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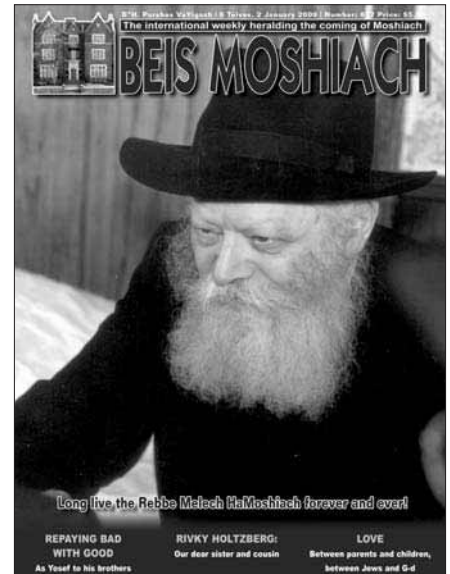
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YOSEF AND YEHUDA: STUDY AND ACTION

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

When Moshiach comes, the two approaches to serving G-d (study, represented by Yosef, and action, represented by Yehuda) will be united. How is this possible? Currently, Yosef (study) is superior. In the times of Moshiach, Yehuda (action) will be superior, but study will be of an entirely different nature, infused with bittul.

The basic content of this week's Torah reading is the approach of Yehuda to Yosef. Indeed, the name of the portion – *VaYigash* – means “he approached.” The Torah is talking about more than one individual approaching another. The confrontation between Yehuda and Yosef – and their ultimate reconciliation – reflects the process by which the ultimate revelation of G-dliness will occur. For, as the *Zohar* explains, the Torah reading is about the coming together of two worlds, so to speak, in order to unify them. Yosef and Yehuda each represent a different ‘world,’ a different approach to the Divinely ordained task of making the physical world a dwelling place for G-dliness.

The same concept is expressed in the Haftora. The section of Ezekiel chosen for the Haftora talks of the time of Moshiach, when the kingdoms of Yehuda and Yosef will be reunited. The prophet is told by G-d to “take a branch and write on it ‘for Yehuda’ . . . take a branch and write on it ‘for Yosef’ and bring them together so they will be united in your hand. . . . Thus says the Lord . . . I will make them one nation and there will be one king over them. They will no longer be two nations nor will they be

divided into two kingdoms.”

This means that the two approaches to serving G-d will be united. Neither will outweigh the other; rather both will be revealed as manifestations of the essential nature of the Jewish soul.

In terms of Divine service, Yosef represents Torah study and Yehuda represents action (the actual performance of mitzvos). Currently, the level of Yosef – that is, Torah study – is considered higher, for it leads to action. “Torah is greater” because through study one ends up with both study and action. Therefore, Yehuda – the model for action – approaches Yosef – the

model for study, since “action follows study.” Since Yosef is – at this time – higher than Yehuda, he – Yehuda – must make the first move, so to speak. Yehuda must approach Yosef. However, in the era of Moshiach, Yehuda will be higher – as the prophecy in the Haftora indicates, “My servant David will rule over them” – because then the advantage of action will be revealed.

However, there seems to be a problem, since the ‘one king’ that will rule over both segments of the Jewish people – the kingdom of Yehuda and the kingdom of Yosef – will come from Yehuda, as Ezekiel himself prophesies: “My servant David will rule over them forever.” This does not seem to be a complete or true unification, since the kingdom of Yosef will disappear and there will remain only the branch of Yehuda. Surely this doesn't mean that there will be only mitzvos and Acts of Loving-kindness after Moshiach, but no study of Torah. True unity means both exist.

How can there be unification between the two kingdoms – that is, the two approaches of study and action – when only the king from Yehuda – Moshiach – will rule? What is the difference between the days before

Moshiach – when this unification has not yet taken place – and the era of Redemption – when there will be one king over all Israel?

As mentioned already, the reason Torah study is greater – during these times – is because it leads to action. So, through Torah study one ends up with the advantages of both. Therefore, in the times of Moshiach, action, which will be greater, must also possess the advantages of both. The difference is that now Torah leads to action, while after Moshiach comes, action leads to Torah.

Parenthetically, we should explain how one can know what to do – how to perform the mitzva – before learning about it – studying the laws. When Moshiach comes, G-d will remove the “spirit of impurity from the earth.” As a consequence, impulses, temptations and cravings will no longer compel a person “against their will.” G-dliness will be fully revealed, in the most physical and mundane manner. At that level, there will be no need to study the laws of the Torah, because they will be known automatically, much as a young child knows not to stick his or her hand into a fire.

Returning to the question why action will be greater than study in the times of Moshiach, we can say that study is limited to the intellectual capacity of the student or scholar. The mind can go very far, understand very much, but it is still limited. Performing a mitzva, on the other hand, requires bittul – a nullification of the ego. To do something simply because G-d commanded it requires acceptance of the yoke of heaven – submitting one’s own will to G-d’s. The attachment thus formed – and the manifestations of that attachment – are limitless.

Nevertheless, there are two types of bittul, two ways of subjugating one’s will. The first is an ‘external’ bittul, one that does not penetrate to the essence of the soul. In this case, one performs the mitzva – carries out G-d’s Will – because of awe, through an acceptance of the yoke of heaven. This is the type of bittul that exists today. Getting there, achieving this degree of submission to G-d’s Will, requires intellect. One must study, learn Torah so deeply and so well, that a willingness to observe its commandments has penetrated to the level of action, to a commitment to perform the mitzva. In the times of Moshiach, however, the mitzvos will be performed because of a higher, ‘internal’ level of bittul. The hierarchical order – from intellect to action, from study to mitzva – will no longer be necessary.

Then – in the times of Moshiach – performance of a mitzva will reveal the essence of the soul – its innate connection to G-dliness – or, as the prophet phrases it, “all flesh will see” G-dliness. As a result, the impetus for doing a mitzva will come not from understanding its significance, but automatically, from the nature of one’s soul.

Still, this seems to nullify the very existence of Yosef – to eliminate the need for study. How can the two kingdoms, Yosef and Yehuda – study and action – become one unified nation and still retain their identities? How is it possible that “My servant David shall rule over them” if they are truly united, meaning both Yosef and Yehuda – study and action – retain their existence – and significance?

At the time when “study leads to action” – when Yosef is higher and Yehuda must approach him – study and action remain two separate concepts. Even though the individual possesses both, since “study leads to action,” a hierarchy exists: study is higher.

The essence of the soul is nullified to G-d’s Will, being only a vehicle for its manifestation. The essence, and its nullification to G-d’s Will, is revealed through action. When the essence is revealed, its nullification to G-d’s Will is revealed in every manifestation and attribute. Thus, when action is higher, the intellect becomes ego-less.

David, the king from Yehuda, is described as “My servant,” indicating that he ruled not with arrogance or self-exaltation, but humility and complete self-nullification. Just as performance of a mitzva requires effort and putting aside one’s desires

and conveniences to fulfill G-d’s Will, so too Torah study requires effort and putting aside one’s ego and rationalizations. In this way – in his submission to G-d’s Will – Moshiach will unite Yosef and Yehuda, study and action.

We can thus understand a key phrase in Rambam’s list of qualifications for Moshiach. Moshiach, Rambam explains, must be “a king from the house of David, expert in Torah and involved with mitzvos – as David his father.” The phrase “as David his father” means that not only will Moshiach be punctilious in the observance of mitzvos and unequalled in Torah knowledge, but he will do both – Torah and mitzvos – with the same effort, humility and self-nullification “as David his father.”

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 25, pp. 258-266)

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RIVKY HOLTZBERG: OUR DEAR SISTER AND COUSIN

By Chani Nussbaum

Sarah Leiter, Rivky Holtzberg's sister, and Penina Glitzenstein, her cousin, tell us about this special shlucha who was brutally taken from us while on duty in her Chabad house.

After the Shiva, I spoke with two family members: Sara'le Leiter, shlucha at Ascent in Tzfas and Rivky's younger sister by one year, and her cousin Penina Glitzenstein, shlucha in Tchernovitz, Russia, who was in high school with her and on shlichus with her in Riga.

SO GOOD-NATURED

"I remember," said Penina, "something that happened in high school. One year, a girl from a Russian family came to our school. Her personal difficulties were really overwhelming. Rivky was so devoted to her. She not only visited her, but made sure to inform the teaching and medical staff of her situation. She did it all quietly and discretely. She actually saved that girl, and did so without fanfare. The girl later

married and settled down.

"Rivky excelled in school. She didn't have to put much work into her studies, and everyone knew that they could ask her for help or pour out their hearts to her and count on her to keep a secret."

"One of the teachers came during the Shiva," said Sara'le. "She had a short story with a powerful message. She said that Rivky was the only student who went over to her after the matriculation exam and said in her simple, modest way, 'Thank you for preparing us for the exam.' She excelled in the midda of gratitude.

"I remember how, in our childhood, when one of our older sisters came to recuperate after having a baby, it was Rivky who volunteered to sleep with the little ones so that their mother could

rest, despite the fact that the next day she had to get up early and go to school. She had a heart of gold."

SIMCHA

"She was smart, smiley, and dynamic, with a special joie de vivre," says her cousin, Mrs. Devorah Lipkin from Merchavya. "She did everything in the most natural way, as though it wasn't hard at all. To her, everything was good, all was rosy."

"A Shabbos Kalla with Rivky was extra special," Penina reminisces. "She infused it with extra simcha.

"If Rivky were here," she said, "she wouldn't let us be sad. She didn't tolerate sadness; it was out of the question, as far as she was concerned. And especially when the sadness is because of what happened to her."

"She had a sense of humor and she knew, and also taught others, how to approach life in a lighthearted way.

"I remember one time getting stuck in a huge traffic jam on the way back to Afula from high school in Kiryot. It seemed like we'd never get home. We were on

edge, tired and hungry. But Rivky managed to change the atmosphere when she said, “What’s the problem? We can walk from here to Afula.” In a split second she managed to put a smile on our faces. Her joy in life was unforgettable. She took everything in a carefree manner. She simply didn’t know how to take things hard.

“When we would be sitting around, in our childhood, she would suddenly get up and say – Come, let’s do something; maybe a refreshing outing or something like that. She couldn’t stand idleness.”

...ALWAYS A SHLUCHA

The same was true for shlichus. Wherever she was, she operated as a shlucha.

Penina related, “As girls in seminary, we went together on shlichus to Riga. We taught Hebrew and Jewish subjects. Today, when I think about how I managed on that shlichus, far from home and in Russia, the answer is that it was thanks to Rivky. When you were with her you couldn’t feel bad. She enjoyed every minute of life, and she imparted that feeling of simcha and enjoyment to those around her.

“When the half a year of shlichus which was

In a split second she managed to put a smile on our faces. Her joy in life was unforgettable. She took everything in a carefree manner. She simply didn’t know how to take things hard.

under the auspices of the seminary came to an end, the shluchim asked us to stay on for the camp that would soon be starting. It was Rivky who convinced me to stay another two months. When I was nervous about how we would finish all our obligatory courses afterwards in seminary, or overcome with homesickness after months of being away, she calmed me down and assured me, “Don’t

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Chabad house in Bombay



***“I’ll never forget
how one Friday,
when I called
her in India...
she told me in
her
straightforward
manner that
there were thirty
chickens in the
bathtub, waiting
to be kashered.”***

worry Penina. It will all be fine.”
And it was.

