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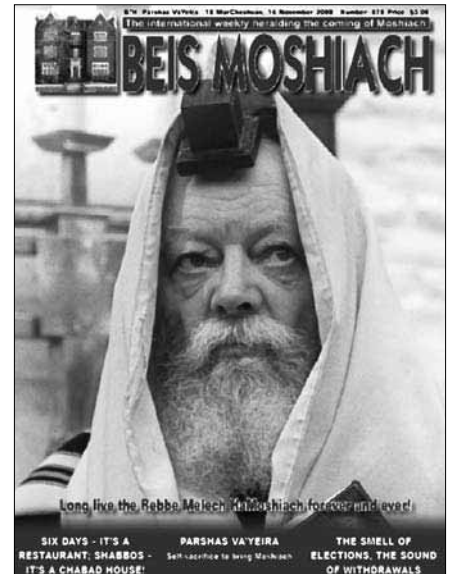
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MESIRUS NEFESH BRINGS MOSHIACH

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

What is mesirus nefesh – self-sacrifice? How does the Akeida, the binding of Isaac, enable all Jews to have mesirus nefesh? As the Akeida revealed G-dliness, so the mesirus nefesh of the Jewish people reveals Moshiach.

Of the many events in the Torah that have a clear connection to Moshiach, surely the *Akeida*, the binding of Isaac, is one of the most powerful. Indeed, the Sages mention several aspects of the *Akeida* that foreshadow the Redemption. For example, the Great Shofar that signals the coming of Moshiach will be from the ram that was sacrificed in Isaac's stead.

The binding of Isaac was also the tenth and final test of Abraham. Since these days are also the "final test" before the coming of Moshiach, the practical lessons of the *Akeida* become even more important. Let's look at one such lesson, concerning *mesirus nefesh* – self-sacrifice. According to the Rebbe, our generation will greet Moshiach because this generation has exhibited the greatest *mesirus nefesh* of any generation. That being the case, it's important to understand what defines true *mesirus nefesh*, and how, through the *Akeida*, Abraham bequeathed it to his descendants, the Jewish people.

When G-d commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, He uses the unusual phrase, "*Koch na*," "Take now." The word "na" literally means a request, equivalent in many ways to "please." "*Koch na*" is a Divine imperative, but it is also an appeal, a solicitation. The Talmud reconciles the apparent contradiction by explaining the intent of the phrase. G-d tells Abraham, in effect, that "you withstood many trials; endure for Me this test so that they will not say there was no reality in the former ones."

This itself requires explanation. If Abraham had not reached the level of *mesirus nefesh* – self-sacrifice – required by the *Akeida*, would that mean his successful triumph over the first nine tests had no substance or value? How can the rabbis claim that an inability to overcome the final and most difficult trial proves the effort expended and self-sacrifice exhibited in the first nine have neither effect nor endurance? Actually, we can ask an even stronger question: Why is the sacrifice of Isaac considered the

paradigm of self-sacrifice when we have the example of many righteous and holy people throughout the ages who willingly gave up their lives to sanctify the name of G-d? Not only that, but G-d spoke to Abraham directly, an "advantage" that the martyrs throughout the ages did not have.

Of course, there is a critical difference between Abraham and all the righteous martyrs who followed him: Abraham was the first person to have *mesirus nefesh*. He was the first Jew to accept upon himself the trials and hardships – whether physical, emotional or spiritual – necessary to sanctify G-d's name. "All beginnings are difficult." Starting is the hardest part of any endeavor. Being able to put aside one's wants, needs, desires, feelings – being able to give up one's very self to bring G-dliness into the world – this was impossible before Abraham. By withstanding the test and fulfilling G-d's request to "*koch na*" – "take now Isaac," Abraham opened the channel of *mesirus nefesh*, thereby drawing into this world the capacity for self-sacrifice for G-dliness. The righteous and the martyrs who followed Abraham's footsteps had the comparatively easier task of "simply" bringing the potential into the actual.

This being the case, we have to look at the first test of Abraham as well. For then he also exhibited *mesirus nefesh*. In Ur Kasdim, the city of his birth, Abraham was thrown into a fiery furnace for attempting to annihilate

idolatry and publicize the existence of G-d. In fact, the first test seems to be the harder of the two, since at the *Akeida* G-d spoke directly to Abraham and told him to sacrifice Isaac, while Abraham had received no such Divine imperative at Ur Kasdim. In Ur Kasdim, Abraham had come to the realization of G-d's existence on his own; he had become aware of G-d through reason. Only later did he have a direct experience of G-d, when the Almighty told him to leave his home and go to the land of Israel. Why, then, is there an emphasis on the self-sacrifice at the time of the *Akeida* – so much so that without it, everything Abraham endured previously would not be real?

The answer lies in the uniqueness of *mesirus nefesh*, simply defined as nullification of one's ego and one's existence. One's actions, one's very being is directed not toward self-gratification or self-satisfaction, but toward fulfilling the Divine directive. However, human beings are created such that they inherently possess an ego and sense of their own existence. Even generous actions, altruistic deeds, Acts of Loving-kindness or dedication need to be justified. There must be a reason, even if that reason is no more than the feeling of having done what's right, good or noble. True *mesirus nefesh* cannot be attained on one's own. Hence the need for Abraham to "open the channel" and bring real self-sacrifice into the world.

Not every "self-sacrifice" is a true *mesirus nefesh*, a nullification of one's ego, of one's self-importance, of one's very sense of being. There is a level of self-sacrifice available to anyone, regardless of who they are. One can calculate, as it were, the result of the sacrifice and come to the logical conclusion that one benefits more, at least spiritually, by sacrificing one's life. This rational approach to self-sacrifice, this sense that there is at least some compensation, is expressed by the phrase, "without x, life is not worth living." X in this case may be anything which

outweighs life; but determining exactly what is worth more requires some analysis and reason.

A true *mesirus nefesh* occurs without any calculation. One's self, the very being and essence, is dedicated to G-d, without any prior evaluation or sudden inspiration. The only consideration, the only thought, is what does G-d want and demand of me at this moment.

In this way, the *Akeida* was the first instance of true *mesirus nefesh*. Only Abraham and Isaac were involved.

The sacrifice and test involved no public declaration of G-d's rule or open demonstration of G-d's presence. G-d's request and desire had no logical purpose; indeed, in many ways it contradicted common sense and reason, apparently negating Abraham's life mission. By "passing the test," so to speak, Abraham nullified his self-awareness and ego. All that existed was G-d's Will.

What is the practical effect and lesson for our times? Since Abraham "opened the channel," every Jew is capable of *mesirus nefesh*. (Indeed, as the Rebbe has remarked, our generation has seen the greatest examples of it.) Every Jew can conquer his inclinations, nullify his desires and dedicate himself or herself to fulfilling G-d's Will. Every Jew can reach the stage and level of "knowing G-d" – not on an intellectual or rational basis, but as an overwhelming experience, as the prophet says, "the whole world will be filled with knowledge of G-d, as the waters cover the ocean bed." Just as

Abraham reached a level where the sum total of his existence was awareness of G-dliness and fulfillment of G-d's Will, so too, every Jew is capable of this level of self-sacrifice. And this is the "Moshiach" level of existence. And just as Abraham gave a retroactive reality to his previous tests through his self-sacrifice at the *Akeida*, so we, by following in Abraham's path, can reveal the reality of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 20, pp. 75-78)

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CROSSROADS: THE SMELL OF ELECTIONS AND THE SOUND OF WITHDRAWALS

By Sholom Ber Crombie

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

OLMERT GIVES, THE ARABS REFUSE

Elections again. That familiar smell of campaign workers plastering the city squares with colorful posters has returned to us again. Just two and a half years have passed since Israel's citizens last went to the polls, and here again they have been called upon to take part in the elections festival. So it goes in a country that has an obsession with finishing off its leaders and then replacing them afterwards. We have already gotten used to changing governments in Eretz Yisroel, one after another – Labor, Likud, back to Labor, and then again *ch"v*.

Every time the star of another leader rises, he gets off the stage and leaves the scene for another performer. Each one, in turn, departs from the political playing field after the voting public has vomited him out – Shimon Peres losing to Netanyahu, Netanyahu losing to Barak, Barak to Sharon –

thus the current political campaign provides nothing new. However, despite this fact, it appears that there's something else in the air. This time, it's really gone too far. In Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, the citizenry of Eretz Yisroel sees all the traits of Israeli politics. The overwhelming disgust leads to utter contempt within the general public for Olmert and his cohorts, leading everyone to wait with longing eyes for Olmert to go home and for someone else to take his place. Even the leftist journalists chuckled after Olmert recently gave a holiday interview and announced that we have to withdraw from the entire West Bank and East Jerusalem, believing that such a dramatic announcement will make him smell like a rose as Sharon did in the face of all the criminal investigations. However, what helped Sharon will not help Olmert, who has already missed the boat and has been compelled to leave office in disgrace, with no one to defend him.

Immediately after Olmert gave

his interview, with his proclamation about “withdrawal” from all the territories echoing throughout the world, the Palestinian side announced that they were not giving in on the refugee problem, and thus are not taken in by what Olmert said... This is not the first time that we bear witness to how G-d hardens the hearts of the Arabs, as the Rebbe touched upon in a sicha from the first day of Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5741: “In the past, G-d showed us a miracle by having the non-Jews refuse [Israel's concessions] from the start, hoping that [the government] would learn from this how to behave. But this apparently didn't help any, and they gave away three-quarters of the territories, and they wanted to give away even more *r"l* – until G-d (in whose hand is ‘the heart of kings and ministers’) showed something that no one ever imagined: The opposing side doesn't want to receive more, because they want to have it all.”

LIVNI'S YERUSHALMI PERFORMANCE

Kadima Party chairman Ms. Tzippi Livni wants with all her strength to bring about the revolution that Olmert failed to deliver and to establish Israel's future borders. Livni's strategy is based upon the assumption that the Israeli public will give her the mandate if she keeps her hands clean, so she can then run with the diplomatic process towards a permanent agreement with the terrorist organizations. She longs to be written in the annals of history as the one who established the borders for the division of Eretz Yisroel, *ch"v*, and the one who brought about the transfer of the Arab neighborhoods of Yerushalayim into the hands of the Palestinians.

Livni's intentions should be a source of concern to anyone for whom the security of the Jewish People is important. Standing at her side are Ariel Sharon's publicity advisers from the "farm forum", who have now come back on the scene and are working to crown Livni as the next leader of the State of Israel. They are certain that Israel's electorate will support Livni's plans, just as it supported the uprooting of Gush Katif. They will stand by her side and do everything to sell the idea to the general public, and we already know that the national memory steers clear of material that it wants to forget. The Israeli people forgot the one thousand casualties suffered in the post-Oslo intifada and supported the Gush Katif expulsion, and similarly has quickly forgotten the backing the expulsion provided to the terrorist organizations from Gaza.

Livni's deception is so great that the publicity advisers on her diplomatic policies speak about the Arab neighborhoods of Yerushalayim as if they too are no longer under our control, ignoring the fact that

the Arabs are also talking about parts of the Old City of Yerushalayim and the Temple Mount.

They were once afraid to talk about the Old City of Yerushalayim. This was something totally outside of the realm of diplomatic negotiations. Yet, the Rebbe had already foreseen many years ago what was bound to happen in the Old City of Yerushalayim if we didn't harness the appetite of the terrorists.

Livni's intentions should be a source of concern to anyone for whom the security of the Jewish People is important... Israel's electorate will support Livni's plans, just as it supported the uprooting of Gush Katif.

The Rebbe spoke on Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5738, about the situation in Eretz Yisroel, and also addressed the issue of Yerushalayim: "Regarding the situation in Eretz Yisroel, there are two possibilities: One possibility is that they [the Israelis] tell the other side that they don't want to relinquish any of Eretz Yisroel, but since he [the other side] would be upset over this, they [the Israelis] won't do anything. [Or] rather [than upset them, it is better

that] they will wait and see that maybe after a week, [the other side] will be in a better mood... [and if not, the Israelis] will give in on something but they still won't do anything [assertive]. As a result, there will be armed terrorists in Old Yerushalayim, Chevron, Sh'chem, Ramallah – everywhere *r"l*!"

Today, when this prophecy is being realized, the leftist politicians tell us, "Even Yerushalayim is turning into a nest of terror cells, so let's give it up."

The most worrisome thing about Tzippi Livni is the fact that, unlike most Israeli politicians, she presents an agenda. While Barak and Netanyahu stand mumbling on the side, Livni speaks about a clear plan of action: First of all, a comprehensive agreement with the Palestinians and the outlined implementation of the "Road Map", followed by direct talks with Syria about the Golan Heights. The Palestinians adore Livni, and Palestinian negotiating team head Abu Ala moved quickly to embrace her for refusing to bend to the Shas Party's demands to remove Yerushalayim from the negotiation table. The Palestinians prefer to conduct discussions on the permanent settlement with Livni, rather than Netanyahu. Even Barak, who failed to sign an agreement with them at the second Camp David summit, is not as desirable to them as Livni.

Even the Syrians won't have a big problem – after Assad participated in indirect talks with Israel via the Turks and agreed to speak about a peace agreement. The public is fearful of Syria, particularly since Syria also stands constantly in the background of the menace from Lebanon, which worries the citizens of Eretz Yisroel today more than all other security threats. This fact causes Israeli politicians to stare with scheming eyes toward the

Golan Heights, as they know that a “peace” agreement with Syria will be perceived by the public to be a substantial achievement. While we are still quite far from seeing a Prime Minister of Israel shaking hands with a President of Syria with smiles and backslaps, politics is what politics will be, and it is forbidden to fall asleep at the watch, even for a moment.

