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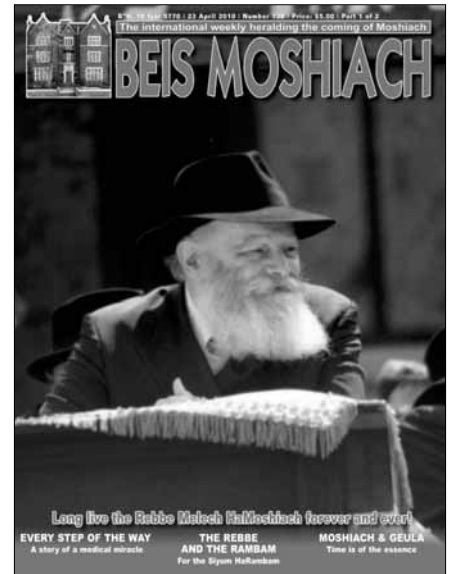
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# SOULS AFIRE

Sichos In English

## A MOMENT OF DRAMA

The seven days of the dedication of the Sanctuary had passed, and despite the expectations of the Jewish people, the Divine Presence had not become manifest.

Even after the sacrifices offered on the eighth day, the hopes of the people had not been fulfilled. [1]

Aware of the people's disappointment, Moshe and Aharon entered the Sanctuary and prayed, and then "G-d's glory was revealed to all the people. Fire came forth from before G-d and consumed the burnt offering." [2]

In grateful acknowledgment, "the people saw this and raised their voices in praise." [3]

Two individuals sought a deeper bond with G-d.

"Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, and placed fire and then incense upon it, and offered it before G-d. It was strange fire which [G-d] had not commanded [them to offer]. Fire came forth from before G-d and consumed them, and they died before G-d." [4]

Moshe praised them in their death, telling Aharon: "This is [the meaning of] what G-d said: 'I will be sanctified by those close to Me and I will glorified before the entire nation.'" [5]

Rashi [6] explains that Moshe told Aharon: "I knew that the Sanctuary would be consecrated by those in communion with G-d. I surmised that this would be either me or you. Now I see that they are greater than we are."

## INSATIABLE YEARNING

The passage is paradoxical.

On one hand, the conduct of Aharon's sons appears undesirable, as obvious from the punishment they received and as reflected in our Sages' [7] discussion of "the sin of Aharon's sons."

Conversely, however, it also appears that there was a positive dimension to their efforts.

For Nadav and Avihu had been designated for unique Divine service and Moshe himself stated [8] that they were greater than he and Aharon and that through their sacrifice, the Sanctuary was consecrated.

This difficulty can be resolved based on the commentary of the Or HaChayim, who explains the death of Nadav and Avihu as follows: [9]

They came close to a sublime light with holy love and died because of it. This is the mystic secret of [G-d's] kiss through which the righteous die. Their death was equivalent to the death of the righteous, [except] there was one distinction:

It is the kiss which approaches the righteous, while in their instance, it was they who approached it....

Although they appreciated that they would die, they did not hold back from coming close to clinging [to G-d] in a sweet [bond] of love... to the extent that their souls departed.

Chassidic thought [10] develops this concept, stating that our love for G-d must involve two phases: ratzu, a powerful yearning for connection with G-d, and shuv, a commitment to return and express G-d's will by

making this world a dwelling for Him. [11]

As the Or HaChayim describes, Aharon's sons had reached an all-encompassing level of ratzu, a longing to cleave to G-d.

This should have been followed by a phase of shuv to express this bond with G-d in their lives. [12]

Their sin [13] was not the closeness they established with G-d, but the fact that the connection was self-contained, causing them to die, without extending this bond into the realm of ordinary experience. [14]

For G-d's intent is that the deepest levels of love for Him be channeled to wards appreciating the G-dliness that exists within every element of creation, and undertaking earnest endeavors to enable that G-dliness to become manifest.

The positive dimension of Nadav's and Avihu's striving is alluded to in the phrase "a strange fire which [G-d] had not commanded [them to offer]."

Their Divine service was "strange" - of a level beyond ordinary mortal experience, and on such a high peak that G-d could not command the Jewish people to seek such a rung.

The closeness to G-d which resulted from this Divine service "dedicated the sanctuary," [15] endowing it with the potential to inspire others to similar heights. For this reason, our Torah reading begins by mentioning "the death of the two sons of Aharon, when they drew close to G-d."

The Torah reading focuses on the Divine service of Yom Kippur, the day on which every Jew "draws close to G-d."

As an introduction, the Torah cites the closeness achieved by Aharon's son's, for their endeavors opened a channel enabling all Jews to connect to G-d with such intensity.

## TWO LESSONS, TWO NAMES

In retrospect, the Divine service of Aharon's sons provides us with two lessons:

a positive one, the potential a Jew has to draw close to G-d; and,

a negative one, that their service lacked the thrust toward shuv, life within the context of our world.

According to popular custom, there are some who refer to this Torah reading as Acharei and others who call it Acharei Mos.

It is possible to say that the difference between the two names depends on which of the dimensions is chosen for emphasis.

Acharei means "after."

The height of connection reached by Aharon's sons generated the potential for similar closeness to be achieved by the Jewish people "afterwards."

Acharei Mos, ("After the death of"), by contrast, places the accent on the negative outcome that resulted from their inability to complement the closeness to G-d with the commitment to develop an awareness of G-d within this material world. [16]

## A SINGLE-MINDED BOND

Lubavitch custom is to call the Torah reading Acharei, highlighting the closeness every Jew shares with G-d.

For the inner dimension of the soul of every Jew is at one with G-d, bound together in an inseparable connection.

This bond surpasses that established through the observance of mitzvos.

For although mitzvos create a bond between the commanded and the Commander, the two remain separate entities.

In essence, however, the Jews and G-d are one. And this is the level of

consciousness which surfaces on Yom Kippur. [17]

On this level, a Jew's obedience to G-d is not a matter of choice, for which there is reward or punishment, but a natural response, an expression of his inner self.

As R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev would say, it is not a commitment to observance which prevents a Jew from eating on Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur, who wants to eat!

And from Yom Kippur, this connection can be continued Acharei, "afterwards," lifting the entire scope of our Jewish observance to a higher level.

The inner point of connection between a Jew and G-d can suffuse every aspect of our lives.

As such, living within the material world will not represent a challenge to dedication to G-d. At this level, one's life is one of simple connection which does not allow for any possibility of separation.

Mankind as a whole will experience this level of connection in the Era of the Redemption, when the G-dliness which permeates the world will be revealed: "The world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d like the waters that cover the ocean bed." [18]

In this setting of manifest G-dliness, man's natural, spontaneous desire will be to obey G-d's will.

*Adapted from: Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXXII, p. 98ff; Sefer HaSichos 5750, p. 428ff*

### NOTES:

1. See Rashi, commenting on Leviticus 9:23.
2. Leviticus 9:23-24.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. 10:1-2.
5. Ibid.:3.
6. In his commentary to this verse, based on Toras Kohanim, commenting on Leviticus 9:24; Midrash Tanchuma, Shemini, sec. 1, et al.
7. Toras Kohanim, commenting on Leviticus 10:1; Vayikra Rabbah 12:1, 20:6,8,9, et al.
8. Moshe represented the embodiment of the attribute of truth (Midrash Tanchuma,

Shmos, sec. 28). As such, he did not make this statement as an expression of humility, but rather, as an honest appreciation of the spiritual level of Aharon's sons.

9. One of the interpretations he offers to Leviticus 16:1.

10. See the maamar entitled Acharei, Sefer HaMaamarim 5649, p. 237ff and Likkutei Sichos, Vol. III, p. 987ff. See also the essay entitled "After Yom Kippur," in Timeless Patterns in Time, Vol. I, p. 52.

11. Cf. Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Bechukosai, sec. 3.

12. On this basis, we can understand our Sages' statement (Avos 4:22): "Against your will, you live." The natural desire of a Jew's soul is to abandon material existence and to cling to G-d. Living within our world is "against your will," contrary to this desire. It remains within the body only out of a commitment to fulfill G-d's will.

See the commentary to this mishnah in In the Paths of Our Fathers p. 141 (Kehot, N.Y., 1994).

13. The Hebrew word for sin - chet - can also be rendered as "lack." (See I Kings 1:21.)

14. The Or HaChayim explains that this concept is underscored by the opening verse of our Torah reading (Leviticus 16:1): "And G-d spoke to Moshe after the death of the two sons of Aharon, when they drew close to G-d and died."

Why does the verse say "and died"? To emphasize that this was the negative dimension of their service. The closeness they achieved was desirable. But "they died," and this closeness did not serve to advance G-d's purpose in creation.

15. In this context, the death of Aharon's sons can be compared to a sacrifice, for they gave up their lives to cling to G-d.

16. Within this context, the connection on the mention of Aharon's sons to the remainder of the Torah reading is that, on Yom Kippur, the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies, drawing close to the manifestation of the Divine Presence. He must remember the importance, not only of entering the Holy of Holies, but of departing, and drawing the spiritual closeness into everyday life.

17. This level of connection transcends the thrusts of ratzu and shuv, uniting one with G-d in a simple and constant bond. See the essay entitled "A Time to Take Stock," Timeless Patterns in Time, Vol. II, p. 147ff.

18. Isaiah 11:9, cited by the Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 12:5, at the conclusion of his discussion of the Era of the Redemption.

# MOSHIACH: TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

*When looking back over the years of the Rebbe's talks and writings on the topic of Moshiach and Geula, one thing becomes abundantly clear. Everything the Rebbe said and did was to convey to us a sense of urgency and individual responsibility for bringing ourselves and the world to our/its preordained outcome.*

## TIME PAST

A number of years ago, I was asked by a bochur not learning in a Lubavitch yeshiva who was nevertheless very involved with the Rebbe and in learning Chassidus, why some people who immerse themselves in the study of Chassidus don't feel the need to "go all the way?" They enjoy the learning, they might even get involved in promulgating the teachings, they consider the Rebbe as the leader of the Jewish people, but still choose to remain "on the outside." Clearly, there are some people who "get it" and some perhaps even more learned who don't.

One of the answers that I gave him at the time was that as long as

a person learns and understands Chassidus as something that is in addition to what he already knows, he won't feel the need to change who he is and how he sees himself. Before, he was a good person and now he is an even better person. It is only when a person is open to completely rethinking everything that he thought he knew in the past, in the light of Chassidus, that it is possible for him to one day "get it," and when he does he will have no choice about changing because for him there can be nothing else. At that point, he will look back at his earlier way of thinking and it will feel like he is looking into the mind of a stranger, so much so that he will ask himself

incredulously, how is it possible that I used to think like that?

The bochur was very excited by the answer and went to share it with his close friend from the same yeshiva, with whom he learned Chassidus and did mitzvot. Later, he came back to me looking crestfallen, because when he repeated it to his friend, his friend could not understand how Chassidus could be anything more than an additional set of Torah teachings and insights that are part of the truth of Torah, and so, one must try to incorporate them into his religious life to whatever degree possible. But why would that make a person rethink everything that he knew to be true up till that point? Since he was truly concerned that his friend didn't "get it" and he hoped that I could help explain it, he asked if I would make time to learn with the two of them on a regular basis.

I tried to explain to him that whether one did or did not "get it" seemed to have more to do with his own mindset, and all the explanations in the world would not help. At best, he would just see it as another new idea or insight to accept or reject. Despite that, we did learn together for some time, and the two of them continued to be heavily involved in mitzvot and running to 770 to see the Rebbe at every

opportunity. Eventually, the first one left his yeshiva to learn in Lubavitch and is today a shliach of the Rebbe. His friend is still a fine Jew, now raising a beautiful family, who is very involved in studying and teaching Torah, and even learns Chassidus.

When I look back in disbelief at the way I used to think about G-d, Torah, Jews and Judaism, what is particularly painful, even more than having been misinformed or uninformed, is when I realize the contradictions in my own thinking. One of the

glaring areas of contradiction was how to relate to a Jew who is “lost.” Even as a young teen I was aware of the Chassidic teaching based on kabbalistic tradition and alluded to in the Talmud, that every Jew would ultimately have a *tikkun* (rectification), or in the popular vernacular, “no Jew will be left behind.” In fact, in the yeshiva that my family was connected to and where I grew up, one of the songs sung at *hakafos* was to the words in the verse in the book of Shmuel 2, 14:14, which is cited as a scriptural

source for this concept.

On the other hand, I was also aware of the difference in approach between the Baal Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon regarding the issue of “rectification of souls.” There are many stories in Chassidic lore about how the Baal Shem Tov spent much time and effort in order to elevate souls that had long been in torment since leaving this world. Conversely, Reb Chaim of Volozhin recounts that when he asked the Vilna Gaon why he avoided visiting the cemetery, his teacher told him that on his last visit many souls from the next world came to him pleading for a *tikkun*, and he couldn’t spare the time from his learning. In the world I grew up in, it was understood that the conduct of the Gaon was more worthy of admiration and emulation.

This colored our view of *kiruv*, Jewish outreach, so that we looked upon the work of Lubavitch with a more than jaundiced eye. Looking back, I can’t help but be amazed by how someone (me) could accept the idea that G-d cares so much about every Jew that He will not allow any Jew to be completely “lost,” but believe that expending time and effort to “save” a Jew was a waste of time that could be used for Torah study (that is without getting into the commandments of “rebuke,” “making G-d beloved,” “saving a life” etc). As the earlier Chassidim would say regarding the Misnagdim or even those non-Chassidim not oppositional towards them, that they lack any true feeling for what a Jew is.

## TIME LOST

In the early years of the Rebbe’s leadership, he didn’t seem to make much of the *yahrtzeit* of his brother, Reb Yisroel Ayreh



***“The Torah has already promised that in the end Yisrael will do teshuva (repentance) and immediately they will be redeemed.” The outcome is immutable and guaranteed. G-d has sworn it to be so and the Torah already promised.***

Leib on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, besides for saying kaddish as he had left no male progeny. Over the years, and more obviously in the later years, the Rebbe spoke more openly about the significance of this date. Looking back even to the earlier years, when it was not referred to expressly, one can see certain themes emerging in the sichos and maamorim said on or close to that day. One of the issues the Rebbe addressed and developed in those talks, revealing tremendous *chiddushim* (novel Torah insights), was regarding the matter of free will.

Generally, the philosophical paradox that most people of a philosophical bent struggle with is free will versus divine knowledge. The Rambam even addresses this conundrum in his legal code, to which the Raavad suggests he would have been better served if he had left the matter untouched. Many great thinkers offered their solutions to resolve this question, with Kabbala and Chassidus presenting its own unique take on the issue. Whatever form the answer takes, the key point is that G-d's foreknowledge is total and unequivocal, but is not determinative.

