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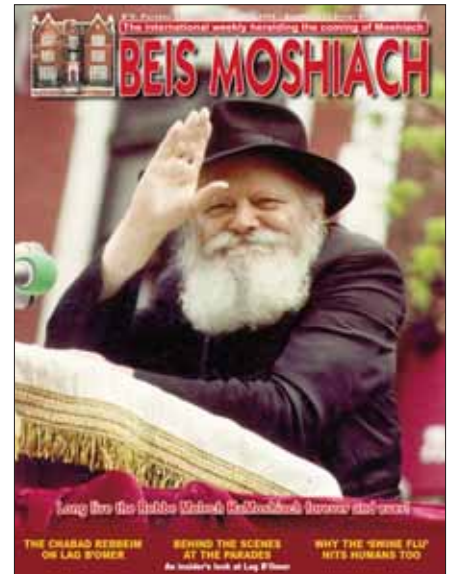
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# AGRICULTURAL TZ'DAKA

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

*The laws of agricultural Tz'daka seem out of place, located between Passover and Shavuos on one side, and Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos on the other. They are placed in the middle of the holiday sacrifices to teach us that these laws – leaving the gleanings and the corner of the field – are equivalent to building the Temple. We must sweat and toil to produce the harvest, and yet leave the gleanings and corner simply because G-d commanded it. We must sweat and toil to build the Temple, without a thought of personal satisfaction. We must sweat and toil to change our natures, thus bringing Moshiach.*

Every aspect of Torah is significant. Each element, whether the name of the Torah reading, a grammatical anomaly, or the choice of a particular word or phrase, provides an instruction for daily life. Many laws derive from small nuances.

In turn, the lesson in halacha (Jewish law) is the source for a lesson in Redemption. Halacha tells us what to do in a given circumstance; from there, Chassidus not only tells us how to work with our inclinations, subduing and redirecting them, but also instills deeper meaning, more spirituality and G-dliness into everything we do. Halacha is

the methodology of mitzvos; Chassidus is the methodology of Moshiach, since Moshiach is going to bring awareness of G-dliness into the world.

In this week's Torah reading, Emor, one of the laws appears to be out of context. The Torah, while describing the sacrifices required for the various holidays, interrupts itself. After explaining the sacrifices for Passover and Shavuos, the Torah suddenly changes the subject, repeating a law of agricultural Tz'daka. It says, "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field . . . and the gleaning of the harvest you shall not gather; for the poor and the stranger you shall leave them. I am the Lord your G-d." The Torah then continues with its description of the sacrifices for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos.

Such a narrative peculiarity calls attention to itself, raising several questions. The laws of agricultural Tz'daka have already been stated in an earlier Torah reading. Why repeat them here? If they must be repeated here, with the laws of the holiday

offerings, why not earlier, after the laws of the Omer? That would make more sense. The Omer, a sheaf of wheat brought from the new harvest, was an agricultural offering. If the laws of agricultural Tz'daka must be here, logically they should follow the law of bringing the Omer. The order should have been Passover, Omer, agricultural Tz'daka, Shavuos. Why is it Passover, Omer, Shavuos on one side, with Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos on the other, with agricultural Tz'daka precisely in the middle? It seems to be the balance, of equal weight with the holidays.

Also, gleanings – that which falls by the wayside during harvest – and the corners of the field are not the only laws of agricultural *Tz'daka*. There are several others. Why are only these two repeated here?

Finally, of course, what is the inner meaning of the interruption? What do we learn about our personal service, about preparing ourselves and the world for Moshiach?

Let's answer the easiest question first. The laws of agricultural *Tz'daka* are not placed next to the command concerning the Omer offering for a simple reason: they are not related. True, the Omer offering involves the harvest; and the directive to leave the gleanings and corners to the poor also involves the harvest. But they are not the same. The Omer offering is time-bound and part of the cycle of sacrificial services. The Omer is brought between the Passover sacrifices and the Shavuot sacrifices, connecting the two. The commandment to abandon the gleanings and corners of the field to the poor applies at all times. It is a law of *Tz'daka*, not sacrifice.

This brings us to the next two questions: why repeat the laws of agricultural *Tz'daka*? And why repeat just these two – the law of gleanings and corners?

In answer to the first question, Rashi quotes a Midrash that it repeats them to make the transgressor answerable for two negative commands. But this just leads to another question! What's so special about the gleanings and the corners of the field? Why is one doubly liable? Further, there seems to be only one commandment, not two. Isn't the Torah just saying the same thing twice?

Question upon question! To answer one, we have to answer another. Why did Torah place the law of agricultural *Tz'daka* in the middle of the festivals, Passover and Shavuot on one side, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot on the other? We know why not after the Omer offering, but why here?

One of the Talmudic sages answered thus: "To teach you that whoever gives gleanings, forgotten sheaves and the corners to the poor in the proper manner, such a person is considered as if he built the Temple and presented his offerings therein."

The connection between the sacrifices and *Tz'daka* is obvious: in both cases possessions are relinquished to fulfill a Divine command. But the comparison isn't between the sacrifices and *Tz'daka* in general. The comparison is between building the Temple and agricultural *Tz'daka*. What differentiates the gleanings and the corners of the field from all other forms of *Tz'daka*? What makes them unique among the gifts to the poor?

(As an aside, we should note that building the Temple is associated with Moshiach. Therefore, agricultural *Tz'daka* must also have an association with Moshiach.)

Other forms of *Tz'daka* may come from a variety of sources. The money donated may be acquired through inheritance, through a business venture, or other non-

laborious means. But *Tz'daka* in the form of gleanings, forgotten sheaves and corners, as mandated by the Torah, requires great personal exertion. Plowing, sowing, reaping – the land yields its produce only through the sweat of man's brow. And the result of this strenuous effort he is commanded to give to the poor!

The comparison becomes clear: just as one must sweat and toil to produce the agricultural *Tz'daka* – the gleanings, forgotten sheaves and corners – so one must sweat and toil to build the Temple. Other types of *Tz'daka*, even from an agricultural source, do not require the same constant effort and exertion.

Furthermore, this agricultural *Tz'daka* provides no pleasure for the giver. With *Tz'daka* in general, the donor gives away the "life of his soul," money or material he could use to satisfy himself. While being generous, one usually has at least the pleasure of choosing the recipient. But such personal enjoyment does not apply to agricultural *Tz'daka*. One cannot choose who receives the gleanings, forgotten sheaves and corners. They, like the Temple, belong to all Israel.

Still, what is the great merit of giving *Tz'daka* without enjoyment? Is an undifferentiated *Tz'daka* so phenomenal that it compares to building the Temple? Normally, one **should** have the pleasure. If nothing else, it's natural to take care of one's own first. Logically, I should give precedence to a poor person I know.

But in building the Temple, in bringing Moshiach, the usual standards don't apply. Here, there are two commandments. Not only should we not reap the corners of the field, we may not have the pleasure of selecting or helping the recipient.

To perform the mitzvah in the most proper manner, in a way that it resembles building the Temple, the ego must be removed. One must subdue and redirect the inclinations. Even the small satisfaction expected from performing an easy mitzvah, like leaving a corner of the field or a couple of sheaves, must be eliminated.

Even in small things, we must transform ourselves, subdue our inclinations. Done properly, the "small" mitzvah of agricultural *Tz'daka* is likened to the "big" mitzvah of building the Temple. Similarly, the *yetzer ha'ra*, the evil inclination, must be completely subdued. We must sweat and toil to produce the harvest, and yet leave the gleanings and corner simply because G-d commanded it. We must sweat and toil to build the Temple, without a thought of personal satisfaction. Similarly, we must sweat and toil to change our nature, to act out of devotion, not desire. To make the world a fit and proper dwelling place for G-dliness, we must work the land, build the Temple and transform ourselves. Then we will again leave the gleanings and the corners, and bring the holiday offerings with our righteous Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 17:255-266)

# THE CHABAD REBBEIM ON LAG B'OMER

*At the meal they would review a maamer, tell Chassidishe stories, sing and dance, and most of the time they would stay up all night and daven at dawn, slowly and at length.*

*\* A compilation for Lag B'Omer.*

## GOING OUT TO THE FIELD

The Baal Shem Tov, the Alter Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek would go out to the fields on Lag B'Omer. Although the Tzemach Tzedek did not make trips, aside from the well-known trips to Petersburg, on Lag B'Omer he would make an exception. The Rebbe Maharash would go on Lag B'Omer until Fremova (a village near Lubavitch).

*(Seifer HaSichos 5699, p. 332)*

## STARTING ON LAG B'OMER

From the first year that the Mittler Rebbe established residence in Lubavitch in 1814, he established the custom of celebrating Lag B'Omer in the field outside the city with a light meal, the drinking of mashke and eating cooked eggs. There was singing and dancing.

During the meal, the Rebbe

Lag B'Omer 5744/1984





would say a maamer Chassidus and would tell the senior Chassidim to relate to him what they remembered of the customs of Lag B'Omer from previous years, and the inyanei Torah, sichos and stories that were told then. After the Rebbe left, the Chassidim would enjoy the rest of the day until evening.

When the Chassidic farmers settled in Chassidishe villages around Lubavitch, the custom was established to celebrate Lag B'Omer with lavish meals that began after Shacharis on the 32nd day of the Omer.

*(Likkutei Dibburim p. 1045)*

## THEY SAW MANY MIRACLES

In the *HaYom Yom* for 18 Iyar, the Rebbe writes: "Lag B'Omer was one of the Mitteler Rebbe's

particularly noteworthy festivals. He and the Chassidim would go out to the fields that day, and although he did not wash and break bread, he did partake of mashke (strong drink), which he normally did not allow himself for health reasons. Many wonders were seen at that time, most of them involving the blessing of children for childless couples - and all year long people waited for Lag B'Omer."



## WITH PERMISSION FROM THE RABBIS

The Rebbe Rayatz described Lag B'Omer in the time of the Tzemach Tzedek:

5604 (1844) - the Lag B'Omer meal was still eaten in the field. On the eve of Lag B'Omer the Chassidim would have a meal and farbreng until late at night. The morning of Lag B'Omer they would daven at dawn and farbreng until two in the afternoon, whereupon the Tzemach Tzedek would go out to the crowd. That year, Erev Lag B'Omer fell out on the second Monday of the series of fasts called BaHaB, and the rabbanim permitted - as a onetime exception - washing hands for the meal after Mincha.

*(Seifer HaSichos 5701 p. 58)*

## STAYING UP ALL NIGHT

The celebration of Lag B'Omer, as it was customarily observed, was to go outside the town (once to the square in front of Hanorova courtyard and once to the open field in the village of Achremova). The one who had the privilege of hosting the celebration would invite the Chassidim who learned in Lubavitch year round as well as the guests, to come to him on Erev Lag B'Omer. After Mincha g'dola (early afternoon) on the 32nd of the Omer, he would serve a bountiful meal of fish and meat which lasted until Maariv.

At the meal they would review a maamer, tell Chassidishe stories, sing and dance, and most of the time they would stay up all night and daven at dawn,

slowly and at length. At eleven o'clock a dairy meal was served, along with plenty of mashke, and from about the third hour they would wait for the Tzemach Tzedek to come.

5609 (1809) was the last time that they celebrated Lag B'Omer in the field near Hanorova with the Tzemach Tzedek. That

year, Lag B'Omer fell on a Thursday. On Wednesday, after Shacharis, all the young married men and talmidim in the yeshiva and the guests who came for the previous Shabbos, Parshas Acharei-K'doshim and remained until after the holiday, and the new guests who came to celebrate Lag B'Omer, went out to the field.

At about four in the afternoon, the Tzemach Tzedek came and said a maamer, "L'havin Inyan HaKesser," and stayed three hours. Before he left, he said they should sing the Alter Rebbe's niggun of Dalet Bavos. When the Rebbe went home, the senior Chassidim gathered to review the maamer and marveled that the Rebbe had said that the Alter Rebbe's niggun should be sung.

*(Likkutei Dibburim p. 1037)*

## BUYING THE FIRST HADLAKA

From a reshima of a farbrengen of the Rebbe Rayatz on Lag B'Omer, 1939:

They used to make hadlakos (lighting of bonfires) not only in Miron but also in Yerushalayim and Chevron. In 5653 (1893) [or 5654 (1894) – the listeners did not recall exactly how the Rebbe said it] the Rebbe [Rashab] bought the first hadlaka.

[It is interesting to note that in a letter from the Rebbe Rashab from the year 5648 (1888) it says: I want to buy the hadlaka in Chevron, but don't buy it for me on the gravesite of Rashbi].

## FARBRENGING ON MASHKE AND EGGS

R' Refael (Folye) Kahn described the Rebbe Rashab's farbrengens:

On Lag B'Omer after Shacharis there was a short farbrengen at the Rebbe Rashab's house. On the dining room table were mashke, and

peeled hardboiled eggs. The Rebbe took an egg on a fork and put it on the plate, cut it with a knife lengthwise and cut each half lengthwise. They sang a number of niggunim and he said a maamer Chassidus (they would let the yeshiva bachurim come in for this farbrengen).

(Lubavitch V'Chayaleha p. 57)

## I PROMISED MY FATHER

The Chassid R' Dovber Rivkin, described an amazing incident which took place with the Rebbe Rayatz on Lag B'Omer:

On Lag B'Omer, after the davening, which lasted way after midday, I went with him [the Rebbe Rayatz] to the gravesite [of the Rebbe Rashab]. As always, as soon as we approached the gravesite the crying and the saying of T'hilim out loud began, until the hearts of all listeners melted. I left the gravesite.

After half an hour I suddenly sensed that the cries and sobs had quieted. The Rebbe [Rayatz] was

standing quietly without crying, a closed T'hilim in his hand, speaking softly and with motions that a person makes when talking to a friend. It was clear to us that he was reviewing a maamer for his father. He stood there like that for an hour and five minutes and then he resumed saying T'hilim with more cries and sobs as before. After twenty minutes, he left and we returned.

