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NAMELESS

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

The absence of Moshe's name from the Torah portion indicates his essential nature. The essence of Moshe is Torah. But so united is Moshe with the Jewish people that he is willing to sacrifice his very essence and being to save a single soul, even one involved in building the Golden Calf. This level of mesirus nefesh, of self-sacrifice, is characteristic of Moshiach, as well. Each individual must strive to reveal this 'spark of Moshiach' within himself.

Torah is the “blueprint of creation,” teaching not only general principles, but also illuminating the details and “hidden corners” of existence. If this is true of the commonplace and everyday, how much more so does it clarify the attitudes that define us and illustrate the moments that transform us.

The most transformative event in history will be the coming of Moshiach. The era of Redemption is the goal and purpose of creation. This period of universal prosperity and spiritual awareness will be initiated by the achievements of Moshiach.

This being the case, Torah outlines not only what Moshiach will do, but the kind of person he must be. Torah provides a specific ‘personality profile’ of Moshiach. And this week’s Torah portion gives us a picture of the most critical attribute of Moshiach. In analyzing the Torah reading, we must remember that there’s a ‘spark of Moshiach’ within every Jew. The Divine soul which every Jew possesses links him or her to every other Jew, including Moshiach. The actions of Moshiach we must duplicate within ourselves.

The prototype for Moshiach is Moshe. Indeed, our Sages go to great length to compare Moshe to Moshiach, the first redeemer with the last. The ‘spark of Moshiach’ within every Jew echoes and reflects the ‘spark of Moshe’ within every Jew. The leader of a generation is called both the Moshe of the generation and the Moshiach of the generation.

With this background, we can now look at the unique features of this week’s Torah reading. First, its name, “V’Ata Tetzaveh” means “You shall command.” G-d tells Moshe to command the Jewish people concerning several activities in the Tabernacle which relate to Aaron and the priestly service: first, G-d instructs Moshe in the procedure for lighting the menorah, then tells him about the priestly garments. The Torah reading also includes the dedication of Aaron and his sons and construction of the incense altar.

However, the most unusual feature of this week’s Torah reading is that it is the only one from the birth of Moshe until his ‘farewell speech’ that does not mention Moshe by name. Of course Moshe

is not mentioned in Genesis, since he wasn’t born yet; Deuteronomy is essentially a first-person address from Moshe to the Jewish people, so there’s no need for him to name himself. But every Torah reading in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers explicitly mentions Moshe by name – except this one, *Tetzaveh*, “You shall command.”

So there are three questions: why is there a Torah reading without the name of Moshe? Why in this Torah reading specifically is it not mentioned? That is, what is the connection between the absence of Moshe’s name and the contents of the portion? And finally, what does this teach us about the nature of Moshiach, in general, and the ‘spark of Moshiach’ within each of us, in particular?

To answer the first question: When Moshe pleads with G-d to spare the Jewish people after the sin of the Golden Calf, he declares that if G-d will not forgive the people, then “erase me from Your book that You have written.” If G-d will not pardon the children of Israel,

Moshe demands to be removed from the Torah. Although this ultimatum was conditional, since it was made by a *tzaddik* and sage – by Moshe – it must be fulfilled in some form. Hence, Moshe's name was 'blotted out' from a Torah reading. But why this portion?

To answer that question, we have to look more closely at the Torah reading itself. Although Moshe is not mentioned by name, his presence is felt throughout. Many verses speak about Moshe, beginning with the first: "You shall command." Actually, the word "*tetzaveh*" means both "command" and "attach." So here G-d is telling Moshe to not only command the Jewish people, but by so doing, attach them to G-d.

G-d doesn't use Moshe's name, because a name is external, used as a reference for someone else. But we don't need a name when addressing ourselves. When the essence is revealed, a name is irrelevant. So G-d instructs Moshe: with your essence, the very nature of who you are, command the Jewish people and attach them to Me.

What is the essence and nature of Moshe? Torah. His very being was bound up with Torah. Still, Moshe was willing to risk his very essence and being to save those whose act – building the Golden Calf – was the ultimate denial and rejection of Torah. The Torah says, "Thou shalt have no other gods" – and they built a god!

How can Moshe be willing to sacrifice his very essence and being, to forego Torah which defines who he is, for the sake of Jews who deny and willfully violate Torah? The answer is that "Moshe is Israel and Israel is Moshe." The unity of Moshe with the Jewish people is deeper and more fundamental than his unity with Torah. So quintessential is the union of Moshe and the Jewish people that their descent becomes his descent. Although Moshe had absolutely no involvement in the Golden Calf, when it was built, G-d told him, "go down." His greatness was one and the same thing as theirs. Moshe could not remain on the mountain with Torah when the Jewish people sinned. Not even Torah could sunder Moshe from Israel.

This explains the essential characteristic of the leader of every generation, who is the Moshe of his generation. Although the greatness of our rabbis and leaders lies in their scholarship, their mastery of Torah,

still "the leader of the generation is like the whole generation." The leader is one entity with the people. A true leader, the true Moshe, the true Moshiah of the generation, will not and cannot abandon any Jew. His very essence and being are totally united and bound with even the greatest sinner, the Jew who builds a Golden Calf and, G-d forbid, becomes an idolater.

The critical attribute of Moshe is self-sacrifice, *mesirus nefesh*. This is the critical attribute of a true leader of the generation, of Moshiah himself. Although Moshe is willing to give up everything for Torah, he is willing to give up even Torah itself for any Jew, even and especially the worst transgressor. For, although a Jew may sin, he remains a Jew. The true, inner essence of Moshe – and of Moshiah – is revealed by an uncompromising self-sacrifice for a single Jewish soul, even the most distant one.

Further, because the essence and being of Moshe – and Moshiah – is one with the essence and being of every Jewish soul, the self-sacrifice of Moshe – and therefore Moshiah – reveals the quintessential unity and oneness of the Jewish people with G-d. That oneness transcends even the sin of the Golden Calf, evoking forgiveness and atonement.

This *mesirus nefesh* is the first stage, the beginning of Redemption.

This Torah reading concerns the activities of Aaron and his sons. All of these activities – the lighting of the menorah, the design and manufacture of the priestly garments, the dedication of Aaron

and his sons, the construction of the incense altar – all of them occur through the agency and direction of Moshe. Since Aaron and his sons are sanctified, without Moshe their service in the Tabernacle applies only to those Jews who observe the Torah's commandments. But because the dedication of Aaron came through Moshe, Aaron's offerings bring atonement to **all** the Jewish people.

And since every Jew possesses a 'spark of Moshe,' a 'spark of Moshiah,' we must also proceed with self-sacrifice, "putting aside our Torah," our personal interests, to help another Jew, to bring them to Torah with *Ahavas Yisroel*, love for a fellow Jew. Through our Moshe-like self-sacrifice, we will merit the coming of Moshiah.

(Likkutei Sichos 21, pp. 173-180)

How can Moshe be willing to sacrifice his very essence and being, to forego Torah which defines who he is, for the sake of Jews who deny and willfully violate Torah?

THE REBBE'S PURIM: PERSONAL NOTES

Short stories and thoughts about Purim from Menachem Ziegelboim's "Sipuro shel Chag – Chag HaPurim"

WHEN CLOWNS CAME TO THE FARBRENGEN

In the early years of the Rebbe's nesius, Crown Heights was home to Jews of many different backgrounds: Hungarian, modern, and Polish Chassidish. One year, in the middle of the farbrengen, a group of people dressed up as clowns appeared, singing and making merry. Their intention was not to disturb; they were simply in a Purim'dike mood.

At the conclusion of their song, the Rebbe said, "Now we'll show what *we* can do," and the Rebbe began a lively niggun.

THE PURIM MIRACLE IN 5740

During the farbrengen on Motzaei Purim, the Rebbe said the maamer, "BaLaila HaHu." Near the end of the maamer, the Rebbe spoke strongly against giving away land in Eretz Yisroel, using the same tune and tone as he said the rest of the maamer. Then, at the end of the maamer, the Rebbe spoke about Haman's decree and the victory of the Jews. He said that just as there was a miracle

back then, so too there would be one today, in our generation.

At the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe instructed the Chassidim to sing "Shoshanas Yaakov." During the singing, the Rebbe motioned to a Chassid to say l'chaim. The Chassid was drunk and the Rebbe said, "Chassid, *utcho*k (the Chassid has run away)."

At the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa, the Rebbe spoke at length about the miracle that took place when President Carter issued a statement disavowing America's vote against Israel in the UN Security Council which, he said, was cast in error. The Rebbe explained at length how this was like the miracle that took place on Purim.

MASHKE FROM THE ALTER REBBE

The farbrengen that took place on Purim, 5711 (1951), was the first that the Rebbe conducted from the bima, using a microphone. Towards the end, the Rebbe surprised everyone saying that he doesn't understand what people want of him, referring to his accepting the role of Rebbe.

The older Chassidim who were present told the Rebbe that it was one *hemshech* (continuation) from the Alter Rebbe and it was one *etzem* (essence).

One of the older Chassidim asked the Rebbe for mashke, saying that "he wanted mashke from the Alter Rebbe." The Rebbe smiled and gave it to him.

At the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe said, "Just as the Rebbe [Rayatz] did not say regarding his father '*nishmaso Eden*' (his soul is in Gan Eden) but '*nishmaso bi*' (his soul is within me), I too do not say about the Rebbe [Rayatz] '*nishmaso Eden*' but '*nishmaso bi*.'"

The Rebbe concluded the farbrengen by wishing the assembled, "The Rebbe shlita [the Rebbe Rayatz] should lead us towards Moshiach."

A SUDDEN MAAMAR

Purim, 1981, was on a Friday. Mincha that afternoon was attended by a scant few, since most people were on mitzvaim or busy with the mitzvos of the day.

The Rebbe davened Mincha and returned to his room. Ten minutes later, when even the few people who had been there for Mincha had left, the Rebbe went to the small zal and began saying a maamer based on the Gemara, "Megilla Nikreis." Before beginning the maamer, the Rebbe instructed that the doors to the

zal be closed, but every so often more people came in through the windows. The maamer took 15 minutes.

After the maamer, the Rebbe said, "I will remain here a little while longer and in the meantime, they should *chap arain* and say l'chaim without any limits..."

Due to the unexpectedness of this farbrengen, they had not prepared the Rebbe's cup. The Rebbe said l'chaim twice from a plastic cup. One of the people present wanted to get the Rebbe's cup but the Rebbe dissuaded him, saying he wanted to be like everyone else. Then the Rebbe

Before beginning the maamer, the Rebbe instructed that the doors to the zal be closed, but every so often more people came in through the windows.

answered l'chaim to everybody present and encouraged the singing.

As he departed, the Rebbe noticed that the doors to the shul were open and commented to R' Groner, "I asked that the doors be closed."

The people continued to farbreng into Shabbos. Kabbalas Shabbos was said with unusual simcha.

SPECIAL REGARD FOR PURIM ACTIVITIES

Over the years, the Rebbe

placed special emphasis on Purim mitzvaim with Israeli soldiers. R' Groner relates:

"Every year, before Purim, the Rebbe asked about the plans to distribute mishloach manos among the soldiers, police and those in jails. The Rebbe then provided a third of the expenses for these mishloach manos, and paid the remaining two-thirds after Purim."

TO WHOM DID THE REBBE SEND MISHLOACH MANOS?

The Rebbe would send mishloach manos to three people every year, a Kohen, Levi and Yisroel. The Kohen was the secretary, R' Eliyahu Quint. After he passed away, the Rebbe sent to Rabbi Mordechai Rivkin. The Levi was R' Shmuel Levitin. After he passed away, the Rebbe sent to Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raitchik. The Yisroel was the secretary, Rabbi Chodakov.

In the first years after the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz, the Rebbe continued to send mishloach manos to all the people the Rebbe Rayatz had sent to, including the Admurim of Boyan, Amshinov, and Kapishnitz.

Every year, shortly after Shacharis, the Rebbe would give R' Berel Junik the mishloach manos, for him to deliver them to the usual people.

The mishloach manos contained a bottle of mashke and hamantashen, with the addition of oranges in later years.

MISHLOACH MANOS TO A LONELY JEW

In 1980, the Rebbe sent mishloach manos to Mr. Henry, an older bachelor who lived in the same building as the Rebbe when the Rebbe first came to America,

on New York Avenue. At first, Mr. Henry had negative feelings towards Judaism but after getting to know the Rebbe over a long period of time, his attitude changed and he began to be religiously observant. He was personally brought close to Judaism by the Rebbe.

The relationship continued even after the Rebbe moved, and he merited special attention from the Rebbe.

