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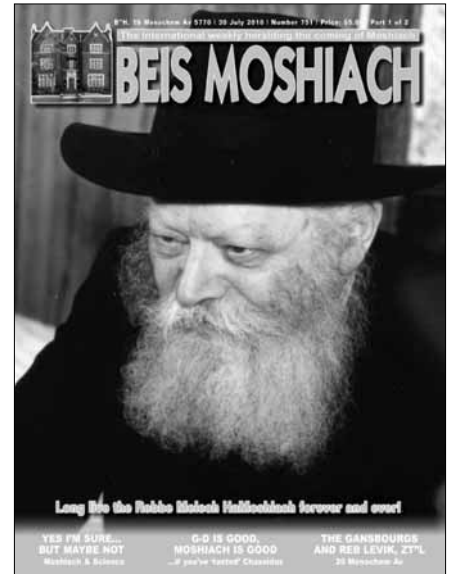
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YES I’M SURE... BUT MAYBE NOT.

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V'DIBARTA BAM: EIKEV

Sichos In English

"It shall come to pass because you will listen to these laws." (7:12)

QUESTION: Instead of the word *"eikev"* — "because" — it could have said *"keshetishme'un"* — "when you will listen" — or *"im tishme'un"* — "if you will listen"?

ANSWER: On Mount Sinai Hashem gave the Jewish people the Ten Commandments, which included the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos* of the Torah (see *Shmos* 24:12, Rashi). In the version of the Ten Commandments as they are recorded (ibid. 20:2-14), there is a total of one hundred and seventy-two words. The word *"Eikev,"* has the numerical value of one hundred and seventy-two. Hence, the Torah is saying, "It shall come to pass, *'eikev tishme'un'* — because you will listen i.e. observe *'eikev'* — the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos* which are in the one hundred and seventy-two words of the Ten Commandments. Thus, your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and kindness that He swore to your forefathers."

Alternatively, the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 28b) says that our father Avraham kept the entire Torah, as Scripture states, *"eikev asher shama Avrohom b'koli"* — "because Avraham hearkened to My voice [kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws] (*B'Reishis* 26:5). In light of the above, the proof

that Avraham kept the Torah may be deduced from the word *"eikev,"* which refers to the one hundred and seventy-two words of the Ten Commandments, that contain the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos* of the Torah.

Alternatively, the *Gemara* (*Avoda Zara* 9a) says that the world will exist for six thousand years. Two thousand of these are utterly void of Torah, two thousand are years of Torah without *Moshiach*, and the last two thousand years will start the era of *Moshiach*. The first two-thousand-year period concluded when Avraham reached the age of fifty-two and was introduced to Torah. The second two-thousand-year period ended one hundred and seventy-two years after the destruction of the second *Beit HaMikdash*, and then the era of *Moshiach* began (see Rashi).

With the word *"eikev,"* which has the numerical value of one hundred and seventy-two, the Torah is hinting that *"eikev"* — one hundred and seventy-two years after the destruction — *"tishme'un"* — "you will hear" — the footsteps of *Moshiach*.

"You will be the most blessed of all the peoples; there will be no infertile male or infertile female among you." (7:14)

QUESTION: What is the connection between being blessed

and infertility?

ANSWER: According to the *Midrash Rabba* (*B'Reishis* 60:13), the matriarch Rivka was childless (until Yitzchak prayed for her), so that the nations of the world would not be able to claim credit that the Jewish nation grew as a result of Lavan's blessing: "Our sister, may you come to be thousands of myriads" (*B'Reishis* 24:60).

According to the *Midrash Rabba* (3:6), *"Baruch tiheyeh mi'kol ha'amim,"* means that "all the nations of the world will bless you." Consequently, Hashem is assuring the Jewish people that, "Although all the nations of the world will bless you, it will not prevent you from increasing (to deny them credit), for I will bless you with future generations which will ensure your continuity.

"He afflicted you and let you hunger, and He fed you the manna." (8:3)

QUESTION: There is a *midrash pelia* — wondrous *Midrash* — that says, "From here we can learn that candles must be lit in honor of *Shabbat*." What connection is there between this *pasuk* and the obligation to light *Shabbat* candles?

ANSWER: While eating the manna, the Jew was able to imagine and enjoy any food. If one wanted a rare delicacy, the manna would assume this taste, and if one wanted a sumptuous dessert, one would taste that. Why, then, does the verse mention the manna in connection with affliction?

Although the taste of the manna varied according to one's desire, the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 74b) explains that, "You cannot compare one who sees what he eats with one who does not see what he is eating. This is the reason that blind people glut themselves without becoming satisfied." Thus, while it is true that a person would experience any taste imaginable, since he did not actually

see his food, he did not truly enjoy it.

Scripture instructs us, “You shall proclaim the *Shabbat* ‘oneg’ — ‘a delight’ “ (Isaiah 58:13), and our sages (*Shabbat* 118b) explain that the way to experience delight is by eating delicious foods. Hence, if the home is not lit, regardless of the quality of the food, not only will one not enjoy the food, but, on the contrary, it will be an affliction. Therefore, one is obligated to light candles to illuminate the *Shabbat* table, so that everyone sitting at the table will proclaim the *Shabbat* an “oneg” — “delight.”

“You should know in your heart that just as a father will chastise his son, so G-d, your G-d, chastises you.” (8:5)

QUESTION: In what sense is Hashem’s chastising of the Jewish people similar to a father chastising his son?

ANSWER: Even when a father is displeased with his son’s behavior and hits him, he would be very upset if a stranger hits his son. The father would become protective then and defend his son.

However, when a person hits a stranger for committing a wrongdoing against him, he is grateful to every outsider who intervenes on his behalf.

Although Hashem may exile the Jewish people due to displeasure with their behavior, He is not happy with the countries that mistreat them while ruling over them. Even before they became a nation, Hashem promised Avraham that He would punish the nations that oppress them (*B’Reishis* 15:14).

“A land of wheat, barley, grape, fig, and pomegranate; a land of oil-olives and date-honey.” (8:8)

QUESTION: For the first five species with which the land is praised the *pasuk* mentions the fruits themselves while for the last two the fruits themselves are not mentioned

(olives and dates), but the extracts — oil and honey. Why?

ANSWER: The *Gemara* (*Horiat* 13b) says that eating olives can cause one to forget Torah learned over a period of seventy years. The *Gemara* (*P’sachim* 88a) relates that Ulah once came to Pumpedita and he was served a small basket of dates. He inquired, “How many of these can be purchased for one *zuz*” (Talmudic currency)? They told him, “Three [small baskets or one large one] for one *zuz*.” In amazement he said, “A basketful of honey can be purchased for one *zuz*, and yet the Babylonians do not engage in Torah study (with the cost of living so low, surely they have plenty of time to study)?” At night he became ill and said, “A basketful of poison can be purchased for one *zuz*, yet the Babylonians study Torah!”

From these two *Gemaras*, it is evident that olives and dates have a detrimental effect on one’s Torah study. On the other hand, the *Gemara* (*ibid.*) says olive oil can help one remember the Torah which he learned over seventy years, and the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 83b) says that honey, “enlightens the eye of man.”

Consequently, the Torah did not praise *Eretz Yisroel* with fruits (olives and dates) that interfere with learning, but with foods (oil and honey) that benefit man and enhance the study of Torah.

“A land of wheat, barley, grape, fig, and pomegranate; a land of oil-olives and date-honey.” (8:8)

QUESTION: Why does the Torah write “*eretz*” — “land” — a second time for “*zeit shemen u’devash*” — “olive-oil and honey”?

ANSWER: When the brothers went down to Egypt for the second time, Yaakov told them, “Take of the land’s glory and bring it down to the man [Yosef] as a tribute...a bit of honey” (*B’Reishis* 43:11). When the Jews complained about the wilderness they said, “Why did you

bring us up from Egypt to bring us to this evil place — not a place of seed or fig or grape or pomegranate?” (*BaMidbar* 20:5).

From the fact that Yaakov brought honey to Egypt, and that the Jews did not complain in the wilderness about lacking olive-oil and honey, it is apparent that they also did not have these items in Egypt. Therefore, to emphasize the excellence of *Eretz Yisroel*, the Torah separates olive-oil and honey from the other items with the word “*eretz*,” to emphasize that, in *this land*, the Jews would enjoy something which they did not have previously.

“A land whose stones are iron.” (8:9)

QUESTION: The *Gemara* (*Taanis* 4a) says, “Read not ‘*avanehah*’ — ‘stones’ — but ‘*bonehah*’ — ‘builders’ “ — referring to *talmidei chachamim* — Torah scholars. Why does the *pasuk* compare *talmidei chachamim* to iron and not to stones?

ANSWER: King Shlomo says, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens his fellow” (Proverbs 27:17). The *Gemara* (*Taanis* 7a) says that Torah scholars are compared to iron because one sharpens the other in *halacha*.

When one stone is rubbed against another, fire is created (see *P’sachim* 54a). Fire represents *machlokes* — arguments and disputes — because just as fire destroys a home, so *machlokes* destroys families and friendships. By comparing Torah scholars to iron the *pasuk* is teaching us that *talmidei chachamim* should sharpen and assist one another, and not be like stones, creating potentially catastrophic sparks of dissension.

“Who leads you through the awesome wilderness, of snakes, fiery serpents, and scorpions, and thirst where there was no water, who brings forth water for you from the rock of flint.” (8:15)

QUESTION: Why is Hashem's leading the Jews through a wilderness with all sorts of snakes and his bringing forth water from the rock, mentioned in the same *pasuk*?

ANSWER: The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 33a) relates that in a certain city people were being harmed by a snake. When they informed Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa about this, he asked to be shown the snake's burrow. He put his heel over it, and when the snake came out and bit him, it died. According to the Jerusalem Talmud (*Brachos* 5:1), a spring of water had miraculously opened under Rabbi Chanina's heel and that sealed the fate of the snake, for when a snake bites a person, if the person reaches water before the snake, the snake will die, but if the snake reaches water first the person will die.

Describing the miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish people in the wilderness, the Torah states, "Who leads you through a great and awesome wilderness, of snakes, fiery serpents, and scorpions, and thirst where there was no water." These conditions were extremely dangerous since they were likely to be bitten by snakes in places where water was not available. The Torah therefore states that Hashem miraculously brought forth water from the rock, which provided water instantly to any person bitten, killing the snake and saving the person.

"And you may say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth.'" (8:17)

QUESTION: Since the *pasuk* already says "*kochi*" — "my strength" — what is the purpose of the words "*ve' otzem yadi*" — "and the might of my hand?"

ANSWER: When a Jew is blessed with affluence, the Torah expects him to give *tz'daka* and share his wealth with the needy. Sometimes there are wealthy people who are "tight-fisted" and refrain from giving *tz'daka*,

thinking erroneously that what they give away will reduce their assets. The word "*otzem*" in Hebrew can also be interpreted as "closing up" (see Isaiah 33:15). To dispel the illusion of some wealthy people regarding sharing wealth with the less fortunate, the Torah says, "Do not think that 'my strength' and '*otzem yadi*' — 'my closed up hand' — made me all this wealth. On the contrary, open your hand, and then you will be blessed with even more.

"Carve for yourself two stone Tablets." (10:1)

QUESTION: From the word "*lecha*" — "for yourself" — which seems superfluous, the *Gemara* (*Nedarim* 38a) deduces that Moshe was permitted to keep the chips of the Tablets, which made him very wealthy. Why is it important to know how he became wealthy?

ANSWER: Many businesses have major expense accounts and also a petty cash fund for small expenditures. Careful watch over the small expenditures is crucial to the overall success of the business, and negligence regarding the petty cash fund can sometimes run the company into serious financial difficulties.

The Tablets contained the Ten Commandments, which in reality represent the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos* of the Torah (see *Shmos* 24:12, Rashi). Among the *mitzvos* of the Torah there are those which people consider important, and others which they consider trivial. They compare some of the *mitzvos* to precious stones, and regard others as mere "chips," which are much less valuable. The chips of the Tablets are symbolic of often-neglected *mitzvos*.

The *Gemara* is not merely telling us the source of Moshe's material affluence, but also describing his spiritual wealth, which, according to our sages, derived from his careful observance of every *mitzvah*, even those some people consider to be

merely "chips."

"And now Israel what does G-d your G-d require of you but to fear G-d your G-d." (10:12)

QUESTION: The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 33b) asks, "Is fear, then, such a small thing?" The *Gemara* replies, "*Ein legabi Moshe mitla zutrata hi*" — "Yes, in the case of Moshe it is a small thing." The answer of the *Gemara* is incomprehensible, for it is written, "What does G-d require of you?"

ANSWER: People who may occasionally violate Torah rule, will not do so when someone whom they highly revere is present. The *Gemara* is saying that "*legabi Moshe*" — if one envisions himself in the presence of Moshe — it will be very easy for him to fear Hashem and not transgress.

When the prophet said, "*Vehayu einecha ro'os et morecha*" — "And your eyes will behold your teacher" (*Isaiah* 50:20), it does not necessarily mean physical seeing, but imagination. When one "sees" his teacher in front of him, then he will conduct himself properly.

Before Eliyahu parted with his student Elisha and went up to heaven, Elisha asked him, "May twice your prophetic power be mine." Eliyahu said, "You have made a difficult request; [however], *im tira oti lukach mei'itach yehi lecha chein* — if you will see me taken from you, it shall be so for you — but if you do not, then it will not happen" (*II Kings* 2:9,10). What does Elisha's seeing Eliyahu being taken away have to do with his request?

Eliyahu was telling Elisha, "I consider you to be my most dedicated disciple, and I know how much respect you have for me. However, I am wondering what our relationship will be when I am no longer physically with you. Thus, *im tira oti* — if you will continue to see me — i.e. envision my presence at all times

even when *'lukach mei'itach'* — I am physically taken away from you — then you will have proven your greatness and you will merit twice my prophetic power.”

Another explanation: the words of the *Gemara* “*legabi Moshe*” can be interpreted as “being close to Moshe.” It is indeed not easy for every individual to attain the proper fear of Hashem. However, the *Gemara* is advising us that “being close to Moshe” — being connected to a *tzaddik*, a Torah leader of the generation — will help one achieve the proper level of *yiras Shamayim* — fear of Heaven.

“Now, O Israel, what does G-d, your G-d, ask of you.” (10:12)

QUESTION: The word “*mah*” — “what” — seems to be superfluous. Instead of asking a question, “What does Hashem ask of you?” Moshe should have simply said, “Hashem asks of you the following...”

ANSWER: On the *pasuk*, “G-d, your G-d, shall you follow” (13:5) the *Gemara* (*Sota* 14a) asks, “How is it possible for a human being to follow Hashem, of whom it is said, ‘For G-d, your G-d, is a consuming fire’?” (4:24) and answers that the Torah means that one should emulate Hashem’s attributes. Just as He performs acts of kindness, so shall you; He clothes the naked, visits the sick, and buries the dead, so shall you” (see also 13:5, Rashi).

In light of the above, it can be explained that Moshe did not begin his remarks with a question, but He was making a statement. He was telling the Jewish people that “*mah Hashem Elokecha*” — “What G-d, your G-d, consists of” — i.e. what He represents and practices — “*sho’eil mei’imach*” — “He asks of you” — to emulate him in your daily lives.

Alternatively, in the Hebrew *alef beit*, there are twenty-two letters.

Each letter can also be written out in full, for example, *alef, beit, gimmel*. Thus, there is an external part of the letter and a hidden internal part, reflected in the full spelling.

The way to write out in full a *mem* or *hey* is by adding the same letter i.e., *mem-mem, hei-hei*. Thus each of these two letters are *tocho k’baro* — the inside is identical to the outside.

