

*Wishing our readers a happy Shavuos,
to receive the Torah with joy and b'pnimius!*

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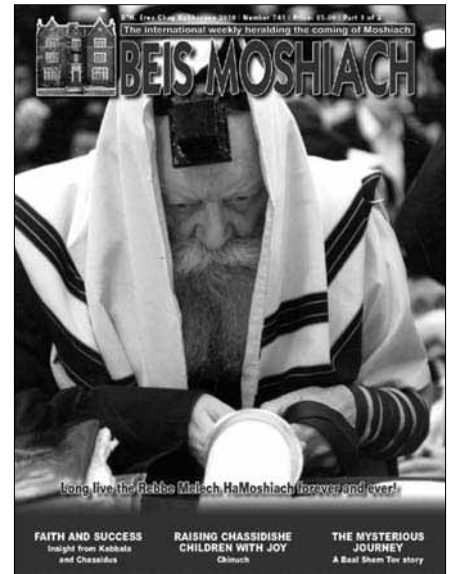
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THE FRUIT OF A BARREN LAND

Sichos In English

WHAT THE BACKGROUND SAYS

In the art of communication, the choice of a setting in which to convey a message is very important.

Indeed, the setting itself imparts a significant portion of the message, for a message's application should not be separated from its content.

Choosing an appropriate setting not only facilitates the comprehension of a concept, it can point to - and actually begin - its application.

Similar concepts apply with regard to G-d's choice of a location for the giving of the Torah.

Our Sages ask: [1] "Why was the Torah given in the desert?" G-d was not compelled to give the Torah in any given place. As such, His choice of location was purposeful, and can provide us with insights.

This significance, moreover, is relevant, not only for the Jews who received the Torah at Sinai, but for man in every generation.

For we praise G-d as Nosein HaTorah, "the Giver of the Torah," using the present tense. [2]

The insights we can derive from the setting of the giving of the Torah teach us how to approach the Torah at all times, and in all places.

WHERE NO OWNERSHIP EXISTS

The first of the explanations given by our Sages in response to the above question is that a desert is an ownerless place; it does not belong to anyone individually.

The same holds true for the Torah. It is not the exclusive possession of any particular individual, tribe, or type of personality.

On the contrary, "The crown of the Torah is set aside, waiting, and ready for every Jew.... Whoever desires, may come and take it." [3]

The ownerless nature of the desert also provides a key to understanding how a person can apply the above lesson and take possession of the Torah.

As our Sages continue, a person must "make himself like a desert, relinquishing all concerns" i.e., he must let loose all the constraints which hold back his commitment to the Torah.

The Torah is G-d's will and His wisdom, and is thus infinite and unbounded as He is Himself.

Therefore approaching the Torah requires a person to step above himself and accept a different framework of understanding. [4]

This was reflected in our ancestors' pledge: Naaseh V'nishma, "We will do and we will listen." [5]

The order of the promises they made is significant.

Instead of first listening to G-d's commandments and then deciding whether to accept them or not, they showed no hesitation and promised to obey Him regardless of what would be entailed. [6]

Rather than have their understanding shape their commitment, they promised to have their commitment shape their understanding. [7]

A DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE

When a person makes such a commitment, G-d molds his environment to enable him to express it. [8]

This is also alluded to by giving the Torah in the desert, as our Sages say [1]: "Just as a desert is not sown and not tilled, so too, when a person accepts the yoke of Torah, the yoke of worldly concerns is removed from him."

In the desert, our ancestors had to depend on G-d for every element of their existence. There was no natural means on which they could rely.

Nevertheless, this was not a cause of anxiety or worry.

On the contrary, despite the barrenness and desolation of the desert, our ancestors entered it with loving trust, as the prophet declares, [9] "I have remembered for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, your following after Me in the desert, in an uncultivated land."

And G-d responded with loving care.

Their food, their water, even their clothing, were all granted to them miraculously. G-d cared for everything they needed, giving them the opportunity to devote themselves solely to the Torah.

So perfect was the setting in which our ancestors lived that our Sages declared: "The Torah was given... solely to those who partook of the manna." [10]

This is not merely a story of the past.

Even though seemingly we have natural means of deriving our livelihood, the truth is that nature itself is a series of miracles.

Because of their constant recurrence, we no longer see these miracles as special. [11]

But this should not obscure the truth - we must realize that at all times, we are relying on G-d.

This awareness should motivate an obvious ordering of our priorities.

Instead of giving primacy to our material concerns, we should give precedence to the Torah. When we do so, we can be confident that G-d will provide us with our needs as He provided for our ancestors.

Even when, like our ancestors in the barren desert, we see no natural means to provide for our livelihood, we should persevere in our commitment to the Torah and rely on Him.

FOR THE DESERT TO BLOOM

The barrenness of the desert can also serve as an analogy for a person's spiritual state.

Although a person feels empty and desolate - and perhaps with good reason, for he has been living in a spiritual desert - there is no need for despair.

The Torah was given in the desert.

G-d descended into the wilderness and gave man His most precious possession, the Torah.

And the same is true today, regardless of a person's spiritual level, G-d extends Himself to him and offers him the opportunity of establishing a connection through the medium of the Torah.

Encouraging that we emulate this initiative, our Sages [12] urge us to "be the students of Aharon,... loving the created beings and bringing them close to the Torah."

In Tanya, [13] the Alter Rebbe explains that this statement teaches that we must reach out and love every Jew, even one who is barren like a

desert, and whose only redeeming characteristic is that he is G-d's creation.

Our Sages relate [1] that during the Jewish people's forty years of wandering, they were able to transform the desert into "settled land" to the point where trees flowered and gave fruit.

Our study of Torah can produce a similar effect.

The aspects of ourselves and of others that appear barren can become productive through the influence of Torah.

THE ULTIMATE FLOWERING

Parshas BaMidbar, "In the desert," is always read before the holiday of Shavuot. [14]

The Jewish holidays do not merely commemorate the events of the past, they also provide us with an opportunity to relive them. [15]

To prepare to relive the Sinai experience, we have to pass through - at least in a spiritual sense — - the desert and its lessons.

This is the message communicated by our Torah reading.

In particular, these lessons are relevant at present, for our generation is awaiting a new phase in the revelation of the Torah, the era when "new [dimensions of the] Torah will emerge from Me." [16]

The giving of the Torah will never be repeated, as the Rambam writes [17] with regard to the Era of the Redemption: "The essence of the matter is: This Torah, with its laws and statutes, is everlasting. We may neither add to them, or detract from them."

Nevertheless, our Sages have said [18] that the Torah teachings of the present age are "as nothing compared to the teachings of Moshiach."

For in that era, the G-dly dimension of the Torah will be openly revealed, and everyone will be able to appreciate its spiritual message.

Just as the Jews eagerly underwent the preparations for the revelations at Mount Sinai, anxiously counting the

days until they would receive the Torah, [19] we too should prepare for the revelation of Moshiach's teachings with excitement and joy.

And then "the pastures of the desert will sprout, and the tree will give its fruit," [20] with the coming of the Redemption.

May it be in the immediate future.

*Adapted from: Likkutei Sichos,
Vol. VIII, p. 236 ff; Vol. XXVIII, p. 22;
Sichos Shabbos Parshas BaMidbar 5745*

NOTES:

1. BaMidbar Rabba 19:26.
2. The text of the third of the blessings recited before Torah study (Siddur T'hillas Hashem, p. 10) and the blessings recited before and after the communal Torah reading (loc. cit., p. 70).
3. Sifri, commenting on Numbers 18:20.
4. In this context, Likkutei Torah, BaMidbar 4c, uses the barrenness of a desert as an analogy in a positive light, interpreting it as reflecting a level of revelation too great to be confined within the limits of our ordinary existence.
5. Exodus 24:7.
6. See Shabbos 88a.
7. Thus instead of man interpreting the Torah according to his mortal limitations, this approach establishes a bond between man and G-d as He is in His infinity.
8. See Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos T'shuva 9:1.
9. Jeremiah 2:2.
10. Mechilta, commenting on Exodus 16:4.
11. Chacham Tzvi, Responsa 18.
12. Pirkei Avos 1:12. Note the explanation of this Mishna in the Paths of Our Fathers (Kehot, N.Y., 1994).
13. Ch. 32.
14. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos T'filla 13:2, Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 428:4). In most years, Parshas BaMidbar is read on the Shabbos directly preceding the holiday of Shavuot. Even in those years when Parshas Naso is also read before Shavuot, and Parshas BaMidbar is read a week earlier, the lessons it conveys serve as spiritual preparation for the holiday.
15. Although every day the giving of the Torah is renewed as mentioned above, on Shavuot, the anniversary of the giving of the Torah, the renewal is more encompassing in scope.
16. VaYikra Rabba 13:3, commenting on Isaiah 51:4.
17. Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 11:3.
18. Koheles Rabba 11:8.
19. Rabbeinu Nissim, end of tractate P'sachim.
20. Joel 2:22.

PACKING TO GO HOME SWEET HOME

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

This dichotomous dance of closeness then distance, leading to ever greater closeness, is clearly played out at the events of the original Shavuot day at the Giving of the Torah. Moshe leads the Jews to the mountain in the desert, after intensive spiritual preparation including reaching the state of being “like one man with one heart.” Following that, he is told by G-d to warn them not to get too close...

HOME VISIT

Eighteen years ago, in the summer of 1992, I had the good fortune of being able to take my family and spend the summer in the Holy Land. We had moved back to New York only eighteen months previously and were now returning for a brief visit with a new identity as Lubavitcher Chassidim. Some of my friends who have since fallen out of touch still felt close enough to me to welcome contact on that visit, although the topic of Lubavitch was for the most part off limits.

One friend specifically wanted to meet for the express purpose

of discussing and trying to understand what had compelled me to take the plunge, especially since he knew me as someone as far from being a “joiner” as one could imagine. Additionally, he had himself begun learning Chassidus in depth with a very learned Lubavitcher and become familiar with many of the central ideas and concepts of Chassidus. He agreed that this learning enriched his spiritual life but he saw no reason why he should change anything about his life, which was focused on learning Torah full time.

Before that meeting, I prayed

and tried to think of how to express what essentially could not be put into words - even for myself. This is because Chassidus is ultimately not defined by the ideas and concepts that are the body of its teachings, but rather by the very real absorption and inner transformation that results from suspending critical and analytical function and relating to the G-dliness contained within those ideas and concepts.

In plain language, getting close to G-d as He is revealed through Chassidus is a two-step process (with each of those steps containing multiple sub-steps).

First, one must engage in rigorous study, employing the critical and analytical functions of the mind that facilitate clear and solid understanding of the material, which enables one to properly grasp the key point (or points) to the degree that it (or they) seems completely true and real. Then, one must recognize the finite limitations of the mind to truly apprehend that which is beyond itself and if one really wishes to connect with that which the mind deems to be worthwhile (namely, G-d and G-dliness) he has to let go and open himself up to experiencing the reality of what he just learned. In a sense, these two steps are of opposing directionality, since analytical

thinking requires a certain “distance” for the purposes of objectivity, as opposed to emotional openness and acceptance for the purpose of coming “close” to G-d.

On top of that, there is the issue that to whatever degree a person “experiences” the G-dliness manifest in Chassidus and its teachings; it is only a glimmer of what it is like when one has an open and revealed connection with the Rebbe. How could I explain what was inherently a deeply personal and experiential process to someone who was convinced that he knew what it was all about, because after all, he had learned a lot of the same material as well? Part of me felt it was a waste of time and doomed to highlight and emphasize the rift between our two worlds, but then there was the part of me that said I had to try and fulfill my obligation to spread the wellsprings outward as well as my obligation to love my fellow and not “withhold goodness from its owner.”

After some thought, I decided to try to illustrate certain points with Chassidic stories, purposely choosing ones that are not part of the Chabad tradition. This was part of an attempt to show what Chassidus in general was all about, and what the Alter Rebbe and subsequent Rebbeim came to add and improve upon. The idea being that since analytical and in depth study of the mystical underpinnings of their teachings was not a part of the approach of the other branches of Chassidus, clearly there was an objective here that had more to do with one’s inner relationship with G-d than with the esoteric nuances of a given philosophy. In order to make that objective more accessible to every individual at every level, in a manner that

could be more readily internalized and be of greater permanence, without extreme roller coaster type ups and downs, the Alter Rebbe framed those teachings in the language of the mind, or in Chassidic terminology, he brought that which is above intellect down into intellect.

HOME COMING

We met in the Beis Yosef shul in the Beis Yisroel neighborhood of Yerushalayim and we spoke for many hours over a number of visits. At the very first meeting, I described to him what I was going to try to do and I led off with two statements attributed to Reb Elimelech of Lizensk:

1) There is no mitzva (commandment) in the Torah to be an *anav* (humble person), but the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination) came up with the clever strategy of convincing people that it is in fact a mitzva. [Note: according to some of the early enumerators of the commandments, there is a commandment not to be arrogant, “Watch yourself, lest your heart become raised up and you will forget G-d...” However, there is no opinion that includes a commandment to be humble in the 613 mitzvos].

2) If Hashem Himself were to tell me, “Meilich, go to Gehennem (common usage pronunciation of the Hebrew name for purgatory), I would actually dance into Gehennem.”

The first statement raises many obvious questions, which we discussed, and we concluded that the point being made is that true humility is a direct expression of closeness to G-d and His reality according to the Chassidic view that G-d is everywhere and in everything, and nothing else exists outside of G-d. The more one experiences the reality that he is

in the presence of and in proximity to G-d, the more he experiences the reality that nothing else exists except for G-d, the less he is conscious of himself and/or his personal qualities and accomplishments, and the more he realizes how absurd it is to take credit for those qualities and accomplishments or lord them over others.

However, the non-Chassidic worldview understands humility in the context of seeing yourself as separate from and independent of G-d, except that He is a lot bigger and better than you and has the humility not to rub your face in it, although He does demand your love, fear and respect. Similarly, someone as great and accomplished as I am relative to everyone else, and totally deserving of their love, fear and respect, as the Torah itself requires towards a Torah scholar of my caliber, ought to behave in a humble manner in emulation of G-d, and in fact, that is another sign of my unparalleled greatness. That is the exquisite brilliance of the Evil Inclination, turning something that should be a reflection of one’s inner consciousness of the divine reality into another “mitzva,” i.e. something that emphasizes the distinction between the issuer of the commandment and the one charged with implementing it, and thus can be turned into a behavioral exercise and itself become a source of greater hubris.

Based on that explanation, the second statement takes on new meaning. Reb Elimelech is not making a statement regarding his personal piety or lack thereof. What he is trying to convey is that when one is living inside the divine reality according to

Chassidus is ultimately not defined by the ideas and concepts that are the body of its teachings, but rather by the very real absorption and inner transformation that results from suspending critical and analytical function and relating to the G-dliness contained within those ideas and concepts.

Chassidus, even when G-d banishes you to a place that symbolizes the most extreme distance from His presence, you should proceed there with the joy of knowing that there is no such thing as real “distance” from G-d and that the perception of that “distance” is only to facilitate the fulfillment of His will as expressed in His commandments, which in turn brings to a greater “closeness” than before.

Although my friend seemed to greatly appreciate many of the ideas and insights we discussed in this and subsequent conversations (the idea of a/the Rebbe was a really tough one), he made it very plain that he could not and would not consider making a life choice that required him to conclude that many of the Torah greats that he grew up admiring and trying to emulate had “missed out” on something so fundamental to every aspect of Jewish belief and practice. In fact, he couldn’t begin to understand how I had done so. I tried to explain to him that it wasn’t a conscious decision to reject anyone or anything, but I had just kept plowing ahead until one day I looked back and realized that I had moved on. This answer didn’t

satisfy him (or me) and the conclusion was that since I had grown up with exposure to these great leaders and had rejected their way of life, I was even more dangerous than a born-and-bred Lubavitcher who didn’t know anything else but what he was raised on.

Oh well, dangerous me was left wondering why Divine Providence had deemed it fit that these discussions even take place, if my first instinct had proven correct and his “better understanding” of where I was coming from only pushed us further apart. The only positive outcome that I could fathom (obviously, we don’t know the long range effects or what is happening in a person’s heart) was that I would be going home to the old US of A with a much stronger sense of my relatively new minted identity.

HOME BUILDERS

This dichotomous dance of closeness then distance, leading to ever greater closeness, is clearly played out at the events of the original Shavuot day at the Giving of the Torah. Moshe leads the Jews to the mountain in the

desert, after intensive spiritual preparation including reaching the state of being “like one man with one heart.” Following that, he is told by G-d to warn them not to get too close. Then there is the sound and light show leading up to the main event which includes seeing that “there is naught else but He” “and the people saw and retreated,” keeping their distance. Then comes the “main event” with G-d Himself speaking directly to the entire nation, first uttering all Ten Commandments as one, followed by the individual repetition of each one. After the individual repetition of the first two, with their souls leaving their bodies and having to be resurrected, they decide that it is too much and ask Moshe to listen to the rest and repeat it to them later. Although Moshe initially disapproves of this request, Hashem says that it is actually a fine thing and they should only retain that degree of fear and shame so as to avoid sinning in the future.

The point of all this is as Chassidus explains, citing the well known Midrash, that G-d desired a dwelling place in the lowly realms. Our job is to build Him a home in this world based on the building plans outlined in the Torah and constructed through the mitzvot, and the ultimate function of that home is that He wants to share it with us. So, even as we are trying to make the world a place where G-d is comfortable to reveal and express His true self, at the same time we need to be preparing ourselves to share that intimate space and experience by connecting to Him and revealing and expressing our true selves as manifest in the core essence of every Jewish soul. To “build a home” we need to operate from a “distance” as separate and independent beings,

whereas to “share a home” with G-d, we need to divest ourselves of our sense of separateness which derives from the finite and external aspects of our existence and focus our energies on getting “close” to Him. When we undertake to carry out these dual and even paradoxical missions without compromising one for the other, each one empowers and enhances the other, and we reveal our own innermost consciousness in which the divine reality is the only reality, or in Chassidic terms, the Moshiach or *yechida* within each Jewish soul.

TIME TO GO HOME

The Rebbe has informed us that the building portion of the project is complete and now the focus is on preparing ourselves to welcome Moshiach. Time and

again, the Rebbe has indicated that this final preparation is very much about our own personal spiritual readiness and that of all our fellow Jews. Many of us have been inspired to “go out” to reach other Jews, seemingly creating “distance” between ourselves and the Rebbe and even between ourselves and G-d, and have even inspired others to do the same, but the point and purpose was always to get to the day when the order would come to return to our true home in Eretz Yisroel together with the Rebbe. Now the Rebbe is telling that this is what we need to be preparing for.

And that is why the Rebbe would often emphasize that with the coming of Moshiach we will all go to the Holy Land, to the Holy Mountain, to the Third Beis HaMikdash, to the Holy of

Holies. All the rules regarding keeping one’s distance from the highest levels of holiness and divine revelation will no longer apply as our entire beings will be focused only on getting closer and closer. Instead of being at the bottom of the mountain forced to keep our distance, we will be permitted to enter the Holy of Holies. Similarly, preparing for and celebrating Shavuot at this time is not about getting the necessary strength and soul powers to “go out” into the world and build a dwelling for Hashem, but about bringing every part of ourselves and the world into the consciousness and mindset of living in an already fully constructed home as fully married partners with G-d, with the complete revelation of Moshiach, immediately, NOW!



