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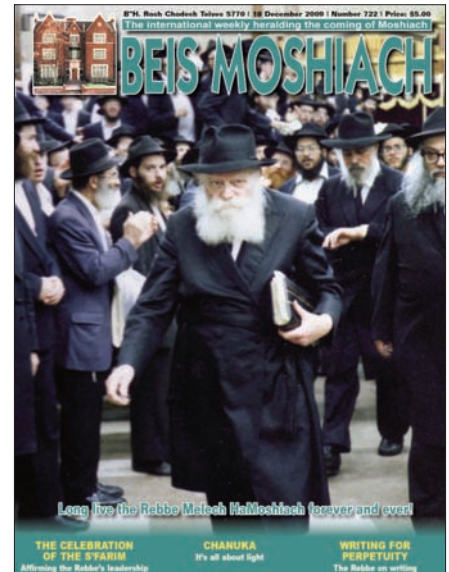
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Beis Moshiah (USPS 012-542) ISSN 1082-0272 is published weekly, except Jewish holidays (only once in April and October) for \$160.00 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and in all other places for \$180.00 per year (45 issues), by Beis Moshiah, 744 Eastern 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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AN END AND A BEGINNING

Sichos In English

Hidden with the challenges of the last moments of exile, are G-dly sparks of a truly lofty nature. Confronting these challenges taps these G-dly energies and brings to ketz ha'yamin, the beginning of the redemption.

THE TRUTH OF TORAH

Among people at large, there is a difference of opinion regarding the narratives of the Torah.

There are some who maintain that all the stories of the Torah should be considered as symbolism and allegory.

Their intent is to teach us lessons in our divine service, not to chronicle history.

The traditional view differs and states every narrative in the Torah must be considered as a true record of events which actually transpired. [1]

Chassidic thought takes a different approach, to quote a kabbalistic expression: [2]

The Torah speaks about the upper realms, and alludes to the lower realms.

The intent is that the narratives of the Torah are descriptions of the interrelation between Divine attributes in the spiritual realms.

Nevertheless, since material existence is not, heaven forbid, a

separate entity, but rather an extension and an outgrowth of spiritual existence, whatever happens in the spiritual realms is also reflected in this world.

Every narrative in the Torah is a record of an actual event, but the event is not a dry historical fact, but rather a dynamic movement beginning within the sublime spiritual planes and having ramifications on all levels of existence.

This approach expresses the positive dimensions of both the views mentioned previously.

On one hand, the historical integrity of the Torah is preserved. Conversely, however, the relevance of the Torah is not as a book of records, but as a spiritual guide, reflecting truths manifest in the spiritual realms that should be applied in our divine service.

INFINITY IN SHACKLES

These concept are reflected in this week's Torah reading, Parshas

Mikeitz, which focuses on the release of Yosef from prison.

Yosef serves as an analogy for the entire Jewish people. [3]

For the name Yosef meaning "increase" refers to an infinite and unbounded potential for growth, [4] i.e., the soul we all possess which is "an actual part of G-d from above." [5]

Moreover, the prayer Rachel recited when naming Yosef, [6] "May G-d add on (yosef) to me another son (ben acher)," reflects the spiritual mission of the Jewish people.

Entities which have hitherto been acher ("another" - estranged from their G-dly core) are brought close and manifest the intimacy of ben ("a son").

The prison refers to the body and to material existence as a whole.

Such a setting confines the infinite power of the soul and denies it expression.

Although G-d gave man His Torah, His will and wisdom, [7] the Torah is also affected by the limits of material existence, and its G-dly source is not always evident.

AN END TO LIMITATION

These concepts are alluded to in the opening phrase of this week's Torah reading:

Va'yehi mi'keitz shnasayim yamim, "And it came to pass at the end of two years time."

"Two years" refers to the Torah which contains two elements, the Written Law and the Oral Law. [8]

As the Torah exists within the confines of material existence, its power appears to have a ketz, an end and a limit.

Nevertheless, because Yosef - in analogy, the Jewish people - is essentially unlimited, the ketz, the restrictions of worldly existence,

ultimately becomes “va’yehi”, a thing of the past.

Yosef leaves prison and becomes the ruler of Egypt.

In the analogue: a Jew is sent into the world to reveal G-dliness.

This is the purpose of his being and eventually this purpose will be achieved.

The material nature of worldly existence may initially restrict the expression of a Jew’s inner nature, but the constraints will be temporary.

Ultimately, just as Yosef became the ruler of Egypt, every Jew will become a source of influence and power, showing how infinite G-dliness can permeate material existence.

MAKING THE END A BEGINNING

The latter concept can be amplified by the coupling of a point of Hebrew grammar with a mystical concept.

The word mi’keitz can mean “at the beginning” [9] or “at the end”. [10]

Similarly, the Zohar speaks of the ketz di’smola, “the left end,” [11] and the ketz ha’yamin, “the right end.” [12]

To apply these concepts to our Torah reading:

The question is whether mi’keitz refers to the end - the final two years - of the trials and tribulations Yosef suffered in Egypt, or to the beginning - the

first two years - of his assumption of power.

According to the first interpretation, mi’keitz refers to the most difficult challenges Yosef faced in Egypt, for it is before daybreak that the darkness becomes most powerful. [13]

According to the second interpretation, mi’keitz refers to the dawning of Yosef’s redemption.

There is a connection between the two concepts.

Hidden with the challenges of ketz di’smola, the last moments of exile, are G-dly sparks of a truly lofty nature. Confronting these challenges taps these G-dly energies and brings to ketz ha’yamin, the beginning of the redemption. [14]

The entire Jewish people are at times referred to with the name Yosef. [2]

May the motif experienced by Yosef become manifest for our people as a whole.

For we have confronted the hardships of exile and we are awaiting the revelation of ketz ha’yamin, the first rays of the redemption.

May this take place in the immediate future.

Adapted from: Likkutei Sichos, Vol. V, p. 198ff, Vol. XXIII, p. 37-38 Sichos Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz, 5751

Notes:

1. See the Responsa of the Rashba, Vol. I, Responsum 413.

2. Asara Maamaros, Maamer Chakor HaDin, sec. 3, ch. 22; Shaloh, p. 13b, 161a.

3. Therefore the entire Jewish people are at times referred to with the name Yosef as Psalms 80:2 states “You lead Yosef as [a shepherd leads] sheep.” See Rashi and Metzudas David to that verse.

4. See Toras Chayim p. 87a.

5. Tanya, ch. 2.

6. Genesis 30:24.

7. Tanya, ch. 4.

8. Torah Or 31b.

9. See the gloss of Rav Avraham Ibn Ezra to Numbers 13:25, Deuteronomy 15:1, 31:10, Psalms 119:96. See also the gloss of the Maharsha to Niddah 58b.

10. Rashi in our Torah reading.

11. Zohar, Vol. I, p. 193b.

12. Zohar, Vol. I, p. 54a, c.f. the conclusion of the Book of Daniel.

13. Likkutei Dibburim, Vol. I, p. 68a, b [English trans. p. 150].

14. This enables us to appreciate the interrelation between the name mi’keitz and the Torah reading which follows. Even according to the interpretation that mi’keitz refers to the last two years of Yosef’s imprisonment, it is still appropriate that it serve as the name of the reading that deals with his redemption. For it was the confrontation of those challenges of that period that brought about his redemption.

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THE POWER OF THE BOOK

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

A ROOMFUL OF BOOKS

Whenever we begin to approach the special day of 5 Teves, I always find myself going back to that time and beating myself up with regret. “Why?” you ask. Well, first a little background:

At that time, I was learning in Lakewood Yeshiva. I shared a number of mutual friends with a certain fellow student, who identified as a Chassid of Pupa, and who had one of the choicest rooms in the dormitory. It was an oversized room, but due to its elongated shape it held only three beds instead of the usual four. When one of those beds became available, he invited me to move in rather than have the administration assign him a roommate.

This room was the unofficial hangout of the “Chassidic underground” in Lakewood, during off hours from the regular learning schedule. Although some members of this fascinating and diverse group treated me with suspicion (“He’s just a Misnaged who is curious”), I soon found myself in the middle of a whole new social circle. Since my roommate also had a massive collection of Chassidic works, including many biographies of Chassidic greats and historical

books covering many different branches of the movement, I began to devour them.

My curiosity was originally fueled primarily because of a family tradition that we are descendants of Reb Gershon Kitover, the brother-in-law and later disciple of the Baal Shem Tov. It only seemed right that if I considered myself an opponent of this movement that should have been part of my birthright, I should at least know what I was opposing. Little did I know the tremendous impact that my reading would have on me. Slowly, over time, I began to become convinced that there was a lot more to Chassidus than is perceived by those who view it from the outside, or even dabble in it casually in the name of being broadminded. By the month of Teves, 5747, my identity as a Misnaged was pretty much limited to one school of Chassidus: Chabad – Lubavitch (as well as some individual aspects of certain other denominations).

One of the Chassidic fellows that I became friendly with was very involved in Chabad, and on occasion, would gently try to soften my opposition. During the original celebration throughout the week following Hei Teves,

word got out that the Rebbe had announced that “all the doors were open” for all requests, and that any note with a request would be taken to the resting place of the Rebbe Rayatz.

Bags and bags of letters and notes poured into 770 Eastern Parkway, even from places like Williamsburg, which was considered a stronghold of opposition. This friend of mine became the “letter carrier” for many of those in Lakewood who wanted to take advantage of this unique opportunity, and he traveled there almost daily during that week. When he approached me to apprise me of this once-in-a-lifetime chance, I told him unequivocally that I was not interested. Since I opposed the man, I wasn’t going to ask for his blessings.

Oy vey, what an idiot (feel free to add any and all pejorative adjectives)!!!

So you see, along with “Hei Teves” being a time for joyous celebration of the victory of the s’farim/books and the victory of the Rebbe and the Chassidim, for me it is a personal day of repentance.

Ironically, my entire internal process began, as mentioned, with books and s’farim, and continued almost exclusively through my own delving into s’farim with very limited input from the various people over the years who tried to be “mekarev” me (not that I am any less grateful to them). So, although as a Misnaged, I might have scoffed at the “campaign” to fill one’s home with s’farim, or celebrating the “victory” and “redemption” of s’farim, I can personally give witness to the importance of being surrounded by s’farim and the power they have to transform lives.

WHAT'S IN A BOOK?

The Alter Rebbe, in his introduction to Tanya, addresses himself to “those who pursue righteousness and seek out G-d,” and points out the possible deficiencies in trying to find one’s way in the service of Hashem from holy books. He begins with the general problem that the reader brings the limitations of his mind and intellect to the learning process, and as such, if he himself is confused and in darkness then he will have great difficulty in discerning the great light that is hidden away within such holy works.

Additionally, those ethical works that are based on human intellect will not be useful to everyone, since each person’s mind works differently and responds in differing ways to different things. Even those works that are predicated primarily on the words of the Sages in the Midrashic literature are not accessible to all, since not everybody merits the ability to discern “his individual place within Torah.” This is all the more so in matters of love and fear of Hashem in the heart and mind, which are by definition individual in nature. The Zohar states in these matters, “each one

This room was the unofficial hangout of the “Chassidic underground” in Lakewood... When he approached me to apprise me of this once-in-a-lifetime chance, I told him unequivocally that I was not interested. Since I opposed the man, I wasn’t going to ask for his blessings.

according to his measure, according to what he can assess in his heart.”

He then goes on to explain why these disadvantages are not cause for concern regarding the Tanya. It is written “for those from our fellowship, from our country and the outlying regions, who know me well and, seeking my advice, have brought all their questions to me in private audiences. This work is a compendium of all the answers to all the questions that they may possibly have in the future.” Apparently, the Alter Rebbe is

explaining why the problems that he raised earlier are not pertinent in this instance by making it clear that he is only offering advice regarding those questions that have come up and is only addressing himself to a limited audience.

However, Chassidic tradition emphatically rejects such a superficial reading of the text, and in fact insists that it was written for all Jews of that generation and all the generations to come. It answers any question regarding the service of Hashem



Whoever opens a Tanya is in actual reality entering into a private audience (yechidus) face to face with the Alter Rebbe.

that any person will ever confront in his life, and enables those people to find the answers either themselves or through consulting those greater than themselves.

To document all the statements of the Rebbeim on this topic and all the explanations of the wording of the Alter Rebbe in his introduction is beyond the purview of this article. (See letter of the Rebbe Rayatz, appendix to *Kitzurim V'Haaros* on Tanya, Likkutei Sichos vol. 26 Sichs 20-24 Teves p. 30-39). The question that is being addressed here is: How is it humanly possible to author a work that encompasses all the spiritual issues of every Jew that lived or will ever live? The Rebbe Rashab takes it even further and says that whoever opens a Tanya is in actual reality entering into a private audience (yechidus) face to face with the Alter Rebbe. How is that possible?

The Rebbe Rashab's parting words before his passing were, "*Ich gei in himmel un di k'savim loz ich aich* (I am going to heaven and the writings I leave for you)." The Rebbe, after a lengthy critical analysis, explains this statement to express the idea that just as Hashem "wrote Himself into the Torah" (as it were), so too "Tzaddikim are similar to their Creator" and "write themselves into their Torah." This is especially true of a Nasi Chabad, since as the Mittler Rebbe explains in the "Maamer Hishtat'chus," the Tzaddik whose function is to

reveal *p'nimius ha'Torah* to the world in any given generation is the all-inclusive soul of that generation, specifically the all-inclusive *yechida* who is one with G-d. The Rebbe adds that since each generation of Jews is inclusive of all preceding and following generations, he is, in fact, the all-inclusive soul of all Jews, past and present.

That is how the Alter Rebbe can address every Jew of every generation and answer his every question and concern, in the manner of a private audience directed to that individual. The only difference between the Tanya and other "k'savim" of the Rebbeim is that the Tanya is the Written Torah of Chassidus and the other recorded teachings of the Rebbeim are the Oral Torah, but in each instance the Rebbe wrote himself into his Torah.

While in Torah study in general, it is extremely difficult for a person to find "his individual place within Torah" to aid him in his "pursuit of righteousness" and "seeking out G-d," the Tanya and the later elaborations of the Rebbeim make it possible, through connecting to the Rebbe himself ("those who know me well") as he is invested into his teachings.

BOOK REDEMPTION

Perhaps this will help us gain a greater appreciation for the miraculous events of Hei Teves. As we know, although each Jewish holiday has many components, all of them are

intricately interwoven. However, when it comes to the court battle over the s'farim, which, as the Rebbe indicated, mirrored a litigious struggle Up Above, there seems to be a wide range of issues that came to the fore. Although the primary legal question focused on the issue of the ownership of the s'farim, the other side also challenged whether the Rebbe is the rightful heir to the crown of Chabad leadership. As such, 5 Teves is both the time of the "redeeming of captives" of the s'farim and an affirmation of the Rebbe's *nesius*. These would seem to be two very disparate and unrelated issues.

