

4

## AFTER SINAI

D'var Malchus

6

## YOUR MONEY AND/OR YOUR LIFE

Thought | Rabbi Zvi Homnick

10

## MONEY MATTERS IN THE LIGHT OF TORAH

Insight | Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim

16

## 'YOU GAVE ME LIFE'

Stories | R' Aryeh Dov Eidelman a"h

22

## TANKS FOR THE PLOWS!

Moshiach & Science | Prof. Shimon Silman

24

## JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS COVER

Profile | Nosson Avrohom

32

## MOSHIACH: WHAT WE BELIEVE

Moshiach & Geula | Rabbi Gershon Avtzon

34

## PRAYING HELPS, BUT WHOM?

Moshiach & Science | Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd

36

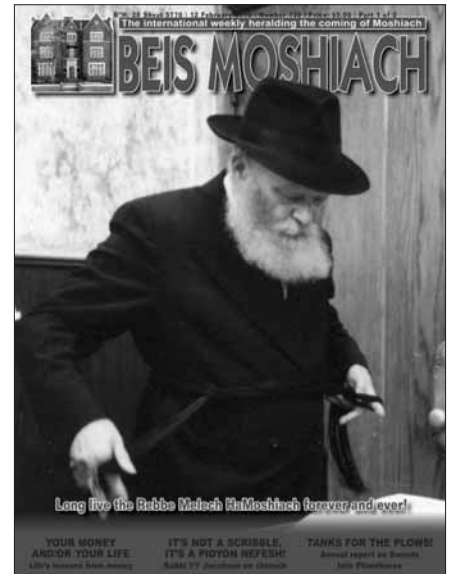
## SHLUCHIM: HOW BITTUL BRINGS BRACHA

Shlichus | Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz

40

## IT'S NOT A SCRIBBLE; IT'S A PIDYON NEFESH!

Chinuch | Rabbi Yossi Jacobson



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# AFTER SINAI

Sichos In English

## WHEN THE WORLD STOOD STILL

When G-d gave the Torah, "There was thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud on the mountain.... Mount Sinai was all as smoke...., the entire mountain trembled violently." [1] "And all the people saw the sounds, the flames, the blast of the ram's horn, and the mountain smoking. And the people trembled, standing far-off." [2]

Far more intense than these arresting physical phenomena was the internal power of G-d's voice.

And so, upon hearing each of the Ten Commandments, the people's "souls took flight." [3]

Moreover, the effects of this revelation reverberated throughout the world at large: "No bird chirped...., nor did an ox bellow, nor the sea roar." [4] Silence permeated all existence while G-d spoke.

After describing such an all-encompassing experience, one might think the Torah would continue with a discussion of matters that reflect such self-transcendence. But instead, the Torah continues: [5] "And these are the judgments."

What is the difficulty?

Our Rabbis [6] divide the mitzvos into three general categories:

A) mishpatim (lit., "judgments"), those mitzvos which are dictated by reason, for example the prohibitions against theft and murder. Even if the Torah had not been given, Chas v'Shalom, we would have instituted - as did most societies throughout the world - laws of this nature. [7]

B) eidus (lit., "testimonials"), commemorative mitzvos, e.g.,

observing the Shabbos or eating matza on Pesach, which enable us to relive the events of history, and grasp their spiritual significance.

C) chukim (lit., "decrees"), mitzvos that are supranational, that are "a decree from Me, [which] you have no permission to question." [8]

Presumably, the Giving of the Torah should have been followed by chukim, for their supranational nature offers fit expression to the spiritual feelings aroused at Mount Sinai.

Why instead does the Torah continue with laws that could (seemingly) be postulated by reason, parallels to which exist in all civilized society?

To Advance, Not to Withdraw

This question can be resolved based on a point of Hebrew grammar.

Rashi states: [9] "Whenever [the Torah] uses the term Eileh ("These are"), it negates what was mentioned previously.

"Whenever it uses the term VaEileh ("And these are"), it adds to what was mentioned previously.

Just as those mentioned first (the Ten Commandments) [were revealed] at Sinai, so too, these (the laws of Parshas Mishpatim) [were revealed] at Sinai.

Rashi is emphasizing that the judgments which are the subject of our Torah reading are not a departure from the revelation of Mount Sinai, but rather an outgrowth of it.

The Torah is not merely transcendent spirituality.

On the contrary, the main thrust of the Giving of the Torah is G-d's clothing His will and His wisdom in

terms and concepts which mortals can relate to. [10]

When a person studies the Torah, he is comprehending G-dliness, and joining his mind with G-d's wisdom in complete and perfect unity.

For the nature of intellectual comprehension involves establishing a complete bond between one's mind and the concept one understands. [11]

Indeed, such a bond is most completely established in the study of those dimensions of the Torah which relate to worldly matters, for these are the ideas which human intellect comprehends most thoroughly. [12]

## FULFILLING G-D'S PURPOSE

The giving of the Torah completes the purpose of creation.

G-d brought all existence into being, because He desired a dwelling place in the lower worlds. [13]

The objective of creation is thus not the revelation of G-d's transcendent power, but rather that worldly entities as they exist within their own context, should be permeated by the truth of His Being.

This is accomplished through the mishpatim of the Torah.

They communicate G-dliness in relation to the issues that involve the everyday lives of mortals within this material plane. [14]

The comprehension of these laws brings G-dliness into each person's mind, making him personally a "dwelling for G-d."

And the application of these laws creates a society that enables man to achieve spiritual purpose and fulfillment amidst peace, security, and the opportunity to satisfy his material needs, a "dwelling for G-d" in the most complete sense.

## BACK TO SINAI

Parshas Mishpatim concludes with a description of some of the

# *That which cannot be known of the Infinite G-d can be internalized by our knowledge to the point that it shapes our personalities.*

details of the giving of the Torah, [15] including the declaration naaseh v'nishma ("We will do, and we will listen") which represents the ultimate commitment of faith.

Even before one has been told what to do, one promises to obey, showing a complete and total willingness to do G-d's will.

This complements the lesson of Mishpatim. [16]

After a person has been able to internalize G-dliness within his mind and life through the systematic study and application of the Torah's laws, he is fit to receive the dimensions of G-dliness which transcend human comprehension, the heart of the Sinai experience.

The study and practice of the mishpatim refine him and transform his personality, making it possible for the infinite dimension of the Torah to permeate his character, erasing any dichotomy that might exist between his self and his faith.

## **KNOWING, AND NOT KNOWING**

The above allows for an extended interpretation of a renowned statement of our Rabbis, [17] "the ultimate of knowledge is not to know You."

The simple meaning of this statement is that a person realizes the limits of intellect, and therefore understands that knowing G-d is impossible, for He transcends all limits.

There is, however, an allusion to the concept that when a person has developed his knowledge, he appreciates that even the concepts which he knows possess an inner

dimension which transcends intellect. [18]

And going further, one can infer that which cannot be known, the dimensions of G-d that are infinite, can be internalized by our knowledge to the point that they shape our personalities. [19]

Knowledge of G-d in this manner anticipates - and precipitates - the coming of the Redemption, the era when "A man will no longer teach his friend..., for all will know Me, from the small to the great." [20]

*Adapted from Likkutei Sichos, Vol. III, p. 896ff; Vol. XVI, p. 242ff; Seifer HaSichos 5749, p. 243ff.*

### Notes:

1. Exodus 19:16-18.
2. Ibid. 20:15.
3. Shabbos 88b.
4. Shmos Rabba 29:9.
5. Exodus 21:1.
6. See the Ramban on Deuteronomy 6:20; Seifer HaMaamarim 5701, p. 51ff.
7. Cf. Yoma 67b.
8. Rashi to Numbers 19:2; cf. Yoma 67b, Midrash Tanchuma, Chukas, sec. 7. Seemingly, our Rabbis should have said "you have no permission to disobey." By stating "you have no permission to question," they implied that the devotion to G-d's will expressed by the chukim must be internalized to the point where, not only is the mitzva observed, it is fulfilled with unquestioning obedience, one's mind consenting to the commitment which transcends reason.
9. Rashi, Exodus 21:1, based on Shmos Rabba 30:3, and the Mechilta to this verse.
10. The fact that the Torah speaks of physical entities on the material plane does not at all diminish its inner G-dly core. To borrow an analogy from Tanya, ch. 4, it is like embracing a king who is wearing

garments. It is not significant how many garments the king is wearing; what is significant is being in the king's embrace.

11. See Tanya, ch. 5. See also the Guide for the Perplexed, Vol. I, Chapter 68.

12. See Tanya, Kuntres Acharon, Essay 4.

13. Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas B'Chukosai, sec. 3.

14. Although mishpatim express the purpose of the Giving of the Torah, the Torah first highlights the transcendent revelations described in Parshas Yisro. This is necessary, for it must be clear that the intellect content of Mishpatim is not merely limited human reason, but rather an expression of G-d's infinity.

After the transcendent dimension of the Torah is underscored, it is possible to clarify that G-d's absolute infinity extends into the realm of the finite, and becomes manifest in the wisdom of Torah law.

15. Although this portion of the Torah reading took place previously (according to Rashi), it is mentioned at the reading's conclusion, because the Torah does not always follow a chronological order P'sachim 6b; Rashi, Shmos 19:11.

Were the narratives related in the Torah merely historical chronicles, it would be preferable for the chronological sequence to be kept.

The fact that this sequence is, from time to time, transposed indicates that the fundamental purpose of these narratives is to teach us lessons pertaining to our divine service.

16. This explanation enables us to understand why the name Mishpatim applies to the entire Torah reading, including its conclusion.

Similarly, it can be explained that the passages of the Torah reading that describes the festivals also relate to the name Mishpatim, for the thorough comprehension of Torah law evokes feelings of happiness, and that is the essence of the festivals.

17. Bechinas Olam, sec. 8, ch. 2; Ikarim, Discourse II, ch. 30, Shalo 191b.

18. To state this in the context of our Torah reading: even the mishpatim are in essence expressions of G-d's infinity.

19. In the context of the Torah reading: the study and the practice of the mishpatim lead to an internalized appreciation of the experience of Sinai.

20. Jeremiah 31:33.

# YOUR MONEY AND/OR YOUR LIFE

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

## LIFE AND MONEY ON THE LINE

The Rebbe Rayatz, during his visit to Chicago in Shvat 1942, recounted in great detail the story of Reb Boruch Mordechai of Bobruisk and how he went from being a disciple of the Vilna Gaon to a Chassid of the Alter Rebbe. One of the revelatory encounters described there is when he happened upon the Chassidic minyan in Vilna, where a celebration was being held. This was a “feast of thanksgiving” given by one of the local Chassidim for having had the great “merit” to receive a severe beating in the honor of Chassidus. The fare served at this purported feast was quite meager due to the financial hardships that the Chassidim endured as a result of ideologically driven persecution, but the joy was real and palpable and the event made a huge impact on the young scholarly genius.

As a young, somewhat immature, self-styled opponent of Chabad Chassidus, I recognized early on a certain dichotomy in the visceral response that I and others had towards some of the qualities associated with the world of

Chabad. These included an absolute certainty that theirs is the superior and most correct path, as well as the willingness to make immense sacrifices for their beliefs. I/we reacted to stories, aphorisms and examples of the above with tremendous annoyance along with some degree of grudging admiration.

One illustration of this would be the time, a few years before I went to learn in Lakewood yeshiva, when a group of friends from Lakewood came to visit me in the yeshiva I was learning in at the time. We sat down to farbreng (yes, we called it that) for many hours and inevitably the topic came around to Lubavitch. One of the fellows recounted a story told regarding a Chassid of the Alter Rebbe who passed on to the next world. At the very moment that he was being judged up Above, the Alter Rebbe opened the door to his room and stood in the doorway in a state of “divestiture from physicality.”

After a short while in that state, the Alter Rebbe laughed aloud. Later, he explained to the Chassidim that during those moments that he stood there, their fellow Chassid was being judged in

the Heavenly Court. The ruling handed down was that he would have to spend a brief time in Gehinom before being allowed to go to his Heavenly reward in Gan Eden. As part of his punishment, he had to walk past the open doors of Gan Eden to see what his actions had cost him to lose out on.

As he walked past, he encountered a childhood friend who was happily ensconced in Gan Eden. The two had been friends until the Chassid embraced the teachings of Chassidus, at which point they became rivals with each trying to persuade the other as to the correctness of their chosen paths. When the Chassid passed by on his way to being purged of his iniquities, his former friend called out to him, “So, what do you say now?” The Chassid responded with a colorful, albeit somewhat vulgar, Yiddish colloquialism suggesting that the fellow could kiss him in a non-traditional location (said suggestion indicating absolute derision), “...you and your Gan Eden together.” It was this that caused the Alter Rebbe to laugh aloud.

In discussing our response to this story, we concluded that these people are out of their minds but you have to admire their fanatical convictions. Another conclusion we more or less agreed upon was that in the non-Chassidic world there were some individuals who were so filled with their own nauseatingly pious self-importance that for them the response of the Chassid was more than apt. In celebration of this point, one of the guys began to sing those immortal Yiddish words to the tune of a well known Carlebach song, as most of the others joined in. (My friends from the yeshiva I was attending mostly sat slack-jawed with mouths agape, shooting the occasional bewildered look in my direction as they tried to puzzle out what planet my visiting friends



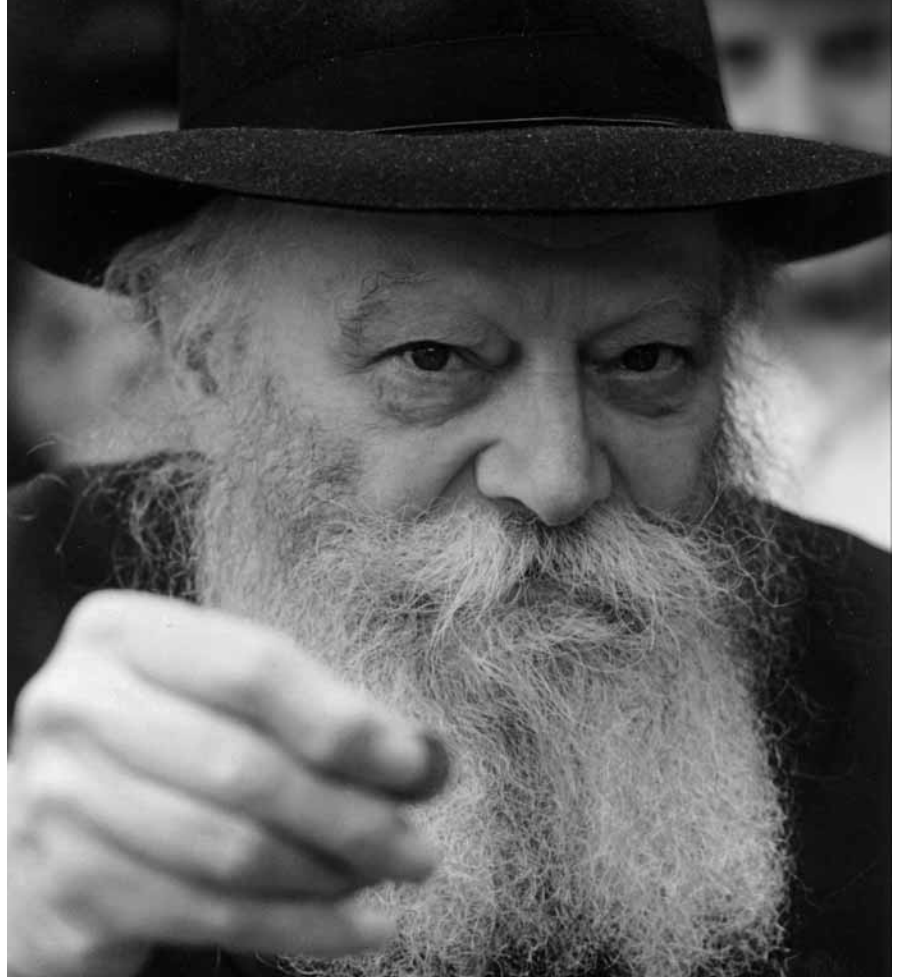
were from and where I fit in with them.)

