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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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TRUE STRENGTH

Sichos In English

AN APPROACH-AVOIDANCE CONFLICT

The character traits of strength and firmness evoke mixed responses.

On one hand, everyone admires personal fortitude, and respects an individual who has the power to persevere in his convictions despite challenges.

And yet, a strong person can also be identified with the undesirable traits of rigidity and insensitivity, sticking to his own views without bending in consideration of others.

Counseling against this tendency, our Sages commented, [1] "A person should always be pliant like a reed, and not hard like a cedar."

Although the image of personal strength projected by popular society sometimes muddles the distinctions between these two types of firmness, a discerning person should not become confused.

The hardness of insensitivity reflects a lack of life, an inability to respond to the cues one receives.

Positive inner strength, by contrast, involves making an active response to those cues, but having that response determined, not by the demands of one's surrounding environment, but by the depth of one's own convictions.

SUPPLE FLEXIBILITY VS. UNFAILING FIRMNESS

These concepts are reflected in the name of this week's Torah reading: Matos.

The singular form, matteh, literally means "staff."

This term is also used to refer to

the tribes of the Jewish people, because the leader of each of the tribes was distinguished by his staff of leadership. [2]

For similar reasons, the word shevet, literally, meaning "rod," is also used as a synonym for "tribe."

What is the difference between these two terms?

A rod is supple, able to be bent, while a staff is firm and unyielding.

For a rod is freshly cut - or still connected to the tree from which it grew - and the life-giving nurture it received makes it pliant.

A staff, by contrast, has been detached from its tree long ago, and over time has become dry, hard, and firm.

Both terms serve as analogies for different levels in the expression of our souls' potential. [3]

The term "rod" refers to the soul as it exists in the spiritual realms where its connection to G-dliness is palpably appreciated.

It shares an active bond with the life-giving, G-dly nurture it receives.

"Staff," by contrast, refers to the soul as it exists in our material world, encloded in a physical body.

On a conscious level, it has been severed from its spiritual source and its connection to G-dliness is no longer felt.

In this setting, there is the possibility for both positive and negative types of strength and hardness.

There is a tendency for spiritual insensitivity, a brittle lack of responsiveness to the G-dliness invested within creation.

On the other hand, it is also

within our material world that a person's strength of resolve is revealed.

For to observe the Torah and its mitzvos despite the challenges of our surrounding environment requires steadfast resolution that stems from an inner awareness of the truth of one's mission.

Moreover, when a person makes such a commitment, he is granted strength that surpasses his personal resources; the power of the essence of the soul expresses itself within his efforts.

This reflects a deeper spiritual source than the level of the soul which is revealed in the spiritual worlds. For in the spiritual realms, the soul's powers of perception are of primary importance. The essence, the very core of the soul, however, transcends all perception, for it is an actual part of G-d, [4] a spiritual potential that cannot be contained within any limitations, even the more subtle restraints of spiritual existence.

It is this essential potential which endows powerful resources of strength to the soul as it is encloded in the body, enabling it to persevere in its Divine service. [5]

This reflects the uniqueness of our world, "the garden" [6] which grows the trees from which these staffs are cut.

Although the material setting causes the soul to feel separate from its spiritual source, this challenge evokes the expression of our deepest spiritual potentials.

This, in turn, endows a person with the strength of a ruler, the ability to master his environment and shape

it according to the Torah's desires.

EXPRESSING POWER

The concept of strength is also reflected in the content of the Torah reading which begins with the laws regarding vows.

Here we see the power possessed by every Jew.

Each member of our people, even a youth who has not yet reached the age of Bar Mitzvah has the potential to invest holiness into the entities of our material world, endowing them with the sanctity of the sacrifices offered in the Beis HaMikdash.

And these laws apply not only in the era of the Beis HaMikdash, but even during our exile at present.

The Torah reading continues, describing the war against Midyan, which as explained in Chassidic thought, serves as an analogy for our efforts to nullify the forces of strife and discord.

By spreading unbounded love, we have the power to wipe out these traits totally, [7] as the war against Midyan caused the utter annihilation of that nation.

A TWOFOLD MESSAGE

Parshas Matos is often read together with Parshas Massei.

Massei means "journeys."

This Torah reading describes the journeys of the Jewish people through the desert, which serve as an analogy for the journey of the soul from the spiritual realm to our material world.

More particularly, the two dimensions of the descent that the hardness of a matteh reflects are also emphasized in Parshas Massei.

The negative dimension - the lack of a revealed connection to one's G-dly core - is implied by the name "journeys," for the descent of the soul to this material world is indeed drastic.

The positive dimension, the manifestation of the power of the essence of the soul, is also alluded to

by the name Massei.

For it is through the descent into this material realm that the soul acquires the potential for an unparalleled upward impetus.

For the connection to the essence of the soul - and the essence of G-d - achieved in this world lifts the soul to a far higher rung than that on which it existed previously.

Moreover, when Parshas Matos is read together with Parshas Massei, the Shabbos is called Shabbos Chazak, "the Shabbos of reinforcement," because of the custom [8] of declaring, Chazak, Chazak, V'Nis'chazeik ("Be strong, be strong, and may you be strengthened") at the conclusion of the Torah reading, in acknowledgment of the completion of the Book of Numbers.

This couples the strength of Parshas Matos with the strength achieved by the Jewish people through their completion of one of the books of the Chumash.

STRENGTH IN EXILE

Parshas Matos is always read during Bein HaMeitzarim, the three weeks between the fasts of the Seventeenth of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av (the Ninth of Av), which are associated with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Beis HaMikdash.

This recalls the negative dimension of a staff's firmness, the severed connection to the source for vitality. [9]

On the other hand, this period of time is also connected with our people's aspirations for redemption. [10]

Indeed, Tisha B'Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash is described as "the birthday of Moshiach," [11] a day which generates a new impetus for the coming of the Redemption.

Herein lies a connection to the positive dimension of firmness, because:

A) in the Era of the Redemption,

our people will reap the fruit of their determined resolution to carry out G-d's will despite the challenges of exile; and

B) it is in the Era of the Redemption, that G-d's essence, the ultimate source of strength, will become manifest in our world, His dwelling.

Adapted from: Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XVIII, p. 378ff; Vol. XXIII, p. 206ff; Seifer HaSichos 5748, p. 554ff; Seifer HaSichos 5751, p. 709ff; Sichos Shabbos Matos-Massei, 5742

NOTES:

1. Taanis 20a.
2. See Likkutei Torah, BaMidbar 83b.
3. See Seifer Maamarei Admur HaZakein 5562, p. 237ff.
4. Tanya, ch. 2.
5. See the maamer V'Ata Tetzaveh, 5752, (Seifer HaMaamarim Meluket, Vol. VI, English translation, Anticipating the Redemption, SIE, N.Y., 1994), which explains that the power endowed by the essence of the essence of the soul far surpasses the power endowed by the soul's perception in the spiritual realms.
6. For explanation of the simile, see Basi L'Gani, 5750 (English translation, Kehot, N.Y., 1990).
7. Herein, we see a connection to the period of Bein HaMeitzarim, the Three Weeks between the Seventeenth of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av, for our Sages (Yoma 9b, Gittin 55b) teach that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of unwarranted hatred. Nullifying the reason for the exile by spreading love will cause the exile itself to cease to exist.

Moreover, at present, we have been granted the potential to anticipate the Redemption and experience a foretaste of the love and peace that will characterize that age.

See the essay entitled, "Living with the Redemption" (Sound the Great Shofar, Kehot, N.Y., 1992, p. 65ff).

8. See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim in the conclusion of Chapter 139. See also Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 25, p. 474.

9. Note also Yirmiyahu's vision of an almond staff (1:11-12) which G-d will use as a medium of retribution. Our Rabbis (Tur, Orach Chayim, ch. 580) associate this vision with the Three Weeks.

10. Hence, during this period, it is customary to study the laws of the design and structure of the Beis HaMikdash (Seek Out the Welfare of Jerusalem, SIE, p. 1ff).

11. Jerusalem Talmud, Brachos 2:4, Eicha Rabba 1:51. See the essay of this title in Sound the Great Shofar, p. 73ff.

MOSHIACH: BEYOND BROTHERLY LOVE

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

*These represent the rectification of the two key aspects that are supposed to derive from a healthy father-son relationship. It is specifically because of the unique closeness between Hashem and the Jewish people that these tragedies/corrective lessons had to take place. * Part 1*

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

Growing up in a religious Jewish environment, the idea of love and concern for one's fellow Jews is (or at least should be) as much a natural part of life as breathing. In my father's home, it was taken for granted that we rejoiced when we heard news that was good for the Jews anywhere in the world, whether close to home or as far away as Eretz Yisroel, Russia and elsewhere, and we commiserated and/or mourned when the news was of a tragic nature. The same applied to reading accounts from the past, whether about Jewish successes and victories over enemies or challenges, or whether about painful and tragic events; whether about individuals, communities or the nation as a whole.

To me, sobbing and pouring copious tears over a Holocaust account, especially one that depicted the spiritual heroism of the martyred was very much a normal reaction. It was only in my late teens when I returned the brand new pristine copy of "Those Who Never Yielded" by Moshe Prager to the person I borrowed it from in the form of a waterlogged mess and explained that I hadn't spilled any water on it, which was received with a look normally reserved for visitors from a distant planet, that I began to suspect that not everybody reacts the same way. (To his credit, the fellow in question absolutely refused to let me pay for or replace the book).

Similarly, I grew up with my father going out of his way to give strangers rides in his car, even going out of his way to Williamsburg to

drop off a Satmar Chassid or to Crown Heights to drop off a Lubavitcher Chassid, as well as extending a helping hand to all sorts of down on their luck Jews from all walks of life, so the idea that Jews care for and look out for each other was axiomatic. (The above are just a few examples. I can't hope to begin to enumerate every single form of kindness and show of concern and even unbridled affection for his fellow Jews that I witnessed from my father while growing up).

Somehow, the paradox of vehemently opposing the religious or anti-religious views of most Jews while still feeling a tremendous kinship and empathy towards them was never troublesome to me. What did freak me out was when I encountered other religious Jews who due to religious differences hardened their hearts to their fellow Jews, or those who due to a lack of religious belief and sensitivity betrayed their own people. Whereas I could and would rant and rail against Jews of other denominations (religious or otherwise) while still feeling that it was only a disagreement amongst brothers who ultimately love one another. (Maybe there is something to the theory that I was born with a Chassidic soul?)

Despite all that, when it came to clearly defining for myself what the Jewish ideal of Ahavas Yisroel really is and what it entails, I felt like I was

adrift. I was well aware of the Ramban in his commentary on the Torah, who writes that the command to “Love your fellow like yourself” is phrased in a way that is intentionally hyperbolic, since it is beyond the reach of human capacity to truly love someone else as much as a person loves him-or-her-self. The reason is that this is such a great and lofty ideal, which Hillel and Rebbi Akiva categorized as the entire Torah or a “great general rule” of the Torah, so that a person has to continually strive for the ultimate even if he knows that he will never attain it.

The purely subjective nature of such a quest without any concrete guideposts with which to measure progress seemed to relegate the entire matter to the ethereal mists of the metaphysical, which we were subtly or not so subtly taught to avoid getting too caught up with. The emphasis of our education was to just learn Torah and do good stuff, including acts of goodness and kindness (to your frum friends and neighbors) and behave yourself in general.

LOVE THY BROTHER

One of the basic tenets of Chabad Chassidus is that the revelations of Chassidus are not limited to the realm of ideas and insights, but they also include the spiritual empowerment to attain spiritual levels that were previously unattainable prior to those revelations. For someone such as myself whose personal search was conducted almost exclusively through studying the written word, that premise seemed a bit farfetched and utterly subjective. If indeed it was true, how would I know that I suddenly had new previously unimaginable spiritual capacities? Would I just wake up one day and know?

As much as it all seemed very out there, I also recognized the fact that if I was taking my quest seriously I had to be open to the possibility of not just rethinking my worldview but also of experiencing myself and the world around me in an entirely different way. Looking back, it is hard to identify exact times for specific shifts in my thinking and even harder to identify specific turning points when my spiritual hard-wiring became altered to the point that I had difficulty relating to the way I used to think and experience reality.



One area that stands out in my mind was coming to the realization that according to Chassidus one could actually achieve loving his fellow Jew like himself. I had studied chapter 32 in Tanya where he explains that by perceiving the soul as primary and the body as “repulsive and abominable” one could relate to other Jews on the soul level. And since when it comes to the soul “who knows their greatness and loftiness in their root and source within the living G-d,” and additionally, “they are all compatible and there is one father to all of them, and therefore all Jews are called actual brothers,” “this is the direct and easy path to come to the fulfillment of the commandment of ‘you shall love your fellow like yourself’ towards every Jewish soul from great to small.” I had also learned the section of Derech Mitzvosecha on the commandment of Ahavas Yisroel, where he explains in greater detail how all Jewish souls are part of the all-inclusive soul of Adam HaRishon, and as such are essentially limbs and organs of one larger spiritual organism.

I don’t recall the exact time when it clicked for me that the implication of all of the above was that Chassidus was providing not only a spiritual guide-map and blueprint but was in fact making it possible to achieve what the Ramban had earlier deemed intrinsically beyond the realm of possibility, but I do remember very clearly a

subsequent related episode. It was during the year 1992, and I was sitting in the deserted basement of a shul in Boro Park, where I would do my learning in relative privacy. I was reading the B’Tzeil HaChochma, which is a collection of conversations between the Rebbe and various great rabbis and scholars who had visited the Rebbe over the years.

I don’t recall who the Rebbe was speaking to (I don’t own a copy and it is out of print), but I saw where the Rebbe makes this very point that Chassidus made a tremendous innovative breakthrough in the area of Ahavas Yisroel so that it was now possible to truly love another like oneself and even more so; unlike as it was in the times of the Ramban when it was in fact impossible to do so. Far beyond the normal excitement that comes with the sense of “boruch shekivanti” (thank G-d that I came to a similar conclusion as someone far greater than me), I was completely overcome and began

to sing and dance around this little room holding the book as one would hold a Torah scroll on Simchas Torah with tears of joy streaming down my face. Yes, that is as subjective as it gets, but to me it was another powerful experiential signpost along my journey, even as I knew that actualizing that potential love for my soul-brothers was and is the labor-intensive work of a lifetime.

BROTHERS FROM THE SAME FATHER

As we enter into the month of Av, we are told (Taanis, 29b) to “decrease in joy” and to avoid litigating matters with a gentile, because the “mazel” of the month is weak. Although when it comes to legal conflicts as well as the various mourning customs of the first nine days of the month, Chassidim are quite particular, when it comes to the instruction to decrease in joy, the Chassidic interpretation which says that “one should decrease all negative things through joy” seems to be the exact opposite of the literal meaning.

