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for Parshas Noach.*

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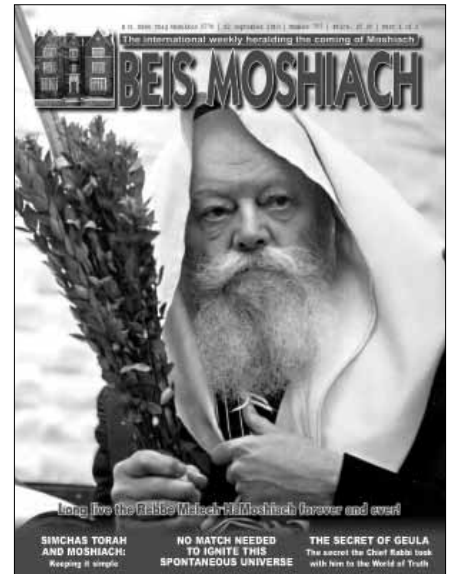
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SIMCHAS TORAH WITH JOY AND TEARS

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CREATION, T'SHUVA, TIKKUN AND MOSHIACH

Translated and adapted by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Tikkun – Perfection – is both an accomplished state and an ongoing process. What is complete within the six days of creation still needs correction from the perspective of Shabbos. T'shuva is the process of correction. When t'shuva is complete, we reach the time that is “all Shabbos,” the times of Moshiach.

Creation, T'shuva, Tikkun and Moshiach – what connects these is a dynamic of completion and elevation. In regard to Creation, the Torah states: “And G-d blessed the Seventh Day and made it holy, for on it He rested from all His work which G-d created to function.” What does this mean, “G-d created to function,” or, more literally, “which G-d created to make”? Why doesn't it simply say “which G-d created”? The phrase “to function” or “to make” seems superfluous. Noticing this grammatical anomaly, the rabbis commented that the Torah is telling us that

Creation itself needs to be developed and corrected. G-d created the world in such a way that, when He was finished, it still needed to be made, as it were. On the seventh day, Shabbos, the world was incomplete and imperfect; it required *Tikkun*, meaning improvement, regulation, reformation. (Indeed, the concept of *Tikkun Olam* – perfecting the world – underlies a range of Jewish activity, in areas as diverse as mysticism and social action.) With the addition of one word in Hebrew, seemingly irrelevant, the Torah reveals a basic fact about Creation – its imperfection – and the imperative that imposes on mankind in general, and the Jewish people in particular, to improve the world, bring it to completion.

On the other hand, in another passage the rabbis also declared that the world was created in its fullness, meaning that nothing was missing. The world was created with everything it needs, lacking nothing, requiring no correction. Everything is in place; no improvement is necessary.

So which is it? Was the world created “to be made” – in need of *Tikkun*, requiring improvement – or was it created complete, in all its fullness? The answer is both. Creation requires both *Tikkun* – improvement – and is also perfect. Both observations of the rabbis are correct. There is neither contradiction nor paradox. Rather, each observation refers to a different part – or stage – of creation. For, as is well known, the world was created in six days. On the seventh day of Creation, Shabbos, G-d rested. So, there is a making of the world in six days, and a resting from – a finishing and completion of Creation on the seventh day.

Thus, during the six days of Creation, the world was formed in all its fullness, complete. It is to this stage of

Creation that the rabbis refer when they say the world was made perfect, requiring no improvement, missing nothing. However, the very nature of Shabbos, the very holiness of the day, the fact that G-d blessed it, must lead to a “making,” a development, correction, elevation and improvement of the world.

That is, from the perspective of the six days of creation, everything is complete. From the perspective of Shabbos, the world needs improvement, because Shabbos is a higher level than the six days. At the level of Shabbos, a day sanctified with holiness, the six days of the mundane are indeed missing something. The world of the normal and everyday requires *Tikkun*.

This parallels what the Alter Rebbe says in *Tanya* in regard to *t’shuva*, repentance: “The essence of repentance is in the heart, and in the heart are found many distinctions and gradations.” Therefore, even if one has done *t’shuva* correctly, even if the repentance is complete, once one reaches a higher level, ascends in spirituality, the *t’shuva* must also be elevated. In simple terms, the more refined, the more spiritually purified we become, the more sensitive we are to the smallest defect in our thoughts, speech or action. This requires a greater degree of *t’shuva*. For example, a stain on a common garment is not cause for great concern; the garment is still completely functional. But the same stain on a silken garment would ruin it.

So, when the Sages say that one should spend all his days in *t’shuva*, they obviously don’t mean that the sins and transgressions have not been washed away and removed by the “first level” of *t’shuva*. Assuming the *t’shuva* is done properly and sincerely, of course the *t’shuva* was perfect and complete (just as the works of creation were perfect and complete on the sixth day). Nevertheless, there are many levels of *t’shuva*, and having refined and elevated one’s self, one must also rise to the next level of *t’shuva*. (The sanctity and holiness reached on one Shabbos carries us through the coming week, but on the next Shabbos – we must reach even higher.)

We can understand this from the simple example of *tz’daka*. As one’s wealth grows, so too does the amount one is obligated to give to *tz’daka*. For an individual less well off, if he gives an amount appropriate to his status and situation, he has given *tz’daka* in the most perfect way possible. But once his situation and status improve, once he is on a higher material level, then what sufficed yesterday does not suffice today. He must give *tz’daka* not according to what he had available yesterday, but according to his means today. The same is true of *t’shuva* – one can repent – or more accurately, return – on a continuous spectrum of scrupulousness and self-examination, of sensitivity and

spiritual refinement. In this sense, even *tzaddikim* can do *t’shuva*. It is no coincidence that in Hebrew the words “*t’shuva*” and “the Sabbath” have the same letters.

