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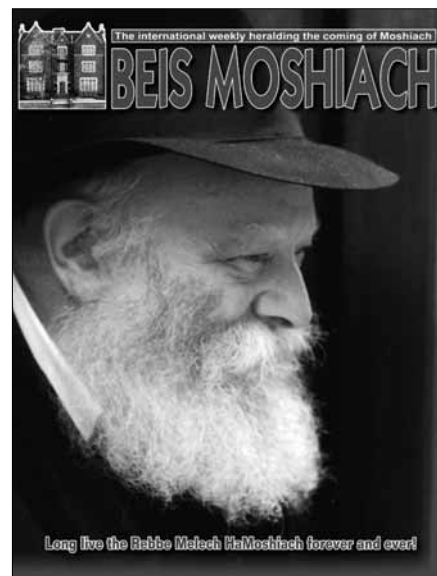
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FROM PERSONAL EXILE TO GENERAL REDEMPTION

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

This week's Torah reading, *Nitzavim*, is always read the Shabbos before Rosh HaShana. Further, this week's Torah reading contains a clear, unmistakable reference to Redemption. We may therefore ask what is the connection between *Nitzavim*, Rosh HaShana and Redemption.

The Torah reading begins as follows: "You are standing today, all of you, before the Lord your G-d – your leaders, your tribal chiefs, your elders, your officers, every Israelite man, your children, your women, and the converts in your camp – even your wood-cutters and water drawers." These verses follow the severe rebuke recorded in last week's portion. There, the Torah predicts that the Jewish people will not observe the mitzvos, thus violating the covenant with G-d. As a result, they will experience devastation, hardship and suffering. Nevertheless, the Torah assures them that, after the torments of exile, they will be redeemed. They stand together before G-d this day, to enter into the covenant. Part of the covenant is the assurance that, just as the prediction of exile will be fulfilled, so will the promise that the Jewish people will return and repossess the land. This is the concept of *Nitzavim*, or standing.

Shortly thereafter, there is an explicit promise of Redemption. The Torah declares that: "Then the Lord your G-d will return your captivity and have mercy upon you. He will return and gather you from among all the nations where the Lord your G-d has scattered you. [Even] if your dispersed are at the ends of the heavens, the Lord your G-d will gather you up from there, and from there He will take you. And the Lord your G-d will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess

it. And He will do you good and multiply you over your fathers."

The wording of this passage teaches a deep lesson about the nature of exile and Redemption. In Hebrew, there are several verb forms, or conjugations. Here, we would expect the causative conjugation, since G-d is causing the Jewish people to return. Indeed, that is the sense in which the verses are translated. However, the Torah does not use the causative conjugation; rather, it uses the simple active conjugation. The literal meaning of the verse is that, "The Lord your G-d will return with your captivity."

Obviously, the causative reading is the primary reading: G-d will cause the exiles to return. Nevertheless, grammatically speaking, the verse says that G-d Himself will return with the captives of the Jewish people. Therefore the Sages explain that in this verse G-d refers to His own exile, as it were. G-d and the Jewish people are so closely attached, they cannot be separated; it is as if G-d went into exile with the Jewish people. When the Jewish people return to G-d, when they do *t'shuva*, G-d will end their banishment. Their exile will end and G-d Himself – the Divine Presence – will return with them.

What is the relationship between this passage, that "The Lord your G-d will return with your captivity," and the beginning of the Torah reading, "You are standing today, all of you, before the Lord your G-d"? On the simplest level, it means that so long as one Jew remains in exile, the ingathering of all the Jewish exiles – the Redemption – is not complete. On a deeper level, it also means that so long as one Jew remains in exile, so does the Divine

Nitzavim is always read the Shabbos before Rosh HaShana. The Torah reading contains a promise of Redemption. The conjunction of the verb allows the verse to be read two ways: one, G-d caused the exiles to return, or two, G-d will return from exile with them. The connection between the promise of Redemption and the beginning of the Torah reading is that so long as one Jew remains in exile, so does the Divine Presence. Ending exile and gathering all the Jews is a difficult task. Each individual, whatever his or her status, has a personal exile which is part of and contributes to the general exile. All Jews must be redeemed to take the Divine Presence out of exile. The practical lesson is that all Jews must go out of exile for the Redemption to be true and complete. We are responsible not only for our personal redemption, but that of the entire Jewish people.

Presence.

Taking each and every Jew out of exile is a laborious and strenuous task, for there is both the general exile of the Jewish people as a whole, and the particular exile of the individual. Any distancing from Torah and mitzvos, any moment that passes without an awareness that G-dliness permeates all of

existence, is a type of exile. The exodus from this personal, inner exile requires us to truly perceive G-dliness, and act upon that perception. Thus our Sages tell us that the day of the gathering of the exiles is so great and so difficult that it seems as though G-d Himself must take each individual out of exile with His own Hand.

An individual's personal exile and redemption includes, and is part of, the general exile and redemption of the Jewish people as a whole. The verse itself alludes to this when it says, "The Lord your G-d will return with your captivity." The phrase, "The Lord your G-d" is in the singular, meaning that, aside from the collective relationship of the Jewish people with G-d, each individual has a particular relationship, whether he is a leader or a drawer of water.

When G-d seizes the hand of the first Jew and takes him out of exile, then automatically, the Divine Presence itself should also go out of exile. At that moment, the complete and final Redemption should occur. But redemption does not occur when the first Jew leaves exile. When G-d actually "seizes the hand" and takes a particular Jew out of exile, only the particular and condensed radiation of the Divine Presence connected with that individual is redeemed. Thus other Jews, and the Divine Presence itself, remain in exile. Only the Redemption of **all** Jews redeems the Divine Presence itself.

How does all this apply practically, on a personal level? It's possible to think that going

out of one's own exile is sufficient. All that is required is individual redemption – raising my level of Torah study, my observance of mitzvos, etc. But the opposite is true: when a Jew is redeemed from his own personal "exile," he must see what other Jews need for their own "exodus." **All** Jews must go out of

When there is Ahavas Yisroel – love for a fellow Jew – between the leaders and the drawers of water, and all levels and types in between, then the Jewish people, “all of you,” will be inscribed for a sweet, good year. Indeed, it will be the year of Redemption.

exile for the Redemption to be true and complete. Therefore, whatever depends on him, he must do.

Acting on this awareness counteracts a mistaken notion one might have. A person who has gone out of “exile” may look condescendingly on others. After all, the “other” is in the lowest possible state, still in a state of exile, distant from G-dliness, Torah and mitzvos. “He,” on the other hand, is superior – “ready” for the Redemption, well-learned, observant. How is it possible that his redemption is connected with and dependent upon the **other**?

The answer connects the beginning of the Torah portion to Redemption. For *Nitzavim* begins, “You are standing today, **all of you**, before the Lord your G-d.” This emphasizes that the covenant requires **every** Jew. Only when the Jewish people stand together – “**all of you**” – before G-d is the covenant

established. True, there is a hierarchy, an order – from the leaders down through the water-drawers. This hierarchy has its importance. But first there must be an ingathering – the Redemption – of **all** the Jewish people, in a general sense. This must include not only the leaders, but the wood-choppers and water-drawers.

This brings us to the connection of *Nitzavim* and Redemption with Rosh HaShana.

For the verse says, “You are standing, **today**, all of you, before the Lord your G-d.” This “today,” is Rosh HaShana, which is why the portion of *Nitzavim* is always read the Shabbos before Rosh HaShana. When the Jewish people are gathered today, on Rosh HaShana, “all of you,” together, then G-d assures us He will judge us favorably. When there is *Ahavas Yisroel* – love for a fellow Jew – between the leaders and the drawers of water, and all levels and types in between, then the Jewish people, “all of you,” will be inscribed for a sweet, good year. Indeed, it will be the year of Redemption, when “the Lord your G-d will return your captivity,” and “the Lord your G-d will return **with** your captivity,” for G-d Himself will take every Jew out of exile, one by one, gathering us together, all of us, today.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 9, pp. 175-183)

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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.

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A GREAT TUMULT IN THE CHAMBER OF MOSHIACH

By Menachem Ziegelboim

*R' Yekil said the words but the Baal Shem Tov did not repeat them. R' Yekil said it again but once again, the Baal Shem Tov did not say them. * R' Yekil looked at the tzaddik and was shaken. He saw that the tzaddik's face was red with sweat running in rivulets. He was bent over until his head was near his knees, almost falling.*

PART I

That year was etched into the memories of the holy disciples of the Baal Shem, for a terrible decree was almost promulgated against the Jewish people. It was only at the last moment, with superhuman effort, that the Baal Shem Tov was able to annul the decree.

Before Yom Kippur, the Baal Shem Tov felt that there was a weighty accusation against the Jewish people as a result of which the Oral Torah would depart from them. The clouds of accusation

grew thicker and obliterated the light which was the merit of the tzaddik.

The Baal Shem Tov was tremendously worried and distressed all day and towards evening, when all the people of Mezhibuzh came to him in order to receive his blessing, as was the annual custom, the Baal Shem Tov blessed one or two but could not continue.

The sun had nearly set and the Baal Shem Tov went to his beis midrash. As he always did, he spoke words of inspiration to the

congregation but unlike his usual manner, he spoke in terms that terrified his disciples. He fell before the holy Ark and cried out, "Vei, They want to take the Torah away from us! How can we exist among the nations even half a day?"

PART II

If anyone thought that thanks to their t'fillos, the judgment would be sweetened, they were wrong. After Kol Nidrei the Baal Shem Tov said that the accusation was stronger.

The next day, the Baal Shem Tov urged the chazanim to hurry up so they could daven N'ila while still daytime. This t'filla was one that the Baal Shem Tov himself led. He hoped that with this exalted prayer, said before the gates of Heaven were locked, he would be able to break the barriers and pierce the skies.

Moments before he began N'ila, the Baal Shem Tov once again spoke words of repentance, which pierced the heart. His voice was broken and sometimes he cried, putting his head down, while groaning and sobbing

bitterly. This is how he began N'ila, not in his usual enthusiastic manner. He finished the silent Amida and began the repetition.

The Baal Shem Tov's custom was not to daven from a Machzor on the Yomim Nora'im. Rav Yekil of Mezhibuzh would stand near the tzaddik and read out loud from the Machzor and he would repeat it after him word by word.

If it seemed that the Baal Shem Tov was making more efforts in his davening than usual, it turned out that more was yet to come. When the tzaddik reached the words "open the gate for us" (or the words "open the gates of Heaven"), R' Yekil said the words but the Baal Shem Tov did not repeat them. R' Yekil said it again but once again, the Baal Shem Tov did not say them.

R' Yekil looked at the tzaddik

and was shaken. He saw that the tzaddik's face was red with sweat running in rivulets. He was bent over until his head was near his knees, almost falling. Some of the holy brotherhood and other people present feared that the tzaddik would fall and they supported him.

A tense silence filled the beis midrash. The disciples looked at one another, knowing that something was afoot, but had no idea what to do. They had never seen their master looking like this, so suffused with emotion that it was frightening to behold.

Some went over to R' Zev (Wolf) Kitzis and asked what was going on. He went over to his Rebbe and looked at his holy face and after a few seconds he motioned not to touch him. He realized that the tzaddik was not

in this world but was walking the pathways of Heaven on a mission known only to him. The Rebbe's face was horrifying with bulging eyes.

This scene lasted two long hours. As people waited in trepidation, some recited T'hillim in their attempt at helping the Baal Shem Tov.

Then, all at once, the Baal Shem Tov straightened up and quickly finished the chazan's repetition. In a loud and celebratory voice, as though nothing had just happened, he proclaimed, "L'shana ha'baa b'Yerushalayim!"

PART III

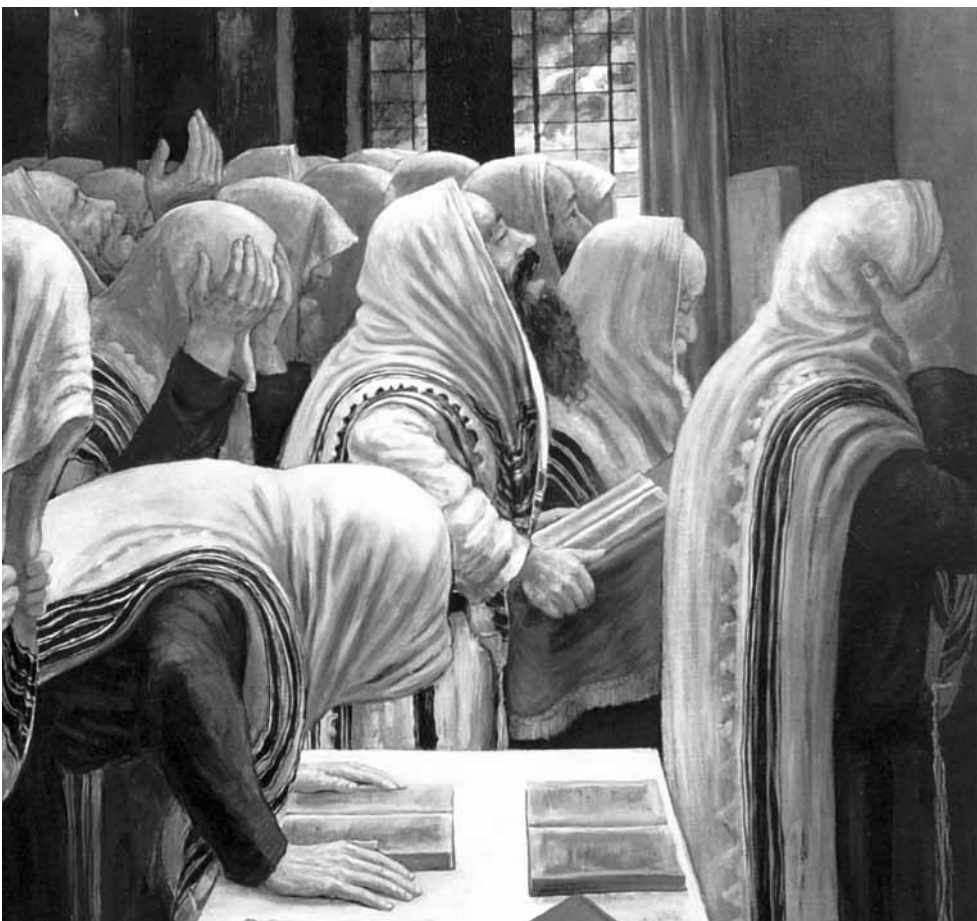
As in previous years, the people came on Motzaei Yom Kippur to the beis midrash in order to see the Baal Shem Tov and join in the holiday meal.

Some of the disciples dared to ask what had happened with the Heavenly accusation on the Oral Torah. The Baal Shem Tov's face clouded over, and after a pause he said:

"As I stood there at N'ila I went from world to world and in every place I accomplished what I had to accomplish. During chazaras ha'shatz too I went from world to world until I arrived at one chamber and there was only one gate left before I would reach the Holy One blessed be He Himself. In that chamber I found millions of prayers that Jews had prayed for fifty years but which had not risen upwards. Since we davened with such concentration on Yom Kippur, all these prayers ascended and illuminated like the light of dawn.

"I said to those prayers: Why didn't you rise further?

"They said: This is what we were told, to wait for you to lead us.



“I went with a great tumult to Moshiach’s chamber and when Moshiach saw me he said: Do not scream...”

“I said: Come with me.

“I saw that the gate was ajar and it was a very large gate, like the entire world. When I began to walk with all the prayers, an angel came and locked the door and put a lock on the gate. It was a big lock like the entire town of

Mezhibuzh. I tried to open the lock with my prayers and my spiritual unifications but could not.

“I rushed to my master and teacher, Achiya HaShiloni and pleaded with him: Under usual circumstances I would not want to force my way in because if the gate is locked that means I don’t belong there. However, Yisroel are in great distress and they do not let me enter.

“My master and teacher said: I will go with you and if I can help you open the lock, I will open it.

