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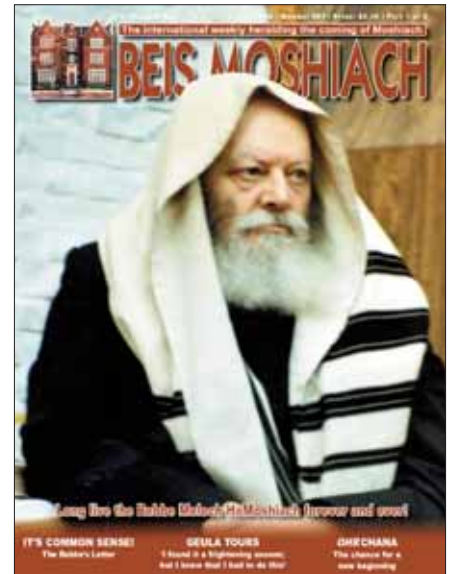
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Beis Moshiah (USPS 012-542) ISSN 1082-0272 is published weekly, except Jewish holidays (only once in April and October) for \$160.00 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and in all other places for \$180.00 per year (45 issues), by Beis Moshiah, 744 Eastern 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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# 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.*

commentary, etc., in the teachings of Chabad Chassidus, the matter remains in the realm of a 'decree,' especially with respect to having **complete** understanding and comprehension, permeating even the **feelings of the heart**.

“(To note the well know saying of the Alter Rebbe<sup>176</sup> on the verse,<sup>177</sup> ‘and I will remove the **heart** of stone from your flesh, etc.’<sup>178</sup> (in the Haftora of the Torah portion of the Red Heifer) – specifically a ‘heart (of stone),’ not the brain. Regarding the understanding and comprehension of the mind, every individual must work on himself. But in so doing, it is the Holy One Blessed Be He Himself – ‘and **I** (will remove)’ – Who removes the heart of stone from the person, having a comprehensive effect, even with regard to the feelings of the heart. Thus it is understood that the effect upon the feelings of the heart (being master of one's emotions) is an

extremely lofty service in all matters. How much more is this so in our case, when the Torah itself underscores the fact that it is a ‘decree.’”

The Rebbe said above that “it is extremely difficult to be absolved of the wonder ... [with regard to] the feelings of the heart.” Here in parentheses, however, it becomes clear just how difficult: it is virtually impossible! It is not within the capacity of a human being to bring his heart to fathom the wonders of a Divine decree. We must strive to comprehend any

[Continued from Issue #695]

To the extent that the Torah provides insight into the incomprehensible (such as the Mitzva of the Red Heifer or the ascent of the soul at the end of one's life), it is for the most part our minds that are illuminated; our hearts may well remain overshadowed by mystery, classifying the teachings of the Torah as a “decree” from On High:

“From this it is understood that even after the Holy One Blessed Be He has revealed in the Torah the portion of the Red Heifer, and after all the elucidation and

explanation the Torah provides, but the insight gained is relegated to our minds; we are by no means assured that we will succeed in illuminating our hearts with the knowledge. It is up to G-d Himself to bestow our hearts with an appreciation of this knowledge, following our intellectual effort. This principle applies to Torah knowledge in general. Regarding the elusive "decrees" of the Torah, it is all the more relevant.

The Rebbe concludes:

"Thus, one's heart should not be depressed within him seeing that, even after the Torah elucidates to him the difference between the first thirty days of mourning and the first year (and prior to that, the difference between the first three days and the first seven, and between the first seven days and the first thirty), extra effort is required for him to be able to accept it [i.e., the process of the departure and the ascent of the soul, etc.], let alone that it should penetrate even the feelings of the heart. After all, it is a 'decree.'"

[To be continued be"H]

## NOTES:

176 Published in the book *Migdal Oz* (K'far Chabad 5740), pg. 308 (from the book *Likkutim Y'karim* pg. 4).

177 Yechezkel 36:26.

178 On this basis we may explain why Rambam quotes this verse (in Laws of Repentance 9:2) with regard to the study of Torah in the Messianic Era, "in those days, knowledge, wisdom, and truth will become abundant, as it is said, 'for the earth shall be full with the knowledge of G-d,' and it is said, 'No longer shall a man teach his brother, nor a man his friend,' and it is said, '**and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh.**'" For at first glance, what is the significance of removing the "heart of stone" with respect to the abundance of "**knowledge and wisdom**"? Thus, we must say that the ultimate state of "knowledge and wisdom" is when it penetrates even the **feelings of the heart** (even when this is a product of "I [G-d, not the person himself] will remove the heart of stone from your flesh").

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Upon this statement I affix my signature, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Tamuz 5766



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# A GENTILE UNDER THE CHUPPA? IT'S COMMON SENSE!

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON  
Lubavitch  
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Brooklyn, N.Y. 11213  
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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן  
ליובאוויטש  
770 איסטערן פארקוויי  
ברוקלין, נ.י.

By the Grace of G-d  
26th of Sivan, 5742  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of June 2nd, which reached me with some delay.

It is not my practice to take up questions which should be addressed to any competent Orthodox Rabbi, whose function it is to "Pasken Shaalos." However, I am making an exception in this case, because, although the matter is really quite simple, it is also very important.

To begin with, consider the situation: A Chuppah and sacred marriage is taking place in accordance with Jewish Law, K'das Moshe v'Yisroel. And while it is taking place, there would be present a gentile woman who is not just a spectator or guest, but one who is involved in a situation which, if it should materialize, G-d forbid, is absolutely contrary to Das Moshe v'Yisroel. And although she may not understand the exact meaning of these words, she probably would understand the general content of this sacred ceremony, or someone would explain it to her, and the incongruity, to say the least, is obvious. In light of this - could her presence at this sacred Jewish religious ceremony afford her respect or honor and give her a sense of real pleasure, knowing how the bride and bridegroom and the family and guests feel about intermarriage?

So much for the common sense viewpoint.

In addition, of course, there is the viewpoint of the Torah and Shulchan Aruch, which clearly holds that, for the good of all concerned, she should not be present there.

Should you wish to discuss the matter further with any Orthodox Rabbi, I am certain that his advice would be the same. But the matter is really so self evident that no further elaboration is needed.

Since it is clear from your writing that your forthcoming wedding will be as it should be, K'das Moshe v'Yisroel, for a Binyan Adei Ad, an everlasting edifice based on the foundations of the eternal Torah and Mitzvoh in the everyday life, may G-d grant that it take place in a happy and auspicious hour, for real happiness both materially and spiritually.

With the blessing of  
Mazel Tov, Mazel Tov

*M. Schneerson*

Letter of the Rebbe MH"M to a bride whose father wished to bring his gentile girlfriend, r"l, to stand with him under the chuppa.

# DON'T SIT SHIVA FOR HER

By Nosson Avrohom

*A farbrengen with the shliach, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Kalmanson is a treat; an experience which strengthens your connection to the Rebbe and your commitment to the Rebbe's horaos. \* The following story was related by R' Kalmanson at one such farbrengen.*

## ESTRANGEMENT

This story took place over twenty years ago in a suburb of Paris. A



Rabbi Sholom Dovber Kalmanson

young father had tragically passed away, leaving behind a wife and two children, a son and a daughter. This motivated the mother to move back towards the religious traditions she had observed as a child. She began going to shul, which she hadn't done in years. The services and the Jewish way of life brought back positive memories and she found consolation in them.

The mother became a full-fledged baalas t'shuva and wanted her daughter to follow her example, but not only didn't her daughter join her, she went further away. The mother passionately explained how her chosen path was the truth and everything the daughter had been raised with was a lie. She regretted the misguided parenting she had inflicted on her children.

The rabbanim whom she was close with urged her to continue. "Each day that your daughter is not religiously observant, puts you both

in danger."

One day the daughter left the house in a fury and went to live on campus. She cut off ties with her mother. The mother found out that her daughter was dating a gentile, black boy who studied physics with her, and was beside herself with grief. She ran to her rabbis and when they heard what happened they grimly informed her she would have to sit Shiva and tear kria for her daughter because she removed herself from the Jewish nation.

The mother tried talking to her daughter and explaining the severity of what she was doing, but the daughter was not receptive. She tried to win her mother over by describing how supportive her boyfriend was of her Judaism. He wanted her to be religiously observant and she was keeping more with him than she did at home.

The mother was not appeased by this news and cried bitterly for days. Her friends joined her in her sorrow, but there was nothing anyone could do about the situation. The daughter refused to listen to whoever the mother sent to her. And the mother became despondent.

## WHAT THE REBBE TOLD THE SHLIACH

The mother had to travel to New York on business. Her friends urged her to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe and to ask for his bracha. They told

her of his greatness and about the miracles that he does. They said that if anyone could help her, it would be the Rebbe. She was convinced.

One Sunday afternoon she went to Brooklyn and joined a long line of people. She was amazed by the number and variety of people who were waiting to see the Rebbe.

When her turn came she briefly told the Rebbe about the situation. The Rebbe gave her a dollar for herself and another dollar for her daughter and told her to speak to Rabbi Shmuel Azimov, the shliach in Paris.

She didn't understand why the Rebbe was sending her to someone else, but his angelic countenance convinced her to comply. When she returned to Paris she made an appointment with R' Azimov. She told him about her visit to the Rebbe and that the Rebbe had

***He told her about the greatness of the Rebbe and said that one thing he knew – that she had to become closer to her daughter, not more distant, and certainly not to tear kria or sit Shiva.***





referred her to him. R' Azimov asked her for every detail of the situation and she spent a long time telling him the story. She mentioned that her rav had told her she had to sit Shiva and tear kria.

R' Azimov did not see how he could help her when the daughter wasn't willing to listen to anyone and kept away from them, but he knew that if the Rebbe said something, even if you didn't understand it right away, eventually things would become clear. He told her about the greatness of the Rebbe and said that one thing he knew – that she had to become closer to her daughter, not more distant, and certainly not to tear kria or sit Shiva.

She accepted his approach and did not sit Shiva, but all attempts at reconciliation with her daughter still led to disappointment. Her daughter decided to travel with her boyfriend to Montreal where he would be completing his degree in physics. Nobody could stop her from joining him.

Surprisingly, when she got to Montreal the daughter got in touch with the local Chabad House, run by Rabbi Mendel Raskin, with the encouragement of her gentile boyfriend. She went there for the Shabbos and Yom Tov meals. Her gentile boyfriend was not invited, of course, but he constantly encouraged her to eat kosher and to keep other mitzvos she told him about. He constantly flattered her for being a member of the Chosen People.

When he finished his degree, he got a position in a university in Cincinnati as an assistant professor, and it wasn't long before his brilliance earned him a higher position. It was at this point that I first got to know them, after I received a phone call from R' Raskin. He told me their story and asked me to keep in touch with them.

I invited them to my house and from my first conversation with them I realized that this black gentile was special. I kept in touch and learned with them, never hesitating to tell them what Judaism says about non-Jews. One time, as we learned Parshas Noach, I told them about the curse on the children of Cham, that they wouldn't have pride and would always lack self-confidence. He told me that this was common knowledge in Africa, though over there they associated it with only a

***A convert complained to the Rebbe that people looked at him askance, apparently because of his skin color. The Rebbe told him not to pay attention to this, since only bodies have color, not neshamos.***

few tribes who are considered degraded. Although I wasn't afraid to say the truth, he wasn't fazed and he wanted to know more.

One day, he told me that he wanted to convert. I asked him whether he realized what this entailed and he smiled. He knew.

I sensed that he wasn't converting for peripheral reasons but because he had studied Judaism and knew more about it than many Jews. He had arrived at the conclusion

that he wanted to live this life. It was obvious that he was very drawn towards becoming a Jew and so I sent him to the beis din in Crown Heights, where he spent a long time and eventually converted.

## **WEDDING PLANS**

When he returned to Cincinnati as a Jew he knew he had to physically separate from his Jewish girlfriend with whom he had lived all those years. After three months they would decide whether they wanted to marry according to Halacha and that's exactly what they decided.