NETANYAHU NONSENSE

The recent polls, showing a sharp rise for Kadima under Livni’s leadership, are not causing much concern to Netanyahu and his pals. They are convinced that they will be able to present in the upcoming election the failures of Kadima leadership and the total inaction of the Labor Party, and thus raise Netanyahu’s standing in the public opinion polls to what they were during the Second Lebanon War, when indications were that the

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table.***

Likud could win up to forty Knesset seats.

The problem is that even “the new Netanyahu” that is being presented to the voting public – one who has matured and has managed to learn how to function in pressure situations – hasn’t learned anything. He still cleaves to the concept of negotiating with terrorist organizations, and only recently stated proudly that during his premiership, he tried to open a channel of discussion with the previous President of Syria, Hafez el-Assad, father of the current president. In his speech in the Knesset plenum at the start of the winter session a couple of weeks ago, Netanyahu created a storm with his dramatic announcement that he would not put Yerushalayim on the trading block. Meretz chairman Chaim Oron screamed at Netanyahu from the opposition benches like a right-winger: “Cut the nonsense, you also promised that you wouldn’t withdraw from Sinai or from Gush Katif – those were empty declarations.” Oron is right, and the one who said it even better was the head of Palestinian negotiating team, Abu Ala. He spoke with sheer contempt for Netanyahu’s statement: “As a prime minister, he will talk differently than how he speaks when he’s in the opposition.”

While Netanyahu has matured, he also wants to place himself at the center of the political map and ensure his hold on the country’s leadership for more than one term. He has learned that as difficult as it is in Israel to be elected prime minister, it is even more difficult afterwards to maintain power as one. He has long ceased waving the flag of “not one inch”. He’ll bribe the left-wingers with the sweetness of tearing down settler outposts, and we’ll see him again sitting at the negotiating table on Eretz Yisroel.

With Netanyahu, the problem

also grows. He smiles to the rightists and invites the heads of the Yesha Council to the hallways of the Knesset, but he also quietly tries to enter the history books as the one who achieved a peace agreement with the Palestinians. At every opportunity, he repeats his standard mantra: “They give, they get – they don’t give, they don’t get” – and then later he’ll explain in his erudite manner how they really have given. The right-wing parties still haven’t learned the lesson from what happened under Sharon’s reign. They sat in the government together with the Shinui Party, but after Sharon used them as a bridge to strengthen his coalition until he presented his diplomatic plan, they were thrown out like useless garbage and went to give speeches at anti-government demonstrations at Kikar Tzion in Yerushalayim. Even today, to our great regret, it doesn’t appear that the right-wing parties have woken up from their delusion of “national leaders”. We still don’t hear a voice of protest from the right with a call not to join a Netanyahu-led coalition government.

WHO SHOULD WE FEAR? THE HYPOCRITES!

But Netanyahu can’t swim in the political sea alone. After Livni failed to form a government, he made a compact with Shas, and he’ll need them in any future coalition that he puts together. Thus, if Shas wants to make use of the right-wing image that Eli Yishai worked so hard to create even in the days of Gush Katif, they will be forced to serve as Netanyahu’s watchdog, just as with Olmert. One can only hope that they will succeed more with Netanyahu than with Olmert, with whom they settled for false documents stating that Yerushalayim is non-negotiable, whereas since the Annapolis Conference, it is clear that an agreement on the division of

“Cut the nonsense, you also promised that you wouldn’t withdraw from Sinai or from Gush Katif – those were empty declarations.”

Yerushalayim was planned behind the scenes. Even Netanyahu, who signed on the campaign of “Peres will divide Yerushalayim”, can’t cover his checks. The Palestinians have announced that Yerushalayim will be included in any future agreement, and in order to make this treif idea seem kosher, they will find some suitable language that will enable the division of Yerushalayim to be included in the protocol, as

Olmert did throughout last year, while even Shas sat quietly in the government. The Rebbe had already said years ago to Rabbi Hillel Zeidman that “the fate of Old Yerushalayim is still placed in doubt, and they’re looking for some method through which the ancient quarter will remain Arab.”

The Rebbe sharply referred to the hypocrisy of the religious factions on various occasions. In a sicha from Yud-Tes Kislev, 5739, the Rebbe spoke about the religious politicians and said with great pain: “Who do we have to be afraid of? – The hypocrites! He boasted that Yerushalayim is the united Yerushalayim, ‘a city in which [all Israel] is united together’, an exemplary city for the entire world on how Jews and Gentiles can live in peace, since it’s under [Israel’s] authority and government. He shows an example of how there can be ‘co-existence’ between Jews and Arabs and he proudly declared this with all the strength he has, despite the fact that he knows that in all the six or

seven years, no more than 175 families moved there. They were stubborn about it and they broke down the doors – not him nor his ‘idolizers’, but the young people – and nevertheless only 175 families managed to break through over a period of seven years!”

It stands to reason that the rightist camp and the religious parties will initially embrace Netanyahu and give him a grace period. However, the real question is what will happen on the day that Netanyahu turns to the path of agreements and withdrawals. Will the rightist and religious community be strong enough to wash their hands of him and oppose him, or will there be a re-occurrence of what took place with Sharon, when the National Religious Party and the National Union failed to understand that he had changed his spots, coming out in opposition to him only when the engines of the expulsion plan were already in operation and well underway?

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‘UNTIL THE FLAME GOES UP ON ITS OWN’

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

The Rebbe explains that “raising up the lights” means to be mekarev Jews so that they in turn are mekarev others. As Rashi says, “Until the flame goes up of its own accord.”

In Chabad houses throughout the world we see Jews who just began observing Torah and mitzvos already being mekarev others.

ITZIK

Rabbi Menachem Tal, shliach in Yishuv Ein Eilah on the Carmel coast, has such a mekurav:

A few years ago, a local Jew named Itzik became involved at the Chabad house. He was a farmer who loved working the land. He thought of doing something to mark the 10,000 days that Ron Arad was in captivity, and decided to dedicate a few weeks to make 10,000 rows in his field.

He told R’ Tal about his decision. R’ Tal told him to write to the Rebbe and ask for a bracha in the Igros Kodesh. They opened a volume and the letter said not to work on Shabbos. Itzik said he would do the

enormous job of plowing only on weekdays.

Itzik has warm feelings towards Judaism and tradition but it doesn’t go beyond that. Just three years ago, when R’ Tal was sick and hospitalized, Itzik made an appearance in shul. They were all reciting chapters of T’hillim when they heard a loud cry. It was Itzik who loudly said, “Master of the world, please heal our rav and I

The story is told about a Jew having yechidus who was so moved that he wanted to give the Rebbe a gift, but he didn’t know what kind of gift to give.

The Rebbe said, “The present I want is for you to influence another Jew to put on t’fillin.”

The man said that he himself did not put on t’fillin.

“I hope that after you influence another Jew to put on t’fillin, you too will start to put them on,” said the Rebbe.

commit to wearing tzitzis all day.”

From then on, Itzik has been wearing tzitzis. He plows his field, drives his tractor, sometimes without wearing a kippa, but the tzitzis are there.

Two years ago, Itzik participated in a Hachnasas Seifer Torah to R’ Tal’s shul. Rabbi Ben-Tzion Grossman of Migdal HaEmek led the parade, and loudly announced various brachos and insights. At a certain point, R’ Grossman became hoarse and then “Reb Itzik” took over and led the proceedings.

Within half an hour they were at the nearby yishuv. They didn’t need to look for rabbanim as Reb Itzik ran the show from beginning to end; a flame going up of its own accord.

A SHMITTA OBSERVING TRACTOR

Itzik got a letter last year from the Shmita committee with instructions and halachos for farmers. As soon as he became aware that it was a Shmita year, he immediately stopped working the land.

Since Itzik was available, he was invited to give lectures to Gerrer Chassidim and frum audiences in Chaifa. In his talks he told how it was possible to observe Shmita with all the hiddurim. Itzik also visited preschools and told the children about Shmita and other mitzvos that he knew.

Itzik also has the skills of a welder and locksmith, and when he first saw the large menoros at Chabad houses he created his own huge menorah out of metal. He has a forklift truck with which he loaded the menorah on the cab of his tractor and during Chanuka he took it to a different yishuv each night, based on information he got as to where people were congregating.

Last Chanuka, one of the mekuravim of the Chabad house got married and his friends made a

Sheva Brachos. What surprise did Itzik prepare for the occasion? That's right, a 7 meter tall menorah, in honor of the chassan and kalla.

Itzik got some shirts from R' Tal with the Moshiach flag on them, which he wears to work. When he next saw R' Tal, he exclaimed, "You won't believe what blessing the Moshiach shirt brings me. People see the shirt and immediately close deals with me!"

Itzik used his connections with farmers in the area and convinced many of them not to work their fields during Shmita. He explained to them that it's a mitzva in which the land rests and they too could rest and learn and receive a stipend from the Shmita committee.

On Itzik's tractor last year there was a large sign which said, "Shomer Shmita."

A TANYA SHIUR AT THE KIBBUTZ

It sometimes happens that the flame disappears for a few years, then comes back and burns of its own accord and ignites dozens of other flames. I heard a story like this from Rabbi Moshe Akselrod, shliach

in Atlit.

One of the nearby yishuvim to Atlit is a moshav (formerly a kibbutz) called Nir Etzyon. R' Akselrod had been giving a shiur there for years when he found out that one of the members of the moshav had begun giving his own shiur in Tanya.

The man had learned in Chabad in his youth and then he changed direction and joined the religious kibbutzim movement. He was giving a shiur to twenty members, each week in someone else's house. He was teaching them what he has learned in his youth – Lessons in Tanya.

THE FLAME RETURNS

At our Chabad house in Beit Shaan there are minyanim for davening every day. There are people who come only on Shabbos, some who come three times a day, and a member of kibbutz Ein Charod, which is near Beit Shaan, who comes only on Rosh Chodesh for Shacharis.

He also arranged a weekly shiur at his kibbutz. Who gives the shiur? Thirty years ago, one of the

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wearing tzitzis. He
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members of the kibbutz became a baal t'shuva, learned a lot, and became a Maggid Shiur in the yeshiva in Kfar Chassidim. He lately had feelings of longing for the kibbutz of his youth, Chassidishe longings.

He thought to himself, "I give several shiurim a day, so why don't I give a shiur at the kibbutz where I grew up?"

And so, our Rosh Chodesh Chabadnik gets the people together and the rav from Kfar Chassidim brings the s'farim, and every week about ten members learn Chassidus.



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SIX DAYS – IT’S A RESTAURANT; SHABBOS – IT’S A CHABAD HOUSE!

By Menachem Ziegelboim

A restaurant or guest house is the best place to be mekarev people. “When you convey Jewish messages to someone on a full stomach, your work is already half way done.”

“And he planted an eshel in Beer Sheva” – R’ Yehuda said, eshel is an orchard. Ask for what you would like: figs, grapes, pomegranates. R’ Nechemia said, eshel is an inn. Ask for what you would like: a loaf of bread, meat, wine, eggs.

“And he called there in the name of Hashem, Keil Olam” – Reish Lakish said, don’t read it as “he called” but “and he made call.” We learn from this that Avrohom made Hashem’s name be called by all the passersby. How? After they ate and drank, they wanted to bless him. He said to them: “Did you eat of my food? You ate of Keil Olam’s – thank and

praise and bless the One who said and the world came into being.”

Avrohom would welcome the passersby. When they ate and drank, he said to them: “Bless Him.” They said: “What blessing should we make?” He said: “Say blessed is Keil Olam from whom we have eaten.”

If he accepted that and blessed, he would eat and drink and be on his way, but if not, he would say to him, “Give me what you owe.” He would ask, “How much do I owe you?” Avrohom would reply, “A pitcher of wine – such and such an amount, a pound of meat – such and such an amount, a loaf of bread – such and such an amount.

Who provides wine in a desert?
Who provides meat in a desert?
Who provides bread in a desert?”

One who saw the plight he was in would bless and say, “Blessed is Keil Olam from whose food we have eaten.”

(B’Reishis Raba ch: 33)

Avrohom’s original idea has become standard practice, at least among the Rebbe’s shluchim. Chabad houses and outreach centers set aside large areas of their buildings for a restaurant and kitchen which is made use of by guests, tourists and businessmen who are looking for a kosher place to eat.

Actually, it’s not just about kashrus. It goes way beyond that. It feels like home. The businessman who spends his day on meetings, far from his home and community, and the tourists who are having a good time but still long for something heimish, love the familiar, traditional atmosphere. Their longing is intensified on Shabbasos and Yomim Tovim.

In the past decade, providing

meals has become part and parcel of shluchim's work. From their perspective, it's not just about providing kosher food or helping Jews fill up with a kosher meal. They know that a restaurant or guest house is the best place to be mekarev people. People open up.

"When you convey Jewish messages to someone on a full stomach, your work is already half way done," said a shliach in the Far East, who hosts about 2,000 guests a year.

For example, every day, dozens of backpackers and Israeli businessmen go to the Chabad house in Poona. "Whoever visits us finds tea and food," said shliach, Rabbi Betzalel Kupchik. "Everyone, from the shyest to the most outgoing, immediately feels at home. Many ask to put on t'fillin. Some have just arrived in India and want to put down their luggage until they find a guest house to sleep at. Some of the tourists sit down to learn

something before they leave. There are also some people who feel like old-timers. They are completely at home, know what's going on, and help us in our work (whether they realize it or not)."

This idea has caught on among the shluchim in the Far East. "Far" refers not only to their location, which is far from Jewish centers, but also to being distant spiritually. A businessman, or a young tourist who just finished his army duty, can show up at these places and quickly feel comfortable.

"The Jewish atmosphere affects them, whether directly or indirectly. No doubt about it," agree all the shluchim.

