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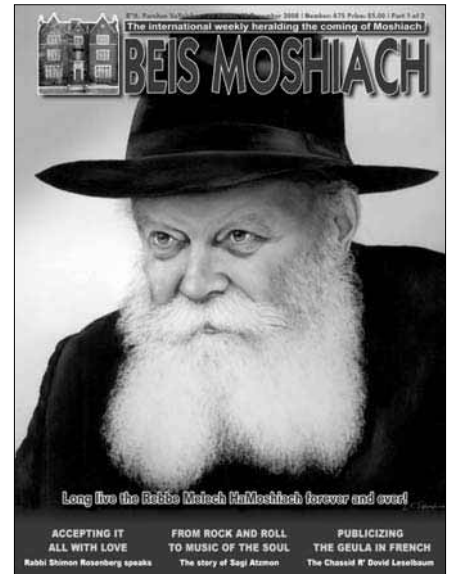
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A TZADDIK'S DISTRESS

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

The sale of Joseph teaches that distress leads to greater tranquility. Tzaddikim desire the tranquility that comes with Moshiach. G-d desires the prayers of tzaddikim. We have suffered the distress; like Jacob, we must now pray for the time of tranquility that follows Redemption.

The name of a particular Torah reading should tell us the general content of the whole portion. But in the case of this week's portion, *VaYeishev*, the name and the content seem to contradict each other. The word "*VaYeishev*" indicates rest and quiet, the tranquility Yaakov sought after his many years of struggling first with Esau and then with Lavan. Yet the Torah reading itself tells of the sale of Joseph, and Yaakov's agitation and anxiety that followed. Indeed, the Sages explain this as cause and effect: Yaakov sought to dwell in tranquility, so there occurred the upheaval concerning Joseph.

Yaakov's desire – his request to rest after his trials and tribulations, to lead a quiet life – had the opposite effect, for as a result of the request G-d brought disturbance and disorder into his life. This sequence of events – a desire for repose becoming the direct cause for commotion and turmoil – applies not just to Yaakov, but to *tzaddikim* in general, as the Sages explain. When the *tzaddikim* – the righteous – seek and desire to dwell in tranquility, G-d responds, what is prepared for them in the World to Come is not sufficient but they want to dwell in tranquility in this world, as well!

Since it is the *tzaddikim* – the righteous – who desire to dwell in tranquility, surely there is nothing wrong with

such an aspiration. Why then does G-d react negatively to this desire, so much so that he arouses the opposition, so to speak, bringing adversity and causing distress to the *tzaddikim*, as was the case with Yaakov?

To understand G-d's complaint, as well as reconcile the apparent contradiction between the name of the Torah reading and its content, we first have to examine the nature of the *tzaddikim* desire. For they seek to dwell in a tranquility that is perfect and complete, which means not simply physical repose, but a state of spiritual delight as well. In the World to Come, which the *tzaddikim* seek, there is neither eating, nor drinking, but only glorying in the Divine Presence.

Yet such tranquility belongs in the World to Come, not in this world. In the here and now, the task – especially of *tzaddikim* – is to work, to perform mitzvos, to accomplish our Divine service of transforming the physical realm into a dwelling place for G-dliness. It seems, then, that the request of the *tzaddikim* – to

dwell in tranquility – is inappropriate, at least given the current situation.

However, there is a deeper reason *tzaddikim* seek tranquility in this world. They desire their Divine service – their mitzvos and Torah study here in the physical realm – to be perfect and complete. And that situation can occur only when the world is at rest, as in the days of Moshiach. As Maimonides writes: All Israel, the prophets and sages desired the days of Moshiach so the nations would leave them in peace, for the nations would not permit them to learn Torah or observe mitzvos properly. When Israel finds rest, it will increase in wisdom.

Nevertheless, achieving such a situation prior to the coming of Moshiach resembles receiving a reward that should come only after the task – the Divine service of transforming the world – has been completed. This is also why the troubles of Joseph overtook Yaakov: his desire to dwell in tranquility was apparently not appropriate for his situation.

But it can't be said that Yaakov did not deserve to dwell in tranquility and repose at all, for after the adversities that followed the sale of Joseph were overcome, Yaakov's last seventeen years were peaceful

and calm. That being the case, why it was necessary to bring new troubles and difficulties upon Yaakov? Indeed, the adversity connected with Joseph was greater than the distress and affliction associated with Esau and Lavan.

Earlier we mentioned that the sale of Joseph and the resulting commotion resulted from Yaakov's desire to dwell in tranquility. And we see that, in fact, Yaakov ended up dwelling in tranquility. That is, in order to elevate Yaakov to a level of Divine service high enough that the spiritual tranquility could be achieved in this world, Yaakov first had to undergo a greater disturbance than previously experienced. For it is well known that adversity and distress refine and elevate a person to a higher level of Divine service.

This, by the way, answers the question concerning the name of the Torah reading: the disruption in Yaakov's life caused by the sale of Joseph was only a preparation, the necessary means through which Yaakov could truly dwell in tranquility, in the fullest sense.

Yet a question remains: surely Yaakov, who embodies the attribute of truth, knew his situation. If he requested G-d to allow him to dwell in tranquility, it must be that, after all his previous trials and afflictions, he had in fact reached a level of Divine service where he deserved such a reward. Why, then, did he need to undergo the disturbance associated with Joseph to merit a proper repose?

Actually, Yaakov had nine years of quiet and serenity after his return to Israel before the troubles with Joseph began. He had achieved a level of tranquility; but he did not dwell in the same type of tranquility before the sale of Joseph as he did after the family was reunited in Egypt.

On his own, Yaakov achieved the highest level possible, where he and his family dwelled in tranquility,

serving G-d and observing His commandments. Such a state was the natural result of his trials and efforts. But G-d gave him tranquility beyond the natural order – allowing Yaakov to dwell in Egypt, a place of confusion, commotion and limitations. And precisely there G-d enabled Yaakov to dwell in tranquility, both physically and spiritually. The locale did not affect the physical peace or the spiritual delight. In order to reach this level, however,

Yaakov had to undergo a greater trial and tribulation, an unnatural distress, as it were, that would raise his Divine service higher than he could achieve on his own.

Indeed, the adversity of Joseph differed from that of Lavan and Esau. With those two, Yaakov was fighting the world's opposition to holiness, transforming the physical into the spiritual. The adversity of Joseph resulted in no such immediate or obvious spiritual triumph. It was simply a Divine decree, in order to elevate Yaakov to a higher tranquility, beyond the limits of creation.

Since G-d wanted Yaakov to reach this higher level of tranquility, why did he wait until Yaakov asked before decreeing the sequence of events? Simply put, because G-d desires the prayers of *tzaddikim*. And from this we learn a critical lesson concerning our own Divine service: we must learn from the conduct of Yaakov. We must seek and desire the Redemption. We must demand the

arrival of Moshiach. Of course, in our times, we have already experienced the adversity and all aspects of distress. G-d wants the prayers of Israel; He wants us to desire the Redemption. And when we seek to dwell in tranquility as we should, then the hope and desire of all Israel – to see with our own eyes the return of the Divine Presence to Zion – will be immediately fulfilled.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 30, pp. 176-183)

Tzaddikim desire their Divine service – their mitzvos and Torah study here in the physical realm – to be perfect and complete. And that situation can occur only when the world is at rest, as in the days of Moshiach.



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SELF-SACRIFICE FOR THE REBBE IN OUR DAILY LIVES

Delivered by Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak Isaac Landa, Rosh Mesivta Yeshivas Chassidei Chabad-Lubavitch, Tzfas, at a kinus for yeshiva students.

Translated by Michoel Leib Dobry

The willingness to have complete devotion for the Rebbe is not limited to situations of literal self-sacrifice ch"v. We must teach ourselves to be completely dedicated to fulfilling the will of the Rebbe, and seek ways to bring this into expression in our daily lives. Each individual knows regarding what he needs to act with self-sacrifice, as we all have that impossible trial in our lives that demands that very level of pure devotion.



Several days have passed since the frightful murder of the Rebbe's shluchim in the Chabad House of Bombay, and we are all stunned and shocked. We are



trying to understand, searching for reasons and explanations. There are those who deal with the physical aspect of this event, saying that there wasn't enough protection, and therefore, they were unable to overcome the terrorists. These explanations don't satisfy us, for we know that this is not the reason. There was something more spiritual happening here. It is clear to us that Hashem Himself brought about this incident. What's going on here? This thought must persistently trouble us: What happened exactly?

We are now in the month of Kislev, and the entire incident with which we have been living for several days began on Rosh Chodesh Kislev. The month of Kislev immediately draws to mind Yud-Tes Kislev, Chag HaGeula, the day when the Alter Rebbe was freed from his imprisonment. Everyone knows the reason for the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment: There was a kitrug (spiritual accusation) against the teaching of chassidus, and as a result of this kitrug, the Alter Rebbe sat in prison. Furthermore, his daughter, the Rebbetzin Devora Leah, literally gave up her life as a result of a similar kitrug.

It appears that here too, there was a spiritual kitrug, which resulted in this tragedy. What exactly was the kitrug? There was an accusation against the whole concept of the Rebbe's shluchim

and the manner of their activities.

We are accustomed to using the word "kitrug" in a situation where a person does not act in a befitting manner, and the accusers in the Heavenly Court say that he is worthy of punishment. But this does not apply in our case. Here, we have a situation where the kitrug was not for punishment, nor because something was lacking – it was essentially due to the revelation of light, which drives away the opposing forces and brings the hisgalus of Moshiach. The yetzer ha'ra and the forces of impurity are neither willing nor prepared to accept this, and they make their accusations. They claim that the time has not yet arrived, and that they too have a portion in the world.

This was the kitrug against the teaching of chassidus. Learning chassidus brings light to the world and drives away the sitra achra. The sitra achra simply cannot tolerate this and counters with an indictment. It opposes the whole concept and does all that it can to interfere. This is essentially what is happening now – a kitrug against the concept of the Rebbe's shluchim.

WHY SPECIFICALLY IN INDIA?

The kitrug took expression specifically in India, and we must ask ourselves: Why there, of all

The tragedy in India, like the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment, was a result of a spiritual kitrug. This kitrug was an accusation against the whole concept of the Rebbe's shluchim and the manner of their activities.

places? There are shluchim of the Rebbe all over the world, why particularly in India?

One possible explanation: We all know the manner of outreach activities carried out by the shluchim in India, particularly with the emphasis, as the Rebbe demanded in the more recent years, that all matters in shlichus are for the purpose of bringing Moshiach. The shlichus must awaken Jews to a longing for Moshiach, to a realization that the time for Moshiach has arrived, and to live with Moshiach. The mitzvah campaigns and all matters of

Torah and mitzvos are in order to hasten the days of Moshiach.

This point is found among the shluchim in India with even greater prominence than elsewhere. While shluchim in other locations surely fulfill the Rebbe's instructions as he asked, the shluchim in India do it with extra emphasis.

It seems that the forces of impurity simply can't stand how the shluchim instill the concept that Moshiach is already here and everyone must stand ready to greet the Redemption. Our entire lives will revolve around the concept of Moshiach – something that the sitra achra can neither accept nor tolerate.

THE ANSWER TO THE ACCUSATIONS: INCREASE IN SHLICHUS!

The question is: Obviously, the sitra achra is there to make accusations. It is understood that when the powers of impurity see the end of the line, they try to delay things with their kitrugim. But how is it possible that they were so successful?

This is really a question that has no answer. The Rebbe has said that we don't have to make excuses for Hashem. We don't understand. But we also don't understand the accusations against the teachings of chassidus. Why did the Alter Rebbe have to sit in prison over this? There was a kitrug, the sitra achra didn't agree – so what!? Why did it have the strength? Why did there have to be the story with the Rebbetzin Devora Leah? There are things that we simply don't understand.

When the Alter Rebbe was in prison, his holy teachers, the Baal Shem Tov and the Mezritcher

Maggid, came to visit him and told him about the spiritual accusations. The Alter Rebbe asked them if he should stop saying chassidus, and they replied, "Since you have started, don't stop – and on the contrary, when you come out, say even more!"

This is our answer to the accusers! We must come out from this kitrug even stronger, and we must act with greater vigor and fortitude.

This is the point that must guide each and every one of us at this time. We must understand that we have come to the stage of the days of Moshiach. Even the

Each person must be prepared to have self-sacrifice for the Rebbe's shlichus in a manner of Kiddush Hashem.

klipa and the sitra achra feel this, so they are applying all the strength they can muster to try and stop us. Our task is to continue fighting the war and to continue with the Rebbe's shlichus as he wants us to do – bringing the days of Moshiach, living with the days of Moshiach, and instilling the concept of Moshiach within the world. We must not, *ch"v*, retreat.

SELF-SACRIFICE IN OUR DAILY LIVES!

We have all experienced the holy moment at the conclusion of the N'ila on Yom Kippur. When a

Jew says "Shma Yisroel," he must imagine to himself that he is being led to literally give his life for Kiddush Hashem. It is with this thought in mind that the Jew declares at the conclusion of N'ila, "*Shma Yisroel, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad!*"

This thought must be with us at every moment of every day. Each person must be prepared to have self-sacrifice for the Rebbe's shlichus in a manner of Kiddush Hashem. Every chassid has been educated for this purpose; every chassid lives in order to go through fire and water for the Rebbe. Thus, when an event such as this happens, "through fire and water" in its most literal sense, it must awaken all of us. We must be willing to have true mesirus nefesh and give our lives over to everything connected with the Rebbe. A chassid goes on shlichus with the knowledge that he is giving himself over completely. This is the thought that we must bear in mind constantly.

