

**4**

## **A JOURNEY BACK AND FORTH**

D'var Malchus

**6**

## **'THE REBBE SAW ME AND THAT'S WHAT COUNTS!'**

Shlichus | Chani Nussbaum

**11**

## **TO CONQUER THE WORLD WITH TORAH**

Shlichus | Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz

**14**

## **A SHTURM ABOUT HAKHEL**

Insight | Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim

**22**

## **MORE SOUL STORIES FROM INDIA**

Shlichus Stories | Eli Shneur

**29**

## **RABBI BINYAMIN ZILBER Z"l**

Obituary

**30**

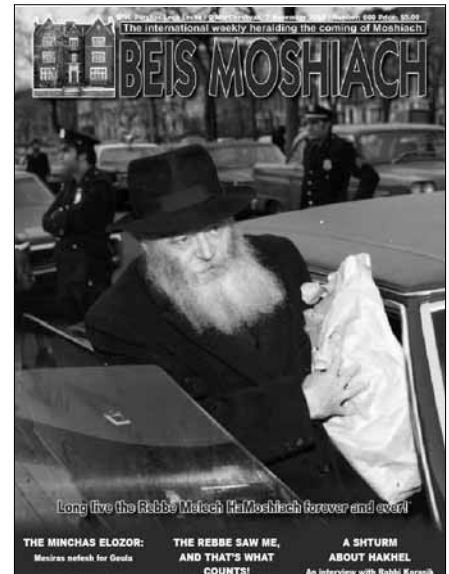
## **LIVING WITH TISHREI YEAR-ROUND**

Thought | Interview by Nossan Avrohom

**36**

## **MESIRAS NEFESH FOR GEULA**

Feature | Yehoshua Kenig



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# A JOURNEY BACK AND FORTH

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

***In Lech Lecha, Abraham was told to leave his land and journey to Israel. This portion is always read in conjunction with the seventh of MarCheshvan, fifteen days after Sukkos, when the last Jew arrived at the Euphrates River, ready to leave Israel. This going forth and coming back, leaving and entering the material world, is not a contradiction. Both are part of transforming the world into a dwelling place for G-dliness.***

This week's Torah reading, *Lech Lecha*, begins with G-d's command to Abraham to leave his home and his father's house and go to the land that G-d will show him. Our Sages tell us that the narratives about the patriarchs and matriarchs indicate the path their descendants – the Jewish people – should follow. Their actions paved the spiritual pathway for us, revealing the how and why of our Divine Service.

The Torah reading starts with the words, "Go out from your land, your birthplace and the house of your father and go to the land that I will show you." Abraham is commanded to ascend to the land of Israel, to leave all else behind and go on a journey of self-elevation.

To truly understand the meaning of this concept – and its importance for us – we must first take note of a significant fact about the calendar: the seventh day of the month of MarCheshvan always occurs during the week of *Lech Lecha*.

On the seventh of MarCheshvan, the Jewish people started praying for rain for the land of Israel. The prayer for rain began fifteen days after Sukkos, so that the last traveler from Jerusalem would reach the Euphrates river. Sukkos, of course, was one of the three pilgrimage festivals in which Jews were required to bring an offering to Jerusalem from wherever they lived. It was a two-week journey – fourteen days – from Jerusalem to the Euphrates River, the Biblically ordained eastern border of the land of Israel. Thus, by the seventh of MarCheshvan, everyone who had gone to Jerusalem for the festival of Sukkos and was now returning home had reached the border of Israel. The rain in Israel would not trouble their journey home.

However, the significance of the seventh of MarCheshvan is not simply negative, the day until which the rains of Israel are delayed. Rather, that very negative – the delay of the rains until the travelers reach the border – indicates that the seventh of MarCheshvan has a deeper connection with the holiday itself. After all, it's a two-way journey to Jerusalem. Celebrating the holiday of Sukkos included both going to and coming from Jerusalem. In other words, as long as the Jewish people had not reached the border, the river Euphrates, it seemed to them as if they were still rejoicing in and observing the holiday.

Thus, the fourteen days after Sukkos were seen as an extension of the festival. The seventh of MarCheshvan, then, marked the final completion of every activity associated with the holiday. It was a day of descent from the heights of holiness the people experienced in the Temple in Jerusalem.

That being the case, there seems to be a contradiction between the lesson of the seventh of MarCheshvan and the

lesson of the Torah reading. The words *Lech Lecha* mean “go out.” That is the theme of the Torah reading. It teaches us to follow in Abraham’s footsteps, to leave home – to leave our material concerns and comforts – and ascend to the land of Israel – to elevate ourselves spiritually. The seventh of MarCheshvan teaches us to follow in the footsteps of those who observed Sukkos in Jerusalem, to return home – to go back to our involvement in the physical world – and descend from the land of Israel – to descend from the heights of spirituality.

Granted that there’s a point to both concepts – elevating one’s self spiritually and involving one’s self in worldly concerns – still they seem to be diametrically opposed. Why is it that every single year they occur together? Since nothing happens by coincidence, but all is a result of Divine Providence, that the seventh of MarCheshvan always falls during the week of *Lech Lecha* emphasizes the connection and interrelationship between the two ideas. But, how does this relate to us now, specifically as we find ourselves in the days of Moshiach?

Actually, elevating one’s self spiritually and involving one’s self in worldly concerns are inter-related. The purpose of *Lech Lecha* – of going forth – is to create a dwelling place for G-dliness. This dwelling place can only be created through transforming material objects and mundane concerns into vehicles for holiness. And this transformation can occur only through the Torah and mitzvos of a Jew. So, when all of a Jew’s activities are “for the sake of heaven” the common and everyday are filled with the spiritual. G-d’s presence dwells and is revealed within the physical world.

The spiritual elevation – the ascent to the land of Israel – indicated by the journey of Abraham is not an end in and of itself. Rather, it provides the inspiration and direction, giving a Jew the ability to “go forth” into the world and transform it into a dwelling place for G-dliness. This return home, this descent to the material world outside the land of Israel, which completes and fulfills the purpose of the ascent, occurs on the seventh of MarCheshvan.

Still, we must look a little deeper into the question, since the journeys of Abraham in the Torah reading of *Lech Lecha* are from outside Israel into the land of Israel, while the journey of the seventh of MarCheshvan is from inside Israel – from Jerusalem – outward to the lands

outside of Israel. Since the journeys are superficially in the opposite direction, there must be something about the journeys themselves that connect the Torah reading of *Lech Lecha* and the seventh of MarCheshvan.

A true journey brings one to a completely new level. One reaches a stage unconnected with and incomparable to the place one stood before the journey. Thus, the journey of Abraham into Israel and the journey of the Jews away from Israel after Sukkos must bring each to the same new level. That is, the spiritual pathway paved by Abraham must be the same one traveled by the Jews and completed on the seventh of MarCheshvan. In this way the correspondence of the Torah reading of *Lech Lecha* and the seventh of MarCheshvan can be explained.

The words “*Lech Lecha*” – “go forth” – are a command from G-d. Prior to this command, Abraham acted based on his own understanding. As he came to recognize the existence of G-d, he taught others about the Creator. But his answers and understanding came from his reasoning and comprehension. As a result, the transformation he could achieve, the degree to which Abraham could teach others to recognize the G-dliness within the world, was limited to an intellectual level. However, after G-d commanded Abraham *Lech Lecha* – go forth – Abraham acted as G-d’s emissary. His actions were based not on his own understanding; rather, he acted simply to carry out the command and directive of the One who sent him. In this way Abraham could connect and unite creation with its Creator. The connection with, relationship to and perception of G-dliness was not limited by one’s intellect or logic. It penetrated the entire being.

And this is also the lesson of the seventh of MarCheshvan: one must take the inspiration and the vision of G-dliness received at the Temple in Jerusalem during the festival and go forth with it as G-d’s emissary, bringing a recognition of G-dliness – through Torah and mitzvos – to the whole world. In this way there will be a revelation of G-dliness and an actual seeing of the spiritual.

The task and yearly journey of *Lech Lecha*, as we experience it on the seventh of MarCheshvan, reaches its culmination and completion precisely now, in the days when the coming of Moshiach is imminent and we will complete the journey Abraham began, transforming the world into a dwelling place for G-dliness.

*(Based on Likkutei Sichos 20, pp. 54-60)*

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# ‘THE REBBE SAW ME AND THAT’S WHAT COUNTS!’

By Chani Nussbaum

*Mrs. Devorah Wagner, a shlucha in Johannesburg, South Africa, tells us of her many travels, how she uses the “power of cooking” to spread Judaism, and shares her Igros Kodesh stories with us.*

When the oldest Wagner child, who is eight years old, returned from 770 last year, his four year old brother asked him, “Did you see the Rebbe?”

Menachem answered, “The Rebbe saw me, and that’s what counts!”

That’s the answer of a child who has been given a good chinuch!

Mrs. Devorah and Rabbi Noam Wagner have been on shlichus in several places on multiple continents.

Mrs. Wagner relates:

“I was close to Lubavitch, but I actually became a Lubavitcher only after I finished high school. That’s when I discovered that other paths were not for me, and resolved to become a Lubavitcher.

“I went to Tzfas to study for a

year and got engaged about a week after my return to the U.S.

“After my husband learned in Kollel in Crown Heights, we went on shlichus. Unlike many others, we have been in several places, and we always feel the kochos of the Rebbe with us.

## SPREADING THE WELLSPRINGS IN VENICE

“First we went to Venice, where we spent three years. My husband was the Menahel Ruchni of the yeshiva there, and the local shliach, R’ Benin, was the Menahel Gashmi. The yeshiva was in the Jewish ghetto (the first Jewish ghetto in Europe).

“My husband gave everything he had to the yeshiva. There were

farbrengens that ignited the hidden spark in many people. The achdus was fantastic, and it accomplished amazing things. Two bachurim helped the shliach at his restaurant. Those who wanted to farbreng, who wanted something more, would go to the yeshiva.

“We saw many fruits from those farbrengens. My husband found a common language with everyone. When people asked about Moshiach, if they were simple people he would respond with stories; if they were learned, he provided sources in Halacha and the Gemara. Many people left with the feeling that the Rebbe is chai v’kayam and, at the very least, can be Moshiach. The best proof was when Misnagdishe visitors left singing Yechi!

“The Jews who visited constantly expressed their amazement with the atmosphere in the yeshiva and the bachurim. There was lots of hafatza, and it was special. Every day, they put t’fillin on many people, dozens of whom who had never put on t’fillin before. Venice drew many tourists, including many Jews.

“Mivtza Neshek was also wildly successful. Many of the young women who passed through Venice committed to lighting Shabbos

candles. I was also active at the university. I remember a student whom I met who did not even know she was Jewish. The only thing she knew was that her grandmother, her mother's mother, was Jewish. I informed her that this made her Jewish. We kept in close touch, and today she is a shlucha herself in a city in Italy.

"I remember that one time, two girls from the Gateshead Seminary in England came. They had a problem with the hotel, so we invited them for Shabbos. They asked many questions about Moshiach and we sat and talked into the night. Afterwards, we received letters from them which they ended with Yechi. That's despite the fact that they came to us with tremendous opposition to anything associated with Chassidus.

"I also informed women about the laws of Family Purity, and helped those who wanted to keep the mitzva. At that time, the mikva in Venice wasn't kosher and it was necessary to travel to Bologna, a two and a half hour train ride away.

"We had a video that explained Taharas HaMishpacha, and a couple who stayed with us watched it and decided to keep this mitzva. I'll never forget the woman who did not have children for seven years, who insisted on keeping the mitzva of Taharas HaMishpacha with mesirus nefesh and had a child! Back then she only observed these laws and Yom Kippur. Today she has become more observant, and she has two children.

"At the end of Pesach, when we held the Moshiach Seuda, a girl dropped in. I invited her to sit down, and she enjoyed herself very much. Boruch Hashem, we have kept in touch, and today she is in shidduchim and looking for a religious man to marry.

"We told the Jews we met how to contact Chabad in the cities they came from, and tried to keep in touch with them. Many visitors kept in touch via e-mail for a long time after they left Venice.



**Rabbi Noam Wagner**

"Many Jews were inspired in Venice, people who came just to eat a hot meal at the restaurant and stayed for the blowing of the shofar on Rosh HaShana or for the Ten Commandments on Shavuot. This was work that was done outside the walls of the yeshiva.

"When our oldest was two years old, he knew to ask people, "Are you Jewish?" – and who could refuse a sweet little boy ...

## **FROM VENICE TO MEXICO**

"When we had to leave Venice, we went to Mexico for a year, to assist the shliach there, Rabbi Meizlich, in the yeshiva he started.

"In Mexico there was great opposition to Chassidus



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The best proof was  
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Yechi!***

and Chabad, but my husband found a way to reach people. He first spoke to them a lot in Nigleh and only then in Chassidus. Boruch Hashem, we were very successful, and we give the credit to the Rebbe who helped us throughout.

"When we had to leave after only a year, after we had just gotten used to the new shlichus, it was very hard. We reminded ourselves that we were being led by the Rebbe, and only he could guide us.

## **FROM MEXICO TO SOUTH AFRICA**

"We are here for five and a half years. Our shlichus focuses primarily on Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim. My husband is the rosh yeshiva, and I try to help him as much as I can. He is the boys' father and I am their mother. If a bachur is sick, I look after him, call a doctor if necessary, make sure he eats, etc.

"At times that I feel down, I write to the Rebbe. I would like to work more with the community, to give shiurim to women, but the answer I open to is always to help my husband in the yeshiva. That is what the Rebbe wants of me, that I should be like the bachurim's mother.

"Here's a story for you. On Erev Shavuot, my husband's driver came to us. My husband had been trying for a long time to convince him to put on t'fillin, but he always refused. He went through the war and didn't want to hear about t'fillin.

"When he came Erev Yom Tov, my husband was in the middle of a phone call and I invited the man in to eat some cheese cake and blintzes that I had made. When my husband tried to persuade him, once again, to put on t'fillin, he no longer refused. Later, he came around to the yeshiva. Lately, he informed us that he has been trying to put on t'fillin regularly, and on a day that he does not, he feels it wasn't a good day.

"He is 70 years old, and from his moving story I learned that it is never too late. In addition, I learned that although a kitchen is a place of physicality, it can also lead to spiritual attainments. This is the reason that I put effort into my cooking and baking. My shlichus taught me that a hot and tasty meal is mekarev people."