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A CHASSID FROM AN EARLIER ERA

By Shneur Zalman Berger

Lodz, Otvotzk, Vilna, Kobe, Shanghai, and Montreal: Wherever he went, R' Moshe Eliyahu Gerlitzky worked on behalf of Jewish life and Chassidus with bittul and hiskashrus to our Rebbeim. In every situation and at all times he carried out what needed to be done with Chassidishe chayus, enthusiasm and simcha and with endless Ahavas Yisroel. * A brief biography of a Chassid from a previous generation, Rabbi Moshe Eliyahu Gerlitzky.

A true Tamim of the previous generation passed away on Erev Shvii shel Pesach. Rabbi Moshe Eliyahu Gerlitzky, elder Chassid and mashpia of the Chabad community in Montreal, passed away at the age of 95. He was a role model of someone who had remained a Tamim, a student of Tomchei T'mimim, until his final day, with Chassidishe chayus at every

farbrengen, the bittul and hiskashrus to the Rebbeim, genuine enthusiasm for every sacred matter, and Ahavas Yisroel for every Jew.

TISHREI WITH THE REBBE

Rabbi Moshe Eliyahu Gerlitzky a"h was born in 1915 in Lodz, Poland and raised in the town of



Konsk, where the family moved while he was a child. His parents, Avrohom Yitzchok and Laya, were Alexander Chassidim. When he was yeshiva age he went to Ostrovtsa, where he learned in yeshivas Beis Yosef. Then he met Chabad Chassidim, whose capitol had moved to Poland. He heard deep maamarei Chassidus from them and felt that he had found the wellspring that would slake his soul.

He transferred to yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lodz, which was led by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Rosenmutter (Hy"d). He started learning in Tomchei T'mimim in 5691/1931 at the age of 15. A year later, he had his first encounter with the Rebbe Rayatz. It was Tammuz when the Rebbe Rayatz arrived in Warsaw and the T'mimim who were learning in Lodz yearned to see the Rebbe. The hanhala made a condition: only those who studied thirty folio of Gemara and twelve chapters of Tanya by heart would be allowed to go.

About thirty of the hundred talmidim, including Moshe Eliyahu, earned the coveted privilege of traveling to the Rebbe, to hear maamarim from him, participate in farbrengens and even have yechidus.



The yeshiva in Montreal fifty years ago. Rabbi Gerlitzky is circled.

Two months later, the Rebbe, who lived in Riga, returned to Poland to spend Tishrei in Otvotzk. The Chassidim prepared well for his visit. The instruction was issued that the talmidim of the yeshiva in Lodz would spend the entire month in Otvotzk with the Rebbe.

The first Tishrei with the Rebbe Rayatz remained engraved in R' Moshe Eliyahu's soul for many years. Along with his "first Tishrei with the Rebbe", he cherished the memory of the special farbrengen with "Ramash" (later to be the Rebbe MH"M) that took place on Sukkos. He wrote of these memories in 5750 as follows:

"On Sukkos we had a deep experience which is engraved within us and remained with us in all the years to come. That Yom Tov, the Rebbe Rayatz told his son-in-law who was called Ramash, to farbreng

with the people. He was the younger son-in-law who got married in Warsaw less than five years earlier.

"One night of Simchas Beis HaShoeiva we gathered in the big sukka of the beis midrash. In addition to us, the talmidim from Lodz, there were many dozens of Chassidim who had come from Warsaw to the Rebbe and the Chassidim of Otvotzk who packed the place with their usual chaos. None of us knew what to expect.

"Ramash began to farbreng at 8:00 in the evening and continued till dawn. That was the first time that Ramash farbrenged with the public, but from the moment he began the entire crowd was riveted by what he had to say.

"He started with the Mishna, 'R' Yehuda ben Teima says be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, run like a deer and strong like a lion to do the

will of your Father in heaven,' and he explained each part separately.

"The detailed explanations continued one after the other at an unbelievable rate. Hours flew by with brilliant thoughts from the Gemara, Midrash, Bavli and Yerushalmi, Zohar and Kabbala and stories of Chassidim. It was absolutely incredible. The crowd, and especially the guests from Warsaw and the Jews from Otvotzk, were stunned by his genius. Until then, nobody knew him and of his brilliance and now they began to see that he was a gifted scholar knowledgeable in all parts of Torah. Before the farbrengen everybody had derech erez for Ramash if only because he was the Rebbe's son-in-law, but now it became an altogether different sort of derech erez, an esteem and awe for the Rebbe in his own right.

"Still, Ramash was very modest

AT HIS SIDE IN EVERYTHING HE DID

About a year after R' Gerlitzky arrived in Montreal he married Chana Etki, the daughter of Rabbi Nette Zev Rosenblum. She traveled to New York and had yechidus with the Rebbe Rayatz. In a unique letter, the Rebbe wrote to him about the yechidus with his kalla and that he had blessed both of them and told her that just as his father the Rebbe Rashab referred to the talmidim as sons, and considered himself a mechutan when they married, the same applied now (see Igros Kodesh Rayatz vol. 12, letter #4563).

A few months before the wedding, R' Gerlitzky sent an invitation to Ramash (later to be the Rebbe MH" M) which was signed by him and his fellow talmidim in the yeshiva in Montreal.

The Rebbe responded, thanking him for the invitation but saying that for reasons beyond his control he could not travel and be away for a few days, **"and I will have to suffice by participating in your simcha from a distance but close in spirit."**

This response did not satisfy the chassan and his friends, who sent another invitation in which they explained why they so desired that Ramash come:

"We are asking once again, due to the importance of the matter that his honor come to the wedding of our brother. Aside from the z'chus for the chassan – and ourselves – that you grace the simcha with your honored presence, we yearn very, very much for you to farbreng with us and breathe some life into us ... to uplift us from our lowly state. It is about three years now that we are in exile, far from Beis Chayeinu, and it is about two years that we have no mashpia to guide us in how to carry out the will of the Rebbe, for even though we receive letters from the Rebbe, we still need the Chassid who can read them."

The Rebbe responded with an apology for the delay in his response because of "the great work in arranging the calendar for Chassidei Chabad which is being published now," referring to the famous HaYom Yom. The Rebbe sent a message with the mashpia, Rabbi Shmuel Levitin who visited them, and he also sent a telegram, and still felt the need to respond to them at length in a letter as "an atonement...and sort of a farbrengen for the days of Purim that are approaching" (see Igros Kodesh C"K Admur Shlita vol. 1, letter #64).

Mrs. Gerlitzky stood by his side in everything he did. She passed away in Kislev, 5761.

and the only time he stood out was when delivering the brilliant talk at that farbrengen by instruction of the Rebbe Rayatz. His modesty was expressed in many ways and I'll never forget, for example, how he would occasionally come to hear the bachurim review maamarim. He would sit and listen but hardly ever mixed in. Every so often he would sit and listen to how the bachurim

learned but only rarely corrected us."

TOP BACHUR

At the end of Tishrei the Rebbe Rayatz said that some of the older bachurim who had come from Lodz, including Moshe Eliyahu, should remain and learn in Tomchei T'mimim in Warsaw while the rest returned to Lodz.

At this time, the Rebbe Rayatz

lived in Warsaw and the talmidim saw him regularly. Then he moved to Otvotzk and the yeshiva moved along with him. R' Moshe Eliyahu had the z'chus to be near the Rebbe Rayatz for a long period of time.

While he learned in Tomchei T'mimim he was one of the most mekusharim among the bachurim and one of the best in the yeshiva. His diligence in learning Nigleh and Chassidus, as well as his tremendous enthusiasm for a mitzva and even for a minhag or Chassidishe story, became a byword among the younger students. In those days, his chiddushei Torah were published in *HaTamim*.

After a number of years of diligent learning he was given smicha for rabbanus by some of the greatest rabbanim in Warsaw.

MAGGID SHIUR AT AGE 22

R' Moshe Eliyahu was only 22 when the Rebbe Rayatz told him to return to Lodz, this time as a Maggid shiur. Here he displayed his great talent to awaken in the young talmidim an appreciation for their studies. While this was the case for both Nigleh and Chassidus, it was especially notable in the study of Tanya and maamarei Chassidus.

He taught for two years in the yeshiva in Lodz and learned a number of mesechtos with the talmidim, as well as Tanya and Likkutei Torah. He also held farbrengens with them every Shabbos and special day in the calendar.

The important job of this young bachur ended abruptly with the outbreak of World War II. The students dispersed and R' Moshe Eliyahu fled to Warsaw in order to be near the Rebbe Rayatz.

During the first months of the war, he escaped with dozens of talmidim from yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Otvotzk to Vilna, the capitol of Lithuania, where they

reopened the yeshiva. He wrote about his arrival in Vilna to the Rebbe Rayatz and received this response:

In response to your letter in which you inform me of your, thanks to Hashem, successful arrival at Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, I would like to bless you with the blessing of *boruch ha'ba*. And the great mesirus nefesh that you had on this journey should stand by you to arouse you to be diligent in Torah and avoda, and may Hashem help you to be a Yerei Shamayim, Chassid, and Lamdan. (Igros Kodesh Admur Rayatz, vol. 5)

The bachurim in Vilna were very apprehensive. They all wanted to leave Europe. The Rebbe Rayatz and Chabad activists in Europe and the United States worked on various fronts to get the bachurim out of Vilna and to safer shores. There was talk about the possibility of their going to Eretz Yisroel, but that did not materialize. The main efforts were directed towards obtaining visas for the United States.

By instruction of the Rebbe Rayatz, 53 Lubavitcher bachurim (along with students of the Chachmei Lublin and Mirrer Yeshivas) eventually arrived in Kobe, Japan, and after a tense period they traveled



Rabbi Gerlitzky (right) with Rabbi Zev Greenglass. They were friends from Poland and lived in Montreal.

His yearning and, even more so, his firm belief in the coming of Moshiach was like that of a man standing at the train station confident that his train will be arriving imminently.

to the international city of Shanghai, which was under Chinese rule. Rabbi Meir Ashkenazi, the rav there at the time, welcomed them with open arms. Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim

reopened once again and the bachurim diligently applied themselves to their learning.

FROM SHANGHAI TO MONTREAL

After spending months in Shanghai, the government of Canada gave a small number of visas which were distributed among the students of the several yeshivos that had been transplanted in Shanghai. The Rebbe Rayatz worked on obtaining as many of these visas as possible for the students and after much effort, visas were allocated to nine bachurim.

They left for Canada in Tishrei, 5702/1941, and together with R' Moshe Eliyahu were: Yitzchok Hendel, Mendel Tenenbaum, Yosef Rodal, Shmuel Stein, Menachem Zev Greenglass, Yosef Wineberg, Tzvi Kotlarsky, and Aryeh Leib Kramer.



The Chabad community in Montreal at Rabbi Gerlitzky's funeral.

The nine bachurim arrived in Montreal on 2 Cheshvan and a branch of Tomchei T'mimim was founded. R' Moshe Eliyahu gave shiurim in Gemara.

Aside from starting the yeshiva, these nine bachurim had other tasks assigned to them. The Rebbe Rayatz sent them a letter with instructions about how to work with the people of Montreal. He also sent special instructions for the talmidim of the new yeshiva: to review maamarei Chassidus on Shabbos in the two Chabad shuls in Montreal, for the bachurim to eat together on Shabbos and during the meals to sing Chabad niggunim, to have one bachur review Chassidus, and to tell Chassidishe stories.

The bachurim got to work recruiting students. Since all of the bachurim wanted to fulfill the Rebbe's instructions, they cast lots in which Moshe Eliyahu Gerlitzky won the privilege of learning with these children-mekuravim.

In the weeks to come, the mashpia, Rabbi Shmuel Levitin was sent to Montreal in order to help establish the new yeshiva on a firm footing. Less than a month after it was founded, the nine bachurim had gathered 24 young students and they formed two classes for them in the yeshiva that they called Achei HaT'mimim. They wondered at first whether this was not bittul Torah, but the Rebbe wrote them in another letter that the time they took to learn with these children was itself the fulfillment of Torah.

In the years to come the yeshiva grew, with R' Gerlitzky's constant involvement. He worked with his friends in Montreal to establish other Lubavitcher mosdos. The first religious school for girls started in his home.

HIS CHASSIDIC PERSONA

For nearly seventy years, R' Gerlitzky stood at the ready to implement any possible assignment

for the purpose of strengthening and expanding the mosdos of Judaism and Chassidus in Montreal and in Canada at large. The Rebbe Rayatz appointed him as the man responsible for *maamad* in Canada. Over the years he received numerous instructions from the Rebbe MH"M and he carried them all out happily and enthusiastically.

His hiskashrus to the new Rebbe intensified even more, with amazing devotion to all his horaos. He became a mashpia for Anash in Montreal, who listened closely when he related Chassidishe stories and divrei Torah with great chayus.

His influence extended beyond the Chabad community. He founded schools for Jewish children and in his lengthy fundraising travels throughout Canada, he "planted ruchnius and harvested gashmius" to support Chabad mosdos in Montreal. Even now, the family is finding out about more and more of the hundreds of people that he brought back to the way of Torah and mitzvos. If not for Rabbi Gerlitzky, who knows if their grandchildren would be Jewish!

His Ahavas Yisroel was exemplary. During a period of time when his family was experiencing financial problems, part of his house was rented to a Holocaust survivor. Knowing that the man could not pay the rent, R' Gerlitzky would secretly give him the money out of his pocket so the man could pay the rent to his wife (Chana, nee` Rosenblum) without her knowing where the money was coming from.

R' Gerlitzky was a loyal soldier who followed the orders of the Rebbeim with kabbalas ol to the point of mesirus nefesh. He took great pleasure in fulfilling their wishes. He served Hashem with love and awe while simultaneously being gracious to all and full of love for a fellow Jew.

His avodas Hashem in davening and learning until his final days was

a sight to behold. His yearning and, even more so, his firm belief in the coming of Moshiach was like that of a man standing at the train station confident that his train will be arriving imminently. "Moshiach needs to come already! Immediately, now!" was something he shouted fervently on many an occasion.

SUDDEN PASSING

Even as he weakened in his final years, R' Gerlitzky did not compromise in his avoda to provide nachas ruach to his Creator, nor did he forego telling tales of tzaddikim which to him was an entire avoda in itself. His grandchildren who stayed with him during complicated and exhausting medical treatments in the hospital, were amazed to see how before he went to sleep he would sit up in bed, and with superhuman effort he would put on his clothes, tie his gartel, and say the bedtime Shma with d'veikus and contemplation, with a genuine cheshbon ha'nefesh.

On Motzaei Shabbos Chol HaMoed he learned his usual shiurim and learned Gemara with one of his grandchildren. He read the Shma at length, as always, and went to bed. He woke up at six o'clock, washed his hands and suddenly collapsed and returned his neshama to his Maker. The funeral took place that same day. He is survived by children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, numerous descendants who follow in his ways of Torah and Chassidus, many of whom serve as shluchim. His sons: R' Avrohom Yitzchok – rosh yeshivas Oholei Torah; R' Yosef Shmuel (Yossi) – shliach in Tel Aviv/Yaffo; R' Menachem Nachum – rosh kollel Tiferes Z'keinim Levi Yitzchok in New York. His daughters: Sara Mindel Shemtov (Crown Heights), Rivka Eisenbach (Montreal), Chaya Laya Berger (Ottawa, Canada), Devorah Rivkin (Tampa, FL), Fraidy Shpigelman (Montreal).

THE MYSTERIOUS JOURNEY

By Menachem Ziegelboim

Presented for Shavuot, 250 years since the passing of the Baal Shem Tov.

PART I

Shlomo, or Shloimke as he was lovingly called, was 23 years old. He was a fine young man and the son-in-law of a wealthy man in Brod. He was promised ten years of support and he utilized this time in diligent Torah study. His father-in-law had much nachas from his studious son-in-law.

Shloimke was thrilled when a messenger from the Baal Shem Tov came to his home and invited him, on the Besht's behalf, to join him on his trip to Posen. This enticing offer was considered a great honor and the wealthy father-in-law saw this as the Besht's approval of his son-in-law.

Shloimke joyfully accepted the offer, not only because of the great privilege of being in the holy Baal Shem Tov's presence for several days but also because he hoped to visit his dear parents in Posen whom he hadn't seen in three years.

On Thursday morning the tzaddik's wagon set out from Brod on its way to Posen. The trip is a long one and Shlomo packed for a week's journey; little did he

know what adventures lay in store for him in the days ahead. Alexei the wagon driver whistled and the horses trotted off.

PART II

The horses picked up their pace. Shlomo looked out the window and was amazed by how fast they were traveling. To his astonishment, he noticed that Alexei had dozed off. He quickly drew the Besht's attention to this fact. The Besht smiled and said, "Don't worry. The horses don't need to be shown the way. They'll get there on their own."

Shlomo's amazement grew but he didn't dare to ask any questions. Hours went by and it was only as the sun began to set that the horses slowed their pace. Shortly thereafter they stopped. Alexei woke up and the Besht aroused himself from his thoughts and instructed Alexei to bring a pail of water.

The sky was turning crimson and there were only a few minutes left to daven Mincha. Alexei disappeared among the trees. From somewhere they could hear the sound of running water.

Within a few minutes Alexei returned with a pail of water. The Besht washed his hands, leaving over a bit of water. He recited the "sh'ha'kol" bracha with great concentration, drank a little and immediately stood up for Mincha.

Shloimke noticed that the Baal Shem Tov's davening was different than usual. It was with tremendous enthusiasm and frightening d'veikus. This intense praying lasted a long time and immediately thereafter the tzaddik instructed that the trip continue. Although Shloimke had heard a lot about the unusual ways of the Besht, seeing them up close was something else.

The night was longer than usual. The wagon kept moving, passing through forests, crossing valleys and traversing mountains. Neither a village nor any signs of life could be seen. Shloimke huddled in a corner of the wagon. His head drooped every so often in exhaustion but the bumps in the road jolted him back awake. Each time he gazed upon the tzaddik to see what he was doing he was always amazed to see him sitting in the same position, with his back erect, hands folded, and eyes open, staring straight ahead as if off into the distance.

Even when a new day dawned, Friday – Erev Shabbos, nothing changed. The horses galloped and



Alexei snoozed as they passed mountains and uncultivated fields. They continued traveling except for a stop for Shacharis. Shloimke began to wonder where they would spend Shabbos but he didn't dare to ask. He postponed his question until midday, hoping that by then they would have arrived in some civilized place.

Only a few hours before the arrival of the Shabbos Queen did he finally get up the nerve to ask the Baal Shem Tov, "Holy Rebbe, where will we spend Shabbos? Where will we daven and eat the Shabbos meals?"

For the first time in many hours, the tzaddik turned his gaze to the young man and with shining eyes he said, "Shloimke, don't you know that we will be

spending Shabbos in Posen and that is why I took you with me?"

Shlomo was incredulous. He knew Posen well, having spent his childhood and youth there, and he saw no sign whatsoever that they were approaching the city. Furthermore, the trip to Posen took a week, not a mere day and a half.

Despair crept into Shlomo's heart. He realized that the tzaddik was trying to pacify him. He tried to picture eating the Shabbos meals on the dirt road and sleeping on the hard ground. He, a soft and pampered Torah scholar, son-in-law of the wealthy man who never lacked for anything at his Shabbos table, would have such a pitiful Shabbos.

He was overjoyed when the horses unexpectedly slowed down and began walking down the lane of a small village which suddenly appeared. Shloimke looked curiously at the unfamiliar village. In the lanes between the huts he could see people hurrying on their way. He didn't mind spending Shabbos in this forsaken, pathetic place as long as he was among other Jews. He felt that he could no longer stand any more hours of travel without human contact.