The very name of the month, the Hebrew word for father, is clearly an allusion to the relationship between G-d and the Jews as Father and son/sons. And yet, although the father-son relationship represents the classic model for calling upon divine compassion “as a father has mercy on children,” it also represents a standard of accountability that is far beyond the expectations built into any other relationship “as a father reprimands his son, Hashem your G-d reprimands you.” That is because a father’s compassion dictates that he put his son’s long term benefit before his desire to be liked and appreciated by his son in the short term. The two yardsticks by which to measure the health of that relationship are if the child/children

live up to the values and ideals and expectations of their father, and also if all the children love each other for the very fact that they are brothers from the same father.

On the 9th day of Av, the two Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed, almost five hundred years apart. The reason for the first destruction is that the people of that generation indulged in the three major sins, representing a complete rejection of G-d and everything He stands for, or in the words of the Mishna (Sukka 5:1) “our forefathers that were in this place [stood with] their backs to the sanctum and their faces to the East, and they bowed eastward towards the sun.” However, during the period of the Second Temple, when they moved away from this behavior and proclaimed (ibid) “but we, our eyes are to G-d,” the reason for the destruction was “baseless hatred” and the lack of unity that resulted therefrom. Each of these represent the rectification of the two key aspects that are supposed to derive from a healthy father-son relationship. It is specifically because of the unique closeness between Hashem and the Jewish people that these tragedies/corrective lessons had to take place.

When a father is upset with his son and is in the process of trying to teach him an important lesson, he expects to be taken seriously and is in no mood for humor or frivolity. However, the one thing that can defuse the tension is if the son is so overcome with joy over being in close proximity to his father that he can’t help himself and he happily hugs and kisses his father despite the acrimonious atmosphere. Chassidus enables and empowers us to experience the fact of G-d as our Father, not just as a concept or as a source of spiritual inspiration, but as actual reality. This is expressed in the fact that Chassidus enables and demands that one put G-d before his

own life even in situations where Torah law makes no such demand, “like a son who serves his father and mother as he loves them more than his body and soul... and gives himself up to death in order to redeem them...” Additionally, Chassidus enables and demands that a Jew love his fellow Jew as actual spiritual brothers from the same father, to the point of unconditional love and even putting the other person’s physical needs before my spiritual needs.

When you have that kind of relationship with your Father, then the call of the hour, especially in the darkest times of exile when it is easy to lose sight of the fact that our Father in Heaven is closer to us than usual, is “to decrease all negative things through joy.” (In our generation, the Rebbe has empowered us as part of the Messianic process to aim for and achieve an even higher degree of unity with our Father and brothers as will be discussed in the next installment, G-d willing.) And that is one of the Chassidic explanations given for why the yahrtzeit of the Arizal is on the 5th of Av, the exact midpoint of the nine days, because the Arizal (whose name was Yitzchok- he “will” laugh) only brought us to the midpoint by bringing down the mystical ideas which served as the precursor to the revelations of Chassidus. These in turn, made those ideas reality and translated them into actual modes of serving Hashem, thus bringing about the full rectification of the sins and flaws represented by the destruction and mourning of the 9th of Av. May we finally witness how our efforts have succeeded to “transform these days to joy and happiness,” with the complete revelation of Moshiach, “his name is Menachem (the consoler),” in the month of Menachem Av (as it is called according to Jewish custom), immediately, NOW!

WHAT FEIGLIN DOES QUIETLY, WE MUST DO AT FULL VOLUME

By Sholom Ber Crombie
Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

The only one today who stands up and screams that the “Emperor” Bibi is wearing no clothes is Moshe Feiglin, the man who stirred up the entire Land of Israel with the big “Zo Artzeinu” demonstrations and has since withdrawn into political activities within the Likud Party, which have proven to be unrealistic and ineffective. Feiglin and his people have to direct all their strength to exposing where Bibi’s path is liable to lead us and to shock the nation into action, but first and foremost, the obligation falls upon us – the Rebbe’s chassidim.

It’s not easy to agree with Moshe Feiglin these days. After a constant array of aggravating failures by the Likud Party’s “Manhigut Yehudit” (Jewish Leadership) faction in the battle for internal party control, it

appears more than ever before that Feiglin’s dream has gone up in flames. About fifteen years ago, Feiglin was riding a wave of success with the “Zo Artzeinu” civil disobedience campaign, sweeping

throng of people together with him. Today, it all looks different. He has called upon Israeli citizens to join the Likud in large numbers in the hope that the Likud is an all-powerful political megaphone that will always be the voice of the people. All that has to be done is to give it a religious-settler leadership, and everything will be fine in the Jewish state – so he reasoned. However, a decade later, the rosy picture has become a bit fuzzy due to repeated losses and failures, proving how slim the chances were in the struggle to take control of the Likud Party.

It would seem that Feiglin’s plans sounded too logical. Let’s take control of the Likud, he says, and we’ll have our own ruling party. But anyone who understands the Likud’s internal politics, the quarreling, the shady deals, and those who “truly” run the show there – knows that the Likud will never allow a settler wearing a kippa to take over the party. The Likud has far more important interests than pure ideology, and if you need any further proof, there is the example of Feiglin’s demotion to an unrealistic spot on the party’s list of candidates for last year’s Knesset elections,

When the Rebbe warned Shamir – and told him explicitly in his holy name that he would bring him down – the alternatives were Rabin and Peres. But the Rebbe has only one truth, the truth of Torah.

after dues-paying Likud members had elected him to the twentieth slot. Then, the Likud Central Committee conducted an internal vote last month approving the postponement of the election of new committee members for another few years, thereby making certain that Feiglin will be unable to put any of his people on the Central Committee. In short, a political party that has neither values nor democracy will always find ways to push such a person out with the utmost grace and aplomb.

THE EMPEROR – BIBI – HAS NO CLOTHES

Despite all this, Feiglin is right. He's right because he's the only person out there today standing and crying out, "The emperor has no clothes!" He's the only one calling for the need to topple the government of Binyamin Netanyahu – and right away – because our prime minister is planning to make a "disengagement" in Yerushalayim. While all the right-wing Knesset Members think about how to "strengthen Bibi on the right", Feiglin is the only one calling the child by his name: What Bibi wants to accomplish is another transfer and expulsion, not in Gush Katif this time, but in Yerushalayim and the Jordan Valley. Bibi is preparing the foundation for the uprooting of dozens of settlements, placing millions of Jews under the threat of terror organizations, and the only

one making an outcry is Moshe Feiglin.

Anyone who doesn't believe what we've said so far can take a look at the prime minister's recent speech in Yeshivat "Merkaz HaRav" at the main ceremony commemorating Yom Yerushalayim. A very sharp and perceptive journalist made a comparison between Bibi's speech from last year's event and the one this year. "Yerushalayim will not be divided", declared Netanyahu the hero last year. This year, however, he settled for the short blessing of "The city that has been joined together". Even the man's bombastic expressions from years past have been lacking recently. Anything that was good as an election slogan – for the purpose of drawing votes from the nationalist camp – has disappeared from Bibi's lips since he entered the Prime Minister's Office. It's as if we've forgotten that this is the same Bibi who handed over Hevron, who warmly shook the hand of the murderous Arafat (may his name be erased), who proposed to former Syrian President Hafez el-Assad a withdrawal from the Golan Heights, and who actually carried out the Oslo Accords – despite the fact that he had been first elected to the premiership fourteen years ago following the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin in order to reverse these hasty agreements.

But the general public has a poor memory. It remembers Bibi standing right before the elections and proclaiming that he would protect

Yehuda and Shomron, and the people believed him, faithfully and blindly following him, as if he was the most honest person in the world whose word was his bond. Even after Bibi proclaimed the establishment of a (demilitarized) "Palestinian" state, the people still sat in disbelief.

In practical terms, since the elections, Bibi virtually never speaks about his diplomatic proposals. Experts claim that he is planning to carry out an expulsion from the Jordan Valley, as we are being told by his Palestinian partners, such as Abu Mazen (may his name be erased). Without uttering a word, his actions prove his intentions. He is the first prime minister to freeze construction throughout all of Yehuda and Shomron. He is the first prime minister to send bulldozers **on a daily basis** to destroy Jewish homes in Eretz HaKodesh, and all as part of a "temporary" freeze. And he is the first prime minister to paralyze the entire nationalist camp for such a lengthy period of time. Everyone is silent and there isn't anyone to cry out. No one would dare to stand up and announce publicly that the emperor has no clothes, and thus we must stop listening to what everyone is saying – namely that King Bibi is dressed in beautiful and elegant garments and he protects all of Eretz Yisroel, from the Jordan to the Euphrates. The truth is that King Bibi has no clothes and is devoid of all ideology and faith in our Holy Land, and he proceeds to destroy Eretz Yisroel practically every day.

Even in the case of Sharon, we got the message a lot quicker. Sharon simply got up, approached the rostrum at the Herzliya Conference and proclaimed that by 2006, there would be no Jews living in Gush Katif. But Bibi remains quiet. He doesn't speak, he just does, and thus the entire nationalist camp stands with deafening silence.

WHEN WILL WE CRY OUT, IF NOT NOW?

What Feiglin does quietly, Chabad chassidim must do at full volume. We have the clearest “Shulchan Aruch” – the teachings and direction of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. The Rebbe taught us that when a prime minister starts talking about giving up strips of Eretz HaKodesh to terrorists, we must protest against the course he has taken and fight him with all our strength, even at the price of toppling his government.

The Rebbe did not limit his war on shleimus ha’Aretz to checking the available alternatives to the incumbent prime minister.

We must remember that when the Rebbe warned Shamir – and told him explicitly in his holy name that he would bring him down – the alternatives were Rabin and Peres. But the Rebbe has only one truth, the truth of Torah, and therefore, the Rebbe doesn’t look at the fact that from a logical standpoint, all other candidates would undoubtedly be far worse. When a Jew causes harm to the security and wholeness of the People of Israel and the Land of Israel, it is forbidden to allow him to remain in power for even one more day.

In addition, it is forbidden to forget that the left-wing prime ministers failed to destroy a single settlement in Eretz HaKodesh. Even the wretched Oslo Accords that Rabin and Peres brought upon us only came after the Likud government’s breakthrough at the Madrid Conference – after the Likud prime minister went and met with the terrorists and agreed to give them autonomy.

Therefore, the battle against Netanyahu’s dangerous course must be led first and foremost by us – the Chabad chassidim, those most faithful to the Rebbe’s holy words: Any prime minister who speaks with

the terrorists about dividing Eretz HaKodesh, the Rebbe himself promises to fight against him, even at the cost of bringing down his government.

If not now, when? When will we come to save Eretz HaKodesh? If when the bulldozers have already reached Yitzhar and Maale Efraim, and we finally wake up and cry out with a loud voice that Bibi is dangerous to Israel and must be removed from power – what good will all the outcry do then? We must utilize the time available to us now, while things have not yet been agreed upon between Bibi, the terrorists, and the Americans, and initiate a national campaign to arouse the entire right-wing camp with a call and demand to the Knesset Members to pressure the government and the prime minister to put a halt to any discussions of further withdrawals and concessions.

If we won’t wake up now, the dangerous scenario of Gush Katif is liable to return and with even greater fortitude. Bibi is likely to make the same type of maneuver as Sharon did – using the religious parties to close deals with Abu Mazen and Hussein Obama behind the people’s backs. Then, after the expulsion plan has been placed on the government table, he’ll throw them out and bring in the Kadima Party, which will gladly agree to become partners in the expulsion government, telling everyone that it had joined the government solely for the purpose of assisting Bibi to pass his expulsion plan quietly. This is exactly what Sharon did. He used Ichud HaLeumi (the National Union), led by Benny Elon, and the National Religious Party, led by Effie Eitam, in order to plan out the details for throwing Jews out of Gush Katif, and when he no longer needed them, he brought the Labor Party and the ultra-Orthodox factions into his

government and carried out the expulsion.

THE SECURITY OF UNSTABLE REGIMES

There are enough “logical” explanations in order to understand the Rebbe’s clear and unambiguous stance in relation to Israeli governments that speak with terrorists: If a government speaks about territorial compromise, we must fight against it and its policies by any and all legitimate means, even at the cost of its political existence.

One of these explanations has recently started to peck away at the conscience of the nationalist camp, which understands that until a normal government is formed in Eretz Yisroel – in accordance with Torah or at least a leadership based on rational intellect – apparently only unstable regimes will be able to maintain the security of Eretz HaKodesh.

For example, this is what happened with Olmert. He entered the premiership in a state of sheer madness, promising to divide up the entire country. However, his government was unstable and under constant threat, thus he was unable to achieve any of his destructive proposals. Even the peace conference in Madrid, for example, collapsed because of the instability of the Shamir government.

Thus, there’s no reason to worry about the big question: “What will happen if we bring down Bibi, and then [Kadima Party head] Tzippi Livni takes over?” This is because apparently the way to preserve the wholeness of the Land of Israel and its people is to hold elections here every two years. As a result, no government will be able to last long enough to carry out any devious plans to uproot Jews from their homes.

A NEW BRAIN FOR THE SUMMER

By Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd

The Rebbe's "green pastures" maamer at Camp Gan Israel provides food for thought and creases for the brain. The claim of chassidus that deep study changes the brain seemed outlandish at the time, but science is finally catching up... once again.

"Since the body and soul are bound together, integrated into one composite entity, it is obvious that every event occurring to the soul will set off a similar occurrence in the body."

--The Rebbe, Mind Over Matter, p.362.

Ahh. Summer.

No more pencils, no more books... The kids are free! ...but not too free. They need structured activities to keep them safe, happy and well, so the prevalent custom is to send them to camp. They make new friends, learn skills, have fun, and go on trips. They may even do some book learning, especially if they

go to a Chabad camp where learning is a fun yet integral part of the experience.

The integration of spirit, mind and body is a popular theme in wellness circles these days. My first exposure to the concept was on a school trip to Eastern Canada. I was gazing out the bus window while passing through the campus of Mt. Allison University when an odd inscription caught my eye on a very big building with classic looking pillars.

Engraved in stone above the entrance were the words "MENS SANA" which immediately prompted two thoughts. The first was, "Wow, that's a big building just for a *"shvitz,"* and the second was, realizing that the word sauna

has a "u" in it, "How many years has that spelling mistake been there?"

It only took a moment till I caught on for as the bus moved ahead I saw the rest of the inscription, "IN MENS CORPUS." My Latin was never that good but it didn't take much *shvitz* to surmise that this was the athletic building and the message was, "A sound mind in a sound body."

For some, mental and physical health would be rewarding enough for a kid's summer camp experience, but not for the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Looking ahead to the coming academic year, he compared camp to a long jump. If you stand and jump, there's only so far you can leap, but if you take a few steps back and get a run at it, you can jump a great deal farther.

