidden and he agreed to keep quiet. A year went by and his wife became pregnant again and she gave birth to a son they named Netanel. Many people attended the bris where they heard the story of the dream.

“That man’s wife had another amazing story. After their first child, she was expecting their second son when she experienced severe pain during her seventh month. When she went to their family doctor, he sent her for an ultra-sound test where they saw she had appendicitis. An operation had to be done immediately. The doctors said that this wouldn’t be good for the baby and they had to inform her of this in advance.

“When her husband called me to consult with me, I told him: You already experienced a miracle with the Rebbe and you know what you need to do.

“He wrote to the Rebbe and the answer was to check t’fillin and mezuzos. I told him that whatever happens he had to take her to Rambam Hospital and in the meantime, I sent his mezuzos and t’fillin to be checked. On the one hand, she had to have the

operation. She couldn’t remain like that. On the other hand, it was likely to bring on labor and the baby wasn’t far along enough to be born yet.

“She arrived at the hospital and they had her get ready for the operation. Yet, as time went by, the pains dissipated. The doctors decided to wait. The next morning, when the doctors came and looked at the pictures, they were shocked that she hadn’t been operated on yet. When they asked her how she felt, she said, ‘Better than yesterday.’

“They were incredulous since in these cases the pains only get worse. They decided to do another test before operating on her, because based on the previous scans the situation was critical.

“The technician turned the ultra-sound device this way and that and said in astonishment, ‘I see no inflammation that would justify an operation.’

“She remained in the hospital for another three days and then was released. It was an incredible miracle for in the world of medicine, this just doesn’t happen. When I told Dr. Singer, the man responsible for ultra-sound in Nahariya, and the best in the country in this field, he was thunderstruck.”

POSITIVE THINKING

The fact that he is a Chassid in addition to being a doctor, helps him a lot in understanding his patients.

“We know that the one who actually heals is the angel who accompanies every doctor. When you realize that you have the power and the permission to heal, and not the right to make pronouncements about people’s fate, you relate differently to your work. It’s more spiritual.

“A few days ago there was a

woman here from Kfar Veradim who said she was suffering from back pain. They sent her to me because that day there was no orthopedist available. I examined her and gave her a prescription.

"A half an hour later she called and said that she hadn't taken the medicine yet but her pains had ceased. She asked me what treatment I had given her. I told her the story about the Maggid of Mezritch who said that next to every doctor stands an angel who guides him. She was amazed by this.

"Three months later her back pain returned and she called me. 'Remember me with the back pain? It came back. Can you do over the phone what you did the last time?' It may be an entertaining anecdote,

but these stories happen, and they demonstrate the power of the spiritual component of healing."

Dr. Ben-Dror related a story that happened the day I interviewed him:

"Someone came in today from one of the moshavim, completely encased in a body cast and afraid for his future. I always have a pushka on my desk, as the Rebbe said. I saw that he was very fearful about his condition and I told him: Put a coin in the pushka and everything will be all right. He put in a coin and left a lot more calmly than he had come in.

"The line that the Rebbe repeated time and again is: Think good and it will be good. I always say the Mishna that if a Kohen thought invalidating thoughts, the

korban becomes unfit. All the more so with the positive, if a Jew thinks positive thoughts, it has power and it can change the situation."

BRIS KODESH

In addition to being a doctor, R' Ben-Dror is known throughout the northern settlements, kibbutzim and moshavim as a mohel. Many families who are not religious are willing to circumcise their sons on condition that Dr. Ben-Dror does it. He complies, no matter the weather, summer and winter, on Shabbos and Yom Tov as well as weekdays.

"In recent years I have circumcised thousands of babies and it gives me great satisfaction. During the years after the gates of the Soviet Union opened and thousands of Russian Jews began to arrive here, I was a doctor at the hospital in Nahariya. The rav of the city, Rabbi Keller, would visit sick people in different departments on Fridays. He would go from one person to the next and give people hope and encouragement.

"We got to know one another and since many Russian Jews wanted to be circumcised, and the mohel had to be certified as a surgeon too, he suggested that I study mila, and I did. I studied it at Shaarei Tzedek Hospital in Yerushalayim and since then, I have circumcised hundreds of adults.

"When the Russian aliya dwindled, residents of Maalot, who knew that I am a mohel, began asking me to circumcise their sons. Now I meet many children whom I circumcised who ask me to circumcise their own children.

