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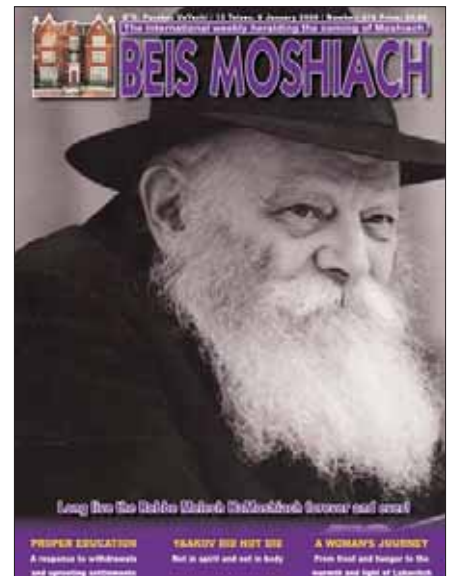
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Beis Moshiah (USPS 012-542) ISSN 1082-0272 is published weekly, except Jewish holidays (only once in April and October) for \$160.00 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and in all other places for \$180.00 per year (45 issues), by Beis Moshiah, 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY and additional offices. Postmaster: send address changes to Beis Moshiah 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Copyright 2009 by Beis Moshiah, Inc.

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# YAAKOV DID NOT DIE

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

***Why must mitzvos be performed in a natural manner, even though spiritually both mitzvos and the Jewish people are beyond nature? We must “eat our meal,” work with the physical world, without relying on miracles. The true spiritual nature is not revealed before the times of Moshiach. Only afterwards, at the time of Redemption, will we see that “Yaakov our father did not die.”***

In the last Torah reading of *B'Reishis, VaYechi*, which means, “he lived,” the Torah describes the death of Yaakov. This seems to be a contradiction. If the Torah reading is named “he lived,” it should be about the life of Yaakov, not his death. Perhaps the Talmudic assertion that “Yaakov our father did not die” is addressing” this difficulty.

The last of the thirteen principles of faith, as enumerated by Maimonides, is the resurrection of the dead, which follows the coming of Moshiach. The Talmudic statement that “Yaakov our father did not die” foreshadows the situation of every Jew after the coming of Moshiach and the resurrection.

However, the statement raises several questions. First, why is Yaakov different than Avrohom or Yitzchok – or any of the other righteous *tzaddikim*, for that matter? Why doesn't the Talmud make the same observation about the other Patriarchs and other *tzaddikim*?

Also, the Torah describes at length that Yaakov was embalmed, buried and mourned for thirty days. This seems a clear contradiction of the Talmudic statement. In

fact, this very objection is raised.

The declaration that “Yaakov our father did not die” occurs in a very unusual context. While having a meal together, Rabbi Nachman asked Rabbi Yitzchok to teach him some Torah. Rabbi Yitzchok replied with the following admonition: “Rabbi Yochanan said one should not talk during a meal because it may be dangerous.” After the meal, Rabbi Yitzchok quotes Rabbi Yochanan again, saying, “Rabbi Yochanan said, Yaakov our father did not die, but lived forever.” At this point, Rabbi Nachman protests, “Then for what did they mourn, embalm and bury him?” Rabbi Yitzchok gives a lengthy answer, “I am interpreting a verse, which says, ‘Do not be afraid, My servant Yaakov, and do not fear, Israel, for I am your salvation from afar and for your descendants from the land of their captivity.’ Israel is compared to his descendants. Just as they are alive, so he too is alive.”

The incident and conversation that resulted bear directly on our situation. For it is more than an interpretive discussion. Rather, it tells us something deeply important about the Torah, the Jewish people and their interaction with the world.

Understanding this gives us an insight into the era of Redemption and the Resurrection.

Let us look first at Rabbi Yitzchok's admonition, that one should not talk during a meal because it may be dangerous, meaning, of course, one may choke on the food. Obviously, Rabbi Nachman also knew the law that one should not talk during a meal because of the danger involved. But he reasoned that this applied only to idle conversation. He thought that if one speaks words of Torah during the meal, there's no need to worry, for Torah itself is a shield and protection. In fact, it may even be an obligation to speak words of Torah during a meal. Therefore one might assume that when Israel is involved in Torah, G-d protects them miraculously, even if according to nature we would otherwise worry about some danger.

Rabbi Nachman recognized that Torah transcends nature. Thus, he realized that one absorbed in Torah also transcends nature. Being involved with Torah unifies one with Torah. As Torah, being higher than nature, is

unaffected by it, so the individual immersed in Torah is protected from hazards of nature.

So Rabbi Yitzchok answers at length, explaining that although one involved in a mitzva is generally protected, a situation where the danger is commonplace – such as choking during a meal – is different. There one cannot rely on Divine assistance. One must interact with the world in a natural manner, not relying on the special spiritual status of the Torah or of the Jewish people.

The conversation between Rabbi Yitzchok and Rabbi Nachman takes place during a series of statements about the many occasions G-d performs miracles for the Jewish people. One might think that the Jewish people should be able to fulfill their purpose – making the world a dwelling place for G-dliness through the performance of mitzvos – in a miraculous manner. Rabbi Yitzchok teaches us, therefore, that Torah and mitzvos must be performed according to the nature of the world. Even though Torah provides protection, one should not rely on miracles in a situation that is normally dangerous. Paradoxically, the transformation of the world into a place of spirituality must take place in a completely natural manner.

Still, there are two possible reasons why performance of mitzvos must be in accordance with nature. First, it may be that since the laws of nature are also created by G-d, even the Torah and its mitzvos must be in accordance with or subject to the laws of nature. On the other hand, it may be that Torah and mitzvos in and of themselves are beyond nature, but by definition a mitzva – to be a mitzva – must have an effect on the natural world. The mitzva must appear within nature and seem natural, even though its essence is beyond its physical existence or manifestation.

We now have a deeper understanding of the declaration that “Yaakov our father did not die,” even though the Egyptians embalmed him and his family buried him and mourned for thirty days. Created entities, things which are physical, must decompose and pass away. “Yaakov our father did not die” means that in essence he was not subject to the laws of nature; the limitations of the physical world did not affect him.

Of all the Patriarchs, Yaakov is most closely identified with Torah. As mentioned earlier, Torah is higher than nature, and one attached to Torah is also automatically higher than nature. Thus, the association of Yaakov with

Torah leads immediately and inevitably to “Yaakov our father did not die.” This also explains why the emphasis is on Yaakov, as opposed to the other Patriarchs. The eternality of Yaakov results most directly from his connection with Torah – G-d’s infinite Wisdom. And this unbreakable link between and unification of G-d, Torah and Israel is inherent in all the children of Israel.

But if nature has no authority over Torah, why must the mitzvos be performed in a natural way in the physical world? Why is the coming of Moshiach – the culmination of existence – a physical phenomenon? As Maimonides says, Moshiach will heal the breaches in the observance of Torah, return the Jews to the land of Israel, rebuild the Temple, etc. Why is the ultimate result of Redemption a physical one – the return of the soul to the body, the resurrection? It would seem that if the Torah is higher than nature, the goal would be to go beyond nature.

Hence Rabbi Nachman asks about the mourning, embalming and burial of Yaakov. How can we say “Yaakov our father did not die” and not be allowed to discuss Torah during a meal because of a physical danger? If the inherent spirituality of the Jewish people overrides all, then just as “Yaakov our father did not die” because of his association with Torah, so too we should be able to discuss Torah while eating without fear of choking to death.

Thus, Rabbi Yochanan explains that although the Jewish people and Torah, in and of themselves, are beyond the limitations of nature, G-d wanted the effect of the mitzvos to be felt in the natural world. From the perspective of the natural world – the Egyptians – it appeared that Yaakov

died. Therefore, according to nature, they mourned, embalmed and buried him. But, from Torah’s perspective, Yaakov – even his body – did not die.

This explains why Rabbi Yitzchok waited until after the meal to declare that “Yaakov our father did not die.” When the Jewish people are “sitting at a meal,” when they are involved in matters of the world, then the effect of their Torah and mitzvos is defined by the limitations of nature. But “after the meal,” when they are higher than the world after refining it, then their true situation is revealed. Just as Yaakov’s body did not die, so every Jew, at the time of the resurrection, will have an eternal life in a physical body. As they are alive, so he is alive. ‘Yaakov our father did not die.’

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 35, pp. 223-228)

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# THE SHLIACH AND THE ‘HUSBAND TRACKER’

By Nosson Avrohom

*Rabbi Yehuda Gordon tracks down recalcitrant husbands for the purposes of gittin on behalf of the Beis Din HaRabbani in Yerushalayim. Until the Holtzbergs arrived on shlichus in Bombay, whenever he went there, he had a very difficult time. Rabbi Gordon tells of his work, his adventures, and Rabbi Holtzberg’s invaluable assistance.*

Rabbi Yehuda Gordon was stunned by the terrible news of the murder of Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife, and he has yet to recover. R’ Gordon is a member of the administration of a rabbinic umbrella organization whose job it is to ascertain the background of immigrants from the CIS. He is also famous for releasing *agunos* (women unable to remarry because their husbands have not given them a halachic divorce). He travels all over the world for this purpose, even to dangerous areas, and he

was greatly assisted by R’ Holtzberg whenever he went to Bombay.

“I have been doing this for eighteen years. I was traveling to Bombay long before R’ Holtzberg went on shlichus there, but it was very difficult. In order to give a *get*, you need a beis din of three men, and I had my work cut out for me in making sure there were another two religious Jews, whether tourists or businessmen.

Those tourists and businessmen were unable to devote much time to R’ Gordon,

so he was always operating under time pressure.

“There were situations of husbands who were sitting in jail or hospitalized, and even some that we had to look for in the jungle. Then I had to work on convincing them to give a *get*, which didn’t always go smoothly. I’m talking about dozens of stories, not just one or two!

“The people who joined me to serve as a beis din couldn’t drop everything to help me. After all, they had gone to Bombay for something specific and their time was limited.”

This problem was eliminated five years ago when the Holtzbergs went on shlichus to Bombay. R’ Gordon was able to concentrate on persuading obstinate husbands rather than on finding religious Jews willing to join him.

“In my first meeting with R’ Gabi, I knew I had met someone I could work with, someone who understood the tremendous importance of this work. He was happy to help out. There was nearly always another Lubavitcher bachur with him at the Chabad house or a frum businessman, so I no longer needed to expend



energy on arranging assistance with other frum Jews there.”

At this point in the interview, R’ Gordon sighed deeply. He has yet to digest the tragedy and its repercussions.

“The situation right now is that R’ Holtzberg had recently been empowered by two husbands to give gittin to two women in India. The fact that he is no longer with us presents us with a complicated situation. We will have to locate the husbands again in order to rewrite the gittin, all according to the p’sak din of the Beis Din HaRabbani.

“In addition to the tragic losses for their families and Chabad, we lost someone who was a yerei Shamayim, a ben Torah, someone who understood halacha. Someone who is not learned in gittin and kiddushin cannot be involved with this; R’ Gabi understood the halachos as well as the practical end of this complicated business.”

## INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE

R’ Gordon finds it painful to think that he’s back to the days before the Holtzbergs arrived in Bombay. He received so much help – from being able to easily form a beis din, to having minyanim and kosher meals. This was all brutally taken away within a few hours.

“It’s unlikely that the shluchim who will replace him will be able to establish the connections that R’ Gabi had, connections that were so helpful to me.”

Rabbi Gordon, described in a BBC documentary film called “The Husband Tracker” as a Jew who will not hesitate to operate even in dangerous locales in order to help a woman end her marriage, admits that without R’ Holtzberg’s help he will find it

hard to start all over again.

