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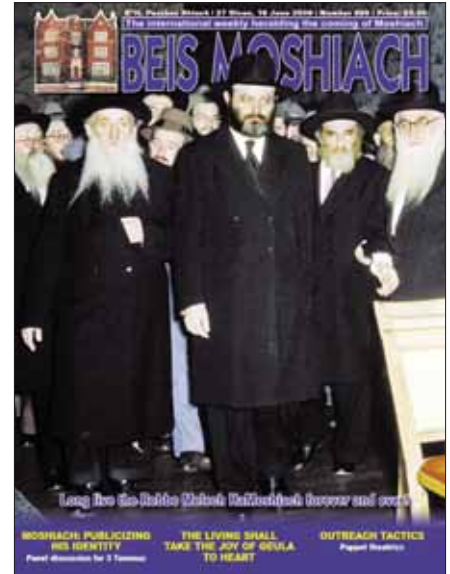
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Chassid | Avrohom Rainitz



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THE LIVING SHALL TAKE THE JOY OF GEULA TO HEART

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

*The preparation for ‘those days’ must resemble what it will be like then, in manner and in kind, which amounts to an increase in the study of Torah, especially the inner dimension of the Torah, ‘the knowledge of G-d.’ * Tracing the Rebbe MH”M’s instructions on how to perfect our Divine service in the Final Era.*

follows.] ‘In those days, knowledge, wisdom, and truth will become abundant, as it is said,¹⁸⁷ ‘for the earth shall be full with the knowledge of G-d,’¹⁸⁸ to the extent that ‘the sole occupation of the entire world [including gentiles] will be to know G-d alone.’¹⁸⁹ How much more so does this apply to the Jewish people, for ‘the Jewish people will be great sages, knowing esoteric matters...as it is said, “for the earth shall be full...as water covers the ocean.”’¹⁹⁰ Thus, it is understood that the preparation for ‘those days’ must resemble what it will be like then, in manner and in kind, which amounts to an increase in the study of Torah, especially the inner dimension of the Torah, ‘the knowledge of G-d.’

THE JOY OF PREPARING FOR MOSHIACH

“According to what was stated above, it is understood that the concept of ‘the living shall take it to heart’ as it applies to the period that follows the first thirty days of mourning is expressed (primarily) through the approach of joy – **preparing for the true and complete Redemption** (when the promise of ‘awaken and sing, you who dwell in the dust’ will be fulfilled) ...

“And since this is so, there should be an increase in strength and fortitude with regard to ‘our deeds and service’ in all matters of Torah and Mitzvos, for they precipitate and usher in and hasten the ‘ultimate perfection of the Era of Moshiach and the Resurrection of the Dead.’

“This increase also applies to Torah study, especially the inner dimension of the Torah. [The reason for the emphasis on the inner dimension of the Torah is as

“And this should be done with tranquility – peace of body and peace of spirit – **resembling and exemplifying** ‘those days,’ when ‘they will experience rest and they will amass great wisdom,’¹⁸¹ ‘they will have time to devote themselves to Torah and its wisdom.’”¹⁹¹

NOTES:

187 Yeshayahu 11:9.

188 Rambam Laws of Repentance 9:2.

189 Rambam’s Laws of Kings, end.

190 Ibid.

191 Rambam’s Laws of Kings 12:4.

187 Ibid 27

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Sivan 28 - Gimmel Tammuz Magbis

B.H. Sivan 15, 5769

To all Anash, Men and Women, G-d bless you.

We are soon approaching the very auspicious day, Gimmel Tammuz. This day comes in close proximity with Sivan 28, the auspicious day that the Rebbe MH"M and the Rebbetzin arrived in the United States.

Obviously, these are very opportune days, especially when it is connected to the number ten, when one should again evaluate his or her "Hiskashrus" (connection) with the Rebbe, and more important, to utilize these special days to 'strengthen' the Hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

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With this in mind, we therefore urge each and everyone of anash, men and women to support Kupas Rabbeinu in every possible way.

In this merit may we be "zoiche" that much before Gimmel Tammuz, the Rebbe will be revealed as Melech Hamoshiach and redeem us from this deep and bitter Golus and lead us all to the true and final Geulo, NOW MAMAOSH.

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MOSHIACH: PUBLICIZING HIS IDENTITY

*Why didn't the Rebbe speak explicitly about publicizing his identity as Moshiach? Although there were positive answers to certain people about publicizing Moshiach's identity, how can we ignore the responses that seem to downplay this activity? * We held a symposium of mashpiim in which many questions regarding the Rebbe's horaos about preparing the world for Moshiach were addressed. In this second part of the symposium, we will address spreading the Besuras HaGeula and publicizing Moshiach's identity.*

In the Rebbe's sichos of 5751-5752 there are two main things that the Rebbe demands of us: 1) To prepare oneself and the world to greet Moshiach – we will ask the mashpiim to explain how we need to live with Moshiach and how we can get others, particularly the people

we meet on mivtzaim, to live with Moshiach. 2) To publicize the Besuras HaGeula – We need explanations, based on the Rebbe's sichos and responses, regarding what needs publicizing and how to go about it.

In part two of this symposium we talk about

publicizing Moshiach's identity and what we need to do. Why did the Rebbe not speak explicitly about publicizing Moshiach's identity?

R' Liberov: Even if the Rebbe didn't tell us explicitly to go and announce that he is Moshiach, he did tell us explicitly how, and with what, Chassidim need "to live." Throughout his nesius, especially in the latter years, the Rebbe kept repeating that "Nasi Doreinu hu Moshiach Tzidkeinu." The Rebbe implanted in our souls the Chassidic imperative to believe and live with the fact that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

We also heard from the Rebbe that when the Rebbe Rayatz wanted to publicize "L'Alter l'Geula," the Chassidim added that he was the man. Thus, the Rebbe taught us that a Chassid's most essential desire needs to be to publicize to the world that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

It's a Chassid's *taava* (desire), the *taava* of anyone who is waiting for the Geula and has discovered that there is someone who is fitting to be Moshiach, to want to publicize this information to everyone.

In the past, the world wasn't ready for this revelation and the Rebbe stopped Chassidim from saying it out loud. All those years, when the Rebbe prevented the publicizing of Moshiach's identity, and even spoke sharply against doing so, it was against the nature of a Chassid.

Therefore, when the Rebbe decided that the time had come to publicize Moshiach's identity to the world, he didn't have to tell the Chassidim explicitly. It was enough for the Rebbe to remove the ban and allow the Chassidishe feeling to burst forth naturally.

It's important to note that the Rebbe did not quietly cancel the



ban. He did so openly. When R' Dovid Nachshon announced "Yechi" to the Rebbe it was just a few years after the sharp sicha of Simchas Torah 5745, and the memory of it was still fresh in people's minds.

The chozer, R' Yoel Kahn, spoke enthusiastically about the farbrengen of Simchas Torah 5745, saying it was the biggest revelation of the Rebbe that he is Moshiach. If the Rebbe did not think he was Moshiach, he could

have simply said it was incorrect. Instead, the Rebbe spent twenty minutes explaining why it wasn't the right time!

By the same token, the Rebbe could have motioned for the curtain to be closed when the Chassidim sang Yechi in 5753, and the big excitement would have been halted in its tracks. To us, it's an absolute certainty that the Rebbe did not wish to send mixed messages to confuse the Chassidim.

If we could make a heading for the sicha of Simchas Torah 5745, it would be, "Lights of Tohu Do Not Enter Vessels of Tikkun." But on 28 Nissan, 5751, the Rebbe innovated that "Lights of Tohu enter Vessels of Tikkun." It's not an easy avoda, but if you're looking for easy avoda, you're in

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the wrong place! The Rebbe said that since we are so close to Geula, it's possible to do this lofty matter of putting "lights of Tohu into vessels of Tikkun."

On Erev Shabbos Tazria-Metzora, R' Dovid Nachshon sent in a bottle of mashke to the Rebbe with a note that the bottle was for the kabbalas ha'malchus of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach by the people. Today, we are used to the idea, but back then it was a bombshell. The secretary who saw the note did not want to give the bottle to the Rebbe. He finally agreed but warned R' Dovid not to go up to the Rebbe during the farbrengen unless he was called.

Throughout the farbrengen the Rebbe spoke about the topic of Moshiach and towards the end, the secretary, R' Groner, personally called to R' Dovid. We can understand from this that not only was the Rebbe not displeased when he saw the note, the opposite is true!

One of the chozrim, R' Dovid Feldman, said that when R' Dovid Nachshon said "Yechi," the Rebbe smiled and answered amen.

That's enough! The Rebbe removed the ban. We should have danced all night over this incredible revelation! This was before all the responses from 5751-2, when the Rebbe urged us to publicize his identity.

To sum up, publicizing that the Rebbe is Moshiach is the most natural hergesh of a Chassid, but as long as it's not permitted, a Chassid won't go against the Rebbe's wishes. However, as soon as the Rebbe removes the ban, a Chassid goes out and tells the world. You don't need to be told to do so, it's obvious.

The same question is asked about proclaiming "Yechi." The Rebbe didn't speak about this explicitly either. How come?

R' Ginsburg: People often ask where the Rebbe spoke about the identity of Moshiach. There are explicit sichos of the Rebbe. On Chayai Sara, 5752, the Rebbe said the only thing left in shlichus is the fact that there is Nasi Doreinu, "the only Moshiach of our generation ... and we just have to accept him so that he can do his mission and take the Jewish people out of galus." In the sicha of Toldos, 5752, the Rebbe says that we need to breathe the air of Moshiach.

What is the air or Moshiach and how is it different from his light? The light of Moshiach are his activities. That's good but not sufficient. We need to breathe the air of Moshiach – meaning to live with the very presence of Moshiach, with the fact that he is already here in the world. What is that if not announcing his arrival? And the Rebbe goes on to say there that this is expressed in the meaning of the words, "Yechi adoni ha'melech Dovid l'olam."

Nevertheless, it's not written explicitly. The Rebbe explains in the famous sicha of Beis Nissan, 5748, why this is so. The explanation is also a response to the question: Why is it important to do things to publicize Moshiach's identity? There are so many activities and mitzvaim that we have been doing until now which are the Rebbe's inyanim, with no doubt about them. Why do we have to publicize that the Rebbe is Moshiach?

The reason is that the people have to accept Moshiach's leadership. "And they will seek (not only) Hashem their G-d (but also and especially) Dovid their king" – that is Moshiach. As the Metzudas says on the pasuk, "for from him (i.e. from Moshiach himself) they will make their request that he rule over them."

On Rosh HaShana we coronate a King, "Say before Me *malchuyos* so that you make Me king over you." The point most emphasized in the prayers of Rosh HaShana is crowning a King. But Hashem's "glory fills the world;" Why does He need our coronation?

It's explained in Chassidus that Hashem wants a Jew to crown Him as king. "Hashem desired to have a dwelling place down below," but this needs to come about through the tachtonim themselves. It is when we blow the shofar and request, "Rule over the entire world in Your glory," that Hashem becomes king, as it were.

The Rebbe says it's the same with Moshiach. We don't choose him, for Hashem is the one who chooses and sends him, but after he is chosen, we need to accept his kingship and say, "Yechi HaMelech," for him to be able to come and redeem the Jewish people. It has to come from "below."

In the sicha of Beis Nissan, 5748, the Rebbe explains why he speaks so much about "ad masai." But "in addition to the emphasis on the anticipation, request and demand for Geula, this proclamation (of Yechi HaMelech) also has an aspect of coronation through which we effect the coming of Dovid Malka Meshicha." The question arises – why does the Rebbe speak about "ad masai which contains the idea of Yechi HaMelech" rather than speaking directly about "Yechi HaMelech?"

The answer is simple. That is precisely the point of "Yechi HaMelech." The Rebbe doesn't tell us explicitly to proclaim "Yechi HaMelech," because coronation of the king must come from the people. At the same time, if he doesn't say anything, people will ask: Where did you get this

coronation of the king idea from? Are you starting new mitzvaim on your own?

So the Rebbe mentions one time in 5748 that in order for Moshiach to be revealed, people need to come to him and proclaim, “Yechi HaMelech,” and the time has come to do that. The Rebbe also says that he speaks so much about “ad masai” because of the announcement of “Yechi HaMelech.” In other words, the Rebbe is saying: I’m not talking about it a lot because it has to come from you, but the intention behind my talk of “ad masai” is “Yechi HaMelech.” What that tells us is that the main thing for us is to proclaim “Yechi HaMelech.”

