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for Parshas Noach.*

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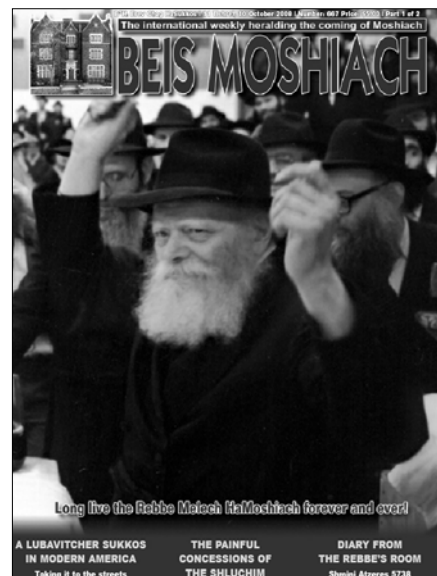
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CREATION, T'SHUVa, TIKKUN AND MOSHIACH

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Creation, *T'shuva*, *Tikkun* and Moshiach – what connects these is a dynamic of completion and elevation. In regard to Creation, the Torah states: “And G-d blessed the Seventh Day and made it holy, for on it He rested from all His work which G-d created to function.” What does this mean, “G-d created to function,” or, more literally, “which G-d created to make”? Why doesn't it simply say “which G-d created”? The phrase “to function” or “to make” seems superfluous. Noticing this grammatical anomaly, the rabbis commented that the Torah is telling us that Creation itself needs to be developed and corrected. G-d created the world in such a way that, when He was finished, it still needed to be made, as it were. On the seventh day, Shabbos, the world was incomplete and imperfect; it required *Tikkun*, meaning improvement, regulation, reformation. (Indeed, the concept of *Tikkun Olam* – perfecting the world – underlies a range of Jewish activity, in areas as diverse as mysticism and social action.) With the addition of one word in Hebrew, seemingly irrelevant, the Torah reveals a basic fact about Creation – its imperfection – and the imperative that imposes on mankind in general, and the Jewish people in particular, to improve the world, bring it to completion.

On the other hand, in another passage the rabbis also declared that the world was created in its fullness, meaning that nothing was missing. The world was created with everything it needs, lacking nothing, requiring no correction. Everything is in place; no improvement is necessary.

So which is it? Was the world created “to be made” – in need of *Tikkun*, requiring improvement – or was it created complete, in all its fullness? The answer is both. Creation requires both *Tikkun* – improvement –

and is also perfect. Both observations of the rabbis are correct. There is neither contradiction nor paradox. Rather, each observation refers to a different part – or stage – of creation. For, as is well known, the world was created in six days. On the seventh day of Creation, Shabbos, G-d rested. So, there is a making of the world in six days, and a resting from – a finishing and completion of Creation on the seventh day.

Thus, during the six days of Creation, the world was formed in all its fullness, complete. It is to this stage of Creation that the rabbis refer when they say the world was made perfect, requiring no improvement, missing nothing. However, the very nature of Shabbos, the very holiness of the day, the fact that G-d blessed it, must lead to a “making,” a development, correction, elevation and improvement of the world.

That is, from the perspective of the six days of creation, everything is complete. From the perspective of Shabbos, the world needs improvement, because Shabbos is a higher level than the six days. At the level of Shabbos, a day sanctified with holiness, the six days of the mundane are indeed missing something. The world of the normal and everyday requires *Tikkun*.

This parallels what the Alter Rebbe says in *Tanya* in regard to *t'shuva*, repentance: “The essence of repentance is in the heart, and in the heart are found many distinctions and gradations.” Therefore, even if one has done *t'shuva* correctly, even if the repentance is complete, once one reaches a higher level, ascends in spirituality, the *t'shuva* must also be elevated. In simple terms, the more refined, the more spiritually purified we become, the more sensitive we are to the smallest defect in our thoughts, speech or action. This requires a greater degree of *t'shuva*. For example, a stain on a

Tikkun – Perfection – is both an accomplished state and an ongoing process. What is complete within the six days of creation still needs correction from the perspective of Shabbos. T’shuva is the process of correction. When t’shuva is complete, we reach the time that is “all Shabbos,” the times of Moshiach.

common garment is not cause for great concern; the garment is still completely functional. But the same stain on a silken garment would ruin it.

So, when the Sages say that one should spend all his days in *t’shuva*, they obviously don’t mean that the sins and transgressions have not been washed away and removed by the “first level” of *t’shuva*. Assuming the *t’shuva* is done properly and sincerely, of course the *t’shuva* was perfect and complete (just as the works of creation were perfect and complete on the sixth day). Nevertheless, there are many levels of *t’shuva*, and having refined and elevated one’s self, one must also rise to the next level of *t’shuva*. (The sanctity and holiness reached on one Shabbos carries us through the coming week, but on the next Shabbos – we must reach even higher.)

We can understand this from the simple example of *tz’daka*. As one’s wealth grows, so too does the amount one is obligated to give to *tz’daka*. For an individual less well off, if he gives an amount appropriate to his status and situation, he has given *tz’daka* in the most perfect way possible. But once his situation and status improve, once he is on a higher material level, then what sufficed yesterday does not suffice today. He must give *tz’daka* not according to what he had available yesterday, but according to his means today. The same is true of *t’shuva* – one can repent – or more accurately, return – on a continuous spectrum of scrupulousness and self-examination, of sensitivity and spiritual refinement. In this sense, even *tzaddikim* can do *t’shuva*. It is no coincidence that in Hebrew the words “*t’shuva*” and “the Sabbath” have the same letters.

This brings us to Moshiach. The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe declared, “Immediate *T’shuva*,

immediate Redemption.” This concept, that Moshiach and *t’shuva*, are connected is rooted in the Rambam, who explains that “As soon as Israel does *t’shuva*, they will be immediately redeemed.” Further, the era of Redemption, the days of Moshiach, are referred to as a day that will be all Shabbos. Thus we find several connections: *t’shuva* and Moshiach, *t’shuva* and Shabbos, and of course, Moshiach and Shabbos. These are all conceptually parallel. Shabbos is the seventh day, following six days of creation; the days of Moshiach will be the seventh millennium, following six millennia of *t’shuva*, mitzvos and acts of goodness and

kindness.

Just as Shabbos represents a state of being categorically different than the preceding six days of creation, so too our spirituality, the nature of our existence, will be radically different during the days of Moshiach.

There is a practical lesson. From the perspective of the six days of creation or the first level of *t’shuva*, we have accomplished a lot – indeed, everything that can be asked of us. We have reached a level of perfection – a spiritual comfort zone reflected in our abundance of possessions and physical comforts. As the Rebbe has said, we have already done *t’shuva*.

Still, material wealth is not Shabbos. In fact, it is irrelevant on Shabbos. From the perspective of Shabbos – which is a microcosm of the days of Moshiach – creation is insufficient. True, the six days of the week, our *Tikkun Olam* and the six millennium are all, each in its “sphere of influence,” a necessary beginning and critical part of the process. But it’s not enough. There’s perfection, and then there’s a true, complete, final and everlasting perfection. We must go beyond the constraints and limits of perfection that we have already achieved. It is Erev Shabbos, the eve of the era of Redemption. We are in transition to the time when, as the prophet says, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean.” Just as Shabbos infuses the six days of the week even before it comes, so that even before Shabbos arrives openly, there’s a foretaste – which grows stronger the closer we come to Shabbos – so, too, we must be infused with the spirit of Redemption, the proximity of *Tikkun*. In the Rebbe’s words: “We must live with Moshiach.”

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 25, pp. 14-18)

THE FOUR MINIM THAT SAVED THEM

By Menachem Ziegelboim

“Why are you talking to me about four minim now? Don’t you see what’s going on here? While you stand here and talk to me you can get killed! Leave, it’s really not the right time now.”

R’ Meir Freiman, a young man in Kfar Chabad, was picked up by the army mobilization vehicle from the shul on Yom Kippur afternoon, 1973. A few hours later he was sitting behind the wheel of a tank and driving towards the battlefield in the south.

It was rough. They had many losses. Many friends fell. The first days of the war were a nightmare with no day or night. Morale was low, but when Sukkos arrived, R’ Meir’s sole concern was the Daled minim. “We must get a lulav and esrog,” he told his astonished friends.

He was unable to get the four minim in time for the first day of Sukkos. They arrived at the front the next day. He leaped off the tank and grabbed them excitedly, reciting the two brachos with great kavana.

The words, “who has granted us life and sustained us and enabled us to reach this occasion,” took on new meaning under the circumstances.

Meir was among the armored forces that crossed the Suez Canal. Now they were parked opposite the city of Ismailia exposed to the shelling of the Egyptians. During breaks between shelling, his thoughts were on his home and family. He also thought of the mitzva of sukka that he was unable to observe that year.

When he finished with the lulav and esrog the “Lubavitcher” within him reared up. He suggested to his tank crew members that they do the mitzva too. They knew him already and had gotten used to his style, and they willingly agreed.

Then he decided to branch out and enable other soldiers to do the mitzva. He left the four minim on his tank and went over to the next tank that was parked two hundred meters away.

“Chag sameiach” he called out to the commander of the tank. The commander eyed the “weird religious guy” and said, “Chag what?”

Meir knew that the commander was from a HaShomer HaTzair, virulent anti-religious kibbutz. He also knew his views, which were mostly not compatible with Judaism. “Chag sameiach,” he called out again. “It’s Sukkos today and we just got a lulav and esrog. Come, you and your men, and say the bracha on them.”

The tank commander didn’t shoo him off as he might have done if he had met him under other circumstances. After all, they were brothers in arms and it was hard to refuse, but his self-respect and kibbutz education did not allow him to give in easily.

“Why are you talking to me now about mitzvos? Do you see what’s going on here? What chag and what mitzvos? While you are standing and talking to me, you can get killed! Leave, it’s really not the right time now.”

Meir just smiled and said, “Come, I’m telling you, and call the other guys too. Don’t be so negative. It’s Sukkos today, after all ...”

After some more back and forth, the commander acceded to Meir’s request. He even called the rest of the tank crew to come to Meir’s tank in order to say the bracha on the four minim.

The commander said the bracha first. He had just taken the lulav when an explosion

could be heard nearby. The soldiers who had crowded around Meir could not believe their eyes. A pillar of smoke rose from their tank, which had sustained a direct hit. They had just been sitting in it! The tank was engulfed in flames and from inside they could hear the sound of their ammunition exploding.

The tank commander recovered from the shock first.

“Thanks to you! Thanks to your lulav!” he shouted, and he fell on Meir and kissed him.

When they had calmed down a bit, the commander told Meir that until the end of Sukkos he would keep the esrog in his pocket. “It’s my good-luck charm. It saved my life. Whoever wants to say the bracha will borrow it from me.”

Shabbos Chol HaMoed found

Meir and his buddies entrenched in bunkers they had dug in the sand. Meir had somehow gotten hold of some wine for Kiddush. Friday night, during one of the respites, he suggested that they leave their bunker “in order to stretch our weary bones and make Kiddush.”

Some of the guys liked the idea and, despite the danger this entailed, they went out. The remaining soldiers were feeling very down and refused to get out. After some pleading, however, they also agreed to come out and hear Kiddush.

They went over to the nearby tank that served them as a table. Meir put a cup down, poured some wine, lifted the cup and began to recite the Kiddush. When he finished the bracha and all present had answered amen, the area shook from an explosion. This time it was very close. Once again it was a direct hit from an Egyptian shell; it had fallen right into the bunker they had just left.

“You saved our lives! Twice!” exclaimed the soldiers. Meir smiled. “It wasn’t me. It’s the mitzva!” he said modestly.

“Chag sameiach” he called out to the commander of the tank. The commander eyed the “weird religious guy” and said, “Chag what?”



A LUBAVITCHER SUKKOS IN MODERN AMERICA

By Menachem Ziegelboim

In 1929, The Rebbe Rayatz spent Sukkos in Crown Heights, which later became Lubavitch headquarters. At the time, it was a modern neighborhood and the few Chassidim who lived there were embarrassed to walk down the street holding their esrogim and lulavim.

PART I

Only two years had passed since the Rebbe Rayatz had left Russia after being persecuted to the point of being sentenced to death. He had miraculously been able to leave, but even then did not allow himself to relax but continued to agitate and work on behalf of the public good.

It was 5690/1929 when the Rebbe Rayatz visited the United States to strengthen the Jews there. He ignored his health problems and limited strength and sailed for America. He spent Tishrei 5690 in Brownsville, New York. This was a Jewish neighborhood that had about ten

shuls where people davened Nusach Ari.

Those who organized his trip assumed that not many Jews would join the Rebbe for the davening, as they had done in Russia where Chassidim came from dozens of cities and towns, large and small. They chose the “Anshei Lubavitch” shul on 195 Watkins Street, which was in a large and imposing building.

PART II

Before the Rebbe Rayatz arrived in America, he ordered Calabrian esrogim from an Italian esrog merchant, because of the

custom of saying the bracha on an esrog that comes from Calabria, Italy. He ordered ten esrogim and ten lulavim.

The esrogim and lulavim arrived in time at the address of Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson. They came along with another thirty sets that Rabbi Jacobson had ordered since, over the years, he sold esrogim to the Jews of New York and made a living this way.

The Rebbe spent Sukkos in Crown Heights, which is where he later established Lubavitch world headquarters. At that time it was a modern neighborhood and even the few Chassidim who lived there were embarrassed to walk in the street holding esrogim and lulavim.

When R’ Jacobson checked his esrogim he saw that there were a few that were outstanding. He immediately said that if he had a nicer esrog than the one the Rebbe got, he would bring the nicer esrog over to the Rebbe as a gift.

Between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, R’ Chatshe Feigin (may Hashem avenge his blood), the Rebbe’s secretary, called Rabbi Jacobson and told him that the Rebbe had heard that he had



a beautiful esrog and wanted to see it. Rabbi Jacobson took the esrog to the Rebbe and placed it on his desk.

The Rebbe's face lit up for it was indeed, a nicer esrog in size and appearance and was unusually clean of any blemishes. "This is not a galus esrog! Where did you get this from?"

R' Jacobson said, "I got three boxes from Italy with each one containing ten esrogim. In addition, he sent a separate box for the Rebbe."

The Rebbe examined the esrog and said, "My esrogim are nice, too, but not like yours."

The Rebbe indicated that the secretary should leave the room and then he said, "How much does this esrog cost?"

"Heaven forbid!" recoiled R' Jacobson. "I only ask the Rebbe to allow me to say the bracha on this esrog that I am giving him as a gift. It is completely 'lachem,' without any question."

The Rebbe said, "But you could have sold it to your

balabatim."

Said R' Jacobson, "I have plenty for the balabatim."

The Rebbe said, "You could make nice money from a balabus for this esrog."

Said R' Jacobson, "I have nice esrogim for the balabatim of our k'hilla too."

The Rebbe called his secretary and asked him to bring him his hat, and then he blessed R' Jacobson with a hearty bracha.

Then the Rebbe inquired about lulavim that grow in America, since the lulavim that had arrived for him at the beginning of Elul weren't good anymore.

R' Jacobson said that nice lulavim grew in California and Arizona. The Rebbe asked for a lulav and indicated which hiddurim he wanted: that the spine be in the middle and not on the side, with leaves close together, not a thin one, a straight one without curled ends and on the other side there should be 'moch' (the brown growth on the back side of the lulav).

The Rebbe looked at his new esrog again and again and said that he wanted to cut a bit of the *uketz* because it was a bit too big and crooked. The secretary asked the Chassid and shochet, R' Avrohom Gordon, of Crown Heights, to come with his sh'chita knife.

It wasn't an easy job because if the cut wasn't done right, the *uketz* would fall off and invalidate the esrog. The Rebbe spent a long time turning the esrog this way and that in order to find the best way to hold it so that the *uketz* wouldn't be entirely removed when it was cut. R' Avrohom took the esrog, placed the *uketz* on the edge of the table and pushed the knife through it until it cut properly.

R' Jacobson's oldest daughter, Chaya Sarah, was nine years old. She had emigrated with her father from Russia. While still in Russia, she had passed a street where there was a fire and had been very frightened. As a result, one eye began to wander.

With the Rebbe's approval, R' Jacobson brought his daughter to the Rebbe to receive his bracha. It was Sunday, Chol HaMoed Sukkos. The Rebbe gently asked her to look at him. The emotional father said to his daughter, "Look at the Rebbe!"

The Rebbe said, "She is looking and she sees straight."

From then on, her eyes were fine.

PART III

A few days before Yom Tov, R' Jacobson asked some of the people who davened in his shul to help build the Rebbe's sukka.

Three of them were willing – the brothers Tzvi Hirsh and Hillel Dvorkin and Yosef Honkim. They were carpenters by profession and knew what they had to do.

They built two sukkos, one large one for the crowd that would be visiting the Rebbe on Yom Tov, and a small sukka on

the roof of the first floor, which could be reached via an exit on the second floor.

They knew that a sukka for the Rebbe was not like other sukkos and they did their work conscientiously and with the desire to please the Rebbe. Yosef Honkim worked hard on even the smallest details. For example, he measured carefully so the Rebbe would not have to lift his foot too much when he would want to enter the sukka from his room.

The Chassid, R' Avrohom Plotkin also came to help with the construction. One of the people present said, "But you are not a carpenter?" He answered with a smile, "So, I'll hand them whatever they need." When they had to buy nails he ran and bought them. He also ran and brought a big bag of fruits for the workers.

PART IV

On Simchas Torah the hakafos took place amidst great joy until dawn, and only then did they eat the Yom Tov night meal. The joy superseded all limitations of time and the Rebbe and the Chassidim washed for the daytime meal moments before the sun set.

Some Jewish reporters came at

The emotional father said to his daughter, "Look at the Rebbe!" The Rebbe said, "She is looking and she sees straight." From then on, her eyes were fine.

night to cover the Lubavitcher Simchas Torah in modern America, a historic event. They took notes of what the Rebbe said during the sicha even though they had a hard time understanding talks on such a high level. The Rebbe's secretary, R' Chaim Lieberman stood near the Rebbe and placed a paper on the back of one of the people there and he took notes (after the halachic end of Yom Tov). These notes are printed in Sifrei HaSichos for generations to come.

(From the memoirs of Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson "Zikaron l'Bnei Yisroel," chapter 28)

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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 2 of 2.

[Continued from last issue]

HOW DOES A CHILD LEARN TO READ?

During the period when he worked in Tzfas' southern neighborhood, R. Mendel was made aware of a certain difficulty in reading encountered by some children, which led him to make the research study that took him nearly twenty years(!). In the process, R. Mendel designed a profound and

modern outlook on the world of reading for children. The surprising thing is that the solution is found in a small booklet entitled "*Mevo L'Kria*" (Introduction To Reading), printed by the Rebbe himself!

In order to enter the special world of R. Mendel, and of every Jewish child, we first must go back several decades, to the days when we were in "cheder," in order that we can provide an answer to the question: "How does someone

learn to read?"