As Americans and particularly as Jewish Americans, we couldn't help but admire, begrudgingly so, those whose beliefs drove them to "go all the way," put their "life on the line," and put their money "where their mouths were." Although the early Chassidim were on a much higher spiritual level and made do with much less, the personal sacrifices of Shluchim and Chassidim of today are in some ways more impressive than those of yesteryear. When I decided that I needed to understand what drives these traits, I knew, like Reb Boruch Mordechai and many others infinitely greater than I could ever hope to be before me, it couldn't be done from the outside looking in.

### **LIFE LESSON FROM MONEY**

The last Shabbos of the month of Shvat, when we bless the upcoming month of Adar, is known as Parshas Sh'alim as we read the Torah portion regarding the obligation for each individual Jew to contribute Machatzis HaShekel (half of a shekel coin) towards the outlay for the daily sacrifices in the Holy Temple. This is in keeping with the law that the Jewish High Court would begin to send out messengers on Rosh Chodesh Adar to announce that people should start bringing in their half shekel contributions for the new year beginning Rosh Chodesh Nisan.

Regarding Machatzis HaShekel, there is a story that occurred when the Rebbe Rashab was a young boy. The custom was that each day, he and his older brother Raza would go in to the Tzemach Tzedek, and he would give each boy a coin worth five kopeks. On the last day before the passing of the Tzemach Tzedek, Raza was delayed for some reason, and after waiting for as



***To posit that one who is distant from the Tzaddik/Rebbe is by definition "dead" seems a bit extreme, especially to well-meaning Jews who sincerely try to serve G-d to the best of their abilities...***

long as he possibly could, the Rebbe Rashab went in himself. This time, his grandfather gave him a half ruble and said, "You see, this is a Machatzis HaShekel. In the word Machatzis, the letter Tzaddik (common usage name for the letter Tzadi) is in the center. The letters that are distant from the Tzaddik are (Mem and Tav) *meis* (dead), and the letters close to the Tzaddik are (Ches and Yud) *chai* (alive)."

This teaching - that in order to experience true spiritual "life," one must be close to the Tzaddik/Rebbe - is a basic precept of Chassidus. However, to posit that one who is

distant from the Tzaddik/Rebbe is by definition "dead" seems a bit extreme, especially to well-meaning Jews who sincerely try to serve G-d to the best of their abilities. Clearly, Chassidus is working with a different definition of "life" and "death," one that holds sway not only in this world but the next, as expressed by the utter scorn of the Chassid for "you and your Gan Eden together," eliciting a positive response from the Alter Rebbe. What is this definition of "life" and "death?" What role does the Rebbe have in determining if one is dead or alive? And what does the

monetary aspect of Machatzis HaShekel (as the Tzemach Tzedek emphasized) have to do with any of the above?

## **YOUR MONEY AND YOUR LIFE**

In the HaYom Yom of 6 Cheshvan, it says, “When the Alter Rebbe wished to bless Reb Yekusiel Liepler with wealth, he said that he didn’t want it so that the wealth wouldn’t distract him from studying Chassidus and his involvement in Avoda. When the Alter Rebbe wished to bless him with longevity, he said, ‘but not with peasant years - that have eyes and do not see, have ears and do not hear. They do not see any G-dliness and they do not hear any G-dliness.’” Reb Yekusiel was known as having a very rudimentary understanding of Chassidus at that point in his life, during the lifetime of the Alter Rebbe, and what little he did have was “a gift” from the Rebbe. And yet he could no longer conceive of a life without seeing and hearing G-dliness, and was ready and willing to give up wealth and long life if it meant going without.

That is the Chassidic definition of being alive. Through a connection to the Rebbe, the Rebbe elevates the person to a whole new level of experiencing reality by granting him a glimpse of the “life” of the Tzaddik, which, as the Alter Rebbe explains, is “not life of flesh but spiritual life, that is, faith and awe and love” (Tanya, Igeres HaKodesh 27). The faith, awe and love that the Rebbe experiences is not simply quantitatively greater but is such that he experiences the Divine reality and delights and rejoices in that revelation (Tanya, Chinuch Katan). Even that small glimpse that the Chassid receives as “a gift” should be enough to make him realize that “the joy [in suffering] comes from his loving

closeness with G-d more than all of the life of this world, as it is written, ‘Since Your kindness is better than life...’” (Tanya, Likkutei Amarim ch 26), and as such he is ready to sacrifice his life and his money for that closeness.

In the commandment to love G-d “with all your heart, all your soul and all your might,” the Mishna explains that “all your might” means with all your money, as there are those to whom their money means more than their lives, and so they would more readily sacrifice their lives for G-d than to sacrifice their fortunes. The Alter Rebbe explains (Tanya, Likkutei Amarim ch 37) why the Sages said that the mitzva of tz’daka is equivalent to all the other mitzvos, and throughout the Talmud Yerushalmi it uses the generic term “mitzva” to refer to tz’daka exclusively, “because it is the main one of the action mitzvos and rises above all of them.” This is because with every other mitzva a person is only giving up a part of his life for G-d, but when he gives away his money for a mitzva, “he is giving up the very life of his soul to G-d.”

Perhaps that is what the Tzemach Tzedek was alluding to immediately before his passing, speaking to the Rebbe Rashab as Rebbe to Rebbe. What sets a Chabad Rebbe apart from all the other wonderful leaders of beautiful groups of Jews that go by the same title is that a Chabad Rebbe reveals G-dliness to the extent that those who are close to him are inspired and consider it an honor to sacrifice life and money, and even reject the “you and your Gan Eden together” of the Misnaged rather than endure “peasant years.” However, all of this is only possible when a Jew comes to the Rebbe and recognizes that he is incomplete and lacking (a machatzis), but those who come and are full of themselves and their wonderful

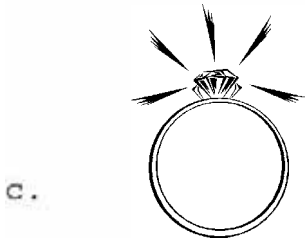
qualities remain “distant” even as they are in close proximity.

## **ETERNAL LIFE AND LOADS OF MONEY**

One of the challenges for Chassidim in our generation is that the Rebbe has turned the table on us. Until now we had a pretty good way to measure how much a person “got it” when it came to Chassidus. It was simple, how much are you willing to give up, materially, spiritually and in any other area of life and be glad you did? The Rebbe made it clear from day one that the mission of our generation is different, not to “leave” and sacrifice the physical in order to connect to the spiritual, but to bring G-d and G-dliness down to earth. We need to reveal G-d in our physical lives and livelihoods, so that the question is not how much I have given up for G-d, but how much does my life and my use of financial resources express and reveal G-d in the world, as opposed to me and my desires. So, in a sense you are giving it up and keeping it at the same time. It is my money and my life and I have dedicated both entirely to revealing and serving G-d.

In fact, we, the people of the first generation of Geula, have actually been directed on how to achieve eternal life through spiritual self-nullification (Sicha Bo 5748, Tazria Metzora 5751) and have been instructed to “reveal” the great wealth that is innate to every Jew (Sicha Truma 5752). The idea is to no longer have to choose between “your money (and physical life) or your (G-d seeing and hearing) life.” But rather what we are working towards is going with “their gold and silver with them” straight to eternal life in the Complete and True Redemption, immediately, NOW!

# QUIZ



**Which of these is your greatest asset?** —

**Which of these is currently uninsured?** —

Your ability to earn an income is by far your greatest asset.

If that income stream is interrupted...even for a brief period...what would happen to the rest of your lifestyle? Even if you are young and careful, the odds of becoming too sick or injured to work are greater than you might think. Research shows that men have a 43% chance of becoming seriously disabled during their working years, while women have a 54% chance<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> "Why Disability" booklet, published by National Underwriter.

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# MONEY MATTERS IN THE LIGHT OF TORAH

Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim  
Photographs by Meir Alfasi

*The less than rosy financial climate makes more people fight over every penny. Many go to dinei Torah with partners, employers, neighbors and even relatives. \* For Parshas Mishpatim we spoke with Rabbi Boruch Boaz Yurkowitz, Rav of the Chabad neighborhood in Lud and Av Beis Din Badatz “Heichal Lubavitch,” about money matters.*

The court system of battei din is a sensitive area in Jewish society. Going to a beis din usually entails some problem - whether within a family, between employer and employee, etc. - with each party focusing intently on their rights and the other side's obligations.

Judgments in divorce cases or

financial matters can generate hostility towards the judges and criticism about battei din in general. However, those who are familiar with battei din are full of admiration for the dedication of the dayanim and their sensitivity regarding the problems they have to deal with.

Parshas Mishpatim contains numerous mitzvos that have to do with interactions between man and his fellow. These mitzvos were designed to create a civilized society, with particular emphasis on money matters.

I spoke with Rabbi Boruch Boaz Yurkowitz, Rav of the Chabad







**“Halacha has the solution  
for every question that arises.”**

**--Rabbi Boruch Boaz Yurkowitz**

neighborhood in Lud and Av Beis Din Badatz “Heichal Lubavitch.” The conversation dealt mainly with the Choshen Mishpat part of Shulchan Aruch, which discusses the money topics connected with this parsha.

**Do the financial issues we have today in the modern era in the**

**free market have sources and corroboration in Shulchan Aruch?**

Of course. Halacha has the solution for every question that arises, even on the newest things. If you learn Choshen Mishpat with an understand of the principles behind all the halachos, you can definitely make comparisons and find

answers to questions that arise nowadays.

Today’s era presents constant challenges in every area of the halachos of money. Often there are conflicts between the norm in the world and the laws of Torah, even in trivial areas which are taken as a matter of course even among

Rabbi Boruch Boaz Yurkowitz was born in Montreal. His father was R' Yaakov Benzion a"h and his mother is Mrs. Etta (nee Junik). His mother was friendly with Rebbetzin Chana a"h back in Poking.

Family members serve on shlichus all over the world.

In 5731, he was chosen to be a shliach in the Chabad yeshiva in Australia. In 5735, he was given smicha by Rabbi Yisroel Yitzchok Piekarski a"h and Rabbi Pinchas Hirschprung a"h.

In 5736, he married Risa Pinson, the daughter of R' Yehoshua and Liba (nee Plotkin) Pinson.

In the yechidus before his wedding, he received a bracha from the Rebbe to finish *Yadin Yadin* after he had already finished *Yoreh Yoreh* and to serve in rabbanus. In 5750, he was appointed rav of the Chabad community in Lud.

In 5755, he formed a Badatz, Heichal Lubavitch, which deals with money matters, kashrus, and mikvaos.

R' Yurkowitz gives numerous shiurim and his shiur in halacha in yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim in Rishon L'Tziyon is famous. He occasionally publicizes piskei halacha in respected Torah journals.

*mistress. Woe for this shame and woe for this humiliation."*

## WITH SENSITIVITY AND CARING

The Badatz Heichal Lubavitch, headed by Rabbi Yurkowitz, deals mainly with money matters, including property damage, delayed wages, laws of damages, unfair competition etc. When I asked him about the number and the level of disagreements and the financial scope of the suits that come for adjudication today, he replies, "It's not always about significant monetary issues, but that is the uniqueness of the Jewish people that 'the law of a penny is like the law of \$100.' Even though non-Jews scorn a cent, Jews go to beis din and hear what the Torah says about it."

To value the din of a penny like the din of \$100 is a wonderful thing, however, you can hear the sorrow in R' Yurkowitz's voice when he speaks about another aspect of monetary suits.

"In many cases of suits that come before a beis din, especially when they do not involve large sums, a little consideration and understanding could have brought about a compromise between the plaintiff and the defendant without all the aggravation. It hurts to see how people can go to war over trivialities when, with a little patience and goodwill, they could resolve things in a positive atmosphere."

### Are there many cases of dinei Torah among neighbors?

Definitely. The numerous dinei Torah among neighbors comes from the unwillingness to forego. As Chazal say (Bava Metzia 30b), "Yerushalayim was not destroyed except for establishing their laws on dinei Torah." Now what is so bad about that? The answer is, they did everything according to the letter of

***It hurts to see how people can go to war over trivialities when, with a little patience and goodwill, they could resolve things in a positive atmosphere.***

religious Jews. Take, for example, the topic of writing contracts. When you write a contract, it's a good idea to consult with a rav so it is done according to the laws of Torah.

I would like to quote what Rabbi Yisroel Grossman wrote in the introduction to his *Responsa Mishkenos Yisroel* on this subject, which provides a proper outlook:

*"My heart is hot within me when I see secular law going and conquering... all the contracts written up between contractors and home buyers are all...according to secular law... and it does not occur to the religious contractors and the religious home buyers that it is possible to write a contract according to dinei Torah."*

Indeed, there is no doubt that even in simple matters such as these, there are many pitfalls. Even

a simple contract requires knowledge of how it should be written.

I would like to quote again, this time from Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Stern, who wrote in his introduction to his book on deeds and contracts:

*"To our shame and disgrace, many fine brethren of ours, who are nurtured on the spring waters of Torah and halacha, when they write contracts and deeds, go to lawyers who write their contracts and wills according to the law of the land which has no halachic force according to dinei Torah. The Toras Hashem, which ought to be the stronghold in the life of every Jew, based on which he ought to establish all his conduct and ways in life, is pushed aside, unfortunately, to a corner, and a maidservant inherits the place of her*



the law and were unwilling to go beyond it and to compromise.

A story is told about a great dayan in a previous generation who oversaw a din Torah about a field. At a certain point, the rav went out to see the field. To the amazement of all present, he bent over and made as though he was listening to the earth and said, "Each of you is claiming, 'It's all mine,' but I listened to the earth and it claims, 'Both of them are mine.'"

**Does beis din try to arrange a compromise between the two sides in these cases?**

The biggest problem is when a person is so entrenched in his position that he does not want to listen, and is unwilling even attempt to understand the other party. Generally, when people come to a beis din, it's too late. Sometimes, the very fact that they were taken to court offends them and it is very hard to calm them down. And when the claimant states his complaint before the defendant, it causes a rift that is very hard to mend. The beis din does its utmost to facilitate a reconciliation.

The story is told of a poor widow who went to Rabbi Tzvi of Riminov and cried that she had had a din Torah with someone and the dayan had paskened against her. Without the Rebbe knowing what the issue was, he sent for the dayan and asked him to explain to him the basis of his p'sak. The dayan showed him the sources and realized that he had erred.

"Yes, I made a mistake," admitted the dayan, "but what made the Rebbe suspicious when he didn't even hear the widow's claim or know what the case was about?"

The Rebbe replied, "I became suspicious when she cried as she did. If the p'sak din had been proper, the woman would not have cried so bitterly. The way of the world is that after a p'sak din of truth, the two opponents calm



***Someone who delays paying wages transgresses five prohibitions and someone who eats a crawling creature also transgresses five prohibitions. People are extremely meticulous to avoid eating bugs, but when it comes to paying wages on time, people are just not careful.***

down."

