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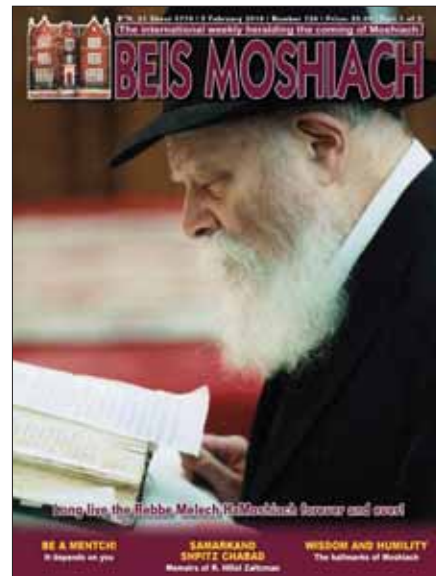
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RIPPLES OF INNER MOVEMENT

Sichos In English

YISRO'S IDENTITY

Few of the weekly Torah readings are named after individuals. As such, whenever such an association is made, it commands special attention.

And if this is true with regard to any Torah reading, surely it applies to this week's reading, Parshas Yisro, which contains the story of the giving of the Torah. Naming the reading Yisro indicates a connection between him and the giving of the Torah as a whole.

Who was Yisro?

The Torah describes [1] him as the Kohen of Midyan.

Our Sages offer two definitions for the word Kohen: [2]

A) "Ruler." Yisro had governed the Land of Midyan.

B) "Priest." He had led the Midianites in their worship. Indeed, our Sages relate [3] that Yisro had recognized all the false divinities in the world.

The connection between the first interpretation and the giving of the Torah is obvious, for it reflects the extent of Yisro's commitment.

Although he lived amidst wealth and comfort, he was prepared to journey forth to the desert to hear the words of the Torah. [4]

But the second interpretation is problematic. Why does the Torah mention this fact? Our Sages teach [5] that it is forbidden to tell a convert: "Remember your previous deeds."

ACKNOWLEDGING G-D

To resolve this question, it is necessary to understand the source for idol worship.

The Rambam writes: [6]

"During the time of Enosh, mankind made a great error....They said that G-d created stars and spheres with which to control the world. He placed them on high and treated them with honor.... Accordingly, it is fit [for man] to praise and glorify [these entities], and to treat them with honor."

Thus the worship of false divinities is rooted in the concept that G-d conveys influence to this world through intermediaries.

This is true, as our Sages comment: [7] "There is not a blade of grass on this [material] plane, that does not have a spiritual force compelling it and telling it to grow."

The gentiles, however, attach independent authority to these intermediaries, thinking that they have control over the influence they disperse, and therefore, view them as gods.

In truth, however, these intermediaries are merely "like an ax in the hand of a chopper," [8] with no importance or will of their own, and therefore, it is wrong - and forbidden - to worship them. [9]

By saying Yisro had recognized all the false deities in the world, our Sages implied that he was aware of all the different mediums through which G-d channels energy to the world.

Despite his knowledge of these

spiritual powers, he rejected their worship, declaring: [10] "Blessed be G-d.... Now I know that G-d is greater than all the deities."

THE MICROCOSM

Yisro's acknowledgment of G-d was not merely a personal matter.

His words of praise brought about "the revelation of G-d in His glory in the higher and lower realms. Afterwards, He gave the Torah, in perfect [confirmation of] His dominion over all existence." [11]

What is at the heart of this pattern of causality?

In microcosm, Yisro's acknowledgment of G-d expressed the purpose of the giving of the Torah. And this prepared the macrocosm, the world at large, for such a revelation.

To explain:

The Rambam states: [12] "The Torah was given solely to create peace within the world."

Peace is not the purpose for the Torah's existence.

The Torah existed before the creation of the world. [13]

It is G-d's wisdom, [14] at one with Him. [15]

Thus just as G-d's existence transcends the concept of purpose, so too, the Torah's.

The Rambam, however, is focusing on the *purpose* of the giving of the Torah, why the Torah was granted to mortals who live in this material world.

He explains that the Torah was

given, not merely to spread Divine light, but to cultivate peace.

RECOGNITION OF G-DLINESS ON EARTH

Peace refers to the establishment of harmony between opposites. In an ultimate sense, it refers to the resolution of the dichotomy that exists between the physical and the spiritual, that a world where G-d's presence is not outwardly evident should recognize and be permeated by the truth of His Being.

On the verse, [16] "the heavens are the heavens of G-d, but the earth He gave to the children of man," our Sages explain [17] that originally, there was a Divine decree separating the physical from the spiritual, i.e., the nature of material existence prevented one from truly appreciating spiritual reality [18] and integrating it in one's life.

At the time of the giving of the Torah, however, G-d "nullified this decree" and allowed for unity to be established between the two.

Moreover, true peace does not mean merely the negation of opposition.

Instead, the intent is that forces which were previously opposed should appreciate an inner commonality and join together in positive activity.

Similarly, the peace that the Torah fosters does not merely involve a revelation of G-dliness so great that the material world would be forced to acknowledge it.

Instead, the Torah's intent is to bring about an awareness of G-d within the context of the world itself.

There is G-dliness present in every element of existence. For at every moment creation is being renewed, and were G-d's creative energy to be lacking, the world would return to absolute nothingness. [19]

The Torah allows for the appreciation of this inner G-dliness, and enables us to live our daily lives in harmony with it.

In a personal sense, Yisro's acknowledgment of G-d

accomplished this objective.

From his involvement with "all the false deities in the world," he came to a deep recognition of G-d. [20]

The transformation which he underwent made possible the giving of the Torah which in turn brings about a similar transformation in world at large.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

The Zohar [21] associates the transformation of material existence with the verse: [22] "I saw an advantage to the light over the darkness."

The word Yisaron, (Yud Tav Reish Vav Nun, sharing the same root as the name Yisro) translated as "advantage," can also be rendered as "higher quality," and thus the verse can be interpreted to indicate that the higher quality of light comes from the transformation of darkness.

There are two implications to this interpretation.

Firstly, the transformation of darkness brings about a higher quality of light than is usually revealed, and secondly, that this light does not stand in opposition to the material nature of the world. On the contrary, it is the darkness of the world which is the source of this higher light.

The Path to Redemption

The Tanya [23] describes the giving of the Torah as a foretaste of the Era of the Redemption. For when the Torah was given, all existence stood in a state of absolute oneness with G-d.

At the time of the giving of the Torah, however, the revelation was dependent on G-d's initiative.

Since the world had not been refined, its nature stood in opposition to the manifestation of G-dliness, and the revelation did not endure.

In the centuries that followed, however, mankind's observance of the Torah and its mitzvot has integrated G-dliness into the fabric of the world.

In the Era of the Redemption, the

dichotomy will be permanently resolved and in a complete and abiding manner, we will realize that our world is G-d's dwelling. [24]

May this take place in the immediate future.

Adapted from Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XI, p. 74ff; Vol. XV, p. 379ff; Vol. XVI, p. 198; Sichos Shabbos Pashas Yisro, 5751

Notes:

1. Exodus 18:1.
2. See the Mechilta to this verse.
3. Mechilta to Exodus 18:11, Zohar, Vol. II, p. 69a, Rashi, Exodus 18:9.
4. Rashi, Exodus 18:5.
5. See Bava Metzia 58:13, quoted in Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Mechira 14:13.
6. Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Avodas Kochavim 1:1.
7. B'Reishis Rabba 10:6, Zohar, Vol. I, p. 251a.
8. Cf. Isaiah 10:15. See the maamer V'Yadaata 5657 (English translation, Kehot, 1993) where this concept is explained at length.
9. See the fifth of the Rambam's Thirteen Principles of Faith (Commentary to the Mishna, Introduction to the Tenth Chapter of Sanhedrin).
10. Exodus 18:10-11.
11. Zohar, Vol. II, p. 67b.
12. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, the conclusion of Hilchos Chanukah.
- The Rambam's source is a matter of question. The Tzemach Tzedek (Or HaTorah, Mishlei, p. 553) cites Gittin 59b. See Likkutei Sichos, Vol. VIII, p. 349ff.
13. Midrash T'hillim 90:4, B'Reishis Rabba 88:2.
14. Tanya, ch. 3.
15. Zohar, Vol. I, p. 24a.
16. Psalms 115:16.
17. Shmos Rabba 12:3. See the essay entitled What Happened at Sinai (Timeless Patterns in Time, Vol. II, p. 91ff, Kehot, 1994) which elaborates on this concept.
18. Indeed, the very Hebrew word for "world." Olam, shares the same root as the word Helem meaning "concealment."
19. Tanya, Shaar HaYichud V'HaEmuna, Chapter 1.
20. The intent is that Yisro willingly acknowledged G-d's presence and endeavored to modify his life to conform with his appreciation of His existence. Other nations were also awed by the miracles of the Red Sea and recognized G-d's power, as it is written (Exodus 15:14-16): "Nations heard and shuddered.... The [inhabitants of] Canaan melted away. Fear and dread fell upon them." Unlike Yisro, however, they did not seek to internalize their appreciation of G-d in their conduct.
21. Zohar, Vol. III, p. 47b.
22. Ecclesiastes 2:17.
23. Chapter 36.
24. Cf. Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas B'Chukosai, sec. 3.

WISDOM AND HUMILITY – THE HALLMARKS OF MOSHIACH

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

Never before in Jewish history, including Chassidic history, had any leader made such a huge deal over the passing of any woman, even the most righteous biblical figures, which made the whole thing seem entirely out of proportion.

WISDOM FOR THE MASSES

Growing up in an environment that was less than approving of Chabad Chassidus, I heard many and varied complaints and accusations against the movement, especially in its current incarnation. One of the common arguments, which I didn't find compelling even in my most rabid phase, was to cite the early Kabbalistic prohibition against the study of Jewish mysticism before the age of forty, and even then only if one was on a high spiritual level. Having learned Nefesh HaChayim of Reb Chaim of

Volozhin as well as other works based on the teachings of the Vilna Gaon and chronicles of his life, in addition to the writings of the Maharal, the idea that higher levels of Divine Wisdom can be revealed to lower generations since they need more potent medicine to arouse them to love and fear of G-d, seemed not only legitimate but quite sensible.

If anything, in my later studies, I found the strong opposition from other Chassidic masters, who were concerned about the intellectualizing of matters of faith, far more persuasive. History had shown that those who related to G-d through

simple faith were far more ready to sacrifice everything, including their lives, for that faith. It was the philosophers and intellectuals who were far more likely to jump ship. Later, I discovered that the Rebbe responded in a letter that recent history in Russia had more than refuted this argument and allayed this concern as Chabad Chassidim displayed a degree of personal sacrifice far beyond anything that came before, particularly those immersed more deeply in the study of Chassidus. However, the letter only addresses the fallacy in the factual conclusion of that argument but doesn't resolve the paradox. How does studying deeper and more intellectually rigorous esoteric ideas lead to greater readiness to sacrifice one's life and do more for G-d?

Over the years, the Rebbe did and said many things in public that provided much material for those looking to criticize. One of those that seemed tailor-made was when the word got out that the Rebbe had called for girls to learn more.

This included gaining a broader and deeper knowledge of Chassidus as well as learning those parts of the Oral Torah, traditionally considered off limits for the fairer gender. The way that the Rebbe framed the issue was that since the main concern regarding teaching Torah to women is the fact that intellectual development enhances the negative capacity for, and tendency of, rationalizing as a means to get out from one's obligations, nowadays women are getting the intellectual stimulation anyway, but from secular sources. As such, they would be better off exerting their minds over a difficult passage in the Talmud or commentaries, which are holy, rather than secular disciplines, which are unholy.

This pronouncement was greeted with universal shock. Those communities that work actively to minimize the exposure of their female progeny to any aspects of the Oral Torah, reacted with utter derision, with their more hostile elements proclaiming that this was proof that Chabad of today was headed in the wrong direction. Even those who provide a broader education for girls, teaching a wide range of Torah commentaries, as well as ethical and philosophical works, responded with strong negativity. As one very thoughtful educator told me, it was not simply an issue of whether the study of the Oral Torah is permitted or not. The far greater challenge in educating religious young women is finding the correct balance between feeding their minds and not corrupting their natural propensity for simple faith in G-d and His Torah. This is especially crucial since the wider world is actively working to denigrate the traditional role of the Jewish woman, since it is seen as more supportive and subservient in nature. Simply put, intellectual prowess and humility before G-d

and man do not often go together.

WOMAN OF WISDOM

Throughout the year following the passing of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, on the 22nd of Shvat 5748/1988, and at this time of the year in later years, the Rebbe spoke about the need to learn life lessons from the life of the departed. Oddly enough, one of the most notable characteristics of the Rebbetzin was that she was so intensely private that very little was known about her life. From the bit of anecdotal material that we do have, what emerges is a portrait of a woman who was exceptionally intelligent, learned and well educated, possessed of a great deal of wisdom, while imbued with Chassidic self-nullification that manifested in the form of extreme personal sacrifice and avoidance of any and all public attention, along with a genuine concern for others.

Since Jews are naturally compassionate, one would expect that even the most hate-filled opponent of Chassidus would consider such a tragedy off limits for digging up reasons to be critical. However, the fact that the Rebbe kept going on about it in terms of its impact on the Divine service of every person in the generation was seen by those who did not see themselves as followers of "the leader of the generation" as a bit over the top. Never before in Jewish history, including Chassidic history, had any leader made such a huge deal over the passing of any woman, even the most righteous biblical figures, which made the whole thing seem entirely out of proportion.

At that time, I witnessed something that really shook my view of the world. As an outside observer, the one thing we all knew for certain was that no matter what the Rebbe said, the Chassidim

accepted and followed unquestioningly. I was living in Eretz Yisroel then, at the height of the political war that split the main religious party, with Lubavitch being the main issue of contention between the Chassidic groups and the yeshiva world. This split was felt at all levels of Israeli religious society and arguments and debates broke out in every shul and on every corner. Encountering one such heated exchange between a group of yeshiva men and their Lubavitcher counterparts, which was conducted in rapid fire Hebrew, I stood off to the side and listened in. The argument ended when it deteriorated to the level that one of the fellows made some snide remarks about how Chabad Chassidim are very involved with mourning their Rebbetzin, and the Lubavitchers reacted angrily and stormed off.