The wagon stopped and the Baal Shem Tov alit and approached a nearby hut. Shlomo jumped down from the wagon and joined his Rebbe.

A poor, thin man opened the door. He looked delighted when he saw the tzaddik. He shook the

The Shuler Gass (School Street): The very name of it sent shudders down the backs of the Jews of Posen. When a child wanted to frighten another boy he would threaten to send him to Shuler Gass. When someone was aggravated with a friend, he would hiss, "You should be sent to Shuler Gass."

Besht's hand and greeted him, "Welcome Rebbe, my great teacher!"

The two men sat down and spoke for half an hour. They both looked elated to be talking with one another. Shloimke tried to listen in but despite his knowledge, he was unable to understand what they were saying.

He looked around and noted the terrible poverty in the house, the children who went barefoot, the mother who lay in a broken down bed. A stench rose to his nostrils and he crinkled his nose. Nevertheless, this was preferable to making Shabbos in a dark field or a forest swarming with wild animals.

He was greatly taken aback when the two men rose, hugged one another and said goodbye and the Baal Shem Tov said they would be on their way. Shloimke saw that the sun would be setting shortly and it would soon be Shabbos. He began to feel annoyed. He didn't dare say anything but all these odd events were beyond his capacity to grasp.

The wagon trundled along for another half an hour or so and Shloimke suddenly noticed familiar buildings. It was Posen!

He was utterly confused. He looked around him time and again to see whether he was in error

and this was nothing but a mirage, but it was real. The wagon entered the gates of Posen, his hometown. Tears of excitement ran down his face; he just couldn't believe they were there. He would soon see his beloved parents, eat his mother's delectable cooking, bask in the love of the home where he had grown up. He wordlessly sent a glance of gratitude towards the tzaddik.

PART III

The *Shuler Gass* (School Street): The very name of it sent shudders down the backs of the Jews of Posen. When a child wanted to frighten another boy he would threaten to send him to Shuler Gass. When someone was aggravated with a friend, he would hiss, "You should be sent to Shuler Gass."

Shuler Gass was the street that housed the university of Posen. Here the gentile students learned from distinguished Christian teachers. Entrance to this street was dangerous for Jews. The gentile students forbade Jews from walking there. The elders of the city told of a hapless Jew who accidentally entered the street and was stoned to death.

There was only one exception, and that was Feivel the tailor. He

worked magic with the needle and because of his outstanding abilities he was chosen to sew the clothes of the gentile students and to even have his home and tailor shop there. Not only that, he was also given permission to have seven Jewish employees stay on that street.

Not surprisingly then, when the horses of the Baal Shem Tov's wagon headed for that street, Shloimke was terrified. "My master," he called out tremulously, "it's extremely dangerous to venture onto that street! A Jew may not enter; they will stone us!"

The Baal Shem Tov smiled slightly and said, "Do you think the horses that knew where to go on this very long trip have now lost their way? They know good and well where they are going and don't need to be shown."

As though the horses had understood the tzaddik, they stopped at the threshold of the tailor's shop. The Besht quickly alit from the wagon and knocked at the door. The door was opened by the tailor, a small man with an obviously Jewish appearance. When he saw the majestic Baal Shem Tov he recoiled in fright. Before he could utter a word, the Besht said, "Perhaps we can spend Shabbos with you. In another two minutes it will be Shabbos and we have just come from a long trip."

Sweat appeared on the tailor's forehead and his eyes darted nervously about.

"I would gladly host you but surely you know that it's extremely dangerous for a Jew to be here, even for a moment, all the more so for an entire Shabbos. No, I cannot have you. Both you and I are commanded to protect our lives."

The Baal Shem Tov looked at him calmly and said, "You don't

need to fear on our account. I am sure that with Hashem's help nothing bad will happen. We would be happy to spend Shabbos with you."

Before the Besht could finish what he was saying, Alexei had put their bundles down in the doorway. Wordlessly, the tailor retreated and opened the door wide.

Two minutes later it was Shabbos in Posen and there they were spending it in the Shuler Gass.

PART IV

With the addition of the tzaddik and Shloimke, the tailor and his seven Jewish employees had a small minyan. Shloimke soon realized he could not visit his parents; first, because he was afraid to leave the house for the Christian street and second, because he was the tenth for the minyan.

In the meantime, word had gotten around about the Jewish guests on Shuler Gass and hotheaded gentile youths began to gather around the house with sticks and large stones in their hands. You could see the murder in their eyes. The thick walls couldn't muffle the angry shouts of, "Send out the Jewish guests!" and the door shuddered as they pounded on it.

The tailor and his family were petrified. It was just as they had anticipated. Shloimke stood in the corner, white as chalk. He knew how his life would shortly end when the door was broken down. The shouting grew louder as the banging escalated.

At that moment, the holy Baal Shem Tov turned his head as if he had just now heard the sound of the mob. His face aflame and looking like an angel, he walked over to the door and with a

Shloimke stood in the corner, white as chalk. He knew how his life would shortly end when the door was broken down. The shouting grew louder as the banging escalated.

frightening calm opened it wide, exposing his holy face to the large crowd.

They were stunned, not having expected the door to open for them. For a long moment they stood there frozen, as though seeing an angel. Then they dropped their sticks and stones and fled in terror.

The sounds of the fleeing rabble reached Professor Berhand, who was sitting in his cathedral, engrossed in his books. He was preparing a lecture for the following day when his concentration was broken by the shouts and the pounding of running feet. The wrinkles in his high forehead vanished and he removed his glasses and looked out the window. He saw dozens of young people running as though escaping a fire. The street was too narrow to contain the frightened men and they trampled one another in their haste.

One of his students related to the curious professor the happenings at the tailor's house. Berhand realized there was something unusual going on and that the visitor at the tailor's house was no ordinary person. "Either he is a magician or he is a man of G-d."

Berhand was familiar with the Jews and their ways. For many years he had studied their books and their history. He was very knowledgeable and sharp. He could not overcome his curiosity and he decided to check out the man who had dared to enter the

lion's den of the students' street.

The Baal Shem Tov was in the ecstasy of his Kabbalas Shabbos prayers as Berhand silently walked in and stood in a corner of the room. The sight of the tzaddik fascinated him. Shloimke and the tailor looked at him, but Berhand paid them no attention. He was focused exclusively on the tzaddik.

As the Besht made Kiddush and sat down to the Shabbos meal, Berhand did not avert his gaze from him, though the Besht did not seem to notice his presence at all. The Baal Shem Tov sang Shabbos z'miros and said divrei Torah for the simple tailors and told them about Hashem's love for every Jew.

At the end of the meal, Berhand roused himself from his reverie and left without saying a word.

This scene repeated itself the next day. At Shacharis the door opened silently and Berhand took his same spot. He stood there from the beginning of the davening until after the meal, and did not remove his gaze from the tzaddik the entire time. And he was back for Mincha and the third meal that followed it.

Unlike the previous two meals in which the tzaddik said simple thoughts that would be understood by the tailor and his workers, at this meal the Baal Shem Tov delivered a deep talk that explained the exaltedness of the Jewish neshama and its descent through the chain of

worlds. The Baal Shem Tov's countenance reflected the almost painful ecstasy of his intense spiritual bonding with the Divine, and it looked as though his eyes were popping out of their sockets in his fervor.

Shloimke concentrated, trying to understand. The tailors just sat there, not comprehending anything. Berhand stood there listening intently and for the first time one could see a slight movement of his head as though he was nodding in affirmation of what was said. The Besht spoke for a long time and when he was finished, he said they should recite the Birkas HaMazon and daven Maariv. Then he instructed Alexei to harness the horses and take them back to Brod.

This was all beyond Shloimke's youthful faculties; the sudden trip, the speediness of it, the events along the way, and mainly, the shocking stay on Shuler Gass. In addition, he was saddened when he realized he would not meet his parents.

On the way back he could not restrain himself and said to the Besht, "I know that my master knows what he is doing and his ways are lofty and beyond my limited understanding. Nevertheless, I hoped to visit my parents and bring them joy and I was greatly disappointed to see their house from the distance yet unable to visit them. It is like a thirsty person who takes a cup of fresh water to drink and at the last minute, someone takes it away from him. How that thirsty person would suffer!"

"This is why I ask that even though I was unable to see my parents, at least explain to me what has been happening since we left on Thursday morning. My master's answers will serve as a consolation for my great disappointment."

The Baal Shem Tov listened and nodded his agreement and so Shloimke elaborated on his questions:

"First, on our way to Posen, why did the horses stop near a thicket of shrubbery where my master davened Mincha and said the sh'ha'kol bracha with such concentration? It seems there was something significant about that particular place.

"Second, who was the old, poor man who briefly hosted us, and why didn't we stay in his house when it was almost Shabbos? And why did we travel so far away in order to spend Shabbos in Posen?"

The Baal Shem Tov listened patiently and smiled. "Shloimke, you are not capable of knowing everything. I will answer two of your questions, and as for your third question, you will know when the time comes."

The Besht began to tell about two Jews who were walking together when they were accosted by bandits who robbed them and then murdered them despite their pleas.

"The robbers buried the bodies in the place where we davened Mincha. For many years, the souls of these two men did not find rest since the place where they are buried is not frequented by passersby and no Jew had purified the air. Therefore, I stopped there, said a bracha and davened Mincha and after doing so, the two souls found eternal rest.

"About the old man, as you know, in every generation the soul of Moshiach is invested in the body of some Jew. This person is deserving to be Moshiach and when the time comes, he will be revealed to all. That old man was Moshiach ben Dovid and he yearned for me to spend Shabbos with him. However, I saw that it was decreed that he would die on

this Shabbos and I could not stay there and witness the passing of our Anointed One."

The Besht concluded, "And as I said, you will find out the answer to your third question in due time."

The Besht's wagon drove through the gates of Brod on Monday and when people heard that they had spent Shabbos in Posen the city was in an uproar.

PART V

Years went by and while young Shloimke remained devoted to his Torah learning, most of his time was occupied with business matters. Sometimes he would leave home on business trips and buy and sell in other cities and towns.

One day, he arrived at a small town that rarely saw many visitors. Shabbos was approaching and Shloimke planned on spending it there. He inquired about the rav of the town and when they met, Shloimke asked whether he could join him for Shabbos, assuring him he would pay handsomely for the hospitality. The rav welcomed him to stay but refused to accept payment.

Shloimke had a wonderful Shabbos. During the meals he "talked in learning" with the rav, who was a learned man. The meals took hours and both host and guest enjoyed themselves immensely.

When it was time for the third meal, the rav began saying a d'var Torah. The central point was about the secret of the Jewish neshama that descends and is invested in the body of a Jew in order to raise it up to holiness. The rav spoke at length and his words were deep and wondrous. Shloimke didn't hide his amazement. "From where did you

learn this? I heard it once before. I was traveling with my master, the Baal Shem Tov, and we spent Shabbos in the home of a tailor on Shuler Gass in Posen when he delivered the same deep, uplifting talk, in almost the identical words.”

The rav blanched and his hands began to shake. Shlomo did not understand why he was reacting in this way and he jumped up in a fright to help him.

The rav excitedly questioned him, “Are you the young man who accompanied our master that Shabbos?”

Shlomo was nonplussed by the question. Before he could respond the rav continued, “You don’t recognize me but I am Berhand, the professor who was there at all

the t’fillos and Shabbos meals.”

After they had both recovered somewhat, the rav related his side of what happened on that extraordinary Shabbos:

“Today I know that that reason for the Baal Shem Tov’s trip to Posen was for me, in order to raise my soul from the klipos and infuse it with the life of p’nimius ha’Torah. As he prayed his awesome prayers, I felt that each word that left his holy mouth was a flame of fire that entered my heart and burned one of the forces of impurity within me. Our master continued until he had eradicated all the impurity within me.

“At the Shabbos meals, when he said divrei Torah, he aroused a flame of fire for holiness in my

heart, especially when he said the deep thought at the third meal about the secret of the essence of a Jewish soul. Those words clove my heart and ignited me from within. I felt that I could no longer continue life as I knew it until then and so I left the city for another country where I converted and joined the Jewish people.

“That is why this drush is so dear to me. It is the teaching which brought me under the wings of the Sh’china and whenever a Torah scholar comes to my house, I repeat this remarkable teaching.”

The rav concluded his explanation. The time had come, and Shloimke understood.

*(From Sippurim Nora'im,
Otzar Sippurei Chabad)*

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ב"ה

STORIES FROM ELDER CHASSIDIM

*Stories told by R' Yisroel Noach Blinitzky a"h. * l'ilui nishmas Mrs. Chaya Majeski bas R' Yisroel Noach from a t'shura published for a bar mitzva in the Majeski family. * Part 2*



THE HOLINESS OF THE MAHARSHA

The Baal Shem Tov said: If people knew how great the holiness of the Maharsha was, they would kiss the dust within four cubits of his grave.

AN ALIYA TO THE TORAH

It is a tradition among Chassidim in the name of the Mittlerer Rebbe that when someone has an aliya to the Torah, the content of the portion that is read pertains specifically to him.

TRACKING THE THIRTY-SIX

The Rebbe Maharash said: I heard from my father [the Tzemach Tzedek] that some of the thirty-six hidden tzaddikim travel to Lubavitch.

THE HEALING COMES FROM HERE

One of the Chassidim of the Rebbe Maharash was sick. He went to the Rebbe, who sent him to a top doctor. The doctor gave him a certain medication and he was healed. Another Chassid, who suffered from the same illness, heard about this and went to the same doctor and received the same medication but it did not help him.

The Chassid went to the Rebbe Maharash and told him what happened. The Rebbe said: "Do you think the doctor is the one who heals? The Sages say, 'From here (i.e., from the verse itself that requires one who damages another to pay his doctor bills) [we learn] that permission was given to a doctor [to heal],' i.e. the healing comes from here."

SHIRAYIM

A Polish Chassid went to the Rebbe [Rashab] and took *shirayim* (leftovers) that remained in his bowl (since the leftover food of a tzaddik has sanctity). The Rebbe noticed this and took the shirayim from him, saying, "If it's good for you, then it's good for me too," and he ate it all.

THE REBBE DIDN'T GIVE IT BACK

The Rebbe Rashab and R' Shneur Slonim were at a certain health resort and on several occasions, they would walk and talk together. After every walk, R' Slonim would write down what the Rebbe had said.

He once told the Rebbe that he did this and the Rebbe asked him to show him what he had written. He gave it to the Rebbe and it was never returned.

TWICE IS ALSO A CHAZAKA

The year 5666/1906 was the first year that the Rebbe Rashab held a special meal on Acharon shel Pesach with the T'mimim. He did so the following year, as well, but the third year he did not plan to attend. When asked why, he explained: "I don't want to make a chazaka."

R' Avrohom Eliyahu Plotkin said to him, "Rebbi (Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi of the Mishna) holds that two times is a chazaka!" And the Rebbe accepted this and went that year too.

TOGETHER WITH THE REBBE

When the Rebbe Rashab was in Rostov and wanted to travel to Eretz Yisroel, there were meetings held about this day after day. One morning, the Rebbe announced that he was not going.

R' Shmuel Gurary asked: "And what will be with me?" (Apparently, he was concerned because the Bolsheviks were beginning to persecute those who had been wealthy)

The Rebbe answered: "Where I will be, you will be."

Which is why, they say, when R' Shmuel died, he was buried in the Rebbe's Ohel.

PAYING FOR AN EYE?

A person had an eye ailment and the doctors told him the eye had to be removed so the disease wouldn't affect the other eye. He asked the Rebbe Rashab whether to do the operation and was answered: "What? Take out an eye and pay for

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it too? I never heard of such a thing."

WHEN R' LEVIK ASKS

The Rebbe Rashab said about R' Levik [R' Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn, the Rebbe's father]: When he asks a question in Eitz Chayim, you have to think!

FATHER HEARS

The older bachurim once asked the Rebbe Rayatz, who was the dean of the yeshiva in his father's lifetime, to farbreng with them. The Rebbe Rayatz agreed on condition that they ask his father. They picked two bachurim to go and ask but one of them (the one who related this) said he could not go then and there; he first had to look at the Rebbe's room.

He climbed a ladder and gazed into the Rebbe's room and in his great trepidation he fell off the ladder. They picked someone else to replace him and they went to the Rebbe and got his consent.

The Rebbe Rayatz farbrenged with the bachurim for a while and then suddenly said: "My father is listening."

They saw that the Rebbe Rashab was standing near the door and then he departed. The farbrengen continued and then stopped again as before, and once again they saw the

Rebbe Rashab standing near the door and then departing. This happened a third and fourth time. The final time the Rebbe Rashab had already been in bed, ready to sleep, but he got out of bed in order to stand near the door and listen.

REGARDS FROM THE WORLD OF TRUTH

One year (5684?) during the Simchas Torah farbrengen, the Rebbe Rayatz said: "My father told me to finish the maamer (of Simchas Torah or another maamer that was said before Simchas Torah with the words, 'hamshachas ha'simcha al kol ha'shana' (the drawing down of joy for the entire year)."

R' Itche Masmid asked when he was given this instruction and the Rebbe answered, "on Hoshana Raba."

R' Itche turned white and he got up, took hold of his head with both hands, and said: "That means we got regards from the World of Truth!"

The Rebbe Rayatz said, "Itche!" and covered his mouth with his hand as a sign that he should be quiet.

TASTY

One time (in 5686?) during a farbrengen, compote was served and R' Itche Masmid began eating it.

R' Itche turned white and he got up, took hold of his head with both hands, and said: "That means we got regards from the World of Truth!" The Rebbe Rayatz said, "Itche!" and covered his mouth with his hand as a sign that he should be quiet.

The Rebbe Rayatz said, "It's simply delicious."

R' Itche said, "We have no connection with such things."

To which the Rebbe responded, "I don't know. I'm a simple Jew and in Chassidus it says that gashmius is a pleasure that comes down to actual sensation."

I TOOK IT FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE

I was present one time, before the nesius of the Rebbe Rayatz, when someone was talking to him about a topic in Chassidus and it was hard for the chassid to understand the terminology of the Rebbe. He said, "These are different 'letters' (i.e. terminology)," and the Rebbe said, "I took it from a different place" (the compiler is assuming that this was an allusion to the idea that he was not simply a disciple of his father, but a Rebbe in his own right).

WITH THE ALTER REBBE TOO

In one of the first years of the Rebbe Rayatz's nesius, Chatshe told him that there were only a few talmidim in the yeshiva (due to the upheavals of the Communist revolution). The Rebbe said: "In the Alter Rebbe's first class of students there were only twenty talmidim."

LEARNING NEAR THE REBBE

At the beginning of the Rebbe Rayatz's nesius, when the yeshiva moved from place to place, they asked the Rebbe whether they should move near him in Rostov.

The Rebbe said: "Yes; they will revive themselves and I will revive myself."

YOU ARE NOT BALABUS

R' Nissan Nemenov once had yechidus with the Rebbe Rayatz and spoke about working on himself not to eat etc. The Rebbe said: "You are not balabus (the owner) of your body!"

CHASSIDUS IN GAN EDEN

After the passing of his father, the Rebbe Rayatz once said about Shilem (the mashpia R' Meshulam Kuratin), "I am jealous of him. He is in Gan Eden and in Gan Eden he hears Chassidus from my father."

UNTIL MESIRUS NEFESH

R' Hillel Paritcher was once dangerously sick with a hernia and he had to stay in bed. Minyanim were held in his house.

