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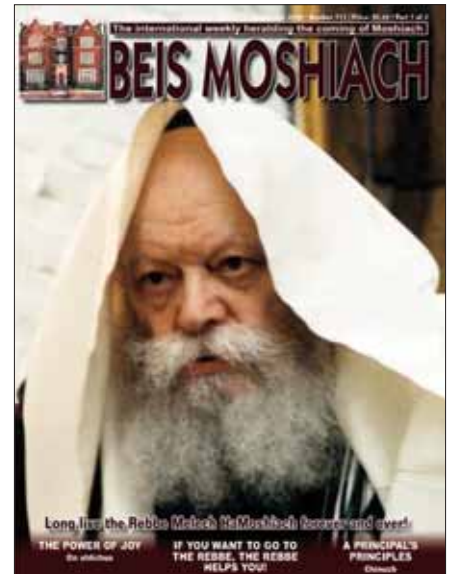
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# STANDING BEFORE G-D

Sichos In English

## WHO BLESSES THE NEW MONTH?

In explanation of the custom why the traditional blessing for the new month is not recited on the Shabbos before the month of Tishrei, the Alter Rebbe relates: [1]

When I was in Mezritch, I heard the following teaching from my master, the Maggid, in the name of his master, the Baal Shem Tov:

"The seventh month is the first of the months of the year [to come]. [In contrast to the other months,] the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, blesses this month on... the last Shabbos of the month of Elul. And with the strength [imparted by this blessing], the Jews bless the eleven [coming] months.

It is written: [2] Atem nitzavim ha'yom, "You are standing today."

"Today" refers to the day of Rosh HaShana, the day of judgment [3].... "You are standing," triumphant in the judgment.

On the Shabbos before Rosh HaShana, we read the portion Atem Nitzavim. This is the blessing of the Holy One, blessed be He, on the Shabbos on which the seventh month is blessed. It is a month which is satiated - and which satiates all of Israel - with

manifold goodness for the entire [coming] year."

## WITH UNWAVERING STRENGTH

More particularly, the word nitzavim - the core of the blessing given by G-d - does not mean merely "standing."

It implies standing with unique power and strength, as reflected in the phrase: [4] "nitzav melech, the deputy serving as king," i.e., G-d's blessing is that our stature will reflect the strength and confidence possessed by a king's deputy.

This blessing enables us to proceed through the new year with unflinching power.

None of the challenges which we face will budge us from our fundamental commitment to the Torah and its mitzvos. On the contrary, we will continue "to proceed from strength to strength" [5] in our endeavor to spread G-dly light throughout the world.

What is the source for this strength?

Immutable permanence is a Divine quality.

As the prophet proclaims: [6] "I, G-d, have not changed," and our Rabbis explain that one of the fundamental constructs of faith is that the Creator is unchanging; [7] nothing in our world can

affect a transition on His part.

Nevertheless, G-d has also granted the potential for His unchanging firmness to be reflected in the conduct of a mortal being, for the soul which every person is granted is "an actual part of G-d." [8]

This inner G-dly core endows every person with insurmountable resources of strength to continue his Divine service.

## TO MAINTAIN THE CONNECTION

Our Torah reading continues, stating [2] that the Jews are "standing today before G-d" for a purpose: "To be brought into a covenant with G-d." [9]

What is the intent of a covenant?

When two people feel a powerful attraction to each other, but realize that with the passage of time, that attraction could wane, they establish a covenant.

The covenant maintains their connection, even at times when, on a conscious level, there could be reasons for distance and separation. [10]

Each year, on Rosh HaShana, the covenant between G-d and the Jewish people is renewed.

For on Rosh HaShana, the essential G-dly core which every person possesses rises to the forefront of his consciousness.

The fundamental bond between G-d and mankind surfaces, and on this basis a covenant is established for the entire year to come, [11] including the inevitable occasions when these feelings of oneness will not be experienced as powerfully.

## ONENESS THAT IS NOT INSULAR

The Torah states [2] that this covenant is being established by "all of you," and proceeds to

mention ten [12] different groupings within the Jewish people.

The establishment of a bond of oneness with G-d is also mirrored by bonds of oneness within our people.

For the same spiritual potential that motivates our essential connection to G-d also evokes an internal unity which binds together our entire people. [13]

In our prayers, we say: [14] "Bless us, our Father all as one." Implied is that standing together as one generates a climate fit for blessing. [15]

May our standing "before G-d as one" on Rosh HaShana, lead to a year of blessing for all mankind, in material and spiritual matters, including the ultimate blessing, the coming of Moshiach.

*Adapted from: Likkutei Sichos, Vol. II, p. 98ff; Vol. XIX, p. 173ff*

#### Notes:

1. HaYom Yom, entry 25th of Elul.

2. Deuteronomy 29:9.

3. See the Targum to Iyov 2:1.

4. I Kings 22:48. See Or HaTorah, Nitzavim, p. 1202.

5. Cf. Psalms 84:8. Herein lies a connection to Parshas VaYeilech, the Torah reading which follows Parshas Nitzavim and which is often coupled together with this reading on a single Shabbos. This connection is highlighted in the subsequent essay in this series.

6. Malachi 3:6.

7. See Rambam, Guide to the Perplexed, Vol. I, ch. 68, et al.

8. Tanya, ch. 2. The word nitzavim employs a passive form; literally, it would be translated as "you have been made to stand." For the potential for a mortal to possess such unchanging firmness is not his alone, but rather granted to him from Above, by virtue of his essential G-dly nature.

9. Deuteronomy 29:11.

10. This is possible, because a

covenant establishes a connection that transcends intellect. Even when on a conscious level, one would sever the relationship, the covenant causes it to continue.

11. See the essay entitled "At One with the King" (Timeless Patterns in Time, Vol. I, p. 3ff) which discusses this theme.

12. Ten groupings are mentioned, because ten is an inclusive number. As such, once a minyan (quorum) of ten is established, the addition of other people to a congregation is insignificant with regard to the laws of prayer.

13. See the essay entitled "At One with G-d; At One with our Fellow Man" (Timeless Patterns in Time, Vol. I p. 8ff) which discusses this theme.

14. The conclusion of the Shmoneh Esrei prayer, Siddur T'hillas Hashem, p. 60.

15. See Seifer HaSichos 5700, p. 157.



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# IF YOU WANT TO GO TO THE REBBE, THE REBBE HELPS YOU!

As heard by Nosson Avrohom

It was at the end of the 70's and the Chassid R' Avrohom Dunin of the Taanachim felt a yearning as the month of Tishrei approached. Memories of the Rebbe overcame him and intensified his feelings of hiskashrus and love for the Rebbe.

Like every year, he and the other teachers in the Chabad school in Chevel Taanach began the logistical and organizational preparations for the trip on Chol HaMoed Sukkos. They greatly wished to be with the Rebbe for Rosh HaShana and experience the awe-inspiring moments of the t'kios, and to see the Rebbe on Yom Kippur, but due to their work in the field of chinuch, they had to suffice with Sukkos and Simchas Torah.

In those days, a flight to the Rebbe wasn't as it is today. In addition to the high cost and the complicated procedure, the teachers had to get the approval of the Ministry of Education for which they worked, as well as the army. Acquiring these permits took a long time, so the planning for the trip had to begin well in advance. This afforded them ample opportunity to make the necessary spiritual preparations.



**R' Avrohom Dunin**

Then one year he decided that, come what may, despite his paltry salary, he was going to take his family along - not just his wife, but his three daughters too. He wanted them all to have the elevating experience of Yom Tov with the Rebbe. It helped that his three girls were of an age that entitled them to great discounts on the airline. He resolved to do what he could to raise the money, borrowing if necessary.

"That year, Yom Kippur was on a Thursday. Despite all my efforts, I still hadn't gotten the entire sum I needed - less than half, to be precise. Nevertheless, Friday afternoon I told the travel agent that I would buy five tickets and even promised that on Sunday, when I would arrive at the airport, I would meet him and pay him the full amount for the tickets.

"You have to understand that in addition to the high cost of the tickets, getting a loan back then was complicated. Even people who had money weren't thrilled to lend it. It was going l'chat'chilla aribber on my part, to do what I did, but thoughts of being with the Rebbe motivated me to do it. I hoped that the Rebbe would help and it was with this confidence that I went into Shabbos.

"Who could guarantee that I would come up with the money I needed? I didn't know but I hoped for the best. Throughout Shabbos I kept wondering - what will I do? I promised to pay and I don't have the money! On the one hand, I'm not willing to cancel the tickets. Who knows when I'll have another opportunity to fly with my family? On the other hand, I can desire to go all I want, but I need the money!



"There was no way, practically speaking, that we had a chance. All my attempts to raise the money from friends did not get me the full amount. Yet I was still hopeful that we could spend Sukkos in 770.

"The miracle happened in an unexpected way, and so easily and quickly that in my rosiest dreams I couldn't have come up with this scenario. On Motzaei Shabbos I spoke with a friend about the situation, how I didn't have the money but I really wanted the family to go to the Rebbe. What should I do? I didn't expect him to be able to help me, I was just sharing my dilemma with him.

"There was a moment of silence and then he told me about someone he knew who was well-to-do and he suggested that I approach him.

"That same night I went to the man and told him about the importance of going to the Rebbe and the problem I had. To my surprise, the man was very moved and he asked me how much I needed. I told him the full amount and was amazed when he pulled out his wallet and gave me the entire sum as a loan on easy terms. I

***Despite all my efforts, I still hadn't gotten the entire sum I needed - less than half, to be precise. Nevertheless, I told the travel agent that I would buy five tickets and even promised that on Sunday, when I would arrive at the airport, I would meet him and pay him the full amount for the tickets.***

thanked him heartily and rejoiced over my good fortune.

"I spent many Tishreis with the Rebbe but that year was one of the most special times. I felt that the Rebbe was very pleased that we had come. Remember that it was very rare for entire families to travel, especially with little children, unlike how common it is today. We were quite unusual. One morning, as we stood on the steps to the entrance to 770 while the Rebbe passed by, the Rebbe stopped and waved at one of the girls. It was a really intense experience.

"There were many other occasions that we felt the Rebbe's great appreciation that we came. When we went in for yechidus, the Rebbe welcomed us with a radiant face. The Rebbe asked the girls whether they lit Shabbos candles and when they nodded yes, he smiled and handed them coins for tz'daka.

"Since that year, we have gone to 770 many times, but we, including the children who have since grown up and become shluchos themselves, feel that that year was the most special of all."

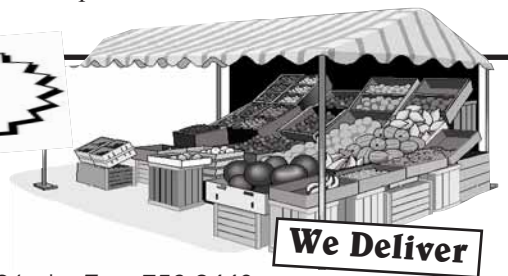
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# THE KING'S 'FLORENTINE'

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

*Tel Aviv's Florentine neighborhood had once been rich in Jewish lifestyle, yet today, the synagogues stand desolate. During the past four years, a slow but solid revolution has taken place in the neighborhood's Jewish life in the merit of a dynamic young shluchim couple: Rabbi Nir Gavriel, and his wife, Michal. This is the story of their activities, a variety of accompanying miracle stories, amazing instances of Divine Providence, and wondrous answers in "Igros Kodesh."*

Remnants of floor tiles, shutters, bricks, carpets, and scaffolding cover the neighborhood houses from every direction. Piles of garbage are strewn everywhere. This is the picture presented by the legendary Florentine neighborhood in Tel Aviv, which is presently in the midst of a swift process of change and renewal. Founded among long rows of orchards at the end of the 1920's by the Florentine family of Salonika, Greece, the neighborhood underwent a major facelift in recent years after the Tel Aviv municipality

declared its regional urban renewal project. While the Florentine urban renewal project was gradually stopped towards the end of the nineties, private initiatives continue. These include the renovation of old buildings, new home construction with orientation for younger residents, the opening of coffee houses, recreation facilities, galleries, workshops for young artists, and designer stores alongside the older industries of clothes and furniture. The cost of purchasing and renting housing units is relatively lower than

in other more established Tel Aviv neighborhoods, and this draws many young people and "bon vivants" to live near the older population. Florentine is located in southern Tel Aviv, near the city limits of Yaffo.

A casual stroll through the neighborhood shows houses with small porches that give you an idea about the type of people residing in the community. Among the passers-by, you can see a varied and colorful cross-section of the population. Most are young people, sporting tank tops and dreadlocks. You can





also find, here and there, remnants of the previous generation, representative of the area's senior community. The neighborhood is set among alcoves and stores with a variety of craftsmen, including carpenters, merchants, and upholsterers.

Four years ago, Rabbi Nir Gavriel and his wife Michal appeared on the scene. Their outreach activities have been blossoming in the heart of this neighborhood ever since.

Rabbi Gavriel's vigor is well-



Rabbi Nir Gavriel standing in front of the shul's aron kodesh

known throughout the community and among the growing circle of friends and supporters that he has managed to gather around him over the years. He operates in two different frameworks of activities in order to reach people from all walks of life. "There's a very interesting nature to the activities in this neighborhood," he said at the very beginning of the interview. "There are many young people living here who returned from journeys in the East and South America, most of whom are musicians, artists, screenwriters, and producers — young people who are awake more at night than during the day. Alongside them there are also homeless single mothers and other individuals in distress."