“She never thought of herself, and in her special way she imbued others with confidence. That is how she was able, without knowing the language and working with people of a different mentality, to be so successful in Riga. She organized the camp, and when it ended, the girls found it incredibly difficult to say goodbye to her.

“She had a certain charm that helped her with mivtzaim, too. She was so successful because people just couldn’t turn her down.

“Every week, upon returning from a long, hard day in seminary, Rivky would go visit a certain old woman. She tried to bring her joy as only she knew how. She visited her until the woman passed away.

“Whatever she did, she did willingly and quickly, and she always created a positive atmosphere around her.”

DAILY MESIRUS NEFESH

"Rivky and her husband Gabi went on a tough shlichus. Everyone knows that India is a very difficult place for shlichus. There is no future for your children's chinuch. (It's even worse than Russia). She did everything as a shlucha with her own hands, and she was graced with the special abilities to handle a shlichus like that."

Penina remembered a few interesting details:

"I'll never forget how one Friday, when I called her in India to see how she was doing and to swap shlichus stories, she told me in her straightforward manner that there were thirty chickens in the bathtub, waiting to be kashered. I was flabbergasted. How would she manage? But for Rivky, everything was possible and everything was fine.

"On another Friday she told me, 'I didn't start preparing for Shabbos yet because I didn't feel well this morning, but don't worry, everything will be fine, with Hashem's help. I'll start now and within two hours, I'll be done.'

"I'm sure," said Penina, "that within those two hours she also managed to bake a delicious cake for dessert, because she was so quick and energetic.

"One time, in one of our phone conversations, she told me that they were renovating the Chabad house and building a mikva. At that point they had only made the pit. Rivky told me that around this time, a partially observant woman visited them and the topic turned to taharas ha'mishpacha. Rivky convinced her to immerse in the pit by the light of lanterns, with simcha shel mitzva. The result was that this woman, who had not had children in years, had a child within a year!"

BE HAPPY!

"With her passing," concluded Penina, "she left us a mandate – to be happy. That is what strengthens us now, knowing that she is hovering above us and saying: 'Get up, don't cry, don't be sad.'

Her sister Sara'le said, "Her lying there just doesn't befit her; she was so full of joy and action. And she, with her husband, are



Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, may Hashem avenge his blood, working on the mikva

surely making a commotion in Heaven and demanding the revelation of Moshiach and the Geula."

"The living shall take it to heart..."

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REPAYING BAD WITH GOOD

By Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi

*The Alter Rebbe, in Tanya, demands of us that we repay bad with good, in emulation of Yosef with his brothers. How do we put this lofty ideal into practice? * The following is from a Chassidic farbrengen on the issues of our times as they relate to the month of Teives.*

The Alter Rebbe had a Chassid whose name was R' Sender. After R' Sender passed away, the Alter Rebbe saw him up Above in a very pure Heavenly Chamber. The Alter Rebbe asked him how he had merited this, and R' Sender answered: "Rebbe, you're asking? It says, 'And tz'daka elevates!'"

What was R' Sender referring to?

R' Sender was a distinguished Chabad Chassid and was beloved to all, even to those who opposed Chassidus. However, there was one Misnaged who could not tolerate him and even tried to ruin him in business. For example, R' Sender would import tea to Russia. This Misnaged informed on him, saying he wasn't paying the tax, and so the government confiscated his merchandise. R' Sender suffered such a great

monetary loss due to this slander that he nearly became impoverished.

In the period that followed, this Misnaged experienced many misfortunes until he became sick and suffered greatly. R' Sender went to visit him. Before they parted, R' Sender bent over to the patient, for all appearances to whisper something to him. Only after he left did those around him discover that he had left a large sum of money under the sick man's pillow so the man could support his family and marry off his daughters.

This was the tz'daka that elevated R' Sender to that very high Chamber in Heaven. It is an example of what it says at the end of chapter 12 of *Tanya* about the behavior of Yosef towards his brothers – "to repay offenders

with favors."

R' Sender's act may have been even greater than Yosef HaTzaddik, because Yosef's kind treatment of his brother after their mistreatment of him came after he saw that Divine Providence was orchestrating everything for the good. R' Sender, on the other hand, never got to see how the Misnaged's behavior was for the good, yet he acted kindly towards him.

WE DETERMINE WHICH GARMENT WE WEAR

Let's examine that piece in *Tanya*: "In matters that are between one person and another, as soon as any grudge or hateful feeling arises from the heart to the mind, heaven forbid, or any jealousy or anger or complaint and the like, he does not accept them at all in his mind and his will. On the contrary, the mind rules and dominates the spirit in his heart to do the exact opposite, i.e. to conduct himself with his fellow with the trait of kindness and exceeding affection in suffering from him to the furthest extreme, without being provoked to anger, heaven forbid, or to take revenge in kind, heaven forbid. On the contrary, to repay offenders with favors, as taught in the Zohar that we should learn from Yosef and his brothers."

We can assume that the person who learns this twelfth chapter of *Tanya* wonders: 'How can I repay the guilty parties with favors? The Torah itself designates this person as a guilty offender!'

This is the behavior demanded of the beinoni, a level for every person "and every person is drawn after it." How does the Alter Rebbe expect us to learn from Yosef, who was a "tzaddik, foundation of the world?"

The Alter Rebbe is not demanding that we all change our personalities. For that you have to be an exceptional person with a special neshama that has the ability to change the feelings of his heart. These are the neshamos of the tzaddikim about whom it says, "Their heart is in their possession." What is expected of us is to oversee the **actions** that are done through the garments of thoughts, speech, and action.

Garments are belongings or items that are stored in the proper closet or shelf, depending on its usage – special clothing for

different seasons or occasions.

When a person wants to wear a certain item, he takes it out, and when he doesn't need it, he leaves it in the closet. The clothing cannot compel him to take them and wear them. The person is the one who decides whether to wear one item of clothing or another.

This is what the Alter Rebbe is expecting of us, as Yosef did with his brothers. We have the ability to **act** towards someone who hurt us the way Yosef acted towards his brothers, even though we are very far from feeling compassion and love for him. That means that when we have a negative feeling towards someone, the only way that it will find expression is if we open the closet which is external to our inner selves and remove the soul garment that matches the feeling that overcomes us at that moment.

Since this is the process by which we react to someone who offends us, we have the ability to refrain from a negative reaction by refraining from opening the

closet or shelf that contains the garment of anger or animosity, in accordance with the Alter Rebbe's demand that we behave as Yosef did towards his brothers.

THE ONE WHO IS RESPONSIBLE – THE ANIMAL SOUL

The Alter Rebbe writes similarly in his Igeres HaKodesh in the letter which begins with the words, "My beloved, my brothers, my friends." He concludes that letter with, "if a bad thought occurs to someone about someone else, he should push it away like a thought of idol worship."

This means we need to seriously recognize that hurting someone, whether in action, speech or thought is as serious a prohibition as actual idol worship, which even a very lowly person sacrifices his life to avoid.

If we go back to our analogy of clothing, it's as though the Alter Rebbe is saying – don't open a closet that has clothing with shatnez in it or any inappropriate modes of dress. You need to get away from there!

Therefore, each of us can be expected to learn from Yosef's behavior towards his brothers, because we're not saying that you shouldn't have the **feeling** of animosity and hatred; just that you shouldn't entertain it in your thought, speech, and action.

This is despite the additional demand made on a Jew, that his feelings towards others be in the spirit of "love your neighbor as yourself." Just as you don't feel anger, jealousy or hatred for yourself (if you do, it's a sign of poor mental health), these feelings should not be felt towards others, either.

The Yerushalmi compares two Jews to two hands, right and left.



Just as it's not possible for the right hand to be angry at the left and hit it, or the opposite, this can't happen with Jews either.

The highest level of understanding is realizing that two Jews are actually one entity, so how could you be angry at someone else?

Our animal soul hides the true feelings that are within the G-dly soul. Thus, it is possible for someone who did not yet succeed in making his G-dly soul primary vis-à-vis his animal soul, to feel hatred for another. This feeling is sourced in the animal soul, which does not express what a Jew truly is.

TEACHING THE ANIMAL SOUL TO CARESS

In his sichos, the Rebbe notes an important point about the Gemara's statement that a Jew ought to say, "I would want [to eat] pig, I would want [to wear] shatnez, but what can I do when my Father in Heaven decreed upon me." Why shouldn't a person say he couldn't possibly eat pig or wear shatnez? Because then he is not a servant of Hashem; he is a servant of his own caprices and desires.

The Rebbe points out that this is said regarding matters between man and G-d. In matters between man and his fellow, however, a person should definitely not say, "I want to kill, I want to steal or lie, etc." Heaven forbid! A person who would say that has rotten middos, and thoughts and feelings like these are completely beyond the pale.

These terrible thoughts come from the animal soul and should be dismissed as soon as they rise from the heart to the mind. Even more so, these thoughts should be uprooted completely. This is done by doing kindness to those guilty

parties who, according to Torah, are in the wrong. We know that our hearts are drawn after our actions, so if we do favors for the guilty person, our feelings towards him will change for the positive.

We use this idea with a child who hits others. We take his hand and have him "make nice" to the one he hit, and we say, "nice, nice." At first he resists, but when we insist, he stretches out his hand and pats the other child.

We must do the same with our animal soul. Although at first it opposes all this and closes its fist in order to hit rather than caress, if we don't give up, we will ultimately get it to act like Eisav did. He intended to bite Yaakov and ended up kissing him - and some say he even kissed Yaakov with all his heart.

These are actions we can take even though we have no desire to do them. Our hearts tell us – **he's** the bad guy so **he** should make the first move and change his way of talking and acting towards us, but we need to remind ourselves that the only person in the world who we can change, is ourselves. We can't change the other person, nor is it our responsibility to do so. (We can try and have a positive influence on him, say a chapter of T'hillim for him, but we can't force him to change).

HURTING ANOTHER PERSON IS EQUIVALENT TO IDOL WORSHIP

In a sin between man and man there are two parts. One part is the prohibition in doing something against G-d's will, and the second part is the action against the other person. As far as the first part, if for example someone hurts someone else, the

fact that he is transgressing Hashem's will is between him and Hashem and nobody else's business. The hatred the hurt person feels is because of his anger and not because of jealousy for Hashem's sake. The proof is that he doesn't investigate what other mitzvos the person does or doesn't do in the category of "between man and Hashem." He only reacts to what affected him personally.

Chassidim tell of a man who shouted in shul because someone sat during the recitation of "VaYevorech Dovid." The person who was sitting retorted – the fact that I've been sitting in a house for several years now without parnasa doesn't bother you. It's just my sitting down for a minute during this prayer that makes you scream...

As for the second part, his personal hurt is significant, but doesn't give him the right to get angry. He needs to think about how nothing happens unless Hashem wills it and how this was decreed in Heaven. If he thinks otherwise and gets angry, it's like idol worship, as the Alter Rebbe writes regarding "whoever gets angry is as though he worshipped idols." This is because the damage was decreed on High and if it hadn't been decreed, the person would not have been able to hurt him.