"Near Maalot is a yishuv called Kalil which is populated by mostly young Jews who want to remove themselves from modernity and live in tents in the woods. Many of them have recently come from extended stays in India and the Far

MY PERSONAL MIRACLE

Two summers ago, during the Second Lebanon War, my wife and I remained in Maalot even though most people left in fear of the missiles. The kids were in Kfar Chabad and we, as "shluchim," did not leave. My wife is in charge of the mikva and I am a doctor.

One Shabbos, the children came to visit us. By that time we knew, more or less, when the terrorists shot their missiles. We were used to the routine, the siren, thirty seconds, and then the missile landing. In the half a minute between the siren and the missiles landing, we ran for shelter.

Maalot was empty of people. All the shuls were closed and whoever had to stay davened in the one shul that remained open.

It pained me to see that out of hundreds of worshippers, only 13 people remained who dared show up. Shabbos afternoon, after the meal, I was taking a nap in the living room when I heard the siren. My wife called me to come inside but for some reason I decided to stay in the living room. I didn't want Nasrallah to disturb my Shabbos rest.

While I was talking to my wife who was further inside the house, we heard the sound of an explosion. It was before the thirty second grace period was over. Over the couch is a large window which had shattered. The new shutters which were made out of metal, flew out of the window and landed right next to me.

Two meters of heavy shutters, sharp as anything, flew by force of the explosion and landed near me. I quickly realized the enormity of the miracle that Hashem did for me. If I hadn't been too lazy to get up, I would have been struck. I don't even want to think what would have happened if the sharp metal and glass shards had penetrated my body. I get goose bumps when I think of that attack.

East. I am the mohel for this yishuv and I do brissin there occasionally. It is there that I feel just how special every bris is. The people there, with their exotic clothes and long hair gather round me and every amen they say moves me. I never heard a more emotional Shma Yisroel than I heard from these young folk who are searching.

"One week, I explained to someone that in addition to doing a bris on a firstborn child, there is also a Pidyon HaBen ritual and I explained what it was according to halacha and the Rebbe's sichos. The parents agreed and we decided to do it in our community. They all came to the Chabad shul in Maalot and it was definitely an unusual and moving event.

"One person had a guitar and

another one had a horn and a third some unfamiliar instrument. The baby's grandfather, an Ashkenazi Jew very far from being religious, said he too is a firstborn and he is certain that his parents did not do a Pidyon HaBen for him. We did a separate ceremony for him.

"Through brissin you can find the way to the hearts of all kinds of young people. I am sometimes invited by kibbutznikim to do a bris on Shabbos and what I do is invite them to spend Shabbos with me in Maalot, and they come. In addition to a bris, they get to experience an authentic Shabbos."

SPREADING THE BESURAS HA'GEULA

A quick glance at a watch lets us know that we have spoken for

more than three hours. When I asked Dr. Gad Ben-Dror what his ambitions are, he was suddenly quiet and then he said: To see the hisgalus of the Rebbe.

He has seen how Chabad has grown in his town. Today, the outreach is not only based in Maalot but there are shluchim even in moshavim and kibbutzim in the area.

"Today, everybody knows what Chabad is and what it represents. In Maalot there are several shiurim, also in inyanei Moshiach and Geula given by Rabbi Frumer which is well attended. Over here we don't hide the fact that the Rebbe is Moshiach. We convey this message clearly and in a way that people can be receptive to it.

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PAVLODAR: READY FOR GEULA

By Nosson Avrohom

*The final words said by Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn were, “Ay, Your footsteps are not known” ... A few hours later, he was buried in his exile in Kazakhstan * Shluchim of the Rebbe have since gone to Kazakhstan to reach out to Jews there * One of these shluchim is Rabbi Shmuel Karnauch who went to Pavlodar and began to collect Jews, one by one, formed them into a kehilla and began breathing life into the city’s hundreds of Jews * The fascinating story of a shliach who left a comfortable, Chassidishe life in Beitar Illit for a very faraway city.*

Sometimes you look for the big stories in order to measure success and to tell about communities and big successful mosdos, but sometimes, the measure of success is in the little stories.

Rabbi Shmuel Karnauch, the rav of the Jewish community in Pavlodar in northern Kazakhstan, was very excited when two children of his community, who learn in Moscow the rest of the year, were home for

summer vacation. The two of them, Yossi and Bracha, are students in the mesivta and Project Children of the Future. They became frum in Pavlodar and traveled thousands of kilometers from home in order to study. Today, they are 100% Lubavitch.

Upon their return, they help R’ Karnauch out. Yossi participates in the shiurim and tefillos at the shul and is the rabbi’s right-hand man.

