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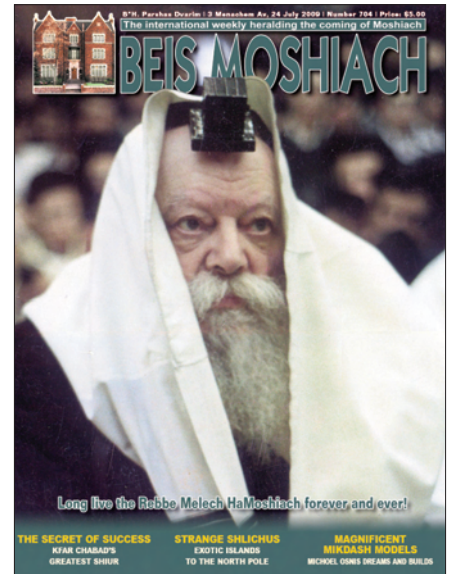
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Feature | Nosson Avrohom



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

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MOSHE'S WORDS

Based on Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IV, pp. 1087-1089.

Commenting on the statement of the *Gemara*^[1] that Moshe transmitted the Book of *Devarim* “on his own,” *Tosafos*^[2] notes that it was imparted with *Ruach HaKodesh* (“Divine Inspiration”).

There are many degrees of *Ruach HaKodesh*. With regard to Moshe the Torah testifies,^[3] “No prophet has ever arisen in Israel as Moshe.” We thus understand that the *Ruach HaKodesh* of Moshe was of the loftiest possible degree.

Moreover, the Book of *Devarim* is part of the Written Torah. Surely then, Moshe’s communicating the Book of *Devarim* “on his own” can in no way imply that it was not given by G-d, heaven forbid.

Especially so, as the *Rambam* rules^[4] that if one says of even one word of the Torah that Moshe said it on his own and it was not transmitted by G-d, he is deemed a heretic. How much more so is it impossible for an entire book of the Written Torah to be imparted by Moshe “on his own” and not communicated to him by G-d.

We must perforce say that “on his own” means that Moshe imparted the Book of *Devarim* with *Ruach HaKodesh*, i.e., as G-dliness vested itself within Moshe and became united with him. This is in keeping with the saying of our Sages, “The Divine Presence spoke via the throat of Moshe.”^[5] Moshe was therefore able to say^[6] “I shall provide rain,” for in actuality it was G-d speaking

through the medium of Moshe.

The only difference between the Book of *Devarim* and the first four books of the Torah is in the manner in which they were revealed by Moshe to us:

The first four books, although they too were communicated to us by Moshe, were transmitted by him merely as G-d’s emissary. The Book of *Devarim*, however, was communicated to us by Moshe in a manner as if he were saying it “on his own” and not merely as an emissary. That is to say, regarding *Devarim* the Divine Presence vested itself in Moshe’s intellect and united with him, with the Divine Presence speaking through the medium of Moshe.

The same holds true for all Torah novella revealed to us through the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*, the authors of the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*, as well as all the *Chidushei Torah* of true *Talmidei Chachamim* in subsequent generations — all was already given by G-d to Moshe on Sinai,^[7] and they are verily the word of G-d.^[8] Merely, that these words of G-d have been garbed in the vestments of their comprehension — the vestiture within each individual in accordance with his particular spiritual level.

It is thus understood that just as in the Book of *Devarim* there are not only to be found new matters, but also many amplifications and clarifications of matters discussed in the earlier four books — things

which would not be known without *Devarim*, so too regarding the novel Torah interpretations and enactments of all subsequent generations:

If one does not observe the enactments of the “Moshe’s” of subsequent generations,^[9] then he not only lacks the present enactments, etc., which are verily the words of G-d, he also lacks in his performance of all that was commanded until then, as he denies the sanctity of the words of all the “Moshe’s” throughout the generations.

We must, however, understand why the Book of *Devarim* differs from the first four books of the Torah in that Moshe specifically communicated *Devarim* “on his own”?

Devarim was related to the generation that entered *Eretz Yisrael*,^[10] at which time the Jewish people began their service of a nation in a “settled land.” It then became necessary for them to lower themselves into the realm of physical affairs in order to refine and elevate the physical to holiness.

As a result of this descent into the physical, the Jewish people could not receive the divine light and manifestation of Torah in the same manner as in the desert when they were wholly removed from the physical,^[11] the revelation of G-dliness in *Devarim* had to pass through a connecting and intermediary medium, a *memutzeh ha’mechaber*.

So, too, from generation to generation: The lower the spiritual quality of the generation, the greater the vestiture of G-d’s words; in order for the divine illumination to penetrate a lower spiritual generation, it needs to be garbed in ever more concealing garments.

However, this only applies to the garments in which Torah is garbed. With regard to the essence of Torah

One of the fundamental aspects of our faith is the belief in the immanency of Mashiach's coming. We must "await his coming every day," which means not only that every day we should wait for his ultimate coming, but that every day, we should expect him to come on that very day itself.

This is all the more relevant in the present era when all the signs that our Sages mentioned in connection with the coming of the Redemption are manifest. In particular, the present days are uniquely appropriate for the coming of Mashiach. For our Sages declared that:

A lion (Nebuchadnezzar) came in the month whose sign is a lion (Av) to destroy Ariel ("the lion of G-d," the Beis HaMikdash), so that a lion (G-d) will come in the month whose sign is a lion and build Ariel.

Furthermore, the name of the month Menachem Av stresses that there will be Menachem, an act of comfort, for all the negative factors associated with the present day. More precisely, this applies on the present Shabbos which falls on the date of Tishah BeAv itself.

Our sages explain that on Tishah BeAv, Mashiach is born. This cannot refer to his actual birth, because Mashiach will not be an infant when he redeems our people, but rather to a strengthening of his influence. For our Sages refer to a birthday as a day when mazalo govair, "the spiritual source of one's soul shines powerfully." On the day when Mashiach's spiritual source is powerfully revealed, there is a unique potential for the redemption to come.

9th day of Menachem Av, 5751
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itself, there is no difference: all parts of Torah, from the first four books of the Torah up until the *Chidushei Torah* of an Acharon (who is widely accepted among the Jewish people)^[12] are verily G-d's words, "all emanating from the same Divine Shepherd."^[13]

From *The Chassidic Dimension*, Vol. 5. Reprinted with Permission of Sichos in English.

NOTES:

1. Megillah 31b. See also Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim, p. 20c.
2. Ibid.
3. Devarim 34:10.
4. Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 3:8.
5. See Zohar, Vol. III, p. 232a; Shemos Rabbah 3:15.
6. Devarim 11:14. See also Likkutei Torah, Bechukosai, p. 50a.
7. See Megillah 19b; Yerushalmi, Pe'ah 2:4; Shemos Rabbah beginning of ch. 47, et al.
8. See Kesef Mishnah, Rambam, ibid.
9. Tikunei Zohar, Tikkun 69 (p. 114a). See also Bereishis Rabbah, 56:7.
10. See Tanya, conclusion of ch. 25.
11. See Likkutei Sichos, Vol. II, p. 329.
12. See Hilchos Talmud Torah of the Alter Rebbe, beginning of ch. 2.
13. See Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar, p. 15c, and sources cited there.

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LARGER THAN LIFE? NO, LARGER THAN DEATH!

By Aryeh Gotfryd

Who hasn't heard protestations about Chabad's undying adulation of the Rebbe?

"You treat him like a G-d!"

"You want him to be Moshiach? Let him rest in peace!"

"Okay, he's a tzaddik, but everyone makes mistakes. Even Moshe Rabbeinu."

"Accept the facts, get over it, and get on with life."

Chabad didn't invent *emunas tzaddikim*. True, we may have perfected it to a fine art, but we didn't invent it. Let's start with the Torah fact (see the **Dvar Malchus**) that the entire book of Devarim was not dictated by G-d to Moshe, as the rest of the Chumash was, but rather that Moshe said it all on his own, with divine inspiration.

This is a very powerful claim. The holy, unalterable, and absolute Truth of every word and letter of the Torah applies just as much to Moshe's own essay as to G-d's very words! The Rebbe explains that one of the reasons that Moshe's words are included

in the Chumash itself is to establish the unequivocal divinity of Rabbinic Judaism. By enshrining the first rabbinic dissertation of record in the Torah itself, Hashem is making it unmistakably clear that Written and Oral Torah are one.

"Well!" the skeptic might say about the idea of comparing someone today to the superman who perpetuated the plagues, split the sea, and brought manna from heaven. "That was then, but this is now." But even taking the declining generations into account, we still know (as the Chasam Sofer writes) that in every generation there is an equivalent to Moshe.

"Well, then!" our skeptic continues, "So who is the Moshe / Moshiach figure now, after Gimel Tamuz? There are Lubavitchers that continue to believe it's the Rebbe and those that say it's over. What's up with that?"

Shortly after Gimel Tamuz, in the summer of 1994, I attended a farbrengen of shluchim headed up

by R' Berel Mochkin of Montreal. He addressed the issue in the following way:

"It's well-known that after a Rebbe's histalkus, on his way to Gan Eden, he passes by the gates of Gehinom where he gathers up some Chassidim, takes them out of there, and brings them up with him to heaven.

"The question is this: We know that in life, a Rebbe is Rebbe for every Jew. That being the case, how is it possible that when he passes by the gates of Gehinom, he only takes out certain Jews, but not everyone stuck down there?"

"The answer is that there are two types of Jews. One kind of a Jew looks at a Rebbe that he is a man – a tzadik – but after all, a man. The other type of Jew looks at a Rebbe that he is *kulo kodesh*, entirely holy, even physically.

"What happens? After 120, both types of Jew could find himself in that other place. Then, when the Rebbe is *nistalek*, he makes his appearance at the gates of Gehinom. The first kind of Jew sits back and says, 'Aha! What did I tell you? He has *epes a shaychus*, some kind of connection to this place. Of course he's a tzadik so he doesn't come right in, but some kind of connection he has.'

"The second Jew says, 'What's going on?! The Rebbe is here?! That doesn't make any sense. He has nothing to do with this place. The only explanation is that he is here for us.' With that he leaps up and runs over to the Rebbe, who gathers him up and pulls him out.

"The same is with us. This is not a discussion about Moshiach. This is a discussion about Rebbe. All we are seeing now is how our views from long ago are coming to the surface. The real question is, how do we look at the Rebbe – as a man, a tzadik, but after all, a

When the Rebbe makes his appearance at the gates of Gehinom, the first kind of Jew sits back and says, 'Aha! What did I tell you? He has 'epes a shaychus,' some kind of connection to this place. Of course he's a tzadik so he doesn't come right in, but some kind of connection he has.'

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man? Or as *kulo kodesh*?"

What are the facts? What the eye sees? Or what Torah says. Who among us could stand up and say that he knows of a greater Torah authority than the Lubavitcher Rebbe? Torah dictates reality, not the other way around. When the Rebbe tells us that his father-in-law is physically alive, that's reality. When he tells us who Moshiach is, that's reality.

When our critics say, "Accept the facts, get over it, and get on with life," I like it. To me it means: Accept the Torah facts that Moshiach is here and the geula is now, get over the shock and dismay of not being able to see and hear the Rebbe for the moment, and get on with life the way it's supposed to be – goodness, kindness, Torah and mitzvos to welcome Moshiach NOW!

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EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

Whether in a Ukrainian hovel, in a Canadian village near the north pole, or trying to escape Yiddishkeit on an exotic island, you can take the Jew out of Lubavitch but you can't take Lubavitch out of the Jew.

HE DRAWS WATER FROM THE WELL

I recently met a shliach to a suburb of Zhitomir in the Ukraine, Rabbi Mendy Dworkin. R' Dworkin works with a group of shluchim in the Zhitomir area under Rabbi Shlomo Wilhelm. The conditions they live under are rather surprising in this day and age. In R' Dworkin's village there are no telephone lines. They hope to install them by 2012.

They still draw drinking water from the well. Every yard has a well and if you're thirsty, you go outside and draw water (there is water in the pipes at certain times but it is not suitable for drinking). Most of the transportation in the village is done by horse and wagon.

The neighbors own a goat which they use for their daily dairy needs. R' Dworkin once forgot to lock his door and when he came back he found the neighbor's goat in his house.

R' Dworkin has a cellar with a trapdoor that opens into his kitchen. He stores potatoes and other vegetables in the cellar throughout the winter. He doesn't throw out the peels because occasionally he uses them for barter with his neighbor. She takes the peels for her goat and she provides him with flowers for Shabbos or other items.

Under these conditions, R' Dworkin runs a school for the local children which is located in a large wooden building among the trees of a nearby forest.

R' Dworkin and his wife left civilized life, family and friends, and went on shlichus to this little village until Moshiach comes. Here they save souls, learn b'chavrusa with people, and run a shul. They forego wall-to-wall carpeting, fine furniture, and all the amenities of modern life to do the Rebbe's shlichus.

AN UNUSUAL WAY OF BECOMING A SHLIACH

I heard about a shliach who sort of fell into shlichus... He is from a Lubavitcher family in the United States. When the family underwent a traumatic event, he became depressed and in this crisis his emuna and religious observance were affected. At a certain point he decided to go somewhere far away to be on his own. He went off to an exotic island.

To his surprise, word got around that a Jew with a religious background had arrived and people turned to him with their questions. Can you help me get a mezuzah? Do you know what we daven on Shabbos? How do you observe kashrus? Where can I get a book on halacha? Etc.

He couldn't turn them away and helped them to the best of his ability. More requests kept coming until he was asked by the unofficial Jewish community to be their rabbi!

SOMETIMES THERE IS A MINYAN

I met a shliach who lives in an American city with 3000 Jews. There is also a large university with 20,000 students and staff, out of which 1000 are Jewish. The shliach opened a Chabad house near the university and he has a small shul, but he mainly provides kosher meals and a place Jewish kids can turn to with their questions.

Some Jews in the city occasionally attend shul. "If more students show up from the university," he said, "we have a minyan for Shabbos, but it doesn't always work out."

"Before last Shabbos we did a lot of advertising and hoped that with the students we would have a minyan. Many students showed up and we had a minyan Friday night but not Shabbos day. We had more

than ten people but some of them weren't Jewish. They think they're Jewish because their father is Jewish."

I asked the shliach whether these people are insulted that he considers them goyim and that they did not complete a minyan. He told me that they are so ignorant of Jewish matters that they don't realize the davening is shorter because there is no Kaddish, Kerias Ha'Torah, etc.

One of the students refused to listen to anything about Judaism. His friends, who visited the Chabad house, always said this guy would never listen to a rabbi. But then one day he came and joined the Shabbos meal and even set up a chavrusa with the shliach. They started with alef-beis and then moved on to Chumash, Mishna, Halacha, Tefilla, etc. Now he is learning in a yeshiva in Yerushalayim. He's the one about whom they said there wasn't a chance he would show up!

I CHANGED MY MIND

Rabbi Benny Karniel, shliach in Gadera, relates:

Someone from Gadera, a mekurav of the Chabad house, occasionally travels for reasons of business and lectures. On one of his trips he went to northern Canada. Since he had a day and a half off, he went to visit the northernmost village, near the North Pole, where in the right season, you can see incredibly beautiful sunrises and sunsets over the endless ice.

