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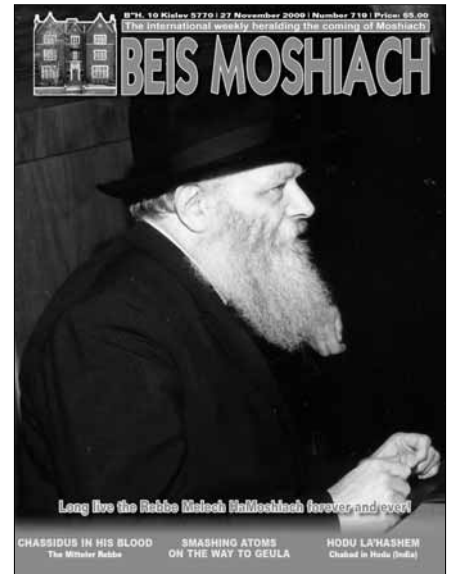
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Beis Moshiah (USPS 012-542) ISSN 1082-0272 is published weekly, except Jewish holidays (only once in April and October) for \$160.00 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and in all other places for \$180.00 per year (45 issues), by Beis Moshiah, 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY and additional offices. Postmaster: send address changes to Beis Moshiah 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Copyright 2009 by Beis Moshiah, Inc.

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HODU LA'HASHEM: CHABAD IN HODU (INDIA)

Interview by Avrohom Rainitz

It's a year since the terror attack on the Chabad house in Bombay and we interviewed the "father of the Shluchim in India," Rabbi Betzalel Kupchik. He spoke about being cautious while simultaneously having bitachon, about the difficulties of chinuch, about the people they are reaching, and about publicizing the B'suras HaGeula. * Part 1*

A year has passed since the Rebbe's shluchim to Bombay, Rabbi Gavriel and Rivka Holtzberg, together with four other guests, were murdered in the Chabad house, may Hashem avenge their blood. Since then, shlichus in India has expanded despite the warnings about additional attacks on Chabad houses in India, may Hashem protect them.

I sat down for a long talk with Rabbi Betzalel Kupchik, the Rebbe's shliach to Poona, India. In general, schmoozing with R' Kupchik is an experience, since he's a character. He's sharp and quick and if he was so inclined he could probably make quite a lot of

money in business, but he has devoted his life to the Rebbe's work.

Those who know him say that he's not a mere soldier but a commando, the kind who will lead the way and break the wall that stands in the way with his head. Others will follow him on a path that is already paved. He was one of the first shluchim in India and the man who has remained there under such difficult circumstances for fourteen years!

This was exhibited with the founding of Matteh Moshiach in Eretz Yisroel, when he paved the way at a time when he had to stand up to old-timers and the

Establishment. Ditto for other things he has done in his life.

He doesn't pay attention to censure. That's an advantage he has, as well as his "problem." To him, protocol is just a recommendation. In his kingdom in India you will see him walking around with his tzitzis over his shirt, due to the intense heat and because he is displaying his Jewish pride. Many shluchim in India copy him in this.

Now, a year after the attack in Bombay, he discusses what has been going on the past year:

How do you sum up the work of the shluchim in India this past year?





He's not a mere soldier but a commando, the kind who will lead the way and break the wall that stands in the way with his head. To him, protocol is just a recommendation.

Shortly after the tragedy we held a press conference in Kfar Chabad with the participation of some of the shluchim to India. One of our resolutions – in accordance with what the Rebbe said to do under similar circumstances, such as the massacre of bachurim in the vocational school in Kfar Chabad –

was to increase our activities in India. We resolved to double the number of Chabad houses there.

Over the past year, three new Chabad houses have opened and if G-d forbid we remain in galus, we hope to open even more. At the time of the attack there were ten Chabad houses in India and in the

near future we hope to have twenty.

In addition, activities have been stepped up at the existing Chabad houses, both in quality and in quantity. Many shiurim and programs have been dedicated in the memory of the Holtzbergs, and tourists – who are our main target – want to express their identification with the shluchim who were murdered al kiddush Hashem. They are participating more in programs.

There have been warnings of late to tourists in India which single out the danger to Chabad houses. How do you deal with the threats?

As long as we demonstrated our trust in Hashem, the tourists didn't take the travel warnings seriously. When they see that the place has become a fortress, it makes them nervous.

Over the past year we were visited several times by representatives of the Israeli establishment with reports of terror threats. They asked us to increase security around the Chabad house. Back at the press conference we held after the attack in Bombay, we announced our decision to put money into fortifying the Chabad houses in India, but it entails a lot of money which we have not been able to raise.

Some Knesset members suggested that the State allocate money to support Chabad houses that work with Israelis abroad.

That's right, but in the meantime, they aren't giving anything. They just come with suggestions and recommendations. I told the representative that if the State of Israel sent them to us out of genuine concern for Israeli tourists, they should be so good as to fund our security.

"You don't go to the ambassador in Bombay with suggestions about how to fortify the embassy; you buy him the equipment! Chabad houses in India invest large sums of money into Israeli tourists and you can help defray the costs," I told him.

Aside from the security angle there are also spiritual concerns. Many tourists won't go to a Chabad house if it's not adequately secured. Shouldn't more money be invested in this?

It's true that some people stay away from the Chabad houses because of the warnings. There is a family here that used to send their

children to our Sunday school but after the security warnings the children stopped coming. They were afraid.

However, once the police of Poona decided to take responsibility for defending the Chabad house and they turned our house into a fortified place, some tourists are now afraid to come.

As long as we demonstrated our trust in Hashem, the tourists didn't take the travel warnings seriously. When they see that the place has become a fortress, it makes them nervous. On the other hand, the children of that family came back to the Sunday school. You can't win them all ...

The warnings began a number of days before Rosh HaShana. On Erev Rosh HaShana they called me from IDF Radio to hear my reaction. I told them that on Rosh HaShana we blow the shofar thirty extra times in order to confuse the Satan, but here the Satan is trying to confuse us and prevent Israeli tourists from coming to the Chabad house and hearing the shofar. Recently, the Israeli Foreign Intelligence branch of the Shin Bet has warned of an atomic attack from Iran. Is the Israeli government recommending that Israeli citizens abandon the country? I concluded by saying, "You don't need to frighten people. All tourists can come to the Chabad house without fear."

You said that the Indian police took responsibility to secure the Chabad house. How did that happen?

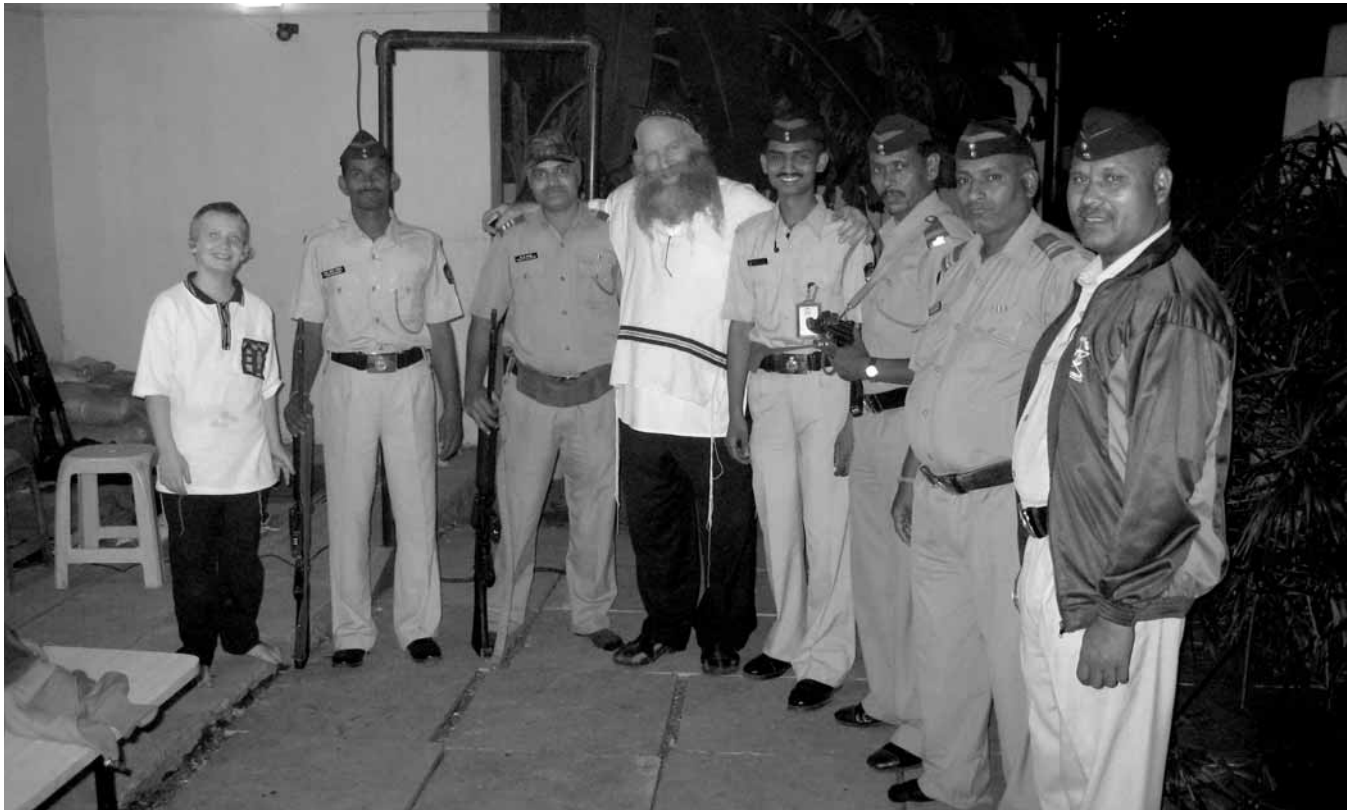
On Chol HaMoed Sukkos a police chief came to my house with three policemen. The chief said he was the commander of the police station that serves the precinct that includes the Chabad house and that the police commander of Poona wanted to talk to me. The city of Poona has seven and a half million people so the police commander has the same security responsibilities as the Israeli Minister of Police.

I did not know what they wanted from me. I told him that we were in the middle of a holiday and I could not attend a meeting. He was afraid to tell his superior that I did not want to meet with him and he asked me to speak to him by phone. The commander was very polite and he said he wanted to meet with me over a cup of tea to discuss a number of issues. I told him that in general I could not drink tea outside of my home and that day, because of Sukkos, I couldn't even drink water at his place. He accepted what I said and asked when we would meet. I told him I'd be available in two hours.

I sat down immediately to write to the Rebbe about the impending meeting and since I didn't know precisely what we would be talking about, I simply asked that all go well. Two hours later the police chief came to take me to the meeting. He is responsible for an area the size of greater Tel Aviv and yet it was interesting to see the respect he showed the citywide commander and his nervousness before entering the office.

The commander welcomed me and inquired about the holiday we were celebrating. After telling him the name of the holiday in English, he looked up information about it. Then he said, "We called you here since we have serious warnings about a terrorist attack on the Chabad house in Poona."

He showed me a text message



R' Betzalel Kupchik with a group of soldiers standing guard at the Chabad house

intercepted by the Indian intelligence services that showed that the same group that had perpetrated the attack on the Chabad house in Bombay was planning an attack in Poona. On his cell phone screen I could read the text message with the address of the Chabad house. I was very shaken.

"We want to protect you," he said.

I thought of the many brachos we had received from the Rebbe and said confidently, "We believe in one G-d and trust that He will protect us. In our Torah (T'hilim, specifically) it says, 'If G-d does not protect a city, the watchman does his job in vain.' If G-d does not help, the entire Indian army can't help. But we are sure that He will help and you will do your part, too. I rely on you that you will do everything you can."

He was very satisfied with my

On Rosh HaShana we blow the shofar thirty extra times in order to confuse the Satan, but here the Satan is trying to confuse us and prevent Israeli tourists from coming to the Chabad house and hearing the shofar.

approach and he said he believed likewise. He told me that soon two policemen would be guarding my house but two days after that, after the Indian holiday season was over, he would assign more people to protect the Chabad house.

When he said "more people" I had no idea what he had in mind. Two days later, a few trucks full of policemen stopped near the Chabad house. Close to sixty policemen spread out in the area of the Chabad house! They put up roadblocks on both sides of the

main road that passes near the Chabad house and soldiers with automatic rifles manned the posts.

Near the Chabad house there are always two trucks full of soldiers from the special anti-terror unit and in the courtyard there are another fifteen soldiers. It's a real fortress.

What do you think is motivating the police commander to invest so many resources into protecting the Chabad house?

I see it as a clear connection to Yemos HaMoshiach. In every

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normal country, how would they treat foreigners who are the cause of terror threats? We can assume that they would tell them to leave the country. As someone familiar with Indian leadership, it would make sense for them to do just that.

Furthermore, the Indian papers publicized recently that the terror in Bombay caused tremendous damage to Indian tourism. In recent months there was a drop of hundreds of thousands of tourists as compared to the same months the year before. If you take into account that every tourist brings at least \$1000 into the country, we are talking about losses of millions of dollars.

And rather than throw us out, they have brought sixty policemen to protect us. This entails tying up the resources of elite forces and costs a fortune, and it's all at their expense. I heard that one of the newspapers in Pushkar reported that Chabad is getting greater protection than the prime minister of India.

Recently, the police commander himself visited the Chabad house. He walked into all the rooms, went up on the roof, and instructed the soldiers who accompanied him to add police to positions that overlook the Chabad house. At the end of his tour he promised to do

all he can to protect the Chabad house and if it comes to that, he said, "We will die for you." I responded, "Don't worry. We won't die. They – the terrorists – will die!"

If you look at this the way the Rebbe wants us to, we come to the conclusion that this is the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy, "and kings will be your caretakers."

Is the Chabad house also taking part in maintaining security?

As I said, our protection is fully at the expense of the Indian police. The police commander asked us to also contribute towards the protection of the Chabad house, whether by installing a massive electronic gate, building up the wall around the Chabad house, or by setting up an advanced camera surveillance system and a backup to the electrical system.

I told him that we have no money for such projects but I would be visiting the United States soon and I hoped to raise the money.

What do you think of all the new security measures?

I told my wife that it's definitely helpful against the thieves.

The security hullabaloo makes us uncomfortable, but we try to ignore it. The numerous soldiers

guarding the Chabad house don't know why we have deserved this massive protection. They are convinced that I personally must be very important to the Indian government and every time I leave the Chabad house they stand silently and salute.

A few weeks ago I travelled to Australia, and I told the soldiers to let the car that came to pick me up to stop near the Chabad house. A few minutes later their commanding officer came and asked me whether I wanted a police escort to the airport.

