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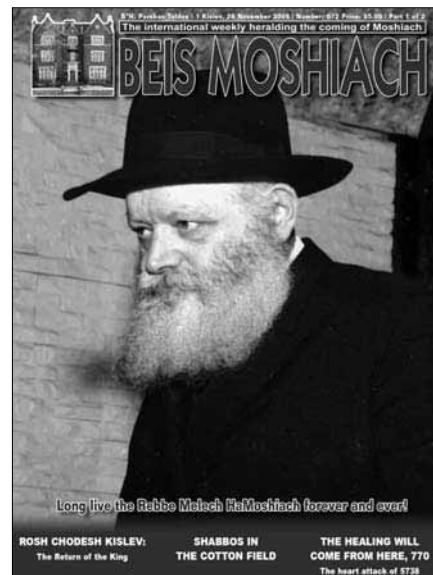
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Beis Moshiah (USPS 012-542) ISSN 1082-0272 is published weekly, except Jewish holidays (only once in April and October) for \$160.00 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and in all other places for \$180.00 per year (45 issues), by Beis Moshiah, 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY and additional offices. Postmaster: send address changes to Beis Moshiah 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Copyright 2008 by Beis Moshiah, Inc.

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ISAAC'S WELLS – AN INTERNAL SANCTUARY

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

The wells of Isaac are metaphors for the three Temples. The uniqueness of a well, and the Temple, is that the structure is man-made, but the content comes from Heaven. The third well is a precursor to the Third Temple. The service of Isaac is specifically and uniquely connected to making a Sanctuary, a dwelling place for G-d, internally and externally.

This week's Torah reading, *Toldos*, contains the curious incident of the three wells of Isaac. The first two wells that Isaac digs are stopped up by the Philistines, but the third one is left alone and its waters remain accessible. It is well known that, as the Sages express it, "the actions of the fathers are a sign for the children." The events in the lives of the Patriarchs indicate the spiritual activity their descendants, the Jewish people, should pursue.

Further, since the Rebbe has prophesied that "the time of your Redemption has arrived," the lesson we learn from a particular incident must focus on how we are to prepare the world for Moshiach.

Nachmanides notes that since there doesn't seem to be any reason for the story on the literal level, nor does it reflect any great honor on Isaac, the lengthy exposition of Isaac's excavations must allude to future events. By analyzing the components of what Isaac was digging, namely, a well of living waters, Nachmanides concludes that the three wells imply the three Temples. His analysis runs as follows: a well is a gathering place for water; its purpose is to make the waters accessible. In a sense, it's where the water dwells. Further, well water is described as "living waters," indicating movement, vitality and purity. The prophet Jeremiah uses this metaphor for the life-force G-d continuously infuses into all existence, describing G-d as the source of living waters. Therefore, explains Nachmanides, just as a well is the 'house,' so to speak, of the living waters, from which they flow, so too the Temple is the house of G-d, from which the spiritual vitality flows. That is, the wells of Isaac serve as a hint for the Temples which Isaac's descendants would build. The name of the first well, *Esek*, meaning "contention," alludes to the First Temple; the name of the second well, *Sitna*, meaning "hatred," alludes to the Second

Temple; and the name of the third well, *Rechovot*, refers to the Third Temple, which will be built in the future, speedily in our days. The name *Rechovot* means to expand or increase. The first two Temples were involved in controversy and strife. The Third Temple will be built without contention or opposition; then G-d will increase our borders and the Jewish people will multiply.

Nachmanides's explanation, that Isaac's three efforts to dig a well of "living waters" alludes to the three Temples, still leaves some questions unanswered. For one thing, what is the specific connection of the wells, and by allusion the Temples, to Isaac? The other Patriarchs, Abraham and Jacob, are also said to have foreseen the construction and destruction of the Temples. Furthermore, we may ask why the wells must be read as a metaphor for the Temples and not something else. Clearly there must be a deeper meaning, an inner connection between a well and the Temple. And since the Torah is precise, of what significance are the names of the wells? Finally, what is the lesson – the sign for the children – of Isaac's actions? How does it affect our Divine service, our efforts to prepare the world for Moshiach?

Let's begin by looking more deeply into the connection between the Temples and the digging of the wells. A well is formed through the efforts and exertion of man. Nevertheless, the water flowing into the well doesn't come through man's labor. Rather, all man does is remove the dirt covering the water; by digging, he enables the water that is already there to be found. Thus, the unique feature of a well is that its structure is man-made but its contents come from a source beyond man's reach.

This is also true of the Temples. G-d instructs the Jewish people, "Make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in them." On the one hand, G-d's Presence, which is beyond man's comprehension, will dwell within the Jewish people; on the other, there is a command to build a sanctuary, to create a structure to house that Presence. Just as man must dig a well, shaping its walls, before the water can gather into it, so too the actions of the Jewish people, the construction of the sanctuary, must precede the indwelling of the Divine Presence. Further, the construction of a well is not simply a preparation, but is an integral part of its existence. The making of a well causes the water to become accessible and useable. The same is true of the Temple. The making of the Temple is not secondary to the existence of the Temple, and the consequent indwelling of the Divine Presence. Rather, our actions create the Sanctuary. The

fulfillment of the commandment to build is a goal in and of itself. The very act of building is the vehicle for the revelation of the Divine Presence.

We may say therefore that what makes the Temple a "House of G-d" is not that G-d chose to dwell in it, but that the Jewish people made the building and assigned it that purpose. What makes the edifice a Sanctuary is the labor and effort to find a suitable location, and build an appropriate structure. Just as we must search for the site of a well and exert ourselves in digging and removing the obstacles, so too we must seek and strive for the Temple to exist as a Divine dwelling place. True, the Divine Presence dwells there, but it does not come into being as a gift from heaven. We must work to reveal it.

We can now understand why the wells – and by extension the building of the Temples – are connected specifically with Isaac. It is well known that, as it says in the Talmud, there are three pillars of the world, Acts of Loving-kindness, prayer and Torah. It is also well known that each of the Patriarchs embodies one of these three pillars, Abraham being Acts of Loving-kindness, Isaac being prayer and Jacob being Torah.

Now, one Hebrew word for prayer is *avoda* – service. And indeed prayer is called the service of the heart. Hence, the service of the heart "substitutes" for the service in the Temple. To serve G-d properly requires effort, exertion – a working on and building of one's self. One has to dig deep, so to

speak, to create a place where the source of living waters, the Divine life-force of the soul, can be revealed and accessible. This working with and digging into one's self parallels Isaac's struggle to dig the wells.

The first two Temples were destroyed, since they were built through the efforts of man, and everything that is born must wither. The Third Temple is being built in heaven and therefore will be eternal. How is it being built? Through the striving, the searching, the "digging" of the Jewish people. During the long exile, the self-sacrifice – *mesirus nefesh* – of the Jewish people has served as the building material, so to speak, for the third, heavenly Temple. This self-sacrifice occurs in the simple sense in times of oppression; but the dedication to G-d's

***The fulfillment of
the commandment
to build is a goal
in and of itself.
The very act of
building is the
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revelation of the
Divine Presence.***

commandments also occurs in times of physical well-being, when the obstacles to observance take a different form, such as material temptation and the mockery of others.

When an individual does not think of himself, but focuses totally on the task of creating a well, so to speak, of making a dwelling place for the Divine Presence, that is the true Divine service, the true *Avoda*. The Jew becomes a servant of G-d and a vehicle for the revelation of G-dliness. In this way, we not only build the Third Temple in Heaven, we bring it down into physical reality, where we can again offer sacrifices with the coming of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 30, pp. 116-124)

When an individual does not think of himself, but focuses totally on the task of creating a well, so to speak, of making a dwelling place for the Divine Presence, that is the true Divine service, the true Avoda.



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THE REBBE'S DOCTORS

By Menachem Ziegelboim

They arrived pessimistic and pragmatic, but left charmed by the Rebbe's personality. These were the doctors who were called to 770 after the Rebbe's heart attack on that Shmini Atzeres night in 5738. Dr. Mordechai Menachem Mendel HaKohen (Max) Glassman, Dr. Ira Weiss, and Dr. Yaakov (Larry) Resnick a"h soon learned that the Rebbe operates on a different plane than the common man.

** In honor of Rosh Chodesh Kislev.*

DR. MORDECHAI GLASSMAN

Dr. Glassman was at the Rebbe's side from the beginning. The Rebbe said to him, regarding his room, "For me, this room is the Holy of Holies."

A few minutes after the Rebbe went up to his room the night of Shmini Atzeres, 5738 (1977), Dr. Mordechai Glassman was called. As he was staying close by, he was one of the first doctors to examine the Rebbe.

"I went quickly to the Rebbe's

room. The Rebbe was pale and sweating. I saw that his condition was serious. I told the Rebbe: 'Rebbe, I think you are having a heart attack.' The Rebbe said that he had not eaten yet that day and he wanted to go make Kiddush in the sukka."

While the Rebbe made Kiddush and ate, Dr. Glassman saw that the Rebbe was in the midst of a severe heart attack. He asked the Rebbe for permission to hospitalize him, but the Rebbe wanted to go back to his room.

A dialogue ensued between the Rebbe and the doctor, and in

the course of the conversation the Rebbe revealed a little of his feelings for that holy place:

"I told the Rebbe that in matters of Torah and Judaism I listened to him but in medical matters I asked the Rebbe to listen to me and go to the hospital. The Rebbe said, 'In principle you are right but in my special circumstances, you do not know all the facts and therefore you cannot decide.'

"I asked: 'What does that mean that I don't know all the facts? What do I need to know? The Rebbe hasn't taken medication till today. This happened suddenly.'

"The Rebbe said, 'No,' decisively and added, 'I prefer to remain here. Do you have any idea what took place in this room and at my desk?'

"I don't know, but I can imagine,' I answered.

"I cannot begin to tell you what has occurred at this desk,' said the Rebbe, 'but to me, this room is the Holy of Holies – and you are telling me to leave the Holy of Holies for the hospital? The refua will come from here.'"

Unlike the rest of the doctors, Dr. Glassman had met the Rebbe long before this event, back in 5722 (1962), when one of his friends, R' Yehuda Leib Meisel, had told him much about the Rebbe. The amazing stories about the Rebbe moved the doctor, though he sometimes wondered whether his friend was exaggerating.

At a later point, when he had yechidus, he was astounded by the Rebbe's medical knowledge. "The Rebbe discussed the most up-to-date research that had only recently been published in medical journals. I found this highly unusual – this was a tzaddik, not a doctor, and yet he



Dr. Mordechai Glassman



Dr. Ira Weiss



Dr. Larry Resnick

knew the latest in medical information.”

Dr. Glassman spent Shmini Atzeres, 5730, with the Rebbe. He was resting on a bench on Eastern Parkway when he was hurriedly summoned. The Rebbe wanted him on the second floor of 770. Rebbetzin Nechama Dina, the wife of the Rebbe Rayatz, wasn't feeling well, and the Rebbe wanted him to examine her.