It turns out that the answer is not so simple. The process of reading is comprised of two parts: the letters and the vowels. The letters themselves don't have a sound as such; they receive a sound only when we join a vowel to the letter, and then the vowel forms a sound that we express as *kametz-Alef*, *patach-Alef*, *kametz-Beis*, *patach-Beis*, etc.

At the initial stage, when a child comes to cheder, he learns the names of the letters and their shapes. At the second stage, we teach him the names of the vowels and their appearance. Now, the child comes to the third and hardest stage: he is expected to connect the vowels to the letters – in other words, he must grasp that the vowels are the musical notes for the letters, through which each letter obtains its sound. For us, this is all quite simple, but for a young child learning this, it's an entirely different world. For the purpose of illustration, we will describe someone explaining to his friend how to change gears in a car. If we settle for a theoretical explanation and try to drive the car accordingly, it stands to reason that it won't go

so smoothly, and we'll need someone to guide us and show us in practical terms how to connect the explanation to the reality. Amateurs would call this the "difficult" stage, but those more professional will say that this represents a gap as wide as an ocean that can be bridged only through the "internalization approach."

This difficulty also exists among older children learning trope. The boy learns to sing the tone as it is, but when he comes to the stage where he has to apply the melody to the words in Chumash, this proves to be most difficult.

So what are we supposed to do?

In fact, the accepted approach is simply to review "*kametz-Alef*" with the child again and again through a variety of methods: flash-cards, songs, worksheets, etc. – until G-d Alm-ghty, in His Infinite Mercy, suddenly enables the boy to internalize that "*kametz-Alef*" and "*patach-Alef*" are two separate entities in which one is read one way and the other is read another

way. But the problem is that we're talking about one letter with two different vocalizations, which alter the manner in which we read each letter.

R. Sholom Ber Henig, from the staff of the Tzfas melamdim, explains this in a more figurative sense: "When a child reaches this stage, he stands at the edge of an abyss between himself and reading, and you tell him, 'You must pass to the other side. I will help you, I will push you, I will spur you on – but you must make the actual passage on your own. There is no one who can do it for you – it's up to you to review the material and sharpen your skills until you finally get it.'"

Most children make the crossing at one stage or another, but there are other children who are unable to bridge the gap, some of whom are even sent afterwards to a reading tutor.

In order to reach a solution to this problem, Rabbi Kumer analyzes it in a more refined manner. "Over a period of years, Rabbi Naftali HaKohen Roth would hold an

annual assembly for melamdim, bringing various professionals in the field of education. Today, the assembly is called "The Educators' Conference." During one such year, they brought a reading expert who surprised us by declaring that a child's brain is incapable of grasping reading until his eye-hand coordination is fully developed! He even proved this through the results of a simple test: A child who is able to jump on one foot and count to ten is sufficiently developed to grasp reading. Those in attendance were amazed: What is the connection between physical coordination and intellectual understanding?

"However, it turned that this expert was right. When I delved more deeply into the root of the problem, I reached the conclusion that reading is also a type of coordination! At the first stage, the child constructs within his memory a collection of letters; at the second stage, vowels; and at the third stage, he is required to form a picture of, for example, *kametz-Alef*. He must now identify that there are two parts, belonging to separate groups, and then go to each group and retrieve the data that he recognizes, for example, *Alef* and *kametz*. Then, he combines the information from these two groups, resulting in a new and third concept that did not exist in his databanks up until now. This is coordination.

"This understanding led me to another conclusion: It turns out that there is a small percentage of children who are not yet sufficiently developed. This is not a shortcoming. Just as some children learn to crawl at five months and others at eight months, so too in regard to reading. These children fail to identify that *kametz-Alef* is comprised of two parts. While some of them do manage to grasp this



Why are you lying to me? Yesterday, you showed me a picture of kametz-Alef and told me that it's called kametz-Alef-Ah, but today you showed me the same picture and said that it's only called Ah.' A shtarke kasha (a good question).

concept, others have considerable difficulty in taking two separate pieces of data and combining them into a new entity. This is similar to a new housewife who has a wonderful new recipe for baking a cake. She follows the instructions with the utmost precision, but there's 'a little something' in the way that professional bakers do it that make it come out totally different – it's not a matter of knowledge, rather one of maturity. This is something that is meant to develop in a person's mind, which enables him to do such actions.

"The difficulty with these children is that the teacher is progressing, while this child, failing to keep up, gets frustrated with his reading, sees a sure-fire prescription for failure, and refuses to try any more. On more than one occasion, I've met with first- and second-grade children who can't seem to grasp the material in their textbook, the seifer 'Massores'.

"'Massores' is a marvelous seifer, and the Rebbe also mentioned once about how 'Massores' is studied in Eretz Yisroel. However, for about fifteen percent of reading-age children, the means to bridge this gap is to be found elsewhere. When I was searching for a solution to this problem, I discovered excellent s'farim such as 'HaMelamed,' 'V'Shinantam,' and 'Alef Bina,' all of which strive to find a proper solution to this problem."

INTRODUCTION TO READING

During this same period, there lived a chassidic Jew in Tzfas named R. Eliyahu Aryeh Friedman, of blessed memory. He was a very special chassid, whose head was so filled with original ideas in education that people used to say that all the money in Switzerland would not be enough to implement his ideas...

"R. Eliyahu would farbreng much with me on the subject of education," Rabbi Kumer longingly recalled. "At a certain point, he started 'nudging' me why we don't learn the seifer 'Mevo L'Kria'? He vehemently claimed that the solution to the problem that I mentioned is found in this booklet!"

The story of "Mevo L'Kria" began in the Latvian capital of Riga. There was a melamed in the city who wrote this booklet, designed for children aged five and six (slightly older than those who learn it today). The melamed himself did not get out of Riga (may G-d avenge his blood), but the booklet did, and the Rebbe printed it under the auspices of Merkaz L'Inyonei Chinuch. In the past, different melamdim in the United States have tried to use it to teach reading, however, many of them justifiably claimed that it contained little exercise material and abandoned its

usage.

"R. Eliyahu pressured and pressured, and I promised that I would start teaching out of the booklet. He claimed that a child could come with complaints to his melamed such as, 'Why are you lying to me? Yesterday, you showed me a picture of kametz-Alef and told me that it's called kametz-Alef-Ah, but today you showed me the same picture and said that it's only called Ah.' A shtarke kasha (a good question).

"In any event, I accepted this thin booklet and joined it to my growing collection of educational texts and worksheets. It took me fifteen years to grasp that it contained something truly special!"

Rabbi Kumer places a brown booklet on the table. He opens to the first page, and immediately points to something rather interesting. There appears a table containing all the Hebrew letters, with its proper pronunciation written in English (Alef, Bet, etc.). "Why is there a need for the English transliteration? Because it is a known and accepted fact that there are three letters which are not pronounced as they are written: Tes, Ches, and Mem. While they are called with a Segol, they are pronounced with a Tzeirei – Teis, Cheis, and Meim. The Rebbe included the English transliteration in order to preserve the correct way to read the letter.

"However, the innovation to this booklet is expressed on other levels. The booklet's unique approach is how it teaches the child 'the most fundamental principle to reading,' and afterwards, he manages with the reading on his own. As a result, expectations at the initial stage are lowered. At first, the child practices combining the letter and the vowel, but only two at a time. For example, the first page starts with kametz-Alef-Ah. What's happening

here? The child learning first reads *kametz*, afterwards *Alef*, and then he suddenly sees the two of them together – explaining to him at once that *kametz-Alef* is comprised of two things.”

Someone who already enthusiastically adopted this approach is the counselor for learning disabilities serving several schools throughout the Tzfas area. She was exposed to this approach during her work in Chabad schools, and since then she has incorporated it as part of her learning framework. “I have identified a parallel between this approach of Rabbi Kumer and the ‘phonetic’ approach, which is a new method in use today in more formal settings,” she explains.

Rabbi Kumer attributes the securing of a proper solution of this problem to the fundamentals of the “*Mevo L’Kria*” approach, which is based upon the success of the child. Every page begins with a review of material that the child already knows, followed by his exposure to a little more new material, and

afterwards more review of what he already knows. The approach is simply ingenious. As he begins to read the page, the child immediately feels the success; he already recognizes the concepts and reads them fluently. He easily manages to prevail over the little new material, and eventually he returns to the warm lap of success.

“When I was perusing this booklet,” Rabbi Kumer recalled, “I realized that the person who compiled it simply tried to sell success to children – and this is just wonderful! The child internalizes that reading is something simple and pleasant, and this is the most important thing on the path to progress in reading. For example, today I came to a kindergarten, and you should have seen how the children ran in from the courtyard to learn a little reading. Why? Because they know that they’ll get an easy page to work on, they’ll finish it, and they’ll feel good about it. In contrast, when a child receives a reading worksheet and declares, ‘I’ve done this already,’ this points

to a certain difficulty that he has with reading; if he had no problem, he would immediately take the worksheet and read it out loud with great vigor.

“This marvelous approach also applies to children who have not matured enough. Since the seifer is based upon lots of review and little new material at each stage, every child is capable of making progress. In English, this is called ‘success breeds success’ – the child reviews the material and slowly makes progress, but with a feeling of success. According to the regular approaches, such a child is liable to remain behind or to come up against some ‘wall’ and make no further success – a feeling of failure. According to this approach, the progress is slower, but it gives him the time to reach greater development.

“On the other hand, teaching with this approach requires patience. Parents who keep track of their child don’t understand why he isn’t making any ‘progress’ in his reading. They see how his older siblings at this age had already learned Daled and Hei with vowels, whereas this child, with the same melamed, is still holding at Alef and Beis with just *kametz* and *patach*... Practically speaking, however, the child is learning and properly internalizing the basis of reading, and afterwards, when he reaches the other letters, he will already be ‘running’...”

The facts are that it is most difficult to work with the “*Mevo L’Kria*” booklet, since it contains very few practice exercises. Therefore, Rabbi Kumer began producing worksheets based on the “*Mevo L’Kria*” approach.

Years passed, and Rabbi Kumer was appointed supervisor for the staff of *melamdin* in Tzfas. In connection with that role, he began putting out reading instruction



booklets for the teachers working under him. His work approach was most interesting. The teaching approach was chosen by the melamed himself, as were the s'farim with which they taught. Accordingly, the melamed then received appropriate booklets and worksheets from R. Mendel to serve as teaching aids. If the melamed was faced with a problem with a certain child, he always found that R. Mendel had a listening ear, not to mention a sizable quantity of learning material geared exactly for the specific problem at hand.

A short while after R. Mendel assumed his position as supervisor of the Tzfas melamdin, he began collecting the sizable amount of required learning material in his possession, in order to put together one all-inclusive seifer. In 5762, he could announce the completion of the first volume in the series "*Otiot Meirot*" (Illuminating Letters), which primarily teaches about letters and vowels.

As is known, the Rebbe gives much encouragement to the printing of s'farim. You can find many letters in Igros Kodesh sent for the purpose of urging one person or another to publish his seifer as quickly as possible. Even when R. Mendel reported to the Rebbe via Igros Kodesh about the preparations on the first seifer, almost every letter he received was an expression of appreciation on the publishing of a seifer. When he reported in 5762 on the seifer's actual printing, he was privileged to receive a reply containing a request that he give top priority to the publishing of two additional s'farim...

The truth is that R. Mendel thought that he had far more material... So he started work on arranging the coming s'farim, all the while he was receiving messages of encouragement from the Rebbe.

It's not easy to put out such a seifer. You have to take abstract art and bring it down into general educational principles and approaches with which anyone can operate. When the work was done slowly due to his many pursuits, he even merited to receive a "punishment." "The Rebbe didn't let me come to 770 when I was working on the s'farim," he recalled. "Once I even got hit with a 'fine,' as the Rebbe wrote that instead of making the trip, I should place the money in a Gemach..."

This reminded him of another interesting episode: "One year, I traveled to the Rebbe and participated in the farbrengens. Suddenly, I heard the Rebbe speaking about the fact that there are melamdin wandering around the world... Of course, from that moment on, I never dared to travel to 770 without permission. Furthermore, when I was working on the s'farim, I didn't receive permission to come for six years!"

"On every auspicious day on the chassidic calendar, I felt that I was receiving renewed strength to finish the publishing job, and I continued making progress. About a year ago, I saw that the project was on the verge of completion, and when I submitted a report to the Rebbe, I received an answer that if I arrange matters, I can come to 770 for Tishrei. During that summer, things actually started dragging along a bit, and it reached the point that the Rebbe once wrote to me 'with great sorrow' about how the collection had not yet been printed. The Rebbe added that it would be possible to complete the seifer by Yud-Tes Kislev, 'and if he wants, he could do it even earlier.' This letter put me into a much faster work pace. The very thought that I had caused 'great sorrow' to the Rebbe spurred me on and gave me no rest. I worked around the clock, and

thank G-d, when I boarded the plane on my way to the Rebbe for Tishrei, I had the two new volumes with me..."

Rabbi Kumer's "*Otiot Meirot*" series is a source of enlightenment, both in its presentation and its unique approach to transmitting reading skills. As mentioned earlier, the first volume deals with the letters and the vowels. The second volume teaches how to join the letter to the vowel, and the third volume for the more progressive students includes word combinations and some innovations from Rabbi Kumer himself...

The first edition had already been sold, and Rabbi Kumer printed the second edition, while also receiving encouragement from the Rebbe every step of the way. One of the more interesting instructions he received from the Rebbe via Igros Kodesh was not to sell the s'farim through regular bookstores, and he gave an explanation: Professional melamdin who take the seifer to children will not understand what's so special about it and will justifiably abandon its usage. Therefore, someone should be sent to explain the subject to them and sell them the seifer privately.

"There are many unique points to these s'farim," explained the counselor on learning disabilities with whom we spoke. "The most important point is that the children do not back away from their exposure to the seifer. It is built according to a unique and gradual approach in a way that avoids sharp turns from one objective to another. As mentioned previously, this approach parallels the customary phonetic approach in use today which creates "mechanized reading" within the child. In other words, the child learns how to extract automatically the required data from his memory without the

need for constant exertion, as he thinks and whispers to himself 'kametz-Alef-Ah,' and only then does he say 'Ah.' This approach brings the child to an immediate jarring of his memory to produce the necessary information. Even the possibility of moving from seifer to seifer contributes to its ease and success."

A good melamed must recognize the sensitive and tender soul of every child in his classroom. For example, you can have a child who excels and make wonderful progress in his learning until...a baby brother is born and comes into the house and then...nothing for six months...

R. Sholom Ber Henig concurs on this point. "Learning to read is not like learning Gemara, where there's a certain amount of material that the teacher has to cover before the end of the year. In contrast, the objective of reading is that the child knows how to read. As a result, when the need prevails, we even

review material that the child learned during the initial stages to refresh his memory. Today's approach to learning is constant review over the letters and vowels, even when the child already knows how to combine letters into a word. Review is still most appropriate – since it is the primary basis of reading. These three s'farim provide a wide cushion with a vast range of exercises for the child to review constantly, tirelessly, and with much enthusiasm."

"In the final analysis," Rabbi Kumer concludes, "we have to remember that besides all the various s'farim, educational approaches, and other means of transmitting the learning material, there is also a child and a teacher. The child is a pure and untainted soul. Anyone who knows how to look can see clearly the 'My anointed ones' within children. In any event, every child has his strengths and weaknesses. There are things that he loves to do and others that he doesn't. A good melamed must recognize the sensitive and tender soul of every child in his classroom. For example, you can have a child who excels and make wonderful progress in his learning until...a baby brother is born and comes into the house and then...nothing for six months..."

"On the other hand, there is the melamed. In order for him to be a good melamed, he must have a naturally proper approach to children, otherwise he shouldn't even bother starting. In addition, a melamed must accept constructive criticism on a regular basis. I received constructive criticism from the principal of the Ohr Menachem Talmud Torah in Tzfas, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Levkivker, and today the teachers get it from me," he said with a smile.

"A melamed also must continue his education. There are a variety of

fields of knowledge that even the most qualified melamed in the world won't know if he doesn't learn them, and today they are absolutely mandatory. While it's true that the melamedim of generations past taught perfectly well without learning 'didactics,' nevertheless, it is well-known the special way that the Rebbe related to the 'The Educators' Conference' organized for the past twenty years by Rabbi Naftali HaKohen Roth. Every participant at this conference can acquire new tools and methods in the field of education..."

"And how do we determine who is a good melamed?" Rabbi Kumer asks rhetorically. His reply is clear. "By the expressions on the faces of the children when he arrives in the morning. A melamed must draw the child to him with thick bonds, and then to the study of reading. The Rebbe frequently brings the story of how the Rebbe Maharash cried as a young boy 'Why does G-d reveal Himself to Avraham Avinu but not to me?' The Rebbe once explained that ever since that cry, the approach to education has changed. That cry bestowed strengths to educate a child in a way that he will yearn for G-d to the point of crying "Why doesn't G-d reveal Himself to me?"

How do we achieve this?

"Once at a farbrengen, I heard the Rebbe say that the Rebbe Maharash's feelings of yearning were instilled within him by his melamed. Nu, how do we instill such yearning? I asked this question to many teachers, and one of them said that we simply have to daven..."

Yet, R. Mendel Kumer says with much emotion: "When a child has strong feelings of yearning for his melamed, as a result, this can also create similar feelings for G-d!"

SUKKA OF PEACE

By Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi, Rav, Kehillas Chabad, Tel Aviv

During the Aseres Y'mei T'shuva, a Jew is busy with his soul and makes this his primary preoccupation to the point that he rises above his body's needs on Yom Kippur. On Sukkos, we focus on the second part, making the body secondary, when a man leaves his protected, comfortable house for a sukka, a temporary structure, which shows that the body is secondary.

WHAT DOES SUKKOS HAVE TO DO WITH ELUL-TISHREI?

If you learn what the Alter Rebbe says in chapter 32 of *Tanya*, it seems as though he is putting us in an awkward position when he says that the way to know the state of your avodas Hashem is by examining the state of your Ahavas Yisroel. The order of events in the month of Tishrei (which begins with the month of Elul) expresses the same idea.

Starting with Rosh Chodesh Elul, we are in a constant process of elevation. In Elul we greet the king in the field, and on Rosh HaShana we enter his palace. In other words, we are occupied with the lower level of t'shuva and we rise to the higher level of t'shuva. On Rosh HaShana we are occupied with general t'shuva

and a general kabbalas ol, and on Yom Kippur in personal t'shuva for our specific actions.

As is alluded to in the verse, "If we had not delayed then we would have returned twice" – if (*Lulei* the same letters as Elul) in Elul we did a proper spiritual accounting, then we could have attained two levels and forms of t'shuva on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. In the t'filla of N'ila we achieve such a high level that Hashem secludes Himself with every single Jew.