When the mother of the girl heard about his conversion and his decision to marry her daughter, she was very excited. She begged her daughter to make the wedding in France and said she would arrange a big event. The groom agreed on condition that I would be the mesader kiddushin. Of course I agreed.

The night before the wedding we were in a hotel in Paris. Before I went to bed he came over to me and said he wanted to get married as a Chassid and could I guide him.

I told him he would need a hat and sirtuk, which we could buy the next day in the Jewish quarter. As for the spiritual aspect, I told him that there is a lengthy maamer, "Lecha Dodi," which is recited by heart. He insisted that he wanted to say it and asked whether I had it with me. Fortuitously, I had a copy on me, which I gave to him.

The next morning we took care of the final arrangements for the wedding, then bought the hat and sirtuk and made our way to the hall. The kabbalas panim was attended by a number of local Chassidim, including R' Azimov. I assumed the chassan would take out the maamer I had given to him and read it inside. How stunned I was when he closed his eyes and began to review the maamer by heart! And he did so in

French. In just one night, not only did he study the entire deep maamer, but he translated it from Lashon HaKodesh, which he had only recently learned, to French and was able to recite it by heart.

This amazed us all. A Lubavitcher by the name of Rabbi Cohen, who translates the Rebbe's teachings into French, told me that he wanted me to introduce him to the chassan because he had to use his talents to spread Chassidus in French. People simply could not get over the chassan's feat.

After the chuppa, R' Azimov confided:

"I'm going to tell you an amazing thing about this couple that I have kept to myself for ten years. When the mother first came to me, and I told her not to tear kria and cut off ties with her daughter, I really had mixed feelings since the young man was not Jewish. I worried that

perhaps the Rebbe had sent her to me so that I could do something to break up this couple. Maybe she *should* have cut off from her daughter, which often shakes a child up enough to bring them back. For many years I harbored uncertainty and even guilt about what I had said.

"Now, seeing him reciting the maamer as a Chassid does, I understand what the Rebbe intended when he sent the mother to me. The Rebbe saw that this neshama was tied to the Jewish nation and he sent her to me and put gentle words in my mouth, not to break ties but to maintain them, since the Rebbe knew that this couple belonged together."

R' Azimov added that he had once known a black man in the United States who converted. This convert complained to the Rebbe in yechidus that people looked at him askance, apparently because of his

skin color. The Rebbe told him not to pay attention to this, since only bodies have color, not neshamos.

## OBEYING EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND

R' Kalmanson concluded his story with this observation:

We don't always understand why the Rebbe says what he does, but one thing we must know – if the Rebbe says something, that's the reality. The same is true with the Besuras Ha'Geula. Sometimes a Chassid might say, "I don't understand and I don't see it," but one thing he must accept – if the Rebbe says it, that's the way it is!

As for the couple, they left Cincinnati after a while and moved to Michigan. Half a year ago they made aliya.

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# OUT OF THE BLUE: UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS ON SHLICHUS

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

There is a story in Jewish folklore about a man who was not successful at making a living. His wife suggested that he open a fortune-telling booth in the marketplace. He protested that he had no idea how to tell the future, but his wife assured him that all he has to do is to reply yes or no when people come to him with questions. Reluctantly, the man set up a booth and hung a sign to advertise his “wares.”

Soon a man came by and asked whether he should buy a home in an old, run-down part of the city. The “fortune-teller” made a show of looking into the future, then said yes. The man bought the house and wonder of wonders, the next day, the mayor decided to move the financial district to that old area and the value of the house went way up. The purchaser told everybody about the fortune-teller who had been able to predict this, and of course he paid him handsomely for his help.

The next day, someone came and asked whether he should buy a certain store. The “fortune-teller” said no. Disregarding his advice, the man bought the store anyways. Wonder of wonders, the very next day a fire broke out and the store went up in flames. Word went around that this was his

punishment for not listening to the fortune-teller.

People flocked to the “fortune-teller” and he made a fine living. Eventually, word reached the king that there was a fortune-teller who gave good advice. The king called for him and invited him to remain at the palace where he would receive a generous salary for answering any questions the king poses to him.

“Now what will I do?” the man fretted to his wife. “It’s all your fault. Now the king will see that I know nothing and he’ll kill me!”

Once again, his wife assured him, “Don’t worry. Just answer yes or no.”

One day, thieves broke into the king’s treasury. The king wasn’t worried. He called for the fortune-teller and asked him to reveal who the thieves were within a week’s time. Due to some unusual circumstances, he was able to find the thieves and return that which they stole. But he decided he could not continue under such tension and he told his wife that he preferred dying to being the king’s fortune-teller. In that case, suggested his wife, he should go to the palace and slap the king. Surely the king would kill him for such insolence and that would be that.

So he proceeded to the palace,

where he found the king lounging in the royal bath and slapped him soundly. Furious, the king leapt up to slap him in return when the ceiling of the bathtub fell. Seeing with his own eyes how his life had been spared, the king awarded his fortune-teller many gifts.

Here was a man who tried to avoid good fortune, but nonetheless it caught up with him, as it says, “And all these blessings will come upon you and reach you.” This is a phenomenon with which many shluchim can relate. Without any effort on their part, blessings come upon them and reach them.

## BRACHOS FLOWING AT BEIT SHAAN

Someone from Beit Shaan called me up. I didn’t know him but he had heard about me from a friend. He told me that his wife died ten days earlier and he was about to move to an old-age home. Since he had no children, he wanted to donate the contents of his house to the Chabad House.

The house was indeed full of furniture and other good things which were able to benefit dozens of needy people.

Another such unexpected windfall was received one evening a few years ago. Arriving at the

Chabad House for Maariv, I was greeted by an individual who handed me an envelope. "This is my maaser," he explained.

Inside I found tens of thousands of shekels, which was a terrific help for our needs at that time.

## THE BRACHOS FLOW IN CHAIFA

When Rabbi Yehuda Dunin arrived in the Achuza neighborhood in Chaifa eleven years ago, he heard that a religious Jew had passed away that week and there was a minyan at his house. They went to daven at the mourners' house and asked whether they were interested in having the shluchim continue the t'fillos there until they decided what they were doing with the house.

The family agreed, which gave them use of a large building in the center of the neighborhood for all t'fillos, shiurim and farbrengens, for free. This went on for seven years.

## MIRACLES IN BAT GALIM

Rabbi Yishai Kali recently came to the Bat Galim neighborhood in Chaifa to open a Chabad House. He had invested a large amount of time and effort looking for a suitable building when an older person who lived in the neighborhood approached him with an offer. "I have a house with two floors, right near the promenade. Come make your Chabad House here."

It seemed too good to be true, but the man urged him to accept. R' Kali asked the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh and after opening to a positive answer, he agreed. This Beis Chabad has hosted farbrengens, shiurim, and even a number of large events... not to mention hosting visitors in the guest rooms.

But even greater than the material largess is when spiritual success comes knocking on the

shliach's door. R' Kali had such an experience.

About a year and a half ago, a young man who had finished the army came to the *Tanya* shiur. He said he was undecided whether to learn in yeshiva or study a profession. After several shiurim, R' Kali suggested that he divide his day, spending half in yeshiva and half studying a profession.

He asked the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh and the answer was: "regarding the suggestion to learn half a day in yeshiva and spend half a day on studying a profession ... better to spend all day in yeshiva and find a yeshiva far from the distractions of the big city."

The young man went to learn in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas and quickly took on all the minhagim, dress, and ways of Chassidus. He was on K'vutza this year. R' Kali knew that this wasn't his kochos but brachos from Heaven.



The Chabad House in  
Bat Galim in Chaifa

# OHR CHANA: THE CHANCE FOR A NEW BEGINNING

*“Without exception, each girl who has passed through our doors in the past three years has given us reason to shepherd as we have seen her mature, grow, and oftentimes ‘find herself.’”*

“I walk out each day feeling fulfilled.”

“The lessons are really good.”

“Everything is so interesting.”

“It’s so different from a typical school.”

Though it may come as a surprise to some, *frum* teenagers face serious challenges which, until recently, have been either overlooked or inadequately addressed by our standard education systems. For some girls, the pressure to meet demands is overwhelming, sometimes resulting in an intense, internal struggle which limits any opportunity for self-exploration, expression and growth. Sadly, all too often, these students slip through the cracks of our larger schools. Ohr Chana Vocational Academy, a first in the *frum* world, was created to serve these young women.

Ohr Chana has recognized these challenges and in response has

created an educational environment which appreciates that each student possesses singular talents, strengths and abilities which should be nurtured and given full expression. This unique approach to education strives to meet the student’s individual learning abilities and personal needs.

One student described Ohr Chana’s response to her particular difficulties in Chumash class: ‘Whereas most of the girls could read fluently, I had trouble with *kria*. Ohr Chana created a special *chavrusa* for me outside of the class so that I could work on what I needed to.’ Another girl related that ‘Sewing was not my cup of tea. Instead I wanted to pursue studies towards the Regents exam, so together we’ve come up with a special, personalized program.’

These experiences demonstrate the importance of giving teenagers choices in their learning. “One of

our main philosophies is to treat our students as adults,” says Mrs. Zeesy Piamenta, Ohr Chana’s principal. ‘If you treat them as respectable individuals capable making good decisions, then they will behave that way. I compare being a student in Ohr Chana to being an adult who has a job: a job entails doing certain things in certain hours. Further, if a jobholder is sick or must otherwise miss work or even just arrive late one day, a responsible adult who wants to keep his or her job would call in, explain the situation, and apologize. This is the overall approach of Ohr Chana.

“Teenagers are so often overlooked, yet they are capable of so much, if they are just trusted and given a chance.”

The school’s objective of individualized learning is achieved through its small size. As one student says, “...because it is a small school, each girl gets the right amount of the attention she needs. This helps build self-esteem and lets you learn more to grow more.”

Another student comments, “...coming from a large school, I’m not used to feeling important enough, which usually wouldn’t want to make me learn. I came here not knowing what to expect...but now I walk out every day feeling smarter, feeling that when I open



my mouth I have new things to say.”

The faculty at Ohr Chana is made up of dedicated staff who truly love and believe in each student. “The real chiddush of Ohr Chana,” says student Yitty Baizman, “is that they actually want you to succeed.” Chassidus comes alive to these teenagers each morning when they begin their day in Rabbi Majeski’s class surrounded by enthusiastic Machon Chana students. Halacha is a favourite since it focuses on the very issues the students grapple with while Jewish Home classes dig deep into the challenges they crave to understand. “We grow daily in our Yiddishkait because there is no pressure and everything is discussed and explained.” Other *limudei kodesh* include Chumash, Parsha, Chitas and Yedia Klalis.

Yet the school also recognizes that not everyone excels in academically focused environments but most certainly possess other important talents. These are catered to by life skills and vocational courses ranging from culinary arts, sewing, computer graphics and office skills to practical mathematics and English. For the first time, young women can explore their identity through an alternative curriculum, rediscover their self confidence and leave the classroom with a marketable skill

Additionally, girls learn teaching

skills which they get to practice every Sunday in a Talmud Torah in Long island and is an integral part of the curriculum. “One of the best ways to build confidence and self-esteem,” explained Mrs. Labkowski, “is to turn a student into a teacher. With ample support and help in lesson-preparation, our students realize just how much they already know as well as enjoy the respect and admiration of their young students.” For this program, the ‘homework’ is not turned in—rather, lessons are prepared and then presented. Girls are further allocated funds for teaching supplies and must budget accordingly

Support staff at Ohr Chana include a school psychologist, currently in her residency, a Madricha, and renowned mentor Mrs. Shulamis Pape, who in addition to teaching ‘Jewish Home,’ makes appointments to speak to each girl privately each week.

The individual results are inspiring. One mother describes how Ohr Chana turned her daughter’s life around: “She has matured and grown so much...in her *middos*, her *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe and her Chassidishkait. Also, in her previous school she was getting C’s and D’s, now she is earning A’s and B’s! The faculty and staff are so dedicated and involved with each girl, and I can’t thank them enough for really meeting my daughter on her own wavelength,

encouraging her without condescending, and supporting her.”

