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JUDGMENT AND ITS APPLICATION

Sichos In English

A MEASURING ROD

Ever since his creation, man has felt the need to search for truth.

Simultaneously, however, he has also faced the bounds of his own subjectivity and the awareness that the insights he discovers are limited in scope.

By giving the Torah, G-d provided mankind with an absolute standard of truth.

In contrast to our subjective insights, the Torah gives us objective values, guidelines and principles that are eternally applicable, in all situations and in every place.

What is man's responsibility?

To judge.

To subject himself and his surroundings to scrutiny and to determine what is the appropriate path of conduct prescribed by the Torah.

And then, he should act upon that judgment and endeavor to modify his life and environment accordingly.

In this way, he elevates himself and his surroundings, lifting them into a connection with G-d that transcends human conceptions of good.

AT THE CITY'S GATES

These concepts are reflected in the name of this week's Torah reading, Shoftim, "judges," and its opening verse: [1] "Appoint judges and officers at all your gates."

Placing the judges at the gates of

a city reflects a quest that every element of the city's functioning conform to the objective standard of Torah law.

The judges will convey the Torah's dictates, and the officers will take the necessary steps to ensure that these directives are actually applied.

In this vein, the Rambam [2] uses this verse as the proof text for the commandment to appoint judges and police in every city in Eretz Yisroel.

In an extended sense, the verse also serves as a lesson that each person must act as a judge and an officer in his own home, structuring his home according to the Torah's standards.

This concept is further amplified by the interpretation [3] of "your gates" as referring to our sensory organs, our eyes, ears, nose and mouth.

These organs serve as the "gates" through which we take in information from the outside environment and respond to it.

We are enjoined to "appoint judges" at these gates, so that our perception will be permeated by the guidance of the Torah.

Moreover, the Torah uses the singular form of the word "your gates," "She'arecha", implying that these efforts are incumbent upon every single individual.

Every person is "a city in microcosm," [4] who should "appoint judges and officers" to control the varied expressions of his

personality.

THE NEED FOR ENFORCEMENT

The judges within our communities - and similarly, the judging aspects of our personality - are not expected to be introverted.

On the contrary, our Sages state [5] that a judge must "gird his loins with bands of steel, lift his robes above his knees, and traverse from city to city... to teach the Jewish people." Nevertheless, this thrust toward outreach contains an intrinsic drawback.

What is a judge's authority?

The objective standard dictated by the Torah.

And since the Torah is fundamentally above mortal intellect, people may have a difficulty relating to the directives a judge delivers.

Even when they acknowledge the truth of these directives and recognize that they should be obeyed, there still may be a gap between this recognition and their own understanding.

And this gap may prevent those directives from being applied. There are two ways to resolve this difficulty.

The first is mentioned in the verse cited above: the appointment of enforcement officers, people who will compel others [6] to carry out the judges' rulings. [7]

There is, however, a shortcoming inherent to this approach.

For although enforced compliance to the Torah's standards ensures just conduct in the world at large, the person compelled to observe remains unrefined. He has been forced to conform to the Torah's standard, but that conformity is external and not part of his inner being.

INTERNALIZING MORALITY

A more comprehensive approach is suggested by a verse from Isaiah describing the Era of the Redemption, [8] "And I will return your judges as in former times, and your advisers as at the beginning."

This implies that the standards which the judges dictate will be complemented by the communication gifts of "advisers."

An adviser does not issue mandates. Instead, as the name implies, he offers good constructive suggestions.

He is more or less on the same level as the person he advises, and speaks to him as a good friend, with whom he shares a commonality.

The listener feels comfortable in hearing this advice and accepts it, not on faith, but with the understanding that it will benefit him.

When the "advisers" share and explain the rulings delivered by the judges, the dictates of the Torah which transcend mortal understanding permeate that realm, changing not only a person's conduct, but also his character.

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

The difference between these two roles can be illustrated by a comparison of the function of a judge with that of a prophet - a subject which is also mentioned in this week's Torah reading.

In the Introduction to his Commentary on the Mishna, the Rambam explains two functions

which a prophet serves:

a) to urge the people to observe the Torah and its mitzvos, as the prophet Malachi called out: [9] "Remember the Torah of Moshe, My servant;"

b) to give advice regarding conduct in worldly matters.

"G-d granted us prophets in the place of astrologers, sorcerers, and diviners, so that we can ask them matters of a general nature, and those of a particular nature."

In this vein, King Shaul went to the prophet Shmuel to enquire about his father's donkeys. [10]

With regard to the determination of Torah law, the Rambam continues:

The Holy One, blessed be He, did not permit us to learn from the prophets, but rather from the Sages... It does not say: "And you will come to the prophet who will be in that age," but rather "And you will come to... the judge who will be in that age." [11]

Here we see a pattern resembling the one described above.

The Sages and judges teach the dictates of Torah law, prescribing norms of conduct. And the prophets convey G-d's word to people on a level more closely related to their ordinary experience, encouraging them to make G-dliness a part of their daily lives.

A FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENT OF FAITH

To emphasize the importance of prophecy, the Rambam states: [12] "One of the fundamentals of [our] faith is to know that G-d sends His prophecies through people."

Since this is a "fundamental of faith," we can understand that it applies at all times.

Our Sages state [13] "that from the time the later prophets, Chagai, Zechariah and Malachi died, the spirit of prophecy departed from Israel."

Nevertheless, the word

"departed" does not mean that it was abolished completely. The spirit of prophecy did not cease, but rather ascended to a higher plane.

Indeed, even after the era of the Biblical prophets, the spirit of prophecy permeated many people.

For this reason, in the Mishneh Torah, the Rambam includes a lengthy discussion of the subject of prophecy, [14] without mentioning the cessation of prophecy, or that the spirit of prophecy can flourish only in a specific time.

And in his Igeres Teiman, the Rambam speaks about several prophets in his own time. [15]

THE MESSAGE OF OUR JUDGES AND PROPHETS

These are not subjects for history texts, but rather concepts particularly relevant to the present time.

As a foretaste of the fulfillment of the prophecy: "And I will return your judges as in former times, and your advisers as at the beginning," in the age before Moshiach's coming, we have been granted judges and prophets [16] to provide us with direction and guidance. [17]

And often these qualities have been personified in a single individual, [18] as manifest in the N'siim of Chabad until the present age. [19]

These leaders have, like judges, given us a directive regarding the nature of the present time: to borrow an expression of the Previous Rebbe, [20] "all the buttons have been polished," and we are in the final moments before the Ultimate Redemption. And like advisers, they have provided us with the insight to anticipate the Redemption in our lives, and prepare a setting for this spirit to spread throughout the world at large.

[Adapted from: Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XVII, p. 213; Seifer HaSichos 5749, p. 666; Seifer HaSichos 5751, p. 780] For additional insight to this see Toras

[Continued on pg. 42]

chinuch

OR MENACHEM: A TOWER OF LIGHT

By C. Katz

An openly Meshichist girls school in Tzfas has been awarded the lofty distinction as the best school in Northern Israel, bar none.

Some 30 years ago, a small group of five students formed the first class of Or Menachem girl's elementary school in Tzfat, Ir HaKodesh. It was held in the parking lot of Kiryat Chabad, and the teacher, blackboard and students moved according to the sun!

It is not easy to quantify the enormous amounts of love, devotion, sweat and toil which the entire hanhala and staff have selflessly poured into the school to transform it from its modest beginning to the thriving tower of light that is now the daytime home to some 450 neshamos.

Although this fact was not lost among the parents and students who spent their years at Or Menachem,

the administration and teachers continued their holy shlichus humbly and without a trace of self-acclaim. But this year, the "secret" was spread!

The staff of Or Menachem received a prestigious award as the most excellent school in northern Eretz Yisroel. It made quite a stir in Tzfat, as no other school in the city ever received this distinction. The competition was difficult as it included all public and private schools in the entire northern section of the land.

In the z'chus of this Hashgacha Pratis — described as a "bracha from the Rebbe" — Beis Moshiach spent a very moving afternoon with principal Nechama Chaya Navon

getting a special inside glimpse into the "Rebbe's school."

* * *

For years, Mrs. Navon has steadfastly proclaimed a simple truth to just about anyone with whom she has come in contact: "Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed!"

Thus it was no surprise when she stood before the prestigious assembly of prize committee members and said the same — even though it consisted of secular Jews and some three Arabic members. . .

"I explained to them that before I came I asked the Rebbe for a bracha — although they didn't understand anything about Igros Kodesh. . .





"We went to meet the commission in Nazr't Ilit and the letter we opened to in Igros was addressed to the Mayor of Nazr't Ilit!

"The Rebbe talked about the importance of bringing closer the hearts of Jews and others to Hashem.

"I told them the most important prize was that the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach will be revealed — this is the main prize!"

The commission apparently was very moved by the presentation, as it decided to award the prize to Or Menachem.

"We see what happens when you go straight with emuna and belief in the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, and

For years, Mrs. Navon has steadfastly proclaimed a simple truth to just about anyone with whom she has come in contact: "Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed!" Thus it was no surprise when she stood before the prestigious assembly of prize committee members and said the same — even though it consisted of secular Jews and some three Arabic members. . .

These other 50 percent come from backgrounds of all kinds – Shas, Mizrachi, even from families not keeping Torah and mitzvos... If the parents send their daughter here — they want her to be her Chassidishe best. Nowadays we don't have any promise that everything will be good in our own Anash. We have to work to show a lot of honor and trust to each girl because this is a great neshama in our hands.

you say it and are not afraid – but not only that you are not afraid but that you are proud of it,” says Mrs. Navon. “Some say if you don’t talk about the Rebbe as Moshiach that you will be more successful. But we believe that this is the success of the school – saying the truth!”

* * *

Twenty years ago, when the school had grown to some 100 students, the hanhala approached Mrs. Navon, asking her to become principal. At first, she wasn’t certain the job was for her. A high-school teacher by training, the job as head administrator seemed to over-exceed her qualifications. And she also was concerned about leaving the local public school where she had developed a shlichus as the staff Chabadnik.

Mrs. Navon wrote the Rebbe about her dilemma, but didn’t receive an answer for a long, long time. Then one day she picked up a Chabad magazine and started to read a very interesting sicha that she felt was speaking directly to her.

“The Rebbe said two things,” she recalled. “If the hanhala comes to a person and asks him to do a special

job but he doesn’t think he has the qualities and the power, he should know that every Shabbos, B’nei Yisroel pray for the members of the community – so that he will have the power.

“Also, if he thinks now he is doing good things but the things they offer him are much more important he should accept the offer.

“When I read it I said WOW. So Motzaei Shabbat I called my mashpia and asked if the Rebbe answers by sicha and not only by letter and she said yes. I asked her to read the sicha and when she read it she said the answer is clear. This is how I came to be principal – by Kabbalas Ol to the Rebbe!

* * *

Interestingly, a few years later, Mrs. Navon asked the Rebbe a question and received an answer to go through the hanhala. So when the hanhala decided that Or Menachem should be a school first for the community but also to open its doors to students from outside Anash, a major milestone had been marked. The Rebbe blessed Or Menachem to be “a tower of light.” Today, some 50 percent of the

students come from various streams outside of Anash.

Asked how she waters this mixed garden of souls, Mrs. Navon explained that first of all, the school tries to view all the girls without differences.

“These other 50 percent come from backgrounds of all kinds – Shas, Mizrachi, even from families not keeping Torah and mitzvos. Regardless of the starting point, everyone has to improve more and more. If the parents send their daughter here — they want her to be her Chassidishe best. Nowadays we don’t have any promise that everything will be good in our own Anash. We have to work to show a lot of honor and trust to each girl because this is a great neshama in our hands.

“But I have to improve what they have now. And the road to improvement is the simple and straight way – to educate in the directions of the Rebbe, including wearing the school uniform and the requirement to wear socks. Even if a girl comes from a non-Chassidishe home, she has to abide by the rules.”

But while rules are rules, the essence of Or Menachem is found in the unique spirit in which the law is carried out. Or, as we were about to see, in sometimes reaching above nature to bring the blessings down to earth. For as we spoke, in the middle of the interview, a worker knocked on Mrs. Navon’s door to ask payment for some emergency work that had just been done.

“Oy vey es’ mere — money —,” sighs Mrs. Navon, as she explains to the man that she has “zero” money in the school’s coffers but that she will pay as soon as she can.

Her words from the heart actually pacified the heart of this particular creditor, though it left us with a very big question. If the government funding only covers the basic costs and salaries of the

teachers — leaving a relatively small portion from the parents each year, how does the school manage to provide so many “extras?”

“The Rebbe will pay!” declares Mrs. Navon. “In the meantime, I try to take from here and there and make a later payment.”

When this interview was conducted, there was a new contest underway: learning the details of Moshiach and Geula. Before the contest began, Mrs. Navon was again faced with a challenge — there wasn’t any money to fund the costs of printing the workbooks and awarding prizes. . .

So what to do? Call it off?

“When I spoke to the teachers, I explained that it’s not a particular class project and it’s not a project of the school. It’s a project to bring the Geula because the Rebbe says that when you learn the details of Moshiach, this is the way to bring Moshiach!

“So because we don’t have a lot of money this year we decided on a few kinds of ice creams to give the girls and the class with the most points.

“I ask myself, ‘Just because we don’t have the means, is that any reason to not do it?’

“It’s not my contest — it’s for HaKodesh Baruch Hu — so for sure He will give.

“And if you really trust and you know you’re not just spending the money: “Hashem will bring it — if not now — later!

And if the ice cream is just the topping to make the learning a little more fun, then it’s worth every lick.

“Our aim is that the girl’s will be happy here,” says Mrs. Navon emphatically. “One day I read something that moved me very much. One Yud-Daled Kislev, Chassidim said to the Rebbe ‘Mazal Tov! Mazal Tov!’ And the Rebbe answered — ‘When the Chassidim will be healthy and happy, also I will



Sometimes, parents come to Mrs. Navon asking why each classroom has a picture of the Rebbe and why the school is so focused on the idea of Moshiach. Mrs. Navon then explains what she calls the school’s Package Deal. They bring their children here because they want the truth. I tell the girls the Rebbe is Moshiach – the truth!

be happy!”