“When I went to the second floor, the Rebbe was waiting for me, together with Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. The Rebbe asked me to examine Rebbetzin Nechama Dina and give him my medical opinion. At first glance I could see the situation was not good. The Rebbetzin had difficulty breathing and her lips were blue. The Rebbe asked me what was happening. I replied that her situation was critical and every minute counted. The Rebbe told me that another doctor had given a different opinion. I answered that I could only say what I thought, and I could see the situation was critical. The Rebbe said that since one doctor said one thing and another doctor said something else, he

had to ask a third doctor. I informed the Rebbe that I knew a doctor from Toronto who was downstairs in 770.

“I called the third doctor, and after a brief examination he concurred that her condition was critical. Her lungs were not working properly and neither was her heart. I said that there was no time and an ambulance must be called. The Rebbe asked me what I meant when I said there was no time, and I replied that it was impossible to know where she would be in an hour, or even half an hour.

“After the third doctor confirmed what I said, the Rebbe agreed to call an ambulance and the Rebbetzin was taken to the hospital. Baruch Hashem, her condition improved, and she lived another year and a half.”

Throughout the night of Shmini Atzeres, Dr. Glassman stood near the Rebbe's room.

“I told the secretaries that they had to get a top cardiologist. It was nearly midnight when they were finally able to get a cardiologist who worked in a nearby hospital. He

immediately saw that this was a heart attack and insisted the Rebbe must be taken to the hospital. The Rebbe refused to go and the doctor began arguing with him. As his voice rose, it became apparent that this doctor did not know with whom he was dealing and I had to get involved.

“I informed him that this is the Rebbe, not an ordinary

“I told him that this is the Rebbe, not an ordinary person, and he had to treat him accordingly. If he was unable to do so, he should leave. He left, and I remained alone.”

“I cannot begin to tell you what has occurred at this desk,’ said the Rebbe, ‘but to me, this room is the Holy of Holies – and you are telling me to leave the Holy of Holies for the hospital? The refua will come from here.’”

person, and he had to treat him accordingly. If he was unable to do so, he should leave. He left, and I remained alone.

“I told the Rebbe that I wanted to make an agreement with him. I would spend the night there and keep tabs on the situation, but if the situation grew worse, heaven forbid, the Rebbe had to agree to go to the hospital. The Rebbe said, ‘We’ll see later.’ I wanted to believe that the Rebbe would agree.”

DR. IRA WEISS

In the middle of the night he was called from his home in Chicago, and just a few hours later he arrived in 770. He said to the Rebbe, “I’m not a big doctor but I know what a Rebbe is.” He was the first of the doctors to express even cautious optimism.

It was a long night. The Rebbe had suffered a severe heart attack and an additional heart attack later that night. The Rebbe refused to go to the hospital and angry doctors left, one after the other. The secretaries were beside themselves with worry. They knew the Rebbe needed professional care, but what could they do? They wracked their brains for a plan.

Those present, doctors and rabbanim, debated as to whether to take the Rebbe to the hospital against his will (after giving him a sedative). Some said yes, others said no. They were unable to arrive at a decision. It was Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka who finally declared that they could not do anything against the Rebbe’s will.

Dr. Weiss was a cardiologist, and a mekurav of



Chabad who had visited the Rebbe previously. Despite his youth, he had a reputation as a talented and supportive doctor. On Dr. Glassman’s recommendation, they called him up. Dr. Weiss, jolted awake by the phone call, assured them, “I’ll get on the first plane to New York.”

A few hours later Dr. Weiss arrived at the airport. A police escort was waiting for him by the runway. The police commander seated him in one of their cars and within minutes, he was at 770. He had brought with him advanced equipment so that he could do the examination in the Rebbe’s office and send the results electronically to his office for analysis.

Upon his arrival at 770, he burst into tears. “We always knew that the Rebbe did miracles for sick people. I myself know this because I treated people whom the Rebbe sent to me, and now I’m coming to heal the Rebbe himself...”

When he entered the Rebbe’s room, his face paled. The situation was overwhelming. “I want you to treat me like any patient,” said the Rebbe.

Dr. Weiss examined the Rebbe. “It is hard to treat a patient this way – hard but possible. I’m not a big doctor, but I know what a Rebbe is and so I hope that with G-d’s help I will be able to heal the Rebbe. I will remain here as long as it takes, until the Rebbe recovers, and the Rebbe will surely recover!”

One night, Dr. Weiss went in and said that he had seen a video of that Tishrei and now he understood, a little bit, the Rebbe’s great exertion.

To this the Rebbe said, "There's no proof from a video, because photographers focus on unusual things," and he smiled broadly.

Dr. Weiss remained throughout the Rebbe's recovery, staying there day and night. He received urgent calls from his colleagues in Chicago beseeching him to return immediately because their practice was going under, but Dr. Weiss put all plans, meetings and lectures aside. "I won't budge from here until the Rebbe recovers," he said.

Eventually, his wife also asked him to return home, but he was still unwilling to leave. The Rebbe, however, instructed him, "Listen to her because she is the *akeres ha'bayis*. I, too, listened to my wife, my *akeres ha'bayis*, about traveling to the Ohel. I wanted to go and she said not to, and I conceded to her."

So Dr. Weiss went back to Chicago on Sunday, 4 Cheshvan. For nearly two weeks he led the team of doctors who devotedly treated the Rebbe. He once said that he could not leave until he knew that he would no longer be needed. He added that in his opinion he could help the Rebbe more than any other doctor since, on many occasions, he had seen open miracles with patients who became better after receiving the Rebbe's bracha.

Before he left, he told mekuravim in amazement what his impressions were of this visit. "I learned more than I gave," he declared. He related that every day the Rebbe spoke to him about various medical issues and about up-to-date medical research. More than once, the Rebbe solved problems which had long disturbed him. "Now my

work is cut out for me to plumb the depths of everything I heard and acquired here."

"He's a very nice guy," wrote R' Yitzchok Meir Sassover, a Tamim in 770, in his diary. "Everyone who asked him about the Rebbe's condition was answered with a smile and with outstanding courtesy. For the period of time that he remained here, he was given various gifts in appreciation for his incredible devotion."

Dr. Weiss' departure from the secretaries, the bachurim, and the new friends he made was in Chassidic fashion. They all danced together. Sassover concluded, "There aren't words to thank him for the great privilege that became his lot, to be the shliach of Divine Providence to help bring about the recovery of our king, the Rebbe."

In a letter that Dr. Weiss wrote twenty-nine years later, he noted the significance of Rosh Chodesh Kislev as follows, "An under emphasized perspective of Rosh Chodesh Kislev is the perspective of Rebbetzin Schneerson, who joyously saw the 'return home' of her dear husband. To the Rebbe and Rebbetzin, their limited but very precious moments together constituted the high point of their day. As the Rebbe explained to me, setting aside time for a daily tea with his wife was as important to him as setting aside time to observe the Mitzva of T'fillin."

DR. YAAKOV (LARRY) RESNICK A"H

Dr. Resnick enjoyed special attention from the Rebbe. One day, the Rebbe said to him,

Dr. Weiss received urgent calls from his colleagues in Chicago beseeching him to return immediately because their practice was going under, but Dr. Weiss put all plans, meetings and lectures aside. "I won't budge from here until the Rebbe recovers," he said.



Dr. Ira Weiss with the Rebbe

“Although they say you are the Chassid and I am the Rebbe, now you have to be the doctor and I am the patient.”

When Dr. Weiss had to leave 770 for his home and practice in Chicago, Dr. Larry Resnick’s name was recommended as a replacement. Dr. Resnick worked in the US military at the time and was in town to take care of some business. He spent a Shabbos in Crown Heights and someone suggested that he take over. Dr. Resnick, realizing that this was a highly significant assignment, agreed on condition that the army would grant him official leave. In the meantime, he stayed in a small room on the first floor of 770 and followed the monitor that measured the Rebbe’s heart function.

“One day, my beeper went off and I was told that I had a phone call in the secretaries’ office. It was a call from the White House! I was greeted by the angry voice of Hamilton Jordan, President Carter’s Secretary of State. ‘Why do you think we have to allow you to do this?’ I couldn’t understand why I was being spoken to in this way; nobody had prepared me for this conversation.

“I answered him [Secretary of State Hamilton Jordan] in the same irate tone, ‘If the Pope was sick and he wanted a doctor from the American military to treat him, you would hold a press conference and proclaim your wholehearted agreement to his request. You surely wouldn’t be annoyed with a doctor who wanted to help him!’

“I could hear a clearing of the throat on the line and then he said, ‘Fine, we’ll get back to you.’ The result of that conversation was that I got an official order from the Pentagon transferring me from Honolulu to Brooklyn, and my new job was in 770 Eastern Parkway.”

From the time he came to Crown Heights until Rosh Chodesh Kislev, Dr. Resnick stayed with the Rebbe. He treated the Rebbe with the utmost devotion, and he was absolutely astounded away by the Rebbe’s supernatural behavior. He enjoyed special attention from the Rebbe. One day, the Rebbe told him, “Although they say you are the Chassid and I am the Rebbe, now you have to be the doctor and I am the patient.”

Dr. Resnick related, “If you are familiar with the building of 770 you know that as soon as you enter the main door, there is an office on the right side. That was the office where they placed sacks of mail every day with letters for the Rebbe. There were two phones in that office. One phone was very heavy and ancient – seventy years old, in fact – and



Dr. Larry Resnick

was used by those who worked in the office. The other, more modern, telephone was on the wall. When this yellow phone rang, they knew that the Rebbetzin was calling. At that time, the Rebbetzin would call often for updates on the Rebbe’s condition, and I would give her a report.”

During those five weeks, Dr. Resnick entered the Rebbe’s room countless times. He would often speak to the Rebbe about various topics, sometimes in learning. When he had questions in *Likkutei Sichos*, he would go to the “source” himself, and the Rebbe would answer him with great affection.

Dr. Resnick once asked the Rebbe an interesting question after he learned a sicha on Rashi’s commentary, “an analogy to a sick person whose doctor told him, don’t eat cold food and don’t sleep where it’s damp.” From the Rebbe’s sicha he understood that it was worse to eat cold food than to sleep where it was damp, which surprised him because according to medicine, sleeping in a damp place is more detrimental than eating cold food.

The Rebbe said that to a certain extent, eating cold things was worse. When sleeping in a damp place, the person can get up and move to a dry place at any time, but after eating cold food, there is nothing one can do about it. Dr. Resnick was impressed by this perspective.

In his free time, Dr. Resnick went to the zal and learned with the bachurim. The hanhala of the yeshiva provided him with suitable chavrusas, from the best bachurim, who considered it an honor to learn with the Rebbe’s doctor.

WE ARE SHLUCHIM OF THE REBBE!

