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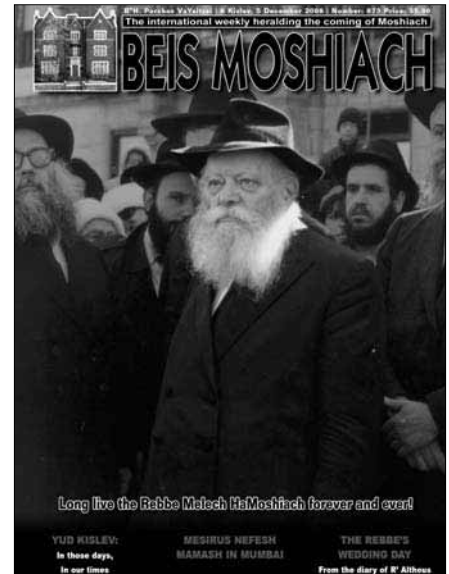
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USA

744 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409
Tel: (718) 778-8000
Fax: (718) 778-0800
admin@beismoshiach.org
www.beismoshiach.org

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

M.M. Hendel

ENGLISH EDITOR:

Boruch Merkur
ed@beismoshiach.org

ASSISTANT EDITOR:

Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd

HEBREW EDITOR:

Rabbi Sholom Yaakov Chazan
editorH@beismoshiach.org

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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FROM A HUNDRED- FOLD TO A THOUSAND-FOLD

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

The negotiations between Lavan and Jacob allude to the role of the non-Jew, and the blessing he will receive for assisting the Jew in learning Torah and observing mitzvos. In the times of Moshiach, the non-Jew will also be blessed a thousand-fold.

When discussing the Redemption and the coming of Moshiach, one of the most frequently asked questions concerns the role of the non-Jew. While almost everyone understands that the era of Moshiach will be one of universal peace, as Maimonides explains at length, there are still many unresolved issues. True, the “world will be filled with knowledge of G-d as the sea fills the ocean bed;” true Moshiach will “improve the entire world, motivating all the nations to serve G-d together;” true, “in that era there will be neither famine nor war, envy or competition, for good will flow in abundance and all delights will be as common as dust.” But the question remains: what is the role of the non-Jew? Or, more specifically, what will be the relationship of the nations to the Jewish people? That depends, of course, on what relationship the nations have to the Jewish people now, not just over the centuries, but most importantly in the current situation, in the last few moments before the coming of Moshiach.

Answers to these questions – and the definition of that relationship – can be found in this week’s Torah reading,

VaYitzei. After the birth of Joseph, Jacob seeks to take his family and return home. His uncle Lavan wants Jacob to continue working for him. In the exchange that follows, as they negotiate over wages, G-d’s blessing is mentioned twice. First Lavan declares, “I have observed the signs, and the Lord has blessed me for your sake.” Jacob, for his part, asserts that the disproportionate increase in Lavan’s herds is due entirely to the blessing given for the sake of Jacob.

“You know how I have served you, and how your cattle have fared with me. For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly; the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned.”

The *Zohar*, the primary work of Kabbala, discusses two opinions concerning the extent of the increase. By how much did Lavan’s herd grow? According to one opinion, it was a hundred times; according to Rabbi Abba, it was a thousand times, since a blessing from Above never results in less than a thousand-fold expansion.

In order to understand why there are two opinions – and the significance of increasing a thousand-fold as opposed to a hundred-fold, we first have to understand the essential nature of a blessing.

In general, a blessing draws forth an emanation from the spiritual source of the one being blessed. What does this mean? A blessing increases one’s well-being. One can have better health, a better livelihood, more stable relationships, or even greater understanding. One’s spiritual capability may be concealed, its expression in this world blocked. A blessing, which is connected to the root, the spiritual origins of the individual, opens the spiritual

pathway, so to speak. It actualizes potential, acting as a channel to enable possibilities – better health, better livelihood, etc. – to be realized. As a result, one’s efforts lead to success or well-being; the previously hidden or obstructed inner reality becomes revealed. Since the physical world is a manifestation of the spiritual, the nature of one’s soul, its spiritual source, determines the nature of one’s physical life and thus the type and extent of a blessing. Factors such as physique, genetics, personality and environment determine one’s physical strengths and weaknesses. So, too, the extent and effectiveness of a blessing depends on the source of one’s soul.

We can now understand the difference of opinion concerning how many times Lavan’s flock multiplied. According to the first opinion, it was Lavan’s blessing. It’s just that Jacob had earned the right to be the transmitter, the vehicle through whom the blessing came down to Lavan. But the nature and form of the blessing was determined by the spiritual source of Lavan’s soul. Accordingly, his flock increased a hundred-fold, for that number indicates perfection for Lavan, a complete realization of his spiritual potential.

On the other hand, according to Rabbi Abba the blessing belongs to Jacob. He brought it with him. Thus, even though he brought it to Lavan, the blessing comes from the root and source of Jacob’s soul. Therefore the flock increased a thousand-fold, for the number one thousand is connected with the perfection of Jacob, the complete realization of his spiritual potential.

This observation leads to two questions: first, what is the reason for the association between the numbers and the individuals – one hundred for Lavan, one thousand for Jacob; second, why is the property of Lavan blessed through the merit of Jacob?

The second question can be answered easily: As Rashi points out, the world was created for the sake of Torah and for the sake of Israel. The purpose of creation in general is to assist the Jewish people in serving G-d, in observing the commandments. When a *tzaddik* such as the patriarch Jacob comes to a place and there serves G-d, the place and all its inhabitants fulfill their life’s mission by helping the Jewish people be a “nation of priests.”

As to the difference in numbers, it may be explained this way: The number one hundred indicates

completeness within the realm of nature. Thus, a hundred-fold increase means that the natural blessing is complete and perfect. A thousand, on the other hand, indicates a perfection that reaches beyond the laws and boundaries of nature. In fact, the letters of the word for a thousand in Hebrew can be rearranged to form the word “wonder.” Saying that something occurs a thousand times means that it is wondrous or miraculous, that it goes beyond the normal limitations, that it is outside the common experience.

This is also the difference between the nations of the world and the Jewish people. The nations in and of themselves are confined to the natural order, while the Jewish people have a connection with G-d that goes beyond creation, enabling them to serve G-d in a miraculous manner.

***...Recognizing this,
the non-Jew will
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mitzvos.***

The question is, do the nations of the world have a connection to the status of the Jewish people? When they fulfill their Divinely ordained task by assisting the Jewish people to observe the Torah, is their blessing limited to a hundred-fold, to the natural consequence? According to the first opinion of the *Zohar* quoted above, the blessing of the non-Jews is in fact limited, because their connection with the Jewish people, and hence G-dliness, is limited. However, according to Rabbi Abba, who says that Lavan’s flock increased a thousand-fold, when the nations of the world do what G-d has commanded them, namely, obey the seven universal laws, the Noachide commandments, and thus enable the Jewish people to observe

the Torah, then the nations can also approach the level of the Jewish people, receiving a blessing akin to the thousand-fold, miraculous blessing of the descendants of Jacob.

The lesson for our times is clear: first, although the Jewish people are dependent on the non-Jewish nations in which they live, the life and blessing of the non-Jew depends on the assistance rendered to the Jew. Recognizing this, the non-Jew will joyously help the Jew perform that which brings life and blessing, namely, observance of Torah and mitzvos. When this thousand-fold blessing will apply to the entire world, with the coming of Moshiach, then G-d will “turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him all together.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos 20, pp. 136-143)

MESIRUS NEFESH MAMASH IN MUMBAI

By Aliza Karp

This is not supposed to happen. What went wrong? When Shluchim are spreading light in the world, how can darkness overtake them like this?

Friday morning the news was finally being released. It was known that bodies had been removed from the Chabad House in Mumbai but the names had not been confirmed. I set to work, writing a press release to give at the soon to be held press

conference at the Children's Museum, and my phone rang. It was Helen Freedman from Americans For a Safe Israel. She was crying. I realized that the news was finally conclusive.

I have worked with Helen on Shleimus HaAretz projects. She

certainly does not identify as a member of Chabad and I was touched by her sincere expression of pain. I asked her why she felt so strongly about the tragedy. "Because I know all the good work that Chabad does. All the love Chabad brings throughout the world. Wherever you go, even in a place where there are few Jews, you find friends in the local Chabad House. And if you want, you can always stay for Shabbos. I know how the Shluchim dedicate themselves completely and when I look at the picture of the wonderful smiles of the





Photo credit: Meir Alfasi



Photo credit: Meir Alfasi

Far left: The Chabad House secured, after the tragedy. Left: The Holtzbergs' 2-year old son, Moshe, a young victim of terror. Above right: Rabbi Leibish Teitelbaum, a US citizen who lived in Jerusalem, who was killed in the Chabad House. Bottom right: R' Benzion Chroman of Bat Yam, another victim who paid with his life.



Holtzbergs...” she could not finish her sentence as new wave of sobbing blocked her words.

This is not supposed to happen. What went wrong? When Shluchim are spreading light in the world, how can darkness

overtake them like this?

The Alter Rebbe said to live with the times. In the first portion of this week’s Parsha is the famous Chabad slogan “U’faratzta.” Yaakov is leaving Eretz Yisroel and Hashem is

telling him to spread out. Is that not what the Holtzbergs did? And the next Pasuk says, “Behold I am with you and will guard you wherever you go...”

Is there an explanation to what happened? I don’t think so. And I don’t want to hear an explanation. The pain is too deep. The conflicting thoughts are too confusing. I don’t want to hear that they accomplished what they were sent to this world for – even if it is true.

On the Tenth of Teives, 5751, 1991, the Rebbe spoke about the Holocaust. Sichos in English quotes the Rebbe: “Undesirable events sometimes occur, not as a punishment for sins, but because of an unfathomable Divine decree, a dictate which transcends any and all explanation... There can be no explanation within the Torah for such a Holocaust.”

What about the young Holtzberg couple themselves? The Rebbe continues in the above Sichah, “The very fact that they died *al Kiddush Hashem*, regardless of any other virtues they had – and they were indeed virtuous... – elevated them to such a level that ‘no creature can stand in their presence.’”

And what about their son, who is an orphan? This child is reminiscent of the Tzemach Tzedek, orphaned at a young age to be cared for by his grandfather. Baruch Hashem the Holtzberg child has exemplary grandparents. And even though no one can replace parents, the worldwide Chabad network is sure going to try to accommodate to whatever extent possible!

And what about the rest of us? Shocked, shaken and heartbroken, but not disoriented. In the past week we have reviewed the Rebbe’s reaction to the terror attack on Kfar Chabad in the

RESPONSE TO TERROR BY THE INTERNATIONAL CHABAD COMMUNITY

This week, the international Chabad community experienced the pain of uncertainty as the tragedy in Mumbai dragged on with no confirmed reports. Now it is reeling in the news that a beautiful young couple – people who gave their lives to bring good cheer to others – have fallen victim to terror, leaving a son who is turning two years old today. Every birthday of his life, will he feel the pain that he cannot yet understand?

The numerous Chabad websites frequented by Chassidim have been posting every bit of news as soon as it comes available. Comments are being posted expressing pain and frustration. In Chabad we have been trained that we do not indulge in self-pity. No matter what! The Rebbe insists we take action. And that is what is happening. Mixed into the news from Mumbai are reports of projects being undertaken around the globe in honor of the Holtzberg family and other victims.

The Chabad community is extremely goal oriented. We feel there is a purpose to every life and our purpose is to teach Jews about their heritage and non-Jews about their role in this world according to the Torah (known as the Mitzvahs of the Children of Noah or Noachide Laws.)

The young Holtzberg couple represent the ultimate participants in the movement to achieve the goals of Chabad. The Rebbe’s army of Shluchim fight ignorance and evil with knowledge and goodness. The Holtzbergs are from the elite unit of Shluchim who are the forefront of our battle. We treasure them. Every person connected to the Rebbe treasures the Shluchim. They are our heroes. We love them and are pained by our loss.

The Rebbe’s ‘battle plan’ in the war against evil is to influence one more Jew to do one more Mitzvah. Every soul is precious. Our heroes not need to win gold medals. They leave their homes and relocate in order to serve their Maker by bringing Jews, even in far flung locations, closer to their roots through doing good deeds.

On a universal level, Chabad Chassidim are also thinking about the threat of terror worldwide and how the Rebbe’s teachings from thirty years ago are relevant today. Shaking hands with terrorists and making concessions to them has proven to have cultivated terrorism into a sophisticated form of warfare. We hope that world leaders will realize that terror must be dealt with seriously. Leaders must protect their people. Terrorists see concessions a weakness. There should be zero tolerance for terror, no handshakes and no flimsy agreements.

From the press release of November 28, 2008

1950's. We know the Rebbe wants us to act. And we have been doing just that.

Chabad houses and individuals around the world have been doing projects in honor of the victims. On a Chabad news website, N'shei Chabad of Crown Heights asked readers to report the Mitzvos they are taking on for the Holtzbergs, and the responses are not just from Chabad.

The entire list is very moving. Here are a few examples:

Sarah Karmely

bsd I have given a class to young ladies in crown heights, and will be giving another class on motzei shabbos, in the zechus of our dear shluchim, Hashem should have rachmonus on us all! besuros tovus

Yoel Caroline

i went over to 2 neighbors and asked them to put on tefillin because of the situation. i have relationships with both for years and tefillin was not to be expected but in this case they both immediately said yes. one was very possibly a karkafta, the other was for sure. both were extremely touched as I explained the power and meaning of tefillin

Deena Rachel

We just had a Rosh Chodesh Farbrengen in Melbourne Australia on Shabbos and discussed personal Hachlotos amongst those present in honor of Rabbi & Mrs Holtzberg. Tznius, Ahavos Yisroel just to name two.

