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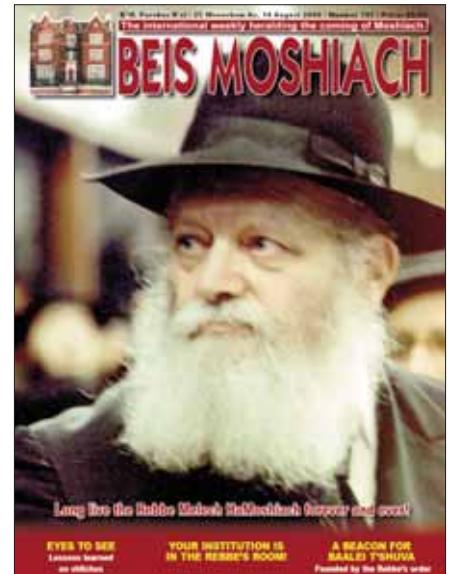
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YOUR INSTITUTION IS IN THE REBBE'S ROOM!

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THE POWER OF SIGHT

Sichos in English

Parshas Re'eh is read on the Shabbos on which the month of Elul is blessed. Indeed, this year, Parshas Re'eh is read on the day preceding Rosh Chodesh Elul.

The Alter Rebbe describes (in Likkutei Torah, Re'eh, p. 32b), Elul as the month when "the king is in the field." "Anyone who so desires is granted permission [and can] approach him, and greet him. He receives them all pleasantly, and shows a smiling countenance to all."

Elul is a time of Divine favor, a time when we can make requests of Him, and they will be granted.

Therefore, it is a time when Jews wish each other a kesivah v'chasimah tovah, that they be inscribed for a good and sweet year, including the ultimate expression of good, the coming of the Redemption, and the era when "those who repose in the dust will arise and sing." (Isaiah 26:19)

PENETRATING PERCEPTION

Our Sages state: [1] "A witness may not serve as a judge." And they explain the rationale: "Once a person has seen [a crime] committed, he can never find justification for the perpetrator."

This teaches us that sight does more than convey information.

When a judge hears the details of a crime from witnesses, he can

still think objectively about the matter and consider the merits of the defendant.

If, however, he has seen the crime perpetrated himself, he will be so deeply affected that he cannot withdraw and contemplate the matter without bias.

Seeing and hearing operate differently.

When a person sees an event or an object, it penetrates deeper than his conscious mind, establishing an inner connection.

The impression created remains with him, constantly strong and powerful.

When, by contrast, he hears about the matter, even if his source is reliable, such a connection is not established, and his conception of the matter is intellectual alone. Therefore, he can weigh it back and forth and see other perspectives.

There is another difference between these two senses:

When we see an object or an event, we grasp it in its totality, and only afterwards, do we focus on the particulars. When we hear, by contrast, we begin with the particulars and work toward the comprehension of the entire picture.

These two points are interrelated:

Because one sees the entity in its totality, it penetrates deeper. And conversely, when all the information one receives is

particulars, it is far easier for them to be offset by other points of information.

TO SERVE G-D BY CHOICE

These concepts are relevant with regard to this week's Torah reading, Parshas Re'eh which begins: [2] "See that I am placing before you today a blessing and a curse."

The portion continues to allude to the principles of free choice and reward and punishment: [3] "The blessing [will come] if you obey the commandments... and the curse [will come] if you do not heed... and go astray from the path which I have commanded."

Moshe is telling the people that their observance of G-d's commandments will not be a spontaneous response. Instead, they will be required to make a conscious choice.

Why does G-d grant man choice? To elevate him to a higher plane of Divine service. [4]

Were man's choice between good and evil to come naturally, he would not have any sense of accomplishment. What would he have earned?

For this reason, at every stage of his spiritual progress, man is confronted with challenges which he must overcome on his own initiative. [5]

By nature, evil has no substance,

and as darkness is repelled by light, evil would be subdued by the power of holiness.

Nevertheless, in order to allow for free choice, evil is granted the power to present a obstacle to the forces of holiness.

Indeed, the forces of evil are granted sufficient strength to parallel even the highest spiritual levels.

For this reason, we see that at times, man is motivated by a desire for material things which goes beyond his understanding, to the point that he is even willing to risk his life for these goals.

Nevertheless, these challenges have one purpose: that man face them and overcome them.

Through these endeavors, the good which man spreads within the world becomes his own doing. He is not merely a recipient of Divine favor; he makes a contribution of his own. [6]

SIGHT AS ASSISTANCE, A COMMAND, AND A PROMISE

On one hand, the challenges man confronts must be real.

If they do not require that he tap his inner resources of strength to overcome them, they do not grant him the opportunity to express these powers of achievement.

On the other hand, G-d does not want man to fail.

He invests within him the power to overcome the challenges he faces and aids him in this endeavor.

One of the means of empowerment is alluded to in the above verse: "See that I am placing before you...." G-d allows man to see the truth of "the blessing and of the curse." [7]

As explained at the outset, when something is seen, it is perceived in its entirety and a deep impression is made.

When man sees the nature of the

good that he can achieve through positive choice, and when he sees that the entire reason evil has been given any substance is to allow him to make that choice, he will surely choose positively.

Alternatively, the word "see" can be interpreted as a command.[8]

The objective of man's Divine service should be to labor to reach a state that he sees Divine purpose in his life.

When this purpose is "seen" and not merely comprehended intellectually, he will feel inspired to carry out his Divine service with increased vitality. Moreover, the word "see" can be interpreted as a promise that we will in fact reach this level of awareness.

SEEING THE TRUTH

The ultimate expression of the potential of sight will be in the Era of the Redemption with the fulfillment of the prophecy: [9] "The glory of G-d will be revealed and all flesh will see."

In contrast to the present era, when we can see only material entities and G-dliness is perceived as an external force, in that future time, we will see directly how G-dliness is the truth of all existence.

Nor is this merely a promise of the distant future.

The Redemption is an imminent reality, so close to us that a foretaste of its revelations are possible at present.

Indeed, it is already possible to see [10] the manifestations of the blessings of the Redemption.

Notes:

1. Rosh HaShanah 26a.
2. Deuteronomy 11:26.
3. Ibid.:27-28.
4. See also the essay "Choosing Our Mission" in this series which also touches on the concept of free choice.
5. The importance of man's initiative reflects a connection to

the monthly cycle of the Jewish year. Parshas Re'eh is read either on the Shabbos on which the month of Elul is blessed or on Rosh Chodesh Elul. The name Elul serves as an acronym for the Hebrew words Ani L'dodi V'dodi lee which mean "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" (Song of Songs 6:3).

Our Rabbis (Or HaTorah, Parshas Re'eh, p. 791) interpret this phrase as indicating that man takes the initiative in establishing this bond of love. See the essay entitled, "The King in the Field," (Timeless Patterns in Time, Vol. II, p. 153ff).

6. In this context, we can derive a concept from the verse cited above: "See that I am placing before you today a blessing and a curse." The Hebrew word nosen translated as "placing" has the implications of a generous gift (see Bava Basra 53a).

Seemingly, the possibility of "the curse" is the opposite of generosity. Based on the above, however, there is no difficulty. For the ultimate purpose of the possibility of a curse is that man reach more consummate achievement in the sphere of holiness.

7. In this context, seeing helps prepare for man's Divine service.

8. In this context, seeing comes as a result of man's Divine service.

9. Isaiah 40:5.

10. This also leads to another point. As mentioned, sight operates on a plane above intellectual comprehension. Often, we see things that we do not fully understand.

Similarly, in the context mentioned above, although signs of Mashiach's coming are visible, for certain individuals, the matter may still be beyond complete comprehension. This factor does not, however, detract from the truth of our perception.

A BEACON FOR BAALEI T'SHUVA

By Nosson Avrohom

*Shliach, Shaul Yosef Benshimol took a group of mekuravim to a seminar at a French retreat in a magnificent castle. * A few days later they made a frightening discovery and at the end of the retreat they received a direct invitation to visit the Rebbe from 18 Elul until after Sukkos. * Mosad HaAderes V'HaEmuna has produced hundreds of baalei t'shuva and Chassidishe families. It was founded by direct order of the Rebbe. * Even the French Secret Service wanted to know why it was called "Mosad" * The amazing story of a shliach and a shlichus that was led by the Rebbe's hand.*

Hundreds of Chabad families, including teachers and shluchim throughout France, owe a debt of gratitude to veteran shliach, Rabbi Shaul Yosef Benshimol, director of the organization "HaAderes V'HaEmuna" in Paris. It was he who

showed them the way, teaching them about Judaism and exposing them to the beauty of Chassidic teachings. R' Benshimol has 35 years worth of shlichus stories about his mekuravim, the Rebbe's extraordinary involvement in his



shlichus, including bona fide miracles. Yet, if you ask him, he feels like he is just starting out...

His own life story is unusual. Although he comes from a family of kabbalists in Morocco, he abandoned Judaism in his youth and entered the world of film and theater in Paris which at that time set the tone for the entertainment industry throughout the world. When he felt that he was reaching the top of his field, he met the legendary playwright Henry Korman and began working with him.

They began working together on



Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Since they had heard that Shakespeare used Jewish mystical motifs in his plays, they thought it would be a good idea to learn something about Jewish mysticism. While looking for the right place to study they came across a Kabbala class given by a Chabad shliach in Paris. The rest, as they say, is history.

One shiur followed another and within a short time, Benshimol shocked the movie industry in France when he decided to drop it all and go back to his roots. Of all people, it was Henry Korman who

understood his life changing decision. Benshimol's first visit to the Rebbe was all he needed to conclude his inner journey.

Just one year later, the Rebbe told him to start an organization to spread Judaism. "I was flabbergasted. I didn't know how to learn Tanya well enough and certainly not other Chassidic works, but when the Rebbe says something, you do it."

This special regard the Rebbe had for him was just one link in a long chain of unusual kiruvim.

R' Benshimol is not the type who

enjoys being interviewed and getting publicity. On the contrary, his work over the years has been done modestly. I met him in the home of one of his daughters in Milan and was happy to have the opportunity to talk to him. At first he tried sidestepping the journalistic limelight but in the end he gave in and agreed to tell the story of his shlichus. He makes a very fine impression – with his warmth and ever-present smile, his genuine humility and charismatic personality. His passion is irrepressible as he describes his encounters with the

One shiur followed another and within a short time, Benshimol shocked the movie industry in France when he decided to drop it all and go back to his roots. Of all people, it was Henry Korman who understood his life changing decision. Benshimol's first visit to the Rebbe was all he needed to conclude his inner journey.

Rebbe, their written correspondence and the special favor the Rebbe showed him.

One of my friends, a young shliach in Paris, told me that he attended some classes on Moshiach and Geula given by R' Benshimol in the shul at the Sinai school and was completely enthralled. "He spoke with such enthusiasm you would think he was presenting the material for the first time. The Talmudic dictum 'And it should be in your eyes like new' - surely is exemplified by R' Benshimol. He's a shliach who 'lives' Moshiach, feels Moshiach, and publicizes about Moshiach."

The secret to R' Benshimol's success in reaching out to people is this: Lots of chayus, love, joy, and smiles. Here is a shliach who is a source of great inspiration.

INFLUENCE FROM THE HOME

Even when he slipped off the path and immersed himself into the decadent theater subculture, where traditional faith is hard to find, he never abandoned kashrus.

"My mother put this into our veins." And then he added something surprising, "At home we always lived Moshiach. My maternal grandmother, who died on Pesach

Sheini at a very old age, was known in Morocco as a woman with ruach ha'kodesh. She told my mother that she would merit to see Moshiach.

"My mother spoke to me about Moshiach from when I was four. There's no question that my grandmother's bracha was fulfilled when my mother came with me for yechidus. It's interesting that my uncle, the mekubal Rabbi Chazan Aziza, told me one time that Moshiach would come from the United States."

The breakthrough in his career was when he met the famous playwright from South America, Henry Korman.

"I met him in Paris at a meeting of actors. I got into a conversation with him and afterwards he wanted to meet me and said that for over two years he had been looking for someone like me to work with him on *Hamlet*. He planned on putting on the play in many countries in an unprecedented performance with singers and first-rate actors. The storyline is about the soul and introspection. I agreed to work with him and we got started.

"One day, as we worked on the play, he sent me to research the Jewish angle. At that time, nothing interested me aside from the play which we thought would be the next

big thing in the world of theater. Since he asked me, I began looking for a class on mysticism and that's how I got to a shliach in Paris. It was before Pesach and the shliach spoke about the holiday and about the inner meaning of Judaism. I followed his talk with interest since I found that the points he made fit wonderfully with the main themes in the play. I was very impressed and amazed by this."

FIRST YECHIDUS

One shiur followed another and Benshimol loved the ideas he was learning.

"Suddenly, the world of theater didn't interest me and I only wanted to learn more and more and get close to G-d. I remember the day that I decided to do t'shuva. I was with another friend who had gotten involved in Judaism and both of us decided to mark the occasion as a day of celebration for us, the day we discovered our inner essence. I began to feel that up until then I had been in the dark, in an empty world which didn't truly satisfy me.

"Henry Korman, who realized he was losing me, spoke to me frankly and said, 'Although I am losing out by your getting involved with religion, I am happy for you that you found the inner point that will make you happy.' Some of my friends were shocked and some said they knew this would happen.

"I came across a book of Chassidic stories written by Martin Buber. The book fascinated me and brought me closer to the world of Chassidim.

"I went to the Rebbe for the first time on Chaf Av 1972. I didn't know it was a special date. I entered 770 in the middle of the Rebbe's farbrengen. I found many wonderful people who invited me to their homes and provided me with full room and board. I was amazed by the tremendous Ahavas Yisroel that I

encountered for the first time in my life.