“When I read this I almost really cried because this is what we want — Chassidish girls, healthy mentally and physically.

“If you are Chassidish, healthy and glad, it’s everything! And you will notice that the Rebbe didn’t say ...if they will learn and do mitzvaim....The Rebbe said only two things — healthy and happy — because when you are there you do everything else.

“I don’t want the *street* to be colorful and happy. I want all the action, all the fun, to be *here*, that the girls will know that THIS is the fun — to be Chabad. That the school is fun!”

* * *

In music classes the girls learn niggunim... on Lag B’Omer they have the usual BBQ and bonfire but the theme is on Moshiach and Geula....and when they go to Chassidus class they enter a special room known as the Palace of Chassidut, where the young princesses are divided into groups with names of good character traits. In their exclusive castle of Chassidus they learn skits and plays and songs that reverberate from Shabbos table to Shabbos table and from one generation to another!

Some of the biggest nachas Mrs. Navon receives is when parents of students who have since grown and

married, say their children now teach their own children the spirited school songs they learned in their young, formative years.

"If this generation wants fun we'll give them fun," smiles Mrs. Navon, "but kosher fun. The Rebbe says we can use everything, but for k'dusha. And this is the Geula – to do things with happiness and light!" And light is the ability to speak about the Rebbe MH"M with joy.

Sometimes, parents come to Mrs. Navon asking why each classroom has a picture of the Rebbe and why the school is so focused on the idea of Moshiach. Mrs. Navon then explains what she calls the school's "Package deal."

"They bring their children here because they want the truth. I tell the girls the Rebbe is Moshiach – the truth! It's a package deal. This is the thing that gives us the power, these are the things that give us life. These are the things that give us simcha. So how do you want me not to speak about it?! This is what we breathe – so we say it!

"We are always trying to make the school better and better so the parents can see this for themselves. When I see the girls at a gathering singing 'We want Moshiach now,' I'm crying because through mitvza Moshiach we can take energy from this generation. I know it looks crazy. It sounds crazy. The Rebbe said it about himself – 'they're saying you're crazy – OK, I'm crazy about Moshiach.'"

* * *

Every Friday morning, before the school week comes to an end, the teachers, administrators and secretarial staff gather with Mrs. Navon to read the HaYom Yom daily teaching of the Rebbeim and to discuss their individual growth. This weekly meeting bonds the school together as a whole.

"This is the most important thing – the teachers are acting as shluchot.

They know and feel that they are acting under the Rebbe and not for the Ministry of Education. This is shlichut HaKodesh and they do it with all their hearts."

Once a student whose family suffered a series of tragedies phoned the school and said the family didn't have any food for Shabbos.

Immediately, the girl's teacher and Mrs. Navon brought the family a complete Shabbos seuda. Another teacher once noticed a girl had difficulty getting to school on time so she personally stopped at the girl's home every morning before school to escort her – on time – to class. When it became clear that there were some girls who were going hungry for whatever reason, the concerned staff made special arrangements with Kollel Chabad to provide daily sandwiches to any girl in the school who wants.

"The teachers here are like mothers, trying to love, take care of and understand the girls," says Mrs. Navon. "We try – we're only human – but I know the teachers go to sleep with the girls in mind. This is the most important thing. We try to think of the girl as a soul, as a neshama. We do our best to build her up.

"These days, the Rebbe advises, one should raise a child specifically through love. This is a very weak generation. Another thing the Rebbe said is that if there are not good things about a girl, that it isn't internal – it's only on the surface. You have to correct it, but not with force. So we try. It's not very simple because we also have to establish discipline and we have to make the school move forward."

"The girls used to be more like sheep. Yes, now it's much more ADHD...They are more clever, they know what they want. The Rebbe says this generation now wants truth and if you're not truth this generation brings a mirror to our

eyes. If I shout — is it because of chinuch or because I am nervous? So there's a little chutzpah, but this is the generation that will bring Moshiach. We have to be with them to bring Moshiach with happiness, with simcha and with a happy heart."

* * *

When Mrs. Navon says "we" have to be with them, she is referring not only to the teaching staff but to the parents as well.

Every month the parents are invited to a special Rosh Chodesh party at the school, each with its own exciting flavor ranging from Chassidus to a special speaker to an entertaining session with arts and crafts or drama therapy. In addition, the school presents various workshops on chinuch, safety in the home and shalom bayis.

"If you want success, it's very important to work with the parents," emphasizes Mrs. Navon. "If the child is happy and relaxed at home, she will come to school more happy and relaxed. We are all on the same side and each is taking one part of the student's life to improve the feeling and the behavior. When we invite the parents to our Rosh Chodesh gatherings we tell them this school is their home as well. The girl feels that all of us want what is best just for her sake –, so even if we punish or make borders - it's together.

"This is my aim, this is my mission — and we try to do it by the truth. If you let the parents understand that we love their children very much and we want what is best for them, they trust us and we trust them and we are all on the same side.

"One day we made an appointment to discuss a girl who wasn't in a good way and when the mother came in and saw the specialists and teachers sitting around the conference table, she

said, 'There are seven people against one woman!' 'NO!' I assured her, 'Eight people are for one girl!'

"I usually point out after the meeting that so many people are thinking and spending time and money for one girl that we can surely see an improvement, as the Rebbe says, the child's soul hears we're speaking good things. The best way to improve the situation is through love.

"I tell the parents there will be mistakes, there will be failures, because now it's a world of good and not-good mixed, but I promise that when the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach will come, there will be perfection, everything will be good. Until then, we are doing our best."

* * *

Throughout the years, Mrs. Navon and the staff have received numerous letters from the Rebbe, so many, in fact, that Mrs. Navon says "that in itself is another story." But she does say that the letters are straight, clear and amazing. And from the various letters and instructions and teachings of the Rebbe, the flavor and very basis of the school has taken shape.

For example, every Erev Shabbos, when the students leave school, Mrs. Navon stands by the door and dips her hand into a huge basket, wishing each and every student a good Shabbos and handing her a coin to give for tz'daka before lighting Shabbos candles. Ever since she heard this idea from the Rebbe some 17 years ago, she has not ceased to follow it.

Before Pesach, the school has a special offer of subsidized matza to every student who commits herself to eating shmura matza during the holiday. This year the school subsidized some 120 kilos of matza and the letters the school received afterwards from the families were most heartwarming.

* * *



"One day we made an appointment to discuss a girl who wasn't in a good way and when the mother came in and saw the specialists and teachers sitting around the conference table, she said, 'There are seven people against one woman!' 'NO!' I assured her, 'Eight people are for one girl!'"

The warmly decorated office of Mrs. Navon, where the conference table is highlighted by a colorful orange watering can-flower pot, has not been vacated for almost 28 years — even though Mrs. Navon, like all the teachers and staff, is entitled to take a "Shmita" year off once every seven years.

"Bli Ayin Hara, Bli Ayin Hara," Mrs. Navon states when asked why she has not taken advantage of this in almost three decades. Once, when Mrs. Navon did write the Rebbe about taking some time off, she received a letter which said that if she continued working at the institution that she would be healthy and glad. That letter was some 15 years ago and after it, she never asked the Rebbe again.

"With my assistant principal Rivki Gruzman and the entire staff — they work so hard — the job is getting done," says Mrs. Navon.

"Other than that, it's a blessing from the Rebbe Melech Moshiach. It's a blessing and it's important to announce it. The Rebbe promised that if you are working for the children of HaKodesh Baruch Hu, you will not stay in debt and receive the same that you put in plus more.

"It's not easy — the things you hear, the situations that you learn of — you feel you want to help but you can't help everything. There are things you can't help. It's not simple, Baruch Hashem.

"B'emet, we are waiting for the Rebbe to come and redeem us!"

In the meantime, may it be soon, the sounds of spirited davening, learning, song and laughter — yes, the distinctive sounds of happy, healthy, Chassidishe maidelach can be clearly heard from the tower of light that beams from the white building on the mountaintop in the holy city of Tzfat.

thought

A LIFE OF TORAH – THE CHASSIDIC WAY

By Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi
Rav k'hillas Chabad in Tel Aviv

THE MASHKE HAS TO GET INSIDE!

One freezing day, a wagon driver gave a ride to a man walking on the road. The man sat among the barrels that the wagon was full with, and his body trembled from the cold. At some point the wagon driver stopped, poured a little vodka into a cup from one of the barrels, took a drink, and gave some to his passenger too.

A pleasant warm feeling spread through the passenger's body and he wondered: Until now, I sat among dozens of barrels of mashke but was cold nonetheless. Here I just drank a little bit of mashke and that was able to warm me up!

Obviously, the difference is that a person can be surrounded by barrels of mashke but if the mashke doesn't get **inside** of him, then **he** is one entity and the **mashke** is another entity. This is why Chassidim always work that the fire of Chassidus would penetrate them and warm them up.

The story is told of a Chabad Chassid of a previous generation who suffered from illness and poverty. Anash raised money for him and sent him away to recuperate.



When he returned, his condition was no better and had even worsened. He was so weak that the doctor only allowed him to eat a slice of challa and a cup of milk and no more, each day.

A young Chassid asked him how he was feeling and the sick man answered: Boruch Hashem, halevai in ruchnius as in gashmius!

The young Chassid was taken aback by this answer since it made more sense to say, halevai in gashmius as in ruchnius because as far as ruchnius went, the Chassid was a baal avoda etc. but his gashmius was terrible.

The older Chassid explained what he meant: You don't understand. I eat very little, true, but it becomes part of my flesh and blood and that is my chayus. Without this little food I would die. Halevai in ruchnius, i.e. that I merit that at least a little of what I learn and daven should become my very life so I would feel that without it, I do not exist.

This what Chazal meant when they said, "Better a little with kavana than a lot without kavana." One would think it should say, "Better with kavana than without kavana?"

The explanation is as follows. Yes, we need to learn and do a lot but the kavana is that at least a little should penetrate and that is the "little with kavana" that comes from "a lot without kavana."

What the old Chassid said fits with the parable of the Alter Rebbe who compared Chassidus to a precious stone in the king's crown. Because the prince was sick, it was necessary to grind the stone so that even a drop would enter his mouth and heal him.

CHASSIDUS INNOVATED: K'VIUS B'NEFESH

When the Alter Rebbe was in jail the second time, one of the askanim (a Misnaged) who had connections in the government told him that if he promised to visit three great Misnagdim after he was freed, he would do his best to free him. The Alter Rebbe agreed and was freed.

When the Alter Rebbe visited one of the three g'dolim, his host asked him: What did Chassidus innovate?

The Alter Rebbe answered that Chassidus innovated that a Jew should have a *k'vius ittim* (set times) for Torah.

The gadol laughed at this because k'vius ittim for Torah is nothing new. Furthermore, according to the Misnagdim, they learned more Torah than Chassidim

who spent time on davening, mitzvos, and being happy. So why did the Alter Rebbe say that Chassidus innovated the idea of k'vius ittim for Torah?

The Alter Rebbe said: There is k'vius in **time**. Chassidus innovated that there must be k'vius ittim in one's **nefesh** (soul).

We can understand what a k'vius b'nefesh is when you see an infant crying every three hours or so because he's hungry. It's not because the clock informed him that three hours went by since his last feeding and that's why he needs to ask for more to eat. Of course it's the baby's inner feeling of hunger that tells him that he must eat now.

That is what Chassidus innovated, that our physical requirements serve as an analogy to us for our soul requirements and the need to learn or daven or do mitzvos at that moment is not because it's part of our daily routine. It's not because we have a daily questionnaire to fill out with checks to be made next to each mitzva that we do, but **something our soul needs**. When a person feels that mitzvos are a k'vius b'nefesh, he feels he cannot possibly transgress the will of Hashem.

This is why we find with Chassidim that they are moser nefesh even for those things which the halacha says can be transgressed and one does not need to be killed for it, because their neshama rejects aveiros like the human body rejects a foreign entity. It happens sometimes that when a person has a transplant, his body rejects it. This is how the body of a Jew, to whom Torah and mitzvos are a k'vius b'nefesh, rejects anything foreign, that is not k'dusha.

A k'vius b'nefesh doesn't only affect a person and keep him away from sin; it has even more of an effect when it comes to doing mitzvos because he feels that he cannot exist without learning and

The older Chassid explained what he meant: You don't understand. I eat very little, true, but it becomes part of my flesh and blood and that is my chayus. Without this little food I would die. Halevai in ruchnius, i.e. that I merit that at least a little of what I learn and daven should become my very life so I would feel that without it, I do not exist.

davening etc. Even if doing mitzvos entails a lot of effort, he doesn't avoid them. On the contrary, he becomes fat b'gashmius from the pleasure he has in doing something that binds him to Hashem (like Reb Nachum of Chernobyl from the pleasure he had in saying "amen, yehei shmei rabba").

Of course it is much easier to serve Hashem out of the habits we were raised with but if we do it this way, we are not living a life of Torah and mitzvos because Torah and mitzvos are not our life. They can be close to us and even very close (like the barrels of mashke surrounding the hitchhiker in the story, but the mashke did not warm him until he drank it) and we can feel uncomfortable if we miss out on our routine.

But life continues as usual because our life is one of the bodily realm, so the main thing is being able to check off each day and to be able to say, boruch Hashem, I fulfilled today's obligations in Torah and mitzvos. And even if things did not go so well, most of the day was all right and the rule in halacha is that "most is like all." We also give ourselves credit and feel we deserve thanks for the Torah and mitzvos we do in galus.

But if you want to be a Chassid,

you know that without a k'vius b'nefesh — even when Torah and mitzvos are done, it's not considered truly a "life of Torah and mitzvos." A person who lives this way is living a life of self-delusion. All his Torah and mitzvos are external and he is not connected to Hashem who is the only reality and existence.