C in California

My Son who doesn't usually put on Tefillin put them on this morning.

SD

Our family has taken on the hachlata of saying the Hayom Yom everyday at the dinner table. May we hear good news!!!!

My husband works in Flatbush,

and last week when he went into a Shul for Mincha they were saying T'hillim for the Chabad House captives. My son was in Monsey and needed a later Minyan for Shacharis – and in Monsey that means you go to Satmar. Again, they were saying T'hillim for the Holtzbergs and other missing Jews. Yes, at Satmar! If I happen to hear about these two places, I am sure that this is happening in Shuls around the globe. President of Hillel, Wayne L. Firestone, issued a heartfelt statement of empathy in which he stated, "Hillel encourages our local

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professionals and students to express their condolences in personal visits to our Chabad counterparts on campuses and in communities around the world."

And what about Shluchim?

Should they continue to go to places that are high risk? I think this question was answered by Sandra, the woman who saved Moshe Holtzberg. She saw the terrorists enter and escaped into a locked room as they ran upstairs to find their intended victims. She was safe. But when she heard the cry of the young Jewish child –

even though she knew there were terrorists in the house, even though she knew they had live ammunition – she answered that cry!

Our Rebbe hears the cries of Jewish children. They are in danger, spiritual danger. And sometimes they are to be found in places with physical danger. A Shliach is an extension of the Rebbe. They are the Rebbe's hands, reaching out to the crying child – even when there are terrorists in the house. Thank you Sandra for showing us the meaning of Mesirus Nefesh, for being an example to us all.

In conclusion I would like to quote Shlomo Slonim. His family was slaughtered in front of his eyes during the Chevron Massacre of 1929. He was found alive under dead bodies that were strewn about his home. He was taken to relatives. He was about the same age as Moshe Holtzberg is today. In 2004, Chabad of Chevron welcomed a new Seifer Torah to the kollel named after Shlomo's great grandmother, Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel. Shlomo was honored with filling in the last few letters of the Seifer Torah. He told Shliach Rabbi Danny Cohen: "Writing the letters in the Seifer Torah made me feel that I had finally taken revenge on the ones who murdered my parents." In 1929 Muslim terrorists had wanted to remove the Jews from Chevron – but instead, seventy five years later, the new Seifer Torah signified the complete and utter failure of our enemies and the eternal connection of Am Yisroel, Toras Yisroel, and Eretz Yisroel.

We pray that Moshe Holtzberg will not wait seventy five years to see victory emerge from the tragedy he is living. We want Moshiach Now!

IN A SNOWSTORM, A MINUTE BEFORE SHABBOS

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

“We don’t know what to do. Everyone is under pressure and we’re afraid we’ll be making Shabbos in the car,” one of the bachurim told a friend in 770, in an urgent phone call minutes before Shabbos. Driving with low visibility, the bachurim parked their car at a roadside gas station and called Rabbi Konikov for assistance.

This was meant to be another routine trip for several students learning in “770” on their way to the Chabad House in Southampton, Long Island. They were going to spend Shabbos with the shliach, Rabbi Rafael Konikov, in order to conduct activities for the local Jewish community. Yet, on this particular journey, something went wrong.

It started on a Friday afternoon about a year ago in the depths of winter, a few hours before the onset of Shabbos. A group of bachurim were making their way

to the Chabad House. Snow had begun to fall the previous night although the forecaster said that the storm would taper off by morning. In fact, the snow didn’t just continue falling, it came down even harder. Large quantities of snow began piling up on the sides of the road, as the city’s snowplows made the maximum effort to clear the streets. As could be expected, heavy traffic started forming on the highways, and cars were moving at a drastically slow pace.

“We don’t know what to do.

Everyone is under pressure and there is a feeling that we’ll be making Shabbos in the car,” one of the bachurim told a friend in 770, in an urgent phone call just minutes before Shabbos. Driving with low visibility, the bachurim parked their car at a roadside gas station, while they called Rabbi Konikov for guidance on what they should do.

Rabbi Konikov didn’t lose a minute. Telling them to hold on, he looked for the closest Chabad House to the gas station where the bachurim were waiting. The dilemma facing the bachurim was by no means simple, as the Shabbos Queen was about to arrive. On the one hand, they no longer had enough time to return to Crown Heights. On the other hand, their intended destination of shlichus was also far away, and the prevailing weather conditions made it doubtful that they would be able to arrive there before Shabbos.

After a few moments, Rabbi Konikov found the closest Chabad House — Rabbi Asher Vaisfiche’s Chabad House in Melville. “We traveled as fast as possible,” said one of the bachurim, “carefully watching as the clock quickly

approached the time for the start of Shabbos. Rabbi Vaisfiche, with whom we were in constant communication, came out in our direction to show us the way.

“In a matter of minutes, we met at one of the intersections close to the Chabad House. He greeted us cheerfully and warmly, as if he had actually been expecting us, and then showed us the way to his house.

“On the way, Rabbi Vaisfiche told us with a sparkle of joy in his eyes that our arrival was literally a case of incredible Divine Providence, as there was another unexpected guest in his house from Eretz Yisroel, who had come just ten minutes earlier. ‘As opposed to you,’ he said, ‘he had been making his way from the opposite direction, getting stuck in the snowstorm en route to Crown Heights. However, his problem was double-fold: His father had passed away that week, and he was still in the middle of *‘Shiva.’* There was a serious doubt whether he would have a minyan in the

Chabad House, as it was assumed that most people who davened there would simply stay home due to the snowstorm. As it turned out, G-d arranged for you to come and complete the minyan.”

When the bachurim arrived, everything was in order, and the Shabbos table was set and prepared. “The family welcomed us with the utmost pleasure, and the face of the guest from Eretz Yisroel was shining.”

The next day, during the Shabbos farbrengen in the Chabad House, the shliach, Rabbi Vaisfiche, told those participants the hashgacha pratit story that had occurred the day before. Then, the guest from Eretz Yisroel asked if he could say a few words.

“During my youth,” he said, “I learned in the Chabad yeshiva in Morristown, New Jersey. One Erev Shabbos, some friends and I were traveling to 770. There was heavy traffic along the way, and the time for Shabbos was getting closer. We



Rabbi Rafael Konikov

stopped the car on the side of the road, and we began searching for a Jewish home where we could spend the Shabbos. Finally, we found a house with a mezuzah. We knocked hesitantly, and the owner opened the door.

“We told him about our problem and asked him if he would agree to host us. He consented, and invited us to come in. After making us all a cup of tea, he told us that he is the middle of *Shiva* for one of his parents, and he had been certain that he wouldn’t be able to say Kaddish even once, as there were virtually no Jews in the area. ‘You came to me like angels from Heaven,’ he said.

“Now, I feel as if I’ve closed the circle. I had the privilege of completing a minyan for another Jew, and G-d arranged a minyan for me,” the guest from Eretz Yisroel said, as he concluded his moving statement.

Indeed, the Rebbe’s shluchim and chassidim are ready and prepared for any problem a Jew might have, wherever he may be, even in the last moments before the onset of the holy Shabbos in the middle of a snowstorm. What goes around, comes around.



Other times. Rabbi Rafael Konikov with a group of T’mimim who came to make Shabbos at the Chabad House.

IN THOSE DAYS, IN OUR TIMES

By Menachem Ziegelboim

The Rebbe Rashab joined in the singing, overcome with yearning for those bygone days when he sat in the shadow of his great father.

PART I

Tes Kislev, 5534 (1774), marked the birth of the Mitteler Rebbe. Fifty four year later, in 5588 (1828), Tes Kislev marked another monumental occurrence. Chassidim described the behavior of the Mitteler Rebbe on that day.

“He began the night with the study of the Seder Kodshim in Mishnayos, with great joy and wondrous d’veikus. He ordered us, too, to rejoice, because simcha sweetens judgment. Four hours before the light of day, he began to faint, but within a short time he returned to consciousness. He lectured several times, for about an hour and a half, in Chassidus, secrets of the Torah which illuminate the soul of every living being, literally with joy, and ‘the elation of G-d was his source of strength’ until his holy soul departed. On Wednesday, the 9th of Kislev, the holy ark was hidden away here in Niezhen.”

This is how Chassidim did “inform with bitterness of soul and write with tears” of the passing of the Mitteler Rebbe.

At the same time, in distant Lubavitch, a lit candle fell on the table in his holy room. On the table were manuscripts that contained his divrei Torah. The flames quickly took hold, and the papers went up in flames, together with the table, the chair the Rebbe sat on, and a box of manuscripts that was nearby. Most of the Mitteler Rebbe’s chiddushei Torah and his writings in Nigleh turned to ash.

The Tzemach Tzedek commented that since the passing of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai there has been no histalkus like this one. “He says Chassidus in Gan Eden and souls listen to him,” added the Tzemach Tzedek one day in that year of mourning.

The day of the Mitteler Rebbe’s passing, was just one day before the anniversary of his Yom HaGeula. It dimmed the celebrations that the Chassidim had planned. They had wanted to celebrate with the same amount of joy that they celebrated the Alter Rebbe’s day of liberation. But how could they rejoice on the Chag HaGeula of the 10th of Kislev when the Rebbe had passed away on the 9th?

The following year, however, Yud Kislev was celebrated as a Chag HaGeula with great simcha and characteristic Chassidic fervor, as it has been ever since.

PART II

5667/1907. On the 18th of Cheshvan, the Rebbe Rashab left his home in Lubavitch from the Krasnia train station. He arrived in Wurzburg, Germany, the following day, Wednesday, at four in the afternoon.

All of that year, except for Pesach, the Rebbe remained in Wurzburg. Every so often, his son, the Rebbe Rayatz, would come with his family to visit his father. That Kislev, the month of light and Geula, the Rebbe Rayatz arrived in Wurzburg. He wrote down his impressions of the Yemei Chag HaGeula as it was celebrated living amidst German Jews.

The night of 9 Kislev. An old Chassid, R’ Zev Gedalia, went to lead the davening, while the Rebbe Rashab concluded with the recital of Kaddish. The Rebbe Rashab did not have his own minyan, and he davened with the Polish Jews who were in that German city, or sometimes in the shul of the Jews of Wurzburg.

However, in honor of the yahrtzait, some of those who had gotten to know and appreciate the

Rebbe Rashab, promised him that they would come to a special minyan in his home.

The Rebbe Rayatz met R' Zev Gedalia for the first time in the minyan of Polish Jews. This Zev Gedalia was not learned – he could barely follow an Agada or Midrash – but he shone with the splendor of old age and innocence of a previous generation, which gave him an inspiring countenance.

Zev Gedalia was born in a small village in the area of Premishla. He went to school for several years, but when he turned nine his father had him tend the sheep in the field. He learned for only a few hours a day

and reviewed in the field. No wonder, then, that though by the age of 15 he was very familiar with the Chumash and T'hillim, but that was all he knew. When he was 20 he already had a family.

One day, the two of them – Zev Gedalia and the Rebbe Rayatz – sat down together to talk. Zev Gedalia enjoyed storytelling and when he found someone who loved listening, as the Rebbe Rayatz did, they were both happy.

He told the Rebbe Rayatz about the period when he was a young village boy. He would get up early in the morning and go to the beis midrash. He always found one Jew

already busy davening, communing with his Maker. His prayers were recited so sweetly that he had never heard anything like it before.

"I don't have the words to describe the sweetness of this man's voice. This Jew – R' Aharon Shimon – was a great Torah scholar and a G-d fearing man. He was a Chassid of the Mittler Rebbe, R' Dovber of Lubavitch.

"I loved listening to his sweet t'filla that played on my heart strings every morning. I also enjoyed listening to him recite T'hillim every day. Sometimes a thread of bitterness and supplication could be discerned; other times the words



were sung in a tune of thanks and joy. As a result of this, I joined his pupils. My knowledge was minimal, and despite the efforts R' Aharon Shimon made, I was unable to understand much. However, he left me with a taste for t'filla which remained with me, praise be to G-d, till this very day."

Zev Gedalia's description, despite his difficulty in describing his childhood, greatly moved the Rebbe Rayatz.

"I am amazed by the great emotion in this simple man. As he speaks we feel that the image of R' Aharon Shimon davening is there before his eyes, and the pleasant sound of his prayers ring in his ears so clearly that he lacks nothing except words with which to describe and relate them. When I analyze the substance of the elderly Zev Gedalia, I see the beauty of the chinuch of the previous generation and the t'mimus in it."

The Rebbe Rayatz conveyed his impressions to his father on their daily walk. The Rebbe Rashab spoke about the quality of t'mimus in simple people and even related a few stories.

The next day, Monday, the 9th of Kislev, after Shacharis, the Rebbe Rayatz sat down near the elderly man. "Do you have more things that you remember about the Chassid, R' Aharon Shimon, Chassid of the Mittlerer Rebbe?" he asked. "Today is his yahrtzait!"

Zev Gedalia got up in great excitement. His body trembled and his face turned white. "What are you saying? Today is the yahrtzait of the Rebbe of R' Aharon Shimon? And I ... I merited to lead the services on his yahrtzait?" Zev Gedalia covered his face with his hands and burst into tears.

PART III

Tes Kislev, the yahrtzait, Erev Chag HaGeula, was a short, wintry

day. The Rebbe Rashab had asked his son to invite the people who came for Mincha to stay for Maariv and a farbrengen in honor of the Chag HaGeula, which he would join.