This is also the response to the claim that the Rebbe said “Yechi HaMelech” and not “Yechi Adoneinu.” The idea of “Yechi HaMelech” is that we are addressing someone specific and asking him to rule us as Moshiach. To say that we are proclaiming “Yechi HaMelech” to Moshiach and we don’t care if it’s you or someone else is like saying that we are addressing Hashem and saying “Rule over the entire world in Your glory” and we don’t care if it’s Him or some other being, *chas v’shalom*.

The inyan in “Yechi Adoneinu” is not dependent on our understanding. There is a purpose in saying “Yechi” with someone on mitzvaim even if he doesn’t know what he’s saying. The Rebbe says in the sicha of Rosh HaShana, 5737, that *Malchuyos*, *Zichronos*, *Shofaros* correspond to thought, speech, and action. Shofaros - action; Zichronos – thought; Malchuyos – speech.

Although Chassidus is full of explanations about the kavanos one should have when blowing the shofar, the primary avoda on Rosh HaShana is the actual



The Rebbe doesn’t tell us explicitly to proclaim “Yechi HaMelech,” because coronation of the king must come from the people.

--Rabbi Chaim Levi Yitzchok Ginsburg

blowing of the shofar, the physical action. The same is true here. Ultimately, we have to proclaim “Yechi” with the intention that we are standing ready to devote ourselves to the Rebbe with all our strength and to get the entire world to do the same. It’s seemingly a very difficult task but the Rebbe says the world is ready. Until that point, we have to proclaim “Yechi” even if we do not yet understand it.

In 5752 the Rebbe said things he hadn’t expressed until then. In the sicha of Chayei Sara, 5752, the Rebbe said that the avoda of shlichus as we

knew it till then was completed and there is a new avoda. It is not about an addition of any kind but a completely new avoda. What changed for a shliach after this sicha? Can you define precisely what ended and what began?

R’ Liberov: Although we are usually particular about not coming up with our own analogies in Chassidus, the Rebbe said that if it will add in avodas Hashem, it’s acceptable.

Perhaps we can compare the length of galus to a long plane trip where the pilot tries to land the plane early (in the mashal it’s negative while in the nimshal it’s positive). He cannot land the plane just anywhere and at any time. He needs the right area and he needs the cooperation of all the passengers so they will be ready for landing.

The plane of galus began to fly after the destruction of the second Beis HaMikdash. It’s a very long and exhausting trip. There is a fundamental difference between the kitzin of other g’dolei Yisroel and the Rebbe’s Besuras HaGeula. If we go back to the mashal of the plane, we can compare the kitzin of g’dolei Yisroel in earlier generations to a situation in which the pilot sees an area where he can land the plane. He asks the passengers to prepare to disembark so that the plane won’t miss the opportunity to land and have to fly to the next location, but the passengers don’t get ready and the plane continues to fly.

In 5710 the Rebbe announced (the topic is explained at length in Rabbi Hertzl’s book, *HaKetz*) that this is the time for the final keitz. In the mashal, it’s like the pilot announcing that the plane has arrived at its destination. Even here, there can be all sorts of delays – the wheels may not

descend, etc. In 5752, the plane landed.

Perhaps with this we can explain some expressions the Rebbe used that year that are hard to understand. In the sicha of Shabbos Parshas VaYitzei, 5752, the Rebbe said that we just have to open our eyes and see that everything is ready. That's because the plane has already landed.

One last thing remains to be done that is not the responsibility of the pilot – open the doors (as the Rebbe said in yechidus to Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu) or open our eyes. This job is for us to do.

Now we can try and explain the topic in the Rebbe's sichos. We know that the Rebbe did not publicly react to every event in Chabad, but from when the Kinus HaShluchim began in 5744 (except for 5745) the Rebbe said a special sicha every year. In 5752 there was a difference in that the Rebbe spoke to the shluchim more directly and formally and set goals.

The Rebbe said that the avoda of shlichus is over and that a new shlichus began. The Rebbe began to explain that "in every generation there is someone from the seed of Yehuda etc." and he quoted the Chasam Sofer and the Bartenura who speak about the existence of Moshiach in every generation. (For 40 years of sichos, the Rebbe hardly mentioned these excerpts from the Chasam Sofer and the Bartenura. In 5751-2 he referred to them repeatedly). To all of us it was clear who that person from the seed of Yehuda is (two weeks later, the Rebbe added in his handwriting to the edited sicha: "and in our generation Nasi Doreinu the Rebbe, my father-in-law").



The Rebbe did not leave Chassidim in the dark without knowing where to turn. In order to know the Rebbe's view, you don't have to look for the explanations and guidance of so-and-so. You can go straight to the Rebbe's sichos yourself.

--Rabbi Shneur Zalman Hertzl

The Rebbe concluded by saying that the shlichus is to be mekabel Moshiach Tzidkeinu b'poel mamash.

In other words, if you want to be a shliach today you have to be

mekabel p'nei Moshiach. We never before had a shlichus to be mekabel p'nei Moshiach. There was a shlichus to prepare the world, to bring Moshiach, but not a shlichus to be mekabel Moshiach.

Here's another analogy. Imagine if the Rebbe announced that he was going to visit ten Chabad houses around the world. A competition would immediately ensue among the shluchim as to who would be among the lucky ten to have the privilege of welcoming the Rebbe to their Chabad house. Everybody would do what they could in all areas of avodas Hashem, especially in the Rebbe's mitzvaim, to merit that historic moment when the Rebbe would walk into his Chabad house.

In the mashal, two years go by and the Rebbe announces the ten winners. They are ecstatic but they don't know when the Rebbe will arrive. How will they feel when the Rebbe announces the date? And when that date arrives and the secretary calls to tell them that the Rebbe is on his way?

Obviously, no shliach would stop doing the mitzvaim and activities he did previously, but it would be completely different. They couldn't have a situation in which the Rebbe showed up at the Chabad house and nobody was there to welcome him because the shliach was on mitzvaim. The shliach has to wait at the door of his Chabad house for the Rebbe. As he waits he speaks to someone about mezuzos, he puts t'fillin on with someone, he convinces someone to kasher his kitchen, but it's all happening as he waits for the Rebbe.

When the Rebbe says there is a new shlichus of kabbalas p'nei Moshiach, it doesn't mean to diminish in mitzvaim, G-d forbid.

But it all has to be done with the focus on how it leads to Yemos HaMoshiach, as the Rebbe explains in the sicha of the Kinus HaShluchim 5752. If the mitvza is not connected to Moshiach, then we understand from the Rebbe that this not the Rebbe's shlichus. It's like the work of other kiruv organizations who, as the Rebbe says in that same Kinus sicha, are unwitting shluchim of the Rebbe.

Perhaps this is also the reason why the Rebbe stopped mentioning the ten mitvza campaigns (as R' Offen mentioned, it's a little hard to pinpoint when this era began, 5750, 5749, 5748. It may have started from Didan Natzach). The Rebbe had referred to the ten mitvza campaigns nearly every Shabbos for ten years. What happened to change that?

In recent years, the ten mitvzaim are incorporated into one mitvza. Shlichus today is about one thing: kabbalas p'nei Moshiach Tzidkeinu! It's like the plane has already landed. We have already accomplished everything and the Rebbe announced to the shluchim – which constitutes a worldwide proclamation, not an internal memo - that everything is done and there is something new.

Sometimes, when you ask a shliach how shlichus changed from 5749 to 5769, in what way did the Kinus HaShluchim of 5752 change the way he does shlichus, it gives him something to think about. I think the conclusions are obvious.

Some people ask: Although there were positive answers to certain people about publicizing Moshiach's identity, how can you ignore the responses from the Rebbe that were not like that, that seemed to indicate that one should not be so involved in



Publicizing that the Rebbe is Moshiach is the most natural hergesh of a Chassid, but as long as it's not permitted, a Chassid won't go against the Rebbe's wishes. However, as soon as the Rebbe removes the ban, a Chassid goes out and tells the world.

--Rabbi Shneur Zalman Liberov

this?

R' Hertzl: The answer to that question is simple: you witnessed it with your own eyes!

About Mattan Torah it says, "You saw that from Heaven I spoke to you." Who are the ones who saw? The entire Jewish nation. It has been explained in a number of places that what sets Judaism apart from all other religions is that other faiths are based on one man who claimed he had a revelation to found a new religion. He gathered a following of the faithful which eventually grew to thousands and tens of thousands of people.

In Judaism, Hashem revealed Himself to millions of people, as it says, "you were shown to know" and the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya (chapter 36), "literally shown with palpable sight." Nobody can claim that Judaism is one man's invention. The testimony of millions was transmitted from generation to generation until our times. That is the source of its strength and perpetuity.

To those who participated in farbrengens, learn sichos, listen to the Rebbe on tapes, or watch the Rebbe on video, there is no question what the Rebbe wants of the Chassidim.

The only doubt one could have is whether we are living up to the Rebbe's demands. If one makes an honest accounting he will quickly conclude that he is still far from fulfilling the Rebbe's ratzon in inyanei Moshiach and Geula. Even if he tries to be more involved in inyanei Moshiach and Geula, if he goes back to what the Rebbe said, he will see that his accomplishments don't reach the level of dedication that the Rebbe wants in this area.

Another point – obviously the Rebbe doesn't want to confuse the

Chassidim and say contradictory things. As the Rebbe quoted more than once from the Yerushalmi, “It is not something *reik* (empty, i.e. meaningless) *mi’kem* (from you), and if it’s *reik*, then it’s *mi’kem*, because you are not toiling in Torah.”

The fact that there is a lack of understanding – *reik* – is *mi’kem*, because we didn’t learn and think about it enough. Just as in Torah study, when you learn a certain Tosafos and a question arises or even an outright contradiction, a Chassid knows that the Torah is the Torah of truth and there is no mistake in the Tosafos. We need to work hard and to pray that Hashem enable us to understand.

The same is true when learning what the Rebbe said. If we try hard and think about it, we can understand a lot. And even if we don’t succeed in comprehending everything, we still conclude that the Rebbe’s words are *emes* and it is we who are lacking in understanding. Since the lack is within us, we need to continue doing what the Rebbe said with all our heart and soul, with *chayus* and *simcha*.

Let’s get back to the question. A Chassid that wrote to the Rebbe and received a certain answer needs to follow it. The answer is addressed to him and written to him in accordance with the way he asked the question.

The Rebbe said, “Obviously, an instruction to an individual... especially if it is in a personal letter to him, is not at all an instruction for everyone since most of the time it depends on the person’s individual circumstances, his character, the options he wrote about in his letter etc.”

On another occasion (in response to the administration of one of the Tomchei T’mimim yeshivos in 5735) the Rebbe wrote

sharply, “How many times must it be announced that what is said to one is not at all a response to someone else.”

The Rebbe also wrote, “Obviously I am not responsible for what people say in my name, and it is well known that what I say to one is not an instruction for someone else.”

And, “Obviously, those who turn to me on occasion through their letters have no place describing their situations in ways that are not consistent with the facts. In such cases, my answer may not always be consistent with what I want to respond. And the common Chassidic aphorism is known, ‘the way you ask, you are answered.’”

A response to an individual may not cool off the enthusiasm engendered by directly learning the Rebbe’s teachings. All the more so an answer where only a half, a third or a quarter of the letter was made public, without noting what the question was or how it was written.

The Rebbe chose to go out to the Chassidim at certain times, for *t’fillos*, *sichos*, *yechidus*, *farbrengens* etc. At these times, the Rebbe revealed his wisdom and desires to the Chassidim. By his wisdom I mean his teachings which encompass all aspects of life, and by his desires I mean the *mitzvaim* and activities that he instructed the Chassidim to do.

True, we can learn from answers about similar situations, but not at the expense of those things which were said to all of us, in public. The Rebbe did not leave Chassidim in the dark without knowing where to turn. In order to know the Rebbe’s view, you don’t have to look for the explanations and guidance of so-and-so. You can go straight to the Rebbe’s *sichos* yourself.

If we categorize the answers, those encouraging publicizing the identity of Moshiach and those which seem to downplay this behavior, we can say that the Rebbe put the brakes on for the moderates and gave the green light to the extremists! There are many examples of this. We will take just two cases to illustrate the point.

A shliach, D.A., who is known as a “moderate,” asked the Rebbe in Iyar 5752: “For someone who runs a Chabad House, is the emphasis today *inyanei Moshiach* and *Geula* or is that part of the rest of the *mitzvaim* and activities of the Chabad house without a special emphasis?”

The Rebbe answered positively to the first part.

“Is part of the *Besuras HaGeula* publicizing Moshiach’s identity?”