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**We are in a Hakhel year. What can you tell us about this as it pertains to your shlichus?**

"In Hakhel, you unite. In all the places I've been, I have seen how achdus manages to break barriers and make things flow. I see this especially with the community here, which is outstandingly united. Our goal this year is to add more shiurim, through which we will increase our achdus, and certainly this will make all obstacles disappear until we see Moshiach.

"My message for Hakhel is that each of us has to see just the good in others and focus on it. This is the way we will unite."

**You've been on shlichus in several places so perhaps you can tell us – how do you relate to a different type of community than you have been used to? How do you unite?**

"Through the Rebbe's guidance. That is how I became a Lubavitcher. It began in a roundabout way and now it's more direct. For me, to get an answer in the Igros is like getting an answer from my father. We have to remember that we are conduits and the Rebbe works through us. We need to do what he wants. In my experience, remembering this point gives you the strength to handle the hard times. We need to remember that we aren't doing anything for ourselves."

**Tell us more about your shlichus.**

"Although I sometimes want to do something else, I am generally involved in the yeshiva. My husband needs my help, and this is my shlichus. My husband, children and I "live the yeshiva." Bachurim from our yeshiva go on shlichus around the world – to America, South America, Australia, Russia – and they keep in touch with us. Every Shabbos four to six bachurim eat with us, which enables us to establish a personal relationship with them.

"It's also great for our five children to have known, since they were little, what a farbrengen is, what a Chassidische niggun is, to have heard a wealth of Chassidische stories and breathe in a Chassidische atmosphere. The bachurim are like our children's older brothers and like our children.

"One night, my husband let the madrich go somewhere, and told me he would put the children to sleep. It was ten at night and our children were sleeping already. Then I realized that he meant the bachurim in yeshiva."

## **GUIDANCE FROM THE REBBE**

"Igros Kodesh answers are not only a source of miracles, but our guidebooks in life. My nine year old wanted to go to sleep-away camp

this year and I wasn't sure whether he was ready. He suggested that we write to the Rebbe and he asked me whether, if the Rebbe said yes, I would agree to send him. I said of course.

"He put a lot of effort into the letter. Before writing it he learned Tanya by heart with my husband, he learned a sicha, and he went to the mikva.

"In the answer he opened to, the Rebbe gave a lot of encouragement for learning Tanya and Mishnayos by heart and then the Rebbe blessed him with a healthy summer. We had no choice but to send him to camp. Sometimes, we have to learn from the kids how to live with the Rebbe.

"We write to the Rebbe about all of our activities and we get answers. It has become a part of our lives.

"Last year, I very much wanted to go to the Rebbe for Tishrei, but I

did not receive an answer when I wrote. I consulted with my mashpia, who told me, "I don't know why I am telling you this, but try again and again until you get an answer." As the Rebbe told a Chassid, "Even when I don't answer you when you knock the first time, knock a second and third time and come in whenever you want, because I'll always hear you." My mashpia emphasized that it was only now, in this specific situation, that she was telling me to write again and again until I was answered.

"Each time I wrote, I opened to a horaa that was hard for me to do. At first I decided to do it under certain conditions, but I immediately realized that the Rebbe wasn't interested in my conditions and wanted me to do it wholeheartedly. As soon as I made the decision to do as the Rebbe asked, I opened to an

answer with the Rebbe's bracha for the trip, my request, and success in my work.

"While I waited for an answer, I looked for a flight, but the planes were booked. There was also a financial problem. But the moment I made the decision to carry out the horaa I found out about an available spot on a flight to New York. That day we also got a donation that covered the cost of the flight, as well as our work in general. It all worked out.

"It was, indeed, a very busy month. I spent time in Montreal with my parents, and worked with many women. I did mitvtzaim as much as possible, and it was really supernatural because by nature, I am shy. I truly felt that it was only the Rebbe's kochos. I returned to my work here with lots of energy."

"Our little girl, who is seven months old, is a walking miracle. She was born in the seventh month and was in the NICU. While I was there with her, I met a woman and I wondered whether she was Jewish. She told me that though she was Jewish, she was married to a non-Jew and lived far away, where gentiles – and Jews who wanted to forget their Judaism – lived.

"I was pleasantly surprised when she was willing to take a Shir LaMaalos card from me, and we keep in touch. My goal now is for her son to attend the local Jewish school."

#### **In conclusion:**

"My husband went to the Rebbe, and he came back for Simchas Torah, in order to give over the chayus to the k'hilla. In our last phone conversation I told him, 'Save me a good spot in 770 because Moshiach is about to come; Shnas Hakhel is underway.'"

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



**Rabbi Noam Wagner at a farbrengen with Rabbi Tuvia Bolton  
at the Chabad yeshiva in Johannesburg**

# TO CONQUER THE WORLD WITH TORAH

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

*There are many mitzvaim of the Rebbe, for all sorts of people, but the thing that most affects a Jew is when he discovers the depths of Torah. More than anything else, this is what changes people.*

In 1971, a group of bachurim went on shlichus to Australia. The Rebbe told them, before they left, **“You probably know that the purpose of this shlichus is to conquer Australia through Torah study.”** (Likkutei Sichos vol. 7, p. 351)

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Wilschansky, shliach and rosh yeshiva in Tzfas, was one of those bachurim. He explained that this approach, to conquer via Torah

study, was something the Rebbe spoke about a lot in 5731.

R’ Wilschansky adopted this approach and he and his talmidim – and I am among them – conquer the world, opening more and more branches of Chabad yeshivos in all sorts of places; you may not have even heard of these yishuvim. They open Chabad houses where many shiurim are given. People learn, and the world is conquered with the power of Torah, preparing it for the

Geula.

This column is devoted to some stories about shluchim and their students, who are conquering the world with Torah study.

## BRANCHES, AND BRANCHES OF BRANCHES, OF TOMCHEI T’MIMIM

The Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas has been a pioneer when it comes to opening additional branches. It started in Chaifa, and continued in Dalton and Natrat Ilit. Other yeshivos g’dolos are following in its footsteps, like the yeshiva in Migdal HaEmek, which opened a branch in Chadera.

Today there are branches big and small of Chabad yeshivos, with the goal to conquer another city, yishuv or neighborhood, and prepare the world for Moshiach.

It started ten years ago in Chaifa. The yeshiva was started as a joint venture by the hanhala in Tzfas and shluchim in Chaifa, led by Rabbi Leibel Schildkraut. The hanhala and the T’mimim wanted to spread Judaism and Chassidus, and the shluchim in Chaifa were looking for manpower to augment their programming.

The yeshiva is a success story. Hundreds and thousands of people were niskarev to the Rebbe and Chassidus thanks to the yeshiva. People walk in and out of the



Talmidim in the Chabad yeshiva in Chaifa listening to a shiur





**A shiur in the Chabad yeshiva in Dalton**

yeshiva at all hours of the day. The bachurim learn with them, some participate in shiurim, t'fillos and farbrengens, and that's how Chassidim and baalei t'shuva are made.

## **A BAAL T'SHUV AND THE SHINUI YOUTH DIRECTOR**

The rosh yeshiva in Chaifa, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Wilschansky relates:

As soon as the yeshiva opened, the bachurim began running Mesibos Shabbos for children in Chaifa neighborhoods. Near my house, some Russian children (among others) showed up. One of them began wearing a kippa in a secular school. He was the only person wearing a kippa among 3000 children!

A few joined him, and four boys kept in touch with me and showed up occasionally to learn in the yeshiva. Today, three of them are Lubavitchers and G-d willing, they will establish fine, Chassidishe homes.

One of them, as he became more observant, was active in the Shinui youth movement (not a Chassidishe party ...) and he became the director. There was a debate at the movement's club about Shabbos observance versus religious coercion. This new director invited R'

Wilschansky to present his position. This is how all the boys were exposed to Chassidic ideas, and they learned that a yeshiva had opened in Chaifa and were all invited to come and learn.

Another Chassid who began his journey towards religious observance thanks to R' Wilschansky is also from Russia. His name is Shaul, and back in Russia he had come in third place in marksmanship. After becoming niskarev to the Rebbe he has started an entire network of shiurim in Chaifa for Russian immigrants, a beautiful shul, a two story learning center, an office, a mitzva tank etc.

R' Wilschansky is familiar with all the religious groups in Chaifa. Not long ago, about fifty Chinuch Atzmai teachers convened for a course in Halacha and higher Torah knowledge. Every week, all the teachers, young men from every Chassidic group, gather and hear a shiur in Halacha for 4 hours, given by Rabbi M.M. Wilschansky. The ones who made the "shidduch" between him and dozens of teachers were Rabbi Tomer Wirth and Rabbi Avrohom Moshe Komer.

A huge picture of the Rebbe graces the yeshiva building, covering all four floors, to the glory of Rechov Arlozorov, a central street in Chaifa. The municipality sent warnings that they should take it down.

Then they sent a final warning, "If it is not taken down, a special team will be sent ... and you will have to pay for it." R' Wilschansky spoke to whoever he needed to, and while the city was preparing its evacuation team, a representative from Agudas Yisroel, who is not a Chassid but is happy to help all kinds of Jews, showed up and convinced the mayor to write a letter giving permission for the picture to remain. Now we all wait to see the Rebbe with the hisgalus, not just in a picture.

## **HAVE YOU HEARD OF DALTON?**

The yeshiva in Dalton, a small moshav between Tzfas, Amuka and Miron, was started four years ago. It also began as a branch of the main yeshiva in Tzfas, but today it serves as an independent lighthouse of Torah and Chassidus for the entire area.

About fifty bachurim learn there, and they spread the light of Chassidus not only in all the nearby yishuvim, but the entire moshav itself has been impacted by the yeshiva. The people who rent guesthouses on the moshav, as well as many of the residents of the moshav, go to the yeshiva for davening or to learn. They are all impressed by the T'mimim and their yiras Shamayim and Chassidishe joie de vivre.

Someone walked into the yeshiva, a ben Torah of about 60, and he listened to a short shiur in Chassidus from the rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Chaim Eliezer Wilschansky. Right after the shiur he introduced himself as a Litvak whose sons all learned in top Litvishe yeshivos, but in his youth he had been in 770 and Crown Heights and had even experienced a miracle story with the Rebbe.

He said to the rosh yeshiva, "You should know that I'm jealous of the

yiras Shamayim of the bachurim here. I can testify that my sons, in top yeshivos, don't compare to the yiras Shamayim of a Lubavitcher bachur who is busy doing mitzvaim at the malls and universities. Despite everything he sees there, he is not influenced; he does the influencing, and it just strengthens his yiras Shamayim."

Even the rav of Dalton, of Libyan background, has become a part of the atmosphere of the yeshiva, and is becoming more and more mekushar to Toras HaChassidus, the Rebbe, and the Besuras Ha'Geula. Recently, in a candid moment, Rabbi Bublil said to the rosh yeshiva, "It's a few years now that I've been wondering why there are hardly any rabbanim

from my community in Eretz Yisroel and the world at large, as compared to the lands near Libya, like Morocco and Tunisia, which have many rabbanim.

"Then I heard a Moroccan rav talk about the Rebbe's shluchim, who went to Morocco and Tunisia 60 years ago and started hundreds of Talmud Torah classes, for boys and for girls. That's when I understood that it's only thanks to the Rebbe and his shluchim that hundreds of rabbanim were produced by these countries. Libya did not have shluchim, and we don't have many rabbis."

This illustrates how many generations are influenced by the Rebbe's shluchim and the Torah they

disseminate.

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It's all nice but not nearly enough. We must increase and expand the shiurim many times over. R' Wilschansky (of Chaifa) maintains that all the Chabad websites are mainly news and mitzvaim related. With the help of a friend, who became niskarev to Judaism thanks to the yeshiva in Chaifa, he started a Jewish website which enables people to learn, via live broadcast, maamarei Chassidus, Daf Yomi, three chapters of Rambam, etc.

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# A SHTURM ABOUT HAKHEL

Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim

*The following is an interview with Rabbi Yosef Karasik, rav in the Bat Chefer district – Emek Chefer, one of the Chabad rabbanim in Eretz Yisroel, and a frequent contributor to Beis Moshiach. He spent two Hakhel years with the Rebbe, once in 5741, as a young boy and a talmid in the yeshiva in Lud, and then in 5748, as a talmid in Tomchei T'mimim-770 and a chozer of the Rebbe's sichos in Lashon HaKodesh. He shares his impressions of those years with us.*

Our readers are already familiar with Rabbi Karasik, since his column on the parsha as seen in Chassidic thought often graces our pages. R' Karasik has been serving in rabbanus for 18 years, first as a rav and shliach in the Central Arava region of the country and then in Bat Chefer-Emek Chefer. In both areas he has made the name of Heaven beloved among his flock, who look up to him not only as their Rav but also as someone pleasant to deal with, someone whose door is always open for them.

He has successfully been mekarev Jews of many backgrounds and communities, who were so far from the path of Torah and mitzvos. In his gentle way he broke down barriers and reached people's hearts. Whoever has seen the magnificent shul he established in Sapir in the Central Arava area, as well as the numerous people who regularly frequent it, will understand what a "something from nothing" feat this was. Beforehand, there were no shuls in the area – and nobody who asked for one either.

He is well known for his clear writing style which suits a broad array of people from the Chassidic to the not-yet-religious. His major literary accomplishment is *HaBayis HaYehudi B'Mishnas HaKabbala V'HaChassidus*, in which he explains the topic of the Jewish home from various angles. He wrote and edited another book in the same style, *HaShabbos B' Kabbala U'B'Chasidus* (two volumes). He also published a book on tz'daka and the laws of interest from a Chassidic perspective, which was recently published in Russian. He is invited by shlichim throughout the country to speak.

For a few years, R' Karasik was the chozer in 770. After the farbrengens, he would sit and review the sichos the Rebbe had said, translating them into Lashon HaKodesh for his friends, and explaining them as well. I still remember hundreds of guests crowding around him after a farbrengen.

R' Karasik spent two Hakhel years in Crown Heights, and I asked him to share his memories of those years with us.

## WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT HAKHEL

First of all, as we begin the Shnas Hakhel, please give us a description of Hakhel during the Temple times.

Once in seven years, after the Shmita year, on the first day of Chol HaMoed Sukkos, all the Jewish people gathered – men, women, and children – in the courtyard of the Beis HaMikdash, in the Ezras Nashim. A special wooden platform was built, upon which the king sat and read sections from the book of D'varim which urged the nation to observe mitzvos.