This brings us to Moshiach. The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe declared, “Immediate *T’shuva*, immediate Redemption.” This concept, that Moshiach and *t’shuva*, are connected is rooted in the Rambam, who explains that “As soon as Israel does *t’shuva*, they will be immediately redeemed.” Further, the era of Redemption, the days of Moshiach, are referred to as a day that will be all Shabbos. Thus we find several connections: *t’shuva* and Moshiach, *t’shuva* and Shabbos, and of course, Moshiach and Shabbos. These are all conceptually parallel. Shabbos is the seventh day, following six days of creation; the days of Moshiach will be the seventh millennium, following six millennia of *t’shuva*, mitzvos and acts of goodness and kindness.

Just as Shabbos represents a state of being categorically different than the preceding six days of creation, so too our spirituality, the nature of our existence, will be radically different during the days of Moshiach.

There is a practical lesson. From the perspective of the six days of creation or the first level of *t’shuva*, we have accomplished a lot – indeed, everything that can be asked of us. We have reached a level of perfection – a spiritual comfort zone reflected in our abundance of possessions and physical comforts. As the Rebbe has said, we have already done *t’shuva*.

Still, material wealth is not Shabbos. In fact, it is irrelevant on Shabbos. From the perspective of Shabbos – which is a microcosm of the days of Moshiach – creation is insufficient. True, the six days of the week, our *Tikkun Olam* and the six millennium are all, each in its “sphere of influence,” a necessary beginning and critical part of the process. But it’s not enough. There’s perfection, and then there’s a true, complete, final and everlasting perfection. We must go beyond the constraints and limits of perfection that we have already achieved. It is Erev Shabbos, the eve of the era of Redemption. We are in transition to the time when, as the prophet says, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean.” Just as Shabbos infuses the six days of the week even before it comes, so that even before Shabbos arrives openly, there’s a foretaste – which grows stronger the closer we come to Shabbos – so, too, we must be infused with the spirit of Redemption, the proximity of *Tikkun*. In the Rebbe’s words: “We must live with Moshiach.”

(Based on *Likkutei Sichos* 25, pp. 14-18)

NO MATCH NEEDED TO IGNITE THIS SPONTANEOUS UNIVERSE

By Boruch Merkur

It requires the perfect storm, a virtual flash mob of circumstances all coming together to spontaneously create even a tiny flame. But every once and a while, when there's no one else to blame, you can hear Mother Nature uttering the faintest mea culpa...

No vandals were to blame for the recent destruction at the home of Brian Duncan of Arkansas. No arsonist was responsible for burning down the front porch, resulting in about \$20,000 of damage. Nor was it terrorism.

Beneath the smoldering ruins, the culprit was found. It was altogether not a human being, nor a member of the animal kingdom. The perpetrator was in fact a pot of decomposing vegetation, described by Duncan as "a charred root ball."

Well, to be fair, it wasn't really

the plant's fault. It was actually the innocent victim of one of the dastardly laws of nature: spontaneous combustion. You see, there really was no culprit here. After all, no one struck a match. There was no source of ignition. Unless, of course, you blame the immutable laws of nature, as we shall explore.

In brief, as Jonesboro Fire Marshal Jason Wills testified, "spontaneous combustion is something where you have to have a lot of variables come together and it

has to be just right." (On further investigation, I gleaned the following information, which is likely to appeal more to those of you who happen to be wearing a long white coat and holding a clipboard: 1. A process begins whereby heat is emitted, such as oxidation or fermentation. 2. The heat gets trapped. 3. The temperature escalates above the ignition point. 4. If there is enough air, it will begin to combust, to burn.)

Of course, it's not every day that you hear about things spontaneously bursting into flames. As the fire marshal suggests, it requires the perfect storm, a virtual flash mob of circumstances all coming together to create a tiny flame. But every once and a while, when there's no one else to blame, you can hear Mother Nature uttering the faintest mea culpa.

THE BIG BANG: A CONVENIENT LIE

Taken further, there is a sort of convenience for this "spontaneous

culprit” line of reasoning. Would it not pay to blame nature itself for all the world’s imperfections? Why talk about a G-d, an omnipotent Being, Who is responsible, as it were, for human suffering and the ills of the universe? The idea of a Creator is inherently enmeshed with the notion of Divine justice, with reward and punishment. It spurs us towards introspection, evoking in us the requisite humility for us to consider: perhaps I truly deserve this. Idolaters of the Spontaneous Big Bang, however, bear no weight of self-scrutiny, responsibility, or repentance. Indeed, atheism breeds moral relativism and hedonism, arrogance and frivolity. So, as you can see, there is a lot at stake in selecting the true source of our universe.

Theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, who had famously stated in his bestseller *A Brief History of Time*, “If we discover a complete [Cosmological] theory, it would be the ultimate triumph of reason – for then we should know the mind of G-d,” has now, in his latest book, proffered that there is no reason to bring G-d into the equation. It is

entirely possible, Hawking claims, that the process of creation, the Big Bang, was set into motion of its own accord, in other words, that the universe “spontaneous combusted.” Hawking’s most recent exposition has stripped away (what was for him) the metaphor of G-d and revealed a more clinical cosmic catalyst: the laws of nature. “Because there is a law such as gravity,” says Hawking, “the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going.”

