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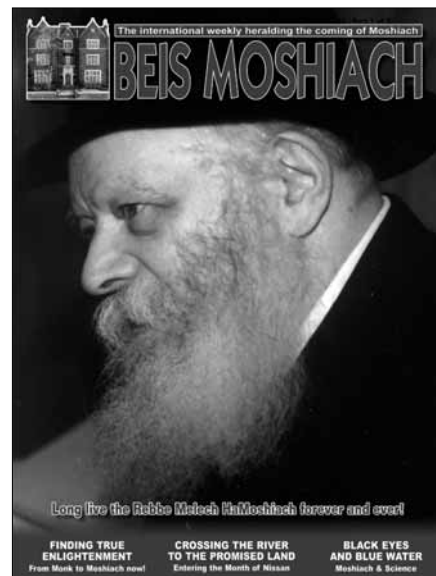
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THE PRECIOUS JEW

Sichos In English

WITHIN THE MANY - ONE

Even a brief look at the different members of our people reveals a wide range of heterogeneity, for there is hardly a country or a setting in which Jews do not live.

The scope of this picture becomes even broader when the history of our people and all their different wanderings are taken into consideration.

The Jews have featured prominently in almost every major civilization throughout the world, and in doing so, they have adapted themselves to the contexts of these different environments.

It is not merely the settings in which our people live that are different, the nature of the individuals themselves vary greatly.

Our Sages comment [1] that just as the faces of no two people are alike, so too, their thought processes differ.

This variety does not, however, obscure the fundamental point of oneness that permeates every member of our people, in every country, and in every age.

Every Jew - man, woman, and child - has a soul that is "an actual part of G-d," [2] and this fundamental G-dly quality permeates every dimension of his being, even his body.

Of this people, G-d says, [3] "I created this nation for Myself, they will recite My praise."

Every Jew is a heir to the entire spiritual heritage of our people.

There is a golden chain extending through the generations, reaching

back to our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and our Matriarches Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah.

Every Jew in the present generation is a representative of the entire collective of our people as they have existed throughout the course of history. As such, G-d cherishes every Jew as a father holds dear an only son. [4]

CLOSENESS WITH G-D

The unique love which G-d shows the Jewish people is reflected in the beginning of our Torah reading which states: [5] "And He [6] called to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him."

Before G-d spoke to Moshe, He called to him, showing him a unique measure of endearment. [7]

G-d did not call Moshe to impart information; on the contrary, He called to him to express the fundamental bond of love He shares with our people. (For although it was Moshe alone who was called, this call was addressed to him, not as an individual, but as the leader of our people.) [8]

The inner G-dly nature which we possess is not a passive potential.

On the contrary, it seeks to express itself.

This is reflected by the subject of the Torah reading, the sacrificial offerings.

The Hebrew word for sacrifice, korban, shares a common root with the word karov, meaning "close."

The sacrifices bring the Jews' spiritual potential to the surface, [9] bringing our people and each

individual close to G-d. [10]

LOVING OUTREACH

The above concepts are not merely abstract truths; they are of fundamental relevance with regard to the manner with which we relate to our fellow Jews, even those whose conduct (at present) is estranged from our Torah heritage. [11]

First and foremost, we must appreciate who the other person truly is. When speaking to a Jew, we must be aware that we are speaking to a person whose soul is "an actual part of G-d."

There is no need to focus on the negative dimensions of the other person's conduct.

Instead, one should highlight his inner potential, making the other person conscious of the G-dly spark within his own being.

We must emulate the example provided for us by our Torah reading, showing our fellow man a special degree of closeness, and inviting him to involve himself in activities that encourage the expression of his G-dly core.

We should pursue this approach with confidence, for it speaks to the very essence of our fellow man.

"No Jew can - or desires to - separate himself from G-d."

When he is invited to affirm his Jewish heritage with warmth and openness, he will respond, proceeding at his own pace to "come close to G-d."

Since he is part of the nation "created for Myself," it is inevitable that he will ultimately "relate My

praise,” follow the path of the Torah and its mitzvos and by doing so bring praise to G-d’s name.

SEEK THE SILVER LINING

There is a natural tendency to be impatient, to urge a person to reach the ultimate goal - the complete observance of the Torah and its mitzvos - as soon as possible, and perhaps to criticize him, if he delays making progress.

This is an improper approach.

When Yeshayahu the prophet made harsh statements about the Jewish people, although they were justified, G-d rebuked him severely. [12]

Instead, we must endeavor to appreciate - and always accentuate - the positive quality which every member of our people possesses. For indeed, independent of any Divine service which a Jew performs, the very fact of his existence is an expression of G-d’s praise.

In the present generation, every Jew regardless of his identification with his Judaism is a living miracle who expresses the praise of G-d.

Despite the fact that the Jews are “one lamb among seventy wolves” [13] and have faced the most severe forms of persecution, they have endured throughout the course of history, while nations far greater and more powerful have disappeared.

This clearly shows that G-d has invested a dimension of eternity within the Jews. Their continued existence, as a nation and as individuals, openly expresses Divine Providence.

In particular, this applies in the present era, barely a generation after the awesome Holocaust which threatened to utterly annihilate our people.

The fact that our people were able to endure that terrible era and give birth to a new generation (regardless of their spiritual level) reveals the

working of G-d’s hand within our world. [14]

THE ULTIMATE PRAISE

The G-dly potential present in every Jew and within our people as a whole will not remain dormant. And its blossoming will lead to the age when the G-dliness latent in the world at large will become manifest, the Era of the Redemption.

At that time, the Jewish people will “relate [G-d’s] praise” in a complete manner, showing their gratitude for the miracles He performs on their behalf. [15]

Herein we see a connection to the month of Nissan, the month during which Parshas VaYikra in most years.

Our Sages associate Nissan with miracles of a wondrous nature. [16]

And Nissan is “the month of redemption,” [17] “the month in which the Jews were redeemed, and the month in which they will be redeemed in the future.” [18]

At that time, the entire Jewish people - men, women, and children - will proceed to our Holy Land and “relate [G-d’s] praise” in the Beis HaMikdash. May this take place in the immediate future.

Adapted from Likkutei Sichos, Vol. VII, pg. 24-26; Vol. XVII, ps. 12-15; Seifer HaSichos 5750, Vol. I, p. 327ff

Notes:

1. Sanhedrin 38a.

2. Tanya, ch. 2. The expression “a part of G-d” is taken from Job 31:2. The Alter Rebbe adds the word “actual,” for two reasons:

a. to emphasize that our souls are truly a part of G-d as it were and not merely a ray of His light;

b. to underscore that even as the souls “actual,” en clothed in the material world, they remain “a part of G-d,” for the word “mamash” translated as “actual,” also means “material.”

3. Isaiah 43:21; the beginning of the Haftora for Parshas VaYikra.

4. The Baal Shem Tov as quoted in Kesser Shem Tov, Hosafos 133.

5. Leviticus 1:1.

6. When mentioning the call to Moshe, the Torah does not refer to any of the different names of G-d. For every name represents a limitation, a reflection of only one aspect of His Being, while the call to Moshe expressed the connection to G-d’s essence, a level which transcends any and all names.

7. Rashi, op. cit.

8. For “it is only for the sake of Israel that I have given you greatness” (Brachos 32b, Rashi, Exodus 32:7).

9. The connection between the sacrifices and the essential G-dly nature of the Jewish soul is reflected by the verse (Leviticus 1:2): “When a man... brings a sacrifice.” Why does the Torah use the word man, adam in Hebrew? Because adam is related to the word adama, “I resemble,” and thus refers to the verse (Isaiah 14:14), “I will resemble the One above;” i.e., man is representative of G-d, as it were (Sheloh, Parshas VaYeishev).

Man’s potential to draw close to G-d stems from the fact that G-dliness lies at the core of his own being.

10. Seifer HaBahir, sec. 46.

11. This concept is also alluded to by our Torah reading, for its latter sections describe the sacrifice of sin offerings and guilt offerings, sacrifices brought to atone for undesirable conduct.

12. See Isaiah 6:5-7.

13. Cf. Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Toldos, sec. 5.

14. Moreover, by and large, the non-observant Jews today are not responsible for their lack of practice. They are like “children captured by the gentiles,” who were never given an opportunity to learn about their Jewish heritage in a complete manner.

15. See the commentary of the Radak to Isaiah 43:21.

16. Brachos 57a.

17. Shmos Rabba 15:11.

18. Rosh HaShana 11a.

CROSSING THE RIVER TO THE PROMISED LAND

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

In the first week of the month of Nissan, there are numerous historic days of significance. To list a few; Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the day of the dedication of the Mishkan in the desert; 2 Nissan, the yahrtzait of the Rebbe Rashab; and 6 Nissan, the day the Jews miraculously crossed the Jordan River into the Holy Land. What these three events have in common is that each represents a major step forward in the fulfillment of the Divine Plan, while also being associated with a qualitative spiritual decline...

PROMISE LOST

Amongst the numerous circles of friends and acquaintances that I picked up along the way during my yeshiva years, there was a loosely knit informal network of “wild geniuses.” Unlike the secular categorizations of “nerds” or “geeks,” these guys tended to be extremely gifted intellectually as well as larger than life characters socially. The social environment that they developed around themselves was a fascinating mix of egalitarianism and elitism. Generally, they took great pleasure in deflating the self-importance of the academic elites in their respective yeshivas, while being generous with their time and friendship towards those who had little to offer in terms of intellectual stimulation. Well-meaning fools and idiots would be tolerated and even befriended if they weren’t too annoying, but the pretentious fool or idiot was informed in no uncertain terms that he was not welcome.

Within that group, there were a number of fellows who would speak wistfully of the Chassidic days of yore, when in places like Mezritch and Liozna, Lublin and Kotzk, and yes, even the Lubavitch of the Rebbe Rashab, simple Chassidim sat shoulder to shoulder with the great minds of the movement. In that egalitarian environment of brotherly love, those great minds were given the tools and guidance to grow and take their place as leaders, even as they worked to assimilate the tenets of Chassidic love for even the simplest Jew. Contrariwise, in today’s world they felt as if they didn’t really belong anywhere, since the modern yeshiva world represented the old world Lithuanian elitism based on scholarship real or imagined, and the modern Chassidic world had

become about building large institutions and had lost any real appeal for the truly gifted.

I remember in particular one such conversation, when a friend suggested that in fact Lubavitch represented the greatest disappointment. In a relatively short period of time, it had gone from an educational system that accepted only the best and the brightest, enlisting the rank and file of the movement to help support that system, and creating a social environment where both groups felt that they were part of the same family, to an open door educational system that threw together any and all comers, thus lowering the level for all. In the push for quantity, quality had been sacrificed to the point that it was no longer even appreciated by most.

Later, when I raised this issue with Lubavitchers whom I encountered over the years, at different stages in my personal evolution, I heard many explanations for why this had to be so, whether due to the spiritual descent of the generation or the needs of the time for broader educational opportunities. Whatever the reason given, my sense was that even within Lubavitch there was a clear acknowledgment of a major downward shift, with some seeing it as a tragic byproduct of exile and others as another painful but necessary step toward redemption. So, even before I ever seriously considered Chabad Chassidus as a way of life in contemporary times, I felt a sense of mourning for the glory days when the world held such promise and opportunity for the spiritual seeker.

PROMISE SACRIFICED

In the first week of the month of Nissan, there are numerous historic days of significance. To

list a few; Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the day of the dedication of the Mishkan in the desert; 2 Nissan, the yahrtzeit of the Rebbe Rashab; and 6 Nissan, the day the Jews miraculously crossed the Jordan River into the Holy Land. What these three events have in common is that each represents a major step forward in the fulfillment of the Divine Plan, while also being associated with a qualitative spiritual decline.

Although there are differing opinions as to when the original commandment to build a Mishkan took place, Rashi in Chumash follows the view that it was after the sin of the Golden Calf and its purpose was to house Hashem's presence amongst the Jewish People as a sign of, and as a result of, His forgiveness. However, that forgiveness extended only so far. The removal of the "spiritual filth" remaining from the sin of the Tree of Knowledge at the giving of the Torah was reversed. Once it returned, the people again became desensitized to G-dliness, and illness and death once again became an integral part of the human experience. Additionally, they were commanded to remove the "crowns" they received at Mount Sinai, which signify the ability to perceive and relate to transcendent G-dly revelation. These tremendous qualitative declines remained in place even after the fire descended unto the altar on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, indicating forgiveness.

Even according to Ramban, who holds the view that the command to build the Mishkan preceded the giving of the Torah, since its purpose was to contain and house that very revelation even after the event was long over, the actual building and inauguration took place after the sin of the Golden Calf and Moshe's pleas for forgiveness and

his receiving the second set of Luchos (usually translated as Tablets). That being the case, the people were no longer on the level of experiencing the full revelation present in the Mishkan, so in effect, although it brought the Divine Presence to all the people, all the time, its qualitative impact was significantly reduced.

The same seems to hold true regarding the 2nd of Nissan and the passing of the Rebbe Rashab. The Rebbe explains the significance of this event (see Likkutei Sichos vol. 27 p. 24-28) in the context of the Rebbe Rashab's pronouncement prior to his passing, "I am going to Heaven, and the writings I leave for you." The Rebbe says that the definitive contribution of the Rebbe Rashab in the realm of Chassidic teachings is the "bringing down" of the teachings of Chassidus in such a way that, and creating a yeshiva where, they could be studied "like a *sugya* in *Nigleh*" (like a topic in Jewish law).

Legal analysis requires one to delve into the underlying reasoning of the law, primarily by means of contrast or comparison, which is driven by questioning and finding seeming contradictions and inconsistencies. However, in the study of the concealed portion of the Torah, there are strong warnings against raising and considering challenging questions and contradictions, since it deals with the absolute truth of G-d and His reality. What the Rebbe Rashab accomplished was that one could apply legal type analysis to the mysteries of the Divine without compromising his absolute faith and acceptance of the absolute truth. This allows one to gain a better and more concrete understanding of ideas and topics

The statement that “the writings I leave to you,” is an indication that the Rebbe with his “going to Heaven” on the 2nd of Nissan would be empowering each and every Jew to gain greater access to and understanding of an entire dimension of Torah that had been previously beyond their reach.

that are inherently abstruse and abstract, thus also making it more accessible to a wider audience.

The statement that “the writings I leave to you,” is an indication that the Rebbe with his “going to Heaven” on the 2nd of Nissan would be empowering each and every Jew to gain greater access to and understanding of an entire dimension of Torah that had been previously beyond their reach.

This is a great step forward and yet appeared to come along with a huge qualitative spiritual drop. At that time, the Communists were consolidating their power and beginning their push to stamp out religion. The yeshiva, which had begun fracturing during WWI and the ensuing Bolshevik revolution, became completely splintered with small groups studying in different places. The Rebbe Rayatz announced that the main call of the hour was to fortify Jewish Education in the face of such religious persecution, and many young students were sent out to teach little children the most basic tenets and skills for Jewish living and learning. Any idea of limiting enrollment, at any level, to the gifted and/or the extraordinary was jettisoned. It would seem that as a matter of policy, spiritual

quality was being intentionally sacrificed for the need to reach and save as many people as possible.

