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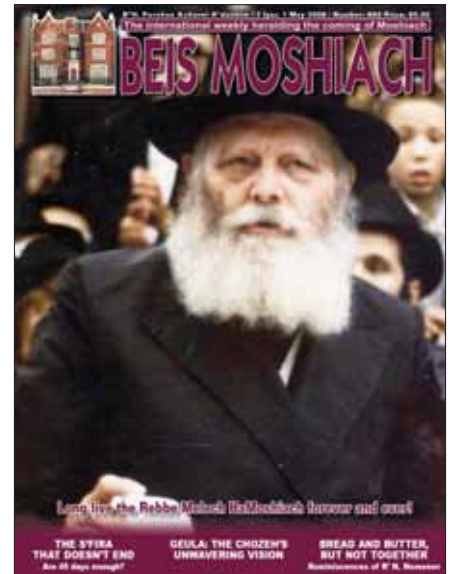
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OFFERING THE ESSENCE

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

This week's Torah reading describes the Yom Kippur service in the Sanctuary. This anticipates the natural state of affairs during the times of Moshiach. Then the volitional, external mode of service will become identical with the intuitive, internal mode. This also parallels the difference between the sacrificial offering and the incense offering. Understanding the difference explains the merit of Aaron's sons, who died bringing an incense offering without being commanded to do so. Aaron's sons felt so unified with G-dliness that they automatically offered "incense," their very essence and being on the altar.

In the days of Moshiach, "the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d, as the waters cover the ocean bed." At the moment, it may be difficult to conceive how our perceptions will change in the times of Moshiach. We must realize, however, that the change will be only of perspective and priority. Currently, we connect to G-d volitionally: in thought, speech and action we attempt to fulfill G-d's commands. In the times of Moshiach, the connection will be innate and

automatic: as a matter of course we will be aware of and fulfill G-d's Will, because the mitzvos will express not just the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people, but their unified essence.

These are not two approaches to serving G-d, or expressing our relationship with him. Rather, the volitional is an external mode of service, while the intuitive is an internal mode. Now, the external mode is dominant, except at certain times such as Yom Kippur. Now, we fulfill the commandments of the Creator, but as an individual, one with a separate identity. This is an exterior service, where the individual and the mitzva – and thus the One who gave the mitzva – remain separate and apart from each other. But there is also an interior service. Here the mitzva is fulfilled in such a way that the individual becomes attached to the Creator, adhering to Him so that they are like one entity. This will be the norm in the times of Moshiach. And this is what we experience, in part, on Yom Kippur.

Further, these two ways of serving the Creator, of performing the mitzvos, parallel the two types of offerings brought in the Temple. The sacrifices parallel the exterior service. They were performed on the outer altar. While they fulfilled a Divine command, they did not unite the individual with G-d in a complete union. The other type of offering was the incense. This was brought on the inner altar and parallels the individual's inner service. This offering with "inwardness of the heart" achieved a unity between the Creator and the

Jewish people.

This week's Torah portion illustrates the nature of the external service, that of sacrifices, and the nature of the internal service, that of the incense. The Torah reading begins: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they approached the Lord and died." The word for "approach" also means to "come close" or "draw near."

Their death was connected with an attempt to become closer to G-d.

From this perspective, their actions seem admirable. To actualize their attachment to G-d, they were willing to abandon this world. Their souls expired not because of a sin, but because of a great desire to experience G-dliness. And yet the Torah tells us elsewhere, in the portion of *Shmini*, that they died because they put incense in their fire pans and offered an unauthorized fire that G-d had not commanded them. This description clearly makes their act sinful. Yet here the opening verse, taken by itself, seems to describe an admirable approach.

So, did they die as transgressors, as a result of a sin, or as *tzaddikim*, as a result of their great attachment to G-d?

The narrative in *Shmini* actually supports the latter viewpoint. Moses explains to Aaron, "This is what the Lord said, that through those attached to Me I will be sanctified." Since the incident occurred at the dedication of the Tabernacle, Moses obviously means that their death sanctified the Tabernacle. Their action of approaching G-d with an "unauthorized fire" must be viewed as exemplary, as the catalyst for the Tabernacle's sanctification.

Accordingly, the statement that they offered "unauthorized fire that G-d had not commanded them" is not a criticism of Aaron's sons, but the highest praise. They went "above and beyond" the limitations of the command. They literally devoted themselves to their desire for a revelation of G-d.

Thus the Torah emphasizes the type of service they performed: it was incense they intended to offer, because incense and their approach to G-d were mutually dependent. The degree of their attachment, manifested in an expiration of the soul, expressed itself in the offering of incense before G-d. As mentioned above, the incense altar was placed within the inner sanctum of the Tabernacle.

To elaborate: the outer altar had an effect on the external part of the person, namely, the thought, speech and action, which are described as the "garments" of the soul. Through the sacrifice on that altar, the person came to a full and proper fulfillment of the mitzvos in thought, speech and action.

But there is a deeper, more primal level of the soul. There, a person's attachment to G-d comes through a revelation of the innermost aspect of the soul. Such a revelation automatically affects the thought, speech and action. Rather than observing the mitzvos because G-d commanded it, one does so naturally, fulfilling G-d's Will as the intrinsic consequence of revelation. This is the offering of the incense altar.

Even the Hebrew words for "sacrifice" and "incense" allude to the difference between an external and an inner offering, which they represent. The Hebrew word for "sacrifice" comes from the root "to approach," or "draw close." Notwithstanding a person's closeness to G-d, there still remains an individual, separate and apart, who performs the mitzvos. The word for "incense" comes from the root for "attachment" or "conjunction." At this level, one does more than approach G-d through thought, speech and action; one becomes united with G-d in essence.

Aaron's sons experienced an open revelation of the innermost aspect of their souls. At such a level, they did not need to be commanded to fulfill G-d's Will. They felt so unified with G-dliness that they automatically offered "incense," their very essence and being on the altar. Thus, what they offered was not commanded, because all their actions automatically and of themselves fulfilled G-d's Will.

But why did the incense offering and death of Aaron's sons sanctify the Tabernacle? And what is the connection between this incident at the beginning of the Torah reading and the priestly service of Yom Kippur, which follows?

As there are two levels of service within the human being, so there are two degrees of Holiness, two ways in which the Divine Presence manifests itself. In the first case, the Divine Presence occupies the Tabernacle, descending upon the children of Israel but remaining separate from them. In the second, the Divine Presence inhabits the Sanctuary, penetrating to the essence of the physical structure, making even the stones holy. The first, a mere occupation, parallels the external service, the sacrifices. In the second, there is an indwelling that penetrates to the very essence, paralleling the internal service, the incense offering.

Aaron, the high priest, was responsible for the sacrifices and bringing the Divine Presence upon the people. His sons went further, revealing the essence and uniting the soul with the Divine Presence.

And this is the nature of the service of Yom Kippur, to so elevate the soul and reveal its essence and unity with G-dliness, that one's Divine service occurs as an automatic consequence of the connection. This inner service is the highlight and focal point of Yom Kippur: on that day, the Kohen Gadol entered the holy of holies to perform – an incense offering. Yom Kippur is the day of atonement because at the level of incense, at the level of essence, the Jewish people are not a separate existence from G-d. Thus, there is no 'place' for sin nor weakness of the Divine connection.

This is the level of every Jew in the days of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 32:98-105)

THE REBBE'S LETTER AND THE DOCTOR'S DECREE

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated by Michoel Leib Dobry

He stood there astounded in the face of my faith in the letters I had received, but I didn't have much time left to explain. I heard them paging me over the loudspeaker, asking that I come to the room where my wife and the medical staff were waiting. As soon as I entered, Dr. Yayina approached me and said: "Okay, Rabbi, I give up. Apparently your Rebbe really is stronger than us and the laws of medicine."

A collection of mashpiim, rabbanim, and askanim participated recently in the bar-mitzva celebration of HaTamim Baruch Shneur Nachshon, son of Rabbi David Nachshon, chairman of Chabad Mobile Centers in Eretz HaKodesh. The farbrengen took place in the small *zal* of 770 and continued until the wee hours of the morning. The elder chassidim in attendance started talking about those glorious and majestic days of

the revelations they were privileged to see and hear from the Rebbe during the years of 5751-5752.

Dozens of T'mimim crowded around the tables laden with food, enraptured by the fascinating discussion that was developing among the mashpiim and askanim who were present at the farbrengen.

Suddenly, the bar-mitzva boy's father, Rabbi David Nachshon, put a halt to the flow of words. "It's forbidden to be ungrateful," he



Rabbi David Nachshon

said. "We had the privilege that the birth of our son, who is now celebrating his bar-mitzva, was accompanied by a whole series of wondrous answers from the Rebbe, and I promised that on this occasion, I would tell about the chain of events that preceded his miraculous birth."

Rabbi Nachshon began his story as those assembled listened attentively:

THE DOCTOR'S FRIGHTENING WORDS

"In a special letter that the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, sent to my father-in-law, Rabbi Zalman Abelsky, who was complaining about his hardships in making a living, the Rebbe wrote that a chassid is compared to an animal: the animal provides wool and the milk for the master, while the master has to make certain that the animal has adequate food and water. The Rebbe concluded the letter: 'And you are connected to my revered father-in-law, the leader of the generation, so you can remove all worry from your heart.'

"I don't know how much we are chassidim according to this comparison, or how much wool and milk we have brought to the Rebbe, but there's one thing I do know: the Rebbe MH" M makes certain to provide us our sustenance from Above, directing and guiding us, blessing and influencing us beyond nature, every step of the way.

"We have merited that our son, who is now sitting before you, was born with the Rebbe's bracha. The Rebbe said that publicizing miracles and wonders hastens the Redemption, and the story of his birth indeed fits the description of a 'miracle.'

"It began when the doctors stated that my wife could not have any more children, as further pregnancies would endanger her health and her life. While such a matter required an authoritative decision by rabbis and other experts in the field, before seeking their advice and consultation, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe, presenting the medical diagnoses and requesting his guidance.

"The answer that we received was amazingly clear. It was most thrilling to get a response with such clarity, in virtually the same fashion that we received answers from the Rebbe before Gimmel Tammuz, 5754. The page opened to a letter sent to a woman who had informed the Rebbe that she was expecting, and the Rebbe blessed her that her pregnancy should be completed to full-term and she should give birth to a healthy child. In the face of such an accurate and appropriate answer, I couldn't remain indifferent. I was in Crown Heights at the time for a visit to Beis Chayeinu, and I showed the answer to the neighborhood's chief rabbi, Rabbi Yehuda Kalman Marlow, of blessed memory. He, too, was tremendously stunned and impressed, and said that the accuracy of the response had left him speechless.

"Thus, with the help of Almighty G-d, we were privileged to learn that my wife was expecting another child. During the ninth month, we came to Laniado Hospital in Netanya for a series of tests with Dr. Yayina, who had accompanied my wife during the entire pregnancy. It turned out that there were some complications which, stated the doctor, posed a danger to the health of the child.

"As is customary among doctors in general, Dr. Yayina didn't leave out any details in describing her diagnosis, stating that based on



what she had seen, the child's kidneys were three times larger than normal for a fetus of this size. There were also other problematic test results, requiring that the child undergo a life-saving operation immediately after his birth. She requested that we return for a second appointment. She would consult with other expert physicians to get their professional opinion of the test findings in the meantime.

"Her words caused us to become a bit nervous, but I constantly envisioned the Rebbe's letter before me.

"On the Thursday of that week, we came in again for another medical check-up. Dr. Yayina was waiting in the examination room with other doctors, who had determined that based on the initial findings, the child should be delivered via Caesarean section shortly before her due date. When the doctor informed me of this decision, I protested that the Rebbe had written to me explicitly that she will complete the days of her pregnancy, so the doctor's advice constituted a direct contradiction to the words of the leader of the generation. My reply elicited a combination of pity and puzzlement.

"When the doctor recovered slightly from her surprise, she said, 'I don't know what the Rebbe says; I am a doctor, and it is my duty to establish things only from a medical point of view.' She softened her tone a bit as she continued, 'Your wife is already in the ninth month of her pregnancy, which means that she has completed the time of her pregnancy, because it is natural for women to give birth already at this time.' I explained to her that when the Rebbe blesses a woman that she should merit to complete the days of her pregnancy, it means that the woman will give birth at the time set by Heaven, without any medical interference.

"The doctor remained steadfast in her belief that it would be far preferable to do the operation as quickly as possible, since delaying would risk unexpected complications. Since she knew that we had small children, she suggested that we should go home to them for Shabbos, and then return to the ward again on Sunday, when they would conduct more tests and bring her into the operating room.

"While it seemed quite apparent that her words were in direct contrast to the clear statement of the Rebbe, nevertheless, she argued that the situation left no room for any alternative.

"LISTEN RABBI, I GIVE UP"

"We went straight from the hospital to the home of my friend, R' Avi Taub. I found myself faced with a complicated dilemma, as the words of the doctor didn't seem to leave room for any alternative.

"Upon entering Rabbi Taub's home, I didn't lose any valuable time. I immediately made all the necessary preparations and sat down to write another letter to the Rebbe, laying out the situation and asking what we should do. This time as well, the Rebbe's reply was quite clear. I felt that the Rebbe was giving his 'support and backing' to this pregnancy. It was very exciting to see how clear the answers were. The Rebbe wrote: 'In regard to what he wrote to me about their visit to the doctor, who made them feel rather low, there is known the saying of the Tzemach Tzedek that a doctor is given permission to heal, and if they hold by the words, they will see that the words of the aforementioned are false.'

"I was stunned and overwhelmed. Who needs a clearer answer than that?!

