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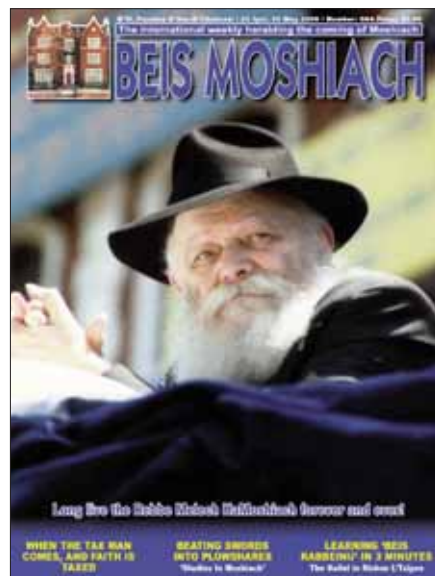
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WHEN-THEN

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

What are the people to eat during the year of Shmita and the one that follows? During Shmita, the sabbatical year, one may not sow, or reap, or gather. This question the Jewish people will surely ask. But it does not indicate a lack of faith. Rather, when they ask it, then the response will come from Above: I will command My blessing upon you. We ask the same question regarding Moshiach: when we are at the last stage of exile, when we have no strength to sow mitzvahs, how shall we sustain ourselves spiritually? G-d promises, I will command my blessing and bring the Redemption.

This week's Torah reading begins with the laws of Shmita, the seventh or sabbatical year when the land lay fallow. During Shmita, the sabbatical year, one may not sow, or reap, or gather.

This raises the question, what are the people to eat? The Torah apparently anticipates the question, for it states: "When you will ask, what shall we eat in the seventh year? We may not sow, nor gather in our increase. Then I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth produce for the three years." That is, when G-d commands His blessing, the land will produce enough for the sixth, seventh and eighth years. The harvest will be sufficient for the normal crop, the year when the land lies fallow, and into the eighth year, until the new crop can be harvested.

Of course, this also alludes to Moshiach. As is well known, the "six years" refer to the six thousand years of the world, and the seventh or Shmita year refers to the seven thousandth, or Sabbatical, millennium – the era of Moshiach. So the question, "what shall we eat in the seventh year?" refers not just to the past, to the times of the first Two Temples, but to the future, the time of the Third Temple, as well.

The Rebbe points out that the passage is phrased in an unusual manner. It assumes that at some point the Jewish people will question G-d. The phrase reads, "When you will ask." The question is not conditional; the emphasis is on **when**, not **if**. The Jewish people will surely ask, "What shall we eat in the seventh year?"

This seems to indicate a lack of faith. After all, if G-d has commanded us to observe a Sabbatical year, to let the land lie fallow every seventh year, surely G-d knows we still must eat. Our faith in G-d demands we assume that he will find a means to provide for our needs.

Also, the question has already been answered, even before it was asked! In the preceding verse, G-d promises that the land will yield its fruit and there will be enough to eat. The Torah states, "You shall perform My statutes and My ordinances you will observe and do them; and you will dwell in the land in safety. The land will yield her fruit and you will eat until satisfied and dwell securely on it. And when you will ask, what shall we eat in the seventh year..."

G-d has just promised that observance of the laws of Shmita produces security and an abundant harvest, yet the Torah says, "When you will ask . . ." Clearly, the difficulty lies with the definitive **when**. That word assumes and guarantees the question will be asked. Yet

the passage seems to indicate there's no need to ask it, since G-d has already promised us and assured us what will happen: "I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth produce for three years."

But why should there be a need to ask "what shall we eat in the seventh year" when we've just been told "The land will yield her fruit and you will eat until satisfied and dwell securely on it?"

We must conclude that when the Torah assures us a question **will** be asked, it also tells us **why** the question will be asked. That is, the grammatical construction of **When-Then**, of **When** you will ask, **Then** there will be such-and-such a response, indicates the nature and appropriateness of the question.

For example, the Torah uses the same construction elsewhere, in regard to redemption of the first born. It says, "When your son will ask, what is this?" and we are told to answer him in a certain way. Later, the Torah advises us regarding a different situation. There it says, "When your son will ask, what are these testimonies, statutes and ordinances?" There, too, we are to answer according to his motivation and mental capacity.

We see, therefore, that there are different types of questions, each with a different motivation. The grammatical construction of When-Then tells us the type of question and the nature of the response. That a particular question must and will be asked doesn't necessarily indicate a lack of faith. Rather, it indicates the relationship the questioner has with G-d.

Let's look at the verse in question with this in mind. It states: "'When you will ask, what shall we eat in the seventh year? We may not sow, nor gather in our increase.'" The details – "We may not sow, nor gather in our increase" – may seem superfluous, but they're not. They are part of the question. So, the question is not really about **what** we will eat, but **how** we will eat. (This is reminiscent of the wise son, one of the four sons discussed on Passover. He, too, asks about details – "When your son will ask, what are these testimonies, statutes and ordinances?" The details indicate that his question is not **if** we should observe the laws, nor even **what** laws should be observed, but rather, **how** should we observe them.)

In other words, since G-d has already promised that the land will be fruitful and that there will be plenty to eat, we are only asking, how will that happen? What method will G-d use to provide us with our needs during the Shmita year? Will it be natural or miraculous? Will it be manna, as in the desert? To this G-d answers that the land itself will produce enough for three years. The sixth year will be bountiful beyond measure, beyond nature, beyond reason.

G-d's statement that "I will command my blessing in the sixth year, and it will provide produce for three years" is not only a situation beyond nature, it's the opposite of nature. According to nature, the land becomes weaker each year. This fact is one of the reasons for Shmita, to give the land a rest and allow it to renew itself. And

precisely when the land is weakest does G-d promise it will produce three times as much! This is why the Jewish people will certainly ask, "What shall we eat" – because the answer goes beyond reason and logic.

The question applies not only to the past, to Shmita during the years when the Temple stood, but to the future as well, to the times of Moshiach, that of the Third Temple. We are in the sixth year, the sixth millennium, that which precedes Moshiach. Since our sustenance in the era of Redemption depends on our actions now, what shall we eat? G-d has promised Redemption if we observe the mitzvos. "But we can neither sow, nor gather in our increase." We cannot even maintain the level of Torah and mitzvos of previous generations, much less increase it. How can **we** bring Moshiach? We are the weakest

generation! The strength of our observance has decreased from generation to generation. The ability of Torah and mitzvos to sustain us seems depleted.

G-d answers **and promises** "I will command my blessing." Let the Jewish people perform the work of the sixth year, the mitzvos of the time of exile. Let them act with self-sacrifice and a devotion beyond reason and logic. Then G-d will give a blessing from Above; that which is sowed in the sixth year will be blessed threefold. Regardless of the weakness of the land – of the generation – its efforts will bring about revelation after revelation. The produce of the 'sixth year' will provide the spiritual sustenance for the seventh – the era of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 27:183-190)

Let the Jewish people perform the work of the sixth year, the mitzvos of the time of exile. Let them act with self-sacrifice and a devotion beyond reason and logic. Then G-d will give a blessing from Above.

OUR PERSONAL ROLE IN BRINGING DOWN THE DIVINE

The last Torah portion of VaYikra, like the first, speaks of sacrifices. Here, the discussion centers on the first-born animal, which represents an arousal from Above, and the tithing of the tenth animal, which represents an arousal from below. Both are a necessary part of the process of transforming the world, preparing it for the times of Moshiach.

The inner connection between sections of the Torah can teach us much about our own connection with Redemption. This is logical, since the ultimate purpose and fulfillment of Torah is Moshiach. The Jewish people alone were given the Torah and it is our Divine mission to bring Moshiach, the era of Redemption when the whole world will be filled with knowledge of G-dliness. Indeed, the very question this raises, why our mitzvos are necessary to bring Moshiach, is addressed in the structure of VaYikra.

There is a well-known principle that the “end is linked to the beginning, and the beginning is

attached to the end.” The portion of *B'Chukosai* is the last portion of VaYikra, or *Leviticus* as it's called in English. Thus, we should find a special connection between the end and the beginning both of the portion and of the book of VaYikra as a whole. As with every aspect of Torah, this connection reveals an important lesson in our Divine service of preparing the world for Moshiach.

There is an obvious connection between the beginning of VaYikra as a whole and its conclusion in the portion of *B'Chukosai*. Both speak of sacrifices. Of course, there's an immediate, superficial connection, since with the coming of Moshiach

and the rebuilding of the Temple, we will again be able to offer sacrifices. However, there is a deeper lesson, one that tells us how to get there.

VaYikra begins with the instruction, “A person, when he will bring from you a sacrifice to G-d.” The book concludes with the laws of two sacrifices, the first-born animal and tithing of animals.

These two offerings, discussed last, illustrate general concepts indicated at the beginning of VaYikra. It is well-known that sacrifices epitomize and symbolize the nature of man's Divine service. There are two types of Divine service, illustrated by these two offerings. One is a response to an arousal from Above. Recognition of holiness compels us to act according to the Divine Will. This is the service of the first-born, automatically sanctified from the moment of birth. Its holiness comes with it, so to speak, given from Above. No human action makes it holy.

The other type of service is an arousal from below. Man takes the initiative to fulfill G-d's commands, bringing G-dliness into the world. This is the service of tithing animals. The dedication, and thus holiness, of the tenth animal depends completely on human action.

The very beginning of VaYikra alludes to these two types of service.

VaYikra begins, “Adam, when he will sacrifice from you.” In Jewish mysticism, the form of man reflects the structure of the spiritual worlds. “Adam” thus refers not just to a person, but to the Supernal Man or *Adam HaElyon*. This human-structured spirituality is the first and highest manifestation of G-dliness, forming and influencing every aspect of creation.

Thus, “Adam, when he will sacrifice from you,” indicates that *Adam HaElyon*, the highest level of G-dliness within creation, arouses a person to sacrifice, or draw closer, to G-d. This parallels the sacrifice of the first-born animal: the holiness is already there, forcing us to recognize its presence. That recognition arouses a desire to be elevated, to become closer to G-dliness.

Next the Torah states, “From the animal you will bring your sacrifices.” This corresponds to tithing animals. Here, man’s actions – his counting – determines the holiness of the animal. He must sacrifice – labor and struggle – to bring his inner animal, the animal nature, closer to G-dliness. It requires effort and exertion to refine and sensitize our desires and inclinations, thus elevating ourselves.

At a deeper level, the sacrifice of the first-born refers to man’s first spiritual attribute. This attribute, *Chochma* or Wisdom, differs from all others. All other spiritual attributes develop within man; as such, one must work to reveal them. *Chochma*, coming from above, is an inheritance to every Jew. The first spiritual attribute does not depend on our actions, but expresses the essence of the soul, its innate connection with G-dliness. Therefore, it is the source of a Jew’s self-sacrifice, his willingness to dedicate his entire being to sanctifying G-d’s Name and making the world a dwelling place for G-dliness.

Since self-sacrifice is innate, a Jew’s essence, his holiness is manifest throughout history. Similarly, the first born remains sanctified even now.

The sacrifice of the tenth, on the other hand, refers to the other spiritual attributes. These ten soul-powers depend on man’s activity. They require effort to be fully developed and expressed. Thus, changing conditions affect our ability to express or develop them completely. When the Temple stood, and G-dliness was openly revealed, the ten soul-powers could be fully activated. The offering of the tenth animal represents complete dedication of the ten soul-powers. Now, in the time of exile, when G-dliness is concealed, the ten soul-powers are likewise limited in their expression. Hence, the tenth animal cannot be made holy. We will not have that ability again until the times of Moshiach.