When Yehoshua led the people into the Promised Land on the 6th of Nissan, this was a great historic leap forward, as they were ostensibly coming to achieve the final purpose for which the world was created. Their mission was to transform a physical plot of earth into a holy place where the Divine Presence would be revealed to the entire world. This entailed leaving the purely spiritual environment of Torah study and meditation within the “clouds of glory” in the desert, and becoming involved with mundane earthly activities. These included wars, home renovations and becoming immersed in the labor intensive fields of agriculture and animal husbandry. Here again, we seem to see a calculated sacrifice of spiritual quality for the sake of expanding the reach and realm of holiness. As the Sages summed it up, “the face of Moshe (shone) like the face of the sun, and the face of Yehoshua (shone) like the face of the moon.”

All of the above would seem to indicate that this is the way that it is meant to be. Every advance in

holiness, in “bringing G-d down” to ever lower levels of existence, so that they too are part of the “dwelling for G-d,” requires that those who carry out the work be themselves “lower” and that even they must sacrifice their spiritual ambitions and gifts for the greater good. That would seem to bolster the view that in the final generation of exile, and especially the final moments of that generation, we must focus on action and reaching out to as many as we can at the calculated cost of personal spiritual growth and quality.

PROMISED LAND

“And they shall build for Me a sanctum and I will dwell within them.” The Sages explain the wording of the Divine instruction to build a Mishkan and a Mikdash to mean that “I will dwell within each and every one of them.” The purpose of constructing a physical “home” for G-d is not simply to provide Him a place where He can reveal His presence within a lowly finite world, but its ultimate purpose is that He wishes to be revealed and present within the heart and mind of each and every Jew. This would seem to indicate that He is not looking so much for a house as for a home.

The same holds true regarding the ultimate design and purpose of creation, “HaKadosh Baruch Hu desired a dwelling in the lower realms.” His desire to make His dwelling, which is explained in Chassidus to mean the place where He can be His true self uncloaked, in this lowly world, is ultimately for the purpose of dwelling within each and every Jew. Since it is our mission to provide and construct this dwelling, we need to construct the dwelling in the world and we need to construct the dwelling within

[Continued on pg. 42]

Kupas Rabbeinu

Lubavitch

קופת רבינו

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B"H 16th of Adar, 5770

MO'OS CHITTIM

To All Anash and Temimim וְטִמִּימִם, Sholom U'vrocho!

Excerpt of a Sicho Kedoisho, which speaks for itself

The Jews will be redeemed solely through *tzedakah*... In particular, this applies with regards to the matter relevant at present, *maos chittim*, *tzedakah* given for Pesach that includes all of the needs of the holiday.

Our involvement with this must be in a manner of *ratzo* and *shov*, i.e., **one should not wait for the *tzedakah* collector, but instead, rush to give him *maos chittim* on his own initiative (*ratzo*). Moreover, even after he has already given *maos chittim*, he should go and give a second time (*shov*)....** For one who has been blessed should increase his gifts according to the blessing he has been given. And who ever increases will be given additional reward. Indeed, there is no limit to this additional reward. From the sichos Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel-pikudei, 5750

It is well known that "Kupas Rabbeinu" endeavors to continue implementing all of the holy projects and activities which the Rebbe has established. Amongst these activities is the Rebbe's practice to extend financial aid to those families in need of their various Pesach necessities.

Accordingly, we are at this time urging and requesting each and every Anash member and Tomim וְטִמִּימִם to contribute generously to "Kupas Rabbeinu," in order to enable the administration to provide for these families and thus afford them with the opportunity to celebrate Pesach with contentment and joy.

Regarding this Mitzvah it is stated: "Whoever increases (in giving) is praiseworthy."

Unfortunately, the amount of families in need of this financial assistance is more than generally assumed. As such, the more generous your contribution to "Kupas Rabbeinu," the greater the number of families receiving assistance will be.

And since, with regard to all Mitzvahs we are instructed to act with Simcha and zest, it is all the more pertinent with regard to the aforementioned, as it is of paramount importance that the funds be received and distributed as soon as possible.

In the merit of Tzedakah which hastens the Geula, may we merit the true Geula Shlaimah, with the revelation of Melech HaMashiach - The Rebbe Nasi Doreinu, immediately, Mamash.

Chag HaPesach Kosher V'Sameach, *Vaad Kupas Rabbeinu*

PS. 1) The traditional "Magvis Yud Shevat, Purim" can also be sent at this time, as well as all other Magvios.

2) All funds should be sent to the following address only; Donations are tax deductible

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In Eretz haKodesh: KEREN KUPAS ADMU"R, P.O. Box 1247, KIRYAT MALACHI – ISRAEL

FINDING TRUE ENLIGHTENMENT

By Nosson Avrohom

He was an Israeli kid who sought soul food and went on a long journey that started with art and continued with ashrams in Thailand, India and the forests of Sri Lanka. He reached the level of monk and always wore an orange robe until he met the Rebbe's shluchim and was amazed to discover that many ideas he had studied in Buddhist sources had their origin in Judaism. That is when he was faced with a very difficult decision...

For ten years, Yosef Aryeh Klein wandered the forests of Sri Lanka and visited far-flung ashrams, dressed as a Buddhist priest. His head was bald and he wore the orange robe of a monk. For years he climbed the rungs of spiritual mastery until public figures and high government officials, including the president of Sri Lanka, would bow before him and consult him for advice. By day he wrote insights and guidance for a good life, meditated, and taught new monks, while at night he slept in crevices and caves in the forest. He thought he had

found the ultimate recipe for happiness.

The first one to expose him to Chassidus was the shliach in Sri Lanka, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Crombie. That led to his visiting the shluchim in Rishikesh and Dharamsala and he eventually exchanged his robe for normative dress and then for Chassidic garb. It wasn't easy for him to discard all the remnants of idol worship that clung to him but with great *siyata d'Shmaya* and understanding of Chassidus he found the authentic inner joy of Judaism.

Now, after half a year of learning in yeshivas Daas in Rechovot he is learning in a baal t'shuva yeshiva in Eilat.

"I was born and lived in the place where the yeshiva I am learning in now is located. At that time, it was sand dunes."

He grew up in the Tzofit neighborhood of Eilat. His parents, who were miners in the nearby copper mine in Timna, lived in one of two large buildings that were built for the employees.

"For many years, copper was our world until large deposits of copper were discovered in Chile and broke the market. Even then, the Israeli government continued employing hundreds of workers despite the losses because this operation supported most of the residents of the city. They closed at the beginning of the eighties when tourism began to flourish and many new positions became available."

The Klein family was irreligious. Both parents were from Eastern Europe and Jewish tradition was more of a symbol to them than a way of life; more about values and morality than anything that obligated them.

"My father escaped by the skin of his teeth in 1938 from Czechoslovakia which the Nazis conquered even before the outbreak of World War II. He was together



with many other Jewish youth who went to Budapest and formed a secret youth movement that worked throughout the war years on forging papers for Jews who were able to hide their identities and save themselves from the Nazis.

“The few times that my father agreed to tell me about that period he said that he would go to the local police to lodge a complaint about a stolen item and he would remember details about the policeman and use it to form a false identity.

“In 1944 that entire group made aliya and later started the Liberal party which later merged into the Likud. My parents were among the pioneers of kibbutz Nitzanim but my father, who was a big individualist, quickly left the kibbutz and at the end of the fifties we moved to Eilat. My father was happy with his decision to leave the kibbutz because not long afterward it fell to the

“As a child, I tried investigating, seeking a true identity, a reason for our life on earth, but I didn’t know where to look. Judaism was the last place I went to look because I saw it as a system of rules and intimidation that was passed along from generation to generation without logical underpinnings.”

Egyptians.

“I grew up in a home that was very patriotic towards the Jewish nation and Jewish identity but without any real content. We never opened a Jewish book. Aside from Pesach and Chanuka, we kept no other mitzvos. We didn’t even observe Yom Kippur. And yet, we had Jewish pride.

“As a child, I tried investigating, seeking a true identity, a reason for our life on earth, but I didn’t know where to look. Judaism was the last place I went to look because I saw it as a system of rules and intimidation that was passed along from generation to generation without logical underpinnings.”

Yosef was a gifted student. In

For nine years I lived in the forest in the southeast of Sri Lanka. Many monks convene in this area, in the middle of the forest, for in the center are the remnants of a large ashram where, according to Buddhist tradition, more than 12,000 monks lived. In the thick of the magnificent jungle there were caves where I would sleep every night.

fourth grade his teachers consented to his no longer doing homework. What he heard in class was enough for him to receive the highest mark.

"I was unwilling to go with the flow and I looked for something beyond. Nobody was able to still the hunger I felt. That which many others push aside, I sought to confront and deal with.

"When I became of draft age, I was turned off by it all. While my friends were excited and enlisted in elite units, and some became pilots, I was preoccupied with a search for truth."

He felt he could not agree to a set of laws on blind faith, without explanation.

"One day, when I returned home on vacation after a long stint in the infantry, the bus, which had veered because of a camel, collided with a car full of German tourists and killed them all. I got off the bus to try and extricate those who were trapped. The terrible scene was reason for the rescue workers to send me to the hospital too and this was the impetus that led the military authorities to grant me an exemption from the army. I was thrilled and a short while later I flew to France."

Yosef's passion was art. He used painting to still his inner hunger.

"I would sit for hours with a paintbrush. I did mostly modern art but not that exclusively. Till today, I can draw portraits that are remarkably accurate. Near the city of Marseilles is a famous art university and I registered there. I was also involved in the local Jewish community and was very impressed by the high positions many of them had in society."

After a year of intensive study, he returned to Israel and the feeling of emptiness returned to haunt him.

"What didn't I do to quiet that feeling? Nothing helped. I didn't know that t'shuvah entails working on your middos, spiritual avoda. I was immersed deep in the world of art. I call those years 'the lost years,' years that didn't get me anywhere and were wasted on material things. I lived in Tel Aviv and went to an art school in Ramat HaSharon. It's a very exclusive place that teaches artists to be art teachers. I was very successful there too. One of the teachers, a well-known artist by the name of Rafi Lavie, a Leftist, announced to the class about one of my drawings that he had never seen artwork on such a high level. Consequently, many of the students and staff were sure I would become a teacher that year but I lived a very wild life without any commitments

to times or limitations. I felt I was on the top of the world and important artists wanted to get to know me.

"But as had happened previously, it was this big success that led me to continue searching. I felt that I had reached the end and there was nowhere to continue. After a period of time, I felt a detachment from those friends and teachers. This detachment just got stronger. I knew that when this crowd, which was constantly talking about inner truth and how art stood for depth, folded their artwork and left the studio they went to the most shocking places of falsehood and physicality.

"After I left art, I was in a state of great confusion. I felt I could no longer continue that way."

One day, he discovered a big center in Tel Aviv for the study of yoga. Friends recommended this particular center and said it provided inner happiness, so he decided to sign up.

"Many of the leaders of this international organization are Jews. I was a member for years. I began to feel that I had found the truth and that peace and serenity were entering my life. There was a long period when I lived there and became a master. Not surprisingly, when time went by the uplifting feeling dissipated and once again, I found myself searching."

He decided to travel far away since life in Israel had become narrow for him and intolerable. Yosef's parents had died within a short span of time at the end of 5754 and his plan was to leave the continent for India.

"Long before that I had wanted to go to India but my parents stood in my way. They constantly pushed me to live the life my friends and relatives were living and I found it very difficult to describe to them what was going on inside of me. When I landed in India I traveled to



Rishikesh where I found a famous yoga master and I stayed with him for two years.

“When my visa in India expired I went to Thailand hoping to renew it there, but on the main street of Bangkok I met a Buddhist monk. He was a very nice guy and he seemed to have great life wisdom along with tremendous simplicity. I was very hopeful that I had finally found what my soul sought. He understood that I was in the midst of a search and he invited me to the ashram where he lived in the jungle, a night’s journey from Bangkok. At that time I was already considered a top teacher of yoga.

“I was sure I would never go back to Israel. As far as I was concerned, I had left it forever. I felt I had to find myself within the numerous paths that the Far East offered. In Israel I did not feel connected to anything. Anyway,

after a night’s travel we arrived at the ashram in the heart of the jungle. The atmosphere was magical and all was peaceful. In the morning we ate natural foods and the rest of the day we practiced asceticism.

“The monks lectured us about how to work on our character traits and I felt it spoke to me. I decided to take another step towards Buddhism. I shaved my head and put on an orange robe. In Thailand it is very easy to be a monk. There is a tradition that goes back many years in which young people become monks for a period of time before going to university. There is a law that someone who wants to be a candidate for certain political offices has to have a period of monasticism in his resume`. In the morning, all of us monks would go to a nearby village and the people there gave us food. I spent three months there.

“At the end of the three months I

felt, for the umpteenth time, that this was not yet my final destination. I continued my search in Sri Lanka. Friends recommended a place where I met a famous monk, a nice person, who delivered lectures on fascinating ideas about how to look at life. I made a commitment to be a monk. Unfortunately, I did not know anything about Judaism at that time. Although, while in India an Israeli tourist had given me a Tanach to read, I tried hard to understand and connect to it but was unsuccessful.”

The decision to be a monk was made in 5760. The center agreed to accept him and he went through the ceremony that transformed him from an ordinary person into a monk.

“The center received a license to appoint monks and I was their first one. I shaved my head and wore the orange robe. I wandered around, not working, and was given food by

There was a famous teacher from the United States who came on a visit to Sri Lanka and identified herself to me as a Jew. She told me that in her estimation, a quarter of Buddhist believers are Jewish... The vast majority of teachers of Vipassana yoga, a mind based meditation without spirituality mixed in, are Jews. In Massachusetts there's the biggest center in the world and all the teachers are Jews who have written many books on the subject.

sincere gentiles who were educated to worship monks, including the president of Sri Lanka who bowed to me in awe when he came to the area and we met.

"After some trips within the country, I began my career as a monk of the forest. For nine years I lived in the forest in the southeast of Sri Lanka. Many monks convene in this area, in the middle of the forest, for in the center are the remnants of a large ashram where, according to Buddhist tradition, more than 12,000 monks lived. In the thick of the magnificent jungle there were caves where I would sleep every night. During the day I would divide my time between three monks who worked in the area. For most of the hours of the day, the monks would discuss different aspects of Buddhist philosophy.

"The more I delved into the books of the masters that taught Buddhism, the more I realized what a share Jews have in this. There was a famous teacher from the United States who came on a visit to Sri Lanka and identified herself to me as a Jew. She told me that in her

estimation, a quarter of Buddhist believers are Jewish. When I looked into this for myself, I saw that this wasn't way off. The vast majority of teachers of Vipassana yoga which is a mind based meditation without spirituality mixed in, are Jews. In Massachusetts there's the biggest center in the world and all the teachers are Jews who have written many books on the subject.

"For hours a day I would study, read books and develop ideas of my own. The new president of Sri Lanka, Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, gave much honor to monks and connected an Internet line for us in the jungle so we could put our ideas online and get more people, from around the world, involved. At a certain point I became the spokesman of the monks on local television stations. I gave many lectures and felt that I had achieved the ultimate. The feeling of emptiness went away and strangely enough, that is when I began my t'shuva."