THE REBBE RECEIVED MISHLOACH MANOS

Throughout Purim, the secretaries would bring the Rebbe the mishloach manos that had been sent for him from all over the world. Very few people were permitted to personally give the Rebbe mishloach manos. Among them were Rabbi Sholom Hecht and Rabbi Yehuda Leib Bistritzky. Afterwards, the Rebbe would give his mishloach manos to the talmidim of the yeshiva or to the girls of Beis Rivka and Machon Chana.

TO WHOM DID THE REBBE GIVE MATANOS LA'EYONIM?

For many years, Rabbi Mordechai Mentlick, the rosh yeshiva in 770, would go to the Rebbe on Purim and receive matanos la'evyonim (monetary gifts for the poor) on behalf of the Kuppas Bachurim (fund for bachurim) that he ran.

Every Purim, the Rebbe would contribute a check for \$100 from his personal account, as well as bills and coins.

The gabbai in 770, Rabbi Moshe Pinchas Katz, would go to the Rebbe's room on Purim and be given about forty dollars for matanos la'evyonim, which was



intended for certain individuals. The Rebbe would emphasize that the money should be distributed on the holiday of Purim.

The Chassid, R' Moshe Groner, would also receive money from the Rebbe for needy Jewish families on the East Side. When he went on Purim, 1991, he noticed that the Rebbe gave him \$100 more than usual. R' Moshe asked the Rebbe about this and the Rebbe responded there was nothing to be concerned about and he should forget about it.

This was, in fact, the last Purim before the Rebbe's stroke on 27 Adar I, 5752.

IF YOU WERE NOT SURE WHETHER YOU SAID L'CHAIM

The Purim farbrengen of 1979 was special. The Rebbe began by saying, "Generally, we start farbrengens with talking, but since it's Purim today, we will start with saying l'chaim."

The crowd sang a niggun after which the Rebbe said, "Someone

should get up and say, 'hurry up' in the language of the land (i.e. English) to say l'chaim again." The Rebbe urged the crowd to say l'chaim again and again, stressing that the inyan of Purim is "ad d'lo yada."

"If someone is not sure whether he had enough," said the Rebbe, "he should be stringent. Therefore, in order to avoid doubts, everyone should say l'chaim yet again." The Rebbe even turned to the elder Chassidim who sat behind him and asked how many times they had said l'chaim - once, twice, or more.

STRIKING HAMAN

During the reading of the Megilla, the Rebbe would bang at every reading of Haman's name, in contrast with the prevailing Chabad custom to do so only when his name appears with a title or description. The Rebbe would generally stamp his right foot and sometimes his left.

Sometimes, the Rebbe would smile broadly when the children "struck Haman."

NEW MEGILLA

In the early years of the nesius, the Rebbe used an old, yellowed Megilla which chassidim believe he received from the Rebbe Rayatz. The "ten sons of Haman" were listed in one column, unlike in the Megilla written by the Rebbe Maharash. The case for this Megilla was plain and black.

Years later, R' Getzel Rubashkin and his sons bought the Rebbe a new Megilla and put it in a silver holder. The Rebbe accepted it after paying for it and he used it as well.

BIG BRACHOS FOR A GRATEFUL GERER

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

As the Rebbe passed near me, he stopped and asked, “What’s happening in Yerushalayim?” Confused, I naively thought that he was referring to the terrorist attack that had occurred in Yerushalayim that day...

In a small manufacturer’s workshop for designing kippot in a variety of shapes and sizes, located in the basement of his home in the center of B’nei Brak, sits Rabbi Yisroel Sternschoss. He is a Gerer chassid who longingly recalls those glorious moments when he was privileged to spend time in the Rebbe’s court. As part of his business dealings, Rabbi Sternschoss has to make his way to the Greater New York City metropolitan area twice a year in order to advance his entrepreneurship. “At every such visit, I would faithfully come to 770 in order to appear in the Rebbe’s presence. Every time I would have to leave Eretz Yisroel, I would ask for the Rebbe’s bracha prior to setting out on my journey.”

Rabbi Sternschoss is a scholarly Jew and a pleasant conversationalist. During the interview, he recounted a series of interesting episodes between his visits with the Rebbe

MH”M and with his own Rebbeim in the court of the Gerer chassidim. It turns out that, as with many other Jews, Rabbi Sternschoss would not lift a finger in anything connected with his business affairs without receiving the Rebbe’s bracha. “There were times that I received an answer from the Rebbe directing me to seek advice or to reassess a proposed business offer. In such circumstances, I understood that even if the deal appeared worthwhile, I should refrain from considering it.”

THE REBBE HAD RESERVATIONS

Rabbi Sternschoss’ biennial trips to New York began in 5740. On every such visit, he would also pay a call at ‘Beis Chayeinu.’ He would frequently participate in minyanim and farbrengens and, in later years, would not miss out on Sunday

dollars distribution to receive the Rebbe’s holy blessing. “Each time that I would come to 770, I would sit in the first row behind the platform where the Rebbe stood during davening. I remember that when I came for Shacharis with the Rebbe for the first time, I couldn’t daven from all the excitement. Every movement and motion of the Rebbe made my heart tremble. His penetrating eyes and appearance were most exceptional.”

On several occasions, he had the privilege of witnessing the Rebbe’s ruach ha’kodesh and the fulfillment of his blessings. “The first time was when I wanted to invest in a big project to purchase machines for sewing kippot. The cost was considerable, but I thought it would enable me to upgrade my business without the need to rely upon others. I asked the Rebbe whether I should make the deal. A few days later, I received an answer via the secretary, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Groner, which seemed to indicate that the Rebbe had reservations. The Rebbe suggested that I check whether there was a glut on the market. He raised the concern that if too many of these machines exist in the kippa market, the large investment necessary to buy them may not be a worthwhile venture.

“I understood from the Rebbe’s answer that this was not a viable

option. If the Rebbe would have supported the idea, he would not have sent me to do 'homework.' The Rebbe's advice saved my business, for which I am grateful on a daily basis. Had I been the one to manufacture the kippot, all damages would have come out of my own pocket, whereas when I make an order for someone else, I pay only for the best-quality merchandise around."

THE REBBE SHOWS CONCERN FOR THE LEV SIMCHA

Even more than the revealed miracles he merited to see in the framework of his business, Rabbi Sternschoss was impressed by the Rebbe's great concern for the Gerer

Rebbe. "In 5744, there was a time period when the Gerer Rebbe, the Baal 'Lev Simcha,' was in a state of poor health. He had undergone a complicated operation and it had been some time since he had last appeared publicly before his chassidim. I was in New York and, as during all my visits there, I had the privilege of davening Mincha together with the Lubavitcher Rebbe in the small upstairs study hall. At the conclusion of davening, I went out and stood in the hallway.

"The Rebbe came out, and as he passed near me, he stopped and asked me, 'What's happening in Yerushalayim?' It was an extraordinary occurrence for the Rebbe to stop and speak with me, as he would usually proceed directly to

his room after the minyan. I didn't quite understand what the Rebbe had meant, and I naively thought that he was referring to the terrorist attack that had occurred in Yerushalayim that day, regarding which I had heard about some tremendous miracles. I replied that there had been revealed miracles, but this was not what the Rebbe wanted to hear. Again he asked, 'What's happening in Yerushalayim?' When the secretary, Rabbi Groner, saw that I didn't understand, he explained that the Rebbe was referring to the condition of the 'Lev Simcha.'

"Excitedly, I told the Rebbe that I had heard that the Gerer Rebbe's condition had improved significantly and that he had even gone for a



stroll outside, causing much happiness among his chassidic community. It appeared that this good news brought much pleasure to the Rebbe, and he gave a bracha that with G-d's help, he will go from strength to strength and renew his days as of old. It was amazing to see a demonstration of such genuine concern of one great Torah giant for another.

"Not long afterwards, I was pleased to learn that the Rebbe's bracha was realized and the 'Lev Simcha' once again appeared in the Gerer beis midrash."

A MIRACLE AT DOLLARS DISTRIBUTION

The crown jewel among his meetings with the Rebbe was the poignant miracle that Rabbi

Sternschoss was privileged to see with the fulfillment of the Rebbe's bracha to his daughter and son-in-law for children. "During the dollars distribution on Sunday, the 26th of Adar Rishon, 5752, I asked the secretary, Rabbi Leibel Groner, if I could be the last to pass in line so that I could make my request to the Rebbe without being immediately pushed along. My daughter and her husband, who had been married for four years and still didn't have any children, also joined us on this visit. They had gone to several doctors, including a number of experts, but none of them had been able to find a remedy to their problem.

"When my turn arrived to stand before the Rebbe, I presented him with a very attractive challa cover, and the Rebbe immediately responded that one must pay for a gift. I then said to the Rebbe, 'My

daughter and son-in-law are here with me. They have been married for several years and still have no children, and I would like to ask the Rebbe to promise that they will become parents very soon.'

"The repeated treatments were not helping at all, and the doctors' vague predictions didn't seem to indicate any light at the end of the tunnel. This was very distressing to them, and the request to the Rebbe came from the depths of my heart. The Rebbe gave each of them a dollar and blessed the couple that they should have good tidings.

"A year later, in Adar, their first daughter was born without any treatments or interventions. After another year, their first son was born, and my daughter, fully cognizant of who was responsible, gratefully named the child Menachem Mendel."



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PURIM 1953: THE RISE AND FALL OF A MODERN DAY HAMAN

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Reinitz

*Another chapter of R' Hillel Zaltzman's memoirs * A most frightening period in our history and the amazing denouement with the death of Stalin on Motzaei Purim after the Rebbe's heavenly intervention on Purim 1953* Part 2 of 2*

[Continued from last issue]

THE BEGINNING OF THE DOCTORS' PLOT

On 26 Teives, 5713, the following report, titled "Vicious Spies and Killers under the Mask of Academic Physicians," appeared in the communist newspaper *Pravda*, courtesy of the official news agency of the Soviet Union, TASS:

A terrorist group of doctors, uncovered some time ago by organs of state security, have been planning to shorten the lives of leaders of the Soviet Union by means of medical sabotage.

Investigations have established that participants in the terrorist group, exploiting their position as doctors and abusing the trust of their patients, deliberately and

viciously undermined their patients' health by making incorrect diagnoses, and then killed them with fraudulent and vile treatments. Covering themselves with the noble and merciful calling of physicians, men of science, these fiends and killers dishonored the holy banner of science. Having taken the path of monstrous crimes, they defiled the honor of scientists.

... The majority of the participants of the terrorist group... were bought by American spies. They were recruited by a branch-office of American intelligence — the international Jewish bourgeois-nationalist agency called the "Joint." The filthy face of this Zionist spy organization, covering up their vicious actions under the mask of charity, is now completely

revealed...

Unmasking the gang of poison-doctors struck a blow against the international Jewish Zionist organization.... Now all can see what sort of philanthropists and "friends of peace" hid beneath the sign-board of the "Joint."

... The investigation will conclude shortly.

The names of nine people who had been arrested were listed, all of whom were top doctors in Russia at the time. Six of them were Jewish.

Initially, thirty-seven were arrested, but the number quickly grew into hundreds. Scores of Soviet Jews were promptly dismissed from their jobs, arrested, sent to labor camps or executed. This was accompanied by show trials and anti-Semitic propaganda in the state-run mass media. This libel later came to be known as "The Doctors' Plot."

The newspapers and radio reported this along with a commentary of incitement against the Jews of the Soviet Union and Jews worldwide. The commentators and the media called upon the public to be wary of the "enemy of the people" and asked all citizens to be on the alert for "terrorists in the guise of doctors."

In all sorts of public venues – schools, universities, factories and army camps, and foremost, in all medical institutions – there were “explanatory meetings.” The speakers, members of the party and secret police, defamed the “terrorist doctors” and called upon the public to guard against additional fraudulent doctors.

The anti-Semitic rhetoric intensified. Day after day there were articles in the major newspapers about robberies, corruption, and swindling. The common denominator in all of this was that all of the suspects in these crimes had Jewish names. At first, the newspapers didn’t refer to Jews explicitly. They used euphemisms such as “rootless cosmopolitans,” “bourgeois,” “Zionist agents,” etc. Within a short time though, they removed their kid gloves and began writing explicitly: “we mean the

Stalin’s timetable for this expulsion was as follows: On 18 Adar the doctors would be tried and a week later, 25 Adar, they would be executed.

Immediately after that, the expulsion plan would begin to be implemented...

Jews, reactionary Jews who work for Zionist, capitalist purposes,” etc.

This massive propaganda campaign soon began to affect the Russian nation, who believed the party line. Non-Jewish patients were afraid to be treated by Jewish doctors. Numerous Jews were fired from their positions, especially in institutes of science, universities and, of course, medical centers.

Our fears heightened as the incitement grew. We anxiously

awaited the show trial. There was a very serious fear that when the arrested doctors would be incriminated – and we had no doubt that they would – the Jews of Russia would be in grave danger of pogroms far worse than those that were routine under the czar.