The question that the Rebbe raised and addressed was free will versus Divine will. All of existence is only a result of G-d's will and can only continue to exist as long

as G-d wills it, and as such it is the only determining factor for existence. Since G-d has already revealed His Will insofar as the outcome of creation as a whole, namely Redemption, Resurrection and the Seventh Millennium, and for each Jew as an individual, namely that every Jew will ultimately have his rectification and share in the World to Come, how can one be said to have free will? Since by definition it is impossible for G-d's Will not to be realized and since there can be no existence without G-d actively willing it, or in plain terms “G-d always gets what He wants,” as He has made clear throughout Torah that the outcome is predetermined, how can the decisions resulting from the will of the individual Jew or all Jews be described as free? (From the standpoint of much of Chassidic teachings, this question becomes even more complex and compelling, but due to restrictions of time and space this will have to do).

The Rebbe resolves all the questions and seeming contradictions by concluding that there actually is no true free will as regards outcomes, it is only a matter of time. G-d will have His way no matter what, you only get to decide if it will be a day sooner or a day later, and since reward and punishment are directly linked

to the concept of free will, your decisions only affect whether the process and time leading up to the final outcome will be a pleasant or painful experience for your soul. Similarly, the nation as a whole can only affect how long or short the process is and how painful or painless it is, but as the Rambam writes in his Laws of Repentance, “The Torah has already promised that in the end Yisrael will do *teshuva* (repentance) and immediately they will be redeemed.” The outcome is immutable and guaranteed. G-d has sworn it to be so and the Torah already promised.

In fact, since at his core essence, the Jew is “an actual part of G-d above,” his will is the same as G-d's will and as such the only truly “free” expression of his will is when it is consistent with G-d's will. Any deviation from that is by definition only temporary. That is why nobody can ever be truly “lost,” since one can only “lose” the more external aspects of his being. Any concealment of the true essence of the Jew may require a long painful process to clean away in this world or the next, but the eventual outcome is assured.

This idea would seem to be very much consistent with the teaching of the Rebbe Rayatz regarding Pesach Sheini on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Iyar cited in the HaYom Yom for that day:

“The idea of Pesach Sheini is that there is no such thing as ‘unrecoverable.’ One can always make corrections. Even if one was *tamei* (ritually impure) or one was on a faraway road, and even if it was ‘*lachem*,’ that it (the impurity or straying) was deliberate, nonetheless he can rectify it.”

A simple reading of the story of Pesach Sheini would actually cause one to reach the opposite conclusion. The fact that they

were given an opportunity to make up for missing out on the first Pesach offering due to ritual impurity that came about through no fault of their own, would seem to indicate that this chance to offer a “makeup” sacrifice is very much specific to that commandment and that situation. In fact, if one does not bring the Pesach offering on the makeup date, he is liable for the punishment of *kareis* (premature death), and can never make it up.

And even though he could absolve himself of the death sentence through proper repentance, as the Alter Rebbe says in Tanya (Igeres HaTeshuva ch. 1) regarding the lack of fulfillment of any positive commandment, “Even though they pardon his punishment for rebelling against His Kingship, may He be blessed, and not fulfilling the command of the King, still and all the light is lacking...as per the statement of the Sages upon the verse, ‘a transgression that cannot be rectified,’ ‘this is someone who missed out on the reading of the Shema in the morning or etc.’”

However, with a deeper understanding of Chassidus regarding the nature of free will, as well as the role of the Jew and the Torah and Mitzvos in actualizing G-d’s Will, it becomes clear that there is a much deeper message to the story. The fact that Mishael and Elitzofon and/or the unnamed bearers of Yosef’s coffin were able to “cause” G-d to issue a “new” commandment (the two Pesachs are counted as separate commandments in the total of 613) as a result of their burning desire to fulfill G-d’s commandments even when legally absolved of doing so, expresses the Kabbalistic and Chassidic precept that the Jew is rooted in the Divine Essence, “the One who

wills,” and as such is infinitely higher than the will that is expressed in Torah and Mitzvos. That is why, as Chassidus explains, if a Jew carries out what the Zohar refers to as “higher repentance” where he totally reconnects with “He who commanded the commandments,” he even has the ability to “bring down” any light that might be lacking due to not fulfilling a positive commandment. “There is no such thing as ‘unrecoverable.’” It is only a matter of time.

## TIME MATTERS

In one of the sichos said on Parashas Pinchas 5745, the Rebbe explained the saying of the Rebbe Rayatz, *l’alter l’teshuva, l’alter l’Geula* (immediately to repentance, immediately to Redemption), in response to those “who seek to find fault” and argue that how can one say “Moshiach now” or “immediately to Redemption” without quoting the first part of the saying, especially since repentance is a lengthy and protracted process. The explanation given was that since the Zohar writes that repentance is something that can transpire “in one moment or one instant,” it is not only possible that we have both things immediately but even one individual can be the one who tips the scale (see full sicha Hisvaaduyos 5745 vol. 5 p. 2622).

When looking back over the years of the Rebbe’s talks and writings on the topic of Moshiach and Geula, one thing becomes abundantly clear. Everything the Rebbe said and did was to convey to us a sense of urgency and individual responsibility for bringing ourselves and the world to our/its preordained outcome. As the Rebbe himself said on one occasion, he was motivated purely by the desire to see to it that the process be a lot less drawn out

and painful than depicted in the prophetic and rabbinic literature. In fact, that is the only effect that our individual choices can have.

All the prophecies of record and all the predictions in the Talmud, Medrash, Zohar and countless other authoritative works are being fulfilled before our very eyes. Moshiach is coming, or better yet, Moshiach is here, but the question that the Rebbe Rayatz wrote in a letter in 1942 and the Rebbe published as a prologue to the HaYom Yom in 1943 is still as relevant as ever, “What have I done and what am I doing to ease the birth pangs of Moshiach and to merit the Complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach?” When the Rebbe asked, “What more can I do?” he was clearly referring to the issue of conveying the urgency, the sense that there is no more time to waste.

We all have regrets about decisions and choices that we made in the past. I assume that most if not all of us feel cheated because we didn’t realize the opportunities afforded to us in the past, especially when we still had the Rebbe leading the charge in an open and revealed way. Nineteen years after the original 28 Nissan sicha, more than fifteen years after 3 Tammuz, and surrounded on all sides by fellow Jews who may not be observant at all, or are observant but oppose our beliefs and efforts, we sometimes tell ourselves that we are entitled to feel a little hopeless. The lesson of these days is the exact opposite. The outcome is assured and there is no such thing as “unrecoverable,” and we have the power to “cause” G-d to issue a “new” commandment to bring the True and Complete Redemption, immediately, NOW!

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

# THE REBBE AND THE RAMBAM

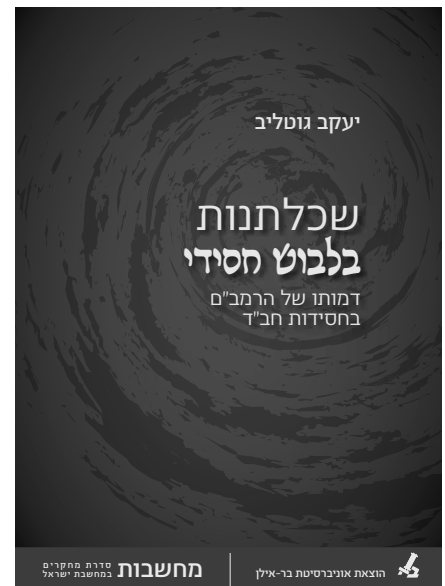
By Gai Kantor

***For eight years, Rabbi Yaakov Gottlieb, the top Maggid shiur in the Darkei Noam yeshiva high school, researched the teachings of the Rambam as they are explicated in Chabad Chassidus in general and the Rebbe's teachings in particular. In the course of his research, he came to the conclusion that the Rebbe fits the criteria for Moshiach as delineated in the Rambam. \* Presented in conjunction with the Siyum HaRambam. \* Part 1***

Rabbi Yaakov Gottlieb attended yeshivas B'nei Akiva under Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neria in Kfar HaRoeh. It was there that he attended his first Tanya class – which quickly sparked an interest in Chabad Chassidus. He went on to attend the Har Etzyon hesder yeshiva, then to Bar Ilan University, where he continued his learning in the advanced Torah study program at the university. He began

teaching, lecturing on the teachings of the Rambam.

After completing degrees in Jewish philosophy, he started working on his doctorate which incorporated research Jewish philosophers, and especially the teachings of the Rambam and the Rebbe. His work was published by Bar Ilan University as *Sichlitanut B'Levush Chassidi* (Rationalism in



Chassidic Garb).

In anticipation of the upcoming celebration marking the Siyum HaRambam, we spoke with Rabbi Dr. Yaakov Gottlieb.

**As a graduate of B'nei Akiva, what motivated you to do this research?**

My initial connection with Chabad began when I attended Tanya classes at Kfar HaRoeh. Years later, my son was sick and I opened to a miraculous bracha from the Rebbe in the Igros Kodesh, which brought about a miraculous refua and boruch Hashem, my son recovered. I began to take a more serious interest in the Rebbe and his teachings.

**What in particular appeals to you in the Rebbe's teachings?**

If I tried to narrow it down I would have to say the D'var Malchus sichos (5751/5752) especially and Likkutei Sichos generally. The D'var Malchus sichos have a certain flavor to them that is different than the sichos of previous years. There is a sense of tremendous power in them and a revolutionary outlook, and not just on the topic of Moshiach and Geula. The Rebbe uses new and very deep terminology which I, at least, hadn't seen previously. One example





is the sicha of Ki Sisa, 5752, about the Sin of the Golden Calf. The Rebbe takes one of the gravest sins of all time and turns it inside out. He speaks about the sin as part of the theme of the parsha, “elevation,” a process which contains a beginning point, a descent, and a subsequent ascent to a higher point than where we started.

The Rebbe brings other examples of this, showing how the process of Creation is one in which there is a descent followed by Geula. This doesn’t involve merely reverting to the starting point (Gan Eden or whatever) but a much higher level than before. These are sichos which made a very strong impression on me. You can see that the Rebbe has a goal and it seems as though he allowed himself to reveal things which he may have refrained from publicizing earlier.

What particularly drew me to Likkutei Sichos is the combination of Chassidus and Nigleh, which appeals to me more than learning Chassidus in a more abstract form. The Rebbe starts with a Gemara, a Rashi, or a Rambam and explains it using a Nigleh approach and then goes on to explicate the kabbalistic and inner workings, and that speaks

to me.

**Did your involvement in Chabad Chassidus proceed independently or through rabbis or classes?**

There were various stages that involved rabbis with whom I studied or learned from. There was a time when I learned b’chavrusa with Rabbi Yehuda Butman of Ramat HaSharon, another period of time when I listened to Rabbi Yisroel Halperin’s farbrengens. I also hear shiurim in D’var Malchus from Rabbi Motty Gal in Ramat Gan. But I mainly learned on my own.

**HIS DOCTORATE**

After studying Chassidus for some time, I decided that the Rebbe’s teachings could be a good research subject. At that time, almost no research was being done on the Rebbe’s teachings. I later learned that Dr. Yitzchok Krauss had a similar idea and was working on it at the same time as I was. He, however, took a different approach, focusing mainly on the Rebbe’s leadership – showing the consistency and how it was all part of a long pattern.

My research focuses on the

analytical and philosophical approach to the Rambam’s teachings; the manner of explicating Rambam’s words; and uncovering the historical tradition of this approach amongst the previous Chabad leaders. I really enjoyed it. When I was a kid I spent a lot of time learning the Rambam’s introduction to Mishnayos and certain excerpts from Mishnah Torah and Moreh Nevuchim. I read a lot about the Rambam and took courses in university on his life and works. So combining the Rebbe’s teachings and the Rambam was personally very satisfying.

**What in particular appeals to you in the Rambam’s teachings?**

When researching the Rambam, you see the enormity and breadth of his genius. Not only was he a brilliant and prolific author, he was among the greatest poskim, one of the greatest philosophers of the Jewish people and the world at large, a dayan in a beis din, and served as both a doctor as well as a political leader who helped the Jews in Egypt and Yemen. This is a complete man - not just in one field or another – but a man with exceptionally broad knowledge and an expansive worldview.

## THE REBBE'S ESTEEM FOR THE RAMBAM



You can see the respect for the Rambam in the writings of all the Chabad Rebbeim. As the Alter Rebbe writes, "Who is greater to us than Moshe in his generation? The Rambam in Spain." But the Rebbe's esteem stands out, as is evidenced by his absolute literal acceptance of the famous saying, "From Moshe until Moshe, there arose nobody like Moshe." This accolade in admiration of the Rambam is not new, but the first one to take it literally and not as a superlative was the Rebbe. I found this very surprising. Over fifty generations, Yehoshua and all the Elders, the Prophets, the Tanaim and

Amoraim, yet none of them were compared to Moshe!

The Rebbe's regard for the Rambam is apparent in the analysis and lessons the Rebbe derives from the Rambam's life. The Rebbe parallels the name Moshe, and even his father's name Maimon, from the root meaning water, to the waters of p'nimius ha'Torah and unification with G-dliness "as waters cover the sea bed."

Even the seventy years that the Rambam lived acquires great significance in the Rebbe's teachings, with the seventy years reflecting the perfection of the seven middos as each is comprised of the ten other middos. The Rebbe makes a calculation of seventy years minus 83 days and says that Mishnah Torah has 83 categories of halachos (Hilchos Deios, Shabbos, Yom Tov etc.) and these complete the 83 days he was missing in his life.

The Rebbe points out that the day he passed away, 20 Teves, is within a few days of the passing of the Alter Rebbe. He also draws a parallel between the Rambam living in Egypt to Moshe, who was raised in Egypt and then later orchestrated the exodus from there with Egypt signifying constriction in Chassidic teaching. The Rambam also removed us from the constrictions of mistaken ideas and leads us towards Geula. The Rebbe quotes the pasuk, "*revos mofnai b'erez Mitzrayim*" with the acronym of Rambam. The Rebbe also refers to the Rambam's middos and humility, to the gemach that he ran to provide financial aid to every person in need.

There is even a reference to the Rambam's picture. The question of a researcher is whether the prevalent picture is accurate. The Rebbe looks at it differently. What impact does it have when people see that picture as representing the Rambam? It reminds them of him, his Mishnah Torah, the Moreh Nevuchim and all his activities so certainly this is a positive thing. This exemplifies the difference between the eyes of a researcher who is interested in historical accuracy and the Rebbe whose interest is in the spiritual benefit.

I found the same phenomenon with the Rebbe. In every area you find incredible scope and when you put it all together you cannot find

anyone else like him in recent generations. Take the area of Torah. The Rebbe is far more than a rosh yeshiva who has a good

understanding of Nigleh and who gives excellent shiurim. The way he learns Rashi is unique and that's aside from the study of Kabbala and Chassidus. The Rebbe is great in every aspect of Torah, including an unusual knowledge and awareness of differing wordings in texts, as well as diverse approaches and assumptions.

And the Rebbe did not only sit and learn; he leads his Chassidim and directs them in their various amazing achievements; everybody knows about the extraordinary work of Chabad headed by the Rebbe. Then there are the thousands of letters, the yechiduyos, etc. The Rebbe's knowledge includes every field, from science to philosophy and everything in between.