I well understood why they would find the comment offensive, as it was meant to be, but it was equally obvious to me that they not only had no adequate response, they were actually embarrassed by the whole thing. This was an eye-opener for me. Seeing the groups go their separate ways, I sort of trailed along with the group of Chassidim to hear what they would say amongst themselves. One of the Chassidim tried to explain to the others, through some convoluted reasoning, that the Rebbe was first and foremost a Chassid of his father-in-law, and as such was not mourning the person who was his wife but the mystical connection to his Rebbe... Not only were they uncomfortable with what their Rebbe was doing and saying, they felt the need to come up with some abstruse Chassidic bromide to ease their discomfiture, born of a lack of understanding.

In my later queries into how the current incarnation of Chabad Chassidus could be seen as

It was not simply an issue of whether the study of the Oral Torah is permitted or not. The far greater challenge in educating religious young women is finding the correct balance between feeding their minds and not corrupting their natural propensity for simple faith in G-d and His Torah.

consistent with, and a direct continuation of, its hallowed historic tradition, I discovered that there were many things that the Rebbe said and did that made his Chassidim uncomfortable. In fact, one Chassid reassured me (with a few others nearby sagely nodding their heads approvingly) that no real changes were made in the Chabad educational system for girls in response to the aforementioned call of the Rebbe except for a few token tweaks. Clearly, he (they) thought that it was a good idea to not get carried away and take the Rebbe too literally, and that this bit of information would make the world of Chabad more attractive to me.

WISDOM OF HUMILITY

A key foundational principle of the mystical tradition of Torah is the fact that all of existence is part of a larger cosmic “Divine plan,” which culminates with the events associated with the “future time”; the coming of Moshiach, the resurrection of the dead and the seventh millennium. And it is through Torah and Mitzvos as well as other aspects of the Divine service of the Jew that all this is accomplished. In the early Kabbalistic literature, our mission in exile is described in varied and

often colorful terms of “raising up the *Sh’china* from the dust” or “reconnecting the final *Hei* [of G-d’s four-letter name] with the first three letters.” Another anthropomorphic image that is used to describe what we are trying to accomplish is the “reconstruction of [*malchus*] the feminine aspect [of the Divine].”

To explain all of the above in great detail is beyond the purview of a brief article, but Chabad Chassidus gives us the tools to understand the larger plan as well as what we can and must do to bring that plan to fruition. If in earlier generations, this was true in a more general sense, in our generation we have been given far more information with greater detail and specificity. In fact, you just have to “open your eyes” to see that everything that happened, is happening and will continue to happen, is all part of the plan. Even things like spiritual descents, which come from being “lower” and more “distant” from G-d, are actually part of bringing us closer to the ultimate revelation than ever before.

In most relationships, unity is more readily achieved when one half of the relationship does the thinking for both. When both halves of a relationship each have a mind of their own, they tend to drift apart as grown children do from

their parents. That is why in the secular world, the more educated are less likely to marry, less likely to stay married, less likely to have children, and almost never have more than one child. These trends are far more pronounced with highly educated women. That is the bad news.

The good news is that when two people with minds of their own realize the need to connect with the other and create a unity that transcends each one’s individual ideas and feelings, that unity is much more powerful than that between one dominant party and one submissive party. So, each of these types of relationship has an advantage that the other lacks. A relationship between “equals” is much more intense and brings the two closer, but there is always the danger of drifting apart. An “unequal” relationship where one is entirely submissive to the other tends to be more permanent but less passionate. Having the best of both seems close to impossible.

On the first Friday of Creation, in the Garden of Eden, the first woman decided to think for herself and partake from the fruit of the tree that promises the ability to “know good and evil,” not just being told by an overprotective husband not to even touch the tree, and decided to share her new knowledge with her husband. At Mount Sinai, the Jews had learned the lesson about the dangers of independent thinking and recognized the need for a leader to whom they could submit and follow without question. When their leader didn’t return when he said he would, they [i.e., the men; the women did not participate] created one that would not think independently, but simply be a mindless conduit for the word of G-d, a calf of gold.

We have been working to correct the spiritual impact and

devastation of these past events for thousands of years. Chassidus provides us with the means to resolve the tension between independent thought and being totally submissive to and completely one with G-d's Oneness. Since it is the wisdom of the inner secrets of the Torah that reveals the G-dly reality and shows the person his own nothingness, it grows the mind while bringing the person to ever greater levels of self-nullification and submission to the Divine Will. Although it is true that we represent the feminine aspect in relation to G-d, but until recently this has only been the work of the Jewish male with the actual females raised in such a manner that independent thinking was not developed or encouraged.

WISDOM AND HUMILITY

It says in the HaYom Yom of Rosh Chodesh Av, "The unique quality of Moshiach is that he will be humble. Though he will be the ultimate in greatness, as he will teach Torah to the Patriarchs and to Moshe Rabbeinu, still he will be the ultimate in humility and self-nullification, as he will also teach the simple folk."

Moshiach is the embodiment of the completion of this process – the ultimate greatness in matters of the mind and the ultimate greatness in self-nullification – which is accomplished by our generation, the final one of exile and the first of Redemption. The ultimate expression of that would be women who learn Torah and Chassidus and their learning spurs them to greater commitment to the traditionally

submissive roles of wife, mother and homemaker. The indication that we moved into the final stage before the Redemption was when the wife of the leader of this generation, who embodied that synthesis of wisdom and humility, moved on to the next stage of existence indicating that this phase was completed.

Similarly, in the address to the Shluchim (Chayei Sarah 5752) the Rebbe explained that the final preparations for Moshiach require us to use our faculties for independent thought in carrying out the shlichus while being totally nullified to the "sender," and to channel that specifically into studying the subject of Moshiach and Redemption, as this leads to actually experiencing that reality of "all will know Me" and "on that day G-d will be One and His name will be One," immediately, NOW!



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THE REBBE'S AHAVAS YISROEL

By Rabbi Leibel Groner

*The Rebbe said: "I will tell you my perspective on life. The past ought to encourage the present and the present ought to strengthen the future. That is, every period in a person's life should cause the next period to be better than was it was until now. Tomorrow must be much better than today, and so on." * Stories about the Rebbe's Ahavas Yisroel to inspire us to better tomorrows. * Said at a Melaveh Malka farbrengen.*

Every person has his personal matters and those things that he does for others. We all know about the many important activities the Rebbe does throughout the world - spreading Judaism and Chassidus and providing material aid as well. But not many people are aware of the Rebbe's personal acts of kindness to others.

UNLIMITED AHAVAS YISROEL

The Rebbe's Ahavas Yisroel was not limited only to Chassidim and people the Rebbe knew, but was extended to any Jew. If the Rebbe heard about Jews who needed help, whether spiritual or otherwise, he took the first opportunity to help them. I'll give you one example.

There was a family that received

a gift from their community, to travel to Eretz Yisroel on vacation. The husband called and asked for an appointment to receive the Rebbe's parting bracha. He and his wife had yechidus. When they left, the wife said to me, "Eh, what did we need this for?"

I asked her what she meant and she said, "The Rebbe ruined our vacation."

"What happened?" I wondered.

"The Rebbe said to us, 'You are going to Eretz Yisroel? That's a very good thing, but before you go, I would like to give you a shlichus. A few weeks ago I was informed that in a country in Europe (if I am not mistaken it is Romania), they opened an old age home for Jews. I was told that there is no kosher food in this home. Since you are traveling, I would like to ask you to stop off in this country, travel to that city, and speak with the head of the k'hilla. Say you are there because I sent you and I want him to arrange kosher food for the people in the home. I am ready to pay half the expenses. The people there were used to eating kosher at home and why should they now, in their old age, no longer do so?'"

The woman concluded, "Can you envision what this entails? It's a city that nobody knows about but the Rebbe found out that there is an old age home there without kosher food and he wants to do something about it. He asks someone who is going on vacation to stop off there and make sure there is kosher food."

We saw many other times how the Rebbe takes care of Jews.

One night, I was in the Rebbe's room and there was a chuppa going on outside because it is customary to make a chuppa near the Rebbe's room. We heard the exclamations of mazal tov as the chassan broke the glass, but not the music that usually follows. The Rebbe noticed this and asked me, "What happened?" I replied that due to financial



constraints, unfortunately no musician had been hired for the simcha.

The Rebbe told me to immediately hire a musician who lived nearby to play at the wedding, and the Rebbe said he should send the bill to him. If they asked who hired a musician, he shouldn't say anything, just "I heard there is a wedding without a musician and so I came."

Around 25 years ago, I was sitting in the office Erev Pesach when the phone rang. On the line was a woman crying. She said that unlike previous years, there were no smells of cooking from her neighbor who lived next door. She managed to get inside the house and discovered that the oven was empty. The lady of the house admitted that they didn't have the money to buy

The Rebbe told me, "It says, 'when a man has a worry in his heart, he should talk it over,' and by doing this, he is calmed down. If so, what do you care if the person repeats himself? Each time he does so, another stone is moved off his heart..."

food for Yom Tov. The woman offered her a loan but the neighbor refused to take it.

The woman related all this and ended with, "How can a family be left without food for Pesach?" I told her that I would see what I could do and took down the information. As soon as I hung up, the Rebbe asked

that I come into his room and I took the opportunity to tell the Rebbe about the phone call. I thought the Rebbe would tell me to find people who could help her, but no! The Rebbe opened his drawer, took out \$500 and told me to put it in an envelope with no indication where it came from and tell one of the

bachurim to put it under the door and leave immediately.

Three hours later, the woman called back. "R' Groner, I don't know what happened here but now I can smell cooking ..."

That's the way it was with the Rebbe. When he heard that someone needed help, he dealt with it and did so secretly.

We saw this by the Rebbe many times. Not only did he endeavor to instill in others the importance of Ahavas Yisroel, he was a role model himself of someone who helped others materially and spiritually.

That's how the Rebbe wants us to behave, to help others with everything and not to wait, but to do it ourselves.

THE REBBE DEVOTES HIS PRECIOUS TIME TO US!

Time is the most precious and important commodity to the Rebbe, as his father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz said, "By my son-in-law, every moment is like a year." I can tell many stories to which I was a witness about how the Rebbe did not waste a moment. At the same time, when the Rebbe received people for yechidus, people who wanted to ask questions, be blessed or receive advice, there were instances when they repeated their story over and over and the Rebbe responded patiently once, twice, and a third time. As the person in charge of arranging appointments, there were times that I walked in and asked that they leave, but the Rebbe motioned for them to stay.

When I went into the Rebbe's room after the end of yechidus one night, the Rebbe told me, "It says, 'when a man has a worry in his heart, he should talk it over,' and by doing this, he is calmed down. If so, what do you care if the person repeats himself? Each time he does so, another stone is moved off his heart and he feels better, so why

rush him?"

The Rebbe considered every minute to be an entire year; but that was for himself. When it came to others, there were no limits. Even if something would take a long time, if it would benefit someone else, make things easier for him, and he would feel better, then the Rebbe forwent his personal matters.

It was amazing to see the Rebbe's patience, to sit for hours upon hours and listen to people's problems. The Rebbe listened quietly to each one as though he was the first to enter. The Rebbe listened to every detail and asked questions. The Rebbe's patience is indescribable. People were blown away by it. When the Rebbe spoke to a doctor, he inquired about medical matters; when he spoke to a judge, he asked specific questions, and all without displaying fatigue.

One time, a big Litvishe rav asked for yechidus. I told him to come at midnight because I wanted to first let in those people whom I thought would be brief. He finally got his turn at four in the morning. Before he went in, he said to me, "I have a very serious problem, but the Rebbe has been sitting already for eight hours and receiving people. I am sure he is exhausted and I doubt he can concentrate on the serious matter I want to bring up." He considered coming back at another time. I told him, "Go in now and if, when you come out, you tell me that the Rebbe wasn't as involved as you would have liked, I will give you an appointment for another day and you will be one of the first on line."

He spent about twenty minutes with the Rebbe and when he came out he said to me, "R' Groner, if I didn't see it myself, I would not have believed it! Even after eight hours in which the Rebbe heard tzara after tzara, when I walked in to the Rebbe's room, he looked as alert and fresh as though I was the first. When I began speaking, after I'd said just a

few words, the Rebbe already grasped the whole thing and immediately explained to me what my question was. Needless to say, the Rebbe gave me excellent advice. I would not have believed that after eight hours I would not see any signs of tiredness. The Rebbe's level of concentration is so high that it was like I was the first person to see him."

The Rebbe gave each person the feeling that he was the only one in his world and nothing else mattered to him but that individual and his problem.

THE REBBE REVEALED HEAVENLY MATTERS FOR PEACE IN THE FAMILY

In New York lived a family belonging to a different Chassidic group that had a sixteen year old son. For various reasons, he was sent to learn in 770 and not in the school of his own Chassidic group. When he became of shidduch-age, an suggestion was proposed and both of them asked the Rebbe whether they should meet and received a positive response.

The bachur called his parents and told them about the shidduch and that the Rebbe gave his approval for them to meet. His parents asked him to tell them about the girl so they could inquire about her. A few days later, his mother said that although they heard nice things about her, she didn't think the girl was suitable for him.

The bachur, who trusted the Rebbe's positive answer, met with the girl and after some time they both decided to get engaged. They wrote to the Rebbe for his consent and blessing. The bachur added that his parents did not approve. They received the Rebbe's positive answer about the marriage.

The bachur told his mother that he had a positive answer from the Rebbe but she insisted, "We are your

parents!” When the bachur told his parents that he planned on marrying the girl (in accordance with the halacha that in two matters a son does not have to listen to his parents: where to learn and who to marry), they were very upset and said they would not attend the wedding, they would not help financially, and the family would cut off ties with him.

A week later the mother went to 770 and went to the room where the bachurim learned. She went over to her son and slapped him in front of all his friends and commanded, “You will not marry her, no matter what.”

The boy did not respond out of respect for his mother, but when she left the beis midrash his friends followed her and reasoned with her, “You sent your son to Lubavitch and you know that if you come to Lubavitch you become a Chassid who consults with the Rebbe. If you have reasons why the girl does not suit your son, go to the Rebbe who gave his approval and present your side. The Rebbe might agree with you.”

Their logic, plus the chance that maybe they could accomplish something, motivated the parents to come and tell me the story. I told them to come back two days later, on Thursday night, and I would try to get them in even though the day had been booked months in advance.

