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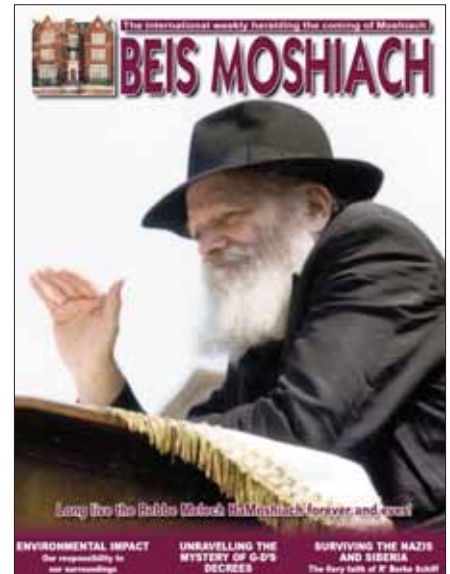
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Beis Moshiah (USPS 012-542) ISSN 1082-0272 is published weekly, except Jewish holidays (only once in April and October) for \$160.00 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and in all other places for \$180.00 per year (45 issues), by Beis Moshiah, 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY and additional offices. Postmaster: send address changes to Beis Moshiah 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Copyright 2009 by Beis Moshiah, Inc.

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# TREASURE, KINGDOM, NATION

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

*The Torah portion of BaMidbar is always read before the holiday of Shavuos. They have an inner connection based on three levels of Divine service. These three levels are alluded to by the three phrases connected with the giving of the Torah: “My special treasure,” “a kingdom of Kohanim” and “a holy nation.” These parallel the three accountings found in the portion of BaMidbar. This also parallels the process of Redemption: first the Jewish people are separated from all other nations; then they lead the nations towards G-dliness; finally, knowledge of G-d covers and permeates the world as the waters cover the ocean bed.*

If a particular Torah reading always occurs in conjunction with a specific holiday, by Divine Providence there must be an inner connection between the two. The portion of *BaMidbar* – the first reading of the book of Numbers – always occurs just prior to *Shavuos* – the holiday of the giving of the Torah. Also, if two things are connected, clearly the first is a preparation for the second. Thus, the Torah reading of *BaMidbar* prepares us for *Shavuos* – for receiving the Torah.

Obviously, since the Torah is given anew each year, we

must prepare to receive it anew as well. Whatever preparations the Jewish people made at Sinai, we must repeat yearly. Indeed, we must prepare ourselves daily, for each day there is a revelation of Torah. In this regard, our actions now foreshadow the Torah of Moshiach. As we are on the threshold of Redemption, we are in a mode of preparation, so to speak. The parallel between the preparations before Sinai and the Torah reading of *BaMidbar* can be applied to our own time, extended to our preparations for Moshiach. Just as Revelation followed the preparations at Sinai, and *Shavuos* follows *BaMidbar*, so Redemption must follow our current preparations for Moshiach.

That said, how did the Jewish people get ready to receive the Torah in the wilderness? From the first of Sivan until the sixth of the month, when the Torah was given, each day was designated for a specific part of the process. Rosh Chodesh, the first of the month, is a mini-holiday unto itself. On the second day of the month, G-d introduced the prefatory process with the words, “If you will indeed hearken to My voice, and you will keep My covenant, then you shall

be My special treasure from among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be for Me a kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation.”

Traditionally, there are two explanations for the phrase “kingdom of Kohanim.” One explanation takes the phrase as a single unit. All the Jewish people are fit to be Kohanim (priests), and therefore be set apart as a holy nation. The other explanation sees each phrase referring to a different aspect of the Jewish people. The second

phrase, “a holy nation,” indicates the holiness, the special sanctity of the Jewish people. They are all like the Kohanim, set aside for Divine service. When, in the first phrase, G-d says the Jews will be a “kingdom of Kohanim,” it means the Jewish people are to be rulers, leaders, role models for the world. The term “Kohen” may also mean a leader.

As G-d prepares the Jewish people to receive the Torah, He describes them with three phrases: “My special treasure,” “a kingdom of Kohanim” and “a holy nation.” Each phrase represents a stage in preparing for the giving of the Torah. First, the Jewish people are separated from other peoples – “My special treasure”; next, they are princes, ruling and leading the nations of the world toward G-dliness – “a kingdom of Kohanim”; third, they are removed from the common and mundane, elevated and dedicated solely to the Divine service – “a holy nation.”

These three stages can be explained on a deeper level: First, G-d chooses the Jewish people. This choice has nothing to do with the status or superiority of the Jews. At this level, there’s no difference between “darkness” and “light.” Since “all the earth” belongs to G-d, He chose the Jewish people simply because He wanted to. We have no voice or option. The phrase “My special treasure” alludes to this stage.

Next comes the stage of service. The Jewish people prepare for – and thus participate in – the giving of the Torah through their actions. But this Divine service has two levels. One involves things permitted by the Torah, which one uses for “the sake of heaven.” In this way allowable actions become sanctified and the nations elevated. They act as a “kingdom of Kohanim,” that is, rulers who rule by shaping and molding the spiritual character of the physical world.

The other level of service, the performance of a mitzvah, is not connected with the needs of the world. This last stage parallels the phrase “a holy nation.” At this level, the Jewish people are totally set apart and separated from the world. They are wholly dedicated and devoted to serving G-d.

The middle stage, and first level of service, uses the permitted, that which belongs to us, for “the sake of heaven.” As mentioned, this parallels the meaning of “Kohanim” as leaders and the phrase “a kingdom of Kohanim.” The unique point of this service is that in performing it we *are not separated* from the world. On the contrary, through involvement with the world, a transformation occurs. The world itself becomes a holy thing, a receptacle for G-dliness.

Which stage or level is the true intent behind the giving of the Torah? Clearly, it must be the middle stage, the first level of service. To be totally separated from the world, the last stage, is really the province of angels. Since the Jewish

people live in the physical world, and were given the Torah in the physical world, that must be the primary location and purpose for the Revelation. That means the Jewish people must deal with the nations of the world, the matters of the world, and the evil inclination that dwells within them. A Jew must be a ruler over his own *yetzer ha’ra* (his evil inclination), his character, and indeed his environment. He must see that all in the realm of the permitted is suffused with G-dliness.

The ability to do this was accomplished with the giving of the Torah.

We can now understand the connection with the portion of BaMidbar, whose content concerns counting. Specifically, it contains three accounts, each obviously corresponding with one of the levels of Divine service.

The first counting is that of the Jewish people as a whole, except for the tribe of Levi. This corresponds to the phrase, “My special treasure.” Counting confers an importance, regardless of any inherent value. That G-d counts the Jewish people only shows that G-d has chosen them. It does not reveal any inherent value or service.

Next, the tribe of Levi is counted separately, for a specific reason. They have the special task of guarding and protecting the holy objects associated with the Tabernacle. This corresponds to “a kingdom of Kohanim.” As guardians, they are “rulers,” so to speak, in charge of the items under their care.

Finally, the Levite men over thirty are numbered. They are set aside for service in the Tabernacle – set apart, as indicated by the phrase, “a holy nation.” Indeed, the family of Kehos, enumerated at the end of the reading, carried and cared for the holiest articles. And of course Aaron and his descendants, the Kohanim, came from this family.

The uniqueness of BaMidbar, the reason why this portion always precedes Shavuot, lies in the middle stage. That G-d chose us, that He numbers the Jewish people, must be the first stage. Obviously, Revelation and the covenant must proceed from G-d’s Will and initiative.

What then? The Jewish people are to be a “kingdom of Kohanim.” They are to be spiritual rulers and leaders. The goal is to be involved in the world, transforming it into a dwelling place for G-dliness. Like the Levites, we have a special task. We are not to withdraw from the world, but lead it and guide it. This is our preparation to receive the Torah – whether for the first time at Sinai, every year following the reading of BaMidbar, or in the immediate, imminent future, when by preparing the world, we will receive the Torah of Moshiach.

Then, after the Divine service of the second stage is complete, we will reach the final stage, that of being wholly dedicated and devoted to G-d. We will be a “holy nation” and, with the coming of Moshiach, the whole world will recognize G-dliness.

*(Based on Likkutei Sichos 18, pp. 18-27)*

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik, District rav – Beit Chefer, Emek Chefer

*Neighbors in place and time and the influence they have. \* A fascinating look at the parsha based on the Midrash, Kabbala, and Chassidus Chabad.*

## INFLUENCE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT

A G-d-fearing Jew yearns to live in a spiritually pure environment. In the famous incident in Avos, the Tana, Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma, lived in a city of “sages and sofrim” and was offered a fortune if he would move to a city that did not have a spiritual atmosphere. He turned the offer down and said that even if he was given “all the gold, silver and precious stones in the world,” he would not consent to live in a city that was not a “place of Torah.”

The Rambam explains that since “a person is drawn in his thinking and actions after his friends and acquaintances and he behaves as the people in his country do, therefore he ought to become close to righteous people and dwell near sages, so he will learn from their actions, and keep a distance from the wicked who go in darkness, so as not to learn from their ways.” The Rambam

goes so far as to say that it is preferable to live “in caves, brambles and deserts” than to live among people who are wicked and are liable to draw him into sin.

So too, Chazal say, “it’s good for the tzaddik and good for his neighbor, woe to the wicked and woe to his neighbor.” The first source for the influence of neighbors appears when the Jewish nation is formed after Mattan Torah, as Chazal tell us in this parsha:

When the Jewish people traveled in the Sinai desert towards Eretz Yisroel, they surrounded the Mishkan in two circles. The inner circle consisted of the Kohanim and Levites and the outer circle consisted of the rest of the tribes. Midrash describes the direct influence among the groups of neighbors. The tribes that lived near Moshe and Aharon – Yehuda, Yisachar, and Z’vulun – became great in Torah, while the tribes that lived

near Korach – Reuven, Shimon and Gad – became involved in strife, notably Dasan and Aviram and the 250 men from those tribes who joined the dispute.

## THE SECRET TO INFLUENCE

The influence of the environment and neighbors can be one of two types:

**Essential, Internal:** the neighbor who is a tzaddik radiates forth his righteous character upon his environment and his neighbors learn from him to improve their ways. The wicked person broadcasts his corruption to his neighbors and they learn from him to sin, do harm, and destroy.

**External:** When a neighbor who is a tzaddik is rewarded for his good behavior, sometimes his neighbors benefit even though they are not tzaddikim. For example, thanks to an excellent student, the entire class may get a prize. The opposite applies as well; when a bad person is punished, those who live in his vicinity may be punished too. The Gemara tells of a woman from the priestly family of Bilga who sinned grievously. As a result, the entire family was punished even though it was only she who sinned.

In many cases, the neighborhood that a person

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sin.***

chooses to live in is an indication of his personal character. In other words, it reveals the same hidden characteristic that is revealed in the neighbor. The reason they chose to live near one another might be an indication of the traits they have in common. A tzaddik chooses to live near good people and a wicked person, near wicked people. Even in a situation where the neighbors are influential, for example, a tzaddik who lives among good neighbors, their proximity serves to inspire and fan the flames of his positive inclinations so as to increase the acts of goodness and kindness.

### **GOOD NEIGHBOR, BAD NEIGHBOR**

Although both a good neighbor and a bad neighbor influence those around them, it often happens that there is a difference in their influence. While the bad neighbor is influential in a superficial way, the good

neighbor's impact is more internal.

The neighbors of the bad person don't truly admire his corrupt ways and therefore, even if they follow him, they don't become corrupt and evil like him. But the neighbors of the tzaddik truly admire him and his elevated personality, his good heart and pleasant ways. Therefore, his influence makes a much deeper impact. He is able to reach them on a deep level so they truly become better people.

A tzaddik is a man of peace and love, for "all of Torah was given to make peace in the world." When the Jewish people stood around Har Sinai to receive the Torah, they "hated dispute and loved peace and became one camp," standing "as one man with one heart." With his powers of peace and love he can influence his neighbors to learn from him.

In the HaYom Yom, the Rebbe writes that the influence of neighbors and a person's environment are not just psychological but emotional and spiritual:

Just as air quality has an effect on our physical health with clean air being salubrious and polluted air being injurious to our health, so too spiritually, the quality of the atmosphere has an effect on the soul. When the air is pure and suffused with holiness, through the "sound of Torah" being heard and b'nei Torah who review it even in the street, it strengthens emuna in Hashem and encourages following in His ways. When the air is filthy and suffused with impurity, since the Torah is not being learned and there's plenty of that which opposes its values, it corrupts people and affects their emuna and can lead to thoughts of heresy.

### **NEIGHBORS IN TIME AND PLACE**

It is not only human neighbors who have an influence on those around them. This concept applies to neighbors in time and place as well.

