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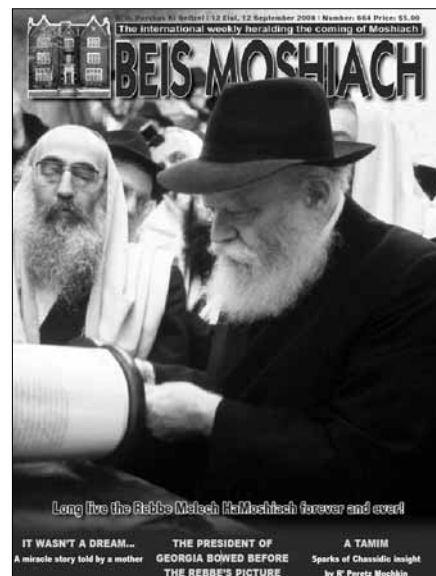
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I WANT TO LEARN IN LUBAVITCH

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THE FINAL PAYMENT

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

A laborer must be paid on time for his work. Why has not G-d paid the Jewish people for their Divine service throughout the centuries? One gets paid only when the job is finished. The job of the Jewish people isn't done until we finish the Divinely ordained task of making the world a dwelling place for G-dliness. The task requires the combined effort of all the Jewish people. When the task is completed, all the Jewish people will be paid, at the time of the resurrection of the dead. The abundance of material benefits promised throughout the Torah is not payment for the mitzvos. It will only facilitate mitzvah observance and Torah study. There is a difference between a worker and a servant. The Jewish people have characteristics of both. The revelation of G-dliness is itself our compensation.

This week's Torah reading, *Teitzei*, contains the commandment to pay a worker on time. "You must give him his wage on the day it is due and not let the sun set with him waiting for it." Our Sages tell us that G-d

Himself fulfills His commandments, doing, as it were, what He tells Israel to do. Frequently the Sages compare the Divine service of the Jewish people – their Torah learning and performance of mitzvos – to the service a worker performs for an employer. The reward for the mitzvos is the "payment." G-d – the Employer, so to speak – compensates His laborers – the Jewish people.

Therefore, as soon as a Jew performs a mitzvah – completes a job for his Employer – G-d should immediately pay him for his "labor." After all, G-d Himself decrees, "You must give him his wage on the day it is due" and not wait until the next morning. Why, then, does G-d delay payment, waiting until "tomorrow" – until the World to Come – to reward the Jewish people? For, as the rabbis note, "Today is the time to perform the mitzvos, and tomorrow is the time to receive payment." Even a complete *tzaddik* – a perfectly righteous individual – must wait.

Perhaps G-d is not obligated to pay an individual until after he has left this world, and the spiritual task has been completed – just as an employer does not have to pay someone until the work is done. All the days of our lives we are indentured to G-d's service. We must serve G-d every moment, always fulfilling His commandments. And since G-d assigns each Jew his or her own particular spiritual task, how can we say we deserve a reward in this world? Every mitzvah is not an isolated act, but just part of the assignment. It takes a lifetime to achieve one's spiritual purpose. That being the case, payment comes due only when the job is done. The reward comes when our life's

work is finished.

This answer works if the World to Come is a wholly spiritual existence. When a person leaves this world, completes his mission, he enters into Paradise immediately to receive his reward. But Judaism teaches us there will be a resurrection of the dead – a time of renewed physical existence. That will be the time of payment, when we will experience a **physical** reward for the mitzvos we have done. Jews have faithfully observed the commandments over the many centuries. All the Jews throughout history have been waiting for our generation, the time of Moshiach and the era of Redemption. Surely payment for our “accounts receivable” has been delayed an extraordinarily long time.

Again, we can ask: Since a laborer must be paid **on the same day** he earns his wages, why has G-d delayed paying the Jewish people the reward for their mitzvos? Where is Moshiach?

Jews have faithfully observed the commandments over the many centuries. All the Jews throughout history have been waiting for our generation, the time of Moshiach and the era of Redemption. Surely payment for our “accounts receivable” has been delayed an extraordinarily long time.

The answer lies in the very purpose of creation. G-d desired to have a dwelling place below, here in the physical world, the lowest realm of existence. But the Divine Light can illuminate this world only through the actions and Divine service of the Jewish people during the time of exile. Every mitzvah done by a Jew purifies himself and his environment, drawing down Divine Light into the world. Thus, it is only the combined actions of **all** Jews throughout **all** the generations that purifies the **entire** world. The job isn't done until we finish the Divinely ordained task of making the world a dwelling place for G-d.

This state of perfection will occur during the days of Moshiach. More precisely, we will achieve the goal when the Resurrection of the Dead occurs, which follows Redemption. Therefore, the combined effort of **all** Jews throughout all the generations constitutes one task

performed collectively. One payment is due to all the workers, that is, all the Jewish people, at the time the job is finished, namely, the Resurrection.

This explains why payment for our Torah and mitzvos will come in the future – the very near future – in the days of Moshiach and the Resurrection. Payment is due to the Jewish people collectively, as one entity. We are not rewarded immediately for our **individual** efforts to make the world a dwelling place for G-dliness. We are rewarded only together with all the Jewish people, when past, present and future unite.

Now, the Torah frequently assures us that we will receive an abundance of material benefits as a reward for observing the mitzvos. But such physical advantages are not the final payment for the mitzvos. Rather, G-d guarantees that if we observe His commandments **with joy**, then He will remove all hindrances and obstacles to our observance. That is the ultimate reward. To help

facilitate observance of the mitzvos in the most beautiful manner possible, G-d will provide plenitude and prosperity. The abundance of wealth and creature comforts exists to strengthen our ability to learn Torah.

That being the case, the abundance of material benefits promised throughout the Torah is **not** payment for the mitzvos. It is a secondary matter, resulting from the kindness of G-d to the Jews because they fulfill His commands with joy. The goodness we receive on the physical level actually enables us to achieve more and work harder in our Divine service of learning Torah and doing mitzvos.

Of course, when the Sages compare payment for the mitzvos with an employer paying his workers, they are not limiting that “payment” to the World to Come. The material benefits – the manifold “creature comforts” – we are to receive in this world are also part of our compensation.

Perhaps a better analogy is to compare our Divine service to the laws concerning a Hebrew servant. A Jew becomes a slave for financial reasons: because of poverty he sells himself or because of theft the Jewish court assigns him to a master to pay off his debt. For whichever reason a Jew enters into servitude to another Jew, the master has certain obligations. He must feed, clothe and house his fellow Jew, who is working for him. Similarly, when the Jewish people are involved in the Divine service of transforming this world into a dwelling place for G-dliness, G-d Himself, our Master, must provide for our physical

needs.

But this obligation of the master (or employer) is not payment for services rendered, so to speak, but part of the cost of "doing business." Indeed, a servant doesn't get paid altogether. So, is our Divine service that of workers or servants?

In truth, our Divine service is partially that of a worker, partially that of a servant, but mainly that of a **partner**. Thus the reward for a mitzvah is not separated or detached from mitzvah. It's not that we do a mitzvah and get something else, like wealth, in return. Rather, the reward is part of the Divine service itself. G-d handed over His world to the Jews so that, through our Divine service, our observance of the

mitzvos, the inherent G-dliness within creation would be openly revealed. The revelation of G-dliness is itself our compensation.

The result is that G-d takes pleasure, as it were, from having a dwelling place in the physical world, and the Jewish people take pleasure from the revelation of G-dliness that occurs as a result of their efforts – their Divine service. Indeed, the Jewish people become a partner in the actual work of creation, for their actions – their mitzvos – cause a revelation of G-dliness in the world itself, making it a fit and proper dwelling place for the Divine Presence.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 29, pp. 138-144)



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ב"ה

A TAMIM

*The following are some “sparks” of Chassidic insight from the mashpia R’ Peretz Mochkin of Montreal. * Presented for 15 Elul, the day Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim was founded 111 years ago * By Rabbi Aharon Eliezer Tzeitlin, in a t’shura given out in honor of the wedding of his son, Menachem Mendel.*

WHAT KIND OF BRACHA IS THAT?!

Someone went to R’ Peretz’s house and found him in the midst of a meal. The guest wished him a good appetite and R’ Peretz responded as follows, “All our lives we work hard so that eating is not *mit a geshmak* (with pleasure) and you bless me with that?!”

MIRACULOUS FARBRENGEN

“Fashion a *saraf* (serpent) and place it on a *nes* (pole) and all who are *nashuch* (bitten) should look at it and will live.”

He explained it thus:

“Fashion a *saraf*” – from the same root as *yayin saraf* (vodka) and make a Chassidishe farbrengen.

In response to the question: “Why a farbrengen - it’s not Shabbos or a special day?” the answer is:

“Place it on a *nes*” – you’ll find

some miracle to celebrate

“And all who are *nashuch*” – if there is a bite to eat

“He should look at it” – it will illuminate his eyes

“And he will live” – he will be truly revived spiritually.

A REQUEST FOR A TIKKUN FROM THE REBBE RASHAB

At one of the farbrengens he related that when he was a boy of 13 he was *nichshal* (transgressed) and he ate something that is an object of desire. It was a Russian version of ice cream. When he went to the Rebbe Rashab he asked for a tikkun for this.

A PITY ON THE FOOD

Cookies were once served at a farbrengen. R’ Peretz noticed that one of the men ate them in an unrefined way and he chastised him, “It’s one thing not to have pity on yourself, nu, but at least

have pity on the food! What did it do wrong that you are eating it in such a manner?”

THE PRIEST ATONES

R’ Peretz would speak highly of the avodas Hashem of the talmidim in Tomchei Tmimim in Lubavitch. He said that one of the tmimim once said to the Rebbe Rashab, “I accept to remedy my own *grubkait* (coarseness). What I request from the Rebbe is to remove the *grubkait* that I’ve gotten from others!”

OBLIGATION TO OBEY

He once referred to the Rebbe’s decree about not drinking more than four small cups of mashke, saying, “In the past, every Chassid knew that it was impossible without drinking Chassidishe [liberal quantities of] mashke. Today, nobody would say that. Let R’ Aharon Eliezer (Tzeitlin) get up from his grave and we can ask him how a Chassid farbrengs. He will tell you: A Chassidishe farbrengen is impossible without a proper l’chaim, but now there is a g’zeira and we must obey it.”

BATUL-BOTTLE

On the same topic he would say an old Chassidishe aphorism in a humorous vein on the “yehi ratzon” that is said in Shacharis. “The Beis HaMikdash was destroyed and *batal ha’tamid* (literally, the Tamid sacrifice was cancelled).” The word “batal” in Hebrew sounds like the English word “bottle,” and so the “bottle was cancelled” – the Rebbe doesn’t allow the (excessive) drinking of mashke.

LIKE THE WALL

At a farbrengen he said: It used to be that we could not daven “Lechu Neranena” without three



hours of learning Chassidus before that. Today though, I said Tehillim “like the wall.”

SPIRITUAL DESCENT OF THE GENERATIONS

He once explained the g’zeira of mashke: In previous generations, a Chassid’s head and brain were full with avodas Hashem and Chassidus. What was visible on the outside i.e. involvement in things of this world, did not reflect one’s pnimiyus.

When they drank mashke at a farbrengen and a person’s head spun around, the pnimiyus was revealed and what came out was worth listening to.

Today, unfortunately, it can be the other-way-round. Although externally, we see that people learn a little and daven a little, who knows where they’re at internally? If the person’s head spins around dizzily from mashke, who knows what will be revealed?

R’ PERETZ AND R’ NISSAN IN MUTUAL BITTUL

In Montreal, Anash and balabatim davened on the bottom floor of the yeshiva building. Up on the third floor is where the bachurim davened. Every so often, some of the Chassidishe Anash also

davened upstairs which is what R’ Peretz did occasionally.

One Shabbos, the mashpia R’ Nissan Nemenov was in Montreal and he davened downstairs, where most of Anash davened. That week, R’ Peretz had yartzeit and he davened upstairs. When davening was over, R’ Peretz sent one of the tmimim to ask R’ Nissan to finish davening and come upstairs to farbreng since he was weak and it was hard for him to farbreng. This was about 12:30 and R’ Nissan was only up to the P’sukei D’Zimra.

The bachur who was asked to do this felt uncomfortable because he knew that R’ Nissan spent a long time on his davening. Nevertheless, he did as R’ Peretz asked him to do. At 1:30 R’ Nissan went upstairs and sat next to R’ Peretz.