They spent 15 minutes in the Rebbe’s room while the bachurim waited tensely outside. When the parents emerged the mother said that they no longer opposed the shidduch. One of the bachurim dared to ask, “We don’t understand. You slapped your son publicly the other day and now, within 15 minutes, you changed your mind?”

The mother answered, “When we told the Rebbe our reasons for opposing the shidduch, the Rebbe said, ‘When I am asked about a shidduch, before I answer I look at all the volumes of shidduchim up

Above and when I see that there is no obstacle I give my approval. When your son and the family of the girl asked whether they should meet, I checked all the s’farim and there was nothing standing in the way of their meeting. When I received a second letter which said that his parents were opposed, I thought perhaps I had overlooked some book where it said the match was not good. I reviewed all the books again and did not see any opposition and so I gave my consent and blessing.’

“If a tzaddik who can go up Above and review the books of shidduchim tells us that he checked them and there is no opposition in Heaven, who are we to oppose it?”

It is known to what extent the Rebbe went to hide things like this and here, in order to make peace in the family, he made an exception and revealed hidden matters. Again, we can see how great is the Ahavas Yisroel of the Rebbe.

EVERY JEW IS A DIAMOND

For several years, the Rebbe stood every Sunday and gave out dollars for tz’daka. Since our Sages say that “great is tz’daka for it hastens the Geula,” the Rebbe did what he could so that Moshiach would come that much sooner. This is one of the reasons that the Rebbe stood for hours and gave money for tz’daka to thousands.

There is a famous response from the Rebbe to a woman who asked him how he could stand there so long. The Rebbe said that every Jew is a diamond and just as you don’t get tired when you count diamonds, you don’t get tired when receiving Jews.

Chazal say that even the idle talk of Torah scholars should be studied, so we need to understand the significance of what the Rebbe meant when he said that he views every Jew as a diamond. What

characterizes a diamond? Hashem put diamonds deep in the earth. A miner digs it up and it is covered with layers of dirt. He cleans it and then gives it to someone whose job is to cut it and polish it.

As long as the diamond was in the earth for thousands of years, nothing touched it; it remained what it was. So too with a Jew who is compared to a diamond. He has a holy neshama which Hashem gave him. A Jew can do whatever he wants with his diamond, even things that are, sadly, against Torah. Even then, his neshama is still connected with Hashem and remains as pure as ever. It’s just that the mud and other things that cover over his neshama hide the great light within.

The Rebbe enjoins the shluchim to look at each Jew like a diamond with a holy neshama. Despite whatever he experienced until that moment, he remains connected with Hashem; he is a Jew who can be called a tzaddik, “and Your people are all tzaddikim.” “Even though he sins, he is Yisroel.”

It says, “How good are your tents Yaakov, your dwelling places Yisroel.” “Yaakov” is the category of Jew who is more involved in matters of this world, material things. Those called “Yisroel” are the ones involved in more spiritual pursuits.

When a Jew does a serious sin, Chazal don’t say “even though he sinned, he is Yaakov,” the lower level, but the G-dly soul within him is still on the highest level and, “he is Yisroel.”

When you speak to a Jew about a Jewish matter, you are not giving him something new that he does not have, because from the moment he was born he is already a complete Jew; he has a pure neshama which yearns to do Hashem’s will. We merely try to help him **reveal** what he has. A Jew can despair and think: if I did those things, maybe I’m a lost cause? To this the Rebbe responds: No! You are a diamond.

“I heard the rabbi’s speech and although I am eighty years old, and all my life I conducted myself in various [non-Jewish] ways, my neshama is still whole; it is still pure and connected to G-d. The time has come to uncover my neshama.”

Nothing affected that reality; you are whole like every Jew; at this moment you can be a Jew in every way. You just have to remove the junk that conceals it.

Three or four years ago, I was invited to Australia. One of the shluchim had a group of wealthy supporters, and he wanted to make a special farbrengen for them. In that farbrengen I discussed this concept.

After the farbrengen, an elderly woman asked me whether a shiur could be arranged at her house once a week. I told her I was just a guest in Australia but the shliach lives there and she should speak to him. The next day, the shliach called me and said, “Leibel, I would never have believed that this woman would want to have a shiur. Every time I asked her to take on some mitzva, she refused. She was unwilling to put up a mezuzah or light candles, and did not have a pushka in her house. She always said, ‘It’s not for me.’ Now she wants a shiur in her house! I asked her what happened all of a sudden and she said, “I heard the rabbi’s speech and although I am eighty years old, and all my life I conducted myself in various [non-Jewish] ways, my neshama is still whole; it is still pure and connected to G-d. The time has come to uncover my neshama.”

We see, then, how important it is to tell Jews about their neshama and how it is like a diamond which, despite being buried in the earth for centuries, can be cleaned off and

polished. This is what the Rebbe wants – not to create something new in a Jew but to reveal the truth that already lies within.

TO LEARN FROM THE REBBE HOW TO MAKE A SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTING

Every community has a gemach – a free loan society. Crown Heights has several gemachim, one of which is called Gemilus Chassadim Shomrei Shabbos. The Rebbe Rayatz was the president of this organization.

Every year on Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim, the gabbai of the gemach, Rabbi Yochanan Gordon, would go to the Rebbe and give him a report of all the year’s activities, how many loans were given, for what sums, how many were repaid, and how many people gave money to expand the gemach.

Each time he gave the Rebbe a report, the Rebbe smiled and said thank you. After the Rebbe Rayatz’s histalkus, R’ Yochanan went to the Rebbe and suggested that the Rebbe accept the presidency of the gemach, and the Rebbe agreed.

For the first Parshas Mishpatim, he prepared the annual report and saw that that year was far more successful than ever before. The scope of the loans was greater, many more people repaid their loans and there had been an impressive increase in contributions to the gemach. The gabbai thought, “If

when I went to the Rebbe Rayatz I got a smile and a thank you, the smile of the new Rebbe will be even broader!”

When he went to the Rebbe and gave the Rebbe the report, the Rebbe read it from beginning to end and then said, “R’ Yochanan, this was all you could do? No more?” R’ Gordon said afterwards that if there had been a hole to crawl into, that’s where he would have gone.

The Rebbe realized how discomfited he was and encouraged him by saying, “Why don’t you take an example from me. You know that every night we say the bedtime Shema and as we do, we are supposed to make a spiritual accounting of how the day went, what should have been and what actually was, what needs to be added and what needs correcting. Every night, when I make a spiritual accounting, I say to myself – is that all I did today?”

Now, you have to know what the Rebbe’s day was like. The Rebbe slept only a few hours a night. The rest of his time was devoted to learning and working on behalf of the Klal. Besides being Rebbe, he was the executive director of the organization that is Lubavitch throughout the world, a huge empire, and yet, since 5710, for dozens of years, the Rebbe did not take a single day off! . The Rebbe was in his office every weekday, on Shabbasos, on Yomim Tovim, on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur.

When I told this to a group of businessmen, one of them asked, “How could the Rebbe be in his office on Shabbos, on Yom Tov, on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur?”

I explained, “First, you have to understand what kind of office the Rebbe had. This was not the office of a business, stocks, or real estate. His office was to help people, to receive people, to give brachos and advice. The Rebbe even told us that if, on Yom Kippur there was an



emergency in which someone had to undergo an operation and he wouldn't do it without the Rebbe's consent, we had permission to enter his office to ask him about it. And if a woman was having trouble in labor, we should come in. That is what it means to work continually on behalf of others without any reservations.

"And after all that, the Rebbe said that when he made a spiritual accounting at night he asked himself, is that all I did?"

The Rebbe said to R' Yochanan, "I will tell you my perspective on life. The past ought to encourage the present and the present ought to strengthen the future. That is, every period in a person's life should cause the next period to be better than was it was until now. Tomorrow must be much better than today, and so on."

WHAT IS MOSHIACH WAITING FOR?

I will conclude with a little story. One Sunday, an important American journalist came to observe the Rebbe giving out dollars. He wanted to see what kind of people visited the Rebbe and how the Rebbe interacted with them. He stood there and took notes of what he saw. After a few hours, he came over to me and asked whether it would be okay if he went over to the Rebbe for a dollar. Of course I said that would be fine.

He went over to the Rebbe and I introduced him as a journalist. The Rebbe gave him a dollar and then gave him a second dollar and said, "With success in what you write." Then the journalist said, "I can reach the entire world because my newspaper has a large global readership. What message would

you like me to convey to the world?" The Rebbe responded, "Tell the world that Moshiach is on the way. He is closer than ever but he is waiting for us to finish our job – to add in acts of goodness and kindness to others. If I did much goodness and kindness today, tomorrow I can't say that yesterday I did so many good things so today I am taking a vacation. On the contrary, today needs to be better than yesterday.

That is what Moshiach is waiting for, for each of us to care about others, whether in spiritual or material matters, and we need to do as much as we can to help others. Moshiach is waiting. The more goodness and kindness we do, the faster Moshiach will come. L'chaim, l'chaim!

CURING THE LOVESICK IN MEXICO

By Avrohom Jacobson



Refael scanned the supermarket shelves, trying to find products with a kosher symbol. He took down some boxes and put them in his cart, and quickly moved on when he suddenly noticed a person staring at him.

He wasn't surprised. In the two weeks since he had arrived in Mexico City, he had gotten used to stares from the locals. Among the millions of dark-skinned Mexicans he definitely stood out. But this time, the gaze was different. It wasn't a look of surprise at his yeshiva-look and the tzitzis poking out from his suit, but one of great interest. Refael sensed that the stranger wanted to talk to him but didn't know how to approach him.

Within a few minutes his assessment was proven correct. "Excuse me for bothering you," the man addressed him and his friend, Yossi. "You look like Lubavitcher Chassidim." The two of them nodded and he went on, "So I'm sure that you will have time to listen to an amazing miracle with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, which I experienced."

The three men stood among the boxes of pasta as the stranger recounted the following fascinating story.

It was in the 70's and assimilation in Mexico had reached a new high. Many Jewish leaders expressed concern about the total abandonment of basic Jewish values.

As a traditional family, my parents felt that they were giving us the maximum in Jewish education and in their worst dreams they did not see themselves facing a personal war against assimilation. But the epidemic was contagious and it affected our family too. My older brother came home one day and announced that he was engaged to a non-Jewish girl.

The truth is, his decision wasn't

made overnight. They had been friends for a while but none of the family had realized that the relationship had gone deeper. My parents' trust in the education they had given us was so great that they didn't try to break up the friendship. They just did not envision their son ever wanting to marry a Gentile.

At first, my parents tried to convince him to drop the terrible idea but he went ahead with his plans and announced a date for the wedding. At this point, my parents despaired. The atmosphere in the house was oppressive. Each passing day, my parents aged a year.

Then a measure of hope was kindled by a Lubavitcher Chassid who knew my father. When he heard of the impending tragedy he suggested flying to the Lubavitcher Rebbe and asking for a bracha.

At first my father rejected the idea. He knew his son and was certain that if he had failed to dissuade him from his plans, there was no chance that someone else would succeed. "If I, the father, didn't convince him, what can the Rebbe do?" he asked.

But the Lubavitcher didn't give up so fast. He told my father miracle stories of the Rebbe in which boys or girls were on their way to marrying a non-Jew and the Rebbe succeeded in saving them from intermarriage at the last moment. Slowly but surely, his words sank in. One day, my father told me that the following week we would be going to New York together with his friend the Lubavitcher in order to meet the Rebbe and ask for his guidance and bracha.

When the day of our trip arrived, my father did not feel well and could not travel. Though I was only twenty years old, I went alone with his friend. There was no other choice; we couldn't forgo this last chance. Before I left the house, he asked me to try and remember every word the Rebbe said because he had decided

In the two weeks since he had arrived in Mexico City, he had gotten used to stares from the locals. Among the millions of dark-skinned Mexicans he definitely stood out. But this time, the gaze was different...

to do everything the Rebbe told us to do.

The flight from Mexico City to New York took six hours, which gave me plenty of time to think about the sad situation we had gotten ourselves into. I tried to think of what the Rebbe would suggest but as much as I wracked my brains, I couldn't think of anything that hadn't already been tried – and failed.

Because of the urgency of the matter, our friend the Lubavitcher had been able to get us an appointment with the Rebbe for that week and so there I stood, late at night, in the hallway before the Rebbe's room. The silence that prevailed at that hour contrasted with the constant hum of voices of yeshiva students throughout the day and added to the feeling of holiness.

I used the waiting time to write a long letter to the Rebbe in which I detailed everything that had happened to my family in recent months and noted that my father had resolved to do everything the Rebbe said so that his son would return.

The person ahead of us on line came out of the Rebbe's room and it was time for us to enter. I suddenly felt weak in the knees, a strange feeling that I had never felt before. At the threshold, a moment before my eyes met those of the Rebbe, I said to our Lubavitcher friend that he would have to explain the situation to the Rebbe because I couldn't open my mouth before the

tzaddik. A second later we were in the room, standing before the Rebbe.

The Rebbe looked at me encouragingly. I found it hard to meet his gaze but I felt that his eyes radiated great power and they gave me a secure feeling that after the Rebbe gave his bracha it would be fulfilled.

I gave the Rebbe the letter I had written and the Lubavitcher told the Rebbe in brief what had happened with my brother and said there was a date set for the wedding.

There was a moment of silence which seemed like an eternity to me. The Rebbe looked at the note that I had given him and then looked at me and said, "First of all, don't worry. He won't marry a non-Jew, but you have to observe three things: 1) kashrus, 2) check t'fillin and mezuzos, 3) give tz'daka in amounts of 18 every day."

The Rebbe took out three dollar bills from his drawer and gave them to me. The Lubavitcher understood that the yechidus was over and gently pulled me out of the room.

When I returned home I was still under the spell of the yechidus with the Rebbe. My father was eager to know what the Rebbe had said and as soon as I walked into the house I told him about the yechidus, the Rebbe's promise and the three things. I gave him the three dollars and felt that by doing so I was transferring the strong faith I had in the fulfillment of the Rebbe's promise.

We immediately implemented the Rebbe's instructions. As I mentioned earlier, we were a traditional family. We kept kosher except for one thing. Whenever my father traveled on business to Switzerland he would bring back Swiss cheese which he really enjoyed. This cheese, which did not have a hechsher, was placed in a particular spot in the refrigerator and only my father took a bit of it every so often. He knew that this must be what the Rebbe was referring to, and he rushed to the refrigerator and threw the cheese in the garbage. He promised that he would never buy products without a hechsher anymore.