After reading from the Torah, the

king prayed to Hashem on behalf of the nation, that they be blessed with success in all matters, both material and spiritual. He concluded with seven blessings for the nation, the malchus, the Kohanim and the Beis HaMikdash.

The Torah reading was from a Torah that was used only once in seven years, and from several sources it sounds like it was the Torah that Moshe wrote himself, on

his final day.

The Hakhel gathering was preceded by the blowing of trumpets. On the morning of that day, Kohanim scattered throughout Yerushalayim and blew golden trumpets, in order to remind the people that the special day had arrived and they had to go to the Temple Mount.

#### **What else took place then?**

There were no speeches by distinguished rabbis, not even by the High Priest. It was only the king who read most of D'varim from the Torah scroll. We can assume that it took at least an hour or more.

The main topics the king read about were: the mitzva of belief in G-d, accepting the yoke of Heaven and the yoke of mitzvos, about the mitzvos dependent on the Land – the section about truma and maaser for the priests and levites, the mitzva of gifts to the poor, and the curses and blessings.

#### **Why was this gathering regarded with such importance when there was nothing new in what the king read?**

Indeed, the king did not impart anything new. He read verses that everybody knew. Yet everybody was commanded to come and stand silently and reverently, with “great kavana,” because the goal was not to acquire new information. The goal was to strengthen the nation’s belief in Hashem, and urge them to go in the ways of the Torah.

By the king reading those passages, he implanted a *d'veikus* (cleaving) to the path of uprightness and truth. There is an expression in one of the Rishonim (the Chinuch, mitzva #612) which says, “This mitzva is a strong pillar and great glory in our religion.”

#### **I assume millions of Jews assembled to listen to the king. How did they all hear him?**

It was an enormous crowd of millions of Jews, and we can assume



that some people did not hear the king; but more than hearing, the main thing was to see and experience. Just being present and seeing the king and all the people gathered together at the Beis HaMikdash, had a tremendous spiritual effect on everyone.

The entire event was an outstandingly uplifting one, which left an indelible impression for at least seven years, until the next Hakhel gathering.

## THE HAKHEL GATHERING WAS LIKE MATTAN TORAH

**The Rebbe made an issue of the topic of Hakhel. What's the Rebbe's approach to it?**

At the farbrengen Erev Shnas Hakhel, 5734, the Rebbe explained something amazing about Hakhel – that it was actually a sort of Mattan Torah at Sinai experience revisited. The Rebbe said: In order to arouse and strengthen the nation to cleave to Torah and mitzvos, Hashem established that once in seven years there would be something like Mattan Torah at Har Sinai. This was

***From this we see how powerful Hakhel was. It was an event that took just a few hours, yet it left such an imprint that it enabled the Jew to serve Hashem in the six years to come!***

Hakhel, when the king read from the Torah so that the nation could, as it were, relive Mattan Torah.

This idea is based on Rambam (Hilchos Chagiga) which says that the participants in Hakhel have to listen with awe like at the event of Mattan Torah, and when the king read from the Torah, the Jew had to consider it “as though he was just commanded and that he heard it from Hashem.” So the Rambam compares Hakhel to Mattan Torah at Sinai!

So you can imagine the great excitement people felt at this once-in-seven-year's event, which was reminiscent of Mattan Torah, when all the Jewish people heard the Ten Commandments.

**In the Rebbe's sichos, the expression “Shnas Hakhel” appears, not “Mitzvas Hakhel.” The mitzva ended after an hour or two yet the Rebbe extended the idea to the entire year. Why?**

The term “Shnas Hakhel” that the Rebbe used countless times is not self understood. It's one thing to call the seventh year “Shnas Shmita,” because the mitzva of Shmita applies to the entire year when the land must not be worked, but Hakhel was done on the second day of Sukkos only. So why did the Rebbe refer to the entire year as Shnas Hakhel? Why would a mitzva that applied at the beginning of the year provide a name for the entire year?

It's the Rebbe's chiddush. Since the event was exceedingly dramatic, with the uniting of all Jews around the king, it affected the entire year.

**How does Chassidus view the mitzva of Hakhel?**

The mitzva of Hakhel gives a Jew the strength to prevail in the mundane world and preserve that spiritual atmosphere during the next six years (until the next Shmita).

In the year before Hakhel, the Shmita year, the Jew was cut off

from mundane work in the field and his time was dedicated to Hashem and His service. At the end of the Shmita year he went back to work – plowing, planting, harvesting and other mundane activities. In order that his daily work would not weaken his fear of Heaven, the Torah commands him to go to the king and hear words of inspiration from him.

From this we see how powerful Hakhel was. It was an event that took just a few hours, yet it left such an imprint that it enabled the Jew to serve Hashem in the six years to come!

**How did such a short event educate people to d'veikus to the ways of Torah?**

The Rebbe once explained this as follows: The Shmita year was actually a year of Shabbos. Just as on Shabbos, a Jew transcends his weekday affairs and hovers in more elevated realms, so too, in a way, throughout the Shmita year a Jew transcended daily life by being forbidden to work the land.

When the Shmita year was over, he had to return to the daily grind by descending from his spiritual high. This is inherently dangerous, because in the transition from the rarified atmosphere of “Shabbos” to the weekday, a person can lose his bearings. This is why we were commanded to go to the king, who confers the strength to transmit the holiness into the mundane world.

The mitzva of Hakhel was like a Havdala ceremony that the king did for the people at the end of Shabbos- the year of Shmita.

**In the Rebbe's letters and sichos he emphasizes the children in the mitzva of Hakhel. Why is there an emphasis on children when in other mitzvos they are exempt?**

The Torah says explicitly to gather everyone, men, women and children. In the tractate Chagiga,



*Those who spent a Shnas Hakhel in 770 felt that it was something like the actual Hakhel, as people gathered around the Rebbe, our king and leader of the generation, as he stood on the nights of Sukkos and taught us Torah.*

Chazal ask why the children have to be brought, “The men come to listen; the women come to see; but why do the children come?” Rabbi Elozor ben Azaria answers, “To give a reward to those who bring them.”

On such an occasion, it would only be proper if there was utter silence so people could concentrate on hearing the king, that even a bird would not fly or chirp like at Mattan Torah. But when you think of millions of children being present, who are bored being there for so long, what do you think they did? They cried, played and generally caused chaos. You would think that this would adversely affect the ceremony. How could people pay attention to the Torah reading with millions of children distracting them?

Furthermore, the Aliya L'Regel, especially for those who lived far from Yerushalayim, was a difficult trip involving walking for days and weeks. They were told to bring the children so they would have a greater reward. What does this mean – to endanger a child in order that the parents have a better seat in Gan Eden?

The words of the Tanna, “to give reward to those who bring them” has a deeper meaning:

There is no greater reward for parents than children who are raised to Torah and fear of Heaven, to faith and connection to the king. The assemblage of the nation at the Mikdash with the king would be engraved in their tender souls and pave the way for a lifetime of Torah and mitzvos.

*This* is the great reward that the parents, who brought their children to Hakhel, received. The trip may have been difficult, but it resulted in years of nachas and peace of mind.

This is also true for our trip to the Rebbe in galus. We need to bring the children to Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel. This will positively affect them, and educate them to Torah and Chassidus with d'veikus and

hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

## THE REBBE'S CONDUCT IN A HAKHEL YEAR

**What was special about a Hakhel year in Beis Chayeinu?**

Hakhel years in 770 were special. To a certain extent, those who spent a Shnas Hakhel in 770 felt that it was something like the actual Hakhel, as people gathered around the Rebbe, our king and leader of the generation, as he stood on the nights of Sukkos and taught us Torah.

In the Hakhel year of 5741, the Rebbe began to say sichos each night of Sukkos. He also announced Mivtza Simchas Beis HaShoeiva, namely that every night of Sukkos we should go out and dance in the street and rejoice.

Hakhel emphasizes children, whereas other mitzvos in the Torah do not address children directly. Indeed, at the hakafos of Hakhel 5741, something unusual took place for children:

The established custom was that at the hakafos the rabbanim, distinguished members of Anash, and honored guests were honored, but before the fifth hakafa there was an enormous surprise when the Rebbe called up all the children (and their educators) for the hakafa. The Rebbe himself went to the hakafa with the children, and he held the Torah for about ten minutes. He danced vigorously and with great joy that cannot be described in words. That hakafa was like the great Hakhel when the king read from the Torah before the people, including the children.

Since then, in many shuls of Anash the custom is that fifth hakafa is dedicated to the children and their teachers, especially in a Hakhel year.

***The sweet taste  
of that simcha  
and brotherly,  
Chassidishe love,  
and tremendous  
love for the  
Rebbe, are  
engraved in my  
heart forever.***

I should add that the Rebbe also founded the Tzivos Hashem organization that Sukkos.

**Can you tell us more about what the Rebbe did in a Hakhel year?**

In many farbrengens and sichos, the Rebbe mentioned the mitzva of Hakhel and explained that with every mitzva and holy action that you do during the year, you have to feel that it is part of Shnas Hakhel. There were years when, in nearly every sicha and farbrengen, the Rebbe mentioned the significance of the year and connected the inyan of the day to Hakhel.

In the Hakhel years of 5741 and 5748, there were many additional “Hakhels”, which the Rebbe himself made. The Rebbe farbrenged or said a sicha on nearly every possible occasion, and he participated in many Tzivos Hashem children’s rallies.

As was previously mentioned, starting from Hakhel 5741 the Rebbe began to say a sicha every night of Sukkos. That year, the Rebbe even farbrenged on two very unusual occasions, which he had never done before:

Purim afternoon, which was a Friday that year, the Rebbe entered the zal upstairs and held a brief

farbrengen. He said a maamer, they sang a niggun etc. On Shabbos HaGadol of that year, which fell on 14 Nissan, Erev Pesach, the Rebbe held a farbrengen (the refreshments were water and bananas since on Erev Pesach we don’t eat food that is used Pesach night). I remember that the T’mimim connected these unusual events with the fact that it was a Shnas Hakhel.

In earlier years, the Rebbe would farbreng only on Shabbos Mevarchim or on Shabbasos that were close to some special date, but from Shnas Hakhel 5748, the Rebbe farbrenged every Shabbos, not only when there was a reason to do so because of the date.

Something that stood out in those Hakhel years was the tremendous simcha, especially during Sukkos. That’s the way it was in 5741 when the Rebbe announced Mivtza Simchas Beis HaShoeiva, and all the nights of Sukkos they danced till dawn. That’s when the dancing on Kingston and Montgomery began.

In 5748 there was also tremendous and special joy at the Simchas Torah hakafo. They were longer, and the simcha was unusually great. Many interpreted this as being associated with a Shnas Hakhel (in addition to it being ten years since the Rebbe’s heart attack and recovery in 5738).

**You were present that Sukkos 5741, when they started the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva dancing every night. What do you remember?**

The sicha of the first night of Sukkos was a surprise; nobody expected it. I was a young boy and I was unable to find a place close to the Rebbe during farbrengens, and it was hard for me to hear the Rebbe on Shabbos when there was no microphone. During that particular sicha I was close to the Rebbe and

was able to hear him, which made me elated.

In my mind’s eye I can see that special moment when the Rebbe suddenly began to speak. A tumult erupted as people pushed to get close to be able to hear the sicha. In the first seconds this created a lot of noise, so the Rebbe paused and waited until the crowd more or less settled down, and then he continued speaking. For me personally it was very special, since I finally got to hear a sicha from the Rebbe on Yom Tov.

After the sicha, in which the Rebbe said we should dance and rejoice, the T’mimim in 770 felt that they had to do something. Spontaneously, the simcha and dancing burst out and over to that famous corner, at Kingston and Montgomery. Till this day, I remember the second night of Yom Tov, when the T’mimim and Anash began dancing in the street. I believe this was the first time that they blocked the street with their dancing.

Close to dawn, they all danced their way back to 770. On the way, they passed by the Rebbe’s house on President Street, where the simcha exploded. From there they continued with song and dance towards 770, and most people dispersed and went home. A handful of T’mimim continued to dance in the zal upstairs.

I was just a little past my bar mitzva and I fell, exhausted, on to the Rebbe’s upholstered bench, where he sat during Mincha and Maariv in the upstairs zal. But the older T’mimim did not let me rest. They picked me up on their shoulders and for a long time they sang and danced with tremendous joy, “Ashreinu sh’anu Chassidim.”

The sweet taste of that simcha and brotherly, Chassidishe love, and tremendous love for the Rebbe, are engraved in my heart forever.

The second night of Sukkos of



## TRAVELING TO THE KING, IN OUR GENERATION

**It seems the Rebbe wanted to create a revolution through the mitzva of Hakhel.**

At some farbrengens and in some sichos, mainly in 5748, the Rebbe explained that in a Hakhel year we must have gatherings at every opportunity, and use them to inspire people to fear Hashem. This is reminiscent of the great Hakhel gathering which the king addressed in the Beis HaMikdash. The gatherings should take place all year long, and not just on Sukkos (see box).

**How should every one of us prepare himself for this special avoda that the Rebbe gave us for a Shnas Hakhel?**

Just as we learn the laws of each holiday from Shulchan Aruch, so too we must learn and know the Rebbe's horaos for a Shnas Hakhel from the sichos of the last Shnas Hakhel we had with the Rebbe, 5748. They are printed and available in various anthologies. In addition, every Chassid and Tamim should study and review the rest of the sichos in which the Rebbe explains what Hakhel is all about (a partial list is provided, see box).

**Many people want to travel to the Rebbe at some point this year. They also want to take their families. What do you think about this?**

The Hakhel gathering is about hiskashrus to the king, with the emphasis on the entire nation coming before the king, seeing him, and listening while he davened and read from the Torah. From this experience one drew strength for the next six years. When we are in

that year, 5741, it wasn't clear whether the Rebbe would say a sicha. People didn't know whether the sicha of the first night was a one-time thing, or the Rebbe had started a new practice. Together with another two friends from yeshiva, we decided it was worth coming early to reserve a place so we could hear a sicha if one was said.

By three in the afternoon we had already taken places and indeed, the Rebbe said a sicha and I was able to hear him. I was the happiest person on earth.

**You had a yechidus with the Rebbe in a Shnas Hakhel ...**

I had yechidus in Tishrei of that year but it was a general-yechidus. I remember the moment we entered the Rebbe's room, and it is one of the most moving scenes I experienced that Tishrei 5741.