Among people there are some who are wicked on the inside but appear to be righteous on the outside. Moshe was not asking, but telling the Jews that “*mah*” — to be like the letters “*mah*” i.e., true inside and outside, is what *Hashem Elokecha sho’eil mei’imach* — G-d, your G-d, asks of you.

“For the land to which you come, to possess it, it is not like the land of Egypt... and water it on foot like a vegetable garden. But the land to which you cross over... from the rain of heaven shall it drink water.” (11:10-11)

QUESTION: Rain water, unlike river water, is not always available. If so, what advantage would the Jews experience in *Eretz Yisroel* in the watering of the fields?

ANSWER: The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 76a) relates that, “Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was asked by his disciples, ‘Why didn’t the manna come down for Israel once annually?’ He replied, ‘I shall give a parable. There was a king of flesh and blood who had one son; he provided him with his maintenance once a year, and he would visit his father only once a year. Unsatisfied with seeing his son so rarely, he provided him maintenance daily, so that he would call on him every day. The same applies to the Israelites. One who had four or five children would worry, saying: “Perhaps no manna will come down tomorrow, and all of us will die of hunger.” Thus, they were forced to constantly turn their attention to their Father in Heaven.’ “

The constant availability of water

in Egypt denied them the opportunity of realizing that they are constantly dependent on Hashem. The blessing of living in *Eretz Yisroel* and having to rely on water from Heaven is that they always have to look up to Heaven (Hashem) and pray to Him for sustenance. A constant relationship with Hashem is a blessing.

After the serpent instigated Chava to eat the forbidden fruit, it was cursed, “Upon your belly you shall go and dust shall you eat all the days of your life” (*B’Reishis* 3:14). Since he will always have food available wherever he will be, what is the curse?

Hashem provides food for everybody, including animals, as King David says, “The young lions roar after their prey and to seek their food from Hashem” (*Psalms* 104:21). The greatest punishment a father can give a child is to hand him a large sum of money and say, “Take this, and I do not want to see your face anymore.” Thus, by making food available to him at all time and at all places and denying him the opportunity to look towards Heaven (Hashem) for food, Hashem was, in effect, saying to the serpent “I don’t want to see you.”

“You shall bind them for a sign upon your arm and let them be a frontlet between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children” (11:18-19)

QUESTION: Why, in this *pasuk*, does it first mention the *mitzvah* of *t’fillin* followed by the *mitzvah* of teaching the children, while in the first portion of the *Shma* (6:6), it says first, “You shall teach them thoroughly to your children” and the *mitzvah* of *t’fillin* afterward?

ANSWER: A parent is obligated to teach his child Torah as soon as he is able to speak (11:19, Rashi). When the child reaches the age of thirteen, he becomes *Bar-Mitzvah* and is

required to wear *t'fillin*. Many parents take an active interest in their child's education when he is very young. However, as he grows older, their participation wanes.

In the first portion of the *Shma*, the Torah is teaching us that the first obligation of a parent is to teach his child Torah while he is very young, and, when he reaches the age of thirteen, the parent must see to it that he puts on *t'fillin*. The second portion is teaching us that even when the child is already wearing *t'fillin* i.e. he has become *Bar-Mitzvah*, the parent is not free of his obligation to educate his children. He must continue to teach and always be involved in his children's Torah learning.

"You shall bind them for a sign upon your arm and let them be an ornament between your eyes." (11:18)

QUESTION: When *t'fillin* fall to the ground they should be picked up immediately, and it is customary to give them a kiss. What is the significance of this custom?

ANSWER: When Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev once observed such a scene in his *shul*, he lifted his eyes to Heaven and said, "A-mighty G-d, when this simple Jew's *t'fillin* fell down, he immediately picked them up and kissed them. The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 6a) says that You, too, wear *t'fillin* and in Your *t'fillin* is written Your pride in the Jewish people. Unfortunately, Your *t'fillin* — the Jewish people — have fallen, and have been lying in disgrace for many years with the nations of the world stepping on them. Why don't You pick up Your *t'fillin* — the Jewish people — and give them the 'kiss' they so well deserve?"

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's heartfelt plea to Hashem to "pick up Your *t'fillin* and give them a kiss," was that Hashem should immediately send *Moshiach* to redeem the Jews and take them out of exile.

The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 6a) says that Hashem wears *t'fillin* containing the *pasuk*, "And who is like Your people like Israel, one nation on earth" (II Samuel 7:23), which testifies to the uniqueness and greatness of the Jewish people. The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 11a) also says that *t'fillin* are called "*pe'eir*" — "magnificence" — as we find that when Yechezkel was in mourning, he was told, "*Pe'eirecha chavush alecha*" — "Put on your magnificent headgear (*t'fillin*)" (Ezekiel 24:17).

In the *Slichos* prayers recited on a fast day we say, "*Asei l'maan pe'eirecha*" — "Act for the sake of your magnificence." This may be explained to mean that we are asking Hashem to act on behalf of His "*pe'eir*" — *t'fillin* — i.e. the Jewish people: "Please forgive the sins of the Jewish people and make them the 'one nation on earth.' Thus, Your *t'fillin*, which declare the praise and uniqueness of the Jewish people, will be telling the truth. Otherwise, the *kashrus* of Your *t'fillin* will be questionable."

"You shall teach them to your children to discuss them." (11:19)

QUESTION: The word "*otam*" can also be spelled with a "*cholom vav*" (see *VaYikra* 23:43, 24:6). Why is the vowel here without a *vav*?

ANSWER: The word "*otam*" without a *vav*, which is translated to mean "them," can also be read as "*atem*" which means "you." The Torah is instructing us that in order for a parent to succeed in teaching "*otam*" — "them" — Torah and *mitzvos* — to his children, it is imperative that it also be "*atem*" — you must be a living example to your children — i.e., the children should see you learning Torah and observing *mitzvos*.

A non-observant father once sent his child to a Hebrew school. As the child's *Bar-Mitzvah* was

approaching, he took his son to the Hebrew book store and asked the salesman for a *Bar-Mitzvah* set. The salesman opened the box and the boy saw in it a pair of *t'fillin* and a *tallis*. Having no knowledge of these strange items, he asked his father with a puzzled expression on his face, "What are these?" The father told him, "My son, this is what every Jew must have when he becomes *Bar-Mitzvah*." The young boy looked up to his father and inquisitively asked, "So father, when are you becoming *Bar-Mitzvah*?"

"You shall teach them to your children to discuss them, while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise." (11:19)

QUESTION: Why does the Torah have to specify all the conditions under which a parent should teach his children, instead of simply saying "teach them at all times"?

ANSWER: Often children, out of respect or fear, fulfill the wishes and desires of their parents. However, once that motivation no longer exists, the children do as they wish. For instance, many children observe Torah and *mitzvos* while their parents are alive in order to please them, but not after their parents' demise. True education consists of molding a person's way of life and thinking so that the principles instilled in him remain imbedded forever.

The Torah is not only instructing us when to teach children, but also specifying the kind of education to give them. The goal should be to permeate the children with Torah and firmly impress on them the importance of its observance. Thus, they will study and observe not only when the father is home with them, but even when he "walks on his way": when he does not have any further physical contact with them, they will continue to observe Torah and *mitzvos* on their own.

G-D IS GOOD, MOSHIACH IS GOOD

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

For someone who has “tasted” Chassidus, the idea that Moshiach will be bad for you is not only factually incorrect but inconceivable ... Every fiber of my being feels that it is under assault in the face of such a suggestion that is completely contrary to what I know as absolute reality, because I have “tasted” and “seen” az der Oibershter is gut.

GOOD FOR WHOM?

In the early years of my involvement with Chabad Chassidus, I got into a lengthy discussion with a good friend of mine who was a direct descendant of a renowned Polish Chassidic dynasty and very interested in understanding the distinctions between Chabad and other Chassidic approaches. (Tragically, he passed away earlier this past year at a young age, leaving behind a young widow and ten young children.) In that conversation, I brought up a story of the Alter Rebbe from the period of his life when he traveled incognito for the purpose of bringing in new recruits to the Chassidic movement.

The story took place when he

paid a visit to the town of Shklov, a bastion of Lithuanian scholarship and opposition to Chassidus. There he entered a house of study, where many young scholars were learning with great diligence. He went up to the lectern and proclaimed loudly with a distinctive tune (well-known to Chassidim), “*Taamu U’Re’u Ki Tov Havaya – farzucht, vet ihr zehn, az der Oibershter is gut* (taste, and you will see, that G-d is good).” The Alter Rebbe immediately left and hurried to get out of town as there was a very real threat of physical danger for Chassidim in those days, and the story goes that he was followed by scores of young men who eventually became devout Chassidim.

Although the story is obviously indicative of the great spiritual powers of a great Tzaddik such as the Alter Rebbe, since it can hardly be expected that an ordinary Chassid would have achieved the same result with the same message, the content of the message is clearly a central point of the story. We discussed and analyzed every detail of the story, with a key point of discussion being the question of whether Misnagdim in general have a more negative view of G-d, and if they do why is that the case.

We had both grown up being educated in Torah institutions that tended to embrace a more oppositional view of the Chassidic movement as a whole, while attempting to incorporate some ideas and insights from the great Chassidic masters, especially those ideas that portray Judaism in a more positive and inspirational light. As such, we had never really been exposed to the extreme attitudes attributed to the early Misnagdim in Chassidic writings, in which G-d is portrayed as a scary all-powerful being just waiting to zap those who step out of line, conjuring up inventive means of torturing and tormenting the souls of the sinful (and who is really completely pure of sin?) for all eternity.

And yet, as we thought about it, we concluded that the main reason for this was not a true shift in

perception, but rather a shift in emphasis. Since we live in times when young people are surrounded by a beckoning world of seemingly endless options and freedoms, the focus became on developing a success orientation rather than a *Yiras Shamayim* orientation. The idea being that American kids relate more to concrete measurable steps that define success in a given pursuit or vocation, so the yeshiva model for the New World became one that focused on being a success in learning, with every other aspect of observance and ideology seen as secondary, tertiary, or even entirely peripheral, but necessary for success in learning.

However, despite the aforementioned shift, if someone is committed to pursuing and attaining real feelings of fear and awe of Heaven, he has no real tools to do so except to fire up his imagination to come up with ways of seeing and defining G-d in scary terms. So, despite the general avoidance of the more “negative” and “scary” aspects of Judaism, there remains a perceptual undercurrent of G-d as the big bad bogeyman, which tends to come to the fore only when decrying or condemning some other group for their laxity of observance or questionable ideology, whence they are consigned to eternal damnation seasoned with unspeakable tortures. Although, this generally is accompanied by outrage and righteous indignation, it can actually be a fun and even cathartic exercise carried out in good cheer with verve and gusto (sometimes even by the “G’dolim” leadership).

IS IT REALLY GOOD?

Not long after that conversation, I got incontrovertible confirmation of the aforementioned thesis, that without Chassidus even the most learned people can and do end up with some pretty twisted ideas about

G-d, which do not comport with Him as the infinitely loving and lovable Being that He is. This involved another even older friend from my early childhood, who is also a direct descendant of one of the early Chassidic greats, but came from a more modern home and made great sacrifices in order to attend the same yeshivas that I did. His connection with his Chassidic origins is limited to great admiration for the late Satmar Rebbe with whom he has a family relation, so his opposition to Chabad is both as a Misnaged and as a “Chassid.”

At the time, a local Jewish magazine decided to capitalize on the controversy surrounding the Moshiach issue, and they published an article from my friend which was unreservedly critical of Lubavitch. In response, they later published an article from a prominent Lubavitcher as well as a reply article from my friend, under the heading of “the great Moshiach debate.” In his original article, he wrote that Lubavitch was guilty of false advertising when it comes to the issue of Moshiach. This is because they represent to the uneducated public the idea that when Moshiach comes it will be good. However, this is completely untrue for everybody but the most righteous people or those who have repented their sins in good time.

Citing the Chofetz Chaim, he explained that after Moshiach comes there will take place “the Great and Awesome Judgment Day,” and at that time, anyone who committed a sin with any one of his limbs or organs will be consigned to spend all of eternity without that limb or organ, since it will be too late for repentance. Thus, someone who sinned by listening to forbidden talk will have no ears, by viewing forbidden sights will have no eyes, and so on and so forth. That being the case, he concluded that Moshiach’s arrival will herald

unspeakable and eternal suffering for almost all Jews.

The question then is why G-d would demand of us that we wait in anticipation, and constantly hope and pray for the coming of Moshiach when it is so patently detrimental to our interests. The answer he gives is that this is another example of a commandment that requires great personal sacrifice, namely that we really truly hope and pray for something inordinately horrible since this is what G-d wants.

Apparently, this theorem was not an original one, because I discovered that the Rebbe actually addressed this perverted view a number of years earlier, bemoaning the tragedy of those that perceive G-d as the epitome of heartlessness. In the Rebbe’s words, “*Dos iz aza achzariyus vos der Satan alein volt nisht gekent oistrachten* (that is such a cruelty that Satan himself couldn’t have thought it up).” And yet, when I spoke to other people from my past, including close family, they didn’t think that his views were that far off the mark. Now that is scary!

So what is the basis for the Chassidic approach? How does one “see” that G-d is good? And what about all the harrowingly harsh and horrific purgations purportedly practiced in purgatory presumably preparatory to paradise (some even cited in Tanya)?

GOOD TASTE

Perhaps we can answer those questions by analyzing the verse quoted in the story at the beginning of the article, “Taste, and you will see, that G-d is good.” The obvious question is what does taste have to do with seeing, and how does Chassidus facilitate this tasting and seeing? To understand this we need to acknowledge that pretty much every Torah source from all periods and disciplines all seem to concur

that this world is a place where there exists far more negativity, whether it be pain and suffering or wickedness and injustice, than good.

According to Kabbala and Chassidus, the reason for this is due to the tremendous concealment and withholding of G-dly light that is necessary to create a finite material world. As such, in this world, the Divine attribute of *G'vura* (strength, justice, severity) is more manifest than the infinite creative powers of *Chesed* (loving-kindness, generosity, tolerance). In fact, "G-d saw that the world would not be able to survive so He partnered it with the attribute of *Rachamim* (mercy, compassion)," which allows for the mutual cooperation of both forces.

So, if we were to extrapolate any knowledge of G-d from the world as we see it, since what we see is mostly negative, we would be forced to conclude that even if we were to accept the idea that "G-d is good" as a matter of faith, since He told us so in His Torah, we could hardly say that we "see that G-d is good."

However, the power of taste works differently than the power of sight. By properly blending some of the foulest tasting ingredients such as vinegar and the like, one can tease out more pleasurable flavors than if he were limited to using only good tasting ingredients. Someone who had only tasted vinegar straight up, the next time he saw a vinegar bottle he would "see" it as something awful because he only "sees" it in terms of his earlier negative experience. However, someone who has tasted many delicacies which include vinegar "sees" it in an entirely different light. In fact, there are many people who feel deprived when refraining from vinegar use during the High Holiday season, depending on their custom.

Similarly, in Kabbala and Chassidus it is explained that the existence of the Divine attribute of *G'vura* is strictly for the purpose of

enhancing and intensifying the attribute of *Chesed*. Any concealment or painful situation is only temporary and fleeting and only as a means to make the world and the individual Jew a proper vessel to receive His material blessings in this world and G-d's Infinite Light and His infinite goodness in the World to Come. It is only if you "taste" it separately that it seems to be just plain bad, and the world and its Creator seem to look just as bad. However, through learning Chassidus and developing an appreciation for the infinite greatness and goodness of Hashem, and how this is expressed even more powerfully within the concealment of the finite, and how in fact the concealment only exists in order to bring about greater revelation, then you can actually alter your own experience of the world as we know it. "Taste" and only then will you "see" that G-d is good.