Bracha works with girls her age.

“As far as I’m concerned, there is nothing more moving, there is no greater satisfaction, that this,” says R’ Karnauch.

This is the seventh year that he is working in Pavlodar where he went, on very short notice from the shliach and rav of Kazakhstan, Rabbi Yeshaya Cohen. When I asked him whether it wasn’t hard for him to go to such a spiritual wilderness he said that he himself had gotten involved



in Judaism from a “nowhere place.” As a polite constructive criticism he added that when it comes to Jewish things you can’t say “spiritual wilderness.”

During the interview, I realized that this view is what gives him the strength to keep going despite the difficult circumstances. From the very start he thanked Rabbi Cohen for his ongoing assistance.

Is Kazakhstan hospitable to the Jewish community?

“Although Kazakhstan is a Moslem country, I would say that it has excellent ties with the Jewish people.”

Up until six years ago, R’ Karnauch and his family lived in warm, Chabad surroundings in Beitar Ilit, completely oblivious to the great challenge that lay ahead of them. At the time that the offer came his way, he was enjoying life in Beitar, especially the shiurim by mashpia, Rabbi Dovid Offen and the

PAVLODAR

Pavlodar is a city in Kazakhstan 350 kilometers north-east of Astana, on the banks of the Irtysh River. The population is 300,000, mostly ethnic Russians. The Kazakhs number only one third of the total population. There are smaller minorities of Ukrainians, Germans and an even smaller community of Jews.

The city was founded in 1720 by Kazakhs and was called Kuryakovski for the lake from which they drew salt. In 1861 the name was changed to Pavlodar (Pavel’s Gift) for Prince Pavel, the son of Alexander II, who was born then. At that point, the city was a small oasis in the desert, lacking in importance until in 1955 when Khrushchev’s Virgin Lands Campaign, an initiative to open up large tracts of virgin land, began to pick up steam and hundreds of thousands of people migrated there, and developed the city’s industries.

Pavlodar grew to become a major industrial center, with tractor, aluminum, and chemical plants and it became one of the biggest cities in Kazakhstan. An oil refinery was completed in 1978 in Pavlodar. A major tank factory was built there which is why it was a closed city until 1992. Declarations of independence led to the city’s further development.

rav of the kehilla, Rabbi Asher Lemel Cohen.

One day, there was a rumor

heard in shul that Rabbi Yeshaya Cohen was going to start a kehilla and shul in a city in Kazakhstan but



he hadn't found the person to take the job. This was the first time that he heard about the city Pavlodar. When he made some inquiries, he found out that it was located in the north of the country which meant that the temperature in the winter goes well below freezing.

The city was founded 250 years ago by Kazakhs. There was no Jewish community at all, no religious institutions, no shul, no older Jews who remembered religious life, simply nothing. The shliach would have to start from scratch in collecting the Jewish remnants living in the city and environs and build a kehilla "something out of nothing."

"The fact that I would have to begin, from the ground up, did not bother me. I personally come from a completely irreligious family. I was mostly worried about the harsh climate."

Days went by and nobody jumped at this shlichus

Months earlier, the Rebbe had known precisely what situation would arise and he had asked that they not travel on Shabbos. She was very excited by this. She saw with her own eyes how the Rebbe runs the show.

opportunity. R' Karnauch decided it suited him and the difficulties couldn't be allowed to stand in the way of the fact that the Rebbe asked that every point on the globe be prepared to greet Moshiach. Once he and his wife were in agreement on this, they wrote to the Rebbe and opened to an encouraging answer. Less than two weeks later they were in Pavlodar.

"We packed our stuff, parted from our friends, and arrived in time for a grand Chanukas Beis HaKnesses. We knew that in a short while, the guests would leave and our shlichus work would just be beginning."

The Jewish population consists of only a few hundred families, most of whom are barely cognizant of their being Jewish. Every now and then, the shliach discovers another Jewish family that nobody knew about before. The impact of the communist era is apparent

here with the majority of the Jews ignorant of everything Jewish. The rate of assimilation is 90%. Many of the Jews here, or their parents, were exiled to this city by the communists, or they are second generation Holocaust survivors who fled to this city in fear of the Nazis. Unlike most of the others, they remained to live there. Over the years, R' Yeshaya Cohen would send shluchim to the city for brief stays over Yom Tov.

