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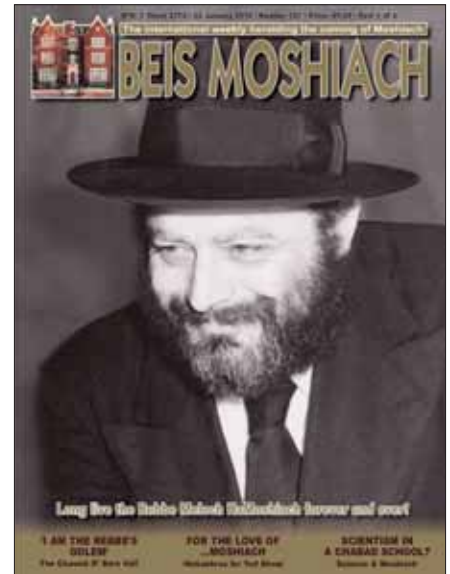
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CONFRONTING PHARAOH

Sichos In English

A TWOFOLD CHALLENGE

"[G-d] placed the world within [man's] heart." [1]

The mission of mankind - to transform the world into a dwelling for G-d - mirrors the challenges every individual confronts in developing the G-dly nature of his own character and personality.

For every person is an entire world in microcosm. [2]

There are two dimensions to our personal task of self-refinement:

Firstly, to use the qualities which we have been granted for a positive purpose.

For example, instead of self-oriented material desire, our potential to love should be expressed in love for G-d, and selfless love for our fellow man. [3]

And our potential for achievement should be directed to making contributions that are lasting in nature, rather than those of mere temporal value.

Similarly, each of our attributes should be dedicated toward good, and indeed, toward the most comprehensive good possible.

But there is a challenge which is more fundamental.

Every person should ask him/her/self: What am I living for?

Is my goal self-gratification, or am I living for a higher purpose?

Chassidus explains [4] that we have two souls, one an animal soul, that like an animal is concerned with its own needs and drives.

It is not bad; but it cannot see beyond itself.

The second soul is "an actual part of G-d," and its fulfillment comes through service, encouraging the expression of this G-dly nature and of the G-dliness invested in the world at large.

The conflict between these souls reflects the challenge which man faces: to break through his self-concern and to reveal his G-dly core.

When this is accomplished, the first task mentioned above, making positive use of the potentials and opportunities we are granted, can be achieved with far greater ease.

WITHIN THE MACROCOSM

These same thrusts are reflected in our endeavors within the world at large.

One of mankind's tasks is to use all the elements of world for a positive purpose.

Every element of being contains sparks of G-dliness which are concealed by the material nature of our existence.

By using these objects for a spiritual purpose, e.g., eating a meal with the intent of using the energy generated from the food to serve G-d, we tap the G-dly energy invested in these worldly entities, and give it expression.

This goal must be applied in a very particular way, relating to the

details of every situation as it is.

There is, however, a second, more general goal for our efforts - to nurture selflessness.

For worldly existence encourages self-concern, and man's task is to break through these barriers and reveal the inner truth.

The words "break through" are intentionally used.

For with regard to self-concern - to borrow a Talmudic phrase [5] - "its destruction is its purification."

Our desires can be redirected from undesirable motives to a positive orientation, but the fundamental approach of selfishness which characterizes worldly existence must be broken.

There is no redeeming quality in mere self-concern.

WHAT THE PLAGUES ACCOMPLISHED

Egypt, Mitzrayim in Hebrew, serves as an analogy for material existence as a whole. [6]

As such, both motifs mentioned above are reflected in the story of the Exodus.

The miracles G-d wrought in Egypt had two purposes:

A) that Pharaoh should release the Jews, and that when they depart, they would "ask every man of his friend, and every woman from her neighbor, golden and silver articles." [7]

In this way, they would "drain Egypt of her wealth." [8]

This reflects the Jews' effort to refine the sparks of holiness that were concealed within Egypt, allowing these resources of good to find positive expression.

B) "So that you will be able to tell your children and grandchildren how I have made sport from Egypt, performing miraculous signs there." [9]

Pharaoh is identified with the stubborn boasts, "I do not know G-d," [10] and "the river is mine and I have fashioned it," [11] denying G-d's influence in our world and replacing it with self-orientation.

The fundamental purpose of the plagues was to negate this approach, to manifest G-dliness openly so that all could see, and in doing so, to break the pride of Pharaoh and his nation.

G-d persisted in this endeavor until Pharaoh's pride was crushed, and he came in his nightclothes to Moshe, entreating G-d's mercy. [12]

Personally, Pharaoh would have been prepared to release the Jews after several of the plagues.

He was, nevertheless, held back and the plagues continued, because G-d hardened his heart. [13]

Why was this necessary?

Had Pharaoh released the Jews earlier, he and his nation would not have been thoroughly humbled.

The refinement of the sparks of G-dliness concealed within the Egypt would have been accomplished, but the power which opposed G-d would have remained intact.

The plagues were continued until "Egypt [knew] that I am G-d," [14] and the self-oriented approach which their leader personified was shattered.

REACHING TO THE CORE

Just as the nullification of Pharaoh had to be absolute, in a personal sense, the negation of the approach of selfishness must be complete, encompassing every aspect of our being.

This dimension is reflected in the name of this week's Torah reading, Bo.

The most common meaning of Bo is "come," but it also means "enter," or "penetrate." [15]

Moshe is commanded to penetrate to Pharaoh's core and negate his strength.

As the Zohar states, [16] G-d caused him to enter room after room, penetrating to the very heart of Pharaoh's palace.

COME WITH ME

The command to confront Pharaoh and negate his influence is given to Moshe, because the task of negating selfishness is a fundamental dimension of man's service.

Man was given the mission of making this world a dwelling for G-d, and this is possible only when selfishness is nullified. For haughty self-interest prevents the Divine Presence from being manifest. [17]

And yet, this nullification of self cannot be accomplished by man on his own; this is only within G-d's power.

For this reason, Moshe shrunk at G-d's command; he realized that the challenge was greater than him. That is why G-d told him, "Come to Pharaoh," i.e., come with Me, and not "Go to Pharaoh." G-d would confront Pharaoh together with Moshe.

Moshe was not shirking responsibility. He was willing to go, but not with his own power.

By hesitating, he invited G-d's assistance, emphasizing that he would be acting only as an agent, and the power to nullify Pharaoh's pride would be G-d's.

THE DYNAMIC OF REDEMPTION

Penetrating through and nullifying the self-oriented dimension of Pharaoh makes possible the revelation of a positive dimension.

And thus the Zohar refers to the House of Pharaoh as: [18] "the place where all lights are revealed in an unrestrained manner."

Carrying this concept further, the Exodus shares a direct connection to the ultimate Redemption.

Indeed, had the Jews merited, immediately after leaving Egypt, they would have entered Eretz Yisroel in the ultimate Redemption. [19] And the entire period from the exodus until the Redemption is referred to as "the days of your exodus from Egypt." [20]

For nullifying the selfishness of Pharaoh and breaking through the limitations of Egypt began - and begins for every individual when he relives the Exodus in a personal sense - a self-reinforcing dynamic that ultimately will take us beyond all limitations, leading to the Redemption; may it take place in the immediate future.

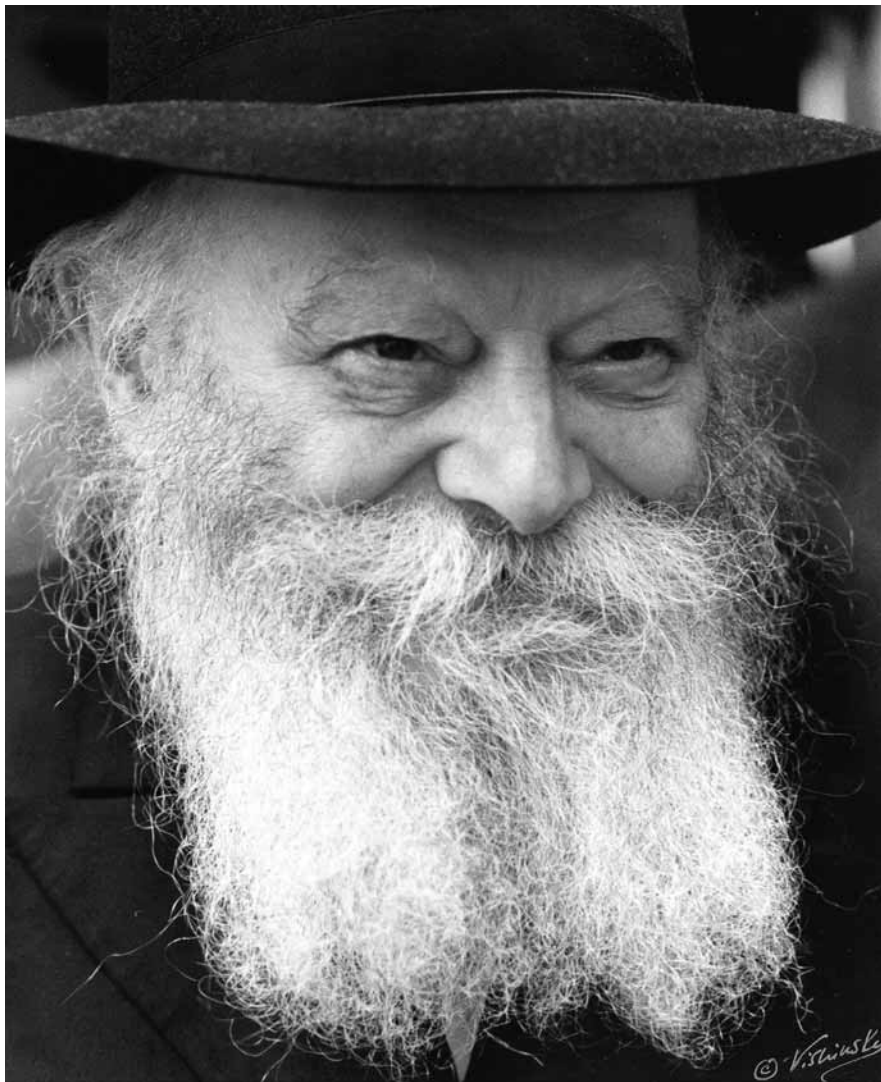
Adapted from Likkutei Sichos: Vol. XXI, p. 48-49; Vol. XXXI, p. 32-33; Sichos Shabbos Parshas Bo, 5753, 5751

Notes:

1. Ecclesiastes 3:11.
2. Midrash Tanchuma, P'kudei, sec. 3.
3. See Avos 5:16.
4. Tanya, chs. 1 and 2.
5. Keilim 2:1.
6. See the previous essay entitled "Seeing and Believing."
7. Exodus 11:2.
8. Ibid. 11:36.
9. Ibid. 10:2.
10. Ibid. 5:2.
11. Ezekiel 29:3.
12. Exodus 12:30-32.
13. Ibid. 10:1.
14. Exodus 7:5.
15. Therefore one of the Hebrew terms for marital relations is bia.
16. Zohar, Vol. II, 34a.
17. See Sota 5a.
18. Zohar, Vol. I, 210a.
19. See Sifri, commenting on Deuteronomy 1:2.
20. Micha 7:15, note the explanation in Likkutei Torah, Massei, p. 88c ff; Seifer HaMaamarim 5708, p. 159ff.

FOR THE LOVE OF ...MOSHIACH

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick



CAN YOU IMAGINE LOVE?

One of the personal quirks that I held on to as I entered the transitional period of seriously investigating Chassidus with an

open mind was my fascination with extreme statements and beliefs. As an opponent of a given philosophy and worldview, it is useful to unearth the most far-out and extreme formulations of that belief system, since those provide the

easiest targets for ridicule. On the flip side, when trying to acquire a comprehensive “big picture” view of a wide ranging ideological construct, it is essential to see not only the central tenets but the “edges” of the picture as well. Simply put, you don’t fully understand and appreciate any idea or belief until you can see just how far it goes.

In retrospect, my perhaps perverse perseverance in pursuing the putatively peripheral but altogether revealing “inside” material, stood me in good stead over the long haul. If I could decipher, process, and ultimately accept the ideas that to an “outsider” seemed the most untenable, even crazy, then nothing could shake my conviction. If on the other hand, I found that “these people” have some nice, even compelling, ideas and beliefs, but the applications of those ideas and beliefs are a little too “out there” for me, I would know to respect and love them as G-d-fearing and well meaning Jews while keeping a certain distance. (That is pretty much what happened when I managed to dig up the inside, not for public consumption, teachings and beliefs of the Breslover Chassidim. I enjoy the teachings, have a special warm and fuzzy place in my heart for the adherents, but I realized that for me this wasn’t “it.”)

In fact, over the years, I have seen numerous people drawn to the teachings of Chabad Chassidus and greatly inspired, but when confronted with some of the conclusions and implications of the belief system that seemed far away from the “mainstream,” they balked. So, in my personal odyssey, instead of looking just for the inspirational and uplifting insights that Chassidus could provide, I actively sought out the “sharp” and seemingly outrageous aphorisms and axioms,

and spent a lot of time trying to figure out what each was based on and if it rang true.

I imagine that I was also influenced by an earlier fascination with the Kotzker Chassidim, whose guiding principle was that if a thing was worth doing then it was worth doing “all the way,” and conversely, if you’re not prepared to go “all the way” then you are probably just wasting your time. (Obviously, the converse doesn’t apply to the obligations facing every Jew as laid out in the Code of Jewish Law.)

In that spirit, when I encountered the following quote from a sicha of the Rebbe Rayatz citing Reb Aizik of Homil (13 Tammuz, 5691, Eng. *Likkutei Dibburim* vol. 5 p. 115-133), I knew I hit the jackpot:

“Shlomo HaMelech was a man of amazing wisdom as it is written, ‘And G-d gave Shlomo wisdom,’ and ‘Wisdom and knowledge are granted to you.’ Now what could be greater, loftier and better than wisdom, particularly the very essence of wisdom? Nevertheless, he didn’t have a Rebbe. If he had had a Rebbe to go to, then not only would his wisdom have been loftier, he would also have had Chassidic companions and been present at Chassidic farbrengens. And then, all his powerful images of ‘lover’ and ‘beloved,’ he would have drawn from Chassidim and their Rebbe.”

This was about as extreme and outrageous as you could get. (In fact, when the Rebbe referred to this quote during a sicha on Simchas Torah 5716/1955, he only alluded to it without repeating the whole statement and he explained, “The Rebbe [Rayatz] said it in Riga, and from there it made its way to Warsaw and Lithuania. The tumult this engendered was huge. Basically, things got really lively and I am afraid to repeat it in order to not create another tumult.”) If I could wrap my brain around this gem and

make some sense of it, and if somehow I managed to actually relate to the underlying premise, then I would be well along on my way – or else, out the door as fast as my feet could take me.

Since I, like Shlomo HaMelech, had no Rebbe nor had I experienced the world of Chassidic fellowship, clearly I would be at the same disadvantage. However, what I needed to figure out was if this was something I even wanted to strive for and become a part of or not, and the only tools at my disposal would be my mind and imagination. In the previously alluded to Song of Songs, Shlomo HaMelech writes, “Because love is as powerful as death.” Sadly, in the real world, many people go through life, and even married life, without experiencing anything near as intense as the biblical analogy in question, although they likely have enough familiarity with the subject matter to at least be able to conjure up such an intense passion in their imaginations.

Could I even imagine that kind of love for a saintly old Rabbi, a man I would never have the opportunity of having a conversation with, or building any kind of personal relationship with outside of his teachings and public appearances?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT LOVE IS?

On the 10th of Shvat in the winter of 1997, I was attending the main farbrengen in 770 when I was approached by a group of young teenage bachurim, who asked me to come and farbreng with them. Since the group included a number of boys who might otherwise be involved in less constructive activities, I agreed. We went upstairs to the “second room” off of the small zal, and began to farbreng.

Since Yud Shvat is the day of the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz, when

One of the things I had missed out on growing up was the old-fashioned no holds barred farbrengens of yesteryear, where Chassidim felt free to point out shortcomings and areas requiring improvement to their fellow Chassidim, in a spirit of love and mutual concern...

the leadership was passed along to the Rebbe, Chassidim have dubbed this day the “Rosh HaShana of Hiskashrus” (lit. attachment, bonding – Chassidic term of devotion to the Rebbe). In that spirit, I tried to convey to these youngsters the basis of the feelings that a Chassid feels towards his Rebbe, particularly, love and devotion. In the middle of our informal talk, a fellow in his twenties approached our table and displaying all the signs of intoxication (real or feigned) began to berate me. I can’t recall his diatribe verbatim, but the following is a fairly close approximation:

“Homnick, you’re an idiot. You don’t know anything. You get up and talk about love for the Rebbe, but you don’t know the first thing about it. I’m only telling you this because I love you and I really feel

Going to the Rebbe enables the person to experience whole new dimensions of love for his fellow Chassidim, and from there to all Jews.

sorry for you. You have no idea what it's like to grow up with the Rebbe, following him around and watching his every move. Do you know what it is to be a little kid who instead of going out to play, runs to 770 to catch another glimpse of the Rebbe? To stand outside in the cold of winter or the heat of summer for hours, hoping to see the Rebbe leaving his house or 770? You think you can just show up, and since you're a smart guy you can get up and become a big-shot in Lubavitch, but you don't begin to know what you're talking about."

This was the gist of it, although there was much repetition and the occasional invective (not suitable for a family publication), plus assorted insults. The boys offered to toss him out on his head, but I adjured them not to. I explained to them that one of the things I had missed out on growing up was the old-fashioned no holds barred farbrengens of yesteryear, where Chassidim felt free to point out shortcomings and areas requiring improvement to their fellow Chassidim, in a spirit of love and mutual concern. Although this individual's claim that he was telling me all of this out of love was dubious at best, clearly Divine Providence was at work and I needed to hear these things. After all, how does one go from having a hard time even imagining a certain kind of love to actually experiencing that love?

THE FACTS OF LOVE

There is a great deal of confusion in the world when it comes to love. That there is

confusion in secular society, particularly in matters of the heart, is no surprise. Sadly, within the Jewish world, and even the Chassidic world whose credo is based on the three loves - of G-d, Torah and one's fellow Jews - clarity is hard to come by. The Alter Rebbe with Chabad Chassidus provides us with a road map as well as a vocabulary with which to develop, train, and guide our emotions.

The first foundational fact one needs to know about love is: all love is self-love. Since the very emotion of love is entirely an expression of self, "I love," and there is no such thing as love without an "I" doing the loving, what and who I love is also only a reflection of self. "I love" myself, what is a part of me, an extension of me, something or someone that benefits and/or complements me. There is no such thing as selfless love, because if the self is not involved there is no love. That is why the Talmud asserts that gentiles are incapable of altruism, because even the most profound expressions of love and kindness are no more than expressions of self. You can't love or feel kindly disposed to someone or something unless there is some benefit for you.

What makes a Jew different is that the Jew has more than one self; the animal soul that is his conscious self, and the G-dly soul, which is his true inner self. And since the G-dly soul perceives that its "self" is nothing more than an expression of G-d, the nature of that "self" is that it wants to return to its source and become consumed there so that it no longer experiences "self" as separate from G-d. It is only

regarding a Jewish G-dly soul that we can talk about love that "transcends" self, since its self-driven desire is to stop being only a "part of G-d, Above, literally," and return to being indistinct from the "whole."

Although the animal soul of a Jew is inherently self-centered, and as such is only capable of loving that which it perceives as related to or advantageous to self, unlike the soul of the gentile, it has the potential for reeducation by the G-dly soul to actually appreciate and be attracted to G-d and G-dliness. This is what is meant by loving G-d with both sides of the heart and both inclinations. It is to this end that Shlomo HaMelech uses imagery that the animal soul can relate to and be inspired to love G-d with a fiery passion. The problem is that after the passage of thousands of years, as the world and the Jew have slipped into progressively deeper levels of Divine concealment, analogies don't work anymore. In fact, there are those who have taken those very songs of unrequited love and used them in ways that are contrary to their true purpose.

In order to reveal the capacity for love of G-d that exists within the animal soul of a Jew, Chassidus came and revealed the innermost powers of the G-dly soul, but it also provided a tangible locus for that love, since the animal soul has a much easier time relating to what it can see on a physical level. The companionship of Chassidim when one travels to the Rebbe is the training grounds in which the animal soul learns to take that first step in transcending self, by learning to love others truly "like yourself," because we all originate from the same source, and the Rebbe is the physical manifestation of the "Divine Source" where the souls of all the Jewish people are still "One" (see Tanya ch. 2, ch. 32). Going to the Rebbe enables the

person to experience whole new dimensions of love for his fellow Chassidim, and from there to all Jews, and sharing the experience of seeing the Rebbe with other Chassidim intensifies the love for the Rebbe. All of this is so that it is no longer the G-dly soul alone experiencing self-transcendent love of G-d, but the animal soul is elevated to the level that it feels and experiences such love as well.

What Reb Aizik was observing was not that the Chassid/Rebbe relationship offers a better analogy than that chosen by Shlomo HaMelech (which is probably what the "tummelers" were "fartummelt" about). He was observing that this relationship took what previously could only be related to by way of analogies, which by definition are difficult to translate into a

personalized emotional experience, and made it accessible through a tangible real-life experiential medium.

LOVING MOSHIACH

Some Chassidim struggle with the concern that this heady and intense love relationship they experienced in the presence of the Rebbe over the years will change when Moshiach comes. When the leader is a king rather than just a Rebbe, and he is also the king of the whole world, clearly that bespeaks a different type of relationship. There are many who, if they were honest with themselves, would admit that they prefer going back to the way things were. That is because they can't "imagine" reaching even greater heights of love for G-d and His "anointed one."