However, when we consider that the entire point of a Nasi is that he empowers his mekusharim to actually find the righteousness they are pursuing and unite with G-d, the connection becomes more clear. The impact of Tanya and the teachings of all the Rebbeim are felt not only when learning their works but when studying any aspect of Torah from any source. Where previously one was unable to find "his individual place within Torah" or the "hidden light" in the other areas of Torah, he can acquire the ability to do so by learning, absorbing and practicing the "advice" he receives from the Nasi, or any of the N'siim. Even someone who, as part of his service for Hashem under the guidance of the Rebbe, finds himself perusing works of questionable content and dubious authorship, has the "heart to know" and "eyes to see" and "ears to hear," to extract what is good and reject what is harmful.

Thus, taking the books/s'farim from their rightful place as part of the collection of the Rebbe Rayatz, which, in a broader sense, belongs to all of the Chassidim, is to undermine the



very role of the Nasi, whose mission is to unify all aspects of the Torah and the Jewish people, and reveal and make accessible the path to righteousness and G-dliness to each and every one of them. The spiritual idea of “books in captivity” would be either the lack of study of those books or, on a more subtle level, studying holy works without implementing their teachings and without an awareness of the G-dly light in Torah.

TAKING G-D OUT OF THE BOOK

Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev exclaimed in wonder over the Tanya, “How does one take such a great G-d and put Him into such a small book?”

The Alter Rebbe addressed himself to those who “seek out G-d” and he delivered, The first section of Tanya explains how one brings the *Sh’china* into the “intellectual faculties within his head.”

Ever since then, each progressive generation has worked towards taking G-d out of the book – or books – and revealing Him in the world. In our generation, the Rebbe made it clear from day one that our mission is to bring the *Sh’china*

Hei Teves is both the time of the “redeeming of captives” of the s’farim and an affirmation of the Rebbe’s nesius.

down to earth. The very first work that the Rebbe authored, the *HaYom Yom*, has a preface page citing a letter of the Rebbe Rayatz instructing every Jew - man and woman, young and old - to confront the following question:

What have I done and what am I doing to alleviate the birthpangs of Moshiach, and to merit the Complete Redemption that will come through our righteous Moshiach?

That same work ends with the saying of the Alter Rebbe recorded in *Derech Mitzvosecha* of the Tzemach Tzedek:

I want nothing at all, I don’t want Your Gan Eden, I don’t want Your Olam Haba...I want nothing but You alone.

In the final maamer that the Rebbe edited fully before his stroke in 1992 (V’Ata Tetzaveh, 5741), he cites this saying of the Alter Rebbe and explains that through the N’siim of Chabad, all the way to our generation, “every Jew is given the power that his

primary desire be the revelation of Atzmus (Essence), and to such a degree, that when this revelation does not shine forth, and even more so in the time of exile when there doesn’t shine forth even the revelation (revelation of ‘light’) that was in the time of the Sanctuary, he is in a state of *kasis* (crushed). And he asks three times a day (or more) ‘and our eyes should see when You return to Zion with mercy,’ because then there will be the revelation of G-dliness up to the revelation of Atzmus.”

In our time, it is not enough to “pursue righteousness” and “seek out G-d” as He is in a book; we need to do everything in our power, utilizing the powers given to us by the Rebbe as he put himself into his Torah, to reveal G-d Himself, Atzmus, in the world, by preparing ourselves and the world for “the Complete Redemption that will come through our righteous Moshiach,” NOW!

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WRITING FOR PERPETUITY

*On countless occasions the Rebbe repeated the statement of the Tzemach Tzedek, “The spoken word is public, the written word open to the whole world, and the printed word – for generations to come.” He explained that “generations to come” is at least four generations. * A compilation of instructions from the Rebbe to editors and writers, presented for the Chag HaS’farim, Hei Teves.*

PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Since the Rebbe became Rebbe, and even before that, he took a positive view towards the development of publishing in the frum world in general and particularly in the Chassidic sector. Throughout the years the Rebbe urged writers to publish their work and more recently, from when the Rebbe began giving out dollars for tz’daka, we saw numerous authors and publishers from all backgrounds receiving the Rebbe’s bracha for their s’farim.

In the Rebbe’s letters we find two opposite emphases regarding publishing: the privilege and the responsibility. In one letter the

Rebbe writes, “Fortunate is the person who, through his efforts, words of Torah are established in print, which is for generations to come. Especially in p’nimius ha’Torah...in Yemos HaMoshiach we will be involved (primarily) with this” (Igros Kodesh, vol. 1, p. 32).

On the other hand, “Consequently, it is understood the extent of the privilege and responsibility upon the publisher” (Igros Kodesh, vol. 7, p. 217).

In another letter, “Great is the merit of the matter in general – surely it is not necessary to explain; all the more so to go on at length for one such as yourself” (Igros Kodesh, vol. 2, p. 214).

However, “Obviously there needs to be **proper** critiquing from

experts in this field, at least two of them” (response from Nissan 5733, Heichal Menachem vol. 1, p. 114).

Due to the enormous importance of “printed matter,” the Rebbe refrained, on principle, from giving his approbation to s’farim. One of the classic examples of the Rebbe’s view on this is his reaction to a letter from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin, who was launching a project to put together a new commentary on Tanach. His plan was to have a team of Torah scholars create an integrated commentary based on accepted traditional commentaries and write it in a modern style.

When he asked the Rebbe to be a partner in this venture or alternatively, to give his approval to the project, the Rebbe wrote in a letter, dated 2 Kislev, 5721, (Igros Kodesh, vol. 20, p. 43) explaining that this entailed great responsibility and if in even one place they put in an inappropriate explanation, this would sully the entire project.

The Rebbe went on to say, “From this we understand that the person in charge must be only someone who has the time and the leisure to devote to it, as necessary, to review every explanation from one end to the other and to examine it thoroughly in order to do away with any veering from tradition, from the straight path.”

The Rebbe goes on to say that it is not possible in this situation to appoint a shliach or representative, especially according to the statement of the Tzemach Tzedek that the printed word is for generations to come. The Rebbe concludes, “Therefore, I must refuse to accept this offer, negating it not only because of the responsibility but also in order not to give my name to the project, since putting one’s name on something is synonymous with taking a share of the responsibility, obviously.”

DON'T EXAGGERATE

Before the index to sifrei Chassidus Chabad was printed, Rabbi Leibel Groner asked, in a note, whether to mention in the introduction the statement of Chazal in Eiruvim that “before Shlomo instituted etc. the Torah was like a basket without handles,” and to say that this index was similar, because until now, Toras HaChassidus was like a basket without handles since people couldn’t find certain topics, while now anyone can open the index and find what he’s looking for.

The Rebbe answered, “Of course you cannot say that until 5726/1966, Toras HaChassidus was like a basket without handles” (Mikdash Melech p. 275).

A SEPARATE SECTION FOR STORIES OF CHASSIDIM

When Mrs. Chedva Segal of N’shei U’Bnos Chabad in Eretz Yisroel published the book *Ateres Malchus* about the Chabad Rebbetzins, she informed the Rebbe that the book would also have stories taken from books of stories about Chassidim.

The Rebbe replied, “Perhaps in a separate section, so as not to mix that which is certain (from the Rebbeim) with that which is not so certain” (*Ateres Malchus* 5758 p. 10).

Regarding a book about the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe told Rabbi Avrohom Chanoch Glitzenstein, “Stories told by the Chassidim should be in a separate section at the end of the book, and only those that have a reliable source (which includes the work ‘Beis Rebbe’). Obviously those recorded in the HaYom Yom should be included in the main text (since those stories were copied from the

In the Rebbe’s letters we find two opposite emphases regarding publishing: the privilege and the responsibility.



notes of my holy father-in-law, the Rebbe).

Then the Rebbe wrote, “If the section ‘Chassidim Mesaprim (Chassidim relate)’ is delayed, don’t delay the printing of the book about the Tzemach Tzedek for that (Mikdash Melech).

“Special attention is needed for any material printed together with sayings from my holy father-in-law, the Rebbe.” (*Igros Kodesh* vol. 2 p. 132)

QUOTING CHAZAL ACCURATELY

“Apparently, due to the lack of sources and all the more so, not examining them – which is obviously essential prior to publication – in addition to the wording not being copied properly, they have also erred.” (*Mikdash Melech* p. 256)

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDITING

Regarding Mrs. Chedva Segal’s plan to publish the book *Ateres Malchus*, the Rebbe wrote, “Surely all this is being edited along with someone else (‘for there is no one judge except the one G-d’)” (*Ateres Malchus* 5758 p. 9).

In a letter to the hanhala of Tzeirei Agudas Chabad in Tel Aviv, 18 Elul, 5720, “The greatest surprise is obvious when you send a draft copy here that is apparently the first version and of **one** person. Was it not possible to consult to begin with over there and send me something that is closer to being ‘proper?’ May it be that from now on there will begin to be some order in this.” (*Mikdash Melech* p. 256)

In response to someone who worked on the Rebbe’s sichos, “But why should it be the responsibility

The Rebbe wrote, “Surely all this is being edited along with someone else (‘for there is no one judge except the one G-d’)”

of one person; it is good and fitting that there be three who are suitable – to translate from Yiddish **properly**, to edit etc.” (Heichal Menachem vol. 1, p. 91)

A response in connection with *Seifer HaMitzvos Mekutzar b’Yiddish*, “Based on what it says, ‘don’t be a single judge’, and ‘salvation is with many advisors,’ surely you conducted yourself thus. In any case, another edit is always helpful, and if it is a large work you put it out first in pamphlet form and the like (Heichal Menachem, vol. 1, p. 104).

In a response to Rabbi Yekusiel Green in connection with his book, *Maskil L’Eisan*, the Rebbe writes, “... especially when it is intended for the public, and the review and approbation of a seasoned expert is in order.” (Heichal Menachem vol. 2, p. 167)

A response in connection with the pamphlet *Yagdil Torah*, “Furthermore and **most importantly**, on a number of occasions I have pointed out and asked and **pleaded** that before publishing something that pertains to **the honor of Chabad**, they should find someone to proofread it **properly**; otherwise, **they should wait** until a person like this is found. Obviously, the proofreader must understand (at least superficially) what he is editing.” (Heichal Menachem vol. 1, p. 85)

“Was there a review (at least **superficially**) of that which is enclosed by at least two people **before** it was sent to me?” (*Beis Moshiach* issue 191 p. 13 Hebrew side).

PRECISION IN TRANSLATION

From a letter from the secretariat to the editor of *Bitaon Chabad*:

“When you translate something in halacha or Chassidus, in order to be sure that the translation is precise, it is very important that before printing, you have another scholar look it over (or discuss it with him even before translating it), someone you can rely on in this so they will produce a good product (if you have not done so until now, it would be good if you begin with this issue).”

WRITE SOURCES

From a letter to Rabbi Nachum Shmarya Sossonkin in connection with the pamphlets *Avrohom Avinu*, “It’s a shame that you did not include sources and editing. And the practical implication (of my pointing this out) is for future pamphlets.” (Heichal Menachem vol. 1 p. 106)

In a letter to Rabbi Simcha Raz, “If you would note in your book ... a source for each saying and aphorism, **surely** a sizable number of your readers will be inspired to look it up inside, and become intrigued by what it says before and after etc. (Heichal Menachem, vol. 2, p. 131)

PLEASE TREAT THIS WITH RESPECT

Once, an American rabbi wrote a letter to the Rebbe in which he said he saw a letter from the Rebbe in a certain newspaper and he was

wondering about the holy words in that letter [which would end up in the garbage].

The Rebbe replied, “In response to your question that you saw my letter printed in a newspaper where there is concern that newspapers are not preserved and in this letter there were citations from Chazal and verses. I based myself on the custom of g’dolei Yisroel from our previous country, as well as the practice of the Rebbe, my father-in-law when he was in the United States, that when necessary he would print words of inspiration in newspapers and the like, even if they had statements of Chazal and verses. Of course, where possible they were careful, i.e. not to write Hashem’s name as written, which we do as well even in material that is printed in pamphlets and the like and even in letters in the language of the country, based on what it says in the poskim that there is holiness even in names for Hashem in other languages.” (Igros Kodesh vol. 12, p. 17)

Despite this leniency, the Rebbe was not lenient with printed brochures published by Chabad and he instructed, “When you print such things - add (in Russian) **to preserve** the issue with respect since it has verses etc.”

In connection with printing a booklet with the 12 p’sukim, the Rebbe wrote, “When it is reprinted, add in the appropriate place that it needs to be properly preserved since it has etc.” (Heichal Menachem, vol. 1, p. 102)

When a brochure on Mivtza Pesach was printed and it did not have the warning to preserve its sanctity, the Rebbe wrote, “Urgent – add with a rubber stamp and the like to preserve the sanctity of the issue (because of brachos etc.).” (Mikdash Melech, p. 276)

To someone who sent the Rebbe some pictures made out of verses and excerpts from piyutim, the

Rebbe noted, “Perhaps it would be worthwhile adding, in the proper place, ‘Preserve the sanctity of these writings.’” (Heichal Menachem vol. 3, p. 88)

PUBLICIZING THE NAME OF THE EDITOR

When the Rebbe received the book, *Chagei Yisroel U’Moadav*, edited by Mrs. Rochel Zamir, the Rebbe wrote, “Obviously, they did a good thing by mentioning her name in the book as she put in a lot more than just compiling it. And Chazal say that it’s a mitzva to publicize those who do a mitzva... and as for chinuch – it is extremely important on a practical level, especially as it relates to the influence of the author in her teaching matters of yiras Shamayim etc.” (Heichal Menachem vol. 1, p 103)

PUBLISHING A BOOKLET AS A MEMENTO OF THE KINUS

From a letter to N’shei U’Bnos Chabad in Nachalat Har Chabad and Beer Sheva: “It is worthwhile publishing a **booklet** (even though the importance of the matter requires a book, but that will take too long) of reports, speeches, etc.” (*Beis Moshiaich*)

To N’shei U’Bnos Chabad in New York: “It would be worthwhile at least... to publish a booklet that will include divrei Torah... current candle lighting times... about the N’shei U’Bnos Chabad and its activities, etc. It would **very** proper that it be done in a way that people will want to take it as a **memento** and to grace their book area or as a gift, etc.”