After Khrushchev rose to power,

Below: According to the testimony of Chassidim who were present at the farbrengen, like Rabbi Yosef Goldstein and Rabbi Pinchas Korf, this picture is from the Purim farbrengen of 1953.



The calculation was simple: a third would be killed by Russian murderers in the pogroms, a third would die on the trip to Siberia, and the final third would arrive at the barracks in Siberia.

minutes of all the secret meetings of the central communist party in Moscow were marked down in a small book. Copies of this book were sent to all the communist centers throughout Russia, where it was read at secret meetings.

Since my cousin, Yaakov Pill a"h, presented himself as a sworn communist, he was trusted and even allowed to take the book home for a night, to read at leisure. Whenever this book would reach the communist party center in Samarkand, Yaakov would invite us to his house to read it.

From these books we found out that the Doctors' Plot was the final component of Stalin's elaborate plan, which was organized down to the smallest details. The doctors would be incriminated, the public would be outraged, and at the last moment Father Stalin would come to the protection of the Jews. His protection would entail a mass exile of the Jews to Siberia.

Stalin's timetable for this expulsion was as follows: On March 5 (18 Adar) the doctors would be tried and a week later, March 12

(25 Adar), they would be executed. Immediately after that, the expulsion plan would begin to be implemented.

Two to three weeks before the designated expulsion date, dozens of trains were readied at stations in all the big cities in the Soviet Union, prepared to take Jews to Siberia. In clandestine areas in Siberia, concentration camps were quickly set up and 40,000 barracks were built to contain hundreds of thousands of Jews. The calculation was simple: a third would be killed by Russian murderers in the pogroms, a third would die on the trip to Siberia, and the final third would arrive at the barracks in Siberia.

As the date for the trial approached, we suffered more and more from insults and degradation. We were humiliated and persecuted wherever we went, on the street, at work, and by our neighbors. The antipathy reached a point that Jews refrained from going out on the street. When Jews were beaten on the street and police were called to intervene, they told the perpetrators, "Don't strike them now, for in a little while we'll be able to beat them publicly with full government support..."

My brother-in-law, Aryeh Leib, lived in Minsk. He was once taking the train and the goyim, noting his obvious Jewishness, mocked him. Nobody intervened on his behalf. When he tried to defend himself, an army officer grabbed him by the neck and threw him off the train.

Under these circumstances, every day seemed longer than a year. It was just a question of who would die when...

In February, 1953, a 15 kilogram bomb was planted at the Soviet embassy at 46 Rothschild Street in Tel Aviv. The building was greatly damaged. The Soviet Union reacted in a fury and cut off

diplomatic ties with Israel. The Russian papers publicized this prominently, adding fuel to the already blazing fire of hatred.

Another brainchild of Stalin, designed to fan the flames of Russian hatred, was narrowly avoided. Lazar Kaganovitz, the only Jew who served on the Politburo, Stalin's government in those days, was sent by the government on an official mission to Afghanistan. The pilot was given a secret order to fly the plane to Israel and to say that Kaganovitz decided to defect to the Zionist entity. Needless to say, such an incident would have caused unimaginable suffering for the Jews of Russia.

By a miracle, the plan was discovered by Kaganovitz's brother-in-law, Vyatsislav Molotov, who served as Russia's Foreign Minister. Family ties and Molotov's sense of justice outweighed political considerations, and he immediately called the airport and urgently asked for Kaganovitz.

Kaganovitz was already on his way to the plane when he was called to the phone. Molotov told him of Stalin's plot. Kaganovitz, one of the most loyal of Stalin's men, initially refused to believe him, but in the end he was afraid and he canceled the flight.

The Doctors' Trial was getting underway and the poisonous propaganda continued to spew forth. The feeling was that the Jews in Russia under Stalin were in great danger, with no positive resolution forthcoming. We all cried to our Father in Heaven.

UNUSUAL ACTIONS IN THE REBBE'S COURT

Of course, we in Russia had no idea what was going on in 770, but when we heard about it later, after leaving Russia, we realized that "Mordechai knew everything that had happened." The Nasi HaDor

and leader, the Rebbe, knew what was taking place secretly in the dictator's office and, like Mordechai HaTzaddik, he worked to pre-empt the evil decree through heavenly channels.

In hindsight, it is obvious that in those winter days of 5713, the Rebbe was aware of the terrible danger hovering over a large portion of our people. At the farbrengen of Shabbos, Parshas VaYeira, 20 Cheshvan, 5713 (1952), the Rebbe began to sing a new niggun that had never been sung at farbrengens before. In the middle of the singing portion of the farbrengen, between sichos, the Rebbe suddenly asked, "Does anyone here know how to sing, 'Ani Maamin'?"

One of the people present began to sing the famous niggun that Jews sang in the Holocaust, and the rest joined in. As soon as the niggun was begun, the Rebbe's face changed and he became very serious. He motioned with his hand that they should sing it forcefully and he too joined in. Those who were aware of the atmosphere among the Jews of Russia recognized the appropriateness of the niggun..

At farbrengens during that time, the Rebbe spoke a lot about the intensifying darkness of galus and about the special quality of the Jewish people which can overcome the darkness. Despite the fact that the Jewish people were under the control of the nations of the world, they had the ability not to be impressed by the concealment and to stand strong, weakening the klipa.

The Rebbe unexpectedly published a new maamer, "Hashem does not come with impossible tasks for His creations," on 21 Teives, 5713. The date was not a

special one in the calendar, but it was just a few days before the Doctors' Plot erupted. This maamer is about the mesirus nefesh of the Jewish people in a time when it is hard to keep Torah and mitzvos, and declares that if this is our lot in galus, then surely we have the ability to prevail.

Two days later, at the farbrengen of Shabbos, Parshas Shmos, 23 Teives, the Rebbe referred explicitly to Stalin in Russia and expressed amazement over the special Jews whose faithful resolve was ironclad. They had to hide in order to put on t'fillin, kept Shabbos despite the danger in losing their jobs, traveled great distances to immerse in a mikva, and studied Torah in cellars. Their commitment did not wane despite the poverty and the lack of food and shoes.

Then came the Purim farbrengen. On Tuesday, Motzaei Purim, a large crowd gathered to farbreng with the Rebbe. Dozens of Russian Jews, who had left the country just a few years before, were present. Some of them had sat in jail for long periods of time and had felt Stalin's iron fist. They and their friends could not help thinking of their brothers in captivity and terrible danger behind the Iron Curtain.

In the course of this very long farbrengen, the Rebbe said eleven sichos. He began with a deep maamer, based on the verse in Esther, "and he reared Hadassah." Then the Rebbe said sichos on relevant matters, with niggunim interspersed, as usual.

The hours flew by. Towards morning, the Rebbe began to relate a story:

"During the Russian Revolution, after the fall of the czar, the Rebbe Rashab told the Chassidim to take part in the elections. One loyal Chassid, who was completely removed from matters of this world and knew nothing about what was going on in the country, went to vote as the Rebbe had directed. Naturally, he first prepared himself by immersing in a mikva and putting on his gartel, as one should when carrying out the Rebbe's instruction.

"After he voted, as his friends told him to, he saw people standing and proclaiming, 'Hoo-ra,' and he stood there too, announcing 'Hoo-ra, hoo-ra, hoo-ra.'"

As he related this, the Rebbe put his hands together like a triangle (see picture) and, with a big smile, proclaimed "hoo-ra" three times.

The Rebbe then turned to his right and repeated the story, once again putting his hands together and proclaiming "hoo-ra" three times. Then he turned to his left and repeated it again, doing as the Chassid did.

The astonished crowd of Chassidim at the farbrengen realized that they were witnessing something beyond their earthly comprehension. Then the Rebbe's face grew serious once again and he began



Image from Chabad.org

A statue of Stalin toppled after the fall of communism

the second maamer of that farbrengen, based on the verse in Esther, “therefore they called these days Purim, for the lot.”

WITHOUT REJOICING BUT WITH A SIGH OF RELIEF

Three days later, on 17 Adar, 1953, the Soviet radio announcer sorrowfully announced that Stalin was seriously ill and had lost consciousness. This official proclamation of Stalin’s illness was unusual for the Soviet Union, which had always refrained from announcing the illnesses of the top echelons. We suspected that Stalin had died, and the wording of the public announcement was to prepare the citizens of the country for the truth in order to prevent chaos. Only later was his death confirmed.

The next day the official announcement was made that Stalin, the wicked enemy of the Jews, had died. The top government radio announcer, Yuri Levitin, dramatically announced, “On the 9th of March, at 10:50, the heart of the First Secretary of the communist party of the Soviet Union, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Council, the Generalissimo Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, stopped beating.”

What caused Stalin’s sudden death? Like everything in those days, this was also murky. Some said he had had a stroke and he lingered for three days and then died. Some said he died in the midst of a psychotic episode, which occurred with some frequency in his later years. Some said he wanted to shoot the members of his government and they preempted him and eliminated him.

A confidante of Stalin, who had defected to England immediately upon Stalin’s death, reported in the

London Chronicle that Stalin had given Voroshilov, the Premier of the Soviet Union, a document decreeing that every Jew in the Soviet Union be exiled to Birobijan, where they would all be killed. His goal was to complete what Hitler had started.

Voroshilov took the paper from Stalin, read it, and threw it back in his face. Stalin, shocked and angered by his chutzpah, had a heart attack on the spot and died.

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Others said that Stalin had been poisoned by the head of the KGB, Beria, because senior government officials feared that an expulsion of the Jews would lead to a third world war and a probable US victory, which would completely undermine Russia.

Stalin’s death was not met with the joy that Haman’s death was received. The people were too stunned. Citizens of the Soviet

Union, who from their youngest years had been raised to sing and praise the “Sun of the Nations,” who were exposed daily to radio programs and newspaper articles that lauded Stalin and his personal concern for every citizen throughout the empire, found it hard to imagine how Russia could go on without him.

People believed that Stalin preserved peace in the world. The “Father of the Nations,” is how he was known. I remember a children’s song that described the residents of the empire asleep in their beds at night and from just one window did light shine for that is where Stalin sat, concerned about peace for all... In every book, no matter the topic, the author had to praise Stalin in the introduction for his contribution to the book. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be approved for printing and the author would be accused of treason.

Thus, despite the massive incitement campaign against the Jews perpetrated by Stalin, there were Jews who cried upon hearing of his demise. A woman who worked for my father tearfully complained, “We finally had someone who cared about us, and now G-d took him away too...”

After the initial shock, the Jews of Russia breathed a sigh of relief. They couldn’t imagine a better ending to the Doctors’ Plot.

On Chol HaMoed Pesach it was reported on the radio that the doctors had been released. The false witnesses who had incriminated the doctors had been sentenced to imprisonment and exile.

Though not every home had a radio in those days, our landlady did, so I was among the first to hear the good news. I ran to my uncle, R’ Boruch Duchman, and to our friends, the Mishulovins (who later became our mechutanim) and

announced the wonderful news.

My uncle Boruch said that the day would come when Stalin would be denounced and he would be thrown out of Lenin's mausoleum. It sounded like a wild dream, but only a few years later, Khrushchev revealed Stalin's atrocities and he was indeed thrown out. Forty years later, with the collapse of communism, all remaining statues of Stalin were removed from public places.

Following Stalin's death, the situation in Russia changed significantly. Many political prisoners were freed, including many Chassidim who had been exiled to camps in Siberia. Thus ended a terrible era in the lives of Russian Jewry.

THE REBBE ACKNOWLEDGES HIS ROLE

The Rebbe never explained the otherworldly events that took place at the Purim farbrengen in 1953. A sort of "acknowledgment" was given only forty years later, when that special maamer was edited by the Rebbe and reprinted. The Rebbe also edited the introduction to the kuntres, including the following:

"To mark the approaching days of Purim, we are publishing the maamer 'Al kein kar'u l'yamim ha'eila Purim,' which the Rebbe said at the Purim farbrengen of 5713. This is the second maamer said at the Purim farbrengen of that year, the recitation of which was apparently connected with the events taking place at that time

including the downfall of the ruler of that country who was an enemy of the Jews. This is according to what they understood at the time from the story that the Rebbe related, by way of introduction and in juxtaposition to saying this maamer, about the instruction of the Rebbe Rashab during the period of the Revolution after the fall of the czar."

The wondrous timing of Stalin's death, on Purim, the day the biblical arch-enemy of the Jews had his downfall, served to underscore the message of 'ba'yamim haheim b'z'man ha'zeh,' that just as in those days, so too in our times, a great miracle took place for the Jews of the Soviet Union and its satellite countries. 'Kein tiyeh lanu' – may we merit the same with Moshiach Now!