Rabbi Shimi Goldstein, shliach in Pushkar, India, is known by the tourists in India as "Shimi HaMachzir" (Shimi who makes baalei t'shuva). Indeed, he has sent numerous men back to Israel to learn in yeshivos or ulpanot. His manner and message are augmented

by the filling meal he serves.

The peak of his activity takes places on Shabbos, when about 200 Israelis join him on Friday night. Although the food is vegetarian, the farbrengen that lasts until dawn is "meaty." Hearts open up and neshamos awaken.

The work doubles and triples on Yomim Tovim. Hundreds of Israelis come to Pushkar from all over for t'fillos and holiday meals. Quite a few Israelis amend their itinerary due to meeting with Shimi Goldstein. Their timetable and plans change after they become aware that there is a Toras ha'Chassidus, and a Rebbe.

THE REBBE CALLED THE RESTAURANT: ESHEL YISROEL

Apparently, the first restaurant to open with this purpose in mind was the restaurant in Milan, Italy, which was opened by the shliach, Rabi



Gershon Mendel Garelik.

The restaurant was open for years, but for various reasons, it closed in 5726 (1966). Since it had been the only kosher restaurant in the city, this created a furor. It had served not only the residents of Milan but also many tourists. Thanks to this restaurant, many people were prevented from eating non-kosher food.

When the Rebbe heard that the restaurant was closed, he was eager to change this. He told R' Shlomo Yosef Zippel a"h, one of the wealthy askanim in the community, to quickly see to it that it reopen. Mr. Zippel even traveled to the Rebbe, and when he had yechidus, the Rebbe spoke to him about the necessity of reopening the restaurant.

"I worked on all the arrangements to open the restaurant," said R' Garelik. "A place was bought in the center of town and the restaurant was built. R' Avrohom Lipsker, who came during the Six Day War to work in chinuch, took it upon himself – by instruction of the Rebbe – to run the restaurant."

The Rebbe even provided the name for the restaurant. In one of the many conversations that R' Garelik had with R' Chadakov, the Rebbe's secretary, who urged him to hurry up and open the restaurant, R'

R' Garelik, who did not know that the Rebbe was also on the line, was surprised to hear the Rebbe's voice.

Garelik told him that it would be named for the Rebbe's brother, Yisroel.

R' Garelik, who did not know that the Rebbe was also on the line, was surprised to hear the Rebbe's voice. The Rebbe agreed to the name and added, "It should be called Eshel Yisroel."

The opening of the restaurant was good news for the Jews of Milan, as well as the businessmen and tourists, and was very successful, since it was the only kosher restaurant in town.

A resident of Milan told the Rebbe in a yechidus that he visited the restaurant in the afternoon and saw someone putting on t'fillin. As a result of this conversation, the Rebbe told R' Garelik, "I had a Jew here who was impressed by the restaurant, but he saw someone davening Shacharis in the next room. Although he thought the man was putting on Rabbeinu Tam t'fillin, in the future, be careful since the restaurant is a public place."

LIKE AVROHOM'S WORK

Another restaurant that received the Rebbe's blessing because of the outreach work that was done between the gefilte fish and the main course is the Yeshurun restaurant in the heart of Tel Aviv, run by Rabbi Zushe Rivkin. While secular life carries on as usual out on the street, inside you can hear Jewish children reciting p'sukim.

The signs on the restaurant, "Prepare for the coming of Moshiach" and "Hinei, hinei Moshiach ba," immediately announce what kind of people run it.

Over the years, the place enjoyed ongoing support and kiruvim from the Rebbe. The Rebbe gave bottles of mashke or wine for those who frequented the restaurant, nonstop encouragement, and saw to it that it remained open. The Rebbe refused

to allow this restaurant to close, and he once said, "It is out of the question! It is Lubavitch of Tel Aviv!"

In the winter of 5752, when R' Zushe passed by the Rebbe for "dollars," the Rebbe said, "You have a restaurant there in Tel Aviv," and with a smile he gave him an extra dollar.

R' Zushe had a routine medical visit, at the end of which the doctor recommended he stop working in the restaurant for the sake of his health. He took her written advice and sent it to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe's response was: "Based on this, you should take (hire) an assistant and continue. This similar to Avrohom's work – Avrohom was one. I will mention it at the gravesite."

Naturally, after a decisive answer like this, R' Zushe remained at the restaurant. He stayed on in order to continue in his role, doing Avrohom's work.

One day, a person walked in, and after eating he said to R' Zushe, "Do you know how I came to your restaurant?" He did not wait for a response, just continued, "I was at the Lubavitcher Rebbe for yechidus and before I left he said to me that since I was traveling to Eretz Yisroel and would be in Tel Aviv, I would surely go to Rivkin's restaurant and eat there!"

When R' Zushe was asked when his work with children began, he answered with a smile: "This question was asked of me by a woman. When I told her that I didn't remember exactly, but it was probably twenty years ago, she did not let me continue but corrected me and said, 'I can tell you exactly when it was because 25 years ago I would say the brachos with the children! My children, who are already over 30, remember you and are affected till this day by what you did then, 25 years ago!'"

It started with one little boy who



Gam Gam – a restaurant on the water



**The manager of the restaurant in Milan,
Rabbi Avrohom Lipsker, talking with patrons**

learned in a nearby school. He passed by R' Zushe's restaurant and felt thirsty. He decided to go inside and ask for a drink of water. That is when R' Zushe had the idea, just like Avrohom. He took out a drink, poured a cup for the boy and asked him to say a bracha. The boy said the bracha and drank, and R' Zushe was happy – a Jewish boy had said a bracha before drinking.

The boy apparently told his friends about the nice Lubavitcher who gave him a drink and just asked him to say a bracha first, because more and more thirsty children began to show up. Within a few weeks, the place was humming with children. R' Zushe was happy about this opportunity that came his way, to implant emuna in young children, and he started buying candies for them.

One time, when he was at yechidus, R' Zushe told the Rebbe about his private educational endeavor and he asked the Rebbe for a dollar for the children. "I told the Rebbe that I valued the Rebbe's dollar at \$30,000 and so, if he would give me the dollar, all the candies I would buy would be in exchange for the Rebbe's dollar and would surely have the segulos of the Rebbe's dollar! The Rebbe smiled and gave me two dollars, saying, *"kifla'im l'tushiya"* (double success)."

R' Zushe's brother once told the Rebbe that R' Zushe was giving the children candy, and the Rebbe suggested that occasionally he give them other things so they could recite other brachos, too. This is why R' Zushe sometimes distributes cookies, so the children can say *"mezonos."* Lately, he had been giving out bags of Bamba, "So that I relate to children of today," he says with a smile.

One day, a religious looking Jew came to the restaurant with his wife and children. It was the afternoon, and while they sat and ate the children started coming in groups to say p'sukim. The man watched.

"I noticed a look of longing in his eyes," said R' Zushe, "but little did I imagine the story behind this man. He waited until the children stopped coming and going and then he got up and said to me, 'R' Zushe, I must thank you for my being a Chabad Chassid today.'"

"I didn't know him and did not remember when I had been mekarev him to Chabad. He didn't give me time to think but explained, 'Twenty years ago, I would come to you every day and you would instill faith in me. As a result of everything I absorbed from you, I looked into Judaism in general and Chassidus in particular and I became a Chabad Chassid! This year I sent my son to a Chabad preschool. I came here and brought my wife in order for them to see where I got inspired.'"

He wasn't the only one to be inspired. Dozens, if not hundreds, of children were treated kindly by R' Zushe, and their sparks were ignited.

THE RESTAURANT IN THE JEWISH GHETTO

In the Jewish neighborhood in Venice, which is called the ghetto in Italian too, there used to be a beautiful Jewish community. Over the years, the community dwindled until out of thousands of Jews, no more than 500 remained. However, 4-5 million tourists visit Venice every year, with 300,000 Jews among them.

Rabbi Rachamim Benin is the shliach who began revitalizing Jewish life in the city. Among his projects is the kosher "Gam Gam" restaurant, which serves thousands of tourists. The name "Gam Gam" is taken from the song, *"Gam, gam ki eilech b'gei tzalmaves"* which is sung by both Jews and non-Jews throughout Italy.

Every Erev Shabbos, the T'mimim who learn in Venice go all over the city, to the ghetto square, the shops, and the hotels. In addition to putting on t'fillin

Just like with Avrohom Avinu, the guests always ask when they can pay for the meals and the answer they get is, “Have meals like these in your house, light Shabbos candles, invite guests – that is the best payment.”



Urging people in the heart of Tel Aviv to prepare for Moshiach

and giving out Neshek and the Besuras Ha'Geula, they invite tourists for Shabbos at the restaurant. Luciana Sinigalia, the woman who manages the restaurant, put it this way, “Six days – it’s a restaurant; Shabbos – it’s a Chabad house!”

The Shabbos meals at the restaurant are an unforgettable experience for those who partake of them. The very fact that there is a kosher restaurant in this out-of-the way place amazes people. The meals are held in the company of the shluchim, the T’mimim and the staff, and they always turn into farbrengens which arouse the neshama and uplift the participants.

They have a sort of ingathering of the exiles, with Jews from Chile and Iraq sitting with Jews from Georgia, America, and France, and the spirit of Shabbos envelops them all.

Just like with Avrohom Avinu, the guests always ask when they can pay for the meals and the answer they get is, “Have meals like these in your house, light Shabbos candles, invite guests – that is the best payment.” People commit themselves, some to lighting candles, others to putting on t’fillin or some other mitzva, as a way of expressing their appreciation to the Rebbe and his shluchim.

One Shabbos, R’ Benin sat in the restaurant after a meal and waited for additional guests. An Israeli couple, seeing him, began to laugh, “A counterfeit *dati* – how come you’re not ashamed to open your restaurant on Shabbos?”

R’ Benin replied, “Who said I’m religious?”

“Oh we knew it. We immediately realized that your beard wasn’t real,” they said.

“My beard is actually real, but so what?”

“So can we come in and eat?”

“Please do,” said R’ Benin, and he set a table for them, apologizing that because of Shabbos the menu was limited to fish with a side dish and chulent. After they ate, they took out their wallets and asked him how much it cost.

“Are you crazy?” said R’ Benin. “It’s Shabbos today!”

Some years ago, an Israeli by the name of Moshe made a living by organizing groups of tourists and arranging lodging and tours for them. When the yeshiva opened, he would sometimes visit for half an hour, to daven and learn with the bachurim. One time, during a Shabbos meal at Gam Gam, he got up and announced that he committed to learning in the yeshiva the next day for six hours. And he did it.

EXPANDING OUTREACH

The phenomenon of hosting large numbers of people in restaurants and the like has spread, especially in tourist cities which are visited by tens of thousands of Jews a year. The goal is not only to feed people, but to provide a pleasant atmosphere so that the visitors will want to linger and, in the course of their stay, be exposed to Judaism.

“The role of a Chabad house in a location such as ours,” said Rabbi Daniel Winderbaum, shliach in Cosul, India, “is more varied than in many other places in the world. Aside from providing spiritual help, the Chabad house is also a place where tourists can find an inviting home. For example, they can store their belongings in a room set aside for that purpose, or they can send emails to their families back home. Many tourists who ‘have

lost themselves' have been permanently hosted at the Chabad house, in rooms set aside for this purpose."

In recent years, Eshel work has expanded. R' Dror Moshe Shaul rescued a tourist who was badly injured while trekking through the Himalayas. R' Nechemia Wilhelm of Bangkok has helped during natural disasters such as the tsunami and a recent plane crash in Thailand.

The Shliach, R' Chezky Lifschitz of Nepal, constantly rescues people who were injured – whether by accidents or through attacks by armed robbers or gangs – while hiking. Shluchim often visit prisons to help Jewish inmates. Many times, the Chabad house is the communications center, where families can find out about their children. Shluchim are the ones who work with patients in hospitals and sometimes have to fly bodies back home.

All these activities are an outgrowth of the Eshel – the place that provides every Jew with his material needs. It can be food and drink, a place to sleep, or medical attention.

Shluchim are called upon to deal with tourists who have fallen into drug addiction. They have been a great help as a liaison with the families back in Israel.

"One time, on one of the days of Chol HaMoed Sukkos, three Israelis came. Two were somewhat high and

one was in really bad shape. He was talking gibberish and acting violently. His health deteriorated and we called his family in Israel. Until someone came to take him, we held a 24 hour watch for three days, because we were afraid he would hurt himself or others. When he was finally taken to Israel, he was immediately hospitalized."

"According to statistics from the Health Ministry, about 600 Israelis a year return from the Far East with psychiatric problems. Some of them require prolonged hospitalization," said R' Boruch Shinhav, shliach in Manali. So it's not surprising that in the jungle, the Chabad house of



R' Zushe working with children in his restaurant

Manali is the place worried parents turn to.

R' Shinhav says, "We are the ones parents contact. Beyond the contact we have with the tourists, we are also in close touch with families of tourists back in Israel. They can get information from us about how their child is doing, whether through friends who passed through the Chabad house or other ways we have of getting information. This work takes a lot of time, but it also is mekarev many people to the Chabad house. Many times, we managed to save tourists from life threatening situations."

Sometimes he must deal with those who did not survive. That happened last year when a bus in Manali overturned. Most of the time, these buses have many Israelis on board. By Divine Providence, there was only one Israeli couple on the bus, and they were killed. It took some time until they found the woman's body. The Chabad house was in constant contact with the family until the couple was flown back to Israel.

AND THEY CALLED IN THE NAME OF HASHEM

From all this we can see that planting an Eshel in our modern times means providing material help for all Jews. This help often brings them to recognize the Creator that they did not learn about in the Israeli public school system.



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THE REBBE'S MIRACLE CHILD

By Nosson Avrohom

When the top doctors couldn't help us, we concluded that we would never experience the joy of parenthood... As soon as my friend heard my story, he asked me, "What are you waiting for? There's the Lubavitcher Rebbe!"