"Since we still have to make the

In the face of such an accurate and appropriate answer, I couldn't remain indifferent.

physical 'vessels' in this world, we appeared at the ward on Sunday morning, filled with trust in the words of the Rebbe. Four other doctors entered the room in order to establish a clear medical diagnosis. While I waited outside in the hallway, curious to see what would happen, I made the acquaintance of a Sanzer chassid whose wife works in the hospital. After a few minutes of pleasant conversation, I told him about the Rebbe's answers and how I was certain the doctor's diagnosis would prove to be incorrect.

"He stood there astounded in the face of my faith in the amazing letters I had received, but I didn't have much time to explain to him the deep meaning of 'Rebbe,' 'leader of the generation,' etc. I heard them paging me over the loudspeaker, asking that I come to the room where my wife and the medical staff were waiting. As soon as I entered, Dr. Yayina approached me and said: 'Okay, Rabbi, I give up! Apparently your Rebbe really is stronger than us and the laws of medicine.'

"What happened?" I asked.

"She told me that the examination they conducted suddenly showed good results. There was no sign of what they had seen in the previous test. The kidneys and all other things that had appeared abnormal just a few days earlier had returned to their natural size. She was stunned, and her facial expression showed that she

was totally in awe. Even the Sanzer chassid who had waited outside with me was very moved and excited about the test results, and has since shared this remarkable story with numerous people. The doctor told me that with such good results, we can go back home and wait for the birth in its proper time.

"These were special days; we knew we had seen G-dliness with our very eyes. We felt how the Rebbe was leading us along the way and was taking full responsibility for the handling of the pregnancy.

"A few weeks passed, and my wife was ready to give birth. It was the day before Zayin Adar, the birthday of Moshe Rabbeinu *a"h*. At the time, I was in B'nei Brak with my friend and fellow shliach, Rabbi Alter Betzalel Kupchik. I immediately called Dr. Yayina and asked if she could be there for the delivery. She, too, was in the midst of her own personal commitments – getting ready to go out to a bar-mitzva, to be precise. Nevertheless, she quickly changed her plans and made her way to the delivery room.

"I changed my plans as well, and headed straight for Laniado Hospital. My wife was already there, and late on the night of Motzaei Zayin Adar, the baby was born – our son, who is now celebrating his bar-mitzva. Dr. Yayina called me over, wished me a hearty 'Mazel Tov,' and informed me that we had a new son. The doctors still were not completely confident, and they requested that we come back with the baby a few days after his release for a series of medical scans, in order to make certain that everything was in proper order with no health problems.

"We arrived at the appointed time, and after a battery of tests, the doctors informed us that all was perfectly fine, and the baby had been born healthy and strong.

NEW CHILDREN WITH OLD NAMES

"After seeing such miracles and wonders," continued Rabbi Nachshon, "I said to myself that this is the Rebbe's child, and I must give him a name connected with the Rebbe's family. By the way, when one an older son, Levi Yitzchok, was born, I wrote to the Rebbe that since we already had named a son after the Rebbe Rayatz, I was requesting permission to name that newborn son 'Levi Yitzchak,' after the Rebbe's father. The Rebbe wrote on the note that I had submitted, 'And the matter is correct,' adding the word 'Shlita.'

"As I tell this, I also recall something in connection with the naming of our daughter, who was born in 5751. I had a very strong desire to name her after the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, of blessed memory; however, my mother's name was 'Chaya.' I turned to Rabbi Binyomin Klein with a request that he ask the Rebbe if this would pose a problem. When he presented my inquiry, the Rebbe replied, 'Nu...', as if he were surprised. When Rabbi Klein asked the question a second time, the Rebbe again said 'Nu...', adding 'long life and good years.' We understood that there was no reason to hold back, and we gave our daughter the name 'Chaya Mushka,' and got a bracha for my mother to boot. I quickly called my mother and told her about the marvelous bracha for long life that she had just merited to receive from the Rebbe.

"Now with our newest son, today's bar mitzva bachur, born after such a long chain of miracles, we were unsure of which name to give him. I was considering each of the Rebbe's grandfathers: 'Meir Shlomo' and 'Baruch Shneur,' but I wasn't certain which one would be preferable. As always, I sat down

and laid out the question before the Rebbe in writing, requesting that he provide me with clear guidance, similar to what I received prior to the baby's birth.

"Indeed, the response was quite astounding and also aroused much wonderment. I immediately saw the words 'Beginning with the words *L'Admur HaZakein*.' I quickly deduced that the one that served as the beginning to the Alter Rebbe was his father, Rabbi Baruch. While I was excited by this answer, nevertheless, I still wanted a much clearer one.

"Thus, I found myself on the day before my son's bris sitting and writing another letter. I wrote that I understood that the Rebbe was definitely referring to 'Shneur,' but regarding 'Baruch,' the answer was not as clear as I used to receive in the past. The answer I received was positively electrifying. My heart was engulfed by feelings of intense emotion. This is perhaps the only letter in all the volumes of 'Igros Kodesh' where the Rebbe writes on this subject.

"The Rebbe writes: 'Regarding what he writes about the father of our family, Rabbi Baruch, the father of the Alter Rebbe, known of great quality,' and the Rebbe proceeds to detail the entire range of his qualities...

"I will never forget how thrilled I was by this clear response, as I simply burst into emotional sobs and found it difficult to calm myself.

"In addition to this clear answer, I saw an allusion to the fact that the many brachos we had received were in connection to the renovations that I was making together with my friend, Rabbi Avi Taub, at the gravesites of the Rebbeim and other tzaddikim in the Rebbe's family, including the gravesite of Rabbi Baruch, the father of the Alter Rebbe."

BEGINNING WITH THE FINAL BLESSING

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

Surely many people remember how, when the Rebbe bentched, he did so from a Siddur, whether the Birkas HaMazon or Al HaMichya. Those of us who merited to be present at farbrengens on Motzaei Rosh HaShana and Yom Tov, still have the words at the ends of the brachos, which the Rebbe enunciated out loud, reverberating in our ears. The following are stories of shlichus related to bentching.

THE BIRKAS HA'MAZON THAT CAME BY FAX

Rabbi Ben-Tzion Grossman of Migdal HaEmek told about a woman who became frum thanks to

the Mivtza Neshek of my wife and some other Lubavitcher women of Beit Shaan. People who don't regularly do Mivtza Neshek might mistakenly think that these are one-time encounters, but the truth is that over the years, connections have been made with hundreds and thousands of women. Some of them come to the stand every Friday in order to meet the Rebbe's shluchos again and to strengthen their connection with them. They hear something from the "Rabbanit" and receive candles. This connection may be their only one with Judaism.

A young woman, a security guard by profession, encountered mitzva observance for the first time thanks

to Mivtza Neshek. Every week she heard new things and committed to another mitzva. At some point, my wife explained to her about bentching. The woman got a Siddur and was careful to say the bracha after every meal.

One day she called the Rebbetzin with a real problem. That day she was sent to guard a branch of Bituach Leumi (National Insurance) in Natzrat (not Natzrat Illit, which is a Jewish city, but Natzrat Tachtit, which is populated by Arabs). It was breakfast time but the woman couldn't eat the sandwich she had prepared because she didn't have her Siddur for bentching and there was no Jew around from whom to borrow one.

At first my wife suggested that she start eating and when she finished, she would read the bentching over the phone to her. This, however, would be impossible while she was on duty. Therefore, R' Grossman called the shlich in Natzrat Ilit, Rabbi Shimshon Halperin, and asked whether he could bring a Siddur or a bentcher to the Bituach Leumi branch office in the nearby city since the woman couldn't start eating without it.

R' Halperin came up with a resourceful idea. He asked whether the branch office had a fax machine and when he was told that it did, he sent the bentching by fax, enabling the woman to finally eat her meal and then bentch.



R' Grossman concludes the story by saying, "I wish that I said the bentching every day with the same devotion as that woman. She was absolutely thrilled with our solution."

BIRKAS HA'MAZON IN WRITING

I once heard a story about two bachurim from Tomchei T'mimim who spent a few weeks on shlichus somewhere in the US. During the course of their work they joined a shliach and even traveled with him to a few small towns in order to look for Jews.

At one point, they stopped on the side of the road and took out their sandwiches so they would have the strength to go on. When they finished eating, the two bachurim began bentching.

They noticed that the shliach had taken out a pen and paper and was busy writing. At first they didn't want to be nosy, but when he kept on writing they finally politely asked him what he was doing when they needed to bentch and be on their way.

The shliach told them that a few years earlier he had had yechidus with the Rebbe and the Rebbe told him that it was preferable to bentch from a Siddur. "Since then," said the shliach, "I have always been careful to do so. Since somehow none of us remembered to bring a

Siddur, I am writing out the bentching so that I will be able to bentch from the text."

SINGING IT TOGETHER

Here in Beit Shaan, at the family Shabbos meals, we have a longstanding practice (for the benefit of the little children) of bentching aloud together, with a tune. When we're finished, we continue using the same tune and say, "Devorah Leah all the bentchers, Sholom Ber all the glasses, Chaya Mushka all the silverware, Blumi and Rivky all the plates, Shneur and Mendy pick up the garbage, Tatty and Mommy... go to sleep."

Over the years, many of the guests who have eaten with us in the past have since told us that they have adopted our practice with their own families and they sing the bentching out loud, together.

BIRKAS HA'MAZON BEFORE EATING

I heard the following story from a fellow shliach who wishes to remain anonymous.

A family well-known in Chabad made its first steps towards Jewish practice thanks to their young son.

For the sake of convenience, they registered him in a religious preschool. In school he learned to sing some lines of the bentching. His parents, who did not want to cause

conflict, agreed to sing it at home together with him. For some reason they didn't know exactly when to sing this song and for a long time they would always sing it before eating.

One thing led to another until eventually, the family began learning Torah and became religious. Today all the members of the family are observant and even Chassidic – all thanks to some lines from the Birkas HaMazon.

BIRKAS HA'MAZON – SEGULA FOR PARNASSA

A mekurav to a Chabad house was experiencing financial problems. He remembered that he had once heard from the shliach in his town, quoting the Rebbe, about some segula for parnasa, but he couldn't remember what it was.

He went to the shliach to ask him what the segula was. As he waited at the shliach's house, he overheard the shliach speaking on the phone. In the course of his conversation, the shliach mentioned that a segula for parnasa is to say the bentching from a Siddur, word by word.

The shliach concluded his phone call and turned his attention to his guest to be told, "Thank you, I have my answer." When the mekurav got home, his wife related that she had dreamed that the Rebbe told her that bentching from a Siddur is a segula for parnasa.

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THE S'FIRA THAT DOESN'T END

By Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi

*Many questions are asked about the purpose of the 49 days: Why were we given these days? What is accomplished by our counting the Omer? How do we accomplish the goal? * 49 days is just not enough, we may need 49 weeks, or even 49 years to get a hold on the animal soul and refine it until it shines. * Said at a Chassidishe farbrengen.*

WHY DO WE COUNT?

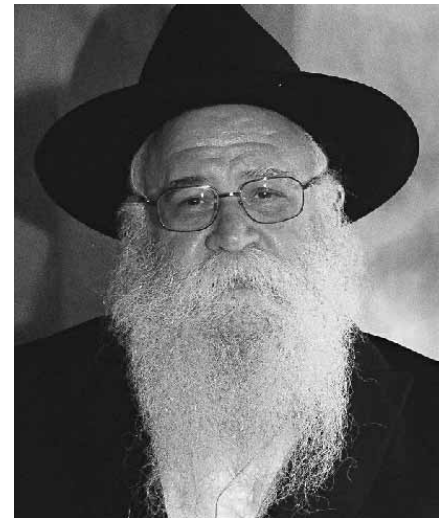
Among the stories commonly recounted at Chassidishe farbrengens is the one about the Chassid who was busy Erev Yom Kippur raising money to redeem captives. In order to make up the enormous sum, he agreed to a deal proposed by some gadabouts in which he would drink copious amounts of vodka in exchange for the money they would make in their card game.

He was successful in freeing the Jewish prisoner before Yom Kippur but he then spent most of the holy day asleep. When he woke up several hours later and saw everyone gathered in shul, he stood up and began singing “Ata Horeisa” with the traditional Simchas Torah niggun.

The shocked worshippers wanted

to throw him out of shul, but they were stopped by Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev. “With the great deed he did with mesirus nefesh,” he explained, “this man accomplished all the avoda of Yom Kippur and Sukkos and he is now already holding by Simchas Torah.”

There is another story which also illustrates such a jump in avodas Hashem. A bachur came to Lubavitch before Pesach and, meeting all the requirements of a Tamim as far as learning went, he was accepted into yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim. Nevertheless, the Rebbe Rashab saw a lack of refinement on his face. He instructed the Rebbe Rayatz to assign the most difficult physical labor in the Pesach preparations to this bachur, including bedikas chametz in several buildings, in addition to learning a



maamer Chassidus by heart. The purpose of this was for the “sweat of a mitzva” to refine his coarseness and uncover his inner refinement.

When the Rebbe Rashab saw this talmid Pesach night, he was very pleased to see that his face had become more eidel and refined. Similar to the first story, the jobs he carried out accomplished in only two days the work of “and you shall count for you” of S'firas HaOmer. By Pesach he was therefore already on the level of receiving the Torah on Shavuos.

Many questions are asked about the purpose of the 49 days: Why were we given these days? What is accomplished by our counting the Omer? How do we accomplish the goal? Obviously, just by taking a minute a day to count we can't be accomplishing the purpose of this

mitzva.

These days are referred to as **yemei ha's'fira**, which means that the **days**, the entire 24 hour periods, are connected with s'fira. How does counting at night affect the entire day? Why is the counting done in connection with the Omer sacrifice – s'firas ha'omer – when the korban Omer was brought on the first day of Chol HaMoed and that was the end of its connection to this time period?

The first time B'nei Yisroel counted, when they left Egypt, they were counting the days until the giving of the Torah. Would it not therefore be appropriate to call these days, “Yemei HaS'fira L'Mattan Torah,” rather than “S'firas HaOmer?”