Everybody was amazed by the fact that R’ Nissan was so batul to R’ Peretz (who was older than him) and yet people could also see the bittul that R’ Peretz had for R’ Nissan.

FEELING GOOD

When he sat down one Shabbos to farbreng, he said as though to himself but in a way that everybody could hear: “The doctors forbade me to take mashke. Just because I don’t feel well for several days I shouldn’t take mashke?” and he drank mashke.

Whether he felt okay afterwards, I don’t know, but we certainly felt good!

EATING MAROR IN LUBAVITCH

R’ Peretz and R’ Yisrael Jacobson sat together at a farbrengen held on Shabbos in Montreal, upstairs in the zal of the yeshiva. R’ Peretz said to him, “You remember how in Lubavitch the mashpia, R’ Shilem (Kuratin) told

you at a farbrengen, ‘Yisrael, how come you eat maror (i.e. a reference to one who is very harsh and demanding of himself) and everybody knows about it? Peretz also eats maror but nobody knows.’”

EACH GENERATION'S STRONG POINT

He said, “It used to be, in Lubavitch, there was more iskafia than today. On the other hand, today hiskashrus is greater than ever. It used to be that when the Rebbe gave an order, of course people had to obey it, and when someone didn't obey they would “get it over the head.” Today though, the hiskashrus is so great that it's impossible to even consider

is the role of the maggid shiur) but “so they should know that it really is so” and to internalize what you know.

KEEP THE GOODS HANDY

When you hear something at a farbrengen, even if you don't understand it, you have to “put it in your pocket.” It's impossible to know when it will be understood and relevant, but when the time comes you'll have the goods in your pocket, ready to use.

AVODAS HA'TEFILLA

The talmidim in the yeshiva in Montreal once received a letter from the Rebbe in which the Rebbe demanded that they work on

R' Peretz concluded, “If we put both together, the iskafia of yesteryear and the hiskashrus of today, we would be on the highest levels.”

not obeying.

R' Peretz concluded, “If we put both together, the iskafia of yesteryear and the hiskashrus of today, we would be on the highest levels.”

MESIRUS NEFESH

All the Rebbeim were moser nefesh for the Jewish people and the Rebbe is also moser the tmimim for the Jewish people (by sending them out to spread the wellsprings).

WHAT IS A FARBRENGEN

What is a Chassidische farbrengen? Not necessarily to innovate new things (because that

asked whether he should say Tachanun and someone said yes, to say it.

R' Peretz was annoyed and he said, “Of course not. The Rebbe went from death to life!”

R' HILLEL

In the early days of the nesius, R' Peretz had a yechidus in which he told the Rebbe that it was important that R' Nissan come to the Rebbe (he came for the first time three years later). He described R' Nissan and said he was like a modern-day R' Hillel Paritcher.

The Rebbe lifted his hands in a gesture of surprise and said, “Like R' Hillel? R' Hillel?” (As though to say there was no comparison).

From then on, R' Peretz spoke of R' Hillel with tremendous awe and exaltation.

WITHOUT CHASSIDUS

Once, at a farbrengen in our house, he described how someone who was not a Chassid wished that he would leave this world while wearing tallis and tefillin because then he would be remembered as a holy man.

R' Peretz spoke at length about how unseemly this view is, that all he cared about was what people would think about him after 120 years. “Thoughts like these can only be had by someone who does not learn Chassidus.”

IT'S A MATTER OF FEELINGS

Once, at a farbrengen, someone argued with R' Peretz about something he said and R' Peretz explained, “At a farbrengen you can't argue because everybody expresses how they feel. Everybody feels in their own way.”

avodas ha't'filla. They found this hard to understand since there were regular study sessions in yeshiva and so how were they to find the time to spend on avodas ha't'filla?

They asked R' Peretz and he said that “avodas ha't'filla” means *arbeten baim davenen* (working while davening) and to think about what the words mean.

SAYING TACHANUN ON 3 TAMUZ

One year on 3 Tamuz (the day the Rebbe Rayatz was released from jail and sent to exile in Kostrama), after they finished *chazaras ha'shatz*, the chazan

HE WOULD SIT NEXT TO THE CHOZER

In Montreal, bachurim were chosen by raffle to go to the Rebbe's farbrengens on Shabbos Mevarchim. Since the money for the trip was collected from Anash, the bachur would review some sichos for Anash on Friday night between mincha and Kabbolas Shabbos. R' Peretz would regularly sit next to the chozer.

GENUINE AHAVAS YISRAEL

Rabbi Hillel Pevsner related at a farbrengen how R' Peretz told him, when they met in 770 at the beginning of the 50's, that R' Yehoshua Heschel had gotten a job as a shochet in Montreal. It was said with such joy and with a sense of great satisfaction which

reminded one of the Rebbe Rayatz's descriptions of the genuine brotherly love that the early Chassidim had.

"MAMASH"

R' Shmuel Zalmanov (one of the editors of *HaTamim* and *Kovetz Lubavitch* and the editor of *Sefer HaNiggunim*) was once a guest in Montreal and between mincha and maariv he spoke quietly with R' Peretz. I, and some others, tried to hear what they were saying. I could make out that R' Shmuel was saying to R' Peretz that a certain Chassid said in yechidus that the Rebbe often expresses the wish that Moshiach come soon "mamash," and "mamash" forms an acronym of the Rebbe's name...

The Rebbe said, "Let it be that way but Moshiach should just come already," so it was obvious

that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

R' Peretz responded, "What's the question? Of course!"

THE LOOK OF A CHASSID

Once, on Yud-Tes Kislev, many of Anash and the tmimim planned on traveling by bus from the yeshiva to 770. R' Peretz, who was unable to travel, sat on the steps and watched those who were going to travel. This made a tremendous impression on them.

SPONGE AND FUNNEL

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TORAH OR PROPHECY?

By Rabbi Shmerel Matusof

*Was the Rebbe Rayatz a prophet? Are Misnagdim lacking the fundamentals of emuna? * An analysis of the sicha of Shoftim 5751 * Part 2 of 2.*

[Continued from last issue]

WAS THE REBBE RAYATZ A PROPHET?

Someone might say: In the sicha, the Rebbe refers to his father-in-law as the Nasi of the generation and the *navi* (prophet) of the generation. There are two responses. First, the sicha (os 9) refers to **all** the Rebbeim as “prophets of our generation” : **Especially in recent generations when in addition to the revelation of p’nimius ha’Torah, starting with “it’s a mitzva to reveal this wisdom” in the time of the Arizal, and then – “your wellsprings should spread outward” through “He revealed His secret to His servants, the prophets,” who are the prophets of our generation until “a prophet from your midst etc. like me” (his being the extension of Moshe who is in every single generation) and they are “your judges” and “your advisors” of our generation ...**

See also the sicha of Parshas R’ei 5751: **“Hashem says (through His servants, the prophets) to every single Jew ...”**

We see empirically that the Rebbe includes the “extension of Moshe” of our generation with all the Rebbeim – for **“they are the prophets of our generation”** and **“your judges” and “your advisors” in our generation!** (Just as there is no contradiction in this to the Rebbe Rayatz, so too there is no contradiction in this to the Rebbe).

Second, in this very sicha we see an explanation given for the need to include the prophet of our generation **“and our Rebbeim the n’siim in the previous generations” : Along with this merit, each member of our generation has the responsibility to accept upon himself “your judges” and “your advisors” and to follow his instructions and good advice – and in the plural... This comes (and is based on the instructions and advice) of “your judges” and**

“your advisors,” “who are the kings – our Rabbis” and our Rebbeim of previous generations – for then it also has the force - understandably to each one as good advice (and not just as an order), so that even if he holds of himself (and even if he has a reason according to Torah and Shulchan Aruch to hold of himself), if there is one person and a majority, the halacha is according to the majority – according to the view of “your judges” and “your advisors” – plural.

The reason the Rebbe includes himself with the Rebbe Rayatz and the other Rebbeim is to make it easier and more in the nature of “good advice” for someone who has a problem accepting instructions and guidance from the Rebbe due to the fact that “he holds of himself.” This person should know that these are instructions and guidance from all the Rebbeim – a majority, while he is just one individual. This also makes it easier for someone who has difficulty accepting and believing that the Rebbe is a *navi*, when he knows that his lack of belief is a lack of belief in the “majority” – the prophecy of all the Rebbeim.

A MITZVA THAT AFFECTS THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR BELIEF

Based on what we’ve said, that the Rebbe is the *navi* of our generation and that Hashem sent him to convey his prophecy to all Jews, we can see why lack of belief in him as a prophet is equivalent to transgressing the mitzva of obeying the prophet and not testing him. This is a principle of our faith and in this, there is no difference whether a

person considers himself the Rebbe's Chassid or not. Regardless, Hashem sent the navi to him too, and he is obligated in this mitzva as he is in all mitzvos and it affects the foundation of his belief. Belief in the navi **includes** belief in his main prophecy!

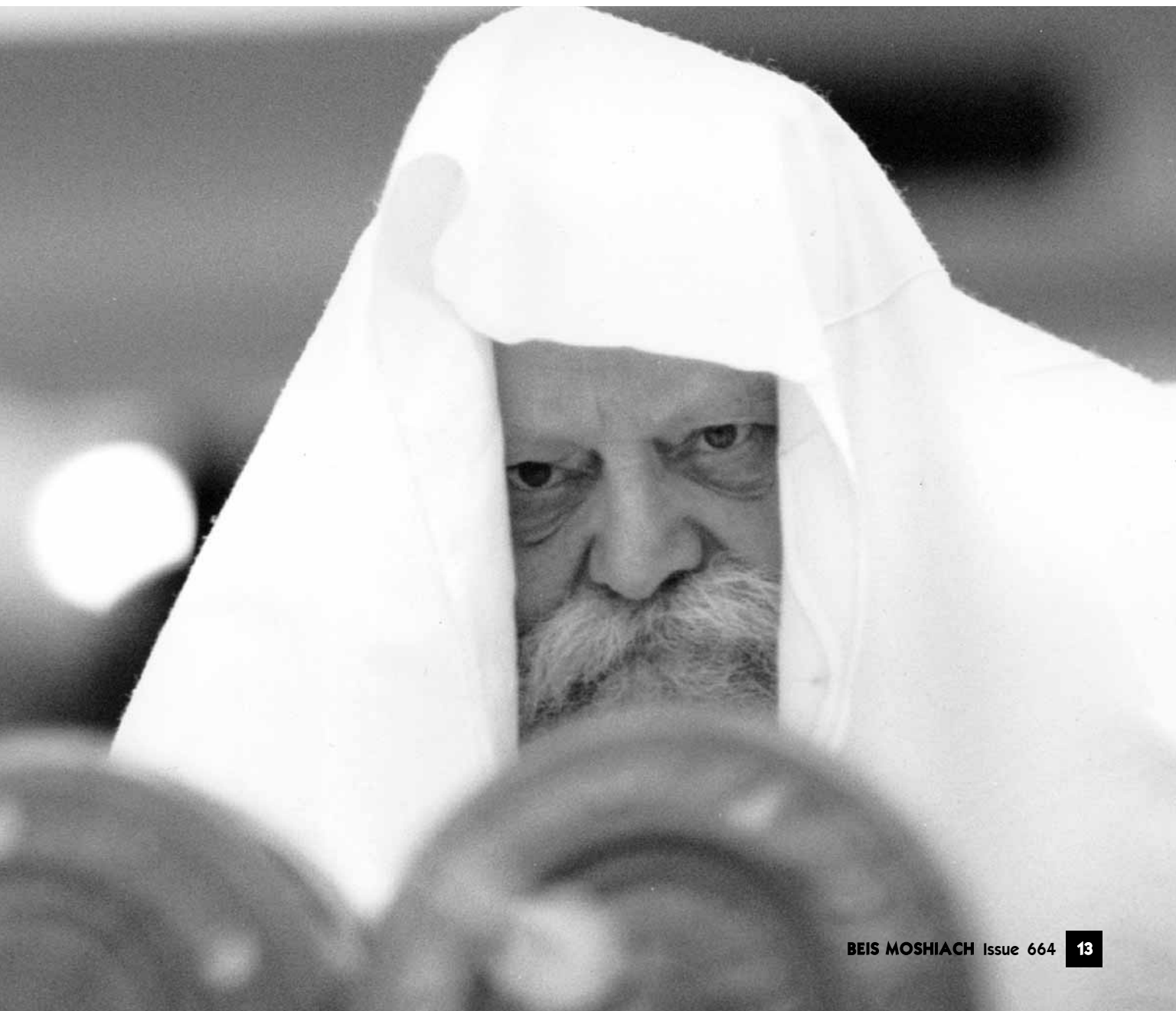
How can anyone ignore what it says explicitly in the sicha? **"To publicize to oneself and to all people one can possibly reach** that they need to accept upon themselves"; "There is the aforementioned horaa that you

need to **publicize to all members of the generation ... regarding the avoda of all Jews and all people in the generation ... every member of the generation** has the responsibility to accept upon himself ... this also has the force - understandably **to each one** as good advice ... in a way **that the entire world ...** with all its myriad of details becomes a *r'shus ha'yachid* (private property) permeated with **the one and only point of** the "Only One of the world" ... **as He reveals himself "amongst us" through**

"a prophet I will raise for them etc. like you [Moshe]," "the Nasi HaDor is everything," "tzaddik yesod olam ..." There are no exceptions!