However, Chassidus has always been about taking the person beyond what he can imagine through analogies and descriptions, and bringing the Divine reality down into the tangible reality. Just as Chassidim throughout the generations had to understand that this experience was in order to make love of G-d more attainable, similarly, we need to know that what we had (even those who grew up with the Rebbe...) was so that we transcend "self" and selfish desires. If you really love G-d and you really love the Torah, and you really love your fellow Jews, and you acquired all this through love of the Rebbe and love for your fellow Chassidim, then you need to channel all that love into bringing about the revelation of Moshiach, immediately, NOW!

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יחד אדונינו מורנו ורבנו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

UNITING CHASSIDIM IN AMERICA

By Shneur Zalman Berger

Agudas HaT'mimim in the United States was started at the initiative of the Rebbe Rayatz. It united Lubavitcher Chassidim who had learned in Tomchei Tmimim in Lubavitch, strengthened Judaism and Chassidus, and helped the Rebbe Rayatz and Chabad mosdos in the US.

THE SOLUTION TO LONELINESS

Chabad Chassidim in the United States eighty years ago felt alone. They lived scattered about the country in various cities.

Many of them had learned in Tomchei Tmimim in Lubavitch in their youth, and sorely missed the brotherly love and Chassidishe warmth they had absorbed, which was hard to find elsewhere. Life in America was light years away from the Chassidishe life they had lived in Russia. Some of them had been appointed rabbanim of k'hillos, but there was no Lubavitcher k'hilla. Each one tried to instill a

Chassidishe atmosphere in his environment but all felt this wasn't enough. They mainly missed farbrengens, learning Chassidus together and Chassidishe soul talks, the things which distinguished the Chassidim of past generations.

Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson described how the Rebbe Rayatz understood the feelings of his Chassidim in America and instructed them to form *Agudas HaT'mimim*. Its goal was to unite the alumni of Tomchei Tmimim Lubavitch who lived all over the United States. This organization was preceded by the *Agudos Tmimim* that was formed in Russia and Poland.

TO INSPIRE THEM AND DRAW THEM TO THE LIGHT

The Rebbe Rayatz wrote to Rabbi Eliyahu Yochil Simpson, a Lubavitcher rav in New York, about this new Aguda in a letter dated 6 Kislev, 5686/1925. He wrote that Divine Providence had caused Chassidim who had learned in Lubavitch to go to America in order to inspire Chassidim and mekuravim in that country who never saw the Rebbeim:

I have asked twice and three times that the talmidim, rabbanim, shochtim the balabatim correspond with one another, to inspire each





The Rebbe Rayatz (center) with Chassidim in the United States

other with a proper arousal. With the same feeling and pleasure that they merited to enjoy from the light which is good, when they stood in the holy chamber of [the Rebbe Rashab], who toiled and worked exceedingly hard to endow them with bountiful good and the dew of resurrection through numerous sayings [which are] holy of holies; so that they would shine forth like stars in the sky in all their beings, for good and blessing.

You dear students ... upon whom Hashgacha Elyona decreed that you go to a distant land, a place where they did not see the light of tzaddikim, our fathers the

Life in America was light years away from the Chassidishe life they had lived in Russia. Each one tried to instill a Chassidishe atmosphere in his environment but all felt this wasn't enough.

holy Rebbeim. Even for the elders, may they live long, it is many years that they have not been in the chambers of holiness, and the young ones never saw anything. Therefore, upon you and only upon you, devolves the obligation and

mitzva to fulfill the great mission to inspire them and draw them to the light which is good.

Then the Rebbe calls upon the Tmimim to unite:

Unite, our dear talmidim, unite. Awaken, awaken and rise up and

illuminate with the light which is good and the merit of our fathers, the holy Rebbeim, should cast a tent upon you and the members of your households, on those who learn and support, on them, their households and children, and all they have should be blessed with unlimited blessings from spirit to flesh.

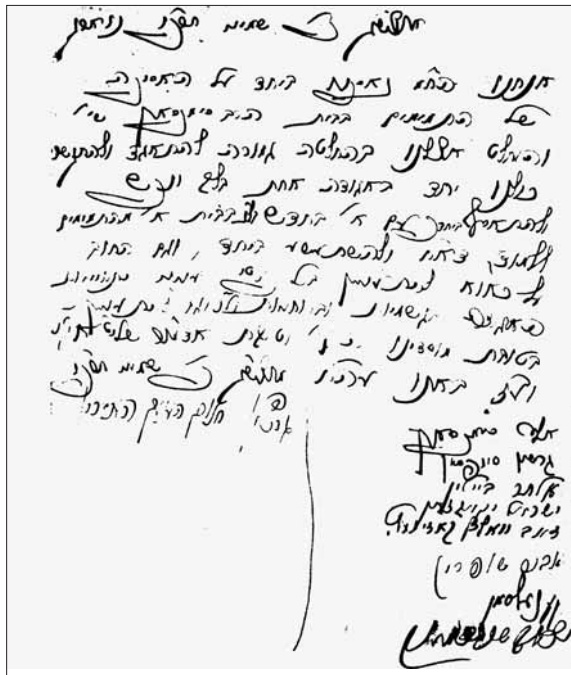
The founding meeting of the Aguda (association) took place at Rabbi Simpson's house on Motzaei Shabbos, Parshas Shmini, the eve of 27 Nissan, and was attended by about ten Lubavitcher Chassidim who had learned in Tomchei Tmimim in Lubavitch. The following are the minutes of the meeting:

"The purpose of the Aguda is for all the Tmimim in the United States to unite in one bond, heart and soul, physically and spiritually, to arouse the spark of love and spirit that they had when they were together in Lubavitch."

A book was chosen to record the minutes of the Aguda. At the beginning there was a paper on which they signed their agreement of the founding of the Agudas HaT'mimim, which read as follows:

"Boruch Hashem, Motzaei Shabbos kodesh Parshas Shmini, 5686, New York.

We the undersigned have gathered together for a meeting of Tmimim at the home of Rabbi Simpson and we have decided with a resolute decision to unite together in one association, heart and soul, and to meet once a month, bli neder, at the home of one of the Tmimim, to learn Chassidus and to farbreng. It is the obligation of each member to involve himself in all matters of commitment to the association materially and spiritually, bli neder, and also to involve himself in the welfare of our mosdos and the welfare of the Rebbe shlita, bli neder.



The minutes of the founding of the Aguda

"Eliyahu Simpson, Gershon Simpson, Alter Beilin, Yisroel Jacobson, Zev Wolf Koznitz, Avner Shifrin, Yosef Nelson, Yitzchok Schneiderman, Gershon Chanoach Hecharin ."

In addition to the men listed here, other members joined the Aguda. Altogether there were dozens of Lubavitcher Chassidim who were active members.

TO UNITE THE TMIMIM

After the founding meeting, the members of the Aguda reported to the Rebbe Rayatz. Rabbi Simpson, the interim head of the Aguda, received a response. The Rebbe wrote that the main goal of the Aguda was to unite the Tmimim and in order to begin functioning it was necessary to take a number of steps. First and foremost, they must formulate a list of the members and their addresses and occupations, and what communal work they were suited for.

The letter specified the jobs that the members should undertake: Reviewing Chassidus publicly,

shiurim, founding chadarim and yeshivos, helping to unite Chabad Chassidim within Agudas Chassidei Chabad, disseminating Chassidic writings, obtaining communal positions for Tmimim and concerning themselves about the welfare of their fellow Tmimim in Europe.

They were told that the Aguda needed a director and a few months later a special committee was voted in. Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson was elected president of the Aguda, his brother Gershon the treasurer, and R' Jacobson the secretary.

In addition to this letter, the Rebbe Rayatz wrote a detailed program for Agudas HaT'mimim. Under the heading "Secret Dissertation," the Rebbe detailed the goals of

the association, including some that were not included in the public letters.

The first goal included to keep in touch, to hold meetings and shiurim, to found chadarim and a yeshiva in the spirit of Tomchei Tmimim.

The second goal was to include the following activities: to be in touch with their brethren in other countries in order to know their material and spiritual state, to find out where a rav, maggid shiur, mashpia, shochet, and teachers were needed, to inform their fellow Tmimim who could obtain the means to come to America how to gain entry, and to help these Chassidim with jobs and activities.

The principal priority of the Aguda was to unite all of Anash wherever they were located in order to bolster those who learned Torah and kept mitzvos. In the special program it emphasized that it wasn't enough to participate financially but it was an obligation to participate in shiurim.

That same day, the Rebbe Rayatz

wrote to Rabbi Jacobson, as well, and the Rebbe told him, too, that they needed to work on behalf of those in other countries who wanted to emigrate to America:

And also to try and bring to your country some of the Tmimim, whom I think are needed for the good of the matter that they have begun, R' Shmuel Levitin in Nevel and R' Mordechai Zev Gutnick in Tel Aviv, and may Hashem help you materially and spiritually.

CHADARIM

Even before the Rebbe wrote these two letters, on 20 Iyar, the Aguda held its second meeting where it was suggested that a yeshiva in the spirit of Tomchei Tmimim be opened. Rabbi Avrohom Eliyahu Axelrod of Baltimore broached the idea and it was discussed at the meeting. Some were in favor while others said it wasn't feasible at that time. After clarifying matters, R' Simpson suggested a compromise:

At the present time (until it becomes possible to consider a yeshiva) we should make an effort regarding the chadarim. Each person in his location should get good boys who will learn with a G-d fearing and effective melamed, at least in the hours after they finish [public] school, and this way it will be possible, as time goes on, to think about a yeshiva, for if there are no kids (young goats) there will be no older goats. The chadarim will also start with alef-beis, as is customary.

In the meetings that followed, the participants concluded that it was not possible, at that point, to start a Chabad yeshiva in America.

The next topic at that meeting was the Rebbe's financial state. Because of his extensive work in the Soviet Union and Poland, he had incurred great debts and the coffers of Beis Rebbi were empty. It was decided that all the Tmimim would



**Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson,
secretary of Agudas HaT'mimim**

try to raise money for the Rebbe and his activities. Many of them committed to raising \$50 (remember that the value of money was quite different in those days!)

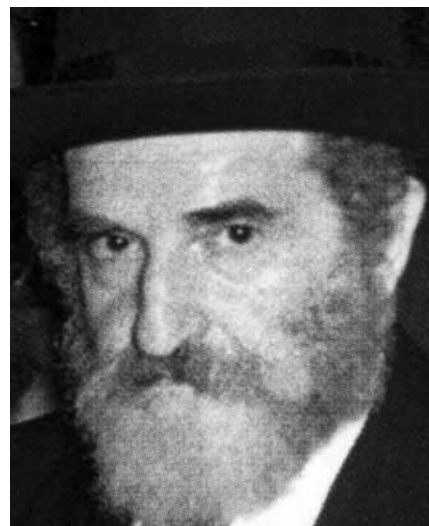
Indeed, the members of the Agudas HaT'mimim worked hard to raise funds that were sent to the Rebbe Rayatz. The Rebbe responded with his blessings.

In the years to come, large amounts of money were raised by members of the Aguda for *maamud* (support for the Rebbe's household).

ALLEVIATING LONELINESS

The meetings of the Agudas HaT'mimim were the focal point of the lives of the Tmimim, especially for those who lived far away and did not often get to meet their friends. Rabbi Sholom Scheiderman of Philadelphia sent a letter to the Agudas HaT'mimim on 25 Nissan, 1927, in which he said he wanted to hold a meeting of the Tmimim in order to carry out the goals that the Rebbe Rashab and Rebbe Rayatz had set forth:

Who, more than you, knows the value that is so important for us to come to a meeting in order to resolve



**Rabbi Eliyahu Yochil Simpson,
director of Agudas HaT'mimim**

the spiritual and material questions that have arisen during our lives here in America, especially how to realize the goal of the Rebbe [Rashab], under whose holy wings we took shelter, and the goal of the Rebbe shlita [the Rebbe Rayatz] who is constantly at his post to show us the proper path. We just need to gather our strength and to carry out what he shows us, and the first thing to do is to meet.

A month later they held a meeting whose official purpose was to strengthen the activities of the Aguda. The meeting took place on 27 Iyar, 1927, with the participation of the hanhala of the association, the Simpson brothers and R' Jacobson. The members of the Aguda from New York were: R' Yitzchok Schneidman, R' Zalman Novik, R' Yosef Nelson, R' Avner Shifrin, R' Benzion Sokolik, the bachur Zev Kohnitz, Chazan Shmuel Kanteroff, and the bachur Chaim Shimon Kanteroff.

The members of the Aguda from other areas were: R' Shmuel Dov Ganeles from Far Rockaway, R' Sholom Schneiderman of Philadelphia, R' Axelrod from Baltimore, R' Leib Horowitz from Boston, and R' Avrohom Popack

from Wilkes-Barre. R' Menachem Mendel Lokshin, menahel of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, also attended the meeting, in order to coordinate the activities of Aguch and Agudas HaT'mimim.

They spoke about the Aguda's activities. A discussion ensued, in the course of which it was suggested that they hold a gathering once a year to farbreng, in addition to the annual meeting of the Aguda. However, they concluded that it wasn't practical to invite all the Tmimim once a year for a general gathering and another time to farbreng, so they decided to invite everyone once a year for two days, with one day devoted to a meeting and the other day dedicated to farbrenging.

In the years to come, meetings and farbrengens were held that raised the morale of the Chassidim and strengthened and connected them, as R' Jacobson wrote:

The impact of the Aguda was apparent both in the raising of the morale of all the members and strengthening their connection with their past in Tomchei Tmimim. It also strengthened the work of Agudas Chabad, for the good of the mosdos like yeshiva Tomchei Tmimim in Poland, maamad, and general matters of the movement of Agudas Chabad... All of this helped alleviate our loneliness somewhat, in the atmosphere of America.

TO RELEASE THE "SCHNEERSOHN LIBRARY"

The vast collection of s'farim belonging to the Rebbeim had been languishing in the Lenin Library for decades. The Rebbe Rayatz and the Rebbe MH"M made great efforts to remove it from Russia.

How did the "Schneersohn Library" end up in Moscow?

During World War I, the Rebbe Rashab left Lubavitch and ultimately settled in Rostov. Because of the



Title page of Likkutei Torah printed with money from the Aguda

upheavals at the time he put most of the s'farim in storage in Moscow, intending to retrieve them after the war.

However, at the end of the war, the Rebbe Rashab passed away. His son, the Rebbe Rayatz, inquired about the s'farim and about retrieving them from storage, but the communists had risen to power and had confiscated the warehouse and its contents. The s'farim were taken from there and put in a public library in Moscow. Over the years, the Rebbe Rayatz attempted through different channels to get back the s'farim. The Agudas HaT'mimim had a secret role in these efforts, only part of which is revealed in the Rebbe Rayatz's letters.

In the summer of 1926, R' Simpson and R' Jacobson started an organization called "Beis Rebbi," whose goal was to retrieve the s'farim. When the Rebbe Rayatz was informed of this, he wrote to them:

An elevated feeling such as this gives honor and praise to those who participate in it. (Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz, vol. 1, p. 297).

The Rebbe even instructed them to consult with legal experts and with those who had connections high up. In a letter dated 21 Teves, 5687, the Rebbe Rayatz informs R'

Simpson of the precise location of the s'farim: **The church of the Christians near the museum that is now named for Lenin.**

Later in the letter, the Rebbe told R' Simpson about various activities he should undertake in order to redeem the s'farim: to refer to the Aguda that already looked into the matter, to speak to heads of various communities, to coordinate with R' Menachem Mendel Lokshin, who served as distinguished director of Aguch at that time, and other things.

Two months later, at the end of Adar I, the Rebbe wrote a long and detailed letter to R' Simpson, part of which was about the s'farim:

Regarding the s'farim, based on the last bit of information I received, the largest museum in Moscow, which used to be called Romyanitzovski Museum and is now the Lenin Museum, took the s'farim and put them in bookcases and made a catalog. Now they say that their Judaic department is the most extensive.

It is not known what the organization "Beis Rebbi" accomplished, but it did not manage to redeem the s'farim. Except for twelve s'farim out of thousands, which were returned to the Rebbe, the library is still in captivity.

OBTAINING VISAS

Shortly after the formation of Agudas HaT'mimim, discussions were held about carrying out the Rebbe's instruction regarding bringing Tmimim to the United States. More instructions from the Rebbe had been sent on this issue. They planned to first work on helping two people: R' Shmuel Levitin, who was running the Chabad Beis Midrash l'Rabbanim in Nevel, and R' Yisroel Noach HaKatan (Chatzkovitz), a Lubavitcher rav in Lithuania.

Their efforts were successful and they were able to obtain visas for R'

Chatzkovitz and his family, but he explained that he had no money to buy tickets for the ship. At their next meeting, the Aguda decided that they would try to work on the matter with Aguch.

All further attempts on R' Chatzkovitz's behalf were unsuccessful, and sadly, he and his family remained in Lithuania where they perished some years later in the Holocaust.

The members of the Aguda also tried sending financial help to the mashpia, R' Alter Simchavitz who lived in Eretz Yisroel. He suffered from a severe illness which necessitated that he travel for treatment to Austria, but he did not have the money to pay for the expenses.

PRINTING AND DISSEMINATING LIKKUTEI TORAH

Chabad Chassidim in Warsaw planned to reprint Likkutei Torah and they asked Lubavitcher Chassidim in America for financial help - \$1000, a huge sum in those days. The members of Agudas HaT'mimim raised significant money for the printing.

It all began with a letter written by Chabad Chassidim in Warsaw to Agudas Chassidei Chabad in the US. This letter ended up in the hands of R' Jacobson, who was a member of the hanhala of Aguch. They had written that there weren't enough copies of Likkutei Torah in Poland and even in the main yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim the quantity of s'farim did not serve the number of talmidim in the yeshiva. In order to reprint it, they needed \$1000.

R' Jacobson responded that it was no simple matter to raise such a large sum of money, to which the Chassidim in Warsaw replied that they could manage to reprint it with \$600, too.

The members of Agudas

HaT'mimim were called to a meeting and each one committed to raising money. Funds started coming in but it wasn't enough. A few months went by, but the hanhala of the Aguda were unsuccessful in raising the rest of the amount.

On 24 Teves, 5687, a festive meal was held at the home of R' Jacobson in honor of the Yom Hilula of the Alter Rebbe. During the meal, which was attended by a number of his congregants and acquaintances, R' Jacobson spoke about the Alter Rebbe and his important work, Likkutei Torah, and about the printing in Poland.

Those present, under the spell of the farbrengen, contributed generously. That evening, several hundreds of dollars were raised. This money was duly sent to Warsaw and the printing got underway. The s'farim were printed by the Rom printing house in Vilna and was the sixth edition. About a thousand copies, in two volumes, were printed in this edition, and about half of them were disseminated and sold in the United States.

I FEEL THEIR DESIRE TO MEET

When the Rebbe Rayatz left the Soviet Union in Tishrei, 5688/1927, R' Simpson wrote to the Rebbe how greatly Anash wanted to see him. The Rebbe responded:

Your desire to meet, I feel strongly... and that is my entire goal - to unite completely with Anash and the Tmimim so that we can fulfill the holy obligation assigned to us, all of us as one, by order of the Rebbe [Rashab], to illuminate the darkness of the land with the light of Torah.

Upon receiving this letter, Agudas HaT'mimim held a meeting and bringing the Rebbe Rayatz to America headed the agenda. Their decision was written in the minutes:

It was decided that since the

coming of the Rebbe is essential in order to achieve the desired result, special attention must be given that it be so. And therefore much effort and work are necessary, whether in publicizing his coming, unifying Anash prior to his arrival, and spiritual activities to whatever extent possible until he comes.

When he comes, all should be ready vessels to receive his light and influence, and since all this requires a great deal of time, it was decided to begin working on this immediately.

That visit did not materialize but he did come some two years later, at the end of 5689. The Rebbe stayed nearly a year and it was largely due to the efforts of the members of Agudas HaT'mimim that his trip to America was so successful.

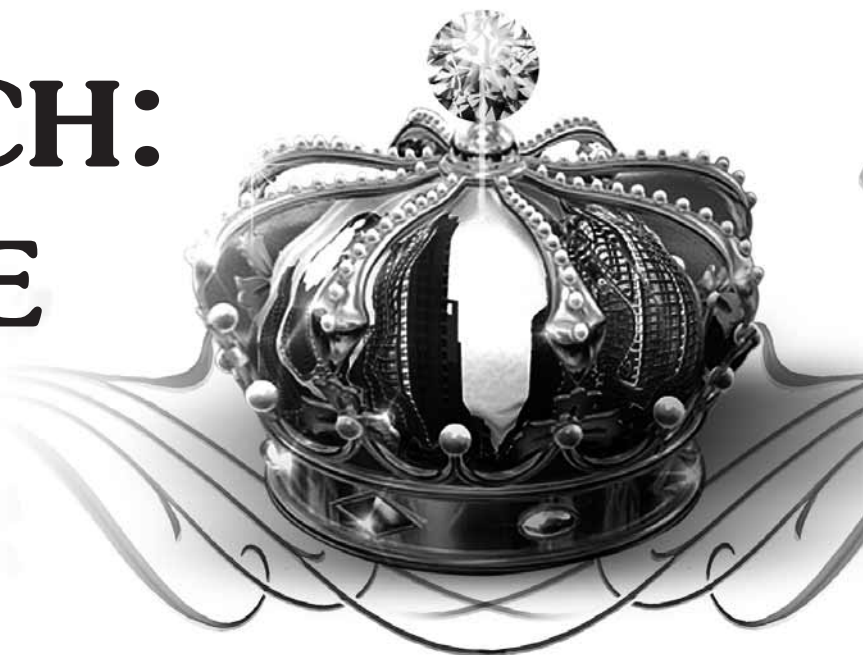
At the beginning of the visit, for Rosh HaShana 5690/1929, about thirty members of the Aguda went to the Rebbe for yechidus. A farbrengen was held for all members of the Aguda and R' Popack was the main speaker. He also taught them a niggun that he had heard from the mashpia in Lubavitch, R' Shilem Kuratin.