Is it scary to live under such a palpable threat?

It's the fortress they constructed around the Chabad house that made the threat palpable and frightened off some of the tourists. We also began to get a bit nervous, so my wife wrote to the Rebbe. The Rebbe's answer was in volume 4 of Igros Kodesh, page 368, and it dispelled any fears:

Through spreading Torah in general and spreading Toras HaChassidus in particular, through which darkness is transformed into light, then just as in the redeeming in peace of Dovid's soul because many, including Avshalom's men, were with me – so too, each one will redeem his soul in peace through the many, the angels who protect a person, the Good Inclination and the Evil Inclination, being with him, for with the aforementioned the Good Inclination overpowers the Evil Inclination and sweetens judgment and then the Evil Inclination reverts and becomes a guardian of the fruit.

Then the Rebbe brings the Targum on T'hilim that explains the words "because the many" not as referring to the many who were with him but to the many tzaros that happened and still "he was redeemed in peace."

THEIR GOING ON SHLICHUS WAS DELAYED

From the diary of Mrs. Rochel Kupchik

“...in short, my burden is mainly at night. That is when I wrack my brains with a tough question: what do I prepare tomorrow? Don’t think this is simple. The guests need to enjoy themselves and there needs to be a variety of food. Also, don’t forget the limitations — there is no pre-checked salad and no meat. We have to be frugal with the mayonnaise and pasta – because when it runs out we can’t immediately make an order from the grocery (there actually is a grocery store here that takes care of our orders, but they mostly bring us water).

So the meals have to be based on natural products such as beans, flour and more beans, but believe me, there is a bracha and the meals turn out exceptionally well each and every time (even though yesterday the rice did not work out well and stuck together in clumps and I was embarrassed to serve Ashkenazi “rice cereal” like that. Afterwards I had a good laugh with Mendy and Yehudis, since in the end the people even asked for more).

What should I make? Make falafel. In order to prepare it all the kids stood and kneaded pitot on the special round rug for kneading ch’pati. After several tries we managed to make pitot with pockets and we were thrilled.

The Kupchiks have been in Poona (off and on) for fourteen years. Betzalel and his wife did not go to India as a young couple like most shluchim. They already had ten children and were well ensconced in the Chabad community in Tzfas. R’ Kupchik held administrative positions in schools and Mrs. Kupchik was a well-known teacher. The children



Roadblocks at the entrance to the street near the Chabad house



Another roadblock near the Chabad house

were all in schools. How did they pick up and leave a community, drop everything and go on shlichus?

R’ Kupchik smiled and said, “We actually went on shlichus right after we got married. It’s just that for various reasons it was delayed a few years and in the meantime we had ten children ...”

What do you mean?

When we got married, we decided to go on shlichus shortly afterwards. Our plan was to go on shlichus to Kiryat Shmoneh, a border city that was under constant bombardment from southern

Lebanon. My wife was going to be a teacher in one of the schools in the area and that would give us a financial base, and I would devote myself to outreach.

Since we got married in Adar, my wife could not get a job at that point in the school year and we decided to wait with our plan until the following school year. My wife was offered a job running the dormitory at Beis Chana “for just half a year” and that fit in perfectly with our plan.

I wanted the Rebbe to guide me and I wrote that I was taught to nullify my own desires and do the

“We actually went on shlichus right after we got married. It’s just that for various reasons it was delayed a few years and in the meantime we had ten children...”

Rebbe’s will and therefore, I had no agenda and I was waiting for the Rebbe to tell me what to do. I waited and waited but did not receive a response.

On Chol HaMoed Pesach, the wife of Rabbi Shmuel Frumer called us and mentioned that her husband, who, due to a certain “heavenly occurrence,” the Rebbe described in a letter as having “facial luminescence,” was currently by the Rebbe. I thought it would be a good idea to take advantage of his special quality and I asked him to convey my letter to the Rebbe and to ask for a response. R’ Frumer did as I asked and within a short time the Rebbe responded, “I will mention it at the gravesite.”

On Motzaei Shvii shel Pesach, I got a call from R’ Rami Antian a”h. He was the Menahel Gashmi of Beis Levi Yitzchok and he said that they were stuck without a Menahel for the second half of the year and he wanted me to take the job “just till the end of the year.” I thought that perhaps this is what the Rebbe meant in his bracha, “I will mention it at the gravesite,” and I accepted.

In those years, Beis Levi Yitzchok was a special program for boys from the all over the North of the country. Many non-Lubavitcher boys learned there. Shortly after I took the job is when registration for the following year began. Since I considered this a shlichus, I put in a lot of work and I was able to register fifty children as compared

to the twenty children of the year before.

Following my registration success, the members of the hanhala asked me to continue in my position. I wanted to go on shlichus so I refused, but they asked that I at least write to the Rebbe. I wrote and the Rebbe’s answer was, “This pertains to the askanei Anash in Eretz Yisroel.”

Back then, there were main three askanim: R’ Shlomo Maidanchik, R’ Moshe Slonim, and R’ Zushe Wilyamowsky. I met with them in Kfar Chabad and told them of my plans to go on shlichus to Kiryat Shmoneh and the request of Beis Levi Yitzchok that I stay and run the mosad.

R’ Moshe said it was a good idea to go on shlichus to Kiryat Shmoneh and I could get monetary grants for working there, since it was a development town. R’ Shlomo also said it was possible to obtain money for various programs. Only R’ Zushe sat quietly. After the other two finished speaking he asked them, “Are you guaranteeing a certain amount of money?”

When they both said they were merely presenting ideas but they could not guarantee anything, R’ Zushe turned to me and said firmly, “The Rebbe did not tell you to ‘consult with askanei Anash.’ Rather, he said, ‘this **pertains** to askanei Anash.’ If they don’t take responsibility, it does not pertain to them and it doesn’t pertain to you either, for now.”

Two years went by in which I served as educational director of Beis Levi Yitzchok. We had a superior staff and I felt superfluous. One of the more talented teachers was Rabbi Eliyahu Friedman a”h. Every few days he would come to me with new ideas about how to advance the talmidim. We were on good terms and one time I said to him, “What am I doing here? You are doing great and I’m just sitting in the Menahel’s seat.”

He was surprised to hear me say this and he answered candidly, “Since you were hired as educational director, I have loved working here because when I come with new ideas you promote them. You are a Menahel who wants what’s best for the students and for this reason it’s important that you continue here.”

It was only years later that I realized that there is something that cannot be defined but sometimes, the very fact that you are in a certain position gets the people under you to work better.

In any case, I was feeling a bit down and I decided to go to the Rebbe. I went in for a “general yechidus” in the small zal and after the Rebbe said a sicha I gave the Rebbe fifteen pages in which I detailed everything that had been going on with me. After a day or two I was surprised to receive word from the secretaries that the Rebbe had responded.

About whether to continue at Beis Levi Yitzchok or to look for something else, the Rebbe crossed out all the other ideas. He also crossed out the word “whether” and added “obviously,” so a new sentence was formed which said: **Obviously to continue at Beis Levi Yitzchok.**

I had asked what to do about my low spirits and the Rebbe wrote: **Do not listen to the counsel of the old, foolish king**

(i.e. the Evil Inclination). When the Evil Inclination entices you to think about your state of mind, and in detail, tell him that you are a Tamim and not a chakran (philosopher) and in general, you have no time for this. Because your personal role in the world is to do the will of the Creator through Torah and mitzvos and not through philosophical inquiry and intellectual acrobatics.

At the end of the letter I had asked for a “bracha that I fulfill the will of the Rebbe and his instructions with constant joy.” The Rebbe crossed out the word bracha and the letter ‘shin’ and the new sentence read: **You will fulfill the will of the Rebbe and his instructions by being constantly happy.**

When I got this answer I did not understand why the Rebbe added the words “obviously,” since even without it, it was clear that I should continue at Beis Levi Yitzchok. It was only years later that I understood.

It was 5749 when the yeshiva ran into serious financial difficulties and R’ Leibel Kaplan decided to close the mesivta. As the educational director, I felt bad for the students who would lose a warm and supportive environment and I asked R’ Kaplan what would happen with these dozens of students who would not be accepted in other schools. Where would they go?

R’ Kaplan said that if I was willing to take responsibility for the

school’s financial deficit, he would drop the idea of closing it down. I said I had no idea what it involved and asked him to tell me how much money we were talking about. It turned out I had to take responsibility for \$5000 a month.

I asked for time to think about it. In the meantime, I remembered what the Rebbe said, “obviously to continue at Beis Levi Yitzchok,” and thought this might be what the Rebbe was referring to. Another thought disturbed me: How can they close a school named for the Rebbe’s father?

I wrote to the Rebbe and was told to consult with knowledgeable friends.

At the same time, in the Shnas HaBinyan I opened a Chabad house at Rosh Pina. I thought of moving there. I presented my question to R’ Yosef Yitzchok Wilschansky, R’ Shlomo Raskin, and R’ Shlomo Zalman Levkivker, and they said that I should take responsibility for the finances. I was able to keep the school going for a few more years until as a result of events not entirely under my control, much of the staff left, followed by a drop in registration. In 5751 the school closed.

We were still a relatively young couple with five children and we considered going back to our original idea of going on shlichus. At precisely that time, hordes of Israelis began traveling to Thailand. There was no permanent Chabad house there and I thought it would be a good idea to open

one. For various reasons that had nothing to do with me, that idea did not work out.

In the following years I did different jobs at Chabad mosdos such as Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchok, Agudas Chassidei Chabad and Matteh Moshiah.

From the diary of Mrs. Rochel Kupchik:

Betzalel still did not return to India but he made sure to send us your package with the mother of a tourist who is staying with us now. You cannot imagine how excited we were. The package was opened with shouts of anticipation like in the stories Nosh!

In addition to the taste of candy that we don’t see here; there is also the taste of SuperChabad — the taste of our Tzfas, of life so far away that we miss so much. And the warm, pleasant taste of unforgettable friends when we see we have not been forgotten.

Today is Friday. It’s nice to think of the Friday routine in Tzfas; last minute shopping at the grocery. Knocking at the neighbor’s (your?) door to ask for yet another thing that was forgotten for our Shabbos preparations. Silence begins to descend on the city. Children in white shirts (aside from the Kupchiks who got theirs dirty already), are returning from the mikva, and then there are the smells of Shabbos food – and compare that to what we have here. I miss Tzfas...

[To be continued be”H]

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THE KINUS IN 770

By Yitzchok Wagshul

Seven-seventy never looked so good.

Here it was, just a few short hours after Shabbos, and a near-miraculous transformation had been wrought on the famous *shul*: like a movie set, it had been changed from synagogue and *beis midrash* into elegant catering hall in little more than the blink of an eye. Fabric tapestries extended down to the floor—where no walls were available, they hung from wooden frames erected for the



purpose—creating the illusion of fine wallpaper in a vast space skillfully reshaped for the evening. For tonight only, one entered 770 by a single doorway, which, once traversed, proved the portal into a glittering evening of inspiration. A “wallpapered” hallway, bordered by potted trees on one side and volunteers manning laptops for registration purposes on the other, opened onto the surreal sight of what one knew to be the *zal* of 770, but which looked for all the

world like a black-tie event at some expensive venue. Eighty-nine circular dining tables, each bedecked in a white tablecloth, graced by a glowing candle and laid with maroon linen napkins and beautiful silverware, filled the space from the eastern wall clear to the back. Only the *Aron HaKodesh* was unchanged.

And that was appropriate, for what was going on in the Rebbe’s *shul* tonight? Something spiritual indeed, something holy: it was nothing less than the annual *Melaveh Malka* banquet in conjunction with the International Kinus HaShluchim—the International Convention of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries. Gathered in Crown Heights for the Kinus, some 450-500 *shluchim* filled 770 *Motzaei Shabbos Chayei Sarah* to revel in each other’s successes and to hear speakers from all corners of the earth share reports from the field.

After an hour or so of networking, the program began at around 9:30. Master of Ceremonies Rabbi Yossi Carlebach, *shliach* in New Brunswick, New Jersey, introduced the Rebbe’s *chazzan*, Rabbi Moshe Teleshevsky, to lead the assembled in the Rebbe’s *kapitel*. This was followed by three brief videos of the Rebbe: discussing the concept of *shlichus* and *Parshas Chayei Sarah*; meeting with *g’virim* (financial supporters); and on the balcony at the rear of 770. In one of the clips, a donor told the Rebbe that he is a supporter of Lubavitch, to which the Rebbe replied that he does not approve of that expression. The Rebbe said he would prefer for the man to view *himself* as being supported by virtue of his affiliation with Lubavitch.

The Rebbe’s secretary, Rabbi Shalom Mendel Simpson had been scheduled to speak, but for health reasons was unable to do so. Rabbi

Carlebach acknowledged his presence and led everyone in wishing him good health and long years, and that, before long, he merit to resume his responsibilities for the Rebbe.

The M.C. then introduced “the *rav* of our *sh’chuna*, member of the Beis Din of Crown Heights, HaRav HaGaon Rav Yaakov Schwei.” Rabbi Carlebach related the well-known story of the Noda B’Yehuda, who, upon his appointment as *rav* in a certain European town, was subjected to a “test” by some haughty scholars. They contrived a *shaala* calculated to stump the *rav*, and when the Noda B’Yehuda answered less than perfectly, they tried to embarrass him. But the *rav* noted, “It must be that this *shaala* is not *halacha l’maaseh*,” that is, not a bona fide *halachic* query applicable to a real person’s situation. The reason, explained the Noda B’Yehuda, is that when a person asks a *rav* a bona fide *shaala*, the *rav* is granted *saayata d’Shmaya*—heavenly assistance—to arrive at the correct answer. This is not necessarily the case, he continued, if the supposed *shaala* is merely a test and has no practical relevance. The fact that the answer he gave turned out to be incorrect could only mean that the *shaala* was not real. Rabbi Carlebach said that Rav Schwei, who makes himself available to answer *shaalos* from *shluchim* worldwide at all hours, is likewise guided by Divine assistance, as he saw from the way the *rav* accurately foresaw all contingencies in a recent *shaala* asked by Rabbi Carlebach.

Rabbi Schwei, for his part, welcomed the assembled *shluchim* and blessed them with success in their work. He pointed out that the Rebbe often cites the *seifer Lekach Tov*, by Rav Yosef Engel, where it is explained that there are three levels to the concept of *shlichus*—acting



as agent for another. The first is where the principal, the *meshaleiach*, is able to fulfill his obligation by having a required task performed through the agent; the agent is acting on behalf of the principal. In the second, it is as though the agent acts as an extension of the principal; since the agent has the principal's authority, whatever he does is imputed to the principal. The third level is where the agent is viewed as *identical with* the principal: the principal himself is, as it were, embodied in the person of his agent; *shlucho shel adam kemoso mamash*.