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

There are no words to describe the joy and excitement I felt at that moment. It was like suddenly leaping into the midst of Simchas Torah hakafos.

Often people ask me, “How did you become a shliach?” “Did the Rebbe send you himself?” “The Rebbe knows you?” etc. They are unfamiliar with the process by which someone goes out on shlichus. Some people are under the impression that Chabad is a well-greased movement that sends shluchim to various places based on the needs of the organization.

However, we know that a shliach is a shliach of the Rebbe and he is sent to his place of shlichus only after receiving the Rebbe’s consent and blessing. That moment, when his shlichus is approved, is one of the most exciting moments in the life of a shliach, perhaps the most exciting. It is this moment which gives him the strength to carry out his shlichus for the rest of his life.

“ATA HOREISA” IN THE MIKVA IN THE MONTH OF AV

I’ll start with my personal story, when I began my shlichus in Beit Shaan. I was engaged, and we

had various shlichus suggestions and/or I was going to learn in kollel. Shlichus in Beit Shaan was one possibility.

We checked out every suggestion and discussed all the details with Rabbi Yisroel Leibov a”h of Merkaz Tzeirei Chabad and with Rabbi Leibel Kaplan a”h of the umbrella organization for Chabad mosdos. After getting their approval, we wrote a letter to the Rebbe with all the offers and asked for his approval, consent and blessing for shlichus to some location.

It was intercession at yeshiva and I was the director of the day camp for the children of Kiryat Chabad in Tzfas. We didn’t have cell phones back then, so I told the Rebbe’s secretaries that if there was an answer from the Rebbe to our letter, they should call my brother-in-law, Rabbi Yitzchok Lifsh.

R’ Lifsh was called at night. He knew that I was living in the yeshiva in Tzfas. The dormitory at that time was in the Rakefet hotel. He called the hotel and asked the operator for Yaakov Shmuelevitz.

The operator called my room, but I wasn’t there. R’ Lifsh told him, “When you see Yaakov Shmuelevitz, tell him to call me because I have an answer from the Rebbe.”

The next morning, at seven o’clock, some of us bachurim headed for the mikva. The operator, upon seeing us, asked if

SHLIACH FROM THE AGE OF 12

A younger shliach, who wishes to remain anonymous, related: “Do you want to know when I became a shliach? At age 12. At least, that is when I resolved that when I grew up, I’d be a shliach.

“Why at age 12? When the Rebbe sent a group of shluchim to Eretz Yisroel, a large crowd went to the airport to welcome them. My father took me along to the airport, and I remember standing there and waiting in the arrivals terminal. Suddenly the door opened and a group of young men entered the room. They all burst into song and the shluchim were raised up on people’s shoulders with love and admiration. That is when I decided, when I grow up, I will be a shliach!”

we knew Yaakov Shmuelevitz. I introduced myself and he said, "Call R' Lifsh because he has an answer for you from the Rebbe."

There are no words to describe the joy and excitement I felt at that moment. It was like suddenly leaping into the midst of Simchas Torah hakafos. Although I did not know what the Rebbe's answer was, it did not matter much at that moment. The main thing was that there was an answer from the Rebbe and I would soon know what the Rebbe wanted my wife and me to do in the course of our lives.

I remember the simcha and dancing at the mikva. I don't remember if we sang "Ata Horeisa Ladaas" or "Yechi Adoneinu," but I will never forget the simcha that "there was an answer from the

Rebbe."

Later on, I called R' Lifsh, and he conveyed the Rebbe's answer: **"Regarding the shlichus in Beit Shaan, I will mention it at the gravesite, may it be in a good and auspicious hour, and with expansiveness, materially and spiritually."**

I will allow myself to speak on behalf of all shluchim (even though no one gave me this authority). That moment, when I got the Rebbe's bracha for shlichus, accompanies me always and differentiates me, and all the Rebbe's shluchim, from all the Jews of all backgrounds who are involved in Kiruv. They are wonderful people, but only we have the ko'ach of the meshaleiach; **we are shluchim of the Rebbe!**

***The mayor said,
"Please convey
my request to
the Rebbe, that
he send a
shliach to Beit
Shaan."***

WHY ISN'T THERE A SHLIACH IN BEIT SHAAN?

Actually, the story of our shlichus in Beit Shaan began about two years before we arrived. In the 80's, the Rebbe announced the importance of printing the *Tanya* wherever Jews live. At that time, Beit Shaan did not have its own Chabad house, although the shluchim in nearby Afula did reach out to Beit Shaan and held some shiurim there. When the Rebbe said to print the *Tanya*, the shluchim in Afula printed the *Tanya* in Beit Shaan.

When the bound s'farim came from the printer, a big celebration took place. It was attended by the rabbanim of the city, gabbaim of shuls, the mayor, Minister Dovid Levy, and many residents from Beit Shaan and the environs. When it was the turn of the mayor, Shlomo Benlulu, to speak, he asked, "Why do they have to come from Afula to print the *Tanya* in Beit Shaan? Why is there no shliach here? Please convey my request to the Rebbe, that he send a shliach to Beit Shaan."

The shluchim from Afula immediately wrote to the Rebbe with the mayor's request. The Rebbe answered that this was a matter that pertained to the umbrella group for Chabad mosdos. When the shluchim from



The Rebbe encouraging the singing as he sees people off

Afula informed them about this, they, in turn, appointed the shluchim from Afula to look for a qualified candidate.

The shluchim from Afula put an ad in *Kfar Chabad* magazine, "Wanted: A dynamic person for shlichus in a city in the north of the country." A few months went by. I was learning in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas when I saw the ad and called the number. They told me that they were looking for a married man, not a bachur. A few more months went by, and as soon as I became a chassan I called the Chabad House in Afula again. They had not found anyone in the interim.

We began checking it out, along with some other offers, until the Rebbe gave his bracha and we became the Rebbe's shluchim in Beit Shaan.

THE SECRETARY CALLED: YOU WERE CHOSEN FOR SHLICHUS

In the mid-1970's, the Rebbe sent groups of Shluchim to the area. I spoke with one of them, Rabbi Leibel Schildkraut, shliach and director of mosdos in Chaifa. R' Schildkraut will never forget those days in 5737 when he and his wife, and their entire group, became the Rebbe's shluchim.

"It began at the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen," said R' Schildkraut. "The Rebbe suddenly said that he wanted to send a group of families to Eretz Yisroel. Whoever was interested should give his name and his wife's name to the secretaries. We submitted our names, as did many others, but for

the next two months nobody got an answer. Then, near the end of Shvat, the secretary Binyamin Klein called us and told us that the Rebbe had picked us to be in the group, if we were still interested.

"The next day, Thursday, the 24th of Shvat, the secretary called again and said that the Rebbe wanted all the members of the group to leave for Eretz Yisroel on Sunday. The entire group raced against the clock to arrange passports and tickets and pack, and we were all ready by Sunday.

"On Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim, the Rebbe devoted a sicha to the shluchim, with special brachos and horaos that accompany us for more than thirty years now, day in and day out, in every task, in every situation, and wherever we are."

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ROSH CHODESH KISLEV: THE RETURN OF THE KING

The heavy wooden door of 770 opened wide. There stood the Rebbe, in all his majestic glory. The enormous crowd burst into a mighty roar as they sang the victory song of "Napoleon's March." There was no better niggun for that moment.

PART I

In the afternoon of 29 Cheshvan, 5738 (1977), word got out that the

Rebbe would be going home for the first time since Shmini Atzeres. It had been more than a month of yearning for the Rebbe. Routine in the world of Lubavitch had ceased. There was no yechidus, the sichos at farbrengens were said from the Rebbe's room and heard over the sound system, and only a few people davened in the small zal. The Rebbe had been isolated in his room, surrounded by doctors and machinery.

The happy news spread quickly. Chassidim had waited for this for weeks. All who were able went to 770. Businesspeople left their work and housewives in midst of preparing for Shabbos dropped everything and went. They did not know when the Rebbe would be

leaving 770. The crowd, which grew from moment to moment, stood and waited.

Thousands stood facing the path that led from the main entrance. They filled the lawn, and some even climbed trees to get a good view. The cold weather on that historic day did not stop people from waiting outside. The atmosphere was like that of a pressure cooker ready to explode.

Night fell. It was Erev Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5738. It was 7:35 p.m. The light in *Gan Eden HaElyon* went out. In another brief moment...

That last interminable moment went by. The heavy wooden door of 770 opened wide. There stood the Rebbe, in all his majestic glory. Chills went down the spines of the assemblage. The Rebbe! There he was! He looked exactly the same. The Rebbe looked at the Chassidim

and the Chassidim looked at the Rebbe. After what had seemed like an eternity, they were reunited.

After a few moments of hesitation, the enormous crowd burst into a mighty roar as they sang the victory song of "Napoleon's March." There was no better niggun for that moment.

How magnificent it was to see the High Priest as he left the Holy of Holies...

The Rebbe waved his hand, as he always did, to encourage the singing. The crowd had been waiting for that signal, the sign that all was well, all was as it used to be. And the singing became more intense. People cried, tears of emotion and of joy.

The anxiety of the past six weeks dissipated in an instant. The Chassidim had so longed for this moment, from the minute the Rebbe sat down in the middle of the hakafos and then wasn't seen for weeks.

The Rebbe walked towards the car, still motioning. Even after he entered the car he continued to encourage the singing. As the car pulled away, the Chassidim formed joyous circles of dancing. Anyone who was not present cannot imagine the jubilation of the Chassidim.

Upstairs, on the second floor of 770, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka watched the happy Chassidim. "Since my father was released on 12

Tamuz 1927, there wasn't a simcha like this among the Chassidim," she commented. This short but powerful statement summed up the emotions of this historic moment.

In the meantime, the Rebbe drove home. The car stopped a few houses away from the Rebbe's house so the Rebbe could walk a little, as his doctors had instructed. The policemen who would patrol near his house approached the Rebbe respectfully and said, "Rebbe, we have waited a long time for you to return home." The Rebbe smiled.

PART II

Later that evening, the Chassidim decided it would be appropriate to continue the hakafof that had been interrupted the night of Shmini Atzeres. Sifrei Torah were taken out of the Aron Kodesh in the small zal and the hakafof continued. "Ata Horeisa Ladaas" was recited, and the p'sukim were sold for large sums to buy mashke and to make a Seudas Hodaa to Hashem.

Many people rushed home to bring meat, fish, fruit and cake. Storekeepers donated food and paper goods. Chassidim held the Sifrei Torah and danced jubilantly in a great release of the tension that they had experienced since Yom Tov.

The pavement in front of 770 filled up, as people continued to come. Bottles of mashke were poured liberally. With such an unlimited simcha, who could measure the amount of mashke? It was an auspicious time.

Two children lined up all the empty bottles. When the janitor came to clean up early in the morning and he saw the row of bottles, he burst into tears.

"What happened?" some Chassidim inquired. "You should also be happy that the Rebbe is well."