The Rebbe answered with a strong no.

“Should we publicize to the world that our era is the era of the coming of Moshiach?”

The Rebbe answered affirmatively.

Another shliach, D.N. who is known as an extremist, gave the Rebbe (4 Iyar, 5751) a letter signed by 250 people which said they accepted the Rebbe as Moshiach. The Rebbe’s response (that same day) was:

“I received it and thank you, may it be an ongoing activity and with addition, and the time is auspicious as per the empowerment of Chazal and their blessing that whoever adds, it will be added to him. I will mention it at the gravesite.”

What should someone who got the first response, do? He should do as he was told. What should the second person do? Do as he was told.

Namely, to continue signing

people up for kabbalas
ha'malchus.

Think about the following – A plain balabus would prefer to silence (or tone down) the extremist Chassid because who knows what he is liable to do. He would prefer that the moderate Chassid do things in his balanced, normal, step by step way. But we have learned that “the view of balabatim is the opposite of the Torah view” and we see that the Rebbe’s view is completely different. The Rebbe continuously encouraged those who did concrete activities and worked tirelessly to bring Moshiach. As for those who were hesitant due to various “concerns,” the Rebbe did not demand extreme behavior from them.

The actual instances of encouragement the Rebbe gave to those who did various activities in connection with the identity of Moshiach are numerous and they have already been printed or collected on video so anyone can read or watch it for themselves.

It has been said that all the questions are valid until the Rebbe encouraged “Yechi.” Once the Rebbe did that, all the questions are irrelevant. How should we relate to the proclamation of Yechi today?

R’ Offen: Regarding publicizing the identity of Moshiach, although we did not have explicit instructions, we have *maaseh rav* (the actual practice of one’s Torah teacher). The Rebbe himself publicized the identity of



There is no question whether the Rebbe wants the world to know the identity of Moshiach. We just have to make sure that the publicity is “Lights in Vessels” and not for the purpose of throwing it in people’s faces.

--Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Offen

Moshiach throughout the year 5753, sometimes twice a day. So there is no question whether the Rebbe wants the world to know the identity of Moshiach. We just have to make sure that the publicity is “Lights in Vessels” and not for the purpose of throwing it in people’s faces.

Some people think this no longer applies after Gimmel Tammuz. Chas V’shalom! All the Rebbe’s inyanim are eternal and what the Rebbe revealed to us was not an experiment that could fail. All the more so when we’re talking about something as critical as “Yechi HaMelech,” which adds chayus to the king.

What’s demanded of us is that it shouldn’t turn into something we do by rote. When we say it, we need to truly accept the Rebbe’s authority. That is kabbalas ha’malchus. As the Rebbe said in a sicha, the appointment of the king already happened up Above but we have to accept his malchus down here.

As the Tzemach Tzedek says in the mitzva of appointing a king, the king is the one who infuses the people with yiras Shamayim by their accepting his rule. When you accept the Rebbe’s malchus, you are accepting Hashem’s malchus, too.

May we immediately merit the inauguration of the third Beis HaMikdash with the Rebbe leading us!

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



IT'S ALL IN THE PREP

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

The Shliach told him: “When you go to photograph a wedding, what do you prepare? Your cameras, screens, extension cords; all the equipment you need to do your job. For your wedding you need to make spiritual preparations. Learn the halachos, learn the spiritual significance of marriage, and learn a maamer Chassidus.”

The idea of *hachana*, preparation, has always played an important role in the Chassidic way of life. For us shluchim, *hachana* is especially significant for several reasons:

1. At the last Kinus HaShluchim where the Rebbe addressed us, he told us “to prepare yourselves and those around you to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu b’poel mamash.”

2. All shlichus activities require a lot of preparation and if missing, it is unlikely that the activity will be successful. I have already written about preparing to meet with potential donors. There’s also preparation involved in giving a good shiur as well as for a proper davening.

3. If you look at a shliach’s daily schedule you will see that most of the time is spent preparing, preparing for Lag B’Omer, preparing for the Kinus HaShluchim, for summer camp, etc. Sometimes the preparations take

weeks or even months and the event itself is over in two hours.

Most Lubavitchers remain oblivious to all the work that goes into the preparations. They usually read a news item, a few lines long, about a successful activity but all the preparations that went into it are done without cameras and lights. It’s all done for the Rebbe so the Rebbe has another drop of nachas from the end result.

In the Rebbe’s sichos we often find instructions about preparing for a Yom Tov or preparations for one mitvza or another – 30 days before the Yom Tov etc. not to mention the preparation for t’filla which, for a Chassid, includes immersing in a mikva, learning Chassidus, contemplating what was learned, eating mezonos, wearing a gartel (for married men), and giving tz’daka, most of which are not done in the non-Chassidic world.

Sometimes you can learn about the importance of something from

the difficulties that arise in its implementation. When I went on shlichus to Beit Shaan, I joined the davening at a certain shul for quite some time. The other people there (who were not Lubavitchers) noticed that I didn’t quite keep up with the chazan and they certainly noticed that my Lubavitcher guests davened with avoda for hours.

This became a topic of discussion and then, at one farbrengen, I explained what is meant by *hachana*. But there were some cynics who made fun of the idea which they considered a waste of time. It was only years later that these same people perhaps understood it a little better because now they often come to the Chabad house for davening or a farbrengen and to elevate themselves a little using the Chassidic ways of *hachana*.

The following are some stories about preparation.

HACHANA THAT LEADS PEOPLE TO T’SHUVA

Rabbi Shmuel Gruzman, shliach in moshava Migdal, told me two stories on this topic. He added a clarification that sheds Chassidishe light on it:

When an event or a special day is coming up, the bigger and more important the event, the more preparations it needs. We don’t need to prepare for an ordinary day except for some food and clothing, etc. But when Shabbos or Yom Tov are coming up, and when a wedding or bar mitzva day is approaching,



there are many preparations that need to be made. So too on shlichus, every mitvza and every program, being that they are done as shlichus of the Rebbe, is important and needs a lot of preparation.

One day, said R' Gruzman, someone from the moshava came to me. He is a wedding photographer and he had something on his mind.

"I'm turning to you because I see and hear you speak at every event that I'm invited to photograph. Since I'm getting married soon, I am very concerned – what can I do so that at my wedding I won't feel like I'm at 'just another wedding,' but will feel that this wedding is special, that it's my wedding?"

R' Gruzman told him that it all depended on his preparation. When you go to photograph a wedding, what do you prepare? Your cameras, screens, extension cords; all the equipment you need to do your job. For your wedding you need to make spiritual preparations. Learn the

halachos, learn the spiritual significance of marriage, and learn a maamer Chassidus. That is what will make the difference and on the day of your wedding the difference will be very clear to you.

He liked this answer and he asked R' Gruzman to learn with him. They began learning but it never ended. That photographer was drawn into the world of Torah and Chassidus and today he is a Chassid, devoted to the Rebbe and very active on moshava Migdal.

R' Gruzman told of another sort of preparation:

A teacher from a local school said to me, "I heard about you and about your successful Machon Bar Mitzva and I want to include my school in your project. Don't think I just picked your name out of nowhere. I am a very picky and organized woman and before I called you I read about you on the internet for forty minutes. It was only after I was impressed by your work over

the years that I decided to speak to you."

Food for thought – I mean, food for preparation.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEAD SEA COAST

Rabbi Shimon Elharar, shliach to the hotel on the Dead Sea, relates:

I have entire weeks of preparation. I prepare all my mekuravim for an upcoming Yom Tov. There are preparation days for Rosh HaShana, for Yom Kippur, for Sukkos, for Simchas Torah, etc.

Before Rosh HaShana I call every employee at the hotels, the managers, assistant managers, heads of departments to the very last person who has ever shown any interest (and there are several hundreds of these on my list), and I arrange a meeting with them to prepare for Rosh HaShana. Then I show up with my preparation kit. They know me already and are

prepared for the preparations ...

In my kit there is a pair of t'fillin, a shofar, a short vort-d'var Torah, and I explain that we need to prepare for the Yom HaDin and have to use the items in the kit.

In my Yom Kippur preparation kit, instead of a shofar there is a rooster and hen and I do Kaparos with each person. In my Sukkos kit, instead of t'fillin I have the Dalet minim and each of my people is visited, takes the lulav, hears a vort about Sukkos, and is invited to visit the Chabad sukka in the center of the hotel district.

There are long-range ramifications of all these preparations. One of the mekuravim told me that he never fasted on Yom Kippur but this year he decided to fast. Immediately after that he built a sukka and bought the Dalet minim and said the bracha on them in the sukka every day.

A mishap occurred on Simchas Torah when he called about half an hour before the Yom Tov was over (don't worry, I didn't answer the phone) to ask when Hakafos Shniyos began. He is still in the learning process ...

Another mekurav who committed, with mesirus nefesh, to close his store on Shabbos and Yom Tov, discovered the Chabad adjacent to his store. On Hoshana Raba he found a few minutes to climb on the s'chach and hang a sign from the sukka that said his store is closed on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

As he was up there on the s'chach, R' Elharar appeared and honked his horn in encouragement. He invited the man to Hakafos on

Simchas Torah night at the Chabad shul in Arad. The man showed up, the shliach gave him some cups of l'chaim and the man danced through the night. That's the way it goes with preparation ...

Once, R' Elharar was passing by the beach during Chol HaMoed Sukkos and picked up a hitchhiker, even though he wasn't really sure he was Jewish. Once he found out that he was, he offered his passenger to say the bracha on the Dalet minim. When the man started reciting the SheHechyanu bracha, he burst into tears. It took some time until he calmed down and then he apologized for his sudden outburst.

"My grandfather was a big rav, a mekubal, and look at me ..." This man joined the list for future preparatory visits.

NEVER-ENDING PREPARATIONS

Even veteran shluchim never stop preparing for mitzvaim. They always look for a new ways to improve and expand their activities. Rabbi Moshe Kurant, shliach in Nesher relates:

Last Elul, one of my children came up with the idea of attaching a trailer to my car that could have a mobile sukka on it. Lots of preparations were needed but the end results were worth it. Most of the work was done by volunteers, friends of Chabad. I didn't realize how much work needed to go into this. First, we had to attach a trailer hitch to the car, and then we needed a permit for the trailer hitch. Then we had to buy a flatbed trailer and test it to see that it was working

properly. After all this, we had to get someone to build us a sukka for it. We needed material, s'chach, loudspeakers, Dalet minim.

Boruch Hashem, everybody in Nesher saw it and loved it. Once Sukkos was over I went back to the iron fitter shop because I needed him to build me a menorah for the trailer.

PREPARING WITH IGROS KODESH

Rabbi Aryeh Farkash, shliach to Yavniel, relates:

A few years ago, my wife organized a farbrengen for women for 12-13 Tamuz. She called Rebbetzin Sarah Rivka Sossonkin of Taanach and asked her to come and speak. Rebbetzin Sossonkin said that her sister was coming to Eretz Yisroel that day and she would be in Yerushalayim.

Rebbetzin Farkash tried to contact other speakers but was unsuccessful in getting anyone. She turned to the Rebbe and asked for a bracha in the Igros Kodesh. She opened the volume to a letter that the Rebbe wrote to Mrs. Sossonkin of Yerushalayim! In the letter, the Rebbe noted that surely they were preparing for the 12-13 Tamuz farbrengen so that it would be very successful.

Reb. Farkash called Reb. Sossonkin and told her what happened. Reb. Sossonkin decided to turn to the Rebbe for advice. The end of the story was that after such a clear answer, the farbrengen was very successful and the main speaker was Reb. Sossonkin.

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OUTREACH TACTICS: PUPPET THEATRICALS

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

Despite his secular upbringing, Dovid Houri escaped the military and found his way to the Chabad yeshiva in Brunoy, but not before French gendarmes arrested him on suspicion of stealing cars. His puppet theatrics are famous, inspiring children everywhere about Judaism, Chassidus, and the coming of Moshiach.

For more than twenty years, Rabbi **Dovid Houri** has been captivating the hearts of tens of thousands of Jewish boys and girls with his unique puppet theatre. Each show is created with much toil and features stories and parables from our Sages, of blessed memory. Rabbi Houri's success exciting kids with these messages is largely due to his special grace and charm. Parents often tell of positive transformations that subsequently take place in their children. "What many trained educators had difficulty in achieving, one puppet managed to do," he says.