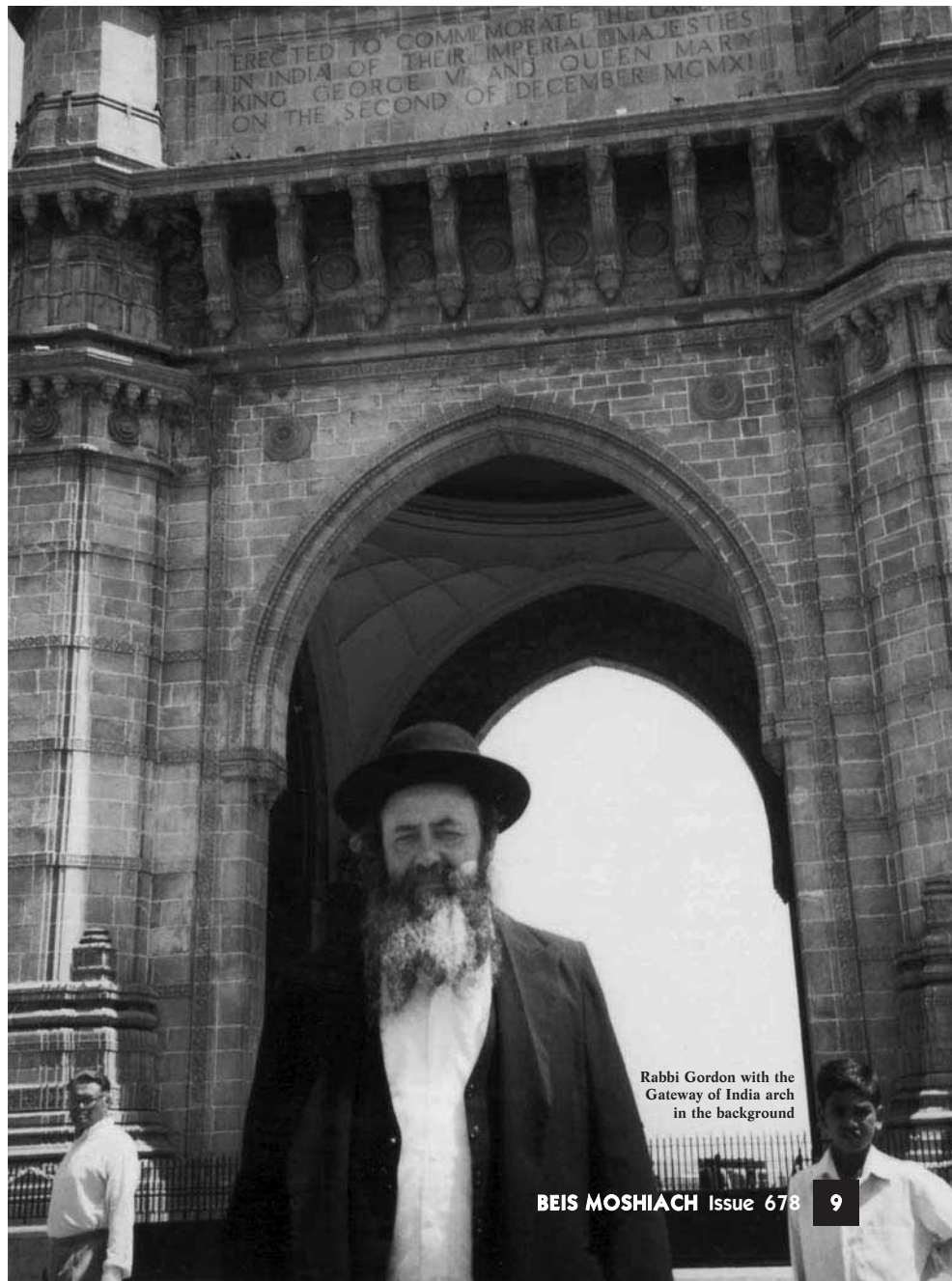
Last year, another documentary was made about R’ Gordon on Israel’s Channel 2. The show, called *Harei At Mekudeshet*, appeared after he published a bestselling book called “Husband Tracker” with 45 fascinating stories. Despite the publicity and the dozens of articles that have been written about him in all the media and Israeli newspapers, R’ Gordon told me that much still remains undisclosed. He can’t tell all. Many aspects of the help he

received from R’ Holtzberg remain a secret.

“R’ Holtzberg quickly became my unofficial representative in Bombay. I would call to ask him something that pertained to my work, and he was quick to help me out. We became close friends and whenever he was in Israel, we met.”

The last time they met was a few weeks before the murderous attack, when R’ Gabi visited Israel.

“R’ Gabi always joined me in convincing recalcitrant husbands



Rabbi Gordon with the Gateway of India arch in the background

to give their wives a get. He helped me find them, which wasn't always easy. There were Israelis who fled their country without giving their wives a get,

and you had to find a host of reasons in order to convince them. To do so, you have to do lots of homework before you meet. Sometimes R' Holtzberg

who was the one who persuaded the man to give a get."

### A DREAM CHANGED HIS MIND

Rabbi Gordon has had countless amazing stories over the years in his work helping women obtain a halachic divorce. In his book, *The Husband Tracker*, he has documented forty-five of these tales, and we asked him to share one of them with us.

"There was an older woman who had been a doctor in Gush Katif. One day she told me that she had come from the CIS, where her husband still lived. She had become religiously observant and had met a widower whom she wanted to marry. She had one problem – that she had not been divorced from her husband before she left the Ukraine. Before I got to work on her case, she warned me that her husband was a wild and violent drunkard who wouldn't hesitate to kill someone.

"She gave me his address in Tchernovitz, in eastern Ukraine, and I called him up. As she had said, as soon as he heard what I wanted, he uttered a string of threats that began with, 'If you come here I will throw you down the stairs, which your nose will count on your way down.' Two months later I had to be in the area, and I decided to stop in and see him. I first prepared my driver, whose relative serves in a senior position in Ukrainian Intelligence, that his intervention might be needed and he should be on standby. I went up to the apartment with a Rabbi Spector.

"We braced ourselves for threats and violence but instead, when the door was opened, a woman asked us whether we were the rabbis from Jerusalem. When we said that we were, she invited us in. We saw overturned chairs, broken plates and glasses on the floor, and the man sitting on the couch looking the worse for wear.

"He was quiet and calm amidst the chaos, and he asked us where he had to sign. It was a surrealistic scene, vastly different than what we had expected. When he had finished signing all the papers, I dared to ask him what had caused him to suddenly soften his position when he had recently threatened me.

"He told me that on Sunday he was supposed to accompany his gentile wife to a village to pick vegetables and the night before, she had dreamt that the man she was living with was married to two women. The dream was so vivid that in the morning they had fought about it – and not just verbally – until he admitted that he had another wife and she extracted a promise from him that he would divorce her.

"I was flabbergasted. Hashem had sent this gentile woman a dream in order to help the doctor from Gush Katif who wanted to remarry. Some time later, I told this story to Knesset member Tzvi Hendel, who smiled and said that that woman had married his father-in-law."

### JEWISH PRIDE

R' Gordon related some stories about the help he received from R' Holtzberg:

"I had twice visited a man in India, a former Israeli who refused to give a get. I pressured him, of course within halachically permissible parameters, but he continued to refuse. He was a stubborn person and was a member of the underworld so working with him was difficult.

"The third time I went to Bombay, I heard that he had had a severe heart attack and was recuperating in a government hospital. Government hospitals in India (not the private ones, which are of a higher standard) are awful. I went to see the man, together with R' Holtzberg. We asked where the man was and were sent to the ICU.

"It was a horrifying scene. It was filthy. Dirty sheets were on the floor and dozens of people were lying there. At that moment, my heart went out to this Jew. The EKG machine looked like a cereal box, and the doctors looked like they wondered why fate had placed them there. Despite all this, the man remained as stubborn as ever. When he saw us, he began screaming that we had come to kill him.

"People began to gather round us, some raising their voices and others approaching threateningly. I was sure we were in trouble, but R' Holtzberg looked calm. He had a rare courage. I asked him what he thought we ought to do, and he looked at me in surprise as though he didn't understand the question. 'Do what you have to do!'

"He had no intentions of

running out of there. In the end, we left when the police came, but for me it was a lesson in Jewish pride. He was fearless. Only some time later did the man agree to give his wife a get. This is only one story out of so many.”

The biggest help R’ Gordon received from R’ Holtzberg, he says, was through the many connections he had with government figures who knew him and respected him, whom he kept happy with ‘tokens of appreciation.’

“The last time I was there, one of the husbands submitted a complaint against me with the office of the Minister of Police, accusing me of trying to force him to divorce his wife. Submitting a complaint to this office is far more serious than submitting a complaint at a regular police station. Furthermore, in India it’s a big crime to convince a husband to divorce his wife. The Israeli embassy didn’t help me, and I was in a bind.

“Who was the one who helped me? It was the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s shliach, R’ Gabi. When I told him my problem, he suggested that I leave the city for a while, promising that in the interim he would work on getting the complaint dismissed, a complaint that could have landed me in jail.

“A few days later he was happy to inform me that I could return since the complaint had been dismissed. How did he accomplish that? He didn’t tell me. That was Gabi. He had Jewish pride. He wasn’t afraid of anyone. He wasn’t afraid of walking through the streets of Bombay like a prince. Everybody respected him, and he helped many people in many different ways.”

***“In addition to the tragic losses for their families and Chabad, we lost someone who was a yerei Shamayim, a ben Torah, someone who understood halacha.”***

### THE STORIES I SAW FIRSTHAND

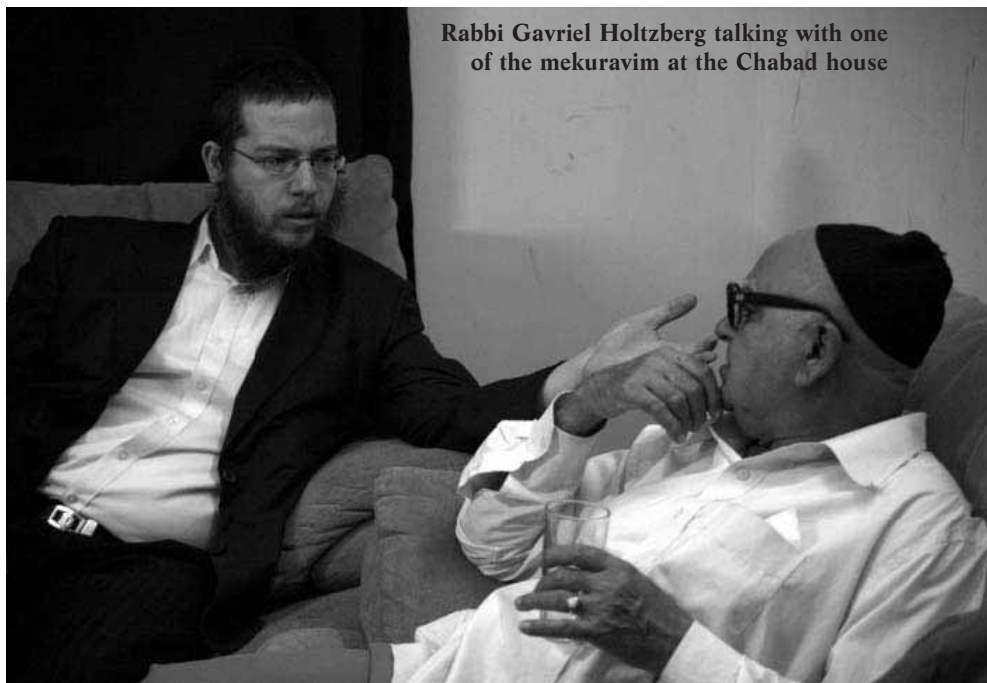
“In addition to the tremendous help he gave me in gittin, help that sometimes made all the difference, there was something special about his Chabad house. I will always miss the Shabbos meals at the Chabad house; they had an exceptional atmosphere. At every meal, after the first course, everybody was given a

turn to get up and say something. Every week I looked forward to this.”

R’ Gordon gave the following two examples:

“One Shabbos, a typical Israeli guy got up and said that three and a half years earlier, he was arrested by the Indian police after they found drugs in his bag. According to him, unscrupulous people had hidden it there. ‘Who raised the money for the lawyers to help me prove my innocence?’ he asked everyone at the table. ‘Rav Holtzberg! When my father came to India, who took care of him throughout all those years and provided him with food and a place to sleep? Rav Holtzberg! Who was waiting for me with proper clothing when I left jail? Rav Holtzberg.’

“The man was teary-eyed as he continued to relate that just two days earlier he was released from jail, and was staying at the Chabad house, room and meals free of charge, until his flight home. He also said that R’ Holtzberg ‘influenced’ people at



Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg talking with one of the mekuravim at the Chabad house



***It was filthy. Dirty sheets were on the floor and dozens of people were lying there. The EKG machine looked like a cereal box, and the doctors looked like they wondered why fate had placed them there.***

the jail to watch over him so that none of the inmates would dare to hurt him. Everybody present was moved to tears.

"Throughout the time that the guy told his story and his father nodded in confirmation of it, Gabi himself was sitting there as though he had no idea why he was being praised. After all, he was just a shliach of the Rebbe who was carrying out his shlichus in the best way he knew how.

"Why did you put so much work into him?" I asked him privately after the meal. His answer was simple and characteristic: 'Because he is a Jew.'

"When R' Holtzberg would meet a Jew, he would look at one thing only – the pintele Yid within him. It made no difference to him how he looked or what he was involved with. With this story and many others, I saw how he was willing to endanger himself to help another Jew not only with spiritual assistance but also, and in most cases, with material

assistance."

Saying this, R' Gordon was reminded of tremendous spiritual assistance that the Holtzbergs provided a certain guest:

"There was an Israeli girl who had come to Bombay and gotten involved in one of the cults there. She became very attached to the guru. That Shabbos that I spent with them, she came too, for some reason, and she described her experiences. I saw how Rivky and Gabi tried to convince her to stay away from the ashram. They were finally successful, and she agreed to return to Eretz Yisroel and study in Tzfas. I was very moved to witness this. I later heard that she began to keep mitzvos."

### **ZEALOUSNESS ALONG WITH REFINEMENT**

Another aspect of R' Holtzberg's personality that R' Gordon pointed out was his zealotry in mitzva observance.

"Although R' Holtzberg lived

**Below: Rabbi Gordon at an Indian jail with a recalcitrant husband who finally gave in. In the center is the jail commander.**

in this out-of-the-way place and was surrounded most of the time by Jews who were not religious, he and his wife were punctiliously observant. On one of my visits he suggested that I join him on the boat to one of the islands near Bombay, where he shechted chickens for the Chabad house and for the Jewish community.

"From there I went somewhere else, and when I returned I saw that he had stopped the line because he discovered that in three boxes that had been salted, the holes were not big enough. I suggested that he put them aside and continue shechting, but he did not agree.

"On that forsaken island, he dropped everything and looked for a phone so he could call a Lubavitcher rav with whom he was in close contact. Until he heard from him how to proceed with those boxes, the sh'chita was at a halt and the entire staff had to wait. I didn't think there was any reason to wait idly, but he refused to continue. He was a modest and refined young man, but when it came to Torah and





mitzvos, he had Lubavitcher strength and was unwilling to make compromises.”

Along with that strength of mind and purpose he knew how to talk to Jews of different backgrounds and find a way to their hearts.

“There was something for which I always admired him. In Bombay there is a shul called Eliyahu HaNavi, one of the most beautiful in the world, though it has hardly any worshippers. Many of the regular worshippers moved to Eretz Yisroel. Gabi could have had his own minyan with his guests, but he chose to take his guests to this shul to daven so that the local people would be able to daven with a minyan.”



