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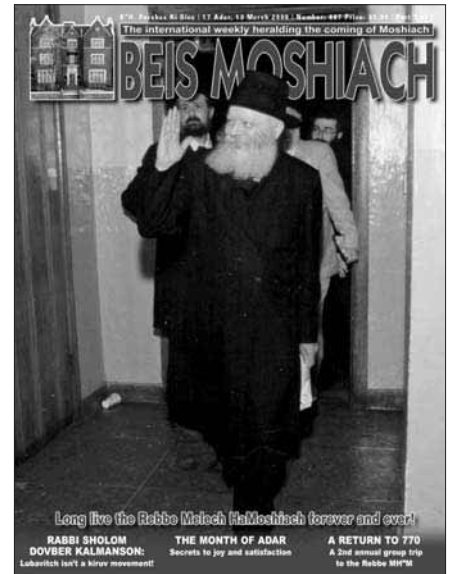
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THE HALF-SHEKEL OF REDEMPTION

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

The “coin of fire” atones for the sin of the Golden Calf. The two characteristics of the yearly half-shekel tithe are quality and enthusiasm. A coin has a fixed value of known quality. Fire is unlimited, transformative passion. Offering these two aspects of the soul atones for and burns away the sin that delayed Redemption.

The tragic incident of the Golden Calf occurs in this week's Torah reading. However, the Torah reading does not begin with the story of the people's transgression. Rather, it begins with the process of atonement. G-d instructs Moshe to take a census of the Jewish people. Each male over twenty was to give a half-shekel; by counting the half-shekels, the number of able-bodied men can be determined. This half-shekel was to be a yearly tax; from the funds collected the communal offerings would be bought.

When Moshe argues with G-d not to destroy the people, G-d relents, but declares that “in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.” This means that whenever the Jewish people are punished for a sin, included with it is a small measure of punishment for the transgression of the Golden Calf. By the same token, every sacrifice, every atonement, surely expiates a little of the sin. Thus, the yearly contribution of a half-shekel per male over twenty repaired, in part, the damage caused by the sin of the Golden Calf.

(As an aside, we may note this particular tithe – a yearly half-shekel per head – was limited to men over twenty because they alone, and not the women,

participated in the transgression.)

There is an immediate and obvious connection between the required donation of a half-shekel and hastening the Redemption. We know that the revelation at Sinai elevated not just the Jewish people, but the whole world. The residue of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge was rinsed away. Once the Jewish people received the Torah, the world was ready for the final Redemption. Had the Jewish people remained steadfast and faithful, Moshe would have been Moshiach; the age of Redemption would have begun with their entrance into Israel.

With the sin of the Golden Calf, however, Redemption was delayed. Before Moshiach can come, or at least, before there can be an open revelation of Moshiach, every trace of the transgression must be removed, consumed by fire, as it were. Thus, every act that transforms the calf back into a molten material brings us one step closer to Redemption.

This brings us to the Torah reading. G-d tells Moshe, “When you take the sum of the children of Israel according to their number, then they shall give every man an atonement for his soul unto the Lord . . . This they shall give . . . half a shekel of the shekel of the sanctuary . . . as an offering to the Lord.”

So, given that the half-shekel is an “atonement for the soul,” a reparation of the sin, so to speak, it seems fair to ask why. What special features of the half-shekel make it an instrument of atonement, and therefore Redemption?

The uniqueness of the half-shekel confused even Moshe. When G-d said, “This they shall give,” it wasn't clear to Moshe exactly what should be given. Moshe did not understand how the people could atone

for the sin of the Golden Calf. Therefore, as Rashi comments, G-d showed Moshe a coin of fire which weighed half a shekel and explained, like this coin shall they give.

Giving the half-shekel atoned for the sin of the Golden Calf, and that sin delayed Redemption; when we give a half-shekel, in a spiritual sense, we hasten the Redemption. Accordingly, by understanding the two elements of G-d's command, we can understand the form of atonement that brings Redemption.

The two elements we deduce from what G-d showed Moshe: first, G-d showed Moshe a coin; second, the coin itself was made of fire.

The half-shekel was given once a year because it functioned as a sacrifice: just as one could not give part of a sacrifice, so too the half-shekel could not be given piecemeal, at different times. For the same reason, the half-shekel had to be a coin. Since the shekel is a measurement, the command to give a half-shekel might mean a certain amount, not a fixed object. Maybe G-d wanted a half-shekel's weight of silver, regardless of its form? No, G-d wanted specifically a coin.

The difference is that weights and measures are quantitative. A coin, on the other hand, is qualitative. It has a certain value independent of its size or mass or volume. Thus, G-d demands as an atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf a coin, not a measurement. The act that initiates Redemption must have a certain quality, not quantity.

For a similar reason, the coin G-d showed Moshe was made of fire. The difference between fire and the other elements – earth, wind and water – is the difference between quality and quantity. Earth, wind and water have dimensions and mass and occupy space. They are limited to a location and cover a certain area. Fire, on the other hand, is unlimited. It has no particular form nor can it be contained within some vessel. Fire continually spreads; it naturally extends and increases itself.

Obviously, our yearly half-shekel tithe cannot be a coin of fire. But on an inner, spiritual level, the coin of silver we give reflects the Heavenly coin of fire. It is this which brings atonement and as a result, Redemption.

Let us remember that G-d said the half-shekel would serve as an atonement for the soul. It was more

than a sacrifice. A sacrifice brings forgiveness, and therefore a removal of the impurity caused by the sin. But an atonement for the soul means a redemption, a replacement of the soul, as it were. The person becomes a new existence.

Purification takes place through immersion in water or immersion in fire. The first washes away the transgression, affecting only the external attributes and unintentional actions. Returning the soul to the furnace, so to speak, affects the essence of the person, transforming him.

The sin of the Golden Calf affected the essence of the Jewish people. By showing Moshe a "coin of fire," G-d indicated that atonement must come from the "fire of the soul." The Jewish people must give their very essence to rectify the transgression and bring the Redemption. Further, this giving must be total and all at once. Like the half-shekel, the "coin" that is the "fire of the soul" – one's very essence – cannot be given with reservations, conditions or in stages. To reach the level of Moshiach, there must be a transformation, one that reveals we have become a new existence.

But G-d revealed the coin of fire only after Moshe admitted his confusion. Similarly, we must recognize our intellectual limitations before the essence of our soul can be revealed.

The practical lesson for us is obvious: we can sometimes lose enthusiasm for study of Torah, for performance of mitzvos, for acts of goodness and kindness, for

preparing the world for Moshiach. At such a time, the Moshe within us – the wisdom of our soul – becomes confused and disoriented. But when we realize that we have become desensitized, indifferent to G-d's Will, that itself arouses G-d's help and He shows us the coin of fire. The essence of the soul is transformed and revealed. Even a mundane act is atonement; the simple mitzva rectifies the transgression and brings Moshiach. If this applies to our own actions, all the more so it applies when we help another Jew do a mitzva.

Enthusiasm eventually brings comprehension. But even more, when we are "fired up," so to speak, it hastens the fire, the Divine revelation, that will rebuild the Temple. By giving our half-shekel, by devoting our very essence to G-d's Will, we hasten the coming of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 16, pp. 381-393)

***When we realize
that we have
become
desensitized,
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the coin of fire.***

SIMCHA – HAPPY WOMEN SHARE THEIR SECRETS

Interview by H. Ben Yishai

*In honor of this month of joy, we held a panel discussion with three women who, in addition to being mothers to large families, are also involved in chinuch. * They spoke about simcha as a supreme value, offered tools to achieve it even under pressured circumstances, and highlighted the joyous aspects of life as Chabad women.*

What is simcha? How do you define it and what can you compare it to?

Shulamis: I would compare simcha to the nutrients in soil that nourish the plant and help it grow. David HaMelech says “*Shmua tova tedashen etzem*” – good news fattens the bones. Simcha improves the essence of anything and everything associated with it. Simcha is the essence of a Jew, and essential to one’s service of Hashem.

A woman, is compared to the earth, from which everything in her home grows. Simcha is the fertilizer that permeates her, helping to nurture all kinds of things in the best

way. We women need to constantly endeavor to be b’simcha in order to have the “minerals” to make our home bloom.

We are a generation that has a lot of frumkait, but not enough Yiddishkait. Of course it’s correct to be concerned with hiddurim, segulos and external things, but the simple, wholehearted, inner Jewish warmth too often gets left by the wayside. Simcha is indicative of a genuine connection to Judaism, just as when one goes to a wedding, the level of simcha of the participants makes it immediately apparent who is related to the chassan and kalla.

I would also compare simcha to a

generator that provides the energy that drives action.

Shani: I would compare simcha to light. What is light? It’s something that illuminates, that shows you how to give to others. A person who is happy is open and receptive to guidance as to how and what to do. You are the light that radiates outward and then people are drawn to you because light attracts.

We are drawn to happy people, especially those whose simcha comes from the light of Torah and mitzvos, the inner desire to do what Hashem wants. This is the source of my simcha, and is achieved by every Jew when he connects to that ratzon. Failure to do so arouses sadness, and nobody wants that. Simcha is everything!

If I want to uplift my life through simcha - and it’s not always easy to do, because the reality is filled with pressures and demands - the solution is to take action, and then simcha is a byproduct. One mitzva leads to another, resulting in happiness and satisfaction. This is a Jew’s true simcha.

A person may become despondent because they feel they are not as successful, patient, or whatever, as they would like to be. If

they choose to do Hashem's will, they will become happy, which changes the situation. Action is better than throwing up your hands in despair, because pushing yourself to do something imbues you with the necessary strength to do it. You've transformed yourself with simcha.

Sarah: I know that my simcha and positive thinking serve as a magnet, so I would define simcha as a magnet. The Law of Magnetism or Attraction, and the power of positive thinking both come into play. If I'm happy, I draw more simcha toward me, and the opposite is true as well.

How you do see simcha as a key value?

Shulamis: Real simcha is to internalize my gratitude to Hashem for my being a Jew. Just as Ahavas Hashem is the root of all the positive mitzvos in the Torah, simcha is the means to achieve it. Simcha is to be happy with myself, because simcha goes hand in hand with love.

The verse says, "Because you did not serve... with joy and goodness of heart from abundance." A person doesn't need a reason to be happy, doesn't need to wait for many conditions in life to be met, or for "abundance", in order to be happy. If happiness is conditional, then only once I have x, y, or z will I be happy. It's enough to rejoice in our identity

PARTICIPANTS:

Mrs. Sarah Cohn

Educational consultant at the Midrashiya for baalos t'shuva for Yad L'Achim

Mrs. Shulamis Landau

Principal of the Chabad girls' high school in Beitar Ilit

Mrs. Shani Plonit

Physical education instructor for the Chabad School in Yerushalayim

as an observant Jew. That's true simcha, an unconditional simcha.

Shani: It's of key importance to me that the children be happy – my own children, and the children who attend the school where I work. Baruch Hashem, my children are very sociable and happy. The children who attend my school are from a segment of the population where life is very hard. We educate the children with positive attitudes that they can take with them in the future. We do our best that the children be satisfied and leave happy.

I try to convey to them that every child is special, that every child is valuable for himself. I constantly try to convey warmth and love and show I care. I observe them.

Children are sociable by nature, so a child who is withdrawn is usually sad, in need of understanding and extra efforts to bring him simcha. I give him a smile, a candy, a job, talk to him. I give a lot of encouragement and wherever I am – even at home – they cling to me.

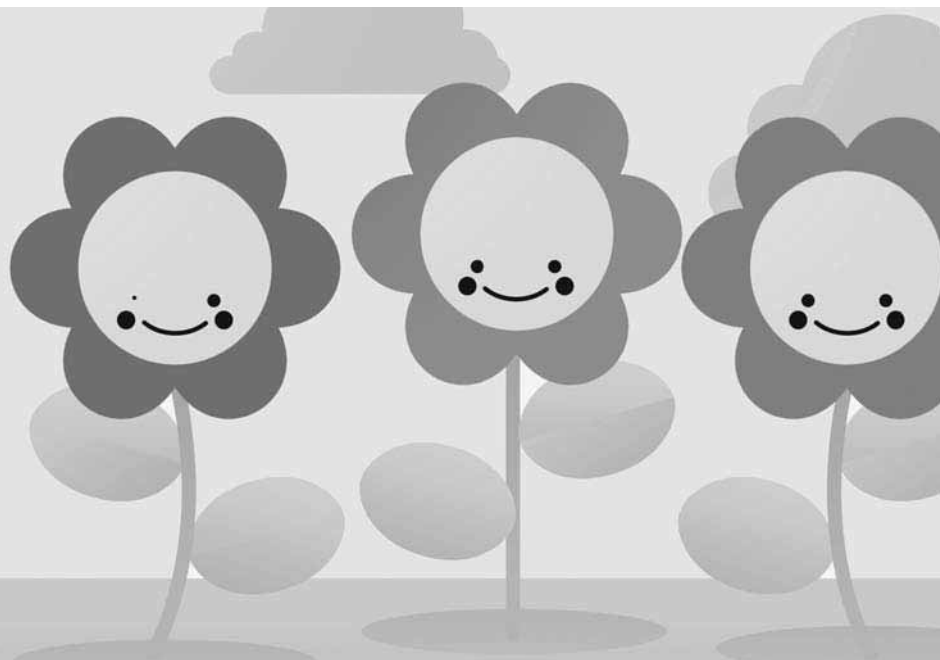
Sarah: Simcha is liberating, it opens you up. It's inner direction, a kind of button inside that operates the simcha system. Sometimes I smile to myself... Nobody lacks for tzaros nowadays, but the act of smiling lifts me up out of sadness. It comes from within and affects the entire day.

What are the tools you have to convey simcha to yourself and those around you?

Shulamis: Life is a river. Tzaros are the troubled waters and humor is the life preserver. Humor is wonderful; it creates a positive atmosphere and dispels a negative one. Laughter enables a person to float so that the Jewish mind can come up with creative solutions. It's only when the mind is free that it can find solutions.

