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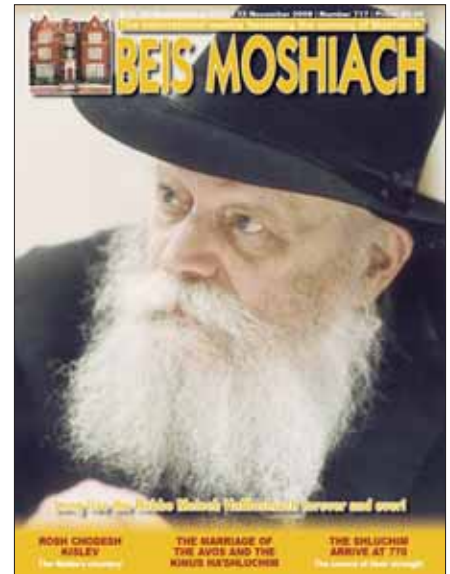
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USA

744 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409
Tel: (718) 778-8000
Fax: (718) 778-0800
admin@beismoshiach.org
www.beismoshiach.org

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
M.M. Hendel

ENGLISH EDITOR:
Boruch Merkur

HEBREW EDITOR:
Rabbi Sholom Yaakov Chazan
editorH@beismoshiach.org

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SHLUCHIM GOING HOME

By Menachem Ziegelboim

We caught Rabbi Nechemia Schmerling as he was about to board the plane for his trip to the Kinus HaShluchim. The shliach in Kfar Yona granted us a fascinating interview about shlichus, the challenges shluchim face, and the shluchim's perspective of Anash in Chabad communities.

You're in the final stages of preparations for the trip to the Kinus HaShluchim.

As a shliach, I try to juggle all of my many obligations. Time constraints are a big problem for me. I teach every morning in the public school system and that ties me down. I have a weddings for mekuravim scheduled both immediately before the trip and right when I get back so the timing is critical. I don't have the luxury of a vacation.

What does the trip to the Kinus HaShluchim do for you?

I recently sat with the chief accountant at one of the big companies here in Israel and when I mentioned my upcoming trip he said, "I hold a senior position here and the world is mine and yet it has been ten years since I've been in the United States. Why is it so

important for you to go every year?"

I told him, "Just as you travel to all sorts of exhibits and conventions in your field, I also travel to the annual gathering of those in my profession, namely the shluchim, where we meet, work out issues and share information with one another."

I told him that every month I get phone calls from my fellow shluchim around the world in which we inform each other of the progress of Jews who came from those locations to Kfar Yona or the other way round, and we try not to lose anybody and to keep in touch with them. To illustrate, I recently received a phone call from the shliach in Peru, Rabbi Blumenfeld, about a certain person. Then I got a call from a shliach in Toronto about someone from his city who had come to Kfar Yona and he asked me to keep in touch with him. So once a

R' Nechemia Schmerling is one of the most interesting among the Israeli shluchim. His "kingdom" is relatively modest in Kfar Yona, between Netanya and Tul Karem, a quiet place out of the public eye, but the size of the place is not a reflection on the shliach who works there.

Shortly before boarding his plane, I schmoozed with R' Schmerling about shlichus and shluchim. Despite the late hour he was in fine form. He never flinched at the tough questions I posed, though he occasionally paused to think things through before responding. Perhaps this interview can serve as a catalyst for discussion about hot topics pertaining to Chabad communities and life on shlichus, in Eretz Yisroel and the world at large.

year the global network meets to discuss various topics and resolve issues etc.

Furthermore, the Kinus HaShluchim is something very dear to the Rebbe and in years past, the Rebbe even paid some of the cost of the tickets. The Rebbe wants the shluchim near him. If the commander calls for his soldiers, if a father calls for his children, what's the question? You have to show up!

What does a shliach get out of the Kinus HaShluchim beyond whatever he learns at the workshops and connecting with other shluchim?

It's hard to explain. Even if you travel to the Rebbe several other times during the year, this is the trip that you long for. You think about it long before it happens and prepare for it even before Tishrei. As it approaches you get excited. It's not



that you anticipate any surprises. You know the schedule ahead of time and as the years go by you don't necessarily attend every workshop – as wonderfully organized as the program is. What really draws us? I don't know. You feel like you've returned home.

A mashpia at a farbrengen spoke about salmon that swim from place to place, until one day they instinctively begin swimming towards a particular destination. They exhaust themselves fighting against the current, they leap over waterfalls and escape from the nets of fishermen until they finally end up in a quiet area somewhere in the mountains, where they lay eggs and bring forth a new generation... That's 770.

What motivates them to swim against the current the entire way? Apparently this is where they were

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born and they feel an inner urge to return to their source.

Each of us was "born" in 770,

within the four cubits of the Rebbe.

Each of us have the big moments we were zocheh to, whether before or

You've come to 770 and yet you remain immersed in the material concerns you have all year?! In order to return home, you need to disengage from everything and be home. 770 is home!

after 3 Tamuz, the moments that shaped us into who we are. And that is where we yearn to return. It's our source. There is no rational explanation for this attraction but when you get there, you suddenly feel removed from the rest of the world, like someone who has come to his rightful place.

I remember the first time I went to 770. It was a Shabbos morning, Parshas Nitzavim-VaYeilech 5742/1982. I walked in at seven in the morning and learned Chassidus and then davened Shacharis and Musaf. Then I found myself a spot for the farbrengen. This was followed by Mincha. I left 770 a few minutes before sunset and ran to eat something. This was the first time I was leaving 770 after an entire Shabbos and suddenly, what do you know ... There are streets and cars and traffic lights. When I was in 770 all day I completely forgot all about the outside world.

This feeling recurs. When you go to 770 you are removed from everything else and arrive at the source.

ARRIVING AT 770, NOT FOR FUNDRAISING

You speak about 770 – the source for going out on shlichus – as lifting the shliach above the physical world. Then he has to return to his city, not to a Chabad community but to places where sometimes there isn't a Chabad minyan (or any minyan). How do you do it?

They say that one time, when

they said to the Rebbe, "Those who did not have the merit to come, should have the merit to come," the Rebbe replied, "One who *did* have the merit to come, should merit to come ..."

One thing that I find grating is when I walk in to the Kinus and see shluchim exchanging addresses for fundraising purposes. You've come to 770 and yet you remain immersed in the material concerns you have all year?! In order to return home, you need to disengage from everything and be home. 770 is home! A shliach needs to show up at 770 early in the morning and sit and learn Chassidus before davening – something he isn't necessarily able to do while on shlichus on a daily basis – and Shacharis needs to be a Shacharis! If he's attending the Kinus program, wonderful; if he has some free time, he should be spending it in 770.

Before leaving for Eretz Yisroel you may have to go to some stores to buy treats for the kids; you may need to visit some people and renew some ties from the past; you may have to set aside time to take care of errands, but your primary wish should be to remain in 770. We need to make commitments regarding learning, Nigleh and Chassidus, to simply sit and learn; to be there in order to replenish our spiritual supplies. Those who come and are busy with other things, well, I don't understand what they're taking home with them.

Every shliach needs a few days a year to disengage. When you go to the Kinus HaShluchim, you are going to the Rebbe, so set material

concerns aside. Be with the Rebbe.

True, all of us go with a hole in our pocket and we return to our place of shlichus with the same worries and problems, but things work out eventually. You see it happen. Every shliach is a witness to big miracles in his work.

THE GIFT A SHLIACH BRINGS

Is there a difference between a shliach who goes to the Rebbe and a Chassid who goes to the Rebbe?

I came across a sicha of the Rebbe in which he describes a Chassidishe balabus who is worn out all the days of the week because of his involvement in the mundane world of work. Comes Shabbos and you want to rest, but the opposite happens. The weariness and tiredness is what the entire Shabbos is about. The Shabbos isn't a Shabbos and the davening isn't a davening and five minutes after the davening is over he has already disappeared.

Then the Rebbe says, a Chassidishe balabus who acts this way is the utter opposite of what the congregation expects of him. Since he is busy all week, they expect to see a "Chassidishe balabus" on Shabbos who knows, after all he has been through throughout the week, to value his time, value Shabbos, and value t'filla.

A shliach who goes to the Rebbe arrives exhausted. The worries he has to contend with all year deplete his energies. In 770 there are balabatim who expect to see a shliach in all his Chassidic glory. They say "shalom aleichem" and expect to see something different, more elevated. The shliach needs to be a role model even when he is among his fellow Chassidim who did not merit to go out on shlichus.

Furthermore, every shliach who goes to 770 has spent the previous two or three weeks telling people he

is going to 770 and convincing people to write to the Rebbe. He goes to 770 loaded with neshamos that he will connect to the Rebbe. When he stands there in 770 with all those letters he's not there just for himself; he didn't come to speak about himself or his family, but on behalf of a large crowd of people who pinned their hopes on him. They sent their "nefesh, ruach, neshama" to connect with the Rebbe.

In a sense he is there to report?

Much more than that! The shliach is saying: "Rebbe, you sent me, I went, and now I am bringing you my bikkurim."

In 770 I was friendly with someone named Ed "the Coach." We would sit and talk. He learned a bit about Judaism and was familiar with the idea of the Mikdash and the Kohen Gadol. He decided to bring the Rebbe bikkurim. He told me that he grew big zucchinis in his backyard. When the time came, he looked for the biggest, nicest one to bring to the Rebbe. He picked it and took it into his house. It was a real whopper. He put it on the table in the kitchen, excited about bringing it to the Rebbe.

His family members weren't too happy with his connection to the Rebbe and someone ruined the vegetable. He was so broken by this; all the work he had put into it. He went back out to the yard to look for another zucchini and found one that was even nicer and bigger. He was thrilled.

It's the same idea. The Rebbe puts a lot into us shluchim. All year he provides for us. You write to the Rebbe and open to amazing answers. You see constant miracles. The Kinus HaShluchim is a time to return to the Rebbe because the whole point of the Kinus is to give the Rebbe nachas and to present the Rebbe with your true accomplishments, with all the



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bikkurim that you bring him.

I have a brother-in-law in Crown Heights who wants me to have at least one meal with him during the Kinus and he always urges me to bring along some other shluchim.

One year I brought along some guys from Kfar Yona with sirtuks and hats, Lubavitchers in every way.

He asked where they were on shlichus and I said they were Anash from Kfar Yona. What?! So many



I write “Yechi” in my ads more for myself than for others. As long as I identify with it and feel it, and it appears on my ads and I’m not embarrassed by it, that’s a sign that something is still burning.

sirtuks in Kfar Yona? Yes, they are the gift we shluchim bring to the Rebbe.

NO WEAKENING IN THE WORK OF SHLICHUS

I want to discuss shlichus with you. There were years, like at the beginning of the 90’s, when there was “on fire” for shlichus. There was an enthusiasm generated by the Rebbe’s new sichos. Today some get the feeling – and maybe

it’s not justified – that many shluchim are operating out of a sense of inertia. They are working, being mekarev people, but not really progressing.

At one of the recent Kinus HaShluchim I walked into the hall in Oholei Torah and saw an American bachur who had spent time in Kfar Yona. I said hello and asked him what he was up to these days. He said, “I have a k’hilla. I have balabatim.”

I told him, “You’re talking like a

Poilisher. You’re telling me that just like there were shtiblach and shtetlach full of Jews in Poland, you have that too. Great, so you have a nice parnasa and some position of authority.”

There are shluchim who go somewhere, get together some balabatim and start a k’hilla, fight with two of them and hug the three who support them. Terrific. If someone approaches shlichus that way, he has a serious problem.

I remember that I wrote “Yechi” in an ad and some Lubavitchers asked me why I needed to write that. I told them that it was more necessary for myself than for others. As long as I identify with it and feel it, and it appears on my ads and I’m not embarrassed by it, that’s a sign that something is still burning.

There was a Kinus HaShluchim in Eretz Yisroel right after 3 Tammuz. Of course people were *tumelling* about what we should do next, how to carry on. It was decided that each shliach would do as he saw fit for the outside but within Lubavitcher communities the same, uncompromising, unchanging message that the Rebbe is Moshiach would be promoted. That was the hachlata of that Kinus and as far as I know, it hasn’t changed since then.

What we see, though, is that many k’hillos, as well as many shluchim, ignore that hachlata we made. When you start putting on the brakes internally, that’s a problem. True, over time the novelty fades, but as long as you live with the idea and stick to it, then even if you want to take a break from the messages, the people around you won’t let you.

If you live Moshiach and talk about Moshiach all the time, then the people around you won’t let you slide even when you feel weak and tired.

Once a week I have a shiur at five o’clock in the afternoon. I often show up very tired but I have to walk in like someone who waited for

this all week. But sometimes when you are just too exhausted to fake it, the businessman who is waiting for you in order to get chizuk, inspires you with his enthusiasm. He tells you again and again, “Moshiach has to come!” and “the main thing is that Moshiach should come,” and even if you were tired you can’t remain apathetic.

Isn’t the tiredness understandable? There aren’t new sichos to get us excited and you don’t necessarily feel that someone is demanding an accounting ...

(Agitated) Of course you have to give an accounting. The Rebbe demands a very precise accounting.

I had an argument with a shliach in Kfar Yona. During Tishrei some questions came up and we had to ask the Rebbe what to do. I told him that I don’t write to the Rebbe in Tishrei because as far as I’m concerned, the Rebbe is *chai v’kayam* as before and the Rebbe asked us not to write in Tishrei. His response was that now we have other means to write to the Rebbe (Igros Kodesh) and so it’s a different story.

After Tishrei I wrote to the Rebbe about some timely issues. The letter that I opened to in the Igros Kodesh began, “After a very long break your letter was received.” That’s when I realized that you are supposed to write to the Rebbe and I resolved to write to the Rebbe much more.

The Rebbe doesn’t just require a *din v’cheshbon*; he’s running everything. I’ll give you an example. I haven’t done Army Reserve duty in a few years. Then I got an order for Reserves for the week after the Kinus HaShluchim. To tell you the truth, I really wanted to go on Reserve duty. I wrote to the Rebbe about it and explained myself with three reasons: 1) I want a break. In the morning I teach and in the afternoon I’m with the k’hilla and in the evening I’m at the Chabad house

If you live Moshiach and talk about Moshiach all the time, then the people around you won’t let you slide even when you feel weak and tired.

– a very demanding schedule, 2) I think it helps my image at the yishuv that I’m in uniform, 3) Whenever I meet guys from Reserves they ask why I don’t show up. They miss me and say that it’s not the same since I bring them a lot of Yiddishkait.