As for the second instruction, that the same day we brought the t'fillin and mezuzos in to be checked. And from that day on, we gave eighteen coins of the local currency to tz'daka every day.

The day of the wedding was rapidly approaching. We were doing everything the Rebbe had said to do and impatiently awaiting the fulfillment of the promise. About a week before the wedding it happened. My brother became suddenly sick and after a routine examination by the family doctor he was hospitalized. We thought this would be our salvation but it turned out that his illness was mild and within two or three days he would be out of the hospital.

Then the phone rang in our house. On the line was one of the doctors at the hospital where my brother had been hospitalized. He identified himself as a religious Jew

and said he knew that my brother was planning on marrying out. He also knew that we were vehemently opposed to this step and suggested a short-term solution.

"If you are interested, I can ensure that he stays in the hospital a bit longer."

We promised to keep the scheme a secret, and the doctor said he would keep him in the hospital until a day after the wedding. Till this day, I don't know who told the doctor about my brother's wedding plans and how he knew about our opposition to them so that he endangered his position and called us with this plan. If it was discovered he would be fired, but I didn't think of all this at the time. It was clear to me that this was part one of the realization of the Rebbe's promise that my brother would not marry a non-Jew. I was just left wondering what would happen after my brother finally left the hospital.

That was the longest week of my life. The day of the wedding passed while my brother lay in the hospital under doctor's orders not to get up. Then "miraculously," he was pronounced healthy and was released the next evening.

That is when we saw the complete fulfillment of the Rebbe's bracha. When he left the hospital my brother went straight to his girlfriend's house, where an unpleasant surprise awaited him. She spoke to him coldly and barely responded to his questions. It took him a while until he realized that it was all over.

He left her house brokenhearted and returned home. We tried not to pour salt on his wounds and let him recover gradually from the big disappointment. Boruch Hashem, he soon forgot her and a few months later, when he had gotten more involved in Jewish observance, he married a religious girl.

A few years later, I heard that the daughter of a friend of mine had a gentile boyfriend and intended to marry him. My friend tried to dissuade her, to no avail.

When I went to express my solidarity with him, I found him at home in a terrible state. I told him about my brother and, confident that this would help him thwart his daughter's plans, I gave him one of the dollars I had received at that yechidus. I told him that tremendous blessings are within these dollars from the Rebbe and he could be sure his daughter would not marry out.

I added that in order for the Rebbe's bracha to be fulfilled, he had to commit to three things: kashrus, checking t'fillin and mezuzos, and giving tz'daka every day in multiples of eighteen.

When I visited him a few weeks later, he told me that when he started following the three instructions, his daughter's relationship with the gentile boyfriend started cooling off and they had recently broken up.

(With thanks to Refael Tawil who told me what he heard from the man in the store in great detail)

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SWAYING IN TIME

By Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd

Time is a creation of G-d, brought into existence through a process of tzimtzum and hispashtus, constriction and expansion. This is analogous to the ebb and flow of vitality in the human respiratory and circulatory systems. The lung or heart creates a vacuum, similar to the Divine withdrawal in the first tzimtzum. Then the void is filled from beyond, whether the lung with air, the heart with blood, or the first tzimtzum with Divine light.

—The Rebbe, Mind Over Matter, p. 82.

It was snowy and cold that Friday in February, but the butterflies had returned - to my stomach at least.

True I had done this all before, but never on such a large scale. A hundred pairs of eyes faced mine, waiting, wondering what was next.

I asked for two volunteers from the audience and several hands went up. In a multicultural setting like this, I made sure my selection was equitable - a male and a female, one white, one colored. I would administer the test and the volunteers would record and tally the student responses.

Although I was the Professor and they were my 3rd year undergraduate class, the tables were turned, for this time it was they who were bemused and I who was nervous. They already knew that the questions I was about to pose were in no way an evaluation of their academic performance in my Faith and Science class. But what they did not yet know was that they were about to become participants in a test of something immeasurably more important - the truth of the Torah.

On the surface, it seemed a little sacrilegious, putting G-d to the test as it were. And besides, who could possibly have the naivety - or worse, the gall - to test such a thing? As the saying goes, "For the skeptic, no proof is sufficient while for the believer, no proof is necessary." On the other hand, if Chassidus and Kabbala were prepared to go out on a limb to make a falsifiable psychophysiological hypothesis, then hey, why not test it?

So test it I did, and fairly I think, as befitting a course offered in the University of Toronto's Faculty of Arts and Science. We used a double blind methodology in which the student / experimental subjects did not know what was being measured, and the volunteer

experimenters could not guess what the hypothesis was. No room for bias here. Everything was out in the open except for the whispered instructions I gave to the volunteers. "When I ask each question, check the position of each student's head as they think of the answer. Only record those which are noticeably tilted upward or downward. You tally the ups and downs in the back half of the class while you, check the front."

With a research assistant ready on each side, I posed the first problem. "Without writing anything down, just using your head, do the following multiplication: Calculate the product of 17 times 17. Don't worry, take your time. Once you get the answer, just raise your hand until we notice you and then put it down." That last bit about raising their hands was just a red herring to make them think that we were interested in seeing how long it takes for them to answer.

Once the markers finished recording their observations on that question, we were ready to continue. "It's time to move on to the next question so don't worry if you didn't finish the first one. We have the data we need. The next question is: What exactly did you eat for breakfast this past Tuesday and at what time?"

Again the markers made their up and down "head counts" and once that was done, the quiz was over. Glancing at their sheets I breathed a sigh of relief. The numbers were diverse enough to make a strong statement.

"Please report your findings to the class. Overall, in which direction did students tend to tilt their heads when answering the first question?"

"Down," "Down," they replied.

"And overall, in which direction did students tend to tilt their heads when answering the second question?"

"Up," "Up," they replied.

"Alright class, I'd now like to read you something and hear what you think. It's a story told by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Volume 2 of his edited talks (Likkutei Sichos, p. 364-5).

One year, in 1894 or 1895, medical science discovered an artery in the brain, which facilitated memory and concentration. So the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe's brother came into the room and told the Rebbe

about the discovery. This Rebbe went into the next room and came back with a small manuscript of Chassidus that was written by his great grandfather the second Lubavitcher Rebbe some hundred years earlier.

He showed him where in that discourse, there are six or seven lines, where the second Rebbe mentions that in the brain there is this artery that has a variable vapor pressure causing it to shift position thereby stimulating either memory or concentration. When this artery is facing the part of the brain that supports chochma and bina (wisdom and understanding), it helps to remember. When it is directed toward the part of the brain that contains the daas, knowledge, it helps concentration. That's why when a person wants to remember, he looks up, tilting his head upwards, and when a person wants to concentrate, he tilts his head downwards.

The brother replied to the Rebbe saying that the Mittlerer Rebbe must have been a great medical scientist. The Rebbe Rashab said to him, "No. The Mittlerer Rebbe knew how the spiritual template of man works in the upper worlds, and therefore he could predict how the physical human being works as well."

* * *

Prof. Robert Jastrow, founder of NASA's Goddard Institute and Director of the Mount Wilson Institute has this to say, in his book, "G-d and the Astronomers":

"This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth... [But] for the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; [and] as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

Here's an extension of these ideas from today's news.

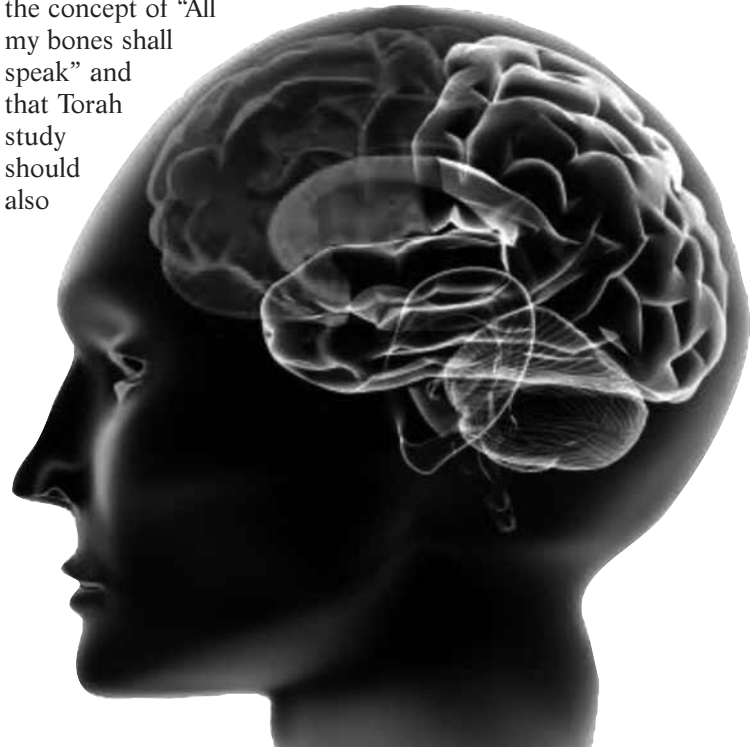
Researchers at the University of Aberdeen have discovered that when people reflect on the past, they tend to sway backward but when they contemplate the future, they move forward. This study on chronesthesia, or mental time travel, shows how tightly linked our senses of time and space really are.

It just may be that the very same blood vessel to the brain is involved, since the backward movement associated with memory of the past will normally cause an upward tilt of the head, while the forward motion for concentrating on the future, normally causes the head to incline downward.

Those of us familiar with Jewish study and prayer will immediately recognize this back and forth swaying motion as the universal choreography that goes so well with Torah and t'filla. Our sages tell us that we should

In psychology today, our experience of time is now considered to be entangled with our spatial sense. In modern physics too, relativity theory has us thinking in space-time, where time is just another dimension, like the three dimensions of space. These disciplines have somehow fast forwarded to the past, converging on a truth that has been embedded in the Torah l'olam, meaning in all places and all times as one.

sway when we pray to fulfill the concept of "All my bones shall speak" and that Torah study should also



involve a physically dynamic so that the learning will be preserved.

Now after thousands of years of swaying to their studies and prayers, science may finally be casting light on how exactly that works.

All of our studies and prayers are highly chronesthetic. Take the quintessential Shmoneh Esrei prayer for instance. We start the first blessing by acknowledging “our G-d (the present) and G-d of our ancestors (the past). Then back to the present (“He does kindness”) and off to the future (“Who brings the redeemer to his descendants.”) Even G-d’s very name is a chronesthetic experience, as the letters Yud, Hei, Vav and Hei, also refer to past, present and future, both individually and collectively as grammarians will explain.

When we go on to pray for health, prosperity and meaning in life, we sway. The backward motion stimulates memory as we are reminded of others who are not so well off as we. Forward is anticipation, as we concentrate on what the world is going to be like when Moshiach comes.

In Torah study too, our swaying accompanies our consciousness as we bridge epochs in time. Whether a Talmudic tractate, a compendium of Bible commentaries, or a chassidic discourse, every page integrates Scripture from 3000 years ago with Mishnayos and midrashim of 2000 years ago, Rishonim of 1000 years

back, and the latter scholars and chassidic masters of more recent times. We integrate all the present implications for how we live and project the impacts onto the Days of Moshiach before us.

Even the subject matter transcends time. For example, discussing the status of a lost object involves analyzing whether an owner’s future discovery of his present loss makes him despair of finding it retroactively to when he lost it, in which case it would be permissible for someone who finds it now in the interim to keep it if he finds it first. We need to sway just to imagine it!

In a more spiritual vein, we have the time-travelling power of higher t’shuva, repentance out of love, that has the unique quality of being able to transform past misdeeds into shining merits, by virtue of having impelled the penitent to subsequently attach to G-d so intently.

In psychology today, our experience of time is now considered to be entangled with our spatial sense. In modern physics too, relativity theory has us thinking in space-time, where time is just another dimension, like the three dimensions of space. These disciplines have somehow fast forwarded to the past, converging on a truth that has been embedded in the Torah l’olam, meaning in all places and all times as one.

This is all part of the convergence of Torah and science, prophesized so long ago by the Zohar, as a sure sign that world is about to be filled with the knowledge of G-d as waters cover the sea.

Now if only we could sway the One Above to bring about that time here and now. Maybe the way to do that is to lean forward into the future perspective, so He will do the same.

Dr. Aryeh (Arnie) Gotfryd, PhD is a chassid, environmental scientist, author and educator living near Toronto, Canada. To read more or to book him for a talk, visit his website at www.arniegotfryd.com.

* * *

Announcement: Baruch Hashem, a second edition of *Mind Over Matter: The Rebbe on Science, Technology and Medicine*, is well under way. Among the many improvements is the inclusion of dozens of never-before-published letters.

Call for letters: The publisher, SHAMIR Books, is offering a complementary pre-release copy of the book for each contributor of material included in the upgrade. Please email info@arniegotfryd.com or call (416) 858-9868 if you are able to share a bona fide letter pertaining to science, technology or medicine.

Call for assistance: There is a modest budget for someone to make a proper index of the book according to Chabad standards. Reply by email if and only if you can demonstrate Torah scholarship, a command of written English, and familiarity with the material.

ADD IN ACTS
OF GOODNESS & KINDNESS
TO BRING MOSHIACH NOW!

ONCE IN A 100 YEARS

By Nosson Avrohom
Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

When I stood before the Rebbe, I was astounded by his penetrating eyes. Nevertheless, I got up my courage and asked the Rebbe for a bracha to find a shidduch. The Rebbe heard what I had to say, then gave me a dollar as he blessed me with... “a complete recovery.” I was then pushed past the doorway, and I found myself outside – bewildered and confused. I’m totally healthy – what does the Rebbe want from me?

Rabbi Nir Gavriel is the Rebbe’s shliach in the Florentine neighborhood of Tel Aviv. His vast array of activities spreads throughout the community. He knows many stories about how Jews have come closer to Yiddishkait and chassidus, including numerous miracles from the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. This one, however, stands out.

“One morning a few months ago, as I stepped out of the local mikveh,” Rabbi Gavriel began, “I

noticed on my cell phone that I had received three unanswered calls from the same number. Initially, I thought that I should daven first and then get back to the caller to see what I could do to help. However, when the same number flashed again on my mobile, I answered the call. On the other end of the line, I heard a very worried young man, who told me in a voice choked with emotion that he is standing at the entrance to the shul and he must write a letter to the Rebbe. He added that he actually

has a letter already prepared and he doesn’t require any introductory assistance, all he needs is for the letter to be placed in one of the volumes of Igros Kodesh.