"Despite the pathetic spiritual state of the Jews here," says R' Karnauch, "there is one consolation. The shul that was built here was built on the ruins of the youth club of the communist movement. It is more than a symbol and testimony that despite the decrees and persecution, the Jewish people are *chai v'kayam*, while the communists and their supporters have declined. Our shlichus is to try and restore Jewish life, to inspire Jews to return to the ways of their ancestors."

Visitors to Pavlodar who did not see the city in several years cannot believe their eyes. The shul hums with activity. Every Shabbos and Yom Tov there are tefillos as well as farbrengens. A cemetery was set aside for Jews after years in which Jews were buried with gentiles. A beautiful Chabad mikva was built and is used by several families. On Lag B'Omer, the Jews of the city march proudly, proud of their Judaism. There are other Jewish activities including shiurim on all kinds of topics.

When you hear R' Karnauch's life story, you understand where he gets his patience and persistence from. He was born over thirty years ago in Odessa, Ukraine. The only Jewish connection his family had was that they knew they were Jewish. As a young man he met the shliach at that time, Rabbi Yeshaya Gisser and he became interested in Judaism through the influence of his uncle and cousin.

His parents, who realized that his interest in his heritage was not just idle curiosity but had practical implications, tried to dissuade him but it was too late. One fine day he left his extended family and went to Eretz Yisrael where he studied at the Gutnick Center in Yerushalayim.

"I wanted to expand my knowledge of Judaism in general and Chassidus in particular. I felt an inexplicable attraction to it. Even while I was in Eretz Yisrael, my parents continued to try to convince me to leave yeshiva and attend university and make a career for myself. The biggest shock for them was when they heard that I was Shomer Shabbos. They could not understand the point. All my attempts at explaining Judaism to them fell on deaf ears. In the meantime, I went on shlichus under the auspices of the yeshiva to Moldavia where the shluchim ran a summer camp. It



The philanthropist Moskowitz visiting the shul



Rabbi Shmuel Karnauch with Rabbi Yeshaya Cohen at the site of the mikva



was there that I heard that my father was very sick and the doctors were pessimistic.

“My mother told me that my father had undergone a complicated, eight hour operation and then the doctors said they did what they could do and they saw no reasonable chance for him to recover. In the meantime, I went back to yeshiva in Yerushalayim and wrote a letter to the Rebbe and put it in a volume of Igros Kodesh. I asked someone to read and translate the Rebbe’s answer for me.

“The Rebbe wrote thanking someone who had been worried about the Rebbe’s health, and informed him that his health had improved and a doctor is given permission to heal. I was happy with this answer and I felt it was for me.

“I told my mother about it and two weeks later she told me that my father, against all prognostications, had recovered from the operation and was out of bed and could even walk and run.

“When the hanhala in yeshiva heard about my father’s health, they sent me on shlichus to Nikolayev which is near Odessa so I could visit my family. During those visits they learned to respect my new way of life and even identified with it. They saw that I hadn’t become primitive; on the contrary, the Torah refines a person and Chassidus purifies him. My mother committed to lighting Shabbos candles and my father began putting on t’fillin every morning.

“I eventually said goodbye again and returned to Eretz Yisrael where I became engaged and married my wife. My parents went to Eretz Yisrael and for the first time they experienced a Yiddishe simcha.

“A short time after my parents returned to Odessa, I got a phone call from my mother saying that my father did not feel well again. My

When my father complained that he experienced discomfort when resting in a certain position, the doctor looked at his medical file and said, 'You have complaints? All the people I know who were in your condition already passed on!'

mother, who had become acquainted with the idea of 'Rebbe' and the ability to receive brachos and guidance from him, asked me to write to the Rebbe again. She was afraid that my father would have to endure a painful course of treatment all over again.

"The answer did not seem to have anything to do with what I wrote. The Rebbe wrote: You are going to your parents. Remember that you cannot travel on an Israeli ship that travels on Shabbos.

"I didn't see any answer here but since this was the Rebbe's answer, I conveyed it to my mother. My mother told me they were actually planning on emigrating to the United States and perhaps the Rebbe's answer was about that. In any case, she promised me that they would not travel on Shabbos. A year later, my father's physical health deteriorated even more and my mother asked me to write to the Rebbe again.

"I wrote another letter and asked for a bracha, noting that my father put on t'fillin every day. How shocked I was to open to the same answer as before, about not traveling on the ship. I realized that something was afoot but I didn't know what. I told my mother this answer and she did not understand it either. There were many ships in the middle of the week. Why would they travel on Shabbos?

"In that same conversation, my mother told me that they had changed their minds and instead of the United States, they had decided to move to Eretz Yisrael. They had already submitted a request for visas.