R' Hillel had the practice of lifting the Torah at Mincha on Shabbos and this week, too, he made no exception; when the time

came he got out of bed and did it. When he was questioned about this he said that he had committed to doing it to the point of mesirus nefesh.

PURE SPIRITUALITY

The Chassid, R' Avrohom Dovid Pevsner was an immensely deep thinker and when he davened he would be so engrossed that the chevra would sometimes move their hands in front of his face but he didn't see anything.

After he passed away, someone from his town went to the Rebbe Rashab who asked him, "How is Avrohom Dovid?" Although he was sick for a while, they had not informed the Rebbe that he had died. When he remained quiet, the Rebbe understood and said, "He was a piece of spirituality."

They say that they once asked the Rebbe Rashab about what it says in the Kuntres HaT'filla about the topic of being drawn into the "body of the King." The Rebbe said: "This inyan pertains to Avrohom Dovid."

NOT ALL OF THEM

Lazer Kaplan, who was the administrator of the yeshiva, once complained that the bachurim demanded gashmius "and were immersed in gashmius." The Rebbe Rashab said: "But not Zalman (Avrohom?) Dovid."

"GOOD" AND "NOT GOOD"

R' Zalman Moshe once farbrenged:

Who says good is good and not good is not good? Maybe it's just the opposite, and not good is good and good is not good?

THE MAIN THING IS ORDER

R' Itche Masmid would say at

farbrengens:

It doesn't matter much what you eat; the main thing is the order. Who says that first you have to eat fish and then compote? Maybe it's the other way round

ORDER IN LEARNING

R' Meir Simcha Chein learned with his grandfather, R' Peretz Chein. All week they learned Nigleh and at midnight they said, "l'chaim," [about which they later commented] "and our heads were lighter" and they learned for another hour and a half. From Thursday night until after Shabbos they learned Chassidus.

TOHU AND TIKKUN

I once heard from R' Bereh Wolf (R' Dov Zev Kozavnikov of Yekatrinaslav) that the difference between Tohu and Tikkun is like the difference between the letters (i.e. phraseology) of Rashi and those of Maharim Schiff. When you look at Rashi letters you see the intellect in them but with Maharim Schiff, first you have to know the seichel and afterwards you can understand the letters.

R' MICHEL APOTZKER

The (Alter?) Rebbe said about R' Michel Apotzker: "Angels wait to be able to serve him on a mission." R' Michel would not travel to the TzemaCh Tzedek but would drag the luggage of those who went, to the train.

HE DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING

The Rebbe Rashab and his son traveled together and the Rebbe Rayatz pointed out a large building to his father. The Rebbe Rashab said: "Believe me, I've traveled here a few times and aside from the wagon driver and his strap, I didn't see anything."

SHOULD IT BE LIKE THAT?

The Rebbe Rayatz once told about a Chassid (R' Michel Apotzker?) who said he had given his yechida away.

R' Chonye (R' Elchonon Morosov) heard this and said: "That's how it should be."

The Rebbe said: "If it needs to be that way, I don't know, but ..."

REAL PLEASURE

In 1927, after Shavuot, the Rebbe Rayatz told Reb Chatshe Feigin he still hadn't read the letter that he received from him because he received it within the days preceding Shavuot about which it says (before Mattan Torah), "do not approach a woman," i.e. to be removed from any "mekabel" (one on the receiving end in any given relationship).

The Rebbe then began describing the great pleasure in the Giving of the Torah and how this delight has no physical counterpart.

Chatshe related that although this was shortly after the Rebbe's imprisonment and he was very broken, this was not apparent on him because of the great pleasure he had in describing the pleasure of Maamad Har Sinai.

REBBEIM IN AMERICA

The Chassid and Mekubal, R' Leib Hoffman once spoke about some topic in Kabbala and explained that eventually the Rebbeim themselves would have to go to America.

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RAISING CHASSIDISHE CHILDREN WITH JOY

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Wilschansky
Rosh yeshiva of the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas and Chaifa
Member of the hanhala of Aguch in Eretz Yisroel and member of the
Chinuch Committee

At Mattan Torah we said our children will be our guarantors. This is a responsibility for the children, and for us, as well. We must give them a proper chinuch which will enable them to live up to their task. Our children need an appreciation not only for their Torah obligations, but they must also be instilled with the feeling of joy that we merited to be Chassidim in the generation of Geula. The chiddush of the generation of Moshiach is that even a small child asks for Moshiach, cries out for Moshiach, and is mekabel Moshiach, proclaiming Yechi HaMelech and demanding Moshiach Now! What better time than Shavuos to learn how to be machanech our special guarantors in these final moments of galus.

Simcha pertains especially to the generation of Moshiach, and we know that with simcha, all obstacles are obliterated. The word “Moshiach” in Hebrew contains the letters of *yismach*, *yisameiach*, and *simach* which are all forms of the word for joy. The Rebbe has directed us to increase our simcha, “simcha which breaks barriers,” simcha which helps overcome difficulties, simcha in its pure form in order to bring Moshiach.

The source of simcha these days is the knowledge that despite the hardships of galus, we are hearing the footsteps of Moshiach. The prophecy that “behold, Moshiach is coming” has already been announced and will imminently be fulfilled. This makes us happy to be Jews, to be Chabad Chassidim, and especially members of the seventh generation which is the last generation of galus and the first generation of Geula that has accepted the mission from the Rebbe to bring Moshiach.

A NEW DIMENSION TO CHINUCH

With a proper chinuch you can instill simcha in children. If the child is aware that “I am living in the generation of Moshiach; I am proud and happy to be a Chassid of the Rebbe and I have a mission to do, to bring Moshiach” – this gives him the strength to handle things, to be different than others, to understand that there are things he cannot get and things that are off-limits to him, and that there are many demands made of him.

Even a very young child can be taught the message of “do all that you can to bring Moshiach” with simcha, and then everything we ask of the child takes on a different dimension.

The chiddush of the generation of Moshiach is that a small child asks for Moshiach, cries out for

Moshiach, is mekabel Moshiach, is mekabel malchuso, proclaims Yechi HaMelech, and demands “Moshiach Now.” All this needs to be instilled with the feeling of joy that we merited to be Chassidim in the generation of Geula.

THE UNIQUENESS OF CHINUCH IN OUR GENERATION

We are in the final moments of galus, a time of opposites, and this has ramifications for the chinuch of our children. On the one hand, there is an enormous revelation of the light of Chassidus – we are witnesses to the fulfillment of the promise that children will study the secrets of the Torah. Throughout the world, schoolchildren are taught more Chassidus than previous generations would ever have dreamed possible. Little children repeat the 12 P’sukim and Maamarei Chazal and are raised with amazing concepts that penetrate their childish minds.

On the other hand, there is so much darkness and challenges in chinuch that were unknown in the past. The entire world, with all its negative influences, is available at our children’s fingertips. With one click of a button, they are exposed to the street, to shocking stories and all the impure klipos.

The chinuch we provide in our day is greater than ever but we need to contend with very serious problems.

We need to remember that as parents and educators, we have been given the tools to succeed. Of course we can’t sit back and expect that things will work out on their own and we definitely need to put in effort, but if we approach chinuch with a positive attitude and with simcha and emuna that we will surely be successful, then with Hashem’s help we *will* be successful!

It is said that Chassidus did not come to innovate anything but to infuse chayus into what was already there. The chinuch of our generation demands the same things that chinuch always demanded; the chiddush is that we infuse it all with the chayus of Moshiach.



CHAYUS IN “SMALL THINGS”

It is said that Chassidus did not come to innovate anything but to infuse chayus into what was already there. Obviously, something that becomes alive is something new. The chinuch of our generation demands the same things that chinuch always demanded; the chiddush is that we infuse it all with the chayus of Moshiach.

The verse says, “*V’haya eikev*” – in the time of the “heels of Moshiach,” “*tishmiun*” – the Torah promises that ultimately we will do t’shuvah and immediately be redeemed.

In Ikvisa D’Meshicha, the chayus that we have for our mission to be mekabel Moshiach

has to be channeled into all the small things that are like a “heel,” those mitzvos that we treat as inconsequential. These are things that seem trivial and we are sometimes inclined not to notice them, but these are Chassidishe behaviors for which our ancestors had mesirus nefesh and we cannot ignore them. This is where Lubavitcher chinuch begins and it has the spiritual ability to arouse the child’s neshama.

The Rebbe repeated the Rambam’s statement that one act can tilt the person - and the entire world - towards merit. We need to teach ourselves and our children that maybe this one little action that we do will be the thing to bring salvation to the world. We have to focus our attention on Chassidishe conduct for the same reason; perhaps this is what will bring the Geula.

A SEGULA FOR YIRAS SHOMAYIM

An example is when a mother checks on her son at night and sees that his yarmulke fell off. There really isn’t a problem with his sleeping without it. From a halachic perspective it is permissible to sleep without a yarmulke and from a chinuch perspective it’s not a problem since the child did not remove it and when he wakes up he

will surely put it back on. But our Chabad chinuch says that sleeping with a yarmulke increases yiras Shamayim; it's a segula. So when the mother sees the yarmulke on the floor, she puts it back on his head.

A Chassidische bachur who wakes up to find that his yarmulke is not on his head feels uncomfortable about it and wonders – maybe there is something lacking in my yiras Shamayim.

When I was a child I read a story in “Talks and Tales” that remained with me. It was about a rowing competition between two camps, a religious camp and an irreligious camp. The boy from the religious camp was the strongest rower and everybody expected him to win. In the middle of the competition his yarmulke fell off and he went back to get it. Though he continued to row and tried to make up for that lost time, the delay cost him a few precious seconds and he lost the race. The other child won the competition but it was the boy from the religious camp who was the real winner because he remembered, even in the middle of the competition, what is really important.

It is stories like these (as well as the famous true story about the mesirus nefesh of the brothers who ran the gauntlet and bent down to pick up the yarmulke while being beaten) that help children absorb the idea that their yarmulke must remain on their head and makes it unthinkable for them to remove it while running or playing, as boys are sometimes inclined to do.

WHY DOES THE PRISON HAVE A FENCE?

The Alter Rebbe brings in his Shulchan Aruch that there is an inyan of washing an infant's hands from the day of his bris.

Halachically, this child has not reached the age of chinuch! Nonetheless, it is good to accustom the child to such things from the youngest possible age. A child who removes the tuma as soon as he awakens behaves differently the rest of the day. When he gets older, he will put netilas yodayim near his bed himself and will know that you don't move four cubits without washing.

Sometimes the mother asks her friend – how come I have to fight my child over things that your son doesn't even think of doing? She doesn't know what to answer but it's possible that the secret lies in the fact that her son washes his hands right away and does not walk around for hours without washing.

It says in the Chumash, “and you will see them [the tzitzis] and remember all the mitzvos of Hashem and do them, and do not stray after your hearts and after your eyes by which you go astray.” The Torah teaches us that it's an irrefutable fact that the eyes see and the heart desires. Tzitzis act as a segula – you wear them and see them, and do the mitzvos!

We don't understand precisely what the eye sees, even the eyes of a little child, but tzitzis protect him and prevent him from doing evil. In the generation of Moshiach the Rebbe says a child wears tzitzis before the age of three and the hiddur from age three is that the child should wear tzitzis all the time.

MOSHIACH NOW – CHINUCH NOW

Another explanation of “eikev” is those things which a person tosses under the heels. The Rebbe explains that this refers to those things which people push off. “How can you demand this mitzvah of me now? I am still

lacking in so many important areas and it's like putting on a tie before your shirt.”

The Rebbe says that this is not the right approach. We need to accept the obligation of Ahavas Yisroel as Chassidus demands; we need to fulfill the takanos of Chitas as the Rebbe demands; and we need to take the inyan of Moshiach as it was told to us, i.e. that this is the avoda now. Don't think that first the child needs to be Chassidish, a yerei Shamayim, a mentch etc. and only then you'll explain to him about Moshiach. Moshiach is needed **now**, the sooner the better, and we have to grab what we can get.

In the introduction to the *Seifer HaMinhagim* there is a sicha from the Rebbe which says that today we need to do all those minhagim and hiddurim that used to be the private practices of a select few. Today, everybody needs to do them since we are in a period of “grab and eat.” Today we teach children to wash three times before bread (and not twice as it says in Shulchan Aruch) and to use a towel etc.

The avoda is to educate ourselves and our children that every little detail can tip the scale. We don't know which act will do it, so we need to increase our hiddur mitzva and do so with a chayus.

CONSTRUCTIVE SELF-CRITICISM

There is another meaning of “eikev” but first let us look at two important rules of chinuch. When a problem arises in chinuch, a prevalent reaction is to look for who is to blame. The larger the problem, the greater the tendency to look for the guilty party.

It's always easier to blame someone else, which does very little good. Then there are some people who blame themselves. By doing

so, they undermine their confidence and make themselves unhappy. You might think “if they aren’t bothered by it at all, they can come to frivolity heaven forbid” (as it says in Tanya) but we see that those who focuses on self-incrimination lose the ability to educate their children and furthermore, this carries over to the children, who are likely to grow up feeling a lack of confidence.

The right approach is to pinpoint the problem and instead of wasting energy on blame or self-flagellation, to concentrate on thoughts and actions that will improve the situation and fix the problem, and to do so with simcha. A person who is happy thinks more optimistically. Sometimes it can be important to discuss the problem with someone but it should be for the purpose of fixing and not to assign blame.

PUTTING IN THOUGHT

There is the famous statement in the HaYom Yom from the Rebbe Rashab that we should think about the chinuch of children for half an hour a day. One important topic that can benefit from this contemplation is planning how to present things to your children.

Here is a typical example. The parent gives out nosh to his children and a short while later he reminds them to say a bracha before eating it. The child says, “I said a bracha” because he doesn’t want to admit to eating without a bracha. The father says he did not hear it and a debate ensues.

You can prevent these situations from arising by thinking every day about the chinuch of your children. How will you approach each child and accomplish what needs to be accomplished in a pleasant way?

Pleasantness is not a contradiction to firmness. The Rebbe taught us the phrase, “with

The Rebbe taught us the phrase, “with ways of pleasantness and the appropriate firmness” - speaking clearly, directly and with the knowledge that what you are saying is correct and important for the chinuch of the child. When the parent is sure of him or herself it helps the child accept what is demanded of him.

ways of pleasantness and the appropriate firmness.” Firmness does not mean screaming or anger. It means speaking clearly, directly and with the knowledge that what you are saying is correct and important for the chinuch of the child. When the parent is sure of him or herself it helps the child accept what is demanded of him.

Simcha is a vital factor in the successful chinuch of children. When your style is one of lectures, it creates a pressured atmosphere. In the right atmosphere, one of simcha and good feelings, expectations are more readily accepted because they are not imposed in a forceful manner.

What a difference there could be in the aforementioned situation if the father would gently and pleasantly remind the children about brachos by saying, “Whoever said a bracha, terrific, and whoever did not – should say a bracha.” Rather than getting into an altercation which can only end up negatively, you build up a connection of trust in which the children are willing to accept your Chassidishe chinuch.

CHASSID, YIREI SHOMAYIM, LAMDAN

When there is simcha, it is

easier to approach the topic of kabbalas ol. The letters that form the initials of the words “kabbalas ol” form the word “eikev,” just as the heel of the foot is that part which represents bittul and kabbalas ol even without understanding.

In the generation of Moshiach we need to encourage and strengthen wholehearted emuna and bittul in children. This wholehearted emuna means not using your intellect to decide what is more important and what is less so.

In the early years of the Rebbe’s nesius, he would bless in the style of the Rebbe Rayatz: to be a yerei Shamayim, Chassid, lamdan. At a certain point, the order changed to Chassid first, then yerei Shamayim and lamdan which in Hebrew form the acronym for Chayal=soldier. This fits the chinuch in our day to raise soldiers of the Rebbe, especially “Soldiers of the House of Dovid” who know that there is a mission to accomplish that we need to do with kabbalas ol and utter devotion, as the Rebbe brings in a sicha – a soldier has a head only so there will be something around which to hang his rifle.

How can someone be a Chassid before being a yerei Shamayim? Is yiras Shamayim not quintessential

The child wondered: “Why do they need a fence? If you don’t give them water to wash netilas yodayim near their bed, they won’t be able to go more than four cubits...”

to being a Chassid? And what about the rule that “an ignoramus can’t be a Chassid,” shouldn’t one have to be a lamdan before becoming a Chassid?

The answer is that you first have to define your goal. One shouldn’t think that they must first be mechanech a child to be a yerei Shamayim and then, once that’s accomplished, to be a lamdan, and once they have achieved that goal, then he is taught to be a Chassid. These are all components of one whole, and that all-encompassing goal must be spelled out right from the start. The child needs to know from the outset that he is being given a Chassidishe chinuch because he must become a Chassid. Obviously, he has to be a yerei Shamayim and lamdan because that will enable him to be a Chassid but from the start the ultimate goal is clear.

CHILDREN GOING TO THE REBBE

In addition to defining your goal, there are practical implications for the child’s conduct, an expectation to be “a little Chassid.” Once upon a time, they did not take children to the Rebbe. R’ Zalman Duchman relates about his grandfather, R’ Mordechai Yoel Duchman, that when he was 13 he joined the Chassidim who went to the Tzemach Tzedek and they were all surprised that a 13 year old was going to the Rebbe. He told them – “where does it say in halacha that there is a difference between a 70

year old and a 13 year old? If an adult travels to the Rebbe, why shouldn’t a boy go?”

Today it is customary to take children to the Rebbe. The Rebbe wants us to bring them, as they are the most important since it says, “do not touch my anointed ones, these are the schoolchildren.” When they wanted to remove the children from the beis midrash so it wouldn’t be noisy, the Rebbe disagreed and said that this is their chinuch, and it starts from day one.

Since being a Chassid is the goal and a Chassid today is someone who lives with Moshiach, then in these last moments of galus a Chassid of the Rebbe needs to live in a way that is fitting for Yemos HaMoshiach. In other words, he must feel connected to spiritual matters and not look upon them as something distant from him. We can instill this in our chinuch of even little children.

A CHASSIDISHE CHINUCH

In the kuntres *Klalei HaChinuch V’Hadracha* the Rebbe Rayatz teaches us that chinuch demands order and gradualness from infancy until bar mitzva. Defining the overarching goal – to be a Chassid who lives with Moshiach – from the very beginning of chinuch, is not a contradiction to this because we are living today in special times where we don’t postpone things. Naturally, you expect things of a child that are age appropriate but from the very start you must instill

within him Chassidic sensibilities. He needs to be polite because that is what a Chassidishe child does. He needs to follow Chabad customs and standards of behavior because a Lubavitcher child does all he can to bring about the hisgalus of the Rebbe.

This needs to be instilled at every stage of the child’s chinuch and at every age in an age appropriate way. You have to use your common sense – you certainly can’t expect a baby to be checking the labels on food packages to make sure it’s kosher, but you can ensure that a nursing mother is eating kosher food, because this affects the baby.

Having “Chassid” as the goal does not in any way slight yiras Shamayim; on the contrary, the yiras Shamayim of a Chassid is something special. And certainly a Chassid of the Rebbe in the generation of Moshiach, a time of “and the earth will be full of knowledge of Hashem like waters cover the sea” means he needs to be a lamdan and prepare to greet Moshiach by learning Torah, especially when today we are already “tasting” of the Torah of Moshiach.