He went into a restaurant in the village and looked at the menu. He explained to the waiter that he did not want meat cooked in milk, which he saw on the menu, and he ordered fish. After he ate, an older man from a nearby table approached him and said, "You're Jewish, right?" He said he overheard the conversation with the waiter. "I'm also Jewish. I came here after the Holocaust because I wanted to get

In R' Dworkin's village there are no telephone lines. They hope to install them by 2012... He stores potatoes and other vegetables in the cellar throughout the winter. He doesn't throw out the peels because occasionally he uses them for barter with his neighbor. She takes the peels for her goat and she provides him with flowers for Shabbos.

away from Jews and anything Jewish. You are the first Jew I've seen in fifty years."

The mekurav asked him whether he was interested in having a connection with Jews now and the man said, "No! But that's why I'm here, so I *won't* have a connection with Jews!"

They parted ways and the mekurav left the restaurant. Suddenly, the Jew ran after him and said, "On second thought, I am interested in having a connection with Jews. Here is my business card."

The mekurav brought the card back to R' Karniel in Gadera, who made sure to give the information to his fellow shliach in Toronto, Rabbi Yisrael Landau. Since then, the Jew in northern Canada receives messages about important mitzvos and upcoming holidays and he is connected.

APPLAUDING MENACHEM BEGIN

Rabbi Lipa Kurtzweil, shliach in Kiryat Malachi for decades, said that when Menachem Begin was Prime Minister, he planned a visit to Kiryat Malachi and even a tour of Nachalat Har Chabad. R' Kurtzweil thought he should organize a demonstration against Begin and his plan to

withdraw from the Sinai.

He asked the Rebbe and the answer he got was not only should he not demonstrate, he should welcome Begin! So R' Kurtzweil led the welcome delegation and applauded enthusiastically because this is what the Rebbe wanted.

THE REBBE SAID: WHAT'S THE QUESTION?

"On another occasion," said R' Lipa, "we got a surprising answer from the Rebbe and we carried it out despite our previous plans." It was during the mass immigration from the CIS, when hundreds of immigrants came to Kiryat Malachi from Bucharria and the city of Tashkent. Rabbi Dovid Gurewitz was the rav and shliach there and when he saw that hundreds of people from his city were going to Kiryat Malachi, he asked that the Chabad house in Kiryat Malachi support the work in Tashkent and send donations.

R' Lipa's reaction was a sarcastic, "That's just what we need." He had plenty of his own expenses and debts from his work in Kiryat Malachi. How could he take on additional expenses?

R' Gurewitz said he should at least ask the Rebbe about it. R' Lipa agreed and the Rebbe's answer was:

What's the question? And if there's a question, ask rabbanei Chabad in the Soviet Union and askanei Anash in Eretz Yisrael.

The rabbonim and askanim gave their approval to send aid from Kiryat Malachi to Tashkent to support R' Gurewitz's work. At a later point, R' Kurtzweil even arranged for two men to go and help out in Tashkent. He also sent big shipments of meat and food for the needy there.

A story with a different ending took place 22 years ago with two good friends, one of them me. I had started a Chabad house in Beit Shaan, and a year later, my friend opened a Chabad house in Gadera. The Chabad house in Gadera needed funding. At that time, we had donors who gave us money generously and I asked the Rebbe whether I could give some of the money from Beit Shaan to Gadera.

The Rebbe answered: Do as the askanei Anash in Eretz Yisrael advise.

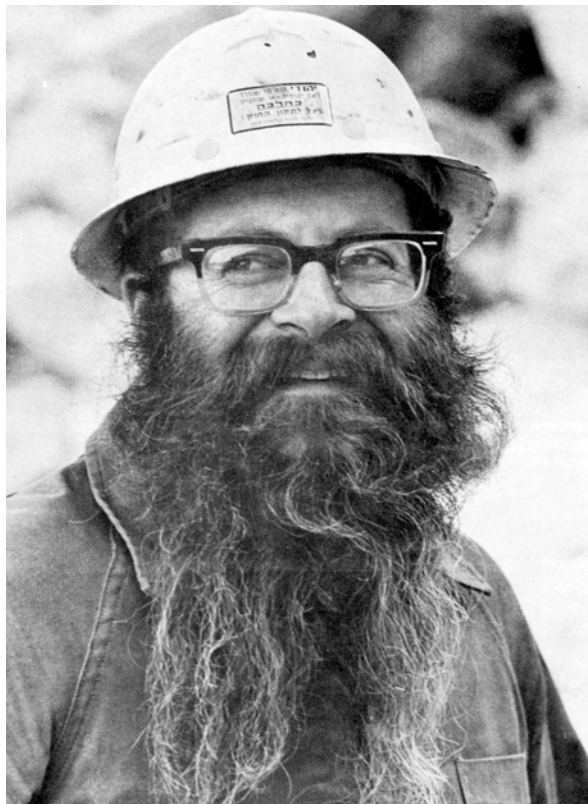
I spoke to R' Zushe Willamowsky and he said I shouldn't do it. Every Chabad house has to use all its resources to expand their activities.

YOU CAN'T PREDICT THE REBBE'S ANSWER

Sometimes there are similar questions in different places or times and the Rebbe answers differently to each one for reasons unknown to us.

I know that a year before I was told by the Rebbe to go to Beit Shaan, someone else asked the Rebbe whether he could go on shlichus to Beit Shaan and the Rebbe told him it wasn't time yet. Today, he is a successful shliach in a big city in Eretz Yisrael.

In another instance, someone



R' Reuven Dunin a'h

asked whether to go on shlichus to a certain city. Whoever had to give their consent did so but the Rebbe's answer was, "If it's not a question of encroaching on someone else."

Later on, someone else asked the Rebbe about going on shlichus to that city and the Rebbe gave his blessing.

TURN YOUR ZEALOUSNESS INWARD

Rabbi Reuven Dunin a"h once said at a farbrengen that twenty years earlier there was a certain rabbi in B'nei Brak who was constantly publicly opposing the Rebbe and the Rebbe's views on shleimus ha'aretz and mitvtzaim. R' Dunin couldn't take it and decided to go to Bnei Brak. He chose a date, called for a car, and was ready to go.

When he left the house he saw that a sicha from the Rebbe had arrived in his mail box. He opened it

and it was a sicha on parshas Pinchas. Great, he thought, that's what Pinchas was about, eradicating the one who made problems ...

He started reading the sicha, which said the lesson from Pinchas is about acting zealously, and he felt even more eager to go to Bnei Brak. He kept reading until he got to the last part with the practical lesson. He was sure that he would read that we need to get rid of those who interfere with avodas Hashem but instead was surprised to see that the hora'a was to use the feeling of jealousy for Hashem within oneself.

R' Dunin sent the driver away and went back home to work some more on his middos, to eradicate his bad middos with the proper jealousy. It was the Rebbe's hora'a.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Rabbi Shimshon Tal, shliach in Hod Ha'Sharon, got married in the spring of 5751. The young chasan presented several shlichus ideas to the Rebbe that he had been offered, and planned a trip to the Rebbe a few weeks before his wedding.

A few days before Lag B'Omer, the Rebbe's answer arrived and it said to accept the shlichus in Hod Ha'Sharon. Although R' Tal yearned to visit the Rebbe as soon as possible, once he received the Rebbe's answer he decided he had to plan a big parade.

He met with some principals of schools and told them about his plans for a parade. One of them said it was a pity to waste his time when no more than twenty children would show up. In fact, about 600 children participated! Right after Lag B'Omer he went to the Rebbe. A real shliach.

FROM HOODLUM TO CHASSID

By Nosson Avrohom

The view is breathtaking from R' Tzvi Fleischer's home at the base of the new Menachem Begin neighborhood in Tzfas. You can see as far as Teveria and the Yam Kinneret, where you can even distinguish individual homes.

"We lived in the Canaan neighborhood within Tzfas for years and just moved here a year ago. You can't compare the quality of life."

R' Fleischer is a familiar face in the Chabad community of Tzfas where he has lived for nearly fifteen years. R' Tzvi settled in Tzfas shortly after marrying his wife Sima, whom he met on his first visit to Eretz Yisrael during a brief break from learning in yeshivas Tiferes Bachurim in Morristown.

A TOUGH CHILDHOOD

Tzvi grew up in London, England, together with his parents and older sister. He was born in the summer of 1961, in the Jewish hospital in Stoke Newington, and as a youth, they moved about London several times, from Dalston to Enfield to Southgate. He did not know much about Jewish tradition. As a child he would occasionally stay with his grandparents for Shabbos and go with his grandfather to shul.

A few years before his bar mitzva, his parents sent him to a Sunday school run by the Reform shul in the neighborhood. Before his bar mitzva he went with his parents to see where he would sit in shul and was told something about the celebration they would be having there.

"I ended up having my aliya in the Modern Orthodox shul called Southgate United Synagogue. My maternal grandmother's second husband was the shamash in another shul and he was the one who taught me to read the Maftir and Haftarah for Parshas Vaeschanan. It was 13 Av 5734/1974."

He remembers that his parents lit the Chanuka menorah and celebrated Pesach with aunts or grandmothers, but those are the only Jewish memories he has of his childhood.

His world collapsed a week after his bar mitzva, when his parents told each of their children that they had decided to get divorced.

"That was my bar mitzva 'gift.' It came out of the blue and after that, nothing was the same. I lived with my mother and my father left the house."

Tzvi rebelled. Until then he had been an excellent student in school,

but at this point he became the most rebellious, impudent child in class.

"My father remarried within a year and he, with his new wife, eventually became baalei teshuva and Lubavitcher Chassidim. I, on the other hand, fell spiritually and my fall was precipitous and swift. I became friends with wild street kids who kept themselves busy with vandalism. I was a member of a group of hooligans who were also fans of the Arsenal football team."

Tzvi left school at the age of fifteen and lived on the street. He remembers when he got his first tattoo, which was the emblem of a local street gang. It was the day that he went to visit his father in order to celebrate his sister's birthday.

"I left when the party was over with the excuse that I wanted to take a walk and went to Soho market in London where I knew they did tattoos, even though the law was that you had to be over eighteen. It was a time of tremendous inner rebelliousness for me and this was how I expressed it."

ENCOUNTER WITH THE REBBE

Tzvi belonged to a gang of 150 youths who were obedient to their leader, a tall, dark-skinned, intimidating young man.

I visited my father every week. He tried to have an influence on me but I pushed him away. I was deep within the kelipa and my heart was closed to listening to talk about Torah and mitzvos. The only thing that occupied me at that time was to hang out as much as possible with the other ardent fans of the Arsenal team."

One day, his father made him an offer he couldn't refuse. It was before Yud Shevat 1981. His father told him that he was going with a group of mekuravim, led by Rabbi Efraim Potash, to the Lubavitcher Rebbe in New York and said that if



R' Tzvi Fleischer with the Rebbe

Tzvi wanted to join them, he would pay for everything.

"My father said my ticket would be open for six months and if I wanted to stay in the US, I could do so. We would be spending one week with the Rebbe. It wasn't easy to decide because that week there would be a local Derby with Spurs, Arsenal's rivals, and I had already bought tickets."

In the end, he decided to go to New York. He had never been there and he wanted to see the place that people were so impressed by.

"When we got to New York it was freezing and there were almost constant snow flurries. I stayed with the Goldberg family on Eastern Parkway. One day I went to Manhattan, where a young yeshiva bachur asked me directly, 'Are you Jewish?' When I said that I was, he asked me whether I wanted to put on tefillin. I followed him to the nearby mitzva tank and put on tefillin.

"That was the first time that the fact that I am Jewish moved me. Here was a young man, and what interested him? Whether I am Jewish or not ... and if I am, then he is willing to spend time to enable me to do a mitzva.

"In the evening I sat next to my father at the Rebbe's farbrengen in 770. I remember that it was a very warm atmosphere and we got ear pieces through which we heard a simultaneous translation of what the Rebbe said into English. I enjoyed this visit to New York very much. I felt proud of my Judaism. Every morning that week I put on tefillin."

At the end of the farbrengen he and his father were told they had yechidus the next day. Over the course of the week, Tzvi had heard stories about the Rebbe's amazing abilities. He had seen the Rebbe several times, at the farbrengen and at the davening, and he was very taken by the Rebbe's appearance. He was curious about what the Rebbe

would tell him at their meeting.

"My father went in first and spoke in Yiddish. Later on he told me that he told the Rebbe that he did not ask for anything for himself. All he wanted was for the Rebbe to bless him that I would grow up to Torah, chuppa, and good deeds and stop being friends with the marginalized people I was with.

"My father told the Rebbe that he accepted the blame for not having raised me to Torah and mitzvos. The Rebbe asked my father some questions about what was going on with me. His yechidus ended with the Rebbe telling my father, "Don't worry, I'll take care of it."

"When my father came out, I went in. The Rebbe spoke to me in English. He asked me questions about my life, about my work, and what my ambitions were. During the yechidus there were some words that I did not understand and the Rebbe called R' Groner into the room for him to explain it to me. At the end of

Tzvi left school at the age of fifteen and lived on the street. He remembers when he got his first tattoo which was the emblem of a local street gang. It was when he went to visit his father in order to celebrate his sister's birthday.

the yechidus, the Rebbe gave me a dollar and said that I should go to yeshiva.

"I did not answer because I had no idea what a yeshiva was. The Rebbe, realizing that I did not understand, called R' Groner again, and he repeated what the Rebbe said. I left the room with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I felt a great sense of respect for the Rebbe. I felt he was elevated above anybody I had every met. His appearance, his eyes, his manner, and his speech were astonishing. On the other hand, yeshiva?! That made no sense..."

IN DARK PLACES

Tzvi didn't give much thought to following the Rebbe's advice. After the yechidus he sat with his father outside 770 and they spoke a little about the Rebbe's suggestion, but he wasn't ready to follow it. The next morning he got on a bus that took him to family on his mother's side in Cleveland. From there he went back home to London and hoped that life would return to normal.

"From that point on, I didn't stop seeing signs that I had to get more religious. Two months later, my father invited me to be his guest at the seder, but I opted to hang out with my friends in a pub over eating matza and marror."

Towards dawn, after plenty of beer, they began quarreling with a rival group and the place turned in one big brawl. Someone punched

Tzvi in the face and knocked him down, and the glass he was holding penetrated his hand.

"I was taken to the hospital where they stitched up the deep cuts. A few months later I had to undergo a complicated operation on blood vessels that had been seriously injured that night. My father said he was sorry I hadn't chosen to come to his house that Pesach, insinuating that things would have turned out differently."

As he lay in the hospital, the rabbi of the local shul came to visit and Tzvi told him about his meeting with the Rebbe and what the Rebbe told him. He said that he did not understand why the Rebbe had suggested yeshiva to him in his state. The rabbi nearly fainted in surprise, not understanding the connection between the Rebbe and this troublemaker of a youth.

"After recovering from the operation, I went back to my old ways, to the same friends and the same scene. The Rebbe's words continued to reverberate in the background but I tried to push them away."

He began working as a bus driver in London. One Shabbos, while driving, he saw two Lubavitcher bochurim, wearing hats and jackets and tzitzis blowing in the wind. They were smiling and they radiated inner peace. They instantly took him back in time to when he stood before the Rebbe, and it reminded him about the Rebbe's advice to go to yeshiva.