For someone who has "tasted" Chassidus, the idea that Moshiach will be bad for you is not only factually incorrect but inconceivable. This is not only from an intellectual and/or ideological standpoint, but every fiber of my being feels that it is under assault in the face of such a suggestion that is completely contrary to what I know as absolute reality, because I have "tasted" and "seen" *az der Oibershter is gut*. (As to the "Great and Awesome Judgment Day," this not the time or place, but let us suffice with the statement of the Minchas Elozor of Munkatch who after explaining that this does not apply to Jews and certainly not in any adverse way [citing the Arizal and others] said regarding those that use this to convince Jews that Moshiach will be bad for them – *afra l'pumayhu* [may their mouths be filled with dust] – in a positive way of course, i.e. the "dust" of bittul to G-d and His righteous ones).

GOOD IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH

There is a note written by Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneerson, the Rebbe's father, whose *yahrtzait* we commemorate on the 20th day of Av, where he writes about the persecution and suffering that he endured beginning with his first arrest. There he explains based on many Kabbalistic ideas how his name and various aspects of his life allude to the Divine attribute of *G'vura*, and how they manifested in his life. And yet, the whole tone of the piece is about how "G-d is good" and that the whole purpose for the existence of this Divine attribute is so that it be "sweetened" with *Chesed*, and concludes with the prayer that he witness the actual sweetening and be released from his exile. Although it is all good, when everything comes together in a sweet way that is when it is better than good.

In similar fashion, we currently find ourselves in a time of concealment, a time which the Rebbe alluded to in a lengthy footnote in the last edited *sicha* to date with the verse, "For a brief moment, I have deserted you, and with great mercies I will gather you in." And yet, we are called upon to not only "see" that G-d is good, but to "open our eyes" and see how everything that is happening is not just leading up to *Geula* and the coming of Moshiach, but is part of the actual process. This requires that we apply the power of "taste" in order to appreciate even those ingredients in the process that seem to be less than palatable, so that we can "see" that "G-d is good" and Moshiach is good. This in turn, should only strengthen our commitment to not be satisfied with a good that requires "tasting" first, but to insist on and do everything in our power to bring about the ultimate revealed good with the True and Complete Redemption, immediately, NOW!

‘AND THEY WILL FEAR YOU’

*A compilation of stories about the mitzva of t’fillin, from the Rebbe’s sichos. * Presented for Parshas Eikev in which we read about the mitzva of t’fillin.*

THE LID OF THE SNUFF BOX

The Alter Rebbe had a silver snuff box without a cover since he used the shiny cover to properly place the t’fillin on his head so they would be precisely centered.

When someone commented to the Tzemach Tzedek that the Alter Rebbe broke the cover off the box, the Tzemach Tzedek said that his grandfather’s way was not to break. He did not break it. The cover was probably attached with a pin and he simply removed the pin.

... The inyan is: In k’dusha there is no breaking. Therefore, it was obvious that the Alter Rebbe did not break off the cover.

(Likkutei Sichos vol. 17, p. 76)

WHY DID THE SICK PERSON GO TO THE HOSPITAL?

A Jew in Eretz Yisroel was

seriously ill and needed a complicated operation. He wrote to me and asked for a bracha. Nu, when a Jew asks for a bracha how could I not give him one? I wrote him with a bracha for a full recovery and added that he should start putting on t’fillin every day.

He committed to doing this and suddenly recovered. He did not need an operation and the doctors were very amazed. The other patients asked him how he recovered and he told them that he started putting on t’fillin and got better. If so, said the patients, we will also start putting on t’fillin and many of them began doing so every day.

... The entire purpose for his going to the hospital was only to start putting on t’fillin and to influence others to do the same. When he did his job, he left the hospital.

*(Sicha B’Shalach 5714,
Sichos Kodesh, p. 185)*

WHAT IS THE LAW ABOUT SOMEONE WHO IS HEADLESS?

One time a bright child, not yet bar mitzva, came for a yechidus and I asked him some questions. I asked him, “What is the din about someone who does not have a hand (G-d forbid) – does he need to put t’fillin on his head?”

The child answered: “Of course he needs to put on t’fillin shel rosh.”

I asked him: “Why?”

The child answered: “Although it says, ‘as long as they are between your eyes there should be two,’ and here there aren’t ‘two,’ because he cannot put on the t’fillin shel yad, but nevertheless he must put it on because that’s what the halacha says.”

I asked: “What would the din be in the opposite case, when he doesn’t have a head but he has an arm?”





The child answered: “All the more so must he put on the t’fillin shel yad for if, when he does not have a hand, despite the fact that it says, ‘as long as they are between your eyes there should be **two**’ nevertheless we do the **opposite** of the pasuk and put on the t’fillin shel rosh (**only**) – when there is no **head**, for which there is no pasuk that says, ‘as long as they are between your **hands** there should be two’ (in fact, we start by putting on the hand t’fillin only) – he should certainly, at least, put on the hand t’fillin.”

Then he realized that he was missing something relevant. I asked him: “Then why doesn’t such a halacha appear anywhere?” And he realized that something was amiss ...

(Sicha of Motzaei Shabbos Ki Sisa 5739 – Sichos Kodesh p. 313)

“SAM SAPOZHNIK”

A Chassid once gave his own explanation in Chassidus. They

asked him: “Where did you get that from? What’s the source?”

He said: “What do you mean? I have a head. I understand. Yagati u’matzasi.”

R’ Zev Wolf said about this:

It happened after a pogrom that Jews went to a village of gentiles to buy back from them those items that had been robbed from them during the pogrom. In one house they saw a pair of t’fillin. They yelled at the man, “That’s stolen! Give it back!”

He said, “What do you mean? *Sam sapozhnik* (I myself am a shoemaker)!”

The goy didn’t know it but we find in the Gemara that there is a specific connection between the t’fillin straps and shoelaces: “As a reward for Avrohom Avinu saying ... ‘till a shoelace,’ his descendants merited ... the straps of t’fillin.”

(Sicha of 12 Tamuz 5713 – Sichos Kodesh p. 330)

The story is known about the gentile shoemaker who stole a pair of t’fillin from a Jew and when they [Jews] noticed the t’fillin and claimed that he stole it, he said “*Sam sapozhnik*,” that he himself was a shoemaker and made the t’fillin himself. He saw that the t’fillin were made out of animal hide and since he was a shoemaker and sewed shoes made from animal hide, he claimed that he had made the t’fillin himself!

This story is not only humorous – as we understand from the fact that it is told to Jewish children learning in chadarim, and in fact I think this story is quoted in one of the letters of the Rebbe Rayatz – but has a lesson, and in addition – there is a source for this in Torah:

In the Midrash it says that because Avrohom Avinu said, “whether from a thread till a shoelace” – he was alluding to the mitzva of chalitzah and the mitzva of t’fillin. In this we see the connection between t’fillin and shoes made by a shoemaker (as in the story mentioned above).

Along similar lines, we see in sifrei Kabbala and Chassidus that Matat sews shoes and with every stitch he makes Supernal Unifications like the yichudim accomplished through the mitzva of t’fillin.

(Sicha B’Reishis 5742 – Hisvaaduyos p. 304)

He claims that he has a “Shulchan Aruch,” and he has also a brain in his skull and so he can himself, boruch Hashem, resolve everything correctly and doesn’t have to ask the Rebbe.

Regarding someone like this the Rebbe Rayatz once used the expression, “*sam sapozhnik*” (he himself is a shoemaker).

There is a story about a Jew walking into a goy’s house and seeing t’fillin there and deciding to buy them from him he asks: Where

did you get these from?

The goy – who doesn't know whether the Jew intends on buying them or is trying to find out where he stole them from – answers, “Ya sam sapozhnik” – I myself am a shoemaker and I sewed them myself.

Obviously, concludes the Rebbe Rayatz, there is no connection between a goy and the making of t'fillin!

Likewise, someone who thinks that he, too, can figure out everything himself and he doesn't have to ask the Rebbe.

(Sicha Shlach 5711 – Hisvaaduyos p. 175)

T'FILLIN MADE OF POTATOES

The story is told about the Tzemach Tzedek when he was a little boy and orphaned of his mother (and the Alter Rebbe took responsibility for raising him) that he spent hours in the Alter Rebbe's room, including when he davened. He was not even six years old, but already there were clear indications of his future greatness. When the Alter Rebbe donned t'fillin he made himself t'fillin out of potatoes and he would wear them and *shuckle* when the Alter Rebbe was busy praying.

Chassidim once had to enter the Alter Rebbe's room to review the drush (which began with “al shloscha d'varim ha'olam omeid”) and since they had to enter after the Alter Rebbe finished with his t'fillin of Rabbeinu Tam, they saw through a crack in the door how the Tzemach Tzedek was playing, as related at length in a reshima (and when the Alter Rebbe finished with the t'fillin of Rabbeinu Tam the Chassidim entered for chazara).

(Sicha of 12 Tamuz 5726 – Sichos Kodesh p. 535)

VICTORY THANKS TO T'FILLIN

There was a pitcher who refused

to play in the World Series on Yom Kippur and said he would not play on Rosh HaShana either. A young man came to him and said that if that's the case, he had a gift for him, a pair of t'fillin.

The pitcher said that he still remembered t'fillin but refused to put them on. The pitcher went on his way and that day he did not win the game.

The young man visited him again and spoke to him. The end was that the pitcher won in the World Series and the t'fillin are on his table. In the end, “none will be cast away...” and he will merit to put them on and so we will have another Jew who puts on t'fillin.

When I read about this (the World Series) in the headlines – I did not know this young man would go visit the pitcher. He did it on his own, and even asked that people shouldn't know about it and to keep it a secret.

(Sicha of Simchas Torah 5726 – Sichos Kodesh p. 52)

T'FILLIN ON SHABBOS CHAZON

... Regarding this, there is an amazing and shocking story. A rav who was a gadol ba'Torah and a posek who had written approbations for many s'farim etc. had the custom of wearing his weekday hat rather than his Shabbos hat on Shabbos Chazon. One time he was walking with another rav who was wearing his Shabbos hat and he argued with him about this and brought proof that you are supposed to do things differently than on other Shabbasos.

Someone came over to them and asked whether they had heard what happened that day in shul. He told them that a Jew with t'fillin came to shul. When they asked him how he could come with t'fillin when it was Shabbos, he said he looked out the window and saw the rav wearing his weekday hat and if the rav could

wear his weekday hat, then he could come with t'fillin.

When the rav realized that he had caused another Jew to come on Shabbos with t'fillin, which is the opposite of the holiness of Shabbos, he took it to heart.

(Sicha Shabbos Chazon 5736 – Sichos Kodesh p. 569)

YEARNING FOR THE MITZVA OF T'FILLIN

There is the story about Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev that after Sukkos and Pesach (some say even after Shavuot) he would wait impatiently for daybreak because he greatly yearned to fulfill the mitzva of t'fillin. And this was the case even though the spiritual inyanim of the mitzva of t'fillin were accomplished on Yom Tov.

Since we were told this story, obviously it ought to serve as a lesson for us in avodas Hashem, as in the famous teaching of the Baal Shem Tov that everything a Jew sees or hears needs to serve as a lesson for him in avodas Hashem. In this case, from this story, we learn about the great longing to fulfill the mitzva of t'fillin after Yom Tov.

(Sichas Simchas Torah 5743 – Hisvaaduyos p. 305)

Question: There is a story about Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev zt”l who would wait all night of Sukkos in great anticipation for the moment that he could say a bracha on the esrog. Why specifically with this mitzva?

The Rebbe: It was the same with the mitzva of t'fillin. After the nine days of Yom Tov and Chol HaMoed when we do not put on t'fillin, he would wait for the moment that he could...

(Sicha leil beis Chol HaMoed 5731 – HaMelech B'Mesibo vol. 2 p. 201)

Furthermore and most importantly, putting on t'fillin brings the true and

Jews went to a village of gentiles to buy back from them those items that had been robbed from them during the pogrom. In one house they saw a pair of t'fillin. They yelled at the man, "That's stolen! Give it back!" He said: "What do you mean? Sam sapozhnik (I myself am a shoemaker)!"

complete Geula quicker and in a deeper, higher, broader way, for then will be fulfilled "and all the nations of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is called upon you and they will fear you" in the most perfect way.

*(Sicha leil Hoshana Raba 5752
– Sichos Kodesh p. 179)*

PUTTING ON T'FILLIN AND YECHIDUS

Many Chassidim considered the day they arrived in Lubavitch to be their "birthday."

My teacher, R' Shmuel Betzalel, arrived in Lubavitch the first time on Thursday evening, Parshas Mishpatim, 5608, (1848). Every year after that, he stayed awake all that night and took pains to put on his T'fillin at the exact time he had entered the Tzemach Tzedek's chamber for Yechidus the first time.

(HaYom Yom 30 Shvat)

THE ARREST OF THE REBBE RAYATZ

In the diary of his arrest it describes at length the give and take, the arguing, hunger strike and the unwillingness to answer questions until they returned his t'fillin. Even prior to that, when he was walking in the corridor, on the steps, he put on t'fillin. All this – in addition to the fact that when he entered

Spalerka [prison] he entered with t'fillin shel yad and t'fillin shel rosh (which represents the initial impact of the mitzva even within his own "four cubits").

*(Sicha 12 Tamuz 5734
– Sichos Kodesh p. 265)*

"T'FILLIN" AND "SHOES"

The Alter Rebbe related that one time the Baal Shem Tov spoke to his disciples about Simchas Torah and said:

Simchas Torah in general, Jews go to sleep late. The time for davening on Shabbos and Yom Tov is generally later than on weekdays and particularly on Simchas Torah, people go to sleep late because of the hakafo and the Yom Tov meals. But angels don't have this avoda and they get up on Simchas Torah at the same time as they do every day. They wanted to say shira but without neshamos they cannot and so while they were waiting they went to sweep up in Gan Eden.

And they found there items that they did not recognize – shoes and sandals. They are very surprised by this for they are used to finding tzitzis or t'fillin in Gan Eden but not footwear. They went to ask Malach Michael.

Malach Michael told them that these are his wares and he explained that they are from the dancing of the

Jewish people with the Torah and he started counting the shoes: These are from Kaminka, these are from Mezritch, etc. Malach Michael lords it over the angel Matat who ties crowns for his Maker out of the prayers of the Jewish people while he (Malach Michael) will make a better crown out of shoes torn from the Simchas Torah dancing.

There are some points that stand out:

1) There is an inyan of simcha on the other Jewish holidays so why are shoes in Gan Eden only on Simchas Torah? 2) Why are the mitzvos of tzitzis and t'fillin mentioned? If you want to say that he wants to refer to mitzvos associated with a physical object (like shoes) it is not understood: 3) What is the significance of finding tzitzis and t'fillin as opposed to finding shoes? If the point is about the ruchnius of the mitzva, these mitzvos are not unique and if the point is to emphasize the physicality of the mitzva, that this too finds favor in Gan Eden, why is finding shoes more surprising than finding tzitzis and t'fillin?

The explanation:

In the story it says that Malach Michael lords it over the angel Matat who ties crowns for his Maker out of the prayers of the Jewish people and this is why two mitzvos associated with t'filla are mentioned: tzitzis and t'fillin. He does not mention t'filla itself because he wants to refer to a physical object like shoes, and t'filla is a spiritual avoda, "service of the heart." However, although tzitzis and t'fillin are physical objects they are not like shoes, for tzitzis and t'fillin are used specifically for a mitzva while shoes are neutral items. Shoes are in the category of *hechsher mitzva*, preparing for a mitzva, something that is associated with a mitzva but not the mitzva itself.