Oved Edom HaGitti is an example of a neighbor in place. Since the Aron and Luchos were in his house for several months, he was blessed with numerous children. Contrariwise, being a neighbor to someone wicked causes harm, like a neighbor to someone whose house was stricken with tzaraas. When the walls of the house are broken, the neighbor's adjoining wall is also broken because the affected house has a negative effect on the neighbor.

Friday and Shabbos are neighbors in time. Friday is called "Erev Shabbos" not because we prepare for Shabbos on that day but because, to a certain extent, the holiness of Shabbos is already present on Friday, even before Shabbos arrives, at the time called *tosefes Shabbos*.

The "neighborliness" of Friday and Shabbos creates a connection between them so that the Friday, towards evening, already possesses the holiness of Shabbos, as it says in Shulchan Aruch, "it's a positive precept of the Torah to add from the weekday to the holy with the advent of Shabbos." During the time one adds to Shabbos, "you can light [candles] and welcome the Shabbos with Maariv," even though it's still Friday, because "tosefes Shabbos becomes like Shabbos to him in every respect."

### **SHLUCHEI ADONEINU**

The Rebbe innovated shlichus in our generation. Chassidishe men and women leave their frum

k'hillos to travel to distant places and spread Judaism and Chassidus. This is not a temporary sortie with a quick return to the greenhouse of k'dusha at the end of a brief stint of shlichus. Going on shlichus entails settling – permanently – in places that are not religious communities.

The Rebbe explains, "Since there are Jews who are in spiritual danger, 'children who are taken captive among the gentiles,' and have become distant from the traditions of their ancestors, there is no time for calculations and discussions. The call of the hour is to go on shlichus to all cities and places where Jews live in order to spread Judaism and the wellsprings of Chassidus outward, to build shuls and battei midrash, mikvaos, houses of Torah and avodas Hashem, wherever there are Jews."

The test of time shows the terrific results. Although the shluchim live far away and don't have the kind of neighbors we would categorize as "good for the tzaddik and good for his

neighbor," they manage to transform the spiritual environment from one extreme to another. For despite the rule that there is a negative impact from a place, "woe to the wicked and woe to his neighbor," when the shluchim go out with mesirus nefesh, the rules change, even the rules established by Torah, and one or two shluchim become transmitters of the light of Torah to all the Jews of the city.

### NEIGHBORS TO GEULA

The great light of Moshiach shines even before his actual revelation. Chassidus, which began with revelations of the holy Baal Shem Tov, whose yahrtzait is on Shavuos, consists of sparks of the holy light of Moshiach.

In this, too, we see that in the period of time that "neighbors" on Geula, *Ikvisa d'Meshicha*, in the final generation of galus, p'nimius ha'Torah has been revealed to all in a way that everybody can understand, through ChaBaD, especially in our generation, the final generation of

***When the shluchim go out with mesirus nefesh, the rules change, and one or two shluchim become transmitters of the light of Torah to all the Jews of the city.***

galus and the first of Geula. We have merited the great light of the Rebbe's teachings which have been preparing the world for the hisgalus of Moshiach, may he speedily come and redeem us.

*Sources: Likkutei Sichos vol. 34 p. 10, vol. 19 p. 62, HaShabbos b'Kabbala u'b'Chassidus vol. 1, p. 102*

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# SURVIVING THE NAZIS AND SIBERIA WITH THE REBBE'S BLESSING

By Nosson Avrohom

*Each of the soldiers was encouraged to write letters to their dear ones. It seemed obvious that none of them would be returning home... \* Tales of fiery faith and ironclad kabbalas ol by R' Berke Schiff, who describes the indomitable Chabad spirit that survived between the brutality of the communists and the bloodthirsty Nazis.*

## BRACHA FROM THE REBBE FOR LONG LIFE

My maternal grandfather was the Chassid, Rabbi Yerachmiel Chadash a"h. His wife, my grandmother, was the sister of the mashpia in 770, Rabbi Shmuel Levitin a"h. Both were Chassidim and mekusharim of the Rebbe Rashab, who sent them, after their wedding, to

Petrozavodsk in northern Russia, to reach out to the Cantonists who lived there.

The Cantonists were children who were kidnapped by soldiers of the czar and forcibly drafted into the Russian army. They lived in military dormitories and were forced to convert to Christianity. They typically served for 25 years and by the time they were through with the army, all Jewish

values had evaporated from their consciousness.

Out of the thousands of children who were snatched away, there were some who retained an attachment to Judaism. Whenever they encountered Jews they were reminded of their roots. Groups of them settled together after their release so they could continue to support one another.

The Rebbe Rashab would send his Chassidim to these Jews in order to re-ignite the fire of Torah and fear of Heaven in their hearts. Many of those Cantonists did t'shuva thanks to shluchim such as my grandfather.

While living in their place of shlichus, my grandparents had four daughters and a son, who later built beautiful Chassidishe homes of their own. Other children who were born to them died very young after suffering from incurable illnesses, r"l. They were terrified and devastated when their only son, Elchanan Betzalel, also fell ill. The doctors could do nothing to cure him.



**R' Berke Schiff (left)  
with his uncle Betzalel (right)**

The Rebbe Rashab had passed away some time before and they didn't know to whom to turn. The fact that they had already experienced the deaths of a number of their children only intensified their fear.

They hurried to the Rebbe Rayatz to ask for his bracha, continuously murmuring chapters of T'hillim. Trembling, my grandfather stood before the Rebbe and pleaded for a bracha that his only son should survive that which his brothers did not. The Rebbe promised him that he had nothing to worry about and this son would recover and would even live a long life. The Rebbe said they should add the name "Alter."

Relieved, thrilled, and full of emuna, my grandfather left the Rebbe's room.

This story took place when the child was eight. The Rebbe's bracha was fulfilled and within a few days he had recovered as though he hadn't been ill.

## **NEXT TO HIS HEART, A BULLET**

Two years before the outbreak of World War II, my grandparents left Petrozavodsk and moved to a suburb of Moscow. Their four daughters, Malka, Bella, Freida, and Doba, had already married. Malka married my father, R' Yosef Schiff, who was a shochet, and they lived in Voronezh, where I

was born.

Their only son, Betzalel, was still not married and he was drafted into the Red Army in their attempt to repel the German advance. Later on, my father was also drafted, along with many other Chassidim.

My mother, Malka, prayed fervently and endlessly that my father would return from battle, alive and well. In most cases, the battle fronts turned into killing fields where tens of thousands of Russian soldiers died.

My mother's tears and prayers were answered and after serving for a year, my father rejoined the family in Samarkand, where we and thousands of other Jewish families had emigrated in fear of the Nazis. My father was released in the middle of the war after his right arm was wounded and paralyzed. He was never able to use that hand again.

He told us that he was sent with hundreds of soldiers to cross a large river. The Russian commanders told them how



**R' Yerachmiel Chadash**

***Trembling, my grandfather stood before the Rebbe and pleaded for a bracha that his only son should survive that which his brothers did not.***

dangerous their mission was but said that for “Mother Russia,” everything was permitted. Each of the soldiers was encouraged to write letters to their dear ones. It seemed obvious that none of them would be returning home. It was to my father’s good fortune that as he entered the river, a bullet hit his right arm, causing him to be removed from the ranks.

For days he lay unconscious in the field hospital, and it was several months until he recovered and could return to normal life, albeit with a paralyzed right arm. Later he realized how great the miracle was, since the bullet had gone right through his arm and stopped millimeters away from his heart. One day, when he stood up to daven, one of the doctors approached him and asked whether he was a Jew. Though in general, in places like that, you didn’t flaunt your Jewish identity, for some reason, my father “admitted” that he was a Jew.

The doctor, it turned out, was Jewish himself, and he went out of his way to help my father recover as quickly as possible. That makeshift hospital was poorly cared for and many soldiers with less serious injuries than my father died because of infection.

The authorities did not care about the ill, especially not for soldiers whom they knew would not return to the front. It was a wonderful example of caring for a fellow Jew.

## **HUMAN TRAIN IN THE STREETS OF SAMARKAND**

My father was a very clever man. He was a member of the communist party, which earned him many privileges. All those who were party members were given positions from amongst a wide range of government jobs in Samarkand and my father used this to the hilt.

In order to control all businesses in Samarkand, the government formed a union which consisted of all the workers in the city. My father received a top position in this union and ran a factory that produced aluminum lanterns. In those days there weren’t electric light poles to illuminate the streets and people used kerosene for light and warmth. My father manufactured the lanterns for them.

I’ll never forget the poverty that was the lot of most of the Jews who migrated to Samarkand during and after the war. People starved. They stood on line for hours in front of specially designated centers where portions of bread were distributed to every family. After this degrading wait, you would be asked whether you had a certificate that testified that you worked somewhere. This guaranteed that you were not a parasite and deserved bread to eat. If you didn’t have a work certificate, you would be sent away from the bread line shamed and empty-handed. My father took advantage of his position and gave out fictitious work

certificates to dozens of Chassidim, including R’ Mendel Futerfas and R’ Simcha Gorodetzky.

These Chassidim could not work in the many factories throughout Samarkand because it would mean having to work on Shabbos. My father was moser nefesh in order to help them. During the war years, the iron fist of the communist government loosened a little, but life remained very tough, informers were everywhere and the risks were great.

I never understood how he had the moral courage to help Jews openly, without fearing the informers who could have landed him in jail for years. As a party member and a senior figure in the union, my father was always in the public eye, but that did not stop him from acting as a Jew and Chassid. He gave us a proper chinuch and did not send us to government schools. If that wasn’t enough, every Yud-Tes Kislev we had a big farbrengen in our house with hundreds of participants coming and going. My grandfather would also farbreng, despite the enormous danger this entailed.

I remember well the Simchas Torah of 1944. There was a big farbrengen in our house and the Chabad Chassidim who lived in Samarkand at the time took part. Chassidim from other Chassidic groups joined them, as well as the Bucharian Jews. The main shul, where many Chassidim local Bucharian Jews held services, was called “Machala.” After drinking quite a bit, my father decided to make a human train from our house to the shul, with himself at the head. Thus, without fear, hundreds of happy Jew rejoiced in the streets of Samarkand.

My father fell sick in 1952

with a terrible stomach illness and he couldn't continue working. He suffered for eight years until he died in 1960.

To our sorrow and the sorrow of the Chassidim who remained in the city, my father passed away a young man, only 52 years old.

## LEARNING TANYA AT WORK

During the eight years that my father suffered from his illness, he helped me and my older brother Aryeh Leib open a factory which manufactured small work plaques. These were ordered by factories in the area to attach to their products, with instructions and the like engraved on them. Hashem helped and the business grew. In the meantime, my father had passed away and my older brother, who had married a girl from Moscow, moved to Samarkand.

My brother had a mathematical mind and he studied mathematics in one of the schools for teachers. He quickly and successfully concluded his studies and was

given a senior position in the Education Ministry – to run a school. I remained in Samarkand and continued developing the business. In addition, I also had to study a profession. In Russia of those days everybody had to complete a course of study. Boruch Hashem, my studies were not in vain.

At night I would study and in the morning I would do some extra work for a Jew, a Torah scholar and G-d-fearing Chassid, Rabbi Eliyahu Mishulovin. He had a factory for murals where I would draw and was thereby able to supplement my income. There I also got to know Rabbi Moshe Nisselevitz, who later became my mashpia. Together we formed the organization CHAMAH. Every day, for an hour, he would learn Tanya with me. In those difficult times, this learning was extremely refreshing.

Every so often we would say l'chaim, especially on Chassidishe dates. He had a tremendous influence on me. He spent dozens of hours with me, teaching me Chassidus and its customs and

***My grandfather refused to leave until he knew what happened to his beloved son who had received the Rebbe Rayatz's bracha for long life.***

practices. I can say, without exaggeration, that I owe him my spiritual life. When he started CHAMAH, my brother and I and R' Berele Zaltzman joined him. Later, other Chassidim joined this Chassidic enterprise to spread the wellsprings.

At the same time, I continued to run the factory that we built with my father's help. All my employees, about 32, were Jewish. I was only 23 years old at the time. I ran the factory until I left Russia at the end of 5731.

The factory gave us ample parnasa and two years after I married, I was able to buy a spacious apartment in the center of the city. Under the influence of R' Nisselevitz, my house became a spiritual lighthouse. In the yard we built a shul and mikva. I also had a yeshiva there, where six boys learned. They came on Motzaei Shabbos and left on Thursday. The yeshiva operated for three years in my house. I have much nachas from that group of bachurim.

## THE REBBE WAS REASSURING – HE IS ALIVE

In 5706-7, most Chassidim left



R' Betzalel by the grave of the Chassid, R' Dovid Horodoker

***Then he asked,  
“How did they  
leave you alive  
when you are a  
Jew?” He  
answered that  
Hashem protected  
him. This answer  
aggravated the  
commander and  
he declared, “You  
are a spy.”***

Samarkand and fled Russia with false Polish passports. We remained in Samarkand because my uncle Betzalel had still not come back from the war and my parents and grandparents were very concerned about him. We got no information about him and while the rest of the Chassidim began leaving Russia via Poland, my grandfather refused to leave until he knew what happened to his beloved son who had received the Rebbe Rayatz's bracha for long life. Days went by, and then months and years and still we received no news about him.