A group of us T'mimim from Tomchei T'mimim in Lud stood in *Gan Eden HaTachton* for personal yechidus, when it was suddenly suggested that all the T'mimim from the yeshivos in Lud and Kfar Chabad enter together. All the T'mimim and the hanhala agreed to the suggestion, and we all entered the Rebbe's room, where we stood in a semi-circle and received the Rebbe's bracha.

In that yechidus there were about thirty bachurim. That was, more or less, the number of bachurim who had come to the Rebbe that Tishrei. Most bachurim remained in Eretz Yisroel. Chabad has expanded tremendously in Eretz Yisroel, and the unbelievable number of T'mimim who traveled this year from Eretz Yisroel to 770 was over 1000 T'mimim! In 28 years the number grew forty times over! Is there a bigger miracle than this?

### LEARNING AND BEING PREPARED

The following is a partial list of five fundamental sichos about Hakhel, which teach what the mitzva is and the ramifications for nowadays:

\*Likkutei Sichos, volume 14, for Parshas VaYeilech (the role of the Kohanim in blowing the golden trumpets on the day of Hakhel)

\*Likkutei Sichos, volume 19, for Sukkos (about bringing little children to Hakhel)

\*Likkutei Sichos, volume 24, for Parshas VaYeilech (the mitzva of Hakhel at the end of Shmita, the verses that the king read at Hakhel)

\*Likkutei Sichos, volume 34, for Parshas VaYeilech (Hakhel in the Mikdash like Mattan Torah at Har Sinai)

\*Likkutei Sichos, volume 34 for Sukkos (fulfilling the mitzva when in galus)



galus and we don't have the Beis HaMikdash or a king, the best place to hold a similar event is in 770.

In 5748, after Tishrei, the Rebbe thanked all those who came to him,

and it appears from that sicha that the Rebbe very much wants us to go to 770 in a Shnas Hakhel.

It is important to stress another point. Since the Rebbe coined the

phrase, "Shnas Hakhel," and he said many times that throughout the entire year gatherings should be made that are like the original Hakhel, someone who was unable to go to 770 for Sukkos, or in Tishrei at all, should at least see it as his obligation and privilege to go to 770 at some point during the year.

Prices of tickets from Eretz Yisroel and other places have gone up significantly, which makes it challenging to travel, but this is an attempt by the Evil Inclination to prevent people from going. There is no doubt that being in Beis Rabbeinu in a Shnas Hakhel has a tremendous spiritual power for the coming years, so people should try to overcome all obstacles and do what they can to go to Beis Rabbeinu at least once during Hakhel.

Since the mitzva of Hakhel is also for the children, even in our day, in galus, children should be brought to 770. This will touch their hearts, and educate them to Torah and Chassidus with d'veikus and hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

## ACHDUS

**Aside from gatherings, what other significance is there to Hakhel?**

Firstly, it's important to emphasize the Rebbe's horaa, that in a Shnas Hakhel there ought to be gatherings in every community, city and country – and this was said, first and foremost, to Lubavitcher communities around the world. According to the Rebbe's horaa, there should be Hakhel gatherings for all of Anash and the T'mimim in every location.

Secondly, these gatherings have an additional purpose, especially nowadays:

It's no secret that there are people outside of Lubavitch who think that there is a lack of unity among us. We need to show them that the truth is that we are all

## A CHASSID IS A KOHEN. WHAT IS HIS ROLE?

On Simchas Torah in the Shnas Hakhel 5727, the Rebbe focused on a very fascinating point in the mitzva of Hakhel. On the morning of Hakhel, on the second day of Sukkos, Kohanim went around Yerushalayim and blew trumpets to remind people to come to the Beis HaMikdash. Chazal in Tosefta say that a kohen who did not blow a trumpet in Yerushalayim "appears not to be a kohen."

That is seemingly quite odd. The main avoda of the Kohanim is in the Beis HaMikdash itself, bringing korbanos, incense etc., while blowing a trumpet on the day of Hakhel is not an essential job of the kohen. In addition to which, it was only done once in seven years.

So why is it that a kohen who devoted himself for seven years to the service in the Mikdash, who only once in seven years, on the day of Hakhel, did not carry out this seemingly trivial task, puts into question his entire standing as a kohen? Can we say that blowing the trumpet in Yerushalayim was more important than the avoda in the Mikdash?

And why did they blow trumpets anyway? Who needed to be reminded about the event they had come for? Who waited to hear the trumpet blasts of the Kohanim? Was it possible that someone would forget this amazing event when the entire nation gathered, which took place only once in seven years? Wouldn't the noise and commotion of masses of people walking to the Beis HaMikdash alert everybody, so that nobody remained sleeping? After all, as soon as day broke, everybody ran to the Beis HaMikdash to participate in the Hakhel gathering – who needed trumpets?

It is reasonable to assume that the person who waited to hear the kohen's trumpet and did not go on his own was spiritually cold, lacking in enthusiasm for the Hakhel gathering, and the job of the kohen was to go to him and wake him up from his spiritual lethargy. The blowing of the trumpet by a man of chesed and love succeeded in arousing even those stragglers, to get up and go.

This is the actual job of the kohen, to draw close the hearts of the people to their Father in Heaven.

Although the kohen's work is generally in the Beis HaMikdash, where everybody goes when they are inspired to serve Hashem, sometimes the kohen goes on "shlichus" outside the Mikdash in order to wake up those who are slumbering. The kohen does this with a golden trumpet, with simcha and enthusiasm and awareness of the importance of this job.

Chazal say – what indicates that the seven years of service of the kohen in the Mikdash is complete? When he is also ready to go out and spread the wellsprings to those who strayed from the source of holiness.

From this the Rebbe taught that the role of every Chassid in a Shnas Hakhel is not to stay closed up with the Sh'china in the Beis HaMikdash, but to go out and blow trumpets, raising a hue and cry and inviting the nation to the Hakhel gatherings taking place in every location, in order to draw people's hearts to their Father in Heaven.

brothers and are united.

We are all Chabad Chassidim and the Rebbe's talmidim. We all strive to fulfill the Rebbe's horaos and to learn his teachings. True, there are differences of opinion in how to understand various sichos and what the Rebbe meant about how the Besuras Ha'Geula should be spread, but Chabad was, and will remain, one united entity forever. Nothing will cancel our love and Chassidic fraternity, as it was from the day Chabad Chassidus was founded by the Alter Rebbe over 230 years ago. It will continue further, with Hashem's help, until the hisgalus of Moshiach, may that be now!

It is vital that we preserve a united front and don't splinter. The bottom line is that we all want to educate our children in the way of Chassidus and in 99% of things we are on the same page. We are all Lubavitchers and the

differences between us are merely trivial in nature.

Everybody knows that the Rebbe spoke nonstop about Ahavas Yisroel and Achdus Yisroel. At the last farbrengen we had, on Parshas VaYakhel, 5752, the Rebbe focused on the topic of Ahavas Yisroel and being careful with our words so as not to hurt another person, even if he holds differently than us.

Speaking negatively about someone presents an enormous spiritual danger, for chinuch as well:

When a child hears his father or teacher speaking derogatorily about a rav or mashpia, or any Chassid, the message the child absorbs is the fact that his father or teacher can criticize a rav or mashpia etc. Who, then, will guarantee that when the child grows older, he won't also speak derogatorily about a rav or mashpia?

But if the child is taught that we

cannot speak negatively about any Chassid, rav or mashpia, that will remain with him forever, and it will be a protective wall for his continued education in the way of Torah and mitzvos.

The only way to stop the machlokes is through learning Chassidus, which refines the middos and subdues the trait of arrogance, so that each of us looks at another from the bottom-up, and accepts every Chassid with love and not with criticism.

Hakhel gatherings in all Lubavitcher communities, cities and countries are mandatory in order to fulfill the Rebbe's horaa and to show the world that we are "one man, with one heart."

The "Order of the Day" is to bring Moshiach. Ahavas Yisroel and Achdus Yisroel at Hakhel gatherings is the way to hasten the hisgalus.

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# MORE SOUL STORIES FROM INDIA

By Eli Shneur

***What do the shluchim in Pushkar do when their child needs medical attention? What do the shluchim in Poona do when there's no money for Shabbos meals and they have a mountain of debts? What motivates an Indian gentile to leave his family and convert? \* A selection of stories from life on shlichus in India.***

The local market in Goa is a flea market which attracts thousands of tourists from all over the world. The Rebbe's shluchim in Goa maintain a stand there, so that tourists can put on t'fillin. The shluchim have a rotation of two hours each.

One day, when it was my turn to man the stand, I took the motor scooter and planned on riding to the market, but then I looked up and saw how dark the sky was becoming. I turned around immediately and returned to the Chabad house.

Just as I crossed the threshold of the Chabad house there was a mighty clap of thunder and the rain came pouring down, accompanied by storm winds. The many tall coconut trees, which are found there in profusion, bent over on their sides and looked like they would break.

People ran for their lives and people with stalls and their belongings ran and screamed as they searched for shelter. We took pictures of some of the scenes. People skidded on their scooters and the sounds of their cries merged with the wailing of the wind.

Then we noticed a dangling electric wire shooting sparks. We were new to India and didn't know what would happen. Within a short time the wire fell and we were left in the dark with the sound of wind and rain howling in the background. The storm was at its peak.

After a few hours the winds died down and the weather calmed. Within the silence we could hear the sound of someone shouting in Ivrit. We realized there were Israelis lost and roaming in the dark. We concentrated to locate the direction

of the sounds and called out to them. Within a few minutes the doors of the Chabad house opened and a group of tourists burst in, eager to find a haven.

We immediately offered blankets and warm drinks because they were suffering from the cold. After they drank and recovered a bit, we prepared a meal and sat down in the dark to farbreng into the night. The truth is we could barely see their faces.

They had come from the village of Arambul, which was a half an hour drive away. They came to shop in the flea market but the storm caught them as they were heading back to their village.

"We looked for a place to escape but didn't find anything. At first we waited at the stalls but the winds lifted them up into the air like paper. We began to run, exposed to the elements, and didn't know where we were going. Someone shouted that there was a Chabad house nearby. In the dark we couldn't find it and we wandered around for over an hour looking for you, as the storm continued to drench us. Luckily you were here, otherwise we would be in trouble and who knows if we would have survived the night."

There are those moments that you enjoy hearing the tourists praise the Rebbe's work that reaches all the way to faraway Goa. It's very satisfying. When you do a Jew a material favor hearts open up and

it's a good opportunity to instill G-dliness and Judaism as Avrohom did in his time. Since the rain kept falling we passed the time with interesting Chassidic insights, miracle stories of the Rebbe and divrei Torah.

When the storm died down they continued on their way.

A few months later I went to the Chabad house in Vata Canal, in southern India. One day an Israeli showed up whose voice sounded familiar to me but whose face was unfamiliar. It took me time to figure out where I knew him from. He was one of the guys who took shelter with us in Goa. I had barely seen his face at the time, but I knew that voice!

***When Rabbi Shimmi told his family about his daring plan, they were flabbergasted. "India?! Why there?" But he was determined, and he began getting ready to go.***



***That week, what particularly weighed on his mind was a loan of \$3,000 that would come due the following Tuesday, but you couldn't tell by looking at him.***

After a few words of introduction I invited him to the Chabad house to enjoy the delicious baked goods made by Arik Louson. Since it was nighttime, I had to postpone t'fillin for another time.

During his stay in the village, he urged other tourists to visit the Chabad house. For example, when it was a cold and rainy Shabbos and the Chabad house was nearly empty, he went and located the tourists. Suddenly, in the middle of the davening, which took place without a minyan, two minyanim of Israelis landed at the Chabad house.

Until then, for some reason, I hadn't suggested that he put on t'fillin. Perhaps we met at night or on the street. But the day finally arrived. I suggested that he put on t'fillin but he declined. I was upset. What had I asked of him already, just t'fillin. Apparently his animal soul knew the significance of this and held him back.

Then one day he told me that he was planning on traveling onward with his friends the following Monday. He complained that I hadn't visited the tourists at the guest houses and he invited me to do so the next day.

I realized that he was right.

These visits are important and even have advantages over visits at the Chabad house, as they enable a deeper level of influence.

The next day I went with Ran Shamir and headed for Ron's house. Of course, we took t'fillin along. When we got there, Ron welcomed us and asked us to sit down. After we schmoozed about the world from the perspective of Chassidus, Judaism, Moshiach and the Rebbe, I got up my courage and suggested that he put on t'fillin.

He hesitated, but finally agreed. Then he said, "You know, I haven't put on t'fillin since my bar mitzva ... and you know what, that day in Goa when we ended up at the Chabad house in the storm changed something in my life ... I will never forget that night!"

## **THE PEDIATRICIAN**

When the Goldstein family arrived on shlichus in Pushkar, it was a far more difficult challenge they had to face than that of the shluchim today. The India of today is nothing like the India back then. To be more precise, the Goldsteins were the "Nachshons" who jumped into the sea which was India. Until they arrived, shluchim would go to India on brief stints, mainly to run Pesach s'darim and to read the Megilla on Purim.

When Rabbi Shimmi told his family about his daring plan, they were flabbergasted. "India?! Why there?" But he was determined, and he began getting ready to go.

At that time, the Goldstein family consisted of two little children. One of the issues that bothered the family was the question of medical care in the event that one of the children became sick. Shimmi couldn't dismiss this concern.

He tried to calm them and answered in this creative way, "Everything is okay. There is a top pediatrician there that we are in

touch with." He meant the Rebbe. Having no choice, the family accepted this and they set off for India.

When they arrived in Poona, he opened a Chabad house and began working with Israeli tourists. One day, the baby got sick and had fever. His wife Zelda wanted to call the top pediatrician and Shimmi told her that he would be coming soon ...

The truth is that Shimmi knew what to do but when there's a sick child with temperature you can't just pray. He knew he had to do something.

A few hours later a local Indian came to the Chabad house and inquired about their work. They responded as they did to every curious Indian. As they conversed, Shimmi asked him what he did. "I'm an expert in family medicine," he said. But the biggest surprise was when Shimmi discovered that the man was Jewish from a Jewish family.

Shimmi triumphantly turned to his wife and said, "The top doctor arrived."

He was one of the experts in the area in the field of pediatrics and they used his services whenever they needed them, until the man made aliya.

## **THE WAYS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

The following story happened after the Kupchik family arrived on shlichus in Poona. A few weeks after they landed, they had almost no money left. Their financial state was bleak and R' Betzalel Kupchik struggled over every cent. Among his first supporters were people who had given him loans of thousands of dollars. The problem was that he had to repay them.