“On my first Shabbos I was hosted by Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz who knew a little Moroccan from the time he learned in Brunoy, when the yeshiva was full of talmidim from Morocco. Later on I was a guest of Rabbi Leibel Mochkin who was a congenial host.

“A few days after I arrived, I had yechidus. I was so overcome by emotion and awe that I could barely open my mouth. I gave the Rebbe the paper with my questions and requests and remained standing. I hardly understood anything in that yechidus. The Rebbe spoke in Ivrit, French, and some Yiddish.

“The highlight of the yechidus was that I suddenly remembered a very important question that I hadn’t written in my note. I was standing there and thinking about it when the Rebbe pulled out a letter from a pile of letters on his desk. I could see it was the letter I had written to the Rebbe about that problem when I was still in Paris. I hadn’t received an answer and here was the Rebbe taking out the letter and responding to the question!

“I was bowled over by the Rebbe’s ruach ha’kodesh. My feet literally shook and my teeth chattered. Maybe it was because of that, that I couldn’t concentrate on the rest of the yechidus. When I left the room, R’ Mochkin asked me what the Rebbe said and I answered that I didn’t remember much. I only remembered that the Rebbe spoke to me in three languages and if I wasn’t mistaken, I heard the word ‘dayan.’

“He decided from what the Rebbe had said that I had to continue with my learning and he took me to Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson who ran yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim and he sent me to learn in Hadar Ha’Torah by Rabbi Goldberg. I told R’ Mochkin that I was an only child and could not remain in New York



Rabbi Benshimol at a farbrengen-shiur with mekuravim at a restaurant in Paris



The opening and dedication of the mosad, “HaAderes V’HaEmuna” with the hachnasa of three Sifrei Torah with a blue, white and red paroches, the colors of the French flag

“My mother spoke to me about Moshiach from when I was four. There’s no question that my grandmother’s bracha was fulfilled when my mother came with me for yechidus. It’s interesting that my uncle, the mekubal Rabbi Chazan Aziza, told me one time that Moshiach would come from the United States.”

MIRACLE FLIGHT

During Chanuka 5741 my family and I were in Crown Heights. The visit was marred because one of my daughters had a double ear infection. When this happened in the past, she would get an injection which would soothe the infected area. This time, there were a few days left before we would be going back to France and we went to Dr. Feldman.

When he examined her ears and heard about our upcoming trip, he said the pressure of the altitude could cause her irreversible problems and unbearable pain. He said he could give her an injection but we should ask the Rebbe whether we could travel with her in this condition.

The next day I went to R' Klein and asked him to bring a letter from me to the Rebbe. The day of the flight was approaching and I had no response. Before Mincha on the day of our flight, I asked my wife to stand with our daughter in the entranceway to 770 where travelers stood to get the Rebbe's bracha. If the Rebbe would give a bracha, we would know all was well.

After Mincha, the Rebbe returned to his room and didn't say anything but I was happy when R' Klein came over to me and said that a positive answer had been given about the trip and the Rebbe included two French bills, one of 100 francs and the other 10 francs. I don't know why that amount – perhaps because the gematria of the word *nes* (miracle) is 110.

I told my wife that there was nothing to worry about, that the Rebbe had given his bracha. The truth is that it was difficult because our daughter cried hysterically all the way to the airport. When the plane took off she suddenly became quiet and fell into a deep sleep. Nothing could disturb her. When the plane landed she woke up and cried again.

In the afternoon, when we went to the doctor, he yelled at us for not coming sooner. When we told him that we had just arrived from America that morning, he laughed, "To fly with a child in this condition..." Another doctor who regularly attends my shiurim, and saw my daughter, said that to the best of his knowledge it was a miracle.

for long since my mother would worry and also because I took care of her, but he promised me that he would take care of my mother and would send money and I should devote myself to my learning."

THE REBBE SAID TO SING: HA'ADERES V'HA'EMUNA

"About two years after I got married, in Tamuz 1976, I had a yechidus together with my wife, my eldest son, my mother and one of

my mekuravim, an extremely talented musician named Yitzchok Bitton. I had a number of questions and I wanted answers from the Rebbe regarding my personal life. Till this day I try not to do anything without asking the Rebbe.

"In one day I was thrilled to get three answers through the secretaries, to three different letters. One of the questions I asked was about the proper way to be mekarev Jews in France and the Rebbe said there was indeed a special way and not everybody merited it and he

added that I had to get involved in kiruv. I was surprised by this answer. I should get involved in kiruv? I was just a young baal t'shuva...

"The Rebbe apparently had other plans. In those days, Rabbi Binyamin Gorodetzky was the director of the European office and the Rebbe's representative. In a two hour yechidus, the Rebbe spoke to him about my opening the third mosad in Paris. When R' Gorodetzky left the yechidus, he met with me and another member of the "Lishka" (name of the first Chabad organization in France), Rabbi Refael Wilschansky, who spoke fluent French and was the interpreter between us.

"During that visit, the Rebbe decided to pay half the travel expenses of whoever had come to 700 with me from Paris. He asked that upon my return there, I should visit the Lishka and get the money! The following Shabbos was 12 Tamuz and the Rebbe told R' Groner at the farbrengen to call me to the farbrengen dais. The Rebbe opened a bottle of mashke and poured some for me to say l'chaim. Then the Rebbe arranged for a bottle for me and said, 'This is for your friends in Paris.' I can't describe how I felt at that moment.

"The next day, Sunday 13 Tamuz, there was another farbrengen and after the special niggun for Russian Jewry I heard the Rebbe suddenly say, 'There is a group here from France and they will probably sing 'HaAderes V'HaEmuna.' The Rebbe looked at me and waited and R' Groner, with his hand motions urged me to begin. Who me? I should sing in front of the Rebbe?

"I wanted R' Bitton to sing but he was shy and that left me alone with all of 770 waiting for me. I finally began to sing and afterwards I myself was surprised by how well it

sounded. My wife says that the Rebbe adjusted my voice. Those were unforgettable moments. The Rebbe smiled broadly and encouraged me with his hands. This is why I called my organization 'HaAderes V'HaEmuna.'"

SHOCKING DISCOVERY IN THE CASTLE

As soon as he returned to Paris, R' Benshimol started the mosad which the Rebbe asked him to establish. The place chosen for it was the 18th *Arondissement* and t'fillos, shiurim, mivtza'im, and outreach began.

"It isn't described as 'under the leadership of the Rebbe shlita' because R' Gorodetzky told me later on that except for two mosdos, the yeshiva in Brunoy and Beis Rivka, the Rebbe did not want any French mosad to be publicly under his leadership. In the early years, when I saw that Rabbi Hillel Pevzner davened near us in a small Sefardic shul, I asked him to join us. Later on, when he built the Sinai campus, he made a shul there and he asked me and the entire k'hilla to join him."

Over the years, R' Benshimol merited unusual kiruvim from the Rebbe. He related this special instance with great emotion:

"In the early years, we would go together, the entire group, to spend the summer outside the city and we had shiurim and t'fillos together. R' Yosef Dery was one of the people who helped arrange these retreats. The story I want to tell you happened in the summer of 1979. We looked for a suitable place to stay and found a vacation resort in a village, in the center of which was a castle surrounded by orchards and flowers and streams. Many people from the k'hilla joined us and registration was closed.

"This was the second time we



Two bills included with the Rebbe's response, "I will mention it at the gravesite. The enclosed is for tz'daka over there."



A letter from the Rebbe to the mosad

The Rebbe looked at me and waited... I finally began to sing and afterwards I myself was surprised by how well it sounded. My wife says that the Rebbe adjusted my voice. The Rebbe smiled broadly and encouraged me with his hands. This is why I called my organization 'HaAderes V'Ha'Emuna.'

went on vacation like this and it was very successful. Forty families joined us including many young people and for every age group we arranged shiurim on various topics and Jewish activities. We arrived at the resort with the castle in the center some time before Tisha B'Av and everything fell into place.

"A day after Tisha B'Av, we felt that something was amiss because people seemed uptight. At first we were afraid that people weren't happy with the gashmius which was a bit strange since it was all wonderful, but later we began to hear stories from people that seemed delusional.

"For example, one of the

mekuravim who went to shower at the castle ran out in a fright and said there was blood on the walls. When we went in to look, we didn't see anything but the frightened face of someone we knew to be a rational, stable person alarmed us. A few hours later, another one of the mekuravim, someone who ran one of the biggest jails in Paris, came racing out of the storage room where we kept fruits and vegetables, screaming that someone threatened to kill him.

"Once again, a number of us went inside and didn't see a thing. He insisted that he wasn't dreaming but had seen a man who threatened him. Something strange was going

Word got around and it turned out that most of the people had heard the cries but each one kept it to his or her self either because he thought he was imagining it or because he was afraid of what others would think.

on!

“All this happened in one day. The final incident that convinced us that something was seriously wrong was when one woman told her friend that on Tisha B’Av, during the reading of the Kinos, she had heard cries coming forth from the ground. Her friend said she had also heard the cries but didn’t want to tell anyone lest they think she was crazy.

“Word got around and it turned out that most of the people had heard the cries but each one kept it to his or her self either because he thought he was imagining it or because he was afraid of what others would think.

“When I heard all this I realized that the problem was not with our program but with the location. I asked Yosef Dery to go into the village and inquire of the gentiles about the castle and whether they knew something we didn’t know. When he began asking around, they were silent and he realized there was something they were hiding. He intensified his efforts to find out the truth about the place.

“He finally spoke with one of the village elders who invited him into his home and told him that the castle had been used by the Gestapo and many Jews had been brutally tortured and murdered there and around it and not even buried. The Nazis played a game in which they made believe they were asleep and when the Jews tried to escape the castle to the fields of wheat, they would shoot them.

“The souls of hundreds of Jews who did not merit burial were the ones who did not let us live there in peace. We had a meeting and I told the families the story and we all said chapters of T’hilim around the castle with some people crying. From then on, we dedicated the shiurim to the memories of these holy Jews.

“As I did every week, I sent the Rebbe a report and I told him the shocking discovery we had made. The retreat concluded a week later. The frightening stories ceased and everybody enjoyed their vacation. On the last day we decided to travel together to the Chabad house and from there, each family would go home. We thought we’d have coffee together and sum up the experience before parting, but someone had other plans...

THE REBBE WANTS TO SEE YOUR K’HILLA

“The moment we entered the Chabad house, the phone rang. R’ Gorodetzky was on the line and he said: I came from the United States today and in the yechidus I had before I left, the Rebbe asked me to tell you that he wants to see you and all the members of your k’hilla in 770 for Tishrei.

“I was stunned. Who would agree to spend another large sum of money in such a short period of time? And people could lose their jobs for this. Remember that in those days it wasn’t easy to find

work without working on Saturdays. This would mean missing over a month of work!

“At first I tried to deflect him, but R’ Gorodetzky repeated his message, saying he was conveying the Rebbe’s request and this wasn’t subject to discussion. The Rebbe wasn’t satisfied with just Sukkos or Simchas Torah, but wanted everybody, with no exception, to be in 770 from 18 Elul until after Shabbos B’Reishis!

“It took me some time until I grasped that there was something behind this request that surely had to do with the castle. When I asked the k’hilla who were witnesses to that phone conversation, I was surprised to hear their unanimous agreement. If the Rebbe wants it, we’re going! This was despite the fact that virtually of them were not yet Chabad Chassidim, at least according to their outward appearance.

“We arrived on Chai Elul. Rabbi Moshe Yaroslavsky a”h went out of his way to help us and this entailed finding hosts for forty families. The next morning, as I walked to 770, R’ Groner met me and asked me whether we had settled in nicely. I said that we had. The next day he approached me again and asked me the same question. I gave him the same answer and offered some details of our arrangements and said there were no complaints. This repeated itself for two weeks.

“One morning I asked him, ‘Leibel, why do you ask me the same question every day when I answered you yesterday?’ He gave me a look and said: The Rebbe asks me how you are doing every morning and in order to answer him, I have to ask you.

“I was very touched by the Rebbe’s personal interest. In general, throughout our stay, the members of the group and I enjoyed an amazing and unusual relationship with the

Rebbe, kiruvim that until today make me tremble when I remember them. Before Sukkos, R' Gorodetzky called me to the secretariat where R' Shmuel Azimov was waiting. He gave us the Dalet minim intended for France. I received the esrog, R' Azimov the lulav, and the Rebbe told us to be partners for the hadasim.

"I cannot possibly describe our excitement. I still hadn't digested the kiruv when I had gotten the esrog from the Rebbe, and on Simchas Torah, at the fifth hakafa, R' Groner motioned that the Rebbe was looking for me. In order to reach the Rebbe, another mekurav and I had to walk on people's shoulders since it was so crowded. The Rebbe instructed that two Sifrei Torah be given to us for the hakafa.

"Shluchim from France that were with us, as well as little me, couldn't begin to absorb all these kiruvim from the Rebbe. It was a real *gilui Elokim*.

"A few days before we returned to France, I had yechidus and the Rebbe asked whether the secretaries had given us answers to all the letters. When I said they hadn't, the Rebbe said to ask the secretaries because he wanted to answer all the questions. When I left the Rebbe's room for the secretaries, we searched through all the letters designated for France and did not find responses.

"The morning of our flight we received answers to all the questions of all the members of the group. In the meantime, we sent in a letter to the Rebbe that said that we were leaving for the airport in the afternoon after Mincha.

"Before Mincha, R' Groner told us that the Rebbe said he would escort us. Those were glorious moments: The group filled two buses. We danced and sang and the Rebbe came out of his room and looked at us and clapped. One of my friends who was there told me



A farbrengen which took place at the mosad when they received the kuntres "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel

"One morning I asked him, 'Leibel, why do you ask me the same question every day when I answered you yesterday?' He gave me a look and said: The Rebbe asks me how you are doing every morning and in order to answer him, I have to ask you."

afterwards that the Rebbe did not return to his room until we had disappeared off the horizon. The Rebbe did not explicitly connect all these kiruvim to what happened on our retreat but every member of the group felt there was a connection."