While the people waited for Maariv, the table was set for the farbrengen. When the davening was finished, the Rebbe Rayatz invited everyone to the dining room. Not too many knew the Rebbe Rashab and even fewer appreciated the significance of the Chag HaGeula,

***Zev Gedalia was
not learned – he
could barely follow
an Agada or
Midrash – but he
shone with the
splendor of old
age and innocence
of a previous
generation, which
gave him an
inspiring
countenance.***

but out of respect for their hosts, they agreed to stay.

At six, the Rebbe Rashab entered the room for the farbrengen. A few moments later three Lubavitchers appeared. Their presence added a warm, family flavor to the gathering. They were R' Menachem Mendel Halperin of Frankfurt, R' Elimelech Stalberg of Munich, and R' Shneur Zalman Persitz of Moscow.

The Rebbe Rashab sat at the head of the table and his face shone.

He spoke with the same inspired tone as though he was addressing hundreds of Chassidim and T'mimim in the big zal in Lubavitch. In measured tones he began to describe the story of the Chag HaGeula, about the Mittlerer Rebbe being slandered and then the order from the minister of the district to arrest him and bring him to Vitebsk. He recounted the story of the arrest, the easing of the conditions, and finally, the actual liberation on the 10th of Kislev and its establishment as a Chag HaGeula, to be celebrated every year.

Then the Rebbe Rashab told about the Chag HaGeula which his father, the Rebbe Maharash, had celebrated in the year 5640 (1880). At that time, the Rebbe Maharash was heavily involved in communal matters, and he often traveled to Petersburg on behalf of the Jews of Russia. He remained in Petersburg for about a month, but he returned to Lubavitch for the Chag HaGeula, to be with the Chassidim.

About an hour and a half after his arrival, despite his tiredness and exertion, the Rebbe Maharash went out to farbreng with the Chassidim. He said that his father, the Tzemach Tzedek, told him to buy the courtyard where the Mittlerer Rebbe had been imprisoned.

During the farbrengen, the Rebbe Rashab repeated the maamer Chassidus that his father said on that Chag HaGeula, twenty-seven years earlier.

PART IV

The next day, too, Yud Kislev, the Rebbe Rashab and his son celebrated the Chag HaGeula together with their guests. At 1:30 in the afternoon they sat down for a festive meal, which lasted over six hours! At the appointed time, the Rebbe Rashab entered the room, washed his hands, and began the meal. Then his son and the other

Chassidim who had come to Wurzburg washed their hands.

R' Elimelech Stalberg referred to what the Rebbe Rashab had said the night before about the Chag HaGeula, 10 Kislev, 5640, with the Rebbe Maharash. He too had been at that farbrengen, twenty-seven years before. He added his own reminiscences. Since he also knew how to sing, he began singing the niggunim that they sang at that farbrengen. The Rebbe Rashab joined in the singing, overcome with yearning for those bygone days when he sat in the shadow of his great father.

"Do you remember the sichos that my father said that year, on the night of the Chag and in the daytime?" asked the Rebbe.

R' Elimelech became impassioned and excitedly reviewed some ideas and points from those sichos. He said that the Rebbe Maharash, upon entering, said, "Today, the Rebbetzin (referring to his wife, who was also a granddaughter of the Mittler Rebbe) is celebrating, and tomorrow, the grandson (meaning himself) will celebrate the simcha."

At the Rebbe Maharash's table sat a Chassid from Zemin, who was a *baal menagen* with a melodious voice. The Rebbe told him, "Zemin, say a niggun."

R' Elimelech sang the niggun the Chassid had sung. Then he reviewed what the Rebbe Maharash said, "My grandfather (the Mittler Rebbe) conducted himself with great expansiveness. He had a group of musically gifted young men known as the 'Mittler Rebbe's kapelye,'

divided into vocalists (baalei shir) and musicians (baalei zimra).

Niggun and Chassidus have a strong connection. Chassidim must sing; be b'simcha and sing out of faith and trust, and Hashem will help one see the revealed good. My grandfather had to conduct himself with great expansiveness, and all things that lead to opening the mind and heart, because he is the power of bina of Chabad Chassidus."

Then the Rebbe Maharash took a piece of cake, said 'mezonos,' and with his other hand he took a cup of mashke and said 'sh'ha'kol.' He took a taste and said l'chaim. Then he told R' Levik, the Rebbe's shamash, to honor each person present with l'chaim.

Throughout R' Elimelech Stalburg's description of the events of Yud Kislev, 5640, the Rebbe Rashab sat and listened closely, with his face shining and exhibiting great excitement. When R' Elimelech finished, he made some comments on what his father had said.

Then the Rebbe Rashab began a Chassidic niggun, the same niggun that his father had sung when he finished that farbrengen. R' Elimelech joined in. It was apparent that the Rebbe Rashab was reminiscing and reliving that Chag HaGeula, despite the dozens of years that had passed since then. His eyes were closed and tears streamed down his face. His face burned with fervent yearning, "and he was completely enflamed and impassioned."

The Rebbe Rayatz, and the others present, became emotional as well. "When we saw the holy face of my holy father, his d'veikus and his passion, we could see that he was standing in the distant past as he was in the present. This aroused in us an inner feeling of shame and overwhelming humility as we each sensed our own lowliness of stature."

Most emotional of all was R' Elimelech himself. He suddenly raised his voice and with his face wet with tears he cried out, "Rebbe, Rebbe, intercede for me with your father, the Rebbe. For in the twenty-seven years since then, I have descended into the deep pit ..." And saying this, he burst into heartrending tears, which roused both the body and soul.

The Rebbe Rashab listened as he still sang that niggun d'veikus, which is but a ladder that leads to ascent upon ascent. When the niggun was concluded he said, "There are three modes of hiskashrus, and they are the three garments of the soul of the person you are connecting to. When you tell a story – this is hiskashrus to action. When you review a d'var Torah – this is hiskashrus to speech. When you sing a niggun – this is hiskashrus to thought."

This small farbrengen, the likes of which the Jews of Wurzburg had never experienced before, was concluded by the Rebbe with a maamer Chassidus, "Pada V'Shalom."

(based on HaTamim vol. 2, pgs. 168-81)

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MAKING IT BETTER IN BOMBAY

By Chani Nussbaum

*The Jewish community in Bombay, India is one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world since the Babylonian exile. Aside from the local Jewish community there are also many business people as well as tourists who come to enjoy incredible scenic vistas. * In an exclusive interview with Beis Moshiach, Mrs. Rivky Holtzberg describes her amazing shlichus. Hardships? She doesn't know of any!*

[Reprinted from Issue #539, pg. 16-20, 20 Teives 5766]

"We always wanted to go on shlichus," says Mrs. Rivky Holtzberg of Bombay, India. "Various suggestions came up but when we wrote to the Rebbe through the *Igros Kodesh*, we always got an answer that focused on the importance of chinuch for Jewish children. Since I was a teacher in Eretz Yisroel, we waited and didn't agree to the shlichus proposals that came up.

"When the idea of going on shlichus to Bombay came up, we opened to an answer about *kiruv levavos* (drawing hearts close) and

achdus (unity), and the Rebbe added: 'When you work, you have all the kochos.'"

Along with her husband Gavriel, Rivky (nee Rosenberg of Afula) merited supernatural kochos from the meshaleiach. Today, after a year and a half on shlichus, everybody knows her husband and he is called HaRav Gabi by all.

The Holtzbergs are working assiduously on building a mikva with Chabad specifications. The bor is made already. Who would have believed it? In Bombay, symbol of impurity, a city of *avoda zara*, the shluchim are planting seeds of k'dusha.

The Jewish community in Bombay is very interesting. Bombay is an industrial city and a port city, which makes it no less important than the capitol, Delhi. The Holtzbergs mainly target Jewish tourists, as the city is flooded with tourists from all over the world, many of them on business.

The local community is divided into two. There is the Iraqi community comprised of descendents of those who came there, for the first time, 200 years ago. The leader of this community was R' David Sassoon, who fled from Baghdad to India which was then under British rule in 1826, in order to be freed of the oppression the Jews suffered, and in order to serve Hashem in freedom. He also wanted to open a business there and he prospered greatly. He was famous for his large charitable contributions to Jewish institutions including the Tzemach Tzedek Shul in the Old City of Yerushalayim. This was the first connection between India and Chabad.

After him followed his grandson, R' Yaakov Eliyahu Sasson, who built magnificent shuls throughout India, including two that exist to this day in Bombay and Poona (Ohel Dovid built in 1863), where Rabbi Betzalel Kupchik is the rav and shliach.

In 1948, when the British left India (a few months after they left Palestine), most of the Iraqi Jews left India for Eretz Yisroel and only

a few remained. The beautiful shul is active until this day and the Holtzbergs maintain it on a daily basis.

The second Jewish community in Bombay is the Bene Israel community. They have seven shuls throughout Bombay and they number 3500 people. The Bene Israel say their ancestors were oil pressers in the Galil and they are descended from seven families who left on business after the Babylonian exile, survived a shipwreck and settled in India.

During the Holocaust, many Jews fled to India. Over the years, many Jews from Spain and Holland also came to this country. So the Holtzberg home is an ingathering of exiles of various nationalities.

"The language at the Shabbos table," says Rivky, "is English, so everybody can understand. One of our main goals is to connect our guests with Chabad houses back home.

"We have many tourists who came here to run away from it all and who come to us after they discover the emptiness in their lives and after seeing all the types of idol worship that flourishes here.

"They don't come here to find themselves, something that was popular a decade ago. Today they come to India to tour or during a semester break.

"Recently, we had an Israeli tourist here who was in an emotional turmoil. He told us that on his tour he was in a city where they have idol worshipping ceremonies and rites at the end of which they put different kinds of ribbons on their hands. He wasn't exactly thrilled to take part in this but

When the idea of going on shlichus to Bombay came up, we opened to an answer about kiruv levavos (drawing hearts close) and achdus (unity).

his Jewish friends insisted that he wrap these ribbons around his body.

"He asked my husband, 'How can I make amends for this? How can I purify myself from the tuma they threw on me?'

"My husband told him, 'I can't give you a tikkun, perhaps you'd like to write to the Rebbe in the *Igros Kodesh* and ask him.' So he wrote and the answer he opened to was about the importance in observing the enactment of the Rebbe Rayatz to say Chitas every day. The tourist said, 'See how amazing this is? It says here in the letter that saying Chitas is a treatment for the soul.' He was so bowled over by the

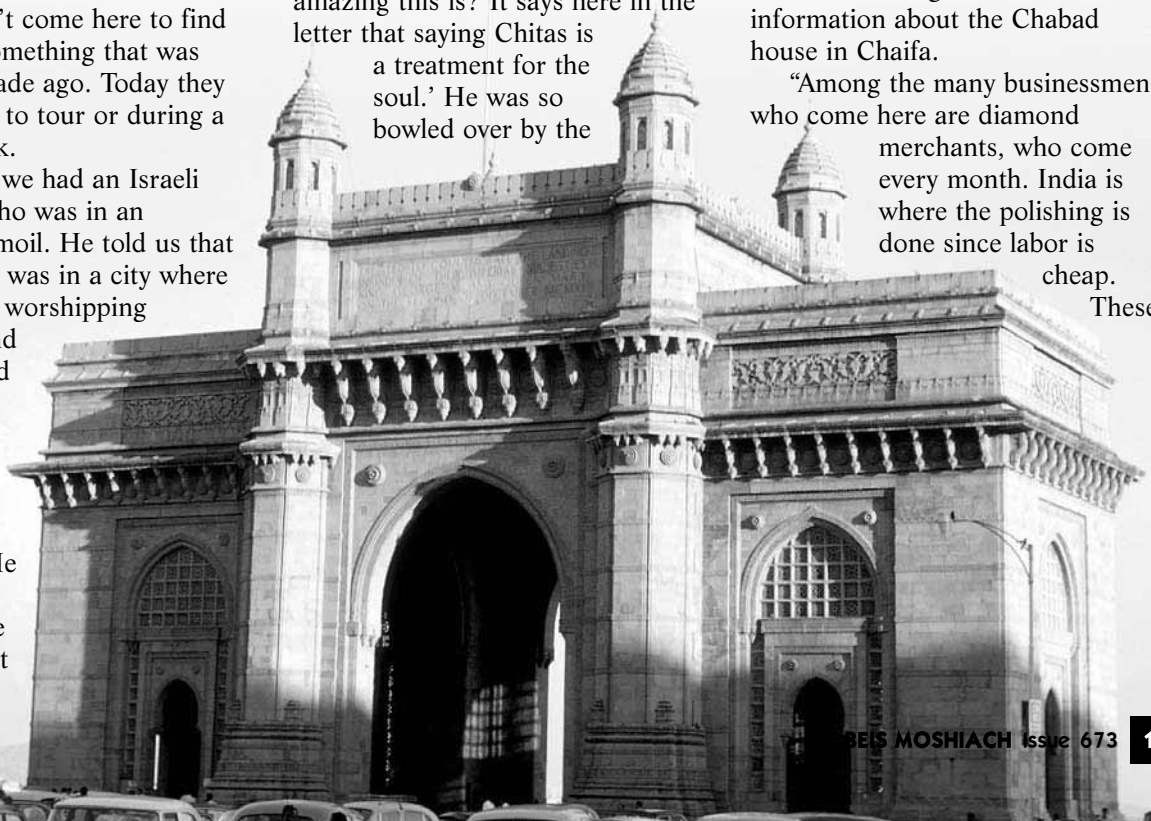
answer that he immediately committed to learning Chitas. We gave him a Chitas and explained how to do it and he went on his way."