“My master and teacher went with me but he too, with his powers, was unable to open the gate and he sadly said to me: What else can I do for you?

“I began to complain: How

can you leave me in this distressful time?

“He said: I don’t know what to do for you but you and I should go to the chamber of Moshiach. Perhaps salvation will come from there.

“I went with a great tumult to Moshiach’s chamber and when Moshiach saw me he said: Do not scream.

“He gave me two letters of a holy name. I went to the gate and thank G-d, I opened the lock and opened the gate and I brought in all the prayers. Thanks to the great simcha in heavens over the ascendancy of all the prayers, the accusation was quieted and I did not have to make a case. The decree was annulled.”

(Shivchei ha’Baal Shem Tov)

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THE DIVINE MESSAGE OF THE NEW YEAR

Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim

What is unique about Chabad teachings about Rosh HaShana? What is the practical approach to Rosh HaShana for the working man? What does malchus mean for us today * A fascinating interview with renowned kabbalist and physicist, Rabbi Yitzchok Ginsburgh.

Chabad Chassidus emphasizes the idea that Rosh HaShana is a day of Kabbalas HaMalchus, accepting Hashem's kingship, and not only a day of judgment. What in fact, did Chabad teachings innovate in this matter?

The idea of Kabbalas HaMalchus and Hamshachos HaMalchus (drawing down Hashem's kingship) on Rosh HaShana is not the innovation of Chabad Chassidus. It is brought at length in the writings of the Ari z"l, as well as the work *Yesod V'Shoresh HaAvoda* (by a Lithuanian kabbalist). In that book, throughout the section dealing with Rosh HaShana and the Ten Days of Repentance, he focuses on the aspect of establishing Hashem as king over the world. He even draws a connection between the coronation of Hashem as king and the coronation of a king of flesh and

blood, who will lead the Jewish people.

Additionally, simply perusing the text of the prayers makes it abundantly clear that the main topic of the day is the coronation of Hashem in the world, with the main addition to the liturgy being the verses of Malchiyos, Zichronos and Shofaros.

However, Chabad Chassidus offers a deeper insight into the inner essential core of the matter. Chassidus draws a distinction between the self-nullification to the Will of the King and the self-nullification to the King himself. Nullifying one's will to the will of the King is the avoda of the rest of the days of the year. This is accomplished by the fulfillment of the commandments with *kabbalas ol*, because this is the Will of the King. The avoda on Rosh HaShana

is to nullify oneself to the Master of the Will, through an inner and essential bond, and devotion to the Essence of the Divine, Master of the Will, in a manner that transcends all rational thought.

As the Rebbe Rashab said: If throughout the year, I need to understand with the vessels of Chochma, Bina and Daas; on Rosh HaShana the avoda is above reason and understanding, to operate on a level of faith alone. One can say that is the defining innovation of Chabad Chassidus.

We are discussing lofty Chassidic concepts. If possible, we need to break it down to "small change" for the ordinary Jew who bears the daily burden of providing for his family. What does the above say to him, in practical terms?

In Chassidus it is explained that as the name indicates, this day is the "head" of the year, not just the "beginning" of the year. Just as the head incorporates and controls all the other organs, so too Rosh HaShana includes within it and sets the tone for all the days of the year. The way a person establishes himself on this day is the way it will be for him throughout the year. (There is a difference between Rosh HaShana and Shabbos B'Reishis, about which it also says that the way a person establishes himself on that day is the way it will go for him all year, but this is not the place for that discussion). The head is elevated; it

includes all the specifics; it is the brain and it guides and directs the avoda of the whole year.

The manner in which a person bonds and nullifies himself to the Master of the Will on Rosh HaShana, is how he will merit to perform the mitzvos in the most perfect manner on a daily basis. On this day, we need to connect to He who commanded us the mitzvos.

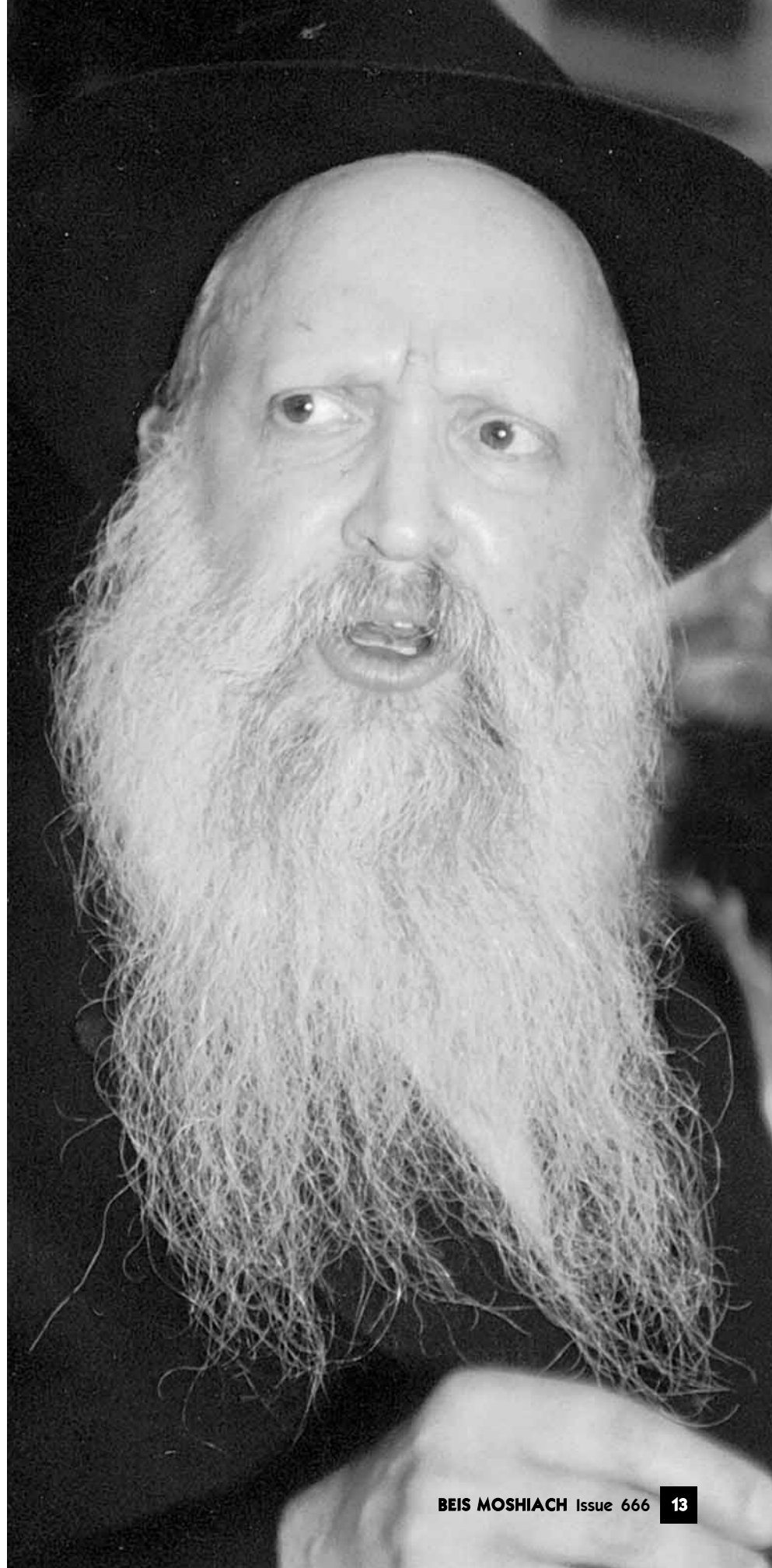
One of the sins cited as the cause for the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash is that “they did not recite a blessing on the Torah first.” Chassidus explains that the sin involved is that although they did study Torah, they didn’t keep in mind the Giver of the Torah, G-d himself. Conversely, according to the degree of connection to the Divine Essence on Rosh HaShana, so will one experience the manifestations thereof throughout the year, in a way of “action is the primary thing.”

How is a Jew actually supposed to “connect” on Rosh HaShana?

As mentioned, Rosh HaShana is about bonding to the Master of the Will and nullifying oneself to Him. In simpler terms; this is along the lines of *naaseh v’nishma*, “we will do and we will listen.” We must first have a deep commitment to doing whatever He will tell us, before we even know what the actual commandment is about. This is called *hiskashrus*, bonding, to the Master of the Will, out of a total sense of self-nullification. Only after this step do we have the self-nullification to the Will - when a Jew fulfills the mitzvos as commanded.

The above ideas would seem to apply equally to every Rosh HaShana since creation. Despite this, is there some unique element to each generation, or even each individual year?

The answer to that is yes, absolutely. During the Rosh HaShana prayers we recite “Avinu Malkeinu.” We first mention Our Father. Similarly, after each set of



t'kios, we say "if like sons, if like servants." These represent two distinct levels of self-nullification; that of a servant to his master and that of a son to his father. There is a third and higher level, explicated in the classic *Hemshech* 5666, of a "son who becomes a servant," which is higher than the level of an ordinary son, as we shall see.

The simplest level is that of a servant to his master who does what he is told out of a sense of obligation to fulfill his master's instructions. A higher level is that of a son to his father. A son derives from the essence of his father, and as such, his bond is much deeper and more innate. A son has the instinctual ability to sense his father's deepest and truest desires. He can sense when a thing is proper and suited to his father's wishes, even when those wishes aren't expressed verbally. The bottom line is a father and son are of one essence, with one drawn from the other. Therefore, a son who senses his father's disposition can plan and do things that express the father's true desire, even without being told explicitly.

This is a wondrous level in avoda, but there is a higher level of a "son who becomes a servant." This level has all the qualities of a son, but it has the additional element of the kabbalas ol that a servant has towards his master. This is a son who does not simply act upon his own sense (which could have some degree of self-interest mixed in) of his father's desire and inclination, but rather he is **particular** to act out of kabbalas ol. (This is one of the main topics covered in *Hemshech* 5666. The Rebbe Rashab once said about himself regarding his relationship to his father, the Rebbe Maharash, that it was in a way of a "son who becomes a servant.")

This is the ultimate goal of our service on Rosh HaShana; "If like sons, if like servants," to integrate



the deep and subtle obliteration of self as only a son can experience, along with the total acceptance of the yoke that a servant has, towards Hashem.

This is the idea of coronation, as it says regarding the commandment to appoint a king over the Jewish people, "Place, shall you place upon yourself, a king." The Zohar explains; "place" - up Above, "shall you place" - down below. Above, we coronate Hashem as King over us, and below, we are commanded to appoint a king of flesh and blood to lead us. We cannot appoint a human

king down below, unless we first coronate Hashem. The avoda of Rosh HaShana is effecting coronation Above and down here.

To wit: One can have the self-nullification of a servant, one can attain a state of self-nullification of a son, but we need to reach the level of a "son who becomes a servant." This is the ultimate objective.

Although this has always been the case, the Alter Rebbe raises a question in *Igeres HaKodesh* on the verse, "Constantly, the eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are upon it from the beginning of the year until the

end of the year.” Why is it that the Divine effluence that is drawn down at the beginning of the year doesn’t last indefinitely? Why only until the end of the year, if the verse says explicitly that His eyes are upon the earth constantly? The Alter Rebbe explains that each year the spiritual light of the previous year returns to its source, and then a brand new and loftier light is drawn down, the likes of which was never in this world since its inception.

This new light is an aspect of Torah Chadasha, a “new Torah,” as it says, “a new Torah will go forth from Me.” Each year we draw down a new light from the Essence of the Ein Sof through total self-nullification to the Master of the Will. Why is it necessary to repeat this each year? Why isn’t it enough that we are subservient to the Divine Will in our observance of the mitzvos, after having nullified ourselves to Master of the Will one time? The reason is that each year we need a day that enables us to truly apprehend what it is that Hashem wants from us. A day that we can sense and understand the inner-essential desire and inclination of the King, as only a child can understand his father. Every year this repeats itself, because each year there are new things that have never existed previously, and as such, we need to renew and intensify our self-nullification to the Master of the Will.

Jews like ourselves have the capacity to sense and know what is the new Divine Will that descends to us in the coming year?!

This is the avoda of Rosh HaShana; to know what is the new Will from Hashem. Since the Baal Shem Tov, we know that the conduit through whom we can hear the latest desires from Above is the Tzaddik and Rebbe of the generation. He is the one that reveals to us the Divine Will, and we must follow his instructions. The

The avoda on Rosh HaShana is to nullify oneself to the Master of the Will, through an inner and essential bond, and devotion to the Essence of the Divine, Master of the Will, in a manner that transcends all rational thought.

Rebbe is the one who senses the inclinations of our Father in Heaven, and through him we receive directives and the ability to perceive Hashem’s true desires, in the here and now.

Today, when we have no sichos and farbrengens, and no new explicit instructions, how can we know what new spiritual energy needs to be drawn down into the world in accordance with the Divine Will?

That is the unique quality of Rosh HaShana, a day in which it is possible and necessary to discern, to merit to perceive, out of absolute inner self-nullification to the Master of the Will, the innermost desire of Hashem, even when it is not stated explicitly.

Actually, we have an endless supply of sichos in writing and on tape, but in order to move forward, we need to renew the self-nullification, and the day to do this is Rosh HaShana. What we learned from the sichos of the Rebbe in past years is not sufficient, because with the advent of the new year there comes a new light along with new desires from Above, and we as sons of Hashem need to sense what He wants, and to act accordingly. Just as we know that Torah Chadasha doesn’t mean an entirely new Torah unconnected to the Torah given to us by Moshe, chas v’shalom, but rather a deeper dimension of that Torah which was never before revealed in the world, so too with the Torah of the Rebbe.

This is the significance of saying Avinu Malkeinu, namely, that we need to try to be suitable “vessels” in a manner of a “son who becomes a servant.” We start with Avinu, that we should merit to be like a son who is a part of his father, and who can sense the heart and inner desire of his father, and from this proceed to the level of servant, who serves with absolute kabbalas ol.

The ambition to reach such an exalted level where one can “perceive” and “receive” the Divine Will is something that everyone can strive for?

The Rebbe spoke about this on Hoshana Raba 5752, saying that everybody must strive to reach levels that in previous generations were “exclusive territory.” It’s true that in all previous generations they said Avinu Malkeinu, which included the aforementioned explanation, but in our generation we have to strive with greater measure, especially in our current situation when “our desire is to see our king,” and we want to know and discern the inclinations of the Master of the Will.

Since the year 5753, Chabad Chassidim have the custom of adding before t’kios the acceptance of the kingship of the Rebbe. Is this the same idea as accepting the kingship of Hashem? And what does it mean to us that we renew the coronation of the Rebbe?

As mentioned before in the name of the Zohar, there is a direct link between the kingship of Hashem and the kingship of the Rebbe, the Jewish king. We have been

given the power from Above to accept the kingship of the Rebbe as Melech HaMoshiach. The Rebbe is the shofar of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, we need to hear in the sound of the shofar a renewal of the kingship, and renewed kingship comes along with new decrees, as is known that every king at the beginning of his rule imposes new decrees.

“The kingdom of earth corresponds to the kingdom of Heaven.” As we know, amongst the nations of the world it is accepted practice that a new king begins his reign by instituting a good decree for the benefit of the nation as well as of the individual. That is the practice of human kings. Similarly, Hashem, whom we crown anew,

regarding Eretz Yisroel from the Rebbe, in the context of Shleimus Ha’Aretz as the key to the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. The Rebbe always came out with a new thing, a new campaign, a new instruction regarding what needs to be done in connection with Eretz Yisroel. The bulk of the new instructions from the Rebbe were specifically in connection with Eretz Yisroel and Shleimus Ha’Aretz. Today, we have a problem in that we don’t hear new things from the Rebbe in these matters, and therefore we have an even bigger problem that people don’t know how to respond to current events on a daily basis.