When we recently sat together in his home in Tzfas' Ramat Menachem Begin neighborhood, we found him immersed in preparations

for a Beis HaMikdash exhibit designed to dazzle participants in the local Lag B'Omer parade. We watched how he invested all his strength, mind and spirit, as this spectacular exhibit started to take shape. That's Rabbi Houri for you: Whatever he does, he does wholeheartedly and gives his all. "Most of my work is for outside of Chabad – a shlichus in every sense of the word," says R' Dovid. Despite the fact that he settled in Eretz Yisroel several years ago, he tours France regularly to perform on demand.

R' Dovid is a most pleasant conversationalist, a warm and easy-going Jew with a friendly smile that never departs from his lips. Still, there is definitely something shy and

reserved about his demeanor. Several times during the course of the interview, Rabbi Houri stopped to inquire whether his story was really worth writing about. That's just the way he is...

FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH JUDAISM

He spent most of his life in Paris' twelfth district, studying throughout his childhood in government schools with only non-Jewish classmates. His knowledge of Judaism was limited to realizing that he's a Jew but nothing about what that meant. He remembers Yom Kippur as a day for people to make a deep personal accounting in their relations with others and a day when if you caused harm to someone, you have to ask his forgiveness, but he had no idea that it was also a day of fasting. "I would periodically see Jewish stores with signs written in Hebrew, as this district had a Jewish presence. However, I didn't know how to read Hebrew, and they didn't speak about this aspect of Jewish identity at home. Occasionally, I would see Jews wearing a yarmulke and tzitzis hanging out of the sides of their trousers, but I neither understood nor knew what it meant.

"As the years passed, my parents decided to move to the Paris suburb of Pontoise, where even this much Judaism was not in evidence. The



closest sign of anything Jewish was a 'synagogue' that was over four miles away from my house.

"My first encounter with Judaism was when I reached the age of bar-mitzva. My mother went through a most traumatic experience, bringing her to get a little closer to tradition. One morning, she asked me if I was interested in having a bar-mitzva celebration. I simply didn't understand what she was asking me or anything about the entire concept. Thus, for the first time in her life, she explained to me the Jewish custom of making a festive commemoration for a boy reaching the age of thirteen with an aliya to the Torah and putting on t'fillin. All these concepts were totally foreign to me, and my mother tried to fill in

the lost years. The only reason that I agreed to do the bar mitzva was that my mother promised me that the bar-mitzva boy receives many presents and surprises that day, and I said to myself: Why not?

"She had only one condition: To attend 'Talmud Torah' and learn the Hebrew alphabet in order that I should be able to read what they ask. I agreed without fully understanding what I was getting myself into. I was a complete ignoramus in all matters pertaining to Yiddishkeit. The fellow who prepared me for the bar-mitzva was a pleasant young man named Shalom Aflalo, who I found out much later was a Lubavitcher chassid. He didn't just settle for a few days of study. Instead he convinced me to join the Shabbos

groups that took place at the distant synagogue.

"At first, I would ride the train to get to the synagogue, until my tutor explained the significance of Shabbos, and how traveling desecrates its holiness. I agreed to walk that big distance each week, as I really enjoyed participating in the activities there, and I felt quite at home in the shul. Even as a child, I realize that my life up until was 'darkness', while since discovering the synagogue, it became 'light'. At the Shabbos groups, we learned Mishnayos, sang Jewish songs, and ate the Seudas Shlishis. I would wait for this experience the entire week long.

"On one such Shabbos, I decided to start eating kosher. This decision led to my not eating at

home, and I would go each night to the home of a kosher family and eat there. Naturally, my mother didn't like the idea and called this family to ask that they stop hosting me. My mother and my family tried to prevent me from taking any additional steps, certain that this was just a passing phase.

"So I celebrated my bar-mitzva, and afterwards I continued living my totally secular life, but within me there burned a desire to become closer to G-d."

LIVING A DOUBLE LIFE

When Dovid reached the age of maturity, the directors of the non-Jewish summer camps discovered that he possessed unique skills in connecting with children and finding a common bond with them. He was called upon each summer to serve as a counselor in the mountainside summer camp, despite the undercurrents of anti-Semitism there. Even there, his inner flame striving to reach its Divine source gave him no respite. While outwardly hiding his Jewishness, he discreetly prayed from the siddur he had received as a bar-mitzva gift and recited T'hilim as well.

"When we were out on nature hikes, I would always stick to the rear so I could daven quietly. I remember humming and singing Jewish songs that I remembered from the Shabbos groups.

"In this way, I led a double life. On the one hand, I would act similar to the Gentiles, working as one of their camp counselors in every respect, but on the other hand – I would daven during every spare moment, and took care not to eat the meat they served, because I knew that it was treif.

"After finishing high school, I decided to go on to university. I had a strong desire to learn art; I knew that I had good hands and I wanted to develop this in more practical

terms.

"I also loved to play music and tell stories. I taught myself how to strum a guitar, and I decided that if I'm considering art, I should go to theatre class, where they both play music and tell stories. Over a period of six months, I took a theatre course at one of the universities in Paris. One day, we were given an assignment to tell a story, and the actors had to act the story out. As Divine Providence would have it, I had to tell the story of Noah's Ark, and as I was preparing my presentation, I got the idea to embellish the story with the descriptive narratives I learned in the 'Talmud Torah.'

"Thus, on numerous occasions, it was specifically the theatre that reminded me of my Jewishness. There was one actor named Ben Zimmet, whose expertise was in klezmer. I remember that during one of his performances, in which I participated as well, I heard him suddenly say, 'Come, let me tell you a story that I heard in the state of the Hebrews' – referring to Eretz Yisroel. He then told about how Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai came to a festive meal, and when he asked what the occasion was, he was told that it was in honor of a married couple that had no children and as a result, they decided to divorce. The couple explained that just as they made a celebration at their wedding, so too on this occasion. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was so deeply moved, he decided to bless them with children. Indeed, that very same year, the wife gave birth to a boy. This Jewish actor then proceeded to convey the moral of the story: Just as we make a blessing on the good, so too we have to make a blessing on the bad, and this causes the bad to be transformed into good. This story had considerable influence upon me, and it represented yet another

turning point in a lengthy sequence of signs that caused my soul to awaken."

A PROUD JEWISH SOLDIER IN THE FRENCH ARMY

Even in the midst of all this "klipa," as Rabbi Houri calls it, he continued to experience periods of spiritual radiance. He deeply internalized the fact that Judaism is the truth. While he felt a strong desire to leave his assimilated ways and live a fully Jewish life, there was still one thing that kept him from doing so: Embarrassment. He was afraid of what those in his immediate surroundings would say about the change he was making in his life. When he reached the age of military induction, he decided that this was the time to change his environment and company, and he tipped his personal scale towards t'shuva.

"I looked in the mirror and said to myself that the time had come to stop this internal identity war and to start living as a proper Jew in every way. Around this same time, by Divine Providence, the French army began to supply kosher food to its Jewish soldiers. During the time that I served in the army, I felt that G-d was accompanying me every step of the way. Not only didn't the other soldiers ridicule me, they displayed much respect and admiration towards me, particularly the Christian soldiers from the villages.

"The army understood from my resume that I was an expert in understanding and dealing with children, and I was assigned to an office for classifying soldiers to various tasks. Cases of Divine Providence took place literally on a daily and hourly basis. For example, even though I lacked the required qualifications and there were those who had much more experience and

were far better trained, I was still awarded the title of 'Unit's Best Marksman'... In addition, there were certain soldiers, even officers, who tried to cause problems for me, but thankfully without success.

"Apart from a few isolated cases of anti-Semitic harassment, I had nothing to fear, and I went around openly wearing a yarmulke and tzitzis. When Jewish soldiers came to me for training on the firing range, I would take the opportunity to explain various aspects of Torah and mitzvos. I remember that there was a non-Jewish soldier who was very attached to me and would say 'Amen' after every bracha I would make... It was quite ironic that I built myself up spiritually in the army, of all places; I felt a strong inner connection. Of course, after the yarmulke and tzitzis, there naturally came Shabbos, and I did everything possible to keep and honor it.

"I started buying s'farim, such as a Chumash and a siddur, and I would read out of them. When I would come home on leave, I would bring kosher food from the army, because I otherwise couldn't eat at home. My mother understood rather quickly that this wasn't some one-time impulse, but something much more serious that I had been carrying inside of me since I was thirteen. Every Shabbos, I would make the several hours' walk to and from the synagogue. On one such Shabbos, I met a Jew along the way dressed in chassidic garb – a kapote, a gartel, and wrapped in a tallis. He gave a warm 'Sholom Aleichem' and introduced himself as Haim Dawidowicz.

"I soon became a regular at his home. For me, he represented a point of light in the sea of klipos that I was exposed to in the army. His house was always open, and he never pressured or tried to convince me to do anything. He was the living example of how a chassid



should act. By the time I completed my military service, I had already made the decision that I had to go to yeshiva. When I told this to Rabbi Dawidowicz, he asked me to come to his house on Motzaei Shabbos.

"When I arrived at his house, I saw that the shliach, Rabbi Yosef Avrahami, was also there. We all sat together for a 'Melaveh Malka' and he began to explain at length what chassidus is, particularly Chabad chassidus. He discussed with great enthusiasm about who the Lubavitcher Rebbe is, and then he proceeded to explain to me why the Chabad yeshiva would be the best place for me above all others. I recall how he described the farbrengens and the chassidic zeal, and it really spoke to me.

"He then told me that in another few days, on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, there would be a special farbrengen at the yeshiva and he was inviting me to come. I was very impressed by what he said and I decided to accept his offer. That same day, I got a vaccination at the army clinic, and I had to be confined to bed and rest until the following day. But when I remembered about the

farbrengen scheduled for that evening, I arranged my things to look like I was still there, and despite orders not to leave the base, I ran toward the train station. I was putting myself at considerable risk, because I only had another week until my release from the army, and the last thing I wanted was any problems with them.

"On my way to the yeshiva, I went through a number of trials. I literally felt the spiritual powers of impurity trying to stop me, but I prevailed. It started right off in the train station's parking lot as I was preparing to go inside, when a couple of gendarmes tried to put me under arrest with the ridiculous charge of suspicion of car theft. All of my efforts to tell him that I'm a soldier and I have no connection with any criminal activity fell on deaf ears. I was forcibly placed in a patrol vehicle and they said that they would check if I really was a soldier. The problem was that the last thing I needed was for the army to find that I had gone AWOL. Nevertheless, I wouldn't let any feelings of despair get the better of me.

“In the end, G-d’s salvation came in the blink of an eye. The gendarmes failed to get my base on the phone, and after I pleaded with them that I am about to miss my train, they agreed to let me go. I got on the last train for that evening, and at the first stop, I got off to transfer to another train for the subway. I was very excited and confused, and before boarding the subway train that was already waiting at the station, I fumbled through my pocket for no apparent reason and dropped everything inside. When I got on the train, I realized that I had mistakenly thrown out my ticket... I knew that if the conductors would ask me where my ticket was and I didn’t have it on me, they would arrest me without asking any questions. As I was pondering this possibility, five gruff-looking conductors entered the car where I was. It was nothing less than a miracle that they passed by without stopping me or asking me where was my ticket.

“I finally arrived in Brunoy. The moment I entered the yeshiva’s gates, I felt that this was my place. The rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Itche Nemenov, was the first one to greet me. I immediately felt at home.

“A few days later, I bought a T’hillas Hashem siddur, starting going out on ‘mitzvaim’, and since I had the proper license, I became the mitzva tank driver. This was a period of time that I will never forget for as long as I live. The unity and joy I came to learn about was the antithesis of the cold and alienation I had known up until then. I discovered much brotherly love in the yeshiva, even with those I had never met or seen before, simply because we were all Jewish.

“I was fortunate to spend a whole year learning on the yeshiva benches, a year of wholesale change in my life, both internal and external.”

CHASSIDIC LIFE, AT LONG LAST

In Tishrei 5746, a year after his studies in Brunoy, Dovid came for the first time to Beis Chayeinu, arriving in 770 before Yom Kippur. His first sight of the Rebbe was on the 8th of Tishrei, from the *vaiber shul*, as the Rebbe spoke downstairs to the children of Tzivos Hashem. In the words of R’ Dovid, these were the moments when the final

When it was over, I saw all the children sitting there transfixed with their mouths agape. For a few moments, I stood there stunned and completely surprised with my success. I was then that I knew that I had found my shlichus in life

seal was affixed on his way to becoming a Lubavitcher chassid, totally connected to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. “Suddenly everything I had heard about the Rebbe – all the miracles, all the activities and words of Torah, the maamarim and sichos – it all hit home.”