THE KEY THAT REMAINED IN THE REBBE'S ROOM

R' Benshimol described another marvelous kiruv:

"In Tishrei 5741/1980 I had yechidus in order to give the Rebbe a fine gold key to our mosad. The Rebbe picked up the key and asked where it was from and I said, from Paris. The Rebbe asked from where in Paris and I said from the 18th

Arondissement. The Rebbe picked up the box and wrote the number 18 in pencil and then put the box on his desk.

"Two months later, on Chanuka, I had yechidus again and my wife pointed out that the box with the key that we had given the Rebbe in Tishrei was still on the desk in the same spot. This made me feel wonderful for the Rebbe was given many keys and yet our key remained on the desk.

"On my way out I asked R' Groner about it and he said that he cleared off only those things which the Rebbe told him to clear off and the Rebbe didn't say anything about the key. When I related this in Paris, people didn't believe me. Seven months later, in the summer, Yosef Dery had yechidus and was

He would travel two hours from the south of Paris to shiurim and when he wanted his wife to come along she would say ... 'I would not have married you if you were religious. I don't have to go along with your whims.' I told him not to pressure her but to merely ask her to attend classes... Eventually they both became baalei t'shuva.

astonished to see the key still on the desk.

"During that yechidus in Tishrei 5741 there was another very special thing. The Rebbe told me that he would give each member of the group who came with me a Siddur and Tanya with his signature. Afterwards, R' Groner told me that when the Rebbe signed them, he would let me know. The final day of our visit came and went and the Rebbe still had not sent out the signed s'farim.

R' Benshimol sadly related another thing that has still not been fulfilled:

"I have one big regret. We made copies of all our flyers and sent them to the Rebbe and I received a response for every mailing. When I once had the thought that I was bothering the Rebbe with trivial things, I found out that the Rebbe brought home all these copies to the Rebbetzin.

"This piece of information was confirmed when we were in New York before the Rebbetzin passed away and right before our flight the secretary R' Klein told me that the Rebbetzin had prepared tea and cake and she wanted to meet the women of the HaAderes V'HaEmuna organization. Because we were in such a rush I hastily and without

thinking said we would visit the next time, but that was not meant to be."

WHEN THE BIG SCIENTIST JOINED MIVTZA PURIM

Many Jews transformed their lives, thanks to R' Benshimol. He told us about one of them:

"In our k'hilla there was a special person by the name of Claude Gaugnim, a scientist and inventor who worked for the French military. Among other things, he developed advanced missiles and had a share in developing some of the French Mirage fighter jets. In all of France there were only two other people with such a high security clearance and he always had a card on him that gave him complete freedom of movement throughout France. No policeman could stop him and every official had to fulfill any request of his. In some respects, he has more power than the Prime Minister. Policemen are stationed around his house and they accompany him wherever he goes.

"One year in the middle of Mivtza Purim, I sent a convoy of cars loaded with mishloach manos to many places throughout the city so they could do mivtzaim. Claude and his car took part in the mivtza and I

sat with him in his car. There was a lot of traffic and we were afraid that we wouldn't reach all the Jews we wanted to reach.

"At a certain point he pressed a button in his car and within minutes some police cars pulled up. He showed them his document and they escorted us around all the traffic jams. When we got past the congested area they asked whether this was all right with us and when he said yes, they disappeared. He's brilliant and the government will do anything for him.

"We once inadvertently got into trouble because of this. On the door to the Chabad house I wrote, 'Mosad HaAderes V'HaEmuna,' and the police who saw him going in and out of our shiurim and t'fillos did some research. When they realized that in Hebrew the place was called a mosad, they associated this with the Israeli Mosad and feared that he was giving them information.

"For a long time they kept close tabs on us. They gathered information on every person who visited the Chabad house. A secret agent once approached one of our people near the Chabad house and said to him, you don't know me but I know you well, and to the man's surprise the agent told him all his personal information.

"Claude's t'shuva process was very interesting. He came from a very intellectual background and Chassidus won him over quickly. His wife though, was not interested. He would travel two hours from the south of Paris to shiurim and when he wanted his wife to come along she would say, 'When we got married, you weren't like this. I would not have married you if you were religious. I don't have to go along with your whims.'

"I told him not to pressure her but to merely ask her to attend classes so she could experience it for herself. One time she agreed to

come and she liked it! Shabbos and kashrus were the first mitzvos they took on and eventually they both became baalei t'shuva. They recently made aliya."

SHLICHUS PERMEATED BY MOSHIACH

R' Benshimol is a shliach who lives with inyanei Moshiach and Geula. In addition to his big 'Yechi' yarmulke, everything he does is directed towards hastening the hisgalus. When asked what he thinks should be done to raise Moshiach awareness, he said to learn inyanei Moshiach as they are taught in the Rebbe's sichos, particularly in the D'var Malchus.

"You can see how the Rebbe wasn't speaking about the past but about the present and future. It's amazing every time to see how the Rebbe's sichos are as relevant as ever even when they were said fifteen or twenty years ago.



"Here's a story for you. The musician who was standing with me when the Rebbe asked me to sing HaAderes V'HaEmuna, Yitzchok Bitton, is a talented composer. He wrote a song about Geula and he asked me whether he should show it to the Rebbe. I said that he should and the next time he had yechidus, he showed the song to the Rebbe.

"The Rebbe looked at it and asked whether another line could be added, 'yehi ratzon she'yihye b'karov mamash.' He was very excited for there could be no greater approbation to the song than the Rebbe adding some words to it. If you hear the song you will notice that he repeats the line the Rebbe added to it several times."

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ב"ה

CLOSE TO ALL WHO CALL HIM

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

I remained alone with five little children, the oldest only six years old – and it was very difficult. My only consolation was that my husband would surely give the letter to the Rebbe, but to my great shock...

Mrs. Devora Beshari, serves on shlichus together with her husband and children in the village of Biriya, near Tzfas. She has kept this miraculous and amazing story to herself for many years. Only a limited number of friends and family members knew about the exciting and fantastic chain of events to this story. However, a few years ago, when Mrs. Beshari saw the tremendous power this story possessed for the purpose of giving Jews spiritual strength and bringing them closer to the path of their forefathers, she decided to tell it at every opportunity.

Mrs. Beshari felt deeply that she had been given a rare privilege to experience the Rebbe MH”M’s *ruach ha’kodesh* in a tangible way. “I feel that the Rebbe has been accompanying me at every step, ever since I was a child, when I merited to learn in the first Chabad kindergarten opened by Mrs. Rochel Zamir in my hometown of Cholon. This continued with the early days of the Chabad school opened in our city by Rabbi Itche Gansbourg, under the auspices of ‘Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchok.’

“It was in 5750,” Mrs. Beshari began her story, “in the days leading up to the Chanukah holiday, when Rabbi Aharon Eliezer Ceitlin, shliach of the Rebbe MH”M and director-general of the Chabad kindergarten network in Tzfas, organized an extensive group trip for members of the local Jewish community to travel to Crown Heights, experience the unique atmosphere of ‘Beis Chayeinu,’ receive the Rebbe’s holy brachos and become personally connected with him. When Rabbi Ceitlin asked my husband to join that particular group as an escort and bring his instruments to provide musical accompaniment on the trip, he was overjoyed.

“The Chabad niggunim played on his clarinet added much to the



Photo by S. B. Goldstein

visit and created much joy for the group members. It also intensified the wonderful chassidic atmosphere. For his part, my husband was most pleased and even excited by this golden opportunity to see and be seen by the leader of the generation. To be perfectly honest, however, I was not quite as thrilled. At the time, we had five children, all of whom were very young, and I expected that it would not be easy to deal with them totally on my own. It's safe to say that I grimaced a bit, but I eventually gave my blessing for the trip.

"We were living in Tzfas' Kiryat Chabad community at the time, and many chassidim came to our home prior to the trip to give letters and Panim to my husband, which he would submit to the Rebbe's secretariat upon his arrival at 770. The flow of people was constant, and my husband packed all the letters into a file folder for presentation to one of the Rebbe's secretaries. Naturally, I also didn't pass up this opportunity, and I sat well into the night writing a letter that included the names of all the members of my family – my parents, my brothers and sisters, my grandparents, my brothers-in-law – about forty names in all.

"I remember sitting and writing until one o'clock in the morning. I put my whole soul into that letter, pouring into it everything hidden within my heart, and the letter just got longer and longer.

"Before my husband left the house, I gave him the lengthy letter in a large brown envelope, and he packed the letter in a compartment separate from the other letters. His plan was to present this letter to the Rebbe in a more personal fashion.

"During their ten day trip to the Rebbe, I remained alone with five little children, the oldest being my six year old daughter – and it was very difficult. My only consolation

was that my husband would surely give the letter to the Rebbe, and we would all merit to receive his blessings as requested. I will never forget how much I longed for his return, not only because I would have his help with the children, but also because I was most curious to hear what happened during the visit.

"As high as my hopes were, even deeper was my heartbreak and disappointment upon his return when I discovered to my shock and dismay the brown envelope containing my letter still sitting in his luggage.

"I was beside myself with anguish. Tears of deep emotional

blue envelope in our mailbox from America – the type that came from the secretariat of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. I was so stunned that I had to catch my breath. I tried to recall the last time that I had written a letter to the Rebbe, but I couldn't remember. A flood of emotion gripped me as never before, and I quickly made my way back to the house.

"I washed my hands and made a few appropriate preparations before opening the letter from the Rebbe. With trembling fingers and chattering teeth, I slowly opened the envelope. The Rebbe's letter was addressed to me. I kept trying to

The girl told my daughter... a miracle story that she had heard... at the home of a Chabad family, while she was staying at the ASCENT Institute... my daughter started to smile broadly. "Why are you smiling?" the girl asked "Because that story happened to my mother!" Today, that young woman is a Chabadnikit

pain rolled down my cheeks as I asked my husband how he could have forgotten. He sighed and told me that the visit was so full and intense that he simply forgot all about the envelope. He had planned to submit it separately from all the others, but in the end, he gave those letters in to the secretariat and totally forgot about the separate brown envelope!

"With a heavy heart, I placed the letter in one of our cabinet drawers and thought to myself that I would send it in the mail at the first opportunity.

"A few days later, I received a

remember when I had sent a Pan to the Rebbe that had not elicited a response. I always kept copies of letters I sent to the Rebbe, and as I went through all of them, I discovered no unanswered correspondence. After a few more minutes, I realized that I was experiencing something out of this world, true *ruach ha'kodesh*.

The Rebbe replied as follows:
**B"H, the 3rd of Teives 5750
Brooklyn, N.Y.**

**Mrs. Devora, *tichye*
Bracha v'shalom!**

**Her Pan from the 16th of
Kislev has been received and will**

be read in an auspicious hour at the Tzion of my holy and revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, of blessed and righteous memory, his soul rests in the hidden treasures of Heaven, may his merit protect us.

"When I saw that the date of my submission of this Pan that the Rebbe had mentioned was the 16th of Kislev, I ran to the drawer where I had placed the Pan that my husband had forgotten to submit to the Rebbe. Imagine how shocked I was to see that the date on the letter was in fact the 16th of Kislev! I went for days afterwards in a state of stunned disbelief.

"Another interesting aspect to this letter: The original typewritten text read: 'His Pan', and the Rebbe changed it in his own handwriting to 'Her Pan', meaning that the letter was clearly meant for me."

When Mrs. Beshari realized that she had merited an open demonstration of the Rebbe's *ruach ha'kodesh*, and her great privilege of

seeing how the Rebbe had felt her deep anguish and took care of her as the faithful shepherd of the Jewish People, she didn't waste any valuable time. She went out that very day to buy a bottle of mashke and other refreshments, and then quickly traveled to her family members in Cholon, who had been included in the letter to the Rebbe, to inform them primarily that the Rebbe would pray for their good and welfare at the gravesite of his father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz.

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, Mrs. Beshari had kept this story to herself for many years, and only a small circle of family members and friends were aware of it. "At a certain stage, when I understood the great unharnessed potential within this story for bringing Jews closer to their Father in Heaven and to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, I decided that I would begin telling this story publicly. I often tell it over to our Shabbos

guests from the ASCENT Institute in Tzfas.

"I can't finish this story without relating another small episode," Mrs. Beshari concluded. "One of my daughters was traveling home, and a girl sat next to her on the bus. The girl was obviously in the early stages of her journey back to Yiddishkait, and the two began to chat with one another. The girl told my daughter that what had moved her to start on the path to traditional Judaism was a miracle story that she had heard when she went for a Shabbos meal at the home of a Chabad family, while she was staying at the ASCENT Institute. She then began to tell the story, and my daughter started to smile broadly.

"Why are you smiling?" the girl asked in wonderment.

"Because that story happened to my mother!" my daughter replied.

"Today, that young woman is a *Chabadnikit*, studying in the Machon Alte Institute of Tzfas..."