Rabbi Gordon with a fellow worker traveling to out-of-the-way places in the world.

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# THE BELATED PAYBACK

By T. Yankelowitz

I heard the following story from R' Gershon Avtzon, Rosh Yeshiva in Cincinnati:

R' Aryeh Kaltmann is a shliach in Columbus, Ohio. Like most shluchim, a significant part of his time is devoted to fundraising. Anybody who has tried this knows it's not most shluchim's favorite activity although it's vital for the upkeep of the Chabad house and its activities.

R' Kaltmann was fortunate in that one of his balabatim covered a significant part of the budget, 80% to be exact, with his very generous contribution. After a period of time in which the shliach only had to raise 20% of his expenses, the wealthy man became sick. R' Kaltmann visited him and did what he could to help him but the man passed away. Before the man died he told his children to continue to help the shliach as he had done.

The children did not exactly follow in their father's footsteps. After he died they gave the shliach a sum of money but with that, their connection ended. Poor R' Kaltmann was stuck; his main source of income had dried up and he had to raise 100% of his budget. How would he be able to do this?

Just when all seemed bleak, his secretary drew his attention to an envelope which had come in the mail. In the envelope was a letter and a bank check. The letter was written by a woman in California,

unknown to the shliach. The incredible thing was that the check was made out for \$10,000!

The woman wrote that her grandson was attending university in Columbus and the shliach had given him a Jewish calendar. When she went to visit her daughter she saw the calendar in her house and asked where it came from. She looked for the address of the shliach and that is how she came to send him the check.

The story was odd but the check was real. The Rebbe was helping him fill the gap. He cashed the check and dictated a warm thank you letter.

Chanuka time, R' Kaltmann gave out menoros to the members of his community as well as to students. He decided to send a menorah to his new donor in California. He included a nice letter about Chanuka.

A few days later he received an envelope with a letter thanking him for the menorah and ... a bank check for \$10,000! R' Kaltmann couldn't believe his eyes. He thanked G-d for the money and "reminded" Him that he was still lacking a large portion of the amount he used to receive from his former patron.

Purim was coming up. R' Kaltmann packed some hamentashen and along with warm wishes he sent them to his donor in California. When he received the third envelope it was with that same

large amount of money, completely out of proportion to the item he had sent her. He cashed the third \$10,000 check but was still in need of additional funding.

You can guess what happened next. He sent her shmura matza for Pesach. After all, he had figured out that whenever he sent her a holiday gift, she sent him \$10,000 in return. Each time he received a check he deducted it from the 80% he was missing and the budget slowly worked its way up.

Before Shavuot, he sent her a flower arrangement and was not at all surprised to receive a warm thank you and another \$10,000. His curiosity had reached fever pitch. True he was in constant touch with her, and sent her Jewish gifts before the holidays, but the amount of money she sent was out of proportion to the gifts. Any shliach would be thrilled – a gift worth a few dollars and in exchange, a check of \$10,000! The most peculiar thing about it was that she did not explain why she in California had picked him, a shliach in Ohio, to receive this magnanimous donation. All she did was write that she had received the gift and was grateful, and as a sign of appreciation she appended a check.

Shortly after receiving the latest check, R' Kaltmann had to be in California. He arranged his schedule so that he would have time to visit the mystery donor and be able to find out the reason for her donations.

After he finished his business he arranged a meeting with the woman. He was graciously welcomed and the first part of the visit went well. Then the shliach broached the subject and said, "I understand that you appreciate the Chabad house calendar as well as the other gifts that I send you from time to time. However, the money you send in exchange is really out of proportion



to the gifts.”

At this point, he paused to gather his thoughts. He didn't want to ruin his chances of future donations with one poorly worded sentence.

“Don't think that your donations are not important to us; they certainly are! However, I find it so very surprising. Why do you send large sums in exchange for little gifts? And especially when you don't know me at all and it's just that your grandson participates in our activities on campus.”

This is what woman said:

When I was a little girl my sister was very sick and the doctors did not see a way of curing her. My

parents went to the best doctors but none of them could guarantee that my sister would recover. My parents began going to rabbis. Back then, there was a young and new rabbi who was beginning to become famous. He lived in Crown Heights and my family went to see him.

I don't know precisely what happened but after they visited him in his office, my sister recovered. He gave her life when others despaired.

My family went back to living a happy, normal life again. For some reason they did not remember that they owed a debt of gratitude to the Rebbe who had saved their daughter. Perhaps they did not want

to think about that miserable time. In any case, the debt remained although it wasn't written down anywhere, perhaps not even in their hearts.

Decades went by. We grew up and married and raised families and our children married. My grandson went away to university and he came home on vacation with that calendar. His mother, my daughter, hung it up on the wall of the kitchen in a prominent place. I visited her in order to see my grandson and when I went into the kitchen I saw the Rebbe's face, the Rebbe who had saved my sister decades before! He looked just as he did in the picture with a black beard and those eyes.

I was reminded of that terrible time, of the tension and fear we experienced every day, the despair at finding a cure and the turnabout after the visit to the young Rebbe in Crown Heights. The memories were so vivid. Then I tried to remember whether the family had ever thanked the Rebbe. I did not think so. I felt ashamed. Someone saved my sister's life and we did not repay the kindness? We didn't go back and tell him of the miracle and did not express our gratitude in any way?

How could we thank the Rebbe now? I wracked my brains and couldn't come up with anything. But when my grandson told me about the Chabad rabbi's activities on campus, I realized this was the answer. I couldn't personally pay the Rebbe back but I could repay the debt to one of his emissaries. The only shliach I had any connection to – thanks to the calendar – was you, and that is how the old family debt came to be repaid to the Rebbe.

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The Rebbe does not abandon his shluchim. If it seems as though one avenue is closed off, rest assured, the Rebbe will open another avenue, because after all, it's not just your work... it's his.



# FROM HOMIL TO NEW YORK

By Avrohom Reinitz

*R' Hillel Zaltzman relates his fascinating adventures in fulfilling the Rebbe's secret directive to collect Chassidic manuscripts from long ago, far and wide, bring them out of the Soviet Union, and have them published.*

## SECRET ORDER FROM THE REBBE

In the 1960's, a secret order from the Rebbe managed to reach us in Russia: The thousands of manuscripts of maamarim that had never been printed should be taken out of Russia. This was described as *pidyon shvuyim* – redeeming captives.

R' Mordechai (Mottel) Kozliner a"h, who lived in Tashkent at the time, devoted himself fully to this task. With great effort he managed to locate the names and addresses of dozens of elderly Chassidim throughout the Soviet empire who were likely to have Chassidic manuscripts from previous generations. After he had compiled these lists, he raised money for this huge mission and encouraged bachurim and young men to travel throughout Russia and rescue these manuscripts.

Naturally, being involved with

Chassidic writings, and especially the final goal of taking them out of Russia, entailed danger to life, but when we heard that this is what the Rebbe wanted, we devoted ourselves to the task.

How did we hear about this in Russia? How did R' Mottel manage to get the addresses of these elder Chassidim? We did not know, nor did we ask. All we knew was that this was what the Rebbe wanted. In Russia of those days, people kept their curiosity to themselves. Taking an excessive interest in communal matters beyond what we needed to know was not only unnecessary, but forbidden!

When we held meetings about the underground work in Samarkand, I would always say, whatever does not affect me directly, please don't tell me. I, too, tried not to talk, even to close friends, beyond what was necessary for them to know. The reasoning was simple – Why put

myself into danger? If I would be caught and questioned, who knew whether I'd be able to withstand my interrogators?

## MOVING ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PREVIOUS GENERATION

I was enlisted, along with other bachurim and young men, for this endeavor. Whenever I went on one of these missions, R' Mottel would give me the names of Chassidim and their addresses. Since writing the information down on paper could incriminate me, I had to memorize it. I reviewed the names and addresses so many times that it's no wonder I still remember them until today.

The trips entailed challenges and adventures, but the climax of each trip was meeting an old Chassid of the previous generation who lived in some hole somewhere in Russia and continued to live his life as he always did. From those special meetings I derived spiritual warmth and *chayus*, for it was a rare treat to see Chassidim of the previous generation. To sit before a real Chassid, someone who saw and heard the Rebbe Rashab, was an exceptional experience.

Hearing their descriptions of the lives of Chassidim in days gone by, and about the abandonment of the future



generation, my heart would overflow. On the one hand, it was inspiring to hear their memories from the golden days of Chassidus Chabad. On the other hand, it was so pitiful to see how cut off they were from life in a Lubavitcher community.

Although these Chassidim managed to remain as they had been in Lubavitch, because they did not live in a Jewish environment, they were unable to transmit it to the next generation. Their children assimilated. I don't think anyone today knows or remembers these Chassidim. May the little bit that I tell in the following pages provide an elevation for their souls.

## IS THE RUMOR TRUE THAT THE SON BECAME REBBE?

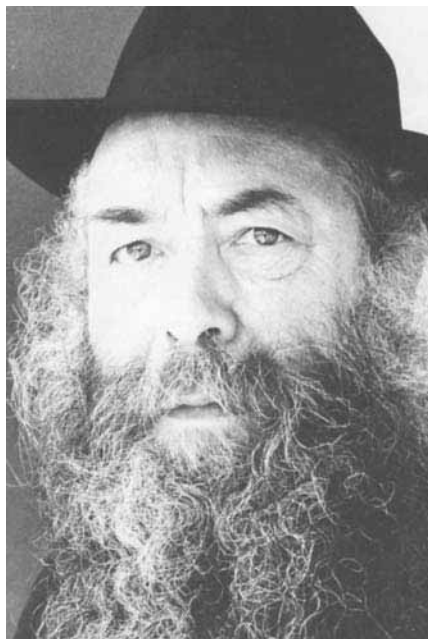
One of the first Chassidim I was sent to by R' Mottel was R' Itche Garelik, known by Chassidim as Itche Stchedriner. He lived at 54 Tashklova Street in Nikolayev and was 84 at the time. He was one of the first melamdin in yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, but as close as he was to Beis Rebbe in the golden years of Tomchei T'mimim - that is how far he became after he left the Chassidishe environment. It reached the point that, when I met him for the first time, he asked me whether it was true that the son (i.e. the Rebbe Rayatz) had become Rebbe (he had become Rebbe in 1920!)

I was shocked by the question. Forty years had gone by since the passing of the Rebbe Rashab and the beginning of the Rebbe Rayatz's nesius. Over ten years had passed since the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz in 1950 and the Rebbe's taking over the nesius, and this man was so cut off from

the world of Lubavitch that he needed to verify whether the Rebbe Rayatz had succeeded his father!

Of course I told him everything I knew about the Rebbe Rayatz's reign and the little bit I had gleaned from R' Binyamin Katz (who came from New York to Tashkent) about the Rebbe's nesius in Beis Chayeinu in New York.

When he heard that I was the son-in-law of R' Efraim Fishel Demichovsky, the son of the Rogatchover Gaon's sister, he



**R' Mottel Kozliner**

told me that he remembered my father-in-law from Lubavitch. He said that one Simchas Torah, at hakafos, the Rebbe Rashab stood on the side and watched the crowd. "I also stood on the side and watched," said R' Garelik. "Suddenly, the Rebbe asked me to move a bit to the side, saying, 'Let me look at that bachur. He reminds me of his uncle (the Rogatchover Gaon).'"

(The Chassid R' Lazer Nannes ("Subbota") related that he went

to the Rogatchover Gaon one Sukkos with a group of bachurim. When they arrived, the Rogatchover was lying on the couch with his hands under his head as he thought. Seeing them, he got up suddenly and they stepped back. When he saw that they were T'mimim, he called: "T'mimim, enter."

They saw a cup of water near the couch, and discussed his being able to drink water out of the sukka. He explained that if he went down to the sukka behind the house, it would entail bittul Torah, and since this wasn't a meal he permitted himself to drink.

Then they asked him what he had to say about the Rebbe. He said: "If there is a Jew at the end of the world who is having a hard time marrying off his daughter, the Lubavitcher Rebbe sees this and prays for him until he is saved from his distress.

"If so," they asked, "why don't you go to the Rebbe (Rashab)?"

He answered that he was afraid of the bittul Torah involved in such a lengthy trip. "But," he said, "my sister's son, who I have taken responsibility to raise after she left him as an orphan, I have sent to Lubavitch."

R' Garelik also told me what he heard about the Tzemach Tzedek, who would say T'hillim out loud and with tears. One time, a bachur hid in the Tzemach Tzedek's house and saw him get up after midnight (perhaps it was part of Tikkun Chatzos) to say all of T'hillim. When he got up to chapter 84, and said the words, "even a bird found a home and a swallow its nest," he addressed Heaven and said, "And by You this is justified?!"

R' Garelik was heartbroken when he told me about his

children. He cried nonstop when he told me that though he had sent his sons to a Chabad yeshiva, they were drafted and sent to the front during World War II. When they returned from the army after the war, they were no longer religious.

## LIFE AS IT WAS IN LUBAVITCH

A few years after our first meeting, I met R' Itche Garelik again. I was on a similar mission to the Charson, Odessa, and Yevpotori district, and took the opportunity to detour and visit with him. He was nearly ninety.

I was moved to see that despite the many years that had passed and his being cut off from the Chabad community, he continued to live his life precisely as he did when he was in Lubavitch. He got up early in the morning, had something to eat, and then learned Chassidus for two hours (mainly Likkutei Torah). His davening took two hours. He did this every day for scores of years.

He told me that he tried to organize a minyan, but could not find ten Jews who wanted to daven on a regular basis. In general, although I was decades younger than these elderly Chassidim, as soon as they realized that I was one of Anash they shared all their deepest feelings with me.