Why, in fact, was the word “s'fira” chosen out of all the words for counting, especially when we don't count the omer but the days!

The period of time in which we count the omer is also significant. We start counting the omer not from the day of, but from the day after we left Egypt, and there must be something we can learn from this.

LIGHT AND GLOW

Baruch Hashem, we have Chassidus which answers our questions and enables us to understand what the avoda of these days is.

The Alter Rebbe tells us that the mitzva to count, “u's'fartem lachem – count for yourselves” is from the root *even sapir* – a sapphire stone, a stone that shines, and the mitzva is to illuminate the “lachem.” Another explanation is that the word “u's'fartem” alludes to the ten s'firos which illuminate for us. So the inyan of counting the omer is to increase the light and glow until a person shines like a sapphire.

Imagine for a moment what it would be like if Hashem created a Jew with only a G-dly soul. Our

neshama would shine full-force because the body wouldn't obscure it. This was the level of Moshe Rabbeinu. When he was born the house was full of light, because his body was solely a vehicle for the neshama.

This is why, when an Egyptian nursemaid was brought, Moshe did not nurse from her. As a baby, he could not possibly have had the rational understanding not to do so. His refraining to nurse from a non-Jew was automatic, similar to the instinctive reaction of a person (and even an animal) to keep away from fire.

If we had only a G-dly soul, it wouldn't be necessary for us to study what is permissible and forbidden according to Torah. The neshama immediately senses that what is forbidden is klipa, poison, and it won't go near it.

This is true of tzaddikim in general, as it says, “*lo y'uneh l'tzaddik kol aven*” (no sin will inadvertently befall the righteous), that even when a tzaddik doesn't know that something is forbidden (for example, if he was served non-kosher food by mistake), he either will not see it or he will know to avoid it.

This is what is meant when it says that the house filled with light when Moshe was born. The light of his neshama was not obscured by his body. When only the G-dly soul is present, anything that doesn't pertain to holiness is in effect non-existent and therefore has no impact. If we were created this way, we would study Torah to connect to Hashem but not in order to know what is permitted and forbidden.

On the other hand, if Hashem created us with only an animal soul, learning what is permitted or forbidden wouldn't help since nothing would stop us. That which is forbidden doesn't disturb the animal soul. It doesn't consider klipa

and impurity to be poison; on the contrary, it lives off them.

THE LOST ONES WILL COME FROM ASHUR

It is for this reason that we are created with both a G-dly and an animal soul. Hashem places the G-dly soul within the animal soul and puts them both into the body in this world and thereby, the radiance of the neshama is dimmed. If a person is immersed in the pleasures of this world, he adds more and more layers over the neshama, as the Alter Rebbe describes in *Tanya*, “and certainly the [animal soul] is strengthened over time with eating and drinking.”

This is when man's avoda begins. “Better is one hour of t'shuva and good deeds in this world, than all of life in the world to come.” The Alter Rebbe asks: Why do we need t'shuva? Why doesn't it say, “Better is one hour of Torah...”

Furthermore, what is meant by “good deeds?” It should have said, “mitzvos!” The answer is that the situation in which the neshama is together with the animal soul within the body and in this world is called “aveida” (a loss). What is a loss? When something is not in its proper place. If it's a wallet, it was supposed to be in a pocket and instead, it's lying in the street. If it's a farm animal, it was supposed to be in a pen or barn and instead, it's in the wilderness. These items need to be retrieved.

The same is true for the neshama. Instead of being in a state in which G-dliness is self-evident, it suddenly finds itself in circumstances where it's not at all obvious that “there is nothing but Him.”

The person discovers all sorts of interesting things that attract the eyes and heart and give him physical pleasure. The degree of attraction depends on the character of the

person and his spiritual level. If, as said before, he has strengthened his animal soul over time, then the things that attract him and give him pleasure will become progressively more gross and depraved.

The result is that the neshama finds itself “lost in the desert” where the ideal qualities of Man are nowhere to be found. The verse says, “and the lost ones in the land of Ashur.” Ashur comes from the root of *osher* and *oneg*, referring to those lost in the pleasures of this world. In such a case, it is not enough for man to learn Torah and fulfill mitzvos because if the pleasures remain as they are, the spiritual “loss” will not be retrieved.

What is necessary is t’shuva, a change in thinking, in desire, and even beyond that, in oneg, in the proper direction.

This is like the Chassidic analogy of the kishka, a delicacy of stuffed intestine. It is made by cleaning out the animal’s intestine and then filling it with a tasty filling. If the intestine is not cleaned first, then even if the most delectable ingredients are used, the end result will be disgusting.

So too, if there is no t’shuva then it’s like this person’s avodas Hashem is wrapped in filthy intestine. It is regarding this switch that it says, “Better is one hour in t’shuva” – *shaa* or hour, according to Chassidus, is not the sixty minute hour of a clock. Rather, it has the same root as we find in the verse, “and He turned to Hevel and his offering and did not *shaa* – turn – to Kayin and his gift.”

So we read “better is one hour of t’shuva” as better is one turn in the right direction, towards the place that the neshama was always used to – to see G-dliness and only G-dliness in everything, in order to extricate the neshama from its “lost” status and bring it to its rightful place.

Similarly, Halacha states that a cow that runs towards the fields

outside the city is lost. If the cow turns towards the city it is not considered lost.

A complete return is, of course, an extremely high level, but at the very least, one needs to turn in the right direction. Let’s use the cow as an example. Although it’s not back home, it turned in the right direction, towards the city, so eventually it will return home.

After man turns his back on pleasures of this world and heads in the right direction, his activities in Torah and mitzvos are deserving of being called “good deeds,” as it says, “Better is an hour of t’shuva and

That which is forbidden doesn’t disturb the animal soul. It doesn’t consider klipa and impurity to be poison; on the contrary, it lives off them.

good deeds.” For a person can learn Torah and do mitzvos even before he cleanses himself of his odious desires, but they are not called “good deeds” that shine and sparkle like “precious stones,” as the Alter Rebbe calls them in Likkutei Torah. They are like the delicacies that fill the kishka that hasn’t been cleaned, whose stench is nauseating.

By “one turn of t’shuva” his deeds become “good” and shine, his body and animal soul and all his actions in this world are permeated by G-dliness, and his neshama returns to the state it was in before it

descended to this world. This is what is meant by “u’s’fartem lachem” – to illuminate the “lachem” by cleaning, polishing, and shining the animal soul so that it cooperates with the G-dly soul and together their actions are pleasing to Hashem, uncorrupted by the vile stench of worldly lust and pleasures.

EVERY PERSON’S PERSONAL OMER

The animal soul consists essentially of emotion, wanting what is best for **me**, what pleases **me**, what is understandable to **me**, what seems right to **me** – whatever concerns **me**. These emotions can be broken down into at least 49 sorts of “me,” which is why we have 49 days to deal with them and elevate them.

This is why these days are called “S’firas HaOmer.” The omer was a meal offering of barley, while all other meal offerings brought in the Mikdash consisted of wheat. Barley is animal fodder and is generally not fitting to be brought on the altar. The purpose in bringing the barley offering of the Omer to elevate all animal souls to be receptive to purification.

We bring animal **food** and not an animal because the point is to refine the animal soul. The coarseness of the animal results from its eating (as quoted above in the name of the Alter Rebbe).

S’firas HaOmer refers to bringing light into the animal which eats the omer (barley). The avoda of s’fira is to shine the “lachem” – the emotions of the animal soul – by polishing one aspect every day. Then we become ready for Mattan Torah, which is the day we fill the kishka – the body and animal soul – with Torah and mitzvos, in order to unite with Hashem.

You might wonder – if we left Egypt already, what is the purpose in the avoda of S’firas HaOmer? This point can be illustrated with a

Chassidic story. A firstborn calf was born on a Jewish settlement. Since it was holy as the firstborn, they were careful not to let it get blemished. While every animal must have its hide cleaned from time to time to remove dust and dirt, they were afraid to scrub this calf lest they make a cut or wound and transgress the prohibition against making a blemish in kodshim. The animal remained dirty and smelly.

One time, this calf entered a Jew's house and they were unable to chase it out lest they injure it. The balabus said to the calf, "Bechor, bechor, you are indeed holy, but you smell bad!"

Chassidim used this story as an analogy to talmidim who considered themselves above the rest, making it difficult to get them to improve their behavior. Eventually, while they were holy in their own eyes, their conduct gave off a bad smell.

This is the state of a Jew before counting the omer. He has the elevated status of G-d's "firstborn," but, in the case of some Jews, he may have lived for years in a coarse environment, and he just decided to leave it, i.e. his personal Egypt. He starts afresh with t'filla and t'fillin, Torah and other mitzvos, but his inclinations, thoughts and feelings are still that of his former lifestyle. To rid himself of this, he needs the avoda of S'firas HaOmer.

For others who were raised in a more pure environment, the same applies but at a higher level. Today's high ground is tomorrow's limitation.

GOING OUT OF EGYPT IS NEEDED TO COUNT THE OMER

Perhaps we can say that this is how a Jew fulfills remembering "the day you left the land of Egypt all the days of your life." Chassidus explains that going out of Egypt is a

condition that exists every day and at every moment in a person's life. It's not just about remembering something good that was done for us in the past that we are merely thankful for each day.

Just as when we left Egypt "the Supreme King of kings was revealed to them and redeemed them," removing them from servitude and elevating them to the stature of free men, the same thing happens in our own lives. Hashem removes us from our place and appoints us as rav, shliach, menahel, teacher, husband, and father.

The Gemara states a principle,

***Hashem removes
us from our place
and appoints us
as rav, shliach,
menahel, teacher,
husband, and
father.***

that "even one in charge of the water-wheel is appointed from Heaven," i.e. even a menial job such as being responsible for distributing water from the well, is from Heaven. It's like a "going out of Egypt" in this particular area for he was given a job from up Above which is a turnabout from his previous status. Previously he was like a slave and was dominated by strangers and now he is a free man and he has the ability of making decisions.

Similar to going out of Egypt, it comes from Above, but there is no guarantee that the animal within him was refined. It is very possible that all the coarseness that was present from birth or from his upbringing, is still present. Hashem had His

reasons for choosing him, but this doesn't make him perfect. It merely says that in Heaven they expect him to exercise his free choice to use his abilities for this job in the best possible way. That says nothing about his present state and he shouldn't fool himself into thinking that his getting a certain position proves that on a deeper level he is more elevated than others.

The story is told of a poor person who became rich and was given a seat on the eastern wall in shul. People spoke to him and consulted with him because human nature is such that people believe that those with money have opinions worth listening to. Then he suddenly lost his money. Naturally, he lost his seat at the eastern wall and with it, the accompanying honor.

He went home and sadly told his wife, "Losing my money doesn't mean I lost my wisdom. How come they stopped respecting me?"

He thought that if Hashem granted him wealth and financial success, then he was also wise. Wisdom requires work and without effort it is lacking.

The nimshal is clear. We often wonder, "So-and-so has such an important job. How come he behaves in such a small-minded manner, unbefitting for someone of that position?" The Alter Rebbe states in Likkutei Torah, in the maamer, "Adam ki yakriv mi'kem," that "baalei avoda" sometimes complain that they were inspired in their avodas Hashem for a while and then they suddenly lost it.

This is because the "going out of Egypt" is not enough. There is still the work of 49 days of refining to do. Without doing this work, we remain like the Eirev Rav who made trouble for the Jewish people because they had not rid themselves of their negative ways.

When we "remember the **day** you left Egypt," we must recall that

going out of Egypt took just one day. The change, though, is an avoda that takes much more time.

How do we achieve this refinement? In brief, we must examine our situation with a combination of both bitterness about it intermingled with happiness at being able to recognize the truth. After that, we need to set clear boundaries with red lines that cannot be crossed and to accept these boundaries with kabbalas ol and iskafia.

The main thing is to add lots and lots of light to counter the darkness we absorbed. In areas that are found wanting in our cheshbon ha'nefesh, we need to increase in light and holiness in thought, speech and action, while beseeching Hashem in t'filla for success in all this. In this way, we will emerge from the days of the Omer more refined and ready for Mattan Torah.

Understanding this inner journey is important for everyone so that we do not become downcast when we feel an undesirable longing, jealousy

or pride etc, after it seemed that we were weaned of it. For example, a yeshiva bachur who is inspired by a farbrengen or by something he heard or learned, who then reverts back to his old ways, might wonder – what's going on here? Where am I really at? Is my true self revealed now or in the moment of inspiration? Have I fallen from my previous state?

The answer is that just as the spiritual inspiration was not a figment of his imagination, so too, the appearance of negative thoughts and emotions are not a “fall.” The inspiration was like a “going out of Egypt,” after which avoda is needed, S'firas HaOmer, illuminating the animal soul.

Incidents like those described at the beginning, of the Chassid collecting money for pidyon shvuyim who reached the level of Simchas Torah in just a few hours or the bachur in Tomchei T'mimim who refined his animal soul in two or three days of hard labor, are rare. We need 49 days, and sometimes 49 weeks or perhaps even 49 years, in

order to attain control over the animal soul and to refine it until it shines.

Today, in the seventh generation, we don't have time for such a slow avoda. The Moshe Rabbeinu of our generation told us that we are going out of galus and receiving the Torah, “the new Torah which will go forth from Me.” He emphasized, “Hinei, hinei Moshiach ba” – not in another 49 days but right now. We have to hurry up. We need to clean all the junk away, flee from it and not look in its direction any longer.

Just as that bachur in Lubavitch was successful, with the ko'ach of the Rebbe Rashab, to make a spiritual leap and illuminate his mind and heart in such a short time, we too can be confident that the Rebbe MH”M will lead us on the paths of our personal S'firas HaOmer in the quickest way, so that we merit to receive the hidden light of the Torah of Moshiach even before Shavuot. May we be a pure receptacle to contain the G-dly light.