The sun was beating down on me as I left the train station in northern Tel Aviv and entered an air conditioned taxi, the first one I saw at the entrance to the station. I told the driver where I was going and we hit the road.

The driver, Yair Nachman HaKohen, turned out to be a pleasant fellow, not too talkative, as many taxi drivers are. Although he wasn't wearing a large kippa, he seemed astonishingly knowledgeable about Judaism, and even about many concepts in Chabad Chassidus. It certainly surprised me.

Then, without any preamble, he asked me directly, "Tell me, you're a Chabad Chassid, right?"

I said I was. I figured it wasn't hard to figure out because even when I was on the annual hike of the Talmud Torah in the Chermon area, and all of us were bundled from head to toe in sweaters and coats, people identified us as Lubavitchers. Somehow, we are not too difficult to identify.

Then came the following monologue and fantastic story:

"Although I don't look like a Chabad Chassid, you should know that I love the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It's only thanks to him that I keep Shabbos despite all the enticements, put on t'fillin every day and attend shiurim.

In 1977, when I was 27 and married for six years, my wife and I decided to leave the country and move to New York. We did a lot of thinking and talking before making this drastic move. It wasn't a mere whim that made us decide to leave our familiar surroundings which we loved so much, and move far away where we knew no one.

We had been married for six years without children, and this is why we left. Throughout those years we had made countless visits to doctors and fertility specialists and our expenses grew and grew with no results. The doctors took our money, made promises, and gave us hope but as high as our

expectations and hopes were, that is how great our disappointment was.

We couldn't take it anymore.

Every time we attended a simcha or family event we felt that people were pitying us. It happened more than once that someone gently asked us not to look at their baby because they believed it would give the baby an ayin ha'ra. Those were gloomy days of ups and downs as we swung between hope and despair, between optimism and black pessimism.

Our leaving for New York was a way of escaping the sad social situation we were in. We were also hoping that changing locations might change our luck.

We quickly acclimated to life in New York. We lived in Brooklyn and found many Israeli families with whom we became friends. I began working as a taxi driver for one of the Jewish companies in the neighborhood. Later, I decided to move up, and I bought a stall in a flea market in Brooklyn where I sold clothes and textiles.

At first, we tried our luck with various American doctors, but to no avail. When the top doctors couldn't help us, we concluded that we would never experience the joy of parenthood. Although outwardly I maintained a happy disposition, inside I was eaten up by sorrow over my fate. I didn't share my story with everyone, but there was a really nice Israeli who worked with me at the flea market, and I opened up to

him and shared my sorrow.

As soon as he heard my story he asked me, “What are you waiting for? There’s the Lubavitcher Rebbe!” I didn’t understand what he wanted from me. After all, I was not at all religious.

It took no less than four years for him to convince me to go to the Rebbe. He wasn’t religious either, but he had great love for and faith in the Rebbe. Whenever we spoke on the topic he told me incredible miracle stories that the Rebbe had wrought with his brachos. I found it hard to believe. I thought he was just getting carried away and was exaggerating the Rebbe’s abilities. I always pushed him off, saying that in the past, perhaps there were great tzaddikim who could perform miracles, but there was nobody like that nowadays.

I displayed great cynicism in the face of his enthusiasm but to his credit, he did not give up. “The Rebbe is the only one who can help you, and he *will* help you,” he

insisted.

I thought – what can the Rebbe do already? I went to the best doctors in Israel and the US and they all failed. What can the Rebbe do? Tell vinegar to burn? The only thing he can do is show us empathy and maybe feel compassion, and I had enough of that. I simply did not believe that the Rebbe could help where all the doctors had failed.

Finally, the day came when I felt that I had nothing to lose, and I went to 770. It was 5743 (1983), six years after we had come to the US and twelve years since we had married.

I entered the big beis midrash. I hadn’t been to a shul on a weekday in years. An Israeli bachur who was sitting there and learning saw me come in and he asked how he could be of help. I told him that I wanted to write to the Rebbe and ask for a bracha. He guided me in how to do this.

I wrote the letter and included my name and my mother’s name, as

well as the address where I could be reached. I gave \$18 for tz’daka, and the bachur assured me he would give it the secretaries.

From 770 I went home with mixed emotions, torn between hope – which my friend constantly gave me – and the weight of the many disappointments I had accumulated over the years.

Days and weeks went by. I went back to work and forgot that I had written to the Rebbe. One evening, as I entered the house after an exhausting day, the phone was ringing and on the line was someone who introduced himself as the Rebbe’s secretary.

I was taken aback. He told me briefly, “The Rebbe said to tell you that you should start keeping Shabbos and put on t’fillin every morning, and the Rebbe gave brachos for your request.”

After this short conversation I didn’t know what to do. In the end I decided that if the Lubavitcher Rebbe, such a great Jewish leader, a



man who has dealings with important politicians and top figures around the world, found the time to pay attention to my note, and he asked me to put on t'fillin and keep Shabbos, believing it would help me – then, although I had doubts about his abilities, I was ready to commit to it, at least for the near future.

The amazing thing is that the day that I got the phone call from the Rebbe's secretary, I began to experience problems with my stand at the flea market. People stopped showing up as frequently as they used to. I finally decided to close the business, realizing that things were just going to go downhill.

The stand had been a big obstacle in my decision not to work on Shabbos because most of the money we earned was made on Shabbos. I felt it was a sign, albeit a small one, but one I couldn't ignore. I made a firm decision not to work on Shabbos. My friends did not understand what had happened to me all of a sudden, but I preferred not to tell them.

I experienced amazing Divine Providence one day when I met a Chabad Chassid who, when he heard what the Rebbe had told me, helped me buy a pair of t'fillin. Since I had closed my stand, it was hard for me to pay the full price for a pair of t'fillin, so he went with me to the Judaica store in Crown Heights and was able to have the price substantially reduced for me. He also taught me the brachos I needed to say and how to put the t'fillin on. From then on, I didn't miss a day.

Throughout that time I worked hard to make a living at various jobs. After two months I met an Israeli, a Yemenite, who ran a successful contracting company. I knew it was a field that I enjoyed, although I hadn't tried it. I asked him whether he needed workers and he said he did. He asked me what I

knew and what areas I had experience in.

I told him honestly that I had not a shred of experience. He was a nice guy and he said with a smile, "If you say you don't know anything – that is just what I need." His problem was with those who thought they knew ...

I quickly learned on the job and did well with whatever he assigned me. Within a few weeks he felt comfortable and secure enough to send me alone to various jobs.

That is how I found myself one day going to re-glaze the bathtub of a Jewish doctor in Manhattan who turned out to be an especially sympathetic guy. Every day, when he came home from work at four o'clock, we would schmooze. He was able to dispel the stereotype I had of doctors as cold, callous types. He was a warm, emotional person with a tremendous love for Israel.

We became friends. I did not feel that he treated me as a worker, so I allowed myself to open up to him. I

If the Lubavitcher Rebbe found the time to pay attention to my note, and he asked me to put on t'fillin and keep Shabbos, then, although I had doubts about his abilities, I was ready to commit to it.

told him that I was married for twelve years and still had no children. All the pain that I had managed to keep within me for years burst forth, as my hands kept busy with my work. He sat in his easy chair and listened.

Apparently I moved him because he said, after some thought, that he worked at Maimonides hospital where there was a top doctor in this field. Unfortunately though, for some months already he had refused to take additional patients.

The world renowned doctor had retired and was to leave New York for Boston in seven months, where he was taking a high position on the medical school faculty of one of the famous universities. Very wealthy people offered him a fortune just for an appointment with him, but he wasn't interested. He had decided to stop treating couples because he wanted to teach the next generation of doctors.

This doctor friend of mine said that although chances were slim, he would do what he could to convince him to take us. I thanked him politely, although I did not delude myself.

A few days later, as I was plastering a wall, I heard the doctor call out to me from where he was parked. At first I was scared that we had gotten a big fine from the city for throwing garbage on the street corner, and that the doctor was angry. But when he got out and I saw his happy face, I realized it was something else entirely.

He took me by the hand and said, "Yair, listen. After a lot of pressure, I convinced him to see you and got you an appointment for tomorrow. Go tell your wife. You have an opportunity to meet with someone who might be the number one man in the world in this field. Don't miss this opportunity," he begged me.

Although despair over failed

treatments was eating at me, I decided this was my last attempt. Whatever would be, would be.

When I told my wife the news, she was adamant. "Leave me alone," she said. "It was apparently decreed that I wouldn't have children. I am not ready to go through this all over again." It wasn't easy to persuade her. I enlisted the last drops of faith and hope within me and finally got her to agree to come. She declared that this was the last attempt she was willing to make.

I felt a swirl of emotions as we entered the doctor's office. We brought him the thick file of all the treatments and scans that we had done over the years, both in Israel and in New York. We were shocked to overhear him mumbling, "Why did I agree to see them? What do I need this for?"

During the visit he repeatedly said that he had no idea why he had agreed to see us when he had turned away so many. He took our file, tossed it in the garbage, and declared, "We will start from the beginning." He was the kind of doctor whose next move you could never anticipate. It was the first in a series of weekly visits. Every Thursday we went to his office.

On one of those visits he asked, "You know that this costs money?"

"Of course," I responded.

"What is your daily salary?" he inquired.

"Maybe fifty dollars," I said.

He smiled and reminded me again that the fact that he had accepted us as his patients was irrational. Other people had offered him tens of thousands of dollars for an appointment, yet he had refused to see them. He told me to pay what I was able to pay. In the end, he got about \$2000 for all the visits, which is a joke for a doctor like him.

Two months had gone by when my wife found out she was

pregnant. I couldn't possibly describe our feelings. I cried, I laughed, I danced, I sat down, I did it all at the same time. There are no words.

Only someone who experienced it can understand how thrilled my wife and I were that day and in the days that followed. Only those who experienced years of suffering as we did can understand the magnitude of our joy. We immediately became optimistic, believers, loving. My wife's face, which had looked so sad, became lit up with joy.

Within all this simcha I suddenly remembered what had preceded it. I recalled the letter I had written to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the phone call I had received from Rabbi Klein, and the mitzvos that I had committed to observing. I thought, yes, there are big tzaddikim in our generation too, who are able to perform miracles.

Nine months went by and the baby was born in an easy birth with no complications. My wife decided to name him Netanel Tal, for we had gotten a gift from G-d.

From then on, I went to the Rebbe many times, whether for farbrengens or for dollars. Whenever I or my friends had a question, we asked the Rebbe, and we saw many open miracles.

In 5751, before we returned to Israel, we went for dollars in order to receive the Rebbe's bracha. When it was our turn, the Rebbe looked at our son and smiled. When he wanted to give our son a dollar, our son was fooling around as children do. I attempted to take the dollar for him but the Rebbe insisted on giving it to my son himself.

I tell this story to people who get into my taxi, mainly if I'm taking them on long trips. They don't understand who the Lubavitcher Rebbe really is. Whoever saw him and received his bracha would not

I couldn't possibly describe our feelings. I cried, I laughed, I danced, I sat down, I did it all at the same time.

forget his eyes, his charm, his love for every Jew, and the fact that if the Rebbe said something, it is guaranteed to happen.

On the last leg of our stay in New York, when my wife had already returned to Israel to prepare for our coming, she called me frantically and told me about an acquaintance who had drowned and was in a coma. The doctors were close to giving up on him. She asked me to run and ask the Rebbe for a bracha, which I did. A few days later he miraculously woke up, and today he is fine.

Yair concluded our conversation by saying that he felt that the Rebbe took him under his wings. Every time he went by the Rebbe, the Rebbe always smiled.

"I feel as though the Rebbe is my father. If I have returned to my ancestors' ways – the famous Abu family of Tzfas were great kabbalists for generations – it's thanks to the Rebbe.

"My son learns in Breslov in Yerushalayim, but he knows who gets the credit for his being here. He learns a lot of Tanya, takes a great interest in Chabad Chassidus, and knows the chain of the Chabad leaders by heart.

"Seven months ago he got married, and I have a lot of nachas from him."

‘IN THE END, YOU WILL BE EXCEEDINGLY GREAT’

*Rabbi Saadia Liberov distinguished himself in all three major aspects of Chassidic life. He was a Chassid whose life was focused on learning and the ways of Torah and Chassidus; he was a Tamim in serving his Maker just as he was when he learned in Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch; and several times in his life he was a Shliach on shlichus for the Rebbe Rashab, Rebbe Rayatz, and Rebbe MH" M * His grandson, Rabbi Mordechai Tzvi Liberov published a booklet with chapters about his life. * The following is a compilation of highlights from the booklet about the missions R' Saadia carried out for the Rebbeim.*

R' SAADIA LIBEROV – KEY DATES

He was born in 5660 (1900), and in 5671 (1911) began learning in yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch, where he was considered among the ovdim and the lomdim. After a few years he was sent by the Rebbe Rashab to be his emissary in Russia.

In the winter of 5681 (1920), within the year of mourning for the Rebbe Rashab, the Rebbe Rayatz became sick with typhus. As he was unable to lead the davening, he appointed R' Saadia to daven and even to say Kaddish. In Shevat 5682 (1921), he was sent by the Rebbe Rayatz to bolster the yeshiva in Chernigov.

After the Rebbe MH" M took the mantle of leadership, R' Saadia was sent by him to Morocco to spread the wellsprings of Torah and Chassidus there. After twelve years there, the Rebbe sent him to Antwerp.

His life was focused on avodas Hashem. At every opportunity he reviewed and explained the ideas of Chassidus. R' Saadia showed how Chassidus illuminates everything and brings out the p'nimius and neshama. His avoda was not conspicuous, but always modest.