ARE MISNAGDIM LACKING IN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF EMUNA?

A person might ask: Who appointed you over us? By saying that everybody must believe in this prophet and prophecy, you have cast aspersion on many



***So too here, after
p'nimius ha'Torah
revealed the true
meaning of G-d's
Unity, that there is
no existence
except for Him,
someone who does
not believe this is,
in a subtle way,
denying His
oneness.***

Jews!

The answer is: Whoever learns the sicha sincerely, will see that every single Jew must believe in the Navi Hashem – the Rebbe, and his prophecy.

However, in the role of “advisor” – not as “judge,” it is worthwhile clarifying this issue:

The question/complaint is a general one which applies to Chassidus in our times in general. Does someone who is unfamiliar with “love of Hashem” as it is explained in Chassidus (whether because he never learned it or he saw it and didn’t understand it) in the category of a heretic regarding belief in G-d, heaven forbid; especially according to halacha? That is precisely the question we are addressing here.

The Rebbe addresses this question clearly in Likkutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 28, os 6:

Just as it was with the revelation of G-d’s unity at the Giving of the Torah, which negated the idea of polytheism...

so too after the Giving of the Torah, p’nimius ha’Torah revealed greater depth in the idea of G-d’s unity ... (over the generations, from time to time p’nimius ha’Torah reveals deeper ways of understanding G-d’s unity in a more subtle fashion).

Even though prior to the revelation of this understanding of G-d’s Unity one could not say that lack of knowledge in this was a deficiency and flaw, heaven forbid, still and all, after these explanations of the real meaning of G-d’s Unity have been revealed in the world, for someone who does not learn and believe in them it is a flaw in his belief in G-d, and in a very subtle way, it is *k’fira* (denial) of G-d’s unity.

As we find with the Rambam who paskened l’halacha that “one who says that there is one Master but He has a body and form” he is a *min* (heretic) and the Raavad disputes this view... And the explanation of Rambam’s view is that even though there were “great and good men” who thought that Hashem has a “body and form” and we cannot, heaven forbid, call them a *min*, nevertheless, after the explanations in the s’farim of g’dolei Yisroel were revealed and publicized, that it is impossible to say so and this contradicts G-d’s Unity (as the Rambam explains in Hilchos Yesodei Ha’Torah), if someone now thinks so because of the simple meaning of the texts or because of what he saw in Agados, he is in the category of a *min*.

So too here, after p’nimius ha’Torah revealed the true meaning of G-d’s Unity, that there is no existence except for

Him, someone who does not believe this is, in a subtle way, denying His oneness. No proof can be brought from earlier generations that they did not know this explanation of G-d’s Unity and so how could their belief in Hashem be complete without this knowledge of G-d’s Unity, because before it was revealed in the world, the lack of this knowledge was not a flaw, heaven forbid. On the other hand, “everything He did in the proper time” and p’nimius ha’Torah was revealed, including deeper ways of understanding G-d’s Unity which continue to be revealed in succeeding generations, and so it is incumbent on every single Jew to learn these topics and to believe in them (end quote).

If we are to differentiate between Chassidim and non-Chassidim, then perhaps it is like the Rebbe says in this sicha that for a non-Chassid it is “in a subtle way” and for Chassidim it’s not just “subtle.”

DOESN’T THIS CAUSE JEWS TO STUMBLE?

Someone can persist and ask: What is gained by these “revelations?” It’s a “stumbling block” for those who don’t want to learn and believe. Why not just let things alone? Chassidim know the truth and those who are not Chassidim don’t accept it anyway!

This question has me flabbergasted. Should Hashem not have given us the Torah because He knew that we would end up in galus?

A navi is forbidden from keeping his prophecy to himself. Therefore, our question is the reverse: Why should a navi withhold something good,

especially the **best news of all**; that “hinei zeh (Moshiach) ba?”

A Z’CHUS OR AN EXCUSE?

Now for some practical applications: I think that the imagined need to engage in intellectual acrobatics to interpret the sicha as being only a “partial” prophecy and the avoidance of pointing out that the Rebbe is talking about himself comes from the feeling of Ahavas Yisroel for those who still find it hard to accept the Rebbe and his being a prophet.

If the sicha is taken seriously, then the responsibility on *us*, the Chassidim, is very weighty because we are supposed to exert ourselves to spread the Rebbe’s message to everybody! This is the start of the Geula (as the Rebbe explains), and being lackadaisical about it is very problematic! This “finding a z’chus” approach interferes with what we are enjoined to do in a number of ways:

1-How can we look negatively upon a Jew, even someone who is not presently a Chassid? Why should we assume that a Jew would not accept a mitzva, especially one that is a principle of our faith? What sort of limud z’chus is it to say that I can believe but the other guy can’t? Is this how we were educated?!

2-We have no right to remove or weaken our **responsibility and privilege** to convey the Rebbe’s message to every Jew and to convince them to accept what the Rebbe said, that he is the navi of the generation with the excuse that it’s not so clear or by saying that they won’t accept it anyway.

On the contrary, because of our **genuine** Ahavas Yisroel, we

should try to the best of our ability to get this emuna out in the open and reveal the “spark of Moshiach” – i.e. the Rebbe – within every Jew!

3- What sort of approach is it that waters down the Rebbe’s message (even for ourselves) because of some question or another? The sicha says: **Simply put, being present at this Chassidishe farbrengen, in the four cubits of the Rebbe, my father-in-law, Nasi Doreinu, every single person, men,**



Rabbi Shmaryahu Matusof

women, and children, must first of all make good resolutions to fulfill all the good instructions and advice that were said at the farbrengen – based on the Written and Oral Torah and the divrei Torah and horaos of our Rebbeim, that it should be “judges shall you place in all your gates.” Namely, that all seven gates of man, i.e. his 2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils, and his mouth – should conduct themselves according to the instructions of our holy Torah as it was transmitted by “who

are the kings – our Rabbis” in general, and in particular by the “judge” and the “advisor” of the generation – Nasi Doreinu.

The Rebbe taught us to look favorably at every Jew with genuine Ahavas Yisroel and so we can’t conclude without finding a z’chus which we will take from a sicha quoted in Likkutei Sichos vol. 35 p. 61. The sicha is about the education of young children and of converts:

If, due to the nature of things, time is needed for learning and preparing until he can fulfill all the mitzvos, this preparation time (according to Torah law) begins only after he is grown ... and thus we have to say that the entire process is included in the obligation.

So too with us, we can say that during the necessary time period to study the matter there is no lack in the fulfillment of the mitzva. However, this does not absolve us of “the obligation on every Jew to learn these things and to believe in them” (as quoted earlier from vol. 35, p. 29).

In conclusion: Every Jew believes in Hashem and Moshe His servant and in Moshe’s “extension” in our generation – the Rebbe MH”M. For many people this is out in the open and for some, it still has to be elicited, but among the latter, their opposition is only superficial as it is explained at length in Tanya and Chassidus, especially in the teachings of the Rebbe. Let us **all as one** accept the Rebbe’s malchus and prophecy and the Rebbe will take **every one of us** out of galus.

*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu
V’Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach
L’olam Va’ed!*

COMMUNICATING MOSHIACH AT ISRAEL'S TELECOM GIANT

By Yisroel Yehuda

*From the 18th floor of the Bezeq Tower, R' Yitzchok Simantov's reputation as the "Chabadnik of Bezek" radiates throughout all 27 floors of the telecom giant's headquarters in the Ezrieli mall. * Enjoy the fascinating story of this communication engineer's life story and his hafatza both within and outside of Bezeq.*

Yitzchok Simantov was a young Sefardi, living in Raanana, going with the flow and enjoying life. Then he learned about Judaism. He says that nobody was mekarev him; he did it on his own.

When it came time for him to choose a path within Judaism, the decision was easy. He was a Sefardi and so he belonged among Sefardim! So he had a trimmed beard and a little kippa and life went

on.

The turning point in his life began with lighting Shabbos candles. Yitzchok wanted to be present as his wife lit the candles but Sefardim daven Mincha very early on Erev Shabbos so the timing wasn't right for him. He found out that Chabad davens later and so instead of going to the Sefardic minyan, he went to the Chabad minyan at the Chabad house in Raanana. As a result,

everything changed.

The warmth won him over and Yitzchok went to the Chabad minyan for the other t'fillos on Shabbos too. Then he stayed for the farbrengen after the davening where he began to hear concepts that were new to him. From the shliach R' Eliyahu Shadmi, he heard about Chassidic people and practices, miracle stories and more. For the first time, he heard about Moshiach and "Yechi." At first it annoyed him but the Chassidic warmth sank into his bones and Yitzchok eventually became a Lubavitcher.

THE INFLUENCE OF A CHASSID

At one of the farbrengens that Yitzchok attended they told of a rich Chassid who, when it came time for Mincha, would stop all his business meetings etc. and daven. He decided that at the Bezeq office where he worked (which was in the Shalom Tower at the time), he would do the same thing.

The next day, at 1:45, he stopped

working and began organizing a minyan for Mincha. At first they davened in the room of the workers' committee, and when Bezeq moved to the Ezrieli mall, Yitzchok made sure there was an equipped shul for them in one of the rooms in the building. When the manager of the office towers heard that Bezeq had a minyan, he informed Mr. Ezrieli who eventually decided to invest \$100,000 and two Sifrei Torah into creating a magnificent shul on the ground floor of the building, a premiere location at the central entry for all for wings of the building.

At one point, the "worker bonding programs" began at Bezeq, which organizes trips and events for employees. After a while, and after some pressure from the religious employees, they arranged religious events with a Jewish flavor. At one of these events, a rabbi came who told the crowd, strangely enough, that davening Mincha on company time was stealing. As a result, the employees told Yitzchok that they wouldn't be davening Mincha there anymore.

Yitzchak responded in his unique and direct way: Mincha isn't merely recommended, but an obligation. He resolved that at 1:45 he would go to the shul and whoever he saw on his way – it made no difference who it was – he would include in his minyan.

The next day, Yitzchok left his room at the appointed time and headed for the elevator. He put on his gartel and began to say *Korbanos*. While still in the elevator, he heard an authoritative voice behind him say, "What's that belt he put on?" Another voice replied, "That's for t'filla. Don't you know that there's a *Beit Knesset* here?"

Yitzchok looked up and was surprised to see the CEO of Bezeq himself, Mr. Biran. He watched in amazement at the Big Boss opened his cell phone, dialed his executive



secretary and said, "Go online and immediately inform all Bezeq offices in the Ezrieli compound via e-mail that whoever is interested in davening Mincha can do so in the building's Beit Knesset, but whoever wants to pray Mincha outside the building will have to punch out on the clock."

The reason was simple. The CEO preferred that his employees daven Mincha in the building than having them go out and look for a shul

which would take time away from their jobs.

Yitzchok, stunned by the unexpected development of events, arrived at the shul which was packed within minutes. "Simantov, how did you do it?" they all asked and from then on, the minyan has been official, approved by the Bezeq company.

As a result of this incident, permission to daven Mincha during work hours was given to all

Yitzchok knew how precious a dollar from the Rebbe is and he was afraid to take it. “Are you sure?” he asked. In response, the gabbai rebuked him, “You are standing here for fifteen minutes and lecturing on Ahavas Yisroel and now you refuse to take it from me?”