"My thoughts were interrupted by a volley of curses being uttered by a Pakistani standing behind me. He venomously cursed Jews and blamed us for all the world's conflicts. I was furious."

Tzvi stopped the bus, and angrily left the driver's cubicle. He approached the Pakistani and defiantly asked him what was bothering him.

"Even though the fact that I was Jewish didn't mean much to me, and I did nothing that expressed my Jewish identity, I couldn't keep quiet. He answered me by repeating his hateful mantra. I said to him, 'Do you know that I am Jewish too?' He shut up. In his darkest dreams he didn't imagine that I was Jewish. He was taken aback and apologized profusely, promising that he wouldn't curse Jews again. This episode brought out my deep connection to Judaism."

The most interesting link in the chain of this story took place when Tzvi repeated the story to his father, describing to him where and when it took place as well.

"He told me that one of those bachurim had also been to the Rebbe that Yud Shevat in 5741 and not only that, but he had yechidus right after I did. This confluence of events amazed me. My *pintele yid* was woken up but the *klipos* I was immersed in blocked the light of the G-dly soul from shining in me.

"I went back to Cleveland for my sister's wedding."

The wedding took place in 5747 and Tzvi was chosen to accompany the groom. He wore a kippa throughout. The wedding took place in a shul, the band played Jewish songs and he was overcome by Jewish sentiments.

"The feelings dissipated when my visit was over after a week and I returned to London. I began a job as a stock boy in an antique furniture store. I enjoyed my work in the

stock room, which was relatively easy and paid well.”

What disturbed him, though, was another worker who came to work every day wearing a shirt with Hitler’s picture. Next to the picture was the European continent and underneath it said, ‘The Hitler Tour - 1939-1945.’

“He wanted his shirt to be seen and bragged about it, while I seethed. Once again, my Jewish sentiments were rising to the fore.

“That worker had no idea I was Jewish until the day came when I couldn’t restrain myself any longer. I grabbed him, forced him up against the wall and told him that I was Jewish and that his shirt offended me. He was scared and began to shake.

“He was sure I was going to kill him. I told him that if he didn’t take the shirt off and burn it, then...” His bravado disappeared and he took off the shirt and ignited it. When he came to work the next day, the story had gotten out and the manager called me to his office and sent me on a forced vacation until he decided what to do with me.

“I went straight to my father and told him what happened. He suggested that I put on tefillin and said this would help me. I didn’t see any connection between putting on tefillin and work, but I put on the tefillin and the next day I was back at work.

“When I look back at my life, I don’t understand why I didn’t put all these signs together. Why didn’t I understand what I understand today, that all these situations resulted from my being a proud Jew who, no matter what I did or where I was, had a deep connection with G-d that could not be severed.”

In Tishrei of 5749, his father asked him not to work on Yom Kippur, but he politely refused.

“Just to take a day off was out of the question for me at that time. I



R' Tzvi Fleischer once upon a time

“He was sure I was going to kill him. I told him that if he didn’t take the shirt off and burn it, then...” His bravado disappeared and he took off the shirt and ignited it. When he came to work the next day, the story had gotten out and the manager called me to his office and sent me on a forced vacation until he decided what to do with me.”

did not understand the importance of the day and so there I was, on Yom Kippur, at work at the construction site where I worked at that time. In the afternoon I had to drill a hole in a beam and I accidentally continued drilling into my leg. I writhed in agony. I’ll never forget that pain.

“Later on I realized that I had experienced a big miracle because if the drill had entered any deeper, I could have sustained irreversible damage. That evening I told my father what happened and once again, he gently reminded me that he asked me not to work that day

and this was the second time that I was suffering due to my resistance.

“I also began to feel that there was a connection between the incidents, but a full understanding was still far off. The next Yom Kippur I decided to fast but not to pray. I went to work, and remember sitting with gentile friends and they all counted the time with me until three stars came out.”

A GLIMMER OF LIGHT

A few months later his mother moved and he helped her with the packing. When they put those items that had been kept in storage onto

the truck, he discovered the old menorah that they had lit when he was a child. He was excited over the find that reminded him of his childhood and his mother was willing to give it to him.

"It was a sign from heaven, as a few days later my father told me that Chanuka was coming up. I told him about the menorah I had found and which brought back fond memories. He gave me a page in English with the brachos and a kippa and I lit the menorah in my house. My interest in Judaism continued to grow."

The feeling of emptiness that he had felt over the previous years hit him full force.

"I had everything in life, good work, a nice apartment, but I felt I had no goal. This broke me. I didn't know that this emptiness was connected with my identity. I fell into a deep depression. When I told my father he said it was this same feeling that had led him to investigating his heritage, which ended up filling him with a deep and inner happiness."

Tzvi's father knew what the best medication was for him and he said, "The Rebbe already told you that your place is in yeshiva, and that's still the case."

"After a lot of thought I agreed to go to yeshiva. What could be wrong with checking it out? I called my father, as I did every Friday, and wished him 'good Shabbos,' and he invited me to join his family that evening. Unlike the other times he had invited me, this time I decided to accept the invitation and even show up early.

Tzvi parked his car on a side street and walked to his father's house, where he was told that his father was in shul. He took his seven year old sister and she showed him the way to shul.

"I'll never forget that night. I put on a kippa as I walked into the shul. They were up to the end of Kabbalas

Shabbos. My father, who stood at the end of the shul, noticed me immediately and smiled broadly. He seemed so happy that I felt it was worth being there just for that alone. I felt good."

The one who was mekarev his father, R' Efraim Potash, was the first to approach Tzvi and shake his hand. He whispered, "When the Rebbe says to go to yeshiva, you have to go to yeshiva, and the question is merely when this will happen and which yeshiva. Whatever the Rebbe says in yechidus has to take place and the question is only when."

"Ten years had passed since that yechidus and I was close to thirty when I decided to see what a yeshiva is.

"The Shabbos meal after the visit to shul was very special. I was suddenly open to listening and especially to taking things in and learning. I felt I had discovered myself anew, that I had turned on a light that had been hidden. I felt a thirst to learn more and more."

The following Shabbos he went even earlier, he davened in the shul, and was willing to listen to his father and not drive home but sleep over. He was able to attend the farbrengen the next day in shul.

"That Shabbos I decided to go to my father every Shabbos and my enjoyment grew from week to week. I remember how my father and I walked to shul and there was a lot of traffic on the main road. I suddenly began to feel the beauty and magic of Shabbos even from the material perspective, not just the spiritual."

On Purim, Tzvi's father arranged for him to meet with Rabbi Tzvi Telsner from Stamford Hill. He got to know him and spoke to him at length and suggested that Tzvi attend the Chabad yeshiva in Morristown.

"That was a terrific period in my life. The moment I decided to do

what the Rebbe said and go to yeshiva, there was a tremendous change in me. It was as though everything was bottled up inside of me and was waiting for this moment to burst forth. I couldn't wait any longer. I wanted a yeshiva now! I wanted to know and do everything all at once. Within a few days I had bought tefillin."

Tzvi quickly moved into the world of Chassidus and the aura of the Rebbe.

"I was able to sell all my belongings in London and two days after Pesach I went to New Jersey, to the Chabad yeshiva in Morristown. On the plane I wore a yarmulke and I have worn it ever since. I did not stop to think about the upheaval in my life but zoomed onward to my destination."

"YOU'RE ASKING WHETHER I'M JEWISH? I'M ASKING IF YOU'RE JEWISH!"

Tzvi nostalgically recalls his impressions of his first days in yeshiva.

"Rabbi Kaplan, from Har Nof in Yerushalayim, farbrenged with us and spoke about Moshiach coming immediately. His entire farbrengen was focused on Geula while I, who did not understand what Moshiach and Geula are about, innocently asked him whether he could ask Moshiach to wait for a few days because I had just arrived from London and was tired from the trip. He smiled and understood me. Each passing day was a bigger experience than the day before; it was an extraordinary time for me."

In addition to learning, the bachurim would go out with a mitzva tank. This combination of intensive learning in yeshiva and going out excited him.

"An interesting thing happened to me one warm Friday when I asked a

store owner if he was Jewish and wanted to put on tefillin. I had my sleeves rolled up because it was hot and humid, so he could see my tattoos. He looked at me in surprise and asked, 'You're asking whether I'm Jewish; I want to know whether you're Jewish!' He agreed to put on tefillin ..."

"I often stayed with R' Rachamim Raymond, who knew my father, and the Broner family. The first Shabbos that we went to 770, I met a friend whom I knew in London, R' Eliyahu Tiefenbrun, and he advised me to write to the Rebbe that I had started learning in yeshiva. He guided me in how to write to the Rebbe and I gave the letter to R' Groner for the Rebbe."

At the farbrengen with the Rebbe, Tzvi felt his body tremble in excitement. He got a good spot near the farbrengen table and felt goose bumps all over. He had been a guy who feared no one but suddenly, he couldn't stop crying.

"When the Rebbe walked in majestically for Kabbalas Shabbos, I cried like a baby. I can't explain it. The Rebbe had told me to go to yeshiva ten years earlier and I thought it was a ridiculous request but the Rebbe, who knew what was what, understood that this was the best thing for me."

Yeshiva wasn't smooth sailing, but he persevered.

"I went to the office of the rosh yeshiva, R' Avrohom Lipsker, to discuss the difficulty I was experiencing. He looked at me warmly and said, 'If you return to London at this point, it will be very hard for you to continue on the path of Jewish observance. I recommend that you continue in yeshiva but slow down. Walk, don't run.'

"His advice still comes in handy. When I experience difficult times, the easiest thing to do is to drop it all. but the right way is to slow down, walk and not run, but make



R' Tzvi busy with Mivtza Tefillin

He studied in kollel for four years and learned shechita and supported himself in this profession for a while. Now he is a fundraiser for a chesed organization in Tzfas. He can write a book about miracles and stories of Divine Providence that he experiences on the trips that he makes around the world.

sure to walk in the direction of the goal.

"Before I went back to London to visit, after a year of learning, I went for 'dollars,' and asked the Rebbe for a bracha for my parents that they be healthy. The Rebbe blessed them and gave me a dollar. When I left 770, I burst into tears again."

TYING ONE KNOT – UNTYING OTHERS

He spent Pesach with his mother and father in London and this was an opportunity for his mother and friends from his past to see his new look. They realized it wasn't a

passing phase but something serious.

When Yom Tov was over, he went back to Morristown and one summer day he decided to visit Eretz Yisrael for the first time.

"It was before 12 Tammuz, 5752. I went to Telz Stone and to Har Nof to visit R' Yaakov Konceptolski. There I met a friend from yeshiva, who suggested that I join him on a trip to Tzfas, where a mutual friend was getting married. I was happy to join him."

At this stage in his life, Tzvi began hearing suggestions of shidduchim. His teachers in yeshiva thought he was ready. He met someone and after receiving the

Rebbe's bracha. they planned their wedding for 12 Elul. He felt a special fondness for Tzfas, its peace and serenity, ever since.

After studying in kollel for four years, he learned shechita and supported himself in this profession for a while. Now he is a fundraiser for a chesed organization in Tzfas. He could write a book about miracles and stories of Divine Providence that he experiences on the trips that he makes around the world. Here is one such tale:

"Before Purim this year, I visited an office building in Los Angeles and at the reception area I noticed a book called, *Why marry Jewish?* After asking permission to take the book, I went to the elevator to go down to the first floor. On the fourth floor, a man got in to the elevator whom I would never guess is Jewish. He looked at me and then said in Hebrew, 'I see the book you're holding. I have a gentile girlfriend. Maybe the fact that I'm meeting you now is a sign that I have to read this book.' Of course, I gave him the book, explained what I knew about the subject and put tefillin on with him.

"I went back to the office and asked for another book. I told them what happened to the first one. They were very happy and said this was their goal since intermarriage was a big problem in Los Angeles. I took another six books. A little later I walked into a photography store nearby, where someone came over

to me and introduced himself as Chaim. When I suggested that he put on tefillin, at first he refused but he finally gave in to my unrelenting persistence. He came out to my car and put on tefillin with me right there in the parking lot. He was visibly moved by the experience.

"Then he noticed the books I had in the trunk. After taking off the tefillin he told me that he was married to a gentile woman for twenty years and he knew it wasn't good but he had three children with her. I explained to him what a tragedy this is and gave him a book. The next day, I went to another office and met a fellow named Asi, who also happened to be married to a gentile woman, a lady from Mexico. I gave him a copy of the book too. I felt terrible about these neshamos lost to the Jewish people.

"When I finished my visit to Los Angeles, I had one book left which I took back with me to Tzfas. It was amazing how each book was given to someone who needed it. I was curious to see what would happen with my last copy.

"At the Shabbos Mevorchim farbrengen I attended, I told the crowd about the books. Someone who works with Russian immigrants asked whether he could borrow the book because he wanted to translate it for the many Jews he worked with who were married to non-Jews.

"I travel a lot and I see Divine Providence wherever I go. The Rebbe's brachos accompany me

every step of the way. It's not just a matter of faith with me; I see it. Before every flight I write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh and I experience success.

"A few days before the flight to Los Angeles, my wife said if I was going to the United States already, I should make a stop at 770. I said I had been there a few months before but she wanted me to go to 770 again. My ticket cost me \$1140 and I called the travel agent to find out how much it would cost for me to stop in New York. He checked and told me that it would cost an additional \$500, a lot of money for me.

"I told the travel agent that I would let him know the next day and in the meantime, I did what every Chassid does when in doubt. I wrote to the Rebbe and put the letter into a volume of Igros Kodesh.

"I opened to an answer about the importance of traveling to 770 and about spreading the wellsprings while working. All my doubts disappeared. I called the travel agent and before I could say anything he said, 'I cancelled your ticket because I saw that you weren't sure about it but don't worry, the prices dropped and you can fly to Los Angeles and stop over in New York for forty dollars less than the previous price.' I was stunned. I saw how the Rebbe helps those who want to spend time in his presence."

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ALL FOR THE MOTHER OF ROYALTY

By Rabbi Shneur Zalman Chanin

Among the nicest memories my parents had of Peking were those of Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe's mother. She was distinguished not only by lineage, but was an exceptionally noble woman in her own right.

FROM ALMA ATA TO MOSCOW

The first connection between the Rebbetzin and our family was through my uncle, my mother's brother, R' Yosef Nimotin. He helped R' Levik, the Rebbe's father, in Alma Ata in the last months of his life and took care of his burial and the stone on his grave.

My uncle Yoske related:

Rebbetzin Chana, who went along with her husband to his place of exile, lived under very difficult conditions. After he passed away on 20 Av, 1944, she remained alone and broken. Heedless of the fact that the NKVD considered her suspect, since she had been the wife of a "counter-revolutionary and anti-Soviet element," I continued to visit her in order to lift her spirits and

help her however I could.

In the middle of 1946 we heard a rumor that Anash were talking about illegally leaving Russia. I told the Rebbetzin about this and she said she was afraid to do something like that. Right after Shavuot I received a telegram from Tashkent from my brother-in-law, R' Chaikel Chanin, which said I should go immediately, with my entire family, to Lemberg (Lvov). They were starting to move because time was short and the Rebbe had endorsed taking this opportunity.

