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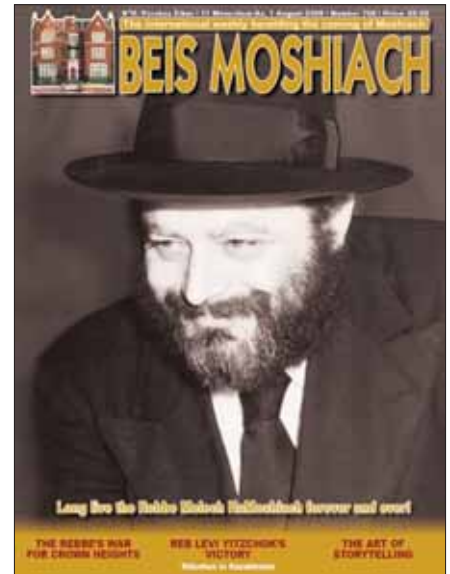
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IN THE ERA OF THE HEELS OF MOSHIACH

Sichos In English (Adapted from Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IX, p. 71ff, Sefer HaSichos 5749, p. 641ff)

NOTHING COMES UNEARNED

One of the fundamental principles postulated by Chassidic thought is that all revelations of G-dliness are dependent on man's Divine service.

Even revelations which transcend our mortal conceptual grasp must be drawn down through our own efforts.

The above also applies to the revelations of the Era of the Redemption.

In that era, it will be revealed that our world is G-d's dwelling.

And just as a person reveals his true self at home, so too, at that time, G-d's true self, [k'viyachol] - as it were - the essential aspects of His Being, will be revealed in this material world.

These revelations will not, however, come about merely as an expression of Divine favor. Instead, they will have been ushered in by "our deeds and our Divine service during the era of exile." [1]

And more particularly, it is the response to the challenges that arise during the era of Ikvesa diMeshicha, the age when Mashiach's approaching footsteps can be heard, which will precipitate Mashiach's coming. [2]

RESPONDING TO THE EXPERIENCE OF G-DLINESS

An intellectually honest person is,

however, prompted to the question: Why is it our Divine service that is going to bring Mashiach?

In previous generations, mankind was on a higher spiritual level and seemingly displayed a greater commitment to Divine service.

How can our efforts accomplish a purpose that theirs did not achieve? [3]

These questions can be resolved by contrasting our Divine service during the era of exile with that carried out by the Jews at the time of the Beis HaMikdash.

In our prayers, [4] we say "we are unable to go up, and to appear and bow down before You."

When a person came to the Beis HaMikdash and appeared before G-d, he had a direct appreciation of G-dliness. [5]

And as a spontaneous reaction, he prostrated himself.

This was not merely a superficial act.

On the contrary, experiencing G-dliness directly spurred a complete commitment of homage, motivating him to willingly forgo all personal concerns and subordinate every aspect of his being to G-d.

During the era of exile, by contrast, G-dliness is not apparent, and our commitment is not prompted by external factors.

A person feels his own self, and his Divine service is not evoked naturally from above. Instead, it must come as a result of his own initiative.

When G-dliness shines overtly, the revelation draws a person to Divine service, and causes him to feel satisfaction in this endeavor. When, by contrast, G-dliness is not overtly revealed, a commitment to the Torah and its mitzvos requires more self-sacrifice.

A POINT IN SOUL ABOVE "I"

Which commitment is greater? When focusing on the extent of the commitment, how much of a person's character is given over to Divine service, there is no question that the people who lived during the time of the Beis HaMikdash possessed an advantage.

G-dliness permeated every aspect of their being.

Nevertheless, the very fact that this commitment absorbed their minds and their feelings indicates that it left room for a sense of self.

Their Divine service had an "I", albeit an "I" of holiness, but an "I" nonetheless.

In the time of exile, by contrast, a person's Divine service occupies less of his conscious thought.

Thus making - and carrying out - a commitment to Divine service reflects the workings of an inner potential that transcends the person's conscious self.

The person goes beyond all concepts of his personal "I".

His true self, the aspect of his

being which is totally identified with G-dliness, motivates his conduct.

This reflects a deeper dimension of soul - and a deeper commitment to G-d - than was revealed during the time of the Beis HaMikdash.

A CHANNEL FOR THE SOUL'S POWER

These concepts are related to this week's Torah reading, Parshas Ekev.

Ekev literally means "heel," and refers to ikvesa diMeshicha, [6] the time when Mashiach's approaching footsteps can be heard.

Moreover, the connection between this era and the analogy of heels runs deeper.

The human body is used as a metaphor [7] to describe the collective of the Jewish people as it has existed over the ages.

In that context, our present generation can be compared to the heels, for we lack the intellectual and emotional sophistication of our forebears.

The heel is the least sensitive limb in the body.

Indeed, our Sages [8] refer to it as "the Angel of Death within man."

Nevertheless, we find that the heel possesses an advantage over the other limbs.

It is most sensitive to the person's will.

For example, it is far easier to put one's heel into a hot or a cold body of water than to immerse any other limb.

One might say that this advantage is a direct result of the heel's lack of sensitivity. Because the heel is further removed from the influence of the heart and the mind, it offers less resistance to orders which run contrary to one's thoughts and feelings.

Chassidus [9] explains, however, that there is a deeper dimension to the heel's responsiveness.

The heel is uniquely structured to express the power of the will.

Our wills are channels for the

expression of our souls, and of all the limbs in the body, it is the heel which displays the most active obedience to this potential.

Our minds and our hearts are mediums for the expression of our conscious potentials. And our heels are mediums for the expression of our inner will which transcends our conscious thought.

Similarly, in the analogue, it is the souls which can be compared to "heels," the people living in ikvesa diMishicha, whose commitment expresses the inner power of the soul and manifests the infinite potential of the G-dly spark that exists within each of us.

JUST RECOMPENSE

Other interpretations [10] explain that the word ekev refers to "the end of days," the era when the ultimate reward for our observance of the Torah and its mitzvos will blossom.

Indeed, the initial portion of the Torah reading focuses on the reward which we will receive for our Divine service.

This prompts a question: Since the mitzvos are G-dly, what reward can possibly be appropriate?

How can any material benefits possibly serve as fair recompense for acts that are G-dly in nature?

The resolution of this question has its source in our Sages' statement: [11] "The reward for a mitzvah is the mitzvah."

The fundamental reward for the observance of a mitzvah is the connection to G-d the mitzvah establishes. [12]

The rewards of health, success, and material wellbeing mentioned by the Torah are merely catalysts making possible our observance.

For when a person commits himself to observe the Torah and its mitzvos, G-d shapes his environment to encourage that observance.

As the Rambam states: [13] "If you will serve G-d with happiness and observe His way, He will bestow

these blessings upon you..., so that you will be free to gain wisdom from the Torah and occupy yourself in it."

These benefits observance brings, however, are not ends in themselves, but merely mediums to enable man to reach his ultimate goal: the service of G-d.

The ultimate benefits mankind will receive will be in the Era of the Redemption, when:

"There will be neither famine nor war, nor envy nor competition, for good things will flow in abundance and all the delights will be freely available as dust." [14]

And yet, man should not strive for this period in order to partake of these blessings.

"The Sages and the prophets did not yearn for the Era of Mashiach in order to rule over the entire world, nor in order to eat, drink, and celebrate. Rather their aspiration was to be free [to involve themselves] in the Torah and its wisdom, without anyone to oppress or disturb them. [15]

It is the observance of the Torah and the connection to G-d which this engenders which should lie at the focus of endeavors.

REALIZATION OF THE MISSION

The two interpretations of the word ekev are interrelated.

For it is the intense commitment that characterizes our Divine service during ikvesa diMeshicha which will bring the dawning of the era which will allow us to express that commitment without external challenge.

The heartfelt dedication to the Torah at present will bear fruit, leading to an age in which the inner spark of G-dliness which inspires our observance will permeate every aspect of existence. "For the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed." [16]

[Continued on pg. 42]

REB LEVI YITZCHOK'S VICTORY

By Chani Nussbaum

Mrs. Leah Cohen and Mrs. Sarah Lifpsitz work as shluchos in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, the place where Rabbi Levi Yitzchok was sent into exile. Their amazing accomplishments in Alma Ata demonstrate the victory of light over darkness.

Here is a story that testifies to the Jewish revival in Alma Ata (Almaty), as told to me by Rabbi Yeshaya Cohen, the shliach and Chief Rabbi of Kazakhstan, told me:

"Eight years ago, there was a Hachnasas Seifer Torah near the Ohel of the mekubal, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn, father of the Rebbe. At that event, the emcee said that years ago, the Rebbe wanted a certain shomer Shabbos Jew to fix up his father's grave. When the work was completed, he was happy to inform the Rebbe. The Rebbe asked him, 'Should the grave be moved to Eretz Yisroel or America?'"

"Out of respect for the Rebbe, the man did not answer. The Rebbe motioned with his hand as though to

say, his father should remain in Alma Ata.

"'It seems,' said the emcee, 'that the Rebbe envisioned the revival that would take place here and this is why he agreed to leave his father's grave in exile.'"

In honor of Chaf Av, the yahrtzait of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok, I spoke with the shluchos to Alma Ata, Mrs. Leah Cohen (12 years), wife of shliach, Rabbi Elchanan, Mrs. Sarah Lifpsitz (7 years), wife of shliach, Rabbi Bezalel. The two are sisters-in-law – Sarah is Elchanan's sister.

How many Jews live in Alma Ata today?

Leah: About 1000 Jewish families, all of whom are interested

in Judaism. I assume there are many more Jews but unfortunately, they don't even know they are Jewish.

What brought you on shlichus to Alma Ata?

Leah: My brother-in-law, R' Lifpsitz, was here with my husband, as a bachur, on shlichus. At that time, they ran a shul which was very old. We arrived a few years later, after we married, in time for the Chanukas HaBayis of the new shul.

We came on shlichus to deal with the tremendous ignorance. I'll give you an example. At the davening on Shabbos, when the people bought an aliya in exchange for a donation to the shul, they wanted to pay on the spot, on Shabbos. But since then, there have been enormous changes for the good.

We are sure this is thanks to R' Levik. We are located fifteen minutes away, on foot, from his Ohel. We bring *panim* to the Ohel that are sent from all over the world.

Tell the readers about your work.

Leah: Not long ago, we started a weekly class for women. The class is held in the home of a different lady each week. We started it in memory of a very special woman who passed away.

Sarah: I knew her and I remember how she walked to shul every Shabbos despite her advanced age. She was a woman with mesirus nefesh. Leah and I decided to start shiurim in her memory and people have been very inspired as a result. The ladies don't want the shiur to end. They ask questions and want to know more and more.

They make good resolutions. For instance, one of the women decided to say the Birkas HaMazon and to say certain portions of the davening every day which we say together.

Leah: We also opened a club for women which Sarah runs. It started with a small shiur which grew until it became an active club of fifty



CHABAD IN KAZAKHSTAN

Alma Ata (Almaty), the capitol of Kazakhstan, was where thousands of people were sent into exile by the communists. One of these people was Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn, father of the Rebbe, who was exiled for his work in strengthening Judaism. He died in exile after much suffering and is buried there.

For many years, Kazakhstan was a spiritual desert with no shuls or religious institutions. Throughout the vast region not even one official mikva was built. Up until a few years ago, the Jews of Alma Ata prayed in a wooden shack and that was only for Shacharis on Shabbos.

In 5754, with the arrival of shliach Rabbi Yeshaya Elozor Cohen and his family, things began to change. R' Cohen changed the Jewish map with Chabad mosdos providing every Jew with his spiritual and material needs. There is a network of shuls throughout the country and beautiful mikvaos were built. Brissin are performed and kosher meat is available. Among the chesed organizations sponsored by the Chabad house are: A soup kitchen, a bikkur cholim, help with medications, chevra kadisha, Shifra and Puah, and even medical advice.

Sunday schools were opened as well as youth clubs, summer camps, libraries etc. Seniors' needs are addressed too, for it is never too late, and there are clubs for women, a club for men and a kollel Tiferes Levi Yitzchok.

ladies. Sarah teaches Tanya, inyanei Moshiaich and Geula, and parsha. The women daven together, listen to stories about the Rebbe, and do various crafts. Sometimes, they themselves prepare material and teach it. Special activities take place before holidays.

We started a Shifra Puah organization here where each new mother receives a gift of her choice worth \$100. We give out the Shir LaMaalos, make house calls and take care of things like preparing for a bris.

We started a course for kallos which is very successful and is in addition to the work Sarah does in running the mikva.

Sarah: We started a B'nos Chabad. All single girls can join the

There was an Israeli couple who came to Kazakhstan to adopt a child. They adopted a girl. We told them to daven at the Ohel and they did, and they promised to be particular about the laws of Family Purity. They had a child of their own, a son!

organization which is divided into two divisions, older and younger girls. Every so often we have special gatherings and during the summer we run a camp. We start and end camp at the Ohel of R' Levik. We see the fulfillment of the verse, "and returning the hearts of the fathers through the children" with this camp as the children influence their parents.

Tell us some good stories.

Leah: This happened two and a half years ago. My husband got a phone call from a member of a local church who said: We have two Israeli guys here; we are sending them to your shul.

The two guys showed up and were shocked to see a shul in this forsaken place. They stayed with us for a while and we took care of all their needs. They often sat with my husband for long talks into the night.

After a while, one of them left to continue his trip and the other one stayed with us. The one who stayed said he wanted to write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh at the Ohel of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok. In his letter he asked the Rebbe three questions and he received three precise answers. He only told us one of the questions – whether to stay or not, and if he should stay then he asked for a bracha to extend his visa. The Rebbe's answer was something like – if you began here, then continue. He stayed for another

while and had a daily shiur with my husband.

He asked my husband for help in finding a job. My husband suggested that since many Jews asked him for information regarding locating relatives' graves, he should take photographs at the local cemetery and support himself that way. (My husband cannot respond to the queries that come in since he is a Kohen). The fellow took him up on this idea and did well. With the money he earned he bought a pair of t'fillin and began putting them on every day.

After a while he went to China and we eventually lost contact. One day, we got a letter from him in which he wrote that not only does he remember to put on t'fillin but wherever he goes, when he meets a Jew, he puts t'fillin on with him.

When you ask me for special stories, I think about our daily activities, about the special atmosphere in which we feel unified at our joint meals on Shabbos and Yom Tov. I think about Jews who until recently knew nothing about their Judaism and suddenly they are sitting down after Maariv on Yom Kippur and completing the T'hilim with the utmost sincerity and kabbalas ol. I feel that it's in the z'chus of R' Levik who is here.

Sarah: I remember a 65 year old senior who decided, despite his age and health, to have a bris mila. I'll never forget how right after the bris

he got up and danced even with the pain and his weakness. He said he felt as though he was holding a Torah scroll. In general, the way he acted, he exemplified the Chazal which says, "Who is honored? He gives honor to people," because he gave respect to all.

He died some time later and it's interesting that following his passing, his wife began taking an interest in Torah and mitzvos. When I asked her why she insisted on saying the Shma every day in Lashon HaKodesh and not in Russian, she said: I feel closer to Hashem this way. I was impressed by this response.

The shluchos have miracle stories to relate about the gravesite of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok.