This third level is illustrated by the Biblical incident of Eliezer, Avrohom's servant, whom Avrohom sent to find a suitable wife for Yitzchok. When Eliezer spoke to the household of Besuel, Rivka's father, he introduced himself with the simple statement, "I am a servant of Avrohom." He did not say, "My name is Eliezer and I am a servant of Avrohom"; his service to Avrohom was his whole identity. Likewise, his mission was more important to him than his personal needs: when offered food after his journey, he replied, "I will not eat until I have delivered my message." Nothing else mattered.

The point, of course, is that the Rebbe's *shluchim* are identified with the Rebbe himself, and if they are in a place, and acting in a place, it is the same as though the Rebbe himself were in that place and taking those actions. Rabbi Schwei wished the *shluchim* success with the main *shlichus* of all, to bring Moshiach, concluding, "*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed*."

The next speaker was one of the Rebbe's *shluchim* in Moscow (and internationally), Rabbi Yitzchok HaKohen Kogan. Rabbi Kogan shared a personal anecdote, saying,

"We all know the power of the Rebbe to help *shluchim*." He related that he had once received a directive from the Rebbe to open a center in the Ramot neighborhood of Jerusalem, to cater to the spiritual needs of Jews who had emigrated from Russia. Years passed without this coming to fruition, until eventually, someone reminded him of it and asked whether it had ever been implemented. Deciding the time had come to take action, Rabbi Kogan asked his brother-in-law, Rabbi Dovid Rabinowitz, to investigate the matter. Rabbi Rabinowitz reported back that there were already three *shuls* operating in the area, and what was more, the proposed site for the religious center was unsuitable. Instead, he planned to construct the center elsewhere.

Six months later, Rabbi Rabinowitz excitedly contacted Rabbi Kogan, marveling at the power of the Rebbe. His conscience had been bothering him over the fact that the religious center had not been established in the location specified by the Rebbe. It seemed that, for a long time, Rabbi Rabinowitz had been trying unsuccessfully to sell a certain business, and eventually he resolved, "If the business is sold, I'll make the religious center in Ramot [as the Rebbe wished]." That very day, he exclaimed, a person contacted him and purchased the business! Rabbi Kogan ended by inviting everyone to the opening of the brand new religious center—in Ramot. He then blessed the *shluchim* with *Birchas Kohanim*, the priestly blessing.

The chief rabbi of Kiryat Shmuel, Rabbi Avrohom Blachson, was in attendance, and came to the microphone to deliver his blessing. "What kind of blessing can I possibly give such a group, whose

accomplishments span the globe?" he wondered. The only fitting blessing is that first delivered by Moshe Rabbeinu: "May the pleasantness of Hashem our G-d be upon us, and establish for us the work of our hands."

At this point in the proceedings, a musical interlude was provided by the Kapelye Choir of Crown Heights, led by Rabbi Zalman Niggun. Their music was so inspiring—particularly the march for Rosh Chodesh Kislev—that spontaneous dancing erupted, with *shluchim* forming a line, hands on each others' shoulders, and snaking between the tables.

One can easily understand that an event like this, involving the procurement of space; artfully and with great imagination modifying that space as described above; and serving an elegant dinner for numerous participants (the caterer reports preparing 450 meals), is an expensive proposition. Yet, incredibly, at this point in the evening came the first of several raffles: at least seventy thousand dollars was distributed to fortunate participants to help with the expenses of travel and their general activities. After all, it is not only the organizers who face a tremendous expense – for their part, all the *shluchim* who traveled from far and wide to participate in the *kinus* suffered a financial setback.

Names were drawn throughout the evening awarding either \$1,000 or \$500 to no fewer than 120 winners. All this was thanks to the generosity of a steadfast pillar of support for the *shluchim*, Rabbi Shalom Ber Drizin *sh'yichyeh*. Additionally, ten 53-volume sets of *Likkutei Sichos (Parshiyos)* were awarded as a gift of the Chanin family *sh'yichyu*. And—yes, there's more!—at the end of the evening, the participants received valuable souvenirs: an electronic photo

frame preloaded with 30 megabytes of pictures of the Rebbe, and a *seifer* of commentaries on the Rebbe's *kapitel*. May all *shluchim*, and all of us generally, enjoy such expansiveness in their work (our work, really), always!

Rabbi Naftali Estulin, *shliach* in Los Angeles, CA, spoke next. Rabbi Carlebach introduced him with the reminiscence that, decades ago, as a young *bachur* in 770, he witnessed a group of *shluchim* from California waiting outside the Rebbe's room. The Rebbe looked them over and asked one thing: "Where is Estulin?"

The *shliach* commented on the fact that this year is 5770, which, he said, is "a beautiful year," for which the Jewish world has been waiting for generations. The goal of a person's life is to have a son; that son grows up and his goal, too, is to have a son; and so on throughout the passage of time. But what, asked Rabbi Estulin, is the *purpose* of those sons—why is that the goal? It must be, that at the end of the chain, that last son is the one who embodies the goal of all prior generations: that is none other than *Melech HaMoshiach*. And that, he said, is the Rebbe.

The Rebbe should have been completely revealed as Moshiach 18 years ago, and yet, we all wait. This is a terrible thing, for each moment that continues to pass without the arrival of Moshiach is one more moment in which G-d, and He too, the Torah teaches, is in exile with us, in the sense that He must allow the forces of unholiness to exist. We must all be pained by such a situation.

On the other hand, pointed out the rabbi, it is wonderful to note the vibrancy and energy of the Rebbe's own neighborhood, Crown Heights. The Previous Rebbe said, "America is no different." After *Gimmel Tammuz*, some predicted



that Crown Heights would empty out, yet the very opposite is true: not only is 770 more crowded today than at that time, but the neighborhood itself is packed.

Rabbi Estulin then took the opportunity to voice his appreciation, on behalf of everyone, to Rabbi Mendel Hendel, who organized the event and so much more, and to his financial backers, particularly Rabbi Drizin.

Appropriately enough, Rabbi Drizin himself spoke next. He was preceded by another musical interlude, this time a choir performance by the children of *shluchim*. The children entered to Napoleon's march, and impressed the assembly with their formal uniforms and harmonious singing,

concluding with inspiring favorites like *Yechi* and *Shluchei Adoneinu*.

Rabbi Drizin referred to the fact that Eliezer, Avrohom's servant, faithfully fulfilled his mission despite his own personal interests. The philanthropist quoted the saying of our Rabbis that "He who prays on behalf of his fellow is answered first," as illustrated by Yitzchok and Rivka, each of whom prayed for the other. He then urged everyone to say a heartfelt *l'chaim* for the complete and immediate exoneration of Reb Shalom Mordechai HaLevi (ben Rivka) Rubashkin.

Almost exactly one year ago, a few short days after the *kinus* last year, the horrifying news rocketed around the world that the Rebbe's



The Rebbe's shluchim in front of 770

shluchim in Mumbai, Rabbi Gavriel and Rebbetzin Rivka Holtzberg, with several of their Chabad House guests, had been martyred in a terrorist attack. Honoring their memory, the evening's keynote speaker was the Head Shliach to India, Rabbi Betzalel Kupchik. He noted that there has never before in history been a time when Jews have been so spread around the world on a permanent basis, actually residing (as opposed to merely passing through) in far-flung places. This is a blessing from Hashem, we are taught. In the wake of the terrorist attack, there had been talk of leaving the area, but instead, related Rabbi Kupchik, the *shluchim* recalled the Rebbe's advice, after a similar incident in Kfar Chabad, to strengthen and increase activities. Therefore, he announced, it was resolved to double the number of Chabad Houses in India, and new *shluchim* will be taking up residence there. Someone in the audience called for the *shluchim* from India to stand, and at that, perhaps eight or ten people got up to great applause.

A surprise was next announced by Rabbi Moshe Reuven Asman, the Rebbe's *shliach* in Kiev. He said that the Rebbe's exhortation to

"do all that is within your power" does not necessarily refer only to new activities, but can also mean that we must strengthen and improve our existing activities. Reflecting on this, he said, he resolved that he could not come without a gift for the Rebbe, so he "did all within his power" and somehow succeeded in purchasing a new mitzvah tank to be added to those that currently serve the Jews of Israel. It would be in front of 770 for all to see on the following day.

It was inspiring to hear young Moishie Friedman, son of the Mill Basin (Brooklyn), NY *shliach* Yehuda Friedman, speak next. He noted that he was not yet born when the Rebbe announced the Moshiach campaign, and for him, that is all he ever knew. It comes naturally to him, as he never knew any other way: the world is ready for Moshiach, and to him, *shlichus* means helping people realize that.

Rabbi Carlebach announced that, with the *Shloshim* approaching, a *seifer Torah* would be written in memory of Alta Shula Sverdlov, young daughter of the *shluchim* Rabbi Yossi and Hindel Sverdlov of Israel, who was tragically killed in a bus accident. Anyone wishing to purchase a

letter in this Torah can do so by visiting the website, shulastorah.com.

Rabbi Dovid Lider, *shliach* in Melbourne, Australia, then spoke, urging that the attendees not leave the *kinus* without taking counsel amongst themselves as to how, indeed, to translate all the inspiring stories into practical action: how to further the goal of spreading the word about Moshiach.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dovid Borenstein of Bologna, Italy, spoke on the topic of *bittul*: a chassid must know that all his successes come from the Rebbe.

Rabbi Shalom DovBer Wolpo of Israel, known for his dedication to the cause of *shleimus ha'Aretz*, delivered his remarks on that theme, elaborating on the current situation and the effort to improve things.

The evening concluded with a video presentation depicting the growth and spread of *shlichus* around the world. The *shluchim* then danced *Yechi*, after which they merited to hear a *siyum ha'Shas* by the *shliach* Rabbi Moshe Antizadeh, followed by *bentching* and a group discussion of how, in fact, to best translate everything into action.



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CHASSIDUS IN HIS BLOOD

*What new thing did the Mitteler Rebbe accomplish in Chevron? What connection is there between him and Rashbi and Moshe Rabbeinu? Why did he want to conclude the shidduch quickly? Why is there no picture of him? * This and more in this compilation taken from the Rebbe's sichos and letters; presented for 9-10 Kislev which marks the Mitteler Rebbe's birthday, yahrtzait and Chag HaGeula.*

CHIDDUSHIM IN THE CITY OF OUR FATHERS

The Mitteler Rebbe was the first of the Chabad Admurim to buy land in Chevron. The Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid, and the Alter Rebbe did not do so. It was a chiddush of the Mitteler Rebbe.

(Sicha VaYeiitzei, 9 Kislev 5729)

COMPLETE YEARS

9 Kislev is both the birthday and the yahrtzait of the Mitteler Rebbe. Chazal say, "Hashem sits and

completes the days of the tzaddikim, etc." We see this with Moshe Rabbeinu and the Mitteler Rebbe.

(Sicha Motzaei Shabbos VaYeiitzei 5738)

TARGETED AUDIENCE

The Mitteler Rebbe wrote for each category of Chassidim — for maskilim and for ovdim in addition to *Shaar Ha'Yichud* and *Shaarei Orah*, which are of a general nature and written for all Chassidim. *Shaar Ha'Yichud* is the key (or index) of Toras HaChassidus.

Shaarei Orah is the Alef-Beis of Toras HaChassidus.

(HaYom Yom for 15 Adar II)

ROSH B'NEI YISROEL

The story about the Mitteler Rebbe is known, that one does not answer a question in yechidus about rectification (for sins) until that matter, in subtle form, is found within oneself.

(Igros Kodesh vol. 6, p 251)

NO PICTURE OF THE MITTELER REBBE

And to note, there is a picture of every one of the Chabad leaders with which it is easy to imagine their likeness in one's mind, starting with the picture of the Alter Rebbe ... until Nasi Doreinu — except for the Mitteler Rebbe, the Baal HaGeula. We have no picture of him.

... In continuation to what was mentioned earlier about the statement of Chazal, "You should see the one who made the statement as though he is standing facing you," that regarding the Mitteler Rebbe (we have no picture of him) — the matter is accomplished by delving into his teachings (*ana nafshi k'savis yehavis* — I have written myself into the writings) to the point of intellectual seeing.

(Sicha 10 Kislev 5744, p. 539, 547)

SILENCING THE MIND

When the Mitteler Rebbe said Chassidus there was absolute silence and yet he would say, "Sha, sha!"

(HaYom Yom 4 Adar II)

REVIEWING CHASSIDUS

The custom of Chassidim in the time of the Mitteler Rebbe is known, as the Rebbe my father-in-law related, that he would instruct

them to tarry in all the places on the way home from Lubavitch and review Chassidus.
(Igros Kodesh vol. 6, p. 132)

LAG B'OMER

For the Mitteler Rebbe, Lag B'Omer was one of the outstanding holidays. They would go out to the field and although he did not wash his hands, he would drink mashke, which was forbidden to him for health reasons. On this day the chassidim saw many miracles. Most of the miracles had to do with children and throughout the year they would look forward to Lag B'Omer.

(HaYom Yom 18 Iyar)

“RECHOVOS HA’NAHAR”

The Mitteler Rebbe’s special inyan in Chassidus Chabad was “rechovos ha’nahar” (the breadth of the river) of bina, as we see in his maamarim that they are extensive and expound on the explanation, as is expressed in the numerous maamarim that were printed by him.

(Sicha leil 4 of Sukkos 5745 p. 199)

HIS BIRTH

The idea of g’milus chesed is emphasized in connection with the Mitteler Rebbe, as we know from the story that when the Alter Rebbe asked the Maggid for a bracha for a son, the Maggid told him (in a play on words in the verse of T’hillim), “ba’meh yizakeh naar – es orcho” – that through fulfilling the mitzva of hosting guests he will merit a son.

The Maggid told the Alter Rebbe (in a play on words in the verse of T’hillim), “ba’meh yizakeh naar – es orcho” – that through fulfilling the mitzva of hosting guests he will merit a son.

(Sicha 4 Kislev 5744 p.558)



The Mitteler Rebbe’s seifer Toras Chaim

THE BLESSINGS AND CURSES

The Alter Rebbe would read from the Torah. One time, he was not in Liozna on Shabbos Parshas Savo and the Mitteler Rebbe – who was still a child before his bar mitzva – heard the reading from someone else. His anguish at hearing the curses of the rebuke so affected him that (weeks later) the Alter Rebbe was doubtful about his fasting (on Yom Kippur). When they asked the Mitteler Rebbe about this – after all, this parsha is read every year — he said, “When my father reads it, no curses are heard.”