The person who hurt him was the means through which Heaven's will was carried out, and a negative thing is accomplished through someone who is already a guilty offender. It's that person's problem that he was chosen to carry out that despicable act. Why should we react angrily and treat him as the guilty party? True, he is guilty, but that is for Heaven to take care of.

The story is told about a

Chassid who would lend money and would not ask for it to be returned. If it was returned, fine. When he was asked about this, he replied – I lent the money because it's a mitzva. Returning the money is the borrower's mitzva. Why should I check up on him to see whether he's doing a mitzva or not?

The justifications with which a person explains his anger – that the person did such-and-such or said such-and-such and it's a mitzva to teach him a lesson – are none of his business even if he's right. It would be much wiser to look for other, better mitzvos to do.

Rabbi Moshe, the son of the Alter Rebbe, said that those mitzvos that the body takes pleasure in, we don't need to be mehader in (do punctiliously) because who knows whether we're doing it for the sake of Heaven or for the sake of our own pleasure?

Therefore, among Chabad Chassidim it is not the practice to look for the sweetest challos for Shabbos, nor the most tantalizing delights, even though it's for Shabbos and Yom Tov, because who can say what the intentions of the person are when eating it?

The same applies here. Since there is, unfortunately, great pleasure in putting down the other person's views, tearing up his publications and fliers, and the like, we don't need to be mehader in this; on the contrary, we need to treat these matters with great stringency.

THE GREATNESS IS IN DIMINISHING A JEW'S SUFFERING

When you do a good thing for someone else, even if it doesn't bring about the desired result, you don't lose out on the reward of

the mitzva of loving another Jew, as stated in chapter 32 of *Tanya*. But when you hurt someone with the intention of some positive result, first of all, who knows whether any good will come of it. Secondly, if no one gains thereby, we totally lost out by harming someone else. It becomes quite clear how we ought to respond when the thought arises to act negatively toward another.

The story is told by the Rebbe Rayatz about one of the big Misnagdim in the time of the Vilna Gaon who was asked to sign

***Only after he left
did those around
him discover that
he had left a large
sum of money
under the sick
man's pillow so
his antagonist
could support his
family and marry
off his daughters...***

the excommunication against the Chassidim. They told him that even the Gaon of Vilna, angel of G-d, had signed it.

The gadol replied: At the binding of Yitzchok we find that Hashem Himself told Avrohom to bind his son Yitzchok. Later on, when Hashem wanted to tell Avrohom that he did not mean that he should slaughter Yitzchok, He sent an angel. Why?

Because to kill a Jew, even if it's for the sake of Heaven as a sacrifice to G-d, you have to be

told by G-d Himself, but *to save a Jew, it's enough to hear it from an angel*. You want me to sign a cherem on a holy congregation because an angel said so?

From many places in Torah we can learn how much we should value other people. For example, there is a Chassidic insight based on the Gemara that says, "How foolish are those people who stand up for the Torah and do not stand up for a Torah scholar. The honor of the Torah scholar is greater, because in the Torah it says, 'He should be lashed with forty,' indicating that forty lashes are given. Came the Torah scholars who said that it's only thirty-nine," and this is the halacha.

Now why isn't a proof brought from the counting of the Omer, where it says we should count for fifty days and our sages tell us that this means we should actually count forty-nine? Because the proof of the greatness of the Torah scholars is that they are able, with their wisdom, to reduce how many times a Jew is lashed!

HASHEM WILL SURELY REMEMBER US

On the verse, "He preserved him like the pupil of His eye" it says, "Whoever touches them [the Jewish people] is like one who touches the pupil of G-d's eye." Obviously, Hashem does not have a body and "the pupil of His eye" is merely an anthropomorphic analogy.

Why is harming a Jew compared to harming the eye? And if another limb of G-d is affected, so to say, wouldn't that be equally as severe? The answer is that when other parts of the body are harmed, it takes a moment to react to the blow, but with the eye, it is instantaneous. Even before it's touched, as soon

“The fact that I’ve been sitting in a house for several years now without parnasa doesn’t bother you. It’s just my sitting down for a minute during this prayer that makes you scream...”

as the finger approaches it, the eye closes or tears. This teaches us how careful we must be not to hurt another Jew and how painful it is to Hashem when a Jew is hurt.

Consider how the Rebbe reacted when he was ridiculed and attacked by Misnagdim and Satmar “Chassidim,” by those opposed to shleimus ha’Am, ha’Aretz, and ha’Torah and threatened that his mosdos would suffer etc. The Rebbe did not say anything bad against anyone **personally**. He spoke only against the **behavior** of certain people

and said that violence had no place in Lubavitch.

The Rebbe received everybody without checking them out first. Only someone who used violence against another Jew was expelled. Who are we to take matters into our own hands and throw anyone out that the Rebbe would welcome?

We have to do the opposite and request that he remain, as the Alter Rebbe asked of the Maggid of Mezritch that he not expel Rabbi Avrohom of Kalisk and his disciples even though their conduct was not to the liking of the Maggid.

I remember, during the difficult time of MiHu Yehudi, when the Rebbe spoke on this subject for hours and denounced the unfortunate Law of Return (today we see how right he was and what tremendous damage was wreaked as a result of not listening to the Rebbe). At the time, a Lubavitcher askan asked the Rebbe why he doesn’t “abolish them from the world.” The Rebbe answered – we are on the eve of the coming of Moshiach, and whoever is cast aside now, will be lost forever, heaven forbid. It’s not the time to push anybody away.

This theme is particularly emphasized in the month of

Teives, as follows:

*The siege of Yerushalayim started on the 10th of Teives, which is the beginning of the tikkun for the unwarranted hatred that led to the exile.

*Learning chapter 12 of *Tanya* in the course of the daily Chitas study schedule, in which the Alter Rebbe tells us to learn from Yosef’s behavior towards his brothers “to repay the guilty ones with favors.”

*Reading Parshas VaYechi, in which we have the promise of Geula, “and G-d will surely remember you.”

*In our generation, a Yom Tov was added to Teives with “Didan Natzach,” in which the Rebbetzin said, “The Rebbe and the s’farim belong to the Chassidim.” Let us remember that even our adversaries are included among the Chassidim to whom the Rebbe and the s’farim belong, similar to what is said about Torah – “an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov” – the Torah and the Giver of the Torah have a connection to every single Jew.

When each of us resolves to do “only goodness and kindness” to others, even to “guilty offenders,” we will merit the “I will surely remember you” with the true and complete Redemption.

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MR. MUSIC'S BACK IN TOWN!

By S. Malachi

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

“Every Jew a Shliach”: In this thrilling story of his life, R’ Velvel Marantz illustrates how each person can utilize his talents to spread the teachings of Chassidus.

“Oibershter, Oy Oibershter...”

The fingers that just a moment earlier appeared wrinkled from age skip gingerly across the ivory keys, producing tones that pull at one’s heartstrings. The tones are accompanied by a silvery voice longing for Hashem and pleading for Redemption.

Sitting in the warm and simple home of R’ Velvel Marantz, I almost forget that we are in the midst of the first interview of our “Every Jew A Shliach” series. The heart is captivated by the magical sound, joining in without even noticing, as he sings the awe-inspiring lyrics, requesting Hisgalus.

If you enter the small synagogue in Kfar Chabad’s ‘Shikunim Chadashim’ neighborhood on Shabbos afternoon, you will come across R’ Velvel in all his glory, conducting a choir of dozens of delightful young boys. With his long white beard flowing and his hands waving energetically, R’

Velvel readily captures the attention of the children – especially since in those hands, he’s holding a bunch of bright red lollipops.

With great enthusiasm, dozens of delicate voices sing the Twelve P’sukim, move on to “Yechi Adoneinu”, and conclude with the annual niggun based on the chapter of T’hillim of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. All these melodies have been composed by R’ Velvel himself.

Standing behind the children, you can see some older faces. These are the parents who have sent their children to say (or sing) the p’sukim and remain “for just a minute” in order to see the heartwarming sight with loving eyes, as many of them recall sweet memories of their own childhood.

G-D IS WONDERFUL

R’ Velvel’s story begins in 5690, in a typical American Jewish family. His parents, who emigrated from

Russia in their youth, had time to absorb something from the pleasantness of the Jewish shtetl life. In Velvel’s childhood, however, Judaism was summed up by his first and second grade studies and an aliya to the Torah on the day of his bar-mitzva.

One of the early points of light in R’ Velvel’s life took place in 5712, a year after the outbreak of the Korean War. This was a particularly costly war, during which more than 34,000 American servicemen lost their lives - about a third of the U.S. forces that had been sent to the front!

As any other able-bodied young man above the age of twenty, Velvel was drafted and sent to the army base at Fort Dix, New Jersey. An atmosphere of dread reigned among the new recruits. The rumors coming from the Korean front were not very encouraging, and every soldier hoped that he could be one of the few to be sent to the American military bases in West Germany, where it would be much safer.

“I remember the tension and apprehension as they read out the names on the list of those traveling to West Germany. Suddenly, I heard my name, and I clearly felt at that moment that G-d in Heaven was watching over me and

protecting me. I burst out spontaneously with a cry of ‘Thank you, G-d!’”

Velvel’s musical career began to gather speed when he was appointed to be the army composer. Despite the fact that the army mandated that he prepare martial music and the like, Velvel concentrated primarily upon composing songs about G-d. One of the songs that he wrote during this time was “Heaven”, which became very popular among the soldiers.

One Friday night, on a remote army base in West Germany, Velvel was invited by the army chaplain to come for Shabbos services. “When I read the [translated] words from the prayer book, I felt that G-d is wonderful, but these lofty feelings did not led me to any practical change in my life. I still had a long road ahead of me...”

After two years in West Germany, Velvel returned to the

United States and resumed his studies at Brooklyn College. Around this time, he met his future wife, Shaindel. Before their wedding, the future Mrs. Marantz asked that they keep kosher and observe various traditional Jewish customs in their new home, and so they did. Even when the children grew up and went to college, they were stringent about eating only in the kosher cafeteria.

Another important step towards his religious observance took place after the Six Day War, in the wake of that miraculous victory that woke the hearts of so many of our brethren. The Marantz family made an emotional pilgrimage to Eretz HaKodesh, and the high point was when they stood before the Western Wall. “When I looked upon the huge ancient stones, I broke into tears. I didn’t understand what caused me to cry, but I knew that something was happening within me,” R’ Velvel recalled.

We accepted the faith in the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, in the same way that we accepted the other fundamental beliefs of ‘Yiddishkait.’

THE TANK THAT ATTACKED AT JUST THE RIGHT MOMENT

Another ten years passed, and the life of the Marantz family continued as usual. At the time, R’ Velvel’s older daughter, Feige, was learning in public school, but she was not very happy there.