In order to understand how far he got in the world of Buddhism, Yosef relates:

"A year before I learned about Hashem, the army announced that it had discovered a boat on the coast that belonged to Tamil rebels. They said that during the day we could walk about freely but at night, since the army was laying in ambush to catch them, we civilians were asked to stay indoors. This upset me since I would sleep in caves in the jungle and now I had to use a normal bed in the ashram. There was one thing I refused to give in on and that was the meditation I did morning and evening.

"Although there was a serious warning, I went out in the evening to a certain hill where I meditated. When nothing happened to me, I went out again in the morning to the same spot. It was four a.m. and it was pitch black outside. The shrieks of animals could be heard and they made me walk quicker. I suddenly heard a voice calling me. I turned around and didn't see anyone and continued walking. A few seconds later I heard shots, and shrapnel from bullets that whistled around me fell in my immediate area. I broke into a run and returned to the ashram in a fright.

"I was terrified that they were terrorists who would enter the building but the hours passed and the next day I found out that the ones who had shot at me were soldiers who had laid an ambush. They were very scared that they had shot at a monk but I calmed them down and said I forgave them.

"Two weeks later, when I went to the capitol in order to arrange my visa, the big monk of the city invited me to see him. It was first then that I found out that I had been miraculously saved. The soldiers, who were armed with Kalashnikov rifles, wanted to kill me but one rifle didn't shoot and another rifle stopped after a few bullets, a rarity for this kind of gun."

The story appeared in all the papers of the country and all praised

the monks who had the spiritual power to stop bullets.

"I knew that I didn't have any powers and when I began doing t'shuva a few months later, I connected this with other things that happened to me and realized that Hashem was protecting me. Throughout that period of time, I wasn't careful and I didn't take care of myself. Today I know that I could have just as easily been hurt but the Divine Providence that brought me to the light also protected me from elephants in the forest and other dangers."

Today, Yosef sums up his t'shuva process as miraculous. He was at life's summit and many people sought him out. He himself didn't feel compelled to seek something else but his neshama apparently thought otherwise for it led him back to his roots.

"I visited the capitol of Sri Lanka in order to renew my visa and to get approbations from senior monks and I passed the time in a small ashram. One of the people in charge was the manager of a large textile factory whose partner was an Israeli from a kibbutz in the north of Israel. When he saw that I was also Israeli he introduced us and a friendship developed. One day we made up that he would get all his Israeli friends together so I could give them a lecture on the wisdom of Buddhism."

But that morning Yosef was sick and could not attend the gathering. Today, he says how happy he was that he got sick because otherwise, he could have easily drawn more innocent Jews into klipa.

"That Israeli and other Israelis left the country after it became an ally of Iran and China and their position in favor of Moslems grew stronger. In the capitol they began putting up pictures of Iranian religious and government leaders.

"I also began to feel uncomfortable there. The same



president, who was very friendly with the monks and had given us whatever we needed, declared war on the Tamil rebels. As a result, he was willing to sell the country to whoever would agree to give him the weapons and military technology. That Israeli, before leaving Sri Lanka, told me that in the capitol there was a Chabad house which is run by a young fellow named Mendy Crombie. He gave me the address and the phone number. I put it in my bag and didn't think I would go visit anytime soon but it happened quicker than I thought.

"Relatives called me from Israel and said that they were on a trip to India and they wanted to see me after nearly a decade. I told them my situation and said I didn't have money for the flight. They agreed to send me the money but wondered how to do so. I remembered the Chabad house and gave them the address. Of course I asked Rabbi

Crombie and he was amenable to the idea. When I showed up to pick up the money from him, he wasn't willing to let me go too fast and we sat down to talk. He spoke Chassidus and I was amazed. It was familiar to me! Whatever I had researched for years he was saying and even adding and developing the concepts!

"It was the first time that I was confronted with the idea that Judaism was not what I thought it was. It was not at all superficial. We spoke for hours about those concepts. He called them maamarim and sichos and I called them by Buddhist names. To his credit, he did not pressure me even though I was shocked by the revelation. He let me digest things. Although I insisted on not wearing a kippa or washing my hands, he didn't get upset. Before I left for India he invited me again for the weekend and we spoke a great deal. I saw a

“After Rosh HaShana the most famous Buddhist monk in the world, the Dalai Lama came. Of course I went to hear him and he explained how it’s possible to be religious and still be a Buddhist. When I left, I consoled myself that even if I got involved in Judaism, I could still continue being a Buddhist. Day by day I became more attracted to Judaism. I tried with all my might to stop the process but it was stronger than me.”

Jewish Shabbos for the first time.”

Before he left the Chabad house for Dharamsala, R’ Crombie asked him to give the shliach there, R’ Dror Moshe Shaul regards.

“When I got there I first made the rounds of the ashrams and then I decided to go to the Chabad house on the Jewish New Year. It wasn’t an easy step to take to show up in my get-up and to walk in where all the young Israeli tourists were, but I truly desired to do it and to my surprise I immediately felt a very strong connection.”

After the meal on Rosh HaShana, which was seasoned with explanations of Chassidic ideas and concepts, something in Yosef’s worldview moved. He began to “get” that Judaism is an amazing thing.

“After Rosh HaShana the most famous Buddhist monk in the world, the Dalai Lama came. Of course I went to hear him and he explained how it’s possible to be religious and still be a Buddhist. When I left, I consoled myself that even if I got involved in Judaism, I could still continue being a Buddhist. Day by day I became more attracted to Judaism. I tried with all my might to

stop the process but it was stronger than me.”

At the same time, Yosef began seeing the falseness in Buddhism which he had not seen in the previous ten years.

“I entered a Buddhist ashram in Dharamsala where my roommate was a monk who was greatly admired for the long period of isolation and asceticism he practiced. But when I lived with him I saw, to my amazement, that he was a corrupt individual with bad character. It seems that from Heaven, when it was decided that I would be extricated from darkness, the pieces of the puzzle would fall into place one by one. One day, I borrowed a book on Kabbala from someone and read it avidly through the night.”

In the morning, after very little sleep, he decided to go to the Chabad house in order to look more deeply into what he had learned.

“It wasn’t the tourist season and I was sorry to see the Chabad house was closed. The next day, I decided to go back there. I really wanted to expand my knowledge of Jewish mysticism and although the day before it had been closed, I

returned. When I saw that it was locked, I decided to return to the city via the village. It was a longer route but my feet took me that way.

“How flabbergasted I was to meet Rabbi Uri Tzipori on the way. He was on shlichus in Rishikesh at the time. He shook my hand and with a big smile he invited me to his Chabad house and promised that we would start learning together. He has a restaurant there and he hosted me happily for a long time. Every morning we would sit together and study Tanya. He has an amazing ability to explain it and I drank in what he said. I was still not weaned of Buddhism and like in Sri Lanka with R’ Crombie, he would explain Chassidic ideas to me and I would compare them to Buddhist concepts.”

After a while, Yosef felt he needed time to digest things. He felt both confused and happy that he had discovered the truth. He asked R’ Tzipori to let him stay at the Chabad house in Dharamsala even though there was nobody there. R’ Tzipori gave him permission on condition that he would not bring in any avoda zara.

“I started putting t’fillin on every day and felt great about it. Then I added shmiras Shabbos. Every day I would go up to where R’ Tzipori was and he would learn Gemara and Chassidus with me.

“After a week I sat down to think about where this was going. It was clear to me that if I continued, the road to doing complete t’shuva was short and accessible. Time after time I tried to halt the process, to think about it and ask questions, but it was stronger than me. Till today, I sometimes sit in yeshiva and think about how I got here and I don’t have a clear answer. A Higher Force stronger than me drew me out of klipa into Chassidus.”

When Yosef speaks about the process, he refers in particular to the moment he removed his monk’s

garb which he wore for ten years and exchanged it for ordinary clothing.

“It was very hard but I did it. From that moment on, I realized that I was actually saying goodbye to that world. Klipa did not give up easily but the power of the Rebbe and his shluchim were stronger. After a long period in which I studied Chassidus, I wanted to return to Eretz Yisroel and go to yeshiva. Not long before that, Eretz Yisroel was the last place I wanted to go, never mind to learn in a yeshiva! But things developed in a way that I felt I had no control over them.

“I had a big problem leaving India because I had been there longer than I had been allowed to stay and in India it’s a very serious crime for which you are jailed. I told R’ Tzipori and he referred me to a local policeman and we asked him for help. While he looked into the matter, we sat and said T’hillim. I didn’t quite believe that things could work out because the law is clear and unequivocal and whoever travels in India knows all the sad stories about tourists in jail for long periods of time.

“The policeman agreed to help us. He showed me a sub-clause in the law that allowed me, for certain reasons, to remain and I studied it and went to the airport. The severe looking official pointed out that I had overstayed my visa and was about to call for the police when I explained that there is this sub-clause that had made it permissible for me to stay. He refused to believe me until I showed it to him in the law book and he was appeased and amazed. Even he did not know about it. From India I went straight to yeshivas Daas in Rechovot where Chassidus won me over and filled my heart.”

Presently, Yosef Aryeh Klein is



The Chabad house in Sri Lanka

learning in yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Eilat which is run by Rabbi Erez Bendetovitz.

“After learning Chassidus, I can definitely describe all those years I spent as a monk as lost years, wasted years. If I had known Chabad Chassidus before, I would not have felt the need to go there. The tremendous integration in Chassidus of emotion and intellect, the dealing with the reality which is life, and the fact that it contains such amazing tools is just incredible. For the first time, I feel connected to myself.

Connecting to the Rebbe was difficult at first. He preferred learning the teachings of the Alter Rebbe and Mittlerer Rebbe but then things changed.

“When you delve into it, you understand that the central point of it all is the Rebbe.”

When he realized how highly the Rebbe regarded shlichus as opposed to staying in your own *Dalet amos*, he returned to his blog where he used to post his insights and advice that were derived from Buddhist ideas. Now he posts maamarei Chassidus.

“Among all those readers are plenty of Jews and I translate maamarim that I learn in my own words in order to bring them the light to be found in Chassidus. My only conclusion from the story of my life is how we must bring Chassidus everywhere, to every Jew. It really saves lives.”

WITH THE POWER OF FAITH

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

The doctors at three different hospitals didn't give him more than a few days to live. Yet we clung to our faith...

All the events that occurred during those days come back to Mrs. Ora Chasan of Ramot as she retells her fascinating story.

The biggest doctors at Hadassah Ein-Kerem Hospital in Yerushalayim and the Loewenstein Hospital & Rehabilitation Center in Raanana didn't give her husband more than a few days or even hours to live, after he had been struck and critically injured by an Arab driver from East Jerusalem. The bracha and dollar that he received from the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, filled his family with hope and faith, which eventually produced positive results. Her husband's recovery from the injury amazed the doctors, who were forced to admit that this constituted a rare occurrence in the medical world. Her husband, Mr. Victor Chasan *a"h*, lived happily for another twenty-one years, until he succumbed to infection.

"If it hadn't been for that infection, you could have

interviewed him yourself and asked him all the details surrounding this story," she pointed out with regret. "During those years after he had returned to full strength, we even had the privilege of flying to New York and visiting 770 to thank the Rebbe for the tremendous miracle that had taken place in the merit of his holy blessing." Ora continues to maintain close contact with Chabad where she lives, davening regularly in the Chabad shul and participating in the various Chabad activities throughout the year.

"This whole story began twenty-one years ago. We established our residence near the home of my mother-in-law in the Ramot neighborhood of Yerushalayim. On that wild and bitter Motzaei Shabbos, my husband went out along an unpaved dirt road to my mother-in-law's house to say goodbye, since we were about to leave town for a while. Today, this street has already been paved,

repaired, and renamed 'Menachem Begin Road', but then it was just a dark mound of dirt. My husband started walking along this path, when he was suddenly struck by a car driven by an East Jerusalem Arab. The force of the blow was so intense that it sent him flying to the side of the road, where he was further seriously injured by a huge rock that had been deliberately laid there.

When a few hours had passed without his returning or calling home, I began to worry about his welfare. My concern increased sevenfold when I called his mother, and I discovered that he had never reached her house. Countless thoughts began to race through my mind. This all took place at the start of the first intifada, when the Arabs were doing whatever they wanted, with no one to stop them. I feared for the worst, figuring that he had been kidnapped and was being hidden somewhere. My husband was a very serious and decent person, and I knew that he would never do anything to worry me.

"The more time that passed, the deeper my concern grew. Back then, there were no mobile phones or such, and so the first thing I did immediately before calling the police and notifying them of his disappearance was to contact all the hospitals in Yerushalayim and ask if my husband Victor, or someone resembling him, had been brought there in the last few hours. No one had any information, and I found myself 'nudging' Magen David Adom every few minutes to ask them if they had transported my husband to the hospital. I had a gnawing feeling that something had happened.

"When I realized that no one knew anything about his whereabouts, I was overwhelmed by tremendous fear over his fate. I ordered a taxi and decided to make my way to the nearest hospital – Mt.

Scopus – and look for him.

“When I reached the emergency room, I was startled to find my husband there, dirty and confused. He told me about the accident and the cab driver who, by Divine Providence, had passed by the scene, noticed him, and brought him to the hospital. The busy doctors had checked him and decided to release him to go home. All his complaints that he felt tremendous pains in his neck and spine were not taken seriously. On the contrary, the doctors scoffed at him, thinking that he was merely exaggerating in order to collect on an insurance claim.

“When he stated categorically that he found it difficult to move his limbs, the medical staff suggested that he should do physiotherapy several times a week, and everything would return back to normal...

“We went back home together, and he began to writhe in pain. With every passing hour, another part of his body ceased to function. The intense pains were primarily in his neck, but they soon spread everywhere. I was beside myself with fear and confusion. I prayed with all my heart that things would eventually stabilize, but they didn’t. By Sunday, his entire body was paralyzed.

“I made an appointment with a specialist for him, but it was like putting cupping glasses on a cadaver. When we saw that the situation was only getting worse, we quickly brought him to Hadassah Ein-Kerem Hospital, where he was examined by a team of sullen doctors. After a comprehensive series of tests, they explained to me that all the vertebrae in his spine had slipped out of place, and he needed an operation to save his life. As a boy he had suffered from a spinal infection and undergone a complicated operation that eventually repaired the damage. Now, however, the accident had apparently returned the previous



Loewenstein Hospital & Rehabilitation Center in Raanana



Hadassah Ein-Kerem Hospital in Yerushalayim

The surgeons labored for several hours to put the vertebrae back in place. The operation itself was apparently headed for a successful conclusion, when suddenly other complications set in. In the midst of everything, his stomach burst.

state of disrepair, and he needed another operation with the utmost urgency.

“We thought about possibly

flying him overseas for the operation, but time was not on our side. Every passing day brought another decline in his medical

The Rebbe had blessed him, and with G-d's help, Divine salvation would come in the blink of an eye. I felt that the only suitable place to move him was the Loewenstein Center. 'He needs rehabilitation, not a nursemaid...'

condition. I signed the authorization to allow the doctors to bring him into the operating room. During the hours-long operation, my lips did not cease saying T'hilim. The surgeons labored for several hours to put the vertebrae back in place. The operation itself was apparently headed for a successful conclusion, when suddenly other complications set in. In the midst of everything, his stomach burst.