Both the Rambam and the Rebbe are characterized by approaching every undertaking in the best possible way. It's not about being a dilettante who knows a bit about everything, but about being exceptional in every field. When you put their knowledge and accomplishments together, they add up to a most unusual personage. Despite the differences between them, there is much in common. The Rambam and Rebbe fascinate me and I regard them both with the utmost admiration.

The Rebbe talks about the fusion of Nigleh and p'nimius being one of the aspects of Geula and I think that the Rebbe's explanations of the Rambam's Mishnah Torah are just that. We generally look at the Rambam as a work of Nigleh but the Rebbe, in his commentary, gives it new meaning by showing how it has implications in p'nimius ha'Torah. This is what characterizes the Likkutei Sichos and the Rebbe's approach in general, in my opinion.

My first thought was to do a general research project on the Rebbe's teachings but my mentor, Professor Dov Schwartz, said that research on the Rebbe's teachings

was not a three to four year project but a lifetime's work. So I had to narrow it down. I decided to focus on the connection between the Rebbe and the Rambam. Upon deciding that this would be my subject, I took a sabbatical and sat in the Heichal Menachem library in B'nei Brak. At that time there weren't many Chabad libraries and there was no online library of Chabad works.

**How many years did you spend on your research?**

I started in 5755 and it took me about eight years. About seven years ago the work began to take on its final form.

I devoted the sabbatical year to gathering material. I took all the s'farim of the Chabad Rebbeim, in order, and went through the material page by page looking for references to the Rambam. I didn't want to rely on the index because sometimes things are left out. I chose to look on my own through the sources.

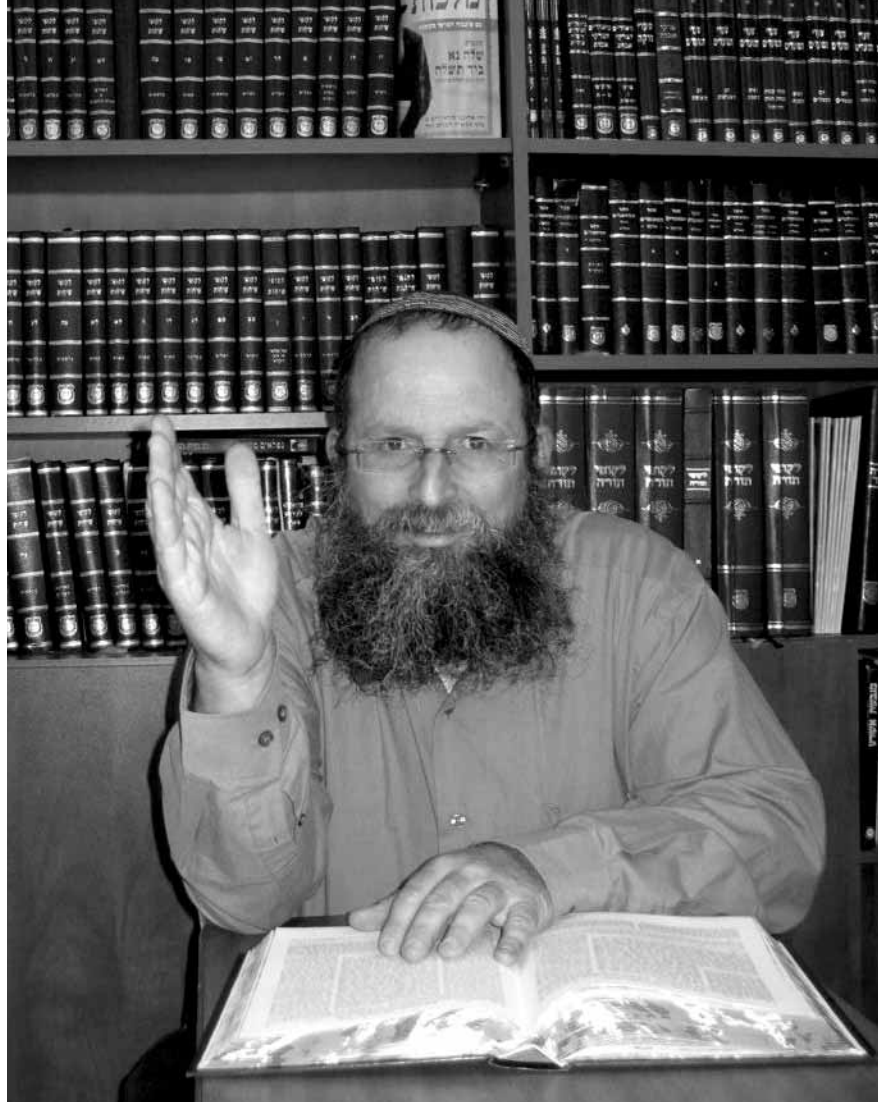
Whenever I found a mention of the Rambam, I copied it down by hand. There is an advantage to writing in that you pay attention to every word. You get more involved.

By the end of that year I had several notebooks full of material. I began dividing the material into categories and slowly, a clearer picture emerged.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMUNA IN STAGES

**One of the axioms of your dissertation is that the way the Chabad Rebbeim viewed the Rambam is part of their general approach, which sees Torah and emuna developing from one generation to the next. Can you explain this thesis?**

There is a historical outlook by the Chabad Rebbeim in general and the Rebbe in particular that emuna continues to be revealed in stages. The Rebbe often quotes the pasuk,



***The development of philosophy, including the Rambam's philosophy, in the Middle Ages [was needed to make] a mockery of the avoda zara of the time... The intellect was an important tool used to shatter the materialistic view of G-d. Later on, other things were revealed.***

"He did everything properly, in its time," i.e. that that which was suitable yesterday is not necessarily so today.

The Rebbe uses this approach a lot regarding those who opposed the study of Chassidus when their complaint was that many

generations of tzaddikim did not study Chassidus and how can it be said to be obligatory today. The Rebbe explains that what was suitable up to 300 years ago is insufficient for our generation. The proof is the very fact that Chassidus was revealed. I call this a historical

***When the Rebbe announced that we should study Rambam including the chapters having to do with identifying Moshiach and the Geula process, he did not mean for us to learn it just to know how it will be one day in the distant future. The Rebbe wanted us to understand what is happening now before our very eyes.***

perspective. Depending on which period in history you are living in, you will be obligated to learn certain things.

The development of philosophy, including the Rambam's philosophy, in the Middle Ages can be explained in the same way. It was necessary for a rationalist philosophy to develop that would make a mockery of the avoda zara of the time. It was essential to promote the mind. The intellect was an important tool used to shatter the materialistic view of G-d. Later on, other things were revealed.

In the Rebbe's teachings you can also see a progression and change over the years. There were topics the Rebbe chose not to publicize in the early years which he publicized in later years, especially in the D'var Malchus. It was like the Rebbe was saying to us: "Now I can tell you things that I could not reveal before."

There is an even greater chiddush here which serves as a basis for my work. We need to conform to the development and revelation of Torah; in other words, even our understanding of the familiar Torah teachings of the past needs to be adjusted in light of the recent revelations. With the passage of time and revelations of additional dimensions of Torah, the earlier

revelations also acquire a different significance. For example, I think that we now have different tools with which to learn and comprehend the Rambam's teachings. Of course, the students of the Rambam who learned his teachings or people in general who learned Moreh Nevuchim, could not see in it what the Rebbe sees because the new revelations provide a new framework for understanding the earlier revelations.

The Rebbe writes explicitly that it's not necessarily the case that the way we interpret the Rambam today is the way the Rambam thought when he wrote it. At first glance, this is very surprising but the understanding of this point defines the approach of the Chabad Rebbeim to the Rambam, that there is the neshama of the Rambam and his intellect, with his intellect more constricted than his neshama. The neshama and the G-dly assistance directed and helped the Rambam write certain things while on the intellectual plane, he thought along certain lines.

This is why it's possible for so many commentaries to be written on the words of the Rambam. It's simply unrealistic to assume that the Rambam thought of all of the many explanations and elaborations of his words. However, since he wrote with

his neshama, with G-dly revelation and assistance, this allows for such tremendous depth and range of explanation.

There are many instances where the Rebbe's interpretation of the Rambam is quite obviously different from what the Rambam seems to have intended. Though he almost certainly didn't have these Chassidic explanations in mind when he wrote his works, the Rambam merited that they were written in such a way that they can contain Chassidic understandings. For example, the Rebbe interprets the opening words of Mishnah Torah in such a way that they convey the idea of tzimtzum. I don't know whether the Rebbe intended to say that this is what the Rambam had in mind when he wrote this halacha, but the Rambam merited to write it in such a way that we can now learn this interpretation in his words.

The Rebbe considers the text of Mishnah Torah as a sacred text as much as the Tanach, Mishnah and Talmud. This goes way beyond the superficial view that the Rambam was a Torah genius who wrote a halachic work. As a sacred text, its importance goes way beyond what even the Rambam may have understood when he wrote it.

## **THE REBBE MELECH HA'MOSHIACH**

**In the last chapter of your book you say that the Rebbe meets the Rambam's criteria of Moshiach. What led you to this conclusion?**

When you examine the quotes from the Rebbe in this chapter, you see how he uses the Rambam's approach to Moshiach not only in order to describe what to expect of the future but also to explain what is happening now and what he is doing.

After closely studying the Rebbe's teachings, I concluded that the Rebbe's activities fit the Messianic

description that the Rambam delineates in Mishnah Torah. It is clear that the Rebbe saw himself as acting in accordance with the Rambam's blueprint.

When the Rebbe announced that we should study Rambam including the chapters having to do with identifying Moshiach and the Geula process, he did not mean for us to learn it just to know how it will be one day in the distant future. The Rebbe wanted us to understand what is happening now before our very eyes so we know how to view various events.

When you are talking about a miraculous Geula which takes place in a moment, all you have to do is hope and pray for it, but the Rambam tells us that the Geula will come about naturally, a process that a human being brings about long before he is recognized as Moshiach.

Moshiach is not like Moshe

Rabbeinu, suddenly dropping into the world, performing miracles and announcing: "Hello Rabbosai, I am here to redeem you." Hashem spoke to Moshe Rabbeinu, and then he suddenly appeared in Egypt and did signs and wonders which led to the Ten Plagues, the Exodus, and the Splitting of the Sea.

In Mishnah Torah it describes a different scenario. There is a king. How is there a king if we don't know he is Moshiach? The Rebbe learns that this king is a leader. He works within a certain sector of the people who follow him.

The Rambam describes how he operates: "he compels all Israel to go in its [the Torah's] ways and strengthens its breaches." The Rebbe sees this as bringing the Jewish people back in t'shuva and he threw himself into this work full steam ahead, in accordance with his interpretation that "compels" can be

in "ways of pleasantness," not only through punishment.

The second criteria, "He fights the wars of Hashem," is met as well. The Rebbe doesn't physically fight as Bar Kochva did, but the fights Hashem's wars with his spiritual might. When the Rebbe points to a victory in the wars of Moshiach, he connects it with the fact that Moshiach is having an effect on the world and is victorious in a number of areas.

The Rebbe fits the Rambam's guidelines of someone who is b'chezkas Moshiach.

I am aware that there are Lubavitchers who are not comfortable saying that the Rebbe saw himself as the person the Rambam describes, but anyone who studies the Rebbe's teachings in depth sees that the Rebbe says this explicitly.

[To be continued G-d willing]

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ב"ה

# COMBAT LEADER

By Menachem Ziegelboim

*From a children's home on a kibbutz to hair-raising adventures in the elite special forces to commander of the Mitzva Tanks, R' Shmaryah Harel candidly describes his doubts, successes and failures as he was drawn into Judaism and Chabad. \* Part 2 of 2*

In 5734 (1974), Shmarya was released from the army at the rank of Captain, a few months after the Yom Kippur War. He worked for El-Al as a security guard for half a year.

"I was an undercover guard whose job it was to look out for terrorists or hijackers. Guarding a passenger plane is very hard for two reasons. First, because working among 300 or 400 passengers sitting crowded together is one of the hardest security situations. Second, because the hijackers know there are undercover guards and they are prepared for us."

When he left El-Al he traveled to the United States. He stayed there for seven years, in the course of which he became acquainted with Chabad for the first time. Shmarya is a perpetual student who loves reading and acquiring knowledge. He threw himself into his studies at Boston University, devoting minimal

time to supporting himself.

Before the beginning of the 5737 school year he saw a flyer that announced a course in Jewish mysticism. Rabbi Chaim Pruss, shliach in Boston, worked on campus and he advertised his weekly Tanya class as Jewish mysticism.

"The title got me. Mysticism is a word that fires the imagination...I registered and bought a Tanya. I love to read and would read the Tanya whenever I had a chance. The language was difficult but I persevered and absorbed a lot. It spoke to my heart and resolved some questions I'd had since childhood."

## **For instance?**

Everyone who lives in Israel experiences the holidays, learns about them and lives a Jewish life, to some extent. When the holidays at the kibbutz were merely parties, it was hard to make peace with that. You ask yourself, why are we

celebrating now? What happened on Purim? Why Chanuka? And so on. When I began discovering the reasons and background of the traditional Jewish holidays, it helped clarify for me certain aspects of the Jewish soul.

## **What did you learn from Tanya?**

I learned that the holidays and customs are ancient and not an innovation of the State of Israel. You find out that there were people who preceded you who had the same questions and eventually became religious. I said to myself: 'This is worth looking into; let me see what religion has to say about all these questions.' Tanya gave me the sense that the world existed long before me and many people before me had the same questions.

It didn't come easy. I had many arguments with R' Pruss. Really I had two independent lines of thinking. One was my argumentative side. Even after I had good answers and started getting involved with Judaism, this perspective continued to put up opposition since it was used to other things.

Then there was my inner voice. There, I began to understand that there was some sort of system of ideas and views and a way of life that was very grounded and solid. I figured, since I was a Jew and this was Judaism, it belonged to me. This was the key idea that got me moving towards Judaism and Chabad.

R' Pruss invited me to a Shabbos meal. I went and was very impressed. It was a spiritual experience and it moved me. The Kiddush, the wine, challos, and mainly the atmosphere, all this made a powerful impression. I decided I wanted to be a part of this.

## **Was that the first time in your life that you saw a Shabbos?**

More or less. When I was a child on the kibbutz, a boy from the Tel Rei'im kibbutz came to school. We called him a *yeled chutz* (a child





Final instructions before setting out. Shmarya and his Tankists

from the outside). It was decided that in order to get him included in our group, every day one child would accompany him home. It worked out one time that I went home with him on a Friday and since his parents were traditional, they made Kiddush. I found it very strange. The Shabbos table at the Pruss family in Boston filled in some of the gaps for me.

**What were you looking for back then?**

I was looking for the truth. From my youth I sought the point of truth within everything and when I saw the Tanya, I saw that it was the truth and I decided that I had to go with it.

The beginning of the journey was difficult and along the way there

***The beginning of the journey was difficult and along the way there were diversions and retreats. On the one hand, I thought the time had come to move forward; on the other hand, I told myself that I wasn't ready yet.***

were diversions and retreats. On the one hand, I thought the time had come to move forward; on the other hand, I told myself that I wasn't ready yet. Things went on this way until 5738, by which time I already knew the basics; I knew what kashrus and Shabbos are.