*(Sicha Shabbos B'Reishis 5731
– Sichos Kodesh p. 119)*

THE GANSBOURGS AND REB LEVIK, ZT”L

By Menachem Ziegelboim

Presented for Chaf Av, the hilula of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn.

PART 1

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn zt”l was a holy man and yet, being rav of a city, he was involved with people and their material and spiritual needs. Few were the people who recognized the greatness of this giant of a man; only those who were filled with Torah and Chassidus and a knowledge of Kabbala could assess the wondrous Torah personality of the rav of the city, R’ Levi Yitzchok.

A coterie of people and Chassidim gathered around this tzaddik. One of this group was the celebrated Chassid, Rav Simcha Gansbourg, a close follower of the Rebbe Maharash. R’ Simcha lived in Dnepropetrovsk where R’ Levi Yitzchok served as chief rabbi, and being in the same city he had the opportunity to see up close the small measure of greatness that this great Tzaddik allowed to show through.

Even when R’ Simcha was appointed rav of a neighboring city Verchany-Dneprovsk he continued to maintain friendly ties with R’ Levi Yitzchok. He would sometimes take his entire family to visit R’ Levi Yitzchok in order to show his children what an extraordinary Jewish personality was like.

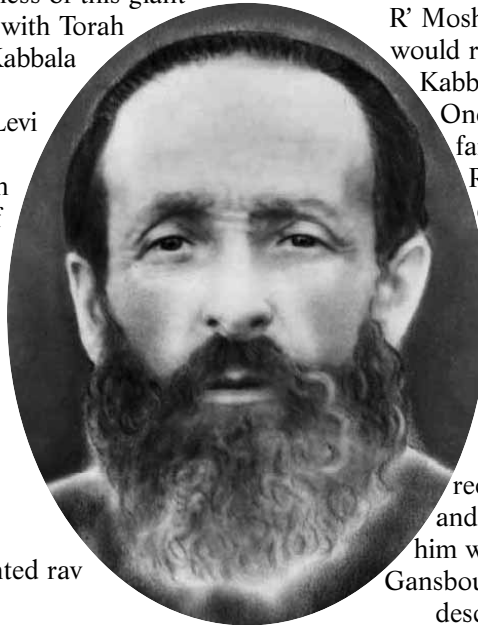
One of the sons of R’ Simcha was Moshe Dovber. With his father’s encouragement he also developed an appreciation for the greatness of this gaon and sought to establish a close relationship with him as well. He would visit R’ Levi Yitzchok periodically and stay with him with

for a while

On one of these occasions when R’ Moshe Dovber stayed in his house, a fire broke out in one of the rooms and R’ Moshe Dovber quickly put out the fire. Many years later, when his son, R’ Tzvi Hirsch Gansbourg would visit Rebbetzin Chana a”h in her home in New York, she would point at him and say to those present, “He is the son of Berel Pazarnik (Berel the Fireman).”

R’ Moshe Dovber said that R’ Levi Yitzchok would regularly speak using the wording of Kabbala and he often used acronyms.

Once, in the middle of a Purim farbrengen in R’ Levi Yitzchok’s house, R’ Moshe Dovber danced enthusiastically while holding a three-legged chair in his right hand. R’ Levi Yitzchok began explaining the inyan of the dance and the three-legged chair according to Kabbala.



Rabbi Menachem Gansbourg

PART II

Another one of the group who recognized the greatness of this tzaddik and seems to have been the closest to him was the Chassid R’ Menachem Gansbourg. Rebbetzin Chana, in her memoir, describes him as “One of our friends who truly deserves mention.” She wrote, “He is one of the people who, in that period, had his ‘hidden powers’ revealed.” Such praise from the Rebbetzin, whose every word was measured, must have been very well deserved.

R’ Menachem often brought his children to the rav’s house. They were warmly received by the rav and rebbetzin. Whenever they came to visit, the rebbetzin would offer them candies that she had put away just for

PART III

them since in those days candies were hard to come by.

R' Menachem's daughter Deena collected stamps and Rebbetzin Chana would often give her the stamps from the letters that she received. She would explain that this letter came from her oldest son who was in Berlin and that letter came from Eretz Yisroel, and so on. She would also show her pictures of the Rebbe and his brothers on her visits.

R' Menachem Gansbourg was a distinguished Chassid and a great talmid chacham. He was well-versed not only in Talmud and its commentaries but also in Chassidus and Kabbala. R' Levi Yitzchok would praise him highly and testified about him that "He has a good head" and "He is one of the few who understands my words of Chassidus." R' Levi Yitzchok would even occasionally send him his writings and chiddushim so R' Menachem could examine them and give him his opinion.

R' Menachem was a yerei Shamayim and very particular about every aspect of Torah observance. This was not something he broadcast or took pride in. He tried to keep his stringencies to himself so that someone who was not discerning was liable to think that he was merely a Chassid like anyone else.

For a period of time his family was sorely lacking in food and R' Menachem would go every morning, while it was still dark outside, and stand on line for food for his wife and seven children. Since his children were very weak, he tried to obtain the best food for them and occasionally he would get white bread instead of black and sometimes he would even manage to obtain a double portion for them. He himself did not touch the food even though it wasn't treif. He managed with black bread and pickled tomatoes. Being constantly concerned about kashrus, he starved more than he ate.

Many Jews did not eat chametz during Pesach but they continued receiving their bread coupons and would use them after Pesach, when they received a sizable amount of flour. One day, R' Menachem heard from R' Levi Yitzchok that these food coupons from Pesach were forbidden to be used. Despite the pitiful circumstances of the time, he took those coupons out of his booklet and ripped them up!

Doing something like this demanded tremendous inner strength. R' Menachem was the only one in his family who did this.

9 Nissan 1939.

3:00 am

Brigadne Street 13

Dnepropetrovsk

The streets were dark and empty when banging was heard at the door of R' Levi Yitzchok. When Rebbetzin Chana opened the door she saw four members of the NKVD who asked for the rabbi. As soon as they entered, while she went to inform her husband of the uninvited "guests," they manned posts near every door. One of the men handed R' Levi Yitzchok a search warrant, along with a warrant for his arrest.

The four men examined all the books arranged in five bookcases. The books included works of kabbala, manuscripts, and letters and telegrams from abroad.

They packed it all and took it with them. The men worked until six in the morning and after examining the entire house, they ordered R' Levi Yitzchok to get dressed and come with them.

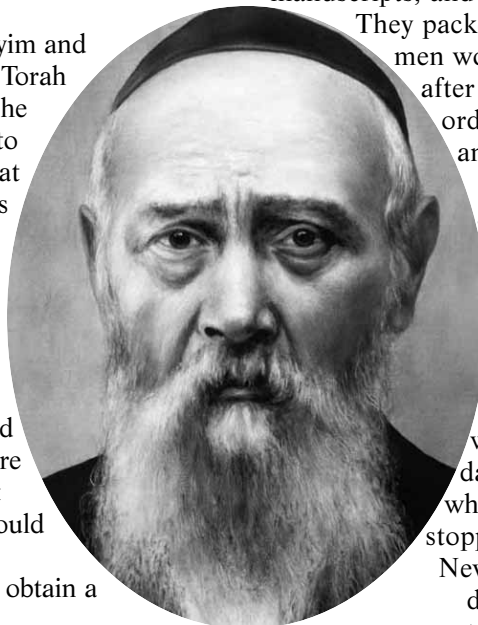
This was the start of the arrest and exile of this holy man; an account of which has been written in the biography of his life. From that point on, nobody dared to visit the house or keep in touch with the Rebbetzin to support her and help her. Any connection with someone with the name "Schneersohn" was dangerous. Even the closest people who would visit the house regularly stopped going.

Nevertheless, even during those difficult days R' Menachem continued going to the house every day, at great personal danger. His closest relatives did not know of these visits. When

they once asked the Rebbetzin whether their father visited her, she said she hadn't seen him in a long time even though he had come just the night before to help her.

In the days preceding the arrest, R' Levi Yitzchok sensed the noose tightening about him, and he asked R' Menachem to take some of his s'farim and belongings to his house to protect them. R' Levi Yitzchok's fears were realized and shortly thereafter he was arrested and spent a year in jail until he was exiled to Chili in distant Kazakhstan.

In the meantime, World War II broke out. The Germans captured large parts of Russia in a short time. Millions of Russians fled to the interior of the



Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn

MIND AND HEART TO FEEL FOR ANOTHER

This is a copy of the postcard that R' Levi Yitzchok sent in the summer of 1943 to the family of R' Menachem Gansbourg, in which he conveys his condolences to the mourning family. He sent the postcard from Tashkent to the Gansbourgs but without any street address so they had to go to the post office to get it. Note that at the top of the postcard, to the left of the stamps, there is a diagonal stamp which shows that the postcard passed the military censor.



The following is a translation of some excerpts from the postcard:

We received your letter from the 24th of the fifth [May]. We did not know all this time about Menachem a"h. We asked often ... but received no answer. Now we know of the great loss, and it is a shame for what has been lost.

There are few like him with a mind as well as a heart to feel for another - it is very rare. May we all have long years.

I knew him well. May Hashem strengthen you and console you and may you see much nachas from your children and their father in Gan Eden will derive much nachas from them. They should not forget their father and should want to go in his way, the straight path.

...wishing for you, health and nachas from your children and in everything,

Levi Yitzchok

P.S. Chana sends her regards. She will probably write soon.

country. Among the refugees was R' Menachem who fled with his family. Before leaving the house he called his daughter Deena (Sharinov) and showed her R' Levi Yitzchok's precious s'farim hidden in the cellar. He asked her to return them to R' Levi Yitzchok or his family after the war. R' Menachem also hid other valuable possessions of R' Levi Yitzchok in a deep pit he dug in their yard. Before hiding the objects he showed his daughter precisely where he was putting them so she would be able to retrieve them and return them to R' Levi Yitzchok.

R' Menachem and his family took to the road. Even during those times of upheaval, R' Menachem kept thinking about the tzaddik

who had been exiled and his faithful wife who went with him and at each station he would get off and write to them and inquire as to their welfare.

After weeks of exhausting travel they arrived in Bucharra where he found a G-d fearing shochet who prepared a meat meal for him. But R' Menachem was unaccustomed to such food and his stomach couldn't digest it. He became sick and died shortly afterwards.

[Another version is that R' Menachem died on the way to Bucharra after he heard that some Chassidishe families had settled in Tashkent. He passed away from starvation.]

His family, who settled in Bucharra, quickly informed R' Levi

Yitzchok and his Rebbetzin of the tragic news. Rebbetzin Chana concludes her memories about him, "The news had an extremely depressing impact on us."

At the end of the war, his daughter Deena returned to her parents' home. She intended to live there and to find the s'farim and other belongings of R' Levi Yitzchok. To her consternation she saw that a gentile family had taken over the house and had no interest in leaving. She decided to try her luck and asked them whether they had found any belongings of theirs in the house. The woman thought for a moment and then said the only thing they found was a large number of books, but they used them for fuel in their oven during the winter ...

As for the valuable items buried in the yard, she did not dare to ask because in those trying times the gentiles stood up to the Jews who returned to their homes. A few years later she went back to try again but was saddened to discover that a big factory had been built over the area and the cement floor covered the hiding place.

She received a postcard from R' Levi Yitzchok who was in Alma Ata. He sent condolences to the family on the death of their father, R' Menachem and added that he hoped they had guarded his belongings and he would like for them to send them to him for the s'farim and belongings would be very useful.

Since the s'farim had gone up in smoke, she couldn't accede to his request and she did not respond (years later R' Menachem's nephew, R' Itzke Gansbourg, gave the postcard to the Rebbe).

The factory still stands there and perhaps, under the floor, those items still lie hidden.

Based on Chayal B'Sheirus HaRebbe

FIVE DOLLARS, THREE CHILDREN, AND ONE BRACHA

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

“He immediately stopped counting and read the writing on the five-dollar bill. Chills went up his spine as he read the words: ‘Chaf-Beis Shvat, Natan Ganot. 5752.’ ... Just a few hours earlier, he had asked for a sign from the Rebbe, and here he had received it.”

R' Boaz Aharon and his wife, Moria, are familiar figures in the Chabad community of Elad. Less familiar, however, is the amazing story behind the birth of their three children, the youngest of whom celebrated his bar-mitzvah this past Teves in Beis Chayeinu, where the couple had received the Rebbe's bracha more than twenty years ago.

On the way to this happy ending, the couple went through their share of very complex, even exhausting, struggles that seriously tested their faith, but with much determination, they held strong. Their unwavering bitachon was rewarded one winter morning, when in an amazing and thrilling display

of Divine Providence, they received a sign that they had been successfully freed from this trial. That same year, they merited the birth of a son and a daughter, and less than a year later, they were blessed with the birth of another son.

“Nearly fifteen years have passed since this story took place,” Mrs. Moria Aharon told us last week with great emotion. “However, I remember the details as if it happened only yesterday. The feelings of energy and excitement still bubble within me. We must believe that the Rebbe's bracha never goes unanswered.”

Like many young couples at the

end of the eighties, the Land of Opportunity – and the great metropolis of New York, in particular – beckoned to the Aharons. “We were a young couple in the first year of our marriage,” Mrs. Aharon recalled. “At the time, we didn't fully comprehend the greatness and leadership of the Rebbe. As with all average Israelis, we were familiar with the Rebbe's name, but we didn't know anything about him. We both came from traditional families, and we tried to observe what we could with the understanding that this is what we must do.

“We arrived in New York in the month of Av, 5750, and settled in the Canarsie section of Brooklyn, where we hoped to make our fortune.

“Several years earlier, the Rebbe's shliach, Rabbi Yehuda Friedman, had begun his activities in the neighborhood, creating a prosperous Israeli community around him. Rabbi Friedman initiated numerous activities and assemblies, Torah classes and farbrengens, and he would always invite different families to his home for a pleasant chassidic Shabbos experience. I was working at the time as an au pair in the nearby section of Mill Basin, and when the month of Tishrei arrived, we were looking for a synagogue. The prayer services in the local synagogue did not suit us, and we were searching for a place where we could feel some Israeli warmth.

“I expressed my feelings on the matter to my employer, and she directed me to Rabbi Friedman's Chabad House. During the Sukkos holiday, we had our first encounter with Chabad, and left most satisfied. We were invited to partake in the Yom Tov meals in the shliach's sukka. I'll never forget my state of shock when I saw black-clad chassidim leaving the Chabad



Miracle children: Menachem Hod Aharon during a visit to Beis Chayeinu for his bar-mitzvah. Sitting to his right is his younger brother, Oria.

House en route to the sukka where we were being hosted. I exclaimed to my husband, 'Look where we've landed!' We had no connection with individuals dressed in black in Eretz Yisroel – on the contrary, we kept our distance from them. We were very quickly surprised to discover people who were warm and filled with the spirit of shlichus.

"My husband was impressed and excited by the education of the shluchim's children. They were respectful, participated nicely in the holiday meal, gave over divrei Torah, and recited the Twelve P'sukim. During that meal, the door to a wonderful world which we had previously known nothing about was opened before us. We found it quite easy to be drawn to these people, and to have a desire to join them, their way of life, and their

world. They invited us to come the following day as well, and my husband enthusiastically nodded his head in agreement. I, however, remained a bit frightened. 'We are not going to become baalei t'shuva,' I warned my husband privately afterwards. As I had predicted, one seuda led to another, one davening led to the next, and we were soon on our way, getting closer to Yiddishkait.