I sensed how greatly they enjoyed opening their hearts to a kindred spirit who could understand them, after decades of hiding their feelings, with no one who would understand their Chassidic lifestyle.

R' Itche told me that he occasionally shechted a chicken for himself. After I told him that I knew sh'chita, he asked me to check his sh'chita knife. When I

did so, I was horrified to find a blemish. When I pointed it out to him, he said that he knew about it. "What can I do?" he asked. "I can't sharpen the knife myself. My son sharpens it for me, and afterwards, I check the knife. I wrap that blemish you found in a shmatte, and I do the sh'chita with the other part of the knife."

These meetings always shook me up. When I left the homes of these Chassidim and I met older Jews on the street, I felt an uncontrollable urge to encourage them to preserve their Judaism. I



**R' Hillel Zaltzman as a young man**

wasn't afraid to talk to them about Judaism, since I left soon after.

Jews would constantly ask me in amazement how a young person like myself knew Yiddish and about Judaism. I would always reply: "You don't realize, but Judaism in Russia is flourishing; it's just that it's all underground." When they asked where I was from, I told them that I came from the city Kustanai in Kazakhstan. Of

course, I had no connection with that city and there were no Lubavitchers there. For reasons of security, I kept my hometown a secret. Even the name I gave them was fictitious – Breitbein (an expression in Yiddish which means "broad-boned").

## HARDSHIPS ON THE ROAD

One of the problems I had when going on a mission was the lack of kosher food. Since we were particular about not eating outside the home, I had to take a suitcase full of food to last me throughout my trip. On rare occasions, when I had leftover food, I gave it to Jews so they would have kosher food to eat.

Since I had food from home which spoiled after a few days, I limited these trips to two weeks. My brother-in-law, Eli Mishulovin a"h, joked, "Hilke once went on a trip. He was thousands of kilometers from Samarkand, but when he was hungry he had no choice but to return to Samarkand for lunch."

I tried to go on these missions by plane. The advantage was twofold. Firstly, the trip by train from Samarkand to any other part of Russia took days, while a plane got me there within hours. Secondly, when you travel by train for days, it's hard to daven with tallis and t'fillin without drawing unwanted attention. When I traveled by plane, I could daven before or after the flight.

One year, in the summer, I was unable to get a flight and had to travel part of the way by train. I asked for a private compartment, but the train was crowded and I had to share a compartment with another three people.

Since I knew I had to travel for several days by train, and the

mission would last longer than usual, I came up with a way to preserve the freshness of the food I brought with me. I would store the meat in preserving jars that I prepared myself. I boiled oil, and while it boiled I poured it into a glass jar with some pieces of meat, then shut it quickly. The heat created a vacuum in the jar, and I heard that meat could be preserved this way for a long time.

One night during the trip, I awoke to the sound of breaking glass. The other people in the compartment also woke up. I realized that one of my jars had exploded, and I was afraid that the others would explode, too. What would my traveling companions think? They might call the police to check the source of the explosions. To my good fortune, the other jars did not burst and the people went back to sleep.

The next day, when I opened my suitcase, I saw the broken jar, and the meat and liquid all over my belongings. I realized that the meat had spoiled and the toxic fumes had caused the explosion. I opted to throw away the rest of the jars, so as not to risk stomach trouble during the trip. That's all I needed, to go to a hospital far from home with an upset stomach...

## WHO IS THE EIGENER?

One summer, I was sent by R' Mottel Kozliner to a Chassid named R' Yisachar Mariyash of Odessa. I arrived in Odessa on a Thursday, close to twilight. Since I knew his address and intended to sleep over at his home, I did not leave my suitcases in lockers at the train station. I was afraid to leave them there because I had my tallis and t'fillin and other "suspicious" items in them.

I dragged the suitcases, trying not to be conspicuous, and made my way to the address which was etched in my mind. R' Yisachar lived on a block of apartment houses, five stories high, in which hundreds of families lived. The buildings were around a large yard, which I had to cross to get to his home. I prayed that nobody would ask me anything. I asked where Comrade Mariyash lived and was directed to his apartment.

I went up to his apartment and knocked gently at the door, so the neighbors wouldn't hear. After a few seconds of silence I heard a voice ask, "Who's there?" I answered, as always, "*Ah eigener* (one of us)." He asked, "Who is the eigener?" What could I tell him when he didn't know me? I repeated, "*Ah eigener*. Please open the door."

I could hear him speaking to his wife: Who can it be? After some consultation he said, "Come back tomorrow."

It was late and I had nowhere to go. I wasn't thrilled at the idea of dragging my suitcases through the yard again. I pleaded, "I have no place to sleep. Please let me in." But he was very afraid and said, "Go to the shul. You'll find someone there." He explained how to find the shul.

Tired and hungry, I went to look for the shul, dragging my suitcases with me. As I approached the shul, I saw a Jew with a trimmed beard coming out. I greeted him, and he introduced himself as the rav of the shul. I asked him for a place to sleep, and he tried to put me off. It was only after I offered payment that he took me to his home.

Despite my exhaustion, I tried not to sleep deeply. I just dozed and a few times, in the middle of the night, I checked my suitcases.

***Naturally, being involved with Chassidic writings, and especially the final goal of taking them out of Russia, entailed danger to life, but when we heard that this is what the Rebbe wanted, we devoted ourselves to the task.***

In those years, the rav of a shul was a government appointee, and who knew how devoted he was to the government? In my suitcases I had a lot of "treife" merchandise, like sifrei Tanya and Siddurim which I had bought on my stay at the central shul in Moscow.

## FRIDAY NIGHT EXCITEMENT

I got up early in the morning and went quickly to the shul to daven. It was Erev Shabbos, and I davened to Hashem that R' Yisachar would let me into his home. Otherwise, where I would spend Shabbos? When I went to his home after davening, he refused to open the door and told me to come at three in the afternoon.

To my great joy, when I arrived at three he opened the door and invited me in. His home was comprised of two rooms. The



***Aside from a few times when, after he planted potatoes or tomatoes, anti-Semites had come and destroyed his field, he usually had food to eat that he had grown himself.***

first room was a kitchen and a place where they stored bedpans that were used at night (by day they used the public bathrooms in the yard). The second room was a dining room and bedroom.

R' Yisachar didn't talk much. He said he was busy getting ready for Shabbos. I asked for a Chumash and reviewed the sidra. By the time Shabbos had arrived, I had looked at his s'farim to check whether he had any old manuscripts.

Friday night he said he was not going to shul (many of Anash did not go to the main shul because it swarmed with informers and government appointees). He told me that on Shabbos morning there were two secret minyanim, one in which older men davened and one, further away, where a younger, more modern crowd davened. These young people had been inspired by the victory in the Six Day War. The next day I decided to go to the young people's minyan.

In the meantime, we began to talk. When he was convinced that I was really "one of ours," he was

bowled over. For decades he hadn't seen a bachur or young man speaking fluent Yiddish with Lubavitcher expressions, and with knowledge of Chabad.

In great excitement, he began telling me his memories of the Rebbe Rashab and the Rebbe Rayatz. He spoke a lot about Rashbatz (the Chassid R' Shmuel Betzalel Sheftel) and other Chassidim of those days. We still had yet to daven Kabbalas Shabbos and make Kiddush. His wife tried to remind him that it was late and the guest surely wanted to eat (which was true), but he continued talking.

When she asked him again to pause, he said emotionally, "It has been decades since I met one of ours. Do you understand? He's one of ours!" and he burst into tears, repeating over and over, "Oy, oy, he is one of ours. Let me revive my neshama."

I, however, was practically collapsing from exhaustion. His wife noticed this, but when she tried to say that the guest was tired and hungry, he yelled, "For decades I haven't seen one of us, one of Anash. Can you understand the excitement?"

It was only towards midnight that we finally davened Kabbalas Shabbos and had the Shabbos meal. At 1:30 we finished eating and they arranged a bed for me in the first room. It wasn't the freshest room, obviously, but I slept like the dead.

The next morning R' Yisachar explained where I would find the minyan of young people. I managed to find it easily and discovered about fifty people, most of them in their thirties and forties. They did not all know how to daven, but they went to shul as an expression of their Judaism.

Being young as well as a new

face, they all took an interest in me, wanting to know who I was and where I came from since they saw I was knowledgeable and could daven. As always, I gave them a fictitious name and address and used the opportunity to encourage them and to tell them about Judaism blossoming in secret throughout Russia.

## **A PROMISE KEPT**

Among the young people I spoke to was a 19 year old university student. He told me that after the Six Day War he began taking an interest in Judaism, but he didn't know what actions he needed to take. After the davening we walked back to his house together, and the long walk gave us time to schmooze and become friends. He said that his father was the community shochet and they had submitted a request to leave Russia. They had been waiting for months for a reply.

Looking back, I don't know why I trusted him, but after he expressed an interest in learning Torah I told him the truth, that I came from Samarkand. I suggested that he come with me.

Although I knew that R' Yisachar was waiting for me to return from Shacharis, I decided that since this entailed saving a Jewish soul, it took precedence. We agreed that I would eat the Shabbos meal in his house and talk to his parents.

When I got there, I found a table set for Shabbos. The father sat at the head of the table and the family was eating the Shabbos meal. I quickly became acquainted with them, and baruch Hashem, they took a liking to me and agreed to send their son with me to learn in Moscow. On the way to his house I had warned him not to tell his parents that his



true destination was Samarkand. They would believe he was going to Moscow, and the real plan would remain top secret. Nobody would know where he was really going.

Since I had to leave Odessa on Sunday and this boy did not have a ticket yet, we decided that he would order a ticket in the meantime and leave a day later.

Nine days later he arrived in Samarkand. Friday night, after the meal, some of us gathered in the home of R' Berke Shiff for a farbrengen. All attention focused on the new guest. The farbrengen warmed his heart, and he mixed with the talmidim of the underground yeshiva. On Sunday he was already sitting and learning with great diligence.

His chavrusa was a bachur from Moscow, a very talented mathematician, who had been niskarev to Chabad by R' Moshe Katzenelbogen. When his parents saw him take it seriously, they were very upset and took him to a top psychologist, who obviously found no problems with him.

After two months, the bachur from Odessa got word that his family had been granted exit visas. He immediately went home, though not before he promised to remain a Chabadnik. His parents settled in B'nei Brak, and he learned in Kfar Chabad. He influenced his sister to learn in Chabad schools. After he finished yeshiva, he married a girl from a distinguished Lubavitcher family and they built a Chassidishe home.

## **SINCE MY FATHER SENT YOU...**

Krimskaya Oblast, Jankayeski Rayan, Stantziya Azavskaya, Kolkhoz Rassiya, Vigon Yosef. You read that correctly. That was the exact address of R' Yosef

Vigon (the brother of Shammai Vigon who is mentioned in the sichos and letters of the Rebbe Rayatz) who was sent by the Rebbe Rashab to live in that village. He possessed some manuscripts of Chassidus.

I went to him by train from the city of Simferopol, the capitol of the Crimea. I got off at the Azavskaya station and looked for the village in which he lived. There were no streets and numbers, rather each villager had a piece of land which he farmed and from which he lived.



**R' Efraim Demichovsky with  
his oldest granddaughter**

When I arrived at his house, after the initial excitement died down, he told me about the difficult shlichus he got from the Rebbe Rashab, the Rebbe having sent him to this village where there were hardly any Jews. Lately, he hardly ever had a minyan. Before the war he went to the Rebbe Rayatz and told him about life in his village, stating that since there were hardly any Jews, he had nothing to do there.

The Rebbe Rayatz told him: "Since my father sent you there, I can't permit you to leave. You are supported by working the land, and each time you ask for Hashem's blessing, you get it and live from Hashem's blessing. For this you ought to be happy."

He told me he only ate dairy foods except for once a year, before Pesach, when he traveled to Simferopol where R' Chaim Rappaport, a Lubavitcher shochet, shechted a chicken for him. He also went to Simferopol for the Yomim Nora'im so he could daven with a minyan.

Like all the old Chassidim I met in out-of-the-way places, R' Yosef's children had gone off the derech. He was 78, but he looked a lot younger than his age. His beard was still almost black, and his general appearance was that of a farmer. Aside from a few times when, after he planted potatoes or tomatoes, anti-Semites had come and destroyed his field, he usually had food to eat that he had grown himself.

As in all the places I visited, I was broken by the pitiful situation I encountered. It was the utter destruction of Russian Jewry. Talking to R' Yosef, I promised to try to find him an apartment in Samarkand so he could live among Chassidim. He said he had to consult with his son, who, nebach, ran his home like a gentile so he could not eat or even live with him. His son was a teacher in Simferopol, and when R' Yosef went there for the Yomim Nora'im, he just slept in his house.

When I returned to Samarkand I related my encounters. The older Chassidim knew some of the people I met. I spoke to the men in Samarkand about R' Yosef Vigon, saying that we had the obligation of bringing

him to our camp. I corresponded with R' Yosef and told him he could come to Samarkand, but he did not rush to come. His son was concerned that he would not be cared for. Even when I wrote that I was willing to make a special trip in order to help him travel to Samarkand, he wasn't quick to take me up on this offer. In the end, we found out that he had passed away.

### **IF MY GRANDSON LEARNS IN SAMARKAND, I'LL BE HAPPY**

I met R' Shmuel Gershon Sorkin in Homil during the summer. As I neared his house I saw him in the distance and immediately identified him as a Lubavitcher Chassid. It was a *mechaye* to see the image of a real Chabad Chassid, just as I pictured one to myself. After all the traveling by plane and train, it was all worthwhile just to see a person like him.