Because of the efforts the Aguda invested in the visit, the other work of Agudas HaT'mimim was put off. Even after the visit the work wasn't resumed for reasons that are not clear. It only started up again in the summer of 1932.

A sign of renewed activity was the meeting held at R' Simpson's house on 23 Iyar, 5692/1932. Invitations had been sent to 25 Tmimim; fifteen of them attended. Nevertheless, the work of the Aguda did not continue as it once had and the final mention of it in writing is from the year 5694, when a special farbrengen was held by Agudas HaT'mimim with the famous R' Itche der Masmid (Horowitz).

Sources: Likkutei Torah Vilna edition 5688, Igros Admur HaRayatz, Zichron Livnei Yisroel, Toldos Chabad b'Artzos ha'Bris, Chassid Neeman, B'Kerem Chabad, Sifriyas Lubavitch

MOSHIACH: WHAT WE BELIEVE.



Rabbi Gershon Avtzon
Rosh Yeshiva in Cincinnati

PART 9 OF 20.

As the saying goes, “75% of known facts are either not known or not facts.” This is especially true regarding belief in Moshiach and Geula, where there are many preconceived notions and questions that remain unasked – and unanswered.

In our previous articles, we discussed the actions that Moshiach must do to prove to Klal Yisroel that he is in fact the promised redeemer. Rambam writes that Moshiach must build the Beis HaMikdash and bring all the Jews back to Eretz Yisroel. You, our dear reader, may be thinking:

WHY DOES THE RAMBAM NOT MENTION THAT MOSHIACH WILL PERFORM MIRACLES?

In truth, the Rambam himself addresses this issue. He writes the following (Hilchos Melachim, chapter 11): “One should not entertain the notion that the King Moshiach must work miracles and wonders, bring about new phenomena within the world, resurrect the dead, or perform other similar deeds. This is [definitely] not true. [A proof can be brought from

the fact that] that Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest Sages of the Mishna, was one of the supporters of King Ben Koziva, and would describe him as the King Moshiach. He and all the Sages of his generation considered him to be the King Moshiach until he was killed because of [his] sins. Once he was killed, they realized that he was not [the Moshiach]. The Sages did not ask him for any signs or wonders.”

One may ask: The fact is that Bar-Kochva was *not* Moshiach. Maybe they should, in fact, have asked him to perform miracles? Had they done so, they would have known in advance that he was not Moshiach. Why, then, is this a proof of anything?

The answer is simple: The Chachamim knew - at the end - that Bar Kochva was not Moshiach from the fact that he was killed by the Romans for his sins (see Likkutei Sichos, volume 27, page 199, footnote 69* for a fascinating explanation that reconciles the many different opinions on the matter). The showing of miracles - or lack of it - was not part of the equation.

The Chachamim could be “mistaken” in the character of a person. They could have thought -

and the truth is that at the time he was - that Bar Kochva was on a higher level than he later proved to be. They would not be mistaken in the requirements and obligations of Moshiach. If the performance of miracles was a necessity, they would have asked him.

Why is Moshiach not obligated to - though he can, if he wants to - perform miracles?

We explained in a previous article that a job-description is based on the job. Regarding the era of Moshiach, the Rambam writes (Hilchos Melachim Chapter 12, “One should not think that when Moshiach comes, the nature of the world will change. The world will run its natural course. The difference will be that kingship will be returned to the House of David HaMelech. Those P’sukim which seem to imply otherwise – such as “The wolf shall lie with the lamb (Yeshaya 11:6)” - should not be taken literally. They are all analogies for what the world will like in that era.”

Being that the era of Moshiach - at least at the beginning - will not be an overtly miraculous one, the performance of miracles is not one of the necessary qualifications for Moshiach.

PART 10 OF 20

But this leaves us with a big question:

Rambam himself writes that every Jew must believe in T'chias HaMeisim - the resurrection of the dead - in the times of Moshiach. Is that not a miracle? How can the Rambam write that there will be no miracles in the era of Moshiach?

To clarify the question:

In his commentary on Mishnayos (Meseches Sanhedrin, Perek Chelek), Rambam enumerates the 13 principles of Jewish faith. The 13th principle is to believe in the resurrection of the dead. In the times of Moshiach, all the Jewish people that have passed away will return body and soul to this physical world and be rewarded for the Mitzvos that they had done during their life-time.

[For sources in the Torah for belief in the resurrection, see Talmud Sanhedrin 90b and further.]

I am sure that everyone understands that the resurrection of a human being is a miracle. According to nature, once a person passes away, his body decomposes and there is no chance of life. The cycle of man started from the earth, as Adam was created by Hashem from dust, and man eventually has to return to the earth. If so, how can Rambam say that there will be no miracles in the era of Moshiach?

The answer in short (see Likkutei Sichos Vol. 27, pages 206-208):

Yemos HaMoshiach refers to two eras. In the first, the natural order is maintained, while the second is

miraculous. This second era is a **result** of the first era.

Miracles are an expression of infinite G-dliness in this world. For one to merit such a revelation, he must be deserving of it. The bigger the miracle, the worthier one must be to earn it. This is true for both personal and general miracles and salvation.

One of the greatest miracles in the history of our people was the exodus from Egypt after 210 years of bitter slavery. Before Hashem redeemed the Jewish people, he made sure that - **as a whole** - they were worthy. As the Midrash writes (see Rashi's commentary on Parsha Bo 12:6) that Hashem gave the Jewish people two Mitzvos, so that they should become worthy of salvation (Bris Mila and Korban Pesach).

The resurrection of every Jewish person that has passed away entails an unparalleled miracle. To merit that, the entire Jewish people must be totally involved in Torah and be inspired by its message.

This is **not possible** during the time of exile. In exile, the Jewish people are oppressed physically and

spiritually. They are persecuted and expelled from land to land. Even during times of peace, it is hard to focus. Besides the ignorance of Judaism found in over 85% of world Jewry - by most, at no fault of their own - we are exposed and vulnerable to the temptation and struggles of the reality of this physical world.

This will change in the first era of Yemos HaMoshiach. At that point - when we will be ruled by Melech HaMoshiach - the oppression will cease. The truth of the Torah will be revealed to all. There will no longer be a struggle to be involved in Torah. All Jewish people will realize that Torah is their birthright, and will turn their full attention to the service of Hashem.

At that point, we will be worthy of many great revelations of infinite G-dliness, not limited to the regular natural order. At that point the second era will begin, and the resurrection of the dead will occur.

Will all the Jewish people - including sinners - be resurrected?

This we will explain IY"H in our next article.

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A SUPER- ACTIVE SHLIACH

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

Whether it's printing the Tanya in Lebanon under PLO fire, representing Chabad on the Tzfas City Council, or the situations he encounters in his roles as a member of the Education Committee of Agudas Chassidei Chabad and the director-general of Beis Chana Institutions in Tzfas, Rabbi Shlomo Raskin has plenty to share. Part 3 of 3.*

[Continued from last week]

Outside the office of Rabbi Shlomo Raskin, director-general of Beis Chana Institutions in Tzfas, the frigid winds penetrate both coat and sweater simultaneously. Inside the building, the cold seemed to disappear, vanishing as if it was never there. You can feel the deep inner warmth in the halls and passageways, the welcoming atmosphere warming you far more than the most new-fangled heaters. This is a most successful vehicle for educating hundreds of students along the path of the House of G-d

— the path of our Rebbeim, the path illuminated by the sichos, maamarim, letters, and instructions of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach.

The walls of the short hallway are decorated with attractive artwork prepared by several classes that completed their studies in the school. It's amazing to see how much each class, in its own way, found the means to express their appreciation to the institution and its administrators who built their chassidic character, masterfully designing them to be young women counted among the legion of the

king.

Having followed Rabbi Raskin from his childhood behind the iron curtain to the founding of Beis Chana, we conclude our interview with his more recent activities. In addition to his administration of Beis Chana Institutions, Rabbi Raskin has been a part of the administration of Matteh Moshiach since its establishment, and is also a member of Agudas Chassidei Chabad in Eretz HaKodesh. But it was his role as an ordinary member of Anash in Tzfas that earned him the privilege — and bragging rights — of printing the





Rabbi Raskin (right) at last year's dedication ceremony for Beis Chana's new building

Tanya in Lebanon, under constant PLO fire.

PRINTING THE TANYA UNDER FIRE

Operation Peace for the Galilee - or, as it's commonly known, "the First Lebanon War" - caught the Chabad community of Tzfas during a process of growth and development. The community living among the historic lanes of the Old City was expanding, while the center of chassidic life in Tzfas revolved around the bustling nearby Tzemach Tzedek Synagogue. "Before the war

broke out, the residents of Tzfas and the surrounding area lived in constant fear. The terrorists would send a rain of Katyusha rockets on the city whenever they desired. I remember canceling a teachers' meeting because of the rocket fire."

"After several long years of constant provocation by PLO terrorists, the government of Israel decided to go to war. IDF forces mobilized as far as Beirut. "My deputy in the Beis Chana administration was Rabbi Avraham HaLevi Goldberg, *a"n*, a vigorous and active chassid. He urged Anash

to make use of this tremendous opportunity to fulfill the Rebbe's directive and set out to print the Tanya on Lebanese soil. He succeeded in encouraging everyone to take part in the project, and we immediately organized two groups of avreichim who accepted the task of printing the Tanya just as soon as it would be logistically possible. There was a feeling of great energy in the air.

"Today it is a relatively simple matter to pick up the phone and deploy someone ready, willing and able to print the Tanya, but back then we had to look for a local Tzfas printer who would be willing to take his heavy machinery, roll it onto a vehicle, and join us for the trip into Lebanon. After a brief search, we managed to find such a person and we set out on our journey. I was in the second group to enter the region.

"My crew consisted of Rabbi Avraham HaLevi Goldberg, *a"n*, Rabbi Yehuda Leib HaLevi Popack, and myself. We eventually got the nickname "The RPG Crew", an acronym for Raskin, Popack, and Goldberg. At the first entry into the zone, we spent the whole night in the area of the 'Good Fence' near the border until we received permission from Israel Defense Forces authorities to move forward with our private vehicle. We were eventually granted permission, and we joined a caravan of several dozen IDF supply trucks. We placed ourselves in the middle of the caravan, and it started to move at the speed expected from heavy vehicles. It wasn't long before we had become completely exhausted by the slow movement.

"After only a few kilometers, the road began to fill with gaping craters and potholes. Suddenly, forty kilometers an hour (25 mph) became too fast a clip. We were traveling in a low private vehicle, and every hole in the ground or

Today it is a relatively simple matter to pick up the phone and deploy someone ready, willing and able to print the Tanya, but back then we had to look for a local Tzfas printer who would be willing to take his heavy machinery, roll it onto a vehicle, and join us for the trip into Lebanon.

sharp motion would shake the whole car. More and more army trucks started passing us, until we found ourselves traveling alone in the total darkness, driving through the middle of Lebanon as if we were local residents on a peaceful day. If that wasn't enough, after another few kilometers, our vehicle began to sputter, and to our horror, we discovered that we had a flat tire.

"Alone in hostile territory, we nervously emerged from the car and tried to change the tire as quickly as we could. There was no light, and the only sound was the howling of jackals somewhere nearby. Our imaginations went into overdrive, conjuring up a terrorist behind every tree in the orchards surrounding us. Finally, after much praying, we managed to fix the tire and continue on our way. It was only at sunrise that we arrived in the city of Tzur, located at the foot of Lebanon's coast, and met up with the first group and Rabbis Kaplan and Ceitlin.

"The printing press from Tzfas was with them, and they were at the final stages of the Tanya printing and just about ready to move on. We proceeded together with them to Tzidon, where we also printed the Tanya, and from there we moved on towards the outskirts of Beirut. The army had paved the road at the entrance to the city, thereby

bypassing a refugee camp swarming with terrorists that would prove dangerous to its forces. We traveled along this route and entered a Lebanese village, asking the local residents if this was part of Beirut. They said yes, and we quickly started printing the Tanya right there in the village.

"Continued inquiries eventually determined that the village was a suburb of Beirut, but still not the actual city. We then received instructions from the Rebbe to print the seifer also in Beirut itself, where we knew there were Jews still living. We continued on our way until we came to the furthestmost point that the IDF had reached. Beyond that point there were no soldiers – just a large demilitarized zone where the terrorists were situated and had set up outposts. The IDF had established itself in a kind of large parking lot, and we positioned ourselves there to make our fourth Tanya printing within twenty-four hours. We were now certain that we were in Beirut.

"Night had fallen in the meantime, and we toiled at the printing press well into the night in order to finish the print job. Every few minutes, the quiet was broken by a volley of rocket fire, then another, and another. We didn't know who was firing or where they were aiming. After several long

hours without sleep, we finally dozed off.

"Someone from our group paid one of the local residents in order to make a call to the Rebbe's secretariat in New York. When he returned, he informed us that he had received instructions from the Rebbe not to leave the area until we bound at least a portion of the s'farim in Beirut itself.

"This was a complete surprise for us. None of us were bookbinders, and we didn't even know how to fold the huge sheet, upon which dozens of Tanya pages were printed. Then, something totally out of this world happened: From out of nowhere, Rabbi Yehoshua Segal, who was a bachur at the time, appeared on the scene. He had recently begun working with Rabbi Manny Wolf at the Kehos bookstore in Kfar Chabad, and he knew the craft of folding and binding s'farim. When we told him about the Rebbe's request, he took several sheets and folded and arranged them until he had created a finished Tanya before our disbelieving eyes. Out of all the teams of chassidim on Lebanese soil, including the Chabad Mobile Centers and others, the one trained in the publishing trade suddenly came our way!"

AN EMOTIONAL MEETING WITH THE JEWS OF LEBANON

As the following night approached, the chassidim returned with their heavy burden of four printings. Back in Tzfas, they made contact again with the Rebbe's secretariat, and the Rebbe issued a directive to place a thick binding on at least a portion of the s'farim and to return to Lebanon in order to learn from these s'farim with the local Jewish population.

"There was one middle-aged Jew, the manager of the Lebanon 'Yellow Pages', who discovered us in Beirut

and gave us his phone number and address and offered to assist us in any way he could. He also asked if we could help him and his son obtain exit visas to the United States, because he wanted to live the remainder of his life in the West.

“Rabbi Shmuel Fromer from Haifa helped us that night with the bookbinding job. He knew a professional from the Gulf of Haifa area who promised us that several s’farim from each printing job would be ready the following morning, and he would have the rest bound later. In the meantime, we contacted the Jewish businessman in Beirut, told him about the Rebbe’s instructions, and asked if he could gather some of his Jewish acquaintances so we could set a time to meet together and learn Tanya with them. We didn’t know if any Jews lived in Tzur or Tzidon, and since these were cities were crawling with numerous PLO terrorists, we decided to make our way straight for Beirut.

“The following day, Rabbis Kaplan, Goldberg, and Popack got into my car and we traveled to the Gulf of Haifa, where we picked up the Tanyas from the bookbinder and then passed by Kiryat Shmuel to pick up Rabbi Fromer as well. We already knew how to get to Beirut, more or less, and how the military operations were progressing. Not stopping to obtain official permission, we proceeded straight into Lebanese territory. As we crossed over the border, we joined up with a small caravan of jeeps also heading for Beirut. The road was still filled with craters and potholes, and the huge clouds of dust created by the advancing jeeps made it extremely difficult to see where we were going.

“After traveling for several kilometers deep into Lebanese territory, I felt the car sustain a hard blow underneath, triggering the light on the oil gauge. That was all we needed right then. But we had no



The RPG Crew. From right to left: Rabbi Shlomo Raskin, Rabbi Yehuda Leib HaLevi Popack, Rabbi Avraham HaLevi a”h Goldberg



Cutting the ribbon at the building dedication. From left to right: rav of the Chabad community of Tzfas – Rabbi Mordechai Bistritzky, Tzfas municipality director-general Mr. Motti Cohen, Rabbi Shlomo Raskin

choice and stopped on the side of the road to check what the trouble was. Fortunately, it happened near an IDF parking station and we moved the car into the lot. A soldier on the premises checked the car and told us that the oil tank had been damaged, resulting in a massive oil leak that made it impossible to continue our journey until it was repaired. We thought about the Jew in Beirut, who had surely already gathered his Jewish friends and acquaintances and was waiting for us.

“While the soldiers in the

parking area promised to call a mechanic, the army operated at its well-known slow pace, and every passing moment was extremely valuable to us. Realizing that we were wasting too much time waiting, we decided to leave the car where it was and travel to Beirut with the army vehicles heading for the area. We eventually reached the meeting place, but as could be expected, the group had long dispersed. We were very saddened by the lost opportunity, but called the Jewish businessman, apologized for the delay, and agreed that we would

The Rebbe spoke with great intensity about the failure of Israeli policymakers to allow the army to complete their operation and defeat the enemy, once and for all. The Rebbe added that people tell how far the army is from Beirut, and that it's not simple to go in there. He then picked up the Tanya that we had printed and said, 'This seifer was printed in Beirut.'

meet him the following morning at the same location.

"In the meantime, we learned that there was a regiment of paratroopers at the nearby American College building, and we decided to spend the night with them. They greeted us warmly, though the hundreds of soldiers and officers were occupied mainly with grumbling over the diplomats who were not instructing the army to continue the fighting against the terrorists and achieve victory. Naturally, in light of the Rebbe's sichos on the matter, we totally agreed with them. Rabbi Fromer, a former member of an elite IDF commando unit, quickly entered into a conversation with the soldiers, lasting well into the night and developing into a marvelous farbrengen. I thought to myself that the whole reason for the car trouble was in order to get together with these soldiers...

"The next morning, we returned to the location we set for our meeting with the local Jews, a small building that was under IDF control. We were met by the Jewish businessman and his son, who lifted his shirt to show that he wore tzitzis, and a number of women and children. It turned out that the men

were afraid to show their faces, and it was specifically the women who were more courageous, as has always been the case among the Jewish People. None of them spoke the Hebrew language, but the atmosphere was one of tremendous spiritual elation. We told them that we were meeting with them as messengers of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who is the faithful shepherd of the Jewish People, concerned for all Jews everywhere.

"We distributed the Tanyas printed in Beirut to each of the participants, and gave Rabbi Fromer the honor of teaching them Chapter 32. He began to lecture on the Tanya, despite the fact that no one understood a single word that he said. As he started to read the words of the Tanya, the sound of crying and emotional sobbing could be heard from those present, and it quickly affected us as well. I felt for the first time what we learned in chassidus about the essence of the Jewish soul. Their 'pintele Yid' flashed and illuminated with great force. Even if they didn't understand the content, their souls understood every word. This was a powerful Jewish experience that has remained engraved in my memory.

"Our mission accomplished, we

turned our attention to the next hurdle: getting our car fixed. The Jewish businessman suggested that we go to a garage located in Beirut's Christian section. We needed a tow truck to bring the car there, and we hired a local individual who was employed by the garage. When he arrived, we discovered that he was a 'Palestinian'. We got into his vehicle, and there were some scary moments when, instead of following the bypass road that the IDF had paved, he traveled through a dangerous refugee camp. We had to show that we were not afraid, despite what we knew would happen if he decided to stop there and let his friends know that he had some Jews with him."

Throughout that period, there were other Chabad activities that took place with the soldiers and the local Jewish community, such as the famous mikva construction and renovation, which was carried out with the Rebbe's bracha. "That Shabbos, the Rebbe spoke with great intensity about the failure of Israeli policymakers to allow the army to complete their operation and defeat the enemy, once and for all. The Rebbe added that people tell how far the army is from Beirut, and that it's not simple to go in there. He then picked up the Tanya that we had printed and said, 'This seifer was printed in Beirut.' When we heard about this, we were filled with emotion. The Rebbe had taken the Tanya we printed and raised it for all to see."

CHABAD COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE IN CITY HALL

A year later, in 5743, the Chabad askanim in Tzfas felt that the municipal government may not be taking them seriously enough and was causing problems for them and the development of the institutions. "Rabbi Kaplan wrote about this to the Rebbe and suggested that in his



Public figures, shluchim, and rabbanim at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Beis Chana campus, also celebrating the tenth anniversary of the renewal of the Chabad community in Tzfas

opinion, if Chabad would have a municipal representative, it would then be possible to deal with matters more effectively. At the time, there were not yet as many Chabad families as there are today, and he proposed that we run on a joint ticket, where it would be agreed that we receive a seat on the City Council. The Rebbe replied, 'Act in accordance with the advice of the local askanim.' Thus, the 'Institution Directors' Committee' was created and this advisory body renders many decisions on behalf of the community to this very day.

"Rabbi Kaplan was elected twice to the Tzfas City Council on a joint list of candidates – once with the National Religious Party, and then with Agudat Yisroel. When he later asked me to accept the position, I was reluctant. I already had plenty of work with the Beis Chana development project, which was then at its height. But when the rav of the local Chabad community, Rabbi Levi Bistritzky, of blessed memory, placed the task upon me, I couldn't refuse him. This was in 5753, and my consent was on the condition that the Rebbe sanction the appointment, especially since it had

been decided that Chabad would field an independent slate of candidates for the upcoming municipal elections.

"The Rebbe nodded his head in a sign of approval, and the campaign was underway. In the elections held in Cheshvan 5754, Chabad won a seat on the City Council and I became the municipal representative of the community and its institutions. My work now became even more intensive. I divided my responsibilities, which enabled me to spend ample time working both as school administrator and city councilman. I made certain to be present at every visit by a municipal government official. These were the early days after the Oslo Accords and their accompanying territorial concessions, and I utilized each such opportunity to mention the words of the Rebbe about our unassailable right to Eretz Yisroel and the danger of giving away land."