Naturally, no one is asking for it, and no one wants it to happen in an actual sense. We all want to *live* in Kiddush Hashem. This is what is demanded and required from us, and for this we must aspire and pray. However, the willingness must be as at the saying of "Shma Yisroel" of N'ila – a willingness to give our lives in sanctification of His Holy Name.

The willingness to have complete devotion for the Rebbe doesn't start just in situations of literal self-sacrifice *ch"v*. This willingness begins when bachurim train themselves to be candles spreading light. We must educate ourselves to be completely devoted to fulfilling the will of the Rebbe. What does that mean? What kind of self-sacrifice is actually demanded from a yeshiva bachur? Each bachur must

discover that for himself. Once he is ready to dedicate himself as at the end of the N'ila prayer, he must seek ways to bring this into expression in his daily life as a 'Tamim' in Tomchei T'mimim. Each individual knows exactly in which area he needs to act with self-sacrifice, as we all have that impossible trial in our lives that demands that level of pure devotion.

This point of self-sacrifice – going out on shlichus with self-sacrifice, fulfilling the shlichus with self-sacrifice – starts here in yeshiva, when each and every one of us educates himself in mesirus nefesh and the commitment to give over his life in carrying out the Rebbe's orders.

WHERE DO I HAVE TO CHANGE MYSELF?

Whenever tragedies befall a community, *r"l*, and suggestions arise as to what to do, each person thinks to himself what the next guy needs to do: "He should..." He has to stop fighting me; he has to improve his conduct; he has to change himself."

This is a flawed way of thinking that must be altered. It should be: "Where can *I* make changes in myself? How *I* can improve my conduct? What must *I* do in educating myself to have self-sacrifice?"

Now it's quite correct that in a moment of truth, it comes naturally. When a situation demanding self-sacrifice arises, it

arouses the *pintele Yid* within even the simplest of Jews, and he shows real mesirus nefesh. Similarly, we find regarding the T'mimim, who are truly "the Rebbe's children." When this essential nekuda within him awakens, he acts with complete devotion. But this nekuda is aroused only when there is a test that threatens this very nekuda. We don't want it to wait until then – we want the self-sacrifice to come much earlier, in the 'little' things that comprise daily life.

In this way, we will surely emerge victorious against the accusations, and we will merit the complete revelation of Moshiach Tzidkeinu and see the Rebbe with our own eyes as he redeems us and leads us upright to our land.

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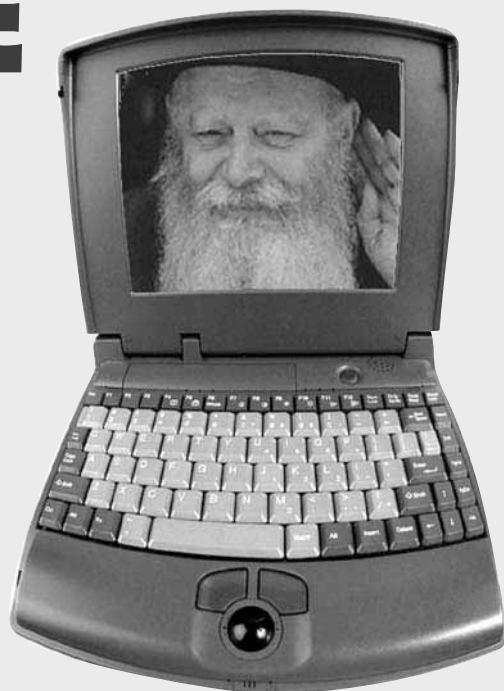
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ב"ה

THE REBBE'S WORD IS A GUARANTEE

By Nosson Avrohom

My father was in shock. Even in his worst nightmares he had never considered that he would have non-Jewish grandchildren...

During Chanuka 5760, a group of Spanish speaking T'mimim visited the Jewish communities in Mexico. With the enthusiasm and energy characteristic of Lubavitch youth, they brought light wherever they went. Until the shluchim, Rabbi and Mrs. Meizlich, assumed their post later that year, Chabad activities in the area had been done in an unsystematic way. R' Shlomo Markowitz would oversee various outreach activities, every so often bringing groups of bachurim to Mexico to work with the Jews there.

Rabbi Yonah Fradkin, shliach in S. Diego, organized the group of bachurim for Chanuka. The T'mimim put together a parade of vehicles with Menoras, and distributed thousands of Menoras and brochures. The Jews of Mexico had never experienced Mivtza Chanuka on this scale before.

One of the T'mimim, Refael Tawil, now a shliach in Salata, Argentina, recalls that Chanuka:

"We were excited to discover that even in a country that did not have shluchim and did not have ongoing Chabad activities, many Jews knew who the Rebbe was and

had experienced miracles with him."

Tired but on a high from their work, the T'mimim went one day to a certain town in order to meet the students of the local Mizrachi school. The goal was to give out menoras and to explain the inner meaning of Chanuka in light of Chassidus. Bleary-eyed from days of work and minimal sleep, their satisfaction and the challenges ahead of them kept them going.

"We began early in the morning. Before we set out, our caravan of cars stopped near a grocery store to load up with kosher products. We attracted people's attention, as we did wherever we went. The reactions were varied. Some shrugged, others didn't understand, some asked us questions, and still others were rude and mocked us.

"As I returned to the car, I was approached by a local Jew who looked excited to see us and thanked us warmly. Surprised by his effusiveness, I asked if he had encountered the work of Chabad before or heard of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The way he said, 'Of course I've heard of the Rebbe,' insinuated that he was offended by the

question. After that reaction I knew that he must have had a great story to tell.

"Before I had a chance to question him, he asked if I wanted to hear an amazing story that he had experienced thanks to the Rebbe's bracha. Within a few minutes, my friends and I gathered around to listen with interest to his account. From his emotional reaction and the detail with which he recounted the incident, you would have thought it had happened just a few days earlier, but in fact it had taken place years before. This was his first opportunity to share the story."

"Although I wasn't raised in an Orthodox home, we were very traditional, like many Jews of Mexico. No wonder then, that when one of my brothers came home and announced that he was marrying a non-Jew, my parents were horrified. "Do whatever you want except for marrying out," they pleaded.

"This was their red line, but my brother informed them that this was not a hasty decision and any efforts at dissuading him were a waste of time. After many months of deliberation, he had concluded that he would never find a more suitable woman to marry.

"My parents tried to plead with him, telling him that by marrying this woman, his children would not be Jewish, thus cutting off a branch

of their family tree. He would not be moved. His friends didn't approve of his decision either, but they too met up with a brick wall. He was determined not to be swayed.

"My parents were beside themselves. One day, my brother came home and announced that he had set a date for the wedding. The hall and everything had been arranged. My father was in shock. Even in his worst nightmares he had never considered that he would have non-Jewish grandchildren.

"As the days passed and the day of the wedding approached, his despair deepened. Little by little he began to realize that there would be gentiles sitting around his Shabbos and Pesach table – an extremely painful thought. Yet my brother stuck to his guns. "I want her; she will be my wife," he declared.

"My father was a businessman, and did a lot of traveling. On one of his trips he met Rabbi Refael Sued, one of the first Chassidim to become Lubavitch in Argentina who helped build the Chabad community

there. My father poured out his heart to him. Unlike other people, who threw up their hands and tried to convince him to make peace with the idea, R' Sued gave him hope. He told him about the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the faithful shepherd of Israel, and told him of similar situations where the Rebbe, with advice or a bracha, saved Jews from intermarriage.

"My father was thrilled with the idea of consulting the Rebbe. R' Sued's description of the Rebbe's abilities impressed him. For the first time, he felt that he had a chance to salvage the situation.

"Arrangements were made for R' Sued, my father and myself to travel together to the Rebbe. It turned out that my father wasn't feeling well on the set day and could not go to New York. We spoke on the phone and decided that just R' Sued and I would go to 770. We had an appointment for yechidus.

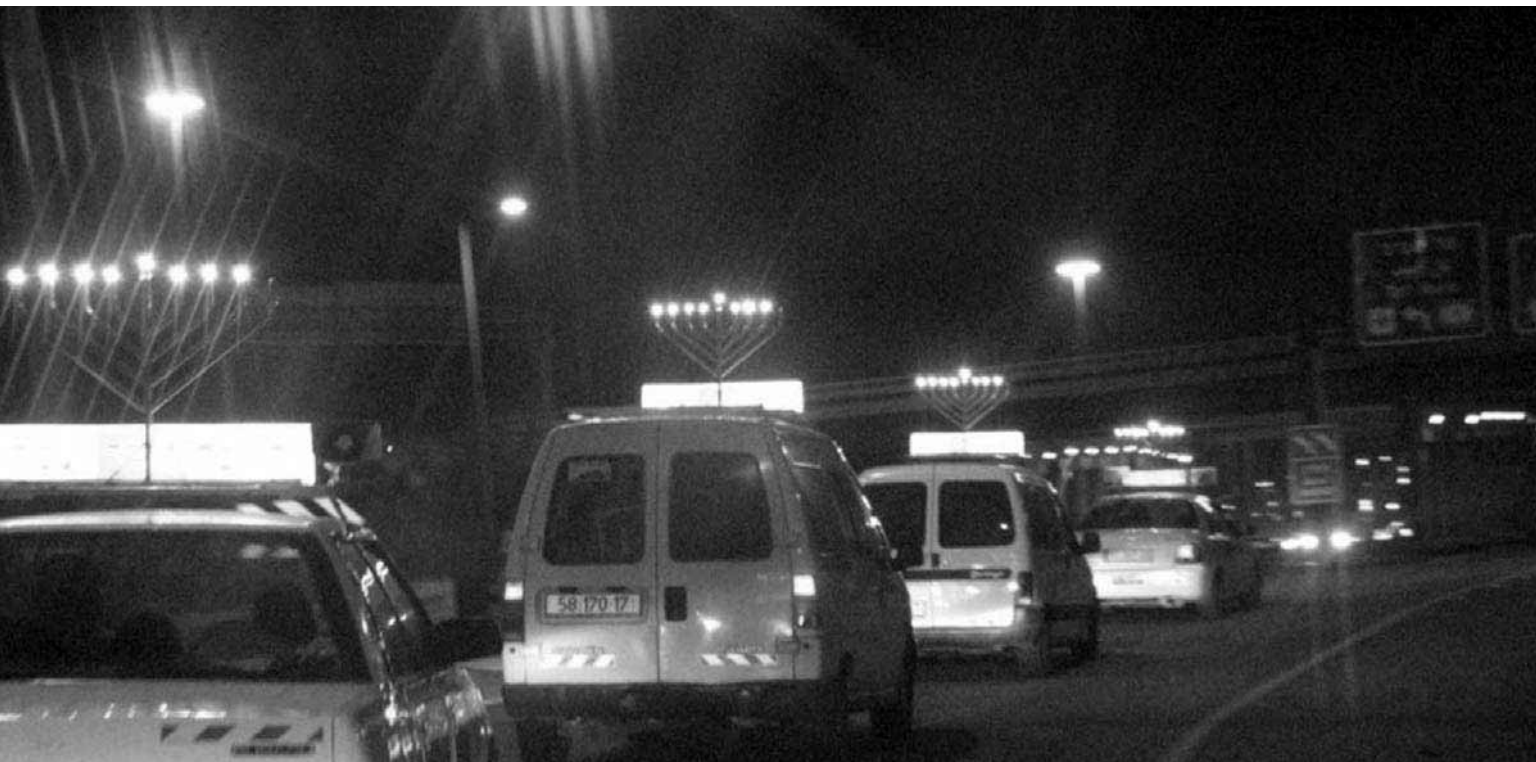
"We waited for many hours near the Rebbe's room. R' Sued was very serious, as I could see that he was

preparing spiritually before entering to see the Rebbe. An interesting array of people were waiting there to see the Rebbe, not just Chassidim. I was impressed. The truth is that everything was strange to me.

"When I entered the Rebbe's room, I felt awestruck. My knees trembled and my teeth chattered. I couldn't open my mouth. The Rebbe's look made me go silent. All my attempts at talking, failed. R' Sued began to speak instead of me. He told the Rebbe about my brother and his decision, and about how the family was suffering greatly from it.

"The Rebbe listened, asked some questions, and then turned to me and said not to worry – it would be all right. Afterwards, R' Sued told me that the way the Rebbe said it indicated a promise. It wasn't merely a hope, a wish or a bracha. I was stunned by the certainty with which the Rebbe made his statement.

"Before we left, the Rebbe took three dollars out of his drawer and



instructed me to give them to my father and ask him, for the sake of his son, to be particular about three mitzvos: kashrus, family purity, and tz'daka. The meeting ended.

"I left the room in turmoil. I was convinced that the Rebbe's promise would come true. I had never before seen a man with such a majestic face. The Rebbe turned the stories of the prophets in Tanach into something alive and real. That same night I told my father of the Rebbe's assurance and the three mitzvos the Rebbe asked him to observe.