Since it was late already, we first had to daven Mincha and then he went downstairs to his apartment on the first floor to eat something. Twenty minutes later I was called to his apartment. "I promised my father today to review a maamer for Anash, but I don't have the strength now to do so," the Rebbe told me. "I want to review a maamer before you alone, and thus I will fulfill my promise to my father." He said the maamer, "L'havin Inyan Hilula D'Rashbi." The main part of the maamer is the first half of the maamer he said the following Shabbos.

(Ashkavta d'Rebbi p. 119)



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# BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE PARADES

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

*It's a tradition and a proven segula among the shluchim that whoever needs a yeshua, be it children, health or parnasa, should take part financially and personally in the parade.*

As you read this, thousands of shluchim are making their final preparations for the parade (or parades) in their city. The parade and kinus don't take more than two, maximum four, hours, but the preparations, oy the preparations - they involve hundreds of hours, thousands of details, and tens of thousands of shekels.

While you prepare to go to Miron or to attend your neighborhood bonfire or special Lag B'Omer event, we shluchim are wondering where we can get another 1000 or 2000 shekels to enable us to have yet another attraction to draw the kids. We are thinking - how can four or five Chabad houses join forces so that the helicopter can be with as many parades as possible, and how can we give more kids rides for a cheaper price?

For the past month, nearly every conversation among the shluchim included questions like, "What attraction are you having for Lag B'Omer this year?" "How much will it cost?" "Which booklets are you

giving out?" "Where are you getting counselors from?" "How many drinks did you order?" "Who agreed to hang up your posters?" "Did you get your permit yet from the city? What about from the police?" And so on.

## BEING AT THE PARADE

Many years ago, I would also go to Miron every year for Lag B'Omer. Of course. Why not? It's a special day and I could do mitzvaim there. But as the work surrounding the parade grew, I realized I had to give up on something. At first I would still go for half an hour between two and five in the morning, "just to say hello" to Rabbi Shimon. But then I stopped going. Lag B'Omer is a mitvza that demands a lot of work, by day and by night, too.

Then it occurred to me that if you want to encounter Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai on Lag B'Omer, you can do that at your local parade. The Rebbe did say that you don't need to go to all the "fairs," but the Lag B'Omer parade is a special

"fair" attended by the Baal Shem Tov, the Rebbe Rayatz, and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. I know Chassidim from Yerushalayim who travel to Miron every year for Lag B'Omer, but they arrange things so that they can still attend, if not the big parade in Yerushalayim, some other parade elsewhere in Eretz Yisroel. The main thing - being at a parade.

It's a tradition and a proven segula among the shluchim that whoever needs a yeshua, be it children, health or parnasa, should take part financially and personally in the parade, i.e. by attending it and contributing money towards it, with simcha and generosity. I have heard from a number of shluchim about children who were born after their parents participated in the Lag B'Omer parade.

You can ask any Chabad house how you can help pay for their parade and offer to cover the expenses for the drinks, prizes, etc.

## A FEW WORDS AT A PARADE

Rabbi Yisroel Gliss, shliach in Dimona, relates:

A few years ago, a new boy from the CIS registered in the Chabad preschool. He, like his parents, did not know much about Judaism but attended the school nonetheless. We subsequently lost all connection with the boy and his family.



One Lag B'Omer, the children of Dimona began to gather for the parade when Rabbi Gliss suddenly noticed that child standing with his father at a distance, watching but not joining in. Both the father and his son wore kippot. I went over to the father with a big smile and shook his hand. "What's new and how is your son?" he asked him, and I invited them to join the parade.

"Oh, no, not that," said the father.

"Why not?" he asked, taken aback.

The father said he learned in a chareidi Kollel, where he was told it's forbidden to participate in any Chabad activities because Chabad says, "Moshiach now," and they in Kollel say "Moshiach when the world is perfected."

Busy with the parade, R' Gliss only had time to answer briefly. "Please go to that rav or man in the Kollel who told you that and tell him that he is only ruining people, distorting the Torah and emuna. He should take his Siddur and cross out the part where it says, "the planting of Dovid Your servant should **speedily** blossom," replace it with, "the planting of Dovid Your servant

when the world is perfected should blossom."

The conversation ended and the parade got underway. A few days later, R' Gliss found out that the boy was learning in a Chassidishe yeshiva in Kfar Chabad.

Thanks to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and the Lag B'Omer parade, the father heard what he had to hear and apparently the words made an impact.

## A PARADE WITH SIX CHILDREN

Rabbi Yitzchok Lifsh, shliach in Tzfas, relates:

5740 was the first year that the Rebbe asked that parades be made in Eretz Yisroel and the world. In Eretz Yisroel there were less than twenty Chabad houses at that time, yet the Rebbe asked for at least sixty parades and another sixty around the world. Afterwards, the Rebbe sent 50 shekels to whoever sent a report about a parade they organized. There were actually 120 parades in Eretz Yisroel and the Rebbe sent money for each parade.

At this time there was a Chabad activist in the south, a young

***He was told it's forbidden to participate in any Chabad activities because Chabad says, "Moshiach now," and they in Kollel say "Moshiach when the world is perfected."***

American by the name of Yossi Dunin. He organized a parade and a kinus in Netivot and six children showed up. Yossi made the parade and kinus for them anyway and reported to headquarters about it and the number of children who attended.

The Rebbe received the report along with all the other reports and he was included among the organizers who received money and brachos.

## CONQUERING MIGDAL

One of the Chabad houses which puts a lot into Lag B'Omer parades (if I can single one out) is the Chabad house in moshava Migdal, which is directed by Rabbi Shmuel Gruzman. Every year they look for a terrific emcee, special attractions, great prizes, fireworks, etc. People show up in droves. From all over the north, thousands of people won't miss this amazing parade and the special performances.

This past year marked 20 years of Chabad in Migdal. At the kinus following the parade, they showed a video with clips of every one of the twenty parades.





R' Gruzman recalls an interesting thing that happened at their first parade. Tzach had just come up with the publicity posters advertising the parades that are familiar today to all children in Israel. R' Gruzman ordered a few dozen of them and hung them along the main street and every other possible place in the moshava. Because they had so much to do, R' Gruzman and his helpers hung signs in the middle of the night and the next morning the moshava woke up to the news.

At 7 a.m., R' Gruzman received a call from the council head. "You conquered all of Migdal!" he shouted. Early risers had called the council head in terror that the new Chabadnik was going to transform the entire town. The members of the council had gathered in his house to ask him to rescue the town.

R' Gruzman promised him that within a week he would take down all the posters. The council head was immediately mollified. As were the members of the council. And all the residents of Migdal who saw the advertising came en masse. Since then, they come every year for the nicest event in the moshava.

## **SERIES OF MIRACLES IN RAMAT HA'SHARON**

Rabbi Yehuda Butman, shliach in Ramat HaSharon, also looks for a way, each year, to surprise the children in order to attract as many as possible. One day, he arrived home and found a surprise on his door – a flyer from the *Rav Briach* lock company and attached to the flyer was a real key. It was a great

gimmick.

R' Butman is well aware that whatever a Jew sees or hears provides a lesson for him in the service of Hashem, and so he decided he had to use this idea for Lag B'Omer. This was his plan – every child in Ramat HaSharon would get a flyer about the parade with a key attached and each child could try his luck. One key would open the prize safe for the big prize at the parade, and that child would win first prize.

The question was where he was going to get 4000 keys for the children. Just then, by "chance," he saw a mobile service truck of the Rav Briach company driving by and stopping near him. He had a little talk with the driver who was a mekurav of the Chabad house of R' Yehuda Friedman in New York and had a big picture of the Rebbe decorating the service area in the truck. The man quickly arranged for the Rav Briach Company to sponsor all the keys and the publicity cards they would be attached to. The entire city was in an uproar. Children stood on line to get the key and everybody was very excited about the upcoming parade.

The morning of Lag B'Omer, Mrs. Butman told her husband that she was about to give birth! He asked/pleaded with her if she could wait ... but the neshama wanted out and she quickly gave birth to a girl (who was bas mitzva last year). Despite all the excitement, R' Butman found a few minutes to participate that year too.

Aside from the main parade, R' Butman organizes other parades for

children of the preschools. Every ten preschools show up at a central location where they make a bonfire in an old bathtub. Each school brings a bunch of potatoes for roasting, they sing a bit, say the 12 p'sukim, hear a Chassidishe story and are given ices and a new book.

That year, a few parents on the Left of the political map did not like some aspects of the Chassidishe book that was given out. They spoke to the deputy mayor of the city and she called R' Butman.

"Oh no! You gave out books with religious messages ... shleimus ha'Aretz ... what kind of religious coercion is this?" The next day there was a nasty article in *Yediot Acharonot* and things were lively in Ramat HaSharon.

Then the wife of the man from the Rav Briach Company called. She had a child in the preschool that got the book and she told R' Butman not to worry about all the articles and complaints. "We are with you! And I have a wealthy woman here who heard about you and Chabad and wants to speak to you about helping the Chabad house."

Since then, 13 years have gone by and the article has been forgotten. The parades grow from year to year and thanks to the commotion made back then and that wealthy woman, the Chabad house has received many nice donations with which they made a soup kitchen, clubs for the children and more!

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# WHY THE ‘SWINE FLU’ HITS HUMANS TOO

By Rabbi Akiva Wagner, Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivas Lubavitch Toronto

*The informal schmooze of a rosh yeshiva to his alumni in response to the recent fear of a Swine Flu pandemic.*

## ‘YOUNG MAN, YOUNG MAN, DON’T CRY...’

There was a group of bachurim sitting in 770, eagerly awaiting the arrival of their maggid shiur, R’ Yoel Kahan, who was scheduled to give them a shiur in Chassidus. Unfortunately, R’ Yoel was late to the shiur. Ten minutes, 15 minutes, then 20 minutes passed, with the restless students seeing no end to their vigil.

One of the bachurim suddenly recalled seeing posters advertising a special event that was scheduled to take place that evening in Boro Park. The famed Maggid of Yerushalayim, R’ Sholom Shvadron, would be speaking. R’ Sholom was known to be a brilliant orator, and his talks were both entertaining and uplifting. “Since R’ Yoel seems to have forgotten us tonight in any case”, he remarked to his friends, “perhaps we should take advantage of the opportunity of hearing the guest from Eretz Yisroel. Who knows when another chance will arise?”

The suggestion met with

everyone’s approval, and in short order they were deposited by their car service in front of the Boro Park Beis Midrash where the lecture was taking place. Although it had already begun, they quietly found their places, to listen to whatever remained. It was during that talk, that they heard R’ Sholom relate the following anecdote:

“In the course of my work, I often have the opportunity to counsel Yeshiva bachurim. They come to me with their questions and doubts, and I do my best to set them straight.

“Once, a bachur came to my office, crestfallen. With tears in his eyes, he poured out his heart about all the (real and imagined) difficulties that he was facing in his life. As I attempted to address his individual issues, he began to cry, and exclaimed: ‘Why does everything have to be such a struggle? Why can’t life just be simple and smooth? Why do I always have to work so hard?’

“In a soothing voice, I began to respond to him. I explained to him that this is the essential difference between a human being and an

animal. Animals have simple lives, their food is readily accessible, and they don’t have worries. Everything with them is straightforward; there are no battles of the conscience, no struggles of right and wrong. But human beings are the purpose of creation. They are not just here to live out their lives, they are here to make a difference, and that takes work, and it involves struggling to succeed.

“I was hopeful that my logical words would calm him down; to my astonishment they had the opposite effect, and his sobbing increased in intensity. ‘What is it now?’ I asked him in wonder.

‘Oy Rebbe,’ he said despondently, ‘it is so unfair. If that is the case, then why did Hashem make me a human, why couldn’t he have made me an animal?’

“I turned to the bachur and replied (concluded Rabbi Shvadron in his famous Maggidic singsong): ‘*Bachur Bachur, vein nisht, du bizt takeh a beheima!* (Young man, young man, don’t cry – you are indeed an animal!)’

## AWAY FROM THE SWINE AND UP TO THE DIVINE

This past week, the World Health Organization (WHO) has raised the alert of a pandemic threatening the civilized world. A pandemic is an epidemic of an

infectious disease that affects very large areas of the world. The name of the disease in the current pandemic is “Swine Flu.”

So you say “*Boruch Hashem. abi nisht by Yidden.*” As long as it’s only the swine that are diseased, we can breathe easy. Not only are we not swine, but we have nothing at all to do with them. We don’t consume them, we don’t raise them (and according to WHO the disease cannot be contracted by throwing around sports equipment manufactured by their hides, or watching other people do so on a screen...).

But somehow this is not working out just so.

While the disease is, in fact, a form of influenza, or flu, that naturally afflicts *dovor achers* (hence its name), it somehow is currently finding haven amongst humans with alarming frequency.

This is probably in view of what the Gemara says (Chulin 5a): A sinner may bring a korban, and it is to be accepted. This is derived from the pasuk (in the parsha of korbanos) “*min ha’beheima*” (from amongst the animals [a korban may be brought]), that is interpreted as “*lehovi b’nei odom sh’domin l’beheima* (this comes to include people who are similar to beheimas).”

When people are similar to animals, then it is no great surprise that the strain of influenza can become confused with regards to its intended destination, and become lodged in some two-legged creatures.

## WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT?

What distinguishes between a human being and an animal? The Pasuk defines it very precisely (Koheles 3): “*ruach ha’odom*

*ha’oyloh l’maaloh, v’ruach ha’beheima yoredes l’matoh.*” An animal is naturally drawn towards physicality and materialism. That is all that is important to it. This is also the characteristic of the nefesh ha’bahamis, where the faculties of the intellect are merely tools to enable it to better pursue its desires (which is why, in the

***In contrast, a human being is naturally drawn to that which is above him. By his very nature, all of his actions are governed by his intellect. Man walks upright, as a reflection of his character in which the mind controls the heart and its expressions.***

sixth perek of Tanya, the middos are listed before the seichel).

In contrast, a human being is naturally drawn to that which is above him. By his very nature, all of his actions are governed by his intellect, which possesses the innate nature of seeking what is just and true, without any ulterior motives. Man walks upright, as a reflection of his character in

which the mind controls the heart and its expressions.

But sometimes man loses his sense of direction. Rather than being drawn towards spirituality, towards G-dliness, he runs off to Mexico, to Cancun (as a matter of fact, the Israelis, who were offended by the reference to a non-Kosher animal, reportedly changed the name to Cancun-disease). In Cancun there are breathtaking beaches, a multitude of hotels, and endless entertainment for tourists.

But you can be sure, no one is traveling there in order to nourish their neshamos. In fact, the name of one of the popular hotels there, “Temptation Resort,” goes a long way to enlighten us about what motivates people to travel there.

Presumably one can find there Kosher food, a daily minyan, and even a daf yomi shiur. But the purpose of going (to that part of Mexico) – unless it’s for shlichus – is to cater to the whims of the animal – the swine – that resides within each of us. Which explains why the flu bugs, floating around Mexico, may have become very mislead with regards to their destinations.

The fact that we are being warned of a worldwide pandemic, is an indication that this situation may be a reflection of the overall state of mankind in today’s society, one that may call for some serious introspection from each of us. How are we leading our own lives, as human beings, or as . . . well . . . as swine? Is our primary goal to do something that the Eibishter wants, to enhance His presence on the world and bring ourselves closer to Him? Or are we seeking more ways of finding gratification for the animal (with whom we share our body), even if it’s gratification that has a valid hechsher from





Since travel restrictions to Cancun have been imposed, the author has included the following picture, so that those who wish can be yoitze with *b'makom sh'machshavto shel odom shom hu nimtzo*.

was the behavior [befitting of] an animal, so too is her korban comprised of animal fodder).

It is the time of the year when we especially focus on correcting these faults, on redirecting ourselves towards living as human beings, on striving towards G-dliness. Forget about the imagined gratification that the animalistic soul will derive from sitting on the beach chair in Cancun. Try instead to cater to the interests of the neshama. Because, in truth, we are not animals, whose sole aim is to pamper their bodies; a good restaurant, an exciting trip, or a thrilling game.

We are human beings, and we have to behave as such.

So, you can put away your surgical mask. The best antidote against *dovor acher disease* is by behaving less like a DA. Learn another maamer Chassidus, another blatt Gemara. Daven like a chassid. An Odom is, by his very being, a reflection of G-dliness (eidameh la'Elyon), and the more effort we put into actualizing this, into living this way, the less chance there is of us being mistaken for swine.

L'chaim! May we all take advantage of these days to elevate and refine our nefesh ha'bahamis, and allow the nefesh HaElokis – the odom (*b'gematria "mah"*) to prevail, until through this we come to Shavuot when we commemorate with a korban of maachol odom!

every possible Rabbi?

This is the time when many of us are formulating our plans for the summer (and/or for the coming year). What are our criteria? Are we looking for good company, lots of fun, and perhaps to make an easy buck? Or are we genuinely interested in listening to the call of our neshamos, to discover its preferred destination, the place where its goals would be best realized?

### ANIMAL FODDER

It is especially noteworthy that,

besides the place, the time of the outbreak of this epidemic was also very significant. The days of s'fira are the time that is earmarked especially to preoccupy ourselves with the animal within us. The Korban of the Omer was brought from barley, animal fodder, because the days of the Omer are for transforming the nefesh ha'bahamis. For this reason, as well, we learn Sota these days, in which the Mishna says (Sota 2: 1): "keshem sh'maaseho maaseh b'heimah kach korbonoh maachal beheimah" (just as her behavior

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# THE LION AND THE TERRORIST

By Prof. Shimon Silman, RYAL Institute and Touro College

*On 13 Iyar this year we commemorate the 57th yahrtzait of Rabbi Yisroel Aryeh Leib Schneerson, the brother of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach. In various sichos over the years, the Rebbe MHM explained the significance of the names “Yisroel,” “Aryeh,” and “Leib.” Most recently, on 13 Iyar, 5751, he explained that the name Yisroel, which is an acrostic for Yesh Shishim Ribu Osiyos LaTorah (there are 600,000 letters in the Torah) teaches us that the Torah is our guidebook for everything that we do. With that foundation, we go out into the world like a lion (Aryeh = lion in Hebrew, the holy language; Leib = lion in Yiddish, a worldly language) and we are victorious in everything we do both in holy matters and in worldly matters.<sup>1</sup>*

*In this context we feel that it is appropriate to present this essay on “The Lion and the Terrorist” with the hope that we will be like the lion<sup>2</sup> and immediately see the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, who comes from Yehudah – the lion,<sup>3</sup> and have the Third Beis HaMikdash which is called Ariel because it is shaped like a lion.<sup>4</sup>*

In studying the Human Security Report (Beis Moshiach #684), we discovered that wars have steadily decreased and have become less deadly since Swords Into Plowshares began, and even terrorism has declined in recent years. Yet the question is often asked: How do we reconcile the presence of war in the world with the prophecy of swords into plowshares which is associated with the cessation of conflict? How could there be war in the Era of Moshiach, especially after the Swords Into Plowshares prophecy has begun to be fulfilled?

## SWORDS AND PLOWSHARES

Firstly, we must point out that even the wars waged since the

Swords Into Plowshares transformation began (at least those fought by the U.S – a country of goodness and kindness) have a new aspect, which we may call “Swords and Plowshares”. In the war in Afghanistan, for example, on the first day of the war, U.S. military airplanes dropped food packages for hungry civilians at the same time that they dropped bombs on military targets. In the war in Iraq, the very precise bombing of Baghdad enabled by advanced satellite technology saved the lives of many civilians. Also, military ships and helicopters were used to de-mine the harbor of Umm Qasr so that food, drinking water and medicine could be brought in by ships to civilians in Basra and surrounding areas who were experiencing severe shortages. The



point is that in these wars, humanitarian aid is an integral part of the military planning right from the start.

Regarding the occurrence of wars in the era of Swords Into Plowshares, the essential point is that the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach said that the prophecy of Swords Into Plowshares – like all the other aspects of the redemption – has *begun* to be fulfilled. But they have not yet reached their completion. Indeed, the Midrash speaks of wars of terror that the Ishmaelites (the Arabs) will wage *in the Messianic Era*. But the swords into plowshares transformations continue throughout the world, as we have been documenting in these articles over the years.

I believe that a careful reading of the Swords Into Plowshares

prophecy itself will clarify the issue. It reads:

*And they shall beat their swords into  
plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation shall not raise a sword  
against nation  
nor shall they learn any more war.*<sup>5</sup>

We notice something very curious here. First the prophet Isaiah says that the nations will beat their swords into plowshares because, as the Radak explains, they won't need them any more as a result of Melech HaMoshiach's peaceful effect on the nations of the world. Then he says, "Nation shall not raise a sword against nation." It would seem that the order should be reversed. First it should say that the nations will not raise swords against each other, then, since they won't be fighting each other anymore they won't need their weapons so they will beat them into plowshares.

From the fact that beating the swords into plowshares is stated first, we see that this process will

begin even before all wars cease, as the world becomes more peaceful and the nations don't feel threatened by each other. Then, as a further development, "nation shall not raise a sword against nation" i.e. there will be no more war. And finally, "nor shall they learn any more war." They will not even maintain a readiness for war. There will be no military exercises, no military training or even any computer simulations of conflicts.

War and terrorism are on the decline, they are being phased out. Soon the completion of the Swords Into Plowshares prophecy will be achieved and "nation shall not raise a sword against nation." The war and terrorism that we have experienced, however, does not contradict the fact that we are in the Era of Moshiach. On the contrary, as we mentioned above, there are statements in the Midrash predicting the occurrence of these events in the Messianic Era. For example, the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni makes the following prediction:

"In the 'later days' (*Achris HaYamim*, a Biblical term for the Messianic Era) the Ishmaelites will wage three wars of terror – one upon the sea because of an arched bow, one upon the land because of a raised sword, and one against a great city which will be more severe than the other two...and from there the son of Dovid (Moshiach) will sprout forth and show us the destruction of the others. From there he will go to the Land of Israel."<sup>6</sup>

Evidently, the terror attack against a great city refers to the September 11th terror attack against New York City. The attack upon the sea may refer to the attack on the U.S.S. Cole in the Gulf of Yemen, and the attack upon the land to the terror attack on the U.S. embassy in Kenya.

There is a law of action and reaction in operation here. In Chassidic philosophy it is explained that it is part of the natural order that whenever a new level of good is introduced into the world, there is a resistance to it and thus a corresponding evil appears to oppose it.<sup>7</sup> For example, the declaration of "The time of your redemption has arrived," coincided with the Persian Gulf War and Sadaam's attack on Israel.

## A NEW WORLD ORDER

Then came the Swords Into Plowshares phenomenon – transformation of military technology, a decrease in war and a tremendous increase in international cooperation and mutual assistance which continues to this very day. Consider, for example, the speech of the Prime Minister of England, Gordon Brown, at the G20 economic summit in 2009, convened to discuss the global financial crisis:

"A few years ago, meetings such as this could not have happened



The Lion and the Calf



with so many different countries from diverse continents involved. Far less could there have been an agreement amongst them. But today the largest countries of the world have agreed to a global plan for recovery and reform...For the first time we have a common approach...

"We have maintained our commitment to help the world's poorest...

"This is collective action – people working together at their best. I think a new world order is emerging and with it the foundations of a new and progressive era of international cooperation."

This is exactly the new attitude of the nations of the world described by the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach in the sicha of Parshas Mishpatim, and expressed by the Secretary General of the United Nations in his report "An Agenda for Peace" on the summit meeting at the UN in 1992 where the Swords Into Plowshares declaration was made.

But along with these developments there appeared a new evil – a culture in which evil people were willing to destroy themselves in order to kill multitudes of innocent and defenseless men, women and children – terrorism.

It is in the nature of this action – reaction process that, as the good continues to blossom, the evil falls away as the outer shell is removed from a fruit and discarded. Thus, as the Messianic prophecies continue to unfold, war and terrorism continue to decline.

### **"AND A CALF AND A LION...SHALL LIE DOWN TOGETHER"**

In contrast to the remnants of war, back on the peaceful side, we have begun to see a new dimension in the fulfillment of the prophecies

of peacefulness for they have not only pervaded humanity, but have begun to penetrate the animal kingdom also.

The prophecy that the nations of the world will beat their swords into plowshares in Chapter 2 of Isaiah is closely related to another Messianic prophecy in Chapter 11 of Isaiah: "A calf and a lion...shall lie down together."<sup>8</sup> In fact, according to the Rambam this prophecy is an allegory referring to the peaceful relations that will exist between previously belligerent nations in the Era of Moshiach.<sup>9</sup> Thus, according

***The Rebbe Melech  
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eras immediately.***

to the Rambam this is a prophecy along the same lines as "swords into plowshares." Many commentaries, however, explain this prophecy literally, as does Rabbi Avraham ben David (the *Raabad*) in his Halachic comments on the Rambam.

The Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach resolves this controversy by explaining that Rambam's allegorical explanation applies only to the first phase of the Messianic Era when, according to Rambam, the world will still follow its natural

order. In the second phase of the Era of Moshiach, however, a miraculous order will be in operation alongside the natural order. Under this miraculous order, the prophecies of Chapter 11 will be fulfilled in the literal sense.<sup>10</sup>

These two phases, however, are distinct only conceptually, not chronologically. The Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach emphasizes that we must demand from Hashem, and we can expect to get from Him, the fulfillment of all the promises of both Messianic eras immediately. This applies even to the revival of the dead which, chronologically, is the last on the list of Messianic events.

Thus it should not come as a surprise that several years ago the world witnessed an event of "The calf and the lion...shall lie down together" – literally. This happened in a nature reserve in Kenya, Africa. The following is based on reports from Reuters and the BBC:

A grown lioness baffled experts in Kenya by adopting a baby oryx, a kind of antelope that lions like to eat. The lioness came across the oryx shortly after it was born on January 5, 2002 in Samburu National Park, finding it lying in wait for its mother who had gone to search for food. Defying nature, the lioness quickly adopted the oryx, giving it affection and protection from other predators as if it were her own cub. Once, a leopard approached and tried to kill the oryx, but the lioness protected the calf.

Extraordinarily, the lioness still allowed the mother oryx occasionally to come and feed her calf. The baby oryx was very close to the lioness. The lioness would lie down to rest in the afternoon and the oryx would curl up beside her.

After two weeks of taking care of her adopted baby, the lioness, tired and weakened, led the oryx to

the river to drink and fell asleep, failing to notice a hungry male lion in the area. While the lioness was taking a nap, the baby oryx was playing around and it was caught by the male lion. The baby was killed. The lioness was very angry. She went around the lion about ten times roaring, and then the lioness disappeared. The lioness has not been seen since.

## “AND THE COW AND EVEN THE BEAR SHALL GRAZE”

We have seen the prophecy of the calf and the lion fulfilled. Now, what about the next verse that says: “And the cow and even the bear shall graze.” Well, we may have seen that too – right here in America. The story, as reported by the Associated Press, reads as follows:

A curious cow and a young wild bear touched noses and hung out together in a pasture before the bear dashed off with the cow in pursuit, neighbors said. But whether the cow was chasing off the bear or just wanted to play is a

matter of debate.