***The Rebbe spoke  
about the  
importance of  
pidyon shvuyim,  
and picked up this  
book saying that  
this was real  
pidyon shvuyim  
and in this merit,  
the redeemers  
would also merit  
pidyon shvuyim.***

He was a man in his sixties with a long beard, a long outer garment (which I had not seen in Russia since my trip to my uncle, R' Boruch Duchman), and a *kasket* (cap). When he noticed me, he immediately invited me into his house so the neighbors wouldn't see me. He sat on a chair, opened the buttons of his outer garment and remained sitting there wearing woolen tzitzis over a shirt under his suit. It was so marvelous to me to see this Chassid from the previous generation who had made no changes.

Hearing my Yiddish spiced with Lubavitcher expressions, and noting that I was knowledgeable about Admurei and Chassidei Chabad, he realized I was really a Lubavitcher and relaxed. Once I had gained his trust, I told him the purpose of my visit, that I wanted manuscripts to send to the Rebbe.

He told me that he was the shochet and occasionally went to other towns for purposes of sh'chita, but he was afraid to speak with people he didn't know. He didn't even dare to speak about Chassidus or Chassidim to his acquaintances, because he knew that the word "Chassidim" in Russia was a crime.

Putting me in context, he said that he had heard that the shochet, R' Efraim Fishel Demichovsky of Minsk, had married off his daughter to a Lubavitcher bachur and now he was happy to see me personally; nonetheless he was afraid to talk to me.

When I spoke to him about his children, he said he had two daughters. Both were married to Jews and he had two grandsons, one of whom was of the age to learn in yeshiva. If I could get his

grandson to learn in Samarkand, he would be extremely happy. I tried my best, but his daughter wouldn't hear of it.

He had a book of manuscripts, for which I gave him in exchange the maamer, "B'Reishis Bara," which I had copied when it came to Russia. I left him brokenhearted.

### **R' REUVEN THE SCRIBE'S TORAH SCROLL**

A year later, before Pesach, my brother-in-law Aryeh Leib came to Samarkand. He told me he had recently visited Homil, and R' Shmuel Gershon had begged that I go to him. He disclosed to my brother-in-law that he had a Torah scroll which was said to have been written by R' Reuven, the Alter Rebbe's scribe. He wanted this Torah to be taken out of Russia and given, in his name, to the Rebbe.

I decided to go right after Pesach. To my sorrow, when I got to Homil and went to his house, I found his daughters sitting Shiva for him. I didn't know what to do. There was a minyan in his house, and it was the first time I saw a man daven at the amud with the daughter of the departed saying Kaddish. They offered some sort of rationale for this.

When the davening was over I explained to his daughters the purpose of my visit. They said that indeed, he had very much wanted to see me, but they did not know why. I told them what I knew about the Torah scroll and about his desire to have it sent to the Rebbe.

They did not know where the Torah was, but they remembered that he had a Torah that was always with him, with which he had gone through the war. He

watched over it carefully, but in later years he left it in a shul in one of the towns where he would go to shecht.

They could not remember which town the Torah was in, but they said that since the thirteen year old grandson would accompany his grandfather on his travels, I could go with him and see whether we could find it.

It was evening, and we decided that this was the best time to go to look for it, since at this hour people were in shul for Mincha and Maariv. Together with the grandson and one of the daughters, I took a taxi in the direction of the towns that he would go to.

The towns were near one another, and in less than an hour we had gone to them all. In the third town they found the Torah in an Aron Kodesh. It was very old and "thin," with ancient wooden rods.

The Jews there did not want to give up the Torah, saying that on Simchas Torah they danced with this Torah since it was easy to carry. I insisted that I had to take it and would not leave without it. The daughter told them that the Torah belonged to her father and she needed it now. We spoke about it as something temporary, and in the end they had no choice but to let us leave with the Torah scroll.

I gave the daughter 300 rubles, which was worth about three months worth of wages, and left before they could change their mind. When I finally left Homil, I was ecstatic that I had been able to save R' Reuven the scribe's Torah. I hoped that it would end up in the right place, with the Rebbe in New York. Shortly afterwards, my father received permission to leave



**R' Hillel Zaltzman receiving kos shel bracha from the Rebbe**

Russia, and he took the Torah with him to the Rebbe.

When I left Russia and went to the Rebbe, I inquired about the Torah I had sent. I was told that an ancient Torah had arrived at 770, but nobody knew where it had come from or what was special about it. When they opened the Aron Kodesh in the small zal, I immediately recognized the Torah among all the other scrolls.

\*\*\*

On my travels I found a number of volumes of manuscripts. One of them was bigger than a Likkutei Torah, and it was thicker than a Likkutei Torah, too.

At that time there were professional writers who wrote sifrei Chassidus for pay. They would write on paper without lines, which was more expensive. The paper in that volume was

beautiful and white, and it had apparently been written by an expert. The lines were long and were a half circle because of how quickly they were written. In that volume, there were discourses of Chassidus Chabad and from other Chassiduyos, too.

When we got these s'farim, we gave them to R' Mottel Kozliner, who took care of them and sent them to the West until they reached the Rebbe.

I inquired as to whether this particular book had reached the Rebbe. I heard that at one of the farbrengens, the Rebbe brought a very thick book and put it on the table. Based on the description, it is very likely that it was the book I had obtained. The Rebbe spoke about the importance of pidyon shvuyim, and picked up this book saying that this was real pidyon shvuyim and in this merit, the redeemers would also merit pidyon shvuyim.



# FROM RUSSIA WITH LIGHT

By Golda Kam

*Sterna-Svetlana describes her journey from the Russian frost and hunger to the warmth and light of Lubavitch.*

## ZHIDOVKA WITHOUT HORNS

Until I was thirteen I knew virtually nothing about Judaism. I remember only that towards springtime my grandmother would bring flour and bake thin matzos. When we sat down to eat them, my father said that his grandfather would say that “many years ago, his ancestors had been slaves and in the end they were freed.” He would always add, “Nu, if only we too were able to get out and be free of this Iron Curtain.”

When I turned thirteen my father said in a serious tone, “Svetlana, you should know that you, your mother, your grandmother, and I are Jews.”

“What?!” I denied it. Nobody had ever screamed “Zhidovka” at me in the street and I didn’t have horns.

My father, who was always tough, patted my head and said, “My dear girl, one day perhaps we will go to Israel and then you will understand everything.”

The “one day” became a reality three years later when my father arranged for us to make

aliya at the end of the winter 5750. A half year earlier he sent me to the Jewish Agency “so you will become religious,” he said. The Agency offered “Kabbalat Shabbat” which meant that Jewish kids from Odessa gathered, sang “Sholom Aleichem” with the accompaniment of a piano, were given raisins, almonds and cake and watched a movie about Israel which I don’t think they had on a Shabbos clock.

As much as I try to remember, I cannot recall Shabbos candles or Kiddush but to their credit, these gatherings enabled Jews to meet and led to Jewish marriages. And ... I had a good meal that day.

## LEAVING FOR THE LAND I HAD LEARNED ABOUT

One freezing Friday I went to the Agency. The place was deserted and a snow-covered sign announced “due to the cholera outbreak there will not be a Shabbat gathering.” I made my way to the shul.

The shliach, Rabbi Shia

Gisser, wondered for a moment why a “shiksa” from the street had come into the shul. I told him I was Jewish and mumbled, “I didn’t eat all day. I went to the Agency and it said that because of cholera there wouldn’t be Shabbat.” I burst into tears and the other people laughed.

After a pause he reassured me that I could eat with them and he explained that Shabbat takes place even if the whole world has cholera! This is simply because it’s one of the days of the week.

I was famished. I glanced at the table and saw potatoes, onions, carrots, beets, a loaf of Georgian bread, a bit of chicken and some canned vegetables. The shliach seated me in the women’s section.

Until that time I had never been to a shul. “Why should I go?” I would ask my friends. “When I feel clinically depressed I’ll consider it.” At that time I thought there was joy in my life. “Here’s another potato, another piano lesson, what’s wrong with that?”

I started going to shul after that Shabbos. All week long, my stomach longed for the Shabbos meal. In our house we had one sack of potatoes and a bottle of oil. From a culinary standpoint it was obvious that a meal at the shul was worth far more than the meal at the Agency.

Just at this time, my school decided to have classes for five long days rather than six shorter ones. We were free every Saturday and Sunday so I was able to keep Shabbos. School was over at four o’clock on Friday and at 4:30 I lit candles. I kept Shabbos at the shul and the shluchim’s house and on Motzaei Shabbos I went home.

The heart follows the stomach ... Fortunately, R’ Shia knew how



to talk my language. I told him that I considered religion an opiate for the masses which leaders sell to people in order for them to live upright, peaceful lives.

He wrinkled his brow and said, “You don’t have to believe in a god who sits on clouds who causes it to rain when he washes his socks.” Then he confidently explained that just as an item of clothing says something about the tailor and a house says something about the one who built it, so too the world announces its Creator. True, we don’t see Him, but do we see a teacher’s logic?

I remember telling my biology teacher in his name that someone who thinks that his great-great-grandfather was a monkey apparently doesn’t get along with his old relatives. She was angry at me for saying this but in the end she excused me from the

evolution section of the test.

R’ Shia would tell us fascinating stories from Tanach, not as legends but as something which was noble, practical and obligated us. I began showing up in a skirt (the same old skirt which I found in the attic) every Shabbos. I learned the Alef-Beis and began to pray. Of course it was at the rate of a pre-1A child but surely these are the prayers that are beloved to Hashem (when else do we say Mo-deh Ani and Sh-e-ma so slowly and clearly)?

After six months, I began preparing for aliya. R’ Shia arranged for me to go with a group going to Beis Rifka in Kfar Chabad and he promised they would take care of me there.

The flight was very exciting. I looked at a map of Israel on the trip planner and remembered the stories from Tanach that I had

just learned – about Avrohom and the covenant in which he was promised the Land, about Kalev and Yehoshua who did not go along with the spies, about Moshe who yearned to enter the Land, and I was going there!

At the airport a van was waiting for us that took us to Beis Rifka. On the way we sang, “Dovid Melech Yisroel” and “Nyet, Nyet Nikavo.” Some laughed too much, some cried too much, and everybody was very excited.

## HISKASHRUS

Getting acclimated wasn’t easy. I was a sixteen year old girl without parents or relatives, in a new country with a new language and a different mentality, and there was so much to learn!

In Russia I had felt like a Rebbetzin just for wearing a skirt. In Israel they taught me that the



Lighting candles in a Chabad house in India (for illustration purposes)

***Until then, R' Gisser was the Rebbe to me but when I heard him talk about the Rebbe, I began to realize what was what.***

skirt had to be modest, and the sleeves too ...

In class I understood maybe a tenth of what was said, and certainly not the jokes or anything complicated. At night I would toss and turn. "Go back to Russia," said a voice within me. "It's hard being religious. Tell them you're not managing ... that you miss them ... you'll find a reason."

"But what about everything I learned? For half a year in Russia I did not touch milk and meat because it was treif. What was I being so careful about? So that I could throw it all away?"

I stayed.

Baruch Hashem there were lots of terrific people along the way like Mrs. Bravman who gave out cookies every night along with a smile and hot tea, or Mrs. Nessia Shneur who knew Russian

and helped me study for hard tests. There were wonderful women in the Kfar who loved me like a daughter. I would work for them so I would have some pocket money and they patiently taught me what every girl knows, how to fold laundry, wash dishes ... I remember Mrs. Chana Lebenhartz standing next to me lovingly and helping me iron.

On Shabbos and Yom Tov we would go to Nachala (Nachalat Har Chabad – Kiryat Malachi). The families welcomed us with open arms. They included: Zaklos, Kanelsky, Kubalkin, Friedland (till this day I am in touch with the mother), and many other wonderful people who donated gifts for the holidays etc.

One year on Sukkos I had a surprise. R' Shia Gisser arrived in Eretz Yisroel. He stayed in Kfar Chabad and during the hakafos I went to say hello. He was very happy to see that I was becoming more religious and he said it was all in the Rebbe's z'chus.

I went to the women's section to watch the hakafos. I'll never forget what I saw two hours later. It was a lesson in the shluchim's esteem of the Rebbe. R' Gisser drank a lot and he pointed at a picture of the Rebbe and shouted in a trembling voice, "When I look at the Rebbe's eyes I feel like a little dog in the garbage, so low, who will never understand

anything about a holy tzaddik, an angel of G-d! I can't even think what I am compared to him, ai, ai, ai." And he fell over, drunk and slept.

Until then, R' Gisser was the Rebbe to me but when I heard *him* talk about the Rebbe, I began to realize what was what.

**BRINGING LIGHT TO OTHERS**

I eventually changed my name from Svetlana to Sterna (since it sounded similar) and changed from a mekabel to a mashpia. When one of the Chernobyl girls would get angry and rebellious I would hug her and calm her down. On mitzvaim I was the one who approached immigrants who were thrilled that I addressed them in Russian, their language.

I got married at age twenty and today, I am a mother of six children, four girls and two boys. I encourage Russian women and take part in Mivtza Neshek. Sometimes one of my daughters goes along with me. For them it's a given that our job is to prepare the world for Geula; baruch Hashem, they were born into it.

When my children are one year old and they know only three words: Abba, Ima, and Rebbe, I kiss them and say, "You are right! It is thanks to the Rebbe and his shluchim that your Ima is here today!"