And so Hawking has fanned the flames of the ever-smoldering ancient debate about our origin...

Isn’t Hawking attempting to inflate the role of science beyond its scope? And how can you make a so-called scientific claim when you admit that it is supported by absolutely no evidence (as Hawking does)? Should we have simple faith in science? Is it really more logical to suppose that laws, such as gravity,

spontaneously created the universe rather than G-d? After all, what created these immutable laws? Were they too subject to spontaneous creation? And if you think about the unlikely confluence of circumstances required to ignite “a (charred) root ball,” can you fathom the improbability of fashioning the perfect storm to set off the root of all creation, “to light the blue touch paper”?!

Of course, there is one definite positive offshoot of this debate: people are talking about Creation and the Creator. This controversy (in addition to benefitting Hawking as a successful publicity stunt) has brought the topic of G-d to the fore, and amongst traditionally non-believing segments of society, the scientific community.

WHADAYA MEAN? WE DO BELIEVE THAT ‘IMMUTABLE LAWS’ SPARKED OFF CREATION!

From a different perspective, we too believe that there are immutable laws that preceded Creation, as it says in Tanna D’Vei Eliyahu Rabba: “There are two things that preceded the world: Torah and the Jewish people.” But our immutable laws are the gift of G-d’s living and fiery Torah, as it says, “from His right hand [He presented] His fiery Torah to them” (D’varim 33:2). Torah is G-d’s will and wisdom. It defines morality and provides the code for a righteous path in life. It is the spark of all life and has the power to uplift us and illuminate the soul, revealing its innate love for G-d, as it is explained in *Tanya* Chapter 19: “[Just as the candle constantly seeks to ascend and reunite with its source] so does the soul of a Jew desire and yearn to...unite with its origin and source in G-d, blessed be He, Who is the fountainhead of all life.” Torah also has the power to set



The physicists' laws are cold and lifeless. Hawking cites the "primordial law" of gravity as an example, the attraction of objects with mass to each other. Indeed, gravity, as we experience it, is a force that pulls us down to the earth, sometimes with all the drama of a crash landing.

off the process of Creation, as it says in the Zohar, "The Holy One Blessed Be He gazed into the Torah and created the world."

The physicists' laws, however, are cold and lifeless. Hawking cites the "primordial law" of gravity as an example, the attraction of objects with mass to each other. Indeed, gravity, as we experience it, is a force that pulls us down to the earth, sometimes with all the drama of a crash landing. It is symbolic of our entrenchment in coarse physicality, our attraction to objects, to things, the obsession with amassing a fortune of material wealth. Is this an example of a law that is the ignition spark for spontaneous creation? There is no indication that these laws possess any relationship or even acknowledgment of humanity; they are completely void of compassion or purpose.

Interestingly, as the Rebbe points out in the *sicha* of Shabbos Parshas B'Reishis 5752, the two interpretations that Rashi offers for

"*B'Reishis*," the first word of the Torah, are apparently contradictory (and the primordial law is that interpretations must complement each other, not be mutually exclusive – see *Likkutei Sichos* Vol. 3, pg. 782 regarding how this is learned from Chazal (Kilayim 9:8)). The opening phrase of the Torah could either read, "*B'reishis* (for a purpose, for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of Yisroel) G-d created the heavens and the earth," or the literal interpretation, "In the beginning of G-d's creation of the heavens and the earth...G-d said, 'Let there be light,' etc." The first interpretation suggests that G-d's immutable laws, the Torah (and the Jewish people), since they preceded Creation, transcend Creation and are its primary purpose, whereas the second interpretation chronicles the narrative of the seven days of Creation, emphasizing the primacy of the world itself and how everything else finds purpose in its contribution to sustaining and

perfecting Creation.

The first interpretation seems to leave room for Hawking's theory – that primordial laws spontaneously ignite the process of creation but remain transcendent and aloof even after the Big Bang, cold and unaffected. But how does this interpretation reconcile with the Torah's insistence that the world is also a focal point, that Creation has the first word, as it were?

The Rebbe MH"M teaches us in this *sicha* that the two interpretations are indeed one, insofar as the primacy of the Torah and Yisroel, the sake for which the world was created, only finds true expression when it is recognized as such in the physical world. Creation only approaches perfection when the entire world, including its lowest aspects, realizes the exaltedness of Torah and the Jewish people. Here in this coarse, material world, in the context of Creation as we experience it, everyone, including all the nations of the earth, must proclaim that Torah is truth and that the Jewish people are G-d's treasured nation.

This alone properly expresses the ultimate purpose for which the world was created. And we, chassidim of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, must have the utmost faith that very soon this realization will spontaneously ignite the world with a flame of benevolence and compassion, selflessness and respect for human dignity, with the imminent Redemption.

A freilichin Yom Tov and Moshiach now!

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

SIMCHAS TORAH AND MOSHIACH: KEEPING IT SIMPLE

By Rabbi Zvi Homnick

NOT SO SIMPLE

Simchas Torah, the last day of Sukkos in the Diaspora and the day that we celebrate the completion of the reading of the Torah, has always been an emotionally charged day for me personally, ever since I was a little child. My father, may he live and be well, always celebrated this day with tremendous joy and energy, even in the most difficult of times for our family. In fact, he has become somewhat of a legend in the yeshiva where he learned in his youth and where he has continued to celebrate the holiday throughout the years, to this very day. Over the years, I have encountered many people who have told me that even though they learned in other yeshivas, they walked especially to that yeshiva on Simchas Torah in order to see my father dance.