496 Bezeq office centers throughout the country!

TO TAKE A DOLLAR FROM THE REBBE-REAL AHAVAS YISROEL

Around that time, Yitzchok met the mashpia, R' Reuven Dunin. Yitzchok was won over by his sincerity and became his ardent mushpa. Yitzchok told him about his longing for a dollar from the Rebbe. R' Dunin inquired about Yitzchok's work at Bezeq and told him that in his shiur (Yitzchok gave a shiur in the Bezeq office after Mincha every day) he should stop teaching the laws of Lashon Hara and teach about Ahavas Yisroel, “Since Ahavas Yisroel includes Shmiras HaLashon.”

Yitzchok was a bit apprehensive about this. He had just begun learning the topic with R' Dunin, but then the following incident happened:

Yitzchok missed the minyan at Bezeq and had to go out and look for a minyan in a local shul. He ended up in a shul belonging to Jews from Libya. The minyan began and he joined in. After the davening, when he was ready to leave, the gabbai went up to the bima and called upon Yitzchok to say a few words.

Yitzchok stood there for a few seconds since, on the spot, he had nothing to say. Then he had an idea and said to himself, “This is your chance to lay the groundwork for the study of Ahavas Yisroel.” He went up to the bima and spoke about Ahavas Yisroel for 15 minutes, emphasizing the need for Ahavas Yisroel especially in our generation as a “foretaste” of the Geula.

When he was finished speaking, the gabbai went over to him and after thanking him, asked him

whether he was a Chabadnik.

Yitzchok said, “I hope one day to be one.”

“You see that boy in the corner. That's my son. A few years ago he was very sick. His condition was critical and the doctors did not hold out hope. ‘Go to rabbanim,’ they said. ‘We've done what we can.’

“We, the brokenhearted parents, sat near his bed and awaited the worst. At some point I left the hospital to take care of something. I felt that my world was destroyed. A group of Lubavitchers doing mitzvaim in the lobby saw my dejected face and sensitively listened to my tale of woe. They suggested that I immediately write to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

“I sat down with one of the Chassidim in a corner of the hospital and wrote. I put the envelope in the nearest mail box and when I returned to the ward the miracle happened! The doctors were ready to release my son, no less! I realized that something incredible had happened here.

“Later, we flew together to the

TOTAL BITTUL

When Yitzchok tells of his work, his line of thinking is quite impressive.

Before Rosh HaShana 5767, due to budget cuts at Bezeq, Yitzchok was going to be fired. The ones to do the firing are those who work in Human Resources who are very hard to deal with. There is one way to retain one's job – to have a hearing in which the employee presents his claim. If the employee is successful, he retains his job but if he loses the hearing, he is fired under worse terms than before so most employees prefer to go quietly and not fight.

Yitzchok wrote to the Rebbe. He did not ask the Rebbe to make sure he wasn't fired. He simply said that he had gotten a letter of dismissal and he asked the Rebbe whether his shlichus at Bezeq had ended and he should leave or whether he should remain.

After all, perhaps his “avodas ha'birurim” there had ended and he needed to look for another place to do hafatza. He did not bring his parnasa into the question. To him, Bezeq was the ideal place for hafatzas ha'maayanos.

The end of the story was that Yitzchok remained at his job with nearly no effort on his part.

Rebbe to thank him. While we were there, we both received a dollar from him.” As he said this, the gabbai took a dollar bill out of his wallet and said, “Take this. It’s for you; a dollar of Ahavas Yisroel and refua shleima from the Rebbe.”

Yitzchok was flabbergasted. He knew how precious a dollar from the Rebbe is and he was afraid to take it. “Are you sure?” he asked. In response, the gabbai rebuked him, “You are standing here for fifteen minutes and lecturing on Ahavas Yisroel and now you refuse to take it from me?”

And that’s how Yitzchok got what he wanted, a dollar from the Rebbe, and learned to listen to what his mashpia told him. Since then he has given a shiur in inyanei Ahavas Yisroel at Bezeq.

A CHABAD HOUSE AT BEZEQ

Yitzchok’s work is done on a daily basis, like at every Chabad house. When he arrives at Ezrieli, he puts t’fillin on with the guards and passersby. Then he continues to his office where people constantly ask him for help and ask him questions about Judaism, where to buy a mezuzah, tallis, t’fillin, and he helps them all graciously.

Yitzchok speaks to his mekuravim a lot about the imminent Geula and about the need to accept the malchus of the Rebbe MH”M and fulfill his instructions.

When a Bezeq employee is about to fly abroad, he knows that Yitzchok Simantov is the one who knows the addresses of all the Chabad houses worldwide. When they return, Yitzchok gets many compliments about the care and hospitality offered at Chabad houses.

Even at the religious events for the workers, Yitzchok finds plenty of work to do. He uses every free minute to talk with people, offer a brief *Tanya* shiur or a spontaneous

farbrengen. They all know that if the rabbi is late for the lecture, Yitzchok will fill in. “After these events they know that a Lubavitcher is someone who has something interesting to say

“I’ve been their colleague for years. I take a genuine interest in how they’re doing and they reciprocate my interest and love.”

Thanks to Yitzchok’s big heart,



A religious worker’s bonding program for the employees of Bezeq with Rabbi Yisroel Meir Lau. Yitzchok Simantov is in the center of the photo.

on every topic, especially on the topic of Geula and Moshiach, of course.”

Yitzchok informs his “k’hilla” about every Chabad event appropriate for each community. “If Chabad in general would plan further in advance, we could bring many people to its events. For example, Bezeq publishes a booklet with lists of camps before the summer. If we had information about Chabad camps in time, we could include that information in the booklet. No camp listed in the book can compete with Chabad’s camps, not in price or in the activities, but unfortunately, we get the information last minute ...”

What makes you so well-liked?

many interesting stories come his way. One time, when he put t’fillin on with the guards, one of them asked him for a bracha for children. In the course of the conversation he learned that the man was not married to a Jew! Yitzchok explained to him what a serious sin this is, and later on, the woman underwent a kosher conversion and they married according to halacha.

Yitzchok discovered that most people were unaware of the mitzva of pidyon ha’ben and he suggested to one of the employees that he make a pidyon ha’ben for his son. That started the “pidyonos fad,” with dozens of pidyonos made over the two years, for people of all ages and backgrounds.

CONSTANT MIRACLES

One of the amazing stories that Yitzchok shared with us happened with one of the employees at a subsidiary of Bezeq who worked in satellite communications. She became sick with cancer and one of her friends referred her to Yitzchok. She tearfully told him that her chances were nil and the doctors had given up on her. Yitzchok encouraged her to write to the Rebbe and told her to make a good hachlata as a “vessel” for the bracha. The Rebbe blessed her with a refua shleima and said she should continue with her medical treatments.

Half a year went by and the woman happily went to Yitzchok’s office to report to him. The treatments had helped and she was healthy. Yitzchok encouraged her to write to the Rebbe and tell him the good news. He suggested that she commit to keeping the laws of Family Purity and promised that this would restore her hair. The Rebbe’s answer was to make a *Seudas hoda’a* (thanksgiving meal).

The woman asked, “How do we make a *Seudas hoda’a* – we aren’t religious?”

Yitzchok explained that all you have to do is buy some refreshments, which her husband should put in shul and that would be that.

A few days later, the woman came back and said, “My husband is having some problems with his brothers and I want to write to the Rebbe about it.” She wrote to the Rebbe and the matter worked itself out amazingly well but the Rebbe mentioned the *Seudas hoda’a* again which still had not been made.

The requests kept coming: Her husband had not been promoted in several years and so of course, she wrote to the Rebbe. Once again, things worked out immediately and the husband was promoted. After a series of miracles like this, the husband was willing to make the *Seudas hoda’a* at the shul near their house.

Time passed and the woman came back again! She wanted to sell her house because it brought back bitter memories. The walls were saturated with her tears, despair and tortured nights. It was hard to live there and the family wanted out. She wrote to the Rebbe and within a short time she had sold the house and bought a larger and cheaper one! With the difference she wanted to open a small business (due to cuts at Bezeq, people were afraid that the section she worked in would be closed or sold).

Since her hair had grown back, she wanted to donate the difference in the apartment prices that she had saved to build a beautiful mikva in the area where she lived.

With the purchase of the new house, the family invited Yitzchok to make the seuda. They were so impressed by him that after he told them he could not eat in their house, they took off from work and went to B’nei Brak and while in close phone contact with Yitzchok they bought an entire kosher l’mehadrin meal.

Before the Chanukas HaBayis the woman asked to write to the Rebbe again and inform him about the new house. She opened to the same page in the *Igros Kodesh* that she had opened to the previous time when she wanted to sell her house.

When Yitzchok told this story he concluded with, “Whenever she comes to my office, I try to guess what will happen. The Rebbe’s precise answers, the miracles, the concern and love for every Jew that is apparent between the lines, increases my longing to see the Rebbe.”

Nearly every day, Yitzchok sends an e-mail with the subject line: “Spiritual Nourishment” to thousands of subscribers in and out of Bezeq. He writes a story or a Chassidic aphorism along with inyanei Moshiach and Geula, something on the parsha, and the time for candle lighting.

The feedback he gets is enthusiastic and people who know Yitzchok refer additional people to him.

KING FOR A DAY

When the “side of holiness” is on the ascendancy, the “other side” doesn’t sit with folded hands. The rule is that obstacles and difficulties arise when the “other side” is aroused to fight an increased level of holiness.

Although Yitzchok was a beloved and devoted employee, not everybody liked his work. Throughout his years of employment at Bezeq, various problems arose which attempted to steer Yitzchok away from his outreach work.

For a period of time, the manager of Yitzchok’s department was unsatisfied with Yitzchok’s outreach and busy office. Whether it was professional considerations or personal ones that motivated him, the manager told Yitzchok that the next time he put t’fillin on with someone would be the last time he did so as an employee of Bezeq.

Yitzchok wasn’t frightened by the man’s threats and he wrote to the Rebbe about the problem. The answer was to continue his hafatza and by doing so, not only wouldn’t he be fired, he would be promoted. Yitzchok did not understand this because the manager was seriously threatening to fire him and what kind of promotion would that be?

Nevertheless, as a loyal Chassid he did not ask questions. He was determined to continue with Mivtza T’fillin and the first Jew he saw, he

planned on “dragging” to his office for t’fillin.

Yitzchok opened the door to his office and lay in wait for the first Jew that would cross his path. After a moment of quiet in the empty hallway, he could hear someone approaching who was talking on the phone. It was a big, tough guy, the manager of the branch, a Russian immigrant (who outranked the manager of the department). This man arrived at dawn and worked until late at night. People preferred to keep their distance from him.

Yitzchok, without giving it much thought, grabbed the man by the shoulder and guided him into his room. As the man spoke into his phone, Yitzchok put t’fillin on his head and arm and shoved a page with the Shma into his hand. The man finished his phone conversation and asked, “What do you think you’re doing?” Instead of answering, Yitzchok urged him to read from the page.

While the branch manager was still in the midst of his impromptu and moving bar mitzva, the department manager appeared in the doorway and observed the “crime” taking place. Within a fraction of a second, the look on his face changed to one of shock as he realized who was “cooperating” with Yitzchok. He quickly retreated.

Yitzchok’s bar mitzva “boy” did not pay attention to what was going on around him for he was very moved by the t’fillin experience. He said, “If you put t’fillin on with me, then you certainly do so with the others here. I’m finicky and it’s hard for me to wear the kippa that you give everybody else too, so I’ll buy a kippa and come with it every day to put on t’fillin.”

From that point on, until he left Bezeq, the Russian came every day to Yitzchok’s office and acknowledged his Maker for a few moments.

Years later, Yitzchok met the manager who had threatened him. He had been promoted and had become Assistant Director of Bezeq. Before Pesach, Yitzchok decided that Bezeq’s chametz also had to be sold properly. He spoke to the administration and it turned out that the company representative who was to carry out the sale of chametz was this very same man. Now however, the man was cooperative and he sold the chametz on behalf of all the hundreds of office centers as well as the chametz in his own house.

Two weeks after Yitzchok put t’fillin on with the Russian branch manager, he got a letter from Bezeq which said he had been promoted retroactively, by two years, and he would be getting the additional accumulated salary in one lump sum.

THE REBBE PROVIDES A SAFE

Four years ago, the activities at the Bezeq shul expanded and in addition to Mincha there is Shacharis too. Yitzchok, who organized the minyan tried to get a Torah so they could daven there on days when the Torah is read too. But Bezeq said they were not willing to have Sifrei Torah there without a safe, because the shul is open all the time and they were not going to take responsibility for such an expensive item.

Yitzchok began looking for a suitable safe. For two years he searched but came up with nothing. Then one day, while wondering how to proceed, he caught himself and said: Why am I looking for a safe for two years now? There’s a Rebbe and he will solve the problem!