It was Erev Shabbos. The Chabad house was made up of a few guest rooms right near the family's rooms. Due to their financial straits

they thought perhaps they should not invite guests for Shabbos and avoid embarrassment, but that idea was quickly rejected.

That week, what particularly weighed on his mind was a loan of \$3,000 that would come due the following Tuesday, but you couldn't tell by looking at him. He seemed as calm as always, not displaying any stress and certain that G-d would come through for him.

The Kupchiks prepared Shabbos with the last of their food and tried to make the meal as festive as they could. Among the participants at the meal was a visiting Israeli who was there on business. After the meal, Betzalel accompanied him to his hostel and used this opportunity to discuss Jewish ideas. When they got to the man's room they said goodbye.

On Sunday, the man returned to Israel but he didn't forget the Chabad house. The impression it had made on him was so powerful that he felt he had to do something



At the Chabad house, Ziv the righteous convert, is in the center

to support the daring venture. That day, Betzalel got a phone call; it was

their Shabbos guest on the line. "What is your bank account number?" he asked. A few hours later they found out that the man had deposited \$3,000, precisely the amount he needed to repay the loan.

## THE STORY OF ZIV, THE CONVERT

One day, as we sat in the Chabad house in Poona, an Indian wearing an Eastern turban came in. We greeted him respectfully but soon realized that our initial assumptions were mistaken.

When we asked who he was and what he wanted, he surprised us by saying he wanted to convert. He said he came from a very distant place for just this purpose. This was certainly odd! That an Indian would decide to convert, out of the blue!

The first step is to turn potential converts away but the Indian wasn't fazed. He said he was prepared to go through the entire complicated process as long as he could be



The gravesite of R' Avrohom Mota in the middle of a residential neighborhood

***It was quiet at that hour of the morning but then we noticed an old woman at a windowsill, sitting and davening out loud and wholeheartedly from a Siddur. Like a Baal Shem Tov story! When she noticed us she cried. She was so happy to see Jews proudly looking Jewish.***

sheltered under the wings of the Sh'china and be counted among the Jewish people. Then he was told to go to Israel and the Chabad house forgot about him.

A few months later the telephone at the Chabad house rang. It was Shneur Kupchik, who was learning in Yeshivas Chassidei Chabad Lubavitch in Tzfas. "Ima, there is an Indian here who knows you ..."

The Indian had been serious; he had paid an astronomical amount of money by Indian standards and gone to Israel to convert. When he got to Tzfas, he saw people who looked like the people at the Chabad house in India. When one of them passed nearby he shouted, "Kupchik!" in the hopes that he would understand that he knew a Kupchik from India. By Divine providence, the person he

addressed was none other than Shneur Kupchik!

He did not ask for Israeli citizenship or for financial aid. He had one purpose only, and that was to convert, along with his wife and son, and then to return to India. It took the family eight long months. He took the name Ziv.

Two years after he appeared the first time, he showed up again and said he wanted to spend Shabbos with us in order to experience it in order to convey it to his family in their distant city.

When I asked him why he had decided to separate from his nation and religion he told me:

"I live in southern India, a three day trip by train from here. I never heard of Jews or their religion. All my life, like the rest of my family all these years, I worshiped what they worshiped and believed in other gods. That's the way it goes when you have a tradition for thousands of years and nobody asks questions.

"I own rice fields and a coconut business, from which I make a nice living, and I lacked for nothing material. One day, I saw a book at my friend's house. When I leafed through it I saw that it spoke about Jews and Judaism, something foreign to me. I asked permission to borrow it and I read it avidly. I connected to the material so strongly; I felt that this was something that I was missing. I wanted to read more and more about these topics.

"They told me that on the Internet I could find anything I wanted. I searched the Internet and began reading with increasing curiosity about these subjects, until I was finally convinced that our worship was a lie, nothing but human fabrication. The only truth was in the Jewish religion.

"Since then, I convinced my entire family that it's all foolishness based on legends and made up ideas that have no basis in reality. But that

wasn't enough for me, and I went to Israel to convert. I spent eight months in Yerushalayim and afterwards we converted."

During davening Ziv closed his eyes and davened with fervor. He closely followed the Kiddush and the meals. He listened carefully to the divrei Torah which were translated for him, loved the singing, and was moved by the wonderful stories that were told.

When Shabbos was over, we gave him chocolate and candies for his wife and son, because of course they kept kosher now and only ate vegetarian products. He asked us to teach him some niggunim from the davening, and recorded them so he would have them at home.

He returned to his family on Sunday. He is making a Kiddush Hashem as he publicizes to all about one G-d and the Seven Noachide Laws.

## **JEWISH REMNANTS IN COCHIN**

On our way to Pushkar from Vata Canal, from the south of the country to the north, we spent Shabbos in nearby Cochin (eight hours away).

Cochin is an ancient Jewish, Indian city. They say that the first Jews arrived in India during the reign of Shlomo HaMelech but the community really became established with emigrants from Iraq and those expelled from Spain and Portugal. The Jewish residents today are few in number, just seven old men and four women. They usually do not have minyanim but on Friday nights during the tourist season the ancient shul cannot contain all the tourists who want to see a former center of Jewish life in southern India.

We arrived in Cochin at seven in the morning and went directly to the ancient Jews' street; the street sign actually said "Jews' Street." We were very excited to see the Magen Dovid



on the houses. Finally, something Jewish within the sea of idols in India!

It was quiet at that hour of the morning but then we noticed an old woman at a windowsill, sitting and davening out loud and wholeheartedly from a Siddur. Like a Baal Shem Tov story!

When she noticed us she cried. She was so happy to see Jews proudly looking Jewish. Before we said goodbye she pleaded that we come back and visit her because she was lonely and sad.

We rented a room that faced a nice lobby and tried to locate Israelis, so we could farbreng with them over Shabbos. The truth is we didn't think we would find any Israelis there, but as we walked down the street wearing our hats and jackets, we were stopped by Jewish passersby who asked us whether we would be having a communal Shabbos meal.

We bought food and new utensils and began cooking for Shabbos. Friday night, we went to the ancient shul and invited whoever we saw. We had about ten Israelis for the meal. We spoke into the night until we noticed a bunch of Indians gathered at our door. The landlady discovered that we had brought a whole gang to her home and she alerted the entire neighborhood.

We went to the shul to daven on Sunday morning. For many hours hundreds of people came to the gate of the shul with great respect, removing their shoes as is customary. We put t'fillin on the Jews among them.

When we had gone to the shul we had hired a rickshaw and asked him to wait a few minutes for us because we had to get change for our bills, but as time went on we forgot all about him. When we finished davening we suddenly remembered that he was waiting for us outside with the meter running. I

went outside in my t'fillin to look for him.

Dozens of curious eyes of locals and tourists stared at me. Out of the crowd, two people especially stood out. When I passed near them, the woman pointed at the man with her and said, "He's Jewish."

The man, about sixty, was from New York and was familiar with Lubavitch. We suggested that he put on t'fillin, but he declined, saying he did so only at home. We convinced him to come to the house of Mrs. Cohen and after pleading with him, he finally agreed to put on t'fillin. His voice was emotional as he read the Shma in the ancient Jewish city of Cochin.

That day we put t'fillin on with other Jews for whom it was the first time in their lives.

We found a special t'filla on the bima of the local shul on the second floor. This t'filla was obviously written during the time that the Soviets ruled Russia. When word of the plight of the Jews there reached the Jews of Cochin they composed a prayer for Russian Jewry:

*"Master of the universe, we have*

*come here today to beseech you on behalf of our unfortunate, oppressed brothers who live in Russia and in the countries under its power. Fear and trembling have seized us since we heard of their terrible and dangerous situation and lot. There have reawakened the voices of those who heap scorn and disgrace on the name Yisroel; a spirit of hatred has burst forth with wicked libels and empty accusations. These brethren of ours are bitter as mutes who cannot open their mouths and who do not have the wherewithal to respond; to whom shall they turn in this time of woe if not to You alone, and upon whom shall they rely in their confusion if not for You?*

*"Father in Heaven, holy one of Israel and its Redeemer, remember that Your children are the remnants of Your nation who remain few in number after the destruction of the holy communities of former glory, prisoners of hope are they, yearning for the light of the redemption, craving Your salvation. Please, Father of mercy who hears the groan of the prisoner, please listen to their whispers and hear their prayers when*



With one of the few remaining Jews in Cochin



they call out to you silently. Remove them from their imprisonment and provide for them relief and salvation, redemption and deliverance in freedom, speedily in our days, and a redeemer shall come to Tziyon, so may it be Your will, and let us say amen."

When we walked around a nearby neighborhood which up until a few years ago had been a cemetery, we discovered gravestones in the courtyards with Jewish writing

on them including names and dates, covered over or even set into the walls of the courtyards. As we walked down one of the paths, we were shocked to see the gravesite of one of the local tzaddikim. "R' Avrohom Mota" was his name. The locals say that when the graves were desecrated they also tried to desecrate his grave, but any Indian who tried to break the monument died on the spot.

\*\*\*

The shluchim are back in India, each to their place, Poona – mystical capital of India, Pushkar – tourists' delight, Vata Canal – the Israeli village, etc. The summer months were a time to raise money for the upcoming months, for the expenses that will run into tens of thousands of dollars. This is an opportunity to help and be a part of the incredible work being done in India in hastening the Geula.

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# RABBI BINYAMIN ZILBER Z"l

The gaon, Rabbi Binyamin Zilber, passed away on 25 Elul at the age of 96. That evening, the large funeral was attended by many g'dolei ha'Torah, including the Vizhnitzer Rebbe and the Gerrert Rebbe.

Rabbi Zilber authored dozens of s'farim on Halacha and Jewish Thought, the most famous among them the series of responsa called *Az Nidberu*.

Rabbi Zilber was born in Poland in 5672 (1912), and even as a child he excelled in unusual yiras Shamayim. He was gifted and put his talents to good use in diligent study. He was known as one of the outstanding talmidim in the famous Novardok yeshiva in Bialystok.

A childhood friend, R' Shmuel Ben-Artzi, related:

"He came to us from the yeshiva k'tana in Brisk. He did not study much Musar. He was a member of the 'chabura' but did not work on 'peulos' (Novardok outreach activities). He was a masmid and davened quietly, unlike in Novardok. We envied and admired him, and he drew attention because of his diligence and refinement."

Over the years, Rabbi Zilber became known as a halachic authority in the laws of Orach Chaim, especially in the laws of Shabbos. He became a member of the Moetzes G'dolei HaTorah, and with his efforts, a number of religious breaches in Eretz Yisroel were corrected.

As for his relationship with the Rebbe – in 5751, he attended the Yud-Alef Nissan farbrengen in Kfar Chabad. In his address he said: Boruch Hashem, the Jewish people are not orphaned. The Lubavitcher Rebbe

looks out for all Jewish people, not only his own people ... We are obligated to join in and encourage the Rebbe's work in spreading Judaism to the entire world.

Rabbi Zilber consistently supported the Rebbe's mitzvaim and signed a proclamation of g'dolei Yisroel in support of Mivtza T'fillin, as well as the proclamation in support of Mivtza Neshek. In his *Az Nidberu* (vol. 6,

siman 67) he brought proofs that little girls should also light Shabbos candles, and cited the Rebbe on this topic.

As an indication of his esteem for the Rebbe, he sent Torah insights to the journal that was published for the Rebbe's birthday in 5737, and wrote, "Here are my chiddushim on the tractate Shabbos ... in the honor and merit of the lofty and honorable Lubavitcher Rebbe, who is moser nefesh for Klal Yisroel, upon reaching his 75<sup>th</sup> year. May Hashem Yisborach strengthen him and fortify him, and may his days and years increase until the coming of the righteous redeemer."

For the *Kavod Chachamim – Ateres Paz*, which was published in 5749, he sent divrei Torah in honor of the Rebbe. He also participated in the *Maadanei Melech* that was

published in connection with the Rebbe's enactment of daily study of Rambam.

Rabbi Zilber was adamantly opposed to the political splintering of religious Jewry in Israel in 5749.

In later years he lived in Beitar and served as Mashgiach in various yeshivos. May his memory be for a blessing.



# LIVING WITH TISHREI YEAR-ROUND

Interview by Nosson Avrohom

*How do we draw down the energy of a 770 Tishrei into the rest of the year? To whom did the Rebbe write not to waste his money to come to him? Why is it that bachurim who were never in 770 before, are now moser nefesh to jump at the opportunity? How do we infuse life into the inyan of “being with the Rebbe?” \* This and more in a discussion amongst mashpiim who also share their memories of their Tishreis over the years.*

You just spent Tishrei with the Rebbe in 770. As mashpiim, how do you instill an inner chayus to the T’mimim about the inyanim of Rebbe, Tishrei and 770?

**R’ Mizrachi:** I once heard an interesting vort from the mashpia, Rabbi Zushe Posner. It says “600,000 feet of the nation, which I am within,” – Moshe Rabbeinu refers to the Jewish people as his feet and he says that he is present there. So too, the Rebbe MH”M, who is the Moshe Rabbeinu of this generation, is there with his Chassidim.

Since the Rebbe is chai v’kayam, he gives the strength and the chayus to the Chassidim and he watches over us so that we don’t fall and we continue to be in the category of “I am within.” Today, the hiskashrus of the T’mimim is no less than it was in the past.

Those who want to feel the Rebbe can feel; those who want to receive chayus from the Rebbe, can receive chayus; there are “yechiduyos” today too, there are farbrengens, there are giluyim, and there is everything we had in the past. However, today these things

come in different forms.

The best example of this is the miracles the Rebbe does every day in the areas of children, health and livelihood, for thousands of Jews, through the Igros Kodesh. This chayus, that the Rebbe lives and leads as he always did, has to be instilled in the T’mimim.

In the past, the job of the mashpiim was easier. When the T’mimim saw the Rebbe, they felt ashamed. One look from the Rebbe was enough to have a powerful effect on the soul of a bachur. Today, the preparations for the trip

## **Rabbi Gershon Avtzon**

Rosh Yeshivas Tomchei  
T’mimim Lubavitch in  
Cincinnati, Ohio

## **Rabbi Yitzchok Akselrod**

Mashpia of Yeshiva K’tana  
Chabad – B’nei Brak

## **Rabbi Avrohom Mann**

Mashpia in Yeshivas Tomchei  
T’mimim Lubavitch in Toronto,  
Canada

## **Rabbi Meir Mizrachi**

Mashpia in Yeshivas Tomchei  
T’mimim Lubavitch – Lud



to the Rebbe have to be more spiritual and more p'nimius'dike. We have to speak to the T'mimim more about the power of thought and the power of visualizing.