"As the month of Sivan approached, the Chabad House initiated a regular minyan, and my husband became one of its regular participants. Within a relatively short period of time, my husband started to grow a beard, and I began covering my hair. We even began to participate regularly in chassidus classes, which brought a depth and meaning into our perception of this

world that simply mesmerized us. The shiurim in Tanya uplifted our hearts. We started hearing a lot about the Rebbe – numerous miracles, episodes and anecdotes that served as an expression of his leadership, his conduct, and his approach. Slowly but surely, we became chassidim and joined the ranks of the king's legion."

The Aharons joined the burgeoning local Chabad community, which only served to accentuate the fact that, while other young couples who frequently visited the Chabad House had been blessed with children, the Aharons had still not been privileged to become parents. Though disturbed by the situation, they knew exactly what they were supposed to do.

"On the first occasions when we went to the Rebbe for dollars

distribution, we came simply to experience this noble encounter. On later occasions, we were already coming for the purpose of asking for the Rebbe's bracha. We had heard much about the segulos associated with the Rebbe's brachos, and not just from his chassidim.

"I realize today how much we didn't understand then about the magnitude of what we had been privileged to experience. We had only just begun to understand about Chabad and the Rebbe. On numerous occasions, we asked for a bracha for children, and each time the Rebbe gave us a dollar and blessed us with 'Good news'. The last time we asked for children, the Rebbe gathered up three dollars, gave them to us, and said: 'B'karov mamash' (very soon indeed).

"This bracha uplifted my soul. I knew that there was someone upon whom I could rely. For our part, we made every natural effort and waited for the bracha to be realized. Dealing with this situation was by no means simple. We were a young couple living in a strange country, unfamiliar with the native language, far away from our families, and every doctor's visit cost us a considerable amount of money. With the help of Heaven, our period of trial wasn't as extensive as that suffered by many other people, but, we went through some serious and painful anguish of our own. The Rebbe's bracha served as a literal anchor to hold onto as we maintained our high hopes.

Then there came the hiding and concealment of Gimmel Tammuz, 5754. We, and particularly my husband, were suddenly left floundering. He had a lot of difficult questions, and when he initially failed to get the desired answers, the strong faith that had characterized his journey along the path of the teachings of chassidus was severely shaken. He was very

stubborn and he wanted to hear answers that provided a proper response – but who really had the answers during those unbearably difficult days?

"I underwent an operation during the winter of 5755, and the first time I left the house was to participate in a farbrengen taking place in the Chabad House in honor of the seventh night of Chanukah. Rabbi Mordechai Friedman from Crown Heights farbrenged with the assembled crowd, and he eloquently shared the story of his life and his journey from being a jazz musician in famous bands to his encounter with the Rebbe and the teachings of chassidus. His lecture instilled within me much faith in the Rebbe, faith without compromise.

"Towards the end of the event, the participants asked him some questions about his life, and my husband asked about what had been bothering him: How can he really know that he's a soldier of the Rebbe? Among other things, my husband told him about the bracha that he had received from the Rebbe that had yet to be fulfilled. Rabbi Friedman replied with determination that when the Rebbe decides to fulfill the bracha, he will surely give a sign. He then urged my husband to take some mashke and get out of his '*mara sh'chora*'..."

That Motzaei Shabbos, at the farbrengen, after many years of holding to a vow of temperance, R' Boaz Aharon decided to have a little mashke, break through his boundaries, and start acting with bittul. If the Rebbe gave a bracha, he'll surely find the way to carry it out, but when *he* decides to do so, and not when *we* determine that he must.

The question that had been gnawing away at him during all those last months, the question of whether the Rebbe still operates in this world as he did in the past, was

at last laid to rest. R' Mordechai Friedman replied that as chassidim, we don't inquire or protest about the Rebbe, and if the Rebbe wants to give a sign, he will do so.

R' Boaz was satisfied by the explanation, and he left the farbrengen quite different than he was when he came.

"Back in those days, my husband was a partner in a business selling troll dolls. He would regularly go around to shopping centers and other places of attraction to offer his merchandise to passers-by. On Sunday morning, the day after that special farbrengen, my husband woke up very early and told me that he's going to the flea market in New Jersey to sell his dolls. The winter weather outside was particularly stormy, with intermittent snowfall and cold enough to freeze a person down to the bone, and I tried to dissuade him from making the trip. 'You should stay home on a day like this,' I told him. 'And besides, who will come out to buy dolls on such a cold wintry morning? Who would dare even go out shopping today?'

"Nevertheless, he decided to go, come what may. All of my efforts to convince him otherwise were to no avail. He looked for people to come along with him on his journey, but no one agreed to join him – and rightly so.

"He left by himself at five o'clock in the morning. He piled the dolls into his van and set out on his way. When he arrived at the mall, he found a quiet corner, put on t'fillin, and davened Shacharis. When he finished, he unloaded his merchandise from the van, and laid them out on the stand as he did each morning.

"Virtually no one had come to the mall, as the freezing cold had left everyone safe at home near their heaters. Anyone who didn't have to go outside on such a day simply stayed indoors. After half an hour

They invited us to come the following day as well, and my husband enthusiastically nodded his head in agreement. I, however, remained a bit frightened. ‘We are not going to become baalei t’shuva,’ I warned my husband...

without customers, a Mexican gentile appeared, inquired about the dolls, and asked if he could buy them all immediately for cash, including all the stock he still had in his van.

“As the customer and his friends piled the dolls into his car, my husband counted the money to make certain that he had received the correct amount. He was startled to see some Hebrew lettering scribbled on the side of one of the bills.

“He immediately stopped counting and read the writing on the five-dollar bill. Chills went up his spine as he read the words: **‘Chaf-Beis Shvat, Natan Ganot. 5752.’**

“The emotion quickly turned into a feeling of great excitement. Just a few hours earlier, he had asked for a sign from the Rebbe, and here he had received it. There couldn’t be a clearer sign than that.

“To my great surprise, he was already back home by eleven in the morning. He told me the whole story, and I quickly caught his excitement. ‘Chaf-Beis Shvat is a prominent Chabad date,’ I told my husband in a joyous state of confusion. We went over the Chabad House calendar, and discovered that this was the anniversary of the passing of the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, of blessed memory.

“‘That’s it,’ my husband told me, ‘we’re chassidim of the Rebbe.’

I replied by saying that since the Rebbe handed us three dollars the last time he gave us a bracha for children, and since the name written on this dollar is ‘Natan’, then not only will we have three children, I even know what their genders will be: two boys and a girl! When he opened his eyes in puzzlement, I proceeded to explain that in the words ‘ben’ and ‘bas’, there was one interchanging letter – ‘nun’ with ‘sav’. The word ‘natan’ has two ‘nuns’ and a ‘sav’... All this came out of my mouth without thinking, like a lightning bolt of emotion.

“As mentioned previously, this incident occurred during the winter, at the beginning of the month of Teves.

“Since then, I had a strong feeling of faith in my heart that the Rebbe’s bracha would very soon be realized. The eventual reality surpassed anything we could have imagined. Five months later, during the month of Sivan, we received the good news that I was pregnant. Not only that, but I was apparently carrying twins.

“On the 19th of Teves, 5756, our son and daughter were born. It would be hard to describe the great joy that enveloped us, and our close friends, family, and acquaintances rejoiced together with us. We were privileged to experience personally the lofty nature of the Rebbe’s bracha. There were times when we had to wait for its fulfillment, but words that come forth from the

Rebbe never go for naught.

“We gave our twins the names Menachem Hod and Hadar. Even on the day of their birth, I knew that we would have another child, as the Rebbe had given us three dollars... I was resolute in my faith, and this is exactly what happened – less than a year later, in an easy, normal and natural birth, our second son was born on the 9th of Teves.

“Our entire perception of the Rebbe and the teachings of chassidus had since gone through a significant upgrade. My daughter sometimes asks why we didn’t give her an obviously Chabad name after she had been born in the merit of the Rebbe’s bracha. The truth is that we didn’t understand then what we understand today, and while we were close supporters who greatly revered the Rebbe – we were not yet chassidim.

“That five-dollar bill brought about several more miracles and blessed several more barren women,” says Mrs. Aharon, as she concluded her thrilling story in a powerful tone of emotion. “Before leaving New York for our return to Eretz HaKodesh, we thought about with whom to entrust the five-dollar bill so that it should serve as a segula for them. We decided to place it in the custody of the Bossys, a couple living in Crown Heights who had not merited to have any children for many years. Lo and behold, within a relatively short period of time, they learned that the blessing had been realized. Their first son was born on Yud-Tes Kislev, and not long afterwards, they were privileged with the birth of another son.

“This dollar was returned to us on Yud Shvat of last year, when we celebrated our eldest son’s bar-mitzvah in 770.”

RABBI MORDECHAI ELIYAHU ON B'SURAS HA'GEULA

By Mendel Tzfasman

Stories and first person testimonies that illustrate Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu's strong faith in the Geula and his acceptance of the Rebbe as Moshiach.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu z"l left a legacy of love for Hashem, the Torah and Yisroel, permeated with tremendous anticipation for the Geula. His relationship with the Rebbe and the Rebbe's fondness for him are well known. The Rebbe granted him a lengthy yechidus years after private audiences were stopped, and asked him to pasken that the time for Geula has come.

Much has already been told about the warm bond between them, about the p'sak din, and about R' Eliyahu's high regard for Chabad and the belief of Chassidim that the Rebbe is Moshiach. In this article, new facts come to light regarding the story of the p'sak din and his opinion about the emuna of Chassidim.

WHY DIDN'T RABBI SHAPIRO TAKE PART IN THE PSAK DIN?

It was 27 Adar II, 5746, when the Rebbe met with the chief rabbis of Israel, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and Rabbi Avrohom Shapiro. During their meeting the Rebbe suggested/asked "Perhaps all the rabbanim will convene and issue a p'sak din that Moshiach Tzidkeinu must come immediately." R' Eliyahu

responded immediately by asking the Rebbe to join the two of them so they would be a beis din of three. The Rebbe agreed and said, "I have been ready for this for a while but I am only one person and another two are needed."

While R' Eliyahu expressed his willingness to participate, R' Shapiro – who was known for his depth and powers of argument - did not want to join the beis din. Chassidim felt that an auspicious moment had been lost.

So too when they met years later on 11 Iyar 5749 when R' Eliyahu himself brought up the topic of a p'sak din. But nothing came of it.

Why didn't R' Shapiro respond immediately? Many ask this question and perhaps we can find the answer in what his son, Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro, said.

"I accompanied my father to the meeting with the Rebbe and when we left the yechidus my father said to me, 'How could we pasken a p'sak like that? The halacha says that a dayan cannot pasken regarding himself and here we were asked to be a beis din that would pasken that Moshiach should come immediately – together with the Rebbe himself ..."

This tells us that R' Shapiro

understood that the Rebbe is Moshiach and he maintained that the Rebbe could not pasken a din about himself.

R' Eliyahu on the other hand, acted like a Chassid in his attempt to carry the Rebbe's wishes, relying on the Rebbe's view.

He spoke about this in an interview that he gave to *HaGeula HaAmitis V'HaShleima* (see box), "We have a tradition that a statement like this and a p'sak din such as this has great value in heaven. We know stories about the holy Ari and his disciples that he asked them to go up to Yerushalayim with him [from Tzfas] and since they tarried they lost the opportunity. We know a similar thing happened with the Baal Shem Tov and other g'dolim when they suddenly said: Say that Moshiach needs to come today, and the like. But since they refrained from saying it, he told them: You missed your chance. Therefore, whenever I am asked: Tell us, when will Moshiach finally come? - I say, today! Say a p'sak halacha - and I immediately answer: A p'sak halacha that Moshiach should come today! Who knows, maybe in heaven they are waiting for this. Whoever thinks that what he says is not reckoned with in



11 Iyar 5749. Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and Rabbi Avrohom Shapiro in yechidus with the Rebbe

R' Shapiro understood that the Rebbe is Moshiach and he maintained that the Rebbe could not pasken a din about himself. R' Eliyahu on the other hand, acted like a Chassid in his attempt to carry the Rebbe's wishes, relying on the Rebbe's view.

heaven is mistaken. Seek Dovid My servant, seek and seek until you find him!"

It's amazing to see how in their conversation, the Rebbe spoke an unusual terms, "In Midrashei Chazal we find that Moshiach Tzidkeinu (Eliyahu HaNavi) will be revealed first in the Galil and within the Galil – in Teveria **but nobody will mind even if Eliyahu HaNavi will come outside of Eretz Yisroel, even in Brooklyn, and then the next day Moshiach will go to Teveria.**"

So too, if you watch the video of their meeting in 5752, you can see clearly how the Rebbe says the shocking words, "**k'vod k'dushas mori v'chami shlita**" (referring to the Rebbe Rayatz as alive) and then the Rebbe "corrects" himself and

says, "Nasi Doreinu." When the Rebbe tells him, at the end of the meeting, "I hope that the Geula will be very soon, then I will visit your honor in his sanctum in Eretz Yisroel," R' Eliyahu took this literally and when he returned to Eretz Yisroel it said in the newspapers, "The Rebbe of Lubavitch, spiritual leader of the Chabad movement, is about to visit Israel."

THE REBBE'S REQUEST STILL NOT FULFILLED

The Rebbe often spoke about the p'sak din of the rabbanim and its effect on the world. Aside from the unusual p'sak din that the Rebbe asked them to pasken that Moshiach must come immediately (in

yechiduyos with the chief rabbis and also when the Erloier Rav visited on 5 Adar II 5749), the Rebbe also asked the rabbanim to pasken that "all endpoints passed and the time for Geula has come," and that the limitation of "Yisroel won't be redeemed except with t'shuva" was removed since every Jew certainly had a thought of t'shuva. R' Eliyahu signed to this p'sak together with many other rabbanim from all over the world back in 5746.

However, the Rebbe's request that when the rabbanim **publicize the p'sak din the Geula will come immediately**, was not yet fulfilled.

Back at the time that about 100 rabbanim signed the p'sak din, starting in 5746, including some Litvishe rabbanim, they were told that the purpose of the p'sak was the legal ruling and not to publicize it. But in 5755, a private initiative of a few people was started for the purpose of publicizing the p'sak din of the rabbanim in order to bring about the hisgalus.

This idea followed a second p'sak din which was signed in 5750 saying that the Rebbe is "b'chezkas Moshiach v'ad Moshiach vadai." In the sicha said on Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5752 the Rebbe referred

GEULA INTERVIEW

At the end of the summer 5751, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu was interviewed for “HaGeula HaImitis V’HaShleima. He responded to numerous questions posed by Rabbi Zimroni Tzik about Moshiach, the Geula, the p’sak din to hasten Moshiach’s coming and more.

At this time, as we find ourselves on the threshold of the true and complete Geula, there is a strong desire that people have to hear things from their rabbis. We turned to Chief Rabbi, Rishon L’Tziyon, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and asked him to meet with us for a conversation and special personal interview for the readers of *HaGeula HaImitis V’HaShleima*.

We enjoyed a very special meeting with this mighty Torah giant who is greatly accomplished in both Nigleh and Nistar. He already has a reputation as someone who chose the path of Rabbeinu HaKadosh – “a way which is pleasing to those who do it and pleasing to others” – good for Heaven and good for people. He is a unique personality, with his pleasant ways, who with his unique holy path has successfully added a new dimension to the entire rabbinic establishment in Eretz Yisroel.

Since Am Yisroel is in a special situation today with everybody anticipating the Geula, but many concepts in this regard are unclear, we thought of publishing a newspaper on the topic of Geula that would convey the message in layman’s terms so people can relate to it.

Rabbi Eliyahu: Very good.