So we go from the level of "little me crowning the king" on Rosh HaShana to rising before Hashem on Yom Kippur. We might have the feeling that all is wonderful, there is no one like us – we have risen up and have been elevated to high levels in the service of Hashem.

Then comes Sukkos when all

Jews, all types of Jews with all sorts of views, as it were, sit in one sukka. There is no "eastern wall" and "western wall," no more protected or less protected. All are equal when they sit under the s'chach.

How does Sukkos fit in after the elevation of Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur? The answer is that Sukkos serves as the touchstone for the avoda of the Yomim Nora'im. The test is whether we are truly one. This tells us whether our avodas Hashem was real, whether we accepted the malchus Hashem on the Yomim Nora'im properly.

What is the connection between our avodas Hashem (of the Yomim Nora'im) and how we regard others (represented by Sukkos)? The answer is at the beginning of chapter 32 of *Tanya* where it says that the foundation of avodas Hashem entails viewing the body as secondary and the soul as primary. This is what enables us to fulfill the mitzva of Ahavas Yisroel.

The month of Tishrei provides us with a good example of this two-part principle. During the Aseres Y'mei T'shuva, a Jew is busy with his soul and makes this his primary preoccupation to the point that he rises above his body's needs on Yom Kippur. On Sukkos, we focus on the second part, making the body secondary, when a man leaves his protected, comfortable house for a sukka, a temporary structure, which shows that the body is secondary.

Being in the sukka throughout one's waking hours deepens the awareness and feeling that there is no personal stature and no possessions (of **mine**, which I acquired). When on Sukkos you lack a house and you have only vegetation above you, which does not fully protect you from the burning sun or heavy rain, you feel that all you have are spiritual possessions. In other words, the bottom line is: the soul is primary and the body is secondary.

I heard a story about someone who managed to drive this point home with his extremely wealthy friend. When he visited the friend, the latter showed him what a wonderful house he owned, but he wasn't impressed. He merely asked: Tell me, do you have a hump on your back? The wealthy man did not understand what connection there was between a hump on the back and his wealth.

The wealthy man took him on a tour of his property and the industries he had built up over the years, and he just kept asking: Yeah, but do you have a hunchback?

Finally, the wealthy man's patience ran out and he asked: What connection is there between a hunchback and my vast wealth? Why aren't you impressed?

The friend said: All this wealth will remain here after 120, but if you had a hump on your back, you could take it with you because it's the only physical thing that goes along with you.

Throughout Sukkos, a person has an opportunity to examine what "possessions" he considers worthwhile. If he really did the work and rose in level from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Sukkos, then it will affect the fulfillment of the mitzvos of the four minim and the sukka about which it says,

"all Israel are worthy to sit in one sukka."

"LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD, PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP"

The fact that Ahavas Yisroel is an important foundation in the avoda of Elul through Tishrei is expressed numerous times when we ask in our davening that there be peace – "quickly bring blessing and peace upon us," "may there be abundant peace from Heaven," "Hashem will bless His nation with peace," and the Priestly



Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi

Blessing which ends with the blessing for peace. During the t'fillos of the Aseres Y'mei T'shuva we say, "*oseh ha'shalom ... hu yaaseh shalom.*"

What sort of peace are we asking for in all these prayers? It cannot be just peace between the Jewish people and their gentile enemies (which will happen only with the coming of Moshiach). It refers to peace among us. In order to understand what this peace consists of, the explanation in Chassidus on the Midrash on

the words "He makes peace up Above" will be helpful.

The Midrash says that these words are speaking of Michael, the Angel of Water, and Gavriel, the Angel of Fire, who make an alliance in order to carry out G-d's will and they don't extinguish one another. How is this possible? As long as each one feels and promotes **his** unique characteristic, they are opponents and cannot unite. But when they take on G-dly characteristics, the "form" of the Creator, their own individual "forms" do not exist; they are battul and their mutual antipathy is battul.

The same is true for people. If you rise above the physical, which separates one person from another, you can achieve Ahavas Yisroel and peace with others. A quarrel is generally when someone is interfering with your ideal view of the world. Whoever does not fit into his little world disturbs him. Shalom pertains especially to Sukkos because on Sukkos a person leaves his habitual life - I cannot manage without ____ (air conditioner, arm chair etc.) - and he is better able to unite with other kinds of people in the sukka.

The explanation of "He makes peace up Above" expresses the true meaning of peace. The peace up Above doesn't happen when Michael and Gavriel keep their distance from one another. It's when they join forces despite their differences.

In other words, when we say 'shalom' it does not refer merely to co-existence without fighting, but to a complete unity which creates the ability to forge ahead towards the destination.

The best example for this is marriage. A couple that lives like two parallel lines that never fight because they do not express their

opinions in order to keep the peace, cannot be said to have shalom bayis. It is only if there is “love and brotherhood” – mutual feelings and the joint desire to build an everlasting edifice that they can merit the continuation of the bracha with which a newlywed couple is blessed, “peace and friendship.” This happens when they rise above their differences and focus on the goal of “they shall build Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them.”

AHAVAS YISROEL REQUIRES EFFORT

There can be a situation in which a person feels “I have no problem with Ahavas Yisroel; the ones who have a problem are the people around me, but not me!” This attitude is erroneous!

If the Alter Rebbe says that a person’s avodas Hashem is reflected in his Ahavas Yisroel, how can a person dare to say that he’s fine and it’s the other people who have a problem? Is Ahavas Yisroel so trivial that a person can acquire it easily with no effort? In so many maamarim, sichos, and letters the Rebbe pleads for Ahavas Yisroel among us. Have we mastered it?

How can a person test where he stands when it comes to Ahavas Yisroel? He can see how many minutes he devotes to thinking, talking, and doing good for someone he thinks is not an Ohev Yisroel. Is even a quarter of the time he spends thinking and talking about what other people lack spent on checking whether the deficiency lies with him?

When it comes to someone else, a person can spend hours talking about what’s wrong with him. When it comes to himself? He’s finished in seconds. A person who is more honest and

generous will be willing to agree that “True, I’m not 100% perfect, but the problem right now is with the other guy.”

The amazing thing is that although we are all smart and we all know that in chapter 32 of *Tanya* the Alter Rebbe equates our Ahavas Hashem with our Ahavas Yisroel, when it comes to Ahavas Hashem no Chassid claims he is anywhere near perfect, as he does with his Ahavas Yisroel. On the contrary, he knows he is far from perfect. This is especially so if he has learned some Chassidus and knows that Ahavas Hashem is a genuine emotion felt in the heart and not something imaginary. After knowing this, and learning that the Alter Rebbe says that Ahavas Yisroel is greater than Ahavas Hashem because “he loves what his beloved loves,” how can he be sure that he doesn’t have a lot of work to do on himself when it comes to Ahavas Yisroel?

Every Chassid knows that in order to acquire a bit of Ahavas Hashem you have to spend months and years learning a lot of Chassidus and meditating on it. Then the next day, you have to continue learning and meditating.

When it comes to Ahavas Yisroel though, people assume it’s something that doesn’t require effort and only the other guy needs to work on it. “I belong to the club of Ohavei Yisroel; I *fargin* and value every single person.” It seems as though he has examined himself carefully, in the most objective way possible, and is sure that he is right. If there is a lack of peace between him and others, he comes to the conclusion that it’s their fault, not his. Just to be sure, before he attacks someone he announces: I love you, I love you...

Whoever thinks this way has

no idea what truth in avodas Hashem is. Are his bodily needs really secondary and his soul primary? You need to toil on 31 chapters of *Tanya* until you get a taste of the level of “their soul is primary and their body secondary.” There is no shortcut. Whoever thinks the other person is the one who is lacking, is really saying that he has no idea what avodas Hashem is and what the animal soul is.

Maybe he thinks he was born like Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe’s nature was that his neshama prevailed over the body, so when he was born the house filled with light, i.e. his body was illuminated with the light of his neshama from the moment he was born. He forgets that by Chassidim, thoughts like these were *muktza machmas mius* (off-limits because they are disgusting) and they need to be thrown out even on Shabbos.

We shouldn’t live a lie, fooling ourselves into thinking that we are perfect when it comes to fine middos and Ahavas Yisroel. There’s a lot of work that needs to be done when it comes to Ahavas Yisroel and, as Hillel said, it is the foundation of the Torah.

HOW TO MAKE A REAL SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTING

We all know that we have to keep track of the money in our bank account so we don’t get into trouble. All the more so must we make an accounting when it comes to subjective things like Ahavas Yisroel, so we don’t “get into trouble.” This is what we need to be thinking about over Sukkos: Where am I holding – is my body primary or my soul?

R’ Shmuel Munkes once helped one of the great Chassidim of the Alter Rebbe to see where he was holding in this avoda. R’

Shmuel went to the home of the wealthy R' Meir Refael's and he lay on the couch with his muddy boots. R' Meir wasn't home at the time and when he came in, his wife said to him, "Some odd fellow came in and lay on the couch with his muddy boots."

If you rise above the physical, which separates one person from another, you can achieve Ahavas Yisroel and peace with others. A quarrel is generally when someone is interfering with your ideal view of the world. Whoever does not fit into his little world disturbs him.

R' Meir said to his guest, "Shmuel, why with the mud? Take your boots off and lie down, be my guest!"

R' Shmuel left the house as though he was annoyed, saying, "What? You care about things

like that?"

R' Meir ran after him and begged him to come back. R' Shmuel agreed on condition that R' Meir would prance through the streets of Vilna on a broomstick. Though it was beneath R' Meir's dignity, he did it anyway. This was in order to instill in him the foundation of the entire Torah, namely that the soul has to be primary.

How should a person know the truth? First, he should examine how he relates to his body and its needs. How does he react if someone takes his Maftir, his seat, his place in the picture or his position in the group?

He needs to examine himself to see whether he says (as the Rebbe once said at a farbrengen) *ashamnu* (the confession "we are guilty") while forgiving himself but he doesn't think the poor other fellow is deserving of forgiveness. It's only the other guy who doesn't deserve the benefit of the doubt that maybe he too does not seek quarrels and is not the Sonei Yisroel type.

The best way to check and see where you're holding and what is primary and secondary to you is by assessing your ability to be *melamed z'chus* (finding merit) on others. The Rambam says that if the entire Sanhedrin judges a person as guilty, then he is declared innocent! The Rebbe explains this by saying that every Jew has good within him, and if not a single member of the Sanhedrin is able to see it, they did not judge him properly.

So too, the proof that a person judges his fellow properly is when he sees positive traits in him and speaks in praise of him. The bad (real or imagined) that he sees in the other, whether in his actions or intentions, is obvious. But what about the other person's

good intentions and good deeds – does he take note and publicize them like he publicizes the bad (real or imagined)?

AN AYIN TOVA IN THOUGHTS, SPEECH AND DEED

There is another measuring stick that a person can use to ascertain where he is really holding. He should ask himself (after shooting lots of arrows at someone) whether all these arrows come from his G-dly soul or from the animal soul. He will conclude that they come from his animal soul and now he must listen to the voice of his G-dly soul which tells him that the deficiencies he found in his fellow are only a reflection of his own faults.

One of the mashgichim of the previous generation told his students: If one of you goes into the dormitory and sees a bachur quickly coming out from under the bed, what would you suspect the bachur wanted to do?

Each talmid came up with something else. One said he wanted to hide a gadget that the yeshiva forbids. Others said he hid a forbidden newspaper, cigarettes, a stolen item. One talmid said the bachur wanted to hide from the mashgiach and another said the bachur was planning a prank.

The mashgiach said: How come not one of you suggested that the bachur had a cross (Heaven forbid) and that he keeps it under his bed and he kisses it there every day? You didn't think of this because this is foreign to your world. As for the other suggestions, they are prevalent in your world, whether in thought, speech, action, or in a dream or imagination. That

means that they are not out of the question for you.

The one who said it was a prank, is liable to do a prank himself and the same is true for the cigarettes, newspapers and so on. This is what Chazal mean when they say, “whoever invalidates others, invalidates with his own imperfection.” The Baal Shem Tov says that the other person is your mirror, i.e. what you think about the other person comes from **your world**.

If you truly understand this, then at least every time you think a thought about someone else, you will turn it back on yourself: What about me? Am I perfect in this?

Someone came to a tzaddik and complained that he had extraneous thoughts when he davened and he related some of these thoughts. The tzaddik said, “These are not foreign thoughts. They are *your* thoughts from the world you live in.”

This was said many generations ago at a time when there were great men who refined themselves. Now, although our generation is the generation of Geula, our avoda is the dregs of the klipos, the coarsest part of the klipos.

The Rebbe Maharash said that “once, the brain was made of silk and the stomach of leather, while today the brain is made of leather and the stomach is made of silk.” This means that today the brain is not pure and clean and capable of receiving the G-dly light and G-dly assumptions, along with spiritual subtleties. Our generation is called “the heel of Moshiach.” The skin on the heel is tough and you can walk on thorns and glass and not feel any pain.

Today, the brain is constructed of tough skin which is like the

skin on the heel. It is possible for a person to trample with his heels and disdain fundamental aspects of avoda like Ahavas Yisroel (when under normal circumstances, they would rip the skin and it would be painful) and not feel the spiritual damage done

***“You don’t know
how many
children I have,
yet they aren’t
hidden; it’s public
knowledge. But
you know how
much money I
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out in the street
with my money
like I do with my
children, and I
don’t take pictures
with my money as
I do with my
children, so how
do you know?”***

to himself.

If Chassidim in the time of the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe (who had mochin of silk, refined and spiritual) invested such great effort to implant love for another in their hearts (to the

point that Chassidim would say “my bread is yours as much as it is mine,” putting the ‘yours’ first), then surely in our time when the mochin is thick and coarse, we have to invest much more effort to attain true Ahavas Yisroel.

I heard from R’ Yona Eidelkopf a”h, who said in the name of the Rebbe Rashab, that a Chassid has to know the state of affairs of another Chassid so that he knows the name of his baby in the carriage. But what happens most of the time? We don’t know the situation of another Chassid and we only know how much money he has (or we think he has).

Chassid A was said to be a millionaire by Chassid B. Chassid A asked Chassid B, “How many children do I have?” Chassid B said he did not know.

Then the “millionaire Chassid” said: “You don’t know how many children I have, yet they aren’t hidden; it’s public knowledge. But you know how much money I have?! I don’t go out in the street with my money like I do with my children, and I don’t take pictures with my money as I do with my children, so how do you know?”

THE ESROG AND ARAVA MARCH TOGETHER TOWARDS GEULA

All this is supposed to be what we think about during Sukkos, a time when all types of Jews are supposed to unite, from the esrog who is the elite Chassid to the arava who is the mekurav. They are held together as one unit.

The point is not to extol the esrog and downplay the arava. That is what a Satmar Chassid who met a Lubavitcher, thought. The Satmar Chassid said it’s because of the lowliness of the

arava that we beat it on Hoshana Raba. The Lubavitcher said the esrog, lulav, and hadasim are jealous of the arava and wish the custom on Hoshana Raba is done with them.

The Lubavitcher stressed the importance of the arava although it seems to be lowest on the totem pole. If the neshama is primary and you consider the source of neshamos, who knows how great another Jew is, even if externally he looks like an arava?

This is the *tzeida l'derech* (food for the road) that the mitzva of sukka gives us: Before a person goes out to the world in the new year he must practice the principle of "the soul is primary and the body secondary," by absorbing large measures of Ahavas Yisroel. This enables him to serve Hashem properly, both in mitzvos between man and Hashem and mitzvos between man and his fellow.

Internalizing this principle in

avodas Hashem is especially important these days in order to get a taste of the Geula we are about to experience. In Geula, delicacies will be abundant like dust. If so, won't that be a colossal waste? Hashem doesn't create anything for nothing!

What it means is that in Geula, our feeling for physical delicacies will be like our feeling for dust, because our body and its needs will be of secondary importance to us.

Perhaps this is also the reason that when, in the future time, the goyim see the great reward that the Jewish people get and ask for a mitzva and Hashem will test them with the mitzva of sukka. Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath and the goyim will kick the sukka as they leave it.

This is an explanation for the future time, when the goyim will see the great reward that the Jewish people get and will ask Hashem for a mitzva. He will test

them with the mitzva of sukka, removing the sun from its sheath, and the goyim will kick the sukka as they leave it. This contrasts greatly with the Jewish people. When we can't stay in the sukka we leave sorrowfully, because we are sad that we are unable to fulfill this mitzva, which expresses the focus on the spiritual over the material. This is an order of priorities which only a Jew can relate to.

As Chassidim say, surely the Rebbe's wishes will be realized and very soon Hashem will erect sukkas Dovid Malka M'shicha. We will merit to sit in the sukka made of Leviasan skin with the true and complete Geula. May this happen through our fulfillment of the Rebbe's desire that we have Ahavas Chinam (unwarranted love), and may this happen immediately and through us.

Said at a Chassidishe farbrengen

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THE PAINFUL CONCESSIONS OF THE SHLUCHIM

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

I've written previously about shluchim who want to daven at length, as they did in yeshiva, but have to keep up with the Chabad house minyan. Or shluchim who would prefer not to carry on Shabbos but have to carry nosh to Mesibos Shabbos because making the children happy is more important than a personal stringency. The following stories are of this type.

HOW TO DAVEN

One of the shluchim brought out another two shluchim and opened a Chabad shul, which serves as a full-fledged Chabad center in that city. It wasn't easy, but after twenty years of davening in various municipal shuls, the effort was worthwhile. Then they had to decide on the nusach and the pronunciation. On the one hand, the shluchim really wanted the davening to be "like in Lubavitch." On the other hand, they wanted the broader public who were not Lubavitchers, to feel at home. It was a real dilemma.

They discussed pros and cons, this way and that, looked at other Chabad houses around Israel and the world, quoted various answers

from the Rebbe and finally, unanimously decided that the davening would be nusach Chabad but with a Sefardic pronunciation (i.e. typical Israeli pronunciation).

The minyan was successful and they are already discussing building a bigger Chabad house that can contain the many people who daven there on weekdays and Shabbos. The impact of the shul is enormous, since after the t'fillos are farbrengens which are mekarev people.

One Shabbos, the father-in-law of one of the shluchim came to his daughter and son-in-law. The father-in-law, from a Chabad community in the center of the country, was shocked to hear the Sefardic pronunciation in the new minyan, and he was furious. "Why isn't it in *lashon ha'kodesh*?" The father-in-law is a big believer in pronouncing the davening in the traditional, Chassidic way. He even has some quotes from the Rebbe about the importance of this, and he does not daven in a place that pronounces it differently.

The father-in-law sent sharp messages and insisted, to his son-in-law and the shliach, that they immediately revert back to the traditional pronunciation. He

declared that he would not visit his daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren on Shabbos because he cannot daven in a shul like that.

The bachur was unsure, it was the Aseres Yemei T'shuva after all, not really the time for jogging and exercises in the Botanic Gardens. Yet, it would enable him to spend two hours talking about Judaism. They went off together...