I put the letter into the Igros Kodesh and the three letters that appeared on the two pages dealt with *chinuch*, Talmud Torah, and “How come you think you have to leave the young children without *chinuch*.” It was obvious that the Rebbe decided I shouldn’t have a break and that I should remain on *shlichus*. I don’t have the strength? The Rebbe says there’s strength!

There was a problem, though, since I had told the Reserves that I would be coming and now the Rebbe was saying not to go. This could make a *chilul Hashem*. And how was I going to get out of it anyway? I realized that my plans were “*taavos*” and the Rebbe wanted something else. The question was how to get out of it.

A few days later I got a phone call. “I am calling from Army Communications. Your order is cancelled.” If the Rebbe decides that you don’t need to be there, then you don’t need to be there.

As for your question – I discussed just that with a few *shluchim* at a Kinus HaShluchim a few years ago. Not about the *shluchim*, because most of them are hard-working, but we were talking about the laxity among *Anash*. *Anash* have stopped getting together, much to our dismay. Before 3 Tammuz, when the Rebbe said to make a *Siyum HaRambam*, everybody

showed up. When people returned from the Rebbe in Tishrei, there was no debate whether the post-Tishrei gathering would be here or there since we all sat together.

Today – whatever the reason may be – reality is such that we don’t get all of *Anash* together in one place. No wonder there is a feeling of laxity. It’s hard to mobilize all of *Anash* for anything.

The *shluchim* spoke about making some regional *kinusim* so that all Chabad Chassidim would gather together to experience the feeling of being part of an “elite combat unit.” Unfortunately, this hasn’t happened.

I don’t think you find a laxity among the [Israeli] *shluchim*. They work very hard and handle many problems and they keep on going despite the hardships. The tiredness you referred to in your question pertains to *Anash*.

Maybe the time has come to send *shluchim* to Chabad communities.

Definitely. I want to tell you something. In our k’hilla we have someone who became *frum* with *mesirus nefesh*. He went through very tough challenges and overcame them. Today he is a full-fledged Chassid. One Shabbos he had to be in a different city and all week he was busy worrying about how he would get to the Chabad shul in that city because it was quite a distance away. After Shabbos he came home and told me, “I managed to make it to the Chabad minyan. I sat down with some of the guys and by the end of the davening I had mastered all the secrets of the stock

exchange.”

TO CONSTANTLY REMEMBER THAT WE ARE SHLUCHIM OF THE MESHALEIACH

What is the core issue that shluchim have to deal with today?

To constantly remember that they are shluchim of the meshaleiach. Every successful shliach has big temptations. When you are acquainted with people and organizations you can be lured by all sorts of deals and all kinds of honor and awards, appointments as a council member or religious council, etc.

The question a shliach has to ask himself is this: Are you getting involved because you are a shliach of the Rebbe? If there is any other reason, however trivial, you should stay away.

I remember how at the beginning of my year on K'vutza a few of us bachurim were sitting in 770 and talking. It was the middle of the night and it was dark in the big zal when someone walked in and offered a paying job to whoever wanted it. We agreed, of course. He took us to the office of Rabbi JJ Hecht on Eastern Parkway.

R' Hecht was making a dinner the following night for his mosdos. In honor of the dinner he had printed a journal with an embossed silver binding that had the names of all the donors. It was a very expensive book. On the first page was a sicha of the Rebbe but for some reason they had forgotten to write that it was a sicha of the Rebbe.

R' Hecht had rubber stamps made and we sat there the rest of the night stamping the books with the missing information. It didn't always come out perfectly straight and the blue ink of the stamp didn't look very nice against the black print of

the book, but to R' Hecht it was important that the first page with the sicha say, "Message from the Lubavitcher Rebbe." It was out of the question for him to distribute a book at his dinner that didn't say that.

A shliach has to know that whatever he says and does, people know that he is conveying the message of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Doesn't that make for a very stressful life?

Yes, but so what? It requires that we be constantly alert and ready for action. It's our battlefield and like a soldier on the front, we have to be constantly vigilant.

You can construct all sorts of plans based on the facts at hand and then suddenly the Rebbe comes and turns things upside down and you have to change your line of thought. A person could be insulted by you or someone might want attention and you have to be there for them. There's no end to it. You can get up in the morning and think all is in order and then things turn topsy-turvy – there's a funeral, some accident happens or an incident that demands a change in your entire schedule. Things are always happening and you have to deal with them.

LIKE BEING IN THE ARMY NOT ON "CHABAD TIME"

Can anyone be a shliach?

Every Chassid, whose neshama the Rebbe chose to be a Chabad Chassid can, in principle, be a shliach. However, just as in the army there are very clear rules about how a soldier earns the title of soldier; the same is true for a shliach. A person who goes to war without training; someone who goes to fight with someone else's uniform – he might look like a soldier but he won't be successful.

In "Basi L'Gani" of one of the

early years (I think 5713), the Rebbe talks about the idea of an army which has three components: kabbalas ol, time, and form. We all remember the concept of kabbalas ol. As for the concepts of time and form - if you can keep them, you are a soldier; and if not, you take pride in it for nothing.

Last summer a boy from Kfar Yona married a girl from the Shomron and he asked me to be the officiating rabbi at the wedding. He said that the rav of his mechutanim's k'hilla would also be attending.

The day of the wedding he called to remind me to be there. I arrived on time and began running the show. As often happens, they wanted to daven Mincha, which threw everything off schedule, but I exerted no small effort to urge them to do everything on time. The chuppa did indeed take place before sunset as it was supposed to. Afterwards, the rav asked me, "Are you a Chabadnik?" When I said yes, he told me, "This is the first time that I'm meeting a Chabadnik who sticks to the timetable."

All the peculiar ideas that you hear from so many people about "Chabad time" are awful. If someone wants to build his shlichus that way, he should consult with the meshaleiach. When the Rebbe talks about the concept of an army he is also referring to the discipline of being on time and sticking to a schedule.

The Chassid, R' Itche Masmid H"yd was an extraordinary person but whenever he sat down to farbreng with R' Zalman Moshe HaYitzchaki, a sharp-tongued Chassid, R' Zalman Moshe would lace into him and say that all his avoda was nothing but yeshus etc. The Chassidim knew that each time the two of them farbrenged, it would be lively.

One time, R' Itche went to a city on a mission of the Rebbe Rayatz and everybody turned out for the



R' Zalman Moshe explained, "When I go to a regular farbrengen with Itche, the two of us farbreng together. Itche is being Itche and I give him a hard time. But today, when he was in the role of shliach of the Rebbe, I could not disturb him. A shliach of the Rebbe is something else."

farbrengen. R' Itche spoke and spoke while R' Zalman Moshe didn't utter a word. Afterwards they asked him why he had kept quiet and R' Zalman Moshe explained, "When I go to a regular farbrengen with Itche, the two of us farbreng together. Itche is being Itche and I give him a hard time. But today, when he was in the role of shliach of the Rebbe, I could not disturb him. A shliach of the Rebbe is something else."

There are all kinds of chevra going on shlichus and they claim that the Rebbe supports what they

do. However, this sometimes clashes with another shliach in the area and causes him harm. "No," they say. "I don't think it causes harm." In *your* opinion it doesn't cause harm but when someone tells you that it causes harm and interferes with what he's doing then there is reason to listen to him.

You sound upset.

I am convinced that within Lubavitch k'hillos there is such great polarity because people are not sensitive to one another. We would all travel to the ends of the world to be mekarev someone but we don't

have the same kind of mesirus nefesh for someone amongst ourselves.

Why is it easier to go to Australia and be mekarev someone than to work things out with someone amongst us?

That's a tough question. I once read a parable from the mashpia, R' Mendel Wechter, about two generals whose men were positioned against one another in battle. One day, one of the generals decided he can't stand it anymore and he ordered his soldiers to retreat in the middle of the night. The other general, who didn't know about this, got up in the morning and began shooting as usual. That's what he was used to doing and he didn't check to see if anything had changed.

Even after 3 Tammuz we continue to be mekarev the entire world. We are a few steps above the world and we need to lift the world up. This is relatively easy work. The really hard work is to be mekarev those amongst us. So for some people it's easier to be mekarev those who are far away but to fight on the inside because that's what they're used to.

But the real front changed. Today, it's within us. True, it's not easy because the ego gets in the way. It requires concessions. It requires changing one's usual way of looking at things.

If our way of talking was proper and the love was there, it would look altogether different. We could bring the Rebbe's message and prepare the world for Geula in a big way.

AT THE KINUS HA'SHLUCHIM 5753

No doubt you remember the Kinus HaShluchim 5753.

I taught a class in Netanya and for an entire lesson I described that Kinus and the moments with the Rebbe. The banquet when the Rebbe came out on the porch to the



After the Holocaust the Rebbe extricated us from the mud and set up the system of shluchim and we began to gallop towards Geula. One fine day, some horses decided that the wagon driver was no longer sitting on his seat and they stopped moving. But the wagon kept going and banged them from behind.

shluchim and suddenly all the tables and chairs lost their importance. Rabbi Kotlarsky proclaimed Yechi and afterwards, all the shluchim went past the Rebbe.

You saw that despite his health, the Rebbe found it necessary to be with us and we, the shluchim, reciprocated that feeling. It was a moment when we truly felt, "I and the king alone." Like children with their father, hugging one another.

Those were unforgettable tremendous giluyim.

17 years have passed since then. Where were we then and where are we today? What changed?

In the Gemara it tells of Rabbi Yochonon ben Zakkai who cried before he died, "I don't know which path they will lead me on [to Gan Eden or Gehinom]." The Rebbe asks, in one of his sichos, where was

he until that time? Why was he wondering about this now? The Rebbe answers that R' Yochonon was so busy bringing talmidim to the beis midrash that he didn't have time to think about this. It was only now, before he died, that he thought about it.

The truth is that I don't have time to deal with questions of where we were then and where we are now. The work on shlichus is so demanding that there is no time for this.

The Rebbe told the shluchim to prepare the world and to convey the message of Geula. That is the only shlichus. How is this being carried out?

After the Holocaust the Rebbe extricated us from the mud and set up the system of shluchim and we began to gallop towards Geula. One fine day, some horses decided that the wagon driver was no longer sitting on his seat and they stopped moving. But the wagon kept going and banged them from behind.

People want to hear about Geula, to believe and hope. People talk about Geula all over. The topic comes up on its own. I think that if Chabad was united in its message of Geula, the wagon would long since have reached the goal.

The successes of all the big battles in history lay in their ability to maneuver, their resources, and the ability of the generals who led the armies. Whenever a commander or army got stuck in a way of thinking, it ended up losing. Those who are connected to the Rebbe, write to the Rebbe, and live with the Rebbe – the Rebbe sees to it that they don't get stuck. If you decide that "we must carry on the Rebbe's legacy" and make up your own rules and guidelines, refusing to hear of another way – you will find yourself spinning your tires.

How do we know what is the right approach with hafatza of

Moshiach?

I don't think anyone has a monopoly on the Rebbe's view. If I go somewhere where I know that people will be upset with certain proclamations, I don't say them and it doesn't contradict my belief. There are places where I will read out loud the quotes about Moshiach and Geula that Tzach puts out, but I won't make proclamations. That doesn't mean that people don't know my view. They all know my view.

Our Chabad house is on the second floor above a supermarket. When I go downstairs after davening to buy milk and bread, the cashier asks me, "Do you need anything else?" and I say, "Yes, Moshiach." It may sound less fiery but you can't ignore it. Wherever you bring in the chayus and enthusiasm for Geula, those around you will feel it and that's what is important.

The Rebbe wrote to the shluchim in Morocco, when they first started out, to give respect to the local rabbis, not to offend anyone, to be careful to uphold the customs there, etc. You can see how the Rebbe conducted himself with all kinds of people, how he was careful not to

When I go to buy milk and bread, the cashier asks me, "Do you need anything else?" and I say, "Yes, Moshiach."

step on them even though his opinion was completely different than theirs. When people feel that you give them space and you speak to them with respect, they end up accepting what you say.

If you had the microphone at the Kinus HaShluchim, what would the shliach of little Kfar Yona say to his fellow shluchim?

In T'hilim 45:11-12 it says, "Listen daughter and observe and incline your ear; and forget your people and your father's house. So that the King will desire your beauty, for He is your Master and prostrate yourself before Him." The Metzudas Dovid says, "Listen daughter is said to every congregation. Listen and observe with the understanding of the heart and incline your ear to hear everything Melech HaMoshiach commands you; and forget your people – i.e. don't be in the counsel of those who are drawn after Gog to fight Melech HaMoshiach. So that

the King will desire your beauty – then Melech HaMoshiach will raise up the beauty of the aptitude of your deeds; for He is your Master and prostrate yourself before Him – and no harm will come to you for He will cover you with His shade."

We go to the Kinus HaShluchim from all over the world. Each of us has to be in the category of "Listen daughter and observe and incline your ear" – to do the true will of the Rebbe, to listen to the Rebbe's sichos and horaos, to live with the inyan of the Rebbe. "And forget your people and your father's house" – go out of all limitations that surround you.

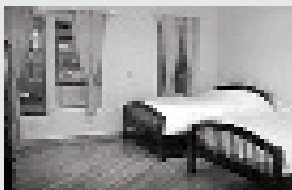
The real message we need to take with us when we go to the Rebbe is – "So that the King will desire your beauty" – i.e. that the Rebbe should have nachas from us and desire us for the "beauty of the aptitude of our deeds." I think that this is the desire of every single shliach.

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THE REBBE'S RECOVERY AND ITS SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

By Yitzchok Wagshul

Based in part on a conversation with Rabbi Nachman Schapiro Head Mashpia of the Beis Midrash Oholei Torah and member of Vaad L'Hafatzas Sichos.

Kislev: a month of miracles; a month of *hiskashrus*. Which chassid doesn't get goose bumps just thinking about it? There is Tes Kislev, birthday and *yahrtzait* of the Mitteler Rebbe; Yud Kislev, when the Mitteler Rebbe was miraculously released from false imprisonment in Czarist Russia; Yud-Dalet Kislev, wedding anniversary of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin; Yud-Tes Kislev, the *chassidishe* "holiday of holidays" known as the Rosh Hashanah of *Chassidus*; and finally, ending the month and bringing us right into Teives, Chanukah—the Holiday of Light. In more recent years, we have even been starting off the month with an occasion to celebrate: Rosh Chodesh Kislev marks the date when the Rebbe, having remained in 770

recovering from two massive heart attacks *r"l* suffered on Shmini Atzeres, 5738 (1977), was finally well enough to return to his home on President Street.