Shortly after returning from Tishrei, still brimming with chassidic sentiment and strengthened hiskashrus, he met his

future wife. However, since her parents objected to the marriage until she completed her studies for her law degree, Rabbi Houri was forced to go look for a job. He met the Rebbe’s shliach in Nice, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Pinson, who suggested that he go to work for his father, Rabbi Nissan Pinson, the Rebbe’s shliach in Tunis. “He had heard about my talent for working with children, and suggested that I help his father with the Chabad school in Tunis. I was there for three weeks until the city was hit by a series of terrorist attacks, and my parents and future in-laws urged me to come back.

“During those weeks, I had the rare privilege of being exposed to a shining example of a pious Jew in its fullest sense, a chassid with every fiber of his body and with total bittul to the Rebbe. Rabbi Pinson also served as rav, mohel, and shochet. You could see him dressed in chassidic garb teaching halacha, and shortly afterward, without his suit jacket in the marketplace, shechting chickens, then handing them over to local Arabs for cleaning and kashering. He would prepared wheat and flour for matzos, and check clothes for shaatnez. He was a chassid loved by all.”

When Rabbi Houri returned from Tunis, he went to work at the Chabad school in Aubervilliers. “I started working there with the kindergarten children. My motto was (and remains) not only to transmit educational information, but also to instill love and fear of G-d in the children through parables and legends from our Sages, of blessed memory. The objective is to enable the children to internalize properly what they learn and to make it live and shine within them. This is my approach to education.

“At the school in Aubervilliers, I placed great emphasis and

importance upon creative activities with the children that illustrated the uniqueness of the Jewish holidays. One year during the Chanuka holiday, I helped the children to build menoras. I worked day and night to make the parts for fifty menoras to give to the students in two classrooms, including mine, for them to construct the menoras. We made continual progress every day in building the menoras as I explained to the children about the great value and importance of every piece. A few days before we finished, one of the children, the son of the local shliach, Rabbi Dovid Turgeman, traveled to the Rebbe with his father and stubbornly took his menorah, even though it hadn't been finished yet. I happily agreed, and unknown to me, he passed by the Rebbe at Sunday dollars and presented it to him as a gift. When I learned of this, "I was in heaven". They gave me a large picture in which you can see the boy presenting the menorah to the Rebbe and how the Rebbe was looking at the gift. One day many years later, after I had already emigrated to Eretz Yisroel at the Rebbe's instructions, I met none other than Rabbi Turgeman. He ran towards me and gave me a big embrace. He then said with great emotion that he had just returned from the Rebbe, and he saw through the display window that the Rebbe had left this gift in his room, despite the fact that all such gifts that the Rebbe received were generally sent to the Chabad library.

"And if that wasn't enough – at the worldwide Chanuka satellite hook-up, I suddenly saw a video clip of the entire menorah presentation between the boy and the Rebbe. It is impossible to express how thrilled I was at that moment. I was beside myself with joy. I saw this as a privilege and honor of the highest order.



"Several years after my wedding, my wife and I decided to establish our home in Sarcelles, where I was placed in charge of the city's Chabad kindergartens and where the puppet theatre took root."

THE LIVES OF THE THEATRE PUPPETS

Rabbi Houri recalls the first career performance of his puppet theatre with much nostalgia. While many years have passed since then, the memories remain clear and intact. "This was more than twenty years ago, when I was living in Sarcelles. When Chanuka came around, I decided that I wanted to do something grandiose and revolutionary, not just another children's rally with prizes, but something much more powerful. In previous years, I used my organ and guitar to entertain the children, sometimes with the help of a mask for my face. Now I wanted to do something substantially bigger. Just a day before the rally, I got an idea to make a puppet theatre.

"This was a concept that had been growing within me for many

years, and I thought that the time had come to put it into practical terms – in thought, speech, and action. The problem was that I didn't have a stage or puppets. In a matter of hours, I had formulated in my mind a story that would put into expression the essence of the holiday of Chanuka, and I was left ruminating over how I would obtain puppets. I immediately snapped into action. My daughter gave me a few dolls from her toy drawer, and I placed them on sticks. Now all that was left to do was to organize a sturdy stage. I found a panel of thick wood and placed two strong chairs underneath. This served as the puppet stage.

"A few hours before the start of the rally, I recorded a few Chabad niggunim and my first performance got underway, totally improvised. I didn't have the courage and self-confidence to announce the start of my performance, but when it was over, I saw all the children sitting there transfixed with their mouths agape. For a few moments, I stood there stunned and completely surprised with my success. I was

then that I knew that I had found my shlichus in life.

“My wife, my friends and colleagues – all of them urged me on and gave me support, and so my puppet theatre began. At first, I would buy ready-made puppets of various images, and then I would ‘convert’ them into the type of images I wanted to create. In later years, I was already designing the characters myself. I created new characters each year, according to the nature of the performances I was working on. People heard about me very quickly, and I was swamped with requests by various institutions and organizations, particularly schools that asked me to perform before their students. Thus, over a number of years, I became quite well-known in France and made many performances until 5753, when we received the Rebbe’s bracha to emigrate to Eretz HaKodesh.”

After receiving the Rebbe’s bracha to move to Eretz Yisroel, the Houris packed their personal belongings, including a large assortment of puppets, and made aliya. They settled in Tzfas, where they discovered a marvelous Chabad community. Rabbi Houri was guided by a strong desire to spend less time involved in his teaching work and invest greater effort in his puppet theatre. He quickly got to work on crafting a selection of puppet characters that children in Eretz Yisroel would enjoy. In the meantime, the difficulties connected with immigrant absorption and learning a new language did not prove insurmountable, and he “broke his teeth” until he was sufficiently fluent in the Hebrew language.

“I designed puppet theatre programs for all the seasons of the year and started working on the practical creation of these performances. I had already taken a

break from education, but then remembered that there is a Rebbe in Israel and in all the excitement, I had forgotten to ask his advice and guidance on the matter. After making all the necessary preparations, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe and placed it in a volume of ‘Igros Kodesh’. When I opened the volume, I was shocked to read a lengthy and detailed letter explaining the great importance of educating Jewish children, especially since ‘he has seen success and is qualified in [the field].’

“After such a clear answer, I acted without delay. I went to the Ohr Menachem Chabad Talmud Torah, where I was hired as a second-grade teacher. I immediately got to work in my new class, even though this age level was not in my area of specialization, as I prefer working with younger children. This first year proved to be most complex for me, and I asked the Rebbe for permission to place less emphasis in my work in education. The Rebbe replied that ‘he doesn’t understand why I am happy about switching jobs. Since it is difficult to find work these days and I already have a proper job that is suitable for me, it would therefore be good if I remained there.’ Accepting these instructions with *kabbalas ol*, I continued teaching second grade for another year. While I loved doing my puppet theatre, it was reduced to less than half its potential output.

“The following year, when I asked again if I could cut back my teaching hours, the Rebbe wrote in very clear language: ‘You are determined to change your place of work, and I am determined that you shouldn’t change your place of work.’ I trembled as I read the answer, then continued my work at the Talmud Torah for a third year, and I didn’t dare ask the Rebbe

about this matter again. However, at the conclusion of that year, I was transferred to teach in the Talmud Torah’s pre-first grade ‘mechina’ class. I was delighted by this development as if I had found a vast treasure, because this age group was far more suited to me.

“Since then, I have also been able to invest more time into the puppet theatre and the tremendous spiritual therapy it provides. I returned to full capacity.”

***Where did this great love for puppets come from and what is so special about them?**

“First of all, all the presentations that I make are stories, legends, and parables from our Sages, of blessed memory. I tried in the past to write my own stories, but it has been proven positive that the stories and parables from Chazal are much more potent, deeper, and compelling. What is specifically unique to puppets is their ability to deliver the message to children in the best way possible.

“Even before I made the puppet theatre, I would love to tell stories. But the impact of a story told by puppets is incomparably greater. The puppets mesmerize the children, and they grasp the message more easily. It makes absolutely no difference whether the children in the audience are religious or secular, as children by their very nature are held spellbound, and they remember the moral of the story far better, thanks to the puppet.

“A few years ago, I was in the midst of a series of performances in Paris, including one before about two thousand children from all the schools and Talmud Torahs in a large arena. This was the most meaningful performance I ever made in my life. To see two thousand pairs of eyes fixed upon you is a rare and fascinating sight.

A few days later, at another performance at a Paris school, a woman approached with me with genuine emotion and asked, 'Are you Dovid Houri?' When I replied in the affirmative, she responded by saying, 'I want to thank from the depths of my heart.' She told me how every year when her daughter would see the flickering lights and trees of the Gentiles on their holiday, she became very excited. All of her mother's efforts to shake her from these feelings went for naught. At the performance in the arena, I told the story of two traffic cops, a Jew and a Gentile, standing on the side of the highway to stop speeding cars. The story takes place during the Chanuka holiday, and they stopped a typical Lubavitcher chassid, who was in a big rush to get to the main menorah lighting ceremony. The Gentile had just been talking most enthusiastically about his own holiday, while the Jew listened with much fascination. Now, the Chabadnik explained to the Jewish policeman in great detail about the Chanuka holiday and its special quality. The Jew was deeply stirred emotionally, as he understood for the very first time that Jews also have a real holiday of their own, and he even proceeded to tell his fellow officer proudly that 'we also have a festival of lights'.

"This woman told me that ever since my daughter saw my performance, she stopped getting excited about the non-Jewish holiday.

"This is just one example among many that I have encountered. The puppets have a tremendous power to influence young minds, and I make certain to emphasize the underlying message behind every performance. Every story has an important moral, and I sharpen it with particular intensity so that the child can grasp it in the appropriate manner."



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INSTILLING THE REDEMPTION EVERYWHERE

Most of Rabbi Houri's performances are conducted outside of Chabad. He has been invited to "misnagdishe" schools in France, and many who hear about this raise their eyebrows in bewilderment, wondering how he managed to get in. In contrast, he also appears before students in the Gerer chassidic educational institutions, and even in schools with a student body that is presently not Torah observant. Regardless of the audience, one clear and firm principle serves as a guide: Every performance concludes with the hope and yearning for the Redemption; every miraculous aspect during the presentation is immediately sharpened by the longing and prayer for the great miracle. "Redemption is a subject that can be instilled within anything," he says. "For example, if I emphasize the message of Ahavas Yisroel or Tz'daka, I add that they possess the strength to hasten the Redemption."

"The Rebbe has asked that we instill the Redemption in everything and start living Redemption. We have a Purim show about a king who forbids his Jewish subjects from giving mishloach manos and eventually gets his punishment for it, and I conclude the performance with a prayer that we should merit to receive the great mishloach manos of the Shor HaBar and the Leviasan. Similarly, there is the story with the traffic cop who is told by a Chabadnik that if he gets his mezuzos checked, this will solve the problem of his children's disobedience, and suddenly we see them dancing together in the Beis HaMikdash. The message is clear: If we act accordingly, we will not only experience a better and happier life — we will experience Redemption."

THE LUBAVITCHER 'LOCOMOTIVE'

By Sholom Ber Crombie

[Continued from last week]

It all began with a news item that caught my eye before Shavuot 5768 on Chabad.info. "The beautiful mikva in New Jersey was dedicated with tears," said the headline. I went on to read about a million dollar mikva that was built in New Jersey. I wondered how it could have cost that much and decided to call the shliach, Rabbi Mordechai Kanelsky, director of Bris Avrohom. The following Friday I went to meet him.

I arrived in Elizabeth and called R' Kanelsky. I called him and waited a long time until he finally answered. When he came to pick me up from the train station, he said he was in the middle of an interview with a reporter from the biggest Jewish newspaper in New Jersey who wanted to cover the dedication of the new mikva.

After we drove for 15 minutes, we arrived at the electronic gate and entered the extensive grounds of R' Kanelsky's home. At the beginning of the week, 400 people gathered in a tent that was set up in the large garden for the mikva's dedication. The mikva was built behind their house.

The building is 3000 square feet and contains both a men's and a women's mikva, with separate entrances for complete discretion. The mikvas themselves are beautifully tiled in soothing tones of blue. The women's mikva is surrounded by a lush garden and the

*When Rabbi Mordechai Kanelsky began working in Millburn, New Jersey, he didn't imagine a permanent shlichus; he just did mivtzaim. However, his winning ways and inexhaustible energy soon turned his Friday mivtzaim into a large-scale year-round outreach machine, so that even before he married, he made a dinner for the big organization that didn't even have a name. * Part 2 of 2.*

calming sounds of a waterfall. The Kanelskys thought of every detail and included luxuries such as preparation rooms with Jacuzzis, heated floors, relaxing classical music, granite counters, a telephone in every room which enables free calls anywhere in the United States, and plush towels and robes.