(Sicha Savo 5745 p. 2950)

CONSIDERATION FOR THEIR POCKETS

We find that the Mitteler Rebbe made an effort to publish his maamarim in consideration of the hardships of the time, so that even someone who could not pay more than a few coins at a time could buy a maamer. Therefore, he did not print a lot at once but little by little “so as not to burden the purchasers all at once.”

His efforts went so far that when necessary he would print [long maamarim] in installments ... as we see maamarim with a lot of sections; from the beginning to the middle and certainly to the end you have to cross “the breadth of the river!”

(Sicha leil 4 Sukkos 5749)

CONCENTRATE ON THE CONTENT

The Rebbe, my father-in-law, told me that the Mitteler Rebbe did not want people to analyze the exact wording in his writings etc.

... The relevance of this story to me (which is why the Rebbe, my father-in-law told it to me) is understood – since I must also request that they not analyze the exact wording etc. Just concentrate on the content based on the cited sources etc.

(Sicha Naso 5745 p. 1594)

BE AN ONION

There is the story about the Chassid of the Mitteler Rebbe who complained that reviewing the maamarim he heard in Lubavitch wherever he traveled through on his way home (as was customary in those days, in deference to the Mitteler Rebbe’s instructions) elicited feelings of arrogance, and this truly bothered him.

The Mitteler Rebbe said, “Become an onion but review Chassidus!”

The Rebbeim were precise with their words. The reason he used the word onion is that it is something sharp and just a small amount of it positively affects the entire dish, to the point that even something that ordinarily gives off a bad taste, the sharpness turns it into a good taste (as we find in halacha).

(Sicha leil 1 of Sukkos 5745)

The custom of Chassidim in the time of the Mittlerer Rebbe is known, that he would instruct them to tarry in all the places on the way home from Lubavitch and review Chassidus.

“FEW AND BAD”

In the time of the Mittlerer Rebbe it was a situation of “few and bad,” in regards to himself and in regards to the state of Jewry in his time:

Regarding himself- the number of years of his nesius were few compared to the years of the Alter Rebbe and Tzemach Tzedek’s nesius.

Regarding the state of Jewry – we know the poor material circumstances of the Chassidim who lived at that time, and obviously this also affected the Mittlerer Rebbe.

(Sicha leil 4 Sukkos 5745)

THE HISTALKUS

It says in the Zohar that on the day he passed away, Rashbi said that he would reveal “holy words that were not revealed until then,” and “the holy torch did not complete saying the word *chayim* until...” We find the same with the Mittlerer Rebbe, as it’s brought in the introduction to Toras Chayim that [immediately prior to his passing] “he began expounding ancient, wondrous things” and “the

holy torch did not complete saying the word *chayim* until...”

(Sicha Lag B’Omer 5745 p. 1999)

CHASSIDUS IN HIS BLOOD

The Mittlerer Rebbe’s entire essence and life was Chassidus. Chassidim often repeat what the Tzemach Tzedek said about the Mittlerer Rebbe (his father-in-law), that if they cut his finger, Chassidus would come out. Obviously this day (10 Kislev) should be connected with learning his teachings which he learned and worked on throughout his life, and particularly in a way of “expanding upon it.”

(Sicha leil 10 Kislev 5745)

AVODAS HA’T’FILLA

The story is known about the Baal HaGeula (which the Rebbe, my father-in-law related) that during davening he would not move in the slightest and at the same time, from the exertion in his davening, sweat dripped from his shtraimel.

From this we learn how much

we need to work on our davening — that it should be with such exertion that our physical bodies sweat.

(Sicha 10 Kislev 5748)

YEARNING FOR CHASSIDUS

The story is known about the Mittlerer Rebbe, who succeeded the Alter Rebbe after the latter’s passing, and from this we understand how great he was even during the Alter Rebbe’s lifetime, that he would make efforts and do things to get the Alter Rebbe to say a maamer Chassidus.

(Sicha 15 Shevat 5745 p. 1163)

“RECHOVOS HA’NAHAR – L’CHAT’CHILLA”

We see the inyan of “rechovos ha’nahar with the Mittlerer Rebbe even before the Geula of 10 Kislev, and to the contrary, most of his maamarim were said before the Geula of 10 Kislev (which was in the second-to-last year of his life).

(Sicha VaYeitzei 10 Kislev 5746)

THE FASTER, THE BETTER

The Mittlerer Rebbe had a number of shidduch offers and he said that he wanted the shidduch that would be concluded the quickest since he could not wait; he wanted to hear his father’s wedding maamarim already.

(Sicha VaYishlach 5714)



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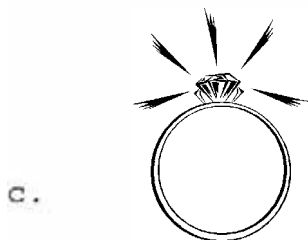
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SMASHING ATOMS ON THE WAY TO GEULA

By Yaacov Moshe Moses and Rabbi Yeheskel Lebovic

The Large Hadron Collider, under the Swiss countryside at Cern, is a 17 mile circular race track for subatomic particles. It's the world's biggest physics experiment and it's finally set to go after 60 countries have contributed 10 billion dollars and 15 years of work by 10,000 scientists. But what is it all about? * Part 2 of 2

Q: Dear Yaacov,

Not so long ago (*Chabad Times*, Nov/Dec, 2008) you wrote about what has been described as “the most ambitious experiment of all time” (*New Scientist*, Aug. 30/Sept. 5, 2008), then you told us the thing broke. Is there any more to say about the “Big Bang Machine” that was supposed to either bring the apocalypse by

causing us all to be sucked down a ‘black hole,’ prove the ‘Big Bang’ theory, or reinforce the theory of MIT’s Frank Wilczek, that creation “comes from nothing”?

That big atom smasher, the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), buried 100 meters beneath the Alps at CERN, near Geneva, sure brought a lot of attention. I heard that physicists received death

threats, lawsuits were filed, and over a billion TV viewers watched the great switch-on fiasco.

But what has happened since? The project was supposed to answer lofty questions such as: Do other spatial dimensions exist; what is dark energy really; and what gives matter its mass? The cost so far is \$10 billion, and at 27 kilometers long, it is the largest machine in the world. In fact, it took eight years just to move the magnet coils from Finland to Switzerland. “The quality control has been draconian,” stated Lyn Evans, LHC project leader.

And the thing broke! Come on, what’s next, and does this fiasco prove, as you said, that only G-d creates something from nothing (the LHC was supposed to reveal the Higgs boson, ‘the G-d particle,’ that is thought to be the means by which the universe got its mass from nothing?

A: Dear reader,

Yes it’s true that what some consider to be a modern-day version of the ‘Tower of Babel’ seemed to have collapsed on September 19, 2008, but don’t think science has given up. After a year recuperating, they are now back in business.

Rabbi Yossi Engel, the Chabad Rav of Adelaide, Australia believes “The experiment must go on. These questions must be asked! And all of this is very good for proving that scientific answers are consistent with Torah. Truth is Truth, ‘Emes is Emes,’ and the progress of knowledge only helps the world realize that soon Moshiach will be fully revealed. As the Rambam states (Hilchos Melachim 12:5), ‘The sole preoccupation of the whole world will be to know G-d. The Israelites will be great sages: they will know things that are presently concealed, and will achieve knowledge of their Creator to the utmost capacity of

human beings,' as it is said, 'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea' (Isaiah 11:9)."

Rabbi Engel also observes that the money spent was not, as I asserted in my previous article, wasted, and my view that all of the effort and money could have been saved if only these scientists had read the Alter Rebbe's *Tanya*, where Chassidus clearly demonstrates from Torah truths that creation was indeed 'something from nothing,' is too simplistic. Scientists need their proof, says Rabbi Engel. Upon reflection, I humbly agree, and therefore will now be more than willing to describe what is next for the LHC. Also, with Rabbi Yeheskel Lebovic's permission, I will quote what he has written on the subject of continuous creation.

Rabbi Lebovic is the spiritual leader, Rav, and mainstay, along with his wife, Rebbetzin Pearl Lebovic, of Congregation Ahavath Zion of Maplewood, New Jersey, and I have often enjoyed and been enlightened by his articles that appear in the *Beis Moshiach* magazine.

But now on to what is planned next for the world's largest machine: To review, physicists were indeed euphoric when the LHC finally whirled into action, rewinding creation, so to speak, within a second of the original big bang; but after only nine days of operation, an electrical fault blew a hole into the helium enclosure, releasing 6 tons of gas into the giant tunnel and causing \$21 million in estimated damages. The project then temporarily halted.

The goal for the LHC is to accelerate counter-rotating beams of protons to nearly the speed of light and smash them head-on 600 million times a second. The most distinctive feature, however, is the temperature. At 1.9 Kelvin – just

"The experiment must go on. These questions must be asked! And all of this is very good for proving that scientific answers are consistent with Torah. Truth is Truth, 'Emes is Emes,' and the progress of knowledge only helps the world realize that soon Moshiach will be fully revealed."

above absolute zero – the LHC is the coldest ring in the universe.

The problem is that to get particles traveling at such speeds into a ring requires steering so precise that it can only be provided by intense magnetic fields created by super-conducting magnets and these operate without loss of power only when chilled below a critical temperature near absolute zero, cooled by liquid helium. Also, the more energetic the particles, the more powerful the magnets need to be. Generating the extra-strong magnetic fields means cooling the coils down to 1.9 Kelvin (about -271 degrees Celsius).

And here is the rub. At such cold temperatures, liquid helium becomes a superfluid and can slip through microscopic cracks. To repair cracks, the entire LHC has to be warmed back up to room temperature. Imagine their electricity bill!

Now finally after all this anticipation, it looks like the research program is ready to roll in earnest.

I would like to conclude with what seems to me to be the clearest and most concise view that I have ever read of what Chassidus has to say about continuous creation, from the writings of Rabbi Yeheskel Lebovic of Maplewood, New Jersey:

One of the cardinal principles of

faith in Judaism is that G-d created the universe *ex nihilo*, yesh me-ayin, something out of nothing — a concept which the ancient philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, etc.) could not accept. In addition, one of the primary doctrines stressed in *Tanya* and *Chassidus* is that of *continuous* creation: G-d is constantly renewing and sustaining the original process of Creation. The original six days are nonetheless special in that they were at the very inception of the process, and Shabbos accordingly is not a day during which there is a total cessation of the divine sustaining power but a day during which that sustaining power is of a different quantitative and qualitative dimension.

The alternate way of explaining creation is, of course, positing that after the moment (or six days) of Creation, the world stands existentially in an independent manner. This belief of continuous, sustained creation has support in several Torah sources, as quoted *ibid*. This doctrine has another doctrine as a corollary: if Creation is constant, affecting thereby every detail of Creation, the Jewish belief in detailed *Hashgacha Pratis* (Divine providence) must likewise affect every detail of Creation.

Although the Rebbe mentions (*Likkutei Sichos*, vol.8, p. 283) that

the first doctrine does not necessarily force the second one (otherwise, all the great Sages who hold that *Hashgacha Pratis* affects only man, would have to disagree with continuous Creation — not likely, for continuous Creation is based on strong Torah sources), there are various statements throughout *Chassidus* which do, *ipso facto*, link the two: once detailed *Hashgacha Pratis* is accepted as a tenet of faith, based on various other criteria, it only makes sense to link it to continuous Creation.

To prove continuous Creation, the Alter Rebbe (*Shaar Yichud V'Emuna*, ch. 2) employs the reasoning of *Kal v'Chomer*: If the splitting of the Sea of Reeds required to be sustained throughout that night by a “mighty easterly wind” (*Shmos* 14:21) which kept the water in an upright position, how much more so must Creation constantly be sustained, lest, without it, creation reverts back to its original “state” of non-existence (in the same way that the waters of the Sea of Reeds reverted to their original position as soon as the wind ceased to blow). This logical argument can be questioned, for G-d does not function within, and is not limited by, nature and reason, and “there is no impossibility (*nimna*)” within His realm of operation” (*Rashba* and others). Couldn't He have generated Creation without having to sustain and recreate it constantly (see *HaTamim* III, p.151)?

The Rebbe states that indeed, G-d could have created it in such a manner, but He *opted* for continuous Creation. The question that would then remain is why, then, did G-d opt this way? While many statements made in *Kabbala* and *Chassidus* are accepted at face-value, we do see throughout *Chassidus Chabad* an emphasis on

attempting to bring esoteric elements within the realm of reason and understanding. We find this expressed in *HaYom Yom* (entry for Cheshvan 19), where it states that one innovation of the Alter Rebbe and his Chabad system was “to attain a level reaching beyond intellect, and (nonetheless, somehow) grasp this itself intellectually.” What therefore could have been the reason as to why G-d opted for continuous Creation?

In *Tanya* (*Igeres HaKodesh*, #20, p. 260) the Alter Rebbe writes about the reason why G-d is the only One possessing the ability to create *yesh m'ayin* (*ex nihilo*). G-d's Existence is in and of Himself, with absolutely no preceding cause for His state of existence, He is therefore the only One capable to bring about existing entities who, *likewise*: (a) have absolutely no preceding source for their *physical* components — save the G-dly power that brings it forth out of nothing, and (b) *feel* that their state of existence is in and of themselves, having the *feeling* of “no strings attached” (although recognizing *intellectually* that they are dependent on a preceding, creative cause). This implies that G-d, in His Kindness and desire to impart to us, wants to give us the opportunity to possess certain areas of similitude to Him, as He created man “in His Image.”

We find yet another area of similitude to G-d that we possess. The *Rambam* and others state that G-d's Existence, being so vastly superior and different than our concept of existence, can only be spoken of as “*nimtza b'metzius bilti nimtza*.” Existing as an Entity — not existing in the sense that we understand existence. Although the reason for referring to G-d's existence in such a manner is to underscore the vast gulf of difference between the nature of

His Existence vs. ours, it can be added that this definition results in yet another parallel between His and our existence. For, according to the view of continuous Creation, we, too, are in a state of “*nimtza b'metzius bilti nimtza*,” as it were. We do exist, but just barely: by virtue of the fragility and instability of our existential state going through the process of constant, alternating creative energy necessary to sustain the existence of any and all created entities, our state of existence is thoroughly unstable (more like the view of modern physics vs. Newtonian physics). This sustaining of existence is compared (*Shaar Yichud V'Emuna*, ch. 1-3) to sunlight requiring constant connection to its source, the sun, short of which it disappears into nothingness. Thus, in this vein, we too are “*nimtza b'metzius bilti nimtza*.” This can serve as a reason, amongst others, for G-d having chosen the path of continuous Creation, i.e., to offer us yet *another* area of similitude to Him (see *Eikeiv* Hemshech 5672, end of ch. 49).