A Jew needs to be involved in study all the time, and at first glance the summer break is a distraction from that mission. The Rebbe points out to us that the child learns more extensively and more energetically in the coming year because of those few steps back in the summer. And that extra *umph* is worth it as we will shortly see.

On one of his visits to Camp Gan Israel in upstate New York, the Rebbe said a chassidic discourse[1] on Psalm 23 that speaks directly to spirit-mind-body integration. In that 1956 talk, thirty years before anyone in academia started taking these things seriously, and fifty years before the concept became popular,[2] he spoke about neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to change physically as a result of mental exercise.

Citing the Zohar[3], the Rebbe explains that "the material of the brain is relative to the intellect, and moreover, the material of the brain becomes

purified[4] by extensive intellectual study, and even more so through intense intellectual concentration because it is a vessel for, and unites with the intellect that dwells within it.” In another talk,[5] he explains the two-way impact of soul–body interactions, going into detail about “physical creases in the brain” that form when comprehension is achieved by virtue of intensive and extensive intellectual effort.[6]

The Rebbe elsewhere[7] expands on the subject, explaining that superficial study does not register physical change whereas much deep study will actually change, not only the structure but even the dynamics of the brain. Moreover the furrows thereby created increase the surface area and hence the mental capacity of the brain.

An additional pedagogical trick he cites (forbidden in any library – *shh*, they’re reading – but mandated in any yeshiva study hall) is to gesture, sway and speak aloud while learning since the more physically involved we are in the learning experience, the better the lessons are remembered.[8]

Of course this all makes a lot of sense now, but it’s only in recent years that secular science and society have started to acknowledge any of this. For centuries the brain was considered a fixed organ and intellect was either a physical result of it or some kind of a ghost in the machinery. Either way, the structure and dynamics of the brain were believed to be as hard wired as your motherboard.

No longer.

We have watched as sea snails double their neural connections in the lab through learning.[9] We have seen the same in

rodents, monkeys and even humans. We have seen how a stimulating environment increases the weight, health, blood flow and oxygenation of the brain.[10] We have seen mentally retarded people train their brains to professional performance.[11] We have discovered how to cure dyslexia and learning disabilities by using specific exercises to build and reinforce new neural networks.[12] We can use imagination to cure illness[13] and computerized brain exercises to eliminate ADHD[14] and slow down aging.[15] Brain training software didn’t even exist a decade ago and now it’s a 300 million dollar industry.[16]

Returning to the “green pastures” discourse[1], the Rebbe drew an analogy, comparing that infinitely miraculous, dynamic place between our temples to the Temple in Jerusalem. The meat of the matter is that just as the physical brain is organically engineered to be the nexus of spirit, mind and body within man, so too is the site of the Temple physically predisposed and sensitively primed to serve its specific function of unifying G-d, mankind and the physical world at large.

There’s an expression, “What happens at camp stays at camp,” but in this case it is not so. The Rebbe’s green pastures discourse is itself a “Mind Over Matter” phenomenon, exemplifying the newfound synergy of Torah and science, a modern fulfillment of an ancient prophecy about the times of Moshiach.[17]

Poetically, it was Gan Israel campers who came up with the song, “We want Moshiach NOW!” It’s been repeated so often, so intensely, and so vocally, with clapping and dancing, joy and anticipation that I’m sure the very foundation of

the Temple mount is resonating and ready for the time of all times when not just the kids, but we all, will be as free as a camper on a summer’s day.

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.

NOTES:

[1] Talk of 16 Tamuz 5716 (1956)

[2] as explained at length in the 2007 NY Times bestseller, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, by Norman Doidge (Penguin).

[3] Zohar III p.140a, and p.262a

[4] similar to discoveries of Michael Merzenich who found that neurons that fire together wire together, enabling them to fire in a synchrony that increases their signal/noise ratio, thus “purifying” both the medium and the message.

[5] 23 Tevet 5720 (1960)

[6] Seifer HaMaamarim 5687 (1927), p.254

[7] Seifer HaSichos, 13 Menachem-Av 5750 (1990), p.120

[8] Talmud Bavli, Eruvin p.54a

[9] <http://erickandel.blogspot.com/2007/09/1-kandels-big-discovery.html>

[10] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Rosenzweig

[11] <http://www.cbc.ca/documentaries/thelens/2008/fixingmybrain/>

[12] www.learningbreakthroughprogram.com

[13] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Placebo>

[14] <http://www.playattention.com/ABOUT-US/PABrochure.pdf>

[15] <http://www.positscience.com/science>

[16] <http://www.sharpbrains.com/market-report/>

[17] Likkutei Sichos, Vol.15, p.42ff.

STRAIGHT TALK ON B'SURAS HA'GEULA

*On the subject of B'suras HaGeula and bringing people close to Chabad, Rabbi Shimi Goldstein, shliach to Pushkar, India is worth listening to. He has changed the lives of countless young people and brought them to Toras HaChassidus. Many have since established Chassidische homes. * We spoke to R' Goldstein about the issues facing Chabad, even the tough ones. * Special Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim.*

Those who visit old-time Chabad communities will discover new faces – dozens and even hundreds of Chassidim. What is bringing people to Chassidus and hiskashrus to the Rebbe now, after Gimmel Tammuz?

The facts speak for themselves. Today, 16 years after Gimmel Tammuz 5754, people from all sorts of backgrounds, who were not educated in this way and certainly didn't see the Rebbe face to face, are becoming mekushar to the Rebbe himself and are becoming Chassidim with uncompromising devotion and bittul, with all the subtle hergeshim

that we know from farbrengens of Tomchei T'mimim.

When a Chassid makes a *cheshbon ha'nefesh* (spiritual accounting) about the devotion of *geborenors* (those born and bred Chassidim) to the Rebbe and where the *gevorenors* (those who came to Chassidus later in life) are, sometimes the comparison is painful to contemplate.

It's a phenomenon without an explanation except for the simple fact that the Rebbe is an inyan **atzmi** without changes and he is literally *chai v'kayam*.

Out in the world, especially in the arts and spirituality circles, people are attracted to

charismatic figures that they never met whom they admire and whose ways they adopt. Yet you say this is an inyan **atzmi** ...

Yes, Hashem created the world with balances of *k'dusha* and the "other side." Eastern religions speak about subtle issues of the spirit that are mamash the "other side" of *k'dusha*.

I had an example of this as soon as I went to India for the first time. It was a few months after the successful promotion of the project *Lirot et Malkeinu*, showing videos of the Rebbe MH"M on Motzaei Shabbos in Chabad communities. I arrived in Poona where there is a very famous avoda zara center and I found out that every Saturday night all the admirers of the guru gather together, wrapped in white, and watch a video of his lectures. He died a number of years ago.

I'm not talking about admiration for the Rebbe's teachings or his powerful leadership or his prophetic vision; nor about the tremendous inspiration that he gives forth or even the miracles that he does. I'm talking mainly about the bittul and hiskashrus to the Rebbe himself, *ahava atzmis* for the Rebbe from people who never saw him and suddenly they are living with the Rebbe with such a love and hiskashrus that at the center of their lives is the desire to do what the Rebbe wants in thought, speech, and action in daily life,

lights in vessels.

You don't have this in the "other side." Over there, the admiration is based on intense development of one's sense of self even at the expense of disengaging from the material world, eschewing luxuries and even through self-flagellation. The admiration is for "giluyim" that will help in their personal advancement.

The way it works is that a Jew connects to the Rebbe by means of giluyim, but surely the people who came to the Rebbe after Gimmel Tammuz are missing all the giluyim that we had in the past?

You need giluyim when you are working with *kochos ha'gluyim* (revealed faculties of the soul) but for *hiskashrus* "atzmis" to the Rebbe, it's not necessary. People from all walks of life are becoming Chassidim in a way that can be described as "atzmi," with the "essence" gradually affecting the conscious and revealed layers of the person as "the essence expresses itself in the faculties."

Furthermore, the Rebbe doesn't remain a *baal chov* (a debtor) and many of those who are becoming Chassidim also receive astonishing giluyim from the Rebbe that perhaps even old-time Chassidim did not have and sometimes find hard to believe.

We had a girl here from a religious background who became close to the Rebbe and after some months of learning she flew to the Rebbe for Tishrei. As soon as she walked into 770 she opened a volume of *Igros Kodesh* to a letter that the Rebbe wrote to a Chassid in which he said he was happy to meet him face to face and he hoped that it was "only the beginning of our encounter."

At a *farbrengen* there, she said she wished she could have a dollar from the Rebbe. One of the women from Crown Heights who heard



Nobody knows him by the name Shimshon. To the world, “Shimi” is his name. Among his chevra from India, he’s known as “Shimi HaMachzir,” for the many people who return to their Father in heaven through him.

When you meet him, as I did, it’s hard to see the charisma. He’s thin, tall but a bit stooped. He speaks quietly, almost in a whisper. He left for Pushkar ten years ago where he opened a Chabad house and where he spends most of the year. Even now, so many years later, he still lives under uncomfortable conditions, but that’s what there is in distant India and especially in Pushkar which is even more remote.

Pushkar is a filthy city which contains within it all the dirt of the world, both material and spiritual. The main attraction in Pushkar is Pushkar Lake, which is considered sacred and is visited by hundreds of thousands of western tourists. On the shores of the lake are numerous temples where the Indians have their ceremonies. There are idols everywhere. Pushkar attracts thousands of people who are “searching for themselves,” including numerous Jews who are looking to satisfy their souls in the wrong places. This is why Shimi and his wife Zelda and their children live there.

He has acquired a reputation for his excellent shiurim in Chassidus. He speaks deeply but directly to the neshama. He has shiurim morning, noon and evening. Some have few attendees and some have many; there are also many chavrusos, the focus of his work. When learning one-on-one it’s hard to withstand his personal charm that comes from the depths of his neshama, and mainly from the truth that he presents and represents.

He spends eight months a year in Pushkar. In the four hot summer months, when Israelis leave the burning city, he goes back to Israel, where he maintains contact with people he met in India and helps strengthen the commitments to Jewish life that people made there. Some of them are already in yeshivos or various Jewish schools. Several dozen have already gotten married and set up Chassidic homes.

When R’ Goldstein talks about tourists in Pushkar he says, “They are different than other tourists to the Far East. In Pushkar they are seeking deeper layers of the soul. A Chabad house right there provides them with what they could not find in Eretz Yisroel.

“When I wonder about why Israelis visit Pushkar, I don’t find any logical reasons except for the fact that this is a birur of a place that needs it. The most amazing thing is that at the center of impurity, hundreds of Jews return to their Father in heaven and connect with the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach.”

Shimi is also the founder of *Livot et Malkein*. The custom today is to show a video of the Rebbe in shul on Motzaei Shabbos. Shimi was the first to institute this practice, and many others have followed his lead.

this surprised her by sending her a dollar from the Rebbe to Eretz Yisroel after Tishrei. What was the date on the dollar? 18 Elul, the day she went to the Rebbe.

Or another gilui, which was really a Balshemske story: A religious couple who were married for a few years without children wrote to the Rebbe and asked for a bracha. In the letter they opened to, the Rebbe wrote that a Jew needs to have complete trust in Hashem that He will fulfill their requests, while doing what needs to be done in the natural way of things. After a few months we got an email from them in which the wife described the dream she’d had that night. In her dream, she and her husband were in the house of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin (though they had never seen the Rebbetzin or the house). The wife begged her husband to approach the Rebbe and the Rebbe received them with a broad smile, blessed them with a daughter and showered them with brachos. The Rebbe even gave some horaos.

The miracle occurred; nine months later their daughter was born.

Today too, boruch Hashem, many people are zoche to giluyim through the Igros Kodesh or other ways that the Rebbe chooses.

Is there truth to the claim that it’s much easier to be mekarev people to the Rebbe in the Far East or South America?

That’s an illusion. People imagine that there are long lines of young people at Chabad houses in India just waiting to get involved in Jewish life. Unfortunately, that is still not the reality. What *is* correct is that the psychological state of the tourist is more free and open. He has left behind his family, the biased media, and responsibilities. Traveling among non-Jews often wakes up dormant feelings about Jewish identity.

The main chiddush is that in India it’s much easier for the shluchim to fully devote themselves from morning till night solely to personal encounters. There is no Jewish k’hilla, no donors, no relationships to make with the municipality, no communal figures to court, and no rallies to organize. You don’t even have to get the kids ready for school in the morning. All

there is to do is talk to Jews about Judaism.

Back in Eretz Yisroel (or other locations) too, when shluchim are personally involved in speaking to people one-on-one they are very successful and on the flipside, even in the Far East, if you are not involved in being mekarev people, it just doesn't happen.

CIRCUMVENTING THE QUESTIONING STAGE

Let's talk about kiruv in general. There must be plenty of debates with people who have questions such as: Why don't you go to the army, how G-d allowed a Holocaust to happen and why do we need a Rebbe when we can go directly to G-d. What do you answer?

The Rebbe writes that we should not debate. This is the best course to follow even though it's very hard not to fall into it. The truth is that I don't see a point in answering these specific questions. Usually, if the person's background is far from Torah and mitzvos, you can't be sure you will give him a convincing answer. They are often not a "keili" for it.

The best thing to do is circumvent the questioning stage and focus on the basics. Get the person to come and learn Tanya. You see people get involved and after learning Tanya for a while and attending farbrengens, the questions just don't bother them as they did in the earlier stage. When you get to the second stage, those who want answers are already keilim to receive them.

There are kiruv movements that focus on questions and answers, but we don't need this. We get to the source. Chassidus gets them to the point where they don't have these questions. True, it sometimes happens that in order for a person to start learning Chassidus there is

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no choice and you have to talk to him about specific topics that bother him, but you respond just because you have to. The minute you can, you need to treat the root problem; it's a pity to waste time on other things.

You can see this approach in many answers of the Rebbe. The Rebbe answers briefly just to assuage the questioner while stressing before and after that you simply need to learn Chassidus and everything will work out. I'll tell you a secret – most of the effort I put in and the debates I have with people are only to get them to agree to stay at the Chabad house and learn; the rest will take care of itself.

Can you give us an example?

Someone comes to the Chabad house – in this case a religious Jew – and he asks why Chabad doesn't sleep in the sukka. There is no point in starting to answer on a point by point basis because in front of a crowd which doesn't understand the fine points in the Rambam and the explanation in the Rebbe's sicha there is a great likelihood, if he's somewhat smart and cynical, that he will "prove" to everyone that we pervert the halacha, G-d forbid.

The same goes for why in Chabad we daven late. Usually, these questions are asked in the first stage as a result of opposition and general incitement against us, and even if not, he is not a keili (to want) to understand the answer. It

is only once he begins to understand a little bit of what Chassidus is, what ruchnius is, what t'filla is about, what a Rebbe is etc. that he can understand that real t'filla is davka after learning Chassidus at length and not necessarily at *neitz* (sunrise). The same is true with every issue; the more you delve into the root of the matter, the fewer questions there will be.