Another tool I use is meditation. I look to find the "full cup" in every situation. You end up with simcha and the awareness that everything Hashem does is not necessarily readily understood - it's all supernatural. I sometimes focus my concentration on: "The one who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him." "In You Hashem I trust" or chapter 23 of T'hilim.

Simple actions like smiling, dancing, clapping, playing with a baby, thinking positively or praying in our own words are things that make us happy. We need to be proactive and not sit and wait for simcha to come knocking at the door of our heart.



Shani: Moving and playing sports, as well as doing chesed, makes me happy. You can't stand still. Even spiritual joy means not standing in one place. When you rise above yourself, it makes you happy. Sometimes you're not in the mood, but give of yourself anyways. You're sitting with the children and everything just clicks. You're not thinking about yourself, about your tiredness and how hard it is, but about them. You suddenly feel – wow! I did well with them even though I was tired!

If I'm alert and feeling fresh, it happens naturally. The real work is when I'm not at my best and have to find the simcha within me. There is enormous satisfaction in knowing that you did the right thing at the right time. It's a spiritual and physical delight. For example, real simcha for me is to learn Chassidus with a chavrusa who understands me.

Sarah: I have a number of techniques that I use to maintain a pleasant atmosphere in the house. For example, I sometimes write notes. It's a quiet message which makes a big impact. Instead of constantly reminding the children to shut the light, I write notes and stick them on the light switch: "I'm sure that from now on you will remember to shut the light." Or near the shoe drawer: "I'm looking for the other shoe and ask that both be put back in the shoe drawer." It takes the sting out of it. I said my piece, but in a way that doesn't poison the atmosphere. It's chinuch with a smile.

If I'm feeling down, I am not embarrassed to put on a tape and dance for five minutes. While I dance, I pray and speak to Hashem. It makes me happy. Smiling is turning our lips upward, heavenward. Another thing I do is remind myself to "think good and it will be good!"

What creative solutions do you have for tense situations?

Shulamis: Sometimes, I tell myself that Hashem sends certain situations my way saying, "Bubbele, let's see ... you haven't been in this situation before ... how will you react?"

You've recently given birth. It's Friday and nothing is ready. You have to have absorbed a lot of Chassidus and have worked a lot on yourself in order to be happy and relaxed under these circumstances.

I strengthen myself with emuna and bitachon, that He is everything and there is nothing but Him. I try to compare my relationship to Hashem to that of a baby and mother. It is the baby's dependence on us that arouses our love; the more dependent the child - the more supportive the parent. The more we depend on Hashem, the more love Hashem shows towards us.

It gives me a lot of strength to think about Hashem's two-fold love towards us: As His beloved only children and also as a bride to a groom. It is not enough to simply be dependent, since a wife has a certain role to play towards her husband. In the same way, the Jewish people have the title of "my wife." Hashem "needs" us in order to have His Presence dwell in the world. He is dependent on us, so to speak. By fulfilling the mitzvot, we are filling His needs.

Shani: I don't always have a solution. Sometimes, in pressured situations we simply pick up and go stay with our parents.

Sarah: My days are often so jam-packed that I don't know where to begin. It seems impossible to get everything done in one day. I will then look at the Rebbe's picture and say, "Rebbe, I know that you are praying for me now. I am confident that I will have *k'fitzas ha'derech* and I'll be successful."

Or sometimes I feel that I am not

prepared enough for a class and I say to Hashem: "I will jump into the *teiva* (words of Torah and t'filla) and you arrange everything for me; put the words in my mouth, give me an appropriate story to tell." When I throw it on Him, I see *siyata d'Shmaya*.

For example, we have a class which is sometimes held out in the yard. In the yard there is a mango tree which drops lots of big leaves, making it difficult to give a class. I say, "Hashem, I know that just as You have never abandoned me before, You won't abandon me now either." Then, seemingly out of nowhere, a girl comes over and offers her help.

Chassidus also gives me lots of simcha and the tools to handle problems. If one of my children is sick, I put 14 shekels – the cost of medicine – into a pushka and ask Hashem that the tz'daka should be instead of medicine. When I take my child to the doctor, he tells me that it's nothing serious and will go away on its own; he doesn't need to take anything.

Just using the word "simcha" makes me happy. When there is a job I have to do that seems overwhelming, I say, "Yes, gladly; I'd be happy to do it." That changes everything and makes it easier for me.

Can you give some personal examples?

Shulamis: This year, against all logical considerations, we opened a Chabad high school in Beitar Ilit. Two weeks before the school year began, nothing was settled. We didn't despair. We did all we could, including davening and asking the Rebbe for brachos.

With amazing Hashgacha Pratis, Hashem sent us the right tools at the last minute in a way that was unexpected and l'chat'chilla aribber. In addition, each girl who came to the school received a bracha,

guidance and specific instructions from the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh.

Our educational approach is based on seeing the good in everything and strengthening the strong points. We try to instill this in the girls at every opportunity. For example, at one of the farbrengens, each girl said her name and how she tries to live up to it. Chana - a woman's mitzvos and the Rebbe's mother. Geula - she is a girl who brings an atmosphere of Geula. A few girls whose names are Chaya Mushka - they bring an atmosphere that is scented and sweet. Shifra - she improves the mood and points out positive things.

I try to emphasize the good to the teachers and the entire staff. The underlying approach at all times is respect, love, and simcha. Humor is a great tool for gently instilling these messages, while making sure to laugh with someone, not at them. We also put our trust in the girls, which naturally makes them ashamed to do foolish things and betray that trust.

Simcha is of utmost importance. The teachers we employ need to be happy people, because the girls need that to be their model. If the girls are happy, it is advantageous for them throughout their lives, including in shidduchim, and it's important for them to know that. What makes us happy? Doing Hashem's will. "The commands of Hashem make the heart rejoice." During Adar we play music at recess that the girls produced themselves and they dance.

Shani: In my parents' home they suppressed their feelings. When my uncle died, although we were sad, life went on and we never spoke about it. I, too, am afraid to open up, to be empathetic when someone close to me is going through a painful situation. When it's hard for me, I think - whatever Hashem does

is for the best, whether I see the good or not. We need to seek the good in everything.

Wherever your thoughts are, that's where you are. Even in a hopeless situation, where you don't see a way out, you need to start doing and things flow from there. Sometimes it's the despair that gets me going.

Sarah: When I was very young, around six years old, two of my brothers died. It was very difficult for me, because I didn't yet have the tools to deal with it. Emuna becomes stronger as the years go by.

In Eishes Chayil it says, "And she laughs on the last day." Can a person laugh on the day he dies? We don't need to wait - we have to live

We need to be proactive and not sit and wait for simcha to come knocking at the door of our heart.

now, this moment, when things seem at their worst. There is good hidden within. I remind myself, "This too is for the good," and it doesn't take long before Hashem shows me the good.

How does the fact that you are a Lubavitcher woman infuse your life with joy?

Shulamis: Baruch Hashem, I grew up in a happy Lubavitcher home. We saw the cup as full and were full of thanks to Hashem. My mother is a very giving and forbearing person. This is a tremendous gift and a great place to start from, but I also work a lot on myself. I can't imagine how it could be otherwise... It's definitely a great z'chus that I am thankful for every

day.

Shani: My connection to Chabad has given me a lot of bitachon and this bitachon gives me simcha. You see that you live within k'dusha. Chassidus taught me - and I've internalized it and I feel and know - that I am constantly in Hashem's sight, and I have all the Rebbeim who protect me. I have who to consult with and he knows what is best for me. Knowing that you have on whom to rely, and doing the shlichus for which you came to this world, is the greatest simcha.

Learning Chitas gives me a lot of simcha, and *Tanya* gives me a lot of tools for a life of simcha. Chassidus is like the delicacies that we make on Friday in honor of Shabbos - it's a taste of Olam HaBa.

I used to get insulted and angry easily. Through *Tanya*, though, I learned that there is nothing to be angry about it. When someone says something hurtful, even if they later regret it, it's still painful at the moment, but *Tanya* says that the world is dependent on the person who keeps his mouth closed and doesn't answer back.

Even when I have what to say, I restrain myself because I know how important it is to keep quiet and to ask for a yeshua for someone (since at that moment, when you don't respond, it's an auspicious moment in Heaven). Sometimes I have to answer when I am suspected of something wrongly. Then I say, "We'll talk about it." If the person said something hurtful, the Alter Rebbe says that it's like death and accepting it with silence atones for sins like a *taanis dibbur*.

There was a time when it was very hard for me financially. I have a large family, sons-in-law who are learning, tuition, etc. We wrote to the Rebbe and the answer was: "If you believe that giving 10% to tz'daka makes you wealthy, then believe that 20% will make you

wealthier.” I nearly fell off my chair. I thought, “If I make 4000 shekels and have to give 800 away, I won’t be left with much.”

The Rebbe continued: “Why does it say in the Torah, ‘tithes you shall tithe,’ next to ‘do not cook a kid in its mother’s milk?’ The more a kid suckles the more milk the mother gives, when you would think that the more it takes from the mother the less there would be. So too, the more you give, the more bracha there is. Logically, there should be less milk, but it doesn’t work that way.”

We had emuna beforehand, too, but it was shaky. It was hard giving 10% to tz’daka, but we saw that the more we gave over 10%, the more we had. Parnasa depends on emuna and tithing. I know someone who gave 50% to tz’daka who is getting wealthier day by day.

On a visit to the US, I noticed that people interact even if they’re not friends. We could use more of that here in Israel. Often people refrain from greeting people with a smile not because they’re angry, but just because they have things on their mind. I decided to start greeting people with a smile and a kind word, and hopefully it will help and have a ripple effect.

There’s a story of a villager who had never seen a mirror. He traveled to the big city and stayed in a hotel, and as he went up the stairs, he noticed an angry looking man glaring at him through a silver window. He went to the manager to

complain about the grumpy people staying in the hotel, whereupon the manager, realizing what had happened, told him, “Come up with me and smile at the man, and he will

smile back at you.”

We need to broadcast love and simcha. The attitude we project is like a boomerang – it always comes back to us.

~CORRECTION RE ISSUE #685~

The article, **The Rebbe Was Thinking of Us in War-Torn Warsaw**, contained inaccuracies:

1) In the account of the miracle which surrounded my birth, the lady traveled by herself to Vilna where she consulted the doctor. The doctor absolutely made no mention of aborting the fetus. He told her that in order to have a healthy child, she must return and be in the hospital for the last two or three months of the pregnancy in order to hopefully have a healthy child. When she returned, her husband did not agree to do anything without asking the Rebbe first. The Rebbe's response was, and this is a direct quote. “She should remain at home and Hashem will bless her with a healthy living child.” After the baby was born healthy, he wrote a letter to the Rebbe stating that his wife had, thank G-d, a healthy boy, and he asked for a brocha that he and his children should be genuine chasidim. He placed the letter into a Tanya and he gave some money for tzedokah.

2) My father was not present at the Yechidus, as he had already come to America (in 12/32). I have only one sister. Everybody cried except me, as I was too young to understand.

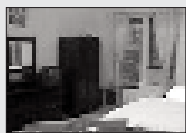
3) We were living not in Manhattan, but in Brownsville, Brooklyn. My father woke up the entire family, not only myself.

4) On p. 12, the response of the Rebbe should read, “when the Jewish people are experiencing tzaros, the simcha can only be expressed in the heart, it cannot be displayed (rather than “ought”; and it “does not need to be”)

There are further minor inaccuracies, which will not be discussed now. When this article was published last year in the Hebrew edition of the magazine, I called up the editor at that time, and told him about the inaccuracies. So you can imagine my shock when it was printed in the English edition, still containing the same wrong information! The Rebbe is always very careful that when a story is transmitted, that all the details be accurate. It would also behoove your writers to verify the accuracy of all future stories.

Rabbi Y. Gordon

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B"H 16th of Adar, 5769

MO'OS CHITTIM

To All Anash and Temimim wha' Sholom U'vrocho!

Excerpt of a Sicho Kedoisho, which speaks for itself

The Jews will be redeemed solely through *tzedakah*... In particular, this applies with regards to the matter relevant at present, *maos chittim*, *tzedakah* given for Pesach that includes all of the needs of the holiday.

Our involvement with this must be in a manner of *ratzo* and *shov*, i.e., **one should not wait for the *tzedakah* collector, but instead, rush to give him *maos chittim* on his own initiative (*ratzo*). Moreover, even after he has already given *maos chittim*, he should go and give a second time (*shov*)....** For one who has been blessed should increase his gifts according to the blessing he has been given. And who ever increases will be given additional reward. Indeed, there is no limit to this additional reward. From the sichos Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel-pikudei, 5750

It is well known that "Kupas Rabbeinu" endeavors to continue implementing all of the holy projects and activities which the Rebbe has established. Amongst these activities is the Rebbe's practice to extend financial aid to those families in need of their various Pesach necessities.

Accordingly, we are at this time urging and requesting each and every Anash member and Tomim uhj ha to contribute generously to "Kupas Rabbeinu," in order to enable the administration to provide for these families and thus afford them with the opportunity to celebrate Pesach with contentment and joy.

Regarding this Mitzvah it is stated: "Whoever increases (in giving) is praiseworthy."

Unfortunately, the amount of families in need of this financial assistance is more than generally assumed. As such, the more generous your contribution to "Kupas Rabbeinu," the greater the number of families receiving assistance will be.

And since, with regard to all Mitzvahs we are instructed to act with Simcha and zest, it is all the more pertinent with regard to the aforementioned, as it is of paramount importance that the funds be received and distributed as soon as possible.

In the merit of Tzedakah which hastens the Geula, may we merit the true Geula Shlaimah, with the revelation of Melech HaMashiach - The Rebbe Nasi Doreinu, immediately, Mamash.

Chag HaPesach Kosher V'Sameach, *Vaad Kupas Rabbeinu*

P.S. 1) The traditional "**Magvis Yud Shevat, Purim**" can also be sent at this time, as well as all other Magvios.