Then one day, an unusual vehicle, which they later discovered to be a “Mitzvah Tank,” passed through their neighborhood, bearing a placard that caught R’ Velvel’s eye: “*Why not send your children to yeshiva?*” (In those days, even girls’ schools were called yeshivos.) R’ Velvel was given a brochure on Jewish education from the ‘tankists.’ He brought the brochure home to his wife, who expressed her interest in the idea, and the ball began to roll. When their daughter also agreed, the parents decided to disregard their feelings of concern and uncertainty, and they called the number that appeared on the brochure.

The person who answered the phone was Rabbi Kasriel Kastel, and he sent HaTamim (now Rabbi) Pini Silberberg to the family’s home. After he succeeded in arranging for the girl to begin learning in a religious educational institution, Pini extended an



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invitation to the entire family to spend Shabbos at his parents' house. The Marantz's were overwhelmed by the invitation. They found it difficult to understand how anyone would be

prepared to host a family of seven whom they didn't even know.

The entire family arrived in honor of that historic Shabbos. Even their son, who was studying at Princeton University, made the effort to come. For the first time in their lives, they experienced a real Shabbos together, seasoned with true Chabad flavor.

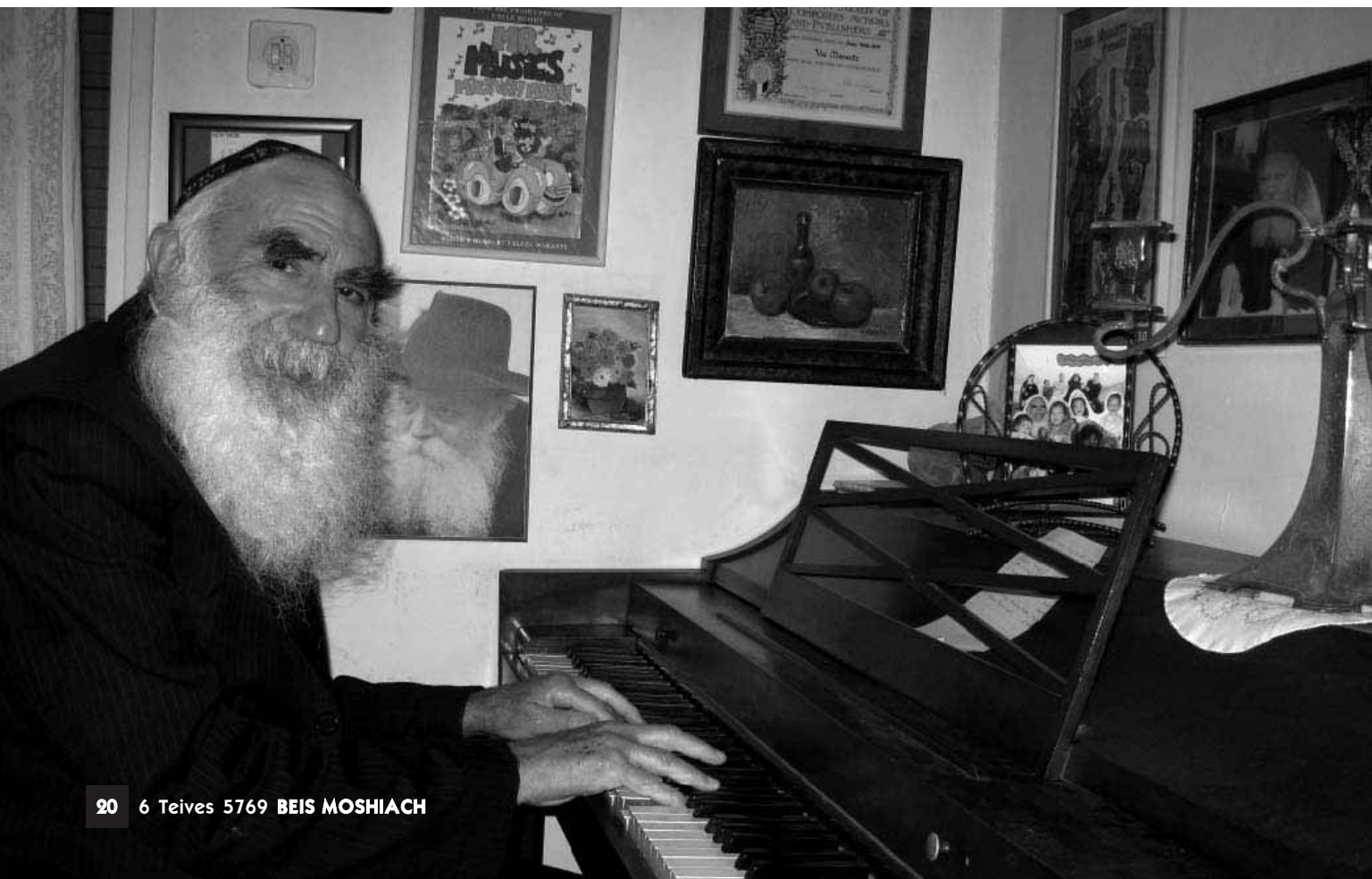
It wasn't long before R. Velvel realized that the year in which this revolution in his family, 5736, was the year the Rebbe launched Mitzva Chinuch (the mitzva campaign on Jewish education).

THE REBBE AS MELECH HA'MOSHIACH AND OTHER BASIC CONCEPTS IN JUDAISM

Pini maintained his connection with R' Velvel and encouraged him to make further progress in his Torah study and mitzva observance.

Within the Marantz family in general, the changes continued one after the other, including leaving the local Conservative synagogue and joining an Orthodox shul.

R' Velvel's first teacher in chassidus was Rabbi Dovid Sholom Pape, with whom he discovered the living wellsprings of chassidic teachings. Even then, back in 5736, Rabbi Silberberg explained to the Marantz family that the Lubavitcher Rebbe is Melech HaMoshiach. "We accepted this as a simple fact," R' Velvel said. "Everything he told us was true. We accepted the faith in the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, in the same way that we accepted the other fundamental beliefs of 'Yiddishkait.' In general, I remember him always speaking about Moshiach – and this was during those years when talking about Moshiach had not yet become all that popular..."



THE REBBE'S TURN

R' Velvel's first encounter with the Rebbe was during a farbrengen, and it infused him with excitement and enthusiasm. During that farbrengen, R' Velvel realized that the Rebbe is not just another Jew; he knew that he was in the presence of a very special individual. Shortly after the farbrengen, when it was announced that the Rebbe would be giving out lekach, R' Velvel got in line. When he came before the Rebbe's holy countenance, he felt an electrifying surge flow through his entire body. From that moment on, he began coming regularly to the Rebbe's farbrengens, sometimes taking his children with him.

His wife, Mrs. Shaindel Marantz, saw the Rebbe for the first time at the 5736 Lag BaOmer parade. After hearing about the great and impressive event, she decided to come with her children. Indeed, the sight of hundreds of children marching, bearing signs, displays, and other Jewish attractions was very inspiring and deeply moving. The climax of the parade for Mrs. Marantz came at the moment that the Rebbe made a 180 degree turn and looked directly at her in the huge crowd. "I felt his penetrating look from a block away," said Mrs. Marantz.

The family continued to make progress in its religious observance. The boys were sent to Chabad summer camps and not long afterwards, they were transferred to a Chabad cheider. Even their eldest son, who had just completed his university studies, traveled to Kfar Chabad to learn in the baal t'shuva program of Rabbi Shneur Zalman Gafni.

In 5739, R' Velvel wrote to the Rebbe asking if it would be appropriate to emigrate to Eretz Yisroel, and the Rebbe replied in the affirmative. Thus, R' Velvel, who at the time still felt that he was only a "friend of Chabad," arrived at the new immigrant center in Kfar Chabad. That same year, he traveled to the United States for his father's funeral and brought his mother back with him to Eretz Yisroel.

AN ENTIRE LIFE IN SIX MINUTES!

During this trip, R' Velvel was privileged for the one and only time in his life to have a private yechidus with the Rebbe shlita. The yechidus lasted only six minutes, but those six minutes included prophecy and guidance that accompany him to this very day. With prophetic accuracy, the Rebbe told him where he would go and what he would do.

"I was very excited when I entered the Rebbe's room. The Rebbe motioned for me to sit and, unaware of the custom to stand, I sat down. The Rebbe inquired about my occupation, and I replied that I had been a music teacher in Brooklyn, but I



R. Velvel signing the k'suba at the Hoffman-Dobry wedding in Kfar Chabad

R. Velvel Pesach Marantz was born on the 18th of Shvat, 5690 (1930), in Brooklyn, New York, to a non-observant Jewish family. He received his education in the local public school system, and then later at Brooklyn College and Columbia University.

Velvel's inclination towards music developed at a very early age. By the age of seven, he had already learned to play the piano, developing musical concepts and composing songs. R' Velvel never formally learned the profession. "It came to me through listening and self-teaching. Essentially, it was always within me," he said. Later in life, he also learned to play flute and guitar.

In 5736 (1976), a transformation took place in the lives of R' Velvel, his wife, Shaindel Raizel, and their five children. The Marantz family discovered Torah and mitzvos as illuminated by the light of the chassidic teachings of the Rebbe shlita, Melech HaMoshiach, and music turned into a vessel for spreading Yiddishkait.

Today, R' Velvel composes melodies and lyrics and spreads Judaism throughout the world. Together with the publicity of more than four thousand tunes behind him, R. Velvel does not neglect his immediate surroundings, working to bring joy to children and adults alike. "*Yismach* (rejoice) contains the same letters as *Moshiach*," he likes to say. Indeed R' Velvel personally exemplifies the connection between joy and Moshiach by his happy disposition and the "Yechi" kippa on his head.

had left the position. The Rebbe asked in response: “Do you work in Rechovot, Tel Aviv, or Petach Tikva?” I didn’t understand what the Rebbe was talking about.

“Seven years later, I started teaching music at the Chabad cheider in Rechovot, and I suddenly realized that the Rebbe’s words were beginning to be fulfilled! How did the Rebbe know that I would be in Rechovot? Two years later, I moved on to teach at the cheider in Tel Aviv, and again I suddenly noticed how I was fulfilling what the Rebbe had said. Afterwards, I turned to Rabbi Bostomsky, the director of the Chabad cheider in Petach Tikva, and asked for permission to teach in his school, even for one day. I didn’t want to delay the fulfillment of the Rebbe’s words any longer!

“During the yechidus, I mentioned that I compose music.

“The Rebbe asked me: ‘Songs for adults or for children?’

“Both,” I replied.

“The Rebbe’s eyes sparkled as he inquired further: ‘You also write songs for children? Songs like *‘Modeh Ani Lefanecha,’ ‘Shma Yisroel,’* and *‘B’Reishis Bara Elokim’?*’

“The truth of the matter is that in those days, I had not yet started composing such songs. But immediately after the yechidus, I already knew what the lyrics would be to the next songs I was about to compose...

“The Rebbe blessed me during that yechidus that I should utilize my musical talents to spread Yiddishkait throughout the world.”

THE GREAT BREAKTHROUGH

Immediately after receiving the Rebbe’s bracha, the gates of Heaven began to open for R’ Velvel. He composed and recorded more and more songs on chassidus

and G-dliness, and the songs were publicized via the radio waves and distributed worldwide.