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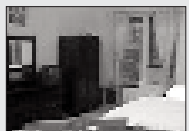
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GEULA: THE CHOZEH'S UNWAVERING VISION

By Yehoshua Kenig

The fascinating life story of Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Horowitz, the Chozeh of Lublin, one of the great Admurim of Poland. His talmidim relate that he possessed a spark of Moshiach, and the Sh'china spoke from his mouth. So eagerly did he await the Geula, that each night, he would instruct his shamash that if he heard Moshiach, he should wake him immediately. His 120 talmidim, giants of the spirit, illuminated Poland with the light of Chassidus and yearning for Geula. Part of a series on G'dolei Yisroel anticipating the Geula.



Eastern Poland in the year 1744: Rabbi Yaakov Koppel of Lukov, the grandfather of the Chozeh of Lublin, was widely praised as a generous philanthropist whose home was open to all.

As he traveled, he would invite any Jew he met onto his wagon. Sometimes, when the wagon was full, R' Yaakov himself would get down and walk alongside the wagon with the reins in his hands.

It was a Thursday and R' Yaakov set out to buy what he needed for Shabbos. He noticed a pauper walking by and offered him a ride. To his surprise, the man shrugged in refusal. R' Yaakov tried to persuade him but the man continued to decline the offer. "It's better for me to walk," he said. When R' Yaakov kept urging him to ride in his wagon, the man impudently said, "Yes, I'm tired, but I won't go on your wagon. I know you baalei tz'daka. You run after mitzvos just to earn a share in the world to come. I'm not interested in helping you with that."

Hearing this, R' Koppel's face lit up and he said, "I'll make a deal with you. You come up into the wagon and I'll give you the reward for this mitzva as a gift."

The poor man wasn't satisfied until they had sealed the deal with a handshake.



A GRANDSON WHO WILL ILLUMINATE THE WORLD

The odd fellow climbed up into the wagon and then he fixed his gaze on R' Yaakov and said, "You should know that it was decreed in the Heavenly court that you had to leave this world. When this verdict was declared, groups of angels that had been created by your acts of kindness rose in protest. 'It says in Your Torah, 'and tz'daka saves from death,' they contended. 'R' Koppel of Lukov is constantly involved in acts of tz'daka! Why should he die before marrying off his youngest daughter?'"

"Satan immediately retorted, 'The wise one [King Shlomo] did not mean people like him. These people do chesed for themselves, in order to gain the respect of people and to earn a share in the World to Come."

"In the end, the Heavenly court gave me permission to go down and test you. You passed the test and earned another 25 years. You will attend not only the chuppa of your youngest daughter Meitel, but also the chuppa of the son she will have, who will illuminate the world with his Torah and his holiness."

Upon saying this, the Angel of Death disappeared. R' Koppel kept this terrifying experience to

himself until a few hours before his passing, on Purim 1769, when he revealed it to those close to him.

FIRST STEPS

That same year, a suitable chassan was found for his daughter Meitel, R' Avrohom Eliezer Horowitz. R' Yaakov promised him fifteen years of support at his table but on this condition – "If your first child is a son, I want a prominent role in his chinuch."

Indeed, the couple had a son a year later and he was named Yaakov Yitzchok. The happy grandfather put great efforts into his chinuch. As a child, Yaakov Yitzchok showed promise of greatness. At the age of three he knew nearly all the prayers by heart. When he began learning Gemara he stood out among his peers as an outstanding student. He later related that when he was a child he considered writing a commentary on the Order of Kodshim!

The young lad continued to make tremendous strides in his Torah study. At first he studied in the yeshiva of R' M.Z.H. Meizlish, the rav of Zolkeva, and then he attended the Chassidic yeshiva of R' Shmelka of Nikolsberg.

THE LIGHT OF CHASSIDUS

According to some traditions it was R' Shmelka who brought his top student to the Maggid of Mezritch. It was R' Shmelka's practice to take his special pupils with him to his master. This is how R' Moshe Leib of Sassov, the Kozhnutzer Maggid and others ended up in the Maggid's court. According to another tradition, it was R' Zushe of Anipoli who brought him to the Maggid, as he would do whenever he encountered lofty souls in the course of his wanderings.

One incident undoubtedly influenced R' Yaakov Yitzchok and convinced him that he still hadn't found his path in the service of Hashem. The Admur Yechiel Chaim of Apt related:

In the tzaddik of Lublin's youth, on the day he completed all of Shas with the poskim, he was feeling in an elevated mood and he went strolling in the fields that surrounded the city. He encountered a maskil, a modern "enlightened" Jew who said mockingly, "I also finished Shas and poskim like you, but now I've graduated to become a student who studies the wisdom of the world. You should do the same."

This shook him up and he walked to the shul in a storm of emotion. How could a person who had learned so much Torah

deteriorate to such an extent? R' Yaakov Yitzchok poured out his heart before the Aron Kodesh and suddenly he beheld a vision of his father. "Do not fear!" his father instructed him. "Go to Rovna, where you will find the truth."

R' Dovber, the Maggid of Mezritch, was then serving as maggid in Rovna. When R' Yaakov Yitzchok arrived there, he was devastated to hear that the Maggid was mortally ill. He went to the mikva immediately and then stood

and prayed for the Maggid.

At that moment, the atmosphere in the Maggid's home changed and the tzaddik showed signs of recovery. R' Yaakov Yitzchok, who had thrown himself into prayer before resting from the rigors of the journey, fainted on the steps of the mikva. The Maggid sensed this and told his disciples: "Hurry to the mikva and save a Jewish soul!" R' Yaakov Yitzchok's life was saved at the last minute.

"BEN-DOVID WILL NOT COME UNTIL THE TEACHINGS OF R' ZALMAN ARE PUBLICIZED"

On the first Erev Shabbos following his arrival at the Maggid, R' Yaakov Yitzchok went to the kitchen, took a piece of fish and salted it well. When he was asked about this he explained, "I am accustomed to salt the fish that I will eat on Shabbos."

This aroused the surprise of the holy brotherhood. The fish he had salted would be cooking in the pot with all the other pieces of fish. How did this stranger know that this particular fish would end up as his portion?

R' Shneur Zalman, who later became famous as the Baal HaTanya and was the dear talmid of the Maggid, took a thread and tied it on the piece of fish and waited to see how things would turn out.

At the meal, the shamash served the fish to the disciples. The fish with the thread was served to the talmid who sat next to the new young man. That talmid, however, was feeling ill and he couldn't eat. He moved his plate aside, towards the person sitting next to him... none other than R' Yaakov Yitzchok. The piece of fish with the thread was his!

A warm relationship developed between the Chozeh and the Alter Rebbe. A talmid of the Chozeh, R' Aharon Moshe of Brod, would urge his mekuravim to have set times to study the teachings of the Alter Rebbe and he explained this with the following incident:

R' Aharon would occasionally look into the *Tanya*, but he made sure to do so privately, since he was afraid that his Rebbe wouldn't be pleased. One time, as he was immersed in study, the door opened and in walked the Chozeh.

The startled talmid was even

THE CLOCK THAT ANNOUNCED THE GEULA

After the Chozeh's passing, his three sons divided his holy belongings. His son, R' Yosef of Turtchin, received his father's silk Shabbos clothing and a wall clock that had hung in his room.

When the Shiva was over, R' Yosef took his precious bundle and set off for Turtchin. The skies suddenly clouded over and it began to pour. He hurriedly took shelter in a Jewish inn and hoped the rain would stop so he could continue his journey, since he was traveling without any money. The rain did not relent and he had to remain at the inn until the next day.

When the skies finally cleared, R' Yosef did not know what to do since he did not have any money to pay for his stay at the inn. He had no choice but to ask the innkeeper which of his belongings he would like. The man consulted with his wife. He was impressed by the silk garments, but the clock was a rare item in those days and was a practical addition to their house. "With the clock we will be able to have a set time for the milking, morning and evening, and it will be good for us and the cow."

R' Yosef went on his way and the clock remained at the inn. Years went by and the tzaddik R' Yisachar Dov of Radoshitz arrived at the inn. In the silence of the night, singing and dancing could be heard from the Radoshitzer Rebbe's room. The innkeeper tossed and turned in bed, wondering why the tzaddik was so happy.

In the morning he inquired, "Why didn't you sleep last night and what were you so happy about?"

The Rebbe answered with an inquiry of his own. "Please tell me, where did you get the clock that is hanging on the wall in my room?" The innkeeper told him what had happened.

The Radoshitzer Rebbe explained, "When I heard the ticking of the clock I immediately recognized that it belonged to the Chozeh of Lublin. When an ordinary clock ticks, it lets its owner know that he is another day closer to his death. True, this information urges him to do t'shuva and good deeds, but it is also sad.

"This clock, which belonged to the Chozeh, is different. With every tick it announces that we are that much closer to the Geula. That is why I rejoiced all night."



more surprised when the Chozeh told him that it was a good thing to study *Tanya*. “Ben-Dovid will not come until the teachings of R’ Zalman are publicized,” said the Chozeh.

In a letter to R’ Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, the Chozeh wrote about the Alter Rebbe: “He sacrificed himself and his life, constantly, over the suffering of Jews.”

THE CHOZEH

The Maggid passed away on Yud-Tes Kislev, 1773, and R’ Yaakov Yitzchok went back to his teacher, R’ Shmelke, who was the rav of Shiniva at the time. After the passing of his beloved teacher, R’ Yaakov Yitzchok attached himself to R’ Elimelech of Lizhensk, who loved him dearly.

R’ Elimelech would send his budding young Chassidim to the Chozeh to learn how to serve Hashem. The Chozeh originally settled in Lantzet, but following an amazing dream that he had, from which he understood that his Rebbe was upset that he had based himself in a town so close to Lizhensk, he moved to Rozvedov.

R’ Elimelech attributed the Chozeh’s ruach ha’kodesh and his amazing vision from one end of the world to the other to his being exceedingly careful to preserve the sanctity of his eyes. In his youth, the

Chozeh would cover his eyes with a handkerchief as he walked in the street. This had an adverse effect on his physical vision, but earned him such incredible spiritual vision that he became known as the Chozeh, “one who sees.”

R’ Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, who was one of his disciples, said about the Chozeh: “The difference between my Rebbe and the prophets is only in that he cannot say, ‘*ko amar Hashem...*’”

Indeed, the Chozeh himself related, “I was able to see from one end of the world to the other, but when I observed the tremendous corruption in the world, I prayed that this ability be taken away.”

SPARK OF MOSHIACH IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

In the year 1800, the Chozeh set up court in the heart of the Jewish quarter in Lublin. The city quickly became a center of Polish Chassidus, a nucleus of Torah and avoda that illuminated the entire country with the light of Chassidus.

Scholars and simple Jews alike flocked to his court in order to bask in his light and to receive his advice and guidance. The Chozeh worked energetically to spread Chassidus in Poland and taught and gave guidance to many disciples.

His student, the Yid HaKadosh

of Peshischa, explained, “The Chozeh has a spark of Moshiach, and this is why they all travel to see him.”

R’ Uri of Strelisk said: “Lublin is Eretz Yisroel, the courtyard of the beis midrash is Yerushalayim, the beis midrash is the Temple Mount, the Chozeh’s apartment is the Ulam, the Azara and the Heichal, his room is the Holy of Holies and the Sh’china speaks from his mouth.”

Out of his large circle of talmidim, many went on to found the Chassidic dynasties of Poland and Galicia, while numerous others became rabbanim throughout the country. Among the more renowned of his talmidim were the Yid

***“We, too, mourn
in our hearts
over the exile of
the Sh’china but
we rejoice over
the fact that
even in exile, it
dwells amongst
us.”***

He regretfully explained to his disciple, the Yid HaKadosh, that the simple people were ready for Geula but the “lofty people” had delayed it, since each one sees himself as a leader.

HaKadosh, the Sar Shalom of Belz, R' Naftali of Ropshitz (whose talmid founded the dynasty of Tzanz), and R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.

FALSE MOSHIACH

Being the primary disseminator of Chassidus in Poland, the Chozeh suffered greatly from the misnagdim. One time, some hotheads plotted to make a mockery of the Chozeh and to shake the faith of his disciples. They took a piece of deer hide and wrote on it: “Yaakov Yitzchok son of Meitel *mashuach* (is the anointed one), says Hashem.”

They were sure that when the tzaddik saw the note, he would believe it had fallen from heaven and would publicize that he was chosen as Moshiach. They would then shame him by announcing that it was they who had written the message.

One of them managed to sneak into the house Erev Shabbos and place the note in the Chozeh's Shabbos clothing. He waited impatiently, knowing that the Chozeh would check his clothing before Shabbos in accordance with

the injunction of the Shulchan Aruch, to avoid carrying on Shabbos inadvertently.

The Chozeh reached inside as the Misnaged held his breath. He scanned the parchment and then said aloud, “Hashem's seal is Truth and since it doesn't say “emes” here, this parchment is fraudulent.” He raised his voice and declared, “Sheker, sheker, sheker!”

When the Misnaged who was hiding heard the Chozeh's cry, he fainted. From then on he became an ardent Chassid of the Chozeh.

ALWAYS B'SIMCHA

The Chozeh of Lublin eagerly anticipated the coming of Moshiach. R' Yisroel of Tomashov related that the tzaddik would warn his shamash every night that if he heard Moshiach he should wake him up immediately.

Nonetheless, he shied away from sadness, even from lofty concerns like “the Sh'china in exile.” His service of Hashem was with tremendous simcha, with joy on his face despite the sadness in his heart over the exile of the Sh'china. The verse, “and you were tired and weary and did not fear G-d,” he explained, refers to tiredness and weariness from fasting and afflicting oneself.