The shliach tried to salvage the relationship with the senior Chassid but to no avail. This went to the extent that they met at a Siyum HaRambam in Teveria and “I just wanted to shake his hand in greeting,” said the shliach, “but he said, ‘Because of you I can’t visit my grandchildren.’”

The Chassid’s feelings and position were nothing new to the shliach. He himself had thought a lot before making the decision, and of course he preferred a davening that was “like in Lubavitch.” But his desire to be mekarev as many Jews as possible to the Chabad house superseded his personal preferences. What a pity that the senior Chassid did not accept the reason for the decision.

Despite this unpleasantness, the

shluchim of that city will continue to daven with the Sefardic pronunciation (when they daven for the amud), because sometimes you have to forgo Chassidische hergeshim in order to further the Rebbe’s goal and be mekarev other Jews.

RUNNING DOWN EASTERN PARKWAY

A young shliach told me about something that happened when he was on K’vutza in 5763:

That year, I met a young Israeli in 770 who had just finished his army service and had traveled to America “in order to get as far away from Israel and all religious people as possible.” Then one day, he met a Lubavitcher bachur, they exchanged phone numbers, and the

Lubavitcher invited him to 770 for Rosh HaShana. “Get on the #3 subway; get off on Kingston Avenue, and I’ll be waiting for you at the exit.”

Rosh HaShana was approaching and the Israeli was curious enough to show up. He stayed with a Chassid who walked every Shabbos and Yom Tov to a shul in Queens in order to review a sicha of the Rebbe there. The bachur from K’vutza walked with him (three hours each way) Rosh HaShana morning and got to know the Israeli fellow.

The Israeli told the bachur from K’vutza that he loved sports. “Sports are my life.” He spent several hours a day on training, exercises, skills, running and walking. The bachur, in order to show that they had common



interests, said he also like sports and that it was very important to take care of your health and training etc. The Israeli was enthusiastic about the connection between Judaism and sports and decided to stay in 770 for another few days. He learned a bit, here and there, but he mainly did exercises wherever he could.

Then he suggested to the bachur on K'vutza that he join him on a run down Eastern Parkway to the Botanic Gardens where they would do calisthenics and then return (about two hours total). The bachur was unsure, it was the Aseres Yemei T'shuva after all, not really the time for jogging and exercises in the Botanic Gardens. Yet, it would enable him to spend two hours talking about Judaism. They went off together.

Their conversation had much Chassidishe content and the Israeli wanted to go every day. The Israeli told the bachur that while running, the amount of oxygen in the brain is diminished and it weakens your memory but if, while running, you accustom the brain to exercise the memory, it greatly improves the memory. The bachur's response to that was that the next time they ran they would learn *Tanya* by heart.

The next day, people were surprised to see a pair of young men running down Eastern Parkway, one without a beard and wearing a little kippa holding a *Tanya* and the other one bearded, looking like a yeshiva bachur, reciting chapter after chapter of *Tanya* by heart as he ran, while the first one tested him.

The lesson in exercise (and *Tanya*) continued throughout Tishrei. Yes, you read that correctly. Two hours a day. Running to the Botanic Garden where they did calisthenics and running back to 770. The bachur really wanted to stop this peculiar activity, preferring

a million times over to sit in 770 with his friends, learning *Likkutei Sichos*, but he continued running with his athletic friend.

On one of their runs, the Israeli said that he had discovered that religious people are much nicer than he had thought and ... he wanted to learn in yeshiva. The bachur referred him to one of the yeshivos near 770 where he learned for two years. He married and established a fine, Chassidic home. And all he had wanted was to run away from Israel and religion ...

The bachur finished K'vutza having learned an important lesson from his month of jogging. He married and went on shlichus and till today he sometimes has to forgo his Chassidishe dreams while being mekarev many Jews to Hashem, His Torah, the Rebbe, and Chassidus.

A CHASSIDISHE SURPRISE UNDER THE CHUPPA

A few years ago, when it was 250 years since the birth of the Alter Rebbe, Tzeirei Chabad came up with the idea of holding the national Kinus HaShluchim on a trip to visit the gravesites of the Rebbeim in Russia. Some of the shluchim were very excited by this plan and looked forward to the trip.

Among those enthusiastic about the trip was Rabbi Nechemia Schmerling, shliach in Kfar Yona. He imagined the visit to the capitols of Chabad, Lubavitch, Rostov, Haditch etc.; but then he looked in his planner and saw that on the Shabbos of the trip he had a "Shabbos with Chabad" planned for dozens of mekuravim from three yishuvim. They were already registered and had committed to participate in this Chassidishe Shabbos.

He sadly but resolutely told the organizers of the trip that he could

not attend. Shlichus took precedence.

A few weeks later Rabbi Schmerling had another opportunity, for on 2 Nissan, the yom hilula of the Rebbe Rashab, another trip to the kivrei tzaddikim was planned. He was called and they said, "Since you missed the last trip, come with us this time."

Rabbi Schmerling looked at his planner and the night of the flight to Russia he had a chuppa. He could let someone else take over but this was shlichus. What should he do? On the one hand, there were his Chassidishe longings. On the other hand, he had a shlichus to do.

This time the decision was not as straightforward and he wrote to the Rebbe and opened the Igros Kodesh. The answer he opened to said, "May you use the day of the wedding ... to increase in Chassidishe customs and spread Chassidus." The answer was clear and he didn't go on the trip.

Rabbi Schmerling prayed and hoped for a sign that his sacrifice was worthwhile. Two days later, the chassan and kalla came to his house for a talk before the wedding. Unexpectedly, the chassan said that his grandfather had been a Tamim in Lubavitch and had miraculously gotten a visa for Eretz Yisroel (one of the prized "certificates") along with some *iluyim* from Poland. He settled in Ramat HaSharon.

He did not look exactly like a Lubavitcher but all the old-timers in Ramat HaSharon know that the only one who distributed shmura matza and arranged Mesibos Shabbos for the children, mivtza shofar, yahrtzait days etc. was his grandfather.

"My grandfather died one year ago and I would like you, under the chuppa, to tell the guests about my Lubavitcher grandfather."

So the Rebbe's instruction in the letter was carried out and Rabbi

Schmerling told hundreds of guests about Lubavitch, the Rebbe and Chassidic customs, all thanks to his forgoing the trip for the sake of the shlichus.

NO COMPROMISING ON HALACHA!

Unlike the previous stories where concessions were made on feelings, when it comes to halacha the shluchim stand firm even when there seems to be cause to compromise, because the Rebbe made it clear, based on the Mishna

***Right after
Shabbos, the man
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rav did not back
down.***

in Avos, "and drawing them close to Torah" does not mean bringing the Torah down to them or making any halachic compromises, G-d forbid.

The following is a story I heard from a shliach who is also a rav in a yishuv somewhere in the north of the country.

A man from the yishuv was friends with a non-Jewish woman from abroad and he said he wanted to marry her in a civil marriage in Cyprus. Then the man's father died (he too had lived with a non-Jewish woman) and after eleven months of mourning the son wanted an aliya

in shul.

The Lubavitcher rav said he could not have an aliya as long as he lived with a non-Jew. This was agreed upon by all the rabbanim in the area.

Right after Shabbos, the man went to the rav's home and made a scene, screaming and threatening him, kicking the door etc., yet the rav did not back down.

When the year of mourning was over, the man again asked for an aliya to the Torah and he got the head of the city council and leaders of the yishuv involved. The latter told the rav that he had to allow the man to have an aliya, otherwise he would be fired.

The rav came up with a plan. He told the leaders that "it would be fine." People were curious and they all came to shul to see what would happen.

The rav told the gabbai to call up the man after the seven men had their aliyos and when he would come up, he should roll the Torah to Parshas Balak and read the verses "and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moav ... and G-d was angry with Israel."

At first, not everybody caught on, but after the davening there was a commotion about how the rabbi had insulted the man, but it was too late. The leaders pleaded with the rabbi to convert the woman so they could marry.

The one who really "got" the hint was the man who asked for the aliya. He went to the rabbi's house again, this time to apologize. He attended shiurim that the rav gave, consulted with him on personal matters, and finally sent the woman to talk with the rabbi. The rav explained to her that it was best for both of them if they went their separate ways. A short while later, the man told the rabbi that they had parted.

The man found a nice Jewish girl and married her. You can guess who the officiating rabbi was ...

SHLUCHIM EMULATING G-D

In conclusion, all these stories are connected to a recent Haftora in which Yeshaya speaks about the war that Hashem will make in the future against Edom. The prophet depicts G-d as a distinguished man, dressed in expensive clothing with huge blood stains.

They aren't small spots, but rather "all my clothing is soiled," like a person who trod on grapes, whose clothes are completely stained with wine.

A deeper look into the verses shows that Hashem is actually proud of this, as it were. He declares that He Himself fought, with no one to help him. Hashem is saying that this is how a shliach has to look at it, no matter what happens to the clothing, the goal is to be victorious.

I look at the work of shlichus, at men who leave Chassidishe environments for places far away, materially and spiritually, where they will raise their children and they will have to forgo much Chassidishe pampering; where they will yearn for the familiar Chassidishe atmosphere of their childhood or yeshiva; they won't always be able to complete T'hilim before davening on Shabbos Mevarchim.

A shliach might think he's in the wrong "business," but if we look back at the Haftora we see that in order for Hashem to vanquish Edom, He is ready to stain his clothes completely. We shluchim too have to be willing to get "dirty," to do what has to be done and even be proud and happy to do so.

To all our readers, I wish you a good and sweet year and the true and complete Geula immediately.

SUKKOS STORIES

A compilation of stories, first-hand accounts of what happened in Beis Rebbe during Sukkos.

AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER WITH THE REBBE RAYATZ

Rabbi Yosef Goldstein (of the “Uncle Yossi” story tapes) relates:

One year, they had to delay building the Rebbe Rayatz’s sukkah until Erev Sukkos because of strong rains that fell until then. Rabbi Sholom Chaskind asked for my help in bringing the s’chach. Before I took the s’chach, I took off my hat and jacket since the weather was very warm. With the s’chach on my shoulder, I went up the steps to the Rebbe Rayatz’s apartment.

Since I had to pass through the yechidus room on my way to the sukkah, I was assuming that the Rebbe was in another room where the commotion would not disturb him. When I entered the yechidus room and saw the Rebbe sitting there writing a letter, I was shocked. The Rebbe was sitting without a hat, just a yarmulke, and the secretary, R’ Lieberman was standing nearby. I stood there frozen. I couldn’t move forward, nor could I leave. I didn’t know what to do.

The Rebbe looked up, saw me with the s’chach, and smiled broadly. Within seconds, which seemed like an eternity to me, the Rebbe motioned to me to continue with my work.

I walked through the room in the direction of the sukkah, being careful not to turn my back to the Rebbe. When I finally got to the

porch, I took a deep breath and relaxed after the unexpected encounter. After I unloaded the s’chach, I faced the dilemma of how I was going to leave.

At first I considered jumping from the porch so I wouldn’t have to enter the yechidus room again without my hat and jacket, knowing that the Rebbe was there. This plan was immediately rejected, since I knew that when a few minutes went by and I wouldn’t leave the porch through the yechidus room, the Rebbe would wonder what happened to me.

What I ended up doing was carefully opening the door and sneaking through the yechidus room, taking care to do so as quickly as possible.

UNUSUAL KIRUVIM FROM THE REBBE RAYATZ

Rabbi Leibel Groner relates:

On the Rebbe Rayatz’s last Sukkos, only ten invited senior Chassidim were allowed in the sukkah. Dozens of Chassidim crowded the door of the Rebbe Rayatz’s apartment in the hopes of being able to enter and see the Rebbe’s holy face.

My father, R’ Avrohom Mordechai Yeshaya Groner a”h, was amongst the Chassidim waiting outside, along with my brother Moshe a”h, and me. When Rebbetzin Nechama Dina heard that my father was standing

outside, she opened the door and asked him to come in with his sons. My father entered and stood with us and watched the Rebbe eat his meal.

The Rebbe Rayatz asked that cups of mashke be given to us and told us to say l’chaim. Then he turned to my father and said with a smile: “R’ Avrohom, either sit or hide your white beard.”

My father did not hesitate for a minute. He hid his beard in his sirtuk.

THE SEATING PLAN IN THE SUKKA

Rabbi Meir Harlig relates:

Until 5731 the Rebbe ate the Yom Tov meals in the Rebbe Rayatz’s sukkah on the second floor. For many years I joined these meals and I remember that each time the Rebbe entered the sukkah through the yechidus room, he tarried for a few long moments in that room. He would look around the room, his gaze lingering on the place where the Rebbe lay after his passing.

Since the porch was very small, ten men and the waiter fit in the sukkah with difficulty. Despite the crowding, a place was set for the Rebbe Rayatz. At the head of the table, on the left, is where the Rebbe Rayatz’s chair was, and silverware and dishes were set there. The Rebbe would sit at the edge of the table, to the left of the Rebbe Rayatz. The Rebbetzins would eat in the living room in the

apartment of the Rebbe Rayatz.

THE REBBE'S CONCERN FOR THE GUESTS

Rabbi Eliyahu Landau relates:

At the Sukkos night meal in 5721, I was one of the fortunate people at the Rebbe's table. In the middle of the meal, one of the bachurim who waited the tables whispered to me that for some reason, one portion of meat was lacking and since we were sitting close together, we would manage with one plate. The seating was such that it was possible to hide the fact that a plate was missing.

All the guests waited but the Rebbe did not begin eating. The Rebbe asked the bachur whether something was lacking, and the bachur said, no. The Rebbe asked

again and the bachur again said no. Then the Rebbe said with a smile, "Is it a secret?" The bachur replied that since there wasn't room for another plate, there was one plate for two people. The Rebbe said: "The main thing is what is in the plate. Is it also for two people?" The bachur smiled.

The Rebbe did not say anything further as he moved his fork around in his plate a few times and then gave it to me saying, "It's clean."

NOT TO DISTURB THE REBBE

Rabbi Dovid Kurtz relates:

I was in 770 for Sukkos 5723. I remember that when the Rebbe had already finished davening and ate in the sukka of the Rebbe

The Rebbe Rayatz turned to my father and said with a smile: "R' Avrohom, either sit or hide your white beard."

Rayatz, the people davening in the small zal were careful not to raise their voices when they responded, "amen, yehei shmei rabba" in order not to disturb the Rebbe. We had heard from those present at the meals, that when he heard the people saying, "amen, yehei shmei



Tishrei 5726/1965 – The sukka of the Rebbe Rayatz on the second floor of 770. Below is a communal sukka.

rabba” the Rebbe stopped eating, stood up, and responded along with them.

WE NEED A HEALTHY REBBE

One year it was pouring during the Rebbe’s farbrengen in the sukkah. The Rebbe entered the sukkah with his coat draped over his shoulders, and removed it as soon as the farbrengen began. The Rebbe farbrenged as always, as though it wasn’t raining.

After a few hours, the Rebbe ended the farbrengen and began giving out *kos shel bracha*. Among the women who stood in the small *zal* was the wife of Rabbi Shlomo Maidenchek. She stood near the window and asked the Rebbe to put on his coat saying, “We need a healthy Rebbe.” The Rebbe smiled

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and put on his coat.

I AM NOT EMBARRASSED

One of the older Chassidim once noticed how in the years before he accepted the Chabad leadership, the Rebbe sat in the communal sukkah and ate a piece of cake before davening. When he expressed his surprise, the Rebbe’s response was, “I am not ashamed of Chabad customs.”

IF IT’S NOT GOOD FOR YOU, DON’T SAY THE BRACHA

Rabbi Zushe Posner relates:

Before the Rebbe accepted the Chabad leadership, some of the T’mimim who did not have Daled minim went over to the Rebbe (known as Ramash at the time), who was sitting in the communal sukkah. He had a thermos next to him and was looking into one of the s’farim of the Rebbe Maharash. They asked to use his Daled minim.

The Rebbe gave them the minim as a gift on condition that they return it and continued learning. One of them took the lulav and began examining it and he concluded that there seemed to be a problem with its kashrus. The Rebbe, without looking up said, “If it’s not good for you, don’t say the bracha.”

WHEN THE DOOR DID NOT OPEN

Rabbi Sholom Dovber Brod relates:

When they built the Rebbe’s beautiful sukkah in the yard of 770 in 5736, the organizers wanted to pour cement to support the sukkah. The secretaries did not allow such a major change in the appearance of the yard. The reason they did

not agree had to do with their fear, which they expressed openly, that the Rebbe would not agree to enter the sukkah. In the end though, the Rebbe did enter the sukkah, to the joy of the organizers.

That year it poured nonstop from the beginning of Yom Tov until Shmini Atzeres. Since they had not poured cement in the yard, the sukkah began to sink in the mud.

One day, the Rebbe entered the sukkah and after a while, R’ Harlig noticed that the Rebbe was feeling around the door in an attempt to open it. The door had sunk in the mud and wouldn’t open. R’ Harlig had to fight with the door to let them out.

The following year the organizers were given permission to lay cement.

IS SOMETHING COVERING THE S’CHACH?

Rabbi Abba Zalmanov relates:

In 5740, the Rebbe and Rebbetzin ate the Sukkos meals on the porch off the first floor of the library building, which was built for that purpose.

In 5742, I passed by the door of the library, and the Rebbe, who was standing near the door, called me and said that someone had asked whether the covering of the sukkah was covering the s’chach.

The Rebbe asked me to check, saying that I could either go up to the second floor and take a look or check outside the library building.

I called R’ Binyamin Klein and together we walked to the Itkins, who lived next door to the library, where we saw that the covering did not cover the s’chach. We went back to the Rebbe, who was still waiting near the door of the library, and only after R’ Klein

said that everything was fine did the Rebbe enter.

THE REBBE SANG “WE WANT MOSHIACH NOW”

One of the Itkins related:

When the Rebbe started talking about the need to demand that Hashem bring the Geula, I listened closely as the Rebbe sat in the sukka and heard him hum “We want Moshiach now.”

THE REBBE WAS PLEASED THERE WAS NO COVER

Rabbi Shimshon Junik relates:

At the end of the 80’s the idea was proposed that a sukka be built closer to the Rebbe’s room, which would obviate going to the yard. When Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka heard about this from my father, R’ Dovber Junik, she liked the idea, saying that if the Rebbe had to go out to eat something in the sukka, no one would have to know about it.

It was decided that a small sukka be built under the window of the Rebbe’s room, near the stairs that led to R’ Groner’s office. The sukka was tiny. It was built near the door leading to the steps, and when you opened the door, you immediately entered the sukka.

After they finished building the sukka, the Rebbe wanted to see it. I went with R’ Groner to show the sukka to the Rebbe. When we got

there, the Rebbe mentioned that when they built the *shalash* (the yard between 770 and the library), the plan was to build a roof that would be opened on Sukkos to make a sukka. The plan was never implemented.

The Rebbe had said that although it was once discussed that the entire area would be a sukka, it doesn’t mean they should do that now.