WHY CELEBRATE CHASSIDISHER YOMIM TOVIM?

Other than Chanukah, of course, none of these events involved open miracles. There was no splitting of the sea, no oil burning for eight days. But we celebrate these days as holidays of sorts all the same. Why? The reason is simple: we believe in *hashgacha pratis*, the unceasing providence of the Living G-d, Who personally oversees even the minutest events, and we also realize

the spiritual role of a Rebbe as *Rosh B'nei Yisroel*, the leader—the very "head"—of the Jewish people. What happens to a Rebbe is far from "even the minutest events": it is nothing less than an act of G-d, orchestrated by Divine Providence because of its spiritual symbolism and relevance to the Jewish people and the entirety of creation.

Thus, for example—as everyone surely knows—Yud-Tes Kislev is not merely the day the Alter Rebbe was released from prison in the year 1798. At the heart of the matter, his very imprisonment had nothing to do with the treason he had been absurdly accused of; it was, in actuality, the earthly manifestation of the spiritual forces that sought to suppress the revelation of *Chassidus*. The Alter Rebbe's miraculous vindication and release on Yud-Tes and Chaf Kislev was nothing short of the earthly expression of the Heavenly victory of good over evil, clearing the way for the open revelation of *Chassidus* and, through that, the ultimate arrival of Moshiach. Clearly an occasion worthy of celebration as a major

chassidic holiday.

The same is true of our Rebbe's return home on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 1977. G-d is still alive, so to speak, no less so in 1977 than in 1798, or, for that matter, at the splitting of the sea, or today. And a Rebbe is no less *Rosh B'nei Yisroel* today than at any other time. Let us prepare for the upcoming occasion of Rosh Chodesh Kislev by reflecting on the spiritual significance of the Rebbe's recovery, and the miraculous manner in which it unfolded, in our own generation, right before our very eyes.

THE REBBE PREPARED US FOR WHAT WAS TO COME

Looking back to the last *farbrengen* before the Rebbe's heart attack—the *farbrengen* of Yud-Gimmel Tishrei of that year, 5738—we can see that the Rebbe was preparing us for what was to come. The Rebbe discussed a letter of the Previous Rebbe, written a day after Yom Kippur, in which the Previous Rebbe makes a “specific request” (*bakasha pratis*) that on the coming Sukkos, and especially on Shmini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, there be great *simcha*, rejoicing. The Rebbe pointed out that since that letter of the Previous Rebbe had been printed and publicized, it followed that it was still in effect: that is, that specific request—for joy on the upcoming Sukkos, Shmini Atzeres, and Simchas Torah—was still in full force. Furthermore, the Rebbe continued, all the blessings that the Previous Rebbe tied to the fulfillment of this request

likewise still stood. The Rebbe drew a parallel to the Previous Rebbe's health, noting that although the Previous Rebbe had been so ill that doctors had despaired of his life *r”l*, he nevertheless lived another eighteen years and, in that time, accomplished disproportionately more than ever before. There are thus times, the Rebbe concluded, when even if doctors advise rest, one must nevertheless do just the opposite: one must be *misgaber*—strengthen oneself—and accomplish much more than previously.

Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik *z”l*, Rosh Yeshiva in 770, pointed out at the *farbrengen* of the chassidim on Simchas Torah 5738, that at that Yud-Gimmel Tishrei *farbrengen*, the Rebbe spoke about matters—such as *keren ha'shana*, the annual *tz'daka* drive—which he usually discussed on Simchas Torah. Obviously, the Rebbe knew what was coming.

SHMINI ATZERES

That *Chol HaMoed* was very special. Although he had never done so before, the Rebbe would turn around to face the congregation before each *t'filla* and would clap to the dancing of the assembled.

Shmini Atzeres, 5738, began as usual. The *shul* was packed tight; people were even clinging to beams. Around 9:30, the Rebbe entered and a hush fell over the crowd. Then a *niggun* began, and the Rebbe encouraged the singing with vigorous arm movements. For some reason, the auction and recital of the *p'sukim* of *Atta Hareisa* were concluded much more rapidly than usual; some speculated that this was



To the tune of zol shoin zain di Geula (“the redemption should come already”), the Chassidim sang, der Rebbe zol gezunt zain (“the Rebbe should be well”) and der Rebbe is gezunt (“the Rebbe is well”). The singing was so loud it could be heard in the Rebbe’s office upstairs, and the Rebbe told Rabbi Groner to tell everyone it made a marked improvement in how he felt.

because the Rebbe had hardly had time to eat that afternoon, nor to sleep the previous night. When *hakafos* began, the Rebbe was honored with the first *hakafa*, as was customary, which he danced with his brother-in-law, the Rashag (Rabbi Shmaryahu Gurary, of blessed memory). The second and third *hakafos* likewise went as usual, with the Rebbe watching from his platform, clapping and swinging his arms in great joy. Yet the Rebbe’s movements were somewhat slower than normal.

Suddenly, during the fourth *hakafa*, while again swinging his arms to the dancing, the Rebbe stopped and turned white. He asked Rabbi Groner to bring his chair, and the Rebbe had to sit down. This was immediately noticed by all, and the *hakafa* was brought to a close. People became panicked over the Rebbe’s condition, and shouts were heard to clear the *shul* so the Rebbe could have fresh air. Within moments, 770 had emptied out. People clustered on the sidewalk anxiously discussing the situation and saying *T’hillim* for the Rebbe’s health.

Needless to say, specialists were

immediately summoned. Pending their arrival, the Rebbe was cared for by the chassid Dr. Avrohom Seligson, the Rebbe’s personal physician, and whatever medical personnel were in *shul* at the time.

The Rebbe maintained firm control at all times. He insisted that *hakafos* be completed inside 770, so the congregation returned and quickly conducted the remaining circuits. The Rebbe had always had the last *hakafa* as well as the first, and this year he refused to deviate from that custom. The Rebbe made his way down from his platform and began the *hakafa* with the Rashag. After a few turns, the Rashag pretended to be tired and the *hakafa* came to a close. The Rebbe then went up to his office, where he closed the door and did not emerge for several minutes. The Rebbetzin arrived soon after.

The doctors insisted the Rebbe remain inside, but he declined this advice and went out to his *sukka* instead, saying he needed to make Kiddush for the Rebbetzin. In the Sukka, a bottle of grape juice had been set out, but the Rebbe stated, “Kiddush is made on wine, not grape juice.”

THE REBBE INSISTS ON SIMCHA

After leaving the Sukka, the Rebbe instructed his secretaries to announce that everyone should rejoice in the *simchas Yom Tov*, and to conduct the remaining *hakafos* with great joy. This directive was carried out, with Chassidim dancing throughout the night despite their anxiety. After *Shacharis*, another announcement was made in the name of the Rebbe, to the effect that people should go on *Tahalucha* as usual and spread the joy of Yom Tov to Jews in other neighborhoods. Furthermore, *Maariv* and *hakafos* should be conducted with a *shturem*—a “storm” of joy. Anyone who wanted to help the Rebbe recover should rejoice, and the Chassidim should organize a *farbrengen* before *Maariv* and *hakafos*, and “visualize that the one who usually sits on the chair is not missing.”

“AND WHAT IF THERE ARE NO HOSPITALS?”

Already on that first night, the doctors determined that the Rebbe had suffered a major heart attack *r”l*. Despite their repeated urging, however, the Rebbe adamantly refused to go to a hospital. “What would one do if one were in a place where there are no hospitals?” he asked. “Whatever would be done then, should be done now.” *Rabbanim*, too, urged the Rebbe to go, and even considered rendering a *halachic* ruling that the Rebbe was obligated to do so. They were preempted by the Rebbe’s request that if that was, in fact, their decision, they shouldn’t tell him, because then he would have to comply, although there was no need. At 2:00 a.m. on the morning of Shmini Atzeres, the doctors actually withdrew from the case and

left, saying they could not take responsibility for the Rebbe's actions. The *mazkirus*—the Rebbe's secretariat—arranged for all the equipment normally found in a hospital intensive care unit to be installed in 770. At 5:00 a.m., the Rebbe suffered a second attack even more severe than the first—some thought the end had come *r"l*—but still insisted on remaining in 770. Dr. Seligson told the *rabbanim* that in his medical opinion, it would benefit the Rebbe to stay.

This opinion was seconded by Dr. Ira Weiss, a renowned cardiologist who came immediately from his home in Chicago as soon as he learned he was needed. Dr. Weiss gave several reasons for this, and added that he knew from his own experience that when patients followed the Rebbe's advice, they were sure to recover. Dr. Weiss selflessly stayed in New York until he could be replaced by other physicians, notably Drs. Levi Lev and Lawrence Resnick. Even after his return to Chicago, Dr. Weiss flew back to the Rebbe's side whenever needed.

“WHAT DRAWS BLOOD FROM THE VEINS—THE NEEDLE OR THE VACUUM?”

One of the doctors asked the Rebbe if he could administer an injection to ease the pain, but the Rebbe declined, saying there was no need. Later, someone told the doctor that by asking permission, he had guaranteed a negative answer, since on Yom Tov it is forbidden to get an injection unless the doctor expressly orders it. Therefore, the doctor returned to the Rebbe and said he was ordering the Rebbe to have the injection on the grounds that the pain is endangering the Rebbe's life. This



This picture is from Hoshana Rabba 5738, a few hours before the heart attack on Shmini Atzeres

time, the Rebbe agreed immediately.

As blood was being drawn, the Rebbe asked, “What draws blood from the veins—the needle or the vacuum?” The doctor said it was the vacuum, and the Rebbe remarked that this had come to his attention before. An individual had described himself to the Rebbe as empty and unfit for anything, but the Rebbe told him the opposite was true. Since an empty vessel draws into itself with added force, this person was a vessel for all types of good and holiness. The Rebbe asked the doctor to repeat this thought to everyone else because the Rebbe was unable to deliver a Shmini Atzeres *drasha* in person.

“DER REBBE IS GEZUNT!”

As the Rebbe had requested, the *hakafos* of Simchas Torah were conducted in 770 with a *shturem*. One *niggun* predominated: to the tune of *zol shoin zain di Geula* (“the redemption should come already”), the Chassidim sang, *der Rebbe zol gezunt zain* (“the Rebbe should be well”) and *der Rebbe is gezunt* (“the Rebbe is well”). The singing was so loud it could be heard in the Rebbe's office upstairs, and the Rebbe told Rabbi Groner to tell everyone it made a marked improvement in how he felt.

The Rebbe also told Rabbi Groner to say that on the next day—Simchas Torah itself—the dancing should be with an even bigger *shturem*. Additionally, the Rebbe elaborated on the thought about the vacuum according to *chassidus*. Rabbi Groner was asked to obtain *mareh mekomos* from Rabbi Yoel Kahan and to repeat it at the evening *farbrengen*. Reb Yoel would also expound on the concept. The gist of the matter was that it is precisely through *tzimtzum*—contraction or concealment of G-dly manifestation—that revelation becomes possible. The Rebbe said that although “the one who sits in the chair” will be absent from the *farbrengen*, this should not interfere with *simchas Yom Tov*. This void itself will bring all goodness from Heaven.

THE SICHA HEARD AROUND THE WORLD

The Rebbe sent some of his *Havdala* wine to be distributed at the *farbrengen* as *kos shel bracha*. Then, after *Maariv* and *Havdala*, the Rebbe—to everyone's great surprise and delight—delivered a short *sicha* by means of a microphone in his office. He noted that, whereas ordinarily he would have addressed

only those present at the *farbrengen*, the circumstances resulted in his *sicha* being broadcast around the world since it was now after Yom Tov in many locations. The doctors permitted the Rebbe to speak for five minutes, but in fact, the Rebbe went on for twenty-two minutes.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

On the day after Yom Tov, a Thursday, the *mazkirus* announced in the Rebbe's name that his health was improving and people should not stop writing to him. The Rebbe's doctors advised against this, but the Rebbe was determined, noting that there were people who needed his help. The Rebbe also accepted people for *yechidus* that night—*orchim* going back home after *Shabbos*. What's more, the Rebbe edited the brief *sicha* he had delivered *Motzaei Yom Tov*, and it was distributed in time for *Shabbos*. After that *Shabbos*, the Rebbe again delivered a *sicha*—this time extending the twenty minutes authorized by the doctors to almost a full hour. Every week thereafter for a period of several months, the Rebbe would deliver a *sicha* on *Motzaei Shabbos*, which he would edit for distribution in time for the following *Shabbos*.

THE REBBE RETURNS HOME

Finally, on Thursday, Rosh Chodesh Kislev, the Rebbe left 770 at around 6:00 p.m. and went home to his house on President Street—where he had not been since *Erev Shmini Atzeres*. Although the Rebbe's full routine—e.g., *farbrenging* downstairs on *Shabbos* afternoons, or coming down for *T'hillim* on *Shabbos Mevarchim*—was phased in gradually over almost a year, the chassidim celebrated the Rebbe's return home on Rosh Chodesh Kislev with great joy, since

it was a concrete sign that the Rebbe was returning to full health. On the final day of Chanukah, the Rebbe washed before *Mincha* and distributed *kos shel bracha*, which he had not been able to do in person after Simchas Torah. That *farbrengen* was termed the Rebbe's *seudas hoda'a*. Every year since that time, chassidim have celebrated Rosh Chodesh Kislev with joy and gratitude for the Rebbe's recovery.

THE YUD-TE'S KISLEV OF OUR GENERATION

It certainly makes sense for us to celebrate the Rebbe's recovery, expressing our gratitude each year on the day the Rebbe was well enough to go home. But—in keeping with what was stated at the beginning of this article—is there anything more to it than that? Was there, in other words, some spiritual dynamic being played out through the Rebbe's illness and recovery?

We are not able to fathom the full depth of *Hashem's* intent, of course, but *mashpiim* tell us that Rosh Chodesh Kislev is indeed highly significant. Rabbi Nachman Schapiro Head Mashpia of the Beis Midrash Oholei Torah and member of Vaad L'Hafatzas Sichos, draws a parallel between Rosh Chodesh Kislev and Yud-Tes Kislev:

In 1798, when the events of Yud-Tes Kislev took place, chassidim rejoiced ecstatically, turning somersaults in the streets. What were they actually celebrating? We may very safely assume that they were celebrating the one thing that seemed, at the time, the overriding event of the day: the Alter Rebbe was now free from his imprisonment—they had their Rebbe back! It was only with the passage of time that it became discernible that the Alter Rebbe's teachings were more plentiful and more elaborately explained after Yud-Tes Kislev. It was only as the

years went on and the spiritual battle over the revelation of *Chassidus* was related by our Rebbeim, that the inner meaning of Yud-Tes Kislev supplanted the more superficial rationale as the main reason for celebrating. It was, in fact, not until 5662 (1901) that the Rebbe Rashab revealed that Yud-Tes Kislev is the “Rosh Hashanah” of *Chassidus*. Likewise, when the chassidim rejoiced at the Rebbe's return home in 1977, they were grateful for one thing: they had their Rebbe back! But as the years unfolded, hindsight has shown us more of the story.