One of Rabbi Raskin's municipal achievements was the street leading to the Kiryat Chabad complex being re-named after the Rebbe. In general, he is most proud of the community he has represented. "I have come to understand what a

truly marvelous community we have. Most of the complaints that came my way dealt with spiritual matters, such as the drawings of non-kosher animals that the municipality placed on the electricity cabinets in the streets."

After serving for twelve and a-half years on the Tzfas City Council (5754-5766), Rabbi Raskin is in a position to advise Chabad representatives throughout the country that they should not be embarrassed and should publicly express their identity. "Even if the other chareidi representatives remove their hats, I keep mine on."

THE ESSENCE OF WORK IN EDUCATION

Despite the number of roles Rabbi Raskin fills, he remains well-liked and modest. He operates out of a sense of genuine love and concern towards his fellow Jew, and a primary understanding of the continuing generation, as he works to shape their education.

A few years ago, a former student was arrested by the police, and when she was brought before a judge, the state attorney asked the court to order her incarceration until

the conclusion of the trial. “When we heard about this,” Rabbi Raskin recalled, “we understood that the charges against her were totally unfounded, and we quickly tried to provide her with assistance. Once a student, always a student. We retained an experienced and trained private attorney for her, and Rabbi Yosef Chitrik, Rabbi Ze’ev Crombie, and I appeared personally before the court. During the discussion, the attorney asked me to stand, and he began to ask me questions.

‘What is your occupation?’

‘Director of an institution for girls,’ I replied.

‘How many girls are in this institution?’ he asked.

‘About five hundred.’

‘Are you responsible for their education and welfare?’ he inquired, and I replied in the affirmative.

“The attorney then asked me, ‘Could you take care of one more?’ I said that I would be delighted, and would even give her lodging in my home. It was only then that I understood where the attorney was heading. The girl was released to stay in my house until her eventual acquittal. After the trial ended, the student told me that she was touched by the sight of the three of us standing on the side, crying. When I left the court, the answers I gave before the judge kept echoing loudly in my ears: institution director, and not just any institution but one with hundreds of students, and I am responsible for their education and welfare, adding that this is also the shlichus of the Rebbe. It was then that the full extent of my responsibilities hit home.”

When asked what principle guides him in his approach to education, Rabbi Raskin responds with a smile, “I am asked this question often by government officials and welfare department representatives. I could say plainly and honestly that our form of education is based upon chassidic

values, a firm connection to the Rebbe, and a vitality pertaining to the subject of Moshiach and the Redemption.

“But let me tell you how someone on the side looks at our style of education. This happened about two years ago, when the regional inspector from the Ministry of Education came to meet with our staff. The first thing he asked was this very question. After each staff member naturally responded with the familiar and correct replies, the school’s social worker, who is not affiliated with Chabad, stood up and said that as someone ‘on the side’, she can state categorically that the most important motto is ‘the Rebbe’. ‘What does that mean, ‘the Rebbe’?’ the inspector queried. The social worker proceeded to explain: ‘Every activity done within the walls of this school is instilled with the concept of the Rebbe, i.e., how does the Rebbe perceive it, how this fits with the Rebbe’s teachings, would the Rebbe be pleased, etc.’ Her words moved all of us, for she had accurately described the very essence of our institution.”

PUTTING ONE’S HEART AND SOUL INTO EDUCATION

In recent years, numerous lectures, conferences, and panel discussions have been held on the painful subject of school dropouts. The most essential part of this important work is done by the Education Committee of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, and Rabbi Raskin serves as one of its members. We wondered whether he could enlighten us with some magic formula for solving or limiting this painful problem?

He divides his answer between boys and girls: “The work with bachurim is more difficult and complex, and the problem usually starts to emerge in yeshiva k’tana.

By then, we already have to find methods and approaches on how to get them to enjoy learning Gemara.

“A bachur who hates to learn Gemara and wastes his time doing nothing very quickly finds himself looking for other things to give him a sense of satisfaction, until he eventually departs from his study program. Even in the first year of yeshiva k’tana, instructors must take care that their classes are not only academically prepared, but that all of the students are involved and understand the learning material. Furthermore, if they notice a student who is having certain difficulties, they must involve the parents and suggest that they pay an avreich or another bachur to help their son progress in his studies and begin to love what he’s learning – otherwise, they’ll find him sitting idly at home, and that would be a sin.

“With regard to girls, the work is much easier because there are more ways to get them to remain in a learning framework that will enable them to demonstrate their qualifications. Based on my experience in the field, I can state that a student who comes from a tension-filled home lacking mutual support from her parents and a proper example to follow, comes to school and lets out all her built-up frustration. Then, when she subsequently returns home, she already possesses the courage to externalize what has accumulated within her. These are essentially the dynamics.

“Since the student does not have the courage to stand before her parents and tell them the truth to their faces, it all comes out at school, and afterwards when she has Shabbos off, it streams into the home as well. The only way to defuse the situation is through real and productive cooperation between the parents and the school staff, provided that there is a genuine desire to help her. The fact is that

sometimes you can have a staff that wants nothing more than peace and quiet without any unnecessary drama, prepared simply to send her home. However, if the staff is interested in improving the situation and the parents give their backing, this is a major step towards bringing success.”

Our discussion with Rabbi Raskin illustrates that work in education is no easy job and is not suitable for everyone. It is a major challenge that must include the spirit of shlichus and dedication. How, then, has Rabbi Raskin succeeded in registering such a high percentage of success at Beis Chana?

“I want to answer this question honestly. It is no secret that each year, Beis Chana also accepts students who are not suitable for its program. This is a certain percentage that we know about and are prepared to accommodate. It is our hope that through the efforts of the school’s staff and the positive influence of the other students, they will change for the better.

“Our social worker told me that the level of success in our school is above and beyond anything she has seen elsewhere, and realizing that the Rebbe is truly the one who runs the institution, all these successes stand in his merit.

“Here’s a story that proves the point. Once about fifteen years ago, I happened to hear that one of the local Tzfas newspapers was planning to print an extremely offensive article on the Chabad community here. I was well acquainted with the editor, and I went to his office and tried to speak to his heart. Regrettably, he considered the article so sensational that he would never dream of removing it.

“I left deeply disappointed, knowing that this article would cause the very opposite of *k’vod Lubavitch*. But I would not give up. I knew that one of the newspaper’s employees was a Beis Chana



Rabbi Raskin receiving a kuntres from the Rebbe at one of the International Shluchim Conferences

graduate from the early years, who unfortunately had departed from the path of Torah. I went over to her to seek her advice on what to do. As I was speaking to her, I realized that she doesn’t have some insignificant position – she is in charge of sending the newspaper to print. She concurred with her employer that it would be no simple matter to remove the offensive article, as that day was the deadline and there was no replacement article to put in that column. I explained to her how much displeasure this article would cause to the Rebbe, and left.

“I returned from the newspaper’s offices in a very dejected state, as all of my efforts had apparently gone to waste. The next day, however, I saw that my words had not fallen on deaf ears. I have kept a copy of that week’s issue of the paper, which was published without the article – in its place is a blank square. My words had apparently penetrated her heart, and she boldly decided to remove the article, to the great displeasure of the editors and reporters. It turns out that Chabad education is

something that doesn’t disappear with the passage of time. In fact, her daring venture cost her dearly, and she was eventually dismissed from the job with the newspaper...”

ANASH LEADERSHIP IN THE HANDS OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

Towards the end of the interview, we asked Rabbi Raskin about his membership on the Vaad Agudas Chassidei Chabad and how he perceives his role in this organization in the present era.

“The Rebbe defined the role of the organization, and this has not changed: ‘The authority, conduct, and affairs of Anash in Eretz HaKodesh are in the hands of Agudas Chassidei Chabad in Eretz HaKodesh, headed by (Vaad) Rabbanei Anash, who are the judges and halachic authorities in the strength of Torah’.

“In practical terms, what comes out from this general instruction is for the Vaad to work on behalf of all the material and spiritual concerns of Anash, with one of the objectives being to make certain that the large institutions will not swallow up the smaller ones, enabling them to develop, even grow, and bring honor to Chabad-Lubavitch.

INVOLVED AND WELL-ROOTED

This profile was concluded in the campus dining hall. Just before the students came in to eat lunch, Rabbi Raskin asked the principal to accompany him as he prepared the upcoming renovations to the dining hall entrance and the hand washing station. That’s Rabbi Shlomo Raskin - involved in every detail, large and small. He doesn’t settle for meetings in an ivory tower or reclining on a leather couch in his office. I met a successful askan who shows tremendous appreciation towards his

SCIENTISM IN A CHABAD SCHOOL?

By Aryeh Gotfryd, PhD

Yud Shvat is about hiskashrus and nesius. But how loyal are we to the Rebbe's values when it comes to how we educate our youth? Here is an issue that is relevant to many of us, whether we have children who study science in school, mekuravim who need answers, or just want to know.

Dear Dr. Gotfryd,

Thank you for agreeing to review my daughter's high school textbook and to evaluate its suitability for use in a Chabad school. As we discussed, I am mainly concerned about the way they treat the age of the world, the solar system, the big bang and evolution.

Rabbi _____

Dear Rabbi _____,

I've reviewed the book and here are my abbreviated findings and thoughts.

By preface, every school type has its standards and outlook, be it a public school, a community school like a Hebrew academy, a modern orthodox, or a charedi school. My comments are more pointed and categorical than they would be if I were asked to comment on these other cases because you emphasize

that your girl's school is Chabad so I assume the Rebbe's standards are to be reflected there, and also that you won't be offended if I tell it 'like it is.'

Liberally sprinkled throughout your child's text, from beginning to end, are heretical notions and even idolatrous narratives presented as science curriculum.

Specifically difficult is the one third of the text which is squarely focused on astronomy (nature and motion of heavenly bodies) and cosmology (origin and history of the universe). This unit of the book requires mastery of a large, diverse and detailed body of persuasive facts and arguments that would lead the average unbiased and rational person to conclude as follows:

*The universe was created 14 billion years ago;

*The universe originated in a Big Bang event;

*The universe has evolved over billions of years to form stars and planets including the sun and the earth;

*The earth is not unique, but there are hundreds of planets like it orbiting distant stars;

*The earth orbits the sun just like those distant planets orbit their

stars;

*The earth spins on its axis which explains day and night and the motion of the stars;

*Modern observations on earth and in space confirm all this;

*Scientists all over the world agree on all this.

[Note: If you are not like Rabbi _____, you may be saying to yourself, 'Hey! That is science.' 'That's what they *should* be taught,' and even 'Well, really *all* Lubavitchers should have to learn this stuff. After all we live in a real world.' Hold that thought, send me an email and *iy"H* I'll link you to resources that will explain scientifically why all the above-mentioned pseudo-scientific claims above are not really in the realm of science at all, but rather of scientism, the unverifiable speculations that constitute the mythology that many of today's scientists espouse as true.]

Back to the text, what are the implications for the Jewish and specifically Chabad student. First, there is frequent discussion of Greek and Roman idolatrous figures and narratives when discussing constellations. Students will have to study this information which involves transgressing two commandments: both the mentioning and study of idolatry. Even the book's first words are about a famous Xian holiday and the special story of an island named after it.

However, this is a small problem compared to the numbered points listed above. Idolatry is blatantly silly and therefore will not be taken seriously by the students. Heresy can be insidious. The Alter Rebbe in Tanya says that the 'wisdom of the nations' contaminates the intellect of the soul while slander and baseless hatred 'merely' contaminate the emotional qualities so they aren't as bad.

Here are some implications of

the scientific 'principles' listed above.

a) The Big Bang implies that creation was a onetime event followed by predictable natural outcomes that do not make room for any divine intervention whatsoever. (= *azav es ha'aretz*)

b) Cosmology and astronomy teach that only material forces exist. Nature's laws are viewed as fixed and unchanging since then, so everything can run by itself and there is no need for a god of any sort (*ein Eloka*). The implication is that even if there is a god, who needs him? He doesn't do anything.

c) Accepting a 14 billion year old world casts doubt on a 6000 year old world. One of the most common outcomes of accepting this view is the belief that the Torah is not literal but only literary at the beginning of B'Reishis when it says the world was made in six days. The Rebbe declares that this completely undermines the basis of Shabbos observance (*ki b'sheises yamim...*).

d) The Shabbos of Creation, the six millennia, are important for the idea of a seventh millennium (*yom sh'kulo Shabbos...*). In this way, those scientific views challenge faith in Moshiach.

e) These evolutionary views as well as the sun-centered outlooks picture man as insignificant in the big picture. We are only an insignificant speck in an insignificant galaxy. That's great for the true humility we must feel but it flies against the idea of the individual changing the world. This science would have us believe, contrary to Torah, that we are insignificant and our divine service is insignificant.

f) We have a Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah that all this science contradicts in many places. Learning, reviewing, being tested on, and taking in pride in mastery of all these science views shows that there is something of higher priority in our Jewish and Chassidic minds than

rabbinic authority.

That leaves us with 'pick and choose' Judaism, just like Reform and Conservative.

g) To say, yes but the Big Bang matches up with Genesis is simply not true. For example, the trees were created on Tuesday and the sun on Wednesday. That is absolutely laughable to any Big Bang evolutionist.

h) These apologetic views backfire. Students don't need equivocators teaching them nor do they need hypocrites - they need educators. The Rebbe was vehement against apologetics, and even faulted the Rambam on this. The Frierdiker Rebbe too was absolutely strident and passionate on this point in his famous 1923 letter to the Rabbis of Germany, saying it was causing spiritual holocaust (long before the physical one took place, *lo aleinu*).

i) The Lubavitcher Rebbe is reputed to have said, "You can explain to an American everything, but you can't tell him anything."

This is very relevant. There once was a time when it was enough for a parent or teacher to say about some idea, "We don't believe in that." Those days are gone. Everything is questioned nowadays.

Young people, especially high school students, pick up their facts and opinions from their peers and increasingly from mass media. They are very impressionable and the opinions they form in high school will largely stick with them for the rest of their lives (until Moshiach comes at which time we and they will say... Oops!).

The secular world view is very clear about its rejection of basic Torah facts and perspectives and nowhere is this more apparent than in science. It's hard enough to promote kosher and pure faith when the enemy is 'out there' somewhere but to invite doubts (*safek* = *Amalek*) into our schools and into the minds and hearts of our

daughters and to tell them "Do well," "Study hard," "Do your science homework" so they can master and internalize heretical concepts which they in turn will pass on to their children raises the question of why send kids to a Jewish school in the first place?

CONCLUSION.

You have a few options:

1. Do nothing - Keep the books, teach the material, don't worry about it. Probably some kids will not be hurt too badly. The problem is that many will.

2. Get rid of the books - It's a nice simple solution to the above but what about the science curriculum? The parents and the Board of Education are expecting the material to be covered.

3. Edit out the offensive parts - sounds somewhat reasonable but it sends a bad message to the kids because it looks like (a) we believe in defacing books (b) we don't have what to answer, and (c) it focuses their attention on the forbidden stuff and increases their curiosity. At a seider that's nice, but here, there's no mitzvah.

4. Get a good science text that teaches the facts but in a kosher way - But does such a textbook even exist?

5. Teach the textbook with critical commentary. Perhaps the best solution, but in that case an expert in Torah, science and education will have to do the following:

- Writing a companion curriculum
- Preparing companion lessons
- Providing companion readings
- Bringing in guest speakers or a/v media
- Train teachers in these matters

I trust this helps,

AG

MIRACLES ON SHLICHUS

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

POLICEMEN IN YEMOS HA'MOSHIACH

Like most of us, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Friedman, shliach in Ohr Yehuda, has been stopped by policemen from time to time for some infraction that would usually result in a traffic ticket. On each occasion, he took the opportunity to spread Chassidus by explaining to the officer what the Rebbe said about policemen in Yemos HaMoshiach. And on each occasion, the tickets were substituted with brachos.

For instance, one time he was particularly harried as it was a few hours before his flight to New York and he was driving without lights, without a seatbelt and holding his cell phone. A sharp eyed policeman pulled him over and asked for his license.

R' Friedman explained to him the difference between "shoftim and shotrim" (judges and policemen) and "shoftim and yoatzim" (judges and advisors) and suggested that the policeman act as they will in Yemos HaMoshiach and only give him good advice without a fine. R' Friedman promised that he would soon be installing a hands free speaker in the car and it would be thanks to the advice of the policeman, just like in Yemos

HaMoshiach. The policeman agreed on condition that the rabbi would pray for him and for the other policeman in the patrol car.

A similar thing happened when R' Friedman was stopped by a policeman on account of the number of children in the back seat. The policeman told him he was fining him 300 shekels.

R' Friedman quoted what the Rebbe said the role of policemen will be in Yemos HaMoshiach and the policeman agreed to act as in the era of Geula, without fines. He only asked that R' Friedman use the amount of the fine to buy nosh for the kids.

The children, who had heard what the policeman said, made sure that he quickly do as promised.

Several of R' Friedman's mekuravim noted his success, and when they too have been pulled over for unwittingly or unwisely erring on the traffic rules, they took the opportunity to emulate his approach. The cook of the yeshiva in Ohr Yehuda was driving a little too quickly and a policeman stopped him and said it was "a red highway" with a double fine of 1500 shekels. The cook explained to the policeman his role in Yemos HaMoshiach.

The policeman apologized, saying he had already begun

writing the ticket but because of Yemos HaMoshiach he would reduce the fine to just 100 shekels.

Of course, there's another lesson to be learned: Living with Moshiach means taking the officer's advice and not driving unsafely or illegally in the future!

THE REBBE'S WORDS WERE PRECISE

A mekurav of the Chabad house in Ohr Yehuda went to the Rebbe for Chanuka, 5752. He stood on line for "dollars" and when it was his turn he told the Rebbe that his wife had had eleven miscarriages and he asked for a bracha for healthy children. The Rebbe gave him a special look and said loudly, "Zara chaya v'kayama" (healthy and viable children). The man held out his hand to shake the Rebbe's hand. The secretary tried to move him along but the man firmly held the Rebbe's hand and asked for a son. The Rebbe looked at him and said loudly, "a son."

The man returned to Ohr Yehuda and gaily announced to everybody in shul that, "In another nine months I will have a son! The Rebbe promised!"

A month later, the man announced that it would be in another eight months. The time of the birth was getting closer and then...the woman gave birth to a girl. A stormy discussion ensued among the people in shul as to whether the birth was or wasn't in the z'chus of the Rebbe. After all, the Rebbe had promised a son and he had a daughter.

A year later, the man's wife gave birth to a son, and people realized that it was precisely as the Rebbe had said. First the Rebbe gave a bracha for children and he had a daughter. Then the Rebbe gave him a bracha for a son and



An aerial view of Moshav Nahalel

he had a son.

R' Friedman repeats this story at farbrengens with mekuravim and emphasizes that we can derive a lot of chizuk and emuna from it. The Rebbe promised us that the Geula is imminent yet it seems to us that Geula is delayed and that the Rebbe was incorrect. However, just as it was only after the son was born, a year later, that everybody saw how the Rebbe's words had been precise, we will see that the Geula, too, will happen precisely as the Rebbe prophesied.

A CHECK FROM THE REBBE

R' Friedman mentions before (and after) every story that the biggest miracle they see in Ohr Yehuda is the incredible expansion of the Chabad mosdos there. It looks almost like Kfar Chabad with a yeshiva k'tana (high

school), yeshiva g'dola (beis midrash), preschools, shul, and dozens of mekuravim and baalei t'shuva. A real k'hilla. As recently as ten or fifteen years ago, nobody would have believed that within such a short time a thriving k'hilla would develop. R' Friedman stressed the central role played by Rabbi Sholom Ber Hendel, the rosh yeshiva and the energetic spirit behind the development of all the mosdos.

"A few years ago we had a very difficult time financially," related R' Friedman. "I was very pressured by debts and needed help. I wrote to the Rebbe and put my letter in a volume of Igros Kodesh. In the answer that I opened to, the Rebbe wrote that he was going to participate in the activities with a check.

We didn't have to wait long. A few days later a representative from the electric company came and checked the meter and

discovered that we had been overcharged. The company gave the Chabad house a check for 13,000 shekels, which was a great help in our financial struggle.

BEIS CHABAD NAHALEL – WHO WOULD HAVE BELIEVED?

It is not only in the success of their activities that shluchim experience miracles. Finding a suitable location for shlichus needs just as much Divine assistance, and can be no less wondrous. Moshav Nahalel in the Jezreel Valley is not exactly a religious moshav. Most of the people there are from irreligious kibbutzim but when Rabbi Dovid Katorza went to live there on shlichus, he was very well received. Everybody knows him and many people attend the programs that he and his wife hold at the yishuv.

Those who were at the scene and saw the demolished car said that nobody would emerge from it alive...

A few years ago, the rabbi and his family were injured in a car accident at the entrance to the yishuv. Those who were at the scene and saw the demolished car said that nobody would emerge from it alive. However, boruch Hashem, everybody survived, and recovered fully from their injuries. The doctors were amazed when R' Katorza, as he waited for surgery after the accident, asked that they bring him his t'fillin and only after he would put them on would he go in for the operation.

The head of the medical team, a kibbutznik who was a mekurav of Chabad in Beit Shaan, checked to see whether the injured rabbi was of sound mind and whether his broken bones and the machines to which he was attached allowed him to put on t'fillin. A brief conversation demonstrated that despite his pain, the rabbi's mind was clear and he put on t'fillin and said a t'filla. The head of the medical team was so moved by this that he took a picture on his cell phone of the rabbi with all the machines and the t'fillin on his head and arm. Later on he showed the picture at a Yud Shvat farbrengen that took place at the kibbutz and this made a big kiddush Hashem.