Yitzchok wrote to the Rebbe about what had happened over the previous two years and the answer was to be aggressive.

Although that is not his nature, Yitzchok called the manager of the

building and said, “You’re getting me a safe today!”

The manager was taken aback by his tone and said defensively, “Where should I get one from?”

“I have no idea,” said Yitzchok, “but you’re getting me a safe **today!**”

The manager sent him to the security department. The person in charge there did not understand the urgency. “Two days ago, we sent a safe to the junk facility. If you would have asked me then you would have

Yitzchok wasn’t frightened by the man’s threats and he wrote to the Rebbe about the problem. The answer was to continue his hafatza and by doing so, not only wouldn’t he be fired, he would be promoted. Yitzchok did not understand this because the manager was seriously threatening to fire him and what kind of promotion would that be?

gotten a safe."

Yitzchok contacted the storage facility. The way it usually worked was that the items were immediately broken down and crushed, so there wasn't much of a chance that he'd get a safe, but Yitzchok wasn't deterred. The nice fellow in charge at the junk facility wasn't fazed by the request/demand for a safe. "If you're looking for a safe, you can come here. There's a large selection of all types."

Yitzchok couldn't believe his ears. For two years he had been searching every Bezeq office compound, high and low, and came up with nothing and now, there were dozens of available safes.

"I looked for a safe for two years. I looked and looked but I was acting on my own and there were no safes at Bezeq. There just weren't any! But the minute I did things as the Rebbe told me to, twenty safes were 'created' within half an hour!"

CHANGE YOUR LOCATION, CHANGE YOUR FORTUNE

Shortly before Pesach 5767 there was a total reorganization at Bezeq. All existing branches were dismantled and transferred from one place to another. Yitzchok had to leave the Ezrieli buildings for Rishon L'Tziyon. He asked the Rebbe, the Rebbe gave a bracha, and so he knew that his shlichus would continue in the new location. So he



moved his Chabad house to Rishon L'Tziyon where he found new opportunities for outreach with thousands of additional employees who have welcomed him warmly.

He keeps in touch with the offices at Ezrieli and under his guidance there are some ongoing outreach activities by employees who caught the "Chabad bug," and who carry on the work there. They consult with him regarding answers from the Rebbe, etc. Since his move, a shul has opened at the new location and the Assistant Director of Logistics gave his approval to the furniture order put together by R' Yitzchok to furnish the shul.

How do you sum up your work of hafatza at Bezeq?

"My current exile plans are to bring the Minister of Communications and the CEO of Bezeq to a Hachnasas Seifer Torah at the new shul. I have permission to send "Spiritual Nourishment" to the employees who work at the central and southern branches of Bezeq, i.e. to more than 4000 employees. I hope to get permission to send "Spiritual Nourishment" to the many more thousands of Bezeq employees around the country.

"It's very simple. You have to be battul to the Rebbe. When you do what the Rebbe says to do and spread Chassidus along with inyanei Moshiach and Geula, you succeed way beyond your expectations."

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Boruch Hashem, Elul 5768

Mivtza: HELPING THE NEEDY

To every member of the Lubavitcher community:

During this month of preparation for Rosh Hashonoh, the "head" of the New Year, we fondly recall our Rebbe's words that this is an especially auspicious time for strengthening our deep bond of Hiskashrus with the "Rosh Bnei Yisroel," the "head" of the Jewish people and leader of the generation.

Our Rebbeim explain that **an important way to strengthen Hiskashrus is by participating in the Rebbe's activities and concerns, consequently, by supporting an organization that brings together a number of these activities, the Hiskashrus is greater and stronger.** Such an organization is Kupas Rabbeinu, which seeks to continue many of the Rebbe's activities and concerns without change from the way he would conduct them himself.

Every year at this time, the Rebbe would call upon us to contribute generously to help needy families with their extra expenses for the coming month's many Yomim Tovim. This also coincides with the special emphasis during this month of giving extra Tzedokah, (indicated in the Hebrew letters of the word "Elul," as explained in many Sichos etc.), as a vital way of preparing ourselves for the new year and arousing Divine mercy upon us. See sicho in the Hebrew text of this letter.

We therefore appeal to every individual man and woman to contribute generously to Kupas Rabbeinu, enabling us to fulfill the Rebbe's desire to help all those who anxiously await our help. The greater your contribution, the more we can accomplish.

Your generous contribution to Kupas Rabbeinu will be the appropriate vessel for receiving the abundant blessings of the Rebbe, who is its Nasi, that you may be blessed with a Ksiva Vachasima Tova for a good and sweet year, materially and spiritually. May it help to bring the full revelation of Moshiach - our Rebbe - immediately now!

Wishing a Ksiva Vachasima Tova for a good and sweet year,

In the name of Vaad Kupas Rabbeinu

Rabbi Sholom Mendel Simpson

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Groner

P.S. Of course, you may send to Kupas Rabbeinu all contributions that you would send to the Rebbe; all will be devoted to the activities to which the Rebbe would devote them.

You may also send Maimad, **Keren-Hashono** (this coming year 5769 - 354 days), Vov Tishrei, Yud Gimmel Tishrei Magbis etc. to Kupas Rabbeinu.

P.S. Please send all correspondence only to the following address.

KUPAS RABBEINU / P.O.B. 288 / BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11225

Eretz Yisroel address: KEREN KUPAS ADMU"R / P.O.B. 1247 / KIRYAT MALACHI / ISRAEL

NO, IT WASN'T A DREAM...

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

*“Shivers went up and down my spine. I looked at myself, and then suddenly I realized that I was dressed exactly as I was in my dream – in a black garment with a long green blouse. I was speechless. My entire body was shaking. Without a second thought, I got up from my place and I literally ran out of there, dazed and confused. ‘That’s all I need,’ I said to myself, ‘that the last detail of the dream should be realized and the Lubavitcher Rebbe will come in...’” * Ten-year old Yuval Bariga of Kiryat Ekron was granted his life as a gift – twice – thanks to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. An amazing miracle story as told by his mother.*

Yuval, the second child of the Bariga family of Kiryat Ekron, is ten years old. Despite the many years that have passed, his devoted

mother, Mrs. Chagit Bariga, cannot forget the miraculous events that preceded his birth, events which brought the entire family closer to

the path of their forefathers.

It wasn't easy to convince Chagit to tell her story for the purpose of publicizing it. All of my urging about the importance of publicizing miracles was met with expressions of hesitancy for days on end. “This is a very private story, too private for you to publicize openly,” she explained in a form of apology. What eventually convinced her to reveal her story was when I told her that the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, who has performed great wonders, requested on numerous occasions that such miracles should be publicized – not just as a means of expressing thanks to Almighty G-d, but because it can bring many other Jews to become stronger in their love and fear of Him.

Many times as she related her story, Mrs. Bariga had to stop and catch her breath. She seemed to be emotionally overwhelmed, literally reliving the experience as she recalled it. She admits that every day when she looks at her son, she realizes how he is the Rebbe's child. Yet, when she relates what she went through in those days, her story takes on a new dimension of intensity, an immediate and tangible reality.

Up until twelve years ago, the Bariga family of Kiryat Ekron was a typical Israeli family. They

commemorated the Jewish holidays in their own way but Torah and mitzvos had no practical meaning for them whatsoever. When the young couple was privileged to hold their first child, their joy and happiness knew no bounds, and they felt that everything was going well.

"It all started when I was expecting our second child," Chagit Bariga said as she began her story. "My husband traveled to Africa for a few weeks, and I found myself looking for a job opportunity so I could pass the time. Through scouring the classified ads of the local papers, I discovered that Chabad in Rechovot, not far from where we lived, was looking for telemarketers to help solicit charitable contributions. I soon found myself at my new job, where I was introduced a most unique personality – Chabad institutions director Rabbi **Elimelech Shachar**. All my preconceptions about chareidim were quickly shattered thanks to his warm and understanding approach.

"After working for a while with the Chabad institutions, which I enjoyed every minute, I went to a doctor to take a series of tests for the purpose of checking the progress of my pregnancy. The doctor conducted the necessary examinations, and after secluding himself in his office reviewing the results, he dropped a bombshell. 'According to the test results before me,' he said, 'the fetus is suffering from a severe heart defect.'

"I was shocked. Never had I dreamed or expected anything like this. I left the doctor's office bewildered and deeply frightened. The very next day, I made an appointment with another even more experienced specialist, and after another series of tests and x-rays, he concurred with the first doctor's opinion. He didn't even try to smooth things over with an

optimistic tone. He instead told me in explicit terms that this pregnancy poses a serious danger and the chances are great that the child will be born deformed.

"Faced with such a clear diagnosis, I decided to terminate the pregnancy. I called the clinic that very day and requested an appointment for the procedure. Being very far from Torah observance, I failed to comprehend the gravity of my decision. Nonetheless I was adamant. That night, I visited my mother-in-law and told her what the doctors had said and what I was planning to do the next day. She was very upset by this and asked that I wait until her son (my husband) returned, but I refused.

"That night, I made all the necessary preparations for the following day's procedure, particularly those of a mental and emotional nature, and I dozed off rather low-spirited.

"As I fell into a deep sleep, I suddenly had a very strange and unusual dream. I dreamt that I was sitting in a waiting room across from several red chairs, and I was dressed in a black garment with a long green blouse. Seated across from me was a young couple. I eventually realized that this was the waiting room of an abortion clinic, and they were also waiting in line as I was. At a certain point, I saw something peculiar to my right. I lifted my gaze, and I suddenly saw none other than the Lubavitcher Rebbe himself in all his glory, wrapped in tallis and t'fillin, sitting on a chair. His face radiated with a brilliant light. I looked at the young couple and asked in surprise, 'Don't you see who's here?'

"The Rebbe just looked at me without saying a word. I felt as if he was silently conveying the message: I came here for you – don't do this!"

"When I woke up that morning, I pinched myself to make certain

that this dream wasn't actually some form of reality. I was never the type to start interpreting my dreams. I don't believe in all that.

Nevertheless, I simply couldn't ignore what I had just experienced.

"Asserting myself over the dream's powerful impact, I got myself organized that morning and set out for the clinic as scheduled, where I had made my appointment to terminate the pregnancy.

When I entered the waiting room, I submitted the paperwork and sat on one of the chairs, waiting for my turn. Something began pecking away in my brain, but I didn't understand what. Suddenly, the picture became clear in my mind, and I noticed that this place was absolutely identical to the one I had dreamt about the night before – the same hallway, the same pictures adorning the wall. I continued to contemplate out of a growing sense of confusion, especially once I realized that even the chairs were the same shade of red that I saw in my dream. My state of wonderment increased with even greater fortitude when suddenly the door opened, and there entered a young couple, virtually identical to the couple that appeared in the dream. They sat down in the exact same place and conferred quietly with one another.

"Shivers went up and down my spine. I looked at myself, and then suddenly I realized that I was dressed exactly as I was in my dream – in a black garment with a long green blouse. I was speechless. My entire body was shaking. Without a second thought, I got up from my place and I literally ran out of there, astounded and dazed. 'That's all I need,' I said to myself, 'that the last detail of the dream should be realized and the Lubavitcher Rebbe will come in...' I had never gone to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and the first time that I had heard that he performed miracles was when I

started working for the Chabad institutions in Rechovot. The directors, Rabbi Elimelech Shachar and Rabbi Erez Karlenstein, told me about the Rebbe's spiritual strength, but I had no reason to internalize something so deep.

"Now, I was suddenly faced with the realization that perhaps G-d arranged all this in such a way that I would start working at the time in the Lubavitcher Rebbe's institutions in order that I would come to know about the Rebbe.

"After fleeing from the clinic, the first place I came to was Rabbi Elimelech Shachar's office. In a voice shaking with emotion, I told him what I had experienced over the

to the end of the pregnancy, a healthy baby boy was born to us through a normal and easy birth. We called him 'Yuval'. We invited many Chabad chassidim to the bris, including Rabbi Elimelech Shachar. During the festive meal, our entire extended family heard the amazing story."

Not long after the bris, Chagit again felt Rabbi Shachar's words that the child born to them would be "the Rebbe's child", thanks to another miraculous event:

"One night, before going to take a rest, I left a little hot water in the kettle, in order that when the baby woke up from his sleep, I could quickly prepare something for him

"After the baby had dozed off, as I made myself a cup of instant coffee, I failed to understand why the cup had lumps in it. I thought that maybe the milk had turned sour, and when my husband came home, I asked him to go to one of the neighbors and ask for some milk because our was spoiled.