"Of course I'm happy too. But with so many bottles emptied here,

you couldn't have at least left me a drop?"

While the dancing was going on throughout the night, some Chassidim sat down to farbreng with mashpiim. Each mashpia, in his own style, spoke about the wondrous giluyim they had experienced that night.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Groner relates, "At two in the morning I went into the hanhala's office, where the doctors had slept, and spoke with Dr. Resnick. He, by nature, was a cool, intellectual person, and he didn't dance with everyone else. Yet he conceded that it was an emotional evening."

The next day, Friday morning,

The policemen approached and said, "Rebbe, we have waited a long time for you to return home." The Rebbe smiled.

when the Rebbe returned to 770, he stopped along the way to talk to Dr. Resnick.

"I heard that last night everybody was dancing," said the Rebbe with a smile, "except for two who did not dance, you and me! I want you to make up for it tonight, and you should dance for me, too."

That night, Dr. Resnick got swept up in the dancing. Afterwards, he said he never saw simcha like that in his life.

In a speech he delivered at a Kinus HaShluchim, Dr. Resnick declared, "The Rebbe had a tremendous impact on my life, from the moment I first met him and accepted medical responsibility for his recovery in 5738. Thanks to the

Rebbe, I experienced much simcha in my family." He received a standing ovation.

PART III

Despite the drinking that went on all night, the next day the Chassidim channeled their joy into massive hafatza. Hundreds of T'mimim and Anash went out to the streets of New York to put t'fillin on Jews and share their simcha with them, the simcha of Klal Yisroel.

Anash decided to arrange a big Kiddush and farbrengen on Shabbos. Jews from all over Brooklyn walked to 770 to join in the simcha.

"Many people made Kiddush on mashke and stayed to eat the Shabbos lunch meal, the third Shabbos meal, and Melaveh Malka in shul. The elder mashpiim farbrenged all Shabbos," wrote Rabbi Yitzchok Meir Sassover in his diary. The children had a special program too.

The Rebbe spent that Shabbos in 770, davening in the zal on the first floor with a small crowd. The Rebbe had the aliya of Maftir. When he read the words, "they bring upon My altar," he burst into tears.

On Motzaei Shabbos, a large crowd gathered in front of 770 to watch as the Rebbe drove home. All hoped that these trips would become routine once again.

It has been reported that the Rebbetzin stated that until she witnessed that great simcha, she hadn't realized the depth of the love the Chassidim had for the Rebbe.

PART IV

Chassidim put forth the idea to write the story in a Megilla and call it, "Megillas Rosh Chodesh Kislev." In fact, every year, Anash and T'mimim around the world farbreng, say l'chaim, and recount the happenings of those days.

From "Sippur shel Chag - Chagei Chabad"

CROSSROADS IN ISRAELI-US RELATIONS

By Sholom Ber Crombie

Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

In order to achieve something in the United States, you have to prove you have no intention of giving in. It is impossible to demand from Eretz Yisroel to do something that is contrary to its very existence.

This happened in 5750, shortly after George Bush Senior became the 41st President of the United States. A delegation from Israel, headed by Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir, left for Washington in order to meet with the new president and to get to know the leader of Israel's greatest ally. In those days, Shamir was starting to consider moving in the direction of the left side of the political map, and slowly began to abandon the right-wing ideology to which he had adhered throughout his political career until he assumed the premiership. The main issue of discussion was a proposed internationally sponsored peace conference (which eventually took place two years later in

Madrid, Spain) and the granting of autonomy to the Palestinians, and the American pressure was very intense. Yet, Shamir was also deeply concerned that the new president's positions regarding Israel and the conflict with the Palestinians were being well concealed.

An entire staff of advisers joined the delegation and labored long hours to prepare its case to be promoted before the Bush Administration in Washington – and for good reason. The elder Bush's accession to the Presidency of the United States was still relatively recent – he had taken office just several months earlier – and there was a flashing red light of apprehension in the background that the new

Chief Executive was liable to be extremely inflexible with Israel. The assumption was that we were dealing with a U.S. President who would deal harshly with the Government in Yerushalayim and would advance the interests of the Palestinian cause. Israel reasoned that the American pressure to make territorial concessions would only intensify, because the demands this time were far greater.

THE OPPOSITE OF THE NATURE OF THE UNITED STATES

One of the people accompanying Israel's delegation to Washington was Elyakim Rubenstein, who was one of Prime Minister Shamir's advisors. Rubenstein knew the complex relationship between Israel and the United States all too well, and worked long and hard preparing how to explain to the Americans the position of Israel's interests versus America's interests. The main argument presented was that what is a matter of mere foreign policy to the Americans is a matter of survival for Israel. In other words, the Americans can concede on something that is deemed insignificant in their eyes, such as its foreign policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict, in order to make things easier for Israel in a matter of central importance to its very existence. Nevertheless, out of a sense of concern for the Americans' hard-line approach, there was an understanding among Shamir's close circle of advisors that they would have to compromise, here and there, on matters not classified as vital to Israel's security.

Upon his arrival in the United States, before proceeding to

Washington, Rubinstein met with the Rebbe in 770 at Sunday dollars. When his turn came, the Rebbe immediately said to him, "I have heard much about you. May it be G-d's Will that you will be similar to Eliyahu HaNavi, who delivered the shlichus of the Holy One, Blessed Be He. Until today, you brought the shlichus from flesh and blood, now you will bring the shlichus of the Holy One, Blessed Be He."

Rubenstein began by presenting the objective of his visit: "We are traveling this week together with the Prime Minister, Mr. Shamir, to meet with President Bush. These are not easy times, today is not as it once was. The situation in Washington has changed."

The Rebbe replied: "You are his advisers; perhaps you should advise him that in order to achieve something in the United States, you have to prove that you are firm in your positions and you have no intention of giving in – not in order to beat them, but because there can be no other way. It is impossible to demand from [the government in] Eretz Yisroel that it should do something that is contrary to its existence and contrary to its livelihood."

Elyakim Rubenstein proceeded to state again that these are difficult times, but the Rebbe stopped him by saying, "The solution to the diplomatic situation is the opposite of what has been done so far. Up until now, they held the position that they not only have to give in on something, but on their principles, in order to get something as a result. This is contrary to the very nature of the United States. The United States came into existence and was founded by firmly maintaining

that it is impossible to concede on something vital to them, and it makes no difference whether England yells at them and France was against them or when the entire world was against the United States – because they held firm in their position, they succeeded, and succeed to this day."

Rubenstein went back to

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Yisroel.***

explaining Israel's position and the claims that were being presented in Washington. He explained to the Rebbe that they will tell the Bush Administration that what for them is foreign policy is a matter of survival for Israel – "and this is a big difference". However, he added that it's not always easy to

explain this because of the Arab pressure, which is now stronger than it had been.

The Rebbe again stopped him and said, "I don't like to say this – but in my opinion, that's not the reality. You start by saying that this is the main thing for us, but since we are among the seventy nations, we therefore have to make concessions. However, when you start to make concessions, it's impossible to find the point where it's impossible to give in."

WHEN YOU START MAKING CONCESSIONS...

It has been eighteen years since that amazing yechidus, and the words of the Rebbe shlita, Melech HaMoshiach, appear sharper and clearer than ever before. A couple of weeks ago, the newspaper headlines blared those exact same claims that Elyakim Rubenstein made in 5750 – "We'll explain to Obama that what for him is foreign policy is a matter of survival for us." Alongside this statement, they proclaim in Israel again and again that they will be prepared to make painful concessions in those things that do not constitute (in their estimation) the components of Israel's most basic and vital security needs.

Once again, Israel expresses concern over a newly elected American President and his unclear positions. Once again, they seek to repeat the same mistakes, and instead of pursuing the true interests of the Jewish People by taking a firm and upright stance, they try to repel the American pressure with the assistance of empty and unfounded claims.

Eighteen years have passed,

yet Israel's political leadership still hasn't learned its lesson. It makes exactly the same errors and is certain that it can avoid straightforwardly confronting the question of our right to Eretz Yisroel. Is this a right dependent upon various "democratic" arguments that have never convinced the Americans, or can we claim openly that the Land of Israel belongs to the People of Israel, and therefore, there can be no compromise? Today, as in 5750, they are certain in Israel that if they seek to minimize America's demands, they will succeed in protecting Israel's "vital interests," such as the rejection of the Arabs' claim to the right of return and preserving the main settlement blocs. However, the Rebbe's words echo once again in these times, for when they begin to make concessions, it is difficult to find the point where they will stop afterwards, and they will eventually give up even that which they want to preserve.

With the outgoing president, George W. Bush, Israel has clung

to this approach of concessions on those principles seemingly less important to Israel in order to ensure the promise of protection for Israel's "vital interests". In this manner, the expulsion plan for the settlements of Gush Katif and the northern Shomron got the green light, when the biggest promise that the United States gave Israel in exchange was a document with an assurance that America would not demand the right of return for the Palestinian refugees and would defend the main settlement blocs. The election of Barack Obama is expected to have an immediate short-term effect upon the Israeli side, and the power relationship between Israel and the United States will change, as in the area of perceptions, the manner of conduct, and demands.

We have to hope that whoever assumes the office of Prime Minister of Israel in another few months will not be a fool who will immediately run to Obama and give him all of his demands on concessions to the Palestinians. Commentators

estimate that during the first months of his tenure in office, Obama will refrain from pressuring Israel, but the political leadership in Eretz Yisroel will be directly influenced from the position of the U.S. Administration, and is liable to do everything to find favor with and please the new American uncle.

However, the major benefit from Obama's election to the Presidency of the United States has already been attained. If until now, throughout the period of the George W. Bush Administration, the Government of Israel acted as America's "yes-man," and we heard again and again that we must always fulfill everything that Bush requests – with an emphasis that he is Israel's best friend – we now hear coming out of Yerushalayim discussions on the question of how to appraise the manner of promoting and explaining Israel's position in the face of Obama's demands. This can only be to Israel's benefit.

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KEEPING THE TORCH ALIGHT

By Nosson Avrohom

Two young Chassidim took note of the lack of programs for the hundreds of thousands of Russian immigrants in Eretz Yisroel – and acted upon it. * Without big organizations and philanthropists to back them, they started Lapid (meaning torch) which provides classes, seminars and more.

It was another news bulletin publicized in Chabad online and written media: “Success for the Seminar on the ‘Foundation of the Jewish Home.’” The reports told about a well-attended seminar for Russian speaking Jews that took place at the spacious CHAMAH campus in Nachalat Har Chabad.

The seminar, a brainchild of Lapid, an organization centered in Tzfas with influence throughout the country, was attended by dozens of people. It was devoted to lectures on the Jewish Home as reflected in Chassidic thought.