"The next day I returned home to Mexico and gave the dollars to my father. I asked him again to be careful about those three mitzvos. He began to give tz'daka every day, but was confused about the kashrus since, as a traditional family, we kept kosher. After my father thought about it, he realized what the Rebbe meant. On occasion, business took him to Switzerland where he would buy a certain type of expensive cheese he liked. Everybody knew the cheese was his and we couldn't touch it. He figured it probably wasn't kosher and immediately threw it out.

"Days and weeks passed until only one week remained to the wedding, but it didn't look as though my brother was going to cancel it. On the contrary, his determination to marry the woman seemed to have intensified. We were at a loss, but R' Sued calmed us saying that if the Rebbe promised, we could rest assured.

"Just two days before the wedding my brother became sick; nothing dramatic, just a headache and a bad cough. He went to the hospital to get checked out and was to be released the next day. My father, seeing a golden opportunity, told the Jewish head of the department that his son was about to marry a gentile woman, and asked whether he could keep him in

the hospital under some medical pretext or another.

"The doctor considered it and then agreed, although he wasn't sure it would help. "I'm happy to do it because I know what it means to have a child planning to marry out," he said, hinting at his own family situation. He told his staff to keep my brother for another day. All of my brother's attempts at getting released were met with strong words of caution, even as they sympathized with him over his having to be in the hospital on his wedding day.

"The next day, when he met his fiancée, she accused him of standing

***When I entered
the Rebbe's room,
I felt awestruck.
My knees trembled
and my teeth
chattered. I
couldn't open my
mouth.***

her up deliberately to please his family. She berated him for embarrassing her before all her friends and relatives and said she wanted nothing more to do with him. My brother tried to placate her, but to no avail. They went their separate ways, and the Rebbe's bracha was fulfilled.

"A few months later he met a Jewish woman. They married and now have fine Jewish children."

He concluded his account with another amazing hashgacha pratis that they experienced on that

Chanuka:

"Before we headed out to the students of Mexico, we asked one of the locals whether the list included all the Jewish schools. We were told there was one more school, but since we were certain not to be welcomed there, it would be pointless to go.

"R' Yossi S., who is now a shliach in California, has lots of guts and Lubavitcher chutzpa. Refusing to be discouraged, he called the school and spoke with the principal. Contrary to everyone's expectations, her response was, 'You're Chabad? No problem! Come to the school and do as you like.' The locals were stunned. That same day we visited the school.

"As we were wrapping up our visit, R' S. told the principal what we had been told and asked why she had agreed to have us. She said, 'How could I refuse Chabad?' She proceeded to tell us that her son had gone on a trip to Europe with some friends. While they were on the train in Italy, all their belongings were stolen. Bereft of all they owned, they wandered aimlessly around Milan. Seeing a shul, they decided to go in. There they met Rabbi Yehuda Leib Cohen, who today is the shliach for Spanish speaking Jews in Eretz Yisroel, and he welcomed them warmly. He hosted them for a week and took care of them until their flight.

"I couldn't refuse a request from such a special movement that is made up of the most amazing people. I hope you succeeded in transmitting your idealism to my students," she said.

"This taught me," concluded R' Tawil, "that no Jew is irredeemable. Even if people seem to be so distant that it appears there is no way we could influence them, we have to realize that we operate with the Rebbe's kochos."

WORKING HARD TO BRING THE GEULA

*The true redemption cannot come as a result of habitual activity, because that is not avoda * A person who lives a life of mechanical and minimal avoda waits for the Rebbe to bring the Geula and consequently, since no Jew will be left behind, he will be taken along too...*

THE M'MEILA AND B'DIEVED APPROACHES

The events of the two main holidays celebrated in Kislev, the Chag HaGeula of Yud-Tes Kislev and Chanuka, emphasize two basic Chassidic principles.

Yud-Tes Kislev and the story of the arrest of the Alter Rebbe illustrate the principle of refraining from the derech m'meila approach. We must work hard for spiritual attainments rather than expecting to grow and achieve automatically through habitual behaviors, the efforts of others or other shortcuts.

Rabbi Boruch of Mezhibuzh visited the Alter Rebbe and asked him why he did not prevent his arrest by moving his hand over his forehead to remove dinim, as they had learned from the Maggid. The Alter Rebbe replied that he did not want his redemption to come b'derech m'meila. He added that Yaakov Avinu also knew about

moving the hand over the forehead, yet he did not do so; rather he made the effort of sending gifts, davening, and preparing for war.

Various details of the story of the Alter Rebbe's arrest illustrate this point. The most telling example is when he asked that the boat stop so he could sanctify the moon. The sailor refused and the boat stopped miraculously, but the Alter Rebbe did not use that opportunity to do the mitzva. Only after the boat resumed moving and the man agreed to stop the boat that he sanctified the moon.

Chanuka illustrates a second point, the idea of going **l'chat'chilla** (doing things the best possible way from the outset) in a way of *mehadrin min ha'mehadrin* (in the finest way) and refraining from the **b'diaved** (permissible after the fact, not the ideal) approach. B'diaved, the Chashmonaim could have lit the

Menora with impure oil. The halacha states that *tuma d'chuya b'tzibbur*, the laws of *tuma* are set aside regarding *avoda* in the Beis HaMikdash if the majority of the Jewish people are *tamei*, and they were all *tamei meis* because of the war. But they did not want to inaugurate the Mizbeiach in a b'diaved kind of way. They wanted everything to be done with the greatest *hiddur*. For this reason we strive to light the Menora on Chanuka in a way of *mehadrin min ha'mehadrin*.

These two holidays teach us two fundamental approaches in *avodas Hashem*: The necessity of working for the desired results, and the importance of striving for the best and loftiest goals.

KNOWING WHEN TO APPLY THE B'DIEVED AND M'MEILA APPROACH

The Rebbeim invested much *avoda* to instill in their Chassidim the desire to toil and invest (as opposed to *derech m'meila*) in the best possible way (as opposed to b'diaved).

This is how, for example, the Tzemach Tzedek educated his Chassidim. A senior Chassid, who had been to the Alter Rebbe in his youth, brought his grandson before his bar mitzva to the Tzemach Tzedek, and asked for a *bracha* that his grandson

remember everything he saw there so that **m'meila**, he would be a Chassid.

The Tzemach Tzedek replied that for decades his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe and his son-in-law, the Mittler Rebbe, toiled so that Chassidim will be Chassidim **not b'derech m'meila but through avoda**, and he is asking that he should be a Chassid b'derech m'meila?

The second principle, of doing things l'chat'chilla rather than b'diaved, and even more so, in a way of **hiddur**, became the classic way to identify a Chassid. Even in the most difficult circumstances, Chassidim make great efforts to obtain a beautiful esrog and

shmura matza, to sit in a sukka even in the rain and even just for a drink, to buy two beautiful pairs of t'fillin, to wear woolen tzitzis with generous measurements and beautiful strings, and to be mehudar in the kashrus of food and drink. They do not compromise or rely on leniencies.

Acquiring these Chassidic traits involves dealing with the human tendency to seek the easy way out. The Chassidic approach does not seek to break bad traits. There is a Chassidic saying that if you break a midda you are left with two bad middos - the original bad midda plus sadness or arrogance. Rather than seeking to break bad middos, we direct

Does Hashem need our avoda? We need the avoda. Man was created solely to serve Hashem, and that is the reason for our existence. If we do not carry this out, we have no right to exist.

them towards positive ends.

Therefore, we don't need to utterly squash the desire to get away with the minimum and make do with what comes automatically. This desire should be used for our involvement in parnasa. *That* should be done b'derech m'meila, without toiling and getting completely caught up in it. We need to do the minimum required of us in order to make a vessel for the bracha, as it says, "six days your work should be done." It doesn't say, "do your work," rather the work should be done automatically, with minimal effort.

The apathy and laziness which leads us to cut corners needs to be directed towards worldly. Instead of investing money and effort to acquire a beautiful wardrobe, suffice with wearing something b'diaved. Rather than work long hours in order to build a magnificent home, choose to live in a b'diaved home whose spiritual contents make it a "dira naa" (beautiful home).

Instead of gorging on many exotic courses in an expensive



restaurant, it would be better for the neshama (and the body) to eat simple, nourishing food which gourmands would consider b'diaved. The same b'diaved approach should be used for all material acquisitions and pleasures.

WHAT THE CHASSID HAS IN THE BAG

M'meila and b'diaved in the right place are wonderful. However, when it comes to avodas Hashem, there should only be toil and the goals of hiddur and l'chat'chilla. Consequently, a Chassid always feels dissatisfied with himself because he thinks: Who knows if I put in enough effort and whether I did it in the most beautiful way?

To understand why this exemplifies a Chassid, we must first look at why any toil is needed in the service of Hashem. Does Hashem need our avoda?

We need the avoda. "I was not created except to serve my Maker" - if not for this, we would not be created and would not be needed. Like any object, there is a specific purpose: a hat to adorn or protect the head, a shoe to protect the foot, etc. If they do not fulfill the desired purpose, they are thrown away.

Man was created solely to serve Hashem, and that is the reason for our existence. If we do not carry this out, we have no right to exist.

THE "EQUIPMENT" WE RECEIVED FOR OUR AVODAS HASHEM

Not only man in the general sense, but every single detail about him – all his material and spiritual belongings, his power of intellect, emotions and garments of the soul – were created to

serve Hashem. If, heaven forbid, they do not get used for their intended purpose, they don't need to exist.

When Chassidim wanted to explain the significance of this they would ask: What would happen if Hashem would cancel the mitzva of t'fillin shel yad? (this is just theoretical since the Torah cannot change.) What would change in the world as a result?

The change would be reflected in man's body. Men would be created with only the right hand, because there would be no use for the left hand! The left hand wasn't

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It's crucial!***

merely created for the sake of symmetry. Everything was created for one purpose only – to serve Hashem.

This perspective is derived from the Chassidic explanation of "ein od" – that there is no existence aside from that of G-d. If a person serves Hashem b'diaved, or in a way that things are done b'derech m'meila, then not all the things Hashem created are being used to serve Him and it's as though they were created for nothing. For if things are done m'meila, without the investment of intellect, emotion, thought, speech and deed, these are extras and Hashem has to ch"v take them away since they are not being used to serve Him.

If these abilities were immediately taken away, we would lose our free choice. Imagine if a person knew that if he merely utters the words of prayer without thought or emotion, his ability to think and feel would be immediately taken away. Obviously, he would never daven by rote.

WHY DO HUMANS WALK ON TWO FEET?

Not only were we created to enable us to serve Hashem, but *everything* that exists in the world was created for this purpose. Kabbalistic sources say that some humans in the future will walk on all fours and that the only reason they walk on two feet now is for us to have free choice whether to copy their animalistic values.

If such people walked on all fours today, who would try to copy them and their ways of eating and dressing? We wouldn't have to be warned about this just as we don't need to be warned not to eat grass like an animal. If such people walked on all fours, the difference between us would be

apparent and free choice would be lacking.

All men have been created upright, on two feet, in the image of Supernal Man and in the image of G-d, in order to teach Jews to live up to that image. In the future, when the universal revelation of G-d will cancel out the animalistic option, those intrinsically animalistic humans will have no reason to walk upright.

TO TOIL IN INYANEI MOSHIACH

I met an older Lubavitcher who had lived through the persecution in Russia in 1927 and the arrest of the Rebbe Rayatz. I asked him which test was greater, back then or now, after Gimmel Tammuz. He said, “Today, of course,” and explained as follows:

Back then, it was clear that if we wanted to remain Jews the only way entailed mesirus nefesh for every detail of Judaism. Today there are two paths which seemingly are both Chassidish and intended for the honor of the Rebbe. It’s very confusing.

Some maintain that we can continue doing everything (mitzvaim, learning Chassidus, etc.) except for one little thing that we need to avoid public attention over – that Moshiach is here and he is running the show. Others maintain that it’s not a detail! It’s crucial!

Why does Hashem create this illusion and confuse us with various approaches? So that Chassidim can work to find what Hashem really wants and won’t just go with the flow, b’derech m’meila.

KEVIUS B’NEFESH

Because of the need to create free choice, man is left with all his kochos even when he doesn’t use them. Over time, he forgets that it was all given to him in order to serve his Maker.

When a Chassid falls back on an avoda of b’diaved or b’derech m’meila, he demonstrates that all that matters to him is his own existence. Avoda is not his raison d’être, but an extra. To him, his left hand exists because it’s nicer that way, and animalistic humans walk on two feet because that’s just how it is.

He is a *chitzon*, a superficial person, whose mitzvos are shallow and done merely to fulfill his obligations. HaYom Yom tells us, in the name of the Tzemach Tzedek, that when a p’nimi asks the Rebbe for success in avoda, he means to work harder through his own effort.

You might be wondering, why does Hashem care if we do things easily – aren’t the results what



count? The answer is that just as we understand that we can’t rely on someone else serving Hashem and exempting us, the same is true within ourselves. If we do things merely with a part of ourselves, without including all our soul and physical powers, that does not exempt the rest of us, those parts that did not get involved. This is why the idea of being a *chitzon* is utterly rejected by Chassidim.