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BRILLIANT SOLUTIONS FROM BUBBE COHEN

By Ice Cream Cohen

What is the one thing that can wear anyone down, make them lose all resolve and inspire them to a quick and final defeat? When our children kvetch! If they get into one of those whiny moods and don't relent on their incessant kvetching, whining, begging, and overwhelmingly powerful wailing and tantrums, even the strongest most resolute parent disintegrates into a wobbling heap of jello.

So my dear Yidden, how was your week? Oy, another week without the Beis HaMikdash is like a hot fudge sundae without hot fudge or even ice cream. Well we can't let it affect our simcha, we just gotta get more happy! There's so much to do, so many problems to solve, so many people who need to smile and laugh. We lamplighters need to keep shining away.

So I've been getting my old brain in gear, trying to work on

solving other major problems of our times, like the economy, air pollution, the melting North and South poles, Shleimus HaAretz, and those annoying answering machines that give us like 2,364.7 options of what to push so you can't talk to a human being or even a gerbil (this last problem is really annoying).

So what is Bubbe Cohen's solution to the Wall Street crisis? Stop worshipping money and WALL Street and focus on

worshipping our True and One Creator, helping to re-build the WALLS of the true edifice – the Third Beis HaMikdash with globs and globs of deeds of goodness and kindness and generosity! Ok, done. What's next?

Oh yeah, air pollution. Don't drive, walk. And learn globs and globs of Torah and Mishnayos to purify the air. There we go, that's done. Wow, this is much easier than I thought!

Ok, what was third? Oh yes, this global warming thing and the melting of the poles. Well, just plug in a lot of air conditioners up North and down South and turn them on. If a lot of the penguins already started migrating more towards the equator, maybe they can help us out by making minyans in all those Chabad Houses scattered across the globe – hey, they dress the same and they kind of shuckle. Maybe they really *are* Chabadniks doing undercover work elevating the polar sparks. That's the real reason why the poles are melting, their kavana and avoda just so warmed up the place it couldn't help but melt! Ok guys, you did enough work there, come home.

Ah, next? Shleimus HaAretz. Well that one really is a toughie. I think I'll skip this one for now and save it for last.

So nu, ah yes – answering machines. Oy, now this is a real challenge. Who ever made them up anyway? What's wrong with human beings answering the phone and directing us? I can be stuck half the day just pushing buttons that lead me to no one, accomplish zilch and then have to pay through the nose for a ridiculously high phone bill. Ah! Maybe that's who made up these systems – the phone company! They just want to make more money off our getting stuck in message land.

Well, we can get beyond them! Solution? If you need to reach someone, just face in their general direction and if they're close enough, so nu, talk to them. If they're a bit farther away then just yell really loud. If they're too far away, then just use your

Telepathic telephopone and *think really hard*. Forget telephones – use your telephopone. Who really wants telephones anyway? Those annoying cords always end up getting tangled in everything and start twisting and breaking and interfering with the connection until they plotz for good. What a waste of plastic. Telepathy is much cheaper. It's also a great way to cut down on noise pollution. Just make sure you send really nice thoughts.

Well, I covered a lot of ground today – leave it to a Chassidic Rebbetzin and Bubbe to have an answer for everything, right? But I haven't covered the last major issue this week that's really been getting to my kishkes. This is a major one, dear Yidden, and I'm going to need your help – your spirit of volunteerism and some

extra mesiras nefesh to lend us your precious children to help solve the problem here.

Oy – a BIG MESS this one is. Not even funny. But dear Bubbe Cohen has an original solution, just hear me out...

It's this Shleimus HaAretz thing. The security problems in

When all those terrorists hear the frightening sound well up in their ears and echo deafeningly across the entire Middle East, they will quake in their shoes, drop all their weapons...and disappear over the horizon to the farthest continents on the planet never to return again.

our Holy Land. Have you all been following the news about our security situation here in Israel? Talk about a mess. A real mess. If only everyone would've listened to our beloved Rebbe, we wouldn't be in this stew. The Rebbe MH"M simply instructed

us to announce to the entire world that HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave us this land and it belongs to us. That's that. Stand firm and strong in front of all the nations of the world, do what we have to protect our citizens and then the world will respect us. The Rebbe also told us more. Being that Purim is fast approaching, we should take a hint and also listen to what our dear Rebbe told us we could learn from this soon to arrive festive day – what did Mordechai the Tzaddik do when they were faced with the threat of national extermination?

The kinderlach, dears, he relied on the kinderlach! He gathered all the children and had them recite Torah passages, and with our precious children reciting words of Torah with their pure and holy mouths, they were able to override the decree and reverse it entirely!

Of course we must give the ultimate credit to the righteous Queen Esther who fasted for three days and also inspired us to fast, repent and increase in unity. It was Queen Esther who had the bravery to approach King Aha-ha-ha-shaveros on our people's behalf and plead for mercy on us. The Purim Megilla is davka named after her for, as usual, it took a righteous woman to help bring about our salvation (men just can't manage things alone).

But it took a recipe of a *few* important ingredients and one of the major ingredients was the young ones – it was the children! It was within the power of our kinderlach and their holy mouths to help turn the whole scenario into a day of salvation and rejoicing to this very day!

So I say let's do it again. Gather all those precious little beings together have them recite the 12 p'sukim – the 12 Torah

passages – at the top of their lungs and you'll see how things turn around. But wait, I'm not done, this is only the *first* half of the solution. The other half is the big secret, a most powerful and effective weapon; even just upon hearing about it our enemies will tremble in fright and start changing their minds...

What is the one thing that can wear anyone down, make them lose all resolve and inspire them to a quick and final defeat? When our children kvetch! If they get into one of those whiny moods and don't relent on their incessant kvetching, whining, begging, and overwhelmingly powerful wailing and tantrums, even the strongest most resolute parent disintegrates into a wobbling heap of jello.

So *this* dear friends, is the other secret power that our precious children possess within their holy mouths and *this* is the power we need to use to solve the Shleimus HaAretz problem.

What, you laugheth at me?

How is this possible thy sayeth? Well, politics hasn't helped, that's been one of the biggest problems! Let me finish explaining how to utilize this tremendous weapon...

With the wonderful mesiras nefesh of all the devoted and doting parents here in Eretz Ha Kodesh (and any dedicated souls who have children willing to make a special trip to the Holy Land for the occasion), we will line up all our children around the borders of Eretz Yisroel, arm them all with loud speakers, microphones and huge amplifiers and give them the momentous command to go ahead and KVETCH!!!

When all those terrorists hear the frightening sound well up in their ears and echo deafeningly across the entire Middle East, they will quake in their shoes, drop all their weapons, run faster than a four wheel drive cheetah revved up with diesel fuel and a six pack of extra sugar and extra caffeine Coke, and disappear over the horizon to the farthest

continents on the planet (perhaps the North and South Poles?) never to return again.

Shleimus HaAretz solved!!! Children aren't just our simcha, they're our solution! Make sure to hug your children today and tell them how much you love them. Or hug your neighbor's kid. Or adopt a kid; there are many that need loving parents of their own. The Rebbe MH"M and the Rebbetzin never had any children of their own; we *are* their children, so you can even give yourself a hug!

We want Moshiach *yesterday*, even *now* is not enough!

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

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LUBAVITCH LIFE IN CHEVRON

By Shneur Zalman Berger

First person impressions – the communal Purim meal, homemade “mashke” for Pesach, a question that arose during a wedding meal, an assimilated bachur who was inspired by the t’filla of a mashpia, and the “protection” of the “Black Rabbi”

For well over 100 years, Chabad Chassidim have lived in Chevron, the holy city, in an organized community. They held farbrengens and shiurei Chassidus, and various yeshivos, shluchim and organizations performed many deeds of tz’daka and chesed. The Rebbeim chose to purchase lands in Chevron, and these were registered in their names. The high point of Chabad Chassidus in Chevron was the visit of the Rebbe Rayatz in 1929. The low point was the massacre that took place shortly thereafter, destroying the Jewish settlement there.

SHABBOS WITH REBBETZIN MENUCHA ROCHEL

The Chabad presence in Chevron started in the lifetime of the Alter Rebbe. His Chassid, Rabbi Moshe Meizlich, was the head of the community. Afterwards, the

community was led by descendents of the Mitteler Rebbe’s daughter, Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel.

In 5605 (1845), Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel and her husband, Rabbi Yaakov Kuli Slonim, left Lubavitch for Eretz Yisroel. They settled in Chevron, and lived in the home of their oldest son, R’ Yehuda Leib. Their home, known as Beis Schneersohn, served as a shul where people davened on weekdays, Shabbos and Yom Tov. The Rebbetzin would share with the Chassidim stories about her father, the Mitteler Rebbe, and her grandfather, the Alter Rebbe.

The Rebbetzin was particular about the Shabbos food, making sure it was all eaten during Shabbos. She shared it generously along with her blessings, with both family and community every Shabbos.

PURIM – CHABAD STYLE

R’ Menachem Shmuel Slonim,

the Rebbetzin’s great-grandson, describes the exciting atmosphere on Purim in Chevron:

“When Adar came in, the

Beis Romano – this is where yeshivas Toras Emes used to be. Today, yeshivas Shavei Chevron is located here. Recently, Heichal HaRashab opened here, which documents the Chabad presence in Chevron



preparations for Purim began. In Chevron, Purim is celebrated on both days – the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar. The women were busy baking tortes, honey cakes, biscuits, hamantashen, and lekach, which they decorated nicely and with hiddur mitzva for mishloach manos.

“The men were busy preparing alcoholic beverages and various combinations of punches. The children, for whom Purim was the most joyous holiday of the year, were making graggers and preparing hammers to break Haman’s head. Since they were allowed to dress up in costume and cavort to their heart’s content as they fulfill the mitzva of erasing Haman, as it says,

“you shall surely erase the memory of Amalek,” their joy and mischief knew no bounds.

“The evening of the fourteenth of Adar, the Megilla was read in shul somewhat quickly because of the fast of Taanis Esther which wouldn’t end until the Megilla was read. The children, who had not fasted, and who had been eagerly anticipating this Yom Tov, were not pleased with the adults’ haste.

“Armed with hammers and graggers, they fell upon every mention of Haman and made a racket, not ceasing until the adults shushed them. They did not allow one mention of Haman to go by without exacting whatever vengeance

their noisemakers could accomplish. While they took revenge on Haman they also banged upon the chairs and benches.

“The next day, the adults and children went to shul dressed in Shabbos clothes for the davening and the reading of the Megilla. My grandfather read the Megilla, as was his custom every year. He would also read the parsha every Shabbos. He would read it with a special sweetness, with strong emphasis on the words and an outpouring of the soul. It was pleasant listening to him read the Megilla, with the words expressed with Chabad d’veikus. He especially outdid himself during the reading of the verses, ‘if you keep



silent,’ ‘relief and salvation,’ ‘and when she came before the king.’

“After the reading of the Megilla and the end of davening, they would drink l’chaim in shul from mashke prepared by the gabbai. They would then disperse to their homes for the seuda.”

After a description of the sending of mishloach manos, he describes the Purim meal with his grandfather, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Slonim (the Rebbetzin’s son):

“In the afternoon, everybody in Chevron, young and old, would gather for the Purim seuda with my grandfather, who was known as *Feter Levitcha*. No invitations were necessary, since it was a given that the Purim seuda took place at his house. It was quite a meal, with whole lambs brought the day before to his home. All the women of the family came together to help my grandmother with the cooking.

“The table was laden with delicacies galore along with fine wines and whiskies. The crowd celebrated joyously, singing Chabad niggunim and dancing enthusiastically – in tune with the verse “The Jews had light and joy, happiness and honor.”

PESACH – HALLEL WITH A CHABAD NIGGUN

The matzos for Pesach were baked in the “Beis HaTanur,” a building that belonged to Kollel Chabad which had an oven. R’ Menachem Shmuel Slonim relates how his grandfather would bake the matzos:

“My grandfather, R’ Levi Yitzchok, who was a handsome man with a sweet voice, would go to the oven on the day they baked matzos, dressed in Shabbos clothes and with a shtraimel on his head. He would stand among the workers, wrapped in his tallis, and recite Hallel with a Chabad niggun. All the men sang along with him with much pomp and

majesty and great rejoicing. The atmosphere was suffused with a spirit of holiness and elevation.”

R’ Menachem Shmuel described how “mashke” was made for Pesach:

“The winemakers in town would manufacture the mashke out of grape sediment, the remains of the grapes after they were squeezed, or out of raisins. This was their main business, since each local balabus made his own wine. The large scale manufacturers sold their wine to outsiders only, those who enjoyed

He reached out for the watch and R’ Levi Yitzchok, not wanting to part with it, warned him, ‘Don’t touch it! It’s demon’s work. Listen to the peculiar knocking.’ The sheik was frightened and fled.

wine from Chevron. The wine of Chevron had a good reputation and was considered the finest in the country. However, in the home of my father (R’ Shneur Zalman) and grandfather (R’ Levi Yitzchok) they did not use the mashke made by others for Pesach.