Terrible things are happening,

That is the unique quality of Rosh HaShana, a day in which it is possible and necessary to discern, to merit to perceive, out of absolute inner self-nullification to the Master of the Will, the innermost desire of Hashem, even when it is not stated explicitly.

begins his reign with a positive decree for the Jewish nation as it says regarding Rosh HaShana, “Eat delights and drink sweets,” “the joy of Hashem is your fortress.” Similarly, about Sukkos it says, “Didan Natzach” (we have emerged victorious), that Hashem should decree for us good things.

You mentioned previously the verse about Hashem’s eyes being constantly upon the land, which refers particularly to Eretz Yisroel. Does this have any particular significance as we go from a Shmita year to a year of Hakhel?

Shmita and Hakhel certainly have particular significance in Eretz Yisroel. We heard many innovations

and now more than ever we need true Daas Torah, capable of knowing what is the inner desire of our Father and King Above, and our father and king below. We as Chassidim need to refine our senses, to want, to strive and truly pray, specifically on Rosh HaShana, that we be able to hear what needs to be done today; what is the inner desire, the inclination of the Will of the Master of the Will.

When we analyze the current situation in Eretz Yisroel, there seems to be chaos and anarchy, with leaders behaving in ways that run counter to rational thought and even to normal survival instincts. What is actually going on

here?

The Rebbe always teaches to look, think and talk positively, even when things don’t appear to be going in a positive direction. Along with his protests against the negative, the Rebbe always sees the good that will come out of every situation. No doubt, the collapse of the established institutions contains something positive; good will emerge from this breakdown. Even now, we need to begin building on the ruins; to build something new, healthy, everlasting and Messianic.

What exactly are we supposed to build?

This is a big topic onto itself, but clearly today it is easier than ever to bring the teachings of Chassidus and Moshiach to every place and every type of Jew. Today, we see many signs of awakening as never before. Countless members of all different communities are searching for a new way, and we only need to reach them.

What should we say to these people?

People are seeking Emes, truth, and that is what you need to tell them. The search for truth is going on at all level, whether with every individual on a personal level or as relates to global issues and events. Moshiach is the ultimate truth of all truths.

Today, everything is false. Everything is smoke and mirrors perpetuated for personal interest. That is why we are seeing the public’s total disappointment with their leaders, and all the institutions are collapsing. On the other hand, science and technology are advancing rapidly. Why do I mention the sciences? Because people who are looking for the truth want us to help resolve the seeming contradictions between Torah and science. People want truth and Moshiach is truth. As our sages say, “There is no Emes aside from Torah,” and the inner dimension of Torah is the core of the truth.

THE SECRETS OF THE LETTERS AND THE SOULS

By Yisroel Yehuda

Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

Rabbi Boruch Menachem Mendel Kumer learned reading twice: once as child, and again when he opened a thin booklet that the Rebbe printed, and discovered the solution to problems many children encounter when learning to read. In honor of the new academic year, we conducted a fascinating interview with someone for whom the world of children is his own.
* Part 1 of 2.

You can find R. Mendel Kumer almost every morning in the “Gan Kippot” kindergarten in Tzfas, where he teaches reading with love and affection before a group of delightful little children. He is not only a “melamed,” he also serves as the supervisor over a team of nine highly trained instructors who teach reading in fifteen kindergartens throughout the Holy City of Tzfas. About a year ago, he completed a project that lasted for

over a decade. This project established the foundations for solving reading problems among children, and is based upon a booklet about reading instruction that the Rebbe himself printed!

Rabbi Kumer is a chassidic Jew, smiling and happy. But he is also very serious, knowledgeable, and totally connected to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach.

His life’s journey began with his birth in the Canadian city of

Kitchener, Ontario. His home conveyed a genuine warmth towards Judaism. His father and grandfather worked on the Chevra Kadisha. His grandfather would even take him to shul on Shabbos and Yom Tov, and Mendel always loved to hear the niggunim and the davening. His mother would occasionally send him to Jewish children’s rallies in order to give him a little taste of Yiddishkeit. Thus, his life progressed peacefully and with tranquility.

Then, when he was sixteen years old, tragedy struck with the untimely passing of his mother. As a result, young Mendel grew up quickly, and began a search for greater meaning in his life. His turning point came at the Western Wall in Yerushalayim. “After the passing of my mother, of blessed memory, the idea arose that our family should move to Eretz Yisroel. As a result, my father, of blessed memory, and I traveled to tour the Holy Land.

“We arrived in Yerushalayim on ‘Yom Yerushalayim’ 5730, and we made our way to the Western Wall. At the entrance to the Western Wall courtyard, there stood the famous t’fillin stand, and we responded to

the request and rolled up our sleeves. My father placed the t'fillin upon his arm and his head. Suddenly, I saw that he was crying... He stood and cried like a child for several minutes, and I thought to myself: Why is he crying? What does he feel what I don't feel? I realized at that moment that there was a gap between me and my father. My father possessed some feeling that was lacking within me – what was it?"

This question continued to gnaw away at his heart and his

mind even after he returned to Canada. Around this time, he began his university studies while also starting to daven and keep Shabbos.

R. Mendel is a very unique Jew. In spite of the fact that his knowledge in Judaism was rather scanty at the time, nevertheless, he began his involvement in outreach activities. "This wasn't 'mivtzaim', rather it was a type of activity that stemmed from simple logic," he recalled. "If you know about something good, get your friend to take part as well!" He started

bringing Jewish students for Shabbos in order for them to see what Shabbos was all about.

Not long afterwards, he began studying with the local rabbi, and about six months later, one of his acquaintances convinced him to go and learn in yeshiva.

His first encounter with Chabad took place shortly before he entered yeshiva. At this same time, he traveled to London, Ontario, for his cousin's bar-mitzvah. Since Mendel was already keeping Shabbos, he couldn't stay in his uncle's house and he opted instead



to spend Shabbos at the home of Professor Yitzchak Block, a Lubavitcher chassid from Toronto who was also involved in outreach activities bringing Jewish students closer to their roots. Professor Block invited the young man to participate in the Shabbos program for youth that would take place on Shabbos Parshas VaYechi in New York. Mendel, who was thirsting for Yiddishkait, was pleased by the invitation and decided to go.

On that Friday, the city of Kitchener was hit by a powerful winter storm. Heavy fog and snow covered the streets. The authorities warned local residents not to leave their homes due to low visibility. There wasn't a living soul outside.

But this didn't interest Mendel in the slightest. "I'd caught the bug," he smiled, "and I decided that nothing would stop me from going for Shabbos. I invited a friend to come with me, and we set out together on our adventurous journey." His miracle was that all other citizens of Kitchener followed instructions and didn't go out into the street. "You could only see in front of you a few meters! The fog was unbearably thick. The slippery snow threatened to make the car veer off the road at any moment. We eventually made our way out of the stormy weather successfully, and after ten hours of road travel, we arrived in the New York area."

Rabbi Kumer has never forgotten that Shabbos. The meals, the singing, the discussions – everything was simply wonderful. As the Shabbos began, Rabbi Zalman Posner of Nashville turned to the students and said, "The purpose of this Shabbos is not to make you religious, but in order that each of you will move one step forward in your Judaism." This suited the students, who were captivated by the rabbanim and mashpiim who participated in the

"I thought to myself: Why is he crying? What does he feel what I don't feel? I realized at that moment that there was a gap between me and my father. My father possessed some feeling that was lacking within me – what was it?"

Shabbos program. "I don't remember much since then," Rabbi Kumer recalled. "I only remember one small episode from the farbrengen with Professor Block. He said to us, 'Anyone who doesn't have the *Alef of Emes* (Truth) is a dead duck.' I sat directly across from him and whispered to myself, 'That's right, what he says is absolutely right.' It took me forty years to understand the sentence, but even then I already knew that it was correct. When we left after Shabbos, I simply cried..."

Despite that wonderful Shabbos, Rabbi Kumer was not yet a "vessel" to enter Chabad. "I felt that I had to acquaint myself with the world, even without chassidus," he said almost apologetically, and so in 5732, he went to study at the Toronto branch of Yeshivas "Ner Yisroel." His father also moved to live in Toronto, and R. Mendel sat and toiled in the study of Torah.

During this time period, R.

Mendel continued to go out on mitzvaim. "It's my nature," he admitted. He participated in the mitzvah campaigns on Shabbos candle lighting, Chanukah, kashrus, Pesach, and more. Again, it's not that it was "mitzvaim," rather it was just something that he loved and saw that it was right and proper to do. "Everyone said that I will eventually be a Chabadnik. Everyone – except me..."

Yet, some delicate and hidden bond seemed to connect him to Lubavitch. Since his arrival at the yeshiva, he began making periodic visits to 770. "These weren't trips to the Rebbe," he explained. "I simply felt that something in this place attracted me. I would come to daven and participate in farbrengens. I was even there a couple of times for Simchas Torah, but my connection was with the physical place."

How was your connection with the Rebbe?

"For me, the Rebbe was a great Jewish scholar, the greatest rosh yeshiva in the world. I had a feeling of tremendous appreciation towards a great man, a giant – but not as a chassid towards his rebbe. I didn't even try to go in for 'yechidus'. It took me time to realize that the 'nekuda' of 770 – the place that attracted me so much – is the Rebbe himself. To a certain extent, I felt that the Rebbe would 'take away' my independence. I had recently set out on a new path, the path of Judaism, and I apparently felt that entering Chabad meant losing my freedom and personal choice on how to progress in my Yiddishkait."

R. Mendel diligently continued with his studies for four years, and then got married. He learned for another five years in yeshiva, and then decided that the time had come to emigrate to Eretz Yisroel.

The next great turning point came when he began his preparations to travel to Eretz Yisroel. “Someone told me that in Eretz Yisroel, there can be no ‘grey area.’ You have to define yourself as a Chabadnik or not,” and R. Mendel decided to take a stand.

As a first step, Rabbi Kumer specifically decided to check things out among the “misnagdim.” He traveled to the yeshiva in Lakewood, New Jersey, and celebrated the Shavuot holiday there. Lakewood didn’t particularly satisfy him, and so immediately after Shavuot, he found himself once again in 770. This was during the summer, and 770 was more empty than full, as is customary at that time of year. R. Mendel took close notice of the T’mimim sitting and studying, and then proceeded to write a letter to the Rebbe. In his letter, he asked a number of questions, starting with “Should we travel to Eretz Yisroel via the Jewish Agency?” He also had several questions on Avodas Hashem, e.g., “How does one deal with the yetzer ha’ra? Is “mivtzaim” considered a form of *bittul Torah*? Where should we live in Eretz Yisroel? Where should I study? How long shall we live there?”

He submitted the letter to the Rebbe’s secretariat and waited for an answer. A day or two passed, and the Rebbe still had not replied to the letter. A week passed, and there was still no answer. R. Mendel started becoming a little impatient, but there was still nothing.

One day, R. Mendel went to the “Ess Un Bentch” restaurant near 770 to get something to eat. As he sat near one of the tables, his ears picked up an interesting conversation. A skinny Jew sitting at the opposite table was chatting with his friend, a brawny fellow,



and the latter was shocked to hear him speaking with praise about the Communist system. R. Mendel listened attentively to the interesting defense and how the friend bluntly cut him off and said, “You’re lying to me.” The thin man tried again to explain from a different angle, but he encountered the same response – “Stop lying.” Despite all passionate explanations that “Communism is good,” the big guy replied, “You’re lying to my face!”

This was enough for R. Mendel! He saw in this strange conversation an answer from the Rebbe: “Stop lying to me...” He returned to 770, and to his surprise, one of the bachurim approached him, carrying a portion of one of the Rebbe’s letters. “Look what the Rebbe says about ‘mivtzaim’ and *bittul Torah*,” the bachur said. For a Jew like R. Mendel, this was already more than enough. He left 770 again, made his way to the nearest Judaica

store, and...bought a gartel.

With his new gartel and bittul towards his Rebbe, he sat and wrote another letter to the Rebbe, in which he naturally mentioned his Chabad decision. After a few days, he received the Rebbe’s holy reply of a bracha for his journey. Regarding his stay in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe wrote, “They will decide on Eretz HaKodesh in any event when they consider the situation there.”

R. Mendel notes that he grasped years later that in the Rebbe’s answer, he removed all worry about joining Lubavitch. “The Rebbe granted me full independence, as it were, to decide and act as I wished, and this nullified the concern over ‘taking away my independence.’”

Rabbi Kumer came to Eretz Yisroel as a chassid in every respect. “My wife arrived in Eretz Yisroel after me. When I greeted her at the airport, I told her for the first time about the new path I had

chosen – “We are Lubavitchers.” She looked at me with a puzzled expression, but she accepted my decision. At the suggestion of Rabbi Yankel Gluckowski of the Chabad shul in Toronto, who was very involved in my process of t’shuva, we made our way to Kfar Chabad and spent our first two months in Eretz Yisroel at the local new immigrant absorption center. Then, at the suggestion of his son, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Gluckowski, now rav of the Chabad community in Rechovot, we proceeded to Tzfas as full-fledged chassidim.”

THE LETTERS’ TEST

In Tishrei 5740, a year after their arrival in the Holy City of Tzfas, R. Mendel was offered a position to replace R. Yaakov HaKohen Steinberger (today with the IDF rabbinate) as a melamed in the kindergartens. R. Mendel accepted the offer, and after they offered him the job on a permanent basis, he wrote about it to the Rebbe and received a positive reply on the matter during Chol HaMoed Sukkos. Thus, R. Mendel began his thrilling journey into the pure and untainted world of the tender young flocks.

R. Mendel, who never learned in “cheider” during his youth, decided to pay a visit to several Talmud Torahs in order to learn “how to be a melamed.” During his tour, R. Mendel encountered various styles and approaches on study and education. There were those who wielded an iron fist with their students, while others used competition as a means to spur the children on to make progress in their studies, and some rewarded the students with prizes, etc. R. Mendel was particularly pleased with the approach of a certain melamed from “Eitz Chaim” in Yerushalayim.

“I stood at the entrance of a class of small children and waited together with them for the melamed to arrive. He came in a few minutes later – a real happy type – carrying a white placard under his arm. As he entered, he picked it up and called out joyfully, ‘Children! Today, we’re going to learn Alef, everyone say ‘Hello, Alef!’ and the children happily said after him. He then passed by each child and said, ‘Everyone give a kiss to Alef!’ You could clearly see how in just a few minutes, the melamed succeeded in instilling a sense of love within the children towards this thing called Alef, even though a few minutes earlier, they neither knew nor recognized what Alef was. I learned from this melamed the first and most important principle in teaching reading to children – getting them to love reading and to see it as something friendly.”

In the coming years, R. Mendel dove headfirst into the world of reading. He taught for eight years at the Kiryat Chabad kindergarten, and then afterwards he was transferred to a Chabad kindergarten on Tzfat’s South Side, where he taught for another twelve years.

The work in the “Darom” (as Tzfat’s southern neighborhoods are called) forced him to go out from the regular learning framework and to seek various other methods. R. Mendel was appointed to teach ninety children in four different kindergartens!

Every morning, it was his responsibility to achieve progress in reading for an enormous number of children! He had no choice except to look for different ways to meet the objective. For example, in contrast to what one might think, R. Mendel tried to teach in each kindergarten with a group framework. While it’s true that the

follow-up and individual progress comes with greater difficulty this way, nevertheless, R. Mendel claims that specifically in this fashion, greater progress is achieved.

“Every child is naturally stronger in certain areas and weaker in others. A child who has greater weaknesses in the area of reading or lacks self-confidence, if he is pushed up against the wall in a small group on a one-to-one basis, he will become more pressured and will make no progress. When they all learn together, and the weaker child thinks that neither the melamed nor his classmates know about his weakness, this provides him with the space he needs to grasp the learning material or to get his confidence up. Thus, after a brief period of time, he too begins to make progress and participates more.

“Let’s take for example a child with a lack of self-confidence who is afraid to call out the letters with everyone because he’s concerned about failing. As time passes, and

“Professor Block. said to us, ‘Anyone who doesn’t have the Alef of Emes (Truth) is a dead duck.’ It took me forty years to understand the sentence, but even then I already knew that it was correct.



he discovers that what he thinks is the right answer usually is, he gets up the courage to start participating as well, and stops being afraid about failure.”