For Yom Kippur 5738/1977, I decided I want to fast and go to

shul. I fasted and bought some s'farim and on Yom Kippur night, before the astonished eyes of my roommates, I learned through the night.

That Yom Kippur gave me a great feeling. After that I said, "that's it, from now on I am observing Shabbos and the holidays." A few days went by and I

## A SERIES OF MIRACLES ONE DARK NIGHT IN LEBANON

During the Yom Kippur War, I took part in a secret operation in Lebanon. We entered Lebanon along with an armored column, and after 24 hours we were told to leave and return to Israel. That was Motzaei Yom Kippur. It was pitch black. We withdrew a few kilometers and they told us to wait at a certain point for tanks that we had to provide cover for. As we waited, I laid out my sleeping bag and ammo belt near one of the armored troop carriers standing there and fell asleep with my head half a meter away from the carrier.

I woke up around one o'clock when the tanks came. As they lined up to enter the parking area, one of the tanks turned around and in the process, banged into the troop carrier. It flipped over and landed centimeters away from my head. At the time, I didn't realize the enormity of the miracle but afterwards it registered: there were only two centimeters between me and death!

The miracles didn't end that night. About an hour later we got orders to leave the area. We traveled via an Arab town which is currently in the secure zone but at that time it was over the border.

We were driving down the main road of the town when we were attacked by an ambush of terrorists. They shot an RPG missile at us from only four meters away! The missile passed fifty centimeters from the troop carrier and boruch Hashem, nothing happened. Of course we returned fire.

Once again, I saw how Hashem helped me and how life and death are a matter of centimeters.

caused me to retreat from the whole business for a few additional months. As Pesach approached, I knew that I had to do it all the way. I bought new dishes and celebrated Pesach with the Krinsky family in Boston. There were three days in a row, two of Yom Tov and one of Shabbos. I wasn't sure how an active guy like me could stay in one place and do nothing for three days of t'fillos and stories. It was really tough.

After Pesach, I began keeping Shabbos and kashrus to the best of my knowledge. At this stage, R' Pruss began talking to me about learning at the yeshiva in Morristown. After deciding to go there, I went to the Rebbe.

It was Tisha B'Av, 5738 (1978), and it came out on Shabbos. Yisroel Pruss (Chaim's younger brother) took me to 770. Friday afternoon, they davened mincha in the small zal upstairs and I stood behind the crowd, at a distance. Towards the end of the davening, the Rebbe turned around after Aleinu. The crowd split in two and I saw the Rebbe looking at me. That was my first encounter with the Rebbe.

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I spent two and a half years in yeshiva. I learned Chassidus and absorbed the atmosphere of Chabad. Though I did not have yechidus during this time, there were a few occasions when the Rebbe said a sicha and I thought he was talking to me. I remember that at one of the farbrengens on Motzaei Shabbos, I suddenly felt this very strongly. I didn't know why the Rebbe was saying those things to me when it didn't pertain to me. The Rebbe was talking about someone who learned Chassidus and began spreading the wellsprings, first to himself and then to his surroundings, and then to all of Eretz Yisroel.

**Why did you think the Rebbe was talking to you?**

***Friday afternoon, they davened mincha in the small zal upstairs and I stood behind the crowd, at a distance. Towards the end of the davening, the Rebbe turned around after Aleinu. The crowd split in two and I saw the Rebbe looking at me. That was my first encounter with the Rebbe.***

remembered that Sukkos was coming up. I called the Pruss family and asked Mrs. Pruss when Sukkos would be. She said, "Tonight." I was taken aback. I knew that work was forbidden and I didn't know how to tell my irreligious boss, out of the blue, that I couldn't work the next two days.

I got up the nerve to make the call. He wasn't available so I spoke to his wife. I said that I could not work on the two days of the holiday. She began to shout, "You can't do that. There's so much work to be done!"

I was scared by her screaming and went to work. The experience



I don't have a clear answer for that; it was a strong feeling. Only later, when I began working for the Chabad Mobile Mitzva Tanks and I saw what an impact they made on the entire country, did I realize that the Rebbe's words did indeed pertain to me.

Another thing that happened that was like a sort of yechidus happened to me on the night I returned to Eretz Yisroel. I went to Flatbush to say goodbye to friends. One of them asked me, "Are you a Chabadnik?" and I replied, "So they say..."

Then I went back to 770 and davened mincha with the Rebbe. When the crowd split after the davening in order to give the Rebbe free passage, the Rebbe met my eyes again and I felt that the Rebbe was saying to me: "You are my shliach and when they ask you whether you are a Chabadnik, you say, 'So they say?!'"

When the Rebbe wants to convey a message, he knows how to do it through thought, too.

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A major change in his life took place on Yud Shevat 5741 (1981). Shmarya went from the yeshiva in Morristown to 770 with other bachurim, in order to be with the Rebbe.

One morning he met R' Dovid Nachshon. Dovid suggested that Shmarya take charge of the mitzvah tanks in Israel. Shmarya asked the Rebbe and the Rebbe responded, "I will mention it at the gravesite."

"A new chapter in my life began. That was also the year I married. When I began working, there were two mitzvah tanks. I began organizing our activities while R' Nachshon was the chairman who took care of all the financial and administrative work."

**You began working with the mitzvah tanks, a project that uses military jargon. Is there a parallel between your army service and**



While serving in the army, somewhere in the canal region, Shmarya is sitting on the left

***One day a part broke when we were in Beirut and we went to buy a replacement part. Picture it – in the middle of a war, a Chabad mitzvah tank stopped and someone goes in to buy a part from the Lebanese.***

**what you did with the mitzvah tanks?**

Someone once said, in order to be successful in tank work, you have to be as disciplined as soldiers in the army. Mitzvah tank work is hard and demanding. It's a 24-hour a day job. When you take a tank out, you can't just leave it there.

In the event that a tank gets stuck or it needs urgent supplies you have to have a support system in place. Setting up such a support system is a complicated business.

Today, it's hard for me to isolate what I took from my days in the IDF, but a project like "Caravan of Light" that we do during Chanukah, as well as other projects, are definitely done in a style similar to

that of the army.

**Do you agree with the many people who say that you remained a commander? Your way of speaking, your instructions/orders are that of a commander, as are the briefings and summations that you do before and after every activity.**

Could be. I don't see myself so I can't say for sure. Actually, I would say that we greatly improved our decision-making process. I think that we do things even more effectively than in the military.

**What is your work on mitzvah tanks like?**

It's not like going out on mitvzaim for an hour or two. Our work is our life. Whoever has worked on the tanks over the years



Putting t'fillin on with soldiers while under fire from Lebanon

## THE TROOPS TELL ABOUT THEIR COMMANDER

Shmarya=discipline

Shmarya=perfect obedience, no arguing

Those who worked with the mitzvah tanks knew that when Shmarya said something there was no arguing with him. Order meant everything to him. When the tankists sold religious items in distant yishuvim and came back with more money than was recorded in the receipt books, they were fined. When they expressed their astonishment (and annoyance), Shmarya said, "There must be order."

Shmarya would do spot checks on the tanks to see firsthand how they were doing. When he ascertained their location, he would surprise them. After reaching their location by car he would ask them to pull over on the side of the road and he would inspect the tank. If he found it less than spotless, he would take them to task.

The tankists never complained when it came from Shmarya because they knew that he demanded the same standards of himself.

passed close by and the driver quickly got out of the area.

We were eleven guys on the tank and we spent weeks with the IDF soldiers, who were very interested in working with us. Thousands of soldiers put on t'fillin.

It was surrealistic with Chassidic music playing in the streets of Beirut. I remember that one day a part broke when we were in Beirut and we went to buy a replacement part. Picture it – in the middle of a war, a Chabad mitzvah tank stopped and someone goes in to buy a part from the Lebanese.

**What other special and interesting activities did you do when you worked with the mitzvah tanks?**

The Rebbe started Tzivos Hashem in 5741 and we developed it throughout Israel. We took it seriously. We operated in 600 yishuvim simultaneously and branches of Tzivos Hashem were started all over the country.

**There was also the "Boruch Haba Melech HaMoshiach" project ...**

Yes. In 5753, we essentially eliminated the aura of reticence and

feels that mitzvaim are their life so that it's not so much that the tank makes the man, as much as man and tank are a match for each other.

Going out on mitzvah tanks is not like going out on mitzvaim for an hour or two. Our work is our life.

**When you first started working with mitzvah tanks, you entered Lebanon while it was under fire, which was highly dangerous. Is that something that you brought over from your army days?**

We spent a few weeks on the Lebanon front. One of our tanks, tank number four, took four enemy bullets. I am aware of the fact that someone with a civilian mindset wouldn't do what we did, and we definitely "got it over the head" from some people.

We had instructions from the Rebbe to coordinate with the army and we did. The army gave us the go-ahead and we even entered war zones. On one occasion, a missile

embarrassment that had seeped into Chabad since Khaf-Zayin Adar. At that time Chabad was pretty much paralyzed on the topic of Moshiach until our "Tanks" got out there ahead of the troops and cleared a path for the rank and file Chabadnik to explain how Moshiach and Geula are here and now. The caravan of

"Boruch Haba Melech HaMoshiach" tanks went all over the country and publicized the fact that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

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Due to a series of financial setbacks, the Mitzva Tanks in Eretz Yisroel have been operating on a more limited basis. Shmarya has

been using this time to apply his talents to other areas and means of spreading the wellsprings. Even so, Shmarya Harel's personal dream remains to lead the caravan of tanks that goes forth to welcome Moshiach.

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# 'BESSER AND EVEN BESSER'

By Menachem Ziegelboim

Pictures: from the archives of the Algemeiner Journal

*Sixteen years ago I visited Rabbi Chatzkel Besser a"h in his Manhattan office, where he shared some of his memories of the hours he spent with the Rebbe. A talmid chacham, Chassid, and askan of the previous generation, his was one of the most fascinating interviews I've conducted. \* Part 2 of 2.*

## THE REBBE WAS A FRIEND

R' Chatzkel Besser was a shtadlan (lobbyist) *par excellence*. "He had an amazing ability to connect with people," say those who knew him. "He would travel to Washington DC with the head of Agudath Israel of America for every meeting concerning communal matters, and would use his natural talent to motivate people to do as he wished."

Because of his abilities, R' Chatzkel had warm ties with various members of the Lubavitch royal family. When we discussed this

topic, he spoke more slowly and carefully weighed his words. It was apparent that he withheld more than he said but that which could be publicized was also quite fascinating:

"My connection with the Rebbe began through his brother, R' Yisroel Aryeh Leib. The Rebbe knew about our relationship but interestingly, he never asked me about his brother. Because of my connection, I would regularly visit Rebbetzin Chana and would occasionally visit the Rebbe's wife, too.

"After the Rebbe's brother passed away, I once went to visit Rebbetzin Chana and she asked me when I was going to travel to Europe. I told her

I'd be going the following week. She asked me whether I was traveling via London and I said I was. She asked me, 'Can you visit Leibel?' I realized she had not been told that he had died. R' Benzion Shemtov told me that the Rebbe had decided to keep this information from her.

"Over time, my relationship with the Rebbe's family got closer, as the following incident illustrates. I had to report to the Rebbe about a certain family matter. It was Elul and R' Chadakov told me that there was no yechidus that month. I had no choice but to tell the Rebbe in a letter that I was recently in Eretz Yisroel and was asked to speak to him about a certain family matter.

"At seven in the morning I got a phone call from R' Chadakov: 'The Rebbe wants to see you.'

"When?" I asked. R' Chadakov said that since in Elul there was no yechidus, I could pick any day and time I wanted. Of course, I said I would come when the Rebbe wanted me to come. In the end, we arranged a meeting for seven that evening.

R' Chatzkel Besser continued emotionally, "What can I tell you? I walked in and the Rebbe got up with a broad smile, took me by the arm and sat me down. I protested, 'I don't sit.' The Rebbe smiled and said, 'Today it's not yechidus. You can sit. You have as much as time as you want. The bell won't ring.' The Rebbe himself was sitting completely differently than he did in yechidus. Even the desk wasn't in the usual place.

"The Rebbe was in a special mood and spoke very openly. He behaved more like a friend than like a Rebbe and he shared many sharp insights and stories. We spoke about many things and then suddenly, in the middle of the conversation, the Rebbe turned very serious. He said, 'You knew my brother well. Perhaps you will tell me something of him?' This was the first time in all those years that the Rebbe asked me about

his brother.

"I began talking and the Rebbe listened. For most of the time he was quiet. He once interjected, 'They told me he had a good head, *a gevaldige kup*.' I was a little taken aback that the Rebbe said, 'they told me,' because I assumed the Rebbe knew his brother well.

"Interestingly, R' Leibel didn't speak much about the Rebbe, either. For two years, I knew him well without knowing that he was the Rebbe's brother. In those days, he went by the name Gurary. I once asked him if he was a relative of the well-known Gurary family. He said he was, and added, "My brother is the son-in-law of the Lubavitcher Rebbe." At first I thought he meant he was a brother of R' Shmaryahu Gurary, but when his wife told me that her husband's name was actually Schneersohn, I realized that he was the Rebbe's brother. After 1951, I no longer saw him so we no longer had opportunity to talk about the Rebbe.

"I will tell you a few things from that meeting with the Rebbe. The day before, Rabbi Shapiro, the son of the Naroler Rebbe – who are Belzer Chassidim – came to me. The present Belzer Rebbe was a new Rebbe at the time and they told me he was going to meet with the Rebbe.

"At that time, I had a friend in Manhattan named Itche Meir Firstenberg, a Gerrer Chassid who used to live in Berlin. He was friendly with the Rebbe during the period when the Rebbe was in Berlin. 'You should know', he told me, 'that even in Berlin of those days, the Rebbe was elevated above the rest. He had unusual yiras Shamayim.'

"He told me that he remembered the day the Belzer Rebbe, R' Aharon, arrived in Berlin. Firstenberg said, 'The Rebbe was a young man and he wanted to meet the Belzer Rebbe so we went together. There was a large



**R' Chatzkel Besser receiving kos shel bracha from the Rebbe**

crowd. Each person said shalom to the Belzer Rebbe while he shook their hand with a towel over his hand. When the Rebbe approached and greeted him, the Belzer Rebbe looked up, took off the towel, and shook his hand. The Rebbe was dressed like everyone else but the Belzer Rebbe said, "He has a warm hand."

"I met many times with Itche Meir. The night I was supposed to have yechidus, I told him that I was going to the Rebbe and he asked me to mention him. When I spoke to the Rebbe, I said I had regards from Itche Meir Firstenberg and the Rebbe said, 'Ah, Firstenberg. Is he still so sharp?'

"I told the Rebbe that I did not know how he used to be but he was very sharp. The Rebbe smiled and said, 'Thank you for the regards. Give him a warm regards from me. He took me to the Belzer Rebbe.'

