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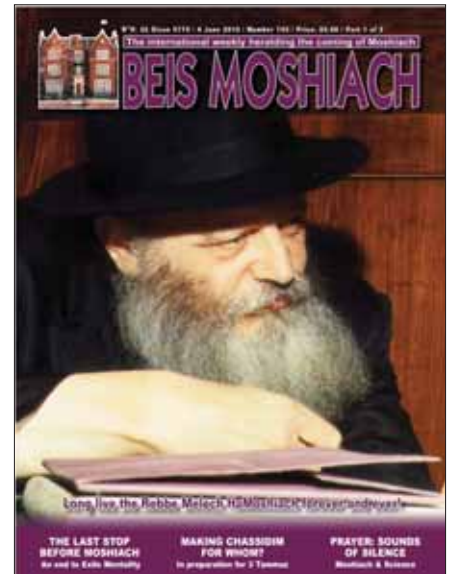
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USA

744 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409
Tel: (718) 778-8000
Fax: (718) 778-0800
admin@beismoshiach.org
www.beismoshiach.org

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
M.M. Hendel

ENGLISH EDITOR:
Boruch Merkur

HEBREW EDITOR:
Rabbi Sholom Yaakov Chazan
editorH@beismoshiach.org

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CHOOSING OUR MISSION

Sichos In English

A PILLAR OF OUR FAITH

The Rambam writes: [1]

“Every person is fit to be righteous like Moshe our teacher, or wicked like Yeravam.... There is no one who compels him, decrees upon him, or leads him to either of these two paths. Instead, it is he - on his own initiative and thought - who tends to the path he desires....

“This principle is a fundamental concept and a pillar [on which rests] the Torah and its commandment[s] as it is written: [2] “Behold I have set before you today life [and good, death and evil.]”... i.e., the choice is yours.

“Any one of the mortal acts which a person desires to do, he may, whether good or evil.... The Creator does not compel or decree that people should do either good or bad. Instead, everything is left to their [own choice].”

G-d did not create man to be an automaton.

Instead, He gave him a unique potential, free choice, which distinguishes him from all other forms of life. [3]

All other existence is ruled by the laws of nature, or its own instinctual drives.

Man, by contrast, has the power to control his conduct, and act according to his own initiative.

TWO TYPES OF CHOICE

The exercise of our free choice lies at the heart of our Divine service.

We have the option of carrying out G-d's will, or ignoring it, Heaven forbid, and our challenge is to “choose life,” [4] living our lives as He desires them.

In particular, two types of positive choice are expected of us:

a. Obedience to the mitzvos of the Torah.

G-d has given us a multi-faceted set of deeds which we are obligated to implement, and others which we are forbidden to perform. At times, performing the deeds required of us or observing the prohibitions imposed upon us involves an inner confrontation, for doing so may run contrary to our natural tendencies and desires.

Our power of choice enables us to employ control and negate any inner obstacles that hinder the fulfillment of G-d's will.

b. Molding one's character to conform to G-d's will, even when there is no explicit commandment.

There is an entire realm of activities referred to as r'shus, “what is permitted.”

We are not told what we must do, or what we must avoid. But that does not mean that there is not a G-dly mode of conduct appropriate for these activities.

The initiative, however, is given to us.

We must strive to discover G-d's will ourselves, and then shape our characters accordingly.

These two thrusts are reflected in the Mishna: [5] “Make His will your will, so that He may fulfill your will as though it were His will. Set aside your will because of His will, so that He may set aside the will of others before your will.”

Setting aside your will because of His will refers to the challenge of foregoing one's own desires in order to obey G-d's commandments.

Making His will your will refers to a greater challenge, molding one's character so that it will reflect and express G-d's will even in situations where G-d's command is not specific.

TAKING INITIATIVE

The task of molding one's character represents a more complete expression of our potential for free choice.

When a commandment has been given, even though man has the option whether or not to obey, the fact that G-d has given a command spurs obedience, for every Jew has a natural desire to serve G-d and fulfill His will. [6]

Moreover, on the most practical level, when G-d's will is explicit, the choice facing man is clear cut.

On the other hand, when G-d has not given an explicit command, and man has to elevate and refine himself until he appreciates what is expected of him, the challenge facing him - and the choice he must make - is far more encompassing. [7]

A NEW PHASE

This approach to Divine

service represents the new dimension contributed by this week's Torah reading.

The Torah reading begins: [8] Shlach lecha - "You may send...." Rashi explains that the people had come to Moshe with a request to send spies to explore Eretz Yisroel, and Moshe had brought their request to G-d.

G-d had replied: "It is up to you. I am not commanding you. If you desire, send."

This represented a new phase in our people's relationship with G-d.

Previously, the Torah had related the commandments which G-d had given Moshe for the conduct of the Jewish people.

It also had described certain situations, e.g., the second opportunity to offer the Paschal sacrifice, [9] where the Jews had come to Moshe with a request, and Moshe had relayed that request to G-d.

But even in those instances, G-d had responded with an explicit command.

This was the first occasion that G-d had left the matter to Moshe's choice.

BUILDING G-D'S DWELLING

This new approach to Divine service, that the initiative be given to man, is associated with the objective of the spies' mission, our people's entry into Eretz Yisroel.

The goal of life in Eretz Yisroel is to fashion a dwelling for G-d within the realities of everyday experience.

More particularly, this dwelling should be established through man's initiative.

Were the dwelling to be established by revelation from above, it would be incomplete.

Man as he exists within his own context and the power of creativity

he possesses would not be included within it.

When, by contrast, man transforms his own will, and on the basis of his inner metamorphosis, proceeds to transform his surrounding environment, G-d's dwelling becomes internalized within our existence.

FACING FAILURE

Since the focus is on man's initiative, there is a possibility of error. [10]

The very term free choice implies that one may make an incorrect decision.

Indeed, in the narrative of our Torah reading, not only did such a potential exist, the wrong choice was actually made. [11] The spies returned and spread panic among the Jewish people, causing them to fear entering Eretz Yisroel.

As the narrative indicates, [12] however, this error can be corrected through t'shuva, sincere return to G-d.

In this context as well, the emphasis is on man's initiative.

For t'shuva involves a person penetrating to his core and summoning up the inner strength to reestablish the bond with G-d severed through his improper conduct.

Indeed, through t'shuva, a person can reach a rung above his previous level of Divine service. As our Sages teach: [13] "Perfect tzaddikim (righteous men) cannot stand in the place of a baal t'shuva."

Nevertheless, the possibility exists for t'shuva even without sin.

As our Sages say: [14] "Moshiach will motivate the righteous to turn [to G-d] in t'shuva."

Through such efforts, the advantage reached through t'shuva can be accomplished

without a prior stage of descent.

This is the ultimate expression of man's power of achievement: to set out on his own initiative, to accomplish his objective, and to turn to G-d with the all-encompassing inner bond that is established through t'shuva.

OUR PEOPLE'S MISSION

The above concepts are alluded to in the name of the Torah reading Shlach.

Shlach means "send," indicating that every person - and in a larger sense, the Jewish people as a whole - are sent out, caused to leave their natural environment and charged with a mission.

This mission enables both the individual and the collective to advance and reach a more elevated rung.

In a personal sense, this refers to the mission of every soul as it is sent down from the spiritual realms to be enclined within the body and material existence.

This is "a descent for the sake of an ascent," [15] for through using material entities for a spiritual purpose, the soul progresses to a higher level.

In a larger sense, this refers to the mission of the Jewish people to make our world a dwelling for G-d.

"Sent out" from continent to continent, our people have labored toward this objective for thousands of years, adding spiritual content to the world's existence through their observance of the Torah and its mitzvos.

This objective is no longer an abstract goal.

On the contrary, we are standing at the threshold of the

[Continued on page 9]

THE LAST STOP BEFORE MOSHIACH

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

In these times, when we are supposed to be making the final preparations for Moshiach as the train is pulling out to take us to our final destination, we need to reject all these “exile mentality” driven stopgap measures and raise our children with the positive messages that the Rebbe has given us.

FIRST STOP

My first experience with formal education actually took place in the Lubavitch institution of Oholei Torah in Crown Heights. I was three and a half years old at the time, and my parents decided to enroll me in a preschool day camp program. Since we lived then in East Flatbush, Oholei Torah was the closest day camp that provided bus service to our area. At that time, the early grades were housed in a small two building campus on Eastern Parkway between Buffalo and Rochester Avenues. Although, obviously, I have very few memories from that period of my life, there are a number of memory snapshots that are still quite vivid in my mind. One of them is of one day during

nap time, when I climbed out of a second story window and lowered myself onto the door of the building which was kept propped open to let in some air, and then slid/jumped down from there to the ground to go off and explore.

The Morah (currently a great-grandmother residing in Crown Heights, may she live and be well) had stepped out for a moment while her cute little charges were supposedly snoozing away, and upon returning discovered that one was missing. When the others told her that I had gone out the window she became somewhat hysterical, alerting everybody on the staff and creating all around pandemonium, which is what I encountered when I decided to make my entrance shortly after. I don't recall many more details,

but I do remember that despite the home I grew up in being one where corporal punishment was the norm, my father thought the whole thing was pretty hilarious, and even though he gave me a stern warning with a scary (trying not to burst out laughing) face not to do it again, I didn't get hit.

Years later, my father told me that one of the reasons that he had me begin my schooling at such a young age (I began first grade that fall) was that in addition to my advanced reading and comprehension skills, my late mother could not handle me at home when I would get frisky. Apparently, my early behavior fit exactly what would today be diagnosed as attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity. I would go from sitting still for hours, completely absorbed in what I was reading or viewing or playing with, to complete distraction and bouncing off the walls.

[I continued in that day camp for a number of years until so many of the other groups had left Crown Heights and East Flatbush that it became way too Lubavitch dominated for our taste. In retrospect, it probably is a good thing that I don't have many memories from that time since, to tell the truth, most of my encounters with Lubavitcher kids

in my early years (on the school bus we shared Sunday afternoons during the school year, in Oholei Torah day camp, and one nightmare summer in Camp Gan Yisroel) fell a good deal short of pleasant.]

So, how did I survive my school years in the days before Ritalin? The yeshiva/s I went to held religious studies in the morning and secular studies in the afternoon. The Rebbis who taught in the mornings were allowed to apply corporal punishment at their discretion (and if you came home and complained that the Rebbe hit you, your father would most likely hit you again since the Rebbe must have had good reason). We experienced the glories of spanking, smacking, whacking with rulers or pencils (on heads, knuckles, upraised thumbs – one Rebbe had an oversized novelty pencil, oy vey), being conked with thrown objects, as well as the more benign standing in corners, and the highly bizarre being forced to kneel under one Rebbe's desk with your neck wedged between the leg of his chair and the side of the desk.

The teachers in the secular studies department, on the other hand, were absolutely forbidden from such forms of retribution (except for the standing in the corner bit) and the worst thing they could do is kick you out of class or send you to the principal's office. This double standard was strongly reinforced at home as well, and I knew that if I got in trouble with the Hebrew studies department I was as good as dead, but if I got in trouble with the English studies department it was no big deal. Thus, I learned to sit still for hours during the morning (mostly reading other material,

daydreaming, or even listening when absolutely necessary), and release any pent up energy during recess, lunch, the English studies classroom and outdoors after school (during the months when it was still daylight outside).

After having attended the same yeshiva through the fifth grade, I transferred to a new yeshiva. I don't recall the reasons for the switch that came up at that time, but it wasn't until I was much older that my father informed me that the real reason was that although the Hebrew studies principal couldn't have been more supportive, the English studies principal of the first yeshiva had refused to take me back as he felt they could not handle my disruptive behavior. That was a real eye-opener for me, to discover that I had actually been kicked out of yeshiva, but what impressed me more was the wisdom of my father in protecting me from that information. I wish I could say that I made it through my developmental years without receiving any negative messages from parental and educational authority figures, but at least I was spared the devastation of walking around thinking that my mother didn't want me at home anymore and the yeshiva didn't want me in their school anymore because I was too difficult to deal with.

Another tidbit that my father shared with me more recently was that my first ceremonial educational experience, the "bringing to cheder" (of which I have zero recollection), also took place in Oholei Torah with the late Reb Michoel Teitelbaum. So it turns out that my long and convoluted spiritual (and oftentimes not so spiritual) journey simply brought me back to the very first stop on that journey.

LAST STOP

"Ten exiles Lubavitch was exiled," with the final exile being in the United States of America, which began with the arrival of the Rebbe Rayatz in 1940 (and moving into 770 Eastern Parkway) after having survived the devastating bombardment of Warsaw and a miraculous escape from war torn Europe. A little over one year later, his son-in-law, later to become the Rebbe, experienced his own miraculous escape and arrived on these shores on the 28th day of the month of Sivan 1941. The Rebbe explains in a number of talks why America is the last stop of Lubavitch in exile. The reason given is that the event of the "Giving of the Torah" was not fully felt on this side of the globe since when one shines a light on top of a round sphere it remains dark on bottom. The coming of the Rebbe Rayatz to America was in order to bring the "revelation of the Giving of the Torah" to the "lower hemisphere" (relative to the Middle East), which is the final stage before the revelation of Moshiach.

The significance of the Rebbe's own arrival in America is explained as being in order to reveal the *ko'ach* (power, which in the Hebrew numerical system equals 28) of the month of Sivan, that is to say the power invested into the world through the "Giving of the Torah." The difference between these two missions is mirrored in the difference of approaches between the Rebbe Rayatz and the Rebbe. When the Rebbe Rayatz arrived, he announced that "America is no different," while pointing out and emphasizing the tremendous challenges and resistance, as well as the negative traits from which these derived. He spoke about the

We experienced the glories of spanking, smacking, whacking with rulers or pencils, being conked with thrown objects, as well as the more benign standing in corners...