EDITING LIKKUTEI SICHOS AFTER 5738

Rabbi Schapiro was involved in preparing the Rebbe's *sichos* for publication, first in pamphlet form and eventually in the bound volumes of *Likkutei Sichos*. Each week, another *sicha* pamphlet—a *likkut*—would be released for *Shabbos*. Today, many people don't realize that the Rebbe was not always in the practice of editing these; in later years, the Rebbe would edit them regularly. In fact, prior to the events surrounding the Rebbe's illness in 5738 (1977), the Rebbe had never made it a routine to edit the *likkutim*. The first time the Rebbe did so was in 5719 (1958), in honor of his thirtieth wedding anniversary. That continued for two years, then stopped. In 5723 (1962), the Rebbe again edited *likkutim*, this time in honor of the 150th anniversary of the Alter Rebbe's *yahrtzeit*. But then too, the editing stopped after only two years.

This on again—off again style was not due to any feeling on the Rebbe's part that editing the *likkutim* was not worthwhile. On the contrary, during one of the *farbrengens* of 5732 (1971–1972), the Rebbe spoke about his essential role, and one of the things he mentioned in that connection was

the editing of *Likkutei Sichos*. The Rebbe's personal editing of the *sichos* represented a particularly lofty revelation of holiness. Still, for reasons known only to him, the Rebbe did not make a practice of it.

In 5736 and 5737, the Rebbe had edited *sichos*, and Rabbi Schapiro remembers that he and his colleagues at Vaad L'Hafatzas Sichos were sure the Rebbe would not continue for an unprecedented third year—especially after his health problems at the beginning of 5738. As the *Shabbos* of *Parshas Noach* approached, they prepared the weekly *likkut* as usual but did not even submit it to the Rebbe (partly because they did not wish to burden him just over a week or so after his heart attacks). How shocked they were to receive a request from the Rebbe's office for the weekly *likkut* for editing! That began a third straight year of *sichos* edited by the Rebbe, constituting a *chazaka*, an established practice.

INCREASE IN THE REBBE'S ACTIVITIES GENERALLY

The increase in the Rebbe's activities after 5738 was not limited to *Likkutei Sichos*. There were more *farbrengens* after that, and more *maamarim*—including the new practice of editing a *maamer* for virtually every special day.

There was an increase in new *shluchim* after 5738. Matters

We should thank Hashem this Rosh Chodesh Kislev—not just for the Rebbe's physical recovery, but also for our meriting the additional giluyim (revelations) it heralded, giluyim connected with the Rebbe's stated main purpose—to bring Moshiach now.

connected with Moshiach likewise increased after that year. For example, it was in 5741 that the Rebbe established *Tzivos Hashem*, whose primary function is to hasten the redemption through the demand, "We Want Moshiach Now!" And the year after that, the Rebbe revealed that the Hebrew letters that signify each year are also *roshei teivos*, an abbreviation for a phrase that has relevance to Moshiach and signifies something about that year—for example, with regards to the year 5770, represented by the letters *tav*, *shin*, and *ayin*, one may say that it stands for *Tehei Shnas Oz* ("may it be a year of strength").

In sum, then, the years following 5738 saw a marked increase in the Rebbe's activities and in new revelations. Just as the main spreading of *Chassidus* took place after the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment and release on Yud-Tes and Chaf Kislev, so too can we recognize in

our times that the main accomplishments of our Rebbe intensified after his illness and recovery associated with Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5738. We should bear this important point in mind as we celebrate this auspicious day and thank Hashem this Rosh Chodesh Kislev—not just for the Rebbe's physical recovery, but also for our meriting the additional *giluyim* (revelations) it heralded, *giluyim* connected with the Rebbe's stated main purpose—to bring Moshiach now.

After all, it is the vacuum that draws in the substance, and if there appears to be a vacuum now, after Gimmel Tammuz (although, to be sure, "the one who sits on the chair is not missing") it is because, for spiritual reasons, that itself is what will bring about the substance: the revelation of Moshiach.

Note: Much of the historical portions of this article have been drawn from the pamphlet, "The Story of Rosh Chodesh Kislev."

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THE SHLUCHIM ARRIVE AT 770

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

Thousands of shluchim are making their final preparations for the trip to the Kinus HaShluchim. For many of them, this is their only visit of the year to the Rebbe and the source of their strength for the rest of the year.



In light of the upcoming Kinus HaShluchim, I want to share the feelings that a shliach experiences on his way to 770 for his annual visit to the Rebbe MH”M with his fellow shluchim, and of course, some

stories.

I will preface this by saying that for many shluchim this trip to the Kinus HaShluchim, Shabbos Mevarchim Kislev, is the only trip they make each year to the Rebbe.

All the longings and expectations of the entire year are concentrated on this Shabbos. All the memories that a shliach has stored away, all the Tishreis that he had with the Rebbe, his K’vutza year [if Israeli], the yechiduyos he had, the farbrengens, the kos shel bracha, the dollars for tz’daka, the t’fillos with the Rebbe, all are emotionally recalled in the days prior to the trip.

HERGESHIM

As we get closer to the date of the flight there are some parts of the t’filla that remind me that I’ll be going to the Rebbe soon. There is the part in the Shabbos morning davening, “I rejoiced when they said to me we are going to the house of Hashem,” where in addition to the simple meaning, the thought immediately comes to me that “Beis Hashem,” where G-dliness is revealed, also refers to 770.

“Our feet stood in Your gates of Yerushalayim” – soon our feet will stand in 770, facing the paroches on the Aron Kodesh, where the Rebbe davened and farbrenged. It’s thrilling.

Sometimes a little prayer wells up in your heart during the davening. “Ask for the welfare of Yerushalayim” – what’s new in 770? “May there be peace in Your strongholds, harmony in Your palaces.” “On behalf of my brothers and friends... on behalf of the house of Hashem, our G-d, I seek good for you” – I ask, on behalf of thousands of shluchim, my brothers and friends, and on behalf of the thousands of T’mimim and Anash who are here physically or in spirit, in 770, the house of Hashem, may there be peace! May it be good! True good, the best possible good. The greatest good is for the Rebbe to come already. And even before that happens, that we be united, that we have success in our shlichus, that we be connected to the Rebbe, and most

importantly that Lubavitch be as the Rebbe wishes.

THE SHLIACH BROKE THROUGH THE WALLS OF THE EMBASSY

Rabbi Yehoshua Adot, shliach in moshava Binyamina, wanted to fly to the Rebbe after the passing of the Rebbeztzin on Chaf-beis Shevat, 1988. Like thousands of other Chassidim, he wanted to be with the Rebbe and offer words of consolation.

He looked at his passport and discovered that it and his visa had expired. He needed to renew his passport at the Interior Ministry and then get a new visa at the American consulate. It was Thursday night and on Fridays, government offices are closed and the consulate would be open only until ten. But his only chance to get to the Rebbe before the end of Shiva would be to get everything arranged the next day, regardless.

His mashpia told him to go l'chat'chilla aribber and even if the Interior Ministry was closed to go and extend his passport. Preferably at the main office, which was located in Tel Aviv at that time.

The next morning R' Adot went to Tel Aviv and as he knew it would be, the office was closed. Just then, one of the cleaning ladies came out of the building to empty a bucket. He asked to be allowed inside.

"But there is nobody there," she said, looking at him oddly.

"It doesn't matter, I have to go in," he insisted.

Then she remembered that actually, there was someone there. It was the director, who had come in to take care of some work. R' Adot went to him and explained his situation and the importance of the flight and wonder of wonders, the director extended his passport for thirty days.

R' Adot then rushed to the

As he knew it would be, the office was closed. Just then, one of the cleaning ladies came out of the building to empty a bucket. He asked to be allowed inside. "But there is nobody there," she said, looking at him oddly. "It doesn't matter, I have to go in," he insisted.

consulate, but by the time he arrived it was 10:15, fifteen minutes after closing. The high walls, the locked iron doors, and the American mentality did not allow anyone to even dream of entering. But his mashpia had told him to go l'chat'chilla aribber so he had to try.

He struck up a conversation with one of the security guards. "Where were you in the army?"

"In the parachutists, troop 890," he said.

"What?! I was also in 890!" Great. Now they were friends.

The door suddenly opened and the guard pushed him inside. He was nearly the only one there. He went over to a clerk and explained the urgency of the situation and within two minutes he had a lifetime visa.

HE DID NOT RETURN EMPTY-HANDED

A few years ago a shliach from Eretz Yisroel went to the Kinus HaShluchim. The Kinus was not the sole purpose of his trip. He was in the middle of building a Chabad house and he needed \$100,000. He planned to visit some wealthy American Jews to ask for their help.

One day he headed out to see a well-known philanthropist. The five hour drive gave him plenty of time to think, and he began to wonder. Maybe the shliach in that city would be upset that he was entering his

territory and soliciting a donation from his supporter.

The Israeli shliach called his mashpia, who recommended that he ask permission of the local shliach. He did so and the local shliach said that yes, it could adversely affect his own fundraising.

The Israeli shliach turned around and drove the five hours back, feeling disappointed.

When he got to the place where he was staying in Crown Heights, he was told that someone from Israel had called for him. The shliach returned the call and the person told him that he wanted to pay all the costs to complete the Chabad house. This entailed hundreds of thousands of shekels! It was quite apparent to the shliach that he was seeing his reward for ensuring that a fellow shliach wouldn't lose out.

I'LL GIVE TEN TIMES THAT AMOUNT

A fellow shliach who wants to remain anonymous told me the following story:

"I was there at the Kinus HaShluchim, 5753, which was an extraordinary Kinus. The banquet took place in the big zal in 770. The Rebbe was in his room and we hoped that he would make an appearance on the porch outside his room.

The happy news was relayed that the Rebbe would be joining the

“If the Rebbe gave it to you for a daughter, you have a daughter. Try and remember,” I said.

shluchim. Two minutes later the curtain was opened and thousands of shluchim sprang up and began to sing Yechi, accompanied for several moments by the Rebbe’s encouragement. It was unbounded simcha. Some of those present were certain that this was the hisgalus.

When the curtain was closed the atmosphere still crackled with excitement. The emcee of the Kinus, Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky addressed the Rebbe and concluded by exclaiming, “Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu, Melech HaMoshiach L’olam Va’ed.”

Slowly, things settled down. The tables and chairs were rearranged and everybody went back to their places. I sat next to an American, apparently a donor brought by one of the shluchim. We got into a discussion about the giluyim we had just experienced. I mentioned that during the Kinus the Rebbe had given out hundreds of thousands of dollars and each shliach had received a check for over \$1000 to cover the expenses of the trip.

This American fellow wanted to know the exact amount of my check because he wanted give my Chabad house ten times that figure. Then and there he gave me a check for over \$10,000.

The following year I located him in the hopes of getting another donation, but he said, “When the Rebbe gives, I’ll give ten times that amount.”

Nu, we’re waiting for that too.

THE REBBE SAID “DAUGHTER” AND HE MEANT DAUGHTER

“On one of my trips to the Rebbe,” said Rabbi Moshe

Oirechman, shliach to Kiryat Mochkin, “a woman from the center of the country came to see the Rebbe. She and her husband were suppliers of Judaica and I knew them well. They were mekuravim of the Chabad house. They had five children, the youngest of whom was killed in the war in Lebanon.

The woman stood on line to get a dollar from the Rebbe. When it was her turn she asked the Rebbe for dollars for her four children. The Rebbe gave her four dollars and said, “This is for the first son, this is for the second son, this is for the third son and this is for the fourth son.” Then he gave her another dollar and said, “And this is for your daughter.”

My friend Zohar Eisenberg and I were eating at “Ess ‘n Bentch,” when the woman walked in and excitedly told us the Rebbe had given her a dollar for a daughter. “But I don’t have a daughter,” she said.

“If the Rebbe gave it to you for a daughter, you have a daughter. Try and remember,” I said.

“I don’t have a daughter!”

“Maybe from the other side?”

“I promise you that I don’t have a daughter,” she nearly cried.

“The Rebbe does not make mistakes,” my friend assured her. “If he said it’s for your daughter, then you have a daughter.”

The woman went to consult with one of the Rebbe’s secretaries, who said that if she had a married son, then her daughter-in-law was like a daughter. I didn’t see it that way.

A few months went by. I was on my way from the Krayot to Kfar Chabad with my friend R’ Yisroel David and we stopped in to visit this family. The husband greeted us warmly and said his wife was resting

since she wasn’t feeling well. She was pregnant, he explained.

The truth is that it sounded bizarre to me, because as far as we knew the woman was over 50. When we left the house it suddenly struck me. Aha! I told Yisroel David the story of the dollar that the Rebbe had given “for the daughter.” A few months later she had a daughter, who they named Simcha.

BRINGING JEWS TO THE REBBE

One of the interesting parts of the Kinus is that shluchim bring mekuravim along with them to 770. They bring them to see the Rebbe and to feel the atmosphere of the headquarters which beams light and warmth to the world.

Two years ago, a high ranking officer in the Israeli Navy, clad in his white dress uniform, accompanying R’ Mendy Offen, who works with soldiers in the IDF and the senior chain of command. The officer addressed the Israeli shluchim and emotionally described how he was tremendously impressed by Chabad in general and 770 in particular. He thanked the Rebbe for his unique contribution to the IDF and Am Yisroel.

Three years ago, the shluchim noticed that the shliach from Givatayim, R’ Yosef Bekerman, brought the mayor with him in order to get the Rebbe’s bracha. The mayor davened that he would get a more senior position. Shortly afterwards, he was elected chairman of the Jewish National Fund, a respected and much sought after position.

These are a few examples out of many. The main point is that every Jew who visits 770 – Beis Chayeinu – Beis Moshiach, is guaranteed to be more connected to the Rebbe, more connected to the Chabad house, and thus closer to Torah, mitzvos and Chassidus.