The activities are designed for all neighborhood residents. "We regularly invite the homeless, the destitute, and senior citizens to Shabbos and holiday meals, prayer services, and Torah classes. They frequently participate in the farbrengens that we hold in the synagogue on Shabbosim, and their

colorful nature specifically contributes to the overall atmosphere. We work with the younger population through a wide selection of weekly classes on a variety of subjects in Judaism and chassidus, and many farbrengens 'plus barbecue' that we hold until the wee hours of the morning, along with other simple get-togethers that almost always develop into discussions about the essence of the Creation and our task in this world."

Rabbi Gavriel runs two Chabad centers. The first operates around the clock, and is located in the center of the neighborhood under the name "*Palterin Shel Melech*" (Palace of the King), offering the sale of holy s'farim, Torah classes, gatherings, and provides the opportunity to write to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. Many people come in a daily basis to have a cup of coffee and read some books on chassidus. The second center is the "synagogue", a splendid locale where many people come for prayer services throughout the year. It also hosts farbrengens on Shabbos, both



***“He told me how there are several big shuls there that had adorned the neighborhood in the past, which today stood desolate. He then suggested that I try and breathe a little fresh air into one of them...”***

at night and in the daytime. “The number of congregants at the synagogue continues to grow. On a recent Shabbos, we all sat together, filling three long tables.”

Rabbi Gavriel’s arrival in Florentine was the result of some marvelous instances of Divine Providence. “For the first four years after getting married, we lived in the Chabad community of Tzfas, a warm and united community with a wonderful atmosphere that staggers the imagination. While we easily could have continued to live there for many years to come, nevertheless, there burned within us the desire to go out on shlichus. When I consulted with the mashpia Rabbi Ofer Meidovnik, he suggested the Florentine neighborhood.

“To this day, I don’t understand where he got such an idea, but he told me how there are several big shuls there that had adorned the neighborhood in the past, which today stood desolate. He then suggested that I try and breathe a little fresh air into one of them. I took his advice seriously and I initiated a feverish search until I came to the synagogue of the Bukharian community that had been shut under lock and key for several years. I asked local merchants and other residents who lived in close proximity to the shul, and they directed me to the Jew who held the keys. When he heard that I was a Chabadnik, he was delighted to help out.

“All that was left was for me to

write to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, and receive his consent. This was almost four years ago, during Chol HaMoed Sukkos. A wave of great emotion engulfed me before writing the letter. I knew that an answer from the Rebbe, one way or the other, would determine my shlichus in life. I made the necessary preparations prior to writing the letter, but even these preparations did not prepare me sufficiently for the clear answer that I received. To this day, I can’t help but get excited over it:

**To the gabbaim and worshippers of the Merkaz Chabad Synagogue, Tel Aviv**

**may G-d grant them life**

**Greetings and Blessing!**

**I was sorry to hear that not only is there not a minyan for public prayers in their synagogue every day, but on certain days, the synagogue is even closed completely.**

**It is surely superfluous to note that if synagogues and battei midrash have at all times and in all places been “a small sanctuary” from where Torah emits to the entire surroundings, then it surely must apply to an even greater extent in our times, and particularly in our Holy Land, may it be rebuilt and re-established through Moshiach Tzidkeinu, upon which are the eyes of Hashem, your G-d, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.**

**And in these days of the month of Shvat, during which comes the**

hilula of our nasi, my revered teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe, of blessed and righteous memory, his soul rests in the hidden treasures of Heaven, may his merit protect us, the preceding and subsequent Shabbos are an auspicious time and appropriate days for strengthening oneself and finding suitable ways to rectify the aforementioned in a manner that from now on, the synagogue and beis midrash will be open every day and every night, a place of prayer and Torah, Torah in public, in the revealed Torah and the teachings of chassidus.

Furthermore, there is the known tradition of the Alter Rebbe, *Baal HaTanya* (authority in the hidden teachings of Torah) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (authority in the revealed teachings of Torah), that “due to the self-sacrifice for the teachings of chassidus, they ruled in the Heavenly Court that in all matters of Torah, yiras Shamayim, and good middos, those connected to it and who walk in its path will prevail” (*Kitzurim V’He’aros L’Seifer Likkutei Amarim*, end of pg. 122).

**With a blessing for success in the aforementioned matter, a “small sanctuary”, and in their holy activities in general.**

**Awaiting good tidings.**

“I read the letter again and again, and trembled with overwhelming emotion. After such an answer, you ask no questions. We packed all our bags, and moved to in the Florentine neighborhood. For me, this letter was a source of strength in all matters of shlichus. I went back to that Jew and took the keys to the synagogue, and we started to renovate, clean, and furnish the location in a befitting manner.

“We started on our journey as a young couple without any assistance or close supporters. We had barely a handful of people whom we managed to convince to come and



daven in the shul. Today, every prayer service is host to a large minyan, on weekdays and Shabbosim alike. Many local merchants have been fueled with a new burst of vitality to return to the honored traditions of their younger days. There are numerous baalei t'shuva who have jumped upon the place like a vast treasure, and help us a great deal. There are already many young people whom we have sent to Chabad yeshivos, and even two couples who have married in the synagogue. In effect, what is happening in the synagogue is a truly magnificent restoration of the crown of His glory in the merit of the Rebbe's bracha.

"At a certain point, we decided that despite the great success that the synagogue had brought to our activities, it no longer suited our needs adequately in reaching the younger population, the future generation. I felt that its location on the outskirts of the neighborhood prevented me from reaching the center of town and its people. Ever since our arrival in the neighborhood, I knew that we had to open another Chabad facility in the center of the neighborhood. My aspiration was something of a pleasant dream, because anyone familiar with the neighborhood knows that all vacated sites quickly turn into boutiques and high-end stores, not to mention the exorbitant rent.

"Thus, a year after our arrival in Florentine, I found myself looking for an appropriate location to hold the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen. I looked along the central neighborhood walkway, but I couldn't find anything. I continued my search, pondering over my available options, when suddenly, like a bolt out of the blue, a Jew walked up to me and asked what I was looking for. I told him, and without wasting a moment, he said, 'I have two upholstery workshops in



Mr. Yossi Franco, one of the shul's gabbaim

***A wave of great emotion engulfed me before writing the letter. I knew that an answer from the Rebbe, one way or the other, would determine my shlichus in life.***

the middle of this street. Go clean them up, and you can make a farbrengen for men in the first one, and for women in the other...' I stood there stunned and overwhelmed. I thanked him profusely and immediately got to work cleaning the two places. I felt that this was a classic example where if you open the eye of a small needle, G-d will provide an opening the size of a large hall.

"The farbrengen was a big success. At least one hundred people attended, and the event continued well into the night. The next day, I approached this benefactor and told him that I must rent the place from him. He agreed and told me his asking price for the rent. I wrote to

the Rebbe about the situation and how I don't have a source for the necessary funds. The Rebbe's answer dealt with the importance of the day of Yud-Tes Kislev, from which we derive strength for the entire year...

"When I read the reply, I was ecstatic. I immediately called the man back and signed the contract. A few days later, someone put me in touch with an affluent Jew who was already en route to his home in Budapest. I gathered my courage, told him that I had heard that he was a generous person, and asked for his financial assistance to rent this property. At first, he asked me to call him back in a few days. However, as incredible as it sounds,

***It was right before Lag B'Omer, and we had decided that we would do something small that day in order to limit the cost of the event. Hesitantly, I wrote to the Rebbe on the matter. The reply read: "He thinks that he's in a transit camp, but in truth, he's in 'the palace of the king.'"***

he called me back less than two hours later, as he was standing at the entrance to the airplane, and told me that he had thought about it and would be happy to cover the rent expense..."

The main Chabad activities in the neighborhood take place in the facility called "*Palterin Shel Melech*" (Palace of the King).

**Where did this name come from?**

This, too, came via a clear answer from the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. "In the first year of our activities," said Rabbi Nir Gavriel, "we had a serious budgetary problem. We had only recently arrived in the neighborhood, didn't know that many people, and lacked the funds necessary to cover our expenses. It was right before Lag B'Omer, and we had decided that we would do something small that day in order to limit the cost of the event. Hesitantly, I wrote to the Rebbe on the matter. The reply read: "He thinks that he's in a transit camp, but in truth, he's in 'the palace of the king'."

"Naturally, after such a clear answer, the event that took place was totally different from what we had originally planned. We invested heavily in the program and dedicated ourselves fully to planning and publicity. Many people came to participate. Since then, the term 'Palterin' has replaced 'Florentine',

and therefore, the activity center is called by this name. The center bustles with activities from morning until evening, sometimes twenty-four hours a day! Many young people come to pour their hearts out, seek advice, ask questions, and reflect. Numerous Torah classes and discussions continue one after another on the premises – all in a pleasant, almost magical atmosphere.

"Recently, there was a very moving story," said Rabbi Gavriel, as he pulled from his memory one episode among many. "We suggested to one of the young people that he roll up his sleeve and put on t'fillin. He looked like a Yemenite Jew, and we were quite surprised when he said that he was an Arab. By Divine Providence, there was another worker there with me, and he said stubbornly, 'That can't be – you have a Jewish face!' He asked him if perhaps his mother was Jewish or if someone else in his family was Jewish.

"I was stunned when he said that his mother was in fact not Jewish, but his maternal grandmother was a Jew... He lived in Yafo, and there was much intermarriage in those days *r"l* with Jewish émigrés from North Africa who were enticed by Arab promises during courtship. We explained to him that he really was a Jew in every respect. This startling discovery made his hands shake. He

was certain that we were kidding him. Later, he agreed to roll up his sleeve and put on t'fillin, as his eyes filled with tears. It was an experience that was both stirring and awe-inspiring.

"When he finished and removed the t'fillin straps, he told us that every Friday night, he would go out with his Arab friends and engage in wild behavior. Yet, when he would pass by a shul, he would stop and listen with sheer rapture to the Shabbos melodies and songs, to the scorn and derision of his friends. He had never understood why, but now it was all clear to him."

The farbrengens at "*Palterin Shel Melech*" have a special pleasantness to them, unique to Chabad. It's not everywhere that you can see Jews from a wide spectrum of backgrounds and opinions sitting around one table, conversing and sharing viewpoints. Anyone who has participated in these farbrengens never misses another one. On more than one occasion, they are highlighted by some thrilling and exciting stories. It stands to reason that the following story is one that Rabbi Nir Gavriel will probably never forget:

"Once, during a farbrengen, someone entered who appeared, to put it mildly, to be down on his luck, and we offered him a 'L'Chaim'. He sat at the farbrengen like someone sitting on eggshells, uncertain whether he should stay or get up and leave. All his complaining and criticisms were met with warm and cheerful responses, and as time passed, he removed his stubborn klipa and was drawn into the farbrengen atmosphere. He joined the singing and the discussions, and enjoyed himself thoroughly.

"Later that night, the participants in the farbrengen started heading home, until the place was totally empty - all except this fellow, who remained glued to his chair. When I approached him, he suddenly burst

into sobs. I tried to convince him to tell me what was bothering him; perhaps I could help. He finally divulged that he had recently been suffering a great deal, and he had already decided to put an end to his life *r”l*. He had even prepared a letter explaining his actions...

“The night of the farbrengen was when he intended to carry out these plans, but first he decided that he would go down to the neighborhood walkway. He then heard the singing coming from the building, and he saw the happy and cheerful chassidim calling him to come inside. On the one hand, he was tempted to go in, but on the other hand, the last thing he wanted was to participate in such an event before ending his life. However, when they wouldn’t relent and he understood that there are Jews here who really like him, it instilled a new purpose into his existence. He chose to draw from the source of life, and he reversed his previous decision.

“This Jew is an esteemed and award-winning figure in the motion picture industry, and every time he passes by the “*Palterin Shel Melech*” and meets with me, he can’t thank us enough for saving his life.”

As mentioned earlier, the second focal point that completes the Chabad revolution in this neighborhood is the synagogue. When Rabbi Gavriel received the shul, it was enveloped in disorder and disgraced by neglect. With the help of two local residents, Yehuda Zaborov, who acquired most of the funds, and Yossi Franco, who oversaw the work and even made considerable donations, he turned this synagogue into a beautiful and elegant place. Today, it conducts regular prayer services – Shacharis, Mincha, and Maariv – and makes farbrengens on Shabbos, both by day and by night. This is due primarily to the tremendous assistance of the Markowitz family, who have toiled week after week in



Dozens of participants at a chassidic farbrengen

***“Later that night, the participants in the farbrengen started heading home, until the place was totally empty - all except this fellow, who remained glued to his chair... He finally divulged that he had recently been suffering a great deal, and he had already decided to put an end to his life *r”l*. He had even prepared a letter explaining his actions...”***

preparing the cooked food for the many participants at the Shabbos meals. These continuing activities are also due to the great help provided by Itai and Immi Gabbai.

“I remember this synagogue, which was called ‘Heichal Shlomo’, back when I was a small boy,” recalled the shul’s head gabbai, Mr. Yossi Franco. “I was born in the neighborhood and grew up in a house near the synagogue, hearing the pleasant melodies emanating

from there. The place used to be jam-packed with congregants. There were three synagogues in the neighborhood: a) the Ashkenazic shul under the leadership of the city’s rav, Rabbi Yitzchak Yedidya Frankel, b) the Sephardic shul, c) the synagogue of the Bukharian community, filled to capacity. Today, we are restoring G-d’s glory and breathing new life here.

“While I now live in a different neighborhood in town, I still have



my business in Florentine. In recent years, I have become quite close to Chabad chassidus, primarily through the Rebbe's shliach in the Neot Afeka neighborhood, Rabbi Ido Rahav, for whom I also serve as shul gabbai. When I heard about the arrival of the shliach in the Florentine neighborhood and his plans to restore the local synagogue, I was happy to help him and offer my assistance. We renovated, built, and scoured it clean, and we now have an events hall within the synagogue. Many local merchants who had never davened in the past now join the minyanim on a regular basis, and attendance continues to grow."