Many people connect to the Rebbe through the *Igros Kodesh*, says Rivky. "There was the story with the Chairman of Zim Shipping in Asia, an Israeli who lived here for a number of years. He came to us when we had first arrived and asked for a bracha for a relative, a little boy with cancer.

"We advised him to write to the Rebbe and he and his wife brokenheartedly wrote a letter. They put it in a volume of *Igros Kodesh* and the letter they opened to was the Rebbe's famous letter to the Chairman of Zim about the importance of Shabbos observance on the ships, which ends with brachos.

"The man accepted Shabbos observance and the boy's operation was more successful than the doctors had anticipated it would be. He is in remission and they hope the dreaded disease doesn't return. In the meantime, they finished their job in India and went back to Eretz Yisroel and we gave them the information about the Chabad house in Chaifa.

"Among the many businessmen who come here are diamond merchants, who come every month. India is where the polishing is done since labor is cheap. These



merchants are in constant contact with us, for our Chabad house is located in a nice section of Bombay, near the hotels on the banks of the river. They come to us for a kosher dinner.

“The following story happened to a chareidi woman from Eretz Yisroel who came here regularly for a few days each month for her job in a diamond business in Eretz Yisroel. Each time, before she travels, she asks Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu for a bracha and she also writes to the Rebbe in the *Igros Kodesh*. If she doesn’t open to a positive answer, she doesn’t go. That is how she comes here every month for twenty years. Her monthly visit is from Monday to Thursday.

“The last time, she wrote to the Rebbe but didn’t understand the answer. The letter was about the kabbalistic concept of nesira (about the separation between Adam and Chava). She understood the answer much later.

“Her flight was supposed to leave for Eretz Yisroel on Thursday but it was postponed and she, along with other shomer Shabbos Jews, stayed on in a hotel for another few days. She came to us for Shabbos and excitedly said, ‘Now I understand the Rebbe’s answer! I have never been without my husband on Shabbos before because I never stayed in India for Shabbos alone!’

“This greatly inspired her to greater hiskashrus to the Rebbe and she started a shiur in her office and is becoming closer to the ways of Chabad.”

How do you manage as far as kosher food in Bombay?

“My husband is a shochet and so we have chicken, and other things are sent to us from Thailand. The basics can be bought here. No milk products are available. The truth is that we’ve gotten used to living without them. If tourists come, they



Entrance to the Chabad House

always bring some dairy products.

What about food for the children?

At first, they sent me Materna (baby formula) from Eretz Yisroel. Now I cook cereal, which they enjoy. I never believed I would be cooking cereal like our

grandmothers made fifty years ago!

“There are thirteen Israeli families that live here including members of the Israeli consulate who work here, employees of El-Al and businessmen, owners of



T’fillin and bar mitzva for the son of the consulate

The view from the porch of the Chabad House



Baking matzos with the children

diamond businesses. It's not easy to instill them with Yiddishkait but we see progress.

"Just this week we convinced a family to put a blech on the stove on Shabbos and we recently sent two boys to learn in yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel. Baruch Hashem, we have heard good reports from them.

"Every Sunday I have a program for children and before every holiday there are special programs. We recently opened a sort of Bar Mitzva course. We were excited to hear that the son of the Israeli consul wants to have his bar mitzva here with us and not in one of the local shuls.

"On Simchas Torah we had a big minyan at the Chabad house. Some of the people who came had never been to a shul before, not even the

local shul. They enjoyed it immensely and got right into the spirit of things because everybody feels comfortable here.”

The project the Holtzbergs are busy with now is, as we said, the mikva. It seems there was never a kosher mikva here previously.

“The closest mikva is in Singapore, a five-hour flight! Since our mikva is underway, I have already begun giving classes in Taharas HaMishpacha.”

What about chinuch?

“I have two children and they are still small but there is a demand that we open a Jewish preschool, so it looks like next year we will be opening a preschool, b’ezerat Hashem.”

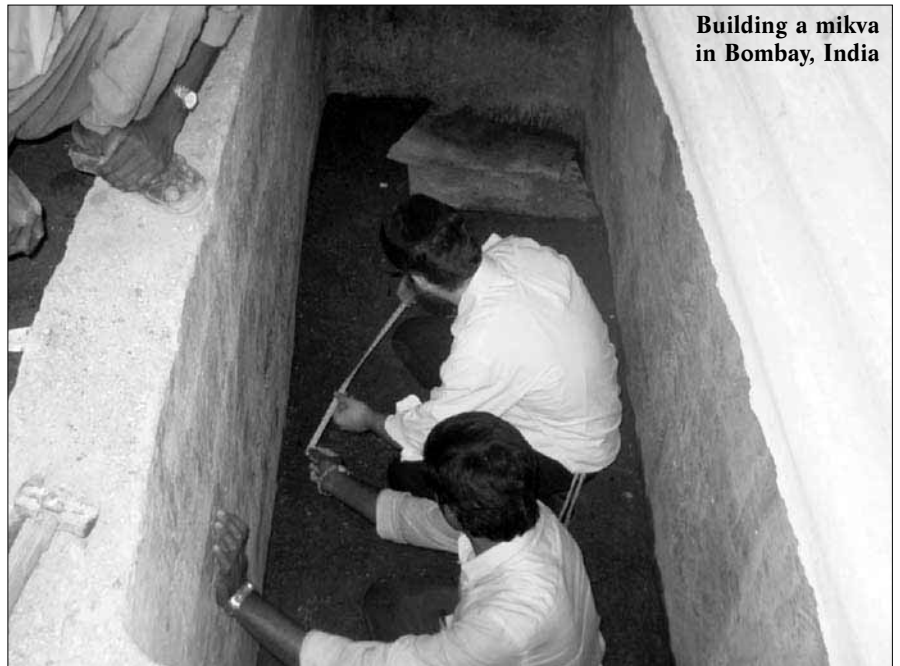
The Holtzbergs also work on spreading the Seven Noachide Laws. “We don’t suffer from anti-Semitism or assimilation because the Jewish population keeps its distance from the local Indians and Moslems.”

It is most pleasant to speak with a shlucha who sees everything in a positive light and who generates a feeling of genuine serenity as well as humor and joy. I wasn’t surprised when she agreed to be interviewed a few hours before Shabbos. She was relaxed and made me feel relaxed too when she said, “Yes, I have time now since I finished preparing for Shabbos a while ago.”

And I didn’t hear about any hardships from her. No surprise either!



A minyan with businessmen



Building a mikva in Bombay, India



A VISITOR'S VIEW OF CHEVRON

By Aliza Karp

*The police asked where I was going. When I said 'Chevron,' the soldier smiled, lifted his thumbs and said, "Yes, Chevron!" * There are soldiers guarding the path from Kiryat Arba to Maaras HaMachpella. As you leave the line of vision of one soldier, you enter the line of vision of the next one. Without exception they smile and say Shabbat Shalom as you pass.*

If you follow the media coverage of Eretz Yisroel it paints a very negative picture. Jews who have not yet found their spiritual roots are inciting Arabs against the Jews of Yitzhar in the Shomron, and the political system is trying to oust Jews from their homes in Chevron. In contrast, I would like to shed some positive light on what is happening in Eretz Yisroel, especially Chevron, where we are surrounded by the Rebbe's activists and their activities.

Parshas Chayei Sara begins with the purchase of Maaras HaMachpella by Avrohom Avinu. Nowadays, tens of thousands for Jews, many in their late teens and early twenties, congregate in Chevron on this Shabbos to hear the

reading of this historical real estate transaction being read and proclaimed on the very same spot where it transpired.

I have heard many stories about this Shabbos in Chevron. Chevron pioneer Sara Nachshon has shown me her enormous cholent pot and described the potato peeling process to fill it. She always thinks she has made too much... but once the serving starts it takes very little time until there is not a drop of cholent left. That's how many guests, expected and unexpected, show up for Shabbos day Kiddush on Parshas Chayei Sara.

I have heard from Chabad Shliach Rabbi Danny Cohen how the Lubavitchers who come to

Chevron on Parshas Chayei Sara sing Niggunim in the hours well past midnight as they walk up the hill between Arab houses to reach the ancient Chabad cemetery, the resting place of the matriarch of the Chabad community in Chevron, Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, and the legendary Reb Moshe Meisels.

I, personally, have never been in Chevron for Parshas Chayei Sara, so I cannot give an account of what it is like from a firsthand experience. But I have been in Chevron for other Shabbosim and I believe that every Shabbos in Chevron is special. I was in Chevron on Shabbos Parshas VaYishlach of last year (5768), just a few weeks following Parshas Chayei Sara. The following is what I wrote in my diary about my experience that Shabbos.

On Friday morning my hostess, Meryl Dalven, in the Shomron town of Emanuel, had some work to do. In addition, she still wanted to bake a cake for a friend who had just given birth that week, make Challa dough for her married daughters who live in Emanuel, and bake Pitot with an extra portion of dough she prepares. To save her time, I made the Pitot while she was out working. I baked them in her stove top contraption. It was so much fun, and the Pitot came out delicious!

I had talked Meryl into coming to Chevron for Shabbos. We were finally ready, with about two and

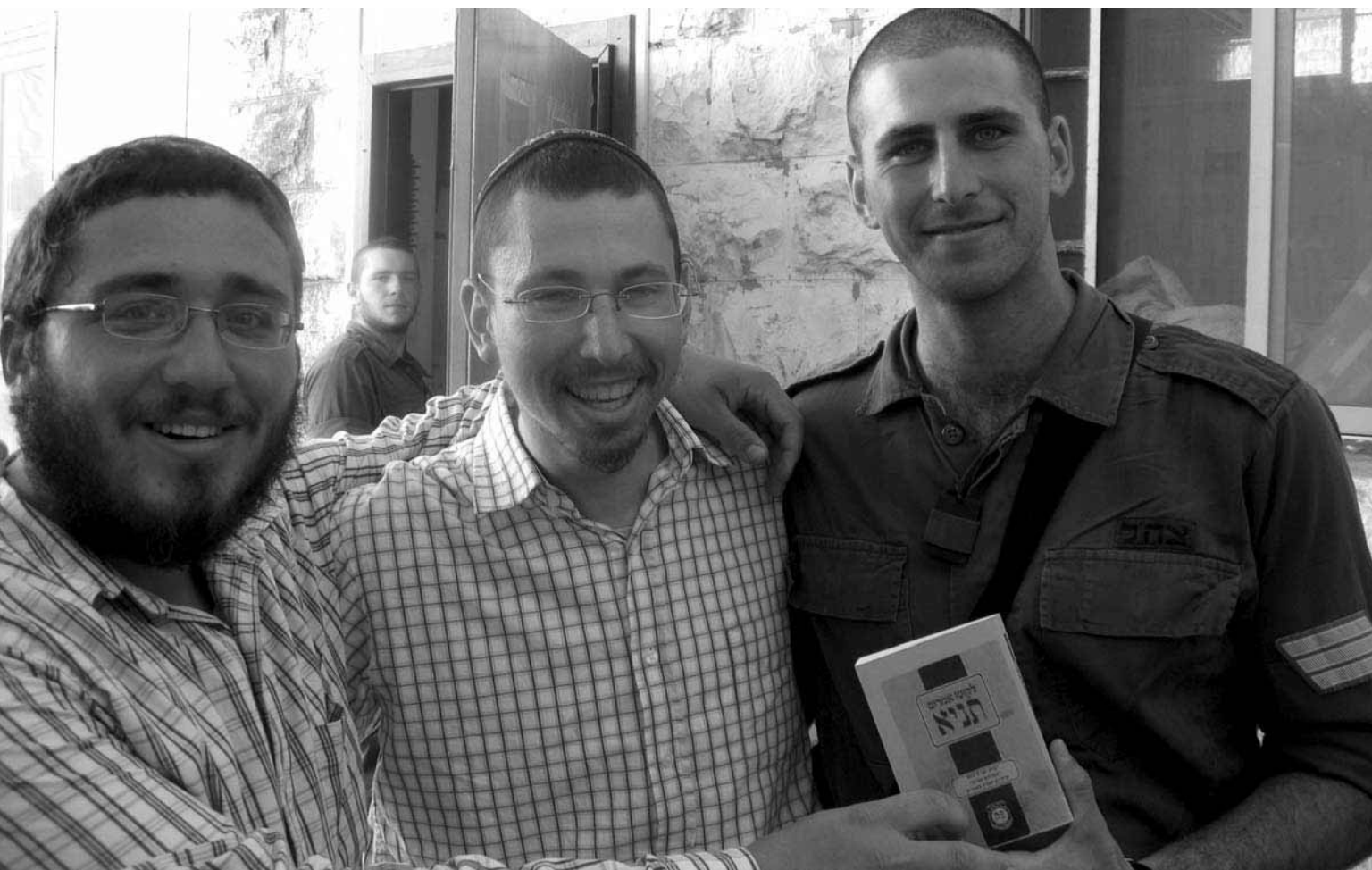
half hours until Shabbos. If everything went smoothly it would be no problem getting there on time; though I don't remember exactly, I think it takes about an hour and half. We took highway 6, which runs North/South and has a generous speed limit. It was not yet completed all the way to Kiryat Gat, so we took some slower roads before we turned eastward on route 35. I love Route 35. The scenery looks to me like the land is untouched since the days of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. About half way to Chevron there was a checkpoint that looked like a major border crossing. It was spooky because we just drove straight through. There was no one there in either direction. Another time when I passed this checkpoint I did have

to stop. There were a police man and an army man at the post. The police wanted me to stop. I could tell the soldier would have waved me through. The police asked where I was going. When I said 'Chevron,' the soldier smiled, lifted his thumbs and said, "Yes, Chevron!"