Leah: A man who was married for years without children decided to go to R' Levik's grave. He prayed there and said, "If I have a son, I will name him Levi Yitzchok. If it's a girl, I will name her Chana." A year later he had a son and he kept his promise and named him Levi Yitzchok. A year after that, he had a daughter and he named her Chana.

A distinguished person came here and davened at the Ohel for his daughter who was married for seventeen years without having children. Shortly after his visit here we were told that his daughter conceived and gave birth to a girl.

There was an Israeli couple who came to Kazakhstan to adopt a child. They adopted a girl. We told them to daven at the Ohel and they did, and they promised to be particular about the laws of Family Purity. They had a child of their own, a son!

Sarah related a miracle that happened to her after davening at R' Levik's grave:

When we got here I was pregnant with our first child. In my eighth month I felt I was going into



The Lifpsitz children



The Cohen children

labor. This was very stressful since medical care here is quite primitive and I had not planned on giving birth in Alma Ata. It would be like giving birth in the desert. They haven't even heard of disposable diapers here.

We went to the Ohel of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok and my husband, who was going to start a club for businessmen, asked for a bracha for this project and of course, for a bracha for an easy birth at the right time.

That evening, at the meeting with businessmen, there was a man who introduced himself as an experienced gynecologist. "I have stopped accepting patients and I am becoming proficient in Western medicine. I would be happy to help you in any way possible."

My husband immediately asked him to examine me and he was able to solve the problem and I gave birth to a healthy, full term baby.

This doctor, who became our doctor, became very famous and his clinic is visited by people who need complicated treatment. He has a lot of experience, just like any doctor in the Western world.

We also saw miracles with my husband's first request, about the club for businessmen. Direct flights from Kazakhstan to Tel Aviv were resumed and so we have direct

flights from Alma Ata to Tel Aviv twice a week.

We see how everything here is miraculous. R' Levik is the channel for success and for the spiritual revival here (which may also be responsible for the mass aliya to Eretz Yisroel of the Jews of Kazakhstan).

How do you manage with kosher food and chinuch for your children?

Leah: It's easier to get kosher food now. Like many shluchim, we import many things. There is a representative of the OU here and through him we import many kosher products which are sold here even in the big chain stores.

For milk, we go ourselves to supervise the milking. But as for cheese and other dairy products, we have learned to live without them. My husband shechts animals so we have a steady supply for ourselves and for the community.

We manage with the chinuch of our little children. We teach them. The big girls learn with the Online Shluchim School which is a big help.

What do the children think about being on shlichus?

Leah: We have never heard them say it's hard for them because we make sure to convey that it's fun to be on shlichus and a big z'chus.

I returned from Israel after giving

birth to my seventh child there. I discovered that my children's level of knowledge is no less than that of Israeli children and is many ways even greater. My daughter came from day camp and complained, "Ima, I can't daven with them because it takes me more time – I daven more than they do." Ashreinu!

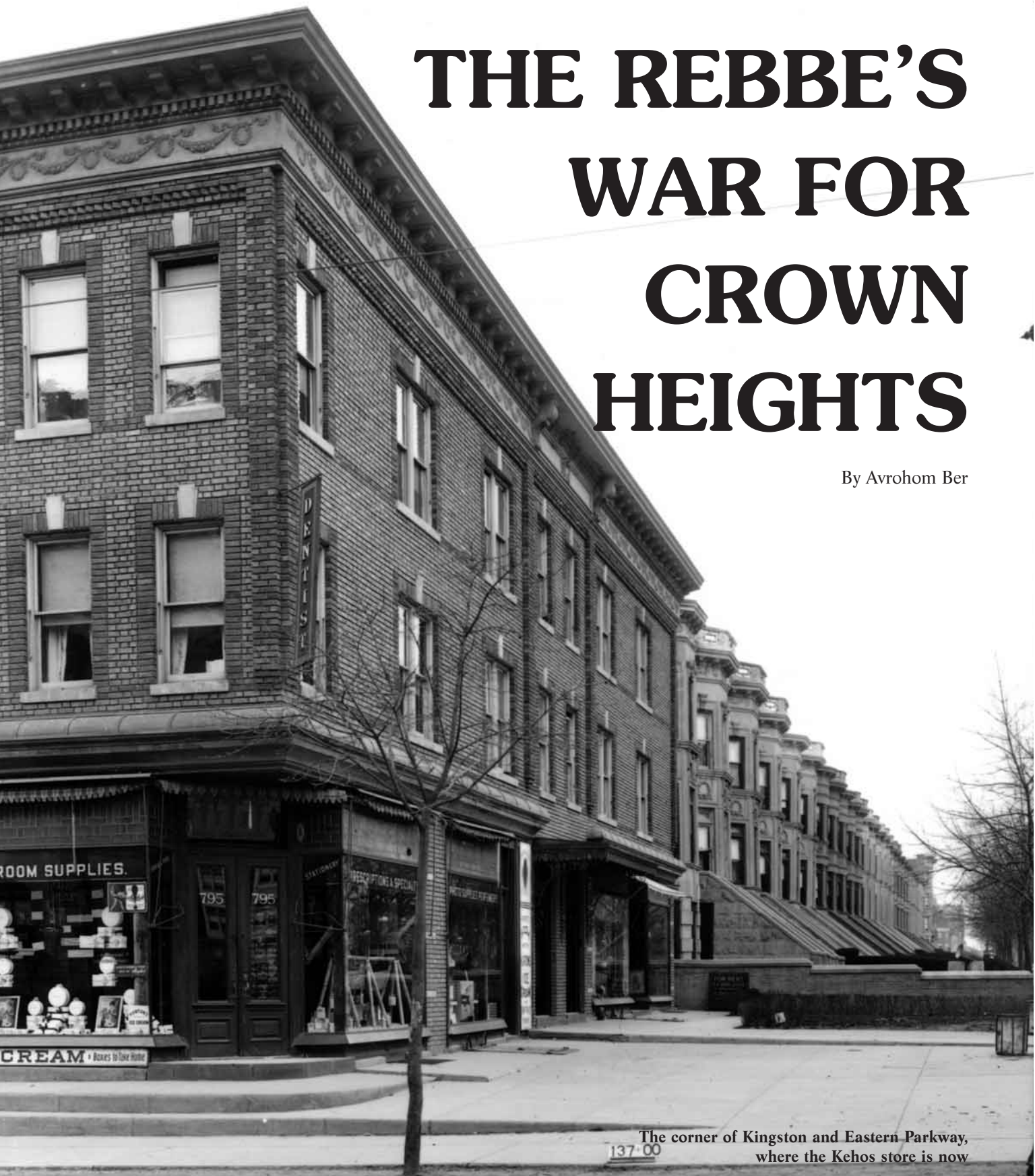
In the merit of R' Levi Yitzchok, we and the children experience the true meaning of shlichus. It's moving to see the children as full partners in our shlichus. We see this especially on special days like Erev Pesach and Yom Kippur. Before Pesach, for example, we have a fair and sell kosher products and new utensils and the children, our little shluchim, inspire people. On Erev Yom Kippur they help with Kaparos for those who are afraid to hold a chicken.

Leah: On Chaf Av there is a big gathering near the Ohel which is open to everyone. Thousands of *panim* are read at the Ohel and people listen to the life story of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok and are very inspired.

"The communists did not vanquish Rabbi Levi Yitzchok," says Rabbi Yeshaya Cohen. The spiritual revival in Kazakhstan testifies to this.

THE REBBE'S WAR FOR CROWN HEIGHTS

By Avrohom Ber



The corner of Kingston and Eastern Parkway,
where the Kehos store is now

*In the 1960's, Crown Heights underwent a major demographic change, from a flourishing Jewish community to a derelict district of crime and poverty. As literally hundreds of thousands of Jews fled, one voice could be heard pleading for them to stay. * Beis Moshiach reviews the history of one of the lesser known battles of the Rebbe, the battle to strengthen the neighborhood. Part 1.*

WAR OF MOSHIACH

The farbrengen of Acharon shel Pesach 1969 was particularly memorable, as those who were there will attest. The Rebbe farbrenged for hours, delivering sicha after sicha with explanations in Nigleh and Chassidus, all of them connected to the topic of Moshiach.

Towards the end of the farbrengen, in the ninth sicha, the Rebbe said, "It is customary to speak on an inyan in Nigleh. We will speak about an inyan in Nigleh and connect it to a timely matter." The Rebbe added, by way of introduction, that just like Moshiach – whose coming is from Above but is elicited through man's avoda – so too with the inyan of "in the future, Eretz Yisroel will spread out to all lands," that we need to make preparations for this through our avoda now.

The Rebbe said that it is forbidden to increase the power of the nations. A long explanation followed in which the Rebbe gave ten reasons, according to Nigleh, why it was forbidden to abandon

Crown Heights (this portion of the sicha was edited by the Rebbe and is printed in Likkutei Sichos, vol. 6, p. 350).

With these words, the Rebbe started his great battle to strengthen the community, yet another war of Melech HaMoshiach. This was a war for the community of the Nasi HaDor, as the Rebbe said on another occasion, **"every action in this neighborhood has an influence and effect on the entire world."** To what extent it affects the world we can see from what the Rebbe said in the sicha, *that if Jews stand strong and don't give up in Crown Heights, land would not be given away in Eretz Yisroel!* At that time, in 1969, the Camp David Accords weren't in the plans yet. Even three years later, on Acharon shel Pesach 1972, the Rebbe said that "sitting securely in your land" is accomplished by a tough stance in Crown Heights!

(Interestingly, it was specifically on Acharon shel Pesach, when the light of Moshiach is shining, that the Rebbe chose to speak sharply about this subject, on at least three occasions – 1969, 1970, and 1972,

specifically connecting it with the holy day. On Shabbos Parshas Shmini 1975 as well, the Rebbe said that he thought of speaking about this on Acharon shel Pesach but he had received some notes saying that it would diminish the joy of the holiday and so he postponed it to the following Shabbos).

THE LARGEST JEWISH NEIGHBORHOOD IN NEW YORK

The mass exodus of Yidden, which the Rebbe so vocally deplored, actually began several years earlier. The largest Jewish neighborhood in New York changed within just a few years. It became a neighborhood of crime and violence which prompted many Jews to leave their homes and move to other Jewish neighborhoods.

For those who don't remember Crown Heights of those days, it will be hard to understand what this was about. Those who began going to the Rebbe only in later years certainly cannot picture the drastic change that the community underwent, from a flourishing Jewish neighborhood in the years following World War II until it became the capital of Lubavitch.

In its heyday, Jews were the majority of the white population of Crown Heights. In nearby communities such as Brownsville and East New York there lived tens of thousands of Jews. The Jews in Crown Heights were modern and many of them were not religious. That is the reason that the first Chassidim who came to America settled in Brownsville, since Crown Heights was, as R' Yisroel Jacobson put it, "a place where the wealthy, the Hellenizers, the modern Jews, lived." In 1950 there wasn't a single Jewish store on Kingston Avenue that was closed on Shabbos.

The block where 770 is located

was populated by doctors, lawyers and other wealthy people. On Shabbos afternoon, Eastern Parkway was full of thousands of strolling Jews. In Brownsville alone, in 1930, the year the Rebbe Rayatz visited America, there were ten Nusach Ari shuls.

It was at the beginning of the Rebbe's nesius that Lubavitcher Chassidim began to move into Crown Heights itself to live near the Rebbe and the Rebbe encouraged this. We see this from what Rabbi Mordechai Shusterman wrote in his book, "I wanted to rent an apartment in Crown Heights and I asked the Rebbe and he said, 'Yes, good idea, but why rent? Buy!' I told the Rebbe that I didn't have the money to buy and the Rebbe said, 'Those smaller than you bought.' I began to seriously think about buying a house."

The gabbai of 770, Rabbi Yaakov Lipsker, also got the Rebbe's approval to move from New Jersey to Crown Heights and this was after years in which the Rebbe did not agree to the idea since he was in New Jersey on the Rebbe Rayatz's shlichus.

Dozens of shuls and mikvaos were built. Crown Heights acquired a reputation as a good neighborhood, quiet and neat. When the Rebbe Rayatz came to America and started building after-school Talmud Torahs called Torah Temima, Crown Heights and Brownsville hosted four of these programs.

Torah began to permeate the community and gain momentum. Chadarim and Jewish schools were opened all over. Many Admurim chose this beautiful neighborhood as their headquarters, from where they led their followers. Among the famous Admurim were those from Bobov, Lizensk, Skulen, Tenke, Lantzhut, Novominsk, Spinka, and Kerestir.

There were all sorts of shuls for

The first Chassidim who came to America settled in Brownsville, since Crown Heights was, as R' Yisroel Jacobson put it, "a place where the wealthy, the Hellenizers, the modern Jews, lived." In 1950 there wasn't a single Jewish store on Kingston Avenue that was closed on Shabbos.

all kinds of Jews such as Menuchas Asher, Bnei Yaakov, Chevra Shas and Adas Yeshurun. And not only Ashkenazim lived in Crown Heights. There was a large Sefardic shul and Ahavas Achim-Anshei Sfard. There were at least 35 active shuls in Crown Heights at the time and there were also, l'havdil, some Reform and Conservative congregations.

In that sicha of Acharon shel Pesach the Rebbe said that about 250,000 Jews lived in Crown Heights!

Rabbi Yehuda Frankel, a Sanzer Chassid, described in his book *Imrei Shefer*, "I had the z'chus of being close to our Rebbe [the previous Sanzer Rebbe] and being his right hand for many years. He trusted me as one of his closest people. Within a short time we bought a number of buildings in Crown Heights, among them the Beth Moshe hospital, and a Talmud Torah opened there with 1000 talmidim, as well as a Kollel, a senior citizen home, and a nursing home for seniors who lived in the area."

In his book, Rabbi Shusterman describes Crown Heights the year he moved there – 1955:

"Crown Heights was settled (almost) exclusively by Jews, most of them religious. The Rebbelech turned their homes into shuls and Chassidim from various courts, wanting to be near their Rebbe,

bought homes in Crown Heights and the neighborhood prospered. On Sukkos there wasn't a house without a sukka next to it.

I drove around to find a house. The house I found (and which I ultimately bought) was on President Street, next to the shul and mikva (of R' Bentzion Frankel a"h). At the end of the street was a municipal park where Jews could stroll after their Shabbos chulent. Utica Avenue nearby was full of kosher stores. Transportation was excellent – it was near the subway station as well as various bus lines. The bus that goes to my printing place is direct, door to door... I asked the Rebbe and he gave his consent for me to buy. With Hashem's help, l'mazal tov, on Erev Purim 1955, we moved into our house."

Who would have believed that ten years later, Utica and that park would be places Jews would be wary to go to?

WHITE FLIGHT

At the end of the 50's, whites began to leave the big Brooklyn neighborhoods. People who had a lot of money moved away to places with a better quality of life. When people saw their friends leaving and knew that the quality of life where they were living would deteriorate and would cause them financial losses as

their houses went down in value, they sold their homes. This made prices fall even further. Black people moved into the cheap houses.

In 1965, President Johnson signed new immigration laws which enabled thousands of Caribbean blacks to emigrate to the United States. They settled in Brooklyn neighborhoods, including Crown Heights. Many of these new immigrants, most of whom had no money and no profession turned to crime. Armed robberies or attacks took place daily in Crown Heights which caused tens of thousands more Jews to leave.