Anyone familiar with Yossi Franco knows that he is a Jew of pure action who carries it all out with a shining countenance and a full and boundless heart.

He began his journey to the magical world of Chabad chassidus in the merit of his daughter, who had previously been associated with the youth organization of the anti-religious Shinui Party. She made contact with Chabad and has even established a chassidic household in all its grandeur. Through this process, he became acquainted with Rabbi Ido Rahav, the Rebbe's shliach in his city. He subsequently caught the bug, and he's been progressing in his observance of traditional Judaism ever since. "What really moved me the most and got me to change my way of life was something that happened on the night of Simchas Torah a few years ago," he recalled.

"Though I was not overly interested in Judaism, it really bothered me that I never had the privilege of seeing the Rebbe. I had always been perplexed why the Rebbe never came to Eretz Yisroel. Everyone who I asked this question tried to avoid giving me an answer. On the night of Simchas Torah, I awoke from my sleep with a start. In

my dream I had seen the Rebbe coming to my parents' home. I used the opportunity to ask him why he doesn't come to Eretz Yisroel, and the Rebbe replied, 'Because I wasn't needed...' I had not only seen the Rebbe, I also was privileged to receive his answer..."

"When I told Rabbi Rahav about the dream, he said that this is the reason the Rebbe specified: because in Chutz La'Aretz, the Rebbe can do more..."

Anyone acquainted with Rabbi Nir Gavriel knows that he is a shliach that doesn't take a single step without writing to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, and he has been privileged to receive clear and unambiguous answers to every question. Many Jews go regularly to the "*Palterin Shel Melech*", put their problems in writing to the Rebbe MH"M, and merit to receive amazing answers. The miracle stories that occur there abound in a manner that transcends logic and reason.

"Those involved in outreach work know that there is absolutely no problem with publicizing the announcement of the Redeemer and the identity of Melech HaMoshiach. I meet young people returning from the East who believe in dust, cockroaches, and fruit *r"l*. If we don't give them the Jewish truth, they will be dragged to the strange faith found in other cultures, primarily in the East. The world today is undergoing change, and these young people don't try to think according to established and rational norms. The faith in the Rebbe as *chai v'kayam* can be perceived – with proper explanation and clarification, of course – as something acceptable. The world today is absolutely ready to grasp such concepts. We are speaking about this openly, and we see that it is accepted.

"We have two weekly classes in 'D'var Malchus' with many regular

participants. We can see that these messages have a powerful influence upon people to make decisive resolutions in increasing their observance of Torah and mitzvos. We speak about this at every farbrengen without hesitation. Even when we learn a sicha from the Rebbe on another subject, we always connect it to the subject of the Redemption. We proclaim 'Yechi' at the conclusion of every t'filla in the synagogue.

"It's inspiring to see how many Jews on a daily basis ask about writing to the Rebbe. They are privileged to receive answers and brachos, and they see much success in those matters about which they asked for the Rebbe's bracha. Last month, one of our supporters met with me and introduced me to his friend, a young realtor with a profitable business who was about to make a major financial decision and wanted to ask for the Rebbe MH"M's bracha. When I came into his office, I found myself standing before a Jew with a burning faith in G-d in his heart, yet distant from matters of actual Torah study and mitzvah observance.

"He told me that someone had offered him a seemingly profitable business deal, valued at about half a million dollars – equal to all the money he had. He had come to the conclusion that this was a worthwhile venture. However, if it turned out that this investment did not reap its expected profits, he would end up losing all his money and even go into serious debt. He was in a dilemma and plagued by considerable doubts, but was pressured to make a final decision. He wanted to ask the Rebbe if he should sign on this proposed business deal or if he should wait and see how things develop.

"The answer that he received was electrifying: The Rebbe wrote that 'encouragement should be given only to those who are eager', and the



matter should be done with all deliberate speed, and it will be shown that he will have success beyond all logic and reason. He became very excited, and it was quite evident what he had to do. We parted from one another, and I didn't see him again until recently. When we met, he called me into his office, as he said that he had something incredible to tell me. He related that he had rushed that day to the office of the other party of this business deal, only to be informed that they had raised the price by fifty thousand dollars. He was confused and didn't know what to do. He understood that someone else had apparently made a higher offer in an effort to get him to pull out of the deal. Still, in light of the Rebbe's clear answer about the advisability of this deal, he decided that he was prepared to absorb this additional expense. He placed a sizable check on the table, and promised that he would pay the balance due within the week. A discussion then ensued on the matter, and the other party finally decided not to sell him the property. He left the office sad and downtrodden. Could it be that after such a clear and precise bracha from the Rebbe, the deal doesn't work out?

"What happened during the journey back home was more powerful than he ever could have imagined. His cell phone rang, and he heard on the line the voice of a close friend, who was offering him the business deal of a lifetime – a deal valued at eight million dollars that was being sold for three million by an overseer of seized assets. 'This is all on the condition that you come to the sale right now, without delay.' He immediately turned around, met with his friend, gave him the check in his possession for the overseer, and he bought the property. As he was signing the relevant ownership documents, it suddenly flashed



A typical street in the Florentine neighborhood

***As he was signing the relevant ownership documents, it suddenly flashed through his mind that the Rebbe's amazing bracha to act quickly had been miraculously realized, albeit through a different business deal, reaping handsome profits far greater than those possible in the previous offer.***

through his mind that the Rebbe's amazing bracha to act quickly had been miraculously realized, albeit through a different business deal, reaping handsome profits far greater than those possible in the previous offer."

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"The big dream that we have recently begun to implement is the establishment of a beis midrash, as the Rebbe wrote to me in the first letter before we arrived in the neighborhood, which will be in constant operation from the morning until late at night. There

are already many young people in the neighborhood who have come closer to chassidus, and after they finished studying in the Tzfas yeshiva and on 'k'vutza', they returned to the neighborhood to assist in our activities, learning each day from the afternoon until nighttime. We want to expand these activities, turning this into an official learning institution with places for sleeping accommodations, a dining hall, and daily classes – a yeshiva format with a strong emphasis on spreading the wellsprings of chassidus."

# SERVE THE KING WITH JOY

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

*Until Chassidus was revealed, the feeling with which Jews would go through the month of Elul was like that of a terrified prisoner. But once the Baal Shem revealed p'nimius ha'Torah, Toras HaChassidus, he elevated the world to another level entirely.*

## WHAT IS YOUR ELUL LIKE?

Someone unfamiliar with Chassidus was asked what he hoped for in the month of Elul. He responded: "If only Hashem will forget about me all month plus another ten days, until after Yom Kippur!"

The month of Elul, which is a preparatory time for the Yomim Nora'im, is seen as a frightening month in the non-Chassidic world. People look forward to having these stressful days behind them because who knows what our judgment will be as we face Hashem on the Yom HaDin.

This feeling, that it's not worth coming under Hashem's scrutiny, is illustrated in the story about the old man who attended his friend's funeral and addressed the departed: "Yankel, my friend, we were friends for years and I know you as a talker, so please, do me a favor, when you get up to the Heavenly Court, don't mention my name ..."

Chassidus illuminates the month of Elul with a new light, a fact which is alluded to in the celebration of the birth of the two luminaries – the Baal Shem Toy and the Alter Rebbe – on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul. This brings a chayus into our avoda throughout the month of Elul. Obviously, you can't live through Elul terrified and

looking for a refuge from Hashem!

According to the approach of Chassidus, Hashem is not a tyrant, G-d forbid, like any king or dictator that we are familiar with. Hashem is a merciful king who seeks to show compassion to His creations, especially the Jewish people – His children. He desires, with an inner, essential desire, to do good to His creations, especially to the Jewish people who are part of His Essence.

Therefore, He wants His creations to come close to Him and to willingly and lovingly accept His rule (melucha). At the beginning of creation, Hashem ruled on His own, as we say in the Adon Olam, "Master of the world who ruled **before** any creature was created." But this was not the purpose for which He created the world. Hashem is not interested in domination (memshala) which is dictated by the king without any input on the part of the subjects. In this form of rule, the kindness isn't earned and is considered *nahama d'chesufa* (bread of shame). It is showered from above upon the created beings that put out their hands like beggars. This kind of hand-out is meant only for one whose humanity has left him or who, heaven forbid, is forced to beg because of starvation.

Hashem, who loves His people, arranged things so that from the moment Adam was created, He agreed to rule the world only if the Jewish people accepted His dominion. This began on the first Rosh HaShana, the day Adam was created and said, "Hashem rules, He has clothed Himself in majesty," and invited all created beings, "Come, let us prostrate ourselves and bow; let us kneel before Hashem, our Maker." This is why Rosh HaShana, for generations to come, is on the day that Adam was created.

In the t'fillos for Rosh HaShana it says that this day is called, "the day which is the beginning of Your

***The month of Elul is seen as a frightening month in the non-Chassidic world. Asked what he hoped for in the month of Elul, someone unfamiliar with Chassidus responded: “If only Hashem will forget about me all month plus another ten days, until after Yom Kippur!”***

works,” and it is only a “remembrance of the first day.” It is not like the first day of creation when Hashem alone chose to be king, but something new, a kingship that is accepted by created beings.

### **THE MITZVOS – A FRAMEWORK AND NOT A JAIL CELL**

It is now clear that the avoda of the month of Elul begins with the coronation of Hashem. How? We need to leave the desert (those who are in the desert), which is a place that is the opposite of k’dusha [regarding which it says, “man does not settle there” – Supernal Man does not settle there; he is in exile there]. We must shake off anything associated with the opposite of k’dusha and go to the field where the King is, and welcome Him, i.e. kabbalas ha’malchus.

The days of Elul are not holidays, are not like Chol HaMoed or even Rosh Chodesh. Outwardly, there is no change. People are still busy with their usual occupations. But what *has* changed is that we go out to greet the king. That means we get into a state of kabbalas ol. We feel that “behold, Hashem stands over him and looks at him and examines his kidneys and heart to see whether he is serving Him as he should.” We interact with the world with the feeling that there is a king and therefore there are rules, and we

can’t do and speak and think as we please.

We can compare this to the level of a servant whose constant awareness of the yoke of his master makes him feel like he is imprisoned. This is quite different than a shackled prisoner whose chains force him to be docile while inside he is a powder keg, ready to explode at the opportune moment and escape. He is a servant who knows his place and accepts it – that he has a master and he receives all his needs from him. Therefore, “like the eyes of servants towards their masters, so are our eyes to Hashem, our G-d” – his eyes are raised up to his master with the feeling that whatever his master desires and requests from him, he will fulfill. He doesn’t consider moving a hand or foot without this being his master’s desire.

If this is the feeling of a servant, then what should we say, we whose very existence every moment – and not just our needs – are from our Master, Hashem? We shouldn’t have the feeling that we are prisoners in chains! That would indicate that we are actually masters and only because of various reasons was our freedom taken away and we want to reclaim it and return to what we consider the good life. No, we want to give our Creator nachas by infusing our souls with the desire to accept the “servitude” which He placed upon us in His kindness.



There is the well-known joke about the person who attended Rothschild’s funeral and cried bitterly. When they asked him why he cried when he wasn’t even a relative he retorted, “That’s why I’m crying!” We can use this approach with the animal soul, assuring it that by being a servant of Hashem, a man benefits far more than any relative of Rothschild could ever hope to gain!

Throughout the month of Elul a person accustoms himself to obeying with kabbalas ol, so that by the time the Yomim Nora’im arrive, he is not an indentured servant but a relative of the King, a part of “Am Krovo” (His close nation) and able to enter the palace as that is his true place. There, only the King’s presence is felt and the person is “ayin”, so the kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim is much loftier.

This is the general kabbalas ol of the entire year – submission to Hashem which is called *bittul ha’metzius*. In other words, he is no longer a servant whose purpose is to do the will of his master; there is only the master, of whom he is like the hand and foot.

In this state, on Rosh HaShana of every year we arouse, as it were,



***If accepting Hashem's rule is done only out of fear, Hashem will appear to us like a tyrant and we will feel the brunt of the Chassidic aphorism: Someone who is not a Chassid has 613 traps to deal with throughout his life.***

Hashem's desire to rule over us. Not as a dictator so that fulfilling Torah and mitzvos is like a prisoner in chains or like a bit and bridle in the mouth of a wild animal, but as our Master.

True, if accepting Hashem's rule is done only out of fear, the new year will still be blessed with its needs because Hashem promised not to revert the world to nothingness, but we will live like animals and prisoners who are led by the whip and chains. Hashem will appear to us like a tyrant and we will feel the brunt of the Chassidic aphorism: Someone who is not a Chassid has 613 traps to deal with throughout his life.

In order that the 613 mitzvos – which connect us with One who commanded them – be “fun” (to use a current term) to do, we need to feel and remember that Hashem gave them to us in His goodness and mercy and in His great love for us.

## **THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S KABBALAS HA'MALCHUS**

After clarifying which type of kabbalas ha'malchus is demanded of us in the month of Elul and on Rosh HaShana, “and His kingdom they accepted willingly,” we can examine a heavenly incident that took place on Rosh HaShana in the year 5507/1746.

On that Rosh HaShana, the Baal Shem Tov's soul ascended to the chamber of Moshiach, the chamber from which the ultimate kingdom

will come to the entire world (as we say three times a day following Aleinu and in portions of the Shmoneh Esrei, especially the t'fillos of Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, which speak about Hashem's kingdom that will be seen by all with the Geula). Moshiach answered the Baal Shem Tov's question as to when he is coming with the words, “when your wellsprings spread forth.”

What concerned the Baal Shem Tov on Rosh HaShana? Not the kabbalas ha'malchus as it was done in all the years since Adam was created, but the complete kabbalas ha'malchus of the world and especially the Jewish people as it will be with the revelation of the Geula. The Baal Shem Tov's avoda on Rosh HaShana was focused on Moshiach.