"I took the opportunity to

mention that I had heard that the new Belzer Rebbe would be coming to see the Rebbe the following week.' They asked me to say, 'I told him, 'that since the Belzer Rebbe was new to the position and a young man, he needed chizuk and they asked that the Rebbe encourage him.'

"Since the topic came up, the Rebbe began telling me about the previous Belzer Rebbe, whom he had met in Berlin. The Rebbe said that he was both a great tzaddik and tremendously knowledgeable and mentioned his proficiency in Orach Chaim. The Rebbe said the Belzer Rebbe gave him shirayim and mentioned the halachos about the necessary shiur for a bracha before and afterwards.

"At this point, the Rebbe mentioned the story about the Tzemach Tzedek who had made a bracha on a slice of bread though he had a whole loaf in front of him as

## TAKING CARE OF THE LIVING

R' Besser often traveled to Poland and worked on renovating cemeteries. Before one of these trips he went to the Rebbe for a dollar and told him about the purpose of his trip. The Rebbe said, "You don't need to work only for the cemeteries of Poland but also for the living. See to it, for example, that it will be possible to obtain kosher food in Poland."

R' Besser was successful in getting Mr. Lauder, the American ambassador in Vienna at the time, interested in Polish Jewry. Mr. Lauder wanted to do more than repair cemeteries and he enlisted the aid of Mr. David Chase to develop programs to rebuild Jewish communities in Poland that were destroyed during the war. When he told R' Besser, he advised him to ask the Rebbe about it.

R' Besser said, "I had brought Mr. Lauder to the Rebbe several times before and he became an admirer of the Rebbe. This time, he also brought along his mother. This meeting took place in 5748.

"That night, the Rebbe davened in his house. After Maariv, everybody left the house and the three of us spoke to the Rebbe about the matter. The Rebbe listened and answered in English, saying he did not think it was worthwhile to rebuild Judaism in Poland and Czechoslovakia. He spoke at length and explained why Jewish communities should not be built in Poland."

A year later, the Rebbe said in a farbrengen that the Jews in Poland should be helped to preserve their Judaism but not to rebuild there. When Mr. Lauder concluded his stint as ambassador, he started a fund for the purpose of reconstructing Jewish communities in underdeveloped countries and stayed away from Poland.

***"Fifteen minutes later my wife came out and motioned that the Rebbe wanted me to enter. When I entered the room, the Rebbe welcomed me with a smile and said, 'My friend is here and did not come in?'"***

well. Afterwards, he explained that it was because there was no knife available. Later on, I saw that this story was published, but the way I remember it the Rebbe said it as follows:

The table was full of different kinds of fruit. The Tzemach Tzedek chose half an apple and said a bracha. Noticing people around the table looking at one another, he asked: 'Was that a test? You

probably think that fruits of the Seven Kinds or that which is preferred should go first. – But while you were thinking about Orach Chaim, I was thinking about the question in the Choshen Mishpat from Gemara Kiddushin about a guest who received a chicken to eat and used it to be mekadash a woman. It asks whether the kiddushin is valid as the chicken was given to him just for eating and is

technically the host's property; on the other hand, since the host gave it to him, you could say it became his.

"The Tzemach Tzedek continued, 'You brought me all these fruits, but you did not bring a knife and how could I eat without one? I saw that only one apple was cut and understood that you didn't want me to eat from the fruits except for the sliced apple. I was concerned about stealing – a halacha in Choshen Mishpat – for you did not want me to eat anything but this, so this was what I chose.'

"The hosts said, 'We see that you are not only a talmid chacham but also a chacham.'

"The meeting with the Rebbe lasted two and a half hours. At 9:30, it was time for Maariv but the Rebbe did not leave. I said that the congregation was waiting for Maariv, but the Rebbe waved dismissively as a sign that we should continue. The conversation continued for another fifteen minutes.

"I'm telling you – the atmosphere in the room...the Rebbe spoke to me and I spoke to the Rebbe," R' Besser said emotionally. "I can't forget those two hours in the Rebbe's presence. What can I tell you? It wasn't only spiritual pleasure, but actual physical pleasure.

"I would say that the Rebbe, as it were, removed his Rebbishe clothes. Whenever I came, the Rebbe was the Rebbe, with all that entails, but at that meeting there was a completely different atmosphere.

"On another occasion, my wife wanted to consult with the Rebbe about something. I told her the door is open but I don't want to ask about it, so she arranged a yechidus for herself. On the appointed day, I took her to 770 and waited in the car while she went to see the Rebbe.

"Fifteen minutes later she came out and motioned that the Rebbe wanted me to enter. When I entered the room, the Rebbe welcomed me

with a smile and said, 'My friend is here and did not come in?'

"I explained that I hadn't made an appointment. The Rebbe laughed and said, 'Rav Kahana ate because of his wife.' The hint was understood."

## THE REBBETZIN'S CLEVERNESS

R' Besser also knew Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. The Rebbetzin invited him and his family to be her guests during the sheva brachos of his grandson ("We went to her house with the chassan and kalla and drank l'chaim"). He remembers her mainly for the following incident.

When the Rebbe's niece, Dalia gave birth to a boy in Washington, the Rebbetzin was involved in arranging the bris and R' Besser was the sandak.

"That day, we spoke several times about the details of the bris. When we spoke about the baby's name, Dalia suggested we ask the Rebbe. I was unable to reach the Rebbe, so I spoke instead with the Rebbetzin. I gathered from the conversation that she had spoken with the Rebbe but didn't want me to know this.

"The Rebbetzin told me she'd get back to me, and called back fifteen minutes later to say, 'The father and mother are the ones to decide the name.'

"But they want to know what the Rebbe thinks the name should be,' I said.

"They should decide,' she said.

"Did the Rebbe say they should decide?"

"She laughed, 'You want me to tell you only what I have to say?'

"No, I am sure that you are telling me that you spoke with the Rebbe.'

"I didn't say that..."

"Then there was a discussion about how and where to make the



**R' Chatzkel Besser speaking at a Melaveh Malka for descendants of the Alter Rebbe**

bris. Once again, the Rebbetzin said she would call me back in fifteen minutes. I realized she was consulting with the Rebbe even though she didn't say so explicitly. The Rebbetzin sent ten men to Washington for the bris, in addition to a complete seuda. The child was named Ariel, after his grandfather, Rabbi Yisroel Aryeh Leib."

## A TWENTY MINUTE CONVERSATION WITH THE REBBE OUTSIDE 770

R' Besser devoted a significant

portion of his time to askanus. He was a member of the Presidium of Agudath Israel of America, member of the Vaad Hapoel Haolami of Agudath Israel World Organization, founding chairman of the Daf Yomi commission ("I give a Daf Yomi shiur every morning."), rav of the B'nei Yisroel Chaim shul in Manhattan, and an advisor regarding Poland for the Lauder Foundation, yet he asked that we skip the conversations he had with the Rebbe about his communal work. "I don't want to discuss my conversations about the klal with a magazine."





**R' Chatzkel Besser during the interview**

### **“SEMICHA” FROM THE REBBE**

18 years ago, R' Besser received “smicha” from the Rebbe.

“The day of my son’s wedding, we went to ask for the Rebbe’s siddur and when we got there, we saw that there were another two chassanim. When the Rebbe came out with the siddur and saw three chassanim, he said, ‘Since there are three chassanim, make a *goral* to see who will be first, second and third to use it.’

“Then he said to me, ‘You are a talmid chacham and a rav, and you are “halachically ordained” to make a *goral*.’

“Nu, so I publicly got ‘smicha.’

“I made the *goral* and my son came out last. He said, ‘It’s good it worked out that way because the first and second have to hurry since others are waiting for them, but I can daven in peace.’”

He agreed to tell one story, which demonstrates the unique relationship he had with the Rebbe.

“I was very close with the Gerrer Rebbe, the Lev Simcha zt”l, and visited him whenever he was in Boro Park. In Elul, 5738, he told me he was invited to Chabad the next week and invited me to join him the following Monday at three o’clock.

“One of the people who arranged the visit was my brother-in-law, Rabbi Nachman Elbaum. I told him I would go to 770 directly from my office but since I wanted to return in the car together with the Gerrer Rebbe, I asked him to reserve a seat for me..

“The Gerrer Rebbe arrived with a large entourage that swamped the entrance. There was the usual pushing and commotion, but slowly order prevailed and we entered the Rebbe’s room.

“The Rebbe’s desk was on the side. When the Gerrer Rebbe entered, the Rebbe was the only one present. R’ Chadakov followed him and then R’ Leibel Groner and R’ Binyamin Klein. The two Rebbes sat facing one another on the same side of the desk and R’ Simcha Elberg and I stood on the side with R’ Chadakov. The others stood on the opposite side of the desk.

“The discussion that ensued has been publicized already. The meeting was very friendly, and it was apparent that the two Rebbes liked one another.

“When the Gerrer Rebbe left, all his Chassidim pushed after him and the Rebbe followed them to escort the Gerrer Rebbe. I did not dare to run ahead of the Rebbe and I followed behind until the main door of 770. The Rebbe remained in the doorway and I couldn’t go past him to the Gerrer Rebbe’s car. The Rebbe raised his hand, walked a few more steps, and then stepped aside. Just as I reached the steps, the Gerrer Rebbe’s car drove away without me.



"The Rebbe turned to me and began talking to me. I was standing near the Rebbe, opposite hundreds of awestruck Chassidim, while the Rebbe spoke to me for twenty minutes!"

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As far as his work in Aguda, R' Besser was only willing to say this.

"I head the Daf Yomi commission. I once wanted to publish a book of *hadranim* on Daf Yomi from all the *g'dolei ha'dor* and I asked the Rebbe to contribute, too. The Rebbe said that I could put his *hadranim* on Shas in the book but I could not write that it was specifically for Daf Yomi, as he did not receive a *horaa* from Beis Rebbe about this, though there was a great friendship between the Rebbe Rayatz and Rabbi Meir Shapiro, who initiated the Daf Yomi project.

"I understood that the Rebbe did not want Chabad to be included officially in this book and in the end I gave up on the project altogether because I didn't want to print it without the Rebbe's contribution.

"I have another story that I want to tell you about a good friend of mine, Rabbi Avrohom Sofer, who was known as Professor Schreiber,. His father was one of the great *tzaddikim* of Hungary, the son of the K'sav Sofer. Professor Schreiber himself was a big *talmid chacham*, as well as a professor in Columbia University. He published the entire Meiri on Shas from manuscripts.

"R' Sofer sought connections with great men, and I once told him about the Rebbe. 'Don't tell me exaggerations of Chassidim about their Rebbe,' he protested. I decided he needed to meet the Rebbe and see for himself.

"Sometime later he said to me, 'You know, I'm going to see your Rebbe.' When I asked him in surprise, 'Why now?' he explained that he had a friend at the university by the name of Professor

Rosenblum, who lately began growing a beard. I asked him what happened and he said that he became a *baal t'shuva* and a Chassid under the influence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I figured that if he had such an impact on Prof. Rosenblum himself then there must be something to this and he arranged an appointment for me to meet the Rebbe.'

"At eleven o'clock that night he came to my house and said in amazement, 'R' Chatzkel, whatever you said about the Rebbe wasn't enough. I've just met with the Rebbe – what a personality! When I walked in he spoke for more than half an hour about the Chasam Sofer. As soon as he began to speak I could see that he was an expert in the writings of the Chasam Sofer and he freely quoted from here and there.

"I was there for maybe an hour and a half. At the end of the visit, the Rebbe said to me, 'Rabbi Sofer, why don't we see you here?' I told the Rebbe that it was hard for me to come late at night, and the Rebbe asked when it was convenient for me. I said I could come at four in the afternoon and the Rebbe agreed.'

"R' Sofer began visiting the Rebbe every few weeks and subsequently became a great Chassid of his. The Rebbe began to utilize him to spread Judaism. Before one of his trips to Israel the Rebbe asked him what route he was taking. When R' Sofer said he was going via France, the Rebbe asked him to spend time – at the Rebbe's expense – for a few days in Italy in order to carry out two missions in Bologna: to build a mikva and to arrange for a kosher restaurant at the university. R' Sofer, who knew Italian, carried out these two instructions and then returned to Israel.

"I have another story for you. R' Shlomo Orenstein, a Boyaner Chassid whose wife was the Rebbe's

aunt, attended my Daf Yomi shiur every morning. He once told me that the Rebbe inquired with great interest about how I taught the daf.

"I always avoided talking to the Rebbe in learning. When I was fifty, I had *yeichud* and mentioned my age to the Rebbe. The Rebbe began talking to me about a Rambam and mentioned something connected to the event of my birthday. I did not reply, as though I did not know what he was referring to. It's a principle of mine as a Chassid that I don't want to talk to the Rebbe in learning. In all encounters with the Rebbe, I knew I had to remember who I was and who the Rebbe was.

"There was one exception. When the Rebbe turned 72, I wrote a letter to him in honor of the occasion, in a learned style and with sources and footnotes.

"That Pesach, my son stayed with me and on Erev Pesach, he went to the Rebbe to get matzos. When he came back he said, 'Thousands of people stood on line and each one got a piece. I passed by the Rebbe and continued walking when I was told the Rebbe wanted me. I went to the Rebbe and he looked in a box of matzos until he found a whole one, which he gave to me, and said, 'Give it to your father and tell him *yashar ko'ach* for the brachos.'"

He ended up getting a matza and a warm thank you...

"On Chol HaMoed, I got a letter with a postmark from 11 Nissan, which showed that the Rebbe responded on the same day he received my letter. In the letter the Rebbe thanked me and also responded in a learned style."

## NOCH BESSER!

"One time, when I passed the Rebbe, he said to me with a smile, '*Besser un noch besser!*'" (Better and better)

# EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

*A medical miracle and clear answers and guidance from the Rebbe led R' Yeshaya Brusilovsky to a path he'd never have dreamed he'd take – a life of t'shuva and a surprising career.*

If you would have asked R' Yeshaya Brusilovsky from Petach Tikva a few years ago if he saw his future in the field of medicine, he would chuckle at the very suggestion. From his youth, he had been taught and loved the field of computer programming, and it was here that he saw his future. However, the ways of Divine Providence are hidden from man. Just a few months after their marriage, his wife was stricken with debilitating arthritis. All the treatments they attempted in hospitals throughout Israel merely worsened her condition.

A phone conversation with a shliach in the former Soviet Union was the unexpected turning point in this distressing situation. An acquaintance of this shliach had also suffered from early-onset arthritis, and he was cured with the help of Bioresonance therapy. The shliach's description of this relatively unknown therapy intrigued R' Yeshaya, and he urged his wife to

attempt the treatment. The process did not take long, and months of constant deterioration in her condition were reversed with the help of the therapy. R' Yeshaya's wife was finally pronounced cured.

After seeing the effectiveness of this treatment, R' Yeshaya was enthusiastic to share it with others. He learned how to perform the therapy himself, and even purchased the necessary medical apparatus to help others suffering from this ailment. For R' Yeshaya, this is more than a calling – it's a shlichus.