The more religious Jews moved to Boro Park or Flatbush, and others moved to Long Island or Queens. Those who didn't want to move too far away from where they had lived moved to East Flatbush. In later years, religious Jews also moved to areas north of New York City.

Jews wanted to sell their homes as fast as possible, while still able to get a good price. If someone expressed his desire to remain in the community where he had lived for years, friends laughed and said, "You're going to live in a crime infested neighborhood and soon you will be afraid to go out in the street." And they were right. But if they had united and not run away, the price of homes would not have gone down further and the blacks would not have moved in. They could have stopped the takeover of Jewish neighborhoods.

Safety became a primary concern. Five crimes a night was an ordinary night for the Crown Heights police. The demand for more police drew opposition from Mayor Robert Wagner who was afraid that every neighborhood would demand a greater police presence.

Life wasn't easy for those who remained. Aside from the increasing danger in the streets, many also



Near 770, 1959

In 1955...“Crown Heights was settled (almost) exclusively by Jews, most of them religious. The Rebbelech turned their homes into shuls and Chassidim from various courts, wanting to be near their Rebbe, bought homes in Crown Heights and the neighborhood prospered. On Sukkos there wasn't a house without a sukka next to it.”

suffered from a loss of parnasa. The Rebbe mentions in a sicha the owners of groceries and tailors who lost customers who needed kosher food and Jewish tailoring. People kept leaving and those who led the flight were Admurim and rabbanim. Entire k'hillos fled and it was hard to ask those who remained without the shul they were used to davening in to continue living in the community which was becoming more and more black.

Lubavitchers also considered moving but the Rebbe opposed this. Most of the Chassidim did not leave because the Rebbe himself remained in Crown Heights and they wanted

to live near him. Other than personal responses that were given to individuals, the Rebbe's view was not known to the public.

R' Bentzion Shemtov asked the Rebbe about renting a new place for the Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos from a store whose Jewish owners planned on leaving. The Rebbe said it was unthinkable that Mosdos Lubavitch would buy these places, thus encouraging other Jews to leave.

The difficult situation led even Lubavitchers to say that the day would come when they would have to move. It's hard to think badly of them, especially after some Chassidim's homes were broken into

by blacks.

Things changed at the Acharon shel Pesach 1969 farbrengen.

ACHARON SHEL PESACH 1969

Before the Rebbe began his explanation in Nigleh at that farbrengen, he said that actually this wasn't a matter that pertained to him but to the rabbanim, but because there were rumors about his view, and this was something that pertained to tens of thousands of people, he had to openly state his view.

It seems the Rebbe did not want to speak about this at all, and all the sichos were said out of necessity. The Rebbe said a number of times that this wasn't his job but the job of rabbanim and askanim, e.g., "Everybody has to think about this – I don't have a copyright." The Rebbe said:

Practically speaking, it is not for me to speak about these matters but other than me, nobody is doing anything about it; there are two organizations and they did nothing. They say I changed my mind; I hereby announce that I didn't change my mind and I won't change my mind and even if I wanted to change my mind, the Torah of Truth does not change. As for what I'm referring to, learn Choshen Mishpat and see the din.

On Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev 5730 the Rebbe said:

I spoke about this on Acharon shel Pesach and hoped to "fulfill my obligation" with that. I explicitly said at that time why I was speaking about it, since there was a rumor that I had changed my mind. I have no regret and I have no choice in this – it's a din in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat, and I don't want to change it and I cannot change it. All the kings of the East and the West cannot change it.

The Rebbe ended the edited part by saying that even if there would be someone who wanted to act contrary to the Rebbe's conclusion:

Before taking such a step, please picture that he and his sons and daughters "were in their friend's place" – i.e. those who are in the situation of tens of thousands of Jews who live in these neighborhoods, and he finds out that his neighbor wants to sell his house to a non-Jew and think about it – justly and not falsely – would this sale be beloved to him or hated? After making his calculation he should act according to our Torah, Toras Emes and Toras Chaim: that which is hateful to you, don't do to your friend.

After completing the explanation in Nigleh, the Rebbe spoke about the issue in practical terms. The Rebbe spoke in a very pained manner and used sharp expressions that we don't find even regarding his other battles for shleimus ha'Aretz and MiHu Yehudi.

At the end of the edited sicha the Rebbe says, **"It was intentional that no sharp expressions were included (in the aforementioned sicha that was said for publication) which suit the seriousness of the matter and the action of moving and selling a house to a non-Jew etc."**

In a letter the Rebbe wrote on 3 Iyar of that year to R' Shmuel Tuvia Stern to which the Rebbe appended a copy of the sicha, he said: **"For obvious reasons there were not included in this account expressions that are apropos of the bizarre, painful and shocking behavior of selling homes in these neighborhoods in order to move to other neighborhoods."** From this we can deduce how severe the expressions were that were *not* included.

The Rebbe's sicha made waves in the Jewish world. Many of those who had already left said that if they

had known beforehand, they would not have left. When this sicha was said, white flight was at a peak and it was very hard to turn the clock back. In a number of sichos the Rebbe made a direct connection between the lack of action on the part of the askanim and the desire to flee to the fact that incorrect information was relayed in his name.

TZADDIKIM IN FUR COATS

The Rebbe's line of reasoning was simple and logical and in hindsight it's hard to understand why askanim did not take action along these lines but opted to run, even though this entailed losing a lot of money and leaving behind shuls that became, l'havdil, churches.

They say there's nothing that can be done and this isn't true. For there is a simple logic which I spoke to non-Jews about and they accepted it. Jews don't want to hear it but non-Jews accept it. [The Rebbe was addressing the argument that the political climate of the time was focused on helping blacks move up in the world – Ed.]

The claim as to why others are brought into the neighborhood is in order to help them. True, you ought to help others as far as a place to live and a livelihood, etc. as we see with Avrohom Avinu that he did chesed with everyone, but why do you need to do it on someone else's account, to take a home and a job away from someone who was right in front of you? That means you are building on someone else's churban!

That this group needs housing and jobs is correct, but not at the expense of the group that preceded them. Something new can be built for them and it won't cost more money; on the contrary, it would cost less. By building on the churban of someone else you don't solve anything since first of all,

you make an enemy of the person who had a churban. And regarding the one on the receiving end, since if someone has one hundred he wants two hundred, afterwards he will want even more from the one who gave him and in the end he will also become an enemy, it's just that it will take another week. From the outset you can build in a way that suits them and not at the expense, on the churban of others.

When you speak about this to the non-Jew, it's accepted but a Jew claims – how can you force someone into where to live...

The Rebbe compared those who fled the neighborhood to a "tzaddik in a fur coat," based on the analogy given by the Baal Shem Tov about someone who is only concerned about his own Judaism and doesn't lift a finger for others. The Rebbe expressed his pain over the fact that those who were well-to-do ran and left behind the poor people who could not afford the luxury of buying an expensive home after the value of their home in Crown Heights dropped drastically.

They don't first think about whether it will be good for others but they act first and afterwards look to see whether it is in accordance with Shulchan Aruch. After the fact, they say that admitting a mistake is done only by lofty individuals.

... Ay, it harms someone else? He answers that Hashem will help him. Why is it that when it comes to your parnasa, you have to go to this person, but in his time of trouble you don't want any connection to him and you say Hashem will help him, and you claim that he will save himself too, but he is poor and can't do that.

PUBLICIZING THE SICHA

The Rebbe considered the sicha and its publicity of great importance. Right after Yom Tov he told the



The building where Oholei Torah is now, as it looked then

chozrim to prepare the explanation in Nigleh for editing. As is known, in general the Rebbe did not get involved in choosing sichos for editing except for rare occasions like this one. The sicha was also published in *HaPardes* which was a Torah journal that served as the mouthpiece of Agudas HaRabbanim in America.

In Sivan of that year the same journal published a letter from the posek, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein z"l which said that he saw what the Rebbe had to say "and everything the gaon and tzaddik, the Admur of Lubavitch wrote was correct in all his words and there is nothing to add or detract and I agree with it..."

In the Rebbe's letter to R' Stern to which he appended the sicha, the Rebbe called upon rabbanim and leaders of k'hillos to lead the battle:

I strongly hope that American rabbis and halachic rulers who should be standing in the breach in all matters concerning the Jewish people, all the more so in something this important, will call out loudly in accordance with the importance of this matter and with great publicity, based on what it says, "do not fear anyone," and the merit of the many helps them.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein himself

did not leave the Lower East Side even after most Jews abandoned it.

The Rebbe asked that the community not be associated specifically with Lubavitch. When askanim began taking action and they asked for help from the International Jewish Federation, the federation said that in this instance it agreed to help Lubavitch. When they wrote to the Rebbe about this, he said that the two things should not be combined. One should represent Lubavitch and one (R' Yisroel Rosenfeld a"h) should represent the community.

The director of Kehos in Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Wolf, who returned to Eretz Yisroel after spending Pesach by the Rebbe, related that on the day of his return flight, Rabbi Chadakov called him in and spoke to him about a number of matters that had to be addressed in Eretz Yisroel. He wasn't able to concentrate on what R' Chadakov was saying as he felt unsettled as he parted from the Rebbe and in anticipation of the upcoming flight. It was only later on, on his way to the airport, that he realized that the instructions he had been given had probably come from the Rebbe.

He found a phone and called R' Chadakov. In the middle of their

conversation there was silence and then he heard the Rebbe's voice. The Rebbe said a few things including that he should repeat the content of the sicha that was said on Acharon shel Pesach and to say that this also affected the position of Jews in Eretz Yisroel.

I HAVE NO REGRETS!

Some of those who left Crown Heights because of the social pressure of their k'hillos, asked the Rebbe's pardon for having to leave. Others, some of them Lubavitchers, said that the Rebbe had "weakened" in his position and was now also inclined to let people leave like the other Admurim who moved their k'hillos to other neighborhoods.

The Rebbe referred to these latter people on Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev 5730:

There are those who, in addition to doing nothing about this, proclaim that I have weakened in this matter. As I have noted several times, why are you mixing me into this? If you don't want to take action, don't, but why do you have to go around and announce that I have weakened in this?

... As was said several times, why do you have to corrupt what I said? If you want to twist things – do it for yourself. But why do you have to go out to the street and say it? If you want to say something crooked say it to yourself, but don't go out and publicize it and certainly don't go and publicize it in my name and specifically in the Polisher shtibel – why must you use me for this?

If you want to leave, if you want to give in to your yetzer ha'ra - albeit in a way that the yetzer ha'ra compels you but you want it to compel you – why are you using me for what your yetzer ha'ra wants? You want to copy the Polisher who left? You can leave.

But why do you have to say that I hold that way?

... that the Conservative rabbi transgressed the Shulchan Aruch, he transgressed; that the Polisher transgressed on Shulchan Aruch, he transgressed, but why must you go around and announce that I regret what I said and that I also hold as they do?

The Rebbe spoke similarly on Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz, Shabbos Chanuka 5731:

Others claim that I myself regretted what I said ... but I said explicitly that addressing the matter is not my personal issue but is based on an explicit din in Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat, and it's printed, and what isn't printed was copied. And since it's not my personal issue but an explicit din in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat, also regarding the dinim regarding shuls, as was spoken about at length a year and a half ago on Acharon shel Pesach 1969, it makes no difference whether I changed my mind – and I *can't* change my mind, especially when I said explicitly that I did not change my view.

All those who said that I changed or those who say that what I'm saying is only for Shabbos Chanuka but after Shabbos Chanuka I will change, I hereby announce that this is a lie and I did not change previously and I have no regrets now and tomorrow too I will not change, nor two days hence, and so, if you don't want to take action regarding this, don't, but don't say in my name that I changed my mind!

... Then there was another thing – they say that the commotion about Crown Heights is because I want to preserve the shul and beis midrash where I farbreng, I just want to preserve 770 which is the gematria of "paratzta" – and the other matters

that live there. In other words, just my four cubits or five or six cubits, but I didn't mean all of Crown Heights.

How dare they say about a Jew that he only cares about his own four cubits and abandons all of Crown Heights? How can they say that something spoken about publicly, which was printed, and connected with a din in Shulchan Aruch, was just about my four cubits? Even if a Jew is suspect, you don't need to go around and shout about it in public and speak lashon ha'ra! Especially when I explicitly said that I mean all of Crown Heights and all the Jews in all of Crown Heights. How do they say such a thing?

I CALLED BUT NOBODY ANSWERED

In the sicha of Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev 5730 the Rebbe spoke very sharply about the lack of action taken even by those who were mekushar to him and despite what he said and his warnings:

After speaking about it, what did they do? They had a meeting and when I asked what was happening they said – what do you mean what's happening? We already organized a committee. What has the committee done? They decided to make another meeting. That is how it remained and nothing else was done.

It's only since Mem Shin [the Rebbe's initials – referring to himself – Ed.] is very involved in this that they need to do some token gesture, so they went around and told people that if anyone wants their suggestion they are ready to offer suggestions. Have you ever heard of such a thing? Who asked you for your suggestions? I'm only asking that something be done!

Then he writes me a note that he must speak to me face to face. He has something important to say

to me and he wants to talk to me about it in person. What do you have to say to me? It's a din in Choshen Mishpat. Sit down and learn Choshen Mishpat. It's an explicit din and you have nothing to say to me about it. The din is printed there with an explanation and there are sources, and the only thing lacking is *nekudos* so what do you have to say to me?

And he also says that he will give his life for me and he is ready, 24 hours, with *mesirus nefesh*, to jump into the fire. No *mesirus nefesh* is being demanded of you; nobody is demanding that you jump into the fire; what's being demanded is only that you take action.

The Rebbe was pained by the situation and also pained that instead of taking action there were Chassidim who were busy trying to figure out who the Rebbe was talking about in the farbrengen who had not taken action:

... Nevertheless, they don't take action and nobody cares, and as was said a number of times, how is it possible to speak sharply at a farbrengen – it's because in any case, each one thinks I don't mean him. When speaking to one person alone, he has no choice – I'm speaking to him, but when I speak at a farbrengen with a number of people present, there are some fools who say to themselves that I don't mean them, and all is fine and well and it's a din in Shulchan Aruch, but I don't mean him.



Jewish newspaper vendor in Brownsville

And he also says that he will give his life for me and he is ready, 24 hours, with mesirus nefesh, to jump into the fire. No mesirus nefesh is being demanded of you; nobody is demanding that you jump into the fire; what's being demanded is only that you take action.

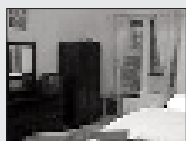
Since I don't mean him, this isn't a matter of "embarrassing one's fellow" which is a very serious thing – he has no share in the World to Come (it's too terrible to talk about) but it doesn't pertain here because every person thinks I don't mean him.

On Acharon shel Pesach 1970

the Rebbe mentioned that a year had already passed since he began speaking about strengthening the neighborhood and nothing was done.

The next chapter will describe, be"H, the work that was done to save the neighborhood and what the Rebbe said about it.

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THE ART OF STORYTELLING

By Ofra Bedosa

The importance of telling Chassidishe stories – interviews with a writer, a preschool teacher, a drama teacher, and a shlucha.