Continuous creation and *Hashgacha Pratis* also have an important corollary in terms of attitude to life's vicissitudes, as mentioned in *Tanya* (*Igeres HaKodesh* 11, p. 445 in English translation): “And when man will contemplate with the profundity of his understanding, and will imagine in his mind his coming into existence *ex nihilo* — truly every moment, how can he possibly think that he ever suffered, or had any afflictions related to ‘children, life, and sustenance,’ or whatever other worldly suffering.”

Depressed states of mind are often initiated, and certainly exacerbated, by the lack of acceptance of one's lot. This is especially so if there are, in addition, elements of self-

recrimination (guilt) and regrets over past courses of action, in which case the person lives with even stronger regrets and greater lack of acceptance.

The Chassidic antidote spelled out here lies in the integrated recognition of G-d's Kindness in: (a) continually sustaining our existence, before which all else pales into insignificance, and (b) directing every step of ours through detailed *Hashgacha Pratis*. Through such recognition, man is able to be in touch with the constantly renewed *present moment* and the blessings and opportunities it holds, rather than being dragged by regrets of the past (once *T'shuva* is done, it's time to move on), or worries about the future.

The two areas of similitude to G-d mentioned above obviously

Depressed states of mind are often initiated, and certainly exacerbated, by the lack of acceptance of one's lot.

apply to every part of Creation in this physical world: (a) **all physical matter emerged out of total nothingness, with absolutely no preceding cause and source of their physical state,** and (b) **they all possess instability of existence, according to the doctrine of continuous Creation.** Wherein, then, lays the advantage of man, and especially the Jew, in this framework? The answer, perhaps, lies in this line of *Tanya* (English translation): "*without comprehension, there is no investing, or grasp or cleaving.*" Man, and especially the Jew endowed with a special G-dly soul receptive to deeper recognition of

G-dliness, is the only being capable of fully *appreciating* the great gifts that the Creator has bestowed upon us — by virtue of his capacity for intellectual recognition, short of which the cleaving falls short. Feelings and excitement have prominent places in Chassidus when preceded by, and working in tandem with, intellectual grasp.

This is what the Alter Rebbe instituted with Chabad. This is why, indeed, Chassidus serves as the precursor and preparation for Moshiach, in whose days "the knowledge of G-d will fill the world, as the waters cover the sea," speedily in our days.

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OHEIV YISROEL

A compilation of stories and sichos from the Rebbeim about Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev — presented 200 years after his passing 5570-5770.

MECHUTANIM

The tzaddik, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev was one of the Maggid of Mezritch's close talmidim and a friend of the Alter Rebbe.

The Alter Rebbe and R' Levi Yitzchok were very close and later they became related by marriage twice. The first connection was with the grandson of R' Levi Yitzchok, the son of R' Meir, who married the daughter of the Mitteler Rebbe, granddaughter of the Alter Rebbe. Thousands attended this wedding and for many years it was referred to as "the big wedding in Zhlobin."

A second connection was with R' Yekusiel Zalman son of R' Yosef Bunem, the son-in-law of R' Levi Yitzchok, also with a daughter of the Mitteler Rebbe. The wedding took place in Liadi in 5568.

OUR MECHUTAN

The Rebbe Rayatz related in the name of his teacher, Rashbatz:

The Tzemach Tzedek once was farbrenging in the sukkah with his sons and with senior Chassidim. Three of the younger Chassidim

stood outside near the sukkah and listened to what was being said, and heard them talking about students of the Maggid.

When they spoke about the tzaddik from Berditchev, the Tzemach Tzedek said, "Our mechutan," and Rabash (his oldest son) repeated an aphorism of R' Levi Yitzchok on the explanation of Chazal that Sukkos is "the first day of the accounting of sins."

(13 Tishrei 5719)

HEAVENLY JEALOUSY

The kalla and her family arrived in Zhlobin a few days before the wedding, led by the Alter Rebbe and his son, later to be the Mitteler Rebbe. R' Levi Yitzchok and the chassan's family arrived on the eve of the wedding.

The Alter Rebbe told the Mitteler Rebbe to go and welcome his mechutan at his host's house. His frightened son said, "But you know how the tzaddik is annoyed with me because I say a lot of Chassidus publicly. I'm afraid to approach him myself."

"Go, my son, and don't be afraid," replied the Alter Rebbe.



The Mitteler Rebbe put on his outer coat, took his walking stick, and went to see R' Levi Yitzchok. He anxiously entered the tzaddik's room and immediately saw that his fears were well-founded. As soon as the tzaddik saw him, his face grimaced in a look of surprise and dissatisfaction and he began speaking without a greeting to him and without concealing his annoyance, as though speaking to the crowd around him and not to the guest.

"Can such great and wondrous wisdom be revealed? It is forbidden to speak of the secrets of the s'firos before someone who did not see the face of our master, the holy Baal Shem Tov." He pointed at the guest. "And he expounds on it openly and in public!"

The Mitteler Rebbe left the room in great haste and returned to his father.

"Father, the tzaddik's annoyance still stands. I am afraid."

The Alter Rebbe understood that it was important to resolve this before the wedding and he quickly went with his son to R' Levi Yitzchok to straighten things out.

The gravesite of
Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev



The two great men met and warmly greeted one another.

“Why are you so upset with my son Berel?” asked the Alter Rebbe.

R’ Levi Yitzchok replied, “You know that it is not me who forbids, this but our teacher, the Maggid, who said not to speak Chassidus in public unless the person saw the face of the holy Baal Shem Tov. How can your son say deep thoughts on *atik* and *arich*; aren’t these ideas too lofty?”

The Alter Rebbe thought and then said, “My son Berel only says what he heard from me, and I saw the Baal Shem Tov.”

“In a vision or in real life?”

“In real life.”

R’ Levi Yitzchok’s face cleared. “If so, let the son of the mechutan say *divrei Elokim chayim*.”

The Mittlerer Rebbe found himself in a bind. He had followed the conversation of the two great men and he was happy that things had been smoothed over between his father and R’ Levi Yitzchok, but now the tzaddik had assigned him a most difficult task — to say Chassidus in front of both of them.

He had a big problem. He knew that when he said Chassidus, his

BRIEF BIO: DEFENDER OF ISRAEL

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev, one of the special disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, is known as the “Defender of Israel.” He was born in 5500/1740 to R’ Meir and Sarah Sasha in the town Hoskov.

Upon his birth, the Baal Shem Tov rejoiced and informed his holy disciples, “A great soul has descended to the world who will speak favorably for the Jews in the future.” (Eser Oros 2:1)

Satan opposed the descent of this soul and said, “When this neshama goes down, my power will end and I will have no control, because he will bring the entire world back in repentance.”

Hashem consoled him, “This neshama will be a rav and will be burdened by the communal needs and be persecuted by antagonists.”

In his youth R’ Levi Yitzchok was known as the genius from Lavretov (in Poland). In his teens he married the daughter of R’ Yisroel Peretz of Lavretov (in Poland) who managed the property of the squire in that town. Lavretov was known at the time as a town of sages. He joined them and learned with them. In addition to his learning, he hosted people in his home and served them himself and prepared their beds.

At the suggestion of his mentor, R’ Shmelke Horowitz (later of Nikolsburg), he went to see the Maggid of Mezritch and discovered a new world. He became utterly devoted to the Maggid and adopted the approach and teachings of Chassidus. Thus he is, in fact, only five generations removed from receiving the Torah on Har Sinai from Hashem Himself. He was the student of the Maggid of Mezritch, who received the tradition from the Baal Shem Tov, who in turn received the tradition from the prophet Achiya HaShiloni, who was counted among those who were in the exodus from Egypt (see Rambam’s introduction to the Mishna Torah), and who learned and received the Torah from Moshe Rabbeinu, who in turn received it from G-d Himself. (Toldos K’dushas Levi Munkacz 2:8)

His parents opposed the Chassidic movement and when they found out that their son had joined the Chassidim they sat Shiva. After his father-in-law lost his money, he had to fill R’ Shmelke’s place as rabbi in Ritchvol but due to persecution by the Misnagdim he fled on Hoshana Raba to the Maggid of Kozhnitz.

In 5525, he became rav in Zelichov, but due to persecution by the Misnagdim, he took the position of rav and rosh mesivta in Pinsk in 5531. There, too, he did not find peace. The Misnagdim declared war on him; they attacked his house and robbed him.

When he was 45 in 5545, on the 45th day of the Omer, he arrived in Berdichev and was adorned with both the crown of Torah and the crown of Chassidus.

After the suffering he endured in so many places over so many years, R’ Levi Yitzchok finally found peace in Berdichev. His passion and d’veikus in Hashem reached new heights. He was “on fire” — extremely emotional, and constantly cleaving to Hashem. He called out frequently to Hashem, addressing Him as Der Barimdiger (the Merciful One). Sometimes he conversed with Hashem as one speaks with a friend, turning to Him with requests, complaints and



He was a passionate believer in the inherent goodness of human beings and always found a way to give another Jew the benefit of the doubt.

demands — never for himself, neither for his material nor even his spiritual needs, but for the Jewish people whom he loved and for whom he was ready to sacrifice his body and soul and all that was holy to him.

People were astounded by the intensity of his emotion, his teachings and his ecstatic prayer. One biographer writes, “When he davened, he did so with fear and trembling. He could not stand in one spot, because of his fear, and when someone left him on one side of the room, he found him later on the other side. The hair of all who were present as he davened stood on end and their hearts melted, and all the crookedness of their hearts were straightened out with the sound of his voice.”

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok wrote the popular work *K’dushas Levi*, a classic collection of Chassidic thoughts arranged according to the weekly Torah portions. It includes a commentary on Avos, and an appendix containing a number of anecdotes that reflect his saintly life and his role as attorney for the defense of the Jewish people.

He became famous primarily for his Ahavas Yisroel and being a *Meilitz Yasher* — a defender of the Jewish people, even the sinners among them. Chassidic literature has many stories about situations in which he found some positive points even among sinners. He was a passionate believer in the inherent goodness of human beings and always found a way to give another Jew the benefit of the doubt.

The Tzemach Tzedek would say that from all the advocacy and merits he said on behalf of the people of Israel, there was created in Heaven Above a unique *heichal* (chamber or palace) known as the Heichal HaZ’chus, the “Palace of Merit,” that is called “Levi Yitzchok ben Sarah Sasha.” When a Jew prays and says T’hillim and asks for mercy from the Creator, May His Name be Blessed, in the merit of Our Master “Levi Yitzchak ben Sarah Sasha,” that palace and chamber is opened and the Jew is saved from any impending tragedy.

With every word he expressed his great love for Hashem and His children. He bonded with Hashem and His people with such a powerful unity that he found no difference between Yisroel and G-d. In every single Jew, even the lowest among them, he saw G-dliness. With every word that a Jew uttered, he heard the voice of G-d.

Even when wearing a tallis and adorned with t’fillin he did not hesitate to talk about mundane matters with any Jew because he believed that even the earthly things a Jew talks about, contains the spirit of G-d.

R’ Levi Yitzchok taught us what Ahavas Torah and Ahavas Mitzvos are. Many stories are related about his enthusiasm while

mind poured forth in abundance without stop. Thought followed thought and chiddush followed chiddush, but he needed peace and quiet for this. How would he say Chassidus in front of R’ Levi Yitzchok when it was known that when R’ Levi Yitzchok heard chiddushei Torah he would lose himself in intense excitement?

The Mitteler Rebbe mustered his courage and said to R’ Levi Yitzchok, “You know that I need quiet when I say Chassidus.”

The tzaddik nodded to indicate that he understood and having no choice, the Mitteler Rebbe began to say deep Chassidic thoughts. The two tzaddikim sat there and listened closely.

The Mitteler Rebbe delved deeply and was disengaged from his surroundings as he climbed to spiritual heights. R’ Levi Yitzchok heard him recite secrets of the secrets and knew with his ruach ha’kodesh that their source was in the first luchos on the level before they were broken.

The spirit of the Berditchever burned with the flames of holiness until he could not restrain himself. Quickly, he got up and covered the Mitteler Rebbe’s face with a tallis. “The heavenly Ofanim and Seraphs shouldn’t envy you. Watch out and take care of an evil eye.”

“Mechutan,” he said, turning to the Alter Rebbe. “Even the great Tanna, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai did not attain such a lofty source — how did your son?”

The Alter Rebbe sat lost in thought. It was apparent that his holy spirit was in other worlds, but then he said, “When this son was born I intended on calling him Hamnuna for Rav Hamnuna Sava, who was on the level of *nunei yama* and whose source is from *alma d’iskasya*. This name fit the level of my son’s soul, but by order of the Maggid who appeared to me in a dream, I named him Dovber. You



should know, though, that my son attained such lofty hidden teachings because the root of his neshama is alongside that of Rav Hamnuna Sava.”

HONOR OF THE TORAH

Word spread about the meeting between the three mechutanim and many people went to the house to see them. Their conversation had ended but when they got up to leave the room, a problem arose.

As they stood in the threshold, R' Levi Yitzchok deferred to the Mitteler Rebbe. “I heard Chassidus from you,” he said humbly, and asked him to go first. The Mitteler Rebbe stepped back in awe before his father and R' Levi Yitzchok. They each sought to honor the other and no solution was in sight. The Chassidim were forced to break the wall so the three of them could walk out together.

The Chassidim learned a memorable lesson about honor for Torah and Chassidus.

WHEN ARE THE GATES OF HEAVEN OPEN?

The Chassidim wanted to make the wedding as early as possible on Friday morning. The one who raised the issue was the badchan at the wedding, the Chassid R' Shmuel Munkes: the two tzaddikim spent a long time on their davening. How would they be able to dance and rejoice if the chuppa would not take place until the afternoon when the two tzaddikim finished davening?

R' Shmuel knocked at the Alter Rebbe's door and as soon as he walked in he saw that the Rebbe had already finished davening and was learning. He was happy to see this, but was very surprised and exclaimed, “Rebbe, you have already finished davening – what will the mechutan say about this?”

In every single Jew, even the lowest among them, he saw G-dliness. With every word that a Jew uttered, he heard the voice of G-d.

reciting a bracha, even a “routine” bracha that is said daily, or when doing a mitzva. For example, the story is told how after Yom Kippur he could barely wait to do the mitzva of lulav and esrog. The time dragged on and the first night of Sukkos “he was up all night, roaring like a lion and dancing and rejoicing, anticipating the taking of the lulav and esrog in the morning.”