Another of his innovations is “The Letters’ Test.” R. Mendel teaches the children the letter Alef and then tests them with a page that concentrates on letter shape recognition. In this manner, he immediately picks up on those disabilities not related to learning,

e.g., vision problems, dyslexia, and the like.

R. Mendel has developed his teaching methodology over the years. While he teaches according to the traditional “masores” approach, he still makes every effort to adapt the exercises to the children in the most complete way possible. This creates a situation whereby he arranges educational games and flash cards for each group of children, in accordance

with their ability to understand. Thus, when he teaches another type of children, he brings out special worksheets suitable for them as well.

One person who recognized even then the value of these unique sheets was the director of the “cheider,” Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Levkivker, who served as R. Mendel’s “mashpia” on matters of education. “Every page that you put out,” Rabbi Levkivker instructed him, “put in a file.” This led to a virtual treasure house of teaching approaches, more precious than gold – educational games, worksheets, and more.

With most children, R. Mendel delved deeply into reading. “He developed this on the level of an art,” testified one of the members of the staff of melamdin. Thus, when you speak with R. Mendel about reading, you get a clear picture of letters, vowels, and everything in between. Not just the small table of letters on the first page of the siddur, but complete and basic information that grants special abilities to experts on how to transmit reading skills to young children.”

(IY”H to be continued)



MY FIRST TISHREI WITH THE REBBE

Nosson Avrohom interviewed four mashpiim who described their first Tishrei with the Rebbe. All agree that today's chassid still needs to go to the Rebbe, and all the hashpaos are there for the taking.



THE AWE- INSPIRING T'KIOS

Rabbi Dovid Offen, Mashpia, Beitar Ilit

That year, Rosh HaShana was on Shabbos and the Rebbe had the aliya of Maftir, as usual. As he read what Eli originally thought of Chana, he burst into tears. The Rebbe cried for a long time and it was heartbreaking. At the farbrengen held afterwards, the Rebbe asked why Chana cried and why Eli thought she was inebriated.

I had the privilege of spending many Tishreis in 770. Those who were there know that this month gives you the kochos for the entire year.

My first trip to the Rebbe was actually for Purim and I remained in 770 for five years. It was 5734/1974 and I was a yeshiva bachur in Kfar Chabad. As we prepared for our trip, the atmosphere was charged with an excitement that grew day by day.

The hanhala of the yeshiva ran a Mivtza Limud of 100 pages of Gemara by heart and ten maamarim. Whoever learned that amount was given half the price of a ticket.

The mashpia in the yeshiva, R' Mendel Futerfas, devoted all his farbrengens to how wonderful it is to travel to the Rebbe. No wonder then, that when we arrived at 770 we were swept away by merely seeing the Rebbe! At the end of the



first Maariv that we davened with the Rebbe, the Rebbe turned around and looked at us, surveying each bachur separately. We felt that the Rebbe's eyes pierced through to our neshama.

I will mention a few moving events that I experienced. Tishrei 5735 was my first Tishrei with the Rebbe.

I think there is nothing more special than Rosh HaShana with the Rebbe. Whatever we learn in maamarim and sichos, "hamshachas ha'malchus," "histalkus ha'malchus," we saw with the Rebbe on Rosh HaShana. We witnessed the awe-inspiring scene of the blowing of the t'kios, seeing the Rebbe throw his tallis over himself and the pidyonos – we could see the Rebbe davening for Klal Yisroel.

I remember that in Tishrei 5736 something frightening happened. That year, Rosh HaShana was on Shabbos and the Rebbe had the aliya of Maftir, as usual. As he read what Eli originally thought of Chana, he burst into tears. The Rebbe cried for a long time and it was heartbreaking. At the farbrengen held afterwards, the Rebbe asked why Chana cried and why Eli thought she was inebriated.

The Rebbe explained that Eli knew that Rosh HaShana is the time of hamshachas ha'malchus and so he maintained it wasn't the time to ask for children. Chana replied that her request for a child was not a selfish one but for Hashem. As we know, she gave birth to Shmuel HaNavi who played a key role in carrying out the ultimate intent of creation with the anointing of Dovid HaMelech, thus bringing down to the world the inyan of Moshiach.

The Rebbe added that we see Jews crying during the Rosh HaShana davening when they get to the part about requests for parnasa etc. Why do they cry on Rosh HaShana for these trivialities when this is the lofty time of kabbalas ha'malchus? The Rebbe explained this along similar lines. When a Jew asks for gashmius, it is intended to complete the Divine plan to make a dira ba'tachtonim.

The person does not necessarily feel this but the neshama knows it. The verse says, "Hungry, thirsty too, their souls cloaked within them."

Sometimes, a person is hungry or thirsty and it's a hunger and thirst that the G-dly soul arouses in order to raise up a G-dly spark in the food or drink.

This astounding sicha at the Rosh HaShana farbrengen which followed the heartbreaking tears during Maftir, complemented one another. At the time, I thought about a fascinating sicha said by the Rebbe Rayatz that on Rosh HaShana there is the avoda of the t'kios and the avoda of Maftir, each one separately. Explained the Rebbe Rayatz, the Rebbe's Maftir is more important than the t'kios. The t'kios are avoda "from below, upward," while Maftir is the Word of the Living G-d from the throat of the Rebbe.

Another interesting thing I remember happened in 5748. During the t'kios I remember clearly that when the Rebbe said the verse, "*Al ya'ashkuni zeidim*," the Rebbe repeated the word "al" and I think that the second time he said "bal."

Later on I remembered a story about the Rebbe Rayatz that on Rosh HaShana 1926 during the t'kios he gave a bitter sigh and from the depths of his heart he exclaimed, "*Arov avdecha l'tov – ai gevald – al ya'ashkuni zeidim*." People sensed that something was behind this. After all the terrible things that took place that year, the Chassidim felt that this is what prompted that prayer before the t'kios.

In Shevat 5748, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka a"h passed away and then I thought (and this is my personal hergesh) that maybe that is why the Rebbe repeated the word on Rosh HaShana.

I remember another special moment during the bracha of the T'mimim right before Yom Kippur. It was terribly crowded in the small zal and when the Rebbe came in we felt on the most essential level the idea of "bless us, our father, all together as one." The Rebbe blessed

us that we should have a successful year and he said that the T'mimim are like the tribe of Levi who are separated from the rest. He mentioned this several times in the blessing. "You have a special shlichus, as the legion of the king, whose primary function is 'teach Your judgments to Yaakov.'" These words and brachos are not only deeply engraved but are still felt by every Tamim who was there.

We got to know and internalize the fact that the Rebbe sees us from one end of the world to the other. Every Tamim who saw the Rebbe felt what I am telling you now. When the Rebbe looked at us we felt ashamed, we hid, we fled. However, we always wanted to see the Rebbe so we would watch him in such a way that we wouldn't be directly in front of him.

The days of simcha of the month of Tishrei have a special place in my memories of those incredible days of light. I remember Sukkos 5736 when, from the first day of Sukkos until the last, it rained nonstop. There wasn't a day that we sat in the sukka without it raining, except for the first meal of the Yom Tov. One of the men wrote to the Rebbe, saying in Shulchan Aruch it says that if it rains on Sukkos it's like a servant pouring a cup for his master and the master throwing it in his face, and he raised the possibility that the rain wasn't a good sign for the Jewish people.

The Rebbe's response was interesting. He negated the idea that it was a bad sign and said that since they ate the first meal without rain, they fulfilled the mitzva and from this we see that Hashem did not throw the mitzva away.

Why did it rain? The Rebbe said that since Hashem wanted the farbrengens of Simchas Beis HaShoeiva to be with *yeshivas ha'daas* (calmness of mind) they took place indoors, and I remember

that this is what we did. The farbrengens took place in 770. R' Mendel Futerfas sat in the small zal and when he wanted to say l'chaim he would put his head and most of his body out the window into the sukka and drink.

On Simchas Torah 5748 Rashag (the Rebbe's brother-in-law) did not feel well and the Rebbe danced alone. It was an unusual sight to see how the Rebbe energized the enormous crowd with the Torah in his arms. What was unusual that time was after the seventh hakafa the Rebbe went back to his place near the bima and he danced there too. It was like he did another hakafa in addition to the two hakafos that he always did.

We didn't know what was going on but the crowd was very excited. In general, Simchas Torah 5748 was unusually b'simcha.

I could sit an entire night and talk about the giluyim and reminisce about those majestic and moving moments that inspired you to t'shuvah and gave you such simcha that were a part of all the Tishreis over the years. The young generation must know that p'nimius, nothing changed. The Rebbe spoke many times that when you go to 770 you go to learn together and daven together. The truth is that today too, everybody ought to visualize how the Rebbe is with him, davening and learning with him, and consider every moment precious and perceive the Rebbe actually standing right there before his very eyes. That is the truth.

If everybody visualized the Rebbe standing next to him, and as the Rebbe himself said on many occasions, "In another little while the Rebbe, my father-in-law, will enter and ask: What did you do? How did you prepare?" This will serve as a tremendous motivation and he will use his time properly to hasten the coming of Moshiach.

A DREAM COME TRUE

Rabbi Avrohom Maizlich, Mashpia, Kfar Chabad

I have kept that passport even though I have thrown out the four passports I used afterwards, because on the visa is written, “Visa to Rabbi Schneersohn of Lubavitch.” I remember the feeling we who were flying felt when we saw that stamp. Even the goy at the consulate understood that Chassidim flew to the Rebbe and they have no desire to be in America for other reasons.

When I was a bachur in yeshiva, traveling to the Rebbe was only a dream and this was for two reasons. First, it was enormously expensive. Traveling by ship was a lot cheaper but it took a terribly long time. In addition to the financial issue, the Defense Ministry was very tough about allowing bachurim out. In order to get a visa you had to go through an arduous process. Even after they gave the visa to you there was a lengthy procedural nightmare until you got a visa from the American consulate.

That was the case until 5716. That year is when the first shluchim to Eretz Yisroel arrived and they made a big fuss about the need to fly to the Rebbe. They described what it was like to be with the Rebbe, about the giluyim, the light,



and they urged everyone to go and not to be satisfied merely with the information that came from Beis Chayeinu.

The first one to go was Rabbi Meir Friedman of Kfar Chabad. Before Tishrei 5717/1956 he took

big loans and flew to the Rebbe. In 5720 the Chassidim decided to charter an El-Al flight for Chassidim-only which would lower the cost of a ticket. Later, this flight was referred to as “the first charter.”

Things moved along but there were problems too, to the point that it sometimes looked as though the charter would not work out. Back then there was a Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union and the American consulate refused to give visas to people of Russian nationality which prevented many Chassidim from traveling. It was only after much pressure was exerted that the embassy decided to give a collective visa to whoever would be on this chartered plane.

I have kept that passport even though I have thrown out the four passports I used afterwards, because on the visa is written, “Visa to Rabbi Schneersohn of Lubavitch.” I remember the feeling we who were flying felt when we saw that stamp. Even the goy at the consulate understood that Chassidim flew to the Rebbe and they have no desire to be in America for other reasons.

I joined the charter when I was newly married and after I, and my friend, the mashpia R' Velvel Kesselman, did our army service, which is why we were given permission to leave the country.

It is hard to describe our inner feelings and outward enthusiasm about a plane full of Chassidim on their way to the Rebbe. It was like a dream come true. Many Chassidim came to say goodbye to us at the airport and there were lively circles of dancing Chassidim. They cried but were happy for us too.

Chassidim were moser nefesh to fly to the Rebbe. The flight cost 1400 liras and my monthly salary as a melamed was 300 liras. In other words, a ticket was equivalent to nearly half a year's salary. But we

thought only of the z'chus of being with the Rebbe.

The flight itself was an unforgettable experience. Picture dancing on the plane as the "Partisan," R' Zushe conducted the festivities with a bottle of mashke in hand. In the front of the plane sat the mashpiim and rabbanim including Rabbi Shmaryahu Sasonkin, Rabbi Chaim Shaul Brook, Rabbi Dovid Chanzin, Rabbi Avrohom Pariz and others.

During the flight I decided to sit near them and listen to their conversation. One of the points I remember is what R' Sasonkin said to his friends, "This is not the way

didn't seem feasible.

Once I picked up my luggage and cleared customs, I headed to the exit. Immediately upon opening the door I saw a crowd of Chassidim who had come to welcome us. There were hugs and kisses, tears and joy. R' Ben-Tzion Shemtov and some shluchim were there. I knew them from when they had come to Eretz Yisroel on shlichus in 5717. In the midst of the hubbub I felt someone pull me aside. It was Yudel Krinsky who said, "Avrohom – you were the lucky one."

Yudel went on to explain that in the morning, after Slichos, the

luggage. I turned down my relatives who had come to take me with them, because I wanted to be close to Beis Chayeinu and preferred staying there with my belongings. It was 9:00 and so I put on my tallis and the Rebbe came out for Krias Ha'Torah. I nearly fainted at the sight of the Rebbe. I said the bracha that you say when you see the Rebbe and stood rooted to my spot, gazing at the Rebbe in amazement as he had an aliya.

I remained in 770 until Mincha when the chazan finished the Shmoneh Esrei, looked at the Rebbe and began saying Kaddish, without saying Tachanun. Afterwards, I asked the chazan why he had not said Tachanun and he explained that it was on the Rebbe's instruction. Apparently, the arrival of guests from Eretz Yisroel was reason enough not to say Tachanun.

After the davening the gabbai announced that there would be a farbrengen to welcome the guests, in the zal upstairs. The farbrengen was very crowded. I stood almost in the front row, near the Rebbe, and I remember that sweat dripped into my eyes and I couldn't even raise my hand to wipe it away, there was such a crush.

The Rebbe began the farbrengen with the reason for the farbrengen. It was the eve of the third day of Slichos when the Rebbeim had the custom to say maamarim. They sang the niggun that is sung before a maamer is recited and the Rebbe said the maamer, "Lecha Omar Libi ..." The Rebbe cried a lot at this farbrengen. This was my first time in the Rebbe's presence and I was overwhelmed with emotion. Our personal comfort mattered not at all. Our only desire was to see the Rebbe and to follow every move he made.

I spent that night on a folding bed in the kitchen of Rabbi Avrohom Korf who was then newly

I asked the chazan why he had not said Tachanun and he explained that it was on the Rebbe's instruction. Apparently, the arrival of guests from Eretz Yisroel was reason enough not to say Tachanun.

to go to the Rebbe. We would travel to the Rebbe in roundabout ways and with much effort; on a flight you can't feel the preciousness and importance of traveling to the Rebbe."

For many hours they told personal stories and reminisced. One told of yechiduyos with the Rebbe Rayatz, another about his learning in Tomchei T'mimim, and a third about Chassidic personalities of old that he knew. These were fascinating conversations.

Due to strong winds, the plane had to land on an island near Canada and we arrived in New York on Monday. At first we hoped we would be able to say Slichos with the Rebbe, but as time passed and we still hadn't left the terminal, it

Rebbe had asked him to go to the secretaries' office. There he was told to go to the airport and to call the office from there. There were no cell phones back then. As soon as he called in from the airport and identified himself, the Rebbe immediately got on the line and asked whether we had arrived yet. He said no, and the Rebbe asked him to wait on the line and every few minutes he asked again. When Krinsky saw me come out he immediately told the Rebbe we had arrived and that the first person to come out was R' Avrohom Maizlich. The Rebbe responded with a happy, "a groiser yashar ko'ach!" I was thrilled that hearing my name made the Rebbe so happy.

We arrived at 770 with our



married. I knew him as one of the shluchim who went to Eretz Yisroel in 5716.

That gives you a bit of an idea of what my first day with the Rebbe was like.

SHLICHUS IN MONTREAL

Motzaei Isru Chag Sukkos I went on a special mission for the Rebbe that was a fitting continuation from the day I had first arrived. I met Rabbi Yisroel Leibov who asked me where my passport was. I said it was in my pocket and asked him why he wanted to know.

