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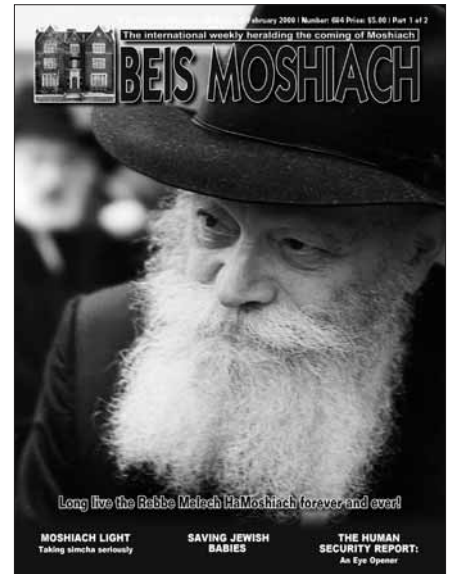
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THE SERVANT THAT'S FREE

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

There are three categories of Torah law. Following the revelation at Sinai, the Torah enumerates the Mishpatim, the laws of daily life. The surface reason is that even common-sense laws, such as do not steal, are Divine and must be obeyed not because they are rational, but because G-d gave them. But the law of the Hebrew slave is unique, thereby indicating the inner connection between Sinai and civil law. The three types of servants correspond to three levels of Divine service.

The Torah portion begins with the words: “*V'eileh ha'mishpatim* – these are the ordinances which you shall set before them – *ki tikneh eved Ivri* – If you buy a Hebrew servant, six year shall he serve, and in the seventh he shall go free . . .” Thus, immediately after the revelation on Mount Sinai, the Torah enumerates the code of civil and criminal laws.

Generally speaking, there are three categories of Torah law: *Chukim*, *Eidus* and *Mishpatim*. *Chukim* are laws that have no apparent rational basis, but are simply Divine Decrees. Keeping Kosher belongs to the category of *Chukim*. There is no logical reason to keep the laws of kashrus; we do so because G-d – the King – commanded the Jewish people to eat only certain animals. By obeying the commandment, we strengthen our relationship with

G-d. *Eidus* are laws that are not intuitively obvious, but are testimonials to events in Jewish history and G-d's Divine Providence. Passover, which commemorates the Exodus, is in the category of *Eidus*. Finally there are *Mishpatim* – rational laws of civilization. These laws, such as do not murder or returning a lost object, are basic to human interaction. Even if G-d had not commanded us to have a properly balanced scale when doing business or had not warned us not to steal, we would recognize that society needs such regulations to function. Since *Mishpatim* – ordinances – are the most common and most easily understood, at first glance it seems to make more sense to start with the *Chukim*. After the lofty spiritual inspiration associated with Sinai and the Ten Commandments, why begin with the mundane laws of everyday life?

On the simplest level, we can say that the proximity of the *Mishpatim* – the rational laws concerning the conduct of everyday life – follow the revelation at Sinai to tell us that even these are G-d given. We obey them not because they make sense and serve as the basis for civilization, but because they are Divinely ordained. They have the same status as *Chukim* and *Eidus*; they are part and parcel of our relationship with G-d.

This structure anticipates the time of the final Redemption. One might think that there is no correspondence between religious obligations and laws of society. Kashrus and Passover belong to the realm of ritual – our duties to G-d, while the laws of theft or the Hebrew slave are societal regulations. Thus we might think that some laws of the Torah are less eternal than

others, less spiritually inspired. Therefore, when Moshiach comes, the “eyes of flesh” will see and the “whole world will be filled with knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed.” This means that the G-dliness within the so-called ordinary and everyday – the G-dliness within those actions governed by the *Mishpatim* – will be visible and obvious. The level of spiritual awareness and elevation achieved at Sinai will penetrate to and be revealed within the most mundane of activities. There will be no distinction between the so-called secular and the religious – between the civil and criminal codes of *Mishpatim*, and the ritual, sacred laws of the *Chukim* and Eidus. Just as the *Mishpatim* were given at Sinai, so too in the times of Moshiach G-d’s Presence will be perceived in the “acts of goodness and kindness” between people.

This conclusion is reinforced when we address a rather obvious question: why does the Torah reading begin with those rules governing a Hebrew slave? If we want to emphasize that G-d’s commands apply to the mundane, we would expect the first *Mishpatim* to concern activities that occur every day. Acquisition of a Hebrew slave was an extraordinary event. In fact, a Jew could become a slave only if he couldn’t pay his debts. A thief unable to make restitution was sold into servitude, so that his labor would pay back the value of the theft. At the very least, then, the Torah reading should have begun with the laws of theft, which logically precede the laws of servitude. And if for some reason the Torah reading had to begin with the conditions and duration of slavery, at least it could have begun with the more common situation of the Canaanite slave.

However, there is something unique about the laws of a Hebrew slave. This uniqueness has an important lesson for the times of Moshiach. A Hebrew slave who, after six years, refuses to leave his master, is punished by having his ear pierced. As Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai comments: “This ear that heard on Sinai, ‘thou shalt not steal,’ yet he went and stole – let it be pierced. This ear that heard on Sinai, ‘unto Me the children of Israel are servants,’ yet he acquired a master for himself, let it be pierced.”

Precisely and only the law of the Hebrew slave – the eved Ivri – demonstrates the inner connection between Sinai and the *Mishpatim*, the laws of civility and society. In general, the Torah does not emphasize a particular connection between the mitzva and its reward or punishment. For example, the reward for honoring one’s parents is long life. Longevity and honor are not inherently dependent on each other. Similarly, corporal punishment – lashes – has no specific connection to the transgression in question. But in the case of the Hebrew slave, the Torah does connect the punishment with its cause. The ear that heard is pierced. At Sinai the ear of

this Jew heard “don’t steal;” at Sinai the ear of this Jew heard that the Jewish people are G-d’s servants. It is this ear that is punished. Therefore the laws of the Hebrew servant are not secular or mundane. They are from Sinai. And so with all similar laws, all *Mishpatim* – all laws of human conduct are from Sinai. This fact, alluded to in the structure of this week’s Torah reading, will be evident to all with the coming of Moshiach, when “the eyes of flesh will see.”

The law of the Hebrew slave has an inner meaning, an immediate lesson for us, as we prepare the world to greet Moshiach. The purpose of the Torah and mitzvos given at Sinai is to purify and refine the material aspects of the world, transforming the material realm into a dwelling place for G-d. Thus, in the first law after Sinai – the law of the Hebrew slave – we see how we can bring about that transformation and the revelation of Moshiach.

Chassidus explains that there are three levels of servitude: the Canaanite slave, the Hebrew slave, and the Hebrew maidservant. Each corresponds to a level of our Divine service. A “Canaanite slave” is under the jurisdiction of his animal soul and his physical desires. But he forces himself to serve G-d, refraining from violating the positive and negative commandments because he fears his Master.

The “Hebrew slave” (spiritually speaking) is on a higher level: The Divine soul illuminates the animal soul, so that it too longs for G-dliness. True, he has not yet transformed it, but at least the transient pleasures have lost their allure. (This parallels the role of the male slave: he brings into the house the necessities for eating and drinking; but this raw material is not yet fit for human consumption. They are not cooked and have not yet left their previous existence.) In a spiritual sense, the “Hebrew slave” has begun to change his nature and the world around him.

The “Hebrew maidservant” (again, a metaphor for a level of Divine service) has transformed her desires and animal attributes into holiness. [In parallel with the above analogy, the maidservant transforms the raw material into something edible, cooking, baking and otherwise preparing the food.]

Thus the *Mishpatim* begin with the laws of the Hebrew slave. The process of transforming the world – the purpose of the revelation at Sinai – starts with illuminating the animal soul and our material environment, changing them and bringing them under the jurisdiction of holiness. What follows, when “all the buttons are polished,” is the level of the “Hebrew maidservant,” the level of Redemption and Moshiach, when there will be a total transformation and the world openly becomes a dwelling place for G-dliness.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 16, pp. 251-257)

LEGAL LOGIC, FUELED BY FAITH

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik, District Rav Bat Chefer – Emek Chefer

*We don't believe in tzaddikim because they are like our ATM for brachos. Our belief in tzaddikim is derived from the Torah, which says, "And they believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant." It is emuna which is derived from fulfilling a G-dly command. * A fascinating look at the parsha from the perspective of Chazal, Kabbala and Chabad Chassidus*

It's surprising that when discussing Parshas Mishpatim, which focuses mainly on the many civil laws that address man's actions vis-à-vis his fellow, the Rebbe emphasizes the connection between man and G-d: man's deepest connection, which is through his belief in the Master of the universe.

The Rebbe draws our attention to two short inyanim, from the beginning and the end of the parsha, that deal with supra-rational belief.

We will preface with two stories that express the mighty power of emuna.

STORY 1: A BOY, A GIRL, A PIT AND A WEASEL

In the tractate Taanis (and in the Aruch – a work from the period of

the early Rishonim) an amazing story is told about the power of emuna. A young girl fell into a deep pit and could not get out. Her life was in danger and she cried out for help. After a long time, a young man heard her and ran to the pit and extricated her.

They both rejoiced and at this moving moment they promised one another that they would marry. Since there were no witnesses present to their oath, they declared that the pit and a weasel passing by would be their witnesses. They then parted ways.

The girl remained loyal to her promise and waited, but the boy forgot his promise. He married someone else and had two sons. Later, two terrible tragedies took place. The older child was bitten and

killed by a weasel and the younger child fell into a pit and died.

His wife insisted that they investigate the reason for these unusual deaths. It was then that the man remembered his promise to the girl and told his wife about it. Hearing this, his wife said, "If that's the case, we must divorce and you should marry the girl you saved."

That's what they did. They divorced, he married the girl he saved, and they went on to raise a wonderful family.

The Gemara says, "If this is what happens for someone who believes in a pit and a weasel, all the more so for one who believes in Hashem!"

With the power of emuna, two children died by means of the weasel and pit and with the power of emuna a new family and life were built. Emuna breathes life into the world.

STORY 2: THE FAMINE AND CRISIS IN THE TIME OF ELISHA

There was an unbearable famine in Shomron in the days of Elisha. Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, besieged Shomron with his huge army and there was no food to eat. The situation was so desperate that people considered eating their children's flesh, as Seifer Melachim relates. Items that in normal circumstances would be considered inedible, like dove's dung, were being sold for five pieces of silver.

In this atmosphere of despair, Elisha announced, “At this time tomorrow, a measure of fine flour will sell for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Shomron.” His prophecy was fulfilled, while an officer who did not believe the prophet and questioned the validity of his words, was trampled to death.

It was the power of emuna in the prophecy which led to the nation’s salvation.

THE BEGINNING AND END OF PARSHAS MISHPATIM

Now for the Rebbe’s teachings on the parsha: “And these are the laws which you shall place before them.”

Rashi says that even if you know that the gentile courts have the same law as the Torah, do not go to a gentile court. Why? If the gentile court has the same law, what logic is there in rejecting them? But that’s the way it is; emuna in Hashem and following His commands, even if they are not reasonable to us, supersedes rational laws.

The end of the parsha also deals with emuna. The parsha ends with the proclamation made by the Jewish people expressing their complete faith, “Whatever Hashem says, we will do and will obey.” They

accepted Hashem’s Torah without checking it out first.

Interestingly, this parsha, which is full of civil laws such as those pertaining to an employer and his employees, the obligations of someone who watches an item for you, etc. begins and ends with these lofty ideas: the sanctity of a Jewish court, emuna and kabbalas ol.

This is the outlook expected of a Jew. Whatever he does – whether in the fulfillment of Torah and mitzvos or in mundane everyday matters – must be with belief in Hashem and the desire to fulfill His shlichus. Man’s life, health, livelihood and all he has, are sustained by his emuna. A Jew’s belief and trust in Hashem is the very force which sustains all of existence.

GENUINE AND SIMPLE FAITH

Emuna is a lofty matter and is not at all rational. When a sick person listens to his doctor and refrains from eating certain food, or he takes medication even when he doesn’t understand how it works and doesn’t see the connection between it and his earache, this is not called “belief in a doctor.” Rather, he is relying on the doctor’s knowledge! The doctor knows from experience that the tablet will relieve his pain and attack the bacteria.

That’s not what a Jew’s emuna in Hashem is like.

A Jew doesn’t merely keep Kosher, because Hashem is the creator of the world and with His

knowledge, He is pointing us towards food that is healthy. This is not pure faith but a rational approach to mitzvos.

A Jew’s faith in Hashem is wholehearted and simple, not because obeying Hashem is a recipe for success. Simple faith is doing what Hashem says because this is what He commanded – period. Not for any other reason. We don’t believe in tzaddikim because they are like our ATM for brachos. Our belief in tzaddikim is derived from the Torah, which says, “And they believed in Hashem and in

Moshe His servant.” It is emuna which is derived from fulfilling a G-dly command.

Therefore, our belief in the Besuras Ha’Geula is rock solid. Even when we’re deep in a black pit, the Creator hears our cries and comes to our rescue in the blink of an eye. It is specifically out of the depths of the darkness of galus, when the opposition to holiness is so powerful, that the Geula comes like the blink of an eye, “and you will be gathered one by one etc.”

We all need to strengthen our emuna in the Geula, for this is the key to hastening it speedily in our days, now.