One time, after being up all night, the moment it was dawn he ran with such excitement to take his minim from a glass-fronted closet, that he put his hand through the glass and didn't even realize it.

He conducted himself with utter simplicity. He ate little and did not drink wine because of mourning for Yerushalayim. On the other hand, he opposed afflictions that some people inflicted on themselves, calling this “the incitement of the Evil Inclination to weaken the mind to prevent him from serving Hashem.”

He lived frugally on weekdays, but for Shabbos he tried to provide amply. He also instructed regarding the poor that they should eat frugally on weekdays so as to have for Shabbos. “The holiness of Shabbos is so great,” he would say, “that a person can connect to the loftiest levels of holiness. On Shabbos, a person returns to his source.”

Every Shabbos he would teach Chassidic ideas and would linger over the third Shabbos meal. It was hard for him to part from the holy day.

He passed away on 25 Tishrei, 5570/1810 and was buried in Berdichev. In their great esteem for him, no rav was appointed to succeed him. The great people who led the community were called dayan and mora horaa.

He will think that we act as the Misnagdim do, starting and ending the prayer in the appointed time. Is this the manner of prayer, to be limited in time? The mechutan davens for hours, becoming so absorbed in his prayers and impassioned that he rises above the limitations of time and place!”

The Alter Rebbe smiled and said, “I daven while the gates of t'filla are open. I am afraid to miss this opportunity. But my mechutan is a great tzaddik and he can daven whenever he wants.”

R' Shmuel was clever and he knew that this wasn't just a simple answer. Now he wanted to hear what R' Levi Yitzchok had to say. How would he describe the level of the Alter Rebbe?

He went to home of the wealthy R' Pinchas Reizes, where he expected to see R' Levi Yitzchok immersed in davening. To his surprise, he saw the tzaddik walking about his room lost in thought, preparing for Shacharis.

“Mechutan,” he cried out in surprise, “The time of davening is

The Alter Rebbe looked at him, smiled and said, “Mechutan, mechutan, you don’t have to dance over every ‘Kadosh’ you hear from the angels...”

established and immutable. In a few moments, this auspicious time will soon be over. Even the mechutan from Liozna finished davening already, while you haven’t even begun!”

R’ Levi Yitzchok said apologetically, “What can I do? I’m not on the level of my mechutan. My mechutan is holy and pure and is always ready to daven without extra preparation, whereas I need a long time until I am ready to stand before G-d and pray.”

L’CHAIM MECHUTAN!

After the chuppa, the Chassidim sat down to eat the meal, which began on Friday and continued into Shabbos morning. At the head of the table sat the two tzaddikim with the chassan between them. The eyes of thousands of Chassidim were glued to the eastern wall when the Alter Rebbe leaned over to R’ Levi Yitzchok with a cup of vodka.

“L’chaim, mechutan! Hashem should help us materially and spiritually.”

“Gashmius before ruchnius?” wondered R’ Levi Yitzchok.

“Indeed. We see this with Yaakov Avinu, who said, ‘And give me bread to eat and clothes to wear,’ and only afterwards did he say, ‘will Hashem be for me as a G-d.’ We see, then, that gashmius precedes ruchnius.”

R’ Levi Yitzchok looked unconvinced. “Do you compare the gashmius of Yaakov to ours?”

The Alter Rebbe smiled and said, “Does our ruchnius compare

in any way to that of Yaakov Avinu?”

WHAT THE MECHUTAN KNOWS

During the wedding R’ Levi Yitzchok sat in his place and greeted the crowds who came to ask for his brachos. Then he stopped and it looked as though he was listening to something in the distance. All looked at him in wonder.

Suddenly, he stood up and joined the dancing Chassidim in a display of unbridled joy, his face shining with a holy light. The Alter Rebbe looked at him, smiled and said, “Mechutan, mechutan, you don’t have to dance over every ‘Kadosh’ you hear from the angels ...”

The Chassidim were dumbstruck. They had been given a glimpse of the tremendous spiritual level of the tzaddik of Berditchev and a fragment of the lofty revelations that he was privy to, which only his good friend from the time they had sat together in the holy fellowship of the Maggid could know.

The Alter Rebbe sensed their amazement and, since the channels of giluyim had been opened, he said, “The level of the mechutan in this world is like the level of the Angel Michoel in the upper worlds.”

One of the distinguished Chassidim who was standing nearby indicated that he did not understand the comparison. The Alter Rebbe added this explanation, “When a Jew does a sin and tells

the mechutan about it, just as the Angel Michoel is completely removed from any connection to this lowly level of sin, so too my mechutan. There is no difference between them.”

The Chassid repeated this to R’ Levi Yitzchok and the tzaddik replied with absolute humility, “Mighty is the spiritual level of my mechutan. He can see all and hear all and yet contain this within him in silence and powerful restraint. However, I have not yet attained this lofty level. I hear something and cannot contain it within me.”

The Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok, and the tzaddik, R’ Mottel of Chernobyl linked arms and danced. The tzaddikim danced and the crowd of Chassidim rejoiced.

(All the wedding stories are based on Otzar Sippurei Chabad vol. 15 and in the sources cited there)

RABBI LEVI YITZCHOK IS MENTIONED IN THE ALTER REBBE’S S’FARIM

In the Tanya there is a letter which begins with the words, “What he wrote to his mechutan, HaRav HaGaon HaMefursam Ish HaElokim Kadosh our Master Levi Yitzchok, head of the rabbinical court in Berditchev, to console him on the death of his son, HaRav HaChassid Meir.”

WHEN IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO WRITE ON ROSH HASHANA AND YOM KIPPUR?

“... like the aphorism of R’ Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev that since writing is forbidden on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, it can only be done if the writing is for the good – since that is pikuach nefesh. Therefore, it must be a k’siva va’chasima **tova**.

“The preparation for this k’siva

va'chasima tova begins **today**.

"By preparing, with 'an arousal from below,' during these forty days, we elicit an 'arousal from Above,' that there will be a k'siva va'chasima tova in the book of the righteous for immediate good life."

(Sicha yom Hei, Parshas Eikev, 20 Av 5714)

THE DECREE IN THE TIME OF RABBI LEVI YITZCHOK

At the Simchas Torah farbrengen, 5686/1925, one of the people present said to the Rebbe Rayatz:

"L'chaim Rebbe, bless my son that Hashem enable him to repent."

The Rebbe responded, "I will tell you a story. The rav of Berditchev told his disciples not

to wear a kazirak (hat with a brim) because there was once a decree by Czar Nikolai that only hats with a brim may be worn.

"It is known that when great men referred to Czar Nikolai they said 'may his memory and name be erased,' for his intention was to extinguish the fire within Jews and to cause them harm.

"What did the Jews at the time do? When they went outside they wore a hat with a brim and hid their *shtraimlach* (round fur hats), and when they reached a place where they were no longer fearful, they wore the *shtraimlach*.

"So too in Berditchev, when the decree was promulgated they wore hats with a brim.

"R' Levi Yitzchok once met a Chassid wearing a hat with a brim and he seemed happy about it. R' Levi Yitzchok said to him, 'how come in the middle of the rebuke it says, 'Because you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy?' To tell us that even if you veer from the right path, heaven forbid, because



you were compelled to do so, you shouldn't be happy about it.'

"Thus," concluded the Rebbe Rayatz to the man who asked for his bracha, "one should not have simcha from being on the wrong path. May Hashem make it good for you in gashmius, but it should pain you that you are this way."

WHY DID R' LEVI YITZCHOK JUMP INTO GAN EDEN?

The Rebbe MH"M related:

"The Rebbe Rayatz, when in Riga, said about R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev that before he passed away he said, 'There were tzaddikim who before they passed away promised not to enter Gan Eden until they brought about the coming of Moshiach, but in the end they were fooled and they were bribed by "the candies" ... but I will not let them fool me.'

"But in the end, said the Rebbe Rayatz, they fooled him too. They

said K'dusha in Gan Eden and R' Levi Yitzchok jumped right in."

The Rebbe MH"M concluded, "Since the Rebbe related this, he surely guaranteed that this won't happen to him. The Rebbe will surely bring Moshiach."

Then the Rebbe elaborated on the difference between the other tzaddikim and the Rebbe, based on how Chassidus explains the difference between the mesirus nefesh of Rabbi Akiva and the mesirus nefesh of Avrohom Avinu.

(Sicha Yisro 5710)

WITH THEM IN THEIR PROXIMITY

At the Yud Shevat farbrengen in 1953, the Rebbe related:

"The rav and tzaddik of Berditchev once said that if he was faced with a choice, to be alone in Gan Eden or to be in Gehinom with other Jews, he would pick Gehinom, the main thing being to be together with other Jews."

The Rebbe explained:

"That is the nature of a shepherd in Israel. His entire being is his role as shepherd in Israel, to the point that he does not care even about Gan Eden. His sole concern is being with other Jews, since that is his mission.

"From this we understand about the spiritual elevations of the Rebbe *baal ha'hilula*, that if the aliyos did not pertain to us too, the Rebbe would forgo his aliyos in order to remain with his flock. The Rebbe does not go up without us; he takes us with him in his aliyos."

ENTICEMENTS VS. PUNISHMENTS

"The well-known aphorism of the rav and tzaddik, Rabbi Levi

HASHEM ENTICED HIM

Regarding what is mentioned in the sichos about Rabbi Levi Yitzchok's swearing that he would not enter Gan Eden until Hashem redeems the Jewish people from galus, the following story is told:

Shortly after the Defender of Israel, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok, passed away, the tzaddikim and Chassidic greats decided they must remind him of his promise. Before he died he swore that he would not rest in his grave and would not agree to enter Gan Eden to sit with the tzaddikim and enjoy the rays of the Sh'china until he brought Moshiach. However, apparently Hashem Himself had enticed him to enter Gan Eden, and there he enjoyed the rays of the Sh'china and forgot about the Jewish people suffering and in captivity. They would send him a shliach to remind him of his oath and surely he would do what he could to hasten the Geula.

The question was who would be the shliach. They held a lottery and it fell on the Chozeh. He accepted this mission and began preparing for his demise so as to meet with R' Levi Yitzchok.

When his talmid, the Yid HaKadosh of P'shis'cha, found out about this, he said that in his opinion it wasn't proper for the Chozeh to leave this world, for then the group of tzaddikim who hastened the Geula would be disbanded and "a threefold rope does not quickly break" [referring to the Chozeh's efforts along with Reb Mendel of Rimanov and the Koznitzer Maggid]. The Yid HaKadosh decided that he himself would be the shliach to forfeit his life and carry out this mission.

The Chozeh of Lublin accepted this and within a short time the Yid HaKadosh passed away at a young age on Chol HaMoed Sukkos, 5574/1814.

A frightening thing happened that Erev Sukkos. The Koznitzer Maggid did not feel well and the Chassidim gathered in the beis midrash to pray for him. The Maggid called for his son, R' Moshe Elyakim Beraioi and said:

"A few moments ago, the tzaddik R' Levi Yitzchok appeared to me and I asked him why he did not keep his promise to hasten the Geula. I also asked him whether it was worth trying to force the time and hasten the end of galus.

"He responded, 'You will be with us shortly and up Above you will see everything that goes on with eyes of clarity. When your eyes are not obscured as in Olam HaZeh, you will see that what seemed bad to you in that world for Klal Yisroel appears in the World of Truth as something very good. Therefore, it is forbidden under any circumstances to try to force the end, because it is very possible that by forcing the good, something worse will happen. Hashem is the source of mercy and He tolerates the suffering of the Sh'china and the suffering of the Jewish people, and the tzaddikim must also join and tolerate the great suffering along with Him.'"

(Based on HaChozeh M'Lublin by Y. Alfasi, Kodesh Hillulim)

Yitzchok of Berdichev:

"Master of the Universe; if you had placed Olam Haba and Gan Eden before man (and l'havdil

Gehinom), while putting the enticements of this world into the book *Reishis Chochma*, surely no Jew would sin. But now that you

put the enticements of this world in front of man and you wrote about Gehinom in *Reishis Chochma*..."

(Sicha Chol HaMoed Sukkos 5711)

THE CHICKEN THAT JUMPED OUT OF RABBI LEVI YITZCHOK'S HANDS

The Rebbe related in a sicha:

"In a book of stories that they sent me recently, a Chassid writes about something that happened when he was at the Rebbe Rashab during a farbrengen and the saying of a maamer. There was a large crowd and a lot of pushing and as a result, the table at which the Rebbe was seated broke. In order not to disturb the Rebbe, who sat with eyes closed as he said the maamer, they quietly removed the boards of the table, some from here and some from there, out the door."

The Rebbe continued with a smile, "When the Rebbe Rashab finished the maamer and opened his eyes he saw that the table was gone. He asked, 'Where is the table?'

"When they told him what happened, he said, 'I will tell you a story about R' Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev. When R' Levi Yitzchok studied sh'chita, after he finished learning – in accordance with his manner of learning, his being a scholar – and was ordained, he had to shecht a chicken. They brought him a chicken and he began to recite the bracha.

"As he said the bracha, especially since this was the first time he was saying this bracha, he was in a state of d'veikus and it took a long time."

The Rebbe laughed. "And in the meantime, the chicken escaped.

"When he finished the bracha and opened his eyes, he asked — Where is the chicken?"

The Rebbe drew a lesson from this story about Torah study, that out of great d'veikus in learning a person is liable to forget about taking action, "and in the meantime the body and animal soul can fly away. And then he is aroused from his d'veikus and begins to cry out — Where is the chicken?"

"True, they demand d'veikus of him in the study of p'nimius ha'Torah and nigleh of Torah. He has to learn the halachos and the kavanos and during the act he also needs d'veikus, but at the same time you have to work on the body and soul."

(Sicha 18 Tishrei, Sukkos 5713)

THERE IS WHAT TO REJOICE ABOUT

They tell about R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev that one time someone came to him in the morning while he was saying the morning brachos and saw him dancing in great joy. This was quite surprising — why was he rejoicing before davening?

He asked the Berditchever, who told him that when he got up to the bracha, "*sh'lo asani goy*" (who did not make me a goy), he contemplated his fortune. Since he was reciting "*sh'lo asani goy*" that meant it could have been otherwise ... and for this, he danced in great joy.

There is no need for lengthy meditation; one needs to simply listen to the meaning of the words, what could have occurred and what actually occurred, that they gave him the greatest gift without any toil whatsoever! When he acknowledged his good fortune he did not need to wait until he davened but had an immediate cause for rejoicing.