This helps us understand the connection between the beginning of the Torah portion and the end. From the beginning of VaYikra we learn that the sacrifice of the

first born animal, which is always holy and always in force, indicates an arousal from Above. The presence of holiness – such as the birth of a first-born animal – forces us to recognize the presence of holiness and thus be elevated. Both our awareness and our daily activities become more spiritually oriented, more attuned to the G-dliness innate to the world. This is an obvious prelude to the times of Moshiach, when such awareness will be fully manifest.

The second type of spiritual service, that of tithing the animals, represents man’s own efforts to elevate himself, an arousal from below. In this way we take the initiative to refine our natures, to transform the animal within us into a vehicle for holiness. Through our mitzvos, we make the world a dwelling place for G-d.

The beginning of the Torah portion reflects this dichotomy. It begins as follows: “If in My statutes you will walk, and My commandments you will keep.” Statutes (*Chukim*) are Divinely ordained mitzvos, without an apparent reason. Walking indicates continual motion – an unlimited movement. Such a Divine service has infinite potential. Being motivated to fulfill the Torah’s commands from Above arouses a desire to be elevated. Nevertheless, this “walking,” this unlimited arousal, is missing something.

Whatever elevation occurs as a result has no permanence. Even the greatest self-sacrifice, aroused from Above, does not permanently transform the individual. For the rest of the soul-powers to be affected, the person must act. The Divine soul comes into the body so that man here below, with his animal soul, becomes a vehicle for G-dliness. Thus, there must be as well an arousal from below, the service of “My commandments you will keep.” By using one’s own soul-powers – the tenth, the animal, to perform the mitzvos, one becomes a vessel for keeping and maintaining the unlimited revelation of G-dliness. This revelation until now has been apparent only occasionally and temporarily. Yet the ideal is for this arousal from Above – the first-born, *Chochma*, “If in My statutes you will walk” – to be visible openly to one and all.

That state arrives with Moshiach, brought on by the arousal from below – the tithing of animals, the ten soul-powers, “and My commandments you will keep.” It is our actions, performing the mitzvos in response to a recognition of G-dliness, that transforms the world, gives G-dliness itself a permanent home here in the physical realm.

This explains why the coming of Moshiach depends on each and every one of us, our personal activity and Divine service.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 17:332-339)

WHAT BRINGS A MIRACLE?

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

“Oh, okay, now we understand,” said the doctors. “The Lubavitcher Rebbe has given us many surprises before.” * Putting the sicha of Shoftim 5751 into practice.

This installment doesn't have one unique story. Every Chabad house has many stories like these – of people whose problems were solved as a result of following the Rebbe's advice.

What *is* special is that the Rebbe said on Shabbos Parshas Shoftim, 5751, that we “need to publicize ... that we need to accept upon ourselves ... the instructions and advice of ... Nasi Doreinu ... the judge of our generation and the advisor of our generation and the prophet of our generation.”

We shluchim, with all due modesty and humility, are involved with this every day by sharing with thousands of Jews the Rebbe's advice and counsel and his main prophecy of *hinei, hinei Moshiach ba*.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU WANT TO RUN OUT OF YOUR HOUSE?

A few years ago, someone walked into the Chabad house of

Rabbi Yaakov Segal, shliach in the yishuvim of Naveh Monson and Yahud, and asked whether he could consult with him about something. He opened with a philosophical query. “What sort of feeling ought a man to feel in his house? Should it be a good one or a bad one?”

He then revealed that every time he and his wife enter their apartment in Yahud, where they have lived for two years, they get bad vibes. All they want to do is get out of the house. The apartment is nice and they are quite comfortable financially, but this feeling is always with them. “We just want to run away. Why is this happening to us?” he concluded with tears in his eyes.

“Did you check the mezuzos?” R' Segal asked him. “No.”

“So the first thing I recommend is that you bring all your mezuzos for checking.” R' Segal gave him one mezuzah for the meantime and the man brought all his mezuzos to be

checked.

The results were amazing. The moment the man put up the temporary mezuzah, he and his wife felt much better. When the sofer checked the mezuzah from the main entrance, he found that it was missing the letter *Tav* in the word *beisecha* (your house).

“How do you expect to feel when instead of ‘your house’ it says ‘*beich*’ (the letters of ‘crying’)?” asked R' Segal.

The man was flabbergasted and asked to be able to show the mezuzah to his wife, his mother-in-law and whoever crossed his path. The couple quickly affixed new mezuzos and lived happily ever after in their lovely apartment.

IF YOU WANT A BRACHA FOR CHILDREN

A couple and a baby came into the Chabad house. As soon as they saw R' Segal, the husband smiled broadly and came over to shake his hand warmly.

“Do you remember me?” he asked.

Thankfully, R' Segal did indeed recall their encounter three years earlier.

“Aren't you a policeman?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“You were here three years ago?”

“Yes.”

“And you asked for a bracha for children?”

“Yes.”

The man was thrilled that the rabbi remembered him from three years before. The couple happily introduced R' Segal their two year old daughter, who was born less than a year after that meeting. They also reminded R' Segal how they sat in that very



place and the woman covered her head and they washed their hands and wrote to the Rebbe. They had come now to repeat the process. The woman had brought a head covering from home and they washed their hands and wrote a letter to the Rebbe asking for another child.

OPERATING ON THE BRAIN

It was Chanuka of five years ago, and R' Segal was about to lock up the Chabad house and rush to go light the menorah when a local youngster walked in. He wanted to have three pairs of t'fillin checked. The boy, a talented musician from a traditional family, brought his t'fillin, his brother's t'fillin, and his father's.

He had been experiencing terrible headaches and fainting. Tests showed that he had a dangerous growth in his head and he was scheduled for a delicate surgery the next day. The doctors

expected the operation would take nine hours!

R' Segal took two pairs of t'fillin to be checked and told him to put on the other pair of t'fillin

As soon as he heard that it was R' Segal, he shouted: "Rav Segal! You don't know what miracle took place!"

the next morning before the operation and to write a letter to the Rebbe. The boy said that he hoped to recover from the surgery within two weeks and he would then find out what happened with

the t'fillin.

The t'fillin were finished being checked four days later (one was kosher and one was not). R' Segal called the boy's number. He wondered if anyone would be available to answer the phone. To his surprise, the boy himself answered. As soon as he heard that it was R' Segal, he shouted: "Rav Segal! You don't know what miracle took place!"

"After I left you the other day," he continued, "I did whatever you told me. I wrote to the Rebbe, I took the t'fillin to the hospital, and I put them on in the morning. Then I had the final tests before the surgery. I put on hospital garb and waited to be taken for the operation. And waited. And waited. I wondered why the doctors were taking so long to get started.

"Two or three hours later, more than ten doctors came in and looked at me in astonishment. They stood and compared that day's pictures with the ones taken the week before.

“Did you have any sort of treatment?” they asked. One of them said that the tumor, which had been the size of an egg, had shriveled to the size of a pinhead and basically was no longer there. ‘You can get dressed and go home,’ they told me. I told them I had done nothing. I had just prayed and written to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

“Some of the doctors chorused, ‘Oh, okay, now we understand. The Lubavitcher Rebbe has given us many surprises before.’ They said that for a tumor like that to suddenly disappear happened only once in several million instances.”

The boy got much closer to the Rebbe and Judaism. He began keeping Shabbos and every Friday he brings a basket of food to be distributed to the needy. Since then he hasn’t asked for any more brachos – a sign that all is well.

QUOTES FROM THE REBBE IN COURT

A young woman from Beit Shaan studied law and planned to become a lawyer. In the course of her schoolwork she had to study some sections of Jewish law in the tractates Bava Metzia and Bava Basra. The professor suggested additional sources with which she was unfamiliar, such as Rambam, Raavad and the Ketzos HaChoshen. She went to the Chabad house and asked for help in her homework. I learned with her and baruch Hashem she passed all her tests.

A year later she called to say that in another week they would be giving diplomas to hundreds of new lawyers and she was chosen to speak on behalf of them all.

“It’s a very important ceremony with judges, ministers, and parents. Do you have an idea that I can use in my speech?”

I immediately recalled the sicha of Shoftim 5751 where the Rebbe explains why in the parsha it says “Judges and Policemen” while in the prophecies of Geula it says, “Judges and Advisors.” This is because in the future, we won’t need policemen to enforce the law but advisors who will guide everyone in how to do mitzvot in the most beautiful way. I explained to her that she could connect “advisors” to lawyers.

She used this idea and repeated it to the thousands of people who attended the ceremony.

I attended her wedding a year ago and heard she was going to become a judge. “I will return your judges as at first and your advisors as at the beginning.”



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KEEPING THE UPPER HAND

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik
District Rav Bat Chefer-Emek Chefer

How to not waver in Divine service – insights from Chazal, Kabbala and Chabad Chassidus.

LIFE INSURANCE

Everybody wants to be confident about his future and many people buy insurance of various kinds, health insurance, life insurance etc. for that feeling of security. In this article we will look at “life insurance” for our spiritual life. This insurance protects not against external damages, but against the enemy within, the Evil Inclination.

When a person is spiritually uplifted in avodas Hashem, for example, when he pours out his heart in t’filla, in learning, or singing a Chassidishe niggun that arouses the soul, he rises above himself. He forgets his physical needs and mundane manners. At that time he mainly feels the holiness of the neshama within him, and his entire being clings to G-dliness.

What do you do if you want to “insure your future” so that even when the spiritual high is over and you land back on earth again, you retain a connection to k’dusha and don’t fall into the net of the Evil Inclination?

The foundation of every Chassidishe farbrengen is “action is the main thing.” Good resolutions are made to improve one’s Jewish and Chassidishe behavior. The question is, how do you insure your spiritual life so that the good resolutions are fulfilled and your spiritual inspiration is ongoing?

A CONSTANT BATTLE

In Tanya we learn that every Jew, aside from tzaddikim, has an

Evil Inclination which tries to make him sin and go against Hashem’s wishes. The battle between the Good and Evil Inclinations is constant. Even a Jew who goes in the way of the Torah and does mitzvos and good deeds all his life, who conducts even his mundane matters according to Torah, with integrity and fear of Heaven, has an active Evil Inclination in his heart. It continues to entice him to sin.

Even a person who lives according to Torah and Chassidus and refrains from sinning all his days, has not necessarily vanquished the evil within. It continues to try and “conquer” man and to cast negative and forbidden thoughts into his mind and heart, “because the essence of evil is in its full strength ... as when he was born.” A person must constantly fight evil and not allow it to rule his thoughts, speech, and action.

Even someone who spends years successfully guarding himself from sinning does not weaken his Evil Inclination, nor does he minimize its attempts at tripping him up. “On the contrary, it has become stronger with time, for he used it a lot for eating and drinking and other matters of this world.” The



mundane matters that a person was occupied with for years, his physical eating and drinking, even when done in a permissible way, are “fuel” that adds strength to the animal soul at the expense of the G-dly soul which is not nourished by physical food. This is how the Evil Inclination gets stronger with time.

HALEVAI WITH RUCHNIUS LIKE GASHMIUS

The famous Chassid, Rabbi Eliezer (Tchecharsker) Dvoskin, was the emissary of the Rebbe Rashab to Cherson, where he served as rav of the Chassidishe community and rosh yeshiva of Tomchei T’mimim. In his final years, his health was extremely poor. He was sick with many serious illnesses to the point his talmid, R’ Mendel Futerfas, quipped, “He had *ramach* (248) illnesses in each of his *ramach* limbs.” He was very thin and all he ate each day was a cup of milk and a slice of challa.

One time, after having a difficult time walking a short distance to shul, he weakly sat down on a bench near the entrance, supported his head with his hands so it wouldn’t list to the side, and sighed deeply. His talmid asked, “How do you feel?” He answered, “Baruch Hashem, *halevai* (if only) in ruchnius as in gashmius.”

