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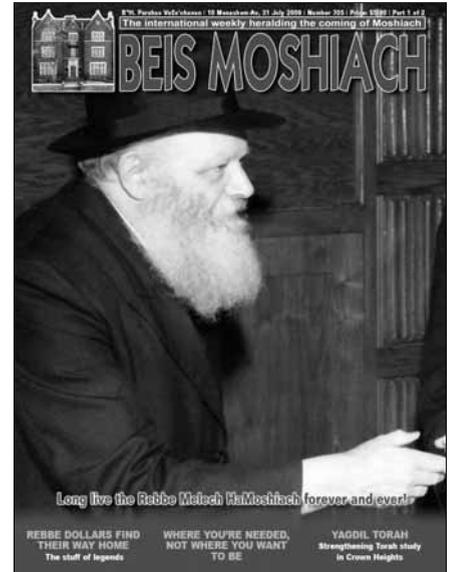
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TO PLEAD WITH G-D

Sichos In English

Parshas VaEschanan is always read on Shabbos Nachamu, “the Shabbos of comfort,” following the fast of Tisha B’Av.

The only comfort which we will accept for the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the exile of our people of our people from Eretz Yisroel, and all the subsequent tragedies we have suffered is the geula.

This was the object of Moshe’s prayers mentioned in this Torah reading, and this is the ultimate object of all the prayers of the Jewish people.

But as the essay to follow emphasizes, prayer is not sufficient.

G-d desires action.

And on numerous occasions, the Rebbe taught us the nature of the deed required: to “live with the Redemption,” and appreciate a foretaste of it in our lives at present.

And by anticipating the Redemption in this manner, we can precipitate its coming.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

The Rambam describes prayer as follows: [1]

The obligation [this] commandment entails is to offer supplication and prayer every day; to praise the Holy One, blessed be He, and afterwards to petition for all one’s needs with requests and supplications, and then to give praise and thanks to G-d for the goodness that He has bestowed.

In particular, the fundamental dimension of prayer is to ask G-d for our needs.

The praise and thanksgiving which precedes and follows these requests is merely a supplementary

element of the mitzvah. [2]

A person must realize that G-d is the true source for every aspect of sustenance and blessing he receives, and he must approach G-d sincerely, with heartfelt requests. [3]

Often, however, we do not content ourselves with asking G-d for our needs. We desire a measure of bounty that goes beyond our needs, and indeed, is far more than what we deserve.

We request a boon that reflects G-d’s boundless generosity.

For every Jew is as a dear to G-d as a only son born to parents in their vintage years. [4] And because of that inner closeness, He grants us favor that surpasses our needs and our worth.

TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF MOSHE’S PLEA

These concepts are reflected in the name of this week’s Torah reading VaEschanan.

VaEschanan means “and he pleaded,” and refers to Moshe’s petition to G-d to enter Eretz Yisroel. [5]

Our Sages’ interpretation of this term provides each of us with guidance with regard to the way we should approach G-d in prayer.

The Sifri states: [6]

[Moshe] could have depended... on his good deeds. Instead, [he] asked G-d for a gift... How much more so, [lesser men] should make requests [of G-d in this manner].

Alternatively, [va’es’chanan] is one of the ten terms used for prayer.

The Midrash communicates

similar concepts, stating: [7]

[This] is one of the ten terms used for prayer. Of them all, Moshe adopted [this approach], one of supplication.

From this, we can learn that no created being can make demands from its Creator, for even Moshe [approached G-d] in a tone of supplication, [asking] for a free gift.

EVERYTHING IS KINDNESS

Although there is a similarity between the statements of the Sifri and the Midrash, in particular, the commentaries [8] note a distinction between them.

For the Sifri sees the concept of prayer and that of requesting a free gift as two different interpretations, while the Midrash fuses the two concepts into a single understanding.

To focus on this distinction more closely:

G-d is “merciful to all His works,” [9] giving each his sustenance as required.

Moreover, when a person’s deeds are worthy, he is assured: [10] “If you follow My laws... I will provide you with rain at the appropriate time.” [11] Therefore, a person might have grounds to believe that he deserves G-d’s assistance.

Nevertheless, even in such a situation, prayer is necessary as reflected by the verse: [12] “Kindness is Yours, for You render to every man according to his deeds.”

Although a person’s conduct

may be worthy of Divine blessing, since G-d transcends the material realm entirely, for G-d's beneficence to be en clothed in a material form requires a unique measure of kindness. And this kindness is evoked by prayer.

Therefore, there is no way a person can demand favor from G-d. At all times, he must make requests of Him as one asks for a present.

This enables us to understand the interpretation of the Midrash mentioned previously.

VaEschanan teaches us the manner in which we should make petitions of G-d.

When asking for His goodness, one should plead with humility, rather than demand; even when deserving, a person should not rely on his merits, but should ask G-d for generosity and kindness.

NOT ONLY A HUMBLE TONE, A HUMBLE HEART

The first interpretation cited in the Sifri asks for a deeper commitment.

Not only should humility characterize the manner in which one approaches G-d, it should permeate one's being.

A person should genuinely feel that he is asking for favor which he does not deserve. For regardless of the virtue of his deeds, there is always a higher standard which could be demanded of him. Therefore, his request is for "a free gift," unearned kindness. [13]

This approach was personified by Moshe, whom the Torah describes [14] as "more humble than any man on the face of the earth."

Moshe realized his own positive virtues, but he also understood that these virtues were granted to him by G-d, and felt that had they been granted to another individual, that person might have accomplished

more. [15]

WHEN CAN A HEAVENLY DECREE BE CHANGED

There is a deeper dimension to the difference in interpretation between the Midrash and the Sifri.

Moshe was praying to enter Eretz Yisroel.

Although G-d had previously decreed that he would not enter the Holy Land, after the conquests of the land of Sichon and Og, Moshe thought that perhaps G-d would relent and therefore, turned to Him in heartfelt prayer. [16]

There is a difference of opinion among our Sages [17] whether prayer can have an effect after a negative decree has been issued from Above or only beforehand.

The Midrash follows the view that prayer can avert a harsh decree even after the decree has been issued. Therefore, Moshe was able to approach G-d through one of the accepted forms of prayer.

The first opinion in the Sifri, by contrast, follows the view that ordinarily, prayer can only help before a decree has been issued, but not afterwards. Therefore, Moshe had to go beyond the commonplace approach to prayer and ask for a free gift. [18]

REACHING ABOVE OUR GRASP

Chassidic thought explains Moshe's request for "a free gift" as follows:

Had Moshe been permitted to lead the Jewish people into Eretz Yisroel, he would have been able to draw forth a level of G-dly revelation which our ordinary Divine service cannot reach.

For there are limits to the spiritual peaks man can reach through his efforts; the highest levels are dependent solely on G-d's initiative.

These levels cannot be reached by the standard approach to prayer. For prayer centers on man's efforts to refine himself and his environment, and therefore Moshe asked for "a free gift."

DOING MORE THAN WE CAN

G-d did not grant Moshe's request, because even the highest levels of revelation are not given as "free gifts," but instead must be realized by man through his Divine service.

The service required to draw down these levels, however, is not one that man can conceive or plot out on his own. It was beyond even Moshe's conception. Instead, it is G-d who charts this pattern of service and with this intent He has led the Jewish people on their odyssey through history.

For this reason, Moshe's prayer was not accepted, and it was Yehoshua and not Moshe who led the Jews into Eretz Yisroel.

Although this brought about the possibility of the Jews being driven into exile, this is part of the Divine plan to enable mankind to carry out the service necessary to bring about the Redemption. For it is the Divine service of ordinary men, confronting everyday experience which will make the Redemption a reality.

Parshas VaEschanan is always read on Shabbos Nachamu, "the Shabbos of comfort."

The true comfort for the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and the exile is the realization that these are only phases guiding us to the ultimate Redemption.

Leading us on a course above mortal understanding, G-d enables man to become His partner in creation, [19] and make the world a dwelling which they will share.

[Continued on pg. 42]

24 HOURS OF SHABBOS

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik
District Rav Bat Chefer – Emek Chefer

Is the day of Shabbos one entity consisting of 24 hours, like limbs of a body, or is each moment of Shabbos an independent unit? A fascinating analysis from the perspective of Chazal, Kabbala and Chabad Chassidus

A HALACHIC- CONCEPTUAL QUESTION

Is the day of Shabbos one entity consisting of 24 hours, like limbs of one body or is each moment of Shabbos an independent unit which is unconnected to the other minutes of Shabbos?

There is a practical difference between the two approaches in the case where someone desecrated the Shabbos (to save a life, by mistake or on purpose):

If Shabbos is one entity, then by desecrating it in part, the entire Shabbos is affected, since just as you cannot divide a live body into parts, so too you cannot divide a Shabbos into parts. If one part of Shabbos was desecrated, its holiness has departed and no longer exists on that Shabbos, not even in the minutes that follow.

However, if every minute is an independent unit, then desecrating

the holiness of Shabbos for one moment does not remove the holiness of the rest of Shabbos.

Here's another question – if a person converts on Shabbos, is he obligated to observe the rest of that Shabbos or is he only obligated to observe from the following Shabbos and on?

If the entire Shabbos is one entity, then since before his conversion it was not holy for him it cannot obligate him during the hours of the rest of Shabbos. But if each moment of Shabbos is an independent unit, he is obligated to observe the rest of that Shabbos after his conversion for those hours are not dependent on the previous hours.

This question can be asked in other contexts, for example, if a person ate on Yom Kippur, is he obligated to fast the rest of the day until the end of the fast or, once

having broken the fast can he continue to eat?

If the day is one entity, then interrupting it interferes with its sanctity and there would be no obligation to continue fasting. But if each moment is a separate unit, then although the mitzva of the day was not fulfilled at a certain time, that would not absolve him of the mitzva at a later point and the mitzva can be done afterwards and he would be obligated to fast the rest of the day.

A nazir and Kohen must be holy and they are not allowed to become tamei. If they became tamei, can they continue to touch the impure thing or not? If the mitzva of retaining their holiness applies to every single moment, then the fact that they became impure at a certain time does not permit them to continue touching something impure. However, if all of time is one unit, then if they became impure, (until they purify themselves) there is no reason to forbid them from touching something tamei.

THE HALACHA AND ITS REASON

The answer is, as it says in Rambam and Shulchan Aruch, there is a difference in the different cases:

When it comes to Shabbos and Yom Kippur, the halacha is that even if someone desecrated it or broke the fast, he must continue to observe the mitzvos of the day and not desecrate the Shabbos and not eat on Yom Kippur for the rest of the day. (Likewise, a minor who was able to demonstrate physical maturity on Shabbos, must observe the remaining hours.)

If someone converts in the middle of Shabbos, he must observe the remaining hours of that Shabbos. As the Mechilta puts it,

one should not say, "Since we desecrated it in part, we will desecrate it all," rather every moment which remains, "even [the length of time of] a blink of an eye," must be observed.

As for a Kohen, the Raavad writes that if he became tamei, "he has no further obligation regarding impurity" and he is permitted to touch something tamei.

The reason for the difference has to do with whether the mitzva applies to the person or to the day (*gavra* or *cheftza*):

With impurity, the mitzva is on the person that he should remain holy and not become impure. Consequently, the moment he becomes tamei it makes no difference if he continues to touch tuma because each additional touch does not add to his tuma. He was utterly tamei with the first touch of something impure and therefore, there is no problem if he continues to touch something impure.

With Shabbos and Yom Kippur however, the mitzva applies to the day and the day itself remains holy even after the person desecrated it. Therefore, even after desecrating it or eating on Yom Kippur, the person is obligated to observe the mitzvos of the day for the rest of the day.

MECHALEL SHABBOS

The Shabbos experience is different than the weekdays. On Shabbos we are sanctified and rise up to very spiritual levels, but one who desecrates the Shabbos falls into the everyday lowly physical reality and is distant from the supernal holiness of Shabbos. It is said that the elevation and sanctity of Shabbos takes place at Kabbalas Shabbos (at candle-lighting, when Shabbos begins).

Being that this is the case, it seems to me that although one who

desecrates the Shabbos must continue to keep the rest of Shabbos, after his desecration and spiritual fall he cannot return to the previous elevated state like that of the rest of the Jewish people. His observance of the rest of Shabbos is only to keep a distance from the forces of impurity by refraining from forbidden activities.

Perhaps this is what the Rebbe is alluding to when he says, "The perfection in the holiness of Shabbos depends to a great extent on Friday night. If there is no holiness on Friday night, then the k'dusha is lacking on the day of Shabbos."

A DAY THAT IS COMPLETELY SHABBOS

Yemos HaMoshiach are called Shabbos as Chazal say on the verse in T'hillim, "Mizmor shir l'yom ha'Shabbos" – "a day that is all Shabbos and rest forever." Shabbos is connected to Yemos HaMoshiach in a number of fundamental ways:

1. The k'dusha of Shabbos is a taste of the enormous k'dusha of Yemos HaMoshiach. "Chazal say that Shabbos is one sixtieth of Olam Haba because the serenity and pleasure that the tzaddik feels is one sixtieth of that wondrous pleasure."

(Reishis Chochma, Shaar HaK'dusha)

2. On Shabbos, the world reaches its full tikkun and perfection as it says, "and the heavens and the earth and all their hosts were completed," and that is like the complete and utter perfection of the world and creation in the future, in Yemos HaMoshiach.

3. The work of a Jew during the weekdays serves as preparation for the pleasure and rest of Shabbos as Chazal say, "he who works on Erev Shabbos will eat on Shabbos." So too, our deeds in this world are a preparation for the great and exalted

levels of Yemos HaMoshiach.