He said that in Lubavitch you don't ask questions but follow orders. He asked where I would be the next day after Mincha and I said

that a cousin wanted me to join him on a shopping trip in Manhattan.

He told me, "This isn't Eretz Yisroel. In every store there is a phone and you have to call the secretaries every half an hour." That's what I did. I went shopping and one of the times I called, he asked where I was and when I answered, he told me to hurry back to the office. I took the first train back and went straight to the secretariat.

When I entered Rabbi Chadakov's office, I was surprised to see, in addition to Rabbi Chadakov who was sitting at the head of the table, Rabbi Shneur Zalman Garelik, the rav of Kfar Chabad, R' Shloimke Maidenchek, who was head of the Vaad in Kfar Chabad, and Rabbi Leib Cohen.

Rabbi Chadakov said, "We are all present," and I realized they had waited for me. "The Rebbe asked me to call the four of you and to give you a mission to travel together to Montreal. Rabbi Garelik will be the dominant figure of the delegation when you meet with the Beis Din there; Rabbi Maidenchek will be the dominant figure when you meet with the mayor. Rabbi Leibel Cohen will be the representative of the girls' school in Kfar Chabad and Rabbi Maizlich will represent the school for boys in Kfar Chabad. May it be successful." Rabbi Chadakov gave us the passports and we left.

Since the entry visa to the United States was a collective one and was good for only one entry, they had taken our passports to

arrange for this trip. As we stood on the stairs at the entrance to 770, R' Leibel Groner asked us to wait. The four of us stood there not knowing why but in Lubavitch, so I was told, you don't ask - you follow orders.

Then the door opened and the Rebbe came out. We were very surprised. R' Avrohom Pariz stood there too and the Rebbe asked him in surprise, "Are you also one of those traveling?" He thought the Rebbe was referring to those who had traveled from Eretz Yisroel and he answered in the affirmative but the Rebbe smiled and waved his hand dismissively.

The Rebbe said, "As is known, the custom in Lubavitch is that on Motzaei Simchas Torah 'Yaakov went

respected askan, R' Garelik was a distinguished rabbi, R' Cohen was an educator, but I was a young man without experience! R' Groner thought a bit and said, "Probably because you gave the Rebbe nachas when you were the first off the charter flight to come out of the terminal. The Rebbe heard your name and he never remains in debt."

The shlichus to Montreal was very successful. The local papers covered our visit at length.

WHERE YOU STAND AND BEFORE WHOM YOU STAND

You can farbreng all night about

The Rebbe saw me standing with crutches. The Rebbe stopped, looked at me and gestured with his hand as though to say, "What's that? You don't need that." * I immediately threw away the crutches and from that moment on, I no longer needed them.

on his way' is announced. The verse continues, 'And angels of G-d met him,' and Rashi says they were actual angels. The Zohar says it refers to Hashem, He and the Sh'china. Since you are about to meet with Jews and non-Jews, Hashem will accompany you to the Jews; angels are enough for the non-Jews. May you have a good trip."

The Rebbe went back to his room and R' Groner urged us to hurry so we wouldn't miss our flight.

On the way to the airport, I asked R' Groner, who was the driver, why I had been included in the delegation. R' Shloimke was a

the giluyim and the great light in the Rebbe's presence but it is important to know that today there is no less; on the contrary. I remember that one of the gabbaim who would announce the farbrengens would add, "You should all know where you stand and before whom you stand." Those who want to feel the Rebbe have to make the preparations and know where they are traveling to.

In conclusion I want to tell an amazing personal story that I experienced in Tishrei 5742/1981. That month I was in the middle of the *Shloshim* for my father a"h and I went to his grave to ask

forgiveness for my going to the Rebbe without being sure that I would be able to lead the davening at every minyan.

On my way back from the cemetery, I was rushing and I broke my leg. I barely made it to my father-in-law who lived in Beis Yisroel and from there I traveled to the hospital where I was given a cast. They said there was a fracture and I had to stay in bed for ten days. That was a Tuesday, two days before the flight. I was beside myself. I called the travel agent, R' Yisroel Alperowitz and he was able to postpone my flight until Motzaei Shabbos.

The last thing I thought of doing was canceling my flight to the Rebbe and so on Motzaei Shabbos, in a cast and with crutches, I boarded the flight. Since I didn't want the Rebbe to see me with crutches, I stood in the second row near the path where the Rebbe walked through. At first I tried to put down my crutches as I walked into 770 but that was impossible. I couldn't stand on my broken foot and when I tried, it was extremely painful.

Once during Aseres Yemei T'shuva, I was standing in the second row near the path when the man standing in front of me suddenly moved and the Rebbe saw me standing with crutches. The Rebbe stopped, looked at me and gestured with his hand as though to say, "What's that? You don't need that."

I immediately threw away the crutches and from that moment on, I no longer needed them. My foot felt better and better and soon I was walking normally. One look from the Rebbe made all the difference.

We must always keep in mind that even now the Rebbe sees us and he can change the order of Creation. With this attitude, when we travel to the Rebbe, we come out full of chayus and Chassidishe enthusiasm.

OUR LONGING FOR THE REBBE LED US TO FORMULATE A SECRET PLAN

Rabbi Yeshavam Segal, Mashpia, Kfar Chabad

R' Kesselman demanded that hiskashrus to the Rebbe be expressed in iskafia, in davening at length, in meditating in davening, in Krias Shma al HaMitta, and paying special attention to every detail. However, the reason for all these demands was so we would be able to better connect to the Rebbe.

From the first day I started learning in the yeshiva in Pardes, I heard the mashpia, Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Kesselman talk excitedly about the need to connect to the Rebbe. The main point of all the farbrengens was the demand that the T'mimim be devoted to the Rebbe.

R' Kesselman demanded that hiskashrus to the Rebbe be expressed in iskafia, in davening at length, in meditating in davening, in Krias Shma al HaMitta, and paying special attention to every detail. However, the reason for all these



demands was so we would be able to better connect to the Rebbe

and so that all these activities would be the proper preparation for our trip to the Rebbe.

"Picture yourselves standing before the Rebbe looking filthy," he would say.

We always yearned to fly to the Rebbe. Every year we wanted to go so badly but the difficulties that stood in our way prevented us from going. A ticket cost a fortune and even those who managed to borrow money had to deal with all the red tape or getting a visa approved by the army.

One year, before Tishrei, we found out that a rabbi had been appointed to the Zim shipping line. We came up with a plan to contact him in order to get him to connect us with a shipping line abroad and we would get to New York (i.e. the Rebbe) as employees.

We constructed an elaborate plan how to reach that rabbi who lived in Chaifa and explain to him why he had to help us. Before we got to him, by way of spiritual preparation, we devoted three days to the Rebbe. In those days, a sicha about the avoda required in the month of Elul, which had been said in 5711, reached us in Eretz Yisroel. We printed it and over three days we went to dozens of yishuvim and towns in the Galil and spoke about the Rebbe and left copies of those amazing sichos.

In the end, our plan did not work out but it enables you to understand how much we dreamt of going to the Rebbe. We were preoccupied with this day and night.

In 5720, when I was still a bachur in yeshiva, a charter for Chabad Chassidim was announced. It was as clear as day to me that I was going to be on that flight. The price of a ticket

was high, a half a year's wages. That year I worked at different jobs. I took part in taking the census which was conducted that year by the Interior Ministry as well as other side jobs. Nevertheless, the amount of money I managed to save was nowhere close to what I needed.

My father, R' Moshe, who was a man of mesirus nefesh and a commander in Lechi, gave me a large sum of money and with the addition of loans I bought a ticket.

The day I found out that I was on the list of passengers, there was no happier man than me. (By the way, before I returned to Eretz Yisroel, I bought a tape recorder which was still a dream in Eretz Yisroel and I sold it and the money I made covered most of my loans).

The plane we flew on was called Britannia. It was the flagship of El-Al at that time. The other flights in those days were on smaller planes that had to make stops on the way to New York for refueling. Our plane had 100 seats and only needed to make one stop.

The flight, together with the great Chassidim, and the very fact that I was realizing my dream, was indescribably thrilling. Our stopover was in Paris. A large delegation of Chassidim, led by R' Nissan Nemenov, welcomed us. You could see the excitement on R' Nissan's face. "Chassidim are going to the Rebbe," he said emotionally, several times.

While they refueled the plane, they took us to a side room and they had police there for our protection. While we waited I put on t'fillin and the policemen thought they were communications devices and special spy equipment. One of the Chassidim who spoke French

explained what t'fillin are.

The pilot was helped to put on t'fillin and he also actively participated in the atmosphere of our farbrengens and dancing on the plane. Before we landed, they informed the control tower at Kennedy that Chabad Chassidim were on this flight and if they saw a plane shaking, they should know it's ours ...

On the way to New York, we made another stop in Canada and from there we arrived in New York on Monday morning. We were welcomed by many Chassidim when we exited the terminal.

This was the first flight to the Rebbe of this size and it was tremendously exciting. As I stood there in a daze, a tall Chassid took me by the elbow and asked my name. I told him my name and he asked or rather stated that I was going to be his guest for Tishrei. It was Moshe Dubinsky a"h and I lived with him that month. I was lucky compared to my friends because he lived opposite 770.

I cannot describe my emotions the first time I saw the Rebbe. I trembled and said the "SheHechyanu" blessing and was simply overcome.

That day, the Rebbe held a Kabbalas Panim for the guests and said the maamer, "Lecha amar libi." I'll never forget the tremendous crowding at that farbrengen as well as the Rebbe's terrifying tears. The Rebbe loudly said, "See how precious the body of a Jew is, that for his sake, Hashem poured forth so much Torah and mitzvos." These were very intense moments.

Throughout that month I wrote letters to my parents in which I described the atmosphere in 770. I felt the great bittul towards the Rebbe that even the

older Chassidim had.

Simchas Torah that year was special. The Rebbe taught the Chassidim the niggun, "Ata Vechartanu." At that farbrengen the Rebbe said that whoever committed to additional learning of Chassidus could come over and get mashke. There was a table the length of the room. The Rebbe stood at the table facing the Aron Kodesh and the Chassidim passed in a line, with each one saying his commitment and the Rebbe poured l'chaim. Behind the Rebbe sat the elder Chassidim. Suddenly the Rebbe turned around to them and apologized for having his back to them. "What can I do, the Aron Kodesh is on that side."

While the Rebbe distributed l'chaim, R' Sholom Morosov who was drunk, cried as he lay on the table and the Rebbe stood over him. From time to time the Rebbe stopped pouring and looked at him and spoke to him. I couldn't hear what was said because it was too noisy.

I made another trip for Tishrei 5734. I was already married and had children. The morning of Yom Kippur I stood next to the Rebbe's bima. R' Itche Noach Rivkin burst in and announced that a war had broken out in Eretz Yisroel. This was the Yom Kippur war.

The secretary went over to the Rebbe and reported to him. The Rebbe turned around but he did not look surprised by the news. He just nodded. Whoever stood near the Rebbe and saw his reaction realized that the Rebbe already knew about it and was in the middle of spiritual avoda to annul the terrible decree.

Three days later, the Rebbe held a farbrengen in honor of 13 Tishrei. During the farbrengen, the Rebbe asked why they should

be farbrenging while Jewish blood was being spilled. The Rebbe answered in the spirit of the baal ha'hilula, the Rebbe Maharash, who said, "I'chat'chilla aribber," that through the farbrengen all the terrible decrees would be nullified.

Since people felt terrible that the Arabs had managed to surprise us and they seemed to be winning, the Rebbe's message gave us hope and calmed us down.

I have a picture on my wall at home that reminds me of a

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special moment I experienced. It was Tishrei 5748 and R' Leibel Groner called me and another three people from Kfar Chabad, R' Velvel Kesselman, R' Abba Levin, and R' Shimon Bekerman, and told us that the Rebbe chose us to receive the Dalet minim.

The four of us were the Vaad Ruchni of Kfar Chabad and we were thrilled to hear this. After each of us got the four minim, the Rebbe began to bless us as he did every year. Some Anash from Kfar Chabad came in too, to hear the bracha. When the Rebbe finished blessing us, he wanted to

go back into his room but Levi Yitzchok Freidan the photographer, who was standing on the steps, said loudly as he held his large camera, "Chassidim wish that we meet again with the Rebbe healthy and whole in the coming year." The Rebbe turned back around and said, "Amen, but in Eretz Yisroel."

Freidan was so surprised that his camera slipped out of his hands and if not for the strap, it would have fallen on the ground. After a fraction of a second, he recovered and said, "Of course, in Eretz Yisroel." The Rebbe smiled broadly and said, "And

cannot relate. I will only say that they outlined my path in life. I will tell two small things. At the yechidus I had in 5720, when I gave the Rebbe a paper with my name on it and my request, the Rebbe took a pen and added "HaLevi" next to my name. He pointed out that I am a Levi and why didn't I write that. Since then, I am particular to include "HaLevi" when I write my name.

In another yechidus, with my wife a"h, the Rebbe blessed me with nachas from my children and my students—who are my children. I was very moved by the Rebbe's bracha.

Giluyim and moving moments are not lacking but we older folk have to say the truth. The devotion of the T'mimim and anash today to the Rebbe's inyanim is not only not less than what it was in the past, it's much more. I say this with certainty. The fact that we don't see the Rebbe doesn't mean that the Rebbe is not active and not with us.

The Rebbe Rayatz writes that Lubavitch is Yerushalayim and the Beis HaRebbi is the Beis HaMikdash and the Rebbe's room is the Holy of Holies and in it is the Aron HaBris about which it says, "the place of the Aron is not included in the measurements."

The reason the Jewish people made aliya l'regel when the Mikdash stood was in order to see and be seen. The seeing was self-nullification before G-d. The same is true when going to 770. Even when we look at the chair and see nothing, we have to believe it isn't empty and that the Rebbe is there and everywhere. The Rebbe gives kochos. This is a feeling that grows year by year because each day we move closer towards the revelation of the true and complete Geula.

then you will save on your tickets here" and returned to his room.

A few weeks later, I met Freidan at a wedding and he told me, "You won't believe this but when the camera slipped it was banged and unbeknownst to me it took a terrific picture of the Rebbe smiling and you were standing nearby."

Of course I asked him to develop a copy for me and this is the picture I have hanging on my wall.

At the yechiduyos I had in several of the years, I experienced wondrous things, most of which I

THE REBBE CALLED ME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FARBRENGEN

Rabbi Nachum Kaplan, Mashpia, Shikun Chabad Lud

Throughout this time we prayed and hoped that they would give us our visas. A few days went by and the army's answer, to our sorrow, was negative. Their stated reason was there were 170 bachurim in the United States who had received visas or left another way, and they still had not returned. "When they return, you can go," they said.

The first year I spent Tishrei with the Rebbe was during my K'vutza year, Tishrei 5722/1961. The T'mimim yearned to be in 770 a few years before that, but there were many obstacles. We T'mimim had moved that year from the building in Pardes to another building in Lud. Tishrei was approaching and we were about ten bachurim who wanted so badly to be with the Rebbe and experience the giluyim and not just hear about them second or third-hand.

The hanhala of the yeshiva submitted our names to the IDF



authorities in Tel Aviv so we could get exit visas. Throughout this time

we prayed and hoped that they would give us our visas. A few days went by and the army's answer, to our sorrow, was negative. Their stated reason was there were 170 bachurim in the United States who had received visas or left another way, and they still had not returned. "When they return, you can go," they said.

We were very down about this and indeed, back then, a bachur who had already managed to get an exit visa did not hurry back to Israel.

In 5721 three bachurim returned: Moshe Slonim a"h, Avrohom Dunin, and Avrohom Sasonkin. The hanhala, along with other pressure that was exerted, told the army, "You see that talmidim who left are beginning to return. Nobody is planning on being there forever. Please give visas to the new group." The army did not agree and they said that only after they all returned would they give additional visas.