R' Moshe Teitelbaum, the Yismach Moshe, originally opposed Chassidus and Chassidim. He met the Chozeh and questioned him about the Chassidim who did not properly mourn the churban.

The Chozeh replied: “This is analogous to a king who was taken captive and exiled to distant parts. His loyal followers were saddened and cried, but when he found his way to the home of one of his loyal subjects, the host's face was radiant with joy as he kept his sadness at bay. We, too, mourn in our hearts over the exile of the Sh'china but we rejoice over the fact that even in

exile, it dwells amongst us.”

R' Moshe eventually became his ardent Chassid and would regularly travel to Lublin.

CAMPAIGN TO BRING THE GEULA

The longing for Geula that burned in his heart spurred him on to various efforts to hasten it. First alone and then in collaboration with other tzaddikim, he attempted time and again to speed up the process.

The first attempt was made by the Chozeh alone. He immersed himself in prayers and special lofty unifications while pleading for the Geula. He was convinced that the time of Geula was approaching, but his efforts proved unsuccessful. He regretfully explained to his disciple, the Yid HaKadosh, that the simple people were ready for Geula but the “lofty people” had delayed it, since each one sees himself as a leader.

WITH R' MENDEL OF RIMANOV

For the Chozeh's second attempt at hastening the Geula, he included his dear friend, R' Menachem Mendel of Rimanov. Together, they decided to “make unifications” for five Shabbosas in a row, thus drawing down the five parts of the soul that pertain to Moshiach.

However, the plan did not work out. The first Friday night, when R' Mendel sat down at the table with the Chozeh, he was taken aback at the sight of Chassidim who spoke freely. At his own table the Chassidim sat in trepidation in the presence of their Rebbe, and R' Mendel could not tolerate ordinary talk at the Shabbos table. When he chastised the Chassidim of the Chozeh, they quieted down and nobody spoke. An atmosphere of *yira* prevailed.

The Chozeh's approach was to discuss holy matters with his



Jews in Lublin prior to World War II

Chassidim and he asked his friend, “How can you impose fear on Jews?”

The next day, when R’ Mendel came to the table, he removed the cloth covering the challos. The Chozeh, however, maintained that the challos should be covered. These occurrences highlighted their different paths and affected their joint efforts.

On the second Shabbos that R’ Mendel was in Lublin, he had a high fever and he was unable to attend the third Shabbos meal. Accepting the failure of the plan for five consecutive Shabbasos of yichudim, R’ Mendel returned home the next day.

When his condition improved as soon as he left Lublin, until he completely recovered before he arrived at home, he realized that it was the Satan who had ruined their plans. However, the Chozeh did not give up and continued to think of how to hasten the Geula.

THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

The Chozeh came up with his third attempt during the war

between France and Russia, Napoleon and Alexander. The Kozhnitzer Maggid, the Chozeh of Lublin, and R’ Menachem Mendel of Rimanov considered this war an auspicious time for the Geula in light of the Gemara that says, “If you see kingdoms sparring with one another, anticipate Moshiach.”

These tzaddikim prayed to Hashem that Napoleon win the war and that this be the war of Gog and Magog, which would be followed by Moshiach. Indeed, Napoleon’s army won battle after battle.

The Alter Rebbe, however, disagreed with these tzaddikim. He maintained that it would be better for the Jewish people if the Russian czar won the war. He said, “On the first day of Rosh HaShana, before Musaf, they showed me [with ruach ha’kodesh] that if Bonaparte wins, wealth will increase in Israel and the Jewish people will be uplifted, but their hearts will be distanced from their Father in heaven. If Alexander wins, although poverty will increase and the Jewish people will be degraded, their hearts will bond with their Father in heaven.

The tzaddikim knew that the

decisive moment when the Heavenly court would determine the outcome of the war would be during the shofar blowing on the upcoming Rosh HaShana. The tzaddikim of Poland deviated from their custom to daven at length and rushed to blow the shofar in order to finally silence the Accuser, but the Alter Rebbe preceded them. How? Early in the morning, before Shacharis, while the tzaddikim of Poland were still davening, he took the shofar and blew one hundred blasts. The Alter Rebbe thus tilted the scale against Napoleon.

After Shacharis, when it was time for the t’kios in the beis midrash of the Kozhnitzer Maggid, he felt that the battle had already been decided. “The Litvak [referring to the Alter Rebbe] preceded us and won,” he declared resignedly.

THE FOURTH ATTEMPT

Napoleon’s downfall did not dissuade the tzaddik and he soon came up with another initiative to hasten the Geula. This time, he included other tzaddikim – R’ Mordechai of Chernobyl, R’ Isaac of

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Moshiach.***

Kaliv, and his great talmid, the Yid HaKadosh – in the hopes that with their joint efforts they would be successful.

The day they chose to focus their prayers was the night of the Seder in the year 1813, since Chazal say, “In Nissan they were redeemed and in Nissan they will be redeemed.”

Maariv, Yom Tov night, the Chozeh davened with wondrous d'veikus, praying with great intensity and with supernal unifications. However, later that evening, during the Seder, he sensed that his colleagues were not with him in his yichudim. After Yom Tov he found out why.

In the home of the Yid HaKadosh, the Satan caused a fight between his wife and his mother. Instead of being busy with yichudim, he found himself forced to intervene in the quarrel. In the home of R' Mordechai of Chernobyl, the afikoman was lost and it took a long time to find it. In R' Isaac's home in Hungary, they said the Hagada in Hungarian.

Thus the Chozeh's fourth attempt to bring the Geula failed. His mesirus nefesh for the Jewish people knew no bounds so,

undeterred by these four failed attempts, he prepared to try again.

TZADDIKIM UNITE

A few months before Rosh HaShana, 1814, the Chozeh began the necessary preparations. He knew it would be a war in all the worlds and he had to enlist his best forces. Alongside him were his holy disciples, R' Klonimus Kalman, author of *Maor V'Shemesh*, and R' Naftali Hertz of Berzhan. R' Yisroel of Kozhnitz and R' Mendel of Rimanov would participate from their locations.

The Chozeh saw with his ruach ha'kodesh that this wasn't enough and he sent an urgent letter to R' Menachem Mendel of Kosov, author of *Ahavas Sholom*, to come to Lublin and help with the yichudim. However, the Satan interfered once again and R' Mendel remained in Kosov, sending his son, R' Chaim, in his stead. This was not what the Chozeh wanted and he was disappointed.

When it came time to blow the shofar, everybody stood in awe and trepidation. They knew it was a fateful moment. The Chozeh announced the t'kios and his talmid, R' Dovid'l of Lelov, was the baal tokeia.

The tzaddik stood in the beis midrash as his soul went aloft. The small shofar that R' Dovid'l held had to arouse the great shofar, the shofar of Moshiach. Surely the Satan would not sit by idly and would try to thwart their efforts.

Silence prevailed and the talmidim trembled. This was a battle with Satan himself. The Chozeh announced, “Tekia!” R' Dovid'l drew the shofar to his lips and tried to blow, but no sound emerged.

The Chozeh announced it again and this time, a clear note sounded. It was a small victory on the way to the big victory.

**GOING OUT OF GALUS
WITH SIMCHA**

At the meal on Rosh HaShana, the Chozeh said to his talmidim, “The accusations on High are great but we think that what was not accomplished with the sound of the shofar will be achieved with the simcha of Torah on Simchas Torah, because the power of joy is greater than the power of awe.”

A battle took place in Kozhnitz too. The night of Yom Kippur the Maggid cried out, “Master of the universe, please say ‘I forgive you as you said,’ and hasten the Geula. Lest you say we lack tzaddikim in the world, you have R' Mendele of Rimanov, who is a real tzaddik. Lest the “Urim V'Tumim” be lacking, we have the Chozeh who illuminates like the Urim V'Tumim. Lest you lack baalei t'shuva, I, Yisroel of Kozhnitz, with my weak body, am ready to do t'shuva for all the Jewish people!”

The Days of Judgment passed and the tzaddikim knew that they had to complete the avoda of yira with the avoda of simcha during Sukkos and Simchas Torah. The Satan also knew to redouble his efforts. On Erev Sukkos, the Maggid of Kozhnitz suddenly took ill. His condition worsened from hour to hour.

On his sickbed, he addressed his son, R' Moshe Elyakim: “A few minutes ago, the tzaddik R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev appeared to me. I asked him why he did not keep his promise that when he would ascend to heaven, he would not rest until he brought an end to the galus.

“R' Levi Yitzchok replied, ‘Soon, when you are in the World of Truth, you will understand the truth of the matter. An upside-down world will be shown to you, for what seems like a disaster for the Jewish people in this world, appears in the World of Truth as the greatest good. Therefore, it is absolutely forbidden to force the *keitz*.’”

Shortly thereafter, the Maggid of Kozhnitz passed away. Due to the *hester panim* (concealment), the Chozeh did not sense the passing of his friend. His Chassidim hid the information from him so as not to distress him on Erev Yom Tov.

THE FALL

Simchas Torah. The beis midrash was packed with Chassidim who had come to be with the Rebbe. They danced and sang and the tzaddik encouraged the crowd, "If we have a happy Simchas Torah, we will also have a happy Tisha B'Av."

By this he meant that the simcha would bring Moshiach and there

would be no fast day, but time would reveal that if Simchas Torah was not sufficiently joyous, then the mourning on Tisha B'Av would be far greater.

The simcha in the Chozeh's beis midrash was at a peak, with the Chassidim circling the bima and the Chozeh dancing and singing with them. Song followed song and none of the Chassidim noticed that the Chozeh had left the shul and gone up to his private room to be miyached yichudim as the tzaddikim had agreed to do.

At the same time, R' Klonimus Kalman was also involved in yichudim to bring the Geula while his chassidim danced and sang. Suddenly, a large stone shattered the window of the beis midrash in Krakow, ruining the joy of the celebrants. In R' Naftali Hertz's beis midrash, too, the Satan was up to no good. A mysterious fire broke out, scattering the congregants.

What happened in Lublin was called "the well-known fall," but nobody knew exactly what happened.

DO NOT CAST ME AWAY

It was close to midnight when one of the Chassidim, walking down the street, heard a groan. When he approached he was horrified to see his Rebbe on the ground. His cry brought the Chassidim on the run.

The Chozeh sighed and said, "Why did you hide from me that the Kozhnitzer Maggid passed away on Erev Sukkos? Had I known, I would not have walked these dangerous paths alone. The Samech-Mem came to attack me and made me fall out the window."

The Chassidim were shocked to hear this, knowing that their Rebbe's room had only one small, narrow and high up window. R' Yehuda Leib of Zaklikov, one of the older ones of



Above: The old gravestone on the grave of the Chozeh.
Right: The Ohel on the gravesite of the Chozeh of Lublin



the group, then recalled what the Chozeh's Rebbe, R' Elimelech of Lizhensk, had said many years before. "Know that you have to pray mightily: 'Do not cast us away in old age.'"

The Chozeh was ill for nine and a half months. His talmid, Professor Chaim Dovid Bernhard, was a doctor. Despite his best efforts, his Rebbe did not recover. "All the forces of the *sitra achara* were arrayed against me," he told the doctor. Even on his sickbed he maintained his faith and anticipation. "I await him [Moshiach] every day, that he come" he would keep murmuring.

The Chozeh of Lublin passed away on Tisha B'Av. He had been moser nefesh to bring the Geula. The tens of thousands of his Chassidim felt it an additional churban. That year, R' Mendel of Rimanov, the third member of the group, passed away on 19 Iyar. Many people considered the reason to be the attempts made by the three tzaddikim to force the keitz.

THOUGHTS ABOUT GEULA FROM THE CHOZEH OF LUBLIN

Calculating the Keitz because of Kibbud Av

He said that tzaddikim calculated when Moshiach would come because they were following the Halacha. The Halacha is that when a son sees that his father is not doing something properly, out of respect for him he cannot tell his father directly that he is doing something wrong. He must show him the Halacha and say: Father, this is what it says in the Torah.

Since we want to express our opinion to our Father in heaven so He will have mercy on His children and redeem them, and it's not right, as it were, that they suffer the burden of galus anymore, the tzaddikim come up with a date and show an allusion in a verse of Tanach how Moshiach will come in that year. This is to show our Father in heaven: Father, it says so in the Torah...

Why was Rebbi unable to annul Tisha B'Av

The Gemara relates that Tisha B'Av once fell on Shabbos and Rebbi (Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi) wanted to cancel the fast of Tisha B'Av altogether, but the other sages were unwilling.

One can understand this as Rebbi wanted to uproot Tisha B'Av altogether, in other words, to bring the Geula and cancel the fast of Tisha B'Av completely. The other sages did not agree, that is, they did not help him since they were not on his level to be able to do something like that.

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‘IN PAIN SHALL YOU BRING FORTH CHILDREN...’

By Avrohom Ber

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

*“The doctor came out of the delivery room with a solemn expression on his face that sank my heart. ‘Not again,’ I thought to myself despairingly.” * The previously untold story about the Rebbe who couldn’t speak and the children who could not be born.*

“You simply can’t understand it. There’s no chance in the world that you’ll be able to understand such a thing,” Shimon told me when we met in his shoe store on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. “Anyone who has no children can never fathom the feelings of a mother sitting beside her son’s bed for close to six months, until the bitter end – a parent who buries three of his offspring. Who can imagine what it feels like to come to the hospital in the ninth month,

time and time again, only to return home each time empty-handed *r”l*.”

We all hear “miracle” stories on the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. All of us have our own collection of such tales, ready to tell upon request. There are stories that have been more publicized; others less. Some have already been printed, while others still make the rounds via word-of-mouth. This story, never previously publicized, is one of the most amazing stories yet to be printed. It is an impressive

display of simple faith in Hashem and His agent, the Rebbe shlita, Melech HaMoshiach.