We have to demand this of ourselves and then we can be mechanech our children to be Chassidim, yerei Shamayim and lamdanim; to be soldiers of the Rebbe with kabbalas ol and devotion to the mission which the Rebbe gave us – to prepare ourselves and the world for the revelation of Moshiach. This needs to be done with simcha because “a Chassid is a *freiliche zach*” and with the requisite seriousness so that we merit to immediately rejoice with the rebuilding of the third Beis HaMikdash through Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

From a speech given at a Kinus Chinuch of Aguch in Eretz Yisroel

THE REBBE'S DIAGNOSIS

By Nosson Avraham

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

As soon as Shabbos was over, the ringing of the telephone broke the quiet. I picked up the receiver, and the head of the ophthalmologic ward of Carmel Hospital in Haifa was on the line. "Look," she said, "you have an amazing girl and I'm happy to inform you that everything is apparently viral, because we can't find any real problem." I was thunderstruck. The words sounded so familiar...

Tremendous emotion filled the voice of Mrs. Natalie Riess of Tzfas, as she related the amazing recovery of two of her children, thanks to the Rebbe's bracha. "I get the chills when I speak about this," she notes, as her memory takes her back to those days when she constantly went in and out of the offices of doctors and other medical experts, with each diagnosis more frightening than the last. "My daughter developed a problem with her vision, and my son's liver was not functioning properly. The doctors didn't always know the source of the problems, but they affirmed that they were

dealing with serious medical issues and couldn't say whether they could be cured."

Only a bracha from the Rebbe could have produced such an extraordinary change for the better, as will now be told:

*

"The events of this story began nine years ago," Mrs. Riess recalls. "After we had been privileged to have a son and then three daughters, our joy and happiness was beyond all measure. After three girls, we were thrilled when our fifth pregnancy gave us another son. I'll never forget all the commotion that

surrounded his arrival. We named him after the Rebbe MH"M – Menachem Mendel – and the excitement engulfed our entire extended family.

"When he reached the age of four months, he suddenly started breathing irregularly whenever he cleared his throat. Having already raised four children, we immediately recognized that this was not typical respiratory conduct.

"We didn't waste any valuable time, and we took him right away to our family doctor, who said that he was suffering from serious shortness of breath. At each subsequent medical examination, the doctor increased the dosage of asthma inhalation and cortisone pills, but nothing was able to curb the decline in his condition. He was inconsolable, and we too were beside ourselves with worry. The joy over his birth had quickly faded to deep concern over the state of his health. When we were convinced that our pediatrician was unable to cure our son, we changed doctors in the hope that a different physician would see things differently.

"During those days, we endured an endless round of hospitalizations and medications, but there was no positive change seen on the horizon. On the contrary, his condition deteriorated until he began to cough terribly and even turned blue. What worried me the most were the noises that came out of his mouth whenever he tried to breathe.

"In the midst of this difficult situation, we arrived at the health clinic of Dr. Meir Lampit, a reputable and expert physician with a resume showing years of experience in the field of pediatrics. The doctor asked us to let him give our son a thorough examination and evaluate his medical file. After making a detailed review, he told us that such phenomena could be the result of a problem with a certain vein in the heart. Dr. Lampit gave us

His system's antibodies were so weak they were almost non-existent, and any germ he was exposed to could make his whole body break down.

a referral to go see a cardiologist.

"We arrived at the cardiologist's office as scheduled, and after he made his diagnosis, he gave our son the treatment that he deemed appropriate. We were relieved to note a significant improvement in our son's condition. He stopped clearing his throat all the time, and his normal breathing was restored – but not for long.

"One night, I heard my son crying with a strange and unfamiliar sound, and one look at his contorted face was simply heartbreaking. A few minutes later, he started to vomit what little food he had eaten. I gave him cortisone pills, placed the inhalation mask over his face, but nothing seemed to help.

"The next morning, I was first in line to see the doctor. I told him what had happened to our son the night before, and he proceeded to examine him. The doctor eventually said that he was apparently suffering from a serious iron deficiency. When I asked the doctor how this was connected to his symptoms, he replied that there was a connection, but the explanation would have to wait until he did some blood tests. When the result arrived, our hearts skipped a beat: Not only was his iron level extremely low, even his iron 'reserves' were almost totally depleted. It was a miracle that he was still alive.

"Neither we nor the doctor could understand how the boy could possibly function in such a condition. We immediately started treatments and giving him pills in order to increase his iron level, but to our regret, the body rejected the treatments and the pills time after

time. We also tried other approaches, but they too were not successful. He steadfastly refused to put foods rich in iron into his mouth. We were in a serious dilemma. It was clear to us what the results would be if things continued in this fashion. I suggested to the doctor that we send him to day care in the hopes that observing the eating habits of the other children might encourage him to eat nutritious iron enriched foods. But he rejected the idea, stating that his system's antibodies were so weak they were almost non-existent, and any germ in the day care could make his whole body break down.

"We still refused to give up hope. We tried every option available to us. Periodically, we were asked to come in for tests, but every time we left disappointed. Our son's liver was even starting to become seriously damaged, and had almost ceased to function, and the kidneys were not faring much better. Nothing we tried did any good. The deterioration was clear and progressive.

"Every parent can imagine in his own mind the gloom and depression we were feeling under those circumstances. As much as we tried to be optimistic and believe that everything would be all right, and that the anticipated improvement would eventually come, each medical test and diagnosis simply indicated the continual state of decline. Our overall emotional state was made even more difficult by the fact that we had not merited to receive clear answers after writing to the Rebbe in Igros Kodesh. I pleaded with the Rebbe just to give me a sign that we'll get out of this complicated

medical situation, but time after time we got replies that had no connection to our situation, and we saw no encouragement or bracha regarding the matter.

"Over the years, I had been privileged to receive clear answers from the Rebbe on almost every subject about which I wrote, and I saw numerous miracles and wonders from those brachos of the Rebbe that I received in this fashion. However, I was not so privileged in this matter, despite writing to the Rebbe on repeated occasions. This fact merely intensified the ominous thoughts I had over the situation.

"And if this wasn't enough, my daughter in the second grade, Michal, came to me one morning to say that she was having trouble seeing and asked if I would buy her eyeglasses. At first, I didn't take what she said as seriously as perhaps I should have. I thought that this might just be a transient sort of thing, and I calmed her down by saying, 'Everything will be all right', 'It's only temporary', 'I'll talk with your teacher tomorrow about moving you more up front', etc.

"The very next day, my daughter came to me again and said that not only can't she see well, now she sees 'flashes', and she began to show me how she sees these objects floating in the air. I looked at her compassionately, realizing that there was something going on here and that we had to find out what was happening to her eyes. We made an appointment with an optometrist, as it never crossed my mind for a moment that it was something more serious than that. He examined her, and his expression appeared quite serious. My heart dropped when he asked me, 'Are you the child's biological mother?' This was a sign of bad news!

"He immediately scheduled an appointment with an eye specialist at the HaEmek Hospital in Afula. When I tried to ask him what

happened and why he was so alarmed, he evaded the question with the excuse that he's not expert enough to make a proper medical diagnosis. The specialist would examine her the next day, and could explain everything properly.

"As if our son's problems weren't enough, now we were worried about our daughter and her vision.

"I am all too familiar with Israeli bureaucracy. Appointments are rarely made so promptly, especially not on medical matters. Therefore, if all this was happening so quickly, then there must be a reason for concern.

"We woke up early the following morning and arrived as scheduled at the office of eye specialist Dr. Sartani. He made a thorough examination of our daughter, and he, too, asked if we were her biological parents. When we said that we were, he asked how the pregnancy went. When we told him that everything went easily and normally, he explained that according to his diagnosis, our daughter was suffering from a seriously damaging medical condition called 'uveitis', an illness in which the body attacks itself, causing blindness or far worse. The doctor suggested giving her steroids immediately as a possible protection for the other limbs of the body.

"He sent us for another series of comprehensive examinations in order to determine the source of the problem. He thought that there was a realistic chance that this was something genetic, and the sooner we had it checked out, the better.

"I returned home with a horrible feeling. Two children with complex medical problems – what would happen next?!

"As I was traveling back home, I looked at my daughter through the mirror –she was sitting in the back – and I was filled with motherly compassion for her. I thought to myself how life can change so



R. Eyal Riess with his son, Menachem Mendel

quickly. I had learned not so long ago that I was pregnant again, but my mood was startlingly downtrodden. I feared for the health of this unborn baby, and was filled with more apprehension than joy.

"My husband, Eyal, constantly encouraged me to make every effort not to look at the children as if they're sick, and it will all pass. The last thing we needed was to bring an atmosphere of sickness, pain, anguish, and disappointment into our home. We had been taught to

believe in the concept of '*Tracht gut, vet zain gut*', but this was a very difficult trial for us. It was virtually impossible to ignore the diagnoses. I felt the earth slipping from under my feet, and the hardships were simply too much to bear.

"We called our family doctor and told him about the results. He tried to calm us down a bit, and he gave us a referral to the Carmel Hospital for consultation with an expert in children's ophthalmology. The doctor was sorry to disappoint us,

but she fully concurred with the findings of the specialist in Afula, and recommended that we have our daughter hospitalized for a battery of tests.

“In the meantime, our son’s condition worsened, and the doctor asked us to do a CT scan on his head to determine whether his brain had begun to sustain any damage. This would enable him to draw conclusions regarding the overall state of his entire body. ‘That’s all we need,’ I thought to myself.

AN EXCITING DREAM

The following morning, my husband traveled to Haifa to check our daughter into Carmel Hospital for a series of tests. At the same time, I was with my son at the Rebecca Sieff Hospital in Tzfas. These were probably the longest and most difficult twenty-four hours of my life. The doctor’s every word just got me more worried. My nerves were totally shot.

“At two o’clock that afternoon, I returned home with my son, while my husband remained in Haifa with our daughter for further follow-up examinations. I was already in an advanced month of my pregnancy, and between that and the situation, I was completely exhausted, both physically and emotionally. I bathed the children earlier than usual, and they were in bed that evening by six o’clock, and after a heartfelt Maariv I laid down to go to sleep myself. I couldn’t hold out any longer; the emotional stress of the last several days had taken its toll.

“Just before I fell asleep, I called my husband to get an update. He told me that the doctors still hadn’t given him the test results, but they had just taken her in for a very significant exam that would determine the seriousness of her condition. I told him that I simply couldn’t take it anymore. It was almost impossible to continue in this

situation while trying to conduct a normal life, giving proper care to our other children, and not yielding to a feeling of hopelessness.

“The easiest thing would be to get down in the dumps and into a *mara shchora’dike* cycle of bad and melancholy thoughts. I somehow managed to force myself from reaching such a point, and my husband also tried to invigorate my spirit and give me more encouragement. Spent of all my physical and emotional strength, I fell into a deep sleep – and then something amazing happened!

“For the first time in my life, I dreamt that I saw the Rebbe – the king in all his glory! I’m not the type of person who usually dreams about tzaddikim. This time, however, the dream seemed so real – a literal vision!

“The Rebbe, wearing his kapote, entered the house through the front door heading straight for the kitchen. He opened the milchig faucet, took all the knives that were in the cutlery holder, and rinsed them under the tap.

“When he finished, he put them back in their place, dried his hands with the milchig towel, then looked at me straight in the eye, pointed at me with his finger, and said, ‘Never use a milchig knife to cut a cake that was baked in a fleishig oven’, and then he repeated with a strong voice, ‘Never!’

“Every time I recall this dream, it gives me the chills all over again. This was the Rebbe as I was privileged to remember him – the same appearance, same tone of voice, same nuances in his speech. Despite the shock that gripped me in this dream, I looked at the Rebbe and begged him that he should bless both my children, and then gave him their names. The Rebbe gave me a look of surprise, then made a gesture of rejection with his hand, and said, ‘**It’s all viral...**’ (I.e., a virus typically disappears on its

own, without medical treatment.)

“Just as the Rebbe said those words – I woke up!

“To this day, I can visualize the Rebbe as he appeared in the dream, every word, every movement and every motion. I studied at Machon Chana in Crown Heights, the neighborhood of the king, and I saw the Rebbe on numerous occasions, at farbrengens and at the many dollars distributions where I passed by him. This was exactly the feeling. I felt – and I feel to this day – that the Rebbe was in my house.

“It was early in the morning. After I had calmed down a little from the intensity of the dream, I started to feel that from this moment on, everything would be fine – an inner feeling beyond explanation. The shepherd never leaves his flock, and I was confident that the trial that we had gone through was now behind us.

“I did *negel vasser*, said the morning brachos, and then I quickly called my husband and told him about the amazing dream. He listened intently and then again strengthened me with words of encouragement that everything would be all right. I asked him about our daughter, and he said that the test results were not in yet but they were being released from the hospital. The doctors promised to give us the results over the phone. This was on Thursday.

“The next several hours were not easy ones for us. On the one hand, there was the logical reality of the situation. On the other hand, there was the very real dream with the Rebbe. The next evening as I lit Shabbos candles, I looked at my children and told them about the dream. I repeated to myself the words ‘The salvation of G-d in the blink of an eye’ and ‘The Rebbe promises and the Rebbe fulfills.’

“It was a very tense Shabbos, but our anxiety was tempered by our strong faith. We had the

Rebbe's bracha and all would be well.

"As soon as Shabbos was over, the ringing of the telephone broke the quiet that reigned in our house. I picked up the receiver, and the head of the ophthalmologic ward of Carmel Hospital in Haifa was on the line. 'Look,' she said, "you have an amazing girl and I'm happy to inform you that it's only viral and we can't find any real problem.'"

"I was thunderstruck. The words sounded so familiar! I put the phone on the speaker and I asked her to repeat what she said, and she happily complied. We were all stunned.

"After a few moments, I got up the nerve to tell her about the dream I had with the Rebbe, and how he told me that it was all viral. As soon as she heard the Rebbe's name, she said, 'With him I no longer argue; I've already seen how often his blessings turn everything upside down. May you have only health and success!'

"I thanked her warmly, and we concluded the conversation.

"At the next rounds of tests we did at the hospital, we were informed that all the symptoms that we had seen the last time had disappeared as if they had never been there, and apparently it was merely a case of... a viral problem.

"While we saw immediate results in our daughter's condition, things continued with our son Menachem Mendel for another six months. In the interim, we were blessed with the birth of another son.

"One day, our family doctor, Dr. Meir Lampit, a very formal man who is a well-known physician and an expert in the field of pediatrics, called us in to come and meet with him. Of course, we came over as quickly as possible. He told us that he had just made a thorough check of our son's entire medical file, and according to the most recent tests, there had been a considerable

As soon as she heard the Rebbe's name, she said, 'With him I no longer argue; I've already seen how often his blessings turn everything upside down. May you have only health and success!'

improvement in his iron level and the overall functioning of the liver.

"He explained to us that in light of the tremendous improvement in his medical condition, he believes that whatever our son had was merely a virus that passed through the liver and affected his whole body, but now the body had overcome the virus and is starting to recover.

"I looked at him in a state of sheer astonishment. 'Doctor, are you saying that this was a viral problem?' I asked him. 'Exactly so,' he replied.

"Naturally, I now also told him the story of the dream with the Rebbe. I was shaking with emotion.

"When we returned home that day, Menachem Mendel suddenly asked to eat some chicken!... He had never asked for chicken before, and every time we had offered it to him, he had emphatically refused.

"From that moment on, his condition continued to improve at a dizzying pace. He started eating in an orderly fashion. Today, he's already learning in the third grade and acts like any other boy with no medical problems. Thank G-d, our daughter Michal has also been restored to proper health. The Rebbe gave a bracha and the Rebbe fulfilled it.

"I have told this story many times already in a variety of forums, and I'm asked every time if it's a halachic problem to cut a cake baked in a fleishig oven with a milchig knife, neither of which are *ben yoma* (i.e., twenty-four hours

have passed since being last used for meat or dairy respectively)? I tell everyone that I called a leading rabbinical authority in matters of kashrus that same day and told him the whole story. According to this rav, this does not seem to pose an actual halachic problem, but he stressed that since I got such a clear instruction from the Rebbe, if I want to discard the knives, that's my decision. I replaced the knives, and I have been extremely stringent ever since that such a thing should never occur. In general, our level of kashrus took a step up as a result – everything in our house is very clear-cut."

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Mrs. Natalie Riess concludes her story with much emotion:

"I remembered then – immediately after the dream – that my daughter Michal would take a milchig knife and use it to cut a piece of cake straight out of the oven, because the milchig cutlery stand was on the counter on a regular basis. Today, no such thing could ever happen in our house. The children do not dare to cut a piece of cake by themselves without asking if the knife is meat or dairy.

"After hearing our story, many people called and told us that they had resolved to be most stringent about separating meat and dairy in the kitchen. The story made waves. The Rebbe had asked to give over a message, through us apparently, in the framework of the mitzvah campaign on kashrus."

THE TRAIN THAT NEVER STOPS

By Aryeh Gotfryd, PhD

It may seem impossible for a small child to fully comprehend the teacher's lesson since he is so much greater in intelligence. But with one single concept, he is connected, and once connected he will be transported, not according to his abilities, but according to those of the teacher.

"This spiritual engine, the Jew's G-dly soul, motivates the attached railway cars, the animal soul and the body. In more general terms, the engine is the mind since the mind rules over the heart."

--The Rebbe, Mind Over Matter, p. 232.

A Taiwanese inventor has an innovative idea to make train transportation even more efficient: get rid of the stops. Until now, you had to choose between a local train which takes forever and an express that saves lots of time but passes most people by. Peng Yu-Lun's goal

was to get the best of both worlds - constant high-speed travel with comfortable pickups and drop-offs at every station.

TRAIN WITHOUT STOPS

His creative solution involves a small removable car-pod that rides atop the train. Passengers who want to get off climb up into the pod near their stop. As the train speeds past the near end of the station, the pod slides onto elevated rails that smoothly lift the car from the train and bring it to rest. Meanwhile another pod holding boarding passengers gets

picked up from the elevated rails at the far end of the station. A special coupling mechanism gradually accelerates the pod and brings it to rest atop the train. Between stops debarking passengers climb up into the pod while continuing travelers step down into the train.

The end result: On a 30 stop route, this train shaves 2 ½ hours off the journey and banks an enormous saving by avoiding all the energy it takes to decelerate a hulking train to zero and bring it back up to speed dozens of times a day. If it proves feasible, this innovation will revolutionize ground travel.

Chassidus teaches us that whatever we see or hear packs a potent lesson in our service of the Creator. This is especially the case with developments in science and technology which are synergistic with Chassidus and are emblematic of the coming World of Good promised by Torah.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out three ways to employ science in divine service - (1) To use it for improving our performance of mitzvos, (2) to use it as an analogy of a Torah concept, and (3) to show how the discovery or innovation itself reveals the essence of G-d in the world.

(1) Less time in transit means more time doing what you want to do once you get there. Faster travel means more good stuff gets done, a definite plus when you want to rack up a lot of mitzvos to bring Moshiach sooner. Several Chassidic Rebbes, starting with the Baal Shem Tov, were capable of miraculously swift travel and used that ability to help needy souls so much more speedily.

Another mitzvah this train accomplishes is the mitzvah of conservation - of fuel, cash, clean

air, and natural resources.

(2) As an allegory, a train like this has many applications, for example, that of a teacher and a student. The teacher's knowledge far surpasses that of the students. Still, after lots of explanations the student does come away with something. That student's little concept links him to his teacher, and by extension, to the depths of his intellect.

The train is like the rav; the student is like the pod. It may seem impossible for a small child to fully comprehend the teacher's lesson since he is so much greater in intelligence. But with one single concept, he is connected, and once connected he will be transported, not according to his abilities, but according to those of the teacher.