Then the Rebbe asked whether this sukka had a covering in the event of rain. When R’ Groner said it didn’t, the Rebbe was pleased, as that would enable him to enter the sukka at any time without having to bother anyone.

HE MUST BE AT THE SIMCHAS BEIS HA’SHOEIVA

Rabbi Shmuel Krauss relates:

When the Rebbetzin passed away and the Rebbe moved into 770, there were bachurim who stood guard every night in Gan Eden HaTachton. One night of Chol HaMoed 5749, at nine o’clock, the Rebbe went out to the sukka, leaving the key to his room in the room.

When the Rebbe came out of the sukka, he asked the bachurim to find R’ Groner, who had another key to the room, and to ask him to come and open the door. “He is probably at the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva,” the Rebbe said. Until they found R’

When the Rebbe started talking about the need to demand that Hashem bring the Geula, I listened closely as the Rebbe sat in the sukka and heard him hum “We want Moshiach now.”

Groner the Rebbe continued to learn in the sukka.

MESECHES SUKKA ON MOTZAEI YOM KIPPUR

R’ Dovber Junik related:

One year, I accompanied the Rebbe to his room on Motzaei Yom Kippur. As soon as he entered the room, before he took off his kittel, the Rebbe went over to the bookcase, took a Mishnayos Sukka, and began learning the laws of sukka. This was in accordance to the custom to start building the sukka right after Yom Kippur, or at least to learn the halachos of the holiday.

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DIARY FROM THE REBBE'S ROOM

*Thirty-one years ago, on the night of Shmini Atzeres, the Rebbe had a heart attack. The Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Leibel Groner shared his diary that covers the events of that time as a t'shura for the wedding of his granddaughter to Yosef Yitzchok Pruss. Beis Moshiach is pleased to present excerpts from this fascinating account. * A complete diary of what took place at that time, based on Rabbi Groner's diary in addition to other diaries, has been published in the hosafos to the new edition of Sichos Kodesh 5738.*

A BUSY DAY

Hoshana Raba 5738/1977

As was customary, after the davening the Rebbe went to his sukkah and began distributing *lekach* (honey cake) to all those who had not received any on Erev Yom Kippur. After the line of men had passed by, the Rebbe distributed *lekach* to women and girls. By the time the distribution was over, it was almost sunset.

Since the Rebbe had not eaten the meal at his home, he asked me to have the meal brought to 770.

When they brought it, he entered his sukkah and ate very little; then he davened Mincha. He davened Maariv at seven o'clock and the hakafos started at nine.

HEART ATTACK IN THE MIDDLE OF HAKAFOS

Shmini Atzeres night

In the middle of the fourth hakafa the Rebbe did not feel well and became very pale. The Rebbe asked me to bring over his chair, and he immediately sat down and began to massage his heart. I asked

for the doctors in the room to be called over, but the Rebbe would not allow them to examine him.

In the meantime they brought water to the Rebbe, but the Rebbe was not willing to drink it since it was before Kiddush.

Between the fifth and sixth hakafos he sat. He stood for the fifth and sixth hakafos but leaned on his shtender. Before the seventh hakafa the doctors asked that the Rebbe remain in his place and not go down to the center of the shul, and Rashag (his brother-in-law) would go up to the bima where the Rebbe was and they would dance there. However, the Rebbe did not agree.

He went down from his bima and walked to the center of the shul where he always danced the hakafos. Rashag danced a few circles and then stopped. The Rebbe made a gesture indicating surprise that he did such a short hakafa, but returned to his place on the bima.

In the meantime, most of the crowd quickly left the shul and some of the Chassidim even broke windows in the women's section so there would be more air in the shul.

After Aleinu was recited the Rebbe announced, "Gut Yom Tov," and began to sing "V'Samachta." He went down from the bima, left the shul, and went up to his room. When he entered his room he did not allow anyone to enter with him, and he closed the door. One of the secretaries called the Rebbe's sister-in-law, who came immediately. When the Rebbe heard her voice he



opened the door. After a few moments, she came out and said to me, "Go in and try to get a doctor to see him."

THE REBBE REFUSED TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL

I went in and the Rebbe said there was no need for a doctor; he was tired and would rest a bit and then go home. I asked him to permit a doctor to come in, not to examine him, but just to look at the Rebbe's face, and the Rebbe agreed. Dr. Glazman came in. Upon looking at the Rebbe, he said the Rebbe was having a heart attack.

The doctor asked the Rebbe whether he felt pain around the heart and the Rebbe said he did. The doctor asked, "Is it a pain like a hammer banging or like needles sticking you?" The Rebbe said it was like needles sticking him.

The doctor said the Rebbe was in the midst of a heart attack, and that in his opinion, the Rebbe should go to the hospital immediately. The Rebbe, however, said that he would not go to the hospital. Since he had not yet said Kiddush and eaten the Yom Tov meal, he asked me to arrange Kiddush and the meal for him in his sukka.

The Rebbe told me there was no need to inform his wife about all this, but in the meantime, someone had run and told the Rebbetzin what was happening. When the Rebbetzin entered the Rebbe's room, the Rebbe said, "I said they shouldn't tell her!"

The Rebbe went to his sukka but immediately sat down, his face turning red from pain. The doctor told the Rebbetzin that these pains were because of the heart attack. After a few minutes the Rebbe stood up, said Kiddush, washed his hands and ate only a k'zayis of challa and a small piece of fish and then of meat. Then he bentched and returned to his room.

ICU SET UP IN THE REBBE'S ROOM

When the Rebbe entered his room he said to me, "Now the doctors can do what they want." In the meantime they took a bed down from the second floor and the Rebbe rested. The doctors examined the Rebbe and they unanimously said he had to go to the hospital immediately, because remaining where he was would put his life in danger.

The Rebbe said that he was not

I asked him to permit a doctor to come in, not to examine him, but just to look at the Rebbe's face, and the Rebbe agreed. Upon looking at the Rebbe, he said the Rebbe was having a heart attack.

going to the hospital. In the meantime, top cardiologists came to the Rebbe's room and asked the Rebbe to go to the hospital, but the Rebbe said to me, "Tell them that I am not budging from 770; if something must happen, it will happen in 770."

I asked the doctors to set up an intensive care unit in Gan Eden HaTachton (the room next to the Rebbe's room) with all the necessary equipment. One of the doctors, Dr. Richter, who worked in a hospital

not far from 770, went there and got permission to take machines and medication. When the machinery arrived, they connected the Rebbe to some of them to check his blood pressure, pulse and heart. They also attached an intravenous line.

In the meantime, the top doctors were insisting that the Rebbe go to the hospital. However, the Rebbetzin said that the Rebbe was unwilling to go and nothing was to be done against his will.

At one in the morning, Rashag called a top doctor who lived on Long Island. He apologized for calling so late, but since he was calling for the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who had had a heart attack that night, he asked him to come as soon as possible. The doctor agreed and arrived at 770 in an hour and a half. After he examined the Rebbe he stated that the Rebbe had to be brought to the hospital.

When he heard what the Rebbetzin said he was furious. "If so, I'm going home and don't call me unless the Rebbe agrees to be hospitalized."

Our doctors asked this man what to do if his condition got worse. He told them what to put into the intravenous drip and left 770.

At five in the morning the heart monitor showed that there was no blood pressure and no pulse. They put something into the intravenous line as the doctor had told them to do, but the situation did not improve. They immediately called the doctor, who told them to add another drop, and that if the situation did not improve they had to take the Rebbe to the hospital immediately. The doctors did what he told them to do, and the Rebbe's blood pressure began to rise and the pulse returned.

At seven o'clock that doctor came back to 770 and said to the Rebbetzin, "Now you see that I was right about taking him to the

hospital. There is no choice! If you want to save the Rebbe you must take him to the hospital!"

The Rebbetzin asked me to repeat this to the rabbanim who were there. Five rabbanim from the ziknei Anash heard the situation, and four of them paskened to do as the doctor said, for the Rebbe himself instructed to do as an expert doctor advises. However, one rav said that without the Rebbe's consent they could not go.

I went back to the Rebbetzin and told her everything. She replied, "You must tell the Rebbe that the majority opinion of the rabbanim is that he should go to the hospital."

I told all this to Rabbi Chadakov and asked him to tell the Rebbe what the rabbanim had said. R' Chadakov went to the Rebbe and told him he had to something to convey from the rabbanim. The Rebbe said, "Don't tell me what the rabbanim said because if I hear what they have decided then I have to listen to them! If I don't know their opinion then I won't be going against it!"

R' Chadakov repeated this to the Rebbetzin. She told the doctor, "Based on this, we will remain here." The doctor was very angry. He spoke sharply to the Rebbetzin and went home.

Dr. Tischoltz, who was known as a top cardiologist, showed up.

THE REBBE: SIMCHA HELPS MY RECOVERY

Shmini Atzeres day

At about 9:30, the Rebbe told me to arrange a minyan for him for Shacharis and Torah reading. At 10:00 the small minyan began davening, and the Rebbe davened in his bed, lying down. When they got up to the Torah reading, the Rebbe said he would have an aliya for Maftir but would do so while sitting in bed. The doctors were unhappy with the Rebbe saying Maftir because they thought it was a strain

on his heart.

When davening was over, the Rebbe said he wanted to make Kiddush and eat the Yom Tov meal, and that's what he did.

Dr. Ira Weiss of Chicago, also a top cardiologist, came to 770. The doctors asked that all the niggunim and dancing take place only in the shul (and not near the Rebbe's room), so as to allow the Rebbe to rest.

At about 4:00 the Rebbe asked me why he did not hear the simchas Yom Tov, and I said it was because

the doctors had asked for quiet. The Rebbe said, "The more I hear simchas Yom Tov, the more it will help my recovery, so please make sure that I hear the simchas Yom Tov." I told the doctors and they said, "if so, they should do as the Rebbe said." I informed the congregation, and they immediately began singing and dancing near the Rebbe's room.

During the day of Shmini Atzeres the Rebbe had another heart attack, but not as severe as the first one. There was no minyan for Mincha

"When he heard what the Rebbetzin said, he was furious. 'If so, I'm going home and don't call me unless the Rebbe agrees to be hospitalized.'"

and Maariv.

R' Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky, who had a chazaka every Shmini Atzeres to give two bottles of mashke to the Rebbe, asked to be allowed to do so this year too, and the Rebbe agreed. He came in and gave the two bottles.

Simchas Torah night, the Rebbe slept nearly the entire night. In the morning there was a minyan, and this time the Rebbe davened sitting up. He stood for the Shmoneh Esrei even though the doctors asked him to sit. After Birkas Kohanim and Hallel they arranged for hakafos in his room, and as usual the Rebbe was honored with the first and seventh hakafos. The Rebbe held the Torah while sitting in bed. He got up for Chassan B'Reishis and stood the entire time. He stood for Musaf as well.

After davening the Rebbe made Kiddush and ate the Yom Tov meal.

THE CONSTRICTION LEADS TO THE REVELATION

Towards evening, the Rebbe said: "Surely there will be a Simchas Torah farbrengen like there is every year. In the middle of the farbrengen go down and tell them in my name, "Even though for now there is an empty place, this is by way of



**Hoshana Raba 5738,
hours before the
Rebbe's heart
attack**

Dr. Weiss told the Rebbe that he hoped that the next Tishrei the Rebbe would be able to conduct himself – for the most part – like every Tishrei. To this the Rebbe responded with surprise, “Must we wait 12 months?”

preparation, for afterwards the place will be filled even more than it was until now. This is like an injection - first you have to make a vacuum and only then can the syringe fill up. In other words, the constriction is what leads to the revelation. Ask R' Yoel (Kahn) in my name to explain this at length.”

When I informed the Rebbe that I had told R' Yoel and he was explaining it to the crowd, the Rebbe said, “Take the cup of wine over which I made Kiddush, as well as the bottle of wine, and give it to R' Chadakov. After bentching and Maariv it should be distributed, and say that after Maariv, before Havdala, there will be another announcement.”

I did so, and after Maariv the Rebbe said: “Tell them that in another little while there will be a brief sicha.” (The doctors asked how long it would take and the Rebbe said five minutes, although it was actually about twenty minutes).

When I made this announcement, the crowd was thrilled, and they danced with joy. The Rebbe said the sicha from his room (over the PA system), and then asked to be examined to see how it had affected his health. The doctors said all was well.

EDITING LIKKUTEI SICHOS

Isru Chag

Since the Rebbe's right hand was attached to the intravenous line, the Rebbe asked me to help him put on his tallis and t'fillin, and I did so. The Rebbe davened Shacharis and then put on the other three pairs of t'fillin.

During the day the Rebbe asked for the mail, etc.

The Rebbe announced that since every year the guests passed by and received a dollar, they should arrange it for this year too. He sat in the doorway of his room with the dollars on the table, and the people passed by.

The Rebbe agreed to having the heart monitor attached before this. Afterwards, he asked how it affected his heart, and the doctors said all was well.

Sunday, 27 Tishrei 5738

The doctors, especially Dr. Weiss, said that the Rebbe should limit his salt intake. The Rebbe said, “It is many years now that I am used to eating a lot of salt, and I have a great need for this.”

Despite this, the Rebbe told those who prepared the food for him to do as the doctors instructed.

Monday 28 Tishrei 5738

The Rebbe got up at 3:30 in the morning. After washing his hands and saying the morning blessings, he edited *Likkutei Sichos* for Parshas B'Reishis. At 5:30 he rested until 7 and then davened Shacharis. After Shacharis he asked me to organize the panim in his room, so that he could take them to the Ohel. He also asked me to prepare all the letters that he had not yet seen.

At 6:00 the monitor suddenly showed extra beats and I alerted Dr. Weiss. He said it was nothing serious but they had to keep an eye on it. The Rebbe said he felt no pain.

Tuesday 29 Tishrei 5738

I went in at 4:30 in the morning and found the Rebbe sitting in bed, editing *Likkutei Sichos* for Parshas Noach. He asked me, “You and (Binyamin) Klein fulfill the inyan of sleep with sixty *nimin* – the sleep of a horse?” I said I had slept for three quarters of an hour and the Rebbe said: “There is an opinion that that is the amount of sixty *nimin*, but that was for Dovid HaMelech; you want to do as he did?” And the Rebbe laughed.

NO PROOF FROM A MOVIE

Tuesday 29 Tishrei

After Shacharis I asked whether to serve breakfast and the Rebbe said, “Not now. Don't play games. The one preparing the food shouldn't serve one person a portion that two can eat. As far as *shirayim* (the remaining food), the halacha is that shirayim have to be less than the portion, and here it's the opposite.”

When the doctors came in today, the Rebbe said to them that this morning he had stood during Shmoneh Esrei and a half an hour later he felt something around his heart that lasted an hour. They did some tests and found no reason for this.

Dr. Weiss spoke to the Rebbe on the subject of the statement of Chazal “that kidneys advise,” and Dr. Weiss had tried to explain the meaning of this by saying that there is a special connection between the kidneys and the brain. However, after he learned in Igeres HaKodesh (where it discusses this topic), he realized that his explanation had no basis.

The Rebbe said that if the gland above the kidney is part of the kidney, they have one membrane, and because of this shared *makif*, they are both called *kelaya*, and as such it is possible to use this as an explanation.

Then the Rebbe told the doctor that he had no appetite and he had not slept well the previous two days. In his opinion it was because they had prevented him from following his usual schedule.

At night, around 11:30, Dr. Weiss came in and said that he had

just seen a movie of this month of Tishrei and now he has a little bit of an understanding of what a big exertion the Rebbe makes. To this the Rebbe replied with a smile, "There is no proof from a movie, because the photographer generally films unusual things."

THE CHASSIDIM LOOKED FORWARD TO THE FARBRENGENS

Dr. Weiss told the Rebbe that he hoped that the next Tishrei the

Rebbe would be able to conduct himself – for the most part – like every Tishrei, though of course with certain limitations. It mainly depended on how the Rebbe felt at every point. To this the Rebbe responded with surprise, "Must we wait twelve months? And next year, thirteen months (since it's a leap year)?"

Afterwards, the Rebbe told the doctor that he had a question. "What suggestions does the doctor have for me so I can make up what I lost at the end of Tishrei, as far as the farbrengens of Shmini Atzeres, Simchas Torah, and Shabbos B'Reishis? And how and when can I add to the activities that I will do, as a matter of course, in order to make up for the loss in a way that does not adversely affect my health, through an additional sicha or a special farbrengen or the like? And, as mentioned before, there is no need to rush, as it can be made up over the course of the year, especially since it's a leap year and there's an additional month."

The doctor said that although it had to be arranged in the proper way and a plan could not be made for this because it depended on how the Rebbe felt on a particular day, it is something to be considered. He would discuss it with Dr. Tischoltz and with Leibel Groner to find out the Rebbe's plan, and see if it is feasible.

The Rebbe added, "The Chassidim looked forward to the farbrengens and so I feel obligated to find a way that they shouldn't be lacking; rather, there should be an increase."

Then the Rebbe said that he was very disappointed by the pace of his recovery, since he thought that after a week, he would be much better.



Rabbi Leibel Groner
accompanying
the Rebbe

'TO LIFE AND NOT TO DEATH'

By Sholom Ber Crombie

*In recent years, those who fight smoking have focused on young people who start smoking and then have a hard time stopping. * 66 years ago, the Rebbe Rayatz declared war against young smokers and forbade “with an absolute and utter prohibition, smoking for talmidim under twenty years of age.” As for older talmidim, the Rebbe asked that they stop smoking * A few years earlier, the Rebbe Rayatz asked b’nei Torah not to smoke during Rosh HaShana * An overview of smoking from the perspective of the Rebbeim.*

NOT TO SMOKE ON ROSH HA'SHANA

“I would like to make the point that those who smoke all year and smoke on Yom Tov too, refrain from doing so on Rosh HaShana. This is proper, for the b’nei Torah are careful in this, and they should also convince their acquaintances.” – this is what the Rebbe Rayatz wrote on 13 Elul 5697/1937, in a letter that was sent to the talmidei

ha’yeshivos.

It is repeated in the name of Rabbi Menachem Zev Gringlass of Montreal, that the Rebbe Rayatz wrote this letter in response to the request of Rabbi Yaakov Chizkiya Greenwald, Rav and Admur of Pupa, author of *VaYaged Yaakov*.

In any case, a year later (22 Elul 1938) the Rebbe Rayatz repeated his instruction that refraining from smoking on Rosh HaShana is the proper behavior of

b’nei Torah. “I suggest that the manner of behavior on the two days of Rosh HaShana be to limit unnecessary speaking, eating, drinking and sleep, and not to smoke, even privately.”

Although the Rebbe Rayatz’s request was directed at b’nei Torah and the talmidei ha’yeshivos, it was accepted among Chabad Chassidim in general.