That is what Chassidus is about, not providing answers to questions but showing the truth in such a concrete way that the questions don't arise in the first place, or at least they won't bother him (like the story with the Alter Rebbe who through a niggun lifted the people to a place above the intellect where they had no questions).

In your experience, what is the best thing to learn with people in order to reveal the truth to them?

From the Rebbe's letters it seems that while you can't answer that categorically, he does refer to certain basic s'farim like Tanya, kuntres U'Maayan, etc. – interesting topics that deal with spirituality and man's inner workings, which are fundamental and easy to understand.

As to the way to learn, in my humble opinion you need to learn Tanya in a way that each chapter is a topic. You have to prepare it well, with all the commentaries, in such a way that the one giving the shiur can talk about the chapter in

“I’m willing to look at the Rebbe but when the Rebbe stops talking for the singing and they show the crowd of Chassidim on the screen, I can’t look. So many dosim (derogatory word for religious Jews) at once...”

an interesting way and not just focus on the words in the perek (although of course you also need to read the words).

Another important thing, from my experience, is learning b’chavrusa one-on-one. Better ten separate chavrusas (even if you learn the same perek with some of them) than a class. When you learn one-on-one you are gearing it towards the student and you can speak about whatever comes up as it relates to what you’re learning. In letters to people who gave shiurim in Chassidus the Rebbe said they should also talk *arum*, i.e. farbreng about Chassidic life and share Chassidic stories and insights, which some people find hard to do in a general class.

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THE QUESTION: WHY CHABAD?

One of the outstanding successes of the Chabad houses in India is that many of those they are mekarev become Chassidim. How do you transform someone into a Chassid of the Rebbe?

The main point is this - that the mekabel has to feel, from the first moment, from all the shiurim and stories and atmosphere, that the Chabad house, Chassidus and the Rebbe are not things that are additional to Judaism, G-d forbid, but they are authentic Judaism! Chassidus is not just another book

of commentary on the Torah and the Rebbe is not, G-d forbid, just another smart rabbi who knows a lot.

Chassidus is the p’nim, the inner dynamic of Judaism in our generation, just as the Gemara was not just a commentary to the Mishna and you cannot understand the Mishna without the Gemara. The Rebbe is not another rabbi nor is he the biggest rabbi in our generation. He is the Moshe Rabbeinu of the generation who transmits Torah to our generation in the manner appropriate to it. Chabad is not another derech; rather, it is the way to fulfill Torah and mitzvos wholeheartedly.

A Litvishe fellow from B’nei Brak who does business in India and is familiar with the work of Chabad houses and our outlook once told me that he had come to the conclusion that Chabad is not a provincial Chassidus but Klal Yisroel.

When you present things this way **matter-of-factly**, from the very start you instill a sense of strength that he won’t feel anywhere else and you forestall a lot of questions that arise for someone getting involved who along the way encounters other branches of Judaism. They often wonder: How come in a Chabad house there are (only) Chabad s’farim and no s’farim of other Chassidic groups? How come our bittul to the Rebbe is extreme? Or a simpler question – why davka Chabad?

In India, where most of the people are from a secular background, it’s much easier to convey these points, but even under tougher circumstances, when dealing with people with a religious background or when in Israel, you can get these messages across, especially if you want to transform them into Lubavitchers.

But if in the end people don’t get it?

We don’t know who gets it and who doesn’t. We see how the Rebbe is running things and not us. We can just try and “if you toil and find, believe that.” Sometimes it seems like so many events were orchestrated from Above in order for a particular neshama to reach your Chabad house at the time and under the right conditions to absorb the point, and he has spent a month on shiurim etc. and you were sure that he got it and then all of a sudden, for whatever reason, he drops it all and walks away.

We mainly see the other type. The person who shows up with all the negatives that make it unlikely for him to accept Judaism and loaded with opposition and defenses and you tell yourself (and others tell you, too) to drop him, there’s no point in investing in him, and then all of a sudden the Rebbe grabs him from out of nowhere and he gets the point, internalizes it and feels it.

I’ll give you an extreme example to show how these things are not up to us. A kibbutznik was working in New York and didn’t have a place to shower every day. A good friend told him that in the nearby neighborhood of Crown Heights there’s a pool with showers. The guy starts going to the mikva every day at five in the morning before work. Some weeks go by without his realizing that 770 is across the street. The bachurim got to work on him and

he starts going to 770. In the end, he went along with the T'mimim who went on shlichus to Pushkar and learned here with us. That is one example out of many.

You cannot figure out who yes and who no, but you see an incredible process here of neshamos wandering around and then from Above they are sent to the Chabad house in order to give them the opportunity to choose life.

The next stage is connecting people to the Rebbe. How do you get people to believe that the Rebbe is Moshiach?

The Rebbe Rayatz once asked one of the Chassidim – how is it possible that in the shul where you work there are people without beards? The man answered that a beard was impossible, referring to the spirit in America at that time. The Rebbe said: “But the question is, how do you sleep well at night when they don’t have a beard?” In other words, if you cared, you would at least try, and you would probably ultimately find a way to get the message across and you would be successful.

Before anything else, we have to have a burning desire to convey the message. The question is only how to convey it.

As a general rule, regardless of background, in order to make an impact there first has to be **kiruv b’ofen klali** (general closeness) which is called in Chassidus *hashpaa chitzonis b’often makif*, and then **hashpaa p’nimis** (internal influence).

For practical purposes, we can divide people into three general categories: **1) those with a secular outlook:**

A kibbutznik once walked in here, the kind who comes from the kibbutz which throws out Lubavitchers who come on Mivtza Chanuka. He told me explicitly that he hates religious people but



he still wants to check out religion. After a softening up period he agreed to watch a video of the Rebbe every day. I noticed that every so often he lowered his eyes and didn’t watch and then he would look up.

I asked him why he was doing that and he said, “I’m willing to look at the Rebbe but when the Rebbe stops talking for the singing and they show the crowd of Chassidim on the screen, I can’t look. So many *dosim* (derogatory word for religious Jews) at once...”

To Jews with a secular outlook there is no ideological problem with the Rebbe being Moshiach and they don’t even have a problem, ideologically, with religion, but they do have emotional difficulties getting close with religious people. The first

thing we try to do is “draw them with thick ropes of love” and if the barrier is removed and we are able to bring them to a state of *hashpaa p’nimis*, then they usually accept it all as a package deal. Hashem, Toras Emes, Moshe Rabbeinu, Moshe of the generation, etc.

This guy, after two weeks of *kiruv chitzoni*, *makif*, could be spoken to in a way of *hashpaa p’nimis*. At this stage, when you sit down to learn about Judaism it doesn’t make a difference what part of Torah it is. The approach is that the messages we convey from the Rebbe are an integral part of Judaism. There is no difference between the Torah of Moshe to the T’hillim of Dovid HaMelech, between the Chassidus of the Baal Shem Tov and the Tanya of the Alter Rebbe and the D’var Malchus

of the Rebbe MH”M.

When things are presented truthfully, that it’s all the same Judaism, then just as Judaism is new for them, so are the concepts about Rebbe and Moshiach. If they accept Judaism, then the emuna in the Rebbe MH”M is also accepted as part of the package.

This creates a strong foundation so that when they reach the point of analyzing the specific details of a given issue, this will be the foundation of their outlook, with belief in the Rebbe as a legitimate part of Judaism and not some external thing that has to be examined.

The second category: those from a religious background – some of them are sensitized against Lubavitchers and what they represent and here, too, of course, the first thing to do is break barriers. We are most likely to get questions from those with a Torah background. We present it matter-of-factly but they will ask good questions such as: How come many rabbanim whom I know don’t know this? Or, that’s all very nice but we haven’t seen the Rebbe for 16 years ... Or they will ask you that disturbing question – How come there are Lubavitchers who don’t believe that?

These questions need to be addressed, and there are answers. When we first started out on shlichus, we thought we didn’t have much of a chance to influence this category of people but we have learned that it pays to try. Some of the events in Eretz Yisroel in recent years have caused them to ask questions about their own religious identity. So among those who come to India, their place in the religious world is not fully developed and it’s an opportunity to expose them to Chassidus and the Rebbe. The facts speak for themselves. There are quite a few from religious-Zionist homes who

started off mocking but were reached first in a makif kind of way, and then in a p’nimius’dike way, until they themselves became “lamplighters”.

The third category: those from a “black hat” background – They aren’t touring in India. You’ll have to ask those shluchim who interact with them ... but one time I met with “black hat” Jew who was working in kiruv and I showed him in s’farim what the Rebbe himself says about his identity as Moshiach. He was stunned and asked why this isn’t publicized. Of course, from here until becoming a Lubavitcher is a long way. By the way, he went to 770 to check things out and when he returned he said that although it’s the truth, it doesn’t resonate with him...

The way to reach them is to learn the Rebbe’s teachings with them, to show them sichos of the Rebbe in s’farim or on video and mainly to show them how the Rebbe himself says he’s Moshiach etc. which many of them don’t know.

It is 16 years since 3 Tammuz, 5754, and we still don’t have the Geula. How do you look at this day?

I don’t pride myself on having opinions on the subject ... The Rebbe created a reality here and we can only look at this reality without mixing in our own ideas. The Rebbe, starting in 1951, spoke about our being in the seventh generation and how the Geula is coming in this generation. Every Chassid understood that the Rebbe is the one who is leading us to our Land. Starting in 5750, and mainly in 5751-5752, the Rebbe stated – and everyone can see this in edited sichos – that we need to publicize that there is a prophet in our generation and there is a clear prophecy that Moshiach is coming now, and we need to prepare the world for him. **The biggest proof**

is that everybody, without exception, understood this from the sichos at the time they were said.

Just take a look at the *Kfar Chabad* magazine of that time and read the diaries that were written then. In 5753 and 5754, nearly every day, the Rebbe encouraged the singing of Yechi. I was a bachur in yeshiva g’dola (post high school) at the time and the rosh yeshiva farbrenged time and again and said our t’fillos, our dollars and all our giluyim from the Rebbe are all one essential point: Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L’olam Va’ed. That wasn’t considered radical at all back then. It was very simple when the Rebbe said it in the sichos and showed us himself that we are on the threshold of Geula.

What about publicizing about Moshiach?

R’ Reuven Dunin once said: What did you understand about the Rebbe before 3 Tammuz that you stopped understanding after 3 Tammuz?

My question is: What difference is there to the world between 27 Adar and 3 Tammuz? Why is it that after 27 Adar, 5752, when according to the rules of nature the Rebbe couldn’t get up out of his chair, we still publicized that the Rebbe is Moshiach and is about to redeem us?

I remember that on Simchas Torah, 5753, after the Rebbe encouraged the singing of Yechi for the first time with strong nods of his head, that we came back from Tahalucha and distinguished people told us that now it was permissible and necessary to publicize Yechi in the newspapers. Nobody dared to say that back in 5745 the Rebbe said it pushes Jews away. Everybody was convinced that the Rebbe was about to be revealed as Moshiach and we had to **publicize** this. In fact, **all the**

shluchim were photographed with a Yechi sign with the greatest publicity. Let's be honest; to outsiders, what difference is there between 27 Adar and 3 Tammuz?

For those who still differentiate, came along 27 Adar, 5754, when the Rebbe's medical condition worsened and it was even more bizarre to publicize that the Rebbe is Moshiach and yet – for all those who remember that period – all of Chabad was busy with this to the point that it said Yechi on *Sichat HaShavua*.

Ohr HaT'filla has selections from Chassidus on parts of davening and is published by the "official" wing of Kehot. Volume 4, which was published in Iyar, 5754 (see introduction), is a compilation of explanations on Boruch Sh'Amar and on. In the first selection, not in the preface or introduction, and not by way of explanation, it quotes no less and no more than a paragraph from the sicha of Chayei Sarah, 5752, about kabbalas p'nei Moshiach.

How did we go publicize that the Rebbe is going to get up and redeem us when his situation was critical? Nobody (no mashpia or rav) said that under the circumstances it would be difficult to explain or that it would be a chilul Hashem, etc. I don't see a logical difference between after 27 Adar, 5754, and 3 Tammuz.

If all of Chabad spoke with one voice and said, "Rabbosai, nothing changed in regard to the main substance of the matter. True, we did not think it would work out like this, but it does not contradict the fundamentals of our belief; on the contrary, there are many Torah sources to support what we're saying."

If we did that, we would be at least as successful in conveying the message as we were after 27 Adar, 5754. As it says in Tanya, chapter 29, when they saw the truth there

Nothing changed in our belief. We are still going with what the Rebbe instilled in us in 5752, 5753, 5754. We're not going back to 5730 to talk about the approaching Geula, nor to 5745 when the Rebbe said that saying he's Moshiach pushes Jews away, but to 5753-5754 when the Rebbe publicly acknowledged that he is Moshiach.

were no doubts. The same is true here. Everybody saw clearly what today is apparent to every "Meshichist." Nothing changed in our belief. We are still going with what the Rebbe instilled in us in 5752, 5753, 5754. We're not going back to 5730 to talk about the Geula that is coming, nor to 5745 when the Rebbe said that saying he's Moshiach pushes Jews away, but to 5753- 5754 when the Rebbe publicly acknowledged that he is Moshiach. We don't need to conquer objectives that we already conquered.

Why is it important to publicize the identity of Moshiach? Is it equivalent in importance to publicizing the B'suras HaGeula, or is there an order of priorities?

Plenty was written on this in 5753 by the chozrim, mashpiim, and roshei yeshivos in *Kfar Chabad* and it should be photocopied and republished. They definitely explained it better than I can now. I'll only say that after the Rebbe brought us to this point in 5753-5754, and throughout Chabad they understood that this is what the Rebbe wants and that is what everyone did, we cannot go back without betraying the Rebbe, *ch"v*.

As someone involved in kiruv, I can tell you that here at the Chabad house with irreligious Jews, it's all one thing, like explaining that the Geula from Egypt was through Moshe, so too our Geula will be through the tzaddik of the seventh generation.

Those who work with people for whom it is hard to accept the identity of Moshiach should work to come up with a strategy of not *what* to say but *how* to say it. Sometimes it does not pay to jump right in and it is worth waiting a few minutes, sometimes a few hours, and sometimes a longer period of time until people accept you. On the other hand, it is sometimes worthwhile speaking about it immediately so they won't say you are hiding the truth. It all depends on the shliach, on the audience, on the place and the timing, as the Rebbe himself said.

The bottom line is that at the Kinus HaShluchim 5752, the Rebbe told us that we have to prepare the world not only for Geula but for the goel, that there is someone descended from Yehuda who deserves to be Moshiach and according to the announcement of the Rebbe his father-in-law, the only Moshiach of our generation etc. (see in source cited). And at

the Kinus HaShluchim 5753, the **Rebbe encouraged the singing of Yechi in front of the shluchim.**

TO STRENGTHEN THE CHASSIDISHE HERGESH

There are those who say that things are being added, hergeshim, and that we can't veer from what the Rebbe said.