On Pesach we have the mitzva of relating the story of the Exodus from Egypt to our children. The Rebbe Rayatz said, “I collected bundles and bundles of stories over fifteen years, from the time I began analyzing in depth the inner meaning of Chassidic stories – how each story is like a window through which penetrates the light of avoda given off by the sun of Chassidus; a light that illuminates all the corners of human frailty.”

A Chassidishe story has impact. It is one of the most powerful chinuch tools we have inherited from our ancestors. It is strong, it purifies, it strengthens, and makes one think. There are big secrets contained within a Chassidishe story, layers of wisdom that await our discovery. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. If so, then a Chassidishe story is worth at least infinity...

There’s the story about two Chassidim who waited on line for the Rebbe to get his approbation for the books they wrote. The first one wrote a deep commentary that he put much work and thought into. The second one brought an anthology of stories. The first author couldn’t believe it when the Rebbe’s door opened and the other man was called in.

When it was his turn he asked why the other man had been invited in first. The Rebbe answered that there is something special about stories that penetrates the hearts of the readers and changes them.

WHEN THE REBBE EDITED A BOOK OF STORIES

We spoke with Rabbi Shimon Weitzhandler, a Chassidishe author, a mashpia in yeshivas Rishon L’Tziyon and shliach in B’nei Brak.

What is the power of a



Drawing by Zalman Kleiman

Chassidishe story? How is it better than a direct educational message?

The difference between a story and direct educational instruction is that a story actually happened and because this is so, it feels closer to us. When you tell a Chassidishe story it becomes real. As true as Torah is, it still remains abstract to us and the natural question that arises is – where am I in the picture?

The Chassid, R' Abba Pliskin, went to the Rebbe and asked him what to farbrengen about. The Rebbe told him to tell stories about Chassidim. This is interesting, and the reason is because even stories about the Rebbeim are relatively distant from us. After all, the Rebbe is a neshama of Atzilus, a yechida klalis; that's far from us. A Chassidishe story is something practical and tangible. Relative to a story about Chassidim, a story about the Rebbeim is considered like words of Torah.

There's someone in Kfar Chabad by the name of Sholom Feldman. He is a very intellectual Chassid. At the same time he is a great admirer of R' Mendel Futerfas to a degree that is really astonishing. You can sometimes hear him say the following, "Everything that is going on in Chabad today is because they don't know R' Mendel." At a farbrengen he once said something in connection with R' Mendel, and R' Mutti Gal said he doesn't understand what connection he has with R' Mendel when he is the opposite of him!

Sholom Feldman responded, "Whatever I learn in Chassidus, I saw him implement." Then he began to tell how R' Mendel lived in Siberia and he concluded with, "R' Mendel is walking Chassidus. Whatever we talk about, he did."

That is the power of a Chassidishe story. When you take a child and instead of teaching him the

concept of "I will take the king" about how to be battul to the king, you tell him about someone like him, not a Rebbe, about R' Mendel and how he was beaten and did not eat for a week in order to observe all the hiddurim kept in Chabad on Pesach, ten minutes of stories will have a far greater effect than learning the laws of Pesach. The effect is more powerful. This convinces the child (and us) and enables him to be strong and when he wants to eat something on Pesach that we don't eat, he will remember these stories. The child sees that what he learned about actually existed in real life;

When you [tell] a child... about R' Mendel and how he was beaten and did not eat for a week in order to observe all the hiddurim kept in Chabad on Pesach, ten minutes of stories will have a far greater effect than learning [all] the laws of Pesach.

there is a role model to learn from.

Do you have another example to illustrate why a story is so influential?

At the farbrengen of 5742 the Rebbe spoke about l'chat'chilla aribber and he used the shliach R' Shlomo Cunin as an example. R' Cunin went into millions of dollars of debt in order to open a Chabad house. In order to illustrate a concept in Chassidus there is nothing more powerful than giving an example of a person who acted that way. It's like a mashal but even more so because a mashal is still something only used as an educational tool while R' Cunin is a real person.

A Chassidishe story has a

tremendous effect on our p'nimius. This is the reason that the Rebbe Rayatz put so much work into sharing Chassidishe stories with us. He did most of the writing and research while he was in the United States and not in good health. The Chassidishe story is the power of Chassidus.

What is the difference between a Misnaged and a Chassid? A Chassid puts into action what the Misnaged learns about. He takes a statement of Chazal and turns it into real life.

What role does the Chassidic story play in the talks of the Rebbe Rayatz?

Chassidishe stories are synonymous with the Rebbe Rayatz's Seifer HaSichos and *Likkutei Dibburim*. They contain Musar and explanations of Chassidishe concepts but the core is the stories. The Rebbe Rayatz bequeathed to our generation the core essence of Chabad. He put into writing an entire Torah of Chassidic stories. He was the sixth in the chain, the s'fira of Yesod which channels and conveys all the s'firos to Malchus.

When the Rebbe was asked about certain Chassidishe stories, he would often say that he hadn't heard that story from his shver (his father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz), but it's a Chassidishe story.

He would travel to visit different Chassidim and question them and even wrote out questionnaires for them to fill out and he encouraged the descendants of Chassidim to write their memoirs. The Rebbe says that the Chassidishe stories that the Rebbe Rayatz revealed in America was a “squandering of the treasures.” He cried at a farbrengen and explained that it was called squandering because it is not appreciated, but we need to know that it’s a preserved treasure. A treasure is something lofty, something hidden that we cannot touch, because it expresses and brings down all the lofty ideas. As Dovid HaMelech said, “I was like

bring people to farbrengens and to be mekarev and save people. We have to warm people’s hearts but it’s always connected with saving our generation.

How should we use Chassidishe stories, to make it alive for children?

It’s a big advantage to know how to tell a story. One of the descriptions they used to give a Chassid was “baal mesaper” – storyteller. Chassidim and Anshei Maaseh, Chassidim who know how to tell stories. But that has a double meaning; men of action and men who can tell stories; the stories have to lead to action.

The Rebbe Rayatz describes at

Sometimes the message of the story is nice but it doesn’t often happen that I encounter someone who tells a story with real chayus. When a story is told with chayus it enters the heart of the listener and has an effect on his life.

living proof to the many.” The Chassidic story is the living example of Chassidic ideas.

What about stories from the Rebbe?

By the Rebbe it was a bit different. In our era it’s pikuach nefesh. The Rebbe shifted the focus to the importance in mobilizing ourselves. Stop telling yourself stories; there’s a burning battlefield out there. That’s the “story” of the Rebbe and of our generation, the seventh generation. The Rebbe is the one who brings everything down to the realm of action; everything is G-dliness, so go to India and open a Chabad house.

Obviously, at the same time we need to use Chassidishe stories to

length how his first melamed, R’ Yekusiel, told stories, the chayus and holy fervor that he had. He said, “The seed that R’ Yekusiel the melamed planted in my heart in my childhood was very successful, boruch Hashem, and every one of the Chassidishe stories had a special importance to me. With my strong power of imagination, each story aroused in me a living picture of the scene as though I could see the faces of the heroes of the stories.”

Do you have a Chassidishe story that will illustrate what we spoke about?

There was someone by the name of Rabbi Perlov who the Rebbe encouraged very much to write. He brought a copy of his book of

Chassidishe stories to the Rebbe for the Rebbe to look over. At the Yud Shevat farbrengen 1965, the Rebbe said that R’ Perlov had sent him stories and he would tell one of them.

The story was about a melamed who worked in the house of a villager and in the evening he worked as his secretary, reading the telegrams that came from the government and sending responses as necessary.

One day, the villager was not around and the letters arrived. The melamed opened them and saw that one of the telegrams announced the death of the villager’s father. He waited until the villager returned and read the telegram to him. The moment the man heard the news, he fainted.

After they treated him and he was revived, the man’s wife asked the melamed, “Why is it that you are the one who knows how to read and nevertheless, when you read the news it did not affect you while my husband immediately fainted?”

The melamed answered, “Because it’s his father and not my father.”

The Rebbe spoke about this story throughout the farbrengen. The melamed was more knowledgeable than the villager but he was the one who fainted because it pertained to and affected him!

BRINGING MOSHIACH INTO THE STORY

I spoke with some women who use Chassidishe stories in their work with young children.

Chaya Maidovnik is a preschool teacher in Tzfas. She said: Through Chassidishe stories I convey those values to the children that I want them to acquire. When I tell the girls a Chassidishe story, my goal is for them to live it, that it shouldn’t remain just a story but should come to life for them. In order to do this, I

myself have to live the story so I pick a story I relate to.

I often hear people tell stories in different ways. Sometimes the message of the story is nice but it doesn't often happen that I encounter someone who tells a story with real chayus. When a story is told with chayus it enters the heart of the listener and has an effect on his life.

Do you use any special teaching aids in your storytelling?

Yes, I have puppets that help me a lot in concretizing the ideas I want to convey to the girls. They are active participants in the show, describing feelings and repeating lines so the ideas are better absorbed. The puppets enable me to review ideas in different ways. This is very important because it gets absorbed better. At the same time though, it's important not to portray ideas in an exaggerated way so that the ideas are absorbed naturally. The fact that a Chassidishe story is powerful doesn't mean you need to put less into how you tell it. I do whatever I can so that the story doesn't get swallowed up among the hundreds of stories we have nowadays in books and tapes. It's very important to me that these stories stand out for the children.

Tell us about reactions from the children that tell you that they absorbed the stories.

In Kislev I spoke to the girls a lot about light in connection with 19 Kislev. We spoke about the light of a tzaddik, the light of k'dusha that emanates from him and that every Jew is a candle who illuminates and that each of us has a holy light that is derived from the mitzvos and good deeds that we do. One of the girls, who is not observant, came to me a few days later and excitedly told me that she went shopping with her mother and that she was an "illuminating candle" since she dressed modestly and spoke nicely.



The Rebbe Rayatz

Chaya has numerous examples. Before Yom Kippur she told the girls a story about R' Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev who came to the defense of the Jewish people. Here is what Chaya told me:

In the days that followed I repeated the idea of defense in many ways. Some time later I heard one of the girls speaking badly about another girl. Suddenly, the girls around her piped up and said: Come on, let's talk nicely like Rabbi ... what was his name? Rabbi Levi. And then Hashem will speak well of us and do only good for us."

The story became a way of life for them and when this is the case, it's easier to correct them. The Chassidishe story is sometimes more powerful than what I tell them as a teacher.

Chaya doesn't dwell on the negative aspects of a story:

I told the girls about a Chassid who had to go through a forest. He took his menorah along because the Rebbe Rashab told him to, and during his trip he encountered a robber. I don't emphasize the robber, neither with the accessories I use with the puppet, nor with the

tone I use. Often people emphasize the negative parts of stories in a dramatic way but we can be dramatic without doing that. The girls are riveted by the story and don't lose out; on the contrary.

One of the ideas that Chaya particularly emphasizes is that the Rebbe is Moshiach and a prophet who must be listened to:

I tell them miracle stories about the Rebbe and stories that took place in 770. When we talk about yechidus or about "dollars," I show them puppets standing on line. I want them to feel it with all their senses, how Chassidim felt.

How do you connect the stories you tell to Moshiach?

Stories of Chassidim were told throughout the generations. In our generation we need to connect each story to Moshiach. When I tell them about the Baal Shem Tov who, when he was a child went to the forest and the animals were afraid of him because of the light that emanated from him, I add that soon Moshiach will come and the animals will be afraid of us because they will see the light in each of us. I look for the connection to Moshiach and tell it to them.

GETTING THE GOY OFF THE STAGE

Ilana Noi teaches art, drama and theater at a Chabad school for girls in Nes Tziyona.

Is it possible to dramatize Chassidic stories without compromising the message?

In my experience, it often happens that when you turn a story into a play it loses something. There are stories that are better left in books than put on the stage. You can actually see how they are more

one side and the scaffold on the other side. On the stage will be Chana and her seven sons. When one of the sons goes to the king or the soldier takes the child to be killed, the audience will continue to see what Chana says to her remaining children. That is the real drama - to see how Chana and her children behave as the tragedy unfolds.

What interests me is to see whether Chana had to direct her children how to behave before they

negative characters?

I don't let children, especially little ones, see negative characters. There is an explicit directive from the Rebbe that children should not play the role of Haman. How could a Jewish child identify with an evil person who stands on stage and says bad things about Jews? I want very much for the dramatic elements to reach deep inside the children.

Back to the story of Chana, if I put the wicked king in the middle of the stage on his throne with a crown, scepter, and royal clothes, it's only natural that children will identify with his power and dream of being like him. He stands for wealth and power. So we have to pay attention to which elements we emphasize and which we de-emphasize.

The story arouses interest... They follow you, with their power of imagination, and get into the subject in a gentle way. If I start the topic directly with a question, I force the listener to listen and then her immune system begins to work. A Chassidishe story puts the immune system to sleep and gets the message across through their hearts. The message is absorbed better.

powerful when read.

What is the reason for that?

I think it's because reading gives a person the freedom to use his imagination. That's taken from us when we see images on the stage.

In a show you can control the details of the story, which ones you leave out and which ones you include. How do you make sure the message gets across to the viewers?

I'll give you an example from a powerful story, the story of Chana and her seven sons. The first question I will ask myself is how to get the goy off the stage. Antiochus will not be the center of the drama. I will put him behind the curtains on

went to Antiochus or whether they did it on their own. That is the real drama for the audience to see first one child, then the second, the third, the fourth taken to be killed and in identifying with the story wanting to call out to Chana, "Stop, it's enough that you will go down in history because of your three sons; leave four!"

The point of a performance is to get the viewer to identify completely with the characters. In this way we can better understand who Chana was and how heroic she was to go through what she went through in that way.

What is your policy about

STORIES AS ICEBREAKERS

Chaya Bracha Leiter of Ascent in Tzfas, talks about stories from the perspective of a shlucha.

You meet people of all ages and backgrounds. How do you use Chassidishe stories to reach them?

When I tell a story I put in a lot of details, painting a word picture for my audience. I use stories mainly as an introduction to the topics I want to discuss. If, for example, I want to talk about the special quality of women in Judaism, as opposed to the feminist ideology which perverts her position, I will begin with a story which brings out the respect between a rabbi and his wife or a Chassidishe couple who went to the Rebbe.

The story arouses interest on the part of the listeners. They follow you, with their power of imagination, and get into the subject in a gentle way. A Chassidishe story develops the listener's interest in the subject in a natural way. If I start the topic directly with a question, I force the listener to listen and then

her immune system begins to work. A Chassidishe story puts the immune system to sleep and gets the message across through their hearts. The message is absorbed better.

Do you speak differently to an older crowd than to a younger crowd?

I lead many groups of soldiers, male and female. I include them in the construction of the story so that they feel part of it. I stop in the middle and let them think about how the story is developing. That usually generates discussion. The story becomes a teaching tool. Whatever I want to convey to them gets through with a minimum of my involvement. It's a big advantage because this way they internalize it far better.

A person is a combination of intellect and emotion. It's very important that the mind be healthy and strong but until a person's emotions are inspired by what he is learning, he won't be budged. A Chassidishe story is what arouses that emotion.

Do you have an example to show how a story helped bring about a big change in someone?

At one of our seminars we had a class on "Loving Your Fellow as Yourself." The one giving the class told about the students of Rabbi Akiva who did not act respectfully towards one another, and a discussion ensued. One of the participants got heated and shouted, "Do you mean to tell me that if I



open a supermarket near your house that is open on Shabbos, that you will continue to treat me with respect?"