THE MONEY OF CHILLUL SHABBOS – WAS GONE

Shimon and Nava (the names have been changed at their request) are an Israeli couple living in the borough of Queens, New York. For years, the trying times they went through were simply too difficult to speak about, but at last they have agreed to tell their unique story to the readers of “Beis Moshiach.”

Shimon and Nava were married twenty-five years ago. They make a living selling clothes and shoes. At that time, Shimon and his father owned a store on Jamaica Avenue, which honorably provided the family with financial sustenance. The problem was that the store was open on Shabbos.

Shimon was then in the process of returning to his Jewish roots through the T’mimim who came to his store on “mitzaim”. When he heard about a story where the Rebbe personally got involved in a matter of keeping Shabbos in a store owned by Jews, he went to the Queens Chabad House and happily informed the shliach, Rabbi Shraga Zalmanoff, that he would start observing Shabbos. He then asked Rabbi Zalmanoff to write a letter to the Rebbe on his behalf, requesting a bracha to find a new location for the store, where he could keep Shabbos.

“A week passed, then another, and then another,” recalled Shimon. “I would periodically check with Rabbi Zalmanoff for an answer, but none was forthcoming. I couldn’t understand why the Rebbe wasn’t responding. Doesn’t the Rebbe want us to keep Shabbos?”

“One day, about a month after

the writing of the letter, a Gentile of Georgian descent came into the store and asked us how much we want to lease him the premises for nine years, which was the remainder of our contract. We replied that two hundred thousand dollars would be sufficient. Without hesitation, he asked to lease the store. In my wildest imaginations, I never would have believed that it would be possible to close such an important deal so quickly!

“My father told him that since we have made an agreement with the property owner to inform him of any changes that we made, we would have to let him know first. The owner, who was Jewish, told us that he agrees to buy out the lease of the store from us for \$200,000, and since we preferred to sell the lease to a Jew, we decided to deal with him.

“The Gentile came back the following day, and when he heard about our agreement with the owner, he immediately offered to up the price to a quarter of a million dollars! Here, we received a little education from our father, of blessed memory, as he told him that he is unwilling to break his word to the Jew, even for another fifty thousand dollars. The Gentile asked my father if he had already signed a contract with the owner, and when he replied in the negative, a look of absolute shock crossed the man’s face. ‘You’re prepared to pass up \$50,000 without a contract?’ he asked my father before leaving.

“The contract with the Jewish owner was signed, and we found our current location in Manhattan. All the merchandise was still left in the old store on Jamaica Avenue.

“One day, the owner came and asked us to remove all of our merchandise, as he needs the place urgently. We quickly transferred all the goods to the store in Manhattan, although we had not

yet installed a proper alarm system or adequate locks. We’re talking about merchandise valued at more than eighty thousand dollars!”

When Shimon came to this part of his story, tears welled in his eyes and his voice cracked slightly. “And then...and then...one night, thieves broke into the store and stole all of our merchandise. It wasn’t enough that we had lost fifty thousand dollars by turning down the Gentile’s offer, but now we were also left without any stock. But we were not dismayed. We realized that it was Hashem’s plan that thieves had taken all of the money we had earned on all those Shabbosim and allowed us to turn a new page in a new location. The store has been

***“Do you
understand what
you’re about to
do? What does a
rabbi know about
this?”***

closed on Shabbos ever since.”

The tremendous faith of simple Jews is simply awe-inspiring...

WHAT DOES THE REBBE KNOW ABOUT SUCH THINGS?

After this lengthy introduction, we now turn to the miracle story, which is the main subject of this article:

As with any young couple after their wedding, when the first pregnancy comes along, the excitement is very great. They wait impatiently to embrace the child that is soon due to enter the world. Nine months of waiting reach their

climax.

Did we say “nine”? Not in this case.

“At the end of the sixth month, Nava already had to go to the hospital. The baby, a girl, was born... but lived for only an hour. You have no idea what it was like. It was simply unbearable.

“We returned to our empty home and tried to deal with the loss. We are very strong people with a lot of faith, and we are not broken that easily. We tried again.

“This time, the pregnancy seemed to go normally. After nine months, we found ourselves traveling once again to the hospital, our lips uttering words of prayer that things should just go well.

“The doctor came out of the delivery room with a solemn expression on his face that sank my heart. ‘Not again,’ I thought to myself despairingly. The doctor informed me that I had a baby boy, alive but not that healthy. The joy that the baby was alive made me forget the complications for the moment – a very brief moment. My wife sat near the baby in the hospital, day and night. For four harrowing months, she hardly came home. It’s difficult for me even to recall that horrific time.

“In the physical sense, the prayers didn’t help. After four months, my wife returned home without the child.

“This was even harder than the previous time. I felt that I was about to explode. Friends and neighbors looked at me with absolute pity. I could read their minds: ‘Look at that poor Jew; he’s already lost two children.’

My wife traveled to the Rebbe MH”M and passed by him at Sunday dollars. She burst into tears and asked the Rebbe for a bracha to have children. She said that she can’t take it anymore, and she wants a living and healthy child.

The Rebbe merely observed her with kindly eyes, but said nothing.

"The third pregnancy was a repeat of the previous ones. The hopes, the prayers, the expectations, and the great disappointment. My wife waited for six months at the hospital in Long Island, and eventually returned home alone. The baby was interred next to his other siblings.

"I had three graves of my children. Do you understand what we're talking about?

"From then on, it had already become a kind of routine. My wife would become pregnant, go to the hospital... and give birth to a dead fetus. We would go back home, and gnash our teeth, but we remained unbroken – until the next time."

Five, yes, five, more antagonizing times – things ended in bitter frustration.

"My wife wrote many times to the Rebbe MH" in request of a bracha, yet the Rebbe did not respond. I don't know how to interpret the ways of G-d or why

this Heavenly decree was destined to fall upon us, but it remained a most painful fact. My wife would write to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe would not respond.

"In Nava's ninth pregnancy, the doctors revealed that she was carrying twins. This led them to draw two conclusions: First, that it was imperative for Nava to remain under observation from the fourth month, and second, in light of her previous history, she must abort one of the fetuses, as giving birth to twins would endanger her life.

"It was 5753, and the Rebbe neither spoke nor responded to letters personally. The new order of things was that the secretary went in and asked the Rebbe MH" to reply with a nod or a shake of his holy head.

"Nava wrote to the Rebbe – again. We are believing Jews, who know the power of a tzaddik. There's no such thing as 'it's impossible to write to the Rebbe.'

"Two days later, we received a call from the secretary. The Rebbe

had said that she should not go to the hospital, rather she should arrange for a personal attendant to help her until the birth. After a few days, we received a letter in the mail. The Rebbe had sent Nava three dollars, apparently for her and the twins."

The doctor at Long Island Jewish Hospital, an observant Jew, opened his eyes in shock at the couple sitting before him. "Do you understand what you're about to do? Do you understand that you're going to kill your wife because of some rabbi? What does a rabbi know about this?"

"Of course, they wouldn't release us from the hospital until we signed a form declaring that we accept all responsibility for what happens. Only after we signed did the doctors agree to release Nava.

"Nu, what do you think?" laughed Shimon happily. "Today, I have two teenagers, a son and a daughter, alive and well – and it is all in the merit of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach!"



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BREAD AND BUTTER, BUT NOT TOGETHER

Reminiscences of R' Nissan Nemenov a"h

By Rabbi Shneur Zalman Chantin

“You can eat each item by itself. When you eat bread, eat it to satiety. When you eat butter, eat it for your good health. But I cannot understand why you have to eat the bread with butter on it!”

It was the end of the summer of 1946 when my parents and sisters entered Camp Hof after crossing the border between Austria and Germany. I never heard details from my father about their wandering in Austria and which cities or places they camped in. After I began making inquiries for this article, and I asked other people who were there what they remembered, I saw that they remembered very little.

The first thing they all remember is that they were told to be absolutely quiet. They also remember their fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of the secret police, fear of soldiers, fear of the dark, fear of the long journey and fear of losing the group or lagging behind.

They all also remember how exhausted they were. Even when

they spent a few days in one place, it was never restful. They were always living out of suitcases, ready to travel. All the transit camps they spent time in during their travels looked more or less the same. There were long buildings called barracks. There was a large room which had military folding beds, and that was it. There were no partitions and no other furniture.

Each family was allotted a corner or a row of beds. They built tables out of their suitcases by putting them one on top of the other, with the bottom suitcase upright and the one on top of it lying down. Their beds served as chairs on which to sit and eat their small ration of bread, until they were told it was time to move on. Soldiers or policemen guarded the transit camps and the refugees

were not allowed to leave them.

When they crossed the border and entered camp Hof in the American zone of Germany, a stone rolled off their hearts. They knew that they were among friends, that the KGB wouldn't get them and that the communists had no ability get them back to Russia, and their fear dissipated.

The camp in Hof was like all the others. Here, too, they brought them into a large room, gave them bunk beds to sleep on and told them to wait until they were brought to a different camp. However, this camp was different from the others that they had gotten used to, where they had limited food, usually bread and water. In Hof, or as the refugees called it, *Oifnams Lager* (reception camp), they were given not only bread but also... butter. The food was sent by the Joint and UNRRA and when the refugees received it, there was nobody happier than them.

UNRRA – United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was founded to help refugees and citizens living in Allied countries that had been liberated in Europe and the Far East. In Germany, the UNRRA was under military surveillance

throughout the country. Military authorities were responsible for maintaining law and order in the displaced persons camps, acquiring basic provisions and distributing it, and providing living quarters. UNRRA ran the camps, providing health services, relief, entertainment, professional guidance and supplementary provisions.

My father told me:

“The first few times that we received butter from the Joint, a product we hadn’t seen in ages, people ate it with a great appetite. We were famished and an item like butter was rare. Naturally, we were happy to be able to smear a bit of it on the dry bread we were given.”

It is important to clarify that for Chassidim under those circumstances it was permissible, without a doubt, for them to eat the butter that the Joint provided even though the butter was from gentiles. Why? First, because all mitzvos are set aside when there is a chance of danger because it says, regarding mitzvos, “and you shall live with them.” Since the butter contained vitamins and was rich in energy, it supplied them with a little of what their bodies desperately needed.

Second, according to Halacha, butter has a different rule than other dairy products because technically butter does not need to be supervised and made out of chalav Yisroel. In order to



understand the Halacha, we need to understand how butter was made then and the differences nowadays that change its halachic status.

In the period of time I am talking about – and before that, as well – the cream was skimmed off the milk, cooled and left for bacteria to curdle it. Then the curdled cream would be poured into a container called a butter-churn, where it was churned for a long time or the container was spun around quickly. This separated the drops of cream that were in the milk and they congealed and formed clumps of fat, or butter grains. Salt would be added to maintain freshness.

Shulchan Aruch paskens (Yoreh Dei’a siman 115) that you don’t stop someone from eating gentile butter because the milk from a



One of the barracks in Hof

The DP camp in Hof



non-kosher animal cannot curdle into butter. Thus it was not a problem for the refugees to eat the butter they were given in the DP camps.

(However, in order not to lead any readers astray, I must emphasize that nowadays, butter production has changed and additional issues have arisen. If a person eats non-Jewish butter nowadays, he is likely to encounter problems with the prohibition of meat and milk and the *g'zeira* of not consuming non-Jewish milk.)

The following Shabbos, my father related, after they finally had butter to smear on their bread, the Chassidim farbrenged as they used to do. They sat together to

tell stories and relate divrei Torah as though they weren't in a way station, traveling a dangerous road and as though all their work was done and their suffering was behind them. They didn't care that the improvised "tables" that they made out of suitcases were of different heights and that the folding cots were their chairs. Of course, the main speaker was the mashpia, R' Nissan Nemenov.

R' Nissan couldn't restrain himself and he took the opportunity to chastise the men and bachurim:

"Gevald, gevald!" he cried out. "What has become of us? Baruch Hashem, we have merited to leave the darkness. Hashem broke the

copper doors for us and the bolts of iron. He did a miracle for us and we left there in a supernatural way. We must give thanks to Hashem.

"Now tell me. How should we thank Hashem for this? Do we thank Him by hungrily attacking bread spread with butter?"

"I'm not talking about what Chassidus demands of us. I'm not asking for *iskafia* or *is'hafcha*, which are lofty levels in avoda. *Gezunterheit!* On the contrary, eat as you please and it should be for your good health. I am talking about something else. I'm talking about our becoming so quickly coarsened. Baruch Hashem we have ample bread. Eat and satiate

CORRECTING AN ERROR

Mrs. Itta Sossonkin-Levitin, who was killed in Czechoslovakia, was the daughter-in-law of the Chassid, R' Nachum Shmaryahu Sossonkin, rav of Batum, and not his daughter, as I had written previously. I apologize.

Halacha dictates, "*taus – l'olam chozer*" – a Baal Korei who made a mistake while reading the Torah must always go back to the beginning of the verse to read it correctly. Since I made a mistake in the previous chapter about Mrs. Sossonkin-Levitin (nee Kleiman), I have to go back not only to the beginning of the "verse," but to the beginning of the "chapter," and use the opportunity to tell a bit about her life.

Itke, as she was known, was married to R' Moshe, the son of R' Shmaryahu Sossonkin. When their daughter Chana Feiga (Tzippora) was three and their son Avrohom was three months, R' Moshe was arrested for being a religious Jew and sentenced to ten years exile in a camp in Siberia. Itke, the wife of the "criminal," was not permitted to continue living in Leningrad and had to move to nearby Luga.

Three years later, when the Germans advanced on Leningrad, she managed to flee with her two

small children to a forsaken village in the district of Molotovsk, Siberia.

When the war ended, she managed, after great effort, to locate and contact her father-in-law, who had moved with many of Anash to Samarkand. R' Shmaryahu arranged an official travel permit for her

and his grandchildren so they could join him in Samarkand in Central Asia.