“ice of America,” the coldness towards spiritual matters and the preoccupation with materialism, and the need to wage war against these traits and attitudes. He issued proclamations calling for repentance in preparation for Moshiach, but he also highlighted the possible threat of the war reaching our shores, and warned that those who don’t repent will be left behind.

Reading the talks of the Rebbe Rayatz from those years provides an extremely stark contrast with the approach of his successor. In fact, it is so extreme that there were those from within and without that saw this shift as some sort of compromise of values. The Rebbe, however, made it clear that this was not the case, and was most emphatic that nobody should extrapolate from the change in approach that it is any way acceptable to alter or compromise the smallest detail of Jewish law, custom or belief, so as to bring the Torah “closer” to the people. Clearly, the differences in approach are not simply stylistic but have roots in the loftiest of the spiritual realms as alluded to in Chassidus, and from which we can glean some understanding on a simple level.

Bringing the “revelation of the giving of the Torah down to the lower hemisphere” is a “top-down” effort, which in order to be successful must overwhelm any resistance and overpower any opposition. On the other hand, “revealing the power of the

Giving of the Torah” is a “bottom-up” effort to extract the hidden potential for G-dliness from within the realm of the physical and its inhabitants. Thus, by definition, there needs to be a radical shift in approach focusing on the latent and inherent goodness within each individual rather than the negatives that need to be overcome. This is accomplished by seeing and relating only to the good within each individual and situation, and avoiding negative messages at all costs. Nothing has changed in terms of the demands of Torah and Chassidus, and in fact, in many ways and on many levels the Rebbe demands more than in previous generations as per the unique times we live in and the unique powers we have been granted.

These two phases in completing the final mission before Moshiach, bringing the transcendent light of Torah down to the lowest levels and elevating the lowest people and places to be receptive to the most transcendent aspects of Torah, have been completed, as the Rebbe informed us repeatedly throughout the years 5751-5752 (after having done so on occasion in the late 5740’s). Just as we have succeeded in integrating the innermost essence of Torah and G-d with the physicality of the world, now we are supposed to be focused on integrating our innermost essence with our own physical beings in the single-

minded effort to bring about the full revelation of “the days (revelations) of Moshiach.”

“NO” TO STOPGAP MEASURES

Considering that the Rebbe has told us that we have been successful with this approach, at least insofar as reaching out to our fellow Jews who never had the benefit of a Jewish or Chassidic education, it is shocking that when it comes to “our own,” we are still mired in fighting negativity, bombarding our young people with negative messages and embracing compromise solutions for those that “fall out of the system” or more accurately are “pushed out of the system.” It seems as if every other month there is a new program for “at-risk kids” or “dropouts” that is predicated on the philosophy of diminished expectations. In fact, even the “solution” is broadcasting negative messages to these kids by making it clear that we don’t believe they are capable of “making it” to become a full-fledged Chassid, Yerei Shamayim and Lamdan.

When I got involved in dealing with this issue fifteen years ago, long before it became popular, the greatest difficulty I encountered was not with the kids themselves but the adults in their lives and the adults in positions of power within the community, who thought I was being unrealistic in my expectations of what can be done for and with these kids. In a matter of years, I saw more and more vocational programs (“at least let him/her keep Shabbos and kosher and feel like a part of the community”) being generously funded and I found myself more and more a lone

voice in the wilderness. I predicted back then that many of these programs would fold (they have) and that others would see themselves as successes if even a small percentage of their graduates remained nominally religious (they do).

In these times, when we are supposed to be making the final preparations for Moshiach as the train is pulling out to take us to our final destination, we need to reject all these “exile mentality” driven stopgap measures and

raise our children with the positive messages (which are absolutely real and true) that the Rebbe has given us. In those cases where we need to “bring back” those who feel that they have been pushed away, we need to convey to them the absolute belief and knowledge that they can reach any heights despite the negative messages that have convinced them that they are unappreciated, unwanted, or incorrigible troublemakers (whether due to any of a number

of “disorders” or due to being “a bad kid”).

In the spirit of 28 Sivan may we make the proper resolutions as individuals and as communities to live “all of our days to bring to the days of Moshiach,” especially when it comes to the education of our children, revealing within them the fact that they are G-d’s “anointed ones,” the “moshiachs” who are meant to lead the way to greet Moshiach himself, immediately, NOW!

[Continued from page 5]

Redemption, moments before the consummation of this task through the coming of Moshiach.

And then we will merit the complete fulfillment of the promise of our Torah reading, [16] “I will bring them [there] and they will know the land.”

May this take place in the immediate future.

Adapted from: Seifer HaSichos 5749, Vol. II, p. 536ff; Seifer HaSichos 5750, p. 517ff; Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shlach, 5745

NOTES:

1. Mishneh Torah, Hilchos T’shuva 5:2-3.
2. Deuteronomy 30:15.
3. Rambam, loc. cit.:1.
4. Deuteronomy 30:19.

5. Avos 2:4.

6. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Gerushin, the conclusion of ch. 2.

7. The emphasis on free choice being expressed in the sphere of conduct where effort is necessary to discover G-d’s will is reflected in the Rambam’s wording (Hilchos T’shuva, loc. cit.). The Rambam speaks about being “wise or foolish, merciful or cruel, miserly or generous,” referring to character traits which must be blended in proper proportion (see Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Deios, ch. 1), and not about the observance of mitzvos or prohibitions where G-d’s will is spelled out explicitly.

8. Numbers 13:2.

9. See Numbers, ch. 9.

10. See Rashi’s commentary on Numbers 13:2.

11. More particularly, it can be

explained that the spies’ error came as a result of the thrust towards establishing a dwelling for G-d within the material world. As a result, they thought their mission involved not only collecting information with regard to the best way possible to enter Eretz Yisroel, but also that they - i.e., mortals - should make the decision whether or not to enter Eretz Yisroel.

12. See Moshe’s dialogue with G-d, Numbers, ch. 14.

13. Brachos 34b, as cited by the Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchos T’shuva 7:4). See the essay entitled “T’shuva - Return, Not Repentance” (Timeless Patterns in Time, Vol. I, p. 33ff).

14. Zohar III, p. 153b.

15. Cf. Makos 8b.

16. Numbers 14:31.

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

NO ‘CHANCE MEETING’

By Sholom Ber Crombie
Translated By Michael Leib Dobry
Photos by Yossi Formansky

In commemoration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the histalkus of the holy Baal Shem Tov, we turned to Rabbi Tuvia Blau, one of the more venerable chassidim involved in spreading the teachings of chassidus among the Torah communities in Yerushalayim, for an exclusive and insightful interview.

A HEAVENLY INSPIRED MEETING

***This Shavuos, we commemorated the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the histalkus of the holy Baal Shem Tov. What meaning does this special year have for us?**

At the two hundredth anniversary since the Baal Shem Tov's passing, the Rebbe placed an emphasis on **spreading the wellsprings of chassidus**. The Rebbe turned to other chassidic rebbes and rabbanim with letters requesting that they bring about the spreading of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings. The Rebbe even turned to those chassidic rebbes – such as the

Gerer Rebbe, the “Beis Yisroel” – who seemingly had no connection whatsoever to even considering action in this matter. Nevertheless, the Rebbe was not deterred, and he asked all of them to be involved in spreading the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov.

It's clear that the main focus must be the increase in activities to spread the wellsprings of chassidus, as we saw by the Rebbe at the two hundredth anniversary. I remember that during Shavuos of that year we made a giant gathering at the Meia Sh'arim yeshiva in Yerushalayim, and the Rebbe was most pleased by it.

Naturally, there is also the concept more specific to our times,

as the Rebbe shows how everything is connected to the time and date and it is clear that the Rebbe also sees the nature of the specific time we are experiencing now.

***What is the unique nature to spreading the wellsprings of chassidus specifically in these times and how do we connect this to the concept of the Baal Shem Tov?**

In the well-known letter from the Baal Shem Tov to his brother-in-law, he tells him about the famous ascent of his soul, when he entered the palace of Moshiach and asked him, “When will the Master come?”, and the Moshiach replied, “When your wellsprings have spread to the outside.” On its surface, one





might think that the Baal Shem Tov rose to the loftiest spiritual chambers, went around there until he suddenly came upon and entered the palace of Moshiach, where he happened to meet him and ask, “When are you coming?”... But if you look into the matter more carefully, you will understand that this is not the true meaning. The Baal Shem Tov’s rise to the high spiritual chambers was **for the specific purpose** of entering the palace of Moshiach. This was the Baal Shem Tov’s objective in engaging in this lofty elevation, since this represented his whole purpose in the world.

Every year on Rosh Hashanah, we pray for the revelation of

The Baal Shem Tov’s rise to the high spiritual chambers was for the specific purpose of entering the palace of Moshiach. This was the Baal Shem Tov’s objective in engaging in this lofty elevation, since this represented his whole purpose in the world.

G-dliness and ask, “Reign over the whole world in Your glory.” The Baal Shem Tov decided, as it were, to “drag” Moshiach down below and bring this to its culmination. Therefore, his question was not

from idle curiosity: “When exactly are you supposed to come anyway?” This was the purpose for which the Baal Shem Tov made his spiritual ascent – to bring about the coming of Moshiach in actual deed. He

A MULTI-FACETED CHASSID

Rabbi Tuvia Blau is a Jew of great diversity. On the one hand, he represents the insular ultra-Orthodox approach, as a Chabad leader who steadfastly adheres to the Rebbe's mode of conduct against all connection to Zionism. On the other hand, he's also the one who writes in the ultra-Orthodox periodicals against their disgraceful pronouncements in respect to other Jews, defending the need to show love for every Jew, as we learned from the Rebbe. He regularly and faithfully represents the Rebbe in the world of ultra-Orthodox Jewry before chassidic rebbes, rabbanim, and other Torah giants, doing so confidently and with his head held high.

Rabbi Blau has fought against the involvement of Chabad chassidim in the "Greater Land of Israel" movement, an association that in his opinion, takes them virtually to the edge of recognizing the Zionist idea – a most dangerous connection. However, he is also the one who wore his feet out on the eve of the Gush Katif expulsion, knocking on the doors of the chassidic rebbes – the Gerer Rebbe, shlita among them – in order to convince them to leave the government and stop the planned withdrawal.

Rabbi Blau was born in 5696, to Rabbi Baruch Yehuda Blau, one of the leaders of the Poalei Agudat Yisroel movement in Yerushalayim. The highly respected Blau family is considered one of the most prominent families among the ultra-Orthodox communities of Yerushalayim. His uncle, Rabbi Amram Blau, was well-known for his great zeal. It was in this environment that R' Tuvia grew up.

He maintained very close and regular contact with R' Uriel Zimmer, an ardent native of Yerushalayim, who himself had become close to the Rebbe over the years. He even had an extensive correspondence with him, and in this correspondence, Rabbi Zimmer significantly influenced him in his connection with the Rebbe. Rabbi Blau eventually learned that this was by the Rebbe's request, and that all of his letters to Rabbi

Zimmer had been brought to the Rebbe.

Without question, Rabbi Blau is one of the notable figures representative of the previous generation, both in Chabad and the Jewish world in general. He is a chassid who wears the traditional garb of ultra-Orthodox Jewry in Yerushalayim, yet he speaks about the Rebbe with unparalleled enthusiasm. An askan who doesn't rest for a moment and has established a line of educational institutions during his life, he is still captivated by the simple interpretation of one of the Rebbe's sichos or a new understanding of the Tanya.

In this interview, I was exposed to just a small portion of his personality and his unique and original way of thinking, which has also taken expression in his many articles that appear in the weekly Chabad journals, among them the "HaTamim" publication of the Beis Moshiach Magazine.

If you ask Rabbi Blau what our involvement should be in order to bring the actual revelation of Moshiach, he replies without hesitation, "The spreading of chassidus among Torah scholars." Throughout the entire interview, he led things in this direction, and it appears that this concept permeates every fiber of his soul. All of his strengths are turned towards this mission, with which Rabbi Blau enlivens all those around him. He devotes many hours to activities in spreading chassidus within ultra-Orthodox circles, among them giving over Torah classes, making farbrengens, and writing articles. He stands behind many activities in this framework, and many projects have received assistance through his valuable guidance. This is the theme to which he is most dedicated – spreading chassidus is his passion not just when we mark the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Baal Shem Tov's passing, but every hour of every day of every year.

--Sholom Ber Crombie

asked Moshiach, "When are you coming," as if to say, "How will this actually all come about?"

Now all that remains is to understand Moshiach's answer to the Baal Shem Tov. There are those who reason that this was a matter of reward, as if the revelation of Moshiach is a compensation for the Baal Shem Tov for fulfilling his mission, like a worker who does his

job, and afterwards the manager compensates him by paying his wages. The intention, however, is not that we have obligations to carry out and the compensation will be the coming of Moshiach. There's a much more inner meaning: This reward is in a manner of "those who sow in tears – will reap with songs of joy." The harvest comes as one direct continuation to the act of

sowing – it is the continuation of the avoda of the Baal Shem Tov.

The Moshiach tells him, as it were, "Start working to reveal G-dliness, and you will thereby reach the state of the days of Moshiach, of the dwelling place in the lower worlds." This is similar to when we clean a precious stone covered with sand and dust. We scrub and polish it more and more

until suddenly – from the action of cleaning – we reveal a shining and glittering stone. So too in the physical world, we must refine it more and more through the avoda of spreading the wellsprings – revealing G-dliness – polishing it to remove that which covers and conceals the existence of G-d within it, until we attain the state of the days of Moshiach, when there will be the simple metzius of a “dwelling place in the lower worlds” for G-d.