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DARK YEARS IN CROWN HEIGHTS

By Avrohom Ber

*Within a few years, tens of thousands of Jews and others left Crown Heights in fear of the criminal element that was moving in. They sold their homes in haste at ridiculously low prices. Shuls, mikvaos and businesses were abandoned. Walking in the streets in the evening and at night entailed real danger to life. Yet the Rebbe urged people to remain and bolster the community. * Part 2*

[Continued from last week]

It is relatively safe to walk in Crown Heights in the evening or even at night these days. At the end of a farbrengen or simcha you can get into your car and drive home or even walk there. For many years though, it was very different. Crown Heights was frightening at night. You could not walk in the street after nightfall. Actually, even earlier in the day it wasn't safe but at night it was really dangerous. Gangs of bandits ambushed and robbed people, beat

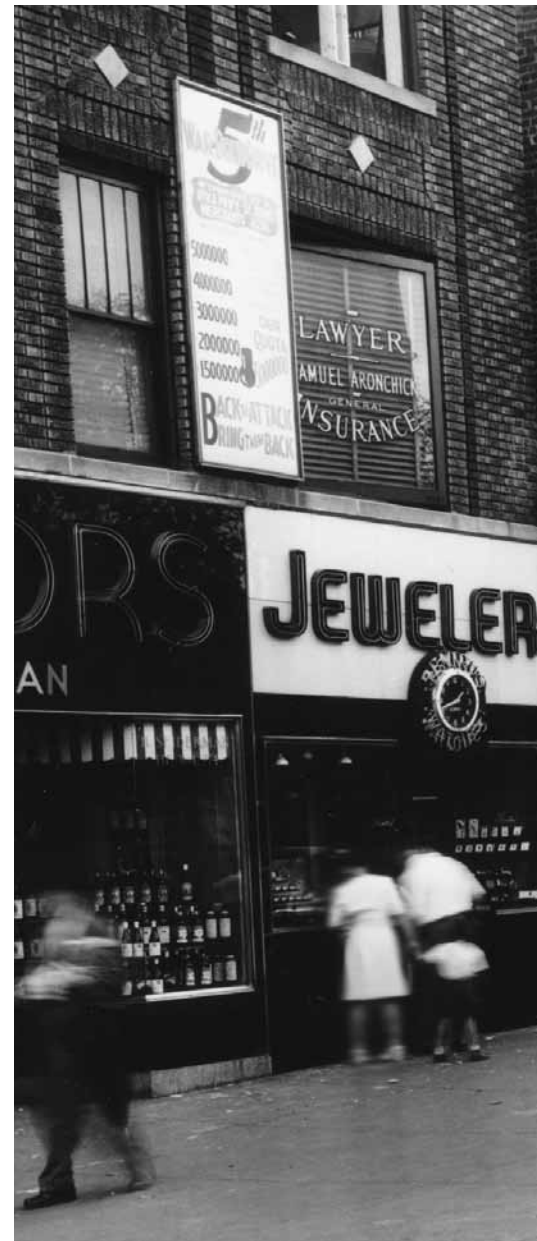
them, and even killed them. Whoever walked on Kingston alone at night was considered to be taking his life in his hands.

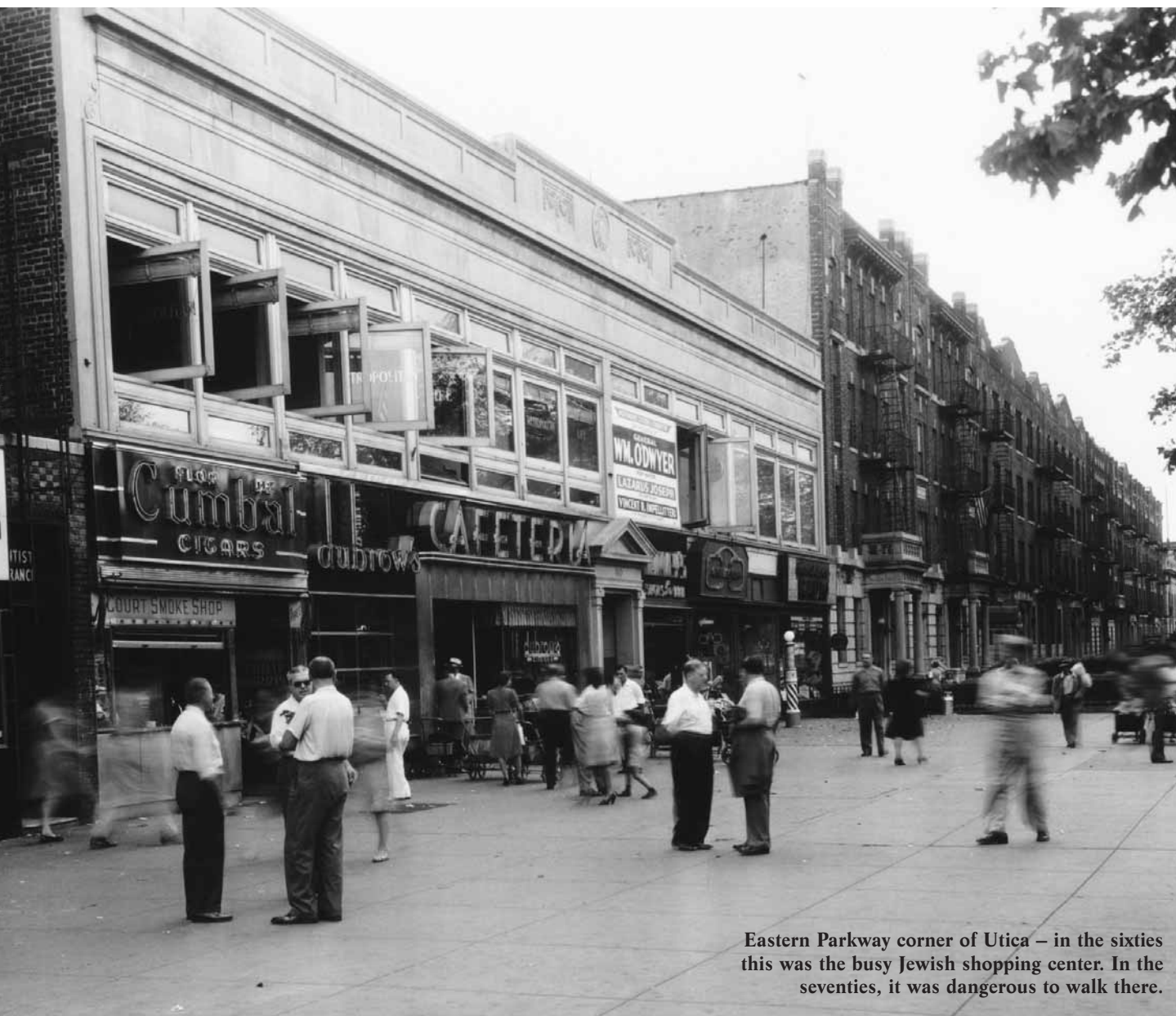
It is painful to read the first person testimony that was related by Mendel Shemtov at that time. He served as the head of the Vaad HaKahal:

The neighborhood changed. The moment gentiles began flooding the area, the Jews fled and abandoned the k'hillos. It happened in Bedford Stuyvesant. Shuls and mosdos were

left empty. Brownsville was deserted. About 200 shuls were abandoned. This is what happened throughout America. I remember visiting my brother in Detroit. There was a Young Israel shul, a beautiful building. The walls weren't finished yet and they had already sold it for a church.

The accepted thing to do was to flee and abandon mosdos. Of course, when you run away you leave behind many elderly Jews who are unable to move and others who can't afford to





Eastern Parkway corner of Utica – in the sixties this was the busy Jewish shopping center. In the seventies, it was dangerous to walk there.

do so. They remained. We are making a lot of noise about 500 Jews who remain in an Arab country and we still have Jews who remain as prisoners in their own homes. If everybody else moves and they don't have the resources or they are used to where they live, they are abandoned.

As was described at length in the previous article, on Acharon shel Pesach, 1969, the Rebbe raised this issue publicly and demanded that everybody do all they could to strengthen the neighborhood. The

Rebbe particularly addressed himself to the askanim.

Unfortunately, precious years passed before the askanim got involved. For several years they sufficed with consultations and meetings, as well as requests for brachos from the Rebbe. In the sichos of those years, the Rebbe cried out about this and said that he had stopped answering questions submitted on this subject since he saw that all his answers didn't help. The Rebbe spoke unusually sharply

about those askanim who came in for yechidus promising to take action but then doing nothing: **"Why do you say lies in the room where the Rebbe Nasi Doreinu held yechidus?"**

At that same farbrengen, the Rebbe said: **"If you don't want to do, so don't do, but don't go and publicize that I also think that way. If you want to move to Flatbush, *gei gezunterheit*, take your bundles and move to Flatbush along with the Conservative rabbi and may**



Chassidim and African Americans side by side
– a picture of Crown Heights from the eighties.

The Rebbe spoke unusually sharply about those askanim who came in for yechidus promising to take action but then doing nothing: “Why do you say lies in the room where the Rebbe Nasi Doreinu held yechidus?”

you be successful. Crown Heights will manage without you. This is not about me; it’s between you and the Shulchan Aruch.”

Regarding the askanim who wrote up various plans and asked for a bracha, the Rebbe said: “A bracha needs to go on something – that is what the Taz says at the beginning of Hilchos Chanuka – and here nothing is being done and they ask for a bracha. In East Flatbush they acted without a bracha and in other places they acted without a bracha – why are you asking me for a bracha? First do something.”

There were some who did work on behalf of the community but they were few and were unable to stem the tide.

The serious efforts that the Rebbe asked for began only at the beginning of the 70’s, when a special organization was formed that bought houses in the neighborhood so that Jews would be able to live there. In those years there was also a lot of effort made to save shuls in the area.

IT WON’T BE ANY BETTER OVER THERE

Most of the Jews who fled at the beginning of the 60’s, moved south, to East Flatbush and Canarsie, but not too long afterwards gentiles began moving in there too. In several sichos the Rebbe referred to the fact that running away didn’t help them. He related that someone came to him who had left the community. He had gotten a p’sak from a rav that he was allowed to leave since a person should not stay in a dangerous place, but he soon discovered that in his new residence, he found himself in the same situation as before. When the Rebbe asked him to publicize this so that others wouldn’t leave, he refused because he didn’t want to bring down the price of his new house. He was getting ready to move again.

Furthermore, the Rebbe clearly

connected the lack of security even in the new neighborhood to the fact that people had left Crown Heights against G-d's will. On Acharon shel Pesach, 1969, the Rebbe said:

You can see that the neighborhood that they started to run to was calm until they began fleeing there. How much more so are they lacking in peace of mind there, since they went there against the Shulchan Aruch and against Hashem.

The Rebbe spoke about the futility of running away on Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev, 5730:

They bring a proof that it is permissible to move – since the Conservative rabbi moved, that's *maaseh rav* ... and the Polisher gutter Yid moved and if so, that's proof that it's permissible. But they don't pay attention to what's happening, that when this one and that one left, he had a robbery, and when this one and that one left, he had a fire...

The phenomenon that took place a few years earlier in Crown Heights repeated itself two miles away. The Jewish families packed their belongings and left, selling their homes, shuls an mikvaos at rock-bottom prices.

Rabbi Michoel Teitelbaum, founder of Oholei Torah, was a shamash in one of the shuls in East Flatbush. The shul emptied out. He heard that the gabbai intended on selling the shul and he fought against this plan. It ended up in court and for a long time R' Michoel was such a regular visitor at the courthouse that people joked that his office had moved to the courthouse. At the end of a long legal wrangle, the court ruled that the gabbai did not have the right to sell the shul as long as worshippers were still interested in praying there.

R' Michoel, who continued to live in East Flatbush long after most Jews had abandoned the area,



Yeshiva bachurim on the streets of Crown Heights in the eighties.

At that same farbrengen, the Rebbe said: “If you don’t want to do, so don’t do, but don’t go and publicize that I also think that way. If you want to move to Flatbush, *gei gezunterheit*, take your bundles and move to Flatbush along with the Conservative rabbi and may you be successful. Crown Heights will manage without you. This is not about me; it’s between you and the Shulchan Aruch.”

continued to maintain a minyan at the shul with utter devotion so that the shul would not fall into gentile hands. When the last Jews left the neighborhood, R' Michoel had Chassidim from Crown Heights go every day to daven in the shul. Until his final day he had a minyan there three times a day.

In later years, R' Michoel moved his preschool to the shul in East Flatbush, thus establishing a steady Jewish presence there. R' Michoel didn't stand on ceremony but

cleaned the shul himself.

In addition, R' Michoel maintained the mikva in his neighborhood and later even moved to live in the mikva building. To this day, the mikva is still in use by dozens of Chassidim every day.

On Shabbasos, R' Michoel would daven in the shul in East Flatbush and after Shacharis he would walk for nearly an hour to the Rebbe's farbrengen in 770. During the short winter Shabbos days he did not stay until the end of the farbrengen

because he had to go back to organize the minyan for Mincha.

THOSE WHO TOOK ACTION WERE SUCCESSFUL!

We see that there were two neighborhoods where they publicly announced that they would remain and they were successful. Take action so that over here it will be like in Williamsburg and Washington Heights, where they ended up building new buildings and brought in more Jews and they were successful! (Acharon shel Pesach 1969)

The Jewish neighborhoods of Williamsburg and Washington Heights were the antithesis of Crown Heights and East Flatbush. The askanim there stood strong and did not allow the situation to deteriorate. Till today, those neighborhoods are populated by thousands of frum Jews. The Rebbe demanded, in many of his sichos, that people learn from them and stand firmly like them.

Those neighborhoods were very successful. Williamsburg became a huge community which continues to grow. About 100,000 Jews live there today, nearly all of whom are religious. (Those for whom Williamsburg brings back unpleasant memories of Tahaluchos of years gone by, will be happy to know that today hundreds of T'mimim walk through the neighborhood singing niggunim and are greeted warmly. Many Satmar Chassidim invite them in for something to eat.)

Washington Heights, too, remained a religious enclave in the northwestern part of the big city - Manhattan. The neighborhood where thousands of Jews from the German Jewish community as well as the staff and students of RIETS/YU, live might be the only place on the island teeming with

They don't pay attention to what's happening, that when this one and that one left, he had a robbery, and when this one and that one left, he had a fire...

people where there isn't heavy traffic on Shabbos.