The Rebbe learned from this



about the inyan of simcha which pertains to each one of us, that each of us has what to be happy about:

When a Jew contemplates "how beautiful is our inheritance" that every single Jew possesses, that he has the loftiest thing which he inherits without any effort at all, then surely he has what to rejoice about.

(Sicha Behar-B'Chukosai 5713; Seifer HaSichos Toras Sholom p. 10; Igros Kodesh vol. 5, p. 176)

PARABLE OF RABBI LEVI YITZCHOK

We learn in the Mishna about Rosh HaShana that "the mitzva of the day is shofar." There is an analogy from the Baal Shem Tov about the shofar that it is like the cry of a child, "Father, Father, save me."

The Rebbe, my father-in-law, related in the name of our Rebbeim

who preceded him, that they once announced to the people in the beis midrash that the main thing isn't the inyan of "Father, father save me" but the "cry."

There are two ideas here: 1) the cry itself, 2) the content of the cry. The main thing is the cry itself; the content is secondary. When it comes to content, not all are equal, but as far as the cry itself, that pertains to every Jew. Every Jew cries out "with an inner voice that can be heard" or "with an inner voice that cannot be heard," but within his soul — he cries out. That is the inyan of the t'kios and this is accepted up Above.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev explains this with a parable of a child who wants an apple and his father does not want to give him one. The child quickly says a bracha and then the father must give him the apple.

That's when the father does not want to give it; all the more so when the father *does* want to give it and is merely withholding it in order to test the child's wisdom, then he certainly gives in to the child. Up Above, Hashem wants to give, as it says, "More than the calf wants to nurse etc.," and we find this concerning Hashem, "You yearn for the handiwork of Your hands," that Hashem wants us to serve Him.

(Sicha Rosh HaShana 5716)

AN AMAZING THING LIKE THIS

"... and as was emphasized regarding the Tanya — about which the tzaddik R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev said that it's an amazing thing that they took Hashem and put Him into a little book, which was given to all Israel so as to

reach even the simplest of the simple.”

(Sicha VaYeishev, 19 Kislev 5716)

ANNOUNCING HIS RELEASE

The Alter Rebbe wrote to his friend, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok about his release from jail:

“As I read in T’hillim the verse, ‘He redeemed my soul in peace’ ... I left in peace.”

The Rebbe began the maamer of 19 Kislev, 5731, with the following words:

“‘He redeemed my soul in peace from battles against me, for with many they were against me.’ (T’hillim 55) It is known what the Alter Rebbe wrote to the gaon and Chassid, R’ Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, that when I read ‘He redeemed my soul in peace’ I left in peace, [granted] from Hashem of peace. From this we understand that the idea of peace in his redemption was essential.”

In the sicha of 19 Kislev, 5719, the Rebbe says:

“On the verse, ‘He redeemed my soul in peace’ – this is also the usual beginning of a number of 19 Kislev maamarim – Chazal relate that Hashem said, ‘whoever is involved in Torah and acts of kindness and prays with the congregation, I consider it as though he redeemed Me and My children from among the nations of the world,’ which is the inyan of the future Geula through Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

“Since the Alter Rebbe writes in a letter to R’ Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev about his Geula, ‘when I read the verse in T’hillim, “He redeemed my soul in peace” ... I left in peace,’ the meaning is that the redemption of 19 Kislev also pertains to the future Geula.”

IT IS KNOWN AND FAMOUS IN ALL THE WORLDS THAT R’ LEVI YITZCHOK Z”L WAS AN OHEIV YISROEL

In the maamer that the Rebbe said on the second day of Rosh HaShana, 5743, he mentioned the Defender of Israel:

“Although the wording that is used there (in the mashal and the nimshal), as they are simply understood, is not speaking in praise of Israel, since it says in the maamer there that this mashal is from the gaon and Chassid R’ Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev z”l, and it is well known in all the worlds that R’ Levi Yitzchok was an Oheiv Yisroel and a Defender of every single Jew, inclining every one of them to the side of merit and in a way of l’chat’chilla aribber ... -

“Therefore, when he quotes in the maamer this mashal of R’ Levi Yitzchok, obviously all the terms and expressions used there are positive. This is his approach and way regarding the Jewish people, as we know from R’ Levi Yitzchok’s explanation of the verses in the beginning of the book of Yeshaya, where there are descriptions of the Jewish people that are seemingly [negative] and the tzaddik R’ Levi Yitzchok explains that these descriptions are in praise of the Jewish people (as is evident also from the fact that these descriptions were said in the book of Yeshaya, and Yeshaya is the prophet of salvation, as is indicated by his name which stems from the root yeshua). Not only that but they are the highest praises and there are none like them.

“One can say that based on the well known explanation of the statement by the Sages that a person receives his punishment in ways he knows about and ways he

doesn’t know about (along these lines, the explanation of the wording “din v’cheshbon” in the Mishna), that when a person states a judgment on someone else, he is also stating a judgment on himself. So the judgment of the tzaddik of Berditchev about these descriptions in Yeshaya is also a judgment about his own teachings and parables.”

MASHAL OF THE GARMENT

“We can explain the special quality of seeing the Mikdash of the future when Shabbos Chazon falls on Tisha B’Av, with the words of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev who brings a mashal to explain why the future Mikdash is shown to every person from a distance. This is what he says:

“A mashal ... of a father who has a dear son and he makes him an expensive garment to wear and since the son isn’t careful, it tears. The father makes another expensive garment and he tears that too. What did the father do? He made a third garment and did not give it to him but put it away for safekeeping and occasionally shows it to him and says — See, if you behave properly you will be given this garment to wear. In this way he is accustomed to go in the right way until he knows that this has become second nature to him. Then he will give him the garment to wear, because he is not afraid that he will return to his destructive ways since it became habitual.

“This is the inyan of Shabbos Chazon from the root meaning a vision, that each Jew is shown the future Mikdash from a distance.’

“The purpose in showing the future Mikdash is to accustom the Jewish people.”

*(Shabbos Chazon Likkutei Sichos
vol. 39, p. 9)*

The Rebbe set his penetrating gaze upon us, handed us another dollar, and said:

‘THIS IS FOR THE CHILDREN TO BE BORN’

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated by Michoel Leib Dobry

*“When the first announcement of the long-awaited miracle came, all the inner sadness and pain that had filled us for all those long years transformed into tremendous joy. When I saw the happiness of all the chassidim around us, I understood how great this miracle really was...” * R’ Dovid Marciano speaks with much emotion to Beis Moshiach about his personal story and the bracha that was fulfilled after twenty-eight years.*

The following story that took place with R’ Dovid and Chaya Phoebe Marciano, a well-known Chabad couple in Kiryat Shmuel, recently made shockwaves in the Krayot region. The story spread

like wildfire throughout the Chabad communities in northern Eretz Yisroel and beyond.

The story began twenty-eight long years ago (!) when the couple married. They went many years

without experiencing the privilege of having children. Then, in 5750, after eight years of childless marriage, they merited to receive the Rebbe’s bracha for children. It was not until this past Gimmel Cheshvan, nearly twenty years later, that the Rebbe’s prophecy was fulfilled and they were blessed with the birth of their son. “The whole world is happy,” Rabbi Marciano told *Beis Moshiach* in a voice choking with tears.

“You caught me in the middle of checking around for an events hall large enough to accommodate all those who will come to participate in the bris,” he said with great emotion. “I see chassidim around me wishing each other ‘Mazel tov’. This is not my simcha alone; it is the simcha of the many chassidim I have come to know over the past thirty years, since I had the privilege of becoming acquainted with the magical world of Chabad chassidus.”

Rabbi Marciano is a very important figure in the Krayot, particularly due to the wide array of charitable activities he is involved in throughout the day.

“The story begins in 5744,” begins Rabbi Marciano. “I asked the Rebbe for a bracha to have children, since several years had passed since we got married and we still hadn’t merited to become parents. The Rebbe blessed us with ‘Bracha v’hatzlacha’ or ‘B’suros tovos’, but there was no mention of the subject of children. This scenario continued to repeat itself. When I came to the Rebbe the next time in 5748 – and on a number of occasions after that – every time I asked the Rebbe for a bracha, he gave me (or us) words of encouragement and bracha, but never a specific blessing for children. Days, weeks, and years passed. We waited and waited, but

TZ'DAKA WITH HIS OWN HANDS

— an excerpt from an article on R' Dovid Marciano
publicized on the Internet —

He remembers the day when the explosion took place as if it happened only yesterday. Dovid Marciano, resident of the Krayot, lost both of his hands during a powerful explosion at the “Refael” factory of the Ministry of Defense. Almost twenty years have passed since an explosion in an experimental project claimed the life of his closest friend.

Marciano is an IDF wounded in action who has borne the harsh proof for many years already, yet he demonstrates an immeasurable degree of self-sacrifice and devotion to his surroundings. This week, I met Dovid Marciano, today a Chabad chassid, at the grain packaging factory that oversees the preparation of twenty thousand food packages for “Eshel Chabad Welfare Programs”.

In this large logistical center created to supervise the packaging and distribution of tens of thousands of food packages sent all over the country, we saw him climbing on cartons, giving orders, and arranging to ship the merchandise from one manufacturer to another, sometimes with the assistance of the special metal devices connected to each of his arms.

Marciano reveals a rare sense of humor when we asked him about his daily activities in the shadow of his artificial limbs. Yet, this is not the reason why he is here. “I have a message to give over,” he says. “I am here only to show a personal example to each and every one of us. These are difficult days of crisis for all of us.

Nevertheless, each of us has the possibility of achieving great things. If I can stand here today without my hands and help Jews to make their festive Yomtov meals, so too can we all. Everyone has something to contribute, and the Jewish People have always provided help to the weak and destitute. Each individual has something to give in order that we can all have a happy holiday.”

In recent years, Marciano has been investing all of his time in welfare activities throughout the region where he lives – Haifa and the Krayot. He works on a regular basis with the municipal welfare departments, and they provide him with lists of families eligible for assistance. “The man has become the address for hundreds of families from all over the region, as he gives support regularly to families at each holiday,” said one municipal representative. “We have only praise for this man, who only recently received the ‘Krayot Citation of Honor’.”

“We are here only in order to enable people to celebrate the holidays with smiles on their faces,” says Rabbi Zalman Wolf. “The spirit of volunteerism that surrounds everyone is tremendous. In recent weeks, laid off workers from the hi-tech industry have joined the ranks of our volunteers to help the families of their colleagues. Everyone comes and does this with a full heart, and Dovid Marciano is the best example.”



nothing happened.

“We visited prominent doctors and underwent a variety of fertility treatments, filled with promise and hope, but in the end, we were filled with nothing but sadness. All of our friends and acquaintances had been privileged to have children, while we had to settle for our deep-rooted faith, but even that was gradually dimming and melting away.

“In Cheshvan 5750, I decided to travel to the Rebbe and state clearly that I want a bracha for children. The many miracle stories about the Rebbe defying the powers of nature and blessing Jews with children against the medical diagnoses were not lost on us. We wanted a clear bracha as well.

“This took place not long after I had suffered a very serious injury during my work with the defense industry. My body was so severely weakened that it led to the eventual amputation of both of my hands. Nevertheless, I was determined to make the trip. ‘If not now, when?’ I continually reminded myself, up until the moment that I boarded the airplane.

“At nine o’clock on the morning of Erev Shabbos Parshas VaYeira, I stood at the entrance to ‘Beis Chayeinu’. However, I was very surprised and perplexed to see 770, which I always remembered from previous visits as being filled to the brim with chassidim, almost totally empty. When I inquired about this unusual phenomenon, I was told that the Rebbe davens at home. (NOTE: That particular week, the Rebbe traveled home on Tuesday and remained there until Friday afternoon, something he customarily did during several weeks at the beginning of 5750.)

“With some apprehension, I walked in the direction of the Rebbe’s house on President Street, but I was just in time to see the avreichim with the Vaad

If the Rebbe makes a promise, the bracha will surely be fulfilled. There is no doubt that this trial was most difficult to bear, but the great joy we are feeling now surpasses it.

HaMesader closing the doors of the already crowded house. I refused to give up and knocked sharply on the door until it opened. Noticing my handicap, the avreichim apparently had pity on me and let me come in. Filled with awe, I stood near the steps that the Rebbe would descend from his room on the upper floor. When the Rebbe came down the steps, he gave me a gesture of encouragement and a soothing look of compassion.

"I was privileged to daven in the Rebbe's minyan, and I experienced a wonderful feeling in

the merit of the special attention I received from the Rebbe. I felt that the Rebbe knew about my situation and was there with me.

"Sunday came, the day that we planned to ask the Rebbe for a bracha. I knew that I couldn't stand in line for so many hours due to my injury, and I asked Rabbi Binyomin Klein if he could do something to help me. He understood the situation and he promised to help me to be among the first people in line. He asked me to knock on the window of the secretaries' office immediately after davening, and he would make

certain to get us in first.

"My wife and I stood first in line for dollars, and when our time came, I told the Rebbe that we needed a bracha for children. The Rebbe gave us a dollar and blessed us with 'Bracha v'hatzlacha'. I don't know where I got up the nerve, but I said to the Rebbe that I want a bracha for children because we still have not been privileged to have any. The Rebbe looked at us with clear and penetrating eyes, gave us another dollar and said: '***This is for the children to be born!***' I left the Rebbe with a feeling of joy I had never felt before. I knew that if the Rebbe gave such a clear bracha, it would surely be fulfilled.

"I returned home to Kiryat Shmuel, filled with faith that we would merit to have children. I neither thought nor imagined in my wildest dreams that so many more years would pass until the bracha would be fulfilled, yet I



R' Dovid Marciano (R) with Rabbi Yeshayahu Hertzel at a event for the Chabad yeshiva in the Krayot

knew in my heart that when the Rebbe makes a promise, it will be realized. I read numerous stories about Jews who only decades later were able to see the proof of the Rebbe's great vision and insight. I firmly believed that a similar story would happen to me, and I strove to increase in acts of chesed and *mitzvaim* activities in order that I should be a proper vessel to receive the bracha.

"Ten months ago, I approached Rabbi Shmuel Fromer from the Krayot, with whom I had a deep personal connection. Twenty-five years ago, he held Torah classes in my home over a period of three consecutive years, and many Jews came closer to Yiddishkeit and chassidus in the merit of these shiurim. I proceeded to pour out my heart to him. In all honesty, I had already begun to get a bit skeptical. It had been twenty years since 5750, twenty-eight years since we got married, and we had already been to so many doctors. Who knows? Maybe when the Rebbe gave us his bracha, he was referring to something in the more spiritual realm... Rabbi Fromer encouraged me not to give up hope. 'Look, Dovid, if the Rebbe gave a bracha, it's bound to happen,' he assured me.