In practical terms, this, as the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya, Chapter 37, “is dependent on our actions and [Divine] service throughout the period of exile.” The Alter Rebbe then continues to say: “For what causes the reward of a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself,” meaning that the whole concept of the Redemption is the “dwelling place in the lower worlds,” which causes the revelation of G-dliness in the world. It is our avoda during the time of the exile that brings about the concept of the Redemption.

***Why did Moshiach promise to the Baal Shem Tov that the Redemption will come specifically “when your wellsprings have spread outward,” the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov? What’s lacking in the general teachings of the Torah?**

The Torah is not comprised merely of the 613 mitzvos. The “love” and “fear” of Hashem with which they must be performed are impossible to attain without the study of chassidus.

The teachings of chassidus achieve the revelation of G-dliness for which the world was created. A Jew who fulfills all 613 mitzvos is still missing something in his observance. He doesn’t know how to fulfill the mitzvos of “love” and “fear” at all. The only way to reach the level of Moshiach is through the teachings of chassidus. The concept of Chabad chassidus – wisdom, understanding, and knowledge,



delving in the greatness of G-d through a manner of comprehension and attainment in the knowledge of G-d – is equivalent to the concept of Moshiach – the whole world in a simple unity of G-dliness.

In this famous conversation, the Baal Shem Tov is assured that it is through the dissemination of his teachings and the spiritual yichudim he wrought that Moshiach would be revealed. There are many who ask: Is it possible to say that we will merit the coming of Moshiach only if we bring about yichudim similar to those of the Baal Shem Tov? Such an objective is simply unachievable! However, that really isn’t included in the conditions for the revelation of Moshiach; the requirement is spreading the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov – and that’s it.

There’s also the concept of attaining spiritual yichudim similar to the Baal Shem Tov’s, and this comes through studying the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings. Furthermore, even someone who doesn’t reach the level of the yichudim of the holy Baal Shem Tov, if he manages to bring about some matter of Yichud Hashem, he has already achieved something in accordance with the yichudim of the Baal Shem Tov, as the whole idea is simply to connect

with Achdus Hashem.

This is the main innovation of the teachings of chassidus: The whole world represents the unity of G-d, and “there is nothing else besides Him”. Therefore, the Moshiach says to the Baal Shem Tov that people should learn his teachings and affect spiritual yichudim “similar to yours” – for the purpose is to bring the revelation of G-dliness into the world. The unity of the whole world with G-dliness is what chassidus teaches, illuminating the nekuda that everything is G-d.

This is also the reason why specifically the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, and not Torah in general, bring about the coming of Moshiach. The Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya, Chapter 42, about the time of the Redemption – “The essence of knowledge is not the knowing alone, that people know the greatness of G-d from authors and s’farim, rather the essential thing is to immerse one’s mind deeply into the greatness of G-d and to fix one’s thought with all the strength and vigor of the heart and mind, until his thought shall be bound to G-d.” G-d created the world as a coarse object in order that through man’s service, we will remove the klipa from the world and

reveal the Divine light within it. Therefore, the written Torah alone does not bring the world to the state of “the days of Moshiach.” There must be awareness of G-d, and this is found in chassidus.

WAR AGAINST THE ALTER REBBE, NOT THE BA'AL SHEM TOV

***What sets Chabad chassidus apart from general chassidus, which goes according to the path of the Baal Shem Tov?**

If we concentrate upon the faith and spiritual feeling found within every Jew, then general chassidus is sufficient. It contains teachings with such enthusiasm that one brief word can evoke great emotion within a Jew. However, if we want the essence of intellect – such that we can also understand G-dliness – we must have the teachings of the Alter Rebbe. This was the argument between the Alter Rebbe and his fellow students of the Mezritcher Maggid. The Alter Rebbe claimed that one must expand his knowledge in chassidus specifically through Chabad in understanding and comprehension, whereas they claimed it was forbidden to make room for intellect.

This is also the reason that the main accusations regarding the teachings of chassidus were made specifically against the Alter Rebbe. There were plenty of claims that could be brought against other chassidim, such as their perceived lack of stringency in mitzvos or insufficient study of Nigleh. But such accusations could never be made against the Alter Rebbe, as he was an outstanding Torah scholar who was incredibly precise in his mitzvah observance, and particularly in his compilation of Hilchos Talmud Torah, where he explains in detail the concept of Torah study. Yet, the misnagdim still came with complaints specifically against him.

The reason for this is simple: It is customary that anyone who invents a new approach to something – even among the nations of the world – first publishes an organized book on the approach in order that people will know what it is. The Baal Shem Tov's approach, however, was not printed in s'farim, as the way of thinking was that the concept of chassidus is something that must be learned from the Rebbe himself. It is only the Rebbe who can convey to you the very soul of chassidus – the G-dly connection that exists in the teachings of chassidus. Throughout the lives of the Baal Shem Tov and the Mezritcher Maggid, until the year 5540, not one single page of chassidic philosophy appeared. There was no printing of chassidus whatsoever; everything was transmitted orally. The first chassidic seifer to appear was “Toldos Yaakov Yosef”, which also included teachings brought in chassidus, but it did not contain chassidus presented in an organized fashion through which one could specifically learn chassidic concepts.

The Tanya of the Alter Rebbe appeared in print in a manner that allowed everyone to learn the new approach – the approach of chassidus. In practical terms, this was the first concrete action in introducing the new approach of chassidus in an organized fashion. The Tanya was the first work that laid out in a clear and orderly manner, the principles of this new and revolutionary approach that emerged in the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. Thus, the Alter Rebbe began the practical application of the new philosophy of Chabad chassidus.

In the preface to the Tanya, the Alter Rebbe says that he really didn't want to write a seifer, because the matter is taken less seriously when conveyed in writing, and people don't comprehend it as they would

when it is heard in a more direct fashion. In writing the Tanya, the Alter Rebbe put the very essence of his soul into the seifer itself, such that every person who learns Tanya can connect with the essence of the Alter Rebbe's neshama. When a person studies Tanya he isn't merely grasping its written content; the very essence of his soul absorbs “the words of the living G-d.” Until then, if someone wished to know the new chassidic methodology he had to go to learn it directly from the Baal Shem Tov or the Maggid, but not everyone would make such an effort to come himself and hear chassidus. In addition, the teachings they would hear were more along the lines of spiritual fervor and excitement, and not everyone connected to that style. People who related more to intellect were less likely to connect to chassidus. The Alter Rebbe created a revolution when he wrote the Tanya, presenting the approach in an organized and specifically intellectual manner and even including the soul-based method that chassidus applies.

Regarding the study of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe says that someone who merely knows the letters, it's as if that person is actually with him. This is a literal revolution. I am accustomed to say that this is what the Alter Rebbe meant at the beginning of the Tanya, when he wrote “from sacred books and scribes”, i.e., “sacred books” are the letters of the Tanya, and “scribes” is the soul-based approach that the Alter Rebbe put into the Tanya.

Naturally, we must remember that the study of Tanya is not just an intellectual, scholarly pursuit of knowledge. Chassidim always know that there must be emuna and a sense of acceptance and bittul..

***For whom did the Alter Rebbe specifically write the Tanya?**

In practical terms, it seems that the Alter Rebbe wrote the Tanya for

the Torah scholars of his generation. The Torah scholars were familiar with the way of intellect and understanding, and therefore, they associated less with the teachings of chassidus, which until then had been characterized by emotion and brief words of Torah. The Baal Shem Tov reached out primarily to the simple Jews, while the Alter Rebbe came with intellect to Shklov and the cities of the Torah scholars in order to draw them to the teachings of chassidus.

In general, the main concept of chassidus is the avoda of Torah scholars. Even in our times, the Rebbe frequently writes that the concept of the teachings of chassidus and its spread to the outside pertains to pious Jews – the Torah scholars. The Rebbe wrote to me once personally in a letter (printed in Igros Kodesh) that “Fortunate is my portion” that this is my “outside” – Jews learned in Torah among whom I spread the teachings of chassidus. There were also letters in this matter to the mashpia, R’ Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, in which the Rebbe requested that he use his influence to make certain that as many students as possible from other yeshivos come to the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen. From the very outset, Chabad chassidus – in a manner of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge – was designed for Torah scholars.

This is also connected to the fact that the main war – both by misnagdim and by the other students of the Mezritcher Maggid – was specifically against the Alter Rebbe, because they couldn’t tolerate that he had written an orderly seifer presenting the approach of chassidus. Some of the Maggid’s students thought that this would cause damage *r”l* by bringing the ideas of chassidic philosophy into a state of “enlightenment.”

While the Rebbe Rashab also

Our Rebbeim put faith into intellect, and this is the unique nature of chassidus, as revealed to us by the Alter Rebbe.

said that “enlightenment” was a damaging force, he was referring to the enlightenment of the world, whereas the Alter Rebbe was assembling the enlightenment of Divine intellect. Our Rebbeim put faith into intellect, and this is the unique nature of chassidus, as revealed to us by the Alter Rebbe.

A Chassid once said that *chochma* and *bina* are intellect and faith, which need the *daas* to join the two together. There were many philosophical texts written, which constituted the more intellectual side of the Torah outlook, while the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov dealt in matters of faith, albeit with much brevity. It was not until the Alter Rebbe wrote the Tanya that these two extremes were combined – the intellect that until then had only been in philosophical terms, with the faith and emotion of the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

***What is the quality to the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings, according to the Alter Rebbe?**

The Baal Shem Tov’s teachings represent the unity of G-d in its simplest sense. Prior to the Baal Shem Tov, it seemed that there was a world and there was Torah and mitzvos – there is the reality of the world that must be considered, and in contrast, there is the Torah and the mitzvos, which also have a place in the life of a Jew. The Baal Shem Tov introduced the innovation that this was all G-dliness. It was necessary to explain the essence of this hypothesis, how mitzvos are

connected to this reality, what Torah study accomplishes in the world, and how the physical reality is merely for the purpose of revealing G-dliness. This was the accomplishment of the Alter Rebbe; he explained the innovation of the Baal Shem Tov regarding the world.

***Chassidim are accustomed to say that the Baal Shem Tov was not a Chabadnik...**

When you want to color a bowl of water, you place a little paint on it, which subsequently colors all the water. Similarly, we find with the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. They were few and very concise, but they served as the color fort the teachings of the Alter Rebbe. Though their styles were different, the teachings are essentially the same.

R’ Aharon of Chernobyl (the son of R’ Mordechai of Chernobyl), once sent one of his chassidim to the Tzemach Tzedek regarding a matter pertaining to all Jews. When he returned from the Tzemach Tzedek, this student gave over before R’ Aharon a maamer that he had heard from the Tzemach Tzedek. This maamer had aroused tremendous excitement within him, and he gave it over at great length and in much depth. When the young man finished giving over the maamer, R’ Aharon took a seifer out of his desk drawer, and he showed him the theme of this maamer in the seifer “Ma’or Einayim” written by his grandfather, R’ Nachum of Chernobyl...

This story expresses the difference between the teachings of Chabad chassidus and the teachings of the other students of the holy

Baal Shem Tov. Among Polish chassidim, their teachings emphasized faith and emotional fervor. In contrast, our Rebbeim placed the emphasis upon the need for the entire Torah to be studied in great depth, in a manner of understanding and intellect.

Similarly, we find that the teachings of the holy Ohr HaChayim allude to various inner concepts. You can study the teachings of the Ohr HaChayim without understanding a thing, even the simpler teachings, which people thought they understood... Only according to chassidus can you understand what is written there. There is also the “L’Sheim Yichud”, which the general chassidic movements say with great enthusiasm – is there any among them who clearly understands what it is he is saying with such great fervor? Then there is the “K’Gavna” prayer, which contains such amazingly deep concepts that one simply can’t comprehend the meaning of this prayer without studying Chabad chassidus.

***What is the correct path in studying chassidus? There are many ways to “grasp” the teachings of chassidus. Torah scholars learn one way, while people who are distant from Torah and mitzvos learn it in another way – particularly in recent years when there is a tremendous stream of Jews from a very wide range of backgrounds, including many intellectuals, who are drawn after chassidus.**

Those who come from outside Yiddishkait usually find their place in Chabad. This is the Judaism for which they had been searching and they accept the chassidus as part of that search. When Jews from other Torah observant sectors come to Chabad, it is the chassidus itself that they have found. The Rebbe writes that the spreading of chassidus precedes the spreading of Judaism.

During the time of the Alter Rebbe, there were no non-Torah observant Jews who learned chassidus; those who came to Chabad were Jews with knowledge in Torah who revealed their knowledge of G-dliness through chassidus.

The truth is that without chassidus – without knowledge of G-d – there is no Torah. Therefore, the concepts of revealing chassidus and revealing Moshiach are one and the same. Today, the central concept with which we must be involved is hastening the Redemption. As the Rebbe has said, this is the essence of the spreading of the teachings of chassidus, particularly to Torah scholars, similar to the time of the Alter Rebbe, as the teachings of chassidus were designed for this purpose from the very outset.

In the area of Jewish outreach, we see that Chabad captures the minds of the intellectual Jew. The intellect of Chabad chassidus reaches people of science and intellect, as it gives them a true response. The first baalei t’shuva were primarily people of intellect and understanding who found real answers in the teachings of Chabad. Over the years, the Rebbe brought many concepts of conduct among Polish chassidim to Chabad as well, such as great excitement, niggunim, joy, and dancing. These modes of conduct were not previously in evidence among our Rebbeim. This is because throughout the generations, the main line for Chabad chassidus was specifically an intellectual one – understanding and comprehension. Today, in the era leading up to Moshiach, the Rebbe uses all available methods to bring Jews close to Yiddishkait and he introduced the concept of enthusiasm, which provides an answer to those Jews who connect to spiritual excitement and brings them to chassidus and Judaism.

The Rebbe united Chabad with the general chassidic movements by

integrating concepts from the other sects of Polish chassidim.