“People would call me ‘Mister Music,’” he recalled. “I didn’t understand how this happened. I had written songs beforehand, but they hadn’t become well-known. My close friends and neighbors all knew my songs. They liked them very much, and passed them on word-of-mouth, but they never achieved any degree of fame. It’s clear that all this happened in the merit of the Rebbe’s bracha.”

One of the songs he composed was “Oibershter,” as performed by the Tzlil V’Zemer Choir, and it quickly became a smash hit. This is a moving song, with words asking and pleading from Hashem that He should bring the Redemption. Numerous heartfelt stories resulting from this song made their way back to R’ Velvel, like that of a woman who became a baalas t’shuva after hearing the song at a Jewish wedding in Brazil. Rabbi Shneur Zalman Gafni tells how on a visit to South Africa, he asked the children to sing a Jewish song, and they all started singing... “Oibershter.”

“MOSHIACH, HOW WE WANT YOU NOW”

Right after his yechidus with the Rebbe, he composed the melody to the song, “Oh, Moshiach,” with the lyrics: “Oh, Moshiach, how we want you now / Hurry and open the gates / Please return us to our homeland, Yisroel / Ad Masai – How long must we wait?” This song became famous some twenty-five years ago in a Tzlil V’Zemer Choir production, reaching Jewish homes of all backgrounds years before everyone started crying out “Moshiach.”

Since then, R’ Velvel has produced numerous cassettes and compact disks. The last CD he

produced was called “Hineh Zeh Ba – Light Up The World.” This name testifies to the content of the eleven songs on the disk, which are instilled with the concepts of Moshiach and the Redemption. “My objective is that every song should bring another Jew closer to Moshiach,” states R’ Velvel.

YIDDISHKAIT FOR CHILDREN IN SOUTH AMERICA

One special project that was a direct result of his yechidus with the Rebbe was the “Musical P’sukim” cassette, which contains a collection of light melodies based on the words of the Twelve P’sukim and “*Modeh Ani Lefanecha,*” which the Rebbe mentioned during the yechidus. The songs include an English translation of the respective pasuk so that non-Hebrew speakers can understand its message. The cassette became a big hit. Many children grew up with it and love it to this day. A third generation now enjoys this unique production, which R. Velvel reveals is due to be re-released soon as a CD, as we have to “live with the times”...

“After the cassette first came out,” he says, “I received messages of appreciation from all over the globe – Australia, Russia, South Africa, England, and South America. One Jew from South America told me that he plays my songs for his children, in order that they should get a little ‘Yiddishkait.’”

It turns that R. Velvel’s music flows in the veins of his entire family, and has even been passed down to his children and grandchildren. His eldest son, Tzvi Hirsch, plays organ and trombone, and is known to all residents of Kfar Chabad for his musical accompaniment at the monthly

public Kiddush Levana, sponsored by Matteh Moshiaich and held in front of the Beis Menachem Synagogue. His son Reuven also plays a variety of instruments, e.g., saxophone, clarinet, and flute, and is in great demand for appearances at weddings all over the country. His younger daughter, Mrs. Chava Berenstock, created music books for children to learn keyboard with a pure and Jewish approach – “*Matchilim L’Nagen Chabad*” and “*Matchilim Im Neshama*.” These unique learning tools constitute a major breakthrough in teaching music to chassidic children, as no such texts had existed before.

FOR WITH JOY SHALL YOU GO FORTH ON MIVTZA’IM

Every Friday, R’ Velvel travels to the shopping center in Beit Dagan with the local shliach, Rabbi **Shmuel Grumach**. He comes with his flute, and between customers for putting on t’fillin, he plays Jewish songs and brings joy to the people passing by. An integral part of his activities comes during the holiday seasons, when he gives “his people” the privilege of participating in the respective holiday mitzvos and - no less important - in the holiday simcha.

R’ Velvel devotes special attention to children. He always comes ready with a cheerful expression, as he wants them to know that they are Jews and how good it is to be a proud and pious Jew. He even gives out candies and the opportunity to make a bracha. “When I approach a young child and say ‘*Shabbat Shalom!*,’ he looks at me with surprise. He simply wasn’t expecting that, nor was he expecting to see a Jew in chassidic garb playing a flute. It changes his entire outlook.” Suddenly, R’ Velvel pulls a small

flute out of his pocket and starts playing a joyous chassidic niggun. The happy and lilting tones fill the living room, and the interview proceeds in an atmosphere fitting for a chassidic farbrengen.

On Sunday evenings, R’ Velvel joins Rabbi Grumach in visiting the homes of Beit Dagan residents, a door-to-door tradition that the two have been doing together for twenty-one years. Rabbi Grumach

“When I approach a young child and say ‘Shabbat Shalom!’, he looks at me with surprise. He simply wasn’t expecting it, nor was he expecting to see a Jew in chassidic garb playing a flute. It changes his entire outlook.”

has compiled lists of the local citizenry, each person indicated according to his current level of religious observance, with the desired objective of bringing them another stage higher in their Avodas Hashem.

TO MAKE PEOPLE HAPPIER

R’ Velvel doesn’t save the simcha just for his outreach

activities in Beit Dagan. Since 5744, he has composed a special niggun each year, based on the words of the chapter of T’hillim corresponding to the Rebbe shlita’s age. During the past three years, his compositions have merited to be the first or second runner-up in the annual competition to choose the Rebbe’s niggun.

Despite the fact that his niggun did not win, the children living in Kfar Chabad’s ‘Shikunim Chadashim’ are familiar with the joyous tune that R’ Velvel sings with them every Shabbos morning after the Twelve P’sukim. I also have been privileged to hear the niggun, composed to the words: “For He sated a yearning soul, and a hungry soul He filled with goodness; they shall give thanks to G-d for His kindness, and for His wonders to the children of men. *Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiaich L’olam Va’ed!* Give thanks to G-d because He is good, for His kindness is eternal; give thanks to G-d.”

Even the adult congregants in the neighborhood’s “Nachum Yitzchak” Synagogue merit to hear the happy melodies. Each evening after proclaiming “Yechi” following Maariv, R’ Velvel takes out his flute and starts playing a tune. When people ask him why, he doesn’t quite understand the question: “I want to make people happier, because the Rebbe says this is what brings Moshiaich.”

R. Velvel, what do you have to say in conclusion to the readers of Beis Moshiaich Magazine?

I am filled with hope that this interview will push people to do something additional.

Moshiaich is a real thing! It’s happening – he’s coming! We have to feel the joy and be ready for the G-dly revelation that will appear throughout the world.

ONLY WITH THE REBBE'S KOCHOS!

By Chani Nussbaum

*At that moment of crisis the miracle occurred... I exclaimed to my father, "It IS possible!" * I prayed that the earth swallow me up, but then I gathered my courage... I was afraid this would be the end of my conversion quest, but the rabbi smiled.*

Menucha Rochel Gafnei is a convert who made aliya and became mekushar to the Rebbe MH"M. She then went to Baltimore on a very challenging shlichus. This is her story:

I was born to a Christian family in Geneva, Switzerland. I believed in G-d since my early childhood. I always asked questions and wanted to know more, but I knew nothing about Judaism. One day, when I was 14, I watched a movie on television about the Holocaust which had horrifying scenes of Jews being thrown into cattle cars.

Shaken, I asked my parents why this had happened to the Jewish people. My mother explained that it was because the Jews did not believe in the Christian god. I began going to the public library to read books about Jews and Judaism. In the

morning I studied and in the evenings I read. 'If Judaism is the source of Christianity, why should I live a lie?' I asked myself.

I informed my parents of my interest in Judaism, and of course they tried to discourage me. My father advised me that Judaism is something you are born into and that I could never become a Jew. I didn't accept that. In fact, I read more and more about it until I reached a point where I thought – maybe this world just isn't worthwhile, what am I doing in it? At that moment of crisis the miracle occurred.

I remember it as though it were yesterday. I tuned into the French channel on television and saw a couple and their child tell how they had converted and become Jews. I exclaimed to my father, "It is possible!"

I told my parents that I was

going to Israel to convert and live as a Jew. I was 17. My mother asked me to wait until I was 18, and I obliged. A year later I made aliya.

ISRAEL IS ACQUIRED WITH SUFFERING

My parents took it hard and cut off their support. I arrived in Israel with nothing. I was sent to the irreligious HaGoshrim kibbutz. I told those in charge that I wanted a religious place, so they sent me to kibbutz Lavie. It was at that time that I chose my Jewish name, Rochel, although I hadn't converted yet.

From kibbutz Lavie I was sent to Kiryat Arba, where I lived for a year. I love Kiryat Arba. In general, my neshama feels close to tzaddikim and to the gravesites of tzaddikim. One day, when I went down to the ruins of the Avrohom Avinu shul in Chevron, I came across a shocking sight.

Arabs were throwing stones at a group of Hesder yeshiva bachurim, while the army tried to throw the bachurim out. Girls were trying to block them to prevent this from happening, and the IDF brought female soldiers to deal with them. I decided to join the girls in their defense of the bachurim. It was an especially warm day and, coming from Switzerland, I wasn't used to the



Farbrengen at the Chabad house

heat. After a few hours I fainted, and only regained consciousness when the ambulance arrived.

When I went back there years later, I was thrilled to see that the place was renovated with an Aron Kodesh and Sifrei Torah.

After a brief period, the chief rabbi decided to send me to an ulpan where I would prepare to convert. Already well along in my religious observance, I was disturbed that other women there were less sincere. On Erev

Pesach, we were warned not to bring in chametz, but my friends brought in chametz cookies on Pesach. I was very upset and made a fuss about it.

When the rabbi in charge of the conversion ulpan came to see how things were doing, he was told about the fuss I had made about the chametz. He was furious, since he viewed it as criticism of his conversion program. He made a public announcement: "Will the girl

from Kiryat Arba who has complaints, rise!"

I prayed that the earth swallow me up, but then I gathered my courage. I got up and said to the rav, "One time, when Dovid HaMelech was speaking in the beis midrash, someone got up and yelled, 'Remember what you did with Bas-Sheva!' Dovid HaMelech replied, 'What I did is between me and Hashem, but there is nothing worse than shaming someone in public!'"



I was afraid that this might be the end of my conversion quest, but the rabbi smiled and three days later I was called to the Beis Din for my conversion. This was 1977.

I will never forget the moment of my conversion. The rabbi of the Beis Din was a Holocaust survivor and had lost most of his family in the war. Three times he told me that the Jewish people is a nation that suffers and that six million Jews had been destroyed in the Holocaust. Are you sure you want to become a Jew? I answered, choked with tears, yes, yes, yes.

I became a Jew at the age of 19. I was Rochel, born anew.

Many years later, at the age of 33, I had a dream in which I saw myself surrounded by Nazis and dogs, being rounded up along

with other Jews. In my dream I felt sad that I had not been able to marry.

I saw this dream as a continuation of the “Holocaust theme” that had played such a significant role in my life - the movie about the Holocaust which had sparked my interest in Judaism as a girl and then the Holocaust survivor who oversaw my conversion. I feel that I am the *gilgul* of a girl who perished in the Holocaust whose soul, for whatever reason, came back down into a Christian girl in Geneva.