After 3 Tammuz they suddenly added a new rule that you can't add hergeshim. They always taught us that just as the Torah teaches us that avodas Hashem is based on kabbalas ol and carrying out the goal, in the same way the Torah teaches us that we need to work with the tools we have at our disposal. As the Rebbe explains how Pesach Sheini came from the people, as did dividing the land and the cry of "ad masai."

When they try to play dumb after 3 Tammuz and say this to the young T'mimim, that's pure demagoguery.

Chassidus emphasizes the inyan of kabbalas ol and absolute obedience, but we were also taught not to be overly rigid. How many farbrengens did we spend on stories of Chassidim who were able to accomplish certain inyanim by the Rebbeim through their own initiative? When talking about the seventh generation there are countless stories of Chassidim who did things that are not written anywhere and what they did was not always to the liking of the elder Chassidim, and yet they accomplished great things.

Starting with the signing to get the Rebbe to accept the nesius, then the stories of Itzke Gansbourg a"h from the early years, when young Chassidim did things that were not written explicitly in the sichos to the annoyance of the elder Chassidim, who even complained to the Rebbe about it (by the way, one of those times in the 50's – so

I heard directly from R' Itzke – some Chassidim wrote a seven page letter to the Rebbe about how the hafatzas ha'maayanos in Eretz Yisroel was not a positive thing, r"l. The Rebbe responded with three words: *v'shochavta v'arva shnosecha* – you shall lie down and your sleep will be sweet).

You can see it with mitvza t'fillin when some young Chassidim thought they should do it in Times Square while the elder Chassidim said it was forbidden to put t'fillin on there and that is not what the Rebbe meant ... and then skip to Chaf-Ches Sivan, which only popped up at the end of the 90's through one person's initiative, and there are many other examples.

In fact, back to our topic, how was it that Yechi was sung in front of the Rebbe even though the Rebbe said not to publicize it? What did they tell us? Rabbanim and mashpiim explained how crowning the king has to come from the people and we can't wait for the Rebbe to ask us to coronate him. They supported their point with stories etc.

Today too, when together with Chassidishe hergeshim things are done to strengthen the point, especially when the Rebbe told us "do all that you can," then every hergesh that can add to the inyan, as long as it doesn't go against halacha, is very welcome.

EMUNA COMES FROM THE ESSENCE OF THE SOUL

16 years have passed since 3 Tammuz 5754. People outside of Chabad were sure that our emuna would weaken but it hasn't. How do you explain this?

"Etzem" doesn't change, says Chassidus. The question is how do we process that. That's the whole inyan of Chassidus Chabad and the revelations of the Rebbeim in their

respective generations, to internalize the emuna so that it is real and goes from the etzem ha'nefesh to all the revealed kochos (the maamer of "V'Ata Tetzaveh" 5752). When it is that way, a person knows with his daas that this is the way it is!

The same is true here. Our emuna in the Rebbe MH"M is not a hope or a wish but clear knowledge in the etzem ha'nefesh which is also understood by the mind and felt in the heart. So the more time goes on, a person who believes has his faith strengthened. It's like the person waiting to give birth; if in the ninth month nothing happens, in the tenth month they are waiting even more eagerly because they know it is imminent. If it's a makif kind of emuna though, the more time passes, the weaker it gets.

Tell me honestly – how can we explain to ourselves, to others, that so much time has elapsed since those amazing sichos and the Rebbe still wasn't nisgaleh?

I want to tell you about something that touched me greatly. The little girl of someone who became a baal t'shuva through us, died. She was not even one year old. When I went to see him, he told me that if his personal situation somehow hastened the Geula, then he accepted this test.

What still bothered him, though, was how it fit with all the brachos he got from the Rebbe before she died. I asked him: "So what comforted you?"

He said that he suddenly "got" that this is what 3 Tammuz is about, along the lines of how the Rebbe explained the Akeidas Yitzchok, that Avrohom's test was not just that he agreed to bind Yitzchok but mainly that following this command did not make sense and he did it anyway. You can understand intellectually that there is something beyond the intellect

which defies all logic but can still be part of the process of bringing the Geula, even the concealment of 3 Tammuz 5754.

For those who want to understand how it makes sense or they want to be able to explain it to others, there are books like *Ata Yodaati* which say there are situations like this before the Geula. That is like the explanations after the fact about how Hashem did not contradict Himself when he told Avrohom to bring Yitzchok up.

DESPITE THE DIFFERENCES – LOVE EVERYONE!

We all learn the same sichos and yet there are differences of opinion. What's the reason for that? Is there a way to overcome the differences?

There were always differences of opinion and up to a point, it is legitimate. But if someone says that the editorial staff submitted their own radical ideas to the Rebbe in the sichos of 5751-5752, that isn't called a difference of opinion. (By the way, this is something I heard from someone in Nachala and thanks to him we produced video clips on Moshiach and Geula where anyone can see that the Rebbe himself said those phrases.)

In any case, even when the differences cross the line, we still have to love every Jew. As people who work with the "outside" we know good and well that when it's convenient for us we separate between views and people. We can love kibbutznikim who think the opposite of us and put up with them and not get angry with them and do them favors. Not to mention our love for wealthy people who don't think like us, and in their case we do very well separating our views from the



person (or his money).

All the more so amongst ourselves; while not compromising on our faith we need to love – or at least get along with in our thoughts, speech, and action – every Jew we see, even if he's a Lubavitcher who thinks differently than us. It's easy to say but requires a lot of inner work.

We can't end without mentioning your project *Lirot et Malkeinu*, which produces videos of the Rebbe according to the parsha of the week which are shown in Chabad communities every Motzaei Shabbos.

It's another proof that the Rebbe is running things. The Rebbe said regarding situations of concealment that the Rebbe will find a way to reach the Chassidim. I think the video on Motzaei Shabbos is one of those ways the Rebbe has of conveying messages to the Chassidim. When I started it, I had no idea how it would develop. Nobody sat and thought about how to convey the Rebbe's messages to Anash, how to connect with the Rebbe.

I heard someone say that they should do in the shul in Nachala what they do in 770, to show videos of the Rebbe every Motzaei Shabbos. For some reason I

latched on to this and I decided to do it even though it was a bit crazy to edit a video just for three shuls (the shul in Nachalat Har Chabad and two shuls in Kfar Chabad thanks to R' Itche Levinson). Without a plan or much thinking about it, the project grew.

At that time, putting up screens in shuls was unacceptable and some rabbanim vehemently opposed it. (By the way, I spoke to Itzke Gansbourg about it and he told me that in the early years of the nesius he brought groups of children to mitvza matza in Kfar Chabad and showed them slides in the main shul. This aroused the ire of some Chassidim, who were concerned about kavod Lubavitch and wrote about it to the Rebbe. The Rebbe responded that they should show him where it says in Shulchan Aruch that you can't watch slides in a shul).

We often see open hashgachos pratiyos when segments prepared months in advance have an amazing connection to events that took place the week they were shown.

May we immediately see the Rebbe and be able to all sing:
Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu
V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach
L'olam Va'ed.

B'SURAS HA'GEULA IN MEVO CHORON

By Nosson Avrohom

It was a long road from religious-Zionism to Chabad. The fire of Chassidus burned in his heart yet he was repeatedly blocked from realizing his dream of learning in Tomchei T'mimim.
* *The story of Rabbi Elisha Avni.*

When Rabbi Elisha Avni began his shlichus nearly forty years ago, the nucleus of the residents in Mevo Choron were ardent Zionists and they didn't see eye to eye with him. The fact that he had belonged to the group of enthusiastic followers of Rav Kook made things somewhat easier for him; nevertheless, any Chabad lecturers he brought out there to speak had to be approved by the yishuv's rav after careful scrutiny.

Today, his work in the yishuv consists primarily of shiurim in Tanya and Chassidus for men and women and farbrengens on special days in the calendar with guest lecturers. A lot of work is done with children through Tzivos Hashem.

"We are big believers in reaching parents through the children. The adults often maintain certain stereotypes that make them keep their distance and it's the children who will lead the way, ultimately, to the Geula."

Mevo Choron is a yishuv situated on a hill north of the Ayalon Valley near the biblical Ayalon. According to some opinions, the yishuv is on the ruins of Nov, the city of Kohanim, and this is why the yishuv was called Beit Nova by the Arabs. The yishuv is in the territory of Binyamin, in the valley where Yehoshua bin Nun



Rabbi Elisha Avni

said, "Shemesh b'Givon dom, v'yorei'ach b'Emek Ayalon." The yishuv was founded by people from the Ezra youth movement in 1970 as a kibbutz of the settlement movement of Poalei Agudas Yisroel. About 200 families live on the yishuv today, most of whom are religious-Zionists.

After the Six Day War, a large meeting was held at Givat Michoel near Nes Tziyona, and it was decided that a yishuv would be founded on the land liberated in the war. The goal was to start a yishuv that would combine Torah and work. They selected Rabbi Yona Dobrat as rav of the yishuv. For a long period of time there were a few dozen families living there.

In the winter of 5730 the nucleus of families moved to Emek Ayalon. It was only after the Yom Kippur War that they moved to the present location and built permanent homes. The site was chosen by the settlement division of the Poalei Agudas Yisroel party. It is near other yishuvim of the movement – Shalavim, Chofetz Chaim, B'nei R'eim, and Yesodot.

R' Elisha Avni was born in one of the places most identified with the Mizrachi movement – Kfar HaRoeh. He was raised on religious-Zionist ideology and his mentor was Chief Rabbi Avrohom Yitzchok Kook (1865-1935).

"However, I know that Chabad

blood ran in my veins from when I was young. I was constantly drawn towards Chassidus and at an older age I found out that my family is related to Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel. When I was twelve years old, my father sent me to camp in Kfar Chabad.

“Only later did my father tell me that when we were in England, he flew to New York for the express purpose of meeting the Rebbe, who spoke to him for two hours. My father didn’t share all the details with me as I was a young boy but what I heard from him was his admiration of the Rebbe, of his leadership and righteousness. I think this is what led my father to choose a camp in Kfar Chabad over a religious-Zionist camp for me.”

R’ Avni got very involved in Chassidus when he went to yeshiva in Kfar HaRoeh, the flagship yeshiva of the religious-Zionist movement.

“Rabbi Neria (d. 19 Kislev, 5756) was the rosh yeshiva and he allowed Lubavitcher Chassidim to come and give shiurim in Chassidus. He had a very good relationship with the Rebbe and he brought Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengens to the high schools. My teacher realized I was enthralled with Chassidus and he tried to make it hard for me and some other bachurim by saying our attendance at these shiurim and farbrengens could not be at the expense of our Gemara learning and I had to make up the material in my free time, but I stuck with it.

“I had a great desire to study Chassidus and I was willing to give up most of my recess to listen to Lubavitcher speakers who taught us and instilled the foundation of Toras HaChassidus in us. The lecturers were mainly Rabbi Yechezkel Sofer, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Volpe and Rabbi Shlomo Raskin of Tzfas. I felt that what they said was truth. Chassidus is



Members of the yishuv at a 19 Kislev farbrengen with Rabbi Kaploun

not what people try to make it out to be – vertlech and hartzige talk without depth. On the contrary, I found that it put the entire Torah in a clear light of true avodas Hashem.

“When R’ Volpe told me that I come from the Slonim family – in other words, that I am the Rebbe’s relative – I was tremendously excited. He suggested that I write the Rebbe a letter and I did so. That was the first time that I wrote to the Rebbe. I told the Rebbe what R’ Volpe told me and asked whether this was accurate. The Rebbe returned my letter with the word ‘relative’ underlined. I was only 16 at the time and I was overcome with joy.”

R’ Elisha Avni’s life wasn’t easy. His father died when he was in his teens and his mother was very sick.

“I wanted to drop everything and attend a Chabad yeshiva. Chassidus was my life. But the people that my mother respected told her that it was more important that I continue learning in Kfar HaRoeh and get my certificate of matriculation like a good Israeli boy. I didn’t want to hurt my mother but I yearned to study Chassidus. I asked R’ Sofer what to do.

“He understood me and said

that in cases such as these I should write to the Rebbe and ask for his bracha. I told the Rebbe about my dilemma and asked what to do. Two weeks later I got an answer. It was a long detailed letter at the end of which it said, ‘learn in a place that has more yiras Shamayim and the study of Chassidus.’ Where would I find a place like that? Only in Chabad yeshivos.

“It wasn’t easy to carry this out, though. I would have liked to have done it immediately but certain people got involved and as a result I stayed in Kfar HaRoeh. I was not happy being there but many obstacles were put in my way and I stayed there until I graduated. Then I wrote to the Rebbe again about what to do next. Throughout those years I continued to learn Chassidus, whether on my own or with the Chabad lecturers who visited the yeshiva. I would also occasionally go to farbrengens and Chabad events in Kfar Chabad and the yeshiva there.

“The Rebbe’s answer was to consult with a teacher in the yeshiva where I learned. The rabbi I spoke with advised me to go to the religious-Zionist yeshiva Mercas HaRav. Later on, when I had already become a Chassid, I did not

The Avnis have one son among a number of daughters. When R'Avni relates the story about his birth, he gets very emotional:

I took one of my daughters to 770 in Kislev as a bas mitzva gift. That was the year that Chanuka Live began and my daughter and I have many memories of that amazing event. Since I wanted her to get as much spiritual strength as possible for the rest of her life, every morning after mikva I sat down to learn Chassidus with her, from what I learned in Tomchei T'mimim – the maamer “V’Nikdashiti.”

I found this maamer to be rather fundamental and it is brought in Likkutei Torah Parshas Emor. One day, someone distinguished looking passed by – I later learned that his name is R' Tuvia Zilberstrom. He seemed taken aback that I was learning this maamer with my young daughter and, apologizing for mixing in, he said he had to ask why I was learning such deep material with a girl so young; it would be better if I learned it with my son. I told him that I don't have a son.

“You don't have a son? So while you're here, ask the Rebbe for a bracha!”

I thanked him for his suggestion. For some reason I had not thought to ask the Rebbe for a bracha for sons. Furthermore, in the twenty seconds I had in front of the Rebbe for dollars I had to ask for a refua for my mother and a shidduch for a good friend, so how could I ask for something for myself?

Anyway, I prepared well and when it was my turn I managed to ask for a bracha for all three things. The Rebbe gave me another dollar and said, “Give this to your wife, and b'karov mamash.” When it was my daughter's turn she said she was celebrating her bas mitzva that year and the Rebbe gave her a bracha.