"Some days went by and they got their visas. My mother made some inquiries and found out that all the

flights and all the ships were booked for the next few months. Hundreds of thousands of non-Jews were flocking to Eretz Yisrael that year in connection with Y2K, the new Millennium that was about to start.

"The Jewish Agency, seeing that there was no space available for new immigrants in the upcoming months hired a special ship for immigrants but ... it was going to set sail on Shabbos. My mother was not Shomer Shabbos at that point, she was just at the beginning of her spiritual journey, but she called me and told me this was an act of G-d. Months earlier, the Rebbe had known precisely what situation would arise and he had asked that they not travel on Shabbos. She was very excited by this. She saw with her own eyes how the Rebbe runs the show.

"Short after, a Ukrainian family gave up their seats on a ship which would not sail on Shabbos, and my parents got those seats. I met my father at the port. He was weak and exhausted and I took him straight to Hadassah hospital. The doctors who examined him said that his chances were slim. The cancer had spread to the small intestine and his condition was serious.

"I did not get caught up in the doctors' pessimism. I told myself that I had written to the Rebbe on his behalf and the Rebbe had said not to travel on Shabbos. They withstood that test and had even begun taking on mitzvos and now Hashem would do what He had to do. The doctors did not understand where my great bitachon came from and they asked me to sign various papers.

"My father had a nine hour operation during which time the doctors walked in and out. When we asked them how my father was they avoided answering and I said Tehillim the entire time. After the operation, the doctors said it was an unnatural medical success. They had been able to clean out 90% of the malignancy and the remaining 10% could be dealt with in other ways. Boruch Hashem, my father had come out of it alive and well.

"After a few months we were asked to come to Hadassah hospital for a medical follow-up. The surgeon who had been with us on all the previous visits was not there that day. When my father complained that he experienced discomfort when resting in a certain position, the doctor looked at his medical file and said, 'You have complaints? All the people I know who were in your condition already passed on!'

"Today, my parents live in Karmiel and are Shomer Shabbos. My father is well aware of the miracle he had which led him to keeping Shabbos."

R' Karnauch's background and personality make him the right man for his shlichus position. He quickly



Rabbi Karnauch and Rabbi Cohen with Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar on his visit to Kazakhstan

NO JEW WILL BE LEFT BEHIND

In Pavlodar, the shliach can give many examples of the fulfillment of the promise that “no Jew will be left behind.”

“This is a story that happened last year. I had to go away for a few hours to the capitol, Astana. I did not dream how in a few hours there, I would be able to unexpectedly get a woman to reveal that she is Jewish. This happened at the airport in Astana, a few minutes before I boarded the plane back to Pavlodar. A woman who works for a local company that did surveys came over to ask me some questions about my eating habits in Astana.

“I told her that I don’t eat in any restaurants because I am Jewish. ‘Not even a cup of coffee?’ she asked, and I said, no, and I explained the problem with *bishul akum* and milk that is not watched during milking, by a Jew. The woman told me that she had a bit of a connection to the Jewish people even though she wasn’t Jewish. She explained that her mother was Jewish but her father was a Kazakh.

“I got excited though she did not understand why. I explained to her that according to Jewish law, she is Jewish and I briefly explained the importance of mitzvos.

“The woman, who wore a cross, told me that after her mother died, missionaries came to her house and told her that all Jews had to convert and that is what she did. She said she was afraid to go to a shul since maybe they would be angry at her for doing so.

“I felt I had a heavenly mission to help her and I gave her a Jewish calendar that I had with me and I invited her to visit the shul in her city. This conversation took place by ‘chance’ and lasted fifteen minutes, and then the woman said she had to continue her survey. I realized that Hashem directs us where we have to go and understood why I had had to travel to Astana on such short notice in order to help the local shliach.”

breathed life into the community.

“At no point did we feel an estrangement from or resistance to Judaism. The people here are so distant from anything Jewish that they want to know more and more and they seek to feel and experience being Jewish. At the same time, most of the couples here are intermarried and this is our main job – strengthening Jewish identity.

“From the very beginning we made house calls and invited people to come to our Shabbos meals. It was a way to make up, in a small way, for their abysmal lack of Jewish knowledge.”

Rabbi Levi Cohen, Yeshaya’s brother, helped him a lot in the early days in making connections with people in the community.

“From my first day here until today, there has been no Shabbos or Yom Tov without a minyan in shul. The results of our work are not always apparent. Many of the people who took an interest left for Eretz Yisrael or for other places with larger Jewish communities so that we have representatives in other locations.”