One can ask why the Baal Shem Tov asked this question when the Gemara records the identical question and Moshiach's answer. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi met Moshiach in Rome and asked him when he is coming. Moshiach answered, “Today.” Afterwards, it was explained to him that Moshiach meant, “today, if you hearken to His voice.”

The Baal Shem Tov certainly knew this Gemara. Why did he ask the question again? And why didn't Moshiach give him the same answer he gave Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi?

Chassidim explain this with a mashal of Gehinom having burned down. Up Above they decided that since Gan Eden was old and

dilapidated anyway, they would make the old Gan Eden into the new Gehinom and build a new Gan Eden. What is the idea behind this change? We can explain it with an example of a student who was left behind year after year in the same class. For the younger children, this class is Gan Eden. For him, since they are teaching new things in the higher class where he ought to be and he's missing out, it's Gehinom.

In this lies the chiddush of the month of Elul with the revelation of the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. As long as Chassidus was not revealed, someone who lived through the month of Elul was like a terrified prisoner. Nonetheless, that for him was Gan Eden because he was anticipating Elul and the Yomim Nora'im; he feared it, but at least he wasn't apathetic to it. Someone who wasn't afraid and remained indifferent, his place was Gehinom, heaven forbid.

In those days, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked, “When are you coming?” and was told, “Today, if you hearken to His voice.” The moment you fear Hashem and are not indifferent to His mitzvos, Moshiach will come and the old Gan Eden will remain Gan Eden and Moshiach will be someone who is appropriate to that level of divine service.

The old Gan Eden has no place today. The fact that Moshiach didn't come is why the Baal Shem Tov's neshama was sent to this world, in order to elevate the Jewish people to a higher level. This is why his name was “Yisroel” – in order to waken the Jewish people from its “faint” in its service of Hashem (just as people call a person's name in order to rouse him from a faint). When in a faint, the body remains intact and there remains a little chayus – which is why he is not dead. This fits with the description of the person who served Hashem before the advent of Chassidus, who was like a prisoner



in chains.

But since the Baal Shem Tov had to be revealed along with p'nimius ha'Torah, Toras HaChassidus, he elevated the world to another level entirely. The old Gehinom no longer has a place at this time, because the focus of our divine service has changed, from fear to love.

### THE REAL AND COMPLETE KABBALAS HA'MALCHUS

Hashem is not a vengeful G-d who looks for ways to catch us as we fail. He is a merciful father who knows man's limitations and enjoys every moment of pure kabbalas ol. The avodas Hashem of someone who lives in the new Gan Eden is done willingly and with pleasure and it is derived from an inner awareness and not from external force.

So, after having successfully raised the bar for one who serves Hashem, the Baal Shem Tov asked the question again, "When are you coming?" We have gone up in level; when are you coming to the new Gan Eden? The Baal Shem Tov asks his question on Rosh HaShana, the day of kabbalas ha'malchus: When will we have the kabbalas ha'malchus of Moshiach?

The answer is: "When your wellsprings spread outward." The Rebbe compares this to a spring of water that purifies even in the smallest amounts (you don't need 40 measures of water as in a mikva), so long as the item needing purification enters it completely. In other words, even a drop of Chassidus can purify a person, as long as the person is completely immersed in it.

This point is brought out in a story of a Chassid in the previous generation who suffered a lot from poor health. The Chassidim raised money to send him to convalesce. When he returned they saw it hadn't helped at all. Then the doctor ordered him to eat just a slice of

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bread and drink one cup of milk each day.

One of the Chassidim once asked him, "How are you?" He answered, "If only my ruchnius was like my gashmius." The questioner was taken aback. "In gashmius you are limited in eating and drinking – heaven forbid that it should be this way in ruchnius!"

The sick Chassid answered, "You don't understand. In gashmius it's a little bit of food but it all becomes part of my flesh and blood. If only it was the same way in ruchnius, that the little bit of ruchnius I absorb becomes part of my flesh and blood."

That is the spreading of the wellsprings, that these wellsprings of Chassidus have to reach outside, to places outside the realm of holiness, and then each drop will revive those who immerse in it and cause them to serve Hashem with chayus and an inner desire.

263 years have passed since the Baal Shem Tov's neshama ascended to the chamber of Moshiach and Moshiach still hasn't come in a way that is open to all. On Rosh HaShana we need to ask and insist in Moshiach's chamber, which is 770: "**When are you coming?**" Especially after the Rebbe said that Moshiach is already on his way and then went on to say that he is here and everything is ready for the

seuda, to the point that immediately one can say that in the prior moment **Moshiach came already.**

In our day, the kabbalas ha'malchus of the month of Elul and Rosh HaShana is in the form of the complete kingdom of Hashem that will be seen in the time of Geula.

If you paid attention when you saw the Rebbe, you would have noticed that although he davened quickly, when it came to Aleinu he said it much slower. I heard from R' Chaim Shaul Brook a"h that he saw the Rebbe say Aleinu when he was still a bachur in Rostov or Leningrad, and he noticed that he wasn't an ordinary bachur.

In this t'filla we ask to see "And they will all accept on them the yoke of Your kingdom" and "Rule over them speedily, forever." We conclude the davening with a heartfelt, "Therefore, we hope to You, Hashem our G-d, to soon see" Melech HaMoshiach in his glory. May it happen still this year and then on Rosh HaShana we will accept the malchus of Moshiach upon us.

As I heard quoted from a child: "On Rosh HaShana I will accept on myself the malchus of the Rebbe MH" and the Rebbe will accept the malchus of Hashem ... In this way, the acceptance of His malchus will be in a much loftier manner."

*As said at a Chassidishe farbrengen*

# A PRINCIPAL'S PRINCIPLES

Prepared for publication by Sholom Ber Crombie

## *A lecture on chinuch by Rabbi Zalman Leib Markowitz, principal of Cheder Lubavitch Morristown.*

Ten years ago, the hanhala of the elementary school in Morristown, where I worked for years as a teacher, asked me to become the principal. At first I firmly refused, stating that I get my chayus in working with children from the relationship I develop with the talmidim as their teacher. As a teacher in the classroom I had a personal relationship with every student and this is what was important to me. I had taught for years and I always felt that I needed to be a beloved father to my students. I knew that as a principal I would be unable to be close in that way to every student.

In the end, I saw I had no choice and I accepted the position, and for ten years I worked as a menahel and got a lot of experience in education. At the beginning of the first year I addressed the parents and said that I had three goals for the school: 1) that every child entering the building should be happy, 2) to raise children who are yerei Shamayim and have good middos, 3) the children should have success in their learning.

When I finished talking, one of the parents said in a puzzled tone

that the last time he checked the dictionary, it said that school is a place where you learn. He did not understand why the goal of the children being happy came before learning. I told him that if a child thinks it's fun to go to school, he will also be successful scholastically.

I explained to the parents that just as when you do business you first have to act diplomatically and make the other person feel good, the same is true for chinuch. When you want to sell something, you understand that first you have to invest in the packaging so that the person feels comfortable and only then can you sell him something.

If we want to sell yiras Shamayim and good middos to a child, we first have to ensure that things are going well for him and that the atmosphere is pleasant. In chinuch you have to be a salesman.

A few years later, I realized that this might be what the Rebbe means in his birthday blessing, "Chassid, Yerei Shamayim, Lamdan." Chassid means a happy Jew. This was always the trait that characterized Chassidim and this is how you knew who was a Chassid. The same is true

in chinuch; first the child has to be a Chassid, i.e. happy, and then he can acquire yiras Shamayim and scholarship.

That is how I did things as a teacher and then as a principal. One of the things I insisted on was even though the school in Morristown requires the teachers to teach in Yiddish, I would close the door to the classroom – so nobody would hear – and teach in English. I wanted the students to understand me. Afterwards, when I became principal, I changed the rules and established that English, not Yiddish, be spoken at general events. It was more important to me that the children be able to learn without difficulty than to learn in Yiddish. This approach proved to be successful.

Another thing I was particular about was not to raise my voice in the classroom to ask for quiet. I would tell the students that I was here to teach them, for their good. So if they wanted to talk, that was their business.

## **A RELAXED, HAPPY HOME THAT CHILDREN WILL WANT TO GO HOME TO**

If we as parents want our children not to look elsewhere in order to feel good, we have to ensure that their home environment is welcoming and happy. If a mother wants her children to be receptive to the lessons she wants to impart, she needs to know that this will happen only if it is pleasant for them to talk to her and listen to her. Otherwise, it makes no difference what she will explain and how hard she tries to express herself well; they won't be listening.

Each of us should think about whether we want to go back to a place where we felt uncomfortable, or whether we avoid it. If we didn't

feel successful there, there would be nothing to motivate us to go back there. So I will ask you – why do you think it's any different with our children?

If they come home and we constantly blame them, even if we try to do it gently, why would they want to accept the chinuch we give them? A parent told me that he doesn't say anything negative to his child even when he is dissatisfied with him. This parent doesn't realize that even without saying a negative word, the child is still attuned to the feeling the father broadcasts; the child feels the unspoken criticism and doesn't feel at ease.

We need to work on ourselves so that we have good times with our kids, so that we love them and are really happy with them despite the hard times; so that we give children a good feeling and don't convey a message that we think he's not all right.

My first priority as a teacher and as a parent was to give the children the feeling that it's okay to make a mistake, to fail. The navi says, "A tzaddik falls seven times and gets up." If a tzaddik can fall seven times, then we can allow our children to stumble. If Hashem didn't want us to fail, He wouldn't have created the world. This feeling is important to the child and gives him a feeling of freedom.

I can tell you with the utmost confidence that there is not a single student that has a problem with the substance of the chinuch he receives at home. The problem is that a person doesn't want to feel pushed away; he doesn't want to feel uncomfortable. So when parents are successful in getting their children to feel good at home, their children won't want to search elsewhere.

In order to succeed at this you don't need to be a professor; all you need is to invest the effort over a long period of time. Chinuch demands work, like anything else

***One of the parents said in a puzzled tone that the last time he checked the dictionary, it said that school is a place where you learn. He did not understand why the goal of the children being happy came before learning.***



that we want to achieve. This work need not be seen as a chore; it can be fun. It's hard but challenging, and in order to succeed we need to be completely devoted to it. On the way to reaching the soul of a child there are endless details, but if we devote ourselves to our children's chinuch, we will be successful.

The second point that needs to be emphasized is the fact that each of us has different abilities than the other. I once had a talmid who did not do well in his learning but he had street smarts. As a teacher, I tried hard to bolster his self confidence and to remind him of his abilities. One time, after I complimented him, he said, "You're just saying that to me. You know that I'm not smart and I know it too."

This was a red light for me because if someone feels that people

are not being genuine with him, then the comments and compliments are not beneficial. So from then on, instead of telling him that he was smart, I would frequently explain to the class that each of them has certain characteristics in which they are better than others, even when they don't have the gifts that others have. As an example, I would tell them how I'm technologically challenged. I would tell them that this never made me feel lacking in self confidence. If I needed help with something technological, I would call over one of the students who did not excel academically but who was able to help me. This is how I showed them that there were areas in which they were special.

After emphasizing this point for a while, it was easier for me to compliment the students for those things in which they actually excelled. They knew I really meant it.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD, NOT JUDGING HIM**

I often meet parents who have despaired over their children. This happens after the child has already gotten into a negative environment and the parents feel that there is nothing they can do. I assure them that there is no such thing and that there is always something that can be done. The most important thing is to give the child a good feeling, and this can be imparted even when the child has ventured away from the

chinuch we have given him.

When a child is in such a situation, the first thing parents need to give him is the feeling that they understand him and are not judging him. The child needs to feel that he is accepted as he is and he is not being looked down upon. I often talk with children like these and I say to them that not only do I understand them and what led them to this state of affairs, but I can also explain to them, better than they can, why they are right for acting as they do.

Only afterwards can I turn things around and explain to them why it is in their best interests to change their behavior. They are receptive because I have conveyed to them that I understand them and don't judge them and that what I care about is their welfare.

This approach has worked in many instances. I did not try to explain to them why they were doing something improper; nor did I try to explain to them why what they were doing wasn't good as far as G-d or their parents were concerned. I focused only on my caring for them and what was good for them. I always emphasized that I am not G-d's policeman.

You can't approach every child in the same way. Each child is different, with different traits, and from each one you need to demand something else and set different goals. Parents need to be sensitive and tuned-in to their children.

Parents often ask what they should do when their children fight. They want to calm things down and restore the peace but when they intervene, each of the children complains that they are siding with the other one. I tell them that instead of each child feeling that the parent is against him, you can make each child feel you are on their side.

When the parent really gives his heart to the children and communicates the feeling that they

are important to him and that he wants what is good for them. Then, when the parent intervenes in one of their fights, he will be able to do so without them feeling that he is against any of them.

When there were fights among the boys in school, I would call them over and remind them how much I try not to cause pain to anyone in class. Then I would tell them that if I cared and made sure not to hurt anyone, they could understand how I felt when I saw two children fighting and causing one another pain. Then I would ask them to please not do this anymore. My impression was that they accepted this because they knew that I **always** tried to make them feel good.

I often tell parents who send their children away to yeshiva, especially high school when the children are young, that when their children call the first thing to ask is not how the learning is going but how the food is. This tells the child that you care about how they feel.

## **HE LACKED SOMEONE TO UNDERSTAND HIM**

Some time ago I met with a bachur who had dropped out after being in a problematic social situation with other boys in his class in yeshiva. He was an average student so he couldn't connect with the more successful boys. He also wasn't a child with any behavior problems so he didn't want to be friends with the problem boys in the class.