"During the operation, the doctors had given him at least seventy units of blood to keep him alive. At one point they came out and stated quite clearly and unequivocally that they had done everything possible but, in light of the situation, it did not appear that he would survive the coming days or perhaps hours. Periodically, another doctor would come out of the operating room and give us more bad news – his kidneys had stopped functioning, problems with his heart and liver, etc. His body's vital systems began to collapse one after another, and I already foresaw the worst.

"My nephew from New York was deeply pained by the situation, and he suggested going to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"The Rebbe's reputation as a miracle worker had been publicized throughout Eretz Yisroel and the world at-large, and it was known to me as well. It was Sunday, and my nephew indeed came to the Rebbe's beis midrash and placed his uncle's fate before the Rebbe, emphasizing

that he was in need of a great deliverance. The Rebbe blessed him with a 'complete recovery' and gave my nephew a dollar, which he sent to me via express courier. We redeemed the dollar as is customary, and I placed it under my husband's pillow. The dollar arrived on Tuesday, but not only didn't the serious downturn in his condition stop, it intensified. For their part, the doctors left no room for optimism.

"On Wednesday, I approached one of the doctors and asked that they stop telling us bad news. If it's been decreed that my husband leave this world, we'll find that out eventually, but until then, they should let us continue praying and asking G-d for a miracle that will save his life.

"From that day on, the good news started coming in. The doctors asked for permission to operate on his stomach to 'put things back in order there'. As they left the operating room, they already sounded more optimistic: the bleeding had stopped, one kidney had begun to function again, and a few hours later, the other kidney also started working. We felt that the Rebbe's bracha had begun to penetrate and was producing results.

"However, despite all the good news, my husband still looked dreadful. His body was swollen, and the doctors clearly thought that he couldn't possibly survive under such circumstances, despite all their efforts to stabilize his condition. He remained for several days in the

intensive care unit until he recovered sufficiently for the doctors to consider his transfer to a nursing home. But I would not consider this option whatsoever. A nursing home? For what? The Rebbe had blessed him, and with G-d's help, Divine salvation would come in the blink of an eye. I felt that the only suitable place to move him was the Loewenstein Center. 'He needs rehabilitation, not a nursemaid,' I told the doctor in charge of his hospital ward in Hadassah Ein-Kerem. I asked him to do everything possible to get my husband for rehab, and declared that if he doesn't survive, it would be my responsibility.

"He saw my tremendous faith and gave his consent. When my husband arrived at the Loewenstein Center, I overheard a conversation between the rehabilitation center director and a doctor from Hadassah Ein-Kerem. The former asked, 'If you think that he's only going to live for another four days anyway, why did you send him to us?' The latter simply shrugged his shoulders. Except for me, holding steadfastly to my faith in the Creator and the Rebbe's bracha, everyone was quite pessimistic.

"Four days later, the director of the Loewenstein Center, an elderly Jew, paid a visit to my husband's room. When he saw the improvement in his condition, he said if he has held out up until now, he will eventually be rehabilitated and can resume living a full and healthy life. His deputy, Dr. Katz, who today serves as the hospital's director, didn't think he had a chance. In fact, my husband remained there for nine months while his condition continually improved. It was by no means easy, and it required a lot of patience and nerves of steel. However, we believed in the Rebbe's bracha and even though things went slowly, he was soon able to stand on his own

feet, completely healthy in body and spirit.

"When he was released, he got around in a wheelchair. He still didn't know if he would be able to move freely, and every shift of his body was quite painful for him. Nevertheless, despite all the difficulties, I decided that I would take him home. The doctor who heard about my plans said to me, 'Madam, that would be a pity. Take him to a special institution. You can't nurse him at home all by yourself.' Who was even thinking about nursing him? My whole plan was based on the belief that he would return to a normal life.

"At first, the neighbors would help me move him around in a wheelchair, but that didn't last long. He had faith no less than ours, and

it revealed the tremendous strength within him, to the point that he was eventually able to stand, and later he could even move around with a walker. I was simply overjoyed.

"With every passing day, we saw additional improvements, literally like a newborn infant learning to use another part of his body. Within a relatively short period of time, he no longer needed assistance and could move around on his own power. I always thought about how the doctors at Hadassah Ein-Kerem and the Loewenstein Rehabilitation Center didn't give him more than four days to live. We clung to our faith, and we felt in a most literal way how "a tzaddik decrees and G-d fulfills". There were many moments of trial, but in the end, the good prevailed."

*

Mrs. Ora Chasan becomes quite emotional as she tells her spine-tingling story with such authentic description.

"About a year later, we had to go to the Loewenstein Center for a check-up. We were met by the new director, Dr. Katz. He was the big skeptic, and here I came together with my husband, who made the effort to stand up and greet the doctor, even giving him a firm handshake as further silent testimony to the power of faith. He remembered us, yet couldn't believe his eyes. 'I just want you to know,' he said, 'that in all the medical books I have read, people in such a condition do not survive for more than a few days. Your faith came to your aid!'"



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EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN TO LOVE HASHEM

By Rabbi Levi Goldstein
A teacher in Oholei Menachem

*In Part 1, we explored the novel idea that the Rebbe introduced, namely that these days it is possible to teach children to love Hashem, Torah and Yidden, l'sheim Shamayim and not for reward or punishment. There we spoke in detail about loving Hashem. Here we expand on teaching the love of Torah. * Part 2 of a series.*

As mentioned earlier, speaking frequently about Hashem keeps Him in the forefront of the children's minds, and gives them the awareness that Hashem is really involved with everything they do. For example, when we learn Chumash, I emphasize very often that the Torah is Hashem's most precious treasure, and how privileged we are to be able to learn it.

From time to time, I touch upon the concept from Perek 5 of Tanya that when we learn Torah, we are doing the best thing in the whole world. We actually become one and

united with Hashem!

I also taught them the Niggun that my father, Yosaif ben Chaya Malka, shlita, used to sing with us when we were very young, while driving us to Yeshiva. The words: *Kinder, kinder lernt Torah, Torah iz di beste s'choireh* ("Children, children study Torah, for Torah is the best merchandise")¹

After saturating the Kinderlach with many stories and lessons that bring out the above points, I finally dropped "the bomb."

"Kinderlach! What's the best

thing in the world?"

Naturally, they answered: "THE TORAH!"

I continued: "Then, I have a question for you. If I offered to give you a million dollars, and then I said that if you accept the million dollars, then, as a reward, I will give you a penny, what would you answer me?"

They all began laughing. I asked them what's so funny. They said, "If we're getting a million dollars, what is a penny worth to us?!"

I continued: "How about if instead of a penny, I would offer to give you a piece of dust, what would you say then?"

They laughed even louder.

I then concluded: "We know that the Torah 'Iz di beste s'choireh,' so, how would you like to get a lollipop as a reward for learning a pasuk Chumash?"

"It's not worth it!" they all called out.

"So, then, what would be the best reward?"

After a moment of thought, they all called out: "More Torah!"

From that moment on, I never again needed to give any tickets, points, prizes or anything ever again for learning or davening.

In fact, if I were to say: “Listen, Kinderlach! Whoever will learn the Chumash well, will get a prize from me,” their response would be: “No thanks, Rebbi, we don’t need prizes for learning. The best prize is to learn another pasuk Chumash. We learn Torah because we love the Torah.”

*

How did this happen? Not by a miracle.

It happened simply because I was finally determined to follow the Rebbe’s Horaa.

I must add that I didn’t completely discontinue my practice of distributing treats or prizes. The change was merely that these were no longer given as a result or in connection with their learning, but rather spontaneously. From time to time I would treat them to a snack or prize.²

It even happened (more than once), that I would offer a treat only to have them respond, “Rebbi, better not now. Because we have just finished learning Chumash and we don’t want it to be connected to our learning Chumash!”

I must say, that the kinderlach took to it with tremendous enthusiasm, much more than I had anticipated. If I ever mistakenly (or “purposely”) tried to bribe them – they would adamantly refuse. Indeed, now it was *my turn* to get used to the idea of running the show without bribes!

True, it is sometimes a bit more challenging from my part, but it is worth it to train the children to do the right thing for the right reason - L’sheim Shamayim!

*

Now, you may ask: Does this method *always* work, with *all* children? Well, ideally, of course, it would. But, I must admit that there was one exception in my class. One boy, let’s call him Shmuly, did not take to it. I tried again and again,

“If I offered to give you a million dollars, and then I said that if you accept the million dollars, then, as a reward, I will give you a penny, what would you answer me?”

but could not succeed in getting him “on board.” Shmuly happened to be going through some emotional struggles, and simply refused to participate in almost anything that the class was doing.

I moved his seat very close to my desk, spoke to him a lot and gave him extra attention, but nothing seemed to make any difference. I knew that we first had to get him on board, to become part of the class, and only then could we go to the next step.

His parents suggested that I promise him some tangible reward. Maybe that would work. This attempt, too, led nowhere.

We finally came up with a solution that Shmuly liked. He would bring home a report each week which showed how many points he’d earned for good behavior and class participation. If he had earned the required amount of points, he would get to go out with his Mommy on a special trip. For each Pasuk that he said together with the class, he would get 100 points (It impresses them because it sounds like a lot more than 1 out of 6 points).

All he had to do was to learn only one pasuk a day. At the end of the week, he would have earned 600 points – the amount he needed to earn the trip with Mommy.

The following morning, as entered the class, he handed me a chart to be filled out as he gains his points. As we began learning Chumash, I looked at Shmuly and discreetly showed him the chart, thereby reminding him of “our

deal”. He whispered to me, with a BIG smile, “Rebbi, only one pasuk!” To which I responded “Sure!”

For the first time in many weeks, Shmuly opened his Chumash, asked me for the place, and got ready to begin. After finishing the first pasuk, I made sure he saw me writing down the number 100 on his chart. He was all smiles!

As I got ready to shift my attention to the rest of the class and begin the next pasuk, I turned to Shmuly and with my eyes wide open and a BIG, BIG smile, I raised two fingers with an inquisitive look, as if to say, “Shmuly, do you want to go for TWO HUNDRED points?” He smiled back and nodded, “YES!”

You can guess what happened after the second pasuk. Yes, he wanted more and more. From that day on, he would beg me (sometimes even during recess time) to learn more p’sukim. This continued throughout the year, B”H.

You are surely wondering whether Shmuly, like the rest of the class, is learning Torah and davening just for Hashem’s sake. The answer is YES!

At a certain point, Shmuly was offered a prize by the principal for good behavior and participation in class. He responded, “No thanks. I don’t want any prizes.”

PLEASANTLY SHOCKED!

Every single child, without exception, is “ready” for this kind of chinuch. The following series of events demonstrates the impact of this method.

From that moment on, I never again needed to give any tickets, points, prizes or anything ever again for learning or davening... How did this happen? Not by a miracle. It happened simply because I was finally determined to follow the Rebbe's Horaa.

Yanky told me that he finished the entire T'hillim on Shabbos Mevarchim. He added that when his uncle offered him a prize saying so much T'hillim, he answered, "No thanks, I don't want a prize. I said the T'hillim for Shabbos Mevarchim and not for a reward."

That day, I taught the children about the importance of Pidyon Shvuyim, adding that they can help a Yid get out of jail by bringing some money, and put "Pidyon Shvuyim money" on the homework sheet. The following day several boys brought in money. One of them, Yossi, brought \$30 with a note from his mother, saying that **it was all from his own money!**

I was so impressed. I told the class the story about the Tzfater Yid and Eliyahu HaNavi, how Eliyahu HaNavi asked him what special thing he did on the day of his Bar Mitzva, for which he has deserved that Eliyahu HaNavi should visit him. Eliyahu told him that he will reveal to him the secrets of the Torah only if he tells him about it. The Yid refused, saying, "Whatever I did was only for Hashem."

This caused a great tumult in Shamayim, and it was decided that this Yid's neshama will come down again to illuminate the world with Torah-secrets. That was the Baal Shem Tov!

I concluded by asking Yankel and Yossi, "If Eliyahu HaNavi comes to you and says that he will reveal to

you Torah-secrets on condition that you tell him about the good things you've done (giving your own money for pidyon shvuyim and refusing a prize for saying T'hillim), will you tell him?" They both answered, "No".

Not long afterwards, we had a Hachnasa L'cheider. After the class sang "Kinder kinder lernt torah, torah iz di beste s'choireh," the zeide of the child asked the class if they want doughnuts for learning Torah so well. Naturally, they loudly and proudly answered "NO!"

"How about Pizza?" asked the zeide. Again, they refused, except for Yudi, who was going through a difficult time and seeking a lot of negative attention, who brazenly screamed out, "Yes! I want Pizza!" I was naturally very upset, but chose to ignore it, so as not to "reward" negative behavior. But made a mental note in my mind, that perhaps this child does need physical rewards.

One morning, I "caught him" saying a few words of davening along with the class. I commented, "Wow! Yudi is davening soooooo nicely. Keep it up, Yudi." Naturally, he began davening even better, and did well for a good portion of the t'filla, which was quite unusual for him.

After davening, I called him quietly to my desk, and - referring back to my mental note - I slipped a chocolate coated wafer into his

hand, and said, "Yudi, this is for davening so nicely. Please don't tell anyone about the wafer."

Smilingly, he took the wafer, hid it under his shirt and slowly walked to his seat.

"You see," I thought to myself, "not necessarily are *all* boys able to operate on that high lofty level, of davening only for Hashem."

But I was proven otherwise. About 10-15 minutes later, Yudi walked over to me and quietly, returned the wafer, saying, "No thanks, Rebbe, I don't want the wafer for davening." Pleasantly surprised, I hugged him in front of the class and told the class what had just happened. "I gave Yudi a wafer for davening nicely, and he returned it to me, because he davened only for Hashem!"

Another boy spontaneously turned to me and said with a radiant face, "Rebbe, just imagine what a tumult is happening in Shamayim NOW!"

GEULA'DIKE CHINUCH

At the farbrengen of Simchas Torah, 5752, the Rebbe quoted the interpretation³ of our Chachamim on the words: "*Al Tig'u Vim'shichoy* (Do not touch My 'Moshiach' - anointed ones)"⁴ as referring to school-children, and explained that the Chinuch of children must go so far as to permeate and infuse them with the concept of Moshiach, to the extent that when one looks at these children, what does he see? - Moshiach!"

How do we actualize this seemingly lofty concept?

The answer was already given to us by the Rebbe, in the abovementioned Sich'a of Parshas VaYeira, that nowadays we are able to teach and train our children to serve Hashem purely l'sheim Shamayim, doing what's right only because it is right, and not for the sake of reward.

This sort of chinuch is indeed Geula'dik, for in the time of Geula, we will *all* be serving Hashem in this manner – solely for the sake of Hashem, with no ulterior motives.

THE TRUE GOAL: THE CORRIDOR OR THE PALACE?

There is another advantage to training a child in this way:

Let us imagine a corridor that leads to a beautiful palace. Everyone understands that the corridor is only a means by which one can reach the main goal – the palace. When we tell a child that if he learns a pasuk Chumash or davens nicely he will get a lollipop or a bicycle, we are giving him a message, loud and clear, that the pasuk Chumash is only the “Corridor”, whereas the prize is the goal – the “Palace”...