“What!? Your physical state is awful. Your body is emaciated and sickly and you barely eat. Do you wish yourself such weakness and illness in your spiritual life?”

“Why don’t you understand? True, I am physically sustained by little, but that food enters me, is absorbed, is digested and becomes one with my body, and the fact is that I’m alive. On the

other hand, in ruchnius it is possible that everything can remain ‘above’ and doesn’t penetrate at all, that my Torah and mitzvos do not unite with and become part of my soul as the food becomes part of me. So I wish for myself ‘if only in ruchnius as in gashmius,’ that the holy matters of Torah penetrate within me and have an effect just like physical things affect the body.”

The basis for this Chassid’s words is what is said regarding the constant battle that a Jew has with the Evil Inclination. That evil force does not weaken as the

*His talmid asked,
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gashmius.”*

years go by. Even in adulthood and old age, the inclinations remain strong, since the Torah and mitzvos that a Jew does don’t become part of his essence and physical character like physical food, which drives the animal soul and Evil Inclination and becomes part of his body.

Chazal say in chapter four of Pirkei Avos, “jealousy, lust, and honor-seeking take a person out of the world,” and this is explained homiletically as pertaining to three stages of life:

In the early years, from infancy to childhood, there is

“jealousy,” where the child is envious of his friend. In the second stage of life, adulthood, which begins in the teenage years, there are “lusts” and negative drives. In the third stage of life, from adulthood to old age, even to advanced old age, there is the desire and pursuit of honor. The Evil Inclination continues to accompany a person throughout life, but in every stage he appears differently.

The Evil Inclination continues to accompany a person throughout life, but in every stage he appears differently.

This is what Chazal mean in chapter two of Avos when they say, “do not believe in yourself until the day you die.” A person cannot be certain of his spiritual future. Even someone who spends his life doing mitzvos b’hiddur has to be vigilant in order not to fall into the trap of the Evil Inclination. The moment he is off guard, the Evil Inclination will pounce on him and try to entrap him in sin.

ANESTHESIA – LOVE

Despite all the above, Hashem gave a Jew anesthesia with which to put the Evil Inclination to sleep so he can be more confident about remaining on the right path. The formula is “love and fear of Hashem.”

When a Jew is inspired to Ahavas Hashem, his entire being is suffused with love. A The Evil Inclination is asleep and inactive. It cannot bother him or try to entice him to sin.

This enormous power which lies in a Jew’s feelings for Hashem from the depths of his heart, like the feeling a child has for his father, temporarily paralyzes the forces of evil that are in man’s heart.

When he pours out his heart

to Hashem, when he says Shma or davens, the Evil Inclination is asleep. By the time it wakes up, he has managed to daven again and put it to sleep again. This is what the Alter Rebbe says in chapter 12 of Tanya, "On certain occasions, like when reciting Shma and t'filla ... the evil in the left ventricle is subservient and nullified to good." In chapter 13 he explains, "When love for Hashem is revealed in his heart ... the G-dly soul gains strength and ascendancy over the animal soul ... to engender an intense and flaming love for Hashem in the right part of the heart ... the evil is dormant ... for his heart burns with love for Hashem." (Nevertheless, the evil is merely quieted down but not transformed to good, for that takes place only with the tzaddik. That is why, "afterwards, it can be woken up again.")

GIVING THE BODY OVER TO K'DUSHA

The Rebbe found a source for

this in the Rambam (Hilchos Mechira), in halachos connected to the laws of sales and purchases brought in our parsha.

You can buy and sell anything on condition that it exists in the world, but something that does not yet exist, like fruit that a tree will produce but have not grown yet, cannot be bought or sold, because "a person does not bequeath something that did not come to the world." Yet, a person can sell the tree for its fruits, for since the tree exists in the world, the fruits that did not yet grow and come into the world can be bought.

"Man is a tree of the field." The "tree" is man himself, his abilities, intellect, emotions and power of action. The "fruits" are the thoughts, feelings and actions that he produces. Just as a tree produces fruit, so too man generates thoughts, speech, and actions.

Just as you cannot sell the fruit of a tree that do not yet exist, so too, we cannot determine how our thoughts and

deeds will appear in the future since they did not yet come into the world.

However, when a person sells and legally commits the tree itself, i.e. his very being and essence, then even the fruits that will eventually be produced are considered sold and legally belong to the purchaser. When a Jew gives his very self over to Hashem, he can be assured that all his deeds and thoughts will be for Hashem. And as we said, the way we sell our very beings to Hashem is through love and fear of Him, and as such we become connected to Him.

As the Rebbe concludes in *Likkutei Sichos*: By being occupied with the halachos of kinyan may we soon merit the fulfillment of the prophecy, "and on that day Hashem will collect ... to acquire the rest of His nation..." and with it, the third Beis HaMikdash, may it be built speedily in our day.

*Sources: Tanya and its commentaries,
Likkutei Sichos vol. 27 p. 176*

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WHEN THE TAX MAN COMES, AND FAITH IS TAXED

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

“Everything was going just fine without any disturbances, until one morning, I saw seven unwelcome guests at the entrance to my store – and they were not the seven ushpizin...” * Ariel Chadad, a Tzfas shopkeeper, saw the miraculous fulfillment of the bracha of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach.

It seems as if there isn't a resident of Tzfas who doesn't know the houseware and electrical appliance store in the center of town, at the end of Jerusalem Street. The owner, Mr. Ariel Chadad, is just as popular. He is known for his goodness and decency. He is a warmhearted and friendly Jew with an eternal smile on his lips. He often gives considerable discounts to customers who he feels may have difficulty in paying the full amount, even if it costs him his profit.

While virtually all Tzfas residents can testify to his kindheartedness, what most

people don't know is the amazing miracle story that he experienced in 5750. A bracha from the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, saved him from a dire financial situation that wiped the eternal smile off his face. But from the moment he stood before the Rebbe and received his holy blessing, everything changed.

“It all started a little more than twenty years ago,” Mr. Chadad began. “Before opening this store, I had a business selling a variety of large electrical appliances, such as refrigerators, freezers, and ovens. With G-d's help, I saw much blessing in the business. The financial returns

were more than reasonable and I made a good living. Everything was going just fine without any disturbances, until one morning, I saw seven unwelcome guests at the entrance to my store – and they were not the seven ushpizin...

“They were with the Israel Tax Authority, and they explained to me that every so often, they drop in on another business to get a ‘glimpse’ of the operations. And what a glimpse it was! They sat down to check over all the books, printouts, and receipts, reviewing everything since the day the business opened to see if there was any tax evasion and how much. Their visit threw me into a panic, because I feared that if they dug deep enough, they would almost certainly find something.

“The investigators sat for a whole day, checking every protocol and every document, down to the most insignificant. After a very aggravating and irritating day, they informed me that according to their examination, I owe them an amount that sounds incredible even in today's terms – three

million shekels! I felt as if my world had collapsed. As they left the store, I found myself alone with this terrible news.

"I went around for days afterwards in a state of confusion and bewilderment. A feeling of despair gnawed away at me. How could I possibly come up with such an astronomical sum of money? Even if I could get them to let me spread it out in installments for the rest of my life, I wouldn't be able to meet the payments. In the face of this oppressive debt, I had little motivation to continue working, leading to a sharp decline in sales. The authorities began ordering the confiscation of my bank accounts, one after another. I felt totally hopeless.

"One day, I found myself confiding this distressing situation to a chareidi customer. He assured me that there was someone who could rescue me from this hardship – the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He proceeded to recount numerous amazing miracle stories that had taken place as a result of the Rebbe's blessings. I had already heard about the Rebbe's greatness in the past, as had virtually every other Jew in the country. I decided that this might be a good idea, and surely would do no harm. Since I was in heavy debt anyway, another few thousand shekels for airline tickets wouldn't make much of a difference.

"He proceeded to suggest that I join one of the group trips to the Rebbe that Rabbi Aharon Eliezer Ceitlin, director-general of the Chabad Kindergarten Network in Tzfas, organizes. When I called Rabbi Ceitlin and asked him if I could join his upcoming trip, he told me that all the places have already been

filled. Refusing to give in, I urged him to do everything possible to secure me a place, as I am desperately in need of the Rebbe's bracha.

"One of my local customers with whom I am very closely acquainted is Rabbi Yosef HaKohen Rosenfeld, director of the Machon Alte Institute for baalos t'shuva. I asked him if he could speak to Rabbi Ceitlin about getting me a spot on this trip to the Rebbe. A few days later, Rabbi Ceitlin got back to me and said that several places had opened up. I quickly jumped at the opportunity, and arranged tickets for myself, my wife, my father, and two close friends. A few days later, we were on a plane en route to the Rebbe.

"I was very anxious on the flight, because I didn't know what to expect. I figured that if things

don't turn out the way I hoped, at least I can do some touring with my wife in the greater New York area.

"The tremendous apprehension was transformed into immense enthusiasm the moment we entered the Rebbe's beis midrash in 770. I was deeply impressed by the t'fillos, the chassidim, and the great holiness that the place radiated to all who passed through its doors. The local residents greeted us with warm hospitality, while I anxiously waited for the moment when I could meet the Rebbe.

"When the long awaited Sunday morning arrived, our group stood in a separate line. I watched from the side as each person quickly passed by the Rebbe, received a dollar, and then was immediately ushered out. I feared that I wouldn't be given



the chance to tell the Rebbe about the serious financial hardships I was enduring. I needn't have worried. As my turn before the Rebbe approached, I suddenly forgot everything I planned to say. My mind went blank, as I stood transfixed by the radiant countenance of the Rebbe. I had never seen anything like it in my life. The Rebbe's face shone as if he were an actual angel of G-d.

"I somehow managed a few broken sentences, briefly outlining to the Rebbe what had happened to me over the last few months. It seemed I had succeeded in arousing the sympathy of those around me, because unlike everyone who had preceded me, the pushing stopped for a moment so I could stay with the Rebbe a little while longer. The Rebbe listened to what I had to say. These were unquestionably the most important moments of my life.

"When I concluded the brief account of my distress, the Rebbe took two dollars and handed them to me, saying, 'One is for the old business, the second is for the new business. Blessing and success.'

"I walked outside totally confused. On the one hand, I understood that the Rebbe was a most unique individual, the likes of which I had never seen before, similar to the great tzaddikim we had always heard about in the annals of Jewish history. On the other hand, however, I didn't understand what the Rebbe meant. I had been hoping for some assistance or guidance, but instead I received two dollar bills.

"Suddenly, I was consumed by a feeling of emptiness. Everything I had envisioned had been realized, but without any sparks or revelation.

"After touring New York, the

group returned to Eretz Yisroel. When I arrived back in Tzfas, I received a call from the clerk at the tax offices with whom I had spoken before my trip. During that first conversation, I had explained the bitter situation that confronted me, stating that they were burying so deep in the ground that even if they would cut the amount due in half, it would simply leave me buried six feet under as opposed to twelve. Now he was calling to ask that I come urgently to the tax offices downtown. 'Ariel, you won the lottery,' he yelled through the

***The authorities
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I felt totally
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receiver.

"Confused, I made my way to the tax offices, which by now I already knew how to find without asking – after all the running around of the past few months, I felt as if I lived there. As soon as I came in, he told me that the commissioner himself had gotten involved in my case and reduced the amount due from 3,000,000 to 150,000 shekels!! His words didn't fully sink in, and I automatically responded, 'That's still a lot...'