And indeed, Mrs. Labkowski expresses this sentiment when she says, “Without exception, each girl who has passed through our doors in the past three years has given us reason to shep nachas as we have seen her mature, grow, and oftentimes ‘find herself.’”

Ohr Chana continues Machon Chana’s mission to be at the forefront of women’s education, responding to the changing needs of contemporary women. These are the “women who are raising the children who will bring the Geula and girls who are training for this lofty mission” that the Rebbe referred to in a *farbrengen*. It is our responsibility to help raise this generation. To do so we must believe in each and every individual and help her become the strong, empowered Jewish mother she was endowed and created to be.

Don’t deny your-self, daughter a someone you know the chance for a new beginning! Experience a joy and passion for learning, and a new excitement each day! Call or visit our school, staff and students today! 556 Crown Street Brooklyn, New York 11213. 718-735-0030.

The logo for Ohr Chana features a stylized, decorative flourish on the left, followed by the word "ohrchana" in a lowercase, serif font. The "o" is a small circle, and the "h" has a unique, flowing design.

ADD IN ACTS  
OF GOODNESS & KINDNESS  
TO BRING MOSHIACH NOW!

# THE BARON OF MIVTZAIM

By S. Malachi

*R' Mordechai Baron is a Chassid who has the fire of mivtzaim burning in his bones. Wherever he goes, he is alert to mivtzaim opportunities.*

Mordechai Baron was born on the banks of the Volga River in Ulyanovsk, Russia, to a religious family. While still a boy, his family made aliya and settled in Ramle. Mordechai was sent to a Mizrahi school and in the afternoon he learned with the Chassid, R' Moshe Beitch a"h.

Like many of his generation, the traditional chinuch did not save him from the enticements of the street. After serving in the army, he went to the United States. There he got himself a job and hung out with other young Israelis.

He returned to Eretz Yisroel for a visit, where he married his wife Nechama. Before the couple departed to America, his father pleaded movingly, "Mordechai, for my sake and for my health, I will ask you two things – not to work on Shabbos and to have a kosher home."

When their first children were born, Mordechai and Nechama wanted them to have an authentic Jewish education which would serve them well when they were

grown. They tried different shuls, but the modern communities in the area had a different ideological approach – to allow a child to choose his way.

One day, Mordechai was at the local Mizrahi shul when a young, bearded man went up to the bima and delivered an enthusiastic talk. He said he came on behalf of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. His name was Chaim Dovid Laine.

Dovid connected Mordechai to the local shliach, Rabbi Kazen, who 'adopted' the young family and opened the wonderful world of Chassidic Judaism to them. Mordechai traveled to 770 and received many special kiruvim from the Rebbe, as well as instructions and guidance.

## I KNOW, NO WEDDING!

Here's a story that Mordechai recounts from the time he lived in Cleveland:

At the bank near him worked a Jewish clerk to whom he gave Shabbos candles. One week, she

announced happily, "I get a mazal tov! I'm getting married."

"Where will the wedding take place?" he asked. He was horrified by the answer. She replied, "We are still undecided as to whether it will take place in a Reform temple or a church."

The fact that she was about to marry out of the faith shocked him. He tried to dissuade her, to explain the extent of the tragedy, but she ended the discussion by saying, "It's none of your business."

Mordechai knew that he had to do something. As it was before Pesach, he gave her handmade shmura matza, the food of faith and healing. When he left the bank he prayed, "Hashem, I did my part, now do Yours."

Some months later, when he visited the bank, the woman told him she had news. "The wedding is off," he ventured.

"How did you know?" she wondered.

Mordechai did not tell her that it was because he had given her the food of faith for just that purpose. She told him how they parted. They had gone shopping for furniture for their new home. An argument ensued and he called her a "kike." She took off the ring he had given her and said goodbye.

"I saw," said Mordechai, "that we have to do what we can do and rely on Hashem. When we go on mivtzaim, we do a little thing and we don't know what is happening in the other person's heart."

## KAVOD LUBAVITCH

After he returned to Israel in 5740, Mordechai began creating and distributing original Chassidic products. One of his products was a card, the first of its kind, which had a picture of

the Rebbe on one side and T'fillas HaDerech on the other side, along with horaos from the Rebbe.

As a pioneer, he got both accolades and criticism for his work. Some Chassidim were concerned about “kavod Lubavitch” and disapproved of the mass production of pictures of the Rebbe in a new format. They maintained that it lowered the dignity of the Rebbe and the honor of Lubavitch.

Even when Mordechai told

them of the encouraging answers he had gotten from the Rebbe for his products, they countered, “The Rebbe told you that because it was unpleasant for him to say otherwise.”

Just as Mordechai's confidence began to falter, he met a distinguished looking Chassid who inquired about his work. This was R' Moshe Nisselevitz, who encouraged him to keep at it. Mordechai continued and constantly received encouraging answers and guidance from the Rebbe.

## HE DOESN'T BUDGE WITHOUT TEFILLIN

When you speak to Mordechai, you quickly realize that business is just a front for his real work, *mitvtzaim*.

“I don't go anywhere without t'fillin. Wherever I go, in Israel and abroad, I have my t'fillin with me.

“One day, when I was in Tel Aviv on business, a religious looking Jew approached me and asked to write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh. We began to talk and he confided that for a long time he had not put on t'fillin. His children were married already, his wife was tired of fighting with him, and the Evil Inclination was in control.”

He wrote about two things to the Rebbe: He asked what was stopping him from putting on t'fillin and what about what he could do to strengthen his *emuna*. The first letter he opened to was addressed to someone in Uruguay. The Rebbe encouraged him to be careful about *kashrus*. The second letter was about the importance of learning Chassidus.

To Mordechai, the answer was clear. “Learn Chassidus! I'll give you a *Tanya* with commentary and it will strengthen your *emuna*.” He was even more surprised when the man told him that before abandoning t'fillin, he had started eating bread without washing first. The man took the Rebbe's letters seriously, and resolved to be careful about the *kashrus* of foods and to wash and learn Chassidus.

Some later Mordechai met him again. From the time he started doing as the Rebbe had instructed him, he began putting on t'fillin, but the Evil Inclination still occasionally prevented him from putting them on. When Mordechai told this to his friend,





Tzvi Rottenberg, he advised Mordechai to find out how the man washed his hands. It turned out that the man did not know how to wash properly. Once Mordechai taught him, the man's spiritual life greatly improved.

## SO HAPPY YOU CAME

Mivtzaim are an inseparable part of life for Mordechai. He always has t'fillin, Shabbos candles, and brochures with him and he doesn't hesitate to take them out at every opportunity. On a bus, a plane, while waiting for his dry cleaning in Paris or at a business appointment, he is ready. He is a familiar and beloved figure on the 135 bus line to Tel Aviv, the diligent Chabadnik who gives out a card or brochure to all the passengers with a smile and genuine interest in everyone.

"I travel a lot to Tel Aviv on

business. First, I give something to the driver, which makes him part of things and forestalls complaints. Then I go to the passengers."

Every year on 5 Iyar, Israel's Independence Day, he organizes a group of people from Kfar Chabad for a busy day of mivtzaim at the park in Ramat Gan. Mordechai loads up the car with brochures about Moshiach, t'fillin, mezuzos, Shabbos candles, and s'farim.

People are receptive. They are happy to use their free time to do a mitzva. "I'm so happy you came," one person said. "I didn't manage to put on t'fillin today. My wife sent me here to get a good spot ... baruch Hashem, you are here."

Even with all of them working from morning till night there is still not enough time to reach everyone in the huge crowd there.

## A DREAM AND ITS MEANING

Mordechai's slogan is, "Be a Chassid and activist in your home and when you go out, in your place of work and in all your travels."

Every year there is a trade show for all kinds of imported goods at the Javitz Center in New York. Thousands of wholesalers from all over the country attend this show. When Mordechai gets notified about the upcoming show, he starts planning his trip. At these shows he buys materials for his upcoming projects, but sometimes it seems that this is only a cover for his real purpose, mivtzaim.

Mordechai orders a number of admission cards and then he calls people he knows in New York to attend the show with him. Many Jew are present – Mordechai estimates that about half of the attendees, 2000 people, are Jews.

Mordechai shows up equipped with a wagon full of Jewish brochures. The wagon is parked near a friend's display and for three hours he circulates among the hundreds of stands with his bag, returning now and then to replenish his supply.

One year, when he asked someone whether he was Jewish, the man answered, "No, but my wife is." Mordechai offered her Shabbos candles and noticed her face pale. The couple lived in a small town in New Jersey, far from a Jewish presence. The woman told him she had memories of her grandmother lighting Shabbos candles but she had never done so and did not know how. The night before, she had dreamed that a bearded Jew came to her and gave her candles. Her dream had come true.

## REUNION

After more than forty years, over 200 graduates of the Sinai and Shakdiel schools in Ramle had a reunion. They hugged and kissed and exchanged memories of their beloved teacher, Eliyahu Shefer.

Alongside tables laden with refreshments were tables laden with spiritual delights: candlesticks, brochures, volumes of Chitas and T'hillim and pictures of the Rebbe with T'fillas HaDerech on the back.

The event was organized by childhood friends Mordechai Baron and Shaul Cohen. This is the fourth reunion they are making in a Shnas Hakhel. The first one took place in 5741, when the Rebbe said to take advantage of the special quality of the Hakhel year to convene gatherings of unity to strengthen religious observance. Dozens of alumni attended a farbrengen in the shul in Kfar Chabad. For many of them, this was the first time they were meeting Mordechai as a Lubavitcher.

For the next Hakhel, in 5748, many of the alumni came with their families for an inspiring Shabbos in Kfar Chabad that concluded with a Melaveh Malka farbrengen with alumni who could not come for Shabbos. During that farbrengen, each participant received a *Tanya* and a dollar from the Rebbe that was given especially for this event.

Since then, the gathering has become a tradition. This year, Mordechai decided to expand it to alumni from additional grades for the purpose of uniting them and getting them to hold their own achdus gatherings.



Mordechai Baron with his classmate Shaul Cohen. Hakhel 5769 – class of 5712

### CAST YOUR BREAD...

On another occasion, while Mordechai was sitting and eating, an older man sat near him and began talking to him. Mordechai suggested that the gentleman put on t'fillin, after which the man said emotionally, "The last time I put on t'fillin was over sixty years ago in Europe." He decided he wanted to buy t'fillin and start putting them on every day.

One year, the show took place over Purim. Mordechai, with the help of some T'mimim, prepared hundreds of mishloach manos, loaded them into his wagon and distributed them to surprised participants. Mordechai's mishloach manos also included a picture of the Rebbe and mitvzaim brochures.

Four years later, someone asked him, "Are you the one who once brought a bag of food for the holiday with a picture of the Lubavitcher Rebbe? (He didn't even know it was mishloach manos). I want you to know that a shliach came to my city and because of you, I help him to the best of my ability."

***I see a  
Chassidishe man,  
sitting and  
learning Chitas on  
the bus, delving  
into a sicha, or  
busy with other  
things. But all  
around you are  
Jews who need  
help!***

When the show took place before Rosh HaShana, Mordechai gave out Jewish calendars. When the show took place Sukkos time, Mordechai and the bachurim brought along lulavim and esrogim.

### THE MESSAGE OF THE CANDLES

Mordechai had a friend by the

name of Yochanan. The two were good friends until Mordechai "went crazy," as Yochanan puts it, and did t'shuva. Once upon a time, Yochanan was a talmid in yeshivas Slobodka, but due to the horrors of the Holocaust, he dropped all religious practice and became opposed to anything Jewish.

It was the eighth night of Chanuka and Mordechai was returning from mitvzaim when he passed by the house of his friend. He decided to stop in and light the menorah there, with the wife and children watching the ceremony for the first time in their lives.

Mordechai lit a menorah with each of the five children. There was so much light that Yochanan exclaimed, "You're going to burn down my house!" Then he became thoughtful and Mordechai left him watching the candles.

A while later, the phone rang. It was Yochanan. "Come and kasher my house," he requested.