TO ADD EACH DAY IN "KI HEIM CHAYEINU"

Rashbatz (R' Shmuel Betzalel, a Chassid of the Tzemach Tzedek and then of the Rebbe Maharash and the Rebbe Rashab, who was a mashpia to the Rebbe Rayatz when he was a child) would tell a story to the Rebbe Rayatz before he went to sleep. One time, he described the difference between the bedtime Shma of a Chassid and someone who was not a Chassid and gave the following analogy.

There was once a wagon driver who went to work each morning and took his son, a young healthy boy, with him. In the morning, before they left, he would give his son a fine meal and in the evening, after a day's work, he gave his son a fine meal.

It was once a fast day and the father did not give his son breakfast that day. The son figured his father

When, for example, he has to give tz'daka, especially when it's more than he's used to giving, and if it's at the expense of his physical pleasures in this world, he feels like he is giving his very life. It's like the wealthy man who had a hard time giving tz'daka and when he had to give he would tell his gabbai: I will close my eyes when you take the money because I can't bear to watch!

was rushing and when they would get to an inn, they would eat. But they passed inn after inn and the son did not get a meal until he arrived home. The boy concluded that his father had changed the routine and from then on he would only get one meal. So the next morning, when his father woke him up, he turned his back and did not want to get out of bed. His father explained: Today is not yesterday! Today is different!

Rashbatz ended by saying that after making a spiritual accounting during the bedtime Shma, a Chassid's conclusion must be that today is not yesterday! It needs to be not only better (which even someone who does not learn Chassidus understands) but altogether different, *haint darf men zain gor anderesh*. A person ought to be dissatisfied by the fact that his connection to Hashem today is still not true enough and hope that tomorrow he will be able to attain a completely different level of connection (not only in quantity but in quality).

This needs to be the outcome not only of the bedtime Shma but of every farbrengen, of every t'filla, of every maamer or chapter of Tanya learned, of every letter written to the

Rebbe MH"m and surely of a visit to the Rebbe.

It is all derived from absorbing the point that G-dliness, Torah, mitzvos, and Moshiach are our lives, and we toil for years in avoda and avodas ha't'filla in order to acquire that feeling, even if for a moment, that "ki heim chayeinu" – to feel that the connection between us and Hashem is the essence of our lives.

There are many analogies to the connection between Hashem and the Jewish people, starting with Shir HaShirim and many expressions and drashos in Chazal, especially in the Midrash on Shir HaShirim which seems to bring examples of avodas Hashem from situations we would be reticent to talk about for reasons of tznius. Yet it says that all Shiros are holy and Shir HaShirim is Holy of Holies.

Serving Hashem does not end with 613 tasks that we need to mark off that they were done in the right time and the right place. That is just the beginning! Yes, the beginning is critical and if you don't have these physical actions of mitzvos that's terrible, but it is step one which is supposed to lead a person to connecting with Hashem to the point that he feels that "ki heim

chayeinu." He is supposed to feel "lovesick" for Hashem like a person feels when there is a true connection like that of bride and groom, husband and wife.

If this connection is lacking between man and his Maker, the goal of Torah and mitzvos, we would not need all these verses and all the statements of Chazal that explain these verses and create the awareness within us that this is Holy of Holies.

A STEERING WHEEL AND NO CAR

Only Chassidus speaks about man's purpose which is to connect with his Creator. Chassidus explains the real meaning of tzaddik, beinoni, and rasha. According to the thinking of the world, since Torah and mitzvos are 613 assignments that we need to carry out, someone who does most of them, or at least the hardest ones, deserves to be considered a tzaddik. If someone did only half of them, he should be considered a beinoni, and if he did only a few, he deserves the title of rasha.

However, since the truth is that Torah and mitzvos are the means by which a person connects to Hashem like a chassan and kalla and husband and wife, any action which is not pleasing to Hashem, no matter how trivial or serious, breaks the connection. Even someone who is clean of all sins but his connection to things of this world causes him to get excited, to get angry, to smile or enjoy physical things – even if as a result of this he did not actual sin because he restrained himself, his situation is not that "ki heim chayeinu," but rather that what counts is gashmius.

A person like this is far from the truth and there is no connection here, not of man and his wife and not even bride and groom. He lives a terrible lie and gets excited by things

that are not worth talking about. He is connected to them as though it's air for breathing and when something material is taken from him, it's like his life was taken.

When, for example, he has to give tz'daka, especially when it's more than he's used to giving, and if it's at the expense of his physical pleasures in this world, he feels like he is giving his very life. It's like the wealthy man who had a hard time giving tz'daka and when he had to give he would tell his gabbai: I will close my eyes when you take the money because I can't bear to watch!

It's not only when it's necessary to give money, it's also when it's necessary to give time, especially hours, in order to listen to someone or to be with someone, while his precious time (not just because he can make money in that time) is already 'pre-booked' with other sorts of pleasures whether they be relaxing or reading, surfing the Internet, listening to music, etc. To forego those pleasures because someone needs help, or a sympathetic ear, is considered by him to be unthinkable self-sacrifice.

He is like the very active child who went driving with his father and made mischief and kept trying to touch the steering wheel. The father finally came up with an idea. He attached another wheel and whenever they went driving, he would seat the child next to this other steering wheel which wasn't attached to anything. The child turned the wheel right and left, thinking that he was the driver.

Can such a person be called a tzaddik? He turns the wheel of mitzvos but the wheel isn't attached to anything. Nothing happened in his "car," inside of him. It's surprising that he is still called a beinoni and not a rasha for as long as he is still attracted to things of this world, he lives in a world of lies,

The monk grabbed him by the neck and thrust him under the water and held him there. He thrashed about, trying to break free and breathe. The monk finally let go and as he filled his lungs up with air the monk said to him: If that is how you will seek the truth, the way you fought and yearned to obtain air to breathe, you will find it!

a life that is not life and only for the purpose of the game which is called "free choice" does it seem like life.

He is really a rasha and it is for this that every Chassid davens – to sense the truth, even briefly, to feel that Torah and mitzvos need to be a real steering wheel so that every move he makes creates a change that strengthens his connection with Hashem.

LIKE AIR FOR BREATHING

It is told that the Rebbe was asked what purpose there is in someone who is paralyzed and attached to machines, unconscious. The Rebbe answered that the very fact that there is a Jew in this world whose neshama believes in G-d (as it says in Tanya, chapter 6, "like every Jew who has the ability to give his life for the holiness of G-d"), is an enormous accomplishment in fulfilling the purpose of Creation.

If that is so, then surely the purpose of a healthy, active person in the world is to connect with Hashem!

A baal t'shuva once told me his story. He was in India standing in a river. He asked a Buddhist monk, who was standing nearby, how he could find the truth. The monk grabbed him by the neck and thrust

him under the water and held him there. He thrashed about, trying to break free and breathe. The monk finally let go and as he filled his lungs up with air the monk said to him: If that is how you will seek the truth, the way you fought and yearned to obtain air to breathe, you will find it!

It says "better is one hour of t'shuva and good deeds in this world than all of life in the world to come." Why does it say t'shuva and good deeds rather than **Torah** and good deeds? Should we sin in order to do t'shuva, G-d forbid? And what is meant by an **hour** – sixty minutes? What is special about an hour? T'shuva doesn't require time, as Chazal say that t'shuva can be done in an instant?

The meaning of "shaa" (literally an hour) comes from the root to turn as the word is used in the verse that says "and He turned to Hevel and his offering and did not turn towards Kayin and his offering." That is why it says "t'shuva" which means to return, for better is a turn which returns the soul to its source of life, to feel that the connection to Hashem provides him essential air to breathe which gives him life.

When mitzvos are done from a place of connection to Hashem, then the avoda in this world is considered "good deeds." Therefore, a turn,

Someone who says he needs vacation avoda is like the person who disconnects the respirator from the invalid in order to let him rest and not exert his heart and lungs. Obviously, this is foolish. How can we take a vacation from our connection to Hashem?

even in an instant and for only an instant is worth more than all of this world and the next. Why? Because he is expressing what his k'vius b'nefesh is.

Based on all this, we can understand why Chassidus demands so much in the area of "sanctify yourself in that which is permissible to you." For not to do forbidden things is part of the list of tasks we need to fill out on our daily form. Yet the form may be completed and the person can still be immersed in permissible cravings. Therefore, he must sanctify himself by refraining from the permissible but unnecessary, so that he feels that matters of this world are not vital to him like air, but they are like his other needs such as eating and drinking and the other things that maintain his existence which, if you need them – you do them, and if not, you manage without them, because they are not our oxygen.

That is always how T'mimim were guided like R' Itche der Masmid Hy'd, who once said to R' Efraim Wolf a"h when he was a bachur in Tomchei T'mimim: When you eat something you want to eat, don't say a bracha on it.

R' Wolf was shocked to hear this. R' Itche explained: How can you bless Hashem over something which is not to His liking?

"Is eating without a bracha any

better?" asked R' Wolf.

Said R' Itche: No, just don't eat. Because saying a bracha is not possible and eating without saying a bracha is certainly impossible!

From this we learn that to a Chassid it needs to be clear what is necessary like air, and then he can be careful about polluted air. He is careful to avoid the air and atmosphere of self-indulgence, but on the contrary becomes like the Alter Rebbe who when they brought him a silver snuff box as a gift said: There is one organ (the nose) that had no pleasure from his world and you want to coarsen that too? And he removed the cover and used it as a mirror to be able to adjust his t'fillin shel rosh.

NO VACATION FOR T'MIMIM

This was always the way to measure genuine Chabad Chassidim and the way to see the "and He separated us from the goyim" and the distinction between "us" and "them" – what are they busy with? With another suit or gadget or new vacation spot or something new for the house? As R' Itche der Masmid said (he visited the United States on shlichus for the Rebbe Rayatz) in a letter, expressing great amazement over people eating actual meat.

Chabad Chassidim know that this

is like breathing polluted air or like the steering wheel mentioned earlier. They also know that this is the key challenge in this world and in galus, that substitutes are presented as the real thing. A person connected to gashmius is in galus. At the same time, it is said about Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who lived in a cave for 13 years, cut off from his family and the world, that for him there was no churban because he was at the level that he described as, "with one bond I am bound up." He was connected and he breathed the real air of Elokus.

A Chabad Chassid who sees people immersed in things of this world wonders how they live, like R' Shmuel Munkes who was the guest of an elderly couple who woke him up for Slichos. He made believe he didn't know what Slichos is. They told him that they pray that the cows give milk and the chickens provide eggs and he said: Feh! Elderly people get up in the middle of the night to ask for food? Are you infants that every few hours you cry because you need to be fed?

Similarly, when R' Nossan Ashkenazi visited Rav Zislin in the hospital before he passed away, he asked that they not eulogize him because: Although it says, "the dead are free," i.e. they are free of mitzvos, they are not free of the connection with Chabad and the Rebbe. So I ask that the funeral take place according to Chabad custom.

After all that has been said above, it becomes rather obvious why the concept of "Bein HaZ'manim" (intersession, vacation) is not in the spirit of Torah and why the Rebbe opposed it.

Whenever a siyum was referred to, the Rebbe added that a siyum is a beginning for something new. Someone unfamiliar with the term "k'vius b'nefesh" might think there should be no vacation because there is a list of tasks we need to do every

day, like the story told of the modern rabbi who was found smoking on Shabbos. When questioned about this he said he just took a vacation from his job. They think that the problem is not being able to make checks on the list we need to submit to the heavenly court after 120 years.

But it goes way beyond that. Someone who says he needs vacation avoda is like the person who disconnects the respirator from the invalid in order to let him rest

and not exert his heart and lungs. Obviously, this is foolish. How can we take a vacation from our connection to Hashem?

This is all the more pertinent to the T'mimim for they are the ones who were educated by our Rebbeim to give a "divorce" to matters of this world and this is why they, and those like them, use Bein HaZ'manim to increase the connection to Hashem through learning and activities to draw our fellow Jews closer to Hashem.

Especially when Elul follows immediately after the break and the T'mimim are getting ready for Tishrei with the Rebbe who provides us with the oxygen of hiskashrus that enables us to breathe during the final choking moments of galus.

No wonder then that the T'mimim look forward impatiently to return to yeshiva, to 770, to Beis Rabbeinu, to seeing the Rebbe. May we see the Rebbe even before Tishrei, still in this year of Hakhel!

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SEEING HOW THE REBBE IS INDEED ALIVE

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

We have to live with Ahavas Yisroel – like the Rebbe. Spread Judaism at every opportunity – like the Rebbe. See this era as the days of Geula – like the Rebbe.

MISSING PICTURE

Last Chanuka, among all the bachurim who came to do mitzvaim in Beit Shaan, there was one from Ohr Yehuda who told a story that happened at Yeshivas Daas in Rechovot a few years ago.

It was Nittel Nacht in yeshiva and they had played chess already and were looking for something to do. Some bachurim reorganized the zal and moved a bookcase, some tables and even the Rebbe's picture, which was relocated to a more prominent spot.

A few days later someone from the neighborhood walked into yeshiva and looked around. One of the bachurim went over to him and asked if he could be of help. The guest went over to the wall where the picture of the Rebbe had hung and asked, "Where is the picture that used to hang here?"

The bachur thought that maybe the man had donated the picture and was disappointed that it had been moved. He pointed at the other wall and said, "We just moved the picture over there." The guest seemed disappointed and he explained why.

"I live across the street and the window of my house faces where the picture used to be. Every morning I make myself a cup of coffee and go over to the window and see the Rebbe's picture. I start the day with a good morning to the Rebbe, look at the picture for a while as I drink my coffee, and then get on with my day.

"A few days ago I noticed that the picture had disappeared. The next day and the next day, the same thing, no picture, and I missed it. I came here to check out what happened to it."

A DIFFERENT KIND OF SHLIACH

There are shlichim who do their work without publicity in the papers or on Internet sites. They are known in their place of shlichus; their mekuravim follow them in "fire and water," but most of Anash haven't even heard of their names.