The Torah portion for the week was Parshas VaYishlach. This is a special Parsha for me. It mentions the word Chitas. The Rebbe repeatedly stressed the importance of learning the daily portion of Chumash with Rashi, the daily portion of T'hillim as it is divided so that it is completed monthly, and the daily portion of Tanya. Tanya may once have been considered a book studied by a small circle of scholars, but now it is taught in all serious

Jewish schools of higher learning. I find that when I say Chitas in the morning after davening, my day goes smoothly. The Rebbe has done so much for me personally that I feel good about fulfilling his request about saying Chitas – even if it is a request for my benefit. (Everything the Rebbe asks for is for our benefit – if we would only listen...)

Not only does Parshas VaYishlach mention Chitas, it talks about Yaakov spending time in the Shomron, the area where Emanuel, Ariel, Kedumim and Yitzhar – all the places I visited during the week – are located. And in the portion for Friday, it spoke about Yaakov traveling to Chevron. When I planned my trip I had not been aware that I was going to be



Eli and Saadia give a Tanya to Harel on his birthday.

following Yaakov's footsteps the entire week, but as the week unfolded and I read about Yaakov each day, it felt good.

Meryl and I had arranged to spend Shabbos with artist Boruch Nachshon and his wife Sara in Kiryat Arba. Once inside Kiryat Arba it took me awhile to find their building. I wonder if they are on the only one way street in town. I got mixed up circling around to find it. When we finally pulled into the correct parking lot, I called Danny

In addition to the usual dozens of army guests at the Friday night Shabbos table, Chabad of Chevron was hosting a few hundred Bachurim for a special pre-Yud Tes Kislev Shabbos.

right away. I had brought a piece of luggage for him. I knew he wanted it before Shabbos, because it contained 80 Benchers which he was anxious to have for the crowd of soldiers who join him at the Friday night meal.

At airport security when El Al scanned my luggage, I was asked if I had packed that particular bag. When Danny brought it to me a few weeks before, when he was in New York for the Kinus HaShluchim, I

had opened it and taken a look at the contents so I could say I packed it and would know what was in it. But when they started to ask me questions all I could remember was some dirty laundry. Then they asked me about all the books. The security guys were Jewish, so I decided it would be good for them to hear about the Benchers. I told them the whole story: That the Chabad House in Thailand had printed them, and that they included songs that post-army kids like to sing – because after the army a lot of Jewish soldiers head to Thailand to search for exotic spirituality and what they find is Chabad – and that the Shliach in Chevron knew these specific Benchers, because they included the extra songs, would be perfect for the dozens of soldiers who are his guests on Friday nights, so he bought... By that time the luggage screeners had heard enough. They gave me my bag and told me to move on.

Upon receiving my call, Danny was in Kiryat Arba in a jiffy. He took the luggage containing the Benchers and sped back to Chevron. In addition to the usual dozens of army guests at the Friday night Shabbos table, Chabad of Chevron was hosting a few hundred Bachurim for a special pre-Yud Tes Kislev Shabbos of preparation for the Rosh HaShana of Chassidus.

Meryl and I prepared for Shabbos and lit candles in the Nachshon "art gallery salon" (living room/dining room) surrounded by Boruch Nachshon's colorful paintings of nature and the supernatural.

It's about a ten minute walk along Psir Mispallalim (Worshippers Path, in English) to get to the Maara. It was a chilly night. The path was filled with animated youth and some 'old-timers' like Meryl and me. We got there in time to take front row seats – even though I

spend most of the time standing. I like to peek through the Mechitza and watch the dancing. I love Friday night davening at the Maara. Here is what I emailed home about Shabbos in Chevron:

I spent Shabbos in Chevron, so you can assume that I was in heaven. Everything was just right – the weather, the people, the davening, the food, the feeling. Nothing could be wrong.

I brought Meryl with me to Chevron for Shabbos. We stayed with the Nachshons in Kiryat Arba and walked back and forth to the Maara. As usual, Friday night davening at the Maara was amazing. I think that singing the davening Friday night is a way to release the weekday tension so you can really unwind and make the most of Shabbos. At the Maara, the joyous singing is accompanied by lively dancing.

The place was packed. The girls are so pretty in their Yesha styles. A few of them formed a circle and danced to the singing.

For those of you who know Simcha Hochbaum, he masterfully led the davening and gave a few short Divrei Torah in between. One time he spoke about Yud Tes Kislev, the release of the Baal HaTanya, the Yahrzeit of the Maggid and the birthday of Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, who was born on the very day her grandfather was released from prison. Simcha connected Chevron, where Menucha Rochel was the head of the Chabad community, to Yud Tes Kislev. Pretty cool for a Minyan that is not Chabad.

The meal with the Nachshons was very nice. The Nachshons are the personification of Hachnasas Orchim. If someone were looking for a project, I would suggest writing a set of books on the Hachnasas Orchim of the Nachshons. There was a woman at

the table with us and after she left, Sara Nachshon told us her story. This particular woman had a married son in Netzarim in Gush Katif, who she would visit from time to time with her husband. Early one morning, during one of those visits, her husband was murdered by terrorists while studying Torah in the shul with a friend. Her son became so distraught over the loss that his health problems became severely aggravated and he died as a result. The poor woman!

I will now finish the story that was unfinished in the email. The woman guest was living in Tel Aviv. She no longer had a husband and was mourning the loss of her son. Her daughter lives in a Kiryat Arba, on a hill that requires going up a lot

of steep steps. The daughter convinced her mother to move to Kiryat Arba. Shabbos Day the woman walks up the steps, but not Friday nights. Sara Nachshon knew the woman was very sad on Friday nights, and asked the woman to become part of her family. Sara said when the woman first came, she was quiet and gloomy, but as time passed her guest has become full of life and light. The Nachshon's Hachnasas Orchim is out of this world. They started to tell stories about funny situations they have had with guests. At least in hindsight they are funny, at the time I am sure they are dramatic. Because they were speaking in Ivrit I could only understand a bit, but I understood they have hosted people under the

This is probably the only event, other than maybe an MBD concert, where these groups come together – and they came together to learn Chassidus!

Dancing in Maaras HaMachpela on a regular weekday.



Once there was a kernel of a Jewish presence in Chevron, it was Boruch who set out to visit Rabbis and community leaders to encourage, and sometimes to pressure them, to visit Chevron. His reasoning was that if the leaders will come, so will the followers.

strangest of circumstances.

Meryl blended in with the Nachshons beautifully. In the morning she was happy to stay and Daven with the Minyan in the Nachshon's apartment. I bundled up so I would be warm even in the Maara, which has no heating system, and headed to Chevron. I walked together with one of Sara's granddaughters, a very pretty girl from Rehovot. I was not sure when I would be back. As it turned out, I came back after Shabbos was over.

During the times that the main Minyanim Daven at the Maara, there are soldiers guarding the path from Kiryat Arba to Maaras HaMachpella. At any given time you can see at least two – as you leave the line of vision of one soldier, you enter the line of vision of the next one. Without exception they smile and

say Shabbat Shalom as you pass.

As we walked by one of the many soldiers stationed on the way, we stopped to listen to a conversation that was going on in English. An international observer was speaking with a soldier. I did not like the conversation but did not interrupt. The observer was explaining how he was not on anyone's side; he considered himself neutral. He was just there to report what he sees to the 'authorities.' As he was Italian, I felt like asking him why he was not observing how the Italian police treat people and report *that* to 'authorities.' What is he doing here? We have an army with the highest moral standards in the world and we have our own system to enforce those standards. He is simply a foreign spy. But I kept my mouth shut. No point in starting up – when these people are around, the video cameras are never far away, together with the video editors to make the Jewish settlers look bad. That was the low part of Shabbos. Soon we turned the corner, and the plaza in front of the Maara came into view.

The participants of the Shabbaton that Chabad of Chevron was hosting were davening on the plaza. Later, when the first Minyan in the main hall of the Maara had finished, they would move into the main hall to hear Kriya and finish their davening.

In this Shabbaton, no one was a newcomer to Judaism. These young men were serious scholars, interested in Chassidus. The participants were from both Hesder and Chassidishe Yeshivos, with a sprinkling of Litvishers. This is probably the only event, other than maybe an MBD concert, where these groups come together – and, remarkably, they came together to learn Chassidus!

Walking up the stairs, I stopped to chat with Saadia, one of the young men spending the year in

Chevron doing Mivtzaim. Saadia and Eli and a few others did an amazing job of working with the soldiers in the area. They also reach out to the children of Chevron with Tzivos Hashem events.

After davening, I ran up the hill to Tel Rumeida to hear kiddush with Boruch Marzel. As usual he had a long table full of guests. Boruch has accomplished amazing things for Chevron, and for all of Eretz Yisroel and Am Yisroel. Once there was a kernel of a Jewish presence in Chevron, it was Boruch who set out to visit Rabbis and community leaders to encourage, and sometimes to pressure them, to visit Chevron. His reasoning was that if the leaders will come, so will the followers. Now there are days when tens of thousands of Jews come to Chevron, and it was started with Boruch's effort. He helps the poor, assists in settlements, oversees the Hachnasas Orchim guest house in Chevron, and established a Cheider that takes in all boys who want to attend.

The conversation this Shabbos was about Chomesh. It was recently resettled, so Boruch was busy again, taking as many people to Chomesh as would fit 'under the radar.' He doesn't want to get caught by the government, which wants to stop the influx of people and supplies.

After the fish course with the Marzels, I went to the Beitar guest house and spoke with some of the rabbis who came for the Shabbaton with their families. The Bachurim were having their program in the Gutnick Center. One of the main speakers was a Rabbi Deutsch from Yerushalayim. I spoke to his wife, who looked familiar. Later I realized I had known her more than twenty years ago when I lived in Yerushalayim for a few years. She had been my daughter's second grade teacher in Beis Chana. Just as she was twenty four years ago, Rebbetzin Deutsch remains a

magnificent woman in her simplicity and refinement.

I also spoke with the Boaz family at their table, and this time it was the wife who recognized me. It took me a while to recall that she had been active in the English programs for N'shei Chabad of Yerushalayim and I had been to one of her Shiurim on a previous trip to Eretz Yisroel. I sat next to her teenage son. His name is Michael and he has Down Syndrome.

Later, at the Seuda Shlishit program, I noticed Michael sitting quietly right next to Rabbi Deutsch and listening to every word. When there was a break in the talking and

everyone began to sing, Michael stood up and started dancing... and then the whole audience stood up and held hands and danced. I was amazed at how the beauty of a Neshama can be seen through special people like Michael. I was also amazed at how the Shabbaton had unified all the different types of religious men through the teachings of Chabad Chassidus – not surprised, but amazed.

After Shabbos I drove back to the Nachshon's home in a new Mitzvah Tank that Chabad of Chevron had dedicated a few weeks before, on Erev Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sara. Amongst others, Boruch Nachshon

was on board. He had come for the Seuda Shlishit. He pointed out how marvelous it was to be riding in a Mitzvah Tank with Jewish pictures on the outside, and a video of the Rebbe speaking about the Beis HaMikdash on the inside, while traveling through Arab occupied territory. Boruch said it was like a ship on a stormy sea. He told me I should write about it... I told him he should paint it.

That trip in the Mitzvah Tank through hostile territory is very significant. The Rebbe's Peulos enrich our lives, they surround us and protect us... even in Chevron.

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THE REBBE'S WEDDING DAY

*“My joy was boundless and you too, my beloved ones, rejoice because we have merited to see a blessed, upright generation from our holy Rebbe.” * A moving description of the Rebbe’s holy conduct on the day that connected him to us, his wedding day, 14 Kislev, 5689. * From the diary of R’ Eliyahu Chaim Altheus, who was with the Rebbe on the day of his wedding.*

MINCHA TIME

On Tuesday, the day of the chuppa, before Shacharis, we went to the mikva. After Shacharis, he learned and I ate.

Mincha time, the chassan stands up to daven the final Mincha before the chuppa and to say the long Vidui (Confession) before the One who knows the secrets of the world, with much kavana and pouring out of the soul, his voice not audible. Nobody but the two of us was present at this awesome scene. We are very, very distant one from the other, like the distance between east and west, for his thoughts are not my thoughts.

He prepares himself for a long trip, to find life, to build a home with the helpmate that he found, and he does not know on which path he will be led. There are many paths

before him and all are potentially dangerous, whether in form and spirit or in matter and physicality, and he cries with copious tears before the Knower of the future, whose eyes supervise all paths of men, to give each man according to his path and the fruit of his deeds. He stands and beseeches, from the depths of his heart, and prays the Vidui prayer, “You know the secrets of the universe and the hidden mysteries of all the living; Nothing is hidden from you, nothing is concealed from Your eyes.”

As though I hear his request, I imagine that he pleads with Hashem and lifts his soul up to Him so that He will let him know the proper path and direct him on the path he should choose, and that He will remove his foot from the trap.

WE ARE DEPENDENT ON HIM

My dear ones, can you picture it, can you imagine my state of mind during that lengthy period as I sit in a corner of this large room, seeing before me this young man who, in a few hours, is to be the son-in-law of the crown of glory of our heads, the Rebbe shlita [the Rebbe Rayatz]? From him, he will in the future build a house in Israel, and no secret is hidden from him ... and from you too! Did I not cry along with him? Did I not join and participate with him in his prayer, in his pleading for mercy from deep within his heart?