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# EDUCATION FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

By Sholom Ber Crombie

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

*If we want to stand on the frontline in the battle for Eretz Yisroel, we must concern ourselves with the matter of education.*

When the late Mr. Rechavam Ze'evi, may G-d avenge his blood, met with the Rebbe in 5750, he arrived ready and willing to hear what he should do in his role as a member of the Knesset to protect Eretz Yisroel. He stood before the Rebbe as a chassid asking for instructions. In his reply, the Rebbe said that he must disseminate Judaism. Surprisingly, what the Israeli government hadn't done yet was to make the *residents* of Eretz Yisroel into *b'nei* Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe continued to explain to Mr. Ze'evi what he meant: "Not just a physical settling there, but also a spiritual settling, to the point that everybody who sees them will recognize that they are born and raised in a land which is called "Eretz Yisroel" – because it is the *nachalas olam l'am olam* (the eternal inheritance for the eternal nation)."

Mr. Ze'evi *hy"d* didn't understand. He asked the Rebbe what he should do to protect Eretz Yisroel, yet the Rebbe spoke with him about education. The Rebbe

continued to speak with him about the need to reveal what is already there within every Jewish man, woman and child, adding that in children this is to be found in an even purer way, without politics and other things mixing in.

This is similar to what former Knesset Member Geula Cohen heard from the Rebbe in *yechidus*. The Rebbe asked her to be involved in education as an effective response to the planned withdrawals and uprooting of settlements. The Rebbe explained to her that the young people need a commander, as in the army, who will ensure their education and give them direction, which is of utmost importance.

It is well known that the Rebbe consistently and inextricably connects the integrity of Eretz Yisroel with Jewish education. Together with settling the hilltops, we must also provide essential Jewish education to all the youth of Eretz Yisroel. Establishing settlements is very important, and the Rebbe called on more than one occasion for the settlement of the

hilltops in the liberated territories – but this is not enough. Along with physical settlement, there must be spiritual settlement.

At the time, not everyone understood this. They thought that physical settlement would be sufficient. When the right-wing parties joined Israel's governments, the most coveted portfolio was the Ministry of Construction and Housing. The rightist politicians and other public officials developed the belief that as long as settlement continued vigorously, no government decision could stop it. In simple terms, "it wouldn't happen."

But in the end, their confidence quickly evaporated when a network of communities built over a period of thirty years was destroyed by a few bulldozers in just a week and a half. Suddenly, the reality of the Gush Katif situation had proven that this direction simply did not work.

## CHANGE CHANNELS

In the twenty years since that *yechidus* with Mr. Rechavam Ze'evi *hy"d*, we have gone through Oslo, Wye, two intifadas, and the devastating experience of the expulsion from Gush Katif and Northern Shomron. The right-wing has finally begun to understand where the root problem of withdrawals and concessions is

hidden. They must discard their old approach to taking action, and consider not only how to stop the problem from spreading, but how to solve it altogether. In short, they have to change channels regarding their activities, whether in spreading information or in politics.

When the current election campaign got underway, the right-of-center parties understood that things can't continue this way. The struggle for Eretz Yisroel has fallen to the lot of the knitted kippa community, while the power base of the religious right has continued to erode.

Even according to the current balance of power, it doesn't seem possible to save anything. Given the way things are, the only option is to make a complete re-appraisal of the situation: Why has the left been able to carry out such wide-ranging diplomatic initiatives from the opposition benches, to the point that everyone today speaks in the language of "Peace Now," while the right-wing scrambles defensively to protect against another disengagement and another withdrawal – while facing the possibility of no power of influence whatsoever in the near future, G-d forbid?

During the last parliamentary term, the Knesset members from the National Union and the National Religious Party sat by idly and their voice was scarcely heard. No one saw them in action, nor was anyone particularly waiting for them to come forward. Since the battle at Amona, they have retreated from taking any stand whatsoever. The National Union and the National Religious Party Knesset members have tried somewhat to heat up the battle for Eretz Yisroel on the issue of the outposts and Yerushalayim, and even Likud sounds far more nationalistic than they have ever been in the recent past.

Thus, after a delay of several decades, politicians have finally begun to internalize the close connection between education and the security of Eretz Yisroel. Slowly but surely, they've gotten the message that there must be a change in awareness, one that deals with the root of the problem and encompasses all sectors within the general public. With the passage of time, they have started speaking before right-wing organizations with a voice that is, perhaps, quite different than before. Instead of investing their energies in "face-to-face" campaigns against the next

***The Rebbe asked  
Knesset Member  
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expulsion, it's possible to get ahead of the game and thus prevent the Israeli left from infusing its ideas into the national fiber – and perhaps even present a true alternative.

This change had led to a mode of conduct that puts an emphasis on the subject of education, giving it the title "the need of the hour". In fact, several weeks ago, we received the blaring announcement of the emergence of a new right-wing party, "HaBayit HaYehudi" (the Jewish Home), which will place the matter of education at the top of its priorities. Its birth was difficult,

coming after exhausting election campaigns, flinging the right-wing between tumultuous and vacillating political agendas, with parties merging, splintering, and reuniting. At each turn, a new proclamation was issued, with the goal of captivating the masses, but nothing ever happened.

Then finally, this new initiative was accepted as a breath of fresh air. In a holiday atmosphere, everyone gave their blessing and even made an historic unification of all the right-wing parties, transforming them into one political entity. Even the party's new name, "HaBayit HaYehudi", was chosen with the feeling that the flag of Eretz Yisroel alone is not enough; it must indicate a vast change for the Israeli public.

**EDUCATION WITHOUT  
ERETZ YISROEL**

However, just as we thought that we were taking a new direction that would connect Jewish education to Eretz Yisroel in one leap, something suddenly went wrong along the way. A great and auspicious opportunity has been lost. Instead of establishing education as an essential matter to be properly internalized, the new party's leaders have preferred to use the issue merely as a means of self-adornment in their election material. Their public council began zigzagging, and with a sudden and unexpected step, it decided that instead of the two flags – Jewish education and Eretz Yisroel – proudly waving side by side, it would be preferable to fold up the flag on the struggle for Eretz Yisroel and remove it from the national agenda.

The distress signals had begun to flash when the party appointed Yehoshua Mor-Yosef to its advisory committee. Mor-Yosef had previously served as spokesman for the Yesha Council, but during the more crucial days of the struggle for Eretz Yisroel, he crossed the line and



became the spokesman for then-Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, who supported the Gush Katif expulsion. Known for his moderate approach, Mor-Yosef received the senior position of party spokesman, and his values became compromise and the integrity of his policies, distorted.

The next stage was the appointment of Professor Daniel Hershkowitz from the Technion in Haifa as party chairman. At his first press conference after accepting the new party's leadership, the professor declared that the party is not right-wing, and its members will be given freedom of action on diplomatic initiatives. He then surprised everyone by explaining that we live in a country of laws and that the High Court of Justice is 'a lamp unto our feet,' even if it makes occasional mistakes. "We must respect the decisions of the High Court of Justice," Professor Hershkowitz explained, as would any leftist, mentioning the declarations from the days of battle against the orange-shirted protesters who fought the disengagement.

A great hour of opportunity had been wasted. The insight regarding the need for genuine change in the national perception in Eretz Yisroel had suddenly been

exchanged for typical NRP sugary statements intended to charm the voters, but offer them nothing of substance. Instead of trying to present a viable alternative emphasizing that there's also another way, the new party preferred to utter pale leftist slogans and use the subject of education as a means of doing away with the battle for Greater Israel. Disgusting.

## THE BETTER ONES FOR EDUCATION

This farce of the "new-fangled" right-wing party is a warning signal for all Chabad chassidim. The holy words of the Rebbe live and exist forever, and it's not for naught that the Rebbe asked and pleaded on numerous occasions that the matter of educating Jewish children must be placed at the forefront. This is not meant as an election campaign slogan or as a proverbial fig leaf *ch"v*, but is the first and most essential subject on the level of its influence upon the Jewish People.

Today, everyone is wearing the hat of education. Barak, Livni, and Netanyahu, each one in turn, climbs the podium and sends flying a collection of pontification on the difficult situation in Israel's education. In general, such declarations go in one ear and out the other. Yet, this time, we should stop and relate to them more seriously. If the state of Israel's education is so problematic, then we possess the strength to change and repair it. And with whom did the Rebbe place the matter of educating the children of the Jewish People, if not with his chassidim and his shluchim?

The election campaign is a time for publicity and campaigning, and it is forbidden for us to waste the opportunity. If we want to stand on the frontline in the battle for Eretz Yisroel, we must concern ourselves with the matter of education. We must invest all our energies and vitality to present a viable Jewish alternative to the withering leftists who have forgotten the eternal values of the Jewish People, and instill true values within the children of Israel.



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# THE SUPERIORITY OF SELF-INSPIRED SELF-SACRIFICE

By Boruch Merkur

*Confronted with darkness and the concealment of G-dliness, especially being under the threat of vicious persecution, Jews are given the opportunity to transform this darkness to light by standing up to the challenge and being resolute in devotion to G-d's will. \* Tracing the Rebbe MH" M's instructions on how to perfect our Divine service in the Final Era.*

[Continued from Issue #671]

In the address the Rebbe delivered on Purim of 5748,<sup>83</sup> the emphasis is on self-motivated self-sacrifice for G-d as well as the unity that results when that goal is attained. The unity of the Jewish people, in turn, is the vehicle for utter unification with G-d, a manifestation of the very essence of G-d in the physical world, the goal of the Final Era.

## SELF-SACRIFICE AT SINAI

The Rebbe identifies two modes of self-sacrifice: one that is a result of G-d's initiative and the other that is a result of the person's initiative. In the first

mode, one is brought to a level of devotion to G-d to the point of self-sacrifice on account of a relationship initiated by G-d Himself. G-d overwhelms the Jew's perception of the world with Divine revelations – miracles, wonders, and mystical experiences – and the natural order, the illusion of a G-dless, natural world, fades into the background, replaced with the appreciation and experience of the reality of G-dliness. In such a heightened state of consciousness, every thought, speech, or action engaged is totally in line with G-d's will. Should that even entail giving up one's life for that end – that is of no consequence. The person is

only concerned with G-d's will, not his own. When G-d is revealed, when it is obvious that G-d is the true reality and we consciously perceive this reality, the natural result is love and total devotion to G-d, to the point of self-sacrifice.

The quintessential experience of this relationship with G-d, when G-d initiates and establishes the relationship, is the powerful G-dly revelation at Mount Sinai: "At the Giving of the Torah, [the self-sacrifice] was a result of the inspiration and revelation of love, etc, that came from above ("He overshadowed them with a mountain, [suspending it

over them] like a barrel”<sup>84</sup>), arousing the love and will of the Jews.”

### SELF-INSPIRED SELF-SACRIFICE

But many centuries later, in the time of the Purim story, Jews reached an even higher mode of self-sacrifice, self-sacrifice that is summoned from the person’s own volition, which reaches even higher, to the very essence of G-d:

“It is specifically the self-sacrifice of Purim (which the Jews achieved on their own [i.e., without inspiration from above]), self-sacrifice that surpasses reason and intellect, that precipitates a manifestation from above that is at a level that transcends all boundaries and division (of reason and intellect), stemming from G-d’s being and essence (where actual self-sacrifice reaches).<sup>85</sup> Indeed, this mode of self-sacrifice reaches higher than the height attained by means of the service of G-d (even self-sacrifice) that comes about after an arousal from below (like the self-sacrifice at the Giving of the Torah<sup>86</sup>). In comparison to this manifestation (that is drawn through the self-sacrifice of Purim), the revelation at the Giving of the Torah (which was a result of an arousal from above) is only called, ‘*heicheilu*,’ a beginning, ‘with respect to the manifestation of light drawn to them during Purim, which is called, “*V’Kibel* (received),” which is the conclusion.’”<sup>87</sup>

This superior mode of self-sacrifice that is connected with the very essence of G-d is achieved specifically through one’s own effort, as exemplified by the story of Purim:

“In the days of Purim, there was no arousal from above. In fact, there was a state of concealment (insofar as the miracle of Purim was invested in nature<sup>88</sup>), as it is written,<sup>89</sup> ‘I will surely hide my face on that day.’ The

self-sacrifice of the Jews was **of their own accord**; they were perfectly willing to have self-sacrifice. Notwithstanding Haman’s decree to kill all Jews, ‘from youth to the elderly, children and women,’<sup>90</sup> they all stood firm with actual self-sacrifice for the duration of the entire year<sup>91</sup> with a strong resolve not to compromise their religion in any manner, even on pain of death to them all, to the extent that ‘It did not occur to a single individual to entertain a foreign thought,<sup>92</sup> G-d forbid.’”



Painting by Zvi Malnovitzer

Confronted with darkness and the concealment of G-dliness, especially being under the threat of vicious persecution, Jews are given the opportunity to transform this darkness to light by standing up to the challenge and being resolute in devotion to G-d’s will. This self-inspired self-sacrifice connects us to G-d in such a perfect and complete manner that it makes the great manifestation of G-dliness associated with the Giving of the Torah appear as a mere beginning in comparison.

[To be continued, b’eZRas Hashem]

### NOTES:

<sup>83</sup> *Seifer HaSichos* 5748 pg. 292-305

<sup>84</sup> *Shabbos* 88a.

<sup>85</sup> *Shaarei Ora*, maamer beginning with “*V’Kibel*,” Ch. 8.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid* Ch. 30.

<sup>87</sup> *Torah Ohr* 99b, end ff.

<sup>88</sup> *Torah Ohr* 91a, 93a, Hosafos 116c.

<sup>89</sup> *VaYeilech* 31:18. See *Chulin* 139b.

<sup>90</sup> *Ester* 3:13.

<sup>91</sup> See Footnote 25 in the original.

<sup>92</sup> That is, not only a forbidden or vain thought, but even a positive thought that is considered a **foreign** thought when compared to the level of the *Yechida Sh’B’Nefesh*.