It was only twelve years later, in 1953, when Stalin died and the government announced an amnesty for the tens of thousands of political prisoners, that we first heard word of my uncle Betzalel. He had been a prisoner in a labor camp in Siberia for most of those years.

My aunt on my mother's side left Russia in 1946. The first question that she asked the Rebbe Rayatz was about her brother Betzalel. The Rebbe said she

could stop worrying because he was alive and his family would hear from him. It was only after we left the confines of Russia in 1971 that we heard about that response from the Rebbe, and we had to wait in fear and uncertainty for another eight years to get the news that he was alive.

We were absolutely overcome with emotion when he walked in the door. The years of suffering were apparent on him. It took a long time until he became accustomed to the noise of the city. Sometimes he would say that he preferred the silence of the bone-chilling Siberian cold. My grandfather attributed the fact that he was alive despite the war to the Rebbe's bracha.

It was fascinating to hear the story of how he was saved in the war through open miracles. He said that as soon as he was drafted in 1941, he was captured by the Germans. For four years he was their prisoner of war and he was taken from one prison camp to another. He had to be constantly on his guard to hide his identity as a Jew. If they would know he was Jewish, they would have killed him. The greatest challenge was when all the prisoners had to shower together. If one of the prisoners or guards would notice he was circumcised, he was done for. The anti-Semitic venom that he heard spewed daily by the German soldiers was a constant warning of the danger he was in.

There were many instances when, certain that his Jewishness had been discovered, he prepared to die, but the Rebbe's bracha protected him. When the people in the camp began to suspect him, he would providentially be transferred to another camp. He lived like a hunted animal

throughout the war. When the German army began to experience defeat and the soldiers started to withdraw, they took him and hundreds of thousands of other Russian soldiers to Berlin. The American army liberated them when they entered Berlin.

Among the American soldiers were many Jews. When they found out that he was a Jew, they were very compassionate towards him. They gave him clothes and fed him royally. He stayed in a big camp together with all the prisoners of war, while humanitarian organizations took care of their needs.

The soldiers in the camp told him that he could choose one of three destinations: the United States, England, or Palestine. Since he was Jewish, they urged him to go to Palestine and join his brethren in founding a Jewish state, but when he learned that his father and sisters were waiting for him in Russia, he chose to return there.

## **FROM GERMAN CAPTIVITY TO SIBERIA**

He left the American camp and joined that of the Russian citizens. They welcomed him nicely and he stayed there for a few weeks. One night he was awakened and brought to the command office of the camp. A senior Russian officer asked him his name, how he fell captive and what the Germans did to him. Then he asked, “How did they leave you alive when you are a Jew?” He answered that Hashem protected him. This answer aggravated the commander and he declared, “You are a spy.”

Everyone in the camp assembled the next morning and the commanders made a selection. Some were sent to the right and others to the left. Those who were

sent left, including my uncle Betzalel, were put on a train that was filled with mildew and filth, and reeked of cow manure. It was hot and crowded and they were given limited rations of food and drink. Many couldn't tolerate the conditions and died. What the Germans didn't manage to do, the Russians did to their own citizens with no less cruelty.

It was pouring rain and the water dripped into the train cars. The drops of water improved their conditions somewhat.

When the climate began to change from warm to cold, they realized they were approaching Siberia. My uncle understood that they had been sentenced to Siberia, as though all the previous years of suffering were not enough.

The area they were brought to was called Komi-SSR. When the train stopped, they were told to get out. They saw a huge camp with rows of huts. Each of them was given a room. They had to obtain their own food by hunting deer and other wild animals. They were assigned to cut down tree trunks and remove the branches. In the summer, when the nearby river began to melt and flow, they sent the logs to other cities in Russia.

Many of those who came to the camp did not survive. They couldn't take the extremely cold temperature, especially coupled with the meager food and hard labor. People dropped dead like flies. Thoughts of survival preoccupied them most of the time. My uncle had to live under these terrible conditions for years, for no crime that he committed, until Stalin died.

When he returned to Samarkand he resumed normal life. He later married and had children. In 1971, when we left

Russia, he was the only one who refused to join us and he continued to run my factory. He was the chazan and darshan in the big Bucharian shul until he died at the age of 83.

The extended family saw how the Rebbe Rayatz's bracha was fulfilled. The Rebbe said he would recover from his illness and live a long life and indeed, that is what happened, with open miracles.



**R' Gershon Ber Jacobson**

## **REGARDS FROM THE REBBE**

Let us go back to the days after World War II. Our family did not leave Russia as other Chassidim did. We waited for our missing uncle. Hundreds of Chassidim crossed the border before the Russians caught on. Some of the Chassidim were arrested and others fled for their lives. From that point on, for the next twenty years and more, we were cut off from the outside

world.

After the war, the communist government regrouped and went back to terrorizing its citizens. I never dreamed I would make it out of Russia to Eretz Yisroel.

We knew nothing about Jewish life in Eretz Yisroel or the United States. All letters were censored. Thus we continued to live our lives behind the Iron Curtain while most of our acquaintances and relatives were in free lands.

My uncle's wife and two children who had left Russia for London left no stone unturned in their efforts to get him out, even getting the Queen of England involved, but nothing helped. Although the Russians gained nothing by detaining him, they refused to release him.

Then, one day at the end of 1971, I got a phone call. My brother Aryeh Leib, who lived in Moscow, told me that our cousin, Gershon Ber Jacobson was in town. I was overcome with excitement. It was years since we had heard from him or from anyone else in the family who had managed to leave Russia. The information we had about what was happening in Chabad was sketchy at best. We had heard that the Rebbe Rayatz had passed away and been succeeded by his son-in-law, about whom miraculous stories were told, but who was this Rebbe? What did he look like? We yearned to know. We dreamed about it.

All members of the extended family flew to Moscow to meet him. At first I was afraid to join this outburst of good fortune. I knew from my brother that R' Jacobson was a distinguished journalist and I was afraid that the secret agents would know about our meeting with him and would then check me out and discover the mikva and shul in my

home and the other Jewish activities that I was involved in. As much as I longed to hear live regards from someone who had been near the Rebbe, I was extremely apprehensive.

After my entire family left for Moscow, my desire to see him overcame me and I decided to ask R' Jacobson himself what he thought of our meeting. Would it adversely affect our Jewish activities? I called my brother and asked him to ask R' Jacobson.

My brother spoke to him and got back to me shortly thereafter with R' Jacobson's surprising answer. He said that this wasn't the first time he was back in Russia, and before every flight he had yechidus. The Rebbe had always warned him against meeting with his relatives.

This time, though, when he went to the Rebbe before he left, the tone was entirely different. The Rebbe told him that the galus of Russia was about to end and he could meet with whomever he wanted to without fear, so long as he did not do so secretly so that they wouldn't think he had something to hide.

When I heard that, a stone rolled off my heart and all my worries disappeared. I was in Moscow the next day and although I still trembled in fear, it was overcome by the belief in the Rebbe's words.

## **MOVING MEETING IN MOSCOW WITH MY COUSIN THE JOURNALIST**

Words cannot describe how excited I was when I met him. We fell on each other's necks and I was choked up with emotion. He enthusiastically told us about the Rebbe and about his leadership which spanned continents. He

related what he heard in yechidus before he came this time, that the galus Russia was about to end and we would be able to leave for wherever we pleased.

I was somewhat confused. Like many others, I had dreamt of the day we could pass across the Iron Curtain but I never thought in practical terms that it would actually happen.

Till this day I remember thinking at the time that he said

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this merely to give us hope so we would not be downcast, and doubted that he meant it literally. I was further convinced of this when my brother's connection with Rabbi Jacobson cost him his job.

One morning my brother was called to the Education Ministry where he was asked about his connection with the American journalist. My brother said he was

his cousin. They took out the form he had filled out before he had taken this job and among the questions he had been asked was whether he had any relatives living outside of Russia. He had replied in the negative.

Of course they wanted to know whether he had been lying then or was he lying now. He answered that at the time he had filled out the form, in 1946, he thought his cousin lived somewhere in Russia. It was only recently that he had found out that he had left and lived in New York.

They did not accept this answer and said that someone who has relatives abroad is not fit to be a principal of a school. To his distress, he was fired from the position.

## **REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES WITH THE JOURNALIST SHAUL SCHIFF**

R' Jacobson then left Russia for Eretz Yisroel, where he found the journalist Shaul Schiff. He asked Schiff to send requests of reunification to our entire family so the Russians would allow us to leave for Eretz Yisroel. That was the only way that someone in Russia could leave. When I received this in the mail from him, I apprehensively took it to the emigration bureau in my city.

From that moment until I left Russia, we saw a golden chain of hashgacha pratiyos. The greatest one of all was that in the application for an exit visa, the supervisor had to sign that he didn't need you in the factory. My supervisor was a Moslem anti-Semite. He was 'friendly' with me only because he received a hefty bribe.

Just at that time, he was out of town, leaving me in charge of

signatures. Naturally, I proffered the view that I was dispensable and I signed for myself under his name! If it would have been discovered, I could have been sentenced for years.

A month later, I was called to the emigration office, where they told me that my request had been approved and I had a month to pack and leave Russia. We heard stories about people who had to wait nine months or even longer until they were called to the emigration office, only to be told their request had been rejected. As for us, it took only a month for us to receive a positive answer.

We had to sell all our belongings within a month. We knew that by leaving, we were relinquishing our Soviet citizenship. Anxious about making all the arrangements in time, after a week, I had my wife admitted to hospital claiming she had suffered a heart attack. This would provide an excuse for delaying our departure in the event that we didn't finish our preparations in time.

By the end of the month we

had managed to sell the large apartment we owned. I presented the factory and a large sum of money to Betzalel, who insisted on remaining in Russia.

## THE T'FILLIN AND TORAH SCROLL IN THE SUITCASE

They did not allow us to leave with much. I had bought carpets, thinking that I would be able to take them to Eretz Yisroel and sell them, but I soon realized that the customs officials carefully checked each suitcase and confiscated whatever they wanted. I decided that I wouldn't plead with them and they could take what they liked. When they checked my bags I stood by silently. I didn't care if they took everything as long as they let me leave.

There was, however, one thing I kept a close watch on and that was my Torah scroll. One of the customs officers whispered to me that I should give him some vodka and I wouldn't be sorry. He promised that one of the suitcases

out of all the suitcases I wanted to take with me would not be examined and I could take what I wanted.

I pointed at the suitcase with my t'fillin and Torah. He tried lifting the bag and when he saw that it was heavy, he asked jokingly whether it contained diamonds. I answered nonchalantly that there was a Torah scroll in there.

He knew good and well how valuable that was and he said that the tax was 1000 rubles (instead of the 200 that he asked for until then). I did not think twice, as I really didn't have the opportunity to bargain with him. I didn't want the Torah to fall into their disgusting hands.

As I counted out the sum, I thought how this money wasn't worth anything and was merely a means by which to serve Hashem. A feeling of joy came over me that at least the large sums of money I had given to tz'daka in Samarkand nobody could take away from me, not even a corrupt customs official.

We had three children when we left Moscow. We flew to Vienna and from there continued to Eretz Yisroel.

Words could not express the deep pleasure we had as our feet touched Eretz Yisroel, and it was all with the prophetic blessing of the Rebbe who knew, with ruach ha'kodesh, when the communist rule would end.

Fortunate are we that we are Chassidim, mekusharim to the Rebbe, who drink from the well of living water of Toras HaChassidus, the teachings of the Rebbeim led by the Rebbe; may he speedily come and redeem us with the true and complete Redemption.



Reb Berke Schiff with his children

# UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERY OF G-D'S DECREES

By Boruch Merkur (based on *Seifer HaSichos* 5748 Vol. 1, pg. 306-319)

*The mystery of the Red Heifer, the mystery of death itself, the mystery of the suffering of the righteous, all that doesn't sit well in our hearts, regardless of the plethora of explanations given, remains a "decree," something inexplicable, irrational, even to the likes of Shlomo HaMelech, wisest of all men.*  
*\* Tracing the Rebbe MH"M's instructions on how to perfect our Divine service in the Final Era.*

Having established the tremendous capacity of the individual to influence the collective, the Rebbe returns to the theme of mourning. The call of the hour, says the Rebbe, is for every person to nullify the slightest hint associated with death, "until no impression of it remains." The Rebbe links this message with the Torah portion read that Shabbos, the portion that speaks about the Mitzva of the Red Heifer, a perplexing decree from G-d which has the power to cleanse the impurity associated with death.