Another analogy is to Torah and mitzvos. The train is like

Torah and the pod is like the mitzvos. Mitzvos are very specific in their parameters and very localized too, like the stations on the route. Not so, Torah. There is a principle in Chassidus that all Torah concepts no matter how diverse are related. On the other hand, since Torah is G-d's will and wisdom, it is exalted far above the physical plane. The train encompasses all the stations equally but never alights at any, just as the Torah encompasses all the mitzvos it contains without the temporal or spatial limitations of any of them. (Sicha of Shabbos Parshas Shlach, 5763)

It's also reminiscent of Rebbe and Chassid. The Rebbe's unrelenting pace and power is in essence impossible to keep up with. Fortunately the Chassid can enter the mitvza-pod, specific Jewish observance campaigns that

couple him to the Rebbe so that when he is connected, he is transported at the Rebbe's pace, the pace of Moshiach and Geula.

(3) Beyond the realm of analogy, this unique vehicle carries a unique message directly pertinent to the Days of Moshiach in which we find ourselves. This technology developed out of the desire to find a win-win solution in which the public on the whole is served concurrently with the competing needs of each individual. This is a foretaste of the better world coming in which win-win solutions will rule.

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

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THE SMICHA REVOLUTION

By Shai Gefen

*In the past 15 years, smicha programs have proliferated * Thousands of bachurim study the laws of Issur-Heter, Melicha, Taarovos, Basar V'Chalav, Shabbos and more. * The Rebbe urged bachurim to acquire smicha before they marry, a practice that had previously been reserved for "Beis HaRav." * In honor of Shavuos, the holiday of Mattan Torah and the "Chag HaMatzos," we present this overview of smicha in Chabad.*

THE REBBE ASKS FOR SEMICHA

The growing phenomenon in Chabad of bachurim getting smicha before marriage is something relatively new. Even if a bachur was interested in smicha, years ago there wasn't much in the way of support not to mention a program. This is why many bachurim did not get smicha despite the Rebbe's horaa about it.

Getting smicha before marriage was a practice exclusive to Beis HaRav as the Rebbe mentioned in the sicha of Beis Nissan 5748/1988.

The Rebbe went on to explain that today, smicha pertains to all. This is one of the practices of Beis HaRav that became the official practice for all of Anash.

The first reference of the Rebbe that we find about bachurim getting smicha was in 5712/1952. At the farbrengen of 24 Teves, the yom hilula of the Alter Rebbe, the Rebbe said that talmidim should get smicha and he said that surely the talmidim will work on this with exceptional diligence. The Rebbe turned to the rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Yisroel Yitzchok Piekarski a"h and said: **You will probably make them exert**

themselves but in the end, give them smicha; my intention is just that it shouldn't come easy in a way of "lo yogaata" ...

In *Minhagei Chabad* it says that getting smicha before marriage is for everyone. The Rebbe made it Chabad practice: **The chassan tries to arrange his learning in such a way that he will get smicha for rabbanus before his wedding.**

In the biographical notes of the Rebbe's life at the beginning of the HaYom Yom, for the year 5736, it says: **Urges once again about getting smicha for rabbanus.**

In a letter that the Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Ezriel Zelig Slonim, one of the leading Chabad activists in Eretz Yisroel and the Rebbe's representative: **If I could muster the strength, I would institute a shiur in the halachos needed in daily life in every place that Jews live, for all types of Jews (14 Kislev 5715).** At a Yud Shevat farbrengen of that year, the Rebbe said they should know the simple din without any rationalizations and should establish Jews, baalei horaa who will know how to pasken a shaila.

The Rebbe did not only urge Anash about this but also wrote about it in letters that he sent to rabbanim of k'hillos around the world, that there should be a lot of learning done of practical halachos and they should do it to increase the number of rabbanim.

The Rebbe delivered a sicha devoted to this topic. During the sicha the Rebbe said what the bachurim should learn in a smicha program before marriage: **At the very least, learn Shulchan Aruch with the Be'er Heiteiv, Shach, Taz, sections of Tur Beis Yosef, clear knowledge of the dinim in Yoreh Dei'a, some of Evven HaEzer, Orach Chaim, especially Hilchos Shabbos ... Pri Megadim and other Acharonim ... general knowledge in Torah, at least in a way of "makif" (i.e. superficially).**



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THE REASON FOR SEMICHA BEFORE MARRIAGE

In the Seifer HaMinhagim the Rebbe brings the reason for his wanting every bachur to get smicha: **... for in a Jewish home questions arise and it is not always possible to consult with a rav and the chassan needs to be the rav of his house.**

The Rebbe spoke about this at the beginning of his nesius and did not stop demanding that smicha programs be founded. For example, in the sicha of Yud Shevat 5715:

Nowadays, the study of halacha has diminished. People don't know simple dinim that appear in the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch for as soon as they master reading without vowel notes they put the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch aside and say it is meant for the ignorant and they start learning pilpul like in the Ketzos HaChoshen or Kreisi U'Pleisi.

If it goes on like this, a situation can be created in which in this generation in general and in this country in particular, in another few years there won't be rabbanim who will be able to pasken shailos.

The Rebbe foresaw the problem which resulted from the type of

learning that was done in the yeshivos where most of the time was devoted to pilpulim and the study of halacha was neglected.

At the 24 Teves 5712 farbrengen, the Rebbe explained why he wanted bachurim to study horaa and get smicha:

My intention is for them to get smicha at least, in such a way that they will know what to do. For this purpose it is necessary to know Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim and Yoreh Dei'a and to have some knowledge of Evven HaEzer, but first and foremost and at the very least – Orach Chaim and Yoreh Dei'a which is vital if you want to know what to do and not transgress, G-d forbid, many halachos such as Hilchos Shabbos etc.

The Rebbe also mentioned the importance in getting a certificate of ordination although he emphasized beforehand that "for balabatim the diploma, the 'paper' doesn't matter much." Then the Rebbe said:

As for bachurim, we are explicitly demanding that they get certificates because this way they can know that they fulfilled the requirements. It would be even better if they were sent to be tested by someone who is strict in giving smicha for then it will be clear that they fulfilled the requirements.

As mentioned, in 5736/1976 the Rebbe began to urge learning for smicha for rabbanus. At the Simchas Torah farbrengen of that year, the Rebbe spoke about it at length and asked that they should select a group of men from the kollelim and bachurim from the yeshivos, who were known to be G-d fearing individuals. This is what the Rebbe said:

Practically speaking; the suggestion is that in every yeshiva and in every kollel, a few bachurim and men should be chosen, and throughout the year they should devote themselves to learning the halachos so they can be piskei dinim for the Jewish people. They should earn ordination in Yoreh Yoreh (the right to issue rulings on the laws of Yoreh Dei'a) and even better, along with Yadin Yadin (the right to issue rulings on the laws of Choshen Mishpat).

From the year 5736 the topic of smicha became a serious one and since then, nearly all the bachurim who were capable of this began getting smicha of Yoreh Yoreh and some of Yadin Yadin.

At the 12 Sivan 5745 farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke sadly about how in yeshivos they do not learn in a way of extracting the practical halacha and he even told a story in connection with that:



Sydney



Melbourne



Arad, Eretz Yisroel

The learning in yeshivos is in a way of give and take and pilpul ... but as for learning practical halacha ... so they can pasken and teach halacha, this is neglected, unfortunately, and the situation is deteriorating, and in many places – in Eretz Yisroel and outside it – rabbanim are lacking who can be turned to so they can pasken halacha l'maaseh. I once asked a rosh yeshiva, how is it that yeshivos do not develop the area of rabbanus? He said: The role of a yeshiva is to establish "g'dolim b'Yisroel" not rabbanim.

At that farbrengen, the Rebbe also laid out the conditions that are necessary when producing rabbanim and morei halacha. In general he gave three conditions:

1- The learning of halacha l'maaseh with diligence until receiving smicha Yoreh Yoreh (and Yadin Yadin) from an ordained rav. 2-Shimush by a practicing rav. In addition to learning and knowing practical halacha, he should spend time with a rav and see how he handles halachic questions. 3- By way of preface to the previous two

items – a special increase in yiras Shamayim which is greatly pertinent to piskei halacha.

It's important to mention that in addition to everything the Rebbe did to increase the number of rabbanim, he saw to it that those who received ordination should take rabbinic positions. To the shluchim in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe wrote that part of their job is to be practicing rabbanim.

The Rebbe's work produced thousands of men who have received smicha over the years. Even outside of Chabad, getting smicha has become a more popular pursuit.

In private audiences with bachurim, the Rebbe would urge them to study practical halacha, intensifying the push towards learning for horaa and smicha. Two people who were on K'vutza in 5725 said that they heard from the Rebbe about the obligation to study practical halacha.

A bachur who had yechidus in 5714 wrote to the Rebbe that he received smicha even though he did not learn Hilchos Treifus. The Rebbe wrote: How can you get smicha

without treifos? Why did you rush to accept the certificate? What will you do about this? I don't want to diminish your accomplishment but I did not know that such a thing is possible in yeshiva!

SEMICHA FOR RABBONUS ALL OVER THE WORLD

Smicha programs are proliferating around the world. Every year, hundreds of bachurim are awarded smicha. The common denominator in all the programs is the goal of learning practical halacha and the desire to get smicha. In the past, it wasn't that well organized but today, whoever wants to fulfill the Rebbe's horaa to get smicha, can do so easily.

There are many smicha programs and we can't mention them all. These are some of the programs: Miami, Cincinnati, S Paulo - Brazil, Ft. Lauderdale, Morristown, Atlanta, Melbourne, Venice, Antwerp, Pretoria – South Africa, Brooklyn, and several in Israel.



Manalapan, New Jersey



Milan, Italy



Morristown, New Jersey

CHAZAK CHAZAK

We just completed the book of VaYikra and proclaimed “Chazak, chazak, v’nischazeik.” The Rebbe explains that saying “chazak” three times alludes to the third Mikdash which will include all the advantages of both the first Mikdash (drawing down G-dliness from above to below) and the second Mikdash (elevation of the physical from below to above). The following are some stories about Jews who strengthen themselves and others thanks to the Rebbe and his shluchim.

CREATIVE EFFORTS

Many Chabad houses obtain donations thanks to a special kind of “chazak, chazak, v’nischazeik.” This is an idea thought up by a creative Lubavitcher Chassid from Miami, Rabbi Moshe Derouyan.

This is how it works: The director of a Chabad house or the leadership of any Jewish community in the world that wants to get people involved in donating towards a large project, calls R’ Derouyan, who makes several visits to the community and visits briefly with every family. At the meeting, parchment is spread out on the table

and a representative of the family is given the honor of writing a letter in a holy Torah scroll.

At the end of each such visit,, and there are many of them, R’ Derouyan discusses with the family how much they will be donating towards the community project, and by the end of the fundraising effort the community has a festive siyum and Hachnasas Seifer Torah (chazak, chazak, v’nischazeik) as well as another nice sum of money that is dedicated towards the goal decided upon in the beginning.

R’ Derouyan has finished – with the help of the scribes that he works

with – twenty different Torah scrolls in as many communities around the United States. He is very careful not to allow anyone to choose what letter he wants. Each family writes the next letter that needs to be written according to the order of the parshiyos. On several occasions, people tried to pay large sums of money in order to pick a specific letter but R’ Derouyan does not allow it. It has to go in order.

When he meets with them, he tells them which letter is theirs and he explains the significance of the letter according to Chassidus and what lesson can be derived from it in avodas Hashem. He tells of many instances in which a family was overcome by amazement by how the rabbi picked just the right letter for them. “Did they tell you about us beforehand?” they wonder.

On one occasion, the person was assigned the letters alef, shin and the rabbi explained that the letters form the word for fire. That reminds us that we need to be careful about our behavior and be like a fire which is useful in that it provides light and warmth but it also needs guarding because it can burn and destroy. His words resonated with the man, who explained that he was a fire chief for the entire West Coast!

Another family that got the letter shin was told that the letter stands for shalom and simcha. The family members reacted with excitement - their two sons were called Shalom and Simcha.

THE HEAD OF THE MAFIA WRITES A LETTER

R’ Derouyan was invited to a certain community and the members of the community gathered to hear him explain how his project works. As he was talking, someone walked in and as though by some hidden signal everybody else walked out, leaving R’ Derouyan alone with the new arrival. Later on, he learned



that this Jew was the head of the local mafia and the others didn't want to be in his presence.

R' Derouyan found the way to his heart and the man bought a letter in the seifer Torah. He, too, felt a deep connection with the letter that he got to write. R' Derouyan explained that the man must use his tremendous influence only in positive ways. The man said this was the first time in his life that someone was telling him what to do, but he liked it. He put on t'fillin and even convinced his friends in the area to do the same.

On another occasion, R' Derouyan visited a community that

is not Orthodox and expended tremendous effort to get them to commit to mitzva observance. All the men put on t'fillin. Many of them had been in the category of "*karkafia d'lo monach t'fillin*" (a skull which never wore t'fillin). Even their rabbi announced, when spontaneous dancing began, that men and women were to dance separately at different ends of the social hall.

A TEXT MESSAGE FROM CHABAD

Rabbi Noam Schwartz, shliach to Katzrin in the Golan Heights, knows

the tremendous power that a simple text message can have. One of his mekuravim serves at one of the bases in the Golan Heights and sends a text message each morning to every unit which says, "Good morning, please put on t'fillin." According to feedback he gets throughout the day, his announcements are effective. Chazak, v'nischazeik.

CHABAD FORUM

Rabbi Shlomo Schwartz, shliach in Chadera, told me about innovations in summer activities:

I've been dreaming for a while of

He tells of many instances in which a family was overcome by amazement by how the rabbi picked just the right letter for them. “Did they tell you about us beforehand?” they wonder.

having a Yeshivas Kayitz for 12-15 year olds who are too old for camp but not old enough to occupy themselves constructively throughout the long summer vacation. I turned to the online Shluchim Forum, where shluchim exchange announcements and ideas.

The forum had an overview on the topic of running a Yeshivas Kayitz by Rabbi Yigal Kirshnzaft, shliach in Gush Katif (may it be speedily rebuilt). R' Kirshnzaft shared details about administration issues, costs, finding a suitable location and much more, from his experience. R' Schwartz now had the information he needed to run a successful program. The Chabad yeshiva in Chadera and the Chabad house collaborated, and dozens of boys participated in a Yeshivas Kayitz. They learned with chavrusas and attended shiurim.

Thanks to the forum and collaboration, the yeshiva doubled and tripled the number of talmidim. Chazak, chazak, v'nischazeik.

INSPIRATION FROM AUSTRALIA

The following three stories are from Australia, thanks to the Shluchim Network, and they also convey the “chazak, chazak, v'nischazeik” that the shluchim are accomplishing. The first story goes like this:

Barry Feldman owns a real estate business and lives in the vicinity of a Chabad community. He is known by all the Lubavitchers but he is not yet observant, except perhaps on

Shabbos. Like many of the people there, even those who are not part of the Israeli community, he has a connection with the shliach, R' Dudu Lieder and through the shliach he learned about the Rebbe.

One morning, the participants of the 6:30 minyan at the Chabad house couldn't believe their eyes when none other than Barry Feldman, walked in on an ordinary weekday with tallis and t'fillin in hand.

For eight years, Barry and his wife did not have children. The top doctors and the various treatments did not leave them feeling hopeful. Then one night, the Rebbe appeared in Barry's dream. The Rebbe took off his hand t'fillin and offered them to Barry. His request was clear. Nevertheless, when Barry woke up he decided to ignore it.

The Rebbe appeared in another dream and this time they were at a bris mila with two babies in the background. Once again the Rebbe took off his hand t'fillin and offered them to Barry. This time it was clearer than clear. T'fillin = children.

When Barry woke up, he knew what he had to do. His puzzled wife asked him where he was going, and when he said he was going to shul, she asked whether he'd gone crazy. “No,” he explained, relating his dream. “With Hashem's help I will put on t'fillin and we will have twins.”

Last summer, nine months after the dream, twins were born, a boy and a girl.

This story was heard directly from Barry at the Shalom Zachor that took place at the home of R' Mendel Lipsker.

THE REBBE MEANT E-MAIL

Another story from Australia:

The phone in R' Dudu Lieder's house rang. It was Limor. She and her husband, an Israeli couple, had lived in Melbourne for several years. About two years ago, they decided to return to Israel. They went to R' Lieder for help in writing to the Rebbe and asking for a bracha to sell their home.

They moved soon after. More than a year had gone by but their home was not sold. Limor had come back to try to get things moving. She had called R' Lieder because she wanted to write to the Rebbe and complain that despite the bracha the house had still not been sold.

She went to the Chabad house and wrote to the Rebbe. On one side of the page she opened to, the letter said: “It's surprising that you did not receive the books I sent some time ago; perhaps you should check at the post office.” On the other side of the page the Rebbe wrote about the mitzva of tzitzis. She did not understand the connection to her. “I checked at the post office and there is no letter about the house.”

“I don't know what to tell you,” said R' Lieder. “I think your husband should commit to wearing tzitzis.”

That night the phone rang - it was Limor again. It was impossible to make out what she was saying, or rather, what she was shouting. When she calmed down she said, “I went home and decided to check my e-mail. I reviewed my messages and went all the way back to one year ago and saw a message that we hadn't paid attention to at the time. It was from a couple who wanted to buy the house but for some reason I

ignored it. I just called them and they are still interested in it and they are even willing to pay the price they offered a year ago!”

NO MISTAKE

The third story was told by Rabbi Amram Muell when he gave a shiur to a group of Israelis:

Four years ago, on Erev Purim, R' Muell went with R' Liedler, an Israeli bachur and an Israeli journalist to a distant prison in Melbourne, about three hours away, in order to bring joy to three Israelis incarcerated there. The visit was interesting, but this story is about the trip home.

They left the prison and had to drive quickly since they were expected back in Melbourne at a party for hundreds of Israelis. They had lost track of time while in the prison and as often happens in these situations, they missed the exit. Boruch Hashem, they noticed relatively quickly and they stopped at the side of the road and motioned to passing cars that they needed directions. After a few minutes a car stopped.

R' Liedler went over to the woman in the car and explained the situation. The woman coolly took out a map and indicated the route they should take, all in that typical composed Australian manner. When she had finished, she put the map away and then said something to R'

Liedler. His waiting companions watched as he transformed from a lost motorist to an international orator. As he spoke, the woman's dispassionate stance began to vanish and they could see her looking more and more excited. What was going on?

R' Liedler got into the car and as soon as he found the right road he explained to his curious friends, “After she finished giving me directions, she asked me whether I am Lubavitch. When I said that I am, she said, ‘I see on TV that Moshiach is about to come and everybody needs to do acts of goodness and kindness to hasten his coming and to get ready. Can I do that too?’ She was eager for me to say yes. I began explaining about the Seven Noachide Laws and as I spoke she got more excited.

“So you see why Hashem made us detour,” he concluded. “This is just one more indication that the world is ready and we just need to open our eyes.”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Rabbi Erez Lifschitz has only been on shlichus Maaleh Adumim near Yerushalayim for six years, but he has many exciting stories to relate about his outreach work at the yishuv under the direction of the shliach, Rabbi Avrohom Samla.

Nine years ago, Erez was traveling through Thailand. Thanks

to the Rebbe's shluchim there, Erez the tourist became Erez the Tamim, and he spent the next while in the yeshiva in Ramat Aviv. After his wedding he went to live in Maaleh Adumim where he began doing outreach work.