THE BATTLE CONTINUES

By Avrohom Ber

*When Brownsville was abandoned and ruined, all anticipated that the nearby Crown Heights would soon share the same fate. However, Lubavitch remained as a stronghold in Crown Heights and when thousands of guests arrive in Tishrei they see a vibrant Jewish neighborhood which prevailed where Harlem, the Bronx, Brownsville and East Flatbush could not. * Part 4*

PLANNED EXPANSION

Even after the houses were bought with great effort, the corporation had two main problems. In many cases they had to renovate the homes, especially those which were not fit for habitation. Then, of course, they had to achieve the goal of populating the houses with families, but not all of the interested parties could afford to pay even the relatively low price.

The corporation dealt with both these problems. After they emptied the houses of undesirable tenants, they renovated them and sold them at 30-40% less than market value. In addition to the sharply discounted prices, aid was offered

to young couples who wanted to settle in the neighborhood and couldn't afford to buy a home. In this way Jewish settlement in the neighborhood continued to expand.

They bought on streets where previously they hadn't had a foothold and businesses were opened with the help of the corporation. Many houses were filled with Lubavitcher tenants.

A SISTER-CORPORATION

The toughest places to conquer were the apartment buildings situated on corners, which had dozens of apartments. It was crucial to buy these buildings for two reasons. One, they would

provide living quarters for hundreds of young couples who were looking for small, inexpensive apartments. Two, these buildings were owned by private people who made most of their profit by taking in tenants who were receiving government support. The landlords received a lot of money from the government. These tenants turned the buildings into jungles and crime-ridden lairs that endangered the security and quality of life of everybody in the neighborhood.

In order to deal with this difficult problem, a sister-corporation was founded which, over the years, bought these buildings. Their efforts bore fruit and nearly forty big buildings,





containing 2500 apartments, were purchased. R' Zalman Deitsch, R' Shimshon Stock, and R' Yitzchok Gurevitch played important roles in founding this corporation.

After years of work, government subsidies were received to renovate these buildings and they were made into comfortable apartments. Their first goal was to get as many young couples and families who couldn't afford to buy private homes as they could.

The arrangement with the government was that each family paid one week's salary to live there for a month and the owner received the remainder of the rent money from the government. This enabled low-income families and those in

kollel to rent a nice apartment. Through this program alone, the committee brought in tens of thousands of dollars every month to subsidize the rent.

BRINGING RUSSIAN JEWS TO CROWN HEIGHTS

In one of the sichos the Rebbe spoke sadly about how small a percentage of the many Jews who were leaving Russia at that time (in the 70's) were settling in Crown Heights. The Rebbe noted the fact that in Crown Heights there were many Russian speaking Jews who would be able to help the new immigrants and could encourage

them to settle in Crown Heights and strengthen the community.

It was in the 80's that the corporation first achieved this, through contacts with organizations that operated in the US to absorb the Jews who were coming from Russia. Many Russian families were attracted by the cheap apartments and the Chabad chesed organizations that helped them acclimate. Everybody benefited, with the neighborhood strengthened and the immigrants living in nice apartments and in a nice Jewish neighborhood.

IMPROVING THE EXISTING AREAS

After years of fighting to buy every building and expand the neighborhood, the corporation began to improve and develop the existing areas. The Jewish residents were spread out over several streets and the goal became to introduce improvements into the expanded Jewish neighborhood, to renovate the existing buildings, and even to build new buildings for the first time since 1940.

In the heart of the Jewish neighborhood, in the square formed by Montgomery, Crown, Albany, and Troy, there was an empty and overgrown lot. Lubavitchers remember it as the place where the Chassid R' Dovid Okonuv was murdered in 1979. In the southern part of the lot dozens of homes were constructed by the Community Council, which eased the demand for homes and lowered the prices. At one point there was an unsuccessful attempt by the members of the Council to open a hotel in the northern part of the lot, which was bought from a hospital. In later years, R' Mendel Drizin bought it and built a beautiful condo complex there.

“There isn’t even time to look at the note... He sits and looks at the four walls of his house and counts the flies on the wall. Take out the note that was written to you and look at what it says there!” the Rebbe exclaimed at the farbrengen.

DEVELOPING CONNECTIONS

One of the important jobs of the Council was to develop connections with government figures. R’ Nachum Pinson was appointed to this position, by means of which large sums of money came in for mosdos in the neighborhood, starting with community development and founding businesses as well as aid for the schools and social welfare for the needy.

One beneficiary of the government funding was the soup kitchen that opened in the Young Israel, where 150 elderly people ate every day. These were people who were unable to leave the neighborhood and who lived in Crown Heights without any real source of support. The place also served as a social center for these unfortunate people.

These government connections also procured over a million dollars to buy new windows and doors.

In elections that took place in Brooklyn, R’ Yisroel Rosenfeld won a seat on the city council. His victory came after a lot of work, most of it on the part of members of the Community Council, and by way of a brilliant political stunt gerrymandering the voting districts in Crown Heights. This division isolated the Jewish area from the section where the blacks predominated. Many of the blacks living in the neighborhood at that

time were new immigrants and therefore unable to vote so the Jews were able to win by a slim majority and to put their man in office. In subsequent elections, following efforts by black leaders, the area was redistricted and the blacks won a majority.

THE MIKVA NEAR 770

There is no question that one of the most painful topics for the Rebbe was the mikvaos in Crown Heights. After the white-flight the mikvaos were abandoned and neglected to the point that they were not usable. The Rebbe demanded that these mikvaos be renovated so that men and women would not have to travel to other neighborhoods or “break their heads” as the Rebbe put it in one sicha.

R’ Yosef Reitzes relates:

“As a bachur we waited one Shabbos, when there was no farbrengen, to escort the Rebbe home. The Rebbe came out at about two and began walking towards Brooklyn Avenue, and we followed at some distance. When the Rebbe got to the corner of Brooklyn he suddenly turned right and began crossing Eastern Parkway. We were wondering where the Rebbe could be going until we saw him enter the Kerestirer mikva at 711 Eastern Parkway, near the corner of Brooklyn. It was a mikva that belonged to a Chassidic group that had left Crown Heights. The Rebbe

immersed and continued on home.”

A few weeks later, on Shabbos Parshas Shmini 5735/1975, the Rebbe said a very sharp sicha about Crown Heights. People who were present at the farbrengen said that they had never heard the Rebbe scream like that ever before.

“It was terrible. Throughout the sicha I was clutching at my heart,” said one man who was there. In his diary, R’ Moshe Chaim Levin writes about that farbrengen, “On Shabbos there was a *moiradike* sicha about the sh’chuna.”

After the Rebbe began speaking about the lack of action on the part of Anash, he went on to speak about the mikva he had visited a few Shabbasos earlier:

Regarding the mikva – about a year and a half ago I wrote a note about fixing up the mikva here, near 770. I was there a few days ago and you literally cannot go there! The mikva is cold, dirty and one can slip.

The responsibility is everybody’s! One can slip and it’s a miracle that boruch Hashem nothing happened. You can buy a mat and put it on the floor so people don’t break their heads there, but nobody did anything about it.

... About a year and a half ago I wrote a note about fixing the mikva. Nothing moved! You were told and I wrote about it and yet it’s like nothing happened. There isn’t even time to look at the note. He sits at home, finishes eating and drinking, and then even reads the newspaper and finishes it and he has nothing to do. He sits and looks at the four walls of his house and counts the flies on the wall. Take out the note that was written to you and look at what it says there!

Some say they already thought about it and decided to do something too, but actually doing – someone else should take action.

What about you? A mikva like this is an embarrassment!

I got two reasons from them. One said that since there are mikvaos near their homes, it isn't necessary to renovate this one.

I also knew that there are mikvaos in other places and I still wrote that they should fix this mikva, since it's the mikva closest to 770 and the Rebbe, my father-in-law lived here and he would daven and learn here and he would draw down hashpaos and brachos and kochos makifim and kochos p'nimiyim and they themselves benefit from his brachos till this day.

A Jew wants to come here and daven here or learn in 770 or even to speak "idle talk" in 770 - everybody has a connection to 770 - and when he goes to the closest mikva he sees that it's cold and dirty and you can slip and it's only a miracle that nothing happens there. And this is despite the fact that from 1940-1950 this is where the Rebbe, my father-in-law lived and people would go to the nearest mikva.

Another person gave me a completely balabatishe answer and wrote me three options. 1) If we want to do something like that it has to be done a certain way and will cost thousands of dollars. 2) Something else can be done which must be done in such-and-such a manner but it will cost less. 3) Do it another way and it will cost less. He wrote me that there isn't even money for this. What a disgrace! When I saw this I shuddered and realized that there isn't even anybody to go to the table with. They couldn't buy a mat or some kind of rug because it costs such-and-such and I know that even for that there isn't any money.

I could give them money. People who give me money are not from the neighborhood and they give me for other things and I can guide



The Rebbe's approach to the topic was sharp and painful to a frightening extent. Matters reached the point that the Rebbe did something quite unusual for the construction of the mikva. The Rebbe sold 770!

them and can take from them according to my request, but it is forbidden for me to give them money because if I give it to them, it will be wasted ...

The Rebbe demanded that the mikvaos should reflect well on the sh'chuna that they are in, while at the same time demanding the greatest haste. In a response from 5741 about plans to build a new mikva, the Rebbe wrote:

Certainly it will be beautiful as far as the furnishings, walls etc. (in this t--oo it should be magnificent compared to all mikvaos in the city). Furthermore and most important is the utmost haste (in the construction etc.) and the merit of the many helps.

THE HEAVENLY SALE OF 770

Several years after the episode regarding the mikva for men ended, a new saga began. This time it was about the mikva for women. In 5740, it was finally decided that a new mikva would be built for women in Crown Heights. In a rash move, one of the askanim tore down the building around the old mikva before the new one was built and then he neglected the work and the construction of the new mikva was delayed for over two years. The women of Crown Heights had no choice but to use a mikva in a building under construction. Some women of the community were badly injured due to various pitfalls in the

The printing machines had been consumed by the fire so that parts of the metal had melted into one large block, but the thousands of copies of the weekly likut that were on the machines were miraculously untouched. The large flames that had managed to melt the metal did not consume the Rebbe's sichos.

place.

In 5742, the askanim wrote to the Rebbe that they didn't have money to build the new mikva and they suggested (as it seems from the response) to appoint someone to fundraise for it. The pointed answer from the Rebbe said:

In all of New York and the like they have built and *are building* mikvaos and most of this is done by women activists who *raise* the needed money themselves and it's amazing that after *over* a year of involvement in this they don't know about this and how the women do this. The way of finding someone to fundraise the money for them hasn't been successful thus far.

On Thursday night, 12 Cheshvan, 5743, the Rebbe wrote a scathing response to the askanim of the sh'chuna in connection with this:

The shocking incident, and what makes it more shocking is that nobody paid any attention to it, they destroyed (with public money and with haste) the only women's mikva in the entire community of Lubavitch and which is visited by Lubavitcher women from a number of countries – two years ago!

Since they are apparently not "aware" of this, I hereby announce: 1) There is no mikva in its place as of now, here 2)

according to Shulchan Aruch even regarding a shul and even when there is another shul – it is highly questionable as to how they tore it down to begin with, 3) in a situation where it is permissible to tear it down (which was not at all the case here) – there must be "to build it speedily by day and by night" (the wording of the Shulchan Aruch).

With my own eyes I have seen that aside from a few days they are not doing any construction, neither by night nor by day. May Hashem have mercy on us all amongst Klal Yisroel. We conclude with the positive.

Following this, on Erev Shabbos Parshas VaYechi, the Rebbe wrote even more sharply:

The p'sak din is known that it is permissible and worthwhile to sell a shul for the purpose of the mikva. They promised me that there would be a completed mikva in the middle of the summer, and then before Rosh HaShana and then for Sukkos, and then in two or three weeks.

On 14 Teives I was at the mikva and in another three weeks it won't be completed either.

If they are really interested in the welfare of the beis midrash – it is for its benefit that they sell it and give the money to someone who is not from Lubavitch – and

give him tens of thousands of dollars payment for his efforts so that he finishes the mikva in three weeks and nobody in Lubavitch should give him any advice at all.

The Rebbe's approach to the topic was sharp and painful to a frightening extent. Matters reached the point that the Rebbe did something quite unusual for the construction of the mikva, a step that he hinted at in the notes where he said it was according to Shulchan Aruch. The Rebbe sold 770!

Late at night, Wednesday night of Parshas Shmos, 5743, a mysterious fire broke out in the printing area of the Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos, which was located on the upper floors of the office building 788, above the shul and big beis midrash of the Rebbe MH"M. (The shocking story began a few weeks earlier, with an unusual instruction from the Rebbe to hurry up and print volume twenty of Likkutei Sichos).

After midnight a passerby noticed the flames coming out of the printing shop. More than ten fire trucks careened through the streets that led to the scene of the fire and they doused the building with water in an attempt to put out the fire, but by the time they got the huge fire under control, it had destroyed all the printing machines and everything there turned to ashes.

The members of the Vaad rushed to enter the shop even before the heavy smoke dispersed in order to see what could be salvaged. They were relieved to see that the fire had been stopped near the offices, which contained hundreds of copies of the new Likkutei Sichos, in addition to vital archives.

The big surprise was in the center of the printing shop. The printing machines had been consumed by the fire so that parts of the metal had melted into one large block, but the thousands of copies of the weekly *likut* that were on the

machines were miraculously untouched. The large flames that had managed to melt the metal did not consume the Rebbe's sichos.

A few days before the big fire that caused such heavy damage, a small fire broke out under the farbrengen bima where the Rebbe sat. Bachurim who were there at the time put it out. Nobody could understand how a fire had broken out under the bima. There was no rational reason for it.

On Shabbos Parshas Shmos, in the middle of the farbrengen, the Rebbe revealed what lay behind the recent events. The Rebbe began speaking about the mikva that was not yet built:

There is something about which I have been screaming more than 101 times. For three years and more I have been speaking about building a mikva and meetings have been held and they discuss it again and again but they still haven't actually finished building the mikva.

Of all the times I was at the mikva, I did not see any of the people in charge even one time. I was there on a number of days and at different times of the day, early, late, at the beginning of the day – at least, at the beginning of my day which is before noon - and only one time did I meet one of the people in charge. And that was within the past two weeks and so probably he showed himself since he wanted to ensure that I wouldn't speak about it at the farbrengen.

However, I spoke about it at the farbrengen time and again and they make a written record of what was said at the farbrengen, and they hear what needs to be done – but everybody thinks that I'm not talking about him but about someone else ...