TO ENLARGE THE STORY SECTION

From a letter to the editors of *Bitaon Chabad*: “The story section

“I have pointed out and asked and pleaded that before publishing something that pertains to the honor of Chabad, they should find someone to proofread it properly; otherwise, they should wait until a person like this is found. Obviously, the proofreader must understand (at least superficially) what he is editing.”

should take up more space, and the reasons are obvious.” (Mikdash Melech p. 278)

TO PERMIT COPYING BUT ON CONDITION

“Regarding the request of Rabbi_____ about copying some articles and stories from the *Shmuzen* etc. Rely on your understanding to decide locally and if you see fit to allow it...then surely you will require from them an official letter in which they will commit that on every article and story it must say that it’s with permission from the publisher and that the copyright is exclusively that of the publisher.” (From a letter to R’ B. Gorodetzky, Igros Kodesh vol. 7, p. 343)

REGARDS FROM 770

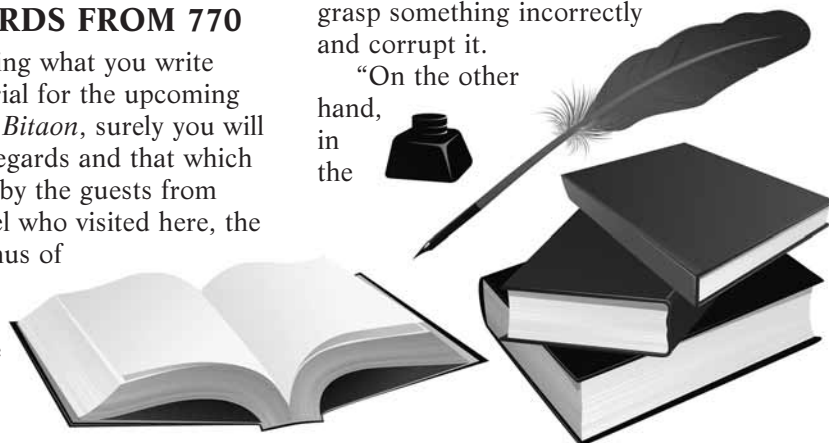
“Regarding what you write about material for the upcoming issue of the *Bitaon*, surely you will utilize the regards and that which was related by the guests from Eretz Yisroel who visited here, the national Kinus of N’shei U’Bnos Chabad, the Yud-Tes Kislev

farbrengen, etc. as understood from the ruling of Chazal that it is a mitzva to publicize those who do a mitzva, that the simple reason is that by doing so you have ‘the jealousy of scribes increases wisdom.’” (From a letter to Rabbi Avrohom Chanoch Glitzenstein, Igros Kodesh vol. 12, p. 95)

ABOUT WRITING SUPERFICIALLY

“I have already said, based on one of the principles of Chassidus that there is no bad in the world without good, there is some value to the superficiality which is characteristic of many readers of newspapers. True, this is a very bad trait, since superficiality has an aspect that is even worse than lack of knowledge since you oftentimes grasp something incorrectly and corrupt it.

“On the other hand, in the



present situation a great benefit lies within it since due to our many sins, most of what is written in newspapers and other printed matter would be better if they were not printed and publicized; The loss of not publishing there is great and the benefit is dubious. Yet, superficiality helps in reducing the damage and loss and in most cases the reader only relates to it as sensationalism, especially in this case, and the nature of people is that the next day they look for another sensation, and the old gives way to the new.”

QUOTING FROM NON-KOSHER SOURCES

“In reading your books I saw, to my dismay, that he quotes M. Duber, and apparently with feelings of admiration. Surely his history and views are known to you, and since you have acquired a reputation and people take your view into consideration, this can serve as a sort of hechsher etc. when he does not deserve this at all.” (Heichal Menachem, vol. 1, p. 97)

ABOUT THOUGHT PIECES

In general, the Rebbe greatly encouraged that thought pieces be written in all sorts of newspapers. In a letter to Rabbi Avrohom Chanoch Glitzenstein in 5712, the Rebbe wrote in the margin, “In response to your letter, it is worth exerting effort to print articles in **all** the suitable newspapers.” (Heichal Menachem, vol. 2, p. 185)

The following are some instructions that the Rebbe wrote to the editorial board of *Bitaon Chabad* about how to present thought pieces (from a letter printed in Mikdash Melech, p. 268):

1) Have a variety of topics. 2)

You need to read the article we are speaking of another time, but as though you are merely the reader and not the writer. Guess what the conclusion of the reader will be and see if there is anything to correct... The primary job of the editorial board is to put themselves in the reader's place and assess how he will react to what is printed.

Don't write deep articles that pertain only to intellectuals and researchers. 3) Don't write long articles, even easy ones, because the reader will first look at the length of the article and won't even start reading it. 4) If the article must be lengthy, you can write it in installments. 5) You have to write deep things, too, but do so in a way that is understandable to all. 6) Increase the story section. 7) Don't use the phrase, “Machsheves Yisroel” (Jewish Thought) since others use this expression in an undesirable way.

READ IT AGAIN

“Since Hashem has granted you that you are a successful writer, meaning that you have found the way to affect your readers, I think you need to read the article we are speaking of another time, but as though you are merely the reader **and not the writer**. Guess what the conclusion of the reader will be and see if there is anything to correct, and how to go about it, if the conclusion (of the reader) requires correction. And perhaps you ought to include someone objective without any prior opinion, in order to get a completely objective reaction.” (Mikdash Melech, p. 258)

“If your intention is that the *Bitaon* have a wide readership and not be limited to a very small group of people, take into consideration that at least most of the articles should be suited to the nature of at least most of the readers in content, style, and length.” (from a letter to the editors of *Bitaon Chabad*, Mikdash Melech p. 268)

“Practically speaking – as I wrote before, the primary job of the editorial board is to put themselves in the reader's place and assess how he will react to what is printed.” (Heichal Menachem, vol. 1, p. 88)

DECIDE WHO YOU ARE WRITING FOR

“There needs to be a decision about who your intended audience is and that will determine the specifics of the content. (Beis Moshiach issue 119)

DON'T PUBLICIZE EVERYTHING

“Although in general it is correct, still – some details were put in that even though it is possible that everyone knows that people conduct themselves this way, you don't need to announce it” (cited in Beis Moshiach issue 119).

THE REBBE, OUR FATHER

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

“When I was a boy I was very poor, and I’m ashamed to admit that I would break into houses and cars and rob them. The second time that I was caught, I was sentenced to two years in jail. I was feeling very down and just then a Chabad rabbi appeared...”

Shluchim attribute their success to the Rebbe. It’s not a new innovation that we call our Rebbeim by the title “fathers” - it’s an old Chassidic practice. There’s even a Chassidic song in Ukrainian that expresses this Chassidic feeling – *Chotsh mi chudi, chotsh mi chudi, nashi batki dobri* (Although we are not that successful, our fathers are superior, with “fathers” referring to our Rebbeim). Thanks to this connection with our “fathers,” we can rejoice and be successful in shlichus.

I have heard many knowledgeable and “feeling” Chassidim repeatedly stress their love for the Rebbe at every opportunity, referring to the Rebbe as Rabbeinu, Malkeinu, Tatte, etc. This relationship is mutual. The Rebbe calls the

shluchim his children and we shluchim make every effort to deserve this title and to merit the giluyim and kochos that our father, the meshaleiach gives us.

This week, I will tell you some stories about kochos that the Rebbe, our father gives the shluchim, his children and about the fatherly relationship that the Rebbe has with every Jew.

THANKS TO ONE MEETING IN PRISON

A shlucha who participated in a Kinus HaShluchim here in Israel told me the following. She occasionally uses a taxi service near her house. On one of her trips, the owner of the taxi stand drove. Along the way, she noticed that he was about to take a drink of water and she reminded him to

say a bracha. He told her that he didn’t need a reminder, and he took a yarmulke out of his pocket and said the bracha out loud. Then he told her why he is always careful to say a bracha before he eats.

“When I was a boy I was very poor, and I’m ashamed to admit that I would break into houses and cars and rob them. The second time that I was caught, I was sentenced to two years in jail. I was feeling very down and just then a Chabad rabbi appeared.

“He told me he is a shliach of the Rebbe and he suggested that I put on t’fillin. I told him I was not in the mood. He didn’t get angry. He just said, ‘If it is hard for you to put t’fillin on now, there is something easy you can do. Whenever you eat and drink, say a bracha first.’ I agreed to that and we parted.

“From then on, my life changed. I committed to saying a bracha before I ate and as my mood improved, so did my circumstances. I was released earlier than expected. I changed my life and now, boruch Hashem, I own this taxi business with dozens of taxis. And to this day, I never forget to say a bracha before I eat or drink.”

A MEETING WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE

Rabbi Dotan Korati is the director of a Chabad house at the largest college in Israel, a school for administration in Rishon L’Tziyon. R’ Dotan came a long way these past four years, from a Shomer HaTzair (virulently anti-religious) kibbutz via a Chabad house in India, the Chabad house in Beit Shaan, yeshivas Daas in Rechovot, to working fulltime in spreading the wellsprings at this

college.

R' Dotan, who did all his learning in yeshiva after his wedding, caught on quickly. While studying in yeshiva with Rabbi Yitzchok Arad, he began working with shliach, Rabbi Ariel Goren. At the college there was a small room in the main building which R' Dotan turned into a shul. He announced that there was a shul and that everybody was invited for t'fillos, farbrengens, and shiurim.

The room quickly became too small to hold all the attendees and the programs spread out to other rooms and lecture halls. R' Arad was invited to give classes at the college and the students flocked to shiurim, t'fillos, and farbrengens.

Apparently he was doing too well, because one of the lecturers suddenly realized that an "illegal settlement" had formed under his very nose, including brainwashing, chazara b't'shuva, and other "crimes." His complaint reached the president of the college's office and R' Dotan was called for a talk with the vice president. He had tried for a year and a half to arrange an appointment with the vice president but the latter was always busy.

At this meeting, the vice president asked what his programming was about, who participated, etc. At the end of the meeting he said, "You have my approval to continue your work. I get positive feedback about you and your activities. May it be with success."

R' Dotan told his mekuravim that 11 Teves is the "Didan Natzach" of Chabad at the college. Like the big "Didan Natzach with the s'farim," the victory is being appealed... Now the president himself is involved.

He will also meet with R' Dotan and with Hashem's help there will be another date to celebrate and strengthen the connection to our father, our shepherd.

WITH THE ADVICE OF A DOCTOR-FRIEND

Nearly everyone in Beit Shaan knows Mr. Chaim Batito. He came from Morocco at the age of 10 and has been living in Beit Shaan for fifty years. He worked for years in education and was highly praised by his students and their parents. Then he worked for a bank, where they also recognized his good qualities. It did not take long before he was promoted to the position of manager of the bank branch in Beit Shaan.

At the same time, Mr. Batito worked on behalf of the community. He founded the main shul in the Bneh Beischa neighborhood. It started in a bomb shelter, but later he got sufficient donations and money from the city to build a beautiful building over the shelter where t'fillos, community events, memorials, bar mitzvas etc. are held. He is the chazan and gabbai and says the divrei Torah when a speech is called for. He provides guidance and is a real leader.

26 years ago, his wife gave birth to their third son, who they named Itamar. When Itamar was three and a half, the doctors discovered a problem with his heart. The resulting medical problems worsened with time until the doctors feared that if left untreated, his life would be in danger. Mr. Batito and his wife had to spend days at the hospital until finally, the doctors advised that the child undergo a heart operation that would enable them to correct the problem.

The couple wavered for a few days and could not decide what to do. They thought it might be better to wait a few years, until the child got bigger and stronger. Perhaps they should consult with other doctors. Mr. Batito then remembered that in his youth he had learned in the Chabad school in Morocco.

"Why don't I ask the advice of the Rebbe of Chabad?"

He flew to New York and stood on line for dollars. Finally, he was facing the Rebbe. He briefly told the Rebbe about his son and asked for the Rebbe's bracha. The Rebbe instructed him to do as a doctor-friend advised.

Mr. Batito returned to Israel but he did not have any doctor friends. Days passed and their indecision was a constant source of worry. He knew a certain doctor but that doctor had no expertise in the heart and heart operations. He couldn't help.

One day, he was sitting in his office at the bank, busy with paperwork, when someone entered his office and announced, "I came from America and I need a loan of a million shekels."

Mr. Batito looked up to see who the jokester was and saw an old friend from twenty years before. They had a friendly conversation about the past and present, about their families, their children, and where they lived. Then Mr. Batito asked him what brought him to the bank that day. The man answered, "I am a cardiologist." Mr. Batito's heart skipped a beat. "Really?" he exclaimed.

The doctor did not understand why his friend was so astounded until he explained that for days he had been seeking a doctor-friend whose expertise was the heart. "You are a friend and a doctor and your expertise is the heart!"



R' Dotan working at the college

He told him the whole story, including the Rebbe's advice, and asked his doctor-friend whether he would examine his son. His doctor-friend was happy to help out and he looked at all the medical records and gave his opinion about how and where to do the operation.

The operation was successful and the child's parents were relaxed throughout. Itamar grew up in good health.

MIRA'LE, LIGHT SHABBOS CANDLES!

R' Motti Gal, shliach in Ramat Gan, relates:

"Thirty years ago, I met a diamond merchant at the exchange in Ramat Gan. One day, he came to me all shaken up because of a sting perpetrated by diamond merchants, professional swindlers, who left him in debt without any way to pay. The swindlers disappeared without a trace and it seemed a lost cause.

"I suggested that he go to New York and ask the Rebbe for a bracha. He followed my advice and flew to America, where he stood on line for 'dollars.' He received the Rebbe's bracha for

'good news.' Within a few days he managed to get on their trail and he got all his money back. This incident served to cement our friendship, which leads us to the second part of the story.

"This diamond merchant got married and I was the officiating rabbi. He gave out mashke at the wedding which he had received from the Rebbe on that visit.

"When he turned 60 he invited dozens of friends to a modest party in the yard of his home. I was there too and I said some divrei Torah. Then he told the crowd about the bracha and miracle that he had merited from the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"To the shock of everyone present, one of the guys got up and said, 'That's nonsense to say that the Rebbe can disclose where swindlers are hidden.

"There was a moment of utter silence. How dare he disparage his host's story?! Then another friend, also around 60, got up and he said, 'I'd like to tell you who the Rebbe from Lubavitch is. I was a shliach for the Jewish Agency and I visited many countries in the course of my work. I got to tour the US for a few days; we were four men and

two women. We decided to combine our tour with a visit to the Rebbe. We stood on line for dollars, the men and women separate.

"When the two women passed by the Rebbe, there were suddenly calls for Hatzalah. One of the women had fainted right after receiving a dollar from the Rebbe. The men from Hatzalah soon revived her and we returned to the hotel before going back to Israel.

"In a free moment I went over to her and asked what had happened at the Rebbe that caused her to faint. [Ed. This is the story that was recounted in the article in issue 721 entitled "Menora with a Hechsher." In that article, the bachur repeated this story on Mivtza Chanuka to a woman from a religious home, who had assimilated.] She told me in a trembling voice, 'I am a Holocaust survivor. With my own eyes I saw how they took my parents and forced them on to the train that took them to a place from which they never returned. My mother's final words to me were screamed as the train began to move. She said, 'Mirale, light Shabbos candles!' These words are my final memory of my mother.

"I was standing facing the Rebbe and the Rebbe gave me a dollar and said, 'Mirale, light Shabbos candles!' I fainted."

"The man from the Jewish Agency finished his story and all present were swept up in the excitement of the Rebbe's open ruach ha'kodesh."