“I told him that I would be at the shul in a few minutes. When I arrived, he put the letter in one of the volumes of ‘Igros Kodesh’. I perused the response that he received, but I didn’t see any clear answer for him.

“I carefully tried to interpret the meaning behind his letter, as he told me why he had written it. He had been married for two months. Just a month before the wedding, doctors had discovered a dangerous growth in his fiancé’s throat. They suggested delaying the requisite operation until after the wedding so that she should look her very best on the most important day in her life.

“The doctors then proceeded to explain how serious the danger was, greatly intensifying their worry and concern. Upon hearing their emotional distress, one of the couple’s friends suggested that they write a letter to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach and ask for his bracha. A Chabad chassid who lived in their neighborhood gave the husband my number.

“All this happened on a Thursday, with the operation scheduled for just four days later, on the following Monday.

“Despite the fact that he didn’t see the Rebbe’s bracha openly, his faith was strengthened by the belief that he will surely receive his blessing, and he promised to keep the good resolution that he had made when he wrote the letter.

“The young man went on his way, but I couldn’t stop thinking about him. The plight of this couple deeply touched my heart. Such young people, only starting out in life, having to suffer so much. I thought about them the whole Shabbos, and I davened and

‘We started operating, but as we began to deal with the afflicted area, her heart stopped beating. After struggling over the matter for several moments, we decided to stop the operation, despite the fact that we still hadn’t removed most of the growth – which means that she doesn’t have much time left to live.’

hoped that the operation would be successful.

“On Sunday, I made my regular rounds along the neighborhood storefronts to offer Jews the privilege of putting on t’fillin. I noticed a new store that sold bedding, linens, and ornamental decorations, and decided to go in and get acquainted with the store-owners. When I came in, I met a middle-aged woman arranging the shelves. I introduced myself as the Rebbe’s shliach in the neighborhood. She looked at me with piercing eyes and said, ‘I know quite well who the Lubavitcher Rebbe is. There are two dollars in my house that I was privileged to receive from him, and they are part of a miraculous story about how my life was saved in the merit of the Rebbe’s bracha.

“The woman then happily, and with great emotion, proceeded to tell her story:

“About twenty years ago, I was living in Brooklyn. I was about thirty years old and still not married. I saw much success in my personal life, but not in this area. A friend of mine suggested that I go to the Rebbe, whose blessings have saved many Jews, and ask for a bracha. I arrived in the Rebbe’s court, and when I stood before the Rebbe, I was astounded by his penetrating eyes. Nevertheless, I

got up my courage and asked the Rebbe for a bracha to find a shidduch. The Rebbe heard what I had to say, then gave me a dollar as he blessed me with... ‘a complete recovery.’ I was then pushed past the doorway, and I found myself outside – bewildered and confused.

“‘I’m totally healthy – what does the Rebbe want from me? I was crushed by disappointment and virtually inconsolable. I sat at home for a whole week, depressed to the point that I didn’t want to leave the house. I felt that a tremendous opportunity had gone to waste. My friend, who had sent me to the Rebbe, reasoned that due to his heavy burden, the Rebbe didn’t hear my request correctly. She suggested that I go back to the Rebbe next Sunday, and this time I should speak more clearly. Full of hope, I joined the lines once again the next Sunday, but incredibly, the Rebbe again gave me a dollar and blessed me with ‘a complete recovery’, adding that I should give the dollar to someone who needs it.

“‘It was only a month and a half later that I fully understood what the Rebbe had said. I felt a choking sensation in my throat, and test results showed that I had a serious tumor there.

“After a series of x-rays, the doctors informed me that

according to their findings, the tumor was spreading into my lungs, and unless they performed an immediate operation, they couldn’t expect me to live for more than three or four months. I now understood the meaning of the Rebbe’s bracha.

“‘I took the Rebbe’s dollar with me, and when I went in for the operation, the dollar was under my pillow.

“‘Shortly after the operation commenced, the doctors left the operating room and told the friend who had accompanied me in very clear terms: ‘We started operating, but as we began to deal with the afflicted area, her heart stopped beating. After struggling over the matter for several moments, we decided to stop the operation, despite the fact that we still hadn’t removed most of the growth – which means that she doesn’t have much time left to live.’

“‘The doctors added that while my days are numbered, no one should tell me anything about this.

“‘My friend was stunned, but he promised to act in accordance with the doctors’ advice. When I woke up from the operation, he told me that everything was fine and convinced me to travel to Eretz HaKodesh and pray at the gravesites of the tzaddikim. I agreed.

“‘Just before my scheduled trip to Eretz Yisroel, I went for a follow-up examination with the doctor, who couldn’t believe me when I told him that I felt terrific. I thanked him for the operation, but I couldn’t understand why he kept asking me again and again if I felt okay.

“‘The doctor furrowed his brow in amazement and asked if he could examine me. A series of additional x-rays were made, and when the doctor looked at the pictures and the test results, he almost collapsed in shock. There

was no sign of the tumor the doctors had detected prior to the operation.

“The doctor called my friend in and told him, ‘Do you remember what we told you earlier? Well, you can forget it. In the tests we just did, we found nothing. The hand of G-d found the way to remove what we couldn’t.’ It was only then that I learned the true story behind the operation and the doctor’s inexplicable excitement. I realized that it was all in the merit of the bracha I had received from the Lubavitcher Rebbe.”

Rabbi Nir Gavriel then picks up the story:

“When she concluded, I suddenly felt myself shaking with emotion. I told her about the young man who had come to me to write a letter to the Rebbe about his wife, who had also been diagnosed with a growth in her throat. I then asked her if she still had the dollar that the Rebbe gave her ‘to give to someone who needs it’. She said that she did, and I asked if she would be willing to give it to this couple. She happily agreed. Finally, after so many years, the dollar would reach its proper destination. She asked if I would watch the store for her while she dashed to her home nearby to get the dollar. Meanwhile, I called the young man and told him the whole story.

“When he heard the purpose of my call, he and his wife immediately headed out to the store. They arrived within a few minutes, accepted the dollar and heard the woman’s unique story first-hand.

“The following evening, the young man called and excitedly related that his wife went through the operation successfully and was now in the recovery room. He added that according to the doctors, the operation was quite



Rabbi Nir Gavriel

Here is a sheet of paper with the protocol of the treatments you would need in the coming months to prevent the return of the growth.’ As he spoke, the doctor took the sheet of paper, crumpled it, and tossed it into the waste paper basket. ‘Something like this you see perhaps once in a hundred years,’ he said.

successful. I felt like a huge weight lifted from my chest. The dollar, of course, had been placed under her pillow in the operating room.

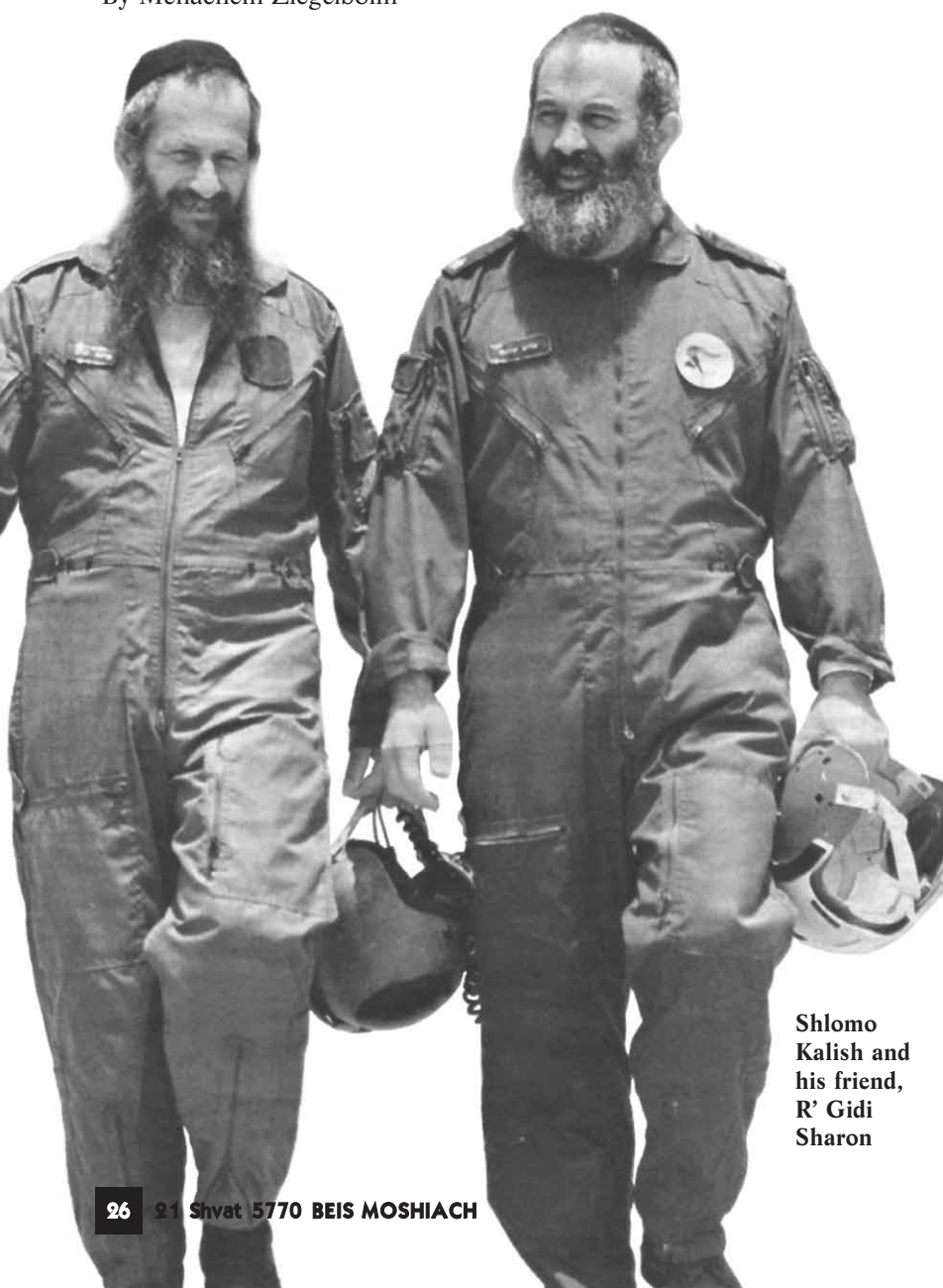
“Two weeks passed. Suddenly, the telephone rang. The young husband was on the line, and he cried out with great excitement, ‘Rabbi Nir, you must hear this!’ He proceeded to tell me that they had just come out of a meeting with one of the finest surgeons in Eretz Yisroel for growths of this type. ‘Initially, he asked us general questions and how she felt after the operation. ‘What difference does it make?’ my wife replied. ‘Chemotherapy or laser treatment? Tell us already what to expect next?’

“The doctor’s lips formed a hidden smile. We didn’t understand what he wanted. He then told my wife, ‘Look, here is a sheet of paper with the protocol of the treatments you would need in the coming months to prevent the return of the growth.’ As he spoke, the doctor took the sheet of paper, crumpled it, and tossed it into the waste paper basket. ‘Something like this you see perhaps once in a hundred years,’ he said. ‘Everything that we thought up until now was one big mistake. We took the growth that we removed during the operation for a pathological examination, and we were stunned to discover that it was not a malignant tumor, rather a lump of fat... May I wish you a long and happy life. You have no need to come back here again...’

“It took some time to absorb the enormity of the miracle,” Rabbi Nir Gavriel concluded, “but it had to be shared. The Rebbe writes that we should publicize the miracles that people experience, so that very week, we made a huge farbrengen with Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi, attended by dozens of local residents who were thrilled to hear the amazing story for themselves.”

THE PILOT, THE BANKER, AND THE CHASSID

By Menachem Ziegelboim



Shlomo Kalish and his friend, R' Gidi Sharon

From playing music in clubs in Krayot to Torah and Chassidus, R' Shlomo Kalish's life has taken some interesting turns. Described as "one of the most influential people in the Israeli high-tech industry," he merges the material world of investment banking with the spiritual world of Torah, Mitzvos and Chassidus.

When Major Shlomo Kalish presents himself for Reserve duty at the flight school at the Chatzerim base, the young pilots sometimes suspect that someone is playing a trick on them. What is this bearded man with a black kippa and tzitzis doing in the operations room?

Before they have a chance to ask what's going on, Shlomo enters the dressing room and puts on his flight suit. He then invites the stunned young pilots to enter the training room because they will soon be flying.

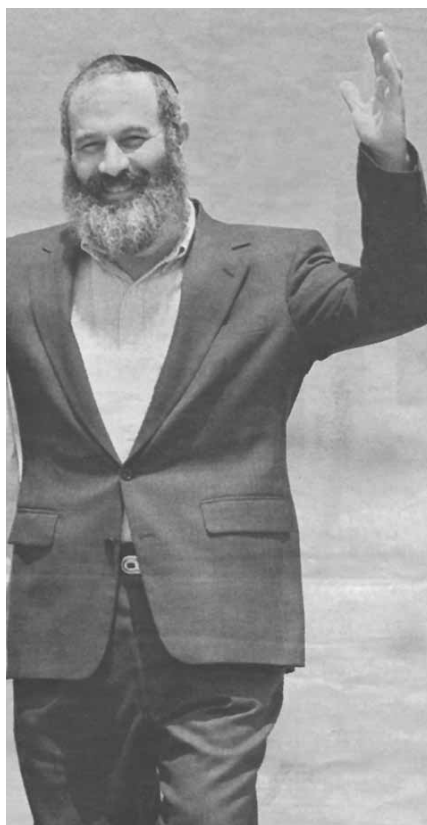
It usually takes several moments before the young pilots realize that the religious Jew who looks like he just came from shul, is to be their flight instructor.

Despite becoming a baal t'shuva, it didn't occur to Shlomo to stop serving in the Reserves. He finished the course for combat pilots, was assigned to the Skyhawk fleet and flew combat missions, including attacks across the border, and was a pilot in the front lines in the Yom Kippur War.