After all this did not help, something negative happened to one of the ladies and nevertheless,



The offices above 770 the day after the fire.



The zal in 770 as they extinguished the fire. The benches were covered with plastic to protect them from the water that poured down from the upper stories.

it made no difference.

Then a similar incident took place with a second woman and it made no difference. Even when it happened with a third woman it made no difference.

Then a small fire broke out suddenly. Nobody knows how it began and there is no rational reason for it. Nevertheless, it made no difference.

Then a big fire broke out which everybody is talking about. This fire was also miraculous – there is no reason for why it began. Nevertheless, it made no difference.

I saw there was no other choice and the building had to be

saved and so I sold it.

They do me a favor and write down what I say and they extol the talk, but when it comes to actually doing something, it has no effect. What is the purpose in talking if they don't take action? There's talk and questions about what was said, they analyze it and explanations are given etc. but it doesn't get translated into action.

The shock this engendered is indescribable. That Friday a secret sale of the beis midrash of 770 was carried out. In the morning, the Rebbe gave the secretaries an entire page of instructions regarding the sale of the beis midrash that same day. Some of the details still cannot

Rumor has it that the Rebbetzin said that three things made the Rebbe's hair turn white: the sh'chuna, MiHu Yehudi, and the state of the T'mimim.

be publicized.

The Rebbe said that the sale should be carried out according to halacha by Rabbi Zalman Shimon Dworkin a"h, the rav of the sh'chuna. It is known that the Rebbe inquired afterwards regarding a number of the details connected with Rav Dworkin's role in the matter.

Due to the great haste in which the sale was done there wasn't time for the buyer to obtain the cash necessary to meet the named price. The Rebbe told the secretaries **to gift the buyer money** so he could officially buy it that same day.

The buyer was a non-Lubavitcher, as per the Rebbe's orders. The Rebbe told the gabboim that from then on, any significant change in the building had to be done with permission of the new owner. Since the gabboim did not know who the buyer was, said the Rebbe, no changes should be made.

The Rebbe sold the beis midrash, Beis Chayeinu, which every Chassid years for, so that the women of Crown Heights would have a mikva.

It has only been in recent years that Chassidim have realized what hashgacha pratit there was in the sale of the shul. The act of sale proved that the Rebbe was the only balabus over 770 and this addressed one of the primary claims in the court case about Beis Chayeinu.

CONCLUSION - BUT NOT THE END

Although in more recent years the Rebbe did not address the topic with such sharpness, the Rebbe's war for the character of the neighborhood and for the security

and quality of life of the Jews who lived there has still not ended. When we read or hear about another incident in which a black attacks a Jew in Crown Heights, we must think only about how we could have prevented this.

White-flight from Crown Heights did not only affect Crown Heights. Think about how Judaism would look today if at the beginning of "U'faratzta," the tanks and mivtzaim, all those hundreds of thousands of Jews, would have been around Lubavitch. Dozens of bachurim who lived in the sh'chuna in the early years found their way to Lubavitch – how many more would have joined Lubavitch if the Jews hadn't fled? How many fights that were not l'sheim Shamayim might have been prevented if the main center for G'dolei Yisroel was in the proximity of the Nasi HaDor? How many more Jews would have become baalei t'shuva?

The Rebbe's war for the "sh'chuna of the Nasi HaDor" as he called it, continues till this day. In certain areas of Crown Heights there are blocks with a few Chassidim and many blacks. Till today the T'mimim continue to help out with minyanim in shuls that need them so that another shul should not be closed.

On the other hand, children are growing up in Crown Heights today seeing mostly Jews as they walk to school, and having no idea that at the beginning of the Rebbe's nesius there were maybe three Chassidishe balabatim who owned homes in the area.

The sh'chuna is dear to the Rebbe's heart. The Rebbe said that whatever happens in Crown Heights

has an impact on the entire world. This is apparent in the Rebbe's war for the physical character of the neighborhood as described above, and also in his war for the spiritual character of the neighborhood when people tried to impose their will on the community in ways that went against halacha. Then too, you saw the Rebbe screaming about things happening in Moshiach's capitol in Lubavitch in New York.

In 5740, R' Shmuel Yitzchok Reitzes returned from a wedding in London and he told the Rebbe that the Lubavitcher mosdos there were growing tremendously. The Rebbe sighed and asked him why this wasn't the case in Crown Heights. When he asked the Rebbe what needed to be done, the Rebbe said, "We need to delay the Torah reading [i.e. in order to get people to do something]." The Rebbe was willing to delay the Torah reading in order to save the sh'chuna.

Rumor has it that the Rebbetzin said that three things made the Rebbe's hair turn white: the sh'chuna, MiHu Yehudi, and the state of the T'mimim.

Tuvia Fertel writes in his book about cities in exile that were called "Yerushalayim," that Brownsville, a Jewish neighborhood with numerous shuls and battei midrash, flourished until the Jews left. It was also called "Yerushalayim of America." When Brownsville was destroyed, all assumed that nearby Crown Heights would soon share the same fate. However today, when thousands of guests arrive in Tishrei they see a Jewish neighborhood which prevailed, "since the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed ... Lubavitch is our Yerushalayim of America." There is no question that Crown Heights deserves the title. It is the only Jewish neighborhood that prevailed during white-flight, while all the others - Harlem, the Bronx, Brownsville and East Flatbush – could not.

TISHREI IN YEHUDA AND SHOMRON (AND PRAGUE)

By Aliza Karp

When I told Rochie Serebryanski that I had been in Hevron for Yom Kippur she asked that I speak about it at the upcoming N'shei Chabad Rosh Chodesh gathering in Crown Heights. I said I would be happy to... why not?

By the time Rosh Chodesh came along, the evening was dedicated to a member of our community whom we lost to a terrible sickness – Aviva bas Avraham Palgi - and to surviving mourners Mrs. Edith Block, on the loss of her dear daughter Devorah Nechama bas Avraham Neuwirth, and Mrs. Miryam Swerdlov on the loss of her precious granddaughter Alta Shula bas Yosef Yitzchok Swerdlov.

After sharing my experiences with the women in attendance I decided to make the speech into an article, dedicated to our departed and our mourners.

Thank you Rochie for inviting me here this evening and thank you everyone for giving me this opportunity to share with you my experiences this past Tishrei. I would like to mention that I know that Aviva, whom we just lost, and the surviving mourners Edith Bloch and Miriam Swerdlov have in common that they all love(d) and support(ed) Eretz Yisroel. Miryam Swerdlov in particular is a regular visitor to Hevron. *Ad Masai, Hashem... Ad Masai?!*

It is our job now to hasten the revelation of Moshiach. With that in mind, I will strive to connect my presentation to the teachings of the Rebbe.

As many of you know, I am very involved with Hevron. I work for the Shliach in Hevron, Rabbi Danny Cohen. I would love to experience all our Yomin Tovim in Hevron, but if I would - I wouldn't be here in Crown Heights to get my work done ... so I go occasionally. This year was the first time I was in Hevron during Tishrei.

Since I want to connect my story as much as possible to the Rebbe – I am going to begin with a story that actually happened on Chaf Beis Shvat. It was a number of years ago when my daughter Rivka Greenwald was in Crown Heights with her daughters for the Kinus. They are on Shlichus in Duluth, MN.

Shabbos morning my husband and I learn Igros Kodesh. We have a volume and we go page by page. The

letters are amazing. This particular Shabbos morning, my two eldest granddaughters came to ask me a question. My husband and I had just started a letter. We completed the first paragraph, where the Rebbe generally says he received a letter on such and such a date but does not always begin to address any specific topic. So we finished the introductory paragraph and I looked up and asked the girls what they wanted. They wanted me to take them to 770. Hmmm. I explained that Bubby does not like crowds, and this week would be

Beit Lubavitch Bat Ayin: Challah on the table in the foreground and Jewish towns in the distance on the porch of Beit Lubavitch Bat Ayin.





Chabad of Hevron: A creative touch to the way the soldiers laid down their rifles on the floor when they came to their Pre Yom Kippur program

very crowded upstairs in 770 because it is Chaf Beis Shvat. And Bubby had to make a big salad because of all the guests because it is Chaf Beis Shvat. And Bubby is tired.

My husband was shocked at my answer but I could not be convinced to change my mind. We went back to learning the letter that had been interrupted. The very next sentence was one I had never seen before and have not seen since. It read: "It is important to be a good influence on your grandchildren."

I closed the book. Apologized to my husband. Got dressed and took the girls to 770. It was packed. I figured there might be some places at the back, so we went to the third Shul. We got there just as everyone stood up together. Instead of standing with them we mounted the now empty seats and scurried to the back porch. A few moments after we got there, two women in the front row got up to leave. It was as if they were holding the spot for us. The glass partition did not reach to the bottom. My granddaughters could see the entire downstairs 770 and the space under the glass gave them plenty of air to breath. It was amazing - we got front row seats!

This past Tishrei I took my eldest

granddaughter, Simcha Rochel, to Hevron for Yom Kippur. It was the first of her three fasts before her Bas Mitzvah... and again - we got front row seats. Actually, every seat in the Maara is a front row seat, even if you are standing. We have it on video... the Rebbe telling supporters of Hevron that all our prayers gather and ascend through Hevron. Can't get closer than that.

I want to take this opportunity to mention – there is now internet access to prayers in Hevron. Chabad of Hevron has a website where you push a button that leads you to a place to put in your information. Then you press the send button and your very soon the prayer will be said in Hevron... at the Maara, at Menucha Rochel or both... your choice. The website is chabadhebron.com (Reminder: it is traditional to give Tz'daka when asking for a Bracha, so, for your convenience, there is a place to click to make donations.)

Our Yom Kippur preparations began the week before on Wednesday night. Danny's wife Batsheva was making a pre-Yom Kippur event for girl soldiers. Simcha Rochel and I attended. Batsheva first taught the girls how to make a scrumptious chocolate dessert and then she taught them about T'shuva. I must admit that Simcha Rochel and I did not leave the event with deep thoughts of T'shuva (nor did we have deep thoughts about chocolate) but we did come away feeling a strengthening of Ahavas Yisroel between us and the soldiers we had just met. A pre-Bas Mitzvah girl and her Bubby mingling with teenage girls with little or no background in Judaism – and feeling connected. It may not make sense, but it was very real.

We were also feeling a sense of awe at how the Rebbe thinks of every Jew in every place, including female soldiers in Hevron. We had

just spent Rosh HaShana in Prague with Simcha Rochel's friends from Online School, Chaya and Bassie Barash, daughters of the Shluchim in Prague. Shlichus in Minnesota, Prague and Hevron are all different – what they share is what they have in common with Chabad Houses around the world - challenges that can only be met by Shluchim dedicated to Am Yisroel and connected to the Rebbe.

The Shabbos before Yom Kippur we spent in Yitzhar. How many of you have heard of Yitzhar? It is in the Shomron, not far from Sh'chem, where Yosef HaTzaddik is buried. It is a magnificent setting.

I don't want to knock Hevron, but it is a big city. Dirty, noisy. Yeah, it's dirty. The government doesn't let the Jews clean up the piles of garbage because we are not allowed to touch Arab property and the garbage belongs to the Arabs. One time Chabad of Hevron got permission to clean up a certain area that had rats, and they had to bring in bulldozers. But the hard part was getting the permission.

Back to my story... In contrast to Hevron the big city, Yitzhar is a community of a few hundred families on a hilltop with views in all directions. It is about 35 miles from the coast, but at sunset you see the sun reflecting off the Mediterranean with the silhouette of Tel Aviv in front of it. The air in Yitzhar is fresh and crisp and the people are exclusively the kind who are dedicated to Eretz Yisroel, Ahavas Yisroel and Toras Yisroel.

Recently a Chabad House has been set up in Yitzhar by Danny Cohen's brother Eli Eitan together with the founder of outpost Mitzpeh Yitzhar, Itzik Sandroi and his partner in pioneering, famous for being the first soldier to sit in jail in the days before the Disengagement, Yossi Pilant. Their Chabad House will bring Chassidus to the people and the soldiers in Yitzhar and the

surrounding areas. Because they now had a Chabad House they were able to sell me Machzorim. That meant I did not have to drive through congested traffic in Yerushalayim in search of them. Plus I have the pleasure of knowing my Machzor is from Yitzhar. And by the way – the Chabad House of Yitzhar is actually a caravan. But it is still a Chabad House.

The first nice thing about Yom Kippur in Eretz Yisroel started the night before, i.e. Motzaei Shabbos. They changed the clocks! It meant we only had to fast until six o'clock and a few minutes. (Very soon after nightfall, Baruch Marzel made sure there were tables of cake and orange juice, enough for the crowds who had Davened at the Maara. And for the soldiers - who to my surprise were also fasting - he arranged for a restaurant-on-wheels to go around to where the soldiers were stationed. The restaurant-on-wheels was sponsored by Chabad of Hevron – thanks to Aryeh Wuensch of Miami.)

Erev Yom Kippur we needed a place to eat. This time we went to Bat Ayin. How many people have heard of Bat Ayin? Many of you probably know this is where the

Meir and Miriam Rhodes have put down roots. Literally, tree roots. I picked a fig from their tree. It was delicious. And I learned a new Halacha. I knew that you did not have to take Truma and Maaser if you eat the produce where it grows. Meir taught me that the ruling is that once the produce passes a Mezuzah, you need to take Truma and Maaser.

So the Rhodes' fed us - us and a variety of young people whom the Rhodes' have a tendency to attract to the warmth of their lovely home that the youth like to refer to as Camp Rhodes – also known as Beis Lubavitch Bat Ayin.

We got back to Hevron and I wanted to check my email in the caravan that Chabad of Hevron uses for office space. As I was leaving, in came Yossi Nachshon and our friend Golan. They covered the small space with mattresses and put out Negel Vasser Keilim. They told me that between Musaf and Mincha on Yom Kippur it will be too hot to walk back and forth to and from Kiryat Arba while fasting, so they are preparing places to rest for the men who will be walking to Hevron to take part in the Chabad Minyan at

the Maara.

At the same time, tents were being put up on the grassy areas leading up the Maara. In Crown Heights the guests come inside. In Hevron, the homes are small and few. Luckily the presence of soldiers makes it safe to sleep outdoors and the weather makes it a pleasure to do so. Some people slept on mattresses even without tents. And some even without mattresses.