The Alter Rebbe was once asked by one of the great Misnagdim what Chassidus innovated. The Alter Rebbe answered “*kvius ittim*” - having set times for Torah study. ‘How was this an innovation,’ wondered the Misnaged, ‘when throughout the generations, the Jewish people have always had set times to study Torah?’ The Alter Rebbe explained that he meant a *kvius b’nefesh* (soul commitment), not a *kvius* in time.

This story completes the picture and clarifies why we can’t do things b’derech m’meila and b’diaved. Doing it that way is not a *kvius b’nefesh*. A *kvius b’nefesh* entails the feeling that learning and doing mitzvos are vital, our lives depend on it. It’s like breathing - a person breathes in order to live, not because now it’s time to breathe! Ideally, a person does not eat and sleep because it’s time for those activities, but because he needs them for his existence.

ONLY THROUGH CHASSIDUS

The difference between a *kvius* in time and a *kvius* in soul is the basis for the story with the Baal Shem Tov that occurred at a gathering of scholars one Rosh Chodesh. One of the men present, thinking the Baal Shem Tov was an ignoramus and wanting to mock him, asked him what the halacha is if someone forgets to say Yaaleh V’Yavo in Mincha.

The Baal Shem Tov replied, “The question is not relevant. I will not forget it, but you will forget it

even when you repeat the Shmoneh Esrei.” Indeed, that is what happened.

Why didn’t the Baal Shem Tov forget Yaaleh V’Yavo? Not because he saw in the siddur that you have to say Yaaleh V’Yavo on Rosh Chodesh, but because the Baal Shem Tov *felt* that it was Rosh Chodesh. It was part of his very being. For the other person, Rosh Chodesh was something on the calendar that you had to remember - either you remembered it or you were distracted and forgot.

How does Chassidus innovate this type of kvius in the soul? By educating us to understand the real “ein od” – the sense and certainty that it is only the word of G-d and His will within every creation which gives them life. Someone who seeks an easy life and does his tasks in this world only to fulfill his obligation b’diaved and b’derech m’meila, is not doing his avodas Hashem as it is illuminated by the teachings of Chassidus.

It’s important that this person realize that his avoda is not just lacking – it’s not avoda at all! By not connecting to the p’nimius, it fails to bring about the refinement which is the main thing – that all his limbs and soul powers connect to G-dliness through their cognizance of the purpose for which they were created.

Other Chassidic groups explain the verse, “and a tzaddik with his faith **gives life**” to his Chassidim - as long as the Chassid is connected to his Rebbe, his Rebbe will, b’derech m’meila, lift him up. The approach of Chabad Chassidus, on the other hand, is that the tzaddik doesn’t enliven you gratis; you have to give life to yourself through refining yourself with your own efforts and avoda. Then the tzaddik will pour forth

from his true life force into the vessel filled with life that you created. Obviously, this cannot be done derech m’meila or b’diaved. According to what a person puts in, that’s how big the vessel will be that the Rebbe will fill.

This is reminiscent of the mitzva of tz’daka. There are various levels in the fulfillment of this mitzva: giving a coin, giving food, etc. The highest level of all

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is giving a person the ability to stand on his own feet so that he can support himself. That is what Chabad Chassidus is about, giving Chassidim the tools so they can rise in ruchnius on their own.

**“AND I WILL REMOVE
THE HEART OF STONE
FROM YOUR FLESH”**

These two Chassidic principles

are the key to bringing the Geula. What is the connection between them and the Geula?

In order to understand the answer, we have to think about why the true and complete Geula still hasn’t come after so many years of exile. It’s not because of our sins. One of the proofs that the Rebbe gave is that if this was so, the difficulties of galus would diminish from generation to generation. Why? Because the further we got from the original sinful behavior and the more we rectified it, the easier it should get. In actual fact, the galus just gets worse.

We know that the Geula depends on our actions during galus. The Geula cannot come as a result of avoda done b’derech m’meila or b’diaved, because that is not avoda. A person who lives a m’meila and b’diaved life, waits for the Rebbe to bring the Geula and **m’meila** – since no Jew will be left behind, he will be taken too... He may not be in the front row with those who go with the Rebbe to Yerushalayim but **b’diaved**, the last row is worth something too...

The practical meaning of Geula is going out of all the complications and entanglements of the general and inner galus. If a person expends effort into getting out of his personal limitations, that indicates that he understands what his problem is. Identifying the illness is half the cure and then the Geula is the other half – the help from Above.

The Alter Rebbe was asked what the purpose is in learning Chassidus and following its teachings when we cannot achieve the desired heights. He answered by explaining the verse, “and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh” – when the Geula comes, the stone which

covers and obscures the truth will be removed.

Consider those who had proper ambitions and goals in a lifetime of toil in avodas Hashem under a heart of stone. The moment the stone is removed, the results of all his work will be revealed and that will save him. On the other hand, someone who

merely waited to receive all the spiritual goodies on a silver platter will have nothing to reveal when his stone is removed.

If we have half the cure in advance, then later on we will get the other half. If the first half is missing, how will the second half help?

Based on all the above, we

need to be grateful for the wonderful chesed that the Rebbe did in telling us that **hinei zeh (Moshiach) ba**, so we can prepare the first half properly now. Then we will merit the removal of the heart of stone, the second half that will bring the anticipated perfection with the true Geula Now!



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CHABAD HOUSES ON THE WATER

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

RUACH AL HA'MAYIM

Four years ago, the shluchim in Teveria opened a Chabad house called “Ruach al HaMayim” (Spirit on the Water) smack in the middle of the famous boardwalk that extends the length of the fisherman’s pier and the boat docks at the edge of the water.

The shliach, Rabbi Shneur Zalman Turkov, went to Teveria in order to run this special Chabad house in the heart of the boardwalk. He explains:

“I came with the Chassidishe ruach (ruchnius) of Tzfas and I found plenty of water here, which is why we called it ‘Ruach al HaMayim,’ alluding to the verse in B’Reishis, ‘and the spirit of G-d hovered over the water.’ The Midrash comments, ‘this is the ruach of Moshiach.’”

Whoever enters this Chabad house is immediately exposed to a wonderful juxtaposition of beautiful Teveria and holy Teveria, ancient Teveria and modern Teveria, and then on to the Teveria of the future, to which the Sanhedrin will return and where Moshiach will be revealed. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

The Rebbe’s shluchim have been working in Teveria for more than thirty years. At first, there was Rabbi Shraga Brod (I was able to help him with Kinusei Torah at several schools during Nissan, 5745). He was followed by Rabbi Yosef Kramer,

who is still there today. R’ Kramer started several outreach centers and a preschool, and today he is assisted by a number of other shluchim.

R’ Kramer has also “elevated to holiness” the large Lido tour boat, which travels on Lake Kinneret. Every Lag B’Omer he boards the boat together with the hundreds of children who come for the Lag B’Omer parade. On the boat the children recite the 12 p’sukim, sing songs about Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, daven, and ask Hashem for Moshiach.

Near the boardwalk, there used to be an old building that served as a shul for the Boyaner Chassidim. In the past fifty years, the city changed and the Boyaner Chassidim were happy to give the building to Chabad. R’ Kramer opened a Kollel and the Chabad house office there. Four years ago, the place was renovated. It is now a visitors’ center, where t’fillos and shiurim take place under the dedicated leadership of R’ Turkov.

Ruach al HaMayim attracts thousands of tourists from Israel and abroad who walk on the boardwalk on their way to the beach. Dozens of them visit the Chabad house daily and put on t’fillin, join a shiur, and enjoy a small exhibit (which is growing) about Teveria from a Jewish-Chassidic perspective.

Groups of school children come from all over the country. A mere four years ago, it was an abandoned

beis midrash. How beautiful it is to see the place bustling with Chassidic life, with the kiruv of Jews and the kiruv of the Geula.

THE DEAD SEA – THE SEA OF LIFE

Let us move southward, to the Yam HaMelach (Salt Sea or Dead Sea). The Elharar family, R’ Shimon and his wife, have been running a Chabad house at Yam HaMelach for seven years now. Many hotels are situated in the northern section of Yam HaMelach. If you take into consideration the thousands of employees in the hotels in addition to the tens of thousands of tourists, we arrive at a constituency the size of an average Israeli city. Don’t they deserve a Chabad house? Of course they do!

In the past five years, two malls were built in the hotel district. Unfortunately, the dozens of stores there operate seven days a week. Each mall has a t’fillin stand that is manned daily by volunteers from Arad.

A family from Kiryat Tivon, on vacation at the Yam HaMelach, came across R’ Shneur Ehrentroi’s t’fillin stand. The fifteen year old son wanted to put on t’fillin, but the father was opposed. An argument ensued, with the mother standing off to the side. The son eventually put on the t’fillin.

A week later, the son was visiting his grandmother when he fell a few

floors down an elevator shaft – and survived, baruch Hashem. When his mother found out about the miracle, she exclaimed, “It’s definitely thanks to the t’fillin.”

ONE TZADDIK IN S'DOM

There in the mall, most of the stores are open on Shabbos. Rafi, a friend of R' Elharar, owns a store in the mall. He began learning Torah and doing mitzvos. R' Elharar tried to convince him to close his store on Shabbos, but Rafi politely explained that it was impossible. He made most of his profit on Shabbos.

“Every Shabbos that I’m closed, I lose 5000 shekel.”

R' Elharar didn't give up. He promised Rafi that if he closes on Shabbos, “I will give you the most precious thing I have, a dollar from the Rebbe.”

A few weeks later, R' Elharar went to the mall and met Rafi. Rafi said he had a surprise for the rabbi. He took out a sign which said, “Closed on Shabbos.” R' Elharar warmly hugged him and blessed him, telling Rafi that he wouldn't lose out by closing his store.

Two weeks later, Rafi won a lottery of 20,000 shekels. The first month of “losses” had been covered. Everybody at the mall heard the story, and it made a great Kiddush Hashem.

MIRACLE ON THE WAY DOWN TO THE YAM HA'MELACH

Another mekurav of the

***When he entered
the large diamond
shop the owner
called out,
“Welcome! You
are an angel from
Heaven! It’s so
amazing that you
came here!”***



R' Elharar and Rafi with his “closed for Shabbos” sign in the background.

Chabad house owns a diamond store in the mall. His connection with the Chabad house began with a miracle:

Last Erev Pesach, R' Elharar went to distribute shmura matza to Jews in the area. When he entered the large diamond shop the owner called out, “Welcome! You are an angel from Heaven! It’s so amazing that you came here!” The day before, the owner had

been in a car accident on the steep incline between Arad and Yam HaMelach. The witnesses to the accident said that surely the people in the car had been killed. In fact, he was the only one in the car... and he emerged without a scratch.

He told R' Elharar that he immediately realized what a miracle it was and decided that he had to make a significant change in his life. For an entire day now, he had been talking to G-d and asking Him to send a sign in the form of a person who could guide him in how to progress in his Jewish observance. “And here you are, bringing me matza for Pesach.”

R' Elharar comes from Arad every morning and runs his own “diamond center,” – a center of mitzvos, a t’fillin stand, and shiurim. To him, every Jew is a diamond and every mitzva is a jewel.

Rabbi Tzachi Francis joined the shlichus team. He is not only known in all the hotels, he is even part of the programming there. The hotels offer their customers a lecture on the topic of joy. R' Tzachi gives a number of lectures a day, to groups of tourists from Israel and abroad. Between public lectures, he learns one-on-one with hotel owners, waiters, whoever.

If Avrohom Avinu were alive today, he could definitely save S'dom in the merit of more than the 50 tzaddikim there these days.

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ACCEPTING EVERYTHING WITH LOVE

By Rabbi Shimon Rosenberg, Afula, Israel (father of Rebbetzin Rivka Holtzberg, may her blood be avenged)

Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

We say in davening, “Thank You...for our lives which are placed into Your hand, and for our souls which are entrusted to You, and for Your miracles which are with us daily, and for Your continual wonders and kindnesses.” In our case, we see this clearly. We have returned the deposit, “our souls which are entrusted to You” – and on the other hand, You, Almighty G-d, have made a miracle for us and left us little Moishy.

As said on Israel's Radio Kol Chai station.

The concept of “faith” is something far loftier than our power of understanding; Faith cannot be seen with the eye; it is concealed. When we recite ‘Tzidduk HaDin’ (the Justification of Judgment), we say “G-d has given and G-d has taken. May G-d’s Name be blessed forever.” A Jew must say it

truthfully and faithfully. This doesn’t mean that it doesn’t cause us pain – anyone who claims that it doesn’t hurt is being dishonest. This is true anguish, a hole in our hearts that will accompany us forever. However, as believing Jews, we don’t question Hashem, for we know that Hashem is good and is the Source of all good;

everything comes from Hashem. It is written, “And you will see My back, but My face shall not be seen.” We can’t perceive the inner nature of the matter, the true purpose of Hashem’s actions.

I am certain that everything is well now with Rivki and Gabi. They are in the front row, close to Hashem’s Holy Throne, saying before the Master of the Universe, “We have fulfilled the mission You sent us to do in this world.”

Three times a day, in the Shmoneh Esrei, we say to Hashem, “We thank You.” Why are we thanking Him? “For our lives which are placed into Your hand, and for our souls which are entrusted to You.” This soul is our deposit, the deposit that Hashem gave and which we return to Him. On the other hand, we say, “and for Your miracles which are with us daily, and for Your continual wonders and kindnesses.”