The deteriorating security in New York bothered the Rebbe, and not only because of the Jews. The Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Nissan Mindel related that on Erev Lag B'Omer, 1969, the Rebbe spoke to him with great shock and in bitter tones about an event that happened the day before in a white church, with a large crowd in attendance. A well-known black agitator walked in and demanded half a million dollars. The Rebbe was concerned about everybody.

The demographics of entire New York neighborhoods changed almost overnight. The Jewish flight did not begin with Crown Heights. In earlier years Harlem was emptied of Jews. After that, other neighborhoods in the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn emptied. Brownsville and East New York, to the east of Crown Heights, and Bedford Stuyvesant to the south, were the first in Brooklyn. Then came Crown Heights. In 1960, 71% of the 200,000 residents of Crown Heights were white. By 1970, it was only 27%.

Blacks moved into a house or an apartment building and home owners on the entire block panicked. Fear of living in an unsafe neighborhood and of the value of their homes decreasing led people to

sell their homes to the first person who showed an interest and to move to where they believed it would be more white, usually far from Brooklyn, with the exception of those who remained in Flatbush or Boro Park.

The situation grew worse. Jews of various backgrounds left the Jewish neighborhood. Fewer and fewer Jews could be seen on the street. Shuls and mikvaos closed and hundreds of storekeepers lost their parnasa and sold their businesses and homes for next to nothing to goyim. The neighborhood became more unsafe with the arrival of new residents. It was dangerous to walk in Crown Heights and people who did walk the streets were beaten, robbed and sometimes stabbed.

Every night the streets emptied out. Women stopped attending events and store owners looked around fearfully before opening their stores. The most horrifying incident was an attack on a Lubavitcher woman who did not lock her door while her children played in the yard. She was dragged out of her apartment at knifepoint and slashed in an attempted rape.

There was an attack with iron chains on yeshiva boys and their teachers during recess. The elderly and poor could not leave and, as Mendel Shemtov described it, they lived like prisoners in their own homes. They were simply afraid to go outside. Some Chassidim took care of them, bringing them hot meals, which were placed in a basket that was raised from the window since the elderly were afraid to open the door.

When Bobover Chassidim asked their Rebbe, who lived in Crown Heights, whether to try to work on the police to add patrolmen to the streets of Crown Heights, he said that in his father's time there was an anti-Semite who threw a stone at their window. Within a short time he



The Rebbe encouraged the establishment of Hatzalah.

contracted gangrene and his hand had to be amputated.

“That’s better protection than the police,” he said. It didn’t change the fact, though, that a few months later the Bobover Chassidim sold their beis midrash and yeshiva building and left for Boro Park.

When the Bobover Chassidim left en masse, this increased the pressure on Lubavitcher Chassidim, who were increasingly feeling like they were the last ones to remain in a war zone. More Chassidim asked the Rebbe whether they should or could move. This may have been the reason for the sicha that was said on Acharon shel Pesach, 1969, in which the Rebbe spoke about the topic after years of not discussing it in public.

The Rebbe said several times that it wasn’t his job to mix in but there was nobody else stopping the flight. The only one who urged people to do something was the Rebbe, who asked that action be taken to support the Jewish residents of the neighborhood.



Residents of Crown Heights increasing security in the community.

In 1960, 71% of the 200,000 residents of Crown Heights were white. By 1970, it was only 27%.

SHMIRA

A few years earlier, in 1964, when the security situation began to deteriorate, a Lubavitcher named Shmuel Schrage started an organization he called Maccabees – a Citizen’s Safety Patrol. The unarmed volunteers of the organization would cruise Kingston and Eastern Parkway between 6 PM and 2 AM and offered free escorts to

When the ambulance team showed up and identified him, the black paramedic on the scene said, “I’m not going to dirty my uniform for this Jew.”

those who needed it. The organization greatly increased the security of the neighborhood – Schrage said it cut crime by 90%. Blacks and gentiles joined the patrol.

The organization, which at first was not recognized by the authorities, caused a media storm in the wake of the rape and murder of a Jewish teacher in an elevator of an apartment building. Many articles were written about the Maccabees, some positive and some negative. The police first denounced them as a vigilante movement but then grew to tolerate them as long as they were unarmed and restricted themselves to observing and reporting incidents to the police.

“If she would have called, she would have been saved,” screamed the headlines, while other articles decried taking the law into their own hands. The media storm concerning Crown Heights and the security situation adversely affected real estate prices even more and some Lubavitchers who worked in real estate pressured Schrage to back off. When he asked the Rebbe, the Rebbe said, “Don’t back down and strengthen it more.”

Shmuel Schrage was involved in a project with the city to rehabilitate prosperous neighborhoods, like Crown Heights, to avoid a recurrence of what had happened in Brownsville and the Bronx – white flight. The project took off but then elections took place and the new mayor, John Lindsay, canceled it as part of the changing of the guard of the new administration.

Ironically, although it was in the city’s interests to protect the

neighborhoods, it was unwilling to help. Presumably, additional pressure on the part of askanim, as the Rebbe wanted, would have made Crown Heights look entirely different today.

Some years later, when the Rebbe was given a copy of the contract between the Crown Heights Jewish Community Council and the security company hired to patrol the neighborhood, the Rebbe’s response was: **...fortunate is their lot and great is the merit of each person involved in this and the like, with energy and strength.**

Sadly, Shmuel Schrage died of a heart attack when quite young. When the ambulance team showed up and identified him, the black paramedic on the scene said, “I’m not going to dirty my uniform for this Jew.” At first they refused to take him on a stretcher. Then they refused to allow Yingi Bistritzky of Hatzalah to resuscitate him. They finally tied him to the stretcher so sloppily that he fell off a few times. “They killed him,” said those who witnessed this.

His wife asked the Rebbe, in a letter, to dedicate a Hatzalah ambulance in his memory. “I don’t want something like this to happen to others,” she said later.

The Rebbe responded positively and indicated that it should be done with some urgency. He also asked for a list of the donors and contributed \$100 and another \$20 bill. Mrs. Schrage raised 18,000 dollars, with the remaining half of the cost collected by Bistritzky and other members of Hatzalah.

EVENTS TO TAKE PLACE IN CROWN HEIGHTS

It was announced previously about the Melaveh Malka farbrengen of Chadrei Torah Ohr ... they deserve a special yashar ko’ach for making the celebration gathering here in Crown Heights, which is the neighborhood where Hashem commanded the blessing here, everlasting life ... this should be a good start for all simchos to take place here in Crown Heights. **This is not a command but good advice that all happy events take place here in Crown Heights. This will make it better not just spiritually but materially** (sicha, VaYeishev 5730).

The Rebbe urged that simchos and events take place in Crown Heights. In 5732, the Rebbe responded to a mosad outside of Crown Heights that held its dinner in Crown Heights:

I will mention it at the gravesite, especially that it took place in Crown Heights where Hashem commanded the blessing – to show the people of the land that the Jewish people are the nation of His closeness.

That Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev, 5730, the Rebbe sadly mentioned the fact that many weddings took place outside Crown Heights:

When there is a wedding, what do they do? They go somewhere else and make the wedding and they write me that if I am the mesader kiddushin, they will do me a favor and make the wedding nearby. If you hold so much of me and you are my good friend, why don’t you make the wedding nearby? Why don’t you make the tenaim [i.e. vort or l’chaim] nearby? You claim there’s no place to do it, so build a hotel! Lindsay [the mayor of New York] gives money for this! You just have to take action! Why are you going far away?

As a result of this sicha, a chassan and kalla (R' Avrohom Boruch Gerlitzky and his wife) informed the Rebbe about their wedding on 27 Adar I in the Young Israel in Crown Heights. The Rebbe responded with a handwritten note: **Thank you, thank you for the good news and I will mention it at the gravesite. Many should see this and arrange simchos in Crown Heights, even those who live (for the meantime) in other neighborhoods.**

The wedding of Gershon Schusterman, son of R' Mordechai, took place on 13 Sivan in the same hall.

R' Chaim Ciment, the menahel of yeshivas Achei T'mimim in Boston, asked the Rebbe whether his daughter's wedding should take place at 770 as the family wanted or whether, since he was a public figure, he owed it to the parent body and supporters of his mosad to make it in Boston, as the custom is to make the wedding where the kalla lives. The Rebbe's response was: **So shall they do it, in a good and auspicious time (in New York).**

The story is told that one time, when the Rebbe went back home at night, he passed a crowd returning from a wedding. He said to R' Chadakov who was traveling with him, "Look, how nice; couples walking in the street at night." In those scary days, it was a rare sight.

When R' Michael Teitelbaum bought the Oholei Torah building from the Conservative synagogue, he opened a hall for events, as the Rebbe wanted. Yet there were people in Crown Heights who refused to enter the building because they didn't want to enter a Conservative synagogue!

A wedding was going to take place there in 1979 and the grandfather of the kalla, R' Yaakov Lipsker, said he would not enter the hall. His son-in-law, R' Gershon Ber



Raskin's fish store

When a wedding took place in Crown Heights on 13 Tishrei, a date when the Rebbe would farbreng, the Rebbe's secretary called to ask permission of the chassan and kalla for the Rebbe to farbreng on the day of their wedding. Of course permission was granted and the Rebbe invited the couple to join the farbrengen after the wedding and to have Sheva Brachos during the farbrengen, which indeed they did.

Jacobson, didn't know what to do and he asked the Rebbe whether to make the wedding outside of Crown Heights so the kalla's grandfather could attend. The Rebbe answered:

If they make it outside this community, chas v'shalom, it will be counter to all the efforts to bolster the community and since it will be done by a newspaper editor it will be "contrary with a bang" etc, as is obvious. Since making it in the neighborhood is essential, surely you will find a good

solution.

R' Jacobson put up a huge tent in the yard of Beis Rifka and that's where the wedding was held. Many people attended the wedding, including many public figures who knew R' Jacobson from his work as a journalist. The wedding was a big demonstration of Jewish strength and strengthening of the community.

When a wedding took place in Crown Heights on 13 Tishrei, a date when the Rebbe would farbreng, the Rebbe's secretary called R' Yechezkel

Kornfeld, the shliach who was mekarev the chassan, to ask permission of the chassan and kalla for the Rebbe to farbreng on the day of their wedding. Of course permission was granted and the Rebbe invited the couple to join the farbrengen after the wedding and to have Sheva Brachos during the farbrengen, which indeed they did.

The Rebbe asked that mosdos and organizations have their events in Crown Heights. In 5733/1973 there was a gathering of descendents of the Alter Rebbe which took place in the Young Israel. It was the first such gathering. Even in later years, when the neighborhood stabilized, the Rebbe still urged holding events only in Crown Heights.

For example, the Rebbe told the hanhala of N'shei Chabad in 5744/1984 that all meetings and events should take place in Crown Heights:

The main session must take place in the main community and only afterwards, somewhere else... It is preferable to organize the aforementioned at times when people come here from other locations in any case.

When the directors of Tzivos Hashem asked the Rebbe whether to hold their Pesach Experience "here in Crown Heights or somewhere else," the Rebbe made a line under "here" and added, "**my opinion is known and your doubt is rather surprising; I will mention it at the gravesite.**"

When N'shei Chabad of Crown Heights held a Jewish carnival on Chol HaMoed Pesach 5742/1982 for the purpose of conveying the idea of mitzvaim, especially the campaign of having a letter in a Torah scroll, which was being

promoted at the time for every Jewish boy and girl, the organizer asked the Rebbe whether to make it in Boro Park, Flatbush, or Crown Heights.

The Rebbe crossed off the first two suggestions. This answer was surprising to the women since the event was not for Lubavitchers. In the end, over 60% of the participants were from other neighborhoods and only a small percentage were Lubavitchers - and not due to a poor showing of the locals.

The organization FREE that works with Russian immigrants, held all its big events which were attended by thousands of people from all of New York, especially Brighton, in Crown Heights, with the Rebbe's encouragement. This was despite the fact that only few Russian immigrants lived in Crown Heights.

There were a number of ongoing events that attracted large crowds to Crown Heights, such as the Rebbe's farbrengens. Hundreds of people from nearby communities and many guests would go to Crown Heights especially for the farbrengens. The number grew on special dates during the year. Till this day, a symbol of pride for the community is Tishrei when thousands of guests come to the Rebbe and fill the streets of the community. They thereby fulfill the Rebbe's wish that Crown Heights be full of Jews and that Jews be able to walk the streets without fear.

STRENGTHENING PARNASA

The storekeepers who could not leave Crown Heights lost many customers. Grocery store owners and tailors suffered the most, as did

those stores whose customer base was primarily Jewish. The halacha says, "the poor of your city take precedence," and the Rebbe said people should patronize the stores in Crown Heights. Buying from stores in Crown Heights enables the shopkeepers to have ample parnasa and in turn support those involved in holy works and the entire community benefits.

The Rebbe was also concerned about goyim. In July, 1977, there was a blackout in New York which paralyzed much of the city's infrastructure. The new black residents of Crown Heights took advantage of the situation to loot. Dozens of stores on Utica were broken into and robbed. The damages were estimated at many thousands of dollars.

R' Yisroel Rosenfeld, one of the askanim of the community, received a phone call from R' Groner, who told him that the Rebbe wanted to know the sum total of damages that were caused to stores of Jews and non-Jews.

"Even of non-Jews?" he asked in surprise, and was told yes. When he came up with the amount, the Rebbe asked if it would be possible for him to donate towards their losses. In the end, they got federal aid. When they informed the Rebbe about this, he asked whether this meant he did not have to pay and R' Rosenfeld said no.