Residents of this rural town about 30 miles northwest of Denver say the encounter took place Sunday after the bear climbed into an apple tree in the cow’s pasture and then climbed down.

The cow is named Apple because she loves eating the fruit of that very tree....Apple ambled over for a look, said Penny Cox of Hygiene, who witnessed the get-together. Eventually the bear took off with Apple running after it. “We really can’t say whether she chased him away or wanted him to play,” Cox said.

The Baal Shem Tov said that once a miracle occurs it becomes part of nature. It is no longer miraculous and can happen again and again. We look forward to the immediate fulfillment of all the prophecies and promises of the Era of Moshiach, as their miraculous aspects become part of the natural world order.

### NOTES:

1 Seifer HaSichos 5751, vol. 2, pp. 513-514

2 See Pirkei Avos 5, 20

3 B'Reishis 49, 9

4 Mishneh Middos 4, 7

5 Isaiah 2, 4

6 Yalkut Shimoni, Melachim, sec. 261. The Zohar on Parshas Balak makes a similar prediction.

7 See, for example, Seifer HaSichos 5751, vol. 1, p. 73

8 Isaiah 11, 6

9 Hilchos Melachim U'Melech HaMoshiach ch. 12, 1

10 Likkutei Sichos vol. 27, pp. 191-206. Hebrew Translation in Shaarei Geula, vol. 2, sec. 31

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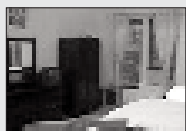
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# ALL FOR THE CHILDREN: CHINUCH UNDER THE 'ISMS'

*Rabbi Aharon Chazan's book "Neged HaZerem" (Against the Current) was one of the first books to describe the Jewish battle against the communist regime. In another book, HaMaavak V'HaNitzachon, he describes his fight for the preservation of the spiritual future of Russian Jewry, under both Communism and Zionism. \* Excerpts.*

R' Moshe Sudakevitz and R' Zusia Rivkin, two Chassidim of late middle age, fled to Uzbekistan as the Germans advanced into Russia. Like all the other refugees, they arrived penniless and starving. Fortunately for them, when factories started popping up everywhere in order to supply the needs of the army, the government looked for reliable and effective people who could run these factories. The Chassidim, being cultured westerners, stood out among the primitive Asians in the population, and since they didn't mind bribing the officials, they were

given important jobs.

In those days it was obvious to all that following the law meant living in abject poverty and people began looking for illegal means to survive. The black market flourished and people of all stations in life did business that way. At the same time, the managers and officials also began to take their official duties less seriously. From the local government, to the police department to the factories, they were not above illegal business dealings. Bribery became a way of life. You just had to find a way to get to the people on top.

Some of those who did business in this illegal manner, including Lubavitchers, became wealthy. They knew that a severe penalty would be meted out to those who did these things, but the situation was such that each one felt that his life was in constant danger regardless, even without these illegal activities.

These wealthy Chassidim formed a network of people bound together by brotherly love. They were always ready to help anyone in need. They often paid bribes for their brethren, helped find employment, and provided for religious needs. They organized a Chabad minyan, complete with Kiddushim on Shabbos and farbrengens. They founded an underground Chabad cheider and a yeshiva k'tana. As soon as proper schooling was available for Lubavitcher families, they turned their attention towards providing chinuch for the rest of the Jewish refugees. They ignored the danger involved, willingly devoting themselves to work on behalf of Judaism.

## FOUR CHADARIM IN A MONTH AND A HALF

At the beginning of the summer of 1944, R' Eli Lipsker visited me and asked me to start a school for



the refugee children in Tashkent. He promised me that I would be able to stay as an employee in R' Moshe Sudekewitz's factory so that I wouldn't be drafted. I took the challenge. As for a salary, I asked for no more than the salary I would lose for working fewer hours.

In the month between Pesach and Shavuos, I started three chadarim in various places in the city. There were about twenty children learning in each school. Their families were Ashkenazim from Russia and the Ukraine. Their fathers served in the army and the mothers and children fled to Uzbekistan when the war broke out.

They knew nothing about Judaism. Some of the boys weren't even circumcised. Many years later, in Eretz Yisroel, I met some of these children who had remained religious.

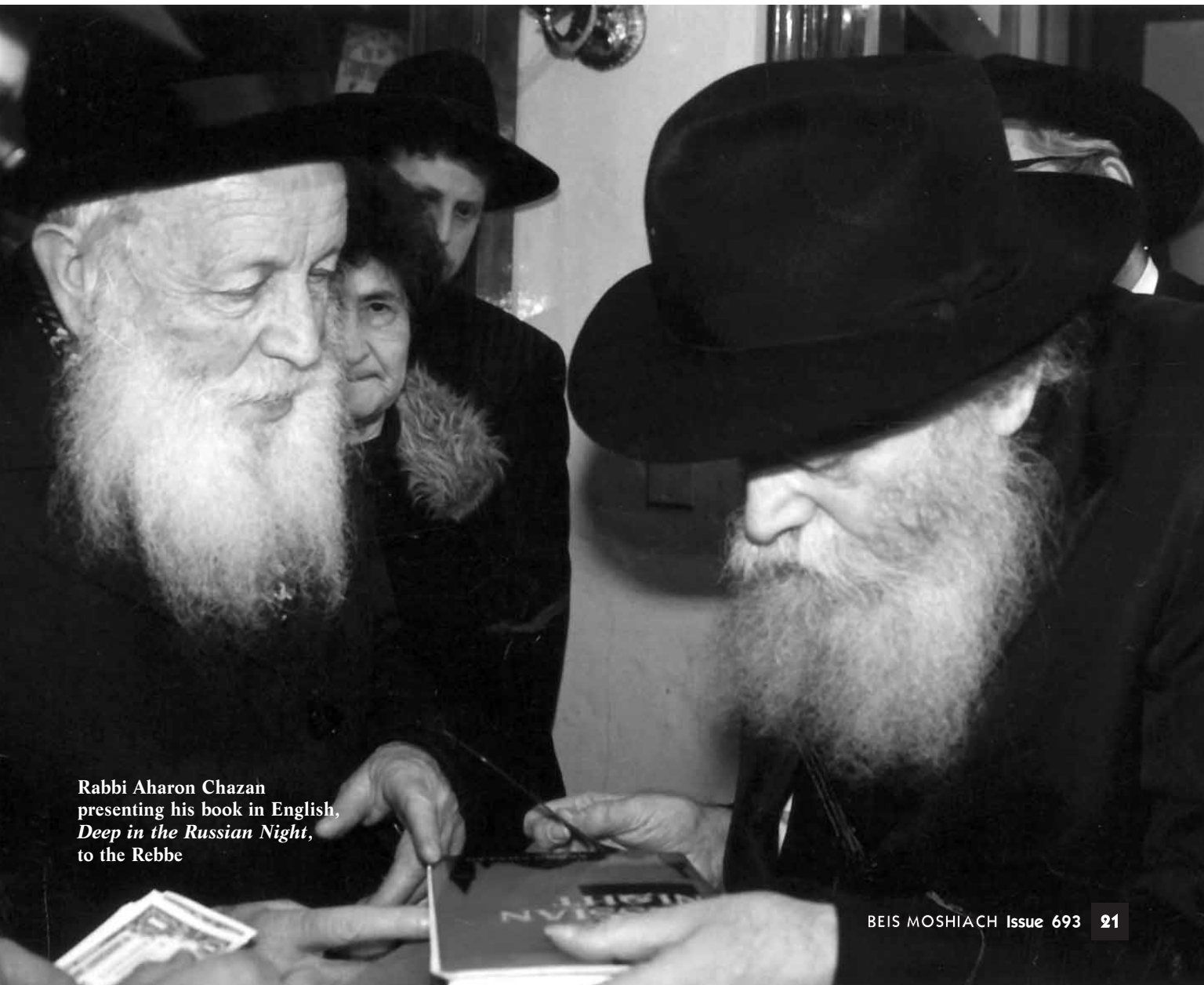
The chadarim formed an underground network of Torah. R' Moshe Nosson Garelik, a Lubavitcher, taught on Ukatchi Street; R' Zalman Leib Estulin, wounded in the war, taught in Sotzgorodek near the textile factory; R' Asher Zelig taught on Novaya Street. These melamdin were older people who were completely devoted to their talmidim. They worked to instill the

children with love for Judaism. They taught all levels from reading in the Siddur to Gemara. On Shavuos, I visited R' Nachum Labkowski, with whom I constantly consulted.

I really must say the 'SheHechiyanu' blessing, I told him. The two words *l'z'man ha'zeh* are an acronym for Zalman Leib, Moshe Nosson, and Asher Zelig. If not for them, we wouldn't have chadarim.

After Shavuos I started another school, on Profesyoyny Street, and R' Moshe the Litvak taught there. After he left his position, R' Chaim Binyamin Brod took over.

The supervision and upkeep



Rabbi Aharon Chazan  
presenting his book in English,  
*Deep in the Russian Night*,  
to the Rebbe

***Quick as  
lightening, all the  
Gemaras were  
hidden. The boy  
pulled a fir tree  
from the corner of  
the room and as  
the men walked in  
they found a group  
of boys pushing R'  
Zalman Leib  
towards the tree  
and shouting,  
"See, we found  
Santa Claus!"***

were my exclusive responsibilities. I prepared what the talmidim would learn, tested them, made sure they had lunch every day, paid the teachers, and paid the rent for the rooms where the learning took place. For security reasons, the melamdim didn't even know where their salaries came from.

The expenses in maintaining these chadarim were enormous. The teachers' salaries alone were 20,000 rubles a month. At that time, the monthly salary of a worker in Russia was 700 rubles a month. The daily lunches and the monthly rent for the four chadarim also cost tens of thousands of rubles. This huge budget, which was paid for primarily by some wealthy Lubavitchers, significantly diminished their income. However, every so often they managed to convince their Jewish acquaintances, even those who were

far from religious, to donate generously for the maintenance of these chadarim.

## **CONVINCING THE PARENTS**

The hardest job was convincing the parents to allow their children to attend these schools. I would start by visiting the parents in the evening, trying to convince them that their children needed to know something about Judaism and that it wouldn't cost them anything. I always emphasized that I was doing this mitzva as a merit for my parents and not as a profit-making venture.

In the event that parents agreed, I would take a notebook and write big Alef-Beis letters in it along with the vowels and teach them to the child, using the corresponding Russian phonetic sounds. Within a few days, after the child knew all the letters at home and could even read words and sentences, I would tell the parents that their child could expand his knowledge of Judaism in a special school that was recently opened. Were they willing to send him to this school?

It wasn't an easy decision for them, since it meant removing their child from the Soviet school. Most of the parents did not agree because of the danger involved in "religious brainwashing" of a child and because not sending them to the Soviet school was considered counter-revolutionary activity or espionage. In the few instances where they were agreeable, I took the children and brought them to the school.

It was exceedingly dangerous work. I was afraid for my life previously, but that was nothing compared to the risk I was taking now. With such deeds to my 'credit,' the government could accuse me of a crime that I couldn't deny. Officially, I was a soldier in

the army who had been assigned to a military textile plant that was vital in manufacturing ropes for parachutists. I would stop in and visit the factory in the mornings and evenings, but I spent the entire day working on the chadarim network. Being caught assured the death penalty not only for me but also for my employer, Moshe Sudakevitz, and he was definitely aware of this. Nevertheless, I felt I had to do it.

The melamdim and the children knew that their activities were strictly forbidden and they were prepared if someone unexpected showed up. Each school had a hiding place for their Jewish books and a place where they kept toys and games in the event that they needed them.

## **THE GRANDMOTHER THREATENED: I'LL REPORT YOU!**

One winter day, one of the talmidim, a clever 14 year old, noticed NKVD officials approaching their building. Quick as lightening, all the Gemaras were hidden. The boy pulled a fir tree from the corner of the room and as the men walked in they found a group of boys pushing R' Zalman Leib towards the tree and shouting, "See, we found Santa Claus!"

"You should be ashamed of yourselves," yelled the NKVD officials. "Do you have nothing better to do than to mock an old man? Leave him alone!"

The boys stopped their game and the guests left.

It once happened that the rav of Charkov and his son-in-law, R' Yaakov Friedman, sent us the son of a supportive neighbor. The next day, the boy brought his friend.

A few days later, the Polish grandmother of the second boy came. She asked R' Asher Zelig,

“Has the government given you permission to teach children under these conditions? Look at this room! It’s not clean. Look at these books – they are old and moldy. Is this the way to teach little children? If you don’t show me your permit, I will have to report you to the authorities.”

R’ Asher Zelig was frightened but he didn’t show it. He said that the school would be closing in another few days anyway. He stopped teaching and he told me, “I am afraid that they will inform on us.”

“Wait a bit,” I requested. “We can work things out.”

I told R’ Yaakov Friedman to tell his neighbor, the father of the boy, that the school had closed and please not to send the boys anymore. After a few days, we re-opened the school, and it continued operating until the Jewish refugees left the city at the end of the war.

One of the talmidim was a boy named Kogan, who came from Russia. His mother was the sister-in-law of Aharon Kaganovitch, the brother of Lazer Kaganovitch, who was a top Soviet government official and one of Stalin’s senior advisors. Her husband was a known communist leader who had been murdered by Stalin during the purges of 1938, and she fled with her son to Tashkent during the war. Because of her family ties, we were afraid to accept her 16 year old son to our school, but our fears were unfounded. After seeing how her husband’s two brothers and sister didn’t lift a finger to save their brethren who were taken out to be killed for no reason, she was bitterly disillusioned by the communists.

Her son did well in his studies and within a short time he reached the level where he could learn Gemara. He decided he had to be circumcised. During the bris, when

his mother saw him suffering, she began to cry. The boy said, “Whose fault is it that I have to undergo this at my age?” The boy continued to learn with R’ Zalman Leib for a long time and became a religious Jew.