On the other hand, by engraving into the heart of the child Ahavas Hashem, and that “Torah Iz Di Beste S'choireh” (Torah is the best merchandise), this will become his reality. He will remember for the rest of his life

“I gave Yudi a wafer for davening nicely, and he returned it to me, because he davened only for Hashem!” Another boy spontaneously turned to me and said with a radiant face, “Rebbi, just imagine what a tumult is happening in Shamayim NOW!”

that the “Palace” is the **Torah**.

The Rebbe places only one condition, however, for this to succeed: that the teacher must speak from his heart. The teacher himself must feel that *Torah Iz takeh Di Beste S'choireh*,” That learning Torah, davening to Hashem and doing Mitzvos in general, is a privilege and not a burden, chas v'shalom.

A mother once admitted to me that she would bribe her son to daven by promising him prizes, because she herself found davening to be boring and a burden. She projected her negative view about davening onto her child, assuming that the only way to get him to do

such a “boring thing” is by promising him a prize.

Remember, words that leave the heart enter the heart.

[To be continued be”H]

NOTES:

1. T.T.T.O. “Yankel Yankel” – Avraham Fried
2. This, too, is in accordance with the Rebbe's shita. See Likkutei sichos vol. 37, page 79, Parshas B'Chukosai, the Rebbe explains how the physical reward we get from Hashem for Torah and mitzvos is no contradiction to serving Hashem Lishma.
3. Shabbos 119b
4. Divrei HaYamim-I 16:22.



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BLACK EYES AND BLUE WATER

By Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd, PhD

A neuroscience discovery about pupil dilation matches age-old wisdom from our daily prayers. Along the way we relive the Exodus and get ready for the redemption coming.

Watch out. Your poker face may be more revealing than you know. A neuroscientist at the University of Melbourne in Australia has shown that when people make decisions, their pupils dilate, a subtle cue that could be used to predict a person's intentions, or communicate with people with locked-in syndrome.

Researchers asked volunteers to pick one of five random digits that displayed on a monitor one after another for 2 seconds each, and to press a button indicating their choice after the final number vanished. An eye scanner revealed that volunteers' pupils were at their widest during the 2 seconds that corresponded to their eventual number choice. Carter's team found that they could predict with considerable accuracy which of the five numbers people would choose, based only on when their pupils dilated.[1]

This reaction is mediated by

the hormone noradrenalin which seems to help us finalize decisions we are leaning towards anyway. The pupil dilation response results from that surge in noradrenalin.

In general, the connection between the heart's desires and wide-eyed gawking is not all that new. The third paragraph of the Shma prayer includes, "And do not follow after your heart and after your eyes by which you go astray." [2] The Verse seems to mirror the thrust of the research - that the heart, i.e., our inner intent, guides not only our judgments but our perceptions as well.

Our Sages say, "The perception of the eye is contingent on the understanding of the heart." [3] In other words, we do not see things as *they* are - we see things as *we* are, depending on our heart's bias.

As interesting as it is, the whole emotional-hormonal-perceptual link seems very mechanistic, defining and self-

limiting. How do we get past our inherent biases? How do we liberate ourselves from our own human nature?

To preface, here's a relevant anecdote (which some of you may remember from 2 ½ years ago).

One Shabbos morning, years ago, my wife and I were chatting in our room about a little comment I'd heard the night before from a friend. "Everything is a test", he'd said. Simple but true, the words rang so real. While sharing my thoughts with Leah, one of our children, then all of two years old, burst into our room, grabbed my Shabbos hat (which was my only hat, the one I was about to wear to synagogue that morning) and dashed out the door and down the hall. I took off after him to find he was already in the bathroom furiously plunging the toilet with it.

Shocked, I quickly surmised what was bothering him. My wife, for the first time, had bought those sanitizing tablets that go in a holder inside the toilet tank and turn the water bright blue. Our clever, darling kid had decided that the blue water was evil and desperately wanted to make it go away. Zipping through his inventory of mental images stored in his two-year-old brain, he could find nothing better than

Tatty's Shabbos hat to do the dirty work. I gently told him, "No, no, no, that's Tatty's Shabbos hat. *Feh.*"

I pulled the hapless garment from its ignominious dunk, set it aside to dry or die or whatever, and proceeded to explain to him that the water is blue for a reason, that it wasn't bad, that Mommy did it to clean the water, and showed him the tablet inside the tank.

I came back to Leah laughing, told her the story, and added: "Do you realize what just happened here? Normally I'd go ballistic, yelling and screaming, maybe punishing the poor kid. Here I'm calm and happy. And what made the difference? Preparing my head with the thought that 'everything is a test.' That thought saved the day for me and for him.

Returning to our question of how to transcend our limitations and improve: If our perception follows our inner intent, and our reactions follow our perceptions, then if we want to improve, we need to work from the outside in and from the inside out, as follows.

That Verse about not following your heart and eyes is immediately preceded by "They shall be to you as *tzitzis*, and you shall look upon them and remember all the commandments of the L-rd and fulfill them." In other words, by looking at the *tzitzis* as a symbol, we will internalize their meaning as a reminder of Hashem's commandments. That in turn will motivate fulfilling them. By having a mitzvah frame of mind, we will have mitzvah perceptions and mitzvah reactions too.

Later words of that paragraph are instructive too: "I am the L-rd your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your

G-d." Why do we need to know about this geographical fact? It's really not about geography. Egypt - in Hebrew, *Mitzrayim*, - symbolizes *meitzarim* - limitations. The way to transcend our limitations is for the mind to acknowledge G-dliness and with that perspective, to influence the heart to appreciate G-dly things.

That in turn will open our eyes a little wider to recognize signs of redemption in the world, like the new research in the sciences that is attuned to the truths of the Torah. You see what you want to see, and by focusing on goodness, kindness and Moshiach NOW, that's exactly what we *will* see! Amen.

Dr. Aryeh (Arnie) Gotfryd, PhD is a chassid, environmental scientist, author and educator living near Toronto, Canada. To contact, read more or to book him for a talk, contact him at 416-858-9868 or info@arniegotfryd.com.

Do you have any unpublished letters from the Rebbe on the subjects of Science, Technology or Medicine? Dr. Gotfryd is offering cash for the privilege of publishing them.

NOTES:

[1] Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, DOI:

10.3389/fnhum.2010.00018

[2] Numbers 15:37-41

[3] Tosafos on the Talmud, Avoda Zara 28b

READERS WRITE

Arnie,

This is in response to your article, The Biological Shabbos Clock. Some time ago I posited that Shabbat was one of the most influential elements in life. At its most basic, it created a workable time frame (a month is too long and fluctuates too much). It is the engine behind economics since one has only six days in which to amass enough wealth to afford the Shabbat meal and the mandatory non-working day. Historically, Shabbat is what influenced the pagans in proximity to Jews to emulate the Jews and their family lives. This was especially true in the days of the Temples when there were "semi-Jews", somewhat equivalent of Noachides. Once again, the genius of Torah and the wisdom of Judaism becomes apparent which is why I say that the Jewish people is the paradigm of civilization and "normalcy" in a world that has demonstrated so much savagery in the names of other religions.

Marshall Shapiro
Vineland, Ontario

RABBI JACOBSON THE ESROGIM DEALER

Written by Rabbi Schneur Zalman Chanan
Translated by Menachem Har Zvi

When did the esrogim of Calabria, Italy first arrive in the United States? Why were these esrogim badly formed in the early years and suddenly beautiful esrogim began to arrive? How did the Rebbe Rayatz respond when he received a beautiful esrog from Calabria in the United States? A portrait of a Chasidic esrog dealer.

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter is the second in a series of chapters which will provide a sketch of the life of the *chasid*, R. Yisroel Jacobson. R. Yisroel, who immigrated to the United States in 1925, was known as the Rebbe's man in America. He was a key figure in the rescue efforts during the Rebbe RaYatz's imprisonment in 1927 and the great *bricha* – escape of the *chasidim* from Eastern Europe in 1946. The history of these events would not be complete without an account of R. Yisroel's activities. In addition to his rescue efforts during times

of crisis, R. Yisroel paved the way for all matters relating to Chabad *chasidim* and *chasidus* in America. The following chapter, published originally in the Hebrew edition of Beis Moshiah on Erev Succos, relates how R. Yisroel established the use of Calabrian *esrogim* in the United States.

I have devoted this chapter to the description one of the many great accomplishments of Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson in America.

Among the activities in which Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson was intensively involved was the supplying of Calabrian Yanover *esrogim* to American Jewry. Prior to his arrival in the United States, Calabrian *esrogim* were not to be found in the country and the lack thereof was not perceived to be a problem. Rabbi Jacobson introduced these *esrogim* to such a broad segment of American Jewry that he became the “king of *esrogim*.” It was well known amongst average Jews and in the various *kehillos* of *chasidim* that Rabbi Jacobson was the primary dealer of quality Calabrian *esrogim*. Due to the fact that Rabbi Jacobson was the sort of businessman who never had the necessary funds to purchase the *esrogim*, the Rebbe Rayatz and the Rebbe MH”M would loan him funds on a yearly basis for the purchase of the *esrogim*. My father and my brothers-in-law (R. Aizik Schwei and R. Zelig Katzman) were very meticulous with the *mitzvah* of *pri eitz hadar*¹ VaYikra 23:40 – literally, “beautiful fruit of the tree.”

– *esrog*. They would spend hours trying to find the finest *esrog*. It was known that the Rebbe MH”M would purchase his *esrogim* from Rabbi Jacobson. Rabbi Jacobson's *esrogim* were unusually fine and very beautiful. Consequently, the first place that one would go to choose an *esrog* was to R. Yisroel Jacobson.

R. Yisroel would customarily prepare forty *esrogim* for the Rebbe in the “lower *Gan Eden*,” as the antechamber to the Rebbe's *yechidus* room is called. The Rebbe would choose approximately twenty *esrogim* and he would return

the remainder to R. Yisroel. The day before Sukkos, R. Yisroel's room was like a beehive. Many *chasidim*, in their great love for the *mitzvah*, made a point to buy the *esrogim* that R. Yisroel had prepared for the Rebbe, and that the Rebbe's holy eyes had examined. My father, in contrast, had a different perspective on the matter: he argued, "One does not use an *esrog* which the Rebbe put aside." In other words, if the Rebbe saw an *esrog* and did not choose it, it apparently did not find favor in his eyes. How could he use an *esrog* which did not find favor in the eyes of the Rebbe?

Generally, the three of us – my father, my brother-in-law HaGaon HaChasid R. Aizik Schwei and I – would go together. For me, these were hours of great pleasure. Aside from this being an opportunity to learn about the laws of *hadar* –the beauty of the *esrog*- and the four *minim*, I greatly enjoyed listening to my father and Rabbi Jacobson conversing and reminiscing about times of old. I remember that Rabbi Jacobson once described his trip to the Rebbe Rayatz in Poland and his *yechidus* on that occasion. He related that the Rebbe Rayatz spoke with him at length regarding the Rebbe MHM's character and of his superior qualities.² An example of the Rebbe Rayatz's praise of the Rebbe MHM can be found in a letter to R. Yankel Katz of Chicago dated 20 Sivan 5706-1946. "... with regard to your request that my son-in-law, HaRav HaGaon

R. M.M. Shlita Schneerson, visit your community. Write your request directly to him. I do not know if you will be successful because by nature he is very concealed. In truth he is great in knowledge of Torah, *niglah* and *chasidus*, with a wondrous *bekius*. With gratitude to Hashem I have *nachas* from him. May Hashem give him success both materially and spiritually..." Igros Kodesh of the Rayatz, Volume 9, page 410.

When my father asked what precisely the Rebbe Rayatz said, R. Yisroel responded, "R. Chaikel, you're no fool. You understand that I cannot reveal that which I heard because I must do as I was ordered." I remember an additional episode related by R. Yisroel. In the year 5675 – 1914, *chasidim* were unable to procure a Calabrian *esrog* for the Rebbe RaShab. He only had a non-hybrid *esrog* from Eretz Yisroel. R. Yisroel remembered how anguished the Rebbe was because of this. He related that because of his great anguish, the Rebbe became ill. His face swelled and he contracted a high fever. As a result of his illness, the Rebbe did not go to Shul during the first days of Sukkos.

On one occasion, R. Yisroel related how he became an *esrogim* dealer.

I arrived in the United States in the month of Teves 5686-1925. In preparation for my first Sukkos (Tishrei 5687-1926), R. Eliyahu Simpson took me to



The Rebbe selecting a lulav

buy *esrogim*. I began by buying *esrogim* from Eretz Yisroel for the members of the Shul in which I served as the Rav. When I desired to purchase a Calabrian *esrog* for myself, I was in for a big disappointment. Rabbi Simpson told me that there are no Calabrian *esrogim* in America, and if I wanted an *esrog* for Sukkos, my only option was to purchase an *esrog* from Eretz Yisroel. As it was very close to Sukkos, I had no choice. Even if I had contacted someone in Europe requesting that they send an *esrog* from Calabria, the *esrog* would not have arrived in time for Sukkos. You cannot imagine the anguish that I had, that as a Chabad *chasid*, I would have to make a *brocha* on an *esrog* which was not Italian Calabrian. For generations, *chasidim* have known that there is a tradition to specifically use *esrogim* from Calabria, as the Alter Rebbe said that this is for a "reason known to him."³ See *Sefer Haminhagim Chabad*, English edition page 140, footnote 541.

At that moment, I promised myself and Rabbi Simpson that for the following Sukkos (5768-1927), there would be, with G-d's help, Calabrian *esrogim* in the United States, not just for me, but also for R. Eliyahu and others. Later that year, prior to the summer, I wrote to R. Chache Fagen, then in Riga, requesting that he send ten Calabrian *esrogim*. R. Chache sent the *esrogim* a long time in advance of Sukkos. Rabbi Simpson, I, and four others from *anash* used six of the *esrogim* and the other four went un-purchased. In the year 5689-1928, I ordered twenty Calabrian *esrogim*. The truth of the matter is

that in the early years, I would not receive beautiful *esrogim*. However, over the years, when I began to purchase *esrogim* from Mr. Kirah (the *esrogim* dealer who sold *esrogim* to the Rebbe RaShab and Rebbe Rayatz), I would receive unusually beautiful and fine *esrogim*.

In a letter written to R. Yisroel in the summer of 5688-1928, Mr. Kirah discusses the sending of fifty *esrogim* for the price of \$1.50 per *esrog*. When R. Yisroel became a serious *esrogim* dealer and purchased two or three hundred *esrogim*, Mr. Kirah related to him that after the First World War, when the Bolshevik regime ascended to power, the large purchases of *esrogim* of the Chabad *chasidim* in Russia ceased. However, when Mr. Kirah realized that R. Yisroel began developing the market for Calabrian *esrogim* in the United States, paying a dollar (!) for each *esrog*, he began to personally travel to Calabria to choose fine *esrogim* for shipment to R. Yisroel.

In the archive of Rabbi Jacobson, there is a letter from the administration of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Warsaw – R. Schrage Faivel Zalmanov and R. Moishe Leib. Rotshtein, dated 7 Elul 5687–1927. “We have already fulfilled your request regarding the *esrogim*. Ten *esrogim* will be sent to you directly from [Yanov] near Calabria. In the near future, we will notify you via telegram that the *esrogim* have been sent. The telegram will obviously precede this letter. We do not yet know the price, until we receive a detailed letter including the price of the postage.”