Mordechai couldn't believe his ears, and Yochanan explained, "When you lit the menoros in my house, you lit up my neshama and my heart."

When they wanted to start kashering, a problem arose. Yochanan's wife, who had not become transformed like him, refused to commit to keeping the kitchen kosher.

This, however, was no small matter to Yochanan. In an effort to win over his wife, he bought her a diamond ring and told her that if she still is unwilling, then he'll have to divorce her. Seeing how serious he was, she agreed to go along with him. Yochanan began learning with Rabbi Kazan and continuously improved until he became completely religious.

Later the family moved to Detroit, and he bought a home in

Oak Park, where the Lubavitchers live. His daughter and her husband were uncomfortable with the religious environment, but he insisted that he knew what he was doing. Within a short time, his grandchildren were learning in local Chabad schools and the entire family was going along with it.

## THANKS TO A YECHI STICKER

On one of his trips to Cleveland, Mordechai found out that a gentile who did various jobs for him had become sick and he had to find someone to replace him. If this delay wasn't enough, the directions Mordechai got were inaccurate, so he was late for an important appointment and quite disappointed.

He turned the car around to head back, he noticed that the sun was about to set so he pulled over to say Chitas while it was still day. Suddenly, he heard knocking on his window. A passing motorist thought he had car trouble and wanted to help. Mordechai explained that he was praying and the man said that he himself was Jewish and had stopped because he saw the Yechi sticker on the car.

Mordechai suggested that his would-be-benefactor put on

t'fillin, but the man declined, saying he would do so when he got home. Mordechai knew it would be too late by then and eventually convinced the man to put on t'fillin by the side of the highway.

Now Mordechai realized why his assistant had gotten sick and why he had driven the wrong way for his appointment. He hadn't had this difficult day for nothing; this man needed to put on t'fillin.

Time and again, Mordechai has seen that if there is a delay or a change in plans, it's because a Jew is waiting for him.

## SHEVA MITZVOS B'NEI NOACH

Mordechai also provides material for the non-Jews he meets, carrying Sheva Mitzva cards in many languages. When he started flying to Paris and London on business, he noticed that he was hearing Arabic being spoken in the airports. He took out his Sheva Mitzva cards in Arabic and distributed them to people from Sudan, Yemen, Pakistan etc. Only one person reacted angrily. He was from Tul-Karem and was full of hate. The rest of the people were pleased and amazed that Jews took the effort to print cards with spiritual guidance for them, in Arabic.

On a trip to America, with plenty of Arabic cards in his bag, he wondered what he would do with them. Then he noticed an American soldier. He went over to him and offered him a Sheva Mitzvos card in English. They got to talking and the soldier mentioned he would be deployed to Iraq very soon. Mordechai excitedly took out his Arabic cards and asked him to distribute them in Iraq.

Another place Mordechai gives out cards is at toll booths. He prepares exact change and gives it along with a Sheva Mitzvos card.

## LEAVING THE HOUSE WITHOUT TEFILLIN?!

"Though a Chassid goes on mivtzaim because this is what the Rebbe wants and what Hashem wants, he needs to know that he is also doing it for himself.

"I've seen this myself. A few years ago, I suffered from inflamed joints. My entire body hurt like it was being stuck with needles and every move I made was extremely painful. I went to the best doctors in Israel and the US but nobody could help me. My help eventually came through a dietitian, but it was obvious to me that it was in the z'chus of mivtzaim that I was healed.

"I don't understand how someone from Kfar Chabad can go to Tel Aviv without t'fillin. I see a Chassidishe man, sitting and learning Chitas on the bus, delving into a sicha, or busy with other things. But all around you are Jews who need help! We can't be apathetic. We need to care about all the Jews who are still unacquainted with Judaism. We have to overcome our reticence and take t'fillin and brochures and bring the light of Moshiach to all Jews, wherever they are."

## THINGS THAT I'VE LEARNED

\*Vacation days (that are not Shabbos or Yom Tov) are terrific days for mivtzaim. Go to parks and Botanic Gardens and you will find people who are relaxed and calm and who want to bring the Geula.

\*Rather than the direct question, "Are you Jewish?" you can try: Do you speak Yiddish? What's your name? Did you have a bar mitzva? (I'm not talking about hasty encounters on the street).

\*Even if a person forcefully objects, if you manage to persuade him in a pleasant manner, he will end up thanking you, so don't despair.



# GEULA TOURS

By Y. Ben Aruya

*“I found it a frightening answer. I opened to it the night before the visit and I couldn’t sleep all night. I knew that I had to do this...” \* Like the story of the rav who became a wagon driver, all she wanted was to be a conventional shlucha, but the Rebbe turned her into an askanit and a tour director.*

“By behaving in a way of ‘and Yehuda approached him,’ i.e. when it comes to Jewish issues, displaying the strength and balabatishkait of being a Jew, that the world was created for the Jewish people, this itself leads to “and Dovid My servant will be Nasi over them forever.” (Sicha VaYigash 5752)

Six years ago, Rechov Ben Yehuda in Yerushalayim became a part of the Rebbe’s worldwide network of “lighthouses.” Here in the center of the Midrachov, on the second floor, with a porch overlooking the street, is the “Merkaz Geula U’Moshiach.” It houses two separate mosdos of one couple who work together in one shlichus – a Chabad house and unique tourist center called “Yerushalayim shel Maala.”

The directors, R’ Doron and Eilat Oren of Nachlaot, Yerushalayim, the parents of five children, live with a constant ambition for progress and innovation in the Rebbe’s shlichus.

## MERKAS GEULA U’MOSHIACH

It all began with Doron’s ambition to find new ways to spread the wellsprings and connect large numbers of people to the Rebbe, not drop by drop but on a large scale. He looked for a high-traffic area that would make it easy to reach the masses and found it on the Midrachov on Ben Yehuda.

He rented a nice place whose strategic location enables him to attract the attention of the crowds idly walking by. Here he set up his Merkaz Geula U’Moshiach, which hosts davening, daily shiurim, and farbrengens. He offers STaM products and services, a Chassidic library, an Igros Kodesh center, and holds lively Kiddush Levana ceremonies on the street every month. He is constantly working to come up with new ideas.

How do they advertise? They don’t need to. Their location, right in the heart of things, does their advertising for them. Passersby are

intrigued by the singing from up above and they go upstairs to check it out. The numerous young people find a warm atmosphere, friendly people learning or farbrenging, and an array of colorful Chassidim from the world of Chabad.

## AN EXERCISE IN RUNNING THE WORLD

Along with the shlichus at the center, Eilat worked as a teacher in a school in Yerushalayim. One day, the administration announced that Ehud Olmert, who was the mayor at the time, and a number of important donors, would be coming the next day to see the school. “He will visit your classroom,” she was told.

“It wasn’t a Chabad school. I thought about what I should do, what to make of the situation. I wrote to the Rebbe and the answer I opened to said that even though the ways of Torah are pleasant, when you meet people who have influence over tens or hundreds of thousands of children, you have to speak to them firmly and urge them to invest in matters that affect eternal life and not in temporal things.

“I found it a frightening answer. I opened to it the night before the visit and I couldn’t sleep all night. I knew that I had to do this shlichus, to speak firmly with them, to protest and cry out and to convey the Rebbe’s message.”

The next day when the mayor and his entourage came to visit the school, she dutifully repeated what the Rebbe said. She felt that the exercise was more for herself than for them.

“The Rebbe expects us to act like a balabus regardless of who is standing before us, as important as he might be – a mayor, prime minister or someone else. As Jews and shluchim of the Rebbe, **we** have to be the mashpiim, **we** run the world. I heard that the Rebbe once

addressed the shliach from London with the words, 'The menahel of London should get up...'

"This helped me to better understand our role as shluchim and strengthened my awareness that we are balabatim and don't need to be afraid of anyone or anything."

## ASKANUS

"Not long after that episode, I felt, 'This is it, I have finished my shlichus here and have to move on.'"

At the Chabad house on the Midrachov she was not satisfied either. "We felt we were missing a golden opportunity. So many people passed through our place. Yes, they always left with some material, but that wasn't enough! We didn't think this was the best we could do. We

wanted to touch people personally, on a deeper level, to connect them with the Rebbe, to give the Rebbe many Chassidim."

So she wrote to the Rebbe and the brief, clear answer was she should be an askanit. An askanit? What's that? She asked around and was told it meant fundraising.

If the Rebbe said askanit then that is what she would be! But how should she go about it? Not only hadn't she ever thought about this, she had no idea whatsoever how it was done. But since the Rebbe had said so, then she would certainly do it, and do it successfully. She began raising money whenever she had the opportunity – a friend, a neighbor, a lady on a park bench... Whoever crossed her path, whether she knew her or not, was asked, "Do you

know someone wealthy or someone who can donate?"

She began accumulating names and addresses, confident that she would be successful. One time, when she took her children to the park, one of the women she had approached turned out to be well-to-do and a big donor.

"Wherever I went I took a notebook and pens with me. I collected names and phone numbers and followed up. I ended up amassing a nice amount of money for our outreach.

"The important thing, in my opinion, is not **who** the donors will be but **how** you reach them, i.e. how you act and how you think. If the Rebbe told me I could raise money, that meant that I am at a point where it is possible and accessible.



You can and must utilize your immediate surroundings, gathering information, working persistently, recording all the details, then getting out there, asking, reaching out for help and not limiting yourself.

“When the Rebbe gives a horaa, we are sure that not only are we suited for the job but he also gives the ability to carry it out. Your environment makes itself available to you so you can take it, conquer it and make use of it. There’s no need to go far.

“The same applies in our ruchnius work. When I would visit city offices on behalf of our center, I always made it my business to talk Chassidus and I saw hearts that were open and thirsty for p’nimius, for meaning. I saw that we have the greatest treasure and if we are quiet and keep it to ourselves, it’s a terrible shame!

“Since then, whenever I meet someone I ask their name, take

their cell phone number and address, and jot down some notes about the person. This provides us with a quick way of contacting people – we send them text messages about shiurim, events, and farbrengens.”

## CHABAD TOURS

Eilat’s askanus did not end there. The Rebbe always asks more of his Chassidim, wanting them to expand and grow. In the next letter she opened to, the Rebbe said she should open a tourist agency.

She was surprised but she remembered the lesson she had learned, “the world was created for me; we are in charge, we run the world...” The Rebbe’s words are the reality and just need to be actualized. Though she had no idea what opening a tourist agency entailed, the Rebbe had instructed her to do it, so she would manage somehow.

“I got some ideas from the husband of a friend of mine, who worked in that field, chose one of the bachurim from the Chabad house as a guide, studied the subject of tourism in Yerushalayim so our tours would have a lot of substance to them, advertised, and baruch Hashem, people registered.”

## LIVING JUDAISM

I started taking groups of tourists on tours with Jewish themes. In Elul, we have Slichos Tours in Elul, researching the nightly Slichos customs in various communities in Yerushalayim – the t’fillos, the blowing of the shofar, the singing ... a moving experience for Jews, most of whom are learning about this for the first time. On Chanuka, we have Menora Tours, seeing the lights of the menoros in Yerushalayim, a tour full of Chassidic content that illuminates the darkness. On the Mikdash Tours, we view a model of

## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SHLICHUS FROM EILAT OREN

**Every woman is a natural leader** – Every woman runs her home. She runs the household and guides the children, establishes routines, times and menus, makes decisions etc. You have all the abilities – take them all with you on mitzvaim.

**Speak up – information gathering** – in order to find, you need to know that you’re looking. Take every opportunity to speak up, to become informed and to ask about the things that you need for the projects you are involved in.

**Make connections** – you know a shlucha/activist that needs something or someone who has something to give – connect the two of them. This will enable each of them to fulfill their mission.

**In your environment you have everything in potential** – know that your immediate environment has everything you need. What remains for you to do is to ask, get the word out, talk to people about what you’re looking for. When you are involved in something you talk about it, and when you talk about it, you find what you need.

**Make a contact list** – you should have many, many names on your contact list. A Lubavitcher woman has

to include the name and number of every woman and girl she meets in the supermarket, park, on mitzvaim or anywhere else. There will always be something you can suggest to them: a shiur, a farbrengen, helping out in some mitvza...