"My unreasonable response could only have been Hashem placing the words in my mouth. He looked at me like I was crazy. 'Ariel,' he told me, 'sell the store

and finish off the debt. Don't you understand that they made allowances for you here in a way that they wouldn't do for anyone else?' Yet, I irrationally persisted (here too I have no idea where I got up the nerve to say this), 'And what about my returns?' I immediately regretted my audacity, but the words had already passed my lips.

"To my great surprise, he showed no resentment over the nature of my complaint, and he started typing data into his computer. After a few anxious moments, he exclaimed, 'Wow, Ariel – you're a hundred percent right!' I was initially startled, and feared that now he would cancel the whole agreement and go back to what it was at the outset – three million shekels. Imagine how shocked I was to hear that in fact, the tax authorities owed me sixty thousand shekels in returns from my work with one of my customers. I had sent them the form long ago, but I had completely forgotten about it.

"At that moment, I made the obvious connection to the bracha I had received from the Rebbe. My debt had been reduced to a mere fraction - from three million shekels I just owed ninety thousand! I was literally trembling. I told him that even this reduced amount, I couldn't pay in one lump sum, and I asked that he arrange installments over a period of one year. At the end of the year, I would pay the balance due. He agreed, and when he received the head commissioner's approval, we signed an agreement.

"I went around in a very excited and emotional state. The Rebbe's bracha had melted the wall of opposition that had previously met all of my pleas before the income tax officials . I

couldn't believe how this had been made possible. It was a tremendous miracle.

"I started making the monthly payments, as per the agreement. When it came to the last installment, in the amount of twenty thousand shekels, I encountered a problem. All my efforts to gather the necessary funds went for naught, and I was afraid that this might jeopardize the whole agreement.

"My concerns were intensified when I approached the clerk at the income tax authority about the difficulties I was facing in arranging the money for the last payment. He told me in the clearest possible terms that if I don't succeed in bringing the required funds to the tax offices as scheduled, the entire signed agreement would be rendered null and void, and everything would revert back to what applied at the outset. He was extremely stubborn, and all my attempts to speak to his heart and explain my situation were to no avail. There were only a few days left to try and raise this amount before the deadline. I paced like a caged animal, crying out from the depths of my soul, 'From where will my help come?' Yet, thanks to the bracha I had received from the Rebbe, the help came.

"I love to give assistance to elderly Jews – coming to their homes to repair their electrical appliances, talking with them,

and most important, listening to them. Thus when a certain elderly Jew asked me to come to his house and fix his broken radio, I put aside my troubles and obliged. When I entered his home, he questioned me about my uncharacteristically crestfallen expression, but I didn't feel comfortable burdening him with my problems. Yet, he was determined to find out.

"Eventually, I responded to his persistent urging and told him everything. When he heard that the matter was connected with the tax collectors, he inquired, 'Who's the one that's bothering you there?' I was surprised by the question, but answered it nonetheless. When he heard the name, he asked me to call the clerk and then hand him the phone. I didn't understand what he wanted, but I was so confused, I simply did as he asked. Suddenly, I hear him issuing an order over the phone: 'Yaakov, this is your uncle speaking. I am asking you to do whatever Ariel Chadad tells you!'"...

"I was stunned. I never dreamed that my salvation would come from this elderly Jew that I had come to help. At that very moment, I felt how the Rebbe's bracha was accompanying me every step of the way. As soon as I completed the repair job, I went to the income tax offices. Yaakov was suddenly far more conciliatory. Representing me

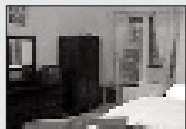
before the chief supervisor, he requested permission to arrange the payment of the outstanding balance through another series of installments. The request was granted, and the final twenty thousand shekels were subsequently paid off...

"But that wasn't all. It was around this time that the Rebbe's second dollar and his blessing 'for the old business, [and] for the new business' were clarified. I decided to open a new business selling houseware items, and to give up the previous business with electrical appliances. The new store started to thrive, sales were soaring with amazing results, and I felt that everything had re-opened for me with greater fortitude.

"The Rebbe's bracha had raised me to heights that I never believed possible to attain. There were times that I would order merchandise, and everything would be sold before it even got to the store..."

Ariel Chadad concluded his story with deep emotion: "You can tell me a million stories, but this story I experienced for myself. I was impressed by the Rebbe's holy appearance and noble character, but, my great transgressions kept me from realizing how one minute in his presence, two dollars and a bracha, could miraculously turn the wheel in the opposite direction."

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LEARNING ‘BEIS RABBEINU’ IN 3 MINUTES

By S. Malachi

A few meters from the busy Rechov Rothschild in Rishon L'Tziyon is a Kollel founded by the rav of the community, shliach Rabbi Mordechai Tzvi Dubrawsky. Over the years, the Kollel has become much more than a place where married men learn Torah. Does someone want to learn Torah? In the Kollel he'll find the right atmosphere and a chavrusa. You have a bar mitzva boy? The Kollel minyan is a terrific place to celebrate. Some people even turn to the Kollel members to vanquish spells and other negative things.

THE STRAIGHT AND EASY WAY

Even those who don't walk into the Kollel don't lose out. Most of the men, of their own initiative, utilize their afternoon break for mitzva t'fillin on the neighboring streets.

Dan, a member of the Kollel, relates:

"One of the people I met in the nearby business district turned out to be a warm person who took an interest in Judaism. We spoke for a few minutes every day and I wondered how we

could make better use of the time.

"I heard a story of a Tamim who learned all of Shulchan Aruch in five minutes. How? His chavrusa was always five minutes late and by using this time to study Shulchan Aruch, and he completed it two years later. Taking my inspiration from him, I began learning kuntres "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel" with this man, which talks about the greatness of 'Beis Moshiach'-770 and addresses fundamental topics like the Nasi HaDor and the Geula."

The two men learned one paragraph every day, sometimes even less. Almost every line in the kuntres is a quote from the Gemara or other sources and requires explanation. For two months they learned the sicha in depth. When they finished it, the man had learned numerous concepts and ideas.

Dan highly recommends this approach:

"Every Chassid who goes on mitzvaim generally has regular 'customers.' In a few minutes of learning after putting on t'fillin, you can bring him into the world of Chassidus, to live with inyanei

Moshiach and Geula and bring about the hisgalus in a 'straight and easy' way, as the Rebbe has said."

The men in the Kollel decided to deepen their connection with the businessmen they met and started a Chassidus shiur in the business section on Tuesdays, when stores are closed at eight o'clock. One of the members of the Kollel gives the shiur and the store owners, led by the fellow who learned Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel, love it and bring along more and more businessmen from the area. Sometimes one can forget that this is a shiur for working men after a hard day of work.

ONE GOOD DEED LEADS TO ANOTHER

Every so often, the Kollel men see the tremendous impact of putting on t'fillin. One of the men would put t'fillin on with a security guard. One day the security guard told him that he brought his own t'fillin from home and had started putting them on every day. Not only that, but this security guard soon began asking the people who came to his building to put on t'fillin as well!

Another Kollel man tells of a major change that took place at the home of a well-to-do businessman, one of the leaders of the Caucasian community in Eretz Yisroel, as a result of putting on t'fillin.

"The boy would watch how his father put on t'fillin and ask questions. At a certain point, the father asked me to start learning with his son. We bought s'farim in Russian for the father and in Ivrit for the son. We put a beautiful pushka in the home and the atmosphere there changed from one extreme to another."

Tommy from the restaurant never agreed to put on t'fillin. He is an older man who grew up in a Chassidic town but his life experiences distanced him from his roots. The Kollel fellow continued to visit him every afternoon and one day it happened. Tommy himself asked to put on t'fillin! It turned out that he wanted to refresh his skills in putting on t'fillin before his grandson's upcoming bar mitzva so as not to be embarrassed in shul.

UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN TREASURE

The men of the Kollel themselves don't think that their going out on mivtzaim every day during their short break is worthy of note.

"As Lubavitchers, focusing on our personal business, even if it's holy business, isn't enough. We were raised with the obligation to get involved with others."

For those who are wondering how they have the time and energy to go out on mivtzaim,

Dan explains:

"It's specifically now, when he doesn't have regular mivtzaim on Friday and all the other yeshiva activities, that a Kollel man who is busy with his learning and his family responsibilities has to get out and spread the wellsprings. It's only on mivtzaim that you get to truly appreciate the sichos. When you learn one sicha after another, it results in adding to your Chassidic data base, but when you take it 'out' with you, then you really feel that you have a treasure. You see the real power of Toraso shel Moshiach.

"We are assured by the Alter Rebbe that through tz'daka, our minds and hearts become refined a thousand times over. What it says in *Torah Ohr* is not metaphorical but is meant literally, that you will succeed in your learning a thousand times over. Obviously, then, it doesn't take away from your learning; on the contrary, you benefit by reaching out to others so that the learning you do in a short time will be done with heavenly assistance."

Rabbi Mordechai Tzvi Dubrawsky



“I don’t have to convince people to learn Torah. I just have to tell them that there is an opportunity here to sit and learn and they come. There is a tremendous interest in Torah study.”

LEARNING WITH CHAVRUSAS

It is nine in the evening on an ordinary Thursday at Rechov Nordau 6, Rishon L’Tziyon. In the shul sits an interesting mix of working men and boys, who learn b’chavrusa with the men in the Kollel.

Chezi sits with Sholom Ber in front of a big Gemara and listens intently, his eyes sparkling with enjoyment. The effort is apparent on his face; he did not grow up with Abayei and Rava. At a nearby table sits Chezi’s father, who is enjoying learning a sicha with Menachem. Next to them sits Roni, who never misses a shiur with Nachum, and there is also Michoel, a news producer whose ingrained habit of writing everything down includes the Tanya lessons with his chavrusa.

The official subject is the tractate P’sachim, but some choose to learn sichos, Tanya or Tanach. In the last half hour R’ Dubrawsky gives a fascinating shiur on the material learned in

P’sachim. The shiur combines delving into the topic with the commentaries as well as arriving at the practical Halacha as it appears in Shulchan Aruch HaRav.

NO CONVINCING NECESSARY

The man behind the successful program is Nachum Rabinowitz. He’s a quiet, modest person. Every Thursday he leads the band, arranges chavrusas, organizes transportation, makes copies of material that will be studied, and provides refreshments (some people arrive straight from work).

“All along we have seen

amazing hashgacha pratis in the arranging of the shiur, in bringing in Kollel men, and all the other details.”

When you ask him how he gets people to come, he says, “I don’t have to convince people to learn Torah. I just have to tell them that there is an opportunity here to sit and learn and they come. There is a tremendous interest in Torah study.”

But it’s not so simple. In order to get the project underway, efforts had to be made:

“Most of the people said they already have a shiur somewhere else. I would call people one by one and convince, explain, and remind them to come. The first week, people felt they were doing

KOLLEL MISHKAN MENACHEM

When Rabbi Mordechai Tzvi Dubrawsky arrived in Rishon L’Tziyon, he worked hard to start a Kollel l’Horaa. Rabbi Dubrawsky, one of the Rebbe’s shluchim to Eretz Yisroel from the 70’s, considers the Kollel a way of developing a Chabad community and a focal point which encourages young people to join the community.

When I asked him when he had the idea of turning the Kollel into a means of outreach, he unhesitatingly answered, “As soon as I thought of starting the Kollel.”

“As soon as I came to Rishon L’Tziyon as a rav, I wanted to open a Kollel with the intention that it would enable the Chabad community to grow. The Kollel attracts young people here, bringing new blood into the community. The Kollel, with a reputation for learning on a high level, is mekadash sheim Shamayim and brings honor to the Rebbe.

“At first I was busy establishing the Kollel, but my desire that it be a center of influence was always with me. This is why I encourage the Kollel men to go out on mitzvaim and have them learn Chassidus in the morning with the people who come to daven.