Even the waiting room is furnished gracefully, with a serene fish tank and a hand painted ceiling. Facing me, in the reception room, was a counter with a computer which is used to operate the technologically advanced building. Instead of the usual waiting room chairs, there are four luxurious armchairs near a library of Jewish

books in several languages and a glass case with jewelry and perfume on sale. The Kanelskys put their neshamos into this project and thought of everything to please people.

Rebbetzin Shterney Kanelsky joined us and explained what motivated them to build this stunning mikva:

"For 24 years we have worked with brides and grooms and we hold mass weddings every year. We always had to beg the brides and grooms to go to the mikva. Even the Russian immigrant families with whom we were in regular contact found it hard to understand the importance of the mikva. We knew



Rabbi Kanelsky with one of his supporters, Danny Kahane, at a yechidus for wealthy donors.

that we could transform the mitvza of going to the mikva from a burden into an experience by building a mikva so attractive that people would look forward to going to it. Of course, at the same time, the mikva is built to the most stringent halachic standards and follows the *shita* of the Rebbe Rashab.

"In our area there was never a mikva for men. The inyan of immersing in a mikva is very important to my husband and he would travel great distances to immerse in a mikva, sometimes to Morristown or Millburn. Occasionally he would drive to Crown Heights. So we decided to build a mikva for men too."

In the basement of the building is a spacious room for shiurim where Rebbetzin Kanelsky gives classes to women and kallos. Every month there is a morning meeting for women, which includes breakfast and a shiur given by the Rebbetzin.

Groups of women visit to tour the mikva. They see how a mitvza can be done with all that the modern world has to offer. The groups are comprised of women from all walks of life including Conservative and Reform, some of whom have never seen a mikva before. The Rebbetzin shows them around and talks about mitzvos and Judaism in general.

Religious women's organizations heard about the mikva and they too

wanted to see it in order to copy it in their areas. Some shluchim have visited the mikva and have taken the plans so they can build exceptional mikvaos in their place of shlichus.

The wife of the donor, who is not yet religious, said in her dedication speech that she had been to beautiful spas around the world but had never seen anything as magnificent as this mikva. She found her visit to the mikva an uplifting, unique experience both spiritually and physically.

The idea for the mikva came up after the Kanelskys' baby Batsheva passed away in 2003. They wanted to memorialize her and the mikva is dedicated to her.

“On the day that we dedicated the mikva, we went to the cemetery and put the invitation to the dedication of the mikva on her grave.”

The Bat Sheva~Chaya Esther Mikvah is also dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Esther Zaltzman, Rebbetzin Kanelsky’s mother. She was tragically killed on Erev Yom Kippur in a horrific car accident, four years ago.

Mrs. Kanelsky — herself, like her husband, an immigrant from Russia — told the crowd of around 400 at the dedication ceremony, of the her mother’s self-sacrifice for the

mitzva of mikva. Every month, she had to journey 36 hours by train to the only mikva available to her, in Moscow; an hour later she would begin the return trip. “The train ticket cost my father a week’s wages,” she said.

EARLY YEARS

We finished the tour and headed for the main building of Bris Avrohom which is a few minutes away by car. There, in R’ Kanelsky’s spacious office we went back in time to when he first started working with Russian immigrants in New Jersey.

He was a bachur learning in Morristown and on Fridays he would go on mivtza t’fillin with his friend Mendel Katzman (now a shliach in Nebraska) to stores in Millburn.

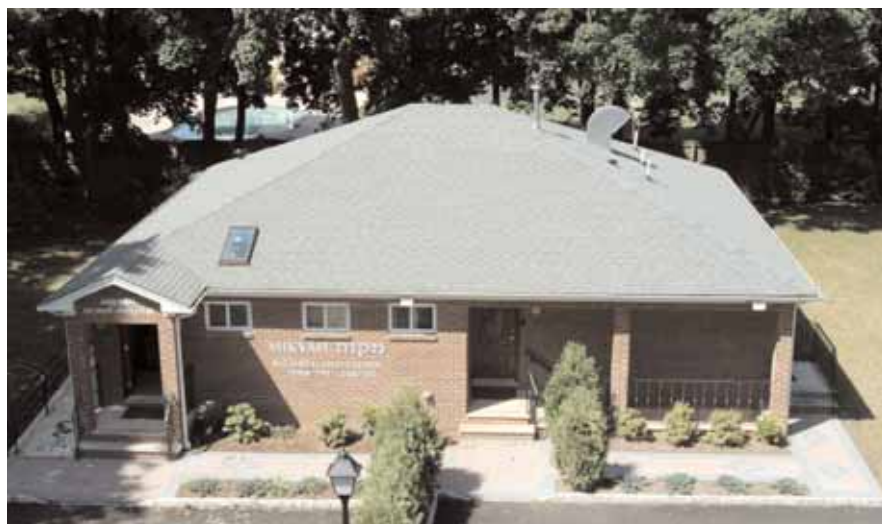
One Friday they arrived at their route a little late and they decided to split up and arranged to meet near the train station a few hours later. When R’ Kanelsky finished his route and went to the train station, he discovered that he had missed the train that his friend Mendel was on, on his way back to Morristown. He was very upset since at that time he barely spoke English and it was almost Shabbos. He had no choice but to wait for the next train in the hopes that he would make it back to Morristown in time for Shabbos.

As he stood there waiting, he heard a group of people standing nearby talking in Russian. Since he knew Russian he listened in and realized that they were Jews. When he went over to them and asked what they were doing there, they told him a few minutes away from there was a place where nearly a hundred Russian Jews came to learn English.

R’ Kanelsky wrote down the address of the place and had to stop talking to them in order to get his train which got him back to yeshiva barely in time for Shabbos.

He kept thinking about that encounter at the train station and he resolved to make use of the information that he got b’hashgacha pratis to be mekarev these Jews. He waited for the right opportunity which came one Friday when all the talmidim of the yeshiva went to 770 for Shabbos and it was announced that Friday would be a day off.

R’ Kanelsky woke up early together with his friend Mendel Katzman and they traveled to the immigration center to meet the Jews there. After helping them with t’fillin, they spoke with them about



An aerial view of the mikva



The mikva surrounded by plants for a tranquil atmosphere

Judaism and saw they were interested in learning more. When the hour grew late they had to leave and they promised to keep in touch and continue visiting them.

That was R' Kanelsky's first encounter with Russian Jews in New Jersey who, at that time, barely knew anything about Judaism.

Before Purim, R' Kanelsky decided to do something special with the Jews of the immigration center to bring them Jewish joy. Together with friends from yeshiva they rented a mobile home which served as their mitzva tank and they traveled to read the Megilla, bringing along mashke and treats. The Jews there were thrilled and their excitement motivated the bachurim to continue working with them.

Following their success, they decided to celebrate Pesach there. After their Pesach seider was a success, Chabad regularly visited the Russian Jews living in Millburn. Every Friday, boys from the yeshiva in Morristown went there to put t'fillin on with them and to talk to them about Judaism. A special bond was forged.

During the summer intersession, the T'mimim knew already where many of the Jews lived who by that time, had finished their stay at the center and had moved to private apartments. They went to their homes in order to put up kosher mezuzos. The money to pay for the mezuzos was raised from bachurim who had jobs in summer camps, which they agreed to donate to the cause.

At the end of the summer, it was clear to R' Kanelsky and his friends that they had to do much more than the usual mitzvaim they had done until then. They saw tremendous potential in being mekarev Jews from the Soviet Union and they wanted to take advantage of their coming to America in order to expose them to a life of Torah and



A group of Rabbi Kanelsky's students from his early years of outreach, at a recent reunion



Rabbi Kanelsky with a group of friends of the organization at his home

We knew that we could transform the mitzva of going to the mikva from a burden into an experience by building a mikva so attractive that people would look forward to going to it. Of course, at the same time, the mikva is built to the most stringent halachic standards and follows the shita of the Rebbe Rashab.



Celebrating 3200 brissin. Sitting from right to left: Rabbi Dovid Wilansky, Rabbi Mordechai Kanelsky, Rabbi Sholom Gordon, Rabbi Eliyahu Shain, and Rabbi Yosef Laine

mitzvos.

The idea they chose was to hold an event to which all the Russian Jews in the area would be invited. They decided to build a large communal sukka where they would have a holiday party. R' Kanelsky contacted Rabbi Shmuel Pesach Bogomilsky who was already reaching out to Jews in the area and R' Bogomilsky was happy to help with the event.

Since R' Kanelsky, who was still a bachur in yeshiva, didn't have the money for an event of this kind, he contacted the Jewish Federation and asked for their help in funding the event. He asked to speak to the boss himself. The secretary asked no questions and she transferred the call to the chairman of the Jewish Federation in New Jersey who was surprised by the phone call. But a few minutes of talking were enough for the distinguished chairman to be convinced that he had to fund a kosher sukka for Russian Jews in New Jersey. He agreed to pay half of the costs, with R' Kanelsky responsible for the other half.

On the day of the event, on Chol HaMoed, hundreds of Russian Jews gathered in the sukka. The

advertising of the event had been successful and the crowd didn't stop expressing their amazement over it. For some of them, this was the first time they were celebrating a Jewish holiday according to halacha.

R' Bogomilsky spoke and the main speaker was Rabbi Moshe Pinchas Katz a"h along with Rabbi Betzael Schiff of SHAMIR. Both of them encouraged the crowd to strengthen their religious observance and the crowd was receptive to this message. The event made a deep impression on all those who attended and also raised the awareness of Chabad activities among the many Jews who lived in the New Jersey area. It was the first step for Chabad outreach in the area, which over the ensuing years has turned into a full-fledged empire.

"It was an organization without a name," says R' Kanelsky as he recalls the events of those days. The work continued to grow and it was a given that if a Jewish holiday was coming up, they were going to do something to mark the occasion.

There were many Russian Jews in the area, and R' Kanelsky and his friend adopted them. Despite the

distance from the yeshiva in Morristown, they would go every week and work with those Jews, focusing their attention primarily on the Ivy Hill section of Newark, New Jersey together with R' Bogomilsky. They held large holiday events attended by hundreds of Jews. Many of them became more committed, some to actual mitzva observance, some to attending a shiur, some to opening their homes to host a class.

BRISSIN

R' Kanelsky became aware of the fact that many of the Jews he was in touch with had not yet been circumcised and he decided to do something about this. He spoke to Rabbi Eliyahu Shain and FREE, who had been working with Russian immigrants already and they agreed to help him.

Their first bris took place thirty years ago on 10 Teives 5739. Three children were circumcised and the following week there were another three children. That's how the huge project began with brissin taking place every week for children and adults. It was a complicated project. First, they had to talk to the people about doing a bris and when it involved children, they had to get the parents interested. After the parents gave their consent, all the technical details had to be arranged, like the mohel, the sandek, and additional people to help organize the bris and the celebration that followed.

Twice a week they rented a "tank" and in the morning, bachurim would travel to the people's houses in order to bring them to the hospital where the bris took place. Afterwards, they brought the mohel, those who served as sandek, and the other people. After the brissin, they celebrated with the newly circumcised and brought them back home. It was only late in the evening that the complicated project was completed.

The next day they had to start

preparing for the next week's bris. The brissin took place with the help of Dr. Benjamin Feigowitz a"h who was the doctor at the local hospital and enabled them to perform brissin there.

News about the brissin spread with people hearing of the possibility of being able to do a bris. Many Jews wanted a bris and their activities expanded as connections were made with numerous Jews. This led to "house calls" and a Jewish revolution was underway. Jews who had just left the Soviet Union discovered a warm spot for Judaism in their hearts and welcomed the T'mimim with open arms.

R' Kanelsky ran all of the activities although he was still a young bachur who had just finished learning in yeshiva. He would go to the immigrant center and meet Jews from among the new immigrants and guide them in their first steps in the world of Judaism which they had not known behind the Iron Curtain.

He often had to spend entire days there, in conversation with Jews who were just starting out as he had to guide them individually, or else working on logistics for activities in the area.

R' Kanelsky developed a friendship with the director of the immigrant center who helped him solidify his activities there. For example, when he began preparing for Pesach, he asked the director if he could have the seider in his building so all the Jews in the area could participate. The director agreed and gave him a large apartment and even a place where the T'mimim could sleep. The director, a Polish gentile, ensured the success of the event and made sure the T'mimim lacked for nothing.