UNTIL AGE 20 – FORBIDDEN; 20 AND OLDER – THE REBBE REQUESTS NOT

Five to six years later, the Rebbe Rayatz decided to instruct the young talmidei ha’yeshivos not to smoke at all, ever. He sent this instruction to Rabbi Mordechai Mentlick, the leading rosh yeshiva in yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim, on 12 Teives 5703. He wrote, “I am presenting my friend with my instruction to make a list of all the talmidim who smoke, and to utterly and absolutely forbid smoking for talmidim under the age of 20, no matter whether it’s cigarettes, cigars or pipes. This prohibition applies to all talmidim wherever they are, throughout any 24 hour period ... this order should be enforced strictly with superior supervision by my friend, and the talmid who transgresses this order

should be harshly punished.”

Further in the letter, the Rebbe addressed the talmidim older than 20 and made a request of them: **“As for my friends, the talmidim who are twenty and older, you should request in my name, for their good – spiritually and materially – that they should try to stop smoking by diminishing day by day until they cease entirely. Whoever fulfills my request - it will be good for him spiritually and materially. Please inform me which of the talmidim who are twenty and above, fulfilled my request.”**

After the hanhala of the yeshiva reported to the Rebbe that the announcement had been made to the talmidim, the Rebbe Rayatz wrote to R' Mentlick that he was happy to hear that they were carrying out his order: **“... In response to your letter about the fulfillment of my order and request regarding smoking, I was very pleased. May Hashem grant them success in their learning and their fear of Heaven, and may they be G-d fearing, Chassidim, and**

scholars.”

YOUNG PEOPLE SMOKING

The Rebbe Rayatz's emphasis on prohibiting smoking to those under 20 is being echoed today in the world at large. As you know, there is a war going on against smoking. Every year millions of dollars are invested, around the world, in the campaign against smoking. All those who are opposed to smoking are in agreement as to what age group to focus on – teenagers, who easily fall into the habit and then have a hard time quitting for the rest of their lives.

In an article about smoking in *Mishpacha* magazine, there was research from Mrs. Naava Inbar, the director of communications for an organization to fight cancer, that said that 90% of Israeli smokers began smoking before they were 18. Consequently, the Ministry of Health decided to focus their energy on the young population of smokers, and to strictly enforce

the law against selling cigarettes to those under age 18.

Presumably, in Tomchei T'mimim after the announcement about the Rebbe Rayatz's *g'zeira*, it was also necessary to work on imposing the new prohibition. About a week after the announcement was made, the Rebbe wrote to the hanhala: **“Please let me know how the situation is regarding smoking by talmidim under age 20, whether they have stopped completely, and as far as those 20 and older, whether they have diminished and are trying to stop completely.”**

Due to the difficulty in quitting the habit, the Rebbe was afraid that talmidim were continuing to smoke privately. In another letter the Rebbe inquired again, **“Please inform me ... about the smoking situation, whether they stopped entirely and whether you are sure that they aren't secretly smoking.”**

NO MORE SMOKING FOR THE FARBRENGEN

Over the years, the Rebbe Rayatz's letter became one of the well-known *g'zeiros* for talmidim in Lubavitch yeshivos (before the *g'zeira* regarding *mashke*, which was promulgated by the Rebbe), and young bachurim refrained from smoking until they were 20. The prohibition applied to all Chabad yeshivos worldwide, and bachurim who were found smoking were severely penalized by the hanhala.

The Rebbe did not outright forbid smoking after the age of 20, which is perhaps why bachurim smoked when they were older than 20. This was apparent in 770, where the talmidim were older than 20 and many of them smoked. Those who learned in 770 back then remember the *zal*



“After the meeting, the Rebbe Rayatz’s letter was publicized, and a new set of rules was put forth by the hanhala. All those who wanted to smoke had to leave the zal. The talmidim who learn in Chovavei Torah also have to leave their study hall.”

in a haze of smoke.

Before the Rebbe farbrenged, everybody in the beis midrash stopped smoking so the Rebbe could come down into a room with fresh air. Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson would bang on the table a half an hour before a farbrengen and announce that everyone should stop smoking.

Aside from the health problems engendered by smoking, the cigarettes made the beis midrash filthy. It was only after the Rebbe stopped walking several times in order to pick up a cigarette butt, that the smokers made sure not to dirty the floor.

NO MORE SMOKING IN 770

In 1976, in yechidus with a Chassid, the Rebbe brought up the topic of smoking and said, “As

far as smoking cigarettes, there is the letter of the Rebbe, my father-in-law.”

Following this statement in yechidus, a meeting was called of talmidim in 770, in which the hanhala urged them to stop smoking. A description of that meeting was written by Y. M. Sossover, who was a talmid there at the time:

“Adar 5736: A meeting took place on Monday afternoon, in the beis midrash of the Rebbe, Admur shlita (in the small zal). At 5:45, Rabbi Dovid Raskin began the meeting and said that everybody was requested to stop smoking, since the Rebbe had spoken to someone in yechidus about this a month ago ...

“After the meeting, the Rebbe Rayatz’s letter was publicized, and a new set of rules was put forth by the hanhala. All those who wanted to smoke had to leave the zal. The talmidim who learn in Chovavei Torah also have to leave their study hall.”

Over the years, especially in the past two decades, awareness about the dangers of smoking and the many illnesses that result was raised in the frum community. Even the older bachurim, to whom the g’zeira did not apply, decided that for their spiritual and material good they were better off not smoking, and the number of those who smoke went down.

In 5755 a law was passed in New York forbidding smoking in public places. The law was welcomed by non-smokers and was successfully enforced. Today, people are aware that it is forbidden to smoke in 770 since it is a public place, and the air there is clean of cigarette smoke.

NOT TO QUIT COLD TURKEY

Although the Rebbe said that

smoking is dangerous for one’s health and people should stop smoking, he was opposed to a ban on smoking. On 3 Teives 5750, someone passed by the Rebbe for “dollars” and complained that he saw bachurim smoking outside 770. He asked, “Why don’t you say not to smoke? Is smoking good or bad?”

The Rebbe said, “It depends on a person’s habit. If someone is used to smoking and he stops, it can harmful to his health.”

The man said, “Okay, so tell them, please, not to smoke. If you tell them, they will listen to you.”

The Rebbe said, “I am not a doctor.”

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF QUITTING

In order to quit successfully you need the awareness that smoking is harmful, that half of all smokers who continue to smoke will end up dying from a smoking-related illness, and that it’s vital to stop. Without a strong desire to do so, it is very hard to drop the habit, but if the resolution to do so is made, quitting can be achieved by virtually anyone.

Smoking harms nearly every major organ. The risk of developing smoking-related diseases, such as lung and other cancers, heart disease, stroke, and respiratory illnesses, increases with total lifetime exposure to cigarette smoke.

The benefits in quitting are enormous, with a tremendous improvement in overall health: the risk of developing heart disease as a result of smoking may be reduced by as much as half in the year or two after quitting. After 15 years, the former smoker’s risk of heart disease approaches that of a person who has never smoked. Five to 15 years after

quitting, the risk of stroke returns to the level of those who have never smoked. Quitting reduces the risk of lung cancer, as well as many other kinds of cancer. Life expectancy rises. There is improvement in the senses of taste and smell. It clears the lungs, making for easier breathing, and reduces coughing and pressure in the sinuses.

There is also the great satisfaction in being liberated from a bad habit, not to mention the financial savings (taxes alone on a pack in New York are a whopping \$4.25, not including a roughly 8% sales tax. Add it all up and a pack of cigarettes in New York is likely to cost around \$9.00!)

It has been proven that it is easier to quit smoking with a support system.

This idea, that there is a psychological component to quitting, is something the Rebbe gave as an example for something else. After his heart attack in 1977, the following was written in

a diary at the time:

"The Rebbe asked that all the mail be brought to him. One of the doctors said that perhaps he should rest for about two weeks before resuming his correspondence. The Rebbe said that if he waited until then, the work would be harder, because so much would have accumulated. The Rebbe said that just like we find in psychology in regard to cigarettes, someone who is used to them cannot divert his mind from them, and if forced to do so against his will it affects his health, so too here, since the Rebbe was accustomed to constantly receive mail and respond to it, suddenly stopping would not be good for his health."

CIGARETTES NOWADAYS – HEALTH HAZARD

Cigarette smoke contains about 4,000 chemical agents, including over 60 carcinogens. Many of

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(To be continued be"H)



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WAITING FOR A MIRACLE

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

“At age two, I was privileged to experience a miracle of the Rebbe. Even now, decades later, I continue to deal with the same problem, and I am filled with hope that the same miracle that kept me alive then will also happen now, and the doctors who are so sure of themselves will understand there is also a Creator and Ruler of the World, and they were only given permission to heal and not to render opinions on such critically important matters...”

For several long weeks, Sagit Vaknin, a young cosmetician from Eilat, had been going around with the feeling that a sword was hanging over her world. Time after time, she and her brother heard from the doctors that there was no chance of saving the leg of their father, **Yaakov Vaknin**, who lives in Sderot. At first, they refused to accept what the doctors said. They sought to meet with other physicians, but all of them held the same opinion, and their last drops of optimism seemed to evaporate.

We say “seemed” because the

condition that affects Reb Yaakov now had already begun to penetrate his system when he was two years old. A couple of weeks earlier, Sagit spoke with her father in order to hear again the story of the illness that he has been battling ever since, when even then the doctors made ominous predictions that fortunately never came to pass about his having “no chance of survival.”

A serious ailment called osteomyelitis had caused damage to his leg and brought on waves of fever that threatened his young life. However, at that time, little

Yaakov’s father, Avraham Vaknin, met a Chabad chassid who suggested that he write a letter to the Rebbe, and as a result of the Rebbe’s holy bracha, the boy made a miraculous recovery. Now, as the doctors again gave up hope, the family recalled the miracle that had saved their father’s life as a child.

But that was then and this was now. This morning, as Sagit left her home on her way to work, she was constantly thinking about how she could “get” the Rebbe’s blessing in order to help her father. Sagit stood in the street and waited impatiently for the cab she had ordered to arrive from the taxi stand. But it was getting late, and Sagit hailed another cab that happened to be passing by at that moment.

As she got into the taxi, she let out a heavy sigh – a sign of deep worry and immense pressure. A moment later, as she was glancing around the cab’s interior, she was utterly shocked to see the car windows filled with pictures of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The smiling bearded taxi driver, **R. Asaf Amar**, identified himself as a member of the local Chabad community. “You won’t believe what incredible Divine Providence has just happened here,” she blurted excitedly to the cabbie, and then proceeded to relate to him the whole chain of events.

With the cabbie’s help, that very night, she arrived at the home of the shliach of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, and the city’s chief rabbi, Rabbi **Yosef Hecht**, and with his guidance, she wrote a letter to the Rebbe in request of a bracha for her father. As I write, she and her family are now waiting for the miracle that will save the situation.

THE DOCTORS DIDN’T EVEN GIVE A 1% CHANCE

We met Yaakov Vaknin a couple of weeks ago. There is no question

that these have not been very easy days for him. This has been a lengthy period of time when he has been running from one doctor to another, consulting with experts at a number of hospitals, and even visiting prominent rabbinical figures and kabbalists. "My greatest dream," he told me with sorrow and sincerity, "is that there will be a dramatic change in my condition, exactly as there was when I was two years old, so that the doctors can see for themselves that miracles do happen in this world and they can file away the medical diagnosis in which they have so much faith."

Yaakov was more than happy to reveal the story of his personal miracle, one that returned his entire family to their roots and the traditions of their forefathers, which had been abandoned not long after their arrival in Eretz Yisroel from Morocco.

"My parents emigrated to Eretz Yisroel in the great waves of immigration during the sixties. While they observed Torah and mitzvos in Morocco in all matters, great and small, when they arrived in Eretz Yisroel, they were settled on Kibbutz Revivim, a kibbutz in the north, where they endured what many families endured in that era. They gave in to the free and permissive atmosphere that reigned in the country at that time, particularly on the kibbutzim that were the symbol of estrangement and alienation from the path of traditional Jewish values. Later, my parents moved to the Negev settlement of Tidhar, where I was born.

"During the first two years of my life, I was a source of much joy and happiness to my parents. I was born completely healthy without signs or symptoms of any problems

that would possibly develop over the years. In short, I was a normal child like any other.

"The problems started to pop up when I turned two. I was hit by a wave of rashes and high fever. At first, the doctors were unable to identify the cause of my deteriorating and unstable condition. After a series of intensive tests, the doctors revealed that I had been stricken with a serious illness called *osteomyelitis*. I would vomit frequently, and I would endure lengthy hospitalizations in the children's ward of Beer Sheva's Siroka Hospital, with the knowledge that I would be waking up each morning to a totally unnatural reality. I underwent a series of difficult treatments and complicated operations, until the day that the doctors called my father into one of the hospital rooms with serious expressions on



their faces.

“Mr. Avraham,’ the doctors said to him point-blank, ‘it’s a pity for you to have to torture yourself and place your hopes on something that simply won’t occur. There’s not even a one percent chance that your son will survive this illness, especially since it has affected him at such a young age, when his body and antibodies are not sufficiently strong to battle the intensity of the illness and the treatments that we would have to apply.”

“Day after day, my father would sit close to my bed and feed me, waiting and longing for good news regarding my condition. Then the day came when the doctors’ clear and firm opinion regarding my chances for survival simply broke him.

“Later, when I grew up and learned about my illness, I understood how great a miracle had to take place for me to come out of this alive. I went through some difficult and complex operations on both of my legs. This was a very deadly bacterium that had caused severe bone damage. My father

returned home that day broken, despondent, and grief-stricken. It was the hardest day of his life.”

A SURPRISE MEETING AT MOSHAV BAROSH

“Back home at Moshav Barosh, near Netivot, my father was absolutely beside himself in anguish. He told me later that he felt that his whole world had been destroyed. This is quite understandable after suddenly being told by prominent and highly experienced doctors in the clearest possible terms that his two-year old son would soon cease to live – plain and simple. He sat on a chair on the front porch and wanted nothing more than to cut himself off from everyone and to take some time out to think about what the doctors had said and about everything he had endured over the last few months since they had discovered my ailment.

“Just a few minutes later, a chareidi-looking Jew passed nearby, and when he saw my father’s emotional state, his compassion was

aroused and he went over to speak to him.

“‘Why are you so worried?’ he asked him directly. ‘If there is anxiety in a man’s heart, let him cast it down...’ My father, who felt that the chassid’s concern and empathy was genuine, proceeded to tell him everything that had transpired over the past few months, up until the meeting that day with the team of doctors that were treating me and their clear medical diagnosis. The man listened to me most attentively and then finally asked, ‘Tell me, do you know about the Lubavitcher Rebbe?’ My father was surprised by the question and replied in the negative. ‘Are you sure you have never heard of the Lubavitcher Rebbe?’,’ the man continued to inquire, and again my father gave a negative answer. After explaining a bit about him, he asked, ‘What do you think about writing him a letter and asking for a bracha?’ he suggested. ‘Many Jews have been saved by his blessings.’

“My father was most impressed by this chassid’s suggestion, which brought him back to those far off days in Morocco, when his family lived in a pure atmosphere of faith in tzaddikim, kabbalists, and the rabbanim to whom they turned to receive advice and blessing. He took the whole matter of writing to the Rebbe quite seriously. With the guidance of Rabbi Hecht, he went to immerse himself in a mikveh and then followed the traditional procedure on what to do when writing a letter to the Rebbe. When he finished writing the letter, it was sent off immediately.

“The very next day,” Yaakov relates, “the unbelievable happened. When my father came into my hospital room, the medical staff was already there waiting for him. They informed him that there had been a change in my condition – a change

REMINDING OF THE LONG FORGOTTEN

Ever since Rabbi Avraham Vaknin, of blessed memory, became a chassid, he had the privilege of connecting many of his fellow Jews to the Rebbe. After proving to himself the reality of the Rebbe’s G-dly-endowed strengths, he suggested to any person suffering from any problem or in need of advice on any matter that he should write to the Rebbe. As a result, many remarkable stories have happened, and his son Yaakov recalls one of them:

“I remember that there was a Jew living on the moshav who became ill, and his condition worsened to the point that the doctors didn’t know what to do. He knew about my father’s connection with the Rebbe and asked him to write a letter to the Rebbe for him. The Rebbe’s answer amazed him, as it did my father: This man’s name was Maaravi Jerbi. He emigrated from Tunisia and everyone knew his name. But when the Rebbe sent a letter with a bracha in response, he added to his name the word ‘Yosef.’ Neither he nor my father understood why the Rebbe added this name in his letter, and they decided to go to his mother for an explanation. She thought for a moment, and then she recalled that back in Tunis, they had also given him the name Yosef...”

that could be defined as nothing less than the difference between Heaven and Earth, compared to how things were the day before. My fever quickly dropped in a manner that stunned all the doctors, even those veteran practitioners who had seen it all. After a few days, the doctors had already stopped saying that only a miracle could save me. They had no explanation according to the standard tools of medicine at their disposal.

“Ever since then, my father began to come closer again to the path of his forefathers and even became a Chabad chassid. He traveled frequently to the Rebbe’s court in New York, and until his last day on this earth, it can be said that his love for the Lubavitcher Rebbe flowed through his veins more than anything else. Later, he proved to be a most influential force in helping to establish a ‘Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchak’ Chabad school in Moshav Barosh. The fact that we lived there proved to be a great asset in helping the Chabad chassidim deal with those local residents who opposed this endeavor. They succeeded in putting together a magnificent school, and I personally studied there under the tutelage of its principal, Rabbi Yeshavam Segal, an amazing example of a true chassid from whom I learned a

great deal.”

This is Yaakov Vaknin’s story about himself and about his father.

THE GRANDFATHER TRAVELED TO THANK THE REBBE

We began this article with Sagit, Rabbi Avraham Vaknin’s granddaughter and Yaakov Vaknin’s daughter. We will conclude with an exciting incident that she related to us, which teaches how connected her grandfather was to the Rebbe as a result of that incredible miracle:

“About five years ago, just a few months before my discharge from military service, I came to the central bus station in Beer Sheva, when I suddenly saw someone from a distance who resembled my grandfather. At first, I couldn’t believe it. At the time, my grandfather was ill and suffering from various health problems, which affected his overall appearance at his advanced age. Thus, I found it hard to believe that this elderly man standing alone and waiting for a bus could possibly be my grandfather.

“In any event, I chose to approach him and get a closer look, ‘just to be sure,’ and I was shocked to see that it really was him. ‘Saba, how are you?’ I asked, totally surprised. ‘What are you doing here all by yourself?’ He was happy to

***“Mr. Avraham,’
the doctors said to
him point-blank,
‘it’s a pity for you
to have to torture
yourself and place
your hopes on
something that
simply won’t
occur.”***

see me, and told me that due to his disabilities, no one paid him any attention, and he’s been waiting at the station now for four hours! When I asked what he was doing here, he replied that he wanted to arrange a visa to the United States in order to travel to the Rebbe. Afterwards, I found out that these travel plans had led to a huge argument within the family.

“What do you think?” Sagit asked. “Did this deter him? Certainly not. He went on his journey – and how! Despite his weakened state of health, he traveled that year to the Rebbe.”