“This year we started the weekly learning with a chavrusa project which is organized by Nachum Rabinowitz. We started with five people and today we have almost thirty participants.

“The learning creates a Torah atmosphere for the k’hilla. It unites the mekuravim and those Jews who initially showed up just for davening. Now they too are part of the k’hilla. I hope that the program expands and we can do it on additional days of the week too.”

me a favor by coming, but a group has slowly developed of people who choose to come to us to learn together with the Chassidic young men.”

OBLIGATION AND PRIVILEGE

Nachum mentions the devotion of the Kollel men who come every week to learn.

“After sitting and learning all day, it’s not always easy to come in the evening for another hour and a half. It’s also a sacrifice for their wives, who allow their husbands to go.”

In conclusion Nachum says, “It’s a shame that this is something that is not discussed with young married men. People talk about going on shlichus and establishing a Chabad house, but not about a man who lives in a k’hilla and learns in Kollel or works, that he too must be involved in mitvzaim.”

WHAT LEARNING AND A FARBRENGEN CAN ACCOMPLISH

One of the Kollel men relates: “At a certain point I would learn Chassidus in the morning with a thirty year old mekurav to Chabad who had not yet found his shidduch. One morning he told me that he had opened to a



Learning b’chavrusa

letter in the Igros Kodesh about wearing tzitzis throughout the day. He admitted that he found it difficult to wear tzitzis all day.

“We spoke about this and then went on to learn a maamer from 5672 about the *Ohr Ein Sof*. Suddenly, with no apparent connection, the Rebbe Rashab says that a tallis alludes to the *ohr makif* and the threads allude to the *ohr p’nimi*. After opening to that letter from the Rebbe, this convinced the bachur to wear tzitzis. Within a short time he became engaged.

“On Rosh Chodesh Kislev, a

farbrengen with Rabbi Moshe Naparstek was organized by Rabbi Mendy Dubrawsky in the shul. The farbrengen took place right after the night Kollel and some of the people who learned there joined in. Towards the end of the farbrengen the participants raised their cups and wished one of the businessmen success in his business.

“A week later he came over to me and said excitedly – I had work nonstop this week. I saw how the bracha at the farbrengen was fulfilled.”



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THE BEATING OF SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES

(Sicha of Mishpatim 5752)

Translation and Commentary by Alexander Zushe Kohn. First Installment.

This past Shabbos, Parshas Emor, 5769, marked 17 years since the final of three consecutive talks delivered by the Rebbe on the inner meaning of *galus* and *geula*. A recurring theme in those talks is the great importance of studying Torah in general and Chassidus in particular, especially the subject of Moshiach and Geula. Alas, many of the Rebbe's own innovative contributions to the field of Moshiach and Geula, because they appeared in Yiddish or Lashon Kadosh, and in a very concise format, for a long time remained inaccessible, or unclear to many of *Anash*. But a few years ago, *Studies In Moshiach* began to change the status-quo with its release of *The Holy Temple In Transit*, a bi-lingual, elucidated edition of *Kuntres Beis Rabbeinu ShebeBavel* and the first in a series of similar books aimed at bringing the Rebbe's profound insights on the subject of Moshiach and Geula to a wider audience. In conjunction with *Studies In Moshiach*, *Beis Moshiach Magazine* is now pleased to be able to bring you the first draft of *The Beating of Swords into Plowshares*, an elucidated edition of the Rebbe's public address of *Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5752* and the second book in this extraordinary series.

those nations that during the Exile host the majority of the Jewish people and their main infrastructure²), contain comprehensive and fundamental instructions for Man in his worship of the Creator.

Foremost among such events today is one that occurred this past *Erev Shabbos*³: leaders of powerful and important nations gathered together and convened. They reached a decision and made a declaration regarding [the commencement of] a new era in international relations—one characterized by the elimination of wars between nations around the world. Armaments would be reduced and eliminated, and ultimately, [there would be] peace, unity, and friendly relations [between nations], for the benefit of all of humanity.

The reference is to the U.N. summit meeting (the first ever held) of January 31, 1992, at which world leaders, including U.S. President, George H.W. Bush, and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, discussed the

threat that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction constituted to international peace and security. Resolutions calling for the reduction and eventual elimination of such weapons were passed, including a Joint Statement by the United States and Russia, stating that "Russia and the United States do not regard each other as potential adversaries" and that

CHAPTER 1: A SHIFT IN ATTITUDE

It is common knowledge¹ that Divine providence guides all the events that transpire in this world, and that they all contain lessons and instructions to Man in his worship of the Creator. Accordingly, events of major significance, involving powerful and important nations of great influence and leadership in the world (namely,

“we will work to remove any remnants of cold war hostility, including taking steps to reduce our strategic arsenals.”

(By Divine providence), this event was preceded by a national address delivered (on the eve of Wednesday, when the lead-up to Shabbos begins^{4 5}) by the President of the United States, in which he informed the people of this nation of his work in reducing and eliminating armaments, and of the redirecting of funds heretofore used in the development and production of armaments toward the nation’s economic needs. The President’s remarks were approved by the House of Representatives, where the laws of the nation (which the Torah regards as binding⁶) are legislated.

This is referring to the State of the Union Address of January 29, 1992, at which President George H.W. Bush said the following:

“Reduction of Military. Two years ago, I began planning cuts in military spending that reflected the changes of the new era. But now, this year, with imperial Communism gone, that process can be accelerated. Tonight I can tell you of dramatic changes in our strategic nuclear force. These are actions we are taking on our own, because they are the right thing to do.

After completing 20 planes for which we have begun procurement, we will shut down further production of the B-2 bomber. We will cancel the small I.C.B.M. program. We will cease production of new warheads for our sea-based ballistic missiles. We will stop all new production of the Peacekeeper missile. And we will not purchase any more advanced cruise missiles.

This weekend I will meet at Camp David with Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation. I have informed President Yeltsin that if the commonwealth, the former Soviet Union, will eliminate all land-based multiple-warhead ballistic missiles, I will do the following:

We will eliminate all Peacekeeper missiles. We will reduce the number of warheads on Minuteman missiles to one and reduce the number of warheads on our sea-based missiles by about one-third. And we will convert a substantial portion of our strategic bombers to primarily conventional use.”

Let us now reflect on the lessons and instructions to

be gleaned from both the general event as well as some of the more specific details, such as the time and place [of its occurrence], and the Torah portion^{7 8} [studied and read] at that time.

CHAPTER 2: THE SOURCE OF CHANGE

The lesson and instruction to be derived from this event concerns a comprehensive and fundamental aspect of the Jewish people’s divine service (“our deeds and our service throughout the duration of exile”⁹)—the “bringing [of] the days of Moshiach.”¹⁰

One of the prophecies concerning the true and complete messianic redemption as it relates to the nations of the world is that “they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift sword against nation, nor will they learn warfare anymore.”¹¹

This state of affairs will be brought about by King Moshiach himself, as stated in the beginning of the aforementioned verse—“He will judge between the peoples, and he will reproach many nations.”¹² (*Redak*¹³ explains that “the judge is King Moshiach...who will be the lord of all the nations. He will reproach them. He will say to the guilty party, ‘Correct the injustice’.... As a result, there will be no war among nations, for he will make peace among them. They will therefore not need armaments; they will beat them so as to make agricultural tools from them.”)

[A prophecy gives us some context for the influence of Moshiach on the nations]:

“At the end of days, the mountain of the Temple of G-d will be firmly established...all the peoples will stream to it. Many nations will go and say, ‘Come, let us ascend to the mountain of G-d, to the Temple of the G-d of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths.’ For the Torah shall go forth from Zion, and the word of G-d from Jerusalem.”¹⁴

[*Redak*¹⁵ links Moshiach’s teaching of the nations to his reproaching of them]:

“The teacher is King Moshiach, and it is in reference to him that the [subsequent verse] says, ‘He will judge.’”

Since world leaders are currently making decisions and declarations concerning the reduction and elimination of armaments, and the redirecting of



resources designated for armaments toward increases in matters relating to the economic conditions of their respective countries, and indeed, the economic condition of the entire world—

—this being the essence of, “*They shall beat their swords into plowshares*”—that the [nations] will break their weapons in order to turn them into tools that are used in the production of food¹⁶—

—it is a clear sign that *the fulfillment of the [aforementioned prophetic] promise*¹⁷ in the true and complete redemption *has begun*.¹⁸

To explain this further:

In the current era, the [activity] of the messianic forces at play has reached a crescendo,¹⁹ in the spirit of the verse—“Behold this one (the King Moshiach) cometh.”²⁰ As such, we have begun to see (a semblance and) a beginning of *King Moshiach’s effect on the nations*²¹—[that is, a semblance and a beginning of the fulfillment of the verse] “He will judge between the peoples, and he will reproach many nations, and they will beat their swords into plowshares.” This has come in the form of the idea G-d put into the hearts of the world leaders (“The hearts of kings are in the hand of G-d”²²) to arrive at a unanimous decision and make a joint declaration concerning the beating of swords into plowshares.

[To reiterate]: The reason the abovementioned gathering of world leaders—at which was made this decision and declaration—took place in the current era, is because of this era’s unique connection to the coming of the true and complete messianic redemption.

[To be continued be”H]

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NOTES:

¹ See *Kesser Shem Tov*, *hosafos*, *sif-katan* 19.

² Indeed, it is because they host the majority and main infrastructure of the Jewish people that these nations have become great and important. “As is known, [the stature of] any nation and kingdom in which the Jewish people reside during exile... rises above that of all the other nations, and continues to rise as long as the Jewish people remain there. “(*Toras Chaim*, *Lech Lecha* 92a. See also *Mechilta*, *B’Shalach* 14:5)

³ Erev Shabbos is connected to Shabbos, as in the Talmudic

adage, “He who toils on Erev Shabbos will eat on Shabbos.” (See also below, note _ (31)).

⁴ *P’sachim* 106, end of side a.

⁵ As underscored also in the fact that the daily psalm concludes with the “minor *Lechu Neranena*” (*HaYom Yom* 23 Kislev, and elsewhere).

⁶ “The law of the kingdom is law”—*Gittin* 10b, and cross-references there.

⁷ All phenomena originate in *the Torah*, as the Zohar says (Vol. II, 161, beginning of side b): “The Holy One blessed be He peered into the Torah and created the world.” More specifically, a particular phenomenon originates in the Torah portion corresponding to the time its occurrence.

⁸ In accordance with the Alter Rebbe teaching: “One must live with the times”—with the inner content of the weekly Torah portion (*HaYom Yom*, 2 Cheshvan; other).

⁹ *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

¹⁰ Talmudic terminology—Mishna, *Brachos*, end of chapter 1.

¹¹ Isaiah 2:4; Mica 4:3

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ad loc.

¹⁴ Isaiah, *ibid*:2-3; Mica *ibid*:1-2.

¹⁵ *Redak* *ibid*.

¹⁶ Not only food *necessary* for human survival, such as bread, but also items of pleasure, such as fruit. This is indicated by the latter part of the verse—“*And their spears into pruning hooks*”—which refers to “tools used for pruning vines and other trees” (*Redak*).

¹⁷ Italics in Hebrew original.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ A word-for-word translation of the Hebrew original would yield, “We find ourselves at the highest moment of the coming of Moshiach.”

Note the connection to [Tu B’Shvat], the “*Rosh HaShana* of the Trees,” which has just passed. In representing the fruits—*Tu B’Shvat* underscores the addition of *pleasurable* items—“the grape, date and pomegranate...flowing with [olive] oil and honey,” to necessary items—“wheat and barley.”