**When presiding over a din Torah, you probably experience emotional scenes.**

The public sees the rav and dayan as a father, before whom they can pour out their pain and bitterness. We understand that these outbursts come from pain and not hostility, G-d forbid.

In the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Mattos-Massei, 5746, the Rebbe tells the joke that they told in school about a din Torah:

*"What is the reason that when people come to a rav with a question about whether something is forbidden or permitted and the rav*

*paskens that it's forbidden, the p'sak din is accepted without argument, even when it entails a great loss, but when two Jews come for a din Torah about a small sum, the one who has to pay screams like a loon about the iniquity of the rav and he announces that he will go to another rav?*

*"How is this possible, that over a large sum the p'sak is accepted without an argument but over a small amount, you are unwilling to accept the rav's p'sak din?"*

*"The answer – they said in school – is that it's not about his loss that he is screaming, but over his friend's gain!"*

## DELAYING WAGES IS LIKE EATING A BUG

One of the topics that disturbs dayanim these days is the global situation which has caused financial devastation all the way down to the pocket of the “little guy” who has a family to support.

We hear about administrators who do not pay their employees on time, causing much aggravation. Aside from the reduction in the output and quality of the work done by an employee whose wages are delayed, the administrator is transgressing explicit Biblical prohibitions.

The Torah says explicitly, “You must give him his wage on the day it is due, and not let the sun set with him waiting for it. For he is a poor man, and to you he lifts his soul.” The Rambam writes that this is a positive mitzva to pay wages on time and the reason that there are no lashes for the prohibition is that it’s non-negotiable; the balabus *must* pay. The Rambam’s words (Hilchos S’chirus 11:2) are frightening: “someone who delays payment is like someone who took the life of his employee and he transgresses five prohibitions.”

R’ Yurkowitz speaks sadly, “Think about it – someone who delays paying wages transgresses five prohibitions and someone who eats a crawling creature also transgresses five prohibitions (according to the Rambam in the Laws of Forbidden Foods 2:23). People are extremely meticulous to avoid eating bugs, but when it comes to paying wages on time, people are just not careful. Where do they get this leniency from?”

**What should the administrator of a mosad, for example, do to avoid this transgression when he hasn’t raised enough money?**

Either pay on time or write into the contract that you can delay payment. The employee has to

agree to it, otherwise this falls under those transgressions.

**Does this apply to workers who are not your employees?**

There are those who get paid when they finish the job, like a doctor, middleman, shadchan, etc. Again, if a different agreement has been made and the two sides accept it, then there is no problem with delaying wages. That is why I recommend that an agreement be written with contract workers as to when they will be paid. If they agree on a day when payment will be made and it was delayed, that is called *halanas s’char* (delaying wages).

## NAVIGATING A DIN TORAH

The section of Shulchan Aruch called Choshen Mishpat is not accessible to most people. The laws are difficult and there are numerous details. Even after learning the laws of Choshen Mishpat it is hard to apply them to everyday life situations.

“It is very important that in every case there be at least one dayan who is experienced. Guiding a case is a subject onto itself, whether in ascertaining what happened or simply maintaining order. The dayan’s responsibility is not only to pasken according to halacha but to ferret out that which may go unspoken.”

**As a Chassidishe dayan who was trained with the Shulchan Aruch HaRav, is there a difference between the Shulchan Aruch of the Beis Yosef and the approach of the Alter Rebbe, when it comes to Choshen Mishpat?**

The Alter Rebbe’s approach doesn’t always cover what is brought in Shulchan Aruch. Generally the Alter Rebbe is stricter when it comes to financial matters, perhaps for the reason of *s’feika d’Oraisa l’chumra* (a doubt in a

Torah matter requires stringency).

**Do we have material from our Rebbeim on this section of Shulchan Aruch?**

Yes. The Tzemach Tzedek devotes an entire volume in his responsa to it. There are few responses from the Rebbe in regard to practical rulings, however, some letters were compiled from the Igros Kodesh that are brought in *Shaarei Halacha U’Minhag*. An example is the Rebbe saying to compensate an employee even if he doesn’t ask for it, which is defined as *din mispater k’din mefutar* (someone who resigns should be treated like someone who was laid off).

**Does a Lubavitcher dayan have an advantage over a regular dayan?**

There are instances where it makes a difference, such as when dealing with internal matters of Anash or in disagreements over understanding what the Rebbe said in defining the role of a shliach or a mashpia and the like.

## GOING TO SECULAR COURT: A CHILUL HASHEM

One of things that bothers R’ Yurkowitz, is the fact that people opt to settle their financial disputes in a secular court rather than dinei Torah.

“The severity of the prohibition of going to secular courts is paskened l’halacha in Shulchan Aruch: ‘One who goes to be judged in secular courts is a rasha and it’s as though he blasphemed and raised a hand against the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu a”h.’ In the Midrash it says, ‘whoever deserts Jewish judges denies G-d first and then denies Torah.’

“It says in T’hilim, (147:19, 20) ‘He declares His word to Yaakov, His statutes and His laws to Yisroel. He did not do so to any

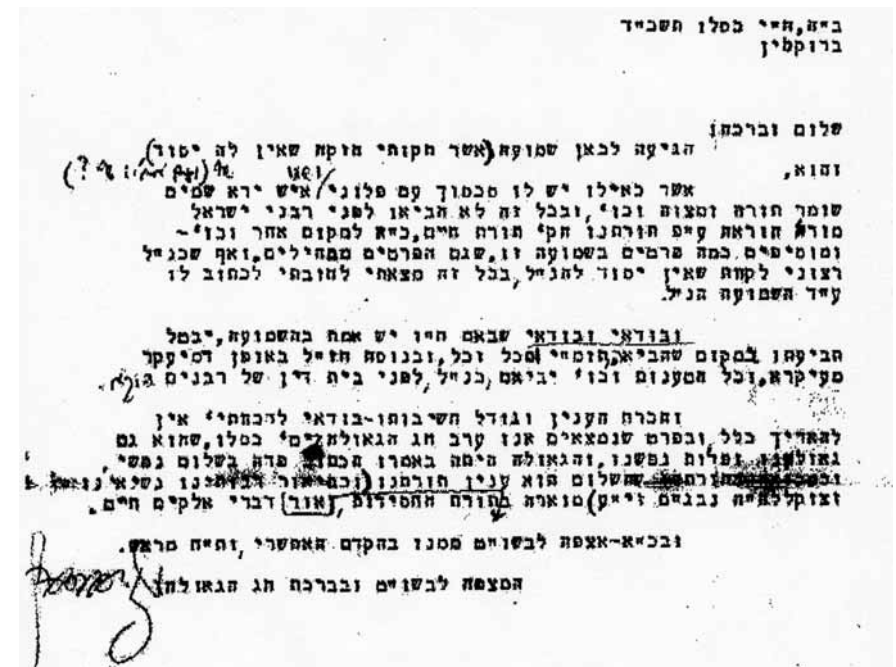


[other] nation; and of His laws they were not informed.' It was clear to the sages of Israel that the gentiles do not have the ability to fulfill the laws of Hashem, as it says in Yeshaya, 'And I will restore your judges as at first and your advisors as in the beginning.' Your judges and your advisors are the ones who judge according to Torah. We pray three times a day, 'return our judges as at first ... and remove from us sorrow and sighing' - since judgment at gentile courts causes the Sh'china to depart and then, may heaven have mercy, tzaros come. But the laws of Hashem are true and they bring abundant blessing, success and good for the Jewish people and then sorrow and sighing are removed."

#### What about when both sides want to go to a gentile court?

In Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat siman 26, s'if 3) it says "it is forbidden to be judged before gentile judges. Even when the two parties want to be judged before them, it is forbidden." We also see that "to accept with a *kinyan* to be judged before gentiles is considered nothing, and it is still forbidden to be judged before them. If he accepted upon himself that if he doesn't go before them, he will have to give such-and-such an amount to the poor, he is still prohibited from litigating before gentiles."

This is so since Chazal forbid it for reasons of denial of Hashem and the Torah. Although he accepted with a *kinyan* and committed his possessions if he loses, there is still a disparagement of the laws of the Torah, for he wants to copy the laws of the gentiles. This is unlike all other money matters, where the Torah allows a person to obligate himself in any way he wishes - for good or otherwise - if the other side agrees, according to the rules of forgiving ownership. But here he transgresses a prohibition and does not have the



A letter from the Rebbe about the severity of the prohibition of going to secular courts

ability to obligate himself in this matter, for he is placing conditions on what it says in the Torah.

Thus, where it is possible to go before Jewish judges, there is no allowance to go to gentile judges or to courts that make legal decisions based on gentile law. Even if he made any legal commitments, they have no standing when it comes to a forbidden act.

#### Are there situations in which a beis din gives permission to go to gentile courts?

I personally do not recommend asking for such a heter and it is too lengthy an issue to get into. I am aware of many instances in which people went to secular court (with the permission of a beis din) and they lost when the court decided against them.

As to your question, someone who wants to contest a p'sak given by a Torah scholar should first approach other dayanim. Only by their authority can he be permitted to go to a secular court when the other side refuses a din Torah. The heter will be given in writing and

only by experienced dayanim who have looked into the matter properly.

#### Do dayanim have the means to enforce their p'sak din?

If a respondent does not come to beis din when called three times, the beis din puts out a *k'sav siruv* and considers allowing the plaintiff permission to go to secular court. The *k'sav siruv* announces that the respondent refused to come to din Torah, and as such he has undermined the obligation of beis din to establish matters according to the laws of the Torah. Putting out a *k'sav siruv* is not only to establish that the respondent is deserving of *nidui*, but it is a tool that beis din has to fulfill what is incumbent upon it by the public to adjudicate *dinei Torah*. The obligation to judge in a din Torah is not only derived from the right of the plaintiff, but is the obligation of a beis din to fulfill the mitzva of "judge your fellow with righteousness" and to bring an end to quarrels.

# 'YOU GAVE ME LIFE'

*A compilation of little-known stories that were told by R' Aryeh Dov Eidelman a"h about our Rebbeim and their disciples.*

## TO LIVE 120 YEARS

When the Alter Rebbe left Shklov after the debate with the Misnagdim, the Misnagdim wanted to stone him as he left the city. When the Chassidim who had accompanied the Alter Rebbe heard this and saw that things were going to end badly, they spoke with a bachur named Dovid who lived in Shklov and was very strong. They told him that a tzaddik needed to leave the city and the Misnagdim wanted to stone him.

Dovid uprooted a tree and warned the Misnagdim that whoever raised his hand ...

The Alter Rebbe left in a wagon and Dovid accompanied the Alter Rebbe until he had exited the city. When they were outside the city, the Alter Rebbe alighted from the wagon and said, "You gave me life and in this merit you will live 120 years."

When this Dovid was 110, my uncle Yisroel Eidelman lived in his city. My uncle's nickname was Yisroel Chadak because he worked as a postman and would travel a lot (in Russian "chadak" is someone who wanders about).

One time, one of his horses

went wild and wouldn't calm down. Dovid the Strong Man yelled, "Shtoi" (stop) and the horse immediately calmed down.

The day before he turned 120 he called for the Chevra Kadisha, said l'chaim with them and told them that the next day he would be 120. He died the next day, at exactly 120 years of age, and he remained a physically powerful man until his final day.

## THE SEGULA REMAINED

A Chassid of the Tzemach Tzedek by the name of Yitzchok was given a coin for a segula by the Rebbe, which he eventually lost. He was very upset about this and since the Tzemach Tzedek had passed away, he went to his successor, the Rebbe Maharash, and told him about the loss of the coin.

The Rebbe Maharash reassured him, "The coin is lost but not the segula of the coin (in other words, the segula for which the coin was given)."

## R' SHMUEL MUNKES' "KAMEIA"

A woman once went to the Alter

Rebbe and brought him a honey cake to thank him for the child who was born to her "in the merit of the kameia."

The Alter Rebbe opened the kameia and saw the letters ches, tes, yud, tes written on it and realized that this was the work of R' Shmuel Munkes, who was known for his pranks.

The Alter Rebbe called for R' Shmuel and asked him to explain the letters in the kameia. R' Shmuel told him a Ukrainian phrase that was an acronym of those letters which meant, "Although you are barren and still have not given birth, you will give birth." R' Shmuel added that although the word *tzelis* is written with a tzaddik, he wrote it with a tes so it would look like a more authentic kameia.

## HEALING WITH THE BEARD

When the Rebbe Maharash did not feel well, the doctor was such a regular visitor in his house that he walked around the rooms and felt at home.

The Rebbe Maharash once called for him and said: "You know that I don't 'hold' of doctors since when they give medication for one organ, it is harmful for the other organs, but I 'hold' of you even though you yourself know that you don't know anything, because when you are called to the patient you sit near him and stroke your beard (he had a long beard) and that's a big inyan. The 13 *tikunei dikna* correspond to the 13 Attributes of Mercy in *arich anpin* and that is the root and source of healing and that is where healing for the sick comes from.

(I heard this from R' Mendel Dubrawsky)

## LET THE TREE GROW

At a farbrengen which took

place in my father's house in the middle of World War I, the shochet R' Shmuel Chaim Tchifkin from Runya recounted:

Even gentiles would go to the Tzemach Tzedek to ask for brachos. One time, a non-Jew who lived near Rudniya (the town near Lubavitch) asked the Rebbe to bless him with surviving children because all his sons had died.

The Rebbe said to him, "Your house is built on a thick tree that was chopped down and the house does not enable the tree to grow. When you remove the house from the tree, you will enable the tree to grow."

The gentile did so and the bracha was fulfilled.

## ENCIRCLING BRANCHES

R' Avrohom the Rav once traveled abroad with the Tzemach Tzedek. On Tisha B'Av they were in the city of Ostreah in Galicia, and they visited the cemetery. There they saw a certain grave from which a tree grew, its branches encircling two nearby graves.

The Tzemach Tzedek and R' Avrohom asked the local people to explain what this was about and they explained, "In our city there was a rabbi by the name of R' Elozor. After he died a tree grew on his grave. One of his talmidim requested to be buried to the right of this grave after his passing, and a branch grew out that encircled the talmid's grave.

When a second talmid died, he was buried to the left of R' Elozor and a second branch grew out that encircled his grave too.

(I heard this from R' Yitzchok, the grandson of R' Avrohom)

## IN ORDER NOT TO DISTURB THE REBBE

Rebbetzin Rivka, the wife of the Rebbe Maharash, once went to his

***R' Mendel Dubrawsky once had yechidus with the Rebbe Rashab and asked that the Rebbe think about him. The Rebbe answered, "I don't forget you for even a moment."***

room and when she left, the door closed on her dress. In order not to disturb the Rebbe she remained awake all night until the Rebbe opened the door.

## THE REBBE DOESN'T FORGET

R' Mendel Dubrawsky once had yechidus with the Rebbe Rashab and asked that the Rebbe think about him. The Rebbe answered, "I don't forget you for even a moment."

## THE END OF AN ENEMY

The parents of R' Berel Pantelialev lived in a small town in Russia and ran a tavern. One day, the governor decided to expel them from the tavern. He got the paperwork together and planned a trip to the town. When R' Berel's parents heard about this, his father hurried to the Rebbe Rashab to ask for a bracha and the Rebbe blessed him that everything would be fine.