His parents were yerei Shamayim who really tried to be good parents but when he was no longer in yeshiva his father was angry with him. This made the bachur feel that nobody understood him.

The bachur became friendly with a girl from a similar background and he finally had someone who listened to him. She understood him and gave him the feeling that he was

worth something. He finally had a place where he felt good.

When his parents discovered the relationship, they were unwilling to accept the fact that their child had a girl friend. His father began screaming that he had to end the friendship. If up until then the parents had been able to maintain some semblance of a routine with this child, at this point things became exceedingly problematic. The father had complaints against the rabbis in yeshiva and against the school where he had sent his son. Whatever peace and quiet had still existed in the house vanished. The boy had no peace at home, at yeshiva or anywhere else.

I happened, b'hashgacha pratis, to go to that city and when I met with the parents I understood the situation. The father didn't stop blaming everyone for the state his son was in and he was very angry. He tried to explain to me why everybody was at fault and why they had to immediately cut off his son's relationship. I asked him to allow me to handle the situation.

I met with their son and when he saw that I knew his story he defensively said that he knew that I had come to convince him to leave the girl but I wouldn't be able to help him. I told him, "You're saying that I can't help you because you don't want to leave her and you want people to tell you that this relationship is okay. Since you know that is not what I'm going to say, you don't see any point in listening to me and insist that I can't help you." He agreed.

I said, "You know what, let's put aside this relationship for now. I want things to be good for you. Let's talk about other things going on in your life; maybe I can help you with that. I will help you straighten things out with your parents, with the yeshiva, with your friends. I want to help you so that all the other things work out."



"The way things are now, you don't have peace anywhere. Now you've lost everything because your life revolves around this relationship. So I'm setting aside the relationship and want to help you with your other problems."

He began to cry. He couldn't believe that I really cared and that I wasn't looking at him negatively; that I was willing to help him with his parents and the yeshiva and wouldn't try to convince him to leave the girl.

Today he is back on track and conducts himself with yiras Shamayim and is a good example for the other talmidim in yeshiva. He has good friends in yeshiva and is a Chassidishe bachur. I am still in touch with him and always ask how

***I did not try to explain to them why they were doing something improper; nor did I try to explain to them why what they were doing wasn't good as far as G-d or their parents were concerned. I focused only on my caring for them and what was good for them. I always emphasized that I am not G-d's policeman.***

things are at home and in yeshiva, because that is what I promised him.

The bottom line is that a positive atmosphere at home and in school is what makes a child happy, and when a child is accepted, loved, valued and

wanted, it not only prevents problems but it enables the request of every parent to be fulfilled: that their son be a Chassid, Yerei Shamayim, and Lamdan. It's up to us.

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ב"ה

# YANKELE TANK

By A. Avrohom

*Yaakov Eshes, “Yankele Tank” to his friends, managed his Mobile Mitzvah Tank with tremendous devotion, constantly proclaimed the imminent arrival of Moshiach. But few know that within the tankist was the soul of an artist whose work received international acclaim.*



By 1979, Yaakov Eshes had been to America twice. The first time, he did so at the behest of a friend who was sure that the talented young man would take the American art scene by storm. Yaakov, with his secular outlook and completely irreligious lifestyle, had high expectations. Respected art institutions were amazed by his rare talent. He was invited to visit and draw in various places, but his big dreams were not yet realized.

The second time Yaakov went to America was with his wife. He was already a Lubavitcher and they spent Tishrei 5740/1979 with the Rebbe. He was convinced of one thing from the very start: that he was going to the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach.

From his youth, the idea of a Messiah who would come and redeem the world fascinated him.

His sensitive soul was drawn to this without knowing the Jewish significance of the concept. In moments of inspiration, while gazing upon beautiful scenery on trips he took, he thought, spoke, and wrote about Moshiach. But back then, it was part of his interest in mysticism and the paranormal.

Years later he understood that Moshiach is a person who will work within the physical reality of the world. He read the sichos in which the Rebbe spoke about “Moshiach Now,” and his heart raced. He wanted the entire world to know about this. On every holiday and special date in the calendar he would eagerly anticipate Moshiach’s coming; perhaps this auspicious time would herald the great miracle.

The tough kibbutz framework tried unsuccessfully to mold this

man into a material realist, but it was not until he discovered the truth of Torah and mitzvos and Chassidus that he found his true spirit. From this firm base he felt that now he could fly and then his agitated soul once again found relief in the paintbrush.

## FROM STALIN’S LEGACY TO THE ART MUSEUM IN BOSTON

Yaakov was born in 1946 on Kibbutz Sarid, which was founded and dedicated on “Stalin’s legacy.” In Yaakov’s world, everything, but everything, was jointly owned. The most important holiday was the first of May when red flags and pictures of “our esteemed leader Stalin” Stalin flew; and of course, religion was verboten.



Yaakov Eshes

They were called “Stalin’s children” and they received a tough education. The kibbutz framework desired to shape the individual down to the last details and whoever didn’t fit in was thrown out.

Young Yaakov wasn’t the type to live as an Israeli copy of the Soviet prison state. At the age of eight he was already transferred from the kibbutz to a dormitory of HaShomer HaTzair.. not that he did any better there. He never learned in a structured way. Like many other children, his soul and unique talents were sacrificed on the altar of communal living.

The kibbutz sought help with this “difficult child,” and he was sent to the home of another kibbutznik family that volunteered to work with children like this. He wasn’t the only one who went through their devoted

care but there was something about Yaakov that they especially liked. They came very close to adopting him and he lived in their home for long periods of time. Their family name was Sharon and their son Gidi became a friend and brother to Yaakov.

Some years passed and Yaakov was post-army service and finding it hard to express himself through writing. He intuitively began using his pen to draw. He started working in pencil, drawing mainly people and faces, all from his heart without any lessons. One of his acquaintances later brought some of his drawings from that period to a psychologist who was expert in art at the University of Los Angeles. She was astounded. For the first time she was seeing contemporary drawings that looked like copies of Aztec cave

drawings.

But that came later. Yaakov’s first job was working as a lifeguard on the kibbutz, where he met an American tourist by the name of Michael Kaufman. The tourist, an art hobbyist, took note of the unconventional young man and saw his unusual paintings. Yaakov was using inks by then and his paintings were full of color and life.

Michael returned to America and asked Yaakov to come. He believed that the art world in the US would embrace him. Yaakov was 24 when he arrived in West Hartford, Connecticut and Michael did all he could to help him. Yaakov was fascinated by the big world and he didn’t stop painting.

Later, Yaakov moved to New Jersey. One day, as he was walking in Manhattan he met a friend from



## THEY HAD MET PREVIOUSLY

During the Peace in Galilee war, the Mitzva Tank went to Rosh HaNikra and began putting t'fillin on with soldiers before they went to fight. Most of the soldiers stood on line in order to put on t'fillin, and only a small group stayed off to the side. Yaakov Eshes called out to them but they said, "We are kibbutznikim from HaShomer HaTzair."

Yaakov was coming from the same place as them and so this didn't faze him. As he spoke to them he realized that he had worked together with some of them for a moving company called HaTavor. They didn't recognize him because of his beard and clothing. He didn't say who he was; he just began telling them about the moving company and experiences he had had with them.

The guys were very surprised. How did this bearded religious fellow know that? It didn't occur to them that this was their former workmate. When Yaakov finally revealed his full name they happily put on t'fillin.

"This is the first time I am putting on t'fillin," whispered one of them to Yaakov with tears in his eyes.

the kibbutz. They got into a friendly conversation and the friend suggested that he attend an art school so he could get a student visa.

Yaakov went to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, no less. They looked at the work of the young Israeli, who knew nothing about art, and told him that he had rare talent. He was immediately accepted and began studying art. But after a while, the director told him that he could continue to sit and paint "but it doesn't pay for you to study; it will only ruin you."

Michael went with Yaakov to all the leading art galleries in the US. They all expressed their amazement but were afraid that the broader public would not appreciate his unique style. A year and a half later they went to a big art sponsor in California. He also expressed his amazement to what he saw but said apologetically, "I am already tied up with someone else. If you would have come a year ago, you would be well established by now."

Disappointed, Yaakov returned to Eretz Yisroel and went to the art department of an institute in Tzfas. Then he met an old friend.



Yaakov Eshes as a young man

## WORK CLOTHES – INCLUDING A KIPPA

One day, Yaakov was walking down the street in Afula when he met his old friend Gidi. Yaakov was unaware that Gideon Sharon had become very involved with Chabad. Gidi suggested that Yaakov visit Rabbi Chaim Sholom Segal's Chabad house in Afula with him.

Yaakov tried to get out of it but Gidi schlepped him to the Chabad

house, where he put on t'fillin for the first time in his life. As he was about to leave, the phone rang. It was Efraim Kaminker from the Chabad Mobile Mitzva Tanks. He desperately needed a driver; did R' Segal have any ideas. Gidi seized the moment and said, "Yaakov, that's a job for you."

Yaakov was interested in working and making money and so he began driving a Mitzva Tank. He didn't care that the job required he wear a kippa. As time went on, his fellow workers on the tank managed to turn the driver-kibbutznik into a real "tankist."

It didn't happen overnight. When he finished work for the day, Yaakov folded his kippa and put it in his pocket before returning to sleep at the kibbutz. That was after entire days of driving with Chassidishe music playing and helping the tank crew. The kibbutz work ethic was something he had absorbed and so if Yaakov was told to announce the times for candle lighting, he didn't miss a single street.

The experienced tankistim were used to tough nuts. Rabbi Dovid Nachshon supervised his progress and he told Yaakov when it was time to add another mitzva. Yaakov politely agreed.

One day, he went to a friend in Rosh Pina for Shabbos. He was standing at a roadside stop in Teverya to hitch a ride. The sun began to set and he removed his kippa, realizing that for someone to stop for him at that hour he was better off without it.

After a few minutes, he decided to put the kippa back on. A moment later, a car stopped for him. It was the friend he was going to visit. Since then, he hasn't taken off the kippa.

Some time later, he started working with Yossi Abelsky. When Yaakov would buy food and offer some to him, Yossi would explain what they could or couldn't eat.



Thus Yaakov learned about kashrus. The next stage entailed moving to an apartment owned by the Chabad Mobile Tank office. It didn't happen with an enthusiastic jump; at a certain point, Yaakov simply found himself with a beard, as a Lubavitcher. The enthusiasm came later.

## DRAWN TO MYSTICISM

Yaakov married in 1979 with the Rebbe's bracha. The following Tishrei and he and his wife went to the Rebbe. Yaakov was less impressed by the crowds, noise and the pushy atmosphere and more impressed by the Rebbe; the inner solid composure and the quiet intensity.

He had yechidus at the end of Tishrei. Among the questions he asked the Rebbe was whether to stay in yeshiva in Crown Heights. The Rebbe said, "It is not worthwhile for you to stay abroad." So he asked where he should live in Eretz Yisroel and the Rebbe said, "Ask the advice of knowledgeable friends." Yaakov and his wife returned to Eretz Yisroel and settled in Afula, where their daughter was born.

When you ask Yaakov what grabbed him in Chabad he answers unequivocally, "The Rebbe." He had no major epiphany; it was a gradual change. At times, when he felt doubtful as to what he needed it all for, "the Rebbe kept me going." He explained that during a crisis he would remember what an empty world of lies he had left behind and his awareness that the path he had discovered was suited for a Jew was strengthened.

The mystical aspect of Chabad Chassidus attracted him. He had felt drawn to that which is beyond the material world since his youth, though lacking an educational framework, it was never something defined. During those years he only expressed himself in his painting and



Yaakov Eshes with the Mitzva Tank

***While working with Israeli parachutists in the Beirut area, a massive sniper attack ensued. One of the soldiers shouted, "Let's get on Chabad's tank; it's the safest place!" Within seconds they had all boarded the tank, where they remained until the shooting ceased. They were all unharmed.***

the images that constantly yearned to go upward expressed what he felt in his heart. In Chassidus he found this articulated.

## ON FIRE FOR MOSHIACH

Yaakov soon earned himself the nickname "Yankele Tank." He was enthusiastic about one subject only – Moshiach. Everybody knew – wherever Yankele Tank went, he brought along with him a fire for inyanei Moshiach.

"It was completely beyond logic, mamash a taava (an inexplicable urge)," Yaakov says.

Yaakov, who by that time was not just the driver but a tankist, would

take the loudspeaker and continually announce, wherever they went, "Hinei zeh Moshiach ba," and "We want Moshiach now." One time, he drove around a religious neighborhood and a few days later, when he went there again, some disappointed people approached him with a complaint: "You promised us a few days ago and it didn't happen ..."

In 1989 he went to the Rebbe and asked in a letter, "Is my place of shlichus in Eretz Yisroel with the Mitzva Tanks; if so, I request a bracha for hatzlacha." In the Rebbe's answer he crossed out the "if" and added the words bracha v'hatzlacha.

## YAAKOV ESHES IN THE LEBANON WAR WE WENT AHEAD TO BEIRUT

*Yankele's adventures on the Mitzva Tank during the first Lebanon War*

At the beginning of the first Lebanon War (when it was still called Operation Peace in Galilee), the Mobile Mitzva Tanks did a lot of work with the soldiers operating on the front. The tanks were given permission to enter Lebanon but during the first stages of the war were not allowed to enter Beirut. Outreach was done only the length of the Lebanon coast road (Rosh HaNikra, Tzor, Tzidon) because the IDF did not allow civilians in. All who entered had to wear an IDF uniform and carry a weapon. The celebrated Mitzva Tank campaign leader, Shmarya Harel, used all his connections to no avail.