I heard from a mashpia that the Rebbe once said that a certain woman asked for a bracha for something and it disturbed the Rebbe's sleep. The Rebbe feels us Chassidim, he feels everything.

The same is true today. In fact, the Rebbe is giving brachos and

doing open miracles now more than ever. Today a bachur can picture the Rebbe and ask for whatever he wants. Writing to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh, the answers people receive, and the results, are just amazing.

A few years ago, Rabbi Reuven Matusof was in 770 on Erev Rosh HaShana and he wrote a pa'n which he read, at first, near the Rebbe's shtender and afterwards, near the Rebbe's room. After Rosh HaShana

he returned to France. When he went to the shul where he davens, one of the people there was happy to see him and proceeded to tell him an amazing thing that happened to him. The night before, he dreamt that the Rebbe came to him in a dream and asked him where he davened. The man said he davens in "Beis Moshiach." The Rebbe asked, "Who else davens there?" and the man answered, "Rabbi Matusof." When the Rebbe heard the name he said, "He was by me."

We must review and stress to the T'mimim, whether at farbrengens or in personal conversations, that there is no substantive change. The only change is in the "garments." The Rebbe is the same Rebbe. In the past the Rebbe was not what we saw with eyes of flesh. The Rebbe is an inner reality, and we have this today, more powerfully than ever.

Before I came to 770 one year, I was very uncertain about whether to go for all of Tishrei or only or half a month. I wrote to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh and the answer I opened said to add, not to diminish. I understood this to mean that the



***Today...we have to speak to the T'mimim more about the power of thought and the power of visualizing.***

--Rabbi Meir Mizrachi

Rebbe wanted me to remain for the entire month.

After I ordered a ticket, one of the mashpiim in the yeshiva reprimanded me for wanting to go for an entire month. He said that I had a family, I wasn't a bachur, and how could I leave my family for a month. When I told him about the answer I opened to, he said the answer wasn't that clear.

I sat down to write again and the answer I opened to was in volume 9, p. 152. The letter is addressed to the mashpia, Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Kesselman and the Rebbe expresses his surprise that the T'mimim are allowed to go home for the month of Tishrei, saying that the hanhala of the yeshiva had to be with the T'mimim even if this interfered with their family ... My doubts were laid to rest.

**R' Akselrod:** First, I have to be honest and say that there is no rational explanation for the *hiskashrus* of the T'mimim today, to the Rebbe and his horaos, which is sometimes far and away greater than it was in the past. This *hiskashrus*, which demands *mesirus nefesh*, proves that the Rebbe is *chai v'kayam*.

I heard a nice vort from someone that the T'mimim of today were babies when the Rebbe spoke about not having images of impure animals in the house. This prepared them for this kind of *emuna*.

The *avoda* today is not only to daven five or six hours, but to go on *mitzaim* for hours, to forego personal comforts and it's all because the Rebbe said this should be done by way of preparing the world for Moshiach. The T'mimim today have a "Chassidische light," a purity that is no less than that of the great Chassidim of the previous generation.

Whenever I go to 770, I meet the Chassid and baal *mesirus nefesh*, Leibel Mochkin. He points at the

T'mimim who fill 770 and says to me in Yiddish, "give a look." See how beautiful it is, look at this *emuna*, see their fire. The T'mimim live with the Rebbe no less than in the past and they are particular about Chassidische *hanhagos* and the Rebbe's *horaos* no less than in the past.

**R' Avtzon:** It depends on how the mashpia presents it. When a Tamim sees a mashpia talking about 770 with a smile, he understands that the mashpia lives with, and is happy with the idea. When he hears the mashpia tell a story about the Rebbe and sees how the mashpia is enthusiastic about a letter of the Rebbe that he saw or learned; when he sees that the mashpia holds a *sicha* of the Rebbe and talks about the Rebbe in the present tense and talks excitedly about this at *farbrengens* – all this arouses a love for those things in the bachur.

When you refer to people's grandfather, the grandchildren "wake up" and it has an effect on them; all the more so when you mention *inyanim* of the Rebbe. The mashpia needs to do this in such a way that he piques the bachur's interest so that the bachur catches the enthusiasm. When a mashpia says, "Last night at a *farbrengen* I heard a great miracle story about the Rebbe," or "I heard an inspiring Chassidic saying," or a *horaa* or a moral lesson, it shows the T'mimim that the concept "Rebbe" and all that goes along with it, is alive for him.

All this is, of course, in addition to learning the Rebbe's *sichos* and *maamarim*, and especially regarding 770 – learning the *kuntres* "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel," as that adds fire to the *hiskashrus*. The mashpiim have to live it in a way that fills their very being, and not just by rote.

**R' Mann:** There needs to be two, simultaneous approaches. The first approach entails *emuna p'shuta*, to explain to the T'mimim, in all

seriousness, that nothing changed. If the T'mimim see that the mashpiim live this, they will accept it too. How should this be conveyed? Everybody has their *hergesh* but the main point has to be that there is no change in the Nasi HaDor, and there can't be. When this is explained, it is accepted. Some need to see it in the *sichos*; others are satisfied by stories and by seeing that the Rebbe continues to lead us.

The second approach – although it is the opposite of the first approach – entails speaking about the details. It is very hard to live with something abstract even if it's *Atzmi* (of the Essence). It's hard to connect to *p'nimius* with *emuna* alone. You have to tell the *talmidim* how Tishrei used to be, with all the *giluyim*, describe it in detail, and then say that we have the same thing today.

We see an interesting *chiddush* in recent years that the Rebbe asked that Chassidim *zolen zich kochen* (should take a great interest) in the details of the Rebbe's holy conduct. The Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Boruch Kahane, who served then as the editor of the periodical, "Beis Chayeinu," which described the events in 770 at the time, as well as every move the Rebbe made, "Whoever describes in detail is praiseworthy."

With Moshiach too, we saw that the Rebbe asked that it come down into the details and that we should learn the subject, going beyond the eternal belief in Moshiach. Today too, beyond the *emuna p'shuta* that we need to have, which the *talmidim* today have, it's very important that the mashpiim delve into the details and *giluyim* of the Rebbe too.

**How do you "take" all the enormous *giluyim* that we absorbed here during Tishrei and "translate" them in a way that affects the year to come?**

**R' Mizrachi:** We have the power

of visualization. The Rebbe Rayatz says that through the power of visualization you can veritably live the thing you are picturing, as though you are experiencing it for the first time, even if it was something you experienced many years ago.

Whenever they feel down, the T'mimim have to picture themselves standing in 770 at farbrengens, at the t'fillos and the learning sessions; the feelings they had at certain times. By picturing all the details, you can re-experience the emotions. This is one of the reasons that the Rebbe asked that a replica of 770 be built in Kfar Chabad, so that someone who cannot travel, who needs a bracha or advice, materially or spiritually, will go there and have the same experience.

770 is Beis Chayeinu where you receive the chayus and ko'ach to accomplish. You can see T'mimim who come to 770 for the first time, who never saw the Rebbe, who insist on getting good spots for the t'fillos, insist on getting in for the Birkas HaBanim, who give their all in order to get another "piece" of 770 in a tangible way. This itself proves that the Rebbe hasn't left us, even if we don't see him. It's not a coincidence that the Rebbe had the kuntres "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel" published a half a year before the stroke on 27 Adar. 770 is the place from where we draw the chayus and kochos for the entire year.

**R' Akselrod:** Every Tamim has to focus on one hachlata and this will remind him of Tishrei. A bachur, who until he came for Tishrei, learned one chapter a day of Rambam, should commit to learning three chapters a day. This gives a certain chayus to the entire stay in 770 and not just for Tishrei. Throughout the year he will remember what made him make that commitment.

Furthermore, the truth is that the T'mimim today "live" 770 all year

round. In the yeshivos they speak about Tishrei and live it in the most sincere way.

**R' Avtzon:** The Rebbe referred to this too. It's analogous to friends who want to remember someone and so they give him a gift that will remind him of all his friends and the pleasant days they spent together. The same is true for Tishrei. Every Tamim has to make a hachlata that



***You cannot work  
on the talmidim  
and sell them  
stories while not  
living it yourself.***

*--Rabbi Gershon Avtzon*

will remind him of Tishrei; a hachlata of "Chassidic warmth," of Chassidic feeling – to think Chassidus for a few minutes before every t'filla or to be careful not to talk from the beginning of davening till the end. When he has a hard time standing by his commitment, he will always remember when and why he made it, as well as the lofty spiritual experience he had at the time.

I want to tell you a story that

happened with a friend of mine. His father would take him every Shabbos to daven with him in 770. One time, he was outside 770 and someone who knew his father asked him whether he davened in 770. My friend, who was a boy at the time, said no. The father's friend later asked the father why he didn't bring his son to 770.

The father smiled and said, come and I'll show you how to ask the question. He asked his son, "Do you daven in the Rebbe's shul?"

The boy answered, "Of course!" That's the chinuch we were raised with.

**R' Mann:** The Rebbe explains in a maamer what Chazal mean when they say that during davening it has to be "the heart upward and the eyes downward." This means that if during davening, a person finds that his heart and concentration are soaring upward – then he need to direct his eyes downward, i.e. he has to think about what will happen after the davening; how will he preserve the lofty state he reached during the davening.

The same is true for traveling to the Rebbe and the days that follow. Of course, emuna p'shuta shines in 770 and clearly isn't lacking by the bachurim who work hard to come to the Rebbe. What's needed is the inyan of "I await him every day that he come" – that it should be as the Rebbe explains in Parshas Balak 5751 that he has to change his whole way of thinking, which is accomplished through learning inyanei Moshiach and Geula, as it will affect the mind and then the heart and then one's thoughts, speech, and actions.

The way to achieve this is when you're in 770, to think how you want to go back home.

Recently, a short and sharp response from the Rebbe was publicized in which the Rebbe writes to someone, "I told you the previous time to sit and learn diligently and

you looked for easier work. Don't waste money on coming here again."

The point is not to discourage anyone from traveling to the Rebbe; on the contrary. We must go to the Rebbe but we must put more effort in and think about how (with what) we want to leave 770.

If for example, a bachur has a problem concentrating while learning, he should make a firm commitment to be particular about this; to put more attention into davening with kavana, in learning before davening, in Chassidishe hanhagos, and in any area that needs chizuk. This is what will draw down the "lights" of Tishrei into the entire year.

**As bachurim you went to 770. Can you describe how you felt and what you experienced?**

**R' Mizrachi:** I went for the first time for Tishrei 5749 as a talmid in shiur beis in Tomchei T'mimim in Lud. Back then there was a special chayus about traveling to the Rebbe and everybody yearned to spend Tishrei with the Rebbe in Beis Chayeinu.

At a younger age I waited eagerly to join the "welcome home farbrengen" that was organized in Shikun Chabad in Lud by the mashpia, Rabbi Moshe Levitin. Those farbrengens were special and full of Chassidishe chayus and hergesh and bubbling with hiskashrus to the Rebbe. All the Chassidim who had spent Tishrei with the Rebbe would come to those farbrengens which would be attended by many people from the Shikun who could not go that year, as well as children and T'mimim.

Those who came back from the Rebbe would describe their spiritual experiences while we listened avidly and lapped up every detail about the Rebbe and certainly anything the Rebbe said.

The mashke at these farbrengens was plentiful and we looked forward to this farbrengen all year. These

farbrengens intensified my desire to go to the Rebbe. In Tishrei 5749, after much effort, I was able to realize my dream. I arrived at the end of Elul, in the evening. The Rebbe returned from the Ohel and I was overwhelmed by emotion as I recited the SheHechyanu bracha upon seeing the Rebbe for the first time. Throughout that month I was on an indescribable spiritual high.

We did not look for giluyim or kiruvim back then. A Chassid is mekushar to the Rebbe with his essence, not with giluyim. The sweetness and inner joy lay in the fact that we were in the Rebbe's presence.

There is one moment from Shabbos Parshas Noach 5752 that is engraved in my mind. I would usually stand in the eastern pyramid from where you could only see and barely hear. Before that Shabbos I found out that there was a bench opposite the Rebbe that was reserved for guests. It was my last Shabbos that Tishrei with the Rebbe and I wanted to hear the Rebbe's voice!

My friend, R' Aryeh Kedem, and I took turns watching our places on that bench from Friday afternoon, including Friday night and during t'fillos. Every few hours we would switch. This was all leading up to the very special farbrengen. That Shabbos, the Rebbe spoke more loudly than other Shabbasos and he spoke animatedly about the advantage of t'shuva that comes from simcha.

I listened closely to the Rebbe and felt that it was being said just for me. I left that farbrengen so deeply inspired that I never felt that way again, not even at N'ila on Yom Kippur.

Motzaei Simchas Torah 5752 I was in 770 and I wondered whether I should pass by the Rebbe for kos shel bracha. I would decide to go and start walking but then I would change my mind. When I left the

line once again, I felt a strong desire to pass by the Rebbe. I had a powerful thought of t'shuva and got back on line.

When I reached the Rebbe, he gave me a special smile that melted me. These things cannot be explained rationally but my Chassidishe hergesh told me that the Rebbe knew what I had been thinking. When you go to the Rebbe you have to make the proper preparation, and the main thing you need is bittul.

There was a strong feeling that you were in the Rebbe's presence and nothing was hidden from him. Just as the head feels what is going on in the foot, the Rebbe feels what you feel and whatever you think.

It was hard b'gashmius in Tishrei but knowing that we were going to the Rebbe, material comforts meant nothing to us. That feeling is felt today too. You can see how the T'mimim put aside their comforts, maybe more than in the past.

**R' Akselrod:** The first time I went to the Rebbe was Tishrei 5746. That year I was learning in yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lud and they spoke a lot about preparing before the trip.

On Simchas Torah of that year, many of my friends and I went on Tahalucha to Queens. We ran all the way back in order to make it to the Rebbe's farbrengen which took place before hakafo in 770. I arrived exhausted but who worried about things like that. I went to the farbrengen and managed to get right near the Rebbe. It was at the end of the farbrengen and there were amazing things. The Rebbe asked everyone to turn over their cups. At that farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke about the gematria of Moshiach with the addition of the letter Yud which alludes to the ten soul powers.