FROM THE CITY OF OUR FATHERS TO THE DALET BAVOS

I moved north and met FK, a wonderful mashpia from Afula. I became acquainted with the Rebbe, Chabad, and the Baal HaTanya.

Dovid HaMelech says, “*Hashem shomer es geirim*” (Hashem protects converts). Why is the word “es” (comprised of the letters Alef, the first letter of the alphabet and Tav, the last letter of the alphabet) necessary? To tell us that he protects converts from Alef till Tav, because without Hashem’s protection, there is no hope of prevailing.

I, who loved Eretz Yisroel and who had vowed that I would never leave, landed in Baltimore after making a *hataras nedarim* (undoing of vows). Now, my husband and I are in the Rebbe’s army of shluchim.

This interview was conducted on the day that marks the passing of Rochel Imeinu, and I asked Mrs. Gafnei when she added the name “Menucha.”

“My husband, Menachem Mendel, added the name

Menucha when we got married. He said that Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel was a great *tzadeikes* – let us add Menucha to Rochel so that you enjoy peace (the meaning of the name Menucha) from the vicissitudes of life. (According to Chassidic tradition, the day the Alter Rebbe was released from jail, a daughter was born to the Mittlerer Rebbe’s wife and she was named for the peace that would now prevail).

THE CHASSIDIM COME OUT ON TOP

My husband began his work in Baltimore ten years ago and we have been in Baltimore together for three and a half years. The shlichus here is extremely hard. To illustrate how hard it is, I’ll start with the welcome I got when I came here.

Baltimore is a Litvishe stronghold and is a hard place to spread Chassidus in general and inyanei Moshiach in particular. The opposition here is great. When I arrived, we rented an apartment and started the “Beis Moshiach” shul in our living room.

The Misnagdic neighbor across the street from us so strongly opposed what we stand for that he pressured the landlord to evict us. One day, he and his supporters stood in the doorway and did not let our mekuravim enter. They called us Christians and I, who had left Christianity thirty years before for Judaism and Chassidus, took this very hard. I stood in the kitchen and cried. “Rebbe, that’s it. Now it’s in your hands.”

Just moments later, the sky darkened and it began to pour. Old-timers in Baltimore could not recall a storm like this before. That neighbor’s windows were broken by two huge trees that fell

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Rabbi Gafni with his friend, Chazan Albrecht



during the storm, and his house was declared a hazard. He was not allowed to enter because of the danger.

The rental issue became quite nasty; the landlord even shut off our water! Eventually, we were

summoned to court over it. When the judge asked me for concluding remarks, I said that I considered the landlord's conduct religious racism. As a black judge, he appreciated the point about racism and declared that

we had two months to remain in the apartment rent-free.

We saw the opposition melt away. My husband recently spoke at the home of a mourner who became close to us. A Litvishe rav was present too, and he hugged



my husband and thanked him warmly for what he had said.

CHASSIDUS UNDERGROUND

Baltimore is one of the cities that was visited by the Rebbe Rayatz on his first trip to the United States. He spent three weeks there and prepared the way for the difficult shlichus that would follow years later.

Baltimore is famous for its Ner Israel yeshiva, a Litvishe yeshiva that was founded by the Chassid, R' Chaim Nachman Kubalsky.

The Rebbe Rayatz asked him to ensure that there was always a *Tanya* shiur in the yeshiva, even if it was secret. The Rebbe anticipated that *Tanya* would be learned underground and indeed, despite the difficulties, that shiur takes place until this day.

The Tzemach Tzedek shul was founded 180 years ago and was visited by the Rebbe Rayatz. A Chassid and rav by the name of Rabbi Akselrod supported the shul and over the years preserved

the chair the Rebbe used when he visited. Now, unfortunately, the shul is in the hands of goyim and we would love to redeem it. We hired a lawyer and just need the money to get things moving. Every so often we visit the grave of Rabbi Akselrod and his wife, who are buried here, to entreat them to bring about the immediate redemption of the place.

Our main work is focused on the shul that we started. These days we are having a hard time maintaining and it's Hashgacha Pratis that you came now for an interview. This gives us a chizuk that we definitely need. We know the Rebbe does not remain "a debtor."

We have seen many miracles, like young men who, after coming to our shul, left their non-Jewish girlfriends. We have Shabbos meals open to the public. Shiurim are given regularly at the shul and of course there are farbrengens, especially on special days in the calendar. We get quite a few Israeli "yordim."

We even get bachurim from Ner Israel who come and write to the Rebbe with the Igros Kodesh. At first they just came to check things out, but when they opened to an answer that was meaningful to them, they saw that there is something to this and they respect it.

My husband does Mivtza T'fillin whenever possible. In the three and a half years that we are here together, he has put t'fillin on people nonstop.

A CLINIC FOR JUDAISM

I work with homeopathic medicine. I got the Rebbe's bracha for this and was told to publicize it. Baruch Hashem, I am good at what I do and see amazing results. I was able to get



Farbrengen on Sukkos
with Rabbi Sholom Jacobson

***When we checked
it out, we
discovered that
that very day was
her yahrtzait! We
memorialized her
that day, at last
understanding
why our meeting
had been
postponed.***

three Jews out of comas. Every so often I give workshops on alternative medicine.

One day I got a brochure which advertised something that I could use in my clinic. I called to order it and was invited to a meeting with the advertiser in order to get the material I needed. For some reason, the meeting was postponed time and again. I finally went with my husband to the meeting. The advertiser wasn't Jewish but he was very respectful.

To our surprise, he said he had been married to an Israeli woman who had died the year before. He wanted to do something in her memory. When



we checked it out, we discovered that that very day was her yahrtzeit! We memorialized her that day, at last understanding why our meeting had been postponed.

About a year ago, as we sat with our guests Friday night, I told the story of Avrohom Avinu's circumcision. One of the guests announced that he had never been circumcised. His mother was Jewish, but his non-Jewish father had not allowed a bris to be performed. Our guest himself was afraid to have a bris done.

I gave him a naturopathic treatment to help him overcome his anxiety, and on Motzaei Shabbos he decided to undergo

circumcision. We held the bris and my husband was the sandek. Now, the man is very involved with our activities and he serves as our right-hand man.

One night, two young men came to us covered in blood. They had been beaten by blacks, and I treated them both physically and spiritually. One of them was the son of a Litvishe rosh yeshiva, but had gone off the derech. He stayed with us for four Shabbasos and began to get back on track. He renewed his connection with his father. We hope for his complete recovery, with Hashem's help.

INSTEAD OF A MACHZOR

On Yom Kippur, like at many Chabad houses, we have more people than usual. One year, before Yom Kippur, a young man came to our Chabad house and said to my husband, "I don't like to pray and I don't want to feel threatened. I found this book in your family room, *Navi Mikirbicha* (A Prophet From Amongst You) and that will be my Siddur." My husband told him to do as he pleased.

The man sat all of Yom Kippur glued to the book. After the fast he said to my husband, "Now take me to 770." My husband

The bar mitzva
of the twins



agreed and at this point, this man is in the process of becoming a baal t'shuva in Flatbush.

Apropos of Yom Kippur, a young man who was with us for the davening told my husband that he wanted to take off a week to find himself. My husband advised him to go to 770. He did, and today he is a baal t'shuva.

There was a Litvishe bachur who would study with my husband despite his yeshiva forbidding a connection with Chabad. After three years, my husband told him, "You can't go on this way. You have to decide where you belong." After some discussion, he finally said, "Fine, so arrange a place for me in a Lubavitch yeshiva."

He became friendly with

bachurim in 770, and today it's a pleasure to see him. He will soon go to the yeshiva in Be'er Sheva to learn for smicha. Needless to say, he is an ardent Chassid.

THE REBBE'S KOCHOS

We manage with the kochos of the Rebbe. Every time I want to return to Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe doesn't allow it. One answer in the Igros Kodesh said, "You should help your husband establish the shul." Another time, it said, "I can't guarantee it, but it is recommended that you stay." The third time, when I couldn't take it anymore, the Rebbe wrote quoting the verse, "The stone that was despised by the builders, became the cornerstone."

In addition to the Rebbe's kochos, I derive strength from my children, twins who are connected with "didan natzach." Back in 5747, after the Rebbe won the court case, the Rebbe said it was an auspicious time. I went with a friend to the graves of tzaddikim in Teveria and asked them to intercede on my behalf so I would have another child. Six months later I discovered that I was pregnant with twins. They were born on 6 Tishrei in 5748, Shnas Hakhel.

In times of difficulty, I tell myself, "I made it through all the hardships in my life thanks to the Rebbe. Now I will carry out my difficult shlichus for him and do my part to bring the Geula."

A DOCTOR WHO BECAME A ROVING SHLIACH

By Nosson Avrohom

*Dr. Shlomo Shaltiel was born nearly seventy years ago to a traditional family in Iran. He went to university, supported himself, reached the rank of officer in the Iranian army, and then left it all and made aliya. * Thus began his journey towards the Rebbe and Chassidus and he is now a doctor-shliach.*

“The doctor of Yemos HaMoshiach” is how Dr. Shlomo Shaltiel is known by the residents of the northern yishuv of Ramat Yishai and its environs. Shaltiel is originally from Iran. He made aliya after he successfully completed his medical studies at the University of Teheran, back in the time of the Shah, before the Iranian Revolution. This bearded doctor is well known among the residents of the kibbutzim and moshavim in the area. During his years of work as a family doctor, first in the south of the country and then in the north, he received many commendations for his

devoted work.

Even as he turns seventy, many of his patients are unwilling to forgo his diagnoses and continue to come to see him. The transformation in his life to one of Torah and mitzvos occurred entirely by Divine Providence, during a visit to the United States with a delegation of doctors for a worldwide tennis tournament.

When he returned to the moshav, he began taking an interest in Chassidus and quickly became a Chassid. Today, whenever he has a chance, he goes around to homes in the area and gives out Chassidishe reading

material. Dr. Shaltiel is also respected in the Arab villages in the area, and he uses this position to publicize the Seven Noachide Laws.

HIS CHILDHOOD IN IRAN

Shlomo Shaltiel was born to a traditional Jewish family in central Iran. They were very poor. At the beginning of each week, his father, Mordechai, would go around to the big markets in order to buy fabric cheaply. Then he would go from village to village and sell it.

“We ate meat once a week, on Shabbos. My mother a”h would buy 150 grams of ground meat and mix it with wheat, chumus and lentils, and this is what we ate on Shabbos. There were times that there was nothing to wear, but we never complained and we knew how to manage with little.”

Although the Shaltiel family wasn’t considered particularly religious, the parents instilled the foundations of faith and Judaism in their children.

“Every Friday, my mother and aunts would light candles before sunset. We didn’t go to shul

regularly, but we did not forget our uniqueness as Jews. If we would have forgotten, our gentile neighbors would have been sure to remind us. When I grew older and my family moved to Teheran, I attended the Jewish Alliance School, where we learned a little about Judaism, one hour a week.”

Since his family was so poor, the father dreamed that his son would make it through his studies. He would constantly urge him to study so that he would have a promising future. This is why he registered his son at the Alliance school, an exclusive school where the students also studied French and English. However, doing well in his studies went along with forgetting

Jewish tradition.