In our case, we see this clearly. We have returned the deposit, “our souls which are entrusted to You.” However, on the other hand, “Your miracles [which] are with us daily” – You *have* made a miracle for us. You left little Moishy with us, You left us the “the branch of My planting,” whom my wife, Yehudis, and I will raise, B’ezer Hashem.

Of course, this hurts very much, but we make no complaints to Hashem. I said ‘Tzidduk HaDin’ as a father, with an emphasis on the “**Tzidduk**.” However, together with our recitation of “the Justification of Judgment,” the Jewish People must cry out to Hashem: *Ribbono Shel Olam*, proclaim an end to our suffering! Why have You done such a thing? We learn from Aharon HaKohen, “And Aharon was silent.” But while Aharon was silent, the rest of the Jewish people cried out to Hashem – “the entire house of Israel shall bewail the conflagration that G-d

has burned."

Hashem tests us with suffering, and we must be on a level to accept everything with love. On the 8th of Kislev, we commemorated the second yahrtzeit of our grandson, Menachem Mendel Ginsburgh, who was killed in a road accident. "Blood touches blood." He was the Rebbe's shliach in Ramat Aviv. There is no one in Ramat Aviv who didn't know Mendy. He knew many chapters of Tanya by heart. 'Tanya' has the same letters as 'Eitan' (strong, firm). That was Mendy.

What strengthens me during these days is the unity among Jews that has taken place everywhere in connection with this event. I don't know why specifically Gabi and Rivki (may their blood be avenged) had the privilege of creating so much unity among the Jewish People. We have to make certain not to let this unity fade; we must utilize it to bring Moshiach Tzidkeinu. This unity must continue – here – and not just in Heaven. If each and every one of us makes a good resolution in their memory and in order to bring Moshiach Tzidkeinu, then the Redemption will surely come. Otherwise, we will have done nothing and the sacrifice will have been for naught.

Ribbono Shel Olam, what occurred was a terrible desecration of Your Holy Name. In response, we have sanctified Your Name. Now, it is Your turn to make a Kiddush Hashem and bring Moshiach.

There are people who think that you have to do big things in order to bring Moshiach, like starting to put on Rabbeinu Tam t'fillin or learning Daf Yomi in Talmud Yerushalmi, but this is not true. Yes, we must do something in order to bring the Redemption. But what is the "something"? Any good deed – no matter how small – done

for the purpose of bringing the Redemption.

People come to us and tell us about Gabi and Rivki. Dozens, even hundreds, of people told us during the Shiva that they have been too many places throughout the world, and are expected to pay for their food and lodging. But Gabi and Rivki were different. They never asked for money; on the contrary, when it was offered, they would respond with, "Have you eaten today? Come and eat first, go and have a hot shower," etc.



Rabbi Shimon Rosenberg

Gabi would go out on the main road and walk around looking for people. Seeing a Jew, they would approach him and he would say, "Come to our Chabad House and eat kosher food for free – just don't eat treif." In the weekly Torah portions where Avraham converted the men and Sara converted the women – it was referring to hospitality like theirs.

They lived in a desolate spiritual wilderness, yet specifically in such darkness, in a place of the klipa of idol worship, they saw to it that people shouldn't *ch"v* decline

further and commit the sin of *avoda zara*.

Ribbono Shel Olam, proclaim an end to our suffering! The Rebbe says that every single Jew is called Hashem's shliach, for the soul descends below and has a specific shlichus. Gabi and Rivki had apparently fulfilled their shlichus in the short time allotted to them. To us, it appears like a brief period of time, but for them, it was completed to the fullest. Five years in India, no more than that, but they were five years filled with kindness and Torah study. Hashem

There are people who think that you have to do big things in order to bring Moshiach, like starting...to learn Daf Yomi in Talmud Yerushalmi, but this is not true.

merited them with the privilege of dying in an unparalleled sanctification of His Holy Name.

We say to Hashem, "Proclaim an end to our suffering!" May Hashem help us that we should bring down truly and visibly good things before our very eyes here in this physical world. The blood is spilled, the heart pours forth, but "G-d is righteous in all His ways, and benevolent in all His deeds." *Ribbono Shel Olam!* May it Your Will that we see Your miracles which are with us daily, and Your continual wonders and kindnesses.

MIVTZA KASHRUS ON MIVTZA CHANUKA

By Nosson Avrohom

I had occasion to sit together with some shluchim from the south of Eretz Yisroel. As each of them told about his work, the conversation soon led to one miracle story after another that the shluchim had experienced. A particularly astounding story was related by one of the shluchim. It was difficult to convince him of the importance of publicizing the story, but he finally agreed on condition that he would remain anonymous.

There was a period of time when I would hitch a ride every morning towards Yerushalayim. One time, a young, talented student who works for Intel joined the ride, and we got to talking. When he heard that I am a Lubavitcher and a shliach, he said with a smile, "I'll tell you a story about the Rebbe which I heard from Professor Eren Shor, who was my teacher at Ben-Gurion University.

"Professor Shor was Professor and Dean of Mechanical Engineering. He was famous and consulted to multinational corporations. He himself told me this story when I showed up earlier than usual one morning. He would always come a while before classes began.

"The students and staff knew that the professor kept to a strict vegetarian diet. I took the opportunity, before class began, to ask about the reason behind it. He smiled and said that it had to do

with an interesting story connected with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, thanks to whom his life was saved."

It was 1984, and after many years of effort in the field of mechanical engineering, Professor Shor went on sabbatical. He went to Manchester, England, for the year with his family. A man like him wouldn't waste his time, and during the year he conducted experiments and studies at the university. He spent his free time with a friend, a former Israeli who lived in Manchester.

By the time the sabbatical year was over, he had completed much research in his field. His colleagues and friends made a party for him to acknowledge his achievements.

He had begun to suffer from a headache. At first he tried to ignore it in the hopes that it would go away with time, but the pain increased and became intolerable. He felt at his worst on the evening of the party in his honor. Having no choice, he left earlier than he had planned, to the consternation of his friends and family. Instead of enjoying an event marking one of the highlights of his



academic career, he was consumed with worry over his health.

His friends were concerned about him. The fact that he left the event in the middle was cause for a flurry of rumors about his condition. He decided to go to the hospital the next day, but the following morning he took just a few steps and collapsed, unconscious. An ambulance was called and he was rushed to the emergency room.

Professor Shor regained consciousness in the hospital, finding himself in bed, attached to medical equipment. He was very weak and could barely listen to the results of the tests that had been done on him. The reason for his pain and loss of consciousness seemed to be a sharp rise in his white blood cell count. The doctors had not determined the reason for the worrisome rise in number, and they ordered complete bed rest as they tried various medications and diagnostic tests to get to the bottom of the problem.

Each day they came up with new possibilities, only to subsequently eliminate them. The doctors were at a loss. As long as they didn't know the reason for the alarming rise in his white blood cell count, they couldn't stabilize him. You can well imagine that Eren Shor and his family were in very low spirits.

Chanuka was approaching. The holiday, which had meant nothing to him in Israel, meant even less in Manchester.

In preparation for Mivtza Chanuka, the T'mimim of the Manchester yeshiva went to all the hospitals in the city and compiled a list of the Jewish patients. They would visit them throughout the holiday to cheer them up and light the Menora with them.

That is how they came to meet Professor Shor and asked him to light the Menora. His initial reaction

was shock at seeing religious looking men at his bedside, asking him to do a mitzva!

He tried getting rid of them, but because of his emotional and physical condition and reserved personality, it wasn't easy for him to do. He appreciated their visiting him, and tried to get out of their request with the excuse that patients were not allowed to light fires in their rooms.

If he thought they would accept

***The professor
swallowed his
annoyance. He
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snack food, fruits
and vegetables
that he had. He
rued the day that
the bachurim had
come to him and
meddled in his
life, but he did not
feel he could say
anything to them.***

that and leave him alone, he soon realized he was mistaken. The bachurim quickly went and got permission to light the Menora. He conceded and lit the Menora with mixed feelings.

The bachurim went on their way and the professor was left alone with his thoughts. There he was, in the hospital ... the doctors didn't know what was wrong with him ... he was far from his friends and family, his

students and his homeland... He thought again about the boys who had come to visit him and who had pleasantly convinced him to light the Menora.

The next day, the bachurim returned. He was eating a hospital meal and they waited until he finished. They got to talking about kashrus, and one of them gently pointed out that the hospital food was treif. Professor Shor responded firmly, "I eat what they serve me. You may be concerned about this food, but I am not. I have no problem with it."

Without asking his permission, the T'mimim got in touch with the Jewish caterer who supplied the hospital with kosher meals for Jewish patients who requested them. The next day they returned with a kosher meal, but it was cold and not too tasty. The professor swallowed his annoyance. He managed with the snack food, fruits and vegetables that he had. He rued the day that the bachurim had come to him and meddled in his life, but he did not feel he could say anything to them.

The following morning, as always, a nurse came to take blood. A doctor appeared shortly thereafter and examined the test results. His condition had improved, but the doctors were cautious and tempered their optimism.

The professor hoped for the best. What ruined his mood was the kosher meal he got that evening. Once again it was cold and mediocre in taste, and he threw it out, making do instead with his fruits and vegetables.

The results of the tests conducted the next day were even better than the day before. The atmosphere of anxiety and despair was replaced with hope. The doctors could not explain the improvement in his condition. When this happened a third time, they did a series of tests and anticipated the

results ten days later.

The headaches and various symptoms diminished. Professor Shor felt much better and after another two days he was released from the hospital. Upon his return home, he resumed his regular eating habits and once again, he began to feel ill. The headache returned full-force. He was considering going back to the hospital when the phone rang. It was the head of the department inviting him to his office to review the lab report.

That night he met with the department staff, who told him that the final tests explained the reason for his condition. He had developed an allergy to a certain type of

bacteria which is found in animal products. Thus, on the days that he had eaten fruits and vegetables and had no protein, his condition had improved. This also explained the reappearance of the problem upon his return home, when he had gone back to eating meat products.

Professor Shor realized that if not for the bachurim ordering the kosher food, he would not have resorted to fruits and vegetables. This ultimately led to the improvement in his blood and resolved his medical problem! "If you hadn't eaten only fruits and vegetables," said the doctors, "it would have been just a matter of days..."

Not satisfied with hearing this story from the professor's student, the shliach met with the professor a few days later at Ben-Gurion University, and he corroborated the story.

"The Rebbe saved my life through his faithful shluchim," he said.

A colleague of Shor, who was sitting nearby, added that since then, whenever the subject of the power of medicine comes up for discussion amongst his academic colleagues, Professor Shor tells them, "there's medicine and there's G-d."

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SPREADING THE B'SURAS HA'GEULA IN FRENCH

By Mendel Tzfasman

The remarkable story of the Chassid R' Dovid Leselbaum of Kfar Chabad, editor of a French weekly pamphlet publicizing the Geula.

A decade ago, people crowded into the 770 in Kfar Chabad for a farbrengen with the Chassid, R' Zalman Sudakevitz. During the farbrengen, R' Sudakevitz told the following story:

"It was 1947, the year I had arrived in France. I was accompanied by older Chassidim, R' Yehuda Chein and R' Chaim Schreiber a"h. Upon receiving a special order from the Rebbe Rayatz, we walked the streets of Paris. We could not understand the reason for it, but we followed the Rebbe's instruction nonetheless.

"As we strolled, we came to a small street, where we discovered why the Rebbe had sent us on this mission. From the fifth floor

of one of the buildings, an older woman looked out the window and asked us to wait until she came down. When we met face to face, she told us emotionally that she was Jewish and her grandson was about to become bar mitzva.

"I want him to study about Judaism, to put on t'fillin, and to celebrate his bar mitzva like a proper Jew, but I have no idea whether there is anyone religious in Paris who can prepare him," she said.

"We were amazed by this 'Baalshem'ske miracle' that happened before our very eyes. We referred her to a nearby shul where we knew that good Jews would help her out."

R' Sudakevitz concluded and

raised his cup to say l'chaim, at which point a dramatic scene unfolded. R' Dovid Leselbaum, a bearded Chassid from Kfar Chabad, jumped up and inquired of R' Sudakevitz, "Do you remember the name of the street and the name of the shul?"

R' Zalman furrowed his brows in the effort to remember and said, "Although it has been many years since then, I remember that it was in the ninth *arrondissement* of Paris and, if my memory doesn't fail me, it was the fourth or fifth street. The name of the shul was 'Rashi Shul.'

Exclaimed R' Leselbaum, "Then the woman you told us about was none other than my grandmother a"h! She wanted me, despite the anti-religious education I received at home, to prepare for my bar mitzva. She sent me to the Rashi Shul after meeting with Chassidim who were walking down the street."

Apparently this is what the Rebbe Rayatz had in mind when he sent his Chassidim to stroll around Paris. He wanted to bring Dovid Leselbaum to Torah and mitzvos and later, to join the Rebbe's legion.

EARLY DAYS

R' Dovid Leselbaum's father had been a Gerrer Chassid in Poland. He moved to France after the war and dropped all religious observance. He enlisted in the French army, and when his children were born he raised them in the spirit of culture, liberalism, and assimilation that prevailed in the streets of France at that time. Years later, when he met Orthodox Jews, he commented to his son that for years he had been sure that nothing of Judaism remained in the world.