After making house calls and meeting many Jews, the shliach began uniting people into a community. In many cities of the CIS there were Jewish k’hillos and the job of the shliach who showed up on the scene was to provide Jewish content, but in Pavlodar, the Jews first had to be found and united.

In addition to house calls, shiurim were provided for men and women. The first Tishrei, the Jews saw a mobile succa, a lulav and esrog, a rabbi wearing a kittel and other holiday-related things, for the first time.

“We sent all the Jews we knew a Jewish newspaper called *Shalom* which is published by the center in Almaty (Alma Ata). It’s a colorful publication which is interesting and

***“The subject of
Moshiach is part
of everything we
do. I explain it
again and again.
A shliach cannot
be successful
without this.
Otherwise, how is
he different from
any other
‘outreach
professional’?”***

full of Jewish content. Many Jews would meet me on the street and ask me questions about Judaism. They began feeling proud of being Jewish and that was only the beginning of the Chabad-Jewish outreach.”

Only seven years later and there is a nice Jewish community. He is greatly excited when he finds Jews and takes them in after seventy years of estrangement from Judaism when the city had no organized kehilla and no religious mosdos.

“I think a shliach has to be an example and so I make sure to wear a hat and jacket whenever I am in shul or attend events. When I make the two hour flight to Almaty, I daven or learn. People look at me. Most of them are goyim. If there are Jews, my appearance and behavior might wake up their Jewish sentiments.

“One day, a man came to shul with an older woman who said she was his mother. The son had no idea that he was Jewish. He had told his old mother about the Jewish Rabbi that he saw walking in the

street in his ‘uniform,’ and that woke something up in her. She asked her son to locate me.

“It was the fifth Chanuka night when he saw the menorah and realized where I was. When I asked and verified that the mother was indeed Jewish, I told him that he was Jewish too.

“The mother began telling me about her past, relating memories and stories of her family. He was very moved and explained that he had always felt an attraction to Judaism but did not understand why. He started a cell phone company and he helps the Chabad house a lot. No question that proper Jewish behavior as well as Jewish pride managed to return another Jew to his roots. Now every Shabbos Mevarchim he recites the entire Tehillim and at work he has recordings of shiurim which he listens to whenever he has a chance.

“There’s a Jew by the name of Binyamin Jacovitz who, up until recently, ran a branch of a bank here. His connection started with Chanuka. When I heard his name from one of the people at the shul who wondered whether he was Jewish, I said that his name indicated that he was definitely Jewish. I asked the man in shul that the next time he met Jacovitz he should tell him that the rabbi was looking for him.

“He did as I asked and the man came to shul and said he was Jewish. I sat with him a long time and explained what it means to be a Jew. He was very touched and said he didn’t know any of this before. We quickly became friends and in that very same conversation he asked what he could do as a Jew. I was amazed that he was ready for this and I asked him to put on t’fillin.

“I was even more amazed when he asked me how much it cost to buy t’fillin. I tried to avoid

answering because I was afraid, that if he heard the price, he would give up on the idea. Apparently though, a Jew’s connection to Hashem goes far beyond what we think it does and he pressed me to tell him the price. He ordered a pair of t’fillin which he tries to use every day.

“He comes to every tefilla, activity and farbrengen. One day he came over to me and said, ‘Rabbi, I’ll tell you the truth. I don’t know what attracts me so much to embrace my Jewish heritage. It is something internal which I have no control over. It makes no difference what I’m doing or how I feel, I cannot miss a Shabbos davening.’

“This man saw the fulfillment of an amazing bracha from the Rebbe which made a stir in town since he is well known. When he left his job at the bank he took a loan from that same branch but when he left, he was asked to return the loan. He came with this story to the Purim farbrengen and said he could not possibly return all that money on such short notice and he would have to sell his house. He was very upset and didn’t know where to turn.

“He wrote to the Rebbe and immediately afterwards went to Almaty where the main branch of the bank is located in order to speak to the ones in charge. I told him that instead of staying at a hotel, he should stay at mosdos of the kehilla and in his free time he should learn. He agreed and upon his return he excitedly said that not only did he not have to return the full amount but the bank discovered that they owed him more severance pay!”

R’ Karnauch is the kind of shliach who is constantly looking for new ideas to strengthen his connection with the members of his kehilla. Every Friday he tries to visit people at home and give them two challos which his wife makes. He also provides a Russian publication published by Rabbi Chavkin in

Russian.