My brother-in-law was so determined to get me out of the Soviet hell that in order to convince me to leave, he offered to pay the expenses of the trip even though I had the money. As soon as I got the telegram, before thinking of myself, I went to the Rebbetzin to persuade

her to join Anash.

The Rebbetzin had gone through so much suffering that she was afraid to make a move. At first she didn't want to hear anything about leaving illegally. It was hard for me to convince her that this was the best move to make. I explained that there was no choice, that life in Russia was unbearable for her and that this was an opportunity to leave this cursed country together with friends and Chassidim. I added the inducement that she would be able to see her son in the United States and that certainly it would be easy for him to bring her to him and she wouldn't have to remain alone, without any relatives, in a land that was so cruel to her. I covered all angles until the Rebbetzin agreed that I was right.

I left to discuss with some Lubavitchers who would accompany the Rebbetzin and help her, but they were all afraid. They were even afraid to send one of their older children along, 18 year olds (who were less likely to come under suspicion). I had no choice but to travel with the Rebbetzin to Moscow and then come back to Alma Ata on the train that same day. I knew that in Moscow there would be Chassidim who would take care of the Rebbetzin and see to it that she



got to Lvov.

I went back to the Rebbetzin and before she had a chance to change her mind, I helped her pack her few belongings. The Rebbetzin told me firmly that she would not change her name and that she would travel only with the name “Schneersohn” and with her official papers. I knew that this name could incriminate her from the outset and put not only her in danger but also whoever was with her. We traveled to the train station and I planned on escorting the Rebbetzin to Moscow.

We arrived at the station and to my surprise I met a friend of mine who was traveling to Moscow. I figured that if he was going there anyway, perhaps he could help the Rebbetzin. He looked at me in incredulity and said, “Are you out of your mind? I am afraid for myself and my wife. How can you ask me to increase the danger? Do you want me to commit suicide?”

He added that anyway the train was full and he hadn’t managed to get a ticket yet. I thought this might be the miracle. If I was able to buy tickets for the three of them, he could take the Rebbetzin with him. But even when I showed him the tickets that I had gotten at a special counter, he still hesitated and said he would be taking too big a chance.

I half seriously, half jokingly said, “I was going to travel but Hashem sent you to escort the Rebbetzin. The fact is that you are traveling to Moscow on the same train as the Rebbetzin. Your wife’s name is Chana and the Rebbetzin’s name is Chana, so go with double Chana (from the root meaning grace) and may Hashem grant you grace. I am sure that in the merit of the Rebbetzin, angels will accompany you and you will arrive safely in Moscow.”

Without waiting to hear his answer, I seated the Rebbetzin, who trembled like a leaf, next to him on

the train. I was able to get off the train and buy strawberries for the Rebbetzin, my friend and his wife.

With a prayer on my lips I watched as the train left the station until it disappeared from sight. From there I headed towards the post office. I sent a telegram to Leibke Mochkin saying that the Rebbetzin was on the way to Moscow. I asked that someone meet her and handed over responsibility for the Rebbetzin to others.

Leibke arranged whatever was necessary. He sent “Mumme Sarah” to meet the Rebbetzin. Mumme Sara brought the Rebbetzin to Lemberg and continued to look after her until she accompanied her to the train that brought her to Poland with the second group of Anash that left Russia.

As for myself, however, I unfortunately procrastinated. By the time I packed my bags and took my family to Chernovitz, I found out that it was too late and we had missed the opportunity.

(The Right of Repatriation officially ended in July, 1946, according to the September 1944 and July 1945 post-war agreements and in most of the big cities of Russia, the repatriation offices were closed. When Lubavitchers wanted to leave, they found that the office in Lvov was still open for repatriation from the inner regions of the Soviet Union. Prisoners, refugees, and former exiles from distant parts who heard about repatriation late in the game, were able to leave Russia this way. By August 1, 1946, repatriation was officially over everywhere.)

As a result, I had to return to Alma Ata. I stayed in Russia for another thirty years and even spent seven years in jail.

My mother and brother Refael (Foleh) did not leave with the exodus from Russia. Both of them lived in Tashkent at the time. My brother would not leave without my

mother, who hoped that my father would still return home. He had been arrested in Av, 1937, and was never heard from again. When they arrested my brother and sent him to Siberia, my mother came to Alma Ata, passing away there in 1957. My brother also made aliya thirty years later.

SHECHITA IN THE REBBETZIN’S HOUSE

My cousin, R’ Menachem Mendel Aharonov [now living in Toronto, Canada – *ed.*] told me the following:

Mumme Sarah brought Rebbetzin Chana from Moscow to Lemberg. She stayed in a modest room that was rented from a Jewish communist. It was highly unlikely that they would search the house of this sworn communist for an anti-Soviet element like her. The Rebbetzin did not leave the house because she was fearful, and Anash did not know she was there because it was kept quiet on account of the fear of informers. Only Mumme Sarah would visit her and bring her something to eat.

The Rebbetzin was weak from the harshness of life. The tensions and rigors of travel added to her malaise. Mumme Sarah noticed that the Rebbetzin ate very little and only uncooked foods and as a result her strength was nearly depleted. She tried to convince the Rebbetzin to eat something hot. The Rebbetzin explained that she was very stringent in the laws of kashrus and she would not eat cooked foods.

Mumme Sarah came up with an idea. She would bring a chicken along with a shochet. Then she would kasher the bird and cook it in front of the Rebbetzin. Would she be willing to eat this chicken? The Rebbetzin agreed.

Mumme Sarah went looking for a shochet. She inquired about several Lubavitcher shochtim who

were in Lvov at the time but they hadn't brought their slaughtering knives with them because they didn't want the extra danger. She finally found me, a young bachur of 18 who had just gotten certification and I had a smooth knife.

She told me that she wanted me to shecht a chicken and she gave me the address of where to go. Then she bought a chicken on the black market, hid it under her arm under her blouse and walked quickly to the building where the Rebbetzin was. This was no small matter since you could sit in jail for years for doing this. She prayed that it would make no noise. Mumme Sarah timed it so the landlords would be out at work and by the time they would return there would be neither chicken nor any signs thereof.

When I entered the house with Mumme Sarah, I saw a refined woman there and realized that she wasn't just anybody, but I still did not know who she was. Mumme Sara introduced me as the shochet. Kindly but firmly, the Rebbetzin interrogated me: Who was I? Who was my family? Where did I learn? Where had I gotten my ordination? She asked me about the knife and about shechita until Mumme Sarah interjected, "Why are you asking the bachur questions when he is a tamim and learned in Tomchei Tmimim!?"

The Rebbetzin said, "Aha, a tamim? My husband told me you can rely on a tamim."

I took the knife and sharpened it on a stone, with the Rebbetzin watching my every move. I slaughtered the chicken and did the mitzva of covering the blood, all within the confines her apartment. The Rebbetzin made sure that I cleaned up the blood from the floor so that no signs remained of what had been done. Then Mumme Sarah removed the feathers and began kashering the chicken when



R' Yisrael Neveler (right) in Poking

I figured that if he was going there anyway, perhaps he could help the Rebbetzin. He looked at me in incredulity and said, "Are you out of your mind? I am afraid for myself and my wife. How can you ask me to increase the danger? Do you want me to commit suicide?"

suddenly, in walked the landlord's father-in-law.

He looked at what was going on

and ... began to share his memories. He remembered how they kashered chickens in *his* parents' house. He

TO ERETZ YISRAEL OR TO NEW YORK?

Often, the Rebbetzin said to my father while in Peking that she planned on traveling to Eretz Yisrael. The following telegrams prove this. However, she apparently changed her mind after she met with the Rebbe.

The two telegrams are from the Rebbe Rayatz, one from Yud Shevat, 1946, before the Chassidim planned on leaving and the Rebbetzin was still in Alma Ata, and the other one from 22 Cheshvan, 1946, when the Rebbetzin was already in Peking.

January 16, 1946

Rabbi Eliezerov, Yerushalayim

I wired a memo to Chief Rabbi Herzog regarding his upcoming trip. Please try to also visit Rabbi Herzog together with Rabbi Havlin to give him my blessing as well as my request to arrange a visa for my mechutenes [relative by marriage], Rebbetzin Chana bas Meir Schneersohn. She lives in Alma Ata, Uzbek SSR, Blvd 9, #16. If he visits Russia perhaps he can try and get an exit visa for her. I believe that she once had a visa through Kollel Chabad. Please send me a telegram with all the information regarding her, her birthday etc.

With blessing,

Rabbi Schneersohn

November 16, 1946

Rabbi Havlin POB 5024 Yerushalayim

My mechutenes, Chana Schneersohn arrived in the refugee camp in Germany in the American zone. Please meet immediately with Chief Rabbi Herzog and do all possible to obtain a visa and better yet, to wire it to her through Rabbi Schneersohn, Paris, 10 Rue Dieu. Wire the results.

With blessing

Rabbi Yosef Schneersohn

But in the letter of 25 Iyar, 1947, that the Rebbe Rayatz wrote:

My son-in-law, R' Menachem Mendel, who went to visit my mechutenes, his honored mother, the Rebbetzin, and to bring her here, with Hashem's help ...

remembered his father going to the shul of a big rabbi in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, by the name of R' Levik who was a holy man, a tzaddik.

One time, he went on to reminisce, they had a halachic question about a plate and his father sent him to a rav. He asked the rav the question and the rav paskened that the plate was kosher. When he told his father, his father was not satisfied by this answer and sent him to ask R' Levik. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn, Rav of the city, paskened that the plate was treif and could not be used, and of course they listened to him.

R' Levik, said the landlord's father-in-law, was strong in his beliefs and he ruled the Rabbinate with an iron hand until they sent him into exile and I don't know what happened to him.

The Rebbetzin, not wanting to disclose her identity, shifted uneasily in her chair. She excused herself, saying she didn't feel well, and she went to her room and closed the door.

Later on, Mumme Sarah was gratified when she saw the Rebbetzin eating something cooked and warm which nourished her.

SHARING A ROOM WITH MY AUNT

The next link in the chain was with my parents and with my aunt, Chaya Mussia Nimotin, who was known to all as Mrs. Mussi. She cooked for the bachurim of the yeshiva with all her heart, soul, and might.

When Rebbetzin Chana arrived in the Peking DP camp with the second group of Chabad Chassidim a few weeks after my parents, they gave her a room to share with Mussia in a barrack near my parents. Mussia was also broken after her husband and young son died of starvation in the siege of

The Rebbetzin was weak... She tried to convince the Rebbetzin to eat something hot... Mumme Sarah came up with an idea. She would bring a chicken along with a shochet. Then she would kasher the bird and cook it in front of the Rebbetzin. Would she be willing to eat this chicken? The Rebbetzin agreed.



R' Refael Nimotin and his brother Yosef

I heard from my mother that when the Rebbetzin prepared for the trip from Poking to Paris to meet with her son, later to be Rebbe, she told my mother that she was worried about the trip and the reunion with her son. All she had were old, worn-out clothes and how could she appear before her son like that?

Leningrad, but she did her best to cheer up the Rebbetzin. She tried to bring guests to speak to the Rebbetzin and farbreng with her.

Mussia told me that she turned the quilted blanket that the Joint had given them into a sleeping bag by folding it over and stitching the two sides. The Rebbetzin would joke and say that she envied her because it was warm and she was young enough to squeeze into the blanket.

The Rebbetzin became very close with my aunt Mussia as well as with my mother, who turned their room into a “palace,” to the point that they even had bedspreads and curtains, an absolute rarity in the DP camp in Poking.

When she met my parents for the first time and found out who they were, she told them how my uncle

Yosef had greatly helped R' Levik and that he had the zechus of being the first to name his child for R' Levik.

When my mother invited the Rebbetzin to be her guest on Shabbos, and the Rebbetzin agreed, it was a great honor for my mother. From then on, the Rebbetzin graced their room on a regular basis throughout their stay in Poking and she illuminated the Shabbos table with her presence.

My sisters relate that they were warned to sit nicely and behave properly. They were told not to be wild and not to interject when the adults were speaking. But the Rebbetzin always addressed them and wanted them to take an active part in the Shabbos meals. She inquired about what was going on

with Anash and about the inside politics of the camp.

During the Shabbos meals she told about her husband and about her holy ancestors. My sisters felt in a tangible way how the Rebbetzin, with her heartwarming manner, aristocratic bearing, fine character, shining eyes and noble face, brought the atmosphere of the Shabbos Queen with her to their room in the DP camp.

A NEW DRESS FOR THE REBBETZIN

I heard from my mother that when the Rebbetzin prepared for the trip from Poking to Paris to meet with her son, later to be Rebbe, she told my mother that she was worried about the trip and the reunion with her son. All she had were old, worn-out clothes and how could she appear before her son like that?

My mother wanted to help the Rebbetzin, and she asked my father to try and get some fabric on his upcoming trip to Munich. My father, although it wasn't easy to find things like that after the war, brought a nice bolt of material that my mother and the Rebbetzin liked. My mother had good taste and she knew good quality merchandise when she saw it.

In order not to inconvenience the Rebbetzin, my mother brought the gentile dressmaker to her room. When the dress was ready, the Rebbetzin asked my mother, “What do you think? Will I find favor with my son?”

As far as I remember, I heard from my father that when the time came for the Rebbetzin to journey to Paris, the Chassidim hired a car with a driver to take her to the train station. All of Anash, rabbonim, mashpiim, roshei yeshivos, talmidim young and old, and all the wives and girls went out to see her off and receive her parting blessing. When the Rebbetzin got into the car, she looked like a queen.

A CHAIN OF BRACHOS

By Avrohom Ber

Translated by Michoel Leib Dobry

T'mimim on their Shabbos mivtzaim fall into a chain of little mishaps that providentially evolve into the biggest blessings of all for a long time friend of Chabad who thought it was 'all over.'

DISAPPOINTMENT

"Yossi, can you hurry up a little?" Shlomi urged his friend good-naturedly. "We left later than usual this Shabbos, and the setting sun is making me nervous. It doesn't look as if we're going to make it for Maariv."

The setting is the Williamsburg Bridge connecting Brooklyn and Manhattan. The date is Shabbos Parshas Beha'aloscha 5767, a few minutes before sundown.

Each Shabbos, the legions of T'mimim, *Chayolei Beis Dovid*, go out to gather Jews together and review a sicha of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach in local synagogues. On Shabbos afternoon, about an hour before the Rebbe's scheduled Mincha, you can already see dozens of bachurim readying themselves for the road, crowding around a Torah scroll to hear Krias HaTorah. As soon as the minyan ends, they burst out of 770, each one heading for "his" shtibel. This scene repeats itself a few hours later, when the

bachurim return from the shuls, except that all the crowding is in order to hear Havdala.

Unlike small towns like Tzfas, New York is vast so that it can take hours just to reach the shul in order to give over the sicha. The journey back is made by taxi, subway, or catching a friendly ride.

Our heroes, Yossi and Shlomi, are making their weekly trek to a distant synagogue with a congregation consisting primarily of Israeli émigrés of Moroccan descent, located on Manhattan's Upper West Side – a more than two hour walk from Beis Chayeinu. They would use the long journey to prepare the sicha that they would give over to the shul's congregants, meeting more Jews on the way, and engaging in light conversation.