R' Shlomo Kalish was born and raised in a typical home in Haifa and went through the public school system, excelling academically. He loved music. "I played guitar in clubs and when I was 16 I started a rock band."

His parents had left tradition behind when they moved to Israel from Europe, and Shlomo distanced himself even further from the few religious practices they maintained. Even on holidays, when the entire family went to shul, he refused to join them. He had Leftist, anti-religious views. Among his friends he was a role model of success.

When he was drafted, he was assigned to the air force. He successfully completed the difficult pilot courses and in the winter of 5732 he got his wings. He was assigned to the Skyhawk fleet



It usually takes several moments before the young pilots realize that the religious Jew who looks like he just came from shul, is to be their flight instructor.

stationed in the center of the country. Young though he was, in the Yom Kippur War he was veteran enough to fly missions over the border.

"I set out on an attack mission in the Golan Heights on the second morning of the war. After waiting in the air over Tzfas, we were directed to fly from the Kinneret to Nafach.

Our order was to attack whatever we saw. We flew low so the missile radar wouldn't discover us and a few kilometers from the Kinneret we saw Syrian tanks. We went into attack mode and I suddenly felt a mighty explosion and saw a plume of smoke. My plane had been struck by an enemy missile! I checked things out and saw that the plane was flying fine but a red warning light was lit. I completed my mission and managed to land in Ramat Dovid with my engine and tail severely damaged."

About a year after the end of the war, Shlomo decided to tour South America. When he was planning his itinerary he was referred by a friend to a pilot by the name of Gidi Sharon. Though they had never met before, this cemented a friendship between them. Today they are both Chassidim and involved with inyanei Moshiach.

Shlomo's commanding officers wanted him to remain in the air force, offering him a permanent position as a pilot of a Phantom jet, the most advanced plane the IDF had at the time. His interests, however, lay elsewhere.

He went to Tel Aviv University, where he got a degree in mathematics while continuing to fly during Reserve duty in the Skyhawks fleet. In one training session he flew too low and hit a suspension cable in the south, which knocked out electricity in Eilat for a few hours. Today, with the hindsight of someone who believes in hashgacha pratis, he doesn't think it was coincidence. Ron Pekkar, Brigadier General (Res.), who was the commander of the base, sent him for 21 days of detention in Prison Six. There, in the officers' tent, he met Major (Res.) Motty Karpel, who was then a captain in the armored corps. Karpel would eventually be one of the people who was mekarev Shlomo.

There were other providential

encounters along the way. One day I was called up to Reserve duty. I arrived at the base in Chatzerim for training in a simulator. As I got off the transport plane I noticed a religious Jew smiling at me and waving. I wondered what a *dos* (derogatory word for religious Jew) was doing at the air force base. Then I realized it was Gidi Sharon, the one who had given me advice about my trip to South America and had become religious."

A few years later, Shlomo met Karpel on the street in Chaifa and discovered that he, too, had become a baal t'shuva. Karpel invited him to his house and quickly drew him in to his religious world.

His growth in Yiddishkait was gradual. "I was very self-conscious and concerned about what people would say about me becoming religious so I was reticent at first, but I finally made the move."

In the Piper fleet of the flight school, where he had already served in the Reserves, he was accepted fully with kippa and tzitzis. "At first I was nervous. It seemed to me like moving from one world into another, but I quickly realized that this was not the case. It was a lot less scary than I thought it would be. I did not feel that their opinion of me had gone down."

There have been quite a few pilots who became frum. Is there a connection between combat flights and returning to your roots?

"Flying and the danger that pilots experience in the air force get a person out of his apathy. A pilot flies extremely high and sees how puny he is and asks himself who am I, where do I come from and where am I going? When you fly you are busy with things that are beyond the usual daily occupations. Many people dream of being pilots, of flying; a person is used to a two dimensional world and knows there is another dimension that he can't get to. Becoming a baal t'shuva is the same



Shlomo at 16

thing. The world didn't change but another dimension was added to the meaning of life. In general, pilots are ambitious and suspicious, looking for answers, especially after experiencing things like war. They ask tough questions and look for meaning."

Shlomo is well aware of the fact that he is different than the rest of those in Reserves in the air force. "Sometimes that I am the first one the young pilots meet in the course, and they don't understand what a religious guy is doing there."

Unlike many other pilots who began leading a religious life, he continues to fly as always. "It's much easier to go to yeshiva, say there is nothing in the world and close yourself off."

How do you get along with the men in the pilot's course?

"The young pilots are usually flabbergasted. There are often debates, questions and conversations

but ultimately they accept me just fine."

Do you speak about Judaism?

"I don't go to Reserve duty in order to be mekarev people, although I certainly don't mind if that happens along the way. Of course you make an impression but that's not why I'm there. There are definitely plenty of conversations about Judaism and you see a shift in the way people think about their heritage."

Following army duty, and some math studies in university, he got involved in the world of business. After getting his first degree he went for a post graduate degree doing his research project at MIT in Boston, which has the reputation of being one of the best schools in the world. Then he got a job as a professor at the University in Rochester, New York.

"I seemed to have achieved my dreams but I still felt that something deeper in my soul was waiting to be discovered. I didn't recognize it as the yearning of my soul for more Yiddishkait and I thought I was homesick for Israel."

He left the promising position and returned to Israel.

"Back in Israel I wondered about my impulsive move. What had made me leave an excellent position with a great salary and go home? Why did I agree to return to Israel and work for 20% of what I had earned in America? The question troubled me and I knew that I had to find an answer."

Hashgacha guided him and he met, unexpectedly, a childhood friend who had become a baal t'shuva. The friend invited him to learn something. It was a maamer Chassidus of the Rebbe Rayatz.

"I was reading when I suddenly got it," says Shlomo about when he first became acquainted with the world of Chassidus. "I realized that

Judaism is not primitive, the way I had thought. I found very deep intellectual analyses, the best of modern thinking.

"I was impressed by the *haskala* (intellectual component) of the *maamer*. I saw there were answers to all the questions that bother an intelligent, irreligious person, for example the questions of man's significance and the purpose of creation. These questions bother people, especially thinking people, and I found clarity on these topics in that *maamer* and in other *maamarim* that I learned afterwards."

It was at this time that he was appointed a senior lecturer in the Business Administration department of Tel Aviv University and gradually became more involved in Judaism.

The first time he met the Rebbe was in 5747. "I participated in a Shabbaton organized by R' Nechemia Vogel, the shliach in Rochester. I went to 770 and saw the Rebbe. I watched thousands of Chassidim dancing and jumping when the Rebbe motioned with his hand, and I must admit that it appeared a little strange to me.

"The second time I was more 'into' things. It was Simchas Torah, 5748. I went to Crown Heights and met my old friend Gidi Sharon. He and some other guys grabbed me and brought me into the chaos which is Simchas Torah in 770. The Rebbe looked at me several times. My eyes met his and I felt the Rebbe 'grabbing' me forever."

His break into the world of business began when he was a lecturer at Tel Aviv University.

"I taught my students how to create a business plan and be successful but they all said to me, 'Wait a minute – if you're so clever, how come you're not rich?'"

At the beginning of the 90's, when Israeli high-tech began to explode, Shlomo anticipated what was coming and decided the time had come to put his knowledge to



In 5732 Shlomo Kalish got his wings

"Back in Israel I wondered about my impulsive move. What had made me leave an excellent position with a great salary and go home? Why did I agree to return to Israel and work for 20% of what I had earned in America?"

use in the business world.

He left academia and in 5754 started a company called Jerusalem Global, a company that raises investment capital and provides business development for high-tech companies. The original idea was that the company would supply all the high-tech companies with a full array of services, from consulting and setting up a working strategy to marketing and financing.

It was a modest beginning. In 5754, the company garnered 5.6 million dollars for three companies whose total worth today is three billion dollars! In the years to come, he was able to attract investment in the hundreds of millions of dollars through private and public stock offerings for various companies.

Within the first five years that Jerusalem Global was in operation,

Shlomo Kalish became one of the most influential people in the Israeli high-tech industry. Besides being one of the founders of the industry, he was also the first believer – the one companies turned to when nobody else believed in them. He supported them in the tough times and made them successful.

Israeli journalists have praised his abilities and talents – "a phenomenon called Shlomo Kalish," and have called him "one of the powerhouses of Israeli high-tech," "one of the most influential people in Israeli high-tech," etc. He spends most of his time between New York and Yerushalayim, but nearly every week he also lectures on international marketing initiatives at the business school of Tel Aviv University.

He founded his investment bank



Combining the world of Torah, mitzvos and Chassidus
with the world of investment banking

He and some other guys grabbed me and brought me into the chaos which is Simchas Torah in 770. The Rebbe looked at me several times. My eyes met his and I felt the Rebbe 'grabbing' me forever.

in Yerushalayim in the eastern foothills of Har HaChotzvim in the north of the city. On the hill, which used to be the exclusive province of Intel, advanced high-tech enterprises are popping up one after the other and dozens of start-up companies, big and small, are quickly filling the buildings.

Shlomo sees Chassidic lessons to be learned from the Internet:

"The Internet connects the entire world and makes it into a small global village, which demonstrates how the world is ready for Moshiach. People ask how it can be that in the time of Moshiach 'the earth will be full of the knowledge of G-d' - it seems impossible. The Internet explains how it's possible.

In one moment you are able to convey information to every place in the world. There are no limitations. A hundred years ago people couldn't understand it like we do today. It fits well with publicizing the Besuras Ha'Geula."

Do you see a connection between high-tech and the coming of Moshiach?

"Definitely. First of all, starting high-tech companies and developing the ideas that my company, Jerusalem Global, deals with, turns people into millionaires within a short time, reminiscent of the way that in Yemos HaMoshiach 'delicacies will be available like dust.' This is also the response to those who ask how this promise can be

fulfilled. We see how within a short time, people can get a lot of 'delicacies,' sometimes without even intending to ...

"Another thing, the Internet has a certain spiritual significance because of its ability to connect everyone. Whether for holy purposes of G-d forbid the opposite, this unprecedented capacity to connect everyone is very Moshiach'dik. Today, a person goes to a virtual store, a virtual school, or visits virtual homes. He goes wherever he likes and does just about everything he wants and it's virtual, not actual.

"People relate to the idea that it's possible to live in a spiritual reality, in a certain sense at least. Years ago, people were unable to accept the idea, challenging, 'How will we be able to keep Torah and mitzvos and disconnect from the physical world that surrounds us?' - We see it's possible.

"If you want a concrete example of combining Chassidus with the Internet, there's no better example than Otzaro shel Moshiach, a site I launched with Gidi Sharon. With Otzar shel Moshiach you can locate all of the Rebbe's teachings. The site does so much to spread the Rebbe's teachings on a global scale, unlike anything we've had until now. The site has 70,000 pages of a hundred basic s'farim of the Rebbe's library and it's available to all."

How do you combine the business world with the Torah-Chassidic world?

"It's not easy, but this is what Chassidus teaches us, not to disengage from the world but to reveal Elokus in everything. I see my work as a shlichus. I utilize the time I spend at work to spread the light of Judaism and Chassidus, to make people smile, to convey a Jewish message. Between that and my daily shiurim, I am continuously working to bring the light of Chassidus into my surroundings."

BE A MENTCH!

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

Ofer said he wanted a bracha that he be a mentch. R' Mendel answered with his characteristic cleverness, "If you are a mentch, then you'll be a mentch." In other words, it depends on you and your behavior.

In the Rebbe's Hagada, in the first footnote of this amazing work, the Rebbe quotes the Rebbe Rayatz as saying, "Once, my father said, 'Yosef Yitzchok, we need to think [during the seider] about being a mentch and Hashem will help. Especially when opening the door [for Eliyahu HaNavi], not to ask for gashmius but to ask for ruchnius.'"

Perhaps we can say that Pesach night, a holy night, the Leil Shimurim, one would have expected from elevated people like the Rebbe Rashab and his son the Rebbe Rayatz that they would ask about "heavenly" matters, Chassidishe conduct, kavanos of the Arizal, to be a maskil, an oveid, something of the world of Atzilus, but no! The request is simple, to be a mentch! That is what the Rebbe Rashab told his only son and this is the first statement in the Rebbe's first Torah composition: Be a mentch!

R' MENDEL FUTERFAS' GUIDANCE

Rabbi Ofer Maidovnik, mashpia in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas, once related at a Chassidishe farbrengen

that the last time he spoke with the mashpia, R' Mendel Futerfas on the phone, before his passing on 4 Tamuz 5755, R' Mendel said: "Ofer, what blessing do you want from me?"

Ofer said he wanted a bracha that he be a mentch. R' Mendel answered with his characteristic cleverness, "If you are a mentch, then you'll be a mentch." In other words, it depends on you and your behavior.

Being a mentch is one of the most important things but also one of the hardest things on shlichus. On the one hand, a shliach is enthusiastic about shlichus. The goal is clear – he has to transform his city, preferably the entire world, establish mosdos and chesed organizations, raise a lot of money, bring the Geula etc. At the same time, he needs to constantly remember the little person and not to trample on or offend anyone in the heat of the battle. To see the other person and be sensitive to their feelings, whether it's his wife or neighbor, his children, partners or competitors. He needs to be a mentch.

Let us imagine, for as an example, a shliach who is planning his son's bar mitzva. He invites hundreds of friends and relatives to the celebration and he calls a rav in Kfar Chabad and says, "It's very important to me that you come." The rav says he hopes to make it. Comes the day of the bar mitzva and the rav is very busy that evening and his wife needs the family car, but the rav was personally and sincerely invited and so he has no choice but to call a cab and go to the bar mitzva.

The hall was full and the father of the bar mitzva boy was busy greeting his guests. The rav from Kfar Chabad goes over to him to wish him mazal tov and the father shakes his hand and then immediately moves on to the next guest. The rav doesn't even find a place to sit and he feels slighted about how he was treated.

R' Mendel told his mushpa, "If you'll be a mentch, then you'll be a mentch." You have to try and you are guaranteed to succeed. Be a mentch.

I know a number of shluchim who, despite their busy day and having some event or another nearly every night with dozens or hundreds of people, are still able to give attention to each person. This has positive consequences.