2) All funds should be sent to the following address only; Donations are tax deductible

KUPAS RABBEINU, P.O. Box 288, BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11225

In Eretz haKodesh: KEREN KUPAS ADMU"R, P.O. Box 1247, KIRYAT MALACHI – ISRAEL

THE LIGHT OF YEHUDA RETURNS TO 770

By Avrohom Ber

This year, dozens of residents of Ohr Yehuda participated in the second annual group trip to the Rebbe. For some, it was the first time, for others, the second, but for all, it was an experience to cherish.

LOCAL REVOLUTION

One of the cities where Chabad activities have blossomed in recent years is Ohr Yehuda. Among the mosdos that have sprouted in the past four years are preschools and a yeshiva k'tana, each of which are attended by over 100 students, as well as a yeshiva g'dola.

Mosdos help a k'hilla grow and indeed, the number of people davening at the Chabad house has grown tremendously, with dozens of new baalei battim participating in t'fillos and farbrengens.

The shul has expanded and now it's bustling all week with minyanim and shiurim. It's a lively center for this growing k'hilla of over thirty Lubavitch families.

The credit goes to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Friedman, who has been the shliach in Ohr Yehuda

for close to two decades. For many years he "sowed with tears," but in recent years, as new young forces joined him, he has begun seeing the fruits of his labor.

Things really took off with the proposal of organizing a group trip to the Rebbe. Rabbi Sholom Dovber Hendel, rav of the shul and rosh yeshiva, and Rabbi Harel Rachimi, the one responsible for everything taking place at the shul and the initiator of the idea, took charge of the group.

Thirteen baalei battim of the Ohr Yehuda community participated in the trip, which took place last Chanuka. The trip was so successful, and the impressions so powerful, that it was decided to make the trip again every year. This year's trip was extra-special, as it was a year of Hakhel, when the

people go to hear the king.

The large group was obvious at the menorah lighting each night and at the t'fillos with the Rebbe, where some of them had an aliya to the Torah. Even during the quiet hours of the evening, when most of the T'mimim and Anash were on mivtzaim, some members of the group could be seen in 770, trying to get in yet another moment in that holy place.

"The only way to get people to want to go to the Rebbe," advises R' Hendel, "is to give them the feeling that *you* live 770. When they see that you live it, they will naturally also want to be with the Rebbe."

R' Rachimi worked quietly behind the scenes throughout, to make the trip a success. Many members of the group noted his efforts in the bureaucratic details, such as expediting visas and arranging places for all of them to stay.

"Before leaving Ohr Yehuda," said R' Hendel, "we held a festive goodbye party at the yeshiva. The travelers were hoisted onto people's shoulders with song and dance. They were deeply moved."

"Our daily schedule in New York was as follows," relates R' Rachimi. "In the morning, after mikva, we

went to learn Chassidus in 770 from booklets we had prepared. Then we joined the Rebbe's minyan. It's impossible to describe how impressed and excited they were by these t'fillos, especially on Shabbos. One of the members of the group whispered to me, 'I don't understand how the Rebbe does not appear. Look at all these Chassidim, praying with such intensity, looking at the Rebbe's chair and expecting his hisgalus. Why doesn't the Rebbe appear?'

"After the davening and breakfast we went on an outing. The focus remained 770, and we would always return in time for Mincha with the Rebbe and the menorah lighting. Each night, we would farbreng, sum up the day and prepare for the next day."

Rebbetzin Hendel was responsible for the women (and children) who were part of the group. After all, women also went to hear the king in a Hakhel year.

I CAME TO THANK THE REBBE

The night of Zos Chanuka, the entire group gathered for a final farbrengen to sum up the trip. It was a refreshing reminder to those who are used to living in 770, of what a powerful impact the place has on someone for whom it's their first or second visit.

They may not have looked like Lubavitchers, but their impressions of their visit to the Rebbe are like those of any ardent Chassidim traveling to their Rebbe. They sat for hours, relating miracles that occurred before their trip, their experiences in 770, and resolutions for the future.

The following are a few of the stories that were told.

Yossi Ben Dor was the only member of the group who is not a resident of Ohr Yehuda. Yossi joined the group after Rabbi Yaakov Reinitz of Lud, his personal mashpia,

recommended that he go to the Rebbe on this organized trip.

"I've been connected to Chabad and the Rebbe for over twenty years. After a bracha from the Rebbe caused my neighbor to recover from a rare and serious illness, many people in the neighborhood, myself included, became close to the Rebbe.

"However, I never went to the Rebbe before this trip. For many years I deeply regretted not having

gone to the Rebbe before 3 Tammuz, but it never occurred to me to go at this point. That is, not until a few weeks ago, when R' Reinitz told me about this organized group from Ohr Yehuda.

"I called R' Rachimi, and he was happy to have me join the group. I have been extremely impressed by his dedication to all the details of this trip. He took care of me from the very start, when I needed an



expedited visa from the American embassy. He had me speak to R' Tuvia Litzman of Kiryat Malachi, who helped me tremendously in obtaining the visa. He took care of all the technical details of ordering a ticket and the trip itself.

"My trip to the Rebbe was also an expression of thanks for the miracle he did for my father. A few

years ago, my father suffered a stroke. I hurried to his house, where he was lying on the couch, and brought him to see R' Reinitz.

"When we got there, I told R' Reinitz about what happened and he said, 'You must write to the Rebbe.' I sat down to write the letter, and the answer I opened to in the Igros Kodesh was for a speedy recovery.

"I trusted in the Rebbe's bracha, but didn't anticipate just how speedy the recovery would be. When we left R' Reinitz's house, my father already seemed much better. By the time we got home, he felt back to normal. It was an open miracle, one which I was privileged to witness with my own eyes."

THE REBBE REWARDED ME FOR THE TRIP

R' Rachimi relates:

One of the most moving stories was the one told by someone who went on the first trip to the Rebbe. This is the story as I heard it from him, a few weeks after we returned to Eretz Yisroel:

I wasn't fully comfortable about joining the group. After weeks of vacillating, my desire to be with the Rebbe outweighed the 'heavy item' on the other side of the scale, the fact that I was leaving my wife, who was in her ninth month of pregnancy, at home.

In keeping with the tradition that opening the Aron Kodesh is a segula for an easy birth, on Rosh Chodes Teives I got *P'sicha* in 770. It was a double z'chus, since on Rosh Chodesh Teives they also take out the Rebbe's Torah and I was privileged to carry it to the bima.

Shortly after my return from the Rebbe, a few days before my wife gave birth, she had a dream. In her dream, she was in the hospital about to give birth and the doctors were telling her that there was a problem. She turned to me in the dream and asked me to write to the Rebbe, and the answer we opened to in the Igros Kodesh was that the Rebbe wants to know the baby's name.

When she woke up, she told me the dream and I was taken aback. I know that the Rebbe doesn't usually mix in to what the parents should name their child, yet my wife had dreamt that the Rebbe wanted to know the name.

That day we discussed names. I wanted one name and my wife wanted another, but we finally settled on one. I wrote to the Rebbe and informed him of our decision. We opened to an answer of blessing and success and that there should be good news.

A few days later, my wife went for a routine checkup and the doctor noticed that there was a problem with the baby's heart rate. He immediately sent her to the hospital, where upon further examination, they found that whenever she had contractions, the baby's heart rate dipped precipitously.

The doctor said the baby had to come out immediately. On 24 Teives, the yom hilula of the Alter Rebbe, my wife gave birth to a healthy baby boy. When he was born, they saw that the umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck and was choking him, but Baruch Hashem, he was fine. That's when we realized the significance of the dream about the Rebbe and his bracha. It was a big miracle. I felt that the Rebbe blessed us for visiting him.

We named the baby Menachem Mendel, of course.

A PROPER THING

Yaakov Tal, who was sitting with us, smiled as he heard Yossi's story. Apparently, he had a big part in Yossi's coming to the Rebbe.

"I joined the group a year ago and it made a tremendous spiritual impression on me. It was an amazing experience. When I heard that there would be a trip again this year, I was torn. On the one hand, I couldn't take vacation from work, nor was I able to manage it financially. On the other hand, the powerful experience the year before and the desire to be with the Rebbe in a Shnas Hakhel made me want to go again. I decided to write to the Rebbe and let him determine whether I should go or not.

"I wrote to the Rebbe and asked for his bracha. The answer I opened to blew me away. It was in volume 6, p. 291 and it says:

Sholom u'v'racha

In response to your letter – which does not say when you wrote it – in which you express your positive desire to come here for the upcoming High Holidays and your wife agrees to this, as was the case last year, in my opinion it's a proper thing...

"I couldn't have gotten a clearer answer! The Rebbe wanted me to come to him! But it depended on my wife's consent. What can I tell you ... my wife is a tzadeikes. We discussed it. We have three children and it isn't easy for a woman to be left alone. In addition, my son was going to have surgery at the end of Chanuka [which turned out fine,

Baruch Hashem] and it was obviously difficult to leave the house at this time. However, she encouraged me to go.

"It was still hard, especially the monetary end of things. I wrote to the Rebbe again and asked for a bracha but the answer was in Yiddish and I didn't understand a word. I took the answer to R' Reinitz for him to translate it, and the answer contained explicit brachos. When he asked me what I had written, I told him about the group from Ohr Yehuda that was planning a trip to the Rebbe. That's how he heard about the trip and got the idea that Yossi should go with the group."

"My second experience was very different from the first. I remember my initial feeling the first time I entered 770, my amazement by the place, the sense of holiness. You connect what you saw so many times on a video and say to yourself, 'The Rebbe stood here,' 'the Rebbe walked here,' 'the Rebbe farbrenged here,' 'this is the paroches that the Rebbe touched,' and it all comes together. Only after walking around for a while could we digest the fact that we are in the place that we had constantly seen in pictures and in video.

"The second time, by contrast, as soon as I walked in I already felt I had come home. I belonged. It was all familiar; it was all a part of me.

"The truth is, for the first half of Chanuka, it didn't really register. Friday night we ate the seuda and farbrenged with R' Eli Eliav and R' Hendel, who spoke very strongly about being privileged to be with the Rebbe. It suddenly penetrated that I had the privilege, and I was with the Rebbe. The rest of Chanuka was completely different.

"On Shabbos afternoon, at the time the Rebbe would farbreng, R' Eliyahu Dovid Borenstein, shliach in Bologna, Italy, farbrenged with us.

His farbrengen made a deep impression on me. For hours he told miracle stories about the Rebbe and about the holy place we were in, stories that instilled in us the awareness of where we were and before whom we stood.

"Rabbi Shmuel Krauss, Rabbi Schwei's secretary, took me around 770 and told me fascinating things

"In the end, I cancelled all those jobs and took the trip to the Rebbe. The trip helped me very much and gave me peace of mind, causing me to devote more time to the really important things: t'fillos, learning, family."

about the place that I had never heard before, such as that when the Rebbe entered 770, he would raise his head and look in the direction of the Rebbe Rayatz's room. His stories are engraved deep in my heart.

"I can't really put it into words. The only thing I can say is that in order to have the great experience we had, one must go in person to the Rebbe, to 770. There is nothing like it."

THE FAMILY GOT MORE THAN I DID

Erez Chaim, another member of the group, felt the same way.

"I can't describe it in words. It's an incredible experience. It's a holy place. You can feel it the entire time. I would recommend to anyone who wants to feel k'dusha, to go to 770. This is even more so in this Hakhel year, a very important year to go to the Rebbe. To get the real experience, you have to really use the time you spend in 770. Every moment must be devoted to learning and davening. This is the best way to feel the k'dusha there."

Erez meant every word he said, for he was in 770 practically all day, learning and davening.

"It was very moving coming back to 770. Last year, the experience was so amazing that this year, I brought my whole family. They enjoyed it very much. I think that whoever goes to 770 should go with his family, assuming that they appreciate where they are going and seek k'dusha and not simply touring."

Amir Daoun, a successful event planner, told about the rainy night he took a wrong turn on his way back from an event in the north of the country and ended up "by chance" at the new 770 replica that Rabbi Freiman had built in Zichron Yaakov.

"I got out of my car and just looked at 770. It aroused a tremendous yearning to return to this holy place. I decided that I would do what I could to help have a 770 built in Ohr Yehuda."

His last visit just strengthened his resolve to build a model of 770 in the city where he lives. Throughout the year he looks forward to the trip to the Rebbe and he literally counts the days.

"The end of the secular calendar year is the busiest and most profitable for me. This year the test was greater than ever. Last year I had thirty commissions, but this year the number of events doubled. I was somewhat ambivalent over whether

to go and lose out on all these customers. It was hard for me to turn them down, especially when a few days before the flight I got a call from a celebrity. That event would have given me lots of publicity.

"In the end, I cancelled all those jobs and took the trip to the Rebbe. The trip helped me very much and gave me peace of mind, causing me to devote more time to the really important things: t'fillos, learning, family. I made a commitment to join the weekly Baruch Hashem shiur in shul."

Zohar Danson, manager of a successful currency exchange company, was the last speaker that evening. He had also gone to the Rebbe the year before and this year he brought along his family. When he was asked by R' Hendel what he got from the Rebbe, he said:

"I sincerely believe that what I got from the Rebbe doesn't make a difference. I'm not saying I didn't get anything; on the contrary, I got a lot. However, it's nothing compared to what my family got and just for that it was worth coming to the Rebbe.

"Last year, when I returned from the Rebbe, I had so much to say but had nobody at home to share it with. My family hadn't been to the Rebbe and they couldn't understand what I was so excited about. This year, we all went, and we've all shared the same experiences."

THE REBBE IS WITH US

After Chanuka, we met with some members of the group who had not spoken at the farbrengen. Motti Azar and his wife joined the group for only three days.

"Our friends, Keren and Oren Darzi, told us they were going to the Rebbe and we decided to join them for at least the first days. It was a spiritual delight, the kind of delight that people are not generally familiar with.

"From the first moment that I walked into 770, the warm atmosphere made me feel completely at home. It is obviously a very holy place. We saw authentic Judaism there. I think that I made great strides towards Judaism and Chabad on this trip.