CHASSIDIC LIFE IN FRANCE

In the winter of 1947 hundreds of Lubavitchers crossed the Russian border with falsified documents. R' Saadia was in the last group to leave Russia. After some wandering, he and others arrived in France, where they settled temporarily in refugee camps near Paris.

With the encouragement of the Rebbe Rayatz, R' Saadia became the mashpia of the refugee Chassidim and gave shiurim in various communities. The Rebbe Rayatz wrote about this role, "May my



friend succeed in his work to arouse our friends, Anash...to be strengthened in the ways of Chassidus."

The Rebbe MH"M also encouraged him in this role, and in one of his letters he signed as follows, "...who signs with regards to the entire group and with blessings for success in the holy work of connecting Anash with their leader, the Rebbe, my father-in-law, materially and spiritually, and I await good news." R' Saadia indeed continued in his avoda "to connect Jews to their leader."

The refugees did not have it easy. They were given a small stipend from a fund to aid refugees,

but it wasn't enough to support them. R' Saadia, who also suffered from financial difficulties, began to teach the Metzger children in the evenings. At a later point, in 1949, he taught a small group of talmidim in yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Brunoy.

R' Saadia, who took pleasure in a proper davening, was bothered by the fact that because of his responsibilities to his pupils, he was unable to daven at length. When he asked the Rebbe about this, the Rebbe answered on 19 Kislev 5712, "In response to your question that because of your learning with students you cannot daven slowly; you ask my opinion whether to

leave teaching. In my opinion, if it is possible to change your teaching schedule so that it enables you to daven at length, it pays to do so, but in any case, you should continue learning with talmidim. This is the connection with the 'tree of life,' in the most literal sense, and since you have this privilege, do not think about looking for something else."

ON SHLICHUS TO BELGIUM

After a year at the refugee camp, R' Saadia was asked to travel and raise funds for the yeshiva in France, which was in financial straits. Belgium was suggested as a

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place that had the potential for substantial donations.

Three days before Rosh HaShana, 1948, R' Saadia wrote to the Rebbe Rayatz about the suggestion, and on 3 Tishrei the Rebbe sent his response. He blessed him and the trip and gave him a special mission to carry out in Belgium:

"In response to your letter of 27 Elul about your trip to Belgium, may Hashem grant you success. Try to visit all the towns and the small villages and all the shuls, and inquire in every place about the state of our fellow Jews in general and about the state of the youth, boys and girls, in particular – their way of life, their conduct and ways of chinuch. Visit the Talmudei Torah and when you visit with the honorable rabbanim, shoctim, roshei yeshivos and teachers in each location, converse with them with an inner closeness as befitting the leaders of the Jewish people... Convey to them, and to all Jews, may G-d be with them, my blessing that Hashem give them an abundance of life and much

blessing, materially and spiritually."

R' Saadia was surprised by this special shlichus and he announced to his family that he was setting out at once. It was a cold day and R' Saadia did not have a coat, but that didn't stop him from leaving.

"When you get a shlichus from the Rebbe, you have to carry it out immediately," he said. When he arrived at the train station R' Hendel Lieberman caught up to him and gave him his coat.

In Belgium he stayed in the homes of R' Yeshaya Eidel and his friend, R' Yehuda Chitrik (who was living in Antwerp at the time). Years later, R' Chitrik recalled those days, emphasizing the pleasure he had in hosting a Chassid like R' Saadia and learning maamarei Chassidus with him.

Every Motzaei Shabbos R' Chitrik would travel to Brussels to farbreng with fifteen men who convened in a building that belonged to Agudas Israel. When R' Saadia stayed with him, he took him along, and together they learned with the men and told stories. "It was a pleasure for them as well as a pleasure for us," said R' Chitrik.

When the shlichus was complete, R' Saadia reported to the Rebbe Rayatz about the results. The Rebbe was very pleased, and in a letter he sent on 7 Cheshvan he referred to him as "my friend, my talmid, my shliach, ha'Rav:"

"The letter from my friend, my talmid, my shliach, ha'Rav, from the third of this month arrived, and I greatly enjoyed [hearing about] your visit to the shuls, battei midrash, Talmudei Torah and the schools, and their most esteemed and precious teachers, who illuminate with the light of Torah and instill the fear of Heaven and fine character traits; the honorable rabbanim, roshei yeshivos, and teachers who teach Torah and implant fear of Heaven and fine

character traits in the garden of Hashem, our lives, our brothers, our flesh; may Hashem be with them and may they be blessed with all things good, spiritually and materially."

OBSTACLES IN THE PATH TO MOROCCO

In the winter of 5710, a few days before his passing, the Rebbe Rayatz spoke with his son-in-law, later to be the Rebbe, about his work in connection with Merkos L'Inyanei Chinuch. He revealed his desire to found mosdos chinuch al taharas ha'kodesh in African countries in general and throughout Morocco in particular. Then, on Yud Shevat, he passed away before the plan was implemented.

Within the Shiva, in his first letter following the histalkus, the Rebbe wrote to R' Michael Lipsker, whom the Rebbe Rayatz had referred to in their conversation, and asked him to carry out this important shlichus. R' Lipsker immediately agreed, and within a short time he headed for distant Morocco. He settled in Meknes and soon established magnificent schools.

A few months later, on 3 Av, the Rebbe wrote to R' Saadia, who was in a refugee camp in France with his family, and urged him to expand the shlichus in Morocco. "It would be good if you spoke to R' Binyamin Gorodetzky after his return from Morocco, about the possibility of your moving there, in a way that you can continue with the type of work the Rebbe gave you, for which he gave you kochos. If this is not possible, look into moving to Australia."

R' Saadia immediately responded, expressing his willingness to undertake this important shlichus. A month later he received the official go-ahead from those in charge, and then the

Rebbe told him, in a letter dated 12 Elul, “to begin acquiring all the papers necessary to obtain permission to enter the country.” He added his blessing, “May it all be successful: acquiring the papers, the trip itself, and mainly – the work there.”

However, many problems cropped up when he tried to get the paperwork done. Perhaps it was because of the government’s attitude after Israel became a state or because of other reasons, but in the meantime, the trip was delayed.

Nevertheless, the Rebbe continued to insist on the importance of the trip to Morocco for the purpose of developing and expanding the work there. In a letter to R’ Lipsker on 23 Teives, 5711, he wrote, “the idea is good ...that R’ Liberov also come, because you must also think about starting to work in Casablanca etc.”

In the letter, the Rebbe asked him to look for ways to speed up the bureaucratic details and he suggested to R’ Saadia – “in my opinion, immediately submit another request for entry to Morocco.” This was carried out, and in a letter from the Rebbe dated Rosh Chodesh Elul, he expressed his satisfaction and wished

“outstanding success, supernatural within the natural.”

More months passed with his request not granted, and R’ Saadia continued to try, making repeated attempts to obtain the necessary papers. The Rebbe was disappointed by this delay and urged him to continue trying in the hopes that “every delay is for the best and there is a time for every desire.”

DIDAN NATZACH

Despite all the delays the Rebbe told him not to despair because, as he wrote in one of the letters, “I strongly hope that ultimately we will be victorious and you will participate with all your kochos and talents in spreading the wellsprings outward.”

A few weeks later, in Teives, 5713, R’ Saadia finally received his visa and began preparing to leave. This did not take long and he soon left for Morocco, arriving there on 17 Adar, 5713. The Rebbe sent him a letter which said, “I received your letter from Casablanca [which says] you already arrived there in a good and auspicious hour ... may Hashem help you be successful, may it be ‘change your place, change your mazal,’ for good and

blessing, and may you succeed in your work in the vineyard of Chabad in the mosad of the Rebbe, my father-in-law, which will draw additional bracha and success into your personal affairs as well, yours and your household.”

Since his job on shlichus was not defined, the Rebbe urged him to discuss it and consult with the appropriate people “and arrange everything in the most effective way for the work, which is also, naturally, the best way for every one of the workers.”

A few days after he arrived, a meeting was held of all the shluchim who had come to Morocco in the meantime, together with R’ Binyamin Gorodetzky, who was visiting Morocco. They concluded that he would work in one of the large towns, Midelt.

When the Rebbe was asked about this, he said “Midelt seems to be the best choice” for a number of reasons – since there were large schools there already, and among all the other mosdos Chabad in Morocco they were the most populated, they needed a suitable dean.

In that same letter, the Rebbe pointed out his specific role, “since the goal is not only to influence the talmidim and the children but also the adults, the balabatim and rabbanim, etc. in order to be mekarev them, not only to help with mosdos Oholei Yosef Yitzchok but with inyanei Chassidus in general – I hope and am confident that where you settle you will organize a group for men ... and over time will establish from this group assistants, mashpiim, and educators.”

FRUITS OF HIS LABORS

R’ Saadia did as the Rebbe said and settled in Midelt. He was hosted in the home of Chacham Meir Abuchatzeira, Av Beis Din of the city, who welcomed him



Rabbi Saadia Liberov near the Rebbe

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graciously.

He began working on expanding the existing mosdos and spreading Toras HaChassidus to the people of the city. After a difficult period of “sowing,” with great dedication, he began to see the first buds of success. Many more children began attending the Talmud Torah he ran, working boys joined Tiferes Bachurim which he founded, and had set times to study Torah and Chassidus, balabatim attended farbrengens that he led, and Jewish life in general developed.

R' Saadia received a letter from the Rebbe dated 5 Tamuz 1953 which said, “I received your letter. Thank G-d, it seems from your letter that you are seeing fruits of your labor. May Hashem grant that you see how the Rebbe, my father-in-law is drawing down success in a supernatural manner.”

A few weeks later he wrote again, “I was pleased that finally you are seeing blessing as you are working in a mosad of the Rebbe, my father-in-law, and therefore the

concealments and cloaks are disappearing.”

INFLUENCING THE ENTIRE ENVIRONMENT

Once his influence on the Jews of Midelt itself, where he spent most of his time and energy, continued to spread, the Rebbe urged him to expand his sphere of influence on the entire area – “you need to come up with ideas and ways of how to impact the [larger] district of Midelt.”

So R' Saadia began visiting the nearby towns, where he gave shiurim in Chassidus and was mekarev the Jews to its ways and customs.

He visited the city of Mishor and helped develop the Chabad mosdos there, but could not stay there for long because he heard that the local police were after him. They suspected that he was an agent for Aliya, which operated secretly to convince Jews to make aliya, which was forbidden at that time. He had to flee the city in the middle of the night.

He went to Rabat, where only after much effort to convince the authorities that he was there solely for educational purposes, to disseminate Torah to local Jews, was he given permission to stay.

He traveled to Kashrishuk, where there were also Chabad mosdos, and met with the leader of the Jewish committee there, Mr. Yaakov Ben Simcha, who helped a great deal in their expansion. After he reported to the Rebbe regarding his meeting, Mr. Ben Simcha received a letter from the Rebbe which said, “I was pleased to receive the letter from... Reb Saadia Liberov, in which he writes about your good work in strengthening the mosdos Oholei Yosef Yitzchok Lubavitch within his pure camp.

“Great is the merit of your lofty work to bring bounty to all those

involved with it, especially those at the top, with blessings from Hashem and success in what you and your household need, materially or spiritually.”

Wherever R' Saadia visited, he made a powerful impression on everyone with whom he met. They admired and respected him very much, and received him with open arms. “Baruch Hashem, wherever I arrive, I am provided full room and board,” he wrote to his family at this time.

R' Saadia, in one of his letters, dated 10 Adar II, from the town Arpoud, which is near Midelt, wrote about these trips and their success, “The trip now is not hard for me. On the contrary, I generally take pleasure from the visit to the Oholei Yosef Yitzchok schools, and from the opportunity to meet and connect with wholehearted and upright people. Thank G-d a thread of kindness is drawn to each one and each person accordingly, and one can see empirically the possibilities and the necessity in the work here.”

The Rebbe asked R' Saadia to write to him posthaste about his successful activities because he wanted to know not only about the work with the talmidim of the mosad in Midelt, but also about “the awakening of the adults and the kiruv of those who lead the flock, in every place.”

PROMISES FULFILLED

Despite the various difficulties that stood in his way, R' Saadia trusted in the Rebbe's promise of “outstanding success in a way of the supernatural within the natural.” When he had a yechidus, the Rebbe promised him, “R' Saadia, your beginning is small, but your end will be exceedingly great.”

R' Saadia wrote to his family, “May Hashem disperse and melt all the obstacles, and may the sun of success shine openly, materially and

spiritually. Surely we need to hope that the promises of the Rebbe will bring the light which is good, so that it is apparent and visible in all ways and details.”

Despite everything, R' Saadia was successful in Midelt itself and the entire area, effecting big changes and strengthening Torah and the spreading of the wellsprings of Chassidus. The Rebbe's promises began to materialize before his very eyes.

On 23 Shevat, 1954, the Rebbe wrote to him, “I was pleased to receive your two letters from Midelt. The main thing is that you have already seen that the Rebbe, my father-in-law is being mashpia, in that you were able to correct the matter of the teachers and the other issues. May Hashem enable you to see the continued success in all matters, constantly, everyday.”

YESHIVA G'DOLA IN SEFROU

During his visits throughout the area, R' Saadia concluded that it was worthwhile settling in another city in order to expand his sphere of influence in spreading Judaism and Chassidus within the schools and beyond. He wrote about this to the

Rebbe, and the response was, “If, in your opinion, you will accomplish more by founding or running schools, yeshivos etc. in another city, please immediately write a detailed proposal.”

The opportunity arose to start a Chabad yeshiva g'dola in Sefrou. Sefrou was an ancient city, not far from Fez, the city of the Rambam, with a large Jewish population. It was known as a city of sages. The Jews, like in other Moroccan cities, lived in one ghetto, or *malach*, and had fine mosdos Torah and chinuch.