IN THE BUSINESS... OF MIVTZAIM

By S. Malachi

Pinchas Reichstrovsky runs a real estate firm but his office is only a cover for his real work, brokering between Jews and their father in Heaven, spreading the wellsprings and B'suras HaGeula.

INSEPARABLE PART

The light turned red and the traffic on 5642 Street stopped, giving me pause to contemplate the significance of the street name, 5642 commemorating the first wave of aliya in 1882. From the window of the bus, I see sooty buildings and advertisements – a typical city street scene. But something stands out among the ads – a picture on a yellow background with the words: Boruch HaBa Melech HaMoshiach, proudly announcing to all that Moshiach is already here.

Behind the sign is the Marina real estate office, owned by Pinchas Reichstrovsky. His ads, emblazoned with the yellow Moshiach flag, are indicative that the ultimate wave in aliya, the imminent Geula, is definitely an inseparable part of this business.

Brochures on various Jewish

topics are prominently displayed in the office. Further inside, behind the office staff, sits Pinchas in his modest office. To his right and behind him are pictures of the Rebbe and on the desk are t'fillin and a pushka. To his left is a library, an intriguing mix of accounting and business books mingled with Jewish tomes. It's a typical director's office – for one who is running a Chassidishe business.

THERE IS A REBBE IN NEW YORK

Pinchas' story begins in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, where he was born into a traditional family. Judaism was never foreign to Pinchas. His father would even take him to shul occasionally.

Pinchas had even heard of the Rebbe back then, under the Soviet boot. A Jewish woman had returned from a visit to New York

and shared an amazing story about the incredible fulfillment of a prophetic blessing she had received from the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

In 5750 (1990) Pinchas and his family made aliya. They settled in Ramat Eliyahu, where he became acquainted with the shliach, Rabbi Chanan Kochonovsky. With his winning smile and pleasant personality, R' Chanan showed Pinchas the light of Torah and Chassidus, step by step.

Pinchas moved to Rishon L'Tziyon and opened an office on Rechov Hertzl. He soon discovered that the office across the way was run by a Lubavitcher, R' Avrohom Nathan. It seemed that the Rebbe continued to accompany him wherever he went.

RETURNING THE HEART OF THE FATHERS

Pinchas didn't find his journey towards a religious life an easy one.

"The hardest thing was to stop smoking on Shabbos," he said. "A friend told me, 'If you want to stop smoking, say l'chaim.' 'But then I'll want to smoke more,' I protested. He countered, 'So take more l'chaim...'"



Last Tishrei in 770 with a group of visitors led by Rabbi Mamon.

The possibility of another trip this year did not even cross his mind... until he opened to a letter in the Igros Kodesh which said: I looked for you in Tishrei but did not see you.



Pinchas began attending the Shabbos farbrengens at the Chabad house, and what the angel Michael cannot accomplish, a farbrengen can accomplish... Whether it was the l'chaim or the Chassidus, somehow or other Pinchas had the strength to withstand the test.

Pinchas continued to increase his religious observance while keeping up a correspondence with the Rebbe. A decisive factor in his spiritual journey was his oldest son, who had started attending the children's programming at the Chabad house. The prophetic verse, "and the heart of the fathers will be returned through the children" was fulfilled, and the entire family became religious.

Pinchas runs his life simply, in accordance with the horaos of the Rebbe and his mashpia. He writes to the Rebbe about everything.

Last year he flew to 770 to celebrate his son's bar mitzva. The possibility of another trip this year did not even cross his mind... until he opened to a letter in the Igros Kodesh which said: I looked for you in Tishrei but did



Moshiach sign in the window

not see you.

As an obedient Chassid, Pinchas brought two tickets, for his son and himself, and went to the Rebbe for Tishrei. Before he left, he collected letters for the Rebbe from all his acquaintances. When he arrived in 770 he opened a volume of Igros Kodesh to a letter which spoke about the need to help the Jews from Russia with Ahavas Yisroel. He took it to heart.

CORPORATE CHABAD HOUSE

Pinchas runs a real estate firm, but his office is only an excuse for his real work, brokering between the material and the spiritual, between Jews and their father in Heaven. Pinchas' real estate office is, for all intents and purposes, a Chabad house. The "Boruch HaBa" sign in the window informs passersby that inside they can get information on Jewish matters. People come in to put on t'fillin, listen to a d'var Torah or seek counsel or a

bracha from the Rebbe. Many of the people who walk in want to write to the Rebbe. In many instances, Pinchas refers them to the shliach, Rabbi Yitzchok Gruzman, so they keep up the connection. One thing is certain; whoever walks into Pinchas' office learns that there is a Rebbe in the world.

During the course of the interview with *Beis Moshiach*, someone walked in to the office to speak with R' Pinchas and was asked, "Chaim, have you written to the Rebbe yet?"

Before Yomim Tovim there is plenty of work to be done – mishloach manot, shmura matzos, etc. On Chanuka, Pinchas installs a large menorah outside his office and lights it every night with the passersby.

Mivtzaim are a family affair, with his sons putting t'fillin on with store owners and his wife going to a nearby old-age home to light candles with the senior citizens.

IGROS KODESH FOR EVERY CUSTOMER

Those who buy or sell homes through his office enjoy outstanding service – and not only from the material point of view. Pinchas gives every client a volume of Igros Kodesh. He relates the following story:

"One day, an older man from Tel Aviv came in. He wanted to sell his apartment, and I was able to help him with that. He had been planning to go back to Tel Aviv by taxi, but I offered to drive him. On the way we got into a fascinating discussion. It turned out that the man had seen the Rebbe several times. He even produced pins with the Rebbe's picture on them.

Pinchas gave the man a volume of Igros Kodesh, never dreaming of the wonderful gift he would receive in exchange. When they arrived in Tel Aviv, the man gave Pinchas a pin with the Rebbe's picture and a set of old Gemaras from the year 5624 (1864), which he had inherited from his father.

THE DVAR MALCHUS – STRENGTH FOR THE WEEK

Among biggest beneficiaries of the spirit with which Pinchas runs this office are the loyal employees. They get a taste of the light of Chassidus, along with the opportunity to do mitzvos.

One such employee is Yosef. Yosef wasn't opposed to putting on t'fillin, but he didn't have his own pair. Pinchas gave him a pair of t'fillin on his parents' yahrtzait and he committed to put them on daily. Ever since, Yosef leaves the house only after putting on t'fillin and reciting T'hillim.

Another case in point is Boris. Boris, who is an elderly man, just



Pinchas asks Chaim – Did you write to the Rebbe?

had a bris. This was not an overnight decision. What tipped the scales for him was the sichos of the Rebbe.

“When I learned the sichos of the Rebbe with Boris, about how precious the mitzva of mila is, he decided to go ahead and do it,”

says Pinchas.

Pinchas’ continual enthusiasm to spread the wellsprings stems from the weekly shiur in D’var Malchus, the Rebbe’s sichos of 5751-5752. The shiur takes place every Thursday night at the nearby Chabad house, with shliach Rabbi Pinchas Mamon.

“When I learn the weekly D’var Malchus, it gives me the strength for the week,” Pinchas affirms.

Pinchas sees the combining of material and spiritual, business and mitvtzaim, as something natural:

“The Rebbe teaches us that every Jew is an intermediary between Hashem and materiality, between the neshama and the body, between holiness and physicality. Along the way, you get some ‘knocks’ here and there, but in the end you do the work, and bring about the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH”M.”

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VOWS: TO KEEP OR NOT TO KEEP

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

Before too long, the Rebbe appeared in a dream again. He spread his tallis over the boy's head and said to her, "This is my child and he must learn in a Chabad yeshiva."

Shluchim often find themselves in a position where they are forced to deal with vows of various kinds. One of the unofficial jobs of a shliach is to listen when people tell them of vows they have made and which they want annulled.

Sometimes we do *Hataras Nedarim*, while other times we have to explain that it is preferable that they keep their vow, since this is their halachic obligation. As shluchim, people come to us to annul vows not only Erev Rosh HaShana but throughout the year.

In the Rebbe's sichos, he explains that when a Jew makes a vow in order to sanctify himself, he has the ability to go to a Chacham (rav) who will raise him to a higher level, so that he doesn't need the vow anymore. The rav can consequently annul the vow.

THIS CAN'T BE ANNULLED

Two years ago, I was walking down the street when a local youth approached and asked to speak to

me. He wanted to have his vow annulled and he agreed to wait until I got two more men. When I stipulated that he had to disclose what the vow was, he was no longer eager to follow through and he said, "I'll have to rethink it."

A week later he came to my home. He told me that he used a certain drug occasionally "to achieve serenity and for a spiritual high," as he put it. He wanted to wean himself off of it and had therefore made a vow that he wouldn't touch drugs. Now he wanted to annul his vow, since he might use drugs here and there, and at least he shouldn't have the additional sin of breaking his vow.

I explained to him that according to halacha, a vow like this could not be annulled. It was preferable that he be careful to fulfill it (I had already looked into this topic a few years earlier, when a woman from Beit Shaan had vowed to wear modest clothing and then she wanted to wear pants again).

The young man began to argue with me, saying I had to annul his

vow since he was definitely going to fail to keep it and then (so he threatened) the sin would be mine since I hadn't annulled it for him. To calm him down, I called a rav to confirm my assertion. When the young man heard that the rav also said not to annul it, he unhappily left.

Two months later, as I was walking down the street one evening, a car sped by, then stopped with a screech of the brakes. The car reversed and the young man got out.

"You see," he remonstrated, "I told you I had to have the vow annulled. I use drugs occasionally and now I have the sin of the broken vow. A pity you didn't annul it back then..."

I told him that I hoped he would be able to stand strong, and we parted ways.

On Chol HaMoed Pesach of last year, two guests came for Shacharis. After the davening, they requested to do *Hataras Nedarim*. We checked whether this can be done on Chol HaMoed and then the first young man was asked to state what his vow was. He hesitantly said that he had vowed not to do a certain sin anymore and now he wanted to annul this vow.

We gently explained to him that this vow could not be annulled and he had to keep it.

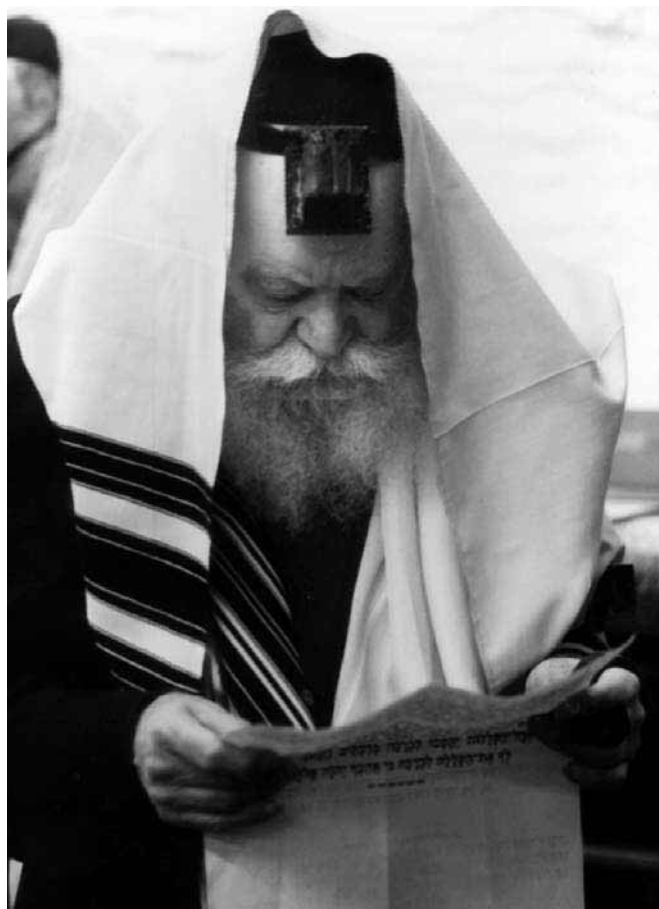
THE FATHER'S ANNULMENT

One of the mekuravim of the Chabad house approached me at an event to discuss the following incident:

As you know, my daughter is about to get married. Recently, on a visit to her in-laws home, they had a fight and she vowed that she wouldn't step foot in their house again. A week later she had calmed down and wanted to go to their house. The question is, does she need to have her vow annulled or can I, as her father, annul it?

An experienced rav who heard about this assured the father that the vow was cancelled since the father had cancelled it on "the day he heard it."

I checked out the Halacha and learned that the father can only cancel his daughter's vow if she is 12 years old, as it says, "in her **youth**, in her father's house." I called the father and invited him and his daughter to come to my house, and together with two other rabbanim, we did Hataras Nedarim.



The Rebbe at Hataras Nedarim

INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE REBBE

This final story is not about a promise, not a vow, but emphasizes the necessity to keep these, as well. I heard this story from Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Volosov, shliach and rav of Ramat Yishai.

Rabbi Volosov has known Mrs. K, who lives in the north, for over twenty years. She had a number of daughters and really wanted a son. She flew to the United States and stood on line for 'dollars.' When it was her turn, she made her request and received the Rebbe's bracha. She had a son shortly thereafter, followed by two more daughters. There was no question in whose merit these children had been born, and Mrs. K. would say, "These are the Rebbe's children and they will be raised solely in the ways of the Rebbe and Chassidus."

When the children grew older, she registered them in a Chabad school in her city. The school subsequently closed, and she transferred her children to another religious school.