The chadarim continued to exist until Elul, 1946, as long as Chabad Chassidim and I remained in Tashkent. Thanks to our extreme caution, we never had an unpleasant incident with the authorities. It is also possible that



**Rabbi Aharon Chazan in Russia**

the authorities turned a blind eye as long as there were Polish refugees in Russia, thinking “they surely aren’t from our country – they are Poles.”

Many of the children who learned in our chadarim were still keeping as many mitzvos as they could when they emigrated from Russia thirty years or more later. Some of them, upon settling in the US or Israel, even sent their children to yeshivos.

## **ACCLIMATING IN ERETZ YISRAEL**

When we arrived in Eretz Yisroel, we stayed for about a month with my brother-in-law, R’ Mordechai Sternberg, and in the home of my nephew, R’ Yisroel Friedman, in B’nei Brak. Then we rented an apartment and began a new life.

I felt like I was in Gan Eden. From my home I could hear the sound of children learning and davening in the nearby Talmudei Torah, the polar opposite of the utter quiet that prevailed in the underground schools in Russia out of fear of being uncovered by spies of the secret police. From the windows of my home I could feast my eyes on the beautiful sight of Jews flocking to shuls, both on Shabbos and weekdays, a stark contrast to the Russian Jews who would sneak to shul with their talleisim hidden under their coats.

It was hard to get used to a life of freedom from religious persecution. When I went to shul, I always hurried out of fear that I was being followed. I would suddenly remember that I was already in Eretz Yisroel and the spies had remained in Russia.

## **I’LL BE BACK**

In contrast to the spiritual situation, the material situation was not especially good. I found work here and there, but nothing steady. Apparently, due to my advanced age I was unable to find regular work.

My father’s brother, R’ Mendel Chazan, lived in Eretz Yisroel and he decided to help us. One day, a nice fellow, who introduced himself as Dovid, a good friend of my uncle Mendel, came to our home. He brought with him a big sack of oranges.

“I live in moshav Ganei Yochanan. I have a home and a



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age?”***

farm and I raise cows and chickens and have a small garden. The house next door just became available and I would like to invite you to come live with us.” He gave me his address and left me hoping that our material situation would soon improve.

In order to get to Ganei Yochanan, I had to travel by train and then by bus, which left me at the entrance to the yishuv. The entire yishuv was one street and on either side were ground level homes. Each family had a plot of land, a chicken coop or a barn with cows.

The main road had seen better days and was full of mud. As I waded through the mud, without boots, looking for Dovid’s address, a horse and wagon stopped near me. The wagon driver asked me who I was looking for. I told him I was looking for Dovid’s house and he said, “In deference to your long beard I will take you in my wagon.”

Dovid greeted me happily. He invited me to sit down and began a long speech about the good life that people who work the earth have. “Everybody here feels like one family. The children go to the government school, the parents work all week and we live in genuine unity. Will you accept my

invitation to join us?”

But I wasn’t listening anymore. When I heard that the people on the yishuv worked all week, I refused to believe my ears. Was it possible that here, in the Holy Land, they worked on Shabbos? I asked him, “You said they work all week. What about Shabbos?”

Dovid looked down. I had brought up a sensitive point which made him uncomfortable. “Yes, Rabbi Chazan, we work on Shabbos. But don’t worry, I will tell everyone that you are an exception and you won’t be asked to work on Shabbos.”

I felt dizzy. “What?” I exclaimed. “You work on Shabbos of your own free will? Oy vey! In Russia we were literally moser nefesh not to work on Shabbos, and you work here *willingly*?”

I was suddenly reminded of the Russian official who had mocked me for thinking that all the Jews in Israel were religious. I had known that they weren’t all perfectly observant, but I didn’t dream that it included outright chilul Shabbos. I was shocked by this and saddened that in our holy land, people desecrated the Shabbos without feeling guilty.

Dovid still tried to persuade me to accept his offer. “You have nothing to worry about. We will teach you what you need to know about farming. As for a religious life, we have a small shul that we open on holidays or for the occasional minyan when someone has yahrtzeit.”

Of course, I declined his generous offer to live on the moshav. I resolved that I must return there soon, not to live, but to help these pure souls return to their Father in Heaven. I left Dovid’s house greatly worried. How could I help these people live authentic Jewish lives?

On my second visit to Ganei

Yochanan, I started an afternoon Talmud Torah. The children attended public school until the afternoon and then they got some Jewish learning. After I spoke with the parents about the importance of this, they agreed. The children jumped for joy, happy to learn the holy Torah.

## **A FESTIVE SHABBOS IN MAZKERET BATYA**

On one of my trips to Ganei Yochanan together with my friend, R’ Alter Scheiner, we went through a large nearby yishuv called Mazkeret Batya. In the yard of the shul there we saw two old men. We went over to them and they greeted us and asked what we were looking for.

“We want to help you keep Shabbos,” we said.

The two men burst out laughing as though we had told them a funny joke.

“True, we have a shul – and not just any shul, but a shul built by Rothschild – but we rarely daven in it. Most of the people here work all week producing dairy products. They don’t keep Shabbos, so of course, they don’t go to shul.”

I wasn’t put off by what they said. I repeated that I had come for the purpose of strengthening Judaism there. One of them, the gabbai of the shul, said to me, “When hair grows on the palm of my hand, you’ll be able to get somewhere. Fifty years have passed since the founding of this moshava and there is no religion and no Shabbos here. Who will you talk to? The Jews here act like goyim.”

“What about the Sefardim who live on the other side of Mazkeret Batya? Are they interested in hearing about Judaism?”

From the gabbai’s reaction we understood that the Sefardim had also become distant from their Jewish roots, but R’ Alter and I

decided to try our luck.

We stopped near the Sefardic shul and asked some children where the gabbai was. They pointed in the direction of the neighborhood grocery store, where the gabbai worked. After a few minutes, the gabbai came out of the grocery and happily welcomed us. It was a long time since he had seen Jews with beards.

We had a nice conversation with him, which led to tangible results. He invited us for the upcoming Shabbos and said that he would tell the Sefardim that a Maggid (preacher) had come to town. On Friday night, after the meal, I could address them and present my plan for a Talmud Torah.

The children of Mazkeret Batya had already heard about the Talmud Torah in Ganei Yochanan. They went to public school together with the children from Ganei Yochanan, who told them how special it is to learn Torah. Their parents, who came from traditional backgrounds, were happy to hear that the organizers of the Talmud Torah in Ganei Yochanan were coming for Shabbos to Mazkeret Batya.

On Friday I took a bottle of wine, challa and fish and set out. Since I wasn't fluent in Ivrit yet, I arranged with a friend who lived in Rechovot, near Mazkeret Batya, to come with me and speak to the people in their language. By the time I got to Rechovot there was no longer any public transportation to Mazkeret Batya and we had to go by bicycle. It was a sight to behold – two religious Jews on bikes.

When we arrived in Mazkeret Batya, we left our belongings in the shul and prepared for Shabbos. To our great sorrow, there was no minyan for Kabbalas Shabbos and we davened on our own. After the davening we sat down to eat our modest meal. When we finished eating, we heard a knock at the

door. At the door, there stood a young man. He introduced himself as a religious person and asked us to visit his home. We made a short visit to his home and were very happy to see that he was Shabbos and kashrus observant.

We rushed back to the shul since, according to our plan, we were supposed to address the residents after the meal. The scene we saw as we approached the shul was like out of a dream. From all directions streamed dozens of people to hear the "Maggid's" speech. This was the first time that a religious Jew had come to speak at the yishuv and the people were excited.

My friend spoke enthusiastically about the importance of a Jewish education. I did not understand much of what he said, because he spoke in Ivrit, but I noticed that when he spoke about mesirus nefesh, chinuch, Shabbos and Russia he pointed at me. I realized he was talking about my history in Russia and I saw that this moved the crowd.

The next day, at Shacharis, the shul was packed and the

atmosphere festive. We visited many residents that afternoon, and saw that the people did not work on Shabbos and even had meals with traditional Shabbos food. The contrast between the Sefardic side of Mazkeret Batya and the Ashkenazic side was great.

The people we visited wanted to know why we had come. When we told them that we were looking into the possibility of opening a Talmud Torah in Mazkeret Batya and we wanted to know whether they would send their children, they responded enthusiastically and promised to send their children.

We lost no time and immediately after Shabbos, we announced the opening of a Talmud Torah. Within a few days, we had arranged the teachers and location. That's how Torah began to take hold in Mazkeret Batya.

## JEWISH PRIDE

The Talmud Torah began with five students, but it grew quickly. Nearly every day more children joined. They attended the Talmud Torah in the evening, absorbing a few hours of Jewish learning. The



On the right: Rabbi Moshe Yaroslavsky and Rabbi Aharon Chazan at one of the Torah Ohr chadarim

teachers gave them not only Jewish knowledge but a lot of yiras Shamayim, love for Hashem and love for Torah. The children accepted it all with love and pure, childlike innocence.

I would visit the Talmud Torah each week to find out how the talmidim were doing and to see what needed improvement. One day, one of the parents approached me and said excitedly, “My son, who greatly enjoys the learning and the atmosphere in the Talmud Torah, decided to wear a kippa and tzitzis all the time, even in public school. The teacher there, who is not religious, was very unhappy about my son’s religious appearance and did his utmost to put an end to it.

“When he saw that his efforts at persuasion had failed, he sent my son to the principal, who also tried to convince him to remove these ‘religious symbols.’ When my son persisted in his position, the principal angrily threw the kippa from my son’s head to the floor and began screaming hysterically.

“As soon as I heard about this, I took my son out of the school and registered him in a yeshiva in a nearby town. Now he learns in yeshiva and is very happy there. After hearing what happened, other parents followed suit and took their children out of the public school and sent them to the yeshiva.”

I was thrilled to hear the effects of the Talmud Torah. Once again I saw the power of light to dispel so much darkness. The few hours the boy learned in the Talmud Torah were enough to give him the strength not to remove his kippa and tzitzis.

My friend Alter was astounded to hear this story. He found it hard to believe that one speech in a shul and the house calls we made the next day could have such a dramatic effect, that some children had left public school and enrolled in yeshiva.

I invited him to visit Mazkeret Batya again to see the results for himself. He met with the children who learned in the Talmud Torah as well as the children who had switched to the yeshiva. He was so amazed that at the end of the visit, he decided to leave his job in B’nei Brak and devote himself to chinuch. From then on, R’ Alter was a great help to us. We opened a girls’ school he taught there. He transmitted love for Hashem and love for Torah, and it wasn’t long before dozens of girls had switched



**Rabbi Aharon Chazan  
after he made aliya**

from public school to Beis Yaakov. R’ Alter helped them find shidduchim later on.

Although no hair had grown on the palm of that man’s hand, we managed to “conquer” Mazkeret Batya.

## **NO LESS THAN IN TASHKENT**

In those days, I would think about the chadarim I founded in

Tashkent. I thought of the Jewish children living in Eretz Yisroel who, for lack of knowledge, were unaware of the enormous spiritual wealth of our Torah. I saw there was a need for chadarim in Eretz Yisroel no less than in Tashkent.

I saw how successful I had been with the Talmudei Torah and I decided to devote myself to this. Since Hashem had not granted me fundraising abilities, I couldn’t cover the expenses entailed in running Talmudei Torah. I spoke to the RaMaT (Reshet Moadim Toraniyim) organization, run by R’ Elozor Kenig, and they took on the organizational role while I continued founding more and more of these schools. We made appeals in the shuls in B’nei Brak to cover the great expenses.

I went from city to city and from yishuv to yishuv. Thank G-d, I was able to arouse the pintele Yid that lies deep within every Jew. Entire k’hillos were inspired and many families registered their children in Talmudei Torah.

To my great joy, there were other organizations that wanted to join in this work and they only needed someone to open the door for them. I thanked Hashem for the ability to do this holy work, and continued full-force ahead. I worked for a long time with my friend, Moshe Yaroslavsky, who ran the Torah Ohr chadarim, and for a while I worked with P’ilim.

Throughout those and the coming years, I was invited to speak to various groups of all ages throughout the country, about Jewish life in Russia. I told them of the mesirus nefesh of Jews who persisted in observing their Jewish way of life despite the government’s persecution. These descriptions made a powerful impression on the listeners, most of who were hearing for the first time about Jewish life behind the Iron Curtain.



# THE REBBE AND THE PRISONER

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

*How could I possibly explain to the authorities that I had nothing to do with such a crime? They had my fingerprints on the counter, and they were absolutely determined to tie someone to the incriminating evidence and close the case. \* My attorney's arguments fell on deaf ears. I was convicted of a crime I had not committed!*

Beis Chayeinu feels emptier on Fridays, as the hundreds of yeshiva students who grace its benches, armed with a bottle of “L’chaim” and other forms of refreshments, head out to their regular Friday “mivtzaim” routes. Brooklyn’s Kings Highway neighborhood, with its sizeable Israeli émigré representation, is one of hundreds of locations throughout the Greater New York metropolitan area to receive a visit. A pair of T’mimim stops by the avenue of Jewish stores and restaurants each Erev Shabbos to farbreng with the area’s Jewish community and give them a taste of the auspicious day’s true meaning.

Their main stop was the

Kinneret Restaurant, owned by Israelis, a pleasant locale where a person could always sit and chat in a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. With bubbling chassidic vitality, they explained the deep yet practical meaning of “Rebbe” and “nasi,” stressing how the Rebbe, like all the Chabad leaders who preceded him, placed considerable emphasis upon true and honest concern for every single Jew. As they related various stories to illustrate this point, they couldn’t miss the strong emotions displayed by Meir, an Israeli contractor and builder.