We, dear children of the Rebbe, should always remember that our father is still alive. When we reciprocate to the Rebbe our love and devotion, the Rebbe will bless us with success in shlichus.

CHASSIDISHE CHINUCH IN SOVIET RUSSIA

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

*The war on Jewish chinuch was waged on two fronts: “turn away from evil” and “do good.” The former was accomplished by avoiding, where possible, registering children in communist schools or, when this was not an option, fighting so that they did not go on Shabbos and Yom Tov. The latter front, of course, meant providing them with a proper chinuch. * The following installment is about the war on both these fronts as related by Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman.*

When the average person thinks of his past, he has the fewest memories of his early childhood. This is not the case, though, with those who were children in Soviet

Russia. Our parents’ uncompromising battle to provide us with an authentic chinuch and prevent us from being exposed to the heretical communist education made

a deep impression on us as children which affects us till this day.

In order to draw the reader into the atmosphere of my childhood years, I will begin with some historical background:

After the Communist Revolution in 1917, the communist regime began a war to exterminate religion. Although according to law there was freedom of religion, in actual fact, anyone who failed to follow the communist program was in serious trouble. In the 1930’s, when the communist war on its opponents was at its height, tens of thousands of people were shot to death in the KGB cellars and hundreds of thousands of people were exiled to labor camps in the wilderness of Siberia at the North Pole.

This was the fate that awaited anyone who dared to educate his children in the spirit of Judaism. For the crime of poisoning his children with religion, the “opiate of the masses,” he was marked as an enemy of the state. Since Mother Russia was concerned for the welfare of her citizens, the law stated that his right to educate his children was rescinded and the children were sent to special institutions where they were “reeducated.”

The words of the prophet, “your wreckers and destroyers will emerge from you,” were fulfilled in communist Russia. The Yevsektzia (short for Jewish section), a special division of the KGB, led the war against the Jewish religion. It was run by Jews who had left Judaism and the biggest tzaros came from them. As we know from the writings of the Rebbe Rayatz, his arrest was a result of the work of the Yevsektzia and they were the ones who led the war against him.

The Jewish schools and yeshivos were the Yevsektzia’s first target. Within a short time, all religious schools were closed. Public schools were opened and their curriculum was based on Marxist-Leninist



From right to left:
Hillel Zaltzman, Berel Zaltzman, Eli Mishulovin

ideology which taught utterly heretical beliefs regarding a Creator of the world. Parents were legally obligated to register their children in these schools.

The Yevsektzia did not stop with that. To ensure that the children would be completely cut off from a life of Torah and mitzvos and t'filla with a minyan, they closed all shuls. Someone who organized a minyan would be accused of disturbing the peace. In many towns not one active shul remained, while in the big cities the government allowed one shul so they could show the world that in Russia there was freedom of religion. For example, before the Revolution there were 94 shuls in Minsk. After the persecutions by the communists and Nazis all that remained was one, small, secret minyan.

In order to receive government approval, these few remaining shuls had to have a committee of twenty people, most of whom were loyal to the secret police (the name of the secret police was changed several times over the years. Anash called

them, "*di osiyos*" - the letters, or "*di drai osiyos*" - the three letters (GPU, KGB). The Chassidim referred to the police as "*a knepl*" - a button, for the buttons on their uniforms).

The members of the committee had to report to the secret police about who davened there and most importantly, make sure that parents did not bring any children under the age of 18. Whoever brought their children to shul was accused of poisoning his children with anti-communist values. This endangered the shul because it was an excuse for the authorities to shut it down.

Naturally, most people who davened in the official shuls were elderly retirees, for they had nothing to lose. Working people, though, were afraid to go to shul since their names would be put on the black list and they were liable to lose their jobs.

You can understand how difficult it was to give children a Jewish education without a yeshiva, without a minyan, and worst of all - having to send them to public school where

heresy was instilled in every possible way.

Each parent had the burden of chinuch on his shoulders. If you wanted your child to have a Jewish education, you had to sit down and teach them or hire someone to do so, with mesirus nefesh, a few times a week. In those days, parents felt the importance of the Rebbe Rashab's instruction that just as the mitzva of t'fillin every day is a Biblical mitzva for every man, so too it is obligatory for every Jew to dedicate half an hour of thought a day to the chinuch of his children.

Lubavitchers, who were educated to mesirus nefesh by the Rebbe Rayatz, aroused the "essence of the soul" and with unusual strength, bravely opposed the heresy and managed to give their children a kosher education despite everything. Some of them learned at home and while others organized secret yeshivos. Those G-d fearing people who were not Lubavitchers brought their children to the secret Chabad yeshivos, knowing that this would enable them to remain Jews.

FIRST MISSION: TO HIDE THE CHILDREN FROM THE NEIGHBORS

The war for Jewish chinuch was waged on two fronts: *sur mei'ra* and *asei tov*. The former was accomplished by avoiding, where possible, registering children in communist schools or, when this was not an option, fighting so that they did not go on Shabbos and Yom Tov. At the same time, they had to give their children an authentic Jewish education. I will tell you about these two fronts in my childhood.

I was born in Charkov but when I was three and a half the Nazis approached Charkov and, like hundreds of Anash, we fled for Samarkand in Central Asia.

Shortly after we arrived in Samarkand, my older brother and sister became old enough for school, and my parents began their many-year battle for the chinuch of their children. It was terrible. In addition to the heresy in the schools, going to school entailed chilul Shabbos and Yom Tov, co-education and associating with goyim. All this was poison for young children and my father did all he could to prevent us from attending public school. Most of the burden, tension and fear fell on the young women whose husbands went to work. Every knock at the door caused their hearts to skip a beat.

The first stage in the battle was to ensure that the neighbors would not know that there were school-aged children in the house. Why did the children have to be hidden from the neighbors? Because, as I mentioned earlier, the government had set up a centralized educational system, and in order to promote their ideology and reach all children, every principal had to register all the children in his district. The principals gave the teachers the task of going from house to house in

For the crime of poisoning his children with religion, he was marked as an enemy of the state. Since Mother Russia was concerned for the welfare of her citizens, the law stated that his right to educate his children was rescinded...



Rabbi Avrohom Zaltzman, father of R' Hillel, listening to a broadcast of the Rebbe

their neighborhood and registering all the children of school-age. The teachers would go from courtyard to courtyard and innocently ask the neighbors whether there were any school-aged children. When the neighbors knew of children of the right age, they would say so.

Registration for school generally took place in the summer, before the following school year began. When registration was over, Jewish parents and children alike would breathe a sigh of relief. Of course we couldn't be seen on the street because if the teachers would catch wind of school-aged children whose parents refused to register them, this information would immediately be reported to the principal.

According to law, the principal had to go to the parents' home and

find out why their children did not attend school. If the parents refused to register their children, it was a snowball that continued to roll until it reached the offices of the KGB, with all the ensuing ramifications.

Very few succeeded in not sending their children to school at all. Many parents could not maintain the fight, since they knew that if the rope was stretched too taut their children could be forcibly removed and sent for "reeducation" in government orphanages. A child who was educated in this way was completely cut off from his parents and everything Jewish. He did not stand the slightest chance of retaining his Judaism.

Many Chassidim sacrificed their daughters and sent them to public school to appease the authorities. Of course they did not abandon their daughters to their spiritual fate but spent hours at home on their Jewish education to minimize the damage caused to their souls in school. For their sons, however, the danger was greater so every effort was made to keep them out of the public school system and in a framework of proper chinuch.

It's important to note that in the early years after the Revolution, the communists made great efforts to uproot belief from the hearts of the children. The teachers in public school dedicated lessons to this and at every opportunity they inserted their heretical ideas. In those years, Chassidim were *moser nefesh* not to send their children to public school.



R' Yitzchok and R' Michael Mishulovin



R' Mordechai Goldschmidt (right) and R' Yaakov Lerner (left)

However, when I was a child, thirty years after the Revolution, the communists felt they had already vanquished the believers and they didn't put as much effort into the brainwashing. The main problems with attending public school were fraternizing with goyim and chilul Shabbos. Chassidim did all they could to hide their children but after it was discovered that they had school-aged children and they had to send them to school or face losing them, many Chassidim opted to send their children and to try as much as possible to avoid chilul Shabbos.

My father tried to hide us and was successful for some years. But after it became impossible to hide all the children from the neighbors, he decided to send my sister to school to lessen the pressure on the boys. Thanks to my sister going to school, my father managed to hide my older brother until he was past school age and the danger dissipated.

FAUX PAS IN MUSIC CLASS

My father also managed to hide me for more than two years after I became school-aged. But when I was nine the neighbors learned of my

existence and passed this information on to the principal of the local school. My father began receiving threats from the principal that if he did not send me to school, his rights as a parent would be lost, since he was preventing his child from receiving a communist education. There was no choice and I had to be registered for public school.

My father tried to minimize the damage and registered me in a school far from home in a neighborhood of goyim, in the hopes that the teachers and staff would not be familiar with Jewish law and wouldn't notice that I was missing school on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

Because of my advanced age, I was registered immediately for second grade. My father spoke to the teacher (Nina Semyanova was her name) and after giving her a nice gift he explained to her that until now I hadn't attended school because I was a weak child and the doctors said I should rest. For this reason, I had to rest two days a week and so in addition to Sundays, when we had off, I would not be attending school on Saturdays either. The teacher, who was unaware of the sanctity of Shabbos in the Jewish religion, naively

accepted his explanation.

As a child, I loved art, drawing and music. I remember that when they saw my pictures in art class they were very enthusiastic and they called me an artist. However, I preferred keeping my talents to myself rather than sharing them with my classmates. I had implanted within myself a deep hatred for the goyishe holidays, customs, and way of life.

In music class the songs praised Mother Russia, Father Stalin and the communist party. Although I knew how to sing well, I kept quiet. The teacher once asked me, "Zaltzman, how come you never sing?" Without thinking I blurted out, "I don't like your songs."

In the second that followed my thoughtless response I realized this comment of mine had put me in danger. The teacher looked at me in amazement and asked, "What do you mean by 'your songs?' Which songs are 'ours' and which songs are 'yours?'" Go over to the blackboard and sing one of your songs."

With Hashem's help I managed to extricate myself from the predicament I had brought upon myself. We shared a courtyard with the landlord's son, a Jewish student by the name of Pinchas who loved

listening to records of Azerbaijani Rashid Baibutov. He would play his music loudly so I came to know many of the songs.

I walked up to the blackboard and began to sing one of his songs. The teacher enjoyed it so much that either she completely forgot my faux pas or she believed that I was referring to Azerbaijani music.

In those days, due to the shortage of classrooms, lessons took place in shifts, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The music class took place in the final hour of the morning session and while I sang, the teachers of the afternoon session arrived and my teacher invited them to her classroom. She took pride in her student who sang so nicely.

Once they discovered my singing ability they began asking me to perform on all sorts of holidays, such as the first of May, international workers' day, and the seventh of November, the day of the Communist Revolution. Each time I was asked, a strong battle was waged within me. On the one hand, I wanted to perform to be able to demonstrate my talent and to prove to them that I could perform and sing better than them. On the other hand, I had a deep-seated hatred for Soviet holidays. It was my envy versus my hatred.

In the end, I never performed for their celebrations and I didn't even attend them. When I think about it today I realize how powerful the chinuch my parents gave me was. How much courage an 11 year old needed not to be drawn after his gentle classmates and to hold strong for such a long time!

TZITZIS AND A RED TIE

Remaining observant while attending communist school demanded much creativity on my part in order to hide what I was doing. For example, when I would

go to school on Monday, after a two day absence, I was afraid that they would laugh at me for being absent. I tried to arrive earlier and to walk around near the school so my classmates would see me and get used to my presence.

I did not remove the Uzbeki yarmulke that I wore when I entered the classroom. However, sometimes the teacher would tell me to remove it. I did not try to defy her so as not to cause any trouble, but I would put my hand on my head so as not to remain bareheaded.

Occasionally there were government medical exams at school for vaccinations, etc. They gave the injection in the arm or shoulder and when I saw the nurse coming I was terrified. How would I hide my tzitzis? If I took it off, the entire class would see it and who knows what would happen.

At the last minute, before the nurse got up to me, I lifted my shirt and hid the tzitzis under it. The nurse, who was a Bucharian Jew, noticed the tzitzis and whispered to me in Russian, "You are a good and clever boy."

After that incident I was afraid to wear tzitzis at school. From then on I would wear tzitzis until I got to school and before I entered the classroom I would go to the bathroom, take it off, and hide it in my briefcase. At the end of the day, before I left school, I went to the bathroom again and put the tzitzis back on.

Another thing I put on in the bathroom was a red tie. In those days, every child had to register for Pioneers, the communist youth group. Every Pioneer received a red tie which he wore to school. Since I was automatically registered for the Pioneers, I got a tie. Every morning I went into the bathroom, removed my tzitzis and put on, l'havdil, the red tie. In the afternoon I took off the tie and put on the tzitzis.

CALLED TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

At the beginning of my second year in public school, my father was also able to arrange things with the third grade teacher so she turned a blind eye to my regular Shabbos absences. He hoped to leave me in third grade for another year since in fourth grade, there were more teachers for additional subjects and my father was afraid that he wouldn't be able to arrange things with all of them.

My father said that I was a weak child and would have a hard time with the pressure of fourth grade so he requested that I stay in third grade. I remember that a Lubavitcher heard of my father's efforts to keep me in third grade and he reacted with surprise: "Everybody wants his child to be skipped a grade while R' Avrohom is trying to keep his son back!"

However, at the end of the year my secret was discovered. The principal found out that my regular absences were connected with the Jewish religion. I arrived at school on Monday early, as usual, and when I entered the classroom I noticed that the teacher hadn't showed up yet. A few minute later I was told to go immediately to the principal's office.

I fearfully made my way to the office and was confronted by not only the principal, but the assistant principal and teacher as well (my teacher had direct responsibility, by law, for her students). The three of them gazed at me and the principal asked in a firm voice, "Tell us, Zaltzman, why don't you attend school on Saturday and who educated you this way?"

I said I was weak and the doctor said I should rest two days a week. Although I was a young boy I knew the game I was supposed to play and that I had to insist that my absences had nothing to do with the religious

education I received at home. The principal, and the assistant principal and my teacher yelled at me and berated me for my fanaticism. They finally told me that my father had to come to the school. They said that if I had to rest two days a week, I could pick another day of the week, not Saturday.

When my father appeared at school they warned him that if he prevented his son from going to school on Shabbos for religious reasons he would be in trouble. They threatened that his parental rights would be rescinded and I would be reeducated in a state school with a dormitory. My father denied responsibility for my absences on Shabbos and I also maintained that it was only because of my health.

After the meeting with the principal, my father began to look for another school so I wouldn't have to attend this school on Shabbos. In the meantime, until he was able to register me elsewhere, my father asked me to hide my briefcase in school on Friday and to go to school on Shabbos without it. He would speak to the teacher about not making me write and be mechalel Shabbos.