Do I not know that in the ways of this celebrated young man are also dependent my own way, and the deeds of our children and children’s children. And when Hashem will grace his ways, the tzaddik will be uplifted and even his enemies will make peace with him. And his way is the way of life and Musar, and He heeds the path of His Chassidim...for such did I certainly cry, and they cried together. It is known that the gates of tears are not locked, and certainly our prayer will be accepted before the Master of all, and he will succeed with great success on the straight path which his ancestors, our Rebbeim chose, and the tzaddik and his Chassidim will see and rejoice in him.

I said to myself, I need to praise and thank G-d for what my eyes see. The past and present are enough for

me. Before me stands Mendel ben Levik who is known and famous to all, born and educated in purity and holiness, and the fear of Heaven is upon him all day. As of this very day, only the fear of Hashem is his treasure, I examined his deeds, inside and out, and thank G-d I did not find in them any flaw. He is perfect in nefesh, ruach and neshama; his learning in hand along with the deeds of his G-d fearing ancestors.

In truth, I see with my senses a precious young man, an outstanding scholar, truly G-d fearing, wearing a silk gartel, fasting, learning *Reishis Chochma* all day; his immersion and prayer with genuine kavana for the sake of Heaven. For by his nature, you know he is far removed, through his natural obstinacy and that of his forbears, from doing anything for the sake of others or for show. And even if he knows that which is outside of him, in secular matters, with his daas he knows how to differentiate between sacred and secular and his holiness was not at all profaned, heaven forbid, in the slightest. What more could I need?

With these ideas in mind I went back generation after generation and did not find better than he. I see only good. I rejoice in this, saying "I thank Hashem for He is good and His kindness is everlasting." The merit of the self-sacrifice of our holy Rebbe shlita, which we have seen personally, will stand by him and his children and his children's children until the coming of the righteous Redeemer, speedily in our days; the light of Israel will not be extinguished. I was exceedingly joyous.

HE DID NOT UTTER A MUNDANE WORD

When he finished davening, he turned from the wall towards me. I looked at him and gazed upon his pale face, and upon his body which

was weak from fasting and the great avoda throughout the day, and I had great compassion on him. I asked him to lie down and rest a bit, but he did not respond. All day he did not speak to me even one mundane word. I thought perhaps he was told to do this. Instead, he would open the *Reishis Chochma* and learn.

Then I was called to the telephone and I was asked whether the chassan was ready for the reception. I said he was, and conveyed the question to him, adding that he should prepare himself with the clothing for the



The author of the diary, R' Altheus

chuppa because certainly, they would soon come to take him to yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim where the reception would take place.

And that is what happened. He prepared himself in his magnificent clothing. How happy I was to see him in his silken kapata and gartel, as is fitting for a child of the Rebbe. My joy was boundless and you too, my beloved ones, rejoice because we have merited to see a blessed, upright generation from our holy Rebbe. May Hashem let us see a

generation like this from his descendents, forever.

At about six o'clock, the door of the room opened and two men came in. One was the Rebbe's son-in-law, Rashag, and the other was the Rebbe's uncle, R' Moshe Horenstein. They came to take the chassan to the yeshiva.

From them I found out that not only the chassan and kalla were fasting the day of the wedding, but also the Rebbe and Rebbetzin and daughters. I wanted to explore the supernal realm with lofty thoughts on that day, and so I asked them whether they had heard and seen anything of the Rebbe that day. Being greatly preoccupied, they did not respond, perhaps for the simple reason that they too did not know of his deeds for he was not in their presence throughout that day.

I greatly desired to be able to picture the avoda of our Rebbe on this day, his prayer with the ascension of his soul, his seeing and inviting the [Rebbe Rashab, his father] to the wedding. I wanted to know everything, even those things which I was not supposed to know. I was highly emotional as I sat in the car when we traveled to the yeshiva with the chassan.

I constantly thought and I asked myself: How? Warsaw? Tomchei T'mimim? Lubavitch? Rostov? Leningrad? Shpalerka? Kostrama? Riga? It was all like a passing dream, and now? I had come to rejoice and I was crying. What was this? Did I come for this? And with this thought the car drove up to the yeshiva.

THE REBBE'S FACE SUDDENLY CHANGED

Standing in front of the gate to the yard of the yeshiva stood two or three policemen on guard, to allow into the inner yard and the hall of the yeshiva only those who had an entry card, as well as those from

The face of the Rebbe changed from red to white, and he looked like a veritable angel of G-d. From his holy eyes shot forth sparks of light, and Hashem placed his awe on the many assembled.

whom they could take a bribe of an *azalt* (of a Polish coin of high value) or fifty *groschen* (a Polish coin of lesser value). Then there were the expert pickpockets of that esteemed city, Warsaw, who entered and exited, at any time, at will...

Some may see this in a negative light, that the thievery took place in cooperation with the police in all those places where thousands of people gathered and jostled one another, because that is an opportune time to pick peoples' pockets and to strip them of their expensive ornaments. It is all done secretly, very quickly, and professionally.

With my own eyes I saw that some of the victims of theft were there at the chuppa with cuts in their clothing, and I can wholeheartedly certify on the thief who ritually slaughtered and inspected the contents of the man's pockets, that his knife was exceedingly sharp and smooth and there was no reason to suspect the slightest flaw or feeling of roughness, heaven forbid. And there is no suspicion of causing pain

to living creatures with their work, because the slaughtered one, who was robbed, did not feel a thing during the slaughter and thievery, even from the grip when the knife entered his pocket and when it left...

And they do not have the arrogance to differentiate between rich and poor. Who is as great and as big a *batlan* (unworldly person) than Rav Leib Sheinin? They did not want to put him to shame either, and among all the wealthy men they also robbed him of the ten dollars that he brought with him to the wedding.

Do not think, my dear ones that I am joking. We had much anguish from this, all of Anash, because of the many robberies of money and passports and important documents. We Anash must remember this for the chuppa of Sheindele, if it will also take place in Warsaw, to protect ourselves.

Getting back to our topic. We entered the yeshiva hall with much pomp. It was already full of people, much more than yesterday, with Admurim, rabbanim, famous geonim, all the distinguished figures in Warsaw, and journalists from all the newspapers. The chairmen of Agudas HaRabbanim in Poland, Agudas HaRabbanim in Warsaw, representatives of the Joint, the orphanages and mosdos, were all present and accounted for. All rose from their seats in honor of the chassan, until he sat in the chair prepared for him between the Rebbe and the Rebbe's father-in-law.

A long silence prevailed throughout this large building and suddenly, the face of the Rebbe changed from red to white, and he looked like a veritable angel of G-d. From his holy eyes shot forth sparks of light, pure like the stars of the morning, and Hashem placed his awe on the many assembled, and they all trembled as a great trepidation fell upon the entire

people, which cannot be described.

THE ASTONISHING OPENING

And Hashem opened the Rebbe's mouth with wisdom, and he said, "It is known that during the joy of a wedding, the souls of the ancestors come from the world of truth. Three generations back for all Jews, and for others more and more; there are different levels. By way of invitation to the souls of our holy fathers, the Rebbeim, that they come to the chuppa and bless the couple, we will now say Chassidus - part of which is from the Alter Rebbe, part from the Mittler Rebbe, part from my great-grandfather, part from my grandfather, the great-grandfather of the kalla, part from the great, great grandfather of the chassan, part from my father, the kalla's grandfather. For 'One who says something in the name of he who said it, should see as though the author of the teaching is standing in front of him.'"

And everybody heard him and saw the fire burning within him and all trembled in fear. Right after this astonishing opening, the Rebbe said the maamer, "Lecha Dodi Likras Kalla." The maamer took about half an hour, no more, but its length was longer than the measure of the earth in its content.

ON THE WAY TO THE BADEKEN

After this maamer, the Chassan Tish ended and the chassan left the room with his escort for the Ezras Nashim in the other room, which was also large and majestic. Beautiful, large trees with many flowers and roses were in the kalla's room, made by the women, her acquaintances and those close with her, as a sign of affection and a *siman tov*. There were many electric lights to illuminate them and to

show that the flowers were alive, and they were beautiful to all who saw them. These plants made a strong impression on my soul when I entered that room.

Suddenly I was in a blooming, green garden like a gorgeous spring day. The praiseworthy kalla sitting within this garden, adorned with a beautiful shawl, glorious in all her glory, her face white as limestone with much charm and beauty, and with fear of Heaven shining forth like the dawn, from the forest of flowers, roses and scented herbs which surrounded her on all sides. Her mother, the Rebbeztzin with her mother, the kalla's grandmother, the great Rebbeztzins with all the distinguished women and many girls who came in honor of the kalla, stood about her and praised her.

All waited expectantly, for in

another few moments the chassan would come to cover her with the prepared veil and crown, and all wanted to witness the canopy they had made for her and to inhale the delightful fragrances.

BLESSING THE COUPLE

While walking with the chassan, the Rebbe entered a small room, adjacent to where the kalla was sitting. There, privately with the chassan, he garbed him in the holy kittel that was made from the Rebbe Rashab's robe and the silk gartel which he had prepared; and blessed him before the chuppa.

Also called to this room was the Rebbe's father-in-law, Rav Avrohom, the grandson of the Tzemach Tzedek, with all the Rebbeim-Admurim, so that each one could

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forth like the
dawn.***



bless him with their strength and the strength of their ancestors, the tzaddikim. The Rebbe called upon all of them to bless the chassan and they fulfilled his request.

I did not see the manner in which the brachos were given and I didn't hear it spoken of, but I know that one of them, a humble and sincere tzaddik, out of his great sincerity and humility refused the great man, saying he was the smallest of the Chassidim and who was he to confer blessings on great men and to stand in the place of great men. His low estimation of himself didn't help him, since he was great and holy to those who knew him. He too blessed, with his hands spread over the chassan's head, the chassan and kalla. May all the brachos uttered by the holy mouths of the tzaddikim rest upon the heads of the chassan and kalla.

After these brachos, the chassan went out with his escort and entered the kalla's room for the badeken. Due to the crowding and pushing I did not see how this was done. It was very chaotic and I can relate only the little bit that I saw and heard.

A THOUSAND PEOPLE STOOD IN FRONT OF ME

Immediately after the badeken, all began running from the yeshiva hall to the inner courtyard where the chuppa would take place with great haste, since people wanted to get a spot close to the chuppa. I did not run. I stood and waited for the chassan and relatives to lead the way, as is proper, and many of the distinguished guests did the same. They gave all of us candles and we formed two lines through which the Rebbe, his uncle R' Moshe Horenstein, and the chassan in the middle would pass. They, the escorts, walked with him at a good and auspicious hour to the chuppa. All those surrounding and

accompanying him tearfully sang the Alter Rebbe's niggun.

Most of the commotion, the running, pushing and shouting that took place then in the yeshiva's yard, I cannot describe. Men, women and children filled the entire large yard. The length and breadth of the yard was about a thousand square meters, with many electric lights illuminating from above. Everyone wanted to be close to the chuppa, which was in a corner of the yard. Whoever was strong, pushed his fellow without asking pardon, heaven forbid, and jumped ahead. Obviously, not every mind could tolerate this.

After the escorts walked the chassan under the chuppa they returned to lead the kalla to the chuppa. Along with her on either side were her mother and grandmother, and the Rebbe's aunt Mushka, the younger sister of the Rebbe Rashab. After them followed all the women and girls and the rest of the crowd.

I stood with my brother-in-law, your uncle, and his son, at a distance. I did not see anything since a thousand people stood in front of me, but my brother-in-law exerted much effort and perhaps with some danger to himself, he climbed the roof of a nearby building. He took his son with him onto the roof where, together with numerous other people who stood there, they saw everything.

After they brought the kalla, I heard an announcement from our friend, R' Feivish Zalmanov, saying that all the young people should move away from the chuppa and allow the elders in. Only the elders should stand nearby and surround the chuppa, and that is how it was.

The kalla, the Rebbe, Rebbetzin, senior Rebbetzin, his aunt Mushka with her husband, R' Moshe Horenstein all went around the chassan.

A GREAT FEAR FELL UPON US ALL

After the hakafos I heard the first bracha recited by the Rebbe. Just hearing his voice made a great fear fall upon us all because his majestic voice filled with much bitterness and dread was heard on high and everybody in the court was filled with dread and for a moment the great noise ceased. A long silence prevailed throughout the yard. His sweet and pleasant voice, which blended together weeping and bitterness with joy and happiness, could be heard even in the distance. Many tears were shed from the eyes of all the bystanders, and the hearts of every one of us melted when the Rebbe said the bracha.

Then the chassan intoned the line one says to be mekadesh the kalla.

None of the Admurim there were honored with any of the traditional honors, except for one, the Radziner. The lottery fell upon him to read the k'suba.

Then the Rebbe opened his holy mouth and loudly recited the Sheva Brachos and once again, fear overtook all of us. It literally seemed to us like we were hearing the voice of an angel of G-d issuing forth from the Garden of G-d. I will not be exaggerating if I say that in those moments when we heard the Rebbe say, "... who created man in His image, in the pattern of His own likeness," we all did a sincere t'shuva like when he cried out before the blowing of the shofar, "guarantee goodness to Your servant."