With great patience, he waited until they finished speaking, and then requested permission to tell a

story that he had experienced personally regarding the Rebbe MH”M’s great concern for every Jew, even someone at the farthest corner of the earth or the lowest spiritual level.

The slight tremor in his voice as he began his account was a living emotional confirmation for all the farbrengen participants, including the restaurant owner, Avner Harush, and his brother, Yosef Yitzchak. While Avner and his brother were well acquainted with Meir and had heard parts of his story on more than one occasion, this was the first time they were hearing it in its entirety.

“About twenty years ago, after completing my military service,” Meir began, “I made my way, as many Israelis, to the land of dreams – America. I established my residence in New York and started making a living by renovating houses. During the evenings, I lived a life of self-indulgence. When I was in Eretz Yisroel, I was still connected here and there to the motif of Torah and mitzvos, such as going to synagogue on Shabbos or keeping a minimal level of kashrus and fasting on Yom Kippur. But in America, I broke off the yoke completely – no Jewish values, no Torah, no ethics or morality. Everything was permissible. During the day, I made money from my



work, and I squandered it all at night.

“One fine day in 5753, during the hurricane season that struck the southeastern United States, one of my good friends called and told me that he had just come across a recent copy of the ‘Yisroel Shelanu’ newspaper, then published by R’ Shmuel Shmueli. My friend had had seen an advertisement that they were looking for renovation contractors to work in S. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, which had been hit by the full force of the hurricane winds. Most of the houses had been severely damaged at best, totally destroyed in many cases. Trees had been uprooted and roads broken, and the territorial authorities were looking for experienced builders from all over the United States to repair the damage for good pay.

“A brief calculation determined that it was possible to earn a considerable amount of money. Within just a few days, my friend and I were on a plane en route to S. Thomas. We decided to make a stop on the way in Miami, where we had many friends and acquaintances, thinking that if we were already traveling to the region, we should use the opportunity to go and visit them. As it turned out, we actually ended up staying in Miami for six months. During that time, we developed our specialization in the field of home renovations. Repairing all the damage in the area took several years, and since not everyone was jumping at the prospect, there would be plenty of work for everyone. We were in no need to rush. As in New York, our primary interest in Miami was recreation.

“One Erev Shabbos I experienced something truly exhilarating. For some reason, my Jewish soul flashed within me, and I suddenly remembered Shabbos in

my father’s and grandfather’s home, making Kiddush and going to synagogue. I decided to go and look for a place to pray on Shabbos. My friend thought that I had lost my mind, and he tried to dissuade me from my sudden religiousness. He told me that he was positive that there were no synagogues in the vicinity of our neighborhood, but for whatever reason, I wouldn’t give in. I got dressed in festive attire, and set out into the city’s streets in the hope of finding a synagogue. I simply went wherever my legs would take me.

“After just a few minutes, I was stunned to see a bearded Jew, dressed in black, walking down the street. I ran towards him and asked him if there was a synagogue in the area. He smiled and told me that that he is an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and suggested that I join him on his way to the Chabad House for Shabbos services. I was absolutely overjoyed, and saw this as a tremendous case of Divine Providence – if you want it, Heaven will help. After services, I walked with the shliach and some other congregation members to his house for the evening Shabbos meal. I experienced a very unique spiritual feeling, but it quickly vanished in the days that followed.

“A few weeks later, we traveled to S. Thomas and success shined on us in everything that we did. We worked day and night, and earned a considerable amount of money, more than I had ever earned in my entire life. We remained there for a whole year, during which I totally abandoned Jewish tradition. We conducted ourselves in whatever way we desired.

“When the job was completed, we decided to return to New York and stop in Puerto Rico on the way to do some touring. Among the sites we visited was a synagogue. When we saw sand scattered all over the

floor, we simply assumed that the place was in need of renovation. It was only later that we understood that it was a symbol in commemoration of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

“We spent the entire High Holiday season in Puerto Rico, and then headed to the airport for our flight to New York. We went through the security check without any problem and had settled into our seats when two local policemen boarded the plane. We could see that they were looking for someone, and I had a feeling that they were looking for us. Indeed, after a few minutes, one of them came up to me while the other approached my companion, asking that we show them our identification. We tried to come up with a variety of excuses, but the officers were determined. When they understood that we didn’t have the required visitors’ permits, they took us off the plane and placed us in the airport jail. We were beside ourselves.

“It is impossible to describe the feeling that surrounded us. We had already built our lives here, and suddenly, with the wave of a hand, the dream is gone. After a few hours, several officers entered the jail cell and told us that they are presently checking our files, and that it should be clear to us that we would be barred entry to the United States and will be sent back to Eretz Yisroel in a few days. A couple of days later, an officer entered our cell again and told my friend that he is being placed now on a plane back to Israel. He then turned to me and said that I am staying because they still have something to check out.

“I was gripped by fear. I asked the officer for an explanation, but he refused to reveal the basis for their suspicions. I felt engulfed by tension and dread that I had never known before. I was in prison, clearly suspected of committing some

serious crime, but they wouldn't even tell me what the charges are. I feared that they wouldn't agree to tell me what I was being charged with until I was standing before the judge. Worry kept me up all night, and robbed me of my appetite. When they finally allowed me to call only two people, I immediately phoned my married sister living in New York and related all that had transpired.

"My brother-in-law gave me a calling card number to contact him if necessary. He got the Israeli consulate involved in the story and hired an expert attorney to represent me during the trial. After a few days of clearing things up, my attorney managed to find out the charges against me. The authorities had found my fingerprints in the jewelry store of some friends that had been burglarized. The suspicion was that I had been the burglar.

"When my brother-in-law told me about the charges, I was frightened and bewildered. I didn't know where this had possibly come from. I remembered that I had been in that store with several of my friends – but to accuse me with burglary and theft? How could I possibly explain to the authorities that I had nothing to do with such a crime? They had my fingerprints on the counter, and they were absolutely determined to tie someone to the incriminating evidence and close the case. The attorney retained by my family came to Puerto Rico and told me that they were charging me with a very serious crime. While he said that he would do everything he could to help me, he added that the chances that the judge would believe my defense against the evidence were slim at best.

"I walked around my detention cell like a caged lion. I felt as if I was in a dream. When the trial finally began, the prosecutors

claimed that the fingerprints were proof that I was involved in the burglary. My attorney rejected the charges, stating that I was a friend of the store-owners, and that since I had visited there, it was only natural that my fingerprints would be left behind. The judge rejected this assertion on the basis that the fingerprints were found behind the counter, and even good friends don't enter the place where the salesmen stand. I was convicted, and the judge decided that he would pass sentence against me at a later date.

"Distressed and mortified, I was taken back into custody.

***My friend thought that I had lost my mind... I set out into the city's streets, and simply went wherever my legs would take me.***

"The following day, handcuffed like a common criminal, I was taken away to jail, a two hours' journey from the detention area. I felt utterly humiliated and wronged for something I hadn't done – a literal case of going from the highest peak to the lowest depth. I had enjoyed a life of leisure and freedom and had everything I wanted, and suddenly it had all ended.

"I presented myself before the new prison director, a stocky and awkward Puerto Rican Gentile (if he hadn't worked there, he surely would have been your run-of-the-mill felon). He gave me two

alternatives: a) to sit together with convicted murderers; b) to sit with one other prisoner convicted on charges similar to mine, but he was a Palestinian...

"It wasn't an easy choice, but I preferred to sit with the Palestinian, despite the fact that the first intifada had broken out around this time. In the presence of the prison director, we made an agreement between us that we would not antagonize one another, and so began a period of several nerve-wracking weeks. It could be more than a year before the judge would pass sentence, and who knew how long he would give me? I cried bitterly over my fate. These were the saddest days of my life. I had not even been given the opportunity to defend myself properly. Everyone was certain that I'm some common criminal who denies committing any violation of the law, despite blatant proofs to the opposite. I knew the truth – that I was completely innocent – but there was nothing I could do about it.

"Months passed, and the holiday of Chanuka arrived. I vaguely recalled that this is when we light candles and eat jelly doughnuts, but had never really learned anything of the deep inner meaning of the holiday. On the third day of Chanuka, the Gentiles began celebrating their own holiday. There was great joy within the walls of the prison, and the sounds of cheers and exultation were heard from the inmates, as if they had just been set free. As evening fell, the jailor in charge of our wing entered my cell and informed me that a large festive meal was being hosted in the dining hall by Christian priests, and he told me in detail what types of foods were being served. Everyone else went down, Christian or otherwise, including my Muslim-Palestinian cellmate. I'll never know what caused me to refuse to go down to the party, yet, something within me

said 'stop'. Until that moment, I had conducted myself as everyone else, eating all these foods, speaking like everyone else. However, a new spirit suddenly rested upon me, causing me to be the only one to stubbornly remain alone in his cell.

"My refusal aroused the anger and wrath of many prisoners. The bullies among them intimated that if I didn't come, they would see it as a form of contempt for all that is holy to them. Nevertheless, I remained undeterred. It was only then that I began to feel with much intensity the difference between me and the other prisoners.

"After a few long minutes, as I lay in my bed absorbed in my thoughts, I heard the buzzing of the front gate to the wing, followed by the clinking of the cell keys. I perked my ears in the direction of the noise, and then suddenly I heard the words, 'Righteous Jew, wake up, it's Chanuka.' At first, I thought that I was dreaming; I couldn't believe it was true. I wondered if I was starting to hallucinate.

"Then, however, I heard the door to my cell opening, and the iron chains of the locks began to rattle. I got up from my bed, and was shocked to see the jailor accompanied by two young Chabadnikim calling repeatedly, 'Righteous Jew, wake up, it's Chanuka.' One of them was holding a carton of jelly doughnuts and chocolates, while the other held a menorah and a box of candles. I rubbed my eyes in bewilderment and washed my face in the basin to make absolutely certain that this wasn't a dream. The water quickly mixed with the tears that were freely flowing down my cheeks...

"I will never forget the friendliness and charm of these young bachurim. They told me about the long journey that had made until they received the necessary permits to come and see

me, and then they said that this is the holiday when the Jewish soul overcomes the body – the powers of purity over impurity. As they were speaking, I began to sob uncontrollably as if I were a child. I told them about the uncharacteristic decision that I had made just moments before they arrived, which now seemed like a piece of a puzzle falling into place. After we lit the Chanuka lights, they enthusiastically explained that they were shluchim of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the leader of the generation, who has concern for every Jew, even if he is far away in prison.

"They sat with me for about half an hour, and gave me tremendous encouragement. I couldn't stop crying throughout the entire meeting with them. I felt that I could finally relieve the heavy emotional burden that had accumulated over the past several months since my arrest. I told the young bachurim why I was sitting in prison, and they replied that for reasons such as this, there is a Rebbe among the Children of Israel to whom it is possible to write and receive his bracha. I was a bit skeptical. How can a blessing from the Lubavitcher Rebbe help a problem that the biggest lawyer has failed to solve? But they were adamant. I asked them if they perhaps have certain connections, based on the fact that they managed to get permission to enter this heavily guarded prison. They merely said it wouldn't be connections that would help in this case, but a bracha from the Rebbe.

"They told me the story with Moshe Rabbeinu, who ran after the little lamb that had been separated from the rest of the flock, and how this demonstrated that he is fit to be the faithful shepherd of His people. So it is with the Rebbe, on whose shlichus they had come now.

"In the end, I gave in. I wrote

down everything that I had gone through in great detail, and then handed them the letter.

"I don't know what they did with my letter, but in writing – I felt that I had unloaded all the tremendous pain that had built up in my heart onto that page. Afterwards, I felt like a new man, clean and refreshed. They left me a package of Chanuka candles and a menorah, taught me how to light the candles for the remaining days of the holiday, and then we parted from one another with a warm hug.

"Since then, I have considered the Rebbe and Chabad to be the most important movement in the world. No one can possibly imagine the great love and devotion that they have for every single Jew.

"The most amazing thing about this story is that just a few days later, I was out of jail...

"Suddenly and unexpectedly, the prison director and several jailors entered my cell to inform me that the judge had decided my sentence. I was to be banished...to Israel.

"I had been certain that I would be sentenced to at least ten years in prison, cut off from everyone, but G-d apparently saw to do otherwise. I laughed and cried at the same time from the sheer joy and emotion that surged through my body. The jailors didn't give me much time for sentiment, and ordered me to gather my belongings. From there I boarded a plane to New York and then straight back to Eretz Yisroel."

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After such a story, there was no need for the T'mimim to explain the great quality and role of the leader of the generation. The T'mimim and the other participants at the impromptu restaurant farbrengen broke out into lively and enthusiastic chassidic song to the words, "Fortunate are we, how good is our portion, how pleasant is our lot that we are chassidim."



# YOU, UPON WHOM THE WHOLE WORLD HINGES

By Boruch Merkur

*The tzitzis of a child brings to the fulfillment of all the Mitzvos, illuminating every single Jew who sees them. \* Four corners corresponding to the four expressions of redemption and coming from the four corners of the earth. \* Tracing the Rebbe MH”M’s instructions on how to perfect our Divine service in the Final Era.*

Marking<sup>156</sup> the Rebbetzin’s Shloshim, 30 days following her passing, and for the purpose of taking to heart a message of inspiration from the Rebbetzin’s life, the Rebbe speaks about the profound impact of an individual on the whole, something that, the Rebbe says, is “connected with the true and complete Redemption...‘awaken and sing, you who dwell in the dust’ [the Resurrection of the Dead].”<sup>157</sup> To this end, every Jew must see that the entire purpose of the world hinges on his next action,

“in accordance with the ruling of the Rambam<sup>158</sup> – that through ‘a single Mitzva, one tilts his own scale [of judgment] and that of the entire world to the side of favor, bringing to himself and to them [the rest of the

world] redemption and salvation,’ meaning that one deed (one action, utterance, or even a single thought) of a single Jew has the power to bring the true and complete Redemption to all the Jewish people (from the beginning of all generations<sup>159</sup> to the end of all generations), the entire natural order of the universe, and also to the Divine Presence, as it were [which is presently also in exile], as it says, ‘G-d, your L-rd, will **return** (shav) your captivity,’<sup>160</sup> meaning,<sup>161</sup> ‘with you captivity,’ in accordance with the saying of our Sages, ‘It does not say, “He will return (heishiv) your captivity, etc.”’”