At the davening on Simchas Torah morning, R' Yisroel Duchman would make kiddush on mashke and he would sing "HaRebbe shlita." I

remember that that year the Rebbe smiled and then signed to him, with his finger to his lip, to stop. It was an amazing and unusual sight. Two years later, in 5748, the Rebbe encouraged the singing of this song.

**R' Avtzon:** I can tell you about the Tishrei atmosphere in Crown Heights when I was a boy growing up. It was always a very special feeling when Tishrei arrived and guests came from around the world. As a child, I looked forward to Tishrei.

Throughout the year my father davened in the Sasnovitz shul between Kingston and Albany and he went to 770 only for the farbrengens. In Tishrei we went to 770 for the t'kios, for N'ila and especially for Napoleon's March. We also went on Simchas Torah and it was something extraordinary. I looked forward to it all year.

My father had a place near the Rebbe and I always knew that when I would be older, I would be next to the Rebbe all the time. At the davening Simchas Torah morning, I remember asking my father why it was so empty and many T'mimim were not there. He told me, "When you get older, you'll understand." When I got older, I understood that many of them had returned exhausted from Tahalucha and the mashke from the first day was still affecting them.

We lived at Crown and Kingston and so we felt the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva whether we wanted to or not. We were a part of it. Even a child in Crown Heights understood and felt that Tishrei with the Rebbe was something special. I remember that on the first night of Sukkos we had a bachur as a guest who apparently had drunk more than enough mashke. Before he fell asleep he yelled, "Get me up to get a place on line to shake the Rebbe's lulav!" That was the atmosphere, living with the Rebbe, Tishrei is with the Rebbe, and we were raised with this.

**R' Mann:** I went to the Rebbe for Tishrei many times but the first time I was there, when I was a boy, and the events that took place, are more memorable than later visits. It was 5742. The year before, the Rebbe had spoken about Tzivos Hashem. I remember that on Yom



***I will never forget the sight – the Rebbe, looking ecstatic, got up and danced and strongly encouraged the singing with his hands.***

--Rabbi Avrohom Mann

Kippur, at N'ila, we children were on the bima. There were older Chassidim who wanted to take us down but the Rebbe motioned to leave us alone. Another thing I remember well is that we sang "Avinu Malkeinu" before the March and the Rebbe encouraged us very

strongly and cried a lot.

Till this day, I have a powerful image in my mind of the Rebbe's majesty when I saw him that Tishrei. After Shabbos B'Reishis some of us families had yechidus. I remember that the Rebbe asked me if I have a letter in a Torah scroll. For months after that Tishrei I was on a high and still caught up in the incredible atmosphere of that Tishrei with the Rebbe.

I remember something special from 5746. It was the Rosh HaShana farbrengen and I sat under the Rebbe's table because I wanted, at least, to hear the Rebbe, since both hearing and seeing the Rebbe was nearly impossible for someone who did not have a regular spot.

The Rebbe asked that they sing a happy niggun and they sang his father's hakafof niggun. I came out from under the table (the older Chassidim allowed me to do so since I promised to only say l'chaim). I will never forget the sight – the Rebbe, looking ecstatic, got up and danced and strongly encouraged the singing with his hands.

I remember something that happened in Tishrei 5751 that can serve as a lesson. That year, Shabbos B'Reishis (Shabbos Mevarchim) was immediately following Simchas Torah and when the Rebbe came in to say T'hillim at 8:30, it was a relatively small crowd. When the Rebbe went over to the shtender, he placed the T'hillim on it and encouraged the singing for about a minute, in all directions, just like at hakafof. Whoever was there for T'hillim that morning saw this wondrous sight.

The Rebbe said, on Shabbos Parshas Tetzaveh 5727 that when Moshiach comes, he will ask each one of us how many Jews we got to say T'hillim on Shabbos Mevarchim.

Those are a few of my memories of Tishrei with the Rebbe, memories that keep me going all year round.



# MESIRAS NEFESH FOR GEULA

By Yehoshua Kenig

*The following article is about the Admur Chaim Elozor Shapiro, Av Beis Din in Munkatch, known as the Minchas Elozor for the book he authored. \* Why did he write a small Torah scroll on deer hide, and when did he demand mesirus nefesh for the coming of Moshiach? \* What connection did he have with Lubavitch? \* This is the second in a series on G'dolei Yisroel and Anticipating the Geula.*

## ROOTS

The roots of Chassidus Munkatch in Hungary began with the great-great-grandfather of the Minchas Elozor, Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapiro of Dinov, who was the first Chassidishe rav of the city. The family name of the Admurei Munkatch was Langsam, but in order to avoid army service, Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech changed the family name to Shapiro.

Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech, author of the famous *B'nei Yisaschar*, did not last long as the rav in Munkatch, since he forbade fattening geese

because of the prohibition of causing pain to animals. This p'sak din created trouble with the wealthy men of the city, who made their money by raising fattened geese. He returned to Dinov, where he later passed away.

In 5642/1882, Rabbi Shlomo Shapiro, the author of *Shem Shlomo*, grandson of Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech, was invited to become rav, and that is when the Shapiro dynasty was established in Munkatch. This lasted three generations: Rabbi Shlomo, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh (author of *Beer Lechai*

*Ro'i, Darkei T'shuva, Tzvi Tiferes*) and Rabbi Chaim Elozor, author of the *Minchas Elozor*.

## BIOGRAPHY

The gaon, Rabbi Chaim Elozor Shapiro, was born on 18 Teives, 5632 (1872), in the town of Strizov, in Poland. His father was R' Tzvi



Hirsh and his mother was Esther, daughter of R' Chanina Horowitz, rav of the city Olinov. When he was three, he became seriously ill, and the name Chaim was added, upon the advice of the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz.

As a child, his gifts were apparent. He began writing his first book on Shulchan Aruch at age eleven. R' Chaim Elozor was known for his fine character and compassionate heart. He was the type to unhesitatingly take off his coat and give it to a poor man. His relationship with simple Jews was like that of a father to his children. He lovingly guided them, and helped them in all ways.

His first wife was Chaya Chasha, daughter of Shraga Yair Rabinowitz of Bialbezog. He divorced in 5666, since they had no children. In 5687,

he married Rochel Perel, daughter of Yaakov Moshe Safrin of Kamarna.

In 5673 (1913), upon the death of his father, he was appointed Admur and head of the Munkatcher Kollel in Eretz Yisroel. He founded a yeshiva and chadarim, which he named Darkei T'shuva. Hundreds of bachurim learned in the yeshiva, coming from all parts of Europe.

Rabbi Chaim Elozor was a staunch opponent to Zionism, but this did not stop him, in 5675 (1915), from purchasing land in Yerushalayim for the purpose of building homes for the members of the Munkatch Kollel. The Battei Munkatch neighborhood was built on the land he bought. The small neighborhood was similar to other Yerushalmi neighborhoods of that time, being comprised of three buildings surrounding a central

***As a child, his gifts were apparent. He began writing his first book on Shulchan Aruch at age eleven.***

courtyard.

### FOCUS ON MOSHIACH

The Minchas Elozor never diverted his attention from anticipating the Geula. His heart and soul burned fiercely with longing and faith in the coming of Moshiach.

**Below: The Admur Chaim Elozor Shapiro, the Minchas Elozor, with the city of Munkatch of today in the background**

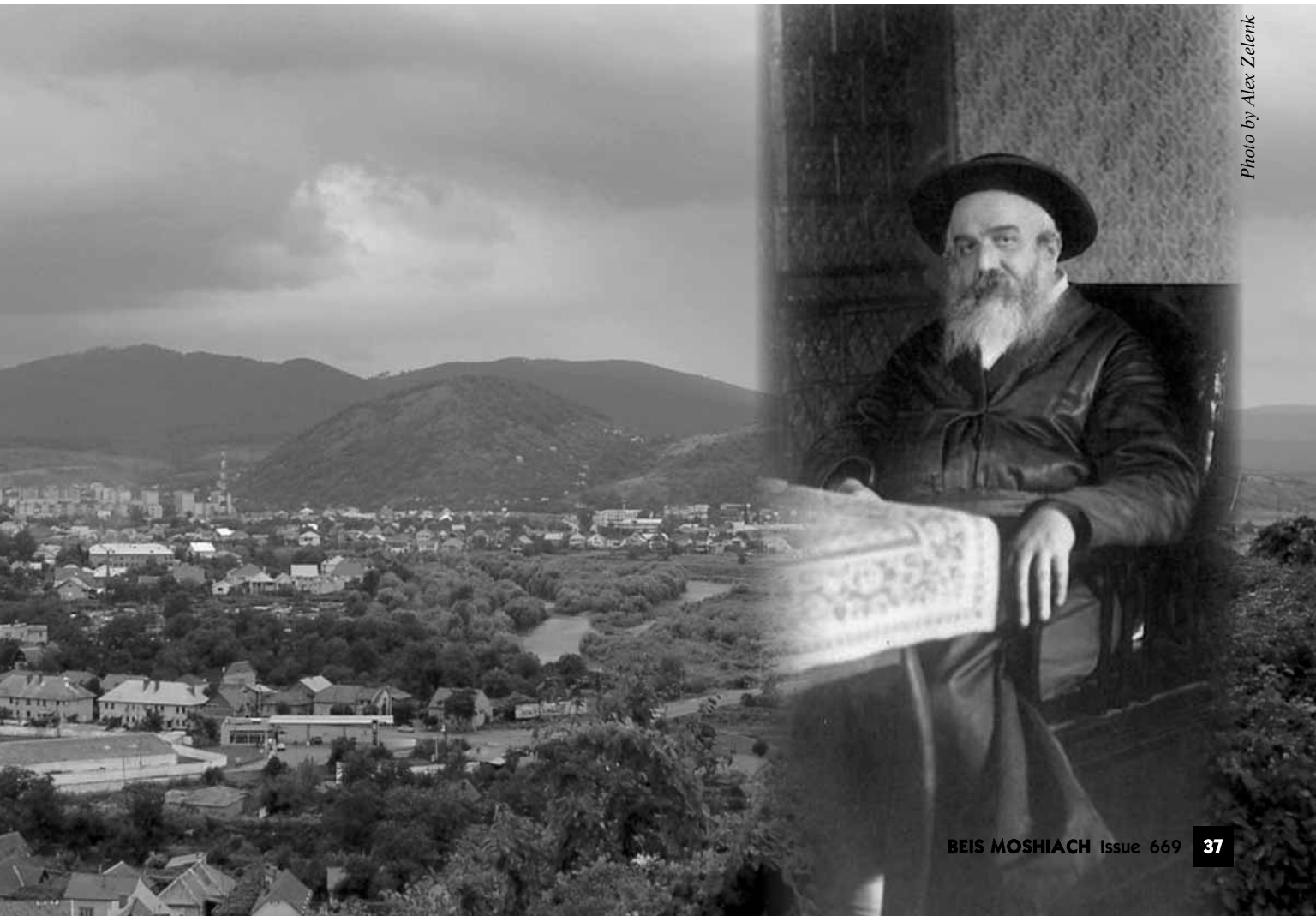


Photo by Alex Zelenk

His Talmid, Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Weiss, Rav of the Neve Achiezer neighborhood in B'nei Brak, relates:

"There wasn't a day that my Rebbi did not talk about Moshiach. I will never forget Rosh HaShana when, before the t'kios, he would stand and address the congregation with copious tears, saying, 'Jews, drop all side issues. I know that everyone has problems with health and parnasa, but the thing that we all need to daven for on Rosh HaShana is Moshiach.'

"In Munkatch, in the era of the Minchas Elozor, no one was distracted from the topic of the coming of Moshiach. That was the

atmosphere for us bachurim. After every Yom Tov, bachurim would print his Divrei Torah, and there you can see how he would speak fervently about Moshiach. He would not divert his attention for even a moment from the coming of Moshiach.

"In Munkatch, when people blessed one another, they would add, 'May we merit to see one another together with the coming of Moshiach.' That was the accepted bracha among the Chassidim in Munkatch."

## A TIME OF CRISIS

On the second day of Sukkos, he

would prostrate himself on the graves of his ancestors and pray for the Geula. When he was asked how he could do that on Yom Tov, the answer he gave was that the din is that during a time of sorrow, or even a plague affecting animals, we blow the shofar to arouse mercy, even on Shabbos; so certainly nowadays, when it is a time of misfortune for Yaakov with inestimable misfortune, physically and spiritually ...

A Chassid who witnessed his prostration on the gravesite of his father, the Darkei T'shuva, gave the following moving description:

"With great arousal and much crying, Rabbeinu shlita cried out: 'My father, my holy father! The Jewish people are wrung out and dislocated spiritually and materially, and the Torah is in a very low state. Why are you quiet there in the upper Gan Eden with all the tzaddikim? Arise, those who dwell in the dust, to arouse mercy on our behalf, and to send Moshiach Tzidkeinu! Please speak favorably on behalf of the Jewish people, to seal us for a year of Geula and salvation, speedily, now, amen.'"

The fire of anticipation and belief were perhaps even more outstanding in his numerous s'farim (over 30). Apparently, his yearning for Geula is what motivated him to write his s'farim. In the introduction to his Divrei Torah, he quoted the Gaon, Reb Shlomo Kluger of Brody, on the verse, "*asos s'farim harbeh ein ketz*" (making many, endless s'farim) – that when you see that the ketz (time for Moshiach to come) does not arrive, one should write many s'farim, "because perhaps additional Torah works need to be published ... and this will bring the coming of the Redeemer closer."

## TORAH FOR MOSHIACH

Shavuot of the year 5686 (1926) is engraved in the memories of all the residents of Munkatch. On this

### THE CITY OF MUNKATCH

The city of Munkatch is in the Carpathian region in Western Ukraine. Before World War II, the city was under Czech, and then the Hungarians took over.

The Jewish presence in Munkatch began over 360 years ago. The first mosad to be built was the shul, which was rented from the town government. Then schools were set up, a Beis Din was established, and a rav was appointed – Rabbi Yehuda Leib, the first rav of Munkatch.

Munkatch became famous in the Jewish world for its rabbanim and Admurim, who earned a reputation as fearless and strong Rabbanim who established a beautiful Chassidic dynasty. The city had mosdos Torah and chesed, and even a yeshiva run by the Admur, which was called Darkei T'shuva.

When trouble began to loom, it also affected the community in Munkatch. The city was taken over by the Hungarians, who happily collaborated with the Nazis. Persecution of Jews began, even before the Nazi conquest, by the Hungarians, who robbed them of their citizenship, taxed them, and enlisted them in forced labor. When the Nazis came, they locked the Jews in a crowded ghetto.