They would come each Shabbos for the Seudas Shlishis at the shul, sit and sing with them, and one of the bachurim would review a sicha from the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. Throughout the year, Yosi and Shlomi were warmly

welcomed by the congregants and the community's rabbi. For example, on Purim and Chanukah, accompanied by several other T'mimim, they came to participate and contribute some joy and ruach to the community's holiday celebrations.

On that Shabbos Parshas Beha'aloscha, when our story took place, these two Israeli bachurim set out on their weekly journey a little later than usual. The sun setting over the bridge prompted them to pick up their pace.

While hurrying along, they suddenly heard someone calling out, "*Shabbat Shalom!*" The bachurim turned around in unison to return the greeting, and saw a pair of smiling Israelis standing before them.

The bachurim realized that this would be a great opportunity to publicize to yet more Jews about the coming Redemption and the presence of the Redeemer in whatever concise fashion their tight schedule afforded them. But this





couple wanted more. "Tell us something on the weekly Torah portion," the man asked. Shlomi quickly gave over the sicha that he had prepared for the shul... "And this is the task of Aharon – to light the inner flame that already exists within every Jew," he concluded. The man pondered for a moment and responded, "*Halevie*, if only it were so, that every Jew is good." With that, they parted company with a smile.

After a moment's contemplation, Yossi and Shlomi realized that this unexpected delay would make them very late. "Let's run," Shlomi said decisively, and they started sprinting up the street past all the passers-by.

After running for a few blocks, the floodgates of Heaven opened, and a powerful rainstorm ensued. Despite the downpour, the two kept up their rapid pace. Jogging on briskly, they clocked their progress according to city blocks. "We've finished the forties." "We're past 55th Street...60th..." And so it went.

"What was he doing in 770?" he asked, somewhat surprised. "He came to celebrate his son's bar-mitzvah by the Rebbe as hundreds of other boys do from all over the world," Shlomi replied. "What?" the man said in amazement. "You mean even today Jews come to 770 to make a bar-mitzvah? What is there to look for in 770 today, after...?"

Exhausted and drenched, Yosi and Shlomi finally arrived at the building where the synagogue was located. Summoning the last of their strength, they started up the steps when Yossi stopped Shlomi. "Listen," he said.

The familiar and beloved melody of Birkas HaMazon was transformed at once into one of the most

disappointing melodies there could possibly be. The congregants had just finished the Seudas Shlishis and were starting the Grace After Meals. After such a long trek and running for so many blocks, they were forced to pass up on their public review of the Rebbe's sicha. It was a frustrating disappointment, to say the least...

TODAY AS WELL?

The two went inside with hesitant steps, wishing they had skipped their weekly visit. They were stringent about davening Maariv in 770, and it didn't appear that there was any point in their staying here any longer. The only reason they decided to stay was that they got their subway fare back to Crown Heights each week from one of the congregants, so they didn't have much choice but to enter.

They surreptitiously settled into a couple of chairs off to the side, hoping not to be seen. If they waited eagerly every week for the moment they could return home to 770, it was especially true this week.

However, as was usually the case in this shul, Maariv took its time. The davening finally concluded, their benefactor contributed their weekly \$5 travel allowance, and the pair got up to leave. Just then, another congregant approached them: "Why didn't you speak today? I was waiting to hear you!"

This fellow (we shall call him Moshe) had a very strong connection with the Rebbe. He had visited the Rebbe dozens of times over many years, escorting prominent public figures as part of his role as one of the leading Israeli diplomats in New York. He continues to have a great appreciation of Lubavitch and was very pleased when the Chabad bachurim started coming each week. Having been out of the country for a few weeks, he was especially disappointed to have missed hearing them that Shabbos as well.

Shlomi decided to change the subject gently. He muttered something about the delays along the way and then asked Moshe, "And where have you been recently? We haven't seen you in synagogue."

"I was in Jordan," the man replied. "I had several business matters to arrange with our 'cousins'

as part of my diplomatic responsibilities. By the way, I have a contribution to give you. Can you come over to my house?"

As they walked together, chatting along the way, Shlomi suddenly made a connection in his mind, "You know, there's a Jew in 770 now who has business dealings in Jordan. Perhaps you know him?" *(NOTE: In America, when two Israelis meet and one tells the other, for example, that he is a native of Haifa, the other one jumps up and says, "Ah, then you must know Yaakov, the Tambour paint salesman." He also goes into shock when it turns out that his friend doesn't know this Yaakov.)*

"I can't say that I do. I don't know all the Israelis in Jordan. But what was he doing in 770?" he asked, somewhat surprised.

"He came to celebrate his son's bar-mitzvah in the shul of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, as hundreds of other boys do from all over the world," Shlomi replied.

"What?" the man said in amazement. "You mean even today Jews come to 770 to make a bar-mitzvah? What is there to look for in 770 today, after...?"

Yossi and Shlomi exchanged glances and launched into a flood of explanations. "The Rebbe is the leader... No one can replace him... He is the nasi of the seventh generation, the generation of the Redemption... 770 is Beis Moshiach... Gimel Tamuz doesn't change the fact... The Rebbe's presence is there, in 770... Even today, you can write to him and receive amazingly precise answers..."

It was specifically this last point that captured his attention. "You mentioned something about answers from the Rebbe today. How exactly do you get the answers?" Shlomi explained the concept to him briefly, and then noticed the skeptical look

in Moshe's eyes. In his diplomatic role, Moshe had merited to bring dozens of Jews to the Rebbe before Gimmel Tammuz, and was privileged to receive many personal answers from him. As a result, he had some difficulty accepting this "new method".

"You know what?" the tamim suggested in a flash of inspiration. "I'll tell you a story that involved some close acquaintances of mine, and I can testify first-hand to its validity."

SHLOMI'S STORY

The telephone rang in the home of an Anash family living in Rechovot. The mother picked up the receiver and was a bit surprised to hear the voice on the other end of the line. An even bigger surprise was the caller's request – forgiveness.

It all began several years earlier. The couple from Rechovot was acquainted with a young Torah scholar, Chassidish with good middos, who was at the stage in life of seeking a wife. They proposed a match with a girl named Rochel (not her real name), who had also come of age.

The shidduch was successful. The festive wedding meal was celebrated joyfully (albeit modestly) in the shul, as opposed to a formal wedding hall. During the wedding meal, the bride's grandfather presented the matchmaking couple with a generous gift of a large set of valuable *s'forim* that he himself had compiled on the Chumash.

Several years passed, and the young couple still didn't have any children. The doctors had no explanation. All of their good friends had already blessed them many times and the neighbors had already suggested a variety of *s'gulos*. All that remained for the family to do was to increase their own heartfelt prayers to the Creator that He should grant them *zara chaya*

After the mother gave her consent to ask for a bracha from the Rebbe MH”M, the ‘shadchanit’ went to wash her hands, and wrote to the Rebbe via “Igros Kodesh”. The answer she received caused her to jump out of her chair and rush to the copy machine in their house to make a photocopy of the letter.

v’kayama.

This was what motivated Rochel’s mother to call the *shadchanit* and ask forgiveness. “I am terribly sorry. We forgot to pay you for your services, and...and...” she said in a voice choking with tears, “perhaps this is the reason why my daughter has yet to have children. I beg you to pardon us, and perhaps in the merit of your forgiveness, we will be privileged to see grandchildren from her.”

“G-d forbid! We have nothing in our hearts against you,” the *‘shadchanit’* replied in all sincerity. “We have nothing against you whatsoever. Besides, we considered that beautiful set of books that we received at the wedding as payment enough. We are with you in your prayers that the young couple should be blessed with *zara chaya v’kayama* very soon *mamash!*”

“Thank you, thank you!” replied the sobbing voice on the other end of the phone. “I prayed that you would forgive easily. Maybe...” The *shadchanit* detected a note of hesitation in her voice. “If you would bless the couple, we will be privileged to see results even faster.”

“My blessings you have already. Beyond that,” the *shadchani’* suggested, “I can write to the Rebbe shlita, Melech HaMoshiach, on your behalf. Would you like that?”

After the mother agreed I should

ask for a bracha from the Rebbe MH”M, the *‘shadchanit’* went to wash her hands, and wrote to the Rebbe via “Igros Kodesh”. The answer she received caused her to jump out of her chair and rush to the copy machine in their house to make a photocopy of the letter.

She immediately called the mother back to tell her about the answer: “The Rebbe writes brachos for the birth of a son. This is literally a most explicit answer, and I am sending it to you now via fax. With G-d’s help, may you hear good news very soon.”

The mother thanked her profusely, and that’s where the conversation ended. Life went on and with this and that, the *shadchanit* forgot all about the episode until the phone rang on this issue once more. “Shalom, this is Rochel’s mother again. I just wanted to tell you that my daughter gave birth to a son today, in a good and auspicious hour. And you know what? Right now, I am holding in my hand that fax that you sent me with the copy of the Rebbe’s bracha. The date on the fax is exactly nine months ago!”

“AND YOU SHALL TELL YOUR CHILD”

This story left Moshe in shock. He was now convinced that the Rebbe he knew and loved so much

continues to respond to Jews in need, even today. He thought for a few seconds, and then asked if he too could write to the Rebbe and ask for his blessing. The bachurim said yes, and briefly explained to him what he has to do. He composed a letter in his house and gave it sealed to the two bachurim, who later placed it in a volume of “Igros Kodesh” in 770.

The Rebbe MH”M’s answer (Vol. 14, pg. 340) was a serious one: “...In reply to his undated letter, in which he writes that...they have not yet been blessed with children.

He has to make absolutely certain that his marriage did not cause an offense to the honor of any Jew, man or woman. That means that there was no prior agreement with another Jew, man or woman...And if there was an offense to the honor of another Jew, man or woman, there must be a request for forgiveness from them or at least in the presence of ten Jews...”

When he read him the letter over the phone, before he even had a chance to tell him that on the same page, the Rebbe writes in another letter: “...**Holy work in the spreading of chassidus is among the s’gulos for having children...**”, Shlomi could hear the sound of sobbing on the line. Moshe told him that he had written to the Rebbe MH”M asking for a bracha to merit the mitzvah of “V’shinantam l’vanecha – And you shall teach them to your son”. The problem was that despite his being around fifty years old, he still wasn’t married. “I once asked the Rebbe for a bracha to get married, and he replied ‘Very soon’, but I didn’t do enough on the matter – and it’s my fault,” he admitted. “Now I get a clear answer from the Rebbe that is obviously a direct instruction for me.”

Moshe explained that several years earlier he was dating someone,

but things broke off between them in a fashion similar to what the Rebbe discusses in his letter. Until receiving this answer, Moshe had never thought that he had to ask forgiveness. He now understood that this woman's lingering resentment was probably interfering with his success in finding an appropriate match.

That very week, Moshe gathered ten Jews together in the shul and requested forgiveness, in accordance with the instructions of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach.

On Shabbos Slichos, Moshe visited Beis Chayeinu – this time as the guest of Yosi and Shlomi. Despite Moshe's long-time acquaintance with Chabad businessmen, he had never spent an entire Shabbos in 770. "With all your self-sacrifice, you succeeded in moving me to the point that I decided to come here," he told the T'mimim. After a deeply inspirational Shabbos from start to finish, Moshe said to the T'mimim: "I was privileged to see the Rebbe and Chabad years ago, but I never dreamed that after Gimel Tamuz you could visit 770 and see the place full to overflowing with chassidim who have come for the High Holidays."

On that Motzaei Shabbos, he wrote once more to the Rebbe, and again was privileged to receive his holy blessing. "I could see clearly how impressed he was by the Shabbos experience," recalled Yossi. "When I was dancing and getting

pushed in the huge circles that formed in 770 on Motzaei Shabbos Slichos, I could see someone near me with a big white knitted kippa, standing out among all the black hats, sweating and pushing together with all the T'mimim. Naturally, this was Moshe."

Leading up to the Rosh Hashanah of chassidus, Yud-Tes Kislev 5768, Shlomi had thought up a new idea. "How about if we jump over to "our" shul and farbreng with the congregants there on Chag HaGeula and spread the teachings of chassidus?" he decided. "We can take advantage of the fact that Yud-Tes Kislev comes out on a Thursday, and go over there on Friday night, Motzaei Chaf Kislev." That Friday, after the T'mimim finished their mivtzaim route, they darted in the direction of the subway trains heading away from 770, towards Manhattan's Upper West Side.

After davening Mincha and Maariv in the home of the local shliach, they marched towards the synagogue, where dozens of Israelis were partaking in the Shabbos meal. When they arrived, there was a big surprise waiting for them. As soon as he saw them, Moshe approached the bachurim and made a happy announcement: "Baruch Hashem, I'm engaged to be married!"

Six months after the Rebbe's bracha, thirty years of disappointment had simply vanished. The undisguised expression of sheer joy on his face portrayed the Rebbe's

bracha more than anything else.

The wedding took place in Eretz Yisroel with great pomp and splendor. One of the most prominent and respected rabbanim in the world today was honored with performing the marriage ceremony. Hundreds of friends and relatives came to wish "Mazel Tov" to Moshe and his new bride. Many of them knew the hard years that Moshe had endured, and this made the joy even greater.

On the day of the wedding, when the new groom went to immerse himself in the mikveh before the chuppa, he saw by Divine Providence a volume of "Igros Kodesh" on the table near the entrance. Already familiar and experienced in the custom, Moshe opened the seifer and requested in his heart a bracha from the Rebbe for a good, happy, and prosperous life. The Rebbe MH"M's answer left him in shock once again: **"Mazel tov on the day of his wedding..."**

*

This past Tishrei, Moshe came to Beis Chayeinu again. This time, however, he had a specific purpose in mind: to thank the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. His wife was expecting a child.

Six months later, in Nissan, a healthy baby girl was born in a good and auspicious hour. The bracha of the Rebbe MH"M shlita had been fully realized, and on the Seider night this year, Moshe read the Hagada with his daughter on his lap. "And you shall tell your child."



SHIUR COMMITMENT

By S. Malachi

Beis Moshiach set out to investigate the secrets behind the success of the largest and longest running shiur in Kfar Chabad. We discovered a Chassid who devotes himself tirelessly so that one more Jew will study Chassidus, and a string of amazing answers in the Igros Kodesh.

If you chance upon the Yisrael Aryeh Leib shul in Kfar Chabad on a Monday or Wednesday evening around ten o'clock, you will see a heartwarming sight. Dozens of men listening to Chassidus, sitting side by side – working men, elder Chassidim, young married men, and even Chassidim and mekuravim from nearby cities. They are all focused attentively on the maggid shiur, Rabbi Yeshaya Goldberg, one of the rabbis in yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim in Ramat Aviv.

This is the 11th year of this successful shiur, which is in its third round in the study of Tanya. There is something special about this shiur that gets people out of their homes late in the evening, to forego family simchas and other events, all in order to listen to *divrei Elokim chayim*. In addition to the core group, there is a large pool of people

who attend the shiur when they are able to. The shiurim are delivered in a way that even those who aren't "regulars" can understand and enjoy.