All of them were religiously observant. On Shabbos, for example, not a single store was open, so that even the Arabs had to close their stores since there were no customers.

A short while before, a Litvishe rav from England, R' Binyamin Peltz, came and tried to start a yeshiva. He bought a large building outside the Jewish area, in a large, beautiful orchard. He was not successful for various reasons. He went into debt and had to close shop. In order to prevent a Chilul Hashem, Chabad got involved and negotiated with him to transfer the building to them, along with the debts.

R' Saadia, who was visiting his

family in France, wrote about this to the Rebbe. In a letter dated 12 Nissan, 5714, the Rebbe replied, “If the negotiations work out well, so that the yeshiva is given to Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchok, it will certainly need a suitable menahel. Why look elsewhere.”

The mosad ended up in Chabad's hands, and upon his return to Morocco, R' Saadia settled in Sefrou and re-opened the yeshiva, which was now run in the spirit of Chabad. Many talmidim joined the yeshiva he headed.

The goal of this mosad was to serve as a yeshiva for older bachurim, because there were schools for young children already. Along with increasing the number of talmidim, the Rebbe also emphasized quality – “that the mosad should have the proper form according to the [Divine] intent.”

R' Saadia ran the yeshiva, and the schedule and curriculum were the same as in any Chabad yeshiva. The level of the talmidim was high. Along with Gemara and halacha, they spent hours a day on Chassidus, and heard fascinating shiurim in Tanya from R' Saadia himself.

R' Saadia also gave a high level Gemara shiur for the oldest class and a Tanya shiur to the staff. On special days he would farbreng with the talmidim and their teachers. Like his Chassidus classes, these were spiced with inspirational Chassidic stories.

The yeshiva earned an excellent reputation and talmidim from all over the country attended it. Yet the Rebbe continuously urged to increase the number of students: “Surely you will add in efforts to increase the number of students and naturally, also increase the quality. As I wrote already, that this is obvious from Chazal – a thousand enter etc. and one comes out worthy of ruling on halacha. May it



R' Saadia (center) with a group of young talmidim in Sefrou

R' Saadia would walk in the streets of the city without fear. He was highly respected by the Arabs, who considered him a holy man. Occasionally you could see an Arab approaching the yeshiva building and kissing the "holy stones."

be with success."

During intersession, one of the teachers, Rabbi Yonatan Levy, went around the country and promoted the yeshiva in the small towns, accomplishing a lot for the yeshiva and its continued growth.

"EXPAND THE PLACE OF YOUR TENT"

In addition to running the spiritual end of things, R' Saadia also had the responsibility of the daily running of the yeshiva on his shoulders. The budget was covered with help from the American Joint Distribution Committee, an organization that did a great deal for Holocaust survivors and refugees, and helped with enterprises such as this one.

R' Saadia's wife, Rebbetzin Miriam (Mariasha), who had in the meantime (16 Iyar, 1954) joined her husband in Morocco, prepared meals and did other things, with the

help of assistants.

When the yeshiva grew, R' Saadia arranged for additional bunk beds, to provide for the large number of talmidim. When this too was not enough and the dormitory was not large enough for all, he tried to expand it.

On 2 Av, 1956, the Rebbe wrote, "Regarding what you write that the living quarters are too small ... you need to discuss this ... about enlarging the place ... and consequently, there will be room for more talmidim."

Once, when members of the Joint visited Sefrou to see the development of the yeshiva, they found it to be somewhat disorderly from a physical standpoint. When they pointed this out, R' Saadia replied, "By us, we don't hold of seider except on Pesach night."

The students, teachers and administration received many letters from the Rebbe. He answered in detail to those who corresponded with him, each talmid according to his needs.

R' Saadia himself received dozens of letters from the Rebbe with instructions, advice and special guidance regarding everything to do with running the mosdos, along with much encouragement and brachos for success in this holy work – "work of Heaven," "to raise talmidim who are Chassidim, Yerei Shamayim, and Lomdim."

The Rebbe told him to distribute Chanuka gelt every year, in the Rebbe's name, to the talmidim, and even appointed him to stand in for him.

INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNAL AFFAIRS

In accordance with the Rebbe's instruction to see himself as a shliach of the Rebbeim to his city and country – not only in inyanei Toras ha'Chassidus and its ways but as far as the general state of Jewry –

R' Saadia was very involved in the public life of the Jewish community and made a deep impression.

He regularly took part in all celebrations that took place, and helped a lot in developing mosdos Torah and Chinuch in the city, especially Beis Rifka for girls, which was officially under the Rav's administration.

R' Saadia gave many shiurim in Chassidus, to groups as well as individuals. Every week he went to the *malach* of the city with a bundle of Sifrei Tanya and he taught until late at night. One of the participants said, "Everybody enjoyed the stories of tzaddikim, and his abundance of knowledge with which Hashem had graced him."

He often held farbrengens, which attracted large audiences. Even those who were unaccustomed to the Chassidic way were soon drawn to the great light. Rabbanim down to the simple people came and enjoyed this wonderful spiritual experience. They were all charmed by his personality, the likes of which they had never encountered before.

His davening, especially on Shabbos, was famous and made an impression. He would daven at length with a sweetness that would tug at your heartstrings, especially during intersession, when he could relax somewhat and spend hours on it.

Many Jews would gather nearby in order to observe his outstanding Chassidic ways, while he, completely focused on his davening, did not notice the commotion around him.

In this manner he managed to instill the outlook and wondrous ways of Chassidus. The Rebbe told him in yechidus that in Morocco you could establish "200,000 Baalshemske Yidden." Indeed, many began to follow Toras ha'Chassidus and took on Chassidic practices.

If at first there were those who

shied away from Chassidic customs, like immersing in a mikva before davening, within a short time, when they saw R' Saadia walking a long distance in order to immerse, many joined him.

After a year in Sefrou he was able to establish a new mikva in the area. The Rebbe took a great interest in this and told him to fix it according to instructions from the Rebbe Rashab, and in accordance with Chabad custom.

STORY OF MESIRUS NEFESH

Thanks to the establishment of the State of Israel, anti-Semitism increased among the Arabs in Morocco, but King Mohammad

protected the Jews and did not allow anti-Semitic sentiments to explode. Nevertheless, every so often, innocent Jews were scapegoats for those thirsty for their blood. Jews lived in fear and holed themselves up, as much as possible, in their ghettos.

The yeshiva was outside the *malach* and people were scared. The Rebbe wrote to R' Saadia, "The Guardian of His nation, Israel, who does not slumber or sleep, will surely protect each and every one of them among Klal Yisroel in every matter, whether material or spiritual, especially those who are involved in holy work of drawing Jews closer to our Father in heaven."

Indeed, generally speaking, the

talmidim lived in peace and did not suffer from the local Arabs. R' Saadia would walk in the streets of the city without fear. He was highly respected by the Arabs, who considered him a holy man. Occasionally you could see an Arab approaching the yeshiva building and kissing the "holy stones."

The King of Morocco died suddenly in 1957 and the Jews were terrified, even though in his will he told his son and heir to follow in his ways and be kind to the Jews. They were afraid the son would not comply and would be their enemy. It was a sensitive time in Jewish-Arab relations, in light of the Sinai Campaign going on in Israel. They were especially fearful of the period between kings when, in the best Arab tradition, this could turn into a period of pogroms. The Jews locked themselves into their homes because traveling from city to city was dangerous.

An announcement was made by the local authorities that there would be a mourning gathering for the king's sudden passing. All residents of the city convened, including the Jews. The Jewish leaders instructed them to go and demonstrate their participation in the grieving for the national loss. All schools in Sefrou were closed and thousands of children also attended. That is, all schools but one – the Chabad yeshiva which was located among Arabs.

"Torah study cannot be abrogated for anything," declared R' Saadia. "It demands mesirus nefesh, like in Russia. That is the only thing I brought with me from there."

One of the talmidim recounted, "Although it was strange, we continued with our learning and davening as though nothing was going on. Amazingly, the Arabs respected his position and not one said a word. The Jews were amazed by this mesirus nefesh."

HELPING INDIVIDUALS

As related by a talmid:

R' Saadia radiated emuna, bitachon and simcha. "Until R' Saadia came to Sefrou, they didn't know how to rejoice on Simchas Torah. When he came, nearly everybody gathered around him to see and enjoy true simcha. All of them would come to watch the unusual sight, how he would dance and prance with all his might, and spin around in utter joy. They were deeply affected by him and were drawn into the Lubavitcher, joyous atmosphere which 'flared up to the heavens,'" said the rav of the city, Rabbi Dovid Ovadia.

Most of Moroccan Jewry would eat machine matzos on Pesach, but when R' Saadia came, they all ate handmade shmura matza. For this purpose, he would travel every year, around Pesach time, to Meknes and together with all the Chabad shluchim baked matzos with all the Chabad hiddurim, enough to supply everyone with matzos.

R' Saadia did not only benefit the city as a whole. He was a good listener for people's personal problems and personally got involved in people's lives.

One time, related Rabbi Yonatan Levy, a Jew could not repay a loan he owed an Arab and was put in jail. He had borrowed a sum of money in order to open a business together with him, as most Jews did, but was not successful and did not have the money with which to repay the man.

The Arab, who was friendly with the authorities, immediately arranged for them to arrest the Jew, and he was imprisoned without a trial. He was among merciless criminals and his life was in danger.

When R' Saadia found out about this, he did not rest until he personally raised the money. He saved the Jew's life and fulfilled the mitzva of pidyon shvuyim.

BLESSED OUTCOME

R' Saadia worked with mesirus nefesh for the success of his shlichus, as the Rebbe said in yechidus with a relative, "R' Saadia sits in Morocco and is moser nefesh to be mekarev Jewish children to Chassidus."

Chabad mosdos in Sefrou, and throughout Morocco, thrived with unnatural success and became an empire. Thanks to the mesirus nefesh of R' Saadia and the other shluchim in Morocco, thousands of children received their education in Chabad schools, and as a result remained loyal to Hashem and His Torah.

In the course of the work, problems arose. Every so often large groups of Jews would leave Morocco, thanks to the work of the Aliya emissaries. They were convinced by their promises of the material and spiritual good that awaited them in our Holy Land.

Obviously, these mass aliya made it hard on the mosdos, and in a letter from 1962, 12 Teives, R' Saadia told about the confusion that prevailed. "There was confusion a month ago regarding aliya, when they thought that all were leaving en masse. The first thing they did was take their children out of the mosdos, and we lost a lot of talmidim. But afterwards, thank G-d, it stopped and was quiet as before in this respect, but we don't know what the future will bring because they are all standing at the ready, waiting to leave."

The Rebbe, in his letter from that period, 24 Teives, wished him that he would relate good news with peace of mind. R' Saadia continued working on chinuch al taharas ha'kodesh.

A while later, the aliya started up again, and numerous people left the country. R' Saadia warned them what awaited them, and urged them to stand strong against the winds of heresy and to educate their children in accordance with their chinuch.

Many of the immigrants listened to him, and thanks to R' Saadia they remained religious Jews. Among the talmidim, most of them established fine Jewish homes and raised frum children, while they themselves served as rabbanim, shochemim, sofrim and disseminators of Torah.

"Thanks to Rabbeinu Saadia" – wrote Rabbi Yonatan Levy, who is now a rav in Shchunat HaYovel in Yerushalayim – "and thanks to his strong, uncompromising education, we were able to stand strong against all the spiritual dangers which hovered over us, and were able to continue educating our children in the way of Torah and Chassidus. Thanks to him, many families were saved from the clutches of heresy and were not enticed by them, including me and my family. And thanks to him we remain



R' Saadia at a Chassidic farbrengen

connected to the tree of life, the Rebbe."

THE SHLICHUS IS COMPLETED

When the wave of immigration increased and included many talmidim of the mosdos (and the staff too), questions arose about the future of the work in Morocco. "If [aliya] continues at this rate," wrote R' Saadia on 14 Shevat, 1964, "[everything connected with the mosdos] is highly doubtful, both because of the students and because of the Joint. But surely if Hashem desires it we will succeed, even in the coming days."

Aliya continued, and more and more talmidim left. Tens of thousands of Jews made aliya and the small towns emptied out. Most of the talmidim from Sefrou left with their parents, leaving hardly any behind. The Jews who remained moved to the larger cities like Casablanca, where Rabbi Shlomo Matusof, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Raskin, Rabbi Sholom Eidelman and others worked devotedly.

Various offers were made to R' Saadia to work in other locations, but the mass aliya from all over Morocco made this questionable.

At the beginning of Sivan, 1964, when R' Saadia saw how things stood, he sent a letter to the Rebbe asking what to do. Perhaps his shlichus in Morocco was over and it was time to move on.

The Rebbe's response said, "When you will present specific suggestions (regarding your future arrangements) – there is room for my opinion."

In the meantime, with the end of the summer z'man, R' Saadia began preparing for a trip to the Rebbe for Tishrei 5725. Before he left, he made whatever arrangements were necessary as far as the yeshiva was concerned. This, in fact, ended his shlichus in Morocco.

DUST AND REWARD

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik, Rav district Bat Chefer-Emek Chefer

*Why is the reward for a mitzva the opportunity to do another mitzva? How did Avrohom receive his reward for saying, “I am dust and ashes”? What do the Red Heifer and the laws of Sota have to do with Avrohom’s avoda? * A fascinating look at the parsha of the week from the perspective of the Midrash, Kabbala, and Chabad Chassidus.*

AVROHOM AVINU’S REWARD

Rabba expounded in the Talmud (Sota 17a): In reward for Avrohom Avinu lowering himself and saying, “and I am dust and ashes,” his descendents, the Jewish people, merited two mitzvos: a mitzva that is fulfilled with dust – the mitzva of the dust of the Sota – and a mitzva that is fulfilled with ashes – the mitzva of the ashes of the Red Heifer.