In general, that daughter had a special bond with the Rebbe from when she was a little girl. When she was only five she drew a picture for the Rebbe with four cups and matza and the Rebbe wrote her back, “Surely you are lighting Shabbos candles.” She received other letters from the Rebbe too. Today she is a shlucha in the yishuv Tzoren.

The Rebbe's bracha was given on Chanuka and on 11 Kislev of the following year my wife gave birth to a boy whom we named Yeshaya. We see how he is the Rebbe's son. He is learning in yeshiva in Kiryat Gat now and is doing well, boruch Hashem.

understand why I had to go through all that when in my neshama I was a Chassid. R' Shlomke Maidanchik told me the following when I gave him a ride in my car. He quoted the saying, ‘throw a stick into the air and it will land on its root,’ namely that my source was Chassidus and therefore, despite all the efforts by many people to prevent me from following this route, I returned to

my roots in Chabad.”

Though R' Elisha went to yeshivas Mercaz HaRav, the fire of Chassidus within him continued to burn.

“They told me that in Chabad I would only find Chabad Chassidus and not the teachings of Rav Kook while in Mercaz HaRav I would have both, but I only wanted Chabad. I remember days of tremendous yearning, something I

can't explain in words. It was a deep feeling, a great desire to learn and grasp more of p'nimius ha'Torah as it is explained in Chabad Chassidus.”

He spent two and a half years in Mercaz HaRav. At the same time he was a regular participant in shiurim on Chassidus given by Lubavitchers in Yerushalayim.

“One day, probably Yud Shevat, I was holding a soft-cover copy of the Rebbe's maamer ‘Basi L'Gani.’ I left the yeshiva and hitched a ride to yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Kfar Chabad. I arrived in B'nei Brak a few hours later and from there someone took me to Kfar Chabad. The mashpia Rabbi Moshe Naparstek farbrenge and he won me over. He is known for his warmth and he gave me a hearty welcome.

“I so wanted to be there that I didn't care that I would sleep that night on the benches. The farbrenge was terrific and lasted late into the night. I liked R' Naparstek so much that he became my mashpia.

“Another shiur that I attended regularly took place at the president's home when Shazar was president. He himself was of Chabad stock. R' Adin Steinsaltz (Even-Yisroel) gave the shiur in Derech Mitzvosecha and I felt like I was flying ...”

When he finished learning at Mercaz HaRav he looked for a place where he could learn in peace without parnasa worries, and that is how he ended up, while still not married, at yishuv Mevo Choron, which was a cooperative venture.

“I knew that at a cooperative moshav I could learn without worries, having set times for learning and working too. I was accepted and remained there until I got married. My wife also wanted this kind of life. Outwardly, I still looked like a religious-Zionist but inside, I was a Lubavitcher Chassid.

My home library was full of works of Chassidus, maamarim and sichos.

“The change began a few years later. One of the rules of a cooperative moshav is that its members cannot travel abroad. At my place they allowed you to leave only for the purpose of studying at an advanced yeshiva for up to six months. We jumped at the chance. I would be able to learn in a Chabad yeshiva, of course. This was in 5738. I spoke to Rabbi YY Wilschansky and Rabbi Moshe Orenstein of the yeshiva in Tzfas, and they were happy to have me come and learn there. The moshav paid for this and so for half a year I reveled in Chabad yeshiva life which transformed me into a Chassid, inside and out.

“I loved the k'hilla in Tzfas: R' Shlomo Zalman Levkivker, R' Aharon Eliezer Tzeitlin, R' Aryeh Leib Kaplan, R' Levi Bistritzky. I learned Chassidus and sichos from all of them and was thrilled. I started my day at 6:30 in the morning with a shiur for balabatim on the maamarim of the Rebbe Maharash and after davening I continued learning in the yeshiva. The shiurim I remember the best are those R' Kaplan gave in the kollel in Likkutei Torah for English-speakers. I also enjoyed the halacha classes given by R' Bistritzky.

“I spoke to my wife about moving to Tzfas. The love and friendship among the people in the young k'hilla were astounding. The farbrengens, the mesirus nefesh for everything the Rebbe asked – we hadn't been raised this way and we loved it. I remember that one day of Chanuka I joined Rabbi Ofer Maidovnik and Rabbi Tzeitlin on mivtzaim in the Golan Heights. We returned at four in the morning and my wife was hysterical. There were no cell phones back then and she had called the hospitals and police to find out whether anything had



Lag B'Omer parade in Mevo Choron

happened.

“Half a year had gone by and I wrote to the Rebbe and asked what to do next. Should I remain in Mevo Choron or live in the wonderful community of Tzfas? We also did not know what to do for a living, though we said that we believed ‘that the One who gives life, gives sustenance.’

“The Rebbe's answer surprised us. We got it through Rabbi Yadgar from the yishuvei Chevel Taanach. The Rebbe said: ‘Continue for now in the place where you live.’ ‘For now’ we understood to mean until Moshiach comes or until the Rebbe assigned us another shlichus. We had mixed feelings about this answer. On the one hand, we wanted to join the wonderful community in Tzfas. On the other hand, we were ecstatic because the Rebbe had directed us to shlichus in Mevo Choron. The Rebbe had given us the task to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus at the yishuv. I didn't hesitate for a minute. We packed as quickly as possible, said goodbye, and went back to the yishuv.”

Before the Avnis jumped into shlichus activities at their yishuv, Elisha made his first trip to the Rebbe.

“I didn't think about it too much; I knew that I was going to forego my comfort in order to spread the wellsprings as the Rebbe wanted me to. On 11 Nissan, 5738/1978, I went to the Rebbe for the first time in my life. This experience strengthened my hiskashrus to the Rebbe and to Chassidus many times over. The Chassidim in Beis Chayeinu, seeing the Rebbe and reciting the SheHechyanu bracha, all this raised me a few inches off the floor ... That trip was like a dream.

“I had a camera with me and I wanted to photograph the Rebbe. The first time, I waited in the small zal and when the Rebbe arrived from the ‘lower Gan Eden,’ I raised the camera to take a picture. But when I saw the Rebbe my hands shook and the camera fell to the floor. Another time, I was in the big zal. I waited for the Rebbe to come out of the elevator but then too, when I saw the Rebbe the camera slipped out of my hands.

“At the end of the visit I had yechidus. I asked the Rebbe for a bracha and for the ability to spread the wellsprings and the Rebbe spoke to me for a few minutes. My knees shook and my teeth chattered in my awe in the Rebbe's presence

and I don't remember a lot about that yechidus. I do remember that the Rebbe blessed me that I merit to increase much light in Torah, both in Nigleh and in p'nimius ha'Torah.

"When I left the Rebbe's room I had just one regret. I had wanted the Rebbe to bless me to have the ability to farbreng and I forgot to ask. The bachurim descended upon me, wanting to know every detail of what the Rebbe said. I felt I was hovering in the air. I saw that the Rebbe gave out bottles to the shluchim at the farbrengen but I did not get one since I wasn't yet official. At the end of the farbrengen I sent in a letter to the Rebbe through Rabbi Klein and asked for a bottle of mashke.

"Before I returned to Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Groner asked me to come to the office, where he gave me a bottle of mashke on behalf of the Rebbe. I was thrilled.

"I returned to Eretz Yisroel full of energy and an uplifted feeling. The first thing we did was start a Tanya shiur and bring mashpiim to farbreng in the yishuv. Rabbi Tuvia Blau helped us a lot in those early days. He came often to farbreng and to give shiurim. Later on, Rabbi Meir Mark, who was on shlichus at a yishuv not far away, would come.

"The beginning wasn't easy. It was hard to deal with the rav of the yishuv, who was a Torah scholar but afraid of the influence of Chabad. We finally agreed that every speaker had to be approved by him first. There were times I thought it would be easier for me to do my shlichus on a Shomer HaTzair kibbutz (which is virulently anti-religious). The problem is we talk about the Rebbe and they believe that Zionism is the *is'chalta d'Geula* and the two approaches are at odds with one another. In the beginning there were activities and shiurim that we had to do secretly."

Many people were drawn to the teachings of Chassidus over the years.

"Despite the difficulties we had to contend with – and there were many – we kept going with the Rebbe's constant brachos. In 5742/1982, we stepped up our activities and in the book the Rebbe asked to be published after the parades that year, a picture of the parade at our yishuv made the cover, in addition to another picture inside. The thing that motivated us to increase our outreach was a second visit we made to the Rebbe on Sukkot of that year. It was a Tishrei full of giluyim, farbrengens and t'fillos.

"When I received lekach from the Rebbe on Hoshana Raba, I wrapped it well to preserve the freshness and when I got back to the yishuv I went to the preschools and gave the cake to the teachers. One of the teachers took the cake and put it into a big cake she made. When she told me this I was very moved. They allowed me to address the children and I told them where the cake came from. I remember that I gave out a small portion of the cake – which amounted to just a few crumbs – to each of the children. Until then we had focused only on the adults, but from then on we included the little children in our outreach.

"What got us to invest more time in the children was the big deal the Rebbe made about it and the founding of Tzivos Hashem. I remember the hakafa that the Rebbe did with the children; all of 770 was in shock. They sent children over people's heads so they could get to the Rebbe. Everybody wanted his child on the Rebbe's bima. From then on the Rebbe didn't stop talking about Tzivos Hashem. We started a branch at our yishuv which is active till today. I made a flag and emblems and every Shabbos 60-70 children get

together.

"Speaking of the children, many people ask me about how I raise my children in a religious-Zionist atmosphere. Our children are active on shlichus. From when they are born they are raised with the spirit of shlichus and we see how in every conversation my daughters have with their friends, they are mashpios on them with what they get at home or at Chabad schools."

Mrs. Ruti Avni tells of many women who come to write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh.

"We don't ask them what they wrote and they don't always see a connection between the answer and their question, but the Rebbe sees what we don't see. We have experienced this on a number of occasions."

The following story happened in Shevat, 5743, with her third daughter:

"24 hours after being born a hole opened between the two halves of her heart. The doctors told us about this worrisome development. They explained that this hole could close on its own but if it didn't, she would need surgery.

"My husband sent a fax to the Rebbe's office and asked for a bracha. Just a few hours went by and after a routine exam they said the hole had closed. They, too, were surprised by how fast this happened."

I asked the Avnis about "the final shlichus" as the Rebbe called it, publicizing the B'suras HaGeula. At the Lag B'Omer parades that take place every year – and this is a highlight of the year for the children of the yishuv – they send balloons up with messages asking Hashem to send the Geula.

"It's very simple. The adults are tough nuts to crack so we work with the children and they influence their parents. That is why a



A farbrengen at the yishuv with Rabbi Tuvia Blau



Children of Tzivos Hashem from the yishuv on the way to 770 in Kfar Chabad

significant part of our work focuses on children.

“I myself heard the ‘recipe’ from the Rebbe ‘and return the hearts of the fathers through the children’ – and that’s how it works at our yishuv. A child understands the

truth. You can’t fool him. On Lag B’Omer, for example, there is a big parade which many adults attend too.

“When it comes to messages about Moshiach a lot depends on how you say it. R’ Zushe Partisan

came to one of the parades and his fervor was unforgettable. He broadcasted truth and nobody could resist him. When people see that we believe in this, it is accepted.”

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ב"ה

YECHIDUS ALL NIGHT LONG

By Shneur Zalman Berger

Mr. Luba Eliav, a former IDF colonel and Israel's envoy to the Soviet Union in the 50's, recently passed away. He worked on behalf of Soviet Jewry and especially for Chabad Chassidim, despite the danger involved. In the course of a seven hour yechidus, he reported to the Rebbe about his work and connections.

Aryeh Luba Eliav (Lifshitz), a leader of the Labor movement and party in the past, passed away at the age of 89. He was born in Moscow in 1921 and made aliya at the age of three. By the age of fifteen he had already started serving in the Haganah. In the years to come he was involved with smuggling Jews into the country and he served as an officer in the navy.

He later became famous thanks to his great help in settling the land. He was instrumental in building the city of Arad and other yishuvim in the Negev. In 1965 he

was elected Knesset member for Mapai and later served as Knesset member for a number of terms for the Mapai and Labor parties. For a while he served as a deputy minister.

Mr. Eliav, despite belonging to the Left, helped Jews in the Soviet Union, particularly Chabad Chassidim. From 1958-1960 he served as First Secretary of the Israeli embassy in Moscow, during which time he set up a secret network that operated from within the embassy and worked hand in hand with Chabad Chassidim to distribute Siddurim, Chumashim,

and other s'farim and sacred items throughout the Soviet Union. He did this at the risk of great personal danger, for the communist government forbade religious activity and punished it severely.

In the summer of 1959, he and his family visited Bobroisk, where he went to the graves of his relatives, descendants of Rabbi Boruch Mordechai. During this visit he helped the local Jews and even gave a pair of t'fillin to someone there.

YECHIDUS THROUGHOUT RUSSIA

After he returned to Israel he anonymously published a book called "Between the Hammer and the Sickle" in which he described his secret work in Russia.

About five years after he returned from Moscow, during a visit to New York, he had yechidus with the Rebbe which lasted seven hours. During this yechidus he told the Rebbe about the state of Judaism in the Soviet Union which he had personally seen. He entered the Rebbe's room at eleven at night and left at six in the morning!