THE REBBE'S RESPONSE

It all began over ten years ago with a Chassidus shiur given by Rabbi Leima Wilhelm in the Yisrael Aryeh Leib shul in Kfar Chabad. R' Yankel Kenig, a young resident of the kfar, began attending the shiur and observed that the number of participants was dwindling. It reached a point where R' Yankel went to the shiur, sat down facing the magid shiur, and the two learned alone.

R' Yankel enjoyed the shiur but knew that if he didn't do something, the shiur was over. He decided to work on getting people to join, not realizing that he was beginning a

life's project. The beginning wasn't easy but R' Yankel is both dedicated and persistent and he isn't embarrassed to nudge people.

"At home they still remind me of the day I returned happily and said that ten people had joined," he says with a smile. In Elul, R' Wilhelm suggested switching the topic of the shiur to Igeres Ha'Teshuva in Tanya and since then, it became a Tanya shiur.

Two years went by and the shiur had thirty participants, but R' Yankel wasn't satisfied. He continued working on bringing more and more people to the shiur. When he goes to daven, his wife knows when he left but not when he will return because he uses every encounter to urge people to attend.

On Monday, after spending an hour and a half in shul talking to people, persuading them to join the



shiur, R' Yankel decided to talk to the Rebbe. Since Gimel Tammuz R' Yankel doesn't write to the Rebbe but rather speaks to him as a son to his father, and then he opens a volume of the Igros Kodesh to see what the Rebbe's response is.

He stood before the bookcase in his house and said, "A bracha for more participants in the Tanya shiur, and Moshiach should come immediately." He opened volume 11 to page 236 and began reading, "I just received your letter of Monday." So far so good.

He kept reading and saw expressions that are not typical of Igros Kodesh: "I have rushed to respond ... because it's a Biblical mitzva to ask for length of days and good years and since we are obligated in this certainly this is good not only materially but also spiritually, and this shlichus to bring the request to the holy gravesite of the Rebbe, my father-in-law, I accept willingly and joyously ..."

The Rebbe goes on to relate the yearning for the coming of Moshiach and wishes: "... and you should have length of days and years with goodness and pleasantness, together with your wife, and spread inyanei Chassidus ... in your pure camp, for then, as it is explained in Tanya" ... the letter ends with the words, "surely you will share the contents [of the letter] with the many, and the merit of the many depends on you."

ASKING FOR LONG LIFE

R' Yankel read the letter again and again, trying to understand what the Rebbe meant. The letter was clearly about spreading Chassidus in our pure camp and even mentioned Tanya, but what was the shlichus that the Rebbe accepted "willingly and joyously?" And what was that about the merit of many depending on him? R' Yankel saw this as a directive to ask for a bracha in

public for long life.

That evening, after the shiur, he asked to speak. He first spoke about the answer he opened to, "it's a Biblical mitzva to ask for length of days" and he prefaced this by saying, "The Rebbe did not tell us how to write with the Igros Kodesh, but we see that thousands of Jews receive his brachos through the Igros Kodesh, each in his way. Usually people write a letter and put it into the volume, but I verbalize my request and say Yechi."

Everybody looked at R' Yankel as he continued, "In the merit of this Tanya shiur, may it be a bracha for all residents of Kfar Chabad for length of days and good years, with children, health, and ample parnassa."

He opened the volume he was holding, the same volume 11, and this time opened to page 208. He read the first lines out loud, "Thank you for the pleasure you caused by the detailed news of the expansion of Oholei Yosef Yitzchok in Melbourne and the expansion of its borders with students, and of course you should also try to increase the number of students, for in this is also dependent the increase in quality ... and surely the other men participate in this, according to their ability ... fortunate is their lot. Obviously, you can give over to each one of the organizers and participants my bracha and may it be the Will that they add in their holy involvement."

It felt like an electric current passed through the air. Everyone present felt that the blessing was addressed to them. R' Yankel pointed out that he had also received a response to his request of the morning for more participants. The final lines of the letter were familiar to him; they were identical to the final lines of the first letter: "surely you will share the contents [of the letter] with the many, and the merit of the many depends on you." Once

again, he had received another instruction to publicize this.

DOUBLE THE STRENGTH

Another two years went by. The shiur grew and inexplicably, so did R' Yankel's zeal. He hung up flyers and spoke with people.

Rabbi Wilhelm, who gave the shiur, was called to shlichus in Russia. R' Yankel worried about the shiur. People who meant well told him he wouldn't find a maggid shiur like R' Lima. Indeed, it isn't easy to find a good Tanya teacher, someone who can explain the "Written Torah" of Chassidus, and what's a shiur without a maggid shiur?

R' Yankel asked the Rebbe for a bracha that the shiur continue and grow and took a volume of Igros Kodesh at random from the shelf. He opened to the familiar words, "it's a Biblical mitzva to ask for length of days and good years ... and spread inyanei Chassidus ..." in volume 11, page 236.

This time, he knew what to do. He asked that the shiur be a zechus for all the residents of Kfar Chabad and a zechus for those who participated in the shiur. He took a volume from the other side of the shelf and began to read, "you should also try to increase the number of students ... obviously, you can give over to each one of the organizers and participants, my bracha ..."

R' Yankel was flabbergasted. Could this be? First he had opened to the letter he had opened to two years before and now he had opened to the second letter he had opened to two years before! But both letters had been in the same volume and he had just put volume 11 back on the other end of the shelf? He examined the spine and discovered an amazing thing, that this set had two copies of volume 11, so he had taken one volume from one end of the shelf and the other, identical volume from the other end.

FOR THE THIRD TIME!

The new maggid shiur, Rabbi Yeshaya Goldberg, gives the Tanya classes with a combination of warmth, clear explanations, and vast knowledge. The years go by and the people change but the number of participants continues to grow.

R' Yankel still remembers the letter he opened to in the Igros Kodesh when the shiur was in its infancy, when he asked for a bracha for fifty participants for the fifty years of the Rebbe's nesius. One line in the answer caught his attention, "a candle for one is a candle for a hundred" – he understood from this that the maggid shiur who sat and learned with him alone could learn with a hundred people.

There are people who attend regularly and those who show up once a week or once a month. At every shiur there are dozens of people and the number is over 100 by now. At one shiur, someone told Yankel that he had counted 99 people. "If that's the case," said R' Yankel, "over 100 people participated today because some people heard the shiur out the window." The Rebbe's bracha had been fulfilled.

The shiur reached the ten year milestone and they got up to chapter 32 for the third time. They were preparing for Mattan Torah and this chapter is about Ahavas Yisrael which includes the entire Torah. R' Yankel decided to do some advertising. If people respond coldly or disparagingly it doesn't faze him; he continues to invite whoever he meets.

After days of effort, he asked the Rebbe for a bracha. In the early afternoon he went to the Yisrael Aryeh Leib shul where the shiurim are given and asked for a bracha for the success of the shiur and the participants. He took a volume of Igros Kodesh at random and ... opened to the same page 208 in



Rabbi Yeshaya Goldberg, the maggid shiur

A year later, the happy husband had become the father of triplets and he called R' Yankel to the triple bris. "You don't invite to a bris," remonstrated R' Yankel, but the ecstatic father said, "You have to come," feeling that he owed the organizer of the shiur for his role in his bracha.

volume 11, "you should also try to increase the number of students ... obviously, you can give over to each one of the organizers and participants, my bracha ..." For the third time the Rebbe was giving him the same bracha for the same shiur.

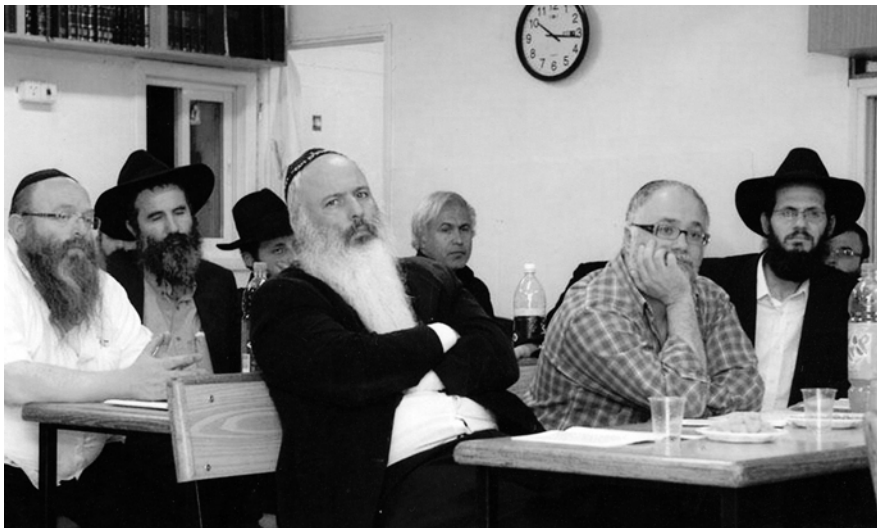
MIRACLES ABOUND

The words of the Rebbe's bracha, "to give merit to many" and "to give each one my bracha" are his guiding lights. When he hears about someone who needs a *yeshua*, he invites him to the shiur. After all, "good years" includes everything, whatever you need for them to be good: children, health, parnassa. He tells them, "Even if you can't attend

every time, try to come once in a while," because in the Rebbe's bracha it refers both to "participants" as well as "organizers."

R.P., who lives in Elad, waited for children for years. His wife worked with Mrs. Kenig and heard from her about the brachos for those who attended the shiur. She asked that her husband be invited. R' Yankel called and her husband made the effort and went to the shiur a few times.

A year later, the happy husband had become the father of triplets and he called R' Yankel to the triple bris. "You don't invite to a bris," remonstrated R' Yankel, but the ecstatic father said, "You have to



Participants in the shiur (photograph by Meir Dahan)

R' Yankel waits expectantly for the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH"m. At the same time, he makes sure that the shiur is for everyone, that it's a shiur where everyone feels comfortable no matter their views or how much chayus they have in "Yechi."

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A resident of Kfar Chabad attested that as soon as he started attending the shiur, his wife became pregnant and a Chassid who was very sick recovered after he started coming to the shiur.

CHINUCH AND HAFATZA

Kfar Chabad, the capital of Chassidus in Eretz Yisrael, has numerous shiurim in Nigleh, Chassidus and Halacha, but there is nothing like this Tanya shiur as far as the number of participants and length of existence. It isn't a shiur like all the other shiurim but is definitely "the shiur" of Kfar Chabad, with most residents

attending it at some point. The shiur has a reputation even in nearby cities and some participants come from outside the kfar on a regular basis. Mekuravim and visitors to the kfar also drop in.

When R' Yankel talks about the shiur, he recalls the first yechidus he and his wife had about a month after their wedding, in Tishrei, 5740. The Rebbe spoke about chinuch and hafatzas ha'maayonos. A short time later, Rabbi Eliezer Tzeitlin asked R' Yankel to be a melamed in Tzfas.

While in Crown Heights, R' Yankel wrote to the Rebbe about the offer that seemed to fit what the Rebbe said to him in yechidus about chinuch. R' Tzeitlin also submitted a note to the Rebbe in which he asked that R' Kenig be a melamed in

Tzfas. He asked R' Groner to put the note on the top of the pile due to the timeliness of the matter, yet no response from the Rebbe was forthcoming.

R' Yankel wrote to the Rebbe, saying that he would continue as planned and learn in Kollel in Kfar Chabad. Two years later, when he was offered a teaching job in Bnei Brak, he thought this fit with what the Rebbe told him in yechidus and he accepted the job for five years. He later realized that if he had accepted the job in Tzfas, it's not likely he would be promoting the shiur in Kfar Chabad.

SECRET TO SUCCESS

When you ask R' Yankel about the secret to success, he replies, "In order to successfully sustain a shiur so that it grows, you need a powerful kevius (commitment to regularity), persistence, and devotion. The natural way of things is that shiurim shrink; some of the people stop attending for various reasons, people's schedules change etc. You have to constantly work on bringing in new people.

"You also need to ask Hashem for the right maggid shiur, someone who can teach the material and attract a crowd, for the lecturer is the most important component in the success of a shiur.

"Boruch Hashem, we have a terrific maggid shiur. I don't know if he'll be happy if you write this but even before he began giving the shiur, R' Goldberg knew all 53 chapters of Tanya by heart. The shiurim that he gives flow with easy-to-listen to explanations that are all, of course, based on sources (we aren't make new commentaries on Tanya). This is the second cycle that he is teaching but he teaches it with gusto, as though it's the first time."

R' Yankel takes the approach of personally inviting people to the shiur. Though this isn't easy and

doesn't always earn him respect, it's the most effective method to gain participants. In light of previous experience, he doesn't use flyers or text messaging much.

"The shiur has to be important enough to people that they make their own reminders if they need them. You can't spoon-feed it all. They also have to make an effort."

R' Yankel gets people intrigued about the shiur by repeating a vort that was said at the shiur, an explanation from the Rebbe, a mashal, something that will motivate people to want to hear more. He is alert to what's going on and takes advantage of every change for the betterment of the shiur. If the simcha season is over, it's time to attend the shiur. Is it bein ha'zemanim? Bachurim can attend the shiur.

One time, when he invited the mashpia, R' Velvel Kessleman, he said apologetically (knowing that the mashpia got up at five in the morning), "I don't know if you can make it, if it's not too late ..."

R' Velvel immediately responded, "Don't make cheshbonos for me or the participants. You have to demand that people show up." And R' Velvel showed up.

Another important aspect is the personal connection and welcome, the attention given to veteran participants and newcomers. If someone new attends, R' Yankel will warmly welcome him and show him to a comfortable place. There are light refreshments on the table. When the animal soul is

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

-Hafatzas ha'maayanos should be done even in a flourishing Chabad community

-Persistence and consistency on the part of one person can accomplish a tremendous amount, turning a little shiur into a model of success for others to copy.

-When you want to convince someone to attend a shiur, flyers and advertising are no substitute for a personal invitation. If necessary, invite them again and again.

comfortable, the G-dly soul is more receptive.

GROWING WITH THE SHIUR

R' Yankel is certainly a role model for devotion to a shiur. He has hardly missed a shiur in years. A simcha that takes place on Monday or Wednesday is declined in favor of the shiur and his relatives and friends know this. He will only attend weddings of close relatives such as nieces and nephews and even then, only after he has set up the shiur and appointed a substitute to take charge.

When the father in a family is that devoted to a shiur, the entire house feels it. The childhood memories of the Kenig children include the Tanya shiur. One of the little children once said, "Abba, when

there are a lot of people at the shiur, *you're* happy; when there are fewer people, *we* are happy." He was referring to the leftover refreshments that his father brought home after the shiur.

In a house like this, the children grow up with a chayus for learning Chassidus and they internalize Chassidic priorities. When they behaved nicely, they got a special prize — going to Abba's shiur.

R' Kenig cares about one thing: that more people attend the shiur. One of his sons said, "I remember asking my father, 'what about your work? What about writing STaM?' And he answered, 'We will make our efforts to bring people to the Chassidus shiur and Hashem will repay us with Chassidishe nachas and with everything we need.' That's the positive attitude we were raised with; not an atmosphere of earning a little more money but an atmosphere of how to bring another person to a shiur."