The Rebbe couples the depth and understanding in the teachings of chassidus, with the vitality and simplicity that general chassidic philosophy provides. Many connected to the Rebbe without any understanding – a gesture of encouragement or a smile from the Rebbe had an immediate effect, establishing the connection and thus turning them into chassidim. But, of course, the essential thing remains the intellect of Chabad teachings, as we see in the Rebbe’s sichos and maamarim that possess such amazing depth.

THE REBBE’S VAST INFLUENCE

***How is the concept of spreading chassidus connected to the Rebbe’s tremendous “koch” on the subject of Moshiach?**

As we said at the outset, the spreading of chassidus is the not only essential to bringing the Redemption, it is the very essence of Moshiach.

It is written, “Anyone who reads Krias Shma without t’fillin – it’s as if he read a ‘teigar’ (complaint),” since his soul gave false testimony. How can he read about the obligation to wear t’fillin while simultaneously disregarding that commandment? One who reads, “And you shall love Hashem your G-d” and “G-d is One” without any knowledge whatsoever of its meaning is guilty of a similar offense Like the person who says Shma without t’fillin, his prayer is little more than hollow lip service. The Mitteler Rebbe writes in “Imrei Bina” that there are Jews who sin with their bodies and those who sin with their souls, and those who don’t learn chassidus and don’t have the knowledge of G-d are causing sin within their souls.

Chassidus is the answer to

everything, and thereby to Moshiach. All other matters are those that the Rebbe added to the main concept of spreading chassidus.

The Rebbe explains that our avoda now is in the spreading of chassidus: a) because this is something that only we, as Lubavitcher Chassidim, can do; b) because this also includes the spreading of Yiddishkai, and c) anyone who gets closer to chassidus becomes much stronger in mitzvah fulfillment and observance. It is quite clear that this is what we must do as we prepare to greet Moshiach.

***What is the easiest method to spread chassidus among Torah scholars?**

The best way that I have seen so far is to give over “*vertlech*” from the Rebbe’s teachings. We can start debating a complete sicha with questions and answers, but the easier and more reasonable way for everyone is through the “*vertlech*” derived from the Rebbe’s sichos. When R’ Alter Simchovitch, of blessed memory, was in Warsaw, the Rebbe Rayatz wrote to him that he should prepare “*vertlech*” from the maamarim and sichos, and say them in the synagogues. Similarly, the Rebbe also wrote to R’ Shlomo Chaim Kesselman when he was in Paris that he should connect Jews to the Rebbe through publicizing his teachings. This is the best and most straightforward method in bringing Jews closer to the Rebbe, for when Jews hear the Rebbe’s teachings, they immediately feel that it is a totally different philosophy – something else entirely.

***We also see the Rebbe’s conduct in miracles, similar to that of the Baal Shem Tov...**

The Rebbe has expanded the concept of miracles, despite the fact that such conduct was not evident among the Rebbeim who preceded him. In simple terms, we can explain this by the fact that the



I hadn’t written to the Rebbe about this matter at all, and I was puzzled that the Rebbe wrote about it.

Rebbe turned to the entire Jewish People. The Rebbe did not give up on a single Jew – even the simple Jews who are genuinely aroused only by those miracles that cause them to see that there is a supernal G-dly existence which is beyond all natural boundaries. The Baal Shem Tov, too, performed wonders and revealed the Name of G-d even to the simplest of Jews. This is the essence of a miracle – something lofty and beyond nature that reveals the metzius above worldly limitations.

It is this unique combination that the Rebbe used leading up to the coming of the Redemption: intellect with simplicity. This marks the unique form of leadership that only the Rebbe could provide – a true revolution with amazing depth on the one hand and involvement with miracles for every Jew, even the most simple, on the other. Only in the era of imminent Redemption could such different areas of concentration blend

into one harmonious balance. During the period of Exile, the revelation of G-dliness is not evident, and when miracles and wonders are done, this is a sample of the state of Redemption.

We see that even the Polisher rebbes were among the Rebbe’s greatest admirers. Once during my youth, I visited the “Toldos Aharon” and I asked him about the Rebbe. He replied with excitement: “Such holiness!” I thought to myself at that moment: The Rebbe does not dress in the same chassidic garb as they do, nor does he close himself off in his own Dalet Amos. He even accepts women into yechidus... Yet, he didn’t speak about the Rebbe’s Talmudic genius or his great Ahavas Yisroel, rather specifically about his holiness! Then it dawned on me that I was facing a Jew who sees the truth. He knows how to feel what the real truth of holiness – of spirituality – truly is.

This is the unique nature of the

Rebbe. His ways were not the standard practice of the Rebbeim, not the norm to which the world was accustomed, yet it was done in such a manner that all perceived the truth in the Rebbe.

***Regrettably, there are also many who opposed the Rebbe's path.**

The opposition to the Rebbe is similar to that in the time of the Alter Rebbe. There are and have been other chassidic rebbes who practiced different modes of conduct, e.g., those who were not stringent about the time for davening, or who adhered to certain customs that seemed problematic from a halachic standpoint. Nevertheless, none of these rebbes were questioned in the same way that the Rebbe was. The Rebbe's circumstances were different, as he presented a very clear path, as did the Alter Rebbe.

To a certain extent, my attachment to Chabad and my headlong leap into the waters of chassidus were more difficult than what is experienced by Jews from totally non-Torah observant circles. When I became close to Chabad in my youth, I had to hide this fact from my parents – *ch"v* if someone should know that I had a connection to the Rebbe...

The first time that I had to receive a letter from the Rebbe, I rented a special post office box, so that this correspondence wouldn't reach my parents, since they had a hard time understanding my connection to Chabad chassidus –

as if they weren't Orthodox enough for us. This was a post office box that received just one letter over a period of one year....

[It was this first letter I received from the Rebbe (printed in *Igros Kodesh*), which really connected me to Lubavitch. The Rebbe wrote me with answers to several questions I had about Chabad. My first concern was that Chabad chassidus was merely kabbala, and the Rebbe explained that chassidus is not kabbala, rather it sometimes mentions concepts connected to kabbala. The second matter the Rebbe wrote about was the issue of how the previous generations did not learn chassidus. I hadn't written to the Rebbe about this matter at all, and I was puzzled that the Rebbe wrote about it. However, some time later, when my father discovered that I had a connection to Chabad, the first thing he asked was about how the previous generations didn't learn chassidus...]

Prior to the Rebbe, there were two extremes: On the one side, there were those who say that we must be in unity with the entire Jewish People, an openness which comes at the expense of our piety in Torah and mitzvos. In contrast, the typical ultra-Orthodox approach claimed that it is forbidden to bend an inch in matters of Torah and mitzvos, and therefore, we must be closed within an ultra-Orthodox community, totally restricted from contact with the outside world.

The Rebbe joined these two extremes that appear so completely

opposite. On the one hand, the Rebbe is telling us that we must act with the utmost stringency in all matters relating to Torah and mitzvos. On the other hand, the Rebbe demands that we love and be united with every Jew. This is the Rebbe's perception of Am Yisroel: Every Jew is *emes'dik* and it is forbidden to be separated from him. This is a revolutionary and unprecedented approach, pertaining as it does to the concept of Redemption.

***In conclusion, what is the message for where we are holding today, as we commemorate two hundred and fifty years since the histalkus of the Baal Shem Tov?**

When we meet with a Jew, we must tell him a chassidic "*vort*" from the Rebbe, something that will uplift him, something with marvelous depth and simplicity, as characterizes the Rebbe himself.

Just a few days ago, I gave over a *d'var Torah* from the Rebbe on a story brought in *Zohar*, and the Rebbe's elucidation shed a completely different light on the subject. The entire congregation in attendance, including Torah scholars, reacted most positively. They saw how it created a real change within them. In the past, we would have to wage war on these matters, but today, when you give over a word of Torah – even something short – you connect Jews with the Rebbe.

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Sivan 28 - Gimmel Tammuz Magbis

B.H. Sivan 15, 5770

To all Anash, Men and Women, G-d bless you.

We are soon approaching the very auspicious day, Gimmel Tammuz. This day comes in close proximity with Sivan 28, the auspicious day that the Rebbe MH"M and the Rebbetzin arrived in the United States.

Obviously, these are very opportune days, when one should again evaluate his or her "Hiskashrus" (connection) with the Rebbe, and more important, to utilize these special days to 'strengthen' the Hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

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With this in mind, we therefore urge each and everyone of anash, men and women to support Kupas Rabbeinu in every possible way.

In this merit may we be "zoiche" that much before Gimmel Tammuz, the Rebbe will be revealed as Melech Hamoshiach and redeem us from this deep and bitter Golus and lead us all to the true and final Geulo, NOW MAMAOSH.

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MAKING CHASSIDIM FOR WHOM?

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

*What does it mean to “live with Moshiach” and how can we put this into practice? Can we reach a point where we want Moshiach like the Rebbe does? Why is it important to publicize the identity of Moshiach and did the Rebbe tell us to do so or just approve it when asked? How can we be mekarev the frum world to the knowledge that the Rebbe is Moshiach? * Presented in preparation for Gimmel Tammuz.*

PARTICIPANTS:

Rabbi Sholom Yaakov Chazan

member of the editorial board of Otzar HaChassidim and an editor at Beis Moshiach

Rabbi Shneur Zalman Hertzl

menahel ruchni of Ohr Menachem and author of s'farim on inyanei Moshiach and Geula

Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schapiro

rosh kollel and shliach in Manhattan

WHAT IS “LIVING WITH MOSHIACH”?

The Rebbe says that it's hard to instill the awareness and feeling that we are on the threshold of imminent Geula. Even for those who regularly attend shiurim on Moshiach and Geula, it's hard to say that they have reached the level of belief in the coming of Moshiach as the Rebbe wants, that it should be out of the question for Moshiach not to be coming right now. What can we do to attain that level of belief?

R' Schapiro: Before speaking about “How to successfully live with Moshiach,” we need to define the term “living with Moshiach.” Does it mean to go up on the Temple Mount and bring korbanos? Definitely not. That will happen after the Rebbe appears and the Beis HaMikdash is built. The Rebbe's demand of us is that now, in the final moments of galus, we start to “live Moshiach.”

This means that the anticipation of Moshiach's coming must permeate **every single detail** of our daily lives. Throughout the generations, Jews prayed for Moshiach three times a day, with quite a few brachos of the Shmoneh Esrei devoted to this. Many Jews recite the Ani Maamins after Shacharis. But the Rebbe expects more than that. We should be expecting Moshiach to arrive imminently and it should be out of the question that he come a moment later.

The Rebbe wants us to actually live with this idea as he does. To the Rebbe, real life is with the coming of Moshiach and without Moshiach, life isn't normal. It's not life! When you listen to the Rebbe's sichos about anticipating the Geula, when you hear the great pain he has when he speaks about another moment in galus, and the yearning when he speaks of Geula, you can understand

what the Rebbe means when he tells us to “live with Moshiach.”

So when you learn a shiur in inyanei Moshiach and Geula, as important as it is (the Rebbe himself said it’s the foundation and the “direct path” to bring about the hisgalus of Moshiach and the way to meet the challenge to live with Moshiach), it’s definitely not enough. Our avoda is to relate what we learn to our daily lives!

The Rebbe explains the difference between an employee of a business and the owner. The employee has set hours in which he works. He can be an outstanding employee who is devoted to his job but when the workday is over he walks away from it. The owner, on the other hand, lives with the business 24 hours a day. He, too spends certain hours at the business and other hours at home, but as the owner his mind is constantly on the business, even when he is home.

As the Rebbe explains (Toldos 5752) the Chazal on the words “all the days of your life – to bring to Yemos HaMoshiach” – every single moment of a person’s life, whether day or night, whether awake or asleep, needs to be permeated with “bringing to Yemos HaMoshiach,” i.e. “that his chayus (at every moment) is in bringing Moshiach. Not only when he thinks and speaks and does things to bring Moshiach but the very essence of his life is to bring to Yemos HaMoshiach.”

And if that’s not enough, the Rebbe says that we need to feel this from the moment we wake up in the morning! “That immediately upon awakening, the essence of the soul feels, by breathing the air, the inyan of Moshiach.” In a footnote, the Rebbe says, “even while sleeping he breathes the air of Moshiach but doesn’t realize it and therefore, the main inyan of ‘so that you remember ... all the days of your life to bring to Yemos HaMoshiach’ starts when you wake up (and through this one

There, in a footnote, the Rebbe points out that Rashi says, “each one would darshen his name” – that the Tanaim themselves would darshen their names, not that the talmidim innovated that the name of their teacher is consistent with one of the names of Moshiach. That means that after they heard their teacher darshen the name of Moshiach as his own name, the talmidim would do the same in public.



R' Sholom Yaakov Chazan

serves also while sleeping).”

When the Rebbe says it needs to be our life, this means that just as it isn’t possible to say that there are certain moments when we are not alive, so too, it has to be impossible for us to have moments in which we are not living Moshiach.

In other words, we need to live the Rebbe’s life. Our thinking needs to be like the Rebbe’s thinking, our talking has to be like the Rebbe’s talking, and our behavior needs to

be like the Rebbe’s behavior. At every moment we need to think: What would the Rebbe think now? What would the Rebbe say? What would the Rebbe do?

How can we reach such a level?

It says, “tzaddikim are likened to their Creator.” Just as Hashem put His essence into the Torah, as is alluded to in the famous acronym for Anochi: *ana nafshi k’savis y’havis*, so too the Rebbe put his essence into his teachings. When we occupy ourselves with the Rebbe’s teachings we can cleave to the Rebbe’s essence and live as the Rebbe does.