It’s no secret that plenty more work needs to be done in Eretz Yisroel with Russian immigrants. In former countries of the Soviet Union, Chabad houses abound, buildings are constructed and

Jewish communities are coming to life. In Eretz Yisroel, however, it’s another story. In many cities the Chabad houses do not target Russian immigrants. What programming there is, and the few who devote themselves to the immigrants, is a drop in the bucket of what needs to be done.

When I heard that there is a Lubavitcher organization that has begun working with Russians, I called my friends and inquired about it. I discovered that it’s a serious and growing organization.

The seminar that took place in Nachalat Har Chabad is one of many seminars that the organization holds every month in different locations. Lapid has also started dozens of Chassidus classes around the country. It’s in touch with a number of activists and establishes, through them,

entire communities in cities where there was no outreach to immigrants before. Since Lapid’s foundation five years ago, it has become one of the major organizations that caters to Russian speaking Jews.

“Our main focus is on starting communities in various cities,” say the founders of Lapid. “The immigrant community is, for the most part, zealous about its tradition and habits, and avoids competing for attention with the regular population.”

“Because of the difference in mentality, in addition to the language barrier, many immigrants cannot join the existing programs that shlichim provide. This is why many immigrants – even those who are actually interested – don’t have a way of getting involved. Therefore we started these shiurim and hold seminars, advertising them in the newspapers that our crowd reads.”

Lapid features shiurim on their website, and groups of Russian speaking Jews in the Ukraine, Russia, and even Germany and Austria, regularly get together to listen to them. This makes it easier on their shlichim, especially the newcomers who still haven’t learned the language.

IGNITING THE SPARKS

I met with the founders of Lapid, Rabbi Boruch Arister and Rabbi Eliyahu Rosenblum, to hear firsthand about their work, and learned that the two men have a similar background.

"Despite the fear of the communist regime, I always saw Jewish identification in my home, particularly with my grandfather who would put on t'fillin," said R' Rosenblum.

"In the early Nineties, when the Soviet Union began to crumble, masses of young Jews wanted to learn about Judaism. Hundreds of them flocked to Jewish centers and shuls. It was a spiritual arousal that is very hard to explain to those who didn't experience it. When the government allowed the study of foreign languages, centers opened throughout Russia to teach Hebrew. What many had done in secret, now had government

approval.

"If only I had maintained the thirst for G-dliness that I had back then. The push to identify with Judaism on the part of thousands of young Jews, including myself, brought the Rebbe's shluchim to cities like Moscow. I met Chabad Chassidim who were proud of tradition and were not ashamed to talk about the Rebbe with open admiration.

"When I went to Eretz Yisroel and settled in Chaifa, I knew that I wanted to be religious. I spent some time in a Litvishe setting, until I met R' Reuven Dunin, a" h. Even without my knowing much Hebrew, I was captivated, and the rest is history."

R' Arister told me:

"I lived in Moscow. In the late Eighties, we began to feel that the communist regime was going under. There was a mass movement of young Jews towards Torah and mitzvos. My older

brother, who was studying in a university in Moscow near the Chabad shul, Marina Roscha, began visiting the shul, along with many other young men. They davened and attended farbrengens, and made their first steps into the world of Chassidus.

"My brother's stories about Chassidic life piqued my interest. One Shabbos I came along with him, and I was hooked. When I went to Eretz Yisroel, I wanted that same kind of experience, so I went to learn in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas."

The two men met in the yeshiva in Tzfas and after they married they continued to learn in the Kollel Tzemach Tzedek. They saw the need to reach out to the immigrants who lived in the city and had nowhere to turn.

"The first decision we made was six years ago," said R' Rosenblum. "It was my birthday farbrengen, and I wondered what



“Some of the participants from Odessa, who came to visit Eretz Yisroel, called us and wanted to join one of our seminars. They weren’t interested in touring. They wanted to learn.”

hachlata to make. The low spiritual level of the immigrants bothered me, so I decided to start a library for Jewish books and to advertise it among them. We quickly rented a place and within a short time we obtained hundreds of Russian language books.

“As word of our library spread, we saw there was a tremendous interest, and that we could expand our services. Before we went ahead, we wrote to the Rebbe about our success with the library. In the letter we opened to in the *Igros Kodesh*, the Rebbe blessed a Jew who was opening a shul. We decided to do just that. Apparently the Rebbe didn’t want sporadic activities but a serious base of operations with which to build a community.

“We quickly found a good location, and on 10 Shvat five years ago, we held our first shiur. Soon after, we began hosting farbrengens and daily minyanim, and it wasn’t long before the shul drew hundreds of immigrants residing in Tzfas. Success gave us the motivation to found the Lapid organization and to hold national

events, not just local activities. We established a network of kollelim, seminars and k’hillos through which we do our work.”

Behind the catchy Hebrew name, Lapid, there is a concept that is the core of the organization’s activities.

“There is a sicha in which the Rebbe tells the story of the Chassid who asked the Rebbe Rashab what is a Chassid. The Rebbe said that a Chassid is a lamplighter who walks about with a torch (*lapid*) and lights the wicks. This is our goal with our work, to ignite people’s souls with our seminars and shiurim and get them to join the k’hillos in their cities.”

MOSHIACH – FAITH AND LOGIC

Shiurim and seminars, as successful as they are, can only give the first push, say the organizers. Then you need k’hillos with rabbanim who know the language and understand the

mentality so that people have a place to turn to and ask their questions and get answers. Lapid helps young married men to begin outreach work with the goal of launching organized k’hillos with a shul. Lapid also assists existing k’hillos to arrange for non-profit status and deal with the endless Israeli bureaucratic red tape.

One of the organization’s branches is located in Beis Eliezer, a neighborhood in Chadera where Rabbi Sholom Rotenbord and his wife have been working for ten years. Dozens of Russian and other families have joined them and a shul was built and shiurim started. They have classes in people’s homes as well as programs for children and youth, women’s gatherings and farbrengens.

Lapid entered the picture in recent years, helping the couple on shlichus deal with organizational issues, and they in turn have started sending their mekuravim to seminars that the

MIRACULOUS RECOVERY

Writing to the Rebbe through the *Igros Kodesh* is promoted by those who run Lapid. During their daily activities as well as at seminars and other events, if someone tells about a problem of any kind, the members of the organization will tell them to write to the Rebbe.

“Two participants in my shiurim are a couple who are both doctors,” relates R’ Arister. “At one shiur, the husband looked gloomy and I knew something was amiss. When the shiur was over I asked him what was wrong.

“He said that his wife was sick with kidney trouble and was hospitalized for days in a coma and on a respirator. The husband was not at all optimistic of her prognosis and he prepared his children by telling them that it was possible that she wouldn’t make it.

“Of course I suggested that he write to the Rebbe, which he did. The answer was to check the mezuzos. When we checked them, we discovered that the mezuzah on the parents’ bedroom was written on paper instead of on parchment. It was changed that same day and we hoped for the best which did, in fact, happen in a miraculous way.

“The woman’s condition began to improve until she recovered and it’s a few years now that she is doing fine. Today they live in Lud and are members of Rabbi Avrohom Chazan’s community.”



A kollel for Russian immigrants



One of the lecturers giving a shiur via the Internet



A group of immigrants listening to a shiur given live over the Internet

organization runs.

“We started looking for shlichus right after we got married,” said R’ Rotenbord. “We lived in the center of Chadera and we decided to open an Ulpan where people could learn Hebrew with half the time devoted to Torah study.

“People loved the combination of learning Hebrew and learning about Judaism and many showed up. It was only a matter of time until they asked that the place be turned into a shul. After we held daily minyanim there, we also opened a kollel for the study of Judaism and were successful with this too. Every Shabbos about 100 people come to the shul, called Shaarei Menachem. Once we moved into the neighborhood, the programs really took off. We started new shiurim and activities for all ages and growth

continues.”

Like all those who are involved with Jews from the CIS, R’ Rotenbord also has to deal with intermarried couples.

“Unfortunately, intermarriage is not only between the immigrants. I recently dealt with a situation in which a Yemenite boy met a gentile Russian girl here in Israel, and I undertook to separate them. G-d was with me and the young man was willing to listen to me. I told him some stories about the Rebbe regarding Jews who assimilated. I spoke to him from my heart and his Jewish conscience pushed him to leave the girl. There is no magic formula. Each case is different but the bottom line is you have to tell them the truth.”

R’ Rotenbord sees no problem with spreading the B’suras HaGeula. “People think that the

topic of Moshiach is one of faith and not logic. Maybe it used to be that way but once the Rebbe taught his chiddushim, the topic is rationally understood too. If I see a Jew only accepts logical explanations, I get him to believe in Moshiach through logic.

“At our shul there are all kinds of people, including Mizrachi and every one of them knows who Moshiach is and how to sing Yechi. They hear it from me in shiurim and at farbrengens and understand that it’s something true and ‘alive.’

“Last Sukkos I was asked to give a shiur in the sukkah of one of our congregants and I came late. From the distance I could hear them singing Yechi without them even knowing that I was about to walk in.”

THE CALL OF THE HOUR: SHIURIM

The leaders of Lapid as well as the directors of its branches, agree that the most important thing for Russian immigrants is a national network of shiurim. The one who organizes Lapid's shiurim is someone who deserves an article to himself, Rabbi Daniel Boloshnik. In addition to the outreach work he does in his city of Migdal HaEmek, he runs no less than 45 shiurim, from Tzfas in the north to Beer Sheva in the south. Over 2000 people attend these shiurim every week and this is in addition to the kollelim for seniors.

I spoke to Rabbi Ravina Aharonov, an activist who works

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for Lapid. He does tremendous work with kafkazim, immigrants from the Caucasus. There are no other shluchim in Eretz Yisroel who work with this population, whose members prefer to live in their own communities even after years of living in Eretz Yisroel. R' Aharonov came to Chabad after attending the shiurim of Yad L'Achim activist, R' Alex Artovsky. Since then, he considers shiurim the most important way of being mekarev young people of his community.

“I was born in Dagestan, a three hour trip from Baku in Azerbaijan. I became interested in Judaism there, unlike many of my friends who assimilated. One of my friends, who had left the city, came back and opened a shul with a sort of yeshiva framework. That's when I started learning *Tanya* and Chassidus, which paved the way for me to study Chumash, etc., and eventually sh'chita.

“In 5752 I emigrated to Eretz Yisroel and I wanted to continue my studies. I took Alex Artovsky's classes and thanks to him, I was hosted many times by the Chabad community in Netanya and I learned there too. In my city of Chadera I connected with the shliach, Rabbi Klonymous Kupchik from whom I learned a lot.”

R' Aharonov says that after he got married he got a few shlichus offers like going on shlichus to the Caucasus, but he decided to work in Eretz Yisroel.

“We tend to invest a lot of energy abroad and overlook the masses of Jews who have moved here and need us no less. In recent years we have done a lot of work in Chadera with shiurim for young boys and girls and people are very excited. Some of them have already become Chassidim.”