The governor went to the train station and waited for the train. He strutted about arrogantly with his coat open. The whistle sounded once, then twice, but he didn't board until the third and final whistle blew. When the train whistled the third time and began moving, he jumped aboard but his open coat got caught in the wheels and he fell underneath the train. That was the end of him and his papers.

(I heard this on my way out of 770 from R' Berel, who heard it

from his mother in his childhood. A week after he told it to me, he passed away, a"n).

## SLEEP IS A SEGULA FOR SLEEP

The Rebbe Rashab told the Chassid, R' Yisroel Neveler not to sleep on Thursday night and R' Yisroel followed this injunction for forty years. He once asked the Rebbe whether he could nap Thursday afternoon so it would be easier for him to stay up Thursday night.

The Rebbe said, "This is the first time I'm hearing that sleeping is a segula for [i.e. to supplant] sleeping!"

## THE REBBE'S ADVICE

A bachur who became of draft age feigned health problems in order to be exempted since it was known to be extremely difficult - if not impossible - to keep mitzvos in the Russian army.

The bachur went to the Rebbe Rashab to consult with him about which draft office was his best option. The Rebbe told him to go to Minsk.

The doctor in Minsk was Jewish and was known as a tough person from whom it was difficult to extract an exemption. However, the bachur - faithful to the Rebbe's advice - went to Minsk. The Jewish doctor asked him whether his vision was good. When the bachur said he did not see well the doctor said, "Ferd (horse), you were supposed



***When the bachur said he did not see well the doctor said, “Ferd (horse), you were supposed to say that you don’t see anything!” He gave him a kick and yelled at him to scram.***

to say that you don’t see anything!” He gave him a kick and yelled at him to scram.

(I heard this from R’ Betzael Wilschansky)

**TO BE A BALABUS OVER SLEEP**

The Rebbe Rayatz once said to R’ Itche Golden, “We [i.e. the Rebbeim] are balabatim over sleep.”

### **WHEN THE REBBE RAYATZ HAD A THOUGHT OF T’SHUVA**

R’ Shmuel Gurary (who was a very Chassidishe Yid) once had the opportunity to buy three things: a silver b’samim box, a hadas, and a cup. They had belonged to great Torah figures - one from the Bach, one from the Rama, and one from the Shach - and cost a lot of money.

After he bought these items, R’ Shmuel went to the Rebbe Rashab and put the three items on his desk. The Rebbe picked up each item separately and put it back on the table. Then he picked up each item once again and said about one of the items, I think it was the b’samim box, that it was very precious.

Then R’ Shmuel went to the Rebbe’s son (later to be the Rebbe Rayatz) who did exactly as the Rebbe Rashab had done. He explained why he picked them up the second time – he thought perhaps the deficiency was in him, that he did not feel the k’dusha the first time he handled the items, so he had a thought of repentance and

then picked up the items again to see whether they contained k’dusha.

R’ Shmuel said to the Rebbe Rayatz, “Now you can’t hide from me [the Rebbe Rayatz acted as if he was a very simple person during the lifetime of the Rebbe Rashab, hiding his own greatness – Ed.].”

### **BEDTIME SHMA**

After the passing of the Maggid of Mezritch, the Chassidim wanted to see how R’ Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk read the bedtime Shma.

They heard him say to himself, “Mendele, Mendele, what will be with you? True, many letters arrive where they write ‘the holy tzaddik,’ but [after 120] when they will ask you yourself, you will have to reveal the truth and an admission of the plaintiff is considered like one hundred witnesses.” As he said this, he cried. He then repeated, “Mendele Mendele, what will be with you? etc.” and cried anew. He did so several times.

(Heard from R’ Nissan Nemenov)

### **WHEN R’ HILLEL NEEDED A FISH**

R’ Hillel Paritcher was always accompanied on his travels by a minyan including a shochet. They once arrived in a certain city and proceeded to the inn where they usually stayed. The innkeeper, seeing R’ Hillel with his minyan, was worried since it was after nine in the morning and the market was

already closed. What would he feed them?

He bought a chicken from a neighbor and asked R’ Hillel’s shochet to slaughter it. As the innkeeper kashered and prepared the chicken, R’ Hillel passed by on his way to daven. The innkeeper called to R’ Hillel, “What could I do? You came after the market was closed and I could only prepare a chicken. I don’t even have a fish.”

R’ Hillel said serenely, “By the time we finish davening, a \_\_\_\_\_ fish can come,” and he referred to an unusual, expensive fish.

While they davened, a fisherman walked in with a heavy basket and said to the innkeeper, “I have a fish but it’s unusual and very expensive. A fish like this you manage to catch only once in a blue moon.”

The innkeeper paid the three rubles and happily prepared the fish. When R’ Hillel and his entourage washed for the meal and sat down to eat, the innkeeper brought the fish and said, “The fish you referred to earlier, arrived.”

(Heard from R’ Peretz Chein, who heard it from the son of the innkeeper, who was present when it happened).

### **R’ HILLEL PARITCHER’S SLEEP**

R’ Mendel Dubrawsky related that one time, his father, R’ Yehoshua, was privileged to host R’ Hillel Paritcher. R’ Yehoshua and one of his friends decided to see how R’ Hillel slept. The door to R’ Hillel’s room was made of wooden slats and there were cracks through which they could peek into the room. In the room there was a table upon which were a lamp and a Mishnayos. Next to the table was a stool with a bowl and cup for washing hands.

After about twenty minutes, R’ Hillel woke up, washed his hands, turned on the lamp, opened the



Mishnayos and said, “uh, uh, uh” for a few minutes. Then he put out the lamp, laid his head on the pillow and slept deeply. This scene repeated itself several times: every twenty minutes he would get up and go back to sleep, throughout the night.

### R' HILLEL'S AIDE

In Gzatzk (160 kilometers from Moscow) lived a Jew named R' Yitzchok, who was R' Hillel's aide. R' Yitzchok was a simple, G-d fearing Jew. My father said that he would recite T'hilim and cry that he did not understand the words.

My father once asked him why he cried and Yitzchok answered, “I myself don't know why; it happens on its own.”

When this R' Yitzchok was a soldier, he once guarded a tower (where there was no room to move and you had to stand like a statue) and he put on t'fillin and davened. The commander showed up and when he saw him with t'fillin on his head he was furious and he threw off the t'fillin and pushed Yitzchok into the snow. Yitzchok fell and broke some teeth.

When the commander left, Yitzchok got up and took some snow, washed the blood from his mouth, put his t'fillin back on and continued davening.

Yitzchok would relate that when he assisted R' Hillel, at midnight R' Hillel would ask him for two pails of cold water in which he would put his feet and learn that way, standing through the night.

Yitzchok died at the age of 103.

(I heard this from my father, R' Moshe MM Eidelman)

### R' SHMUEL MUNKES' MECHUTAN

R' Shmuel Munkes engaged his daughter to the son of one of the Chassidim and then he traveled to

***The mechutan couldn't restrain himself. Interrupting the learning, he demanded, “How could she not have shoes?!” R' Shmuel replied calmly, “I already know for fourteen years that she doesn't have shoes and you just found out about it now and get all excited. I don't need a mechutan like you!”***



R' Itche Masmid

the town of his mechutan. Upon his arrival, he sent his daughter alone to the mechutan's house and went to the beis midrash to learn.

When the mechutan opened the door for R' Shmuel's daughter, he noticed that she was barefoot. He angrily sought out R' Shmuel, looking in all the inns and shuls until he found him sitting over a Gemara.

The mechutan couldn't restrain himself. Interrupting the learning, he demanded, “How could she not have shoes?!”

R' Shmuel replied calmly, “I already know for fourteen years that she doesn't have shoes and you

just found out about it now and get all excited. I don't need a mechutan like you!”

The mechutan realized that R' Shmuel was obviously on a very high spiritual level and he pleaded with R' Shmuel to reconsider until R' Shmuel finally gave his consent.

### REGARDS FROM GAN EDEN

R' Itche Masmid was once present when the Rebbe Rayatz said a maamer. When the Rebbe finished, R' Itche asked him why he concluded with something that had nothing to do with the maamer.

The Rebbe answered: “Father (the Rebbe Rashab) told me to finish that way.”

When he heard this, R' Itche was amazed. “That means we have regards from the Upper Gan Eden!”

The Rebbe Rayatz put his hand on R' Itche's mouth and told him to be quiet.

(Heard from R' Aharon Yosef Blinitzky)

### WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH BEREL?

R' Pesach of Molostovka was one of the great Chassidim of the Tzemach Tzedek. He was in the midst of the Purim seuda with some other Chassidim when he asked, “What's happening with my Berel?”

What's happening with him?" Then he returned his attention to the gathering and did not mention him again.

At that very moment, R' Pesach's son Berel was traveling and on his way through the forest a bandit tried to rob him. They fought and his son, a strapping fellow, won.

Afterwards, Berel said that when his father mentioned him twice, it was precisely the time that the bandit attacked him.

(Heard from R' Mendel Dubrawsky)

### AI, YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE HIM

When I was in America, Rashag asked me which year I arrived in Lubavitch. When I said I arrived in 5672/1912, he said, "If so, you got everything. In 5672, many things happened."

When I arrived in Lubavitch I was eleven. Many of the bachurim were strongly drawn to the bachur Chaim Yona, who was a model of modesty. They were very impressed by him and considered him a big

Chassid. They said he had a big neshama. Among the bachurim who were drawn to him were Shlomo Chaim, Peretz Mochkin, and others.

The Rebbe Rashab said about him, "Chaim Yona is mine."

One time, R' Sholom the chozer (who was the Mashgiach) went to the Rebbe Rashab with a negative report about Chaim Yona. The Rebbe responded, "Ai, you don't know him."

Chaim Yona and Shlomo Chaim both did not have any children for some time after they got married. Shlomo Chaim once got a letter from Chaim Yona which said that he (Shlomo Chaim) would be helped in regards to children but as for himself, he did not see anything (it seems he had had a dream).

After the passing of the Rebbe Rashab, the Rebbe Rashab would go to Chaim Yona in a dream and tell him maamarim. He once told his friends about this, and they passed the information on to Rebbetzin Shterna Sara, who told her son, the Rebbe Rayatz. The Rebbe Rayatz called for Chaim Yona and admonished him for telling. He said, "Since you told, it

won't happen again."

There were three Yona's who did not have children: Chaim Yona, Yona Poltaver, and another Yona, so I suggested to my son Yoel that he name one of his sons Chaim Yona.

### THE PARITZ WHO DID NOT WANT TO SELL CHAMETZ

Every year, on Erev Pesach, the Jews of the town Bobruisk went to Rabbi Boruch Mordechai to sell their chametz. He would sell it to the paritz (squire) of the town. One year, the paritz decided not to sell the chametz back to the rav but to keep it for himself.

The townspeople came to the rav to ask him what to do. He ruled that they should put all the utensils in which they cooked chametz on to wagons and to leave these wagons near the paritz's yard.

They did as the rav told him and before very long the area in front of the paritz's house was full of wagons packed with utensils. The paritz didn't know what he'd do with all of it and he decided to sell the chametz back to the rav.

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# TANKS FOR THE PLOWS!

By Prof. Shimon Silman, RYAL Institute and Touro College

*Why is this Shloshim different from all other Shloshim in that this one is the beginning of T'chiyas HaMeisim? In light of the above, however, the answer is very simple. This Shloshim took place right after the Swords Into Plowshares declaration which annuls the "iron which shortens the life of man" and transforms it into a peaceful entity.*

On January 31, 1992 the heads of state of the major world powers met at the United Nations in New York City. This was the first ever Security Council Summit, i.e., the first meeting held by the Security Council at the level of heads of state. At this meeting they issued a joint statement announcing their intention to reduce arms production and to redirect the resources to improve economic conditions throughout the world.

The next day, at the Shabbos farbrengen of Parshas Mishpatim in "770," the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach announced that the statement issued by the heads of state at the United Nations was the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, thousands of years ago, that in the Era of

Moshiach the nations of the world will "beat their swords into plowshares." He explained that this declaration of intent by the world leaders was the direct result of the influence of Melech HaMoshiach himself on the nations of the world. The Rebbe MH"M continued by describing the details of this influence over several decades, especially the promotion of the ideals of goodness, fairness and justice through the observance of the 7 Noachide Commandments, throughout the world. This brought about a refinement of the nations of the world, the climax of which was the collapse of the atheistic Communist regime in Russia and its replacement with a government committed to justice, fairness and peace based on the belief in G-d.<sup>1</sup>

This new heightened sense of morality was described by the Secretary General of the United Nations in his report on the January 31 Security Council Summit. In this report, titled "An Agenda for Peace,"<sup>2</sup> he wrote: "It is possible to discern an increasingly common moral perception that spans the world's nations and peoples."

At the Rabbi Yisroel Aryeh Leib Institute on Moshiach and the Sciences, we have been monitoring the Swords Into Plowshares (SIP) developments over the years and reporting on it in this magazine every year for Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim.

## S.I.P. AND T'CHIYAS HA'MEISIM

One aspect of Swords Into Plowshares that has not received adequate attention is its connection with T'chiyas HaMeisim, the revival of the dead. Perhaps the reason for this is that in the sichos of 5751-5752 it is mentioned only in a couple of footnotes to the sicha of VaYechi, 5752. Here is the quote:

*"At that time there will not be any of the 'iron which shortens the life of man,' as it says, 'They will beat their swords into plowshares.' Even more than that – death itself will be annulled<sup>3</sup>... There will be everlasting life literally – the soul in the body – since the 'iron which shortens the life of man' will have been annulled."<sup>4</sup>*

Based on this we may be able to explain a very surprising statement that the Rebbe MH"M made in the sichos of Parshas Mishpatim – another statement that has not received adequate attention. In one sicha (edited and published together with the Swords Into Plowshares sicha) the Rebbe MH"M talked about a *seifer* that was published for the *Shloshim*



after the passing of HaRav Moshe Yitzchok Hecht z.l. In the middle of the sicha the Rebbe MH"M says:

"Since Shloshim cancels several aspects of the mourning, *this is the beginning of the cancellation of mourning altogether – with T'chiyas HaMeisim*, at which time the prophecy<sup>5</sup> will be fulfilled that says, "Death will be cancelled forever and Hashem will wipe away the tears from upon every face."<sup>6</sup>

One may wonder: Why is this Shloshim different from all other Shloshim in that this one is the beginning of T'chiyas HaMeisim? In light of the above, however, the answer is very simple. This Shloshim took place right after the Swords Into Plowshares declaration which annuls the "iron which shortens the life of man" and transforms it into a peaceful entity.

## TANKS FOR THE PLOWS!

Now, on to our report on a specific Swords Into Plowshares transformation, one in which we see the swords transformed into plowshares literally.

A large number of tanks and other heavy armored vehicles which have been made surplus in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union after the Swords Into Plowshares declaration have been transformed for civilian use. A

considerable number of vehicles have been converted to a variety of such uses in countries such as the former German Democratic Republic, Belarus and Russia.

These uses include:

- \*bulldozers
  - \*firefighting vehicles
  - \*cranes
  - \*power-unit vehicles
  - \*mineral fine-crushing vehicles
  - \*quarry vehicles
  - \*rescue vehicles
  - \*casualty evacuation vehicles
  - \*transportation vehicles
  - \*oil-rig vehicles
  - \*oil and chemical products
  - \*spill-cleaning vehicles
  - \*tracked ice-breaking prime movers
  - \*environmental vehicles.
- \*And, last but not least – plowshares, literally!