"When the first announcement of the long-awaited miracle came, all the inner sadness and pain that had filled us for all those long years was transformed into tremendous joy. When I saw the happiness of all the chassidim

around us, I understood how great this miracle really was. While I still haven't fully digested the magnitude of the miracle, it's clear that what the Rebbe says, goes. There's no other way to explain it.

"On the 25th of Tishrei at midnight, I had laid down to go to sleep when I saw the Rebbe in a dream for the first time in my life. In my dream, I found myself standing at the distribution of 'lekach'. I was standing off to the side, while chassidim and other prominent individuals passed by for the privilege of receiving 'lekach'.

At a certain point, I asked to join the line, and the Rebbe gave me a look, as if to say, 'Get back to where you were', so that's just what I did. Longingly, I watched all the people passing and receiving warm and loving attention from the Rebbe, while I stood alone on the side. At the end of the distribution, the Rebbe turned around and almost walked out, while I tried with some embarrassment to get into the path to approach the Rebbe. The Rebbe noticed me, and this time his face shone. He called me over to him and brought me a whole carton of honey cake. When I took it into my hands, I saw that the cake was covered in chocolate... The Rebbe smiled again and then disappeared...

"I awoke from the dream totally drenched in cold sweat. I was shaking and I had a difficult time getting back to sleep.

"A week and a half later, on

Gimmel Cheshvan, when our son was born, I understood the meaning behind the dream. The Rebbe had given us a long period of time to be tested, and he didn't let me get in the line. However, just at the very end, I was privileged to receive cake 'with chocolate' – I was blessed with my first-born son after a period of twenty years. My conclusion is that one should always daven and hope, and if the Rebbe makes a promise, the bracha will surely be fulfilled. There is no doubt that this trial was most difficult to bear, but the great joy we are feeling now surpasses it."

Throughout the interview, R' Dovid spoke with great emotion. "It is taking us some time to get our feet back on the ground. We still haven't completely absorbed the fact that we have become parents after twenty-eight years of marriage. G-d willing, we are now preparing for a bris. In the meantime, we have been receiving telephone messages from all over the world, including from news reporters, acquaintances, and chassidim who wanted to give us their blessing. Many of them have already promised that they will participate in the bris celebration."

(This translation is dedicated to Mrs. Ester Nechama Dina Hoffman of Nachlat Har Chabad and Yaakov Menachem Mendel Dobry of Tzfas, who also celebrated their respective birthdays on Gimmel Cheshvan.)

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WITH FRIENDS LIKE THIS, WHO NEEDS ENEMIES?

Letter sent to a prominent Jewish newspaper.

November 5, 2009

Dear Rabbi G,

I find it commendable that you are speaking out to defend Israel's honor. In your letter from the editor this week you expound in depth on the subject.

I must point out, however, that while you spoke out against all the "popular" bashers of Israel that the Jewish community normally protests, you left out a glaring problem: Israel's own responsibility for terror attacks against it.

On page 7, when discussing the 7000 missiles fired at Israel and a wave of suicide bombers etc, you write, "There was hardly a sound of protest emanating from the UN or, for that matter, from any of the great centers of morality and human conscience scattered around the world..."

The discerning reader fails to find included in your list of "who is silent" Israel itself!

I think it is high time that everyone stopped tiptoeing around

the subject of taking Israel's government to task for the irresponsible policies that have put the Jews of Israel and elsewhere in terrible danger.

It appears to be taboo for an American Jew to speak against Israel. It's okay to ask, "Why didn't Jews speak up against Hitler?" In retrospect, we see how bad that was. But let's use the same logic to analyze the dangerous position Israel is in today.

In a "military moment," this could all turn around! Yet Israel does nothing and American Jews

don't utter a peep of protest. Are we any better than the silent American Jews of the pre-Holocaust era? Perhaps we are afraid to alienate this or that person in the government in the US or in Israel. That's fine, but in that case, at least attack the policies! But no, we hear only silence.

Now I am not a steady reader of your paper, so I may have missed such commentary. But I, for one, am sick of Israel putting itself into a militarily indefensible corner and then demanding that we Jews around the world support its outrageous acts of sheer irresponsibility.

It looks like Israel is becoming another Hungary, the government simply negotiating, as Kastener did, to save "A Favored Few" against what it considers to be an imminent destruction (G-d Forbid), as it is clear that nothing positive for Israel or its people comes out of each instance of sitting down for talks.

What is relevant for your readers is the obvious fact that the places that are being rocket attacked and given away are ALL religious areas.

One certainly doesn't see Israel giving away Tel Aviv or Haifa...

Wishing you all the very best,

Raanan S. Isseroff
Administrator

The Shtetl Foundation
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I think it is high time that everyone stopped tiptoeing around the subject of taking Israel's government to task for the irresponsible policies that have put the Jews of Israel and elsewhere in terrible danger.

TURNING CHALLENGES INTO SUCCESSES

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

In life, the test begins when difficulties set in. Learning the horaos in the Rebbe's sichos is easy, but implementing them is another story.

DANCING IN THE STREET

The Rebbe said that the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva should reach the street, “until the street dances.” Many shluchim organize a Simchas Beis HaShoeiva event in their city. Unfortunately, in the past three years, certain rabbanim and askanim in Israel said not to have these events because the boundaries of tznus are breached. Nevertheless, we Chassidim of the Rebbe have to do all we can so that “the street dances,” obviously while making sure to not compromise tznus.

A shliach in Petach Tikva, R' Eliezer Weisfiche, told me about the

covert and overt war that took place in his city when he acted on the Rebbe's horaa. As they did every year, Lubavitchers organized a Simchas Beis HaShoeiva in the center of the religious-Chassidic section of Petach Tikva called Kiryat HaBaal Shem Tov. As soon as they did, the protests and warnings against it began.

The Chassidim, loyal to the Rebbe and his directives, guaranteed that the event would conform with the laws of tznus and they even got the approval and the signature of the rav of the Chassidishe community, a Tzanzer Chassid. Many people participated in the event, which turned out to be a Kiddush Hashem and a Kiddush

Sheim Lubavitch.

Here in Beit Shaan we also experienced great difficulties when it came to making a Simchas Beis HaShoeiva. The municipality makes a similar event and even other religious groups suddenly mixed in and wanted to have input as to how it was carried out. This was in addition to the large costs of making an event like this.

But in the end, the Chabad house's event continues to grow. When certain “friends” anticipated that 70 people would participate, 400 people attended the first year, 600 the next year, and nearly 1000 the next.

Now, even the mayor knows that if he wants to meet the people of Beit Shaan, he has to attend our event.

THE RABBI VERSUS THE LADY

The battles are often protracted but the one who is persistent, wins. At one of the kibbutzim near Beit Shaan there is a covert and lengthy battle taking place concerning the character of the shul. This is not a religious kibbutz but it has a large shack that has served as a shul for seventy years now. It had been abandoned and instead of davening, other activities were done there. Lately, there has been a demand for a shul again.

One of the veteran members of the kibbutz, whose father a”h was a member of the old minyan, has adopted and preserves the shul, but she has demands regarding its reopening. When a bar mitzva takes place, she wants all the uncles and aunts to be allowed to dance with Sifrei Torah around the bima where the bar mitzva boy is standing. Another demand is that since the women's section (the rear of the building) is crowded, the room should be divided down the length with a mechitza, with one side for

men and one side for women.

I heard about this from a member of the kibbutz who occasionally visits our Chabad house and is getting more involved in religious observance. He is slowly but surely succeeding in getting the atmosphere at that shul to change. He convinced the woman that they have to consult with another rav about the “customs” she wants instituted.

“Pick any rabbi you want from this area and we’ll ask him.” She picked a rabbi from one of the religious kibbutzim, who came to hear the two sides and paskened as follows: The mixed dancing is forbidden. As for dividing the shul down the length, there must be a mechitza or at least the fence of the bima must be extended the length of the shul, but if that’s not possible, it’s not the end of the world.

“You see?” she said. “The rav said it’s allowed, but when it comes to the dancing I don’t intend on listening to him.”

So my friend has to try and convince each family celebrating a bar mitzva to listen to the rav and not to the woman. Boruch Hashem, they are heading in the right direction.

SHAATA PRISON

Chazal say “according to the pain is the reward.” Additionally, we often see that the harder it is to carry something out, the greater the success. During Simchas Torah we saw this.

We shluchim held hakafos in several places and boruch Hashem, it was a great simcha in each location. The biggest simcha of all was in the hardest place, the Shaata Prison, which is considered quite tough. For years now, shluchim in Beit Shaan go there on Motzaei Simchas Torah for “hakafos shniyos.” The one who devotedly



Rabbi Dovid Teichtel

arranges this is R’ Dovid Teichtel, who was a prison chaplain for many years. He led us from wing to wing, speaking words of encouragement to the prisoners and leading the dancing.

Surprisingly, although each year I visit the prison thinking that I will cheer up the inmates, I end up leaving with the feeling that *they* cheered *me* up. As soon as they see the Chassidim with the Torah entering the wing, they burst into song, actually roars, of simcha until all the neighboring wings join in. The love with which they embrace and dance with the Torah is indescribable. It’s as though they have nothing in the world other than joy with the holy Torah.

In the prison there are minimum security wards and tougher, closed wards. The greatest simcha is in the highest security ward called “the X ward.” There are inmates there who are forbidden from leaving their cell and they sing the loudest. They hug the Torah with all their might and find it hard to be separated from it.

Last year, we went to a certain wing where the wardens told us that there was a lockdown because they had found dangerous

homemade knives under the beds. They were not allowing anyone in until the search was completed. Of course, the dancing stopped. Searchers came in to conduct a thorough search of the entire wing. They took everything apart.

As soon as they were done, the simcha reached the skies. They didn’t stop singing for a good, long time. It was only after R’ Teichtel inserted into the verses of the song, “*Ana Hashem hoshi’a na*” that “the walls of Shaata Prison should fall,” that they all joined in to the singing of “Yechi” and allowed us to continue to the next wing.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

R’ Noam Bar Tov, shliach and rav of yishuv Balforia in the Jezreel Valley, related:

It’s hard for us to get people involved and I constantly have to think of creative ways of getting people to show up to t’fillos and shiurim. Even the minyan at the shul has its ups and downs. Our moshav is not big — it has 60 families. When one member of the minyan died, we no longer had a minyan. It was miraculous that someone else decided to join on a regular basis.

There’s a guy who is pessimistic by nature who told me many times already, “Give up, there’s no chance we’ll have a minyan here.” But I keep trying and boruch Hashem, there is always a minyan. We had a minyan every morning on Sukkos and now the people want to continue with it.

Before every shiur or farbrengen, I have to make personal phone calls and hope people will show up. My daughter decided to make a Tzivos Hashem club and she learned how to run a creative club, combining Jewish and Chassidic ideas in the program. Every program requires effort.

CHALLENGING COMMUNITY

A friend, who is a shliach on a yishuv that is not at all religious, told me that he is not even allowed to advertise a shiur or farbrengen because they will throw him out (and sad to say, there is more than one yishuv like this in Israel). But don't think he sits idle; on the contrary. He does things one-on-one without advertising; checking a mezuza here, offering a drasha for a bar mitzva there. He makes a house call, has a chavrusa, etc.

Throughout Sukkos the shliach was very busy. He visited people in their sukkos and invited many people to his sukka. New friendships were made and old friendships were strengthened with dozens of people. The day is not far off when he will be able to invite all of them to one big farbrengen or for a communal Shabbos meal. This has happened at other similar yishuvim after some years of reaching out.

EVERYONE ENDS UP AT THE CHABAD HOUSE

For many years now, all the schools go to the Chabad house to have their Chumash party. A few years ago, a certain religious group arrived in Hod HaSharon and announced to the schools that they also make Chumash celebrations. Some of the schools went to them but most came back to the Chabad house.

The Chabad preschool has also experienced ups and downs, competition and imitators, but the parents have voted with their feet and the preschool that began four years ago with 12 children now has 35 children and a long waiting list.

Even the Chabad shul in Hod HaSharon has been imitated. After its ten years of existence, a few dozen mekuravim and baalei

t'shuva from Chabad yeshivos opened another shul with a Chabad atmosphere at the other end of town. It goes to show how great a demand there is for a Chassidishe davening. There are more farbrengens, more shiurim, and more and more people who spread Chassidus and are hastening the Geula.

SPECIAL CHILDREN

When the Geula comes there won't be sickness and limitations, but for the meantime, in the final moments of galus, there are numerous families with children who are not well.

R' Y.L., a shliach in Eretz Yisroel, is a father to a special needs child. He told me how he and his wife manage to put the "Alef" into "gola" and how they deal with the challenges of galus while simultaneously doing their shlichus.

"It took us a few years until we realized how complicated our lives would be because of our special needs child, but with time, we have learned to live with it, to be b'simcha, and to be able to advise, help, and support others with similar problems.

"A few months ago, the department of Agudas Chassidei Chabad that helps special needs children (run by R' Menachem Mendel Blinitzky) organized a group of about 200 families of Anash with special needs children for a Shabbos together in the Galil. The stories we heard did not make for easy listening, but we saw how nevertheless, Chassidim and shluchim are able to bring the 'Alufo shel olam' into the tzaros of galus."

One of the fathers said that his special needs son, seven year old Shneur, attends a special school which is not religious (there are instructions from the Rebbe which say to send such a child wherever is

best for him, as long as there is kosher food etc.). On the staff is an Arab employee who feeds the children. She announces at the beginning of the meal that they won't start eating until Shneur says a bracha!

Another Lubavitcher family, with a teenaged special needs daughter, sends her to foster families in B'nei Brak every Shabbos. One Litvishe family said that ever since they began hosting the Lubavitcher girl, they have accommodated her level of kashrus and even buy chicken with Rav Landau's hashgacha.

Despite all the sorrow and pain in these stories, there is a touching unity among these families. They take in children for brief stints in order to help one another and they offer support and advice. R' Yekusiel Farkash, who was the was guest speaker at the Shabbos in Maalot, saw with his own eyes how friendships were made between a long-term special needs family and young parents whose special needs child was just born. R' Farkash saw how over the course of one Shabbos, the young parents visibly relaxed, as they found in their new-found role models the strength to go on. They left after this Shabbos completely different than the way they arrived.

"It was worth the entire Shabbos just for this family," enthused R' Farkash.

The organization *Ezer MiTziyon* has been a part of many support meetings for families like this in many communities, but when they saw what's happening among Chabad families they expressed their amazement and said it was beyond anything they saw previously. In Chabad, said their representative, we see how achdus is the essence of the community and not just something that is there because of a shared problem.