²⁰ Song of Songs 2:8; *Midrash Rabba* on verse.

²¹ See footnote _ (17).

²² A common expression; based on Proverbs 21:1. See also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 13, p. 285, footnote 1, marginal footnotes, and cross-references ad loc.

FRESH FACES IN THE JUNGLES OF BOLIVIA

Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim

*At the end of April, Bolivian police raided a Chabad House in the small vacation town of Rurrenbaque, a popular tourist site for Israeli backpackers, and ordered that it remain closed until further notice. * Beis Moshiach interviewed the shluchim who live on the edge of the jungles of Bolivia.*

It was just a few weeks ago that Bolivian police raided the one storey building of the Chabad House in the small vacation town of Rurrenbaque, Bolivia, a popular tourist site for Israeli backpackers, and ordered that it remain closed until further notice. The raid was a complete surprise to the shliach, R' Aharon Freiman.

Policemen later explained that the raid had to do with the suspicion that tourists were behind an assassination attempt on the Bolivian president, Evo Morales.

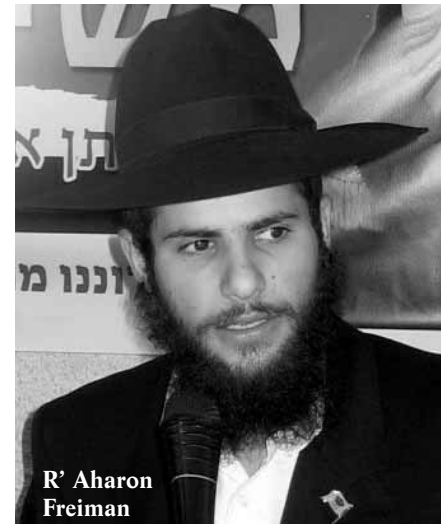
They would have arrested the shliach too, but lawyers who represent the Chabad House intervened.

One of the people arrested was a bachur who just ended a three

month stint there and was on his way to New York. He was arrested in the airport and had to sit in jail for nearly thirty hours. Thanks to the direct involvement of the Canadian embassy, the Jewish community, and the central Chabad House of Bolivia in La Paz, he was saved from having to spend Shabbos in a cell.

News of the raid quickly spread throughout the Jewish world via the Internet and the story was picked up by dozens of media outlets.

The Jewish Congress of South America used their diplomatic ties to reach the highest echelons in the Bolivian government. This included a phone conversation with the president, Morales, which made him realize his error



R' Aharon Freiman

and express his apologies.

I spoke to Aharon (Arale) Freiman and his wife Sarah, who told me about their work and the recent events

What's happening now?

"The Chabad House remains closed by government order, but we are continuing with our shlichus. We held Shabbos meals nearby with about seventy Israelis who are touring here."

What's the atmosphere like?

"Like every Shabbos. Lots of l'chaim. The chevra feel even closer because of the raid."

How have Israeli tourists reacted?

"Some keep their distance because they're afraid that the police will come again, but most

of them identify with us and even offer their help more than usual. Many of them said, 'If you need help in any way, we are here. What you tell us to do, we'll do.'"

Why was the Chabad House closed? What did they suspect?

"At first they said that the authorities suspected that these tourists were behind an assassination attempt. The Israeli embassy told us that they haven't approved visas for many tourists.

"But that's not the real reason for what happened. They simply want us out of here. We have all the necessary papers and permits, but they want to scare us or embarrass us to get us to leave. In Rurrenbaque lives an anti-Semite

by the name of Miguel who runs a restaurant called Camilla. He is angry that the Israelis eat by us and don't go to his restaurant.

"Fortunately, the tourists prefer kosher food over the restaurants around here. Miguel has connections with people in the government and pays bribes in the right places. It is he who is behind this persecution against us."

What are you going to do about it?

"At the moment, the Chabad House is closed and we are checking out other options. We are still unsure. We have to use local lawyers which costs a fortune and we don't have the money. We are also trying to work

with the municipality and other authorities that may be able to help. Many locals who love the Chabad House reach out to help as well."

SO VERY FAR

Rurrenbaque is a small village that is a perilous eighteen hour drive north of La Paz. Only 15,000 or so people live in the village. The climate is generally warm and it's a first class tourist area because of the jungles in the area. Rurrenbaque is surrounded by endless jungles that are incredibly beautiful and pristine.

Below: Birkas HaChama in Rurrenbaque



We were in agreement that if the Rebbe said to go, we were going. Just like years ago, when the Rebbe told someone to go, he went without asking questions.



R' Freiman at the entrance to the Chabad House with Bolivian security forces.

The village is a thoroughfare for a steady stream of tourists who come to see the famous Amazon rainforests, as well as the Pampas River, which is a breeding ground for anacondas, lizards, dolphins, monkeys and assorted other forms of wildlife.

Many tourists travel from La Paz to Rurrenbaque by plane. The tiny airport is nothing but a field. Powerful rains often turn the area into mud, preventing planes from landing.

The alternative to flying is the eighteen hour drive by bus, crowded with locals. The bus takes the El Camino de la Muerte (Road of Death), known as the world's most dangerous road. Because of the extreme drops (4700 meters to 1800 meters), single-lane width, and lack of guardrails, the road is extremely dangerous. On top of that, rain and fog reduce visibility, muddy the road, and loosen rocks from the hillsides above. About 100 people are killed annually on this road, some of whom are Israeli tourists.

Rurrenbaque boasts hotels for tourists, Indian reservations and

in the thick of the jungle there is even a village of "Subbotniks" who claim Jewish ancestry. They come occasionally to the Chabad House for Jewish calendars and the like.

Arele and Sarale Freiman came here about three months ago to open a Chabad House. They arrived on a Friday and immediately began preparing Shabbos for the tourists. Their base was established by Shuki Gur, who lived there the year before. He is the one who urged them to come there on shlichus.

"We had many options for shlichus, and every time we wrote to the Rebbe we did not open to a clear answer. When Shuki suggested we open a Chabad House, we wrote to the Rebbe and the answer was a blessing for success in educating young people and also dealt with the topic of traveling to spread Judaism. We considered this a positive answer and were on our way."

Didn't you want to check it out first?

No. We were in agreement that if the Rebbe said to go, we were going. Just like years ago, when

the Rebbe told someone to go, he went without asking questions.

What did you find when you arrived?

It was extremely hot and humid. The tourist season had not yet begun and only a few tourists were there. The Chabad House was in a deserted and overgrown place. Shuki helped us get on our feet.

How did you prepare for Shabbos?

Out of nothing. You probably figured out that there is no kosher food here. We bake our own bread. Sometimes, my wife makes it herself and other times she is helped by the tourists or a French baker who lives here likes us and our work. We milk cows in a barn that is a twenty minute drive away. We make our own wine. I cook raisins and make delicious wine.

We are more organized now and most of our food consists of rice, lots of vegetables, potatoes, and fruits. It's a tropical region and there are all kinds of tropical fruit. My wife knows how to make everything out of nothing...

The Freimans quickly learned that even something as basic as electricity is not a given.

The electricity in the village is produced by generators and it's very expensive. They try to use gas for the oven and burners as much as possible.

Immediately after Shabbos they looked for another location for the Chabad House. They found a spacious one-storey building and fixed it up. They turned the roof into a nice sitting area from where you can view the magnificent scenery.

"The Chabad House is busy. People come and do as they like. If they want to eat, they eat. If the atmosphere is right, they sit down to a shiur or farbrengen. It's all spontaneous."

What is your daily schedule?

I get up at eight o'clock and go put on t'fillin with Israelis. I start in the travel agencies where there are always Israeli tourists. Many of them have just arrived. Then I go to the hotels. Sometimes a few chevra will accompany to immerse in the river and then to Shacharis.

Around noon, the tourists start showing up at the Chabad House. They eat, talk, and learn together or separately. Many of them want to write to the Rebbe. The Chabad House is just that, a house. There are many "corners" for learning, talking, relaxing, writing to the Rebbe, etc. People feel at home here. Since Rurrenbaque is basically just a gateway to the jungle and there isn't much to do in the village, there are some who spend their whole time here in the Chabad House.

The work here is nonstop, yet the only scheduled activity is supper. It begins at eight and is followed by a Tanya shiur. The discussion that follows extends well into the night. We talk about

Jewish issues, clarify matters having to do with the neshama, and some write to the Rebbe. My day usually ends at three in the morning.

Many people watch videos of the Rebbe. They really enjoy it. Some of them can sit and watch for hours. It definitely has a big impact on them.

Every Shabbos we have a sort of Tahalucha along the nearby river. As we walk we talk about Judaism, but mainly we bond, which then allows us to share messages about Judaism and Chassidus.

WRITING TO THE REBBE

Writing to the Rebbe and hiskashrus through writing are an important part of their activities. The stories of powerful answers and amazing miracles get around and every tourist wants to write to the Rebbe. Before they write, they

make a practical commitment. Recently, two people committed to learning Chitas every day, one decided to put on t'fillin daily, and one committed to lighting candles every week. Another committed to keeping Shabbos.

"He had written to the Rebbe about a number of problems. Before writing he made a positive resolution to be careful to say brachos before and after eating. He wrote to the Rebbe and the answer was about the necessity to keep Shabbos. I was reluctant to tell him that, since he had just made a nice resolution. I hesitated for a moment and then decided that if this is what the Rebbe said, it was up to me to read it and explain the letter.

"The guy said, 'Up until two years ago I kept Shabbos but since I went traveling I stopped keeping it. Now the Rebbe is "giving it to me" and telling me that all the problems I've been experiencing are because I



R' Freiman putting t'fillin on with an Israeli tourist

stopped keeping Shabbos. It all started when I stopped keeping Shabbos...' After some internal struggle, he finally resolved to keep Shabbos.

"I was very moved because going off on shlichus is no light decision, especially in places like these. Nonetheless, the Rebbe answered us and he knows our capabilities.

"There was another fellow who wrote to the Rebbe about his girlfriend, wondering whether to marry her. I don't know precisely what the Rebbe wrote, but he suddenly jumped up, all excited. 'The Rebbe mentions her name, Ilana!' he exclaimed, and he showed me the words, '*ilana d'chayai*.'"

UNDER DIFFICULT CONDITIONS

Bolivia is six hours earlier than

Israel. We began our interview at 4:30 in the morning local time and I could hear a rooster crowing in the background. The Freimans had not yet gone to sleep.

Arele and Sarah are very young. Many people ask her how she dared to undertake a permanent shlichus in such a distant and difficult place. The shlucha is not just responsible for meals. She sits with the female tourists and talks to them. They connect with her and are then willing to commit to lighting candles or other mitzvos. She sometimes discusses the laws of family purity, laws that are often left far behind when traveling.