We would like to hear from the rav about the Geula and preparing for it. Let us begin with the miracles that took place during the Gulf War.

Rabbi Eliyahu: I see these miracles as unusual miracles in that they were public, everybody saw them. There were terrifying threats to incinerate half of Israel and boruch Hashem, we got out of it with kindness and mercy. We must thank G-d for the miracles He did for us. We mainly need to give thanks

that during this period of time Am Yisroel saw that it is not “the power and strength of my hand” that brought us salvation.

Some saw the missiles as a stage in suffering, the birth pangs of Moshiach. I don’t see it that way since we suffered enough already. Our parents suffered, in the Holocaust we suffered, we endured boruch Hashem more than enough suffering. Now the time has come for us to be redeemed by Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

One of the religious newspapers which did not like what I said sent me a paper and marked what I was to read. There they wrote about me – how could Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, the Rishon L’Tziyon, not believe in the suffering of Moshiach? I took the paper and sent it back and wrote in the margin, “I believe in Moshiach and do not believe in suffering!” Those who believe in suffering should be concerned lest they suffer!

Can a date be set for the Geula?

Rabbi Eliyahu: I am not in favor of dates since all endpoints have already passed. Some say that Moshiach will come in this month or that month and I (firmly) reject that. I say to them, no! Moshiach should have come yesterday!

If he did not come yesterday, I am aggravated and so I wait for him today. If someone will tell me that Moshiach will come tomorrow, it is forbidden to believe him. I believe that yesterday and today – if you listen to His voice; that is my belief.

From what you say it is apparent how great anticipating Moshiach is. The question is to what extent must we live with this expectation of Geula?

Rabbi Eliyahu: I will tell you a story of a great tzaddik, Rabbi Tzadka Chuseini. He was a pious and righteous man that was removed from matters of this world (the uncle of Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka). I would usually visit him on Sunday Chol HaMoed to wish him a Chag Samayach. One time, when I went to visit him at his house, they told me that he went to shul. This was on Sukkos and his custom was to sit in the

to the p’sak din of the rabbanim and said that the prophecy of “and they will beat their swords into plowshares,” which took place on the eve of that Shabbos with the meeting of the presidents of the United States and Russia, was a result of Moshiach’s activities in the world **and a result of the p’sak din**

of the rabbanim about “b’chezkas Moshiach v’ad Moshiach vadai” in our generation.

Following the Rebbe’s request of the chief rabbis to publicize the p’sak din (the first one --that the time for Geula has arrived), Rabbi Naftali Roth, who was very close with Rabbi Eliyahu, asked R’ Eliyahu

permission to publicize the p’sak din in a big way. R’ Eliyahu gladly agreed and many other rabbanim also gave their consent. However, due to the opposition of a few rabbanim who signed, the p’sak din was not publicized.

R’ Yitzchok Lifsh, menahel of Beis Chabad of Tzfas says, “We

sukka of the shul nearly all day. He was an old man at the time and he would nod off.

When I arrived and I saw that he was sleeping I did not want to disturb him and I told the shamash: I am going to daven Mincha and I will come back. The shamash said: No! The rav told me that when you come you should go into him and I will bring you in now. I said to him: But he is sleeping. He is resting, you cannot, you cannot. He said: I won't listen to you. He went and told R' Tzadka just one word: je'eh which means he came. This was meant to inform him that I had arrived but R' Tzadka, who woke up to hear the shamash

say "he came," jerked awake and exclaimed in Arabic, "Where is Moshiach? Where is Moshiach?" When the shamash told him that Chacham Mordechai had come he said, "Ah, ah" and made a dismissive motion with his hand. I was so shaken by this. His thoughts, even in sleep were that Moshiach had come!

To me this is an example of belief in the coming of Moshiach.

What is the extent of the obligation of rabbanim to raise awareness of the subject of the coming of Moshiach?

Rabbi Eliyahu: There is an amazing explanation by the holy Ohr HaChayim on the pasuk, "And if your brother who dwells with you becomes poor [and sells some of his ancestral land], and the nearest relative comes and redeems that which his brother sold" (VaYikra 25:25). The Ohr HaChayim says that that

which his brother sold refers to the Beis HaMikdash which was sold because of our sins.

"... and the verse is telling us that his redemption is through the tzaddik who will be close to Hashem, the way it says "with those who are close to Me, I will be sanctified." He will redeem that which his brother sold (because Hashem calls tzaddikim My brother and My friend) and the Geula will take place when the hearts of men are aroused and he [the tzaddik] will say to them, is it good that you sit outside, exiled from the table of your Father? What sweetness is there in life in the world except for the divine companionship

that you experienced when you were regulars at His table ... and it will make repugnant in their eyes the imaginary pleasures, and will infuse them with the staple of the spiritual ... until they improve their ways and this is how Hashem will redeem that which was sold. And on this all the masters of the land and the g'dolei Yisroel will in the

future be held to account [for not doing this] and from them Hashem will seek the shame of the shamed house."

From here we see how much Hashem wants the tzaddik who is close to Him to arouse the nation to Geula. If we don't, then Hashem will hold us accountable. It's a frightening idea, a frightening idea.

What then, is the Rabbanut doing about this to arouse people to anticipate the coming of Moshiach?



partially succeeded in publicizing the p'sak din. At the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen of 5755, everybody rose and the rav of the city, the son of R' Eliyahu, read the p'sak din which his father had signed." Apparently though, the Rebbe's intention was that the full p'sak with the signatures of the rabbanim be publicized or

alternatively, that it be widely publicized and not just locally.

R' Lifsh worked together with R' Shlomo Zalman Levkivker on a third p'sak din which is the most well-publicized that was signed by hundreds of rabbanim the world over after 3 Tammuz 5754. This p'sak din contains quotes from the

Rebbe's sichos about spreading the news about the judge, advisor and prophet of the generation whose main prophecy is that the time for Geula has arrived and t'shuva was done. Then it says, "Based on the foregoing, the time has come for the everlasting Geula. According to Torah law the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rabbi Eliyahu: My guidelines are very clear. At every gathering of rabbanim that we have I tell the rabbanim to strengthen the belief in Moshiach's coming in their speeches and to conclude every speech with this topic of Geula and Moshiach.

I will tell you a story about the Chida. This is alluded to in his book *Birkei Yosef*:

He once traveled to Italy and stayed there over Tisha B'Av. The Sephardic women there had the custom of buying paint and whitewash and painting and whitewashing their homes on Tisha B'Av. They did the same thing in Algiers and Morocco. Seeing this, the Chida was taken aback and in shul he asked: How could you do this on Tisha B'Av? What is this simcha about?

One day he was walking in the street and on the way he saw two women talking and pointing at him. The Chida asked his escort and translator to ask the women what they were talking about and why they were pointing at him. The translator asked them and came back to the Chida and said that one of the women said to her friend that Moshiach will not come (heaven forbid) and when her friend asked, "Says who?" she pointed and said "There, the holy rav from Yerushalayim."

The Chida was shaken by this and he wanted to know why they said Moshiach will not come. They told him, weren't you the one who said not to whitewash and paint the house? We who believe that Moshiach will come prepare the house in his honor on Tisha B'Av and you said not to whitewash which indicates that Moshiach will not come.

The Chida nearly fainted. He immediately asked the gabbai to call all the gabbaim and heads of shuls and all the rabbanim in Italy and he announced to them: Rabbosai! If you whitewashed half a room, then whitewash an entire room. If you used to use plain paint, then use the best paint, since Moshiach is coming!

Do you see that people today are excited about Moshiach?

Rabbi Eliyahu: Certainly! And what an awakening there is. They used to be afraid to talk about Moshiach. The most they ever spoke about were the laws of korbanos etc. Today, boruch Hashem everybody talks about Geula and Moshiach. Even

those who speak against it are also involved in this. This itself is a blessing. It accustoms them to talk about Moshiach. It is to the credit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The entire awakening is thanks to him.

In the past it was publicized that you paskened in a way of a p'sak din that Moshiach must come now and redeem the Jewish people. What is the significance of this p'sak din?

Rabbi Eliyahu: Our tradition is that a statement such as this and a p'sak din like this are highly regarded in heaven. There are stories about the holy Ari and his talmidim. He asked them to go with him to Yerushalayim and since they tarried they missed an opportunity. We know a similar thing happened with the Baal Shem Tov and other g'dolim when they suddenly said: Say that Moshiach needs to come today, and the like. But since they refrained from saying it, he told them: You missed your chance.

Therefore, whenever I am asked: Tell us, when will Moshiach finally come? - I say, today! Say a p'sak halacha - and I immediately answer: A p'sak halacha that Moshiach should come today! Who knows, maybe in heaven they are waiting for this. Whoever thinks that what he says is not reckoned with in heaven is mistaken. Seek Dovid My servant, seek and seek until you find him!

The Mikdash will speedily be built and it's only natural for problems to come up in light of technological developments. Is there anything being done in this regard?

Rabbi Eliyahu: Rashi, in his commentary to the Gemara in Sukka (daf 21) says that the Beis HaMikdash will come down built and perfectly complete, from Heaven. Why does he say both "built" and "perfectly complete?" In the first and second Battei Mikdash they had to resolve physical problems such as warming the floor of the Azara which was made of stone and which was hard to stand on during the cold winter. The solution lay in digging under the floor and lighting a fire there.

We might think that now too we will have to come up with modern ways of solving these and other problems and so Chazal told us that the third Mikdash will come down readymade from Heaven "perfectly complete," so we won't need to ask questions or provide solutions. May we merit to see the building of the Beis HaMikdash b'karov mamash.



Melech HaMoshiach shlita must be revealed immediately to all and come and redeem and lead us upright to our land, miyad mamash, and this is followed by Yechi Adoneinu.

RABBI ELIYAHU'S INITIATIVE TO BRING THE GEULA

As mentioned, R' Eliyahu signed the p'sak din that the Geula must come but not on the p'sak din that openly referred to the Rebbe as Moshiach. However, not only did R' Eliyahu not oppose this belief of the Chassidim that the Rebbe is Moshiach; he encouraged it from behind the scenes. Most surprising is the following:

Knowing of the special relationship between R' Eliyahu and the Rebbe and his regard for the sichos, Rabbis Levkivker and Lifsh approached him to sign the p'sak din, signed by hundreds of rabbanim, that the Rebbe is Moshiach and must be revealed as such. The first time was on Chol HaMoed Pesach 5753 but R' Eliyahu declined to sign. On another occasion the two rabbis went to his son's house in order to meet the father who was staying there. It was a few minutes before Shabbos, "We learned from Hillel that this is the best time," they said by way of apologizing for coming at that time. R' Eliyahu humbly responded, "You surely don't refer to Hillel but to the person who came to Hillel ..."

As to their request that he sign, he said, "I see that I cannot avoid you and so I will tell you the facts as they are. **I asked the Rebbe on my own initiative whether I could call upon Am Yisroel to rally around the Rebbe as Melech HaMoshiach but the Rebbe said that this is not my job ...**"

R' Lifsh gave R' Eliyahu the book *Z'man HaGeula* which is a collection of sichos on the topic of Geula and the identity of Moshiach.



Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu signing the p'sak din that the Geula must come immediately!

"Weren't you the one who said not to whitewash and paint the house? We who believe that Moshiach will come prepare the house in his honor on Tisha B'Av and you said not to whitewash which indicates that Moshiach will not come!" The Chida nearly fainted... He immediately announced, "Rabosai! If you whitewashed half a room, then whitewash an entire room. If you used to use plain paint, then use the best paint, since Moshiach is coming!"

According to his son, R' Shmuel Eliyahu, rav of Tzfas, this book remained on his father's desk. In a picture of the room you can clearly see the book *Ata Yodati* by R' Chaim Sasson, his close student, in the bookcase behind his chair.

POWERFUL YEARNING

Over three years ago, R' Boruch Abuchatzzeira (Baba Boruch) had a dream in which his father, Baba Sali

asked him to give a gold watch to R' Mordechai Eliyahu. He told his son that when the hands reached 12:00 Moshiach would come.

"I was careful not to touch the watch," said R' Eliyahu, "I don't open it; I am afraid to open it but I have it." At first, he gave R' Eliyahu a gold watch but a few months later his father came to him in another dream and told him to give a silver watch. It was 3:00 at the time, say those close to him. Now the hands

are a few minutes before 12:00. “When the hands reach ... that’s a sign that the Geula begins,” said R’ Eliyahu. “The gold watch is on the bottom with the silver watch on top because silver is rachamim and gold is din. I wanted rachamim to be over din and Hashem should help us have a speedy Geula.”

R’ Eliyahu even received Baba Sali’s robe with the instructions to greet Moshiach while wearing it. This instruction and the hands almost at 12:00 (the clock doesn’t work steadily, sometimes it moves and sometimes it stops) strengthens the emuna of many Jews.

Someone once asked R’ Eliyahu about when the Geula will be and the rav expressed his pain, not about the questioner but about Moshiach. “When I see Moshiach I will ask him: Why are you so late? Why have we been waiting for you? Every year we wait and wait and wait, why?”

The Geula was so real to him. He once said how he pictured the Geula with tremendous immediacy.

“We will say to Eliyahu HaNavi – where were you? We made a kos Eliyahu and made it and made it, where is he? Come and announce the Geula, ad masai?! It may be the case that Eliyahu HaNavi will not want to answer me. What will I do? My suggestion is that we take a small child to ask him.”

At this point, R’ Eliyahu suggested that the child will ask Eliyahu HaNavi those questions from the Gemara about which we said *teiku* (an acronym for Tishbi yitaretz kushiyos u’baayos – that Eliyahu will answer the difficult questions). “The child will ask and Tishbi will explain ‘teiku,’ ‘Nu nu,’ the child will say, ‘Tishbi, answer this teiku for me ...’”

R’ Eliyahu said that the role of Eliyahu HaNavi will be to resolve questions of Jewish ancestry. Eliyahu



Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu in an interview full of emuna and anticipation, “The Lubavitcher Rebbe is coming to Israel”

will sit there and Jews will pass by him and each will be identified by him.

R’ Eliyahu called upon the public to learn chapters 8-10 of Hilchos Korbanos of the Rambam before Pesach where it says how to bring the korban Pesach. “What will a person do Erev Pesach if he did not prepare? He won’t be able to do anything.” And the rav expressed his wishes that we merit to bring the korban Pesach that year in the Beis HaMikdash.

DIRECTING TALMIDIM TO TOMCHEI TMIMIM

Rabbi Yoel Chaim Rosen, menahel of yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Rishon L’Tziyon relates: One of the talmidim in our yeshiva came from one of the prominent yeshivos of the Merkaz HaRav crowd following a program run by ATaH (Igud Talmidei HaYeshivos) in yeshiva high schools and Hesder yeshivos. His father, a distinguished rav was strongly opposed to his son learning in Chabad. In order to make a final decision the father and son went to R’ Eliyahu.

“If my son wants to learn Chassidus he can go to the yeshiva in Yitzhar. There is no reason for him learn in Chabad for Chassidus.”

“Go and learn in Yitzhar for a week, as your father says, and another week in Chabad and then both of you come back to me,” suggested R’ Eliyahu wisely.

When they came back R’ Eliyahu asked the boy what he thought. “In Yitzhar I enjoyed the shiurim and in Chabad I enjoyed the avodas Hashem.”

R’ Eliyahu declared, “Continue learning in Tomchei T’mimim.”

TRAVELING TO THE REBBE IS PIKUACH NEFESH

Another interesting anecdote about the connection between Chabad and the knitted yarmulke world: In the period following 3 Tammuz, R’ Yigal Kirshnzaft, shliach in Gush Katif, still held very religious-nationalist views but as a Chabadnik he sent his older sons to learn in yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim. When they told him they wanted to fly to the Rebbe, he said leaving Eretz Yisroel is permitted only in isolated cases.