In the eighties, the business district on Kingston Avenue was first established, an area that is a source of parnasa for many residents of the community. The Community Council helped by securing loans of tens of thousands of dollars for people who opened new businesses.

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EYES TO SEE – LESSONS LEARNED ON SHLICHUS

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

R’ei anochi – look at yourself, i.e. make a spiritual accounting. How is your avodas Hashem? It’s not enough to fly to the heights and explore deep commentaries on the words “Anochi Hashem Elokecha.” You need to look at your own situation and fix what needs fixing.

The two righteous brothers, R’ Zushe of Anipoli and R’ Elimelech of Lizensk, requested several times of their teacher, the Maggid of Mezritch, that they merit to see a hidden tzaddik. They had heard a great deal about a group of hidden tzaddikim and pleaded to be able to see one for themselves.

At last, the Maggid agreed. He told them to travel to a certain village for the upcoming Shabbos and to stay with a particular person who lived there, and this

would enable them to observe the behavior of a hidden tzaddik for an entire Shabbos.

It was Erev Shabbos Parshas R’ei, Shabbos Mevarchim Elul. The two tzaddikim knocked at the door and asked to be hosted for Shabbos. The homeowner, who did not seem at all like a tzaddik, yelled at them coarsely to scram because he didn’t want to host rabbis with all their prayers and customs. The brothers promised they wouldn’t impose any special

customs and would suffice with whatever was done in his home.

Towards evening, the guests asked where they could immerse in honor of Shabbos. Once again, their host yelled at them and nearly threw them out of the house until they gave up on their audacious idea. They promised they wouldn’t bother him and wouldn’t sing any z’miros or say divrei Torah so he wouldn’t be disturbed.

The brothers endured a miserable Shabbos with prayers said hastily and meager meals without divrei Torah. When it came time for the third Shabbos meal, the brothers sat down and whispered disconsolately, “We did not merit hearing words of Torah from the hidden tzaddik; let us at least speak some divrei Torah amongst ourselves.”

Since it was Parshas R’ei, they delved into the meaning of the words, “R’ei anochi,” – that you need to see the “anochi Hashem Elokecha.” They shared secrets of the Torah and in the meantime their host paced the house while noisily eating from a large watermelon. They didn’t notice that he was listening to every word.

He suddenly approached them and, continuing the thought of “R’ei anochi,” he said, “And I say, r’ei anochi – look at yourself, i.e. make a spiritual accounting (since it was Shabbos Mevarchim of Elul). How is your avodas Hashem? It’s not enough to fly to the heights and explore deep commentaries on the words ‘Anochi Hashem Elokecha.’ You need to look at your own situation and fix what needs fixing.”

The two tzaddikim realized that this was the message they had been sent to hear and they returned happily to their homes to carry out what they had heard.

THE COUNSEL WANTED MESIRUS NEFESH

It often happens that a shliach of the Rebbe is in the middle of a project, lecture, shiur, or conversation with someone who needs advice, and he hears a line that strikes him, “look at your own situation,” and he thinks – how important it was for me to hear that. This is one of the gifts of shlichus.

I heard the following story from Rabbi Tamir Kastiel, shliach in Katamon in Yerushalayim. He had been looking for a long time for a piece of land to build a Chabad house. He finally noticed a terrific location in the center of the neighborhood that for some reason had not been built on. He made inquiries at the Tabo (Land Registry Office – the name is a holdover from Turkish times) and found out that there was an annotation regarding this lot, “not suited for construction.” None of the clerks at the Tabo knew why this was so.

R’ Kastiel went to the municipality and asked for land in the neighborhood. The director of the department looked on the map and said there was no available lot. R’ Kastiel had already done his homework, and he pointed at the empty lot and said, “There, that’s available.” It was looked into again, once more the annotation was noted, neighbors got embroiled, the attorney of the city council got involved, etc.

One day, R’ Kastiel went to the municipality to see how he could get things moving. As he waited in the hall he saw the legal counsel of the municipality come in and walk briskly to his office where two older Yerushalmi fellows were waiting. They had come to join forces with the counsel in his battle against destroying some landmark building.

R’ Kastiel heard the counsel loudly explain to the two men, “It’s not enough that you come here

politely; I need a tough and uncompromising battle!” And he raised his voice and said, nearly screamed, “I need suicidal maniacs, you understand? Suicidal maniacs! Mesirus nefesh!”

R’ Kastiel knew that it was not by chanced that he overheard this exchange. “I also have to be tough and devoted to the success of my cause with mesirus nefesh,” he told himself. R’ Kastiel continued his work with renewed energy and boruch Hashem got a permit to build a Chabad house. Although the lot was “not suited for construction,” it was apparently suited for a building for the Rebbe.

R’ Kastiel always makes an effort to process anything he hears and tries to help to the best of his ability. One day a young man from the yeshiva in Katamon approached him and asked permission to go home because he had a court case the next day.

“What’s the case about?” asked R’ Kastiel. The bachur said that a few years before, when he was 15, he stole a car and had run away from the police, and had done a few other things.

“Do you have a lawyer?” asked R’ Kastiel.
“No.”

R’ Kastiel spent the following day with him and stood by his side in court. The prosecutor wanted to put the boy in jail for two years.

“What do you have to say?” asked the judge. The boy was so shaken that he couldn’t say a word. He could only point at R’ Kastiel.

R’ Kastiel approached the bench and said, “Whatever was said here may be true about the Amir (a pseudonym) of once-upon-a-time, but today he’s a different Amir. Today, Amir learns in yeshiva, contributes to society with Mivtza T’fillin, and helps the needy.”

The judge was convinced and Amir was not penalized.

“R’EI ANOCHI” WITH CONSOLING THE BEREAVED

It’s the third yahrtzait of Chaya Mushka Atyah, the daughter of the shliach to Chevron. The little girl was killed in a fire. The Atyah family is very special and immediately after the tragedy they worked on building a beautiful Chabad house in Kiryat Arba in her memory. Pushkas with the girl’s picture on them were distributed. A tz’daka fund for the Chabad house in her memory was started and within a short time a building was erected. It’s huge, with rooms for guests, a shul, shiurim and a soup kitchen.

R’ Atyah says that when he first heard the terrible news he felt he didn’t have the strength to go on. Then he remembered that just that morning he had been menachem avel someone who was mourning the death of his son. He had consoled the man with words of faith, pointing out that everything is from Hashem, etc.

R’ Atyah took the words he had said that morning and applied them to himself, and was strengthened with that emuna. It was in this way that he was able to move forward in a manner that had people marveling about his strength. He was able to take a tragedy and turn it into a vision; thoughts into actions, and words of consolation into amazing deeds. “You need to look at yourself.”

RENEWAL AFTER 20 YEARS

A Torah scroll was written in the z’chus of all the shluchim in Eretz Yisroel. There was a raffle among all the shluchim at a Kinus in Nir Etzyon and Rabbi Yehoshua Adot, shliach in Binyamina, won. The Hachnasas Seifer Torah took place in Binyamina and was attended by

hundreds of local people, as well as hundreds of shluchim who came from all over the country. It was a celebration that was the joint project of Chabad in Binyamina and Tzeirei Chabad and made a great Kiddush Hashem throughout the entire area.

I asked R' Adot what he felt during the program - the writing of the letters, the dancing, the parade with torches, the meal, brachos etc. He said that it started earlier, the

moment he heard he had won the raffle. He felt it was a gift from Heaven for twenty years of shlichus in Binyamina. It gave him the encouragement and ability to continue with renewed strength, to expand his activities in quality and quantity.

R' Adot and his wife have done the unbelievable in Binyamina. They came after only a few years of learning and familiarity with

Chassidus and mosdos Chabad. They came to a place with no Torah, k'hilla or activity. On their own, they built the place up and slowly, brick by brick, they established a Chabad house. They even brought another shliach, R' Menachem Lerner, who has done amazing work and was the spirit behind the Hachnasas Seifer Torah. They got a gift and they deserve it!

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APPROBATION

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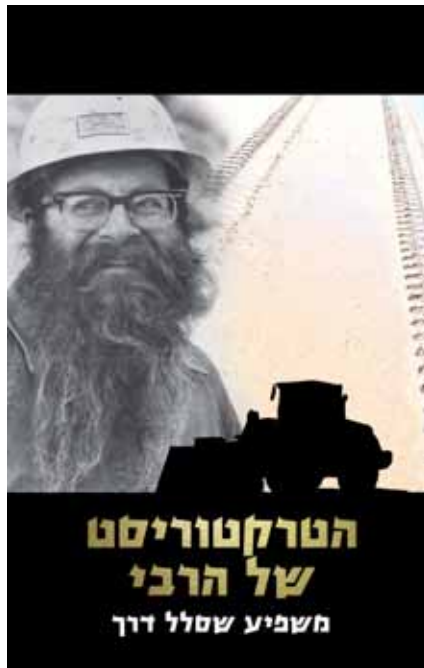
A chapter from the book, “The Rebbe’s Tractorist” about the mashpia, R’ Reuven Dunin a”h, which was published in time for his yahrtzait on 11 Menachem Av.

BEGINNING AND ENDING WITH AHAVAS YISROEL

R’ Reuven Dunin a”h was an Ohev Yisroel and the topic of Ahavas Yisroel was always on his lips. Whatever topic he spoke about at a farbrengen inevitably ended up being connected somehow to this subject. “It is not possible,” he would exclaim, “that a Jew says before davening, ‘I accept upon myself the positive commandment of ‘love your fellow like yourself,’ and right after davening cause pain to another person as though he didn’t obligate himself to anybody!”

His entire day revolved around the avoda of Ahavas Yisroel. He demanded of his mushpaim the avoda of the bedtime Shma when a Jew says, “I forgive whoever angered and provoked me, etc.” He said it should be recited in such a way that it was a preparation for saying, “hareini mekabel...” before Shacharis!

R’ Reuven repeatedly emphasized that Ahavas Yisroel is a basic precondition for receiving brachos from Above. Someone once told R’



Cover of the book
about R’ Reuven Dunin

Reuven about a certain problem that he had. R’ Reuven told him: “It seems there is someone in your life that you don’t get along with.” The man agreed but added that in his opinion he was not obligated to be the close friend of every single Jew. R’ Reuven explained: “A Jew must

know that if Hashem put him together with another Jew, that’s an indication that it’s possible, and they have to get along with Ahavas Yisroel.

At one of his farbrengens, after he began with a famous line of his that became a slogan for Ahavas Yisroel: “*she’tamid nihiyeh yachad*” (we should always be united), he continued as follows:

“It says, ‘and Yisroel camped’ in the singular and we learn, ‘as one man (ish echad) with one heart (lev echad).’ This is the inyan in kabala of joining the lower echad (oneness) with the higher echad (oneness), i.e. if you want to be connected to the ‘true oneness,’ namely Hashem, you must embody and reflect that unity within yourself. The ‘Yisroel camped’ is eternal. If you want the ‘One’ to be revealed in you, then you must know that the ‘secret of echad’ is attained through echad – oneness with all Jews. Ahavas Yisroel has to directly and speedily lead to achdus and if it doesn’t, it’s the opposite of Elokus.

“This is what each of us says after declaring that he accepts the mitzva of loving his fellow Jew, when he puts in effort in order to stand properly before Hashem, ‘Bless us, our Father, all as one – with the light of Your countenance.’ Because it is only when we are as one that there can be a blessing and the inner revelation of ‘the light of Your countenance.’

“Therefore, we have to put a bit more thought into it. The Rebbe says in the HaYom Yom that Ahavas Yisroel is a condition and a gateway for prayers to be answered. Understand, if we pride ourselves on being frum, it doesn’t work without Ahavas Yisroel, r”l. It is possible that a Jew finishes his life in this world and if, heaven forbid, he did not fulfill Ahavas Yisroel that would mean that in his life he did not daven! He went to shul and said the

words and he thought that he davened but without Ahavas Yisroel how can he stand before his Maker? If you believe that 'you are children of Hashem your G-d,' how can you push His children away just so that you can stand in your place more comfortably as though only you are a Chassid and tzaddik? It doesn't work that way!

"Don't forget," R' Reuven would constantly exhort his mushpaim, "Ahavas Yisroel is both a mitzva in the Torah and one of the Rebbe's mitzvaim. Who wants to fail in it?"

"The foundation of the entire Torah is Ahavas Yisroel. The Rebbe says, 'We begin and end with Ahavas Yisroel!' Whenever the Rebbe lists the mitzvaim at a farbrengen, he starts with Ahavas Yisroel, and when he speaks about Mitzva Chinuch he emphasizes, 'chinuch of yourself and chinuch of others' (and this is a horaa onto itself: to be careful not to skip 'chinuch of yourself,' which must precede 'chinuch of others'). When he finishes enumerating the mitzvaim, he mentions again that it starts with Ahavas Yisroel."

REBUKING – WITH OPEN LOVE

Most of the time, R' Reuven, with his direct approach and genuine Ahavas Yisroel, did not hesitate to say it the way it is. He was once a guest for Shabbos in one of the Lubavitch communities in Eretz Yisroel. The chazan for Musaf wasn't the greatest, to say the least. He didn't know the usual tune for this t'filla and he mixed in various melodies. Although the tunes irritated some of the people, they kept quiet.

There was a prominent person there who was known to all as a strong-minded individual who always tried to impose his view. Nobody dared to oppose him on any topic. After the davening, this man protested loudly and complained



R' Reuven receiving kos shel bracha from the Rebbe

that the gabbaim had sent such a chazan up. This loud criticism greatly offended the chazan. Everybody kept quiet because they were afraid to speak up.