Sagit’s father, Mr. Yaakov Vaknin, put it best this way:

“At the age of two, I was privileged to experience a miracle of the Rebbe. Even now, decades later, I continue to deal with the same problem, and I am filled with hope that the same miracle that kept me alive then will also happen now, and the doctors who are so sure of themselves will understand there is also a Creator and Ruler of the World, and they were only given permission to heal and not to render opinions on such critically important matters...”

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'HE COULD BE RAV OF WARSAW'

By Avrohom Ber

Rabbi Meir Greenberg, rosh Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Morristown and rav of Paterson, New Jersey for over forty years, passed away on 3 Elul at the age of 91. * Rabbi Greenberg, one of the first T'mimim in America and one of the first shluchim of the Rebbe Rayatz and Rebbe MH"M, was a Chassid, battul to the Rebbe, a tremendous Baal Nigla, an oved Hashem, shliach and rav * Rabbi Greenberg supported the belief in the Rebbe as Melech HaMoshiach both before and after Gimmel Tammuz.

ONE OF THE FIRST T'MIMIM IN AMERICA

It is hard to put into words what Rabbi Meir Greenberg was about. It is hard because he was a Chassid who received rare kiruvim from the Rebbeim yet never considered himself great. It is hard because he was a tremendous Baal Nigleh as well as someone who believed with emuna p'shuta. And it is hard because he was an uncompromising rav who did not concede an inch when it came to rabbanus and yet

he was a gentle, softhearted man to those who turned to him regarding personal matters.

The job is that much harder when the person you want to describe was a Chassid, a lamdan ("a big lamdan" is what the Rebbe said about him), a tremendous masmid who learned over 15 hours a day, davened like a Chassid, was tremendously mehudar in mitzvos, a shliach and bottom line: a simple Chassid who lived till his last day with the belief that the Rebbe

MH"M is chai v'kayam.

R' Meir's father was R' Yehoshua Falk, a Chassid from the town of Azaritz. R' Yehoshua emigrated to Brooklyn where Meir was born on 14 Cheshvan 5677/1916. The family lived in Brownsville, Brooklyn, where many Jews lived.

R' Yehoshua Falk and his brothers Yosef and Yekusiel belonged to the Anshei Broboisk shul in Brownsville, a shul where they davened nusach Ari. In 1926 Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, who had just come from Russia, was appointed as the new rav. His first student was nine year old Meir. R' Yisroel, who lived to be mekarev children, was mekarev Meir, who sat behind him in shul. He taught him to say the Six Remembrances, korbanos and the like.

For Meir's bar mitzva in Cheshvan 5690/1929, R' Jacobson convinced his father to take him for yechidus to the Rebbe Rayatz, who was visiting America at the time, to ask for a bracha.

In the winter of 5690, Meir started learning in Yeshivas Torah Vodaas. There were no Lubavitch yeshivos in America at that time. He was placed in the beginners group for Gemara. R' Jacobson, who wanted him to skip, learned an hour and a half with him every day, so that the following z'man, Elul 5691, he could be in a more advanced class. Meir was smart and the

following year he was in the highest level in the yeshiva which was taught by Rabbi Shapiro.

R' Jacobson taught Meir about Chabad, the Chabad Rebbeim and learned *Tanya* with him once a week. In 5691 a new talmid joined the shiur because the boy's grandmother heard about it and wanted her grandson to join. The bachur was Nosson Eliyahu Gertzulin who later became Mashgiach in Torah Vodaas.

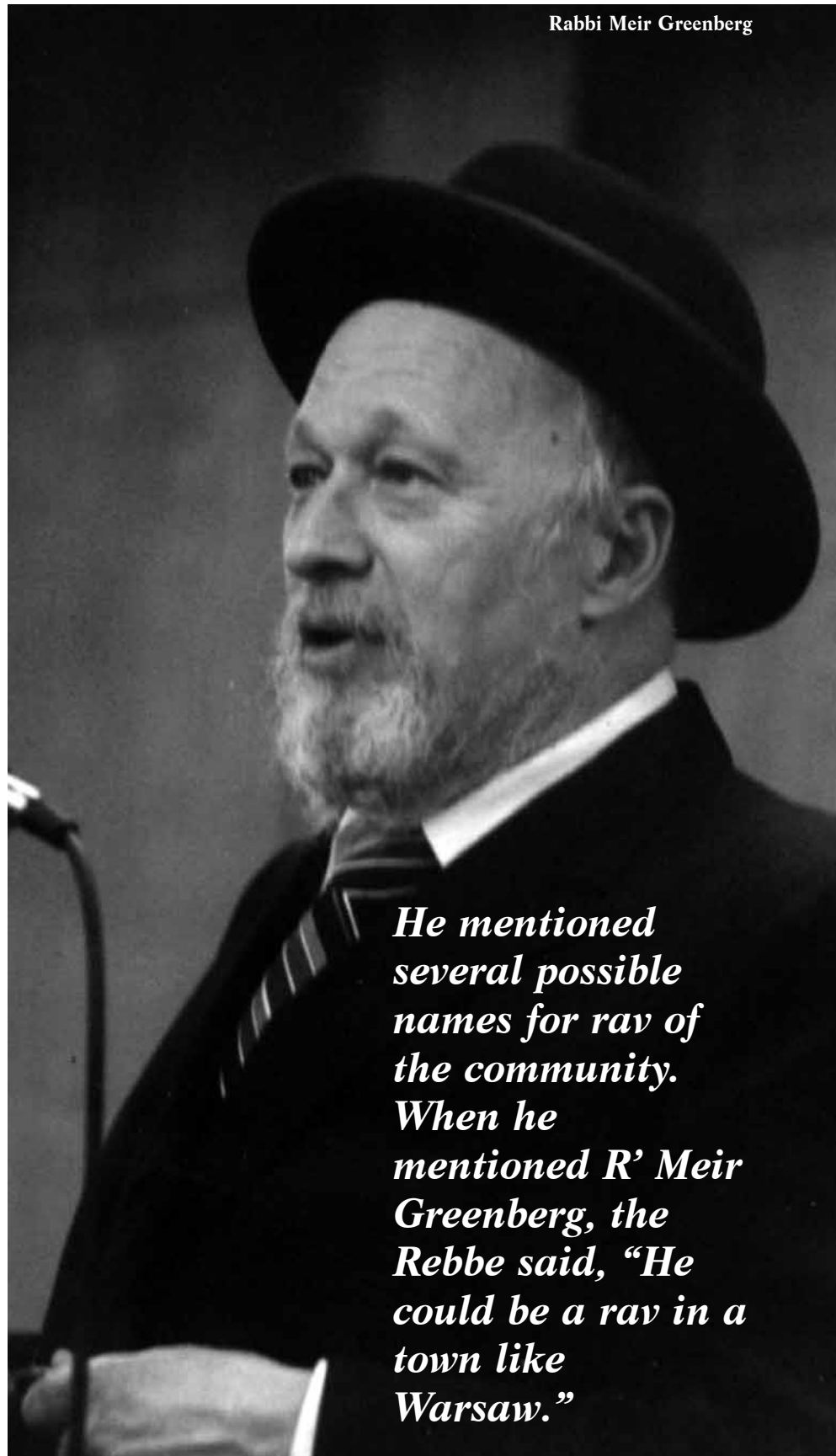
The Chassidus shiur first took place in R' Yisroel's house. Later, because many students had joined, the shiur was held in the Division Avenue Shtibel, which was in Williamsburg, near the yeshiva. Nearly all the bachurim who came to Chabad in those years came from that shiur.

Who brought the other boys to the shiur? Meir Greenberg, R' Yisroel's first talmid who was already considered a big lamdan. He was listed as a member of the "acting committee" of Achei T'mimim – as the representative of Torah Vodaas. That is how he was mekarev Jews to Chassidus at a young age. His good friend Menachem Mendel Feldman, who learned with him in Torah Vodaas at the time, worked together with him.

R' Meir was a close disciple of Rabbi Shlomo Heiman (1892-1945), the rosh yeshiva of Torah Vodaas, who was considered one of the great roshei yeshivos of the time. R' Meir would transcribe his shiurim, many of which were later printed. Even at that young age, it was apparent that R' Meir was destined for Torah greatness. His scholarship and sharpness were well-known among the talmidim of the yeshiva.

R' Yisroel continued to work with him and had him (and some other bachurim) review a maamer, on a regular basis, in shul on Shabbos. This was another stage in

Rabbi Meir Greenberg



He mentioned several possible names for rav of the community. When he mentioned R' Meir Greenberg, the Rebbe said, "He could be a rav in a town like Warsaw."

***Later in their trip
they encountered
German soldiers,
who checked all
their belongings.
When they got to
the package, they
asked what was in
it. R' Meir said,
"Nothing..."***

R' Meir's transformation into a full-fledged Tamim.

TRAVELING TO THE REBBE

In 1939, R' Meir was one of six American bachurim who were the first to travel to the Rebbe Rayatz, in Otvotsk. It was R' Yisroel's idea to send American bachurim to Europe, which was quite a novel idea at the time. On 4 Tamuz, the Rebbe Rayatz gave his approval and the bachurim left by ship, accompanied by R' Yisroel.

They stopped in Paris, where they met the Rebbe's son-in-law, later to succeed him, who gave them medication for his father-in-law. Later in their trip they encountered German soldiers, who checked all their belongings. When they got to the package, they asked what was in it. R' Meir said, "Nothing," and the soldiers simply let them go.

(A famous story is told about this trip. As they waited on the train platform, the Rebbe said a sicha which lasted an hour. Then the Rebbe looked at his watch and said he had to stop and would continue

another time. On Rosh Chodesh Tamuz 5701, at the Rebbe's first farbrengen in the US, the Rebbe went back to the point he had discussed in that sicha. He even asked the bachurim whether they remembered it.)

The bachurim arrived at the Rebbe Rayatz at the beginning of Elul 5699/1939, but were unable to stay a long time, since the war broke out on 17 Elul. The next day they were on the train to Warsaw and from there to Riga, where they spent Tishrei before returning to America. Before they left, they had yechidus and the Rebbe said, "May Hashem help us meet again in good health."

At the end of the yechidus, the Rebbe asked all the bachurim to leave except for Meir Greenberg. The Rebbe blessed him personally and gave him a shlichus to R' Mordechai Dubin, the well-known Chassidishe askan from Latvia who did a great deal to rescue the Rebbe (the Rebbe was helped through him, because he did not have Polish citizenship, only Latvian). Many years later, R' Meir was pleased to recollect the fact that he had been able to help rescue the Rebbe.

When he returned, R' Meir was one of the first T'mimim who learned in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, founded by the Rebbe Rayatz upon his arrival in America.

On Purim 5718, R' Meir brought a mekurav to the farbrengen of the Rebbe MH"M. At midnight, the person complained that he did not feel well and asked R' Meir to take him home. R' Meir's son, Heschel, who was ten at the time, remembers it well. At that farbrengen, the Rebbe mentioned the names of all the early T'mimim in America, but Meir Greenberg was absent, as he had left to take home his guest...

THE SHLICHUS TO CHICAGO

In Elul 5700/1940, R' Meir was sent on shlichus by the Rebbe

Rayatz to Chicago for half a year. He also visited Detroit and Milwaukee (today, his daughter and her husband, Yosef Shlomo Samuels, are on shlichus there). The purpose of the trip was to spread the light of Chassidus and to be mekarev those who descended from Chabad Chassidic stock.

Before he arrived, the Rebbe sent a letter to the Lubavitcher community there and asked them to look after his distinguished student. The Rebbe also wrote to R' Sholom Posner, who lived there. In this letter, the Rebbe called R' Meir "our dear and beloved student."

For those living today, it is hard to understand the situation in America back then, when thousands of Jews who came from religious homes abandoned their religious observance. In the same letter in which the Rebbe outlined the purpose of the mission, the Rebbe wrote that even for those descending from Anash, there was no need to talk Chassidus, but to inspire them to mitzvos like t'fillin.

In the course of the shlichus, R' Meir also visited many rabbanim in the area and his visit reflected very well on Chabad and the Rebbe. In Cheshvan 5701/1940, R' Moshe Leib Rodstein arrived in America and was sent to Chicago by the Rebbe Rayatz, where he founded Agudas Chassidei Chabad in Chicago. In a letter to him, the Rebbe Rayatz wrote to support R' Meir, who was there on shlichus.

MEMBER OF THE HANHALA IN TOMCHEI T'MIMIM

R' Meir continued to learn diligently and received his smicha l'rabbanus from Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim-770, Torah Vodaas and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein. He was one of the first to receive smicha from the gaon. In order to receive smicha from Rabbi Feinstein, you had to

know nearly all of Shulchan Aruch, and the test in his house, took weeks. There are very few people who received smicha with R' Moshe's signature on it.

R' Meir was appointed to teach young talmidim in 770. Many of today's ziknei Anash, were his students. The most famous one was Yehuda Kalman Marlow a"h, the *mara d'asra* in Crown Heights. After he became sick and the doctor told him not to teach anymore, R' Meir was appointed mashgiach in the zal.

In 1942, R' Meir was one of forty rabbanim who were called to a meeting by the Rebbe Rayatz. At the meeting, the Rebbe said, "Hashem helped and we founded a yeshiva here, but now it is too small." The Rebbe asked the rabbanim to help support a Building Fund for Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim.

In later years, you can find R' Meir's name appearing as a member of the central administration at meetings of Achei T'mimim. Those yeshivos opened in order to protect Jewish youth in America from assimilating. R' Meir threw himself into this mitzva of saving spiritual lives until he went on shlichus.



His utter bittul to the Rebbe Rayatz and his son-in-law was apparent. During the year of mourning for the Rebbe's father, the Rebbe would read from the Torah. R' Meir was once called up to the Torah near the Rebbe and his trepidation was obvious. Afterwards, he said that he didn't know where to hide himself; he was ashamed to stand next to the son-in-law of the Rebbe.

In 1944, on the same anniversary as the Rebbe, 14 Kislev, R' Meir married. He received a special letter from the Rebbe MH"M, in which the Rebbe explained to him the inyan of a wedding that comes after perfection in personal avoda and is the beginning of one's avoda in the world.

About two years after he married, the Greenbergs went on shlichus to Worcester, Massachusetts, where R' Meir was appointed chief rabbi of the city. This was a job that entailed being the rav of five shuls.

In 1950, R' Meir was in close touch with the Rebbe MH"M about communal work. However, their lengthy phone conversations were not only about communal work. The Rebbe considered him someone fit to talk to in learning. It is not clear how many Chassidim in our generation the Rebbe spoke to in learning as he did with R' Meir.

R' Meir related that each time the Rebbe responded to a question, he did so by saying - it seems to me, I think, etc. Obviously, everything the Rebbe said was absolutely accurate.

FIRM AS A ROCK

In Cheshvan 5714, the Greenbergs moved to Paterson, New Jersey, where R' Meir was a rav for 45 years. Paterson in those days had 40,000 Jews and Rabbi Greenberg was appointed rav of seven shuls.

On Yom Kippur he would go to each of the shuls and deliver a different sermon to each one, seven different drashos in one day. When they asked him why he prepared seven sermons when each shul had different people, he said that since someone accompanied him, he didn't want him to become bored listening to the same speech over and over again.

On 21 Iyar, 5708, while he was still rav in Worcester, he received a letter from the Rebbe, which said:

In response to your letter about participating in the meetings of the city council and demanding that they close their businesses on Shabbos. This is his obligation according to Torah, and in no way or manner should he do any leniencies and ingenuities, only stand strong – with words of love and kiruv – but strong like a flint stone which by nature is a stone that produces fire. A leader of a flock of Israel, regarding all that pertains to observing Torah and

Before he gave a shiur in Gemara, R' Greenberg would remain awake most of the night in order to prepare it, considering all the possible arguments that could crop up in the course of the shiur.

mitzvos, must be firm like a rock. Regarding helping out in matters of livelihood and getting settled, a rav must try to help each and every man and woman in his k'hilla with an arousal of the heart

... This letter seems like an excellent summary of R' Meir's character as a rav. He was firm like a rock on the one hand, and ready to help in a heartfelt manner on the other.

The beginning wasn't easy. R' Greenberg took the job after several rabbis resigned, because they were not able to successfully manage the kashrus situation in the city. R' Greenberg was different. His strength as a rav was completely different than that of previous rabbis and he did not cave in to anyone.

When one of the balabatim threatened to hurt him after R' Greenberg paskened against him in a din Torah, R' Greenberg responded sharply that since he did not have a halachic leg to stand on,

he was not frightened of him, and he hung up the phone.

A woman had an uncle who worked for the IRS, and she threatened R' Greenberg that her uncle would take care of him. This was really problematic since the chilul Hashem could be terrible. R' Greenberg had a yechidus and when he told the Rebbe about this, the Rebbe laughed. Not smiled, but laughed. "Ah, it should be 'and there shall be no hope for the informers.'" Nothing untoward happened.

He was fearless, but that did not stop him from being gentle and kind when speaking with someone about their personal matters. His strength, along with his pleasantness, are what turned Paterson around. As mentioned, R' Greenberg was a rav there for 45 years in a city where no other rav had lasted more than a short time.

As a rosh yeshiva too, the rabbanim who worked under him, as well as his talmidim, highly respected him. Rabbi Wilschansky, who replaced him as rosh yeshiva in Morristown, said that R' Greenberg treated them as though they were his own age.

In 5718, R' Meir had a yechidus together with a member of the community whom he brought to the Rebbe. In the middle of the yechidus, the man cried, "Rebbe, I'm a dead man. The doctors say that I don't have much longer to live."

The Rebbe said, "Heaven forbid. Hashem can give you another twenty years." The man died twenty years later in 5738.

In this yechidus, the Rebbe asked the man whether he had known the Rebbe Rayatz. When the man said no, the Rebbe said, "Ah [ed. like, what a pity], but you know what? Look at Rabbi Greenberg's eyes. He saw my father-in-law. Look at him, and you can see my father-in-law through him."

ROSH YESHIVAS TOMCHEI T'MIMIM IN NEW JERSEY

In 5719, R' Greenberg was appointed rosh Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Newark. It was R' Jacobson who pushed him into this job. Amongst his first students was Rabbi Mordechai Ashkenazi, the rav of Kfar Chabad. R' Greenberg served as rosh yeshiva for many years, even after the yeshiva moved to Morristown.

In yeshiva, R' Greenberg's shiurim were renowned for their brilliance. They were very deep and you had to concentrate closely in order to follow them, but his explanations were clear and understandable to all; Chochma as well as bina. If we add the fact that he was able to focus on one topic in Nigleh for 14-15 hours (as he told his son), we find someone with ChaBaD, with all three aspects of the mind. Every word of the Alter Rebbe was viewed by him as being utterly precise.