4. Every Shabbos there is a G-dly k'dusha that is like that of Yemos HaMoshiach (Ramban, Shaar HaG'mul, 124). Therefore, we are commanded to refrain from doing activities on Shabbos as it will be in the future that the Jewish people will be freed from mundane activities all their days to engage in Torah and mitzvos. They won't need to do a malacha, for "strangers [non-Jews] will arise and bring your sheep to pasture."

5. In addition to all the above, in the merit of keeping Shabbos we will merit Yemos HaMoshiach as it says in the Midrash, "if you observe the candles of Shabbos, I will show you the candles of Tziyon, as it says, 'and it will be, in that time, I will search Yerushalayim with candles.'"

Shabbos is one entity with every moment as limbs of one body and the central point of Shabbos is that a Jew's physical world is elevated to G-dly sanctity.

Similarly, all the wonderful things that will take place in the days of Moshiach – as the Rambam writes, "in that time there won't be famine nor war nor jealousy and competition, for goodness will be greatly abundant and all delicacies will be available like dust, and the only occupation of the world will be only to know G-d and therefore Yisroel will be extremely wise and know hidden things and apprehend the knowledge of their Creator according to the ability of man" – are part of the central point, the removal of all barriers that conceal the Creator and the revelation of the Creator in the physical world.

May we merit the true and complete Geula speedily, now!

(Sources: Likkutei Sichos vol. 8, p. 50. HaShabbos B'Kabbala U'B'Chassidus Vol. 1 p. 60)

SHLICHUS IN SRI LANKA —WAR AND PEACE

By Sholom Ber Zaltzman

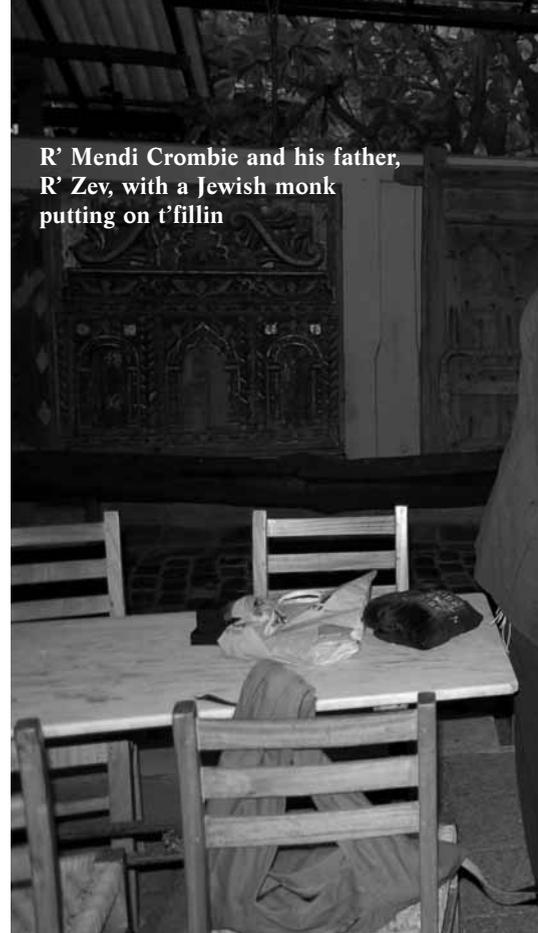
*The recent end of the war in Sri Lanka had personal significance for Rabbi Mendi and Talia Crombie, shluchim of the Rebbe who opened a Chabad house there five years ago. * Even during the war they stuck to their post. The day they began building a mikva, the first in Sri Lanka, the government announced that the Tamil rebels had surrendered and the 25 year civil war was over. * An incredible shlichus.*

The decades-long civil war in Sri Lanka recently came to an end. It took 25 years and tens of thousands of lives, but the Tamil rebels finally lost the fight. During the years of war, terror reigned throughout the country and many innocent citizens

lost their lives.

Sri Lanka is an island south of India and in the good times, it attracted numerous tourists. It is known for its magnificent beaches which are a veritable magnet to surfers. In the past two years the

R' Mendi Crombie and his father, R' Zev, with a Jewish monk putting on t'fillin



fighting escalated, keeping most of the tourists and Western businessmen away. With the long-awaited peace and quiet comes the hope that life will go back to normal.

Nearly five years ago, in November of 2005, Rabbi Mendi Crombie, his wife Talia, and baby Levi Yitzchok who was a year and a half, arrived in Sri Lanka. They went despite the precarious security situation because of encouraging answers from the Rebbe in the Igros Kodesh. They have reached out and touched many souls lost among the hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans and Eastern idol worshipping religions and cults.

The welcome the Crombies got when they arrived in Sri Lanka was a government curfew following acts of terror. They had to spend a few days in a guest house in the capitol city, Colombo, until the curfew was lifted. Then they were able to leave the city and set up shop in one of the villages lying on the western coast of Sri Lanka, where many



word had gotten out among the Israeli surfers in the area that a Chabad house had opened.

UNUSUAL SIGHT

One day, R' Crombie went on Mivtza T'fillin near the road that leads to the village. The few Israelis he met there were happy to roll up their sleeves and put on t'fillin. A car stopped nearby and a European looking man emerged. He was dumbfounded by the sight of the rabbi and the Israelis.

When he finally found his voice he said that he was a Jewish businessman who had lived in Sri Lanka for years. He would have sworn, just minutes before, that he would never meet a religious Jew in Sri Lanka, certainly not a Chassid. It was so completely out of the question that when he had driven by quickly and seen R' Crombie, he was sure it was a mirage as a result of the heat.

He had driven on but then a voice inside him told him to turn around. He was thrilled to hear that R' Crombie is the Rebbe's shliach and that he had opened a permanent Chabad house. He was happy to help out and thanks to his assistance they connected with other Jews who live in Sri Lanka. He began to regularly visit the Chabad house, to hear about Judaism, and to put t'fillin on daily. He tried to fill in the huge gaps in his knowledge of Judaism by learning with R' Crombie and by reading books in English.

Despite the difficult conditions in the village, where even taking a hot shower was impossible, the Chabad house became the family and home of Israeli tourists. Every night, Israeli surfers came for supper, which turned into a Chassidishe farbrengen that went into the night. Some of them had been in the village for months and they felt very lonely. This feeling afflicts many Israeli youth who travel after their

young Israelis go. At that point they did not know a soul who could help them and they didn't have even a single address to turn to if they were in need.

When R' Crombie was asked about how he could manage under these conditions, he said, "Before we arrived in Sri Lanka, we did research and found out that a large concentration of Israelis are in Hikkaduwa. Backpackers and tourists alike favor the beach party atmosphere created by the surfing and diving scene. Beautiful white sand beaches, colorful coral reefs and excellent surf attract people from all over the world.

"We planned to go to Hikkaduwa as soon as we landed, but were delayed by the government curfew. We finally got there on Erev Shabbos and we had to get organized in a hurry. Before nightfall, I managed to toivel in honor of Shabbos in a quiet corner of the beach and my wife was able to prepare a Shabbos meal with the few ingredients she was able to

quickly cook without a normal kitchen. We set up a little table on the porch of the room we had rented in the guest house and sat down to our meal.

"We were exhausted after the experiences of the previous few days. Then we noticed a group of young people sitting on the other side of the guest house who were looking at us. We realized they were Israelis. We invited them over and they were happy to join us. They were flabbergasted by the surreal sight of a Shabbos table with candles, wine and challa in the middle of this forsaken village in Sri Lanka. That was the official opening of our Chabad house."

After Shabbos, R' Crombie rented one of the central houses in the village and turned it into a Chabad house. He brought a Torah scroll with him and began holding minyanim, shiurim, farbrengens, and Shabbos meals. The Israelis were overjoyed and helped him as much as they could. Within a few days, the

He would have sworn, just minutes before, that he would never meet a religious Jew in Sri Lanka, certainly not a Chassid. It was so completely out of the question that when he had driven by quickly and seen R' Crombie, he was sure it was a mirage as a result of the heat.

army service. The Chabad house was a comfort and with time, many began to take on practical mitzvos.

For half a year, the Chabad house was located on the beach in Hikkaduwa and reached out to the numerous Israelis and Jewish tourists in the area. Then R' Crombie heard about a Jewish community in Colombo, comprised of businessmen and other Jews. He began contacting them for the purpose of solidifying a k'hilla. He met with them and followed up on any shred of information that could help him find other Jews living in the area.

He eventually made contact with dozens of Jewish families, including a number of Israelis. Some of them had no idea that there were so many Jews living there and they were happy to discover the beginnings of what could be a k'hilla.

Once a week, R' Crombie and his wife traveled five hours each way to the capitol by local bus, which rumbled along on poorly maintained roads from an earlier age, with their son in their arms. In Colombo they met with Jews and started a weekly shiur which took place in the home of one of the Jewish families.

R' Crombie was determined to enable them to have a proper Pesach. The village of Hikkaduwa began to empty out from Israeli surfers because of the heat. R' Crombie decided to move the Chabad house to the capitol, where

he began preparations for the first communal seider ever to be held in Sri Lanka.

When he recalls those days he says wistfully, "The special thing about the Chabad house in Sri Lanka is that you constantly feel the 'ingathering of the exiles.' It's just like the verse says, 'You will be gathered one by one.' Each person here has a story about how he came here and what led him to get involved in Judaism."

As an example, he told us the following story:

One day, the phone rang in his house and the caller introduced herself as a researcher of World Jewry who lives in Australia and was doing research on Jewish roots in Sri Lanka. R' Crombie invited her to his home, where he discovered that she herself has Jewish roots and was of Jewish origin. R' Crombie referred her to the beis din in Melbourne, where they paskened that she needed to undergo *giyur l'chumra*. This woman discovered her Jewish roots in Sri Lanka of all places.

Another example:

The communal Pesach s'darim have, over the last few years, been amazing events. When you see dozens of Jews sitting together and remembering the Exodus from Egypt in such a far-off place, it's quite moving.

Two years ago, we had a South African Jew with us, living in Sri Lanka for reasons of business. At the

end of the seider he came over to me and very emotionally said, "It's unbelievable. It's like every other Jewish community in the world!" He was so moved that he came back the next night. Ordinarily, only those who don't make it the first night come the second night.

A SHLIACH DOESN'T DESERT HIS POST

With the Chabad house's move to Colombo, a new phase in Chabad's work in Sri Lanka began. Jewish communal life began to flourish and the Jewish families gathered around the shliach and his wife. Every Friday night, R' Crombie invited people to Kabbalas Shabbos and in the middle of the week the children began to meet in a Tzivos Hashem club where they learn Jewish concepts in this foreign land.

The difficult conditions, the heat, and the distance did not faze the young couple. But then came the wave of terror that threatened to disrupt their work. Echoes of explosions began to be heard regularly near the Chabad house and the Jewish residents began to fear for their lives. Some of them stayed indoors while many others left the country. Tourism was affected as many tourists opted to skip Sri Lanka.

"Every Jew we discovered had a different providential story to tell, and whoever we met was always excited to hear about a Chabad house. People have gotten used to hearing about Chabad houses all over the world but a Chabad house in Sri Lanka is still a surprise to many. Maybe it was the terrorism that made people think that nobody would endanger themselves to live in a place like this for the sake of other people."

One Friday, someone walked into the Chabad house with a look of amazement on his face. He said he was religious and he lectured in

“It’s unbelievable. It’s like every other Jewish community in the world!” He was so moved that he came back the next night.

R’ Crombie farbrenging with mekuravim



psychology all over the world. Before this last trip he said to his wife that until now, there had been a Chabad house wherever he went, “But now I’m traveling to a country without a Chabad house.” To his surprise, shluchim had made a Chabad house in Sri Lanka too.

The Chabad house itself has felt the impact and fear of terror. One terrorist attack took place just one short block away from the Chabad house and another time, when Mrs. Crombie was at the airport, they heard powerful explosions. Afterwards they found out that Tamil rebels had bombed the airport with combat planes! In both cases it was a miracle that the shluchim were saved. Nevertheless, this did not deter them and they did not abandon the Jews who remained there.

Throughout the years of war they remained in the country and provided a warm and loving home to all Jews in the area – businessmen, young Israelis traveling after the army, or Jewish tourists. Some were even Jews who had come to the Tibetan monasteries which are all over the country. All of them were happy to visit the Chabad house which gave them a good, Jewish feeling.

CONTINUED GROWTH

Once they established themselves in Colombo, their work continued to expand and it has become a powerhouse of light and k’dusha. R’ Crombie is in touch with all the areas where Jews can be found in Sri Lanka. Bachurim join him as reinforcements for Yomim Tovim. They are sent to distant villages where Israelis can be found and they visit Jews all over the country.

Half a year ago, the Chabad house moved to a spacious building in the city center. It functions as a Jewish center that provides for all Jewish needs. R’ Crombie explains that many Jews feel uncomfortable taking kosher meals from the Chabad house even though he tells them that this is why they are in Sri Lanka. So they decided to open a restaurant that will provide kosher meals so no one will feel uncomfortable.

R’ Crombie brings a shochet to Sri Lanka periodically so kosher meat will be available. They freeze it and it is used by the local Jews.

They are working on building a mikva. “The day we started working on the mikva, the government announced that the rebels gave up and the war was over. Fascinating, isn’t it; that a bloody war that lasted



R’ Crombie with the Israeli ambassador, putting up a mezuzah at the embassy

25 years and cost thousands of lives, ended on this day.”

Another interesting point – the curfew that was imposed on the day they landed in Sri Lanka was because of elections in the country. The man who was voted in as president was the one who successfully squelched terror. The hashgacha pratis in both cases, and especially the link between the two, is remarkable.

R’ Crombie said that the day the

RETRIEVING LOST SOULS

R' Crombie told us about a Jewish woman who lives in Sri Lanka with a Moslem non-Jew and together with her children she began learning about Judaism. When Mrs. Crombie told the children about Shavuot and Mattan Torah, and the children asked, "What's the Torah," the older daughter answered, "It's like the Koran." Now they are learning about Judaism without their father knowing about it.