Although we presently don't have the ashes of the red heifer – the tenth red heifer will only be utilized when

Moshiach comes – we still have

"the potential, the encouragement, and strengthening [to allow us] to change the state that results from the deficiency of life, that it should return to its former state, etc., until no trace remains, etc.

"This is especially the case in light of the explanation [regarding the Red Heifer] provided by the teachings of Chabad Chassidus. [Indeed, this topic] has been elaborated on to the point of 'providing sustenance,'<sup>169</sup> understanding and comprehension within the soul's faculties of Chabad [i.e., wisdom, understanding, and knowledge] (reaching even the Chabad of the Animal Soul). In recent times it is even possible for this knowledge to be related and explained to a Jewish child, so that he can bring himself [to such a state of purity] that there will not remain in him even a trace of the undesirable concept of the deficiency of life."

Today, the Torah provides the means for any Jew to achieve (a sort of) purity and the removal of defilement from contact with the dead. To be effective, however, the Torah must be properly understood and internalized. How then is this achieved with regard to study of the concept of the Red Heifer, a paradoxical topic that eluded the minds of even the greatest Jewish sages, including Shlomo HaMelech and even Moshe Rabbeinu himself?<sup>170</sup> Indeed, it was only to Moshe Rabbeinu that – following a state of abysmal perplexity ("the face of Moshe turned yellow"<sup>171</sup>) – G-d revealed the secret, the unraveling of the mystery of the Red Heifer



(“to you (specifically to Moshe) I am revealing the reason of the Heifer, but to others it is a decree”<sup>172</sup>),

“and even after it was revealed to Moshe, Shlomo said [regarding the mystery of the Red Heifer], ‘I said, “I will become wise,” but it was far from me.’<sup>173</sup> [How then] can **every single Jew** be able to bring himself [to such a state of purity] that there will not remain in him even a trace that was left upon him as a result of the concept of death?”

True, in recent generations the teachings of Chassidus has come to illuminate some of the deepest secrets of the Torah, and as we said, in terms that are palpable by even simple Jews, even children. Nevertheless, the mystery of the Red Heifer, the mystery of death itself, the mystery of the suffering of the righteous, all that doesn’t sit well in our hearts, regardless of the plethora of explanations given, remains a “decree,” something inexplicable, irrational, even to the likes of Shlomo HaMelech, wisest of all men.

To shed light on this shadowy riddle, the Rebbe makes a distinction between understanding a concept with the

mind and having it sit well with us in our hearts:

“One of the principal concepts of Torah is that it should penetrate not only intellectual understanding but that that understanding should permeate one’s entire being, affecting even **the feelings of the heart**.

“In terms of the feelings of the heart, following all the elucidation and explanation, it is extremely difficult to be absolved of the wonder [which perplexed Moshe Rabbeinu], ‘**how shall it** [i.e., the defilement associated with death] **be purified?**’ to nullify the effect of and the impression left by the deficiency of life on the feelings of the heart, to the point where there remains no doubt in the feelings of the heart, etc., as it is regarding overt and revealed goodness given by the Holy One Blessed Be He (the essence of goodness<sup>174</sup>), ‘from His full, open, holy, and broad hand.’”<sup>175</sup>

It is one thing to have an explanation that resolves these mysteries; quite another to reconcile that explanation with our perception of common sense, our everyday experience, to have it sit well in our hearts that something as grim and undesirable as death has a means to be purified, that there is good concealed within misfortune and suffering, goodness that can somehow be revealed and experienced as such in our daily lives.

[To be continued be”H]

#### NOTES:

169 Tikkunei Zohar tikkun 6, end. See *Likkutei Sichos* Vol. 24, pg. 136, Footnote 35, where it is discussed.

170 BaMidbar Rabba 19:3-4; Koheles Rabba 8:1 (5).

171 BaMidbar Rabba 19:4.

172 Ibid 19:6.

173 Koheles 7:25.

174 See Footnote 48 in the original.

175 Third blessing of Grace After Meals.

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# ANOTHER KIND OF SOLDIER

By S. Malachi

*Eliezer Morgenstern of Morristown, NJ, went to Israel to fulfill a childhood dream: To serve in the Israeli army. Once there he realized that he'd either reach out or get dragged down, spiritually. Thus, his four years of military service were equally hafatza service, specializing in mitvza t'fillin. Today he's helping Chabad on campus while studying at the Technion in Chaifa.*

It was Purim 5764 (2004) when Eliezer Morgenstern arrived at the IDF processing base to begin his military service. He bought wafers and candy and explained to the soldiers how to do the mitzva of mishloach manos. Then he and his newfound friends washed and sat down to the Purim seuda he provided – a bag of pitot and franks.

From the processing base Eliezer was sent to an absorption center for immigrants, where he spent three weeks with young people from all over the world who volunteered to serve in the Israeli army. He will never forget

his first day in the camp.

On his way to shul in the morning, he passed by some civilians who were employees of the IDF. The men were surprised to see this young bearded soldier greeting them. His appearance apparently touched them for one gestured at his companion and announced proudly, “He’s a Kohen.” “And his grandfather was a rabbi,” the other one revealed. Eliezer thought, “Either you’re mashpia on others or they are mashpia on you!”

He stopped and asked them, “Did you put t’fillin on today?”

After some convincing, the group conceded to put on t’fillin.

Then and there, Eliezer resolved, “Not a day will go by without my putting t’fillin on someone!” That is how his first day in the camp began. “I realized that although I’m in the army, I am on shlichus.”

## THERMOS WITH SOUP

It wasn’t an easy commitment but Eliezer stuck to it, through basic training, during combat exercises, in courses, and even in maneuvers in the field. His impressive stature, beard and armored t’fillin case made him a “landmark” in the camp wherever he went.

“They would call, ‘Tzaddik, come here.’ I would tell them that it says in the Gemara ‘and Your people are all tzaddikim,’ and they would respond, ‘but you’re a *real* tzaddik...’”

One of his commanders thought the t’fillin case was a thermos. He asked him curiously, “Is that soup that you carry around with you wherever you go?” Even the religious soldiers didn’t understand why he had two cases until he explained that in Chabad they put on two pairs, Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam.

When Eliezer tells of his efforts to put t’fillin on with someone every day, he recalls a moving story:

“One day they woke us up

earlier than usual and told the religious guys to go and daven and immediately afterwards we would be going out to the field. I would usually manage to schlep two or three people with me to shul, but on the day 'when it's for real' the soldiers want to use their time to organize their equipment and it's hard to convince them to go and daven."

But Eliezer didn't give up. He went over to one of the tents where there was a kibbutznik that he knew and called, "Ofer, put on t'fillin!"

"Leave me alone," Ofer replied.

"Ofer, do it for me!" pleaded Eliezer.

"For you, I'll do it," Ofer conceded, "but I'm not getting out of bed." He sat up in bed and Eliezer quickly wrapped the t'fillin and asked him to say Shma.

"Isn't it enough that I put the t'fillin on? Do I also have to say prayers?"

Eliezer was shocked. "What? Have you never put t'fillin on before?"

***One of his commanders thought the t'fillin case was a thermos. He asked him curiously, "Is that soup that you carry around with you wherever you go?"***

"No."

"You didn't have a bar mitzva?" Eliezer asked incredulously.

"What kind of bar mitzva, Eliezer? I grew up on a kibbutz ..."

Realizing for the first time that in Eretz Yisroel, "the Jewish State," many Jews never put on t'fillin, Eliezer strengthened his resolve to do mitzva t'fillin.

### **MEKUBAL WITH A LONG BEARD**

On one of his first days in the army, Eliezer was sent with another two soldiers to clean the base.

"Apparently they didn't know what to do with us, so they gave us garbage bags and sent us to do what every new group does when they come."

There was no trash on the ground and the new immigrants got into a lively conversation. Then one of the soldiers, whose name was Nick, said, "You Chabadnikim are all right! I like you, Eliezer, but I can't stand Lubavitchers." Oblivious to Eliezer's surprised look, he continued, "I heard that those people throw stones and diapers



at the Israeli police.”

Nick, whose Jewish name was Aryeh Belzer, had many problems in the army. One day he called Eliezer and said, “I want to go to a mekubal.”

“What’s a mekubal?” Eliezer asked him innocently. He replied, “A man with a white beard who sits in a cave.”

“I don’t know what you’re thinking of,” Eliezer responded, “but I’ll take you to someone.”

After making some inquiries, Eliezer took him to Rabbi Furmanski who was living in Beitar. He’s not a mekubal but a Chassid. He was born in the US to a non-observant family. He was accepted to university at a very young age and became a baal t’shuva. The Rebbe told him to sit and learn and that’s what he does. He knows a lot of Chassidus and consequently, kabbala as well. He is also a mathematical genius and he uses this to come up with gematriyos for the names people bring him.

“We went to his house late one evening. Aryeh broke the silence by announcing, ‘I’m the one who dragged him here. I asked him to take me to a mekubal.’ I wanted to bury myself ... but R’ Furmanski was cool about it.

“‘Today, everybody wants to learn kabbala,’ he said with a smile. ‘But you have to realize that kabbala was intended for certain people in certain generations. In our generation, there is Chassidus, which is suited to and vital for everyone to learn.’”

They developed a connection and after Aryeh served in the army, R’ Furmanski referred him to a Chabad yeshiva for mekuravim from abroad.

## WHEN HOLTZMAN PUT ON T’FILLIN

While in the army, Eliezer put t’fillin on everyone, commanders and soldiers alike.

“When we were in basic training I had a sergeant called Holtzman. When the guys realized that I wanted to put on t’fillin with every soldier, they challenged, ‘Let’s see you put t’fillin on with Holtzman.’ I told them that one day he would do it (during basic the soldiers are not allowed to address the sergeants). The guys laughed and said there was no way this would happen because he ate treif and was anti-religious, but I knew that one day it would happen.

***“I always knew  
that I can’t break  
because they’re  
looking at me like  
a person of rank.”***

“The days went by and one Friday I had a pass out of camp (for a short leave), before which one receives a briefing from the commander. It was six in the morning and I went to Holtzman with my t’fillin.

“‘You want to put t’fillin on me?’ he said angrily.

“I replied, ‘Yes, why not?’ I was sure I would encounter opposition and it would take a few attempts to get through to him. I figured I would talk to him a little bit and the next time a little bit, and slowly I would convince him. To my amazement, without another word, Holtzman rolled up his sleeve and put on

t’fillin. Behind even tough exteriors, jewels are hidden.”

## UP CLOSE WITH A “MESHICHIST”

Eliezer’s open and friendly manner made him the man people turned to regarding Jewish issues. “Whoever saw me began talking to me,” he recalls with a smile.

And when talking to a Chabadnik, the first topic that comes up is Moshiach, of course.

“Straightaway they would ask me: ‘What does it mean when they say the Rebbe is Moshiach?’ And all sorts of other questions about Moshiach and Geula. Many people who hear about the belief in the Rebbe as Moshiach think that Lubavitchers are crazy, but when they meet me face to face and hear the sources, their view changes.”

Personal example and the feeling of camaraderie enabled Eliezer to reach his friends’ hearts:

“You can’t compare Chassidim who show up to light menorahs and give out donuts to someone who is going through the army alongside them. The soldiers love when Chassidim come, but when they hear something from the guy who is running beside them and carrying the stretcher with them, they are far more receptive.”

His appearance forces Eliezer to excel:

“I always knew that I can’t break because they’re looking at me like a person of rank. I saw how people were impressed by my commitment and personal courage and it made them think that there’s something genuine about Torah and mitzvot.

“I want to stress that there are difficult times and tests in the army and you have to consult

with a mashpia about it. The way the army is today, it is definitely dangerous for many people from a spiritual perspective, and we are talking about *dinei nefashos* (laws pertaining to matters of life and death).

## CHABAD HOUSE IN GIVAT CHAVIVA

After three years in the army in Nachal, Eliezer got engaged to Michal Landau. After they married, he continued in the army as a commander in the vacation town of Givat Chaviva. The army sends groups of soldiers there to study graduate courses.

Eliezer didn't have much to do and most of the day he was able to sit in shul and learn. The shul quickly became the local Chabad House and soldiers would come and discuss Judaism with him.

In addition, the shul was located directly opposite the classrooms where the soldiers studied, which enabled Eliezer to know precisely when classes ended – and mitvza t'fillin began.

The leaders of the various youth groups that came to the village also benefited from Eliezer's outreach.

"One day a kid walked into shul and told me he had started getting involved with Chabad but his parents were unhappy about it. He was sent, against his will, to this co-ed music camp. Whenever he was able, he would escape to the shul and farbreng with me and the soldiers."

## THE COMMANDER AND THE REBBE'S PROPHECIES

One of the soldiers there began taking a special interest in Chassidus. He had known a bachur from the Chabad yeshiva in Migdal HaEmek who gave him some CD's with niggunim and videos of the Rebbe. Eliezer would borrow his portable video player and gather the soldiers around to watch the Rebbe express his views on a variety of subjects. While they were there, he would also put t'fillin on with them.