In fact, a lot of military equipment is easily converted to civilian use because they are not weapons in the sense of having lethality, although they are part of the military arsenal of armed forces. However, most lethal weapons systems can also be converted because they are a combination of a piece of transport equipment (such as vehicle chassis, an aircraft or a ship) and a lethal element (such as a gun or missile) mounted upon the transport part.

In some cases, such as towed artillery, the transport equipment part is minimal while in others, such as lightly-armed landing ships, the weapon itself is of minor importance. It is therefore not surprising that many weapons have been transformed for civilian reuse simply by taking the weapon part away and using the transport equipment element.

In addition to armored vehicles, other types of military equipment have undergone a Swords Into Plowshares transformation, such as:

\*Helicopters for police missions, search-and-rescue and transport. In the United States alone, hundreds of surplus military OH-58 and Bell Jet-Ranger helicopters have been converted to law enforcement and public safety related use.

\*Military training aircraft have been reassigned to civilian flight training, sometimes after the removal of specific avionics equipment.

\*Small landing ships are now used as ferries, and small transport ships and tenders for civilian transport purposes.

We are so close to the end. All we need to do is open our eyes, and in the blink of an eye we will have the complete Geula and Hashem will wipe away the tears from all of our eyes.

After all, this is the year *tav-shin-ayin* – the year of the eyes.

### NOTES:

1 Seifer HaSichos 5752, vol. 2, pp. 362-365

2 "An Agenda for Peace," [www.un.org/Docs/SG/agpeace.html](http://www.un.org/Docs/SG/agpeace.html)

3 Seifer HaSichos 5752, vol. 2, p. 235, note 96.

4 Ibid., p. 239, note 139.

5 Isaiah 25:8.

6 Seifer HaSichos 5752, vol. 2, p. 378. Italics are mine.

Below: A Russian tank transformed into a plow



# JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS COVER

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

Photographs By Meir Dahan

*R' Daniel Roeber is the "person in charge" of all the richly leather-bound Chitas'im found on the book market – and more. With the hands of a skilled craftsman, he engraves, designs, glues, and prepares the binding. On a special visit to his bindery, he tells not only about his work, but also about when he was a soldier in the American armed forces during the bloody Vietnam War, his coming closer to his Jewish roots along a difficult road, and his first "yechidus" with the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach.*



In the building complex of what was once the "vocational school" in Kfar Chabad, there is now located the bindery of the Roeber family. You can see the glue, the knives, the rollers, and the other various tools which serve the workers in the bindery that has already become quite famous. If you have a leather-bound Chitas, Siddur, or Machzor in your home, chances are that the seifer was bound at the Roeber bindery. What started out as a relatively small operation has in recent years turned into a thriving business producing merchandise that today adorns every Chabad library. "We also design non-Chabad s'farim," bindery founder and manager R' **Daniel Roeber** noted with a pleasant smile.

As you enter the facility, you immediately get a whiff of the strong smell of leather penetrating your nostrils, along with the smells of the special paints used in the bindery. Thousands of holy s'farim



are laid out in long rows, waiting for an artistic handmade binding by the Roeber family. The cacophonous noise of the machinery is the only thing that breaks the quiet and pastoral atmosphere of the Kfar. There are offices on the upper floor, and it was there that we sat with R' Daniel Roeber. "Everything today is business," he tells me with a tone of sadness. "If people would be prepared to pay a little more for the quality work, they would receive s'farim that wouldn't wear out even a hundred years later."

Despite all this, R' Daniel says that he also periodically does private jobs for various rabbanim and Admurim, who request the preservation of special s'farim. "While I do a great deal of work with the Gerer chassidim, even the Gerer rebbe likes simplicity, thus making it rather difficult to find assignments for us to carry out."

By Divine Providence, we

conducted this interview a few days before the auspicious day of Hey Teives, which is also R' Daniel's wedding anniversary... With reserve and restraint, R' Daniel detailed his life's story, as we sat surrounded by shelves overflowing with leather-bound s'farim ready to be sold.

"I was born in the city of Wayne, Nebraska, located not far from Postville, Iowa," said R' Daniel as he began his story. "A few years after my father passed away from injuries suffered in a work-related accident, we moved to Chisholm, Minnesota, where I spent most of my childhood and teen years. The city had a population of no more than a few dozen families, three of which were Jewish. When we were still living in Nebraska, my mother studied history and later worked as a history teacher. History was also my hobby, and it eventually brought me closer to my Jewish roots.

"The history of the Jewish

People fascinated me. I was amazed by the thought that in logical terms, Jews should no longer be in existence after what they endured over the thousands of years since they became a nation. All of the world's great empires have collapsed, and only the Nation of Israel has managed to survive. I found several Jewish books in the college library and I started reading them. My family didn't look too favorably upon my interest in Judaism. When my grandfather or my mother would see what I was doing, they would admonish me for reading too much. What they didn't know was that it was the s'farim that brought me to Yiddishkai, and I am deeply involved with them to this very day – including with regard to my livelihood."

With much fondness and nostalgia, Rabbi Roeber recalls his youth as he paved his own lonely path towards recognition of the Creator of the World and the Jewish People. "I realized in hindsight that the books written about Jews and Judaism, including many books composed by Jewish authors, contain many concepts, conclusions, evaluations, and information that are totally false and inaccurate. G-d performed a tremendous kindness for me, and when I was still a young man, I knew how to extract the pearls from all the deception. The thing that aroused my curiosity the most was whether there were still Jews who observed Torah and mitzvos, as they did long ago."

Back then during the early seventies, at the height of the bloody and divisive war in Vietnam, young Americans were still being drafted into the armed forces. "I was seventeen years old at the time, but I already knew deep within my soul that I was going to become Orthodox, even though I had neither encountered true Jewish life nor had I met those who fulfilled



***When my grandfather or my mother would see what I was doing, they would admonish me for reading too much. What they didn't know was that it was the s'farim that brought me to Yiddishkait, and I am deeply involved with them to this very day – including with regard to my livelihood.***

Torah and mitzvos with great devotion. There was still no Internet at the time, and the possibilities for gathering information were rather limited. The process was slow, but things progressed. G-d produced open miracles for me at every step of the way. When I was drafted into the United States Air Force, this marked the first time that I had ever met Orthodox Jews.”

When he reached the age for military induction, he made his way, as did all his friends, for the army training base. Expressions of patriotism were commonplace for him and his buddies, and he was certain that he was going to be drafted into the American infantry. However, the army commanders who made a detailed examination of his life and his abilities thought otherwise. His upbringing with a strong background in mathematics and history and possessing a highly developed and quick mind led these officials to designate him for service in the intelligence corps, specializing in breaking enemy codes. “It wasn’t like in Israel or Europe, where you can’t manage without knowing at least three languages. In the United States at the time, people had enough trouble speaking English. The army invested much resources and tremendous effort in training

manpower for these positions. At first, I was told that I would be inducted into the intelligence corps as a Russian translator, and I would go to study in a military school in California together with the rest of my friends. However, for certain reasons, the plans were cancelled and I was sent instead to a foreign language school in El Paso, Texas, where I specifically learned the complicated Vietnamese language over a period of nine months. This is a very difficult language, filled with a variety of dialects, and its study can be unbearably complex.”

Towards the end of his service in Texas, R’ Daniel understood how the hand of Divine Providence caused him to be separated from his other friends, who went to learn Russian in California. “During that period, I customarily made regular visits to the shuls in the cities near the army base, about an hour’s distance away, in order to read holy s’farim and get closer to Judaism. I also spent Shabbos and Yomtov in these synagogues, once I received permission from the base commanders. One day, as I was coming to the end of my studies and preparing to go to the battlefield in Vietnam, I read in the local newspaper that two young Orthodox men had come to town.

“I didn’t waste a moment, and at the first opportunity I went to

visit them at their hotel. The two young men were Levi Bukiet and Yossi Gutnick. This was the first time that I had actually seen Jews who appeared as they do in books, and I was very pleased. They said that they had been sent by the Rebbe as part of ‘Merkaz Shlichus’ with the primary mission of distributing Chabad s’farim. They added that they are by no means unique, as there are many more Jews who strictly observe all the mitzvos. They answered a long list of questions that had been pecking away at my brain for some time. I was simply overjoyed, and in the end, I also ordered some s’farim from them.”

The pair of yeshiva bachurim gave him guidance in the basic concepts of Judaism, and from that moment on, he knew exactly what he had to do in matters of halacha, kashrus, and Shabbos. “After my meeting with them, I began to feel more how G-d runs the world. The army unit that I had originally joined went to the school in California, and was eventually sent to the front in northern Thailand. If I had gone with them as planned, my journey to observant Judaism would have proven most difficult. My friends were puzzled why I had suddenly decided to go around wearing a yarmulke and keep kosher. In the new location, specifically because I was all by myself, I asked whatever I wanted from the commanders.”

After completing the language studies, Daniel was sent to a course in radio, in order that he would know how to operate listening devices. Throughout that period, despite the intensive curriculum, he continued to maintain contact with the young Lubavitchers who had provided him with so much spiritual guidance. “During a two-week furlough that we were given before we were sent to serve in Taiwan, they invited me to come and stay in



Crown Heights. Over the next week and a half, I furthered my studies and also acquired stringently kosher pairs of t'fillin, tzitzis, and other Judaica items. I started to feel an inseparable part of the Judaism of which I had dreamed."

This was also the first time that Daniel had ever been exposed to the Rebbe in person. "This was my first opportunity to see an authentic Jewish community, not just a few Jews with properly groomed beards gathering in the synagogue. I saw a lively and vibrant Jewish community, just as I had read about in s'farim, and I couldn't believe that such a thing still existed today after all of the destruction. This was a revelation that simply lifted me off the ground. The Rebbe impressed me as a leader, when I saw the great honor that the chassidim gave him."

Yet, R' Daniel also acknowledged the fact that he still didn't have the necessary tools to understand fully what a "Rebbe" really is and how he is different and greater than anyone else. "I saw the tremendous respect and appreciation with which Levi Bukiet honored him, and I understood that this was something most unusual, above and beyond the standard norms of behavior in connection with an average leader."

During his preparations before heading for Taiwan, Daniel kept in close contact with the bachurim. "I would write letters to Levi from the army, more often than I did to my own mother," he noted with a smile. He leisurely spent the last days with his family, taking the opportunity to order a subscription with the Jewish Press weekly so he could learn and read more about Yiddishkait.

After an exhausting year of studies, the time had come to be called into action, and Daniel flew to Taiwan. The information compiled by the eavesdropping



**R' Daniel at work**

intelligence forces was extremely sensitive. The material was vast and quite sizable, and there existed the possibility of causing considerable damage and posing great danger if they were taken captive. As a result, they were forbidden to travel to Vietnam, and their unit did not operate like other units deep within enemy territory. Instead, they served specifically in nearby Taiwan, the location of a secret intelligence base where they listened to Vietnamese army broadcasts and circling fighter planes together with Nationalist Chinese soldiers. There were the dark days of the harsh and complicated guerrilla warfare that caused many casualties.

The job of the intelligence unit was most irritating. "Together with us in the language school was a soldier, a native-born Korean and a native speaker of the Korean language. Once when we let him listen to the conversations between pilots speaking in Korean, he angrily threw the earphones off his head after a few minutes, telling us that he couldn't understand a single thing, even though they were speaking in his mother tongue. It turned out that the pilots were carrying out a variety of deceptive maneuvers, such as speaking into

the communicator as they turned the device on and off. At the listening post, we could only hear portions of words and syllables in a language that was only recently foreign to us."

The work was in shifts of three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening. "It was my job to listen to the citizen band and military radio frequencies, and to write down everything that I heard. Even when I managed to get on to military radio frequencies, it was rare for me to hear any clear words or sentences. These were highly trained and very cautious guerrilla fighters, and the conversations between them were conducted only in code." He tells many stories about the hours he spent listening in the bunkers. In one such story, he nostalgically recalled how specifically through casual listening, it was possible to know the location of the enemy. His memories at once brought him back to those days in the army.

"As I mentioned previously, all the conversations between the Vietnamese soldiers were conducted in code and in code language, however, there were instances when the enemy soldiers were a bit careless and spoke normally and

## ELDER CHASSIDIM WHO WERE INFLUENTIAL IN HIS LIFE

The people who have had a considerable influence on the development of R' Daniel Roeber's chassidic character and the building of his Jewish world were the elder chassidim whom he was privileged to visit often, and from whom he learned about chassidic customs, and drank from the living waters of chassidus. "From even the littlest and most marginal things, I learned how great these chassidim were in the innermost recesses of their souls. I first met Rabbi Bentzion Shemtov in 'Beis Chayeinu' during a visit to the Rebbe. My acquaintance with his son, Rabbi Mendel Shemtov, while I was still serving in Southeast Asia, resulted in our seeing one another quite often.

"When I first arrived in Kfar Chabad, I saw him standing and talking in the yeshiva corridor with the mashpia, Rabbi Mendel Futerfas. As soon as he saw me, before I realized what was happening, he ran over to me, gave me a big hug and kiss, said a hearty 'Sholom Aleichem', and asked how I was doing. I remember how I was still in a state of shock for days afterwards. We had not been acquainted with one another before, yet he showered me with this great expression of love. I felt that this was a true chassid."

Another chassid who had a great influence upon R' Daniel was Rabbi Berke Chein. "He was not a particularly great chazzan and he didn't have one of the finer voices I have ever heard, but when he took the amud and started davening, you simply couldn't remain unmoved. His t'filla both sounded and felt totally different. I will never forget how he said the words 'Who works salvations in the midst of the earth'. It left a powerful impression. Often when I saw the two of them walking together, R' Berke was holding his cane with a plastic shopping basket hanging at the end.

"During the years that I learned in Kfar Chabad, R' Mendel was no longer a young man anymore, yet his strength remained firm. His friends joked how he was not as strong as he was in Russia, but when he grabbed me by the shoulder one Shabbos Mevarchim and lifted us together onto a table to dance, I saw that he was still quite strong enough.

"In general, I learned from R' Mendel that a chassid must be so in every respect, and there is no such thing as being a chassid in one area and acting like a 'misnaged' in another. I remember once that he traveled from London to Amsterdam to make a farbrengen, and many bachurim including myself, took a charter flight in order to be there. The farbrengen lasted well into the night, and he constantly repeated the tune, 'Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Pesach asked me why I think that he's a misnaged, and I replied that I know from the way he drinks..."

fluently. One day, we suddenly heard a soldier talking in Vietnamese over the radio, noting the approach of a helicopter. 'I see a helicopter,' he cried out in a shaking voice. 'It's getting closer,

even closer.' Suddenly, we heard a powerful noise and then the radio went silent. We then realized that the soldier had been killed by a bizarre accident with the helicopter, as he was standing in a tree

preparing an ambush on a passing battalion of our troops. We understood that there were apparently other soldiers in the surrounding trees."

As he continued with his army service, Daniel became progressively stronger in his Judaism. He started becoming more stringent in his observance of kashrus and Shabbos. "There were almost no Jews in the city where I served. There was only a minyan in the hotel, a minyan that continues to exist to this very day. The city was home to about forty Israeli families who conducted local business, and forty American families who were there in connection with the army, but regrettably, most of them were not Torah observant. The person who made my kashrus observance much easier and gave me tremendous encouragement was Rabbi Mendel Shemtov. I met with him once I discovered that he had arrived in the city on business matters.