"This medical approach is recognized in Germany and other countries throughout Europe, including the former Soviet Union," R' Yeshaya explains. "It is based on the principle that every component of the body sends off electromagnetic waves, and if we manage to surpass these waves, it's possible to destroy the bacteria and treat the root of the problem. This approach identifies most ailments, and provides the appropriate

response."

After treating several people and seeing amazing results, he decided to learn the technique in greater depth. He paid a visit to its originator, who turned transformed it from a theory in medicine to a practical healing tool. R' Yeshaya invested tens of thousands of dollars in a brand-new machine, which included treatments for a whole variety of medical and emotional problems that were not in the original version of this device.

"We have a fine method of healing that has helped us and many other people, including some well-known personalities. The conventional approaches don't always supply the proper answers, as we saw for ourselves. It was apparently decreed from Heaven that we should go through what we did in order to reveal this methodology to others."

## REVEALING YIDDISHKEIT IN SUMMER CAMP

Yeshaya was born in Kiev during the *Lameds* (1970s). His family's entire knowledge of Judaism could be summed up by the awareness that they were Jews. "Our family was no different than most other Jewish families in Kiev, which was then under Soviet domination. We had never heard of Shabbos, or even Yom Kippur. Though we knew next to nothing about our Jewish identity, our Gentile neighbors made sure we never forgot about it, constantly persecuting and harassing us due to our Judaism.

"My parents suffered much from anti-Semitism. I endured far less, perhaps because I was shy and reserved or because I studied subjects that my peers in school considered to be more intellectual. The primary victims of anti-Semitism were those who came from



weaker homes and had difficulties in their studies. However, even I didn't manage to escape the sour expressions on the faces of the more 'privileged' youth. Although they never said so explicitly, I felt that I and the other Jews in the class were unworthy of proper treatment by these peers.

"My favorite pastime was chess. From a very young age, chess was my whole world and it occupied all of my leisure time. My great-aunt was the Ukrainian national chess champion, and the game flowed through the veins of our entire family. At the age of eleven, I registered with a chess club and made spectacular progress, obtaining several high ranks. In those days, it was a point of considerable respect to be a winning chess player. People, particularly those in the ruling government, gave much honor to those who had success in matters of intellect."

Yeshaya's life was that of a "captive child" in its fullest sense. He didn't even feel that he was

lacking anything. "When, without much effort, your daily agenda is filled with such intellectual subjects, you don't feel the need to look for anything else," he says. "What could be out there to look for that I didn't already know?"

"The first time that I was exposed to Torah and mitzvos was when one of my close friends, Zhenia, told me about a seminar for young people being organized by Jews from the United States. He said that they were bringing clean and healthy food with them from overseas, a big draw in the Ukraine at that time, due to the radioactive contamination seeping out from Chernobyl. He added that this seminar was only for members of the Jewish faith, and admission was free of charge.

"This sounded wonderful, and when I asked my parents, they naturally agreed wholeheartedly. Free? Why not?"

From the first moment that I stepped foot inside the summer camp grounds, I felt that I had come

to the right place, that I somehow belonged there. It's impossible to describe this in words, but I felt as if I had revealed something that had been planted deep within me for many years.

"The organizer of the summer camp was Rabbi Michael Manis, of blessed memory, who worked for the 'Ezras Achim' Organization. With each passing day, my Jewish soul illuminated more and more. They told us stories about Judaism and taught us how to daven and learn Torah.

"Naturally, the counselors told us about the Rebbe and his activities throughout the world, and we were very impressed. At the end of camp, each of us wrote a letter to the Rebbe about our feelings and dreams. Within that relatively short period of time, they had succeeded in instilling within us the greatness of the Rebbe, helping us to create and internalize a deep connection to him.

"I had already completed my first semester of studies in computer



programming at that point, but despite my great love for the field and my dream of becoming a programmer, I left everything to go learn in the yeshiva that Rabbi Manis had established in Kiev. During my first days studying in the yeshiva, I underwent a bris mila, with a wooden table serving as the operating table...

"I progressed in my Jewish studies with a deep spiritual longing, beyond all logic and reason. My parents, who knew nothing about Yiddishkeit, were certain that I had lost my mind. The path I had chosen was most unacceptable in accordance with the way of life in those days. They tried to dissuade me and asked me to return to my computer studies, but I remained steadfast in my decision. The bachurim who helped us to take our first steps in Judaism were Rabbi Asher Ze'ev Deitsch from Petach Tikva, Rabbi Moshe Heber from Nachlat Har Chabad, and Rabbi Eliezer Karogliak from Kfar Chabad – all of whom came on the Rebbe's shlichus within the framework of the 'Ezras Achim' Organization. I have maintained contact with them to this day.

"Later, Rabbi Berel Karasik arrived, from whom I also learned a great deal. I stayed in the yeshiva

program for six months. Not long afterwards, rumors began to circulate that anyone who didn't cross the Ukrainian border before the country was granted independence, would be conscripted into the Ukrainian army. Rabbi Karasik helped me obtain an airline ticket and sent me to Eretz Yisroel, where I began studying at Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Kfar Chabad. While in yeshiva, I increased my knowledge of Torah and mitzvos, and I became a Lubavitcher in every respect, right down to the chassidic garb.

"Rabbi Karasik and I planned that I would remain in Eretz Yisroel for a certain amount of time, and upon receiving Israeli citizenship, I would fly back to the Ukraine with an Israeli passport and begin working on the Rebbe's shlichus, without the need to worry about the local authorities. I was already deeply rooted in the Chabad experience, and it was clear to me that I must ask the Rebbe before making any decision. I wrote to the Rebbe about this plan and asked for his consent to leave the yeshiva. The Rebbe's reply was not long in coming: **'In accordance with the advice of the administration of the yeshiva where he learns now. I will mention it at the Tziyon. Check the**

**t'fillin.'** The yeshiva administration understood from the Rebbe's answer that he wanted me to remain in yeshiva. My t'fillin were checked, and they were found not to be stringently kosher.

"One person who had a tremendous amount of influence on me and from whom I learned much was the chassidic mashpia, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Futerfas.

At the end of my yeshiva studies in Kfar Chabad, I decided to complete my degree in computer programming, and I entered a crash course that gave me all the information and knowledge I required. I always thought that I had thrown away all of my studies in the Ukraine in order to go learn in yeshiva, but G-d does not remain in debt. After I had become a full-fledged Torah observant Jew, He provided me with a golden opportunity to finish my studies and fulfill my dream. Later, I started working for the VeriFone Corporation, where I was the only Torah observant Jew. I still work there today. The hi-tech market was soaring at the time, and I was privileged to receive expressions of great appreciation for my contribution to the company's success."

## THE REBBE – WITH HIM EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

After reaching marriageable age, with no promising prospects on the horizon, R' Yeshaya decided to rent an apartment near his place of work in Petach Tikva. There, he would host Shabbosim for Soviet immigrants who wished to strengthen their Torah observance.

"After I turned twenty-five years old, I started making serious inquiries regarding shidduchim. During that period of time, I was without a mashpia and all my efforts to find someone suitable were to no avail. This was a very confusing time

for me: Though I very much wanted to raise a chassidic family and build my future life, I was totally preoccupied with my work.

“At a certain point, I wrote to the Rebbe that I had been left without a mashpia, and I asked if he could provide me with a chassidic model whom I could emulate and turn to for advice. I don’t remember what the Rebbe’s answer was, but I simply can’t forget what happened the following morning:

“I arrived in shul to daven as I did every morning, and one of the Anash members there put his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Shaya, I really understand you. I also got married at a later age. I know all too well the difficulties you’re facing.’ I was bewildered, but couldn’t ignore the incident. Just yesterday, I had asked the Rebbe to find me a person who could understand me and with whom I could connect, and the very next morning someone approaches me in such a caring manner. I asked him if he could be my mashpia. His eyes opened wide, his tone of voice became quite emotional, and he then asked if he could tell me something.

“He related that prior to his wedding, he had been very well-liked by bachurim his age, many of whom consulted with him as a kind of mashpia. After he got married, many of these bachurim asked him if he would be their ‘*Aseh Lecha Rav*’. He devoted himself to the task, and these young men started coming to see him – but it was at the expense of his family life. Eventually, his wife asked him to stop being their mashpia and spend more time with his own children. With no alternative, he agreed, but when he wrote to the Rebbe via ‘Igros Kodesh,’ the Rebbe replied with a letter on the need for him to be the image of a mashpia. He tried to soften his wife’s opposition to his involvement in such matters, but his efforts proved unsuccessful.

“Then, on the night before I



A group picture at summer camp with the avreichim who helped bring him back to Yiddishkait

***Not only was the pain not eased by the medication, it intensified from day to day until it became positively unbearable. We tried all types of natural remedies and alternative treatments, but nothing seemed to work.***

approached him, he received another clear answer from the Rebbe that he must be a mashpia, and there’s no possibility of avoiding the issue. He showed the Rebbe’s answer to his wife, and this time she gave her consent – on the condition that he would serve as mashpia to only one person. When I came to him the very next day with the request that he should be my mashpia, it was clear to both of us that the Rebbe had arranged this personally. His eyes sparkled with emotion, and I was delighted at this affirmation that the Rebbe had received my letter and was taking care of me. We arranged to meet later that same day.

“After I presented him with my current situation, he gave me his opinion. He said that I should take a vacation from work, go to the

Rebbe, calm down a bit, and then with my renewed strengths and an understanding of what marriage is – come back and deal with the subject. He gave me guidance on how to approach the company’s directors to request an unpaid leave of absence for one year. Miraculously, they were very understanding and gave their permission. He arranged for me to join the *k’vutza* studying in Beis Chayeinu, despite the fact that it was Pesach and already halfway into the year. Those were marvelous days, which redefined my whole concept of *hiskashrus*.

“Six months later, during the month of Tishrei, I was greeted in ‘Beis Chayeinu’ by a friend of mine – Rabbi Dovber Beitman from Dnepropetrovsk, who worked there with the ‘Beis Chana’ seminary for

women. I asked him if he knew of a possible shidduch for me, and he suggested I wait until the end of the year of study in 770, when it would be appropriate to discuss the matter again. When the year ended on Zayin MarCheshvan, I presented the idea to my mashpia, and when he gave me his approval, I asked the Rebbe for a bracha.

“In the letter I received from the Rebbe in Igros Kodesh, he wrote that the days between Yud Kislev and Yud-Tes Kislev are most auspicious ones. At first, I didn’t attach much attention to this since it was still MarCheshvan. I planned to be in the Ukraine within a few days, but things didn’t work out that way. The embassy informed me that I would have to wait two weeks before receiving my entry visa, so I didn’t end up boarding the plane until the 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev. I stayed in Kiev for two days, visiting my parents and old friends whom I hadn’t seen for a long time. I arrived in Dnepropetrovsk on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, staying at the home of my friend, Rabbi Dovber Beitman. The very next day, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, I had my first meeting with my future wife, who worked for the ‘Beis Chana’ seminary. As amazing as it might seem, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, we were already discussing establishing a home together, and on Yud-Tes Kislev, we celebrated our *vort* with the participation of the community’s rabbis.

“When the *vort* was over, I recalled the Rebbe’s letter about how the days between Yud Kislev and Yud-Tes Kislev are auspicious ones. I couldn’t help but feel a sense of deep emotion. The Rebbe, the merciful father, had found the right mashpia to give me the right advice

E. YOCHANAN GURARY  
CHIEF RABBI OF HOLON

אלי' יוחנן גורארי  
הרב הראשי לחולון  
בשר

ר"ח אדר תש"ע

### המליצה

הנני בזה להמליץ על הר"ר ישעי' וענת ברזילובסקי שידויו, שמתחזים כרפואה בשית "פול – סרצ'וק", וזאת לאחר ששמעתי מכמה וכמה שהטיפול הנ"ל עזר להם מאד.

מזכיר בשית הבונה ורפואה בין-תהודה (ביו רוגנס) שחקר ויסד ד"ר פול (R.Volle) ואחריו חקר פרופסור סרצ'וק (Sarchuk V.N.) מאוקראינה, שגילה דרך להעביר גלי רפואה על ידי אלקטרוסיגנות לסים ולהפכם לתכשיר מרפא. והנ"ל משתמשים במכשיר שפיתח פרופ' סרצ'וק, הנקרא BIOCORID-F.

הטיפול מרפא כמה סוגי דלקות (ביניהם דלקות פרקים למיניהם), דלקות שר, שושנה במצב כרוני, מחלות אוזן אף גרון, מחלות ריאות ודרכי נשימה, מחלות מערכת העיכול, מחלות מערכת העצבים, אורגניות למיניהם, מחלות כבד, מחלות עור כולל פיסטריות ועוד.

השי"ת, שהוא רופא כל בשר ומפילא לעשות, ית' בעזרו לעזור לנוקמים לרפואה. וזוכה במהרה לביאת גואל צדק, אמן.

דגה  
יוחנן גורארי  
אלי' יוחנן גורארי  
הרב הראשי לחולון

### HaRav Yochanan Gurary's letter

at the right time.”

The Brusilovskys’ wedding took place on a day no less auspicious – Yud Shvat. The following day, they emigrated to Eretz Yisroel, where they joyously celebrated ‘*Sheva Brachos*’ with their close friends and acquaintances.

“I felt that the Rebbe was accompanying me every step of the way, which made my sense of joy doubly great. The company that I worked for prior to my trip to the Rebbe welcomed me back with open arms, and my wife started working for the ‘Moreh Geula’ organization, headed by Rabbi Michael Gotzel. People would call her in order to write to the Rebbe and she would translate the answers for them. She also worked in translations for Rabbi Lugov’s website.”

### SALVATION CAME THROUGH THE REBBE'S SHLIACH

“Life was good and pleasant, and everything seemed to be going quite

smoothly,” R’ Yeshaya recalled. “Then one day, my wife started to feel sharp pains in her ankle. We went to our family doctor, and after he checked her leg, he gave her an ordinary pain-killing medication. However, not only was the pain not eased by the medication, it intensified from day to day until it became positively unbearable. We turned to the family doctor again, and he made an appointment for us with a rheumatologist. In the meantime, until the day of the appointment, we tried all types of natural remedies and alternative treatments, but nothing seemed to work.

“The rheumatologist explained that my wife was suffering from a form of arthritis, which was rather

unusual for a young woman only twenty-one years of age. She suggested that my wife take morphine pills to dull the pain, but they didn’t help. The condition only worsened and even spread to other parts of her body. We returned to the doctor, and she suggested that a small dosage of chemotherapy pills and steroids might do the trick and asked us to come back in one month. By the time we returned to Tel HaShomer Hospital, my wife was already in a wheelchair.

“Not only weren’t the medications helping, one doctor who went over the blood tests claimed that the pills my wife was taking were harming her immune system. We felt literally helpless, and we didn’t know what to do. On the one hand, current treatments were not helping and were even causing damage. On the other hand, the pain was too excruciating to ignore, and needed to be dealt with. In the hospital ward, we met other people suffering from the same complaint, and we realized that the doctors

were only treating the symptoms, not the ailment itself. We constantly wrote to the Rebbe on the matter and received special brachos. But how would this all end and what were we to do?