"After going downstairs a few steps, he suddenly came back in a state of panic and asked, 'Did you change the water or did you use the water that was in the kettle?' I didn't understand why he looked so pale when I told him that I had used the water that was in the kettle... Terror seized him and without any further explanation, he took the baby and asked me to come with him to the emergency room. It was only while en route to the hospital that I understood from his breathless words what had happened. I burst into uncontrollable sobs.

We raced to Kaplan Hospital in Rechovot without paying attention to traffic regulations. When we arrived at the children's intensive care unit, we told the doctors on-duty what had occurred. They wrung their hands and said, 'We're talking about ingesting a caustic material that can consume all the internal organs'. There was no need to elaborate, and we understood that there was nothing that they could do. They sympathized with our plight, but the child could not survive for long...

"It was the second night of Chanukah. I will never forget that moment as long as I live. I was very far from mitzvah observance, I was not raised to believe in G-d, and surely not in tzaddikim or rabbis. Yet, as I left the room where our son lay, I called out brokenhearted, 'Rebbe, I don't know you, I never even read about you. I know only one thing: You came to me in a dream, and in your merit, this child was born and brought into the world. Please do something

I called out brokenhearted, 'Rebbe, I don't know you, I never even read about you. I know only one thing: You came to me in a dream, and in your merit, this child was born and brought into the world. Please do something miraculous so that this child will live!'

last twenty-four hours. In stark contrast to me, he was calm and relaxed. 'Remove all fear from your heart,' he told me. 'The child who will be born is the Rebbe's child, and everything with him will be fine. Pay no attention to the medical diagnoses.' I heard his resolute words, and I didn't know how to react. I wasn't a particularly big believer in those days, but I also couldn't ignore the incredible experience that I had gone through. I was simply afraid to disregard what had occurred.

"The reality was far stronger than anything imaginable. Despite the concerns that accompanied me

to eat.

"As I was sleeping, my husband came back from work, emptied the water that I had left in the kettle, and filled it with sodium hydroxide to clean out the leftover calcium residue. Afterwards, he went out to run a short errand. He assumed that before the baby woke up, he would return home, pour out the poisonous cleaning material, and refill the kettle with water. However, the baby woke up while he was still out, and I prepared some cereal with the water that was in the kettle – mixed with the sodium hydroxide!... The baby ate his cereal until he was full and went back to sleep.

Terror seized him and without any further explanation, he took the baby and asked me to come with him to the emergency room. It was only while en route to the hospital that I understood from his breathless words what had happened.

miraculous so that this child will live!’

“During this time, the baby laid on one of the hospital beds in a deep sleep. After a few minutes, one of the doctors came and said that she wanted the bottle from which the child had drank, since she had to check if any sodium hydroxide remained and at what level. We gave her the bottle that we had containing a little of the remaining milk after the baby had taken from it. It was brought to the laboratory for tests, but a short while later, the doctor returned and asked if we were certain that this was the bottle. To our astonishment, she said that the lab tests showed that the bottle contained nothing more than milk and water, and there was not a trace of any poisonous or dangerous substances. After the baby underwent a series of comprehensive

examinations, we were released to go home, utterly perplexed. Something didn’t make sense to us, for we knew with absolute certainty that there had to be poison in that bottle. But the doctors stubbornly declared, ‘If there had been poisonous material, we would already have seen the bitter results’.

“We weren’t calmed so quickly. Rabbi Shachar, with whom I was always in contact, arrived with several of the Chabad Talmud Torah students to say T’hillim near the baby’s cradle.

“This story is one link in a chain of other-worldly, incomprehensible events that occurred with this child. I admit that when I heard from Rabbi Elimelech Shachar that our child was ‘the Rebbe’s’, I shook my head skeptically. Yet today, ten years later, I can say assuredly and unabashedly – he is the Rebbe’s child! We have seen not once and not twice how the Rebbe protects him and rescues him from difficult situations.

“I truly feel how the Rebbe keeps and protects us,” said Chagit, as she concluded her story. “Every time that I am confronted by a problem on any matter of concern, I close my eyes and ask the Rebbe to help us. Family members and other people around us don’t understand me. They are certain that we’ve been infected by mysticism or spirituality. Even I can’t explain it rationally or logically – I’m not someone who was raised on blind faith, far from it. Yet, after having experienced all this, it simply can’t be ignored.

“These facts have brought my husband and I closer to the path of Torah and mitzvos. We have seen clearly that this world just doesn’t run on its own, and there is a Greater Power that directs and leads it.”



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WHEN THE PRESIDENT OF GEORGIA BOWED BEFORE A PICTURE OF THE REBBE

By Nosson Avrohom

In a special interview with Beis Moshiach during the recent hostilities between Russia and Georgia, shliach and Chief Rabbi of the Republic of Georgia, Rabbi Avrohom Mikhalashvili describes his shlichus, his work with Georgian Jews for the past two decades, his special relationship with the president of Georgia, and more.

The redness of Rabbi Avrohom Dovber Mordechai Mikhalashvili's eyes is an indication of the lack of sleep he has been experiencing the past week. When life is routine, Rabbi Mikhalashvili is endlessly busy in his roles as Chief Rabbi of

Georgia, shliach of the Rebbe, and friend to Georgian Jews in Israel and other countries. The recent war found him swamped with demands.

He, together with Jewish Community Chairman Refael Mesingiser-Hacohen, worked in

rotation, helping his community in Tbilisi, sheltering refugees from the border towns who had fled to the capitol in fear of the Russians, and keeping in close contact with the Israeli businessmen and tourists who remained in Georgia, as well as their worried families back in Israel. In addition, the phone doesn't stop ringing with calls from journalists in Israel and abroad.

On the second day of the outbreak of hostilities, I managed to reach Rabbi Mikhalashvili even though the phone lines were down. In the few minutes that he was able to spare, he described the community's activities during the war:

"In the Guria region which is near the border that was just captured by the Russians, some missiles hit buildings near the shul at a distance of only 200 meters.

Jewish families that live nearby relate that they felt the impact and some houses went up in flames. A few families wanted to leave for Tbilisi and we helped them. Many families have called asking for a bracha, advice, and segulos for spiritual protection.”

The Russian shelling did not stop with Guria or border towns. From the start of the war, in order to break the Georgian soldiers, the

Russians launched a series of air strikes deep into the country, including Tbilisi, the capitol.

“Because of the close connection we maintain with Jewish communities, I was unable to catch a wink of sleep until four in the morning. After a catnap of just twenty minutes, I was suddenly awoken by an explosion that shook the area. In the morning I found out that the Russians had bombed a

military installation near the airport. Since then, there were several other reverberations from explosions.”

The members of the community directed their concern not only towards members of the Jewish communities, some of who were drafted into the war effort, but also towards helping the country in general.

“The Georgian people, from the simplest villagers to the intellectuals



The president of Georgia, Michael Saakashvili at the menorah lighting with shliach, Rabbi Mikhelashvili

and men in high positions, all respect the Jewish people. This is the only country where you won't find anti-Semitism," said Rabbi Mikhalashvili enthusiastically.

Now, Rabbi Mikhalashvili and his people are working on signing up Jews in Tbilisi so they can donate blood for the wounded, "As a sign of friendship to the Georgian people who are so nice to us, year round." They also established a fund with members who are Jewish businessmen in Israel and elsewhere, to provide aid and assistance in the country's rebuilding efforts.

WHAT A BACHUR CAN ACCOMPLISH

After a fascinating, five hour interview with Rabbi Mikhalashvili, one of the most interesting of my career, I realized that because of this war, I discovered one of Chabad's largest outreach efforts. It is a shlichus that has rarely been given media coverage.

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Rabbi Mikhalashvili's work with Georgian Jews did not begin recently. Back in 1989 he worked under the auspices of Merkaz Chabad Lubavitch for Georgian Jewry which he founded for Georgian Jews. This was after two years of intensive work with the Georgian community in Queens, a community that numbers many thousands today. Even after speaking to Rabbi Mikhalashvili for so many hours, I felt that I had just gotten a glimpse of the extent of his work.

"My parents and grandparents were born and lived in Georgia under the communists, and they led the way in the preservation of Jewish values and traditions. Many people viewed them as their spiritual leaders.

"I actually began working with Georgian Jews in 1987 when I was a bachur at the end of my K'vutza year in 770. Jews from Georgia had begun emigrating to the United States and settling in Queens. The community then bought an apartment which they turned into a shul."

Rabbi Mikhalashvili remembers that year fondly. "It was an atmosphere of tremendous hiskashrus to the Rebbe following *Didan Natzach* (the victory in the court case over the s'farim) and this was expressed in added farbrengens in addition to learning, in order to give the Rebbe nachas.

"At the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas VaEira, the Rebbe delivered a heartfelt sicha. He said it was possible there were Jewish children in New York who knew nothing about Judaism and he asked everyone to make a commitment as to what he would do for Jewish education. Then the Rebbe spoke at length about Avrohom Avinu, quoting the verse, 'and he planted an *eshel* in Beer Sheva.' The Rebbe held a Chumash and smiled as he

said, 'What did he make? He made a Chabad house!'

"The participants at the farbrengen felt how much pleasure the Rebbe had when he said this. For us, this sicha was a clear horaa that we had to get to work. On Motzaei Shabbos I called the heads of the Georgian community in Queens and arranged a meeting with them for Sunday.

"They took me seriously and at the meeting were the heads of the k'hilla including R' Yaakov and his son R' Reuven Elberg; Chacham Avrohom Ashvili; Mr. David Butarshvili; Mr. Suso Ptarkatchshvili; Mr. Refael Yisraelshvili; and Isro-Yisrael Mikhalashvili. They all liked the idea of opening a center for activities in their community and gave me their blessings. I felt they had been waiting for someone to begin working with their community there in Queens.

"They accepted me very warmly. Some of them knew my family roots and had been students of my father, Rabbi Ben-Tzion Mikhalashvili and of my grandfathers, Chacham Shabtai z"l and Chacham Yitzchok z"l. They were happy that the son of these rabbis was continuing the family tradition.

"By the next Sunday we had opened a Sunday School attended by dozens of children. When we found out that many children attended public school because their parents didn't have the money for tuition in Jewish schools, we established a fund for this purpose and saw tremendous success. Along with some fellow T'mimim we made a significant transformation among these youth, who were being exposed to Jewish concepts that were entirely new to them. Boruch Hashem, some of them continued on to yeshivos and established fine, frum families.



Rabbi Mikhalashvili with an old Chumash he found in his birthplace, Kulashi

“The successful work with the children drew their parents in their wake and we started an array of shiurim for men and women, house calls and other programs. We connected many Jews to the Rebbe and would bring groups from the community for ‘dollars’ and ‘kos shel bracha.’

“At the end of 5748 the Rebbe announced Shnas HaBinyan (Year of Construction). I decided we had to do something in Queens. I called a meeting and told them what the Rebbe said and we decided to hold a cornerstone laying ceremony for a new shul. Everybody like the idea but where would the money come from? I promised them that we would make the ‘keilim’ and Hashem would help.

“A few months went by and a member of the community, a taxi driver, suddenly became wealthy, and he donated most of the money for the beautiful shul.

“Those were wonderful days of intense work while I simultaneously learned in 770. I only gave shiurim and did outreach work in the

evenings and Sundays.

“On one of my house calls I visited a wealthy couple who asked me to check their mezuzos. I was glad to do so and I explained the mitzva to them. The father was moved and he asked me to change all his mezuzos to ones that were more mehudar. They prepared a feast for the occasion and invited members of the community.

“That set off a chain reaction. They asked me to give a weekly Tanya shiur in their house and they transferred their two daughters to a Jewish school. He began to wear a yarmulke and the couple committed to Shabbos observance and kashrus. Their involvement was an impetus for many other members of the community to make positive changes in their lives.”

“THIS SURELY PROVIDES NACHAS RUACH”

Rabbi Mikhalashvili worked for two years with the community in Queens with the Rebbe’s bracha,

and he accomplished a great deal. In Cheshvan 5749 he wanted to return to Eretz Yisroel but he found it hard to leave his work behind. In a letter to the Rebbe he asked whether he could start an international Chabad organization that would work with Georgian Jews in their country as well as with those who made aliya.