Fortunate is the ear that heard all this, and may we all merit together to hear, speedily, in the cities of Yehuda and the outskirts of Yerushalayim, *kol sasson v'kol simcha* – the sound of rejoicing.

After the brachos and the breaking of the glass, there was a tremendous noise with the wishing of mazal tov in exultant tones as the music played and they danced before the chassan and kalla.

IRANIAN RESCUE MISSION

By Menachem Ziegelboim

Following the Shah's escape from Iran and the takeover by Moslem religious fanatics, Jewish lives were in jeopardy. A window of hope was the possibility of extricating young Jewish boys and girls from the country. Three young Lubavitchers took on the challenge.

THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN SAVED

The passing of R' Yossi Raichik a few months ago reminded me of when I was a bachur in 770, fourteen years ago, in the years after K'vutza. I had met with him and two other special Jews, three heroes who saved about a thousand boys and girls from Iran when Moslem religious fanatics seized control of the country.

Many people were aware R' Yossi as one of the men who oversaw the large airlifting of about a thousand children from Chernobyl after the nuclear reactor disaster, but most did not know that this was actually his second rescue mission. The first rescue mission took place ten years earlier in Iran.

A FORTUITIOUS JOURNALISTIC DISCOVERY

It began one ordinary afternoon in 770, when I found a stack of papers held together with a paper clip on a bench. It was a copy of a report to the Rebbe seven years earlier from a pair of T'mimim who went to Cyprus in the summer. They met with the Israeli ambassador there, who welcomed them warmly and asked them to thank the Rebbe, on his behalf, for saving him and hundreds of other children from Iran.

It was a line and a half, but my journalistic antennae were set to jangling. Hundreds of children were rescued? By whom? How did Chabad get involved in Iran? My mind raced with questions.

My initial attempts at locating information fizzled. I must have

asked the wrong people. Additional research informed me that this was a huge and incredible rescue operation. The Shah had fled Iran and the Ayatollah Khomeini had taken over the country, seeking to transform it into an extremist, religious, Moslem country.

My research led me to the three men who led the rescue campaign: R' Yossi Raichik a"h, R' Hertzel Illulian, shliach to the Persian community in Los Angeles, and R' Sholom Ber Hecht, rav of the Persian community in Queens and director of NCFJE.

The Kinus HaShluchim that took place that year brought the three men together in one place, in the office of Rabbi JJ Hecht a"h. Rabbi JJ Hecht had devoted tremendous energy to the absorption of the Iranian children in New York. The three men were very busy and had hardly any time to rest, let alone meet with one another.

Apparently, since their amazing mission had been accomplished, they had not sat down together to reminisce about the operation. It was hard to make a chronology of events because that is not how they spoke.

With his parents born in Iran, it's not surprising that R' Hertzel Illulian had felt a lifelong connection to the Jews of Iran. He grew up with the Persian language and customs. R' Sholom Ber Hecht is Ashkenazi, yet

he had close ties with Iranian Jews. As for R' Raichik, he laughed as he told how he fell into this rescue adventure:

"Years ago I traveled with my friend, R' Yossi Gerlitzky, on the Rebbe's shlichus to the Far East. On the way back we stopped in Teheran and contacted members of the Jewish community. Long after, R' Illulian called me and asked me to go back to Iran in order to spread Judaism. I refused. It was only after he begged me, 'Just go for a week

and then come back,' that I agreed."

R' Illulian wanted to go to Iran himself, but he received no response from the Rebbe year after year. "I wanted to do something for Iranian Jewry. It bothered me that 80,000 Jews lived in Iran, calling themselves traditional, and in need of spiritual guidance. Since I wasn't given the okay to go there, I sent them Jewish material." The third time he asked, he finally got a positive response.

R' Illulian declares that the third time, when the Rebbe agreed, was

nothing but ruach ha'kodesh. "The Rebbe knew what would take place in Iran in the near future." Before he left he asked R' Hecht to join him because he knew the mentality of Iranian Jews.

"At that time," said R' Hecht, "we didn't dream that the Shah's monarchy would collapse, not to mention that there would be a revolution."

Two weeks after receiving the Rebbe's positive answer, the two of them left for Iran, well stocked with Jewish material.

JUDAISM IN IRAN

"It looked like Jewish life was flourishing. There were many shuls and all were full of people who called themselves traditional and loved Judaism. But when we began looking a bit further, we discovered that most of them knew very little about Judaism and mitzva observance. Their ignorance was shocking."

In all of Tehran they found only two observant Jews; they were involved in sh'chita, each one for his own needs and for five or six family friends. Rav Yedidya Chacham Shofet, the official rav, and Rav Nesanel Ben Chaim did what they could, but the religious situation was poor.

Upon their arrival in Teheran, the two Lubavitchers met with the head of the community and with Rav Ben Chaim and his brother. They introduced themselves as emissaries of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and explained that the Rebbe cares about all Jews in the world. "The Rebbe thinks about you and worries about you, which is why we came here on his shlichus."

"Since they were good-hearted Jews, and since many in the community has already heard about the Rebbe and were aware of his work, they cooperated with us," said R' Illulian. "Shortly after we arrived,



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some young men volunteered to take us from the hotel on a tour of the Jewish ghetto where the poor of the community lived, and to the exclusive neighborhoods where the wealthy Jews lived. They also took us to see the Jewish hospital and the schools and shuls.

“On our first Shabbos there, we visited the Abel Shami shul of the chief rabbi, Rav Yedidya Chacham Shofet, a huge shul that had about 1200 seats, all full.

“It had been arranged that we would address the crowd. R’ Hecht spoke in English and I translated into Farsi and added my own drasha. We told them that we learned in a Chabad yeshiva in New York and had come on the Rebbe’s shlichus to encourage them and to help them.

“We felt that they listened with open hearts. Many of them visited us at the hotel and asked for guidance and aid. It was a promising beginning. We continued on our tour of other shuls like Khursani and Yosian, and then toured the mosdos.”

They saw that other than the Otzar Ha’Torah school, all the Jewish schools only set aside one hour a day for religious studies, which consisted of a little Tanach and a little Hebrew. They encountered ignorance during house calls where they saw that only a few people were familiar with kashrus or family purity. In all of Teheran there was only one mikva, and its kashrus was doubtful.

Within a short time, parents began asking the shluchim to make a Talmud Torah and yeshiva for their children. As long as they were young, they went to shul with their parents. When they got older, there was not a single yeshiva in Iran for them, and most of them continued in high schools and universities. Without realizing that their rescue mission had begun, they began utilizing the local mosdos in order to register children ages 13-15 to learn in yeshiva. They didn’t realize that they were actually preparing a list of children to save.

After two weeks, R’ Hecht had a complete picture and returned to New York with the goal of finding a permanent shliach for Iran. The heads of the community had agreed that a permanent shliach would work half a day as a mashgiach of kashrus and half a day as a teacher in the Jewish school system. They also promised to set up a permanent kosher kitchen for simchos. All looked rosy. Upon returned to New York, he reported to Rabbi Chadakov. He was very pleased and said to look for a shliach.

GUIDANCE FROM RABBI CHADAKOV

At this point, R’ Yossi Raichik entered the picture. He was in Eretz Yisroel for the wedding of a friend when he got a phone call from R’ Illulian. He asked him to come and help him, since he had gotten some brief experience with Iranian Jews in the past.

“That was the year that the Rebbe said the Tanya should be printed all over the world so I set off for Teheran prepared with galleys. When I got there, the first demonstrations against the Shah were taking place. At that point it wasn’t clear where that was leading and so nobody was nervous. All I was thinking about was printing the Tanya in several cities across Iran. After the printing we distributed copies of Tanya to the Jews of each city and sent the remainder to America.

“We checked mezuzos in Jewish homes, spoke with people about mitzvos and Judaism, and gave people chizuk. The local bachurim, who worked with R’ Illulian until I came, were already wearing tzitzis. Many Jews in Teheran began showing open signs of their Judaism.”

R’ Illulian remembers constantly reporting to R’ Chadakov and receiving close guidance from him and the Rebbe. Every conversation with him lasted half an hour.

“One time, to our surprise, the instructions R’ Chadakov relayed included a warning about danger in a Moslem country like Iran.”

REVOLUTION IN IRAN

Millions of Iranians trembled when they heard the name of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the last Shah (king) of Iran. He inherited the monarchy from his father and ruled the country as a despot. He had a secret police force which stamped out any signs of rebellion against him. There were constant attempts at revolution. He secularized the country and brought in an atmosphere of liberalism. Religious figures in Iran opposed him, but their voices were cruelly stifled by his police.

The reforms the Shah instituted included a series of economic and social reforms intended to transform Iran

into a global power. They succeeded in modernizing the nation, nationalizing many natural resources and extending suffrage to women, among other things. This made his country flourish economically in the 60's and 70's.

He had good ties with America and Israel that led to business deals among the countries, and the exchange of information and military hardware. The Shah of Iran was the first Muslim leader to recognize the State of Israel. He was a benevolent ruler to the Jews in his country.

The Iranian Revolution began on February 11, 1979, when religious opposition exploded. The Shah had to leave the country for exile. He died in Egypt in 1980.

The first of the major demonstrations against the Shah took place in January, 1978. Furious students and religious leaders in the city of Qom demonstrated against a libelous story attacking Khomeini which had run in the official press. Pressure from the president of the United States prevented the Shah from employing violence to disperse the crowds. The protests continued and the Shah responded with violence.

Finally, on 12 Kislev, 5739, more than two million people filled the streets of Teheran, the capitol, to demand the removal of the Shah and return of Khomeini from exile in France. The army fell apart when soldiers refused to open fire against demonstrators and began

supporting them. The Shah had been unaware of how truly unpopular he was. Most of the populace was loyal to Khomeini, who called for an end to the monarchy. The Shah had no choice but to leave Iran for exile. Religious leaders took over the country and transformed it into a religious republic.

THE BEGINNING OF THE INCITEMENT

R' Raichik related his introduction to the political unrest. "I found out about it on my first day there. I went directly to the house of R' Illulian's brother and, after resting a little, I wanted to go out and meet R' Illulian. That's when his brother told me that the situation on the streets was dangerous and there was a massive demonstration of a million people taking place in the square. I wanted to go out nevertheless, but he locked the door and put the key in his pocket, saying, 'You're not leaving. It's very dangerous out there!'

"We were careful. The revolution had not yet reached its peak, but revolutionaries prowled the streets in packs and would hang people without asking many questions, even Moslems or unidentified people who innocently walked by."

It was at this time that the first requests began coming in from the community. The shluchim had started organizing the first learning group for boys aged 13-15. Now they had to apply this information towards another purpose.

"Parents came to us and begged us to take their children, especially the girls," said R' Illulian. "We began to organize groups for the purposes of learning or leaving – depending on what happened next – between the ages of seven and thirty."

The uprising continued to get wilder, until the Shah realized he couldn't prevail and fled to Egypt. That was a particularly difficult day for the Jews. They had been treated well by the Shah and greatly desired for him to remain in power. They had not forgotten that the Shah's father had cancelled many decrees against the Jews, like the law which stated that whatever a Jew touched became impure.

It became increasingly dangerous. The streets were full of armed mobs. They hung people in the squares one after the other. Revolutionary guards would stop a passersby and ask: 'Who are you – Bahai?' (Bahai were called dogs by Khomeini) and immediately hang him. 'Who are you – a Pakistani? You took our jobs from us,' and hang him.

"Although we kept working and were encouraging, we saw the fear on every Jewish face," related R' Illulian. The change was quite extreme. As long as the Shah ruled, you could see his picture in every house and store. People feared the Shah, but the Jews were okay with



Rabbi Raichik

him. Everyone knew that if you mentioned his name five times a day, the Shah's secret police would not bother you.

"Now, all of a sudden, a million people were out on the street and openly demonstrating against the Shah. This was a veritable tsunami, and the Jews were terrified. The rules of their lives were different now. They realized that the situation was dangerous and they had to do what they could, at least to save their children. We understood that our mission had changed. Our new job was to take the children out of danger."

Rabbis Illulian and Raichik contacted R' Hecht in New York, and informed him that they had a new mission. They maintained that the danger was increasing from day to day and instead of disseminating Judaism, they had to get Jews out of there. He didn't understand what had happened all of a sudden.

It took them a week to convince R' Hecht of the gravity of the situation, until he finally realized that everything had suddenly and unexpectedly changed. At that point, they began a desperate race against the clock, to get out as many children as possible before it would be too late.

"I WAS SCARED, BOY WAS I SCARED!"

Fortunately, Iran wasn't a closed country at that time. On the contrary, the government encouraged boys to study professions in Europe in the hopes that they would return to Iran with their knowledge. The shluchim held a big meeting at the shul, announcing to the parents that they would help children leave Iran provided that they agree that they would be sent to Jewish schools.

In the meantime, R' Illulian sent the first group of children via Italy. R' Hecht, back in New York, was

very nervous about the fate of his friend, lest the revolutionary guards discover that he was behind the smuggling and persecute him.

"I was scared; boy was I scared!" said R' Illulian. "Revolutionaries ran wild in the streets, burning houses and cars, ransacking stores, and shooting at passersby. Walking in the streets, I would often encounter mob scenes. Once, they even torched a car right in front of me, and I immediately fled. The streets were burning. Cars and buildings went up in flames all the time. Revolutionaries fired shots in the streets, and tens of thousands of

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Moslem fanatics filled the squares with demonstrations against the Shah. I was in touch with R' Chadakov by phone. He warned me to be careful and encouraged me in my work."