As a child looking up at his father, I experienced tremendous pride (“that’s MY father up there”) to the point that I felt like I would burst. As I got older and began to appreciate the meaning and significance of the day and the revelry (on my level), I found that the emotions became more complex and intense, and oftentimes I had to find a private corner to watch from

as I found myself bursting into tears of overwhelming emotion, a mixture of pride, joy, regret and more. Oddly enough, the day also has some unpleasant associations for me, such as the time when I was a young boy and while running behind the rows of dancing men, I fell and split open my chin.

I remember being amazed and terrified by how much blood poured out from that chin wound, but being rushed to the emergency room and having a number of stitches put in was far more traumatic. Apparently, despite having a relatively high threshold for pain, I have a terrific aversion to the invasiveness of being stuck with needles and having those needles along with surgical thread drawn through the skin. Although, the memories of parts of that experience are pretty faint, I distinctly recall screaming and thrashing and hearing the doctor later say that in all his years, he and the staff never had to work so hard to physically restrain such a young patient. When we came back to have the stitches removed, the poor guy seemed so traumatized by the earlier experience of torturing some little kid, that I worked extra hard to suppress my pain responses (and,

boy, did it hurt), because I felt sorry for him.

Another less than pleasant association with this special day is the memory of my father having a private conversation with me (before age ten), explaining to me that the doctors had discovered that he had a heart condition. This was following a Simchas Torah when he had felt those pains especially strongly as a result of his exertions. Although he had gone to a doctor previously because of chest pains, they had been dismissed as heartburn. This time, the doctors finally figured out what it was, and my father thought that I should know just in case something happened (G-d forbid), that it shouldn’t come as a complete shock.

He also made it a point to emphasize that the problem was there from before and not to blame it on exertion for a mitzva, and in fact, one could say that it was thanks to the mitzva that the problem was discovered and correctly diagnosed. And so, watching over the years as my father performed a modified and far less strenuous version of his dance routine, new emotions were added

of fear and trepidation, the kind that only a child who has already lost one parent prematurely can muster.

And yet, with all that emotion swirling around, my mind was always trying to work things through as far as what it all means. Why are we dancing with the Torah? What are we celebrating? Shouldn't it just be for those who are devoted to the study of Torah and have achieved greatness in Torah? If so, why do we center the celebration on the completion of the weekly Torah reading, which is for everybody, even the most simple and unlearned?

THE SIMPLE JEW

As I was walking down the street, a few days before actually sitting down to pen this article, casually thinking about a possible topic, a memory surfaced with surprising intensity (a blast from the past?). I could picture with surprising clarity sitting at a high school gathering before the holidays, and the Hebrew Studies principal, who also taught our class, telling us the following story.

Reb Mendel of Kotzk would say that only one time in his life did someone get the better of him in a verbal exchange. Ironically, this individual was a simple Jew. One Simchas Torah, the Kotzker saw this simple Jew dancing with the Torah with tremendous joy and enthusiasm and asked him, "*Vos bizt du dah ah mechutan?*" (The question is a shorthand Yiddish expression that literally seems to address a wedding guest, asking what direct familial connection he has with the wedding party, but when asked in a challenging tone would be the equivalent of "What are you doing here?" or "What business is it of yours?") The anonymous Jew responded, "*Oif a bruder's chassana tanzt men oichet,*" (lit. - one also dances at his

brother's wedding).

I also recalled how this pithy interchange (with its characteristically salty Polish Chassidic flavor) made a huge impression on me at the time (a few months before my Bar Mitzva) and even moved me to tears. My strong reaction surprised me even back then, because I was busy growing up in a world where there existed only the Talmid Chacham (Torah scholar) and the Am HaAretz (one not learned in Torah). We were taught to look up to and to strive to become like the former, and to look benevolently (albeit tinged with patronizing paternalistic pathos) upon the latter if he was a well-meaning fellow who knew his place, but to despise the lowly ignoramus

who didn't show the proper respect and appreciation for his betters. There was also a third option, a *Torah'dige Baalabus* (a working man with a Torah education who devotes some time to his learning), who landed somewhere in the middle. The *poshuter Yid* or simple Jew as a spiritual icon existed only in Chassidic stories which some of us read as kids in (that sneaky Lubavitch publication) Talks and Tales and the like.

Looking back, I could articulate more clearly to myself that although I was moved by the message that even the simplest of Jews has a place when it comes to celebrating the divine bequest that was entrusted to us, and which distinguishes us from all the other



nations of the world, something still didn't quite compute about the story. On the one hand, the fact that the simple Jew gets the better of the brilliant scholar and great Chassidic master would seem to be conveying the idea that the simple Jew enjoys a certain spiritual advantage, a theme that figures prominently in the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples. On the other hand, a superficial reading of the story would seem to indicate that as clever as the man's response was, ultimately, his place in the celebration is a peripheral one, not as an actual *mechutan*. In fact, the person from whom I heard the story took it just that way. In his presentation, the message of the story was that despite the clever riposte, we must strive to be *mechutanim* at the celebration and not merely incidental participants by virtue of an accident of birth.