“For the sake of hiddur mitzva, they made it themselves at home. They had commissioned a small vat, like the one used by the big producers but on a smaller scale,

and a few days before Pesach they would begin making mashke. It required a lot of effort, expertise and attention. It did not compare to that of the experts, but taste was not the top priority. The top priority was kashrus, and on Pesach we were very stringent not to rely on others for things we could make ourselves.”

A QUESTION THAT AROSE AT A WEDDING

At a wedding that took place in Chevron in 5646 (1886), it was feared that a chicken that was served was treif. A Torah scholar in attendance said that in his opinion, the chicken was treif and a question had to be asked of a rav regarding the utensils that had been used.

The question was sent to Rabbi Shimon Menashe Chaiken, the Chabad rav of Chevron at that time, and he said the chicken was kosher. Joy was restored at the wedding meal.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Na’ah (the father of the posek R’ Chaim Na’ah), later one of the leaders of the Chabad settlement in Chevron, who was a young man at the time, checked the chicken and wrote his conclusions. He suggested there was reason to be lenient because of the simchas chassan v’kalla. He wrote this t’shuva at the age of 19 and sent it to his father, Rabbi Moshe Tzvi, who lived in Russia, to get his opinion.

The gaon, Rabbi Chizkiyahu Medini, author of *S’dai Chemed*, was one of the leaders of the Jewish community in Chevron and had excellent ties with the Chabad leaders of the city. In his book he relates a few of the Talmudic discussions that he had with his good friend, Rabbi Mendel Na’ah.

For example, in *S’dai Chemed* (published in New York, 1959, vol. 3) he discusses the topic of women being exempt from time-bound mitzvos. He delves into the issue of

adding from the weekday to the holiness of Yom Kippur as it applies to women. At first he brings the opinions of Rishonim and Acharonim, analyzes them, and suggests and then demolishes different logical arguments. He then relates that Rav Mendel Na'ah came to his beis midrash and a debate ensued between them on the subject:

"While I was immersed in the *Chesed L'Avrohom*, my friend, the great rav, R' Mendel Ashkenazi [Na'ah] came and I showed him what [the gaon, R' Teumim says] and what my opinion is." He describes their dispute, and the opinion of R' Mendel, who disagreed with his view. In conclusion he writes:

"A few days later, my friend [R' Na'ah] brought me what he wrote on this issue, for I had asked him to write down our dispute." Then he quotes what R' Mendel Na'ah said and concludes that it is up to the reader to decide.

THE "BLACK RAV"

The "Black Rabbi" is a fascinating and much described episode. R' Menachem Shmuel Slonim wrote:

"Sheik Abdul Rachman Issa Amar was referred to by the Jews of the settlement in Chevron as the 'Black Rabbi,' since he received 'protection money' from Kollel Chabad. He would stroll through the market place of Chevron, staff in hand, and when he saw something he fancied he would remark to the storekeeper, 'That's nice.' The hint was understood and the item was sent to his home even before he got there. If he met a person in the market who was wearing a new suit, he would say, 'You don't deserve it, take it off and give it to me.'

"This despot entered the shul with his young son one Rosh HaShana, shortly before the blowing of the shofar. The people were afraid to blow the shofar, the only one they had, lest the sheik desire it as a toy

for his son. They all went down to the cellar of the shul and blew the t'kios there.

"One time, he came to my grandfather's house and found the money for the stipends distributed by Kollel Chabad, as well as the record books, on the table. After inquiring about the record books, he said to R' Levi Yitzchok, 'You know that I could take it all, but I'm an honest man and won't take the sustenance of the poor away from them. Since I protect you, however, I want to be written down on the list like one of the distinguished rabbis.'

"From then on, he was referred to by the people and the rolls of Kollel Chabad as, 'The Black Rabbi.' Like all the Jews, he received: for esrogim (code for primary support), lulavim (code for the additional stipend for distinguished scholars), and hadasim (code for special funds for marriages, new mothers, the ill etc.).

"The appellations 'esrogim, lulavim, and hadasim' were used so that the Russian censors shouldn't suspect that Jews were sending money to the Turkish government (the Russians and Turks were adversaries) and also as protection from the informers. Similarly, on the sign of yeshivas Toras Emes in Chevron it said 'Store for Olive Oil and Tzitzis.' When anticipating the annual money from abroad, people would ask one another obliquely, 'Did the ship arrive yet?'

"R' Levi Yitzchok once traveled abroad on behalf of the Kollel, and he brought back with him two items that were rare for Israel at that time: a samovar made of shiny copper and a small pocket watch. Among those who came to welcome him back was the Black Rabbi. The sheik scanned the room and noticed the sparkling samovar on the shelf. He asked in wonder, "Is it made of gold and very expensive?"

"It was obvious that he wanted it,



Rabbi Menachem Mendel Na'ah, one of the Lubavitcher leaders in Chevron



The S'dei Chemed

Not only the elders and I, but even the scoffers of the generation who mock everything, are impressed.

so R' Levi Yitzchok replied, 'It is for you.' The sheik looked around some more and noticed the watch. He reached out for it and R' Levi Yitzchok, not wanting to part with it, warned him, 'Don't touch it! It's demon's work. Listen to the peculiar knocking.' The sheik was frightened and fled. Whenever he showed up thereafter, he would ask whether the 'monster' had been removed from the house.

"The Black Rabbi and his eight brothers were always warring. The residents of Chevron often awoke to see the mountains covered with battling Bedouins. The Black Rabbi was always the victor, but he tired of the many wars. When Ibrahim Pasha came to Yerushalayim, the Black Rabbi invited him to conquer Chevron.

"When Ibrahim Pasha conquered Chevron, permission was granted to the army to plunder the city for three days and nights. The Jews hid their possessions in pits and fled to the courtyard of the Black Rabbi. One Chabad Chassid, R' Yisroel Yaffa, 'the Printer from Kopust,' could not flee since he was looking after his terminally ill daughter.

"The soldiers entered the Jewish neighborhood and threatened to kill R' Yisroel if he did not disclose to them where their possessions were hidden. R' Yisroel showed him the valuables in the cellar and then escaped through a narrow window. He ran to the Black Rabbi to report the theft.

"The Black Rabbi had just

returned from the battlefield in exhaustion. R' Yosef Yehuda Bechor Shmerling, who was the Austrian consul in Chevron and a friend and neighbor of the Black Rabbi, approached him and said, 'We have been pillaged!' The Black Rabbi angrily told him to go away. This scene repeated itself until ultimately the Black Rabbi threatened to stick a sword in his heart.

"However, R' Yosef then pleaded, 'Our master and protector, my soul is in your hand, save us!' The Black Rabbi was mollified. He went to the military commander, who ordered that the pillaging cease. He placed guards at the gates of the Jewish neighborhood and the Jews returned to their homes. All their possessions were returned. That day, the 19th of Iyar, was declared a 'Purim,' and Tachanun is not said."

The Black Rabbi's career ended when the Turkish authorities sent him to Turkey, where he was put on trial for many crimes and executed.

THE HOLY CITY WILL BE HOLY

The spirit of authentic Lubavitch Chassidus began to be felt in Chevron when, in 5672 (1912), seven select T'mimim from Lubavitch arrived with their mashpia, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Havlin. The Rebbe Rashab wanted to strengthen the impoverished and long-suffering Jewish community in Chevron. The goal was to start a yeshiva and to provide shiurim for the adults.

The seven outstanding T'mimim were:

Rabbi Alter Simchovitz – later one of the roshei yeshiva of Tomchei T'mimim in Warsaw and Toras Emes in Yerushalayim.

Rabbi Yechezkel (Chatshe) Feigin – later the Rebbe Rayatz's secretary, and acting director of the network of Tomchei T'mimim yeshivos.

Rabbi Hillel Protkin, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Katzav, Rabbi Yisroel Zalman Osnas, Rabbi Avrohom Eliyahu Asherov – later one of the roshei yeshiva of Tomchei T'mimim in Warsaw, and Rabbi Menachem (Nache) Karasik, one of the chozrim of the Rebbe Rashab.

They established yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Chevron, and were joined in their learning by local bachurim and men. They started out in the Chabad yeshiva building Magen Avos, and after a short while they moved to Beis Romano.

The talmidim of the yeshiva brought with them the Chassidishe warmth and chayus which they had absorbed from the yeshiva in Lubavitch. They influenced many to learn Chassidus and breathed Jewish-Chassidic life into the community. The senior Chabad Chassidim in Chevron sent letters to the Rebbe Rashab, praising the yeshiva and its impact.

Rabbi Mordechai Dovber Slonim, Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel's youngest son and one of the distinguished older Chabad Chassidim in Chevron, wrote to Rabbi Shlomo Yehuda Leib Eliezerov, one of the Chabad leaders of Chevron who was in Lubavitch at the time. The following are some excerpts from the letter:

"Great is the benefit for the holy city in general and specifically, in sending the mashpia and the precious bachurim who have illuminated this holy city, from darkness to a great light. I had despaired, thinking there was no more hope, heaven forbid, having about this several times. Indeed, had I not seen it with my own eyes, I would not have believed it. How great is the power of [the Rebbe Rashab] to transform darkness and gloom into great light.

"The impact made by the men and bachurim here is apparent to all. It is undeniable that even for us

seniors, the G-dly spark that had already been extinguished was rekindled. I cannot describe for you the pleasure I have in hearing the chapter of Tanya every day and the occasional maamarei Chassidus. Not only the elders and I, but even the scoffers of the generation who mock everything, are impressed. Now we have hope that the holy city will be sacred for Torah and prayer, and the light of Chassidus will illuminate within it, as is the desire of our ancestors, the holy Rebbeim, through the Rebbe [Rashab].”

Another perspective is seen in a letter of the rosh yeshiva, Rabbi

Havlin. This letter was sent to Rabbi Chonye Morosov, who at that time was the secretary of the committee for Toras Emes (he later became the Rebbe Rayatz’s secretary):

“My dear friend, I am writing this letter in the yeshiva. If you could only see how the bachurim learn with the men and even the boys. It is like a microcosm of the yeshiva in Lubavitch. The bachurim daven at length as they did there, nothing changed, heaven forbid. I try not to add or diminish so that it will be precisely, in all details, as in Lubavitch, as it says in the letter of the Rebbe [Rashab].

“You would surely receive great

“One time, I came across the bachur sitting on a large rock near the spring, holding his head between his knees and crying loudly.”

pleasure from this. In truth, if there weren’t financial obstacles and the like, we could have a substantial yeshiva here like we have in Lubavitch. It is not as we thought, i.e., that here they are not suited; on the contrary, they are devoted with all their heart and soul.”

Below: Four generations of the Slonim family. In the center sitting and learning is Rabbi Mordechai Dovber Slonim, the youngest son of Rabbi Yaakov Kuli and Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel Slonim. His sons, grandsons and great-grandsons are next to him. On the right is his son, R’ Shneur Zalman Slonim – rav of the Chabad Chassidim in Yaffo; on the extreme left is Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Slonim – the last rav of Chevron, and between him and R’ Mordechai is standing R’ Eliezer Don Slonim, who was murdered in the pogrom of 1929.



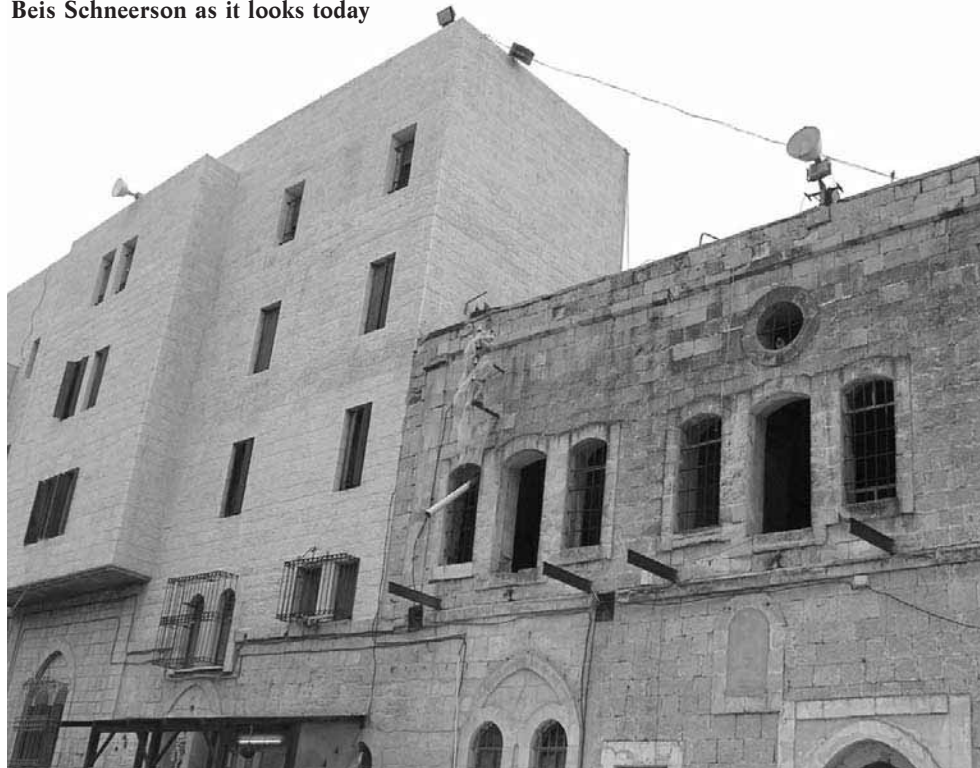
HE HAD A CHANGE OF HEART

Rabbi Shimon Glitzenstein, who taught in the yeshiva, told about an irreligious bachur who immigrated to Eretz Yisroel from Cracow and began doing t'shuva, starting off learning in a yeshiva in Yerushalayim.