“During that period you could see a slowdown in the outreach work with Georgian Jews. Many of them had been strongly observant in Georgia but when they moved to free countries, they cooled off somewhat when they experienced freedom. The Rebbe’s answer to me was astonishing. He wrote to begin working on the day I arrived in Eretz Yisroel.

“On Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha, 11 Cheshvan, before I returned to Eretz Yisroel, I gave a bottle of mashke to the secretariat. During the farbrengen the Rebbe spoke a lot about shlichus and I felt that he was talking to me. As was customary at that time, the Rebbe said that those who had submitted bottles of mashke should step forward to take the bottles and should do so quickly.

“The Rebbe also poured me an almost full cup of mashke. I said a bracha and l’chaim and drank it. The Rebbe answered l’chaim and when I finished announcing where I was going on shlichus, the Rebbe said, ‘bracha v’hatzlacha.’ Remember, I was a young bachur and those moments are with me forever.

“When I arrived in Eretz Yisroel I got down to work. Since most of the Jews from Georgia made aliya to Eretz Yisroel, I decided to live and have our headquarters in Eretz Yisroel. We sent groups of T’mimim to Georgia in order to strengthen those who still lived there and to encourage the rabbanim there. We operated

mainly in Kulashi, Kutaisi and in Tbilisi. We had a representative in each city through whom the work was done. We sent many s'farim as well as Jewish religious items and brochures written in the Georgian language.

"In Elul 5749 the Rebbe spoke about establishing branches of Tomchei T'mimim all over and we decided, upon consultation with rabbanim from Georgia, that we had to start a yeshiva. We decided

to start a branch in Kutaisi. The one who ran the yeshiva and gave shiurim was the rabbi of the community there, Chacham Shmuel Fanikashvili.

"Dozens of boys joined the yeshiva and they learned Mishnayos, Halacha, Gemara and of course, Chassidus. It was exciting, especially considering the fact that the Rebbe Rashab had already founded a yeshiva there when he sent Rabbi Shmuel Levitin

and Rabbi Avrohom Slavin there, as well as Rabbi Mordechai Perlov and Rabbi Shmaryahu Sossonkin. The yeshiva operated for a long time until most of the community moved to Eretz Yisroel.

"In Eretz Yisroel we did a great deal of work to uplift Georgian Jewry and to establish their communities. Within every community I worked in collaboration with the rabbanim and gabbaim in making shiurim and farbrengens. In k'hillos that did not have a rav or chazan, we found suitable people for them. This work breathed new life into them and brought about a spiritual renaissance.

"Among other things, we founded Noga for Georgian girls and women. In 5750 we began published a weekly pamphlet in Georgian that we called *Torah Ohr* which is still published today. It has a sicha from the Rebbe on the parsha, a Chassidic story, and a halacha column.

"In the responses from the Rebbe that we received, we saw how highly the Rebbe regarded our work. Regarding the founders meeting for Noga that we established in Cheshvan 5749 the Rebbe said: **May you also relay good news in the future in increased measure, I will mention it at the gravesite.**

"On Isru Chag Pesach 5751 we held a very successful Kinus Torah in Romema for those living in Yerushalayim and the Rebbe said: **They are surely providing nachas ruach and pleasure with this and the time is auspicious for great success and the like. I will mention it at the gravesite.**

WE MAKE THE MOVE

"A little less than ten years ago, we began hearing reports about the weak spiritual state of the thousands of Jews still living in

ANSWERS FROM THE REBBE

Rabbi Mikhelashvili has dozens of answers from the Rebbe in writing that he received over the years, ever since he began working with Georgian Jews. "In light of all these responses we felt that it was like the Rebbe was waiting for someone to take on this job and begin working with Georgian Jews. For nearly every question we submitted, we received an answer. Here are three:

"The Kinus HaShluchim 5750 was the first time that I participated as a shliach. When the Kinus was over, I submitted a report to the Rebbe and after receiving the Rebbe's answer I haven't missed a single Kinus: **I will mention it at the gravesite for good news and the time is auspicious, Kislev (Rosh Chodesh, 9, 14, 19 and its conclusion, the days of Chanuka – beginning on Shabbos) as was mentioned again and again at the Kinus HaShluchim.**

"In Tishrei 5751 I experienced many difficulties for various reasons. I had just left 770 and was naïve. I had a hard time handling the problems of *askanus* (community involvement). One day, I felt I couldn't go on and I wrote to the Rebbe suggesting that I take a break. I didn't think of leaving shlichus altogether, chas v'shalom, but I thought it would be a good idea to take some time off to relax and regroup. The Rebbe's answer was clear: **Great is the inyan of askanus in addition to it being a continuation of askanus in the Year of Miracles [i.e. 5750], I will mention it at the gravesite.**"

Once we're mentioning difficulties in askanus, Rabbi Mikhelashvili acceded to my request and modestly told me about an answer that referred to him, though he didn't get it directly from the Rebbe.

"It was a few months earlier, in Sivan 5750. Some Lubavitchers went to Georgia under the auspices of Ezras Achim. They mainly visited Tbilisi. When they returned, they wrote to the Rebbe about the poor state of Judaism there and asked for a bracha to establish an organization and to go there and work.

"That was a year and a half after I had gone on shlichus. The Rebbe's answer to them was: **It was established already and is in operation already, literally, if you are able to, help him with everything. I will mention it at the gravesite.**

Those who received this answer reported to me about their plans and about the Rebbe's answer.



The main shul in Tbilisi, exterior and interior



“The prime minister welcomed me and I told him about the meaning of the holiday. Then he dropped the ‘bomb.’ He said, ‘I want to tell you something, which is why I invited you here. According to the Jewish religion I am a Jew because my mother is Jewish.’”

Georgia who did not have rabbinic leadership. Most of the activists had made aliya or had died. Sending s’farim and religious items, and sending bachurim to run Pesach s’darim and for Yomim Tovim was very nice but not enough to sustain them spiritually.

“Let it be said to their credit that the shuls were still full, especially on Shabbos. Tradition was very strong. Nevertheless, it was clear that they needed someone to lead them. For a long time I looked for people who would agree to go there but couldn’t find anyone so my wife and I decided to go ourselves.

“Back then, it was no easy task. Today the country is highly developed but at that time they were just beginning to recover from the

harsh Soviet rule and the country was very primitive. I arrived for Tishrei and when I informed the community in Tbilisi that I had come there to live, they didn't believe me. They were sure I had come for a week or a month. People

“At our Shabbos meals we have the custom that each person tells of a Jewish experience he had in his life and this is greatly inspirational. When he heard everybody else, it affected him very much. He told about the Rebbe and how he had the privilege of seeing the Rebbe during the blowing of the shofar. He made a commitment to be more observant and to learn the Rebbe’s teachings as well as Chitas.”

thought, ‘He means well but he won’t last here.’

“As the days passed and people saw we were still there, they were overwhelmed with joy. They reminded me of my parents and grandparents who were familiar and respected rabbinic figures in Georgia. News about our arrival spread like wildfire throughout Tbilisi and neighboring cities and many people came to shul to meet me.

“I’ll never forget the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva that we had that year. We brought music and instruments and there was tremendous joy. People danced with all their might for hours. Some said that they didn’t recall a simcha as great and genuine as this in their lives.

“Since then, we are in Georgia. Right after Tishrei we got to work. We started shiurim, kashered kitchens, opened daycare centers, preschools and schools and began establishing ties with other communities throughout the country like the smaller k’hillos in Guri, Oni, Poti, Sormi, Batumi, Senaki, Akhaltsikhe and others where there were few families. We sent them religious items and s’farim and bachurim went to them on Yomim Tovim and served as chazanim or ran s’darim.

“Our center is in the capitol in a building adjacent to the Parliament and in the old, historic shul which has been used for over a hundred years.

WITH LEADERS OF THE COUNTRY

Rabbi Mikhelashvili has forged strong ties with highly placed people in government. The government of Georgia accords great respect to the Jewish people. Two of its ministers are Jewish, the Minister of Defense, David Kezerashvili and the Minister of

Reintegration (formerly known as the Minister of Conflict Issues), Temuri Yakobashvili.

On more than one occasion, the President of Georgia surprised Rabbi Mikhelashvili with his knowledge of Jewish history and he has demonstrated enormous respect for its leaders. One time, when he visited Rabbi Mikhelashvili’s home and saw the Rebbe’s picture, he bowed deeply and said that he is a holy leader and that he had heard much about the Rebbe.

“I place a big emphasis on Chanuka and I work to ensure that not a single Jew will miss out on lighting the menorah; it makes no difference what their daily connection to Judaism is. We saw how the Rebbe emphasized *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle) and this is because the Chanuka lights have the power to ignite hidden Jewish sparks.

“We have a public menorah lighting ceremony and we bring the media to cover the event. One year, they called me from the office of the previous Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania and said that he wanted to see me. That was the sixth night of Chanuka and I took a silver menorah, candles, dreidels and some baked goods that my wife Shlagit Chaya prepared.

“The prime minister welcomed me and I told him about the meaning of the holiday. Then he dropped the ‘bomb.’ He said, ‘I want to tell you something, which is why I invited you here. According to the Jewish religion I am a Jew because my mother is Jewish.’

“I was dumbfounded. After I had recovered somewhat from the shock I suggested that he light the menorah and he did so. I saw clearly how things explained in Chassidus and in the Rebbe’s sichos about the special power that Chanuka has to ignite hidden sparks, were happening before my



Rabbi Mikhalashvili with a delegation from the IDF on a visit to the Jewish cemetery of Tbilisi

very eyes.

“The prime minister was very moved and I decided to go all the way and invite him to the menorah lighting ceremony at the big shul in Tbilisi along with the current president, his good friend, who was a sure winner in the elections for president that were going to take place two weeks later. He was so emotional that even when his secretary informed him that he had a scheduling conflict for that time, he told her to juggle things because he wanted to attend.

“Sure enough, a few hours before Shabbos, he arrived at the shul accompanied by the current president, Michael Saakashvili who was elected two weeks later. All the media were there and he lit the menorah with great emotion and the current president called upon the Jews of the country to rebuild Georgia.

“This is when my ties with government figures began and it continues till this very day with a president who seems to be the president most favorably disposed towards Jews and Israel in the world today. The current president attends our major events. Three weeks before he was re-elected as president, on Chanuka 5768, he skipped several events in order to attend the menorah lighting in my home which is near his house.

“He once told me that the Rebbe is a holy man and he greatly admires him. I gave him a small T’hillim and a dollar from the Rebbe as a segula for success in his job and in his important trips and meetings. I know that he takes special care of them.

“Whenever I am invited to events, even non-Jewish ones; when he enters the room he comes right over to me even though there are

other important people present. There’s no question that his admiration has a trickledown effect to other government officials and the Georgian people as a whole.

“Businessmen and Israeli tourists who spend time in Georgia are delighted by the admiration and respect they receive from the locals who hear that they are Jewish.

“Another friend of Chabad’s work in Georgia is Temuri Yakobashvili, Minister of Reintegration who is responsible for the separatist regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. I met him nearly twenty years ago when he led a delegation of students who visited Israel under the auspices of the Jewish Agency.

“That was in 1990. One day, I got a phone call and on the line was Itzik Moshe of the Jewish Agency who told me that an international convention of students was taking

HOW A DOLLAR FROM THE REBBE PREVENTED AN INTERMARRIAGE

You can sit with Rabbi Mikhalashvili all night and hear miracle stories, stories of hashgacha pratis, about his work, and about kiruvim he got from the Rebbe. We asked him to pick one story, something special. After thinking a bit he chose a moving story that connects the beginning of his shlichus work in Queens in 5747-8 with the work he is doing today.

“One of the special people I worked with back in Queens was Isro-Yisrael Mikhalashvili, one of the leaders and founders of the community. One day he called me and said that his brother Menasheh, who was the gabbai of the main shul in Tbilisi, had come to visit him and he wanted me to take them to meet the Rebbe on Sunday for ‘dollars.’

“Naturally, I was happy to oblige and when we arrived, I introduced them to the Rebbe. The Rebbe looked at the two men with obvious pleasure and asked the guest from Georgia about the community there. He told the Rebbe that the k’hilla operated a Talmud Torah in the afternoon, after the children finished public school.

“At the end of their conversation, the Rebbe gave a dollar for him and another dollar for the children of the Talmud Torah. When Menasheh left, he was shaking with emotion. He said he felt he had been born anew.

“Menasheh returned to Tbilisi under the spell of his encounter with the Rebbe. He invited the entire community and told them about his meeting with the Rebbe and about the dollar he received for the talmidim. He gave the dollar to his grandson, Yaakov, his daughter’s son who was a sweet only child, aged six.