The question was asked of R’ Eliyahu who paskened, “For a Chabad Chassid, traveling to the Rebbe, even today after 3 Tammuz, is pikuaach nefashos.”

As for the skeptics who wonder what R’ Eliyahu personally believed about who Moshiach is after 3 Tammuz, here’s this:

R’ Eliyahu was invited as the guest of honor to the Siyum HaRambam which took place in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas which minces no words when it comes to the identity of Moshiach. In his speech, R’ Eliyahu hinted broadly at his view. “Soon Melech HaMoshiach will come and then, when he gives out dollars on Sunday I will also stand on line to get one.”

May R’ Eliyahu’s heartfelt wish come true ASAP.

FOUR YEARS IN CAPTIVITY

By Sholom Ber Crombie

Four years ago, Israeli citizens were taken into captivity by public relations advisors, celebrities and other special interest groups. The demands include freeing terrorists who will strengthen terrorism so we will, ch"v, further negotiate with terrorists. * The official reason for all this is Gilad Shalit.

The mother of a terrorist serving his sentence in Israeli prison conveyed a message to Gilad Shalit's mother through the media: Exert pressure on the Israeli government so that they surrender and accept Hamas' demands. That's the only way your son will be freed.

This was publicized in the Israeli media. They told the Jewish nation the clear position of Hamas: You – the Shalit family and your supporters – do the work for us. You exert pressure on your government to accept the deal as is, no matter how dangerous it is for Israel. The main thing here is that Hamas should not have to bend at all. Hamas definitely has the winning card. The best public relations people and high profile celebrities in Israel do the work for them.

Hamas doesn't even have to pay them.

We can certainly understand the Shalit family. Any parent wants to see their child healthy and whole. Any parent promises to turn the world over so that his son shouldn't sit one more day in captivity. But they are playing a dangerous game. The security experts are telling them, "You are ruining the deal; harming our security." Anybody with any sense tells them that their media campaign is supporting Hamas and causing them not to compromise on the price they have set for their son. The Prime Minister tells them: You are pushing Gilad further away when you shout that you want him back "at any price."

But they continue to point an accusing finger at the government as though there is some personal agenda on someone's part not to have Gilad freed, almost as though this is about government corruption. Nobody gets up and screams that this is actually a miracle that the Prime Minister is



Nobody gets up and screams that this is actually a miracle that the Prime Minister is not capitulating! By resisting, he is saving Israel from a tsunami wave of terror that Hamas wants to inflict on Yehuda and Shomron.

not capitulating! By resisting, he is saving Israel from a tsunami wave of terror that Hamas wants to inflict on Yehuda and Shomron.

It's really a miracle because every day that passes the pressure on Netanyahu grows and we know already whom we are dealing with. The media campaign that the Shalit family is waging has as its goal to weaken the Prime Minister; to wear him down until he says okay. But Netanyahu is hearing the crazy price demanded by Hamas and he is shocked. He hears the voices from Gaza that say that if it is necessary to kidnap another soldier, they will do so. And he knows that he cannot give in; he simply cannot.

TO PROTECT CITIZENS – “AT ANY PRICE”

We have no complaints against the Shalit family. We have complaints against all those who are leading them astray. Against all the Leftists and the “morally superior” folks who are hitching a ride on the campaign to “free Gilad” in order to further their political agenda which includes demanding that terrorists be freed “just because.” From their point of view, the murderers in prison – those with Jewish blood on their

hands – are peace and freedom activists. Their agenda requires speaking with the other side, i.e. with Arabs, though sadly (to them) it is now clear to all that there is no one to talk to.

Therefore they have but one solution and that is to free arch-terrorists, senior terrorists like Marwan Barghouti who is serving five life sentences for a series of deadly terror attacks in which dozens of Jews were murdered – so “it will be possible to talk.” That is what they say on the enlightened Left.

Gilad Shalit serves as a means to promote the small-minded politics of people who don't allow the facts to confuse them. They have brainwashed the nation with a message that makes it seem as though yielding to terrorists is the only way to see Gilad back home.

In the second Lebanon War over 100 soldiers were killed. In the military action in which Gilad was kidnapped soldiers were killed who had defended the residents of Israel with their lives. They paid with their lives for our reckless abandoning of Gush Katif and the resultant situation in which the settlements surrounding Gaza became the new border.

And yet, nobody thinks that the State of Israel abandoned these soldiers by placing them

there, on the new border which is an hour away from Tel Aviv. Everybody understood that this is the army's job, to defend Israeli citizens “at any price.” That is the *only* thing which is “at any price.” Not defending soldiers at any price, certainly not at an insane security cost and abandoning the lives of Israeli residents to the mercies of senior terrorists whom the Shalits want freed in exchange for their son. Ask any soldier who goes to war even if he knows he won't come back. He has a goal: to defend Israel.

EXERT PRESSURE ON HAMAS!

Why not pressure Hamas a bit? Why make demonstrations against the Israeli government and not against the Hamas government? The big demonstration that was recently held against the Israeli government *should* have been made, because we cannot leave public opinion for Hamas to manipulate, but it should have been made against the world. Instead of marching to the Prime Minister's residence in Yerushalayim, the thousands of protesters should have marched on the world's embassies in Tel Aviv. They should have demonstrated there outside the English and Danish embassies which are doing nothing to enable the Red Cross to meet with Gilad. They should have demonstrated outside the American embassy which is not pressuring Hamas enough to soften their demands, or opposite the Russian embassy.

There is another solution which was recently approved by a committee of ministers: to forbid family visits to terrorists in prison until Gilad returns home. They can also stop supplying

electricity, funds, water and all the other services that Israel provides Hamas. And they certainly shouldn't stop the blockade on Gaza – even if it means depriving them of their pasta and spices - until Gilad Shalit returns home.

But the people running the Shalit campaign want the easy life. They openly serve the Leftist ideology and spin tales about how one day all the prisoners will be released and life will be good. They talk a good talk and make people forget the heavy price Israel has paid for questionable and reckless deals like this.

They mainly make the nation forget the fact that there are other options, other alternatives. Wasn't it the State of Israel that invented the concept of an operation to free hostages? Wasn't it the State of Israel that

taught there are many ways to deal with terrorists?

WE NEED AN OPPOSING CAMPAIGN

Instead of the fraudulent and demeaning campaign of the celebrities promoting "Gilad Is Still Alive," we need a strong and courageous campaign that will support the family as well as the residents of Israel; a campaign that will preserve the sanity of the people as well as their security.

Unfortunately, we only see a campaign like this from the other side, from the families of terrorists in Gaza. They demonstrated outside the home of a senior Hamas official and demanded that they not bend on the Shalit deal.

The Israeli public is confused after four years of insane pressure by the best public

relations minds who brainwashed the people eliminating any rational thinking on the subject. We must provide a counterforce and start a campaign that will bring the facts to the public as the Rebbe MH" M laid them out so many times. The Rebbe referred to those destructive deals that took place in the past after which much unnecessary Jewish blood was spilled. The Rebbe also emphasized the views of the security experts and noted the tremendous motivation the terror organizations get from these extravagant deals, which are carried out without any proportionality.

In the Rebbe's sichos we have all the answers to explain why this deal is dangerous for us. It's a matter of life and death. We must wise up – and the sooner the better.

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'MAISHKE'

By Shneur Zalman Berger

*The little flame gave off the last bit of light and went out. Sitting in the darkness they all sighed deeply, but Moshe's voice became even louder, stronger, more joyous. * Part 2 of 2*

[Continued from last issue]

PESACH NIGHT IN JAIL

In Kiev, R' Moshe was put in a cell with members of the underworld. At first they tried to make his life miserable and to humiliate him. As soon as he walked in they looked at him as at an alien being, a Jew with beard and peios.

Some of them approached him and arrogantly touched his beard while making crude jokes. Moshe kept quiet. He just sighed deeply, not so much because of his physical pain but because of his deep anguish. A few went over to him and began removing his outer clothes. He remained silent and looked heavenward through the small barred window. A few younger prisoners made a final attempt to annoy him with jokes at his expense, calling him the "spirit man" and the "holy man."

They sufficed with this and no longer bothered him. They even returned the clothes they had taken. Only a few thieves, who were starving, went over to the bundle he had brought. Again, he did not react but merely looked at



them with compassion.

He did not know why he had been taken to GPU headquarters in Kiev until the interrogators informed him of the serious crimes that he was accused of: "You are a big criminal. You received money from and you have ties with counter-revolutionaries overseas." He was interrogated and tortured about this fictitious accusation for weeks, with no end to his sorrows in sight.

The only consolation he had was that his fellow cell mates had

begun to treat him with respect, having noted his exemplary conduct and how he treated each of them. There were also some Jews among them who began regarding him as an older friend. They would ask him to be the arbitrator for the petty arguments that erupted among them. When sadness overcame them they would ask him to cheer them up, to sing a stirring niggun like they heard him sing in the morning when he would daven. They even asked him to pray for them.

Some gave him their portions of bread in exchange for the portions of soup and meat which were not kosher, of course. When he received food parcels from home nobody would take any of it even though he offered to share the contents. He also had some loyal "Chassidim" who would give him some food items they received from home. They knew what he would accept and what he wouldn't touch. Despite all this, Moshe suffered from malnutrition since the portions of bread he ate were so small.

In the days preceding Pesach he was dispirited since he knew that in the jail they gave nothing that wasn't chametz. His hope that he would receive matzos from home dissipated when the holiday began and he had none. He later found out that his family had indeed sent him food for Pesach, but the people in charge of the jail didn't give him the package until a week after Yom Tov.

His fellow inmates saw that he was downcast and urged him to tell them what bothered him. One of them, a young Jew with broad shoulders and arms like steel bars nagged at him so much that he finally extracted the reason from him: Moshe would not eat bread for the next eight days.

When word got out about this, there was a hush in the cell. Then

the prisoners began whispering amongst themselves. Each of them began to root around in his precious belongings and proffered various food items. The young man showed them to Moshe and asked whether they were okay for Pesach or not. Out of all their food supplies, all they could put aside for him were sixteen sugar cubes.

Pesach night arrived. After the warden made his last inspection and saw that everybody was asleep in Moshe's cell, his loyal friends got to work. They hung a rag over the window of the cell, blocked the peephole in the door, and then took out a candle stub and lit it. Moshe began presiding over a "seder." He sat in a corner on a wooden plank. His eyes were red from weeping. He cried silently as he gazed at the flame that flickered in the center of the cell and at the men standing around, their eyes also fixed on the flickering candle. Even the gentiles gathered round with serious demeanors. Nobody lay down to sleep.

The seder was conducted at the request of some of the Jews who remembered celebrating Pesach in their childhood. Now, all was different. There was no wine, no matzos, no charoses, nothing! Just some sugar cubes and cold tea. Nonetheless, they wanted a seder; they wanted to hear the traditional tunes.

Moshe got up, took the cup, closed his eyes and began reciting Kiddush. At first he said it quietly but little by little his voice rose and became more joyous. Before him were three sugar cubes, one on top of the other, like three matzos. When he asked the Four Questions his tears flowed and moistened the sugar until they became wet and salty. Later on, he fulfilled his obligation of maror with them ...



Then he began reciting the Hagada, his voice a bit tremulous. He recited and those present sat there absolutely silently until it seemed they were holding their breath. The little flame gave off the last bit of light and went out. Sitting in the darkness they all sighed deeply, but Moshe's voice became even louder, stronger, more joyous.

During Pesach he obtained some more sugar and was able to make it through the Yom Tov without having to eat chametz. The Jewish prisoners who came to his aid became closer to him and considered him holy. Thanks to him, some of them became more connected to their Judaism.

COMPENSATION FROM THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT

His brother Dovber relates:

"When Moshe was arrested I was in my parents' house. We knew he had been arrested together with his talmidim but we did not know precisely where they were being held or what had become of them. We were afraid to ask at the GPU office lest they take us too. After weeks of hearing nothing, we found out through a Jew who had been arrested together with them, that Moshe was being held in Kiev. My father read the entire T'hillim each morning with great sobs.

"We were tremendously worried since in those days being sent to exile or even being taken out to be killed was commonplace. Back then there were numerous arrests in which dozens of Anash were taken from a city in a single night. They called this "the Yazov era" after the Defense Minister in charge of the GPU, who hated Jews and was responsible for all the crimes committed by his men.

"At the beginning of the winter of 1939, Yazov was removed from his position, the wave of arrests ceased and the severe punishments diminished. It was not only Yazov who was replaced. My brother related: 'After Yazov was dismissed, the interrogators who had once questioned me sat in the same jail cell as me...' That's how far the wheel turned.

"The GPU started reexamining files in an effort to uncover all of Yazov's dirty deeds. In the end, they decided that my brother had been falsely accused of transferring money illegally and having ties abroad. They immediately sent him back to Berditchev, where he had originally been arrested and judged for the crime of organizing a yeshiva and learning Torah with youth. The judges sentenced him with a period of imprisonment that was much

Before him were three sugar cubes, one on top of the other, like three matzos. When he asked the Four Questions his tears flowed and moistened the sugar until they became wet and salty. Later on, he fulfilled his obligation of maror with them...

briefly than the year and a half he had already spent in jail, and released him. They even said that the Soviet government owed him compensation for his having been in jail more than was proper."

MODESTY

After his release, the rav of Berdichev took Moshe as his son-in-law for his daughter Bas-Sheva. The couple lived in Moscow until they fled during World War II. The Nazis approached Russia with giant steps and hundreds of thousands of refugees fled deep into the interior.

R' Moshe arrived with his wife in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Many Lubavitchers had fled there from Russia and the Ukraine. When R' Moshe arrived, he was appointed head of the newly founded yeshiva.

The yeshiva consisted of classes that were dispersed among shuls and private homes. R' Moshe's class learned in his house. Once again, he taught the bachurim with unparalleled devotion. His talmidim would say that he was both a devoted father and faithful teacher. When his baby daughter would cry he rock her back to sleep in his arms while orally giving a shiur in Gemara. He knew the tractates of Bava Kama, Bava Metzia and

Bava Basra by heart.

R' Henschel Rappaport described R' Moshe:

"R' Moshe was an outstanding lamdan in Nigleh and Chassidus, a big oved and yerei Shamayim, and a faithful Chassid. They would say that when he went to sleep he tied his hands to the sides of the bed to keep his hands from being free."

His talmid R' Aryeh Leib Demichovsky, who lives in Rechovot, adds:

"I was one of the first talmidim in Samarkand. We learned in his house. He was a lamdan and a big masmid but it was all done exceedingly modestly. Whenever I went to his house I saw him learning. He was a teacher cut from a different mold that one doesn't find anymore. He was a scholar but his uniqueness was in his yiras Shamayim and Chassidishkait, which he implanted in his talmidim. He would encourage us to cleave to the ways of Chassidus at all times. His farbrengens were a byword. He would farbreng with us on special days in the calendar and occasionally on a weekday. He once asked me, 'What do you think about when you are on your way home?' He was particular about not only our speech and actions but also the purity of our

thoughts!

"R' Moshe was like a father to his talmidim and we loved him tremendously. He took an interest in our material welfare and constantly asked how our parents were managing with parnasa and a place to live, and he tried to help. During the war the economy was terrible and he worried about us as though we were his own children."

In the words of R' Moshe Kozliner of Nachalat Har Chabad, "R' Moshe was a Tamim in the full sense of the word and a tremendous lamdan. The talmidim loved him and he loved them."