R' Aharonov has numerous touching stories to share and we asked him to pick just one, the story he considers the most moving. It was hard to pick one but this is what he told us:

“There is a bachur who is about to go on shlichus to Moscow. He became frum thanks to the shiurim. I know him from back in the Caucasus. He made aliya while married to a non-Jewish woman. It really bothered me and I began talking to him. After some time he realized he had made a mistake and he decided to leave her, although this was hard to do.

“Then he spent a few years learning in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas. This bachur had an amazing story. After he left the gentile woman he owed a lot of money and so he didn't think it would be possible for him to buy a ticket to go to the Rebbe. He wrote to the Rebbe and the answer, in volume 10, was about the preparations that need to be done before going to the Rebbe. Well, this bachur won the raffle to travel to the Rebbe!

“Today he is married to a baalas t'shuva who studied at Ohr Chaya and they are getting ready to go on shlichus in Moscow where they will work with Jews who moved there from the Caucasus.

“There are some other stories about Jews who, thanks to the shiurim, realized the seriousness of intermarriage. My shiurim are mainly for high school aged boys. One of the shiurim takes place in memory of a friend of theirs who died suddenly. These guys are very zealous about not missing a shiur. Some of them began growing a beard and many began keeping Shabbos. Their thirst for knowledge is enormous.”



**Rabbi Rosenblum at the chuppa
of a talmid of the kollel**



**Rabbi Arister with members
of the kollel in Tzfas**



**Rabbi Boruch Arister (on the left side) and Rabbi Eliyahu Rosenblum (right)
farbrenging with immigrants.**

USING TECHNOLOGY FOR SHIURIM

The tremendous impact from these two shiurim are multiplied over 20-fold when you consider that such stories are common wherever these 45 shiurim are held. Still, if you ask the directors of Lapid, they say they are only starting out and there is so much more that needs to be done. They have no plans for taking it easy; they constantly think about how to expand their circle of influence which is what led them to providing shiurim on the Internet.

"Within Lapid's website there is another site that is called Torah Video," explains R' Rosenblum. "It will take more time until we can physically reach every location where Jews want to learn Torah. We are using advanced technology in order to spread Judaism to as many Jews as possible. This site is a kind of

virtual yeshiva with shiurim on various topics in Torah from Halacha to Gemara and of course on Chassidus and the B'suras HaGeula.

"The one who gives the shiur sits in our studio in Tzfas and Jews from all over the world can participate in the shiur, ask questions and experience the shiur. As mentioned earlier, it's an excellent resource for new shluchim who went on shlichus to the CIS and don't know the language yet. They send their mekuravim to learn via this site."

Internet shiurim are on various levels. It's just amazing how these shiurim are accessible worldwide and Jews from out-of-the-way places participate.

"People are really interested to the point that when we wanted to have a two week vacation around the holidays, the participants didn't let us do it. They begged us not to stop. Some of the

participants from Odessa, who came to visit Eretz Yisroel, called us and wanted to join one of our seminars. They weren't interested in touring. They wanted to learn."

SEMINARS

The seminars are the "icing on the cake" of all Lapid's programs. These seminars take place every month, in various locations throughout Eretz Yisroel.

"We believe that the seminars are a vital tool in kiruv," says R' Rosenblum. "Even if they don't have the power to change someone from one extreme to another in two days, they are able to inspire people. A Jew, who lives in an irreligious environment in a place that is estranged from Judaism, will have a hard time making a step in the right direction even if he's moved to do so. The seminar gives him the

tools and the initial push to make a change."

Many of the seminars take place in Tzfas. Lapid works closely with Ascent:

"The atmosphere in Tzfas is spiritual and opens people up," says R' Rosenblum. "Many people are motivated to make a change after attending a seminar. There's no greater pleasure than seeing one of the participants, some time after the seminar, walking down the street and wearing a kippa. You know, without him telling you, that he was touched by the seminar. Or you see someone wearing tzitzis and many people start attending the ongoing shiurim in their hometowns because of the seminars."

Additionally, there is another type of person attending the seminars – Jews who are religious but who did not learn enough and who still lack a lot of knowledge.

"At the last seminar that took place in Nachalat Har Chabad, a woman attended who became frum through one of the Litvishe organizations. She said at the concluding farbrengen that she didn't realize that Chassidim had geonim and scholars and that there was such depth to Torah. She had been under the impression that Chassidim are simple people who are happy and dance all day."

In addition to the seminars that last a few days and have an array of shiurim, Lapid also conducts tours of the graves of tzaddikim and organizes trips whose purpose is Jewish identification. This is the second year that the organization is joining with other Chabad organizations that work with Russian-speaking Jews and together they are going to the gravesite of the Rambam in Teveria. There they will have a

big farbrengen and mark his yahrtzeit.

"The first time we decided to make the trip, an amazing thing happened. We ordered some buses and advertised and many people came. Unfortunately, we didn't calculate right and the amount of money we charged wasn't enough to cover the cost of the buses. If this was the only thing we did that year, then we could manage to cover the cost but when there were many other projects that needed money, this unexpected expense was quite a

We are soldiers in the Rebbe's army and soldiers don't ask questions, they obey! The Rebbe says to publicize the B'suras HaGeula, so we do. And people accept it."

burden.

"In the middle of the trip, one of the women wanted to write to the Rebbe. In the answer she opened to, the Rebbe wrote to someone that this time the secretariat would cover all the costs but from now on, he had to make sure there was enough money in advance.

"Nobody besides us knew about any money that needed to be paid and so the answer was surprising. Before we could recover from the shock, the woman told us that the way she

understood the answer was perhaps she was supposed to donate some money to our organization so that the topic she wrote about to the Rebbe would work out. With simple faith she took out her wallet, pulled out a wad of bills, and gave them to us.

"When we counted the money we couldn't get over it. The amount was precisely the amount we were missing. The Rebbe promised to pay and he immediately did so."

When I asked R' Rosenblum about ways to spread the B'suras HaGeula among immigrants who are the intellectual type raised on rationality and scientific reasoning, he did not understand the problem.

"The Rebbe Rayatz writes that the Alter Rebbe founded Chabad Chassidus in Russia because Russian Jews are most suited to it, so why shouldn't Russian immigrants of today be able to relate to the Rebbe's sichos when the Rebbe is the successor to the Alter Rebbe and says the same Chassidus?

"Furthermore, we are soldiers in the Rebbe's army and soldiers don't ask questions, they obey! The Rebbe says to publicize the B'suras HaGeula, so we do. And people accept it."

I was interested in hearing what R' Rosenblum and R' Arister's plans are for the future.

"We want to open a big spiritual center in Tzfas for Russians along the lines of Ascent. There is something about Tzfas that opens the soul. A center like this can be a place where we hold workshops and people can be hosted. It would be a huge leap forward. Shluchim would have a place to send people."

SHLICHUS IN THE BASTION OF REFORM

By Nosson Avrohom

*When the Rebbe told Rabbi Sholom Dovber Kalmanson to go on shlichus to Cincinnati, he didn't even know where it was on the map. Upon checking it out, he realized what a monumental task lay before him. Thirty-five years later there is an array of mosdos and additional shluchim. * The story of a shliach who went up against the Reform stronghold and won. * Part 2 of 2*

[Continued from last issue]

THE ONE GOAL OF SHLUCHIM

One of the eleven mosdos that R' Kalmanson oversees is the mesivta of Cincinnati, which is directed by Rabbi Gershon Avtzon (see issue #660 for an article about the mesivta). This is the yeshiva's third year and so far, it has been very successful. R' Kalmanson is very involved with the yeshiva but if you ask him, his contribution is the

weekly shiur he gives on Sunday. The shiur enables the bachurim to ask him anything they want, even about basic ideas in Judaism and Chassidus.

"In the past we all knew that a Chassidische chinuch is the best chinuch. Today, there are cracks. More and more teachers and parents do not know what is special about a Lubavitcher chinuch. A teacher can enter the classroom and give a shiur and go home. He may not be interested in the students' inner worlds. There are rabbis and mashpiim who give their shiurim based on the assumption that the students are proficient in the foundation of the topic they are talking about.

"Mashpiim speak about lofty matters and remain oblivious to the fact that many talmidim don't know what they're talking about. A few months ago I asked a group of talmidim whether they knew what the Rebbe's war about the law of Mihu Yehudi is about. I was shocked. Nobody knew. Another time I asked who knows what a Rebbe is. Some said that a Rebbe is an Ohev Yisroel. Others said that he does miracles, that he is a Torah genius. But is that a Rebbe?! That might be a great rabbi, but not a

Below: Talmidim in the mesivta in Cincinnati. Right: With the talmidim-shluchim in the mesivta



Rebbe.

"A Rebbe is a 'general soul.' A Rebbe is a Nasi HaDor. A Rebbe is the Moshiach of the generation and consequently, he has all those special qualities that they mentioned. But this is the problem with chinuch today. We don't realize that we have to start from the beginning. To educate properly means dealing with the basics, loving the students and connecting them with the foundational ideas in a deep way.

"There are many menaholim who are less interested in actual chinuch than they are in having successful talmidim and how this will reflect on their school. Today, after Gimmel Tamuz, we have to invest even more than we did in the past in the Chassidishe chinuch of our talmidim."

When I asked R' Kalmanson how he sees Lubavitch today, he said, "The situation today is such that we have plenty of 'those that ruin and destroy you, come from you.' Instead of moving forward, in light of the Rebbe's sichos, some of us



Rabbi Sholom Dovber Kalmanson

have chosen to stop and get involved in politics. This clashes with the eternal truth that led us, and continues to lead us, as shluchim and as Chabad Chassidim, in preparing the world to greet Moshiach.

"I heard from a shliach who visited a Litvishe bookseller in

"We have to teach that the Rebbe is not something of the past, heaven forbid. If the mechanchim taught this way, we wouldn't have kids who are cooled off. A child has to know that today we have a Rebbe!"

Monsey, who said that he knows what is going on in Chabad today. He put it this way, 'The older ones are still busy being mekarev Jews and the younger ones are busy



TRUE REALITY IS G-DLINESS

Rabbi Kalmanson's influence doesn't begin and end in Cincinnati. In recent years he has been invited to speak at many gatherings and Yemei Iyun around the world. A famous speaker, who heard that I was going to interview Rabbi Kalmanson, told me that the secret of Rabbi Kalmanson's success in speaking is that he doesn't merely speak well. He conveys solid material with something for everyone. When the topic is Moshiach, it's hard to remain apathetic after hearing him speak.

Rabbi Kalmanson has an amazing story that happened back in 2001, which is illustrative not only of his power of communication, but his perspective on the world.

"I regularly travel to London for Yud-Tes Kislev, in order to speak at the Geula and Moshiach Shabbaton organized by Rabbi Chaim Yitzchok Cohen. A few weeks before my trip, Rabbi Amitai Yemini, shliach in Los Angeles, asked me to spend Shabbos with him. I was supposed to travel with my wife, but since she didn't feel well shortly before the flight, one of my daughters took her place.