While Eliezer was busy with his learning and mitvzaim, he bore the brunt of some unanticipated disapproval. "One day a commander showed up and began yelling at me: 'I know what you're doing – you're showing the soldiers political films (which is against army regulations).'

"I replied simply, 'This is what the Lubavitcher Rebbe said 20-30 years ago. If you think that what he says applies to the situation today, then that just goes to show that you also agree that he's a great prophet.'"

## A SHLICHUS THAT NEVER ENDS

After serving in the army, Eliezer decided to attend the Technion in Chaifa in a special track for religious Jews. As soon as he showed up he saw that his shlichus was waiting for him.

"I met with the shliach there, Rabbi Yossi Rosenberg, and I told him about my plans to study at the Technion. He said they are looking for someone who can help boost the Chabad House's work on campus.

"We were a perfect match and since then we work together in spreading Judaism on campus (in addition to the shliach's work with the people who live in the nearby Ramot neighborhood and the k'hilla of the Chabad shul)."

## THE SHIUR

A majority of the students at the Technion are from abroad. They come to Israel to study and spend time there. Eliezer runs a special program for them in English that draws a large crowd.

"Most of the students are from America. They encountered Chabad at the universities they came from and when they came



Eliezer, while in the army

here, they looked for the local Chabad House.”

For a long time he held a Tanya shiur in his house, which was a fascinating challenge for the intellectual students. But after a while, Eliezer decided to change his approach. There were students who were shy about coming to his house and others

who wanted to join but found the material too difficult since they hadn’t attended the first classes. That’s when “the shiur” was created.

The shiur on the parsha began this winter and is called “the shiur” by the English speaking participants. Unlike the Tanya class, each parsha shiur stands on

its own as a separate unit. Eliezer includes Chassidus and what the Rebbe says along with a basic understanding of the parsha.

“It’s a shiur for everyone, from students who previously learned in yeshivos to kibbutznikim who are not familiar with the stories of Tanach.”

### THE FIRE DIDN’T TOUCH THE TEFILLIN!

A particularly moving story happened towards the end of Eliezer’s army term, after serving as a combat leader in the Second Lebanon War. An excited soldier approached him, asking for help putting on t’fillin. Eliezer was thrilled – finally someone was asking him! After putting on the t’fillin, the soldier told him the following:

“I am not religious and I don’t believe in miracles, but I must tell you what happened! During the fighting we arrived in a village in Lebanon. We were supposed to take a certain hill, and in order to blitz the enemy we were instructed to unload all our equipment including our packs and to charge with only a protective vest and our personal weapon.

“Suddenly, the enemy started shooting mortars at us. We were under murderous fire. It was the hot days of summer and the field was full of thorns and dry brush. Everything in the field was scorched – personal belongings and expensive equipment. Weapons were burned and ammunition exploded.

“When the fighting was over, I was sent with a group of soldiers to retrieve whatever we could. I began searching and noticed an incredible thing time and again. In every pack we found, even the most burned, the t’fillin were unharmed. Even the fabric bags they were in were not scorched. I realized I was going from one charred kitbag to the ashen remains of another and collecting pairs of t’fillin!

“I grew up without emuna and I don’t know how to explain this. I can’t understand it. I won’t become religious because of this and won’t become a believer, but I decided I must put on t’fillin.”

***“I grew up without emuna and I don’t know how to explain this. I can’t understand it. I won’t become religious because of this and won’t become a believer, but I decided I must put on t’fillin.”***

### THE MOST TALKED ABOUT TOPIC

The shiur takes hours of preparation. Aside from Rashi, Medrashim and short ideas from the Rebbe’s sichos, Eliezer learns a variety of commentaries and ideas that include sources from across the gamut of Jewish thought.

The participants are thinking people and include former yeshiva students, so the class has to satisfy all types and levels.

“It’s very hard and I have to prepare well, but the big advantage of this crowd is that when you explain things well, it really gets through to them.”

The atmosphere is open and relaxed. With everyone feeling free to express his view, the students animatedly discuss topics in Judaism. The shiur begins at 6:30 and lasts for two to three hours, and sometimes longer.

In each shiur, Eliezer focuses on a central tenet of Judaism as it is illuminated by the Rebbe’s teachings. Ask him which topic is spoken about the most in the shiurim and he’ll tell you – Moshiach. It all starts and ends with Moshiach!

### SHABBOSOS WITH CHABAD

Aside from the daily activities, the Chabad House devotes a lot of attention to seasonal activities and events. Every few weeks there

is a communal Shabbos.

"We've reached the maximum the place can hold. I add tables here and there and manage to fit everyone in."

Even on a regular Shabbos the shluchim are busy, mainly with hosting students

"People call Erev Shabbos and ask: 'Can I come for Shabbos? I have three friends – can I bring them?'" Eliezer either refers them to R' Yossi or hosts them himself.

Every so often the shluchim arrange trips. These excursions are a wonderful opportunity to get to know one another and have some hands-on learning experiences. Eliezer remembers a special Shabbos in Ascent of Tzfas when students gathered from all over the country and had an inspiring time together.

### "MEAT AND MEET"

At the start of every semester the Chabad house hosts a barbeque called "Meat and Meet." The timing is perfect, so the event is always successful. Everybody wants to get to know one another and the pressure of classes and tests hasn't started yet. It's a great time to get acquainted with the students and welcome them to the Chabad house.

Last Chanuka, six separate parties were held on campus! A menorah lighting took place on the campus plaza with a thousand students participating. After a lot

of effort in obtaining permits, a large menorah was set up and R' Yossi and Eliezer spoke about the significance of the holiday. Music was played on the sound system and hundreds of doughnuts were given out.

### HIS WIFE

Michal is responsible for the most important part of the work, the gashmuis! "As much as we put into the ruchnius, we put into the gashmuis. The students are here without family and long for the warmth and the special atmosphere they find at the Chabad House. We see clearly, 'A Jew's gashmuis is ruchnius.'"

Michal is also the computer expert at the Chabad house. She prepares the flyers and takes care of their column on the Chabad on Campus website.

### LACK OF TIME

"People in my classes don't understand how I do it. The classes at Technion are very intensive and demanding and the others have no time for anything else, while I arrange shiurim and events.

"When they ask me, I explain that I have no secret. I don't have time either. Sometimes I have no time for homework, but I drop everything on Wednesday for the shiur. I want to do well at school and I have invested a lot of time into it and it's very important to me, but I don't compromise on

***If you don't illuminate your environment, it's a sign that you yourself are not lit up.***

the outreach which is my first priority. I could make the outreach second and then I would have plenty of time to study, but then I would feel I have missed out. As the Rebbe writes, 'A Chassid creates an atmosphere ... and if not ... he must ask himself: What am I doing in the world?'

"When I am someplace, I know that first and foremost I am there to influence others. If they would tell me I cannot do both, take classes and do outreach, I would know that this is not my place. If I'm in a place that doesn't allow me time for others, that's not a place for me.

"Chassidim are 'neiros l'ha'ir.' Every few weeks we get reminded about this by the Rebbe in the HaYom Yom, to illuminate our surroundings, to make a difference. If you don't illuminate your environment, it's a sign that you yourself are not lit up. It may sound spiritual but I feel it on a physical level. I am constantly reminded that I am here to impact on others."



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# A CHABAD CORNERSTONE IN ROSH PINA

By Nosson Avrohom

*For 22 years now, Rabbi Shlomo and Etti Berkowitz have been reaching out in Rosh Pina. They were greeted by a charming pastoral landscape but the people were not at all welcoming. Today, the shluchim are familiar and beloved figures in Rosh Pina.*

A beautiful harmony of violin, guitar, flutes and harmonicas accompanied me as I walked the narrow streets of the old city of Rosh Pina towards the shul. Just a few short years ago, the shul was merely a historical museum, of interest only to the many tourists who enjoyed exploring the background of this enchanting town. Rabbi Shlomo Berkowitz, the Rebbe's shliach, restored the shul's function as a house of prayer with minyanim throughout the week.

The old stone houses and the cobblestone streets are an attraction to the many people who want to slow down a bit. Guesthouses line both sides of the main street, boasting

breathtaking vistas from their windows. Restaurants serving organic food take their place among cafes, art galleries, boutiques and a busy shopping center. No wonder Rosh Pina is a magnet for droves of artists, musicians and seekers of a mystical atmosphere, with tens of thousands of visitors a year.

In the midst of all this are Rabbi Berkowitz and two fellow shluchim, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Hertzl and Rabbi Segev Levy. The Chabad community that has grown around them over the years is one of the most fascinating.

"People here are a special type of spiritual, serene Jews," R' Berkowitz told me. Not

surprisingly, the Chabad community is also unique. I sensed it as soon as I walked into the shul for Maariv. There was a very warm feeling of unity. Moments before, all of them had been farbrenging together for Rosh Chodesh, accompanied by guitars and songs written by one of the members of the locals.

"This unity was readily apparent during the Second Lebanon War, when Rosh Pina was also a target of our enemies. Because of answers from the Rebbe in the Igros Kodesh, the k'hilla collectively decided not to leave but to stay and help the soldiers. Each of us felt that we were one family."

Rosh Pina was founded in 1882 by thirty immigrant families from Romania. They had sent a representative, Dovid Shuv, to find a suitable location for them. Then they bought land and established the yishuv Rosh Pina, based on the verse in T'hillim, *"the stone scorned by the builders became rosh pina – the cornerstone."*

The Turkish authorities forbade new construction and the settlers resignedly continued living in homes they bought from



the Arabs. In 1883, Baron Edmund Rothschild came to their aid. In exchange for transferring all the land and buildings of the moshava to his name, he built up the place and paid its debts.

Their shul was founded in 1887. At some point it fell to disuse, and for many years the old shul was open only for tourists. As mentioned earlier, the Chabad community has recently resumed regular minyanim there.

The moshava filled a central role in the settlement of Eretz Yisroel until the founding of the State. In 1920 it was a base for Yosef Trumpeldor and his colleagues and in the thirties, Professor Gideon Mer, an expert

on malaria, worked there researching the disease.

Under the British mandate the moshava was a base for the smuggling of Jews from Syria. Rosh Pina was also the base for a troop of the Betar group, whose membership included the famous martyr hung by the British, Shlomo Ben Yosef.

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R' Berkowitz's personal history is no less interesting. He grew up in Petach Tikva and attended Litvishe yeshivos. At the end of the 70's he was learning in Yeshivas Itri in Yerushalayim, where he was one of a group of eight bachurim who were mekuravim to Chassidus Chabad through Rabbi Berel Shur

a"n. They kept their Chassidus shiurim a secret. Each time that R' Shur came to the yeshiva, he taught in a different bachur's room.

The mashgiach, Rabbi Shmuel Cohen, found out about it. Of a Chassidic background himself, he didn't make a fuss about the underground shiurim. On the contrary; from time to time he would ask those talmidim to check things up for him in Tanya or Likkutei Torah.

When they finished learning in Itri, the entire group went to learn in Tomchei T'mimim in Kfar Chabad, which they had visited a number of times. Only R' Berkowitz was persuaded by the rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Elefant,

## *He sighed and said, ‘Now you’ll start closing our streets and throwing stones on Shabbos...’*

to remain in Itri. “You can become a Chabad Chassid even if you learn in a Litvishe yeshiva,” he said, and he predicted a rosy future for him as a gadol b’Torah.

R’ Berkowitz agreed to stay on condition that he could go to the Rebbe for Tishrei. He will never forget that Tishrei, (see sidebar) in which he completed his transition to Lubavitch and to the Rebbe.

“It was 5741(1980) and the plane was full of Lubavitchers. Even the meals served by the stewardesses had the hechsher of Rav Landau. It was a Shnas Hakhel. After a month packed

with experiences and moving moments, I came before the Rebbe for yechidus. I had one question – should I switch to a Chabad yeshiva.

“I told the Rebbe that I wanted to make the switch but my family opposed it. The Rebbe answered that the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch says a person should learn where he desires to learn. The Rebbe said I should make the switch in the most respectful and reasonable way, so as not to offend my family.”

R’ Berkowitz and his wife Etty (Lifsh) arrived in Rosh Pina 22 years ago, having spent the first year of their marriage in Tzfas, where he learned in Kollel. Rabbi Betzalel Kupchik, now of Poona, India, had started working in Rosh Pina at that time. This was one of several places where Rabbi Kupchik has paved the way.

“When I completed the year in Kollel, my wife and I were determined to go on shlichus. R’ Kupchik urged me to consider Rosh Pina among our other

possibilities. We went to the Rebbe for Tishrei 5747 and at the beginning of the month I submitted a letter with R’ Kupchik’s suggestion.