There was an Israeli family who had no intent or interest in celebrating their son's bar mitzva. After a lot of work in convincing them, R' Crombie was successful. When the family came to mark the bar mitzva, the father and the brother of the bar mitzva boy put on t'fillin for the first time in their lives - a triple bar mitzva celebration.

R' Crombie says that many encounters happen with the hashgacha pratit of just minutes. He catches Jews in the hotels at just the right moment, often leading to significant religious changes. A minute earlier or later, that Jew would not have been there.

On one of their first Shabbasos an eighty year old monk walked in and said he was a Jew named Moshe . To the astonishment of those present, he stumbled through the Shma Yisroel.

war was declared over, people danced in the streets and the entire country was paralyzed because of victory celebrations, while in the Chabad house they were celebrating the beginning of the construction of the mikva. Local Jews who came to see the start of the construction were swept up in the double joy of the construction and the victory in the war which until then had terrorized them.

Looking back on the fear of the war, R' Crombie relates, "The Chabad house was always a refuge for many Jews who considered it a safe place to be, even during the war's harshest times, and we as shluchim knew that we had a job to do and we could not leave or show weakness. We constantly received the Rebbe's brachos through the Igros Kodesh in which the Rebbe encouraged us and instructed us to

continue with our work.

"Yes, there were difficult moments and anxiety. There were days when we couldn't leave the building because of a curfew and terrorism was a constant worry and challenge. The airports were often closed and sometimes this made life very difficult, especially when you have no kosher food and you need outside help.

"After our friends, Rabbi Gabi and Rivky Holtzberg were murdered in their Chabad house in Bombay it was definitely scary. Many people were afraid that the attack would endanger the security of Chabad houses in the East, especially in Sri Lanka, where there has been terrorism for decades. We put a lot of money into fortifying the Chabad house and now that we are in our new building we have a gate and a guard."

In addition to defensive measures, tremendous efforts are being invested in order to expand their work. One of the special projects is a monthly online publication which is sent by email to a mailing list of hundreds of people who have visited the Chabad house since it opened. Whoever visits the Chabad house is registered to receive the publication. It contains Chassidic stories and ideas for every month. It's in English and Hebrew and they get positive feedback every month.

Many people say that they print it so they can enjoy it not only when online. He has a list of subscribers who look forward to it every month. This is one of several projects whose goal is to keep in touch with visitors even after they leave. R' Crombie holds reunions when they visit Eretz Yisroel, and Shabbatons where those who visited the Chabad house in Sri Lanka get to revisit that special atmosphere.

MONKS CONFRONT JUDAISM

One of the touching aspects of shlichus in Sri Lanka is getting in touch with Jewish monks who live in the Tibetan monasteries. This began on one of their first Shabbasos when an eighty year old monk walked in and said he was a Jew named Moshe [what nationality?]. To the astonishment of those present, he stumbled through the Shma Yisroel. Following this visit, a relationship developed between him and R' Crombie that engendered a long process of return for that monk and other Jewish monks. He said that decades ago he entered one of the Buddhist monasteries in Sri Lanka and he has been there ever since and even serves as a senior monk.

R' Crombie spent hours trying to reach this Jew's heart. In a letter that Moshe wrote to R' Crombie, he

thanked him profusely, “Now I feel true meaning in my life.” In the distant Sri Lankan monastery he reads books about Judaism. Last Chanuka R’ Crombie visited him and brought a menorah, and he was thrilled. He lit the menorah for the first time in his life and strengthened his connection to R’ Crombie. Now, when he visits Colombo, he stops in at the Chabad house and puts on t’fillin, dressed in his monk’s clothing.

One Pesach night at the Chabad house, in walked a young Australian Jew who had come to Sri Lanka for a course at a distant monastery. When he was asked how he knew to come to the Chabad house, he said that one of the lecturers at the monastery was Moshe. When Moshe learned that he was Jewish, he suggested he participate in the seider.

Another touching story took place with an Israeli monk who studied at a Sri Lankan monastery for fifteen years and conducted himself as a monk. When R’ Crombie heard about this man he tried to contact him many times, without success. The man refused to have anything to do with him and tried to ignore his existence.

His family wanted to send him an urgent package from Israel but had no way of contacting him. The only connection they were able to make in Sri Lanka was with the Chabad house so having no choice, they sent the package there and asked R’ Crombie to get it to the monk.

R’ Crombie jumped at the opportunity. Once a connection was made with the Chabad house, the monk didn’t feel he could cut it off. He began attending shiurim and t’fillos. He realized that his life until then had been a mistake and devoid of meaning. R’ Crombie helped him along in the t’shuva process and after a long period of Torah study,



A bris mila at the Chabad house

he decided to leave Sri Lanka and devote himself fully to a life of Torah and mitzvos. Today he is a talmid in a Chabad yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel and if you met him, you would not believe that up until recently he was dressed in an orange robe.

A year ago, a reporter for the Jewish community in England visited Sri Lanka. He was surprised to discover a shliach there. When he visited the Chabad house he was excited to see the picture the shliach showed him of a monk wearing t’fillin while still wearing his orange robe. He chose to begin his article with a description of the picture of the monk and told about R’ Crombie’s work in igniting the Jewish spark in the heart of a Jewish monk who had long forgotten his Jewish origins. At the end of the article he said he was most moved when the shliach said, “In Sri Lanka there aren’t thousands of Jewish tourists, but it’s enough for us. We don’t need large numbers in order to do the Rebbe’s shlichus and care for every Jew.”

THE GEULA

“The subject of Geula runs

through everything we do in Sri Lanka,” says R’ Crombie. “It’s not just in the shiurim and talks we have on the topic. Nearly everyone who visits the Chabad house asks, ‘How long are you here?’ and when they hear that it’s four years, they move on to their next question, ‘When are you returning to Israel?’ The answer is always, ‘With G-d’s help, immediately, on clouds, with the Geula.’

“Then, as though following a script, they ask me to explain the idea of shlichus until the Geula and what is the Geula and when will it come, etc. We teach them about Geula and Moshiach and ask them to make good resolutions to hasten the Geula.

“We spread the Seven Noachide Laws far and wide. We printed up special cards in the local language and we give out thousands of them. In addition, there is a regular class for goyim on the topic of the Seven Laws. We have good ties with ministers and senior figures in government who help the Chabad house and help make the world a better place.”

THE REBBE'S DOLLARS FIND THEIR WAY HOME

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

Mrs. Chaya Rochel Hendel of Tzfas tells the following story:

“A little more than a year ago, a well-known and prominent woman in Chabad circles, privileged to rear an entire generation of shluchim with great *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe, was our guest in the Chabad community of Tzfas. As is customary each week, a *farbrengen* was held in the shul’s women’s section on Shabbos immediately after Musaf, during which the participants exchange stories on their experiences in the area of spreading the wellsprings of *chassidus* and *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe. In addition, they frequently tell special miracle stories that took place in the merit of the Rebbe’s *brachos*. On this occasion, I told about the Rebbe’s dollars that were stolen from me and which returned in an amazing fashion.

“The wallet with the dollars that I had received from the Rebbe and a

few important documents was in the display case facing the entrance to our house. About two years ago, a thief came in, took the wallet, and disappeared without a trace. When I realized that the wallet had been stolen, I was deeply distressed. It was less due to the documents, as those can be replaced; my main anguish was over the loss of four dollar bills that I had been privileged to receive directly from the Rebbe’s hand. Even if the thief would eventually be caught, it is almost a certainty that he would have used them by then.

“Naturally, we reported the theft to the police and the officer on duty recorded the complaint, but he had no leads on the thief. In truth, they hadn’t even tried to do anything, as such things happen every day. Several months passed, and I totally forgot about the whole matter. Since I customarily have dollars from the Rebbe with me at all times as a



means for success and protection, I put four new Rebbe dollars in my new wallet and then proceeded to continue my normal routine.

“One day, I was invited to a *pidyon ha’ben* ceremony at the Chabad House located in Tzfas’ Old City. When I arrived, the local *shlucha*, Mrs. Shterna Sara Marzel, approached me and asked if I had lost any dollars from the Rebbe, to which I naturally said yes. ‘But I didn’t actually lose them, someone stole them. In any event, against my will, the dollars are no longer in my possession,’ I told her. When she heard the whole story about how these four dollars had been stolen from me, her face lit up. ‘If it’s four dollars, then these apparently are yours,’ she said. She explained that one of the people who *davens* at the nearby Tzemach Tzedek Shul revealed that he had bought four dollars received from the Rebbe from a storeowner in Tzfas’ Rasco neighborhood, and he noticed only later that the name ‘*Chaya Rochel Hendel*’ was written on each of them. When I heard this, I naturally paid the man what he had paid for the dollars and got them back.

“Rather curious to know how the dollars had come to this storeowner, I went to his place of business one day and asked him about it. When he saw me and understood who I was and what I wanted to know, he declared emotionally, ‘Mrs. Hendel, the Lubavitcher Rebbe is *chai v’kayam*.’ After he calmed down a bit, he recalled that when the thief entered the store to sell him the dollars, he said to himself: ‘Why not? The dollars will be a source of good fortune for me in the protection of my safe, where I keep all of my earnings.’ ‘Yet, G-d apparently wanted them to return to you.’

“A few minutes later, a member of the Chabad community came in

to buy something. I don’t know why I said it, considering what I had decided just minutes earlier, but I asked him if he was interested in buying dollars that had been received from the hand of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. When the person heard the offer, he jumped at the opportunity, especially since the price I was asking was such a bargain.’

“He bought the dollars, and when he noticed the name ‘*Chaya Rochel Hendel*’ written on them, he told Mrs. Marzel about it and she then asked me if I had lost any dollars. Thus, I was privileged to get my dollars back...

“I told this amazing story in shul during the *farbrengen* that Shabbos.”

* * *

“As a result of this story, other women remembered similar incidents that they had experienced with dollars from the Rebbe, and each one told her story. The most fascinating story told on this occasion was about a dollar that made its way around the globe and finally returned to its rightful owner when she received change in a store near 770.

“The entire *farbrengen* revolved around dollars from the Rebbe that came back to their owners at exactly the right moment.

“The woman who spent that Shabbos as our guest left the *farbrengen* overwhelmed and deeply affected by these stories, and she internalized the fact that a dollar from the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, is not just some banknote, but a vessel channeling the Rebbe’s spiritual power.

“When she returned home and told her husband about the amazing stories she had heard at the Shabbos *farbrengen*, he recalled that one of their daughters, a *shlucha* of the

Rebbe MH”M somewhere in Eretz Yisroel, had asked him to give her a dollar that he had received from the Rebbe. She planned to sell it at a special ‘dinner’ at a considerable price, and the money would then go toward the outreach activities that she and her husband conduct in their place of *shlichus*. When the woman heard this, she became very annoyed. ‘How could you even think of giving away a dollar from the Rebbe? I told you just now about the importance of these dollars...’

“Her husband explained that he had made a promise and he simply couldn’t go back on his word.

“The Shabbos experience, together with this new development, compelled her on that Motzaei Shabbos to pull out from their hiding place all the dollars and other banknotes that she and her husband had received from the Rebbe over the years. Among the banknotes she found was an old one thousand shekel bill that she had received from the Rebbe during ‘*yechidus*’. After racking her brains for a few minutes, she recalled that she had received it when she had gone in with her daughter for a private audience with the Rebbe. This daughter was now married for several years already and had not yet been blessed with children. The woman decided to give this thousand shekel bill to her daughter.

“As she emotionally told all this to her husband, he reminded her that this daughter’s birthday was that night. At this point, the woman started to put all the pieces together, and she felt that there was a guiding hand from Above directing all that was happening in this matter. The next morning, she went to the station where she could get a bus traveling to her daughter’s city of residence. In all the excitement, she forgot to tell her daughter that she was on her way to see her. When she reached her daughter’s house,

she had to wait outside for a while until her daughter returned home with her husband.

“The daughter was positively overjoyed when she came home and saw her mother waiting for her. They kissed and embraced with great emotion. Yet, the daughter was curious to know the reason for this sudden and unannounced visit. She didn’t have to wait long, as her mother said, ‘Today is your birthday.’ While the daughter acknowledged that this was true, she still felt that this was not the real purpose and that there was some other reason – and she was right...

“Last night,’ her mother told her, ‘I was rummaging through the drawer where I hid all the banknotes that we were privileged to receive from the Rebbe, and what did I find? An old one thousand shekel bill. I recalled that we had received this particular bill when you and I went in for ‘yechidus’ with the Rebbe. This took place a long time ago and you were only two years old at the time. I had promised myself that when you grew up, I would give it to you, but many years have passed since then and I had forgotten all about it.

“This past Shabbos,’ she continued, ‘I was in the Chabad community of Tzfas, and the amazing stories that I heard about the journeys made by dollars from the Rebbe until they reached their true point of destination awoke within me a need to look through that drawer, where I found the thousand shekel bill that belongs to you. It had been waiting in that drawer for years, but Divine Providence had decreed that the time had come for me to give it to you. I am certain that it will bring you the personal salvation you need.’

“When the daughter heard her mother’s words, she was so overcome that she broke into tears.

The mother fell into her daughter’s arms, and the two couldn’t seem to calm themselves for several minutes. All that remained to do was to wait and see how things developed. “If it hadn’t actually happened in real life, we would have said that such things only occur in legends or fables.

The mother fell into her daughter’s arms, and the two couldn’t seem to calm themselves for several minutes. All that remained to do was to wait and see how things developed.

“If it hadn’t actually happened in real life, we would have said that such things only occur in legends or fables. Incredibly, just eight months later, on the 9th of Iyar, the woman’s daughter and son-in-law were blessed with the birth of triplets! Years of emotional anxiety and suffering had come to an end. The deep inner agony had been transformed into uncontrollable joy.”