"I can describe the meeting with him as nothing less than finding water in the middle of a desert. The base chaplain informed me that Rabbi Shemtov had come to town for a business trip and was staying in a local hotel. I spent considerable time searching the hotels spread throughout the city until I finally found him. I knocked on the door, and when he asked who was there, I replied, 'A Lubavitcher chassid.' He was stunned. 'What? A Lubavitcher chassid?' he asked. 'What's a Lubavitcher chassid doing here?' He opened the door and we started a very lively conversation. He gave me an electric spoon for heating up soup. On a later visit to the city, he brought me kosher l'mehadrin chicken and beef."

Daniel would cook his own meals, as the kitchen at the army base was totally treif. He arranged a special closet in his quarters with

kosher cooking utensils. On Shabbosim, he would switch shifts with fellow soldiers in his unit. “Contending with the issue of keeping kosher proved to be much easier than I would have thought, and this was a clearly open miracle. The person who was in charge of the kitchen was a Gentile of Chinese origin, and he not only knew what Jews were, he knew what kashrus was. In an amazing case of Divine Providence, out of about a billion Chinese, his family grew up in Shanghai, in a region where Torah observant Jews lived during the Second World War.

“Not only did no one else on the base know anything about kashrus, Shabbos, and the like, they didn’t even know what a ‘Jew’ was. This Chinese cook named Nisi was the only one who knew what a Jew was and he even understood numerous Jewish concepts. From that moment on, Nisi came to my aid and helped me as much as he could. He was the one who organized a closet with a lock for me, and also gave me whatever I needed to keep kosher. Throughout my military service, I saw how the hidden Hand of G-d assisted me in all that I required to maintain stringent observance of this mitzva.

“I experienced yet another incredible instance of Divine Providence in connection with the kosher meat that I received from Rabbi Shemtov each time he visited the city. I would freeze the meat for an extended period of time in a special location in my quarters on the base, and I would take out a piece for Shabbos and Yomtov. I placed it into boiling water for a few hours, and this was my holiday meal.

“One night, we were awakened by loud pounding on the door to my room. It turned out that there was a suspicion of possible drug possession – a most widespread phenomenon on army bases at the



time – and the authorities had somehow decided that there were drugs in the quarters where I slept. An army lieutenant entered my room together with a bloodhound, a well-trained dog with a highly perceptive sense of smell. The sight of them made me extremely nervous.

“While I had absolutely no forbidden material in my possession, I was concerned about the fate of my kosher meat. The trained dog would smell the meat in a second, and I would become seriously entangled with the military law against smuggling meat outside the army camp and cooking outside the base kitchen – totally against army regulations. The minimum punishment that I could expect to receive was constant supervision that would prevent me from eating kosher meat. I became alarmed when I saw the dog passing the closet where I kept the meat and I began to expect the worst. I prayed in my heart, and as amazing as it might seem, the dog continued on its way, as if its nose was clogged...”

Daniel’s Jewish idiosyncrasies were brought to the attention of one of his commanding officers, who decided to put an end to all the nonsense. “One day, after nine

months of military service, I was called before the unit commander. The first question he asked me was – “**What** are you?” – not ‘Who’, but ‘What’. He demanded an explanation for the strings coming out of my clothes, the skullcap on my head, and my stubborn determination to switch shifts that would keep me from working on Shabbos. For the next several minutes, I proceeded to explain to him what a Jew is. During the entire time that I spoke, he didn’t cut me off even once, listening most attentively. This army unit had no prior experience with religious Jews.

“When I finished speaking, the commander decided to transfer me from the intelligence corps to an office position.”

The new position made things much easier for Daniel in his religious observance. “At no stage did the army try to place restrictions upon me. They saw that I was a serious person who always tried to manage as best he could, and they specifically appreciated the fact that I was religious. Therefore, I was given a simpler task, which made everything much easier for me.

“Not long afterwards, the military authorities turned to me



with a request that I return for new studies in order that I can serve in various military posts. The year was 5734, and then-U.S. President Gerald R. Ford, together with his secretary of state, Dr. Henry Kissinger, had begun to implement the policy known as Vietnamization. According to the plans, we would train South Vietnamese soldiers to do the job for us, thus enabling American armed forces to return home. However, Vietnamization eventually proved to be a colossal failure.

“As a result of the declared policy, I was called in to speak with the company commander, a Jew, regarding the continuation of my military service. As he was speaking with me about the new studies and the problems I face as an observant Jew, he suddenly informed me that if I wanted to finish my army service and be released early, he could arrange that for me. I told him yes, as this was an offer that I simply could not refuse.

Yet, a new problem suddenly emerged. “When they told me the scheduled date of my discharge, September 16, I checked my Hebrew calendar and discovered that it fell on Rosh HaShana. I returned to my commander and told him that I am unwilling to be released on that day, and I also explained the reason why. He looked at me with shock and anger, but I was determined not to violate the sanctity of Rosh HaShana no matter what. In the end, the date of my discharge was moved up to September 4. When I arrived back at my mother’s home, I realized how intense the opposition to the war in Vietnam had been, to such an extent that it was dangerous to walk in the street wearing a uniform.”

Daniel’s stay in his mother’s house was very brief, as the month of Tishrei was rapidly approaching. A few days prior to the High

Holidays, he made his way to Crown Heights to spend Yomtov in the court of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. “I was privileged to be in the Rebbe’s Daled Amos for the entire month of Tishrei 5735. This was the year when 770 was expanded, and I merited to see the building both before and after the renovations. The tremendous abundance of all that is Jewish deeply moved me. In the army, I barely managed to eat two kosher slices of bread a day, whereas in Crown Heights, I found plenty of nourishing food – all kosher l’mehadrin. Another aspect to the visit that I had some difficulty absorbing was the quantity of information, customs, and modes of chassidic behavior.”

Daniel stayed in the king’s neighborhood until after the Pesach holiday. During those months, he entered the learning program of the Hadar Hatorah yeshiva for baalei t’shuva. “The most unforgettable moments from that six month period were specifically during the days of Chanukah – singing ‘*HaNeiros Hallelu*’, lighting the menorah, and the massive mitzva campaign activities. These were moments filled with majesty and splendor, and I was simply overcome with emotion. After Pesach, I decided to travel to Eretz Yisroel for the first time, and I enrolled at Yeshivas Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, headed by Rabbi Shneur Zalman Gafni. I studied there for three years, and each Tishrei I went back to Beis Chayeinu.

“In 5736, I was privileged to have my first yechidus with the Rebbe. I remember how I was trembling from all the excitement. I didn’t know what to ask, and I even found it difficult to open my mouth. Before entering the Rebbe’s room, I took a sheet of paper and wrote out a question regarding a proposed shidduch that had been

offered me, and I asked for a bracha for success in my continued studies. The Rebbe replied that I should return to Kfar Chabad and learn there for another year, and I thereby understood that the Rebbe didn’t want me to get involved with shidduchim yet. In hindsight, I realized that I simply wasn’t ready yet as I was still in the midst of building my spiritual and chassidic world. One year later, I returned to Minnesota, where I met my wife and we were married.”

During the first year of their marriage, R’ Daniel Roeber and his wife lived in Montreal, and afterwards they moved to Minnesota, where R’ Daniel worked over five years for a large houseware company owned by the Jewish United States Senator, Mr. Rudy Boschwitz. “While the decision to travel back to Minnesota was made largely due to my father-in-law’s illness, we eventually stayed there for about twelve years. After working for five years in Senator Boschwitz’s houseware company, I moved on to more Jewish work, and I served as a shochet and a kashrus supervisor in a dairy. Cows were my whole life. I have helped raise them from birth, supervised their milking, ritually slaughtered them, and now I deal with their hides,” R’ Daniel said with a laugh.

In 5749, the Roebers decided to emigrate to Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe’s bracha, which they received at the time, has stood by them to this very day. “We submitted a letter to the Rebbe with a request for a bracha, yet days and weeks passed and we did not merit to receive an answer. We had already sold our home and all its contents, and we were faced with a complicated dilemma. During one of our visits to Crown Heights, I asked Rabbi Binyomin Klein what was happening, and he suggested that I ask the Rebbe at

Sunday dollars. I followed his advice. When I passed by and presented my question before the Rebbe, the Rebbe smiled, gave me a dollar for a bracha, and replied: **‘It should be at a good and auspicious hour.’** As I left, I had a feeling of disappointment. I felt as if I had ‘squeezed’ the Rebbe for a bracha that I did not deserve. I went around with this feeling for several long days afterwards, until I felt that the Rebbe’s bracha to me quite simply was that I should not expect immediate success. Everything will happen, but it will take time.

“That’s exactly what happened. At every stage of my life, it took us some time to know how such things as how to build our home, and similarly in relation to the business. Everything took place, but not as quickly as I would have anticipated. We emigrated to Yerushalayim and purchased a home in the Ramot neighborhood. I worked for several years with Wagshall Book Publishers and afterwards with the Moznaim Printers in Mishor Adumim, until I opened our own business in Kfar Chabad.”

As a boy growing up in Kfar Chabad, I still remember Daniel Roeber’s small bindery located near the orchards, together with the Mauda family’s carpentry shop. The business then was very small and just starting to prosper with only a few machines and a limited output. Today, when we arrive at the large factory located in the vocational school, everything already appears different – bigger and more industrial. After having more or less reviewed his fascinating life story, we turned to him with our central question: **Where did all this start to materialize? Where did the connection between Roeber and leather-bound s’farim first take form?**

***“I served as a shochet and a kashrus supervisor in a dairy. Cows were my whole life. I have helped raise them from birth, supervised their milking, ritually slaughtered them, and now I deal with their hides,” R’ Daniel said with a laugh.***

In response, R’ Daniel gave the following reply: “Books have always aroused my curiosity and interest. In essence, it was s’farim that led me to my revelation of the path of Judaism. My great interest in bookbinding went into high gear when I was living in Minnesota. One day, I saw an advertisement in the local newspaper that a book craftsmanship center was opening in Minneapolis, where it would be possible to learn the art of printing and binding books. I registered for the program and started learning. I enjoy manual labor very much, and your readers are surely quite aware of the condition of the s’farim in their shuls. Thus, I found myself working on the restoration of s’farim through a new binding that would last much longer.

“After completing the course in Minnesota, I started bookbinding without much knowledge, and despite the many years that have passed since then, the s’farim have remained in preserved condition to this day. Even then, when I was making a living as a shochet and a kashrus supervisor, I dreamed of emigrating to Eretz Yisroel and making a parnasa occupied with holy articles, and that’s exactly what has happened. In Eretz Yisroel, I have been involved with holy s’farim, and I established the bindery several years later, which with G-d’s help, has achieved much success. Other prominent high

quality binderies often send us holy s’farim, despite the fact that it is quite expensive for them.”

Along his career path, Rabbi Roeber has seen that there is a market demand for leather-bound gifts, and he had begun to produce more and more leather-bound s’farim in a variety of colors and styles. “In the past, everything was in standard black and white, while things a bit more special were made in brown and white. I decided to make a breakthrough and bring all colors into play. Siddurim in orange, green, even pink, everything in a different and more modern style. When we introduced this to the market, people thought that I had gone crazy. However, after large quantities of these s’farim were purchased in New York, everyone was suddenly amazed how they had never thought of this before...”

Whenever R’ Daniel Roeber speaks about the shlichus he sees in his work, he always says the pasuk “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him”. In the past, only very unique books were meticulously designed and bound by trained craftsmen, whereas holy s’farim were usually bound in a standard fashion. Today, he says, we see how the entire world has been transformed into a vessel for holy endeavors.

# MOSHIACH: WHAT WE BELIEVE



Rabbi Gershon Avtzon, Rosh Yeshiva in Cincinnati

## PART 13 OF 20

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

In our previous articles, we discussed the transition of an individual from Chezkas Moshiach to Moshiach Vadai. We were left wondering:

### **CAN SOMEONE WHO IS CHEZKAS MOSHIACH LOSE THIS STATUS?**

The Rambam writes (Hilchos Melachim Chapter 11 Halacha 4): “If he - Chezkas Moshiach - is not successful or is killed, it is known that he is not the one that Torah had promised the Jewish people. He is like all other kings from the house of Dovid that have passed away. Why was he sent? As a test for Klal Yisroel.”

There are a few things that take away the Chezkas Moshiach:

1) “If he is not successful.” In order to have the Chezkas Moshiach, the Rambam maintains

that the individual must be active in compelling the Jewish people to do Torah and Mitzvos, and fight the wars of Hashem. (see previous articles for explanation of these qualifications)

Rambam is telling us that if this person is not successful in these projects, he loses the Chazaka. If his mission to educate the Jewish people or to fight assimilation or other threats to the Jews, then he is not Moshiach. He is a fine Jewish leader, but not Moshiach.

But how does one judge success? If a leader is followed by followers, that’s one degree. If he is followed by leaders, that’s a whole new level. Look at the world today. Every religious organization is doing “kiruv.”

The broad public has finally acknowledged our collective obligation to educate others. Outreach centers and online resources abound. And with 4000 Chabad Shluchim worldwide, there is barely a locale without access to Judaism. (See Sichos VaYeishev 5752).

The next consideration is how long we give the individual to prove his success in these matters?

According to commentaries, this is the physical lifetime of the individual, which brings us to the next criterion in the Rambam.

2) “If he is killed.” This does not include death by natural causes or fatal accidents, as will be explained in later articles. The Rambam speaks of being killed by the people he is trying to fight. Such an example is Bar Kochva, who was thought to be Moshiach until he was killed by the Romans.

If the individual’s enemies can vanquish him, it shows that he is not worthy of being Moshiach. Rambam writes clearly about Bar-Kochva (Hilchos Melachim 11:2) that Bar-Kochva was killed because of sins that he committed. At the beginning he was worthy of being Moshiach, but his success “went to his head” (see Midrashim for stories of Bar Kochva).

## PART 14 OF 20

At this point two related questions need to be addressed:

1) If someone that has Chezkas Moshiach disappears for a while, does that ruin his chazaka?  
2) If someone that has Chezkas



Moshiach dies a natural death, does that ruin his Chazaka?

On to the first of these questions: IS THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL A SIGN THAT HE IS NOT MOSHIACH? The answer to this is an unequivocal NO! Furthermore, according to our sages (see Rashi Daniel 12:12, Midrash Naso 11:2, Midrash Rus 5:6, Rabbeinu Bechaye Parshas VaYechi pg. 44) it is a prerequisite for Moshiach to be concealed before his final revelation.

To summarize: There will be three stages in the arrival of Moshiach. 1) His initial revelation to the Jewish people. 2) His concealment 3) His final revelation.

We see the same principle in action during our first redemption - Yetzias Mitzrayim. After many years of slavery, Moshe makes his initial arrival and proclaims - through the code-words of "Pokod Pakaditi Es'chem" - that the time of Geula has arrived. He encourages the

Yidden to be prepared to leave Egypt. Moshe then disappears for a while - see end of Parshas Shmos and beginning of VaEira - and then makes his final return to take the Yidden out of Galus.

What is the point of this "disappearing act"?

The Chasam Sofer (on Shmos) explains that this is a test for Klal Yisroel. It is a very difficult trial; a test of faith. Hashem is looking to see if Klal Yisroel will lose their emuna or whether they will hold on to it. If the Jewish people keep their faith, this shows that they are worthy of redemption.