One day, she called R' Volosov in a panic and told him that the previous night, she had dreamt that the Rebbe came to her house, put his hand on her son's head and said to her, "This is my child. He must learn in a Chabad school." R' Volosov reminded her that the Rebbe "was right," and the children were switched to Chabad schools in the area.

When the boy graduated Talmud Torah, his mother registered him in a Sefardic yeshiva. Before too long, the Rebbe appeared in a dream again. He spread his tallis over the boy's head and said to her, "This is my child and he must learn in a Chabad yeshiva." After briefly consulting with R' Volosov, he was registered in a Chabad yeshiva near his home.

When her daughter finished high school, they forgot the instructions again and registered her in a religious, though not Lubavitch, seminary somewhere up north. Then a shidduch was suggested, an excellent bachur from a Litvish yeshiva in Yerushalayim. They checked him out and were very seriously considering him until... the Rebbe came with a tallis and said, "This is my child. She must marry a Lubavitcher bachur."

R' Volosov told her to recheck all the details of the suggestion, and after a few days, Mrs. K called to say that the proposition had been dropped.

That day, a few hours later, Mrs. K called again to say that another shidduch had come up, this time with a Lubavitcher bachur. We don't know whether the bachur knew how closely the girl and her family were being guided by the Rebbe, but it wasn't long before they were engaged.

The Rebbe helped the mother keep her promise to raise her children solely in the way of the Rebbe and Chassidus.

THE HUMAN SECURITY REPORT: AN EYE OPENER

By Prof. Shimon Silman, RYAL Institute and Touro College

The Report states: “Most forms of political violence have declined significantly since the end of the Cold War – and finds that the best explanation for this decline is the huge upsurge of conflict prevention, resolution and peace building activities that were spearheaded by the United Nations in the aftermath of the Cold War,” and this is exactly how the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach described the Swords Into Plowshares phenomenon in the sicha.

Seventeen years ago this week, the week of Parshas Mishpatim, the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach announced that the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah that the nations of the world will “beat their swords into plowshares” had begun to be fulfilled. This began with the meeting of the heads of state and foreign ministers of all the member states of the U.N. Security Council, at the U.N. building in New York

(the first such meeting ever) at which they made a declaration to the effect that a new era in international relations would begin in which armaments will be reduced and military resources transformed into peaceful uses. It would be an era of “peace and unity, joint efforts and mutual assistance among the nations of the world, for the good of all mankind.”¹

Now we can look back over the past seventeen years and ask ourselves, “Do we see a different world, a better world, a more peaceful world?” Well, if we read the newspapers and listen to the news, we hear a lot about war and terrorism. But the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach told us to open our eyes to see the Geula. This may involve more than just reading the newspapers. But, on the other hand, the Swords Into Plowshares phenomenon, as described in the famous sicha of Parshas Mishpatim, was something that was clear and obvious if one just took a careful look at world events. So, perhaps we are missing something even when we do read the newspapers.

On October 17, 2005, the Human Security Center issued the 2005 “*Human Security Report: War and Peace in the 21st Century*” (published by Oxford

University Press). Funded by five governments² and three years in the making, the *Report* tracks and analyzes trends in political violence around the world. "Its findings are sharply at odds with conventional wisdom. It shows that most forms of political violence have declined significantly since the end of the Cold War – and finds that the best explanation for this decline is the huge upsurge of conflict prevention, resolution and peace building activities that were spearheaded by the United Nations in the aftermath of the Cold War," according to the Human Security Center's own description. And this is exactly how the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach described the Swords Into Plowshares phenomenon in the sicha.

I must admit that I too was worried

about the wars and their

ramifications for the Geula, but

when I read the Human

Security Report I felt a sense

of exhilaration. The Rebbe

Melech HaMoshiach tells

us to open our eyes and

we think it means

something mystical.

Sometimes all it means

is to look beneath the

surface. Read the right

reports. Get the right

information. The

following is a summary

and analysis of the report:

The post World War II

era witnessed an

extraordinary increase in the

number of wars, most of them

civil wars. This was followed by a

steep decline in warfare after the end of

the Cold War –around the time of the

"Swords Into Plowshares" declaration.

There are two key questions to be asked: 1) How do we explain the decline in the use of force in relations *between* states and 2) What brought about the decline in wars *within* states? Strangely, neither of these important trends has been the subject of much scholarly investigation. Scholars have generally been more interested in explaining the causes of war than the causes of peace. This is particularly true with respect to the remarkable post Cold War decline in civil wars.

Much of the research on the causes of international peace over the past 20 years has used

large datasets and statistical inference models to examine the "correlates of war" – the economic, political, and sociological factors associated with interstate war – and peace. This research points to a number of long-term global trends that are associated with reduced risks of international conflict:

*A dramatic increase in the number of democracies.

*An increase in economic interdependence.

*A decline in the economic utility of war.

*Government participation in international organizations that encourage the peaceful settlement of disputes.

While these factors are associated with reduced conflict, further analysis is required to

determine if they are the causes of

peace or the results of the peace.

Which is the cause and which is

the effect?

The report suggests

some possible reasons for

the dramatic decrease in

wars in this era. One of

them is that the end of

the Cold War removed a

major cause of armed

conflict from the

international system.

Approximately one-

third of all wars in the

post World War II period

had been driven wholly, or

in part, by the geopolitics of

the Cold War. The end of the

political confrontation between

East and West in the late 1980s

not only removed the only real threat

of war between the major powers, but also

meant that Washington and Moscow stopped

supporting 'proxy wars' in the developing world.

Denied the external assistance that had long

sustained them, many of these conflicts simply

petered out, or were ended by negotiated settlements.

Furthermore, the end of the Cold War was

followed by a sudden increase of international

activism directed toward stopping ongoing wars and

preventing wars that had ended from starting up

again. The greatly increased involvement by

governments in international organizations, which

play an important role in building global norms that

encourage the peaceful settlement of disputes, has

helped reduce the incidence of conflict. This little



analyzed but critically important development, the report says, appears to offer the most compelling explanation for the steep decline in warfare, starting in 1992.

But then the report goes on to give a different explanation which is along the lines of the explanation given by the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach in the sicha.

THE POWER OF IDEAS: A WAR AVERSE WORLD

A quite different explanation for the decline in interstate war stresses neither the role of liberal economic and political institutions, nor military deterrence, but a gradual normative shift against the use of violence in human relationships. Among the key indicators of this general shift in attitude that the report mentions are the outlawing of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. These antiviolence norms play an important role in constraining behavior. They also help in the creation of laws and institutions – which in turn can provide the monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to help encourage compliance.

Nowhere is this normative shift more evident than in changing public attitudes toward war. Prior

to the 20th century, warfare was a normal part of human existence. For governments, war was simply an instrument of statecraft. Today the forcible acquisition of territory is universally perceived as a blatant transgression of international law, and resort to force against another

country is only permissible in self-defense, or with the sanction of the UN Security Council.

There has been a similar change in attitudes to colonialism. While colonial subjugation is now universally abhorred, such conquests were once accepted as a normal part of empire and were often depicted as morally justified, in that they brought the benefits of civilization to the colonized. Ideologies that glorify violence and see war as a noble and virtuous endeavor are today notable mostly by their absence. Insofar as similar ideologies still exist they are mainly found not in governments but in small, fanatical, terrorist organizations, such as those associated with al-Qaeda. In addition, the sort of hyper-nationalism that drove Nazi German and Imperial Japanese aggression in the 1930s and 1940s is now extremely rare. Some scholars argue that the rise of war-averse sentiment in the industrialized countries has been the critical factor in the worldwide decline in international war. The reason that liberal democracies live in peace, according to this view, is not because they have democratic modes of

government, but because their leaders and peoples have become more averse to war.

From this perspective, interdependence and the growth of membership in international organizations are the *result* of the peace achieved by increased war-aversion, not the cause of the peace.

THE RISE AND FALL OF CIVIL WAR

Until now we have been discussing international conflicts. But the decline in civil wars immediately after the Swords Into Plowshares declaration was even more sudden and more dramatic. The number of civil wars taking place around the world initially increased after World War II – from 2 in 1946 to 25 in 1991. Prior to World War II the maximum number of civil wars in the world in any one year had never exceeded 10. As the graph shows, the escalation in the number of civil wars from 1946 to 1991 was the largest in the entire 1816 to 2002 period. This increase was due mainly to the rise in Cold War related conflicts and to struggles for control over the new states created by the end of colonialism.

But the decline in the number of civil wars that began after 1992 was steeper than the considerable increase from 1946 to 1992. In just 10 years, the number of civil wars fell by 80%!

THE HUMAN SECURITY BRIEF

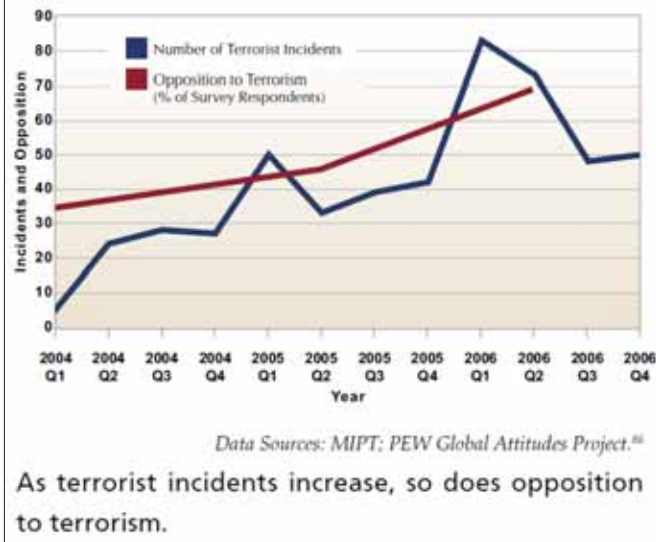
The Human Security Report has been updated annually since it was originally released by the Human Security Briefs of 2006 and 2007. Again and again they were surprised that the shift from militarism towards peaceful relations – Swords Into Plowshares – continues year after year. While this may not be obvious to one who follows the news, it is absolutely clear once all the data is collected.

The 2007 Human Security Brief (published in 2008) focuses on three areas: 1) Global terrorism, 2) Armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa and 3) Armed conflicts globally. In each of these areas there has – surprisingly – been a decrease.³

THE DECLINE IN TERRORISM

We first consider global terrorism which, of course, is the issue of greatest concern. Careful analysis of the data shows that the global death toll from terrorism has fallen. This decrease is surprising because the consensus among Western experts has been that the threat of terrorism, particularly Islamist terrorism, has been increasing since the September 11 al-Qaeda attack on the U.S. This was the view held by the 2006 and 2007 US National Intelligence

Figure 1.4 Pakistan: Terrorist Attacks and Public Opinion, 2004-2006



There is overwhelming evidence to indicate that the more the Islamists attempt to impose their extremist ideologies and their harshly repressive policies on other Muslims, and the more violence they perpetrate against their coreligionists, the more they lose support in the Muslim world.

Estimates, by a 2007 survey of 100 foreign policy and security experts published in the US journal Foreign Policy, by a 2007 report on the terrorist threat to Europe from the director of the UK's Security Service, and by a 2008 report from the official US National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC).

But the reason these organizations consider terrorism to have increased is because they include in their data attacks against civilians by armed groups in Iraq. The Human security Brief points out, however, that this is incorrect since these attacks in Iraq are part of the civil war going on there and thus are not part of what is generally considered "terrorism." Once the attacks in the civil war in Iraq are removed, the data shows a net decline of more than 40% in deaths from terrorism since 2001.

(Also, the civil war in Iraq has greatly subsided since 2007, so even if that data is included, reports issued by the NCTC at the end of 2007 and in 2008 show a 40% decrease in deaths from

terrorism between July and September of 2007, and a further decrease of 20% between October and December of that year.)

Another report, published by The US based Intelcenter think tank in mid-2007, examined the 63 "most significant" attacks launched by al-Qaeda and its affiliates over a period of nearly 10 years.

The study included the major attacks most associated with Islamist terrorism – those in Bali, London, Madrid, Amman, and Jakarta, as well as 9/11 in the U.S. It did not include civil wars. They found that by mid-2007 the *number* of Islamist

attacks around the world had declined by 65% from the high point in 2004, and that *fatalities* from such attacks had declined by more than 90%.

In other words, the fall in Islamist terrorist violence has been remarkable. But can it be expected to continue? According to the Human Security Brief, not only has Islamic terrorism decreased, but also the *threat* of terrorism has diminished. They give three reasons for this:

1. Counterterrorism efforts are more widespread, more coordinated, and more effective today than they were prior to 9/11,
2. Their global network has broken down and there is infighting within and defections from the terrorist groups and
3. There has been an extraordinary drop in support for Islamist terror organizations in the Muslim world over the past five years.

The last factor is of particular interest. There is overwhelming evidence to indicate that the more the Islamists attempt to impose their extremist ideologies and their harshly repressive policies on other Muslims, and the more violence they perpetrate against their coreligionists, the more they lose support in the Muslim world. By late 2007, in Afghanistan, just 1% of Afghans "strongly supported" the presence of the Taliban and foreign jihadi fighters in their country. In Pakistan, which is considered the world's "crossroads of terror," support for Islamist political parties has collapsed – dropping by some 500% between the 2002 and 2008 national elections. And in the North-West Frontier Province where al-

Qaeda has its strongest presence in Pakistan, support for Osama bin Laden dropped from 70% in August 2007 to 4% in January 2008.