AIM FOR SIMPLE

Once I began to learn Chabad Chassidus, where the concept of the simple Jew and his unique and direct connection to G-d Himself is explained at length, so much of what I had learned and read from the Baal Shem Tov and other Chassidic schools began to make sense. It is far too lengthy a discussion to attempt to do justice to in a brief article, so in the spirit of our topic, I'll just try to keep it simple.

We all understand that the relationship that a small child has with his father (in normal healthy situations) is pure and uncluttered. The child reacts with pure emotional instinct unfettered and undiluted by the convolutions of intellect and the reservation engendered by critical analysis. Thus, his attachment to his father comes from the deepest core of his being, his very essence, and in turn, relates to the very essence of his

father, as he does not begin to apprehend or appreciate the qualities or lack thereof of the father's intellect, personality or behavior. Additionally, the very young child does not measure his relationship with his father based on his own behavior and whether or not he is deserving of his father's love and consideration.

Sadly, as the child grows and develops along with his intellect, and is held to increasingly stringent standards of behavior, and gains a stronger sense of independent identity, that pure and limitless love and attachment begins to recede into latency, to the point that he may even become antagonistic towards his father. To avoid that unpleasant possibility, the child must always hold on to that pure childlike love even as he gives it form and expression by developing a greater appreciation of his father's qualities which are the form and expression of his essence.

One of the concepts that the Baal Shem Tov came to bring to light in the deep darkness of our interminable sojourn in exile, to a people that had not experienced seeing G-d and being seen by G-d in the Holy Temple for almost two millennia, was that the worst symptom of our banishment from grace is the fact that we had begun to relate to G-d as some distant taskmaster in the sky, not as a loving father whose infinite love for his children exceeds ad infinitum that of elderly parents for their only child born to them in old age. Even worse, is that those of a more philosophical bent can't help but relate to Him as some sort of disembodied conceptual construct, whose existence, presence in our world, oversight and providence, are all fertile ground for theoretical theological debate.

This is the true meaning of the Kabbalistic formulation that "the *Sh'china* is in exile," inasmuch as

we, perhaps unintentionally, banish Him from our world and our lives as a result of losing touch with that childlike connection that we had in the earliest days of our relationship when we followed Him unquestioningly into the desert, which the prophet describes as the "generosity (*chesed*) of your childhood." Only the love of a child is given truly generously without any restraint (*g'vura*) whatsoever, as well as the love that is given to a child, as G-d says through his prophet, "For Yisroel is a child, and I will love Him."

It is the childlike innocence and simplicity of the simple Jew that pierces the deepest darkness of exile and allows him to connect to G-d's Essence from the very core of his own essence. Precisely because he is not intellectually developed in Torah study, and because he sees himself as unworthy and undeserving so that he performs the mitzvos without any expectation of reward or recognition, his burning love for G-d remains unrequited and ever at the fore. All this is explained in the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov (given over by the Alter Rebbe) that the burning bush that Moshe encountered is symbolic of the simple Jew, in that being nothing more than a lowly vegetation it contained an infinite blaze that could not be put out.

And it was Moshe, in preparation for receiving the Torah and guiding the Jewish People in the maturation of their relationship with G-d, who experienced this vision and lesson, as a reminder that everything we learn and do is ultimately aimed at channeling and enhancing that pure childlike inextinguishable love for G-d and attachment to Him. Moshe expressed recognition of this idea with the words, "I will turn and see," and Rashi explains the odd phraseology of "I will turn" to mean, "I will turn away from here to

get close to there.”

Obviously, the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe were not simply sharing a revolutionary anti-establishment homiletic as a theoretical counterpoint to the prevailing rabbinic hierarchy; the point is that through being connected to the Rebbe, the Moshe of each generation, one can actually sense and experience that pure connection to G-d even as he develops a deeper understanding and appreciation, with each enhancing and strengthening the other. In the end, everything we learn and do, as we are commanded to learn and do, should be aimed at recapturing and holding on to the simple love of the simple Jew.

And when it comes to Simchas Torah, the reason that we celebrate with a rolled up and covered Torah scroll in celebration of completing the yearly cycle of the reading of the Torah, is to express the level of connection with G-d that a Jew has through Torah that transcends intellect and understanding and is not measured by each individual's degree of knowledge and exegetical prowess. So, no Jew should feel that he is at a brother's wedding, but rather it is his own personal celebration, and if anything, the simple Jew and the little Jewish child is a lot closer to the pure joy of being attached to G-d Himself than their more mature and learned counterparts.

In a talk on the eve of Simchas Torah 5722, the Rebbe cites a variation of this story (without a Tzaddik being part of the story) and emphasized the point that for every Jew it is not just a “brother's wedding,” but his own personal celebration. However, perhaps one could explain on a deeper level (and if the story took place with a Tzaddik like the Kotzker involved it surely requires a deeper look) that this is the very point of the story itself. Because the simple Jew looks

up to the Tzaddik and Torah scholar and sees himself as completely unworthy, and as such feels that the only right he has to join the celebration is as a brother because “we are all sons of one father,” that is the very reason that his love for G-d and his joy with the Torah is that much more pure and untainted. So when the Kotzker said that this person got the better of him, it wasn't just in the context of verbal fencing but in substance.

HOW SIMPLE CAN IT BE?

Once I started learning Chassidus in earnest, these ideas and concepts opened a whole new world to me, but it all still seemed somewhat unreal. When I went to see the Rebbe in person, watched the Rebbe daven, attended farbrengens, passed by for dollars (and of course learned even more) it started to become real. I saw and experienced firsthand how through a connection to the Rebbe, the Moshe of the generation, the higher realities described on paper come to life and become part of one's real-life experience.