Before he gave a shiur in Gemara, R' Greenberg would remain awake most of the night in order to prepare it, considering all the possible arguments that could crop up in the course of the shiur. He could spend from ten o'clock at night until five in the morning on one shiur. He drank one cup of coffee after another in order to stay awake.

As part of his job in rabbanus, R' Greenberg was a member of the "Igud HaRabbanim in the United States and Canada." He even served as president, a role which enabled him to do much for the Rebbe in those matters that the Rebbe did not want to act officially in the name of Chabad. R' Chadakov once called for R' Greenberg to send an urgent telegram to the government of Russia, something that could not be done under Chabad's name.

It wasn't unusual to see R'

Greenberg in phone conversation with R' Chadakov. They spoke often.

THE REBBE: HE'S A GREAT LAMDAN

At one of the farbrengens in which the Rebbe wanted to speak about the qualities of a simple Jew, he used the example of three T'mimim who went on a certain shlichus. One was a "great lamdan," another was a "great maskil," and the third was a simple Jew. It was the latter, who managed to accomplish what the other two could not. The "great lamdan" in the story was R' Meir Greenberg. It would appear that the Rebbe never used this expression regarding any other Chassid.

One year, when R' Meir came from New Jersey, as he did every year, to the Motzaei Simchas Torah

farbrengen with the Rebbe, he received kos shel bracha and the Rebbe said to him, "We spoke today about sanctifying the month; you will probably say a pilpul tomorrow at the Kinus Torah about this."

The Rebbe was referring to a sicha that he said that day in which he presented a chiddush in Kiddush HaChodesh based on Shulchan Aruch HaRav, siman 600.

R' Meir, who had come late and had missed nearly the entire farbrengen, had not heard that sicha, but was certainly going to deliver a pilpul on the subject. He had never given a shiur on it before, since it's not one of the tractates learned in yeshivos.

Right after kos shel bracha, which ended late at night, R' Meir had to hear a review of the sicha from R' Yoel Kahn and R' Mordechai Mentlick. He then went home, at least an hour's drive, with

a regular schedule the next day. He didn't have Shulchan Aruch Admur HaZakein at home (Kehot had taken it, as it wasn't that readily available, in order to print the new edition from it). He couldn't even borrow it from one of the balabatim, since it was four in the morning when he arrived in New Jersey.

He waited for eight o'clock, and ran to someone's house for the Shulchan Aruch. R' Meir learned the subject, and went back to New York in the afternoon. At 3:30, he said a pilpul in which he cited a Yerushalmi supporting the Rebbe's thesis at the Kinus Torah.

Two years later, the Rebbe said a sicha on the topic of "Yom Tevoach" and this time too, he told R' Meir to say a pilpul on the subject. Needless to say, the pilpul was said the next day even though the inyan is also not one of those learned in yeshivos.

R' Meir took his son R' Heschel



Rabbi Greenberg receiving a dollar from the Rebbe

for yechidus in honor of his bar mitzva. The Rebbe tested Heschel on the topic he was learning, *Maalin BaKodesh*. The Rebbe asked him whether “maalin ba’kodesh” is *d’Oraisa* or *d’Rabbanan*. He said he hadn’t learned that. The Rebbe looked at R’ Meir and asked, “Nu?” Then he smiled and said to the boy, “The Alter Rebbe didn’t know either, he was unsure.”

After the passing of Rabbi Zalman Shimon Dvorkin, rav in Crown Heights, there were talks about elections. When R’ Zalman Gurary was at the Rebbe, he mentioned several possible names for rav of the community. When he mentioned R’ Meir Greenberg, the Rebbe said, “He could be a rav in a town like Warsaw.”

Apparently, the Rebbe was referring to the Warsaw of yesteryear, the city that was a Torah fortress, but when R’ Meir heard this he modestly dismissed it, saying, “The Rebbe meant I could be rav of Warsaw today, a city that has hardly any Jews.”

At one of the general yechiduyos for bar mitzva boys, R’ Meir went with his grandson. On the note he wrote to the Rebbe, he asked for nachas from his children and grandchildren. The Rebbe didn’t even look at the note when he said with a smile, “You should have nachas from your children, grandchildren and from yourself too.”

TREMENDOUS LAMDAN

R’ Greenberg corresponded in halacha with many g’dolei ha’Torah, like Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and others. Every year, on 18 Kislev, the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, his rosh yeshiva in Torah Vodaas, he would give a shiur in yeshiva.

While he was still Rabbi Heiman’s talmid in Torah Vodaas, Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner, rosh yeshiva in Chaim Berlin, came to

visit the yeshiva. R’ Hutner presented the students with a difficult question he had, and said that if someone had an answer, he would eat his hat. R’ Meir gave an answer and when R’ Heiman heard it he turned to R’ Hutner and said, “You have to eat your hat.”

Once, when he was in a Litvishe yeshiva, he spoke in learning with someone who is considered a gadol ha’dor in the Litvishe world. He mentioned the opinion of the Alter Rebbe. The rabbi made a dismissive gesture as though to say, “So what.”

R’ Meir remained quiet but afterwards, when the same rav

***On Yom Kippur
he would go to
each of the shuls
and deliver a
different sermon
to each one,
seven different
drashos in one
day.***

mentioned another insight, R’ Meir pointed out that he was contradicting an explicit Mishna. When they looked it up and saw that R’ Meir was right, the rabbi angrily left. The students of that rosh yeshiva referred to the Chazal which says, “He made a mistake in the Mishna.”

R’ Greenberg was very friendly with Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik, rosh yeshiva in Chicago. This friendship helped his son Heschel years later, when he came with R’ Yitzchok Springer and R’ Eliezer Turen, to ask Rabbi Aharon

Soloveitchik to voice his opinion. His opinion was publicized and made a tumult among frum Jews, because he wrote that the belief that Lubavitcher Chassidim have in the Rebbe being Moshiach has strong Torah support.

ON ALL FRONTS

In 1945, the Rebbe Rayatz founded the “Adeinu” organization, whose purpose was “for young men and talmidei ha’yeshivos involved in Torah, to meet from time to time at a gathering of talmidei chachamim, discuss chiddushei Torah and gather for Torah celebrations.” R’ Meir was appointed “assistant chairman of the committee.” The chairman was R’ Mordechai Mentlick.

R’ Meir was also a great baal chesed. In 1947 he was the secretary for the Bikur Cholim committee which was under Machne Israel. The committee was the first of its kind to take care of ill people among Anash, as well as Jewish soldiers and those wounded in war.

He was an emotional man. The residents of Buffalo, the city where he lived his final years, excitedly told his son Heschel that his father began crying from their stories when they had met for only minutes. These weren’t old friends, but he deeply felt other people’s misfortunes.

His avodas ha’t’filla was something special. He would meditate on Chassidus for a long time before davening. His son, Yosef Yitzchok relates that as a boy, he would sometimes look for his father and couldn’t understand where he had disappeared to. His mother did not explain and only later did he find out that his father had locked himself in his office and davened for hours upon hours, being precise with every single word.

After davening he would say the chapters of T’hillim that

corresponded to his family members, down to his grandchildren. How did he remember when to change to the next chapter? R' Meir had a watch which reminded him of everybody's birthday.

His mind was extraordinary even for secular matters. His multifaceted talents were incredible. You could ask him about a Gemara and get an answer. By the same token, you could ask him a worldly question and get a brilliant answer. You could ask him, "How long does it take to fly from Spain to Morocco" and he would answer within seconds after he made the calculation. His mechanical aptitude was unbelievable. A rosh yeshiva who spent his life with Gemara would fix broken cars.

He was very particular to say brachos from a Siddur. He always said the "al ha'michya" from a Siddur even though he was a genius who remembered entire segments of Gemara by heart.

"The mind rules the heart," was something apparent in R' Greenberg. One Shabbos, when he returned from shul, he was held up by an armed black man who said, "Rabbi, give me your money!" R' Greenberg asked him with a smile what he thought G-d would do to him if He would see him with a gun. The man ran away.

A similar story happened when a thief broke into the shul and found R' Meir there. R' Meir explained that he had come to the wrong address since rabbis don't

have money.

SIMPLE FAITH

The most surprising aspect of R' Meir's personality was his emuna p'shuta. Even though he was a Baal Nigleh and a tremendous lamdan, he lived with the simple faith that the Rebbe is Moshiach and that is how he educated his children.

One time, when Rashag went to his parents' home, R' Meir's son Heschel was there. His grandmother, who took pride in her grandson's Chassidishe education asked young Heschel who Moshiach is. "The Rebbe shlita" is what he said, repeating what he had been taught at home.

When his son Yosef Yitzchok called him after Shabbos Parshas Shoftim, 5751, and told him what the Rebbe spoke about on Shabbos, he was tremendously excited. Just glancing at the sicha brought tears to his eyes.

Even after Gimmel Tammuz, his belief that the Rebbe is Moshiach and chai v'kayam, was unshaken. He was one of the first to sign the p'sak din that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

His son Yosef Yitzchok relates that one night, after Gimmel Tammuz, his father called him with a question. "If the meshaleiach dies, what's the din?" He didn't know what his father wanted and why he was suddenly quizzing him in Shulchan Aruch, but his father persisted. "Nu, think a little. What does the Ketzos in siman 188 say?"

When he finally answered, "the shlichus is cancelled," his father said, "That is what I wanted to know. Good night." And he understood what his father meant.

He lived with the reality that there cannot be a situation in which "if the meshaleiach dies his shlichus is cancelled" and he repeated this at every opportunity. As a Baal Nigleh he brought proof to this emuna p'shuta from nigleh.

When he turned seventy, the Rebbe blessed him with "may your days be extended over your kingdom." The bracha was fulfilled. R' Greenberg served for many more years as rav and rosh yeshiva.

He passed away on 3 Elul and is survived by his children: Sterna Lerman (Flatbush), Rabbi Heschel Greenberg (shliach in Williamsville, NY and rosh yeshiva of the Yeshiva G'dola in West New York, New Jersey), Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Greenberg (Crown Heights, a rosh yeshiva in Tiferes Menachem in Seagate), Rabbi Mendy Greenberg (New Jersey) and Chasha Freida Samuels (shlucha, Milwaukee, WI).

His s'farim are *Shiurei Gittin* on the tractate Gittin and *Shiurei Mesechtos* on the order of Moed. The family is presently working on printing additional chiddushei Torah of his.

With Rabbi Meir Greenberg's passing, we have lost a Chassidishe rav, a tremendous gaon, and a genuine mekushar to the Rebbe MH"M. May his memory be for a blessing.



RABBI YOSEF YITZCHOK RAICHIK A”H

Rabbi Yossi Raichik passed away on 21 Elul at the young age of 54. A few years ago, he fell ill with a serious lung disease. Despite doctors’ recommendations, he continued working, even during the past few months, when his condition deteriorated. He was due to travel to the United States, in the hope of finding a lung donor, but on the eve of his scheduled departure, he collapsed and was taken, in serious condition, to the Beilinson Medical Center in Petach Tikva.

R’ Raichik was born in California. His father was the famous Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik a”h, one of the founders of the Chabad empire in California.

In 1976 he and Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Gerlitzky went on shlichus to the Far East. They spent time in Teheran and briefly met the local community. In 1978 he responded to the request of Rabbi Hertzel Elilulian, who was sent to Iran at



that time, and went to Iran. In accordance with the Rebbe’s directive that year, he went prepared to print the *Tanya* and did so in several Iranian cities. He also checked mezuzos and spiritually uplifted Iranian Jewry.

While he was in Iran, the Islamic Revolution began to take off and he

was responsible for rescuing 1000 children who escaped Teheran. He helped them get settled in the United States and was very devoted to their material and spiritual wellbeing.

Shortly after he married, R’ Raichik and his wife moved to Eretz Yisroel on shlichus. When the Rebbe told mosdos Chabad to save children from Chernobyl after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion sent out a toxic radioactive cloud, he became the director of Chabad’s “Children of Chernobyl” (CCOC) project. They airlifted more than 2,531 children and 1,757 parents from the nuclear-contaminated Chernobyl to Israel for treatment.

R’ Raichik traveled the world and was away from home for long periods of time in order to raise money for the children and the mosdos that were founded for them in Kfar Chabad. He worried about these children, alone and away from their families. He was there when they celebrated a bar mitzva near the Kosel, when they got married, and was a sandak at the brissin of their children.

Friends and acquaintances remember him as a wonderful person, a genuine Chassid, a good listener, beloved by all, devoted to the Rebbe, and an active though modest askan. He is survived by his wife and children, brothers and sisters: R’ Shimon Raichik, R’ Sholom Raichik, R’ Elozor Raichik, Mrs. Suri Klyne, Mrs. Devorie Wilhelm, and Mrs. Chanie Hanoka; R’ Abba Raichik, R’ Levi Raichik and R’ Yanky Raichik.

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RABBI YISROEL NOSSON SLAVIN A”H

Anash were saddened to hear of the passing of the Chassid, Rabbi Yisroel Nosson Slavin of Tel Aviv and later of Yerushalayim.

R’ Slavin was born in 5676/1916 to the baal mesirus nefesh, Rabbi Avrohom Levik Slavin and Mrs. Slavin, nee Zilberman. When he was just three years old, the Rebbe Rayatz sent his family on shlichus to strengthen Judaism in Georgia. At first the family lived in Kulashi. Later, the Rebbe Rayatz told them to move to Kutaisi. R’ Yisroel Nosson joined the Tomchei T’mimim yeshiva there and used his free time to check t’fillin and mezuzos.

In 1927, about a year before the Rebbe’s final arrest in Russia, he and his father had yechidus and he was tested by the Rebbe on his studies.

MESIRUS NEFESH FOR SHABBOS OBSERVANCE

When he grew older, R’ Yisroel Nosson had to work in business in order to save his family from starvation. Despite his young age, he was faithful to his Chassidishe chinuch even in the world of business.

One time, he traveled with a group of Jews who were also in the clothing business, which was illegal under the communists. The train was delayed and therefore it would be arriving in Kutaisi on Shabbos. Despite the danger involved in being caught by the police agents planted throughout the station, he got off

the train with the contraband material.

The merit of Shabbos observance protected him and when Shabbos



was over he went on his way again and arrived safely in Kutaisi. A week later, when he met his fellow businessmen, they told him that when they arrived in Kutaisi they were caught by the secret police and their goods were confiscated.

Even when R’ Yisroel Nosson was able to run a textile factory, he insisted on Shabbos observance and managed to halt production on Shabbos even under the watchful eye of the government.

In 1945, due to someone informing on R’ Yisroel Nosson to exonerate himself, he was arrested and jailed for nine months. Despite the harsh conditions of jail, he avoided contaminating himself with

treife food although this entailed perpetual hunger.

After a brief trial, troika-style, he was sent for ten years of hard labor in Siberia. Fortunately, it was the last year of the war and a general pardon was granted all prisoners, including R’ Yisroel Nosson.

THE REBBE RAYATZ ESTABLISHES THE YAHRTZAIT

Following the informer’s tattling, NKVD agents burst into the home of his father, R’ Avrohom, who was then the rav of Kutaisi, and conducted a thorough search. They found letters from R’ Avrohom to the Rebbe and from the Rebbe to him. This was incriminating evidence that R’ Avrohom belonged to the ‘dangerous and radical’ organization that was run by the Rebbe Rayatz. This put R’ Avrohom’s life into danger.

When his son, Yisroel wanted to immediately flee to the city of Tbilisi, his father calmly replied: The Rebbe sent me to work in Kutaisi, not in Tbilisi and so I won’t leave. I hope that Hashem will help and no evil will befall me.

That night, his father was arrested and taken to NKVD headquarters where he was sentenced to ten years of hard labor in Siberia. His crime was establishing classes for children and mikvaos. Some time later, they received a note from the commandant of the camp that said

their father was hospitalized. The family, who knew that there was no hospital in the camp, understood that their father had died. May Hashem avenge his blood.

R' Yisroel sent a letter to the Rebbe Rayatz in which he briefly wrote what had happened and said that the family did not know what to do about the mourning period and which day to observe as the yahrtzeit. The Rebbe said that since the Rebbe Rashab sent him to Georgia, and since the Rebbe Rashab passed away on 2 Nissan, they should observe 2 Nissan as the yahrtzeit, just as the Rebbe Rayatz observed this day for his father.

KASHRUS

After the war, an agreement was made between Russia and Poland which enabled Polish citizens who had fled Poland during the war, to return home. Many Russian Jews took this opportunity to leave Russia. R' Yisroel Nosson got eight passports and visas for his family and his father-in-law's family (he was engaged at the time) and the family crossed the border to Cracow.

Then they went to the refugee camp in Poking as the Rebbe Rayatz instructed and R' Yisroel Nosson began teaching the numerous children in the camps. He founded a Talmud Torah and would travel three hours each way every day in order to teach Jewish subjects to the young children. While in Poking, he married Rivka Zilberman. When the Rebbe Rayatz said that most of Anash should make aliya, his family did so and settled in Kfar Chabad.

Unlike many Russian immigrants, R' Yisroel Nosson did not relax when he got to Eretz Yisroel. He took a job in the military industry, where he was horrified to discover that the large kitchen that provided hot meals for about 1000 employees had no kashrus supervision. He waged a public campaign, getting employee signatures and writing petition

letters until he managed to have the kitchen kashered.

In revenge for the commotion he had caused, he was fired. He was left without a livelihood to support his wife and five children but he did not despair. He was very pleased that he had saved close to a thousand Jews from treife food.

After a difficult period, he took a job as a mashgiach for foreign ships that brought immigrants to Israel. To his sorrow, he discovered that the kashrus situation on the ships was deplorable. The cooking of treife and kosher was done in one kitchen with no separation. Despite his previous experience he fearlessly stood up for his principles. He began writing letters and meeting with the appropriate people and it worked. The owners of the ships acceded to all R' Yisroel Nosson's demands, knowing that if they did not, the Jewish Agency would stop using their shipping line to transport olim.

When the large wave of immigration ceased, R' Yisroel Nosson was left without a job. About a year later he was appointed mashgiach of the El-Al kitchen at the

airport in Lud. When he tried to correct serious kashrus problems, he met up with excuses and evasiveness. He did not back down but went into the kitchen and poured out the pot of food. That's when he was taken seriously and... again he was fired.

R' Yisroel Nosson began to work in chinuch, mainly in mosdos that had immigrant children. He made hundreds of house calls in order to convince parents to send their children to schools that were run in the spirit of Judaism. He also raised money from supporters in Eretz Yisroel and abroad for the mosdos.

He volunteered for Pe'ilim-Yad L'Achim. He would go to the centers where Georgian Jews lived. He spoke their language or in Russian with the Bucharian Jews. He was able to get hundreds of children to switch from public school to Torah schools.

R' Yisroel Nosson Slavin is survived by Mrs. Sterna Bransdorfer of B'nei Brak, Yosef Yitzchok Slavin of B'nei Brak, Avrohom Levik Slavin of Crown Heights, Mrs. Leah Shiffer of B'nei Brak, and Yehuda Leib Slavin of Ramat Gan.