Chassidim need to be immersed in the Rebbe’s teachings - the sichos, maamarim and letters. When you learn the Rebbe’s sichos, especially the farbrengens where it is written up as the Rebbe said it at the farbrengen, you acquire the Rebbe’s outlook on everything in life. The same is true when you read the letters in Igros Kodesh which contain the Rebbe’s view on the smallest details.

We also need to live with the desire to learn from the Rebbe’s conduct by reading diaries of Beis Chayeinu of earlier years. This is

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especially directed to bachurim on K’vutza. What was special about the year on K’vutza? That you spent an entire year with the Rebbe. Though unfortunately today we don’t see the Rebbe, bachurim still need to live with the Rebbe.

As we said, living with Moshiach needs to be at every moment. So, too, living with the Rebbe, which is ultimately the same thing, needs to permeate every moment and detail of life. Living with the Rebbe means “to immerse in the pure waters of knowledge” – when a person immerses in a mikva, he has to immerse completely; otherwise, it’s not t’villa.

When we live with the Rebbe in our thoughts, our middos become more refined and our speech and action fall in line with the Rebbe’s. So too, when we go out to the world with the Rebbe’s Besuras Ha’Geula, we share it with genuine Ahavas Yisroel and consideration for the person we are talking to. Let’s think about it – if the Rebbe would be speaking to this Poilishe Chassid or Litvishe Jew and telling him the Besuras Ha’Geula, would there be opposition? No! So if we are truly living with the Rebbe and conveying his message with sincerity, it will be accepted.

R’ Chazan: In the Rebbe’s sicha of Purim, 5747, he quotes the Gemara, “if the teacher is like an angel of G-d, seek Torah from his mouth” and asks: an ordinary person never saw an angel so how can he know if his teacher is



R’ Sholom Dovber Schapiro

comparable to one?

The Rebbe explains that the answer can be found explicitly in the Rambam, who writes that the way angels exist is like life in Olam Haba. Since we know that in Olam Haba there is no eating and drinking, no jealousy, hatred or competition, it is obvious that angels don’t have these bad middos. Therefore, when we see someone whose nefesh is not bribed by his guf, someone who is not under the sway of jealousy, competition, war and hatred, he is like an angel.

The answer to how we can “live Moshiach,” is to be found in the s’farim that describe life after Moshiach comes when there is no jealousy, hatred and competition. That is precisely the kind of life we need to live in these final moments

of galus.

If we find it hard to understand how we can live as though it’s Geula while still in galus, we can look at the Rebbe to see how his conduct was Geula-like. We can’t suffice with learning the Rebbe’s teachings but must observe his actions and act likewise. It is through this that we fulfill the Rebbe’s horaa of “living with Moshiach.” When we do this we will have a positive influence on those around us because we will be in the category of “like an angel of G-d.”

THE NATURAL DESIRE OF A CHASSID, TO PUBLICIZE THAT THE REBBE IS MOSHIACH

After the Rebbe’s sicha on 28 Nissan, 5751, Chassidim from all Anash communities, led by Rabbanei Chabad, ziknei ha’Chassidim and the great mashpiim, signed on the Kabbalas HaMalchus forms. The Rebbe accepted this with thanks and even wrote “one who has 200 wants 400.” At first this activity remained within Chabad, but after a few months there was talk about taking this out of Chabad and there were positive answers about this from the Rebbe. Then the Rebbe himself began encouraging the proclaiming of Yechi every day and Moshiach’s identity became something that was discussed in the public at large as something inseparable from the Besuras Ha’Geula.

The question is why is it important to publicize the identity of Moshiach? Why isn’t it enough to proclaim the Besuras Ha’Geula, to tell the world that Moshiach is coming and that we need to prepare to greet him?

R’ Hertzl: Much has been written and said about this and so I’ll make just one point. If you learn

the Rebbe's sichos of recent years, if you were in 770 in 5751-5752 and heard the Rebbe's sichos and farbrengens, then you surely noticed an amazing thing – that the Rebbe began referring to the Rebbe Rayatz as “Moshiach Tzidkeinu” and “Moshiach of our generation.”

In earlier years the Rebbe merely said “the Rebbe the Nasi” or “the Rebbe the shver,” but in recent years he got us used to another title, “Moshiach Tzidkeinu.” A new stage had begun. No longer was it sufficient to refer to the Rebbe only as the Rebbe but we need to relate to him as Moshiach. It is also obvious that this point, which was originally an inside matter, became public knowledge, not only because every inyan brought in the Rebbe's teachings is part of the wellsprings of Chassidus which we are obligated to spread, but mainly because the Rebbe himself made Moshiach's identity public knowledge.

How should we convey this message? That is an individual matter and depends on who you are talking to. Generally speaking, after the Rebbe himself added “Moshiach Tzidkeinu” to the Nasi HaDor, it's important to publicize his identity as Moshiach vadai. This should be what every Chassid wants to do, to tell this to the world.

R' Chazan: In the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Tazria-Metzora, 5751, the Rebbe quotes the Gemara in Sanhedrin about the names of Moshiach, where it says that the talmidim of the Tanaim would expound on the name of Moshiach according to the names of their teachers. There, in a footnote, the Rebbe points out that Rashi says, “each one would darshen his name” – that *the Tanaim themselves* would darshen their names, not that the talmidim innovated that the name of their teacher is consistent with one of the names of Moshiach. That means that after they heard their teacher darshen the name of

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R' Shneur Zalman Hertzl

Moshiach as his own name, the talmidim would do the same in public.

The Rebbe says the lesson is, “and we, Chassidim, respond accordingly (as far as the Rebbeim, especially the Rebbe, my father-in-law, Nasi Doreinu).” Obviously, we Chassidim of the Rebbe need to publicize that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

Since the Rebbe edited these sichos for the purpose of publicizing them in *Kfar Chabad* and the *Algemeiner Journal* which are read by Jews outsider of Chabad, as well, that means the Rebbe wanted people “out there” to know that he is

Moshiach.

Furthermore, in the sichos that deal with inyanei Moshiach and Geula, the Rebbe says explicitly that “Moshiach's name is Menachem” and 770 is the gematria of “Beis Moshiach,” and from there Moshiach is affecting the entire world. Above all else, on dozens of occasions the Rebbe said that the Nasi ha'dor is the Moshiach of the dor, so the Rebbe's horaa to learn inyanei Moshiach and Geula in the “Likkutei Sichos of Nasi Doreinu” includes these amazing expressions about Moshiach's identity.

As for the question about the importance in publicizing Moshiach's identity – the answer is simple. Jews have been waiting for Moshiach for nearly 2000 years, so when you tell someone that Moshiach is about to come it remains intangible and abstract. But when you point at a specific person and say: “this is Moshiach and he's coming immediately!”, that's another thing entirely. It's real and helps greatly in strengthening the anticipation for Geula and the preparations for it.

R' Schapiro: Here's another angle. In the *Igros Kodesh*, the Rebbe tells people to inform him of good news when their situation is happily resolved and he emphasizes that by doing so they fulfill the biblical mitzva of “love your fellow

like yourself.” Giving good news to someone is part of the mitzva of Ahavas Yisroel.

Every Chassid believes that the Rebbe is Moshiach and every Chassid considers this wonderful news. So if you meet someone, in order to fulfill the mitzva of Ahavas Yisroel, you will share your belief that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

Even during the years when Moshiach’s identity was not publicized, the natural desire of every Chassid was to tell the world that the Rebbe is Moshiach. We wanted to say, “Ashreinu...that we are Lubavitcher Chassidim and our nasi is Moshiach,” but we had to restrain ourselves because of the Rebbe’s instructions not to publicize it.

Once the Rebbe began removing these limitations in the summer of 5751 until from the winter of 5752 he himself encouraged the singing of Yechi, the natural inclination of every Chassid ought to be to publicize this information to all.

As for what R’ Chazan said that this is part of the Rebbe’s sichos on inyanei Moshiach and Geula which the Rebbe told us to learn and teach – we need to differentiate between a direct horaa to publicize a specific message and individual points that

can be found within a sicha that the Rebbe gave for publication:

In the Rebbe’s sichos of 5751-5752, the Rebbe spoke a lot about the impending Geula from many different angles but there were specific points that the Rebbe emphasized and explicitly instructed us to publicize. For example, there is the sicha of prophecy in our time. It’s not another detail in a sicha that the Rebbe gave us to spread. It goes far beyond that. The Rebbe said explicitly “there is a horaa that we need to publicize to all members of the generation that we have merited that Hashem chose and appointed someone of free choice who is incomparably greater than the people of the generation, to be the ‘your judges’ and ‘your advisors’ and the prophet of the generation ... until the main prophecy – the nevua of L’Alter l’Geula and immediately ‘behold Moshiach comes.’”

I’m not laying down any fast and hard rules here, but we have to look into this topic – was there a specific horaa to publicize Moshiach’s identity or is this topic something that we can extract as a detail in the sicha? You need to know.

R’ Chazan: All agree that there are certain details that the Rebbe emphasized and told us explicitly to

publicize and there are things that are only a detail or a footnote in a sicha, but since it was written in the sichos that the Rebbe edited for publication in the newspapers, this has the element of being personally made public by the Rebbe.

When you learn the Rebbe’s sichos about Moshiach with someone (by the way, regarding the importance of learning inyanei Geula, including learning Likkutei Sichos of Nasi Doreinu, the Rebbe used the term “and certainly they will agitate and publicize it everywhere”) – you need to learn the entire sicha including those parts that deal with Moshiach’s identity.

The difference between the topics that the Rebbe told us to publicize and other things in the sichos might be in the order of priority. When you meet someone for a brief period of time, it’s better to talk to him about the Besuras Ha’Geula and the prophecy of Geula about which we have a direct horaa. Then, if there’s time, it would be good to learn the Rebbe’s sichos with him about inyanei Geula, including the terms the Rebbe uses about his identity as Moshiach.

[To be continued, G-d willing]

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HASHGACHA PRATIS AT EVERY STEP

By Nosson Avrohom

Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schiff, founder and director of yeshivas Ohr Simcha in Kfar Chabad, embodies the Chassid of yesteryear, a remnant of the generation of Chabad askanim with that old world flavor.

The following story happened forty years ago when I lived in Samarkand under communist rule. In Samarkand and the surrounding cities there were communities of Lubavitcher Chassidim and Bucharian Jews. All of them yearned to leave the Russian exile but for various reasons were unable to.

The ones who rose to the occasion and, with tremendous *mesirus nefesh*, made sure that Jewish children would get a proper education were Chabad Chassidim who endangered their lives and their freedom for this cause. This work took on form under the Chamah organization— of which I was a member— was founded and run by the mashpia, Rabbi Moshe Nisselevitz.

As someone who owes his



spiritual life to R' Nisselevitz, I was present when he came up with the idea and formed the organization with the commitment to do all he could to make it a success. I became one of the central

characters, one of a few people who invested energy and money. Every month we would raise large sums of money and transfer it to contact people scattered throughout Jewish communities around Samarkand in order to pay the teachers so they could teach the children.

One fine day, we heard the happy news that my cousin Rabbi Aryeh Leib Demichovsky, who lived in Minsk at the time, had gotten engaged to a Lubavitcher who lived in Samarkand. We took it upon ourselves to prepare the *aufruf*. No caterer or stores sold the food we needed and my wife stood on her feet for hours to prepare the entire meal, from beginning to end. It was very hard, especially when in those days we already had three small children who ran around the house and needed supervision. I had intended to help her prepare the many dishes but then, a day before Tisha B'Av, Rabbi Moshe Nisselevitz asked me to go on a trip on behalf of the organization.

The purpose of the trip was to personally check up on the underground *melamdim* in each town where we sent money and to see how many children actually participated. Since many of the students and teachers were Bucharian, I had Rabbi Refael Chudaitov, another active member of Chamah, with me. He was a person who was afraid of no one, was proud of his Jewishness, and wasn't afraid to display it. He knew all the Jewish communities and really it was *I* who was accompanying *him*.

He was much more involved in all the little details and he knew, with each *k'hilla*, when the classes took place, at which hours and in which locations. I was responsible for the logistics of the trip. I took along a diary and when we went to each city I wrote down a report about the situation, how many students I found that were learning and their ages as well as notes about



A secret meeting of Chamah. Standing (from right to left) Moshe Nisselevitz, Zalman Friedman, Hillel Zaltzman. Sitting (from right to left) Aryeh Leib Schiff, Yosef Shagalowitz, Gershon Ber Schiff and Berel Zaltzman.

what needed improvement.

A memory that remains etched in my mind is one from a visit to the town of Margalan. It's not a big town; it's small by the standards of the Soviet Union. I was moved upon meeting a beautiful, united k'hilla there.

We arrived on the evening of Tisha B'Av. The shul was full and, as is the custom of Bucharrians, they extinguished all the lights and the congregants read the Kinot with great lamentation. It was a moving sight to see in those days when Soviet secret agents stopped all religious gatherings and assemblies. How beautiful it was to see many Jews sitting together, proud of their Judaism and proudly demonstrating their Jewish practices. The scene repeated itself the next day. This is what remains deep in my heart.

I was very amazed by their spiritual leader, an elderly Jew with a long white beard and expressive eyes. When we spoke a little I could see he was a great Torah scholar. After the davening we joined them for the walk to the cemetery where, according to their custom they prayed as is the practice of many on a fast day.

After this experience we continued our trip according to plan. It was Thursday afternoon and I greatly desired to reach my home in Samarkand that same day so I could help my wife in the many preparations for our cousin's aufruf. During the day of Tisha B'Av we visited three other towns. How amazing it was to see how they preserved the Jewish spark despite the ever-present fear of the secret agents.

That evening we arrived in Andizhan. R' Chudaitov, knew all the activists in the place, as well as their addresses and where the secret activities took place. He brought me to a big house with a large yard around it. The owner of the house, a friendly older man, welcomed us warmly.