When she finally arrived in Samarkand, after weeks of traveling, R' Shmerel took her into his small home and shared his bit of bread with her and the children. At that time, they also had their three year old granddaughter Rochel living with them, the daughter of their son, R' Asher. She was orphaned from her mother, and her father was in a labor camp in Siberia.

One night, when R' Sossonkin was sitting up learning Torah, as usual, he noticed that his daughter-in-law had

woken up and looked upset. He asked her what happened but she politely declined to answer. The next night the same thing happened. Itke woke up in a fright and once again did not answer any questions.

The third night, when she woke up once again and began to pace back and forth, she agreed to tell



R' Shmaryahu Sossonkin

yourselves. There's butter? Eat as you desire.

"You can eat each item by itself. When you eat bread, eat it to satiety. When you eat butter, eat it for your good health. But I cannot understand why you have to eat the bread **with** butter on it. Not only that, but you make sure to spread the butter on the bread so that it is evenly distributed so that one side or corner, heaven forbid, does not have a drop more butter than another. *This* is what hurts me! As the verse says, 'you became fattened and thickened and covered in flab.' It's the *gasus ruach* (coarseness of spirit) I'm talking about. Is that where we have gotten to in so short a time?

To become so *megusham*? Gevald, gevald!"

By the way, the butter the refugees received from the Joint was the same butter that was given to the American soldiers, and it was very salty so it could last a long time without refrigeration. My mother admitted to me that under any other circumstances she wouldn't put butter like that into her mouth.

Nevertheless, R' Nissan couldn't tolerate it. My father would conclude, "R' Nissan? He was a real Chassid and ovoid Elokim. Go and tell people today who R' Nissan was. They will think he was a fanatic who didn't relate to this world."

"Gevald, gevald!" he cried out. "What has become of us? Hashem broke the copper doors for us and the bolts of iron. Is this how we thank Him?"

It says in Mishlei 10:7, "the

him what was troubling her. "This is the third night that my brother, Yaakov Kleiman, who died of starvation in Leningrad together with his wife, came to me in a dream and asked me to save his children."

She told her father-in-law that she and her brother had made a pact that whoever remained alive after the war would take care of the others' children. She had survived but when she saw how hard it was for her father-in-law to support himself, his wife, their granddaughter and now her and her children, she felt she couldn't impose on him with additional children. For this reason, she had not mentioned her promise until then.

R' Sossonkin reassured her and together they discussed how to find her nephews, who were in communist institutions, and bring them to Samarkand. After great effort, the three orphaned children of her brother were brought to Samarkand and R' Sossonkin took them into his house.

One day, a prisoner who had been together with Itke's husband came with the bitter news that R' Moshe had died. He told about the hardships, the

backbreaking labor and subhuman conditions R' Moshe had endured and also recounted his *mesiras nefesh*. Despite his suffering and starvation, he refused to eat non-kosher food.

After a few months, despite the pain over the loss of his son, R' Shmaryahu encouraged his daughter-in-law to remarry. She married the mashgiach of yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, R' Shneur Zalman Levitin, whose first wife had been killed in the bombing.

They joined the group my parents were in and together made the trip from Russia to Poland to Czechoslovakia. They were about to cross the border into Austria when a Czech soldier shot and killed her.

After these tragedies and despite the enormous difficulties, R'

Shmaryahu raised all six orphans: his three grandchildren, Itke's two children and R' Asher's daughter, (R' Asher remained in Russia in a labor camp in Siberia) and the three Kleiman children who were nephews of his daughter-in-law. He raised them to Torah, chuppa and good deeds in the way of Chassidus. May his memory be a blessing.



R' Moshe Sossonkin



R' Shneur Zalman Levitin

memory of a tzaddik is for blessing,” that whenever we mention the name of a Chassid or yerei Shamayim, we need to bless him and sing his praise. Since I mentioned R’ Nissan, I want to tell you some more about him and how I, his talmid, saw the good qualities that he had.

If you didn’t know R’ Nissan, you could think that he was removed from this world like the perushim described in the Rebbe Rayatz’s Memoirs, who covered their eyes so they wouldn’t see outside their immediate area.

R’ Nissan wasn’t like that. On the contrary; he definitely saw

what was happening outside his four cubits. For example, when he would meet my mother in the street, although she was a woman and it was in public, he would always stop to ask how she was and say a few encouraging words.

R’ Nissan was an ovoid Elokim. He was a Chassid who worked on himself and his middos. His Shacharis on a weekday took 5 or 6 hours, and not because he didn’t know how to read well. He was demanding of himself and of his talmidim, largely in the area of iskafia – breaking, conquering, and subduing the Evil Inclination;

subduing the coarse and negative traits and self discipline to behave in the proper manner.

I knew R’ Nissan in yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Brunoy when I was a boy. I learned with him only the beginning of the study of Chassidus, a few chapters of *Tanya* and one maamer in Likkutei Torah, I think it was the maamer, “Lo Sashbis.” Right after my bar mitzva my family and I left France for Crown Heights.

I first went to yeshiva in Brunoy in 1954, when I was a boy of six. At home I was the baby son, born to my older parents. I was born in Paris, after all the hardships my parents had gone through. My sisters were older by then. There was no school for me in Paris and so, despite the concern for my welfare and the difficulty in parting with their “ben yochid,” they sent me to R’ Nissan in Brunoy so I could receive the kind of Chabad chinuch for which they had been so moser nefesh in Russia.

The yeshiva building was given to the Chassidim by the Joint and the food was also donated by various organizations who continued to support Jewish refugees for years after the war was over. The food given in the yeshiva kitchen was made with whatever ingredients they were provided with and the taste was like that of the manna, i.e. it had no taste of its own ... everyone tasted in it whatever he wanted...

I was the youngest boy in the dormitory. My father wanted someone to ensure I would eat properly, so he asked his friend, R’ Nissan, to have me eat in his home. R’ Nissan’s wife would cook for her household in any case and another portion was no extra hardship for her. In the Nemenov home at that time there were three sons. There were the two older



R’ Nissan Nemenov and his sons, R’ Sholom Dovber and R’ Moshe, shortly after they left Russia

boys, R' Sholom Ber and R' Moshe, and the younger son, my dear friend R' Yitzchok (the menahel ruchni of the yeshiva now), who is a year older than me.

There is an aphorism, "Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are." After the brief period of time that I ate in R' Nissan's house and saw what he ate, I modified the saying to, "Tell me what you eat and I'll tell you who you are." By seeing what my teacher ate, I was able to learn, to some extent, about the greatness of this Chassid and G-d fearing man.

Though I was just a boy, I noticed that R' Nissan did not use the bread that most of Anash used. That bread was baked in the bakery of a non-Jew and a Lubavitcher would throw a little wood into the fire or light the oven so that the bread would be pas Yisroel and kosher according to all opinions.

R' Nissan's wife would bake bread for him at home that was more mehudar. She did not have an oven so every Thursday or Friday, she would bake three challos for Shabbos in a metal pan on the fire. The challa that was left over after Shabbos was used for the rest of the week.

This challa, with the addition of a little cheese that the Rebbetzin made herself, were the only things R' Nissan ate during the week. In 1954 there were no plastic bags to keep bread fresh. The bread or challa remained on the table covered with a napkin that protected it from flies but not from drying out. Of course, as each additional day went by, the challa became harder and harder until it was like a rock. In order to eat it (I remember it as though it was today), R' Nissan would dip it in hot tea to soften it. I don't know how the cheese tasted.

We could manage with the bathing conditions but, as Chassidim, we could not manage without a mikva in which to immerse before davening every day.

I am not exaggerating when I say that day after day, week after week, and year after year, this is **all** R' Nemenov ate.

So when my father told me what R' Nissan demanded of the group of refugees, I could understand a bit of his pain. As a mashpia, it hurt him to see how they "grabbed" fresh bread with butter. He couldn't understand how Chassidim could be so coarse.

Another small example from the time I was in Tomchei T'mimim Brunoy:

In my day, there were no showers in yeshiva. Who had heard of a personal shower? Once a week we would go to the town bathhouse and every bachur and child was given ten minutes to shower. If someone did not come out after ten minutes, he would be forcibly removed, dressed or otherwise.

We could manage with the bathing conditions but, as Chassidim, we could not manage without a mikva in which to immerse before davening every day.

R' Nissan (and a few other special Chassidim like R' Nachum

Labkowski) came up with an idea. The yeshiva building was in the middle of a thick wooded area and at the edge was a spring. The water was cold and shallow; it was outside, without a roof or anything around it. That is where R' Nissan and these other brave souls went to immerse. It made no difference whether it was summer or winter, whether it was pouring, snowing or bitterly cold and windy.

R' Nissan went to immerse in that spring every day, with kabbalas ol and without taking the conditions into account. There were no steps leading down to the waters of the spring; in order for the water to cover the entire body at one time, you had to lie spread-eagled and R' Nissan was no youngster. Only an *emeser erlicher Yid*, someone with yiras Shamayim, could do this.

These little stories are etched in my memory, heart and soul till this day. I learned from them. It was an edifying lesson about how a genuine Chassid conducts himself; someone who demanded much more of himself than of his pupils. It is no wonder, then, that he demanded of others what he did, that gashmius shouldn't hold such an important place in their lives. To him, that was plain and obvious.

י"בס

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TO COLLECT WHAT IS ‘OWED’ TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

By Boruch Merkur

*“A Jew shouldn’t have to come to the point of crying out; he should only have to extend his hand to G-d...and immediately G-d gives him, from the ‘full, open, holy, and generous hand’ of the Holy One Blessed Be He.” * Tracing the Rebbe MH”M’s instructions on how to perfect our Divine service in the Final Era.*

[Continued from Issue #690]

“And especially – in addition to the fact that G-d, of His own volition, wants to give Jews charity – Jews cry out, ‘Until when?!’ including the righteous women of the generation, as well as ‘Hadasa is Ester,’¹⁵⁰ who is presently in the World of Truth. She cries out together with all the women and children of the Jewish people and with all the Jews, ‘Until when?!’ How long will ‘Shushan [be] in the depths of terror?’¹⁵¹ Indeed, there must be the bestowal of life from ‘the Giver of life will give you life.’¹⁵²

“Moreover, a Jew shouldn’t have to come to the point of crying out; he should only have to extend his hand to G-d, and G-d will fulfill his obligation¹⁵³ (on Purim) that ‘we give to **anyone** who extends a hand.’ He shouldn’t have to speak or ask; he should only do a physical action, extend his physical hand and immediately G-d gives him, from the ‘full, open, holy, and generous hand’¹⁵³ of the Holy One Blessed Be He.

“Here we are speaking about a gift relative to the capacity of the Giver, what the Holy One Blessed Be He Himself can afford, regarding Whom it is said, ‘The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine.’¹⁵⁴ Indeed, G-d’s

generosity is manifest even within the natural order, where there is physical (as well as spiritual) silver and gold.

“All the more is the above true insofar as the gift comes from G-d’s essence and being, for the Jew who ‘extends a hand’ appeals to G-d’s very essence. The profound care that G-d has for the Jewish people is reflected in the statement of the Rebbe Rayatz¹⁵⁵ – that the simplicity of a Jew (especially when he does an action with simplicity, ‘extending a hand’) unites with the true simplicity of [what Rambam refers to as] the ‘True Existence.’ Of consequence, the ‘giving’ [to ‘all who extend a hand’] is according to what G-d’s essence and

being can afford, beyond all possible measure.

“At the same time, perfection is attained with regard to the capacity of the recipient to receive as well as his actual enrichment; **bountiful** good given in a manner that can be received, overt and revealed goodness within the framework of created beings.

“Indeed, we are talking about the perfect gift both with respect to the Benefactor as well as to the recipient, including [the ultimate gift of] the true and complete Redemption by our righteous Moshiach.”

NOTES:

¹⁵⁰ Ester 2:7.

¹⁵¹ Liturgy from the Musaf Prayer of Yom Kippur. See *Torah Ohr* Hosafos 116c.

¹⁵² Yoma 71a.

¹⁵³ Third blessing of Grace After Meals.

¹⁵⁴ Chagai 2:8.

¹⁵⁵ The address of 12 Tammuz 5707, Section 3 (*Likkutei Dibburim* Vol. 3, pg. 491b, beg.).

THE WINDING ROAD TO A SPECIAL SHLICHUS

By S. Malachi

EARLY YEARS

Chanan was born in Rechovot to a frum Tunisian family. In his childhood, his father was sent to Algir, Morocco, to bring people on aliya but he was brutally murdered in 1958.

In yeshiva high school, Chanan had questions about emuna, and he quickly ran into problems when he endeavored to find answers. The answers he was given didn't satisfy him, and when he continued asking, his teachers forbade him to ask questions about emuna, either

because they didn't have answers or because they didn't want to deal with him. Chanan left yeshiva for public school.

SECRET PLAN TO CAPTURE MAGUR

After high school, he was drafted into the army. During his army service, he was assigned to a command group responsible for preparing a military plan to capture the eastern side of the Jordan River, in Jordan. The command group in charge of the operation called to

project Magor – an acronym for Menasheh, Gad, and Reuven, the tribes which settled in that area in Biblical times. They had detailed plans, down to a list of officers and commanders who would take charge of Rabat Amon and other cities.

After his military service, Chanan studied mathematics and computer science at Bar-Ilan University. In 1973, he married his wife Varda, who also used to be religious, and settled in Ramat Gan. Six years later, they moved to the hills of the Shomron with the nucleus that started the Elkana settlement.

"We were 16 families. Our first attempt at building a settlement was quelled by the authorities, but in 1977, after Rabin's resignation, the interim Peres government gave its approval. Peres thought it would help him in the elections."