**See the positive in the negative** – when something is lacking it’s a sign that you have to go out and give. Wherever you go, you have a mission to accomplish. For example, Hashem wants you to influence your neighbor, to talk to her about Torah and mitzvos. How does He get you to do this? By making you run out of eggs so you have to borrow from the neighbor...

**Openness = Wealth** – When a person refrains from including those around him, he limits himself; he is impoverished. When a person thinks as a rich man he is open, he talks, he creates a reality of wealth – the world was created for Yisroel. Don’t hold back from approaching anybody in order to ask for advice, help, knowledge, information...

**You are the Rebbe’s daughter!** – When you remember that you are the Rebbe’s daughter, you will receive everything! The Rebbe will make sure you have everything you need.





the Mikdash along with finding out about the vessels of the Mikdash, the avoda, etc.

And that is how this unique operation, amazing in its simplicity though with a powerful impact, came to be. It enables Jews of all backgrounds to encounter religious and Chassidic Judaism.

Yerushalayim shel Maala exposes them to religious family life and to the magnificent history of the Chosen People.

Today, after two and a half years, Eilat directs a team of fifteen guides.

“The Rebbe made it clear that every activity, every tour, has to connect them to the present, so they see Judaism as something that’s alive... Another thing that the Rebbe made clear to us is that on every tour there has to be a visit to a Chabad mosad of some kind – a shul, a Chabad house, etc. And of course, there had to be Chassidishe tochen, the outlook of p’nimius ha’Torah.

“The Rebbe also emphasized that

the Merkaz Geula U’Moshiach and the Yerushalayim shel Maala should be under one roof but as two separate mosdos.”

Today, the Yerushalayim shel Maala tour agency runs an array of Jewish tours. These are advertised on a tasteful and interesting website as well as other forums which attract the public. Thousands of people have gotten an up-close and personal taste of authentic Judaism. The get-to-know Jewish life tours include **On-Site Visits** to homes, mosdos, and Jewish events which inspire and instruct; **Righteous Women** – a tour for women, in which they learn about separating challa and farbreng with women; **Preparing for Shabbos** – a peek into the home and kitchen; **Chassidic Yerushalayim; Sofer and Safrus; Among Chassidim and Mekubalim; Bar/Bat Mitzva Celebrations; and Chagim and Moadim.**

## BREAKING BARRIERS

To make the tours a success, the staff is alert to every need, expectation, sensitivity, and the abilities of the variegated crowd that joins them. Every guide knows that in order for people to be receptive to their message, they must speak from their hearts. The fact that the guides lead dozens, hundreds if not thousands of Jewish neshamos to recognize G-d and the Torah, spurs them on to working with a chayus, love, and Chassidishe warmth. Writing to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh helps the devoted staff stay on track and brings them much blessing and success.

In order to make the deepest impression on visitors and to forge a long lasting connection with the Jewish-Chassidic message that is part and parcel of every tour, they try to include visits to Lubavitcher families as much as possible. Many of the participants are amazed that religious families are willing to host

them. Some are afraid and ask suspiciously, “Are they aiming to make us do t’shuva?” “They won’t yell at us?” “Do they really want us to come?”

These encounters usually end up with an exchange of phone numbers and an invitation to come for Shabbos. Fears dissipate within minutes of their first encounter. A generous spread, welcoming faces, and conversation about topics of mutual interest break the barriers and create an opening for closeness.

It often happens that the staff and the hosts are the ones who are surprised. “Each time we are amazed anew to see people who come with no background in Judaism express feelings and ideas that are actually deep Chassidic concepts. With nearly all of them, we find bittul and a genuine desire to listen to the d’var Hashem. It’s moving and uplifting to see how Chassidus opens people up and affects the Jewish neshama. This is why we include Chassidic stories, Chassidic niggunim, inyanei Moshiach and Geula, pictures of the Rebbe, Igros Kodesh...

“Whenever you deal with the public, you have to be exceedingly careful, exacting in your work standards, with sensitivity and understanding, following clear and effective rules in order to prevent complaints, disappointment and distress. The Yerushalayim shel Maalash staff is experienced, in touch with the unique character of



the work and does whatever it can so that each tour is successful. In order that the next tour will be even more successful the staff meets to review what happened and to learn lessons for the future. They learn from their mistakes and difficulties they experience and are constantly improving.

Thus far, Eilat’s tour agency has warmed the hearts of about 5000 people from all over the country and all backgrounds – soldiers, school children, kibbutznikim, employees of high-tech firms, etc. They come to hear and see Elokus and they are all touched.

**“Immediately mamash mamash, all Jews will go, ‘with our youth and our elders etc. with our sons and our daughters’ ... to our holy land, to Yerushalayim the holy city, to the holy mountain, to the third Beis HaMikdash, to the Holy of**



**Holies**

**... and all this immediately.”**  
(the conclusion of the sicha of VaYigash, 5752)

*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu  
V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach  
L'olam Va'ed!*

# www.MoshiachForKids.com

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# REACHING OUT IN OLD TAPPAN

By Chani Nussbaum

“While attending the Kinus HaShluchos this year, I thought: How come my husband and I don’t have miracle stories? Why don’t I hear moving stories about people whose lives were saved thanks to our Chabad house or even about a family who went ‘all the way’ to Chabad?”

“I realized that this was a Yetzer Hara thought, to get me down. The truth is, when a woman lights Shabbos candles for the first time in her life, that’s a miracle. The Rebbe teaches us that one neshama that is inspired is an entire world, and the most important thing of all is that it hastens the Geula.”

That’s how my conversation with Mrs. Devora Itta Lewis, shlucha to Old Tappan in New Jersey, began. But it turned out that she had beautiful shlichus stories to share.

## A NEW SHLICHUS

I grew up in California. Although we were Lubavitch, my family lived in a very secular community, so you could say I grew up familiar with what’s involved on shlichus. I went to seminary in Australia and then to Beis Rivka in Crown Heights. My husband and I went on shlichus to Long Island for five years, shortly after we married. Two and a half years ago we were asked to be part of a shlichus under Rabbi Mordechai Shain.

We live and work in Bergen County, New Jersey. Few Jews live

here and most of them are businessmen or professionals - doctors, psychologists, and the like. The community is solidly upper middle class.

At first it was hard for me to adjust to the mentality. In California everything is relaxed, and people have time. It’s a big contrast to Long Island where we lived previously and to New Jersey where we are now, where life is fast-paced and stressful. The advantages of living here are that we are just a twenty minute

drive away from Monsey, so chinuch and kosher food are no problem. The best part is that we are close to 770. I am happy that my children have Jewish amenities that I didn’t have in California when I was growing up.

## IN THE BEGINNING

We arrived in Old Tappan a few days before Rosh HaShana. Our first step was to find a spacious place for a Chabad house. My husband called the owner of one of the expensive



Rejoicing at the Chabad house



hotels in the city and asked to meet with him. When they met, the man's first question was, "Where are you from?"

My husband said, "From Long Island," since that is where we lived before we moved to Old Tappan.

But he asked again, "Where are you from?" and my husband said, "From Chabad. We came to help the Jews here."

The hotel owner excitedly said, "That's just what I was waiting to hear. My wife is from Iran and she came to the US in the 70's with the youth that fled Iran because of the Revolution when Khomeini came to power. When she arrived in the US, it was Chabad who helped her get settled. For many years we have been waiting for an opportunity to pay back Chabad for the help they gave her."

He allowed us to use his hotel for the Chabad House and helped us find an apartment nearby. So, even before we got started, we felt the ko'ach of the meshaleiach, and then more miracles and hashgacha pratiyos followed.

Our first Rosh HaShana was special. Although we began organizing just two days before Yom Tov, about 80 people came to the davening, despite there having been no shul in the area for many years. The fact is that the prior lack of local Yiddishkait contributes to our programs being welcomed in general.

That first year, during mitvtzaim on Chanuka, a woman in the central business district stopped to ask about his 'strange' activity. He explained that he was from Chabad and he had come to spread the light of Judaism. She was so excited about this that since then, she helps us a lot in our work here. The fact that she belongs to a Reform Temple and her husband isn't Jewish doesn't deter her one bit.

Another moving story happened with the owner of a flower shop, who my husband presumed was a non-Jew. From the beginning, my husband became friendly with him, thinking that the man would prove helpful with information about the Jews who lived in the area. In fact, he knew many businessmen who order bouquets from him and every few days he would give my husband another name of a Jew who lived in the area. Many Jews, whose entire Jewish identity began and ended with the fact that they knew they were Jewish, began getting more involved thanks to the flower vendor.

One day, the shop owner told my husband that his maternal grandmother died and before she died she told the family that she was Jewish. Until then, his mother had no idea about this. She was married to a non-Jew and they lived like gentiles in every respect.

Of course my husband began to be mekarev him and they arranged a weekly shiur in Tanya. When they began learning Tanya, the man told my husband that he



**A senior citizen happy to shake the lulav**

remembered going, in his childhood, with his grandmother to buy meat and over the store was a sign with Hebrew letters that spelled "Kosher." He didn't even know how to pronounce the word! It turned out that not only was his grandmother Jewish but she even kept kosher.

Back then, he didn't know how to pronounce the word 'kosher,' while now he learns Tanya every week with my husband and is making progress nicely, boruch Hashem.

## **IN THE RIGHT TIME**

We met a special family, where the husband is a child of Holocaust survivors and the wife is from a Sefardic family of Kohanim. They knew very little about Judaism but when their twin sons became bar mitzva, their mother brought them to our shul. Her lack of knowledge was so great that when she saw my husband's tallis bag she asked: Where did you get that nice pillow from ... My husband explained to her what tallis and t'fillin are.

The mother became very interested and was so impressed by Chabad's programs and our warm and welcoming attitude towards everyone, no matter who they are, and that she began to study Judaism in earnest. Today, she and her children are regular participants in all our programs and shiurim. If not for the Rebbe, their Judaism would have begun and end with the knowledge that they are Jewish and possibly some empty ceremony at age 13.

In the course of our shlichus, I met a Jewish woman, a psychologist who does research on brain function. She also works as a therapist for families with brain damaged children. At one point, I found out that they were doing tests because they suspected that she was ill. I wanted to encourage her and give her something and I remembered



the book, *Chicken Soup for the Neshama* (by Burston). It had been published years ago (2003) and was out of print and I wondered how I should get a copy. It so happens that the author's son learns together with my son in Monsey so it seems I had found a way.

I happened to meet the author while in Monsey one day, and told her that I needed a copy of her book. She apologized, saying there were none left but when she saw how disappointed I was, she said she would check in her car. A few minutes later she came back with a big smile and said she had found the last copy. I was thrilled and I gave it to the psychologist along with a personal letter.

The woman called me a few days later and said emotionally, "You don't know what this book did for me. It came at just the right time. I was on the brink of a deep depression. Everything seemed black to me, with no hope. The doctors told us that we can't have children and if that wasn't enough, it seems as though I have cancer. This book saved me and really got me back on my feet."

The woman began to come to shul and the crisis passed.

## FESTIVE OCCASION

In our area lives an Israeli family that outwardly seems totally disconnected from Judaism. We were very surprised when one day, the family appeared in shul. Their son became bar mitzva and they said this was a one-time visit to shul because they did not want an ongoing connection.

My husband discovered that both father and son had beautiful voices. This was before Chanuka and he decided to draw them in, in this way. He suggested that the father come with us to the old age home and sing there. At first he said no, but later on he called my husband and said that in return for preparing his son for

his bar mitzva, he would agree to go to the old age home and sing.

At the old age home, the residents enjoyed the performance very much. A young woman said to my husband: You don't know what you did for my father who is in this home!

With tears in her eyes she said that her father used to put on t'fillin every day and had kept mitzvos until he went to the home. "When you showed up and put t'fillin on with him, and celebrated Chanuka, you reminded him of his good old days."