To return to R. Jacobson’s story –

After I began to personally travel to Italy (1955) and cut the *esrogim*, it became clear to me why the Calabrian *esrogim* were not that beautiful, lacking shape and form, with unusually long stems. Mr. Kirah would not personally cut the *esrogim*, but rather purchase them wholesale from the owners of the orchards. He would write to the owner of an orchard, requesting a specific sum of *esrogim* from the region of Calabria (in southern Italy, a most fertile region in southern Italy close to the Island of Sicily). Upon receiving a letter from Mr. Kirah, the farmer would cut the requested number of *esrogim* off the trees while leaving them attached to their long stems. They were then packed and shipped overseas. The *esrogim* which grow in Calabria are not planted for the purpose of the *mitzvah* of *esrog*, rather they are one of many species of fruit which grow there in profusion. Tens of miles in that region are full of *esrog* orchards. All sorts of fruit grow in the region – pomegranates, figs, olives, etc. The locals do not use the *esrogim* as they are. They are prepared for consumption through frying or cooking, followed by salting. Consequently, the locals are not

particular about the perfection and external beauty of the *esrog*, especially the beauty of the outer skin. A large quantity of *esrogim* grow on each tree and many *esrogim* grow to be quite large, weighing up to four or five *litra*.⁴ One Talmudic *litra* is approximately equivalent to one pound.

To accommodate the weight of the *esrogim*, the farmers lower the branches in order that they grow outward – lengthwise (as opposed to upwards) and supports are built for each branch. Many *esrogim* can grow on one small branch. In addition, supports are constructed for an individual heavy *esrog*. The *esrog* is supported by a small wall built of small sticks lying lengthwise (similar to the partition described in the Mishna (Eruvin 16b) which is constructed of cords lying lengthwise, in order to permit carrying for the members of a traveling caravan). These sticks are built in a manner which encompasses three sides.

Since the external beauty of the *esrog* is not of importance, the locals are not particular with this matter. Therefore, the *esrog* is placed on the supports, or at times, they place the *esrog* on a large thorn on the *esrog* tree. As a result of these farming practices, the Calabrian *esrogim* are not externally beautiful.

Until this day, the farmers do not understand what we do with the *esrogim* and why we are so particular with the beauty of its skin. Now that I go to cut *esrogim* on my own, I see that it is difficult to find even one good *esrog* from amongst ten trees. At times, it is difficult to find one good *esrog* in an orchard of tens of trees. I work together with a team of four non-Jewish farmers and after ten hours of work, we are able to gather only dozens of *esrogim*.

In the year 5690–1929, the Rebbe Rayatz visited the United States. In his diary, R. Yisroel writes of his involvement in procuring the four *minim*-types for the Rebbe.

Prior to his arrival in the United States, the Rebbe Rayatz ordered ten *esrogim* and ten *lulavim* from Mr. Kirah of Genoa Italy. (Both the Rebbe Rayatz and the Rebbe RaShab purchased *esrogim* from Mr. Kirah and from Mr. Kirah’s father.)

The Rebbe’s *lulavim* and *esrogim* were received at my address, together with thirty *esrogim* for the purpose of selling. (There were ten *esrogim* per box, one box for the Rebbe and three for me, plus a package of *lulavim*.)

The neighborhood of Crown Heights where we had rented an apartment for the Rebbe consisted of more modern Jews and did not have a *mikvah* at that time. Those who needed a *mikvah* would come to use the

mikvah on Christopher Street. Afterwards, they would come to my house and have a warm drink and *mezonos*. Some *chasidim* who had stopped at my home after a *mikvah* visit related to the Rebbe that I had exceptionally beautiful *esrogim*. My feelings were that if my *esrogim* were truly more beautiful than the Rebbe's, then I would without question give my finest *esrog* to the Rebbe.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, R. Chache Fagen called me and said that the Rebbe requested that I bring my most beautiful *esrog*. I brought an *esrog* which was truly beautiful in size, appearance and cleanliness. When the Rebbe saw my *esrog*, he said, "This is not a *galus-exile esrog*! Where did you get this?" I replied, "Mr. Kirah sent me three boxes, each containing ten *esrogim*, plus an additional box for the Rebbe." The Rebbe responded, "My *esrogim* are also beautiful, but they don't compare to the beauty of yours."

The Rebbe motioned to R. Chache Fagen to leave, and asked me how much he needed to pay for the *esrog*. I replied that I request of the Rebbe the merit to recite the *brocha* on the *esrog* which I give to the Rebbe as a gift. I added, "Rebbe, it is '*mishelachem* – [your own] without doubt.'⁵ See Sukkah 29b. The Gemara states that an *esrog* requires ownership- "*mishelachem*" [your own] for proper fulfillment of the *mitzvah*.

The Rebbe responded "But you could have sold it to one of your *baalei batim*- Shul members. I replied, "I have enough for the *baalei batim*. There will be extra." The Rebbe added, "You could have received a good price for this *esrog* from a *baal habais*" – Shul member! I replied that I have very fine *esrogim* for the *baalei batim*.

The Rebbe asked R. Chache Fagen to bring his hat and he blessed me. Afterwards he asked if there are *lulavim* that grow in America, because the *lulavim* which were received on his behalf in the beginning of Elul are no longer fresh. I responded that fine *lulavim* which grow in California and Arizona are available. The Rebbe requested that I bring him a *lulav* which was "centered (the spine precisely centered, not bent to the side), not a thin one, a straight one, without *kneplach*"

(literally 'buttons' – this refers to rounded tips. There are those who make a point of using these, however, the Alter Rebbe is stringent in this matter).⁶ See the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch Hilchos Lulav, 645:20.

The Rebbe bought *hadasim* from R. Eliyahu Simpson. The Rebbe requested help in cutting the stem of his *esrog* because it was long and crooked. The shochet, R. Avraham Gordon, who lived in the neighborhood,

Mention must be made of their great efforts. They displayed the unique enthusiasm characteristic of simple Jews, that every detail be just right.

was called. He arrived with the knife that he used for the slaughtering of fowl. The Rebbe was concerned and wondered how to properly hold the *esrog* during the cutting so that the stem not be severed. R. Avraham requested the *esrog*; he placed the stem on the edge of the table and pressed the knife on the stem thereby cutting it properly. He similarly cut the *lulav* which was quite large, but very beautiful.

My oldest daughter, Chaya Sara, was nine years old at the time. While still in Russia, she once experienced a deep fright due to a fire. As a result, she developed a squint. I requested of the Rebbe to bring my daughter to him for a blessing. We entered on the first day of Chol HaMoed Sukkos during twilight. The Rebbe said to her, "Look at me in the eyes." I was overwhelmed with emotion and said, "Look at the Rebbe in the eyes!" The Rebbe said to me "She's looking. She sees properly!", and thank G-d, since then, she is fine.

I related to the members of my Shul that the Rebbe needed a Sukkah. The brothers R. Tzvi Hirsh and R. Hillel Dvorkin from Chechersk and R. Yosef Honkim volunteered. Since they were carpenters, they purchased the necessary materials and built two Sukkahs, a large Sukkah for the community and an additional Sukkah on the roof of the first floor, accessible via a door on the second floor.

Mention must be made of their great efforts. They displayed the unique enthusiasm characteristic of simple Jews, that every detail be just right. I remember how Yosef Honkim measured and built the Sukkah in a way that the Rebbe would not have to raise his foot too high when entering the Sukkah. R. Avraham Plotkin (the father –in-law of R.Nachum Chadash and R. Leib Garelick) also arrived to help with the construction of the Sukkah. When told, "But you're not a carpenter!"- he responded, "Then I will bring them whatever they need." When they needed nails, he went and purchased nails, paying out of his own pocket. He also purchased a large sack of fruit for all the workers. When asked regarding the contents of

the sack, he responded (jokingly) “They give me this as an addition to the nails.”

The following are two letters from the Rebbe Rayatz to R. Yisroel relating to the *esrogim* business.

B”H, 25 Tammuz, 5703

Brooklyn

My beloved friend HaRav HaGaon, vatik v’chasid, a G-d fearing man, HaRav Morainu HaRav R. Yisroel, may he be well,

Greetings and Blessings!

I herewith send a check for the sum of one hundred dollars as a loan for the *esrogim* business. I “attach” to this my blessing that G-d fulfill the blessing of my great-grandfather, the Zemach Zedek who blessed my grandfather the Rebbe MaHarash that the funds disbursed for Gemilas Chasadim – loans, be successful, both materially and spiritually. May it be G-d’s will that the *esrogim* sent from Eretz Yisroel be protected during their passage and received in the appropriate time. May their sale bring you good livelihood both materially and spiritually.

B”H, 7 Tishrei 5706

Brooklyn

My friend, vatik v’chasid, G-d fearing man, HaRav Morainu R. Yisroel, may he be well.

Greetings and Blessings!

Thank you for the notification regarding the *esrogim*. Please choose for me five *esrogim*. (My son-in-law HaRav M. M. S. Shlita will choose them.)

With blessings to be sealed for a good year.

The following is a letter sent by the Rebbe RaYatz to the Department of war requesting aid in procuring a Calabrian *esrog*.

By the Grace of G-d

Elul 27, 5704

Sept. 15, 1944

Brooklyn, N. Y.

The Department of War

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sirs!

While realizing that the conduct of the war occupies your fullest attention,

I trust that your Department may find it possible to extend to me the courtesy and favor of my request — a gesture which would be deeply appreciated not merely by myself, but also by the hundreds of thousands of American citizens whose spiritual leader I am privileged to be.

For several generations it has been the sacred custom of my ancestors, who have been the heads of the Chabad

Hierarchy and the recognized leaders of world orthodox Jewry, to get the kind of citrus fruit known as ‘Ethrog’, which is needed for the ritual of our festival of Succoth (Tabernacles), from *Calabria* — the peninsula in the southeast of Italy. Even during the last war, facilities were granted to my saintly father to have a special emissary bring a number of those citrus fruits from Calabria to Stockholm and thence to Russia, so that my late father and I and some of our Hierarchy members could perform the sacred precept of our religion in accordance with the custom of our ancestors.

Now that Calabria is liberated, thank G-d, I would deem it a great privilege to once again be able to observe this sacred and cherished precept of my faith on Calabria-grown ‘Ethrogs,’ and at the same time offer a special prayer for the speedy and complete victory of the Allies over fruit grown on liberated soil.

I therefore venture to ask you for the great favor of cabling to the competent authorities in that particular district to send out per *Air Mail* some ten ‘Ethrogs’ grown in *Calabria*, so that I may get them before our Succoth Festival which takes place from October 2nd to October 10th.

Needless to say that all expenses incurred in this connection will be gratefully reimbursed by me.

Thanking you in anticipation of your kind reply,

Very truly yours,

R I S : nm

P.S. I understand that the botanical term for the ‘Ethrog’ tree is “Citrus

Medica” and for the fruit “Malum Medica” or “Malum Persica.”

NOTES:

1 VaYikra 23:40 – literally, “beautiful fruit of the tree.”

2 An example of the Rebbe Rayatz’s praise of the Rebbe MH”M can be found in a letter to R. Yankel Katz of Chicago dated 20 Sivan 5706-1946. “... with regard to your request that my son-in-law, HaRav HaGaon

R. M.M. Shlita Schneerson, visit your community. Write your request directly to him. I do not know if you will be successful because by nature he is very concealed. In truth he is great in knowledge of Torah, niglah and chasidus, with a wondrous bekus. With gratitude to Hashem I have nachas from him. May Hashem give him success both materially and spiritually...” Igros Kodesh of the Rayatz, Volume 9, page 410.

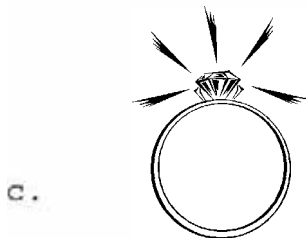
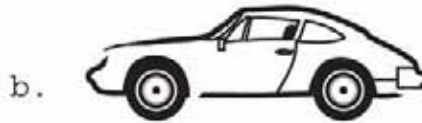
3 See Sefer Haminhagim Chabad, English edition page 140, footnote 541.

4 One Talmudic litra is approximately equivalent to one pound.

5 See Sukkah 29b. The Gemara states that an *esrog* requires ownership- “mishelachem” [your own] for proper fulfillment of the mitzvah.

6 See the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch Hilchos Lulav, 645:20.

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.

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Oren Popper, *Field Representative*

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¹ "Why Disability" booklet, published by National Underwriter.

² Disability income products underwritten and issued by Berkshire Life Insurance Company of America, Pittsfield, MA, a wholly owned stock subsidiary of The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, New York, NY, or The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, New York, NY.

DO SHLUCHIM REST ON SHABBOS?

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

Stories about the power of the seventh day, Shabbos, in being mekarev Yidden.

The Rebbe explains that the number seven expresses the perfection in Creation while the number ten goes even “beyond Creation” which is achieved through mitzvos that draw k’dusha down to the world.

I think that when you bring *Beis Moshiach* magazine into your home every week, it brings a k’dusha and chayus from “beyond Creation” into Creation. A Chassidishe house is the most perfect home in Creation and when you bring in a Chassidishe publication it elevates the home into an atmosphere of Geula that is “beyond Creation.” Everybody in the home gets to read ideas about Geula from different angles, sichos, stories, diaries, news and farbrengens and it is all permeated with the anticipation of Geula.

I can say from my own experience that I know of a number

of families who were initially uncomfortable with the topic of Geula. When I gave them *Beis Moshiach* their attitudes changed. Instead of questions in the style of the second son in the Hagada, I began getting questions in the style of the chacham like “what is the source in the Rebbe’s sichos” or “what is the source of the p’sak din that the Rebbe is b’chezkas Moshiach,” questions that evinced a genuine desire to know.

I’m writing this introduction in order to encourage all readers and subscribers to think about where else they can introduce *Beis Moshiach* so others can benefit and we can hasten the Geula. I have already suggested giving back issues to friends, mekuravim, waiting rooms of dentists and that you recommend that people subscribe.



THE POWER OF A SHABBOS MEAL

Back to the number seven and the seventh day of the week, Shabbos. This week I have some stories that occurred at Chabad houses on Shabbos.

Rabbi Nechemia Shmerling, shliach in Kfar Yona, related a story about a young family who were his Shabbos guests. The father is the son of people who own a famous restaurant in the center of the country, not a Chassidishe restaurant, to say the least. It is open seven days a week and is not kosher. The son recently got involved in the Chabad house. R’ Shmerling invited him several times but kept on getting pushed off until that Shabbos when they finally showed up.

They walked into the shliach’s house nervously, looking around as



though to ensure that it wasn't dangerous to proceed. The father walked in first and he loudly exclaimed, "Wow! This is a really nice house!" He continued looking around and exclaimed, "Wow, you have nice pictures." He looked at the set table and said, "Wow, such a nicely arranged table." Every few minutes he found something else to compliment, the food, the atmosphere...and at the end of the meal he said that he came from a family that was very far from religious observance. He had been indoctrinated that religious Jews lived primitively, ate only gefilte fish and maybe sat on the floor and ate with their hands and feet. No wonder he was apprehensive about accepting the invitation!