One of Dovid's brothers was active in the communist party in

France, and he drew his brothers in too. Fortunately, the roots that were planted in Dovid's young heart did not allow him to deny the one G-d. One time, when a discussion arose about the

Creator, the youth leader declared, "There is no such thing; G-d does not exist!" Dovid took this as a personal insult. In protest he got up and walked out, and he never returned.

His brother was so estranged from Judaism that he did not even want to celebrate his bar mitzva. When Dovid made aliya, this brother severed ties with him and even convinced the rest of the family to do likewise. It was only after he found out that Dovid, despite being observant, still remained a mentch that he reconciled with him and he too made aliya. His daughters, some of whom were married to gentiles, left their husbands and did t'shuva, and today they are married to religious men. Their children study in religious schools.

At a certain point, Dovid began to search, and he joined a B'nei Akiva group that opened in Paris. The activities that interested him were the singing and plays in Yiddish. "There was something fascinating about it. It was something pre-historic to us," he said. In hindsight he saw that this prepared him to study and disseminate the Rebbe's sichos.

FROM PONOVEZH TO LUBAVITCH

R' Leselbaum's journey to becoming a Tamim was neither short nor simple. His life wasn't an easy one. For a period of time during World War II he hid in a monastery in order to save his life. Later on, when he made aliya at age 16 and a half, he joined the Ezra youth movement. When he was drafted as a soldier in Nachal (*Noar Chalutzi Lochem*), he and his friends founded the Jewish settlement of Shaalvim in Latrun. At that time, before the Six Day War, it was near the border and suffered heavy attacks from the Arabs, but it was the buffer which protected the yishuvim that were further away.

After his army service, he took



THE LETTER AND CHECK THAT WERE NEVER SENT, WHICH ARRIVED EXACTLY ON TIME!

R' Dovid Leselbaum has a thick folder full of dozens of letters that he received from the Rebbe over the years. Each letter contains slices of life, amazing stories, and incredible revelations, but the most outstanding letter is the last letter he received.

This letter is dated the 29th of Nissan 5733 (1973), but it arrived just a few months ago, along with a small miracle. Here is the remarkable story:

"I am in touch with a graphic artist from France regarding my work. He has worked with *Beth Loubavitch* in Paris for decades. Over the years of working together, we have become friends.

"One day, before Pesach of last year, I was reviewing my emails to get rid of the unnecessary ones. While reading through old emails I noticed one from the graphic artist which bore the subject line, "Here is something which will definitely interest you!" I hadn't opened it at the time, and this was actually the first time I was noticing it.

"I clicked on the email and saw a letter, written by the Rebbe to me, one I had never seen before!"

"I clicked on the email and saw a letter, written by the Rebbe to me, *one I had never seen before!* The graphic artist works with Rabbi Mellul, who translates all the Rebbe's s'farim into French at a fast clip, and he gets the s'farim after they are translated, for editing and design. He noticed a letter printed on page 194 of *Igros Kodesh*, volume 27, and

figured I would find it interesting. He didn't dream that I had never seen this letter before!

In the letter the Rebbe wrote: **To the... Dovid Avrohom** (in the footnote it says, "Leselbaum, Kfar Chabad), **Sholom u'v'racha!**

...With blessings for great success in spreading Judaism and for good news.

- 500 liras (participation from here to cover debts for publishing the sichos).

I was flabbergasted. I never knew about this letter. Apparently there were letters that the Rebbe wrote but did not send, and when Kehot wanted to continue the series of *Igros Kodesh* they published it.

As I said, it was before Pesach. A few days later, on Yud Nissan, my neighbor, R' Tzvi Greenwald, came by with a check. "I got a large amount of money to distribute among activists and askanim, and I have 500 shekels for your work in disseminating the sichos," he said.

It was just as the Rebbe had written in the letter to me thirty years ago!

a course given by the Jewish Agency, which trained teachers and counselors for Youth Aliya. Then he got a job in education in a school near Ponovezh yeshiva.

"I woke up and went to sleep to the sound of Torah study. It made me want to join them. I looked for a place where I could learn in Ivrit, and I went to yeshiva Kol Torah, led by Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l. I loved the learning and the yeshiva atmosphere, and it seemed I would remain there forever."

Then came a turning point in his life, as a result of an unforgettable meeting with a Chabad Chassid that took place a few years earlier. During his first year in Eretz Yisroel, a close friend who had come with Dovid on the ship became sick and had to be operated on. He was hospitalized in Schneller hospital.

Dovid visited him every day. One day, he met a frum man who spoke a high class French, and whose pleasant words and manner made an indelible impression on young Dovid. It was Rabbi Mordechai Aharon Zilberstrom. Dovid didn't know he was a Chassid. "If I had known," he jokes, "I would have kept my distance from him."

He became close with R' Zilberstrom, and began visiting yeshivas Toras Emes in Yerushalayim to hear the *Tanya* classes given by Rabbi Shapiro, the rosh yeshiva at the time.

"What really drew me were the magical moments when niggunim were sung between Mincha and Maariv on Shabbos. I would go every Shabbos and feel that the niggunim literally took me to hidden spiritual destinations."

R' Zilberstrom, knowing that Dovid wanted to work in education, suggested that he help him in his work in registering

Rabbi Dovid Leselbaum
when he was in the army.



The Rebbe said: I would like to take this opportunity to give you regards, and to tell you about your son Dovid's good middos and qualities.

children. At that time, before the law of compulsory education, there was a huge battle over registering children for school. The schools represented different political factions and sometimes ridiculous situations developed, such as having three schools on one small yishuv.

When the law was passed, the schools became either public schools or public-religious schools. The chareidim refused to bow to the dictates of the Education Ministry and their schools were designated as Chinuch Atzmai – independent education. Within these factions there was a huge battle to recruit children, mostly the children of the immigrants who flooded the country.

R' Leselbaum, who knew the hardships in registering children for the Agudas Yisroel schools, was surprised to hear that R' Zilberstrom had no problems with registration, since he was registering children for Chabad schools. "I was very surprised. Was this a new educational stream? When I realized that he was a Chassid, I had thoughts like, 'Oh no, look what I fell into,' but since I had already

gotten to love the Chassidic values for which R' Zilberstrom stood, discovering that he was a Chassid had the opposite effect."

"WHAT'S WITH THE LESELBAUM FAMILY?"

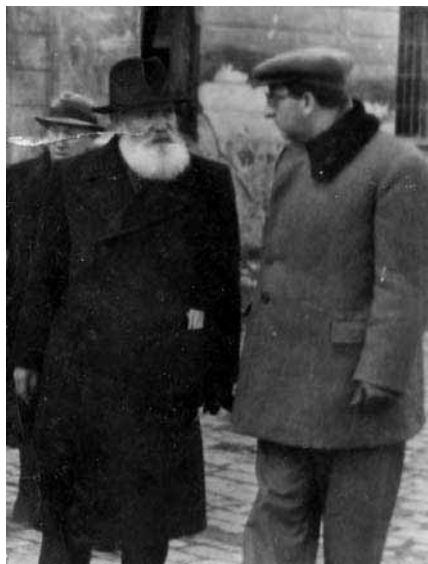
At that time (1956), R' Dovid wrote his first letter to the Rebbe. He asked whether he should continue learning in yeshivas Kol Torah or switch to Tomchei T'mimim. In his letter he said he was afraid he hadn't learned enough Nigleh yet. The Rebbe's

response began with thanking R' Leselbaum for his letter and the information about himself. The answer to his question was: 1) On the contrary, learning Chassidus would make learning Nigleh easier, 2) He should have regrets over the time he learned Nigleh without Chassidus.

R' Dovid transferred to Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Pardes. Once he became a Tamim and felt the obligation of hafatza, he became very concerned about his irreligious parents. In one of his letters he asked the Rebbe for a bracha for them. The Rebbe wrote: **As per your request, they will write to Paris about the matter which you wrote about and mentioned in your letter. May Hashem grant you success, so that you report good news in your matters and in all the above.**

When R' Dovid talks about his request of the Rebbe, he recalls with emotion the situation which led to the special attention that the Rebbe gave his parents:

"When I studied in the yeshiva in Lud, R' Refael Wilschansky visited the yeshiva. He was a young man, and was the secretary of the Lubavitch office in Paris,



On the left is Yaakov Zerubavel

R' Dovid received another letter from the Rebbe: I was very pleased to read ... that you were able to fulfill my request and convey the matter to Mr. Z... You did my shlichus, and I too did my own shlichus.

which oversaw the mosdos in Europe and North Africa. It was a farbrengen that had a tremendous effect on me. I hadn't imagined that there were Jews like him in France. At the end of the farbrengen, I went over to him and asked him to have an influence on my parents.

"A few years later, when I flew to the Rebbe, I went via France so I could visit my parents. Before I went I was in a quandary about where to spend Shabbos. On the one hand, I had heard about R' Nissan Nemenov and his special farbrengens and the yeshiva in Brunoy. I wanted to see and experience all that. On the other hand, it was important to be with my parents. It was a tough choice, especially because my parents did not have a proper set-up for Shabbos. I asked the Rebbe, and he told me to spend Shabbos at home.

"Before I went to my parents I went to the home of R' Yehuda Chein. One reason was to get dishes from which I could eat on Shabbos. His wife, who was a

special woman, gave me a hotplate, dishes, challos and other things for Shabbos. Another reason was because I had heard that R' Yehuda had been sent to my parents by the Rebbe. I was curious about what had happened there.

"R' Yehuda's wife told me an amazing story. Her husband had indeed been sent to my parents by the Rebbe, and much later, when he had yechidus as *Shadar* for Beis Rifka in Paris, the Rebbe asked him, 'What's with the Leselbaum family?' At first, R' Chein did not know whom the Rebbe was referring to, and the Rebbe had to remind him.

"R' Chein told the Rebbe that when he got to my parents' house, he put up a mezuzah and spoke to my mother about lighting candles Erev Shabbos and Yom Tov. This was long before the mitzva campaigns. The Rebbe asked, 'Nu?' In other words, so what happened?

"When R' Chein said, 'I don't know. It was Friday, and the woman promised to light and the husband joined in.' The Rebbe got up and exclaimed, 'You don't know what nachas ruach is felt in Heaven when a Jewish woman lights Shabbos candles, even once in her life.'

"Actually, my mother ended up lighting a lot more than one time."

Over the years, his parents became close with the Rebbe. One time, when R' Leselbaum's daughter was sick, his father asked the Rebbe for a bracha. The Rebbe sent him a letter written in Yiddish which said: **I hope that by the time this letter reaches you, she will feel well, and may Hashem help her progress from good to better ... May her parents merit to raise her to Torah, chuppa and good**

deeds, with a lot of parnasa and a lot of nachas.

The Rebbe then went on to tell his parents how special their son R' Dovid was, and blessed him with long life:

I would like to take this opportunity to give you regards, and to tell you about your son Dovid's good middos and qualities. He has corresponded with me for years, and I also receive good news about him through others who write to me.

Surely you also know about his good middos, "character traits," however, you will certainly be happy to hear that over the years in which you did not see him he has grown even more in that department, and there is positive feedback from many who come in contact with him.

May Hashem help you have from him, and from all your children, genuine nachas which is Jewish nachas, and may you continue with your current good health for length of days and good years, with blessing.

THE REBBE SHOWS A "SIGN AND A MIRACLE"

The Rebbe gave R' Leselbaum a special mission to work on Yaakov Zerubavel, one of the



leaders of Mapam, who was one of the foremost atheists and Leftists of his time. The Rebbe also “squandered the treasures” and displayed his ruach ha’kodesh, in order to melt the ice that covered his heart.

Yaakov Zerubavel is mentioned in the same breath as his political colleagues David Ben-Gurion and Yitzchok Ben-Tzvi. His views were Leftist-atheistic, communist and anti-religious. His wife’s maiden name was Leselbaum and occasionally, at family events, R’ Dovid would meet him.

When R’ Dovid sent the Rebbe a report about his activities, he mentioned meeting Zerubavel. In a long and detailed letter, the Rebbe asked him to approach him and influence him to change his extreme and destructive approach. The Rebbe dissected his character and said that his contrary activities came from longstanding habit. They weren’t a result of current contemplation.

The Rebbe asked him to use his talents to increase goodness in the world. The Rebbe then used “heavenly tactics” and told R’ Dovid that he could say that the Rebbe told him to approach Zerubavel:

You can add that surely it has been quite some time that doubts have arisen for him, but he tries to quiet them. As soon as they fall into his head, he pushes them aside. It is human nature that people are afraid to re-examine the correctness of their way of life, for this requires special courage.

Then the Rebbe added this unusual line:

Shortly after you speak with the aforementioned relative, he will have a dream, which will serve as a miracle, and a sign that the time has come to reconsider his views from the



Rabbi Leselbaum with a mekurav

past.

“I admit that despite the detailed letter, I was very nervous about going to Zerubavel but in the end, after a dressing down from the mashpia, R’ Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, I carried out the shlichus. To my surprise, when I told Zerubavel that I had a message for him from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, he invited me into his office in the Histadrut building. He stood the entire time I read the Rebbe’s letter, out of respect. Then he thanked me warmly for carrying out this mission.”

A short while later, after reporting to the Rebbe, R’ Dovid received another letter from the Rebbe:

I was very pleased to read ... that you were finally able to fulfill my request and convey the matter to Mr. Z. It is especially good that you did not get into any debates or discussion, because that was not the intent. In the future too, do not get into debates. You did my shlichus and I too did my own shlichus.