The lecturer said he would not accept his approach but he would respect him as a person. The man continued to shout, "And if I turn on my stereo and play music all Shabbos to entertain my customers, will you still respect me?" And he continued in this vein.

At a certain point the lecturer took a deep breath and realized he wouldn't be able to convince him in the usual way. He looked at him and said, "I can tell you a story." The man seemed a little confused but said, "Okay."

The lecturer began, "Once there were two rabbis who were very close. One of them loved good and

the other hated evil. Doesn't it seem like they were very similar in their views?"

"Yes," said the man in the audience.

The lecturer smiled and said, "No, they were completely different. The rabbi who hates evil will find every evil thing, as small as it might be in you, and hate it with all his heart. But the rabbi who loves good will find the smallest good thing in you and love it with all his heart."

The tension level went down significantly and the man smiled and said, "I get it."

You could have tried explaining it to him for a year and he would continue to be irate and argue but one little story circumvented all his opposition and reached the right place in his heart.

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RABBI YITZCHOK ISAAC HERZOG Z"l

By Gershon Nof

He was a gaon who excelled in Torah and the sciences, a man of mind and heart, who became chief rabbi of the State of Israel. He was privileged to correspond and visited with three Chabad Rebbes. It is fifty years since his passing on 19 Tamuz, 1959.

MULTIFACETED PERSONALITY

Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac Herzog was a multifaceted personality. He excelled in his knowledge of Torah, yiras Shamayim, and had fine character traits. He was also knowledgeable in the sciences and studied at the Sorbonne and the University of London, where he received his doctorate for his work on the subject of *t'cheiles*, after he discovered eighteen types of kosher *chilazon* that are used for making *t'cheiles*.

R' Herzog was born in Lomza, Poland, and in 5657/1897 he moved to England, where his father was appointed to serve as rabbi in the city of Leeds. In 5668/1908 he received rabbinic ordination. During the years 1915-1936 he served as rabbi in Ireland, first in Belfast and then, from 1925, as chief rabbi of Ireland.

Rabbi Avrohom Yitzchok Kook persuaded him to make aliya and after R' Kook's passing he was elected Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel on 17 Kislev, 1937. In this prestigious position he helped many

Jews both inside and outside of Israel. He used his position, which was respected by the British mandate which then ruled Israel, to help Jews.

During World War II, he worked mightily to save his fellow Jews. In 1941 he made a trip to England, South Africa, and the United States for rescue work. He even tried to urge the leaders of the Allies to save Jews and demanded that they bomb the camps. When he wanted to return to Eretz Yisroel, the British warned him that the Nazi net was widening to include Palestine, but he told them that our prophets prophesied about two destructions and not a third and he returned to Israel.

After the Holocaust he traveled throughout Europe in order to convince survivors to make aliya. During this trip he met with various politicians and with Pope Pius XII. He asked the Pope to return the Jewish children who had been hidden with the church in order to save their lives, but was given the cold shoulder. So, lacking their cooperation, he went from church to church in order to remove the Jewish children himself.

R' Herzog incorporated within his personality greatness of thought, spiritual and moral leadership, genius in Torah and halacha and proficiency in secular wisdom. His accomplishments were many but in this article I will focus primarily on his relationships with the leaders of Chabad, from the Rebbe Rashab to the Rebbe.

It is not known whether R' Herzog studied in any yeshiva or whether he only learned with his father, R' Yoel Leib, who served as rabbi in Leeds and later in Paris. He considered himself a talmid of the Ridbaz who was rabbi in Slutsk, then Chicago, and then in Tzfas and wrote a commentary on the Yerushalmi. He was tested by the

Ridbaz and received smicha from him.

Mr. Chaim Herzog, the son of the rav, a general in the IDF and President of Israel, relates:

“On the Erev Rosh HaShana before World War I broke out, my father was staying with my grandfather, R’ Yoel Herzog, in Paris. Around midnight, my father began shouting in his sleep. My grandfather ran to him and my father woke up in a fright. He said that the Ridbaz had appeared in his dream wearing white and wrapped in a tallis and said, ‘Tzaros on the Jewish people.’”

After Rosh HaShana, they received the Yiddish paper with the news item framed in black announcing the death of the Ridbaz at midnight on the first night of Rosh HaShana. That year, on the 9th of Av, World War I began.

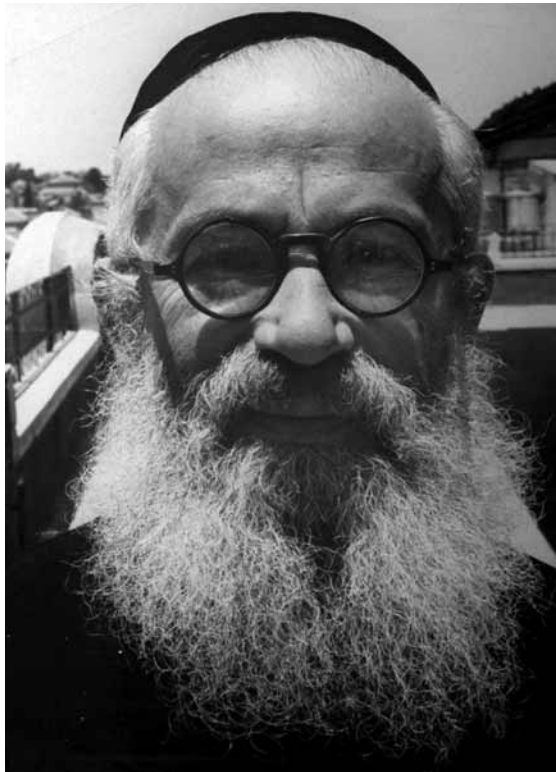
R’ Herzog served as Chief Rabbi of Israel during a fateful time for the Jewish people, during and following the Holocaust. He was recommended for the position by the gaon, Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer z”l, rosh yeshiva in Slutzk and later of Eitz Chaim in Yerushalayim, and author of the *Even HaEzel*.

A POSITIVE IMPRESSION ON THE REBBE RASHAB

R’ Herzog’s ties with the leaders of Chabad began with the Rebbe Rashab. The Rebbe Rayatz wrote the following to R’ Herzog on 24 Adar, 1941 (Igros Kodesh, vol. 5):

“On one of my father’s trips to Menton, he stayed in Paris. When he returned home he told me about the great friendship shown to him by your father and how your mother made sure to bake bread for him.

“My father said, ‘I enjoyed becoming acquainted with the young R’ Herzog and he is a *reiner talmid*



He asked the Pope to return the Jewish children who had been hidden with the church in order to save their lives, but was given the cold shoulder. So, lacking their cooperation, he went from church to church in order to remove the Jewish children himself.

Chacham (clean Torah scholar). When I spoke to him I saw that aside from his greatness in Torah, he is also proficient in [secular] wisdom and languages, and the maamer “Ein Divrei Torah mekablin tuma” occurred to me and this is what I call a “clean talmid Chacham.” My father was profuse in his praise.

“Then my father said, ‘secular wisdom goes counter to Torah and attempts to contaminate it, but for someone whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his divrei Torah turn aside the tuma. Even more so, he brings merit to the many with the wisdom he has in addition to his Torah knowledge, like Rasag, Rambam, and Ramban in their generations.’”

The gaon and Chassid, Rabbi Yisroel Friedman, told of another incident involving the Rebbe Rashab and R’ Herzog, as he heard it from R’ Herzog himself. It happened during one of the Rebbe Rashab’s visits to Vienna at which time Jewish students would visit him (apparently, R’ Herzog was among them) and would speak with him in learning.

It once happened that when they came to him, the Rebbe said, “This time I will not be able to talk with you since my head hurts.” One of the students piped up and said, “But Chazal say, ‘*Ha’chash b’rosho*’ (usually translated as, if your head hurts), he should preoccupy himself with Torah.”

The Rebbe answered, “When you have a headache, you should go to sleep. When Chazal said “chash b’rosho” they meant, “*der vos s’iz gechapt oifen kup*” (one who has wrong ideas) should preoccupy himself with Torah.”

CONNECTIONS WITH THE REBBE RAYATZ

There was an even stronger connection between the Rebbe Rayatz and R' Herzog. In a letter that the Rebbe sent to Rabbi Shlomo Yehuda Leib Eliezerov, dated 25 Shevat, 1938, he wrote about R' Herzog, "I correspond with him about communal matters."

It is not known when this connection between them began, but in his Igros Kodesh there appears a letter of consolation that was sent to the family after the passing of the grandfather, R' Yoel Leib, at the beginning of 1938:

I was shocked to hear of the terrible tragedy that happened to you with the passing of your husband, father and father-in-law who was known for praise amongst the gaonim of Yaakov, Reb Yoel Leib. May Hashem console you among the mourners of Tziyon and Yerushalayim.

My relatives, knowing how upsetting this sad news would be for me, hid it from me and I only found out about it today. I would like to know how the members of the household are faring, especially their son, R' Yitzchok Isaac.

When he was elected Chief Rabbi of Israel, the Rebbe Rayatz wrote him a letter from Paris on 5 Shevat, 1937, wishing him mazal tov on his appointment and blessing him that it be in a good and successful time and that he succeed in strengthening all areas of religion – kashrus, Shabbos observance, the laws of purity, Torah study, etc.

The Rebbe wrote to him often. Sometimes this entailed many letters back and forth on topics such as the state of Jewry in Russia, trying to obtain the release from the USSR of R' Mordechai Dubin, requesting certificates for entry into Israel, and the Yaldei Teheran.

Among the topics covered in the "one-time" letters is the practice of

Around midnight, my father began shouting in his sleep. My grandfather ran to him and my father woke up in a fright. He said that the Ridbaz had appeared in his dream wearing white and wrapped in a tallis and said, "Tzaros on the Jewish people..."

stunning animals before sh'chita (this was a suggestion proposed at that time by those concerned with the suffering of animals). The Rebbe Rayatz asks R' Herzog to convince the enlightened rabbis to oppose stunning before slaughter.

In another letter, the Rebbe Rayatz urges him to write an article promoting family purity, to open people's eyes and inspire them to keep this mitzva as Hashem commanded it. In response, R' Herzog sent the Rebbe a Hebrew translation of an article that he wrote in Britain.

On 9 Teives, 1949, the Rebbe sent him greetings on his sixtieth birthday.

HELPING THE JEWS OF RUSSIA

The state of Russian Jewry greatly preoccupied the Rebbe Rayatz and he turned to every possible person who could help, among them R' Herzog. On 27 Av, 1941, the Rebbe sent telegrams to a number of rabbanim, including R' Herzog:

The state of our brethren in Russia demands that worldwide Orthodoxy send a special delegation to visit them and to establish a large project to aid them, materially and spiritually. I suggest that a committee be founded with the participation of yourself and R' Hertz (the chief

rabbi of England), Abramsky and myself. Please telegram your consent and then I will write to you in detail.

In a telegram dated 21 Adar, 1944, the Rebbe asked R' Herzog to check the veracity of the news that appeared in the paper that the Russian government officially recognized the Jewish community in Moscow and allowed it to open a seminary for rabbis. On 4 Iyar, the Rebbe sent him another letter on the same subject.

Regarding the Jews of Russia, there are also some letters dealing with R' Mordechai Dubin, who was a member of the Sejm (Congress) in Latvia and devoted his life to helping others. Among those who were helped by him was the Rebbe himself, after R' Dubin used his position to get the Rebbe out of Russia. After the Russians took control of Latvia they arrested R' Dubin several times and tortured him.

On 23 Elul, 1948, the Rebbe wrote to R' Herzog:

I turn to you about our outstanding friend, the energetic askan who has mesirus nefesh and elevated middos, especially Ahavas Yisroel, R' Mordechai Dubin of Riga, former member of the Congress in Latvia, who was sentenced to ten years by the Soviets and is sitting in jail in Russia. May Hashem redeem him and take him out to the light.

I think it is unnecessary to emphasize R' Mordechai's great personality. He was one of the leaders of the Jewish people in Europe and tens of thousands of people received help from him, with the help of Hashem, in body and finances. It is an obligation and mitzva to make efforts on his behalf to get him out of jail at the earliest opportunity.

The Rebbe followed this up with other letters in which he asked that people work to get Mordechai Dubin out of prison and out of Russia to Eretz Yisroel and requested updates. Unfortunately, all the efforts were fruitless and R' Dubin died in the city of Kubishev after much wandering. He is buried in Malchovka, a suburb of Moscow.

Another topic which generated many letters between the Rebbe Rayatz and R' Herzog concerned certificates. The British, who ruled Palestine at the time, severely limited the number of Jews allowed into Eretz Yisroel and gave the Jewish Agency a small quantity of certificates. The Jewish Agency gave most of these certificates to veteran Zionists.

Religious Jewry received very few certificates and it was extremely difficult to obtain one. In one letter, the Rebbe wrote how upset he was about four talmidim of yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim and requested that R' Herzog obtain permission for them to make aliya. R' Alter Simchovitz, the menahel of yeshivas Toras Emes in Yerushalayim, was the contact person. He met with R' Herzog and then reported to the Rebbe about the difficulties, which prompted another letter from the Rebbe to R' Herzog.

In the winter of 1940, the Rebbe wrote from Riga, asking for a certificate for R' Hillel Tzeitlin (may Hashem avenge his blood) whose material and spiritual situations were precarious.



**Chief Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac Herzog (left)
with Sefardic Chief Rabbi Bentzion Meir Uziel**

On Isru Chag Pesach, 1940, less than two months after the Rebbe arrived in New York, he asked again about certificates for talmidim of yeshivos in Poland.

In a telegram to Rabbi Eliezerov, in the winter of 1943, he said that he asked R' Herzog for certificates for R' Mordechai Dubin, Avrohom Yaakov Levitin, his mechutan – R' Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn and the latter's wife Chana and son Berel.

The Rebbe's concern was not limited to those for whom he asked certificates but he also asked some rabbanim, including R' Herzog, to

declare a fast day on the first day of Slichos, 22 Elul, 1941. In Iyar of 1942 he asked that a "Worldwide Chevra T'hillim be founded of ziknei talmidei chachamim, no matter their nusach and including no fewer than ten people who would recite the entire book of T'hillim every day at dawn, for the merit of Klal Yisroel."

THE YALDEI TEHERAN

One of the ugliest stories that took place in Israel during the Holocaust years involved the Yaldei Teheran. Over 700 child survivors



Rabbi J.J. Hecht and Dr. Nissan Mindel presenting R' Herzog with a cake which said (in Hebrew) "Goodbye – from the students of Shaloh in New York"

arrived in Teheran in 1942 and the Polish government in exile set up a large camp for them. Then the children were transferred to the authority of the Jewish Agency. The Jewish Agency representative responsible for the camp was an assimilated Jew who gave a member of HaShomer HaTzair the authority to educate the children. The counselors were all irreligious and they did all they could to make the children drop their religious observance both when they were in Teheran and after they made aliya.