Rabbi Tzafrir Enosh is that kind of shliach. He is a shliach in Givat Shmuel and is a faithful partner of old time shliach, Rabbi Shabtai Fischer. I might not know him either if not for the trip I made during the Aseres Yemei T'shuva to the gravesite of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai with one of the schools in Beit Shaan where I am the rabbi.

I was sitting on a bench near the gravesite when I heard the singing of Aleinu from a nearby room with the tune used at children's rallies in 770. Before I went to see who the group was that was singing Chabad-style, I heard them singing Al Tira and Ach Tzaddikim. Then I saw them. They wore knitted kippot, long tzitzis and their teacher had a beard and black yarmulke. They were singing Chabad niggunim together. Then they recited some of the 12 P'sukim and their love for their young teacher was apparent.

I waited for an opportunity and then approached the teacher.

"My name is Tzafrir and I teach in a high school in Givat Shmuel."

Then I discovered something interesting. Tzafrir became a baal t'shuva in 770. Maybe that is the reason that all those who are close to him have learned that there is only one genuine leader in the world and it is only from him that we can learn how to approach everything – the Rebbe.

After his army service Tzafrir traveled in South America and the United States and then attended university in New York where he met some T'mimim who invited him to visit 770. He went, and stayed

there...

He soon became a Chassid. He married and joined the Chabad outreach in Givat Shmuel. In his free time he is a teacher and rav in a local high school but he is mainly a shliach. No wonder then, that many of his students, as well as his mekuravim, live with the Rebbe.

I met one of these mekuravim recently in a military academy high school at Tel Teomim near Beit Shaan. They had called from the school asking me to speak about Chassidus. When I got to the academy and gently asked why the interest in Chassidus (the academy is not only for religious people), they pointed at G, a graduate of the high school in Givat Shmuel, who is a teacher at the school and the resident expert on Lubavitch matters.

R' Tzafrir told me that G is a graduate of the Givati Brigade and two years ago he completed his army service and was at a crossroads in his life. He had an enticing offer for a lucrative business opportunity but he came to the Chabad house to write to the Rebbe. He opened to an answer in the Igros Kodesh about the z'chus and obligation to work in chinuch. He immediately dropped the lucrative offer and that is how he came to be a teacher at the military academy where he teaches general ethics but also Chassidic values.

LIKE THE REBBE

R' Tzafrir goes on to relate:

M is another veteran of an elite combat unit who is a role model of a mekurav who "got it" and doesn't budge without an instruction from the Rebbe. M attended the secular high school in Givat Shmuel. That



Rabbi Tzafrir Enosh (right) with some of his students

was the orientation of his parents and his entire family who were still not religious at that time.

Fortunately for M, he had a Tanach teacher, a religious woman, who included concepts of t'filla and the fulfillment of mitzvos in her lessons. M took an interest in this and the teacher referred him to R' Tzafrir. The teacher warned R' Tzafrir not to go off into inyanei Chassidus and belief in the Rebbe but just to instruct him in his t'filla and to show him how to put on t'fillin, keep Shabbos, etc.

For some reason, her warnings didn't help and M even told the teacher about the Chassidic ideas he was learning at the Chabad house. The teacher was curious and she ended up arranging a shiur in Chassidus with Mrs. Enosh. M's older brother heard these Chassidic ideas too and he bought a kippa, t'fillin, and went to a religious university.

M himself went all the way. He grew a beard, wore his tzitzis out, davened Nusach Ari, and in short, became a Chassid. Even when he was drafted to an elite unit he considered it a shlichus and all the soldiers in his unit put on t'fillin every day, said l'chaim on every Chassidic date, and visited Chabad

houses in those places they were stationed.

M called up R' Tzafrir excitedly and told him that another soldier had joined his unit, a religious bachur with a black yarmulke. "We immediately started learning Tanya together. Now I have a chavrusa in the army to learn Chassidus."

For M, life is Rebbe. We have to act with Ahavas Yisroel – like the Rebbe. Spread Judaism at every opportunity –

like the Rebbe. See this era as the days of Geula – like the Rebbe.

THANKS TO A RAFFLE

When the N'shei Chabad over here get together, they bring other women from their towns so they can experience the Kinus too. One of the preschool teachers in our daughter's school joined the Kinus that took place last summer, and wound up winning a raffle for airfare to visit the Rebbe. Thanks to that our family and hers became closer.

They came to a Shabbos meal, heard some things about the Rebbe and about "hu b'chaim" (he is alive). She learned to write to the Rebbe about her personal matters and received wonderful brachos that caused many other women to come every evening to the Chabad house because they heard about writing to the Rebbe and getting brachos.

As a result, some of her pre-school students started lighting Shabbos candles which just got the ball rolling. Some women committed to saying T'hilim, others to checking mezuzos, to attending a shiur in Chassidus, etc. All this was accomplished by a raffle ticket to visit the Rebbe even before the flight even took place!

profile

SPICE SHOP WITH A CHASSIDIC FLAVOR

By S. Malachi

“Pimiento” is a store that sells spices, condiments, nuts and seeds, natural products and ... Ahavas Yisroel. Yes, you read that correctly. Ahavas Yisroel is the most desirable product in Michoel’s store. You will also find a t’fillin stand, Chassidishe niggunim, condiments with names like “Tzemach Tzedek” and “770,” and a congenial shopkeeper.

FIRST STEPS

Michoel Biggio was born in 1959 in the port city Barranquilla in Colombia. His family was favorably disposed towards Jewish tradition but Michoel’s Jewish knowledge, like that of the other Jewish youth in his city, was minimal.

The change began with the arrival of the shliach, Rabbi Yosef

Liberow. With much effort and help from Above, R’ Liberow was able to relate to the Jewish youth and he opened the wonderful world of Judaism and Chassidus to them. Michoel enjoyed the classes that took place in the local Sefardic shul.

Along with his spiritual progress, Michoel and a partner started a successful business importing sports

equipment, which they marketed throughout the country. On one of his business trips to Bogota, the capital, he met a Jewish student named Rivka. They decided to marry and settled in Barranquilla.

A few years later, Michoel went with R’ Liberow to 770. This was in 5753 and Michoel didn’t have a yechidus or hear a sicha, but the visit had a deep effect on him. He saw the Chassidim reacting to their beepers and he ran through the streets of Crown Heights, together with R’ Liberow and other Chassidim, heading for 770 to see the Rebbe. He stood with the crowds facing the curtained balcony and heard the enthusiastic singing of “Yechi,” and waited excitedly for the moment when the curtain would move aside and he would see the Rebbe.

What made the greatest impact on Michoel was the faith of the Chassidim. When he returned to Colombia he didn’t know much about the Rebbe and Chassidus. He shared his impressions about the faith of the Chassidim and the most important expression of every Chassid, Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L’olam Va’ed. “You can’t understand it unless you’re there in 770,” he said to his family and friends.

MAKING ALIYA

Michoel and his wife continued making progress in their religious observance, and the business flourished, but they were worried about their children’s future. More than half of the Jews in Colombia intermarried. They wanted to raise their children as loyal Jews and they couldn’t guarantee their future in an assimilated community.

The economic crisis that Colombia experienced in 1997 was the final straw that convinced Michoel and Rivka to leave for Israel. Without Chassidic garb or



defining themselves as Chassidim, they felt like the Rebbe's children and that the Rebbe was guiding them.

They did exhaustive research. First they spoke with the representative of the Jewish Agency, who did not want to send them to a religious yishuv as they requested. He recommended Raanana where there were many immigrants from South America and the financial situation was good.

Then someone recommended Tehilla, an organization that helps religious families make aliya. They decided to live in Einav, a small religious yishuv in the Shomron. They packed their belongings, including a picture of the Rebbe which they had hung in their living room in Barranquilla, and set off for the unknown.

Michoel, Rivka and their three

At the airport nobody knew of a yishuv by the name of Einav and for a while there, they were afraid the place didn't really exist... Finally, a taxi driver said he knew where it was, "past the Green Line," and Michoel said to his wife, sounds like the place is green and full of vegetation.

children arrived in Eretz Yisroel at the beginning of 5758. At the airport nobody knew of a yishuv by the name of Einav and for a while there, they were afraid the place didn't really exist. They were alone, did not know the language, and knew nobody. Finally, a taxi driver said he knew where it was, "past the Green

Line," and Michoel said to his wife, sounds like the place is green and full of vegetation.

They loaded their luggage onto the taxi and looked on in amazement and trepidation at the changing scenery; exposed hills, Arab villages, and kafiye-h-clad Arabs on the sides of the roads on donkeys.

One day, their son came home and said, “Abba, how come you don’t have a beard? All my friends’ fathers have a beard...” It was close to the Three Weeks and Michoel decided to grow a beard for the “meantime.”

THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN

It turned out that the caravan that they were given was next to the home of the shliach of Einav, Rabbi Uzi Shinan. The children of the families were the ones who hit it off first, and this led to a strong friendship among the adults.

One day, their oldest daughter said she wanted to attend the Chabad school. The Chabad pride of the Shinan children had affected her and she wanted to be like them. Michoel was happy with her request; back in Barranquilla he had sent his children to the Chabad preschool.

The Chassidic education the children received quickly penetrated their home and moved the family along, with giant steps, towards a life of Torah, Chassidus and hiskashrus. One day, their son came home and said, “Abba, how come you don’t have a beard? All my friends’ fathers have a beard...” It was close to the Three Weeks and Michoel decided to grow a beard for the “meantime.” The “meantime” ended up becoming permanent and the beard was followed by other Jewish and Chassidic changes.

Though many other families find such changes to be a difficult challenge, Michoel was happy with his children’s progress and enjoyed the Jewish-Lubavitch look his home was taking on. The Shinan family, with their sensitivity and love, taught their neighbors how to run a Jewish-Chassidic home.

While the children’s education and their spiritual progress were working out fine, Michoel had yet to find work. He tried catering, worked as a hired hand, but these things didn’t pan out. He didn’t complain though; he remained as optimistic and happy as ever.

Then Michoel opened a store called “Pimiento,” which sells condiments, nuts, seeds and natural products along with... Ahavas Yisroel. Yes, love, along with taking a genuine interest in people.

A GOOD WORD

For eight years now, the modest store has been located on Rechov Petach Tikva in the heart of Netanya. The store is named for an English pepper but some people think it’s his name, and greet him with a “Good morning Mr. Pimiento.” Michoel takes it in stride. Customers are welcomed by a large picture of the Rebbe and Michoel’s ever-present smile.

Pimiento is the place for all your Jewish needs, a fact which is no secret to the customers. This one has problems with his oldest daughter and that one is looking for a shidduch while a third one wants a bracha for his grandmother. Michoel and Rivka listen to each one and try to help. Among the people who frequent this special store are boys from the school for special children called Yehuda HaLevi. They also find a warm smile and listening ear with Michoel. No wonder the

residents of the area love “their Chabadnikim.” “You bring bracha to our neighborhood,” they say.

Someone walks into the store and says, “I didn’t come to buy anything; I came to see you.” Michoel welcomes him warmly. “How are you? How’s your grandson?” He knows his customers personally, remembers their simchos and takes part in their joys and sorrows.

“Here in Israel there is tension; it’s very different from Colombia. So many people want you to say ‘good morning’ to them and to ask how they are. They just need a good word...”

“Take one,” he suggests to a customer, referring to a Kovetz Limud. “Here, on this page is a sicha of the Rebbe,” he recommends. He might offer to arrange a chavrusa for a customer to learn Chassidus; to another he promises a Tanya and he might convince someone else to join a shiur at the Chabad house.

Michoel doesn’t keep the simcha in Netanya. He brings it back to Einav. A year and a half ago, the shliach opened a Chabad shul. Michoel is a mainstay of the minyan, which already numbers dozens of people. He helps create a warm atmosphere. He always notices how other people are doing and what they need.

THE “TRACTORIST” OF SHIKKUN CHABAD

Michoel sees spreading Judaism and strengthening hiskashrus to the Rebbe among his customers as part of his work.

“That’s our job here; it’s our daily work.”

The words “boruch Hashem” and “Rebbe” are constantly on his lips. He always has stories about the Rebbe because “without the Rebbe you just can’t be,” he exclaims.

Working in the store provides

abundant opportunities to strengthen people's hiskashrus to the Rebbe. When people see the picture they are reminded of their visits to the Rebbe or a miracle they experienced or heard about.

Michoel recalls an interesting incident:

A customer told me we have to add a step to the entrance to the store because the step there is too high. We began talking and he said he was one of the builders of Shikkun Chabad in Netanya. In those days he worked as a heavy equipment operator. One day, one of the Chassidim said to him, "Next week is Sukkos. Come with us to 770." He went and had an unforgettable time. At one of the farbrengens that took place when he was in 770, the Rebbe suddenly asked, "What's with the 'tractorist' of Shikkun Chabad in Netanya? Bring him here."

Michoel took his son to 770 to celebrate his bar mitzva (following an answer from the Rebbe in the Igros Kodesh). He told all his customers about his upcoming trip, as well as the teller in the bank and the gas station attendant, and whoever heard he was going wanted to send letters to the Rebbe.

"I had the feeling that the whole world wanted to go with us and be with the Rebbe."

When he returned to Eretz Yisroel, the miracles began. People whom he didn't even remember had sent a letter with him, told him about some miracle they had experienced after asking the Rebbe for a bracha. Sick people were healed, people got engaged, prayers were answered.

MOSHIACH

In Pimiento, Moshiach and Geula are the focus, with the goal being the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH"M. The store's t'fillin stand is



No wonder the residents of the area love "their Chabadnikim." "You bring bracha to our neighborhood," they say.

busy at all hours of the day. When customers call out to him, Michoel answers them from the t'fillin stand, "I'm here outside; take what you want and I'm coming."

When there is an abundance of customers in the store and "customers" at the stand, Michoel

comes up with creative solutions.