Yet we still feel the pain of the terrorist murder of the Chabad *shluchim*, Rabbi Gavriel and Rivka Holtzberg in Mumbai, India in November, 2008. This attack originated in Pakistan.

Historical evidence suggests that terrorist campaigns that lose public support will, sooner or later, be either abandoned or defeated. As Muslim populations increasingly reject Islamist policies and terror tactics, they are more likely to cooperate with official counter-terror campaigns. This is precisely what happened in Iraq, where Sunni insurgents became so alienated from their former al-Qaeda allies within Iraq, that they joined with the US in an anti-Islamist alliance to defeat them.

The number of armed conflicts being fought in the [sub-Saharan] region fell by more than half. The number of people being killed dropped even more steeply – by 2006 the annual battle death toll was just 2% of that of 1999.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

American news organizations don't report very much about conflicts in Africa,⁴ except for the major ones such as the conflict in Darfour. However, even after the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach's Swords Into Plowshares declaration of 1992 – as late as 1999 – sub-Saharan Africa was the world's most war-afflicted region, with a battle death toll that was greater than the rest of the world's combined. As reported in the *Economist*, "From north to south, east to west, large swathes of the continent are at war."⁵

But after 1999, sub-Saharan Africa's security landscape was dramatically transformed. The Human Security Brief of 2007 documents the decline in wars during the years 1999-2006. The number of armed conflicts being fought in the region fell by more than half. The number of people being killed dropped even

more steeply – by 2006 the annual battle death toll was just 2% of that of 1999.

This was not the only positive change. Conflicts are conventionally defined as armed confrontations between one government and another government, or between a government and an insurgent group. But this definition – one used by almost all of the major conflict datasets – completely ignores communal and other "non-state" conflicts, those in which a government is not one of the warring parties. To address this omission, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) created a new non-state conflict dataset for the Human Security Report Project (HSRP) that has revealed just how important this previously uncounted category of conflict is – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2002 there were 26 of these non-state conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa – twice as many as those in which a government was one of the warring parties. But in this category, too, there has been a sharp decline in both conflict numbers and death tolls since 2002. Between 2002 and 2006 non-state conflict numbers had dropped by more than half across the region, and their death tolls had fallen by some 70%.

Violent campaigns waged against defenseless civilians by governments or rebel groups constitute a third type of political violence. Once again, we find a positive change taking place in recent years. Between 2002 and 2006 the number of campaigns of "one-sided violence" against civilians fell by two-thirds, and their death tolls fell by more than 80%.

Sub-Sahara African governments have also been highly vulnerable to coups d'état in the past. Indeed, the region has suffered almost half of the world's coups since 1946. But here, too, there has been a positive change. The average number of coups per year since 2000 has been some 40% lower than in the 1980s – the peak decade for coups in the region.

So what happened to bring about such a dramatic reduction in wars in this region? The Human Security Brief analyzes this, first attempting a conventional explanation:

"The most robust finding on the causes of war by researchers is that the higher the per capita income a country enjoys, the lower its risk of armed conflict. This is why most wars take place in very poor countries. The evidence for this war-poverty association is overwhelming.

"But while economic growth is clearly associated with reductions in the incidence of both conflicts and coups over the long term, it cannot explain the steep recent decline in the number of armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2000, income levels have

not risen high enough, or over a long enough period, to explain the reduction in new outbreaks of conflict. This is also true of all the other “structural” explanations that researchers have focused on.... The explanation for the radical improvement in sub-Saharan Africa’s security climate in the new millennium must lie elsewhere.”

Then what is the real explanation?

“The HSRP’s research suggests that the drivers of this remarkable decline in armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa are to be found not in long-term structural change, but in the post-Cold War surge of policy initiatives designed to stop wars (“peacemaking”) or prevent them from starting again (“postconflict peacebuilding”)....These peacemaking and postconflict peacebuilding initiatives – which include third party mediation efforts to end ongoing conflicts, humanitarian missions, and peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations – have all greatly increased in number since 1990.”

In other words, it was the new drive for “peace and unity, joint efforts and mutual assistance among the nations of the world, for the good of all mankind,” as described by the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach in the sicha on the Swords Into Plowshares declaration.

CONCLUSION – THE STATE OF HUMAN SECURITY

The Human Security Report 2005 found that armed conflicts involving a government as one of the warring parties had declined by more than 40% around the world from the end of the Cold War to 2003. The most severe conflicts – and the number of genocides – had declined by some 80%. Coup d’état numbers were down by 60 % from the high point in 1963.

The Report also found that the number of battle deaths in state-based armed conflicts had declined even more steeply than the conflict numbers – though over a much longer period. The average number of battle deaths per conflict per year – the best measure

of the deadliness of warfare – had fallen from 38,000 in 1950, to just 600 in 2002. By 2006 the estimated global battle death toll had declined further, but only very slightly.

The HSRP now has five years of data on “non-state” conflicts – those fought between communal or rebel groups or warlords, but in which the government is not a warring party. Five years is long enough to detect trends, and they now report that worldwide, non-state conflict numbers have undergone a marked and consistent decline since data were first collected in 2002. In fact, they declined by a third – from 36 to 24 – between 2002 and 2006. Reported battle deaths from these conflicts declined by 60% over the same period. Much of this global reduction in the number of non-state conflicts and associated fatalities has been driven by the improvements in sub-Saharan Africa.

When we look at the combined global total of state-based and non-state conflicts, we find that there has been an 18% decline – from 68 in 2002, to 56 in 2006.

A third type of political violence involves deadly campaigns against defenseless civilians. Campaigns of “one-sided violence” – which can be perpetrated by either governments or non-state armed groups – often take place during civil wars, with sub-Saharan Africa having the lion’s share. Campaigns of one-sided violence, like armed conflicts, have to result in at least 25 fatalities a year to be counted as such. In 1989 there were 19 such campaigns, but their number grew unevenly throughout the 1990’s – lending support to the view that targeting civilians had become an increasingly prevalent element of the post-Cold War security landscape. In 2004, the peak year, 38 campaigns of one-sided violence were being perpetrated around the world, but since then there has been a sharp drop. In 2006 there were just 26 – a net decline of 32% from 2004.

Let’s open our eyes. See the Geula. Believe in its immediate completion.

In honor of the chasuna of the author’s daughter, Yisroel and Chanie Mogilevsky, on Tuesday, 23 Shvat.

¹ Sicha of Parshas Mishpatim, 5752. Seifer HaSichos 5752, vol. 2, p. 362

² The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade; the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation; the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs; and the British Department for International

Development.

³ The content of this section is based on, and quoted from, the Overview of the Human Security Brief 2007, www.humansecuritybrief.info/access.html

⁴ The BBC, however, frequently has reports on them.

⁵ “Africa’s Wars,” The Economist, 14 January 1999,

SAVING JEWISH BABIES

By Ofra Badosa

I never knew what lay in store for me at the hospital, but I did know that if I went with a positive attitude, whatever I said would have more of an impact. It was important to me to make people happy and so I made sure to bring along lots of simcha. * The inspirational story of Miriam Kirschenbaum, who was named for her midwife and follows in the footsteps of the first Jewish midwife in saving the lives of Jewish babies.

Miriam Kirschenbaum has been unceasingly involved in preventing abortions for thirteen years now. Her goal is to prevent as many abortions as she can and her method is anything that works. Speaking to her, it became apparent that this is no nine-to-five job, but an around the clock affair. During our interview, every few minutes she had to stop to take care of something. The phone rang nonstop, and in between questions and answers, she arranged a meeting with a woman who was planning to have an abortion and found a sandek for twins who were born a few days

earlier. The energy with which she approached each task made it obvious that she's a woman who achieves her goals, with Hashem's help.

Tell me how you got involved in this work.

First, I am named for Miriam the Prophetess. She and her mother were the first to endanger their lives so that Jewish children would continue to live. My mother a"h gave birth to me in Hadassah – Har HaTzofim. My parents were still new immigrants. My father had gone to fight in the Sinai and my mother didn't know a word of Hebrew. After the birth, the

midwife said in French, "You have given birth to a sweet baby girl. Which do you prefer – to name her for the hospital or for me?" The midwife's name was Miriam and my mother liked the name. Thus, I came to be named Miriam.

My volunteer work began with going to carry out the Rebbe's mitzvaim. Once a week I went with a friend to the maternity ward in order to encourage the women there. I never knew what lay in store for me at the hospital, but I did know that if I went with a positive attitude, whatever I said would have more of an impact. It was important to me to make people happy and so I made sure to bring along lots of simcha.

Each woman was an entire world to us. We listened closely to whatever they wanted to tell us and they often shared very personal things with us. The sensitive time immediately after giving birth opens the door to connecting on a whole different level. We would give them Shir LaMaalos cards, suggest that they buy a letter in a Torah scroll for the baby, speak about lighting Shabbos candles and, if there were no guests around, we would discuss the topic of family purity. After we left, we often received phone calls from women who wanted to continue the connection with us, and we helped them out as needed.

These mitzvot continued for about two years, until my children were grown. I found myself with free time on my hands and began to look for something else to do, something which would be both satisfying and enable me to contribute.

I grew up in a home of lots of chesed. That is what I saw, and I wanted to give. I began volunteering to accompany women giving birth and at the nursery in a hospital in the center of the country. One day, I heard that the hospital had outpatient clinics where abortions were done. Curious as to what went on there, I entered the building and followed the signs to a long hall with two benches at the end, on which sat about ten women and girls.

After a bit of inquiry, I learned that two or three times a week, numerous women and girls presented themselves before a committee, seeking approval for an abortion. I couldn't believe my eyes. The line seemed so innocent, but they were really on the way to the slaughterhouse.

One woman, who looked like she was in her seventh month, sat and read a newspaper. Another woman was a young, thin soldier who sat on a big army backpack. Next to her paced a woman who looked obviously agitated.

Every few minutes a woman left a room holding a folded form with a sentence for life or death. What shocked me the most was that opposite them, on a nearly identical bench, sat

women who were waiting to see a fertility specialist!

I could not understand all these women who wanted to end their pregnancies, and decided I had to do something about it.

Is it so easy to get approved for an abortion in Israel?

Yes. The woman sees the committee, which consists of a doctor and a social worker. It's enough to show that the fetus has a problem or that you have a physical or mental condition that does not allow you to care for the baby. For 200 shekel one can get a letter from a psychiatrist attesting that she has a mental problem.

The committee approves abortions up to the 24th week, which is already the sixth month of pregnancy! If a woman is further along and she still wants an abortion, doctors in a private clinic are willing to do an abortion for fees of up to 15,000 shekel, even if there is a real risk for the woman.

This is horrifying!

After a woman is approved by the committee, she merely needs to do a series of exams and make an appointment for an abortion.

We often hear the word but don't know how it's done. What happens is the doctor injects a saline solution into the fetus' heart and kills it. The woman is then induced and she gives birth to a dead baby.

In the case where I get to a woman who already aborted, if the baby made it

to the fifth month, I ask her permission to give the baby a Jewish burial and if it's a boy, to have him circumcised. I explain that they owe it to the fetus to do what needs to be done to allow the neshama to rest in



Gan Eden.

After what Miriam saw in the outpatient clinics, she realized she had to take action. A week later, she was standing and waiting for the women who had come out after seeing the committee. From the forms they carried, she could determine the fetus' sentence – a white form with a pink paper inside..

How can you speak to a woman about this – isn't it an invasion of her privacy?

It's not easy and often, when I face a woman, I have no idea where the right words will come from. You need a lot of *siyata d'Shmaya*. Before I call or visit a woman, I give tz'daka and daven that Hashem help me find the best way to handle the situation.

The main thing I try to do is become friends with the woman or girl, to slowly and gently enter her heart. It's a talent that I have, baruch Hashem. In the conversation that ensues, I try to find out what the problem is and why she wants to end the pregnancy. Before we part, I ask for her phone number in order to keep in touch and try and help her.

My list of phone numbers began to grow. There were women who did not respond to me; there were women who responded and wanted to work with me; and there

were women who allowed me to enter their lives and help them. The gift they received thanks to their openness is priceless...

In my experience, women often want to abort because they find themselves at a dead end in life. My role is to help them, to support them materially and emotionally. If there's a need for it, I help with shalom bayis or refer them to experts. If they need food, I make sure they get food packages. If the husband is the one who doesn't want the baby, I talk with him.

For nearly three years, I sat on the bench at the outpatient clinic of Assaf HaRofeh hospital. Boruch Hashem, I was very successful in my work, but one day, security guards and police approached me and my friend and insisted that we leave.

Unwilling to give up my work, I soon found myself in the Abu Kabir House of Detention. Someone from the Left had decided to remove us from the clinic, at any cost. We attempted to reach an agreement in which women volunteers would be able to stand in a pre-arranged place and hand out flyers to women who left the abortion committee, but no offer was accepted.

I was released from detention after I made a commitment not to continue my activities. I spoke to a rav and he told me that I'm a mother and I can't endanger myself. I heard him, but after you

hold a baby in the delivery room and he looks at you as though to say, "If not for your mission, I wouldn't be here today," I knew that there was no way I was going to stop.

All I need to do is lend a hand, be a listening ear, make connections, provide money, and help out where needed. Many people see the results of their acts of chesed in the nachas they have from their children and grandchildren. In my case, after nine months I see the results and they are so tangible... it has no price, not in this world or the next. I am surrounded by children and it's heartwarming to think about it.