THANKS TO PAYING ATTENTION

R' Yitzchok Gruzman, shliach in Rishon L'Tziyon, relates:

A few months ago, one of my

friends told me a fascinating thing. Eight years ago, he said, “I walked into a Chabad house for a minute in order to look for a certain brochure about day camp, and you, R’ Gruzman, came over to me and asked me what I needed. A brief conversation ensued and you asked me whether I put on t’fillin every day. I told you that even though I owned a pair of t’fillin, I didn’t put them on every day. You concluded the conversation by asking, ‘My dear fellow, if you have the t’fillin already, why not put them on?’”

“That night, when I went to sleep, that question reverberated in my mind. In the morning when I woke up, I heard it again. I went to work and came home and the question kept replaying in my head. I finally took the t’fillin out of the closet and began putting them on every day. Eight years have passed in which I haven’t missed putting them on every day and it’s all thanks to a short conversation in which you gave me a little attention.”

R’ Gruzman added:

A few years ago, we opened a soup kitchen in the center of town. The owner of a butcher shop next to the soup kitchen was very opposed to our opening and as we put up the large sign with many people in attendance he began shouting and threatening and a fight nearly broke out. I immediately told all my friends and supporters who were there not to respond to him. The man saw that nobody was attacking him or reacting to him and he quickly calmed down.

He eventually became one of the closest friends of the Chabad house. Today he is one of our main members. He travels twice a week to learn Chassidus in Kfar Chabad and it’s all thanks to a simple, one-time mentchlichkait when I asked that people not respond to his outcry.

R’ Binyamin Karniel, shliach in Gadera, also told me a nice story

about the consequences of proper behavior. Someone walked into the Chabad house and said to R’ Karniel, “Have you noticed that for half a year now I have been wearing a kippa? Do you know that it’s thanks to you?”

R’ Karniel did not remember how it was thanks to him and he listened curiously to the story the man told him:



The Rebbe Rayatz: “Yosef Yitzchok, we need to think [during the seider] about being a mentch.”

“Half a year ago, I was walking down the street near the Chabad house and you asked me to come inside and complete a minyan for Mincha. That day I was rushing and I said I didn’t have time. To my surprise, instead of being annoyed, you blessed me. That made a tremendous impression on me. Although you were trying to complete a minyan before sunset and I was unwilling to help, you blessed me. I thought about this all that day and the next and as a result, when it was time for Mincha I felt I wanted to go to shul and daven. I

stayed for the shiur and for Maariv and since then I haven’t missed a t’filla ever since. I wear a kippa and I am observant to the best of my ability.”

I heard another story about R’ Karniel from R’ Sagi Har Shefer, the shliach in Nes Tziyona:

There was a Hachnasas Seifer Torah in Gadera at the Chabad house. The event was advertised not only in Gadera but also on the shluchim forum and in invitations that were sent to all the shluchim in the area. I made an effort to attend and although I had a chuppa and two other events that evening, I went for a few minutes for the writing of the final letters. I congratulated R’ Karniel and went on my way.

Late that night I was pleasantly surprised when R’ Karniel called me and said, “I’m calling to thank you for coming.” That’s an example of being a mentch because usually, after an event like that you are tired and you just want to go to sleep, but he didn’t forget to call a colleague who took the time to attend his event and to say thank you for coming.

Another story was told me to me by someone who wishes to remain anonymous:

I was about to leave the house to attend the bar mitzva of a friend. Just as I left the house, my wife asked me to help her for a few minutes. I told her that I was rushing to the bar mitzva and I left. Near the house I met a neighbor who is a journalist. I said hello and started talking. The conversation lasted a long time until it was too late to go to the bar mitzva and I went home. That’s when I realized that I was not a mentch. My wife had asked me for a few minutes of help and I didn’t help her because supposedly I was in a rush, but I ended up having plenty of time to talk to my neighbor. The next time I will try to be more thoughtful when my wife asks me something.

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SAMARKAND SHPITZ CHABAD

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

For dozens of years the Chabad community in Samarkand was known as a particularly Chassidic community with all the hiddurim and “shpitzkait,” to the point that Chassidim in Russia would say “Samarkand shpitz Chabad.” In this chapter, Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman draws the reader into the world of Chabad in Samarkand.

A bachur with illustrious ancestry asked the Rebbe in yechidus about a shidduch. After the Rebbe gave him a positive answer, the bachur alluded to the fact that the girl was not *gezha* (of Chassidic ancestry). The Rebbe responded, “Nu, so if she wasn’t in Samarkand, so what?”

Indeed, the Chabad community in Samarkand was known as a particularly Chassidic community with all the hiddurim and “shpitzkeit,” to the point that Chassidim in Russia would say, “Samarkand shpitz Chabad.”

In the following chapter I will describe the inner world of the

Chabad community in Samarkand; the Chassidic warmth, the Lubavitcher hiddurim and the heartfelt simplicity.

The original Jews of Samarkand were Bucharian (Sefardic) Jews. They are called after the city Buchara, which was once the capitol of the district. They descended from Persian Jews who came there 900 years ago.

The first Chabad presence in Buchara was 120 years ago in 5650/1890, when the Rebbe Rashab sent R’ Shlomo Eliezerov to Samarkand. He had served as rav in Chevron. He worked on fixing

mikvaos and sh’chita in Samarkand, Tashkent, and the surrounding cities and towns. He did this holy work for nearly thirty years off and on, until someone informed on him to the government and he had to flee back to Israel.

Five years after that, in 5685/1925, the Rebbe Rayatz sent R’ Simcha Gorodetzky to Samarkand. (I have special memories and feelings about this giant of a Chassid. I will, G-d willing, write about his askanus and mesirus nefesh separately.) He learned with adults, organized yeshivas Tiferes Bachurim, started Talmudei Torah for hundreds of Bucharian children and sent talented bachurim to yeshivos Tomchei Tmimim in Poltava, in central Russia. Afterwards, they became leaders in their community.

R’ Simcha was arrested by the secret police on several occasions, as R’ Folye Kahn related in his book *Shmuos V’Sippurim*. In 1944, he was arrested and sentenced to death together with R’ Chizkiyahu Kayikov, the rabbi of Bucharian Jewry in Samarkand (who was one of talmidim that R’ Simcha sent to Tomchei Tmimim in Poltava). Then there was an announcement from Stalin that those sentenced to die would be sent instead to Siberia for 25 years of hard labor. They were released after Stalin’s sudden death.

R’ Simcha invested extensive efforts into Samarkand for 19 years, but it had not yet acquired the reputation of a Lubavitcher city and it certainly was not known as shpitz Chabad.

THE MINYAN OF SHPITZ CHABAD

The foundation of the Chabad k’hilla in Samarkand was laid in 1941, when refugees began arriving from the Nazi front. Among the refugees were tens of thousands of Jews from Poland and other

A farbrengen in the Chabad k'hilla in Samarkand. Sitting from right to left: R' Chaim Zalman Kozliner, R' Dovber Yaffee, the author - Hillel Zaltzman, his father R' Avrohom Zaltzman. The little boy is Benzion Mishulovin, Dovid's son.



countries, including a few dozen families from the cream of Chabad Chassidus. Despite the starvation and epidemics in which hundreds of Jews perished, the Chassidim established schools, yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim, and shuls.

Years of diligent study in these yeshivos produced scholars who had implanted within themselves the spirit of Chassidus and fear of Heaven. The bachurim davened at length, spent a long time contemplating Chassidus before and after davening, and all of them were suffused with the spirit of Chassidus.

Chassidishe farbrengens in

A bachur with illustrious ancestry asked the Rebbe in yechidus about a shidduch. After the Rebbe gave him a positive answer, the bachur alluded to the fact that the girl was not gezha (of Chassidic ancestry). The Rebbe responded, “Nu, so if she wasn’t in Samarkand, so what?”

Samarkand had tremendous Chassidishe warmth. The mashpiim

demanding and succeeded in affecting the correction of middos



The author, Hillel Zaltzman, on the right with his friend Yaakov Lerner

They farbrenged until late into the night discussing the question “Who are we?” Are we Chassidim as the Rebbe wants? How can we lie? Are we Misnagdim? Chas v’shalom! So then, who are we? By the end of the farbrengen they came to the conclusion that we are among “those who want to be Chassidim.”

etc. and poured out their souls with tears over their not being genuine Chassidim as they should have been. They farbrenged until late into the night discussing the question “Who are we?” Are we Chassidim as the Rebbe wants? How can we lie? Are we Misnagdim? Chas v’shalom! So then, who are we? By the end of the farbrengen they came to the conclusion that we are on the level of “those who want to be Chassidim.”

The famous Chassidic artist, R’ Hendel Lieberman (the brother of R’ Mendel Futerfas) studied art in Moscow, which gave him occasion to attend some impressive events. During World War II he also ended up in Samarkand. He once farbrenged with R’ Yisroel Noach HaGadol and stayed until late at night under a weak light that flickered from the kerosene (a small lamp that was used in those days).

When the farbrengen ended towards morning, he said in amazement, “Ah, I was in Moscow at a number of gala events with big and beautiful electric lights, but it wasn’t as clear and lit up for me as it was in the dimness at the farbrengen with Yisroel Noach ...” That was the kind of farbrengen there was in Samarkand.

No description could capture the Chassidic depth, the genuineness and emotion that could be felt every moment of each farbrengen. Nor can mere words aptly depict R’ Yisroel Noach’s minyan, which was called “der shpitz Chabad minyan,” where they davened with avoda for hours not only on Shabbos but throughout the week.

Samarkand acquired its Lubavitcher reputation during the years from 1941-1946. At that point most of the Chassidim left Samarkand for Lvov, and from there they made their way to free countries. The few Lubavitcher families that remained for another 25 years tried to preserve the



R' Moshe Nisselevitz



The Mishulovin brothers. On top from right to left: Eliyahu and Dovid.
On bottom from right to left: Michael and Yitzchok

Chassidishe atmosphere and managed, to a great extent, to be deserving of the title “shpitz Chabad.”

INFLUENCE OF THE YOUTH

After 1946 a new period began in Samarkand. It was very difficult spiritually since the great Chassidim had left Russia. In addition, the Soviet police force was no longer distracted by the war and intensified its persecution against religion.

The Chabad k'hilla that remained in Samarkand was comprised of Chassidishe families such as ours who were afraid to take the risk and cross the border. There were also some Lubavitcher families who had tried crossing the border but failed, returning to Samarkand brokenhearted.

Among them were Dovid and Eli Mishulovin. The 16 and 18 year old brothers hoped to join up with a Polish family and be able to cross the border. They were unsuccessful and returned home. They were despondent about their failure but were happy they had escaped the clutches of the KGB and had not been arrested.

After farbrengens like these, the bachurim went out different than they came in. A certain change was apparent in every one of them in thought, speech, or action.

Dovid and Eliyahu learned in Tomchei Tmimim in Samarkand during the war. R' Mendel Futerfas saw that these two boys were good candidates, and he made sure to get them into yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim, where they were educated in the spirit of Chassidus. About them can be said what the Rebbe said to R' Moshe Herson in yechidus, when he opened a yeshiva. The Rebbe said: “You should know that there are talmidim who don't need special attention from the mashpiim. The very fact that they are in yeshiva affects them and they grow up properly.” The Mishulovin brothers grew in Torah and yiras Shamayim from being within the walls of Tomchei Tmimim and benefited as well from the inspiration and guidance they received from their mashpiim.

The brothers were very

Chassidish and were particular to the nth degree regarding halacha and Chabad customs. They devoted themselves to the chinuch of their younger brothers, with Dovid focusing his attention on his brother Yitzchok and Eliyahu focusing his attention on his younger brother Michael. We knew Eliyahu as a clever person and a person of great intellect.

Shortly afterwards, another bachur returned to Samarkand. R' Moshe Nisselevitz (who was known as Maishke der geller) was also unable to cross the border. This small group contributed a lot to the development of the Chassidic environment in Samarkand. In their behavior, conversation and farbrengens, they had a tremendous influence on the younger ones and the entire environment. They were the ones who created the

atmosphere of shpitz Chabad.

Though there were many pious Jews in Samarkand, they had no connection to us, the young ones. It was only this small group of bachurim who had a tremendous influence on the younger boys and indirectly, on the Chassidishe balabatim in Samarkand.

I think it was a mazal that we all lived together in the old city. It was also our mazal that our “school” with R’ Benzion Maroz was in the Mishulovin home and we saw all the Chassidishkait and p’nimius and koch.

Their relative from Tashkent, R’ Aharon Zubrovsky (who later lived

CARE IN MITZVA OBSERVANCE

In order to illustrate how great was the care that the group took in mitzva observance, I will try to describe how they washed their hands. It was an avoda permeated with yiras Shamayim and made an enormous and unforgettable impression on me.

First, they washed their hands of any dirt and then dried them well. If they were not dried well enough, they would blow on them. Then they would scrutinize their hands, especially their nails, to make sure there was no dirt underneath. Then they examined the edge of the cup

engraved in my mind despite the many years that have passed since then, that whenever I see someone take the cup without any preparations and quickly pour three times, it makes me cringe.

Learning Chassidus, the davening at length, the hiddur in all aspects of halacha and Chabad custom, was something they did matter-of-factly, with an inner chayus. We young ones found this behavior contagious and tried to emulate them. The topics of their conversations were halacha and Chassidus, and sayings of the Rebbeim that they heard from the great Chassidim who were in Samarkand during the war.

During his interrogation, when the interrogator tried to take his tzitzis off of him, he did not think twice but slapped the man on the cheek.

in Kfar Chabad), often visited. He would come to Samarkand to spend time in the company of the Mishulovin brothers and Moshe Nisselevitz. Although he was older than the Mishulovin brothers, they formed one cohesive group. R’ Aharon, Arke as he was known, was a big yerei Shamayim and particular about mitzva observance. He would spend an hour learning Chassidus before davening and then would put on t’fillin and pace the room in contemplation. He would daven at great length with his face creased in concentration, sometimes snapping his fingers with a heartfelt niggun.

One day, I saw a bachur older than them in the Mishulovin house and I felt that they were concealing his identity from me since he was hiding there. It was only later that I found out that it was Yaakov Notik (who was known as Yankel der geller).

by running their finger over it to make sure there was no flaw that would invalidate it. After that, they dried the handle, the inside, and even the outside of the cup. This was necessary because if someone had touched it with impure hands, i.e., without netilas yadayim, that would make the water tamei and when they added other water to it for netilas yadayim, all the water would become tamei.