"Do me a favor," he'll say to a religious customer, "put t'fillin on with him and I'll be with you shortly." People are taken by surprise by this request but they do it happily.

"When someone gives you

When there is an abundance of customers in the store and “customers” at the stand, Michoel comes up with creative solutions. “Do me a favor,” he’ll say to a religious customer, “put t’fillin on with him and I’ll be with you shortly.” People are taken by surprise by this request but they do it happily.

responsibility, a holy responsibility, you don’t say no,” Michoel explains. “It also makes sense to help out because while he puts t’fillin on with the other guy, I am freed up and he can make his purchases quicker.”

In the morning hours, when there are fewer customers, Michoel visits the neighboring stores and puts t’fillin on with people.

“There was a young man who ate near my store every day but did not want to put on t’fillin. I spoke with him many times but he refused. On 3 Tammuz I felt that I had to give the Rebbe nachas and I went on Mivtza T’fillin. When I saw this guy I went over to him and said, ‘The Rebbe needs you; come put on t’fillin.’”

“He seemed surprised and hesitant but he finally said, ‘You know what? I’ll do it.’ The t’fillin shel yad were easy to put on but the t’fillin shel rosh was difficult because of his hairdo. When he finished saying the bracha he burst into sudden tears and told me how happy he was to put on t’fillin. I have stayed in touch with him and he is slowly making progress.”

Running a busy store doesn’t stop Michoel from being involved with mivtzaim. The way he looks at it is that the purpose of the store is mivtzaim:

“Rebbe and Chassid are one thing. We live for this. Without this holy goal we wouldn’t have the strength to work so many hours a day. “You need to work in order to be mekabel Moshiach, to be mekarev Jews, to sincerely ask your neighbors: ‘How’s it going with you?’ This is our business!”

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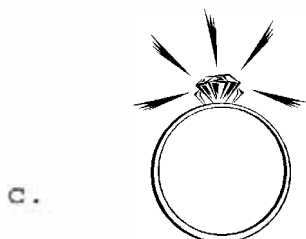
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HOLISTIC HEALER USES RAMBAM AND CHASSIDUS

By Nosson Avrohom

*R' Moshe Refael Tzror's interest is medicine - not Western medicine, but Jewish medicine as taught by the Rambam. * "Today most of the medical world is dealing with health issues that the Rambam dealt with centuries ago."*



Dr. Moshe Refael Tzror outside the "Machon L'Refuah al sheim HaRambam"

Some interesting changes have been taking place in recent years due to people's exposure and openness to various healing modalities. In the past, alternative healing methods were mostly for kooks, or at least that is how it was perceived. In the past decade, however, a significant change in attitude has occurred. Nowadays every clinic offers alternative healing in one of two categories: treatment that addresses body and soul, and proper nutrition that enables the body to heal itself without external involvement.

But these modalities are not really new. Over 800 years ago, the Rambam laid out the principles of alternative medicine. We, Chassidim of the Rebbe, learn these principles when we study the Rambam as per the Rebbe's instruction. One of the people who works in disseminating the Rambam's medical advice is Dr. Moshe Refael Tzror, founder of the "Machon HaRefuah Yehudis al sheim HaRambam." The institute is located in a picturesque stone house surrounded by a garden blooming with fragrant shrubs, flowers, and trees on the top of Har Canaan in Tzfas.

I visited the Machon in order to hear about its goals and functions as well as the life story of the director, R' Tzror, who became a baal t'shuva through the Rebbe's shluchim in South Africa. If you visit the Machon, don't expect to see a doctor in a white coat with a stethoscope around his neck. You will meet a Chassid in a long black coat, a hat, and a smile.

We designated an hour for the interview but the conversation was so interesting that it didn't end until more than two hours had passed.

THE GOALS OF THE MACHON FOR JEWISH HEALING

"We opened the Machon for

Jewish Healing in 5753/1993, for the purpose of researching the health guidelines of the Rambam and of putting the information to use. The Machon has several departments. There is the Michlelet HaRambam, where we teach natural healing in the light of Judaism, mainly the Rambam's teachings. We emphasize the study of subjects covered in Chassidus regarding the soul in Tanya and other Chassidic works. Healers study here, as well as people who work in fields pertaining to medicine and complementary medicine. We offer a variety of courses of varying lengths. A graduate of the Michlala gets a diploma from the University of Natural Healing in Santa Fe in the US.

"We run natural healing clinics in several locations around the country, in Tzfas, on Rechov Dizengoff in Tel Aviv and in Netivot. At these centers, people see top doctors in both natural and modern medicine. We don't ignore modern medicine; we use it where necessary. There are instances, particularly emergency situations, when the patient is better off with conventional care and only after receiving it, is it a good idea to move on to natural healing.

"We also have a laboratory where we develop natural remedies based on the healing plants of the Rambam, a lab which operates with a permit from the Ministry of Health."

R' Tzror calls his field "Jewish medicine."

"This approach of healing based on the Rambam did not exist, in a practical form, until 5751/1991. It was just theoretical. Since then, we have been promoting the practical application of the Rambam's ideas of health through lectures, conventions, and workshops to a variegated audience. At the Machon we research the foundations of preventive medicine, how to prevent

illness, changes in habits that can be deleterious in the short and long term. We also do research on the effect the environment has on the health of body and soul.

"Our research approach is built and based on the Rambam's approach and the results we come up with are implemented in our clinics. All treatments are done in a natural way in a Jewish, holistic approach, which understands the connection of body and soul. A strong emphasis is also placed on preventive medicine, which is a cornerstone in the Rambam's teachings about medicine. It is for

from kibbutzim and they are astounded. I see this as a shlichus, not just a career."

What do you teach in your lectures?

"I show people how the Rambam and Chassidus fit together like the joining of body and soul. The Rambam is very original in his thinking. That is true for the halachos he wrote as well as his writings about the soul and health. And his approach is very practical. Chassidus provides 'garments' to the Rambam, providing the heart and the atmosphere. And together, they create the change."

We don't ignore modern medicine; we use it where necessary. There are instances, particularly emergency situations, when the patient is better off with conventional care and only after receiving it, is it a good idea to move on to natural healing.

this reason that these teachings are included in his halachic work, *Mishneh Torah*, though it seemingly would be more in place in a medical-philosophical work. This told me that the Rambam considered preserving one's health such an important obligation that it goes hand in hand with daily halacha.

"Today, most of the medical world is dealing with health issues that the Rambam addressed in his time and we are confident that in our work in spreading his teachings, we are expanding the sphere of k'dusha and being mekarev many Jews to Judaism.

"It's amazing to see how Chassidus and the Rebbe's teachings complement those of the Rambam. I give classes and lectures to people

A CRY FOR HELP FROM 30,000 FEET UP IN THE AIR

When he was four, R' Tzror's mother began to tell him that he would grow up to be a doctor. He was always attracted to the medical field. He read many medical books but what finally led him to his work in medicine according to the Rambam was a miracle that he experienced during a flight from Germany to South Africa.

"I had a friend who lived in South Africa who was starting to become religious. I was curious to see what was happening with him and I was also disappointed by my social circle at the time. So I decided to visit him. I flew from Germany to

Portugal and from there I boarded a plane to South Africa, but forty minutes into the flight one of the engines failed. For a while, we flew with one engine as the airplane lost altitude. For an hour and a half the plane flew leaning to one side and we clung tightly to the seats in front of us so we wouldn't fall. It was terrifying, a feeling of utter helplessness. I felt these were my final moments.

"Then, as is typical for Jews in trouble, I began to talk to G-d and to tell him that if He gave me a chance to live I promised I would change my life and join the process that my friend in South Africa had started, a return to his roots.

"The plane landed in the first place it could, an African country in the middle of the continent. The air conditioning didn't work and for an hour and a half we remained seated until the technical crew fixed the engine. All our requests to be allowed to get some air outside were refused. There was an epidemic raging in that country at the time and they didn't want any of us to be infected.

"I landed in Johannesburg on Motzaei Shabbos and my friend, who came to meet me, didn't understand why I was so emotional. In a few words I told him what had happened on the flight and I asked him to take me directly to his rabbi. It was close to midnight and he tried to convince me to wait until the next day so I could rest, but I insisted that I wanted to meet a rabbinic figure then and there who could guide me.

"I decided I had to cut off my long hair and begin wearing tzitzis and a kippa. My friend saw I was determined and serious and he brought me that night to Rabbi Abrams.

"Later on I learned that R' Abrams was the Rebbe's shliach who worked with the Israeli k'hilla. I got

to know his wonderful personality and his goodhearted wife Tzivia. R' Abrams understood me and calmed me down and I became a member of the Israeli community he led. It was a warm, united k'hilla with lots of love. I began davening every day, putting on t'fillin, and keeping Shabbos. From that point on I wore a kippa and tzitzis. It was the best time of my life."

BRACHOS FROM THE REBBE

"I came to know the incredible leadership of the Rebbe and became an ardent Chassid. Even without being in 770 I felt a personal connection with the Rebbe through his shluchim and his teachings. I even experienced an amazing miracle that came about through his bracha and from then on my connection to him only grew."

The story was that R' Tzror went to visit an Israeli friend who sold falafel from a makeshift stand. He went to teach him the best way to shape the falafel balls. As Tzror was about to leave, the electric cord of the pot wound around his legs and the boiling oil tipped over onto his hand. Fortunately, the oil did not touch the rest of his body, but the pain in his hand was searing.

"I couldn't take it. I writhed in pain and screamed so that everybody on that street came out to see what was happening. It was unbelievably painful. My friend rushed me to the hospital and the doctors said that since the burns were so deep I would have to undergo plastic surgery and skin grafts. The hand was burned raw and the nerves had stopped working."

Tzror called R' Shabtai, the secretary at the Chabad house, and requested that he ask the Rebbe for a bracha. This was in 5747/1987.

"I told him to say it was urgent because I was supposed to have an operation the next day. The next

day, he got back to me with an answer that the Rebbe had said bracha and success and that everything would be fine. I was deep into Chabad already and I appreciated what a bracha from the Rebbe meant.

"Dr. Klein came to my bedside at noon. He was head of the plastic surgery department and he asked me to get ready for the operation. I told him I would not be having an operation. He was taken aback and I explained that I didn't need one because I had a bracha from the Rebbe. 'In any case,' I said, 'you say that the operation has a 50% chance of success, so I'm going to rely on the Rebbe's bracha. His track record for the fulfillment of brachos is 100%.'

"The doctor tried to explain how serious the situation was but I stuck to my guns until he realized that I meant what I said. He asked me to undergo tests and he stuck my hand with a pin. I felt it, although just the day before, the nerve endings were burned and didn't react at all. The feeling became more and more sharp.

"Dr. Klein couldn't believe it. He tried other tests. He pressed on the nails of my hand to see how quickly blood would return and he was surprised to see that it looked good and that I hadn't made things up.

"I was excited. I felt that the Rebbe's bracha was beginning to come true. Within half an hour I had the entire team around my bed, each one trying to check out the wonder in person; one pressed, another squeezed, a third one pinched.

"All of them could see that despite the severe burn, the nerve system that had been terribly affected was beginning to regenerate. That day I signed that I took responsibility for my health. From the hospital I went to Dr. Rodney Unterschlag who was mekurav through Chabad and

became a shliach.

"I told him about the burn and the bracha from the Rebbe. He was somewhat ambivalent about my great faith. When he saw that I was going with the Rebbe's bracha till the end, he taught me how to change the bandages.

"After this incident, I decided to go to Cape Town to recuperate. I stayed in a hotel on the bay for a month and I did daily soakings of my affected hand. It was amazing to see how the hand was renewing itself. The blood vessels began to work and the hand was regenerating. All the bleak prognostications of the doctors were proved false and with the Rebbe's bracha my hand became as good as new."

FINE WINE IN, UGLY TRUTH OUT

R' Tzror was ready to return to Johannesburg but when he asked for a bill for his stay at the hotel, he was shocked to hear the astronomical sum far beyond his wildest imaginings. He politely explained to the clerk that the amount was way more than the services he had received but she insisted.

When he refused to pay that ridiculous amount, she threatened to call the police.

He asked to speak to the manager. She refused, saying that the owner was a big businessman and this hotel was just one of his little businesses. Tzror would not back down.

"I had only been provided bed and breakfast and the hotel wasn't very exclusive so I thought it was outrageous to ask me to pay the equivalent of what it would cost at an expensive hotel that provided full meal service."

The clerk finally called the hotel owner. R' Tzror presented his complaint and added that the hotel was "dead" even though it had



Dr. Tzror holding a healing plant

I told the doctor I would not be having an operation. He was taken aback and I explained that I didn't need one because I had a bracha from the Rebbe. 'In any case,' I said, 'you say that the operation has a 50% chance of success, so I'm going to rely on the Rebbe's bracha. His track record for the fulfillment of brachos is 100%.'

plenty of potential. The businessman asked him, "Do you think you can manage it better?" Tzror said he could. "Are you sure of yourself?" he asked. Tzror affirmed that he was. The owner asked for a suite to be readied for him and said he would

come in ten days.

"Ten days later he came and we met. I was surprised by his appearance. He was completely red, with a red throat and ruddy face. I thought it may have been better to pay rather than meet with this large,

odd-looking man. He asked for fine wine and our conversation got underway. He suggested that I produce a birthday party for him, 'so I can see what you can do.'

"I saw that all he wanted was honor. I told him that I didn't think he could afford what I had in mind. He was offended. 'Take my checkbook and do what you want with it,' he told me. I took the checkbook and committed to doing the event.

"I ordered the finest wines and entertainment. I invited singers and famous people, some of whom had to be paid to come. I had just one condition, that there be two menus, a kosher one for Jews and one for goyim.

"When he saw the well attended

the owner began to throw back glass after glass of wine and his face grew redder and redder.

"Something changed in his attitude towards me. I had a bad feeling and left the room. A few minutes later the receptionist said that the owner was calling for me. When I went downstairs I could see he was completely drunk. He sneered, 'You dirty Jew,' and began praising Hitler. He told me he planned on completing what Hitler didn't finish.