“An entire month went by without an answer. I asked one of the secretaries about it and he said that he put my note on top of the pile, but the Rebbe moved it to the bottom. It was only at the end of the month, before we returned home, that we got the go-ahead.

“When we began in Rosh Pina, the spiritual state of the moshava was especially poor. People were not happy to see us and were afraid that we would ruin their peaceful lives. On one of our first days there, someone encountered me on the street and asked, ‘Do you live here?’

“I replied that I did and he sighed and said, ‘Now you’ll start closing our streets and throwing stones on Shabbos.’ Worried residents held demonstrations outside the Chabad house. Ilan, a member of our k’hilla, confided that when he was young he was a member of a youth movement and he would demonstrate against us for coming to make them do t’shuva. ‘We were right...’ he concluded with a smile.”

“The first significant project which R’ Kupchik started was a Chabad preschool which is still in operation. It wasn’t an easy project. The devoted teacher, Mrs. Ada Zamir, worked for a long time without a salary and it is thanks to her that the school continued to exist.

“The local council wasn’t happy about giving us a permit to open the preschool, and every year was another fight. One year, the school’s building was nearly taken away from us. The council blamed the Education Ministry and the Education Ministry

### **LOOKING FOR A TREASURE UNDER THE BRIDGE**

During the 22 years of shlichus in Rosh Pina, R’ Berkowitz has connected many Jews to the Rebbe. When I asked him for an interesting example, he took out a letter and told me the story behind it:

“One day Mrs. Ada Zamir, the first teacher in the Chabad preschool, showed up with a young couple. They wanted information about Judaism. They were spiritual people and had recently returned from India, where they had explored many cults. When they had a hard time deciding which cult to join, they suddenly remembered Judaism. As they stood at that fateful crossroads, they decided that before making this momentous decision they would research Judaism, and that is how they came to us.

“After talking for a long time and clarifying many issues, I suggested that they write to the Rebbe. They wrote and received a speedy answer: **When they eat spiritual, healthy food for Jews (living according to the Torah of Life), they will be healthy physically, too, and there is no other way. Check mezuzos and t’fillin, I will mention it at the gravesite.**

The two of them left their idols and today the husband is a famous Lubavitcher lecturer.

blamed the council. On the first day of school, not having the permit, the staff, students and parents of the preschool assembled right there in the lobby of the council building with snacks and toys. Some of the mothers were not religious, which gave our protest a populist feel rather than a religious one.

“At some point, the council members couldn’t take it anymore and they called the police to get the kids out. The situation was so absurd that the council gave us the permit.

“Over the years I received many brachos from the Rebbe. The problems we deal with today pale in comparison to the heartache and trials of the early years. Our Chabad k’hilla has grown and we now operate as a united front and not as private people, which makes things much easier for us. The people who were afraid of us at first have realized, over the years, that we don’t eat anybody and many of our big opponents became

friends.”

When R’ Berkowitz speaks about difficulties he is definitely referring to the cultural center as an example.

“Even when the council and other institutions began to realize that the Lubavitchers are not scary people and they don’t have any intentions of attacking anybody, the cultural center remained a fortress of irreligiosity. Any attempt to work with them on various events was turned down.”

Mrs. Berkowitz adds:

“On our first Shabbos here, we went to daven at the Ashkenazi shul. When I arrived, the women’s section was empty and I was later joined by two American women, one older and one younger. A man motioned to them occasionally to show them how to daven and where they were up to.

“When the davening was over we got to talking and the younger one told me that this was the first time she was davening in a shul.



**Rabbi Berkowitz being appointed rav of the k’hilla**

I invited them to eat the Shabbos meal with us. They told me that they were staying in yishuv Vered HaGalil. I suggested they join us and then return to their guest house.

“On our way to the house we passed by a fenced area where there was a sign that said: A Community Center named for Sir Bartow Will be Built Here. I noticed that the man was pointing at the area and telling the women, ‘What I was talking to you about ... it will be built here.’

“We didn’t attribute special importance to this and walked on. At home we made Kiddush, ate and sang. We all enjoyed it. We were young shluchim and it was our first opportunity to host people.

“It was only after the local newspaper published a letter from this man in which he thanked the Chabad house of Rosh Pina for its warm hospitality on Shabbos that we realized that he was the person who donated the building and the women were his wife and daughter in law. That building, the new cultural center, had been closed to us for years. Thanks to our hosting them, a few years later we were given permission to use the center for free.

“It was Noa Brenenson who finally got us in. Her brother, R’



**Rabbi Berkowitz (left) and Rabbi Hertzl with sandwiches for the soldiers during the Second Lebanon War**

Gideon (Gidi) Sharon of Kiryat Tivon, had gotten involved in Judaism through R' Kupchik. When Noa's husband served as head of the council, she tore

down the barrier of opposition to us. I'll never forget the words of the director of the cultural center back when I asked for permission to do a Chanuka program. 'Why

should I let you? You are the Maccabim and we are the Greeks and we are in the midst of a cultural war!'

"A year later, that director was replaced and his replacement allowed us to use the center. Today, whenever an event takes place, they call us from the center to work things out in advance. They are even willing to postpone events that they are planning so as not to interfere with Chabad's work or forgo Chabad's active involvement in their activities."

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R' Berkowitz does the usual and seasonal programs, especially with soldiers and residents of the town. However, the heart of the community's activities is the shul, where there are daily t'fillos, shiurim, and farbrengens.

When the Berkowitz couple arrived in Rosh Pina, two shuls were in operation, one Sefardi shul and the other Ashkenazi. The big, beautiful shul that was established by the founders of the moshava remained closed for t'fillos for sixty years and was open only to visitors and tourists.

I asked R' Berkowitz how the shul, which served as a museum, became a Chabad shul. He said:

"When we wanted to turn the place into a proper shul, we experienced strong opposition. However, it was impossible to forbid us to daven in the shul. We enlisted the help of the elderly gabbai who opened the shul for davening on the Yomim Nora'im. Then he enabled us to daven there on Shabbos. When groups of visitors came, we would go outside until their guide finished explaining the historical background. This absurd state of affairs continued for a while.

"Another problem was they did not allow us to put up a curtain between the men and women's

## HE REMEMBERS THE REBBE RAYATZ'S VISIT TO ROSH PINA

On my visit to Rosh Pina I met Mr. Aviv Keller, probably the oldest resident there. He remembers, nostalgically, when the Rebbe Rayatz came to the moshava, especially the visit at his aunt and uncle's house, and the tremendous impression made on the residents. He was a young boy at the time.



Aviv Keller (right) at the signing of a contract to write a Torah scroll to unite the residents of Rosh Pina

"It was shortly before the massacre in Chevron and Tzfas in 1929. The Rebbe Rayatz was on his way to the holy places in Tzfas and Miron. He stopped at Rosh Pina and went to my uncle, Shimon Keller's house, and asked whether it was a Jewish home. I was there and the Rebbe appeared very impressive to me. He davened Mincha with his escort and then my uncle asked him whether he would have a cup of tea and the Rebbe agreed.

"News that the Rebbe was in my uncle's home spread quickly and many local residents gathered around the house. The Rebbe asked the settlers how they were and listened to them talk about their feelings and experiences. In the meantime, the wheels of the Rebbe's car were found to have twisted somewhat from the long and winding road. They called the blacksmith, Aharon Weinstein and his sons, and they worked on fixing the wheels.

"The residents were very excited by the Rebbe's visit though I, being a little boy, did not understand what all the excitement was about. Nobody knew ahead of time that the Rebbe would visit. When the Rebbe left the house a large crowd accompanied his car."

Mr. Keller told this story to the k'hilla at a birthday party in his honor.

"When we came here 22 years ago," R' Berkowitz told me, "we met the aunt, who confirmed the story."

The house the Rebbe visited is still standing and is in the center of the moshava. When R' Berkowitz heard that the house was being sold, he went to the person who bought it, Mrs. Netta Rimon, who works in Middle Eastern clothing design. When she heard about the historic-Chassidic angle to the house, she asked him to kasher the kitchen and since then she has become part of the k'hilla.



**The city council head lighting the menorah in Rosh Pina**



**Rabbi Berkowitz at a program for children**

sections. The people in charge of tourism at the council kept checking to ensure that we did not make any changes in the shul.

A few days before Pesach, I got a phone call from Mrs. Noa Brenenson. She told me that there was a family who had been interested in Judaism and then backed off and she asked me to bring them shmura matza.

“Without knowing anything about them, I went to their house. The woman was working in the garden and the husband was standing on their porch. They gave me an odd look. When I explained what I had brought with me and the purpose of my visit, they said I should leave the matzos on the windowsill and that they didn’t know if they would use it.

“I figured matza is the food of faith and I hoped it accomplished something with them. Indeed, within a few days we kashered their kitchen and today they are one of the closest families to us and regulars at the shul.

They had started out with Rabbi Yisroel Halperin in Hertzliya, where they lived for a while, but at some point reverted back to their old ways. One thing that R’ Halperin had said stuck with them. He told them that since it’s a given that words from the heart enter the heart, if they did not complete their coming close to Judaism, it’s an indication that the problem was with him.

“When the mother of this woman saw that she was becoming a Lubavitcher, she revealed to her that her family, Alperowitz, were from the town of Kurenitz where they were Chabad Chassidim. When she told me about this, I told her jokingly that although it might seem to them that I was on a higher level, she in fact was the real thing as her origins were Lubavitch.

“This woman was an important factor in getting the shul to becoming a shul once again. I knew that if I asked the city council about erecting a mechitza I would get an automatic refusal, so I sent this woman, explaining to her the purpose of the mechitza. She went with the request but said that the site renovation administrator refused.

“Two weeks later she came to our house holding bags. When we asked what was inside she told us that she had bought material and planned on sewing a mechitza for the shul. She just wanted us to pick a material from the ones she’d brought.

“When we asked her what happened all of a sudden, she said she had written to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh about a personal matter and in the answer she opened to, the Rebbe spoke about the importance of a mechitza in a shul. She was taken aback by this and concluded that her personal issue was connected with putting up a mechitza and so she was determined to take this upon herself.

***I heard the baal korei ask one of the people, “Yoram, why don’t you come to our shul? What are they promising you at the Sefardic shul – Olam HaBa? Over here we promise you Yemos HaMoshiach!”***

“She sewed the material and by the next Shabbos the shul had a kosher mechitza. I was nervous because the administrator came in every Shabbos to see that we didn’t change anything and I wondered what he would say about the new mechitza, especially after we had spoken to him and he had refused.

“When he came that Shabbos

I watched him turn red in anger. The woman called him outside and told him she had left a message on his answering machine before Shabbos that we cannot daven without a mechitza and she had made one. To my surprise, he was appeased and the mechitza remained.”

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Many tourists to Rosh Pina

## EXPERIENCING THE REBBE’S HEAVENLY SIGHT FIRSTHAND

“I spent Tishrei, 5741, with the Rebbe,” relates R’ Berkowitz. “I was new to it all and not familiar with how things worked in 770, especially in Tishrei. I heard that there would be a farbrengen on Erev Rosh HaShana and, wanting a good spot from where I could see and hear the Rebbe, I arrived at 770 three hours early.

“About twenty minutes before the farbrengen, someone came over to me and said I was in his place. At first I didn’t understand what he was talking about - I had been standing there for three hours already! However, when more and more Chassidim came in I understood that this is how it works. Wherever I would stand or sit, that was already someone’s permanent place, until five minutes before the farbrengen, I found myself outside 770, frustrated and upset.

“I ended up standing in the pyramid that was always on the western side. I couldn’t see the Rebbe well and I was still smarting from the whole scene. By the time the farbrengen ended, though, I realized it was all b’hashgacha pratis.

“Standing next to me was a typical Israeli with a white kippa on his head. It looked as though it was his first time at a farbrengen, too. During the break between sichos, the Rebbe said l’chaim to the crowd. I gave the Israeli a cup so he could say l’chaim to the Rebbe.

“I got wine for him and told him to raise his cup and say l’chaim. Interestingly, though plenty of people around us raised their cups towards the Rebbe and the Rebbe acknowledged them all, the Rebbe did not react to this Israeli’s gesture. It was an obvious omission. Not only the Israeli and I sensed it, but so did the entire crowd around us.

“I wondered what the reason could be for the Rebbe responding to everyone but this Israeli. I felt so bad that he was being skipped over. Then I suddenly thought that maybe it was because he did not know to make a bracha on the wine.

“When the Rebbe finished saying another sicha and began a niggun, I asked him whether he had said a bracha. He didn’t even know what a bracha *was*. I said the bracha with him word by word and it was exciting and moving to see that the moment he raised his cup to the Rebbe, the Rebbe suddenly turned in his direction and said, ‘L’chaim u’li’vracha.’ It was an incredible sight. We all felt G-dliness at that moment. There is no other explanation. For me, it was my first encounter with the Rebbe’s heavenly vision.”

drop by the Chabad shul on their visit to the Old City, sometimes getting caught up in a farbrengen or a shiur.