“Then, the help came in a way we had least expected. In the first months after we arrived in Eretz Yisroel, we thought about going out on shlichus. We both owed our current path in life to the Rebbe’s shluchim, and wanted to share this gift with others. Thus, we made inquiries among our friends and acquaintances, telling all of them that we were looking for a place to go out on shlichus. A while later, when my wife was already in the midst of her serious medical condition, we received a call from one of the shluchim from a large city in the former Soviet Union, with a proposal of a place of shlichus for us. For whatever reason, we opened up to him and told him about everything we had been going through.

“I told him that I wanted very much to go out on shlichus, but that my wife’s medical condition did not allow it at the present time. After giving a brief description of what my wife was enduring, he questioned us closely about the specifics of her condition. I didn’t understand why he was so interested in all the details. ‘Look,’ he eventually told me, ‘I know someone who had exactly the same problem, and she was cured by a woman here in my city.’ A glimmer of hope was kindled within me, and a few days later, my wife and I landed in that city. There we were introduced to the medical approach that saved my wife – Bioresonance therapy.

“At the very first treatment, the doctor already predicted my wife would be walking again within the month. This was a dream that we questioned would actually be realized, yet that’s exactly what happened. After a few weeks, we



**R' Yeshaya Brusilovsky demonstrates how the device works**

noticed a marked improvement in her condition. She was no longer suffering from those intense pains, and within a few months, everything had disappeared as if it had never been. After we saw the treatment’s effectiveness, we decided to learn it in order to help others. We asked the doctor to teach us this marvelous healing approach, and she gladly agreed. We became quite friendly with her, and over a period of a few months, she had taught us everything.

“Before returning to Eretz Yisroel, we paid a large sum of money to buy the amazing Bioresonance therapy device, which we brought back with us. Yet, we didn’t feel that we understood enough to treat others. Though we used it occasionally to give treatments to close friends and family, for the most part the device with proven ability sat unused in the closet.

“Five years have passed since then, and Baruch Hashem, all is well. We have been blessed with children, and we see that this

treatment was sent by Divine Providence for our benefit.”

## **A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH**

Before R' Yeshaya explained the actual approach and how it works, he made it clear that this is not some ‘grandmother’s remedy’ like some of the accepted alternative methods; it is a scientifically proven medical approach. This is a technique that deals with the root of the problem, instead of just containing the symptoms.

The treatment via Bioresonance therapy is divided into two parts. First, naturally, comes the diagnosis. R' Yeshaya explained how the device enables for a diagnosis of the patient and the medical difficulties that brought him/her to require treatment:

“Every component of the human body – cells, tissue, limbs – emits specific electromagnetic waves that have a coordinated influence on the rest of the biological system. Together, these waves form an

overall profile of the patient, something like a personal template, as the waves of a healthy individual are structured differently than those of someone who is ill. Each ailment has its own 'frequency', and by the same token, certain frequencies can prevent the development of an ailment, while other frequencies can even heal the body from given ailments."

After the diagnosis, the treatment is divided into two types. The first and more widespread method is by using higher electromagnetic frequencies to attack illnesses on lower frequencies.

"There's another approach, the one that we learned and which was used to treat my wife. In this method, water is placed in an electromagnetic field together with the medication used to cure the ailment, and then given to the patient to drink. This may sound like some kind of home remedy, but it really works. When we came to the doctor who taught us this approach, she told us that she learned it when she contracted a serious illness and it eventually saved her life.

"The way this device works is simply unbelievable. It operates through codes that are entered into its memory banks for the purpose of identifying the problem and also helping us to construct the medication that can cure the patient. Everything – the medications, the diagnoses, etc. – has a scientific basis and is written in very clear language."

R' Yeshaya described the process with great enthusiasm. "The facts show that it works. Within just five days, it removes the bacteria, and we often saw literal miracles. There was a woman who was in the early stages of pregnancy, diagnosed with a form of bacterial infection, and the doctors wanted to terminate her pregnancy. We treated her with this device, and at her next examination, the doctors confirmed that the

bacteria had disappeared. I treated someone else whose doctor had given him medication that he wasn't sure would work. He came to us, and we treated him successfully. The doctor was very impressed, and the patient said that we had treated him."

As a Chabad chassid, R' Yeshaya recalls the Rebbe's sicha about the development of external forms of wisdom as a stepping stone in the world's march to the days of Moshiach, in parallel to the flow of G-dly wisdom.

## LEARNING FROM THE APPROACH'S FOUNDER

Until a few months ago, R' Yeshaya reserved this device only for his close friends and acquaintances. While he was disturbed by the fact that he had access to this tool and was doing nothing with it, feelings of concern also gnawed away at him. What finally caused him to start using it openly was a meeting with the founder of this approach, Professor Sartzok of Kiev. "I thought that I would never be able to reach him, but I recently decided to try. While this professor's research is based upon someone else's findings, it was he who advanced it in practical terms, bringing it down from mere theory to actual application.

"I managed to get in touch with him, and he said that he would be happy to teach me how it works. I took his offer as a great compliment, and I invested a great deal of time and effort in learning his healing approach. I knew that I was standing at a major crossroads: If I continued to learn this process from its originator, while using up considerable funds, I would have an obligation to be involved in its practice. My mashpia had moved overseas with his family, and when I spoke with him, he suggested that I consult with a rabbinical authority. I

decided I would speak to the rav of Cholon, Rabbi Yochanan Gurary.

"Before turning to him, I wrote to the Rebbe via Igros Kodesh about my plans.

The Rebbe's answer appeared in Vol. 6, pg. 360, and the word that immediately jumped out at me was 'Gurary'. I didn't need more than that; I understood that the Rebbe was pleased by my desire to consult with Rabbi Gurary. I called him, and he agreed to meet with me. I told him about this healing approach and how it had helped my wife. I also said that there was a new and more updated device, which I wanted to bring to Eretz Yisroel. Rabbi Gurary emphatically told me to go to Kiev to meet with Professor Sartzok.

"The professor taught me many things, and he eventually sold me the newest version of his healing device with codes for a wide assortment of problems, including treatment of emotional disorders and strengthening of the immune system. The new device has a range of fascinating possibilities, e.g., treatment of infertility on the level of DNA programming."

In the months since he started working with the new device, R' Shaya has successfully dealt with a wide variety of cases. As per his request, many of those whom he has treated, including certain prominent Chabad figures, contacted me and told about the amazing results.

"You have to understand that this is an absolutely scientific treatment, already accepted in numerous countries throughout the world. Eretz Yisroel already has a lesser version of this healing approach, but the more updated version has not yet been recognized. We personally experienced how this device saved my wife. Who knows where she would be if it hadn't been for this treatment – and today we use it to help others."



# ‘WHO DOESN’T LOVE THE REBBE?’

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

***Rabbi Aharon Shiffman is the Rebbe’s shliach in charge of Chabad activities at Moshav Shefer and Kibbutz Farod, located in the heart of the mystical forests and groves of the region of Mt. Meron. Here is the story of his long and circuitous journey from the Lithuanian-brand Itri Yeshiva in Yerushalayim to Chabad to the mountains of the Galilee.***  
**\* Part 2 of 2.**

[Continued from last issue]

Today, R’ Ronen Malul is an outstanding chassidic avreich, and it’s hard to believe that his journey to Judaism happened only a few short years ago.

“At the Moshiach’s Seuda at Rabbi Shiffman’s home on the last day of Pesach, I decided to ‘shift into high gear’, and he suggested

that I go to yeshiva. He brought me, together with R’ Gil Heller, to Ramat Aviv, and he introduced me to the yeshiva staff. Later, he also went with me to the Daas yeshiva in Rechovot, where I studied until I got married. Rabbi Shiffman would call me occasionally to ensure that everything was going all right, both materially and spiritually. That’s true

devotion.”

It was already getting late, and we parked our car in the parking lot of the Amirey Hagalil Hotel, located in a forested area between Moshav Shefer and Kibbutz Farod. Nothing had prepared me for the tent of Moshe Genish, in a rear courtyard with an amazingly breathtaking view over the blossoming valley. He’s been living there for close to two decades with his family and children. Pillows and carpets are spread out all over the lobby with an improvised library and wood-fueled central heating. Moshe greets us warmly, and after giving a hug and a kiss to his rav, Rabbi Shiffman, he goes to prepare the tent for the weekly chassidus shiur.

As Moshe makes the preparations, Rabbi Shiffman shows me around this gem of a place, and I am thrilled to discover an Aron Kodesh, a sanctuary, a stringently kosher mikveh, and numerous s’farim in chassidus perused regularly by tourists and drifters who visit the premises. My curiosity is piqued by our host’s unique garb – a Bedouin keffiyeh and a long cloth robe. While we waited for the other participants in the class to arrive, Moshe agreed to tell us his unique life story.

Moshe was born in Tzfas to a traditional family. He received his education at the Kadouri school and was inducted into the IDF Nachal infantry division. During his military service, his brother Ofer was killed in a training accident. Driven by his pain and anguish, he sought a better reality, one of peace and unity. He had a desire to find a place where he could establish a ‘hill of love’ that would join together all the religions of the world. “Today, after having learned chassidus, I understand that the only thing that I can do is to try and produce greater peace and brotherhood among our own people, and Melech HaMoshiach will be the one to bring world peace. Back then,

however, I thought that I would be able to achieve this on my own.”

After finishing his military service, Moshe set out on his search. His journey eventually led him to Australia, where he opened two coffee houses in Byron Bay. These cafés became meeting places for all the Israeli tourists. After getting everything he could out of the business, he left the coffee houses as a gift to his friends, and with another companion, he set up Blue Mountain Ranch, where they would turn military energy into agricultural. He made contact with several investors, but the project never got off the ground. He returned to Eretz Yisroel in 5755 and his search for an appropriate place where he could realize his dream and establish a ‘hill of love’ brought him to the farmland near Moshav Amirim.

Two of his good friends joined the undertaking, and together they opened the Amirey Hagalil Hotel, which became a spiritual center combining recreation with a religious message. They also organized a musical band on the premises called ‘Lahakat Sheva’. Ethnic Jewish bands from throughout the country and the world turned the hotel into their home. Three years ago, the farmland returned to its original owner, and Moshe moved his activities to the tent that he erected, where he continues to fulfill his dream together with his family. Many programs take place there combining music, hospitality, daily Torah classes, and developmental workshops on a variety of subjects. The hotel serves as host to numerous guests.

In retrospect, Moshe says that the Chabad movement has accompanied him for as long as he can remember. “When I was boy growing up in the Old City of Tzfas, a group of bachurim from the Chabad yeshiva lodged not far from

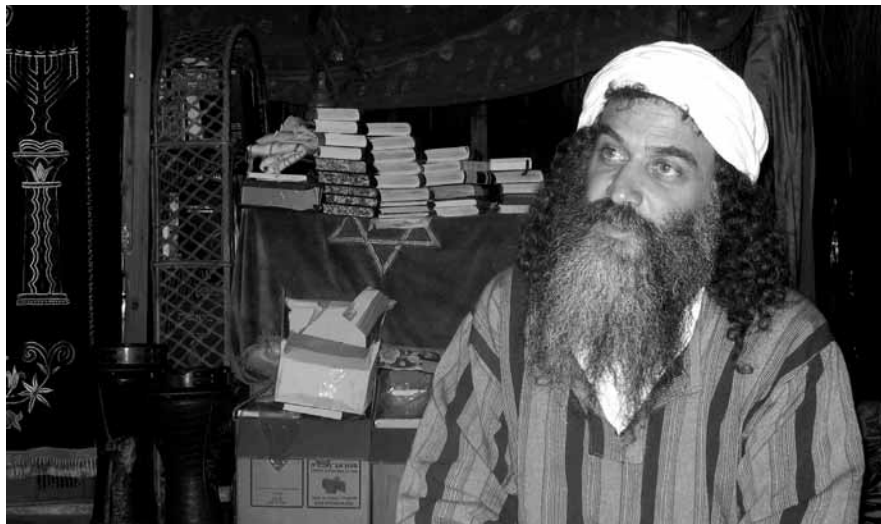
where I lived. Among them was Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Ben-Ari. His characteristic stubbornness succeeded in bringing me to the yeshiva on several occasions. Later, when I was living in Australia and was engaged in the restaurant business, two bachurim would come to me on a weekly basis to give over a class in chassidus at the café. One of them, Rabbi Yosef Ginsburgh, serves today as head of the baal t’shuva yeshiva in Ramat Aviv.

With his return to Eretz Yisroel, he understood very quickly that all the traveling around the world and the dreams were deep-rooted symptoms of self-exploration. “I always wanted to make joint Shabbos meals, but not necessarily with kosher food. I was looking for that sense of ‘Jewish togetherness’, yet I didn’t know exactly how to achieve it. When we were building the Amirey Hagalil Hotel, a new non-Chabad baal t’shuva met me and objected to my outreach activities with non-religious Jews. I was very offended by what he said, but wondered whether he might be right. That same week, I had the opportunity to participate in the wedding celebration of a Chabad friend, and the officiating rabbi spoke with great enthusiasm about

the Jewish nekuda that we all share. Only then was I able to relax.

Before starting the class in the tent, Moshe asks if he can write to the Rebbe about a legal problem that cropped up recently with the tent he built, requesting a bracha that everything should work out properly. The Rebbe’s answer appeared in Vol. 13 of Igros Kodesh, and it dealt entirely with the importance of educating the young in the eternal truth, not half-truths, and the Rebbe even gave the reasons for his opinion. As Moshe read this, he began to tremble. This year he had decided to take his eldest daughter out to the Chabad school in Tzfas and enroll her in a non-religious school. He gave a variety of different excuses for this decision, among them the positive influence that she would have upon others, but the Rebbe thought otherwise. Rabbi Shiffman was also deeply moved and he explained to Moshe that this was the means for receiving the bracha.

Moshe asked that he should mark the page where the answer appeared, so that he could show it to his wife the following day. She doesn’t make a move without asking for the Rebbe’s bracha. In the meantime, the participants in the class had gathered together and were



Moshe Ganish in the special tent that he erected

privileged to get a taste of the Rebbe's sichos, as explained with the utmost clarity by Rabbi Shiffman.

The visit to Moshe's tent was quite thrilling, and the unusual scenery, diversity, and colorfulness aroused our curiosity. But Rabbi Shiffman was already used to it. "There are many Jews in the region who have established their residences in the thick wooded forests. These Jews have souls that are crying out for the truth," he explained. We then made our way to an encampment called 'Chemdas Yamim', run by the talented musician, Mr. Yitzchak Tavior. "It's interesting to note that his ranch is located exactly 770 meters above sea level," Rabbi Shiffman mentions with a smile, a fact that Tavior likes to point out at every opportunity.

Tavior is an especially gifted musician and world-renowned conductor. He welcomed us warmly. He had just returned from a major concert performance in the Netherlands, and I was surprised to hear that he asks the Rebbe for a bracha via Igros Kodesh before each journey. Rabbi Shiffman brought to our attention the library in his home, which had two volumes of Igros Kodesh on the shelf, and when he opened them, we noticed that they were filled with slips of paper containing numerous requests and questions. Despite the fact that Mr. Tavior's outward appearance was by no means chassidic, his deep connection to the Rebbe is quite amazing.