"At first I was scared but I quickly recovered. I told him he needed to take medication and if he would be in my house I would force him to crawl on all fours and ask forgiveness. I took my salary for the month, left my letter of resignation,

my salary for the month, but I soon realized that someone had bribed them, a common occurrence in South Africa. I suddenly got the courage, I don't know from where, to say to him that I had connections with high level people in Johannesburg and when I would be released, I would make sure that whoever was involved in my arrest would be punished and lose his job.

"Apparently that scared him because that evening he suggested in a conciliatory tone that I leave the money and would be free to go. I could pursue the payment of my salary in the court. I agreed to this on condition that they give me enough money for the flight and the trip from the airport to my home. He reluctantly agreed and gave me 500 rand.

"In Johannesburg I met with a lawyer who told me I could sue for at least half a million dollars for such anti-Semitic remarks. I could also testify to tax evasion and corruption but that's not what I wanted to do. I just wanted him to be judged for his anti-Semitic statements.

"When the hotel owner realized I was pursuing this, he tried to pay me off with large sums of money so I wouldn't ruin his good name. I didn't seek revenge, just justice and I began the legal process. A journalist friend publicized the story on page one of the most widely read newspaper in Cape Town.

"The next day I got a phone call from the hotel's accountant, a Jew, who advised me to leave the country as fast as possible since the hotel owner wanted to kill me. Since I knew that he was corrupt and human life didn't mean much to him, I left South Africa."

"Something changed in his attitude towards me. He sneered, 'You dirty Jew,' and began praising Hitler. He told me he planned on completing what Hitler didn't finish."

garden party, complete with greenery and flowers, waiters circulating and an orchestra playing, the businessman was ecstatic. At the conclusion of the party, he gave me the keys to the hotel.

"I threw myself into my work. I made connections and created tailored vacation packages for adults and young people with shows and musicals. Within a short time the hotel was thriving.

"One day, I was told that since the hotel was doing so well, the owner had decided to renovate and enlarge it and he wanted me to attend a meeting with the contractor. They came to the hotel and the meeting began. I had fine wines brought in and we began to talk. Everything was going well until

and went upstairs to pack my bags. It was obvious that I would no longer be working for this evil person.

"When he saw that I was serious and that the future success of his hotel was in the balance, he sent people to me to appease me, saying it was just a bad joke, but I wouldn't forgive him. I took my belongings and went to the airport, where an unpleasant surprise awaited me. Two policemen told me I was accused of stealing from a hotel and it would be better for me if I went along with them willingly. All my attempts to explain that this was baloney fell on deaf ears.

"When I stood before the investigating officer I told him my story, that I had taken nothing but

THE RAMBAM'S APPROACH TO HEALING

R' Tzror's life story and his connection to the Rebbe were so fascinating that we nearly forgot

what the topic of the interview was.

How is the Rambam's medicine different than modern medicine and how does it differ from other alternative healing?

"There are two main approaches in medicine. The first approach is that of the Rambam, namely that a person has inner healing abilities which medical people need to strengthen by preventing people from eating harmful foods and by using healing herbs and proper nutrition in the event of illness. This is called holistic healing.

"There is another school of thought in medicine which is the conventional reactive approach we see in modern hospitals. This approach acknowledges only that which can be seen with a microscope. If they see that something is lacking in the body, they supplement it from the outside. For example, with diabetes, a disease the Rambam defined, there is a problem in that the pancreas does not produce enough insulin.

"A doctor using the modern approach will give the patient insulin shots, but this weakens the functioning of the pancreas. A holistic doctor, who uses the Rambam's medical approach, will strengthen and heal the pancreas so that it increases its insulin output.

"You asked how the Rambam's approach is different than modern medicine. Remember that the Rambam in his time was very modern. As far as we know, he performed operations. There were no other schools of thought that differed with him. Today we know that his is the best form of healing because it doesn't just address illnesses as they arise but works to prevent disease.

"Today's conventional medicine hardly deals with prevention. Every HMO has a long list of disease diagnoses and the pay scale for each treatment, which cost the insurers a



Dr. Tzror making herbal remedies at his Machon

"Today's conventional medicine hardly deals with prevention. Every HMO has a long list of disease diagnoses and the pay scale for each treatment, which cost the insurers a fortune. Nobody considers putting together a list of warning signs for people who reach thirty and forty years of age, how to prevent getting sick."

fortune. Nobody considers putting together a list of warning signs for people who reach thirty and forty years of age, how to prevent getting sick. Generally speaking, that is the difference between the two schools of thought in medicine.

"There are other differences in how treatment is done. The Rambam says that treatment entails proper nutrition and even writes that we can determine who is a good

doctor by whether he can heal with nutrition. He writes that even when medicine is needed it is preferable to give mild medication and non-poisonous plants and only in critical situations to give stronger medication. Everything has to be measured since certain medications, while healing one thing, simultaneously destroy something else.

"The Rambam connects body

and soul. He knew the world of interplay between body and soul and in his books there are clear protocols of how problems in the soul affect the health of the body. The Rambam was the first psychologist in the world who didn't talk about the body and soul as a concept but considered it an important aspect in his medical perspective."

GREAT INTEREST IN LEARNING JEWISH MEDICINE

As R' Tzror led me along the pathways of the garden, between rows of beanstalks, hyssop shrubs and lavender, he explained how someone who decides to change his life to one that is more healthy has to do so gradually. We stopped every so often near one of the plants and he plucked off some leaves, had me smell them, and then shared some of his vast knowledge with me.

"This is the hyssop which the *metzora* has to take, together with a cedar branch, to regain his purity. The Rambam thought very highly of this plant, which grows almost everywhere, especially for people suffering from anemia and stomach ailments.

"Do you see that shrub?" he asked as he pointed to a grayish shrub. "That is a wormwood plant, also known as *Shiva*, an herbal tea

very popular among Moroccan Jews. If people knew how many wonderful properties it has, they would drink it every day."

R' Tzror said that although most of these plants grow wild, you have to be familiar with them so as not to confuse them with poisonous plants that are also plentiful in the field. You also have to know when to cut them, which parts to use – the leaves, roots, seeds, or fruit - and how to use them.

"The Rambam's medical approach has become more and more popular in recent years. Even the *Kupat Cholim* (Israeli health clinics) have come to see the need for preventive care. The field of "complementary medicine" includes both approaches, conventional and alternative, as a combination that can increase the quality of medical care and its success.

"This approach is reminiscent of the fundamentals of Chassidus which talk about combining intellect and emotion and it is popular now after the Rebbe taught us to look at the world and see how the world is ready for Geula."

I asked R' Tzror how he explains the fact that the Rambam's approach was ignored for years and only recently has become popular.

"I saw in the Rebbe's *sichos* that he says that efforts are never for

naught; even if at first we thought our efforts were not effective. There's no question that the great efforts we are making are having an effect and more medical people are being exposed to it."

R' Tzror offers another reason why he thinks alternative medicine is on the rise – the increased intermingling between East and West.

"There is a mishmash today in views and philosophies between the two worlds. There is also a flood of information thanks to the online media and it definitely has an effect on medicine. We are seeing the fulfillment of the prophecy about the era of Geula that knowledge would increase."

R' Tzror tells about a tremendous interest among a wide variety of people, from working people to kibbutzniks and young students, in the field of medicine.

"I see a great interest in learning about Jewish medicine. It's fascinating to see how these concepts, even those which you wouldn't think would be *mekarev* someone, are *mekarev* many Jews. They understand that it all comes from Judaism. It has happened more than once that someone took an interest in the Rambam's medicine and went on to study his halachic works too."

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100% EFFORT IS NOT ENOUGH – THE REBBE DEMANDS RESULTS!

By Rabbi Yosef Chaim Ginsburgh, Conference Chairman, Head Shliach and Rav, Rosh Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim – Chabad Ramat Aviv, Eretz Yisroel
Translated By Michael Leib Dobry

From a speech 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.

One of the main sichos of recent times is the well-known sicha from Chaf-Ches Nissan, 5751, in which the Rebbe demands from each and every one of us to “do everything in your ability – in a manner of ‘the lights of Tohu’ but within ‘the vessels of Tikkun’ – to bring about the coming of Moshiach in actual reality, immediately mamash.”

When we hear these words, “do everything in your ability”, they arouse us to intensify our activities, as we have not yet reached the complete hisgalus of Moshiach Tzidkeinu. It's been a long time since we heard this sicha emitting from the Rebbe's holy lips, and

surely each one of us has been engaged in some real action with the intention of “doing everything in your ability” to bring Moshiach. When we come together again, and we speak once again about this famous sicha – the question is bound to arise: How is it possible to “do everything in your ability” again and again and again? How many times can you “do everything in your ability”?

We can find an answer to this perplexing issue in the Rebbe MH"m's sicha from Taanis Esther, 5711. The Rebbe says that the great quality to the Redemption is that after we reach a level of completion, G-d raises us from strength to strength to an entirely new level of completion. And so it goes ad infinitum, constantly rising ever higher and higher.

Furthermore, since it is known that “the entire level of completion of the days of Moshiach and the Resurrection of the Dead depends upon our actions and our avoda throughout the time of exile” (Tanya, Chapter 37), and since the Rebbe thereby explains that our Avodas Hashem in the time of exile must be similar to the reward that will be at the Redemption, therefore, we can say that even our avoda today, literally on the verge of the Redemption, is to add further completion to the level that we have already attained. Thus, although the Rebbe has told us that we have already completed the avoda and the process of birurim, we continue forward in our Avodas Hashem in order to reach the highest level of perfection after perfection.

Then, when we see things as they are, we understand that we don't need p'shetlach and interpretations of what the Rebbe said. For when the Rebbe says that the world is ready – it means that the world is ready! And when the Rebbe says that we only have to open our eyes – we



only have to open our eyes. Everything is already complete!

However, we have to begin a new avoda here: After everything has been completed and everything is ready for the Redemption, G-d Alm-ghty places us in a situation such that we have to start everything all over again. This is not because there was something missing for the Redemption – this is not a condition for the Redemption, nor does this put an end to anything. Rather, it's similar to the reward that we will receive in the Future to Come, and it is thereby the manner of avoda that is demanded from us. After there has already been the "do everything in your ability" and the ultimate perfection of us all, both individually and collectively, the "do everything in your ability" starts again. Thus, the fact that the matter has already reached a level of completion does not *ch"v* weaken us whatsoever. On the contrary – it must strengthen us even more.

Therefore, each one of us must instill renewed strengths within himself. Furthermore, when we are together, utilizing the power of the many, each of us can place himself in a totally new drive of "do everything in your ability."

This concept (a higher level of completion than the previous one) is especially prominent in the activities of "Matteh Moshiach" leading up to Yud-Alef Nissan. For example, two years ago, everyone who participated in the Yud-Alef Nissan rally at Bloomfield Stadium in Tel Aviv felt that we had reached the ultimate level of perfection. Yet, last year, we reached an even higher level of perfection, and an even higher one this year at the Yarkon Park. It has reached such a point that it's as if the previous levels of perfection are deemed of no value. We're talking about a totally different type of perfection on a much higher level, and with G-d's help, we will already

merit to be with the Rebbe in actual reality and in its most revealed sense. This is exactly what we're talking about: Each of us must reach totally new achievements, and even someone who does not possess the tools to achieve things at such a level can still make a totally new headway in "do everything in your ability".

Another important matter to emphasize – and maybe this conference can mark its inception – is the main point of this most special sicha from Chaf-Ches Nissan, 5751, how we actually see that the concept of "the lights of Tohu" is being more readily accepted. "Do everything in your ability" in a manner of "the lights of Tohu" but within "the vessels of Tikkun." Beyond this statement, the Rebbe gave two even more concrete and practical instructions within the sicha itself.

First, the Rebbe spoke about the need for ten stubborn people. Faced with such words, each of us must ask himself: Am I really stubborn? What does it mean to be stubborn? The best example of stubbornness is a child who determinedly wants something, while you try to divert his attention with big things, small things, stories, and sweets. If he's really stubborn, then no matter how you try to divert him, he remains steadfast in getting what he wants. To *stubbornly* demand the True and Complete Redemption in actual reality means that even when we achieve success in our shlichus, even when experience great revelations in the teachings of chassidus, and even when we are bestowed with an abundance in all material and spiritual matters from all dimensions – it doesn't matter to us. We still haven't attained the nekuda that represents the one and only thing that we want.

The second concept that the Rebbe mentioned literally at the end of the sicha is to find one, two, or three people to devise a plan on

what to do and how to do it in order to bring about the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu in actual reality. The Rebbe speaks about one individual, or two people, but no more than three. There are those who think that the Rebbe spoke first about ten stubborn people, and afterwards compromised on one, two, or three. But if that was what the Rebbe meant, he would have said it in descending order: three, two, one. Since the Rebbe framed his words in ascending order, it is understood that he did not mean to diminish the demand upon everyone to be stubborn, rather we're talking about another issue entirely, i.e., we do need one, or two, but no more than three.

At the start of the sicha, the Rebbe spoke on a personal level about the concept of stubbornness, "do everything in your ability," and what he demands from each and every one of us, both as individuals and collectively as Jews, is to feel pained that Moshiach has not yet revealed himself in the fullest sense of the word.

However, stubbornness alone is not enough. Even if we give ourselves completely to this matter with total self-sacrifice, the Rebbe will not be satisfied. The Rebbe has placed upon us the responsibility to achieve one single result: the hisgalus of Moshiach Tzidkeinu in actual reality. As long as we have not reached that goal, we have not fulfilled our task.

They say that you give a small child a mark for effort, whereas an adult gets marks only for results, not for effort. It stands to reason that in previous generations, the self-sacrifice would have been enough. They demanded one hundred percent effort. But we have already come to the verge of the Redemption, and what is demanded from us now is not just one hundred percent effort, but also one hundred

percent results. The time has come for us to understand that our responsibility is connected not to effort, not to self-sacrifice – although self-sacrifice must be included – rather, our responsibility is to attain actual success!