"I went home completely different. I feel much closer; I try to read more books of Chassidus, to learn what I can; I am more particular about Mincha and Maariv. I've told all my friends that I plan on returning next year, and

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recommended that they join me."

Dovid Amarani just became acquainted with Chabad recently. His father died six months ago and when he and his brothers looked for a shul for Shacharis, friends suggested the Chabad shul.

"I really connected with the people in the shul, especially Harel Rachimi. He's someone who literally sacrifices his own needs in order to give to others. I was so impressed to see their concern for everyone - that everything be fine, that the t'fillin be fine, the mezuzos be fine, and that

you yourself are fine. It's very rare these days to find such caring for others."

Dovid is having a Torah scroll written *l'ilui nishmas* his parents, which he will give to the Chabad shul, of course. When Dovid was asked to join the group traveling to the Rebbe, he was happy to do so.

"It was quite an experience - one that everyone should have. It's a happy place, a place that is alive. Being there and seeing all the Chassidim and hearing all the stories of mesirus nefesh is something really special. I was especially moved by the Rebbe's farbrengen Shabbos afternoon. Knowing that the Rebbe is with us, and the Chassidim standing there raising their cups for l'chaim and asking the Rebbe for what they need, is something you don't see anywhere else in the world."

Said Rabbi Rachimi, "Traveling to the Rebbe alone is completely different from bringing a group. When you go alone, you have the time to daven at length, to sit alone in 770 and learn a sicha, to think about the Rebbe. When you are responsible for a group, you are constantly thinking about and arranging the next step. You don't have time to think about yourself. But whenever I speak with one of the people who went to the Rebbe and he tells me about how moving the experience was, and that the experience will be translated into good resolutions, I say to myself - those two difficult weeks were worth it."

R' Hendel concludes:

"On our first night in 770, the first night of the first group, I dreamt that we were coming in a big van and the Rebbe came out of his room and looked us over. That was the best answer that I could get from the Rebbe about how pleased he is that these people took the time and spent large sums of money just to travel to him."

SHE RISKED HER LIFE FOR CHASSIDIM

By Shneur Zalman Chanin

*Instead of leaving servitude for freedom and slavery for redemption, they had gone from the frying pan into the fire. * A teenager's mesirus nefesh for a band of venerable Lubavitcher refugees as they escape post-war Poland.*

"These are the names of the Jewish people who came to..." Poland: R' Yona Eidelkopf of Rostov and his family; R' Dovid Bravman and his wife and her brother, Leibel Raskin; the wife of R' Yeshaya Denberg who was the sister of R' Nissan Nemenov, her son and daughter; my father, R' Chaikel Chanin and my mother and two sisters; R' Shimon Yakobashvili (R' Simon Jacobson) with his wife and two sons; R' Zalman Levitin and his family; my father's sister, with my uncle, R' Chaim Minkowitz, and their two daughters; my aunt Mussia Nimotin; R' Nissan Nemenov, his wife and family; the family of R' A.L. Slavin and some other bachurim whose names I don't know. The total was 46 people.

These 46 souls left the Egypt of our generation and were the first group of Chabad Chassidim to cross the Russian border with counterfeit papers of Polish citizens. They were the ones who paved the way, as it were, for the Chassidim still in Russia to follow them.

Subsequent groups of Chassidim used the same methods, more or less, as they did. (In order to avoid accusations of being historically inaccurate, I will note that there were individual Chassidim who crossed the border into Poland before my parents but my parents were among the first Chabad Chassidim who left as a group.)

Following that first group, nearly 550 people fled Soviet Russia that summer. In the winter of 1947, another 500 Chassidim managed to escape.

THESE ARE THE JOURNEYS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE...

These are the journeys my parents traveled after they left the Land of Egypt, a.k.a. Russia, the land of enormous tzaros and imprisonment, of scarcity, servitude and hardship.

They left Tashkent and camped in Moscow; they left Moscow and camped in Lvov which is Lemberg;

they left Lvov on the 21st of Sivan; they crossed the border of Poland and they camped in Krakow, the birthplace of the Rema.

They left Krakow and went southward to the border of Czechoslovakia; they left Czechoslovakia and camped in Austria; they left Austria and camped in Camp Hof in Germany, they left Camp Hof and camped in Camp Poking, and they remained there for a long time.

They left Poking and camped in Paris; they left Paris and went westward and sailed the Atlantic for the United States, the country of chesed, to the neighborhood of the king in Crown Heights, New York.

From my father I heard several times that as soon as they crossed the border, even before they had a chance to breathe freedom into their lungs, they had to fight for their lives. Instead of leaving servitude for freedom and slavery for redemption, they had gone from the frying pan into the fire.

The constant fear of the NKVD which they experienced in Soviet Russia never left them; it was merely exchanged for the unceasing fear of the unknown. The group of Chassidim included pregnant women, children and babies, which obviously made the traveling that much more difficult. They knew that any misstep was likely to cost them their lives and they realized that any little obstacle could put an end to their hopes.

FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE

My father never told me of his activities in Poland. I recently found out that he did not stay with the group the entire time but left them in Krakow and moved from town to town with his friend, R' Dovid Bravman. His instincts as a public askan apparently did not allow him to rest and he felt responsible to continue and lead the group further. As soon as he discovered that they had to flee for their lives, he looked for a way to do so in the least dangerous way.

Mrs. Rivka Lieberman, daughter of that special Chassid, R' Chaim Meir Liss, recently divulged to me a side to this story that I had never heard about before. She told me the roles she and my father played in the story.

Mrs. Lieberman lived with her parents in Poland until the outbreak of war, when they fled from Poland to Russia. They were sent by the Soviets to Siberia, where they remained until 1943. At that time, the government released all Polish citizens and they were permitted to settle throughout Russia.

Her father sought a suitable place to live. Of course he desired to live among Chassidim. After much wandering, the family arrived in Samarkand, which was a Chassidic center. There tragedy struck. As her father stood on line for bread, he was attacked and murdered by an Uzbeki, leaving Mrs. Lieberman an orphan.

Immediately after the war, when Polish citizens were allowed to leave Russia and return to Poland, Mrs. Lieberman and her mother legally left Samarkand and went to Lodz. She and her mother were the first of Anash to leave the Chabad community for Poland.

Before Mrs. Lieberman and her parents had fled to Russia to escape the Germans, they had seen only

the beginning of the destruction the Germans wrought. They never imagined the actual extent of the devastation that had occurred in Poland in their absence. They thought that they were returning home, to the small town near Lodz, and they hoped to find their home and at least some of their possessions intact.

Arriving in their hometown, however, they found neither their home nor their property. The neighbors glared at them with hatred in their eyes. No doubt they

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were afraid they would have to return what they had stolen. The refugees found it hard to believe that in devastated Poland, where its citizens were still licking their wounds inflicted on them by the Germans, the anti-Semitism would be so strong.

Rivka Liss (later Lieberman) and her mother understood that remaining in that town was very dangerous for them. They hurriedly left for Lodz, the big city. They regretted having left their fellow

Chassidim in Russia.

With the help of the Joint and compassionate Jews, Rivka and her mother found a temporary roof over their heads, but they constantly looked for a way to leave accursed Poland.

UNFAMILIAR CHASSIDIM BUT “CHASSIDIM EIN MISHPACHA”

One fine day, my father and Dovid Bravman knocked at their door in Lodz. They explained they had sought them out to help them escape westward in hopes of a better life.

Rivka Liss had heard of my father but did not know him or R' Dovid personally. She was thrilled to meet them. For her and her mother, these were Chassidim, and “Chassidim are one family.” They were friends, with the same Rebbe and the same ideas, and it made no difference whether they knew them from before or not.

My father and R' Dovid told her that they had just come from Russia with a group of Chassidim, and that they had officially left as Poles. Of course, they had no intention of settling in Poland, but wanted to travel westward and leave Poland. However, they had a serious problem in that not a single one of them knew Polish. In these difficult times, when it was dangerous for a Jew to travel in Poland, never mind an entire group, they had to have someone along with them who knew Polish. If they were stopped on the road, they needed someone who knew Polish fluently who could represent them.

They asked Rivka Liss, who spoke fluent Polish, to join their group. They would take her and her mother with them to freedom. When her mother said she had no money for the trip, he promised them that he would take care of all

of their expenses.

How did my father and R' Dovid know that she was in Lodz, and how did they manage to locate her among thousands of refugees?

To this day, Mrs. (Liss) Lieberman does not know the answer to that question.

"We were looking for a way to return and live among Chassidim once again. Of course we agreed to the arrangement. I was a young girl and didn't realize what a dangerous task I was taking on."

TERROR ON THE TRAIN

Thus, without realizing the tremendous responsibility and danger involved, Rivka Liss, a girl of 18, joined the group of Chassidim in their journey from the

border cities in the east of Poland to the southern border of Poland-Czechoslovakia.

She related a terrifying episode that happened on the way. On the train trip from Lodz to Krakow, where they would meet up with the group of Chassidim, each of them was lost in thought. My father and R' Dovid were afraid lest the NKVD be on their trail, while Rivka Liss was nervous about the Poles. She sat and trembled as she listened to a conversation between two anti-Semitic passengers. They looked at my father and R' Dovid, two obviously Jewish men, and expressed sorrow that Hitler hadn't exterminated all the Jews and said they would love to throw the two of them out the window of the speeding train. She chose not to tell

my father and R' Dovid, figuring they had enough to worry about.

She joined the group in Krakow. Together they traveled across Poland by freight train, until the border of Czechoslovakia. When she had finished her task, the Chassidim asked her to return and make the trip again with the next group of Chassidim. She bravely made the trip 4 or 5 times, until she finally crossed the border herself.

To this day, Mrs. (Liss) Lieberman doesn't realize the extent of her bravery. She says, "I owe your father thanks for the chesed he did for me and my mother. Thanks to him, I was able to leave Poland and travel with the Chassidim until we reached safe shores."

The Rema's shul in Krakow



YOU MADE NO MISTAKE!

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

“As we were getting into the car, which was still parked in the first lot where we had come by mistake, the manager came towards us. ‘Guys, you must tell me,’ he asked directly. ‘Who actually sent you? What exactly were you looking for here? Why did you come to my car lot on a Friday afternoon, and specifically this week?’”

Anyone who consistently goes on “mivtzaim” can tell of numerous instances where he tangibly felt that he was operating solely on the strength of the m’shaleiach – the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. Sometimes complicated and even annoying questions that one has never considered before arise, and we astonish ourselves while a clear, appropriate, on-the-mark answer passes our lips. At moments like these, we know with absolute certainty that someone put the answer into our mouths.

Many such stories of Divine Providence and open miracles circulate among the T’mimim, especially regarding Mivtza T’fillin.

Last week, I encountered several T’mimim in ‘Beis Chayeinu’ who

had just returned from a brief shlichus in Chicago. Their sparkling eyes and faces full of expression were testimony to the fact that they had something most important to say – and I wasn’t disappointed. It turns out that they hadn’t quite recovered from the thrilling and awe-inspiring story they had experienced the previous Friday, when they had gone out into the city’s streets to give Jews the opportunity to put on t’fillin.

“On Thursday, the 11th of Shvat, we left 770 for Chicago to participate in a Seifer Torah dedication at the local Moshiach Center, scheduled for Sunday evening, the night of Chamisha-Asar B’Shtat. The Torah scroll was

written by Rabbi Avrohom Fine, in memory of his son, who had passed away at a young age. We departed New York on Thursday afternoon and arrived in Chicago the following morning, going directly to the local mikveh and then to the Moshiach Center to daven Shacharis. At the conclusion of davening, we went to have breakfast at the home of Rabbi Yoel HaKohen Caplin. Rabbi Caplin is a shliach in Kasul, India, but he resides in Chicago at the times when there is no tourism in Kasul.

“Breakfast turned into a lively farbrengen, and at its conclusion, we decided to go out on Mivtza T’fillin and spend our Friday in Chicago in an appropriate manner. The Jews of Chicago are not localized to any particular area, so we turned to Rabbi Avrohom Fine, who works with Jews throughout the region, and asked him where he would recommend we go to do mivtzaim.

He gave us the address of a car garage run by a Jew, an estimated 20 minutes away. He told us that the manager, Avrohom Hurwitz, has very warm feelings for Yiddishkait and would certainly be delighted to meet us.

“As we approached the location, we saw a large lot filled with cars. Glad to have found our destination relatively quickly, we parked our car in the lot and looked for the office.

“As we left our car, one of the workers, a Gentile of Latin American origin, approached us and we asked him where we could find Avi. He raised his eyebrows in puzzlement, and said that he didn’t know anyone by that name employed there. We naively thought that the Jewish manager also had a non-Jewish business name that was used more commonly in such circles. We asked him if the owner was in fact of Jewish origin. When he replied in the affirmative, we said that this was the man that we meant, and he led us to the boss’ office.

“We happily entered the office and encountered three men – the owner and two others. We hesitated as to which one we should approach. The face and outward appearance of the man sitting in the manager’s chair was not particularly Jewish – blue eyes and grayish hair. After a few moments of uncertainty and hesitation, we got up our nerve and asked him if he was Jewish. We were most pleased when he said that he was.

“What do you want?” he asked us. We replied that we came to put on t’fillin with him.

“The man appeared rather surprised by our reply. ‘You didn’t come to buy a car?’ he asked in puzzlement, trying to figure out what brought these religious young men here.

“No, we haven’t come to you to buy a car,” we told him, certain that his responses were a sign that he was looking for some way to get us out of his office as quickly as possible. We could see that he was truly confused by our questions.

“A brief discussion ensued, in which he informed us that he hadn’t put on t’fillin since his bar-mitzva. ‘Why should I now interrupt this lengthy period of not putting on



Rabbi Avrohom Fine

t’fillin?’ he inquired pointedly. He seemed to be asking us to convince him.

“By this time, we were rather perplexed. While he was giving us the impression that he just want us to leave his office, we felt that he also wanted us to stay and chat with him and continue answering his questions. It was a most peculiar situation, yet one familiar to many who go out on mitzvaim.