* * *

Another exciting incident took place during the pregnancy.

Throughout this time leading up to the birth, the doctors were certain that the mother was carrying twins.

Six weeks before the birth, when her husband was staying at his grandfather’s house, he happened to come across a “t’shura” booklet. On a whim, he took the booklet and started to leaf through it. Then, his eyes noticed an answer from the Rebbe, regarding the birth of triplets, dated the 9th of Iyar. As he read the letter, he pondered over whether this might be hinting something to him.

He knew that his wife was due to give birth in the middle of Iyar, though his wife was expecting twins, while in the letter, the Rebbe gave a bracha for the birth of triplets. He decided to take the booklet with him anyway and show it to his wife. They couldn’t imagine how relevant this letter would be for them.

The next six weeks passed very quickly, and on the day of the birth, she discovered that she was carrying triplets! The couple were positively overcome with emotion, as they remembered the letter that appeared in the “t’shura.” Their children were clearly born with the Rebbe’s brachos.

* * *

“All we have to do is open our eyes and see how the Rebbe accompanies us every step of the way,” Rebbetzin Hendel concludes her account. “This is an amazing and most encouraging story that shows us how the Rebbe lives as leader of the generation, and is found among us performing wonders of great salvation in the world. Everything that takes place here is one big miracle of Divine Providence, and as chassidim today, all that remains for us to do is ‘And they requested Dovid their king’, at the True and Complete Redemption, immediately, mamash.”

YAGDIL TORAH TRANSFORMS CROWN HEIGHTS

By S. Malachi



Levy Yitzchok and Batsheva Browd's firstborn son was born Shabbos afternoon, 19 Tamuz, 2006. The bris took place the following Shabbos and the baby was named Menachem Mendel. On 27 Av, Menachem Mendel, who was only 36 days old, finished his mission in this world and passed away suddenly.

The young parents sat Shiva. The tragedy made them feel close to Hashem, closer than they had felt before. Many people came to console them and when the Shiva was over they wondered what they could do to memorialize their son, knowing that mitzvos done in the merit of the departed give great pleasure to the soul.

Someone told them about the special connection between a firstborn son and Torah study from the commentary of the Shach (al ha'Torah, Parshas Ki Sisa): "and they shall not see Me empty-handed – the firstborn needs to be involved in Torah and yira more than other people..." Hearing this reinforced an idea they had discussed about starting an organization to strengthen Torah study in Crown Heights. Yagdil Torah was founded.

Yagdil Torah's goal is to further learning where it already exists and to encourage those who don't yet do so on a regular basis through shiurim, chavrusos, and various services.

They started with a shiur that moved from apartment to apartment in their building. Every week the neighbors gathered to learn Gemara together. Levy began looking for additional people to volunteer to arrange a similar shiur in their own building and the organization expanded. More and more shiurim were added and Levy saw how an excitement for Torah study was growing. Eight shiurim were started within a month, with another five shiurim added through the personal initiative of inspired individuals.

A "SHTUREM" IN TORAH

Today, the organization consists of four departments: shiurim, chavrusos, publishing and the Yagdil Torah Beis Midrash. The shiurim department runs several shiurim throughout the community and helps existing ones. The organization helps find a suitable location and Maggid Shiur, prepares a sign, arranges

publicity and other relevant tasks. Close to 150 shiurim take place every week in Crown Heights, some of them in private homes and some in shuls. The shiurim are given in different languages.

The shiurim create an atmosphere of Torah at home and in the street and draw people into learning more and more. "One of the people told me," says Levy, "that because of a halacha shiur he attended, he decided to study halacha daily. The shiur inspired him to learn halacha on a regular basis."

A very successful approach in the community has been having a series of lectures spread out over several shiurim, like learning Hilchos Pesach before the Yom Tov. Last year, during the 3 Weeks there were shiurim on Hilchos Beis HaBechira in six different shuls.

In order to attract a crowd, they try to select a Maggid shiur, a topic, the language (and the budget) which are just right for the participants. There are weekly shiurim on all parts of Torah: Gemara, Halacha, Chassidus, and Inyanei Moshiach and Geula.

At Yagdil Torah they are



R' Levy Browd

constantly thinking of new ideas to encourage people to learn and make it comfortable and convenient to do so. In Tishrei, for example, when 770 is packed with guests, the organization made four shuls available throughout Crown Heights so people were able to learn in peace.

FINDING A CHAVRUSA

Matchmaking – that is, with chavrusos – is another service Yagdil Torah provides. Anash from all over call Yagdil Torah or fill out a form on the internet, and they are matched up with chavrusos. “It’s not an easy job,” says Levy. “Before arranging a chavrusa, we thoroughly assess the interests of the person so we can find the right partner with whom he can learn on a regular basis.”

The publishing end of Yagdil Torah has as its goal, encouraging people to learn Torah. The brochure, *Ki Heim Chayeinu* brings quotes from the Rebbeim and earlier s’farim that inspire readers to strengthen their commitment to Torah study. Each brochure focuses on a different topic, for example, the importance

“Without Torah study you cannot be a proper Jew, never mind a Chassid. We clearly see the change in someone when he starts learning Torah on a regular basis. The impact can be seen at home too.”

of *kvius itim* (having set times to learn) and Torah being a source of protection.

Before the yemei hilula of the Chabad Rebbeim a booklet is published which includes, in addition to Mishnayos for the name, excerpts from the teachings of the Baal Hilula that talk about the importance of Torah study. This is in

accordance with the Rebbe’s instruction to learn from the teachings of the Baal Hilula on that day.

For Yagdil Torah, every date is a reason to publish a brochure: Shabbos B’Reishis – “the way you start off is the way it goes” is certainly a time to start things off with Torah study so the entire year goes that way. Before Hei Teives the brochure publicized the instruction of the Rebbe that the way to celebrate Didan Natzach (victory) of the s’farim, is by increasing in Torah study

The organization produces an annual Crown Heights Shiur Directory with all the shiurim taking place in the neighborhood throughout the week (close to 150!). It provides the topic, the location, the time, the lecturer etc.

On Yud-Tes Kislev Yagdil Torah arranges the division of all the tractates of Shas in accordance with the Chassidic custom. During the year, the organization provides reminders via telephone, text messages, and email.

Recently, Yagdil Torah opened a beis midrash which is open in the

A COMPILATION OF REBBE QUOTES AS PUBLICIZED BY “YAGDIL TORAH”

*One should try very, very hard so that every Jew, whoever he may be, has a shiur in learning Torah (*Shabbos Noach 5745*).

*When speaking to someone to be mekarev him to Judaism, Torah and mitzvos through mitzvaim etc. there is an easier way to influence him, by getting him to learn Torah in a way of understanding and intellectual grasp (*Naso 5745*).

*It used to be that Torah was above everything else so that when speaking about an orderly life, married life, first and foremost it was a given that after the wedding the young man would learn Torah for a while. As for a livelihood, the parents on both sides would ensure in whatever way that there should be no disturbances with worries about parnasa so the Torah study could be with purity and serenity.

This was a feeling not only for the parents but also for young people, both the boy and girl, the chassan and kalla. Even the maid, l’havdil, knew not to make noise by knocking on the door since the new chassan was sitting and learning and he was not to be disturbed (*11 Shvat 5718*).

*... When the children return home from school, Talmud Torah or yeshiva, their mother asks them to review what they learned for her ... learning with the mother, in her special way, with more warmth and feeling than the father (learning with him is more like a test, as is customary for the father to test his sons on their learning on Shabbos etc.). She adds enthusiasm to their learning as we can see (*Emor 5750*).

*The wife needs to oversee and urge her husband not to lie down to sleep at night before finishing his shiurim. Even when he claims he is tired and he will fall asleep while learning, she needs to explain to him that better he should fall asleep with a saying from Tanya or other s’farim than to fall asleep with worries (*Yisro 5744*).

*The wife needs to make demands and urge her husband regarding mitzvos including, of course, giving tz’daka and establishing times to learn, not to fulfill his obligation by learning Chitas but by having many set times for learning Torah and to keep to those times... (*Naso 5720*).

evening in the Kollel Menachem building. Every Monday you can see the beautiful sight of many Crown Heights residents flocking towards the beis midrash to learn together. Old and young, rabbanim and businessmen, they learn on their own, with chavrusos or in groups. Once in a while they invite a guest lecturer to give a shiur.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE ERA OF GEULA

At Yagdil Torah, technology is

used for just the purpose it was created – strengthening Torah and mitzvos. Via the internet site (YagdilTorah.org), people can find about the various shiurim in the neighborhood. One of the site’s sections provides an easy to use form which enables users to look for a chavrusa. You can specify your preferences: Where you want to learn, i.e., in a shul, home, or on the phone; when you want to learn; in what language; the subject and level; and the format, be it lesson or chavrusa.

The site provides other opportunities, which even cater to those who don’t live in Crown Heights, such as being able to download recordings of lectures and shiurim which can be listened to at home or in the car. You can also download pdf files of their brochures and find links to Torah databases on the internet.

The funding for all this is provided by members of Anash who appreciate the importance of the organization and volunteer to support it. Levy says there are cases where people made a donation and shortly thereafter told him about yeshuos they experienced.

THE WOMEN’S ROLE

Mrs. Browd does her share, mostly behind the scenes. She wants women to know the important part they play in their husband’s Torah study and how they often determine how much or how little their husbands learn. We see the close connection that women have with their husband’s learning from a letter the Rebbe wrote to N’shei U’Bnos Chabad (vol. 20, p. 332) in which he suggests that the women include a report about their husband’s shiurim along with their *pidyon nefesh*.

“When a woman encourages and enables her husband and sons to learn, she is a full partner in their learning and her z’chus is even greater. We can learn a lot from Rebbetzin Chana, who was moser nefesh to make ink so that her husband’s Torah would be preserved.

“Mesirus nefesh is required of us, too, and this can be expressed in various ways. For one woman it can be ‘freeing’ her husband so he can go to a shiur or to learn with a chavrusa. The Rebbe says that when you learn Torah, you have to be



Young and old learn b'chavrusa in the beis midrash

immersed in the learning, without thinking about other things. When a woman sends her husband to learn and does so cheerfully, she gives him the peace of mind to concentrate on his learning.

“Another form of mesirus nefesh that the Rebbe mentions is for a woman to forego luxuries so that her husband can devote less time to working and have more time to learn.”

THE STRAIGHT AND EASY WAY

When Levy talks about learning, you can tell that this is his *zahir t'fei*. “Without Torah study you cannot be a proper Jew, never mind a Chassid. We clearly see the change in someone when he starts learning Torah on a regular basis. The impact can be seen at home too. Torah changes a person’s outlook, refines his behavior, and brings unity and peace. When you learn Torah you know what to do. The Torah guides us in how to live. It is what has preserved the Jewish people for thousands of years in galus.”

We, who live in the final generation of galus and the first generation of Geula, feel a special connection to the Gemara in Sanhedrin, “The talmidim of Rabbi



This is how it began, with a Gemara shiur with neighbors in the building

Elozor asked: what should a person do to save himself from the birth pangs of Moshiach? He should be involved in Torah and acts of kindness.”

Let us conclude with a quote from the Rebbe from Shabbos Parshas Tazria-Metzora, 5751:

The explanation of the “straight path” to the hisgalus and coming of Moshiach through “malchus of tiferes” – practically speaking: ... “tiferes” is the inyan of Torah study and “malchus of tiferes” is learning Torah in inyanei Melech HaMoshiach and Inyanei Geula as they are explained in numerous places ...

In order to bring about the hisgalus and the coming of Moshiach immediately, every single person (men – those who sit in the tent (Yisachar) and businessmen (Z’vulun), as well as women and children, each according to their abilities) needs to increase their study of Torah (especially) in inyanei Moshiach and Geula.

Menachem Mendel’s physical life ended after one month and a week, but his spiritual life continues to flourish until the Resurrection of the Dead with the coming of Moshiach, speedily, now.

WHERE YOU'RE NEEDED, NOT WHERE YOU WANT TO BE

By S. Malachi



The walls of the large room are accustomed to the sounds of explosions and volleys of bullets, the sounds of war. However, these days, Yemos HaMoshiach, they are also witnessing the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy, “and they will beat their swords into plowshares.” We have already heard about tanks that were transformed into snow plows and missiles melted down into golf clubs, but a firing range that was turned into a “Beis Moshiach” is a step beyond.

In Dimona is a modest building where young people study Chassidus and incredible outreach work takes place. Oren Romano runs it with the support of the shliach in Dimona, Rabbi Yisroel Gliss.

Oren grew up in Dimona in a traditional family. The story of his journey to Chabad begins with the dream of making it big in America. Like many young people, he too went to the United States to make money.

DISCOVERING THE LIGHT IN FLORIDA

Oren landed in New York not far from 770, but it took him some time to get there. After a brief stay in New York, he moved on to Florida, where he began working for a home remodeling company. The first job he was assigned to was none other than the Moshiach Center directed by Rabbi Motti Anati, the shliach who exposed him to Toras ha’Chassidus and to the Rebbe.

For a year and a half Oren interacted with the T’mimim, learned and listened. It was there that he became engaged to his wife, Tammy, who stands by his side and has supported him all along, up to and including the opening of Beis Moshiach in Dimona. During the l’chaim, he met the shliach to his

city, Rabbi Yisroel Gliss, who happened to be in the area and was invited to the celebration by Itzik Shmueli.

At that time, an old childhood friend arrived in Florida. This was Boruch Ada, who would later become a major player at the Beis Moshiach in Dimona. Boruch also thought he was going to America to strike it rich and see the world, but when he saw the change in his friend Oren he realized that his plans too were going to change. He was drawn in to the spirit of Chabad, slowly but surely.

Boruch began attending shiurim and farbrengens that Oren hosted regularly and he soon came to feel at home at the Moshiach Center. Oren returned to Eretz Yisroel and married.