But I was nervous that I would be compelled to write and I refused to go to school. My father, who was afraid that they would carry out their threat, pleaded with me, "You are not yet bar mitzva and if you don't go on Shabbos, it poses a big danger for all of us because they can arrest me and send you to a state orphanage where they will certainly force you to write on Shabbos."

On Shabbos morning I got up early and, while my father and the family were still sleeping, I quietly left the house and went to my friend Michael Mishulovin.

My father found a new school for me in the non-Jewish section of the city, more than a half hour walk from the Jewish neighborhood. They hadn't heard about Shabbos over



**Chassidishe children in Samarkand. From left to right on top: Itche Mishulovin, Sholom Ber Garelik, Bentzion Goldschmidt
Bottom: Berel Vilenkin, Luzik Vilenkin, Mordechai Garelik**

there and I would be able to be absent without arousing suspicion. My father explained to the principals of the school I was in that he wanted to transfer me to a different school because my aunt lived there and she would care for me.

The administration, which wasn't interested in problems with a child who observed religious laws, was happy to get rid of me and quickly arranged the transfer of documents to the new school.

The great distance to the new school was very hard for me. In those days there was no transportation to school and I had to walk a half an hour each way. During the winter I had to leave early in the morning while it was still dark outside and I was very afraid. But I was happy to be able to keep Shabbos.

After some months went by and the new school had begun asking me why I didn't show up on Shabbos, my father decided to try the opposite tactic – to transfer me to a school close to home where the staff was Jewish, and to ask them to allow me

not to show up on Shabbos.

According to the law, when a student is transferring to another school, the principal has to transfer all his papers to the new school, thus transferring the responsibility of the child. When my father went to my previous school and said he was switching me to a new school, he suggested that they avoid the bother of transferring the documents and that he would take care of it. The principal, who was lax in doing his job, agreed to his idea and gave my father the papers.

My father "forgot" to go immediately to the new school where he planned on registering me. Two weeks went by and he saw that nobody took an interest in me, so he decided to wait a bit longer and see what would happen. When another few weeks went by he realized that nobody had information about where I was supposed to be going to school and nobody cared.

So I remained at home and my tribulations with communist schools were over.

[To be continued.]

IT'S ALL ABOUT LIGHT

By Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd

Of all the special dates on the Jewish calendar, there's only one that celebrates light and of course, that's Chanuka. Not that we are short on themes for this holiday: There's the miraculous military victory compared to which the Six-Day-War was blasé. There's the absolute commitment and epic heroism of the Maccabees that makes the raid at Entebbe look routine. There was even the archetypal culture clash between Athens and Jerusalem that has reverberated throughout Jewish history down to this very day.

But the main observance of Chanuka wasn't hooked on any of that. It's all about light.

The lights of Chanuka commemorate the miracle of oil, and the details are instructive too. The eight days reflect unity, infinity and the supernatural. Think seven and you will see why. The number seven characterizes nature. For instance, in space, we have six directions (left, right, back, front, up and down) around any central point. In time too, there are seven days of the weekly cycle. In music, the seven notes of the scale.

Eight indicates unity in music, for example, by completing the scale then returning to the same note but at a higher level. The same applies to time. After a seven day cycle we're back to the same day we started with.

Eight expresses infinity by showing we don't stop at one series but cycle over and over again. Eight starts the new cycle of weeks, of octaves, of oscillations. And by virtue of the simple fact that eight is more than seven (nature), it implies the miraculous, the supernatural.

We could have marked those eight days with eight jugs of oil, eight latkes or eight psalms for that matter. Why specifically lights? Of course it's because the oil was used for lighting the menorah, but still we can learn some lessons from light itself.

Our sages remark that although the Chanuka lights are only a rabbinic mitzva, its date, the 25th of Kislev, is alluded by the fact that the 25th word of the Torah is "Or" - light. The Hebrew word "Or" too has its inner meaning. It's numerical value is 207, which spells "Raz," or "secret." Not only does light reveal whatever is secreted away in the darkness, but light itself has its mysterious aspects, as any physicist will tell you.

For example, no one would doubt that light is physical, yet it is very elusive. Try holding it in your hands or weighing it on a scale. Of course we can't smell it, taste it or hear it, but the funny thing is, it's hard to even see it. Light reveals what is there but doesn't reveal itself. When we enter a lit room are we looking at light or at a room lit

up? Even if I trace it to its source, is it light that I see, or a light bulb, or the sun?

Light is like the divine energy that fills the world, it's apparent but not visible. Or like the light of the soul - "*ki ner Hashem nishmas adam*" - the soul of man is the candle of Hashem. I, for one, have never seen a soul. But like anyone else, I can tell the difference between a body that has one and one that doesn't.

And this brings us to another dimension of Chanuka - the battle against Hellenism was a battle for the soul, including the soul of man - the neshama; the soul of the universe - G-d; and the soul of our activities - mitzvah - "*ki ner mitzvah v'Torah or*" - a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light.

The Hellenists fought against the idea of mitzvah, bringing heaven down to earth, manifesting G-dliness in the physical world. The remedy was to go flat out the other way, to protect and defend exactly this, the holiness of the deed, of the mitzvah, and that's why we celebrate with a mitzvah candle. It's the victory of light over darkness.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe refers to the deeds of Moshiach as his light. His presence in the world, on the other hand, is comparable to air - it's everywhere although you can't see it. Breathing the air of Moshiach is wonderful, inspiring in every sense of the word, but without his light, it's not good enough.

One of his principal deeds will be the Chanukas HaBayis, rededication of the Mikdash in Yerushalayim and when that happens, we will see him playing the harp of eight strings in a place above space, a time out of time, in the radiance of a divine presence that will shine forever.

What a happy Chanuka that will be!

MOSHIACH: WHAT WE BELIEVE



By Rabbi Gershon Avtzon

It is not only that there are many passages in the Torah that speak about Moshiach, rather EVERY passage in Torah speaks about Moshiach. The differences in the passages are only whether they speak openly about Moshiach, or whether one has to look in the commentaries and find the connection.

PART 1 OF 20

There is a well known saying, “75% of known facts are either not known or not facts.” This is especially true of belief in Moshiach (Messiah) and the resurrection. Most of us approach the subject with preconceived notions which lead us to conclusions that are not based on Torah tradition. In addition, there are many people who are ashamed to ask basic questions and thus their belief can only be superficial.

For this reason, I have taken it upon myself to start this series

that will deal with the basic questions on the belief in a Moshiach and messianic era, from a completely Torah-based perspective. In addition, I intend to quote the sources, so that the reader can reference to the original source and study it at his/her own pace. I welcome all questions and suggestions.

We will begin with the most basic question:

IS THE MESSIAH A JEWISH CONCEPT?

For many people, the very mention of Moshiach,

resurrection, or Moshiach appearing after disappearing for awhile, is an automatic turnoff. They say that it sounds too similar to Christianity.

We therefore have to start with a disclaimer. It is not our fault that there are similar imitations to our name brand. Being that Christianity was created by Jews - and to recruit Jews - it should not be shocking that they have adopted some of our basic beliefs. For one to discount an idea as a “Christian, non-Jewish concept” without checking Jewish sources, is like giving credit to a new company, without verifying that they didn’t steal the patents from an older company.

[To put things into perspective: The Rambam (Maimonides) writes (Hilchos Melachim, chapter 12) that the reason the Hashem allowed the idea of a “Christian Messiah” in the first place, is so that the idea of redemption should not be a foreign idea in this world. When the true Jewish redeemer will come, the nations of the world will say, “Right idea, wrong man”.]

There is a well known saying that “75% of known facts are either not known or not facts.” This is especially true of belief in Moshiach and the Resurrection of the Dead.

What does Judaism have to say about “Moshiach”?

“The entire world was created for the era of Moshiach,” asserts the Talmud. (Sanhedrin 98a) This ultimate goal preceded Creation. On the verse in B’Reishis, (Chapter 1 verse 2) “Before the creation, the spirit of Hashem was hovering over the water,” the Baal HaTurim and other commentaries explain that this is referring to the spirit of Moshiach.

When the Rambam (in his commentary for Mishnayos Sanhedrin, Perek Cheilek) enumerates the 13 principles of Jewish faith, he includes - number 12 and 13 - the Belief in Moshiach and the resurrection.

In his Hilchos Melachim, (chapter 11) the Rambam writes: “One who does not believe in Moshiach, or await his arrival, is a denier of the books of prophets and the five books of Moshe, for they are full of references about Moshiach.”

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains the above passage of the Rambam in a revolutionary way (Sicha Acharei 5751): It is not only that there are many passages in the Torah that speak about Moshiach, rather EVERY passage in Torah speaks about Moshiach. The differences in the passages are only whether they speak openly about Moshiach, or whether one has to look in the commentaries and find the connection.

One Chassid, Rabbi Dubov of

NJ, took it upon himself to prove the above. He has printed over 30 books (Yalkut Moshiach U’Geula Al HaTorah, Kehot publications) showing how literally every verse is connected with Moshiach.

Our sages say, (Zohar, Part 2, page 161) “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world.” If every verse in the Torah is connected with Moshiach, then every part of creation must be connected with Moshiach!

From the above, we can see clearly that the belief in Moshiach is a central Jewish belief.

PART 2 OF 20

Having just established that the concept of believing in Moshiach is not only a Jewish thing, but a central tenet in Judaism, we will now address the question of WHY is it so important to believe in Moshiach, to the extent that if one does not believe in or await Moshiach, he is considered a “denier” of the Torah.

Before we continue, we must agree on a basic point. If someone claims to care about - or believe in - something, and that person knows that the presence of a certain individual will benefit his cause, he would anticipate that persons’ arrival. If he doesn’t, it shows that he really doesn’t care about the cause.

If one had to make a list of the 5 most important things in Judaism, it would probably look

as follows:

- 1) Hashem 2) Torah
- 3) Mitzvos 4) Jewish People 5) Jewish Land - Eretz Yisroel.

ALL of these are being withheld from their “full potential” during the era of Galus - Exile.

1. Hashem - The Gemara says (Megilla 29a, see Rashi Parshas Nitzavim) that when the Jewish People are in exile, Hashem is in exile with them. In the time of the Beis HaMikdash, the Sh’china (Divine Presence) within everything was revealed to all. In the time of exile, we do not see clearly the true reality of the creation.

2. Torah - Chazal say that the Torah we learn today is “nonsense” compared to the Torah that Moshiach will teach. There are so many secrets of the Torah which, due to exile, are forced to remain hidden and will only be revealed in the times of Moshiach. The Midrash (VaYikra Rabba) writes that Moshiach will reveal “A New Torah.”

3. Mitzvos - Every child knows that there are 613 Mitzvos (commandments) from Hashem. Most of those Mitzvos (i.e. sacrifices, Shmita, Yovel, etc.) are dependent on the presence of the Jewish nation in Eretz Yisroel and an existing Beis HaMikdash. Today - in exile - we can fulfill only about 250 of the 613 Mitzvos! When

Moshiach comes, we will be able to fulfill all 613 properly.

4. The Jewish People - The Jewish nation is divided into twelve, corresponding to the twelve tribes. Ten of the twelve tribes were exiled during the period of the Beis HaMikdash. They will be returned to us when Moshiach comes. In addition, all the Jewish people that have passed away, or people



that are living but do not know that they are Jewish, will return with the coming of Moshiach.

E. Eretz Yisroel - When Hashem promised Eretz Yisroel to Avraham Avinu, he promised him the land that belonged to 10 nations. When the Jews entered the land, they only conquered 7 nations. The remaining three - the lands of Keini, K'nizi, and Kadmoni - will be given when Moshiach comes.

From the above it is clear that anyone who asserts that Judaism is dear to them, must also be anticipating Moshiach. For Moshiach will make every aspect of Judaism reach its "full

potential".

The reader may ask, if believing in Moshiach is so important, why is it not mentioned in the Torah?

In fact, not only is it mentioned in the Torah, according to some commentaries, it was said by Hashem Himself!!

We all know that on Har Sinai (Mt. Sinai), Hashem gave 10 commandments. All the commandments are readily understood except one. What are we to take from the first commandment [the second commandment that says "I am Hashem..." is, on the other hand, quite clear. I guess because we

figured out what it means the first time it was commanded.], "I am Hashem your G-d..."?

The Rasag writes (in his commentary of the Mitzvos) that this is the commandment to believe in Moshiach! Just as Hashem took the Jewish people out of Egypt, we must believe that He will take us out of Exile!

I must admit that even after the above, the following point still needs clarification: True, believing in Moshiach is very important, but is it that important that it should be part of the 13 PRINCIPLES of Jewish faith?

I will try to explain that in the next article be"H.

THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

By Menachem Ziegelboim

*Autobiographies are sweeping the market, and many Chassidim have joined the trend. What motivates an elderly Chassid to write his memoirs? What purpose do they serve, and doesn't it contradict the Chassidic principle of bittul? Is it a worthwhile endeavor from a Chassidish, financial, and psychological standpoint? **
Presented for Hei Teves – Didan Natzach – Chag HaS'farim.

The verse says, "This is the book of the history of man," and some understand this verse to mean that almost every person can write a book of his life; you just have to know how to do it.

In recent years it has become much more prevalent to write memoirs. Senior Chassidim write about their youth, as well as the stories of Chassidim that they heard over the years. They also publish diaries that they kept.

Years ago, when an elderly

Chassid passed away, an article would be written about him that gave an outline of his life. Today, the newspapers write long pieces, elaborating on the Chassid's personality, his middos, his hiskashrus to the Rebbe, etc. and descendants often try to publish it in book form.

Actually, even twenty years ago there were Chassidim who wrote about their lives and published it in their lifetimes such as the pioneers R' Meir Avtzon, R'

Binyamin Gorodetzky and R' Yisroel Jacobson. R' Jacobson wrote his memoirs but they were edited and printed only about twenty years after he passed away.

Veteran writers, editors, and researchers are approached by families who want a book published about a dear family member. They want to know how much it will cost, how it's done, whether it's worthwhile, whether people will be interested, and more. Often they drop the idea as soon as they hear the answer to the first question.

THE REBBE RAYATZ ENCOURAGED IT

Chassidus always denigrated involvement with self, so it would seem that writing, and certainly publishing, one's memoirs goes against this Chassidic principle. Understandably, Chassidim only began writing their memoirs when told to do so by the Rebbe Rayatz, who urged them to write what they saw and heard.

The Rebbe Rayatz himself kept a diary as a child, and he wrote what he saw and heard in his father's court. He did so with the constant encouragement of his father and his teachers. They gave him precious time, even at the expense of his learning, to write. Thanks to his writing we have a wealth of stories of the history of Chassidus since the time preceding the revelation of the Baal Shem Tov.

When Chassidim began to leave Russia in 1946-7, the Rebbe Rayatz instructed some Chassidim to write their memoirs of the work they did in Russia, and to record the names of Anash and the talmidim who worked to spread the wellsprings in various places and times.