It turned out that the program made the biggest impression on the Israeli man. He said to my husband, "Throughout my life in Israel, I had a very negative impression of religious people and of religion generally... Your caring for every person touched me and I can definitely say that my outlook has changed."

Another example of tremendous siyata d'Shmaya happened recently. My husband gave a shiur in the home of someone who greatly respects him. When the shiur was over, my husband spoke with the man and showed him his planned activities for the week. My husband confided that he regretted that he had not yet been privileged to kasher a kitchen in the community. "Rabbi, don't worry," he said. "You'll do that too. You can kasher ours!"

We saw how the shliach just has to lift a finger and the Rebbe finishes the work.

## WONDERS OF HASHGACHA ELYONA

The Lewis' do numerous activities and reach out to all Jews, aside from the regular seasonal activities: Jewish programs in the local Jewish school and activities for teens; programs and shiurim for women and ongoing activities at old age homes.

"During the week I teach at the Chabad School in Monsey while my husband is busy with Chabad House work fulltime. In the evenings we help with relationships, shalom bayis, etc. Even people from the Reform community turn to us with these problems. They know Chabad is the place to turn to. We are in the best position to truly help them since we operate with the kochos of the Rebbe and connect them to the Rebbe. This is the real solution to all problems.

"I didn't go to the Rebbe much in my childhood. Flights from California were expensive and it wasn't that feasible. When I became bas mitzva my father took me to the Rebbe and when I went by, the Rebbe said, 'Grow up to be a Chassidishe girl.'"

I think the Rebbe's bracha was fulfilled with Mrs. Lewis!

*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, Melech HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed!*



Mivtza t'fillin

# THE REBBE AND THE BIKER

By Sholom Dovber Crombie

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

*His long hair straggling down his neck and his overall hyper-casual appearance bore testimony that he was of the wild and “freaky” type. But by the time he finishing saying his piece, the whole assembly had quite a different picture...*

The communal Shabbos meals at the “Moshiach U’Geula” Center in Yerushalayim’s Nachlat HaShiva neighborhood are famous among the many young people who frequent the pedestrian mall. They stop in on Friday night to hear Kiddush and get a taste of Shabbos. The T’mimim working on the premises make sure to provide the participants with some food for the soul as well, utilizing their visits to engage them in Yiddishkait and share a thought from the Torah.

These Friday night get-togethers see throngs of young people gathering until the wee hours of the morning to take part in rousing chassidic niggunim and inspiring words of chassidus that capture the soul.

On one particular Shabbos, a participant got up and asked if he

could say a few words. Many an eyebrow was raised in puzzlement, wondering what a young man who didn’t appear to have any connection to chassidic Judaism wanted to contribute. His long hair straggling down his neck and his overall hyper-casual appearance bore testimony that he was of the wild and “freaky” type. But by the time he finishing saying his piece, the whole assembly had quite a different picture and it was clear to all why he got up the nerve to tell his exciting story.

HaTamim Yitzchak Granitz, one of the yeshiva bachurim who work at the center, retells this special story for the readers of Beis Moshiach Magazine:

“While my outward appearance would seem to indicate that my life is rather far from being religious,” the young man began,

“I was actually educated in a Chabad school. My parents wanted me to get a little Jewish education and learn certain basic concepts about the Jewish world. As a result, I even had the privilege of hearing about the Lubavitcher Rebbe and the special path of Chabad chassidus.

“Yet, despite the education I had received in school, at the conclusion of my studies, I left the ways of Torah and mitzvos, and my connection to Judaism became ever more distant. Eventually I found myself working as a trainer in a health and fitness center.

“While my work there provided me with a great deal of satisfaction, I was still looking for a pastime to fill my inner world and some inspiration for my path in life. I found this with riding big motorcycles and participating in competitions with my friends. With the passage of time, this hobby became more and more dangerous. We would hold races at breakneck speeds in a totally irresponsible manner that put our lives at risk. On numerous occasions, these competitions almost ended in a tragic accident, but that was part of the excitement... I used to travel in these races at speeds in excess of one hundred and fifty miles an hour! I would cover tremendous distances in a short period of time,

despite the instability caused to the bike by intense wind friction.

“Not long ago,” the young man continued, “I was walking down the Ben-Yehuda pedestrian mall one afternoon, when suddenly my eyes spotted a small picture of the Rebbe sticking out from a pile of papers scattered along the sidewalk. At first, I thought that I should just ignore the picture, but I felt a powerful feeling in my heart drawing me towards the Rebbe’s face, as if his eyes were penetrating me. This fact annoyed me, and I continued on my way, angry at the Rebbe.

“Then I began to think to myself: ‘What does he want from me?’ Despite all my efforts to pay no attention to the Rebbe’s look, there was something deep within me – maybe the Chassidic education that I had received as a boy – that caused me to retrace my steps, pick up the Rebbe’s picture, and put it in my knapsack.

“Before long, I forgot all about the picture and how I got it. I seriously doubt if I ever would have remembered it again, were it not for what happened just a few days later. I was riding along the ‘Chutza Yisroel’ highway at a ridiculously high speed, when I suddenly felt the Rebbe’s penetrating look once more, just as I did when I saw his picture on the sidewalk of the Ben-Yehuda pedestrian mall. It was as if he was calling to me from out of my

knapsack to stop riding so fast.

“In an instantaneous and incomprehensible decision, I chose to listen to that voice in my heart. I stopped the motorcycle and pulled the Rebbe’s picture out of my knapsack. It was a card with the Rebbe’s picture above the word ‘Moshiach’ on one side, and the Traveler’s Prayer on the other. I asked my friend to recite *T’fillas HaDerech* together with me, and when we finished, I told him of my decision: ‘That’s it. I’m not going to ride so fast anymore!’

“We got back on the motorcycle and continued on our way at a much calmer and more tranquil pace, together with all the other vehicles moving along the highway. Suddenly, I noticed a police roadblock placed at a curve directly in front of us. The motorist would have only a few meters to stop before reaching it. When we got to the roadblock, we were amazed to see that the police had erected a barricade with barbed wire, and in addition, the driving lane had been covered with slick oil.

The police officers at the scene explained that there had recently been a series of car thefts perpetrated by residents of the nearby Arab villages. The thieves managed to break through every roadblock the police erected, driving at very high speeds until they escaped without a trace. As a result, the police contrived this new type of roadblock, which

***I felt a powerful feeling in my heart drawing me towards the Rebbe’s face, as if his eyes were penetrating me. This fact annoyed me, and I continued on my way, angry at the Rebbe.***

could not be breached at accelerated speeds. The policemen explained further that the drivers of a car going over the barbed wire and oil at a high speed would have virtually no chance of surviving the impending collision...

“We immediately understood how this pertained to us,” he concluded his amazing story. “If I wouldn’t have had that urge to listen to the Rebbe’s look burning within me and slow down, I would have been roaring towards the roadblock at a pace so fast that I wouldn’t have been able to slam on the brakes in time, and it’s highly unlikely that I would have made it out alive...”





# MAKING WAVES: FROM RADIO IN ARGENTINA TO SHLICHUS IN TZFAS

By Nosson Avrohom

*A fascinating life story along with personal miracle stories as related by R' Yehuda Landau.*

At the time Yehuda Landau discovered Chabad and the Rebbe MH"M, he was a popular radio broadcaster in Bahia Blanca in southern Argentina. His weekly program, "Personal Style," enjoyed very high ratings. It covered many juicy issues and kept the listeners spellbound. He covered political scandals, exposing lies and frauds, and corrupt politicians and public figures. As stories poured in, and R' Yehuda and his partner knew just how to present them in a way that would capture the attention of hundreds of thousands of listeners. Even the president of Argentina did not escape the sharp tongues of the pair of young broadcasters.

Today, R' Yehuda realizes that his drive to find absolute truth grew out of a deep search for his own self. Back then, he didn't know this and he did his work happily and with lots of courage and commitment. While getting to know Rabbi Moshe Friedman, a shliach in his city, he hoped that he would be able to get some sensational story out of him, once

he figured out how to successfully defrock him of his pious exterior.

The two of them debated for hours, sometimes late into the night, but the shliach's persistence was more than he had bargained for. He soon came to realize that there are indeed genuine people in this world of ours, people who stand behind what they say and believe.

Within a fairly short time R' Friedman succeeded in convincing R' Yehuda of the truth of the way of our ancestors. What topped it all off was when R' Yehuda met the Rebbe and experienced a series of miracles. R' Landau tells us how he got from behind the microphone in Argentina to the Chabad k'hilla in Tzfas.

## ONE JEWISH MEMORY – HIS BAR MITZVA

The education that I got was barely traditional, like that of most Jews in Bahia Blanca. There was an organized Jewish community but aside from knowing about our

belonging to the Jewish people, the leaders of the community did nothing to deepen our Jewish knowledge and identity. We gathered in shul a few days a year but these were community gatherings with no Jewish worship. Most of my friends and acquaintances were quite assimilated.

My strongest Jewish memory from youth is of my bar mitzva party. My mother told me that I was almost thirteen and that there is an ancient Jewish custom to celebrate this day. So although we did not observe anything at home, I went to the shul which was directed by Rabbi Asher Benoliel, had an aliya, and put on t'fillin for the first time. It was also the last time until the shliach drew me into Jewish practice years later.

My life was good. I had a successful radio program and did well in business. You could say that I had everything in life.

My first connection with the shliach, Rabbi Moshe Friedman, began in 5745, shortly after he arrived. On my program we had top politicians. We did extensive research on them and then asked them the questions that they least wanted to hear. When they tried to wiggle out of them, as politicians do, we would push them into a

corner. We even managed to trip up the president.

One fine day I got a phone call from someone who introduced himself as a shliach of the Rebbe. He invited me to come to one of his programs. I was curious to know what it was about and I went. We kept in touch ever since. The ideals he propounded were terrific but I assumed he was yet another charlatan who wanted honor and power. I had long conversations with him and needless to say, my questions that were asked cynically were answered seriously and well.

I quickly learned two things: One, he was very persistent. Today I know that this is a characteristic

***“I can tell you one thing, that in your case, this dream which seems removed from reality is more realistic than what happened here!”***

typical of Lubavitchers. Two, what he lectured to me about, he did himself. His dedication amazed me. Within a fairly short time, we became friends. We

Rabbi Yehuda Landau driving his car  
in the Lag B'Omer parade



celebrated the birth of our twins, Zecharia and Nachum, in 5748, with him. As time went on, I committed to doing more and more mitzvos until we became Chassidim in every way. My beard began to grow and my wife started covering her hair.

We sent the twins to a non-Jewish preschool because in the preschool in the Jewish community the children hit and taunted them for being the only ones to wear tzitzis and yarmulkes. I made sure that the gentile teachers would keep the rules of kashrus. They respected me there and the teachers, like the parents of the preschool children, did not make Saturday birthday parties because my children would not be able to attend. The only treat they could give them was Coca Cola. The teachers greatly respected us and our way of life.

## THE REBBE IN A DREAM

The Rebbe is the one who grabbed me. One time, when R' Friedman visited our house, he brought the weekly sicha, a Chabad publication in Spanish. We spoke about all kinds of things as we did on every visit. After he left, I read a miracle story in the booklet. I read it from beginning to end with great interest. The story was about someone who did not have children for many years and the shliach who knew him urged him to go to 770 and get the Rebbe's bracha.

At first the man doubted that the bracha of a rabbi, as great as he was, could help him when big doctors could not. The shliach though, kept urging him to go and he finally agreed, especially when he felt he had nothing to lose. At that time, the Rebbe was not receiving people and the shliach advised him to wait for the Rebbe in the hallway of 770 and when

the Rebbe would go in, to approach him and ask for a bracha.

The man's sorrow over not having children was too much to bear and when the Rebbe went from Mincha to his room, he approached the Rebbe and began to cry bitterly. The man was very wealthy and he plaintively told the Rebbe, "What's it all worth to me without children?"

The Rebbe asked him whether he put on t'fillin. The man did not expect a question of this sort and he said that he was not religious. The Rebbe told him that he was also a "businessman" and he was ready to make a deal with him. If the man put on t'fillin, in which it is written "and you shall teach your son," then he was sure that in the merit of this important mitzva Hashem would give him children. And that's what happened. He began putting on t'fillin and a year later his first son was born. When I read this story, I was blown away by it.