In the spring of 1944, the Nazis burst into the ghetto, packed most of the Jews into cattle cars, and transported them to concentration camps. Most of the talmidim of Darkei T'shuva were killed Al Kiddush Hashem. The names of many of them remain unknown.

The Jewish community in Munkatch was almost completely gone, but the spirit of Munkatch continues to thrive in beautiful k'hillos in the United States and Eretz Yisroel.

In its heyday, under the Minchas Elozor, about half, or even more, of the 30,000 residents of Munkatch were Jews. Today, out of nearly 100,000 residents, only about 300 Jews live there.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Teichman, shliach and rav in Jewish communities in the Carpathians, including Munkatch, looks after the material and spiritual needs of the tiny community.

The old shul  
in Munkatch



day, there was a Hachnasas Seifer Torah for a Torah that the Minchas Elozor had commissioned to be written for himself. It was a small scroll, written in beautiful script on deer hide, by a G-d fearing, Yemenite scribe in Yerushalayim.

The Torah was brought from the home of the Minchas Elozor to the Beis Midrash, with much singing and rejoicing. Suddenly, a loud proclamation was heard from the Admur. "This Torah is in my possession only temporarily," he said, as tears poured down his face, "for when Moshiach comes, speedily in our day, he will need two Torahs, one for his treasury and one to keep with him wherever he is, as the Laws of Kings dictates. This Torah needs to be small, so that it can be with him constantly. I dedicate this Torah that, with Hashem's help, will be speedily, in our days, brought as a gift for Moshiach ben Dovid."

## MYSTERIOUS VISIT TO ERETZ YISROEL

In Iyar, 5690 (1930), the Minchas Elozor spent thirteen days in Eretz Yisroel. During his stay, he visited the holy sites and the Munkatch neighborhood. One of the outstanding incidents that took place during his stay, was a visit shrouded in mystery with Rabbi Shlomo Elozor Alfandri, a Rav and Mekubal in Yerushalayim.

The visit took place on the eve of 14 Iyar, Pesach Sheini. That evening, the Minchas Elozor entered the room of the Mekubal and asked to speak with him privately. The crowd that remained outside tried to listen from the windows and cracks, and heard snippets of an intense conversation about the coming of Moshiach.

The Minchas Elozor pleaded with the Mekubal to

bring about the coming of Moshiach immediately. Rabbi Alfandri responded with the words of the verse, "Behold, he stands behind our walls." The listeners did not hear more than that. Rabbi Alfandri died a few days later. He was over 100.

Wherever the Minchas Elozor went, his fiery yearning for the Geula was prominent. When he went, for example, to the grave of Rabbi Yochanan HaSandler, he said, "Now, in the period called 'the heels of Moshiach,' we need a good *sandler* (shoemaker) to fix the heels..."

So too, when he went to the grave of the Amora, Rabbi Yirmiya, he recited T'hilim and mentioned what the Talmud Yerushalmi relates that Rabbi Yirmiya said before he died: "Dress me in white, pressed clothing; dress me in distinguished clothing. Put shoes on my feet, place my stick in my hand, and lay me on my side, so that I will be ready when Moshiach comes."

His visit sent shockwaves throughout the country, and the written media covered it extensively. He returned to Munkatch less than two weeks later, where he received a royal welcome, as his student, Moshe Goldstein described: "We arrived at the courtyard of the royal house ... and everyone called out, 'Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu,' he should lead us forever and towards Moshiach Tzidkeinu, speedily in our days, amen."

## NONSTOP DEMAND: AD MASAI

Upon his return, Rabbi Chaim Elozor increased his efforts to build up Judaism in his city. Under his energetic leadership, the Jewish community in Munkatch grew until it numbered more than half of the residents of the city. Mosdos Torah were established, along with tz'daka and chesed organizations. Many street names

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were changed to Jewish names, such as “Darkei T’shuva.”

His name became famous even among non-Jews, and many leaders visited him and consulted with him, including Thomas Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, Edvard Benes, who was appointed president after the death of Masaryk, Wilhelmina, Queen of Holland and others.

The Minchas Elozor passed away on 2 Sivan, 1937, in Munkatch. He left behind hundreds of talmidim, geonim and famous rabbanim, and dozens of s’farim on varied Torah subjects. But more than anything else, he left behind his example of someone with a fiery faith in the coming of Moshiach. He was a role model of one who did not stop asking “ad masai.”

In 1933, his only daughter married Rabbi Boruch Yehoshua Yerachmiel Rabinowitz, who later succeeded him. Today, two sons of Rabbi Rabinowitz serve as Admurim. Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Leib Rabinowitz is Admur in Boro

Park, and Rabbi Yitzchok Yaakov Rabinowitz is Admur in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

### **HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REBBE RAYATZ**

The warm connection between Lubavitch and Chassidus Munkatch began in the time of the Rebbe Rayatz, who corresponded with the Minchas Elozor.

The Rebbe Rayatz and the Minchas Elozor met at the healing spas, which they went to on doctor’s orders. It is said that the Rebbe MH”M once accompanied his father-in-law on his trip to the spa, and met with the Minchas Elozor there.

During their stay in Marienbad, the Czechoslovakian resort known for its mineral springs, they would walk together. On one such occasion, the Munkatcher suddenly stopped walking and began breathing deeply. The Rebbe Rayatz asked him whether he wasn’t feeling well and wanted to return. The Munkatcher said no. A few minutes later, the Munkatcher began breathing deeply again, and said, “I am smelling the scent of k’dusha.” The Rebbe Rayatz smiled.

When the Admur, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Rabinowitz, visited the Rebbe MH”M, the Rebbe told him that he once saw a letter which his father-in-law had written to the Minchas Elozor with superlatives in the heading - several rows of them!

### **LEARNING TANYA WITH YOUNG CHILDREN TOO**

The Minchas Elozor wrote a letter to the Rabbis of Mesivta Torah Vodaas, which seems to be a response to their complaint about one of the teachers, who learned Tanya with the boys. In his response he said, “As to whether to

learn Likkutei Amarim Tanya with the boys, in my opinion ... they are a balm for the eyes and they purify the heart and soul. That which is famous needs no proof ... it can be of great benefit, especially in America, where wantonness and heresy abound, Heaven protect us.”

In 5748, after the Rebbetzin passed away, the Admur, Rabbi Yaakov Rabinowitz, came to be menachem the Rebbe. He said to the Rebbe: “My grandfather, the Minchas Elozor, highly praised the Rebbe Rayatz.”

Older Chassidei Munkatch described the high esteem in which letters from the Rebbe Rayatz were received at the home of the Minchas Elozor. In general, the special connection between their Rebbe and Lubavitch was well known.

### **THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE AND THE MINCHAS ELOZOR**

The Rebbe’s relationship with the Minchas Elozor was unusual. The Rebbe even indicated that in many instances, he conducts himself according to the teachings of the Munkatcher, even when his father-in-law did not. On Pesach night, 5730 (1970), Rashag asked the Rebbe whether the Rebbe Rayatz took the head of the maror.

The Rebbe replied: “No, it’s my *kuntz*.”

Then the Rebbe added: “I hold of the Munkatcher.” He quoted what it says about the Munkatcher, “For maror he took a bit from the hard root of the horseradish, which wasn’t ground, and added to that to complete a k’zayis from the ground up horseradish.”

In letters of the Rebbe that deal with halachic topics, he often refers to p’sakim of the Minchas

Elozor: for example, the heter to change the Nusach HaT'filla to Nusach Ari but not the reverse, bachurim putting on T'fillin D'Rabbeinu Tam, the obligation to grow a beard, laws of mourning, etc. Also, in the book of minhagim that was compiled from what the Rebbe said, many references to the Minchas Elozor's s'farim are cited.

The special relationship between Lubavitch and Munkatch continued into the seventh generation. On several occasions, Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Leib and Rabbi Yitzchok Yaakov Rabinowitz came to the Rebbe.

When Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Leib came in 5725, the Rebbe spoke highly of the s'farim of the Minchas Elozor, which draw clear legal conclusions. The Rebbe inquired about manuscripts of the Munkatcher that were not yet printed, and encouraged the reprinting of the s'farim that were already in print.

In 5748, when Rabbi Y.L. Rabinowitz came to be menachem avel, the Rebbe asked again about reprinting the s'farim of the Minchas Elozor which are unique in combining Nigleh and P'nimius ha'Torah. When Rabbi Y.Y. Rabinowitz came to be

menachem avel, the Rebbe also spoke about printing his grandfather's s'farim and said: "It is worthwhile and proper to try and publicize the s'farim of the Minchas Elozor ... Surely you know that in Lubavitch we try to reach every single place, 'spreading the wellsprings outward' ... This activity hastens the coming of Moshiach, like the Baal Shem Tov wrote in his famous letter."

The Rebbe also suggested that he publish his grandfather's letter about the benefit of learning Tanya.

At the Siyumei HaRambam which take place every year in Crown Heights, the Munkatcher Admur sends his brother-in-law, R' Mordechai Leib Weiss, Rosh Yeshiva in Munkatch, as his personal representative to the event.

## PEARLS FROM THE MUNKATCHER

**It is permissible to ask for the Geula as reward for a mitzva** – It says "*eikev tishmiun*", and Rashi says this refers to those easy mitzvos which a person treads upon with his heels (*eikev*). In *Ikvisa d'Meshicha*, one must be extra careful with easy as well as hard mitzvos, for we don't know the reward for mitzvos.

This is seemingly difficult to understand, for we are told, "Be like servants who serve the master not for the sake of reward!"

Rather, surely ... in order to receive the reward, i.e. to hasten the Geula thereby ... it is permissible to ask for this reward, that he redeem us speedily in our days, since this rectifies the world to its ultimate purpose and the Will of Hashem

(Chaim V'Shalom).

**To ask again and again, we were not told "do not add"** – In the Midrash and s'farim it says that Moshe Rabbeinu davened 515 prayers, like the numerical equivalent of the word "VaEschanan." If he had davened one more prayer, he would have been able to enter the land, but Hashem told him not to.

This is a lesson for those who err in our times and think we shouldn't daven excessively for the Geula. They maintain: "Why add to what we pray in the Shmoneh Esrei?"

From this we see that if Moshe would have davened one more t'filla, he would have been answered. Since we were not told not to daven more, then surely it is a great mitzva to pray and pour out our soul ... and may we merit the Geula shleima b'karov, speedily.

**One who says he will come later is a heretic!** – the Rambam writes in his commentary, in Hilchos Melachim, that one who does not believe in the



The Minchas Elozor

coming of Moshiach, or does not await his coming - and he is clearly drawing a distinction with the word “or”, that even one who believes in his coming but does not await his coming and says he can come at a later time - is called one who denies Toras Moshe.

*(Hagada shel Pesach – Shaar Yisachar)*

**To be aware of Moshiach’s suffering** – In truth, if a person thought about the anguish that the holy Sh’china has, and the pain that Moshiach Tzidkeinu suffers - for there is no end to the afflictions that he suffers from in every generation - then surely our own suffering would not be considering suffering at all, and we would ask for mercy solely for Moshiach’s coming.

*(Mashmia Yeshua)*

**To wait every day? But Ben Dovid does not come etc.** – It is says in the Zohar, “Do not anticipate the footsteps of Moshiach until you see a rainbow with clear colors shining in the world.” A person might ask, “But we are commanded to believe and wait for his coming every day?”

The answer is: You can ask further on the Gemara, where it states many signs like that - “Ben Dovid will not come until everybody is either entirely guilty or entirely innocent,” and “until coins are gone from pockets,” and many others. Surely, Chazal did not mean to say that we shouldn’t anticipate Moshiach’s coming until these signs are fulfilled, and thus negate the main idea of “I await his coming every day.”

These signs are not prerequisites. There is a similar inyan where it says, “Yisroel is not redeemed except through t’shuva – once they do t’shuva, they are immediately redeemed.” Even when a person knows that he did not do a proper t’shuva, still, “I await his coming every day,”

waiting for Hashem to say, “for My sake I will do it”. This is obvious and clear.

These times and signs are surely true, but they are not absolute prerequisites.

*(Divrei Torah)*

**The Geula is not with my strength and the power of my hand but from Heaven** – We believers of Yisroel believe, and must believe, that after all the many misfortunes and tzaros which have come upon us, our salvation is near. But do not, heaven forbid, attempt to materialize the Geula in a natural way. It will not be through man’s power and might, for a natural and human Geula is not called Geula.

*(Divrei Kodesh)*

## MESIRUS NEFESH FOR MOSHIACH’S COMING

The Rebbe called 5744, Tihiye Shnas Divrei Moshiach. The Rebbe urged everyone to demand the true and complete Geula through Moshiach immediately. At one of the farbrengens of that year, the Rebbe said:

... As for those who complain

about the fervent and copious speaking about the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu – there is a letter of the Munkatcher that was recently reprinted, in which he writes explicitly and unequivocally that we need mesirus nefesh for Moshiach to come, similar to the mesirus nefesh for the three things that it says, “be killed and do not transgress!”

The Munkatcher is accepted by all groups as a great man and a gadol b’Yisroel ... and he writes explicitly that one should be moser nefesh for Moshiach’s coming, explaining at length that this mesirus nefesh is like that of the three sins.

If only they publicized this letter, which has already been printed in his book! Whoever wants to can buy it and see the letter for himself.

In connection with this, one of his talmidim related how one time he spoke about the mesirus nefesh needed to bring Moshiach, and he said in Yiddish: “Zol lozen shecht’n” (he should allow himself to be slaughtered) in order to bring Moshiach!

## REMAZIM - ALLUSIONS

At a farbrengen in 5744, the Rebbe related that the Minchas Elozor learned a lesson in Torah and K’dusha from everything that happened in his daily life. For example, when he traveled by train he tried to find an allusion and lesson from the number on the compartment in which he sat!

“This conduct is in accordance with the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov, that from everything a Jew sees or hears, he should learn a lesson in his avodas Hashem.”

In the kuntres “Beis Rabbeinu Sh’B’Bavel”, the Rebbe explains the remazim in the number of his beis midrash, his “home,” 770. In footnote 85 he alludes to this story about the Munkatcher:

“The conduct of g’dolei Yisroel was to learn lessons in avodas Hashem even from mundane matters like the number of a train compartment, which is something transient. All the more so for one’s permanent home, and especially in this case, when the address becomes the name of the building, as is mentioned in the text.”