In the middle of our conversation, Miriam said she had to answer her cell phone.

"It's a woman who just left the delivery room... I must hear how it went."

I listened to Miriam talking to the new mother – who, if not for Miriam, would have aborted this baby.

"You gave birth an hour ago... What did you have? A boy! How nice! I'm so excited. How long were you in labor? Ten hours ... that's relatively quick for a first birth... How is he? Is he cute?! I'll call you in another few minutes to get all the details from you and to see how I can help."

After six years of work, Miriam had saved sixty babies. For the Rebbe's 100th birthday, she resolved to run her own private mitvza and give the Rebbe an unusual gift – to raise the number to 100 babies. In order to accomplish this, she threw herself into her work, disguising herself, sneaking in, and doing whatever it took to achieve her goal.

In the seven years that have passed since then, she has stopped



counting. She estimates that it's about 1300 babies. These days, Miriam is so busy that she doesn't even get to see 90% of the babies she saves. There are weeks in which four brissin take place for "her" babies.

Tell us more about how you go about your work.

Each case is different. Very often, in the course of helping the fetus, the parents benefit tremendously. If they are young, I help them marry, whether by referring them to gemachim for bridal gowns, arranging dowries, guiding them in dealing with the Rabbinate, or getting them a hall which is willing to donate its services or offer a reduced price.

If there are apartment problems, I go to the Housing Office; if there are problems paying the electric bill, I speak to the Electric Company. If the husband or wife has a drug problem, I connect them with professionals who can help them overcome their addiction and oversee their progress. I go along with the women when they give birth, and afterwards I help arrange the bris, bringing mohelim from all over

Every few minutes a woman left a room holding a folded form with a sentence for life or death. What shocked me the most was that opposite them, on a nearly identical bench, sat women who were waiting to see a fertility specialist.

the country for free, and arranging for distinguished sandakim from Rabbi Kaduri zt"l to Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu.

After the birth I make sure they have everything they need for the baby: a crib, carriage, baby bath, diapers, wipes, bottles and pacifiers. After a few months, I also help the mother find a job and provide money for daycare for a few months.

By now I have connections all over the country and a solution to nearly every problem that I encounter. I am aided by cabinet ministers, Knesset members, mayors, doctors and specialists, who are all, Boruch Hashem, sympathetic to the cause.

My primary goal is ensuring that the baby remains alive in its mother's womb. But things evolve from there. After they see they can rely on me, they share details of their lives. Even if their washing machine breaks down, they call me. Whatever they're going through, I'm there for them, and that gives them the strength to carry on.

Quite a few of the women become pregnant again, once they appreciate the enormous significance of bringing another child into the world.

Tell us a special story that has happened in the course of your work.

A couple with three children came to see me. Now the mother was expecting triplets. She went for the first ultrasound and was told she was carrying twins. At the next ultrasound, the doctor discovered another head. The doctor sat down with the couple and gravely explained the risk involved in carrying triplets.

"You won't be able to carry triplets to term, and if you do, they will be born with birth defects," he warned.

The couple was very interested in maintaining the



After six years of work, Miriam had saved sixty babies. For the Rebbe's 100th birthday, she resolved to run her own private mivtza and give the Rebbe an unusual gift – to raise the number to 100 babies.

pregnancy, and after hearing that bleak prognosis from the doctor they decided to speak to the medical committee to get approved for fetus reduction.

We spoke on the phone and she told me about her situation and her dilemma. From her account, I understood that each fetus was in its own sac, which is a relatively easier situation in a pregnancy of triplets because the likelihood that one fetus would pose a danger to another was quite low.

We spoke late at night. I asked her to go into her children's bedroom and to see how each of them slept in his own bed. She

came back to the phone and I could hear the tears in her voice. She understood what I was getting at...

"You have to understand that just as your children are each sleeping in their own bed, so too, right now in your womb there are three babies sleeping each in its own sac. If tomorrow I would ask you to tell me which of these fetuses you want to abort, how would you choose?"

It was a touching and powerful conversation. She cried a lot and resolved that she wouldn't do anything.

I spoke to her husband about the fears that their doctor had instigated. I tried to think what would help them relax with the decision not to abort. I found a senior department head in a maternity ward, who was touched by the story and was happy to work with them till the birth. When he met with them, he told her that if she was strong they would be successful, with G-d's help. All I wanted was to help them be strong and make it through the pregnancy.

They decided to continue with the pregnancy. She managed to hang in there until the 31st week without any problem or special effort. In the 32nd week her feet swelled. The babies were at a good weight and in order to avoid the possibility of her developing toxemia, they did a C-section. She

gave birth to three healthy babies, two boys and a girl.

These days, Miriam handles situations from throughout Israel and even around the world. Many of the women hear about her through word of mouth. Rabbanim who are familiar with her work refer women that they meet to her.

The EFRAT organization (founded to prevent abortions) sends her the toughest cases. For a while, she was regularly interviewed on Channel 7. She is referred cases by Machon Puah, especially before Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. That's when women who are not yet religious call in order to find out whether they are permitted to abort. The days of t'shuva seem to affect everyone...

Do you ever shut your cell phone?

I can't. My work goes on day and night, around the clock. You have to give your neshama in order to save a neshama. Often, I accompany women to the delivery room or operating room, and that can be day or night. Many of these situations are urgent, so if something comes up, I usually can't postpone it for the next day. This is really a matter of life and death. These days, I'm no longer surprised to get phone calls from India, London, Honolulu or some forsaken kibbutz.

Was there ever a situation in which you had to do something unusual to reach a woman's heart?

On my birthday, I was with my family on the way to a restaurant when I asked to visit a woman who was planning to abort very soon. She didn't live far from us, so I told my family to continue to the restaurant and in the meantime, I would meet with her. For half an hour I stood outside her door in



the wind and rain. I rang and rang but nobody answered the bell.

The woman finally opened the door and we stood there and talked. She said she was 22 and this was her third pregnancy. I tried to reach her but saw I wasn't getting anywhere. She thanked me for coming but asserted that she was still interested in aborting. She politely but firmly closed the door. I still stood there.

Every few minutes she looked out the window to see whether I had gone. After half an hour, she couldn't take it anymore and let me in. From that meeting Hadas was born. Today she is the mother of six children! From our conversations and from her personal experience, she realized that children are diamonds and one is more beautiful than the next.

In this case, as in others, our close connection has a great effect on their level of religious observance. This family began keeping Shabbos and they ask



For half an hour I stood outside her door in the wind and rain. Every few minutes she looked out the window to see whether I had gone. Finally, she couldn't take it anymore and let me in.

many questions that pertain to their daily life.

Do you have an Igros Kodesh story for us?

A woman who had become pregnant after two miscarriages was told by the doctors that there was a problem and that she would not be able to carry to term. I am used to doctors giving women black prognoses which are far from the reality. When we met, I calmed her down and reassured her that all would be fine. I suggested that she write a letter to the Rebbe to receive his bracha.

She wrote and opened to a letter about Shabbos observance. She divulged that she tries to keep Shabbos but still watches television, and her husband also worked on Shabbos. When she saw that answer from the Rebbe, however, she decided to go all the way. She removed the television from her home. Seeing how serious she was about Shabbos observance, her husband committed to not working on Shabbos. A half a year later she gave birth to a healthy baby.

Tell us about an extreme case in which you managed to convince the mother to do the right thing.

This story is about a woman in her thirties who was divorced. She was so preoccupied by her divorce that she didn't even realize that she was pregnant until the 13th week. She was definitely going to abort this baby. She went early in the morning to one of the hospitals in Yerushalayim for the abortion, but they informed her that they couldn't take her since they already had way too many cases. She was referred to a different hospital in Yerushalayim, where they explained that they did abortions only during a certain week.

They referred her to Assaf HaRofeh, but they had finished for the day. They referred her to the medical center in Rishon L'Tziyon. Desperate, she decided to find a private clinic in Yerushalayim.

She called a medical center in Yerushalayim, and they gave her the phone number of a place that

helped with abortions and also provided monetary assistance. She was given the number of EFRAT and that's how she came to me.

I called her and introduced myself and we began talking. She focused mainly on not having the money to raise a child. I began taking down the information in order to "arrange an abortion."

She told me that before she was married she had an abortion and during her marriage she had had some miscarriages. This was her eighth pregnancy!

I started talking to her about the baby inside her, with a beating heart and arms and legs. I told her that I'm not a doctor, but you didn't have to be an expert to

know that her uterus was tired. I explained that this might be her last chance to be a mother and I referred her to the best doctor I knew.

He pronounced that her uterus was not in good shape and that they couldn't know what would happen after another abortion. She decided to continue with the pregnancy, and a few months later she gave birth to a boy.

I call these children, who are saved from the worst of all, "wonder children," and they are really the smartest, cutest kids. At the well-baby clinic they know that the "accidental children" are special children.

In conclusion?

I have two important things to say. The first is that everything I do is thanks to my husband and dear children. They were always patient and cooperative, and helped and supported me all the years.

I also want to implore whoever reads this article to refer women to me who are experiencing difficulties with a pregnancy. Very often, problems that seem insurmountable have solutions and pessimistic pronouncements by doctors are not the word of G-d. There were situations in which I saved fetuses in the ninth month when they found so-called medical problems with them, and they were born healthy. There were situations in which irreligious women kept fetuses with Down Syndrome and other problems and ended up becoming religious.

We must remember that every child is a world and "whoever saves one Jewish soul it is like he saved an entire world!" Every neshama is precious to Hashem.

Phone numbers: 054-5707008 08-9249013

LIKE AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN

This is a thank you letter which Miriam received from a woman who, when she found out she was expecting a child, was uncertain whether to continue the pregnancy or not. As she hung up her laundry, she looked heavenward and asked Hashem: "If You are up there, send me a sign, help me." That moment, her husband called her to the phone and Miriam was on the line.

Dear Miriam,

It has been a pleasure to get to know an amazing and special woman like you. During my difficult time and uncertainty how to proceed, you appeared out of nowhere like an angel from Heaven, instructing me: "You must carry on."

"You would be doing an injustice to yourself and the baby," "You will regret it." These lines reverberated in my head at the beginning of the pregnancy until little by little, I began to make peace with the idea.

Every so often, I had a panic attack and cried as I wondered how I would manage this pregnancy at my age; how would I give birth and bring another child into the world when my children were already grown? Who could go back to that again? And always, as though you sensed what I was feeling and my state of mind, you called, you were supportive, and you said, "Don't worry, it will be okay. She will bring joy and light into your home." "Do you know how wonderful it will be? And your children will love her so much!" Slowly, I made it through each stage.

And now, with Hodaya born to our family, I can tell you that you were right with every word you said. The light and joy increased in the house, and we all hover over her 24 hours a day, including my two older children who are officers in the army. They are always watching the princess, and I sit there and think and thank G-d. How fortunate am I for not aborting! How fortunate am I that Miri called me and encouraged me in her pleasant way.

Miri, they say that there is a magic word that only special people can hear... I think that in this case, it would be proper to put it to use. So "thank you." Thank you for your help and support, for your personal attention and warmth. May you be healthy and continue in your holy work. If only there were more people like you. You deserve all the thanks and all the credit. Keep appearing like an angel from Heaven and save many more babies.

With respect and admiration
The X family

A CHASSIDIC LIGHTHOUSE

By Shneur Zalman Berger

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

He devoted his entire life to fearlessly spreading Torah and Chassidus wherever he went - Kfar Chabad, Tel Aviv, and Romania. Beis Moshiach is pleased to present a thrilling glimpse into the activities of the chassid, Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi HaLevi Heber, of blessed memory, who worked tirelessly to brighten the lives of so many Jews.

UNDER SURVEILLANCE

Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi HaLevi Heber, of blessed memory, was a chassidic figure in the fullest sense of the word. He devoted his life to the Rebbe's projects and campaigns, and the spreading of chassidus and Yiddishkeit everywhere. He worked with great vitality and energy in a variety of important areas, and achieved much for the strengthening of Judaism and the spreading of the wellsprings of chassidus. Twice, his work as a shochet brought him to Romania, where he endured very difficult conditions under the rule of the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

The latter stint in Romania was spent on the Rebbe's official shlichus, beginning in 5741 and

lasting for seven years. The main purpose was his vocation as a shochet for the local Jewish community, while striving in his clever ways to work towards the expansion of Jewish activities.

The shlichus in Romania was most complex. Rabbi Heber traveled as an official shochet, and the country's Communist authorities did not allow him to develop and expand his activities. Yet, despite the strict surveillance, he succeeded in spreading Judaism through organizing events and farbrengens, publicizing the Rebbe's sichos in Romania's Jewish newspapers, and his intense involvement in the renovation of mikvaos throughout the country.

The Communist regime forced Rabbi Heber to take extra precautions when working within the Jewish community. Although they permitted him to work, it was clear that if he overstepped their bounds, he would quickly find himself deported. He therefore conducted his activities in Bucharest and other Romanian cities with the utmost care.

The surveillance of the authorities was particularly stringent. Whenever there was a Jewish event - whether it was a farbrengen at a private family affair or just going to shul - agents of the Securitate (the Romanian FBI) would always be present with concealed recording devices, ostensibly "to maintain order."

Extra safeguards were taken every step of the way - in telephone conversations with the Rebbe's secretaries, letters to the Rebbe himself, journeys taken at the Rebbe's request, or any other personal and communal affairs. He always knew when to be silent, lest he arouse the suspicions of the regime's investigative authorities.