“We’ve had many interesting stories with tourists. On 12 Tammuz, for example, we were in midst of a big farbrengen for men and women at the shul when a couple walked in. The crowd was singing a niggun and the woman asked me what they were doing. I explained that we were having a Chassidishe farbrengen in honor of the Chag Ha’Geula. She was very excited to hear this and she told me that she was connected to the Chabad outreach in Yakne’am, run by Rabbi Noam Dekel. She had wanted to attend the farbrengen there that day, but her husband refused. Instead, she saw how the Rebbe arranged a farbrengen for her in Rosh Pina.”

Often, guests from Israel and around the world tell R’ Berkowitz stories that they had with the Rebbe.

“One evening, an older man came in and related that in his diplomatic role he had yechidus several times with the Rebbe. He told us an interesting story and lesson that he heard from the Rebbe one of those times.

“The Rebbe told him a story about a family in Russia in the time of the Cantonists. The Russians took one of their sons to the army, where he forgot about his Judaism as he made his way up the ladder. One time, he and his soldiers went to a place that was familiar to him and he remembered that he was right near his hometown. He decided to research his past. Taking a few men with him, he went to the town.

“When they entered the Jewish quarter, it all came back to him. Remembering that his father was a shoemaker, he went to his shop.

At first his father was apprehensive since he did not recognize him. When he told his father that he was his son, his father asked him, 'Do you remember that you are a Jew?' He assured him that he did. 'Do you keep Shabbos?' He admitted that conditions in the army did not enable him to do so. 'Do you keep kosher?' He again replied that he could not in the army. The father finally lost his patience and asked, 'So in what way are you Jewish?' The son responded, 'I am still afraid of dogs.'

"The Rebbe explained to him in yechidus that many times, a Jew forgets that he's Jewish, but then a dog comes and reminds him. The lesson is clear."

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Chabad activity in Rosh Pina has increased in recent years with the addition of two shluchim, R' Hertzl and R Levy.

"The big change took place when we tried to open a Chabad school a few years ago, which aroused great opposition. Some days the students learned in our house, but Rosh Pina was not yet



The old shul that has become the new Chabad shul.

A view from outside and inside



ready for a Chabad school and the school did not last long. The good thing that resulted was that we were joined by another shluchim couple, the Hertzls. Mrs. Hertzl was a teacher for the two years that the school was open.

"Then came another shliach, R' Levy, who is secretary of the

Chabad house and gabbai of the shul. He is busy with shiurim and many activities."

The members of the k'hilla in Rosh Pina, like the three shluchim, all come from different backgrounds. The one thing that unites them is their great Ahavas Yisroel.

"People here are focused on the Rebbe. They all write to the Rebbe and live with Moshiach and Geula. When they write something, they add 'Yechi ha'Melech' with great sincerity. We had a bar mitzva at the shul and I heard the baal korei ask one of the people, 'Yoram, why don't you come to our shul? What are they promising you at the Sefardic shul – Olam HaBa? Over here we promise you Yemos HaMoshiach...'"

The members of the k'hilla range from musicians to alternative healers and are, in general, spiritual people. An entire article could be written about each of them. One such example is Ofer Reichshtat. At a farbrengen before davening, Ofer told me that he was hoping to



Reading the Megilla in the old shul

produce his first CD soon called *Hishtadlus*, with songs that he wrote.

“I’ve been living in Rosh Pina for thirteen years,” said Ofer. “I came here from Bat Yam in order to live in a quieter place. For years I have been going through a long process of getting involved in Judaism, a process that culminated on my birthday, on Purim of four years ago.

“At that time I lived on the upper street of Rosh Pina, above the shul. The Chabad singing that wafted up from there penetrated my neshama and effected the change. The Chabad niggunim played on the strings of my soul. Several times I found myself sitting and listening to the songs coming from the shul.

“When I walked in I was taken by this amazing thing called Chabad, the Rebbe’s greatness, and his shluchim. You feel a lot of light and chayus.

Later on I experienced an amazing bracha from the Rebbe. It was Yud-Tes Kislev of three years ago. The teachers at the Chabad preschool asked me to come and farbreng with the children, but I wasn’t so interested. When I went to the yeshiva in Tzfas, where I was learning at the time, I noticed a poster near the *netilas yadayim* area about the special quality of children, proclaiming that the world exists with the breath of their mouths. It inspired me and I told the teachers I would come.

“It was a very special event, at the end of which the teachers and children blessed me to become a chassan that year. At my vort a few months later, R’ Berkowitz took a dollar out of his pocket and told me, ‘I don’t know to whom and when it was given, but this is a dollar from the Rebbe



**A Sukkos farbrengen**



**The packed shul**

and I’m giving it to you as a gift.’ On the dollar it was written that it was received at a Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen.

“The teachers, who were at the vort, reminded everyone that at their Yud-Tes Kislev event at school they had all blessed me for a shidduch. At the end of the evening, when we wrote to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh together with R’ Hertzl, the letter we opened to said, ‘I am surprised that you don’t mention the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen...’”

There is so much more that could be written about the

community in Rosh Pina, about the people and the camaraderie and simcha there.

“During the Second Lebanon War, we all stayed here because of answers from the Rebbe in the Igros Kodesh. Missiles flew from all directions and the entire area was under attack. In Rosh Pina hardly any missiles fell, just two that did no damage. We decided to write a Torah scroll that all residents will take part in as an expression of our thanks for the open miracles here.”

# BUSINESS IS BLOOMING

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

*In his Crown Heights flower shop, Rabbi Gil Hirsch cultivates not only flowers, but neshamos, sprinkling them with the dewdrops of Yiddishkait, exposing them to the sunlight of chassidus, and gently nurturing them in the teachings of Torah and chassidus.*

When I was sent to interview Rabbi Gil Hirsch, owner of the legendary flower shop on Kingston Avenue near 770, I came during the afternoon hours and found the store closed. Through the glass, I could see a most unusual sight: Among the attractive plants, wild flowers, laurel wreaths, and various decorative floral arrangements sat more than a minyan of chassidim, sitting alongside those “returning to their roots,” captivated by the clear and flowing words of the storeowner, Rabbi Hirsch.

The next day, I came a little bit earlier, but the store was closed then as well. Behind the glass, I could hear the voice of Rabbi Hirsch’s melodious voice in Torah study.

It was not until the following day when I came even earlier, that I finally found myself standing before a pleasant and warmhearted chassid

with a thick beard. I quickly realized that this business, opened with the direct instructions he had received from the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, is not merely a flower store, as it also serves as a place for spreading the wellsprings of chassidus and the announcement of the Redemption.

“One day a week, the store hosts a class for baalei t’shuva including those who, over the years, have already become chassidim,” said Rabbi Hirsch modestly. “Another day, I broadcast via an Internet site to hundreds of regular listeners.”

## A SURPRISING INSTRUCTION

Rabbi Hirsch finished watering the flowers and plants, then settled into his armchair to relate the unique story of the flower shop, while I listened spellbound.

“I really wanted to go out on shlichus,” he began. “In 5728, a few months after my wife and I got married, we went in for a yechidus with the Rebbe on the occasion of my birthday, as was customary in those days. I told the Rebbe that we were ready to go out on shlichus. The Rebbe heard my request, and said there is no need to hurry. Two years later, when I asked the Rebbe again about going out on shlichus, he simply replied, ‘You have a holy and valued shlichus in Brooklyn.’ I didn’t know what the Rebbe meant.

“Five years later, in Shvat 5735, I again went in for yechidus with the Rebbe, and when I repeated our desire to go out on shlichus, the Rebbe said, ‘Why should people have to buy flowers in other communities, when it’s possible to open a store here?’ There had been a flower shop in Crown Heights, not far from 770, but it had closed a few months prior. I was simply amazed by the Rebbe’s request, and I understood that this is apparently the shlichus that the Rebbe is assigning me.

“I remember that yechidus well, as if it was taking place just now. I had the privilege of spending ten minutes and thirty seconds alone with the Rebbe in his holy inner chamber – a rather lengthy period of time for a birthday yechidus. I will never forget how the secretary came in every minute to indicate that I should leave. Yet, the Rebbe continued to explain how my life’s shlichus would essentially be through the opening of a flower shop in Crown Heights – an endeavor that had never crossed my mind, nor did I have the slightest idea how to go about it. I was dumbfounded.

“It took me a few days to absorb what the Rebbe was requesting. I had always seen myself going out on actual shlichus, and here the Rebbe is asking me to open a flower shop,

a business that I knew nothing about, despite the fact that my father-in-law ran one in Borough Park. But if the Rebbe says – you do. I didn't ask too many questions. I made inquiries regarding a place that I could buy in order to open a store, and in the meantime, I submitted a letter to the Rebbe, asking if I should learn the tricks of the trade from my father-in-law. The Rebbe replied that I should open immediately, in other words, without going through a period of study and training. For whatever reason, the Rebbe wanted me to open the store as quickly as possible, and so I did.

### CHARGED WITH KIDNAPPING

Though Rabbi Hirsch may not have realized it, the Rebbe's earlier instruction to him about his "holy

and valued shlichus in Brooklyn" was also being fulfilled.

For fifteen years, Rabbi Hirsch has given over a class in Shulchan Aruch within the confines of the store. "This began when the Lubavitch Youth Organization and shluchim from surrounding towns would send Chabad friends and supporters to our home, giving an up-close view of the pleasant and fragrant atmosphere of a real chassidic Shabbos. The *pintele Yid* within many of these people was ignited, and we continued to accompany them along the way until they had changed their names and attire, becoming full-fledged chassidim."

"One such story took place six years ago. There was a boy, about fourteen years of age, who lived near Borough Park. The boy's family was entangled in a very complex

*I had always seen myself going out on actual shlichus, and here the Rebbe is asking me to open a flower shop, a business that I knew nothing about.*

domestic situation, and his mother wanted to cut him off from all facets of Judaism *r"l*. This boy was already mature enough to understand the truth of Torah and the importance in



fulfilling mitzvos, and he was determined not to be swept away by the torrential waves surrounding his family. When he decided that he could no longer tolerate the daily preaching against the traditions of his forefathers, he got up and left home. This boy's sorry story spread throughout the neighborhood, and while the local Jewish community was filled with sympathy for his plight, there was nothing that they could do to help him. In the United States, sheltering a child that age without his parents' knowledge is against the law, subjecting the violator to possible imprisonment. As a result, many people were simply too afraid to do anything.

"One day, I received an urgent telephone call from an acquaintance living in Borough Park. He told me the whole sad tale about this boy who wanted to continue observing his Jewish traditions, whatever the price, and concluded emotionally, 'You Lubavitcher chassidim are known for protecting every Jewish soul with tremendous sacrifice. Please do something!' I decided to get into the thick of it and help this boy. Rumors had spread about his disappearance, and his mother had filed a report with the local police and asked them to find her son, which they eventually did.

"The police detained the boy for questioning and an investigation. He was worried about being detained over Shabbos, and I assisted him as much as possible, even accompanying him when he was in jail, and working to get him released – at least for Shabbos. In the meantime, the police informed my attorney in no uncertain terms that they deem this entire affair to be no less than a kidnapping. Furthermore, I am the prime suspect being accused in his abduction, since I had no right to exercise any authority over the boy nor provide him with assistance against the will of his

mother.

"Rabbanim and chassidic rebbes from Agudath Israel of America had also been involved in this complicated matter, but in practical terms, I was the one who helped him, and therefore, I was the prime suspect.

"When I consulted with my attorney, he told me bluntly, 'The State of New York is charging you with kidnapping. They have all the evidence to prove that you assisted the boy in running away from home against his mother's wishes. Chances are high that the charges will stand up in court, and you'll be sent to prison.' Before the trial, I asked the Rebbe for a bracha, and I appeared in the courtroom on the appointed date. The prosecutors presented a logical and legal case that I had no right to get involved in a matter that has no relevance to me. In presenting my defense, my attorney claimed that I had pity on the boy, and therefore I helped him by doing no less than my dutiful responsibility towards my fellow man.

"My attorney had serious doubts whether this line of defense would prove successful, but I urged him on by stating that he's not operating with his own strengths alone, but with those of the Rebbe. After the two sides made their concluding arguments, the judge retired to his chambers to prepare his verdict. Anxiety reigned in the courtroom.

"His ruling took everyone by surprise. He declared that he was impressed how despite the fact that I was not biologically related to the boy, my active concern for his welfare was significantly greater than any family member. Therefore, since the court was only concerned with the boy's best interests, the judge not only ruled that the kidnapping charges were unfounded, he appointed none other than me to be his legal guardian. I was shocked, as was my attorney, and the case was

closed – by the hand of G-d."