“People open up and I am able to put t’fillin on with people who would usually refuse, and speak to them about Jewish topics. I finish these visits right before Shabbos. I recently bought a car which will enable me to double the number of weekly visits.”

Unlike Jewish communities

throughout the CIS, Pavlodar did not have a Jewish cemetery and R’ Karnauch asked the city council to set aside land for this purpose which they did.

“The land given to the kehilla enables us to do ‘chesed shel emes’ with the Jewish departed. The city never had a Jewish section of the cemetery and it’s sad that Jews were

buried alongside gentiles. When necessary, I also serve as a member of the Chevra Kadisha. The Jewish section is sectioned off and guarded 24 hours a day. I sometimes have to convince families to bury their loved ones in the new Jewish cemetery. So far, about ten Jews have been buried there.”

If there was no kehilla and no Jewish cemetery, then there certainly was no mikva. The nearest mikva was in Almaty, a two and a half hour flight! A mikva was one of the first orders of priority. The speed with which it was built amazed even veteran shluchim.

“It was very difficult to fly to Almaty every month and remain there, and sometimes it could be on Shabbos and other difficult times to be away, not to mention the cost of these flights. I decided we had to build a mikva here so that people in the community would learn about another aspect of religious life. But back in the early years, the idea was out-of-the-question because who would want to donate money to a mikva in a little, distant place? Who would think it was money well-spent to build a mikva for so few people?

“I spoke with Yeshaya Cohen who supported my decision and as always, he promised to help. He asked me to prepare plans for a mikva. I asked the company of the famous philanthropist millionaire Moskowitz to make me plans for a mikva. We sat for days and examined different types of mikvaos so we could choose what was best for us.

“When Moskowitz visited our shul to celebrate our anniversary he was told about the plans to build a mikva and on the spot he promised to cover the costs. R’ Cohen supervised the halachic end of things and he came every so often in order to make sure that everything was being done properly.

“When the mikva was first



Rabbi Karnauch lighting a public menorah in the center of town



A large succa in the yard of the Chabad house

opened I saw how necessary it was. A Jewish couple in the community wanted to observe the laws of Family Purity and use the mikva. Many of the couples are intermarried but these two people were Jewish and so I was very happy with their decision.

“Then I found out that the man had married twice, both time to Jewish women and he hadn’t given the first wife a proper Jewish divorce. I explained the situation to him and he was willing to give his divorcee a get. All that remained to be done was to marry his current wife according to halacha.

“At that time, there was a convention of religions taking place in Astana, which was attended by all the shluchim of Kazakhstan. I decided to make a big deal of the event. Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Yona Metzger participated in the convention too. I went with this Jewish couple who was married publicly, in front of all the newspaper reporters and television journalists. Rabbi Metzger was the officiating rabbi. After the glass was broken, as is customary, I thought – it was worth building the mikva just for this.

“This couple has been making great strides towards Torah and mitzvos and the husband’s children learn in Jewish schools in Moscow.”

A big farbrengen is held on 20 Av, the yartzeit of the Rebbe’s father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn, whose picture and story are disseminated throughout the country. There is hardly a Jew who has not heard of him. Many gentiles know about him too.

When I asked R’ Karnauch about his work in spreading inyanei Moshiach, he said, “The subject of Moshiach is part of everything we do. I explain it again and again. A shliach cannot be successful without this. Otherwise, how is he different



Publicizing the miracles of Chanuka



A shiur-farbrengen at the shul

from any other ‘outreach professional’? A shliach who wants the kochos of the meshaleiach has to live with the messages and the special chayus of the meshaleiach.

“During the Three Weeks we had a good opportunity to talk about Geula and Moshiach. Since the Rebbe said to learn about the Beis HaMikdash during this time period,

we had shiurim on Hilchos Beis HaBechira and we had siyumim. The weekly shiurim for men and women during this time dealt with the Beis HaMikdash.”

Seven years ago, before there was a community in Pavlodar, who even thought of learning about the Beis HaMikdash?

FUNDRAISING IN THE ERA OF MOSHIACH

SECRETS OF NO-BUDGET FUNDRAISING: LET'S BUILD A BOARD

By Raanan Isseroff

WHY A BOARD?

We will now discuss how to make money using your board of directors, building an honorary board of directors, the creation of a PTA (Parent Teachers Association), Alumni or Sisterhood, which are all takeoffs on the same idea of empowering a group of people in an honorary position to be involved in your organization.

Some might wonder why one would ever do such a meshuga thing like to give control to anyone over the holy Daled amos of our Beis Chabad!