T'FILLIN INSTEAD OF A BATHING SUIT

R' Katorza was invited to a festive party at the moshav, in celebration of the completion of a large real estate development project by one of the residents in Nahalel. Though the timing of the party - Friday at 2:00 pm - was

somewhat problematic, the rabbi decided to attend anyway. It was an opportunity to say a few words of Torah, to meet new people and reconnect with the old and to do his shlichus.

The day before the event, a phone call went out: "Come to the party with a bathing suit and good spirits!"

R' Katorza, though, had other plans. Instead of a bathing suit he brought a pair of t'fillin, which he offered to the party-goers. A fifty year old man got up and asked to put them on. He was very moved and he cried as he said Shma. When he was finished he announced that it was the first time he was putting on t'fillin. He had been educated in the spirit of HaShomer HaTzair (virulently anti-religious) and had not even donned t'fillin at his bar mitzva.

R' Katorza announced that this was not just a celebratory party but a bar mitzva celebration. Everybody applauded and the rabbi said a few words and they nearly forgot about going to the pool. Later on the host told R' Katorza that the man who had put on t'fillin was his brother-in-law and he needed a bracha since he was quite sick. R' Katorza came by his house and put up mezuzos and after a few weeks the illness had almost completely disappeared.

R' Katorza concludes, "At first I debated whether to go on a Friday afternoon - and with a bathing suit no less! - but when I went anyway it turned out that it saved someone both spiritually and physically.

A SHUL IN NAHALEL?

In Nahalel there is an irreligious high school which is attended by the children from Nahalel and kibbutzim in the area. Over the years R' Dovid Katorza asked the school administrators for permission to open a small shul in one of the buildings for t'fillos and shiurim, but the answer was a definite "no."

Then, sixteen months ago, there was a change. The family of Sammy and George Rohr agreed to donate a Torah to the shul in Nahalel. In honor of the Torah, the school's hanhala agreed to set aside a room for t'fillos and shiurim. They turned a computer room into a shul. Boruch Hashem, today the shul has regular minyanim, shiurim and farbrengens. R' Katorza gives shiurim in Chumash and Rashi, and in Gemara for advanced students. The shul is next to the dining room so he invites whoever passes by - and they all do! - to come in.

R' Katorza's influence is felt not only in the school but also throughout the moshav. Recently a woman from the moshav told his wife that every Shabbos, when she sees the rabbi walking to shul wrapped in a tallis, it reminds her of her grandfather who would go to shul like that and it brings back all her Jewish memories.

And this is in Nahalel. Who would have believed it?

INADVERTENT MIRACLE

"A few years ago I traveled, as I do periodically, to raise money in Los Angeles," begins Rabbi Benny Nachm, shliach in Shlomi near the Lebanon border. "I went to a man I know there, Boruch Avitan, and asked him for a donation for the Chabad house in Shlomi. Boruch gave a donation and he also asked me to speak to a

friend of his. 'Go to Shimon. He used to live in Shlomi and he can help you.' But I felt uncomfortable going to him.

"A year passed and I went to my friend in Los Angeles again. This time he begged me, 'Go to Shimon.' When he saw that I didn't want to, he 'threatened,' 'If you don't go to Shimon, I won't give you a donation either.' The ways of Hashem are hidden and the wiles of the Evil Inclination are sometimes mysterious too - I did not go to Shimon. Boruch sent me a donation a month later, by mail.

"The third year, he promised that if I didn't go to Shimon he

wouldn't give me a penny, not then and not by mail and that was final.

"I took Shimon's address from him but still found it hard to decide whether and when to go see him.

"On that visit to Los Angeles, I went to see my fellow shliach, Amitai Yemini who runs a Chabad house for Israelis. We spoke about this and that, and then to my surprise, he said, 'Why don't you go to Shimon? He is very wealthy and he used to live in Shlomi. Here's his phone number. Call him and go see him.'

"R' Yemini said that he himself

had gotten nice donations from Shimon and so he recommended wholeheartedly that I go and see him.

"I called Shimon and asked whether I could meet with him. 'What's the question? I know you from Shlomi. Every year I see you speaking at my father's memorial. Come and I will help you.'

"I was welcomed with kisses, song and praise and since then he has been a big help to the Chabad house in Shlomi. He has been instrumental in building the mikva, helping the needy and in building the shul named for his father, Beis Avrohom.



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‘MAY G-D GRANT YOU LIFE!’

By Shneur Zalman Berger
Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

A tremendous level of enthusiasm engulfed the Rebbe Rayatz's visit to Baltimore and Chicago. Thousands of people waited at the train stations in anticipation of the Rebbe's arrival, and many accompanied him to his place of lodging. The papers made a special effort to publicize news on the various welcome ceremonies, private audiences and chassidic discourses, and the Senators and Congressmen who came to pay a call upon the leader of the generation. This article commemorates eighty years since the Rebbe Rayatz's journey to strengthen Judaism in the United States and to promote activities on behalf of the Jews of the Soviet Union.

THE CHASSIDIM WIN OVER EVERYONE

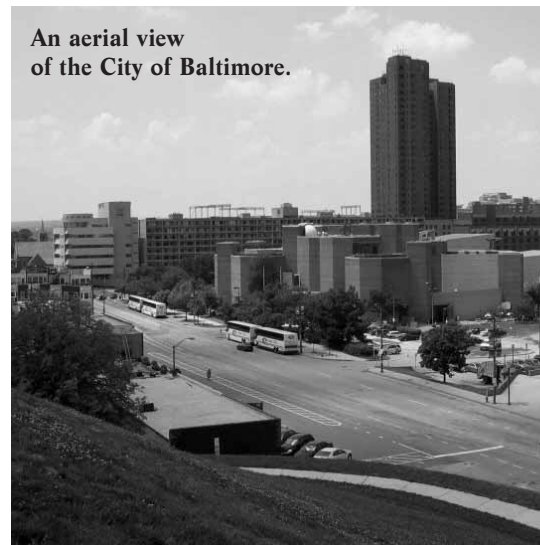
Eighty years ago, when the Rebbe Rayatz made his historic visit to the United States, there were relatively few chassidim living there. Nevertheless, this handful of Lubavitchers managed to unite all the Jewish organizations to give the Rebbe an impressive welcome to America and work up thousands of Jews to a state of tremendous excitement over his arrival. In every location the Rebbe visited during his tour, huge welcoming events and large meetings to strengthen Yiddishkait were organized, awakening people to the cause of the Jews of the Soviet Union. The Jewish newspapers of that era frequently expressed a sense of amazement that just a few chassidim managed to win over all of the local Jewish communities.

VISIT TO BALTIMORE

After the Rebbe Rayatz's visit to Philadelphia, he proceeded to Baltimore, the largest city in the State of Maryland. The Rebbe stayed in the city for three weeks, his schedule filled with general events before huge crowds, including rabbinical and other public figures.

"The Rebbe will arrive on Hey Teves!" the joyful announcement blared throughout Baltimore. The visit was eventually postponed for one week, to the 12th of Teves, and throughout that week,

An aerial view
of the City of Baltimore.



advertisements were publicized in all the Jewish newspapers announcing the delay in the Rebbe's arrival. These ads created a tremendous public response.

In the announcements, the members of the Welcoming Committee called upon the city's Jewish community to come and greet the Rebbe at the train station on the 12th of Teves at a quarter to two in the afternoon. The ad emphasized that the Rebbe Rayatz had suffered greatly in Russia and it was only after the intervention of prominent individuals overseas that he had managed to resettle in Riga, Latvia.

On Friday, *Asara B'Teives*, just two days prior to his arrival, the "Morgen Journal" wrote that despite the small number of Lubavitcher chassidim living in the city, they succeeded in getting all the local Jewish communities involved in preparing a special welcome for the Rebbe Rayatz. The paper continued to report that on that day, Friday, a special conference would be held for the purpose of making these preparations, with the active participation of representatives from all the city's Jewish organizations.

The same issue included a Welcoming Committee announcement opening with these exciting words: "Important news for all Jews of Baltimore! Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (the Lubavitcher) is coming to Baltimore." The announcement also



The Rebbe Rayatz and the mayor of Baltimore, as publicized in the local papers. The Rashag stands to the right.



The local police received the Rebbe with great honor and respect, and during the three weeks that the Rebbe Rayatz stayed in Baltimore, the officers stood guard around the house as a sign of deference to the city's esteemed guest.

included a call to welcome the Rebbe at the train station.

Special calls to participate in the welcoming ceremony at the train station were also made by the Vaad Rabbanim of Baltimore, Agudas HaK'hillos, and the special conference organizing the welcome. From the train station, there would be a special parade in which everyone would travel together to the Rebbe's place of lodging. The paper then gave details of the route the Rebbe would take.

A LARGE CROWD FROM MORNING TO NIGHT

The great day had come, the 12th of Teves.

Thousands of people streamed to the "Mount Royal" train station, and the crowd thrilled at the sight of the Rebbe descending from the train, accompanied by his official delegation: His uncle Rabbi Moshe Horenstein, his son-in-law Rabbi Shemaryahu Gurary, and his secretaries, Rabbi Yechezkel Feigin and R' Chaim Lieberman.

The papers publicized the welcome and the scheduled two week visit with banner headlines, making special mention of a planned meeting with the Mayor of Baltimore. They also made a point of stating the exact address where the Rebbe would be staying: 2343 Eutaw Place. The vast publicity brought a huge crowd to the location. In the days that followed, numerous news items were printed



Rabbi Avraham Eliyahu Axelrod

in the "Der Tag" and "Der Morgen Journal" on the progress of the Rebbe Rayatz's visit in the city.

The local police received the Rebbe with great honor and respect, and during the three weeks that the Rebbe Rayatz stayed in Baltimore, the officers stood guard around the house as a sign of deference to the city's esteemed guest.

The Rebbe Rayatz visited the four Chabad shuls, along with all the other synagogues there at the time, and said chassidus. Welcome celebrations were held in Baltimore hotels. On Shabbosim, the Rebbe would say chassidus before the large crowd that gathered at his lodgings.

Every evening between six and nine, the Rebbe would receive people for yechidus. Those who wished to come at a different time had to coordinate this with Rabbi Yechezkel Feigin. Hundreds of people streamed

into the Rebbe's house for yechidus each day. Among those who came were Senator Millard Tydings, Senator Phillips Lee Goldsborough, Congressman Vincent L. Palmisano, and Congressman Linwood Leon Clark. Announcements of the hours for receiving people didn't help much. At the conclusion of the Rebbe's visit, "Der Tag" newspaper reported that the house was filled every day from morning until late at night with people who wanted to receive the Rebbe's bracha. The reporter further wrote that among the numerous visitors were many American youths from assimilated families. The Rebbe accepted all of them and succeeded in strengthening them in their observance of Torah and mitzvos.

During the Baltimore visit, the Rebbe Rayatz was invited to a special meeting with Mayor William Frederick Broening, who presented the Rebbe with a book on the city's history. The meeting was reported in the media, and the Rebbe's picture appeared in the English language newspapers with the mayor and the Rashag standing at his side. A similar meeting was held with Governor Albert Ritchie of Maryland.

While he was still staying in the city, he traveled to New York for one day and then later spent a few days in Washington, D.C., where he met with Mr. Louis Brandeis, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and asked him to head efforts on behalf of Russian Jewry.

THE "PRESIDENTS" WITH THE REBBE

In a special letter sent to his wife, the Rebbetzin Nechama Dina (first publicized in the Beis Moshiaich Magazine, Issue #354), the Rebbe Rayatz described the intensive activities among the younger Jewish community, which was primarily divided into three organizations:

In his letter to the Rebbetzin (mentioned above), the Rebbe said that during one of the meetings with the organization presidents, they told him that when the Rebbe spoke in one of the shuls, a women's organization president heard his explanation on how G-d instructed Moshe Rabbeinu to teach the women with soft words, whereas he should teach the men more strictly. The words had a tremendous effect on her, and she spoke with the women about it. As a result of this

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(דער ליבאוויטשער)
קומט אין באלטימאד
דינען וואך 12טען יאנואר
1845 ביים 11
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אלע באלטימאדער אידען ווערן איינגעלאדען
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A newspaper ad published prior to the Rebbe Rayatz's visit: "Important news for all Jews of Baltimore! Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (the Lubavitcher) is coming to Baltimore."

spiritual awakening, she and her colleagues asked their male counterparts to give the Rebbe a message of special thanks and a request for advice on how to run their organizations more effectively.

The powerful influence among the women leaders bore fruit. The leadership called upon the organizations' membership to come and listen to the Rebbe Rayatz's speeches when he visited the local synagogues. The effect was so great that sometimes the *vaiber shul* (women's section) was more full than the men's section.

Shortly before the Rebbe's departure from Baltimore, the presidents of the three organizations came to the Rebbe to offer farewell wishes on behalf of their respective memberships and the young women's group. They told the Rebbe that they have the honor to inform him that they will do whatever he asks. They will also update him on the situation from time to time, and hope to receive his reply. The presidents noted that a considerable portion of the younger membership was very positively influenced by the visit, and they are waiting to see the good results.

THE LEADER IS QUICKLY INFLUENCED

As opposed to Chabad chassidim and representatives of the three aforementioned organizations, who came to the Rebbe time and time again, there was one organization that proved to be a much harder nut to crack. With a membership of about three hundred strong, the Rebbe called them “good Jews at heart,” meaning that they didn’t fulfill Torah and mitzvos at all.

Their leader, a Dr. Sindy, did come to the Rebbe on several occasions, but it took some time until the organization's full administrative board agreed to follow suit. In the end, they too arrived to show their respect, a delegation of nine doctors and three attorneys who represented the entire organization. The Rebbe explained to them that Jewish feeling is not enough – it must be translated into effective action.

The organization leader himself was quickly influenced, and just ten days after the start of the Rebbe's visit to the city, he began to feel and conduct himself like one of the chassidim. He went in to the Rebbe frequently, and took part in the sichos and farbrengens with the chassidim who packed into the

There was one organization that proved to be a much harder nut to crack. With a membership of about three hundred strong, the Rebbe called them “good Jews at heart,” meaning that they didn’t fulfill Torah and mitzvos at all.

Rebbe’s lodging.

Towards the end of the visit, Dr. Sendy came and blessed the Rebbe on behalf of the organization’s membership. He added that his organization had decided to help the yeshivos under the Rebbe’s administration.

On the eve of the Rebbe’s departure, large notices appeared on bulletin boards throughout Baltimore calling upon the city’s Jewish community to come to a “*Tzeischem L’Shalom*” ceremony that would take place at the Yisroel Anshei Sephard Synagogue.

The Jews of Baltimore flocked to the farewell event in very large numbers, which the Rebbe describes in his letter with great emotion:

“At the arranged time of the ‘*Tzeischem L’Shalom*,’ the street was full... It was such a stirring event, such a warm feeling that made a great impression. Non-Jews, *l’havdil*, say that they had never seen someone who had received such a friendly send-off and such a beautiful and gentle regard from such a variety of people.”

Rabbi Avraham Eliyahu Axelrod, one of Baltimore’s most prominent Chabad chassidim, received a letter of thanks from the Rebbe for all those who took part in the welcoming events.

Before leaving the city, the Rebbe gave out a picture and a note with the following message: “By the Grace of G-d. I hereby give them my blessing that G-d Alm-ghty should fulfill their hearts’ requests for good

and for a blessing in physical and spiritual matters. Yosef Yitzchak. The 5th of Shvat, *Taf-Resh-Tzaddik* (5690).”

“THEY WERE REALLY CRYING”

Despite the official departure ceremony, many people returned the next day to see the Rebbe off – for more than three hours! They came and left the Rebbe’s house, Jews of every age and from every sector, including rabbanim and public officials.

12:55 p.m. The Rebbe left the house surrounded by a large assembly and calls of “Go in peace” were heard from every direction. At the train station, about seventy people were waiting, and the depot administration allowed them to go up to the train without tickets. The Rebbe entered his carriage and the assembled crowd burst into exuberant and enthusiastic song: “May G-d bless you and keep you...” The train pulled out, and everyone called out, “Go in peace and with success. May G-d grant you life, as you have granted us.”

Besides the Rebbe’s official party that had escorted him to Baltimore, they were accompanied by Rabbi Avraham Eliyahu Axelrod and two gabbaim from local synagogues. An hour into the journey, these three got off the train, as they had to return to Baltimore. The moment of the final departure was most moving, as the Rebbe described in

his letter:

“When the time approached for the three to get off the train, I spoke with them. They felt more than fortunate to have had me as their guest, and we parted from one another. They were really crying over why we had to part. They said that now, with G-d’s help, they will see to it that the matter of the ‘maamad’ is arranged in a different manner, and G-d Alm-ghty will help them.”

During the railroad journey, the train made a stop at the station in Philadelphia, where several chassidim and other Chabad supporters boarded in order to see the Rebbe. Four of these people continued the train journey for another forty-five minutes and eventually got much closer to Lubavitch. It is poetic that the ‘city of brotherly love’ – Lubavitch made such an impact on the Jews of that other ‘city of brotherly love’ – Philadelphia.

The Rebbe arrived in New York City at four in the afternoon, and his accommodations, which so far had been in a rented apartment, would now be in a hotel.

* * *

Throughout the Rebbe’s stay in the city, the chassidim and other Chabad supporters were busy organizing events connected with the visit – speeches in synagogues, farbrengens, etc. After the Rebbe’s departure, the spiritual awakening among the chassidim translating into the study of chassidus and other spiritual growth.

On the 18th of Shvat, the Bobruisk Synagogue hosted a special evening, organized by Agudas Chassidei Chabad, during which a number of projects were established that turned this organization into a far more active one. These projects included Torah classes at one of the Chabad shuls, each month in a different shul. The

shul chosen to host the first class was the Tzemach Tzedek shul, where a Tanya class with Rabbi Axelrod already took place.

VISIT TO CHICAGO

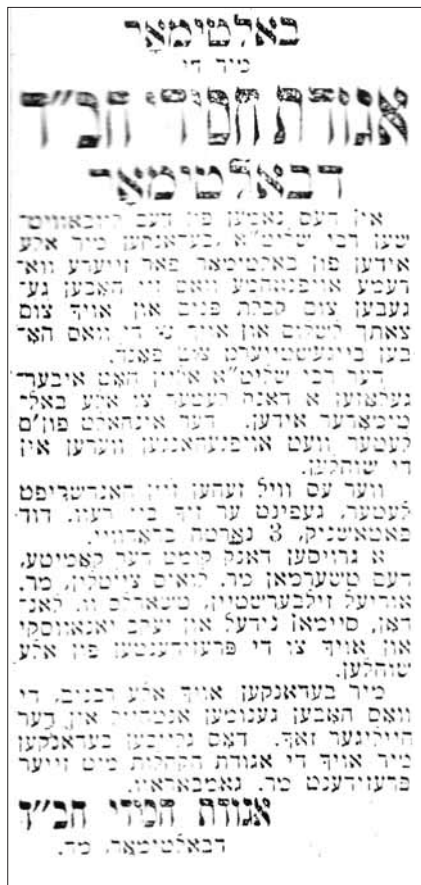
With the Rebbe's return to New York from Baltimore, he stayed in the city for about a week, and from there he traveled to Chicago, Illinois, America's "second city", arriving on the 11th of Shvat. The visit lasted for three months, until Erev Rosh Chodesh Iyar.

Prior to the visit, a preliminary meeting was held, led by Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu Elkin, the rav of the Anshei Lubavitch Shul (and one of the first students of Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim in Lubavitch). The meeting was conducted in the shul itself. Special discussions were held about the welcome scheduled for the day of the Rebbe Rayatz's arrival in the city. During the course of the meeting, a special committee was appointed to organize the welcome, headed by Chabad representative Mr. Balatin, who spoke to everyone with great enthusiasm about the tremendous work achieved by the Rebbe in the Soviet Union.

The welcome ceremonies were most impressive. The "Morgen Journal" reported that about fifteen thousand Jews were waiting at the LaSalle Street train station, having come to give honor to the Rebbe. The paper added that the Chicago police had done considerable work to prepare a path for the Rebbe among the thousands who had come to greet him.

This most interesting report appeared in the "Kroier" newspaper from the 13th of Shvat:

"The terminal in the train station was filled with Jews. Men and women, young and old, local children, boys and girls – everyone poured into the street and the flood of people would not cease. The throngs came from every direction to



(top): The "Morgen Journal" reports on the anticipated great welcome
(bottom): Agudas Chassidei Chabad thanks the Jews of Baltimore on behalf of the Rebbe Rayatz for the warm welcome

greet their prominent guest. They came from all over the city."

At this point, the reporter listed the local neighborhoods from which Jews came to the train station. He then proceeded to describe what happened as the people waited with great anticipation for the train to arrive:

"There was much pushing from every side as people strove for the privilege of being among the first to greet the Rebbe and receive his blessing. While there was still another half an hour until the train came, it was no longer possible to enter the terminal and join the thousands who were already there. Their Jewish soul told them that they were about to meet one of the greatest individuals in the Jewish People today. In addition, he was a heroic figure who would sacrifice his very life for the Torah and look death straight in the eye without emotion, while not wasting a moment in spreading Torah among the Jewish People..."

"Right next to the train tracks, on top of a truck designed to deliver merchandise from the train carriages, there stood a gray-haired Jew, already ninety years of age. Standing near him was a boy, apparently his great-grandson, and they were flanked by two middle-aged Jews, probably his sons. He stood there with his eyes fixed in the direction from which the train was due to arrive. A whole world of joy engulfed his wrinkled face. He had suddenly become a young man again.

"He then bent down and said with great excitement, 'I want to see the Rebbe, the grandson of my Rebbe. I still remember his appearance well – the shining form of our master, our teacher, our Rebbe, Rabbi Shmuel, of blessed memory. Ah, what an appearance he had, and his look gave me strength. Where do you think I got my longevity from? Every time I saw him, it gave me strength for another ten years. I also knew his father –

LONGING FOR A “YECHIDUS”

Pesach, 5690, in Chicago. After two months during which there was a never-ending stream of people coming for yechidus, the Rebbe told a special story that brings testimony of a chassid’s great longing for yechidus:

“In the summer of 5659, when my father, the Rebbe [Rashab] was out in the country, he stayed at the home of a baal ha’bayis, a simple yet pious Torah observant Jew, who took care of all my father’s material needs.