CHABAD HOUSE – HEBER HOUSE

To this day, his wife, Mrs. Tzipora Heber, has difficulty talking about the surveillance. She got used to keeping quiet on all matters connected with the Romanian regime. In time, she agreed to tell us what it was like under the Communist-Romanian oppression that embittered their lives.

"The truth is that we had already gotten a bit used to people tracking us, and the authorities also understood that we weren't all that dangerous. Nevertheless, we were conscious that people were following us everywhere. Of course, we were very careful not to say anything negative, and this perhaps

is the reason we were able to hold out for so long.

“Similarly, we were also careful not to conduct any public activities, allowing ourselves only to invite people to our house for Shabbos or Yom Tov, and my husband would farbreng with them there. On Purim, we would invite the members of the Israeli consulate and leading figures of the Jewish community to our home. Needless to say, we sent regular reports to the Rebbe, including updates via telephone on the activities and the difficulties.

“Even our contact with the embassy was not entirely out in the

open, and we tried to keep everything on a low profile. The reason for this was because other Israelis who got a bit too careless and said things better left unsaid, either on the phone or by letter, quickly found themselves expelled from the country.

“In spite of all this, we managed to bring many Jews closer to Yiddishkeit, and they began to strengthen their mitzva observance. Many of them did a complete turnaround and became Torah observant in all matters, great and small.

“To illustrate the surveillance, I’ll

He pointed to the sign ‘Chabad House,’ and wanted to know what it meant. I replied that ‘Chabad House’ means ‘The Hebers’ House.’

tell you about an incident I remember well: Once we were traveling to another city for Pesach, and we allowed a Jew who lived very far from the synagogue to use our apartment during the time that we were out of town. Upon our return home, a policeman came to conduct an investigation. He asked who had stayed in our house and why. Then he pointed to the sign on our front door with the words ‘Chabad House,’ and wanted to know what it meant. I replied that ‘Chabad House’ means ‘The Hebers’ House.’ As far as he was concerned, our family name and the word Chabad sounded the same, and he left us alone.”

CHEDER TORAH OHR ‘INSPECTOR’

Among his various duties when he returned to Eretz HaKodesh, R’ Yisroel Tzvi served as the “inspector” of the Torah Ohr cheider system, and as the mashpia of the Chabad community in Tel Aviv.

The Torah Ohr organization established a network of Torah study classes throughout the country in order to bring Jewish children closer to the path of Torah and mitzvos. During the afternoon



hours, the teachers gathered the children from non-observant or egalitarian homes and organized classes for them in Torah-related subjects. The classes took place after the conclusion of the official school day. Over a period of decades, the organization reaped sizable spiritual harvests, and many of these children became Torah observant, sometimes even

becoming full-fledged chassidim.

Rabbi Heber held the post of “inspector” for this cheider system from 5735 until 5741. Among his responsibilities were to oversee what was happening in the various branches and to provide whatever help they needed, be it, administrative, financial or political.

While he barely spoke about his activities with the Torah Ohr

cheider, the documents he left behind testify to his multi-faceted activities in this area. He paid regular visits to Bat Yam, Nes Tziona, Tel Aviv, Yerushalayim, Cholon, Natzrat Illit, Netivot, Beersheva, Petach Tikva, Ashkelon, Beit Dagan, Taanach, Kiryat Malachi, and even as far north as Tzfas and Kiryat Shmona.

In the documents left in his estate, there are numerous points that Rabbi Heber wrote down for talks before groups of children, e.g., chassidic stories and messages pertaining to specific dates on the Jewish and Chabad calendar. It should be noted that public transportation in those years was not as it is today, nor were the highways. As such, those journeys demanded a heavy toll in both body and spirit.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF RABBI YISROEL TZVI HA'LEVI HEBER

Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi, son of Rabbi Chaim Eliezer HaLevi Heber, was born on Yud Kislev, 5684, in the city of Lodz, Poland. In his youth, Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi learned in the local branch of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim. After his family emigrated to Eretz HaKodesh, he studied in Yeshivas Torah V'Yira and Yeshivas Toras Emes in Yerushalayim, and in Yeshivas Achei T'mimim in Tel Aviv.

After marrying his wife, Tzipora (may she have long life), daughter of Rabbi Meir Blizhinsky, he taught in Chabad schools and gave Torah classes to young people in Tel Aviv in the process of returning to their Jewish roots. He also taught a special class in chassidus at the yeshiva in Kfar HaRoeh. His wife, Tzipora, was one of the directors of the N'shei Chabad Organization, and the Rebbe encouraged her to increase the organization's activities. Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi received repeated instructions to assist his wife in her activities, and he carried out those orders by giving Torah classes to women.

Some time afterwards, he began his work as a professional shochet, and within this framework, he traveled with the Rebbe's bracha to Romania, where he remained for two years. Several years later, he traveled again to Romania – this time on the Rebbe's shlichus.

Between his two stays in Romania, he served as mashpia of the Chabad community in Tel Aviv, together with his friend, Rabbi Sholom Ber Butman. After returning from Romania the second time, he served as the mashpia of the Nachum Yitzchak Synagogue in Kfar Chabad.

Rabbi Heber passed away on Wednesday, the 15th of Kislev, 5767, at the age of eighty-three.

In the process of preparing his memoirs, it was revealed that Rabbi Heber was extremely organized, and he left behind in his estate a unique archive of documents – small in quantity, but rich in quality. While it was marvelously organized and arranged, it had neither been seen nor checked by anyone prior to beginning work on his memoirs. For example, it contains responsa on the subject of mikveh, and orderly diaries on his many activities for the Torah Ohr cheider, including explicit details of his travels and work throughout the country on their behalf. Similarly, we find numerous correspondences attesting to the many activities he did for the overall community. All this constitutes a thrilling and extensive foundation for the compilation of this seifer which will be published, G-d willing, in the coming months.

LEADING THE PROTEST AGAINST SELLING TREIF

Rabbi Heber was not one to sit at home in order to save his skin. He reached out as far as he could for the spreading of Yiddishkeit and the removal of anything detrimental to the Jewish people. He sent many letters of protest over the years in objection to various issues that he encountered.

When he perceived the need, he even stood at the forefront of demonstrations, entitling him to a fair share of blows. While he was working as a shochet in Ramat Gan, a store selling treif opened in the city, causing a great deal of tumult all over town. Various people tried to speak to the proprietor and convince him to close his business, but the pleas fell on deaf ears. Rabbi Markowitz, one of the leading rabbinical figures in Ramat Gan, organized a demonstration at the city's central synagogue. During the demonstration, it was decided to march toward the store and continue the protest there, despite



Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi HaLevi Heber with the Rebbe



A Purim farbrengen at his home in Bucharest, Romania

the lack of a police permit.

There were already numerous policemen waiting at the store for the demonstrators, but Rabbi Heber was not intimidated. He approached the store and began pounding on the display window. The local police chief pounced on Rabbi Heber, gave him a hard punch, and immediately disappeared from the scene. Rabbi Heber's face was swollen from the force of the blow. When his father, R' Chaim Eliezer, heard about the

incident, he sent a letter to the Rebbe. After writing the letter, the swelling lessened and soon disappeared. R' Yisroel Tzvi writes in his memoirs: "I felt that [the lessening of the swelling] occurred only because of the Rebbe."

"I FELT A REAL CHANGE WHEN I WAS APPOINTED MASHPIA"

One year, Rabbi Heber was

appointed mashpia of the Chabad community in Tel Aviv. He took the appointment with the utmost seriousness, and began to farbreng on a regular basis with the Chabad chassidim of Tel Aviv. The appointment of Rabbi Heber, together with his friend, Rabbi Sholom Ber Butman (may he live long), came as a result of the Rebbe's instructions from Yud-Tes Kislev, 5737, to appoint one or two mashpiim in every Chabad community.

Rabbi Heber noted in his memoirs that he felt "a real change" after his appointment as a mashpia.

SPEAKING FROM THE HEART

One of the young chassidim in Tel Aviv during those days was R' Moshe Dickstein, who was very close with Rabbi Heber:

"For me, he was a unique mashpia. When he made a farbrengen, he spoke from the heart. I would frequently seek his advice, and whenever I would come to him upset and agitated, he would patiently calm me down and advise what I should do.

"The generous chassidic businessman, R' Rami Antian, of blessed memory, was in contact with me during his early stages along the path of Torah and mitzvos, and I brought him to a farbrengen with Rabbi Heber at the Nachlat Binyomin shul. This farbrengen had a great effect upon him, and he often said that the 'final stroke' in his becoming a Chabadnik was that farbrengen with Rabbi Heber.

"Rabbi Heber was a good man who loved to help everyone, and was open to listening to others. Rabbi Heber often came to the home of Rabbi Moshe Yeruslavski to help him provide hot meals for needy Jews."

COLLECTING SOULS AND TORAH SCROLLS

By Nosson Avrohom

R' Berke Shiff, founder of the Ohr Simcha mosdos in Kfar Chabad, was sent as a young man on a dangerous mission behind the Iron Curtain. There he met a Jew eating a Shabbos meal in a cellar and discovered another lonely Jew who waited for him in a little village in Siberia with three Torah scrolls.

Although 45 years have passed since the story happened, Rav Berke Shiff remembers it vividly. This is one of many amazing stories that he experienced while working on behalf of CHAMAH which was founded by his mashpia, Rabbi Moshe Nisselevitz. It gives us a glimpse into the workings of this vital organization that operated behind the Iron Curtain. It's a story of suffering souls that found their roots.

It all began on a rainy day about a week before Shavuot in 5724 (1964). The communist regime was at the peak of its power under the

leadership of Nikita Khrushchev. R' Berke was a young man at the time and newly married. He went on a trip in order to have his nephews circumcised. While visiting R' Nisselevitz for a bracha before the trip, he was assigned another job, to rescue three sifrei Torah from a forsaken village in the hinterlands of Siberia.

Even today, so many decades later, you can still hear the emotion in his voice as he relives the tale.

MISSIONS AND CHALLENGES

"My brother-in-law, my wife's

brother, lived in Kursk which is a twelve hour trip from Moscow. He informed the family of the birth of twin sons and we were thrilled at the news.

"A short while later, my in-laws who lived near us begged me to travel to Kursk in order to ensure that the babies be circumcised. Unfortunately, my brother-in-law and sister-in-law were not among the few who stubbornly kept Torah and mitzvos at all costs, even at the risk of arrest.

"He was an electrician and she was an accountant. My in-laws feared that if I didn't take care of the circumcisions, they would not happen. I was only 23 years old and my new wife was very nervous about my going. I had a branch of yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in my house. Seven bachurim would come on Motzaei Shabbos and would stay until Thursday, learning Nigleh and Chassidus. They went home for Shabbos.

"What if the police knock on our door?" she asked, referring to the bachurim who stayed with us. In those days, being caught doing secret religious activities in one's house was a very serious matter.

"She finally agreed to make peace with the situation, knowing



how important it was that her nephews be circumcised. I informed my brother-in-law that I would be visiting him to take care of the bris mila for the twins. He was very apprehensive but I presented it as an established fact. He agreed on condition that on the day I arrived he would leave the house so that if the secret police showed up and discovered that the babies were circumcised, he could say he wasn't home at the time.

"I agreed to his condition and before leaving the house for the airport I went to my mashpia, R' Nisselevitz for his bracha. He was very happy about the responsibility I had assumed and before I left he told me that a chassid, R' Moshiach Chudaitov, the son of R' Refael Chudaitov, had come to him and told him that he had just been in Moscow.

"There he had met the chief rabbi, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Levin, who

showed him a letter he had received from a childless man by the name of Miyasin, who lived in some far-flung village in Siberia. The man wrote that he had three sifrei Torah and since he felt his days were numbered, he asked that someone come and take the sifrei Torah so they would not be desecrated upon his death.

"R' Levin was not a Lubavitcher but apparently he knew that if anyone would do anything about this situation, it would be a Lubavitcher and so he gave the letter to Chudaitov. R' Nisselevitz showed me the letter where it said where the old man lived.

"Siberia is a distant journey from Moscow but I accepted the assignment to rescue the sifrei Torah.

DOUBLE BRIS

"I arrived in Moscow Wednesday morning and went straight to the

home of my older brother, R' Aryeh Leib. Through him I got to the Chassidishe mohel, R' Mottel Lifshitz and we arranged that we take the train to Kursk that same day in order to circumcise the babies. I spent the few hours that remained until we had to be at the train station with my brother's family whom I hadn't seen in a long time.

"While talking I asked my brother's father-in-law, Rabbi Avrohom Cohen, whether he knew any Chassidim in Kursk so I could visit them and give regards. He thought a bit and then said there was a Jew by the name of Zalman Kievman who lived there and to the best of his knowledge he was religious. This man came from a longstanding Chabad family. His father was the well-known Chassid, R' Dovid Horodoker (Kievman), one of the talmidim of the Rebbe Rashab, who was a model of

genuine avodas Hashem. The Rebbe Rashab said about him that he was the Tanya's beinoni and he demanded of him that he attain high levels in avodas Hashem.

"This R' Zalman worked as a baker who put matzos in the oven. "If he did that kind of work, he is probably still religious," said my brother's father-in-law. He looked up the address of Zalman Kievman and gave it to me.

"At the appointed time, I rushed to the train station with R' Mottel. We had a long trip ahead of us and I didn't want to miss the train, especially when I had arranged with my brother-in-law that I would come the following morning and do the brissin. According to our plan, he had left the house for a few days, leaving his wife with the children.