R' Chudaitov and I heard about the Jewish activities being conducted in the city. Then he stayed to rest and asked me to go to the airport to buy tickets for the two of us. R' Chudaitov was older than me and the intensive two day trip, and the long day of fasting, was taking its toll on him. In spite of his exhaustion, I could see he was very satisfied with the work that Chamah

was accomplishing among the Jewish children in the towns and villages.

I took a taxi to the airport in the early afternoon. I prayed that there would be a flight and that I could procure tickets for it. "Hashem," I murmured in supplication, "I willingly agreed to go on this trip, like the many trips that I make for Chamah, but this Shabbos we are celebrating the aufruf of my cousin and I have left my wife alone to prepare everything. Please, Hashem, all I ask is that I be able to get home as early as possible."

Although my prayer had been said from the heart, when I reached the counter I resignedly acknowledged that it was not accepted. The clerk told me that three flights went to Samarkand each day but all these flights had left and there would be no more that day.

I was so disheartened by this. The only possibilities left to me were either to take a flight to Tashkent and from there to fly to Samarkand or to wait for a direct flight the next day, Friday. With my stomach grumbling from the fast I decided to buy tickets for Tashkent. I could visit

The long-awaited call finally came two weeks later, and the doctor asked us to come for a meeting at his office. We were terrified in the anticipation of what he would say and rushed over to see him. He was serious and direct.

my mother who lived there and break my fast and the next morning I would fly to Samarkand.

I bought two tickets and set off for the house of our host. R' Chudaitov, who heard that the tickets were for Tashkent, was not pleased. He didn't understand why I had been hasty and not waited for the next day. In addition, the double ticket doubled our expenses. But what concerned me most of all was to get home as early as possible before Shabbos, and a few hours later we set out for the airport.

If you know R' Chudaitov you know that wherever he goes he takes along food and drink just in case. That was an immutable practice for him, just like he would take along his t'fillin.

It was 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) and very humid when we boarded the flight to Tashkent. I was dripping with sweat. The heat plus the fast and the traveling were really tough. My relative young age wasn't much help. My thoughts were focused on when are we going to land already and when can I break my fast. When the stewardess announced that the flight would take an hour, I began counting down the minutes and seconds.

45 minutes went by. Usually, twenty minutes before the end of the flight the stewardesses prepare the passengers for landing but this time, there was nothing. Time was passing and I watched as R' Chudaitov, who was known as a

Chassid who didn't care what anybody thought, got up, put on his gartel and started davening Maariv while ignoring the stares of the other passengers.

When he finished davening, he took out his food and broke his fast. He sat there with his long beard and religious appearance while I preferred going incognito. I didn't want anybody to know that I was a religious Jew. In those days I ran a factory under the watchful eyes of the Soviets and I didn't want to expose myself. And so despite my tremendous hunger I didn't dare get up and daven Maariv and break the fast.

I was feeling dizzy from the heat and the fast, and anticipated in my mind's eye the landing and the visit to my mother where I would break the fast, but the plane kept flying with no indication that it was getting ready to land. I prayed that we get there as fast as possible.

After an hour and a half of flying the stewardess said we should put on our seatbelts because we were about to land. As the wheels of the plane touched down and the plane stopped, she asked the passengers not to get up. For certain reasons the plane had landed in Samarkand and in ten minutes it would be taking off again for its original destination, Tashkent.

A few minutes passed before it sank in. We rushed over to the stewardess and explained that we wanted to get off because Samarkand is where we wanted to

be. I told her what had happened to us and she was also amazed by our good fortune. "See what a G-d the Jews have looking out for them," she exclaimed. R' Chudaitov took a cup of water and said a bracha out loud and drank.

In the meantime they readied the off-ramp for us and I arrived home shortly afterwards.

I learned that emissaries to do a mitzva are not only not harmed but felt how Hashem was with us wherever we were as we carried out our mission.

Twenty years later, I saw Hashem's intervention once again.

One evening, when I returned from work at the yeshiva Ohr Simcha in Kfar Chabad, my wife told me that our youngest child, Menachem Mendel, who was five years old at the time, had a high fever. A fever is fairly common so at first we didn't realize the seriousness of his condition. We kept him home from school the next morning and treated him with the usual remedies.

When we saw that the fever was not coming down and two days had passed, we decided we had to consult with a doctor. Our family doctor checked him and gave him a prescription for some antibiotic pills, but two days later we saw that the pills hadn't helped and his fever remained high.

We began getting worried and when we went back to the doctor we told her that the antibiotic hadn't worked and could she examine him more closely. She took off his clothes and we were shocked to see swellings under his armpits and in other places. The doctor referred us to the hospital for tests.

We went to the hospital straightaway. The various tests showed nothing but the doctors said that they would send the results to a famous lab in Germany. We asked the doctor what they suspected he had and he said that those lumps

were a sign of lymphoma or leukemia.

They sent a biopsy to Germany and told us to return in a week. It was a nerve-racking week to be sure. What did our son have? We became even more worried when a week later we still had not received a phone call from the hospital and his fever still had not gone down. We were beside ourselves with worry.

The long-awaited call finally came two weeks later, and the doctor asked us to come for a meeting at his office. We were terrified in the anticipation of what he would say and rushed over to see him. He was serious and direct. He said that although the tests didn't show anything and they saw no sign of cancer, still, every passing day could only make things worse and so he recommended assuming it was cancer and treating him with chemotherapy. He asked us to sign that we gave our permission for the hospital to begin this harsh treatment.

We asked for a few days to think about it but he pressured us, saying that each day could endanger the child (despite the fact that the tests showed nothing!). I was not going to take such a step without consulting with the Rebbe and I signed that I was responsible for the child's health and took him home.

Throughout this time, our son suffered from headaches and other pains and we were so sad to see him so miserable. When he was well, he was an active child and now he was

a shadow of his former self, complaining about everything, resting a lot and looking melancholy.

I wrote a long letter to the Rebbe describing our son's health and the doctor's recommendation and asking for a bracha. I received a response the very next day which said not to follow the doctor's advice but to consult with a doctor-friend about which hospital to take our son to.

My wife's sister is a nurse, which made it easy to find a doctor-friend. I called her and told her about our son and asked her which hospital she recommended. She said there was a place in Petach Tikva for children where they treated them on an out-patient basis. She said there was a doctor there by the name of Zeitzer and she was highly recommended by all the doctors.

I thanked her and that same day took all the medical records, in addition to the original doctor's recommendation, and went to Petach Tikva. The line was very long because of her good reputation.

An elderly, simply dressed woman emerged from a room and asked me who I was there to see. I said I was there to see Dr. Zeitzer. She smiled and said that was her and invited us into her room. It was amazing, like she was waiting just for us.

She scanned the documents and then she asked whether we owned a cat. I said we did not. "How about a dog," she asked. "No," I responded and I explained that we

had no animals.

She turned to my son and asked him whether he ever put dirt in his mouth. He said he did while I raised my eyebrows in surprise. She smiled and said that she thinks she knows the reason for the mysterious fever. There is no malignancy and no dangerous disease. There are children who are nutritionally deficient and they eat dirt to make up for this lack. She said it was very rare for a child to be harmed by eating dirt but she was sure it was the cause of his fever. "The bacteria in the dirt are what caused the swelling and the fever," she said. She gave us some antibiotics and promised that we would see an improvement within a week.

We left with renewed hope and the belief that all would work out well. And sure enough, within a week the fever began to go down and his condition improved. Two weeks later it was like he had never been sick. We were thrilled.

I thought to myself, what would have happened if I hadn't asked the Rebbe? We would surely have listened to the doctors and what would have been the fate of a child injected with powerful toxins?

Today our son is married and has a lovely family, thanks to the Rebbe's bracha. So that's one story about hashgacha pratis and one story about the Nasi HaDor.

The hashgacha pratis and miracles that we experienced then have never ceased, and still occur.

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SPARKS OF FAITH

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

“You can tell the Rebbe anything” – a descendent of the famous Rabbi Shlomo Alkebetz meets the Rebbe * Moshiach is a human being. * Where can I buy a Yechi yarmulke? * More delightful stories from R’ Shmuelewitz.

The manager at a branch of the Discount Bank in Afula thirty years ago, Mr. Amnon Alkebetz, was sitting in his office. Every so often, a customer would walk in to take care of something. On this particular Friday, Moshe Chavusha, a Lubavitcher Chassid and an auto mechanic, walked into his office after having been away from the city for a month.

“Hello Moshe,” said the manager. “Where did you disappear to for a month?”

Moshe told him that he had been to the Rebbe and described in vivid color some of the special events he was part of. “What an experience! What davening, farbrengens, Simchas Torah, out of this world!”

The bank manager liked what he heard. “How much does it cost?” he asked, inspired to make the trip as well.

When he heard that it was

\$4000 he decided that was more than he could afford. They said a friendly goodbye and he went back to work. A half an hour later the phone rang.

“This is the bank headquarters in Tel Aviv. The national manager, Mr. Terach Rekanti invites you to an important meeting.”

Mr. Alkebetz was somewhat surprised by the sudden summons, but he wasn’t left wondering for long. The following Sunday he went to Tel Aviv and heard that they were looking for someone to run the branch of the bank in New York. “Since you are loyal and successful in what you do, we decided to offer you this prestigious position.”

At first Mr. Alkebetz turned down the offer but the senior manager urged him to try it out. “What do you care? Go for a three month trial. You will be put up at a hotel, plus you’ll get a salary and

an additional \$100 for daily expenses. Check it out and then decide whether you want to remain there.”

He agreed to this offer. He went to New York and easily took on the management of 700 employees. One day, he mentioned that he wanted to buy a 220 watt steam iron for use in Israel, and a friend referred him to Drimmers on Kingston Avenue. When he got there he noticed that nearly every store on the street had a large picture of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He asked about it and was told that most of the residents are Lubavitcher Chassidim. He was surprised and happy to hear that the Rebbe and his followers lived right there.

He was reminded of his wish to see the Rebbe, that had seemed impossible just a short while ago. Here was his opportunity. He walked over to 770 and introduced himself to the Rebbe’s secretary. He said he was a descendent of Rabbi Shlomo Alkebetz (1500-1580), the author of *Lecha Dodi* and he asked for an appointment with the Rebbe.

The secretary said to wait a few minutes because he had to ask the Rebbe. Amazingly, he came back with the reply that he could see the Rebbe then and there. When he met the Rebbe, he felt a deep feeling of love for him. The Rebbe spoke to him about his family yichus and asked whether he had a *megillas yuchsin* (genealogical history) of his family. Mr. Alkebetz said not exactly but he had an old *Megillas Esther* that he inherited and the family tradition was that it was used by Rabbi Shlomo Alkebetz.

He told the Rebbe that he wanted to give it to him as a gift but the Rebbe said it had to remain in the family for it was an inheritance from generation to generation. Mr. Alkebetz left this

encounter completely different than the way he went in and this was the beginning of a deep and lasting bond between the Rebbe and the entire Alkebetz family from Afula. When his wife arrived in the United States to help her husband decide whether to accept the job, she also went to the Rebbe.

Her first encounter with the Rebbe was on a weekday, at 3:15 when the Rebbe left his room on his way to Mincha in the small zal. The Rebbe greeted Amnon and his wife, gave coins for tz'daka to the children who stood there waiting near the pushka and then went in to daven.

Mrs. Alkebetz noticed tears rolling down her husband's cheeks and asked him why he was crying. "Throughout your life you have never devoted much thought to religion, and your family is not particularly observant or traditional ..."

He explained that from the moment he had met the Rebbe he had felt that the Rebbe was close to him like a father. You could tell the Rebbe whatever was in your heart and each encounter with him was as moving as a meeting between father and son who did not see each other for years.

When three months were up, Alkebetz returned to the branch in Afula. "America is very nice and big but the people are a bit cold there ..."

On the first day he went back to work in his old office, Moshe Chavusha came in and greeted him in turn, "Where did you disappear to for three months?" Amnon remembered that it was Moshe who had first given him the idea and desire to meet the Rebbe.

Close to thirty years later, Amnon was visiting his daughter at moshav Balforia, and arrived at Rabbi Noam Bar Tov's Chabad house for davening and stayed for the Shabbos Mevarchim



Mr. Amnon Alkebetz telling about his connection to the Rebbe

farbrengen. When he heard that there were several people in the community who were connected to the Rebbe and Chabad custom, he asked to speak and said, "You know the Rebbe? I know the Rebbe! Allow me to tell you how I met the Rebbe," and he told them this story.

The Alkebetz family kept in touch with the Rebbe over the years. Their son Avi, mayor of Afula, is a close friend of the Chabad house and he is the one who initiated the project of building a 770 replica in Afula.

THANKS TO THE PSAK DIN

A few years ago I met with the secretary of a religious kibbutz in Beit Shaan Valley to collect the annual payment for the Shabbos brochures I bring to the kibbutz every Friday. He told me that although he had been happy to pay until then, the new brochures I had been bringing them recently say the Rebbe is Moshiach and so he was unwilling to pay anymore.

I told him that this is based on a p'sak din which was signed by hundreds of rabbis and publicized to the world. When he heard this, he immediately apologized and promised that not only would he be glad to give me the money, he would increase the payment.

My brother-in-law, Rabbi Yitzchok Lifsh, shliach in Tzfas, told me that he is involved in getting rabbanim to sign the p'sak din. He related:

"A few years ago, I met with a well-respected rabbi in the Torah world in general and in Tzanz in particular, Rabbi Eliyahu Schmerler. R' Schmerler is the rosh yeshiva in Tzanz and the director of Mifal HaShas. When he heard the purpose of my visit, he immediately began praising the Rebbe. Throughout the conversation he stressed that everything Rebbe said is precise and very serious. There are no p'shetlach or exaggerations. Moreover, according to the Rebbe's sichos, and in light of the halachos in the Rambam, it is clear



that rabbanim need to rule that the Rebbe is a prophet and is Moshiach.