The letter instructed him not to give the letter and the copy to Zerubavel unless the latter asked for it himself. When R’ Leselbaum went to Zerubavel’s house before Pesach to give him shmura matza, Zerubavel berated him, “How is it possible that you still did not give me a copy of the Rebbe’s letter?”

“That’s when I knew that the time the Rebbe had referred to had come, and I made him a copy.”

We don’t know the end of the story, but his public opposition to religion and Judaism weakened from that point on. Furthermore, despite the education he provided his children, his son became a baal t’shuva, learned in kollel, and married the granddaughter of the gaon, Rabbi Chaim Na’eh.

Years later, Zerubavel described a trip he made to Russia on behalf of the State. When he arrived at one of the shuls wearing the beard he favored, they thought he was a distinguished religious figure and gave him an aliya.

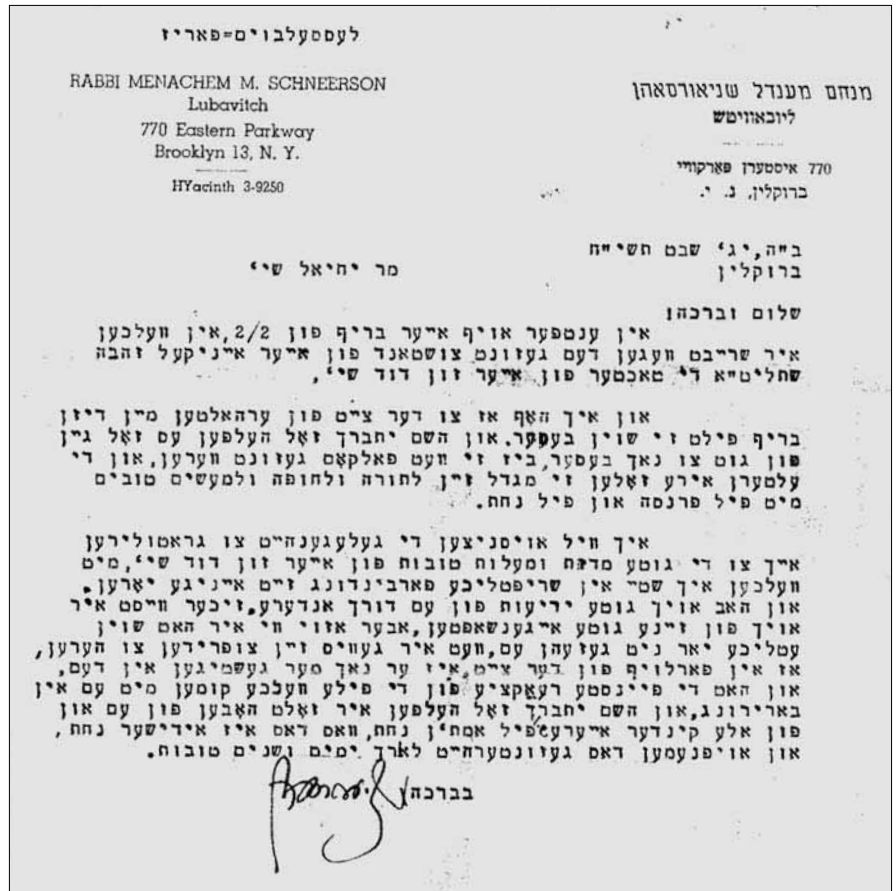
“It wasn’t pleasant for me to tell them that I am not religious, and so I did not refuse. I have no rational reason for it, but I was so moved that the letters in the Torah danced before my eyes.”

SPREADING THE WORD IN FRENCH

Over the years, following instructions from the Rebbe, R’ Dovid Leselbaum worked in chinuch in the Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchok school in Brosh, together with his friend, Rabbi Uri Ben Shachar a”h, and in the Zarnoga transit camp near Rechovot where new immigrants settled. R’ Leselbaum raised upright generations of Chassidim and yerei Shamayim.

In recent years he took on the responsibility of publishing the weekly *Sichat HaShavua* in French. Despite his advanced age, R’ Leselbaum works on it every week, on his own, compiling material, writing it, editing it, and printing it. He even packages it and sends it around the world. The financial responsibility is his as well.

The pamphlet is written in a literary French and is much beloved by all the French readers in Eretz Yisroel, Montreal, and, of course, France. It has a column of current events as seen through the lens of the Rebbe’s



A copy of a letter the Rebbe wrote to R’ Dovid Leselbaum’s father

sichos and letters, a miracle story from the *Igros Kodesh*, a sicha that is rewritten so all can enjoy, and excerpts from the Rebbe on a variety of topics. Mrs. Sorkin, the wife of Professor Sorkin, director of the Emergency room at Ichilov hospital, serves as the editor.

Aside from the weekly pamphlets, R’ Leselbaum also publishes a magnificent magazine

before Tishrei, Chanuka, Purim, Pesach and Shavuot. Lately he is working on starting an Internet site packed with material in French on Jewish topics and inyanei Moshiach and Geula.

“Much needs to be done in order to hasten the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH”M,” he says with a smile.



FROM ROCK AND ROLL TO MUSIC OF THE SOUL

By Nosson Avrohom

*It was on Yom Kippur that he was transformed from a rebellious kid who fought anything that smelled like the Establishment, and he began to get involved in a life of Torah and mitzvos. He switched from the hard rock music that he played in Australia to rock music with Chassidic themes, and he hopes that it will enable him to reach those who are still searching. * The fascinating life story of Sagi Atzmon of Ramat Gan.*

Friends from Sagi Atzmon's past recognize him today only because of his red hair. If you would have asked them whether the most rebellious person they knew, who fought all his life against social conformity, would

completely change and become religious, they would have been willing to promise it was impossible.

When we met this week at his home in Ramat Gan, he admitted that he had shocked not only his

friends but, to a certain extent, himself as well. In his wildest dreams he never imagined that he would do this.

Previously, Sagi considered the religious sector as the source of all ills in Israeli society. He saw them as a large group driven by social conventions like blind people, who were unable to give expression to their talents and thoughts.

From a young age he felt a strong attraction to music, and his tremendous rebellion against anything restricting led him to form a popular hard rock band. After the army, he flew to Australia, where he formed another band and recorded two hit albums. He lived elected to live among non-Jews and avoided befriending fellow Israelis.

This was his lifestyle until Yom Kippur, five years ago. Till this day he cannot explain what happened to him. The first time he put on t'fillin he cried, yet he didn't know why. He felt like a blind person, being led by a mysterious image, just as he had imagined religious people did. Since then, step by step, he has made his way back to his roots.

Today, with the Rebbe's blessing, he is using his talent in order to spread the wellsprings, through the musical genre which he loves. Having composed a number of successful songs, he is working – with the guidance of his Mashpia – on producing an album called "Chassidica," featuring Chassidic songs, rock style.

"I was born in Ramat Gan. My parents were very far from religious observance. There was nothing Jewish in our home, just lots of rejection and alienation from anything religious. I never experienced Kiddush and my only

exposure to fasting on Yom Kippur was as a kid, observing my maternal grandfather. He had fought as a partisan against the Nazis, and was the only one in the family who still kept some vestiges of tradition. He led the Seder, which was basically a family gathering and a good meal, lacking understanding of the significance of the holiday.

“Even as a small boy I was anti-religion and religious people. I loved freedom of any social and organized convention and did only what I wanted to do, without anyone stopping me. I despised the religious sector. I saw them as the biggest enemies of freedom, who tried to restrain free society.

“With this world-view, I found myself very drawn towards hard rock, which had begun to spread around the world. The lyrics of the songs blamed the Establishment for all problems and preached freedom from all restraint.

“My love for rock music was boundless. At age seven, I knew the lengthy lyrics of songs and could perform them perfectly. Some years later, I began writing songs in English. As far back as I can remember, I was unable to connect to the Hebrew language, which is derived somewhat from Lashon HaKodesh.

“Today, I understand it. Having only been fed the external shell of Jewish existence, and not its inner dimension and warmth – Torah and Mitzvos – I was a Jew with a disconnected identity. There was no reason not to visit foreign pastures to find meaning.

At age 14, I grabbed a guitar and began to play, to write and compose songs. This filled the vacuum within me.

“I loved rock music because it was dramatic; I could vent my

frustrations against the Establishment through it. The music has such depth, which touches the dark points of the soul. A Jew is always searching for something of substance, and since I didn’t have the real thing, I was drawn to the music. I stayed away from traditional

musical styles, which seemed petty and superficial to me.

“At age 15, I started my first rock band, which I named Catharsis. We began performing, and acquired lots of fans. We performed in the most prestigious venues, and I felt that I was on my way to the top of the world.

Sagi Atzmon



I was a Jew with a disconnected identity... always searching for something of substance. Since I didn't have the real thing, I was drawn to the music.

"It all came to an end when I became of military age. I was assigned to the military police in the Megido prison and spent three years alongside prisoners from the settlements. The daily interactions with the prisoners affected me deeply. When I was released, I was determined to leave the country and never return.

"I chose Australia, both because it was so far away and because it was the country most identified with freedom. It's the only country still unaffected by globalization, and people there live a good, tranquil life.

"Upon settling there, I formed a rock band called Demona, with three other musicians, whom I made sure were not Jewish or Israeli. I ran away from my identity as though it was fire and tried my best to assimilate. I refused to accept the fact that the Jewish people are the Chosen Nation and are different than goyim. We are all human beings, all equal. The band was successful and began to perform at festivals and clubs. I had a good Australian accent, I lived well, and I lacked for nothing.

"Within a few years, we had produced two albums that were hits and I felt very happy. I had plenty of money and we did atypical rock music with a solo in Arabic style. People loved it and the CDs flew off the shelves.

"The turning point in my life began when I felt maxed out on pleasure and I asked myself, 'where do I go from here?' Hashem apparently heard this inner voice of mine and sent me the answer in the form of one of my good friends, a businessman by the name of Yaniv Levy.

"One day, I went to his house and saw him reading a Chumash. I looked at him in surprise. Here was a rational man, yet he had started digging into Judaism. Things moved quickly from there. I began feeling the emptiness of the Australian goyim who surrounded me. They had always seemed superficial to me, but I had explained – to myself and others – that this was their culture and we had to learn from it.

"Not knowing the concept of a Jewish soul, I thought this superficiality was their mentality. When I began understanding that their lifestyle was neither a culture nor a mentality, but just plain emptiness, I found myself connecting to Israelis once again.

"I was amazed when Yaniv, a very talented person, began showing an interest in Judaism, which I had considered so primitive. When he started telling me it was interesting and worth trying, I told him off, but he asked me questions which challenged my mind. Why had I never asked whether this world had to have had a Creator who created it? Is there Divine Providence? Why are we here?

"I was stunned. I realized that I had never asked myself these

questions before. That same day I had an incredible experience. He convinced me to put up a mezuzah on the house that we had been trying unsuccessfully to rent. That same day five people called!

"A couple, who were already renting a room in that house, had been looking for work for three months without any success. From the minute we put up the mezuzah, they began getting a flood of offers. If I hadn't experienced it myself, I would not have believed it. It would have been pathetic and unintelligent on my part to say it was coincidence.

"I began to realize that perhaps something deeper was going on here that I had never really checked out. Yaniv struck while the iron was hot, and urged me to put on t'fillin. 'If it doesn't help, it can't hurt,' he pleaded, and I unenthusiastically agreed to put on t'fillin for the first time in my life.

"From the moment I put the t'fillin on, I felt discombobulated. On the one hand, I didn't know anything about Judaism and the anti in me had not diminished in the slightest. On the other hand, I had a feeling that is hard to describe, a feeling of connection to something inexplicable.

"The second time I put on t'fillin, tears began to pour down my face and I felt like I was suffocating. I was shocked. I could not understand what had gotten into me. I felt that the tears were stronger than me; it wasn't me, it was something inside that was hard for me to deal with. From then on, I put on t'fillin every few days and was emotionally affected each time.

"During this time, my good friend Jason, the drummer in the band, moved in with me, for the purpose of opening a studio in my home and increasing the

productivity of the band.

"I had never before spoken about spirituality, but because of everything I had been experiencing, I began asking him about his faith. He told me it was based on the Bible. I said to myself, 'Look, I'm a Jew and this goy knows better than me; he goes in the ways of the Bible while I refuse to do so!'

"The final straw was on Yom Kippur. A week before Yom Kippur, the gentile drummer, Yaniv Levy, and I were sitting around and talking about spirituality. Jason was very surprised to hear from me that I intended to fast on Yom Kippur. He snickered and said, 'You? No way!'

"We made a deal that if I fasted and didn't speak lashon ha'ra, he would have to eat kosher. In my ignorance, I didn't know there was no reason for him, as a gentile, to do so.

"On the island where he lived, people's favorite food is rabbit and I told him that since the Bible says we can't eat rabbit, and he believes in the Bible, he should stay away from it. He agreed and I went out to buy a tallis. We made up that I would be silent all of Yom Kippur, not speaking good or bad.

"A few Israelis stayed with me throughout the day. They were to report to Jason whether I was keeping my end of the deal.