On 18 Teves, 5709, the Rebbe Rayatz wrote to R' Ben Zion

Shemtov:

You should correspond with our friends Anash and the T'mimim in Eretz Yisroel and other places where you can discuss this with them in writing regarding this matter, and send it all to me. I have assigned someone to arrange all the letters and information that will come in (Igros Kodesh, vol. 10, #3365).

On 24 Shevat, 5709, he wrote again:

I was very pleased by your good decision to fulfill my request to inspire my friends the talmidim and Anash to cooperate with you, and to fulfill what I have imposed upon them to write, each one, about their work in supporting Torah and the learning of Chassidus in the land of our birth. May Hashem grant them success and tell them all that I bless them materially and spiritually (ibid, #3398).

One of the people who wrote his memoirs as a result of this instruction was the Chassid, Rabbi Meir Gurkow a"h. He sent his writing to the Rebbe Rayatz, who responded thus:

The pamphlet of memoirs which you sent was received; thanks and blessing. It is fitting and proper for all the senior talmidim to write those memories which are worth remembering (ibid #3612).

In another letter, the Rebbe Rayatz wrote:

I won't deny that I often feel pained that Chabad Chassidim in every generation did not write of events and happenings which included thousands of supernatural miracles ...

Nevertheless, I greatly cherish their books and writings in which they explain what they heard, each one in his time, more than if they recounted for us the miraculous.

It seems that the Rebbe MH"M was referring to the aforementioned requests in his response to Rabbi Eliyahu Yochanan Gurary, rav of Cholon, when he asked the Rebbe for his approbation on his book *Toldos Yitzchok Isaac* about the outstanding Chassid, R' Isaac of Homil:

It is well-known that this [giving approbations] is not done. On the other hand, what the Rebbe my father-in-law said about the importance of writing memoirs and the benefit in distributing them is well known. And actual deed says much - we see this in actual fact. May you soon make a blessing over the completion, and shortly thereafter have good news to relay about the benefit that already began etc. I will mention it at the gravesite and may you give good tidings (Heichal Menachem, p. 100).

The Rebbe often urged Chassidim to write their memoirs. In a letter that the Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Perlov, author of *Likkutei Sippurim*, he added a handwritten note which said:

Obviously it is very proper to write these stories for the purpose of printing them over time - even better, with the addition of sources (who you heard it from, etc.).

In another letter, the Rebbe wrote:

About the receipt of your writing, thank you for the pleasure it gave me upon reading them and all the more so when they will all be organized.

In another letter, the Rebbe concludes:

With blessings for good news ... and also for writing (and in volume) stories and other matters of the Rebbeim and the "early Chassidim" of each one of them – so may you continue to increase, and to increase in health and joy.

This shows how the Rebbe valued the memoirs of Chassidim.

One of the important memoirs is the work of Rabbi Refael Nachman Kahn called *Shmuos V'Sippurim*. In the introduction he relates that after friends encouraged him to print his memoirs he asked the Rebbe and was told, *kedai u'kedai* (it is very worthwhile).

Afterwards, he was even spurred on in his writing by the Rebbe, with the Rebbe referring to his work by name.

Still and all, there were Chassidim who hesitated to publicize their memoirs, despite the public interest, so they printed a book of their chiddushei



GIVING A T'SHURA

The publishing of memoirs of Chassidim has been given a boost by the trend of giving out t'shuos. These t'shuos are given out at simchos, usually weddings, when the chassan and kalla or their parents present a t'shura to their guests. These consist of letters from our Rebbeim that were sent to the parents or the grandparents, as well as memoirs.

The souls of parents up to three generations back attend a wedding of their descendents so it is a fitting time to publicize an account of their lives. Much can be learned from their behavior, way of life, and fine characters.

A t'shura is usually a thin booklet and it costs much less than a book. The size and the work that goes into its production are also far less.

Torah and included a brief autobiography at the end. This is what Rabbi Shlomo Matusof did in his *Rishmei Biurim* and Rabbi Shlomo Galperin in his *Be'er Mayim Chaim*. In *Al Avoseinu v'al Yichusam* written by the mohel, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Marinovsky it says, "This is not a biography in the usual sense of the word. A lot is said about the author's father ... and about the rabbis of Kremenchug who preceded them, but this is not a recounting of the childhood of the author ... due to the fact that beyond all his special qualities he was particularly great in humility and outstanding modesty and most likely this would not be to his liking."

LETTERS TO THE REBBE THAT WERE TURNED INTO A BOOK

This seems to be the impetus, as various authors have written in their introductions:

"The Rebbe shlita suggested to me a number of years ago that I write what I heard and saw from mashpiim, Chassidim, men of deeds," wrote Rabbi Yehuda Chitrik a"h in his *Reshimos D'varim*, where he transcribed his memoirs and mainly the stories of

Chassidim that he heard.

"I once wrote to the Rebbe," continued R' Chitrik, "a story that I heard from the mashpia R' Shmuel Gronem z"l Esterman. I received a letter of thanks from the Rebbe and a request that I continue writing what I heard. Over the course of the next few years, from time to time I wrote to the Rebbe what I heard. That is how material was collected for *Reshimos D'varim*."

R' Yisroel Jacobson, in his introduction, wrote:

"On 2 Cheshvan, fifty years since the first time I entered into the Rebbe Rashab's holy chamber (on 3 Cheshvan 5668), I entered the Rebbe's room and a number of my memories from the past came up. The Rebbe said on that occasion that I should write my memoirs of the time I spent in Lubavitch."

Other Chassidim had family reasons which led them to write their history. R' Mordechai Shusterman, for example, wrote briefly in the introduction to his book, "With trembling hands I fill the desire of my son to write, even briefly, the events of my life, to serve as a remembrance...even though who am I and what am I and who will be interested in the

history of my life, but my children asked me more than once or twice and while I still have my strength and memory I hereby fulfill their request."

R' Meir Avtzon also gave this as a reason, "... I wrote all this down after I conceded to the pleading of my family who asked me to write so that later generations will know."

He had other reasons, too, that are no less important:

"To fulfill what it says, 'Give thanks to Hashem for His kindness and wonders to mankind,' I wrote the story of my life and what I lived through in Soviet Russia in order to demonstrate the kindness of Hashem and His many wonders which rescued me from all the dangers that lay in wait for me."

Apparently, despite all this, the fact that he printed a book about himself bothered him, and he later felt it necessary to clarify, "My intention with these stories is not to publicize myself or to make myself famous. My goal with this book is to relate how, over many years and under a cruel government, Anash Chassidei Chabad withstood it with mesirus nefesh, not just in potential but also in actuality, for keeping Torah and mitzvos. Therefore the book is called *Oros B'Afeila* (Lights in the Darkness), to show that even in the double and redoubled darkness, in the exile of the wicked Soviet regime, the great lights of 'a mitzva is a candle and Torah is light' as they are illuminated by Chassidus Chabad, did not cease."

Therefore, nearly all books of memoirs that have been published in recent years speak about the mesirus nefesh of Chassidim behind the Iron Curtain. This was precisely the goal of the Rebbe Rayatz when he asked, "**to write, each one, about their work in**

Stories like these inspire you to strengthen yourself in going in the ways of Hashem and to strengthen your faith. Furthermore, the inspiration the readers have will be beneficial to the soul of the one being written about.

supporting Torah and the learning of Chassidus in the land of our birth.”

A DISAPPEARING GENERATION

“The present generation,” says Shneur Zalman Berger, a writer for *Beis Moshiaich* who does a lot of research on Chassidic history, “if we divide it in two, consists of those who lived lives of mesirus nefesh and those who lived in their shadow, whether as their descendents or at Chassidishe farbrengens where the former recounted innumerable stories. The first group is disappearing. In recent years many Chassidim who were active in Russia during the most difficult years, from 1920 until the escape in 1946-7 when most Chabad Chassidim left the country, have passed away.

“Not all of these Chassidim are willing to share their stories. Some won’t talk about that time - they still live in great fear and prefer silence. Many of them who have already died left children who, in addition to being sad over their passing, are distressed by the fact that they wanted to know what their father or mother experienced but are left with a ‘black hole.’

“Of those who are willing to talk, many seek to convey to the next generation the difficulties they lived through, as well as the good middos of yesteryear and the values with which they were raised - being satisfied with having little, valuing what you had, the authentic Chassidishkait of yesteryear, the Chassidic brotherliness, and the close friendships.”

R’ Yechezkel Brod, in the

introduction to his book, *Ohr Chassidi B’Choshech HaSovieti* (Chassidic Light Within Soviet Darkness), tells of the amazing hashgacha pratis that motivated him to write his memoirs:

“I am not a writer, nor am I the son of a writer, and according to my personality and nature I would never think of writing my memoirs. Although I lived through an extremely stormy and difficult life, especially in my youth under the communists, I am no different than thousands of Chassidim who lived through the same trials and tribulations, perhaps even greater than what I experienced. I surely do not dare to compare myself to those legendary Chassidim, men with tremendous mesirus nefesh, who sat for years in Russian jail or were exiled to Siberia for their work in strengthening Judaism.

“Nevertheless, I decided to write my memoirs only because I know that this is what the Rebbe wants, that memoirs be written.

“I arrived in the United States in 1951, along with many other Jews who had managed to survive the horrors of the Holocaust and communist persecution in Russia. There were many refugees and it wasn’t easy to settle into a new life. In addition to the usual problems in acclimating to a new country, language and culture, the greatest struggle was parnasa. I went through a difficult period in which I suffered poverty and want; it was only with great effort that I managed to bring home food for the family.

“So I was very surprised when, R’ Nissan Mindel, one of the Rebbe’s secretaries and editor of the *Shmuzen* (Talks and Tales), came to my house.



“You are constantly crying about why the young generation is the way it is. So come and tell us how it was with you. It will definitely have an effect on some of the young generation. I have no doubt about it.”

He said he came from the Rebbe, who had instructed him to draw some of my memories out of me. This sounded exceedingly strange to me. As I said, I was dealing with the hardships of basic existence and thoughts of my past were altogether not what I was focused on. The time for memories is when you retire and relax, not when you are working hard to put food on the table.

“But when the Rebbe wants it, you don’t ask questions. I agreed on condition that my recollections be anonymous. I gave myself the name Mendel and that is how some of the stories of my youth and my wanderings throughout Russia were published in the *Shmuzen* (afterwards they were translated into Hebrew and published in *Sichot LaNoar*, starting from the Kislev 5731 issue).

“In those days there was still fear of the Russians, and that is one reason I wanted to remain anonymous and made many factual changes. Today I feel like a free man and can tell things as they were and more completely fulfill the Rebbe’s request.”

R’ Brod went on to say the reason that several others gave:

“I have another reason to write my memoirs. Nobody knows their final day and I want my children and grandchildren to get this ‘inheritance’ and to know how Jews and Chassidim lived under terrible conditions in communist

Russia and how they were moser nefesh to keep Shabbos and to provide their children with a Jewish education.”

STORIES OF CHASSIDIM AND MEMOIRS

The books that have been published thus far can be divided into two categories, stories about Rebbeim and Chassidim of previous generations and personal memoirs.

When Rabbi Moshe Havlin, rav of Kiryat Gat and rosh yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim there, had yechidus in Tishrei, 5737, he asked the Rebbe whether he should publicize the book of his grandfather, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Havlin. The Rebbe asked whether he was referring to stories about him or stories-memories written by him. R’ Havlin said they were stories that he wrote.

“Did he say who he heard them from?” inquired the Rebbe.
“Yes.”

The Rebbe responded: **“In general, this is a good thing. However, 1) find out beforehand – since there are already published stories from the elder Chassidim R’ Perlov and R’ Refael Kahn – whether they were printed already, 2) it would be worthwhile to edit them since it is possible that he wrote them just for himself.”**

The Rebbe greatly encouraged the stories about Chassidic personalities, and especially Chassidim. R’ Abba Pliskin heard this personally from the Rebbe in yechidus. The Rebbe complained that the bachurim “lacked moisture.” When R’ Abba asked what was meant by “moisture,” the Rebbe explained:

“You need to tell stories of Chassidim who were Chassidishe Yidden and I mean Chassidim specifically, not Rebbeim, for when you tell about a Rebbe one thinks that this is infinitely distant etc. but when you tell of Chassidim you learn from that etc.” (Heichal Menachem p. 221).”

Although R’ Mordechai Shusterman makes it clear that he agreed to write his memoirs only because his children pleaded with him to do so, in what he wrote about Rabbi Yissochor Dov Gorevitz, he noted the importance of publicizing these memories about a Chassidic personality like him. “... Just as everything is with hashgacha pratis, so too surely is this important matter. Publicizing it is a great benefit to the young generation and even the older ones. Both of them can take an example from this man who was a Tamim and extremely modest in his very being.”

In “A Word From the Family” in the introduction to the book *Chassidim V’Anshei Maaseh* which was written about Rabbi Aharon Eliezer Tzeitlin Hy”d and his son Rabbi Yehoshua Heschel a”h, they wrote about this at length. “In reading this book, the more you read the more you learn about the noble images of my grandfather and father whose entire lives were devoted to Torah and mesirus nefesh, from when they were young boys until their passing, with elevated Chassidic emotions.

Miracles and wondrous stories of tzaddikim, on the other hand, bring about an elevation of the soul, an opportunity and a desire to shake off oneself a bit of the gashmius.

“This book is not merely a biographical compilation that was written for the family but an edifying composition from which we can learn Chassidic conduct and the proper path of hiskashrus to our Rebbeim is, with utter bittul, while emphasizing the Chassidic, inner, deep aspect that was rooted in their very souls.”

R' Menachem Chanzin wrote similarly in his introduction to the book *Dovid Avdi* (Dovid, My Servant) about his father, Rabbi Dovid Chanzin, “This book, the story of his life, practices and good deeds, as well as his the those of his fathers ... The benefits of publishing a book like this have already been written in a number of books. Stories like these inspire you to strengthen yourself in going in the ways of Hashem and to strengthen your faith (including faith in tzaddikim and clinging to them). Furthermore, the inspiration the readers have will be beneficial to the soul of the one being written about, but it must be accurate, as it happened, without unnecessary descriptions that have no purpose; on the contrary, if you add – you diminish. Regarding stories like these you can say, ‘the service of Torah is greater than its study’ (as would seem from the sicha of the Rebbe Rayatz - 2 Nissan 5701).”

CHASSIDISHE REMINISCENCES AND NOT HISTORIC RESEARCH

My fellow authors have turned up their noses about many of the books that have been published, each one for his reasons. “It didn’t happen quite that way,” says someone who was there, “that work was done by someone else and at another time,” says someone else.

Many of the authors express their apprehension of inaccuracies in light of the many years that have passed. Maybe their memories have failed them?