"Because of the attacks on the World Trade Center, I needed identification even for a domestic flight, so we took our passports. When we returned home, I put the two passports down together.

"When I am invited to speak, I usually ask for a direct flight, but that year, because the cost of a direct flight was too much for him, R' Cohen asked me to take a flight from Ohio to New Jersey and then to London. Since it was a brief stopover, I agreed. On the domestic flight I had no problem since I showed them my driver's license, but before boarding the flight to London I had to show my passport.

"I didn't understand why I got a puzzled look when I handed over my passport, until I realized that I had taken my daughter's passport by mistake.

"The plane was taking off in forty minutes. I had to be in London for Shabbos. I suggested that I would fly and would ask my family to send my

passport to London, but the man smiled and said that was not possible. You cannot fly from country to country without a passport, especially with the tightened security conditions after 9/11.

"I asked to speak with a supervisor, but he also said I could not fly without a passport. I sat in his office thinking how I had to be on that flight! I asked him to call someone in charge in London and let me speak to him, but that, too, got me nowhere.

"Then I remembered a horaa from the Rebbe from the 50's that when a shliach is stuck, he should say that the Rebbe sent him, and he will be successful. I decided to go l'chat'chilla aribber and said, 'I am an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It is as his emissary that I must participate in an important conference in London.'

"When we talk about 'living with Moshiach,' we first have to internalize the idea that this world is concealment and the true reality is G-dliness."

"There was silence on the line and then the man asked me, 'Do you have a driver's license?' When I said that I did, he said, 'Get on the plane. When you get to the immigration officers in London, tell them that I approved your entry this way. It's all in the computer when they type your name.'

"The American clerk couldn't believe it. From his office I was taken directly to the plane, which closed its doors as soon as I had boarded.

"In London I got an Arab employee. When he heard that I was there without a passport and that I had gotten permission

to enter with my driver's license, he began screaming at me. I told him to check the computer and see for himself. He did so unenthusiastically, and when he saw what it said, he told me that in his thirty years working in that department, he had never seen anything like this. Of course, the farbrengen that Shabbos was about this amazing miracle.

"When we talk about 'living with Moshiach,' we first have to internalize the idea that this world is concealment and the true reality is G-dliness. It's only when you live this way that you are able to see miracles.

"On my way home to Ohio, I went through the same thing again but that time, it went more smoothly."



The Chabad house of Cincinnati



The young generation in Cincinnati

fundraising and building buildings.'

"Why do they hide what the Rebbe asked us to publicize? I don't understand it. There was a professor here in Cincinnati who became frum and is now in Yeshiva University. His wife, who also became frum, decided to do research on the differing views within Chabad. She spent a long time doing her

research, learning all the sichos from 5710 and searching the Igros Kodesh. She came to me one day and said, 'Rabbi Kalmanson, I don't understand how there are people in Chabad who oppose publicizing Moshiach.'

"This woman sat next to a shliach on a flight to Israel. When she told him that she was from



Chabad house on campus

Cincinnati and that she knew me, he depicted me as a lunatic. She asked him, 'Why do you say that? I know him and he was mekarev me!'

"She told him about the research done by a professor in Bar Ilan University, who discovered that most mekuravim today are meshichisten. The shliach remained silent since he had nothing to say. Chabad is not a kiruv rechokim organization and we are not a public assistance association. We are, first and foremost, shluchim of the Rebbe who do what we were asked to do."

One of the outstanding qualities of Rabbi Kalmanson - and whoever knows him can confirm this - is his enthusiasm and warmth for inyanei Lubavitch in general and inyanei Moshiach in particular.

"The only way to preserve the Lubavitcher fire is by mechanchim and mashpiim educating the talmidim in this way. Last night I gave a *Tanya* class, and one of the women excitedly told me that her son constantly talks about his pride in being a Chassid of the Rebbe.

"She is not a religious woman but her son, who attends our school, is proud of being a Chassid. Why? Because that is what he was taught! The same is true for inyanei Moshiach. We have to teach that the Rebbe is not something of the past, heaven forbid; he's not history but something current. If the mechanchim taught this way, we wouldn't have kids who are cooled off. A child has to know that today we have a Rebbe!"

SHABBOS IN THE COTTON FIELD

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Reinitz

Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman will never forget that Shabbos. While his friends sat in his parents' house and farbrenged on Shabbos B'Reishis, he had to be in a cotton field, making believe he was picking cotton while he surreptitiously recited the morning prayers.

COTTON PICKING: A NATIONAL PROJECT

When Shabbos B'Reishis comes around, I recall the Shabbos B'Reishis I spent against my will in a *kolkhoz*, among dozens of gentiles who were picking cotton. Now, as I write my memoirs, I decided to devote one brief chapter to that long Shabbos.

Before I relate what happened on that Shabbos, I will give you some background information. After the Communist Revolution, traditional farming was destroyed and was replaced with cooperative farms and huge government farms. The goal was to develop agricultural products for export in order to bring foreign currency into the country.

A massive cotton growing campaign began in 1937. Just as oil earned the moniker "black gold," cotton was called "white gold."

The arid desert-like conditions on the plains of Turkmenistan and in

central Soviet Asia were excellent for growing cotton. Under the Five Year Plan, the Soviet Union enlarged the area for this crop. The Soviets installed irrigation lines, put down train tracks to transport the cotton, and built factories throughout the area.

Nowadays, in most countries, cotton picking is automated from beginning to end, but back then the Soviet Union did not have enough machines to pick the cotton and the existing machinery did not work properly. All the work had to be done manually. An exhausting task, in earlier times it was relegated to slaves.

Since exporting cotton provided the Soviet Union with large amounts of foreign currency, the government decided that cotton picking was a national project and all citizens had to contribute of their time towards it. During the harvest, high schools and universities were largely closed down since many students would

travel to *kolkhozes* to pick cotton. Work places also had to send some of their employees to participate in the national project.

Since the cotton harvest began before Rosh HaShana and lasted for two months, this was a terrible decree for the religious Jews who lived in those areas. They were required to pick cotton for a number of consecutive days, which included Shabbos and Yom Tov. Being absent from cotton picking was dangerous; since it had been declared a national project, how could you explain avoiding your patriotic duty?

THE MOSLEM IN CHARGE MADE THREATS

Our workshop also had to send some workers to pick cotton. Since all our workers were Lubavitchers, we hired goyim and sent them, on our behalf, to pick cotton. We explained to the people in charge that we had a lot of work to do at the workshop and we had to keep our regular employees in order to supply the quota assigned to us (as explained in the previous chapter).

The people in charge apparently realized the real reason behind our refusal to go pick cotton ourselves. Thus, they did not always agree to this arrangement and required that we go to the *kolkhoz*. Instead of sending one worker for ten days, we tried sending ten workers for one day. We claimed that ten workers



Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman

I thought of the Chassidic adage: “The way you start off on Shabbos B’Reishis is the way the whole year goes,” and wondered – if this was how my Shabbos B’Reishis was, what sort of year was in store for me?

accomplished in one day the same amount as one worker in ten days. But they insisted that we had to send

one or two of our workers for at least one full week.

We tried to push them off each

time, but eventually they said we had to send one of our workers for a week. If we didn’t, they would consider our refusal as political defiance against the government, and there would be consequences.

Having no choice, I decided to send R’ Moshe (Moshke) Valotzky to the kolkhoz for a few days. He left on Monday for the kolkhoz, which was located in a village called Jambol, forty kilometers away from the city. He was supposed to return on Friday afternoon. To our surprise, he returned on Wednesday.

He told us that since the kolkhoz was very far from the city, he had



been afraid that he wouldn't be able to find another car traveling toward Samarkand in order to make it back before Shabbos.

The next day, when I arrived at the main plant for which we worked, I met a Moslem who was in charge of supervising the factory on behalf of the communist government. He began screaming threateningly at me, in front of everyone, "You should know, Zaltzman, that cotton picking is political. If you continue to insist on not sending representatives from your workshop, I will show you..."

That morning the person in charge of the cotton picking had visited that kolkhoz, and when he inquired as to whether the man from our workshop was there, he discovered that he had been there only from Monday till Wednesday.

I saw that if I didn't calm him down, he could carry out his veiled threat and arrest us. I tried to mollify him by saying that I would personally go to pick cotton, but he continued to shout, "When are you going? After Shabbos?!"

I didn't know what to say. I was afraid that if the KGB decided to accuse me of a political crime they might investigate and discover all our underground work. Having no choice, I said, "Fine, I will go tomorrow, on Friday."

I figured that I would go the next day and spend Shabbos at the kolkhoz, but wouldn't do any work on Shabbos. The main thing was for them to see me there with the workers.

SHACHARIS IN THE COTTON FIELD

Friday morning I set out early so I would get to the kolkhoz before Shabbos. I took three challos for Kiddush and lechem mishneh, and fish and meat for the meals. I did not take my t'fillin because I was afraid that I would not be able to

hide them. I would have to return on Sunday in order to put t'fillin on that day. I hid the money for my return trip in my coat.

According to the rules, I had to sign in with the people in charge upon my arrival to get the special apron that was used. It was an apron with a long sack attached in which the cotton fibers were placed. I went quickly to the office so I could sign in before Shabbos that I had gotten the apron. However, the supervisors were out with the workers and hadn't come back from the field. The kolkhoz people didn't understand why I was in a rush. They said, "Where are you hurrying to, comrade? You can get the sack later tonight, or even tomorrow morning."

Of course I couldn't explain to them why I was in a rush, and I waited impatiently for the supervisors to return. To my good fortune, shortly before Shabbos all the workers returned along with the supervisors, and I was able to sign and get the apron-sack.

Some of the workers, who worked in the government factory where I worked, recognized me as a young chevraman and exclaimed, "Ho, Zaltzman arrived!"

They suggested that after supper we go to a club and spend the evening dancing etc. I didn't immediately reject the idea so I wouldn't appear suspicious, but I wondered how to get rid of them without their realizing why I refused to go along with them.

I went with the other workers to the sleeping area where I had been allotted a mattress. I lay down feeling quite upset. I thought of the Chassidic adage: "The way you start off on Shabbos B'Reishis is the way the whole year goes," and wondered – if this was how my Shabbos B'Reishis was, on a distant kolkhoz with goyim, what sort of year was in store for me?

The gentile workers, who had

rested a bit from their work, asked me to join them for supper in a restaurant and then to continue on to the club. I told them that I had a bad headache and couldn't move. The truth was that I actually did have a headache because I was so upset.

After all the workers went to eat, I got up and went outside to daven in the fresh air. I had not taken a Siddur with me, of course, and I davened Kabbalas Shabbos by heart. Then I made Kiddush on the lechem mishneh, ate a small piece of fish and meat, and went to sleep. I had a hard time falling asleep. My mind was preoccupied with ideas about how I would manage to daven Shacharis the next morning, and deceive everyone so they wouldn't notice that I wasn't working.