The measure of success is when we succeed in having an effect upon others. As the Rebbe says, a speaker must do his utmost that his speech will be positively received by the audience. Therefore, the main criterion for success is how much of what we say is accepted in the world.

Thus, when the Rebbe says that we need one, two, or three individuals to devise a plan of action, this doesn't mean that only three people will devise the plan. Instead, the Rebbe turns here to each of those stubborn people, to all Lubavitcher chassidim, and says: Your stubbornness alone is insufficient. You also have to devise a plan of how to give these things over to others in such a way that your stubbornness will produce tangible results, and your words will have a positive influence upon those who hear them. As a result, each individual must periodically sit and think to himself about how to improve the way he or she approaches others in order to achieve better results. Afterwards, he must know that when one sits alone, it's much more difficult to attain good results, as the objective is to influence others outside of ourselves. Therefore, we must consult with someone else, and for the best possible results, we need three. When three people sit together and discuss a matter, they reach a joint position comprised of three diverse opinions, each one inclined in a different way. But if the three of them reach a conclusion that the matter must be done in a certain fashion, then it really will attain the ultimate success and completion.

We are at a conference of Chabad institution directors, and each person came here not only out a sense of formality, but also with the objective of arousing ourselves to the only remaining avoda: bringing Moshiach Tzidkeinu in actual reality. Our joint action can bring about an internalization of the Rebbe's clear words in the sicha of Chaf-Ches Nissan that we first must be stubborn in our self-sacrifice. We generally possess this quality, and anyone who has yet to reach this level can do so in a moment, since self-sacrifice, like t'shuva, can come "in an hour and in a moment" – but not the next step, the devising of a plan.

We don't need p'shetlach and interpretations of what the Rebbe said. For when the Rebbe says that the world is ready – it means that the world is ready! And when the Rebbe says that we only have to open our eyes – we only have to open our eyes. Everything is already complete!

In order to achieve this, we must gather together with intent and purpose and coordinate all our strength, using every available moment towards reaching actual conclusions. (We have seen this when the Rebbe conducted public debates. Anyone who remembers the sicha when the Rebbe spoke about printing the Tanya for the blind in Braille knows that the Rebbe said that since everything possible has been done and more, he then reached the conclusion that perhaps this is something that had not yet been touched by "the spreading of the wellsprings outward".) Everyone must make his own personal accounting: recalling everything that he has done, where he has met

success and where he hasn't, and then he can say to himself, "What else haven't I done that can truly lead to actual success?"

With G-d's help, with the strength of this conference and the good decisions we make here, "Each one shall aid his fellow, and to his brother he shall say, 'Strengthen yourself'", we can bear the true responsibility that the Rebbe has placed upon us to bring Moshiach in an actual and revealed sense as the Rebbe has said, and not to be satisfied to remain in our own shell – living and feeling the concept of Redemption.

A person knows all too well that there are many times that he can be

detached from the whole idea. Sometimes, there is criticism leveled against someone else for not accepting the simple words of the Rebbe stated explicitly in his sichos, but then he asks himself: Do all these writings constantly appear before me, personally – twenty fours a day? Each person knows the answer himself.

Therefore, each of us will surely bring himself now to the nekuda of "Do everything in your ability", but no less important is devising a plan on what to do and how to do it, and there will surely be the greatest and most wondrous success in actual deed with the hisgalus of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach shlita, immediately mamash – NOW!

profile

RONALD MCDONALD ON MIVTZAIM

By Gai Kantor

*"I am not a Chabadnik, but what can I do? Chabad comes out of my mouth. I have a Moshiach flag. I am waiting for him every day. It's something inside that is bigger than me." * Actor Shlomi Laniado tells of his unique style of spreading Chassidus in the world of theatre and media in Israel.*



A picture from the new CD, "Shlomi and Stam Prepare for the Geula"

When Shlomi Laniado was invited to appear at the Web Security Expo in Berlin, he had no reason to refuse, especially when he considered the pay – a few months in just four days. But when he contacted the organizers and they worked out the details, he found out that the expo started on Tuesday and ended on Friday evening at 10:00 which meant he was expected to appear on Shabbos.

Shlomi knew there were certain things you just didn't do. He explained that he doesn't work on Shabbos and he had to finish working in the afternoon so he would have time to get ready for Shabbos. The management of the expo wasn't exactly thrilled but Shlomi was told his condition was accepted. He was given permission to finish working early Friday afternoon which enabled him to get ready for Shabbos in a timely manner.

That's Shlomi for you. The night before we met I spoke to him on the phone and he told me that he was behind the scenes at a Maccabia event (a huge sporting venue in Israel) and in another few minutes he would be going on stage.

"Tonight is Rosh Chodesh Av and I plan on mentioning this when I speak," he told me. "There will be a lot of people tonight on stage but none of them will talk about Rosh Chodesh. I will be the one who speaks about it because it's important to me. It's important to me that thousands of young Jews from all over the world, who are participating in the event tonight, hear another Jewish concept."

The next day, I met Shlomi in a sports center in Petach Tikva. He had just finished a performance and workshop there for a camp with hundreds of children who are not religious.

"Do you know what I did here with them?" he asked rhetorically. "I

said p'sukim with them and give out CD's with the 12 p'sukim."

And no, this event wasn't organized by a shliach. It was an event that could have been empty of any Jewish message if someone else would have performed, but Shlomi is not just any other performer. He sees it as his privilege and responsibility to disseminate Jewish and Chassidic messages wherever he goes, it makes no difference where.

CHILDHOOD IN CHABAD SCHOOLS

Shlomi went to Chabad's preschool in Yerushalayim. Before he moved up to first grade, his parents consulted with a doctor friend of theirs about whether to register their son in a religious school or not to bother. The doctor said, "Listen, I am not religious, but I think that a bit of Jewish learning in the early years will help him later in life."

Shlomi was registered in a Chabad school in Ganim in Yerushalayim where he stayed through fifth grade. At that point his family moved to Karmiel where he went to a school that was not religious. The rest of his schooling was not religious but the chinuch he received in Chabad had a lasting effect "and the image of the Rebbe did not move from before my eyes at any time," as he puts it.

In the years to come he was particular about certain things, not because someone taught him; rather, it came from within. An incident from that time:

"My friends would go to parties on Friday night. I would leave the house and go around with them a little bit and when they got to the entrance to where the party was, I would say goodbye and go home."

In hindsight, he can point at this period in his life as a time when he was inspired to a very powerful feeling of Ahavas Yisroel which he feels till this day.

"Nobody appointed me as judge and I cannot judge anyone for what they don't do. I can only love people for what they *do* do. All along, even in my professional life as well as in my personal and spiritual life, I always looked to see the light, even if it was a very small light."

Around the age of 16 Shlomi ran into some difficulties. Some social problems and a little tension with his parents motivated him to talk to G-d. He got this idea from a line he once heard from his grandmother a"h when he saw her sitting at four in the morning in her home. When he asked what she was doing, she said she was praying.

"Praying?" he wondered aloud. "But you aren't holding a Siddur?"

He saw her sitting at four in the morning ... When he asked what she was doing, she said she was praying. ... "But you aren't holding a Siddur?" She laughed and replied, "Who needs a Siddur? Just talk. Hashem listens."

She laughed and replied, "Who needs a Siddur? Just talk. Hashem listens."

Now, when he felt the need to speak to G-d, he went up to the roof of the eight storey building where he lived and began to talk to Hashem at length, a three to four hour talk! This was a decisive period in his life.

"I asked Hashem for three things. Not only did I get what I wanted, He surprised me and I have gotten much more. Since then, Hashem is part of my personal code of behavior wherever I am. If talking explicitly about Judaism isn't possible, I manage to touch on it indirectly. Whether it's at a party full of frivolity for youth, or in the midst

of a conversation about business, I bring in Judaism."

ENTERING THE WORLD OF THEATER

"When I finished with the army I began directing birthday parties for children. At a certain point I was asked to act the part of a costume character for some travel agency. I would travel all over the country with a travel agent, get into the costume and perform. Then I found work with someone who made scenery.

"One night, I stayed to watch over the scenery of Chanoch Rosen (the biggest mime and producer in Israel) and he saw me and said,

"What do you know how to do?"

"I said, 'I know how to do everything others know, but better.'

"I realized I sounded arrogant and thought it wouldn't work in my favor but he said, 'Okay, I will do a piece and you'll do it after me.'

"I did it and he didn't say anything. When I finished he said, 'That's it, I need you.' He taught me his entire performance and I was Rosen's double. We are still in touch and he asked me for my help in his last performance.

"At that time I lived in a two and a half room apartment with my parents and sister. We were not well off financially and I had to shelve my plans to attend drama school. With the money that I earned from the

birthday parties, I would help out a little, buying something small for Shabbos, etc. As time went on I branched out and began appearing at bar mitzvas, weddings, and was invited to Shabbasos Chassan.

BACK TO A CONNECTION WITH CHABAD

Shlomi began working with Chabad houses that invited him to do performances and lead Lag B'Omer parades and children's rallies. The first time he worked with Chabad was in Ramat HaSharon. He recalls that event with a smile:

"It was a mini-Lag B'Omer-rally attended by the children of one gan. We brought a small grill and lit a fire in it at the Chabad house. I said the pasuk, 'Love Your Fellow Like Yourself,' just barely because this was Ramat HaSharon and in those days you couldn't get away with saying that.

"Today, the rallies in Ramat HaSharon are major events. Rabbi Yehuda Butman and Chabad Ramat HaSharon are major forces in the city. This Chabad house is warm, a place for the needy, it has a mikva, the nicest shul in Ramat HaSharon, and being Chabad is a big honor like being the mayor."

With time, Shlomi realized that the way he did things, his goals and the messages he conveys, matched perfectly with that of the typical Lubavitcher.

"I am always thinking about how to combine my artistic life with Chassidic-Chabad values. At first I didn't know to call it Chabad and Chassidic, even though I have Lubavitch roots, but over the years, when I met Chabad shluchim they said to me, 'Listen here my friend, you are a shliach of the Rebbe!' I would ask, 'How am I a shliach of the Rebbe?' They said, 'Are you happy? Yes. You love Judaism? Yes. You love every Jew? Definitely. You inspire people to simcha? Yes. So

you're a Chabadnik!' I said, 'Fine, I didn't plan it. It came out that way.'

"I am not a Chabadnik, but what can I do? Chabad ideas come out of my mouth. I am not a Chabadnik, but at every event you will see my Moshiach flag. I am not a Chabadnik but even though he tarries, I await him. I am not a Chabadnik but I am ready at any moment to be told: Onwards Shlomi, the Beis HaMikdash is here and you have to occupy the children. "If, despite the fact that I am not a Chabadnik, I speak Chassidus, then apparently it's something from within that is greater than me."

Shlomi sees his work as his life's shlichus. He feels a deep urge to convey more Jewish messages, to put more Jewish content into every possible place. In his picturesque, original way of putting it, he describes the thoughts he has that motivate him to work in this direction:

"At some point I asked myself: How can I convey this love, this simcha? I don't have much Torah, nor many mitzvos or good deeds, but I have love and joy and gratitude. I constantly see the goodness around me. I constant say that Hashem does miracles and I open my eyes and see them. I always recount these miracles and tell my friends, look – it's happening and it's possible.

"They say that when a person goes up to the Heavenly Court he is told: 'Hello, welcome to the Heavenly Court. Nu, tell us what you did.' And he will say, me? I am Shlomo ben Chaim Laniado, I learned Torah. 'Fine, but what did you do?' ... I don't understand the question. I learned Torah, isn't that good? They say, 'No. You learned for yourself. What did you do for others?' What will I say? That I had the opportunity to perform for kids and didn't speak to them about Judaism? That I had the ability to

put a smile on people's faces so they would be happy, and I didn't do so? That I could have said a d'var Torah at a rock event for youth but didn't?

"They will say, 'Listen here, we didn't expect you to be the tzaddik of the generation. We said, do what you want, but you didn't do as we wanted. Tell us, do you think this is all right?' I will be embarrassed and I will say, no, it's not all right, but it will be too late. "That is my fear, perhaps I was chosen to speak about Judaism, simply, genuinely, joyfully, and I didn't do enough. It will be pathetic if that was my role in this world and I didn't do it.

"You see me with a cap and not with a kippa. I look like anybody else and it all comes from something fundamental that is implanted deep within me. I am not ashamed before anyone and I am not afraid of anyone. I don't owe anyone anything. I do things with an understanding and out of love. You will be surprised to hear that I feel somewhat uncomfortable talking to you about this because it can look as though I am trying to ingratiate myself with you. I feel more comfortable talking about Judaism with someone whom I know doesn't fully identify.

"I'll tell you what I mean. I'm starting a project with Rabbi Ziv Katzbi in Ramat HaSharon. I said to him: Let's switch roles. You handle the social talk and I'll talk about Judaism. He said: That's better because no one would suspect that you are trying to make them into baalei t'shuva.

ELIJAHU HA'NAVI IN MCDONALDS

Shlomi travels all over Israel and the world and he has many interesting stories to tell.

"I collect all these stories and each story encourages me to look for the next story. I'm always collecting stories."

The following story illustrates his efforts to bring a Jewish message wherever he goes.

"On television there is a children's channel which is the most viewed by children in Israel. Every year, in the summer, they have a project in which they 'go off studio' and travel throughout the country. I emceed that segment for ten years.

"I once went to the broadcast with a star of the children's channel, Oded Menashe. During the ride I spoke to him about Hashem giving a person free choice between good and evil and we are supposed to choose life. Life is good and you have to believe in good. Afterwards, he opened the live show and said, 'And choose life!' The staff asked him afterwards what that was about and he said, 'I don't know. Shlomi confused me. The pasuk stayed in my head from our ride together.'"