“During those days, there was a melamed named R’ Dovber, who was a chassid from the city of Beshenkovitch, and he decided to go to Lubavitch and hear chassidus. He left his work and trudged all the way to Lubavitch by foot. When he arrived, he was informed that my father, the Rebbe, was in the country, and he determinedly continued his trek. When he arrived there, he was told that the Rebbe would not say chassidus. Needless to say, he was very disappointed, as all of his efforts had been in order to hear a chassidic maamer from my father.

“Sad and dejected, R’ Dovber walked until he met the aforementioned baal ha’bayis. The latter spoke to his heart, encouraging him to put his faith in G-d, without knowing the reason for his sadness.

“On Shabbos, R’ Dovber was the guest of this baal ha’bayis, and the host tried during all of the Shabbos meals to get R’ Dovber to speak about what was bothering him in the hope that maybe he could help him, but to no avail. Finally, during the Seudas Shlishis, R’ Dovber broke down, and with tear-filled eyes, he said that he doesn’t lack a thing – he just wants to hear a maamer from the Rebbe. He had worked so hard to get there, but in the end, he couldn’t fulfill his wish.

“Since the baal ha’bayis was almost like a family member to the Rebbe, he immediately went in to the Rebbe, and said to him, ‘There’s a guest here who is deeply distressed that he can’t hear chassidus from the Rebbe. When I see a Jew immersed in sorrow whom I can help – I must help him! The Rebbe can help this Jew by saying chassidus.’

“A short while later, my father, the Rebbe, announced that he would say chassidus. After R’ Dovber heard the maamer, *haht zain panim geloichtn* [= his face shone] and he was positively elated. When the baal ha’bayis saw this, he went to the Rebbe again and told him that the maamer had caused great pleasure to R’ Dovber. He then asked the Rebbe if Gan Eden also possesses the type of joy and pleasure that R’ Dovber experienced after hearing the maamer. ‘Not necessarily,’ my father replied, ‘but just know, that for each time people say T’hillim in this world, they teach them in Gan Eden a new interpretation of Seifer T’hillim.’

“When he left the Rebbe, he began saying T’hillim with tremendous fervor from that moment on.”

block the thousands waiting for the Rebbe.”

The stewards at the train station pleaded with the crowd of thousands to move away from the train and let the Rebbe and his escorts disembark, but this proved practically impossible. Everyone wanted to see the Rebbe. Not long afterwards, the Rebbe left the carriage, standing a couple of steps higher than the platform, and looked out at the throngs of people. The crowding was so great that the Rebbe’s entourage couldn’t get out of the carriage, and was left at the door. Photographers took advantage of the opportunity to snap pictures of the Rebbe and the crowd from every direction [*if only such pictures could be found – Author*]. It took some time before they managed to make a path through which the Rebbe’s party could pass, and the Rebbe finally left the carriage and entered his car.

The Rebbe’s car set out as part of a long caravan, accompanied by hundred of buses filled with thousands of people. On the way from the train station to his place of lodging, many Jews stood at every corner and waved to the Rebbe. The first accommodations were located at 3639 Douglas Boulevard, in the heart of the Jewish neighborhood.

An especially large crowd surrounded the location, waiting to get a glimpse of the Rebbe, if only for a moment. The Rebbe got out of the car, and the entire assembly cried “Baruch Haba” in voices filled with emotion. The dense throngs of people did not allow for making a path for the Rebbe to pass, thus the Chicago police were forced to act quickly and secure a way for the Rebbe to reach the house. The Rebbe suddenly stopped, motioned with his hand, immediately silencing the crowd, and briefly thanked them for coming to welcome him.

A few minutes later, the Rebbe entered the house.

our master, our teacher, and our Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dovber, of blessed memory, and now I can make the blessing of ‘*SheHechiyanu*’.”

“The old man sobbed like a small

boy, and with great enthusiasm, he broke out in a dance like a young chassid... Once again he had received renewed strengths.

“The train arrives. The passengers get off, but their faces

THE ADMUR COMES TO THE REBBE

At the temporary lodging, the Rebbe received many Jews for yechidus, among them rabbinical figures, public officials, Senators, and Congressmen. An unusually special guest was the Hornisteiple Rebbe, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Twersky, a descendant of the Mittlerer Rebbe, who was living in Chicago at the time.

Congressman Sabbath was among the many visitors, and the conversation between them lasted for a long time. It mainly centered on the dozens of Jews, including rabbanim, who had been arrested in Minsk, and the Rebbe's efforts towards their release.

Besides the private audiences, the Rebbe was occupied with arranging gatherings for strengthening Yiddishkait and chassidus, and arousing interest on behalf of Jews in the Soviet Union. As in Baltimore, the Rebbe visited the Chabad shuls and other synagogues in Chicago. A special visit was made to the local Talmud Torah. The Rebbe made farbrengens both on Shabbosim and on weekdays, and delivered chassidic maamarim.

The mashpia, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Havlin, was staying in the United States at the time, and he wrote to his friend, Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, describing the events that took place in Chicago:

"On that Shabbos Kodesh [the 1st of Adar], all of Anash gathered together to spend Shabbos with the Rebbe shlita. Both at night and the following day, [the Rebbe] was with a known Anash member [named] Gilman, with all Anash around the Rebbe shlita until the [Friday night] seuda, which lasted until eleven at night. Similarly, the following day, the Rebbe shlita's seuda was until four [in the afternoon].

"On Motzaei Shabbos, we traveled with the Rebbe shlita to the



Newspaper headlines announce the Rebbe Rayatz's arrival: "The Lubavitcher Rebbe is coming."

Tzemach Tzedek shul, and he said chassidus there.

"The following day, Sunday, there was a mass meeting in the large beis midrash, where the rabbanim spoke and eventually the Rebbe shlita.

"Yesterday, there was a great celebration at the seuda or banquet for Chabad of Chicago, with the city's rabbis in attendance. The Rebbe shlita spoke there, and I was the musician, and the Rebbe specifically asked me to play the well-known niggun."

The mass gathering that Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Havlin mentioned in his letter was attended by about three thousand people, who came to see and hear chassidus from the Rebbe Rayatz. The meeting was organized by some of the more prominent organizations in Chicago: The Rabbinical Offices, Agudas HaK'hillos, together with the

Welcoming Committee. The meeting took place in the Anshei Knesses Yisroel shul, and it was filled and overflowing. The "Kroier" newspaper noted that the crowding was especially great, and with no alternative, many people simply remained outside the synagogue.

The Rebbe thanked the organizers and participants, and the aforementioned newspaper quoted his address to the crowd: "You surely have heard about the Jews in Russia and about their life, and therefore, I will not add much. I will speak to your souls and to your heart, and ask you not to relate to them coldly, as each person knows his obligation."

In preparation for Beis Nissan, the hilula of the Rebbe Rashab, a special kuntres was printed with two maamarim in chassidus ("Ani Y'shane" and "Simani K'Chosam"). The kuntreisim were distributed in both chassidic and non-chassidic synagogues, and the maamarim were studied in many of these shuls in honor of the hilula.

A special banquet was held on the evening of Beis Nissan, and this was no simple achievement. On the one hand, it was the Rebbe Rashab's *yahrtzeit*, and on the other hand, this was a fundraising "dinner". Despite the difficulty, the Rebbe spoke first about his father, and afterwards about the sorry material state among the Jews of Russia and the sorry spiritual state among the Jews of America, who also need support. About two hundred people participated in this special evening, and about \$5,000 were collected and then transferred to the fund to help the rabbanim in Russia.

During the Pesach holiday, as is known, our Rebbeim were extremely stringent in everything connected with preparing food, and since the Rebbe was away from his home, he tried to limit his diet to matzos, wine, and a few other basic food items.

Lubavitcher chassidim in New York baked the Rebbe's matzos and sent them to Chicago, while the wine was prepared in Chicago with the utmost strictness. During the first days of the holiday, the Rebbe ate no cooked food whatsoever, even refusing to drink a glass of tea. Each morning, the Rebbe drank a cup of hot water after it had cooled off, boiled especially for him by his devoted secretary, Rabbi Yechezkel Feigin.

We learn about his limited menu over the days that followed from a letter written by the Rebbe himself to the Rebbetzin:

"During the three days of Chol HaMoed, R' Yechezkel traveled on Monday to be present personally for the milking process, and boiled the milk himself. He cooked three hard-boiled eggs, and this was lunch – grated eggs with a little water on a glass plate, one cup of milk, and with that it was over. In the evening, one cup of milk, and as usual, 'Shmura' [matza] at every meal.

Of course, our son-in-law [the Rashag] and uncle [Rabbi Moshe Horenstein] had complaints. How is this possible? It's Yomtov! They said that R' Yechezkel would supervise, he would cook personally, and other claims, but it was no use. In the end, it's better than in Spalerke [during the imprisonment]."

As mentioned earlier, the visit concluded on Sunday, the 29th of Nissan. Prior to his departure, a "*Tzeischem L'Shalom*" ceremony was held in the Chabad shul with a large assemblage of people participating. The Rebbe said a chassidic maamer, and the Lithuanian rabbis, Rabbi Efraim Epstein and Rabbi Zaks, spoke before the congregation.

The Rebbe then used the occasion to request that T'hillim should be recited in all of the synagogues on a daily basis, as divided according to the day of the month. He added that all those who

count themselves among the ranks of the chassidim should also learn Chumash with Rashi each day, as divided according to the day of the week. The Rebbe then continued to speak words of spiritual awakening, and descended from the platform to enthusiastic words of blessing from all in attendance.

The Rebbe traveled from the Chabad shul to his place of lodging, where he arrived at half past ten at night. Half an hour later, a delegation of twenty people arrived with a surprising message. The Rebbe wrote about it in his letter to the Rebbetzin:

"They told me openly that the chassidim of Chicago and the surrounding area had become organized, and they were asking that I give my approval to establish their 'permanent' residence in America. Representatives of the misnagdishe communities had also joined them in this. They also wanted to express the thanks of Anash for the visit to Chicago, and the good impression that the visit made upon the chassidim of Chicago – far more than had been expected. They also happily reported on the successful impact that the visit left in general among all Jewish sectors.

"Their idea that I should move to America was an indication of their tremendous excitement, coming from people who were not expected to react in such a manner. They spoke with great fervor."

The Rebbe gave a brief reply, and they left, but that was far from the end of the evening, as the Rebbe accepted people in yechidus until one a.m. By half past six the following morning, the Rebbe's minyan for Shacharis had already started, and at the conclusion of davening, a large throng of people began to stream into the house to say goodbye.

As the Rebbe's visit to Chicago came to a close, he prepared to depart from the city with his son-in-

law, Rabbi Shemaryahu Gurary. A sizable crowd, including well-known rabbanim, waited at the train station to part from their distinguished guest, and the Rebbe blessed them all. When someone said to the Rebbe that they will never forget the visit, the Rebbe replied that "when I learn and you learn, we will thereby remember one another."

Through the photographer of the "Kroier" newspaper, the Rebbe asked to give his thanks to all those who had welcomed him, while his son-in-law, the Rashag, submitted an announcement to the press, thanking the Jews of Chicago, Agudas HaRabbanim, and other organizations that took part in the welcome ceremonies and other gatherings.

At nine in the morning, the Rebbe boarded the train, and twenty Jews from Chicago traveled with him for half an hour. Several representatives of the Jewish newspapers and others accompanied the Rebbe to Detroit, the next stop on the Rebbe's journey.

The fruits of this visit would be known for decades with the subsequent establishment of Torah classes in Chicago, which continued for many years afterwards. Over the passage of time, the Rebbe Rayatz even sent special correspondence to those who participated in the class.

* * *

During the visit in Chicago, there was a break of a few days, when the Rebbe went to stay in Milwaukee.

Sources: Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz, Seifer HaSichos Admur HaRayatz 5688-5691, Toldos Chabad B'Artzos HaBris, HaMashpia, Beis Moshiah, Der Morgen Journal, Der Tag, Kroier Chicago, and more. Special thanks to the National Library – Yerushalayim.

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(This translation is dedicated to R' Yisroel Shlomo and Mrs. Chana Kroll of Baltimore, Maryland.)

WITH THE REBBE'S BRACHOS, WE MADE IT

By Shneur Zalman Berger



Rabbi Yitzchok Wolpo with Dr. Jacques Brotchi

It all began with a strange weakness in the left foot. This soon deteriorated into a lack of sensation and difficulty walking, and before long Mrs. Yaffa (Sheindel Mushka)

Wolpo of Yerushalayim began to use a cane. Eventually she found herself dependent on a walker. Her husband Rabbi Yitzchok a"h [ed. He passed away a month ago], daughter

Rebbetzin Sima Ashkenazi of Kfar Chabad, and sons Rabbi Sholom Dovber, rabbi of a shul in Kiryat Gat, and Rabbi Menachem, director of the Chabad mosdos in Netanya, worked together to arrange appointments with top doctors.

The alternative treatment that was their choice only made her condition worse and caused her much suffering. Even conventional doctors were unable to diagnose the source of the problem. As time passed and matters did not improve, they realized that the situation was more serious than they had thought.

After many tests, the doctor said there was definitely a serious problem with her spine but he couldn't pinpoint it since nothing was showing up on the MRI.

Months went by and the couple was preparing to leave their home in Yerushalayim to spend Shabbos Shuva with their son R' Menachem in Netanya, when Mrs. Wolpo fell and broke her right leg. That left her stuck in a wheelchair since her right leg was in a cast and there was no sensation in her left leg.

Before Sukkos the family consulted with a famous doctor at Hadassah hospital. He asked how a previous exam was done and reacted angrily, "They didn't do it right!" The test was done again and he informed the family of the sad news: "A large tumor is wrapped around the spine like a snake. It's a very rare tumor and the likelihood of recovery is very slim."

"We were very worried," confided Rebbetzin Sima Ashkenazi. "The doctors didn't know whether it was malignant or a benign growth that could be surgically removed. But an operation near the spinal column is extremely risky and can adversely affect the other parts of the body. A slightly wrong move can seal the fate of the patient. We spoke to R' Elimelech Firer for help in finding a surgeon. R' Firer is a Belzer Chassid and an incredible

person who volunteers his time and extraordinary medical expertise – with no formal medical training – to advise people on medical matters. He is highly esteemed by the medical community. R' Firer explained that in this rare situation, although the surgery could be done in Israel, it was preferable to travel to Brussels, where the best doctor for this type of operations lives. Dr. Jacques Brotchi has treated several famous government figures including the king of Morocco.

“When we brought up the idea of traveling abroad, my mother absolutely refused. ‘I’m never particularly keen on flying and under the circumstances – in a wheelchair and in pain - I’m much more afraid to fly.’ My father shared her reservations, and was also anxious about how we would manage in Belgium where we didn’t know anybody and didn’t speak the language. It was also hard for him to leave his shiurim in Gemara and halacha in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood, shiurim that began at five in the morning and ended late at night.

“We didn’t know what to do but we had to make a decision on the spot. The doctor who examined her warned, ‘You must operate immediately; if you don’t, the paralysis can spread to the rest of the body.’”

It was evening. In another few minutes, R' Yitzchok Wolpo would be returning from Maariv and immediately calling Tel HaShomer hospital to give his consent (or refusal) for the operation.

Rebbetzin Ashkenazi decided to write to the Rebbe. She requested a bracha and asked whether they should go to Belgium or remain in Israel and do the operation there. The answer in the Igros Kodesh was amazing. The Rebbe wrote:

At an auspicious time the name

WHAT BOTHERS MISNAGDIM?

Rabbi Sholom Dovber Wolpo relates:

Many b'nei Torah who are not Chassidic daven in Rabbi Pinson's shul. I reviewed a maamer Chassidus there on Shabbos, and in the course of my explanation, I said several times, “The Rebbe asks,” “The Rebbe explains,” etc. Every time I mentioned the Rebbe, one of the people in shul yelled out “zatza!” I didn’t react.

After the maamer he came over to me and angrily asked, “How do you mention the Rebbe without saying “zecher tzaddik l'v'racha?”

“If you were saying something over from R' Chaim Brisker would you say zatza?” I countered.

He said, “That you wouldn’t say zatza on R' Chaim doesn’t matter to me because there could be many reasons for that, but the fact that you don’t say it for the Rebbe is because you think the Rebbe is chai v'kayam, and that’s what upsets me.”

I said coolly, “Tell me, is this Russia that you want to tell me what I can and cannot think?” Then I tried to explain it to him with sources etc.

Before we parted I said to him, “Look at how the Rebbe conquers the world. Before Gimmel Tammuz you spoke against Lubavitch and against the Nasi HaDor with tremendous opposition. Today, your battle is focused only on wanting us to say that the Rebbe is a tzaddik and that mentioning him is for a blessing!”

The very fact that this point that annoys the Misnagdim so much is indicative of its importance. We must deal with this. If the Rebbe in fact is chai v'kayam, it may well be that the focus of our avoda today is specifically to promote this belief that the Rebbe is chai v'kayam.



Benny Fischer,
director of Magen L'Choleh

of your mother will be mentioned at the holy gravesite of the Rebbe, my father-in-law for the success of the medical treatment. May it be that just as you wrote the request, you should write good news about this.

Then the Rebbe gave advice about how to ensure success:

Obviously, the more you strengthen your mother's trust in Hashem, the Healer of all flesh who does wonders, in that much greater measure and earlier, will come the success.

The Rebbe also referred to travel:

Regarding the suggestion of traveling to ... etc. the solution is in your hands. What I mean is that if you decide with the requisite strength to spread traditional Judaism there – and its ultimate purpose and main aspect - regarding taking practical action, and without paying attention to the difficulties which you encounter when you want to act on behalf of our Torah, the Torah of life and its mitzvos, then the idea is a proper and good one. (Igros Kodesh vol. 19, p. 309)

“That made it clear to us,” said

PALESTINIANS IN BRUSSELS

If the Wolpo and Ashkenazi family thought that by leaving Eretz Yisroel they could forget their security problems for a while, they were mistaken. A fifth of the residents of Brussels are Arabs! There is practically a Palestinian state right there in the city. Unfortunately, the magnificent shul of Rabbi Azriel Chaiken (until he left for a position in the Ukraine) is in the heart of this Palestinian state. A few Jews keep the minyan going with mesirus nefesh.

When the Wolpo brothers wanted to go to the mikva, they needed an escort to accompany them through the neighborhood which the Chabad Chassidim call "Jibaliyah."

"When you walk into the neighborhood you feel like you're entering Gaza," says R' Sholom Dovber Wolpo. "It's the same faces, the same buildings, the same sights. I have incredible respect for those few people, including some young Lubavitchers with Moshiach yarmulkes, who go to Rabbi Chaiken's shul and the mikva in the basement, even on Shabbos when they have to walk a long way through this scary neighborhood. They have had rocks thrown at them and were saved miraculously. When we came to Brussels, they told us to be very careful of the Arabs and not to draw attention to ourselves. We saw them everywhere at the hospital. An Arab passed us in a hospital corridor and he made a victory sign and said in English, 'Palestine will win.'

"One night, my sister went to a shiur and I stayed with my mother. My sister arrived at one in the morning and I wanted to leave the hospital and go to the hotel but by the time I got downstairs they had closed the main doors. I had to walk through the large complex to another building where I could leave by a side door in the emergency room.

"My car was parked near the main entrance, but this door opened to a completely different area than I was familiar with. I saw a van with two guys sitting in it but it was dark and I couldn't see their faces. I asked them how to get to the main parking lot and they invited me to get inside and they would take me there.

"On the way I said I was from Israel and explained the reason for my being in Brussels. When they dropped me off I said, 'In Israel we say 'toda rabba' - thank you.; They looked at me with hatred in their eyes (there was light over there and I could see them clearly) and said, 'And we say shokran (thanks in Arabic). We are Palestinians.'" I got out of the van without saying another word and when I drove out of there I thanked G-d that I emerged intact from the lion's den.

Rebbetzin Ashkenazi. "We had to travel to Belgium and spread Judaism.

"I told my family about the answer and to my surprise, some supported me while others disagreed and said that the Rebbe answered that **if we want** to travel, then to go and spread the wellsprings but it wasn't a direct answer to go. I

maintained that the Rebbe directed us to travel and spread Judaism. We all knew we had to decide quickly; the danger was great and each passing day could be critical.

"The doctors at Tel HaShomer pressured us for an answer. My father said the trip to Belgium would be hard for him with the language, accommodations, and expense, and

how could he travel abroad with my mother when she was in a wheelchair and in terrible pain?

"It's hard to describe my emotions as I wrote to the Rebbe again. I put the letter into the same volume and opened to page 416. This time too, the Rebbe's answer was amazingly precise:

May the trip be in a good and auspicious time in all its details and inner point - that through it will be added in spreading Judaism in general and spreading the wellsprings outwards in particular. And they should utilize the time spent here, in the terminology of Chazal, "the way it should be done" - with joy and goodness of heart. May we soon merit the fulfillment of the promise of "with calm and tranquility," that we all return with calm and tranquility to our holy land with Moshiach Tzidkeinu very soon. I await good news in all the above ...

"I called my parents and told them the Rebbe's answer. When they heard that there was an explicit answer, they agreed to the trip and things moved into high gear."

The family had to contact Dr. Brotchi and the hospital. Here Rabbi Benny Fischer, director of Magen L'Choleh of Yerushalayim, got involved. He spoke with the doctor and the hospital and arranged for an operation in three days. The next hurdle was passports - they had expired five years before. R' Sholom Dovber came to the rescue and within a few hours they had new passports.