Yankele Tank went with his partner, R' Menachem Offen the length of the coast road in Lebanon. They noticed a left turn in the direction of the mountains and they figured they would try it. After about a quarter of an hour of driving, they came upon an IDF position and a group of soldiers who didn't understand where they had come from. After putting t'fillin on with the soldiers, they asked them whether they could continue on towards Beirut. The surprised soldiers didn't think there was a problem with this and said, "Sure, follow this road until the top of the mountain and then continue on the road that leads down into Beirut."

Yankele got behind the wheel and that's how Chabad's "ground forces" entered occupied Beirut.

On another occasion, while working with Israeli parachutists in the Beirut area, a massive sniper attack ensued. One of the soldiers shouted, "Let's get on Chabad's tank; it's the safest place!"

Within seconds they had all boarded the tank, where they remained until the shooting ceased. They were all unharmed.

For a while, Yankele served as a "double agent" – he served in the Reserves in Lebanon while also making sure the Mitzva Tank was operating. Since his job was to bring water to various units, of course he also made sure that the Chabad unit received supplies on a regular basis.

It was only after many years, when working with the Mitzva Tanks could no longer support his family, that Yaakov switched to working as a professional driver.

### RETURNING TO HIS ORIGINAL POSITION

Last year, he felt he couldn't do it anymore and he wrote a letter to the Rebbe that said: Bli neder I made a resolution, which requires total bitachon, to the effect that I won't work any longer as an

employee and I will devote at least the morning hours to the study of Torah and Chassidus. As of now, I have no idea what to do for a living, perhaps painting."

He put the letter into a volume of Igros Kodesh and opened to:

**Others have been in a similar situation to you and since they didn't despair, heaven forbid, and did things in a natural way – all that depended on them, Hashem gave them success and now they returned to their [previous] standing etc. Surely the same will**

be for you.

**Consult with friends who are businessmen about what to do... and do as they advise with strong trust in Hashem who supervises over every single person individually. Check t'fillin and mezuzos if they were not checked within the past twelve months. Set times every day for Torah. A few cents to tz'daka before weekday prayers. T'hillim as divided over the month.**

**And one of the principal things, strong trust in Hashem. I will mention you at the gravesite.**

Yaakov followed these instructions and friends connected him with the shliach, Rabbi Shmuel Frumer of the Krayot. Yaakov showed him his drawings and the shliach recommended that he "return to his previous standing" and work in art.

### WITHOUT THE PERSPECTIVE OF LIGHT AND SHADOW

**Tell us about your style.**

My style is called primitive which means without the perspective of light and shadow, depth and size, and also without any defined technique. As someone who is not that connected to the material world, I don't need the inspiration of something external like a figure, event or scene, in order to draw. The uniqueness of this type of art is not in the accuracy of the details or its symmetry but the colorfulness and diversity.

You can draw whatever you want or feel with this style. In my irreligious past I tried drawing angels, Eliyahu HaNavi and the like. Today, I know that you can't draw angels but the figures in my drawings still "hover" as though they seek to disconnect and reach loftier places. The inspiration derived from external things is not for the drawing itself but for the state of mind

needed to draw.

I was once touring in Australia, before I came to Chabad, and I went up a mountain that overlooked a lake and I suddenly felt homesick for Israel. I wrote a poetic note about Moshiach looking out over the land of Israel as he comes to redeem it. Perhaps this illustrates how inert nature, which is a source of fascination for other artists, is for me the glasses for what lies beyond it. Outside of Israel, what I saw connected me to the scenery that I remembered from Israel.

### How does this drawing fit with the world of Torah and mitzvos?

In a way, the artistic lifestyle demands a framework, the idea of "action is the main thing." Perhaps I also am attracted to practical deeds because my own process was more thought out and built less on the touchy-feely side of things.

I recall my visits to the Rebbe and I think that the most exciting visit was when I brought Moshe Chavusha to the Rebbe. It was an amazing experience, how his enthusiasm was contagious. At one of the farbrengens he was so overcome that he nearly started jumping in the middle of the farbrengen.

### Who else did you have a connection with on your way to Chabad?

Aside from the people I mentioned before – Gideon Sharon who brought me to Chabad and R' Shmuel Frumer – I had a very good relationship with R' Saadya Jerufi, with whom I spent many a Shabbos. I also got to know Rabbi Yadgar of Taanach who taught me a lot. He's the one who made me aware that Chabad demands p'nimius and thanks to him I stayed with the program.

At the beginning I also had a strong connection with R' Avrohom Dunin. I will never forget how I was once with him at kibbutz Ein Dor.



top: Yaakov Eshes receiving a dollar from the Rebbe  
bottom: A letter of blessing before his wedding

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בברכה  
*[Handwritten signature]*

He was going to address the highest grades of the boys who learned there. He managed to hold their attention until late at night to the point that the children began to show a great interest in Chabad.

The principal noticed this and kept trying to interject and say that it was getting late and time to go to sleep. He kept them until three in

the morning!

At the end of the farbrengen they asked him, "Are we also Jews?"

R' Avrohom answered, a little tongue-in-cheek: There's no question about you. When Moshiach comes, all the charedim will come and Moshiach will ask you who they are and you will say: Yes, they are also Jews.



# MIRACLES (NISSIM) – THEN AND NOW

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

*Mr. Nissim Mizrachi of Rishon L’Zion told the following story to Rabbi Ben-Zion Cohen, who regularly does outreach activities in his hospital ward to encourage the ill and infirm. This is a story of a fascinating miracle that occurred as a result of a divinely inspired trip to New York.*

It’s been four months already since Rishon L’Zion resident Nissim Mizrachi began a series of regular visits in the treatment rooms of the “Assaf HaRofe” Hospital, where he is undergoing very difficult and exhausting chemotherapy. The emotional and physical pain he endures is most intense. Even the doctors are a bit worried, and the information they release increases the overall sense of concern.

Nevertheless, when you meet Nissim, you come face-to-face with a Jew filled with faith who displays tremendous optimism

despite everything he is going through. One person who met with him last week at his sickbed and was greatly impressed by his character was Rabbi Ben-Zion Cohen of Kfar Chabad, who has been doing Mivtza T’fillin and Bikur Cholim activities in the hallways of “Assaf HaRofe” Hospital for many years. Rabbi Cohen quickly discovered the reason for his great optimism, based in large measure upon an amazing miracle story that happened to his father, who had received three dollars from the Rebbe after being diagnosed with

a similar illness nearly forty years ago.

Mr. Nissim Mizrachi was recently released from the hospital and is now praying for an improvement in his condition.

## THREE DOLLARS FROM THE REBBE

“It was in 5733,” Mr. Nissim Mizrachi began his story, “at the conclusion of my military service and shortly after getting married. We decided, as many young Israelis did during those times, to go out and see the world and take







a break from the pressures of daily life in Eretz Yisroel. A very popular destination for trips then was the great metropolis of New York, the city that never stops. This particular journey was clouded by the fact that my father, Shlomo Mizrachi, was ill. The doctors had revealed a medical problem that seriously affected his health and curtailed his ability to function.

“The medical staff classified his illness as terminal and incurable, and he lay in the hospital for a lengthy period of time. My father was a learned and scholarly Torah

observant Jew, who served as gabbai of the Beit E-l Synagogue in Rishon L’Zion. Even in such difficult times, he always instilled within us the belief that G-d’s salvation can come in the blink of an eye, reminding us that He is the Healer of all flesh Who does wondrous things, and it makes no difference if the doctors have already given up. He had no fear, and was filled with boundless faith. When I came to ask his permission to make the trip under such circumstances, he agreed without hesitation.

“I wondered out loud if it was

really a good idea to travel in a situation where the doctors said that my father didn’t have much time left, but he rejected this argument categorically and urged me to take the trip as planned.

“With mixed feelings, I made my way to New York, constantly worrying whether I would ever see my father again. When I mentioned his condition to several of my friends in New York, they directed me to one address: 770 Eastern Parkway and the Lubavitcher Rebbe! While he may live in Brooklyn, his empire spreads all over the world. I was familiar with Chabad, but I knew nothing about the greatness of the Rebbe. I remember that one of them told me, ‘Just as it’s forbidden to miss visiting the Western Wall when you come to Eretz Yisroel, when you come to New York, you must go to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Everyone is amazed by the Rebbe’s greatness and the wonders and miracles attributed to him.’

“Thus, one fine day we found ourselves visiting 770. I had the privilege that day to participate in a farbrengen with the Rebbe together with throngs of his chassidim, and I stayed there from beginning to end.

“Unfamiliar with Yiddish, I didn’t grasp much of what he said. Nevertheless, I was spellbound, excited, but mainly amazed by the Rebbe’s radiant appearance and shining countenance. I couldn’t take my eyes off of him. I never felt this way before or since. I stood silently and listened with the utmost attention, enraptured by what I heard, even though I failed to comprehend.

“This was the only experience from my trip to New York that remains emblazoned in my memory, and it was worth it all. At the conclusion of the farbrengen, numerous chassidim went up to

***He is still in possession of one of those three dollars that he received from the Rebbe – his father decided to give the other two dollars to Jews who also needed salvation in health matters. He absolutely believes with all his heart that this is what will save his life, which according to the doctors is hanging in the balance.***

the platform where the Rebbe was sitting, and he gave each of them a pack of dollars in order to give three dollar bills to each of the participants in attendance. I asked one of the young men standing nearby about the meaning of this custom. He proceeded to explain that these dollars are a source of tremendous hidden blessing and good fortune, and when I receive them, I should hold them as a keepsake and give three different dollars in their place to charity.

“The beis midrash was extremely crowded. Several hundred chassidim stood as if they were packed in a sardine can. Yet, it seemed to me that they were all mesmerized and captivated no less than I was. I thought to myself the entire time that the trip to New York had been worthwhile just in order to have the privilege of experiencing this event. Perhaps Heaven had destined for me to decide to make this journey in spite of my father’s serious medical condition in order that I could bring him these three holy dollars. After all, the young man had told me that they could work miracles.

“As the farbrengen ended, a path was formed among the throngs of people, and the Rebbe

departed, accompanied by his aides.”

#### **FOURTEEN YEARS OF LIFE**

“After the farbrengen, nothing else interested me on the New York trip, and I waited for the moment when I could get on a plane back to Eretz Yisroel. Contact with the family back home was irregular, as international telephone connections were not what they are today. When I did call home and ask for an update on my father’s condition, they told me that the situation remained unchanged and he was confined to bed at home.

“When the flight landed at Lod Airport, I quickly left the terminal and headed towards my brother, who was waiting for me outside as pre-arranged. I very much wanted to see my father, and primarily to give him the dollars from the Rebbe for a blessing and a segula.

“I naively thought that my father was at home, however, when my brother turned left at Beit Dagan Junction instead of going straight, I asked him what had happened. He then told me that our father had been re-hospitalized, and according to the doctors, his days were numbered.

When I angrily asked why his medical condition had been kept from me when I called, my brother simply explained that they didn’t want to ruin my vacation. I entered my father’s room, and was shocked by what I saw. His entire body was hooked up to tubes, and he lay there unconscious, sedated, and on a respirator. It was a very painful sight to see.

“My brothers told me that his health condition had become complicated, and the medical staff didn’t give him much more time. I don’t know how to explain this logically, but I had tremendous faith in the three dollars that I received from the Rebbe. Despite all the pain and despair of those around us, I placed the dollars under his head and prayed quietly that the Rebbe will arouse G-d’s Divine mercy upon him.

Afterwards, we went back home to Rishon L’Zion.

“The following day, I got up early and made my way to the hospital, praying in my heart for a miracle from Heaven.

“I was the child who was closest to my father, and his serious condition cast a damper on my spirits. I was prepared to do anything for him.

“Incredible as it may seem, when I entered his room, I found him sitting on a chair and eating breakfast... I stood there thunderstruck and astonished. It was difficult to believe that this was the same person who only last night lay unconscious, hooked up to tubes all over his body. Even the doctors maintained that this was literally a medical miracle. ‘People usually don’t recover from such a complicated illness, but he came back to life,’ they said.

“With great emotion, I told my father about the dollars and the special visit with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and he nodded his head as a sign of thanks. It was clear that

he had made the connection between the miraculous recovery and the Rebbe's holy dollars.

"In fact, my father, of blessed memory, lived for another fourteen good and pleasant years. While his illness did continue to bother him, he still left this world after living a long and fruitful life. I suddenly felt that the whole trip to New York was an incredible case of Divine Providence just in order that I could visit the Rebbe

and help my father in this Heaven-sent manner."

\*

Sadly, just four months ago, forty years after this story took place, Nissim Mizrachi himself contracted the same illness as his father's – in exactly the same part of his body. He is still in possession of one of those three dollars that he received from the Rebbe – his father decided to give

the other two dollars to Jews who also needed salvation in health matters. He absolutely believes with all his heart that this is what will save his life, which according to the doctors is hanging in the balance.

He makes a heartfelt request that all those who read this story should pray for the complete and speedy recovery of **Nissim ben Sara**.

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#### APPROBATION

I strongly recommend the esteemed project of Radio Moshiach, which operates here in our neighborhood of Crown Heights, "Here has Hashem commanded His blessing," as well as in other surrounding neighborhoods. Radio Moshiach enables countless individuals to listen to the Rebbe's Farbrengens, to divrei Torah in the concepts of Geulah and Moshiach, to niggunei Chabad and more, which generates a holy, uplifted atmosphere in the homes of all listeners.

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Upon this statement I affix my signature, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Tamuz 5766



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# THE POWER OF JOY

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz  
Shliach, Beit Shaan



Children at the Tzivos Hashem club in Mevo Choron

## SIMCHA AT THE CHABAD SHUL

R' Sagi Har Shefer, shliach in Nes Tziyona, told me about someone in his city whose oldest son unfortunately stopped attending shul. One day, the son dropped into the Chabad house and discovered joyous davening. There was singing and even dancing on Friday night after Lecha Dodi. He came back again and again and today he is one of the regulars at the Chabad house and is mekurav to the Rebbe.