“Some time after that, I met with another well-known rav and discussed this topic with him. He said that for him the defining Torah authority is R’ Schmerler. ‘If R’ Schmerler says it’s right to sign, then I will add my signature.’ So of course I showed him R’ Schmerler’s signature and he signed too.”

MOSHIACH – A HUMAN BEING

One day, a Zionist rabbi visited the religious kibbutz in the Beit Shaan Valley and he gave a lecture to the members of the kibbutz. He said that Moshiach doesn’t have to come with the help of a person but, in his opinion, Moshiach is a utopian idea, an era, a vision.

One of the people sitting there regularly participates in the Tanya shiur I give at the kibbutz and he knew a thing or two about Geula and Moshiach. He pointed out that the Rambam writes explicitly (in Hilchos Melachim) that Moshiach is a person from the House of Dovid etc. The rabbi said he would look into it.

A few days later a letter from

the rabbi came to the kibbutz in which he wrote that he looked it up in the Rambam and Moshiach is indeed a person who will come and redeem us. The letter was publicized in the kibbutz and made a big Kiddush Hashem. It goes to show, if you attend classes in Chassidus, you know what’s what!

“I’M WILLING TO HELP CHABAD ONLY BECAUSE OF MOSHIACH”

A certain shliach in an irreligious city had trouble with the mayor. The mayor didn’t exactly like the ways of Chassidus or the activities to spread Judaism. He had grown up in an anti-religious home and his mother, a senior politician, was known for her opposition towards anything religious.

In any case, this shliach believes in every Jew and in their Jewish neshama and so he went to this notorious woman and asked for her help. He wanted her to speak to her son the mayor so he would be more helpful to Chabad.

At first, she couldn’t believe what she was hearing. She told the naïve shliach, “Be happy I’m not fighting you! You want me to *help* you?!” But the shliach began

talking to her, as Chassidus teaches us ... a little bit about the Rebbe, a little about Moshiach, a little neshama and a little seichel. After a while, she said, “I will help you; and do you know why? It’s only because of the emuna and anticipation of Moshiach in Chabad. On this I agree with and admire Chabad.”

Not only did she speak to her son, she also put a mezuzah up in her house and even made donations several times to the Chabad house’s activities.

This same shliach (who wishes to remain anonymous for the continued success of his work) met a Jew in the business district of his city and began talking to him about the Rebbe. “The Rebbe sent me, the Rebbe said, etc.” The man shrugged and said that he doesn’t know who the Lubavitcher Rebbe is. He had never heard of that name. But when the shliach took out a picture of the Rebbe and showed it to him, he said, “Oh! Moshiach! I know him! Why didn’t you say Moshiach?”

WHERE DO YOU GET A YECHI YARMULKE?

At moshav Merchavia near Afula, there is no Judaica store, nor is there one in the nearby kibbutz. The shliach who works at the yishuv, Rabbi Boruch Lipkin, has to provide for the religious needs of the people living at the moshav and kibbutz. R’ Lipkin arranges shiurim, minyanim, mesibos Shabbos and helps people do mitzvos and the Rebbe’s mitzvaim. Over a few years he has formed a k’hilla within a k’hilla, a group of families who have made their homes Chassidische ones.

One of the families of mekuravim has each member participating in Chabad house activities. The father attends shiurim, the mother attends the

evening programs for women, father and son go to shul and the children attend mesibos Shabbos.

One day, the son asked his father to take him to the men's shiur. The father explained that it wasn't for children but the child insisted and begged until his father called R' Lipkin and got his okay to bring his son. The child still attends a non-religious school at a nearby kibbutz but he asked his parents to buy him tzitzis and he wears them.

The father recently called R' Lipkin and asked, on behalf of his son, where he could buy a Yechi yarmulke like his friends, who already attend a Chabad school in Migdal HaEmek, wear.

DO A MITZVA AND BRING MOSHIACH

At the Chabad yeshiva in Krayot, led by Rabbi Yigal Pizem, they print a few hundred Moshiach

cards every week and the bachurim give them out when they go on mitvza t'fillin.

Why do they need to reprint them every week? Because every week they print a short thought from the Rebbe on the parsha on the back of the card. On the front it says, "Do a mitvza and bring Moshiach."

WRITE IT IN THE CONTRACT

Rabbi Dov Tevardovitz told this story as he heard it from the person it happened to:

A Chassid told him how his brother (both of whom are mekuravim to Chabad) got a prestigious job in the high-tech industry. The new employee asked that it be written into his contract that the minute Moshiach will arrive, he gets 60 days of vacation. At first his employer balked but he explained that the moment

Moshiach comes he must go to him for at least two months. The boss finally agreed and the unique condition was written into the contract.

Another story that shows what kind of emuna we are supposed to have:

At one of the Rebbe's farbrengens, after he finished a talk about how we ought to believe that Moshiach is about to come, a rav went over to the Rebbe and asked why the Rebbe constantly repeated this idea when Jews believe in the coming of Moshiach.

The Rebbe pointed at one of the Chassidim-askanim sitting behind the Rebbe on the dais and asked the rav: "Would you give him a loan until Moshiach comes?" The rav was surprised and didn't know what to answer. The lesson was learned and the rav understood the depth of emuna the Rebbe expects of us.

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ב"ה

יחי אדונינו מורנו ורבנו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

SOUNDS OF SILENCE

By Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd

Davening with simple faith joins the essence of the soul with the essence of the Infinite, so that the Essence of the Ein Sof will be the Healer of the ill, and He Who blesses the years.

—*The Rebbe, HaYom Yom, 11 Tishrei.*

Musicians manipulate it. Comedians play it up. Actors, politicians, kids and their parents all have some intuitive sense of how to convey deep and powerful messages using this one simple technique - Silence. Whether it's a pregnant pause, an upbeat syncopation, a raised eyebrow or a baby's silent scream, a well-placed silence speaks volumes.

But for those who aren't so good at reading between the lines, there's a new invention out of the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology that can decode a lot of that quietude for you. It's a lip-reading telephone that can pick up bioelectricity from your face muscles and send the encoded signal through a cell phone to be reassembled as a speaking voice at the other end of the call.[1] Move lips at point A, hear speech at point B. Cool.

That may or may not put a stop to those annoying people who yammer and holler into their cell phones as if they were plastic cups connected by string. But

what it *will* do is help patients with speech problems, workers in noisy environments, friends with secrets, and astronauts with their hands-free flight controls. There's even a translation function that allows the listener to hear your mouthed words in *their* language.

Like so many things these days, this remote lip-reading innovation has been presaged by an ancient Jewish ritual. No, I'm not referring to the guilt trip. Nor the silent auction (right, that's Chinese). I'm actually talking about prayer. True, not all Jewish prayers are silent - just the most important one - the Amida, a.k.a. standing silent prayer.

A Jew's morning prayer cycles through stages - the Verses of Praise often said aloud or sung; the blessings of the Shma which includes a lot of vocal responsive reading; and the Declaration of Unity itself - which in some congregations, Yemenite for example, is a deafening shout that can literally shake the walls. But when we get to the holiest of all prayers, the top rung of the ladder, the Amida, what do we hear? Nothing. Just lips moving.

But why? Why, after all the hub-bub, when we get to the heart of our personal conversation with G-d, do we finally go silent? One answer is that the lead-up prayers

are about us talking. The Amida is about G-d listening.

In general prayer serves two functions. The verb "to pray" - *l'hitpalel* - is actually reflexive, meaning to judge oneself. At this level, we are working on ourselves, our appreciation, our emotions, our consciousness. For this we need voice, we need to resonate, to feel the prayer. But the word "prayer" itself - *t'filla* - is beyond that, it's about selflessness.[2] In fact it is so selfless, we enter into the realm of divine where we can actually create a new will within G-d Himself, to heal the sick, feed the hungry, salvage broken relationships.

We learn about silent prayer from the Biblical Chana who invested her heart and soul in a tearful, silent prayer to be blessed with a child. The son she bore, the prophet Samuel, went on to anoint Saul and later David, the forerunner of Moshiach, may he come speedily in our days. Then we will see all our prayers answered in a world where all communication barriers will be broken, a world awash with silent waves of knowledge, a world immersed in the knowledge of G-d as waters cover the sea.

NOTES:

[1] <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/discoblog/2010/03/05/new-lip-reading-cell-phone-system-can-allow-for-silent-conversations/>

[2] HaYom Yom, p.110, 5 Kislev

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.

THE 'RASHBI' COMMUNITY IN THE SUNSHINE STATE

By Nosson Avrohom
Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

With Lag B'Omer behind us, we now turn our attention from the peak of Mt. Meron to sun-drenched Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, where the small Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai community has risen virtually out of nowhere. Once a of just eight people, today it constitutes a whole congregation of hundreds of Jews from families all over the region. All this is thanks to the unique and heartfelt activities of Rabbi Daniel Shahino and his wife, Orna Ester (nee Fried).



At an exciting and impressive event held recently, the synagogue of the Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai Jewish community in Fort Lauderdale, Florida was dedicated. More than four hundred people filled the synagogue, deeply moved by the pomp and splendor revealed before them. "The building renovations started three years ago," said Rabbi Daniel Shahino, shliach and community rav. "The municipal overseers were dissatisfied, to put it mildly, with the layout of the previous building. Six months ago, the matter was brought before the courts, and the judge ruled that if no acceptable arrangement could be reached within three months, he will be forced to order that the building be closed. We felt as if a sword was being held at our throats."



Community members at the synagogue dedication

With some feelings of regret, Rabbi Shahino turned to the community at large for their assistance, and they responded to the shliach's call in a most extraordinary manner. The entire building was renovated and expanded with the Rebbe MH" M's brachos, far more than required by the municipal authorities. The synagogue underwent a thorough change – everything was redone from the floors to the ceilings – inclusive! - and even the light fixtures and furniture were replaced with newer and more fashionable pieces. Today, the walls of the synagogue are adorned with five large and newly designed libraries. When the shul opened its gates last month, the public stood in awe of the fantastic transformation.

After a festive dinner celebration

and the traditional ribbon cutting, the assembled guests were shown a video presentation of all the development stages in the renovation of this synagogue, which essentially represents a “home” to all members of the community.

For the rav of the community, Rabbi Shahino and his wife, Orna Ester (nee Fried), the shul dedication ceremony was one of the most climactic moments in his shlichus activities, an important milestone that serves as an expression of the “harvest in joy” after the “sowing in tears”.

When he started working with the community eight years ago, it numbered only eight Jews who were trying, albeit with some difficulty, to maintain some semblance of a community. Today, the community listings include the names of about

four hundred Jews(!), and the activities conducted with them have continued to grow and flourish. Rabbi Shahino serves as both shliach and rav, and invests great energy and effort in both capacities.

The central motto that characterizes the activities in the Rashbi community is one of brotherhood, partnership, understanding, and support among all members of the community, working for one another. Since many of these people have come from Eretz Yisroel, the activities are along the lines of “*Mach Da Eretz Yisroel*”.

FROM A CHANCE MEETING TO A REGULAR SHLICHUS

Rabbi Shahino arrived in Florida



Rabbi Daniel Shahino

The judge ruled that if no acceptable arrangement could be reached within three months, he will be forced to order that the building be closed. We felt as if a sword was being held at our throats.

nine years ago as part of his shlichus with the “Beis Moshiach” smicha institute, under the administration of the shliach, Rabbi Mordechai Anati. “At the end of the year of shlichus, I had completed three parts of my smicha studies and I was presented with several possibilities for the continuation of my path in life: learning in 770, returning to Eretz Yisroel and considering offers of shidduchim, or accepting a proposed shlichus in Florida. I was amazed by the sheer clarity of the Rebbe’s answer: The Rebbe wrote to me that I should go where I can be the most involved in spreading the wellsprings of chassidus, and he promised much success. Within a few days, I was on my way to Florida.”

Equipped with the Rebbe’s clear bracha, Rabbi Shahino – in addition to his yeshiva study schedule at Beis Moshiach – started going out on mitzaim, primarily T’fillin

Campaign activities. His encounter with the Rashbi community was literally by chance. “Three weeks after my arrival in Florida, I met a Jew and asked him if he would like to put on t’fillin. Since he didn’t look like someone who practiced the traditions, I was a bit surprised when he said that he had already put on t’fillin that morning. I asked him where he davened, and he told me that he is a member of a small community, and he davens there. When I inquired where the synagogue of this community was located, it turned out that it was about an hour and a half walk from Beis Moshiach. I told him that I would come the following Shabbos with another bachur, and we would help them make a minyan and read the Torah for them. He was pleased by the offer, and I kept my word. On that Shabbos morning, I walked the long distance to the synagogue. There were eight people there, and

we proceeded to make the minyan and I also read from the Torah, as promised.

“The emotion among the members of this small community was incredible. They didn’t know how to express their appreciation adequately, and they invited me to come again the following Shabbos. It pained me to see how they took the cholent out of the refrigerator before davening and placed it on the fire to heat it up. They didn’t even have the slightest knowledge of the most fundamental laws of Shabbos. When they asked if we would like to partake in the cholent, we declined by giving the excuse that it was not up to our kashrus standards. When we arrived the next Shabbos, they brought out a pot of fish for us and again placed it on the fire. They explained that they had made certain that it was strictly kosher before buying it... This time, we got up the courage and explained the halacha to them. They simply didn’t understand what we were talking about.

“Every Shabbos thereafter, I continued to come with another friend in order to make their minyan. Between Shacharis and Musaf, we gave over words of Torah and halacha. The circle grew wider, and other bachurim from the smicha institute also started coming on weekdays to teach Torah classes.