“There was a tinge of hesitation in his voice, and we sensed he was leaving us an opening to try to

convince him. After a brief discussion, he conceded, ‘If you can convince my two employees here, who are also Jewish, I will join them and put on t’fillin as well.’

“We could tell that a powerful war was waging within him. He both wanted and didn’t want to put on t’fillin. Despite his obvious detachment from Torah and mitzvos, he didn’t ask us to leave his office, and was providing us with opportunities to convince him.

“His employees, who were much younger than him, both had obviously Jewish names. Yet they, too, responded with cynicism, stating that on numerous occasions, they had been asked to put on t’fillin for a monetary price. We wouldn’t give up on them so easily. Once we were already here, we would use the full measure of our convincing efforts to crack this hard nut.

“Seeing that his employees were unwilling to relent, the boss finally got up from his chair, rolled up his sleeve, and agreed to be the first one to put on t’fillin. His two employees followed suit shortly thereafter.

“The ice broken, a warm and pleasant conversation ensued. The manager opened his drawer and pulled out a number of pictures of



his parents and grandparents, who had been very pious Jews. He told us that his grandfather had established this car lot seventy-five years ago, and it had passed to his father and then to him. After some time of sharing his family's history, he asked us, 'Tell me, who sent you here?' 'Avi,' we replied, referring to the shliach, R' Avi Fine. His eyes narrowed in puzzlement as he queried, 'Who? Avrohom Hurwitz? The competitor from across the street?'

"It was only then that we realized we had made a mistake, and had somehow missed the car lot of Avrohom Hurwitz, located right across the street.

"After exchanging pleasantries, we shook hands and warmly departed from the threesome, and proceeded to Avrohom Hurwitz's garage. He was very pleased to see us. It turned out that he had been in contact with Rabbi Fine for quite some time, and had already become much closer to the path of our forefathers. Of course, he was delighted to put on t'fillin with us and to hear a few words on the weekly Torah portion and the Rebbe's announcement of the Redemption.

"When we saw the hands of the clock ticking towards the onset of Shabbos, we quickly headed for our car.

"As we were getting into the car, which was still parked in the first lot where we had come by mistake, the manager came towards us. 'Guys, you must tell me,' he asked directly. 'Who actually sent you? What

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exactly were you looking for here? Why did you come to my car lot on a Friday afternoon, and specifically this week?'

"We replied honestly that we had actually been sent to the car lot across the way and had only come to him by mistake.

"He appeared very surprised and deeply moved. He then took a deep breath and said, 'You made no mistake! You really were sent to me!'

"Seeing our confusion, he proceeded to explain: "Two weeks ago, my father passed away, causing me much grief and sorrow. Unlike me, my father didn't completely break from the yoke of Torah and Jewish tradition. He tried to keep some of the mitzvos, particularly those connected with the Jewish holidays. It was important to him to feel Jewish. When he passed away, I decided that I must do some great Jewish mitzva for him so that he will look down upon me from Above and have a little nachas. After some deliberation, I decided to start putting on t'fillin – something that I haven't done since my bar-mitzva

celebration many years ago. I faced a problem, however, in that I didn't have a pair of t'fillin and have no connection to any Jewish community in the area to be able to buy or borrow a pair. For this reason, the implementation of my decision was postponed from day to day.

"And then you showed up at my office and suggested that I put on t'fillin! I had never before been presented with such a request, and was stunned when you came and asked me to do so. I was overwhelmed. My initial reaction was to refuse, due to the shock. I wanted to find out from where you had fallen or who had sent you to me – until I realized that this was the finger of G-d.

"On any other day, I would have quickly shown you out the door, but this time I was confused. It took me a few long minutes to collect my thoughts and fulfill what I had promised – to put on t'fillin..."

"Now it was our turn to be stunned. It's not every day that you have the privilege of seeing so clearly how everything in the world is guided by Divine Providence.

"We went back to the Moshiach Center happy and excited," concluded one of the T'mimim. "The entire shlichus to Chicago took on a much deeper and more serious dimension for us. We saw quite clearly how the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, the faithful shepherd, guaranteed the fulfillment of a Jew's good resolution, and we were privileged to be his shluchim to carry it out."

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BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

By R' Dror Moshe Shaul, Shliach in Dharamsala, India

“What t’mimus he has. A Jew in his twenties, who doesn’t even know it is forbidden to smoke on Shabbos, is anxious about being called up to the Torah for his bar mitzva.”

Dharamsala, a picturesque Indian village nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas far from the center of the country, attracts vast numbers of tourists, many of them Israeli.

Here, far away – both physically and spiritually – from any Jewish community, amazing things happen to them, in the Jewish sense. The following is one of the many, many stories of lost souls who find the truth in India.

Every year when Elul comes around, baalei t’shuva seem to appear out of nowhere. The blowing of the shofar each morning seems to awaken slumbering souls.

One morning, a tall, thin man dressed in rags and large sunglasses came to the Chabad house. His appearance exuded a complete lack of interest in the material world.

After tea and cake and a light breakfast at the Chabad house, he told us that he came from a kibbutz in the north of Israel and now he wanted to check out Judaism. Amos (fictitious name) had absolutely no knowledge of Judaism. After spending two hours learning a single



Mishna of Pirkei Avos with the Rebbe’s explanation, I asked him whether he wanted to put on t’fillin.

“What are t’fillin?” he asked. I told him that they are something you place on your head and arm in order to connect with G-d. I added that this is done every morning and some verses of the Torah are recited. It was like explaining to an alien who landed from Outer Space what food is.

Amos said he had to think about it because he wanted to understand it before he did it. I didn’t pressure him and casually asked him whether he had had a bar mitzva.

“What’s a bar mitzva?” he asked. I patiently explained that at the age of 13, a Jewish boy is called up to the Torah for the first time in his life. I told him that it wasn’t too late, and offered to make a bar mitzva celebration for him in shul that Shabbos. After a few cigarettes, Amos agreed to think about the idea.

In the meantime, he registered for a course in Kabbala, his first acquaintance with the Jewish soul as it is explained in Chassidus. The course is based on *Tanya* and is combined with several important introductions about Judaism in general. It is designed to provoke deep philosophical questions so that the answers of Chassidus will be properly appreciated.

Unlike the other members of the group, Amos had almost no questions. He’s a smart guy and he grasped everything he learned from me and a Tamim named Mendy almost immediately. Each day I brought up the topic of t’fillin, until baruch Hashem, after a week of intensive learning from morning till night, he finally consented.

He read the parshiyos with difficulty, both because of the lack of familiarity with the wording and because of the inexplicable emotion that overcame him.

The six years I have spent here

with my family are worth it for wondrous moments like these when a Jew leaves the unfortunate category of “a *karkafta* who did not put on t’fillin” for the category of “one who has a share in the World to Come.”

Friday, after preparing for Shabbos, Amos told me he was interested in a bar mitzva but he wanted more information. I explained it to him briefly. In order to avoid providing him with any excuses, I told him not to worry and that we would take care of everything.

When Amos arrived for Kiddush on Friday night, he seemed tense. Every few minutes he went out to smoke. As we went to wash our hands, he asked me, the next cigarette clutched at the ready in his hand, whether he would have to read

from the Torah the next day. I reassured him that all would be fine and he had nothing to worry about.

Mendy, who had been working with me to be mekarev Amos, was amazed. “What *t’mimus* he has. A Jew in his twenties, who doesn’t even know it is forbidden to smoke on Shabbos, is anxious about being called up to the Torah for his bar mitzva.”

The next day, the children accompanied me to shul, their excitement about this bar mitzva all the greater, knowing how hard it had been to get him to put on t’fillin. They had prepared candies, melted and sticky from the heat of the monsoon season, but it was all we had.

Amos was called up to the Torah on Parshas Ki Savo and Mendy read the Haftora. Amos was very moved

and barely managed to recite the brachos. The candies were thrown and everybody sang and danced, thus helping Amos take it all in a happy way.

Amos stayed with us until after Rosh HaShana. He continued to put on t’fillin every day and to study diligently. He learned that there is no smoking on Shabbos and made great efforts to refrain from smoking on this holy day.

One day, he left and traveled to the Chabad house in Rishikesh, taking the t’fillin I had given him, which were the first pair I ever received.

Until we meet at the Beis HaMikdash, Amos is continuing his inner journey, discovering his true identity.

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LUBAVITCH ISN'T A KIRUV MOVEMENT!

By Rabbi Sholom Dovber Kalmanson

*The army of the “soldiers of the House of Dovid” – established by the Rebbe Rashab, trained by the Rebbe Rayatz, and sent out to finish conquering the final strongholds of galus as laid out by the Rebbe MH”M – is a victorious army. All the abilities needed to achieve a complete victory were given to it by the Rebbeim. * If we only set aside our extraneous considerations, we would immediately finish the final war against those who “mock the footsteps of Your anointed one,” and bring the true and complete Redemption.*

At the farbrengen of Simchas Torah, 5661 (1900), the famous sicha – “all those who go out to the war of the House of Dovid,” which the Rebbe MH”M referred to as a prophetic sicha, was said. The Rebbe Rashab stated that there would be two stages of battle in the coming generations. The first fifty years would be spent countering “Your enemies who mocked Hashem,” and the next fifty years would be spent fighting against those “who mocked the footsteps of Your anointed one.”

In order to prepare soldiers for war, they have to go through basic training before they are ready for battle. The same is true in the “war of the House of Dovid.”

The Rebbe Rashab prepared the groundwork so that his students wouldn’t care about others and not be self-absorbed. This is comparable to “writing a writ of divorce for one’s wife,” that they don’t think about themselves. Though this would seemingly be a negative thing which lowers morale, here the results are

different. Chassidische soldiers know that they aren’t an entity that senses and feels itself, but they are completely devoted to the commander – “*hanachas atzmuso*” (setting aside one’s essence).

The Rebbe Rayatz prepared his Chassidim for war and delegated jobs. In his generation, the concept of mesirus nefesh was not an abstract idea but the daily reality. That was in the first fifty years, when the war was merely a preparation for the real battle of the “footsteps of Your anointed one.”

When all is ready for war, you need a general to lay out the goals to ensure victory. That general is the Rebbe. The Rebbe’s first mivtza (which is not so well known) is Mivtza Shmura Matza. I remember people wondering about it. They thought perhaps it was for fundraising purposes – maybe if they gave out shmura matza, they would get something in return.

What was the real reason for this being the first mivtza? Possibly since this is the first “Ani Maamin,” the “food of faith,” which gives us faith. The Rebbe went through all the 13 Principles of Faith until he reached the 12th, the belief in the coming of Moshiach (this is not the place to demonstrate how mivtzaim correspond to the other principles).

The Rebbe prepared groups of soldiers and sent them to war, as it says in the Torah, “you are approaching today ... do not be afraid for Hashem your G-d is with

you, to save you.” We need to know that we are going with “the power of that elder,” with the power of the Rebbe, and *yado ha’arichta* (his far-reaching hand) is with every shliach.

Today too, shlichus has all three components: putting oneself aside, *mesirus nefesh*, and knowing the goal.

HANACHAS ATZMUSO

The Rebbe once went on a mission for the Rebbe Rayatz to a certain Litvishe rosh yeshiva. The talmidim of his yeshiva, hearing that the son-in-law of the Lubavitcher Rebbe had come, went to talk to him in learning. The Rebbe didn’t answer them, so they thought he wasn’t knowledgeable. Once the Rebbe had spoken with the rosh yeshiva and fulfilled what the Rebbe Rayatz had asked him to do, he sought out those students and answered all the questions they posed to him in a most impressive manner.

When the rosh yeshiva heard about this, he asked the Rebbe: “Why didn’t you respond earlier? Why give them reason to mock you and the Rebbe? Couldn’t you have answered them immediately, at least briefly?”

The rosh yeshiva heard about this and he asked the Rebbe: Why didn’t you respond earlier, thus giving them reason to mock you and the Rebbe? Why didn’t you answer them, at least briefly?

The Rebbe answered: “I came here as a shliach of the Rebbe Rayatz, so until I spoke to you and fulfilled my shlichus, I could not carry out any personal business, however important. Now that I’ve completed the mission, I can talk about other things.

We must remember that while on the battlefield during a battle we have nothing else going on – no personal interests, nothing. When we conduct ourselves in this way, then we succeed. It can be hard, with all sorts of problems, but we will make it

through.

Rabbi Cunin relates that when he started his shlichus he owed \$50,000 and couldn’t sleep at night. “Now,” he says, “I owe millions. I sleep well, the banks can’t!” We have to work with the feeling that *they* can’t sleep and they will continue to extend us credit tomorrow.



The Rebbe once told such a shliach, “If you can’t take the heat, get out of the kitchen!”

MESIRUS NEFESH

Before going to war, there are a number of announcements: Whoever built a house and didn’t establish it should go home; whoever planted a vineyard and didn’t redeem it (referring to the fruits of the fourth year), should go home; whoever betrothed a woman and didn’t finalize the marriage, should go home, and then it says – whoever is afraid should go home. If he’s afraid about how to convey the message, about whether people will be

receptive or not, “go home” is the answer!

In truth, there is what to fear. If a shliach doesn’t say what the people want, he might not get money, or he may not be successful. He built a house or planted a vineyard, but is still fearful lest they won’t be satisfied. Maybe it will cause him harm. He is told to go home. A shliach is thrilled to find a *g’vir* (wealthy man) who is capable and willing to support his whole organization, but then the *g’vir* asks him, “Is it true that my wife is not Jewish? She’s called a *shiktza*?” If the shliach hems and haws, he should just go home!

The Rebbe once told such a shliach, “If you can’t take the heat, get out of the kitchen!”

The Rebbe did tell us to teach *inyanei Moshiach* and *Geula* in a way that it will be received in people’s intellects (*b’ofen ha’miskabel*). We need to think before we talk and plan how to present something. If we look at letters that were written after the Six Day War, when *Mivtza T’fillin* began, the Rebbe said it should be done *b’ofen ha’miskabel* then too. This phrase is not exclusive to *Mivtza Moshiach*. To quote “*b’ofen ha’miskabel*” in order to negate that for which the world was created, is the opposite of what the Rebbe wants! Obviously, it’s not supposed to be done in a wild way but it must be done; it’s the main shlichus these days.