After the davening they sat down to farbreng and R' Reuven immediately spoke about the importance of Ahavas Yisroel. After speaking about the concept for some time he moved on to the practical application and described, from another perspective, what took place after the davening (without mentioning names):

"They asked someone to daven Musaf. Maybe he was nervous by the honor he was given or maybe this was the first time he davened for the amud for Musaf. Then someone gets up and speaks insensitively and in a way that is far from Ahavas Yisroel."

R' Reuven spoke at length, describing the feelings of the Baal T'filla and what the critical man had done and showed the ugliness of the deed. Everybody present was surprised by what he said and were afraid of the reaction of the tough guy. They knew that this person didn't take it sitting down from anyone who dared to speak to him

or about him in this way, certainly not in public. In the best case scenario, they expected the man to get up and storm out, but amazingly, R' Reuven kept on talking on the topic and the man sat and listened. It was apparent that R' Reuven was making an impression on him. The rebuke, which was said out of real Ahavas Yisroel, penetrated and was accepted.

When R' Reuven finished talking, the man said l'chaim to R' Reuven and continued to sit at the farbrengen. More than their amazement about how the person had accepted the rebuke, they were amazed by R' Reuven's courage for he had told the man whatever was on his mind and did so straightforwardly.

On another occasion, he spoke about an interesting phenomenon he had observed in nature:

"I was watching a chicken coop and everything looked yellow and I could hear the noisy cheeping. It seems that in the tray with water that they were given there was something sharp and one chick got scratched. A red dot of blood appeared on its yellow feathers. Another chicken noticed the red dot

and went to check it out, giving a peck at it. The redness spread and another chicken noticed it and also gave a peck.

“Within seconds, all the chicks began to fight over the right to check out the interesting red dot. It didn’t take long before the unfortunate chicken died of all the little pecks.”

The nimshal is sometimes a person has a problem and people point it out in public and in an inappropriate manner, without thinking that their words can hurt. The first one merely revealed a small fault that the person had and tried to “dig around” just out of curiosity. The problem is that after some of his friends do the same thing, the wound is likely to be deeper and very painful and even more than that.

On the positive side – when R’ Reuven spoke with his fellow Chassidim, he always conveyed the message in the spirit of the aphorism that Chassidim are one family. R’ Yechezkel Sofer related, “One evening, I went to Kfar Chabad and met R’ Reuven who was the mashpia in Tiferes Bachurim at the time. I was happy to see him. I went over to him, hugged him, and said, ‘It’s so good to see you!’ R’ Reuven immediately said, ‘Really? If you are so happy with me, let’s see you take me now, in your car, to Rechovot!’ That line was a lesson for me about the meaning of genuine Ahavas Yisroel.”

LIVING TO GIVE TO OTHERS

R’ Reuven did many deeds of chesed which were the practical outcome of his feelings of Ahavas Yisroel. He ran a gemach and you could see how much he really wanted to help the needy. One of his mekuravim relates:

“R’ Reuven thought I was having financial problems and he offered

me a loan from his fund. I told him I didn’t need it but he tried to convince me to take the loan anyway, while emphasizing that he wouldn’t be lacking because of it since he had a special gemach fund.”

Ahavas Yisroel suffused him and because of it, he gave so much of his time and energy. When it came to material assistance, whoever had a connection with him knew that he could be relied on. If someone needed to talk to him, he would go to their house and sit there even for several hours, in order to help.

R’ Chaim Benet, the composer for the Seret-Vizhnitz Chassidus in Chaifa, related:

“During the first Gulf War I saw a Scud missile explode not far from where I live. This scared me so much that I couldn’t sleep at night. B’hashgacha pratis I met Reuven on the street and I told him about my fears. He asked me when I would be home and then he came to visit (I live on the fourth floor and although it was very hard for him to climb many steps he did it unhesitatingly). During the visit he repeated the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s calming words and didn’t leave until I assured him that I was no longer afraid.”

R’ Reuven was a giving person, a man who loved to give. Real giving doesn’t begin in the pocket but in the heart. With such a love for giving, you can even give while receiving. He once went with a friend to buy a car from someone who lived in B’nei Brak. He had a lot of money on him, tens of thousands of sh’kalim, which he was going to use to buy the car.

On the way he decided to stop in and see his mother (who lived in the home of his sister, Zehava Markowitz in B’nei Brak). At the end of the visit, when he was ready to leave, his mother took a fifty shekel bill out of her little purse and gave it to him. Although at that moment he had a lot of cash on him,

he accepted the money with great feeling and thanked her profusely, “Thank you Ima, thank you so much for your help.”

When his friend asked him afterwards why he got so excited over fifty shekels when he had so much money in his pocket, and maybe he should have refused the money and let his mother use it for something else, he explained, “You don’t know what a good feeling she had that she is able to help her son.”

R’ Reuven had golden hands and he used his talent to help people. When he noticed a need, he immediately started thinking how he could help. When his son Shmuel learned in the yeshiva in Tzfas, Reuven once went to visit him and went to his dormitory room. While talking to his son, he noticed that the door of the closet of one of the roommates was broken.

He asked why it was broken and the boy said it was like this for a long time and the people in charge were unable to fix it.

“Would you be happy if it was fixed?” asked R’ Reuven.

“Sure,” said the bachur with a smile, without realizing what R’ Reuven was getting at.

The next day, when the bachur went to his room during the lunch break, he saw R’ Reuven sitting on the floor with a drill, fixing the door.

Mrs. D. Shefi, owner of the Refuah Shleima clinic in Chaifa related:

“In my clinic there was an old box that had bottles of herbal remedies in it. One day, Reuven came to the clinic and built me a massive wooden box that the bottles fit in exactly, so that it would be easier for me in my work. In general, in the last years of his life, when he was our guest for a few days, he kept looking for ways to help fix up the house.”

When he spoke about the importance of Ahavas Yisroel, he

emphasized that there are people who speak nicely about Ahavas Yisroel but when it comes down to it, they don't 'walk the talk.'

"I don't want to limit in any way the obligation of Ahavas Yisroel," he would say, "because you have to love every Jew no matter whom, but first you have to strengthen the love for those close to you, those with whom you come in daily contact. Even though all Jews are brothers and equal, there is still the idea of 'the poor of your city take precedence.' That is the only way to attain Ahavas Yisroel for all Jews."

Rebbetzin Weissblum of the Nave Shaanan neighborhood of Chaifa related:

"Our neighbor, an older man by the name of Barry, asked me whether I knew R' Dunin. When I said that I knew him, he said, 'You think you knew him but I really knew him. He was a tzaddik who did many acts of kindness. For nearly forty years he would come and help fix my washing machine (when he was first married, R' Reuven supported himself by fixing washing machines). In later years, it was hard for him to climb the stairs to my floor because he had problems breathing. I remember how he came to my house out of breath and said, 'Give me a minute to catch my breath and I'll start working right away.' He lived in order to give to others."

LOOK AT WHAT CAN SEPARATE BETWEEN CHASSIDIM!

One of his pet topics was achdus among Chabad Chassidim. Older Chassidim in the north still remember how before Yud-Alef Nissan 1979, R' Reuven organized a Kinus Achdus for all the Lubavitchers who were scattered throughout cities in the north, including Chaifa, Kiryot, Natzrat Ilit,



R' Reuven reaching out to other Jews

Older Chassidim in the north still remember how before Yud-Alef Nissan 1979, R' Reuven organized a Kinus Achdus for all the Lubavitchers who were scattered throughout cities in the north, including Chaifa, Kiryot, Natzrat Ilit, Migdal HaEmek, Afula, and Kiryat Tivon. The Kinus took place in Migdal HaEmek and about fifty families participated.

Migdal HaEmek, Afula, and Kiryat Tivon. The Kinus took place in Migdal HaEmek and about fifty families participated.

At every possible opportunity, especially in the last years of his life, he stressed how much nachas the Rebbe has when he sees his Chassidim living in unity and what aggravation he has when it's not that way.

When he spoke about the importance of achdus, he stressed that when Chassidim live together and mingle, it adds "flavor" to all of

them. He once gave this analogy: Even if you put eight teaspoons of sugar into a cup of tea, if you don't mix it, the tea won't be sweet. On the other hand, if you put in just one teaspoon of sugar, but you mix it, the entire cup of tea will be sweet!

By the same token he underscored the absurdity of disunity. R' Shmuel Frumer relates:

"One of the Shabbasos that I spent at R' Reuven's home, we went to the mikva early in the morning, walking side by side. On the way we noticed dog excrement in the middle

“How can this be? If there is a fight, G-d forbid, among two brothers, is the solution for the family to cut off ties with both sides? On the contrary! Those who are concerned about machlokes should attend both gatherings and not miss either of them!”

of the sidewalk. Reuven went around it from the right and I went around it from the left.

“When we returned to the house on Rechov Borochoy, Reuven asked me, ‘Did you see what separated between us when we walked to the mikva?’ ‘Yes,’ I said. Reuven got all excited and said, ‘Do you get it? It makes no sense that excrement can separate between two Chassidim! What happens? They circumvent it and get back together...’”

He would always explain to his mushpaim the way to get around the obstacles to unity:

“We must be battul to the Rebbe because when you’re battul to the Supernal will, even incompatible powers can join forces like fire and water did in the plague of hail. The fire remained fire and the water remained water but they were battul to the command of Hashem and they came down together from heaven and completed their mission.”

When he saw disunity among Chassidim, he was heartbroken. A young Chassid once asked him, “How was it possible that Korach, who was Moshe’s relative and one of the distinguished people, aroused a controversy against Moshe?”

On the spot R’ Reuven shot back with his answer which was said with a bitter smile, “Usually a headache begins with the head...”

The Chassid, R’ Tal Nir, a family doctor from Nachalat Har Chabad, related the following:

“On 3 Tammuz 5756 I sat with him at a Kinus Achdus of Chassidim in Kfar Chabad, men, women, and children. He had so much nachas from all the Chassidim sitting together, as children of one father. He shed a number of tears during the niggunim when all the participants united in an atmosphere of elevation and striving higher, an atmosphere that stirred the warm, Chassidishe heart of Reuven. Also during the moving speeches, he cried many times.”

When he spoke about the lack of achdus he was so aggravated. His heart bled when he spoke about the possibility of realizing the Rebbe’s promise of “hinei zeh ba” in a way that was so accessible and immediate, and about how the promise is distanced from us as a result of nonstop attempts by the forces of negativity to create disunity. And it’s all because of stupidity and the wiles of the Yetzer.

Because of this he would go from place to place, from city to city, and from yeshiva to yeshiva. He went to all Chabad centers in the attempt to make shalom and mend the rift among Chassidim. It was all in order to give some nachas to the Rebbe.

This is an excerpt of what he said on this topic:

“I am prepared to sit with each person, calmly, like brothers, like Chassidim, and to put it all on the table. True, you cannot command something in the heart in either direction, but we have to remember that none of us is the Goel aside from the Rebbe.

“Regarding the Geula it says, ‘You will be gathered one by one, the Jewish people.’ We have to understand that it doesn’t work like a military system where everyone marches together in lockstep; it doesn’t play out through the masses. In truth, there is an emphasis on each person as an individual.”

When asked his opinion as to what prevented achdus among us, he said, “We have to eradicate yeshus (ego). That’s what messes everything up. I look at friends from the early years and I’m shocked by what they say. At the same time, when I meet a friend like this, won’t I kiss him? Won’t I heartily shake his hand? And if he doesn’t want to shake hands, I am likely to jump him and kiss him anyway! I know one thing – the Rebbe says that every matter of holiness comes through interconnectedness. If there is separation, that means there isn’t k’dusha. I don’t want there to be separation because of me. Ever.”

“I am very pained,” he said on the same occasion, “that energy is not invested to try to be unified. How can there be people among us who are able to live with this separation? Not to mention those who invest money and energy to hurt one another...”

Unfortunately, R’ Reuven’s efforts were not always successful. He was witness, on a number of occasions, to two separate Chabad events on the same day and at the same time. After one of these occasions, at a farbrengen that took place on 3 Tammuz, he asked one of the people there, “Which gathering did you attend?” To his dismay,

many of the people said they did not attend either gathering because they did not want to take sides in the dispute.

Reuven was horrified by this and he cried, "How can this be? If there is a fight, G-d forbid, among two brothers, is the solution for the family to cut off ties with both sides? On the contrary! If Chassidim of the rank and file need to attend one gathering, those who are concerned about machlokes should attend both gatherings and not miss either of them!"

R' Doron Shefi says that in the years when there were two gatherings on the same date, R' Reuven asked him to take him to both gatherings while expressing his disappointment that they didn't manage to arrange one gathering. Not to attend either gathering was out of the question, as far as he was concerned.

R' Yitzchok Goldberg, rosh yeshivas Tomchei T'minim in Migdal HaEmek, who attended one of the gatherings that took place recently, described R' Reuven's Ahavas Yisroel like this:

"When R' Reuven stood at the podium and spoke about the opposite of Ahavas Yisroel, he spoke about the idea of a barrier and asked all present to resolve to get rid of the barriers between us. He spoke from his heart so that everybody knew what he meant."

The thing that bothered him the



**R' Reuven Dunin
farbrenging on Chanuka**

most was the fact that the excuse for disunity was supposedly concern for the Rebbe's honor. When he once spoke about this, he said, "I can see you want to hear a joke. It often happens here that a driver cuts someone off and they meet at the traffic light. Harsh words are hurled against the guy's mother and the person shouts, 'How dare you talk that way about my mother?'"

"The truth is that this is a false claim. When was the last time you spoke to your mother that you are suddenly taking up the cause of her honor?"

"The same is true for us. We attack people who we think don't care enough about the Rebbe's honor but do we really care about

the Rebbe's honor in connection with other things?"