EVERYBODY SHOULD KNOW THERE'S A REBBE!

After the wedding the couple settled in Dimona and to Oren it was clear that wherever he would live, he was on shlichus. He felt that spreading Judaism and Chassidus was the most natural and correct thing to do. Motti Anati of Florida was his role model.

“When you see a shliach who operates with such utter devotion to the Rebbe and uncovers the hidden spark in every Jew, you want to do it too to repay his work in kind.”

Oren began working in the roofing business while simultaneously starting shiurim and spreading the Besuras Ha'Geula. He felt that all the kochos he got from the Rebbe had to be used in his hometown and he began working under the direction and with the help of the shliach, R' Gliss.

Oren has a goal, to bring the Besuras Ha'Geula to every resident

Oren and his wife wrote to the Rebbe and put the letter into a volume of Igros Kodesh. “A shliach has to be where he is needed and not where he wants to be...” Needless to say, they were bowled over by this answer and their thoughts about leaving were shelved.

of Dimona, and ultimately to everybody in the world! Everybody should know there is a Rebbe, Nasi HaDor, who is chai v'kayam and continues to lead the nation; that the is Geula is imminent.

In the past he had been involved in the local entertainment industry and his name was known among the youth of the city so he used his name to be mekarev them.

“There is a mashal in Chassidus that when you lift the lowest part, you lift everything on top of it too. Apparently that is why I am successful in my work with them...” he says matter-of-factly.

When he observed the frightening phenomenon of Jewish girls lured by the various non-Jewish minorities in Israel, he got involved in rescuing them. He and his wife work tirelessly to save these souls from assimilation.

THE PLACE YOU ARE NEEDED, NOT THE PLACE YOU WANT

His outreach work expanded but he missed Florida.

“Abroad, among goyim, everybody feels Jewish. Over there we would host dozens of mekuravim on Shabbos. The T'mimim of the Machon HaSmicha would come and create an atmosphere of Chassidish chayus and Geula and it was all so sweet...”

Oren discovered that in Israel it's much harder to bring people to a shiur or Shabbos meal and the financial situation wasn't good either. The couple wanted to return to Florida, to Motti Anati where they had gotten their first taste of Olam Haba. They thought they would be able to continue working there on a large scale and more easily.

Oren and his wife wrote to the Rebbe and put the letter into a volume of Igros Kodesh. The answer they opened to said: A person's emissary is like himself. You want to be in Montreal for certain reasons but you need to be in Eretz Yisroel, “a land which has the eyes of G-d upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year.” A shliach has to be where he is needed and not where he wants to be.

It also said in the letter: The word “shliach” [in Hebrew] with the addition of the letter Yud is numerically equivalent to the word “Moshiach.” When the ten soul powers are used, the shliach becomes part of the meshaleiach.

Needless to say, they were bowled over by this answer and their thoughts about leaving were shelved.

TAKING CONTROL OF AN EVENT

The early days weren't easy. He remembers, “Two people showed up

SHMA SAVED HIS LIFE

In the course of his outreach work, Oren visits the industrial section where he puts t'fillin on with many employees. Ronny works in a building supplies factory and is always "pressed for time." He would regularly decline to put on t'fillin but you could see that his soul wanted to do it. Oren explained to him that if he had no other option he could put on the t'fillin and just say the first line of Shma. Ronny agreed to this and every day he would say the pasuk. Occasionally, the t'filla would lengthen to include the entire Shma.

One day, the factory got an order for merchandise somewhere on the Dimona-Be'er Sheva highway where the Bedouin live. Ronny went there and the Bedouins pointed to a dirt road where a Subaru was parked. "Drive over to the car," they told him and got him off the main highway. When he stopped the truck the door suddenly opened and a big guy sat in the seat next to him and ordered him to drive.

Ronny was terrified. He trembled in fear but had no choice except to continue following the Subaru. A few minutes later he was taken off the truck and put into the Subaru. The two people who sat next to him forced his head down as one of them rubbed his throat menacingly. Ronny was deathly afraid. He couldn't see anything and didn't know where they were taking him. The pressure on his throat increased and he felt he was going to die.

In those moments, with the last of his strength, Ronny whispered the only Jewish line he knew by heart, the Shma. The pressure on his neck ceased and air filled his lungs. This happened three times – three times he couldn't breathe and three times the reciting of Shma saved his life. In hindsight Ronny thinks that his kidnappers did not realize they were choking him to death.

After a short trip that seemed like an eternity, Ronny was thrown out of the car and left alone on the deserted road. He saw a military jeep approaching and he ran and waved his hands, screaming for help. When he told the soldiers that he had come from the Be'er Sheva-Dimona highway they told him he was in the hills of Chevron.

Ronny returned home in good health and told everyone: What saved me was the pasuk, Shma Yisroel.

for our first program." But slowly the numbers grew.

At first Beis Moshiach began having minyanim for Shabbos with a borrowed Torah scroll from R' Gliss and from there they expanded to activities throughout the week.

One day, he read Rabbi Shmuelevitz's column in *Beis Moshiach* magazine which was about a shliach who went to an event where he explained to the crowd that he was usually invited to speak but if he wasn't, he invited himself. He read about another shliach who went

to a fancy event and took control by playing Chassidische CD's and having some T'mimim do a Chassidic dance. Oren adopted this approach at bar mitzvas and weddings and soon he did not have to take control but was invited to these events.

WHAT HASHEM WANTS

Oren remembers a special story that took place in the early days of Beis Moshiach. It was right after he got married. One of their Sheva Brachos took place at the home of a

friend named Ilan. Oren sat with his friends and the seudas mitzva turned into a farbrengen. Rabbi Netanel Boni farbrenged with them and when he had had some mashke to drink he said to the host: What a Chassidische farbrengen can accomplish, the Angel Michael cannot accomplish. What is your request?

The host, who had been married several years and did not have children, asked for a son and was blessed by the people sitting there.

Time passed and Oren got busy and forgot about the farbrengen. Then one day he and the mekuravim of Beis Moshiach were invited to the pidyon ha'ben of Ilan's firstborn though he still had not remembered what took place at the farbrengen. During the seuda and farbrengen at the pidyon ha'ben, R' Boni said: Ilan, say l'chaim! You remember that we sat here a year ago? What did you ask for? A son. You got it!

Oren decided to hold a thanksgiving meal at Beis Moshiach and the miracle story was related firsthand. Many people attended the event including new people. One of the newcomers who had the same problem got up and said, "I also want a bracha. It doesn't matter to me what – whatever Hashem wants, a son, a daughter."

The man did not maintain a connection with them though. Later on Oren found out that this man had heard dire things in connection with Geula, about the war of Gog and Magog and other tzaros that would befall the Jewish people, and this was the reason he stayed away. Whenever he was invited to some program, he declined. One day Oren decided to take action. "I took hold of him and said you have to come with us now."

It was late Shabbos afternoon and Oren was holding his oldest son, Eitan Yisroel. He reminded

himself that the man needed a bracha for children and he said, "It's an opportunity to ask for a bracha." The man looked at him in surprise and said, "What are you talking about? My wife is about to give birth any day." Oren was excited and he reminded him about the bracha he had gotten at the farbrengens which was about to be fulfilled.

When the woman gave birth to twins, everybody saw how the father's words, "a son, a daughter" had come true. Today, the happy father is a member of the community and he wears a hat and jacket.

A WARM RECEPTION

One day Oren got news from his old friend Boruch in Florida that he was returning to Eretz Yisroel. Oren knew how hard it was for a fresh mekurav to come to Eretz Yisroel and he wanted to see Boruch continuing on his chosen path. He knew that meeting up with old friends and relatives would present him with difficult challenges. So Oren prepared a surprise for Boruch, a bunch of activities including mitzvaim, house calls, shiurim and farbrengens that would ensure a gentle and Chassidische landing.

It worked out very well and Boruch went to learn at the yeshiva in Ramat Aviv and then returned to Dimona where he became Oren's right-hand man.

LOTS OF SHIURIM

A day at Beis Moshiaich begins with a Tanya shiur with Oren which is from 6:30-7:30. Refreshments and hot drinks are served as they are in Florida. In this shiur, people become acquainted with the foundations of Chassidus, to the spiritual makeup of a Jew, and they learn what is expected of them.

"At one of the shiurim, after we



Oren with Rabbi Motti Anati

We must instill in the mekuravim that the Rebbe is not someone who once lived but the present Nasi. Our generation is thirsty and seeks meaning and the truth. When you give it to them, they are drawn to it.

learned about the level of the beinoni, someone got up and said with a smile: When I came here I thought I was already on my way to becoming the tzaddik ha'dor!"

After the davening, Oren goes to work which is also connected with hafatza. He manages a Judaica store. Since the store is located opposite the cultural center, many children pass by who recognize Oren from Mesibos Shabbos and they yell out the p'sukim to him.

Every evening there are shiurim at Beis Moshiaich from 7:30-9:30. Among the topics covered are: T'filla – the meaning of the words etc., Chumash – the weekly parsha, Tanya, maamarim from Likkutei Torah, halacha and Gemara. On Shabbos there is a Chassidus shiur at 8:15 in the morning and before Mincha with R' Naftali Boni.

"Our goal is to uncover the pintele Yid and we do this by providing the neshama with all it needs, Nigleh, Chassidus, and halacha, with an emphasis on Geula and Moshiaich."

A special shiur on D'var Malchus is given by Rabbi Ronen Telker of Be'er Sheva and takes place on Wednesdays. "When we learn the sichos of 5751-52 we feel we must bring the Geula," says Oren.

TO TELL THE TRUTH

When he is asked where he gets the energy to continue doing this outreach work in addition to his parnasa and the other things going on his life, he says, "We have to focus on the fact that the Rebbe is Moshiaich and is chai v'kayam and then we can go 'on dry land within the sea.' When we know that the Rebbe is looking at all our activities

it gives us endless kochos.”

Oren sees the secret to the success in his outreach work as sticking to the Rebbe’s horaos while emphasizing the focus on inyanei Moshiach and Geula which the Rebbe spoke about nonstop in the latter years.

Oren has a clear system: The minute you tell someone that you want to change them, and show them that they’re wrong and you’re right, you’ve lost. You do have to say the truth but it’s how you say it that matters. You have to say that the Rebbe is *chai v’kayam* with eternal life, a *neshama* in a physical body. At first it’s hard to accept this and it seems off-the-wall but then people begin to ask questions and they learn and discover that this belief is firmly sourced.

If you want to influence others, you have to remember that learning Chassidus without the Rebbe’s last *sichos* which contain horaos about how to live with the times, will give you *mekuravim* who never become Chassidim. You have to learn with people the *maamer* that talks about “*ana nasiv malka*” and the *sichos* of 5751-52, about the Rebbe, Moshiach, and proclaiming “*Yechi ha’Melech*.” We must instill in the *mekuravim* that the Rebbe is not someone who once lived but the present *Nasi*. Our generation is thirsty and seeks meaning and the truth. When you give it to them, they are drawn to it.

HOW COME NO ONE COLLECTS SAND?

Every Shabbos Oren and Boruch organize *Mesibos* Shabbos gatherings around town. On peak Shabbasos they reach 400 children. They divide the neighborhoods between them and go to where the children gather and they announce: *Mesibos* Shabbos for boys and girls! The children, who expect them,

come running and the fun begins.

After saying the *p’sukim* and hearing a Chassidishe story, Oren shows them a picture of the Rebbe and says: Who wants Moshiach?

Everybody waves their hand and then he asks, “Why?” He gets all sorts of answers. This is an opportunity to teach them about the Geula and what awaits us in *Yemos HaMoshiach* through examples and parables.

“How come nobody collects sand and brings it home?” he asks the children. “Because it’s not worth anything,” they answer. “That’s how we will look at money when Moshiach comes,” he tells them.

Oren relates, “There were twins who, every time we said the *p’sukim* and said the words ‘*dira ba’tachtonim*’ would giggle and disturb us [because ‘*tachtonim*’ in modern Hebrew is underwear – ed]. One Shabbos I quieted them down and explained the meaning of the words *tachton* and *elyon* and connected it to preparing the world for Moshiach which we do, we who live ‘*ba’tachtonim*.’ From that Shabbos on, the children’s behavior improved. When the *Mesibos* Shabbos were over, the twins didn’t want to go, they wanted me to continue.”

SHLIACH IN A TIME OF SORROW

As a Chassid, Oren doesn’t forget the goal even in difficult times. A year ago, Dimona was shocked by a homicide-suicide bomber attack which miraculously did not end worse than it did. Oren was in the Judaica store at the time which is near the business district.

“I heard the explosion and did not know what happened. I felt that something bad had occurred. Then I heard someone say, ‘It was an attack!’ I told the person with me,

‘You stay here in the store’ and I took my *t’fillin* and ran to the scene.”

Many young people had already gathered and Oren took out his *t’fillin* and within seconds there was a long line of people who wanted to put on *t’fillin*. It happened to be right after a Shabbos Geula and Moshiach for “graduates” of the Moshiach Center in Florida which R’ Anati has every year. R’ Mendy Hartman, who met with Oren on Shabbos and knew about his work in Dimona, contacted him immediately after the terrorist attack and the next morning he brought a *mitzva tank* and Oren and Boruch got to work.

People were shocked and scared and many of them went to the scene of the attack where they saw the *mitzva tank* which boosted their morale. People went over, asked questions, and put on *t’fillin*, of course. More and more people approached, wanting to know the Rebbe’s message at a time like this. Oren and Boruch put *t’fillin* on with them and gave out Moshiach cards with the Rebbe’s picture along with this message: The only solution is Moshiach.