Our son Nachum had a lazy eye. We quickly noticed that he could not fully open this eye and he was treated by one of the biggest ophthalmologists in Buenos Aires. He tried various approaches, but finally concluded that nothing would help and the child had to be operated on. He recommended that we wait until he grew older and stronger since the operation entailed general anesthesia.

When he was three years old we had the operation done but it did not help. He had become so used to using just one eye that the other eye remained lazy and did not recover. The medical team was very concerned that he would lose the vision in that eye. We worried about it constantly.

The night that I read the story, I had the most amazing dream. It

was the first and last time that I saw the Rebbe in a dream. I tremble just thinking about it, even though it happened so many years ago.

The Rebbe stood in the middle of the room and looked at me with such compassion and he asked me why I was sad. At first I was afraid to look at the Rebbe or respond but I soon calmed down. A strange serenity came over me and I told the Rebbe that it was because of our son's health. The Rebbe smiled broadly and asked, "Does your son wear tzitzis every day?"

I answered honestly that he did not and then the Rebbe said, "Buy him tzitzis to wear and you will see that everything will work out in the best possible way."

In my dream I was taken aback by the Rebbe's suggestion and I asked what connection there was between the two things. The Rebbe said that regarding the mitzva of tzitzis it says, "And you shall see it," and if you did this below, Hashem would help from Above.

I woke up in turmoil. I was covered in a cold sweat. I was just at the beginning of my t'shuva and I had no idea what it said in the parsha of tzitzis. Later on I checked it out and I saw what was written there and I was flabbergasted.

At this point I felt it wasn't just a dream that I could dismiss, yet I still found it very hard to commit to wearing tzitzis myself and to put them on my son. It was a very strong psychological barrier. Until then, my interest in Judaism was on a "low flame" and I knew that if I started wearing tzitzis, I would soon be fully religious. No wonder then that my G-dly soul and animal soul were battling fiercely. In the end, the G-dly soul won out, and I decided that I would take the Rebbe's suggestion seriously.





My bar mitzva

At that time I was present at a family gathering at the home of Rabbi Gavriel Setton in Buenos Aires where Rabbi Yossi Benchimol was too. I told them all about my amazing dream. Rabbi Benchimol said that if I didn't do what the Rebbe asked, the dream was a waste. "It's all in your hands now. The Rebbe gave you the means to help your son and if you don't do it, you will be responsible."

His honest message got through to me. I spoke to my wife and we decided that I would start wearing tzitzis for a test period, to see how I felt about it. It was a

very short trial period since the children saw my tzitzis and said they wanted tzitzis too. So I bought them tzitzis at the Judaica store in Buenos Aires.

### THE DREAM WAS MORE REALISTIC THAN REAL LIFE!

Four months later, I took my son to the doctor and I saw doctors from all over entering the room where my son was. That made me very nervous! I thought something terrible had happened but then the top doctor came out

and said, "What happened with your son goes beyond all logic and anything I've learned in medicine. I've had this position for many years and I have never seen anything like this. Your son sees just fine, as though he never had a vision problem."

I was overcome by this news and I told the doctor about my dream, a vision really. He looked thunderstruck and he said, "I can tell you one thing, that in your case, this dream which seems removed from reality is more realistic than what happened here!"

A few years later, in 5755, a group of us from Argentina went to 770 and to the Rebbe's room. Today I wouldn't dare enter into that holy place but back then I was relatively new to Chabad. I learned a lot before going in and I planned on saying T'hilim the entire time. What actually happened was that I couldn't utter a word. I felt as though it was closed off to me.

I felt choked up from distress and emotion. Then in an instant, the feeling became really intense and it struck me. This was the room that I had seen the Rebbe in, in my dream; the same library, the same desk, the same chair. I will never forget it. People around me did not understand why I suddenly burst into tears. I couldn't stop crying. Even today, after having told the story so many times, I can't help but get emotional.

Fortunate are we that we are Chassidim and that we are mekushar to the Rebbe. My son's vision is fine, like anybody else's.

### THE SHLIACH TOLD ABOUT THE REBBE'S ANSWER WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES

After such an incredible miracle, R' Landau quickly got

into a life of Judaism and Chassidus. He began attending shiurim and davened and put on t'fillin daily. After the tzitzis he bought a suit and then a hat.

As a Chassidishe man with two growing sons, Bahia Blanca was not the ideal place for chinuch and he wanted to move to Buenos Aires which has wonderful Chabad mosdos. What stopped him from moving was the help he gave the local shliach, R' Friedman, in the capacity of an additional Chabad family. How could he abandon him?

Lag B'Omer is the yahrtzait of R' Friedman's father. Every year, he would go to Buenos Aires to be able to daven as chazan in a minyan. That year he went to the Rebbe and I gave him a letter to give to the Rebbe in which I asked about moving to Buenos Aires. Of course R' Friedman wasn't happy at the prospect but he honored my request and conveyed my question. Upon his return, the first thing I asked him was, what was the Rebbe's answer.

If you know R' Friedman, you know he's a genuine Chassid. Although he so badly wanted me to stay and help him, with tears in his eyes he told me that the Rebbe said we could move. Despite his personal disappointment, he wished me well. Not long afterwards we moved to Buenos Aires.

I had a big miracle with the Rebbe in our new house too. This time it was about children. It was six years after our twins and we had no other children. We wrote to the Rebbe and asked for his bracha.

Our final move to Buenos Aires was made in Kislev 5754. Two months later, in Shevat, we went to Bahia Blanca to finish up the final details regarding our move. To our surprise we saw a letter

from the Rebbe about our move with the usual wording for such occasions. We were thrilled. Nine months later our daughter, Chaya Mushka was born.

## CHABAD RADIO PROGRAM

I did a number of things for parnasa in Buenos Aires. Since I had radio broadcasting abilities, I decided to use them to spread the wellsprings and we put a radio program on the air called "Chabad Live" which contained many different segments. The common denominator of them all was to

***On the way out we met a Druze doctor who is assistant director of the emergency room and he said, "Do you know you had a miracle?"***

spread Torah and Chassidus and publicize the Geula. The program made a great impact.

On Yud-Alef Nissan 5756 we decided to travel to 770. After spending some time there, we flew to Eretz Yisroel where we spent Pesach with friends in Tzfas. I asked them to rent an apartment for us. We had serious thoughts about making aliya and felt even more strongly about it after the terrorist attacks on the Jewish center in Buenos Aires in which dozens were killed.

I was miraculously saved from being injured in the attack that took place on 11 Av 5755. It was a

Sunday and I was going to work and I noticed that I was low on gas. I stopped at a gas station and hoped that I would get out of there quickly so I wouldn't be late for work.

It happened that the attendant was more interested in the soccer championship game that was taking place than in filling up my tank. He began talking sports with me, about who would win and who would lose, and I felt very stressed. I wanted to get to my office that was located right near the Jewish center building. I fumed over the slow moving attendant. At nine o'clock I heard strong explosions. I was as frightened as everyone else. We had already experienced a terrorist attack against Jews on Purim 5752 and I figured it was another one. This time, my fear was that they attacked a Chabad mosad.

As I approached the building where my office which marketed electronics was located, I realized the extent of the miracle that happened to me. The brunt of the explosion was borne by the Jewish community center building. All the buildings located around it were badly affected and they even removed dead and wounded from them. My office was completely destroyed.

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Writing to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh wasn't that prevalent back then in Argentina and after thoroughly enjoying our stay in Tzfas we wanted to know whether we should move there.

It was Rabbi Mordechai Zafrani who told us about writing to the Rebbe and opening to an answer in the Igros Kodesh. We wrote a letter and the first words that we saw were: next year in Eretz Yisroel.

We were ecstatic. We decided then and there to sell our

belongings in Argentina and to move to Tzfas.

## T'FILLIN STORIES

Within two months, the Landau family had sold their home and belongings and moved to Tzfas. At first, Yehuda worked as a mashgiach for kashrus in the city while learning the craft of t'fillin making, covering every aspect of the process. Many people still remember his store that was located opposite the yeshiva, and many people gave him mezuzos to check that they brought from mitvtzaim, and their t'fillin.

R' Landau has many stories about this. He starts off by saying, "Check, check and check again. Don't rely on your t'fillin or mezuzos having been checked seven years ago. Check them every year or two, and definitely if the Rebbe tells you to. I will tell you a story that made a big commotion when it happened here in Tzfas.

"A few years ago, a well-known softer came to me and asked me to check his battim, not the parshiyos. What happened? The Rebbe wrote to him several times to check his t'fillin. He did so, with experienced, G-d fearing



The Rebbe's letter about moving to Buenos Aires

sofrim, but they found nothing. He thought the Rebbe might mean it was a problem with the battim.

"With his consent, I decided to check the parshiyos anyway and I was shocked to find in the section of 'ki yeveacha' that the last letter in the word 'yadecha' was written incorrectly. It was a Thursday at 9:30 in the evening when I called him and told him what I found. At first he thought I was kidding but when he saw it himself, he was quite upset since it meant that for

years he had put on non-kosher t'fillin. He told this story at every opportunity in order to reinforce the Rebbe's horaa to have t'fillin checked.

"One day, Rabbi Chaim Zilber, who does a lot of mitvtzaim in Tzfas, brought me t'fillin to be checked. He did not understand why it took me so long to check them but I did it slowly and carefully.

"He checked these t'fillin every year for 16 years. To his dismay, I found that an entire word was missing. For months he went around with that parsha in his pocket so he could show people the importance of periodic checking."

## SHLICHUS IN TZFAS

In the past year, R' Landau decided to dedicate his life to the Rebbe's mitvtzaim:

I had an enticing offer that was hard to refuse, to go on shlichus, but when I wrote to the Rebbe, I opened to letters that indicated I should remain where I was. People who knew me and were involved, thought I was crazy. Erev Shabbos a year ago, two rabbanim in the k'hilla invited me to their home



Rabbi Landau speaking at a Chassidic farbrengen attended by the mayor of Tzfas



and asked me why I was turning it down. When I said that the Rebbe told me explicitly to do so, they wanted me to write again in their presence.

I told them that I would not write again if the answer was clear but they pushed me and said I should write that friends pressured me to write again. Out of respect for them I gave in and wrote again. The Rebbe's answer was in volume 8, p. 271 and it stunned all present:

**In response to your letter – that does not say when it was written – in which you write once again about the possibility of traveling here. It is rather surprising since you see the success Hashem has granted you in your work where you are now and that there is nobody else to do what you do, which is a clear indication that you have found your shlichus in this world over the last few months. If so, why look for ways and means to leave your shlichus and travel elsewhere?**

**Especially based on what is explained in the sicha of 19 Kislev 5664 about confusion in avoda when you think about another avoda as you do it. And it was also explained at the farbrengen the precision in the phrase *machshavos zaros*, that they are not necessarily empty thoughts and certainly not forbidden thoughts, but since they are foreign at this point in time, they confuse the avoda, especially when every Jew is called a holy nation and it is known what an effect thought has in matters of holiness.**

**Therefore, do your work where you are now with great joy that you merited to be a channel through which is drawn and increased matters of ner mitzva and Torah Ohr, and the luminary**

**of Torah which is Toras HaChassidus, its ways and customs.**

**With the passage of time it is not out of the question that you will also be able to travel to a better place, but not in the situation where you are now in ... for a number of great and important things are still in the developmental stages. It is unnecessary to go on about this at length.**

The rabbanim and I read the letter again and again, finding it hard to believe our eyes. The answer couldn't be clearer. Since then I have been spreading the wellsprings with the parents of Chabad preschool children in the Menachem Begin neighborhood of Tzfas, most who are not from frum homes. We want to forestall situations in which a child goes home and wants to talk about the parsha, as he learned about it in school, and the parents have no idea what he's talking about. We print a special booklet with the content of the parsha for the parents and we provide ongoing programming for them.