It is thus within our power, the power of each individual, to

change everything for the good and bring about the Redemption.

## THE MITZVA OF TZITZIS BRINGS THE REDEMPTION

Of course, the manner by which this change is made is through adding in Torah study and Mitzva observance. It is, therefore, fitting that individual Mitzvos reflect this idea of having a holistic impact. The Rebbe cites the example of the Mitzva of wearing tzitzis, tassels on four-cornered garments:

“The effect of an individual Jew, even a child<sup>162</sup> who has just begun his education,<sup>163</sup> wearing a *tallis katan* – performing the Mitzva of Tzitzis, which is equal to all the Mitzvos<sup>164</sup> – is directly mentioned in Scripture, ‘You shall see it and you shall remember all the Mitzvos



**Boruch Merkur with his son at his upsherinish**

of G-d and you shall do them,<sup>165</sup> meaning that the *tzitzis* of a child is a reminder of (not only the Mitzva of Tzitzis that applies to an adult but it serves as a reminder for) and it brings to the fulfillment of **'all the Mitzvos of G-d,'**<sup>166</sup> extending its influence also upon **every single Jew** who sees<sup>167</sup> the *tzitzis* (even a child).<sup>168</sup>

#### NOTES:

<sup>156</sup> *Seifer HaSichos* 5748 Vol. 1, pg. 306-319.

<sup>157</sup> Yeshayahu 26:19.

<sup>158</sup> Laws of Repentance 3:4.

<sup>159</sup> For in the Days of Moshiach, at least in the second stage, all the dead will be resurrected. Regarding the first

stage, the Rambam rules (Laws of Kings Ch. 12, beg.) that "In the Era of Moshiach...the world will follow its natural order ... There is no difference between the present age and the Era of Moshiach except [the emancipation] from our subjugation to the [gentile] kingdoms." But thereafter, [in the second stage of Redemption] the nature of the world itself will also undergo a change, beginning with the greatest change of all, the resurrection of the dead. (See *Likkutei Sichos* Vol. 27 B'Chukosai (5745), where this topic is discussed.)

<sup>160</sup> Nitzavim 30:3.

<sup>161</sup> *Igeres HaKodesh* Ch. 6, end.

<sup>162</sup> For he is capable of performing actions (Chulin 12b ff; Rambam Laws of Impurity Associated with Foods 14:2, Laws of Vessels Ch. 2, beg.).

<sup>163</sup> See Footnote 27 in the original, which speaks about how the education of a child begins as early as three (and even younger, for *tzitzis* can be worn from the time a child begins to walk).

<sup>164</sup> Nedarim 25a; Sifri on the verse, "And you shall remember all the Mitzvos of G-d" (Shlach 15:39), and the commentary of Rashi on Parshas Shlach ibid: "The numerical value of '*tzitzis*' is 600, and the 8 strands and 5 knots add up to 613 [i.e., the number of Biblical Mitzvos]."

<sup>165</sup> Shlach 15:39.

<sup>166</sup> See Footnote 29 in the original, which speaks about the spiritual impact of "remember[ing] (*u'z'chartem*) all the Mitzvos of G-d. Namely, it produces the effect of the masculine quality (*zacharim*), of influencing and bestowing (*mashpiim*), etc., drawing down G-dliness – reaching a level that is even higher than G-d's name Havaya and even beyond that ("I consider it as if you have made Me" (see Zohar III 113a; VaYikra Rabba 35:7; *Likkutei Torah* Shlach ibid)) – into the Mitzvos, which then express the feminine aspect, serving as vessels to contain the G-dly emanations.

<sup>167</sup> See Footnote 30 in the original, which speaks about the unique quality of sight. Namely, that it lends itself to establishing absolute truth, in contrast with hearing.

<sup>168</sup> The conclusion of the section of Scripture is, "I am G-d, your L-rd, Who took you out of the Land of Mitzrayim" (the exodus from Mitzrayim, which is the forerunner and root of all redemptions), indicating that the Mitzvos of Tzitzis\* are connected with and bring about the true and complete Redemption: "As in the days of your exodus from Mitzrayim, I will show you wonders [in the future Redemption]" (Micha 7:15).

\*"Four corners...corresponding to the four expressions of redemption... 'I extracted you,' 'I saved you,' 'I redeemed you,' 'and I took you.'" (Commentary of Rashi on Shlach, end). To note that the Redemption is likewise "from the four corners of the earth."

# THE KING'S 'TEIBEL'

By P. Zarchi

***Mrs. Teibel Lipsker was a unique chassidiste whose exemplary love and mesirus nefesh in communist Russia continued unabated in America.***

Mrs. Luba Alte Toibe (Teibel) Lipsker passed away last year, on 25 Shvat, 5768, at the age of 94. She was born on Shabbos Chanuka, 28 Kislev, 5674(1914) in Voznansk, Ukraine. She was the oldest of nine children. Her father, R' Ezriel Sholom Chaim Boruch, a Boyaner Chassid, was a shochet, mohel, and chazan.

## CHILDHOOD

Her childhood was fraught with difficulty. Her family fought to maintain a home of Torah and mitzvos throughout all the years of persecution in Soviet Russia. Her parents ignored the law which said that every child had to attend school on Saturday.

"My father was called down to the police station," Mrs. Lipsker later related to her great-granddaughter, Chanie Stone, "and my sister and I accompanied him. After hours of interrogation, my father left surrounded by policemen. 'They are arresting me,' he told us. 'Go home and we will see one another later.' We burst out crying, bringing the neighbors to their windows. He was released after three days. From then on, we were scorned as *Subbotziva* (Shabbos observers). People would point and laugh behind our backs,

'Those are the girls who made a commotion at the police station.'"

Her mother, Leah, died at a young age, leaving a house full of little children. Teibel took on the role of mother, raising her younger siblings. Some years later, the family moved to Batum, in southwest Georgia, where her father found work as a chazan.

## TEIBEL MARRIES

In 1934, Teibel married R' Yaakov (Yankel) Lipsker of Byelorussia, who arrived in Georgia a few years before her. They settled in Kutais, where Yankel and his brothers ran a weaving factory that was idle (illegally) on Shabbos.

The Lipsker house was a warm home for all the T'mimim as well as a refuge for those fleeing and hiding from the authorities. Years later, R' Yankel said that he wasn't afraid of the Heavenly Court, since the help he provided for the T'mimim in those years would stand him in good stead.

Their home was an oasis of devotion to Judaism and Chassidus. When their sons and daughters turned five, they hired a private melamed to teach them, despite the danger this entailed. The house was suffused with great love for the Rebbe Rayatz, though neither

Yankel nor Teibel had seen him since his departure from Russia in 1927.

Her oldest daughter, Tzivia, still remembers their nightly bedtime ritual, which included Teibel telling them stories of tzaddikim and saying with her children, "*M'zol zeh'n zich mit'n Rebbe'n*" (may we see the Rebbe).

## IN THE FREE WORLD

In 1946, the Lipskers escaped Russia and arrived in France, where they stayed for several months. A year later, Rebbetzin Chana was also able to flee and travel to France. Her son, later to be the Rebbe, who was living in America with the Rebbe Rayatz, went to France to welcome her and accompany her to the United States.

Teibel had the great privilege of preparing food for the Rebbe. Every day she prepared his meals with love and devotion and her husband brought it to the Rebbe's room at the hotel. When Yankel asked the Rebbe what sort of food he wanted, the Rebbe asked for fish or, if regular fish could not be obtained, then to fry herring. The Rebbe also told them which bakery to buy from. When the Rebbe stayed for Pesach, it was they who prepared his wine and provided him with a set of dishes and utensils as per his request.

Before leaving France, the Rebbe wanted to pay the Lipskers for their services, but they refused. Instead of payment, the Rebbe gave Teibel a set of Likkutei Dibburim, which she treasured until her final day.



In 1949, the Lipskers emigrated to America. The Rebbe Rayatz told them to settle in Haystown, New Jersey, where Yankel ran a farm [see issue #633 for more about this “Farm Shlichus”]. In 1954, they moved to Crown Heights, where Yankel became the shamash in 770. He was later elected gabbai, a position he held until his passing in 1985. In Crown Heights, Teibel continued her “career” of good deeds and devotion to the Rebbe.

## THE DEVOTION OF A CHASSID

Teibel expressed her devotion to the Rebbe in a unique way, by taking on jobs that others neglected. When she noticed that the crown on the Rebbe’s Torah scroll was tarnished, she took it home and polished it. It soon

became her regular job to shine all the crowns in the Aron Kodesh of 770.

When Teibel noticed that the Rebbe’s farbrengen table was covered with a collection of various tablecloths, she sewed a long tablecloth, fitting for the king’s table, which she continued to launder every week. And who if not Teibel took the Rebbe’s half-shekel coins before Taanis Esther to polish them?

Chassidim learn a daily portion of Tanya; Teibel learned it four times a day! Why? Because she had received four volumes of Tanya from the Rebbe. Every day she would learn the daily Tanya from each of those volumes.

The following story, which was heard from one of her children, sums up her dedication. In the early years, teams of volunteers would



R' Yankel Lipsker

come to 770 the night before Lag B'Omer to prepare thousands of

The Rebbe in Paris with his mother, Rebbetzin Chana





**Left: R' Yankel built the Rebbe's amud in the small zal, the Aron Kodesh in 770, and more. In this picture, he is standing next to wooden items he crafted, in Morristown.**

sandwiches for the children who would be taking part in the Lag B'Omer parade the next day. One year, late at night, the sandwiches were finished and the volunteers went home, leaving 770 a mess. Unwilling to leave the Rebbe's shul in such a state, Teibel stayed there alone and cleaned it up herself!

### **CONCERN FOR OTHERS**

Teibel cared greatly for others and exemplified Ahavas Yisroel. She was always the first to help, whether spiritually or materially. Whoever entered her house heard a good word, got a freshly baked treat and if they were needy, a few dollars. Her children remember all sorts of unfortunate people, "bag ladies" with torn clothes who they wanted to chase away but Teibel invited them in. She served them coffee and spoke to them for hours!

Teibel was devoted to the Rebbe's mitzvaim. Even in her 80's, she would go out to encourage

***The volunteers for the Lag B'Omer parade went home, leaving 770 a mess. Unwilling to leave the Rebbe's shul in such a state, Teibel stayed there alone and cleaned it up herself!***

women to light Shabbos candles or people to buy a letter in a Torah Scroll. On Sundays, when the Rebbe distributed dollars for tz'daka to thousands of people, she would talk with people waiting on

line about the importance of marrying a Jew. She was an active member of the PTA of Lubavitcher Yeshiva and the monthly meeting took place in her home.

Teibel loved to attend weddings. Even in her old age she danced and rejoiced with the kalla.

Teibel's most outstanding mitzva was bikkur cholim, visiting the sick in homes and hospitals. Her granddaughter, Sheva Schmukler, writes:

"I went with Bubby to visit the sick in a nearby hospital. She looked for those who were in the worst condition. I am ashamed to admit that I was too scared to go into the rooms, but she fed them one spoon of food after another with endless love. If she felt that the staff was neglecting one of the patients, she did not hesitate to tell them off and challenge them to improve. I left full of admiration and respect for Bubby, for her sterling character and love for every Jew."

Teibel would end every conversation with, "*Zait matzliach, brought Moshiach, yivorechicha*" (be successful, bring Moshiach, be blessed). Every day of her life, she anticipated and worked to bring Moshiach. All of her conversations were full of mentions of Moshiach and Geula and how much she yearned for his coming.

Teibel passed away minutes after her grandson's wedding and only a week before the wedding of her great-granddaughter. She is survived by children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren around the world. Many of them are shluchim of the Rebbe.



# MOSCOW LIGHTS

By S. Malachi

*Rabbi Eliyahu Bar is a Lubavitcher sofer living in Moscow. When he began learning Tanya with two young men, he didn't imagine where it would lead. Today he runs a club called Tzemach Tzedek and spreads the light of Judaism and Chassidus to more than one hundred young men.*

Moscow. Groups of young people in their early twenties sit in a well heated restaurant around Rabbi Eliyahu Bar, a bearded man with a captivating smile. Eastern Jewish music plays in the background and Caucasian delicacies are served. They all go and wash their hands, some of them already familiar with the ritual while others receive instruction. What binds them all together is the matter-of-factness with which things are done, and that is likely attributable to the devoted and consistent approach of R' Eliyahu.

Meet the young men of Tzemach Tzedek. Their colorful yarmulkes reveal that they aren't typical yeshiva bachurim, but their desire to know more and progress in their Judaism has led some of them to yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim.

## WHEN MOSHIKO MET GIL

Rabbi Berel Lazar, shliach and

chief rabbi of Russia walks in. He sits down and speaks to them in their language, sweeping them up in his Chassidic fervor. It's a birthday gathering for R' Eliyahu attended by over sixty people.

Chassidishe niggunim are sung into the night and good resolutions are made, each one of which entails a mighty battle.

Take Raziel for example, (R' Bar makes it a point to call the boys by their Jewish names, a name that they have usually chosen at their bris) who studies economics at university. Just two years ago he had his bris mila and took a Jewish name. Since then he hasn't stopped fighting to preserve his identity. Kosher food is not served at university cafeterias and even at home a kosher meal isn't available for him. But Raziel committed to refrain from eating non-kosher meat. He knows that this won't be easy among his friends and even more so among his relatives, but he knows he has the strength to stick to his resolution – he is a member of the Tzemach Tzedek group.