That day they contacted the Rebbe's shliach in Brussels, Rabbi Mendel Shmuel Pinson. R' Pinson said he would take care of their stay in Brussels and they could relax. It was Wednesday, 26 Cheshvan, 5763/2003, when the Wolpo family went to Brussels.

The family describes R' Pinson "like an angel from heaven." "He helped us constantly," said R'

Sholom Dovber.

“R’ Pinson had people waiting for us at the airport who took care of everything, including a special vehicle which could accommodate a wheelchair. We were taken to an apartment where lunch was waiting for us on the table. The next day, R’ Pinson went with us to the hospital and stayed until the entire lengthy admittance procedure was arranged, and even a private room. His wife cooked delicious food every day for the entire family. Arriving home at six o’clock from a tiring day of work, she would cook for us and then call us to come by and get it. We told her not to cook so much and that we had food left over from the day before, but she said, ‘If you don’t come and get it, I’ll bring the food myself.’

“On Thursday and Friday many tests were done. The doctors were unsure about what to do and we could see that they were worried about how things would work out. This made our mother nervous. She was no longer young - she was approaching eighty. My sister reassured and encouraged her, reminding her of the Rebbe’s answer about trust in Hashem being the key to success.”

The entire family was 100% sure that the Rebbe’s bracha would be fulfilled in its entirety and she would recover fully. The worrisome part was the suffering she was going through and what awaited her with the operation and the recovery process afterwards.

After candle lighting Friday night the results of the tests came back. Though the news that the tumor was benign was very encouraging, there



Rabbi Wolpo with Dr. Jacques Brotchi

was still great danger that if the tumor grew, then any little damage done to the spine could cause tremendous and irreversible harm to the rest of the body.

On Shabbos, Dr. Brotchi came for the first time to examine the patient. He said the operation would be moved up from Monday to Sunday. “Monday could be too late!” He told the family that even though the operating rooms were not in use on Sunday, he would open them himself and bring a special team. “I will do everything I can to save your mother.”

“On Shabbos I was alone at the hospital with my mother, faced with the responsibility of telling her about the truth of her condition,” said Rebbetzin Ashkenazi. “In the afternoon I explained what the tests had shown. She was understandably very agitated, and I read the Rebbe’s answer to her again and again.”

On Sunday, at ten in the morning, Mrs. Wolpo, accompanied by her family, entered the operating

room, amazingly calm thanks to the Rebbe’s brachos. At that same time, in many locations around the world, grandchildren and great-grandchildren prayed at the graves of tzaddikim and said T’hillim. *Bli ayin ha’ra*, Rabbi and Mrs. Wolpo have grandchildren on shlichus throughout Israel and from Siberia to Moscow, Canada to Thailand.

“The doctors said it would take time for the operation to begin because of last minute tests and preparations. They estimated that the operation itself would first start in an hour,” said Rebbetzin

Ashkenazi. “I used the time for mitzvaim. Even when on mitzvaim back in Eretz Yisroel, I found it hard to smile when my mother was suffering, and now it was much harder.”

While the operation was underway, the family waited in Mrs. Wolpo’s room. They were all there, her husband, daughter and sons, reciting T’hillim intently for over five hours. Then the doctor appeared and announced, “The operation is over. It was much more complicated than we originally thought. We will only know how it went tomorrow morning and then we’ll be able to assess the likelihood of her being able to stand again.”

At seven in the evening, the family was allowed to enter the ICU to see her. It was a scary sight. She was hooked up to many machines, breathing with a respirator, and in pain. Fifteen minutes later they were told the visit was over. In the morning, the doctor came as promised and declared that the operation was a success and he was

BESURAS HA'GEULA AT THE HOSPITAL IN BRUSSELS

Upon their arrival in Brussels, Rebbetzin Ashkenazi and her two brothers began to think about how to go about doing mitzvaim in a strange city. Rebbetzin Ashkenazi relates:

"I took material in Hebrew and English along with me from Israel and Rabbi Pinson gave us material in French, the dominant language in Belgium. Every day I would go to the different departments and ask the nurses whether there were any Israelis or Jews there. At first they looked at me suspiciously but as time went on I learned to preface by saying that I was from Israel and my mother was hospitalized there before I got to my point.

"Some avoided answering me but there were nurses who cooperated and I spoke with many Israelis and Jews. I had a common language with the Israelis. With the locals I tried to speak in English and if they did not understand, at least they got reading material. I spoke a lot about Judaism and mitzva observance and about the Rebbe.

"During our stay, R' Pinson arranged some shiurim for us. I gave a shiur to Israeli women who work or whose husbands work at the Foreign Ministry and Defense Ministry in Brussels. I told them about my mother's illness and the Rebbe's answers and read the answer from the Igros Kodesh. At the end of the shiur some of them came over to me and asked that I write to the Rebbe for them. We opened to on-target answers and brachos.

"My brothers Sholom Dovber and Menachem were busy too. Menachem stood at the main entrance to the hospital and looked carefully at whoever walked in. Many Jews who passed by and saw a religious looking Jew said hello and he spoke to them about mitzvos and gave out brochures.

"At a farbrengen in R' Pinson's shul he told the crowd that a yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim should be started in Brussels. Menachem also went to Paris for a day and farbrenged with the talmidim in Brunoy.

"My brother Sholom Dovber gave a shiur to the employees of the Israeli embassy and other mekuravim, once for men and once for women. He also reviewed a maamer in R' Pinson's shul on the two Shabbasos that he was in Brussels and gave a shiur in Nigleh to the b'nei Torah with the participation of Rabbi Azriel Chaiken, the rav of the city."

sure she would recover. The tension immediately vanished and everybody shed a tear in thanks to Hashem.

"We stayed on for another ten difficult days," relates R' Sholom Dovber. "My mother suffered tremendously and every move was painful. Physiotherapists came to re-teach her how to move her legs. It was very hard since they hadn't yet removed the cast from her fracture.

"Before we left the hospital my father gave Dr. Brotchi a silver cup. The doctor, a warm hearted Jew, was very moved and said he would make kiddush with it on Shabbos. May he continue in his work in saving people's lives.

"The trip to Israel was a carefully executed operation. My mother was confined to a bed where she had to remain motionless throughout the flight. I can't begin to describe our apprehensions and the problems we faced but, with Hashem's help, and thanks to the Rebbe's brachos, we made it."

Mrs. Wolpo went to a rehab center in Tel Aviv where she had physiotherapy treatment for two and a half months. When the head doctor at the rehab center examined the medical records, Mrs. Wolpo said to him that as far as she knew, only one out of a thousand of these operations was successful. He responded, "You are mistaken. In your serious condition, maybe one out of 100,000. You did the right thing by having the operation done by Dr. Brotchi of Belgium."

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'I AM THE REBBE'S GOLEM'

The rav of Yekatrinslav before Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn was Rabbi Dov Zev Kazavnikov, known as Radaz, or R' Bere Volf, as the Chassidim referred to him.

HIS CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

Radaz was born and raised in a small settlement near Dubrainka (the Chernigov district). In this yishuv lived scholars and great Chassidim who were proficient in Nigleh and Chassidus.

His early Chassidic education was provided by the Chassid, R' Yoel Zalman who was one of the great Chassidic scholars of the yishuv. R' Yoel Zalman implanted fine character traits in his talmid to always be concerned for others.

By the time he was twelve years old, Radaz had acquired quite a bit of knowledge of Shas and was proficient in many midrashim of Chazal.

In this yishuv lived many simple families who did not even know the simple meaning of words of prayer. Radaz was very bothered by this and out of compassion for them he set aside time to teach

them Siddur and to tell them stories from the Gemara and Midrash.

Radaz did this for three or four years but it was very hard for him to speak and as time went on speaking became more and more difficult for him. When he was orphaned of his father he became seriously speech impaired. However, he did not stop learning and farbrenging with the simple people.

THE REBBE'S GOLEM

When he turned 17, Radaz went to Lubavitch to the Tzemach Tzedek. In yechidus he told the Rebbe about what he did with the simple people and that it was hard for him since he was speech impaired. The Rebbe thought and then said: Continue what you have been doing with them; you should be a melamed. And the Rebbe blessed him with the ability to

explain things articulately.

Radaz related: When I left the Rebbe I didn't recognize myself. I suddenly began speaking normally and it became obvious to me where this ability came from.

When I returned home and reviewed the three maamarim that I heard from the Rebbe, everybody was flabbergasted and I said to them, "I am the Rebbe's 'golem.' The Maharal of Prague created a golem out of dirt and the Rebbe created a golem out of flesh."

When the Rebbe Rayatz relates this (Seifer HaSichos summer 5700 p. 32) he concludes: "We who remember R' Dov Zev with his articulate speech have some idea of the good reward of a Chassid who devotedly seeks the welfare of others."

(A similar thing happened in 1957 with a Chassid who had speech problems and asked the Rebbe for a bracha. The Rebbe told him – Igros Kodesh vol. 14, p. 49 – **In response to your letter in which you write about your manner of speech, surely you know the story from the Rebbe, my father-in-law about R' Zev Dov Kazavnikov and therefore you should learn diligently in general and particularly in Divrei Elokim Chayim, i.e. Toras HaChassidus, and this will hasten your cure through the success of medical treatment.)**

LEARNING WITH R' HILLEL PARITCHER

In 5618/1857 the Tzemach Tzedek sent Radaz to Rabbi Hillel of Paritch. Radaz stayed with R' Hillel for a long time as a *yosheiv* and received guidance from him in the study of Chassidus and the ways of Chassidus.

When he arrived, R' Hillel assigned him to two older men to explain to him the general ways of Chassidus, "*oislernen dem*

Chassidish'n alef-beis" (to learn the Chassidishe alef-beis). They mainly told him stories of the Rebbeim and elder Chassidim.

They repeated each story several times until he knew the details perfectly. Then they would ask him what area of rectifying middos, fear of heaven, and apprehending the Creator he could learn from the story. They would teach him to exert himself in this as in in-depth learning and then they told him what R' Hillel said on the matter.

(Igros Kodesh Admur Rayatz vol. 4, p. 51 and on)

HIS BRILLIANCE AND HUMILITY

Radaz was known as an awesome genius in Nigleh and Chassidus and although he was physically short, his spiritual stature was extremely high.

Despite his genius he was exceedingly modest and did not engage much in exegetical debate in Nigleh and would act very humbly (as the great Chassidic rabbanim did in those days).

Occasionally, when his position compelled him to, he would display his tremendous powers and prodigious scholarship. Even then, he did so with his characteristic humility and lofty awe of heaven.

HE SPOKE PEARLS

Radaz was famous for his articulateness. His explanations in Chassidus were superb. He had an amazing capacity for description and when he explained and described something, the listeners felt as though they saw it with their own eyes.

The Rebbe Rayatz had this to say about his verbal abilities: (Seifer HaSichos 5704 p. 83):

"Radaz was outstanding in his exquisite speech. Whatever he said, even deep topics, he explained so



that the listeners felt as though they saw the scene themselves, especially when he told a story. He would describe the happening until the entire scene was vivid in the minds of the listeners and made a tremendous impression on them."

In another place (Seifer HaSichos 5701 p. 54) the Rebbe writes:

"Radaz once farbrenged and explained what it means when a Jew prays. He explained the idea of "know before whom you stand" – how the G-dly soul understands this and how the intellectual soul understands it, and how the animal

soul takes it. He spoke for a long time and those present did not sense the passage of time."

The Rebbe Rayatz concludes:

"I saw it as if in a vision. He depicted the G-dly soul, the intellectual soul, and the animal soul like an adult explaining things to a small child.

A HOLY MAN, A WONDER WORKER, AND BAAL TZ'DAKA

Radaz was famous as a holy man and was known as a wonder worker. Many legends were

HOLY MAN

Radaz was known as a holy man. When more than twenty years after his passing the government planned on destroying the cemetery, his remains had to be transferred under the supervision of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok. Those involved were astonished to discover that his body was whole as though he had just been buried.

R' Boruch Shifrin related that in one of his many conversations with R' Levi Yitzchok in Alma Ata, he asked whether it was correct that R' Levi Yitzchok had participated in transferring the body of Radaz. R' Levi Yitzchok affirmed that he had been involved and that he himself had transferred the body to the new cemetery. The funeral took place secretly in fear that the government would force them to transfer the body to the museum because of the rarity of its intactness.

R' Boruch related: When we spoke about this, it was a few days before the passing of R' Levi Yitzchok. I expressed wonder about a Chassid reaching such a high level. R' Levi Yitzchok explained that the level of a Chassid is very high, especially a Chassid such as he was, and he praised him very highly.

In that conversation, R' Levi Yitzchok spoke about the lofty spiritual level of "love in delights" and explained that the yira (fear) given from Above is on a higher level than ahava (love) and he brought proof to this from the Igeres HaKodesh of Tanya.

Concluded R' Boruch, how surprised I was when after some time I saw that this inyan is brought in Tanya in the daily shiur as it is divided over a year, for the day of 20 Av (although R' Levi Yitzchok had no natural way of knowing that the Rebbe Rayatz had made such a division that very year on the other side of the world), the day R' Levi Yitzchok passed away.

recounted about him as a holy man who did miracles. He ate and slept little and davened at length and with d'veikus until late in the day. For most of the rest of the day he would be wrapped in tallis and t'fillin and sit and learn Nigleh, Chassidus, and Kabbala.

He had a compassionate heart and every unfortunate person who came to him was responded to, to the best of his ability. His house was always empty of life's necessities and the leaders of the community had to give his monthly salary to his wife because otherwise, by the time he got home he was empty handed, having given all the money to the poor.

CHASSID OF THE REBBE MAHARASH

Radaz was one of the young Chassidim of the Tzemach Tzedek and one of the distinguished Chassidim of the Rebbe Maharash.

The Rebbe Rayatz once said about Radaz (Seifer HaSichos 5703 p. 104), after hearing him review a maamer of the Rebbe Maharash with his articulate explanations, "Each word of my grandfather's maamarim was a wellspring of living waters to him."

In 5629/1869, Radaz was appointed the Rebbe Maharash's shliach and shadar and he would review Chassidus in towns (Likkutei Dibburim vol. 4 p. 752:2). The way the chazan R' Yechiel Halperin came to Lubavitch is that when Radaz

visited Charkov as shadar, R' Yechiel heard how he spoke about Chassidim and Chassidus and was very inspired by this and immediately went to Lubavitch (Seifer HaSichos 5705 p. 26).

HIS HISKASHRUS AND BITTUL TO THE REBBE RASHAB

After the passing of the Rebbe Maharash, Radaz became mekushar to his son, the Rebbe Rashab and he would go to Lubavitch frequently. Radaz was completely battul to the Rebbe Rashab and the Rebbe Rayatz describes in one of his sichos (Likkutei Dibburim vol. 1 p. 105) that in his childhood in 5647/1887, he saw the tremendous submission and the majestic awe of the senior rabbanim and Chassidim like Radaz (and others) towards his father, the Rebbe Rashab, and this made a tremendous impression on him.

In one of his letters (vol. 4 p. 247) the Rebbe Rashab calls him "my true beloved and friend."

The Rebbe Rashab related (Seifer HaSichos kayitz 5700 p. 32): Once, the Chassid Radaz came to me to farbreng. I asked him: What is a Chassid?

He answered: A Chassid is someone who is devoted to seeking the welfare of others. That is the education and guidance of the senior Chassidim, to implant in the children of the Chassidim the feeling of seeking the welfare of others, with devotion. For this devoted labor they receive the best reward.

Radaz told how this happened to him, how by his being devoted to others he began to talk normally – And the Rebbe Rashab concluded, "A Chassid is someone who devotes himself to seeking the welfare of others."

In 5661/1901, the Rebbe Rashab chose the rabbanim Radaz and R' Dovid Tzvi Chein to judge and resolve the arguments that had arisen regarding some wills that had been entrusted to him.

HIS VISITS TO LUBAVITCH

When Radaz visited Lubavitch and met with the great Chassid and maskil, R' Chaim Ber Vilensky, the two of them would sit together and talk about inyanei Chassidus and would relate stories.

In yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim in Lubavitch they would bring the great rabbanim and scholars every year to test the talmidim in Nigleh. Among them were Radaz and Radatz and others. They would test the talmidim and write an assessment of their learning and give them a program of learning.

The following year they would check to see how they had progressed in their learning.

Radaz attended the wedding of the Rebbe Rayatz on 13 Elul 5657/1897 in Lubavitch. At one of the sheva brachos he visited the chassan together with some of the senior and distinguished members of Anash. He told the Rebbe Rayatz what he remembered about the sheva brachos of his father, the Rebbe Rashab in Elul 5635/1875.

The Rebbe Rayatz heard many stories from Radaz and quotes them often in his sichos and letters.

HIS FINAL DAYS

Radaz lived an exceptionally long life and until his final days he davened at length and learned Torah. He passed away on 27 Teves. The Rebbe Rashab wrote about his passing:

“Awesome is the grief of my soul upon the taking from us of our true beloved, our friend the Radaz z”l., such that ‘in hiding does my soul weep’ over this wonderful pearl that was lost from us, may his soul be bound up in the bond of [eternal] life.”

After his passing the Rebbe Rashab wrote to the community in Yekatrinslav that they should take care of his wife and household and give her a monthly stipend so she could support herself and her family. He also instructed them to appoint a rav who would be suited to the true desire of Radaz and this would be a fitting memorial for his good name. And he suggested Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn, the Rebbe’s father, to serve as his successor. In fact, after much effort, R’ Levi Yitzchok was chosen as the successor of Radaz.

[Continued from pg. 60]

that they share.

DOES THE REBBE HAVE SUPERNATURAL POWERS?

I’ll conclude with how the Rebbe himself explained the secret of the power of the tzaddik ha’dor:

A group of students had yechidus with the Rebbe and they asked him

about many topics in Judaism. Towards the end of the yechidus, one of the students asked, “Is it true that the Rebbe has supernatural powers?”

The Rebbe answered: “The truth is, every Jew has the potential to control nature because every Jew has a G-dly soul which is connected with the infinite Creator Who is above nature. By fulfilling Torah and mitzvos, a person connects to the infinite Creator and is raised up

above the limitations of nature and accomplishes acts that are considered wondrous and supernatural. The question is to what degree a person brings this ability – which exists in his potential – to fruition.”

The tzaddik fully actualizes the G-dly connection with the Creator, and this hastens the true and complete Geula, which is the job of our generation.

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THE ART OF CHASSIDUS

By Nosson Avrohom

He loved drawing when he was a child growing up in Russia. Until his teens, he didn't even know he was Jewish, but once he did, he took an interest in his roots. He discovered, to his surprise, that all the greatest artists were Jewish. He came to Chabad, became a Chassid and today he promotes his work in the artist quarter of Tzfas. He is a model of a Chassidic artist and is a source of inspiration to others.

It is peaceful and serene in the alleyways of the Old City of Tzfas. Even a resident of Tzfas who has lived there for years will still experience a wonderful sense of inspiration and mystery. In this section of the city live the artists who offer their wares in a cobblestoned alleyway. The narrow alleyways have an atmosphere of a bygone era and the winding streets reveal surprises to whoever visits them.

After half a year of living in Tzfas I decided to tour the oldest section of the city. I headed towards the Artist's Colony. A melody piqued my senses and as I turned a corner I saw a musician

playing a clarinet. A pair of children ran over from a nearby courtyard and stood there waving their hands rhythmically as if in a rehearsed performance. For the musical performance alone it was worth the walk, I thought. Then I met a Jew in Chassidic garb who was learning the daily portion of Rambam next to the display of his paintings available for sale.

The Chassid's name is Menachem Mendel Kaspinov. I engaged him in conversation and within a few minutes realized that he wasn't just another artist but a Chassid whose inspiration is drawn from his deep study of Chassidus.

"Twenty years ago, when the

gates of Russia opened, I read somewhere that Tzfas is where kabbalists and artists live so we chose to come here."

R' Kaspinov was born to a Jewish family in Moscow at a time when the word Jewish was a dangerous one in the Soviet Union.

"In my childhood, I heard my grandmother talking with my aunt and my mother a few times in a language that I did not know. It was only when I grew older that I realized it was Yiddish. Until I was 14 I did not know that I was Jewish. There was one thing that they were particular about at home and that was to eat matza on





heritage once the communist hegemony collapsed. Newspapers became more informative and I learned that in other countries there was flourishing Jewish life. There were news items about the power of Jews in the United States and how there was Judaism in Russia, too, and even in Moscow.

“At a certain point, my parents realized there was nothing to fear and they told me that I was Jewish and everything they had heard from their parents about Eretz Yisroel and Torah and mitzvos. They even apologized for hiding my Jewishness from me and said they did it because they were worried and wanted to protect me. They told me about the persecution they experienced in their childhood and since they didn’t want this to be my lot, they chose to hide my Jewish identity from me.

“At this time, I developed my artistic talent. Since kindergarten I had demonstrated an impressive ability to draw. My father was a pilot for the Soviet airline and planes and flying were frequent topics of conversation in our home, so most of my drawings were about this. At the recommendation of my preschool teacher, my parents sent me to art courses where I excelled. I was sent to an art school where I also studied theater, and throughout, I always sought excellence.

“When I finished school I went to a special institute for the theatrical arts where I successfully completed a course in theatrical scenery production. It’s interesting that with all my success in art, my desire to find out about my Judaism only grew. Art was my entire world. I would take part in student exhibitions and each time, I noticed that Jewish artists achieved the greatest success and were the most talented. A light flashed in my mind.

“Each time I met a Jew I

Pesach. The matza was bought through the official community offices and we ate it along with bread. Nobody explained to me the significance of matza. I thought it was an ancient Russian tradition to eat a flour and water cracker that did not rise.