After much effort and pressure were exerted by various people including R' Pinye Altheus a"h, we got a visa for one month only.

That year there was a charter flight and the price was 1200 liras, a huge amount in those days. I don't remember where I got that money from which goes to show how strongly we desired to go to the Rebbe. The T'mimim would take on any work in order to be able to go.

The spiritual preparations for the trip were top priority. Our mashpia, R' Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, constantly demanded of the talmidim, especially those who were about to go to the Rebbe, to value their time and to learn maamarim by heart. He would "attack" a different bachur every day and not leave him alone until he promised to learn.

Of course the news about the visas for our trip to the Rebbe thrilled us. Every bachur understood the significance of a trip to the Rebbe and it was clear to see how

this affected the T'mimim. There was a more serious atmosphere. On Shabbasos the T'mimim spent much time on t'filla and meditated before the davening. The learning of Chassidus was different and all conversation revolved around the Rebbe and the trip to 770.

When we arrived at Beis Chayeinu, the Rebbe came out of 770 to welcome us. Each of us felt that the Rebbe personally cared for each one of us.

During Tishrei and the following months, the Rebbe made sure that the bachurim who came from Eretz Yisroel were dressed right, ate sufficiently, and slept well. The Rebbe's concern for us was personal. I have to give you an example from something that happened a few months later when we finished K'vutza.

It was a day before we were leaving for Eretz Yisroel and we had yechidus at 2:15 in the morning. We fasted that day as Chassidim do. After the yechidus, the Rebbe told R' Chadakov, "Surely the bachurim will now review the yechidus," and he asked him to let us know, in his name, that first we should go eat.

The first hint of winter could be felt and on more than one occasion, someone from the hanhala would chastise a bachur who was out without a coat. We knew that this was coming from the Rebbe.

Throughout that time that we were close to the Rebbe, especially during Tishrei, we felt spiritually elevated. Our talking was different; our davening certainly was. We constantly followed the Rebbe, observing when the Rebbe came out and went in; it was a feeling of connection.

Remember that back then there weren't as many Chassidim in 770 as in later years and the atmosphere was more intimate. For example, when we learned in the small zal and the door was open, sometimes the

Rebbe passed by to his room and we could see him, but the bachurim did not even pay attention because we were occupied with our learning. It was all on a smaller scale.

On Rosh HaShana, during t'kios, it was very crowded in 770, more than usual. Everybody pushed in order to be able to hear the t'kios. That year, the air conditioners did not work. I went to daven wearing a new suit and after the t'kios I couldn't wear it anymore. It was soaked with sweat and torn, but nobody thought about petty things like that.

Those who were with the Rebbe during t'kios know that it was the one of the most moving events of the month of Tishrei. It was silent in 770 and the Rebbe went up to the bima as the secretaries brought him the sack of panim. The Rebbe covered himself and the pidyonos with his tallis. Whoever was near the Rebbe could hear his crying. That was enough to arouse one to t'shuva. The enormous crowd, despite the crush, stood silently. It was possible to hear a pin drop when the Rebbe began to recite the p'sukim. They were moving, spiritually uplifting moments, another world entirely. Just recalling those moments can bring one to t'shuva.

On Simchas Torah of that year, something unusual happened. It was the second farbrengen when people washed at 6:30, before sunset, and the farbrengen lasted ten hours! At midnight the Rebbe began to speak about the Mittlerer Rebbe. I don't remember the exact order of what the Rebbe said but it revolved around the mesirus nefesh of the Jewish soldiers of that time.

Then the Rebbe's tone of voice changed and he began to speak sadly about the many Jews in Russia who suffered, and since there were many minyanim of Jews present in 770, and we know the power that a

It was a day before we were leaving for Eretz Yisroel and we had yechidus at 2:15 in the morning. We fasted that day as Chassidim do. After the yechidus, the Rebbe told R' Chadakov, "Surely the bachurim will now review the yechidus," and he asked him to let us know, in his name, that first we should go eat.

p'sak din of a beis din has, they should pasken that this suffering cease. The Rebbe cried and cried. It was heartrending. In the middle of Simchas Torah, such tears ... We knew something was afoot.

The next day, when the janitor came to clean 770 he said that he had heard on the news that many Jews had been arrested by the Russian authorities.

Yom Kippur with the Rebbe was very moving. It entailed standing all day, fasting, and the only thing that kept you going without thinking about your personal comfort was the

At the last minute, the Rebbe turned his gaze upon him and smilingly said l'chaim. It was amazing to see how the Rebbe related to him at just the right time.

Rebbe. Every move the Rebbe made, every hint, energized you for another few hours of standing. At N'ila especially, we could feel the Rebbe lifting us up to another world. We felt no hunger or weakness.

Erev Yom Kippur 5726, four years after the first flight, I was invited to eat with the Rebbe in the Rebbe Rayatz's apartment because I had won the raffle that year. I sat at the table on the same side as the Rebbe and was terrified. I washed but I didn't dare to eat. How could I eat while sitting near the Rebbe?

I had a thrilling experience that Chol HaMoed Sukkos. The Rebbe held a farbrengen in the sukka for the T'mimim. During the farbrengen, the Rebbe asked, "Where is the one who won the raffle? He should come forward to get l'chaim."

It's hard to describe my emotions as I approached the Rebbe and the Rebbe noted my name.

At that farbrengen R' Ben-Tzion Shenker (famous chazan, composer

and arranger) asked for a bracha for his father who did not feel well. The Rebbe asked him to sing and blessed him. The Rebbe said that people should say the "leishev ba'sukka" blessing even if they were only drinking wine.

The Rebbe said something unusual. He said that since this farbrengen was for the T'mimim who are the inyan of date trees, they should start shaking like a lulav.

In 5738 I went to the Rebbe only for Sukkos because back then I worked for the Education Ministry and I couldn't take off more days. At a farbrengen on one of the days of Chol HaMoed, I saw something that remains etched in my memory. Next to me stood a bachur who held a cup with l'chaim and waited for the Rebbe to say l'chaim. He stood there for at least a quarter of an hour. As time passed, it looked as though if the Rebbe did not say l'chaim, he would faint. At the last minute, the Rebbe turned his gaze upon him and

smilingly said l'chaim. It was amazing to see how the Rebbe related to him at just the right time.

That Chol HaMoed Sukkos something unusual happened. Some people went to bring simcha to various shuls. Since I had arrived only a few days earlier, I decided to remain in 770. When the Torah scroll was taken out, the Rebbe suddenly began to encourage the singing of "Ana Avda d'Kudsha Brich Hu." It was done in an unusually vigorous fashion and lasted ten long minutes. Everybody jumped up and down and the simcha was enormous, as though the Rebbe was celebrating Simchas Torah early. A few days later, when the Rebbe had a heart attack, everybody felt there was some connection between it and the encouraging of the singing.

There are so many memories. Those were days of amazing giluyim. The truth must be said. In the past, the Chassidim needed more kiruv from the Rebbe in order to work while today we see that people work no less than in the past. It's important to remember that we have to go to the Rebbe. 770 itself gives kochos, as the Rebbe explains in kuntres "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel." Whoever wants to fill up his storehouses needs to go as people always went, and will get chayus as

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OPEN HOUSE FOR EVERY JEW

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

Every shliach can tell you about lonely people, Jews without family or a social circle, who came to the Chabad house and were revived. There they found friends, they found Torah and an atmosphere, and sometimes they found their way back.

I compiled a few stories from my fellow shluchim about Jews who were alone and how they helped these people.

A DESERTER WHO WAS “REDEEMED” TWICE

Rabbi Yisroel Gliss, shliach in Dimona, relates:

About ten years ago I went to a family event in Kiryat Malachi. As soon as I walked into the hall I noticed a soldier in uniform out of the corner of my eye, who was walking idly about, looking lost. I went over to him and asked him some questions to get acquainted. He was from Russia, and his parents

had remained in the CIS (each in a different country).

At first he had attended a yeshiva in Yerushalayim but he found it difficult and he enlisted in the army. When military service was hard for him, he ran away and since then he wandered among friends and hung out in various places.

I invited him to my house in Dimona, and he was happy to accept. He actually lived with us for three months. During this period of time he became more involved in



Judaism, joining shiurim and the t'fillos at the Chabad house, going on mitzvaim etc. He left after three months but by then he was on his feet as far as mitzva observance is concerned.

He's now married with a Chassidic home in a Chabad community in the center of the country. After having five children, he started to experience parnasa problems. That was precisely when official representatives of the IDF entered his home and said they had been searching for him for years.

He spent a few days in military prison but ended up with a job as a member of the regular army. He has parnasa and the army gained a Chassidishe soldier who does the Rebbe's mitzvaim with people near and far.

In the course of his investigation he had gone to the Chabad house in Ramle and asked whether anybody suspicious had offered mezuzos for sale.

THE MILITARY POLICEMAN

Twenty years ago, a young man walked into the Chabad house in Beit Shaan and it was obvious that he had recently started growing a beard. He said he lived in Beit Shaan, his father died a few years before, but "Now I can't eat at my mother's house," he said. Why?

He was a detective for the military police. There had been a robbery at the office of the chaplain at the big base near Kfar Chabad. Mezuzos, money and many items were stolen and he was asked to find the thief. In the course of his investigation he had gone to the Chabad house in Ramle and asked whether anybody suspicious had offered mezuzos for

sale.

The Chabad house director told the detective that he knew nothing about stolen mezuzos but he could offer shiurim. The officer attended shiurim, became more observant, returned to Beit Shaan and then needed a place to eat with kosher food. Of course we were happy to accommodate him for several years. Eventually he married and settled in a Chabad community in the center of the country. He has a lovely Chassidishe family.

ODD SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Another person who had himself adopted by our Chabad house for a few years was Danny G. Danny is a former farmer. His

wife died, his daughter was killed in an accident, his other children cut off ties with him following the accident, and he moved from city to city until he found a small apartment in Beit Shaan.

Danny had never received a religious education and his entire spiritual world was based on newspapers and other media. It would happen that in the middle of the Shabbos meal in our house he would raise topics unfamiliar to us and our children. We politely hinted to him that it wasn't appropriate to discuss these things in front of the children. Sometimes he understood and other times he merely raised his voice and asked what was wrong with discussing some titillating story or another.

It took many years but in the

end, Danny joined us. He joined the davening and shiurim and understood Chassidic ideas and when he left Beit Shaan he was R' Danny. We meet occasionally and he always says that in Beit Shaan he found not only a place to eat and sleep but also meaning in life.

FROM THE CLOSED WARD TO BEING AN ACTIVIST

I'll conclude with a moving story from a fellow shliach. For obvious reasons I have left out identifying information.

Dalia (a pseudonym) is a smart woman who is known in our town. She's a career woman who even published a book that she wrote about herself. At a certain point in her life she began to suffer from mental problems and for a while she was even hospitalized in a closed ward.

After a lot of hard work she slowly recovered but still did not get entirely back to herself. She did not go back to work but she did not want to sit idly at home either. She felt lonely and wondered what she could do.

She came to the Chabad house (even though she was not at all religious) and asked what volunteer work she could do and what shiurim she could attend. She was happy to take on the job of head chef in the soup kitchen. She also helped with sewing, fixing curtains etc. and she attended the shiurim.

Today she is one of the most beloved women in the N'shei Chabad in her city. She helps out with all their projects, very successfully and on a volunteer basis. "What do you think ... The Chabad house is my house and the children here are like my grandchildren. I should take money for helping out?!"

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MY TISHREI WITH THE REBBE

By Ofra Badosa

Photos by Rinati Dvorski

A DESCENT FOR THE SAKE OF AN ASCENT

When I think back about my story, I see that it all begins and ends with strong faith. Emuna and ratzon are what make dreams come true. Although there are times when a person is spiritually down, and as a result feels more distant from

Hashem, this itself can open doors in surprising ways.

That's what happened to me about three years ago. It all began when I left my job and I found myself sitting at home when I had been used to running around all day between work and errands. I would see my two daughters in the evening and on vacation. I worked fulltime

since they were born, without stopping for a minute and looking back or seeing what was going on around me.

Then, in one moment, suddenly everything stopped, nothing moved. I began to feel that my life was stuck. I stayed home and didn't want to see anyone.

SOME BACKGROUND

My name is Sophie. I live with my family in Bat Yam. We are originally from the Caucasus region, from the city of Chatchakla. Life there is vastly different than life in Israel. Over there, in order to be a Jew you have to work very hard. My grandmother was a very religious woman. She sat and learned Torah. Everything my daughters learn in school, I learned with my grandmother at home. She would read to us from the Hebrew and translate, so we would understand.

I remember how my father would run to buy a whole lamb or bring chickens to be shechted so my grandmother would have kosher meat. There was no supermarket with kosher, prepared meat. My mother would sit in the kitchen for hours and remove feathers from the chickens. At my parents' house we observed less of the mitzvos but identified very strongly as Jews.

We made aliya in 5752 with the big aliya from Russia.



The connection forged between me and 770 and the Rebbe during those days was a deep, soul connection. It seemed to me that people in 770 did not know the meaning of tiredness. They davened all day and learned and at night, they danced. I don't know from where they get the strength.

Before I got married, my mother explained the laws of family purity to me. Although it wasn't with the finer points that I know today, we knew the basics and this was transmitted from one generation to the next. In my home I kept kashrus and lit Shabbos candles.

UNCOMPROMISING CHINUCH

I encountered Chabad when my daughters reached school age. We began looking for a preschool. We

wanted something nearby, convenient, and my husband Alfred and I went to a preschool associated with the Shas political party to check it out. When we left, Alfred said he wasn't going to put our girls in this school. He doesn't like anything extreme and always says that extremes aren't good.

When my sister heard we were looking for a school, she said that her daughter was going to a Chabad school and that they gave special attention to the children. The closest Chabad school to us was in Cholon and we decided to go there.

We arrived at a rundown apartment complex, but the minute we walked into the gan, we felt it was wonderful. The teacher was a charming woman and after meeting with her Alfred said this was the place for our girls. He said he didn't care that it looked neglected outside because the moment he met the teacher he knew that he could leave his children in her capable hands.

The first year, the girls had transportation but after that, over the next three years, I had to bring them to school and then continue from there to my job in Tel Aviv. That complicated my life. Everybody asked me why I was looking for trouble, it took a lot of time and gas, and there were plenty of preschools in Bat Yam. I told them that I didn't know but this was what I wanted. I liked the education in Chabad. They learned values of tznius and Ahavas Yisroel which was very close to the chinuch that I had received in the Caucasus.

TAKE ME TO THE REBBE

So there I was, sitting idly at home, feeling down. One day, before Rosh HaShana, Alfred came home from work and suggested that we travel to Czechoslovakia so I could relax and recover. I thought our finances did not allow us even a

trip to Yerushalayim! He insisted and said he wanted me to get out of my slump.

"If you really want me to get out of this, take me to the Rebbe!"

"Really?! You would go?"

"Of course! What's the question?"

"Fine, let's take care of our visas."

The next day we went to B'nei Brak to the travel agency and tried to arrange visas and tickets for Sukkos. The travel agent said there was no way we could get visas and tickets in just two weeks. She consoled us by saying maybe we should go for Pesach.

We asked her to begin the process because maybe we would be able to arrange it. I explained to her that if the Rebbe wanted me to come for Sukkos, he would arrange the visas and tickets for us. She smiled and politely said that she would do what she could. Alfred left her our phone number and money for visas.

Three days later she called and said we had an appointment with the consulate in another three days. Friday morning we went to the American embassy and after a brief interview we were given approval and the visa arrived three days later. The travel agent couldn't believe it and I reminded her that if the Rebbe wanted it, we would get there for Sukkos.

The next step was to buy tickets. The dollar was very strong at that point and before I began looking I asked the Rebbe to help me find a cheap ticket. I told my husband that I would buy a ticket only if the dollar went down to 4.24. My husband was incredulous. "The dollar is only going up. There's no way it's going to come down."