This aroused a furor in the Jewish world and many protests appeared in Eretz Yisroel and throughout the world, against the plot. R' Herzog went to war against the Jewish Agency. This is what was written in *Davar*:

"In *HaPardes*, the monthly rabbinic journal published in Chicago, there was an article which said: Last Chol HaMoed Pesach a telegram was received from R' Herzog by R' Meir Berlin, who was in New York at the time. In the telegram, R' Herzog complained bitterly against the Jewish Agency in

Eretz Yisroel, which handed over these refugee children to various absorption places where they were being forcefully torn away from their religion. R' Herzog said in the last telegram that he was fighting against the Jewish Agency and asked the Agudas HaRabbanim and religious Jews in America to muster their remaining strength to help in this holy war."

In *HaMashkif*, 22 Iyar, it said: "A demand that the chief rabbi of Israel must be a Zionist was voiced by Rabbi Fishman at a session of Mizrahi's head committee which convened yesterday. R' Fishman accused R' Herzog of being at fault concerning the uproar surrounding the Yaldei Teheran by supporting the Aguda. R' Fishman's words created a furor and the speaker insisted that the Chief Rabbi publicize his view regarding Zionism and the entire Yaldei Teheran scandal or resign."

The Rebbe Rayatz wrote at least 34 letters about this, a number of them to R' Herzog.

At a meeting of Admurim and rabbanim which took place on 4 Elul, 1943, the Rebbe said:

May Hashem grant us the merit to remove this black stain and sinful crime that the Jewish Agency brought on the Jewish camp and on Am Yisroel by removing Jewish children from their religion. May Hashem fortify the strength of the mighty gaon, R' Yitzchok Isaac Herzog and along with him, the venerable Admurim and rabbanim ha'geonim. May Hashem be with those who work devotedly to rescue the refugee children from apostasy and to put them into proper schools.

YECHIDUS WITH THE REBBE RAYATZ

R' Herzog went to the United States before Shavuot 1949. On the first day of Shavuot, which he celebrated in Brooklyn, he visited 770 and had yechidus with the Rebbe Rayatz. The newspaper *Der Tug* reported that during the yechidus key topics that pertained to the Jewish world at the time were discussed. The Rebbe spoke about the Jews of the United States and said that since he had come to America he had met with Jews of various groups and all were dear Jews. Even those who were not religious expressed regret from the depths of their heart with a genuine inner sigh.

R' Herzog responded with a quote from the Rambam that "the Torah promises that ultimately the Jewish people will repent at the end of galus and immediately be redeemed," and said that day was apparently very close.

A week later, R' Herzog met with the Rebbe Rayatz's son-in-law, the Rebbe. The conversation concerned the work of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch and R' Herzog wrote a message and words of blessing to the students of Shaloh.

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Posner, who was a talmid in 770 at the time, related:

“On the second day of Yom Tov, which was on Shabbos, it was hard for R’ Herzog to walk to the place where he davened then, ‘Crown Heights Yeshiva’ (in the building of Beis Rivka today on Crown Street), and he asked that a minyan be made for him for Mincha in the beis midrash of yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim on Bedford and Dean, closer to where he was staying.

“We talmidim did not want that because that day the Rebbe Rayatz would be farbrenging in 770. Then an order was received from Ramash [the Rebbe] that he would not allow any talmid into the farbrengen until they finished Mincha in the yeshiva.

“Naturally, we followed orders and went to yeshiva. After Mincha, R’ Herzog spoke on the parsha (since he was from Eretz Yisroel and it wasn’t Yom Tov for him but a regular Shabbos), and then I accompanied him, together with Tzvi Hirsh Chitrik, to where he was staying. When we all arrived at 770, the Rebbe himself opened the door for us to the Rebbe Rayatz’s farbrengen. After the farbrengen, when I went downstairs, the Rebbe stopped me as he stood at the threshold of his room and asked me to tell him everything that took place at the yeshiva and what the rav had said, including our conversation as I walked him home.”

The Chassid R’ Moshe Geisinsky told of the deep impression the yechidus had on R’ Herzog. On his way back from New York he went to Paris and farbrenged with Anash. He told about his yechidus with the Rebbe Rayatz and said in astonishment, “You surely want to hear regards from your Rebbe. He is extremely weak so that they even have to put his t’fillin on for him. But I was amazed by the quickness of his mind. What brilliant government minister for example, can accomplish in three weeks – he [the Rebbe] does in a day.”



Der Tug reporting about the yechidus that R’ Herzog had with the Rebbe Rayatz

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE REBBE

The connection between the Admurei Chabad and R’ Herzog continued with the Rebbe. When the Rebbe accepted the role of Nasi, R’ Herzog sent him a telegram with his blessings. They exchanged letters as well. In one of them, R’ Herzog asked the Rebbe’s opinion “about the seeming scientific contradictions.”

On 8 Iyar, 1956, the Rebbe sent R’ Herzog a telegram in which he asked him not to send his approbation to institutions in America whose very names showed that they prided themselves on being the standard bearers of Judaism, which were comprised of Conservative and Reform representatives, like the “New York Board of Rabbis” and the “Synagogue Council of America.”

R’ Herzog, who had already sent his approbation and blessings, acceded to the Rebbe’s request and rescinded his letter. On 4 Sivan the Rebbe sent him a letter thanking him

for doing this and at the end of the letter, the Rebbe wrote a letter about the “seeming scientific contradictions,” which appears in Igros Kodesh, volume 13. In that same volume there are other letters to R’ Herzog in which the Rebbe expresses his view that it is not permissible for Israeli ships to sail on Shabbos and it is forbidden to travel on them.

MAN OF PURITY

To conclude with a story that testifies to R’ Herzog’s yiras Shamayim:

As mentioned earlier in this article, at the conclusion of the Holocaust R’ Herzog met with the Pope, a meeting that he hoped would result in the Pope telling those under his command to release the Jewish children who had been harbored by the church during the war. What was not mentioned there is that after this meeting, he went to the mikva in order to immerse and purify himself.

SOUL CONNECTION WITH RABBI LEVI YITZCHOK Z"l

By Nosson Avrohom

*R' Tzachi Kadmi feels a deep connection with the Rebbe's father. * In an interview with Beis Moshiach for Chaf Av, Tzachi told me some interesting connections he has had with R' Levik and about his preparations for the upcoming Chaf Av farbrengen.*

Tzachi Kadmi is a Lubavitcher Chassid living in Moshav Gamzu on the edge of the Ben Shemen forest. He is a successful insurance salesman and an active Lubavitcher at his moshav. Only one thing is on his mind these days – how to organize a Chaf Av farbrengen that will attract the largest number of people from the moshav, which speakers/mashpiim to bring, and when the best time to have it is.

After talking to Tzachi for two hours, I understood where his “koch” about anything having to do with R' Levik comes from. His two

sons were born on the birthdays of two of R' Levik's sons, the Rebbe and R' Yisroel Aryeh Leib. Tzachi's feeling for R' Levik is what propelled him to name the mikva he built after the venerable Rav and mekubal. While visiting the graves of the Rebbeim in the CIS he had a special feeling at the gravesite of R' Levik in Alma Ata and he himself doesn't know why.

Tzachi grew up and lived in Cholon until ten years ago when he moved with his family to Moshav

Gamzu which is located near Modiin. The moshav was founded many years ago and was settled by Satmar and Nadvorna Chassidim along with a group of new immigrants from Morocco. The mixture worked fine and there are still Moroccans on the moshav who speak Yiddish, and Chassidim who speak Ladino and Moroccan.

Over the years the moshav experienced an economic crisis and soaring unemployment and in the mid-70s' they decided to form an agricultural cooperative through Poalei Agudas Yisroel. Rabbi



Yekusiel Yehuda Rosenberg z”l was the rav of the moshav and was known for his genius and great yiras Shamayim.

Three decades ago R’ Rosenberg, who had served as rav in Salutza and Kloiz in Romania, decided to leave the moshav since many Chassidim left for Chassidishe communities that began to spring up in Yerushalayim and other places. They were replaced with members of Poalei Agudas Yisroel and religious Zionists as well as immigrants from North African countries.

At Moshav Gamzu, named for the eternal optimist Nachum Ish Gamzu, many archaeological finds have been made in recent years with the most notable one being a mikva dating from the second Temple period. According to all the experts and historians, the place serviced those people who were going to the Beis HaMikdash for Yom Tov who stopped here, immersed, and then continued on to Yerushalayim.

“It really bothered me that there was no mikva for men here,” said Tzachi. “There had been a mikva in the past but after Rabbi Rosenberg died, over twenty years ago, the residents felt there was no need for it and the old building was destroyed.

“One day I decided to take matters into my own hands and build a mikva. When I presented the idea to the current rav of the moshav, Rabbi Meir Eliav, he was enthusiastic about it. He is an expert on the laws of mikvaos and a friend of Chabad and the Rebbe.

“After he gave his consent, the moshav’s Vaad met and decided to allocate a piece of land for it. What I had to do was raise the money. In my daily life I’m an independent businessman and am, boruch Hashem, a giver. Now I found myself fundraising. All the members of the moshav gave a token donation in order to be partners in the

THE PICTURE OF RABBI LEVI YITZCHOK

Tzachi Kadmi relates:

At moshav Gamzu there is a young man who is a bit “stuck” in shidduchim. We know each other well. One day I met him and invited him to my house to write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh. I told him to make a good resolution and take it all seriously and I was sure he would get a bracha.

He did, in fact, take it seriously, and came over to write the letter. He chose not to show me the answer he opened to.

On his way out of my house he noticed a picture of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok. He asked me about the man in the picture. It seemed he had seen the picture previously and just wanted to be reminded of who it was. I told him the name and he immediately said, “He is a great tzaddik and if you have time, I will tell you a story that I heard from someone I work with who is not religious.”

This fellow has traveled a lot in his line of work which is communications. On one of his trips he went to Kazakhstan. One day, as he left his hotel, he was surprised to hear Chassidic music blaring from a car with some Chassidim dancing nearby. Since he had finished his business in the city and he had to wait a few days for his flight back to Israel, he was happy to meet religious Jews, a sight he had not expected to see in Alma Ata.

He went over to the Chassidim and they invited him to join them. He described his visit with shliach Rabbi Yeshaya Cohen and his family as “unforgettable.” They sat and farbrenged into the night with moving niggunim and delightful conversation, no barriers, and unlimited joy.

Before he went to the airport, R’ Cohen asked him to do him a favor and take some videos back with him to Israel. He was happy to do so, thus paying him back in a small way for his wonderful hospitality.

After R’ Cohen gave him the things he wanted brought to Israel, he gave him a small picture of a tzaddik and said, “He will surely protect you wherever you go.” He didn’t ask who the tzaddik was and he got into the taxi that was waiting to take him to the airport.

Officials at the airport decided to focus their attention on him, for no apparent reason, and when they noticed the equipment he had with him for his work in communications, this aroused their suspicion and they decided to check it carefully. They took him to a side room and a high level official came in to conduct the search. They opened all his bags and belongings and put all the contents on the table. When they finished, they took all his documents and checked each one individually.

In the meantime, time was moving on. He was sure he would miss his flight. All attempts to explain to the Kazakh police that they were in error and he wasn’t a criminal were in vain. They were sure they had caught a big fish and maybe even a dangerous spy. That is, until the senior officer saw the picture of R’ Levi Yitzchok that he had been given by the shliach. The officer looked at it and told his men to give him back all his things. He apologized and announced that he was free to leave.

It was only when he arrived back in Israel and he inquired as to who the tzaddik in the picture was that he found out that it was the Rebbe’s father. Since then, he always takes the picture with him on his trips.



Tzachi Kadmi in his home in moshav Gamzu

endeavor but I still had to raise the majority of the money. I contacted some people whom I thought would help out but nothing moved.”

Tzachi heard about an organized trip to the gravesites of the Rebbeim that was arranged by Rabbi Sholom Dovber Wolpo of Kiryat Gat. He decided that since he had the z’chus to undertake the mikva, he ought to daven at the gravesites of the Rebbeim and ask for success.

“We visited all five gravesites of the Chabad leaders as well as that of the Baal Shem Tov, R’ Zushe of Anipoli and even the Maharsha. I had the most moving experience on the yahrtzait of the Rebbe’s father, when I was in Alma Ata. I have no idea why I felt that way there and not in Lubavitch or Mezhibuzh, etc. but that’s the way it was.

“We stayed at R’ Levi Yitzchok’s gravesite for five hours where I read the entire T’hillim with great feeling. Then we took part in the big farbrengen organized by the shluchim with hundreds of people in attendance. The mayor also took part. I felt a deep, soul connection to

R’ Levik without being able to explain why.”

Tzachi returned home to Gamzu with big hopes but was disappointed when the few promises that had been to him about money for the mikva did not pan out. “I had to raise all the money to finish the construction.”

When the construction was completed, it was clear to him that the mikva would be named for R’ Levi Yitzchok. This idea came to him while he was praying at R’ Levik’s gravesite.

The completion of the mikva and its opening was exciting for the members of the moshav. Although at first they weren’t too interested in something that would be used by only a few people, today dozens of men immerse every morning. Not only residents of Gamzu use it but also many people from the area use the mikva, especially on Erev Shabbos and Erev Yom Tov.

Three years later, when Chaf Av fell out on Shabbos, Tzachi thought about what he could do in honor of the baal ha’hilula.

“At the farbrengen on the moshav ten days earlier, with Rabbi Shlomo Ta’izi, we spoke about having to make a farbrengen for the yahrtzait. The big question was when to have it. The residents of the moshav know that in order to have a Kiddush-farbrengen on Shabbos, there needs to be a reason like a birth or a seudas mitzva for a chassan and kalla. The rule was you didn’t make a Kiddush just like that. Unfortunately, a yahrtzait was not considered a valid reason for a Kiddush.

“When I went home, I decided to write to the Rebbe and ask for his bracha. I added a personal request too. I asked when to make the farbrengen, whether on a weekday before that Shabbos or on one of the days following it. By specific divine providence, the letter I randomly opened to had the date on which my letter was written, and there was an answer to my personal question and about the farbrengen, as follows: ‘I was happy that you sat with Chassidim on Shabbos to farbreng.’

“I was thrilled. I said to myself, if the Rebbe writes that the farbrengen will be on Shabbos, all I had to do was convince the gabbai. When I left a check for the Kiddush at his house, he called to ask me what it was for. I told him it was a surprise. He got annoyed and said that wasn’t acceptable.

“I knew that he used the mikva and was grateful to me for that and I said it was a farbrengen in honor of the Baal HaMikva. He thought I was referring to a big donor and that I wanted to honor him for his donation and he agreed to that.

“The next day, during the farbrengen, when the gabbai saw that no wealthy man had showed up, he dressed me down in public and said that now everybody had to know what the surprise was that got the k’hilla to make an exception and have a Kiddush. While wondering

REB LEVIK'S KIDDUSH CUP

Tzachi has an amazing hashgacha pratis story to tell. He said that on Friday, the day before Chaf Av when he made the farbrengen in shul, he went for a haircut to a friend who is located near his parents' house in Cholon. He told the barber, a religious Sefardic Jew, that the next day was the yahrtzait of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok and he suggested that the man light a candle, give tz'daka, and read some chapters of T'hillim.

"At first the barber thought I was referring to Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev but I told him that I was talking about the Lubavitcher Rebbe's father and I told some stories about him. He listened and then we went on to talk about other things."

Towards the end of the haircut the barber suddenly exclaimed, "Who were you talking about before?"