However, it wasn't until Simchas Torah 5752 that I was completely blown away. Words can't describe what the eyes saw, as I stood inches from the platform where the Rebbe danced his *hakafa* (how I got that highly coveted spot is a miracle unto itself), but in that instant I **knew** and **felt** that “nothing else exists except G-d,” how every Jew is “a literal part of G-d Himself,” the infinite love that G-d has for every Jew no matter his or her level of knowledge or observance, and so much more. It was just so obvious and so simple, without words and explanations cluttering my perceptions. Later, when I came down from the experience and started thinking again in words and phrases, the phrase that kept screaming from my overflowing and

blazing heart to my brain was “Rebbe, *ich bin dainer* (I am yours).” I have spent the last eighteen years trying to channel and develop that intense level of connection to the Rebbe and the One who the Rebbe is connected to (often with less than spectacular success) which I felt in those brief moments of my “Chassidic infancy.”

This all has a very practical lesson during this time of final preparation for the imminent and final revelation of Moshiach. Those of us who merited to see and hear directly from the Rebbe the “tidings of Redemption” during the years of 5751 and 5752, need to remember what it was like at that time; the clarity, the certainty, and the pure and simple faith and joy that we experienced in the most tangible sense with each new declaration, and we need to pass that along to those that weren't there.

Yes, we have a lot of work to do in carrying out the Rebbe's instructions and directives in order to prepare ourselves and the world, especially through learning and teaching the subject of Moshiach and Geula as it is explained in Torah, and particularly in the deeper dimension of Torah, Kabbala and Chassidus. But we also have one day of Simchas Torah, the Rebbe's day, when we close the books and reconnect to that pure untainted childlike faith and love, as well as the feeling of “Rebbe, I am yours.” And with that joy and faith, we go straight to Shabbos B'Reishis that sets the tone for the entire year, after which we proclaim “And Yaakov went on his way,” in anticipation of going out to take the final steps on the journey of Yaakov. The journey that ends, as Rashi says in Chumash, when “the redeemers will go up to Mount Zion to judge Mount Eisav, and the kingdom will be to G-d,” with the coming of Moshiach, immediately, NOW!

THE SECRET OF GEULA

By Menachem Ziegelboim

Three months after the passing of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, testimonials about his life keep coming in. In a book that was published for the Shloshim, his son, Chief Rabbi of Tzfas, Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, reveals a secret his father took with him to the World of Truth.

In Adar, 5746/1986, the Chief Rabbis of Israel, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and Rabbi Avrohom Shapiro, visited the Rebbe. In the middle of their conversation the Rebbe said, **"We have rabbanim here and we can pasken like a beis din that Moshiach must come."** The Rebbe wanted them to pasken that the time had come for Moshiach, but Rabbi Shapiro hesitated and the Rebbe did not push the subject.

A few months later, in Iyar of 5746, there was a Yom Iyun for Rabbanei Chabad in Eretz Yisroel. Rabbi Gluckowsky wanted to take the opportunity to have a p'sak din written and signed by the Rabbanei Chabad and the two Chief Rabbis. The story of how this did not work out was told in a previous issue, about how the two Chief Rabbis were not there at the same time. Rabbi Eliyahu was delayed for unexpected and odd reasons. Rabbi

Gluckowsky later told *Beis Moshiach* that he saw it as "the Satan's work."

The p'sak din was written and signed by Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu as well as other rabbanim.

Aside from the unusual p'sak din that the Rebbe asked them to pasken that Moshiach should come immediately, the Rebbe also asked that the rabbanim pasken that all "endpoints" have passed and the time had come for the Geula and that the limitation of "Yisroel are not redeemed except with t'shuva" was removed since every Jew had certainly had at least a thought of t'shuva.

In an interview that he gave to *HaGeula HaAmitis V'HaShleima*, Rabbi Eliyahu said:

"We have a tradition that statements like this and a p'sak din such as this have 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. 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!"

A BEIS DIN CONVENED EVERY YEAR

Three months have passed since the passing of Rabbi Eliyahu and testimonials about his life keep coming in. In a book that was published for the Shloshim, his son,



Chief Rabbi of Tzfas, Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, reveals a secret that his father took with him – literally! He was buried with a folder that contains a number of piskei din that obligate Moshiach to be revealed immediately and redeem Israel.

The book is called *Avihem Shel Yisroel* (Father of Israel) and has stories about Rabbi Eliyahu that were told during the Shiva. One of the chapters is on “Resurrection of the Dead” in which it says that shortly after his passing, the family heard that he had been a member of a special beis din that was formed by some mekubalim. It met approximately once a year in order to declare: The Time for Geula has Arrived.

The head of the beis din, Rabbi Yeshua Ben Shoshan, revealed this secret to the family and asked that the piskei din be buried with Rabbi Eliyahu for him to bring to the Heavenly Court, to Hashem, so he could present their resolutions and demand, as it were, that He fulfill them. This is what it says in the book:

“This is a story which the

WHO IS RAV YESHUA BEN SHOSHAN?

At one of the large t’filla gatherings that took place at Neve Dekalim to pray that the expulsion not take place, on the dais next to Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu was a short man with a beard who began the t’fillos with tremendous depth of emotion. Many of the people wondered who he was. This was Rabbi Yeshua Ben Shoshan.