In Rurrenbaque this is especially challenging, as there is no mikva in the area. "We found a live spring in a place called Chetauba. In order to get there you have to take a boat ride from Rurrenbaque. There's a rooming

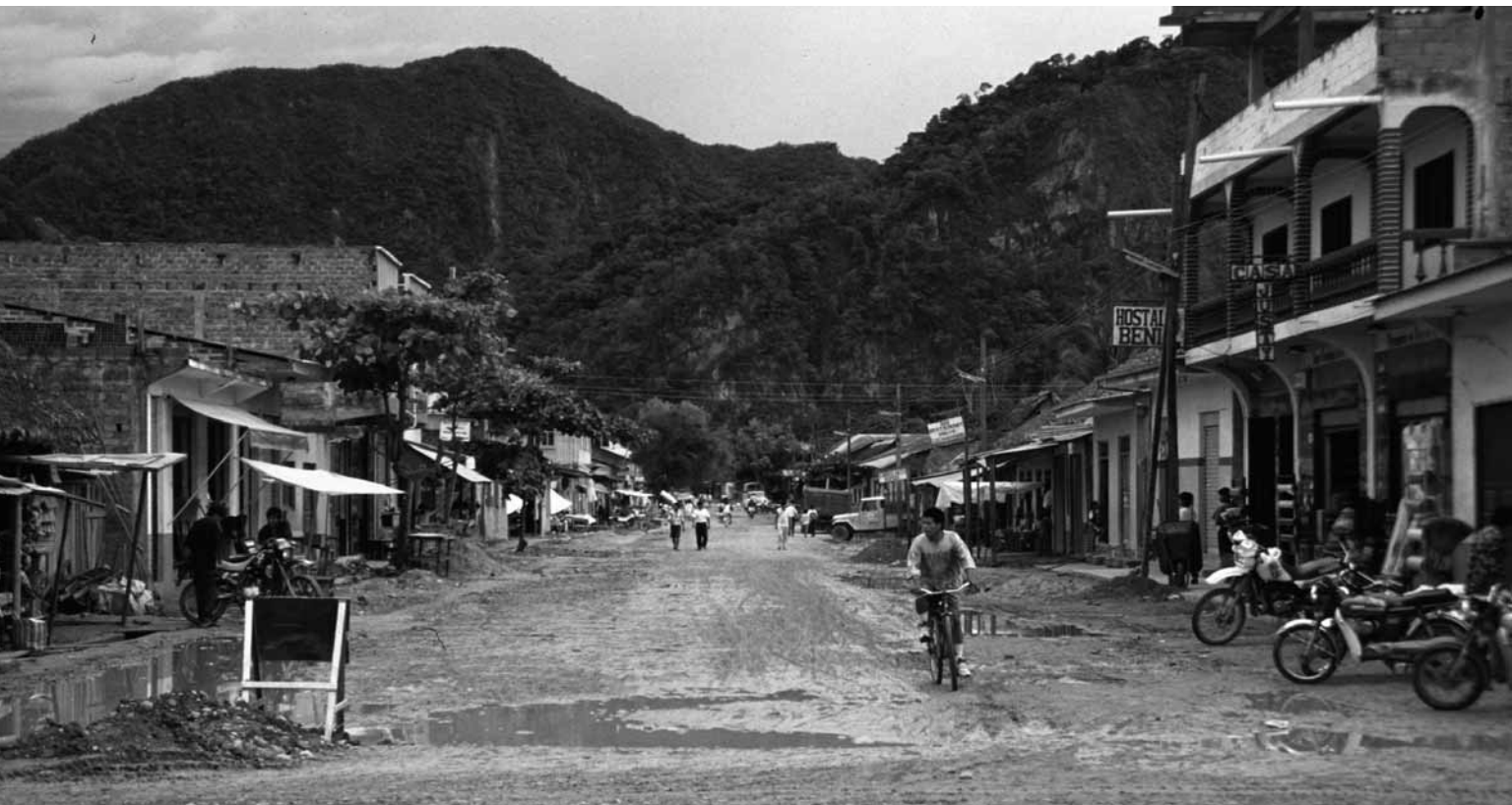
house connected to the spring, and there you can immerse in the very cold water. At night it's pitch black. It takes mesirus nefesh."

The shlucha worked hard preparing Pesach for about 200 people with the help of the tourists. "We have no budget for cooks," she jokes. Two bachurim helped with the Seder, which was held in a local club and lasted until two in the morning.

"There's a lot of work to be done with Israelis who consort with non-Jewish women. We focus on this. We generally speak directly to the women and explain to them that it's not in their best interest to be with Jews because this has a negative impact from a spiritual standpoint. The locals don't want to mess with G-dly forces and they drop their Jewish boyfriends. Many couples have broken up this way."

How do you think things will work out now?

Below: A typical road in Rurrenbaque



Things will work out with siyata d'Shmaya and the Rebbe's bracha. We are not afraid because we are here legally. Just the day before, we were at the local office of the Interior Ministry and we showed all our papers and everything was in order. We are working on various possibilities to re-open the Chabad House. We are going to do all we can to continue our shlichus here.

Since this news item was publicized on Chabad.info we have been contacted by dozens of Lubavitchers, families of tourists, and Jewish organizations who expressed their willingness to help us reopen.



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AMRAM'S SONGS OF ASCENT

By Sholom Dovber Crombie

The name Amram Muell is known to thousands of Jews in Eretz Yisroel and the Far East. He directs evenings of Jewish meditation with Chassidic music and his lectures on numerous topics offer a sound response to the secular New Age philosophy without being condescending. The lectures and programs he presents are of high quality and they enable a broad public to connect to Chassidic concepts. His remarkable acting skills complement his novel outreach approach.

R' Amram Muell will never forget the first time he participated in the niggunim session in the yeshiva in Kfar Chabad. It was in the middle of 5741 (1981) and R' Muell was just starting out as a young mekurav to Torah and mitzvos when he was invited to spend Shabbos in yeshiva.

The highlight of the experience was sitting in the large zal of the yeshiva, as hundreds of bachurim sang soulful niggunim. Until then he had become familiar

with all types of music and naively thought he had absorbed all of its various forms, but he suddenly felt that the Chassidic niggunim were drawing him to a new place in his soul that he had never known before.

He describes that experience as one of his defining moments. Years later he has himself become a renowned lecturer who gives workshops on Jewish meditation through Chassidic song.

"Until that moment I had not discovered the neshama within

me and the inner voice that plays on the chords of my soul but when I stood there with hundreds of singing bachurim, I was taken to another world.

"I felt the power of a Chabad niggun which takes you to a spiritual place that no other experience can bring you to. Standing in the zal in Kfar Chabad, surrounded by hundreds of bachurim with their eyes closed, with the mashpia, R' Mendel Futerafas sitting in the center, I didn't want this magnificent scene to stop. As someone used to meditating, I decided to do as everybody else and close my eyes and meditate with the niggunim in the background. I felt the niggun lifting me higher and higher."

In recent years R' Muell has adopted that experience of "meditation" with Chassidic niggunim, and he presents it to thousands of people. He constantly meets people, young and old, whose neshamos open by means of a Chabad niggun, just the way it happened to him decades ago.

His workshops' success can be attributed to his personal charisma, his unique approach, and the animated and authentic way the niggunim are presented. Despite the tremendous success of his lectures, the highlight of his outreach work is his

“Niggunim-Meditation” Jewish meditation facilitated by music and niggunim. This workshop is popular with Chabad houses around the world.

He credits the ability to present these complex workshops to the teachings of the Rebbe. The Rebbe emphasized that non-Jewish meditation is *avoda zara* and asked that alternatives be found. He spoke and wrote many times on this subject to people who had previously been involved in various forms of meditation, and encouraged them to come up with “kosher” versions.

The Rebbe said this would save Jews who are ensnared in idolatrous meditation and would heal the soul and provide serenity

for many Jews. When R’ Muell found out about the Rebbe’s instructions, he decided to take up the challenge. He provides Jews with an alternative to this widespread “New Age” phenomenon.

Ten years ago, R’ Muell, working as a popular lecturer at Chabad seminars, sought a means to draw Jews in to a Jewish experience. He knew that people seek to connect with their inner selves and the way to do that for them is to connect them with the depths found in Chassidus. However, sometimes the way in which the message is conveyed is not “user-friendly.”

“The way we became accustomed to presenting the

messages of Chassidus made it hard for many people to find the answers that are there, and instead of Chassidus, they went off to foreign fields where they were offered a cheap, empty alternative. The false packaging in which mysticism and even kabbala are presented out in the world misleads many people.

“In the course of my work I realized that it was important to provide an alternative for all those people who flock to ‘kabbala institutes’ and various spiritual centers where they have moving spiritual experiences that have no real substance. I saw that we must provide other tools within Judaism, aside from *t’filla* and *hisbonenus*.”



After one of his lectures on Shabbos, he sang the niggun “An’im Z’miros,” and shared the story behind it. One of those present, a young musician with a long ponytail, was swept away by the niggun and couldn’t stop singing it all Shabbos. As soon as Shabbos was over, he took his guitar and began playing the niggun that had affected him so deeply.

The next morning he went to yeshiva and became a baal t’shuva. For R’ Muell, this was strong proof of the power of niggunim and he decided to run a workshop that would infuse the niggunim with Chassidic ideas in the style of hisbonenus and meditation.

Let’s go back and recount R’ Muell’s personal story, a story of a lost soul in the 70’s in Israel. Amram Muell was born in Rabat, Morocco and at the age of 12 he made aliya with his family. Theirs was a modern, Israeli home, and the little bit of tradition that he learned in his childhood was soon forgotten.

From childhood, Amram displayed great talent in music, dance and acting and a rosy future was predicted for him on the stage. Before he was drafted he studied advanced dance in exclusive schools in Israel. He also studied electronics and worked as a technician for planes. Even during his army service, his great love for the world of the stage and entertainment was utilized when he was appointed in charge of entertainment on base in addition to his work as an electrical technician.

Then there was the Peace in Galilee War and the stress associated with his intense workload and mounting responsibilities in the war effort.

This busy schedule prompted Amram to look for ways reduce the stress on his body. He turned to various forms of meditation and even to kabbala. His interest in meditation turned out to be the first step back into a Jewish way of life.

Among the books he read at that time was one based on the Bible, written by a non-Jewish professor. The book raised many questions for him regarding his Judaism. So when R’ Tzvika Rochberger, a resident of Kfar Chabad visited his base, Amram approached him. Tzvika answered his questions about Judaism and

Instead of finding answers within Chassidus, they went off to foreign fields where they were offered a cheap, empty alternative.

set him on the road

to Chabad and Chassidus. He met Rabbi Shneur Zalman Gafni of Kfar Chabad and later began to regularly attend the Chassidus classes given by Rabbi Zimroni Tzik.

Amram continued to search while still considering Judaism limited and primitive. However, the depth in Judaism and the answers he got, as well as the open minds of the Lubavitchers whom he met and the fact that people were willing to listen to his questions, began to draw him towards the world of Chabad.

The more he understood about Chassidus and Torah life, the more he realized that he would have to shelve his dream of a career on stage. He divided his time between his army work and yeshiva studies in Kfar Chabad. Gradually he began to observe a Chassidic lifestyle.

One day he was asked to present a dance performance to mark the occasion of a change of command. Since he would not do a mixed show, he prepared a play of a Rebbe and Chassidim and a Chassidic dance. He chose a group of soldiers to play the Chassidim and he took the starring role. Before performing he even wrote to the Rebbe and received his bracha.

The performance had professional scenery of the HaBima Theater. Amram elected to wear real tzitzis instead of the non-kosher theater costume tzitzis. In the background, a Russian violinist played an authentic Jewish niggun. The combination of the actors who wore typical Chassidic garb and the musical accompaniment won the hearts of everybody in the hall, including the violinist.

“Suddenly, everything I experienced in the previous months in Kfar Chabad rose up in my heart and everything I learned in Chassidus about the Chassid who is battul to Hashem came to the fore. In that moment I felt the sweetness and charm that I had found in the Chassidic way of life. It suffused me and enabled me to play the role of Chassid. In front of thousands of soldiers and the officer corps of the army, I really got into the niggun and was oblivious to what was going on around me.”

Whoever attended that performance will never forget it. Many people shed tears as they

watched the moving dance. Tough officers who, in their daily lives, didn't seem like anything would touch them, had tears glistening in their eyes. Some of them even went over afterwards to thank him personally, adding that nothing had ever been able to move them in this way before.

"That performance made me aware of the power of music. I felt that the evening's success was a result of the Rebbe's bracha. I realized that the Rebbe was giving me the ability to use my talents to be mekarev Jews."