“Years went by and the child grew up. He was appointed to high level government jobs in the Georgian government and he was even appointed as the general manager of the local TV station. I did not know him, nor did I know of his background though I did know his parents because they were members of the community.

“Three years ago I got a phone call from his parents who urgently wanted to meet with me. They were very upset and crying. They told me that their

only child had met a non-Jewish girl at work and they were planning on marrying.

“I calmed them down and asked them for his phone number. They didn’t believe he would be willing to listen to me but when I called him he was polite and within a few hours he was sitting in my office. I spoke to him openly about the move he was about to make and gave him a Jewish historical perspective and spoke about preserving the Jewish spark.

“I asked him whether he wanted non-Jewish children. He admitted that since he had decided to marry her, he felt uneasy and was confused. I asked him to tell me about a Jewish experience that he remembered in order to try and arouse his Jewish identity and feelings. It didn’t him long before he told me about his grandfather who was a gabbai in the shul and with whom he was very close, and about the dollar he had received from the biggest Jewish tzaddik the Jews had, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, a dollar he had kept all these years.

“He described how excited his grandfather was by his meeting with the Rebbe and this was a strong memory he had from when he was a little boy. He didn’t understand why I turned pale.

“I had had no idea that he was the grandson of the man who had met the Rebbe eighteen years earlier. Now it was my turn to surprise him and tell him that I had been with his grandfather when he met the Rebbe and I

hadn’t realized that Menasheh was his grandfather.

“Look how, from Heaven, they connected us now,’ I said to him. ‘The dollar was given to you because the Rebbe knew that the day would come when you would want to marry a gentile woman and that I, who had been there, would have to be the one to remind you about this.’

“He was extremely moved and with tears in his eyes he said he wanted some time alone to think. A little while later he told me that he had decided he would only marry a Jewish woman. A year later he married a Jewish woman and I officiated at his wedding. A few months ago we celebrated the bris of his son.”

***‘The dollar was
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The president on a visit to the shliach's house, receiving a shofar as a gift



The president on a visit to the shul on Chanuka

place in Israel and he wanted us to take care of the group from Georgia. I agreed, and for three days we took them on tours of Yerushalayim and holy sites. We spoke to the Jewish students as much as we could and taught them Jewish concepts.

"Temuri headed the group and he was particularly moved by the visit to the point that he wanted to have a Shabbos experience. We hosted the entire group at my parents' house in Kfar Chabad. Before we parted, I decided to ask him whether, if I gave him t'fillin, he would promise to use them every day. I was pleasantly

surprised when he said, yes. Since then, he puts on t'fillin every morning and he davens Shacharis from a T'hillas Hashem Siddur."

NESHAMOS

In recent years, Israel and Georgia have become staunch allies. Israel arms sales to Georgia over the last decade have been estimated at some \$300 million to \$500 million. They have included spy drones, infantry weapons and electronics for artillery systems. Israel has



A Kosher Certificate for water and lemonade



Knesset member Cohen of Yahadus HaTorah on a visit to Tbilisi

reportedly helped upgrade Soviet-designed Su-25 ground attack jets assembled in Georgia. And former Israeli generals serve as advisers to the Georgian military.

But Israel pulled its trainers out quickly and vowed to restrict itself to selling Georgia defensive weapons after hostilities broke out this summer in order to placate Russia and gain Russia's cooperation in sanctions against Iran.

In addition, many Israeli businessmen and tourists have visited Georgia. Israeli businessmen have invested a lot in real estate, agriculture and industrial projects in Georgia.

"Because of the great influx of Israelis we plan on opening a yeshiva so that the talmidim of the yeshiva will be able to reach out to Israeli tourists and businessmen at various vacation spots. We also plan on opening a kosher restaurant for tourists.

"It's interesting that for many of them, it is here in Georgia that they are exposed to Judaism as they see the beauty of Judaism and the respect the local people have for Jews. Judaism becomes a source of pride for them.

"A few months ago, someone came to Georgia on behalf of a large investment company in order to run a certain project. When he arrived at my house for Shabbos, he was visibly moved and he called me by name. I didn't recognize him at first but when he told me his story, I remembered him. He had learned in Tomchei T'mimim and was even in 770, which is where he remembered me from. Unfortunately, since then he went spiritually downhill.

"At our Shabbos meals we have the custom that each person tells of a Jewish experience he had in his life and this is greatly inspirational. When he heard everybody else, it

affected him very much. He told about the Rebbe and how he had the privilege of seeing the Rebbe during the blowing of the shofar. He made a commitment to be more observant and to learn the Rebbe's teachings as well as Chitas.

"There are hundreds of these stories. There is a wealthy man here who is well-known in Yerushalayim. He gives a lot of money to Litvishe yeshivos in Eretz Yisroel. He began investing in Georgia and every time he comes to Tbilisi we sit down to learn together, sometimes a daf Gemara and sometimes a sicha. He's someone who knows what it means to learn and it was here that he was first exposed to the teachings of the Rebbe. He enjoys the Rebbe's approach and today he loves to learn sichos.

"One time I told him, 'You think you came to Georgia in order to invest money, but you really came for another purpose...' He began writing to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh.

"We have a custom that during the meal Rosh HaShana night each person makes a good resolution for the coming year. Two years ago, I suggested to my guests that they make a good resolution or tell a story that had to do with the Jewish neshama.

"A kibbutznik who had come as a tourist got up and told the following story. 'My grandmother is a religious woman who went through a lot of hardships in her life. When I told her that I was going to Georgia, she asked me to find a kosher place to eat on Rosh HaShana. I gave her my word because I saw that it was important to her.

"Tonight, I looked for a shul in Tbilisi. I arrived for the davening and waited for someone to invite me. I didn't know a soul, of course, but this was the best I could do in order to keep my word to my

grandmother.

"The davening was over and the shul emptied out. Within a few minutes there I was, standing alone and thinking about how upset my grandmother would be if I told her that I wasn't able to do as I promised her.

"Just as I was about to head back to my hotel, the last man in shul came over to me and wished me a good, sweet year and introduced himself as the rav of the community. He invited me to his home and here I am with you, fulfilling my grandmother's request.'

"This young man finished his story choked with emotion and he committed to putting on t'fillin every day."

BECAUSE OF THE WAR

Rabbi Mikhelashvili concluded the interview with the hope that the recent war between Georgia and Russia will lead to a stronger Jewish life in Georgia.

"We are presently cleaning up the Jewish cemeteries in Georgia. After careful searching we found that many gravestones are in bad shape and we formed a committee to improve the situation."

Another project that is imminent is establishing a large scale food supply system to provide kosher products to food stores located in places where Israeli tourists and Jews often visit.

"We are about to set up a slaughtering house so we can supply meat and chicken to the Jews of Georgia and neighboring countries. In the wake of the war we will intensify our efforts in the other Jewish outreach efforts we make all year round such as bar mitzvas, weddings, and deepening Jewish identity for as many Georgian Jewish families as possible by providing suitable Jewish educational opportunities.

I WANT TO LEARN IN LUBAVITCH

A story of life in Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch, presented in honor of 15 Elul, the day that Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim was founded by the Rebbe Rashab.

The following story was told by R' Avrohom Zaltzman a"h in a letter he wrote to his grandson, R' Yosef Yitzchak Zaltzman, the Rebbe's shliach to Russian Jewry in Toronto.

When I was a young boy of eleven and a half, a *meshulach* came to my parents from Lubavitch. I was one of eleven children but for some reason the meshulach took a liking to me. He suggested to my father that he send me with him to Lubavitch. The yeshiva had a good reputation and my father was happy at the opportunity to send his son to a place of Torah and fear of Heaven.

A short while later I was learning in the famous chadarim of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim Lubavitch. My Rebbe was R' Leibel of Vitker and he was called "der Vitker melamed."

I slept in the beis midrash that was next to the cemetery. The first night, the older boys, aged fourteen, warned me that I'd better get to sleep quickly because at two in the morning the dead

woke from their graves, dressed in white, and they looked in the windows to see which talmidim weren't sleeping. You can imagine how well I slept that night (if I slept at all).

My young age and being away from home made it hard for me to concentrate. I found it hard to learn diligently and I occasionally joined in mischief making. At a certain point the Rebbe Rayatz said about me, "He needs his mother."

One of the times I engaged in mischief was Simchas Torah. Together with some other boys we gave a goat mashke to drink. When the goat became drunk and pranced about, we were quite amused.

At some point, the mashgiach, R' Chatshe Himmelstein, decided to expel me along with five other young boys. None of us were bar mitzva yet.

We went to the mashgiach a few times and pleaded with him to take us back but to no avail. He refused to answer us and just sat

there silently.

Having no choice, we decided to try our luck with his wife. She was good-natured and we thought she could influence her husband. We went to her a few times and she promised to speak to him on our behalf, but that didn't help.

We held a meeting and we thought of trying to see the Rebbe Rashab himself. We just didn't know how to get an audience with him. They certainly wouldn't let us have a yechidus. The man who stood in front of the yechidus room was tough; his name was R' Nachman the *meshares*. There was no way he would let us in.

Then I came up with an idea. Another man worked in the Rebbe's house whose name was Mendel the *meshares*. He was a man with a good heart and wasn't so strict. My idea was to go to the Rebbe during supper time.

I knew that between the kitchen and the dining room, where the Rebbe Rashab ate supper, was a long hall. I decided to wait until I saw Mendel go to the kitchen to bring the food to serve and to take that opportunity to quickly go to the dining room where the Rebbe was sitting.

That's what I did, and boruch Hashem, I was successful. You can imagine how uncomfortable I felt going to the Rebbe without permission and at a time when nobody else saw him.

The room was long and I had to walk a long way until I reached the Rebbe. With trembling knees I walked in the direction of the table and I began to cry. I was too scared to talk.

The Rebbe was eating a dairy meal. Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah sat on the side of the table and Rabbi Shlomo Leib Eliazarov, called the “rav of Chevron” (because that is what he was at that time) sat on the side but not quite next to the table and spoke to the Rebbe.

When the Rebbe noticed me he gently asked, “Why are you crying, little boy?”

I answered through my tears that the mashgiach R’ Chatshe Himmelstein had expelled me.

The Rebbe asked, “Why did he expel you?”

I said, “I don’t know.”

The Rebbe laughed and said, “Nu, so go learn in Radin.”

I cried harder and said, “No! I want to learn in Lubavitch!”

The Rebbe continued to laugh and said, “Maybe go and learn in Slobodka.”

The Rebbe continued to enumerate yeshivos that were well-known in the yeshiva world of that time, but I continued to cry and repeatedly said that I wanted to learn in Lubavitch!

Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah interjected, “Yingele, I will speak with Chatshe Himmelstein.”

I was overjoyed to hear that the Rebbetzin would take my side but I wanted to hear what the Rebbe had to say. I said I wanted to hear from the Rebbe.

The Rebbe said to me, “I will

speak to my son about it.”

When the Rebbe saw that I continued to stand there, he asked, “What else?”

I said, “I have friends who were also expelled and they want to come back and learn in yeshiva.”

The Rebbe asked, “Why didn’t they come in?”

I answered, “Because they are ashamed to do so.”

The Rebbe concluded the conversation by saying, “I will speak about them too.”

The next day they called all the boys together and informed us that we had been accepted back in yeshiva. We did not go back to the chadarim but were sent to the attic to the melamed, Mendel Liadier.

R’ Avrohom Zaltzman once told this story at a farbrengen, when he shared memories of his childhood and his learning in Lubavitch. R’ Mendel Futerfas, the unforgettable mashpia, was at this farbrengen. His comments “made” the farbrengen.

When R’ Avrohom finished his story, R’ Mendel asked him, “Please tell me, why do you think the Rebbe accepted you back in yeshiva?”

“My broken heart. That’s the point of the story. It was because I wanted so badly to learn in Lubavitch to the point of tears. That’s how a Chassid ought to want Chassidus, until his heart breaks!”

R’ Mendel disagreed with his



Avrohom Zaltzman a”h

The room was long and I had to walk a long way until I reached the Rebbe. With trembling knees I walked in the direction of the table and I began to cry. I was too scared to talk.

conclusion.

“No. You’re mistaken. Your broken heart is not what got you back into the yeshiva. The Rebbe accepted you back because of one reason – because of your concern for your friends. That’s the reason he took you back, because of your Ahavas Yisroel!”

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