Simcha Rochel and I had our last meal in our own accommodations and we lit candles. On the way to the Maara we passed the Avraham Avinu Shul. This Shul had been totally destroyed and desecrated by the Arabs in the years before 1967 and is now a completely new Shul. It's very nice. I am sure you all know the story that happened hundreds of years ago, when there were only 9 men in Hevron for Yom Kippur and a tenth man walked into Shul just before Kol Nidrei. When the men of Hevron wanted to take him home to feed him after the fast he mysteriously disappeared only to reappear in a dream of one of the men later that night. The mysterious guest said he was Avraham Avinu and had come to complete the Minyan. Since then the Shul has been called the Avraham Avinu Shul. When we walked by on our way to the Maara it was packed to overflowing and there were rows of chairs outside two of the exterior walls that had windows.

When we arrived at the Maara there were many people coming, and even more already inside. Almost all the women were dressed in white, flowing skirts. The girls with their long dark hair and the women with white scarves. There was something very graceful and surreal about how

In the back right hand corner a soldier holds the Sefer Torah brought to the Kollel building in Hevron by Rabbi Kogan and members of his congregation in Moscow.



The Kollels represent one of the ways Chabad of Hevron is striving to awaken those who slumber in Hevron.

they looked. It filled the Maara with a feeling of purity and hope.

There were Minyanim everywhere: On the plaza outside, in the hallway, in the room where a Kollel learns, the room of Yaakov, the room of Avraham and the main hall. During Yom Kippur day, Ulam Yitzchok, which is open to Jews only ten days a year, was also open... and packed to capacity.

When we got to the main hall it was full, and women were beginning to stand near the entrance. I always figure there are at least two seats vacant near the far side (as per the Chaf Beis Shvat story), so we squished through and found 'our' two seats on the far side near the back.

There is a hallway behind the main hall with windows connecting the two areas. From our location we could hear our Minyan and the Minyan behind us which we heard with more volume and clarity. It was confusing at first, but very beautiful. The Minyan behind us had a lot of singing. Beautiful tunes, very sincere, very emotional, very moving and very inspiring.

When our Minyan ended and we walked back to our room. It was a warm night. Small groups of people were gathered outdoors. Windows were open. I would also like to say that hearts were also open. That was the feeling. The pervading atmosphere was one where no one was a stranger. We could hear the sounds of Davening, learning and lively discussions that were to continue through the night. Jewish Hevron was unmistakably ensconced in Yom Kippur.

Simcha Rochel had brought packages with her all the way from Duluth to give to soldiers. A woman

who is not Jewish has an organization that sends packages to soldiers in Eretz Yisroel and we took some packages to deliver. The soldiers loved the baseball hats and other 'guy' things in the sack. We added a compact Segula L'Shmira according to the Rebbe's guidelines, plus some chocolate and delivered it with a cold Coca Cola. One of the soldiers we delivered the packages to had told us that he had never been to Hevron before his army service and what he found wonderful about Hevron was Shabbos. In Haifa, where he lived, he had seen Jews in Yarmulkas from time to time so he thought he knew a little about his heritage. But in Hevron, he said, you can feel in the air when it is Shabbos... that is the feeling we had on Yom Kippur... you could feel it was Yom Kippur.

The next morning we had a Chabad Minyan at the Maara. Most of the men walked from nearby Kiryat Arba. Because Chabad begins later than other Minyanim we usually start outdoors and move inside when someone else is finished. That was the plan, but somehow we were able to start indoors right away. I was relieved. Outside, the women would have been in the sun. The Minyan started on time. Shliach Rabbi Menachem Porter did a wonderful job conducting the service.

It is not easy to follow Yom Kippur Davening. It is lengthy and unfamiliar. But when Davening in Maaras HaMachpella, so close to our fathers and mothers, Hashem's favorite children, the mood of the relationship of Hashem to Am Yisroel strongly reflects the relationship of children and parents. We begin every prayer by

mentioning Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov and their presence in the Maara is very comforting.

I wish I could tell you that our Davening was on such a level that Moshiach came and aroused those who slumber in Hevron... but alas. The prayers in 770, at the Kotel, in Maaras HaMachpella and all the Shuls around the world have not yet broken the shell of Galus.

Today was the second of MarCheshvan. Almost one hundred years ago, on this date, in Hevron, the Rebbe Rashab established a Yeshiva. Seven years ago on this day Chabad of Hevron opened a Kollel. Due to the onset of World War One, the Rebbe Rashab's Yeshiva was open in Hevron for a few short years after which it was forced to move to Yerushalayim. Against all odds, Chabad of Hevron received permission to open their Kollel and – in a city where even putting up a Mezuzah has caused a ruckus by Peace Now and the media – they have not only maintained the afternoon Kollel but have now opened a second one in the evening.

When Sara and Boruch Nachshon were amongst the first to re-settle Hevron, the Rebbe sent a letter to Boruch telling him that his learning and Davening in Hevron together with his friends will constitute the spiritual conquering of Hevron which will bring about the conquest of Hevron in the physical. Not only has Boruch designated Chabad of Hevron to be considered his friends according to the letter from the Rebbe, but his son Rabbi Yosef Nachshon is instrumental in the learning and administration of the Kollels.

The Kollels represent one of the ways Chabad of Hevron is striving to awaken those who slumber in Hevron – and all our loved ones whom we long to see again in happiness and in good health. May it be with Moshiach NOW!

THE MARRIAGE OF THE AVOS AND THE KINUS HA'SHLUCHIM

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik
District Rav Bat Chefer – Emek Chefer

*What is the advantage in the shliach who works as far away as possible? * Which shidduch is more successful, one in which the couple are similar or one in which their differences complement one another? * A fascinating look at the parsha from the perspective of Chazal, Kabbala and Chabad Chassidus presented in honor of the Kinus HaShluchim and the sidra that deals with the shidduchim of the Avos.*

SIMILAR OR COMPLEMENTARY

People often wonder, which is preferable – when a couple are similar, having a common background and upbringing, or when the couple are unlike and their differences complement and complete each other? Which sort of shidduch will be more long-lasting and harmonious?

Let us look at the marriages of Avrohom and Sarah and of Yitzchok and Rivka and see how they differ:

Avrohom and Sarah were more or less similar:

Their family background was similar, as they were related. Avrohom was Sarah's uncle. She was the daughter of Haran, Avrohom's brother. They were both born and raised in Ur Kasdim. They were closer in age than the other

Avos and Imahos, being only ten years apart. They both were born to goyim who did not believe in one G-d and both underwent a process of change in which they came to believe in one G-d. In their actions, too, they were on the same page – both were hospitable and both taught others about G-d, “Avrohom converted the men and Sarah the women.”

Yitzchok and Rivka were quite different from one another:

Their family background could not have been more dissimilar - Yitzchok was born to Avrohom and Sarah, righteous people who believed in one G-d and served Hashem, while Rivka was the daughter of the wicked Besuel and the brother of the wicked Lavan. Yitzchok was born in Eretz Yisroel, where he lived his whole life, while Rivka was born in Ur Kasdim, an impure land. There was a large age gap of 37 years between them. When the couple wed, their spiritual levels were quite disproportionate. Yitzchok was already on a high spiritual level – he was circumcised and had been brought, at the Akeida, as a sacrifice to Hashem. Rivka lived outside Eretz Yisroel “as a rose

“The marriage of Yitzchok and Rivka is a general matter that rises above all else, as it represents the general connection between Above and below, the general idea of Torah and mitzvos, and the connection between the neshama and the body.”

among the thorns.”

From their first encounter, when Rivka saw Yitzchok for the first time, she sensed his holiness and lowered herself from the camel and bowed to him, an act that symbolized her awe and emphasized the distance between their spiritual levels. Even many years later, when she felt uncomfortable in her pregnancy “and the children fought within her,” she consulted with Sheim rather than her husband because apparently there remained a distance of levels between them.

THE SPIRITUAL LEVELS OF AVROHOM AND YITZCHOK

It would seem that a bond between someone on a high spiritual level and someone on a lower spiritual level, would be more suitable for the shidduch of Avrohom than for Yitzchok. After all, Avrohom’s spiritual level was the midda of chesed, which is all about drawing the lowly close, while Yitzchok’s spiritual level was the midda of din and g’vura, which is about giving each person in accordance with his spiritual level, no less and no more.

Yet despite the differences in background and level of Yitzchok and Rivka, the Torah says wonderful things in praise of this shidduch:

1-The term “ahava” (love) between man and wife is used for

Yitzchok and Rivka (and was not mentioned about Avrohom and Sarah) as it says (24:67), “And he took Rivka and she was his wife and **he loved her.**”

2 - After the passing of Sarah, Avrohom remarried Hagar-K’tura and had six more children, and even in Sarah’s lifetime he had a concubine, Hagar, who bore him a son. Yitzchok, on the other hand, did not marry another wife after the passing of Rivka and did not have a concubine.

3 - The story of the marriage of Yitzchok and Rivka is told in the Torah at great length and it is written twice. Chazal say “Nicer is the talk of the servants of the Avos than the Torah of the children, for this parsha of Eliezer is repeated in the Torah while many important aspects of Torah were only hinted at.”

4 - Among all the prayers that were prayed over the generations, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai singles out the prayer of Eliezer for the shidduch of Yitzchok as an outstanding prayer that was accepted very quickly.

Thus says Rashbi (B’Reishis Raba, 60, 4): “Three people had their prayers and requests of Hashem answered immediately: 1) Eliezer the servant of Avrohom when he went to find a shidduch for Yitzchok, as it says, ‘And it happened before he finished speaking and behold, Rivka came

out.’ 2) Moshe Rabbeinu when he asked that the earth open its mouth and swallow Korach. 3) Shlomo HaMelech when he asked that a fire descend on the altar in the Beis HaMikdash.”

Of the three, Eliezer’s prayer was greater than the rest because they were answered only after they completed their prayer while he was answered even before he finished. This is surprising, for Eliezer was a Canaanite servant who lived before the Giving of the Torah, while Moshe and Shlomo were righteous Jews who lived after the Giving of the Torah. How could the prayer of a servant be loftier than that of our greatest teacher and prophet and greater than the prayer of the wisest of all men and the one who built the Mikdash?

The answer is that Eliezer’s prayer was for a shidduch for Yitzchok, and his marriage was the loftiest of all, therefore he was extremely successful.

A SYMBOL FOR THE MARRIAGE OF KLAL YISROEL

In Chassidus it explains that the shidduch of Yitzchok and Rivka is a symbol for the marriage of Klal Yisroel, as well as for the avoda of a Jew in the world. The Rebbe says, “The marriage of Yitzchok and Rivka is a general matter that rises above all else, as it represents the general connection between Above and below, the general idea of Torah and mitzvos, and the connection between the neshama and the body.”

In other words, Yitzchok represents the level of the G-dly soul (*mah*) and Rivka represents the level of the body of a Jew (*ban*), and the connection between Yitzchok and Rivka embodies all the avoda of a Jew in the world, to unite the physical and the spiritual.

The starting point and the totality of the avoda of a Jew in the world

are embodied in this marriage, and because this was so crucial, the prayer for this shidduch was answered right away.

This can be understood with an analogy from nature which sounds paradoxical – two extremes, although they are the most distant, have the strongest connection, as in the kabbalistic saying, “The beginning is wedged in the end and the end in the beginning.”

It's like the heat of the sun. Generally speaking, the more distant one gets from the sun, the less heat there is. Nonetheless, the surface of the earth is much hotter than outer space is, even closer to the sun.

Also, when you compare the temperatures on mountaintops to the temperatures in the valleys below, you discover an amazing thing. The higher the mountain and the closer it is to the sun, the lower the temperature. On the highest

mountaintops there is snow while below those very mountains it is hot, to the point that near the equator – in the center of Africa - on the peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro, there is snow year-round, whereas in the valley at its feet it's extremely hot.

This can be used as a mashal to the idea that the end is wedged to the beginning and the beginning to the end. If you go far enough you connect with the origin.

So too the shidduch and the joining of two opposites, Yitzchok and Rivka, created a highly successful and complete connection, just as the connection between the spiritual world of the neshama and the physical world of the body creates the most successful bond.

THE SHABBOS OF THE KINUS HA'SHLUCHIM

The Rebbe assigned a holy shlichus to every Jew, to be mekarev our brothers and sisters to our Father in heaven and to bring the Geula. This Shabbos, thousands of shluchim will gather to be strengthened in their avoda of shlichus.

The avoda of shlichus consists of uniting opposites. A Chassid who lives in the rarified atmosphere of Tomchei T'mimim and who spent his life doing Torah and mitzvos is sent “abroad” to a place far from

Jewish life, where he has the job of making a “shidduch” between the holiness of the shul and beis midrash and the secular environment far from Judaism and belief in G-d.

Sometimes, in the avoda of shlichus, fears and difficulties arise. We find ourselves in a double and redoubled darkness of the end of galus; how can we succeed in fixing the world?

Our parsha comes to teach us that Avrohom sent Eliezer out of the country and it was there that he was successful in his prayer and his mission of combining opposites. With his prayer he accomplished more than even Moshe Rabbeinu and Shlomo HaMelech.

We mustn't be fazed by the difficulties of galus and the challenges of shlichus because when a Jew davens to Hashem, he is immediately answered. All that is needed is the effort of uttering his prayer, and then immediately and even before he finishes the prayer, he will merit tremendous success in his shlichus of being mekarev everybody in his environment to Hashem and hastening the Geula.

SHLICHUS IN DISTANT PLACES

The Rebbe once said that there is an advantage in shlichus in the most distant places, whether distant spiritually, in terms of the absolute lack of Jewish and Chassidic life there, or physically distant from any Jewish communities.

Sometimes, the most successful influence is in the most distant places. In the merit of the avoda of shlichus all over the world and the tremendous achdus of the Kinus HaShluchim, may we merit “and gather us together from the four corners of the world to our land,” with the true and complete Geula, now.

Source: Hisvaaduyos 20 Cheshvan 5742 and more

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APPROBATION

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



[Handwritten signature]

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BEARING FRUIT IN KARMEI TZUR

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

He grew up in a traditional family in Belgium, came to know there the shliach of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, and in a moment of inner awakening on Simchas Torah, decided to make a complete turnaround in his life. After studying at the prestigious “Lev” Institute, he established his home and went out on shlichus to the Karmei Tzur settlement, located among hostile Arab villages in the Shomron, where he spreads chassidus and the Redemption among religious families, seeing brachos and deriving nachas in all that he does. The story of the fascinating shlichus of Rabbi Dovid Rosenfeld from Karmei Tzur.