# PROVIDING SPIRITUAL ALIYA FOR RUSSIAN OLIM

By Nosson Avrohom

*Shaul Burstein's mother, a high ranking official in Russia's Department of Commerce, never revealed to her son that they were Jewish. It was only by accident that he discovered it. His search ultimately spurred him to create the Chabad Center for Immigrants in Chaifa.*

You may not know R' Shaul Burstein, there are thousands who do. He has to his credit dozens of brissin, bar mitzvos and weddings for Russian Jews, hundreds of people who began putting on t'fillin and who put up mezuzos, shiurim for men and women, youth programs, and the Tzivos Hashem club. It all adds up to thousands of people who began discovering their Jewish heritage thanks to R' Burstein's Chabad Center for Olim, which opened four years ago in Chaifa.

"People tend to think that Russian Jews are estranged from their Judaism, but this is a false stereotype. Although they are

usually intellectual, they are also filled with a strong sense of faith," says R' Shaul.

One of his fellow shluchim said, "He is a dynamic shliach. You see him all over the place. He operates in l'chat'chilla aribber mode, with lots of Chassidishe pride and belief in the Rebbe." R' Burstein has always been ambitious, and strives for seemingly unrealistic goals.

R' Burstein exhibits extreme devotion to all ages; adults, teens, children – everybody is included in his activities. He arranges t'fillos and shiurim for the adults, and organizes outings for the youth who attend shiurim and

activities. They visit holy sites in Tzfas and Yerushalayim, to strengthen their Jewish identity.

"I am working on getting a grant from one of the foundations for work with youth, so that I can double and triple the number of kids we work with." In the meantime, some boys have already switched to the Naaleh project in Kfar Citrin.

R' Burstein is identifiable in Chaifa thanks to the colorful Mitzva Tank that he drives from neighborhood to neighborhood.

## SEARCHING

R' Burstein was born and raised in the former Soviet Union. His early childhood years were spent moving from Czechoslovakia to Azerbaijan, and then Armenia. On account of his mother's high position in the Department of Commerce and Industry office, they had to move every few years. In 1976, the family moved to Belarus.

"When I was in eighth grade, I discovered marksmanship, a sport which was highly developed in Russia in those days. I tried it out and was highly successful at it, taking third place in this

prestigious sport.” In fact, one of the mekuravim at his center told me that R’ Burstein was one of the best marksmen in Russia and won many competitions.

In 1991, his parents sent him to a military dormitory, in which the future generation is trained as officers for the Russian army. He spent three years there, and then he studied another few years in the legal department of the military.

“Throughout this time I kept up with marksmanship. I had special permission to leave the base whenever there was a competition. Years later, when I entered the world of Chassidus, my experience in marksmanship taught me a lesson in avodas

Hashem. Just as the marksman has to fully concentrate on the target, we have to be completely focused on our shlichus to be mekarev Jews and hasten the Geula.”

His mother hid her Jewish identity for fear of losing her government job. The home in which he grew up had absolutely nothing Jewish about it, and he had absolutely no inkling of such a possibility. He heard for the first time about his Jewish origins from visiting relatives who had emigrated to the United States before he was born.

“During their visit, they spoke about their being Jewish. Since my mother couldn’t hide it anymore, she shared the secret

***“You see him all over the place. He operates in l’chat’chilla aribber mode, with lots of Chassidishe pride and belief in the Rebbe.”***

which she had kept for so long. I didn’t know a thing about



Judaism and mitzvos, but innocently telling my friends in the military dormitory was apparently reason enough to start suffering from discrimination. They had always been jealous of me for my excellence in marksmanship, and it was as though they had found a justification for their feelings.”

Along with the shock at the revelation, he realized what it was that had attracted him all along to pray to G-d every night. “Despite my ignorance of my Jewish identity and heritage, I would pray to Hashem every night before going to sleep, even when I didn’t know Him. While still a child and then later, when I served in the army, with an atheistic atmosphere all around me, I would pray that G-d forgive me for my sins and grant me happiness and satisfaction in life.”

His sister moved to Israel, to kibbutz Malkiya in the north, and

***“While still a child and then later, when I served in the army, with an atheistic atmosphere all around me, I would pray that G-d forgive me for my sins and grant me happiness and satisfaction in life.”***

he followed. His acclimatization to the kibbutz was far from ideal, and he decided to return to Belarus. He was greatly bothered by the lack of satisfactory answers to his many questions about Judaism. He saw that the shul on the kibbutz, where he hoped to hear answers, was under lock and key.

“I had an enormous and unexplainable thirst to hear about Judaism. Without knowing anything, I felt a soul connection which cannot be rationally explained. I felt that my neshama was longing for this.”

The second time he went to Israel, he did so with the rest of his family. They all arrived at the absorption center in Teveria. This time, he had to contend with the missionaries who swarmed all over the city and preyed on the immigrants’ ignorance.

“Opposite the absorption center there was a shul, and I observed festively dressed Jews coming out of there every Friday night. I realized that Friday has some significance, and without understanding why, I decided to dress up, too. One time, I saw all of them exiting the shul with books and looking skyward. I found that strange. Now I know that observing people sanctifying the new moon. There were many times I wanted to go in and make inquiries, but the language barrier stopped me. I simply had no way of communicating with them.

“Conversely, there were many people we thought were nice. They seemed to want to satisfy our desire to know about Judaism after years of being cut off, and they would visit every day and speak to us in our language. These were the conniving missionaries. From one of them I got a book and when I read it, it moved me. It explained how to

leave sin and love G-d. I innocently thought that this was just what I was looking for and that this was Jewish belief.

“Thank G-d, I had a feeling that I needed to talk to Jews with beards and kippos who seemed more authentic and reliable when it came to things Jewish. When I showed them the book and motioned to them that I wanted to know whether this is what they learned and represented, I was given an earful about how terrible this was. I wanted to be an authentic Jew, like I had heard about from my mother about my grandmothers.”

After a long time in Teveria, Shaul and his mother moved to Chaifa, where he began studying law in the University of Chaifa. At the same time, he continued his search for authentic Judaism.

“I wasn’t circumcised yet, and when I read in a book about the importance of bris mila, I didn’t hesitate. After doing my research, I went to the offices of Bris Yosef Yitzchok in Yerushalayim and asked for a bris. That day I also put on t’fillin for the first time in my life. I felt that I had taken another step in the direction of my fathers.”

Shaul began wearing a kippa every day and bravely started going to the Sefard shul in Neve Shaanan. His mother was surprised by his quick entry into Jewish life. The members of the Sefardic shul respected him. It wasn’t every day that a Russian Jew would join in their singing of piyutim with great enthusiasm. One day, he decided to stop working on Shabbos, and he informed his boss at the security firm he worked for at the time. The boss threatened to fire him, but then let him be. He started attending more shiurim, and he took it all in eagerly.



## MY MOTHER WAS TAKEN ABACK BY IT ALL

Shaul came to the Rebbe and Chabad serendipitously. One fine day he stood looking at the library in the shul and discovered, to his astonishment, a book in Russian. It was a Tanya. He had no idea what the book was about, but as it was in a language he could understand, he asked permission to borrow it. He was glued to it for months, until he had read it from beginning to end.

"I did not understand much of what I read," he admits, "but I felt that this book has a special light. I felt a need to seek out the movement that disseminated these books. At the university I had seen a picture of the Rebbe which said on it, 'The only solution – Moshiach ben Dovid.' The Rebbe's face greatly impressed me, and this also spurred me to check out what Lubavitch is all about.

"One Tishrei, in the shopping area on Rechov Hertzl, I met R' Yehoshua Aloni, who was in the process of becoming Chabad. We got into a discussion and he said,

'You have to get to know Chabad.' 'That's just what I want to know,' I replied, and I followed him into a Chabad shul. There I met Rabbi Menachem Mendel Wilschansky, the Chabad rosh yeshiva in Chaifa.

"He invited me to visit the yeshiva at the beginning of the semester, when the bachurim returned from 770. In the meantime, he invited me to a farbrengen in the sukka of Rabbi Leibel Schildkraut. On the one hand, I was surprised at the use of alcohol. On the other hand, I loved the openness and honesty of the main person who farbrenged, Rabbi Avrohom Lisson, who spoke in such a down-to-earth way.

"The rest is history. I dove into Chassidus and all my questions disappeared. At first I went to the yeshiva occasionally and learned with chavrusas, but I soon started going on a daily basis. I became a student there and dropped my university studies.

"My mother was in a state of shock. She found it hard to digest that I was dropping everything in order to learn Torah. She was

***"The missionary in charge came over to me and angrily said we had destroyed an entire day's work. He didn't know how happy I was to hear that..."***

worried that I wouldn't be able to support myself. I told her what R' Naftali Dagan (a Lubavitcher who helped me a lot when I was first becoming frum) had told me: 'How does a cat who goes about in the streets manage? Who feeds it? Hashem! He will take care of you, too!'

"While in yeshiva, I began working with immigrants at the t'fillin stand I set up. I convinced many of them to undergo a bris mila or a bar mitzva. I was very happy during this period of my life. I felt that I had finally found what I had been looking for. Chassidus was the answer."

## DOING SOMETHING BIG

Shaul got married five years ago. He and his wife (nee Marantz) decided to use the leadership abilities he acquired in the Russian army, his seriousness and his interest in activism for shlichus among the Russian Jews of Chaifa.

"Shortly after I got married, I wrote to the Rebbe and asked him to show me what my shlichus in life is. I opened to an amazing answer, in which the Rebbe wrote that every person has to work in his field of expertise and in the



The mekuravim involved in a chesed project

place where he is. Since I lived in Chaifa, I began working with the large community of Russian immigrants in Chaifa. It's sad to see how shluchim go to the CIS, even to places with small communities, and they invest so much, building buildings, while here in Eretz Yisroel there are over a million Jews from the CIS who are largely ignored. The result is that they are more likely to be approached by missionaries than by Chabad.

"With the Rebbe's bracha I

***A group of drunken goyim attacked them with clubs and bottles. His friend managed to get away, but Mordechai was badly hurt and taken to the hospital more dead than alive...***

decided to do something big, not just another project but something l'chat'chilla aribber. I took the money that we got on the birth of our first child, emptied out all our savings, and bought a place facing the Chabad yeshiva. I named it the 'Chabad Center for Russian Immigrants.' The first group consisted of students from Petersburg, who were connected with Chabad over there and were happy to help a new center.

"Our circle of influence

widened and the number of members grew. At our first minyan I discovered that most of the men were uncircumcised. Today they are all circumcised and dozens more have joined them. We see a tremendous interest to connect to our tradition.

"Many of my congregants told me that they had hoped a center like this for immigrants would be built. They felt they couldn't enter just any shul and become part of a k'hilla whose mentality was different. They were thrilled that a center where Russian speaking Jews could feel at home had been started, and they intended to do whatever they could to make it successful.

"People began growing beards and regularly wearing kippas. We started holding large gatherings in order to raise awareness of our work. We were surprised to see hundreds of people attending each gathering! We also started running an annual camp, and had regular programming every day of the week for youth. Many of the parents want their children to connect to their Jewish roots but don't know how to go about it. We became their surrogates.

"I recently opened to a bracha from the Rebbe to put up a building, and I decided the time has come. From the very start I have thought that we must open schools for the children of mekuravim. We have to walk a fine line – to provide them with a Jewish education without losing the individual attention.

"The center I started opposite the Chabad yeshiva was already too small for all the people who came to daven and for shiurim. I found a spacious place in the center of town and we are now in the process of renting it. This is only a transitional building. Soon we're going to move into a bigger

building which I am in the midst of negotiating. There I plan to open a school for immigrants, a preschool, a shul and a community center for all our activities."

One of the strong points of R' Burstein's work is his personal connection with his people. In his k'hilla, they all feel like one family. When they recently moved from one building to the other, they all pitched in. Each person used his skills and profession to help with renovating the building.

"It was a moving scene. It emphasized to me how they all feel connected. After all is said and done, that is our uniqueness as a people. The Jewish people were able to prevail in strange lands because of our sense of mutual responsibility, and there is no reason why it shouldn't be the same in Eretz Yisroel. Many of the recent immigrants come from communities that were well established, mainly by the shluchim. When they come here, there is no one to continue working with them."

## **MEDICAL MIRACLE**

"There is a man in our k'hilla by the name of Mordechai Morzanov (Nikolai). He was the lawyer of the shliach in Kiev, R' Asman, and he even learned in the yeshiva that was started there. He was very proud of being Jewish.

"One night, while in Kiev, he went for a walk with a friend. Unlike many other Jews, who are afraid of anti-Semitism, he left his kippa on. When they walked through an underground walkway, a group of drunken goyim attacked them with clubs and bottles. His friend managed to get away, but Mordechai was badly hurt and taken to the hospital more dead than alive.

"The Ukrainian doctors threw

“From the Levenstein hospital he was transferred to the Graf Hospital in Chaifa for terminally ill patients, most of them quite elderly. When I heard this story from R’ Asman, we decided we had to help him. I began to visit him, to put on t’fillin and talk with him. One day, when I went to his mother’s house, I was surprised to see that there was no

“Shortly after I put up a mezuzah in his room, his memory, which had vanished, began to return. In the meantime, he underwent some operations to stabilize his condition. He had one more operation on his head to undergo. A few weeks ago he joined our k’hilla on the trip that we made to Tzfas, and even immersed in the Ari’s mikva. All the doctors who see his file consider him a medical miracle.”