Throughout my conversation with Shlomi, he had plenty to say. I almost didn't have to ask him anything since he volunteered stories as well as his thoughts about different topics. He had plenty to say after I asked him:

The Rebbe said that we are already in Geula times and we have the hisgalus of Moshiach. How do you see this?

Very simple. I'll preface it with a few thoughts and you will understand how I see Geula today. There is a famous chain of restaurants called McDonalds with thousands of branches around the world. In every country, McDonalds has an actor called Ronald McDonald who is a clown and is the symbol of the company.

15 years ago, I heard that there was going to be an audition for the role of Ronald McDonald. I went and there were a lot of people, so I submitted a video of myself and left. Two weeks later I got a phone call from Chicago. They told me they would be coming from Chicago to



Performing before Shavuot at the Chabad house in Ramat HaSharon

It is 15 years now and McDonalds in Israel has not had a performance on Shabbos. Why? Because their clown doesn't work on Shabbos. When I started working for them I knew they sold meat and milk together. I said to them, "Do you think it will ever be kosher?" They said, "Huh?!" Today, over half of their sixty branches in Israel are kosher.

Israel in order to see me for a tryout. They said I should show up with a funny performance.

On the day of the meeting I walked in with a big suitcase. I said, "Hello, Shalom, I am Shlomi Laniado," and then I dropped the suitcase and it popped open. Inside there was a cucumber, socks, a cabbage, and other items that fell all over the place. I put on a serious look and said, "Sorry, sorry."

That broke the ice and everyone was laughing and laughing as I began picking up my things. They said, "Listen, we want you to be the McDonalds clown. We want you to

go to Paris to study."

"Great," I told them, "no problem except for one thing – I can't work on Saturday."

I saw their shocked faces and they began consulting amongst themselves. One of them said to me, "What's the problem, money? We'll pay you well." But I explained that it was a matter of principle. In the end they said, "Okay, we will send you and see what will happen."

I flew abroad and went through their training at a cost to them of \$25,000 and learned make-up and lots of other things. I enjoyed it. They treated me very well, arranged

a kosher hotel and everything was fine. I returned to Israel and then I was told that there was going to be a big event on Shabbos when they opened a branch in the Ramat Gan mall, and I had to appear there. I said, "Sorry, but I can't perform on Shabbos." They said, "You can't appear on Saturday? Fine, so perform Saturday night."

It is 15 years now and McDonalds in Israel has not had a performance on Shabbos. Why? Because their clown doesn't work on Shabbos. When I started working for them I knew they sold meat and milk together. I said to them, "Do you think it will ever be kosher?" They said, "Huh?!" Today, over half of their sixty branches in Israel are kosher. Every day more kosher branches open up. McDonalds had a kosher restaurant on Rechov Rothschild in Tel Aviv (that moved now to Beer Sheva) which gives 300-400 meals away for free! A McDonalds gemach.

I perform in all the hospitals in Israel twice a month, representing McDonalds, giving out gifts, toys, and games. We recently opened a waiting room for the children's ICU in Tel HaShomer hospital. There was a festive opening and I told a story about Eliyahu HaNavi. Yes, Ronald McDonald told a story about Eliyahu HaNavi. Many times, I go to the hospital and see frum people. They don't expect more than a toy and are very surprised when I tell them a halacha or something from the parsha.

Every actor who works for McDonalds for ten years receives a commemorative cup. After ten years I got a cup and do you know what it said on it? "Turn away from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it." Don't you find that fascinating, that on a McDonalds award cup they put a pasuk from Tanach?

Do you realize what's going on here? An international chain of

restaurants finances chesed projects and has dozens of kosher branches and doesn't have performances on Shabbos! I am not coming here to be McDonalds defending angel. I'm just telling you about this so you can understand how you can see Geula.

In the course of my work I went to a competition, three years ago, in Las Vegas. It was between all McDonalds' clowns from around the world, 570 of them. The competition is attended by producers, comics and actors and there are various workshops like a media workshop by CNN, a magic workshop given by a student of David Copperfield (greatest magician in the world). It's a very professional event. Hashem helped me reach the finals and I was one of the five best in the world.

During the competition I had plenty of free time since I did not attend the meals. The meals there were lavish, but as a Jew I could not partake of them. People sat there for hours while I used the time to expand my knowledge. I found three amazing Jews who live in the US who, in conversations with me, were moved to tears.

Chassidus says there is a spark within every Jew and you just have to reach it. Well, I've seen it! Whenever I speak to a Jew, boruch Hashem, he doesn't remain apathetic. He wakes up and remembers his origins and regrets his assimilation.

When the competition was over I returned to Israel via New York and I stayed in New York for a week. I visited 770 for several hours and davened there. I experienced amazing hashgacha pratis there and I was very moved.

SHLOMI AND STAM

The highlight of your work in spreading Judaism and Chassidus through plays and movies is the project "Shlomi and Stam." How

did it begin?

It began with a different CD called "Dalik and Stam." The actor who played Stam is Yehoshua Sagi. He urged me to get to know the Noam family in Kfar Chabad. I went to meet the Noam family, Chaim and Rochel, who produced "Dalik and Stam." We sat down to talk and by the end of the conversation we had decided that I would do a show. I called it "Shlomi and Stam Love the World," and it's about Creation. We had an empty blue screen and little by little, with the children, we made a sun, moon, stars, everything according to the Beria. It was really nice and we performed it twelve times around the country.

Then we did "The Pesach Clock," a movie that describes the preparations for Pesach in a fun, experiential way while instilling Jewish and Chassidic messages. This was translated afterwards into German and has been shown for three years now to hundreds of children in Switzerland and Germany.

Now we are about to produce "Shlomi and Stam Prepare for the Geula." It started when I got a request from Rochel Noam to write a script about Geula. I put in a lot of time but was unsuccessful. The other people I turned to were also unsuccessful. Then one night, with Hashem's help and the Rebbe's help I wrote a script.

The next day I called Mrs. Noam and we began to move on it. It took seven months to prepare the animation since it was very complicated – 3D of the Mikdash along with photography, editing and music. Due to the subject matter, we needed someone knowledgeable to review it. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Ginsberg reviewed all the material and we also consulted with experts on the topic of the Mikdash.

The movie, 35 minutes long, will be ready any week now and will be

on the Internet. It will also be on CD's that will be sold for a token price and will include additional features like skits and songs.

Another big thing we are about to do is make a new Internet site called "the Simcha Site," which will have movies about Judaism for children starring Shlomi and Stam. The movies that will be coming out in the future (aside from the movie about Geula and the Mikdash) are about Rashi, a scribe, and "Shlomi and Stam at Beis HaRebbi – 770." As part of the project there will also be an open studio where artists will be hosted and talk about and perform Jewish topics.

The one who wrote the music for Shlomi and Stam is Asaf Nagel from the Nagel trio. We did a movie with him where we meet him walking around a park and singing. We ask him: How do you make such nice music?

He says: With simcha.

We named the site, "The Simcha Site" which is also the name of my grandmother. Thanks to her I had that fateful conversation with G-d.

Shlomi and Stam prepare for Geula with a great desire to see it actually, with the desire to convey to all Jewish children that the inyan of Geula doesn't belong to a particular group. It's a topic that belongs to all Jews. One of the 12 p'sukim is, "Torah tziva..." A Jew, even if he really wants to, can't fulfill the entire Torah because there are many mitzvos that don't apply to him. But if you are a part of "K'hillas Yaakov," and you have the awareness of the mutual responsibility among us, then you are a partner to the fulfillment of all the mitzvos. I think this is very important for hastening the Geula. A smile, greeting people warmly, love for every Jew without referring to his actions, all this will make the Geula come quicker.

Believe me, I can't wait to see the



Shlomi and Stam at a birthday party

If we now we have gatherings with thousands of children filling up the Heichal Tarbut – then it is clear that Moshiach is here and we are in the Geula and in a few moments we will build the Beis HaMikdash and go up to Yerushalayim.

sight of the light emanating from the windows of the Beis HaMikdash and lighting up the world, and going on aliya la'regel. That's why I consider these things so important.

As for Shlomi's many appearances for Chabad:

I think that the place that deserves the most admiration is Kfar Saba. We reached over 10,000 children! That was two years ago and there was a big rally with the star, Yuval HaMevulbal (comic play on the name Yuval, meaning "the confused") who is considered *the* Israeli children's star. Yuval HaMebulbal also happens to be one of my protégées and I even wrote

some of his songs. He likes to perform the song I wrote about Ahavas Yisroel. I felt really good about that, about Judaism getting on TV, theater and shows. There are plans for other p'sukim songs in the works as well.

Shlomi considers himself a shliach to spread Judaism not only on television programs and performances but also among the artists themselves:

The day before Yom Kippur I did a Leil Slichos for artists at the home of a friend and we invited about twenty people. In the end, seventy people came, because guests brought their friends and colleagues. There

were refreshments and we said the Slichos and spoke about Judaism. It was a joyous affair.

At the end of the evening, the manager of a famous publishing house came over to me and said, "I never fasted on Yom Kippur and I won't fast this year either, but for the first time in my life I won't be watching movies and listening to music; like you said tonight, I will sit and think."

I said to him, "I love you." The evening was worth it just for him.

When we see the results of our outreach, we are excited and energized. Before Pesach I got an email which said: Hello, I am the mother of a little girl and we've never before done the Pesach customs. We saw your show, "Shlomi and Stam" and decided to enjoy the experience we saw acted out on stage, and for the first time we plan on doing the Pesach customs."

It's such a great feeling to know that I got this woman to celebrate

Pesach and that man to sit and think on Yom Kippur instead of watching movies. And these are the stories we know about. Imagine how many stories like these we don't know about ...

DO A LITTLE MORE

What do you have to say in conclusion?

It's very simple. If the biggest children's star took a pasuk from the 12 p'sukim and it got on television, the theater and DVD; if McDonalds which sells meat and cheese all over the world has dozens of kosher branches in Israel; if I make an Erev Slichos and invite twenty people and seventy people show up and enjoy it; if I stand on the stage at an irreligious event and still say the p'sukim and give out a CD with the p'sukim and I talk about the Three Weeks and people accept it with love and nobody tells me to be quiet; if we made the first rally with one gan and now we have gatherings with

thousands of children filling up the Heichal Tarbut – then it is clear that Moshiach is here and we are in the Geula and in a few moments we will build the Beis HaMikdash and go up to Yerushalayim.

I once performed at a rally that was emceed by a Lubavitcher. I quietly said to him, "I am going somewhere for a few days and I have a question – If I were to tell the Rebbe now, 'I am an actor, what do you think I need to do?' what do you think the Rebbe would say to me?"

He looked at me and said, "Shlomi, the Rebbe would tell you: do a little more." That is what I ask of everyone today. You know things that others don't know. Do a little more for them so they will know too and this involvement will lead speedily to the Geula.

Do a little more!

(I thank Menachem Mendel Akselrod for helping me with this article – G.K.)

Notes:

- Deuteronomy 16:18.
 - Seifer HaMitzvos, positive commandment 177; Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Sanhedrin 1:1.
 - Sifsei Kohen to Deuteronomy, loc. cit.; Or HaTorah, Shoftim, p. 822.
 - See Tanya, ch. 9, et al.
 - Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabba, ch. 11.
 - Similarly, within one's own personality, there are times when a person must enforce the law, even when it runs contrary to his natural tendencies and/or his understanding.
 - This indicates that there is no independent purpose to having officers, the object is merely to supplement the judges' power.
- The officers are given "a rod and a lash" to enforce the rulings the judges deliver. As such, the appointment of officers is not counted as an individual mitzvah in the reckoning of 613 mitzvos.
- Instead, it is included as part of the mitzvah to appoint judges.
- Isaiah 1:26. A similar expression is used in the weekday prayers (Siddur T'hillas Hashem, p. 55): "Return our judges as in former times, and

our advisers as at the beginning."

Significantly, in neither of these sources is reference made to officers. In that era, "the spirit of evil will be removed from the earth (Zechariah 13:2)," and there will be no need to compel people to accept the Torah's laws. Even in that era, however, the gentle encouragement provided by advisers will serve a purpose.

9. Malachi 3:22.

10. I Samuel 3:20. In his Introduction to the Commentary on the Mishna, the Rambam also mentions a third function of the prophets: to convey commandments from G-d relevant to the immediate situation of the time: e.g., Elisha's command to Yehoram not to slay the soldiers of Aram he brought to Shomron (II Kings 6:22), or the command for the Jews not to return to Eretz Yisroel until the conclusion of the seventy years of the Babylonian exile (Jeremiah 29:4-10).

11. Deuteronomy 17:9 (in the continuation of our Torah reading). In this vein, the Torah commandment [Deuteronomy 18:15 (also in the continuation of our Torah reading)]: "G-d will set up for you a prophet from your midst, from your brothers, like me, and you shall hearken to him," must be understood as applying to the particular directives a prophet conveys and not to the determination of Torah law.

12. Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 7:1.

13. Yoma 9b.

14. Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah, ch. 7-10.

15. A discussion of the potential for prophecy in the present era is also found in Shaar HaKedusha (authored by Rav Chayim Vital), sec. 3, ch. 7, and Rav Reuven Margolios in his introduction to Responsa From Heaven.

16. Note the Rambam's statements in Igeres Teiman that "as a preparatory step for Moshiach's coming... prophecy will return to Israel."

17. See also the Rambam's Commentary to the Mishna (Sanhedrin 1:3) which states that the prophecy of this verse will be fulfilled in the era immediately before Moshiach's coming, even before the Era of the Redemption.

18. As they will be in the person of Moshiach who will be "a great prophet, approaching the level of Moshe" (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos T'shuva 9:2) and also the supreme teacher of Torah law, teaching even Moshe and the forefathers (Tanchuma, Toldos sec. 14; Seifer HaMaamarim 5730, p. 210).

19. And the N'siim have also served as "advisers" providing counsel with regard to both spiritual and material concerns.

20. Sichos Simchas Torah, 5689.