When he went to university, he behaved like anyone else, free of any religious constraints. The only thing he observed was fasting on Yom Kippur.

Before Shlomo started medical school, he studied veterinary medicine, chemistry and literature. When he concluded these subjects successfully, he was disappointed that he did not find satisfaction in them. He decided to study medicine, which he found enjoyable.

“In order to finance my studies, I would buy large quantities of socks and undershirts in the market in Teheran, and go around with my father and sell them in the

“I say that Chassidus is a medication with no side effects. When a person does not feel well or is dealing with an illness, the teachings of Chassidus protect him no less than medicine does.”



Dr. Shlomo Shaltiel

“I had seen many rabbis in my life. There were those I respected and those I admired, but the feeling I had with the Rebbe was altogether different.”

villages. I recall going to a regular customer of my father’s, an officer in the Iranian army. He took a liking to me, and told my father, ‘Send him to study, so that when he gets older he won’t sell fabric but will be an army officer.’”

His father did what he could to ensure that his son would be a successful student. “Even though the Shah was known to be kind to the Jews, and a lot of business was done between Iran and Israel, the Iranian man on the street hated Jews. The biology professor, who had studied in Germany, was a big anti-Semite. Although we Jews in his class were the best students, none of us got a mark higher than 60. We knew there was no point in arguing with him.”

Shlomo was often aided by the fact that looked typically Persian, not Jewish, but one time, even this did not help him.

“In the middle of my second year in medical school, I became friendly with a gentile dental technician. This man had a hobby of hunting geese far from the city, in an area that was surrounded by lakes. He didn’t know that I was Jewish until he

once saw me in the company of Jewish students. On our next hunting expedition, a young boy came over to me and whispered that if I valued my life I shouldn’t go hunting anymore. He had heard that this technician and his friends were planning on murdering me and throwing my body in the river.”

Despite his distance from religious observance, Shlomo felt a growing affinity for Eretz Yisroel and his Jewish heritage.

“While I was still in high school, people from the different parties in Israel came to speak to us to drum up interest in aliya. HaPoel HaMizrachi even opened branches where they taught Ivrit. I was an active member of the Labor branch, and after learning five hundreds words in Hebrew, I

helped open another four branches and even prepared teachers so they could teach Ivrit to other students.”

When Shlomo graduated medical school, he was drafted into the army. Since his marks were good, he served in central cities.

“After six months of training, I was appointed as an officer in the medical corps. We were assigned posts in central cities and our job was to help villagers in villages around the city, whose hygienic standards were low. We had to supply them with free medication and treatment. Every day we would visit another village. I enjoyed my service in the medical corps very much, handling the medical challenges that I had learned about in school.”

STORY OF A FAMILY

I would often get phone calls from friends and acquaintances who would ask me to come to cities or moshavim where I did not work as a doctor, in order to examine patients and give them a diagnosis.

About ten years ago, Mr. Elisha, a deputy mayor of Afula and the leader of the Persian communities in the north of the country, called and told me about a Persian Jewish family from Shiraz, Iran, who had settled in Natrat Ilit. The father was unwell and he asked me to go and see him.

I went that same day, and after I treated the man I got into a conversation with the family. I was told that their acclimation to Eretz Yisroel was so difficult that they were considering returning to Iran. I felt bad that they were having such a hard time in Eretz Yisroel, and I explained that it’s hard at first, and that in Eretz Yisroel, their children had greater opportunities to study Torah and do mitzvos. In the Diaspora, it was more likely that their children would assimilate. I also told them about the Rebbe and about the Igros Kodesh, and they were finally convinced to stay.

“When we wrote to the Rebbe, they opened to an amazing answer which indicated that they remain and not leave. They were very impressed. After a few hours of telling them about the Rebbe and Chassidus, I said goodbye and didn’t hear from them again. The next time I heard about them was when I saw a Chabad Persian newspaper called ‘Generation of Moshiach.’ The publisher was one of the children of that family, who now lives in B’nei Brak. At first he had gone in the direction of Shas, but then he discovered Chassidus and he became an ardent Chassid.”

LIFE CHANGE

When Shlomo concluded his army duty in 1968, he decided he was moving to Israel. After Israel's miraculous victory in the Six Day War, he had a longing to be a part of the nation in Israel.

"When my parents heard my plan for the first time, they didn't stop crying. They couldn't understand why I would leave a good position with a nice salary to go to a land which, to them, was backwards. How would I manage there? When they saw that I was determined to leave Iran, they tried to convince me to emigrate to the United States or a country in Europe."

R' Shaltiel tells me that he had a feeling that the Shah would lose the throne and that the radical Moslems would take over the country in a revolution.

"I couldn't articulate it, but that is what I felt. I was one of the first Jewish doctors to go to Israel from Iran. Many more followed me."

When he moved to Israel, he was attached to a branch of Kupat Cholim in Kiryat Gat, where he lived. He was quickly sent away from the Ulpan for

"On our next hunting expedition, a young boy whispered to me that if I valued my life I shouldn't go hunting anymore. He had heard that they were planning on murdering me and throwing my body in the river."

learning Hebrew, because they thought he spoke the language well enough already. He acclimated quickly and successfully.

In 5732 (1972), when he felt like an old-time Israeli, he decided to specialize in his field. He was sent by Kupat Cholim Klalit to do a residency in the HaEmek hospital in Afula. He divided his time between his work in the internal medicine department in the hospital and his job as a family doctor a few times a week in Ramat Yishai, which at that time numbered very few people.

His living in Israel did not make him rethink his Judaism; on the contrary, all his medical friends were irreligious so there was no one to inspire him to return to his traditions. He acquired a good reputation as a doctor, which only distanced him from introspection and searching.

The first glimmerings of interest in Torah came as a result of his association with a certain intellectually inclined cabby, Meir Ifargon, whose growing interest in Torah and mitzvos started to rub off on Dr. Shaltiel.

"I began to attend seminars and lectures at Arachim. I saw that Torah has depth and I found it interesting. I started keeping kosher and Shabbos. After my initial enthusiasm though, I cooled off and considered dropping it all."

This was a confusing period for him. On the one hand, he realized that there was truth here; he couldn't ignore it. On the other hand, the way things were presented to him, a presentation with a constant element of fear, made him feel that he couldn't commit to mitzva observance and that it was better not to start.

"At the right time and the right place, Hashem



Shlomo Shaltiel (center) during his army duty in Iran

sent me the medicine for my soul. Back in Iran, I had played tennis a lot. I really enjoyed the sport. I was sent to California for a doctors' tennis tournament by the doctors' union, to represent Israel. I was thrilled to go."

Before Shlomo boarded the plane to the US, he contacted his nephew in New York. His nephew had migrated to America before the Iranian Revolution with the help of Chabad, and thought the world of the Rebbe.

"My nephew's enthusiasm for the Rebbe surprised me. He spoke about the Rebbe in glowing terms, as a miracle worker, a prophet and the one who had saved him and about another 1000 Jewish children from Iran."

R' Shlomo felt he couldn't miss the experience, so he arranged a stopover in New York.

"When we walked into 770 there was a large crowd waiting for the Rebbe to enter for Mincha. Some Chassidim who stood near me realized that this was my first time, and they suggested that I stand near the door and wait for the davening to be finished. Then, when the Rebbe would leave, I could see him from up close and maybe receive his blessings. I understood that the Rebbe was no ordinary rabbi who you could meet at any time."

Shlomo went up to the hall near *Gan Eden HaTachton* and waited for the Rebbe to come up in the elevator. Then, he thought, he would be able to see the Rebbe.

"When the Rebbe came up, a woman suddenly stepped forward and began speaking to him. I stood facing him, and when the Rebbe looked up at me, I felt I was melting. It's a feeling that can't be explained in rational terms. The Rebbe's penetrating

eyes and his demeanor stunned me. I trembled in fear."

He did not understand what was happening to him in those moments. He had never felt fear for any man, not even people in authority. In Ramat Yishai he was often called to accompany government leaders and ministers who visited the area, and he guided them without a qualm. Now, with one look from the Rebbe he felt tremendous fear.

"All my ideas of speaking to the Rebbe vanished in that moment, and I quickly left. Deep

"You can never know the power of a word and what it can accomplish. Sometimes, one word of yours can arouse hidden resources of faith and be a catalyst for real change."

inside I knew that the Rebbe was awakening me, and I promised myself that when I returned to Israel I would find out what Chabad Chassidus is about. I had seen many rabbis in my life. There were those I respected and those I admired, but the feeling I had with the Rebbe was altogether different."

When he returned to his home in Ramat Yishai, he began inquiring about Chabad in his area. He soon met the rav of a yishuv, shliach Rabbi Yosef

Yitzchok Volosov, and Rabbi Shlomo Tzoref.

"I began attending farbrengens and shiurim. I quickly realized that there are many g'dolim in Torah but the path of Chabad is something loftier; it's the Torah of Moshiach. Chassidus and the sichos lit up my neshama. There was a long period in which I would travel with a group of boys to attend the shiurim given by the rabbanim of the yeshiva in Migdal HaEmek, Rabbi Goldberg, Rabbi Gurewitz, and Rabbi Segal."

DOCTOR AND ROVING SHLIACH

Dr. Shaltiel decided not to keep the enormous light that he discovered in Chabad Chassidus to himself, but to share it with as many Jews as possible. Since that time he has ordered many hundreds of copies of Chabad pamphlets in many languages. Every week he gives them out to as many Jews in as many homes as he possibly can. This is not only in his immediate area of Ramat Yishai but throughout the wider area, including – but not limited to – Kfar Yehoshua, Tivon, Kibbutz Alonim, and Beit Shearim. In many places they wait for him each week.

In the research I did for this article, someone I know who lives in Ramat Yishai told me that Dr. Shaltiel goes to places and people that a Chassid cannot necessarily get to.

"On one of my visits in Tivon, I met two women. One was married with children and the other was single. The latter told me that until the age of 16 she studied in Chabad and today she is a Leftist and supports the views of the Arabs.

"At the end of our conversation I asked her directly whether she had made a mistake

by leaving the path. She could tell I wasn't trying to be condescending, and she admitted that she had erred when she was younger. She said that if she had continued in the ways of Chassidus she would probably be married and have children and wouldn't be living the way she is now.

"I felt I had awakened her *pintele Yid*. Whenever the occasion arises to talk to people, I do. You can never know the power of a word and what it can accomplish. Sometimes, one word of yours can arouse hidden resources of faith and be a catalyst for real change."

Dr. Shaltiel has numerous examples of this:

"There's a man from kibbutz Alonim whom I met at his place of work in Tivon. I would give him *Sichat HaGeula* every week. He's an intellectual and I got into a conversation with him. I told him about my profession as a doctor, and we became friends. Before Yom Kippur last year, he surprised me by asking where he

could attend services.

"The closest place for him was yishuv S'dei Yaakov, and I recommended that he go there. After Yom Kippur he told me that he made the effort to go to Tivon, and not only did he fast the entire day but he did not leave the shul." Now that kibbutznik helps Dr. Shaltiel distribute Chabad periodicals, candle lighting kits, etc. to various kibbutzim.