Oren is grateful to all those who support their work, first and foremost the *shliach* to Dimona, R’ Gliss; the many *T’mimim* he met in Florida who keep in touch and still help out, R’ Itzik Shmueli who was with Oren throughout his *t’shuva* process and who comes every *Simchas Torah* and dances with the crowd in a parade in the city, the brothers Yoel and Zelig Mifei who come for the *Yomim Nora’im* and help with *chazanus* and *mitvtza shofar*, Avi Tzadok who comes for Shabbasos throughout the year. And from Florida: Mumi Vanu, Shai Meara and Danny Birnbaum and last but not least, Rabbi Motti Anati.

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

FRENCH REVOLUTION

The Rebbe said that in the days of Napoleon and (l'havdil) the Alter Rebbe, France was a country of klipa while today it is a center of Torah and Chassidus and the wellsprings of Chassidus even issue forth from there. The following are some stories about the wellsprings of Chassidus in France.



SMILING FRENCHMEN

The shliach in Lyons, Rabbi Shmuel Gurewitz, was told in yechidus, “Work with a smile because the French love people who smile.” Indeed, if you go to France (as I have done on several occasions), you see the warmth and joy. You also see it in 770 when you meet groups of French visitors and even with a single Frenchman. They speak energetically and with joy. The French love a smile on your face.

I noticed another thing on my visits to France. I was there once for a day, for the vort of a mekurav of ours who got engaged to a French girl. I asked a member of the community to show me around Paris for an hour or two. I assumed he would proudly show me the Eiffel Tower, the Opera, or the Louvre but he took me to the Pletzel, to the old shul in the Jewish quarter. “This is where the Rebbe would daven when

he lived here,” he explained.

The French maintain that by the Rebbe living in Paris for a number of years, he affected all the future activities there and in all of France. The entire spiritual revolution and the hundreds of baalei t’shuva are in the Rebbe’s merit. “The Rebbe plowed and we merely harvest the fruit,” said my guide.

IN THE MERIT OF MEZUZOS

In Lyons there is a network of Chabad schools for boys and girls that Rabbi Gurewitz and other shluchim established. A number of years ago, the shluchim bought a large building for all the mosdos but they were unable to keep up with the mortgage payments and were in danger of losing the building.

They wrote to the Rebbe and asked for a bracha. The Rebbe wrote

that they should put up mezuzos in all of the rooms. They discovered that many mezuzos were missing so they took care of it right away.

Just then, a delegation came from the court to see the building and decide to whom to transfer ownership. The judge, who led the delegation, saw that there were mezuzos on all the doorposts and he immediately ruled that the building should remain under Chabad ownership.

Later on, the judge explained that his wife was Jewish and he had learned from her that in the mezuzah holder is a parchment which has words of faith in G-d written on it. If Chabad bothered to put up words of faith in G-d on every doorpost, then they could be relied upon to use the building for proper education and they would also pay what they owed.



The French maintain that by the Rebbe living in Paris for a number of years, he affected all the future activities there and in all of France.

Daniel Kaminsky meeting the Rebbe

IN THE MERIT OF ONE PRAYER

In order to write this article, I spoke with the mashpia, Rabbi Avrohom Boruch Pevzner of Yerushalayim, who spent his childhood in France. He just recently filled his father's position as rav of the Chabad community in France.

To illustrate what a revolution they have seen there, he told me that when they celebrated his bar mitzva there was no kosher l'mehadrin caterer in all of Paris and they had to prepare the meal at home in their kitchen. Today there are dozens of catering companies that are mehadrin.

Nine months ago, the Chassid, Rabbi Hillel Pevzner, one of the Chabad rabbanim in France for decades, passed away. The night before his funeral a man came to their house and sobbed. He said to

the mourning sons, "The rabbi was not only your father but my father as well."

He said that 25 years earlier he was employed somewhere where he had to work on Shabbos. One time, he had vacation on Shabbos and he went looking for a shul so he could daven. Fortunately, he met R' Pevzner and he asked him where the shul is. R' Pevzner invited him to go along with him to the shul, where he davened the entire t'filla.

After the davening R' Pevzner asked him, "Where do you daven every Shabbos?" The man said he usually worked on Shabbos. R' Pevzner "informed" him that from then on, every Shabbos, he should come and daven at the shul and with Hashem's help, they would not fire him.

The man went to his manager and asked for the day off every Shabbos. The manager agreed and "Since then, I did not leave the rav.

Twice since then, the rabbi moved to another building and each time, I moved along with him. Thanks to him, I began keeping Shabbos, to learn Torah, and to be a Jew."

ONE STUDENT OF MULLE AZIMOV

One of the founders of the Chabad community and Chabad activity in Paris and France is Rabbi Shmuel (Mulle) Azimov. I spoke with one of his students who lives in Eretz Yisroel now, R' Daniel Kaminsky, who told me the following stories.

While he was attending the Jewish school Yavneh, he also helped the Chabad mosdos by fundraising. He traveled to the south of France and got nice donations for the Beis Rivka school, located in the suburb of Yerres near Brunoy, headed by Rabbi Shonthal. At the end of the trip, Daniel brought an envelope with a list of names and the amounts of the donations. There were an additional fifty francs in the envelope and the secretary wrote that this was Daniel Kaminsky's donation.

The secretary made another mistake and bought Daniel a raffle ticket for a trip to the Rebbe among the raffles of the girls of Beis Rivka. On the day of the big dinner, everybody wondered who the lucky girl would be who would win the raffle. The winner was announced and it was Daniel Kaminsky!

Everybody laughed but Daniel did end up going to the Rebbe and receiving a bottle of mashke from him. Daniel was asked to announce who the bottle was for and he said, "For Brunoy." The Rebbe asked him to announce it again and to say precisely whom it was for. Daniel announced, "For Beis Rivka," and the Rebbe smiled broadly and motioned to him questioningly, as to what connection he had with Beis Rivka.

“THE POEM OF BAUDELAIRE”

“R’ Azimov taught us,” said Daniel, “that even before a big test you should ask the Rebbe for a bracha. Although my father is not a Lubavitcher Chassid, he agreed to send letters for me to the Rebbe. He usually sent them on time and the tests were fine.

“One time, my father forgot to send the letter and it was a very important test. The night before the test, I asked him whether the letter had been sent. He looked in his pockets and to his dismay he found the letter. He hurried to send it. He found a branch of the post office that was open until midnight and sent the letter from there. I told him that Chassidim say that the moment the letter is sent, you have the bracha. My father remained skeptical.

“To his astonishment, within a short time he received a letter from the Rebbe and the date (including the post mark in New York) was the day the letter was sent!”

Daniel continued taking his matriculation exams and was up to the French literature test. He had to read (and comprehend) sixty books written by the best French writers. Then he had to meet with a professor who would choose one of the sixty books and discuss it with him.

Daniel spent most of his time learning Torah and doing mitzvos and out of the sixty books he read just one, the *Poem of Baudelaire*.

Daniel wrote to the Rebbe before the test and mentioned the name of the only book he had read. The day of the test, Daniel waited on line. His father, a superintendent of several schools himself, came to support his son during the test. His turn came and the woman pointed to a book on the list but then

The judge, who led the delegation, saw that there were mezuzos on all the doorposts and he immediately ruled that the building should remain under Chabad ownership.

suddenly changed her mind and skipped to another spot on the list which was, of course, the *Poem of Baudelaire*. He did well on the test and then continued to study Torah.

MEETING ON A DISTANT ISLAND

Daniel worked in diamonds and precious stones. Before every trip out of France he asked the Rebbe for a bracha. One day, as he was about to leave for Sri Lanka (an island near India), he prepared plenty of kosher food and asked for the Rebbe’s bracha. The Rebbe answered, “there should be good news” and “miracles of miracles.”

Ten days later, in Sri Lanka, most of his food had been eaten or had spoiled. Shabbos was approaching and he did not have wine or challa; he had nothing but some broken matzos. Then he came up with an idea. He left the hotel, bought some bunches of grapes and made wine out of them. For his seuda he bought a guava, a coconut and a mango.

Ten minutes before Shabbos he was sitting in the hotel lobby when he heard someone call out, “Hey

you, good Shabbos.” He looked around and saw a Lubavitcher who told him he was on his way to Thailand but due to a problem with the plane, he had to spend Shabbos in Sri Lanka. The man invited Daniel to his room where he had plenty of challa, meat and fish that his wife had cooked before he left, and together they had a wonderful Shabbos.

12 YEAR OLD GENIUS IN BRUNOY YESHIVA

I was asked to tell this story without revealing the person’s name.

A talmid in the Chabad yeshiva in Brunoy studied diligently and made a siyum on the tractate Bava Basra. He paid special attention to the chapter *chezkas ha’battim* with all the additions of the Ketzos HaChoshen, until he knew it all by heart.

When the semester was over, this twelve year old went to a yeshivas kayitz. At the time, there were a number of Litvishe yeshiva bachurim from Gateshead, England, there. One of these bachurim discovered this young Lubavitcher genius and he spent the entire time marveling over him. The Litvishe bachur ended up leaving Gateshead and going to learn in Kfar Chabad. He learned to be a Chassid and eventually established a Chassidishe home.

One day, a guest from Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, visited Brunoy. R’ Goren spoke in learning with the bachurim of the yeshiva and was very impressed by them. He said this was the first time in his life that he saw such young bachurim who were proficient in the commentaries on the Gemara and Shulchan Aruch on such a high level. R’ Goren said he would report this to the Rebbe when he would meet him the next time.

If this isn’t a “French Revolution,” what is?

THE BLACK CURTAIN

By Aryeh Gotfryd

New discoveries in nanoscience give us insight into creation, our personal lives, and the times we live in.

Let's go back to the beginning of the universe – before the real Big Bang, when Hashem said “Let there be light, and there was light.” What was there then? Nothingness, void, blackness. In Hebrew, it's called *ayin*.

But what was before the *ayin*? Of course it was, and still is, Hashem alone. The *ayin* is *tzimtzum*, a withholding of the divine presence to make room for a world and to allow us to have free choice. In order for us to exist, we need a separation, or at least a perceived separation between G-d and us. This separation is also referred to as a *paroches*, or curtain.

Separation is nasty. It creates anxiety and confusion, enables evil, and catalyzes conflict. In Chassidic terms, separation is about *galus*, exile from before G-d's presence. On this side of the black curtain, life can be bleak, our future looks hopeless.

We know of course that all this is temporary and soon Hashem's game of hide and seek will be up. In the meantime we have to open up our eyes and see that ultimately the black curtain does not define reality and it's really within our ability to

discover the light within it, peer beyond it and even pull it aside.

New discoveries in nanoscience help us do just that.

Nano stuff is tiny, measured in nanometers which are only a millionth of a millimeter wide. The term nanotechnology refers to the whole gamut of infinitesimal gizmos created in recent years that promise to benefit our lives.

For example, using a chemical niobium nitride (NbN), scientists have developed the blackest material known to man, thousands of times blacker than black paint. Uniquely unreflective, it absorbs nearly 100% of all light that hits it. It also happens to be one of the thinnest materials known to man, only a few nanometers thick, or about one ten-thousandth of the thickness of a human hair.

The uncanny blackness of NbN is due to its low reflectivity and high light sensitivity across a broad spectrum of wavelengths. That allows it to capture nearly every photon of light that hits it. The boon for the solar energy industry is tremendous as less light wasted means more light converted into electricity.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe teaches us that science and technology contain valuable lessons to help us understand ourselves, our Creator, and our mission to reveal Him in this world.

Light normally prevails. Turn on a light in a dark room and instantly the darkness vanishes. But there is a kind of darkness that is so powerful, it can completely overpower light, just like NbN does. But ultimately, the mountains of separation that darkness creates are just tiny molehills. Being only a few atoms thick, we could walk right through a veil of NbN or blow it away with our breath, allowing the light to shine through unhindered.

We know that the divine attribute of *g'vura*, which is the source of *tzimtzum* is really there for a higher purpose, a concealment for the sake of a greater revelation. This is like NbN, that traps light and transforms it into electricity that can then be used for any and all purposes.

Why be intimidated by darkness when it's only a little nothing, there for our benefit in any case? In the ultimate redemption, may it come speedily, Tisha B'Av, the darkest day on the Jewish calendar, will become a great Yom Tov.

In the meantime, many Yekkes and Litvish communities hang a black curtain in front of the ark on the Shabbos before Tisha B'Av to indicate the depth of our sorrow. Chassidim, on the other hand, treat that Shabbos as the happiest Shabbos of the year to ensure that we don't fall into sadness or mourning which are forbidden on Shabbos.

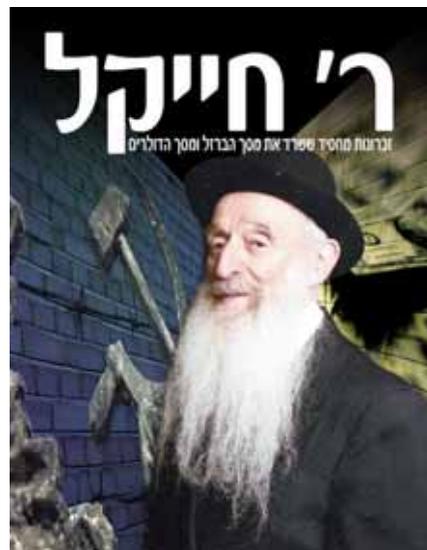
Here too, NbN teaches us a lesson. The darkness may seem overwhelming but it's flimsy. And whatever darkness is there can be transformed to useful light as well.

The Rebbe teaches us that revelations in science are the result

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EPISODES IN THE POKING CAMP

By Rabbi Shneur Zalman Chanim



Honoring my father with the first hakafa

“After years of suffering in the communist hell, we Lubavitchers felt like we were in Gan Eden in the DP camp. We enjoyed the freedom and were happy to be able to finally live like human beings, as Jews, as religious Jews, and of course, as Chassidim. The faces of the Chassidim expressed their gratitude to Hashem. We walked the streets of

the Jewish camp with a sparkle in our eyes and felt a powerful desire to kiss the air of freedom.”