He gives shiurim to businessmen and employees at the main shopping center. Acquaintances and students vie to host him for a shiur, a Chanukas HaBayis, a memorial event, a bar mitzva or a house call. He also deals with complicated problems. One of the businessmen told him about a friend of his daughter who had an Arab boyfriend and was held captive in an Arab village not far from Maaleh Adumim. Erez got to work and together with Yad L'Achim they managed to get her out.

A student told him about how worried he was about his father who was sick with cancer and the doctors were not hopeful. Erez asked the Rebbe for a bracha for him and opened the Igros Kodesh to a letter where the Rebbe writes to consult with three doctors and to check the t'fillin. After the t'fillin were found to be pasul and were exchanged for new ones, they consulted with other doctors and one of them suggested a new medication. The father's condition improved drastically, which made a Kiddush Hashem and was great publicity for R' Erez Lifschitz's Chabad house.

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NISAYON AND NES, TEST AND MIRACLE

By Ofra Bedosa

The following is Michelle Zis' story of return and overcoming tremendous challenges which shows the power of a woman to influence her home.

I met with Mrs. Michelle Zis in order to hear her personal story, a story of difficult challenges that required her to work on herself. In my very first conversation with her, I could tell that she is a woman with a very special energy and chayus. There is something youthful and happy about her. Every sentence has some connection with the Rebbe and every idea of hers advances the Geula. This is a story about connecting with the Rebbe, a bond which brought out in her strengths she didn't know she had.

Tell me about yourself.

Our connection with the Rebbe and Chabad began 30 years ago back in France. At that time we were immersed in French culture.

Those who are familiar with the situation today in France with all the religious schools will find it hard to understand what it was like in the 80's. More amazingly, the work began in the time of the Alter Rebbe when he openly opposed Napoleon and French culture and said that if the French are victorious, then the Jews will live in tranquility but it would lead to assimilation.

That was the state we were in. Our lives revolved around ourselves. That was the theme of French education, based on Descartes', "I think, therefore I am." With this attitude there is no room for G-d; it's only about me and my ego. This is completely contrary to Chassidus.

I was born to a traditional Sephardic family. My grandparents were religious but their children had explored the "big world out there." My husband is of Ashkenazic background. His grandfather belonged to Komarna Chassidim but his parents went through the Holocaust and were very opposed to religion so that they did not even have a mezuzah.

The Rebbe's revolution in France began in the 80's and it inspired masses of Jews to do t'shuva. Sometimes I look back and remember where I came from and feel so grateful to Hashem that the Rebbe chose us.

How did you get involved with Torah, mitzvos and Chassidus?

It started thanks to my son Chaim. When he was four we registered him in a Christian school that was near our workplace. The first year was all right, but the second year all sorts of things happened that set off red lights for us. He did not listen to the teacher and had many discipline problems.

The final straw was when he was given cake and when he finished it he found a little figure in his mouth of their god. He took it out and threw it on the floor. The teacher was upset and she told us what happened.

That night my husband and I discussed what happened. My husband suggested that we think of a more Jewish education for him. Although we were not at all religious, my husband had a strong affinity for Israel and Judaism. This was in the middle of the year and we decided to continue at the present school until the end of the year and to send him to the Jewish center near our house on Wednesdays. There were no behavior problems there and the counselor said he was a happy and cooperative child.

It was amazing. His neshama simply could not stand being in

that impure place. The following year he attended a religious school. We continued living our lives as usual. A few months went by and Chaim asked me to buy him tzitzis. I was taken aback because we weren't even eating kosher. I didn't know what to do about his request and I just didn't buy it for him. A year later, when we kashered the house I bought him tzitzis.

How did your connection with Chabad begin?

It was in 5740/1980. We were associated with the community near our house which was led by a Chassidic rav who was very close to Chabad. Under his influence we registered our son in the Chabad elementary school. At this time it became very clear to me that the truth lay in a life of Torah and mitzvos and I knew that I would do whatever I could so that my children would be religious.

I knew what a gentile education was about since we had received it and I didn't want my children to grow up that way. I felt very strongly about this point. At that time I was already wearing a wig, we kept Shabbos, kashrus and taharas ha'mishpacha. Since it was clear to me, I was ready to be moser nefesh for this. In France there was no transportation to the Jewish schools and every morning I had to take him by subway and then a bus to school. Outwardly, Chaim looked like a religious child but our progress was still very superficial. At this point I began writing to the Rebbe to get brachos for help in becoming G-d fearing and believers. I did not always get a written response from the Rebbe but I always saw that my letters were answered.

When did you move to Eretz Yisroel?

In 5743/1983 we realized that if we wanted the children to remain Jews, we had to move to Eretz Yisroel. Our first stop was an



Chaim Zis, the older son

At this point I began writing to the Rebbe to get brachos for help in becoming G-d fearing and believers. I did not always get a written response from the Rebbe but I always saw that my letters were answered.

absorption center in Natzrat. We registered Chaim in the school in Migdal HaEmek. That first period in Israel was a nice one. We discovered the Holy Land and loved the weather and felt very happy. There were also hardships, mainly lots of new things that came up that we had to get used to. The mentality here is so different than that in France and it wasn't always

easy. We became much stronger and I am not sure that if we had remained in France whether we would have been able to do so.

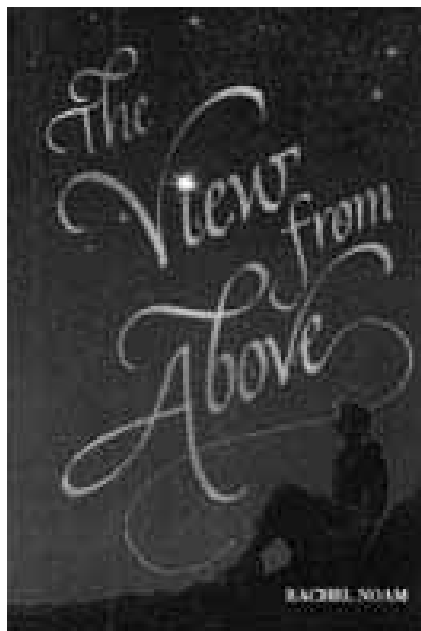
Seven months later we moved to Netanya. My son continued attending the school in Migdal HaEmek and he boarded during the week with a Lubavitcher family. My husband was not happy about our son only learning Jewish

subjects. He tried convincing me that the children should learn professions so they could manage in the future. I was insistent on this point though and explained that this is the Rebbe's horaa. I didn't ask or wait for his agreement.

My younger son, Natniel began attending the Chabad school in Netanya. Since he was raised in the system from the very start, he absorbed it readily. I saw how when you register a child for a Chabad school, the Rebbe works on the parents through the children! The Chabad spirit began to enter our home. I sat with him a lot and learned the customs and halachos in Chabad. My husband davened at the Chabad shul and we had a subscription to *Kfar Chabad* magazine, mainly so I could know what the Rebbe said at the farbrengen on Shabbos.

In 5750 the Rebbe asked the Chassidim to start shiurim in Chassidus, especially Tanya. A friend told me about an interesting program at the shul not far from our house. She convinced me to join her. That night I met Rachel Noam who told her amazing life story (translated into English as "The View From Above") about her clinical death and how it was thanks to that experience that she became a baalas t'shuva and connected to Chassidus. She described how her soul left her body and went up above, how she felt G-d's infinite love. I felt very drawn to what Rachel was saying and at the end of the talk I asked her to give a shiur in my house.

Two weeks later we had the first shiur. After the shiur I sat down right away to write to the Rebbe about the shiur and to receive his bracha. The following week, on a Sunday, the phone rang during the shiur. It was a call from 770. The secretary spoke in English and conveyed brachos for the shiur. Those were tense times in Israel



**"The View From Above"
by Rachel Noam**

with the first Gulf War about to begin. The Rebbe's words infused us all with simcha and bitachon.

Some other women and I began to cry as we were overcome with emotion. Rachel said, "Do you understand what a Rebbe is? He is thinking of us at four in the morning in New York!" A strong feeling welled up in me for the Rebbe. I felt how at that moment we were the only ones who existed for him and I felt his genuine caring for us.

The shiur continued for nine years and made a revolution in Netanya. Every week forty women came, many of whom strengthened their commitment to Torah and mitzvos, learned Chassidus, and began wearing a wig. I learned Chassidus from Rachel, from her shiurim and farbrengens, and I wasn't the only one. There are some women today who teach Chassidus, thanks to her. It was the beginning of my deep connection to the Rebbe.

When did you first go to see the Rebbe?

In 5752 some women from the shiur went to the Rebbe. We joined a group organized by Rabbi Tzeitlin of Tzfas. This trip transformed me. At that time, the Rebbe gave out dollars nearly every day and I stood on line each time to meet him. It is hard to describe what I experienced in those moments that I faced him. After I received a dollar and left the line, I cried. I know that a lot of klipos fell away from me during those moments that I stood in front of him.

I davened with the Rebbe, and we farbrenged for hours. It was a wonderful time. The Rebbe gave us special treatment since we were a group from Israel. We returned home with lots of simcha and renewed strength. The trip also made a big change in the women who went with me. After that trip another shiur was started in French which also attracted many women and I started another shiur with Rachel. It was a period of great excitement of doing and hafatza and we merited great giluyim from the Rebbe which helped us so much. The wellsprings of Chassidus continued to spread in Netanya.

You say that after Gimmel Tammuz your hiskashrus to the Rebbe only got stronger. Please tell me about that.

I won't forget that day. It was a Motzaei Shabbos and on Sunday morning Rachel called me in tears. She didn't know whether to come to me or not. I told her that we are always learning that when the situation is hard you have to carry on nonetheless. About 100 women called me that morning and I told them all that we were meeting as usual.

It's hard to describe the atmosphere that morning at my house. We danced for hours. We understood that the concealment was actually the beginning of the

Geula and even the Geula itself. There was a great light on that day. Throughout the week following Gimmel Tammuz, a friend and I went all over the country, to gatherings and shiurim. We felt we were drawing ever closer to the Rebbe. I am telling you all this primarily in order to show you how much strength I received, kochos that stood by me in the test I would be facing. Hashem precedes the blow with the cure.

When did you discover that you were sick?

5756 was a hard year for me. It was after years of taking responsibility for my family's t'shuva process. My husband was not opposed to what I wanted but his progress in mitzva observance was very slow. The acclimatization to such a different mentality also took a lot out of me.

I turned fifty and felt exhausted. It was a very deep fatigue that is hard to explain. I was in an internal space that did not enable me to overcome the exigencies of life. My mother-in-law became sick with cancer and my husband had to go to her in France. He stayed there for nearly three months and visited us for two weeks. I was very alone since my older son learned in Yerushalayim and my second son was in yeshiva in Rechovot and both of them came home only on off-Shabbasos. Communication back then wasn't what it is today and it was very expensive to speak long distance by phone. We wrote letters but that wasn't enough for me. I felt very sad and hopeless.

My mother-in-law died and my husband sat Shiva in Paris and remained there for the Shloshim. One morning I woke up and felt a lump. I went to a surgeon who said he did not see a problem. After three weeks I checked again and felt the lump distinctly. I went back to the doctor who checked more thoroughly and after a biopsy I was



Chassidishe nachas - Natniel Zis with his children

A strong feeling welled up in me for the Rebbe. I felt how at that moment we were the only ones who existed for him and I felt his genuine caring for us.

told I was sick. After getting the results I felt like the sky had fallen.

My husband took the news hard too because he had just lost his mother from the same illness and he was greatly dispirited. It took me a long time to digest the fact that I was sick and I spent days and night in fear and uncertainty. I barely slept and ate. When my husband saw that I was not handling the situation, he called Rachel Noam who came to the house, sat with me and cheered me up. That enabled me to start fighting the illness.

What do you mean by fighting? What did you do?

It's very hard because although you undergo difficult treatment there is no guarantee from the doctors that you will recover. I had to work hard to muster my strength in order to have faith and trust that I would get out of this. It is also the sort of disease where it makes

no difference how many people are around you, supporting and loving you. I was the one who had to contend with it.

The main thing that helped me at this time was t'filla and a connection with Hashem. When you daven, there is hope and this leads to positive thinking and that has a positive effect. There is an inner voice that says, "I want to get out of this and I will get out of this!" Boruch Hashem, we are close to the Rebbe and through him are able to come even closer to Hashem. I said a lot of T'hillim and my friends davened for me. From the depths of my heart I asked Hashem for a refua. I continued going to shul on Shabbos and to farbrengens and this greatly strengthened me, the k'dusha, the connection with the women, and the bond with the Rebbe.

I wrote to the Rebbe and

Within a week I showed up for the first treatment. Despite my fears of the treatments, I saw the Rebbe's brachos, how the doctor at the public clinic referred me to Brenner, how the treatments were being done at a private place in Tel Aviv rather than in the hospital...

opened to a letter which said I should go to a doctor. I went back to the doctor who diagnosed the illness and he looked at all the results and said I needed a mastectomy. This shook me up tremendously. I had been through operations before, with general anesthesia and wasn't ready to go through it again.

I went to an alternative doctor in the hopes that he could help me. I ate well and I think this was a big help in overcoming the illness. I did regular healing treatments and hoped for the best. It was a time that I underwent a lot of tests and I was terrified with each one. After four months I got up one morning and felt that the lump had grown and when I touched it there was a lot of pain. I met with a doctor at the medical center in Hertzliya who told me I would have to undergo a series of treatments and then surgery to remove the tumor.

Before the treatments I went to fill out form #17 for the national health insurance. The head clerk helped me with the whole process in the course of which she asked me to wait a few minutes because she wanted to consult with the head doctor. After a few minutes she came back and asked me to see him.

I entered his office where the doctor asked me why I wanted to

be treated by that particular doctor at the medical center. I did not understand why he was asking me this and thought he was trying to make things difficult, but then he said, "We have a top doctor, Dr. Brenner, who I think is better for you. He will accept you privately for a first visit but then all the treatments can be done through the national insurance."

I felt I had to listen to him and he gave me the phone number. After a few days I went to Brenner's clinic. After a short conversation he began to examine me and then he said that it looked as though I had a serious tumor. He said that after three treatments we would know more.

Within a week I showed up for the first treatment. Despite my fears of the treatments, I saw the Rebbe's brachos, how the doctor at the public clinic referred me to Brenner, how the treatments were being done at a private place in Tel Aviv rather than in the hospital.

How did you manage during this period?

It was hard. It's hard to describe the treatments. I don't know how I would have gotten through them without emuna in Hashem and the Rebbe and my husband's support. Each time they injected me with the chemotherapy I said "Yechi Adoneinu" in order to

get kochos from the Rebbe. After each treatment I had terrible side effects for a week. I took a lot of supplements that helped me maintain a high hemoglobin level and boosted my immune system. Chemotherapy greatly weakens the immune system and if you don't take the necessary measures it is hard to survive the treatments.

Between treatments I davened a lot and asked for the Rebbe's brachos. I got constant encouragement from the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh. Before the third treatment I went for a checkup at Dr. Brenner. Before I went I wrote to the Rebbe. The answer I opened to was a letter of that date, 23 Cheshvan:

"... I will read the pidyon nefesh mentioned in your letter at the holy gravesite of the Rebbe, my father-in-law ... It is surprising for I wrote you several times about the great necessity to be happy and in every letter that I receive from you ... all is not as it should be, his health and that of his wife and children and parnasa, anxiety etc. ... (And apparently you don't want to remember what the doctors said originally ...)

With blessings that you will finally dedicate yourself to the instruction of the Baal Shem Tov and the n'siim who followed him, to serve Hashem with simcha and good health for you and your household."

I went to the clinic with a strong feeling of awe and emuna. I knew that I had the Rebbe's bracha and all would be well. The doctor examined me and smiled and said, "The tumor disappeared. I want you to go to the surgeon who will check you more thoroughly, to confirm that I am right." The surgeon found something still remaining in my arm and felt that I should still have surgery.

The date for the surgery was 2

Kislev. In the letter that I opened to it stressed “as you enter the month of miracles.” I went for the surgery calmly, knowing that the Rebbe was with me. I returned home and after two days the Chassidus shiur was held in my house. Three weeks later I underwent easier treatments. I felt more upbeat, knowing that the worst was behind me. When I got the results of the biopsy that was done during the surgery, it said, “The tumor is completely gone.” I was under observation for a year and all the checkups showed that the disease was gone.

Can you tell us what you got from this test and how you convey it to other women?

The Rebbe says that the avodas ha’birurim is over but the avoda of tests is still here. In maamarim the Rebbe explains that in a test there is a deep spark of holiness and that withstanding the test and revealing that hidden light within our souls causes the revelation of a great light and then the test disappears. All the difficult tests we undergo these days are apparently the way to attain the great light (to reveal the alef within the gola).

These lofty ideas became very practical for me during my illness. In order to pass the test and fight the disease I had to reveal soul powers that were hidden until then. I can tell you that I could not reach those deep parts of my psyche without studying Chassidus. The first thing this learning gave me was simcha. I understood from delving into Chassidus that a Jew and Hashem are one. I saw that in

the place where I was truly connected to Hashem, there was no illness and that the reason for the illness was separation between me and Hashem. The Rebbe says that all physical illnesses come from soul illnesses and that Chassidus provides a cure for the soul. I experienced this myself in the test that I had to contend with. I worked very hard on my hiskashrus to Hashem and the Rebbe. It was a real battle since the moment I did not surrender to my situation and accept it as Hashem’s will, I immediately became depressed. The minute I strengthened the point of unity with and bitachon in Hashem, I felt stronger.

Was there anything you learned that was particularly helpful?

Yes, Shaar Ha’Yichud V’Ha’Emuna in Tanya. The Alter Rebbe explains the unity of a Jew and Hashem and how there is nothing but Hashem. I understood that the sense of independent existence that Hashem gives us is in order for us to do our job in this world as a soul in a body and in order for us to have free choice to submit to Him or not. Understanding this point gave me tremendous bittul which in turn gave me tremendous strength. After I recovered, all the suffering I underwent was forgotten and I was left feeling tremendous gratitude to Hashem.

How did this ordeal affect your family?

My husband and I were greatly strengthened. We saw the bracha

from the Rebbe and its effect and this was very inspiring. It enabled us to have a greater connection to Hashem, to the Rebbe – to Moshiach and the learning of Chassidus. This understanding went way beyond words and gave us the awareness that the Rebbe is the one who channels life to us, both physical and spiritual life. That the Rebbe is the center of the family, of our lives, and that in order to live as we ought, we have to bring hiskashrus to the Rebbe into every detail. It makes no difference whether I am in the kitchen, doing laundry, shopping or at work. It’s not easy to internalize this and to really live it all the time. It requires daily work of learning and bittul, but it’s what the Rebbe demands of us.

The Rebbe is waiting for us to do the work and internalize everything he gave us. The Rebbe is here and he was already revealed as Moshiach; he is only waiting for us to uncover our true selves, the inner point, the poor spark imprisoned within us. When a Jew bonds with the Rebbe through learning Chassidus and doing what he asked us to do, he does not remain a debtor. In hindsight I can say that although this was an unpleasant test, it was good for me. It is very likely that I would not reach this level of thinking and action if not for this. Moshiach now!

Michelle would be happy to talk with women undergoing similar trials. You can write her at michelezhis@yahoo.com

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

FAITH AND SUCCESS

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik
District Rav Bat Chefer – Emek Chefer

Trust in Hashem is not an easy thing. Challenges, dangers, fears, and problems can all disturb our trust in Hashem, but the first of the Aseres HaDibros demands that we place our faith in Hashem, the One in charge. He took us out of Mitzrayim and will redeem us from this Galus, as well, in the merit of emuna and bitachon in the coming of Moshiach. * A fascinating look at Emuna and Bitachon from the perspective of Chazal, Kabbala and Chabad Chassidus. * Presented for Shavuot, the “Time of the Giving of Our Torah.”