The next day, the dollar began going down and within a few days it reached the amount I had specified. Even on the radio they spoke about



When I returned, there was a message for me from Chani Tzik from Bat Yam. She suggested that we come stay where they were, near 770. We took the address and the next day we went. We arrived at an apartment house and went up to the fourth floor. I finally felt like I was back in Israel. It was an old apartment where Elana Schanowitz, her husband, and seven or eight children lived. After our stay in the mansion in New Jersey, I felt much more comfortable here. I was sure that we would stay there for a few hours and then return to the mansion but that's not how it worked out.

WHAT IS AHAVAS YISROEL?

When I walked into the women's section of 770 I was shocked. You could barely breathe, it was so crowded. If a match had fallen among us, I think it would have remained upright. From the front rows I heard someone call out, "Tissue, tissue," and from all sides they tossed boxes of tissues.

Chani said we should move closer to the glass. I said there was no way we could do that but she insisted, "Come and I'll show you what Ahavas Yisroel is."

She moved forward and said, "Girls! Let us show someone new what Ahavas Yisroel is. Let us allow her to get close to the front." And suddenly there was room to move. It was like a miracle. I didn't say anything and she pushed me and whispered from behind, "Keep going." I was like a puppet on strings.

When I got to the glass partition, I looked downward and couldn't believe my eyes. If I thought it was crowded in the women's section, the crowding down below was in an altogether different league. Yet, despite the crowding they managed to dance in a circle.

how surprising it was that the dollar had gone down so quickly. I began looking for tickets and designated no more than \$800 per ticket. We looked on the Internet and through travel agencies and only found tickets with Italian or Canadian airlines. I was afraid to travel with them and only wanted El-Al.

My husband was getting annoyed, and rightly so. "Your Rebbe wants to you come so much, so drop everything and go!" I stuck to my guns. If the Rebbe wants us, we will be able to get a ticket for

\$800 on El-Al. And that's what happened.

A MARBLE PALACE OR AN OLD APARTMENT?

We arrived in New York with El-Al. A friend of my husband, whom he hadn't seen since high school, came and took us to his home in New Jersey. It was more of a palace than a house. Inside it was luxurious with colorful marble and had many stories. One day, he took us to Manhattan so we could tour a little. I felt like it was a movie with all the skyscrapers and long streets.



When we got back to the apartment, the hosts had arranged a bed for me in the baby's room and my husband was given a mattress. I didn't think Alfred would be willing to stay since he likes to be comfortable and I was sure we would be going back to the marble mansion. I looked at him apprehensively, not wanting to say anything, because then he would do the opposite! I looked at him to see what he would decide to do. He sat on the mattress and with a smile he said that he wouldn't exchange the mattress for any mansion.

Chani and Elana were like mothers to me. They took me everywhere and looked after me. Their love filled a place within me that was empty since I had left home when I got married. I saw how much I missed it.

The first day I was completely in shock; ditto for the second and

third day. As the days passed I realized that there was one place in the world that you can't get used to and that is 770.

THE WORLD IS IN 770

One day, a friend of my husband's paid for us to tour Washington as a gift. I usually like touring and getting to see the world, but I couldn't do it. On the way to Washington I didn't stop crying. My neshama did not want to be separated from 770. My husband tried to understand what I was feeling. "I don't recognize you like this. You love the world!"

I explained that I felt I was wasting my time and that all that I wanted to do was return to 770. My husband did not understand me and said, "But you were there for a few days. Come, let's see the world." I tried to explain that the world is in 770 ...

The connection forged between me and 770 and the Rebbe during those days was a deep, soul connection. The night of hakafos we went to the dancing. It seemed to me that people in 770 did not know the meaning of tiredness. They davened all day and learned and at night, they danced. I don't know from where they get the strength.

I returned home in a state of euphoria. I was sure that after I had received so many brachos that my life would work out. At first I sat and waited for things to move on their own. Big mistake. I'm sure that if I had applied all the kochos that I received in Crown Heights sooner, I would have become an even better vessel for bracha. Still, Alfred began to keep Shabbos which is a big thing for him and for me. Thanks to Tishrei with the Rebbe.

A CHABAD ENCLAVE IN WARTIME

By Shneur Zalman Berger

THE SORRY PLIGHT OF THE REFUGEES

Bloody battles and the fear of war led millions of Russian citizens to flee towards the interior of the Soviet Union. They hoped to find refuge from the terrors of war and from the German troops that had conquered vast expanses, felling millions.

Many Chabad Chassidim were among these refugees. They went primarily to Samarkand, the second largest city in Uzbekistan, and Tashkent, the capitol of Uzbekistan. The first Chassidim arrived in Tashkent in the summer of 1941. Unlike Samarkand, where help from the local community was quickly organized, the refugees in Tashkent had to rely on the meager help of the few who opened their homes and hearts to their brethren.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees came to Tashkent, most of them bereft of all, without food or money and only scanty belongings. Many of them wandered the streets, homeless.

The Chassidic-familial glue united the Chassidim even when the situation seemed almost hopeless. In the first months of their stay there, two main Chassidic centers formed, the larger one in the area Stari-Grad

(the Old City) and the second concentration in Corso, a neighborhood on the edge of the city. Later, most of the Chassidim settled in Stari-Grad.

The winter of 1942 made the refugees' plight even worse. At first the government tried to ease the plight of the refugees but the nonstop stream of humanity was impossible for it to handle.

Housing and employment for the refugees were insurmountable tasks. The available wheat and bread were quickly used up and it was not enough for all. Citizens were forced to stand on line all night in order to get a loaf of bread and even then, they did not always get what they wanted. Food on the black market was very expensive.

Hunger, filth, and crowding contributed to the typhus epidemic that decimated the refugees. The overcrowded hospitals could not take more patients. The Angel of Death appeared everywhere. Corpses lay in the streets for days with no one to dispose of them.

It took a year before the government began to distribute food coupons that provided just 400 grams of bread daily per person. Many used the food coupons of dead people to supplement their meager meals. There were other ways of getting food coupons, under fictitious

names, generally with the help of local officials who were open to bribery.

The tremendous wave of refugees in Tashkent flooded the area mainly between the summer of 1941 through 1942 when most of the Chassidim came too. As the numbers of refugees diminished, the medical and economic situation improved somewhat. It was only at the beginning of 1943 that food and medicine packages came from America which eased the situation a bit.

The starvation and diseases affected the Chassidim too of course; men, women, children, and babies fell sick. Some died and they were buried in the old Ashkenazic cemetery which tragically, was destroyed over the years. Many of the gravestones cannot be identified today.

Some distinguished Chassidim died in Tashkent in those days, including outstanding scholars and G-d fearing men such as: Rabbi Dovid Kievman (Horodoker) who was considered to be a beinoni of Tanya; Rabbi Chaim Ezra Bronstein who was called "Ezra HaSofer" by the Rebbe Rayatz for being an expert scribe; Rabbi Zalman Pruss, Rabbi Feitel Levin, brother-in-law of the mashpia R' Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, and others.

One of the tragedies that took

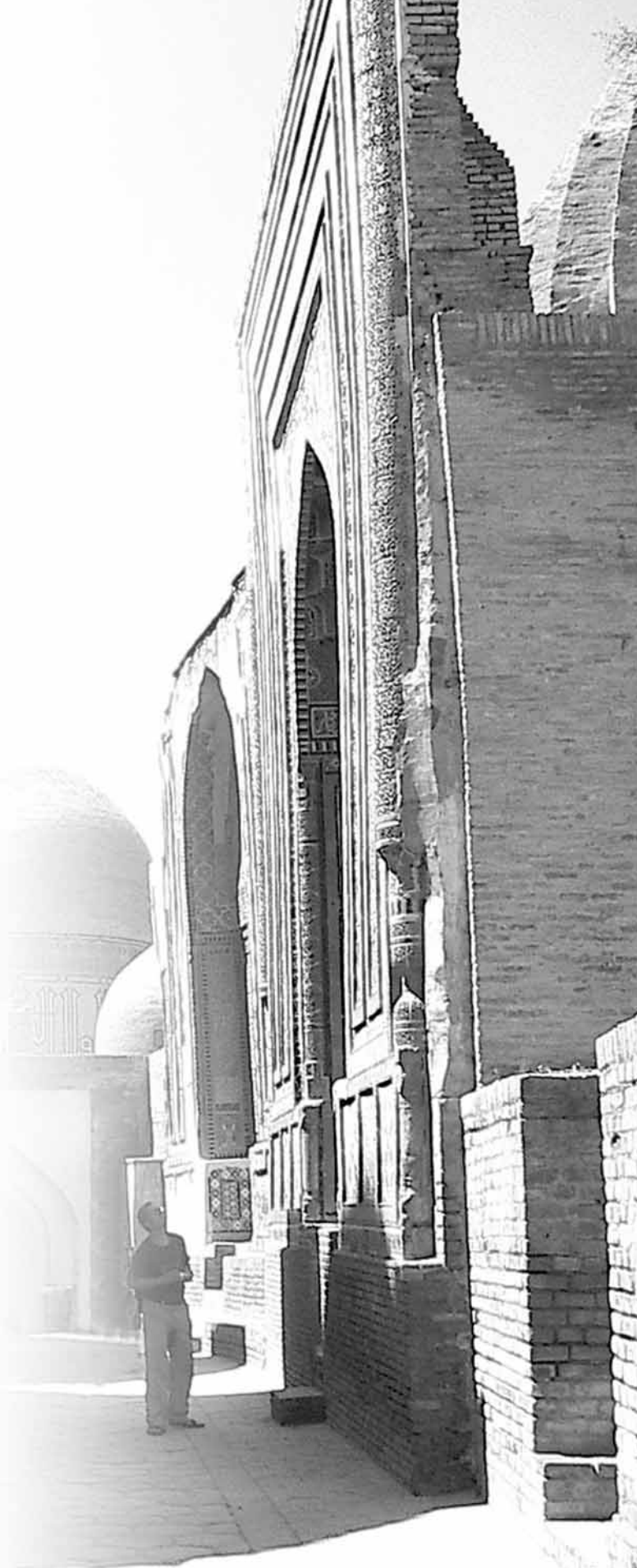
While most Chabad communities in Eastern Europe were uprooted because of World War II, the Chabad k'hilla in Tashkent was actually founded because of the war. Hundreds of Chabad Chassidim from all over Russia arrived there as refugees. Despite the difficult financial hardships, they united in brotherly love and formed a beautiful k'hilla with chinuch and chesed. * The story of the Chabad k'hilla in Tashkent.

place was the passing of Ita Henia Levin, daughter of R' Yisroel Neveler. Ita Henia, an exceptional Chassidishe young woman, could not bear the sight of her father dying of starvation and she brought him her daily bread. She told him that she had gotten bread on the black market. She became sick with dysentery and died on 26 Shevat at the age of twenty.

Her death was the most difficult of the many trials the family had to contend with. She had been one of eleven children and seven died young under various tragic circumstances. She was the eighth to die.

Purim was during the Shloshim. R' Yisroel, who was a happy person by nature, did not allow sadness to overtake him. When he returned from Shacharis in shul he brought some Chassidim with him who sat down to a meal that included leftover food and a little mashke. Simcha soon prevailed and R' Yisroel was one of the main speakers at the farbrengen.

At the farbrengen that took place the following Purim, after he said l'chaim several times, his



He suddenly began to cry but after a few minutes he opened his eyes and wiped his tears. He cried out, “Even when they tear out pieces of your flesh, say that it’s good!”

sorrows overwhelmed him. He suddenly began to cry but after a few minutes he opened his eyes and wiped his tears. He cried out, “Even when they tear out pieces of your flesh, say that it’s good!”

He repeated this several times. Some say he repeated it eight times, to correspond to the number of children he had lost. He cried once again and his tears wet the table. People couldn’t help but join in with the father’s crying.

A few minutes passed until R’ Yisroel recovered and he exclaimed, “It is Purim today and we need to be happy, say l’chaim!”

HELL ON EARTH

Despite the hardships, the extended Chassidic family did what it could to stick together and help one another to the extent possible. People shared the little that they had. If they didn’t have, at least they were consoled by the fact that they had each other.

The new refugees that came

found places to stay with the “veteran” refugees who had come not that long ago themselves. In R’ Yechiel Rivkin’s home lived twenty people in one room!

His son, R’ Zushe Rivkin, remembers the privation of those days, “It was an absolutely abnormal situation. We were twenty people in a one-room apartment that belonged to Uzbeks. It didn’t have a floor. Straw was scattered on the ground and that’s where twenty people lay. On one side lay the men and on the other side, the women.”

R’ Zushe’s sister, Freeda Levin, describes the hardships then, “Each person cooked for

himself what he managed to obtain. Before Pesach, my mother bought 100 grams of schmaltz and two kilograms of potatoes. Sometimes we didn’t have even that and many people died of starvation. Nowadays it’s hard to imagine that 100 grams of schmaltz sufficed for an entire family for eight days of Pesach!

“If that wasn’t enough suffering, one day, my husband Berel became sick with typhus, a terrible and contagious disease that is spread by lice. Those sick with typhus were immediately taken by the authorities to the hospital, even against their will, so they would not infect others. People from the Ministry of



A drawing that depicts the refugees



A 12 Tamuz farbrengen 1965 of the Chassidim who remained in Tashkent after the war. From right to left: R' Shlomo Galperin, (?), Rabbi Shneur Zalman Pevsner, R' Mendel Garelik

We were twenty people in a one-room apartment that belonged to Uzbeks. It didn't have a floor. Straw was scattered on the ground and that's where twenty people lay.

Health came to our house and took him to the hospital. I knew that the doctors didn't even bother trying and some of Anash had died.

"At the hospital I saw that the head doctor was a Jew as were the nurses who devotedly treated the sick. They did all they could and when I saw that, I was

somewhat appeased. For some reason, they liked my husband and they treated him with great dedication until he recovered. It was an open miracle because in those days only a few were cured of this disease.

"After having typhus a person has a tremendous appetite but there was hardly any bread for my

husband. I gave him my portion and I ate rice and nuts.

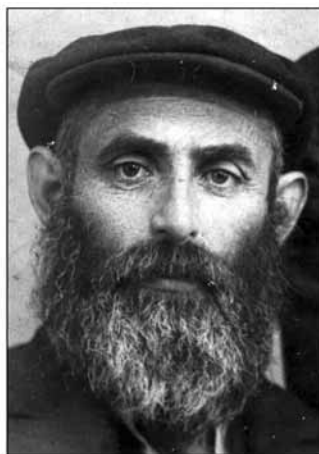
"A year later I gave birth to our first child, but due to the terrible living conditions he did not survive but died five days later. A year after that, I gave birth to a girl."

OPEN DOOR

As mentioned before, many Chassidim opened their homes to families who had just arrived and



R' Chaikel Chanin



R' Shmuel Menachem Klein



R' Dovid Kievman-Horodoker



R' Yisroel Neveler

hadn't found shelter. These Chassidim had recently found homes for themselves just days or week earlier, and now they hosted individuals or families.

The family of R' Shlomo Chaim Kesselman were guests for a long time in the home of Rabbi Shmuel (Mulle) Pruss, as were T'mimim who lived in his home during different periods. Rabbi Berel Rickman suffered from poverty and worked hard to buy bread for his family. Nevertheless, he took in a refugee by the name of Yeshaya Garber who became like a member of his household until the end of the war.

Among the main activists were Rabbi Mordechai Sirota and Rabbi Mendel Klein. The two of them worked on behalf of the refugees in general and the Lubavitchers in particular.

R' Mordechai and his wife Rivka were born in the Ukraine and in their youth they moved to Tashkent where they married. R' Mordechai, who was originally a Breslover Chassid, got to know distinguished Chabad Chassidim and became a Lubavitcher.

In their three small rooms, the Sirotas hosted many refugees who were given not only a place to sleep but food too, despite the scarcity. The house was very crowded yet this did not stop R' Mordechai from going to the train station when he heard a train had arrived with Jewish refugees and looking for Jewish faces. When he found them, he would bring them to his house and provide them with food. Some people ate, thanked him, and went on their way, while others lived with him for months.