That is how the Chassidic writer, R' Yehoshua Dubrawsky described the emotions of the Chassidim in the DP camp in Poking in an article that was printed in the *Algemeiner Journal*. He was right. The Chassidim rejoiced and did not

complain about the difficulties and poverty which were their lot. They lived with the hope of seeing the Rebbe face to face and giving him nachas.

I know, for example, that on Shabbos, 18 Elul, 1946, about three weeks after they arrived in the camp, R' Nissan Nemenov farbrenged in the shul of the Aguda and the farbrengen was very joyous. The other refugees, who participated in the farbrengen, did not understand what all the rejoicing was about. How was it that despite the feeling of temporariness, despite the lack of stability and the tension and hardships, that Chabad Chassidim were happy?

In my parents' house a routine of sorts set in. My mother ran the household and was busy cooking, doing laundry, fixing up the room that served as their home for nearly a year, and mainly with chesed. My sisters went to the Beis Sarah-Beis Rikva school that was set up in the camp and my father traveled to Munich and made efforts to support the yeshiva.

There were 150 bachurim in the yeshiva and most of them had no family in the camp. At first they ate only the packaged items they

received from the Joint. Even when some kindly women from the community cooked for them, it wasn't organized.

To cook for dozens of bachurim was no easy task. First, you had to build a primitive stove out of bricks. Then you had to chop wood and make the fire. If the fire died down you had to get it going again by waving a piece of cardboard, like a bellows, and you had to wait for hours until the food was cooked. When the food was finally served it had the appearance, taste, and smell of soot, but nobody complained.

How exciting it was when they bought a coal stove for the yeshiva which had not just one fire but two, and they could put two pots on it at one time! Mumme Ida was given the official job of cook for yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Peking. Everybody called her "Mumme" which means "Aunt." Any older woman was called "Doda" or "Mumme" or "Tzatzza" in Russian. Every older man was called "Dod" or "Feter" or "Dzadze."

My father worked hard to build up the yeshiva and the bachurim. Although the bachurim received basic supplies from the Joint, as everybody did, it wasn't enough and it did not go beyond the basics. Also my father knew that the melamdin, mashpiim, and roshei yeshivos had left Russia with nothing and the small amount of money they earned was not enough to put them on their feet.

It wasn't only in the DP camp that people lived in poverty. The German economy was in a shambles and citizens lived hand to mouth. Because of the massive bombing of German cities by the Allies, there was also a dearth of living quarters, food and gas. Thousands of refugees



A request for a set of Chumashim

from Eastern Europe only made the economic problems worse.

Germans were given food for coupons, 800 calories a day (in contrast to 2000 calories that the Jews in the refugee camps received), which did little to satisfy their hunger. Many of them descended upon the farmers in the villages, who sold their wares at steep prices or in exchange for valuable goods. Due to the lack of fuel, many trees were cut down without permission, and trainloads of coal were robbed.

Out of sight of the law and to the consternation of the American occupational government, a black market developed where you could buy rare items such as eggs, flour, sugar, butter, chocolate, meat, and cigarettes. The price of a box of cigarettes on the black market, for example, was 120 marks.

In order to earn some money, residents of the DP camps did illegal business in foodstuffs on the black

market. The American government showed zero tolerance towards the black market dealers and they were punished severely and sent to jail. Despite the danger, my father traveled to Munich, the big city, at his first opportunity. Munich was where the refugee centers and various aid committees were based.

As a loyal *shtadlan* he made the rounds of the organizations and asked for and demanded help for the yeshiva. He also met, for the first time, with the heads of Vaad Hatzala of Agudas HaRabbanim in the United States, particularly with Rabbi Sneg a"h, with whom he became friends. He also came in contact with members of the Joint and received additional food from them for the yeshiva bachurim like flour, rice, coffee, and

cigarettes, items that were not readily available.

My father knew the danger he would be in if he was found with items like these and yet, with the help of older bachurim from the yeshiva, he brought his cache from Munich to Peking. They sold the coffee and cigarettes on the black market and with this money they ran the yeshiva and paid the staff.

R' Yechezkel Brod a"h was one of the older bachurim who went with my father to Munich. He told me how he and another bachur waited until my father gave them full suitcases to bring to the camp. Despite the roadblocks which were set up to catch swindlers – those who dealt on the black market, they got through without incident.

"Your father, who was dressed as a businessman, was frequently subjected to inspection, but who would suspect us, two bachurim

wearing shmattes and carrying patched up suitcases, of carrying precious merchandise?”

My father was able to make contacts with members of the committee who ran the camp, with askanim of all groups, and even with some key figures in the military government. They all loved him and admired his good heart and his desire to help. When they celebrated a Hachnasas Seifer Torah in the camp, bringing it to the shul of the members of Beitar, for example, they honored my father with the first hakafa and not the rabbanim or mashpiim who were older than him.

When R' Sneg, one of the leaders of Hatzala in Munich, got to know my father well, he admired his work for the Klal and especially for yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, which he did before worrying about his own parnasa. He offered to give my father money with which he could do business and support himself and his family, but my father refused. He also firmly refused to take food products or clothing for his family.

“One time, which was an exception,” said my father, “was on one of my visits to R' Sneg when he asked me, as usual, ‘Nu, R' Chaikel, perhaps I can give you something this time?’ I responded swiftly with my request, ‘I know it’s a difficult request under the circumstances, but perhaps you can get me a set of Chumashim so I will be able to learn with my daughters?’”

R' Sneg fulfilled this request and procured a beautiful set of Chumashim that were printed in Austria. These Chumashim are still in my father’s house.

R' Sneg took an active role in the rehabilitation of the war survivors, in saving Jewish children and in providing religious services to refugees when he worked under the auspices of the Vaad Hatzala of the Igud HaRabbanim in Munich. He

One Purim, when R' Tuvia was merry with wine, he began to turn his friend's hat around. Later he explained, “At first, Jews wore hats without brims and whenever they wanted to, they could look up and see the heavens...”

Then Russia decreed visors must be worn, in order to conceal the heavens, but you were able to move the hat sideways... Now the Satan has invented the wide brim all around so that no matter how you turn the hat, you can't look at the heavens.”

also led the rabbanim who were preoccupied with halachic questions that resulted from the war.

Among the rabbanim that he consulted with were the Lubavitcher rabbanim: R' Avrohom Eliyahu Plotkin, R' Shneur Zalman Garelik, R' Shmaryahu Sossonkin, R' Menachem Mendel Dubrawsky, and R' Mordechai Perlow. When R' Sneg called for a meeting of the g'dolei ha'rabbanim to resolve some of the problems, especially complicated questions about allowing women to remarry, my father was able to have the Lubavitcher rabbanim seated in the front row as was fitting.

Unfortunately, I only remember the names of two rabbanim who were called to this meeting: the rav of Marmorish and the rav of Krasna, who were great Hungarian rabbanim who lived together with the Lubavitchers in the Poking camp.

My father saw the Chabad rabbanim who had come to Munich wearing *kasketen*, Russian visors and shmattes and was upset by the difference between their appearance and that of the other rabbanim, who wore silk kapotes and velvet hats. So when R' Sneg told my father that the rabbanim were hosted in his home as soon as they arrived in Munich, and they made a very favorable impression on him the first time they met, my father asked him for some money so he could buy them dignified clothing. In general, this was something my father considered very important, that a rav who represented Lubavitch and the Rebbe should receive all the respect due a great rav.

My father said that among our rabbanim there were some who refused to exchange their kasket for a hat with a brim all around, particularly R' Dubrawsky and R' Nissan Nemenov. Then someone wrote the Rebbe about this or perhaps sent a picture of the rabbanim, and a letter or instruction

arrived from the Rebbe Rayatz stating that the rabbanim should wear dignified clothing and change their hats.

They say about R' Tuvia Belkin, who was a Chabad Chassid and rav of the Tzemach Tzedek shul, where he taught Chassidus every Shabbos for eight consecutive hours, that one Purim, when he was merry with wine, he began to turn his friend's hat around.

When the friend asked him why he was doing this, R' Tuvia explained, "At first, Jews wore round hats without brims and whenever they wanted to, they could look up and see the heavens and think of Who created it. Then, when the evil kingdom of Russia decreed that hats with visors must be worn, in order to conceal the heavens, you were able to move the hat sideways and see the heavens. But now the Satan has wised up and has invented the modern hat with a wide brim all around so that no matter how you turn the hat, you can't look at the heavens."

Speaking of dignified clothing, I heard that when the Klausenberger Rebbe, the great tzaddik, Rabbi Yekusiel Yehuda Halberstam zt"l, was staying in the Poking camp after losing his entire family in the war, he once noticed a girl wearing shoes without stockings. He asked her: My daughter, how can a Jewish girl walk around without stockings? She replied that she didn't own any.

The Klausenberger Rebbe took off his shoes, removed his stockings and gave them to the girl, saying, "I can walk around without socks but a Jewish girl is commanded to cover her legs." (It is said that during the Shiva for the Klausenberger Rebbe that very girl, then grown up, paid a call and brought those black socks that she had kept for fifty years).

The following story shows how poor people were in the Poking



R' Chaikel, first at the right, farbrengen in Poking in those days

camp. R' Yechezkel Brod, known as Chatzkel, was getting married and the Chassidishe women volunteered to help prepare the wedding feast. They managed to get a white dress for the kalla, but what about Chatzkel? The American army donated undershirts and underpants, shirts, coats and pants, but all the army-issued clothing was olive green. How could Chatzkel, a yeshiva bachur, go to his chuppa wearing green?

Some ladies decided that since they did not have new fabric with which to make a suit for him, they would come up with something else that would suit a chassan. They undid the stitches in the suit that he wore out of Russia, the suit that had served him as a smoking jacket, a coat, and as a pillow and blanket during their wandering. Then they turned it inside out, sewed it up and voila, a new suit.

After hours of dancing, and when R' Nissan had drunk quite a bit, he sat down to farbreng and shared what was on his mind. He was upset, as mashpia and menahel of Tomchei T'mimim, that Chatzkel had excessive pleasure from his

"new" suit.

"Gevald, what happened to you, Chatzkel? When Hashem showed you miracles and took you out of prison, from the hands of the NKVD, out of Russia, from servitude to freedom, what should you have done as a token of thanks? You should have learned Toras HaNigleh and toiled in Toras HaChassidus, learned and davened at length, thought about a subject in Chassidus, learned Reishis Chochma, and desired to climb spiritually. And what do I see that you've done? You put all your focus into a new suit. Gevald Geshri'en!"

Someone whispered in R' Nissan's ear that this wasn't a new suit, but R' Nissan didn't accept that and continued to say that it didn't matter whether the suit was new or not. What mattered was that he sensed that Chatzkel took pleasure in it. "How did we become so *megusham* (materialistic)? Gevald, gevald! Chatzkel, a Tamim, a baal mesirus nefesh, who learned in Tomchei T'mimim, how could you fall so far and waste your precious time to have a suit sewn for you?"

I heard from my father about another incident that took place in Peking but I think that if I write about it, it will only diminish from the vivid description written by the talented author, R' Yehoshua Dubrawski. I have translated the story as he wrote it:

In the Waldstat Camp lived thousands of Jews from all segments of Jewry: religious-Chassidic Jews from various Chassidic groups, Aguda, Mizrachi, Beitar, Mapai, Mapam, and HaShomer HaTzair. Unfortunately, most of the residents of the camp were not religious. Thus, when the internal committee of the camp was elected democratically, most of its members were not religious.

Among the various mosdos that the vaad founded, a building was designated to serve as a movie theater. It was decided that the movie theater would be closed on Shabbos. After a while, some members of the leftwing parties protested that if oneg Shabbos for religious Jews is to eat fish and chulent, for most residents of this camp oneg is a more cultural experience, to see a play or a good film in the theater.

Under heavy pressure from the movie-lovers, the majority of the members of the internal government caved in. The religious Jews were very upset by the public desecration of Shabbos.

The Lubavitcher families were housed in, to the best of my knowledge, six barracks. They were a nice percentage relative to other groups in the camp. Our barracks were on one side of the camp and on the other side were some barracks of religious zealots from Hungary, with their rabbanim and leaders. We Lubavitchers also had rabbanim, mashpiim, a yeshiva with a rosh yeshiva and a Vaad that took a leadership role.

One day, a delegation of

“They had never demonstrated before in their lives but when they finally did so, it was a demonstration that wouldn’t be soon forgotten!”

Hungarian Jews came to our Vaad. They suggested, maybe demanded, that we join them in a demonstration against this terrible chilul Shabbos, that we all protest the decision to open the movie theater on Shabbos.

The Lubavitcher Chassidim considered the issue with great seriousness. I think that Jews from the West don’t understand the mentality of Lubavitchers from Russia and their feelings in this regard. On the one hand, this was about fighting for Shabbos observance, something each one personally fought for with mesirus nefesh back in Russia, so what’s the big deal to demonstrate against chilul Shabbos in Peking, in the free world?

On the other hand, the concept of a demonstration was completely foreign to us. I am certain that most Chabad Chassidim who lived in the DP camp thought: What’s a demonstration? How do you do it? In Russia we only heard about a demonstration organized by the NKVD against racist America that persecuted Blacks and Asians, or against the British Empire that sucked the blood out of oppressed colonies. How were we supposed to demonstrate against the shameful chilul Shabbos in the Jewish camp?

I think our leaders figured that the Hungarians knew what a demonstration is and they would show us how to do it. What we knew was that the demonstration would take place near the theater and we had to be there on Friday evening before Kabbalas Shabbos.

Right after Mincha on Friday we flocked to the theater, a large crowd

of Chassidim of all ages. When we got there, we didn’t know what to think. The doors of the theater were closed and nobody else was around. It was empty and quiet and there was no sign of our collaborators.