THE CHILDREN'S JOURNEY

"In the first stage," said R' Illulian, "when we were not yet talking about 'escape,' but about leaving the country to study in New York, this was the yardstick we worked with. After the children who were interested in learning registered

with us, we selected the best and put together a group that would go to study in New York. At this point, each one had to buy his own ticket and we took care of the visas.

"For the first children I received American visas while still in Iran, from the American Consul Richardson. When the rioting reached a peak and the Moslem fundamentalists burned the American consulate, all the embassy employees fled and there was no one to provide visas for the US. Since I had Italian citizenship, I went to the Italian consulate and received visas for Italy.

"The first group numbered 250 boys and girls. They flew to Italy and stayed in Rome for a few days, while we ran around to arrange visas to the US. Until the arrangements were finalized, I put them up in a hotel. The difficulties were enormous – providing food and board for 250 kids, including many young children. I was helped by Rabbi Binyamin Gorodetzky, the Rebbe's representative in Europe, who came to Rome on the Rebbe's instruction, in order to help us with the children."

"The Iranian authorities knew nothing about our intentions. They didn't know it was organized, or that there was a connection among the children. At the airport, the children mingled with the crowd and nobody suspected it was an organized group. In hindsight, though, it was supernatural – a real miracle. Two hundred and fifty children leaving on one flight and nobody noticed?! I don't have a rational explanation for it."

R' Hecht took up the story. "R' Illulian returned to the US before Rosh HaShana, 5739, with the first list of children and he told me all about the revolution, firsthand. I immediately spoke to my father a" about absorbing all these children, and from that point on, we were a

team. R' Illulian and R' Raichik continued to work on arranging things in Teheran and Italy while in New York, my father and I prepared for the children who would be arriving.

"Contact was made with several mosdos, but none of them were willing to take the children. My father, with his characteristic energy, decided to provide special classes for them within his own mosdos, Hadar Ha'Torah and Machon Chana. He wrote to the Rebbe about his decision and within a short time he received a long letter from the Rebbe. The Rebbe approved his plan and gave him many warm brachos, including a bracha that he shouldn't have money problems.

"With this positive answer from the Rebbe in hand, my father and I got to work. The first thing we did was prepare the forms, like the Green Card and a declaration that the students could finance their stay in the US and would not become the burden of the American government."

In the meantime, R' Illulian was with the first group in Rome, aided by R' Gorodetzky and the Joint's

representative. When he arrived with subsequent groups, the Joint allotted them a building and he already knew his way around, but that first time, he might not have managed, especially in obtaining visas for the US, if two miracles from the Rebbe had not happened.

At that time, the American government made it very difficult to obtain a visa, especially if the people were refugees, and especially if they were from Iran. On average, the consulate would give one visa for every ten requests – and here we needed 250 visas! Acknowledging it was an unrealistic request, they decided to approach the ambassador and explain the situation. Perhaps he could do something to help.

The ambassador understood the delicate situation and personally made sure that the group got all the visas they needed. The amazing thing is that not only did he personally give them the visas, but he opened a municipal theater for them, invited all 250 children there, gave R' Illulian visa forms for all of them, and guided him in how to fill them out.

"So there I was in the hall,"

relates R' Illulian, "repeating the ambassador's instructions, loudly telling them all what to write and what not to write. Within an hour, all 250 visas were ready! Their help was tremendous. The ambassador did this contrary to all his standing orders. To highlight how amazing this was, I know that Russian refugees who were in Italy at that time and asked for visas for the US had to wait between half a year and a year until they got them. We went through the process in two to three hours.

"Nevertheless, those days in Rome were the hardest of my life. While the 250 children toured Rome, R' Raichik and I worked around the clock. By day I would chaperone them, and at night, after they went to sleep, I would fill out piles of forms for all 250 of them. If only I had the strength today that I had then!

"We were welcomed to the US by R' Hecht. His father had made arrangements for the complete material and spiritual care of these children, an exceedingly complicated task. Each one needed to be set up in a dormitory with full room and board, and settled in an appropriate learning program."

"TAKE OUT AS MANY AS POSSIBLE"

In the meantime, the three men heard that things were heating up in Teheran, and R' Illulian and R' Raichik asked the Rebbe whether they should go back. The answer was, "Take out as many as possible."

After two or three weeks in New York, they returned to Iran to continue their rescue work.

R' Illulian recounted: "I returned to Iran on Chol HaMoed Sukkos, 5739. Landing in Teheran after a flight that lasted an entire day in which I couldn't even drink, I immediately looked for a kosher sukka. Unfortunately, all the sukkos



From right to left: Rabbi Sholom Dovber Hecht, Menachem Ziegelboim, Rabbi Hertzell Illulian, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Raichik

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I found were not kosher, as nearly all the Iranian Jews were ignorant of halacha and custom. Starving and thirsty, I searched for a proper sukka.

"In addition to that was the danger of walking in the streets and there I was, walking in the middle of the night. I finally made it to the sukka of Chacham Ben Chaim.

"By the next day, the Jews of Teheran knew I had returned. Hundreds of Jews came to the sukkos of my older brother and uncle and tried to convince them to speak to me about their children. I stopped checking out who was an excellent student and decided to take any child who wanted to leave. This was a matter of saving lives."

One night, at four in the morning, R' Hecht got a phone call from the head of the community in Teheran, Dovid Shofet. "Rav Hecht,

please, you must quickly send forms for the students. They are grabbing our girls on the street and attacking them. They are forcibly inducting our sons and compelling them to fight. It is dangerous to leave the house."

They quickly got to work. There were no computers back then, just electric typewriters. A friend, Rabbi Chaimpur, took a few hundred emigration forms and filled them out in one night."

R' Raichik recalls that the head of the community told them, "We are sending you our children, whether you are willing or not. If you greet them at the airport with the appropriate paperwork, wonderful; if you don't, the American government will send them back to Teheran."

The chaos had just begun. R' Illulian and the head of the community sent the names of candidates to R' Hecht, and he filled out the forms according to the lists, but in the turmoil in Iran nobody knew what was going on. New children were added to the list while others, who were on the list, didn't know they were on it.

When the forms arrived in Iran, R' Illulian and R' Raichik sat up entire nights, erasing names and filling in the details of the new children, based on the criterion of filing only for those actually present.

When they arrived in the US, the emigration authorities at first thought it was a fraud. They suspected that these were Iranian terrorists who were trying to enter the US. Beyond all this, they had to prove that each child could support himself. Each student was supplied with a certificate that the school took full responsibility for them, including medical treatment if necessary. If the government would have checked things out, it would have discovered that the mosad could not do what it claimed, and

would not have allowed it. But some influential senators got involved and they made sure that the immigration authorities wouldn't do any investigation.

The immigration authorities helped them a lot, especially their clerks at the airport. For example, they allowed them to enter the terminal at the airport in order to welcome the groups of children so they could help them with technical matters. Whenever a group came, R' Hecht's father would travel to the airport to welcome them.

"I think that this episode has two parts," said R' Hecht. "The first was getting the children out of Iran and the second, absorbing them in Crown Heights. The big problem we faced was where to put them. We began to shop for buildings the way that most people shop for bread."

R' Raichik relates, "We eventually formed a staff which operated within a tight framework. R' Illulian and R' Chaimpur were in charge of getting the children out of Teheran and bringing them to New York, while R' Hecht and I took care of the children at this end. It was very hard. We had no money. Each day, a new problem cropped up. I remember one Erev Shabbos I asked myself in despair why on earth we were bringing them here."

"WHEN WE SAW MY FATHER, HE SEEMED SHELL-SHOCKED"

The difficulties were enormous, but all along, R' JJ Hecht was encouraged by the Rebbe. He was given educational guidance and suggestions on how to solve administrative problems. R' Hecht would ask the Rebbe about every little problem in connection with the children, even problems of clothing, shoes and where to sleep. He asked whether to convince the children to travel to Eretz Yisroel or to bring

them to America, and the Rebbe said that first they had to come to the US in order to get a proper chinuch. Then efforts should be made to send them to Eretz Yisroel, because over there it would be easier to observe Shabbos, chinuch, kashrus and so forth. The question became relevant when parents began leaving Iran, following in the wake of their children.

The Rebbe gave many instructions all along. When other mosdos wanted to help in absorbing the children on condition that the children learn in their institutions, the Rebbe opposed this.

“From the Rebbe’s instructions,” said R’ Raichik, “it was clear that we had a double task, saving them and being mekarev them. We understood, for example, that we were supposed to preserve their customs and traditions. On Pesach, we gave the children rice, *kitniyos*, that only Sephardim eat on Pesach. The Rebbe agreed to let them learn in other places on condition that they also study Torah, such as Yeshiva University. The Rebbe knew that the first order of priority was to save them from assimilation.”

Within half a year, about 1000 Jewish children came to the US. Many of them today are Chassidic men. Dozens serve as rabbanim, shochtim, teachers and other *klei kodesh*. Some of the boys, upon their arrival, did not even know alef-beis yet a few years later they were tested and received ordination for Yoreh Dei’a and Choshen Mishpat. Even those who dispersed when their parents came, left with a significant spiritual baggage. They came with astonishing ignorance and left with wide-ranging knowledge of Judaism. They all knew that they were Jews, they knew what Torah and mitzvos are, and knew what alef-beis and Shabbos are.

“It’s important to repeat and emphasize that aside from the fact

that they were Jews, the children knew nothing about Judaism, Torah and mitzvos,” stressed R’ Raichik. “If they would have attended public school, there is no question that they would have assimilated. This is why we made our rescue contingent on one thing, that they commit to spending at least one year with us.

“The Rebbe wanted them to know about their Judaism, and this condition was a clear message from the Rebbe that this was our job, to instill it within them. The truth is that from the outset there was no intention of transforming them into Chassidim, although those who



Rabbi Illulian

chose this path were certainly given plenty of support and encouragement.

“It was a very complicated mission and it was only thanks to the Rebbe that we came through. Think about it, within three months we grew from a mosad of thirty children to a mosad of 1000!”

R’ Hecht recalls: “When the rooms in our mosdos were full, my father decided he had to buy a building. He noticed a building in the neighborhood that belonged to a hospital and he invited the administrators. We sat here in the office and the doctors came. We

quickly drew up a contract and closed the deal. The building cost \$250,000. We paid \$50,000 as a down payment and got the keys.

“The purchase was made two weeks before Pesach, and we were happy that there was a place to house the children. The problem was that my father had signed the contract without checking out the building. Afterwards, he went to see it and when he returned he seemed shell-shocked.

“The entire building was a shambles. I thought my father would have a heart attack. All the plumbing was in ruins. The electrical wiring had been stolen and many of the walls were broken. In the end, we had no choice but to rebuild the building.”

“There were endless difficulties,” R’ Raichik tells. “There’s no reason to go over all of it. By the way, throughout our efforts you have to remember Anash of Crown Heights and their contribution. Many families adopted children. Some adopted two or three at once. The community’s hospitality was incredible. The children weren’t merely guests, they were refugees, and Anash helped them to the best of their ability.

“Many of them who first spoke about renting apartments or rooms, realized what the situation was about and waived payment. The same was true with the teachers. We hired people to teach the children basic Jewish and secular studies, and some of them forwent payment. I’d like to emphasize that the only one who saw what needed to be done for the children and made sure it got done, was R’ JJ Hecht. He gave our project its soul.”

“That year and a half,” says R’ Hecht, “my father went into three million dollars of debt, which today would be equivalent to thirty million, but he did it because the Rebbe wanted it. The Rebbe’s support was personal. Pesach night of that year,

5739, the Rebbe personally attended the children's seider and blessed them, in addition to all the other places he went that year: Tomchei T'mimim, Hadar Ha'Torah, Machon Chana, and FREE.

"The seider took place in the building which Tzach uses today, 305 Kingston. The hall was full of long tables, and each participant received a matza cover and a silver-plated cup. After the Rebbe blessed those in the dining room of Tomchei T'mimim, he came to the Iranian boys and then he went to Machon Chana to bless the Iranian girls. When the Rebbe finished the bracha, they responded with *amen, kein yehi ratzon*, which the Rebbe repeated in a Sephardic pronunciation.

"In his encouragement of our work with the Iranian children, the Rebbe showed us signs of kiruv too. At the farbrengen of Acharon shel

Pesach of that year, the Rebbe indicated that I should say l'chaim, and he encouraged me with his hands to increase the simcha."

TO SHARE IN THE MAROR OF THE CHILDREN FROM IRAN

One of the special shows of affection from the Rebbe followed a letter that R' Hecht wrote to the Rebbe on Erev Pesach. He asked for the Rebbe's bracha for increased strength in the work with Iranian refugees.

The Rebbe responded: "Those who hope in Hashem renew their strength," and the Rebbe explained, "The energy that a Jew invests in matters of Judaism is renewed from Above with new strength."

Erev Pesach afternoon, the Rebbe distributed freshly baked matzos to many shluchim and to those who

would be directing public s'darim. When R' Hecht passed by, the Rebbe told him to enter his room, where he gave him a package of matzos for the boys who came from Iran and another package of matzos for the girls.

"Where are the girls having their seider?" asked the Rebbe.

"In Beis Rifka," said R' Hecht.

The Rebbe asked that "four – i.e. that eight *k'zeisim* (for the two nights) – of the maror that the Persian children ate" be prepared for him.

R' Hecht was astounded by this request, and the Rebbe clarified, "I don't mean for the gefilte fish but for the maror."

In this way, the Rebbe made a unique gesture in the face of the bitter plight that the Iranian refugees were in, asking to eat their maror specifically.

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