A Lubavitcher who lived in his house for a long time relates:

"I arrived at his house late at night. I saw numerous people

RABBI SHLOIMKE MAIDANCHEK

During the war, many non-Lubavitchers were also in Tashkent. The unity among the Lubavitchers, as well as their radiant vitality, made an impact on them and many became *niskarev* to Chassidus. Some even became Chabad Chassidim. One of them was Rabbi Shloimke Maidanchek who later became a leading Chabad figure in Eretz Yisroel.

R' Maidanchek was born to a religious family but the winds that blew at that time drew him off the path of Torah and mitzvos. Before the war he attended a school for locomotive engineers since he wanted to be an engineer who worked on trains. The war broke out and he had to run for his life. He went to Tashkent where he finished his studies and became an assistant engineer.

One day he entered the Chabad shul, as he later recounted:

"I saw Jews with beards that reminded me of my father. In my town there were maybe ten Jews with beards and here there were dozens. I saw how they prayed and their great *simcha*. I felt I had entered paradise. After that I went to the shul many times. The first time, they were afraid of me. They kept their distance, fearing lest I be an informer."

Rabbi Aharon Chazan dispelled these fears as he relates:

"It was Pesach night, 1944 and Rabbi Naftali Greenberg, who was my neighbor, came to see me. He asked me to go with him to the Machnovka Rebbe who had come to Tashkent as a refugee. At first I refused because it was late at night and it would be a burden on him, but R' Greenberg convinced me and we went.

"When we arrived at the Admur's home, we were amazed to see the Admur and Rebbetzin sitting there with a young man who did not look religious.

I was curious as to what brought this young man to the Rebbe. The young man said, 'I wanted to celebrate Pesach. I asked the Chabad Chassidim here but they were afraid of me so one of them referred me here. Indeed, the Admur agreed to have me.'

"The young man said that he wanted to be in the company of Jews. The truth is that at first, I was also nervous because I had started the underground chadarim and if he would be in touch with me and would know about them, who knew who would find out about them? In any case, I liked him. He seemed honest about wanting to be among Jews.

"I connected him with Lubavitchers and explained to them that I thought he really wanted to learn Torah and daven and that he wouldn't inform on us. I brought him in, step by step, into the Chabad minyan, to farbrengens, and also to work in a shomer Shabbos factory which was run by a Lubavitcher. He eventually became a Lubavitcher and much later, he became the Chairman of the Kfar Chabad City Council and Chairman of Agudas Chassidei Chabad in Eretz Yisroel."



R' Shloimke Maidanchek

sleeping on beds and on and under tables. I looked for the balabus and didn't find him and so I planned on just lying down. Then I noticed him sleeping on the floor in the hallway together with the other guests."

R' Mordechai even hosted very sick people who were in dire straits and helped them till they recovered. He not only concerned himself with providing food, lodging and medical assistance but also tried to find them employment so they could support their families honorably.

Hosting refugees in the house was no simple matter. Most of them had no identification papers or permits. The NKVD conducted searches for refugees who remained in the city without papers. Nevertheless, R' Mordechai hosted them.

One night, he found out that searches were being conducted in the area. He quickly woke up his guests and took them down to the cellar and covered the opening with a table. This time, the search wasn't that thorough and they didn't find anything.

His daughter, Mrs. Chaya Goldschmidt, recalls those days:

"The NKVD once showed up with no prior warning. Sometimes my father would give them money or vodka and they would leave but this time they took him for interrogation. I was a little girl and very frightened. I thought my father would come back (an interrogation usually took a few hours) and would say that we could not have guests anymore. But my father wasn't frightened and he continued to bring more guests.

"One night they came back and knocked at the door. As usual, my father tried to explain that the people in the house were poor relatives but they didn't want to listen. To the sound of the cries of family and guests,

they took my parents for interrogation. We cried and cried. We were very afraid for mother who was very sensitive.

"Our prayers helped and they returned late at night. From the sparkle in their eyes we understood that they would continue hosting guests as always."

With time, R' Mordechai forged good connections with people in the government of Tashkent. He used these ties to obtain papers for the refugees, arrange exemptions from the army and other things. This all cost a lot and entailed plenty of bribe money.

R' Shmuel Menachem Klein and his wife Miriam were also leading figures when it came to helping the refugees. They hosted people and their home was also the place where weddings, brissin and farbrengens were held.

Rabbi Nosson Kanelsky relates:

"During the war, I arrived in Tashkent with my mother, lacking everything. We were often hosted by the Klein family. Mrs. Klein treated every guest like a king. The moment you entered their house she would hand you a plate of delicious food. Dozens of guests ate at their home every day."

R' Eliyahu Volovik, then a young bachur, lived in their home for half a year. He greatly admired R' Shmuel Menachem Klein:

"He was a quiet man, modest and pleasant. He never raised his voice. He would sit and learn until late into the night."

R' Chaikel Chanin, his wife Chaya Leah, and their two daughters arrived in Tashkent as refugees. They arrived on Rosh Chodesh Elul 1942 and from then until the end of the war they devoted their energy to helping Lubavitcher refugees.

To the sound of the cries of family and guests, they took my parents for interrogation. We cried and cried. We were very afraid for mother who was very sensitive.

"My father tried to help each one in any way he could, like by getting sewing machines, finding employment in factories, help for orphans and widows of which there were plenty, giving advice or even founding a school," said their son, Shneur Zalman.

"Some of Anash told me that when they arrived in Tashkent bereft of everything, starving, with some of them swollen from hunger, they knew that R' Chaikel had food for them, a place to sleep, and support until they could find a livelihood."

Some of the Chassidim were regular guests of the Chanins, including Rabbi Avrohom Eliyahu Plotkin, a distinguished Chabad rav of the previous generation. R' Plotkin came with his wife and children. He was sick and suffered due to protracted starvation. He stayed with them until he recovered, thanks to R' Chaikel who brought doctors and got the requisite medication.

So even in those dark days of hunger and plague, the love Chassidim had for one another stood by them. The many acts of chesed sparkled like diamonds in the darkness.

(To be continued b'ezras Hashem)

HAKHEL – GATHERING BEFORE THE KING

By Shmuel Chaim Abrahamson

The Rebbe Rashab once said, “How is it that a Jew is not in Lubavitch on Rosh HaShana? Where else is he? * The Rebbe wrote to someone, “I thought we would meet during Sukkos (as was your custom to come to the Rebbe, my father-in-law for these days) to be blessed with a piska tava for a good and happy year; I was sorry to see that you did not come this year.” * An overview of the custom of Chassidim and T’mimim to travel to the Rebbe for Tishrei, particularly in a year of Hakhel.

Traveling to the Rebbe was always an important aspect of hiskashrus and the darkei ha’chassidus. Back with the founder of Chassidus, the Baal

Shem Tov, we found a special enactment in which he instructed his disciples to come from time to time to see him, and as the Rebbe Rayatz put it, “a statute amongst

Chassidim.”

Over the generations, the Rebbeim spoke highly of coming to see and be seen face to face in the holy four cubits. There is the famous account about one of the earlier Chassidim who traveled to the Rebbe when he was a child and he described very vividly what the trip was like and the feelings that they had. This account was printed in “HaTamim,” which was the public forum for the talmidei ha’T’mimim and Chassidim of those days.

The Rebbe once spoke highly about the visit to Beis Chayeinu and said “although there are those who did not come, but remained to sit in their hole, imagining that they were sitting in the king’s palace ...” and the Rebbe concluded “obviously, it’s a great pity on them.”

The reason for the trip to the Rebbe is that spending time in the Rebbe’s presence gives a Chassid renewed *chayus* (spiritual vitality), as the Rebbe said, “The very inyan of a Chassid traveling to the Rebbe is simple. From time to time the Chassid goes to his Rebbe and this trip affects his avoda throughout the year until the next time he goes.” Or as the idea is expressed in the famous Chassidic saying in a play on words, “*Rebbi lo shana, chiya minayin*” (lit. if Rebbi did not record it in the Mishna, where did R’ Chiya get it from) – if one does not go to the Rebbe at least once a year, where will the *chayus* come from?

On another occasion, the Rebbe explained that really, the ideal place for every Jew in general and a Chassid in particular, is where the Rebbe is. The Rebbe explains that Hashem designated the place of the Rebbeim as rest stops on our long

trip in the desert of galus. These locations are like roadside inns where we Chassidim can relax a bit from the road and learn and daven with peace of mind.

SEEING THE REBBE ON YOM TOV

The trip can take place any time, since any day and date is suitable for seeing the Rebbe. However, it becomes more important to go on Yom Tov and special dates, the month of Tishrei in particular.

The Rebbe Rashab said, “How is it that a Jew is not in Lubavitch on Rosh HaShana? Where is he?!” The Rebbe once wrote someone, “I thought we would

meet during Sukkos (as is your custom to come to the Rebbe, my father-in-law for these days) to be blessed with a *piska tava* for a good and happy year; I was sorry to see that you did not come this year.”

The Rebbe also said many times that the trip to the Rebbe on the three major holidays in general is the inyan of *aliya l’regel* in general and “*kabbalas p’nei rabo b’regel*” (going to see one’s rebbi on the holiday) in particular. This inyan is underscored in the month of Tishrei which has many Yomim Tovim, when the gathering of “many Jewish people from around the world” in the shul of Nasi Doreinu, empowers us to draw

down and bring about the inyan of *achdus* during the rest of the months of the year when people are home.

In Tishrei 5747 the Rebbe spoke highly of going for Tishrei and explained that now that we don’t have a Beis HaMikdash, the place where we can fulfill a tiny bit of the inyan of “bowing before You” is mainly in the shul of Nasi Doreinu. The Rebbe noted the amazing fact that “many, many, dozens and hundreds of Jews remove themselves from their homes and place in order to spend the holidays of Tishrei in the four cubits of Nasi Doreinu. This is similar and reminiscent of the inyan of *aliya l’regel* in the time of the Beis HaMikdash.”



The fact is that in this last generation in general, and in recent years in particular, Tishrei has become the main time that people go to the Rebbe. This month begins with the Yomim Nora'im and the beginning of the year is auspicious to be blessed for a good year, and continues with the second part, the Time of our Rejoicing. The Rebbe transformed Simchas Torah, the peak of the Tishrei season, into the most special date of the year and it became known as the Rebbe's day.

In addition to the importance of traveling to see the Rebbe face to face, the import of such a trip includes simply spending time in the Rebbe's four cubits. The Rebbe's place, in and of itself, is extremely important. Even if you don't see the Rebbe, there is the advantage of being with the Rebbe.

A well-known Chassidic response illustrates the point. A Chassid in the time of the Tzemach Tzedek went to the Rebbe but since the maamarim were said quietly and the Chassid couldn't hear them, he complained to one of the elder Chassidim. "What did I come for?"

The elder Chassid answered with a quote from Dayeinu in the Hagada, "If He brought us to Har Sinai and did not give us the Torah, dayeinu – that would be enough for us." By this he meant, just being there with the Rebbe is enough.

BEIS MOSHIACH – 770

In the written account mentioned earlier in "HaTamim," a definition of the Rebbe's house was given by a Chassid. This was publicized afterwards, in part, in an edited sicha of the Rebbe. "From the day the Beis

HaMikdash and the Holy of Holies was destroyed until Hashem has mercy and sends us the righteous Redeemer who will gather us from the four corners of the earth and lead us to Eretz Yisroel ... Lubavitch is our Yerushalayim and the shul where the Rebbe davens is our Beis HaMikdash, and the room where the Rebbe sits is our Holy of

***"Yasher ko'ach to
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be in the four
cubits (the shul
and beis midrash)
of the Nasi HaDor
during the time of
Hakhel."***

Holies and the Rebbe is the Aron which contains the Luchos of the Torah."

As for our generation, the seventh generation, the final generation of galus and the first of Geula, the concept of Beis Rabbeinu is that much more important. The Rebbe referred to 770 and accorded it great

importance in a way that we did not see with the earlier Rebbeim.

In the winter of 5752, a few months before 27 Adar, the date on which the great concealment of "he bears our illnesses" began, the Rebbe produced a kuntres devoted to explaining what makes 770 special in our generation, the seventh generation in general and the period right before the coming of Moshiach in particular. The Rebbe kept this kuntres in his Siddur throughout the following months, an unusual custom.

In this kuntres, the Rebbe says that 770 is the home of the Nasi HaDor and light goes forth from it to the entire world. The Rebbe said that 770 is the main "miniature sanctuary" during galus until the coming of Moshiach.

The Rebbe said that Beis Rabbeinu is where the Geula of the Sh'china from galus begins and the Beis HaMikdash will descend there first. This is why the Rebbe calls it "Beis Moshiach."

These are just a few highlights from that amazing kuntres which everyone should learn (it is translated into English).

SHNAS HAKHEL

The upcoming year is a special one being a "Hakhel" year, a year following a Shmita year. Hakhel was a mitzva (see D'varim 31: 10-13) in which all the Jewish people went to hear the king read from the Torah on the Sukkos following a Shmita year.

In the Rebbe's sichos about a Shnas Hakhel, he speaks about the spiritual aspect of this mitzva even nowadays, after the destruction of the Mikdash, whether with children's rallies, Hakhel membership cards etc. But without a doubt, Hakhel is

fulfilled by going to the king in order to hear one of the Rebbe's sichos, hearing Chassidus from the Nasi HaDor which is like the king reading from the Torah.

In Likkutei Sichos volume 34, p. 192, the Rebbe says "the main innovation of the giving of the Torah at Sinai was not Torah study and hearing G-d's commandments ... but that it was in a way of **seeing** ... One can say that this is the reason that in order for the generation that follows the generation of Mattan Torah and the following generations 'to fear Hashem your G-d and keep to do all the words of this Torah' – it is not enough to **remember** that we stood at Sinai, that we remember something in the **past**, which means it is distant. We need something special, the mitzva of Hakhel; that all Yisroel, men, women, and children gather together like they did at Sinai."

We can say that in our times we cannot remain at home and suffice with learning the Rebbe's sichos about Shnas Hakhel, because that is not the inyan of Hakhel. We have to go to 770 in order to relive "Hakhel with the Rebbe."

In a sicha of 5741, a Shnas Hakhel, the Rebbe explains that unlike all the other aliyos l'regel every year, in which people drew strength and chayus for the coming

year, the aliya in a Shnas Hakhel is different in that the kochos and chayus it provides have an effect on "all the days that you live on the earth."

After Tishrei 5748, a Shnas Hakhel, the Rebbe said something unusual about the guests who came for Sukkos that year. He said (on Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha), "Yasher ko'ach to all the guests whose Chassidic feeling was openly illuminated and was expressed practically in the fulfillment of 'go forth

from your land,' in order to be in the four cubits (the shul and beis midrash) of the Nasi HaDor during the time of Hakhel, 'gather the nation, men, and women and children' (on the Yom Tov of Sukkos) – at least for an hour or a day and all the more so those who were here throughout Sukkos."

Following this sicha, many Chabad Chassidim and those who were not Chabad, who did not spend Tishrei with the Rebbe, hurried to do so in the months that followed.

In a yechidus with R' Dov Teichman and his wife on 11 Cheshvan 5734 – a Shnas Hakhel, the Rebbe said, "Why didn't you bring the children? We are making a fuss about Hakhel, the men, women and children!"

GOING TO THE REBBE TODAY TOO

We see how precise is that which Chassidim say, "Chassidim are not alone," because wherever they go, the Rebbe is with them. Today too, even when we don't see the Rebbe, the Rebbe took care of this ahead of time. He infused us with life about the importance of 770 which is the home of the Nasi HaDor, the place from which light goes forth to the entire world until the coming of the Redeemer!

May we immediately see the third Beis

HaMikdash descend and join Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel with the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH"M, now!

As the Chassidic song says: "Dear brothers, we will see one another again, Hashem will give health and life, we will travel to the Rebbe, we will see one another again!"

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