How apropos it was that the topic of achdus among Chassidim was the one most discussed at R' Reuven's last farbrenging. It was Shabbos Parshas D'varim 5762, the last Shabbos of his life, when he sat down to farbreng with his family and mekuravim. In the middle of the meal he addressed everyone. He began by speaking strongly that the Rebbe says our generation is the generation of Geula and that we have to do all we can to hasten the Geula and that nothing changed in this regard since 3 Tammuz.

In connection with this he mentioned what it says in the Chassidishe parsha, in Likkutei Torah on Parshas D'varim, that the fulfillment of mitzvos has to be in a way of "every day they have to be as new to you," and as the Rebbe says, "really new!" He emphasized that the avoda done in this way, without laziness and with lots of chayus, hastens the Geula.

Then he spoke a lot about the importance of Ahavas Yisroel, especially among Chassidim. He said that the first mivtza of the Rebbe was Mivtza Ahavas Yisroel and said we place an emphasis on loving Jews who are not Chassidim when there's a lot of work to be done on the unity within Chabad as part of our avoda in hastening the Geula.

Not surprisingly, these were his final words said in public.

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YOUR INSTITUTION IS IN THE REBBE'S ROOM!

By Rabbi Yosef Hecht, Shliach and Chief Rabbi of Eilat, Member of Chabad Rabbinical Court of Eretz HaKodesh

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

Delivered at the closing session of last month's conference in Tel Aviv for Chabad institution directors in Eretz Yisroel, sponsored by Agudas Chassidei Chabad

"Fortunate are we, how good is our portion, and how pleasant is our lot, and how beautiful is our inheritance!"

"How good is our portion" – that we run and actively work in the Rebbe's institutions, "how pleasant is our lot" – that his holy name and his holy brachos accompany these institutions every hour of every day, "how beautiful is our inheritance" – that we know that this is the avoda



that brings an end to the exile and leads us to the Redemption and the hisgalus of Melech HaMoshiach, immediately mamash.

The "mosdos" have always been one of the most important things in the Rebbe's eyes. We all know how much strength the Rebbe devoted to the institutions and how many brachos he bestowed upon them, those who work for them, and their students.

THE MOSDOS – A GIFT TO THE REBBE

To illustrate the Rebbe's unique warmth towards the institutions, I often mention the farbrengen of Yud-Alef Nissan 5732, when the Rebbe celebrated his seventieth birthday. The excitement among Anash in attendance was tremendous. Everyone realized that we had attained a certain high point, and yet felt that this marked only the beginning of many such new achievements by the Rebbe, as he conquered the world with the light of the Redemption.

At the Yud-Alef Nissan farbrengen that year, Chassidim sang the niggun "*Becha Hashem Chasisi Al Avosha L'olam*," the first pasuk of the Rebbe's new chapter of T'hillim. The crowd sang with great exuberance for a lengthy period of time, and if you noticed – it seems to me that you can see this on the video as well, there was a slight smile on the Rebbe's lips throughout the singing of the niggun. The Rebbe surveyed the crowd from right to left, as his holy eyes constantly moved from one side of the shul to the other, sweetly smiling all the while. The Rebbe saw that those assembled were in a state of great elation, as they sang with much devotion and enthusiasm. They seemed to be calling: "Here we are, Rebbe! We will do whatever you ask of us – some new mitzvah campaign, whatever you want us to

carry out in the world to lead us to the Redemption – we will fulfill!”

When the singing stopped, the Rebbe said that he was happy to see that everyone is enthusiastic, and since he intends to impose a new campaign upon them, it is therefore good and most important that they accept it joyfully.

What was the “decree?” In honor of his seventieth birthday, the Rebbe asked for the establishment of seventy-one new institutions throughout the world.

At the time, this seemed like something totally unrealistic and extremely difficult to achieve. The Rebbe spoke about the great merit and strength associated with this effort, and how he would help and give support, etc. We saw that this wasn't a back burner issue; we had to conquer new ground and bring the light of the Redemption to the whole world.

In the end, far more than seventy-one institutions were established...

ATTRACTIVE VESSELS IN HONOR OF MOSHIACH

We can understand this concept through a chassidic parable: Moshiach is coming soon and G-d's Divine Kingdom will be revealed over the world – “And G-d shall become King over all the earth; on that day shall G-d be one, and His name one.” Chassidus explains that when we invite the king, we must make certain of two things: a) the house must be clean of all dirt; b) we must place attractive, praiseworthy, and exceptional vessels in the house – befitting the honor of the king.

It appears to me that in his efforts to prepare the whole world for the coming of Moshiach, the Rebbe accepted the responsibility for placing new, beautiful, and proper vessels all over the world – namely, the Rebbe's mosdos. You have

nothing more beautiful than these beautiful vessels – the Rebbe's institutions spread throughout the world, and this is especially so in relation to the Rebbe's institutions in Eretz HaKodesh.

When we increase light, increase in holiness, increase in Ahavas Yisroel, the filth is automatically nullified and no longer takes up any space.

Many people look upon this generation as one that is somewhat detached from Jewish values and Jewish traditions, and everyone ponders how it is actually possible to deal with such a world. As world

administering the mosdos, he must prepare the beautiful vessels for the revelation of the king. The institution that he establishes, the institution that he runs, the institution where he conducts activities – this is one of the important vessels in the eyes of the king. As a result, it is imperative that this institution should be run properly and operate properly – in order that not a speck of anything undesirable or contrary to holiness should attach itself to it. These are the beautiful vessels through which we shall welcome the king.

The Rebbe lifted his holy eyes from the note and said to him: And why didn't you ask that everything should work out without an operation?! The chassid suddenly realized what he had done, and immediately told the Rebbe, “That's exactly what I meant; this was my question!” But it was already too late...

leader, the Rebbe shows how even a little light dispels a great deal of darkness, and how much more so when there is much light.

The Rebbe's institutions are lighthouses that the Rebbe has dispersed to the four corners of the earth. They radiate warmth, Ahavas Yisroel, and light. The light draws forth all Jewish souls, as it drives away all undesirable things without the need to do anything to battle the negativity directly.

Every institution director must consider this mission and its importance in everything he does. In

THE REBBE FEELS THE PAIN OF THE INSTITUTION DIRECTOR

As I have mentioned, in the Rebbe's unique way of combining light and warmth, love and a smile – things of an undesirable nature are driven out. I would like to show you this evening a previously unpublished note that the Rebbe wrote to my father, of blessed memory, on the subject of institutions. We see from it how much the mosdos mean to the Rebbe, how important they are, and how much we have to work to make

certain that everything should be just right.

Anyone who was even slightly familiar with my father knows that he had a unique style in writing to the Rebbe, and there was also a unique style to the answers that the Rebbe gave him. The following case in point took place about forty years ago, when my father was the director of the Chabad institutions in New Haven, Connecticut. A most difficult financial situation was prevailing there at the time, and my father was in need of assistance in a variety of areas. He simply cried out to the Rebbe for help, otherwise he didn't see how the institutions could continue to operate. Within every word of this letter, the Rebbe obviously saw his pain and anguish.

The Rebbe replied to my father's letter: **Even though I naturally feel his pain, "and I behold from my flesh," for in addition to the pain about the situation in New Haven, as I also have a connection to the institution, I am also sorrowed and pained about a similar situation or the like in our other institutions crying out for such help.**

The Rebbe continues to specify those institutions in need of assistance:

Two in Yerushalayim (may it be rebuilt and re-established), two in Kfar Chabad, two in Lod, five in the [kindergarten] network, three in Paris and the vicinity, two in London, one in Melbourne, – Do you grasp what's happening here? The Rebbe simply sits down and writes all his institutions with the same problem as my father has. – and those in the United States that I don't want to list, as that would reveal a secret known to the directors. Similarly, I have not mentioned those in need of help of a different type, and I have a connection to these institutions. Furthermore, in the opinion of their administration and possibly

in my opinion as well, their place is not limited to that location at all, and it's as if the institution is in my room in 770, and not in the courtyard in 770. – The Rebbe has established: *Just know that the place does not stop there, in the opinion of the administration, the Rebbe writes, and possibly in my opinion as well.* I thought to myself: What is the meaning of "possibly"? If the institution director accepts the fact that his mosad is in the Rebbe's room, then so do I. And if this is not so clear to you, then **perhaps** this is my opinion as well...

However, take notice of the amazing points that the Rebbe reveals: a) *I know what is happening in all the mosdos all over the world and about their problems.* It's simply fantastic and quite unbelievable how the Rebbe describes this in such detail. b) *The situation hurts me no less than it hurts you, because the place does not stop there, and the institutions are in my room in 770, not in the courtyard!*

An institution director who considers each morning that he is dealing with something in the Rebbe's room should be filled with awe as he gets to work on his holy activities! In addition, his heart should be filled with joy by the knowledge that he is together with the Rebbe in his room, educating children, running the institution. Such things must give a person an entirely different feeling towards the institution itself and how he relates to it!

Perhaps before the existence of this note came to light, he simply didn't know what it was all about and how it related to him... He was unaware how the Rebbe perceived and looked upon such things. However, when he sees this clear opinion in the Rebbe's holy handwriting, it must bring a special sense of awakening, another expression of will, joy, vitality to the

director of every institution and all its employees – that the institution will be "tip top," not tainted in the slightest *ch"v*, as it is in the Rebbe's room – together with the Rebbe himself.

Do we have any idea what "the Rebbe's room" means? The truth is that we don't. We only know what chassidim have said that it's the *yechida* of the entire Jewish People. Yechidus – the Rebbe's yechida, the yechida of the entire Jewish People, and your yechida! When you are with the Rebbe in his room, your level of yechida is revealed at that moment! The level of yechida within your soul must be in a state of constant revelation – twenty-four hours a day! Total self-sacrifice for the issue at hand! Don't be moved by any difficulties or delays! Don't let anything deter or weaken you! Anyone who is not in the Rebbe's room – becomes weak! However, someone who **is** in the Rebbe's room – is not weakened! His level of yechida is revealed!

I'll tell you a story that will clearly illustrate for us the meaning of "the Rebbe's room": In the early years, there was a very well-known chassid who had a certain health problem, and the doctors were uncertain as to which type of operation they should perform on him. Each suggested procedure was complicated with its own benefits and drawbacks. The chassid said that under the circumstances, he must ask the Rebbe.

He went into the Rebbe, gave him a note stating that the doctors have doubts over which operation they should do, and asked the Rebbe for his advice. The Rebbe lifted his holy eyes from the note and said to him: And why didn't you ask that everything should work out without an operation?! The chassid suddenly realized what he had done, and immediately told the Rebbe, "That's exactly what I meant; this was my

question!” But it was already too late... The Rebbe told him (so I heard): Just know that anyone who passes the threshold of that door and enters this room with simple faith brings forth success in a manner beyond nature. You didn’t have this at the appropriate time when you needed it.

Thus, what exactly is “the Rebbe’s room”? The Rebbe’s room means the simple faith that draws from a level far higher than nature, higher than *seider hishtalshlus* – success in spiritual matters and success in material matters beyond all measure. This is where the institution that we run should be. This is where the institution director should be every day, how he should feel, how he should relate to the task put before him. This is where he must be!

If only we could hold at the level the Rebbe has set for us in this note and feel it. I believe that many things would be quite different if we would actually feel things in this way.

I will conclude with a story that illustrates how much the Rebbe gives to us and showers us with brachos.

It took place during the holiday of Sukkos more than forty years ago (5726-7-8). During those years, the Rebbe would farbreng twice in the sukka – on the first night of Chol HaMoed and on Shabbos Chol HaMoed. Before then, until 5724, there was also a farbrengen during Simchas Beis HaShoeiva, which the Rebbe later stopped. On one occasion, when the Rebbe went out to farbreng, it was pouring rain, literally. Everyone was in the sukka, some with winter coats, some with raincoats, and some with hat coverings. The Rebbe arrived at the farbrengen with his coat, and rain was actually pouring into the sukka, not just dripping from the s’chach.

But this was the time for the Rebbe’s farbrengen, and since when does rain prevent the revelation of



Rabbi Yosef Hecht and Natzrat Illit Chief Rabbi Yeshayahu Hertzel unveil the plaque summarizing Chabad institution activities in Eretz HaKodesh.

the G-dly light that comes from a farbrengen with the Rebbe? At a farbrengen, the Rebbe draws G-dly light into the world. Thus, the rains cannot interfere – on the contrary, they only help.

The Rebbe took off his coat, and placed it on the chair. When the Rebbe removed his coat, all the chassidim followed suit. It may have been difficult for them, but they all removed their coats. Can you imagine? The Rebbe removes his coat, and you sit at his farbrengen with your coat on? Unthinkable!

There was one man – half chassid, half not – who had come as a guest and he had some difficulty with this trial... So he kept his coat on, since he didn’t want the rain to drip all over him. It was a most joyous farbrengen, but he, of all people...caught a cold – and a bad one at that.

After the farbrengen, he wrote a letter to the Rebbe: I participated in the farbrengen in the sukka, but I caught a cold and got sick, and I ask for the Rebbe’s bracha. The Rebbe wrote to him that this was because

you had something blocking between the warmth of the farbrengen and your body.

This is what the Rebbe says!

Rabbosai, we must use our common sense and not do the wrong thing at the wrong time. We don’t put on a coat if there’s no need for one, and we don’t wrap ourselves in some barrier! It is written that even a partition of iron cannot separate Israel from our Father in Heaven, but sometimes a person does something foolish or incorrect, and this is what prevents that unique warmth of the Rebbe from radiating upon all the institution directors and all those involved in institution activities.

May G-d help us that we should understand where we are, what the institution is in the Rebbe’s eyes, the warmth the Rebbe radiates, and we should accept this with love and hope that through our final activities, we will merit the hisgalus of Melech HaMoshiach, immediately, mamash. Amen, may it be His Will!