R' Yankel waits expectantly for the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH"m. At the same time, he makes sure that the shiur is for everyone, that it's a shiur where everyone feels comfortable no matter their views or how much chayus they have in "Yechi." The connection that Tanya has to Geula extends far beyond Moshiach's answer to the Baal Shem Tov. R' Goldberg always emphasizes the points connected to Geula, such as the precision in the Alter Rebbe's wording that alludes to inyanei Moshiach and Geula, may it happen immediately.

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WHY DON'T WE READ EICHA FROM A MEGILLA?

In these days of Bein HaMeitzarim, as our yearning for Geula increases, we whet our spiritual appetites with this compilation of thoughts and sayings on anticipating the Redemption



LISTENING AND SEEING

The Rebbe Rayatz once said, "Moshiach is already close. Those with good hearing and good vision hear his voice and see him. (*Sefer HaSichos* 5696)

LIFT YOUR EYES AND SEE

One of the Chassidim of R' Avrohom Yaakov of Sadigora asked him, "Why did gedolim and tzaddikim give dates for Moshiach's coming when those times have passed, and yet the Geula did not come?"

The Rebbe answered, "My father zt"l (Rabbi Yisroel of Ruzhin) once said on the Gemara, *kalu kol ha'kitzin* (all endpoints for galus have been passed), that just as the

Shechina departed from the Mikdash in ten stages, its return will also be gradual. Every keitz that was announced brought the Shechina down further into the world. Now the light of the Geula is in the lowest heaven which is called *vilon*. But I say that the light of Geula has already spread around us and is level with our heads but we don't notice it because our heads are bowed from the pressure of galus. May Hashem lift our heads up so we can see the Geula with our own eyes!" (*Sippurim Chadashim*)

WHERE IS THE MONEY?

Chazal say, "Ben Dovid [Moshiach] will not come until coins are gone from [people's] pocket." Rabbi Yitzchok Meir of Ger, the *Chidushei HaRim* said, "A pocket is

the proper place for coins. The phrase "coins are gone from people's pockets" refers to money being put in places that are inappropriate, i.e. with people who don't use the money for tzedaka and good deeds. Then Ben Dovid will come." (*Chidushei HaRim*)

THE KETZ

While sitting with his Chassidim, Rabbi Elimelech of Grodzinsk said: At the beginning of parshas VaYechi, Rashi explains, "Why is this parsha closed? Since Yaakov Avinu died, the eyes of Israel were closed from the suffering of servitude. Another thing, Yaakov sought to reveal the end of time [Moshiach] to his sons and it was hidden from him."

This is surprising. Was Yaakov's request not fulfilled? He went on to

The light of Geula has already spread around us and is level with our heads but we don't notice it because our heads are bowed from the pressure of galus. May Hashem lift our heads up so we can see the Geula with our own eyes!

explain that the fact that Yaakov sought to reveal the keitz and it was hidden from him was actually a hint to the keitz.

The Chassidim did not understand this and the tzaddik explained: When we see that troubles increase to the point that Torah is closed off and study halls and yeshivos are locked and it seems as though all endpoints have been passed, we should be confident that the keitz is approaching. (*Be'er Ha'Chassidus*)

THEY ARE WORTHY OF REDEMPTION

"If Yisroel has nothing but hope, they are worthy of the Geula in the merit of their hope." (*Midrash Tehillim, Yalkut Shimoni*)

ESTHER VERSUS EICHA

The *Levush* writes:

All my days I wondered. Since we have the custom of reading Eicha in public and saying a bracha over it, why don't we write it on parchment as a book unto itself as the din is for all sefarim that are used to enable the congregation to fulfill its obligation?

Perhaps this was the practice because scribes did not write them since we wait for Moshiach every day and hope that Tisha B'Av will be transformed into a Yom Tov. If they would write Megillas Eicha it would seem they despaired of the Geula, whereas this does not apply to Megillas Esther because the days of Purim will not be annulled. So we

have no choice but to read Eicha from Chumashim.

MERIT OF THE BELIEVERS

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk wrote: The merit of those who believe in the coming of Moshiach and who await him every day will stand by us to break the power of klipa and dinim (judgments) and to erect the Beis HaMikdash speedily in our day. (*Noam Elimelech, VaYishlach*)

GROWTH BECAUSE OF HOPE

Rabbi Chaim Dovid Azulai, the Chida, explains:

In Shmoneh Esrei it says, "Speedily cause the scion of Dovid Your servant to flourish ... for we hope for Your salvation all day." We ask Hashem to bring Moshiach and even if it seems we don't have the merits for this, it should still "flourish." Why? Because we hope for Your salvation all day, i.e. in the merit of the hope and expectation of the Jewish people, we deserve to be redeemed. (*Midbar K'demos*)

YEARNING

Rabbi Shlomo of Radomsk writes:

What does yearning for Geula entail? A person should be pained and pray over the exile of the Shechina, for Hashem's name is desecrated by the wicked and we need to look forward to Hashem's

speedy salvation. When a person spends his life with this thought, he arouses the inyan of Geula.

If all Yisroel would anticipate the Geula and repent for their sins with all their hearts and souls, they would truly arouse the keitz, the Geula. (*Tiferes Shlomo, Acharei*)

KNOW THE ENEMY

The Admo"r of Komarna wrote about how much a person should yearn for the Geula:

Just as a lookout constantly keeps watch lest the enemy come, so too l'havdil, we need to constantly search with our eyes and hearts; perhaps Moshiach will come at this very moment. (*Heichal Bracha, Bereishis*)

PROPER PREPARATIONS

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev asked:

Why is it that when the Tana, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked Moshiach, "When are you coming sir?" Moshiach answered, "Today... if you heed His voice." For it says, "Behold, I am sending Eliyahu Ha'Navi to you **before** the coming of the great and fearsome day of Hashem?" From this it seems Moshiach can't come until Eliyahu comes first. Also, why does Eliyahu need to come before the Geula?

When R' Levi Yitzchok saw that nobody present was offering to answer, he said:

The reason is that people are immersed in their day-to-day concerns and are preoccupied with worldly vanities. Eliyahu has to come before the coming of Moshiach in order to arouse them all from their preoccupations so they can prepare to greet Moshiach.

"Today, if you heed His voice" means if we arouse ourselves on our own, then Moshiach can come today, immediately, without Eliyahu having to arouse us beforehand. (*Sifsei Tzaddikim, Beha'aloscha*)

LIVING THE DREAM OF THE MIKDASH

By Nosson Avrohom

Photographs by Meir Turgeman

*Michoel Osnis sees his work for the Beis HaMikdash as a life mission and he has invested plenty of energy and money into it. He studied all the laws and lore, then built a workshop in his yard. He's been busy building models of the Mikdash and Mishkan ever since. * An eye-opener for the Three Weeks – may we see the real thing immediately!*

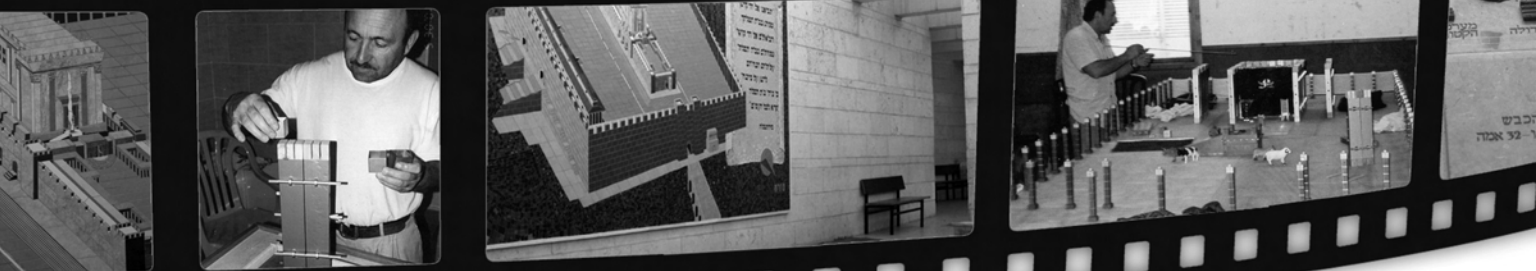
Michoel Osnis, of Kedumim in the Shomron, is an artist who constructs models of the Beis HaMikdash. When you talk to him, you can't help but be amazed by his enthusiasm for everything connected with the Beis HaMikdash and the Geula. He dreams about it, thinks about it, breathes it, and considers it not only his mission but the core of his life.

"On a day that I don't go to my workshop and add a stone to a model or do some chiseling, I don't feel well," he says.

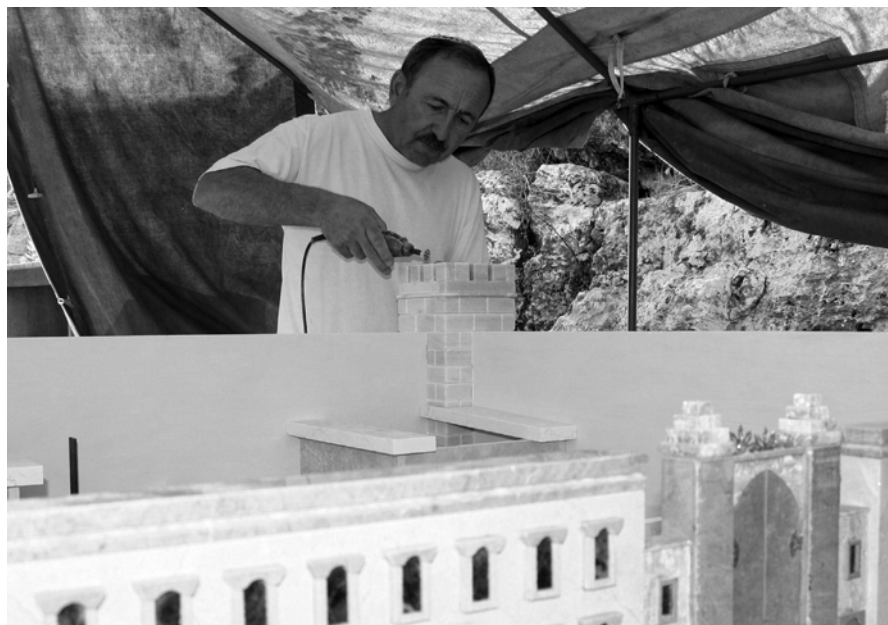
For thirteen years now, Michoel has been building these models. The surprising thing is that throughout this period of time, he only built seven models. The reason for this has to do with the tremendous seriousness with which he approaches the building of each one.

"It must be as precise as possible with the measurements, rooms, and chambers. The only difference between one model and another is how I decorate it."

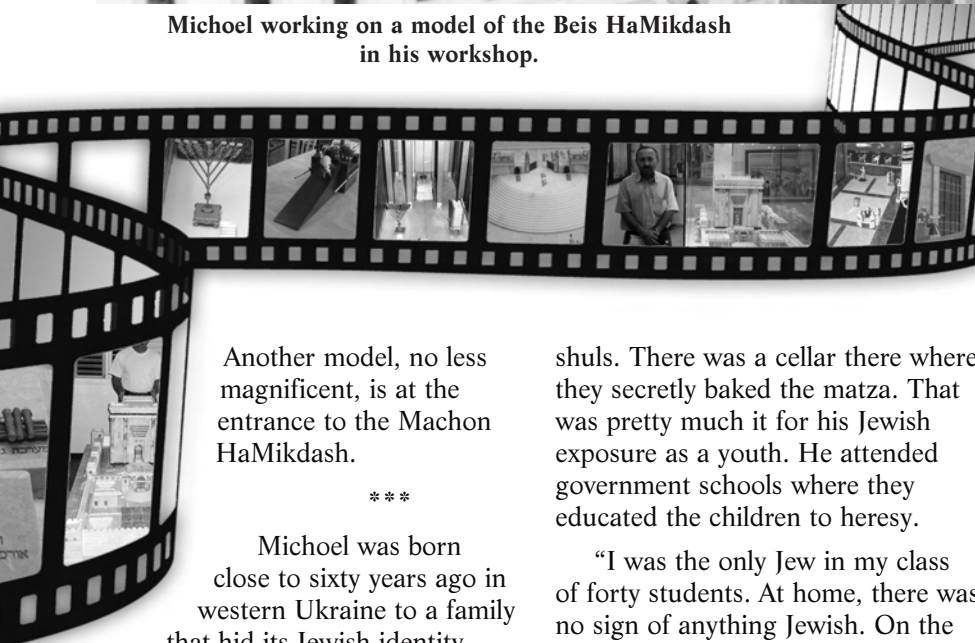
It takes eight months to a year for each model. When I spoke to him, he was working meticulously on a special model of the Mikdash that will be placed on the roof of Aish Ha'Torah next to the Kosel, about as close as one can physically get to the Mikdash.



“I wasn’t just secular; I was an atheist. In the Soviet schools they taught us not to believe in anything. Like any good Soviet student, I was convinced that all religion was pure nonsense.”



Michoel working on a model of the Beis HaMikdash in his workshop.



Another model, no less magnificent, is at the entrance to the Machon HaMikdash.

Michoel was born close to sixty years ago in western Ukraine to a family that hid its Jewish identity.

One of his hazy childhood memories is of his maternal grandfather going to Moscow in order to get matza from one of the

shuls. There was a cellar there where they secretly baked the matza. That was pretty much it for his Jewish exposure as a youth. He attended government schools where they educated the children to heresy.

“I was the only Jew in my class of forty students. At home, there was no sign of anything Jewish. On the contrary, my parents tried to forget that we were Jews. The only person from whom I got any information about Judaism was my grandfather,

who died in 1966, when I was sixteen.”

When he got older he began working as a construction engineer. He married at the age of 24 and had to confront his identity because her family observed the holidays. They celebrated secretly so nobody would see them.

Michoel was not circumcised as a child and only had his bris years after he arrived in Eretz Yisrael.

“I always felt something was missing. When I was thirteen, my grandfather took me to a corner of the house and told me that he had to make me a bar mitzva but it was dangerous. I asked him what it is and he said, ‘The day will come when you will know.’ That is another strong memory that I have from that dark time.”

Michoel’s father was a member of the communist party. His paternal grandfather was a senior figure in the party, one of the men who surrounded Lenin and one of those who admired him with blind devotion.

“Perhaps this is what protected me when I was a child in class. Unlike other Jewish children, I didn’t experience any anti-Semitism. There were times the atmosphere was tense and I felt it was because I was Jewish, but I hardly ever suffered from my identity even though everyone knew about it.”

Being a Jew was a problem for Michoel and his family when they wanted to leave the Soviet Union in 1977 in the ‘Reunification of Families’ program. They were not allowed to leave “because of my brother-in-law who was a pilot and because of my work in the intelligence field.”

For more than twenty years Michoel and his wife fought against the Russian authorities to realize their dream of aliya. They did not



"I don't use cardboard. I make it out of stone and marble."

"In my dream I saw... that rays of light were shining from the windows, such as I had never seen before. It was a kind of palpable light that was life-giving. The light moved toward every direction and I felt as though the Mikdash was the center of the universe and from it, light went forth to the entire world. I felt that light was entering me too."

despair and the exhausting, protracted battle only made them more determined.