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Two months ago, R' Landau moved to the Nof Kineret neighborhood on the edge of Tzfas where he is helping the shliach, Rabbi Shlomo Almalem. He is also continuing his work in the Menachem Begin neighborhood. He has terrific stories from his shlichus work but he chose to share a story that happened with his daughter during mitzva Neshek:

"We were registering children for Chabad schools. My daughter remembered that there was a home where the father had been in touch with me in the past and she thought it would be a good idea to go and visit him. We took some parsha pages and candles.

"We arrived at the house forty minutes before Shabbos. The woman who opened the door realized why we had come and she burst into tears and hugged and kissed my surprised daughter. We didn't know what was going on until she explained that the day before, her son had been injured and he had a fracture that required general anesthesia for the operation. She was very worried about it and so she promised that she would light Shabbos candles if all went well.

"All went well and they left the hospital on Friday afternoon, but all the stores were closed and she had no candles. Then in the midst of her husband's frantic search, we showed up and offered them Shabbos candles. Needless to say, her son who had the operation is registered in a Chabad school."

### **THE DOCTOR ASKED, "DO YOU REALIZE THIS WAS A MIRACLE?"**

R' Landau began this interview with a miracle story that his son Nachum had and he ended the interview with a miracle story that happened with his daughter Chana when she was born nine years ago:

"My wife did not feel well in this pregnancy and she wrote to the Rebbe. We always open to clear answers in the Igros Kodesh and this time, the Rebbe wrote about a similar situation and said to consult with a top doctor.

"We went to a doctor who said she should stay in bed. A few months later, my wife did not feel well and she called me in shul and we went to the hospital together. The doctor did a routine, superficial examination and wanted to send us home. Remembering that the Rebbe had said to consult with a top doctor, I said that I wanted to see the head

of the department. He was offended and said, "You don't rely on me?" I told him that that wasn't the point but I felt that something was more complicated here.

"If you don't call the department head, I will ask that you sign that you refused our request and if anything happens, you will be held accountable."

"This threat got him to call Dr. Bilanka. After a brief exam he made a more thorough exam and I noticed that they were conferring together. He finally came out and said that he wanted my permission to do a C-section. Within a few minutes my wife was in the operating room. I went to the shul to say T'hilim. My wife wasn't worried since all her births were via C-section.

"Some time went by and then a nurse came and said I should go with her to the NICU because the doctor wanted to talk to me. She calmed me a little when she said my wife had given birth to a girl and the doctor would explain everything. This just made me more anxious and I ran to the department where I saw the baby in the midst of tubes, completely white and with blue lips. "That's your daughter," said the doctor.

"Unfortunately, one of her lungs collapsed and her situation is critical. I don't know if she'll make it." When I asked him what her chances were, he said, "We will treat her as though she has a chance ..." from which I gathered that they were pessimistic about



The Rebbe's response to the query about going on shlichus

her fate.

"I asked them to do all that they could since Hashem is the one who gives the power to heal. After visiting my wife who was in the recovery room, I went home and wrote to the Rebbe and asked for a bracha for a miracle. The answer was about consolation that ought to come after a period of sorrow.

"I had mixed feelings about the answer. Maybe the Rebbe wanted to console us when all was lost or maybe, after the fright, her condition would improve.

"I called the shliach in the neighborhood, Rabbi Boruch Levkivker to consult with him and only his wife was home. She read the letter and said that to the best of her knowledge, the implication was that from now on there would

be an improvement and that I should have bitachon.

"When I went to the hospital, I was terrified when I didn't see my daughter where I had left her. I thought the worst had happened.

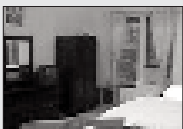
"The day before, my wife and I had discussed what name to give her. I had wanted the name Chana and my wife wanted the name Devora Leah. We wrote to the Rebbe and opened to a letter that was written to mark the yahrtzeit of the Rebbe's mother, Chana. We decided that would be our daughter's name.

"It was a bizarre situation. The doctors didn't hold out a chance for her survival but we believed that things could improve. That day, when I went to her room and didn't see her and was so shaken up, the doctors who noticed me rushed to update me about the improvement in her condition. They said she had been moved to an incubator.

"By the afternoon she could breathe on her own and eight days later she was sent home. The story of our miracle made the rounds of the hospital. Apparently, the hole in her lung had miraculously closed on its own.

"On the way out we met a Druze doctor who is assistant director of the emergency room and he said, "Do you know you had a miracle?" We said we did and we told him the answers we had opened to from the Rebbe. He said, "I envy your faith. I learned long ago not to argue with your Rebbe."

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# CAPTURING THE HEART OF BRIAN

By Raanan S. Isseroff

***Chabad's "small" delegation of anti-land-giveaway protesters in Washington captured not only media attention but also the heart of Brian, the Jewish leader of the pro-Palestinian demonstrators.***

The power of protest cannot be overestimated.

Seven am, Monday May 18th Netzach sh'b'Yisod, a busload of determined Lubavitchers and "Friends of Chabad" left Crown Heights for Washington DC, to propagate the Rebbe's timeless message of "No Land For Peace" as the way to keep Israel's citizens safe.

This episode in the saga really began with when Israel's new Prime Minister assumed office. From all indications, it seemed that he would be following in the footsteps of 40 years of predecessors to this important post – to simply do what the last guy did.

Israel has a long history of a "hidden hand" behind its government's leaders. They campaign that "Now everything will be different," only to end up doing exactly what the last Prime Minister did. As such, nobody was surprised when Mr. Netanyahu

announced after being elected that he was anxious to again resume Peace talks.

Knowing that giving away land is a sensitive issue, especially as now that Jerusalem is on the table, no open mention was made of this "trifling detail." However, the simple act of going to sit down with the expressed intentions of "Peace" was interpreted by one and all as Mr. Netanyahu's opening offer to give away more land. Indeed, it was revealed later that it was not only land that was up for discussion, but it was also being requested that Israel reveal the extent of her nuclear arsenals, a disclosure which would seriously prejudice Israel's national security.

Sadly, only 60 short years since the Holocaust, the blind promotion of Israel's suicidal policies demonstrates that Jews generally and Israeli politicians particularly have really learned nothing.

"Remember!" and "Don't Forget," slogans touted for so

long, have today become meaningless in the face of a potential second Holocaust in the making, ch"v.

Thus, our brave busload set off in the face of the impossible – to bring the message of the Macheneh Sh'china to the doors of Washington.

The event was big news even before it got off the ground. In Israel people were excited to hear that someone is finally standing up to advocate against this life threatening situation. Now the Israeli press was interested. Who were these small mice to roar at the lion?

On Sunday, Arutz Sheva ran an article in Israel about the upcoming rally. "Lubavitch is sending busloads of protesters to Washington DC!" screamed the headlines in excitement. The Israeli Charedi Radio Station "Kol B'Ramah" called to get a live interview with the organizers. Rabbi Yekutiel Rapp spoke on the upcoming rally and the Rebbe's message that the governments need to ensure the security of Israel and the safety of its citizens. He explained that just as the whole Torah is called a Torah of Peace, so too the totality of Israel with all of its land brings safety and peace for both Jews and Non-Jews in Eretz Yisroel and around the world.

A remarkable thing came out of this pre-rally press. In Israel and



all over the internet, on countless Jewish blogs and shul lists, went out the call that Lubavitch was joining the fray and sending buses to the rally in Washington!

In fact, although the Sri Lankan's had staged an enormous demonstration thousands strong, the front page of the Washington Times the next morning was graced by a picture of the paltry 200 member Jewish demonstration with signs proclaiming: "It says in the Bible that the land of Israel belongs to the Jews!"

Upon arrival at the rally, our delegates joined the AMCHA contingent from Riverdale, headed by Hillary Markowitz, and another group who came from Manhattan. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Keller was invited to speak, after which he recited the Rebbe's 12 P'sukim for children. The concept was to recall the merit of the children who are the guarantors that the Torah be kept – a fitting statement shortly before Shavuot at the scene of a political battle against those who wish to forfeit not only the Torah but the Land of Israel as well!

With us were Rabbi Yehuda Friedman of "Chabad House of Flatbush" and Rabbi Mendel Gafni and his wife Menucha with a group from Baltimore. As the rally progressed, we wished to distance ourselves from the Sri Lankan rally and the protesters for

Palestinians, and moved down the street, away from the designated rally area. The police, in an effort to keep all the rallies in one place, pushed us back into the faces of the pro-Palestinian group.

In the words of HaTamim Levi Kofmansky:

We stood across from the White House – about 100 "No-Land-For-Peace" demonstrators. Each of us was there to bring across the Lubavitcher Rebbe's messages: "...The act of protest is effective..." and "...even a vocal minority benefits the entire generation!" (See the book: "When Silence is a Sin," chapter 6.) Stuffed between us and the fence in front of the White House was a small group of around 15 pro-Palestinian activists with a noisy bull horn. Separating us was a row of 20 police officers.

We exchanged comments with them for about a half hour. They argued their ideas and we championed the Rebbe's logic. Myself, I kept declaring that G-d gave the entire land to the Jewish

people. I confronted the largest and loudest one, who appeared to be their leader. I asked him how it is that as a self-proclaimed "liberal," he is able to support terrorist groups whose desire is to create a Taliban style terror state in the heartland of Jewish Israel – a state which suppresses the very same



***"Remember!" and "Don't Forget," slogans touted for so long, have today become meaningless in the face of a potential second Holocaust in the making, ch"v.***

***He ran around the row of police officers to our side. The first person to greet him was my friend Matisyahu, who shook his hand, embraced him and, in typical Lubavitch fashion, asked if he is Jewish and if he wanted to don t'fillin.***

human rights that he himself espouses and holds dear! He responded that the "Palestinians" have only resorted to homicide bombings out of "desperation".

If this is the case, I argued, why aren't others doing this? One does not see suicide bombers from Tibet, Sudan and other places where people are far more desperate and worse off than Israel's well treated Arab population. I contended that Arab suicide bombings are purely

motivated out of a national desire to commit racist mass genocide against Jews.

He was left speechless. He did not have an answer to this. Conceding defeat, the group's leader asked if he could come over the police line and shake hands with me!

We motioned for him to come over and he ran around the row of police officers to our side. The first person to greet him was my friend Matisyahu, who shook his hand, embraced him and asked if he is Jewish. The young man, who identified himself as Brian, revealed that his mother is indeed Jewish. In typical Lubavitch fashion, Matisyahu asked if he wanted to don t'fillin. Though he had never even heard of t'fillin, after Matisyahu explained their spiritual significance, Brian decided to put them on for the first time in his life!

Wrapped in the t'fillin, Brian jokingly called out to his fellow co-political activists on the other side of the row of police officers that he had "switched sides". We all laughed, cheered and waved our "No-Land-For-Peace" banners. Brian's colleagues on the other side were all in a state of shock! They didn't know how to react. Finally, he took off the t'fillin and after a short, pleasant friendly exchange, he motioned for his group to leave!

His group, which was quite loud just a short while before, now dispersed in silence, leaving the

square all to ourselves and the Rebbe's message. Such is the power of t'fillin.

The Rebbe explains in a Sichah the deep lesson to be learned from the episode of the Meraglim (the spies). It was only Yehoshua Ben Nun and Kalev Ben Yefuna who spoke out when the Meraglim began loudly maligning the land. Even though they were talked down, their minority opinion still won out.

We learn out from this an important lesson. When a tiny minority, or even a single individual, speaks out, even against a huge majority while everyone else remains silent, still that lone opinion carries a weight! It *will* be taken into account and effect a change.

The rally was put together by the Crown Heights Committee For Shleimus HaAretz in conjunction with Chabad of Flatbush, Kensington, Georgetown, Mill Basin and Brooklyn College, HaMatteh L'Hatzalat HaAm V'HaAretz, SOS, Chabad4Israel, True Peace and Crown Heights Women For Shleimus HaAretz. A big Yashar Ko'ach to all who helped out!

Donations for on-going peulos can be sent to 858 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213. Checks should be made to: "Crown Heights Committee For Shleimus HaAretz".

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