Two years ago, Yitzchak Tavior traveled to Nuremberg, Germany, for a concert performance that elicited a very enthusiastic response. At the suggestion of the organizers in Germany, an invitation was extended this year to, of all places, the United Nations Headquarters in New York on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Among the works he performed were several

compositions on the vision of the end of days, the vision of the dry bones, and the prophecies of Redemption as brought in Seifer Yechezkel, among them 'and the wolf will lie with the lamb.'

"There were hundreds of performers in the concert, and it was attended by representatives from all nations of the world, and as a result, he was invited to other prestigious events. When he returned to Eretz Yisroel and took part in his regular class at Moshe Genish's tent, he heard what they were studying and was almost completely overcome. They were learning the D'var Malchus from Parshas Mishpatim, where the Rebbe discusses the United Nations and its true role. When they read the p'sukim that the Rebbe quotes in this sicha, Tavior cried out: 'These are the p'sukim that I performed at the United Nations...' As the sicha continued, the Rebbe said: 'And when did all this happen? After Yud-Alef Shvat.' The concert had taken place on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Shevat...

As we listen to Tavior, we hear terminology befitting a born and bred chassid. "I have written to the Rebbe on countless occasions and I saw how everything worked out. There are many answers I would prefer to keep to myself, but these are the facts."

It was already past midnight, but before departing he tells us about the nine miracles that he experienced with the pearl of beauty he built as his home on the mountain above Moshav Shefer.

The tour was so interesting and extraordinary, as we met so many Jews who never saw the Rebbe, were never educated according to the teachings of chassidus, yet are totally connected to the Rebbe with all their heart and soul. This phenomenon inspired me to join Rabbi Shiffman for another round at the start of the following week.

Our first stop this time was on

Kibbutz Farod. The entire kibbutz is located in a densely wooded area, giving you the feeling of living in a jungle. I quickly realized that the Jews are looking for a little quiet calm and tranquility, to cut themselves off the noise and tumult found in other places.

We first came to the Farod synagogue, located in the center of the kibbutz. Before entering the synagogue, Rabbi Shiffman prepared me by saying that what I was about to see would put any longstanding Chabad House to shame. In fact, I saw the Rebbe's picture adorning all the walls, pictures of the Chabad Rebbeim, a Chabad calendar, Chabad sayings – everything calling out Rebbe and Lubavitch. "I'm not the one who put these things up," Rabbi Shiffman said to my surprise. "It was done by the gabbai, a special Jew named Zeev Sherman, a lieutenant colonel in the Israel Defense Forces, whose whole world has revolved around the Rebbe ever since he found out about him."

"The Jews on the kibbutz are '*Baal-Shem'ske Yidden*'. They were not educated according to the tenets of Judaism – quite to the contrary. This Jew, Zeev Sherman, told me that even though he doesn't wear a kippa, not a weekday goes by without his putting on t'fillin. When he was a young soldier, he visited the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv, and on his way out, he met Rabbi Avraham Lison. His personality captivated him, and he committed to putting on t'fillin every day, and he has done so ever since. He asked for the '*Krias Shma*' page and started putting t'fillin on regularly. In general, he feels that he is the Rebbe's shliach on the kibbutz. He proclaims 'Yechi Adoneinu' after every davening, telling everyone – including guests – that this is the Rebbe's shul..."

"One day, I took his t'fillin to be checked, and when I brought them back, the '*Krias Shma*' page was

***Today I understand that the only thing that I can do is to try and produce greater peace and brotherhood among our own people, and Melech HaMoshiach will be the one to bring world peace. Back then, however, I thought that I would be able to achieve this on my own.***

missing. When he came to me with complaints, I assured him that he could find the '*Krias Shma*' in a siddur. He was still upset about his loss, because it was written on the page that the Rebbe also asked people to say '*Hareini Mekabel*' and '*Ach Tzaddikim*', and he didn't know where to find them. Naturally, I showed him where they appeared in the siddur, but I was deeply moved to see the earnest sincerity with which a secular Jew fulfilled the Rebbe's request. On another occasion, we learned that it is forbidden to say '*Shecheyanu*' during the month of Av. 'Does that include Rosh Chodesh?' he inquired. It turned out that he customarily finished the entire Book of T'hilim each month and then made the bracha '*Shecheyanu*'."

Rabbi Shiffman had numerous examples of this type. "A few years ago, one of the local residents named Marcus approached me, and said that his son had never had a *pidyon ha'ben*. We arranged to make a ceremony on Friday, as he said that this was the only day he had free. I arrived on the scheduled day together with Rabbi Alter Eliyahu HaKohen Friedman of Tzfas, and we conducted the ceremony in the presence of many kibbutz members. Three of the people in attendance then got up and said that their sons had also not had a *pidyon ha'ben*, and so we were privileged to redeem three first-born, one after another.

We gathered these boys straight from the soccer field for the event, totally unprepared for such an event. From there, I quickly set out for the central part of the country...

"Then, just fifteen minutes before Shabbos, one of the residents, a young man who had been getting much more observant, called me and said that his wife had placed a piece of garlic that had been distributed at the ceremony into one of the Shabbos dishes. He asked if the garlic had been purchased outside of the kibbutz or if the boy's father had brought it, the latter of which might pose a problem. It was still before Shabbos, and I quickly called the synagogue, where I hoped that I would find the gabbai and ask him. When someone picked up the phone, I heard in the background that they were saying Kabbalas Shabbos. I immediately wanted to hang up, but the Jew on the line asked the chazzan if he could lower his voice, as he was talking to the rav... After he answered and I hung up, I said to myself: 'These are Jews of the Baal Shem Tov...'"

I am amazed by how much affection Rabbi Shiffman has for his mekuravim, a feeling which is clearly reciprocated in kind.

Shortly after midnight, as we sit in Rabbi Shiffman's home, I pose the question that everyone wants to ask: How? How does he succeed in instilling such great love for the Rebbe in so many people coming

from such different backgrounds? Such an intense connection to Yiddishkai?

"Everything started with house visits," Rabbi Shiffman explains. "We did Mezuzah Campaign activities from door to door, along with programs for children. In such community settlements where everyone knows one another, you become a recognized figure rather quickly."

Rabbi Shiffman speaks warmly about the young people who have completed their military service and raised families, who remind him about the activities he conducted during his early days in Shefer and Farod. "Today, I feel like a member of every family. This is neither an easy nor a simple task, but it is the only method for bringing success."

Rabbi Shiffman admits: "In fact, as water reflects the face, when you love someone and show true concern for him, he reciprocates in his expression of love. We're talking about on an equal level, not like a rabbi preaching to his congregation, but more as a friend or family member. Today, we are invited to every event, bris mila, bar-mitzvah, wedding, or *l'havdil*, funeral."

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The simplicity and straightforwardness of the local residents, and their heartfelt affection towards the Rebbe's shliach, holds this shlichus apart from those in other place. I found here much appreciation and respect for the Rebbe. I expect that for many years to come, the words of Moshe Genish will reverberate in my ears: "Is there anyone in the world who doesn't love the Rebbe? Chabad chassidim have inner strength, and everything they do is done with a lot of love."

What better way to sum up the action and success of the shliach, Rabbi Aharon Shiffman – inner strength and much love.

# THE REBBE'S BLESSING

By Nosson Avrohom

In the northern city of Yokneam, there is hardly anyone who does not know Mr. Chanan Kaspi, a longtime resident and the president of the Aviv PCB Company which specializes in electronic engineering. What many do not know is what a strong connection he has to the Rebbe and about the miracle he experienced.

Chanan prefers being on the sidelines. It wasn't easy persuading him to tell his story and publicize it in a magazine, but when he heard that the Rebbe himself encouraged publicizing miracles so as to give chizuk to people and hasten the Geula, he was convinced.

On the Chag Ha'Geula, 19 Kislev, he was willing for the first time to stand before hundreds of Chassidim in the Beis Levi Yitzchok shul in Tzfas and to tell his story. When we met this week he still hesitated, but with the encouragement of his wife he shared the story that began 35 years ago.

## THE MEETING BETWEEN SHAZAR AND THE REBBE

My father, Mr. Tzvi Kaspi a"h, was the Israeli consul for Jewish Issues in New York for four years, between 1967 and 1971. In his job he worked hard to strengthen the Torah connection of Jews in the Diaspora, with a great measure of success. Among his tasks one year

was to prepare for the visit of President Zalman Shazar on Purim, 5751/1971.

Arranging the President's meeting with the Rebbe made my father aware, for the first time, of the Rebbe's greatness. This started the tradition of Israeli diplomats in New York visiting the Rebbe every year at the hakafos of Simchas Torah. I have many memories of those events. I would go with my father and the diplomats who came every year and although I was young, the extraordinary electric atmosphere in 770 is burned into my brain.

I remember the first time I walked towards the Rebbe's bima. I was short and in the intense crowding, I got bounced around like a ball. Finally, after many exhausting minutes, we got to the bima, where I saw the endless sea of black hats of the excited Chassidim. Suddenly there was a hush and at once, the large hall was silent. The sea of hats parted and the Rebbe walked in.

In stark contrast to the mighty efforts necessary for us to get through, the Rebbe just entered and a path opened for him in the crowd and closed immediately behind him. To see him stride in was an impressive sight. When the Rebbe stood on the bima, my father stood next to him and within a few minutes the hakafos began. It was 5729, the first year that the tradition

began of people from the Israeli consulate in New York visiting the Rebbe. The Rebbe warmly greeted each member of the delegation and he spoke a lot to my father and the other consul workers.

Before we left, the Rebbe gave us a piece of lekach from a small tray on the side which was apparently intended for us. That first encounter left a tremendous impression on my father and all the members of the delegation. From that point on, my father would visit the Rebbe in his room on various occasions and would consult with him. Before our mission in New York ended and we traveled back to Israel, my father had yechidus. I joined him with my older sister who was about to get married.

First my father went in with my sister and then she came out and I went in. The Rebbe spoke in Ivrit mixed with Yiddish, although my knowledge of Yiddish was minimal. I was twelve and a half. The Rebbe asked where I learned and what I studied and asked about my bar mitzvah. When I said that the parsha when I would get an aliya was Shmos, he said that although this parsha is one of galus and descent, you can already see the ascent and Geula in it.

Towards the end I shook the Rebbe's hand and he blessed me that I be a talmid chacham and see success in my learning and then he added a line in Yiddish, "*gezunt und shtark*."

I knew what "gezunt" meant but what did the rest of the bracha mean? I asked my father whether the Rebbe wished me health and the Rebbe, who heard me, said in Ivrit, "I wish you strong health." The yechidus ended. We wondered for some time why the Rebbe had blessed me with this bracha and not my father or sister, but after a while the matter was forgotten.

When we returned to Israel, my father kept in touch with the Rebbe



The Rebbe and President Shazar

and met with him on every visit he made to New York. A few months later, the Rebbe sent me a letter for my bar mitzvah. The Rebbe would also send us matzos every Erev Pesach.

Many years passed, and the meeting with the Rebbe was pushed to the recesses of my memory as I moved on in life and started a family. Ten years ago the doctors discovered that I had a serious disease in my spine. From that point on, my health deteriorated until I reached the point where I could no longer walk and had to use a wheelchair attached to a morphine pump. The pain was unbearable and it was hard to see any light at the end of the tunnel. Along with my physical decline, my state of mind deteriorated. Those were bleak days indeed.

The doctors who diagnosed the illness were not hopeful. In this sorry state we met with the director of Ezra L'Marpeh, Rabbi Elimelech Firer (a Belzer Chassid who is a self-taught medical whiz) who connected us with a hospital that specializes in

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problems like mine, in Cleveland. That was five years ago. I was hospitalized there and in a long, tiring process the doctors diagnosed my problem and prescribed the proper treatment. Along with the treatment they put me into a rehab program for the purpose of restoring my health. That's when I realized how the misdiagnosis on the part of the Israeli doctors had caused me to undergo treatment that had done great damage.

I had to cleanse myself of all the

medications and poisons that had entered my body, rehabilitate it from the previous deterioration, get my limbs moving again and restore my immune system. The hardest part of it all was reclaiming my emotional health, which had worsened along with my physical state.

Then, one day, after a difficult period of massive physical therapy, the miracle happened. My condition improved; the doctors in Cleveland had done a superior job. A few days earlier I had parted from my



**Chanan's father, Tzvi Kaspi (standing left) at a welcoming ceremony that Chabad Chassidim made for President Shazar at the hotel. In the picture from left to right are: Mr. Kaspi, Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raitchik, Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, the military attaché, Shazar, Rabbi Chadakov, Rabbi Peretz Mochkin and Rabbi Binyamin Klein**



**Chanan Kaspi telling his story at the Beis Levi Yitzchok shul in Tzfas**

wheelchair and begun walking, something that a few months earlier I would not have believed would ever happen. The medical team that treated me in Israel had deemed such a step impossible. I was led by a trainer to the basketball court. We stood side by side as I waited for instructions. He brought a basketball and gave it to me. I took it and he told me to bounce it a few times.

After a few minutes he told me stop and to move towards the basket. Straining my physical and emotional abilities to the utmost, I

moved towards the basket, step after step, not believing that I was really doing this. When I reached the basket I stopped and waited for instructions. I was fairly certain I knew what he would tell me to do but I waited to hear it from him. Yes, he told me to aim for the basket.

With great difficulty and effort, I threw the ball towards the basket. The trainer wasn't satisfied with that; he tossed the ball back to me for another try. Those moments are etched in my mind. That is when I began to believe in myself.

Overcome with emotion and with the trainer's encouragement ringing in my ears, I suddenly recalled the yechidus from my childhood. In my mind's eye, I could see the Rebbe clearly, as the yechidus and what the Rebbe had said came back to me. His blue, penetrating eyes gazed upon me as though I was standing before him right then. They contained much compassion and consolation. It was a vision of but a moment but it was very powerful. I was rendered mute.

I felt that I suddenly understood the meaning of the Rebbe's unique bracha to me. Minutes went by before I could utter a word. I abandoned the ball, not because I had given up but because I needed to calm down from the intensity of my emotions. I realized that every word the Rebbe uttered had a purpose, though sometimes 35 years need to go by before we understand them. At the time, when the Rebbe had blessed me in Yiddish and then again in Ivrit that I have strong health, I did not understand what he meant. But in Cleveland, a few years after my father had passed away, I understood how far-reaching the Rebbe's vision was.

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When Chanan was asked to explain this experience, he found it difficult.

"Maybe since the yechidus and my rehabilitation both took place in America?" he tried to say, but then he conceded, "Nah, that's a weak point."

Over the years, his connection with Chabad and the Rebbe was strong and deep, but since his recovery this connection has become much stronger. "What I learned from this story is that you can never give up hope. The 'yeish' is always greater than the 'ayin' and in the end, whatever happens is all for the good."