"I saw that people said, 'Next Year in Jerusalem,' but remained in exile." And yet, with all his love for

Eretz Yisrael, Michoel remained an atheist, at least in his own estimation.

"I wasn't just secular; I was an atheist. In the Soviet schools they taught us not to believe in anything.

Like any good Soviet student, I was convinced that all religion was pure nonsense."

In 5751/1991 he finally made aliya during one of the mass emigrations. Finally he was free and that awakened his thirst to know and learn about his Jewish tradition.

He first settled in Kfar Saba. He joined his brother in business, manufacturing sausages with an Eastern European flavor. They hoped for numerous customers from among the hundreds of thousands of new immigrants. Michoel made sure the factory was kosher according to the highest standards even though he did not understand the significance of this.

"I knew this was Eretz Yisrael and I had an inexplicable drive in me; I did what I could so as not to

sully Eretz Yisrael, the land of the Bible which I so wanted to learn about. Time constraints did not allow me to do so because I was the sole marketing person and I ran around the country every day.”

The business closed three years later. Although the quality of their products was good, the production was by hand and did not enable them to compete with the mass production of the big companies.

Michoel visited Kedumim because of a friendship that developed with one of the residents. He loved it and decided to move there.

“I felt that I had found Eretz Yisrael. When I lived in the city with all the hustle and bustle, there were times that I asked myself how it was different than living in a city in the Ukraine. What was it that motivated me to overcome the difficulties and make aliya, I asked myself? In Kedumim I found the answer.”

Until then, he had never heard of the Beis HaMikdash and did not know what it was. Although he had lived in Eretz Yisrael for years and had even moved to a yishuv with a religious orientation, he remained unfamiliar with this part of our history.

“My ignorance on the subject of the Mikdash ended when I paid a visit to Kfar Chabad to visit a Russian family that had emigrated to Eretz Yisrael many years earlier. They had just moved to their new home in a new neighborhood that was built in the kfar. During the visit I saw the children playing with Tanach cards. I liked the idea of a card game on Tanach.” Michoel noticed the cards spread out face up on the floor in the shape of a rainbow. He noticed a card with a menorah and knew what that was; he saw a pushka and knew what that was. Then he saw a card with a building on it.



Michoel with a model of the Aron and Keruvim.

“I looked at it but did not know what it was, though I felt attracted to it. I felt its power. It’s hard to explain the emotions that. I felt breathless. I wondered why the picture meant so much to me.

“I took the card and asked the children what it is. They laughed. I admitted to them that I didn’t know. ‘It’s the Beis HaMikdash,’ they said and they explained to me what it is. Their parents recommended

Josephus’ book, *Wars of the Jews*. I bought it that same day and read it eagerly.

“When I finished the book I felt as though I had been reborn. I felt that everything that had been until then was nothing and now I was a new person who had discovered his true essence.

“While still in the Ukraine under the communist boot, in a home that was loyal to the government, I felt a

“When I woke up that morning I felt all my muscles aching. For two days I lay in bed and couldn’t go to work. The dream was so vivid that it fully preoccupied me. I felt I had been given a mission and I had to carry it out.”

desire to learn about the Roman period in Jewish history. I felt an enormous connection to it which cannot be rationally explained. This feeling increased when I came to Eretz Yisrael. I always wanted to delve into Jewish history and to study it and now Hashem was giving me an opportunity.”

After finishing the book, he decided to read Tanach and other books on Jewish history, especially those that dealt with the period of the first, second, and the soon-to-be built third Mikdash. At the same time, as a permanent resident of Kedumim, he took his turn at guard duty. He would sit in the “*butka*” (guard booth) for hours at a time and read.

“The word *botka* in Russian is a dog house,” he says laughingly, “and I would sit in that little guard-dog house and read Tanach. Nobody was happier than me. I felt that my neshama, the breath of life, was there. When I would go back home my wife would ask me where I was coming from and why I looked so radiant and I would smile.”

The guard post was located near the yeshiva and every morning the rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Ben Shachar, would greet Michoel and ask him how his day was going.

“Whenever I did not understand something in my learning, he would clarify it for me, and that’s how I made progress. One time I got up to the verse, ‘And they shall make for

Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in it,’ and I stopped. I wondered why there isn’t a Beis HaMikdash today when there is a command about it. Why didn’t we build it? Some time later the rav came by and he told me it was a complicated matter.”

About a half a year after his first visit to Kfar Chabad, where he first became acquainted with the concept of the Beis HaMikdash, and all his passionate and intensive study since then, Michoel had a dream that changed his life.

“I am not the type of person who has dreams per se. If I do dream, it’s a confusing jumble of things that vaporize as soon as I wake up. This dream was different; it was unforgettable with all its details. It was like watching a documentary film from beginning to end.

“In my dream I saw myself hovering somewhere and under me I saw a time line. The more I flew, the more years back in time I went. All around me it was dark. I noticed that there were another two hundred years left on the time line and it was all beginning to become clear. I was approaching a point that was the source of the light and I suddenly saw that it was the Beis HaMikdash. It was a beautiful building and I saw it all clearly, without people.

“In my dream I saw the Azara, the Ezras Nashim, the annexes and the chambers. While gazing upon the Beis HaMikdash in increasing wonder, I noticed that rays of light

were shining from the windows, such as I had never seen before. It was a kind of palpable light that was life-giving. The light moved toward every direction and I felt as though the Mikdash was the center of the universe and from it, light went forth to the entire world. I felt that light was entering me too. After a few moments I felt that I was moving forward on the timeline and was beginning to land.

“With all my might I tried to stop myself from landing and to continue floating. I saw the past, perhaps I will see the future, I thought to myself in the dream, but the downward pull was stronger than I was. I couldn’t raise my head and look forward. It was only after mighty effort that I was able, with difficulty, to do so and to see on the distant horizon a powerful light emanating from the second Beis HaMikdash and further on, from the third Beis HaMikdash, which was somewhat fuzzy. I was overcome with a feeling that the third Beis HaMikdash was imminent and it was moving in our direction.

“When I woke up that morning I felt all my muscles aching. For two days I lay in bed and couldn’t go to work. The dream was so vivid that it fully preoccupied me. I felt I had been given a mission and I had to carry it out. The mission is to raise awareness about the Beis HaMikdash,” Michoel declared.

“I never worked with my hands before; crafts were just not my thing. But I decided to take pieces of marble and try to build a Beis HaMikdash with them according to the measurements that I learned. To my surprise, it didn’t come out badly at all. I was ecstatic. I felt reborn. At first I thought of constructing a model out of cardboard and plastic but something made me reject this idea and I built a model out of marble and other authentic

materials, which makes it look magnificent.”

Michoel is religious now but thirteen years ago, even after his amazing dream, he still felt conflicted. He had many questions.

A few days after the dream, he went to Kiryat Malachi on business. On the narrow Ramle highway which was filled with traffic, he turned to G-d and asked him for a sign. “If something happens to me now and You save me from an accident, I will believe in You.”

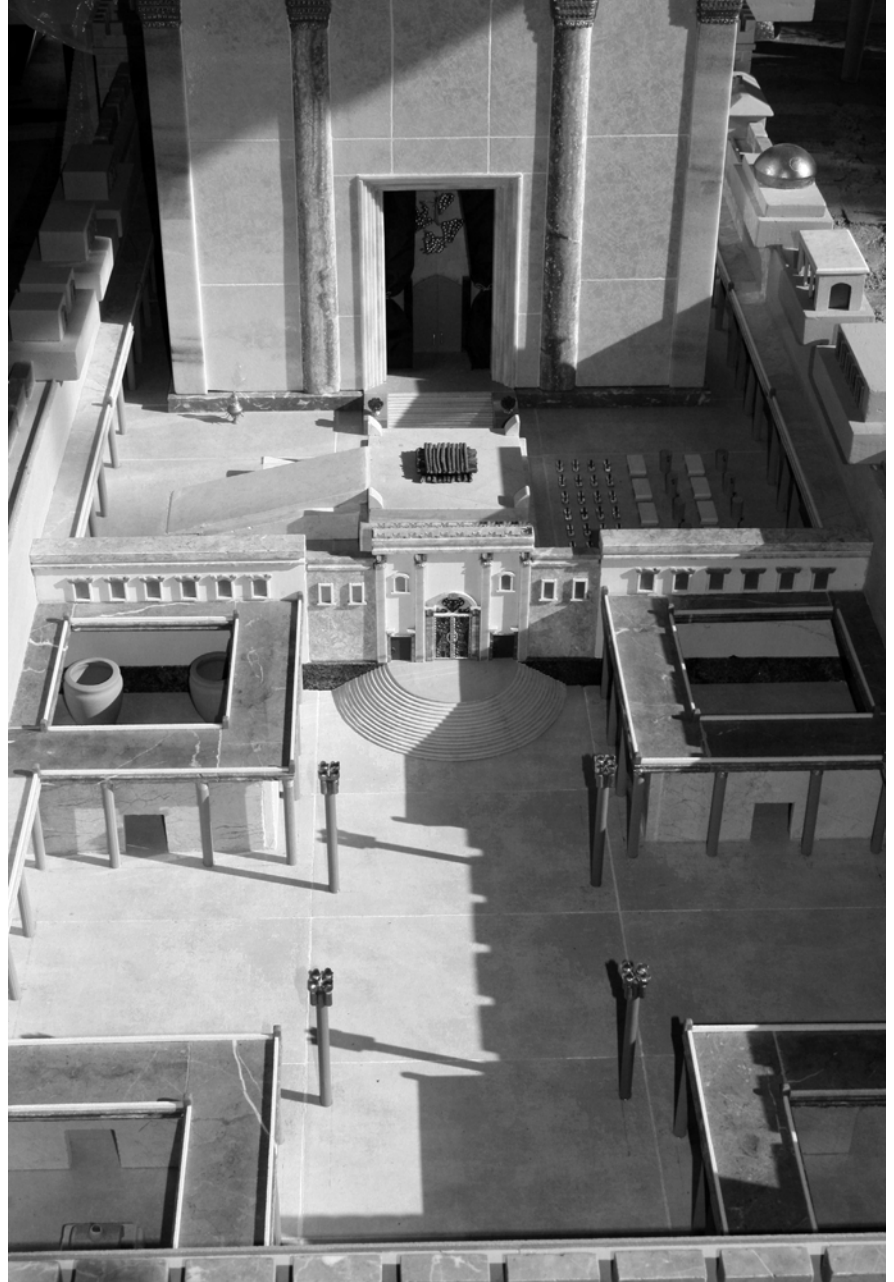
“Suddenly I felt an explosion and my car was thrown into the opposite lane of oncoming traffic. I closed my eyes and waited for the inevitable crash, but miraculously nothing happened. I opened my eyes and there wasn’t a single car. Just a moment before, there were plenty of cars but now there weren’t any. I quickly regained control and returned to my lane, which was surprisingly also devoid of traffic for the moment.”

It was only after Michoel managed to pull over that the usual heavy flow of traffic resumed. “I felt like it was the splitting of the sea, that Hashem had stopped the water until the Jewish people crossed. It was a mind-boggling miracle that I never thought could happen to me.”

Michoel is an intellectual, rational sort of person who is not inclined to imagine things. That same day he went to the shul on the yishuv to say the Ha’Gomel blessing.

“Ever since that incident I stopped vacillating and began keeping mitzvos. I left all my other activities and began working exclusively on the Mikdash.”

His big breakthrough in building models of the Mikdash happened one day as he walked by the home of Rabbi Moshe Asher who worked at



Machon HaMikdash at the time. He also lived in Kedumim and Michoel, who saw him and heard of his work, invited him to visit his workshop to see the model he had constructed.

He began to measure the model and within a few minutes he leaped up in excitement. He picked up the phone to call the director of Machon HaMikdash, R’ Yisrael Ariel, and said to him, “I am looking at an amazing model. You must come and see it for yourself.”

R’ Ariel was there the next day.

“He measured it and was extremely impressed by the

precision. He asked me whether I had learned the tractate Middos. I told him that this was the first time I was hearing about this tractate and I told him about the visit to Kfar Chabad and the dream. He asked me to come to the Machon HaMikdash and to build a model like this for them.

“I worked for eight months for him until I built the model which is at the Machon HaMikdash till this day. People ask me how I became an artist. The truth is that I was never an artist. I wasn’t attracted to it and didn’t see my future in it, but I feel that along with the dream, I received

One time a group of eight years olds came. I told them about the Beis HaMikdash and they looked at it. There was one boy who constantly tried to touch the model even when I told him it's not allowed. I asked him why he so badly wanted to touch it when it was only a model. He said, 'It's not a model. It's a small, real Beis HaMikdash. Just as I will grow bigger, so will it.'

the ability to do this. I give my all to raise awareness of the Beis HaMikdash.”

Michoel, seeing this as his mission, put all his energy and money into it. He studied the tractate Middos and everything associated with the Mikdash and Mishkan. He built the workshop in the yard of his house and he devotes days and nights to building models of the Mikdash and Mishkan.

By day he works on the Beis HaMikdash and by night he goes to work as a security guard.

“The Mishkan is my great love. It's ingenious; it contains everything – physics, architecture, mathematics, everything.” Michoel is apparently the only artist around who builds educational models of the Beis HaMikdash.

“There are architects who make models but I found many mistakes in them. This is Torah and you can't make mistakes. I don't make toys. I make it out of authentic materials: silver sockets, copper sockets; from what I've seen. There are students who study about the Beis HaMikdash in school from cardboard models.

“They study it, then take it apart, throw the cardboard on the floor and step on it unintentionally. If it's made out of cardboard, it's not real. My models are made out of stone and marble. The students see what the Mikdash is really about,” he enthuses.

Groups of children visit his workshop, as well as adults who want to see and learn about the Mikdash. He patiently explains it to all of them.

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Although there is great interest in the Beis HaMikdash and the Geula, Michoel is not satisfied.

“I sent thousands of letters to yeshivos and schools in Eretz Yisrael and abroad in which I told them

what I do. I suggested that they have models of the Beis HaMikdash since there is nothing better than being able to actually see something. It's very important and it gets these ideas through to people in a tangible way.

“Out of nearly 3000 letters, only four shlichim of the Rebbe from overseas responded. It's nice, but not enough. For the past two years there has been an expensive model in New York. I am not seeking to make a business out of it; I just want to cover my expenses.

“I am disappointed that there isn't a great interest in the Beis HaMikdash. I have wondered why this is so. I found an answer in Tanach. I read about Koresh (Cyrus) who freed the exiles from Bavel and provided the money and all the vessels of the first Beis HaMikdash, and sent them to rebuild Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash. How many of them ended up going? No more than 12%! It was comfortable for them, they had gotten used to Bavel, and they didn't feel an urgent need to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash.

“There were seventy years since the destruction of the first Mikdash until the end of the exile of Bavel and in that span of time the Jews had forgotten about the Beis HaMikdash. What should we say after 2000 years since the destruction of the Mikdash? I realized that I shouldn't be upset about this but continue to work on raising people's awareness.

Despite his frustration with the limited interest, he also has moments of great satisfaction. “There was a group of yeshiva students from Yerushalayim who were very excited over the models. They spent hours studying every inch of them. They quoted halachos and cited Mishnayos and Gemaras and I stood off to the side and beamed with joy.”