The uniqueness of *Mivtza Moshiach* is totally different. The Rebbe said that when a Jew meets another Jew, the opening line should be, “We want *Moshiach* now.” We might think that’s wild and we should start with “*Sholom Aleichem*, how are the wife and children,” but the Rebbe assures us that if the shliach is normal in all other respects - in his dress, behavior and speech - if this is his only *meshugas*, it will be accepted.

The Rebbe referred to the story about the shliach, R' Moshe Feller. He wanted an appointment with Prof. Velvel Green, who did not want to meet with him. R' Feller tried and tried and in the end, in order to get rid of him, Prof. Green agreed to see him for twenty minutes at 4:00.

When R' Feller arrived for his much coveted appointment, he realized that the sun was about to set and he hadn't davened Mincha yet. He excused himself, put on his gartel and began to daven. Prof. Green was astonished. He had finally gotten twenty minutes and he was praying?! This itself affected him deeply. He began asking questions about Mincha, Judaism and so on, until he eventually became a Chassid.

If a shliach thinks that the Rebbe is not here, heaven forbid, he has a problem. There is a halacha that if someone is a shliach to deliver a divorce and while he is traveling to his destination, the person who sent him died, then the shlichus is cancelled. If someone is confused, and thinks the Rebbe is not here, he should pack his bags and go home.

Since I don't see anyone packing his bags, apparently everyone believes that the Rebbe is *chai v'kayam*. Everybody knows the truth; the only problem is the fear and discomfort. Everybody believes, but people are nervous about whether it will be accepted or not. That's why *mesirus nefesh* is necessary.

KNOWING THE GOAL

Before I went on shlichus, I heard the following vort:

The Gemara gives three reasons not to enter a ruin: 1) so people shouldn't suspect you, 2) because it could collapse, 3) because of *mazikin* (lit. damagers, referring to demons). It concludes: One time, I entered a ruin and met Eliyahu HaNavi.

Likewise, there are three reasons not to go on shlichus: 1) *So people shouldn't suspect you* – they challenge, “If you are so successful,

why don't you go into business? You're probably intending to skim off from the income...” 2) *Because it could collapse* – the mosad can topple and fall and then you'll look like a fool, 3) *Because of mazikin* – everybody knows what those are... (Sometimes they are even our own).

The answer to all this is – if you go with the strength of that “elder” and you meet with Eliyahu, we are sure to succeed.

The Rebbe said in the sichos of 5752 what the goal of shlichus today is – to make sure that everybody knows we are in Yemos HaMoshiach and we are preparing for it without trepidation.

Any qualms a person may have

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about this being the shlichus, and any proofs they may bring from 5715, are inconsequential. We're going forward, not backward. Don't look into the past for direction. When you get into the car of shlichus, you go forward, not in reverse. Move onward and don't be afraid of anything; nothing will stop you!

Remember that Lubavitch isn't a Kiruv movement. Lubavitch is an army that follows orders. Whatever the orders are, that's what we do.

There's the well-known story about a soldier in the Russian army who got frostbitten while on duty. He was punished along with the

admonition, “had you remembered that you serve the czar, you wouldn't have frozen.”

If a shliach thinks about the Rebbe, he won't get frozen. If he is frozen, that means he stopped thinking about the ko'ach of the meshaleiach.

The Rebbe explained that we saw the fulfillment of the first part of the Rebbe Rashab's prophecy, “Your enemies mocked You Hashem,” with the Yevsektzia in Russia. But who would have believed that it would be the frum people who are fighting the idea of the immediate revelation of Moshiach?

“Of course I believe in the coming of Moshiach,” these people assure you, “but who says it can be tomorrow?”

Yet look at the effect we've had on the world. In speeches, conversations, the music CD's – it's all about Moshiach. You go to weddings and hear Moshiach songs.

One Simchas Torah, a Misnaged came in to our shul and was discussing how we see all the signs indicating that it's Yemos HaMoshiach. You would have thought he was a Lubavitcher! Someone asked him, “Where did you learn all this?” The Misnaged answered, “What do you mean by ‘where?’ In yeshiva! In Halacha.”

Everyone remembers the reaction of the non-Lubavitch world when the Rebbe spoke about the Rambam, yet today, they are learning inyanei Moshiach and Geula!

In 5752, there was a women's Melaveh Malka in Montreal for Kabbalas P'nei Moshiach Tzidkeinu. A rabbi that I know, menahel of the Beis Yaakov, called me. He said, “Do you remember me?” I said, “Of course.”

He said, “What a chutzpa your N'shei Chabad has to invite my wife to the Kabbalas P'nei Moshiach! You can do what you want, but don't mix me into your things!”

I replied, “We've known each

other for many years. Look at what progress we've made. Twenty or thirty years ago, you never would have said 'do what you want, just don't mix me into it.' You would have been shouting at me that this is k'fira. Today you say, 'It's okay, just don't get me involved.'

"Don't worry. In another few years, you will *thank* me for inviting your wife. The Rebbe is conducting a train with hundreds of cars and you are in the last car. When the Rebbe got to the tenth station, you were at the first station. When the Rebbe started the inyan of shlichus, you screamed 'bittul Torah,' and about the danger of becoming corrupted by going far away from a place of Torah. Now, you are all involved in kiruv projects.

"The only differences in our approaches are these: (1) That the Rebbe says that outreach is not kiruv rechokim, bringing near those that are far, because none of us can say which Jew is closer and which is farther, and (2) we recognize that it's the Rebbe who is directing the t'shuva movement (as the Rambam says Moshiach 'forces' Jewry to improve their ways)."

I explained to him that we are moving from station to station and today we are at the station of publicizing Moshiach and Geula.

For the last fifty years, the entire Jewish world has been watching us. They know that we get orders from the Nasi HaDor and they always want to know what the current order is. The problem today is that there is confusion amongst ourselves, and Lubavitchers don't give clear answers about what the Rebbe said.

Since we broadcast confusion and uncertainty, of course they don't understand and they laugh at us. If we all sent the identical message, it would be accepted!

It's amazing. I recently saw a science magazine called *Discover*. It was all about how time will soon be shown to be nothing more than an illusion. Think about it – if a physicist can explain to the world at large that time is an illusion, why can't we, l'havdil, clearly say what the Rebbe says? Why is that any more unbelievable?

Many years ago, the Rebbe was asked why missionaries are so successful while we, l'havdil, are often unsuccessful. The Rebbe replied that it's because they worship a lie, in truth (i.e. they are sincere) while we worship the truth with falsehood (i.e. insincerely). If we were honest and didn't try to trip ourselves up with our own minds, we would be far more successful and the Beis HaMikdash would be built already. We don't realize that it is our own questions that causes others to be confused.

The Rebbe pleaded that we learn inyanei Moshiach and Geula, particularly from Likkutei Sichos. If we were experts in the subject, there would be no room for doubt and nobody would have difficulties.

There's the joke about two poor tailors, one of whom was always happy. The other tailor asked him, "How is it that you are always happy, without money?"

He replied, "Because Moshiach is coming."

"Nu, so what?"

"Then all the dead will come to life and we'll have plenty of work!"

"Yes, but all the tailors of all the generations will come to life too!"

"But we have the latest style..."

In order to bring Moshiach, we need the latest "style," the last sichos of 5751-5752.

We must speak about shleimus ha'Aretz and Moshiach. We can't sit back and relax; we must raise a commotion and cry out about these inyanim.

What are they fighting about? Though they want to throw us out of the entire country, the main areas of conflict are over Yerushalayim, Sh'chem, Chevron and Yericho. Rashi says that all of Yerushalayim is called Moriya. Moshiach is an acronym for: Moriya, Sh'chem, Yericho, and Chevron. It's a sign from Heaven that we must get involved in inyanei Moshiach.

When you conquer a city, the first thing you do is fight from outside. Then, when you get close to the wall, you make lots of noise, break the wall and conquer the city.

The Rebbe declares that this is the seventh generation, the last generation of galus and the first of Geula. We passed through the initial stages and now we are near the walls. Now we are up to conquering the city. The Rebbe tells us clearly that shleimus ha'Am is about shleimus ha'Aretz and getting all to believe that "hinei zeh ba".

The Rebbe is waiting for us. Our decision must be:

Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Melech

HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed!

(From a speech given at the Kinus HaShluchim banquet 5761)

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ALL BEGINNINGS ARE DIFFICULT

By Nosson Avrohom

*Rabbi Yonason Spitzer is a story unto himself. He came to Chabad from a Poilishe Chassidic family and a Litvishe yeshiva. * Today, he is a shliach in the Ein Kerem neighborhood, where they warned him, “There are seven churches, six restaurants open on Shabbos, and we don’t like religion or religious people. A pity you’re wasting your time here.”*

Ein Kerem is a picturesque neighborhood in the southwest of Yerushalayim. It’s somewhat removed from the city, surrounded by hills and dotted with olive and cypress trees. Ein Kerem’s appealing stone houses adorned with arches are now mostly inhabited by Israeli artists and sculptors. There is a certain charm to the paths between the houses in one of the most exclusive and sought after neighborhoods in Yerushalayim.

It is also a tourist attraction and a pilgrimage site for Christians who come to see the famous churches whose bells chime out the time every quarter hour all day long.

Ein Kerem’s Arab residents fled

during the War of Independence and Moroccan and Yemenite immigrants took their place. Over the years, many Jerusalemites discovered the charming village, and the population slowly changed to one of artists and the well-to-do.

In the 60’s, Hadassah Medical Center was built in Ein Kerem for the purpose of directing the development of the city towards the west. After the Six Day War, the order of priorities changed and for many years, Ein Kerem remained a village.

I spent hours surveying the neighborhood with shliach Rabbi Yonason Spitzer. As we spoke, I got to see his work firsthand. I could see that his success in

establishing a k’hilla is the result of persistence and dynamism as he rises to the challenges he sets for himself.

R’ Spitzer remained unfazed when he would walk down the street and see people crossing to the other side at the sight of him. Those were the polite ones... Others publicly denigrated him and asked him to leave.

He recalls how when he first arrived in Ein Kerem and wanted to invite his neighbors to a Shabbos meal, he was met with outright refusal. When he decided to call families in the neighborhood and invite them to an authentic Shabbos table, most of them hung up the phone after his opening line. The cultivated European manners and smiles were of no consequence when the suggestion smelled of Judaism. But as time went on, R’ Spitzer was able to find ways to reach people’s hearts.

Now, after eight years of work, he has a k’hilla of thirty families in what is called the first or inner circle. In the progressively wider circles are hundreds more people. At the Chabad House, located in a large building in the center of Ein Kerem, there are t’fillos every day of the week. On Shabbos, he attracts many young people, thanks in part to some members of the k’hilla who are musicians by profession.

The Chabad House hosts



Rabbi Yonason Spitzer with the public menorah he put up

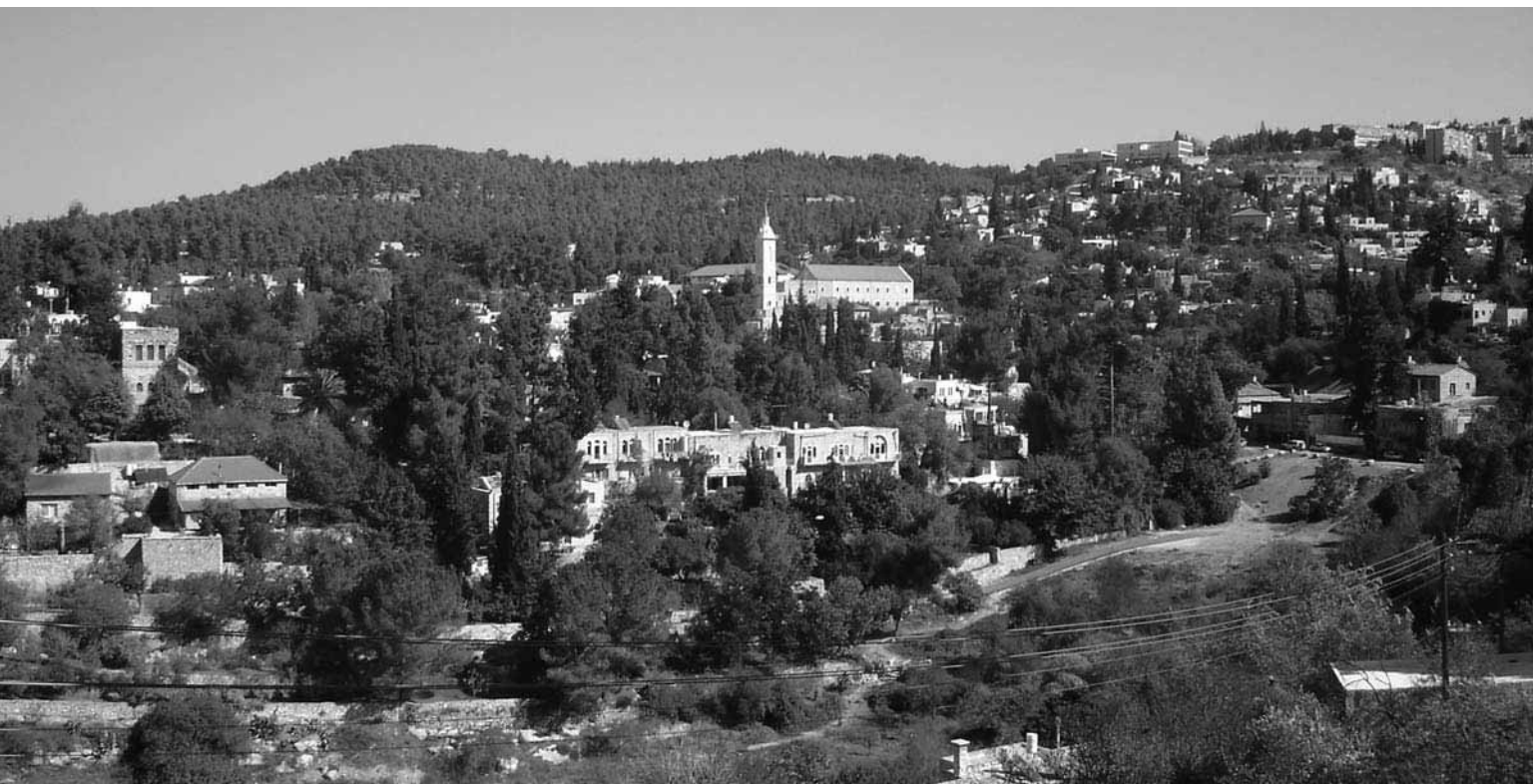
farbrengens on a regular basis. There are also one-on-one shiurim in Chassidus. It's a new trend among the people there, most of

whom are artists, musicians, in television or the tourist business.