Since that Shabbos the family has drawn closer to Chabad, the Rebbe, and Torah and mitzvos.

I KNOW YOU!

R' Shmerling:

Some years ago, when I went to the Kinus HaShluchim, I met the shliach from Mazkeret Batya, Aryeh Greenberg, on the plane. Next to R' Greenberg sat two people he was bringing to the Rebbe. I got into a friendly conversation with the two of them and our friendship continued when we arrived in New York. The two of them had a problem with their visas to the US and I helped them until it was all arranged and then we traveled together to 770. Since then, every year I meet these two friends who have an annual tradition to join the shliach when he attends the Kinus HaShluchim.

One year, again on a flight to the Kinus, I met the two mekuravim who also had the 18 year old nephew of one of them along. They told me that he was recently orphaned of his father and they decided to give him a boost before he was drafted and to take him to a powerful spiritual experience, spending a few days with the Rebbe. I spoke to the fellow on the flight and during the Kinus.

One Friday, two years later, the sun was setting and Shabbos spread its wings over Kfar Yona and the nearby military base. The soldiers know that whoever remains at the base on Shabbos can attend the davening at Kfar Yona and after the davening each soldier is invited to the home of one of Anash who davens at the shul.

When the davening was over, I invited some soldiers to join me for the Shabbos meal. On the way, they introduced themselves and began talking and then one of the soldiers realized that he knew me from the Kinus.

"Ah, you're Rabbi Shmerling? I'll never forget how pleasant you made my visit to 770. My uncles always talk about you. I'm so happy to be able to have a Shabbos meal with

you."

Naturally, after that, the mood at the table was upbeat and R' Shmerling farbrenged with them until the wee hours of the night.

A CONVERSATION OVERHEARD

Rabbi Shimshon Tal, shliach in Hod HaSharon, related the following:

Last Shavuot the Chabad house had several minyanim for the Torah reading of the Ten Commandments for all the children (and adults) who wanted to participate. One of the times, in the afternoon, some people were sitting around the Chabad house waiting for a minyan so they could begin the Torah reading.

Mrs. Tal supervised the children in the yard. On a nearby bench sat two old men, Holocaust survivors. Mrs. Tal overheard one of them telling the other emotionally that he remembered that in his hometown there was a person who always gathered people for a minyan.

Since they were speaking positively about davening with a minyan, Mrs. Tal told her husband that there were two men outside who could complete the minyan. R' Tal asked them whether they could come up a few stairs in order to complete a minyan and hear the Torah. The man who was recounting his memories said he could not go up the stairs and his walker testified to that, but his friend could go. In the end, the more infirm one made an effort and they both were part of the minyan.

The old man was very moved throughout the reading of the Torah. He was also an active participant when R' Tal announced Yizkor. By the end of the davening, he announced that he liked the place and from then on he would attend the davening every Shabbos.

The old man, walker and all, does indeed show up every Shabbos.

“Don’t be concerned if your Shabbos table is not run in military order. It’s okay if the children are a bit mischievous. A more relaxed atmosphere can be the thing to inspire mekuravim and give them the desire to have a Shabbos table of their own.”

He slowly goes up the stairs of the Chabad house and joins the davening. He even invites his friends to join him.

SHABBATONS AND THEIR IMPACT

Shluchim say that one of the most powerful things that motivate people to do t’shuva is a Shabbos meal at the Chabad house. Shlucha in Dimona, Mrs. Naava Gliss has this to say:

“Don’t be concerned if your Shabbos table is not run in military order. It’s okay if the children are a bit mischievous. A more relaxed atmosphere can be the thing to inspire mekuravim and give them the desire to have a Shabbos table of their own.”

At the Shabbos Kalla that the Gliss family hosted for their daughter, one of their guests was a Lubavitcher woman whose husband and she are considered Lubavitch in every respect for the past ten years. This woman said that the first thing that motivated her to get closer to Chabad was visiting the Gliss family for Shabbos meals. She remembered the first Shabbos that she spent with them.

“Next to me sat a ten year old girl (the kalla) and she spoke to me throughout the meal. Thanks to this adorable little girl I felt at home and it led me to think how I could also have a Shabbos table in my home

with such a marvelous atmosphere.”

Another woman from Dimona told the Gliss family:

“My home became religious thanks to your Kabbalas Shabbos parties that I attended when I was a little girl. I still have the taste in my mouth of the treat that was given out there at the end of the gathering. I learned what Shabbos candles are, about going to shul, Kiddush, a festive meal, and Birkas HaMazon. When I got married, I told my husband that that is how I want our home to look on Shabbos and holidays.”

A final story from Dimona:

Tehilla was a girl from an anti-religious house who came every week to the Kabbalas Shabbos wearing shorts and a sleeveless top. R’ Gliss and his wife didn’t know how opposed her parents were to these visits. Every Shabbos, she went home and told her parents, “When I grow up, I want to be a rabbanit just like Naava from Chabad.”

Today, Tehilla is a religious preschool teacher and most of the songs about mitzvos and p’sukim that she teaches her students are ones she learned at the Mesibos Shabbos at the Chabad house in Dimona.

THANKS TO KEEPING SHABBOS

Meir (a fictitious name) is a successful businessman and a

mekurav of the Chabad house in his city. He attends the davening and shiurim and makes generous donations to their activities. A few years ago he had an opportunity to import a large number of electrical switches from Turkey so he could sell them in Israel at a large profit. Meir looked into it and found it a worthwhile venture. He went to Turkey, visited the factory, considered the cost of marketing and almost signed on the deal but at the last minute he decided to return to Israel and to ask the Rebbe about it.

In a conversation with the shliach, it was made clear to Meir that even if the deal seemed terrific, if the Rebbe would say “no,” it was no deal. He wrote to the Rebbe and put the letter into a volume of Igros Kodesh. When they opened the volume the answer was, “regarding the electrical lights, it would be worthwhile to set up a Shabbos clock in your house.” The man understood immediately that the Rebbe wanted him to commit to not opening or shutting lights on Shabbos and he did so.

Armed with the Rebbe’s bracha and his good resolution, he went back to Turkey to sign on the deal. The appointment was for Sunday morning and he arrived in Turkey on a Friday, very close to Shabbos.

“When I arrived at the hotel, it was Shabbos already. I wanted to read but remembered that I could not turn on the light. I opened the door and sat in the doorway so I could read by the light of the hallway. The people who passed by thought I was odd but I didn’t care.

“After Shabbos, when I went to sign the contract, they told me they had decided to lower the purchase price by 15% which greatly increased my profits. I have no doubt that this profit was a result of keeping Shabbos as the Rebbe told me to do.”

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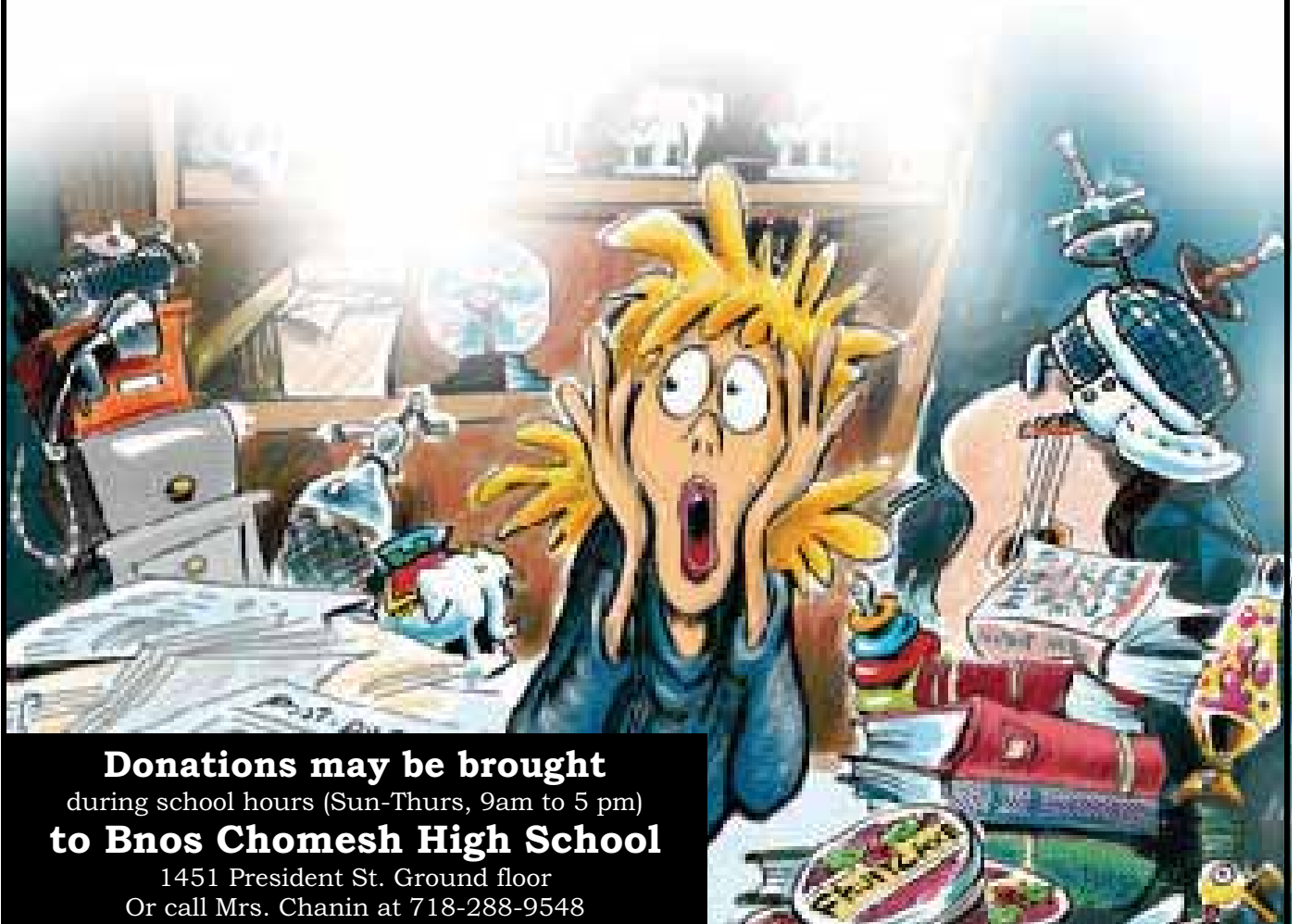
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LOST ORPHANS RETURN TO LUBAVITCH

By Shneur Zalman Berger

*They were far from their parents, all alone, and far from the Chassidim. Memories faded and their vestiges of Yiddishkait vanished into communism. Countless children of Chassidishe homes were uprooted during the siege of Leningrad. Some of them returned to their families and their roots but many others did not. * Here is the story of six children, out of hundreds, who returned to Lubavitch: Zelig Altheus, Rivka and Mussia Shapiro, Feigel, Rochel and Zalman Kleiman.*

R' Shmuel Betzalel tried explaining to his nephew that he had come to rescue him from the orphanage. But Zelig, who at the age of three or four knew how to pour

his heart out with traditional Chabad niggunim, by now had forgotten not only the tunes, but his parents and origin as well. All he wanted was to remain in the Russian orphanage.



He was grateful to the communist party for saving him...

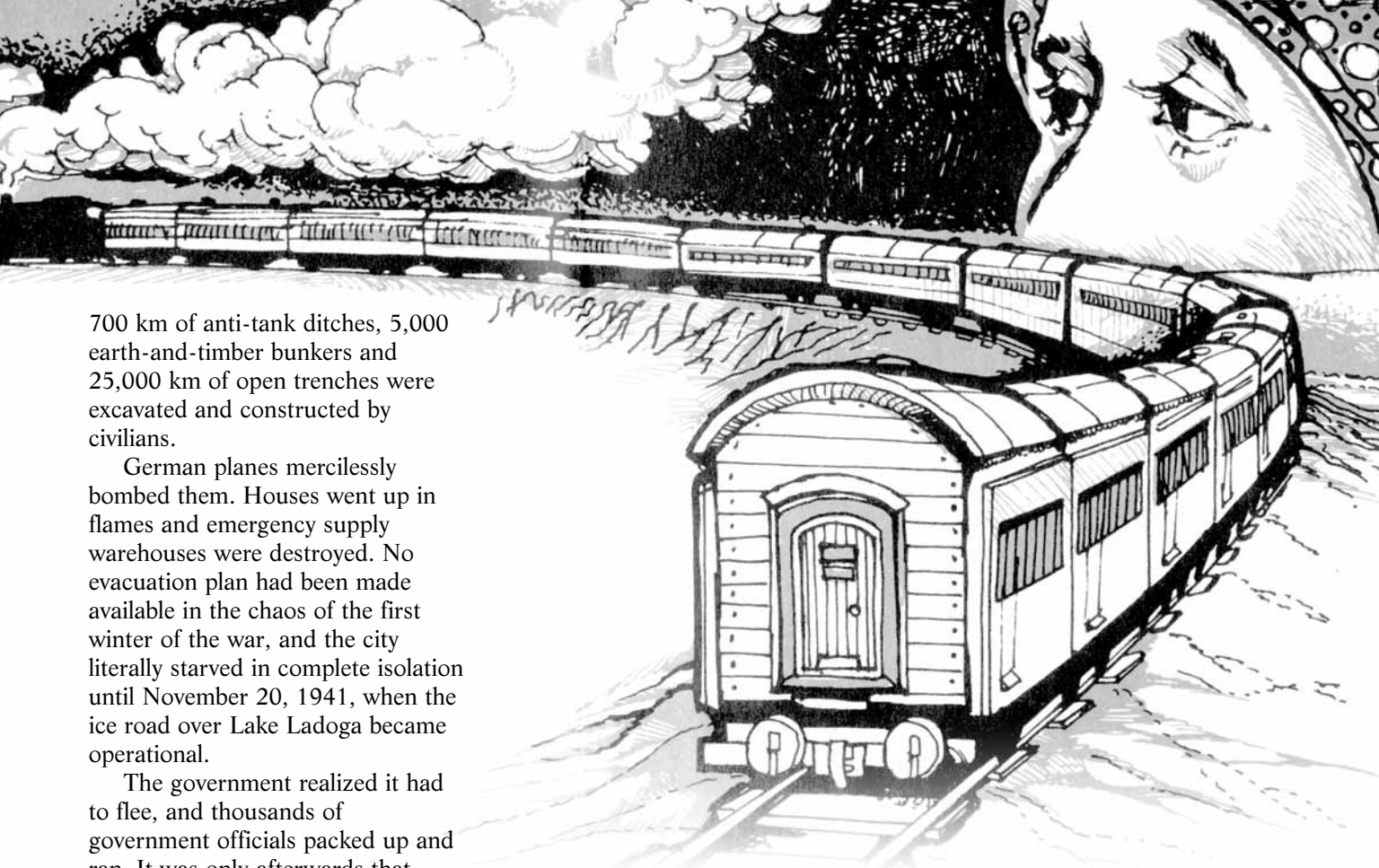
"Where will we go when we recover," asked Sarah Shapiro, "since we don't have parents?" A few hours later she passed away, leaving behind two little sisters in a Russian hospital where they lived alone for a long period of time. Due to illness, starvation and continuous travails they no longer remembered their family's names and their Chassidic past. It didn't seem possible that anyone would save them...