Tzachi wondered about the question and when he repeated the Rebbe's father's name the barber closed his eyes as he tried to remember something. Then he said it was the second time that week that he was hearing about Rabbi Levi Yitzchok, the Rebbe's father.

"Now I remember that a neighbor came in for a haircut and he told me that he has a cup that belonged to the father of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He has it for several decades and was interested in selling it."

"At first I was stunned into silence," said Tzachi. "I couldn't understand how the Rebbe's father's cup had ended up with that man. I was skeptical of the story and decided to verify it. I said I wanted to meet

with the man.

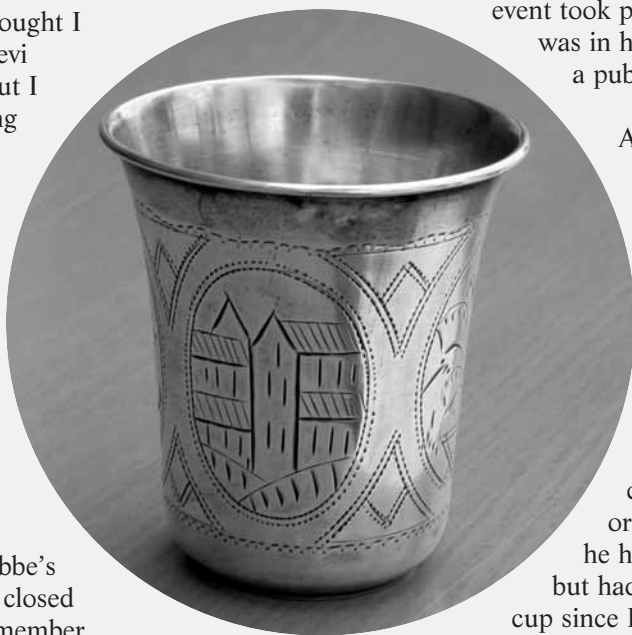
"Since the barbershop was empty, he went out and came back a few minutes later with the neighbor who had the cup with him, wrapped in red silk. The man claimed it belonged to the Rebbe's father. When I asked him how he knew this, he told me that in 1967 he spent time in the United States as a young man and he tried his luck in business. Around Chanuka time of that year, one of his friends invited him to join him at an event. He didn't remember where the event took place but he remembered that it was in honor of Chanuka and there was a public auction.

"A Jewish woman from South Africa bought a candlestick which they said had belonged to one of the Chabad leaders and then they announced the auction of a cup that belonged to the Rebbe's father which came from some Polish artisan."

Tzachi continued, "I didn't know what to say. When I asked if he had a certificate that testified to the original owner of the cup, he said he had had a voucher to that effect but had lost it. I decided to buy the cup since I felt a special connection to

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok and I told the man how amazing it was that I had met him since I felt this way about R' Levik and it was the eve of his hilula! My excitement was contagious and the man decided to make a donation towards the mikva which was in the middle of construction.

"I am not sure of the origins of this cup but this hashgacha pratis made a deep impression on me and this is the story that I told the next day, at the farbrengen I arranged in the shul on Shabbos in honor of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok's yahrtzait."



how to say it I got an idea. I decided to tell them an interesting story that happened to me just the day before (see sidebar).

"I began recounting my saga, from the day I came to the moshav, to my decision to build a mikva, my feeling when at R' Levik's grave, my two sons having the same birthdays

as two of R' Levik's sons, the farbrengen I organized in honor of the yahrtzait, and throughout all this not knowing why I felt such a strong connection to R' Levi Yitzchok.

"The farbrengen happened, despite the tough rules. It was a farbrengen in memory of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok which had quite an effect

on many of the residents.

"Since then, other farbrengens have taken place at the shul, with the help of the gabbai, on other Chassidic dates. Many take part in these farbrengens. The breakthrough was Chaf Av and the farbrengen in honor of R' Levi Yitzchok."

CHASSIDIC ADVENTURES IN SOVIET RUSSIA

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

R' Hillel Zaltzman's secret meanderings on chassidic missions often landed him unexpected opportunities to mourn, to learn, to laugh, to make chassidim, and even to make shidduchim.

When I traveled to meet with R' Mendel Futertas in Chernovitz (as I wrote about in a separate chapter about R' Mendel), I decided to detour to Lvov, which isn't far from Chernovitz. My aunt Sarah Pewzner lived in Lvov and she had lost her husband, R' Dovid, and her son R' Moshe, within a short time.

The story of the death of my cousin Moshe is tragic. He was a young man in his twenties, nice looking and strong, who worked as an electrician in a factory. One day, on Chol HaMoed Pesach, he left the house in perfect health and two hours later was brought back dead. While he had been working on a

new electronic machine at the factory, his Ukrainian anti-Semitic 'colleagues' connected it to the electricity, killing him.

My aunt was a very strong woman who kept her pain deep in her heart and did not display it. Even under these tragic circumstances, when her son died in his prime shortly after the death of her husband, she did not publicly shed a tear. She sufficed with deep sighs. She pushed all her suffering deep into her heart. This is why I felt obligated to visit her and lift her spirits.

I went with her to the cemetery and we visited the graves of her

husband and only son, who were buried next to each other. I was taken aback to see how, after she cleaned the grass from the graves, she stood there silently without crying. She only sighed deeply now and then.

During my visit, my aunt suggested that we visit the Botanic Gardens in Starisky Park. I did so and was happy to see that despite her losses she retained a joy in life and she enjoyed showing her nephew (me) the sights. It was a place with a myriad of flowers, shrubs and trees. When I entered, I felt as though I had been connected to an oxygen tank. The air was crisp



The interior of the great shul in Petersburg



with the scent of pines and I breathed deeply. Songbirds added to the magnificent atmosphere. It was like a taste of Gan Eden on earth.

Living in Lvov at the time were two brothers, the Chassidim R' Shmuel (Mulle) and R' Dovid (Davidke) Gurewitz, along with R' Elimelech Lebenhartz. In those days, when throughout the Soviet Union there were few Lubavitchers scattered here and there, each one yearned to get to know the others and farbreng together.

Shabbos morning I went to R' Elimelech Lebenhartz (whom I knew from the time he lived in Stalinbad) and we walked together to R' Mulle.

Our meeting was warm and the three of us walked together to the mikva before davening. On the way we passed near R' Dovid's house. His wife had just given birth to their oldest son, Chaim. Feeling mischievous, the two of them asked me to pretend to be a tourist from New York.

We entered R' Dovid's house and the two of them whispered to him and introduced me as an American tourist who came that week from the Rebbe. At first, R' Dovid was thrilled to meet someone from Anash who saw the Rebbe that week, but then he turned pale, fearing that the KGB secret agents who always followed

tourists, saw the "American tourist" enter his house.

But his longing to hear something of the Rebbe overcame his fear and he began asking me questions. I managed to play my part and told him the little that I knew about the Rebbe. R' Mulle and R' Elimelech stood in a corner and couldn't refrain from laughing. R' Dovid, who thought they were laughing at his apprehension, began shouting at them, "Why are you laughing? They might be following him and then we are all in trouble! He's an American and so he doesn't understand anything, but you know what goes on here; why are you laughing?"

I couldn't contain myself any longer. I burst out laughing and told R' Dovid it was just a joke. I introduced myself, saying I was Hillel Zaltzman from Samarkand, and two days ago I had seen R' Mendel in Chernovitz. R' Dovid joined in the laughter and it was a joyous atmosphere.

From there we all continued to the mikva and to davening. Our farbrengen after the davening was hartzig because in those years it was very rare to meet with fellow Chassidim and farbreng together.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE POLICE

My plan was to use this trip as an opportunity to visit the grave of the Rebbe Rashab in Rostov. From Lvov I continued to Rostov via Kiev. I arrived at the train station towards evening and stood in the passenger area with my aunt, who had escorted me. A cleaning lady passed by, washing the floor, and a bored policeman went before her asking people to get out of her way so she could do her work.

The policeman approached me and I felt my suitcase scalding my hand... The suitcase was full of anti-communist material and I

EXILE WITHIN AN EXILE

On one of my winter trips, in an attempt to locate Chassidic manuscripts (as related in an earlier chapter), I arrived in Charkov, where I was supposed to meet R' Nissan Skoblo. He lived in a communal courtyard with goyim and I crossed the entire courtyard with my suitcases as the gentiles who lived there watched me.

When I knocked at his door and walked in, he was frightened and discomfited. I was used to people feeling tense when they met a stranger but I noticed that he was more frightened than the norm.

After we spoke for a few minutes and he realized that I was one of Anash, he told me his secret: in half an hour a number of men and women would be coming to bake matzos in his home. He happily showed me the electric oven he had made himself for the baking of the matzos. He also showed me a tool with which the dough was rolled out. That was the first time I saw that dough could be rolled this way.

I felt it was an exile within an exile: in Samarkand, Anash lived in separate courtyards and were able to bake the most mehudar matzos, while here, I saw the baking of matzos in such a difficult way. In other places, they had a matza bakery in the shul but in Charkov of those days R' Nissan had to bake matzos in his house in the evening, after work hours, so that the few people in the city who did not eat chametz on Pesach would have matza. The families that got matza sent representatives to help R' Nissan with the baking.

desperately wanted to avoid any encounter with the law. I stepped aside before he would ask me to do so. Unfortunately, this unusual move aroused his suspicion. He stopped near me and asked to see my identity papers. "Where are you from and where are you going?" he questioned me.

My heart raced. I handed him my papers and an uncomfortable feeling came over me. The policeman saw that I came from distant Samarkand, a distance of 4000 kilometers from Lvov, and he asked, "What are you doing here?"

I explained that I had vacation from work and I had come to visit my old aunt (which was true!). He looked at me suspiciously and demanded, "Please open your suitcase, comrade."

At first I trembled. In my suitcase were some volumes of Tanya, T'hillas Hashem Siddurim, and the *Panim el Panim* weekly of Agudath Israel which had a long article about

Rashag and the Chabad movement. I became tremendously frightened. What if he found all this incriminating material? Although I had arranged my suitcase so that a towel, sweater and clothing were on top, he could easily find all this contraband.

In those tense moments I remembered how R' Moshe Meizels, the Chassid of the Alter Rebbe, had avoided death thanks to the Alef-Beis of Chassidus – "the mind rules the heart." I mustered my inner powers and with a relaxed smile I quickly opened the suitcase. I felt the policeman eyeing me and I continued to smile. After I opened the lock, I began lifting the cover as he continued to watch me and I continued to smile. Then he responded with a smile and said, "Fine, close the suitcase and please move."

These few brief moments seemed like days to me. There was no time to think because the train came and I rushed inside. I arranged my belongings and the train set out. Only afterwards, when I had calmed down a bit, did I think of what could have happened and where I would be if he had found the material in the suitcase. It was an open miracle!

A YOUNG, YIDDISH-SPEAKING BACHUR

After I davened Maariv, I began to think about my plans for the trip. The train was supposed to arrive in Kiev at ten in the morning and I had enough time to daven in Kiev since the train to Rostov did not leave until the evening. Before I left Samarkand, I was told about a widow whose husband had been G-d fearing, and after his death she lived with her two daughters in Kiev, far from a Jewish environment. One of my missions was to visit them and encourage them to leave Kiev and move to Samarkand where there was a Jewish community, and then to



R' Hillel Zaltzman

also ensure the girls would only consider shidduchim with G-d fearing boys. I figured I would be able to daven Shacharis in their house.

When I arrived in Kiev, I was unable to find the widow's address. After searching for a long time I began to get nervous: Where would I daven? I had already said the morning Shma but had waited to daven Shacharis with Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam t'fillin (I wasn't married yet and I didn't have a tallis) in their house with peace of mind.

I nearly gave up and decided to daven in the street, come what may, but then I had an idea. I would go and look where Jews lived and ask someone to let me daven in his house. That was no simple matter but preferable to davening in the street!

Having learned from experience, I didn't take my suitcases with me. I left them in a locker at the train station. I just took a bag with my t'fillin and a little food I had brought from home. I walked around the streets of Kiev and noticed a public courtyard with private houses around it. I entered the yard and met a woman who looked Jewish. When I asked her whether I could daven in her house, she looked at me in terror and whispered, "Daven? Daven? Go to the city park where you will find old Jews and you can ask them."

I did as she suggested and found a small park nearby where old Jewish men and women sat and talked in Yiddish. This unusual sight was wonderful to see. When I went over to them and asked them, in Yiddish, whether I could daven in their house, they could not believe their eyes: a young man speaking Yiddish who wanted to daven! They were sure there were no longer religious youth in Russia and my presence astonished them.



**R' Hillel Zaltzman (right) with his friend, R' Moshiach Chudaitov
on a recent flight to Russia**

"Who are you? Where are you from?" asked one old man.

"From Kostanai in Kazakhstan," I answered.

"What is your name?"

"My family name is Braitbain," I said.

"Unbelievable," said the man to his wife, "in the Soviet Union there are young men like him who speak Yiddish and know how to daven."

(As I wrote previously, one of my side goals in my travels was to show the Jews I met that there were still young people who learned Torah and did mitzvos and spoke Yiddish. This information greatly encouraged the Jews whom I met and inspired them. However, I was afraid to reveal my real name and origin and I always made up a name and chose a city I had never visited.)

After they calmed down from the pleasant surprise, one of the old men said, "Go to Kreshyatik – a main street in Kiev – take the streetcar, and get off at the Podol stop, where you will find a shul."

They assured me that the shul was still open even though it was two in the afternoon. I followed their instructions and was so happy to find the shul. When I walked into the yard, I saw an old man sitting

and learning Gemara. I greeted him and asked, "Is the shul still open? Can I daven there?" He nearly fell off his chair. A young man who spoke Yiddish and wanted to daven?! He smiled and showed me the door to the shul.

"Is there a mikva here too?" I inquired. He nodded, surprised by the question, and showed me the mikva. I went into the mikva and a few minutes later noticed that the old man had come in, apparently because he wanted to see what a young person like me was doing in a mikva.

When he saw my tzitzis made of wool (even though it was the summer), he asked, "You're one of the Chassidim?"

In those days, it very dangerous to associate with Chabad Chassidim and so I made believe I did not understand his question. "What? Sidim? What's sidim?"

He asked me again and I continued to play dumb. When he saw that I did not understand what he was saying or he realized that I did not want to continue the conversation, he left.

After immersing in the mikva I went into the shul and davened. During the davening I noticed that

he came in several times, I guess to check to see whether I was really davening. When I put on Rabbeinu Tam t'fillin, I did it in a showy manner, certain that he would tell his friends about the unusual scene and this would inspire them.

When he saw that I was a man of few words, he did not try to ask me any further questions like what was my name or what was I doing in Kiev. In general, in the Soviet Union everybody was used to avoiding unnecessary questions, especially when he saw that I was closemouthed.

When I finished davening, the old man invited me to his house to eat something. I politely declined and said I had brought kosher food with me from home. He seemed very moved by this, marveling at this sight before him. In Russia of those days a frum young man who put on Rabbeinu Tam t'fillin and ate kosher was not even a dream. The man probably thought Hashem had sent him an angel from heaven...