R' Shimshon Tal, shliach in Hod HaSharon related:

At our Chabad house there is an especially joyous atmosphere. We sing a lot in the davening and everybody knows the tunes and joins in. One voice, the voice of my six year old son, can be heard over everyone's.

One Shabbos after the davening, an older lady went over to my son and said, "Don't stop singing. I listen to every t'filla from the women's section and I always enjoy

hearing you sing."

On weekdays, R' Tal goes to daven in another shul, one that was started recently by some mekuravim to Chabad. These are businessmen who attend the weekly shiur given by R' Yossi Ginsburgh in Ramat Aviv. They built themselves a Chassidic-Sefardic shul in Hod HaSharon. R' Tal goes to daven there with them very early every morning. After the davening they put on some music and they all dance. Only after that do they go to the other room for a shiur in the daily Chumash with Rashi. R' Tal teaches the class and adds Chassidic insights. Then they are ready to start their workday, having been fortified with simcha, Torah, and Chassidus.

There are also shiurim in the evenings. The Aron Kodesh is decorated with square Luchos and whoever enters the shul immediately feels the Chassidishe simcha, a simcha that hastens the Geula.

## SIMCHA: GEMATRIA MOSHIACH

To R' Yitzchok Yadgar, shliach in Taanach, simcha is an integral aspect of his activities. In every conversation with R' Yadgar and in every shiur, simcha is apparent and it affects all the participants.

"Recently," said R' Yadgar, "a young woman, a graduate of the Chabad school I run, came crying to me. She had a tumor which the doctors had written off as nothing but later discovered to be malignant. She had to undergo an operation to have it removed and hope that it hadn't spread.

"I encouraged her, 'First, stop crying and be b'simcha. Remember, yismach has the letters of Moshiach!' Then she asked the Rebbe for a bracha through the Igros Kodesh and she opened to 'good news.' I suggested that she make some positive commitments, to register



her son in a religious preschool and to be careful with family purity, and I blessed her that after the operation nothing should remain of her illness so she wouldn't need additional treatment.

"After the operation the doctor said to her, 'Praise the Creator because you had a miracle! Contrary to all the predictions and statistics, you don't need additional treatment. The disease is completely gone.'"

## **SIMCHA LED TO A BIG DONATION**

R' Shimon Yardeni, shliach in Azor related:

A few years ago I had serious financial problems and I urgently needed a large sum of money. I didn't know what to do. I suddenly remembered a sicha of the Rebbe of Shabbos Parshas Truma, 5752, in which the Rebbe said every Jew is rich. I decided to be happy and optimistic. My simcha grew to the point that I got up and danced alone in the Chabad house. I felt I was dancing with the Rebbe and with faith in what he said.

I left the Chabad house and a woman who lives in the yishuv, whose son I recently prepared for his bar mitzva, came over and gave me precisely the amount of money I needed. I saw with my own eyes how simcha brings bracha.

## **SIMCHA CHANGED MY LIFE**

R' Elisha Avni is a shliach and program director in yishuv Mevo Choron, not far from Yerushalayim. You may not have heard of the place or the shliach, but the people of the yishuv know him well. They all know about the interesting farbrengens, the Tanya classes, the Lag B'Omer parades, and the Tzivos Hashem club that he organizes.

They are also aware of the fact

that bachurim from the yishuv disappear and only after a while do they find out that R' Avni sent them to 770. Some of them return to the yishuv with a sirtuk and live a Chassidishe life, thanks to the Rebbe's shliach.

At first, he didn't even consider himself a shliach but after visiting the Rebbe and experiencing giluyim from him, he returned to Mevo Choron and made major changes in himself and the yishuv.

It was in Tishrei 5741/1980 when the young rabbi noticed that the Rebbe distributed a bottle of mashke to certain Chassidim. He went over to one of the Rebbe's secretaries and asked whether he

renewed energy now that he knew he had the Rebbe's help.

That Tishrei, R' Avni received lekach from the Rebbe and at the farbrengen, the Rebbe motioned to him to say l'chaim. No wonder then that he returned to Eretz Yisroel with tremendous enthusiasm.

"The first thing I did was to take the lekach and mix it into new cakes. I went to the preschools and gave out 'lekach from a tzaddik' to the children. They were all given a picture of the Rebbe and they sang Chabad songs. I saved the bottle of mashke for Yud-Tes Kislev, when I widely advertised the upcoming farbrengen and said that mashke from the Lubavitcher Rebbe would

***A few days later, R' Groner gave him a bottle of mashke and said, "The Rebbe gave this bottle for you." R' Avni was thrilled and this simcha gave him new strength. He resolved that he would no longer be embarrassed by those who mocked and opposed Chassidus and he would work with renewed energy now that he knew he had the Rebbe's help.***

could also receive a bottle for the work he does in Mevo Choron. A few days later, R' Groner, the Rebbe's secretary, gave him a bottle of mashke and said, "The Rebbe gave this bottle for you."

R' Avni was thrilled and this simcha gave him new strength. He decided that he would return to Mevo Choron different than the way he was before. He resolved that he would no longer be embarrassed by those who mocked and opposed Chassidus and he would work with

be distributed.

There was a terrific response, following which we started a Tanya class with Rabbi Yossi Gruzman, who came from Kfar Chabad every week. There were also other farbrengens with mashpiim who came from Kiryat Malachi, Dr. Tal Nir and others. The yishuv slowly began to acquire a Chassidic atmosphere. We have Chabad in Mevo Choron and it's all because of the simcha that the mashke from the Rebbe gave me.

# REB BERKE, THE AFIKOMAN

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

*Amongst the childhood memories of Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman there is a place of honor reserved for the extraordinary Chassid, R' Berke Chein a"h. R' Berke was a fugitive in the Zaltzman home for two years, giving R' Hillel a special opportunity to observe a genuine Chassid from up close. In this and the following chapter, R' Hillel shares his memories of R' Berke.*

My memories of R' Berke Chein begin with my childhood in Samarkand. R' Berke went there together with the other Lubavitcher Chassidim who fled the Nazis during World War II. The Lubavitcher refugees formed a Chabad k'hilla and within a short time they had opened secret chadarim and yeshivos.

R' Berke was one of the Chassidishe melamdim. Many parents wanted their children to have him as their teacher. One day my father came home and announced that he had been able to arrange for me to be in R' Berke's class.

I was six years old at the time and I was very apprehensive at this news, since I had heard that R'

Berke punished students with a *kontchik* [leather strap]. Although his talmid, Mottel Kalmanson said he was a good melamed and never hit anyone, I worried, "Mottel is his nephew but I'm not related to him."

I went to his class and discovered for myself that yes, there was a leather strap hanging on the wall, but he never used it. It was there just to frighten us. (I heard the Rebbe say at a farbrengen that his melamed had a *kontchik* hanging on the wall and for some talmidim, it was enough just to see it; for some talmidim, the melamed had to take it off the wall in order to get them to behave; and some talmidim needed more than that.)



## AT THE LAST MINUTE, BEFORE LEAVING RUSSIA

After the war, when most of Anash left Russia in 1946, R' Berke also tried his luck in crossing the border into Poland. He traveled to Lvov (Lemberg), where askanei Anash (led by R' Leibel Mochkin and R' Mendel Futerfas) arranged forged documents for Anash which stated they were Polish citizens and were allowed to return to their homeland.

This was very dangerous, of course, and those Lubavitchers who were caught paid for this criminal act with many years of imprisonment. It was only after Stalin's death that the survivors were



R' Berke Chein  
with his son R' Mottel

*I heard the Rebbe say at a farbrengen that his melamed had a leather crop hanging on the wall and for some talmidim, it was enough just to see it; for some talmidim, the melamed had to take it off the wall in order to get them to behave; and some talmidim needed more than that.*

and his parents-in-law. Suddenly, a police car showed up and one of the policemen politely asked R' Berke to accompany him. R' Berke managed to say a few words to his family, asking them to say chapter 20 of T'hillim on his behalf.

The train was supposed to come at any moment and the Chein family had to make the fateful decision: who was going to continue with their plan and leave Russia and who would stay behind with R' Berke?

His wife Feigel declared that she would not travel without her husband. Her parents said that if she stayed, they too would stay. They decided to send the boys, since their educational future would be in jeopardy if they remained in Russia. The boys, R' Mottel and R' Meir Simcha, joined another family which, for the purposes of crossing the border, had it registered that they had children. Feigel and her parents remained in the Soviet Union.

The parting from their children cannot be described. Nobody knew when or if they would see one another again. R' Berke's sons left Russia and until 1961 were orphaned of their living parents.

## FUGITIVE

R' Berke was taken to the cellars of the KGB and after a long, painful interrogation he was given the death

sentence. This was then reduced to eighteen years imprisonment and the final sentence was ten years internment.

Throughout this terrifying time, his wife worked behind the scenes to smuggle her husband out of jail. She did not rest, day or night, and miraculously, she was able to bribe a few key people. After three years in jail, she was able to free him. Her husband lived with her for a short time in Lvov, where his two brothers lived. During this time, their daughter was born.

Not long afterwards, though, the KGB once again began looking for all those connected to the big escape from Russia in 1946-1947 who were not previously arrested or had been arrested and freed, like R' Berke.

As was their way, one night the KGB pounced simultaneously on several homes of Anash, so they would be unable to warn one another. They arrested several of the askanim who had remained in Lvov. One of those arrested was R' Berke's brother, R' Dovid Leib. His wife managed to run and warn R' Berke. Five minutes later the secret agents showed up at R' Berke's house, but by an open miracle, he was able to flee the house with his tallis and t'fillin before they showed up.

Thus began the most dangerous period in his life, as he wandered from one hiding place to another. At

freed.

Obtaining Polish documents was complicated and dangerous and was not possible for everybody. The askanim gave priority to those who had young children that needed a Jewish education. After some effort, R' Berke was able to get Polish passports and at the appointed time he showed up with his family at the train station in Lvov. They didn't know that the secret police were following them and with pounding hearts they waited for the moment when they could board the train. After half an hour's travel they would be over the border!

The Chein family consisted of R' Berke and his wife, his two sons,



***When R' Berke was fourteen he was already completely involved in the world of business. He bought merchandise for such large sums of money that to conceal the cash he had to wrap wads of bills all around his body when traveling from city to city.***

first he hid with a family in Lvov and did not step foot outdoors. When he felt the noose tightening in Lvov, he went to his niece Bas-Sheva, the wife of R' Yehuda Kulasher (Butrashvili) who lived in Malachovka, a suburb of Moscow.

It didn't take long for the police to visit his niece's house and ask whether there were any guests. R' Berke was in the middle of davening and did not notice what was going on around him. When the police saw him from the back, wrapped in tallis and t'fillin, R' Yehuda told them it was someone praying and miraculously, they left.

Naturally, after a visit by the police, R' Berke was afraid to continue staying in his niece's house. Throughout his wanderings, R' Berke was particular about even the smallest details of Chassidic practice, despite the danger.

He went from place to place among Lubavitcher families who lived in various suburbs of Moscow, until he felt he had to leave. He decided to travel to distant Samarkand. The trip from Moscow to Samarkand, which took a week by train, was dangerous. Passengers were checked several times on the long trip by those in charge of the train and also by policemen who would get on at various stops to see whether each passenger had a passport and other documents.

Needless to say, if they checked R' Berke's papers and discovered he



**R' Hillel Zaltzman**

was a wanted man, he would be in trouble. He had no choice but to travel to Samarkand anyway. He hoped that in that place far from Lvov and the center of Russia, he would be left alone.

### **R' CHAIM – THE AFIKOMAN**

R' Berke miraculously made it to Samarkand without incident. He went to the Mishulovin family, old friends, and found refuge with them. I was a little boy when I went to visit my friend Michoel Mishulovin and I saw a stranger in the other room talking to R' Eliyahu Mishulovin. Although Eliyahu was just 19, he was considered an intelligent young man and R' Berke spoke to him as a

peer.

When they saw me, they closed the door. I realized he was a Jew in hiding whose presence was a secret. Afterwards I found out that it was R' Berke Chein.

Nobody knew that R' Berke was in Samarkand. In order to guarantee that nobody would spill the beans and say "R' Berke" by mistake, he decided to call himself "R' Chaim." It wasn't a lie since his full name was Chaim Dov Ber. In general, R' Berke was very particular not to lie. He said that the Rebbe Rayatz was once asked what to do in interrogations by the KGB when telling the truth would have dire consequences.

The Rebbe said that lying was forbidden but the truth had to be concealed. So when we spoke about R' Berke, we would call him R' Chaim. My aunt Rosa, who was known for her cleverness, nicknamed him "Afikoman" because he was constantly hidden.

R' Berke stayed in the Mishulovin home for a few months until it was feared that someone had noticed the guest and they decided it would be prudent for him to move to another hiding place. After much deliberation and careful investigation of the possibilities for hiding places among Anash in the city, they decided he would stay with us, the Zaltzmans. Eliyahu Mishulovin spoke with my older brother Berel about moving R' Berke to our house. After my brother discussed it with my parents and they gave their consent, R' Berke moved into our house.

### **THERE'S PLENTY OF TIME FOR SLEEPING OVER THERE**

I was about eleven years old. They told me that we would be having a guest, a Jew who had no place to live. They warned me that nobody was allowed to know that he



was in our house.