A reward from G-d is “measure for measure,” which means there is a connection between the type of avoda and the reward that is received. What connection is there between these two mitzvos – purifying the Sota and those impure by contact with the dead – and what Avrohom did?

THE REWARD FOR A MITZVA

In Pirkei Avos (4:2) it says, “The

reward for a mitzva is a mitzva.” This means that the reward for a mitzva is the privilege of being able to fulfill G-d’s command. One should do a mitzva “not in order to receive a reward”, for the fact that we have the enormous privilege of Hashem giving us the ability to fulfill His instructions is the greatest reward of all.

All material pleasures and all of physical existence cannot provide a proper reward for a mitzva, because every mitzva has an infinite effect. The entire world is not sufficient reward for even one mitzva!

(On the flip side – “the payment for a sin is a sin” means that all the sorrows and pains in the world are not sufficient punishment for one sin. A sin defies Hashem’s command and adversely affects all the worlds and supernal forces and the infinite G-dly power).

What then, is a worthwhile reward for a mitzva? “The reward

for a mitzva is a mitzva” – the privilege to do another mitzva. This is what it says in sifrei Chassidus, “the reward for a mitzva is a mitzva from the root meaning connection, i.e. through the mitzva he cleaves to Hashem. There is no greater reward and pleasure than this, for he receives the countenance of the Sh’china” (unlike other creations, such as animals, who have no mitzvos and do not have the privilege of doing His mitzvos).

In addition, there is the tremendous spiritual power that is the result of a mitzva, which is actually the great reward for doing it. The holy Sh’china shines a joyous and smiling countenance upon a Jew who fulfills a mitzva. From every single mitzva an angel is created, a spiritual entity that protects the mitzva-doer. So the reward for a mitzva is the outcome of that very mitzva. (So too for a sin – punishment for a sin is that when a person sins he distances himself from the source of life and blessing, and by doing a sin an evil angel is created.)

For most work that is done in the world, the payment is not a direct outcome of the job. For example, a teacher teaches and his reward is money; he does not receive chochma as a reward. But when a person does a mitzva, the reward is a direct outcome of the mitzva. The actual good deed illuminates him and sanctifies him.

Since “the reward for a mitzva is a mitzva,” the reward for each mitzva is defined and specific to the spiritual accomplishment of the mitzva. The reward for one mitzva

is not the same as the reward of another mitzva.

If the reward for a mitzva was like the compensation that a worker gets, all mitzvos would generate the identical reward – blessing and success. Although there is a difference in the amount of reward given for each mitzva, in quality they are identical, just as all employees receive the identical reward – money. The difference between the manager’s salary and the janitor’s salary is only in the size of their check; they all receive a monetary payment.

But when it comes to reward for mitzvos, there is a big difference between the reward for this mitzva and the reward for another mitzva. The reward for mitzvos is like the payment that a farmer gets for toiling on his land. His reward is commensurate with his work. If he plants an olive tree, he will get olives; if he plants grape vines, he will harvest grapes.

The same is true for mitzvos. For example, the reward for the mitzva of tz’daka is wealth. The reward for helping the sick is being saved from illness. The reward for cheering up those who need cheering, is not being downcast oneself. The reward for teaching Torah to someone is that your mind and heart become refined so you can understand the holy Torah.

Every mitzva creates an angel according to the type of mitzva it is. A person who serves Hashem with the midda of love, receives a reward of love, and an angel of chesed is created. A person who serves Hashem with the midda of din and g’vura, receives a reward of g’vura, and an angel of g’vura is created which protects him.

WHAT’S THE CONNECTION?

Based on what was said so far, the question about Avrohom’s

reward is even stronger. What connection is there between his avoda and his reward?

Avrohom was a man of chesed. He served Hashem with great love, to the extent that he was described (Yeshaya 41:8) as “Avrohom who loved Me.” Avrohom was generous with his money, his body and his soul. He even hosted wicked people, idol worshippers, in his home, and did so graciously. He had enormous love, not only for his righteous son Yitzchok, but also for the wicked Yishmoel. He showered him with goodness, not condemnation, even though his ways were corrupt.

It would seem logical that his reward would be mitzvos of chesed

A man of chesed like Avrohom gives tz’daka not only from his surplus, but also from his own bread and water.

and love, yet the two mitzvos he was given as a reward – the Red Heifer and the Sota laws – are mitzvos of din, instead!

Burning the heifer is the attribute of din and g’vura. Its red color symbolizes din, and the Zohar states that the heifer has all the powers of din and g’vura (“five g’vuros”). All the laws of how it is done come from din, rather than chesed and rachamim. So too, the Sota laws start with the husband’s zeal and din and continues with the Beis Din’s harsh words and threats. The entire process is one of din, and not at all chesed and rachamim. Why are these mitzvos Avrohom’s

reward?

WHAT IS LOVE?

First, let us examine Avrohom’s love and chesed. In the Midrash it says that his chesed was done humbly and modestly, fully identifying with the recipients of the chesed. In his heart, Avrohom felt the other person’s difficulties; he empathized, felt his pain and helped to the best of his ability.

In order to be a “man of chesed,” to help and give, you don’t need the humility and modesty of “and I am dust and ashes.” Even people who are not humble contribute tz’daka and do chesed because they desire to help someone in need. Avrohom’s uniqueness was in his feeling of humility. He felt lower than everyone else, and thought that everybody deserved more than he did.

There are people whose tz’daka makes the poor person feel uncomfortable. Their attitude proclaims, “I’m the strong one, you’re the weak one; I’m the rich man and you’re the nebach case on the receiving end.” Avrohom gave the recipient the opposite feeling, that the poor man was doing him a favor by being willing to accept his help. He did not communicate a feeling of superiority.

A man of chesed like Avrohom gives tz’daka not only from his surplus, but also from his own bread and water, because he feels lower than others and gives tz’daka from a feeling of devotion and service.

G-DLY MESIRUS NEFESH

The two mitzvos of the Red Heifer and the Sota, which were given to the Jewish people as a reward for Avrohom Avinu’s avoda, express the idea of love which is exemplified in Avrohom.

Purifying the impure doesn’t come from a feeling of superiority.

The Kohen who does the purification does not convey the message, "I am pure and you are impure and therefore I am purifying you." It was just the opposite. He conveyed the feeling of love to such an extent that in order to purify the other person, he himself became impure. The Mishna in Para says, "All those involved with the heifer, from beginning to end, become impure." (This was a lighter form of impurity, from which they could be purified in a day, not the severe impurity engendered by contact with the dead).

So the purification ceremony demonstrated tremendous Ahavas Yisroel, like that of Avrohom Avinu. Only someone who truly loves others can deal with all kinds of people, not just pure, perfect individuals. When a man of love helps someone become pure, he doesn't convey a sense of superiority. He purifies the person even when it comes at the expense

of his own purity.

This is the true measure of chesed. It doesn't look away from impurity, but seeks to help rectify it.

The same is true with the mitzva of Sota, where Hashem's holy name is erased and the water is given to the woman to drink. Even though erasing G-d's name is a desecration of His name, and this was a woman who acted immodestly and is suspected of a terrible sin, nevertheless, this is done out of great love, in order to purify her for her husband.

ULTIMATE REWARD IN YEMOS HA'MOSHIACH

All the types of reward that a person receives in this world and the world of souls are not the ultimate payoff for all of man's avoda throughout the generations. The ultimate reward will be given in Yemos HaMoshiach, a time we look forward to eagerly.

At that time, the real reward for our avoda will be given, a reward which is not something additional to the avoda that we did but a direct outcome of it. By fulfilling Torah and mitzvos a holy light was generated in the world, but until the coming of Moshiach, this G-dly light remains hidden. In the future, it will be revealed.

This is what is meant when Chazal say, "all the days of your life – to bring to Yemos HaMoshiach." A Jew's avoda, from the time we became a nation until the end of galus, is to bring Moshiach, because at that time the purpose of all the avoda will be revealed. That is when the sparks of light and holiness in all of a Jew's actions will be revealed, and even more than that – "Hashem's Essence will be revealed in this physical, lowly world."

Yehi ratzon ... that the Beis HaMikdash is built speedily in our days ...

Sources: Likkutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 79

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PS Form 3526, September 2007

THE REWARD FOR DESERTION

A Farbrenge with Rebbetzin Chaya Rochel Hendel

PERSONAL MISSION IN MONTREAL

About twenty years ago, I went to the Rebbe together with a group led by Rabbi Tzeitlin. When we passed by the Rebbe for “dollars,” Rabbi Groner introduced me to the Rebbe by saying, “This is Rebbetzin Hendel from Tzfas.” The Rebbe looked at me and asked, “From Montreal?”

That is when I understood that I have a shlichus in Montreal, where my husband’s family lives, in addition to in Eretz Yisroel, where I live. Whenever I am invited to Montreal, I try to go and speak.

About two years ago, I joined my husband on his fundraising trip to raise money for the Ohr Menachem mosdos in Tzfas. Our itinerary included two weeks in Montreal.

As soon as I arrived, I was asked to speak for the Machon Dovrei Ivrit (MADA). The shiur took place at the home of shlucha Riva Hamburger, and many women came. Two young women walked in, Israeli policewomen who had fled the country in order not to take part in the Expulsion. They had received three orders to throw families out of their homes, and had been trained in how to beat the women and children.

They simply fled the country with foreign passports. They left their families and jobs and went to Canada, since one of them had a grandmother who lived there. They were looking for work, but in the

meantime had heard that there was a class for Israelis. They longed to meet up with other Israelis, and they showed up at the shiur.

I was very impressed by their mesirus nefesh. They were not even religious, but in order not to throw Jews out of their homes they fled the country.

I started the shiur by teaching the brachos on food. There were ample refreshments, so we were able to say nearly all the brachos in order. I taught them the mnemonic *maga eish* which stands for mezonos, gefen, eitz, adama, sh’ha’kol. I explained that saying a bracha is like a direct call to G-d. We say, “Boruch ata Hashem...,” and are blessed in return, and who doesn’t need Hashem’s blessings?

One of the policewomen, aged 32, said with a smile that if her mother knew she was attending a Torah class, she would flip, since she was opposed to religion. Now she held a cookie and said she had lost her phone to call G-d and needed ours. In short, she asked for guidance in reciting the bracha.

How sad that a cultured girl, an Israeli policewoman, from the center of the country, pretty, smart, etc., did not know how to recite a bracha and needed help to say it word by word.

DRAMATIC SHIUR

Throughout the two weeks, the two women went to every shiur I gave in Ivrit, even the last shiur, on

the topic of Family Purity, which was meant for married women. Although the shiur took place in a distant area, they came. I figured it was okay that they attended, since the Rebbe says that older girls should also learn about Family Purity.

By Divine Providence, the hostess told the following story at the beginning of the shiur: A woman in Crown Heights waited ten years to have a child, until the Rebbe told her, “Taharas HaMishpacha.” The woman had always observed the laws carefully, but since the Rebbe gave her that answer she went to a shiur on Taharas HaMishpacha.

At the shiur, the speaker told a story about a game in which a boy gave a girl a ring and said in jest, “*harei at mekudeshes li b’tabaas zu...*” The speaker said that if there were witnesses, the woman needed a *get l’chumra* (a divorce).

The woman without children, hearing this, was shaken up. She remembered that as a girl, back in Israel, she had belonged to the HaTzofim (Scouts) movement and had played this game. She consulted with rabbanim and was told that even though twenty years had passed, she needed to ask the boy-man for a get.

After many inquiries, she found him. He was already married and had several children. Her family in Israel was sent to take him to Beis Din, and he gave her a get. A month after the halachic matters were taken

care of, she conceived. She wrote a letter to the Rebbe thanking him for saving her from the serious sin of “eishes ish.”

In Montreal, one of the policewomen who heard the story was shaken up and told us, “I also belonged to HaTzofim and I did the same thing! Ten boys stood facing ten girls and we played ‘wedding.’ Each one said to the girl facing him, *‘harei at mekudeshet li...’* and of course there were witnesses. Do I also have to find the boy and ask him for a get?” Then she added, “Now I understand why I haven’t gotten married yet. I think this is what is holding me up.”

In the meantime, we told her to make inquiries, and I was happy to see, with my own eyes, the reward she was getting for her mesirus nefesh. At the end of the shiur she announced that she thought it over and realized that **all** those boys and girls had not yet gotten married!

HE SEES WHAT WE DON’T SEE

A year later I was back in

Montreal. I tried to find out about the policewomen, but nobody I asked knew where they were.

Then came the surprise. A year or two ago, as I sat in shul in Kiryat Chabad in Tzfas one Shabbos, a woman came over to me at the end of the davening and asked, “Do you remember two policewomen who fled Israel for Montreal?”

“Of course,” I replied. Then she told me, “I am one of them. I did t’shuva a few months ago, came back to Israel, and I’ve been looking for you.” It was an emotional reunion, especially with those results!

In Tishrei, 5768, we were sitting in 770 and I made a small farbrengen, in thanks to Hashem for saving one of my sons on that day. It was an active farbrengen with everybody telling interesting stories, when suddenly the policewoman showed up and told the participants, girls from Machon Alte, P’nimius and Ohr Chaya, “I am one of the policewomen from Montreal that the Rebbeztzin told you about.”

The girls were excited, and since

some of them had not heard the story, they asked me to repeat it. The policewoman listened, amazed that I remembered the details, and she confirmed everything. She added that her friend had arranged a get and we hope she gets married soon.

She told me she is learning at Machon Chana in New York. When her grandmother in Montreal saw she was becoming religious through Chabad, she told her that thirty years earlier she had gone with a group to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe gave her three dollars: one for her, one for her daughter, and one for her granddaughter! She is the first granddaughter, and her grandmother received a dollar for her a year before she was born. She is 29.