"Our Chabad House is the home for every Jew, and that's not

a slogan. That's what characterizes our Chabad House – every Jew, no matter his personal beliefs, will be welcomed with open arms. When this is the approach, people respond in kind. One active member of my k'hilla is one of the leaders of the Leftist B'Tzelem organization, which champions the human rights of Arabs. She knew good and well why, a week before the Gush Katif Expulsion, I wasn't at the Chabad House. That didn't stop her, though, from coming to the Chabad House for shiurim and farbrengens. The Rebbe's guiding principle is to accept Jews where they're at."

R' Yonason Spitzer was born in Yerushalayim a few days after the Entebbe rescue. His father was born in Meia Sh'arim and was raised in a Shomrei Emunim - Chassidic home. His mother is from a Litvishe background all the way back to the Vilna Gaon. His father, despite his zealous



Chassidic background, learned with Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian z"l.

"Although we were sent to Litvishe yeshivos, the home atmosphere was Chassidish. In 1981, the Klausenberger Rebbe zt"l arrived in Yerushalayim from the United States. He appointed my father in charge of his mosdos in Yerushalayim. My father eventually became a devoted Klausenberger Chassid and is considered one of the distinguished askanim there. He is the one who, with great effort, established Kiryat Tzanz in Yerushalayim."

When R' Spitzer graduated Talmud Torah, he learned in the Litvishe yeshiva, Slobodka, in B'nei Brak. It was at that time that he began searching for something.

"The Litvish approach to learning and chinuch is technical. It is lacking in feeling, chayus and enthusiasm. I began feeling an emptiness. I remember that one Thursday night a few of us were sitting in a room and eating some chulent when someone tossed out a question – Does anyone have a clue as to what G-d is and how He looks?

"Some guys said that it was forbidden to think about this, while others offered various answers. Unfortunately, some of the answers shouldn't even be repeated. This intensified my desire to know more about Jewish hashkafa and emuna. Those who are raised with a Chassidische chinuch don't know how blessed they are... Chabad Chassidus addresses many questions in emuna."

Near the yeshiva was a Chassidic library, which Yonason would visit to read Chassidische s'farim, especially those of Chabad. His family had a personal connection to Chabad, which began in 1981:

"Back then, my father flew for the first time to the Klausenberger Rebbe, who lived in Monsey. When he got to the Rebbe, even before they got into a conversation, the Rebbe asked him to go and see the Lubavitcher Rebbe. My father didn't think twice about it. Since then, every time he went to America, he would visit the Rebbe.

"A year later, my father arrived in the US around Yud-Tes Kislev time for fundraising purposes. He went to 770, as he always did. While he was there, the announcement was made that the

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Those were the
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tankistim should pass by the Rebbe and they would be given a dollar. My father decided to join the line. My father looks nothing like a Lubavitcher Chassid and before he reached the Rebbe, R' Groner asked him whether he should be on that line.

"My father said he was a shliach of the Klausenberger Rebbe, and R' Groner got upset. The Rebbe, noticing them talking, smiled broadly and motioned that he wanted to give my father a dollar. The Rebbe blessed my

father with special warmth. I always tell my father that with the Rebbe, things just don't happen. The Rebbe surely knew that his son would become not only a Lubavitcher Chassid, but a shliach of his."

What gave the Spitzer family a particularly warm feeling toward Chabad was an amazing miracle his father experienced. He passed before the Rebbe for dollars and handed him a note in which he had written the names of all his children, five sons and two daughters.

The Rebbe did not open the note but gave him two dollars for each of the children who were over 18 and another five dollars for the remaining children.

"My father was stunned. How did the Rebbe know that two of them were over 18? When he turned to go, he was told that the Rebbe was calling him back. The Rebbe handed him another two dollars for my mother, for her investment in our chinuch.

"I'll never forget when my father came home from that trip. He was so excited. I had never seen my father like this before. He put on his gartel and cried. He gathered us all and said that he had a mission from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and he gave us the dollars he had been given for us. He told us that the Rebbe knew our ages without him giving that information.

"Then he called in my mother and gave her the dollars that he had been given for her. From that day forth, we spoke about the Rebbe and Chabad with awe."

So while learning in Slobodka, Yonason studied Chassidus on his own. One day, at the beginning of 5753, he heard about a shiur taking place at the Chabad library which was being given by Rabbi Mendel Vechter. He went and



The Chabad House

loved it. R' Vechter asked him to bring other bachurim, and as time went by, more bachurim began attending the shiur. They learned *Tanya* and *Likkutei Torah* together.

Yonason met the mashpia, Rabbi Zalman Landau, and they began to learn *Tanya* and the Rebbe's sichos every Wednesday. He kept his study of Chassidus to himself, for obvious reasons. The hanhala of his yeshiva was afraid of the study of Chassidus, and it was forbidden to bring sifrei Chassidus into the yeshiva.

The chavrusa with R' Landau turned into a shiur in Chassidus, with other bachurim participating.

"For months, about fifteen bachurim would get up early each week, and by six o'clock we were gathered in the shul of the Alexander Chassidim to learn Chassidus with R' Landau.

"One morning it was discovered by the rosh yeshiva's brother-in-law. He was in shock, but he quickly recovered and gave us Musar for learning *Tanya* which, according to him, was

heresy. He said, 'It says there that every Jew has a neshama which is a part of G-d *mamash*. Do you realize what you're learning? Is Hashem something tangible?'

"The next day, the mashgiach came over to me and said he knew that I organized the shiur. He demanded that I stop or leave the yeshiva. I asked him why they made the study of Chassidus into something negative when it strengthened me and the others in our emuna and fear of Heaven. It was okay for the bachurim to go to the ocean on Friday afternoon to refresh themselves, but learning Chassidus was forbidden?

"He wasn't willing to listen to me, and stated that it wouldn't be pleasant for me to have to go home. He even called my father and told him about the *Tanya* study. My father came to yeshiva and we saw the rosh yeshiva together. The rosh yeshiva said he couldn't oppose the mashgiach and it was my choice to stop learning Chassidus. I was not willing to do so and preferred to leave that

yeshiva.

"I called R' Landau to ask him what I should do, and he suggested that I learn in Migdal HaEmek. I was there by Elul. The yeshiva was busy getting ready to visit the Rebbe for Tishrei, and I joined in the excitement and made the trip.

"That Tishrei in Crown Heights solidified my resolve to become a Lubavitcher. Although the physical conditions were harder than anything I had experienced before, I was willing to accept it all with love. I felt that I was finally finding what I was looking for."

Yonason learned in Migdal HaEmek for about two years. After a year on K'vutza, he went to Australia to study for smicha. There he also got involved in shlichus work. Part of the time he spent on mitzvaim at the Chabad House for Israelis. He found it hard to get used to the mindset of the secular Israelis he met.

"A Chabadnik who grows up in the world of shlichus and is more exposed to the world and less taken aback by their craziness. It took me time to get my bearings."

In 5760, after a year and a half of shlichus in Australia, he married Devora Leah Wolpo, daughter of Rabbi Sholom Dovber of Kiryat Gat (a longtime *Beis Moshiah* columnist). They were set on shlichus. After getting a taste of it in Ramat Yishai and Ramat Beit Shemesh, they were sure this is the kind of life they wanted. They had a number of options, including Ein Kerem.

"One day, we went to Ein Kerem to check it out. After a few minutes of walking around, we met producer Avi Kushner, a prominent figure on the secular Israeli cultural scene. He had a crew of photographers and other workers with him. He seemed surprised by our presence in the neighborhood.

He came over to us and said he was making a documentary movie about the neighborhood, and why were we there?

"I told him that I was considering opening a Chabad House, and his eyes lit up. Above us was a mosque and below us was a church. He looked at both of them and said encouragingly, 'The only thing we're missing here is a place that teaches Judaism.' It was like he was sent to us to help us make our final decision.

"He spent a long time telling us about the neighborhood and how we didn't have an easy job awaiting us. We quickly saw what he meant a few minutes later, when we got into a conversation with a local woman who asked what we were doing there. When we told her, she looked at us like we were delusional. 'There are seven churches and six restaurants that are open on Shabbos for thousands of patrons. Over here, people don't like religion or religious people. It would be a waste of your time and energy.' Hearing that, I knew this was the place for us ...

"It was shortly before Rosh HaShana and we wrote to the Rebbe that we want to go on shlichus in Ein Kerem. We packed our belongings and three days before Yom Tov, we moved in. We were well aware of the challenge that awaited us but it didn't frighten us. On the contrary, the difficulty hardened our resolve.

"We rented a house in the center of the neighborhood and hung up a sign that said, 'Beit Chabad.' The next day we rented the sports/culture/youth center for the two days of Rosh HaShana and advertised the t'fillos that would take place and that the shofar would be blown. We barely had a minyan that year."

"We weren't disappointed. We

knew just what we were up against. The first year was, indeed, very hard. Shiurim were started and then folded. Many attempts that were made to get things going failed before they got off the ground. Today, in retrospect, I don't understand how we survived that tough beginning.

"We began working at the Ein Kerem hospital. We put t'fillin on with sick people and gave them moral support. With some of them, we wrote to the Rebbe.

"Two years later, we managed to form a tiny community and I decided to do something grand. I

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rented a large building in the center of the neighborhood, renovated it so it would look like an attractive place, and opened a nusach Ashkenaz shul, as there were already some nusach Sefard shuls.

"Rosh HaShana came around again and we advertised the opening of the new shul. I was surprised when dozens of people showed up. Two talented musicians, Yair Harel and Boruch Brenner, came. They eventually formed the *Kulmus HaNefesh* band, which includes Chabad

niggunim in its repertoire. Meeting them gave a tremendous boost to our Chabad activities. They brought their friends and the k'hilla grew."

Farbrengens are a regular feature in Ein Kerem and they have a special charm.

"I always told friends that what you can do through the stomach, you can't do through the head," says R' Spitzer.

Even on Shabbasos when he is not in the neighborhood, the regular farbrengen takes place.

"It's a wonderful way of creating achdus among the mekuravim and the newcomers. Each person has an opportunity of saying what's on his mind and asking questions."

When I asked R' Spitzer to tell me more about these farbrengens, he took out an article from a drawer with the headline "Experiences of a Hesder'nik yeshiva boy." He had been released from the army and returned to yeshiva and had written about his experiences on an Internet blog where he described his first farbrengen. That first farbrengen he had was in Ein Kerem. Here's what he writes:

On Motzaei Shabbos we took a walk in Ein Kerem in Yerushalayim. We looked for a place to eat and when we asked a guard whether he knew of a place, he said, "What are you religious guys looking for here? Everybody here is Christian. Since I came here from Moscow I can't look at goyim," he said emotionally. We wasted an hour and a half in the cold and fog before returning to the car. The car was parked near a small building that had a sign, "Beit Chabad." We heard the faint sounds of singing and music and figured they were having a Melaveh Malka.

A door suddenly opened and



Dancing with a mekurav

two men came out, one of them holding a flute. He said goodbye to the other man and was about to go back in when he noticed us watching. He said, "There's a Melaveh Malka going on inside; come on in and eat something."

We looked at one another and

spontaneously went along with him (after all, it was 11 at night and we had been looking for a place to eat). We went inside and saw about twenty people sitting around a table and playing music - two guitars and the flute and singing, and another flute on the table. I didn't

know anyone (aside from my friends who came with me, of course) but the warm atmosphere was amazing; very hard to describe.

The people there weren't the most religious in the world and we had nothing in common, but sitting there made us feel so close - an experience that even if I tried to describe it, I couldn't. It's something powerful that you feel but can't explain. I took the flute from the table and joined in. After a few minutes, my friends were ready to leave so we left. I could have stayed for hours like that, among people I didn't know but who conveyed such a powerful and amazing sense of closeness. With Hashem's help, I will go there again.

If for the first Rosh HaShanas and Yom Kippurs he barely got a minyan, for Simchas Torah he got no one. R' Spitzer danced alone. That was five years ago. By Simchas Torah, 5767, he had over 200 people.

During the past five years, R' Spitzer has built up a warm k'hilla of 800 people. I asked him to tell me how he got to know some of his mekuravim.

"The serenity and beauty of the place attracts mystical types. The main teachers of Eastern religions live in Ein Kerem. There's an older woman who lives here who is considered an expert in that field. She is very well-known amongst the Israeli elites. Part of her prominence is because she's the daughter-in-law of Meir Yaari, the founder of the HaShomer HaTzair movement.

"In her youth, she started branches of eastern meditation in the Negev. Often, her name came up in conversations with mekuravim. One day, I decided that if she has such an influence on people, I had to visit her. Maybe I could initiate something



Rabbi Yonason Spitzer giving a shiur in the Chabad House

positive, like a *Tanya* shiur.

"I knew that if I was successful with her, it would attract many of her students to Chassidus, too. So I went to her home and offered to learn *Tanya*. To my surprise, she replied that she had heard of me and had wanted to study Judaism for a long time, hoping to do so before she closed her eyes forever, as she put it.

"I soon saw that despite her advanced age and intellect, her knowledge of Judaism was minimal, like that of children of assimilated parents. We learned several times together. At first it was very complicated, since every topic that I explained, she connected to her teachings.