"During the long train ride, R' Mottel told me about his work and noted sadly that out of half a million Jews who lived in Moscow (in those days), he was asked to do a bris only once every few months. That's how bad Jewish life in Moscow was. I was sorry to hear this and wished what any religious Jew in those days hoped for, that the communists have their downfall and Jews be able to be observant once again, without fear and without danger of arrest and exile.

"After many exhausting hours of travel we arrived at my brother-in-law's house where I met my sister-in-law. The fear in Moscow and the surrounding cities was greater than the fear that people felt in Samarkand, where I lived, and you could practically touch it. When I suggested to my sister-in-law that perhaps the brissin should take place in the local shul in the presence of a minyan, she was terrified by the very thought. She asked us not to tell anyone about the brissin and she preferred to do it secretly.

"We respected her request and I was the sandek for the two babies.

R' Mottel circumcised them and the two boys were given Jewish names. Despite the haste and secrecy, we were overcome by emotion which could be felt in that room.

"The brissin took place on Thursday morning. Notwithstanding my agreement with my sister-in-law I chose to spend Shabbos in their home in order to see that the babies were all right and to help her take care of them since her husband was away.

A SURPRISE VISIT FRIDAY NIGHT

"On Friday night I was exhausted both from my travels and because of

"Who would have believed that with all the hardships there are still young people, educated in this way and who are still religious?"

the crying of the babies who didn't let me sleep. I decided to go out and visit Zalman Kievman. At first I was afraid he lived far from her house but my sister-in-law said she knew the family and they didn't live far.

"In fact, I found it fairly easily, a standard ground-floor home. I hesitantly knocked at the door. As I walked there I had thought how this meeting would work out and how I would explain the reason for my visit.

"From outside I could hear movement within the house as well as whispering. I patiently waited for someone to open the door.

"It took a few minutes until the

door was opened and there stood a young girl who asked what I wanted. I told her that I wasn't a local and that I had come from Samarkand where I knew that her paternal grandfather was buried. I said I had come to give regards to her father. She looked at me in astonishment and asked me to wait so she could ask her father whether she could let me in.

"In those days, we of CHAMAH worked to restore the Jewish graves in the cemetery in Samarkand. We cleaned up the place which is why I knew her grandfather was buried there. That was the best reason I could come up with to explain my visit.

"While I still stood there at the entrance to the house, she returned and motioned to me to enter.

"I walked into the house where I saw a wooden covering which was the entrance to the cellar. When he saw that I was Jewish, he greeted me with "shalom aleichem" and invited me to go down into the cellar with him. There I saw a table with a white tablecloth, wine and challos, and I realized he had been in the middle of his Shabbos meal.

"I told him about his father's grave which we had cleaned, as we had done to all the Jewish graves. I mentioned that I was a religious Jew like him, that I put on t'fillin and kept Shabbos of course. When he heard that I was religious his face lit up and his eyes opened wide.

"He got up and asked me to lift up my shirt. At first I didn't know what he wanted but when I saw his excitement I lifted my shirt. When he saw my tzitzis he cried. He laughed and cried.

"Who would have believed that with all the hardships there are still young people, educated in this way and who are still religious?"

"I realized it was a long time since he had met another religious Jew, not to mention a religious

Right: R' Berke Shiff and his brother Betzalel

young man my age. He poured out his heart to me and told me about his two daughters with whom he had been unsuccessful in instilling traditional values.

“His first daughter was about to finish medical school and according to law, since her studies had been free, she had to spend several years working as a doctor in distant towns, providing free medical service to the residents. This is how they repaid their debt to the government who financed their studies. He was afraid that in the long period that his daughter would be away from home, she would meet and marry a goy.

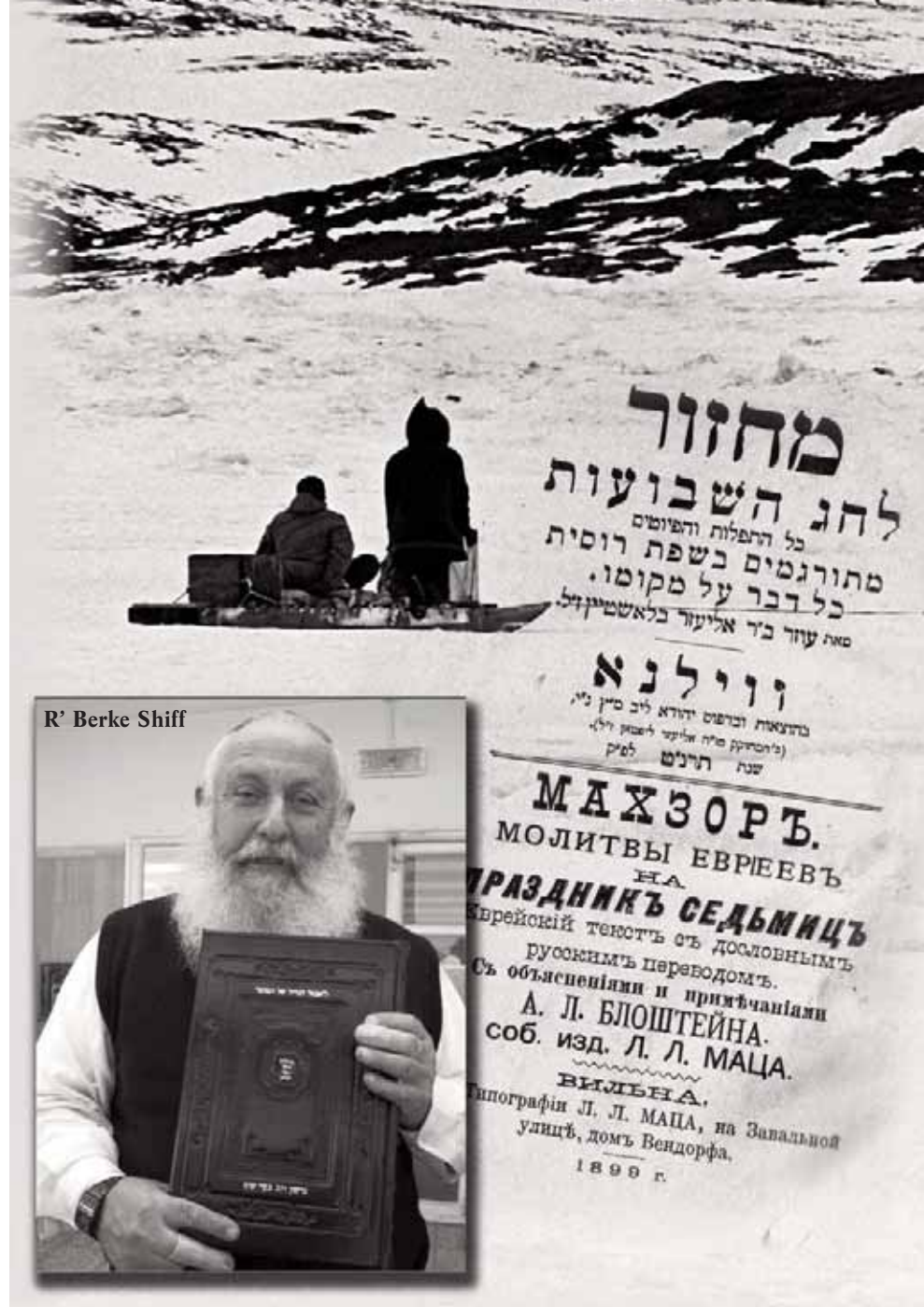
“He said that the fact that she would not marry an observant Jew was something he long since made his peace with, but to marry a goy? He couldn’t accept that. His voice broke. He finally had someone with whom to share his pain and deepest worry.

“I mainly listened. I thought about the Divine Providence that had brought me to his house, from the moment that I had heard about him from my brother’s father-in-law until the moment that I decided to visit him. Neither he nor I dreamed how this meeting would lead to a far-reaching change.

“When he finished unburdening himself, I acknowledged his pain and told him that in Samarkand religious Judaism flourished underground. I invited him to be my guest that summer. He nodded his agreement and I gave him my address though I didn’t know whether he would take me up on my offer.

A SOUL’S WANDERING

“As soon as Shabbos was over, I got on the first train heading back to Moscow. I debated about whether to continue from there to my home or



to accept R' Nisselevitz’s assignment and go on another tiring trip to Yassin in Siberia in order to save three sifrei Torah. I was afraid that when the old man wrote the letter he did not know what sifrei Torah really are and that he probably had Chumashim. Since he had found Jewish books he wanted to return them and be visited at the same time.

“All the way to Moscow I wondered what to do. My brother

and his family who heard of my thought of continuing to Siberia were taken aback. They thought I was crazy to take such a long trip in the freezing cold just because of a letter that someone we didn’t know had written. They cast doubt on the Jewish identity of the letter-writer.

“After much thought I told my brother that I would go and see whether there was a flight that day that would bring me to the area. If I could get a ticket, that would be a

sign from Heaven that I should go; if not, I would go home.

“My brother lived in a fifteen storey building and next to it was a hotel that sold airplane tickets in its offices. The clerk told me that in another six hours there would be a flight and I decided to take it.

“Before the astonished eyes of my brother’s family I left in a taxi for the airport on my way to distant, frozen Siberia. The first leg of my trip I flew in a large plane that landed after a few hours in an airport in Krasnovirsk. There I boarded a little plane, an eleven-seat contraption, which brought me deep into Siberia to the area of the villages.

“When I landed I had another trip ahead of me, this time by bus, an eleven hour journey! This bus took the long route and stopped at all the villages. In the letter, the man said that after several hours I should start asking people where he lived and since he was well-known among the villagers, surely I would find someone to direct me.

“Seven hours went by. The entire area was covered with heavy snow and the only path was the road we were on. Whoever I asked about the location of the letter-writer did not know where it was. None of them recognized his name either. I began to wonder whether the man had made it all up but not having much choice, I continued the trip.

“At a certain point an older man got on the bus and when I asked him for the man I was looking for he said, to my delight, that he knew him well. Since he would be getting off after me, he would tell me when to get off. And that’s what happened. Some more hours went by and the man told me to get off the bus. He pointed at the direction towards the man’s house and I got off the bus into huge snow drifts.

“I had to walk slowly. I was dressed like a city man. I wore shoes with regular soles, not those meant to handle

deep snow. I wasn’t prepared for the bitter cold and wasn’t dressed properly for it.

“After several long minutes of trudging through the snow I saw a village woman walking slowly. I called out to her to direct me to that man’s house. She pointed at his house and said, ‘He died this morning.’

“I finally reached his house and was greeted by a barking dog. I knew that villagers released a fearsome dog in their yard at night in order to protect them from attacks by wolves and other wild animals. I did not dare to enter the yard and I called out in the hopes that someone would hear me and welcome me in.

“After calling out for a while, a middle-aged gentile villager came out. When he heard what I wanted he said that the old man had lived in that house up until four months ago. Then he moved into another house in the

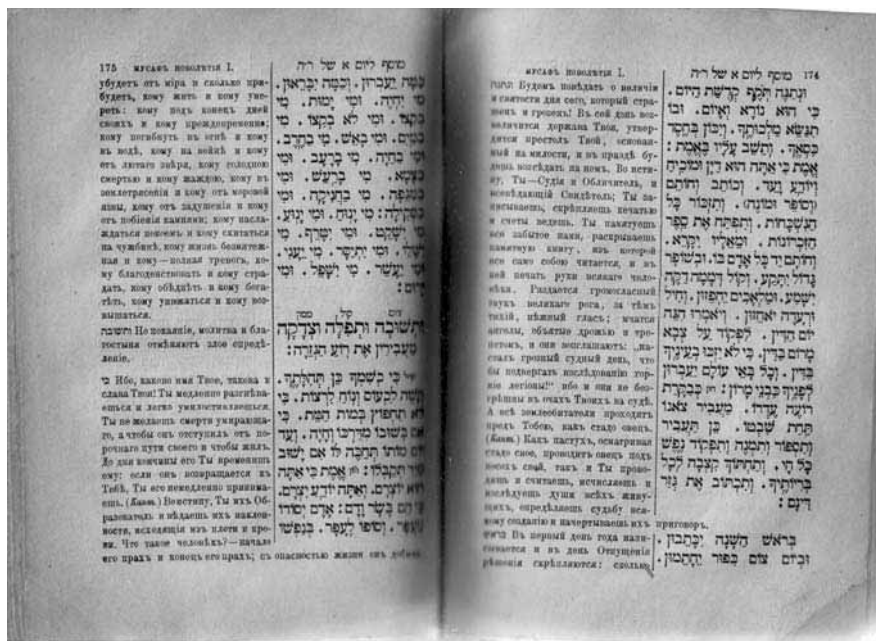
center of the village. He added that he had heard that the man had died a few hours earlier.

“He suddenly noticed what I was wearing and he had pity on me. He brought the dog into the house and brought out high boots to protect me from the snow and water. Then he volunteered to escort me to the man’s house. Together we walked in the snow and we got

to talking. I asked him whether he knew about Jews who lived in the area. He seemed surprised by the unexpected question and gave me a definite no for an answer.

“He said he had heard about the Jewish people but had never seen a Jew and he had no idea how a Jew would look. The concern I had had at the beginning of the journey and the doubts that my family had had about the man’s Jewish identity, came back to me.