By the end of the year, their outreach had grown and had reached thousands of Jews. R'



Joint bar mitzva celebration for fathers and sons

Kanelsky was completely devoted to the success of their work. He ran around fundraising and was busy expanding their sphere of influence.

A new problem cropped up at that time. As many Jews were allowed to leave Russia, the Jewish schools in New Jersey were too small to absorb all the children. R' Kanelsky sat in 770 and wondered what to do to enable these Jewish children to attend Jewish schools. One of his friends referred him to Rabbi Isaac Mintz a"h who was the principal of a Jewish school in New Jersey.

After R' Mintz heard about the problem with immigrant children, he enthusiastically asked R' Kanelsky to bring him five children so he could see whether they could integrate in his school. These children integrated into their classes within hours and they could see there was great potential for absorbing children of immigrant families in the school. R' Mintz asked for another five children the next day.

This started a new campaign, to get Jewish children in the area into Jewish schools. At that stage, the only school willing to accept immigrant children was R' Mintz's school, and R' Kanelsky would pick up children in the street, who had no

school to attend, and bring them to school.

The special program arranged for these children was very successful and by the end of the year they had learned so well that many of them did better on their tests than the original children in the school who were American children from the local community. Until the end of the school year, nearly 100 children entered this school with all the expenses this entailed on R' Mintz's shoulders since the parents did not have the means to pay tuition. R' Kanelsky even worked as a teacher in one of the classes to save on the salary.

THE REBBE RESERVES A PLACE AT THE DINNER

A few years after the work began, the results were starting to show as the organization became more established and many Jews made major changes in their lives. It was a mosad with an array of activities for adults, youth and children. As the programming expanded, so did the expenses and the first dinner for the organization that didn't even have a name, was planned.

As they got into high gear for the dinner, R' Kanelsky wrote to the



Former mayor of New York, Rudolph Giuliani received a picture of the Kosel at one of the dinners

Rebbe and asked for a letter of bracha to be read at the dinner. The Rebbe's answer was, "last year's." That was the practice at the time, to read the letter for the dinner from earlier years. Since this was R' Kanelsky's first dinner, he figured he would have to forego the Rebbe's letter, but he sent the Rebbe an invitation to the dinner. The Rebbe sent back the envelope the invitation came in along with the amount of money that was requested for the dinner, just as those invited to the dinner were asked to do.

It was a rare kiruv from the Rebbe. This continued with later dinners. Each time, when the Rebbe was sent an invitation to the dinner, the Rebbe paid for a place and sent the money in the envelope provided.

This kiruv was one of many which the organization received from the Rebbe, as R' Kanelsky received detailed instructions from the Rebbe regarding every step he took. For example, when they printed a calendar in 5744, they presented it to the Rebbe with the abbreviation for the year on the cover. They wrote the year *Tav, Shin, Mem, Dalet* which forms a

word with a negative connotation.

The Rebbe attached a note to the calendar which said, "if possible to stamp over with a rubber stamp," and he indicated that they should change the order of the letters to *Tav, Shin Dalet, Mem*.

As for the name of the organization, *Bris Avrohom*, it was chosen by the Rebbe. After presenting several names for consideration, the Rebbe circled "Bris Avrohom."

Another directive was in connection with the printing of the Tanya in Russian. It was after the Rebbe announced the campaign of printing the Tanya and R' Kanelsky wrote a letter to the Rebbe in which he asked what he should do regarding this campaign. In his answer, the Rebbe told him to print a Tanya in Russian under the supervision of Prof. Branover, and to print it in as many places as possible.

When the first three sections of Tanya were translated and a Russian Tanya was published, R' Kanelsky and the donor, Dovid Mintz, went to *Gan Eden HaTachton* near the Rebbe's room where they gave the

translated Tanya to the Rebbe.

A printing press and generator were purchased and three men from Crown Heights traveled to 101 cities in New Jersey and printed the Tanya. When they were done, they took one Tanya from each printing and bound it in leather for the Rebbe. They brought the box with 101 Tanyas to the Rebbe themselves. The Rebbe gave Dovid Mintz, who was the donor for the printing campaign, 101 twenty dollar bills, one for each printing.

At the same time, the organization printed a Siddur with Russian translation in conjunction with SHAMIR and these Siddurim serve the shluchim around the world that work with Russian communities. A lot of work went into editing the Siddur and it was highly praised by rabbanim around the world and its printing was encouraged by the Rebbe.

In 5746 they received another kiruv from the Rebbe when the chairman of the fifth dinner was Rabbi Yosef Wassner who would help Rashag raise money for Lubavitcher Yeshiva. R' Wassner's participation in the dinner was a

result of the Rebbe's intervention when R' Wassner hesitated to serve as chairman for Bris Avrohom – because it took place just a month before the dinner for Lubavitcher Yeshiva where he was the chairman.

He wrote about it to the Rebbe and the Rebbe told him to serve as chairman for the Bris Avrohom dinner too and that it would not negatively affect the dinner for Lubavitcher Yeshiva.

But then R' Wassner had another problem. The honor he received every year at the dinner for Lubavitcher Yeshiva was to read the Rebbe's letter, but there was no letter from the Rebbe for the Bris Avrohom dinner, as mentioned earlier. He didn't know what he would do as chairman of the dinner at the dinner without a letter from the Rebbe. He decided to write to the Rebbe and noted that his role at the dinner for Lubavitcher Yeshiva was to read the Rebbe's letter and therefore, he requested a letter from the Rebbe for the Bris Avrohom



Senator Joseph Lieberman awarded a picture of the Rebbe at one of the dinners

dinner too, so he could read it at the event.

Friday before the dinner, R' Kanelsky received a phone call from the Rebbe's secretary. R' Groner informed him that the Rebbe wrote a letter for the dinner. R' Kanelsky

was thrilled. The letter arrived on the day of the dinner which started at five o'clock. After Mincha at 3:30, the Rebbe sent out the letter. It was a special letter in which the Rebbe highly praised the work of Bris Avrohom.

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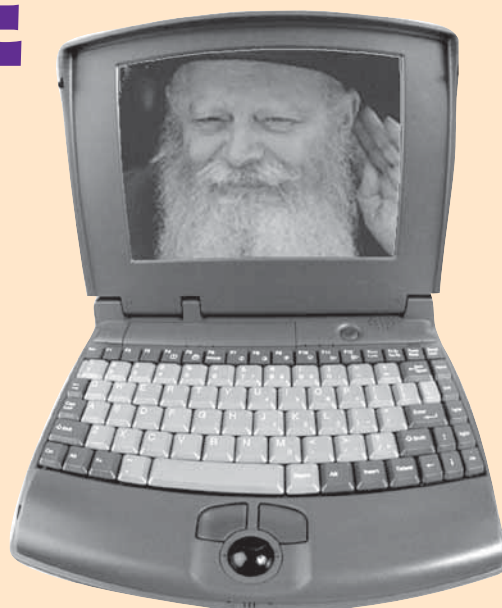
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ב"ה

THE LIFE OF R' AHARON CHAZAN

By Avrohom Rainitz

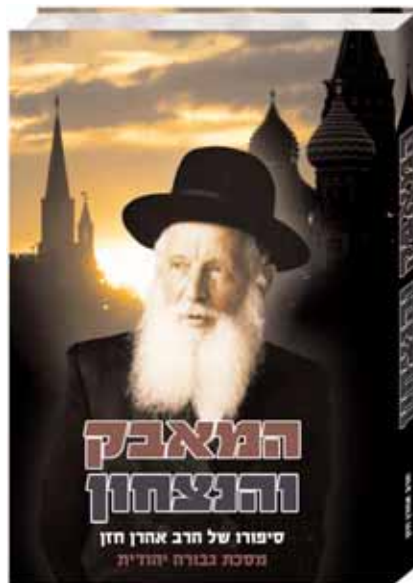
Last summer, on 4 Av, we heard the sad news of the passing of Rabbi Aharon Chazan a"h, a role model of mesirus nefesh for the preservation of Judaism in Soviet Russia and later, in Eretz Yisroel. In his first fifty years he fought the communists and their wicked regime which terrorized millions of citizens in its vast empire.

In the next stage of his life, after he made aliya, R' Chazan devoted himself to working with new Russian immigrants and to battling the Leftist establishment in the State of Israel. He arranged thousands of brissim and sent thousands of Jewish children to religious schools.

Admurim, rabbanim, roshei yeshiva and masses of people attended his funeral as all admired his work on behalf of religious Jewry. Among the Admurim were those from Machnovka, Chernobyl, Spinka, Zhevil, and Rachmastrivka. Likewise, rabbanim from B'nei Brak, led by Rabbi Moshe Landau, and a distinguished group of Chabad rabbanim, were in attendance.

During the Shiva, hundreds of people visited the Chazan children to offer their condolences. Among the visitors were many askanim who expressed their genuine amazement that despite his many struggles with political activists, no stain of politics ever rubbed off on R' Chazan. One of the heads of Agudas Israel said:

*A chacham, a baal middos tovos, an askan and most of all, a chassid, R' Aharon Chazan was a pillar of spiritual strength against the bastions of secularism both in Russia and in Eretz Yisroel. * Part 1 of 2.*



Rabbi Aharon Chazan's memoir

“For forty years your father worked with various groups, political mosdos of one kind or another, and none of the politics stuck to him. He never calculated how he would benefit from his work. It wasn't about money or honor, just for the

sake of Heaven.”

Another visitor said that he once asked R' Chazan how he worked with a certain group that takes advantage of his activities and raised a lot of money on his account. He responded: What do I care what they do afterwards? Now they are helping me get dozens of children into religious schools and that's what matters.

People were amazed by even the smallest details of his outstanding personality. For example, the gabbai of the shul where he davened said he was astounded that R' Chazan never raised his voice to anyone. Unlike other men his age who get annoyed when children make noise in shul and the like, he never expressed any annoyance – he just smiled at everyone.

In addition to his famous communal work, R' Chazan used every free moment to learn Torah. His children recalled that during the Nine Days, to ensure there was a daily siyum in shul, their father



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

would be called upon to make three or four siyumim every year. Even they were surprised to discover that in the Shas in his house there was a list of the dates when he completed each masechta. He had completed Shas twenty times!

CHILDHOOD IN THE SHADOW OF THE REVOLUTION

R' Aharon Chazan was born on 16 Shevat 5672/1912, in the small town of Krasnostav, a descendent of well-known rabbanim. His maternal grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Rappaport, was a direct descendent, eighth generation, of the author of *Sifsei Cohen* on Shulchan Aruch. His father, Rabbi Mordechai Chazan, was a descendent of the Baal Shem Tov. Shortly after his birth, his father was appointed rav of Krasnostav.

As the son of the rav, he was

treated with respect, even as a boy. The townspeople took it for granted that one day he would be the rav after his father. At that time, nobody dreamed of the historical events to come.

The Revolution against the Czar began in Adar 5677 and along with it came pogroms from the Ukrainian hordes. Seven year old Aharon watched as ruffians grabbed his father and grandfather, put them up against the wall of the shul near their house, and drew their weapons to shoot. Incredibly, the gun did not work and the hooligans sufficed with cruelly beating them with the butt of the rifle.

At the end of a fierce struggle, the communists had won the Ukraine and a most difficult era of communist rule ensued. Young Aharon Chazan saw how Jewish life around him declined although his family remained staunch in its faith. Under the influence of their heroic

stance, Aharon also refused to cave in to communist pressure.

While his classmates left yeshiva one after another, he remained at home and learned with his father and grandfather. At some point, none of his former classmates wanted to have anything to do with him. In addition to being friendless, the family suffered the shame of starvation. The only thing that kept them going was their trust in Hashem.

When he was 16, an underground yeshiva was opened in Zhevil by a Chabad Chassid by the name of R' Mordechai Eliezer Lapatovsky, which was headed by R' Shaul Bruk. Aharon joined the yeshiva and thanks to the learning he had done at home, he was one of the outstanding pupils.

A short while later, the incitement against religious Jews in Zhevil forced his family to relocate and move back to Krasnostav.

Aharon continued learning with his father and grandfather for three years.

THE FIGHT FOR SHABBOS OBSERVANCE

From the age of 19, his search for work began so he wouldn't be arrested for the crime of being a parasite. Until he left Russia, he had a constant battle to remain shomer Shabbos. His first job was at a factory which manufactured bricks. The work was backbreaking and the salary a pittance, but he was able to keep Shabbos. Every day he had to fortify himself against the threats and mockery of the other workers and the managers who predicted that he would soon find himself in Siberia.