He stood there and davened from the Siddur shel Mekubalim with many holy names and kavanos in it that only the initiated recognize. He is not called “rav” but just “Yeshua” by all those who know him, without a title of “Mekubal” or “Tzaddik Nistar.” Just a simple Jew.

Rabbi Yeshua Ben Shoshan is a Yerushalmi Mekubal who was born in Yerushalayim. At a young age he began learning kabbala from mekubalim in Yerushalayim: Rabbi Mordechai Ettia, Rabbi Dovid Laniado, and Rabbi Mordechai Sharabi. Then he learned with Rabbi Dovid Batzri and Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Hillel.

A year before the outbreak of the Six Day War, he volunteered for the Shaked commando group, where he served as a combat soldier and officer. During the Yom Kippur War he commanded a battalion of parachutists and was seriously wounded in hand-to-hand combat with an Egyptian soldier. He nevertheless continued to fight and he was awarded a medal of bravery for this.

He is considered today to be one of the great “*mechavanim*” – those who daven according to the kavanos of the Rashash. Many of the mekubalim ask him to pray with them in t’fillos they arrange for Klal Yisroel.

protagonists did not want told but upon the passing of Rabbi Eliyahu, we have permission to relate it.

“Many years ago, Chacham Yeshua Ben Shoshan convened a number of great mekubalim and they formed a beis din. This beis din dealt with inyanei Geula and after some discussion and great *sanigoria* (defense) of Israel, they paskened that Am Yisroel deserves the coming of Moshiach.

“Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu served as dayan on this beis din of Ahavas Yisroel, for who was more fitting than he to speak in defense of Israel? This beis din convened nearly every year and held serious talks, and they would pasken again and again that Am Yisroel is ready for Geula.

“The night of the funeral, a few

hours after we heard the sad news, Chacham Yeshua Ben Shoshan went to the Eliyahu family and told them about this. He had a request: that the rav be buried with the rulings that the beis din had decreed. The family agreed and whoever watched closely at the funeral would have seen that there was a folder packed with papers among the shrouds. It was that folder in which the dayanim filed their discussions and piskei din that the Geula must come.

“‘Take it with you and show the Heavenly Court our reasoning down below,’ requested Chacham Yeshua. ‘Tell them that Am Yisroel, which went through all the decrees of the gentiles aimed at uprooting the Jewish faith and still remained Jewish, deserves the Geula.’”

AN AWESOME SIMCHAS TORAH

By Menachem Ziegelboim

*Chassidim who were present spoke of that Friday afternoon Simchas Torah farbrengen with awe. 101 years have passed but the events and words spoken then remain as compelling as ever. * Simchas Torah in Lubavitch, 5670/1909.*

Numerous Chassidim crowded in at the Simchas Torah farbrengen with the Rebbe Rashab. Around the table sat twenty to thirty men of distinction and around them crowded the T'mimim and the Chassidim. The small hall could not contain all the people who had come for Yom Tov.

Friday, Simchas Torah: Silence fell upon the room and the Rebbe entered. Due to renovations done at that time, the Rebbe's place was set up near the door of his father's room. That seemed to be the reason why, from the very beginning, the Rebbe spoke about his father, the Rebbe Maharash.

The Rebbe took mashke frequently, which was not his usual practice, and each time he mentioned his father he cried. "I was a boy before my bar mitzva," said the Chassid, R' Folye Kahn. "I stood high up on the bima on the

side of the hall and I can still picture the scene of the Rebbe crying loudly. To me it was both moving and surprising."

"Where you there at the histalkus (on 13 Tishrei, 1882) of my father?" asked the Rebbe of the mashpia, R' Shmuel Gronem. When the latter said no, the Rebbe said, "Here, right here, is where they did the tahara."

The atmosphere was intense at this unusual farbrengen in which there were many "giluyim" (revelations). All crowded closer in order to hear. Due to the pushing, many tables and benches were broken.

The Rebbe said very emotionally, "His Simchas Torah ... his Yus-Tes Kislev ... Those who saw the revelation of the Primordial Light were myself, R' Manish, Gronem and maybe Moshe" – referring to the Rebbe's chozer who was very

mekushar to him.

The Rebbe said loudly and with great emotion, "I am my father's servant. I am my father's Chassid. Elokus wants to speak. It makes no difference through whom other than that he be a vessel for it."

Saying this, he burst into tears and could not calm down.

The wealthy Chassid, R' Manish Monisson suddenly felt very weak due to the crowding and heat. A few Chassidim rushed to bring him cold water from the room where Rebbetzin Rivka, the wife of the Rebbe Maharash, and Rebbetzin Shterna Sara, the Rebbe's wife, sat.

When they saw the pushing and crowding they were taken aback and they hurried to the door of the hall to see what was going on. When Rebbetzin Shterna Sara saw that the Rebbe was highly emotional she asked him not to drink anymore and said he should stop the farbrengen and rest a bit. The Rebbe responded in surprise, "You?"

The Rebbetzin clapped her hands in distress, "You don't feel well, go rest."

But the Rebbe continued to farbreng, his face shining and yet with an expression of seriousness and pain.

"What? It's not good for me? It's good for me. If only it was this good for my son."

A few minutes later his mother came in. Apparently, her daughter-in-law had asked her to speak to her son so he would stop the farbrengen since she knew that his health was not good.

The moment his mother walked in, he rose from his seat in her honor, and all the Chassidim did likewise. It was amazing that he observed her entering despite his sitting with his back to the door that she entered from.