THE RESCUER WHO WAS SAVED

In 1993, Chanan decided to "rescue" his sister who had become interested in Judaism. In the process, he found Yamima, a special woman who was mekarev many people. Chanan, who had

BIO

Decades after they first troubled him in yeshiva high school, Chanan Hassan found the answers to his questions in Toras HaChassidus.

The road to knitted kippa and from there to sirtuk and black hat was long and arduous, but it ended with hisকাশrus to the Nasi HaDor. Even the interruptions in that journey proved to be a "descent for the sake of an ascent."

Today, Chanan is the director of the computer department in the daughter-company to Bank HaMizrachi called Meichish. Did we call him a director? Actually, he is the director of the company's Chabad house. He sees his work as a shlichus, and defines his job as putting the Alef of Geula into the Gola (exile), so that the company becomes a place that is Meichish (speeds-up) the Geula.

Chanan, who lives in Elkana in the Shomron, is one of the main activists in the Chabad house there. Much of that shliach's success is to Chanan's credit.

completed his first degree and was starting to work on a second, took a break and began taking classes with Yamima. (The shiurim were given modestly, with separate shiurim for men and women, and the men did not see her.)

"I wasn't looking for Judaism. I was just afraid my sister was entrapped and I decided to gather enough information to be able to extricate her."

Chanan soon fell under the spell of p'nimius ha'Torah. Yamima was mekusheres to the Rebbe and her shiurim were rich with Chassidic concepts, presented in an appealing manner.

Chanan also took an interest in Kabbala. He attended shiurim in Breslover Chassidus with Rabbi Moshe Erez Doron and Rabi Shimon Teichner.

Chanan had many questions. Yamima pointed out, "you examine everything logically; if it satisfies you, you accept it and otherwise you reject it." Her advice was simple. "Don't reject it; say you don't understand. As time goes by you will discover that it's right, that you cannot think otherwise."

AN ANSWER TO EVERY QUESTION

Chanan began his foray into the world of Chabad Chassidus. He was fascinated by the mekubal, Rabbi Yitzchok Ginsburgh. He enjoyed the language of Kabbala and the deeper secrets of Lashon HaKodesh, and the fact that R' Ginsburgh is a mathematician and physicist satisfied an old time need to connect abstract emuna with logic and science.

He would go to learn Chassidus with the mashpia, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok (Fitch) Offen in Ramat Gan. There he met the shliach, Rabbi Matti Gal, who had an influence on him too. The more Chanan delved into Chassidus, the

more he found the answers he sought. He also began to realize that logic is limited. He came to the conclusion that by learning, he would find answers to all his questions.

Then R' Rami Antian a"h arrived at a nearby yishuv, Shaarei Tikva. Chanan began attending his weekly shiurim in Likkutei Torah, Torah Ohr and the D'var Malchus sichos of 5751-5752. Chassidus, especially these sichos, changed Chanan's way of thinking and gave him a different perspective on the world.

RABBI ELIJAHU DIDN'T SEE A PROBLEM

"I was uncomfortable with Rami's belief in the Rebbe as Moshiach chai v'kayam. I wondered whether anything is wrong with learning from someone with such seemingly radical ideas. I went to Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and asked, "Is learning *Tanya* and Chassidus the right thing to do?"

"Of course!"

"But the rav there, he's one of those they call Meshichisten..."

"So what's the problem?"

"He always says, 'Yechi Adoneinu.'"

"So what?"

"When I was ready to leave, Rabbi Eliyahu asked me, 'And he is Meshichi?'"

"I answered in the affirmative and he smiled, and then I left."

"To this day, I can't be sure what he meant with that last question. It felt as if he was asking me, in third person, if I believe that the Rebbe is Moshiach."

In any case, Chanan's discussion with R' Eliyahu affirmed that he was on the right path, and he continued to learn Chassidus.

"I believe that emuna has to come from within, and that's why my journey was very pnimius'dik. I learned deeply, which changed my world."

FIRST LETTER TO THE REBBE

Chanan wrote his first letter to



the Rebbe with R' Rami. When he opened the Igros Kodesh he saw three letters that asked: 'Why aren't people learning *Tanya* where you live?'

He did not get answers to the questions he had written.

"It annoyed me and I decided to stop asking," Chanan recalls with a smile.

Rami tried to convince Chanan to give a shiur at the yishuv, but Chanan did not feel ready to do so. Rami's own attempt at giving a *Tanya* shiur at the yishuv was unsuccessful. He would say, "Elkana is like a nut – hard to crack, but the inside is good."

Chanan's journey back to a religious life wasn't easy, neither for him nor for his family, who by then had opinions of their own.

"We let the children do as they pleased. The girls saw the change in us and began looking into Judaism and attending classes on their own."

A SHLIACH FOR ELKANA

After ten years of Jewish involvement and learning, Chanan and his wife decided that their path

is Chabad. Already accustomed to a different style, the transition to learning Chassidus wasn't easy for the family.

"When I wrote to the Rebbe about this, I opened to a very encouraging answer. The Rebbe gave a bracha that our daughter would marry a Tamim. It took a long time, but the bracha was eventually fulfilled."

In 5763 Elkana got its own shliach, Rabbi Yitzchok Kenig. It was no longer necessary to travel to hear a shiur in Chassidus, and davening in a Chabad minyan became a reality. Chanan offered his help from day one, introducing the shliach to life on the yishuv.

The center of Chabad activities was the Sefardic shul where Chanan was a regular worshipper. Various people, who looked askance at Chabad, convinced the gabbai to shut them out.

Thanks to this turn of events, they decided to go l'chat'chilla aribber and buy a building for their shul – a seemingly unrealistic plan at first, but it proved to be successful.

BETWEEN BEER SHEVA AND ASHKELON

Two years ago, Chanan decided to give his maaser money to a Chabad house that operates with no financial backing, and where the locals are not able to support the work.

"I opened the Chabad.info phone book and the first place that caught my eye was Ofakim. It's a city between Beer Sheva and Ashkelon, out-of-the-way and with no financial support. I saw that they have a soup kitchen and thought that would be the perfect place to make my donation."

Chanan called the phone number but nobody answered. When there was still no answer the next day, nor the following week, he decided to call the shliach in Ofakim, Rabbi Yisroel HersHKowitz. He told him that he had been trying to reach the soup kitchen for two weeks. Was there a soup kitchen or not?

R' Herkowitz excitedly told him that his call was perfectly timed. The program had stopped not long ago due to lack of funding, but he was now sitting with R' Shneur Zalman Kenig and they had decided to open it up again.

"I saw the Hashgacha Pratis with my own eyes," says Chanan.

THE REBBE

Although Chanan had made a huge shift, his outer appearance didn't change. One day, he opened to a letter where the Rebbe said: "Inside, he is a Chassid, but this should be apparent externally, too."

Chanan switched to nusach Arizal and bought himself a black hat and a gartel. As with everything else, this was with the constant support and encouragement of his wife.

Chanan made the trip to the Kinus HaShluchim 5767. Just getting there entailed many challenges and miracles (see box), and when it all worked out he considered it a positive sign from Heaven.

After two weeks in 770, Chanan returned home with renewed kochos, a stronger hiskashrus to the Rebbe and... a sirtuk.

FIVE MINUTES THAT TURNED INTO HALF AN HOUR

Chanan doesn't keep Chassidus to himself. He spreads the Rebbe's teachings at every opportunity. Back then, he davened at the main shul of the yishuv – Moreshet.

"I suggested to my neighbor, Yaakov Zeidman, that we learn a Chassidic aphorism each day. We set aside five minutes, but the five minutes soon grew into over half an hour."

Light attracts, and more and more people joined the short shiur. They would read a Chassidic aphorism from *Otzar ha'Pisgamim*.

"There are things in that book that are simply amazing," exclaims Chanan. "Every short sentence contains treasures that give you strength all day. Those five minutes became half an hour, and even then it was hard to stop."

They began learning the HaYom Yom and from *Mi'Gola L'Geula*.

INSTILLING PNIMIYUS HA'TORAH

Chanan ends the Gemara shiur he gives at the Sefardic shul with Chassidus. Explanations and analogies from Chassidus are interwoven throughout the shiur.

“Chassidus is not meant only for time set aside for it. In every conversation, in everything, there is the Chassidic view.”

As for his work in spreading the wellsprings, Chanan has specific answers from the Rebbe. A group of young men asked him to give them a shiur in Kabbala. He saw this as an opportunity to teach Chassidus but he wasn't sure whether it was the right thing to do.

When he wrote to the Rebbe, he opened to two interesting answers. One was about giving shiurim to young people, about the tremendous help they need, and about the importance and need to instill p'nimius ha'Torah in them. The other letter said not to leave his job under any circumstances.

“A short while later, the bank offered me early retirement with a pension buyout and good terms. I

liked the offer because I was looking forward to the day when I could leave my job and spend more time on spiritual pursuits, particularly when the offer was very generous. But the Rebbe had told me to stay. I suppose my shlichus is at my place of work.”

CORPORATE CHABAD HOUSE

Chanan is the authority on Judaism for hundreds of people at his place of work. As the director of a department he tries to bring the light of Chassidus in a myriad of ways: in staff meetings, speeches and even in greetings attached to a gift; a short Chassidic saying can pack a punch.

People ask him about anything connected to Judaism – from checking mezuzos to a chicken for Kaparos. Chanan is the one they ask about the laws of mourning and yahrtzait, the location of Chabad houses around the world... someone once even asked him about the menu of the Chabad house in Thailand.

Many people write to the Rebbe,

One day, he opened to a letter where the Rebbe said: “Inside, he is a Chassid, but this should be apparent externally, too.”

while others make positive mitzva commitments. One of the most powerful outreach tools he uses is a weekly Torah email. It started with handing out printed publications:

“I would order brochure style publications on the parsha in Hebrew and Russian and give them out. That had a limited reach. Then I got the idea of sending out my own e-mail.”

WEEKLY SHIUR FOR THOUSANDS

What better approach for a man in computers than to send out Jewish reading material via computer? Chanan began writing a weekly sheet with Chassidic ideas on the parsha. He sent it out via e-mail to all who wanted it. The initial list of subscribers included hundreds of employees at the company he worked at, but it quickly expanded to thousands of people.

He got glowing feedback. For many, these parsha sheets were their first exposure to p'nimius ha'Torah and the depth of Judaism. Countless people said that they forward the material to their friends every week, while others said they print it to read at the Shabbos table or hang it up in shul.

Over the years, Chanan has added nicer graphics and color, and



Chanan farbrenging

the list of subscribers grows. The content is usually limited to words of Torah, but twice a year, before Rosh HaShana and Pesach, in accordance with the Rebbe's instruction, Chanan asks readers to donate to the needy before the holidays.

"Every week I put hours of work into it, and I feel that it's worth every minute."

IN CONCLUSION

Every Lubavitcher, every Jew, can be a shliach!

You can give a shiur, support a Chabad preschool near you... actually, there's no need to give examples. If you open your eyes, you will see numerous Jews around you who are waiting for your help.

Even if we don't see them going to yeshiva tomorrow and becoming baalei t'shuva, every positive influence is significant. A small action on our part can help someone change, become mekushar to the Rebbe and fulfill his destiny in life.

MIRACLE FLIGHT

I have to tell you about series of miracles I had in connection with my trip to New York for the Kinus HaShluchim. For many years I had an unlimited visa to the United States, but after the attack on the World Trade Center, all visas were automatically cancelled.

When I decided to fly, I submitted a new request. I was very nervous since my last name is Hassan. If that wasn't enough, my English birthday is 9/11. Americans don't care for that sort of thing.

I asked for an interview three weeks before my scheduled flight to the Kinus HaShluchim, and was given an appointment in two months. I decided to play dumb. I asked, "But I have a visa for an unlimited amount of time?"

They replied that they had canceled all visas.

I asked, "How can you do that without telling people?"

They said it was publicized in the papers. In the end I managed to get an interview in two weeks, about a week before the flight.

When that problem was solved, I discovered another one. This time, it was with my passport. I went to the Ministry of the Interior offices, and got my new passport a day before my appointment at the embassy.

I assumed that my wait at the embassy would be a long one and I decided to take not just one, but two booklets of material to learn. The line took hours, and as I waited I noted that all but one of the clerks were women. I hoped I would be called by one of the women since they are more compassionate. When my name was called, the available counter belonged to the man. Having no choice, I went over to him.

I pushed my papers under the glass partition and the man asked me gruffly, "What do you plan on doing in the United States?"

His opening question did not bode well, but I continued to hope. I answered: "The Lubavitcher

Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach lives there and I'm going to visit him."

"You're a Chassid?" he asked.

When I replied in the affirmative, he said, "You can help me then. I attend a Yiddish class (I don't know whether he was Jewish or not) and I want to know how to say 'passport' in Yiddish."

I told him, "It's amazing that you're asking me that question now. On my way here I learned something the Rebbe taught in Yiddish, and it has the word 'passport' in it. Apparently the word is the same in Yiddish as in English (it was Parshas Chayei Sarah and the Rebbe quoted the Rebbe Rayatz as saying that what's important is not the age it says on the passport but what a person does, that 'life of Sarah' refers to her deeds).

The clerk asked whether I could bring him a photocopy of the page or send it to him, and once again I saw the Divine Providence. I replied, "I took two today. If you preserve the sanctity of the booklet, I can give you one." I showed him where the word was written, and the rest of the interview was brief, with only one question.

I saw how the Rebbe was arranging things when I got the visa the next day.

One by one the problems were resolved. Due to a medical problem, I had concerns about flying. I spoke to my doctor and learned that a new medication was available which made it possible for me to fly with peace of mind. A place to stay worked out smoothly, as well. I saw how the Rebbe took care of me.

The first time I wrote to the Rebbe after I returned home, I opened to a letter which said – "You didn't say how it worked out with the visa." Of course, I immediately sat down and wrote the Rebbe a thank you letter for the miracles that I had experienced throughout the trip.