Today, this young man has become a full-fledged "Tamim" in every respect, learning in one of the Chabad yeshivos in the United States and demonstrating outstanding abilities as an excellent student in both nigleh and chassidus.

## BRINGING BACK SOULS

Rabbi Hirsch's sphere of influence is not limited to those with whom he personally meets. Every Wednesday, Rabbi Hirsch gives over a class in chassidus via the VirtualYeshiva.com website. He presents concepts relevant to the world we live in, clearly explaining how the world is ready for the Redemption, seasoned with miracle stories from the Rebbe that leave a tremendous impression upon the listeners. He also uses this time to conduct an open forum discussion, giving the many on-line participants an opportunity to ask questions.

"While most of the listeners who regularly visit the website are Jews," said Rabbi Hirsch, "non-Jews occasionally join the class, for which I am also quite happy. I utilize the opportunity to explain how the Creator designated a special mission for them to prepare the world for the Complete Redemption by fulfilling and publicizing the Seven Noachide Laws. About five hundred people regularly participate in the class each week, and the number continues to grow all the time. I am now thinking about asking the webmasters to add more classes dealing with 'Moshiach and the Redemption', a very popular and desired Torah subject."

I asked Rabbi Hirsch to tell our readers some interesting stories in connection with his program and he shared two that had taken place recently:

"There was a regular participant from North Carolina named Quinn. He spent his childhood in the local

church of the town where he grew up, connected to the ways of Christianity. He didn't ask many questions, but on one program, when I said that a Torah scroll must be complete without any errors, otherwise the entire scroll is rendered unfit, he was very impressed. He asked me to direct him to a place where he could delve into the subject more deeply.

"A few months later, he came back to me, totally captivated. He had made an extensive investigation of all the proofs of Christianity, and he reached the conclusion that it was all a hoax and Christianity has no true basis, merely deception and brainwashing. He was in awe of the amazing stories I had told about the Rebbe, the prophecy of the Redemption, and my razor-sharp explanations – naturally taken from the Rebbe's sichos. He told us most emotionally about everything he had gone through, adding that while he was a Christian, he wanted to convert to Judaism... back to the religion of his mother and father. Naturally, when he said this, the other participants and I were simply overwhelmed. I gently explained to him that there is no need for him to undergo a conversion, as he is already a kosher Jew.

"This young Jewish man was totally shocked by this discovery. He was determined to make a change in his life, and he began to learn in a far more structured manner. I referred him to the Chabad shliach in his city, who helped him a great deal in his process of returning to his Jewish roots. I heard from the shliach that he was already a chassid in every respect, and am hoping to meet him soon. (He was planning to come visit this past Sukkos, but for various reasons he was unable to make it.) The treasured and shining light of Yiddishkait had flickered within yet another Jewish soul, creating a great transformation not just for himself, but for all the

generations to come. Every time I come across such things, I can't help but be reminded how we have been promised that 'he that is banished be not cast from Him.'

"Yoni, a young Jewish man from a remote town in Oregon, regularly and actively participated in our virtual classes. He would ask many questions on a variety of subjects and revealed a growing interest in the deepest teachings of Yiddishkait. Although I had never met him, I could immediately feel that despite his distance from a life of mitzvah observance and his scanty knowledge of the world of Torah, he



has a special neshama that would not let him rest. He soon informed me that he wanted to take a much more serious step towards following in the path of his forefathers, and I looked for a Chabad shliach in his area with whom he could make contact.

"When I informed him that there was not yet a shliach in his vicinity, he replied, to my delight, that in order to satisfy his spiritual thirst, he was prepared to leave home and come to New York. He found a place to live in Flatbush, where by Divine Providence my father-in-law, Rabbi Yochanan Marozov, serves on

shlichus as the rav of the Beis Menachem Shul, and I made the connection between them. When I recently asked my father-in-law about him, he said that in his opinion, he represents a most unique neshama. This young man has come closer to his Jewish roots, and is absorbed in the study of nigleh and chassidus, day and night, with great diligence. He is making great strides and is turning into a chassid."

## BUDDING FLOWERS

I had almost forgotten that I was actually sitting in the middle of a store that sold flowers and accompanying decorations, and I asked if we could also speak about the essential nature of the business itself. Rabbi Hirsch looked as if he had just made a sharp 180 degree turn. Only after making it clear that selling flowers is an incidental aspect to his life's shlichus, did he turn to the subject of the flowers themselves.

"The flowers that come from Eretz Yisroel are the best and highest quality ones around, as they last for a much longer period of time and Americans love them," Rabbi Hirsch told me. "A sizable portion of the flower market in the United States comes from the fields in Eretz Yisroel. Last year, during Shmita, I had to conduct a unique supervision regarding my purchase and import transactions, as there is considerable fraud in this area. Merchants who know that Jews don't buy flowers from Eretz Yisroel during this year switch the import stickers – so we have to be on the alert. I personally buy all my merchandise during Shmita from the South American market, particularly Colombia and Ecuador."

Although Rabbi Hirsch has to interrupt his import of Israeli flowers from time to time, business is always blooming with fresh Baalei T'shuva!

# MOVED BY THE REBBE'S WORDS

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

*First-hand stories told at a recent farbrengen with Rabbi Elimelech Shachar, director-general of Chabad institutions in Rechovot.*

Anyone who has participated in a farbrengen with Rabbi Elimelech Shachar, director-general of Chabad institutions in Rechovot, is surely familiar with the warmth and intensity with which he discusses the great importance of hiskachrus to the Rebbe. Throughout the years of his extensive public and communal activities, Rabbi Shachar has experienced a sizable number of amazing stories and instances of Divine Providence stemming from the Rebbe's brachos. As he tells such stories before an attentive audience, he does so with undisguised enthusiasm as if they had occurred only a matter of days ago. Rabbi Shachar customarily connects each story with a moral or a manner of proper conduct.

Rabbi Shachar is known to the residents of Rechovot as the

address to turn to for assistance in putting their feelings in writing, during times of personal distress or indecision, in order to consult with the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, via "Igras Kodesh." As word of the many Jews from all walks of life who have merited to receive clear answers and experience incredibly revealed miracles spreads, the number of people requesting his assistance in connecting with the Rebbe increases.

I recently had opportunity to farbreng with Rabbi Shachar, where I heard two marvelous stories:

"One day, several years ago," Rabbi Shachar began, "the telephone rang in my home, and I heard the voice of a young man on the line. After identifying myself, he told me that he had heard how I had helped many

Jews write to the Rebbe MH" through Igras Kodesh, a number of whom had experienced personal rescue and salvation as a result. Since he was studying film in his high school curriculum, he was asked to submit a special project and wanted to come and interview me on the subject. Naturally, I was happy to oblige, as this is yet another means to publicize G-dliness in the world, especially among certain sectors of the population. We set a date and time when I knew that I would be available.

"At the scheduled time, a tall young man appeared at the door of my office. He was about seventeen years of age, with long hair and characteristic teenage attire. After a friendly handshake, he got right to the point. He opened the file folder that he brought with him, took out a pad and pen, and started firing a barrage of questions. 'You talk and I'll write,' he suggested. And so it was. During a lengthy interview, I proceeded to explain with great clarity the entire matter of hiskachrus to the Rebbe, seasoning my description with numerous miracle stories that I was privileged to witness personally. These stories had involved many Jews from a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints, people who had written to the Rebbe in this manner and saw the positive outcomes for themselves.

"I saw that he was quite impressed, and after finishing the interview, we warmly shook hands and parted from one another. Over the next several years, I neither saw nor heard from him again.

"This year, I was among the thousands of Jews from throughout the world who were privileged to start the Year of Hakhel with the Simchas Beis

HaShoeiva celebrations in Beis Chayeinu. One night during Chol HaMoed Sukkos, as I went to leap and dance in the streets of the king's neighborhood, I felt a tap on my shoulder. When I turned around, I was facing a young man with the appearance of a Chabad chassid in every respect, wearing a felt fedora and a beard, his face shining and a broad smile on his lips.

"He asked me if I recognized him, but all my efforts to jar my memory and reveal his identity proved futile. 'Who are you?' I surrendered, to which he replied, 'Richard Rubin'. When he mentioned his name, I remembered him immediately. After all, you don't forget such a unique and unusual name for an Israeli so quickly. I was

thunderstruck. The first and last time I saw him, he looked like a typical 'unrestricted' youth, long-haired and completely removed from Jewish tradition – and now... I couldn't imagine what had transpired since. I was even more stunned when he told me that he had just completed a year in 'k'vutza', and had decided to continue his studies on the benches of '770' for one more year.

"My amazement grew as he mentioned that he had invested much effort during the past year studying the Rebbe Rashab's famous hemshech (*Samech-Vav* – 5666) in great depth, and he even compiled a booklet with a summary of the maamarim he learned. I could no longer contain my excitement, as I told him how

I felt, a graduate of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, who did not have the privilege of learning the entire hemshech of *Samech-Vav*. He promised that he would give me a copy of the booklet, and today, in his merit, it is much easier for me to learn this 'hemshech'...

"We can never know how and where we have an influence upon another Jew. Whether the action is large or small, we don't always see what happens afterwards and if our actions were successful in this world. However, as this young man confirmed, our conversation about 'Igros Kodesh,' which served as a preparation for the documentary he made, changed his entire life..."

Rabbi Elimelech Shachar then related another story: "One day about fifteen years ago, during the Sukkos holiday, several of the directors of Chabad institutions in Rechovot came to the city's Chavatzelet neighborhood, located near Kaplan Hospital, to meet with Mr. Gadi Cohen, who was serving at the time as Rechovot's city administrator. We brought a set of Daled Minim, to give him the privilege of fulfilling the mitzvah of the day.

"He invited us into his living room and said that he has a very special story to tell us. Somewhat surprised, we sat down to hear his story. He said that he has a sweet little two year-old girl, but one morning just a few months earlier, something went horribly wrong.

"He personally got up to wake her, as he does every morning to take her to kindergarten, but instead of scrambling to her feet like usual, she remained lying in bed, smiling up at him. At first, he thought that she was playing around with him, but as the



***As the minutes passed and she wasn't getting out of bed, he noticed that she simply couldn't move her limbs, not even a finger.***

minutes passed and she wasn't getting out of bed, he noticed that she simply couldn't move her limbs, not even a finger. He suddenly became very scared, deeply concerned for her fate. In a state of panic, he took her in his arms and ran with her to the hospital emergency room right near his house.

"The only thing that the medical staff could tell him was that in their opinion, the child was clearly paralyzed in every limb of her body. They couldn't give any explanation for this sudden paralysis and asked that they come back later for further tests.

"It was simply terrible for the parents to see their child paralyzed, unable to move a muscle, literally like a stone, especially after having already seen her take measured steps and move all her limbs before. The

pain and anguish were immeasurable. Their hearts consumed with fear, they went from one pediatric specialist to the next, but they all responded with the same mantra, 'We don't know the reason.'"

"One day a few months later, his work responsibilities had him walking in the streets of Tel Aviv, when he suddenly came across a stand manned by some young Chabad chassidim who were offering passers-by the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of putting on t'fillin. Though he was far from any connection to Yiddishkait, when a Jew is in trouble, he apparently knows where to turn. He stopped and rolled up his sleeve. When he removed the t'fillin, he felt the need to bear his anguished soul to them. In a voice cracking with emotion, he told the avreichim the whole story, and it genuinely touched their hearts. One of them gave him a D'var Malchus, then wrote down Mr. Cohen's name and his wife's name, and promised to daven for his daughter's recovery.

"Mr. Cohen decided to use the D'var Malchus as a segula. When he got home that evening after a long work day, he went over to his daughter's bed and placed the D'var Malchus under her pillow, quietly praying that it should help her get out of this condition and return to how she was before.

"The miracle that took place

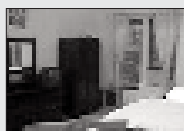
was simply incredible: When he woke up the very next morning, he was surprised to see his daughter running towards him, just as she always did before. I asked him to show me the D'var Malchus he had guarded as a keepsake, testimony to the miracle, and as I flipped through it, I was stunned to see a letter from the Rebbe giving a bracha for a speedy recovery.

"Why did I specifically remember this amazing story now? Because a few days after the murder of the shluchim Rabbi Gavriel Noach Holtzberg and his wife Rivka (may their blood be avenged), an event that made waves throughout the national and international media, I went into our shul in Rechovot, and saw Gadi Cohen asking someone to give him a pair of t'fillin to put on. I approached him and he recognized me right away. He told me that something deep inside of him was aroused as a result of the tragedy, and after years of not doing so, he decided to start putting on t'fillin.

"I reminded him of the story with his daughter, and he was amazed that I still remembered it.

"Today, this girl is seventeen years old, and her father attributes the restoration of her health to his putting on t'fillin in the streets of Tel Aviv and a booklet of D'var Malchus..."

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