"... In the end, he came to Chevron. As soon as he arrived, he went to yeshivas Toras Emes. He heard shiurim in Chassidus Chabad and his soul was revived. According to the schedule in the yeshiva, they would learn Chassidus for two hours before Shacharis and then they went to immerse in the mikva. During the summer, they would immerse in the cold springs that are around the city. I would customarily immerse in Ein Ashdid, near the lot called Sahadusa by the Arabs. According to their tradition, the witnesses who signed the deed that Efron gave Avrohom Avinu when he bought M'aras HaMachpella are buried there.

"One time, I came across the bachur sitting on a large rock near the spring, holding his head between

Beis Schneerson as it looks today



his knees and crying loudly. In response to my questioning, he explained that when he crossed the threshold of the yeshiva, he felt another spirit within him, and when he heard the davening of the mashpia, R' Shlomo Zalman Havlin, he heard a deep echo from the outpouring of the soul of great Chabad Chassidim who, with their songs of d'veikus, expressed their awe and longing towards the One on high.

"Just as their singing in general was weighty and deep, the songs of d'veikus in their davening expressed various emotions: outpouring of the soul, inspiration, passion and sublime connection. The niggunei d'veikus that the mashpia sang in his davening expressed his own personal style and bore a special charm. The melodies were sweet and captivated the listeners. The niggun, suffused with a fiery yearning for G-d, was able to raise the spark in the hidden recesses of the soul of even he who had become distant from the ways of Hashem, to return him to the bosom

of pure faith and to infuse him with a yearning of holy fire for true life.

"The bachur from Cracow, an intellectual and socialist, became a different person. When he spoke about this fateful moment in his life, he said, 'Only now do I have an idea of the power hidden within pure faith. I feel like someone reborn. In the brief time remaining to me to live (his days were numbered, for he was sick with tuberculosis), I know the true goal in life.'

WAR AND POGROMS

During World War I, the Chabad community received a painful blow. The Turks, who were fighting Russia, expelled Russian citizens from Israel. The talmidim from Lubavitch, as well as some of the residents of Chevron, had to leave the country. Some of them were exiled to Egypt and returned at the end of the war, but the yeshiva recommenced in Yerushalayim rather than Chevron.

In the years that followed, the



The gravestone of Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel in Chevron

Chabad community in Chevron dwindled. The highlight for Chabad in Chevron was when the Rebbe Rayatz visited them. This visit is described at length in books.

Only a few days after his visit, the pogrom of 1929 brutally decimated the Jewish settlement in

Chevron. The Jewish community, as well as the Chabad community, was utterly destroyed. The few survivors moved to Yerushalayim and thus ended the Jewish and Chabad presence in Chevron.

In 1967, the Lubavitch pioneers Rabbi Boruch Nachshon, the artist,

and his wife Sarah, arrived in Chevron. Today, their son-in-law, R' Victor Ettia, their son R' Yossi Nachshon, and Rabbi Danny Cohen are the shluchim in Chevron and Kiryat Araba. They are bringing the Chabad spirit back to the holy city of Chevron.



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MEGILLAS CHASSIDIM

By Dafna Chaim

Why is it specifically Megillas Esther that will never be annulled? How do we know that Mordechai and Esther were Chassidim? What do we learn from them in our avodas Hashem today?

CHINUCH FOR MESIRUS NEFESH

In Megillas Esther there are many fascinating characters. Some play a minor role while others play major roles, but Queen Esther stands out above all others. The Gemara relates that when the story reached its happy conclusion, Esther requested of the Sages that she be written down for generations to come. The Sages responded, “Do you want to arouse the jealousy of the goyim?” But after further discussion, her request was accepted and the Megilla bears her name.

Megillas Esther will maintain its special status even after the coming of Moshiach. The Rambam writes in Hilchos Megilla, “All the books of *N’viim* and *K’suvim* will be annulled in the Days of Moshiach except for Megillas Esther. It endures like the Five Books of the Torah and the halachos of the Oral Torah that are never cancelled.

Why does Esther hold such a special status? This was not the first time in history that women were involved in miracles. Chazal tell us that “In the merit of the righteous women, our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt.” Later, the brave actions of Yehudis were so essential to the miracle of Chanuka

that until today, women are obligated in lighting the Chanuka menorah.

What, then, makes Esther greater than other women? In addition, was Mordechai’s share in the miracle any less significant?

The Rebbe explains that the salvation of Purim came about because of the mesirus nefesh of Esther. Esther was heartbroken to hear about the decree on her people, despite the fact that she was safe in the palace and it would not affect her personally. She cared about her people to such a degree that she was willing to take her life in her hands in order to get the decree annulled. She dared to approach the king without being summoned, fully cognizant that anyone who did so was liable to be killed.

Says the Rebbe (sicha Purim 5714, *Toras Menachem* p.144): “If Esther would have asked a Misnagdic rav whether it was permissible for her to go to Achashverosh, he would surely have paskened that it was forbidden. *Shulchan Aruch* states that a person has to protect himself, as we were commanded, ‘and you shall be very protective of your souls.’ Fortunately, Esther didn’t ask any questions or stop to consider whether it was permissible or

forbidden to do. Rather, when it was a decree on the Jewish people, she acted in a manner of mesirus nefesh...”

Esther acquired this potential for mesirus nefesh from the chinuch she got in the house of Mordechai. Mordechai was a Chassid, “a mesirus nefesh Yid,” and he imparted to Esther the Chassidishe chinuch that when a Jew is in distress, you go with mesirus nefesh.

The Rebbe says, “Mordechai must have been a Chassid, since he enacted the inyan of ‘a person must get inebriated on Purim until he doesn’t know...’ Who but a Chassid would come up with an enactment for generations to come that you need to drink to that extent?”

In the sicha of Purim, 5715, (*Toras Menachem* p. 304) the Rebbe explains the real significance of Esther’s request to be written down for generations:

Mordechai and Esther aroused the power of mesirus nefesh in the Jewish people. Since that time, it is engraved in our hearts, within every single Jew until the end of time, so that we have mesirus nefesh for Torah and mitzvos. This gives every Jew the ability to rise above the place and time he is in and act with mesirus nefesh in his daily life, not only during N’ila on Yom Kippur, but when we eat and when we sleep, when we walk in the street and when we go to work.

Mesirus nefesh doesn’t require jumping off the roof. It means to give over one’s personal desires. Only the person himself knows how hard a particular thing was for him to do, and other people may not notice he did it at all, but he does it

with simcha and hiddur, because that is what he was commanded to do.

AYELES HA'SHACHAR

We also learn about Esther's "Chassidishkait" from a Midrash. Chazal say that Esther is compared to a type of deer called *ayala*. Rashi, on the verse in T'hilim, "As the hart pants after the water brooks," teaches us two unique characteristics of the *ayala*. The verse begins with the masculine *ayal* and continues in the feminine *saarog*, which Radak explains includes males and females.

Rashi says, "The Sages say that this *ayala* is a chassida among the animals." The *ayala* does not live only for itself, but cares about those around her. When the animals are thirsty, say Chazal, they go to the *ayala* so she will raise her eyes on High and pray for them. She digs a hole and puts her antlers in it and moans and pleads to Hashem until Hashem has mercy on her and brings water up from the deep.

Rashi also says that when the *ayala* crouches to give birth, the fawn is unable to emerge since her womb is narrow. She cries out to Hashem and pleads for her life. Hashem has mercy on her and sends a snake to bite her in the area of the womb and expand it.

If the *ayala* is crouched to give birth and the animals come to ask her to pray on their behalf for water, she forgets her personal suffering and prays for her fellow animals. (This is the basis for the idea that when a woman gives birth, her cries can hasten the Geula, especially if she makes requests for other people.)

That was Esther. She was in a golden cage in the king's palace, contending with enormous difficulties as a Jew – Shabbos, kashrus and even family purity. But she put aside her own hardships and devoted herself completely to saving the Jewish people.

THE QUALITY OF EARTH

The Rebbe emphasizes the significance of Esther taking the initiative with the question that is asked in Chassidic discourses (Torah Ohr Megillas Esther):

Esther always did what Mordechai told her to do, as it says, "what Mordechai said, Esther did," so how did it happen that in the miracle of Purim, she did everything on her own, without his counsel?

The question is even stronger when we know that the story of the Megilla happened in a time of *hester panim* (Hashem's concealment), when confusion was great. Under these circumstances, surely Esther had to consult with Mordechai, the leader of the Jewish people. Yet Esther turned out to be a leader. It was she who told Mordechai what to do, "go and gather all the Jews and fast for me," and it was she who planned the banquets.

The Rebbe responds that "Esther *karka olam haysa*" (Esther is likened to the earth). She is like that which is deep, down under, through which the entire structure is lifted, together with Mordechai HaYehudi, up high, and she sets him in his proper place (Toras Menachem vol. 13).

When you want to lift a house, you use a lever. When you place it underneath the bottom of the house, you lift the entire house along with it. Although the avoda of Esther was seemingly in lowly things, she was the catalyst for the greatest of

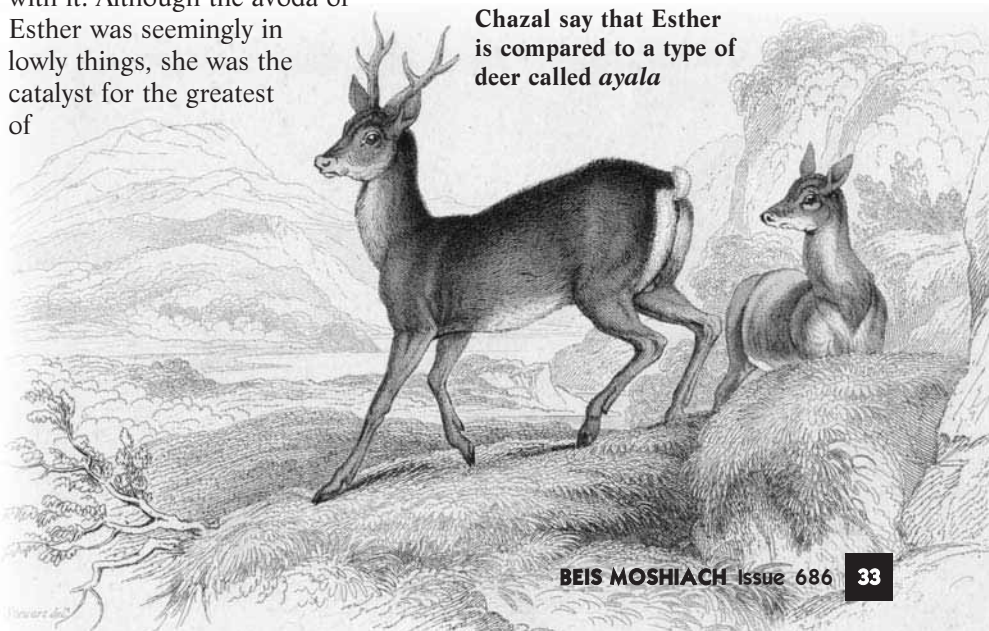
elevations. "Until the (stone) became the cornerstone which causes an extremely great elevation, for by making a dwelling for Hashem down below, one effects an increase of light until the world of Atzilus and the worlds above it" (ibid).

Esther bequeathed this ability to us and it needs to be expressed in the simplest, most routine aspects of our daily life, with the goal being to establish a Jewish home where all the details are run properly. Even if we're dealing with the *moshel b'kippa* (the absolute dictator, i.e., Achashverosh), the house is run with kashrus, family purity, everything according to *Shulchan Aruch*.