The pastoral settlement of Karmei Tzur is located a few miles south of Gush Etzion Junction, half way to the Jewish settlement of Chevron. Established on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5745, it is considered one of the region’s newer settlements. Its first residents were graduates of Yeshivat Har Etzion in Elon Shvut, and they were later joined by other families, among them a group of Jewish immigrants from Peru. As with most settlements in Gush Etzion, the chosen name for this settlement was derived from Torah sources – the ancient Beit Tzur, the remnants of which are located nearby. Beit Tzur is mentioned in the Book of Yehoshua and played a significant role in the wars of the Maccabees against the Greeks.

The settlement of Karmei Tzur is not located in a particularly sympathetic area. Reaching the settlement requires passing by several rather hostile Arab villages, and the route has seen its fair share of serious terrorist attacks that have claimed the lives of numerous Jews.

While Karmei Tzur is not a particularly large settlement, with a population of about one hundred and twenty families, it is still quite inspiring to see the communal solidarity, unity, and brotherhood reigning among the residents, most of whom are students of the former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu. The settlement’s economic state is average; many of the male residents work as educators, merchants, physicians, computer experts, and economists. The Torah aspect of life has not been pushed into a corner, and the settlement supports and runs a unique kollel that emphasizes the study of the Beis HaMikdash, a learning institution that has contributed much to the local spiritual framework.

We came to this dynamic settlement last month to survey the

vigorous and exemplary activities of the shliach, Rabbi Dovid Rosenfeld, who has been working tirelessly and with great devotion on the premises for the last five years.

We began our tour in the Tzur Shalom neighborhood, founded in memory of one of the settlement's residents, Dr. Shmuel Gillis (may G-d avenge his blood), a senior member of the medical staff of Hadassah Hospital who was murdered by terrorists on his way to the settlement in 5761. The neighborhood is located on the settlement's western slopes with a view of Wadi Rashrash, and on especially clear days, you can even see the Tel Aviv area.

We quickly learned that Rabbi Rosenfeld is privileged to have growing cooperation from residents, who look most favorably upon his devotion towards spreading the light of chassidus on the settlement. "There are two main levels of activity in which we operate and invest much effort," said Rabbi Rosenfeld, his characteristic joyful spirit shining through his every word. "First, there is a variety of classes in the Rebbe's maamarim and sichos, farbrengens on auspicious days with guest speakers, deep Torah discussions with local residents, and special classes for the Peruvian immigrants with Rabbi Daniel Ariel.

"Second, there are regular activities with hundreds of Israel Defense Forces soldiers on guard duty and at army bases in the vicinity of the settlement. It is impossible to describe the tremendous emotion that fills me every time I surprise a soldier at some remote outpost in the middle of the night, or bring a little joy and excitement to a lone soldier out on patrol in the mountain ranges by reminding him that today is Purim or Chanukah... This is a living example of the mutual responsibility of the Jewish People."



Rabbi Dovid Rosenfeld bringing Yom Tov cheer to IDF soldiers

RABBI LASKER: THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO TAKE A DECISIVE STEP

While Rabbi Rosenfeld has been engaged in official and continuous operations on the Karmeit Tzur settlement for five years already, it seems that the fire of shlichus began to burn within him long before then. It was this that drove him to make the critical decision to leave the warm and pleasant community life in Beitar Illit and invest all his strength, energy, and material goods in the field of shlichus, the spreading of the wellsprings of chassidus, and the announcement of the Redemption.

When I asked him to explain how everything crystallized and from where his endless motivation stems, he took me on a journey back to his younger days in Brussels.

Rabbi Rosenfeld was born into a traditional family, whose stress on adhering to Jewish values did not interfere with their enjoyment of the freedoms that life in Belgium had to offer. "In our home, we kept Torah and mitzvos as 'traditional' Jews did – what they knew, they did, and what they didn't know, they didn't try to find out. Yet, it was very important to my parents to send me to learn in the Jewish day school in Brussels, where the city's Chabad shliach, Rabbi Shimon Lasker,

taught Talmud and Tanach. Even as a young boy, I had much affection for him, and I was most impressed by his loving and giving nature towards every Jew, which warmed my heart.

“At my request, we began learning Gemara together, and later he also taught me the ins and outs of Talmudic study. We learned many sichos of the Rebbe, and the teachings of chassidus in general, and I also learned from him the modes of chassidic conduct. He was a model to be emulated for the pleasantness of his ways and the uniqueness of his personal attributes, and we really connected spiritually. My parents knew about this and didn’t interfere, and I found my visits to his Chabad House in the city increasing in frequency and duration, as I become more and more involved, becoming an integral part of the surroundings. I’ll never forget the first time I entered the Chabad House in the middle of a chassidic farbrengen, listening to all the participants singing ‘*Tzama Lecha Nafshi*’ with great fervor.

“In 5750, when I grew up a bit and became a young man, I spent considerable time at the Chabad House in Antwerp, under the directorship of Rabbi Shabtai Slavaticki, who had a great influence upon me. The sweetness of his smile and the clarity of his words left a powerful impression, and it was there that my appearance as a chassid began to take shape. While I still didn’t dress in chassidic garb, my inner essence was already connected to the Rebbe with every fiber of my soul.

“I traveled from Antwerp to Eretz Yisroel, and enrolled at the ‘Lev’ Institute in Yerushalayim, where I wanted to learn a trade that would help me support a family, G-d willing.

“A visit to Brussels to see my parents turned my life around. I returned to Eretz Yisroel as a full-

fledged chassid in every respect, including my outer wardrobe. This strong inner feeling that accompanied me all the years since my early youth also took on a more noticeable and external dimension.

“It was during the month of Tishrei, and I was celebrating Simchas Torah in the Chabad House. As all the other chassidim, Rabbi Lasker drank a proper quantity of ‘mashke’, and then he approached me and said firmly, ‘Dovid! The time has come for you to take a decisive step and close matters. You know what a Rebbe is, and you know what chassidus is. Let’s go!’

“While he surprised me with his directness, I answered him readily. Under the effect of a ‘L’chaim’ or two of my own, I replied that I have already decided to stop ‘dancing at two weddings’. I stated that right after Simchas Torah, I would begin to adhere to all Chabad customs and modes of dress.

“The next day, when the effects of the mashke had worn off, I found myself in a state of tremendous uncertainty. I remembered my promise, but I wasn’t totally sure that I could - or even wanted to - implement it in practical terms. A powerful war was waging in my mind.

“I went around for a whole week like a caged lion. I was constantly engulfed by nagging questions: How would I live my life? What type of family do I want to raise? How do I want to educate my children? A week later, I no longer had any doubts regarding the future of my life. Even when I tell this story today, I get chills up and down my spine.

“On one of my first nights back in Yerushalayim, I dreamed that I was in ‘Beis Chayeinu’ and was going in for ‘yechidus’ with the Rebbe. The amazing thing was that though I had never been to the Rebbe before, the dream was clearly

identical to 770 in New York down to the smallest detail. In my dream, there was someone else in front of me for ‘yechidus’, and then I approached the Rebbe and asked him a question – the nature of which was unclear to me – and returned to my place near the doorway, as I prepared to leave the Rebbe’s room. Suddenly, the Rebbe called my name, gave me a piece of ‘mezonos’, and asked that I make a bracha and eat. I did as the Rebbe requested, and then I was surprised when the Rebbe took my hand and asked me to sing a niggun. When I gathered my wits about me, I began to sing the niggun ‘*V’Samachta B’Chagecha*’ with great fervor. The Rebbe instructed me to dance, and he even danced with me... When I finished, I left the ‘yechidus’, and I met Rabbi Lasker standing nearby as I came out...

“I awoke from my sleep totally covered in cold sweat. It took me several minutes to realize I really wasn’t in 770, rather in my bed at the dormitory in the ‘Lev’ Institute of Yerushalayim... The dream seemed so real; it was obvious this was not a case of ‘dreams speak lies’. I realized that there was a message here that the Rebbe wanted to give me.

From that morning on, I decided that I would be connected to the Rebbe. I wrote the Rebbe a letter of *hiskashrus*, and that week I bought a fedora and suit.

SHLICHUS ON A SILVER PLATTER

After his marriage to his wife Chana (nee Katorza) in 5753, the couple took up residence in Beitar Illit, where the fire of shlichus and the desire to fulfill the Rebbe’s will was kindled. Rabbi Rosenfeld started by helping the previous shliach on the Karnei Tzur settlement, Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen. “Rabbi Cohen made the first serious efforts on the

settlement, and I assisted him in his continual activities.

“Five years ago, Chaf-Zayin Adar came out on Shabbos, and I found myself sitting in shul filled with gloomy thoughts. So many years have passed since that dreadful day, and what have I been doing to hasten the hisgalus?”

“These feelings disturbed me very much and gave me no respite. What would happen if the Rebbe would come at this very moment and ask me, ‘What did you do to hasten the Redemption?’ What would I say to him? I would face him with shame and embarrassment. I would undoubtedly run and hide out of fear from the question. I spent that entire Shabbos deeply troubled and in a genuine state of apprehension.

“Yet, in a truly amazing manner, G-d joined the good thought to practical action. On Motzaei Shabbos, I received a phone call from Rabbi Cohen, who informed me that he was planning on leaving the settlement to take up a new shlichus on the settlement of Karnei Shomron, and then asked me if I was interested in replacing him. I was so stunned I could hardly speak. I was in total shock. The Rebbe perceived my feelings and gave me a place of shlichus on a silver platter. This was clearly an offer that I couldn’t refuse. Naturally, I consulted with my mashpia and my wife, and they happily gave their blessing. Thus, we set out on a new path of shlichus.”

LOOKING FOR THE INNER MEANING OF LIFE AFTER THE EXPULSION

The main avoda of shlichus in Karnei Tzur is classes in chassidus. This is a very religious yishuv, where all its residents observe Torah and mitzvos. Thus, there is no need for t’fillin and mezuzah activities, as everyone does these things on their own without the help of the Chabad



Rabbi Dovid Rosenfeld with his Daled Minim at the intersection

House, which merely has to give periodic reminders of their importance.

On Sunday, when we conducted this interview, we found Rabbi Rosenfeld meticulously preparing the regular shiurim that he teaches during the week on a variety of subjects. There’s a Tanya class on Sunday, and a class on the Rebbe’s sichos in connection with the weekly Torah portion on Wednesday. An additional class in chassidus is given by Rabbi Daniel Ariel for the new immigrants from Peru.

All the classes take place in the special kollel in operation on the settlement for the study of the Beis HaMikdash and the Redemption, with which the shliach has developed an excellent connection. “Recently, during the Three Weeks, we organized a joint lecture with Rabbi Makover on the subject of the Beis HaMikdash. In many of our activities, they see eye to eye with us on the importance of the concept, and it’s a great pleasure to work with them in a spirit of cooperation.”

In addition to the general shiurim in which certain local residents participate regularly each week without fail, there are also some special “one-on-one” chavrusa

classes with the shliach on the subject of faith and Jewish outlook.

As with many religious Zionist settlements throughout Yehuda and Shomron, there is also a tremendous thirst on this settlement to learn the teachings of chassidus. “This is a very serious population, educated in giving and showing care for all Jews. The residents agreed to come out and live on a desolate strip of land and make it blossom, despite all the hidden dangers involved in the process. You can feel the pioneer spirit of the people dwelling in Tzion leading the way. There is no doubt that the expulsion from Gush Katif and the northern Shomron caused a deep chasm and aroused certain fundamental questions about the ideology on which they had been raised. They are looking for a purpose and a sense of meaning to their lives, and they find this in chassidus.

“Chassidus provides the seasoning that gives a new and inspirational light in the mitzvos, and they happily accept it and ask for more. On every auspicious day on the chassidic calendar, we bring mashpiim, rabbanim, and lecturers to bring spiritual strength to the grateful residents. Recently, we brought Rabbi Moshe Feller from

AN ANSWER OF MONEY FROM HEAVEN

During the years of his shlichus, Rabbi Rosenfeld saw the Rebbe closely accompanying him and providing his blissful assistance in everything that he did. "In every action, great and small, we see clearly how the Rebbe helps us beyond all measure and limitation."

"One year right before Purim, I was faced with a serious budgetary crisis. I tried to raise the necessary funds, but I failed to reach the amount required to cover even a portion of our most vital expenses. I wasn't sure of what to do now, and I was worried about the many soldiers and local residents waiting impatiently for our activities. I was beside myself.

"I sat down and put it all in writing, and then placed the letter between the pages of a volume of 'Igros Kodesh'. I didn't open the volume with any particular kavana. I imagined that the Rebbe would 'give it to me over the head' or calm me down, but what I asked for was some real help, and not just words of encouragement. That evening, when I had already forgotten about the whole thing, I pulled out of my pocket the lottery ticket that I had recently bought and then went over to the local lottery stand to see if my number had hit. It took me a little while to absorb the fact that I had actually won – not first prize, but an amount that was exactly enough for me to continue our activities..."

Minnesota, and he was most impressed by what he saw. In turn, the residents were equally impressed that he had come all the way from

the United States and found the time to visit a remote settlement and support its people. Many of the residents expressed their deep

appreciation, and this spurred an increase in participation in our Torah classes."

Rabbi Rosenfeld customarily lists the names of all those who participate in a farbrengen or a shiur, and then he places the list in a volume of "Igros Kodesh". "One of the emotional high points of the year is the farbrengen I hold on my birthday, which takes place shortly before I travel to 770 for the International Shluchim Conference. Naturally, I make a big farbrengen on the yishuv and give all participants the opportunity to write down their personal requests, which I will bring to the Rebbe. It is most exciting every time I see how seriously people relate to this matter, just like lifelong chassidim with pure and tremendous faith in the power of the Rebbe. It's amazing to see how many of them write not just about their personal concerns, but also for the sake of the entire Jewish People."

[Continued next week iy"H]

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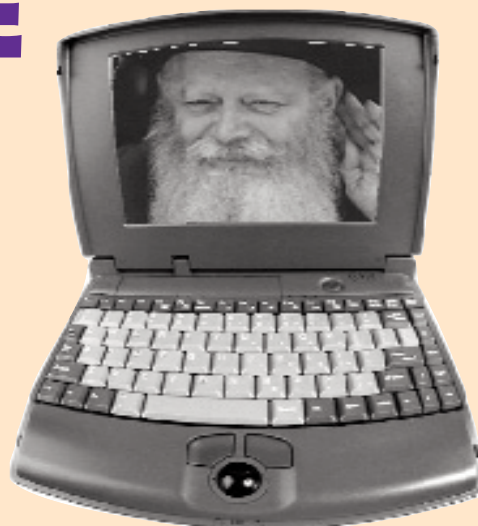
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