DAVENING IN A COMPARTMENT WITH THREE GENTILES

I went to the train station in the evening. The trip to Rostov was long. I got on the train in Kiev on Wednesday night and was supposed to arrive in Rostov on Friday morning. I had no choice but to daven on the train on Thursday.

As I related in an earlier chapter, I always tried to fly and not travel by train so as not to get stuck in a situation where I had to daven in a train compartment. Perhaps I could have been lenient and only said Shma in t'fillin and then taken them off and davened the rest without t'fillin, but I was particular about davening the entire t'filla with t'fillin, and this was difficult to impossible in a crowded train.

In the summer, when everybody



The Rebbe Rashab

went on vacation, I wasn't always able to get a flight and had to travel by train. In these instances, I would at least try to buy a ticket for a car with separate compartments. On these long trips you don't sit on benches, of course, but sleep on long shelves like narrow bunk beds in separate compartments. In every car there were usually close to ten compartments with four passengers in each, and only one compartment for two passengers. When I managed to get a compartment for two, I would convince the man in charge, with a bribe, not to let another person in. However, when this two-man compartment was taken, and I was given a place in a compartment for four, I couldn't prevent three people from entering.

Unfortunately, on the long trip from Kiev to Rostov, the train was full. I was given a place in a four-person compartment and the compartment was full. I looked around the car, hoping I would find a Jewish family with whom I could talk and get them to allow me to daven in their compartment. It wasn't comfortable but better than davening in a compartment with goyim.

In the next door compartment there were three Jewish women. I talked to them and asked them to let me daven in their compartment the next morning. They looked at me suspiciously and refused, saying, "If you don't daven one time, big deal..."

I told them that I could not miss davening and if they did not allow me to daven in their compartment, I would have to daven in my compartment with gentile passengers. They were not impressed and they entered their compartment and locked the door.

In order to minimize any damage, I decided to get up at dawn and daven while the others were still sleeping. I could hardly sleep because every few minutes I would wake up and look out the window to see if I could put on t'fillin already.

In my compartment there were two bunk beds. On the bottom beds were Ukrainian men and one gentile woman slept on the upper bunk opposite me. I was sorry to see that one of the goyim got up early and went out to the corridor. He enjoyed the fresh air from the forest that came in through the window. He kept the door to our compartment open.

My thoughts raced. What should I do now? I decided it was better to daven now than later when they were all awake. I got off the top bunk and said to the goy who went back and forth from the room to the corridor, "I am religious and want to pray. I would appreciate it if you come into the compartment or stay in the corridor because I want to close the door." He was very respectful and said he would remain outside so as not to disturb me.

I closed the door, put on my t'fillin, and began davening. My head was the height of the upper bunk where the lady slept. When I put on Rabbeinu Tam t'fillin she woke up. I tried not to look in her

direction but I could feel that she was lying there in fear, opening an eye and then closing it. She had no idea what I was doing, having never seen anything like it before.

Boruch Hashem, all went well and afterwards the goyim treated me with great respect for the rest of the trip.

AT THE OHEL OF THE REBBE RASHAB

I arrived in Rostov on Friday, at eleven o'clock. Before I had left Samarkand, I heard that R' Lazer Nanes was planning on going to Rostov in the summer. I was very happy at the rare opportunity to visit the Ohel with him and we arranged to meet in Rostov.

In those days, people didn't talk about visits to Lubavitch, Haditch or Niezen. This was because visiting a little town would arouse attention and suspicions and also because the Rebbe Rashab was closest to our generation and we had heard about him from our fathers. My father, for example, learned in Lubavitch and we heard stories firsthand about the Rebbe Rashab from many Chassidim.

R' Lazer's sister-in-law lived in Rostov. I got her address and directions from him and easily found her house. Her husband was a simple man but she had absorbed the "Chassidishe flavor" and had seen Chassidim of stature from the previous generation.

When she saw a young bachur who spoke Yiddish and came to Rostov to daven at the Ohel, she saw I was one of Anash and gave me much respect. She did not stop talking about Jews she knew from the previous generation and telling Chassidishe stories that she remembered. She mainly spent time telling about Chassidim who learned in Tomchei T'mimim.

To her, the highest form of praise was to say, "He was a Tamim," but

A VISIT TO THE GREAT SHUL OF LENINGRAD

While in Leningrad, I visited the main shul where I met a tall man by the name of R' Avrohom Abba. He worked as a shamash in the shul and he was also a sofer. Since in Samarkand there was a shortage of t'fillin, I bought t'fillin from him. I always tried to get t'fillin on my trips, without success. The only person from whom I could get kosher, mehudar t'fillin was this R' Avrohom Abba.

After we got acquainted, he offered to show me the big shul where they generally davened only on holidays. On weekdays, they held services in the small shul on the second floor, to the left of the big shul. During the war and following it, Anash davened there, and that is also where the yeshiva Tiferes Bachurim was located where Rabbi Lipa Shapiro was a Maggid Shiur.



The Great shul in Petersburg

R' Avrohom Abba said that this shul was the most beautiful in all of Europe. Indeed, when we walked in, I was amazed by its beauty. As I began to walk towards the Aron Kodesh, I heard someone walking behind me... I looked carefully behind me and to the sides and did not see anyone. Then I realized that the shul had unusual acoustics so that even something whispered could be heard throughout the building. As magnificent as it was, you can't compare the beauty of the shul back then to the beauty of the shul today after the shliach there, R' M.M. Pewzner, renovated it.

In the courtyard of the shul I met a Jewish woman about forty years of age. At first she thought that a youngster like me did not understand Yiddish, and she began speaking in Russian and asked what I, a young man, was doing there in a shul. Once I answered her in Yiddish, she switched to a rich Yiddish and expressed her amazement at my grasp of the language.

As I wrote, when I would meet with Jews by chance on the street, I tried not to get into long conversations in fear of the KGB but in the short time that we spoke, I would ask who they were and what they did and mainly, if they had been able to raise their children in the ways of the Torah. I will never forget what that woman answered me, after I asked whether her son went in her ways. In tears she quoted the verse, "Children have I raised and exalted and they rebelled against me."

A MOVING VISIT TO THE PETROPAVLOVSKAYA FORTRESS

When I was in Leningrad, I took the opportunity to see the Petropavlovskaya Krepost (fortress) where the Alter Rebbe was held. Back then, the fortress had ceased serving as a jail and had turned into a tourist spot. I walked around the fortress as a tourist and was allowed



The Petropavlovskaya fortress

to enter the cells of prisoners from the time of the Alter Rebbe. The government preserved the fortress and left everything as it was - the narrow iron beds and the small window near the ceiling for a bit of air and light.

I trembled at the thought that perhaps the Alter Rebbe had been in that very cell. Who knows? Maybe I was

walking precisely where the Alter Rebbe had walked.

I reviewed some lines of Tanya in my mind and thought: Quite possibly, since the arrest of the Alter Rebbe, no Jew had walked here. What a z'chus I had that I was here now and reviewing lines of Tanya, the "Written Torah" of Chabad Chassidus.

When I left the fortress I looked out to the Nieve river that passed nearby and thought: Perhaps this is where the Alter Rebbe was brought on the boat that stopped for Kiddush Levana when he said the words, "Terror and fear shall befall them."

Those were especially moving moments and each time I think of them, I relive the experience.

instead of saying "Tamim" she said "tamei," and each time she wanted to sing the praises about someone, she would say with great admiration, "He was a tamei." I had a hard time holding back my laughter.

R' Lazer came and we had a Chassidishe Shabbos with Chassidishe niggunim and stories. He spoke a lot about his imprisonment. He said that one of the things that kept him going was his custom of singing all the Chabad niggunim he knew on Motzai Shabbos.

On Shabbos I went with him to the shul where the Rebbe Rashab davened. For security reasons we did

not walk together. R' Lazer walked in front of me. We didn't want people to realize we were associated.

Before Krias Ha'Torah the gabbai asked me whether I knew how to say the bracha on the Torah. I was taken aback by the question and after telling him that I could, I said, "You see that I know how to daven!"

He retorted, "The fact that you are holding a Siddur doesn't mean you know how to daven."

He gave me a paper which said "chamishi" on it and said I would be given the fifth aliya. I usually did not accept an aliya on my travels because, since nobody checked the sifrei Torah, many of them were

pasul and it would be saying a bracha in vain. It was only after R' Lazer told me that the Torah was kosher that I agreed to accept an aliya.

On Sunday we went to the Ohel. The Ohel was separate from the cemetery and with the efforts of Anash the yard was closed with a lock. Aside from R' Lazer and a few others, the shamash did not allow anyone to enter.

When I entered the yard I saw five spots with piles of dirt, as though people were buried there. R' Lazer explained that this was done so that other people wouldn't be buried there. R' Lazer pointed at one of the five graves and informed me this was the gravesite of the Rebbe Rashab. We davened quickly lest we be seen, and we left.

SPIRITUAL RESCUE

A few years after World War II, around 1948, a young man from Leningrad came to Samarkand. His father had been a Lubavitcher shochet who died in the siege of the city. The orphan came in order to be with Jews and in the hopes that he would be able to be exempt from the army. He wasn't that bright and people thought that when he went to the draft office they would immediately throw him out, so they didn't make efforts on his behalf. He was drafted anyway, and by the time people realized their mistake, it was too late.

When he finished his service, we heard that he returned to Leningrad and from that point on we were not in touch. On one of my trips in the summer of 1959 or 1960 I decided to pass through Leningrad in order to meet with him and see what he was up to.

When I would travel to a distant city that was unfamiliar to me, I always tried to take a couple of addresses of Anash who lived there with me, so if one wasn't home, I

could visit another Chassid. On my trip to Leningrad I had the address of that man and I also had the address of R' Michel Rappaport.

When I arrived in Leningrad, I went to R' Michel's house. He lived in a communal setting. If you hadn't seen it, you would not believe that in the second half of the 20th century, people in Europe lived this way. Several families lived together in one apartment with each family in one bedroom. The bathroom facilities were shared, there was one dining room, and in the hall was a kitchen with a sink. Each family had a specific time for the bathroom and a turn to cook in the kitchen.

You can imagine how difficult life was for a Jewish-religious family that had to live in an apartment like this with goyim or, l'havdil but no less challenging, with irreligious, communist Jews. Each time you had to put a metal plate on the treif gas range before cooking and try to do so inconspicuously.

R' Michel, who had to live in an apartment like this, rented a summer home outside the city. Although the summer home was more like a shed than a home, for R' Michel it was a palace because he lived there himself, with no gentile neighbors and with a separate kitchen. What luxury!

When I came, R' Michel was on his way out to his summer home. He was very happy to see me, not only because I was a Lubavitcher bachur, but mainly because his only son, R' Yitzchok (who lives in Toronto now) was after his bar mitzva and R' Michel wanted to show him that you could be a religious bachur. It wasn't only old people who could be religious. He asked me to farbreng with his son and to have an influence on him.

He was amazed by our meeting because he was living at the summer place already and had just come that day to visit for a few hours. I arrived

just then and we met.

R' Michel shechted chickens and secretly enabled many people to eat kosher. When he heard that I was a maven in sh'chita knives, he gave me his knife to check. I was shocked to see that the knife wasn't good and despite our difference in age, I told him the truth.

He smiled a little and gave me another knife to check. This knife was better but still not mehudar. He gave me a third knife and this time not only was it perfectly smooth, it was also very geshmak. When I told him my observations, he was very happy and he said, "You are a genuine maven in knives. When you said you were a maven, I decided to test you and I purposely gave you the knife with flaws."

I left my belongings with R' Michel and hurried to the city before it got dark to find the address of the man I had come to Leningrad to find. I found the address but was told he had gotten married (to a Jew, boruch Hashem) and had left the area. I did not get to see him but I met his two sisters and his mother, who were very happy to meet a young Jew who had heard about their late father.

From my conversation with them I learned that they had grown up in a Chassidishe home befitting a Chassid who learned in Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch, but after their father died, they remained alone, without Jewish-Chassidic guidance. They said they also had a younger brother who was in the army. We spoke for a few hours and I left the house without seeing the man I had come to see.

As we know, everything is b'hashgacha pratis. Who knew why I had gone to Leningrad, whether to see him or for other more serious and important reasons. I often saw this in my travels. I was thinking along certain lines and hashgacha led me in another direction.

After I returned to Samarkand and told about my visit to Leningrad and what happened there, I had an idea – maybe I should try and marry off the girls. I spoke to one of the bachurim and suggested that he go there and meet them; maybe one of them suited him. They were Jewish girls who had been born in tahara and were the daughters of a Tamim.

He took me up on the idea and went to Leningrad. I was thrilled when I heard that he met with one of them and they liked one another and decided to marry. The wedding took place a few months later in Samarkand.

Later on, the second daughter arrived, followed by their younger brother who had finished his army duty. After years of estrangement from Jewish company he barely knew anything. I took on the job of being mekarev him and brought him to work in my workshop. Boruch Hashem, over the years he became more involved until he became a Chassid.

I remember that after he had become acquainted with the customs of Chassidim and already wore woolen tzitzis, it happened that we walked together on Shabbos and I suddenly noticed that he was carrying something in his pocket. I asked him in surprise what he was carrying and he innocently said that he heard that after the Tanya was printed, R' Zushe of Anipoli took a Tanya with him wherever he went to the point that he did not even move from room to room without it.

"I don't have a Tanya," he said, "but I don't leave the house without a T'hillas Hashem Siddur in my pocket."

Baruch Hashem, over the years he and the sisters established Chassidishe families and have Chassidishe children and grandchildren.

[Continued from pg. 5]

Notes:

1. Tanya, ch. 37.
2. See Sefer HaMamaarim 5710, p. 237, which interprets the verse (Numbers 12:3) "And Moshe was more humble than all the men on the face of the earth" as meaning that G-d showed Moshe all the future generations of mankind. Moshe saw the dedication of the Jews in the generation directly preceding Mashiach's coming and their unswerving adherence to the Torah and its mitzvos despite their lack of conceptual development. He appreciated that the advantage their Divine service possessed, and this moved him to humility.
3. The explanation to follow comes in

addition to - and is enhanced by - the concept that the Divine service of the previous generations is still an active force within our world, for good is eternal (see Tanya, ch. 25).

Using this reservoir of good as a resource, we are like "dwarfs on a giant's shoulders" (Foreword to Shibolei haLeket). Our own contributions are amplified by the hard-earned merit of our forebears.

4. The Mussaf prayers, Siddur Tehillat HaShem, p. 258.
5. See Chagigah 2a, "Just as a person would come to see [G-dliness], so too he would come to present himself [before G-d]."
6. Or HaTorah, the beginning of Parshas Ekev.
7. See Tanya, ch. 2.

8. Avos deRabbi Nosson, the conclusion of ch. 31.

9. Torah Or 1b.

10. Devarim Rabbah 3:1,3, Ibn Ezra and Ramban to Deuteronomy 7:12.

11. Avos 4:2.

12. The word mitzvah shares the same root as the Aramaic word tzavsa which means "connection." The fundamental aspect of the mitzvos is the connection to G-d they establish.

13. Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah 9:1.

14. Loc. cit., Hilchos Melachim 12:5.

15. Loc. cit.:4, see also Hilchos Teshuvah 9:2.

16. Isaiah 11:9, quoted by the Rambam, loc. cit.:5

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Upon this statement I affix my signature, Sunday 20th Tamuz 5766



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