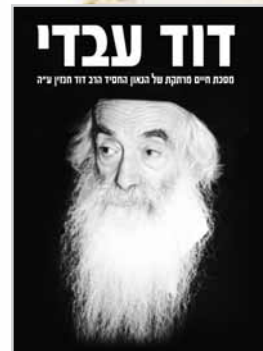
“This was very difficult, for I did not write things down soon after I heard it. It just remained in my memory and many years have passed since I heard it, and who knows whether I will be able to write it accurately as I heard it,” wrote Rabbi Yehuda Chitrik a”h, in his introduction to *Reshimos D’varim*.

He, like others, realized that writing down their recollections wasn’t only the fulfillment of the Rebbe’s wish but a rich spiritual-Chassidic legacy for the next generation. They realized that we are better off having stories with mistakes here and there than no stories at all.

What more do we need than this sharp letter from the Rebbe which describes the necessity in printing s’farim in our generation:

...the early Chassidim certainly did not need this because their minds and hearts were pure. But nowadays, due to the exigencies of the times etc. hearts have diminished and people are immersed in material matters, in the physicality of everything, so that the sensitivity and elevation of the soul is not apparent. Seemingly, this is difficult to correct by rational means because the subject matter is too *eidel* to grasp from the outset. Miracles and wondrous stories of tzaddikim, on the other hand, bring about an elevation of the soul, an opportunity and a desire to shake off oneself a bit of the gashmius etc. It also accomplishes a jolt even to the lowly soul, or one that is in a lowly situation as well (letter from Motzaei Shabbos, 2 Shevat, 5692).

In a yechidus before R’ Refael



HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PUBLISH A BOOK?

That is what many people ask when they take the first step in carrying out a family decision to publish a book of memoirs. This question addresses only part of the total cost, since the cost of printing a book is only one expense. Before it is published there are other important stages - like writing, for example ...

Much depends on the writer and the type of material they bring him. Some bring lots of raw material and "all" that needs to be done is to collate, to write, to type it up, to edit, and prepare it for publication. Some people have nothing and they want the writer to do all the work, from interviewing dozens of acquaintances and relatives to researching the pertinent details. Obviously, the work is far greater and requires a lot of effort and time and you will pay accordingly.

After the writer finishes getting it all down in writing, the material goes back to the family for their opinion. Corrections and usually many additions are then inserted into the existing work.

Then the book is brought to people who knew the man or the era and they make their comments, which are also incorporated into the book. Only then does it get sent to a professional proofreader/editor (or two) to clean it up and to tighten the writing. (It's interesting how each time the book is reviewed, more mistakes are found. That's just the way it goes). Proofreading/editing can cost around 500 shekels (\$25-\$35 per hour in the US) depending on the proofreader/editor's experience, professionalism, and desire for the job.

Then comes the page setting stage, which is handled by a graphic artist. He or she designs the page layout which will be used throughout the book, using the text which is provided on disc or email. The size of the print is determined, as is the spacing between the lines, between the words and the margins. All this contribute a lot to the size/thickness of the book (which for some reason is important to people).

Then the graphic artist will insert the pictures

where they belong, according to instructions from the writer or family member in charge of producing the book. The pictures are sized according to their importance. A typical graphic artist takes \$2-3 per page. The price varies depending on whether the page also has footnotes, and if it is also necessary to comb through or Photoshop the pictures, etc.

Then the graphic artist prepares the binding. This work is done, in the vast majority of cases, in the presence of the writer or the relative. Aside from the content of the book, this is one of the most important aspects of the book and a factor which will largely determine sales. Designing a cover can cost \$100-400.

When the book is finished it goes back to the family for a final check to ensure that paragraphs were not mistakenly dropped and that pictures are where they are supposed to be. Only after the final okay do you go to the printer and ask, "How much does it cost to print a book?" The pricing is based on the number of pages and the thickness of the page (color or black and white). The cost of printing an average book of 280 pages of standard size is 12-15 shekels per page.

You will notice that I haven't said what it costs to write the book, because that depends on the writer, the amount of work he has to do, his level of professionalism, and of course the nature of the work required of him. There's no question that in the overall cost of producing the book, the main expense is the writer, and for good reason.

Many families who reach this stage make their calculations and then drop out. It's expensive for the average Chassidic family who simply want to publicize the important memories of a cherished individual. Though consider that the books are sold afterwards and you regain some of the money.

It really depends on whether the book is well-written, has good content and is nicely designed. This will largely determine whether the book will sell. The more copies you sell, the greater the chance of recouping your outlay and maybe even making a profit. All agree, though - the writers, the editors, the publishers, the distributors - that you can't get rich off of this.

Nachman Kahn published the second edition of his book, *Shmuos V'Sippurim*, the Rebbe encouraged him, "**Sometimes one is inspired to yiras Shamayim from a story more than other**

things."

"I wish to convey this message to many Chassidim who refuse to be interviewed and tell their memories," says Shneur Zalman Berger, who has many dozens (if

not hundreds) of interviews under his belt. "You are constantly crying about why the young generation is the way it is. So come and tell us how it was with you. It will definitely have an

effect on some of the young generation. I have no doubt about it.”

A good example of the impact that a memoir can have on the younger generation is the book *Neged HaZerem* (*Deep in the Russian Night* in English translation) by Rabbi Aharon Chazan, which was published in 1981. It was one of the first books that showed the young generation what the mesirus nefesh of Jews in Russia was like on a daily basis. The book, which was very successful and was reprinted many times, became a hit in dramatic performances too. Thousands of people attended dozens of performances throughout Israel and the US. Till this day, many shluchim give the book to their mekuravim, who enjoy and are inspired by it.

It’s not easy to check the facts when the events took place sixty or seventy years ago,” admits Rabbi Shneur Zalman Berger. “You have to start with a good working knowledge of the material; details about the era, the situation at the time, knowledge of the history of Chassidim of that time, geography and even the mentality etc. Yes, there are Chassidim who don’t remember that well, but then, we youngsters don’t always remember what took place ten and twenty years ago. We try to do our best to ask the person being interviewed questions from different angles, to authenticate different versions, to verify things in books, and mainly hope.

“Of course, there can be errors, but memories cannot be preserved in a safe. Nobody is free from errors. In the general picture, the stories of Chassidim are full of positive nostalgia, suffused with Chassidic love, good middos, and mesirus nefesh – all of this transmits values that

A PARTIAL LIST OF BOOKS TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

(INCLUDING MEMOIRS OF CHABAD CHASSIDIM,
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES, AND STORIES OF CHASSIDIM)

From Shedlitz to Safety by Rabbi Shimon Goldman
Deep in the Russian Night by Rabbi Aharon Chazan
Chassidic Light in the Soviet Darkness by Rabbi Yechezkel Brod
The War of a Jewish Partisan by Yechiel Granatstein
Subbota by Rabbi Eliezer (Lazer) Nannes
Mother in Israel – the Life and Memoirs of Rebbetzin Chana
Comrade by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser
Extraordinary Chassidic Tales by Rabbi Refael Nachman Kahn
From My Father’s Shabbos Table by Rabbi Yehuda Chitrik
The Man Who Mocked the KGB by Rabbi Mendel Levertov
Portrait of a Chassid by Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Gansbourg
Return by Professor Herman Branover

the young generation needs.”

R’ Avrohom Rainitz, who wrote and edited *Chayal B’Sheirus HaRebbe*, the memoirs of R’ Itzke Gansbourg, has another perspective:

“The memoirs of R’ Itzke are mostly about his work with Tzach and Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchok in Eretz Yisroel in the early years of the Rebbe’s nesius. It was not surprising when some people said that a certain school or program was described inaccurately. You have to remember, though, that every important event had many people involved. It is definitely possible that each person saw things from a different perspective and that they are all right and there is no real contradiction.”

R’ Yisroel Jacobson points this out in the introduction to his memoirs, which are a fascinating documentation of his life and considered highly reliable. He did not negate the possibility of error but he asks that people look at the big picture:

“Writing memoirs and the history and estimation of people is, to a certain extent, one-sided.

In other words, it is seen through the eyes of the writer. I know that every person or happening that I write about is just a small part of the whole.

“However, one can read about the event or the estimation of that person from other sources, and then compare the two or more versions to get a clear picture, i.e. you can divest it of the perspective of the writers.

“Furthermore, it often happens that someone knows or sees something and he is part of what happened and he does not know about other details, but from many writers you get a full picture and you get a completely different view; due to the totality of the matter and not because of the fault or assessment of any given writer. When all the parts are collected from all quarters regarding each matter and person, then you get a different picture. From this we understand how beneficial it is to everyone when each person writes the events of his life that are connected with general issues and individuals.”

BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE REDEMPTION

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

R' Michoel Bukchin is baal t'shuva with a colorful life story. His career has shifted from organizational psychology to family counseling in the light of chassidus. A fascinating personal and professional life story.

For many years now, Rabbi Michoel Bukchin, a Lubavitcher chassid living on the Shomron settlement of Yitzhar, has served as an organizational psychologist. In his youth, before he returned to his Jewish roots, he earned two academic degrees in the field at the renowned Columbia University in New York. Since then, he has dealt with organizational counseling and business mediation for a variety of large companies and organizations.

In recent years, he has decided to give a shlichus'dike angle to his work. Over a period of one year, he completed further academic

studies at a prominent institution in Eretz Yisroel, where he learned mediation and counseling for individuals and couples, and he quickly learned that it could be proven that all of the approaches exist in the teachings of chassidus.

Rabbi Bukchin is known for his development of numerous administrative systems that measure levels of performance in business organizations. His most recent position was as the general director of a human resources organization in the Herzliya Medical Center, and he offers help coming. In the meantime,

sitting in his modest office in Raanana, he reveals to us his thrilling story.

R' Michoel spent his early years in the Vatikim neighborhood in Ramat Gan. Anything that pertained to Judaism in his parents' home was primarily symbolic, far from the more meaningful way of life. "My father was very learned. He taught me the *trope* in preparation for my bar-mitzvah, despite the fact that he walked around bare-headed and ridiculed Jews who observed Torah and mitzvos. He really loved the singing of the cantor, yet he reacted with cynicism towards pious and devout Jews. In contrast, my mother was a Holocaust survivor, and she usually asked questions such as: 'Where was G-d during the Holocaust?' She possessed a very spiritual soul.

"At the Jewish holiday season, we all went to synagogue, perhaps a surviving element from the education they received from their grandparents. Father even made Kiddush on wine and we would eat together – but nothing more than that. We wouldn't observe the holiday, much less the mitzvos; these were merely symbols that my father liked to preserve for some reason. When my paternal grandmother passed away, my parents had our kitchen kashered in order that my grandfather, who observed many of the more basic elements of Torah and mitzvos, especially kashrus, could eat in our home. According to family tradition, my grandfather was a descendant of a Karliner chassid who composed niggunim for Rabbi Aharon Karliner."

Michoel had been educated according to the ideals of Zionism and the political vision that characterized the period when the modern Jewish state was established. "I was born in 5712, when the state was still in the early years of its existence, and everyone

was surrounded by an atmosphere of mutual brotherhood and the joy of accomplishment.”

Michoel did his military service in the IDF Central Command Special Forces unit, a role that included a considerable amount of potential ambushes and other high risks. He was wounded in one of the unit’s rigorous training exercises, after which he was assigned to a command position. “My character was more or less formulated in the army. I was fiercely anti-religious, repelled by anything I saw as narrow-minded, primitive, or based on ancient preconceptions. I remember when my friends and I had a conversation with a young graduate of the ‘HaRo’eh’ religious school. I began to tease him about his opinions and the yarmulke he wore on his head. He got up from his place, gave me a penetrating look and said, ‘It’s impossible to explain what the color red is to someone who is blind.’”

This statement was engraved in Michoel’s memory and was a contributing factor in his decision to consider the state of his Judaism.

In the meantime, he took an active part in the Yom Kippur War, and like many Israelis during this period, he made his way after his discharge from the army to the great metropolis – New York City. “I flew to the United States for the purpose of studying, working, and staying there permanently. I was sick of Israel. I registered at the prestigious Columbia University, and over a period of several years, I succeeded in earning two degrees: one in general psychology and the other in organizational psychology.”

It had been his childhood dream to go into psychology. “This was the profession that constantly occupied my interest. I wanted to understand people. My mother was



R' Michoel Bukchin

He got up from his place, gave me a penetrating look and said, ‘It’s impossible to explain what the color red is to someone who is blind.’

a Holocaust survivor, her friends were Holocaust survivors, and when I thought about it, I saw people who had seen unimaginable suffering yet still knew how to live a life of joy. This paradox fascinated me – what is it that ticks within the soul of man? In addition, I had many thoughts about how the world could be a better place to live in if only people would think logically...”

With two degrees under his belt, Michoel very quickly succeeded in acquiring a name for himself. He started working for large companies. He worked for a lengthy period for an arms purchase mission with the Ministry

of Defense. Flights throughout the United States became routine, along with meetings with authors and intellectuals with whom he discussed and clarified his psychological insight. “I arrived in the United States at the start of the seventies. During those years, to say that you came from Eretz Yisroel was a source of great pride and respect. I identified as an Israeli, not a Jew. I didn’t go around with Jews, nor was I seen with them. All of my friends were Gentiles, I felt more comfortable with them, as an equal among equals.” He was angered by the distance other non-religious Jews maintained from their Gentile neighbors. “During this time, my cousin was going out with a young dark-skinned man, and when I asked her if they were planning to get married, she replied emphatically, ‘Of course not, he’s not Jewish.’ I remember how surprised I was. I didn’t understand what the problem was with the fact that he was a Gentile and she was a Jew. ‘You’re both human beings,’ I told her. ‘If you would say that it was because of the color of his skin, I could understand that. But Judaism? What’s the connection?!...’”

He spent the next ten years in a luxurious apartment in Manhattan, enjoying all the pleasures of life. One of his greatest joys was solitary trips on his motorcycle, covering long distances throughout North America. “I would customarily stop in small towns and villages at the crossroads, go in and have a chat with the local residents on whatever subject. I enjoyed this very much. Along the way, I saw some breathtaking views – just me and my motorcycle, without any radio or telephone. Then, I started contemplating on my surroundings: thick forests blazing with color and stunningly beautiful lakes.

When I noticed that he didn't mention his Jewishness, it gnawed away at my heart for some reason, despite the fact that I was very anti-religious at the time. When my turn came, I proudly replied that I am a member of the Jewish People.

"I began to understand that there must be a Creator here who did all this. It can't be that it simply came out of nothing. Time after time, as I careened around a sharp curve on winding, unfrequented road, I would find myself confronted by beautiful views that would literally take my breath away. These were moments when a cry of 'Father...Father...' rose unbidden to my lips. It's something that you can't control. In the face of such sights of nature, you can't help but be extremely humbled."

During those years of amazement and confusion, it was specifically the Gentiles who strengthened his Jewish spark. "On one of my treks through North America, I sat and chatted with a group of secular high school graduates around a campfire. They heard that I have a foreign accent, but being rather courteous young people, they didn't ask me directly where I was from. Instead, they decided to have each person tell about how his parents and grandparents came to the United States. With rare exception, they were all descendants from European bloc countries — England, Germany, Sweden, and the like. When the turn came for one of the Jewish kids in the group, he said that his parents came from Hungary.