FROM SAMARKAND TO TASHKENT

Nissan, 1945. The war had ended. The secret police, which during the war did not have time to chase after Jews, started its persecutions once again and with greater force. The evil Stalin ordered the police and his secret agents to pursue religious Jews. The situation deteriorated and the hanhala of the yeshiva in Samarkand was afraid that such a large number of talmidim in one city posed a danger. They decided to move the classes to other cities such as Tashkent which was nearby, and Kutais in Georgia.

At the beginning of 5706, R' Moshe was sent with his class and family to Tashkent. There were Lubavitcher families there, too, who helped sustain the yeshiva.

Then the famous exodus from Russia via Lvov began, with numerous Jews crossing the border with forged papers, arriving in Europe and going from there to Eretz Yisroel and the United States.

At the beginning of 5707, R' Moshe, his wife and their two

daughters left Russia and arrived in Paris. Lubavitchers who had left Russia and arrived in Paris started a yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim and R' Moshe was appointed the rosh yeshiva.

R' Moshe, who had suffered greatly under the Soviet regime, did not have much time to enjoy the freedom, for on 23 Teves, 5709, just two years after he left Russia, he died following an

illness at the young age of 35. His coffin was flown to Israel, where he is buried in Teveria.

This article is based on: Ohr Chassidi B'Choshech HaSoviet, Toldos Chabad B'Soviet Russia, Yahadus HaDmama, Talks and Tales, and oral interviews.

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TWILIGHT ENCOUNTER

By Rabbi Bentzion Elisha

Based on a personal story shared by a Bachur in the keynote address at the Summer Merkaz Shlichus Kinus several years ago.

"There are three things Odessa is famous for," said the Ukrainian Rabbi. "The best Chazanim (Cantors), the best Rabbanim (Rabbis) and the best Ganavim (thieves)!"

"Please watch yourselves here." He warns us. "While you're walking around town, beware not to stay out past twilight because once the city gets dark, it isn't safe anymore..."

My friend Shmuel and I had finally arrived in Odessa to help the Shliach for the Pesach S'darim. We had gotten our visas at the very last minute, and all the red tape we were forced to endure while attempting to make it into the former Soviet Union makes me wonder how we managed to get here in the first place; was it a miracle?

A beautiful Pesach came and went. Overall it was very nice, and of course we were kept very busy. Finally, after all was said and done, we found ourselves with a little time on our hands. We ventured out into the city, enjoying the ambiance of this old world town as

we sought out Jews to inspire.

As we were walking around trying to find someone interested in putting on T'fillin, we met someone who recognized me. He had mistaken me for my father! That's always a compliment. He knew my father when we lived in Odessa many years ago and the resemblance of our faces opened up conversation. What a small world.

As usual, we got carried away just walking about, and then it occurred to us that it was getting dark. Suddenly we noticed that all the children and women were off the streets, and here we were lost in the city, alone with just our wrinkled map in our hands to guide us.

Out of the blue, a tall man wearing a leather jacket materialized out of nowhere and started walking towards us. The man looked like a skinhead and reeked of trouble. The Rabbi's earlier warning rang ominously in my ears.

I said hello in fluent Russian as I tried to put our map discreetly

away. We didn't need to look completely like fish out of water.

He said hello, and asked where we're from.

"I'm from Odessa originally," I told him.

His face changed to an expression of disbelief.

"My father was born here, and my family lived here when I was a child," I elaborated.

"What are you looking for?" He cut to the chase.

I told him we were looking for Pochenko Park, which we weren't, but I mentioned the first random name I remembered from the map. We just had to lose this guy.

"I know where Pochenko Park is, it's very easy," he said. "Do you see the alley by the side of the street," he pointed as he explained. "Well, you go down the dark alleyway and that will lead you to the dark sea side. Then you'll go up the road there, which will lead you to the edge of park Pochenko." He looked at us smugly.

Returning his gaze knowingly, I replied, "That alley looks awfully dark. I would hate for something





“Odessa has had so many Jews living here for so many years that they inevitably left their mark. Everything here seems so Jewish, even the non-Jews have something Jewish about them. Tell me, Senya, what’s Jewish about you?” I ask innocently. “Nothing.” He hides his face for a second before he says, “Nothing is Jewish about me. My mother is Jewish, but I’m not.”

it

bad to happen to us there. Looking at our map shows us that we can take the main road, which is lit up by street lights, all the way down, and that will lead us straight to our destination. The main road is just four blocks away.”

The man’s smile breaks into laughter and he says, “You’re smart. You’re very smart.” There is a menacing look in his eyes that express words that are not said. ‘You stupid fool,’ I can almost hear the unspoken words. ‘It won’t help you knowing the directions. The only direction you’re heading to is to be robbed.’

All the conversation so far had been conducted in Russian. Shmuel, standing by my side, doesn’t speak the language and can’t follow the conversation. Maybe that’s why he’s the one who remembered the purpose of our excursion in the first place and noticed that there was still light out. He took advantage of this brief moment of silence to push me to put T’fillin on our new friend who he thought was Jewish.

Why not? What’s there to lose

at this point, and who knows, perhaps we can make a soul connection.

“My name is Israel. What is your name?” I ask.

“My name is Senya” answers the local stranger.

“Where are you from, Senya?” I ask him.

“What do you mean? I’m from Odessa. I’ve always lived here.” he answers in a bewildered tone, as if to say ‘What do you mean where am I from?! Of course I’m from Odessa, nobody moves *to* Odessa, people move *out* of here!’

“Odessa has had so many Jews living here for so many years that they inevitably left their mark. Everything here seems so Jewish, even the non-Jews have something Jewish about them. Tell me, Senya, what’s Jewish about you?” I asked innocently.

“Nothing.” He hides his face for a second before he says, “Nothing is Jewish about me. My mother is Jewish, but I’m **not**.”

“Senya, do you know what that means?” I ask him.

“What?” He scoffs. “What does

mean?”

“Senya, if your mother is Jewish that makes you Jewish, too.”

Stunned, he immediately denies my statement.

“No, I’m not Jewish, I’m Ukrainian. It even says so in my passport. Do you want to see?”

He searches for the document to prove to me that I’m wrong.

“Senya, I don’t care what it says in your Ukrainian passport. According to Jewish law, if your mother is Jewish that makes you Jewish!”

Contemplating this new identity he has never considered his own, something inside him breaks. I can see it in his face. He is silent. I take the opportunity to continue.

“Senya, we have so much in common! Your father is from Odessa and my father is from Odessa, your mother is Jewish and my mother is Jewish, I’m a Jew and you’re a Jew. We are practically Mishpacha.”

Mishpacha is one of those Jewish words everyone in Odessa knows the meaning of.

I offer my hand to shake his.

“Israel, do you know why I stopped you this evening?” he asks. “Since we are practically Mishpacha, I’ll tell you. I wanted to rob you. I saw you two rabbinical students, and thought to myself, look at these two penguins, this will be easy money.”

We shake hands. He keeps my hand in his as he stares at me. “Yes,” he agrees. “I suppose we can say that.”

“Israel, do you know why I stopped you this evening?” he asks. “Since we are practically Mishpacha, I’ll tell you. I wanted to rob you. I saw you two rabbinical students, and thought to myself, look at these two penguins, this will be easy money.”

Uneasily I say “I’m so glad you changed your mind.”

The look in his eyes gets noticeably softer. “Yes, I guess I did change my mind.” He says, as he lets go of my hand. Then he looks down. Perhaps he is ashamed.

“Can you just give me twenty

dollars,” he begs. “I really need it. We are Mishpacha after all, aren’t we?”

“I don’t have money on me, Senya,” I tell him frankly. “However, if you want to stop by the Yeshiva later on, I’ll make sure to have \$20 waiting for you.”

“It’s getting late; we have to go,” I inform our new friend.

“Let me walk you to the main street,” he offers. “It’s dangerous here after dark...”

Senya, our newly made friend, walks us to the main street. Most of the roads in Odessa are shrouded in darkness; only the main streets are lit up by street lamps. We walk together into the light. We say good bye to the twilight stranger as we safely walk

back to the Yeshiva where we were staying.

That night we were leaving Odessa, heading to different Kivrei Tzaddikim in the Ukraine, but we didn’t forget to leave a \$20 bill for Senya with one of the Bachurim in the Yeshiva. Perhaps Senya will somehow join the Yeshiva in Odessa, and who knows, maybe he will become a Shliach himself one day.

Even though our mission is never-ending, our mission in Odessa was over.

As we were traveling from Tzaddik to Tzaddik I had time to think about our twilight encounter in Odessa. It is incredible how by being Shlichus minded, thanks to the Rebbe’s training, we were able to turn what could have been a fatal situation into a fateful one.

How wondrous it was that by the mere act of reaching out to another Jew, not only we were saved from robbery but we somehow managed to also steal the heart of a thief.

Rabbi Bentzion Elisha is an award winning photographer (ElishaArt.Com) and writer based in Crown Heights.

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YES I'M SURE... BUT MAYBE NOT.

By Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd

A hundred and fifty years ago they thought that science and physics spoke the absolute truth. Kant and Einstein proved that science never did and never will be able to give absolute truths.

—The Rebbe, *Mind Over Matter*, p.69

We live in an age of uncertainty.

Geopolitics, the economy, the environment. However much we know, things are still increasingly unpredictable. And then there is science.

At the heart of atomic theory, for example, is the “uncertainty principle,” that pillar of quantum wisdom that informs us that the most fundamental building blocks of matter and energy are ultimately unknowable.

The laws of nature, once thought to be completely deterministic, are now viewed as probabilities. In other words, more uncertainty. Another case in point is the environment, which is modeled by chaos theory or the butterfly effect, the idea that tiny unpredictable changes can quickly reverberate into massive system change.

Science is not the bastion of unshakeable truth that we once thought it was. Science is now about probabilities and perceptions, not about things “as they are.”

No wonder that many these days ascribe to a new kind of atheism, which is really more akin to agnosticism, a kind of knowing that you cannot know. If your sole anchor in the sea of knowledge is science, then all absolutes are denied.[1]

On the other hand there is more to scientists than meets the eye for they, after all, are human too. So what characterizes a scientist’s faith? According to polls, about half of all scientists believe in the Creator and His continued guidance of natural processes. Some take scripture literally, others literarily, but they typically ascribe to some traditional faith system.[2]

But what about the other half... the new agnostics whose belief in doubt is firm? How do they celebrate

their doctrine? Perhaps you can find them in the agnostic house of worship on Main Street. There’s a big neon question mark out front and a minister is banging on the pulpit declaring to all, “I’m not sure!”

What’s amusing about the agnostic church, of course, is that faith and doubt are mutually exclusive and diametrically opposed. Faith is about clarity, certainty and unshakeable principles. Doubt is about being undecided, unsure and (no hard feelings intended, but) unprincipled.

I have often been told by my secular friends, “I envy your faith. I wish I could believe like you. I am always plagued with doubts.” For the most part, our discussions and debates don’t really lead anywhere, but sometimes other approaches do.

A practical deed, a mitzvah, such as lighting a Shabbos candle, giving tz’daka (charity), or making a blessing over food can awaken the soul and evaporate doubts in a way that logical arguments never can. As King Solomon put it, “For the mitzvah is a candle and Torah, light.”

But how does this work? Can deeds dispel doubts? According to recent experiments by psychologists, it seems the answer is yes.[3]

In a study published in the prestigious journal, *Science*, subjects were asked to rate 10 CD’s and were then informed they could choose their fourth or fifth favorite as a gift for participating in the experiment. Then they were given hand soaps to rate. Half based these ratings based on the packaging alone and half actually washed their hands with the products before rating them. After all this, they went back to the 10 CD’s and rated them all over again.

The latter CD ratings varied in one significant way. Those who actually washed their hands ranked the chosen CD the same as they had earlier, but those who did not wash in between upped their rating of the



chosen CD the second time.

Apparently, hand washing helped subjects put the decision process behind them and accept the gift for what it was, a mediocre gift.

Surprisingly, however, those that did not actually wash rated the gift CD significantly higher the second time, indicating a need to rationalize and lingering doubts about their original decision.

Hand washing plays an important role in Jewish life, and there are many occasions where the washing of hands is mandated by the sages. Of course one reason is sanitation, but there are spiritual and kabbalistic reasons as well. In light of this research perhaps we can add another dimension - the psychological.

For example, one occasion for washing is the eating of bread. At one level it's a hygiene issue. Who needs dirty germs on food? But that can't be the whole story because the ritual washing for bread needs to be done after the hands are hygienically clean. Add to this a cultural dimension - whenever we eat bread we use hand washing to commemorate the divine service of the priests in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Another layer of meaning is the kabbalistic. Water symbolizes Torah, divine intellect which flows from above onto the hands which symbolize the emotional level within man. The hands are raised after washing and before drying to symbolize the elevation of the emotions that results from being awash with divine intellect.

But what does washing for bread do for you psychologically? For one, it separates you from whatever it is you were doing before and focuses your consciousness on what lies ahead. A moment before you may have been cutting a deal, arranging a car pool, fighting with a phone company or shopping online. But once you've washed for bread, it's

history. In fact between the washing and the eating you are not even allowed to talk, except for the blessing on eating bread.

Without the washing, we would be tumbling headlong from battles to bagels to making deals to breaking bread. Besides getting indigestion from worry, it's not a way to live. Conscious living means celebrating the moment, every moment, for the value it has. Eating is holy. It's life itself. The washing ritual gives you a chance to focus on the immense significance of what might otherwise feel like nothing more than stuffing your face because you are hungry.

But there is another psychological value as well. The same behavioral boundary that frames feeding time also serves as punctuation for your previous concern. And setting a limit to your past activity behaviorally also limits its impact on your psyche, preventing it from encroaching on other activities and values that also deserve undivided attention.

Rabbi Chaim Brovender, a popular and innovative educator in modern orthodox circles and head of Yeshivat HaMivtar near Efrat Israel, was once interviewed about his experiences with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Besides being astounded by the Rebbe's prodigious knowledge, boundless energy and prophetic insight, the thing that impressed him most was his desk. He walked in to a late night appointment after the Rebbe had already seen dozens of people and responded to hundreds of issues in addition to his own myriad projects and concerns.

When you walk into the office of someone whose day is that complex and demanding, you would expect to see signs of it on the desk and around - piles of papers, open books, coffee cups, a phone or two, files, stationery, and electronics. We all know what a busy person's desk looks like when he's involved in so many projects. But not the Rebbe.

His desk was perfectly clean, as if to say to the person who walks in, "I have nothing else in the world on my mind right now but you."

Washing your hands, clearing your desk, making a blessing, taking a deep breath, all these are ways to draw a line in the present to settle the past and focus on the immediate future, which is a healthy way to live. Otherwise our minds can get murky and muddled, clouded by doubts, and invested in histories we should have left long behind.

Of all the Rebbe's teachings, one stands out as an overarching theme - Welcome Moshiach with acts of goodness and kindness. Our psychology lesson lends insight to this as well.

As we stand on the threshold between exile and redemption, we need to draw a line between the dubious values of worldly cares and the eternal values we will celebrate in the redemption. The best way to wash away the grime encrusting millennia of mess-ups and misery is also the best way to enter the era of unity and clarity we are all awaiting. And that is to define the moment with a cleansing event - a mitzvah.

And lest our doubts plague us still and we agonize over exactly which of those hundreds of possible mitzvos we should actually do, the answer is simple and clear: The next one.

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NOTES:

[1] [http://www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com/id/2258484/?from=rs)

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[2] http://www.religioustolerance.org/ev_publi.htm

[3] [http://blogs.discovermagazine.com](http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/80beats/2010/05/07/hand-washing-after-a-decision-scrubs-away-those-lingering-doubts/)

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