In addition, the Rebbe explains, to be successful in running a home, every woman needs to have at least a few minutes a day that she uses to help other people. Even the material needs of another person are *ruchnius sh'b'ruchnius* (the highest spirituality).

When the home is established in this manner, the "house of Haman" is overpowered and all the sparks that were in it are elevated to a home of holiness... This is a preparation and a channel to continue malchus in Israel with the return of the righteous judge and the priesthood, with the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash by Moshiach Tzidkeinu, speedily in our days.

Chazal say that Esther is compared to a type of deer called *ayala*



LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO GEULA

By Ofra Badosa

*“Whenever I went there, I would meet with the elderly people. When I began singing for them and performing all kinds of one-act plays, I saw how it revived and energized them. I sensed that this was doing something important for them.” * An interview with standup comic, Michal Levitin.*

The first time I met Michal was at an evening of tambourines and dancing. The energy was exceptional, and Michal sang in a clear, high voice that permeated our very beings. She spurred us on, saying, “Onwards, start moving your feet, we need to rejoice!”

As the evening progressed, the energy level rose. At one point in the dancing, I found myself opposite her. While I danced and she sang, she simply exuded chayus and simcha. Looking at her shining eyes, I felt the energy of my own simcha increase.

In the sicha of Parshas Truma, 5752, the Rebbe quotes a story from Taanis about two entertainers who merited the World to Come through rejoicing and making others happy. The Rebbe explains that besides earning a portion in the World to Come through simcha, it also makes

us a ben Olam HaZeh, because our lives are more authentic, happy and successful.

In honor of the month of Adar and the upcoming holiday of Purim, I met with Michal Levitin in order to see a bas Olam HaBa up close. Throughout our conversation I hardly stopped laughing, so it works...

HAPPY CHILDHOOD

How did you get involved in the field of entertainment?

I had a very happy childhood. Laughter and song was part and parcel of the life I was raised in. My parents had a great approach in which they looked at things from the right perspective. All my siblings have a sense of humor but I’m the only one who makes a living from it.

My maternal grandparents were both natural actors. My grandfather

a”h was a chazan. My singing comes from him. All the grandchildren loved to imitate him, and it is thanks to those imitations that I can reach high operatic notes today. My grandmother loved to laugh and the stories she would tell us always had a humorous component. Even when they told us sad stories, my grandparents would add something at the end so we could all laugh.

I learned a lot about simcha from my great-grandmother Leah, too. She would always tell me stories about the British mandate. I don’t know how accurate they were, but they sure were funny! I remember her laughing till her final day. Whenever I went to her, she would ask me to dance and sing for her and then she would say, “If I had a medal, I’d give it to you.” Her name was “Lieder,” which means songs in Yiddish.

How did you get on the stage?

I started performing in the Chabad elementary school in Nachalat Har Chabad. Performances on Rosh Chodesh and for Yomim Tovim were regular features, giving us plenty of opportunity to sing and act. In seventh grade, I started doing mivtzaim in the chronic ward of a senior citizens home. It was the perfect place to practice. The crowd there was very receptive and never complained.

Whenever I went there, I would meet with the elderly people. When I began singing for them and



performing all kinds of one-act plays, I saw how it revived and energized them. I sensed that this was doing something important for them.

That was my first experience outside the family and school and I saw that I was able to bring joy to people. It encouraged me to continue. In high school, I performed together with a friend – my first encounter with performing on stage. There was lots of enthusiasm around our performances, especially since two young girls were performing.

What did your family think about your performing?

They took it well and even liked it. My mother loved to act and appeared in many performances in our neighborhood. The field of entertainment is very natural for our family. The whole subject of making people happy and taking things in good humor is very much a part of who we are.

Even in difficult circumstances, my father would always find something to laugh about. Laughter is truly healing. When a person is depressed, their state of mind and physical condition only worsen, while positive attitudes and simcha change things for the good.

INNER JOY

What about the proverbial sad clown who makes everybody happy but is sad inside? Can you relate to that?

Not really. Yesterday, for example, I was all dressed and made up, ready to go to a performance and just waiting for the babysitter to show up. I always prepare small jobs for her to do during the evening. This time I had set out two puzzles for the children, which I wanted to ask her to cut and glue. I couldn't find glue at first, but then I remembered that on the porch I had a big gallon container of carpenter's

glue. I lifted the container by the handle, and within seconds I was left with the handle in my hand and the entire contents of the container all over myself and the floor.

I stood there covered in glue, white practically from head to toe. Many people in my situation would have, understandably, been extremely upset, but I just burst out laughing. I even called everybody to come and see what had happened to me. The entire family stood there laughing; it was hard to stop.

Since my work entails describing real life situations on the stage, when delay or mishap occurs to me I immediately think about how I will incorporate it into my monologue. It enables me to see things from a different perspective. It's not that I'm disconnected from what's going on around me; it's just that I'm looking at it in a different way.

Obviously, everything here was decreed in Heaven and I can only do my best. Realizing that what actually happens is not under my control leaves me smiling and relaxed.

LAUGHTER WITH A MESSAGE

What's the dividing line between laughter and silliness? How do you create "Chassidishe laughter" while preserving the proper boundaries?

Before doing any stand-up comedy, I think about what message I want to convey, a message of simcha, of shalom bayis, of chinuch – and then each segment is built on the foundation of this message. I think that each stand-up routine that I do provides enough material for an entire lecture.

Actually, after every performance, the emcee explains what we can learn from it. Sometimes, I sum up each piece in a few words, something short that the women can take with them along with a smile on their faces. If, for

example, I did a routine on shalom bayis, I might say afterwards, "A smart woman will allow her husband to decide to do what she wants." Or after a routine about an obnoxious child who doesn't listen to any authority, I'll say that I'm not an educator but in our generation where we have such *shefa* (abundance), we can't forget that shefa has the same letters as *pesha* (willful sin).

How do you convey Chassidishe messages?

The subject of my new show is

***I stood there
covered in glue,
white practically
from head to toe.
Many people in my
situation would
have,
understandably,
been extremely
upset, but I just
burst out
laughing.***

the three garments of the soul – thought, speech, and action – in a woman's daily life. It's amazing to see how it's possible to convey a Chassidishe message to all sorts of groups. The feedback I'm getting is very enthusiastic. The women who attend the performances relate to the content; for them, it's a novelty and they get the tools to deal with their daily lives. They suddenly see that it's possible to impact on the home with the help of your thought, that they can change the reality because

"where a person's thoughts are, that's where he is." If a woman conveys positive messages and thinks positively, she can change the atmosphere in the home. The same is true with speech and actions, the main thing.

Humor is a powerful tool for inner contemplation. How do you structure your performances so that they will affect people's p'nimius?

Through my routines, I get them to identify with their own reality. I make it a gradual process so they will be receptive. I usually take a familiar situation (I'll play the part of a mother at home in a robe, not a rocket scientist) and present it in an extreme manner, so that the robe will be very funny and I'll wear the sheitel backwards. But it's still a reality they can relate to. The extreme portrayal ensures that people don't think that I'm coming to criticize or brainwash them. A woman in the audience can relate to it, but at the same time, be removed from it.

It enables people to see themselves as they really are. This enables them to deal with and learn from the less rosy situations in life.

Often, the subjects I choose are taken from the simplest things in life, like when something spills and the mother screams hysterically. Through a skit, women can see how all the pressure and nerves look from the outside, and the effect it has on the mother and the children. It enables them to learn how to take things with the right attitude and respond with a softer manner.

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Tell us a little about the different kinds of audiences and their reactions to your performances.

I meet all kinds of people, from the completely unobservant to the most religious, Chassidic

communities. Many situations change from performance to performance. Sometimes I perform after a moving lecture and sometimes the audience is not in the mood for humor.

Though it's not always a perfect situation, if I've made just one woman happy, dayeinu. Sometimes I do a performance during a Yom Iyun for twenty female psychologists. The organizers want them to have a break and don't even tell them that I'm coming. It takes them a few minutes to catch on. They start to whisper, but they try to hide their laughter.

There are audiences who have yet to realize that they are allowed to laugh. You can barely hear the laughter, but their eyes are shining. Yet, it's the same performance that I did the night before to a crowd that coughed and cried from laughing so hard.

Which audiences do you like the most?

The audience I enjoy the most is the one that reacts. I love responding spontaneously and ad-libbing. Depending on the audience,

there is a basic idea which I present and expound upon, but when there are reactions from the crowd, I can easily depart from the script.

At one such performance, I played the part of a woman who was trying to put her kids to sleep. As time moved on and they did not go to sleep, she started saying things like, "Sleep! I said sleep!" An old Moroccan lady in the audience stood up and shouted to me, "Sweetie, Mommy, maybe he's hungry?"

I looked at her and continued playing the part: "I'm sorry, you already ate today. The restaurant is closed!"

But the old woman didn't give up. In her heavy Moroccan accent she said, "I listened to you from the beginning of the piece and you didn't give him anything to eat." The audience found this hysterical.

SIMCHA

Is making people happy your shlichus?

For sure. My husband always wanted to go on shlichus and till this day, the topic comes up every now

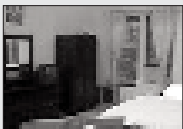
and then. My siblings are scattered from China to Los Angeles and I'm the only one who remained in Eretz Yisroel. But in our daily lives we see that what we're doing is an unusual shlichus. My husband is the sound man for my performances and we construct them together.

How do you see a connection between humor and Moshiach?

The way I see it, living with simcha and humor is synonymous with living with emuna. The irreligious, and even some chareidim, view anticipating Moshiach as an invitation to disappointment. What makes Chabad's approach different is that we relate to the subject of Moshiach with simcha. It's a completely different approach because we know with complete faith that he's about to come. When you live this way, then you're happy. When you're happy, there's a much greater chance that Moshiach will come immediately.

It's interesting that the word "Moshiach" has the same root letters as simcha. There's a strong connection between them!

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A CHASSIDIC PENSIONER POWERHOUSE

By S. Malachi

Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

Rabbi Nachum Kaplan, mashpia of the Chabad community in Lod, Israel: “Pensioners have plenty of shlichus to do!”

DAYS OF YOUTH

It was during the chaos that prevailed at the end of the Second World War. A tiny crack opened in the Soviet iron curtain, as Polish citizens received permission to leave the country. Many of the Jews who had been trampled by the Soviet boot took advantage of the opportunity and escaped using falsified Polish papers.

The Kaplan family, together with their six-year old son Nachum, crossed the border, and after a lengthy interval, finally arrived at the Jewish transitory camp in Pocking. Two and a-half years later, the Rebbe Rayatz instructed the head of the household, R. Meilech, to emigrate to Eretz Yisroel, and the family settled in the city of Lod.

At the time, there were only five

Chabad families living in Lod, but led by Rabbi Zushe Wilimovsky, the chassidim would not be deterred and they decided to establish a local branch of Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim, which eventually became the famed Chabad yeshiva of Lod.

THE BUILDING IS TAKEN

During those times, in the orchard near the train station, stood a two-story building where the Rebbe Rayatz reportedly stayed during his visit to Eretz HaKodesh. R’ Zushe asked no one, and he simply made a “*kinyan*” on the building with a large padlock, and thereby created the yeshiva on the premises as an established fact. Not long afterwards, when a truck arrived at the location filled with immigrants designated to move into the building, R. Zushe explained to the officials with absolute confidence that the building was already taken...

R. Meilech Kaplan was the first “*maggid shiur*” at the location. He simply took a number of children and sat and learned with them there.

This was still many years before the yeshiva world, as we now know it, began to flourish. Torah institutions were not a common

BRIEF BIO

Rabbi Nachum Kaplan is a beloved mashpia and veteran educator in the Chabad community of Lod.

He recently “retired” after more than fifty years working in education: Torah classes, community gatherings, spreading the wellsprings of chassidus among the city’s Jewish population, and of course – a listening and understanding ear to provide chassidic guidance to the members of the community.

Rabbi Nachum is the son of Rabbi Elimelech Kaplan, one of the founders of the Chabad community of Lod, who served as its rav over a period of many years.

sight, and numerous people came from various locations all over the country in order to learn in the yeshiva.

Within a period of two years, there were already about three hundred students in the yeshiva, many of them were brand new immigrants from Morocco and Yemen. During these times, a war was taking place over the souls of these immigrant children. The official government organizations requested that the children be placed in secular learning institutions to uproot all remnants of Jewish tradition from their tender minds. Thus, each child registered in the yeshiva meant another life saved.

WAITING FOR ANOTHER 167

Young Nachum Kaplan joined the expanding yeshiva program, and during the next thirteen years, he studied with the utmost diligence.