BELIEF IN HASHEM

“Anochi: I am Hashem your G-d” – the first dibbur[1] of the Ten Commandments does not merely relate that Hashem took us out of Egypt but is also a command to believe with complete faith that He is one, the only one, and there is nothing but Him. He created and runs the world and

nothing happens in the universe which does not come from Him.

Avrohom[2] Avinu, the father of all the believers, was born to idol worshipping parents and was not raised with belief in Hashem, but when he grew older and contemplated the universe, he came to recognize the one G-d who runs the world. This belief

was then transmitted in the spiritual “genes” of his descendants so that every Jew, by his very nature, believes in G-d. “Yisroel are believers, children of believers,” even those who don’t contemplate the wonders of nature.

The statement, “I am Hashem your G-d” is to tell us not to suffice with the natural emuna in our hearts, but to constantly work to bring it to the fore through meditation. The more we delve into the subject of emuna, the more we arouse and fan its flames so that we feel it in our daily lives. The most effective way to live with faith in Hashem is through learning Chassidus which explains the greatness of the Creator and His powers.

TRUST IN HASHEM

Complete trust in Hashem is derived from belief in Him[3]. When you believe that Hashem runs the world and that even the most minute detail is not happenstance and does not happen by the will of created beings or laws of nature, but is directed by Hashem, then you trust in Him that He will do what is good and proper for us.

Challenges in life, problems with parnasa or health, dangers and fears, all distract us from complete trust in Hashem, but one who truly believes in Hashem ignores all that and has absolute trust. He understands that Hashem is in charge and by His will our enemies are dispersed and all our requests are answered for good.

A person who trusts in Hashem is happy. He accepts whatever happens with joy and serenity because he casts his burden upon Hashem with complete faith that everything is from Him and he is confident that whatever happens is being orchestrated by Hashem for

his good. A person who trusts in Hashem has no worries about what he will eat tomorrow, for as it says Tanya[4], "His heart trusts in Hashem for He desires kindness and is gracious and compassionate ... without any doubt."

Genuine trust is when you rely exclusively on Hashem and not on your own might or brains or on any created being, as it says, "cast upon Hashem your burden," not to rely on anything but Hashem. That is how you fulfill the first of the Ten Commandments.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMUNA AND BITACHON

Despite the similarity between emuna and bitachon, they are not synonymous. These are the basic differences between them:

1) Emuna is not a hope that things will work out well but the awareness that whatever happens comes from Hashem. There are times when Hashem's plan, for whatever reason, differs from what our limited human minds think is best, but with emuna we accept whatever Hashem intends for us. Bitachon, on the other hand, is the certainty that it will be good. Bitachon is relying on Hashem that He will provide a good, happy life with health, children, parnasa etc. A person with bitachon is calm and possesses an inner tranquility because he has no fears or worries. In every situation he trusts in Hashem that He will do what is best for him.

2) The believer can sin as Chazal say[5] that a thief, while stealing, believes in Hashem and prays that He will help him in his work, even though he knows that it goes against the Torah. But a person who trusts in Hashem will certainly not steal and transgress Hashem's will for he relies on Hashem sending him his livelihood



This is a great level in bitachon in Hashem, to consider every action and attainment of something in a natural manner as something given by Hashem.

and there would be no point in stealing.

3) Emuna is constant. At every moment, day and night, a person believes in G-d. Bitachon comes to the fore mainly in times of trouble when there is no natural way of extricating oneself from a given situation. The person does not despair but trusts in Hashem as it says in T'hilim, "From whence comes my help? My help is from Hashem."

4) The person with bitachon has a sense of self; it is he who relies on Hashem and trusts that Hashem will provide him with his needs. The person with emuna forgets about his personal needs and is completely devoted to Hashem. As the Rebbe puts it: Emuna is bittul and going out of self with the feeling that whatever he has is not his, but Hashem's.

HAPPY WITH THE FIRE

The following is a story about a tzaddik, a descendent of the Baal Shem Tov, which shows the fundamental difference between emuna and bitachon:

A fire broke out in the town of this tzaddik and destroyed most of the homes, including his. The tzaddik moved away and explained, "even when my house burned down I believed in Hashem and was happy and thanked Him for everything He had done for me, so it was not fitting for me to remain in the town where the rest of the people were saddened over their losses."

"If the fire had not burned my house, I would have to be pained

in order to share in the sorrow of others (like Moshe Rabbeinu, when the Jewish people were fighting Amalek and he sat on a rock and not on a more comfortable seat) but now that my house was burned too, I am permitted and even obligated to accept this with joy and love. It wouldn't be right to live among them and be happy while they are sad so I moved away so I can be joyous without offending anyone."

That is complete faith in Hashem. He acknowledged that everything that happened was from Hashem "and a person is obligated to thank and rejoice over bad just he thanks and rejoices over good," because everything comes from Him; but the midda of bitachon functions to bring about that one experiences only good and not bad.

In the holy Zohar[6] it tells about Rabbi Yeisa, one of Rabbi Shimon's holy group, who would daven to Hashem in an unusual manner. After he brought food home and before he set out his meal, he would daven that Hashem send him food, and then he would wait a while and say about the food that was already prepared in advance, "This is the food that I received from Hashem." Only then did he sit down to eat. The Zohar praises his conduct and applies the verse in T'hilim[7], "Hashem desires ... those who hope for His kindness," – those who anticipate His generosity all day and ask for their food from Hashem.

Wasn't his behavior odd? The food was in his possession before

he prayed, so what significance did his praying and waiting have? It seems like a farce. Why does the Zohar praise this as great trust in Hashem?[8]

Most people's feeling of bitachon only comes into play when we lack for something or when there is some difficulty or illness that we are unable to overcome in a natural way. That's when we arouse our bitachon in Hashem who rules over nature, who has the power to provide all our needs and remove all obstacles and heal all illnesses. However a person who can obtain something naturally, like a thirsty person who is standing near a faucet who can easily fill a cup and drink, does not need bitachon in Hashem for a drink.

However, R' Yeisa felt otherwise. Even though he obtained something in a natural manner and even though he already had it in his possession, he believed and awakened in himself his trust in Hashem. So when he wanted to eat the food that he already possessed, he asked Hashem and then waited for Hashem to give it to him. When he ate, it was with the feeling that he wasn't eating of his own food but from the food Hashem had provided him with. This is a great level in bitachon in Hashem, to consider every action and attainment of something in a natural manner as something given by Hashem.

"THINK POSITIVELY AND IT WILL BE GOOD"

We can ask, why should a person who trusts in Hashem be serene when perhaps in Heaven they decided he deserves to be punished for his misdeeds? Why should he expect things to be good?

Because bitachon has a great

power to even change decrees that were made in Heaven! In the merit of bitachon, complete trust in Hashem, where a person casts all his burdens upon Hashem and he relies on Hashem to do good things for him that are obviously good and he has no worries – this sort of bitachon draws down all the brachos as it says[9], even if he is not deserving, bitachon has the power to draw down goodness on those who trust even if they deserved distress for their misdeeds.

BETWEEN EMUNA AND BITACHON FOR GEULA

The SMAK[10] connects the mitzva of emuna in Hashem, which is learned from the verse, “I am Hashem your G-d,” to the mitzva

of belief in the coming of Moshiach. He says that with the commandment *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, Hashem says that just as I want you to believe that I took you out of Egypt, so too I want you to believe that I will gather you and save you, with mercy.

The Maharsha[11] writes that those who think the Geula is far off are liable to despair and forget that there will be a Geula; we need to constantly think about and remember that our Geula is imminent, as it says, “my salvation is nigh to come.”

One of the signs of the Ikvisa D'Meshicha is a weakness in emuna. Therefore, says the Rebbe, the call of the hour is to learn inyanei Moshiach and Geula for in the merit of emuna and bitachon in the coming of Moshiach, we will

merit the Geula. So essential is this faith that the Gemara tells us that one of the first questions every person will be asked (after 120) is whether he looked forward to the Geula.

G'dolei Yisroel lived with complete emuna and bitachon that Moshiach would be coming imminently. Some of them had festive clothing ready to wear when Moshiach comes.

Strengthening our emuna and bitachon that *hinei hinei* we will open our eyes and see Moshiach, will hasten his coming, may it be immediately, now.

Sources: Parshas B'Shalach 5723, Likkutei Sichos, vol. 26, p. 97ff.

NOTES:

- 1-Rabeinu B'Chayei Shmos 20:2
- 2-Rambam, Hilchos Avodas Kochavim perek 1, halacha 3
- 3-Ramban, Seifer Emuna U'Bitachon, perek 1; Chovos HaLevovos Shaar HaBitachon beginning chapter 1; Orchos Tzaddikim the ninth gate, Shaar HaSimcha. Emuna in Hashem is the root of Torah and from it blossom all the mitzvos including the midda of bitachon which are like fruits that grow on the tree of emuna.
- 4-Tanya, Igeres HaT'shuva siman 11
- 5-Brachos 63a
- 6-chelek beis, daf 62 amud 2
- 7-chapter 117, verse 11
- 8-“The preparation of food to be suitable for eating serves as preparation for receiving all the spiritual elements in the food which are
- ‘the emissions from the mouth of Hashem.’ That is why he waited until he received the food from ‘the house of the King.’” – Shem M'Shmuel B'Shalach 5672
- 9-Ikarim, 44, end ch. 47; Kad HaKemach, erech bitachon.
- 10-In the explanation of the mitzva of Anochi
- 11-Kesubos daf 111

"The quickest way to reveal Moshiach is by learning the Torah sources about Moshiach & redemption" שי"פ תזריע ומצורע היתנש"א



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Upon this statement I affix my signature, Sunday 20th Tamuz 5766



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THE RAYATZ'S MAN IN PARIS

Written by Rabbi Schneur Zalman Chanim
Translated by Menachem Har Zvi

The following chapter recounts the fascinating life-story of Rabbi Schneur Zalman Schneerson, the Rabbi of the Alliance of Orthodox Jews of France. Rabbi Schneerson was a primary figure in the rescue activities led by Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, the Rebbe's emissary in Europe.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman Schneerson was not just another link in the rescue network established by the Rebbe Rayatz. He was a primary figure and a major pillar, a veritable right-hand man of Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson. Rabbi Schneerson began his rescue activities at the war's outbreak, when a huge influx of Jews arrived in Paris. During the subsequent period he saved a large number of Jewish children from the hands of the Nazis.

At the conclusion of the war, before fully recovering from his own suffering and misfortune, he began providing assistance to the

survivors. In a letter dated the 18th of Tammuz, 5706 (1946), the Rebbe Rayatz wrote to him:

"Many thanks for your efforts on behalf of the refugee *anash*, may they be well. I request that you exercise all efforts in the future without discouragement by any obstacles or hindrances. G-d will assist you and grant you success. You will surely notify me in the near future of the completion of the matter in a good manner."

On the 28th of Sivan, the Rebbe wrote to R. Schneur Zalman that Rabbi Gorodetzky (the son-in-law of R. Shmuel

Levitin) and his family had arrived in Poland. Rabbi Gorodetzky remained in Poland, while his family continued on to Prague.

"I request that you inquire and extend efforts to bring my friend Moreinu HaRav Binyomin and his family to Paris, and to help them travel directly to the United States. May G-d grant you success..."

DEEP INVOLVEMENT

As I related previously, in anticipation of Rabbi Jacobson's trip to Europe the Rebbe Rayatz sent two letters: one to all of *anash* and one to R. Schneur Zalman Schneerson. The Rebbe relied on R' Schneur Zalman to organize a proper welcome for R' Yisroel and provide assistance in his mission. Indeed, on the very night that R' Yisroel arrived in Paris, a meeting was held at Rabbi Schneerson's house, on Rue Dieu 10.

All of the correspondence between the Rebbe Rayatz and R' Yisroel passed through Rabbi Schneerson's Paris address. While R' Yisroel was away, R' Zalman had permission to open, organize, and read the letters. Depending on the urgency of the matter, R' Schneur Zalman would decide whether to contact Rabbi Jacobson via telephone, telegram, or mail.

The following letter from R' Zalman emphasizes his connections to the various organizations and his activities on behalf of the Russian refugees. In the letter one can also sense the chaos and confusion which reigned in postwar Europe.

B"H

8 Menachem Av, 5706

My dear friend, who is like a brother to me, HaRav HaGaon, HaRav HaChassid R' Yisroel, may he live good and lengthy years.



Greetings and Blessings.

I just received your letter of Thursday of [the week of Parshas] *D'varim*. I likewise received the telegram on time. I am sending you three letters which were received on your behalf. I opened the first letter to see if it contained an urgent matter, in which case I would notify you via telegram.

We do not have any news or developments. I have been in touch with certain organizations and have requested of them that they include our people in all of their lists. At first they said that they need all the names in order to receive a visa here. However, this is difficult for us, because they are in a state of transit. Visas received here on behalf of those who have already traveled will be for naught, only taking the place of others. Later I was told that perhaps permits without names could be granted for a number of people. This would work for us.

In general there will be one list here, because all the organizations will compromise to make a common list to comply with the demand of the Ministry. In the meantime we received the letter of Rashal [R' Shmuel Levitin] to his son-in-law R.B. [R' Binyomin Gorodetzky], stating that the Rebbe's opinion is to travel to the American Zone.

Even R' Binyomin must travel there, based on the sacred advice given through R' Shmuel. If so, to travel here is a matter of "the bread which fell into the pit" [a Talmudic expression (*Brachos 56a*) meaning that it's hopeless]. Obviously in current times one must always ask, because things are always changing.

I have nothing more to notify. May you receive life, peace, and goodness as desired by your soul and mine.

Schneur Zalman

TEMPORARY SECRETARY OF THE REBBE RAYATZ

HaRav HaTamim R' Schneur Zalman Schneerson of Refko, born in 5698 (1898), was a fourth generation descendant of the Tzemach Tzedek. (His father was HaRav HaChassid R' Menachem Mendel, the son of R' Levi Yitzchak, son of R' Boruch Sholom, who was the only one of the Tzemach Tzedek's children who did not serve as a Rebbe.)

During the course of many months in 1923 or 1924, Rabbi Schneerson served as temporary secretary of the Rebbe Rayatz. Subsequently he served as the Rebbe's financial agent in Russia, channeling monetary aid to *anash*. In a letter (#3889) dated the 12th of Iyar, 5693 (1933), the Rebbe guided Rabbi Schneerson on how to arrange papers for R' Nissan and how much to spend for this action. Under the directive of the Rebbe Rayatz and with tremendous self-sacrifice, Rabbi Schneerson involved himself in "illegal activity": the establishment of *chadarim* and *mikvaos*. This activity consequently placed him under GPU surveillance. His requests to emigrate from the USSR were rejected sixteen times. Dr. Joseph Rosen interceded on his behalf to President Kalynin, and in the month of Nissan, 5695 (April 1935), R' Schneur Zalman received an exit visa permitting him and his family to leave Russia.

"IF SCHNEERSON IS LEAVING, THERE IS A G-D!"

The history of Rabbi Schneerson's life recorded in this article is based primarily on a letter that he wrote in 5737 (1977). In this letter he requests that the recipient support his institutions in the United States and as a side-note he relates his own personal life story. (I am grateful to the Schneerson family for providing me with this letter.)

After Rabbi Schneerson's request to emigrate was rejected for the fifteenth time, he went in desperation

to the Red Cross, which during that period provided aid for prisoners. As a representative of Jewish prisoners and exiles, Rabbi Schneerson had become a regular visitor, for a while even providing them with financial assistance. In particular Rabbi Schneerson was a friend of the Secretary of the Russian Red Cross, Madame Pushkova (wife of author Maxim Gorky), who had been highly involved in the Rebbe's release in 1927, and her personal assistant, Viniver.

When Rabbi Schneerson entered the office to request an exit visa, Viniver apologetically stated that he could not help and explained the assertion of the GPU: "We will never let this man [Rabbi Schneerson] leave!"

Rabbi Schneerson responded calmly, "Don't worry. I understand the risk. However, I believe that at the end they have to change their minds."

To the shock of all of those who knew of Rabbi Schneerson and his activities, his emigration request was approved, despite the wrath of the GPU.

Rabbi Jacobson writes in his letter:

"It is interesting to note the following episode. An acquaintance of mine who was very distant from religion heard that I had received permission to leave the country. He asked in utter disbelief, 'They are truly permitting you to leave? You?' I confirmed that I had indeed received approval. Upon hearing my response his facial expression changed and he stated, 'If they are freeing Rabbi Schneur Zalman Schneerson, then perhaps there is truly a G-d a Heaven? Perhaps, after all, something supernatural does exist!'"

Rabbi Schneerson was ready to leave the U.S.S.R with his wife, son, daughter, and a train

car full of *s'farim*. The GPU authorities were enraged. A true criminal, whom they would have loved to sentence to death, was slipping from their fingers. During his train journey through the U.S.S.R. to the port city where he was to board a ship to Palestine, "guests" entered the train. They requested that Rabbi Schneerson follow them to the local G.P.U. offices. R' Zalman remained calm. He directed his family to continue on to their destination with the wish that with G-d's help they would somehow reunite. Sure enough, through great miracles, he was freed after a relatively mild interrogation. He succeeded in reaching the port city prior to the ship's departure, thus rejoining his wife and children.

R' Zalman arrived in Eretz Yisroel on the first day of Chol HaMoed Pesach, 5695 (1935). However, he did not intend to settle there. As a true *chassid*, R' Zalman desired to meet his Rebbe, the Rebbe Rayatz, who was then in Warsaw. Immediately upon his arrival in Eretz Yisroel R' Zalman began searching for people who could help him get an entry permit to Poland and an American visa to ultimately settle in the U.S. Thanks to the efforts of Eretz Yisroel's Chief Rabbi, the Gaon R' Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, Rabbi Schneerson's wish was granted. When he received the visa he was told by the American consul, "This is the first time that I am giving an American visa to a person with a Russian passport."

THE MEETING WITH THE REBBE AND THE SURPRISE DIRECTIVE

On Erev Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, after only 72 days in Eretz Yisroel, R' Zalman left his family and traveled to Poland to

meet the Rebbe.

R' Zalman's happiness cannot be described. After eight long years of anticipation, he would at last be seeing the Rebbe. The visit also gave the Rebbe much joy.

When R' Zalman went into *yechidus*, he informed the Rebbe that he had received an American visa and that he intended to permanently settle in the United States. However, the Rebbe thought otherwise. The Rebbe suggested that he travel to Paris and accept a rabbinical post in one of the city's Shuls. This would enable him to establish Jewish schools and begin spreading Judaism in France. Without a second's thought, Rabbi Schneerson immediately nullified his own will to the Rebbe's will. He took his few possessions and traveled directly to Paris by train.

There he began searching for a rabbinical position. He maintained contact with the Rebbe via telegram and sought his advice each step of the way.

In a letter dated the 10th of Elul, the Rebbe writes to R' Zalman confirming that he already received three of his letters, and he urges him to continue his search.

"Knowing your superior qualities of energetic organization, patient mind, kind heart to bring people closer, seeking the good for all, and beloved by all, with G-d's help, within a brief period of time you will acquire friends and beloved ones.

With G-d's help, you will accomplish great things. In my opinion, this is the opening that will, G-d willing, bring the inner intent from the potential to the actual, materially and spiritually."

[To be continued be"H]