The basis of the brotherly love seen in the early beginnings of our holy brotherhood of Chassidim was very much an “All For One and One For All” atmosphere as we read about in the early history of the four Baalei Shem starting from Rabbi Eliyahu Baal Shem, Rabbi Yoel Baal Shem, Rabbi Adam Baal Shem and up to Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov and even until today. The Ahavas Yisroel in those days was so pure! Today, we too can recreate such team effort, even if one doesn't see the Rebbe, but only kochs' in the ways and teachings of our Rebbeim...

It is important to first understand what purpose such honorary boards serve for a mosad financially. This way we can fully appreciate what the sharing of our shlichus / fiefdom means. These honorary boards are all essentially

the same in structure and only differ in name and mission. In the end of the day, the Honorary Board, the PTA and the Alumni Association serve the same purpose of building our Chabad houses, giving our main supporters kavod and letting them share in the wonders that the Rebbe does through our efforts and becoming not only more *mekushar* but they become an actual part of our family as well!

We will start with a discussion of the Honorary board of directors, another article will be devoted to building a working and involved PTA, Alumni Association or Sisterhood as they each deserve their own special detailed discussions.

A note: What we discuss here is how to involve outside people in your Beis Chabad. The same formula can also be used to involve “the uninvolved” of your mekuravim as well. On the same token, you can use this formula to wake up your present far-shlufener board as well.

BUILDING AN HONORARY BOARD

What is an “Honorary Board of Directors”? For a Not-for-profit, this is a group of people who are invited to serve in voluntary positions of leadership for a charitable organization.

For the wealthy in America, charitable board membership is something of a “must-do” activity. Everybody who is anybody serves on a few charitable boards and an invitation to join is considered an honor. Their names appear on your stationary and website and their names are dropped by the fundraiser and yourself to curry respect for what you are doing. Much fundraising is simply “who you know.” If the wealthy people in your community respect the people on your board so this adds dignity to your cause as important people are championing it. People don't have to know that the person is simply lending their name to help you out! This is one aspect of what a board is useful for.

Let's understand something from the outset: There are two boards in any charitable organization. You have a controlling executive board of directors, who are the legal founders of the Non-Profit. Here we are talking about something different than a legal controlling board.

The second kind of board is called an “Honorary board” which has no real control. An Honorary Board is a group of people who have no legal control over your organization but who out of the goodness of their pockets (“hearts”) put their respected name on the line to help your organization to get ahead

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charitably. They are honored by being asked to serve and help financially with the charity.

These generous, wonderful people (who are usually connected, rich or just love what you are doing) bring to your organization, their good name. With their generous help, savvy, and connections to the local community and their familiarity with the area customs and politics, they act as your “memutza” (middleman) to having money raised, local town or city services & ordinances safely

navigated & finagled and your mission advertised and glorified.

In return, they get to have their name on your stationary, website and dinner party invites. Plus, their name and pictures are freely bandied about the community in association with your good work (and of course your picture!) Their friends pay good money for seats to come honor them when you have a dinner and help in other smaller but invaluable ways as well. They help you get that variance to build your extension, permits to have events, fight it out with the other local anti-religious or anti-Chabadniks and stand up for your right to exist within the community.

If your board thinks what you are doing is “just the most”, so then they invite their friends who bring their money and wealthy friends, which can mean quite a bit for your Chabad House in improving your public relations with the local community. After all, building a building is not just a monetary challenge.

There is so much ko’ach in what a group can do as opposed to what just you or I can do by ourselves. In a sense, “WE” are the Rebbe’s Honorary Board taking his message to the world. We simply extend that relationship to bring in more family. Like the old song: “Really every Jew is just our brother...”

But it’s true! They really **are**

our brothers and we make them an extension of our being the Rebbe’s arm. As the saying from Avos goes that the Sh’china rests on ten Jews, etc.

Serving on the board of a Charitable Non-profit is an honor that some organizations even charge for! Okay, your organization is not the Guggenheim or some famous museum that anyone would give money for this honor.

LEADING THE BOARD

In this vein, it is self understood that you must have a respectable person managing the board. This is a whole craft in itself, building a board, running meetings and making it a huge source of income for your mosad. People give classes in this and write books on the subject. The Federation here in New York City has fundraising seminars and one of their topics is the art of running and managing a board. In my humble opinion, it is well worth it to hire someone to train your fundraiser in this craft or send him for classes. I will give you a general overview of what is involved and why you must have someone knowledgeable in this skill to be that person running, exciting and directing the board.

[To be continued be”H]

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