In 5722, the great moment had come – traveling to the Rebbe for “k’vutza.” This marked the first such group of yeshiva students making the journey. It was accompanied by numerous delays and obstacles on the one hand, and wondrous help from Heaven and encouragement from the Rebbe on the other.

“Until 5722, we submitted requests to army officials on numerous occasions for exit permits. They refused, telling us: There are one hundred and seventy Chabadnikim who left to travel to 770 and have not returned. When they come back, you can go... We tried again and again over a number of years, using various means of influence, but the army always refused to let us leave the country. After Pesach 5721, three bachurim returned to Eretz Yisroel. We came to the army with some optimism and said: Here, the bachurim are coming back. The response: We’re waiting

for another 167...”

After continual pressure, the involvement of various people, and the yeshiva’s commitment that the k’vutza would return – the long-awaited exit permit was issued, but for one month only...

The “exit permit” was not the only hurdle the young bachurim had to overcome on their way to the Rebbe. In those days, the cost of a transatlantic airline ticket was twelve hundred liras, which amounted to the equivalent of six months’ salary for the average Israeli worker!

“Our job, as T’mimim, was to sit and learn, so naturally we never dreamed of going out to work!” Rabbi Kaplan recollected. “Looking back, I don’t know where I managed to get together the money for the trip.”

A PROPHETIC P’SAC DIN

The “k’vutza” arrived in 770 at the end of Elul 5721. Rabbi Kaplan

will remember Simchas Torah 5722 always:

“We washed for bread at sixty-three in the evening, just before sundown, and the farbrengen continued until half past four in the morning. At around one o’clock, the Rebbe suddenly passed his hand over his holy forehead and began to speak about the Jews suffering in Russia. The Rebbe sobbed bitterly; then he turned to those assembled and said: Come, let’s issue a ruling in the beis din of the lower worlds – enough!

“It gave me the chills. I didn’t understand what was happening – we’re celebrating Simchas Torah! Why is the Rebbe crying? The following day, one of the non-Jewish workers told us that arrests of Jews had been made the previous night in synagogues all over Russia.”

NACHAS FOR THE REBBE

After Tishrei, the “k’vutza”



WHEN YOU RECEIVE AN ORDER FROM THE REBBE – IT MUST BE FULFILLED IMMEDIATELY!

One day, Rabbi Nachum Kaplan was hit by an attack of severe abdominal pain. He thought that it was something that would eventually subside, but even after a few days of rest and taking medication prescribed by his doctor, nothing seemed to help. On the contrary, the pain got worse and he understood that there was something seriously wrong. He wrote a letter to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, explaining the situation and asking for a bracha. He placed the letter in a volume of *Igros Kodesh* and received an answer regarding a Seifer Torah dedication. The Rebbe wrote how the writing of a Torah scroll is a segula for health and parnasa, bringing the well-known statements from the Baal Shem Tov.

“I immediately realized what the Rebbe meant,” Rabbi Kaplan recalled. “Several months earlier, it had been decided to write a Seifer Torah for Shikun Chabad of Lod, as a result of several major accidents that had occurred in the community. During the preparations in raising the funds for the Torah scroll, I was appointed as a member of the committee to organize the writing of the Seifer Torah. However, we hadn’t done much recently towards promoting the campaign, and the writing hadn’t even started.

“I understood that I needed to take some action on this matter, and as a result, I would merit to become a proper vessel to receive a bracha for good health. In the meantime, however, the situation only worsened, and I had no choice other than to go the hospital.”

Rabbi Kaplan arrived at the hospital down to his last ounce of strength. He was immediately sent for a comprehensive battery of tests, and the seriousness of the problem was quickly discovered – bleeding in the digestive tract causing a considerable loss of blood. The hemoglobin level had fallen dangerously low, to the point that it constituted a literal danger to life. The doctors explained that if, G-d forbid, he would have come in only a few hours later, there would have been nothing that they could do.

Rabbi Kaplan was hospitalized and immediately began to receive blood transfusions. “As I lay in the hospital, I understood that the first stage of the miracle was now taking place, as the Rebbe had granted me health, for if I would have come a few hours later...”

Five days later, Rabbi Kaplan was released and sent home. The doctors ordered him to rest for a period of several weeks. While he did rest at home, in the meantime, he started working most vigorously to fulfill the Rebbe’s instruction on the Seifer Torah writing. Two weeks later, a ceremony was held for the start of the actual writing, special certificates were issued for contributors, and the committee began the process of selling letters.

“You have to know that when you receive an answer from the Rebbe, you must give thanks for the bracha while simultaneously fulfilling the Rebbe’s instructions,” said Rabbi Kaplan, as he concluded his amazing story.

(As told during the “All-Moshiach Shabbos,” sponsored by Matte Moshiach, 5764)

went in for yechidus, together with ten bachurim from America. They were traveling on the Rebbe’s shlichus to strengthen the yeshivos in Eretz HaKodesh, while the Israeli bachurim had come to strengthen the yeshiva in 770. The Rebbe gave guidance to the k’vutza regarding their responsibility, and asked them to submit a monthly report on what is happening with them.

The Israeli “k’vutza” members devoted themselves to their Torah study with great energy, while giving special attention to the younger bachurim who needed support and encouragement.

“We didn’t leave 770 to go anywhere. We sat and learned in the upstairs study hall constantly. My place was literally next to the door that opened towards the hallway leading to the Rebbe’s room. The door was open, and the Rebbe often passed by and we didn’t even notice because we were so immersed in our studies. Afterwards, the Rebbe would mention on different occasions about how much nachas this gave him.”

Weeks passed in the meantime, and the expiration date for the army’s exit permit was rapidly approaching. “As soon as we arrived, we submitted a request for an extension of the permit. An extension was granted until Yud Shvat, and we naturally tried to extend it longer. However, this additional request was rejected, and we were forced to leave Beis Chayeinu. Prior to our departure, each k’vutza member received a silver dollar and a *Tanya*. In those days, distributions of this type were extremely rare.”

ONE MORE MINUTE WITH THE REBBE

Now there arose a new problem: The “k’vutza” members did not have any money to pay for their return

Rabbi Kaplan speaking
before Chabad supporters



flight back to Eretz Yisroel (since they hadn't returned on the originally scheduled date, they forfeited their return ticket). The bachurim requested assistance from the yeshiva administration, but received a negative reply. In the end,

the Rebbe ordered the administration members to pay for the return tickets of all k'vutza members in full.

"The *'Tzeis'chem L'Shalom'* send-off prior to our return to Eretz Yisroel still lives on in my memory. I remember how we sat on the bus, and the Rebbe came out of 770 to escort the k'vutza. I sat and watched the Rebbe, and then the vehicle began to move. At that very instant, it suddenly hit me: We're leaving! The bus continued to pull away from 770, and the Rebbe remained standing and looking at us. I wanted so much to yell: One more minute! Just one minute..."

R' Nachum returned to the yeshiva in Lod. Two years later, he was married, and then began to work as a teacher in the Chabad Talmud Torah in Lod. Around this time, Rabbi Yaakov Katz (who today serves as the rosh yeshiva in Kfar Chabad) left in order to teach in the Kfar Chabad yeshiva, and Rabbi



A picture that Rabbi Kaplan received with the caption: "To Rabbi Kaplan from the Levy family – a memento from the bar-mitzva of our son, Yosef Avichai"

Nachum Kaplan took his place, which he filled for fifty-three years, until 5765...

"MIVTZA TORAH" FOR ALL THE PEOPLE

When Rabbi Kaplan reached his senior years, he retired from his teaching position with the Talmud Torah. However, it quickly became clear that this was only to enable his new (and no less vital) career to get underway.

At first, Rabbi Kaplan considered sitting in kollel and learning Torah without any disturbances. However, a good friend thought otherwise, and told him: You will teach others!

Rabbi Kaplan accepted the challenge and established a study framework for Jews in their golden years. "This is a lifesaver," he said with much enthusiasm. "There are those who enter their retirement, and stare at the sky and count the stars. Instead, we sit in shul together and learn the Rebbe's sichos and halachos in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch."

It's not always easy to convince an adult that he can both learn Torah and enjoy life at the same time. There's naturally the "yetzer ha'ra" that gets involved, but Rabbi Kaplan doesn't give up: "Thank G-d, I'm a bit of a nudnik. I don't settle for just once and I don't let up. I meet with people, I call them on the phone, and I'm unrelenting."

In this unique kollel program, run for several hours each day, Jews participate from all religious circles and backgrounds. Many who don't come on a regular basis still participate whenever they have a few hours free. Rabbi Kaplan's secret: a little love seasoned with a lot of patience. Everyone joins in the learning and the reading, and each person is at a level where he can understand.

EVERYTHING BEGINS AND ENDS WITH MOSHIACH

Another area where Rabbi Kaplan has been most active for several years is his “community gatherings.” There is virtually no synagogue in Lod that doesn’t know Rabbi Kaplan. Every Shabbos, he would go out to several shuls, reaching everyone in town during the year.

As the years passed and walking great distances became more difficult for R’ Nachum, he replaced his Shabbos drashos with weekly Torah classes at the various synagogues, teaching at each location as per the request of the participants. Some learn Gemara, others prefer Mishna, while elsewhere they learn only Kitzur Shulchan Aruch. “I saw that anything above and beyond that would result in a ‘breaking of the vessels’ for them,” Rabbi Kaplan explained with a smile.

Regardless of the class’ subject matter, Rabbi Kaplan will always find a way to instill the unique sparkle of chassidic teachings, combined with pearls of wisdom from the Rebbe.

A special emphasis is placed upon classes on the subject of Moshiach and the Redemption. “Everything starts with Moshiach and ends with Moshiach,” says Rabbi Kaplan. “Once someone told me, ‘Rabbi, if Moshiach is so important – why don’t we mention him all the time?’ I told him, ‘We ask for this three times a day in the Shmoneh Esrei prayer, and not just in one bracha. We say, ‘He who revives the dead,’ ‘Redeemer of Israel,’ ‘He who gathers the dispersed of His people Israel,’ ‘He who rebuilds Yerushalayim,’ ‘cause Your servant Dovid to flourish,’ ‘restore the Divine avoda.’ Suddenly, he noticed how central the subject of Moshiach was in his prayers.”

THE MASHPIA AND THE YOUNG

When you come across Rabbi Kaplan’s vitality and “chassidishkait,” coupled with his simplicity and warmth, you understand immediately why the community chose him as their mashpia. When we ask about the demands of the position, Rabbi Kaplan says: “A mashpia must always be ready. There’s no such thing as ‘I don’t want...’”

He is known throughout the city as ‘Rabbi Kaplan from Chabad.’ Many people invite him to participate in their simcha or *ch”v* in their time of mourning. “When you come for such an event, you can’t just leave,” he said. “One asks you to come for a chanukas ha’bayis, another asks you to come for a bar-mitzva or a yahrtzait. Of course, all such events are an opportunity to spread the teachings of chassidus and the Rebbe’s announcement of ‘Here comes Moshiach.’”

“Several years ago, we rented a car and turned it into a ‘Mitzva Tank’ with the help of a few posters, and we passed through the city’s neighborhoods. When we came to the ‘Ben-Gurion’ neighborhood, we suddenly heard yelling above us: someone was calling to us from a porch on an upper floor. We went upstairs, spoke with the people there for a little while, checked the mezuzos, and then departed. Twenty years later, a Jew suddenly approached me in shul and asked: Do you remember me? After you visited me with the mitzva tank – I began the process of doing t’shuva.”

Rabbi Kaplan also finds the time to sit and farbreng with young people who haven’t found their place in currently existing programs of study.

“We have a very fine young man here named Avichai Yaakobi, who gathers the young people and

conducts activities with them. Once I was sitting with them at a farbrengen, singing, ‘*Ribbono Shel Olam*.’ Suddenly, one of the attending youths said with much emotion: ‘I remember how Rabbi Avichai taught us this song.’ Every Friday, I used to teach my students a chassidic niggun, and it remained etched on his heart even fifteen years later.”

When Rabbi Kaplan was asked where he gets the strength, he doesn’t understand the question: “Isn’t this what the Rebbe wants?” he says quite simply.

WE CAME TO SEE THE REBBE!

“I was with the Rebbe for Simchas Torah 5738. This was after the ‘heart attack’ and we were not privileged to see the Rebbe that Yom Tov. On Motzaei Shabbos, the Rebbe gave a special sicha from his room via microphone. Engraved in my memory was the melodic way the Rebbe said the words: ‘And may our eyes behold [Y]our return.’ All of us felt the Rebbe speaking with us: We had come to see the Rebbe, to see Moshiach, and suddenly there was this terrible concealment.”

With G-d’s help, we should merit that “our eyes [shall] behold” the King in all his glory, down in this physical world, immediately, *mamash*.

ב"מ

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