We were puzzled. What should we do now? We stood there and waited. Suddenly, from a distance, from behind the barracks, we heard chanting, “Shabbos, Shabbos, Shabbos.” At first it was low but it slowly got louder and we saw the Hungarians marching towards us neatly, in rows, led by their rabbanim and leaders.

As they got closer and continued chanting, the doors of the movie theater opened and groups of youths with sticks jumped out to greet the demonstrators. We Lubavitchers were frightened. Some of our men ran towards them in order to stop them and to stand by the sides of our fellow demonstrators, but there was nobody to defend. The Hungarians had collectively fled; not one remained. They said at the time that the youth with the sticks were members of Mapai and HaShomer HaTzair who had found out about the demonstration ahead of time and had prepared a fine welcome for us.

As I recall, among the Lubavitcher demonstrators hardly anyone left. One of our chevra found a tall barrel which he turned over and used as his soap box. He stood on it and began talking about Shabbos and about Judaism in general, but it was noisy and nobody listened to him. Some Chassidim began sharing inspirational words with the Leftists while others yelled at them that this wasn’t Russia

where Shabbos is desecrated.

The commotion grew when additional fired-up youth emerged from the movie theater and saw that the Russian demonstrators were not leaving and were continuing to ruin their “oneg Shabbos.” Some of them came out with sticks. My father-in-law, for example, who believed that with the right words you could always convince a Jewish neshama, began to remonstrate with two young men until the two of them dealt him such a blow that he fell to the ground with a muffled cry.

Among us Russian demonstrators was one young man who was a simple fellow with a husky build, well-muscled, and when he saw the two young men hit a refined, weak man he grabbed one of them and threw him on the ground. Then he grabbed the second one and threw him on the first as though they were sacks of potatoes he was piling up.

Then nine or ten policemen came from the camp on the run, just in time to witness the terrible “crime” the giant Russian Chassid committed. They did not have guns but they had clubs, and hit him for several minutes. He still managed to get in some blows to one or two policemen before they bound his hands behind him, beat him, and put him in the camp jail.

During the melee, other Russian Lubavitchers were beaten too. Apparently, it was those who tried to argue with their attackers. A group

of Jewish firemen came to help their friends and began to spray water on the Chassidim-demonstrators. The Mapai’niks were soaked too.

I don’t know how long the demonstration took. As one person put it, “They had never demonstrated before in their lives but when they finally did so, it was a demonstration that wouldn’t be soon forgotten!”

Wet to the bone and dispirited, we went back to the shul for Kabbalas Shabbos and then to our rooms to eat the Shabbos meal. We all thought about the brawny Chassid and his friends who were sitting in jail, but shortly thereafter we heard that the three of them had returned “home” that same night.

The brawny one (who was a butcher and secretly sold kosher meat in Soviet Russia) was worried and upset that he was imprisoned on Shabbos, and by Jewish policemen no less. Gevald! What about Maariv? He didn’t know the davening by heart. No! He had to have a Siddur.

As his fellow inmates told it, he paced the little cell impatiently. He hit the bars with his fists and kicked the walls until he gave such a kick that he knocked down part of the wall as if it were nothing. Nu, he didn’t think much about it, just grabbed the hands of his friends and they went back to their barracks.

We ate the meal late and our disappointment ruined our oneg Shabbos somewhat. Until then we

thought that only communist Jews of the Yevsektzia could persecute other, religious Jews. We did not imagine that Jews from the Leftist parties would strike religious Jews.

The story did not end there. In the middle of Shacharis in the Chabad beis midrash some buses of the MP (the American Military Police) drove up. They had a small tank and rifles at the ready. We had heard that the MP were tough and merciless and that they strictly punished for the slightest infraction. They entered our shul and demanded that the butcher be handed over to them for hitting a member of the Jewish police and breaking the jail.

Of course, rather than handing him over, the Chassidim hid him. I could never find out where they hid him but the fact is that though the MP searched for him in all the rooms in the Lubavitchers’ barracks, they could not find him.

Did the demonstration accomplish anything? I don’t remember precisely but I think that a week or two after the demonstration, the theater remained closed.

As for the butcher, he later went to my grandfather (R’ Menachem Mendel Dubrawsky), the rabbi of the camp, and asked for instructions on how to do t’shuva because by breaking the wall of the jail he had transgressed the melacha of *sofer* (demolishing) on Shabbos.

[Continued from pg. 33]

of revelations in Torah, and especially Chassidus. During the period leading up to Tisha B’Av, the Nine Days, we are enjoined to somber up, as the Talmud states, “Mi sh’nichnas Av, m’atim b’simcha – When the month of Av arrives, we decrease in joy,” which means that

we are obliged to refrain from many activities that naturally cause happiness. Chassidim, as usual, have their own twist on the adage, which we interpret as follows: When the month of Av arrives, we decrease [in all those happy activities, but even this decrease we do] in joy.

It’s this joy that breaks through all boundaries and brings Moshiach

NOW!

Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd is an educator, author, and scientist living in Toronto, Canada. He lectures the world over on Torah and Science. To book him for a talk or Shabbaton, see www.arniegotfryd.com, email him at arnie@gotfryd.com, or call (416) 858-9868.

TAKING HOSPITALITY TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

Rabbi Rami Banin's Chabad House hospitality is legendary. Now the legend has grown a bit with this email that a Toronto-based Aish HaTorah rabbi has recently sent to all his contacts.

Rabbi Avram Rothman writes: I had always felt that our community excelled at Hachnasas Orchim-welcoming and treating guests well-but I have to tell you that starting with the owners of "Your Home in Rome" (a Kosher Bed & Breakfast) and concluding with Chabad of Venice, the bar has been set very high.

Let's take a few minutes to write about the Chabad of Venice. Here we have a city of only 400 families, two active Shuls, a few Rabbis and one very interesting Chief Rabbi.

Yet, when one goes into the Jewish Ghetto (Venice, by the way, was the first place in history that had a Jewish Ghetto and in fact, created the word Ghetto itself) on Shabbat, one could easily see two to five hundred Jews from all over the world.

How does this happen?

It happens because Chabad of

Venice makes it possible and they do it in a really wonderful way.

We all know how difficult it is to keep an enjoyable and spiritually filled Shabbat when we travel. Either someone takes advantage of us, charging an exorbitant amount for the basics of Shabbat or otherwise, we sit alone in our hotel room trying to make do, making Kiddush at a desk, eating on a bed and so on.

Chabad in Venice understood this and decided to make it possible for all types of Jews, from secular to the most religious and from Sephardic to the most Ashkenazic, to get together, have wonderful Shabbat meals, sing, say Divrei Torah and really enjoy Shabbat with literally hundreds of new friends.

Not only that, but while anyone would be justified to charge a reasonable fee for the meals and many people would charge an enormous amount, they do not

charge anything. That's right, they do not charge anything.

Ok, they ask for a donation, but even that is done most discretely by simply leaving envelopes out for people to take.

The bottom line, understanding the great expense involved and the need to sustain themselves- Chabad of Venice clearly does this for the Mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim and kiruv. There is not a question; even the City of Venice should give them an award for attracting so many people to the city.

The Rebbetzin and I not only felt welcome, had wonderful (the food was really quite good) Shabbat meals but also met some exotic, friendly and interesting people. We were able to spend a great Shabbat in Venice because of the excellent Hachnasas Orchim performed by the Rabbi, Rebbetzin and bachurim of Chabad of Venice.

There is no question; Chabad of Venice has taken the Mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim to a high level. Our community is very welcoming, very friendly and very helpful, but even though our circumstances are different, the Chabad of Venice truly has set a high level for us to emulate.

While I unquestionably met some special people on every stop of my trip, I have to say that Chabad of Venice really is worthy to comment on. If you ever have the occasion to go to Italy and can stop in to Venice, I want to strongly encourage you to do so.

Rabbi Avram Rothman received smicha from the Ner Israel Rabbinical College of Baltimore and has been, since its inception, the Rav of the Thornhill Community Shul in Ontario. The Shul stresses the importance of community, chesed, outreach and Mitzvos Ben Adam L'Chavero.

R' DOVID OBLIGATES THE YOUNG

*On the passing of R' Dovid Markowitz
a"h and what he taught us.*

By Rabbi Sholom Fash

Menahel Beis Moshiach in Kiryat Malachi



In the Gemara, Tractate Yuma 32, it says that Hillel the Elder obligates the poor and R' Elozor ben Charsin obligates the rich. We can say that R' Dovid Markowitz a"h obligates the young. After his retirement, despite having suffered through many illnesses and open heart surgery, and living on the

third floor of a building with no elevator, R' Dovid sat and learned from morning to night with youthful energy.

Every day he would wait for a lift to Beis Moshiach in Kiryat Malachi, where he would learn in the Kollel Tiferes Z'keinim.

On Yomim Tovim, R' Dovid

would go on mitzvaim like a young bachur, distributing everything from doughnuts on Chanuka to shmura matza before Pesach to the people he worked with for 45 years. He brought them the simcha of the holiday and the Besuras Ha'Geula with enthusiasm and great love.

Last Chanuka, when he was already very weak, he didn't stop Mivtza Chanuka and came up with creative ideas in order to spread the joy of the holiday and the Besuras Ha'Geula.

When we went to visit him in the hospital four months ago after he broke his foot, we saw how even there he continued to spread inyanei Moshiach and Geula. To a nurse who finished treating him he said, "I saw what you have done so devotedly for me; I have something for you too," and he gave her a picture of the Rebbe.

During the Cast Lead Operation, R' Dovid traveled for blood tests to Kiryat Gat and he gave the nurse who worked there a Moshiach card in appreciation for her devotion. She thanked him and hung the card up in the room. Two weeks later, when R' Dovid went back for more blood tests, the nurse told him, "Yesterday a missile fell on this side of the building. The windows shattered in all the rooms but in this room, where I hung the Rebbe's picture, the window didn't even crack."

R' Dovid lovingly maintained and improved Beis Moshiach. He changed the place significantly and donated a large portion of his pension fund for this purpose, so that more people would be able to sit and learn with peace of mind and comfort.

When I gave him a ride each morning to Beis Moshiach, I would ask, "How did you sleep?"

He would say, “I wasn’t able to sleep,” because of the pain he suffered.

“What did you do while awake?” I would ask, and he would answer, “I said T’hillim.”

R’ Dovid studied three chapters of Rambam a day and even bought a number of sets of Rambam so that every participant in the shiur would have his own volume. I took a lesson from his devotion.

When we saw what he went through and nevertheless, how he did all his activities with constant joy, we would derive strength from him and all our problems would melt away.

He would bring his friends

from work to the farbrengens we held in Beis Moshiach, “so they could get a taste of life,” he would say.

He would always relate how he opened a Chabad house in his office at work. When he went to work in Yaffo (before that he worked in Eilat) he saw there was no shul. He immediately called some friends and organized a minyan for Mincha.

He put out a tz’daka box for needy families and said that everybody should give what they could. At the end of every month he would count about 1000 shekels with which he helped families in Kiryat Malachi. Before every holiday he provided what

was needed: doughnuts for Chanuka, mishloach manos for Purim, shmura matza for Pesach, etc.

“And the living shall take to heart”- R’ Dovid taught us a lesson. Some people are waiting to go on shlichus and only when they get there do they start working. We saw how wherever Divine Providence sent R’ Dovid, he became the shliach in that place.

We are sure that R’ Dovid is busy up Above too. May we see him immediately with “arise and sing those who dwell in the dust,” soul in body, with the true and complete Geula through the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach.

[Continued from pg. 5]

NOTES:

1. Mishneh Torah, Hilchos T’filla 1:2.
2. This is reflected in the wording used by the Rambam, and the interpretation of his position by the Seifer HaChinuch (mitzvah 233). Note, however, the wording of the Shulchan Aruch HaRav 185:2 which refers to “the recitation of G-d’s praise as the fundamental element of prayer.”
3. In this vein, we can understand the connection to the Rambam’s opening statement in Hilchos T’filla 1:1 that prayer is “the service of the heart,” i.e., shaping one’s feelings. For what affects most people most are their material needs, and appreciating and asking G-d for these matters requires a re-definition of one’s inner feelings.
4. Kesser Shem Tov, Hosafos, sec. 133.
5. Deuteronomy 3:23.
6. Commenting on the above verse, quoted (with slight changes) in Rashi’s commentary to the verse.
7. D’varim Rabba 2:1; Midrash Tanchuma, VaEschanan, sec. 3.
8. Chizkuni on Deuteronomy 3:23; L’vush on Rashi’s commentary to that verse.
9. Psalms 85:1. Note K’subos 67b, Bava Metziah 85a.
10. In particular, a unique measure of Divine beneficence is assured the Jewish people as reflected by our Sages’

statement (Bava Metziah 83a): Since they are the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, even the feasts of King Shlomo at the height of his opulence are not sufficient recompense for them.

11. Leviticus 26:3. In an expanded sense, rain includes all our material needs. Geshem, Hebrew for “rain,” shares the same root as Gashmius, “material substance.”

12. Psalms 62:13.

13. In this context, the Sifri’s statement that Moshe could have depended on his good deeds must be interpreted to mean that, according to the mankind’s prevailing understanding, Moshe could have depended on the virtue of his deeds. Moshe himself, however, had deeper knowledge, and therefore, greater humility, and made his requests as a petition for a present (Maharil).

14. Numbers 12:3.

15. See Maamarei Admur HaZakein 5562, p. 51, and the explanation of this concept in the essay in this series entitled “Pride that Runs Deeper Than Self.”

16. Rashi, commenting on Deuteronomy 3:23.

17. Rosh HaShana 17b.

18. See also Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XVI, p. 277, which explains that when individuals who possess merit appeal to G-d’s kindness without depending on their virtues, they evoke a measure of Divine favor which surpasses the natural order.

19. Cf. Shabbos 10a.