The test is two-fold. Firstly, the very fact that the long-awaited Moshiach disappears is hard enough. In addition, it will seem like exile only intensifies after Moshiach first proclaims that Geula is near. Right after Moshe's announcement, Pharaoh made it harder for the Jewish people. While—previously he would supply the straw, he changed his policy

and made the Jewish slaves collect straw themselves without lessening their quota.

[It is interesting to see how this plays itself out right in front of our eyes. On Shabbos Shoftim, 5751, the Rebbe announced his prophecy that Moshiach is ready to come. The very next week there were riots in Crown Heights!]

It is indeed a very difficult test, but it is our final one. The Jewish people must believe the words told to them by the Moshiach Hashem and hold strong in their Emuna. This itself helps bring about the final revelation of Moshiach. As our sages say, the darkest hour is just before dawn.

In our next article we will explain: If someone who is B'Chezkas Moshiach dies a natural death, is he disqualified from being Moshiach?

Rabbi Avtzon's audio shiurim are available at [www.ylcrecording.com](http://www.ylcrecording.com)

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# PRAISING HELPS, BUT WHOM?

By Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd

*The very act of praying tones down self-centeredness, which melts away negative feelings and the bad health they create, making way for forgiveness and better health in body, mind and spirit.*

**The mitzva to love a fellow Jew is the entry-gate through which man can pass to stand before G-d to pray.**

--The Rebbe, HaYom Yom, for 2 Tamuz.

One single prayer can heal a relationship, according to a new study released by Florida State University.

At least ninety per cent of Americans pray every day[1], asking and thanking their Maker for blessings of health, wealth and peace of mind. But what would happen, asked Psychologist Nathaniel Lambert of Florida State University, if we focused our prayers on the people that make us mad?

Experimental subjects were asked to pray just once for the

welfare of their spouse or partner, someone they feel hostility towards at least part of the time. The results were dramatic. That one prayer was normally enough to take away vengeful thoughts and emotions, create forgiveness and get rocky relationships back on track.[2]

In a follow-up study, people were asked to pray for one friend, once a day for a month. By the end of that period, the one praying became less self-centered and more forgiving overall. This is a remarkable discovery, but it was already written about 200 years ago in the Tanya, the foundational text of chassidic thought. It explains[3] how pity cancels hatred thereby creating love.

Above and beyond the character enhancements and social benefits,

the forgiveness factor associated with prayer has plenty of health perks of its own. Mayo Clinic researchers have determined that bearing a grudge appears to affect the cardiovascular and nervous systems. In one study, people who focused on a personal grudge had elevated blood pressure and heart rates, as well as increased muscle tension and feelings of being less in control. When asked to imagine forgiving the person who had hurt them, the participants said they felt more positive and relaxed and thus, the changes dissipated.[4]

But how can we learn to let go of our feelings of indignation over some nasty remark or those socks on the floor for the umpteenth time? After all, is it really that easy to exercise prayer and forgiveness for that inconsiderate jerk who thinks s/he runs your life? The answer, in Chassidic terms, is to exercise your mind along the lines of downplaying material concerns so you can accentuate spiritual values in your life. The Tanya[3] explains how to achieve this too.

This doctrine is corroborated by brain research as well. The part of the brain responsible for bodily awareness and self-care is the right parietal lobe. Prayer causes a decrease in brain activity there, and the flip side of this fact is that people with damage to this part of the brain are much more spiritually attuned.[5]

The Tanya, written centuries ago, advises that if you want to be a kinder and more loving person, the first step is back off from your materialistic and self-centered perspective. That makes it easier to take the next step and do something nice for your friend (or enemy), like pray for him or her. On the other hand, if you are having trouble becoming less selfish and materialistic, you can take a behaviorist approach and start with a good deed. The very act of

praying tones down self-centeredness, which melts away negative feelings and the bad health they create, making way for forgiveness and better health in body, mind and spirit.

And lest we forget the purpose of our prayer, that person that we are praying for - s/he is benefiting too! A thorough meta-analysis of 17 intercessory prayer studies shows that on the whole, prayer offered on behalf of another yields positive results.[6]

This convergence of modern medicine and psychology on the one hand and the timeless teachings of Torah and chassidus on the other, is one more sign that Moshiach is coming very soon, and who knows - if we pray just once

more for that, we might generate a lot more good than we bargained for.

#### NOTES:

[1] <http://washingtontimes.com/news/2008/dec/05/study-americans-pray-just-to-get-through-the-day/>

[2] <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/01/100127134607.htm>

[3] [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/7911/jewish/Chapter-32.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/7911/jewish/Chapter-32.htm)

[4] <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/01/080104122807.htm>

[5] <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/12/081217124156.htm>

[6] <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/03/070314195638.htm>

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*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](mailto: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.*

[Continued from pg. 42]

the mood and whether the parents are happy to welcome guests, or glad to see them leave.

## YESOD

Just as tiferes is the middle midda of the emotions, yesod is the middle path of implementation of those emotions.

How many of you have ever heard a recording of yourself? A person's initial reaction upon hearing himself is, "that's not me! I sound awful!" We don't realize how we sound when we speak. Why is that? Aside from the physiological reason, the person listening to us hears things as they are stated, while we identify with the emotions being expressed and not with the words being uttered. The first time we hear the words we say, we don't even recognize the voice of the person who said them.

Yesod means to *be* the other person, not just to speak but to listen to what you are saying. To

communicate with children and speak about their world, to explain things in terms they can understand and relate to. The Alter Rebbe writes in Igeres HaKodesh that yesod is communication.

Chinuch with yesod is being able to communicate, to relate to the world of a child. Not just, "What did you learn today" or "How was your day in school?" Then the parent is viewed as dispassionate, as a judge. Chinuch means to farbreng with your child, to ask him what he likes, what he wants, to do and discuss things together.

The child needs to feel that his parent is someone he can schmooze with as a friend and advisor and not just as a judge (along the lines of the sicha of Shoftim 5751).

## MALCHUS

In Chassidus it explains that a genuine king does not want or need to be a king; he does it only for the sake of the people.

In a footnote to the sicha of 28

Sivan, 5751, the Rebbe says that every man, woman and child in our generation is the s'fira of malchus. I heard from R' Leibel Groner that Rabbi Yolles told him, "I asked the Rebbe why he writes so briefly but speaks at length. Shouldn't it be the other way around?"

The Rebbe did not answer and R' Yolles suggested, "Perhaps it's because the Rebbe is the aspect of malchus and since 'malchus is the mouth,' speech, therefore the Rebbe speaks more than he writes." The Rebbe responded, "You're right."

That's the inyan of a Rebbe. As the Rebbetzin said in the court case about the s'farim, "The s'farim belong to the Chassidim because Father belonged to the Chassidim."

Chinuch with malchus is when the parents or educators think and feel about what the child needs. Not what nachas I want from him, and not seeking the good feeling that the child gives us, but that he should use the abilities and talents that Hashem granted him, and live a truly fulfilled life.



# SHLUCHIM: HOW BITTUL BRINGS BRACHA

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz  
Shliach, Beit Shaan

## WHAT WOULD THE REBBE WANT?

Rabbi Binyamin Karniel, shliach to Gedera, was on his way to see the owner of a big business in order to bring him mezuzos that he had ordered and to put them up. He parked the car and debated whether to take his t'fillin with him or not. On the one hand, t'fillin weren't appropriate now. The man was a busy person and he was taking enough time out of his schedule for these mezuzos. On the other hand, why not? In any case he would be involved in doing a mitzva...

He deliberated for a few seconds. Logic (of the animal soul) nearly convinced him not to take the t'fillin, but at the last moment he asked himself: 'What would the Rebbe want me to do now?' And he immediately decided to take the t'fillin.

The man welcomed him warmly and showed him the cookies and drinks that he had prepared in honor of putting up the mezuzos.

He asked whether he could call his employees for the mezuzah ceremony. R' Karniel asked, "Maybe you'd like to put t'fillin on in the meantime?"

"Why not?" the man replied good-naturedly, and he put on the t'fillin.

The man was so enthused to see how he looked in the t'fillin that he called the engineer to come and see something nice and interesting. The engineer walked into his office, took a good look and said, "It suits you."

R' Karniel took advantage of the momentum and said to the engineer, "Maybe it suits you too?" The engineer laughed uncomfortably but stated, "It doesn't suit me and there's no chance in the world that I will put them on."

"Why isn't there a chance?" asked R' Karniel.

The engineer said he grew up in Russia and had never put on t'fillin. R' Karniel was excited about the

opportunity of saving a Jew from the status of "*karkafta d'lo monach t'fillin*" (a skull that never wore t'fillin - in Gedera, the Chabad house custom is whoever puts t'fillin on a karkafta makes a Kiddush in shul on Shabbos). He said, "Listen, we are going to make you a bar mitzva right now!" With another few words of persuasion the man was convinced.

Other employees gathered round and R' Karniel explained to all of them that the cookies and drinks were not only in honor of the mezuzos that would be put up, but in honor of the engineer's bar mitzva. They all applauded and R' Karniel was glad that he had "listened to the Rebbe" and brought along his t'fillin.

## HE INVITED THE EGG-THROWERS FOR SHABBOS

There is a shliach who might be upset that I'm writing about him because he is, by nature and after years of avoda, a real baal-bittul. This is R' Menachem Tal, who has been on shlichus in Ein Ayala for twenty years.

On his first Shabbos there, some troublemaking kids who didn't like the idea of a religious person on the yishuv, threw eggs through the window of his home while the family ate the Friday night meal. R' Tal didn't get upset. He left the house and called out to the kids who were hiding in the bushes, "Come! Who wants to join us for a Shabbos meal?"

How they reacted was hard to know because the boys were hidden by the bushes and the darkness, but the following Shabbos they joined him for seuda.

## THE BITE THAT LED TO THE MEZUZA

That's R' Tal; he turns every

problem into a yeshua. A few years ago, while preparing for Lag B'Omer, a dog belonging to one of the neighbors bit him. He was immediately inundated with advice. When someone suggested he could demand a lot of money from the dog's owner, R' Tal replied, "I didn't come here for money but for shlichus."

Later on, the family that owned the dog asked him how they could compensate him for the unfortunate incident. He told them he didn't need compensation but since they were asking, he had noticed that a mezuzah was lacking at the entrance to their house. He wanted, if they were willing, to bring them a mezuzah.

R' Tal continues his work modestly, humbly, and with great success. No longer do they throw eggs - on the contrary, everybody in the area knows and admires him, and are happy to assist him.

In the first Shabbasos they had to look around to see whether there was a minyan for Maariv, while today, boruch Hashem, there is a regular minyan. There is even an individual who shows up every Shabbos to make sure there is a minyan. If there is, he goes home. If not, he stays.

A new girl showed up at one of the children's clubs at the Chabad house but after several weeks of involvement, she stopped showing up. After a few weeks, she began attending again. When Mrs. Tal asked where she had been, the girl said that her parents (mainly her father) were angry about all the p'sukim and songs she was bringing home and they forbade her to attend.

"So why did you come back?" asked Mrs. Tal.

"Today I went to visit my grandfather and I hid my bicycle behind the shed and came here."

On Erev Pesach, while R' Tal was burning his chametz, the girl's

***The girl's father met him and began yelling at him, "You are missionaries! You are inciting my daughter against me!" The rabbi gently explained that nobody was obligated to attend, that he loved Jews etc. The man suddenly smiled and said, "I just wanted to see how you would react..."***

father met him and began yelling at him. "You are missionaries! You are inciting my daughter against me!"

The rabbi gently explained that nobody was obligated to attend, that he loved Jews etc. The man suddenly smiled and said, "I just wanted to see how you would react. Now I'm not angry at you. My daughter can continue attending your program."

Their relationship improved and now he is a regular donor of hundreds of pounds of fruits and vegetables for the needy that are helped through the Chabad house.

### **THANKS TO A DELAY AND TAKING THE TIME TO LISTEN**

I heard this story from a shliach in Kiryat Arba, Rabbi Victor Ettia. Before Lag B'Omer, he went to a meeting with a friend in Tel Aviv for the purpose of getting him to donate some items for the parade. Due to an error in how he wrote the address into the GPS, he was half an hour late for the meeting. As he drove, he listened to a tape with a lecture on hashgacha pratis. He thought, "I wonder what benefit will come out of showing up late to an important meeting."

He got out of his car and a man covered in tattoos came over to him. R' Ettia was sure the man was

going to ask for money for drugs but he was willing to hear him out. The man introduced himself as a resident of the neighborhood, a poor man from southern Tel Aviv. He said he did not know how to read and write and he was unable to make it through the month and was always having trouble providing for his wife and children. R' Ettia's original assessment seemed borne out but he continued to listen patiently and sympathetically.

The man asked where he could buy fine t'fillin. He said that lately he was getting more involved in religious observance and he yearned to buy a pair of t'fillin. He had seen that across the way there was a lotto stand where you could scratch a card and win 2500 shekels. If he won, he could buy t'fillin. That morning he had stood on line and prayed that if Hashem let him win an amount that enabled him to buy t'fillin, he would buy them.

"When I scratched my card, I won 2500 shekels! Now, when I need to know how to go about buying t'fillin, I see you getting out of your car!"

R' Ettia connected him with R' Avrohom Kadosh, who sells t'fillin in Kfar Chabad, and they agreed on a price. The man told R' Ettia that he was calling a cab to go to Kfar Chabad.

R' Ettia proceeded to his

appointment and just as he returned to his car, he saw a taxi drive up with the happy man holding a velvet bag with his new t'fillin. The man told him that R' Kadosh had showed him how to put them on and had even promised to make a CD for him with the Shma so he could say it while wearing the t'fillin.

## THANKS TO BITTUL THE NIGHT OF BEDIKAS CHAMETZ

This is a story that Rabbi Sholom Ber Hendel, rosh yeshivas Chabad in Ohr Yehuda, told about his uncle, the shliach in S. Monica, Rabbi Avrohom Levitansky a"h. Last Pesach, Mrs. Levitansky spent Pesach with her brother, Rabbi Shneur Zalman Hendel in Tzfas. One day, they met a religious person in Tzfas and the minute the man heard that she was the widow of R' Levitansky, he told them that he became a baal t'shuva thanks to one night at R' Levitansky's house.

He had met R' Levitansky years before, a few days before Pesach. He invited him to the seider but he was already invited somewhere else, so R' Levitansky invited him to attend another Jewish ceremony, the night of Bedikas Chametz.

The man showed up at the designated time and he saw, for the first time in his life, how the rabbi wrapped ten pieces of chametz and the family hid them. Then he saw the rabbi recite the bracha "al biur chametz" and go around with a lit candle, searching the house for chametz.

To the man's amazement, the rabbi went "nuts" when he couldn't find one of the ten pieces and he enlisted the whole family to help him find it. "The rabbi was completely focused on this one little piece of bread. He was oblivious to the guest and all the preparations for Pesach. He opened s'farim and called rabbanim and the only thing

that interested him was what to do with a piece of chametz, less than a k'zayis, which had disappeared.

"When I saw this, I realized that Judaism is something serious, much more than I thought until then, and I felt I had to devote myself to learning more about it."

He went to yeshiva, became frum, and raised a Chassidische family – all thanks to the kabbalas ol of a shliach in S. Monica, California.

## IT'S ONLY BECAUSE I'M A SHLIACH

Rabbi Mordechai Bistritzky, rav of the Chabad community in Tzfas, told me about his father, Rabbi Levi Bistritzky a"h, who was a shliach and rav in Tzfas for many years.