A number of soldiers were niskarev from that evening and the inspiration the evening had created had a lasting impact on many of the participants. As a result, the Tanya was printed on base with the symbol of the Air Force, with the approval of the commanders of the base.

The performance also made a great impact on R' Muell himself. No longer satisfied with his personal growth in Judaism, he began using the dance and pantomime for the Rebbe's mitzvaim. Once a week, a mitzva tank came to the base and took him to various yishuvim, where he would do programs with the children.

On one trip to an army base in the Golan to do mitzvaim, the commander asked the person in charge of activities who was going to address the soldiers. The man spontaneously pointed at Amram. Amram was caught off guard. It was not too long ago that he himself had been in their shoes. Having no choice, Amram began to speak.

The positive reaction of the soldiers, as well as the enthusiasm of the other T'mimim who were there, made him realize that he was ready to start contributing from what he learned to those who were not yet religious.

In Tishrei, 5742, he went to 770 as a Chassid. He arrived in Beis Chayeinu just as the Rebbe was

leaving to the Ohel. He joined the crowd waiting to see the Rebbe on his way out, but to his disappointment, because of the crowding, he was only able to see the Rebbe's back.

Suddenly, the Rebbe stopped walking, turned around, and smiled at him. He was thrilled by this special kiruv. He felt it was a gift from the Rebbe, a gift that filled him with tremendous chayus. And when the Rebbe distributed dollar bills to the tankistin, Amram too received a dollar and a bracha.

When he returned to Eretz Yisroel, he decided it was time for him to leave his work in the army and devote himself to learning in yeshiva. He informed his commanders that he was leaving and went to Tzfas. He threw himself into learning and hafatza and was appointed in charge of ATaH and of the reports to the Rebbe about mitvzaim in yeshiva.

A year later he met his wife, Rivka. She was working as a preschool teacher in Tzfas but she wanted to finish her education degree. He had been offered an educational role in Beis Levi Yitzchok, which was in Tzfas at that time. Aside from that, they had a number of shlichus offers. They wrote a letter to the Rebbe presenting all their options, but they did not receive an answer.

When Amram went to 770 before his wedding, he asked the secretary, Binyamin Klein about a response. R' Klein said he did not have one for him. He decided to write to the Rebbe again. Shortly after submitting the letter he was given a handwritten response. It said that his wife "should continue her studies until she receives her diploma," and for him, "to do as advised by knowledgeable friends."

Upon his return to Eretz Yisroel, he was shocked to discover a letter from the Rebbe in his mailbox. It was a response to his first letter. The Rebbe's



answer was, “regarding all of the above, do as the hanhala of the yeshiva advises.” He went to the hanhala of the yeshiva in Tzfas with the two letters, and it was decided that the couple would live in Yerushalayim for a year until his wife finished her degree. Then they would move to Tzfas to work in the jobs they had been offered in the Chabad mosdos there.

It was only after the couple moved to Tzfas following their year in Yerushalayim that they received the Rebbe’s letter of blessing for their wedding, even though it was dated a year earlier. They saw this as another sign from the Rebbe that he wanted

them to live and work in Tzfas.

Along with his job as a mashpia in Beis Levi Yitzchok, R’ Muell began giving lectures at “Evenings with Chabad” and other seminars for people interested in Judaism. This was the beginning of his career as a lecturer.

As time went by he gained experience in speaking to different kinds of audiences. He started teaching at Machon Alte for baalos t’shuva and at Pnimiot in Ramat Aviv, while working as a computer networking technician for Beis Chana. He saw there was an enormous vacuum when it came to providing articulate

responses to those wanting to know about Judaism. Many of them had a hard time finding people to answer their questions.

As someone who worked a lot in outreach and in giving lectures and shiurim, R’ Muell started compiling a curriculum that would provide answers to the people who came to “Evenings with Chabad” and encounters at the Chabad house. He tried to ascertain what bothered people and what questions arise for those who, suddenly decide to investigate Judaism as an option for meaning and spirituality.

His lectures were constantly refined as he received feedback



The performance at the army base

and questions which opened up new topics to explore. The answers, of course, came from the vast treasury of Chassidus, which contains answers to all questions in life.

The fact that Chassidus provides an answer to all questions in life led many people who attended the lectures to completely change their way of life and to take on the yoke of Torah. Some came merely to find out about a particular topic, with no interest in connecting to Judaism. After being amazed to discover how Chassidus addressed their issues, they were drawn to learn more and more.

R' Muell developed a number of workshops that dealt with all facets of life, from the soul to parenting and relationships. He developed his material and discovered more and more answers in Chassidus to secular mysticism. The lectures were built on Chassidus with the emphasis placed on the *pintele Yid* within each person that seeks to be revealed.

He enriched his lectures with features of the artistic world he came from, incorporating his expertise in pantomime and acting.

R' Muell's reputation spread as the many stories about people that were inspired by his lectures got around. He was invited to speak all over the country.

That's how Ascent's unique seminars came to be developed with R' Muell chosen as the main lecturer. The seminars are presented as Jewish mysticism and they include lectures in understanding the inner workings of the soul based on ideas in Chassidus. At the very first seminar, one of the participants was *niskarev* to Torah and *mitzvos* and became a *baal*

t'shuva. This was a powerful impetus to continue building a series of lectures, as well as to consider new horizons, to develop other workshops to present Chassidic ideas in original ways.

The workshop itself has undergone much qualitative development through the input of dozens of professional artists, who helped produce top quality productions of *niggunim* like "Dalet Bavos," "Anim Z'miros," etc. The *niggunim* are played on a number of instruments like the flute, guitar and violin, so that each participant can relate to the instrument that speaks to his or her soul and helps lift them and

I really got into the niggun and was oblivious to what was going on around me.

expose them to the inner spark of the *neshama*.

R' Muell attends "spiritual festivals" several times a year in Israel and his talks attract hundreds of people who have embraced New Age mysticism in their thirst for spirituality. They are rewarded with an unusual Jewish experience.

People who had attended seminars in other places, in which they had learned about the "spirituality" of the East or commercialized Kabbala, said that R' Muell's lectures gave them a completely different feeling and touched their *neshamos*.

"Many people told me that at first they were taken aback when they saw that the lecturer on

mysticism was a religious guy with a beard and kippa. However, after they heard what Chassidus has to offer them in all aspects of life, they acknowledged that it was a different mysticism...

"Over the years hundreds of Jews of diverse backgrounds have acknowledged that what Chassidus gave them, they were not able to get anywhere else. At this point, *baruch Hashem*, dozens of Jews have established Chassidishe homes and have themselves become active in spreading Judaism.

"Additionally, I have met thousands of people who were searching for self knowledge and never imagined that the answers could be found in Chassidus, so close to home. The fact that these seminars are packaged in the style of mysticism and spirituality enabled them to recognize the great light of Chassidus and the Rebbe.

"Since I started this line of work with the public, I constantly have the holy words of Chassidus in front of my eyes, namely, that a Jew neither wants nor is able to separate from G-d. Our job is to help a Jew navigate his way through the high-walled maze that makes it hard for a Jew to get close to Hashem and which obscures his pure *neshama*.

"If we work with the premise that the truth of a Jew is his pure *neshama* and all the rest is just the *kli* which obscures it, it will be easy for us to understand that really, a Jew wants to know his Creator and to reach the light of Judaism. It's the darkness of the world which interferes.

"In every lecture I try hard to connect people to the Rebbe in three ways: thought, speech, and action. *Niggun* – the connection to the world of the Rebbe's thought; Torah – to the world of

speech; and Stories – to the world of action. I work on all three approaches with hope and faith that at least one of them will touch the audience.

“Sometimes, you have to look for ways and techniques to reach a Jew from different directions and to get him to rise above that which blocks his soul. In the course of my lectures or in encounters with people, I always think about how I can connect with the person as he is now. How can I reach him? Not just how he connects with me or what I want to convey to him from where I’m at. It’s very important to remember that you are merely a shliach of the Rebbe and it all has to be done with the Rebbe’s kochos. Sometimes we have to

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act like ‘undercover fighters’ and use packaging like meditation and the like to bring Judaism to a Jew where he’s at now.”

As an example, R’ Muell tells of a Reform rabbi who went on vacation to Tzfas and attended one of his lectures. He wanted to check out Chassidus and what it offered people. To his surprise, he himself was touched by it. At the end of the lecture he approached R’ Muell to speak to him personally.

The two of them sat through the night and spoke about practical fulfillment of mitzvos. Until then, he only knew of the superficial aspect of mitzvos which, to him, seemed antiquated and lacking in meaning which is why he thought they needed changing. He suddenly realized that there is inner meaning and depth to the fact that the details of every mitzva are dictated by Hashem.

R’ Muell opened the world of Chassidus for him and explained how the practical performance of mitzvos is the spiritual expression of G-dly matters, which are brought down from spiritual worlds as a result of a Jew’s avoda. This is why nothing can be changed.

By the end of the night, the Reform rabbi couldn’t contain his emotions and burst into tears. The next day, R’ Muell was surprised when the secretary showed him a check the rabbi had given her. It was accompanied by a letter in which he describes the powerful impression their talk had had on him and how he was exposed, for the first time, to the inner meaning of Judaism, which changed his entire approach to Torah and mitzvos.

When R’ Muell was asked how he came to develop his approach, he said he could point at one

thing: what the Rebbe has taught.

“The Rebbe taught us that there is the fifth son who doesn’t even sit at the Pesach table. In one of the sichos the Rebbe says that the level of this son is higher than *hishtalshlus* and therefore he pertains to the level of yechida. Consequently, only Chassidus, which is the yechida of the soul, can reach him. Chassidus is the *etzem* that pertains to every person, every neshama.

“We are now ‘at the eve of Shabbos, after midday,’ when the world is about to experience the revelation of Geula. At this time, of course, there is an even greater obligation to reveal the light of Chassidus and the Rebbe’s teachings in the world. We just have to think about how to do it in creative ways in order to attract more and more people to the Rebbe’s teachings. Chassidus provides the answers to all the questions and our shlichus is to present this to every Jew, in the best way we can.”

With this approach, R’ Muell has spent weeks in the Far East, seeking out lost souls and giving workshops on Jewish meditation as a response to the foreign meditation tens of thousands of tourists are seeking. One example out of dozens took place on a visit to the Chabad house in Bangkok, Thailand.

After his lecture, a young kibbutznik asked to speak with him. He told R’ Muell that he grew up in an atheistic home in which the word “G-o-d” did not exist, but in the course of his travels he felt a spiritual awakening when he saw the mighty power in nature. He realized that there had to be a G-dly power that runs all this.

Despite his inspiration, his atheistic upbringing held him back from discussing this with



With Rabbi Nechemia Wilhelm at a workshop
in the Chabad house in Bangkok

anyone. He did not believe that sane people could talk about things like this. But when he heard R' Muell explain in

intelligent fashion that there is a G-d in the world, he felt able to go over and talk to him about his questions.

Another story took place with a couple, both musicians, who went to Thailand in order to learn Eastern religion. They attended the music workshop given at the Chabad house. As they listened to the niggunim along with the explanations and meditation techniques, they literally fainted in rapture. They actually needed medical attention to rouse them. Afterwards, they said that they felt such intense emotion that they couldn't contain it and they felt transported to another plane.

R' Muell once went to Japan for just one night in order to give a lecture to businessmen. One member of the audience was so inspired by that lecture that he became a baal t'shuva. He maintained contact with R' Muell and eventually went to yeshiva. Today he himself is a lecturer for Ascent.

It just goes to show how much can be achieved when we strive to reach out to bring Moshiach in the Rebbe's way with passion, patience and persistence.

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