"Days went by, and I saw that p'nimius ha'Torah was beginning to affect her. She stopped connecting things to the philosophies she was involved in. She started coming to shul. She came to our home for the Pesach Seder like many others did, and loved it.

"As I had hoped, it didn't stop with her. One day, her kibbutznik daughter called me and said that her son in the army was very interested in Judaism and since she had heard about me from her mother, she wanted him to meet me.

"At our first meeting, we made him a bar mitzva by putting t'fillin on him for the first time. Now he, his mother and other members of their family are getting acquainted with Judaism, which was completely foreign to them previously.

"There's a basketball player who played for the Israeli Olympic team and is a well known Israeli personality. Three years ago, he moved to Ein Kerem. One day, I got a phone call from him. He asked me to teach him Judaism.

"I make sure that not a month

goes by without the neighborhood being flooded with flyers about our programs. He told me that he found one of these flyers and since he had a connection with Chabad from the days when he played for Galil Elyon, he wanted me to be the one to teach him. I'm not knowledgeable in sports, and when I went to his house and he

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introduced himself, the name didn't mean anything to me ...

"I taught him how to daven and how to put on t'fillin. He is very warm to Jewish things and we developed a nice relationship. At the beginning, he once told me, 'I don't lack for anything. What I need, I have. I just lack something

internal and that, I am beginning to find in Judaism.'

"We arranged a *Tanya* shiur in his home for some of his friends and it's going well, Baruch Hashem. Thanks to him, on Shavuos, dozens of kids came to hear the Ten Commandments because he came to the Chabad House and he spoke to the boys who were thrilled at his presence.

"He was interviewed for *Maariv* and he told them about his connection with Chabad back in the days when he played for the Galil Elyon team."

"There's a person in our k'hilla whose father started the Reform movement in Israel. At one of the Shabbos meals he spent with me, he asked my opinion about Halacha. I stated that you don't play around with Halacha. He didn't like my view and he walked out.

"At first I took his leaving badly, but there are some things you can't compromise on. Originally, I thought that maybe I should have nicely evaded answering him.

"A year went by and he came back to the Chabad House. This time he began to daven. He recently had his son circumcised in shul. He even began keeping Shabbos. I never mentioned his walking out on me, but it taught me a lesson. On the one hand, we have to be mekarev all kinds of people; on the other hand, there are topics that we cannot compromise on. Even if at first people are offended, eventually their connection with you and what you represent will become stronger. They will realize that you are a man of principle and not a huckster, and they will respect you more for it.

"I'll give you another example of situations in which you have to



A picture of the Rebbe with a message for the athletes

stand strong. I recently completed the registration for a Jewish music workshop we are having at the Chabad House. At first I thought that since it's more of a public event, maybe we could do it with both men and women. I asked Rabbi Gluckowsky, but he said I

could not do it mixed.

"All day I've been getting phone calls from people who are surprised by this decision. Even if in the short-run, I feel I'm going to lose people, we are not private people. We are shluchim of the Rebbe and have to go according to

Halacha."

R' Spitzer does a lot of work at the Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital. He describes the transition from visiting Jews in the hospital to the activities at the Chabad House as "crossing the Nehar Dinur (river of fire)."

"I often return from a long visit with a patient, downcast and in tears, hoping to get back to myself by the time I get to the Chabad House. Just a few minutes ago, the shliach in Germany, R' Yisroel Diskin, called me and asked me to visit someone very ill in the hospital. He has no family in Israel and I'm on my way there."

In addition to visiting the sick, R' Spitzer does interesting programs around Yomim Tovim time.

"Every Yom Tov, Purim, 15 Shvat, Chanuka, etc., I organize a big group of musicians from the Chabad House. We take musical instruments to the different wards and cheer up the patients."

R' Spitzer decided that the hospitalized children also need to march in the Lag B'Omer parade, or at least to experience it. He and a group of musicians went to the hospital with Jewish signs and they marched around the halls.

"I'll never forget how in one room we went into, a little boy asked to tell me something. In a weak voice he whispered in my ear, 'Thank you for coming. I thought that this year I wouldn't be able to take part in the Lag B'Omer parade.' It was worth all the effort just for him."

Often the patients ask R' Spitzer to write to the Rebbe for them and to ask for a bracha for an improvement in their health. Many people go to the Chabad House to write to the Rebbe themselves. The miracles abound.

"Many of the people who write consider it their intimate moment



The media taking an interest in Judaism.

with the Rebbe, and they don't show me what they wrote or what the answer is. But I on countless occasions, people leave the Chabad House looking amazed.

"A couple from Spain came in once to write to the Rebbe about their son. He was suffering from constant headaches. The doctors recommended surgery but the parents were hesitant and fearful. The Rebbe's answer was clear: doctors are given permission to heal and the patient has to listen to their advice. The Rebbe ended the letter with a bracha for good news.

"When I went to the hospital two weeks later and went over to the boy's bed, he wasn't there. I asked the doctors where he is, and they were happy to tell me that he had been released. The operation and his recovery had been so quick it surprised them."

In describing R' Spitzer's work at the hospital, I must mention a member of his k'hilla, the famous writer Dovid Ben Yosef.

"He has an interesting life story. In the past he wrote a book called, 'Does Love Have a Chance?' More recently, he wrote a book called, 'There's a Chance,' in which he answers the questions he raised in the first book. On the flyleaf, it says, 'Chabad Ein Kerem opposite Hadassah Ein Kerem.' The story about the two books he wrote is interesting. About twenty years ago, he was sick with cancer. His doctors at Shaarei Tzedek gave him three months to live.

"One night, he disconnected all the machines and left the hospital for home. He holed himself up in his room and asked his wife and children not to talk to him. He spent an entire week like that, making an accounting of his life. He refused to take phone calls.

"One day, the phone rang. He didn't answer, but the person left a

message on the voicemail that he had just been for dollars at the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He had asked for a bracha for him, and the Rebbe had given a bracha and a dollar.

"A short while later he tried alternative medicine, which helped him recover. Five years later, he called to apologize to the doctors for running away. They didn't believe it was him. They were sure he had died long before.

"Three years ago, after his wife died, he moved to Ein Kerem. He was looking for tranquility and that's what this neighborhood has.

It was okay for the bachurim to go to the ocean on Friday afternoon to refresh themselves, but learning Chassidus was forbidden?

One day I met him in the grocery store and he told me that his name is also Spitzer. That was a good enough reason to become friendly, and he began coming to the Chabad House until he became an integral part of it. He is a Chassid of the Rebbe not only because of the bracha he received, but also from his study of Chassidus and understanding the Rebbe's views and approach.

"In the first book he wrote, he raised questions about how to heal from serious illnesses. In the second book, he offers solutions

that he wrote under the influence of his deep connection with the Chabad House. Not long ago, he arranged a big farbrengen and he contributed the dollar he received from the Rebbe towards the success of the Chabad House. 'The best place to heal from physical and psychological illnesses is the Chabad House,' he announced to great applause.

"Every so often he gives workshops at the Chabad House, in which he tells people with serious illnesses about the possibility of healing."

R' Spitzer always seeks to grow, even though his time is taken up with his k'hilla that he and his wife built up. Two projects in the works are a yeshiva for baalei t'shuva with an emphasis on health, with healthy food and various sports, and a music school for Chassidic music with a Chabad orientation.

"Music is a deep thing in Chabad. According to the research I did, it's an original idea that has never been tried. Music opens the heart and the neshama. People feel more comfortable taking a music workshop than attending a shiur. It's a good way to enlarge the circle of mekuravim with those who don't attend shiurim.

"I have a mekurav with whom I'm very good friends. His views are extreme Left. He used to come to the Chabad House, but when he heard me say on Purim that I ask Hashem to cancel the decree of the Expulsion from Gaza, he stopped coming out of some murky sense of principle. Nevertheless, we stayed in touch and even became closer. The other day he came over to me and said, 'You'll still be able to get me into the Chabad House through the back door, because I love music and for a long time now I've wanted to study Chassidic music.'"

THE REBBE'S LETTER, TORN

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

I feel that through his ruach ha'kodesh, the Rebbe saw my great sorrow, for one bright morning a few weeks later...

There are many stories about the Rebbe. There are miracle stories, and then there are love stories, stories of a father's love, care and concern for his children. This one is a bit of both.

Mrs. Miriam Kirschenbaum, a member of Lod's Shikun Chabad community, has been privileged to receive numerous expressions of appreciation from gabbaim, shamashim, and rabbis for her unique work. Mrs. Kirschenbaum works around the clock saving infants through the Efrat

organization, convincing expectant mothers to have their child and not, *ch"v*, consider abortion as a possibility.

Hundreds of babies have been saved in the merit of her work, and she maintains her involvement throughout their lives. She has heard and experienced hundreds of stories of open miracles and wondrous cases of Divine Providence in connection with these activities.

This time, she is sharing a story of her own, a story which occurred with her own family, when she and

her husband decided to move from their home in central Lod to Shikun Chabad. This moving story embodies the Rebbe's fatherly concern, caring for his children from afar. Despite the many years that have passed, it is engraved in her memory, as if it happened only recently.

"In Kislev, 5752," Mrs. Kirschenbaum begins, "we had completed the lengthy process of coming closer to the teachings of Chassidus, with the help of many fine chassidim. Of course, we had also drawn close to the great luminary – the Rebbe. We put all of our children into the Chabad educational institutions of our city of residence – Lod.

"At this stage, my husband and I decided that the time had come to move to Shikun Chabad. With our children in school there, each ending at a different time, and all of the various rallies and farbrengens, the vast majority of our life's existence was there. The decision to move was a foregone conclusion.

"By this time, we already knew that you don't do anything of such importance without asking the Rebbe and seeking his advice. Therefore, we sent a letter stating our intention to leave our apartment in central Lod and purchase one in Shikun Chabad, pending a positive reply from the Rebbe. In the interim, we began the process, though we were still divided between the two apartments. We hadn't sold the previous one, nor had we completed the purchase of the new one.

"With tense anticipation and tremendous excitement, we waited for the Rebbe's answer. One afternoon some weeks later, as my husband was getting ready to go to shul for Mincha-Maariv, we were surprised to see that a letter from the Rebbe had arrived in the mailbox at the new apartment.

The Rebbe's reply reads as



The first letter, which was torn



The second letter that was received in its place...

follows:

**B”H, the 26th of Teives 5752
Brooklyn, N.Y.**

**The distinguished, pious,
respected, and lofty chassid**

**R’ Michael Mordechai,
sh’yichyeh**

Shalom u’v’racha!

**In reply to the announcement
regarding their entry into a new
apartment:**

**May it be G-d’s Will that it
should be “one who changes his
residence, changes his fortune” for
the good and for a material and
spiritual blessing.**

**The *pidyon nefesh* contained in
the letter will be read at the *Tziyon*
of my holy and revered father-in-
law, the Rebbe, of righteous and
holy memory, his soul rests in the
hidden treasures of Heaven, may
his merit protect us, etc.**

**With blessing,
/signature/**

“I was very excited at that moment by the very fact that we had received a letter from the Rebbe – something more precious than gold. I was particularly amazed that the letter had arrived at the address of our new home, even though we had sent our letter to the Rebbe’s secretariat with the address of our previous residence. I sat in the living room of our home and read the letter’s contents over and over again.

“In fact, the letter was the standard customary text that the Rebbe sends to Jews requesting a bracha for moving to a new home, and had been signed by the Rebbe’s holy hand.

“When my husband mentioned the letter to others in shul, they told him that not many letters had come out recently, and especially not those in connection with ‘standard’ issues. Some suggested that he frame the letter and place it at the front entrance of our home as a *segula* for protection.

“Suddenly, my young son snatched the letter from me, as

many small children are prone to grab whatever they can get their hands on, and the letter was torn in two. “I was absolutely beside myself. My entire body was trembling. The pain was far more than I could bear.

“My husband returned from shul still consumed by a feeling of exhilaration, eager to share what his friends had said about the unique privilege we had merited. He was perplexed by my despondence, until I could restrain myself no longer and began to cry bitterly. I told him that our son had torn the letter in two, destroying its wholesome perfection. Furthermore, the tear passed directly through the Rebbe’s signature. I sobbed the whole night long.

“I took some scotch tape and tried to re-attach the two portions, thus restoring its appearance as a complete letter as much as possible. I gently and carefully straightened it again and again. Afterwards, I had the letter framed. Nevertheless, I was filled with regret that I hadn’t guarded the letter in a more meticulous fashion, as is befitting something so valuable. I was unable to forgive myself.

“I feel that through his *ruach ha’kodesh*, the Rebbe saw my great sorrow. Otherwise, it is impossible to explain what happened a few weeks later.

“One bright morning, as I casually went downstairs to throw out the garbage, I saw a letter sticking out of our mailbox. Its blue color was like those that usually came from the Rebbe’s office. I was momentarily taken aback. I didn’t understand why we possibly could be receiving a letter now, as we hadn’t written anything to the Rebbe for the past month. Shocked and surprised, I opened the letter and saw that it was indeed a letter from the Rebbe. The previous letter had been addressed to my husband, but this letter was addressed to me. As I read the letter, I began to shake with excitement. This was another letter

in honor of our entering a new apartment.

“The letter was sent from the Rebbe on the 13th of Adar Rishon, 5752. It was a letter of blessing, and the Rebbe wrote in addition: **It would be fitting to check the mezuzos, and similarly the t’fillin of all those requesting a bracha – if they have not been checked within the last twelve months – to be certain that all are properly kosher.** At the conclusion of the letter, there appeared his holy signature! I was more than consoled – I was overjoyed at our good fortune to receive this second, signed letter.”

Mrs. Miriam Kirschenbaum concluded her story with great fervor. It was apparent that despite the lengthy amount of time that had passed since it all took place, the intense feelings had not dimmed. As she recounted her story now, recalling every detail of what had transpired, she was genuinely overcome with great emotion.

“I am certain that the Rebbe perceived my feelings of sorrow and pain, and sent the second letter – amazingly addressed to me rather than to my husband, as the first had been – to assuage those feelings. The story quickly spread throughout the Chabad community of Lod, and has accompanied me every day since.”

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