He was often a topic of discussion at weekly municipal meetings where they discussed whether to allow him to continue working despite his Shabbos observance. At those meetings were his childhood friends who remembered how together they helped the families of widows and orphans and how, at shul, he would speak to them about Judaism.

Over the years, thanks to the daily brainwashing they got at the government schools, they had stopped keeping mitzvos and had joined the communist youth movement, known as the Consomol. Now that he had become a worker like them, he continued to speak to them about Judaism even though this was considered a serious crime. But they never informed on him, and often, they even defended him from those who sought to harm him.

In 1936, at the age of 24, he took off from work for the month of Elul and went to Berditchev with the intention of visiting the graves of tzaddikim in the old cemetery with the request that he marry a G-d fearing woman, a rarity in Russia of

those days. As he davened in the shul in Berditchev in the morning, R' Sholom Friedman walked in and invited him to his home where he said that R' Aharon had been recommended as a scholar and a G-d fearing person. He suggested a shidduch with his sister, Nechama Leah, the daughter of Rabbi Zushe Friedman, the Chassidic rav of Odessa.

After his parents and the parents of the girl discussed it and they thought the idea a good one, they arranged the Tena'im for Chanuka. R' Chazan was very grateful to Hashem for answering his prayers so speedily.

Their wedding took place on Rosh Chodesh Tamuz 1937 at a time when rabbanim of small towns were sent to Siberia and Jewish weddings were held secretly. Yet, none of the guests – and there were hundreds – suffered as a result of the wedding. The chuppa took place outdoors in the yard of the Friedman home and among the guests were also NKVD agents. Since these agents regularly kept an eye on the visitors to the Friedman home, they certainly considered themselves old family acquaintances who could attend the family simcha.

THE YEARS OF TERROR

After their wedding, the couple moved to Odessa. R' Chazan had to look for work again but everywhere he tried, they immediately rejected him as soon as they heard that he would not work on Shabbos. In the end, he decided to become a bookbinder. It was work that enabled a person to keep Shabbos because since there was no government office that had work for more than a few days a month, the bookbinder had to work for ten offices simultaneously. The bookbinder arranged his own hours and appeared at each office according to his own schedule. Not

surprisingly, a number of religious Jews chose this profession.

R' Chazan was able to get bookbinding work from a new government office that dealt with housing matters. Every month he had to report for about two days of work at each of the twelve branches of this office. Nobody knew that he did not work on Shabbos, even though they knew he was religious – his beard and peios testified to that.

One time, one of his employers asked him, "How come all bookbinders grow sideburns? You are the third bookbinder with sideburns that I know." R' Chazan cleverly answered, "It's the uniform of people in this profession." The man accepted this answer in good spirits and with a chuckle.

Stalin started his infamous purges in 1937 led by his chief butcher, Yazov. The nightmare machine of the NKVD went into high gear spying on people and terrorizing them. Everyone lived in fear that he was about to be arrested. More than any other group, the Jews were in serious danger. Hundreds of people disappeared every day and always for the same reasons: Enemies of the people, Trotskyites, counter-revolutionaries, spies, or a connection with the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

In Adar 1938, R' Chazan found out that his brother-in-law Sholom, his wife's brother, was arrested in Berditchev. There he was tortured and on 13 Sivan he was shot to death for the crime of supporting Judaism and running the Chabad yeshiva there. May Hashem avenge his blood. A few weeks later, on Rosh Chodesh Adar II, his brother-in-law Avrohom was taken by the GPU and on 2 Nissan he was killed in jail. May Hashem avenge his blood.

THE MIRACULOUS LIBERATION FROM THE RUSSIAN ARMY

A year after he married, shortly after the birth of their daughter Devorah, R' Chazan was called up for the reserves. For a religious Jew, serving in the army wasn't only physically dangerous; it was primarily spiritually dangerous. R' Chazan was careful not to eat forbidden foods, and when his commander tried to force him to eat, he claimed he did not feel well.

He was sent to the hospital where he drank quarts of water and ran around the building. By the time his turn came, of course his heart was beating very rapidly. The Jewish doctor who examined him gave him a note in a sealed envelope. Once back at the camp, he found out that the doctor had written that his health was compromised and he was not fit to serve in the army. That was his first rescue from the army.

As the fighting progressed, Stalin issued an all-inclusive draft order and all men had to enlist, even if they had previously received an exemption. R' Chazan was drafted once again. After a few weeks in the army, his unit was granted leave for a few hours. He used the opportunity to go to a private clinic and ask for a checkup. The doctor, a Jewish woman in her thirties referred him for an examination of his lungs. In the lung department the doctor noticed his tzitzis and said, "Tzitzis!" After examining him and not finding anything wrong, she told him to have an X-ray but the X-ray showed that all was fine.

She told him to wait a moment and wrote a note which she gave him. To his surprise, R' Chazan saw that she wrote that he was sick with non-symptomatic tuberculosis that was liable to produce symptoms at any time. The commander referred



Rabbi Aharon Chazan in a picture
taken in 1946 in Moscow

One of the heads of Agudas Israel said: "For forty years your father worked with various groups, political mosdos of one kind or another, and none of the politics stuck to him. He never calculated how he would benefit from his work. It wasn't about money or honor, just for the sake of Heaven."

him to a military clinic. He ate sharp onion and smoked a few sharp cigarettes so that during the medical evaluation he felt terribly nauseous and his face was ashen.

The doctor, worried by his appearance, took the note that the Jewish doctor had written and sent him to the medical committee which decided to exempt him for a month. In incredible hashgacha pratis, he arrived in Voronezh, where he met the brothers Tzvi and Zev Slavin who, with connections they had with the government, managed to get him a permanent exemption from the army.

After he was released, he wanted to return home but he found out that Odessa was about to fall to the Germans and citizens were not permitted to travel in that direction. He heard that hundreds of thousands of refugees were traveling eastward and he assumed that his wife was among them.

Making additional inquiries, he discovered that his wife was in Zhizhak. He traveled there immediately and found her in serious condition, like the other refugees, living under inhuman conditions. That's when he discovered that his son Zushe had passed on at the tender age of two years. He had become sick with rubella and developed complications because of the lack of medication and living in a cold, damp room which had been erected against the outside wall of a house. This was a devastating shock and R' Chazan was crushed by feelings of guilt. The news that a new baby, Chaya Sarah, had been born, who was then three weeks old, only mitigated his pain somewhat.

WITH CHABAD CHASSIDIM IN TASHKENT

After wandering for some time,



Rabbi Aharon Chazan on mitvza t'fillin at the Kosel, shortly after leaving Russia

the newly reunited Chazan family arrived in Tashkent where R' Chazan got a job as a watchman in a warehouse for army tools and equipment. He became acquainted with the Lubavitcher Chassidim and their work on behalf of Judaism. He had especially fond memories of R' Moshe Sudekewitz and R' Zushe Rivkin, wealthy Chassidim who formed part of a network of people that were bound together with bonds of brotherly love. They were always ready to help anyone in need. They often paid bribes for their brethren, helped obtain work, and supported the religious needs of the community. They organized a minyan where there were kiddushim on Shabbos and farbrengens. They had a secret Jewish school. As soon as schools with proper chinuch were made available for children of Anash, they worked on providing a proper chinuch for the children of the rest of the Jewish refugees. Their plans entailed danger but they were willing to devote themselves for Judaism just as they had done to improve their material circumstances.

At the beginning of the summer

Hundreds of people disappeared every day and always for the same reasons: Enemies of the people, Trotskyites, c o u n t e r - revolutionaries, spies, or a connection with the Lubavitcher Rebbe...

of 1944, one of the Chassidim, R' Eli Lipsker visited R' Chazan and asked him to found a school for the children of refugees in Tashkent. He promised him that he could remain as an employee in R' Moshe's factory so that his exemption from the army would be assured.

R' Chazan took on the challenge and in the month between Pesach and Shavuos, he managed to start three chadarim in different places. After Shavuos, he started the fourth one with about twenty children learning in each of the chadarim. These chadarim formed an underground Torah network.

On Okatchi Street, R' Moshe Nossan Garelik, a Lubavitcher, taught; R' Zalman Leib Estulin, wounded in the war, taught in Sotzgorodik near the textile factory; R' Asher Zelig taught on Novaya Street. These teachers were older people who were completely devoted to their students. They worked hard to instill in them a love for Judaism. They taught all the levels from reading in the Siddur to Gemara.

After Shavuos, R' Chazan arranged another school on Profesyoyny Street where R' Moshe the Litvak taught. After he left his position, R' Chaim Binyamin Brod took over. The supervision and support were R' Chazan's sole responsibility. He planned what the students would learn, he tested them, he made sure there was lunch every day, and he paid the salaries and the monthly rent for the rooms they learned in. For security reasons, the teachers did not even know where their salaries came from.

The expenses were enormous. The teachers' salaries alone were 20,000 rubles a month. A monthly salary of a worker in Russia was 700 rubles a month. The daily lunch and the month's rent for the four rooms cost tens of thousands of rubles. The huge budget, covered primarily by well-to-do Lubavitchers, significantly reduced their earnings. However, they occasionally convinced their fellow Jews, even those who were not religious, to generously donate to support the chadarim.

He also worked on another front, circumcising children. Together with other Chassidim, they explained to the Jewish refugees about the importance of the mitzva and arranged brissin for dozens of children. Parents were often afraid to allow the mohel to do the bris without supervision and they demanded that a doctor be present. In order to placate the parents, one of the wealthy Chassidim, R' Gershon Richter, would put on a white coat and turn into a "doctor."

The chadarim continued to exist until Elul 1946 when a great many Lubavitcher Chassidim fled Russia via Lemberg. R' Chazan also wanted to try his luck with forged papers and planned to travel to Lemberg (Lvov) near the Polish border. For a while, it was possible to buy counterfeit Polish papers in Lemberg and many Jewish-Russian citizens used them to successfully cross the border into Poland.

R' Chazan had to close all the chadarim because once most of the Chabad Chassidim had left the city there were no sources of funding anymore. He had no choice but to also leave the city because if he was caught, they would surely sentence him to death both as a deserter and a counter-revolutionary. This danger hovered over him still just as when the chadarim operated but at least then, he felt he was endangering his life for a lofty cause.

On the way to Lemberg, he stopped in Moscow where he rented a room in a house for a week. It

was before Rosh HaShana 5707. Together with him were his wife, his mother-in-law and three daughters. He had nearly bought the train ticket to Lemberg when the Chabad Chassidim in Moscow received a telegram which said, "Our relatives in Lemberg took sick." This was a hint that the government had caught the last group of Chassidim who tried to cross the border. Security was even tighter and the government was especially on the lookout for religious Jews.

With Lemberg no longer an option, R' Chazan had no choice but to remain in Moscow and thus began a period of twenty years in which he battled for Shabbos and for his children's chinuch under conditions of deprivation and high personal risk.

OPEN MIRACLE

For over ten years since he arrived in Moscow, R' Chazan went from one job to the next. He had a hard time keeping a job because of his insistence on keeping Shabbos at any cost, even if it meant being fired. It was only in 1957 that he finally found work as manager of a warehouse in a factory that bought old rags and recycled them. His immediate superior was Moshe Zaitchik who excelled in giving tz'daka and acts of chesed. He stayed at this job for eight years until he was able to leave Russia.

At this time, he saw an open miracle. At his place of work there was a drunken gentile who coveted

his job, whether because he thought it was easy or because he was convinced the salary was higher. He began persecuting R' Chazan in order to get him to leave. At first, R' Chazan paid no attention to him, but as time went on, the harassment grew more severe. One day, he told his son-in-law Moshe Greenberg about it. "You should write a letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe and ask for his bracha," he suggested.

In Russia of those days, nobody endangered themselves by sending letters from Soviet Russia to the Rebbe. The connection with "Schneerson" was sufficient reason for arrest and exile to Siberia.

His son-in-law had a solution. Write the letter and then put it in a Tanya. For Chabad Chassidim in Russia it was commonly accepted that when you put a letter into a Tanya, the foundational work of Chabad Chassidus, that the Rebbe received it with ruach ha'kodesh.

R' Chazan did as he suggested and asked for a bracha to be rid of the harassing gentile. He put the letter between the pages of a Tanya. Within days a fire broke out in the building near his work and after a brief investigation it turned out that the gentile was guilty of setting the fire. He was sent to jail for many years and R' Chazan never saw him again.

[To be continued be"H]

Note: In issue #693 we presented two chapters from Rabbi Aharon's Chazan memoir, HaMaavak V'HaNitzachon (the Battle and the Victory.)



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