He told about this extraordinary yechidus a number of times, while expressing his great admiration for the Rebbe and his work behind the Iron Curtain. In his book, he described the experience:

"I discovered that the Rebbe knew far more about me and my work than I thought. He knew about all my meetings at the embassy with Chabad Chassidim. In connection with this I must say that the embassy in Moscow was different than other embassies. It wasn't a place for cocktail parties but a place where intensive work was done. In addition to the expected workload, there were secret meetings with Jews, secret

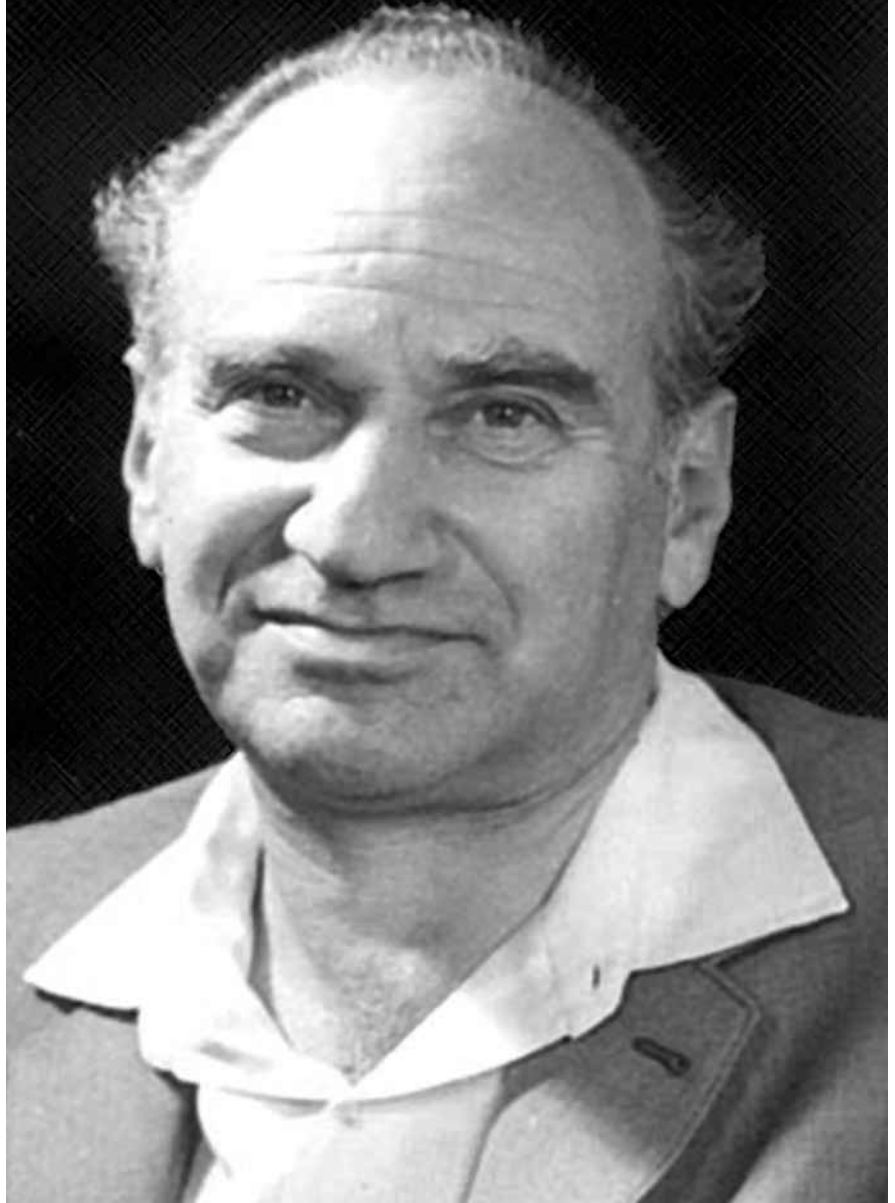
meetings to ascertain their situation and to help them with anything they needed.

“Chabad Chassidim ‘used’ us often to send letters and messages via diplomatic mail which was less dangerous. The fear in those days was so enormous and powerful – it’s impossible to imagine – that only people of mesirus nefesh like Lubavitchers worked and accomplished in all matters pertaining to Judaism. We members of the embassy were the only ones who could help them because we had more freedom due to our diplomatic passports.

“Much was said about this collaboration between the embassy and Chabad at the yechidus but I cannot say more about it. What I can say is that the Rebbe asked me about the shuls and the activities taking place in them. I had circulated in many of the shuls and through them we managed to deliver those items that were sent through. We spoke at length about that and about the great amount of s’farim and material on Judaism that we brought one way or another from Israel.

“I was First Secretary at the embassy and I was responsible for the issue of Judaism in the Soviet Union. The Rebbe inquired, in his special way, as to how we went about this job. It was important to him to know every detail about our cooperation and help to the work of Chabad. The Rebbe ‘led’ me in the conversation and the moment I spoke of a certain town or city and mentioned the gabbai, baal korei or shamash, he wanted to know precisely what ties we had with him, how frequently we met, and so on.

“During the lengthy yechidus the Rebbe spread out a map of Russia. Not that he put a map out on his desk, but orally, he spread out a map and even I, who knew about the Rebbe’s tremendous



I told the Rebbe about meetings with Jews, mainly about the meetings that took place in shuls. These were not simple encounters. Even there you couldn’t just approach someone and talk to him because the KGB was dogging your footsteps the entire time. I wasn’t afraid for myself, since I had diplomatic immunity, but the Jew who spoke to me could be arrested by KGB agents at any moment.

“The Rebbe’s responses were succinct, as he sufficed with a comment here and there. Mostly, he only wanted to hear more and more until he arrived, in his special way, to the details that truly interested him.”

involvement and activity, was amazed by his vast knowledge about every single place where Jewish activity took place in Russia.

“I saw that the Rebbe was very interested in hearing about these meetings. The stories flowed and the Rebbe said little but asked many questions, wanting to know as much as possible. I knew, and at this meeting I could see, that the Rebbe knows a lot.

“Chabad’s net was spread over the entire Soviet Union, a network that was moser nefesh for Judaism and did holy work, but the Rebbe wanted to know what was going on in Russia from the perspective of someone who had just finished his diplomatic service there. I told the Rebbe about the holy work of his Chassidim, about their mesirus nefesh for Judaism, and I described at length how his Chassidim devoted days and nights for Judaism in the Soviet Union.

“I told the Rebbe about the secret network we established at the embassy and about our aid to the underground work of Chabad to distribute Siddurim, Chumashim and other holy books to Jews. Any help we gave to this great work we considered sacred, but we knew that to the authorities it was anti-Soviet activity which entailed years in prison. Just in the time I spent there we transferred thousands of holy items such as Siddurim, t’fillin, mezuzos etc. The authorities often confiscated the material and censured us, but

our immunity protected us from the punishments for which that government was notorious, though there were times that some of our people were expelled from the Soviet Union because of this work.

“I immediately saw that I wasn’t revealing any secrets to the Rebbe. He knew it all and his main interest was in the details. He wanted to know precisely to which places we had gone. I spoke about the devotion of his Chassidim and the great danger they were constantly in and I told the Rebbe that we knew at the embassy that they weren’t working as partisans without direction. We knew good and well that the Rebbe was the one who gave the orders to this amazing network of Chabad in Russia.

“I told the Rebbe about the good working relationship between us at the embassy and the Lubavitchers, and about the tremendous work that we did together. In my book I was very careful not to reveal names of the Lubavitchers or others who were involved in this work so that the government wouldn’t arrest them or follow them, but I told the Rebbe openly. I am sure the Rebbe knew about all this, but the Rebbe did not let on that he knew; on the contrary, he urged me to continue telling him.

“During that moving night the Rebbe asked me many questions about all sorts of specific activities that even today I think it would be better if I didn’t mention the

names associated with them. Not once, throughout the many hours of yechidus, did he mention names of people nor did he ask me personally whether I met with someone by the name of x in city y. He began with a question in Yiddish – our entire conversation was in Yiddish – and he directed me as to what he really wanted to know. He was careful not to say, for example, that in Tashkent there are two shuls and so-and-so is over there; otherwise, he might reveal to me information I didn’t know.

“After I answered all the questions he led me to speak about the baal korei of the place he was inquiring about and led me to tell him how he was, how he looked, and whether perhaps he had a special message etc. In another location he led me to the shamash, in a third place to the Jewish shoemaker who had a stand in the market in a certain city, and thus in every location.

“And this went on for hours. It was like the Rebbe made an oral journey with me throughout the Soviet Union, the length and breadth, and did not leave out a single place. I was literally captivated and amazed by the Rebbe’s knowledge of every detail related to Judaism in Russia, by his total mastery of every single underground religious activity, and he did not hold any list in his hand!

“For example, in one location the Rebbe led me to a certain person but he did not want to describe him. ‘He’s blonde,’ I offered. ‘Ah,’ said the Rebbe. ‘What does he do?’ And we continued to speak. The Rebbe conducted the conversation with a view that encompassed the entire scene.

“In general the meeting was very impressive and it was a very moving experience for me, even

though the entire encounter did not deal at all with opinions or outlooks or anything like that. I had to express my tremendous admiration for the Chabad Chassidim, led by the Rebbe, many times; about their immense work in Russia that I was witness to, about the holy work with mesirus nefesh, even though when it comes to politics I am very far from the Rebbe's view.

"I say this to emphasize that the great admiration I have for the Chabad Chassidim and the Rebbe is not a 'blind admiration' but a deep respect that I acquired when I saw them in their daily work and mesirus nefesh in the Soviet Union.

"When I left the yechidus the Chassidim surrounded me. Of course I could not disclose to them even one word of what was said, but I remember that they told me, 'To sit for so many hours with the Rebbe is no small thing!' I didn't consider it a matter of pride as though it was due to who I was. The Rebbe simply knew that I had traveled throughout Russia and he knew that he could learn many details from my testimony about Jewry in general and his Chassidim in particular."

GREAT ENTERPRISE

In the years that followed, Eliav's connection to Chabad

גנו שר הקליטה לרבה אליאב בתארי בספרו. בין הפסים והמגלי איך סוגרים הפלסות את בתיהבנסת. הם צוסיס ואת כסלושה שלמים. הראסון הוא שלב הריסוד. העתונות הפקוסית מספרת לקהל הקוראים על ביהבנסת המשמש מרכו לשלחנים הפריסיטיביים של היהודים. לעסקי סוק שחור. במסווה של תפילות ומטנה זכה — סספר העתון — שותים היהודים לסכנה. בניצוחו של הרב היהודי. ועוסקים בהתמלה ציונית היספריאליסית. אחרי הריסוך בא שלב גיוס דעתהקהל. בתנונה סוקרי צים סכנמי קוראים נדהמים. בין המגויבום גם יהודים. המדיים לעתנאי העורץ על שהסיר את המסווה ספל ביהבנסת. השליסי הוא שלב הביצות. כדי לחסל סוקרי סודענות כזה סוגרים השלסונות את ביהבנסת. על פי הנסווה הזאת ההוררת תנסנה נסגרו עסרות בהיבנסת. אך לא רק לסיים את הורד כיהודי קסה המילה אינה אסורה. לפי העק הויסי. אולם השלסון גלחם נגדה כסו נגד כל כעווה יהודית ושנג יהודי. עברתם של המהלים אסורה מהלים הנתססם בסילה תינוקות נענסים בענסים חסורים. ידועה פרסת המהל. סכטר. שהרסיים עשו ססנה עלילת'דם סודרנית. שכטר היה אחד המהלים הפועלים בסתר בקהילת צירנוכין. נגנ אמבלנס. שהסיס העוק סניסל ושסעצו לא הגליה. סטר את שכטר בודי השלסונות. שכטר נעצור. נכלא רעמה כמה חרסיים. אחריכך ארגונה הצירייה. עורב תרבות יהודית' שהוסטו בו כל הופיונות בסרסו: המהל. הרופא היהודי ססיסל בנינוק בבית'החלים הורדי התינוק. הויבו על חסא הסילה. באוועים נרחבים. כסרכו והמנהג ביהבנסענות אין אך לא רק להולד כיהודי קסה. אלא גם לסיים את ההורד כיהודי.

grew. About three years after he was in yechidus, Chabad Chassidim in Yerushalayim located the ruined gravesite of his great-grandfather, Rabbi Boruch Mordechai on the Mt. of Olives. His descendants repaired the grave and then held an unveiling. Luba Eliav took part in the prayers that were said near the new gravestone as he mentions in his book, "After the ceremony we all — relatives and Chassidim — took part in a *chagigat mitzva* and danced and sang."

A year went by and Eliav, who held Leftist views but had a warm spot in his heart for Chabad, visited Kfar Chabad for the first time. It was in Kislev, 5729, and in *Yemei T'mimim* there is a *duch*

that was sent to the Rebbe after the visit which said:

"Today, Luba Eliav, Deputy Absorption Minister, visited Kfar Chabad and the mosdos. Berke [R' Berke Wolf] also joined the tour with him. Berke said that Eliav greatly enjoyed his visit and was very impressed by Kfar Chabad and said that he did not imagine that Kfar Chabad was such a big and serious enterprise.

"He promised to help in any way he could and offered to [R' Shlomo] Maidenchek that he would speak to Mordechai Gazit, who was appointed as director of the department for special projects at the Absorption Ministry, on our behalf, because he could

help regarding getting jobs in airline maintenance for Russian immigrants. He visited the vocational school, the girls' school and the yeshiva, where they had lunch.

"At the yeshiva he enjoyed seeing bachurim from all over the world and they put t'fillin on with him and his assistant."

One year ago Eliav was stricken by a stroke. His exemplary yet clandestine work on behalf of the Jews of the former Soviet Union, undertaken at great personal risk, is an example for us all.

Sources: *Tivot Shachar*, *Dedushka*, *Kfar Chabad* magazine, *Yemei T'mimim*, the official Knesset website, the *Davar* newspaper



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MAZEL TOV ON THE GIRL AND THE BRIS

By Tamar Shor

MYSTERIOUS ANSWER

“We had a girl!”

“Mazel Tov, so the bris will be on Thursday.”

Huh?

This was a conversation that I had with my husband a little over three months ago, on Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5770, shortly after the birth of our second daughter.

“The bris will take place just as the Rebbe said it would,” I mused, “and I thought I understood and that the Rebbe was mistaken, G-d forbid, this time ...”

It began a month and a half before I gave birth. I had to make a decision about a certain change at the organization where I volunteer. I thought the idea was excellent and was eager to carry it out without hesitation, but for some reason there were all sorts of obstacles that pushed off the carrying out of the “great idea” for a number of weeks. I finally ended up doing what I should have done from the start, write to the Rebbe and see what he had to say.

So I wrote a letter and added another page in which I reported that my pregnancy was coming along nicely and we were awaiting a birth soon. The Rebbe’s answer

was precise. In volume 7, p. 358, the Rebbe said there was no place for innovations where Chassidus had already presented me with everything ready-made, and although “you seek new ways” in the form of the innovation I wanted to implement, I had to know that “your failure will be on that very path.”

It was hard for me to accept this answer, especially when this was the first time that the Rebbe was telling me clearly not to do something. It was tough on my ego but I finally got a glimmer of understanding that maybe the Rebbe was enabling me to feel a small measure of bittul for the Rebbe’s ratzon.

In response to my other letter, I received an answer on the previous page that begins with the words, “we find in the mitzva of mila,” which explains the mitzva of circumcision at length. We did not know our baby’s gender but with an answer like that we were sure that we could start looking into halls for a bris.

After a few weeks I wrote to the Rebbe for a bracha for the pregnancy before an examination I was supposed to have. The

Rebbe’s answer in Volume 10 p. 333 spoke about the importance of giving a name to a baby. The name under discussion was Yosef Yitzchok and from this we understood that I would be giving birth to a boy. We hadn’t paid for a hall yet but I caught my husband starting to write a menu.

A few months earlier we had spoken about possible names. We had said that if it was a boy we should name him for my husband’s grandfather but now, with a clear horaa from the Rebbe about choosing a name, especially Yosef Yitzchok, the issue came up again. Since we didn’t know what to do, we called my husband’s mashpia, R’ Chaim Ashkenazi a”h who, as always, gave us straightforward advice. “First have the baby, and then we can talk ...” How right he was!