“During the Second Lebanon War, practically the only ones who remained in Chaifa were the immigrants. The old-time residents fled to their families in the center of the country. We decided to visit the bomb shelters, where we found many frightened immigrants. I noticed that the missionaries had been there ahead of us and had flooded all the

“Not long ago, I got a call from one the mekuravim letting me know that an entire bus of missionaries had come to the market and they were giving out their material to passersby. We immediately went over there with a Mitzva Tank, which has a powerful loudspeaker on the roof. We denounced them in several languages. When they saw that they were unsuccessful, they boarded the bus and drove to the center of the city. There they tried again, but we followed them and ruined their plans once again. The missionary in charge came over to me and angrily said we had destroyed an entire day’s work. He didn’t know how happy I was to hear that.”





## NOT JUST INTELLECTUALS

R' Burstein considers working with the youth, the next generation, of supreme importance. Nearly every week they celebrate another boy's bar mitzva. These events are particularly moving for him and the entire community, after years under communist rule which forbade such things.

"A few months ago, I noticed someone peeking in the door a few times and disappearing. I went out after her and saw a woman and her son. I asked her what she wanted. At first she was embarrassed to say, but when I pressed her, she told me she wanted to honor her grandfather's wishes and celebrate her son's bar mitzva, but she had never been in a shul and didn't know what to do. Today, that boy is an member

of our youth club.

"There was another story that moved the entire community. A Georgian woman came wanting to celebrate her son's bar mitzva, but she didn't even want to pay the token fee that pays for refreshments for the crowd. That seemed rather tightfisted, but I decided to forgo payment anyway.

"One day, when she came with her son so he could prepare for his big day, I asked her about her husband. She was frightened by the question and said that if he called, we shouldn't tell him they were with us.

"The day of the bar mitzva arrived, and she didn't stop crying throughout the event. When it was all over, she told me that her husband wasn't Jewish and had adamantly refused to celebrate his son's bar mitzva. When she insisted, he said that he would not give her a cent towards it. I cried too.

"In addition to bar mitzva celebrations and the Tzivos Hashem club which many children participate in, the center has weekly activities for dozens of teenagers who go on trips with a spiritual dimension in the north and to Yerushalayim.

"They are more open on the outings, and it's an opportunity to instill some Judaism. They usually have a bit of a hard time adjusting to anything, and they don't necessarily get the loving attention that they need from their parents, because their parents are busy working and trying to manage. In order to attract as many boys as possible, we combine it with the study of martial arts."

"Many immigrants from the CIS aren't Jewish. The gentile men and women do not enter our shul to daven or attend classes. They understand on their own

## CIRCUMCIZING THE PROBLEM

R' Shaul Burstein is a familiar face at Bris Yosef Yitzchok because he has sent them dozens 'customers.' He has great powers of persuasion with people of all ages, convincing them to undergo a bris.

"I don't convince them," says R' Shaul surprisingly. "Convincing doesn't help here. I talk to a Jew with Jewish feeling and explain the importance of a bris, make an appointment, and tell him that I'm going with him. In my experience, when you start explaining it intellectually, it doesn't work. He ends up vacillating and it drags on. Since this is not something rational, you have to establish it as a fact and that's that!"

R' Burstein has many stories about bris mila.

"We had someone named Ariel in our k'hilla. He went back to Moscow and became part of the Marina Roscha community. He was a very famous artist in Russia and had a gallery on Arbat Street, a tourist attraction known for its exclusive artistic boutiques. Many art lovers from all over the world visit that street. His business thrived.

"After he had visited and been involved in our k'hilla for some time, I asked him straight out whether he had a bris. He said he did not. I began urging him to have one done, but he kept pushing me off, finally telling me that he could not be circumcised because of a medical problem he suffered from a robbery incident in Moscow some time back.

"Hoodlums had pounced on him in the doorway of his home, robbed him and then beat him until he lost consciousness. I told Dr. Tchechaskes, who worked at that time in Bris Yosef Yitzchok, about his medical problem. He confirmed that it was a real problem, but said he should come for an examination anyway. We went and the doctor treated him. It was only when he finished that he told the man that he was now circumcised!

"He was very nervous, since doctors had warned him against this, but amazingly, when he went for an exam at the Elisha hospital in Chaifa, the doctor asked him how it was that the problem he had suffered from had disappeared!

"Apparently, because of the complexity of the operation, the doctors preferred leaving the problem as it was and giving him medication. That is, until Dr. Tchechaskes helped him! The problem from which he had suffered for years was cured thanks to bris mila."

that it's not for them. The problem is mainly with the children. We do not want to exclude the non-Jews, for they often help bring the Jewish children. Four Jewish girls came to our programming thanks to a gentile boy, and there are many such instances. I asked Rabbi Moshe Landau what to do. I told him that they all come to a class on self defense and then we sit down to learn. I teach the Jews Torah and the goyim, the Seven Noachide Laws. I bought all the books on the topic and I get into it with them. Rabbi Landau said there was no problem with this."

"Though Russian Jews are typically intellectuals, they are people of strong emotion. When the Rebbe Rayatz had to leave Russia, he wrote that he found it painful because there were Jews there with feeling and simple faith. Even for those who perceive themselves as rationalists, it's not hard to grasp the Rebbe's greatness and to understand that every word the Rebbe says is precise. The shiurim that I give a few times a week enable them to understand Geula."

"The k'hilla is growing practically from one day to the next. We already have two minyanim, one made up entirely of baalei t'shuva. People are interested and this itself is a sign of Geula."



Rabbi Burstein, a sandek at a bris of a mekurav

## IN EVERY CITY – A SHLIACH TO WORK WITH IMMIGRANTS

R' Burstein would like this article to end with a call to Chassidim who came from the former Soviet Union to get involved and work with Russian immigrants.

"In the Ukraine and Russia the shluchim have built an empire. In Eretz Yisroel, though, we are asleep. There are many immigrants who would love to learn, but there aren't enough shluchim to work with them. There ought to be shluchim in

every city in Israel whose job it is to work with immigrants. We are losing an entire aliya to assimilation.

"Just yesterday, an older man came into the center. He seemed far from religious observance. He came in with his son and grandson, and surprised me by asking to say Kaddish Yasom for his dear ones. A few times he broke down during the Kaddish. People are ashamed to admit that they are ignorant. Let's light one spark after another until they become one large torch with the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH"M."

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# NO MATTER HOW YOU SLICE IT, IT COMES UP ‘EXILE’

By Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Mayzlesh, Shliach, Mexico City, Mexico

Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

*Even with all the tremendously positive publicity on the holy work of Chabad, etc., demonstrating amazing unity, none of this provides us with any sense of satisfaction whatsoever. We are simply unwilling to accept any respite or calm. We are shocked and broken by the very fact that despite all this, we are still in exile!*

The horrific tragedy that took place on the 28th of MarCheshvan in the Chabad House of Bombay, India, was an event filled with contradictions. The greatest heights and the lowest depths converged, ripping away at us without mercy. They tore out our very souls with afflictions that know no boundaries, stemming from a strange and frightening arousal of misfortune within the spiritual realms.

The events of the 28th of MarCheshvan sent shock waves throughout the Jewish People and the entire world. It led to an overall

awakening of incredible dimensions on various levels of both a general and a specific nature. It succeeded in reaching the innermost point of the heart within us all, leading as a natural result to what is one of the highest levels of Jewish unity our generation has ever known.

No sectors, no groups, no parties, no cultures – but all Jews as one man with one heart. Amazing!

This event also led to a sanctification of G-d’s Name and a sanctification of the great name of Chabad chassidus for the holy work and self-sacrifice of the shluchim.

Indeed, the possibility and opportunity for publicity, spiritual awakening, and unity was positively tremendous. Amazing!

**But, on the other hand...**

The terrible pain stands out with greater emphasis and force at all the well-known levels of “world, year, and soul”.

**World** – the event took place right in the Chabad House. A house with the Rebbe’s holy name upon it was destroyed and demolished by the savagery of man in a most frightful manner, covered with blood, fire, and pillars of smoke.

**Soul** – the Rebbe’s shliach together with his wife, the shlucha, who dedicated their whole lives to the Jewish People – and “a person’s shliach is considered as the person himself” – were murdered in an act of unspeakable cruelty, together with their four holy and pure friends!

**Year** – the incident happened immediately **after the conclusion of the International Shluchim Conference!** The bitter news came to us on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, in the midst of the day marking the beginning of the month of Redemption! And all this happened during the period regarding which



the Rebbe proclaimed, “The time of your Redemption has arrived,” the period of “they will beat their swords into plowshares,” etc.

How could this have happened? What is going on?

The **house** that is the source of assistance, encouragement, and safety from all physical and spiritual harm; the safest **person**, “shluchim in the fulfillment of a mitzva are never harmed”; the **days** filled with the very essence of the announcement of the Redemption – have seemingly been desecrated and covered with the blood and tears of grief and sorrow.

Could the aforementioned positive aspects (the resulting unity, publicity, etc.) constitute even a modicum of consolation over the agonizing loss, anguish, shame and humiliation that cries out from this episode?

We are torn asunder with deep inner afflictions of the soul. But while we are simply not ready to diminish anything from our intense feelings of pain over this tremendous chillul Hashem, neither are we prepared to ignore the fact that there was also an equal dimension of Kiddush Hashem in connection with the holy work of Chabad.

Granted, we are not able to concentrate with any sense of joy or pleasure on the amazingly positive aspects to this event, as would be the case if this were the result of a truly positive occurrence, for example, if all the publicity and Kiddush Hashem were to have stemmed from the miraculous and unnatural rescue of the shluchim and the others inside the Chabad House!

The fulfillment and inspiration from this positive awakening is tempered by intensive spiritual suffering. The pain and anguish is only slightly concealed by the covering of publicity and

admiration. And we remain utterly bewildered...

In the kuntres of Purim Katan 5752, the maamer of “V’Ata T’tzavei,” the last discourse that the Rebbe distributed individually to each of us, the Rebbe explains the quality and necessity in connecting to the leader of the generation. He brings in great detail how the concept of the nasi in each generation and thereby the *hiskashrus* to him is expressed in a matter unique to that generation, as expressed by the leader of the

***We must understand and instill within ourselves that the exile in whatever form (even when it seems to be wrapped in holiness) is something unnatural and repulsive!***

generation and for which he bestows strength.

As is further explained in the maamer, our *hiskashrus* to the nasi of the generation derives from the concept that each and every one of us must be shocked by the very fact that we are still in exile.

Furthermore, as the Rebbe emphasizes in a most innovative matter (*ibid.*, from sec. 9), even when we are in a state of material abundance, and even when there is also plenty in the spiritual sense,

nevertheless, inasmuch as we are still in exile despite all this prosperity, we are unable to enjoy any of this material and spiritual wealth. On the contrary, as is written there, we are “*izetreislt*” – shocked, “*kasis*” – crushed, from the very fact that we are still in exile! This matter gives us no rest (and surely no enjoyment).

**We must understand and instill within ourselves that the exile in whatever form (even when it seems to be wrapped in holiness) is something unnatural and repulsive!**

Thus, it is possible that from these seemingly confusing and frustrating spiritual problems, we can derive at least one point:

Even with all the tremendously positive publicity on the holy work of Chabad, etc., demonstrating amazing unity, none of this provides us with any sense of satisfaction whatsoever. We are simply unwilling to accept any respite or calm. We are shocked and broken by the very fact that despite all this, we are still in exile!

Yes, even after all the tremendous spiritual elevations, the exile is still something unnatural and repulsive! Exile in any form, even in the most lofty, is the most searing desecration of G-d’s Name imaginable!

By its very essence, exile is a desecration of the Chabad House! It constitutes disgrace and affliction for the shliach! It causes shame and humiliation to the month of Redemption (Kislev)! It’s a tremendous feeling of lost opportunity from the Shluchim Conference! Can it be that with all our avoda, we have still failed to bring the actual revelation of Melech HaMoshiach and the Redemption? Short of achieving this objective, all of our avoda has gone “in vain and for nothing” and represents a desecration of the

entire Torah (just as there actually was *r"l* in the case of the desecration of the Torah scroll).

Furthermore, and most important, every day that the Redemption delays in coming represents a desecration and humiliation of the holy words of the leader of the generation, who proclaimed that "The time of the Redemption has already come and *Hineh Zeh Melech Moshiach Ba!*," as he asked to be publicized to the entire generation!

During the farbrengen of Yud Kislev 5740, the Rebbe made reference to the concept of the length of the exile, saying with great anguish:

"If we had been so privileged, the Redemption would have come immediately during the time of Yaakov Avinu, when Yaakov Avinu was already prepared for the Redemption. But in fact, the "angels" got involved... and announced that Eisav is not ready for the Redemption, and therefore, Yaakov and his sons still have to remain stuck in exile... something that simply cannot be understood!"

That's not the way it was with the Yaakov (the nasi) of our generation!

When Yaakov, the leader of the generation, proclaims the world is ready, "the avoda of shlichus has been completed and there remains only to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu in actual deed," "the time of the Redemption has [already] come" – the "angels" of our generation, who



are specifically the "shluchim," will surely not look to blame the delay on the failings of "Eisav," nor will they look for advantages in continuing the exile, rather we will all proclaim clearly: The world is ready, everything is ready!

Nothing is lacking in the avoda of shlichus with the further diffusion of Chabad Houses and their holy work among the Jewish People, nor in the publicity of their holy work, and surely not in the publicity of the aforementioned proclamation that **the entire Jewish People are ready for the Redemption!**

We don't need any external difficulties or afflictions to remind

us that we need the Redemption, for even with all the material abundance and spiritual blessings that have been bestowed upon us and which will surely continue, we are unwilling to satisfy our thirst for the Redemption, and in the language of the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, all of us are "*tzetreisl't*" – shocked, "*kasis*" – crushed, from the very fact that the Redemption has not yet come in actual deed, and this feeling and recognition penetrates the heart of our friends and supporters, as we all wait impatiently and with complete confidence for "*Hineh Zeh Melech Moshiach Ba!*" – NOW!



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