"My father did not have an easy life. People persecuted him and his life was even in danger. Through it all, there was a line we heard from him again and again, 'It's only thanks to shlichus of the Rebbe that I have the strength to continue in this position, despite the hardships and persecutors. If I wasn't a shliach of the Rebbe, I don't know how I would be able to last in this position.'"

My father would say that from time to time he would think about the great privilege of being a shliach of the Rebbe and how it gave him the strength not to cave in and break from those who interfered and threatened him.

## HOW SHLUCHIM DEAL WITH A TRAGEDY

R' Aharon Shiffman, shliach to the yishuvim Parod and Shefer near Tzfas, spoke about his late wife, Libby a"h, and her part in their joint shlichus. They are little stories about a great woman and about the kocho she bequeathed to her children and her husband to continue with the shlichus despite

their loss.

The Shiffmans live in Tzfas near Kiryat Chabad. In addition to his shlichus, R' Shiffman is also a melamed in the local Talmud Torah as well as an active gabbai in the shul. Whoever enters his home immediately feels that this is a house of shluchim. It's not only before Purim, when the house is full of mishloach manos for mekuravim, or before Lag B'Omer, when the family is busy preparing signs, hats, prizes and flyers, but throughout the year their house is a house of shlichus and Geula. There are tambourines hanging in readiness for the Geula. Some of them were made by Mrs. Shiffman and she put them in the babies' cribs. Others were made and decorated by her daughters.

Not surprisingly then, when their mother suddenly took ill and passed away, it was the girls who were strongest in their emuna and in accepting yisurim with love and simcha in a way that astounded whoever went to console the family or to offer support in the days preceding her tragic death. Two days before her passing, when all the doctors said that according to natural means there was no chance she would survive, the girls made calls to all their non-Chabad cousins and begged them to light Shabbos candles with a bracha.

One of the uncles, a Sanzer Chassid, agreed to have his daughters light even though it is not his custom. During those two days that she was hospitalized in the ICU in Rambam hospital in Haifa, the Admur of Seret-Vizhnitz was hospitalized there too. He was there with some of his Chassidim and aides. Late at night a conversation ensued between one of the Rebbe's aides and R' Shiffman. The aide said he was flabbergasted by the emuna of his daughters. He had heard them talking on the phone with their nieces and begging them



to light candles as a z'chus for their mother. "If I hadn't heard it with my own ears, I would not have believed how such young girls could be so permeated with such emuna in the miracles of Hashem and in the importance of mitzvos and the ways of Chassidus."

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BRING MOSHIACH?

When word of the tragedy came, the psychologist advised that it would be best if the father broke the news to the six year old. The father told her that her mother had gone to bring Moshiach. The child immediately understood and accepted that. When two weeks had gone by, she asked her older sister, "How long does it take to bring Moshiach?"

## "AND THE LIVING SHALL TAKE IT TO HEART"

After the Shiva, it was the girls who encouraged their father to return to working at kibbutz Parod and moshav Shefer, to give shiurim and resume his other activities. The first shiur was attended by many more people than usual in an expression of appreciation to him that despite his mourning and the additional burden of being the sole parent, he did not miss a shiur or activity in his place of shlichus.

R' Shiffman walked into the shul in Parod and was surprised to see a sign still hanging there about his wife's passing. The people explained to him that they couldn't take down the sign because they felt that she was part of the family.

R' Shiffman dedicated his shiur l'ilui nishmas his wife and explained the idea of "and the living shall take it to heart," that everyone has to

increase in Torah and mitzvos in her memory, and to learn from her good deeds. One of the participants, who owns a hotel, exclaimed that at first he thought he had to encourage the rabbi but when he listened to the shiur he himself was encouraged. He expressed his astonishment over the fortitude of the shliach who had just buried his wife two weeks before. The shliach wasn't talking about the difficulties or about his sorrow, but was thinking about all of them, his mushpaim, and what they needed.

## SHE ENCOURAGED HER HUSBAND

For the Shloshim of Mrs. Shiffman, the women of Tzfas held a large gathering and published a booklet in her memory. In it is a letter written by three girls who learn in Tzfas, the daughters of shluchim in Rosh Pina, Teveria, and Metulla, who were adopted by Mrs. Shiffman during their stay in Tzfas. They said that she always encouraged her husband not to miss a shiur or program. Even in difficult times or when they were bogged down in work at home and she could really use his help, she always told him that the Rebbe's mitzvaim come first. "You go and I'll manage..."

Having been raised in this atmosphere, it is no wonder that the daughters encourage their father to return to his activities. The girls said that on every special day they anticipate their mother's return, and speak about it constantly.

## TAKING STRENGTH FROM "L'HASKILCHA BINA"

Rabbi Shimon Rosenberg, shliach in Afula, attended that

gathering. He experienced his own tragedy when his daughter and her husband, the Holtzbergs, were murdered in their Chabad house in Bombay. R' Rosenberg is a role model of a Chassid and shliach who knows how to transform his personal tragedy into an impetus for hafatza. He has built a 770 building in Afula and delivered hundreds of moving talks about emuna and anticipation of the Geula. He was even asked to speak at the memorial for IDF fallen soldiers and victims of terror before heads of state and millions of viewers. All who heard him left strengthened and amazed by his emuna and how he continues to be so strong in the Rebbe's shlichus.

R' Rosenberg told the women of Tzfas that he derived strength from studying the letter in Igeres HaKodesh, *l'haskilcha bina* where the Alter Rebbe explains that no evil descends from Above and everything is good. He said he learns this letter every day and if he forgets one day he feels the anguish build up in his heart and he rushes to learn it again. It keeps him going.

The Shiffman children also receive strength from the Rebbe and every day they sit with their father and read the Rebbe's letters of consolation from the book *Menachem Tziyon*.

The Rebbe writes that the true consolation is in doing tz'daka and chesed l'ilui ha'neshama. The children accept and implement it. R' Shiffman's young students also try to increase in chesed and tz'daka.

May we immediately have the Geula, at which time the prophecy of "death will be destroyed forever" will be fulfilled and all the dead will arise.

# IT'S NOT A SCRIBBLE; IT'S A PIDYON NEFESH!

By Rabbi Yossi Jacobson

*Seven paths of chinuch that correspond to the seven middos. \* From a speech given at a Yom Iyun organized by Aguch in Kiryat Chabad in Tzfas, Av 5764, on the topic of "Parents as Mechanchim."*

## CHESED

The foundation of chinuch is the midda of chesed and love. Parents and educators need to openly express their love to each child, especially in this weak generation.

At the last Kinus HaShluchim (5764), R' Sholom Moshe Paltiel told over the following in the name of R' Shmuel Gurevitch, shliach in France:

There was a young man who became interested in Judaism and Chassidus in yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim in Brunoy. When he had yechidus, he said to the Rebbe that he had one problem with Chabad - the esteem and love of the Chassidim to the Rebbe seemed too

extreme and unhealthy.

The Rebbe answered him in French, "It's simple. I love them deeply and they reciprocate that love."

A father needs to hug his child and give him the sense that he feels blessed to have him, and thanks Hashem for the very fact that He gave him a child who brings such joy to his life.

On the verse, "kissing me with the kisses of his mouth," Rashi says that the bride, the Jewish people, asks Hashem to be revealed with the "kisses of his mouth," and not kisses on the hand. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev in his *K'dushas Levi* explains that the

hands are what we use to give things to others. A kiss on the hands is like saying, "I love you because I get nachas, joy and pleasure from you." Kisses of the mouth are not because I get anything from you, but because I love your very being and soul.

Parents and teachers need to give children this special feeling. It has the ability to light up their entire futures.

## G'VURA

Some mistakenly think that g'vura is about punishments and rigidity. It's true that these stem from the midda of g'vura, but Chassidus explains that the midda of g'vura itself is an avoda that is deeper than chesed.

Chinuch with g'vura doesn't mean that you tell a child, "I'm not in the mood for you; I had a bad day," or "if you don't listen then go to your room for an hour and a half." Real g'vura of k'dusha is a revelation of a deeper chesed and, as the Rebbe explained in 5734, is derived from p'nimius ha'chesed.

A practical example: The children need to go to sleep at seven o'clock. At 9:30 the child comes out of bed (in some homes, the children "observe" Tikkun Chatzos...) and with some trepidation walks slowly into the kitchen. His parents hug him and give him cake and ice cream. He continues to wander around until two in the morning and then falls asleep on the floor.

The doting parents couldn't help showing him their love but they weren't thinking about his welfare. The next day he will be tired and cranky in school because he didn't get enough sleep.

What does the midda of g'vura require of us? It requires us to overcome our external midda of love even when it's hard to do so. The welfare of the child requires us

to give him a kiss and explain kindly but firmly, “In order for you to be able to learn and play tomorrow, you must go to bed now.” The child might cry for a while, but this will enable him to have a good day.

A child’s life is more complicated than we think and we need to give him the tools to live with structure and discipline.

A Jewish psychologist who works in a religious neighborhood complained to me about the eating and sleeping habits in some homes, about the neglect and lack of discipline.

Chinuch requires discipline and order in eating, hygiene and sleep. It says in the tractate Taanis that the foundation of chinuch is order. A child must have order in his life, and this is accomplished with the midda of g’vura.

To summarize: A house without chesed is not a healthy place, but a house without g’vura can be a jungle. Both middos are needed to create a stable environment for a child to grow, with chesed dominating g’vura, right over left.

## TIFERES

What chesed and g’vura have in common is that the giver and recipient are two different people. With chesed, the giver feels love. With g’vura he is judging what is good for the recipient. Both leave leeway for undesirable outcomes, like Yishmoel and Eisav. We understand that there is a negative repercussion of chesed as in the example of the indulged child mentioned earlier, and a negative repercussion of g’vura is cruelty.

Tiferes in chinuch is when you experience the individual personality of the child as he or she is.

I heard from Rabbi Serybranski, shliach in Australia, that he was once writing a letter to the Rebbe



Rabbi Yossi Jacobson

***Chinuch with g’vura doesn’t mean that you tell a child, “I’m not in the mood for you; I had a bad day,” or “if you don’t listen then go to your room for an hour and a half.” Real g’vura of k’dusha is a revelation of a deeper chesed.***

and when his two year old saw this, he asked for a paper so he could also write to the Rebbe. The child scribbled on the paper, as two years olds do, and gave it to his father saying it was his letter. After some hesitation, his father sent his son’s scribbling to the Rebbe along with his own letter.

A few weeks later, a special letter from the Rebbe arrived at his home for his son. I saw this letter, which says, “The *pidyon nefesh* was received and will be read, G-d willing, at the gravesite ...”

Do you know what a Nasi Yisroel is? When everybody else would see a scribble, the Rebbe saw a *pidyon nefesh*. Where others

would see a game, the Rebbe saw the expression of a Jewish soul.

This is an example of tiferes in chinuch, of getting into the inner world of the child, identifying with him, and then being able to help him. What seems like scribbling to us can be very significant to a child.

Sometimes a child does not listen to anything. In the morning everybody gets up and dressed and is ready to go, but this child doesn’t want this shirt and those shoes. He’s a child you argue with every day. In chinuch according to the midda of chesed, you love him a lot despite his daily orneriness. In a chinuch according to g’vura you would educate him, punishing him



until he learns his lesson.

These two approaches have merit but they lack the beauty and completeness of tiferes, which is to *understand* the child. Perhaps the child doesn't want to make trouble but he has fears and challenges you are unaware of. He needs someone to understand him and help him.

It's not a scribble; it's a pidyon nefesh.

## NETZACH

The midda of netzach is to be unfazed by obstacles, to fight them and win. In chinuch there are impediments that interfere with what we are trying to accomplish, which is where the midda of netzach comes in. There is an additional point here, in that sometimes a child needs to see how his parents fight on his behalf.

In 5747, a rosh yeshiva in B'nei Brak said negative things about Chabad Chassidim regarding their observance of Family Purity. I was a young bachur at the time and I remember that at the farbrengen on Parshas B'Shalach, the Rebbe referred to it at the end of one of the sichos and said, "The verse says, 'Select people and go and wage war on Amalek' – Moshe Rabbeinu told Yehoshua that they needed to leave the cloud in order to fight because within the clouds they were protected by Hashem. Chabad Chassidim should know that they are within the clouds and the Rebbe, my father-in-law, Nasi Doreinu, protects them. Don't be impressed by the attack and the mockers and continue spreading the wellsprings."

The awareness that the Rebbe was fighting on behalf of his Chassidim was a great and powerful feeling.

In the early years, the Rebbe often wrote to askanei Chabad in Eretz Yisroel about their quarrelling and how it pained him. Yet, in

letters to other people, the Rebbe defended them. The Rebbe showed his children – I am fighting for you.

A child feels wonderful when his father takes a stand on his behalf. Naturally, I am not talking about tough parents who threaten the principal or teacher. That is destructive netzach. Rather I am referring to netzach according to Musar and Chassidus.

## HOD

In the maamarim of the Rebbe Rashab, he explains that hod is devotion and an inner stubbornness. In avoda this translates to internalizing the proper values and doing what needs to be done. It's not the energy needed to overcome the opposition but the consistency of staying on the right path by strengthening oneself from within.

Chinuch with hod is when the child sees that the parents have values, consistency, constancy, and order.

In its introduction, the Ein Yaakov discusses the dispute of the Tannaim about which verse expresses the greatest principle of the Torah. According to Rabbi Akiva (or Ben Nanes) it was "*V'ahavta*" - You shall love your fellow as yourself. Ben Azzai believed it was "*Zeh seifer toldos adam b'yom bara Elokim adam b'dmus Elokim asah oso*" - This is the book of the chronicles of man; on the day that G-d created man He created him in the image of G-d. According to Ben Zoma it was "*Shma Yisroel*," and according to Shimon ben Pazi it was "*Es ha'keves echad ta'aseh ba'boker, v'es ha'keves ha'sheni ta'aseh bein ha'arbayim*" - One sheep you shall offer in the morning, and the second sheep in the afternoon. One of the rabbis got up and said, "The halacha is like Ben Azzai!"

The Maharal, in his *Nesivos*

*Olam*, explains that Shma Yisroel was a philosophical bombshell about the unity of G-d. V'ahavta was a social bombshell. Creating man in His image, human dignity, was a moral bombshell. All of them express values that are derived from Judaism that changed the world. But Judaism goes way beyond that. In Ben Pazi's view, the verse that ultimately defines what it means to be a Jew is the one that speaks of unwavering consistency, "One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon." Every single morning and every single afternoon you make a sacrifice for your Creator. Judaism is not only about a moving Yom Kippur experience. It is a something the Jew lives every moment of his life. It is the awareness that I am a servant of Hashem every day, every moment.

That is chinuch of hod. Children have to see us with consistent values. A mother told me that she went on a bus with her daughter, back in the 60's when a child rode free until age 7. A week after her daughter's seventh birthday the driver asked the girl how old she was. The mother said she was six and the girl said, "Last week I had a birthday and I'm seven!"

Her instinctive response was to punish her daughter for embarrassing her in public, but later she regretted it. Why? Because her daughter had learned from her that it's okay to lie.

I once called someone's house and asked whether the father was in. The child answered, "My father told me to say he's not home."

Chinuch has to be based on authentic values. You can't fool kids. A child knows if his father values Torah study or not. A child knows whether his father fulfills Chazal's injunction to "honor his wife more than himself." He senses

[Continued on pg. 35]