“This continued for about six months – walking each Shabbos to the synagogue, and then returning to the ‘base’ – Beis Moshiach.

“One Shabbos, someone from the community suggested that we come to his house before Shabbos and stay as his guest, thus saving us the time it took to walk there. I happily accepted the offer, and thus we would arrive at his home on Friday afternoon and return to the ‘base’ only on Motzaei Shabbos. This enabled us to participate in the prayer services on Friday evening, Shabbos afternoon, and Motzaei

Shabbos as well. Naturally, we emphasized the concept of making *farbrengens* and instilled much spiritual strength within the congregation. Thus, the place began to thrive and develop. Other people heard about this young and growing community, and they started coming to the shul, taking part in the Torah classes, and making *bris milas* and *bar-mitzvahs* on the premises.

“At the end of my year of *shlichus* in Beis Moshiah, the community members approached me and pleaded that I should stay. Grappling with this difficult internal struggle, I prepared to travel to New York and spend the month of *Tishrei* in Beis Chayeinu. At the end of that month, I would make my decision.

“When the *Yamim Tovim* came to an end, I sat in 770 and wrote a letter to the Rebbe. I was faced with two choices of my next destination – *Eretz Yisroel* or Florida. The letter I received aroused tremendous excitement within me. The Rebbe’s answer was addressed to a Jew who served as the *shamash* of none other than – the *Rashbi* synagogue! The Rebbe wrote to him in the name of the Rebbe *Rayatz* that the task of a ‘*shamash*’ is to illuminate, and he gave him a *bracha* that he should merit to illuminate not just materially, but also spiritually.

“There was no need for more than that. I could not have received a more clear and unambiguous answer! I immediately called the members of the community, told them about the Rebbe’s answer, and informed them that I accept the position.”

HAND-IN-HAND WITH THE REBBE

In his official role, Rabbi Shahino found himself consulting frequently with the *shliach* from



With a group of community members on an outing in the country



Rabbi Daniel Shahino with Mr. Edwin Dennis, who donated the new facility

Montreal, Rabbi Chaim Shlomo Cohen. The task of community *rav* obligates knowledge on a wide range of issues, not to mention the experience that he was lacking. “At the start of the *shlichus*, there were times when I almost gave up. Dealing with the various issues squeezed me for every drop of strength that I had. It was the encouraging answers that I merited to receive from the Rebbe that kept me going. I remember one answer that touched me in a special way. The Rebbe wrote that he simply doesn’t understand why I’m complaining, as I have received strength from ‘*Rabboseinu N’sieinu...*’

“I felt that the Rebbe was accompanying me every step of the way, literally hand-in-hand. On more than one occasion, I stood before an issue that seemed beyond my control, but the Rebbe was there to help me and give me direction. The last time I had such an experience was at the ceremony to open the synagogue. About four hundred people filled the shul from wall to wall. Our daughter had been born just the day before, and I was in a state of utter exhaustion, having gone many long hours without sleep! In addition, I had been unable to compose a speech for the occasion in the midst of the exciting events of the previous day. I arrived at the dedication with nothing prepared to say, the sense of fatigue threatening to overcome me.

“I entered the synagogue without even the most minimal preparation, and I said in my heart, ‘Rebbe, please put the proper words into my mouth.’ I don’t know where the strength came from, but I stood up and gave a *d’var Torah* appropriate for the time and the event and thanked everyone who needed to be thanked. There was no trace of my exhaustion in my demeanor. When I came down from the rostrum, I realized that it wasn’t me who had spoken; someone had

THE DOLLAR THAT HADN'T COMPLETED ITS SHLICHUS

Recently the shluchim Rabbi Daniel and Mrs. Orna Shahino were privileged to welcome the birth of their first child, a girl, after four years of marriage. "Community members would bless us at every opportunity, and people made good resolutions to wear tzitzis on a daily basis, learn chapters of Tanya, recite T'hillim, and put on t'fillin. As you can already understand from this article, our community is very much like a family, with a feeling of partnership and a spirit of unity pervading among everyone. This is a place of giving; you give today, and tomorrow someone appreciates your giving and gives to you and all those around you.

"We have a regular custom during Shacharis, that I teach a few halachos at the end of the service. One day, I was teaching a certain halacha, and I paused for a moment to describe the Rebbe's custom in this manner. Before I could resume where I'd left off, a Jew stood up from among the congregation, whom I had never seen before. He identified himself as Avraham Yisroel, and he asked if he could tell about something that he personally experienced with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. As he spoke, all those assembled listened attentively to every word.

"The story took place twenty years ago. Many long years had passed since he had gotten married, but he and his wife still had no children. They were living in New York at the time, and they went to the best and most expert physicians in the field, but to no avail. During one such visit to a prominent doctor, he suggested that they consider adoption, as there was serious doubt whether they would ever have their own biological child...

"Then one day, he heard about the Rebbe,

particularly regarding his brachos for having children, and he came for dollars distribution. He told the Rebbe about his pain and anguish, and the Rebbe gave him a penetrating look, blessed him, and gave him a dollar for a blessing and success. The excitement he felt was so intense that he couldn't hear the Rebbe's bracha.

"The person who stood behind him did hear what the Rebbe said, and he asked him write the words of the bracha on the dollar. After his meeting with the Rebbe, this Jew began to face a tremendous test of his emuna. It was clear to him that the Rebbe's bracha must be fulfilled, and he continued to consult with the doctors, refusing to give up hope despite all their expressions of pessimism. In the end, the reality proved the doctors wrong, and the Rebbe's bracha was realized! He then showed me the twelve-year old boy who had come together with him. 'You see him? This is the Rebbe's child, born against all odds...'

"I heard that you didn't have any children yet,' the man added, 'and I remembered the dollar that I had received from the Rebbe. I would like to give it to you, since for me, this dollar has completed its mission...'

"I questioned whether I should take it from him, as I knew the value of a dollar from the Rebbe. Yet, the man would not relent, and together with the other members of the community, he convinced me. Incredibly, just a few months later, we received the good news, and just recently, our daughter was born. This dollar has since managed to reach three other couples who have subsequently been blessed with children within a period of a few months. It is now in the hands of a fourth couple, and we anticipate salvation for them very soon..."

made certain to put the words in my mouth."

MIRACLES

The construction, expansion, and renovation of the synagogue was accompanied by its fair share of miracles. "One fine day, municipal overseers arrived and inspected the premises, and they decided that it was not in accordance with the building standards. We were summoned to appear in court.

I sensed that I was in serious trouble, but I knew that the Rebbe

was with us at every step that we took. It started in the lobby of the courts building, when the manager who had rented us the building angrily demanded to know why we were breaking the law and entangling the property with legal problems. Up until then, everything had passed quietly...

"During a break in the deliberations, I went out into the lobby to learn the daily Chitas. The manager sat down near me and attempted to open a discussion with me. She turned to me and asked

what I was mumbling. 'Tanya,' I replied as I continued learning. She raised her eyebrow in puzzlement and said that her first name was Tanya... She couldn't believe that there was a Jewish seifer that bore her name, and this both amazed and moved her. She saw this as a sign of the finger of G-d.

"The following day, she updated the property owner who employed her as manager, and told him some details about these troublesome renters who were causing them problems with city hall. He called

that day and asked to meet with me.

“This landlord was a wealthy man who owned a very large retail chain and a considerable amount of land. I was somewhat anxious and apprehensive about meeting with him. He came into the synagogue the next day and introduced himself as Dennis. Imagine how surprised I was when he said that he was a Jew who wanted to thank us.

“Thank us? For what?” I wondered to myself, concerned whether this was some sort of business scheme. He said that he had moved nearby last year, and when I had invited him inside to put on t’fillin, he happily agreed. He said that this was the first time in his life that he had put on t’fillin! A few months ago, his son also moved nearby, and he too put on t’fillin for the first time in his life.

“When I heard that you were having a problem with City Hall, I decided to drop everything and come to your assistance in whatever way I could,” he said firmly.

“We were in shock. We presented him with the facts on our legal problem. The place was too small to hold our entire congregation, so the building was deemed a danger to public safety. ‘No problem,’ he said emphatically, after he heard all the details. ‘We’ll give you another storefront located right next to you, and you won’t even have to pay another dollar for it...’ We were stunned. It seemed like a sweet dream from which we would awaken at any moment...

“I realized that he was an unusually wealthy Jew who was truly ready to help, and I decided to take advantage of the opportunity. I turned to him in a manner of ‘L’chat’chilla Aribber’ and told him that the amount we are paying for the first storefront was relatively high, and in light of the rather pressing financial situation, we would be most happy if he could assist us. The community members



Rabbi Daniel Shahino (right) and Rabbi Yosef Duch (second from left) on Purim activities with the community

All of us sat there in total silence, having some difficulty absorbing the astounding clarity of this answer. These were Jews who had asked the Rebbe with pure faith that he should answer their question, and the Rebbe responded in the clearest way possible.

who heard my request shifted uncomfortably in their chairs, worried how he would respond. He looked at me and asked how much we were paying, and when I told him, he agreed to reduce the rent by half. We now had double the size for even less than we’d been paying previously!

“When I returned home, I wrote to the Rebbe about what had happened and asked for a bracha that I should succeed in collecting enough funds for the planned expansion, adding about the meeting with the property owner. The Rebbe’s answer made my heart skip a beat (Vol. 4, #840):

I was pleased to hear that on this coming Wednesday, in a good and auspicious hour, there is due

to take place in the home of our friend, the veritable and pious chassid, involved in the needs of the community, etc., Rabbi M. Wechsler, *sh’yichyeh*, a special meeting to discuss the matter of actual assistance in the work of Merkaz L’Inyanei Chinuch.

Included here is a copy of a letter that I wrote a few days prior to a similar meeting on behalf of Merkaz L’Inyanei Chinuch, Machne Israel, and Kehos, which took place in New York. They will see from this letter my view, my opinion, and my request in relation to this work, and the right and obligation incumbent upon each and every one to participate in this work to maintain and expand the work of these three

institutions. They will naturally publicize the content of my aforementioned letter among the participants at said meeting, who have been privileged to take part in the work of my revered and holy father-in-law, the Rebbe (may I be an atonement for his resting place), and similarly anywhere that it will be beneficial.

I hope to hear soon about the actual activities of this meeting, and the good fruits and future growth that come forth from this good sowing. They will surely also make known the names of all the participants.

“I couldn’t have hoped for a clearer bracha. If I had been concerned before over where we would obtain such a large sum of money, particularly in light of the current difficult economic situation, all such fears vanished immediately after reading the letter.

“The very next morning, we already began to see miracles and wonders. During Shacharis, Mr. Franco, a synagogue committee member, arrived in shul with his guest, Mr. Eyal Valenci. He had heard about the renovations and decided to donate a new Aron Kodesh. Later that day, I spoke again with the property owner to let him know about the building plans. He didn’t give me much time to talk, and simply donated another twenty-five thousand dollars!”

THE WAR AGAINST ASSIMILATION

As with many shluchim in the United States, Rabbi Shahino finds himself constantly fighting the plague of assimilation. While the Reform movement takes in everyone, the shliach, trained according to the time-honored precepts of Shulchan Aruch, periodically stands up to Jews whose financial support sustains the entire community. “On more than

one occasion, there have been some unpleasant incidents, but we must stand firm and make known to all that in our shul, there will be no bris mila performed on someone whose mother is not Jewish according to halacha. We have three Jews in our community, former Israeli nationals, whose spouses are Gentiles or underwent a Reform conversion, and they know that in all matters related to halacha – there are no compromises.”

Rabbi Shahino tells us about an incident that took place recently. It proved to be a very difficult trial, but it was all worth it in the end. This story can serve as a message for other shluchim who find themselves dealing with similar circumstances.

“There is a Jew in a community with whom the connection began eight years ago, when we first started our activities. At that time, he was engaged to a non-Jewish woman, and he wanted me to participate in his wedding as the rabbi of the community, stating that she had undergone a Conservative conversion. I invited him to my office, and I explained to him in the clearest way possible about the damage he is causing to himself and the problems that will be created in the future. My words fell on deaf ears.

“Their wedding took place as planned, and they eventually had a son, whom he wanted to enter into the covenant of Avraham Avinu. This Jew was quite wealthy and had a very prominent status in the community. Any time we had a financial deficit, I would call him and without even asking me the amount, he would give me his credit card... However, when he asked if he could have his son circumcised in the synagogue and if I would help him find an Orthodox mohel, I categorically refused. This was not easy, but I had no alternative. He eventually found a Reform ‘mohel’

who agreed to circumcise his son, and he asked if I would honor him by participating in the event.

“I explained to him that my coming for such an occasion would give a ‘seal of approval’ to the whole concept, and therefore, not only wouldn’t I come, I would encourage all the other community members not to come as well. He became enraged by my declaration, and I gently reminded him that I had already warned him before his marriage that this is what would happen. He reproved me for my stubbornness, noting that the Reform rabbi who doesn’t even know him is still prepared to celebrate the event with him, while I, a rav who is quite close to him, refuse to attend. I explained the sharp difference between me and this Reform rabbi, and with that, the conversation ended. He was very angry and cut off all contact with me. Every once in a while, I would hear people in the community murmuring that maybe I hadn’t handled the situation appropriately.

“Then, after a period of three weeks, he called me to ask if I would write to the Rebbe for him about a big business deal that he was planning to enter. Though the Reform rabbi had been the one to participate in his celebration, he knew he could not turn to him when he was faced with a serious question. In his heart he didn’t believe in him, and he knew full well who could really help him. Since then, our relationship has been restored and his appreciation for Judaism has merely grown. When his father passed away, he asked me to officiate at the funeral. This event made the connection between us even stronger. His wife now wants to be converted according to halacha and to start observing a life of mitzvos...”

[To be continued G-d willing]