"It was very difficult, but I was up to the challenge. It also saved me from humiliation like that of my friends in shul, who had no idea what they were supposed to be doing. I stood there silently in my tallis, a voice inside me asking, 'What's going on with you?'

"Till this day, I don't know. It is a process that you undergo, and then have a hard time

explaining what the trigger was, why it started now and not earlier etc. You simply feel that someone has taken hold of you and is leading you, whether you want it or not; you are not in control. Many people are exposed to spiritual and G-dly forces in the world but they don't change as a result and become religious. I wonder why.

"Yom Kippur afternoon, when I went out for a walk

"I stood there silently in my tallis, a voice inside me asking, 'What's going on with you?' Till this day, I don't know."



Putting on t'fillin for the first time.

accompanied by the guys and heard them gossiping about someone, I was upset – how can they talk lashon ha'ra? Then I caught myself, "I do it all the time!" I was shaken up. I realized that because I kept quiet, I was able to observe what was going on around me. I was really no different than them. If anything, I was ten times worse.

"From that Yom Kippur, I emerged a different Jew. That silence brought me to an inner silence which allowed me to contemplate and internalize things that I couldn't understand previously. I realized that although I saw myself as being intelligent, I constantly spouted on about what I wanted and didn't listen to others. I led my life in precisely the same way as the Establishment I so detested.

"When Yom Kippur was over, I told my friend Yaniv that I was going to buy t'fillin and start putting them on every day. He was flabbergasted. I started attending lectures of various rabbanim and saw that Judaism has depth. It was far from being superficial, as I had thought it was.

"A few days after Yom Kippur, I had another transformative experience. At this time, I was operating booths in malls, which were mainly open on Shabbos when people were out shopping. I didn't know how one observes Shabbos. Every Shabbos I would go to Yaniv to eat the Shabbos meal. That was the extent of my Shabbos. He was more involved than I was and did not work, but I wasn't up to that yet.

"One Shabbos, when he was out of town, I made arrangements to go on an outing with one of my friends from the band. As time went by, however, I had the strange feeling that I

should start keeping Shabbos properly, even if my friend was away.

"I went to sleep early, but about an hour later I woke up in a panic. A dull explosion woke me up. The doorknob of the room was burned and flames had begun to lick at the couch and bookcases. Sparks flew my way. It was only after the fire was extinguished that I figured out what had caused it – the battery in my cell phone had exploded. My head was a short distance away from the explosion. I don't know why I didn't get hurt. All the merchandise I had prepared for sale was burned. I took this as a sign from Heaven that I had to keep Shabbos. Then and there I resolved to do so.

"Since then, I became more and more observant. I looked at the lyrics of the songs that I wrote and saw that they were actually all a plea to Hashem. All of them came from a deep thirst for something I did not know; I hadn't been taught about it and was only being exposed to it now.

"A short while later, I began davening Mincha and Maariv, too. At the same time, my gentile friend, Jason, realized that Judaism was what he had been seeking all those years. Today he is at the end of the conversion process. Heaven directed him to move in with me at the time that I began learning about Judaism.

"After five years in Australia, I returned to Israel. I still did not know what Chabad Chassidus was, having mainly learned from lecturers with Litvishe orientations, who spoke about endless fights with the Evil Inclination. I would look at people and count the sins they did, and think about how big their Gehinom would be. To my understanding at the time, G-d

"An hour later I woke up in a panic. A dull explosion woke me up. The doorknob of the room was burned and flames had begun to lick at the couch and bookcases. Sparks flew my way."

was a threatening, frightening figure you did not want to mess with.

"In Eretz Yisroel I became acquainted with other forms of Judaism, and it rattled my religious stability. I saw only G-d before me and did not understand why there were different approaches and groups. My parents were terror stricken; I had left the country a free man and had returned 'seeing everything in black.'

"Being exposed to the light of Chabad Chassidus was the second and definitive stage in my becoming a baal t'shuva. My friend Yaniv was also in Israel. Through him I met his friend Danny Bazhinski, a talented musician and DJ. He had become a baal t'shuva through Chabad in Australia, and when I met him he was already learning half a day in the Chabad yeshiva in Tel Aviv, Chazon Eliyahu.

"He had to return to Australia in order to complete the citizenship process. I accompanied him and lived with him there. He taught me the concepts of "Rebbe" and Toras

HaChassidus.

"He had pictures of the Rebbe, and you know, sometimes, all it takes is a look at a tzaddik in order for a change to be made. He explained to me the principles of Chassidus. I was ecstatic. Until then, I had thought that Judaism is the hard truth and it is difficult to live life in this world. Suddenly I was exposed to an ideology that says there is no point in suffering in this world and no reason to constantly fight the Evil Inclination. The best way to subdue the Evil Inclination is to spread goodness, and consequently, the evil will disappear. The expression, 'think good, and it will be good' really appealed to me. I had a better understanding of what Divine Providence is, what the world is about and what our mission is.

"I saw a video of the Rebbe and was surprised to see a rabbi who didn't scream and didn't frighten people. On the contrary, he smiled and radiated simcha. I saw that Hashem isn't the "bad guy" out to get you. We are a part of G-d, a merciful Father Who waits for the Jewish people to return to Him, and is happy with every good deed a Jew does.

I became close with Rabbi Yosef Groner of Melbourne and became a happy man. He's a great person, a real Chassid who knows nothing about life in this "real world." He is completely involved in mitzvaim (He was once asked by a mekurav whether it was okay for him to go to a nightclub wearing tzitzis, and R' Yosef asked him what a nightclub is!). He has a special, refined look. His davening is said word by word and moves even someone cold by nature. In Elul, he would meet Israelis in a non-Jewish restaurant and blow the shofar

for them in front of everybody.

“We were ten Israeli baalei t’shuva who had become close with Chabad and he was a significant component when it came to building our inner world. His mesirus nefesh to walk for two hours every Shabbos evening to and from the senior citizens’ home in order to hold a minyan there, as well as his manners and demeanor, had a lasting effect on us. We were charmed by him.

“In the meantime, my music had taken on Jewish themes and I was seeing success in this. I became a regular guest at the Chabad house for Israelis run by Rabbi Dovid Lieder, who is also a model of mesirus nefesh, a terrific Chassid and a delightful person. I would attend various events he held at the Chabad house, and we connected. He reminded me that seven years earlier, on one of my first days in Melbourne, he had met me with Rabbi Shneur Schneersohn and when they suggested that I put on

t’fillin, I had declined rudely.

“Once I discovered the light of Chassidus, I decided to go to Israel in order to share what I had learned with all my friends. I wrote to the Rebbe and received his bracha in the Igros Kodesh. I went back, this time, as a Chassid.

“When I arrived in Eretz Yisroel with my new look, I told my parents I was a Chabad Chassid. My father reacted with a sigh of relief. ‘If you’re going to do t’shuva, at least be a Chabad Chassid,’ he said with some satisfaction.

“Although my first visit home had been full of tension with my parents, this second visit was wonderful and I was able to convince my parents and relatives to take part in the process I was going through. I felt as though I was at the end of a journey.

“I started learning at the yeshiva in Ramat Aviv. Though all the shiurim and farbrengens were good and well, in order to

internalize the world of Chassidus, I had to learn for a while in yeshiva.

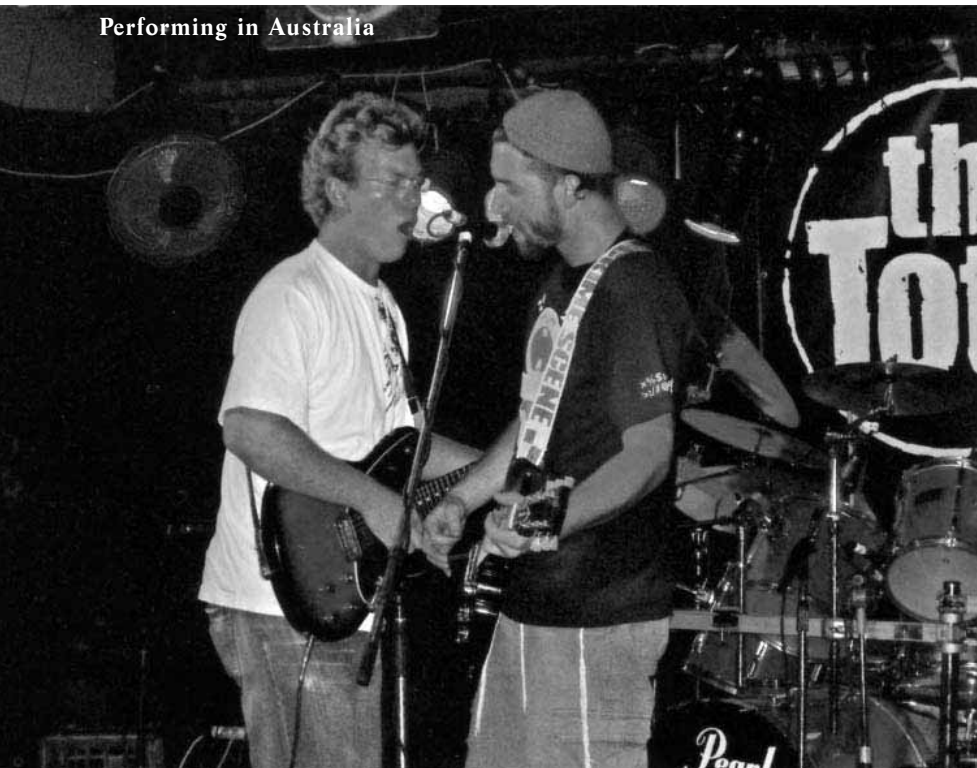
“After a year, I went to the Rebbe for Tishrei. I felt as though I was floating. It is said that when a Chassid goes to the Rebbe, he does the mitzvos of accompanying the dead and Hachnasas Kalla, because you kill the animal soul and bring in the G-dly soul. I don’t know if I felt the G-dly soul, but when you go to the Rebbe and experience Tishrei, you feel that you are drawing upon lots of kochos to carry on.

“When I returned to Eretz Yisroel, I met my wife and we married and settled in Ramat Gan, near my parents. We have become active members of our warm community, which is led by the shliach, R’ Mutty Gal.

“Even before I flew to the Rebbe, I began working on my first Chassidic, musical album, which will incorporate the music I had expertise in before I became religious. This time, there are no lyrics about searching for self and trashing the world, but lyrics based on maamarim that express longing for G-dliness and the hisgalus of the Rebbe. Michoel Gabizon of Chaifa helped me with it. He was niskarev by R’ Menachem Mendel Wilschansky eight years ago and he used to be a DJ.

“The songs selected for this album are a combination of Chassidic ideas and my thoughts. For example, one of my favorite songs on the CD is called, “Ana Nasiv Malka.” The words are taken from the Rebbe’s maamer, “B’Ashtei Asar Yom,” in which he quotes the famous line from the Alter Rebbe, who said that he doesn’t care about this world or the next world; what he wants is G-d Himself.

Performing in Australia



“When I arrived in Eretz Yisroel with my new look, I told my parents I was a Chabad Chassid. My father reacted with a sigh of relief: ‘If you’re going to do t’shuva, at least be a Chabad Chassid.’”

Sagi with Rabbi Yosef Groner and Danny Bazhinski



“There’s another song that comes from chapter 41 of Tanya, which the Rebbe said we should learn by heart. As for the songs written by me, the most famous one has become standard fare in camps and is sung at Chassidishe events. It is called “Yud-Tes Kislev.” The song is about the Geula of the soul and the word that is repeated is “Chassidus.”

“I wrote this song while I was still in Australia. I thought of putting it in the drawer and not writing any arrangements for the song, but later when I decided to rework it, I was amazed by how popular it became among Lubavitchers in Australia. It is sung at every event there.

“There is another song that I wrote which is called, “Moshiach B’Petach.” The words express the strong desire on the part of the Jewish people for the Geula and the need to open our eyes. It ends with the words, “ad masai.”

“I put out a CD with just four of the songs last year, before we went to the Rebbe. I brought

about 100 CDs with me and they were quickly grabbed up. This spurred us on to start working on a serious album that would be professional and appeal to a broader audience.

“The thing that motivated me to invest my energy into this album is an answer I opened to in the Igros Kodesh. After I received the blessings of my mashpia (R’ Omer HaLevi), who told me that this is my shlichus, it was important to me to ask the Rebbe whether I should use my talent and influence in order to use my music for positive messages.

“The answer I opened to was clear, and it greatly encouraged me to continue putting effort into dealing with the various difficulties that came up along the way. The answer was in volume 27 p. 229:

Based on what I heard of numerous instructions in similar situations from the Rebbe, my father-in-law: Since Divine Providence has granted

you that your voice is heard and your influence is felt where you are, and that there aren’t many observant people there, not only should you not move from there, but on the contrary, you should connect yourself there more and more, seeking ways and means of how to fully utilize your influence...

“Although rock music is hard and noisy, it has depth. It comes from a place of searching for justice and allows a person to express himself in lyrics. Nobody had used Jewish-Chassidic themes with this specific audience before.

“In recent years, the selection of Jewish musical fare has grown tremendously, but not for those people who love rock music. It’s a large audience of young people and adults, rebellious in nature, but intelligently and intellectually rebellious. We offer them a musical style which is not trying to be popular, yet it has depth and a message that is proper and truthful. I hope it will be successful.”