After all that, they would take a towel, check to make sure it was completely dry, fill the cup with water and pour it on one hand. If they suspected that the water might not have covered the entire hand at once, they would dry their hands and start again.

Moshe Nisselevitz took it a step further than his two friends. Even after all these precautions, he still did not trust himself and ate with rubber gloves on his hands. This remains his practice until today.

These precautions are so

CHASSIDIM OF OLD

When they farbrenged with us, they would describe the Chassidim who left Russia after the war. With great nostalgia they described that period and the farbrengens of the senior Chassidim. When they wanted to sum up that era in one sentence, they would say, “*Es hut zich gigasin Elokus mamash*” (G-dliness literally poured forth).

Their vivid descriptions brought the davening of the Chassidim of those days to life before our eyes. R’ Asher Sossonkin (Batumer) delved into his davening and emoted each word precisely. Then he would suddenly be roused from his d’veikus and cry out some words (those who knew R’ Asher Batumer, know what I’m talking about).

(R’ Asher was once farbrenging with some Chassidim in 770 and at the height of the farbrengen, after some cups of mashke, someone called him, “you Russian.” He replied, “If only I remained a Russian ...”)

They also spoke a lot about the davening of R’ Nissan Nemenov (R’ Nissan der geller), R’ Yisroel Noach Blinitzky and many others.

R’ Yisroel Noach worked as a cashier at a factory and as part of



R' Dovid Mishulovin before he left Russia



R' Chaim Zalman Kozliner (right) learning in Samarkand

his job he had to go to the bank every day. One time, after drinking mashke at a farbrengen, he said about himself that there wasn't a single stone between the factory and the bank that he trod upon without thinking Chassidus.

They would tell us these stories in order to arouse within us the desire to learn Chassidus in every circumstance. My uncle, R' Boruch Duchman, once told us: "Bachurim, learn Chassidus! The time will come when you will be covered in a tallis (i.e. you will get married) and you will want to think Chassidus. You should have what to think about."

At farbrengens they didn't just repeat nice aphorisms but demanded actual avoda, changing middos, etc. After farbrengens like these, the bachurim went out different than they came in. A certain change was apparent in every one of them in thought, speech, or action.

In the 60's, R' Michel Vishedsky lived in Tashkent with his brother-in-law Mordechai Gorodetzky, and Simcha Gorodetzky lived there too. R' Michel told me that when he came back from a Shabbos Mevarchim farbrengen, Simcha asked him what they spoke about at the farbrengen. R' Simcha hadn't

been there since he had to go to the house right after the davening in order to take care of his paralyzed wife, but he was very interested in knowing what happened had transpired.

R' Michel said they had spoken about a certain inyan that needed additional effort. Two months went by and R' Michel had not effected any changes. R' Simcha said to him, "How can that be? You told me that Chassidim farbrenged and said that this inyan needs fixing!" That was what a Chassid was about – after he heard that Chassidim, younger than he, had farbrenged and spoken about correcting a certain area, it was a given for him that it would be done.

"HERGEISHIM" THAT TURNED INTO CHASSIDIC RULES

There were hergeishim that turned into a custom or Chassidic rule. For example, drying yourself with a towel after the mikva was out of the question and despised. They would look critically at those balabatim who found it so important to dry themselves after the mikva that on Shabbos they went to the

mikva with a towel around their neck (so as not to carry). To them, this represented the epitome of a coarse, materialistic balabus who needed to be thanked for the fact that he even went to the mikva.

Eliyahu Mishulovin suffered from a heart disease and needed to be extra careful not to get chilled so he had no choice but to dry himself after the mikva. He therefore was careful not to go to the mikva when anyone else was present, lest they not realize that his health required him to dry himself and do likewise. He didn't want to be a bad influence on anyone.

Once some bachurim came to the mikva while he was there drying himself. He was mortified and quickly explained that he was sick and had to be extra careful not to get chilled and therefore he had to dry himself.

I recently went to the mikva on Shabbos and heard some men talking about this inyan. One said in a tone of amazement, "I knew two older Chassidim who never dried off after the mikva – Yisroel Jacobson and Shmuel Levitin." I told him that in Samarkand I barely knew *any* Chassidim who dried themselves.

However, in the sicha of Rosh

Chodesh Cheshvan, 5743, the Rebbe spoke about drying the body after mikva and said that although it says in the writings of the Arizal that he did not dry himself after the mikva on Erev Shabbos, we are particular about drying ourselves. The Rebbe said that whoever wanted to conduct himself according to the writings of the Arizal could leave an area of the body not dried, thereby allowing the k'dusha of the water of Shabbos to spread to the entire body.

In light of this sicha, drying yourself off is fine. In Samarkand they cherished the water of the mikva to such a degree that they would not dry it off.

Unfortunately, I sometimes see bachurim or men who don't cherish the water of the mikva at all. They immediately go shower after immersing, and some even use soap and shampoo! It looks very *megusham* (coarse). It hurts me when I see bachurim showering after the mikva and when they are asked why they do this when in Chabad this was unheard of they say impudently, "We are Chabad sh'b'Chabad."

About ten years ago a Chassidishe man told me, in all innocence, that he showers after the mikva with soap. It was the first time I heard such a thing and I was shocked. I asked, "How could you do that?" He tried to justify himself by explaining that he had to shower after the mikva because otherwise his body itches (presumably from the chlorine). "At least go home and do it there, or dry off after the mikva and then shower," I suggested, "but don't shower with soap right after immersing."

Some years later I spoke with him again. I had already forgotten our conversation but he remarked, "Since then I haven't showered after the mikva." I immediately recalled our conversation and I asked, "Well, how do you feel?" He didn't know what I meant and I said, "Don't you

itch afterwards?" He made a dismissive motion with his hand and laughed.

I remember that when they complained to R' Berke Chein that the mikva water was dirty or cold, he would always say, "Yes, true, we are dirty, smelly and cold."

R' BERKE'S INFLUENCE

When R' Moshe Nisselevitz began urging us to get involved in Klal work, the groundwork had been prepared. It was in this period that these young men raised the banner of Chabad in Samarkand.



R' Moshe Nisselevitz

When R' Berke Chein came, the group became even stronger in yiras Shamayim and hiddur mitzva. The "keilim" were ready and R' Berke's behavior and manner made a great impact even though he was in hiding most of the time.

At his farbrengens, R' Berke would demand of himself and others to improve their actions, avodas ha't'filla, hiddur mitzva, and study of Chassidus. He would say, "Be careful with your *madam*" (madam is Russian for woman but he was using it as an acronym, *mem, dalet, mem – machshava, dibbur, maaseh* –

thought, speech, action). He would speak passionately about how when a Chassid went out in the street he did not need to look around but to just look in your *dalet amos* (immediate vicinity). He would often say that speech is like a mixed salad that has everything in it – it has a little bit of idle chatter, some derogatory remarks, a sprinkling of *rechilus*, etc.

At farbrengens they spoke about various areas that needed improvement. Among other things, they said that a Chassidishe house should not have a radio and that Shabbos ought to be "completely sacred," and how completely out of the question it is to have a secular newspaper on the table because it desecrates the honor of Shabbos.

I remember that from time when they spoke about the importance of chinuch, they would repeat from the Rebbe Rashab, "Give your son to Aryeh the melamed. She (the wife) yells? So, let her yell ... She cries? So let her cry ... She won't die."

That's what the farbrengens were like and that is the chinuch they instilled in us.

THE ATTRACTION OF SAMARKAND

The Chabad k'hilla in Samarkand, like that of Tashkent, was comprised primarily of Chassidim who came during the war from Russia. The Bucharian Jews in Samarkand, who were sent by R' Simcha Gorodetzky to Tomchei Tmimim and returned as full-fledged Chassidim, lived on their own and were not involved in the Ashkenazi Chabad community. This was mainly because of the difference in mentality and language, and was exacerbated by the suspicion that had become second nature among Russian Jews in those terrible years under Stalin.

In the 50's and 60's there were a

few Ashkenazi families in Samarkand who did not come from a Lubavitcher background. They slowly became friendly with the Lubavitchers until they became inseparable from the community, and when they made aliya at the end of the 60's and the beginning of the 70's, they continued to live as Chabad Chassidim in Chabad neighborhoods. They all established beautiful Lubavitcher families and their children are rabbanim, shluchim or in chinuch in Chabad communities around the world.

The Chabad community in Tashkent was larger but since it was spread out over several areas of the city, it lacked the strong sense of community that was felt in Samarkand. We all lived in the old city in an area one kilometer square and even after we moved to the new city, the distance between us was small.

The Chabad population of Samarkand fluctuated over the years. After most Lubavitchers left Russia in 1946, we barely had a minyan, and only on holidays. In the 60's the Chabad k'hilla in Samarkand grew until by the time we left Russia in the 70's, there were several minyanim every Shabbos with 15-20 people in each minyan. There were even minyanim on weekdays here and there.

The expansion of the k'hilla was due to three reasons: 1) natural population growth 2) mekuravim 3) Chassidim who were drawn to Samarkand from other cities in Russia.

For example, in the 60's R' Yosef Greenberg (Yossel Besseraber) came. He was a yerei Shamayim and a baal mesirus nefesh. Then R' Sholom Vilenkin came with his family. He was a warm Chassid who knew how to farbreng with vitality. I can't forget his pleasant davening as he sat facing the open Siddur and uttered each word like someone



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counting diamonds and pearls. If a word did not come out right he would go back and repeat the line. You could almost see the words of the davening as they emerged from his mouth. Before Borchu he would spend a long time meditating on Chassidus. Till today, his pleasant davening rings in my ears.

Then came R' Chaim Zalman Kozliner (ChaZaK) and his family, who contributed a lot to the atmosphere in Samarkand. R' Dovid Okinov and his family came. He was also an asset to the community and his children attended our underground yeshiva. R' Chaim Volovik followed. Not only were his children part of the yeshiva, his son Yosef later became a maggid shiur. R' Yaakov Notik contributed a lot to our k'hilla and I will write about him

separately. Each one of them deserves entire pages of praise and honor but I did not spend a long time with every one of them so I will not be able to write about them as they would deserve.

I also remember someone named Aharon Friedman who would daven nusach Ashkenaz. I think he was the brother-in-law of Yitzchok Zilber. R' Aharon came from prison where he was thrown after he tried to cross the border in 1946. R' Aharon would walk openly to shul with the fearlessness usually reserved for the elder Chassidim, even though he was in his thirties. We, who were very wary of the secret police, were afraid to have him join our k'hilla.

He tried to say Kaddish at every opportunity with "*vikarev keitz meshichei*" (and He should bring

During our first Rosh HaShana in Eretz Yisroel, I davened with tears. To be honest, it wasn't so much from the atmosphere of Rosh HaShana but in yearning for Rosh HaShana in Samarkand.

close the end date of his anointed one – part of nusach Sefard according to the Chernobyl Chassidim) and would say it with awe inspiring motions, his long yellow beard swaying to and fro. On Yom Kippur he would come to shul wearing a kittel on top of which he wore an old and dirty bloodstained coat. He said that during his interrogation, when the interrogator tried to take his tzitzis off of him, he did not think twice but slapped the man on the cheek. Of course he was beaten for this and the blood which ran from all over his body stained his coat. “I want to daven with this coat on Yom Kippur before Hashem,” he said.

THE YOMIM NORA'IM

I remember the davening on Yomim Nora'im in Samarkand. In Elul already you began to feel the change in the atmosphere and everybody tried to increase in Torah and mitzvos and to minimize material pursuits. We could feel the approach of the Yomim Nora'im.

The 48 hours of Rosh HaShana were an awesome and frightening time. The minyan took place in a private home with about fifteen men. Each person sat in his place, immersed in his davening and very careful not to utter words unrelated to the holiday. Even for matters related to the holiday they preferred to motion with their hands so as not to get caught up in idle talk. Every free moment was devoted to saying

T'hillim.

R' Moshe Nisselevitz would come to the place where the minyan was held on Erev Rosh HaShana with his walking stick and bag containing his food etc., because he did not spend the Yomim Nora'im with his family.

After we found out about the custom in Lubavitch to make shifts so that T'hillim would be recited constantly throughout the 48 hours, we did so too. We didn't make shifts with a full minyan because we didn't have enough people but we divided the hours between us and each of us took a shift. Each person began his shift ten minutes before the official start of the shift and concluded ten minutes later than the official end so as to ensure that there was no interruption in the recitation of T'hillim except, of course, during the davening.

As I write this, the memories draw me back to those wonderful days. I am there and it is hard for me to describe the feelings that suffused us in the room where the minyan was held.

R' Berke Chein (who was known as R' Chaim while he hid) stood in one corner covered with his tallis and saying T'hillim in a soft and tearful voice. R' Moshe Nisselevitz stood in another corner and he recited the words quietly. Dovid and Eliyahu Mishulovin sat with their tallesim over their heads and said T'hillim with great kavana, as did everybody.

When the minyan began, each person prayed with great kavana

according to his level. We all looked inside the Siddur and uttered each word clearly, focusing on the meaning of the words.

(When my father first saw the Siddur T'hillas Hashem a Chassid had gotten from Moscow, he so desired it that he paid 700 rubles [the equivalent of a monthly salary] for it because it had been arranged and printed by the Rebbe. Then we were able to be more exacting in the nusach.)

When the chazan reached the Shmoneh Esrei, some of the people were still up to the P'sukei D'Zimra. We waited until there were at least six people ready and for chazoras ha'shatz we waited for nine, but we never tried to hurry anyone in his davening. Nobody dared to interfere with someone else's davening.

The Shmoneh Esrei had a unique flavor; whispered voices, rising and falling, with the sound of quiet sobbing in the background. One cried, another sighed, and a third shed tears onto his Siddur.

After chazoras ha'shatz we tried to wait for those who were still in the middle of davening so that by the blowing of the shofar we would be up to the same point. While some still davened, others said T'hillim.

The saying of the preliminary prayers and the blowing of the shofar took R' Berke an hour, with his tears dripping on the Siddur and the table. We youngsters, before and after bar mitzva, were enthralled. After the davening, when we went outside, we walked with our faces down and restricted our gaze to our immediate vicinity.

When we left Russia and saw other conduct on Rosh HaShana, we found it hard to take. During our first Rosh HaShana in Eretz Yisroel, I davened with tears. To be honest, it wasn't so much from the atmosphere of Rosh HaShana but in yearning for Rosh HaShana in Samarkand.