Towards the end of the pregnancy my strength waned to the extent that even tying my shoes was an ordeal. The Rebbe received a hysterical letter from me in which I didn’t ask that things hurry up but perhaps, maybe, I could get an abridgment for good behavior ... The Rebbe apparently knew who he was dealing with and this time I opened to a direct, reassuring answer (volume 15, p. 315) which said, “May Hashem complete the days of the pregnancy properly and easily and you should give birth to a healthy child in the right time, properly and with ease.” I was reassured. I gave birth two days later. To a girl.

I was surprised, considering the letters about a bris and the name. But in my short acquaintanceship with the Rebbe I had learned that if someone was in error, it was me. So I put aside my bewilderment and waited for things to be clarified, which they were shortly.

MYSTERY SOLVED

A month and a half previously, my husband had received a phone call from a friend who works for Bris Yosef Yitzchok. The friend called to ask whether my husband would be a sandak and told him what this entailed. In the course of the discussion – and the numerous conversations that followed – my husband heard about cases in which people were helped by the organization and were circumcised a second time. This triggered something in his mind, and my husband began to wonder whether there might be a problem with his own bris.

The friend encouraged him to check things out and he found out that the mohel who did his bris wasn't necessarily reliable. In those days, when he was a baby, the family knew nothing of Chabad and the Rebbe and religious observance. My mother-in-law said she was almost sure that the mohel was bearded. That was hardly enough to dismiss my husband's concerns, and he decided to go for a checkup that would confirm or dispel his suspicions about the halachic validity of his bris.

Time went by and we were heading for the hospital for me to give birth. My husband asked whether he could take advantage of our proximity to B'nei Brak to go there and pray for the birth and get checked.

Permission was granted and my husband left. While I dealt with labor pains he went looking for an expert rav to examine him. The friend from Bris Yosef Yitzchok had told him that there was a rav like this in B'nei Brak, but when he looked for him he found that he wasn't in. The friend suggested another rav, in Beit Shaan, about an hour and a half away, but my husband explained why he couldn't possibly make such a trip at this time.



It was hard for me to accept this answer, especially when this was the first time that the Rebbe was telling me clearly not to do something. It was tough on my ego but I finally got a glimmer of understanding that maybe the Rebbe was enabling me to feel a small measure of bittul for the Rebbe's ratzon.

Finally, a rav was located in nearby Rishon L'Tziyon. My husband called and asked how I was doing and whether he still had time. He was given permission to continue his quest and set out. In the meantime, I entered the delivery room and gave birth. To a girl.

What seemed so clear in writing made it to my brain with some delay (I will use the birth as an excuse). I wondered how the Rebbe could have spoken about a bris, how he could have been "mistaken?" The thoughts racing through my mind centered around the baby girl cradled in my arms, and didn't make the connection with my husband's situation.

The checkup verified that my husband's bris was no good, not even l'kula. It's not clear what the mohel did but it was certainly not a bris l'halacha. Two days after I gave birth I found myself in a situation similar to that of husbands: saying T'hillim while praying for a swift and easy end for my spouse's ordeal. The bris was done with local anesthesia and was painless. Afterwards, my husband put on t'fillin for the first time as a Jew with a proper bris. It was very moving and exciting.

A BRIS MILA FOR THE FATHER OF THE GIRL

The first one we told was Rabbi

Chaim Ashkenazi, who was moved to tears. He pointed out the amazing hashgacha pratis that was with us all along, as well as the great z'chus my husband had in realizing a mistake had been made and ensuring the bris was done properly. We were so happy to be able to share this with R' Ashkenazi, who was an important part of our lives and guided our first steps in the ways of Chassidus. Erev Shabbos my husband came

to take me and the baby home and we both limped out of the hospital. On Shabbos we made a Kiddush in shul and my husband had an aliya and added the name Yosef to his name because of the Rebbe's answer. We farbrenge in the men's section and the women's section over this story. The Rebbe did a chesed for us and it was important to us to publicize the story in order to show the importance of bittul, the role of a

Chassid and the greatness of the Rebbe. The Rebbe was with us all along. It seems that events were orchestrated in order to connect the right people at the right time and place, and sure enough, precisely on the day of the birth is the day his bris took place. If he tells you right is left or he talks about a bris and a girl is born, don't for a moment think the Rebbe was mistaken.

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EVERY JEW IS BIKURIM

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

*The Rebbe quoted the Zohar which says that every Jew is connected to Hashem like the bikkurim that were brought by the Jewish people and left in the Beis HaMikdash. The Rebbe stressed that it makes no difference what kind of Jew he is; all are connected with an essential bond to Hashem. * This week the stories are about Jews who, at first glance, did not seem particularly pious, but turned out to have a special connection with Hashem.*

ATONEMENT IN PRISON

My son-in-law, R' Sholom Dovber Blau, began giving shiurim in Shaata Prison which is near Beit Shaan. He also arranges a minyan with inmates in the maximum security wing and each time he is moved by their inspired prayers. The inmates wholeheartedly regret the various negative things they've experienced in life and they daven loudly, word by word. At the appropriate places they emphasize each word with a shout from the

heart, like the words "oshamnu," "gozalnu" (we are guilty, we stole) etc. and "Boruch Ata Hashem ... Matir Asurim."

During the breaks the inmates ask him halachic questions. One day, a guy went over to him and asked whether it was permissible to play sports in a shul. He told him no. The man's face crumpled and he turned to his friend and said sadly, "See, now we did an aveira."

All the prisoners standing

around, some of them with more than one life sentence, defended the two of them and explained to the rabbi that they didn't mean to do it. The jailors had locked them in the shul of their wing and they got to talking about this and that until they discussed a certain sports move and one of them demonstrated to the other how it was done. Now they regretted it and asked how to atone.

The fellow continued to explain to the rabbi why he was so bothered by this. "Every morning, the moment I wake up, I say Modeh Ani. This morning I don't know what happened to me, but a few seconds went by and then I suddenly remembered that I still hadn't said it. I began to think about why this happened and then I realized it was probably because of what I did yesterday in the shul. That's why I'm asking how I can atone for it."

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev would take pleasure in this ...

A RING AND A GOLD WATCH FOR A POOR BRIDE

Rabbi Tzemach Avrohom, shliach and rabbi of moshav Yinov HaSharon, tells about a woman who came to ask him a halachic question. Her dress was less than modest and she seemed distant from any Jewish education but after she told him her story, he saw that despite her appearance she had a sincere and compassionate Jewish heart.

The young woman had been recently widowed and she was trying to get married. One day she was sitting in a café drinking coffee when she noticed that the man who had been sitting next to her a few minutes earlier had forgotten a large, expensive gold ring on the table.

Since she was a G-d fearing

“Every morning, the moment I wake up, I say Modeh Ani. This morning I don’t know what happened to me, but a few seconds went by and then I suddenly remembered that I still hadn’t said it. I began to think about why this happened and then I realized it was probably because of what I did yesterday in the shul...”

woman, she began looking for him in order to return the ring to him. She soon realized that there was no chance of finding him. Rather than taking the ring for herself, she decided to find a poor bride and give it to her. She went to a jeweler and asked him to fix the ring so it would fit the finger of a kalla. At first he tried to persuade her to keep the ring for herself but when he saw she was determined to donate it to a poor bride, he decided to join her in the mitzva and donated a nice watch for the cause. Now she was asking the rabbi whether she had done the right thing and if so, did he know of a poor bride who would accept this gift.

Another thing that bothered her, which she wanted his opinion on, was since she suffered from insomnia and often woke up in the middle of the night, she wanted to know whether she could say T’hillim at that time ...

MID-LIFE CHASSIDIC TRANSFORMATION

In the holy city of Teveria, a Chabad yeshiva opened, which increases the work of the shliach, R’ Yosef Kramer many times over.

This time we’ll zero in on a

younger shliach, Rabbi Reuven Gol who has been working in Teveria for five years. He lives in an irreligious neighborhood and works with the people in and outside the neighborhood.

There is a family who lives near him where both the father and the mother used to be religious. He learned in yeshiva and she went to Beis Yaakov and yet they established an irreligious home. Even when R’ Gol greets him with “Shabbat Shalom,” the neighbor responds with, “Perhaps it is Shabbos for you but for me it’s a regular day.” The neighbor takes every opportunity to tell R’ Gol that he doesn’t refrain from eating anything and he has no connection with what he learned in yeshiva. When R’ Gol blessed him with an easy fast on Erev Yom Kippur, the neighbor said, “It’s just a fast day for you; for me, it’s a regular day.” And this is how he raised his children.

Lately there has been a significant change in this family’s lifestyle. The impetus was R’ Gol’s continuous blessings and greetings.

One day, the neighbor’s daughter went to South America and R’ Gol helped find the address of the Chabad house there, which

was happy to host her. Little by little, the neighbors learned that religious people are not as bad as they once thought. They invited him to arrange a Chanukas HaBayis for the matriarch of the family who came to live near them.

Their old refrains were gradually replaced by lines such as, “Don’t judge us by our appearance. Every Jew has p’nimius too. There’s a neshama. We are also Jews.” A certain change had taken place in their outlook.

THANKS TO THE REBBE’S PICTURE

On one occasion, the neighbor told R’ Gol about something that happened to him when he was in the army.

“I suffered from a certain problem and had to be released from some of the military tasks assigned to me. I submitted my request but they said there was nothing to discuss. I appealed to a higher officer and a date was set for a hearing together with the officer who opposed my original request. I knew my chances were slim but I had to try.

“When the fateful day came, I went over to the picture of the Lubavitcher Rebbe which hung in my room and prayed that in the merit of the Rebbe, the tzaddik, I would be successful. The hearing went in my favor and whatever I asked for was approved. Since then, I have a warm spot in my heart for the Rebbe and Chabad Chassidim. When you came to live in our building I knew that only good things would result.”

R’ Gol concludes the story about the neighbor with another story:

“Last night, as I went up the stairs, I passed the neighbor’s door which was open a little bit. When they noticed me they asked me to

come in. 'We have a question. Grandma cooked vegetable soup with meat and our ten year old daughter ate only a potato from this soup. Can she eat a dairy meal now or does she have to wait six hours?'

"'Wait,' I said. 'I have to ask a rav.' Although the rav said that in the event that she did not taste the meat she could be allowed to eat dairy, the neighbor decided to be more stringent and have the entire family eat a pareve supper so as not to rely on the leniency.

In a candid moment, the neighbor told R' Gol, "Don't think I hate religious people or mitzvos. You should know that I set aside a tenth and even a fifth of my earnings and I often buy cases of chicken and meat and bring it to the nearby yeshiva so the talmidim have plenty to eat."

R' Gol told him that a Chabad yeshiva opened in Teveria and the neighbor said that he would suggest to his married daughter that she also adopt this practice and use her money for the benefit of the students of the new yeshiva.

THANKS TO A BABYSITTER AND A HOUSE FULL OF SEFARIM

Another surprise awaited R' Gol when he made a house call for mitvza mezuzah. This is what happened:

An older woman called R' Gol and asked him to put up eight mezuzos for her. When he arrived at the address, he found the woman and her daughter, who was in her twenties and had come from Europe on a visit to Israel. It was the daughter who had ordered the mezuzos. With her yiras Shamayim she kept asking whether a mezuzah was needed in this doorway and that doorway and maybe in the

THANKS TO A REBBE VIDEO

At the Geulas Yisroel shul, as in most Chabad shuls, a video of the Rebbe is shown on Motzaei Shabbos. Due to technical reasons, the video is not shown in the shul proper but on the second floor, next to R' Gerlitzky's office.

The P family members are regulars at the shul and all their children went to the Chabad government school in Yaffo. R' Gerlitzky tried a few times to convince the father to switch his children to an actual Chabad yeshiva but he said he wasn't ready to do that yet.

One Motzaei Shabbos after Maariv, R' Gerlitzky suggested to Mr. P that he go upstairs with everybody else and watch the video of the Rebbe. Mr. P said the kids were bored and it would be better if they went home, but R' Gerlitzky put a gentle hand on his shoulder and took him to see the video.

When the video began, they saw and heard the Rebbe talk about the importance of authentic Jewish education, about not compromising on anything less than the best when it comes to chinuch, etc. Mr. P saw this as hashgacha pratis and the next day he registered his children in the Chassidische yeshiva.



R' Yosef Shmuel Gerlitzky

yard, wanting to ensure that everything was perfectly kosher.

R' Gol finally asked the mother how she had merited such a fine daughter who was meticulous in her mitvva observance. The mother told him that her daughter had been raised irreligious, but two years earlier she had gone to study in Europe and lived near the

shliach in Vienna. One day, the shliach asked her to babysit their children. The parents left and the children were sleeping so she looked at the bookcases that were full of Jewish books. Out of boredom, she began to look through them and discovered some fascinating things.

When the shlichim returned late at night, they found her surrounded by piles of s'farim. They invited her to come again and there were many visits and discussions and Shabbos meals which ultimately led her to leave her studies—for one year—and register for the Chabad school in Tzfas. The rest is history.

THE NEW CONGREGANTS

In the center of Tel Aviv, next to Shenkin garden, is a shul called Geulas Yisroel which is run by shliach, R' Yosef Shmuel Gerlitzky. Most of the congregants are older people who have attended the shul daily for decades. In recent years

Even when R' Gol greets him with "Shabbat Shalom," the neighbor responds with, "Perhaps it is Shabbos for you but for me it's a regular day."

their numbers dwindled. Many died or moved to senior homes and R' Gerlitzky is constantly trying to find ways to be mekarev people, young and old, to the shul.

A few years ago another shliach joined the Chabad center. His name is R' Yitzchok Beer, and he also works on increasing membership in the shul. R' Beer related:

"One day we started Shacharis and then waited for a minyan. A young man walked in looking distressed. He came over to me and said the mezuzah fell from the door of his house and he wanted to give it in to be checked. He

introduced himself as a student who went to university and lived on the other side of the city. He came from an irreligious home but the minute the mezuzah fell, he felt he had to check it out.

"I asked him to stay for Shacharis because he was our tenth man. He agreed and he completed the minyan in the days to follow, too. He also attended some shiurim and now he is one of the most advanced mekuravim at the Chabad house."

Another story from R' Beer:

"There was a family here that never visited the shul. One Friday the children said to their parents,

'why don't we go to the shul?' At first the parents refused but after much begging, the father agreed and they all went to shul for Kabbalas Shabbos. They met me and the father mentioned that he is a Levi. I told him that was wonderful because a Levi was what we were missing and if he came Shabbos morning he would get an aliya to the Torah, the honored second aliya.

"He showed up the next day, got an aliya, and he hasn't stopped coming for his aliya every Shabbos. He also became friendly with R' Gerlitzky. The family went to him for a Shabbos meal and bit by bit they are becoming involved in Torah and mitzvos. The children switched to a Chabad government school and after a video on Motzaei Shabbos (see box) the boys switched to a real Chabad yeshiva in Tel Aviv."

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