Before our astonished eyes, she opened her wallet and took out the dollar her grandmother had gotten from the Rebbe for her, a year before she was born.

How wondrous are the ways of Moshiach! He sees from one end of the world to the other.

Incidentally, she said that many of the policemen and policewomen who carried out the cruel expulsion from Gush Katif and northern Shomron are now being treated by psychiatrists and psychologists. They can’t sleep at night because of the nightmare they took part in.

As for her, the one who was moser nefesh and left her family, her job, her friends, her country, so that she wouldn’t hit Jews and throw them out of their homes, she came to the truth, to the truth of Torah.

Boruch Hashem, she recently became engaged to a Chassidishe man, a baal t’shuva and Lubavitcher who learns in MADA in Montreal. May she build an everlasting edifice on the foundation of Torah and Chassidus, to give nachas to the Rebbe MH”M and her family.

L’chaim!



WHAT WERE THE KGB LOOKING FOR IN MY WORKSHOP?

*For years it remained a mystery until it was solved in the course of a fortuitous meeting. * Another chapter in the memoirs of R' Hillel Zaltzman. * Part 1 of 2*

To be a religious Jew in Soviet Russia was more than just difficult; it was nearly impossible. Although officially the law did not forbid a religious life, there were many limitations that dogged the lives of an observant Jew.

One of the most difficult challenges was making a living without desecrating the Shabbos. In Russia, everybody had to work. If you did not work, you were labeled a parasite and your citizenship rights were revoked. Thus, everybody had to find employment, at least officially. The official places of employment were open seven days a week, and if you were registered as an employee, you had to show up to work on Shabbos. Since all businesses were nationalized and thereby considered state property, being absent would

lead to charges of religious worship and was considered a crime against the state. If you undermined productivity, you were undermining the economy of all of Russia.

Some Jews working in small factories tried to bribe the managers to look away from their Shabbos absences, but the manager would usually refuse for fear of losing his job if anyone found out. In addition, employees were encouraged to tattle on their bosses in the event that they noticed anything illegal going on.

Only a few people managed to find work as an accountant in a small factory, without many workers around, where, in rare instances, it was possible to come to an agreement with the manager.

THE SOLUTION

The most popular solution in the early years of the communist revolution was to work at home. Many Lubavitchers took advantage of a loophole in the law which allowed a person with physical limitations to work from home. After producing medical statements, they received permission to work at home. This enabled them to work when they pleased. Some Lubavitchers with initiative were able to open factories and be their own bosses.

In every city there was a government office that was responsible for the workers and industry in the city. In communist Russia there was no private business, of course. Everything belonged to the government. If you wanted to open a plant, you had to work under a government plant and be subservient to government regulations.

As there wasn't room for everyone within the main plants, some of the factory workshops were within them, while others were located far from them. Since we would close the workshop on Shabbos, we

opened it as far from the main plant as possible to avoid the scrutiny of the managers.

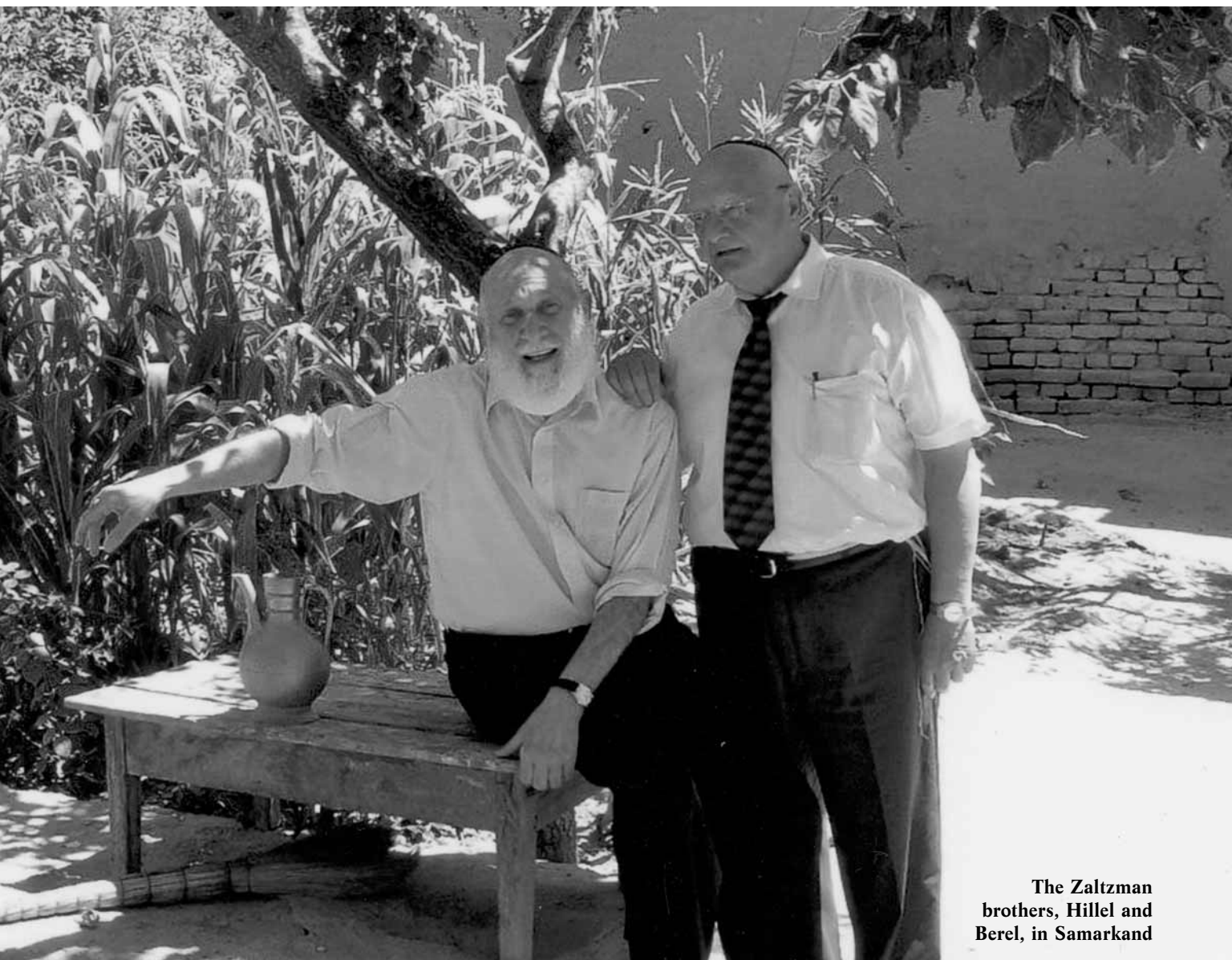
Despite all our caution, occasionally the managers of the main plant announced that they were coming for inspection on Shabbos. We had no choice. We had to be there. Before Shabbos we would bring Sifrei Chassidus, and on Shabbos morning all of us would show up at the factory and learn Chassidus or review the sidra as we waited for the inspectors. Most of the time, they

didn't show up; they just wanted to frighten us. Sometimes they showed up, walked around for five minutes, and left. They were satisfied just to see us there.

Like all the Lubavitcher bachurim, I had no profession with which to support myself. I decided to open a factory to manufacture clothing labels. I went to one of the government factories and asked for permission to open a factory. I thought they would be interested in me and would agree to my

terms – mainly because I could bribe them so that they wouldn't bother me.

I presented samples of the cloth emblems I planned on producing. They wanted to know how this would work – who would need these emblems, and who would buy them. I explained that the manufacturing would be done only after I got specific orders from factories. I maintained that most workers in my line of work lived far from the main factory, and that I



The Zaltzman brothers, Hillel and Berel, in Samarkand

***Before Shabbos
we would bring
Sifrei Chassidus,
and on Shabbos
morning all of us
would show up at
the factory and
learn Chassidus
or review the
sidra as we
waited for the
inspectors.***

therefore wanted to open a workshop near where they lived.

The managers, who were bribed, of course, made a simple calculation. What did they care if the business was far from them, the main thing was that they didn't have to invest anything and I promised to bring them the necessary amount. They happily approved my request, and I opened a workshop in the Jewish section of Samarkand.

Aside from the bribes they received, the managers had another motivation for approving my request. There was an "income plan" which dictated that a factory had to earn a certain amount for the government, for example, 100,000 rubles a year. The management had to ensure that each individual workshop would bring in a certain amount so that it would add up to the required total. Since I had always tried to produce more than was required of me, they knew that we could be relied upon to fill the quotas.

In the Soviet Union there was also an individual quota for each worker. By law, every person had to receive an average salary of between 90-100 rubles a month. Someone who worked extra hours could make up to 120 rubles a month. But if a person earned more than that, government officials would adjust his salary in order to align his output with the average salary.

Since the output of our work was likely to make large profits, we registered 15-20 Lubavitchers as our employees though only 4-5 people actually worked there. This way, we were able to provide an average salary of 120 rubles a month for each officially listed worker, while the income of the factory was really much more. The employees who were only registered and did not work received a small portion of the salary that was listed for their name.

These extra employees made their money on the black market. This way, they could observe Shabbos and Yom Tov without any difficulty. They registered with us just to please the government, so they wouldn't be persecuted as parasites. Both sides profited from this arrangement.

Of course, all our employees, both those who worked and those who were merely registered as workers, had to be reliable people from among Anash. If just one person would tattle, it would lead to the arrest of all involved and ruin everything.

I was glad when I was able to earn nice amounts of money, because this money was used for communal work. In general, the concept of giving one's money for communal causes was an obvious one for us, to the point that when we heard that in

western countries people got a receipt for a donation, we could not understand it. We knew that when you send a telegram or a package, you get a receipt from the post office, but who needed a receipt for tz'daka? When someone explained that the receipt verified that the money had reached the organization and not someone's private pocket, it sounded even more peculiar.

At our factories we made labels for clothes and other products. We filled orders for factories throughout the Soviet Union. In order to contact many factories, I sent agents throughout the Soviet Union to solicit orders. Since the law stated that I had to get the work myself, and not send agents for that purpose, all the people I sent were from Anash so I wouldn't be endangered by tattling.

One day I had an idea – in nearly every city there were factories called "industrial complexes." I got a book with a list of all the cities in the Soviet Union and sent hundreds of letters with samples of labels that we made. On the envelope I wrote "industrial complexes" and the name of the city. I didn't have an exact address, but in most cities, the postal workers knew the big factories by name, and the letters usually made it to their destination. A number of the factories that received my letters sent me orders. I had plenty of work, without having to pay agents.

INSPECTION OF THE WORKSHOP

Since the government did not rely on the internal inspections of government workers, every city had a government office which

was called “The Technical Inspection Bureau.” This department would visit the factories from time to time, check the level of productivity of the workers, and decide whether it was necessary to change the salary or the production quota. During these inspections, they would check the entire operation from A to Z, and determine how many labels each worker had to produce.

We had good ties with the head of the department, Ivan Ivanovitz, after he got a hefty bribe from us. When they had to come and inspect our workshop, he would come himself and ensure that all went well. Nevertheless, inspection day was always nerve-racking.

One day, we were informed by the Inspection Bureau that we should prepare for the annual inspection. We told all the registered workers to be there on inspection day. I arranged things

so that each registered employee would have a position where he would do some of the work, and I told them what to answer if they were asked questions.

Present during these inspections was a representative of the government plant under whom we worked. We had to show him that the work leaving our place matched the number of employees. This was complicated, since on a daily basis, four people did the work. The most responsible job, working the machine which made the labels, I left for myself. I didn’t want to take a chance that someone else would work quicker.

My brother Berel had a similar workshop, but he worked for another government concern. Since we had a good connection with the department head, we decided that Berel would invite the plant representative he worked under, and get both of our inspections over with in one

day.

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

The day arrived. At nine in the morning most of the workers had arrived to work. Ivan arrived, along with Lilia, the gentile representative of the plant under which I worked. The only one missing was the woman who represented the plant my brother worked for.

Berel asked all of us to wait a little with the inspection until the representative of his plant would arrive. Since we had no phone in our workshop, he went out to find a public phone to call her. He wanted to tell her to hurry up, since everybody was waiting for her.

Berel was supposed to return in five minutes. Ten minutes went by, and he still hadn’t returned. The main inspector said that while they waited for the other representative to come, he would go out to buy cigarettes. More time went by, and he didn’t return either.

R’ Michoel Mishulovin, who was registered as a worker with me, said that until they all showed up and the inspection began, he was going to a nearby swimming pool in order to immerse before davening. He left his pocket sized Tanya, which he always kept in his pocket, at the office because he was afraid lest his clothes be stolen. If the Tanya was found, he could get into big trouble.

He left. The minutes went by, and R’ Michoel, too, had disappeared.

There was something very odd about all this, and it made me uneasy, but in my worst dreams I did not anticipate what was yet to come.

Half an hour went by, and the



The yard where the workshop was located. It was after climbing over this pile of stones that Berel fell into the hands of the KGB.

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head inspector returned with a pack of cigarettes. I asked him what happened and why he had been gone for half an hour instead of five minutes. He avoided answering me, saying nothing happened, but I sensed that something bad had taken place.

In the meantime, the woman representative showed up, but Berel had not returned. We decided to start the inspection with my workshop, as it was nearly eleven o'clock. My hands were occupied with making labels, but my head was elsewhere. I was very worried

about my brother and Michoel, and I was frantic over what was taking them so long.

I couldn't think for long because Ivan was standing next to me with a stop watch in his hand, timing how long it took to make a label. That way, he could calculate how many labels we could make in a day and how much the monthly salary should be.

After a long time, which seemed like forever to me, Michoel came back. We were in the middle of the inspection so I couldn't ask him what had happened.

[To be continued be"H]

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