"When I noticed that he didn't

mention his Jewishness, it gnawed away at my heart for some reason, despite the fact that I was very anti-religious at the time. When my turn came, I replied that I am a member of the Jewish People. They were perplexed by my proud and straightforward answer, and they tried to lower the resulting tension by asking, 'But what country did you come from before you came to America?' They assumed that I wasn't aware of the meaning of what I had said. However, I was completely sure of what I was saying, and I continued to describe to them how proud I was to be a Jew.

"I don't have the slightest idea how this feeling of pride engulfed me. Yet, the fact was that I stood before a whole group of people and explained that each of them can go back in his family history no more than four hundred years, when their families first emigrated to the United States, whereas I was a descendant of an unbroken chain lasting three thousand two hundred years. Since I was also a Levi, I know exactly who my original forefather was. Therefore, it doesn't make any difference what my country of origin is. I am a member of the Jewish People, which has wandered from Eretz Yisroel to Babylon, to Spain, to Russia, then all over the world — and my parents have now returned home to Eretz Yisroel."

Michael's clear and unambiguous answer, especially uttered with such Jewish pride, stunned not only the assembled group, but also Michael himself. He felt that it wasn't him talking, rather some hidden force within him, more powerful than he was.

"One evening, I happened to be sitting with some of my co-workers at a bar, and everyone bought a round of drinks. When my turn came, one co-worker, a native Frenchman with noble lineage, taunted me by saying that he thought that Jews weren't willing to buy drinks for their friends. Without skipping a beat, I replied that only happens if the Frenchman steals the Jew's wallet... The co-worker's face turned beet-red with anger, and he said, 'You killed J...' Instead of getting dragged into a shouting match, I replied that 'I' was a Jew, tried before a Jewish court, and sentenced to death, despite the fact that it was the Romans who actually executed him. 'You took one of history's worst criminals and turned him into your deity. What does that teach you?' Stunned and bewildered, the co-worker didn't respond. As amazing as it may seem, he later became one of my best friends.

"These two incidents gave me the feeling that I was speaking with a powerful inner strength that was not my own. My responses were coming from somewhere deep within my soul.

"It was with these surprising sentiments at the fore that Rabbi Shraga Zalmanov, director of the Chabad House for Hebrew speakers in New York, stepped into my life. He would come with a team of bachurim to our offices to offer us the opportunity of putting on t'fillin. Months of adamant refusal finally melted away in the face of typical Chabad pleasantness and amiability, and I was

captivated by their charm.”

Such things eventually brought Michoel to take his first steps along the path leading to the House of G-d. One day, he participated in a meeting of Israeli intellectuals, who debated the question on how to improve the government in Eretz Yisroel. “We were a small circle of ten individuals, and the statement of one member of the group really got my attention. He said that we must implement the laws of Torah, although they must be provided with certain cosmetic changes to make them logical and more acceptable for our times. I thought to myself: ‘Before they change the Torah, I first want to know what it contains.’”

With the direction of one of my close friends, Rabbi Mordechai (Motti) Gal, who had turned to his Jewish roots several years earlier and had become a baal t’shuva, Michoel went to ‘Beis Chayeinu’ the very next day. He entered the front door of 770 and told the bachurim sitting there that he wanted to study Torah. “I came in as a typical motorcyclist, wearing high boots and a black leather jacket. There was a bachur there to whom everyone referred me named Chezki Markowitz. We sat down together and started learning. He suggested that we should learn chassidus, but I wanted to learn Gemara, explaining to him that mysticism never really interested me. In the end, we began with the first Mishna of Tractate Sukkos, followed by a chassidic maamer that focuses on the Mishna.”

When they finished studying the maamer together, Michoel was amazed. Several years worth of university study in the area of physics and Einstein’s theory of relativity had been summed up by an eighteen year-old yeshiva bachur teaching him a chassidic maamer based on the teachings of the AriZaL and kabbala written



In the early days

Michoel’s clear and unambiguous answer, especially uttered with such Jewish pride, stunned not only the assembled group, but also Michoel himself. He felt that it wasn’t him talking, rather some hidden force within him, more powerful than he was.

more than five hundred years ago, long before the advent of modern science.

After that study session in 770, he was already a totally different person. He understood that Judaism is not something superficial, and surely not primitive. On the contrary, scientists have now begun to reveal the innovation found in Torah – and it’s just the tip of the iceberg. “One week, Chezki Markowitz invited me to spend Shabbos in 770. I happily accepted the invitation, and we had the Friday evening meal with the ‘chozer’, Rabbi Yoel Kahan. I went around with a positively wondrous feeling, as if I was about to reveal a hidden secret or break some mysterious

code.”

By the second time he left 770, he was already fully committed to begin exploring Judaism in a much more serious way. However, his daily business concerns would delay matters a little, maybe a little too much. “It took me three years to make the final decision to choose a religious lifestyle and stop ‘dancing at two weddings’. The ones who helped me in this process were specifically my non-Jewish friends, who prepared vegetarian meals for me whenever we got together – even if I didn’t ask for them. When I explained to them about the importance of Shabbos, they encouraged me to stop sitting on the fence.”

Michoel started to be proud of

One co-worker, a native Frenchman, taunted me by saying that he thought that Jews weren't willing to buy drinks for their friends. Without skipping a beat, I replied that only happens if the Frenchman steals the Jew's wallet. 'You took one of history's worst criminals and turned him into your deity. What does that teach you?'

his Judaism and his roots, and the constant connection with the bachurim on the benches of 770 led him to begin studying at Yeshivas "Hadar Hatorah" in Crown Heights as a full-fledged baal t'shuva. "When I realized that the absolute truth and the way to the best possible life was found in Torah study and mitzvah observance, I decided to forsake the life of pleasure and reconcile with my Judaism. I was working then as a senior adviser for a large corporation in New York, a job that required flying all over the United States with high regularity and staying at luxurious hotels. Yet, I gave it all up and returned to Eretz Yisroel."

Michoel's parents were alarmed by the drastic change that had taken place in their son, who had gone to the United States anti-religious and returned to Eretz Yisroel as a baal t'shuva with a thick beard and a yarmulke on his head. "I joined Rabbi Motti Gal in his work at the new Chabad House that he founded in our city of residence – Ramat Gan. Six months later, I flew to the Rebbe, this time as a much more chassidic Jew. If my first stay in the United States led to my becoming Torah observant, on this visit I was a

chassid in every fiber of my body and soul. The tremendous avoda at the Chabad House together with Rabbi Gal strengthened me and brought me closer to the Rebbe and Chabad."

Michoel had several spiritual experiences during that visit in the court of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, and he has kept them in his heart as an everlasting memory. "On one of my first days there, we davened Mincha with the Rebbe in the small *zal*. It was extremely crowded, and I found myself standing only three feet away from the Rebbe. Many of those davening were looking at the Rebbe during the minyan, watching his customs and mannerisms. Preferring the 'lights of the baal t'shuva', I objected to this mode of conduct and reasoned that it would be better to do the opposite. If I daven well and with proper feeling, I thought, the Rebbe will help to bring my t'filla to a much higher spiritual level. This was no easy task, but I restrained myself and didn't look at the Rebbe.

"At the end of Mincha, several chassidim, including Rabbi Rami Meir (who today lives in Kfar Chabad), approached me and asked how I had been privileged to have the Rebbe look at me so frequently

and so intently.

"That same day, I entered the secretaries' office and submitted a letter for the Rebbe with three requests: a) a bracha to have good and proper parnasa; b) a bracha for an appropriate shidduch; c) a bracha for success in honoring my father and mother in a befitting manner, as numerous conflicts had developed between us as a result of the change I had made in my life.

"I was privileged to receive answers to all my requests in a most amazing manner. The Rebbe delivered a sicha to the graduates of Beis Rivka, and it was the first time that I could enter 770 and put on earphones to hear a simultaneous Hebrew translation. This took place during the week of Parshas Korach, 5742, and the Rebbe spoke about how the staff of Aharon budded and grew almonds, which blooms faster than all other plants – within the short period of just three weeks. The Rebbe explained that this staff corresponded to the Levites in order that they should merit to have great success. Since I belong to the tribe of Levi, I thought to myself, 'I have just received a bracha for my first request: parnasa.'

"As a psychologist, I know that a person hears what he wants to hear, and I said to myself that this could be quite interesting, especially since I already knew that the Rebbe has said how it is also possible to receive answers through the sichos themselves. I continued to listen to the sicha, and since this was a sicha for the graduates of Beis Rivka, the Rebbe then began to elucidate on the role of the woman in the chassidic home. 'Now I've just received a bracha for a proper shidduch,' I thought. I left that sicha with brachos for my first two requests, but not for the third. I understood that I would apparently have to wait for the

Rebbe to give me a more personal response.

“As I was walking from ‘Beis Chayeinu’ to the Hadar Hatorah dormitory, one of the yeshiva students came towards me, a young man dressed in jeans and a funny-looking hat characteristic for those times. He suggested that we learn something together, and at first I considered putting him off. However, something within me made me agree. When I asked him what he wanted to learn, you can just imagine how shocked I was by his reply: he wanted to learn the Laws of Honoring Parents in Shulchan Aruch... That wrapped things up. The Rebbe had actually replied to all three questions in the way that he saw fit. We sat together and began to learn the halachos in depth.”

Michoel later understood that while it’s possible to bless someone with parnasa or a shidduch, there are clear halachos in Shulchan Aruch on the issue of honoring one’s parents. Therefore, the halachos were the best possible answer for him in response to his third request.

After concluding his visit to “Beis Chayeinu” and doing a little fundraising for the new Chabad House in Ramat Gan, Michoel returned to Eretz Yisroel, got married, and took up residence in Nachlat Har Chabad. Later, in response to some clear answers from the Rebbe, he moved to the Shomron settlement of Yitzhar. “We were debating whether to live in Yitzhar or Nachliel, and when we wrote a letter to the Rebbe on the matter, the answer was ‘Do according to the advice of close friends’. This is what brought us to Yitzhar.

“Yitzhar is the home of the yeshiva of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, and we wanted to be close to him. But as we started the process of buying a home, the first



As a young Chabad chassid

intifada broke out in full force. We asked the Rebbe again if we should continue the process, and the Rebbe replied that we should. A few months later, we wrote to the Rebbe that we were having business problems, and the Rebbe said that we should enter the house. I didn’t understand what the connection was, until we arrived at the real estate office, where we were informed that despite the fact that we had paid for our house, all construction had been frozen. As a result, they couldn’t give us the keys to the house. The Rebbe’s answer was now crystal clear. We somehow forced our way into the house and moved in.”

Rabbi Bukchin built, established, and founded a number of institutions and organizations with his own hands, and each of them has proved a source of tremendous blessing. One prominent example is the girls’ school in Emanuel, an institution that represents a continuing miracle of its own.

As mentioned, due to his vast experience, he has decided in recent years to utilize his psychological qualifications in

strengthening and mediating between couples, and helping to solve conflicts and problems with domestic harmony. His unique approach combines what he learned with his own innovations from the teachings of chassidus. “The analysis and treatment are divided into two. First, there is the cognitive analysis that checks the source and root of the problem. This data enables the development of effective recommendations and methods of treatment, based on the diagnosed behavioral patterns. Second, it provides solutions to all types of problems, large or small, severe or superficial, through a system of exercises and approaches appropriate for that problem.”

After several years of involvement with organizational psychology and guidance, he began investing most of his time in psychology and counseling for couples. He is always surprised to see how the best advice and guidance that he learns in one of the counseling methods can be found in the teachings of chassidus. When we asked for a few examples, there were plenty that he could mention.

“We have an array of about twenty means of treatment for twenty common types of psychological conditions. There are four types of people for each approach, and I found them to be similar to the four categorizations in the animal soul as brought in Tanya – fire, water, wind, and dust. It’s amazing to prove how the concepts and theories that we learn in the field today have already been brought in Tanya in a most orderly fashion. There are numerous examples to indicate this fact.

“One basic activity is changing one’s regular habits and modes of conduct. A person can enter his home, hear his wife tell him something, and get upset over what she says. However, by the same



R' Michael Bukchin with his son

token, if he hears his friend's wife tells his friend the exact same thing, he responds differently. The reason is that when it comes from his wife, it reminds him of something from his childhood and it automatically elicits a negative reaction from him. We conduct an exercise in opposing reactions to those same automatic responses – "think before you act". This is also explained in chassidus regarding how every bracha demands proper intention, 'Know Him in all your ways'. A Jew must break through boundaries and limitations, including the boundaries and limitations of his old way of thinking."

It seems that Rabbi Bukchin can pull out a variety of examples on every subject. "If we're talking about changing one's habits, then there's the problem of complementing as opposed to adjusting. At times, each member of a given couple complements the other, e.g., the husband is a miser while the wife is a spendthrift or the husband takes risks and the wife is responsible, or vice versa. There

are those for whom things never seem to get better and their failure to understand that these opposing tendencies have to complement one another causes tension. In order to reach a happy medium, a frugal person needs to practice acts of extravagance, and a compulsive shopper needs to practice thrift. All this is explained in the teachings of chassidus and the Rambam."

Rabbi Bukchin notes that true awareness is the key to the long sought change in every area and on every issue. "In connection with couples, the awareness must be about the difference that exists within each of them and the unique qualities with which each has been blessed." He then concluded: "In many instances, the wife will respond in one way, and the husband in the exact opposite way. They have totally different outlooks, intentions, and reactions on almost every issue, because each is their own unique individual."

It turns out that even in the area of counseling and psychology, we see clearly how the world is ready for the hisgalus of the Rebbe,

Melech HaMoshiach. When we suggested this to Rabbi Bukchin, we were surprised to receive a magnificently built response. "Let's take, for example, an average person with a reasonable level of ethics and values who is greatly troubled over his bank overdraft. Suddenly, he notices a woman pass by and accidentally drop her purse. He picks it up and discovers that it contains a large sum of money, sufficient to cover his entire overdraft and even leave him enough to buy his children everything they've been requesting for a long time.

"A world war takes place in this person's heart, a war between ethics and conscience on the one hand and momentary gratification on the other. In the days of Moshiach, these conflicts will not exist and a Jew will never consider the possibility of taking something that doesn't belong to him. The fig tree will cry out not to pick it on Shabbos. Today, if one of us errs and turns on a light on Shabbos, he may suffer from some inner anguish, but he simply will not feel how this act causes tremendous pain to his G-dly soul and separates him from his roots. In the days of Moshiach, we will feel the pain of the G-dly soul and there will be a greater sense of awareness that will be placed before us at all times.

"To a certain extent, all the methods developed in recent years have come to implement this true awareness in an actual sense and to explain to people that acts of goodness are essentially both advisable and worthwhile. It's amazing how science today has become more mystical than kabbala itself, and in my estimation, this is a most exciting process of Redemption. The physical world itself explains how to live G-dliness."