Many Jews with whom he comes in contact want to write to the Rebbe. "People today long for a genuine leader, someone elevated, and that's where the Rebbe comes in," says Dr. Shaltiel. He shared me with some miracles that he was witness to.

"Six or seven years ago, someone from yishuv S'dei Yaakov came to me in my role of physician and asked me my opinion regarding a certain problem he had. In the course of our conversation I learned that he did not have children for many years. I felt sorry for him and suggested that he write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh

and ask for a bracha. He was skeptical, but since the idea came from me, he finally agreed. Then he returned home and didn't see him for several years.

"I recently met him on yishuv. He reminded me of the story, which I had forgotten, and exultantly told me that his wife had given birth to twins, a boy and a girl, that same year."

He has another story about someone who was already in the operating room with a diagnosis of appendicitis.

"When he called me and told me about his condition, I asked for a bracha for him. The Rebbe's answer that I opened to was that it was all imaginary. I called him back and he told me that in the meantime he was feeling better. I told him he could go home without having an operation. The doctors made him sign that any deterioration in his condition was his responsibility, and he agreed.

"This man also did not have children for some years. He asked the Rebbe for a bracha, and he had a daughter."

Dr. Shaltiel is involved in the painful situation of mixed marriages between Jewish girls and Arab men.

"A few years ago I met an Arab who boasted to me that he was friends with a Jewish girl from Migdal HaEmek. I painted a harsh picture for him about the suffering he would endure if he remained friends with her. I said, 'You will never have peace. She will always be depressed.'

"He was very frightened by what I told him, and a week later he asked me to talk to the girl, instead of him. I spoke to her in a tough manner, telling her that this was forbidden. She was frightened and they broke up. In situations such as these you have to say the truth, namely that both



Dr. Shaltiel receiving a dollar from the Rebbe that he won in a raffle

They are experiencing the same spirit of spiritual revival which Jews in Israel are experiencing. They are going to shul more and attending shiurim.

sides will end up losing.”

PEOPLE AREN'T ONLY WAITING FOR MOSHIACH ...

When I asked Dr. Shaltiel if he feels that the world is ready for Geula now, more than years ago, he was unequivocal:

“Twenty years ago, when I would tell people about Judaism, I would often encounter difficulties. People didn’t want to listen to me and some of them got rid of me and not always in the nicest way. Today, people seek me out; they seek the truth. Many young people are getting involved in Judaism. I speak openly about inyanei Moshiach and Geula and Moshiach’s identity, and people don’t have a problem with it. Not only are

people waiting for Moshiach, they are pleading for Moshiach to come.”

As a doctor with plenty of experience, Dr. Shaltiel explains that part of the world’s readiness for Geula is the connection that is being observed and acknowledged today between the world of the spirit and the world of action, which the medical world previously did not acknowledge and actively negated.

“I say that Chassidus is a medication with no side effects. When a person does not feel well or is dealing with an illness, his connection to the messages within the teachings of Chassidus protect him no less than medicine does.

“At the yishuv here, there was someone who had an intestinal tumor and had given up hope. Every week I would bring him the D’var Malchus, and this gave him chizuk. The Rebbe’s sichos gave him hope and encouragement. He has since recovered, and he says that the strength to prevail over the harsh treatment he had to endure came from the teachings of Chassidus.”

I asked Dr. Shaltiel his thoughts about what is going in Iran today. I assume he is in touch with his relatives who remained there.

“The tremendous hatred that the Iranians have for Israel is the result of one single cause – the withdrawal agreements. In the

past, Israel had a good relationship with the Iranian people, but the imaginary peace agreements changed that. Instead of bringing to normalization and good relationships, they brought hatred and estrangement, just as the Rebbe said in his sichos.

“As for the Jews who live there, I speak to my sister-in-law and nephews who remained there. They say that they are given full freedom. They explain to their neighbors that they are Jews but not Zionists. The government has only expressed hatred for Zionism. They are experiencing the same spirit of spiritual revival which Jews in Israel are experiencing. They are going to shul more and attending shiurim. It is only their property that keeps them there – the government doesn’t stop them from leaving.”

I asked Dr. Shaltiel what he advises those who are involved in hafatza.

“There are many people, especially T’mimim, who man t’fillin stands and don’t say a word to people. Someone could come and put on t’fillin and then go on his way without hearing anything. If someone is putting on t’fillin, you have to take the opportunity to tell him something. People today are thirsty to hear the truth. We can never know what an impact we can make. People are searching for truth and faith and we have to give it to them.”



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LOVE – BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN, BETWEEN JEWS AND G-D

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

How is the love that parents have for an older child different than the love for a baby? Is love divided amongst children or does each child receive “complete love”? What is the difference between Hashem’s love for His children during exile and His love during Geula?

PARENTAL LOVE

There is a powerful bond of love between parents and children. They care deeply about one another, sharing in their joys and disappointments as though it is happening to themselves. When one of them is in danger or is experiencing some misfortune, enormous compassion is aroused on the part of the other, and they will go to any length to save him.

This genuine love is sourced deep in their hearts. They unite and connect even in their desires –

when one of them takes pleasure in a certain thing, he wants the other one to enjoy it too. They constantly seek to improve the lot of their loved ones and to help them realize their ambitions. The act of giving provides them with great satisfaction.

Even physical distance does not affect their love. In fact, the distance only increases their strong feelings. They can sense the other’s mood, even at a distance.

They think only of the good points of their family and look away from the flaws. It can be as

clear as day that a family member did something wrong, but they will have compassion on him and forgive him. Even the rebuke and punishments that parents mete out to their children comes from their care and concern for them.

WHEN IS THE LOVE STRONGER

When it comes to parental love, is there a difference whether the children are young or old? And what about the children’s feelings towards their parents – is there an age when the feeling of love is stronger, or does age make no difference?

Torah and Chazal do emphasize a difference in ages. Midrash states, “Hashem says, I love only Yisroel, as it says, ‘For Yisroel is a youth and I love him,’ (Hosheia 11:1) ... He loves the small child more than the grown child.” The open expressions of love such as hugs, kisses, endearing words and loving looks, are usually expressed to little children far more than to

older children.

Yet in Shmos it refers to “Yisroel, my firstborn son,” a term of greatness, which seems to indicate that the love is greater for an older child.

The Rebbe explains in *Likkutei Sichos* that both are true – in certain respects the love for a younger child is greater, while in other respects the love for an older child is greater:

Love for an older child has logical reasons behind it. The parents value their children’s qualities – their talents, their middos, the pleasure the children give them – and the child admires his parents who take care of him, protect him, can be relied upon and give him whatever they can.

The love for a little child who has yet to mature and appreciate all that his parents do for him, especially a baby who doesn’t even realize they are his parents, is not a rational love. It’s a natural, inner love that is not motivated by any intellectual or emotional reasons.

The love for an older child is called an “*ahava sichlis*” (rational love) in Chassidus, because it has a clear logical motivation. The love for a little child is called “*ahava atzmis*” in Chassidus, because it comes from the essential bond between parents and children, who are united on a soul level. The children are a part of the parents’ essence. They are one soul, one essence, so the love between them is like the love a person has for himself.

LOVE WHICH IS NOT MOTIVATED BY A RATIONAL REASON

Despite the clear advantage in the love of an older child which is understood rationally and therefore permeates a person’s entire being, Chassidus explains that there is an

advantage in the love that a little child feels towards his parents.

Rational love is actually self-love and not love for another, since his love for the other is based on his personal appreciation. The parent brought him into the world and provides for him, and therefore the child appreciates what the parent does for him. It makes sense to love since I receive a benefit from him and I am dependent on him. This love is conditional and can therefore change depending on mood or on the ability to give. The love can even weaken and disappear.

The natural love of a little child, which is an essential-soul love, is eternal. It does not change with time or moods because it is “an unconditional love.”

In other words, although an older child has an essential bond too, the logical reasons for the love cover over the real reason, that they are united at their source with one neshama. It is specifically with a little child who lacks the rational reasons for love that the essential connection is more apparent, and therefore, the love of a little child is a more open kind of love than that of an older child.



THE LOVE BETWEEN HASHEM AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

There are also two kinds of love between Hashem and the Jewish people: the love of an older child which comes from contemplating Hashem's kindness towards us and our dependence on Him, and the love of a little child, which is an essential love not based on meditation. It comes from the inner bond between a Jew and Hashem, as the Alter Rebbe says in *Tanya*, "a veritable portion of G-d Above." The existence of a Jew is united with the existence of the Creator.

Hashem's love for the Jewish people contains these two levels as well. When the Jewish people observe Torah and mitzvos, the love is also for their good qualities – "Yisroel, my firstborn son." Yisroel has qualities that are greater than those of other nations, and therefore Hashem loves them.

However, there is also an essential love that Hashem has for the Jewish people, as the verse says, "for Yisroel is a youth and I love him." It's the love for the little child who doesn't have good qualities yet. Hashem and the Jewish people are one.

The Rebbe emphasizes the fact that Hashem made us in such a way that as little children grow up, their minds and emotions mature as well. This means that the understanding of the mind doesn't necessarily have to conceal the natural, deep and unconditional love; on the contrary, it has the ability to strengthen the revelation of the essential love.

Accordingly, when a Jew uses his mind and abilities for avodas Hashem because of the command of Hashem, with bittul and kabbalas ol, his qualities will not conceal, but actually reveal the essential love that he has for Hashem.

IS LOVE FOR SEVERAL CHILDREN A DIVIDED LOVE?

Can parents love several children with as much love as parents of one child, or is their love divided amongst their children so that each additional child diminishes their love?

Chassidus explains that there can be total love for each child, unlike love for something

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physical, where the love for one thing can diminish the love for something else. For example, if a person likes one particular food, his love for that food may be stronger than the love that another person feels when he likes several different foods. A dish was once served to one of the descendants of the Baal Shem Tov and he said, "I love this food," but then he immediately regretted

saying that and said, "G-d forbid that I have such a love! I love Hashem and tolerate the food! The Torah says, "and you shall love G-d, your G-d, with all your heart," meaning there should be no room in your heart for any other love, just love for Hashem.

Children are of the essence of the souls of the parents, thus the love for one child does not weaken the love for another child, because they are all one entity. Just as the love a person has for his hand does not diminish the love for his foot, so too the love for one child does not weaken the love for another child and the love for one mitzva and a certain part of Torah does not weaken the love for other mitzvos and the rest of Torah. [Nevertheless, the love for an only child is an "extra love" because Hashem made it that way (Seifer HaMaamarim 5701, "Ata Echad," chapter 1)]

COMPLETE LOVE IN GEULA

L'Asid Lavo, the enormous love between Hashem and the Jewish people will become apparent, both the essential love and the rational love.

The essential connection of the Jewish people and Hashem – the G-dly soul, "the veritable portion of G-d Above" within each Jew – will be seen by all created beings. Hashem will remove all the coverings that block Him from the created beings, as it says, "your teacher will no longer be cloaked," meaning that "He will not hide His face from you."

Likewise, all the good qualities of the Jewish people over the generations, from Avrohom Avinu till our generation, will be gathered together and all will see how extraordinary are the Jewish people.