***Even those who  
are turned off for  
a time end up  
coming back  
quickly because  
they know that  
they will hear the  
truth here.***

No less moving is the story of Gil, who has finished dental school and is now studying for a third degree. In addition to his medical studies he is studying Judaism.

Gil “happened” to meet Moshiko, a young Israeli student who attends university in Moscow. Gil came with Jewish fervor and Moshiko, who is from a traditional Bucharian home, has Jewish knowledge and a command of Ivrit. Under Gil’s influence, Moshiko discovered what many Israelis discover far from home – namely that Judaism is not what they thought it was. Today, Moshiko is a chazan in a local Bucharian shul.

### **SEEKING TRUTH**

When you ask R’ Bar how it all began, he smiles. It’s hard to point at one thing. After many years in Eretz Yisroel, during which he worked in Chabad schools in Chaifa and Kiryot, R’ Eliyahu, a sofer by profession, and his wife Ilana, moved back to their hometown, Moscow.

He is known in the k’hilla for the warm welcome he accords anyone who enters the shul. R’ Eliyahu will do everything to make him feel comfortable so he will want to come back again and again and not just on Yom Kippur. R’ Eliyahu helps visitors feel a part of

the shul and the davening, lending a hand t’fillin and with anything else they need.

When R’ Bar noticed Jewish youth who were confused and seeking answers to questions of life he felt they were screaming out for help and he decided to respond. He got started without any official position or financial backing.

One of the milestones in his work with them took place five years ago when he was working for R’ Zev Kurevsky at the Achei T’mimim school in Moscow. It was there that he learned the principles of chinuch from R’ Kurevsky, which include warmth and love along with an uncompromising Jewish outlook. This is what helps him today in forging a close connection with these young men.

### **A FRIEND BRINGS A COUSIN AND A SON BRINGS A FATHER**

R’ Eliyahu gathered these young men one by one out of the fifteen million people in Moscow. He started with a shiur every Sunday with a few boys, which quickly expanded. The boys brought whoever they knew to the shiurim and farbrengens – brothers, cousins and friends.

“It’s a hard and fascinating age,” explains R’ Bar. “They have a tremendous interest in anything having to do with Judaism but they have to contend with battles and trials every step of the way. At this age they are trying to find their place in society and the world and are seeking absolute truth. They ask questions like: ‘How am I different than everybody? What makes me Jewish?’ These questions are not answered in university.”

Today, two years after he began, R’ Eliyahu gives two shiurim on Sundays and Wednesdays, in

addition to seasonal activities. Each shiur is for two and a half hours. On Sundays the text based discussion is around the Torah portion of the week and the Rambam’s Seifer HaMitzvos. On Wednesdays they learn Tanya and principles of Chassidus, followed by some Prophets, which provide a basis for Jewish history.

As the bond between R’ Eliyahu and the boys grew stronger, his relationship with their parents developed. Aside from the spiritual impact, R’ Eliyahu tries to get to know the parents to enable them to meet the rabbi that their children are so connected with. The parents are also invited to programs and holiday gatherings so they can see the light of Torah and mitzvos for themselves and be reassured that their children are involved in something good and appropriate.

As a result, many parents invite R’ Bar to prepare their children for their bar mitzva, to put up mezuzos and anything to do with Judaism.

### **GRAB A MITZVA BEFORE MOSHIACH COMES**

Sunday is a day off in Russia and at night various entertainment spots are open. R’ Bar realized that his chevra were hanging out in these places after shiurim, sometimes remaining there till dawn. He knew that in order to fight this darkness he had to use light.

He suggested that they all go out together to one of the kosher restaurants in the city. Instead of nights of questionable entertainment, Sunday nights have become farbrengen nights.

“One time, as we sat at the restaurant in the Bolshoi Brunya synagogue, I took the *Shaarei Geula-Yemos HaMoshiach* which was lying there and began to read to them portions from the Rebbe’s sichos about Moshiach. I translated and explained. I saw

how learning this subject aroused their longing for the coming of Moshiach.

“Into this atmosphere of inspiration, I said, ‘You have to grab the opportunity to make good resolutions before Moshiach comes. Everybody has to make a good resolution, to strengthen kashrus, Shabbos observance or t’fillin.’

“One of the bachurim whom I didn’t know yet said sadly that his t’fillin had disappeared a few years ago on a visit to Georgia. After some convincing on my part, he came to us the next day to buy t’fillin, which cost him a nice sum. One mitzva leads to another and a

month later he called and said that his brother was about to get married and to ask if there was something he should do.”

Of course, R’ Eliyahu referred him to rabbanim who deal with that and the brother got married with chuppa and kiddushin.

## FAMILY CLUB

Today, more than 100 Jewish young men are part of the Tzemach Tzedek circle of friends. Most of them are students aged 18-23. They are Caucasian, Georgian and Ashkenazim. Sometimes younger brothers or parents show up as well. They

have made an exclusive club for themselves to which only Jews (children of a Jewish mother) can belong. Together they celebrate Shabbos and Yom Tov, learn and farbreng.

They have all bought t’fillin, with R’ Eliyahu helping find sponsors for those who can’t afford it. It does not stop with t’fillin. R’ Eliyahu continues to cajole and direct and when he sees that a talmid is ripe for it, he pushes him to the next stage – yeshiva. His graduates are learning in yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim Lubavitch in Moscow and Eretz Yisroel.

Shiurim generally take place in R’ Bar’s house in a homey atmosphere, complete with light refreshments and home-baked goodies made by Mrs. Bar. Their home is open to all for Shabbos meals. The Bar children play an important role in creating the warm environment. They play with the boys and serve as an inspiration to them. When the boys hear a young child fluently review an idea in a sicha, it has a tremendous impact on them.

At these meals they learn how to say a bracha before and after eating, which for many of them has become a habit they take everywhere they go. In addition to programming for boys there is a completely separate program for girls run by Mrs. Bar. The girls, some of them sisters of the boys who attend R’ Eliyahu’s shiurim, also attend the Shabbos meals and holiday programs.

On all these occasions R’ Eliyahu tries to instill the importance of adherence to tradition and the observance of Torah and mitzvos without compromise.

## SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE

R’ Bar, who knows his crowd,



Rabbi Eliyahu Bar

***They got up at  
midnight and  
learned and  
farbrenged in  
inyanei Moshiach  
for hours, until  
dawn.***

speaks to them in their language. Before every Yom Tov he “announces” by internet when the holiday begins and ends, mentions candle lighting and the essential mitzvos of the holiday and provides a detailed list of shuls throughout the city and when they daven.

The young people set up their own Internet site for the Tzemach Tzedek club which connects them and publicizes their activities. The site also has an “Ask the Rabbi” feature which enables them to ask the rabbi about anything on their minds without revealing their identity.

They celebrate holidays with R’ Bar, who tries to provide them with

a holiday atmosphere that will make a deep impression on them. On Yom Kippur many of the boys came to spend the holy day together. Some of them slept at his home while others were hosted in the homes of friends who live nearby. Nobody considered driving, since they all knew already that R’ Eliyahu makes no compromises in Judaism.

They shut their cell phones and fasted the entire day. They prayed with fervor as they listened to R’ Bar’s explanations and instructions. All efforts were worthwhile in order to see their faces at day’s end, happy and proud that they had observed the holy day properly.

When you ask R’ Eliyahu how people react to his non-compromising approach he replies, “The G-dly soul of a Jew senses where the truth lies and we see this especially with boys of this age. Sometimes newcomers find it hard to accept our standards, but even those who are turned off for a time end up coming back quickly because they know that they will hear the truth here.”

### **MOSHIACH’S ARMY**

R’ Eliyahu Bar recalls an incident that took place during the war in Gaza. Seeing that the boys were busy reading reports and stories about the war, R’ Eliyahu put pictures of Chabad’s work with the soldiers on the Internet. This generated discussion and made a tremendous Kiddush Hashem as they saw the shluchim’s devotion to the soldiers. In one picture a Moshiach flag can be seen near the tanks as well as on a military watch tower.

One of the surfers who saw the Moshiach flags asked, “Is that the army’s new flag?” The amusing idea quickly developed into a deep discussion on inyanei Moshiach and Geula. When R’ Eliyahu saw what his talmidim had written he was amazed, for he himself did not realize how much they longed for Moshiach.

In general, the war in Gaza gave R’ Eliyahu a special opportunity to peek into the pure depths of the souls of these youngsters who grew up estranged from Judaism. The boys did mitzvos and made resolutions as a z’chus for the soldiers and residents of Eretz Yisroel and didn’t stop davening for and talking about them.

### **MITZVA GORERES MITZVA**

One day of Chol HaMoed, R’ Bar went with his children to the shul at the community center Marina Roscha. It was a Sunday and there was a Jewish concert which attracted many of the Jews of Moscow.

R’ Eliyahu stationed himself on the steps to the entrance to the hall and offered the Dalet minim to passersby. Hundreds were happy to shake the lulav. As one man completed the mitzvah and turned to go, he paused. R’ Bar could see that he wanted to do something in addition.

“I’d like to give tz’daka,” he said.

R’ Eliyahu took him to the shul’s office, where he made a generous contribution. One mitzva leads to another.

### **EIGHTH NIGHT, FIVE BECHOROS**

On the fifth night of Chanuka, R’ Bar made a Chanuka party at the Bolshoi Brunya shul. Dozens of boys sat at tables and learned about Chanuka from a Chassidic perspective. They joined in the davening and danced to a band. Rabbi Yitzchok Kogan told them about the great history of the shul and gave them a tour of the Jewish museum there.

On the eighth night, a party was held at the Brunya restaurant. That night, Rabbi Kogan, a Kohen, redeemed five firstborns who hadn’t had a pidyon haben when they were babies.

R’ Eliyahu gave dozens of s’farim out on Hei Teives – Chumashim, T’hillim and Siddurim with Russian translation, as well as other Judaica items – to the surprised and happy boys. They were also given a keychain with the Rebbe’s picture on it. On Purim



there was a lively Purim party at R' Eliyahu's house which was attended by dozens of boys. After the Fast of Esther, the Megilla was read and everyone was given two mishlochei manos to distribute the next day. One of the participants at the Purim seuda pledged to buy t'fillin and committed to using them every day.

## IF YOU OBSERVE

One of the main holidays in Russia falls in January. It's a wild two weeks of celebration, during which there is no school or work. The partying does nothing to strengthen people's ruchnius, and R' Eliyahu felt that he had to do something to fill the boys' time productively.

"I saw that it ruined all their progress and I decided to offer them more during these days." This idea came about when he saw a Shabbaton for young people at Ascent in Tzfas. He thought to

himself, "I have to do this with my chevra."

R' Eliyahu spoke with the boys and they decided to hold two Shabbatons at yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, which is located in a nice suburb of Moscow.

At first it merely looked like an excellent way to remove them from the gentile atmosphere of carousing, but it soon turned out that the Shabbatons in yeshiva had a tremendous effect on them. The boys joined the regular s'darim of the yeshiva. They listened to shiurim, davened, and participated in the Shabbos meals and farbrengens with Rabbi Zushe Garelik and Rabbi Berel Haskelevitch.

The rosh yeshiva later said that the boys joined right in and absorbed the atmosphere in yeshiva way beyond just "eating the kasha of Tomchei T'mimim." Being exposed to boys their age who are religiously observant made a deep impression on them.

## TIKKUN CHATZOS CHABAD STYLE

The imminent Geula and the coming of Moshiach are topics that fascinate the boys. "What will happen when Moshiach comes?" they love to ask. "What will remain as it is today and what won't?" "Will there be a war of Gog and Magog?" R' Bar answers every question patiently and clearly, based on the Rebbe's teachings.

When the students stayed in yeshiva they heard about Tikkun Chatzos, the mourning for the churban and the galus, and they asked R' Eliyahu to say it with them. R' Eliyahu explained that in our generation only lofty individuals recite it, but he suggested an alternative. They got up at midnight and learned and farbrenged in inyanei Moshiach for hours, until dawn.

Reaching out to those of Caucasian and Georgian background entails unique

R' Eliyahu Bar (center) with a group of young men



challenges. Many of them living in Moscow are connected with rabbanim who are not Chabad and when their children get involved with Chabad and inyanei Geula, they look at this askance.

The parents sometimes vehemently oppose the belief in the Rebbe as Moshiach that their sons accept matter-of-factly. R' Eliyahu is careful to instill the Besuras Ha'Geula and the Goel without overwhelming them.

During the shiurim, the boys learn the halachos of Moshiach in the Rambam and about the p'sak din that identifies the Rebbe as a prophet and Moshiach. This gives them the sources they need to support their faith.

### IT'S NOT ABOUT "I"

When asked for the secret of his

***“What will happen when Moshiach comes?” they love to ask.***  
***“What will remain as it is today and what won't?”***  
***“Will there be a war of Gog and Magog?”***

success, R' Eliyahu says, “When my wife asks how to make an impact on the girls that she teaches, I tell her – don't think you are

influencing them. Do what you can and Hashem will influence them...”

“I don't think I am changing their lives. I do my part and Hashem influences them through Torah and mitzvos. I try to do what I can and to be the conduit for Hashem's influence, and baruch Hashem we see results.”

Still, we try to understand what motivates a family man who works as a sofer to dedicate so much time and energy to spreading the wellsprings. His answer is, “The Rebbe gave all the instructions and continues to give us the kochos to carry them out. It doesn't take a lot of brains and you don't have to be someone special in order to know what to do. You just have to do it. I try to be the conduit, and I see that the less ego there is, the more success there is.”

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