My parents' home consisted of two rooms and a small corridor. The first room was a dining room/living room/kitchen/bedroom for my parents, my sisters and me. The second room, which was not heated, was for R' Berke. My brother Berel slept in that room too. From that room you could go out to a little porch that faced the yard. During the day, R' Berke didn't dare go out to the porch lest one of the neighbors see him. He was holed up in his room all day, immersed in t'filla and avoda. Late in the evening he would go out on the porch to breathe some fresh air.

I remember that during the long summer days my mother would tell R' Berke to go rest a bit. He would point at the cemetery that could be seen from the window of our home and say, "Over there, we will rest a lot. Now there's no time for that."

Our apartment was on the second floor, separate from the Bucharian families who shared our courtyard. On the one hand, this was a big advantage when we wanted to hide the fact that R' Berke was living with us. On the other hand, it created a problem because in those days we didn't have a bathroom. There was an outhouse about forty or fifty meters away from the house. It was a small structure with a hole covered by some boards with a space in between.

R' Berke certainly couldn't go out to the yard every time he needed to relieve himself because within 24 hours all the neighbors would know of his presence in our house. Instead, he would use a chamber pot which had to be emptied every day. We young bachurim weren't sufficiently alert to small details and the burden fell upon our righteous mother.

She did everything with sensitivity, not only so that the neighbors wouldn't notice but also so that R' Berke wouldn't feel



R' Berke Chein receiving kos shel bracha from the Rebbe

***What immersion in a mikva can accomplish, the greatest mitzva cannot accomplish, and what sadness can accomplish, the biggest sin cannot accomplish.***

uncomfortable. She would wait until R' Berke was immersed in davening, at which time he didn't see or hear anything going on around him, and she would hurry to clean up. She did this not for one day, not for one week, and not even for one month, but for nearly two years!

In those days there were no washing machines and my mother had to wash all our – as well as R' Berke's – clothes by hand. She would put each garment on an iron washing board, rub it with soap, and then rinse it. It was hard work and R' Berke pleaded with her to get a gentile woman to do it, but how could we bring a gentile woman into the house when he was hiding there? My mother tried to do the laundry while R' Berke was immersed in davening and avoda to avoid making him feel

uncomfortable.

During the two years that R' Berke stayed with us, he was ill a number of times. Of course we couldn't take him to the doctor or call a doctor in. How we managed each time, I don't remember and don't understand. I just remember that one time he was very sick and his life was in danger. We had no choice but to call in a doctor. They told him that we had a guest and he became sick.

Our family, like the Mishulovin family where R' Berke hid previously, knew the price we would pay if they figured out that we were hiding a fugitive, a man the Soviet police was looking for. But did we have another choice? You couldn't throw a person out into the clutches of the KGB! In order to calm themselves, they figured that if he

was captured, G-d forbid, they would say they didn't know him, that this unfortunate person showed up with no place to live and as compassionate people they had pity on him and took him in. They knew the KGB wouldn't buy this story but it was reassuring to have one prepared just in case.

I remember that one time, as R' Berke was davening, some government official came to check the residents logbook. He entered our home and saw the door to the second room was closed. He opened the door and saw R' Berke standing and davening. They told him that he was praying and could not be disturbed. The official apparently suspected that something wasn't as it should be and he began asking questions about who this man was. He had to be bribed so he wouldn't talk. From then on, even after R' Berke had left for the Mishulovin home the official would come to our house every month for more money.

## A BEINONI OF THE TANYA

R' Berke's stay in Samarkand enriched our Chassidic education and lifestyle. As young boys, we observed R' Berke's behavior and learned how a Chassid acts, not only while davening and learning but also in daily life, as the aphorism goes: "There walks a Chassid, eats a Chassid, sleeps a Chassid." In each detail his Chassidishkait was apparent.

R' Berke once told us that in his youth his behavior was completely different. As a child, he loved money and the first words he learned to say were "Mama" and "money." He loved money so much that he would kiss it. When R' Berke was fourteen he was already completely involved in the world of business. He bought merchandise for such large sums of money that to conceal the cash he had to wrap wads of bills all around

his body when traveling from city to city.

But when he got older he began to think, is this that what my future will look like? Will I always be immersed in business with its inevitable association with cheating and lies? Spiritually moved, he decided to change his life and he became a preschool teacher. He also changed his middos and instead of being a hoarder to whom every penny is guarded, he began to give away his money to tz'daka.

When we heard this, we realized that this is what a Chassid is about, and this is how we had to break the Yetzer Hara. To us, R' Berke was the embodiment of the Beinoni in Tanya for he fought the Yetzer Hara all his days and succeeded in ruling over it.

## IMMERSION IN THE MORNING WITH MESIRUS NEFESH

R' Berke's day began with immersion. In his first years in Samarkand, there was no mikva and despite the danger, he would walk every morning to immerse in a small river on the edge of the city. Early in the morning, when the townspeople were still asleep and nobody was in the street, R' Berke would put on rags like a homeless person, tuck his beard into his coat, and walk to the river. He did this every day throughout the summer. We thought he would stop in the winter, especially since he was sickly, but he didn't; he went to immerse in the river even on the most frigid days.

Back then, we bachurim would immerse in the river or pool and our way there was through the center of town. During the summer the center of town was a hangout and it wasn't recommended that Chassidishe bachurim walk through there. We thought of skipping the immersion Shabbos morning and sufficing with the immersion of Erev Shabbos. We said it wasn't proper for us to see

the sights of the center of town on Shabbos before davening.

When R' Berke heard about this he negated the idea and said there was nothing in the world that could substitute for the advantage of immersion before davening. He quoted the Chassidic saying that what immersion in a mikva can accomplish, the greatest mitzva cannot accomplish, and what sadness can accomplish, the biggest sin cannot accomplish. He said we had to develop self-control and look only within our four cubits but we should not forego going to the mikva on Shabbos.

Even in later years, when R' Abba's mikva reopened in Samarkand – the mikva that R' Abba Pliskin built during the war – R' Berke preferred to immerse in the river in the summer. He was afraid that his daily visits to the mikva would arouse suspicion and might cause the location of the mikva to be discovered. He also preferred not to ask for favors from R' Feivish Genkin who, along with his wife Chasha, was responsible for the mikva. Only in the winter did he immerse in R' Feivish's mikva.

It once happened that R' Berke wanted to go to the mikva after hours and R' Feivish refused to open the mikva for him. R' Berke pleaded with him but R' Feivish refused to budge, on principle. It was a winter day and when R' Berke gave up on convincing R' Feivish, he went to the river despite the freezing cold.

When R' Feivish saw how serious R' Berke was about immersing, he was so moved that he gave R' Berke the key to the mikva so he could go whenever he wanted.

This same mikva was also used by women and was run by his wife Chasha. The mikva was supposed to be closed by a certain time at night. When R' Berke heard about this, he asked R' Feivish to leave the mikva open for at least another hour after the official closing time. He said if a

woman came late, she should still have a chance to immerse.

R' Feivish maintained that people should come during hours and not show up late. R' Berke turned pale and began to shake. He was so overwrought he could barely speak. With his remaining strength he screamed at R' Feivish, "You should know that you're starting up with the Baal Shem Tov and all the Rebbeim!" In the end, R' Feivish gave in and did as R' Berke requested.

## SECRET SUKKA

After immersing in a mikva, R' Berke would recite all of T'hillim, eat a little something, and then sit and learn Chassidus until ten o'clock. His Shacharis took two hours, until noon. Then he would put on Rabbeinu Tam t'fillin. Putting on t'fillin was an entire avoda for him. He would ask for our t'fillin; from one he preferred the hand t'fillin and from another the head t'fillin.

When he was no longer forced to hide, (as will be related in the next chapter), he walked to the homes of Anash and asked this one for his hand t'fillin and another for his head t'fillin. He recited the Shma from parchment. In general, when R' Berke heard about a hiddur, he would adopt it.

He would finish davening at 1:00 and then sit down to eat lunch. After such a davening, even his eating was an entire avoda, never done ravenously or gluttonously. He would take a slice of bread, cut it into little pieces, and put one piece after another into his mouth while chewing slowly. That's how he ate everything he was served.

He would say that according to the rules of health, you had to eat slowly so that the food digested, but people ate quickly just to satisfy their desires. Therefore, when a person eats not to satisfy his desires

***R' Berke turned pale and began to shake. He was so overwrought he could barely speak. With his remaining strength he screamed at R' Feivish, "You should know that you're starting up with the Baal Shem Tov and all the Rebbeim!"***



**R' Feivish Genkin**

but for his health, he should eat slowly.

During the long summer, he would rest at 2:00 for an hour. Whenever he went to sleep, he was particular not to cover his feet (so that he shouldn't be too comfortable). At 3:00 he sat and learned a series of shiurim on various topics. During the long summer days he would recite the entire T'hillim again in the afternoon. Then he would daven Mincha and Maariv and sit down to study Shulchan Aruch, Chassidus, etc.

On Shabbos he would finish the entire T'hillim before davening. After davening he would review the sidra,

*Shnayim Mikra, V'Echad Targum*, and then would recite the entire T'hillim again before Mincha. Mincha or Maariv would take over half an hour.

R' Berke yearned to daven with a minyan and we tried, to the best of our ability, to make this possible. We would arrange a minyan for Shabbos in our house. Sometimes we did not have ten men to whom we could entrust R' Berke's secret. He would hide in his room and hear the davening from there and answer K'dusha and "boruch Hu u'varuch shmo." His joy over participating in a minyan is indescribable.

Sometimes we only had nine men and together with R' Berke we had ten. We couldn't announce his presence but did not want to forego the minyan. We would include a child with a Chumash and say that having no choice, we would rely on this solution for the minyan.

For the Yomim Nora'im and Sukkos, R' Berke would always go to the Mishulovin home. It was dangerous to eat in a sukka at our house because it was located in the yard together with all the neighbors. The Mishulovins had a separate yard. Not only that but R' Feivish would build a sukka with a double wall for them. If someone would visit their sukka, he wouldn't dream that behind the sukka was another small sukka where R' Berke spent most of Sukkos davening and learning.



We preferred that R' Berke spend the Yomim Nora'im with the Mishulovins, where it was possible to have larger minyanim as was fitting for the Yomim Nora'im.

People looked at him as he davened. It happened more than once that while focusing on the words of the davening, he would grind his teeth. This was the case on weekdays and all the more so, on the Yomim Nora'im. Tears would pour down his face throughout the davening, especially during Shmoneh Esrei. Even Kaparos took him an hour. He said each word with great concentration and tears. The *LaM'natzei'ach Livnei Korach* before the blowing of the shofar took him an hour. When I left Russia it was hard for me to get used to the speedy davening and the five minute Kaparos.

## PEARLS FROM FARBRENGENS

At a later point, when R' Berke was able to leave his hiding place, Anash and the bachurim in Samarkand enjoyed his farbrengens. One time, on Shabbos Mevarchim after the davening, all the bachurim sat down to farbreng. They made Kiddush and said l'chaim and waited for R' Berke, but he was in the middle of reviewing the sidra.

I was 17 and was the chutzpinyak of the group. I went over to him and said, "Bachurim who are busy throughout the week are sitting here because it's Shabbos Mevarchim and we have to wait for you to finish reviewing the sidra?"

Anyone else would surely have tossed me out, but R' Berke, with his refined middos, indicated with a

movement of his head and saying, "uh, uh," that I was right and that he would try and quickly finish the sidra. He didn't want to stop in the middle because his custom was to do the entire sidra at once.

On each of his birthdays he committed to a new hiddur and said that this is what R' Hillel of Paritch did. R' Berke said that one time, on his birthday, R' Hillel began to sweep the house from the entrance of the house towards the inside and not the other way round, which is the usual way.

R' Berke would often speak about R' Itche der Masmid during farbrengens. He once said that R' Itche would always speak about R' Hillel of Paritch and R' Isaac of Homil and would say that when a Chassid speaks a lot (and *kocht zich*) about a certain Chassid, it's a sign that he is close to his level. I thought to myself – R' Berke often speaks about R' Itche der Masmid. This must be because they are all the same type.

I remember that at farbrengens, when they would speak about Chassidim and their level, R' Berke said, "It is known that the Rebbe Rayatz said about R' Itche der Masmid that he is the Beinoni of Tanya. The Rebbe Rashab once said to R' Chonye Morosov, '*Na dir ahava un na dir yira*' (take for you love, take for you fear) and he gave him a slap on his shoulder. Chassidim said that the Rebbe Rashab meant to say that R' Chonye was on the level of the Beinoni since the Beinoni has love and fear."

After hearing this from R' Berke, we sat together and mused: Whose level is greater – R' Itche der Masmid's or R' Chonye Morosov?

We decided that R' Itche's was higher because the Rebbe Rashab gave R' Chonye the love and fear while R' Itche toiled to attain it himself.

I heard that R' Chonye was a crier, by nature. One time, the Rebbe Rashab asked him, "Chonye, why are you always crying?"

R' Chonye replied, "What do you mean? For the sins of my youth."

The Rebbe asked, "If you knew that you already washed them away with tears, would you stop crying?"

R' Chonye said: "Certainly!"

Said the Rebbe, "Nu, you can stop crying."

But they say that R' Chonye continued to cry.

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R' Berke once spoke at length about the value of Tomchei T'mimim in general and a Tamim in particular. He said that R' Meir Simcha Chein had seven daughters and since this was in the time of the Communist Revolution when many people went off the derech and joined the communist party, he was worried about shidduchim for his daughters. In order to accustom them to T'mimim and to appreciate them, he would often host bachurim in his house and make sure to tell his daughters of their good qualities.

He would say that a Tamim is a diamond. That is how he educated his daughters from a young age. One of his daughters related that a Tamim once came to them with torn sleeves, his nose was running and he didn't have basic manners, yet she still looked at him with admiration because that is what her father taught her; since he was a Tamim, he was a diamond!

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