In the morning I got up with everyone else. I somehow managed to avoid breakfast with the goyim, and when they began to head out for the fields I quickly put on the apron-sack so I wouldn't be carrying it to the field.

When we got to the field, I looked for a spot that was far from the other workers so they wouldn't notice that I wasn't working. I managed to daven Shacharis while walking about in the field and making it look as though I was picking cotton.

In the afternoon, after I finished Shacharis, I returned to our living quarters, where I made Kiddush on lechem mishneh and ate the Shabbos meal.

I thought of my friends in Samarkand, farbrenging in honor of Shabbos B'Reishis, and missed them terribly. That particular Shabbos there was a minyan at my parents' house, and that is where the farbrengen was being held. I felt that I could not stay any longer at the kolkhoz, not even until Sunday morning. I began to think about how I could return to Samarkand Motzaei Shabbos.

THE BLACK ROAD

I had inquired earlier, so I knew that not far from the kolkhoz was a highway that connected Samarkand with Tashkent. Many trucks drove by there that took hitchhikers for a fee. The problem was that in order to get to the highway, one had to cross fields and vineyards which were guarded at night by dogs as big as wolves. Crossing those fields at night, one could be torn to pieces.

I decided to leave the kolkhoz immediately, while it was still daylight, in order to have enough time to reach the highway before nightfall. I walked quickly and was close to the highway by late afternoon. I stopped on the side to daven Mincha and wait until the stars came out. When Shabbos was over I walked to the highway and tried to stop a truck.

This highway was considered dangerous, and was known as the "Black Road" since there was no knowing who you were stopping. There were instances in which drivers had stopped for people standing by the road and robbed them. There were also the opposite cases, in which robbers waited on the road for victims to stop for them.

I stood there a long time, waving my hand, hoping that someone would notice me and stop. After some time, a driver stopped his truck. When I got in I noticed that there was another passenger sitting next to the driver. In the pitch blackness I couldn't see the stranger's face. I sat quietly next to the door, hoping the trip would pass peacefully.

After a few minutes, the other passenger asked the driver to turn off the main highway and go to a small village on the roadside. Since the village was very close to the highway, the driver agreed. It was a bit frightening because the roads within the village were absolutely black. The passenger guided the

driver along the roads until he reached his destination.

I got down from the truck in order to let the other passenger out, and then climbed back in. While the door was still open, the driver asked the man for the money he was owed for the ride. The man took out a big knife and threatened the driver with it as he screamed, "You want me to pay you?"

There I was, sitting in between the driver and the man with the knife. I was terrified! If the driver started arguing with him, I was likely

In order to get to the highway, one had to cross fields and vineyards which were guarded at night by dogs as big as wolves. Crossing those fields at night, one could be torn to pieces.

to be the victim. Fortunately, the driver realized what sort of character he was dealing with, and he drove away as the door closed on its own.

After we calmed down from that horrible incident, I spoke to the driver and found out that he was going to be driving right near my house. Since I had left the kolkhoz before Shabbos, I had left my money there and I had no money to pay him. When he drove near the street where I lived, I asked him to wait a little so I could get some money from the house and pay him. But

after his scary experience with the previous passenger, the driver was afraid to wait and drove off.

When I entered my house, I was happy to see my friends still sitting at the Shabbos B'Reishis farbrengen, which lasted late into the night. They were thrilled to see me. They had thought of me throughout Shabbos and had wondered how I was doing there at the kolkhoz among goyim. I told them everything that had happened.

PLEASANT MOMENTS DURING HARVEST SEASON

During those difficult months of the cotton harvest, there were also some pleasant moments that I recall. After we had taken care of the cotton picking problem, we could enjoy Chol HaMoed Sukkos and farbreng in the big sukkas in our yard and in the Mishulovin family's yard. We did not work at the workshop and we had the time to farbreng all day. If someone knocked, our hearts began to beat quickly in fear of the KGB, but in general those were pleasant days.

One year we had to send three workers from our workshop to pick cotton on Sunday. I went with R' Moshe Nisselevitz and R' Michoel Mishulovin. We brought food from home, as well as the *HaYom Yom* which I had managed to obtain two months earlier in Moscow (as I will relate in a later chapter).

During the lunch hour we moved away from the other workers and sat on the grass near a spring. After eating our full, we learned the *HaYom Yom*. Each entry that we learned was a vast spiritual treasure for us. It had been many years since we had gotten any information about the Rebbe, and this book revived us. I cannot describe how great was our pleasure to learn another aphorism, another sicha, another horaa.

'STRIKE AT THE SETTLERS!'

By Shai Gefen

*Following a wave of attacks against outposts and settlers before the elections, Beis Moshiach presents an interview with Gershon Mesika, the Chairman of the Shomron regional council. * "These elections are critical for the future of the settling of all of Israel," he warns. "The Jewish people were miraculously saved from government under Olmert and Livni, both of whom were ready to hand everything over to the Arab enemy."*

We are at a crossroads. We went through an extremely difficult period, especially after the Annapolis summit and Olmert and Livni's plans of giving everything to our enemy. Comments?

We must thank Hashem that the elections were moved forward. The government is determined to attack the outposts and the existing yishuvim. We

must praise Hashem for saving us and rejoice over getting rid of them. They belong in the garbage heap of history. There is still great concern that in this interim period they will try to amass political currency with the philosophy of "strike at the settlers and save the nation," as we remember from various dark times back in Europe.

We are being exceedingly

cautious not to give them any opportunity or motivation by avoiding any provocation on the part of the settlers. We hope that we will make it through these hate-propaganda-filled days, which are timed for the elections in order to save some hopeless politicians whose popularity is dropping in the polls.

A few weeks ago they destroyed the Federman farm, and now we have the anti-settler incitement of Barak and Olmert. How do you explain this?

There was nothing that justified the attacks by the Israeli media. It is all an attempt to amass political currency, like Olmert did with Amona. It was his goal to do better in the polls that motivated him to perpetrate the atrocities in Amona. Now we are going through the same thing, with narrow minded politicians who don't know how to handle the situation in the south. It's all falling apart before their eyes. All their retreats over the past years have been shown to be dangerous failures. They gambled on the lives of an entire nation, and now that they're doing terribly in the polls they revert to incitement against the settlers.

Barak spoke about cancerous growths, and a decision was made to no longer support the outposts. What are you doing about this?

As I said, their motivations are obvious. They have abandoned the settlers and their security, although most of them serve in elite units of the army. We are sure this will boomerang in his face. We see how the Labor party which he leads is about to collapse, and they are all scrambling to distance themselves from the failure.

As far as the decision not to fund the outposts, this is an old decision they have recycled to show that they are facing Left. I'm not scared. We see how the broader public loves us. Just last Sukkos about 20,000 visitors came to Shomron, excluding Binyamin and Yehuda. I would like to thank the "Matteh to Save the Nation and the Land" for the campaign it did, and the transportation that brought people from all over the country to Shomron.

It often happens that when an attack is out of all proportion, which is what is happening with us, the victim is admired even more. The effect of the attack boomerangs.

What are you doing about the upcoming critical elections, with Yerushalayim, Yehuda and Shomron in the balance?

The real arena is the political arena. Unlike the earlier elections, I think that this time tens of thousands of people will take action. We have learned from the expulsion that we have to put all our efforts into the primaries with every party, so that those loyal to Eretz Yisroel will be put into realistic positions on the ballot, and those who were not loyal will be pushed out.

We need to ensure that as many as possible from those who are passionate about Eretz Yisroel will vote in the general election. The religious sector needs to stop being a tagalong and grab the



Every Jew should visit Shomron, Yehuda and Binyamin. There are people who were never in those areas, parts of our country where our Patriarchs walked.

leadership. If 30% of the Knesset members will unite as a bloc and not enter any coalition except as a bloc, they will have the potential to establish who the next prime minister will be, and decide on the future of Yerushalayim, Yehuda and Shomron.

I call upon the religious sector to unite, so that any future government will have to reckon with the National-Religious and Chareidim, and to join only that government that will publicly guarantee that it will not abandon Yehuda, Shomron and Yerushalayim.

How do you explain that Kadima still appears in the polls as a viable party?

The Kadima party is a fiction of the money men and the media, which puff it up in a patently artificial manner. They live in a bubble without substance, and all it takes is a pin prick for the balloon to burst. I really hope that the public sobers up. Any peace agreement process is a delusional process. Since Oslo, the Israeli government has retreated step by step. The world's opinion of Israel has only worsened. The more we conceded, the more despised we became. The Rebbe's warnings were borne out. Not only did the concessions not achieve the world's support, but the opposite. The pressure against us intensified and we need to say we've had enough. Not for security or political reasons but for the real reason, that the Tanach is the property deed of Eretz Yisroel, and Hashem gave Eretz Yisroel to Am Yisroel as an everlasting gift.

Is settling the territories a growing or diminishing phenomenon?

There was never as much construction as there is now. The rate of growth is triple what it was. I call upon everyone to come and settle in Shomron.

In your opinion, can the deterioration be stopped despite what has happened until now?

I wouldn't say it *can* be stopped; I'd say it *must* be stopped. We will not be able to exist if the

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suicidal process called "peace agreements" is not stopped.

I had an argument with a journalist who explained the Left's position in giving away land as fear of a demographic problem. I told him that he was

speaking hypocritically because in another twenty years there will be an Arab majority in the original borders of the State of Israel, so according to him they will be giving away the entire country. They don't have a real claim. The demographic problem is baloney.

We have to increase our birth rate and settle all over Israel, and this will make the desert bloom. Giving away our land to our enemies just endangers us. We see what's happening in Acco and how the entire Israel became a powder keg.

What can people do?

The first thing is for people to convince others to get out and vote on election day. Another thing, every Jew should visit Shomron, Yehuda and Binyamin. There are people who were never in those areas, parts of our country where our Patriarchs walked. Bringing a million people to these places will strengthen Jews' connection to our land, and they will better understand the danger.

I think the work being done to bring tens of thousands of Jews to these places is excellent. If, G-d

forbid, we get another leader who will decide to expel Jews, he will have to face tough opposition from the public who won't let him take such dangerous steps.

Do you still rely on Netanyahu after what he did to Israel?

I do not rely on Netanyahu. We need as many Knesset members as possible who are to the right of him. We have to see to it that we have as many Knesset members who are loyal to Israel within the mainstream of Likud. I call upon anyone who is affiliated with any of the parties, whether Likud, Ichud Leumi, Shas etc. to work on getting those loyal to Israel within those parties into positions of leadership.

In conclusion:

We cannot despair. Our Geula is progressing with giant steps. Each of us has to be ready to answer, "What did you do to bring the Geula?" Every Jew has to think about what more he can do, and where and how he can be more influential in order to bring Moshiach and our redemption.

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