“At a certain point I began to realize that I belonged to the Jewish people. I tried with all my might to understand what this meant, in what way I was different than others because I was Jewish; what were the customs or traditions of Jews, but I did not know where to get this information. My parents could not help me. In one of the

highest classes at school I found a book categorized as “Jewish” called *Sholom Aleichem*.

“This book was old and moldy and it discusses some religious ideas. I found out about Sukkos and other holidays in Tishrei, but what were they about? I wanted to know, to understand and gain more information, but I had no idea how to go about it. I thought perhaps Judaism was a kind of religion or nation that no longer existed. I was very curious. Every time the word “Jew” or “Judaism” was mentioned in the newspaper, I would read the item again and again.

“I learned more about my

PRAYERS FOR A CHILD IN 770

For seven years the Kaspinovs did not have children and they were very concerned.

"In 5757, my wife decided we had to travel to the Rebbe, to be in 770 and ask for a bracha. Before we bought tickets we each wrote to the Rebbe separately, through the Igros Kodesh. Our initial idea was to go for Chanuka, especially since there was an organized group of women from Tzfas who were going. My wife opened to a letter about the miracle of Chanuka.

"The answer I opened to, though, was about a Yud Shvat farbrengen and the Rebbe wrote 'surely you will see fit to participate in that farbrengen.'

"In light of these answers, we decided that she would go for Chanuka with the group, and I would go for Yud Shvat. My wife returned to Eretz Yisroel and I left the same day.

"One year later, on 28 Teves, 5758, my wife gave birth to our son.

"We figured out at the bris, which took place on 6 Shvat, that my wife had been in 770 on the date of his birth the year before, and I had been there on the date of his bris. We saw this as the acceptance of our prayers.

"We had decided to name him Levi Yitzchok. We thought it was a nice name and we considered it a z'chus to name him for the Rebbe's father. At the bris we found out that that day was the yahrtzeit of Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe's mother."

I would take part in student exhibitions and each time, I noticed that Jewish artists achieved the greatest success and were the most talented. A light flashed in my mind.

connected with him and we became friends; it was amazing. Out of hundreds of people I could pick out the Jew in the crowd and connect with him. I realized that the fact that the Jewish artists were always leaders in the field must be a result of the depth of Judaism and not simply a coincidence. I checked out other artistic fields and saw that Jews led the way there too.

"I developed a serious connection with Judaism in 5747 when Lubavitcher Chassidim, headed by Rabbi Michoel Lokatchky, established a number of Jewish centers for youth under the

auspices of Chabad.

"That year, I completed my studies at university and worked as an interior designer at a museum that operated under one of the country's big banks. Opposite the museum was a movie theater that had an unused basement which they gave to R' Lokatchky and his people. They built a Jewish library and turned the place into a Jewish center. I visited there to expand my Jewish knowledge. I spent hours upon hours sitting and avidly reading books on history and Jewish thought.

"It was there that I met my wife.

She was the librarian and was already deeply involved in Jewish life. After learning at the Chabad shul Marina Roscha for two years, she helped me better understand the roots of the Jewish people and strengthened my desire to deepen roots of my own. After half a year we decided to marry. She made three conditions: Shabbos observance, for me to undergo a bris, and kashrus. We got married on 27 Elul, 5750/1990.

"It was hard for me to keep the conditions at first, until I understood more about them."

Four months after their marriage the young couple decided to make aliya. They were interested in the holy city of Tzfas. R' Kaspinov attended the shiurim of R' Dovid Notik at Ascent regularly, and acquired a hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

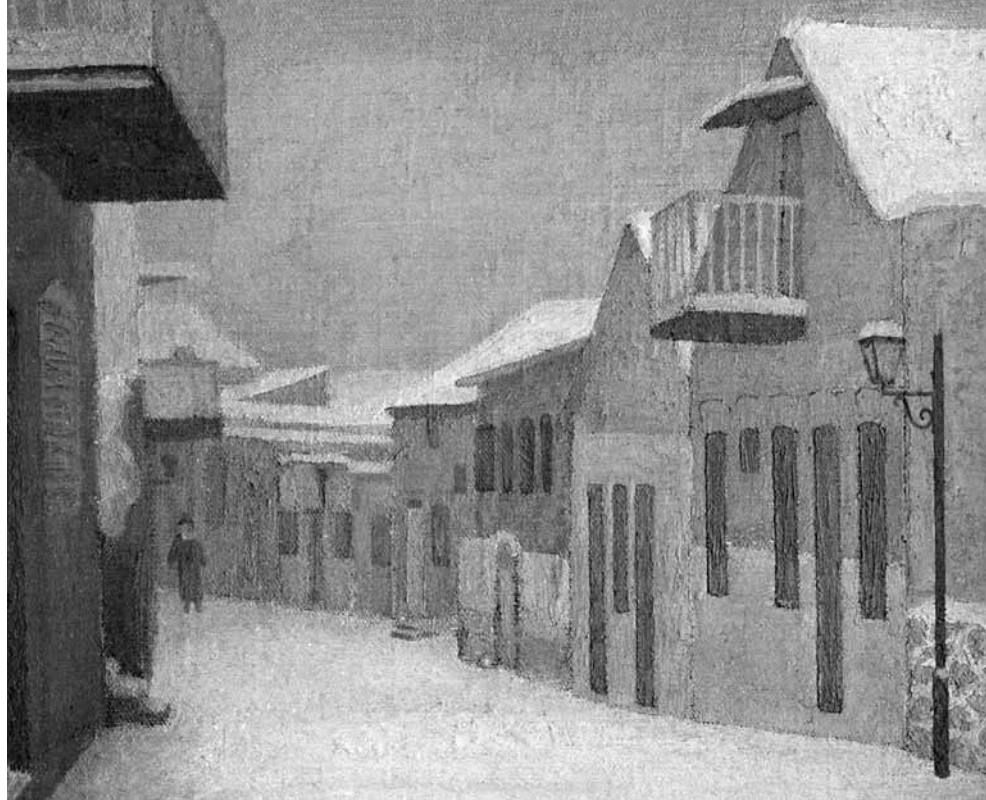
"Many of my paintings are of the alleyways of Tzfas. I was very taken by this city, by its hills and the breathtaking scenery. I began to express my wonder in my art. I spent many months painting the scenery and alleyways in oils."

Before we got to talking about the paintings that he has for sale, including many that are obviously Chassidic in nature (one of traveling to the Rebbe caught my eye) I asked him to describe his style.

"A style expresses the inner meaning that the painter wants to reveal and express. The artist will call that scene to mind in a strong way, but they also have an additional aspect to bring out. On the one hand it's not a copy of a picture; on the other hand, it's not solely a product of creativity. It combines reality with imagination."

R' Kaspinov gets his inspiration for his paintings from Chassidus, particularly from the maamarim and sichos of the Mitteler Rebbe and the Rebbe Rayatz.

"In the past, before I was



The Old City of Tzfas in a drawing by Menachem Mendel Kaspinov

religious, I thought that art is spirituality. It provided me with great inner satisfaction and I did not seek anything beyond it. I thought this was the real deal. Today, I know that painting is only a tool, one of the many instruments of expression that Hashem created. Judaism is real perfection. Torah and mitzvos are what express the truth and what I do is use the abilities I was given to serve this goal.”

In each of R' Kaspinov's paintings, certainly in those for sale, there is a lot of thought invested.

“In every Lubavitcher home there are pictures of the Rebbeim and one day it occurred to me that we also need pictures of Chassidim, role models, so we can look at them and seek to emulate them. For a long time I thought about which Chassid I should draw – R' Mendel Futerfas? R' Berke Chein? Someone else?

“If I chose one of them, why him? I came up with the idea of painting a Chassid who combines

There is no Chassidus without Chassidim and no Chassidim without Chassidus. You can't be Chassidim without being attached to the wellsprings of Chassidus. A long beard and certain kind of hat are not enough.

all of them. I took pictures of Chassidim and studied them deeply for a long time.

“After many days, a certain picture became clear in my mind and I began drawing it. I decided to draw a Chassid holding a book, in line with what the Rebbe Rayatz said: ‘There is no Chassidus without Chassidim and no Chassidim without Chassidus.’ You can't be Chassidim without being attached to the wellsprings of Chassidus. A long beard and certain kind of hat are not enough.

“That painting was an instant success among the tourists in Tzfas. When I ask customers why

they chose this painting and not other ones of scenery and sights in Tzfas, they say that this painting reminds them of their grandfather who kept Torah and mitzvos.

“There is another painting that I drew recently in which Chassidim are making their way to Lubavitch. There are many paintings that are similar but when I drew this one, I had a certain goal in mind. I wanted to touch upon something essential in Toras HaChassidus – *hisbonenus* (meditation). And so, within the painting, above and below the picture, I included the Mitteler Rebbe's own writing from *Shaarei T'shuva* where it talks

BE CAREFUL WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

“Don’t underestimate the power of art. You could have nice children’s books with good Jewish content but the illustrations can be dangerous. Parents and mechanchim don’t always consider how influential illustrations can be. In Russia of 100 years ago, a well-known children’s author chose the world’s greatest paintings to illustrate his books. When asked why he chose such expensive paintings, he explained, ‘When the children grow up they will remember the artwork as much as they remember what I wrote.’

“Pay attention to what you bring into your homes!”



about the importance of hisbonenus. Instead of a sky and earth, I put in these quotes. Chassidim on their way to the

Rebbe don’t waste their time; they meditate.”

At the makeshift gallery where he sells his works, I found R’

Kaspinov engrossed in his painting, with brush and paints in hand. He was removed from the chattering of the many tourists walking by and completely immersed in his work. I was amazed by his absolute concentration, and questioned him about it.

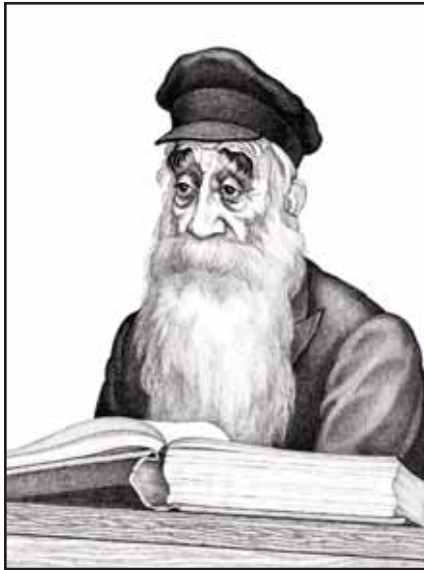
“Art is a deep expression of the soul. I can’t *not* paint. It’s a form of expression of my thoughts and feelings. A painter doesn’t pay attention to what’s going on around him as he paints. Even if he is drawing background or the scenery around him, he puts his soul into it. I draw the same tree but put my soul into it.”

In recent years, R’ Kaspinov has done a lot of research on the topic of art in Chassidus. He lectures in several places about the connections between the two.

“By the Chabad Rebbeim we find a broad range of comments on art in general and painting in particular. These topics are discussed frequently, especially by the Mittlerer Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab and the Rebbe Rayatz. Painting is generally given as an example of the importance and impact of hisbonenus as a good way of strengthening one’s connection with Hashem.

“The Mittlerer Rebbe says that a Jew needs to disengage from this world and bond with Torah and mitzvos and find pleasure in them, just like an artist who sees the painting of another celebrated artist and takes pleasure in it.

“We know the story that the Rebbe Rayatz tells about his father, the Rebbe Rashab, who visited an art exhibit and saw three special paintings, one of them of a battlefield. They saw another artist who was trying to copy this picture with his paintbrush but suddenly fainted. He was so deeply unconscious that it was difficult to rouse him, because he had been immersed in the scene and had



Left: A Chassid learning. Right: Chassidim traveling to the Rebbe.

experienced it intensely.”

The letter of the Rebbe Rayatz in which he relates this story was selected by the Rebbe to be included in the publication following the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz, *Hemshech 5711*, from which R’ Kaspinov gathered its importance to the Rebbe.

R’ Kaspinov readily connects the world of art to the Rebbe’s prophecy that the time for Geula has arrived:

“In the future, Torah study will be visual. We won’t only learn about G-dliness; we will see it.

“Today, it is possible to see how this is beginning to happen. Everything is becoming visual. Those in marketing know that in order to be successful, you have to market your product in a visually appealing way. Everything that is done today, is done in a way to attract your attention. The visual world was never as powerful as it is today.

“The same is true in k’dusha, especially in art and design. There are many artists who are drawing Chassidic themes. In every sub-category of art there are artists whose work revolves around Jewish

experience.”

R’ Kaspinov shares these thoughts with tourists who choose to stop near his paintings and get into a conversation with him. During the interview, some of them had their picture taken with him.

“A few weeks ago, a middle-aged man asked whether he could study art with me. He said that he comes every week to Tzfas. I was happy to oblige and we studied art together several times.

“On 19 Kislev, after a few lessons in which I explained the principles of art, I felt uncomfortable because here we were, two Jews, sitting on a day like this without saying a word of Chassidus. I didn’t know how to get off the topic of art and on to the significance of Yud-Tes Kislev. Then Hashem gave me my opening. At the end of our lesson, the man said he wanted to ask me some questions about kabbala that had been bothering him for a while.

“I saw that p’nimius ha’Torah was something that spoke to him. He shot questions at me and I tried to answer them. After a long time he said, ‘For twenty years now I have been asking questions, and

every answer I got only confused me more. This is the first time that I’m getting answers that satisfy me.’

“The next day he came back and asked for a lesson on Chassidus. At the end of the shiur he decided to learn art some other time - for now he wanted all our lessons to be about Chassidus. Perhaps all my work in art and my being in the Old City was only to light up his neshama, like in the story of R’ Yosef the Wagon Driver.”

At this point, R’ Kaspinov folded up his paintings and headed for the Canaan neighborhood of Tzfas. He gives a shiur over the Internet under the auspices of Lapid, an organization which works with Russian-speaking Jews all over the world.

“There is a tremendous interest among immigrants from the CIS in Torah and mitzvos. Regulars have told me that they tried previously to understand various concepts and were unsuccessful and these shiurim have helped them. Many of them have become more committed to an observant way of life; may this be my reward.”

RECOGNIZING A TRUE LEADER

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik
District Rav Bat Chefer – Emek Chefer

*What makes people admire a great man and consider him a “man of G-d?” Why did the Rebbe Rashab spend a fortune to buy a fancy walking stick for his son? * A fascinating look at the parsha from the perspective of Chazal, Kabbala and Chabad Chassidus.*



In honor of Yud Shvat, the Yom Hilula of the Rebbe Rayatz, the column this week will examine the Torah view of a leader.

All nations have respected leaders, but Jewish leaders are special. Not only are they tzaddikim who are devoted to their flock, but they have a deep soul connection with the people of their generation.

Let us begin with the esteem the Egyptians had for Moshe Rabbeinu. The Torah says regarding the story of the Ten Plagues (11:3), “The man Moshe was very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of the servants of Pharaoh and in the eyes of the nation.”

The commentators ask: why does this verse have that double phrase, in the first part saying “and the man Moshe was very great in the land of Egypt,” which ostensibly refers to everybody in Egypt, and then

repeating, “in the eyes of the servants of Pharaoh and in the eyes of the nation,” when they are already included in the previous phrase “the land of Egypt?”

WHY ARE GREAT PEOPLE ADMIRER?

The *Meshech Chochma* states that there are two reasons to admire a great person and to consider him a man of G-d: 1) because of the miracles that he does and 2) because of his tremendous wisdom, his upright behavior and his elevated middos.

Although admiration can be widespread, from the simplest people to the wisest of men, there is a difference in who is the first to recognize a great man’s qualities:

When the admiration is a result of miracles, then the first to get

excited are the ordinary people who readily believe stories, (both factual and fictitious). Intellectuals are usually skeptical, and don’t believe so readily. It’s only after they thoroughly check things out that they acknowledge the person’s greatness.

However, when the admiration is for the individual’s tremendous wisdom and outstanding middos, then the wise men are the first to recognize it and only afterwards does the man’s reputation become known to the masses. Thus, the first group is characterized by emotion and excitement while the second class is characterized by the intellect.

Moshe Rabbeinu combined both advantages: 1) He performed miracles and wonders which earned him the admiration of the masses, but it was only after the further miracles of the Ten Plagues that the



Painting by Yossi Rosenstein

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wise men of Egypt admitted that he was a man of G-d. 2) His great wisdom, his outstanding middos, his humility, compassion and kindness to others with mesirus nefesh, caused the wise men and magicians to recognize his greatness and only then did this spread to the masses, who also came to revere Moshe's wisdom and middos.

Now we can understand the double wording in the verse. "The

man Moshe was very great in the land of Egypt" refers to the esteem of the ordinary people which resulted from the miracles of the Plagues, while the magicians and wise men still did not appreciate Moshe. When he did more miracles, then even "the servants of Pharaoh," the wise men and magicians, admired him. Once these people intellectually appreciated his wisdom and began to admire him for it, the

rest of the nation also eventually took note. This is why the verse ends with words, "the man Moshe was great ... in the eyes of the nation"; the masses were the last to recognize Moshe's wisdom.

Naturally, it wasn't only the Egyptian nation and its wise men who esteemed Moshe but also the Jewish people. Let us look at a unique phenomenon:

Sometimes, the people farthest from the person recognize his greatness before those who are closer to him. The Ramban says that while the Egyptians recognized Moshe's greatness, there were Jews who found it hard to believe in Moshe and to listen to him (6:9 "and they didn't listen to Moshe etc.").

This was partially a result of their anger at Moshe because of the worsening of their situation that ensued from his speaking to Pharaoh, as it says in the parsha that they complained to Moshe. However, in the end, after all the miracles and when the slavery was over, all the Jewish people believed in Moshe.

According to the Ramban, this is what the verse means when it says, "and the man Moshe was very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of the servants of Pharaoh and in the eyes of the nation." There are three stages in the public recognition of Moshe: 1) "in the land of Egypt" – the Egyptian people 2) "the servants of Pharaoh" – his magicians and wise men 3) "in the eyes of the nation" – the Jewish people.

GENTLE LEADERSHIP

As previously stated, the Jewish people had a hard time believing in Moshe because of their suffering. To encourage them to put their trust in him, Hashem gave Moshe a special command: "and Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon and commanded them to the Jewish people."

“The truth is, every Jew has the potential to control nature... The question is to what degree a person brings this ability – which exists in his potential – to fruition.”

According to the simple meaning of the verse, what was the command? It doesn't say. Rashi explains – “He commanded them to lead them gently and to tolerate them.” By leading them patiently, the love that they have for Moshe would surface.

At first, Yisroel “did not listen to Moshe,” because of “shortness of spirit.” This “shortness of spirit” was on the part of both the Jewish people, because of their lack of patience due to the suffering, and Moshe, who spoke to them sternly and rebuked them for their poor spiritual state.

Hashem commanded Moshe to “lead them gently,” to speak of their good qualities and to encourage them with promises that Hashem would help them. “Tell the Jewish people that I am G-d ... and I will take you out from beneath the burdens of Egypt and I will rescue you from your labor and I will redeem you.” This aroused and revealed their admiration and emuna in their leader (from here we learn that in order to be mekarev Jews to Hashem, we need to encourage them and not threaten them).

SILVER STICK

As related in Likkutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1326, the Rebbe Rashab and his wife Shterna Sara were once traveling from their home in Lubavitch to another country and the Rebbe bought his son (later to be the Rebbe Rayatz) a beautiful walking stick with a silver handle. The gift was very expensive and since they were struggling

financially, the Rebbetzin asked why he had spent so much on the gift.

The Rebbe Rashab answered, “I met an Admur and his son and when I saw the difference between his son and our son, I was inspired to buy him a gift.” When the essential love was aroused for his son, there was no room for calculations and he bought the gift with great love.

A stick symbolizes rule. Moshe led the people with his stick, with which he performed signs and wonders. There are two kinds of sticks, a stick that is used to strike people in a government of tyranny and a stick of gentleness in a government of love and chesed.

When buying a silver handled stick, the Rebbe Rashab was giving his son the ability to lead the people with chesed and compassion and not with judgment and anger, since the uniqueness of authentic Jewish leaders is in their patience for their people.

THE CHASSIDIC APPROACH

The teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples explain what a leader is and the connection between him and his people:

The choice of a particular individual as the leader of his generation is no coincidence; it is directed from heaven. There is a deep, inner connection between a leader and his people. They are connected on a soul level. The neshama of the leader is the aspect of “head” and the neshamos of the people are like the body, so the

spiritual connection between them is because they are one spiritual entity.

The Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya (chapter 42):

“Moshe Rabbeinu is one of the seven shepherds who cause vitality and G-dliness to flow to the community of the souls of Israel, for which reason they are called shepherds.” Just as Moshe provided vitality for the members of his generation, so too “in every single generation, sparks of Moshe Rabbeinu come down and are vested in the bodies and souls of the wise men of the generation, the eyes of the congregation,” as the Midrash cited in Tanya (chapter 1) says, “Hashem saw the tzaddikim that they were few and he planted them in every generation.” The Tanya explains (chapter 2) that they are “heads of thousands of Israel whose souls are the head and brain... and the nourishing and life of the nefesh, ruach and neshama of the ordinary people is from the nefesh, ruach and neshama of the tzaddikim and wise men, the leaders of B'nei Yisroel of their generation.”

The “Moshe” of every generation is compared to a power station that produces electricity and sends it along wires to every home. In order for the electric current to work and the house to be lit up, you need to turn on the switch. It's similar for spirituality – Hashem created the spiritual-neshama force and placed it within every Jew. In order for this force to illuminate and have an effect on the body, you have to locate the right “switch” which gets those spiritual forces to work. The Rebbe is the one who reveals the “switch” in every Jew.

The influence of a leader on his people is not like the assistance one person provides for another, that of a strong man for a weaker one, but like the help you give yourself. The people are a spark of leader's neshama and he helps to perfect them through the inner soul-bond

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