“I asked my benefactor whether the man whose home we were going to had been Jewish and he said absolutely not. ‘He was a villager like us and I never heard that he had any connection to the Jewish people.’ I didn’t know what to think.



Pages in the Machzor that R' Berke kept

“When we got to the man’s house, I said goodbye and thanked him for all his help. As I approached the house I saw a number of women dressed in black crying over their dead father. When they saw me they exclaimed, ‘Oh how he waited for you!’ I didn’t know what they meant since I hadn’t told anybody that I was coming.

“Later on I heard from R’ Nisselevitz that after he gave me the letter he relied on me to carry out the mission and he sent the man a telegram telling him that someone was on his way to take the sifrei Torah. Shortly before the man died he told the women that someone was supposed to come and take the sifrei Torah.

“The one thing that I was curious about was whether the man was actually Jewish or not. I asked the women for permission to go inside. When I did so, I saw the man’s body covered with a tallis lying on a table in the center of the room. An Aron Kodesh was in the eastern corner and it had a simple paroches on it with a Magen Dovid. I relaxed. I realized that the man had indeed been a Jew.

“I felt mixed emotions. I knew that it wasn’t by chance that I was there and that Heaven had arranged for me to come on the day he died. Although I was very tired I sat next to the body and began to recite T’hillim for his soul.

“When I asked why they didn’t bury him, they said they were waiting for his son who lived in Alma Ata in Kazakhstan to come for he had been told by his father what to do. I said T’hillim until the middle of the night. Two days remained until Shavuos and the following morning I had to head for home.

“Before I left I asked the women about the man and the reason that he lived in this village. They told me this fascinating story:

“In days gone by, before the communists took over the

government, the village was populated by a group of gentiles who had converted to Judaism. This man had been their spiritual leader for many years. When the communists came to power they persecuted the people of the village and many left the path of Torah. Some left the village and goyim took their place. He was the only one who had stood fast and decided, for some reason, to remain in that place and protect the three sifrei Torah that he had.

“At first they asked me to remain with them for Yom Tov, saying that they observed the holiday according to halacha, but when I saw that there was no reason for me to stay, I preferred leaving as soon as possible so I could get home to Samarkand before Yom Tov. They said that the man wanted me to take all the Jewish items, not just the sifrei Torah.

“Before I left Moscow I had taken empty bags with me for just this purpose. I first opened the Aron Kodesh and was moved to see the three sifrei Torah standing there as though they awaited me... I kissed them with great emotion and respect and put them in my bags. There was also a Machzor for the Yomim Noraim, a Siddur, and a shofar.

“They offered me a sum of money that the man had designated for me but I politely refused it. They arranged a sled harnessed to swift dogs to take me to the bus station with all my bags.

A SHORT TRIP HOME

“On my way back I felt that Hashem was with me. As soon as I arrived at the station a bus came. The same thing happened as I waited for planes to take me to Alma Ata and from there to Samarkand. Each time I had a short wait. When I looked from the windows of the plane I saw how in the villages in the south the snow had melted and the rivers had risen. I gazed upon the

In those days all letters to the Rebbe went through a third party. We didn’t send letters directly to the Rebbe because we knew that all letters and telegrams were examined by the secret police.

majesty of creation and thought about this unusual mission I had been able to carry out. The man who had preserved the spark and wanted to protect the sifrei Torah had merited that Providence send me to him on the day he died so that I would read T’hillim for his neshama.

“I did not make it home in time for Shavuos but I managed to reach Tashkent where my mother lived and I spent Yom Tov with her. It was a special Yom Tov. I felt enormous satisfaction over having succeeded in the three missions and all the experiences I had lived through in the previous few days only intensified my emotions.

“Wherever I went during that long, tiring trip, I had made sure to send a telegram home to apprise them of where I was at all times. When I returned home to Samarkand after Shavuos, I went to see R’ Nisselevitz to tell him that I had carried out the mission and I gave him the sifrei Torah. I kept the Machzor as a memento and I still have it.

SURPRISING CLOSURE

"I assumed that the story was over but it wasn't the case. After a few months I received a telegram from Zalman Kievman of Kursk, the man I had visited who had cried over his bitter lot. He told me that he accepted my invitation and he planned on arriving soon with his older daughter. He wanted to visit his father's grave and he wanted to confirm that my invitation still stood. Of course I told him to come.

"A few days later he arrived with his daughter. He asked me to accompany him to the cemetery, to the grave of R' Dovid Horodoker. I was happy to comply. I ordered a cab and he entered the cemetery while I waited outside

"Afterwards he told me that he asked his father about his daughters' future and he tearfully pleaded that his father arouse much mercy in Heaven so his prayers would be answered. He cried and I didn't disturb him. When he returned from the grave with red, swollen eyes, I suggested that he leave his daughter with us. We would teach her Jewish customs, and in general, in Samarkand she would experience more of Judaism than she did in the city she came from. At first he refused. He said that although she had finished medical school she hadn't gotten her diploma yet and if she didn't return, all her schooling would be a waste.

"I suggested that he send someone to bring her diploma to Samarkand without necessitating her going there. 'If you are truly afraid for your daughter's fate,' I told him, 'the best thing for her is to remain as our guest. We will take care of all her physical and spiritual needs.'

"He finally agreed and we began to speak to her but she refused to listen. She was not at all receptive to what we had to say. In Samarkand she didn't know a soul and she didn't have the necessary Jewish

motivation to arrive at the conclusion that it was best for her to remain in a place that would improve her spiritual standing.

"Some days passed and my wife did her best to provide for all their needs and to be a gracious hostess until the time came for their return flight to Moscow. A few hours before their flight, he asked me to accompany him to his father's grave. This time too he prostrated himself on the grave and cried bitterly over the fate of his daughters who had

"One time, when her father called to see how she was, my wife told him that she was davening and couldn't come to the phone. "My daughter is davening?!" he asked in amazement.

not received a proper chinuch and who he feared would assimilate.

"When we returned from the cemetery to our house in order to pick up his daughter and go to the airport, we were surprised to hear that she had decided to remain in Samarkand after all. I was very happy. I promised him that he had nothing to worry about and that we would take care of all her needs and treat her as our daughter.

"All we had to do was get her diploma from the university. A

dynamic bachur who learned in our yeshiva jumped at the opportunity because in Moscow he had many relatives and he would combine the two things – getting the diploma and visiting them. He joined the father on the flight to Moscow. He managed to wrangle the diploma out of the administration and he brought it back to Samarkand.

"The girl had, in the meantime, displayed a growing interest in Judaism. She was bright and within two months my wife had taught her the Hebrew letters and she had made great strides towards a life of Torah and mitzvos. Then she began to daven.

"One time, when her father called to see how she was, my wife told him that she was davening and couldn't come to the phone. "My daughter is davening?!" he asked in amazement.

"After a few months she surprised my wife when she began telling her of her interest in getting married to a frum boy. She even pointed at one of the bachurim who learned in our yeshiva, the bachur who had gone to Moscow to bring back her diploma. When my wife discussed it with the bachur he was interested and the two met several times.

"When we informed her father he didn't know what to say. We decided to write to the Rebbe. That same day we wrote to the Rebbe and sent the letter via relatives of the bachur who lived in Eretz Yisroel.

"In those days all letters to the Rebbe went through a third party. We didn't send letters directly to the Rebbe because we knew that all letters and telegrams were examined by the secret police.

"Two weeks later we received an answer, 'It should be in a good and successful time.' After an answer like that, there was no room for doubts.

"The bachur continued to learn in our house until the wedding and

the girl went to live with another Chassidishe family in the city where she prepared for the wedding. Two months later her parents and relatives came to Samarkand. We put up a chuppa in the yard of our house and the simcha was very great.

“A while later, Zalman Kievman and his wife decided to move to Samarkand. Their second daughter did a shidduch with a yeshiva bachur too. The father’s prayer to Hashem

that He have mercy on his daughters could not have had a better outcome. Not only did they not marry goyim but they got the cream of the crop, bachurim who learned in Tomchei T’mimim.

SEEING THE HASHGACHA PRATIS

“In the early 70’s they, like most of the Chabad community in Samarkand, received permission to

move to Eretz Yisroel. They established beautiful families there with children and grandchildren going in the way of Torah and mitzvos.

“For me, it was a lesson about how this world is run by Divine Providence. We just have to open our eyes to see it. Fortunate are we that we are Chassidim and walk in the light of the Rebbe.”



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ב"ה

THE MYSTERY FACTOR

By Ice Cream Cohn

Adar and the Geula being around the corner, isn't it time to start taking simcha seriously? Nu, smile already!

I really want to talk about something that's been bothering me (and I'm sure all of you) for a *very* long time and gives me absolutely *no* rest. Aren't we all just breaking our brains trying to figure out why the Geula Shleima isn't here yet? What's missing, what'll push it over the edge, what's holding it up already?

After much prayer, meditation and kvetching to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, I think I was blessed with an amazing revelation and hit on ***the mystery factor***, that annoyingly elusive element that's been blocking the progress of the Geula...

Many people are now buying special clothes to greet Moshiach, taking their cues from the likes of the Chafetz Chaim and the Yismach Moshe. Well, this sounds fine for the guys, black and white and they're done – they don't have any special hang ups about clothes. But I question how wise is it really to encourage us *women* to go

specifically in this direction...

Don't you all understand psychology and women? This is a mess!!!

Now we got Shaindy thinking... "Oy! I just don't have anything appropriate to wear to the Beis HaMikdash – this dress won't do, this one isn't right – I really need to buy something *new* for the occasion..." But then it interferes with her praying! In the back of her mind, while she's asking for the rebuilding of Jerusalem she starts thinking – "Oy vey – I just CAN'T go to the Beis HaMikdash without a new dress... Hashem, can You just wait another week, just one more pitsy week, until I make it to that sale at Bloomie's next Wednesday?"

And Racheli... "Hashem? Can you just wait 'til the end of the month when my husband gets his paycheck so I can go find a new dress *matim* for the Beis HaMikdash? It's just 'til the end of this month. Another month won't

hurt!"

Oy, and Sarahleh... "Gevald! This sheitel is a mess! I couldn't POSSIBLY go to the Beis HaMikdash with this thing on my head – it doesn't at all go with my prettiest dress! Hashem, can you just wait 'til my second cousin and sheitel macher Gitty comes from New York in a month and a half with the latest sheitles from Frizzy Wiggy Fashions?"

THIS IS IT! Women! You're the ones who are holding things up now! Please, get a grip on things – don't be so picky! You've had nearly 2000 YEARS to pick out a dress!!!

Perhaps it's best not to get *overly* focused on this. Isn't our focus best spent on other things like prayer, faith and deeds of kindness? Maybe we should just let our husbands go out and pick out the dresses for all us females in the family. (Ouch – sorry ladies, heard those yelps of protest!) Really, give them a chance! They could be better at it than you think – believe it or not men can have good taste and their no nonsense approach will save endless time and agonizing decision making on our parts.

This is where we can work on our faith in Hashem, by trusting in His answering our *prayers* for our husbands to find the *right clothes*. And you know what? Maybe *davka* in the merit of that faith in Hashem, He will bless them not only with siyata d'Shmaya to buy just the right attire, but also bless *all* of us with the immediate Geula –

For having ***the most amazing level of faith ever in the history of Am Yisroel!!!*** Believe me, this would require an infinitely higher level of faith than even that of the New Song.

(Sorry, guys, you have no idea how hard a test that would be!)

Practical guide for the women:
Oh gosh, dears, I did not mean for you to start thinking like Shaindy, Racheli, and Sarahleh! Chase that out of your holy heads right away!

Really, don't get hung up on clothes – this is so trivial. Even pick the nicest something you already have and if you can arrange buying something special, there's no pressure as you have a back up and it won't bother you. Not all of us can maybe afford something new, there's always clothes gemachs, or a friend might have something just right for you. Trust me, everyone is going to be so excited to arrive at the new improved shiny and awesome Third Beis HaMikdash that NO ONE and I mean NOBODY is going to be looking davka at you and what you're wearing.

By then our thoughts will be so

refined and spiritualized that this will be the farthest thing from our minds. Just choose something for each member of the family that is modest, appropriately elegant, and simple – and again it's ok from something you already have, many of us have to be careful with finances lately anyway. These are the best guidelines of all. Look at pictures of how Rebbetzin Chaya Moussia, Rebbetzin Nechama Dina and Rebbetzin Chana dressed – that should give us a clue. We'll be embarrassed showing up high fashion and ungepatchkit.

Anyways, think about it a bit. Who was famed for preparing clothes for the Moshiach? It was davka the Holy Chafetz Chaim and the Exalted Yismach Moshe – we don't hear anything about their Rebbetzins, do we? It was the *Rabbanim* that did this. We women already have special ways to prepare. The best thing to focus on are the directives the Rebbe MH"M did specifically tell us to work on – like learning inyanei Geula and Moshiach, kabbalas ha malchus, deeds of goodness and kindness, faith and simcha, picking up tambourines and dancing and singing the New Song, etc.

B'ezras Hashem, I'll meet you at the ezras nashim of the long awaited Third Beis HaMikdash immediately. And spread around my new slogan: Moshiach

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you're wearing.***

yesterday, even now is not enough!

(Rebbetzin Ice Cream Cohen is just melting for Moshiach. Help encourage her by sending her a mitzva you want to do to bring Moshiach NOW! Or yesterday. Or from the beginning of Creation. Oy. Ad masai!)

*Moshiach Mitzva Count: Send your mitzva to
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