Zalman refused to go to shul to daven on Yom Kippur. Communist education had brainwashed his young mind. He had forgotten that he had ever learned Chumash with his father. R' Shmaryahu Sossonkin told his family not to pressure him and hoped from the bottom of his heart that Zalman would slowly return to his roots...

These are three true vignettes, terrible stories from the lives of six Lubavitcher orphans who lost their parents, relatives, communities and Chassidic way of life during World War II. They were a few of the fortunate ones who returned to their families and communities.

The Germans laid siege to Leningrad, the pride of Russia, from 16 Elul 5701/1941 to 22 Teives 5704/1944. This 900 day siege killed hundreds of thousands of people.

On 28 Teives 5701/1941, the Council of Deputies of the Leningrad administration enlisted tens of thousands of people to construct fortifications. A total of 190 km of timber barricades, 635 km of wire entanglements,



700 km of anti-tank ditches, 5,000 earth-and-timber bunkers and 25,000 km of open trenches were excavated and constructed by civilians.

German planes mercilessly bombed them. Houses went up in flames and emergency supply warehouses were destroyed. No evacuation plan had been made available in the chaos of the first winter of the war, and the city literally starved in complete isolation until November 20, 1941, when the ice road over Lake Ladoga became operational.

The government realized it had to flee, and thousands of government officials packed up and ran. It was only afterwards that civilians were allowed to leave, via trains that left one after the other. The Germans bombed the bridges so as to cut Leningrad off from the world.

It was only a matter of time before starvation and contagious diseases would ravage the city. Laborers were apportioned 600 grams of bread a day; workers were given 400 grams; children and those who were supported were given only 300 grams. Large quantities of wheat, flour and sugar were destroyed in the bombings. The electricity was cut off and during the winter it was bitter cold and there was nothing anyone could do about it.

Despite the massive siege, the Germans were unable to conquer the city thanks to the fortifications that the government had built with the help of its citizens.

During this period, as tens of thousands of people were drafted to build the fortifications, the

government ordered children to be sent out of the city, stating it was too dangerous for them. The real reason was so that the children wouldn't inhibit parents from helping in the war effort.

The government filled trains with hundreds of thousands of children, who were brought deep into Russia under the supervision of teachers and appointed counselors. This was seemingly a noble act but the bitter truth was that many thousands of families were torn asunder. Chaos and confusion reigned. Many parents were killed in the war from bombing, starvation or disease, and the children remained under the supervision of "Mother Russia," raised in state orphanages that were built for this purpose.

The tragedy was great among Chassidishe families as children were torn from their parents. The separation was both physical and spiritual. Many Chassidishe children never returned to their roots, whether because of the ravages of

war, brainwashing, or because their parents were killed and the children were no longer sought out. Lubavitch lost many of her children.

The exceptions were those Lubavitcher families that fled Leningrad on the last trains out. They went mainly to Tashkent and Samarkand, where they underwent other suffering no less difficult, but at least the families were united.

"I LOVE THE REBBE"

One of those children was Rabbi Chaim Zelig Altheus, *a"h* who was born in Leningrad. His father was Rabbi Menashe Altheus. R' Chaim Zelig had a brother named Sholom Dovber.

When the Rebbe Rayatz went to Leningrad, R' Menashe was a *ben bayis* (household regular) in the Rebbe's house. He raised his children to love the Rebbe, as his neighbor, R' Isaac Karasik, later related:

"I remember that when I once

entered R' Menashe's house at night. As he was putting the children to sleep, he recited the Shma with them. When they finished, he said with them, 'I love the Rebbe,' and then added, 'I also love Mama and Tatte.'"

R' Menashe raised his children in the ways of Chassidus and if one may say so - also in the ways of Nikolayev, the city of Chassidishe singers. By three or four years of age, Chaim Zelig would sit on the steps and hum to himself *niggunei gaaguim* of Nikolayev, to the delight of all who heard him.

During the German blockade of Leningrad, R' Menashe was forcibly inducted into the army. He took a quick course for medics and served on one of the Soviet submarines. On one of his first trips, he set out with the submarine in the Baltic Sea. The submarine left Leningrad for Estonia which had already been captured by the Germans. As the submarine approached Tallinn, the capitol of Estonia, the submarine suffered a concerted attack by German destroyers, and all crew members drowned, including R' Menashe. It was Erev Sukkos. A few months later, his wife died in the presence of the children. A short while later, the brother, Sholom Dovber, died of hunger in the presence of Zelig.

Zelig remained the sole survivor of his family and he was utterly depressed. He did not want to live any longer and he cried day and night, "I want to go to Mama in heaven!"

His mother's sister helped him by forcing him to swallow a bit of food every day while he constantly yearned for death.

As time passed, the streets filled with orphans who wandered about aimlessly. Hunger reigned. The parents of many of them had died or had been drafted, and the government decided to remove them to safer areas. Zelig's aunt thought it would be to his advantage to leave

the besieged city. Zelig was put on an armored train full of children that broke through front lines and traveled deep into Russia, where he was put into a state orphanage.

The peace and quiet, no longer being subjected to 24 hours a day of shrieking shells and deafening explosions and having to crowd into a corner while waiting for a mighty bang, helped Zelig regain his sanity somewhat. Occasionally, scenes of the terrors of Leningrad and the terrible sight of the deaths of his mother and brother came to his mind, but the routine of everyday life dulled the sharpness of his memories. With time, calmness replaced the fear.

But everything has its price. The mind of the youngster, who had just been saved from the horrors of war, was brainwashed by the staff of the orphanage with the ideology of communism. They taught the children that their lives had been saved thanks to Mother Russia and Father Stalin and that the communist party would be the one to destroy the Nazis and bring happiness to the world. Like everybody else, Zelig accepted what those who cared for him told him. He was educated in this fashion for three years.

The living conditions in the orphanages during the war years were horrendous, but, fortunately for Chaim Zelig and his friends, there was a river nearby, and when they felt hungry, they went fishing.

RESCUING ZELIG

At the end of the war, his uncle, R' Shmuel Betzalel Altheus, found out that only young Zelig remained of his brother's family, and that he was in an orphanage. He went immediately to the orphanage, introduced himself as Zelig's father and asked to speak to him. The staff was afraid of a meeting between them because he would take away their "catch," but R' Shmuel Betzalel

insisted and the meeting finally took place.

Later on, R' Shmuel Betzalel related that at their first meeting, Zelig did not want to talk about what happened in Leningrad and about his family. The tragedy was too difficult to deal with and he preferred forgetting about it. R' Shmuel tried explaining that he had come to save his nephew but Zelig had forgotten his parents and his origin and wanted to remain at the orphanage.

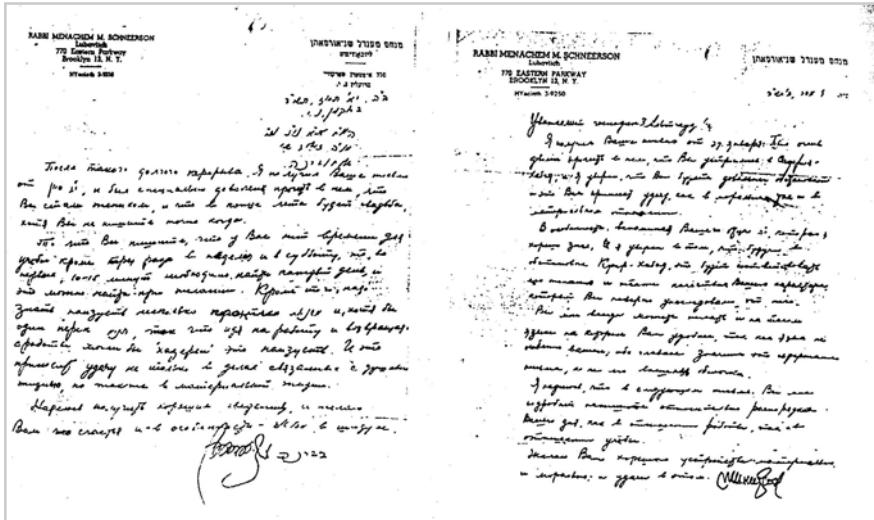
R' Shmuel did not give up but met with Zelig another few times. Despite the enormous pain, he was able to slowly restore the memory of Zelig's holy parents to him, and his life before the war. The child eventually put his trust in his uncle and agreed to go with him. The administration did its best to thwart them but R' Shmuel managed to smuggle Zelig out and adopted him as his son. Zelig returned to the ways of Judaism and remembered how to daven, but he had forgotten Yiddish and spoke to the family in Russian.

Along with many other Lubavitchers, they smuggled across the border via Lvov and after much wandering, ended up in Eretz Yisroel where Zelig received handwritten letters from the Rebbe, written in Russian.

"AI, HOW I LONG TO SEE THE REBBE"

No less chilling is the story of the Shapiro sisters, Rivka and Mussia. Their father, Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya, learned in Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch and was known as a tremendous *oved* until his final day. One of the elder Chassidim told about his great *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe Rayatz, "If the Rebbe told him to walk through a wall he would simply do so."

His daughter, Rivka Raskin, said that after the Rebbe Rayatz left Russia, "My father did not see him



The Rebbe wrote to R' Chaim Zelig in Russian



Rabbi Chaim Zelig Altheus

again. Occasionally, my father would sit at home and learn and he would stop in the middle of learning and sigh deeply, 'Ai, how I long to see the Rebbe'"

During the terrible siege of Leningrad, starvation was rampant and felled tens of thousands. Under these circumstances, R' Shapiro allowed his little children to eat from the food parcels that the government distributed, but even then, he did not allow them to eat the meat and fats, saying it was absolutely treif. He himself did not eat anything but bread and water. He shriveled up and his strength waned until he died with much suffering, as his daughter Rivka related:

"It was Friday night, 23 Kislev 5702. Together with my mother, brothers and sisters, I stood and cried at his bedside. I prayed and pleaded with G-d that He have mercy on us, but late that night my father died at the young age of 57.

"A few days later, my brother Yitzchok Yaakov was taken to the hospital and a day later he also died. He was only 15. We sisters cried silently so that our mother, who was in dire straits, would not hear and know about yet another tragedy. We did not inform her of the death of her son but she soon found out

about it when she met him a few days later, since she died about two weeks after our father.

"We three little girls were left alone: 12 year old Sarah, I was 11, and Mussia was 9. We stayed in the house for five days with our aunt Fruma who came to take care of us."

The girls' health deteriorated and Chana Dubrawsky, their cousin, had them hospitalized. Rivka continues the story:

"In the evening [of the day we were hospitalized] Sarah suddenly felt worse and she asked me to take her portion of bread. I knew she had no appetite but I pleaded with her to muster her strength and eat; but she said she could no longer eat. I knew that our mother had died shortly after she said she could no longer eat, and I was afraid that the same thing was happening here.

"'You must eat and save yourself,' I begged her. She refused and asked me in a sad and weak voice, 'Where will we go after we recover? We have no father or mother?'"

"I ate her portion of bread and felt a bit stronger. Before my very eyes I saw my sisters weakening. The next morning I looked at Sarah and saw that she was fading. I was helpless and didn't know how to

help her. Sarah asked Mussia to sit on her bed and talk to her but Mussia said she didn't have the strength to sit. Sarah no longer reacted and a little while later she was no longer with us."

Rivka spent another six months with Mussia in the hospital. They were starving and shivered in the cold. They heard the German planes bombing nearby but that was nothing compared to their tremendous longing for the family members who had perished. At first, relatives visited them, but after a while the visits ceased and Rivka was sure that all her relatives, the Chassidim and friends of her father, had been killed in the bombings or had died of starvation and cold.

The tragic truth was otherwise. Their cousin Tzivya Dvorkin went to the hospital and asked how the Shapiro sisters were. One of the doctors, who had treated the brother Yitzchok Yaakov and the sister Sarah, knew they had died. Thinking that she was referring to them, he sadly informed her that they had died. Tzivya concluded that the two girls had died and were buried in the large mass grave that had been dug in those terrible times.

[Continued next week be"H]

[Continued from pg. 8]

ourselves.

When it comes to measuring the quality of a “home,” one does not use the same standard of measure as for a house. A home is more about how comfortable and welcome you feel there than about the size and design features, or the perks and amenities. In order to make a house for G-d inside a particular heart and mind, they both have to be used to fulfill the mitzvos of the heart and mind to the extent that the person is capable of. Yet, that is still far from being a place where G-d “feels at home.” Since these are the seat of the human consciousness they are also where there is the strongest sense and awareness of self. And as Chassidus explains, the sense of self as an independent existence is antithetical to G-d’s Oneness and “I and he cannot dwell together.”

In order to make G-d feel at home inside you, as it were, you need to get the “me” part of you out of the way. This is accomplished by giving oneself over entirely to G-d, including sacrificing one’s spiritual goals and ambitions in order to fulfill the Divine Will. And since the ultimate goal of all spiritual seeking is to become a home for G-d and to become one with G-d, the true quality of that home and that oneness is built more during times of spiritual darkness and sacrifice than during times of spiritual bounty.

The Mishkan was not built by people still on the lofty spiritual level they reached at the giving of the Torah. It was built by repentant sinners who had experienced that huge spiritual drop and were still prepared to give anything so that G-d would dwell amongst them. Similarly, the advances made in bringing down a grasp and understanding of the finer points of Divinity as taught in Chassidus to those of lower spiritual capacity and ability is measured not by how spiritual those people become but how much they are prepared to sacrifice themselves for the higher cause of building a home for G-d.

The Jews in the desert had reached the highest levels of insight and understanding of G-d that a person can possibly attain. They had experienced and witnessed the giving of the Torah, and had spent forty years secluded in a world of Torah study and Divine service. They were told, however, that that was not good enough. They needed to cross the “river,” which represents intellect and understanding and is therefore limited, and enter into the physical land, which is the place where G-d’s infinite Essence will ultimately be revealed.

Whatever spiritual heights a person might achieve through building a relationship with G-d “based on reason and knowledge,” he must eventually cross his “river” and put his own understanding and seeking “on the

side” to do the physical work of conquering the land and building a home for G-d. Conversely, one may not become so involved in building the physical structure that he forgets that the real home is “inside each and every one,” and remember that it is necessary to fill your mind and heart with G-d through the study of Chassidus and prayer.

ULTIMATE PROMISE

That is the message that the Rebbe gave us so many years ago regarding the “final shlichus.” We need to prepare the world and we need to prepare ourselves by studying the topics of Moshiach and Geula in Torah, “especially in the Torah (maamarim and Likkutei Sichos) of the leader of the generation.” This is not about sacrificing quality for quantity or for anything else. It is about attaining the ultimate qualitative achievement that the true spiritual seeker can hope for. It is about doing everything in our power to bring about, during this month of Nissan, the “I will dwell within them” of the True and Complete Redemption, immediately, NOW!

Positive comments and constructive criticism welcome: rabbizvi@aol.com

[Corrections for last weeks’ article: 1) It is Chapter 3, not 4, of Shaar HaYichud V’Ha’Emuna that ends with the question; 2) “Chabad demands p’nimius” is attributed by the Rebbe Rayatz to the Alter Rebbe; 3) The talk took place in 5696, not 5692.]

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