His concerned mother approached him and also pleaded with him to finish the farbrengen because he was overwrought but the

Rebbe loudly replied, "Mama, I am your son until the coming of Moshiach. I am Father's son, his Chassid and servant. I am my father's servant until the coming of Moshiach."

After a moment's thought he added emotionally, "My hair fell out because of three things: toiling over Tanya and Imrei Bina and over Father's passing."

Then he said a line that made them quake, "Elokus desires to speak and there is through whom – open your mouth and I will fill it."

Since it was Friday afternoon, the Rebbe was unwilling to eat anything after the time for Kiddush but he continued to drink a lot of mashke. Apparently, the large amounts of mashke, the heat and sweat all combined to adversely

When Rebbetzin Shterna Sara saw that the Rebbe was highly emotional she asked him not to drink anymore and said he should stop the farbrengen and rest a bit. The Rebbe responded in surprise, "You?"

affect his health. Some of the Chassidim standing nearby turned to the masses and asked them to move back to enable fresh air to get in, but due to the great crowding this was impossible.

Suddenly the Rebbe rose and said, "Don't let me leave until I say a sicha and maamer; a sicha of how Tomchei T'mimim ought to be and a maamer ..."

Then he went out to the back room to rest a little.

The Chassidim waited for hours until midnight Friday night for they assumed the Rebbe would return, but his poor health did not enable him to.

That Simchas Torah farbrengen was remembered for years to come for the many giluyim revealed there.



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THE GIVE AND TAKE OF SHLICHUS

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Shliach, Beit Shaan

In the HaYom Yom, the Rebbe writes, “When you give the dalet minim after saying a bracha on them, say explicitly that it is a gift that is meant to be returned, especially on the first day of Yom Tov, and this is a benefit to both the giver and the recipient.” The recipient has to hear this for he needs to consider how his mitzvah of taking depends on this one who is giving. Meanwhile the giver needs to know that when he gives properly, he gains too. Shluchim of the Rebbe share stories about giving and taking that benefit all.

PAYBACK

There was a man who had a door factory in Kiryat Ata. After many successful years, the business fell on hard times and was on the verge of bankruptcy. Rabbi Chaim Shlomo Diskin

heard about it. He is not the type to allow one of his mekuravim to fall and so he went to the factory, met the owner and gave him a large amount of money, enough to save the business. The owner was touched by this and committed to setting aside maaser

of his profits and giving it to the Chabad house.

The business got back on its feet and started earning money again. At the end of the first month the owner went to the Chabad house with a thick envelope which he handed to R' Diskin. “This is \$6000 of maaser from the first month,” he said emotionally. “With Hashem’s help I will come to you every month.”

Since then, he brings an envelope to the Chabad house every month. Every month he would write a thank you letter to the Rebbe for the past brachos and with a request for a bracha for the next month.

Then came Gimmel Tammuz, 5754. A brokenhearted R' Diskin, closeted himself in his room and refused to talk to anyone. His family tried to console him, mekuravim tried to talk to him, but he felt he just could not ...

Then came the factory owner with his monthly envelope. He went to R' Diskin’s room, handed him the envelope and sat down to write his letter to the Rebbe as he did every month. When he noticed R' Diskin’s hesitation he said, “Why are you unsure? The Rebbe is chai v’kayam. We will send the fax and the Rebbe will give a bracha.”

Ans so the wheel had turned and it was this very mekurav who put R' Diskin back into the swing of things.

100 TIMES MORE

Rabbi Moshe Akselrod, shliach in Atlit, relates:

I once went fundraising among businessmen in New York. I visited an old friend, a diamond dealer, who told me the following story.

“A Jewish businessman who used to work in this building

recently left for somewhere else. A week ago someone from Yerushalayim came looking for him, and I told him he left. The man from Yerushalayim said, 'What a pity. Every year he gives an \$18 donation to our yeshiva.' I told him not to worry and that I would give his yeshiva \$36.

"Not ten minutes went by and the phone rang. It was a friend of mine who asked me whether I had a certain diamond for sale. I asked him to wait and I called a friend who had the stone he wanted. The diamond and money exchanged hands and I made a profit of \$3600 as the go-between.

"You see? I gave \$36 and in less than ten minutes I earned 100 times more."

Both the giver and recipient benefited.

SURPRISE CHANGE IN ATTITUDE

In Ohr Yehuda there is wonderful collaboration between the Rebbe's shliach, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Friedman and the rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Sholom Ber Hendel. Six years ago, The town gave them a small pre-fab structure to serve as a shul. Over time, many people joined for davening and shiurim and it became necessary to expand their space.

For some reason the two rabbis went ahead and expanded the building without a permit from the city. Soon thereafter, they began receiving warning notices until they finally received a demolition order to be carried out by Tisha B'Av.

The matter ended up in court, where a battle ensued between the shluchim and the town's lawyers. Heading the prosecution was a well-known lawyer who was determined to see the order

YOU BOUGHT THE HA'YOM YOM – I WROTE IT

Recently, I have been trying to find stories connected to entries in the HaYom Yom of that week. In connection with that, I'd like to tell the following story which I heard from Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Chitrik, shliach and principal of Beis Chana in Tzfas.

Forty years ago, R' Mottel Kozliner a"h received a visa to leave Russia and he went to see the Rebbe as soon as he possibly could. While in Crown Heights, he visited Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Chitrik (the father of the one telling this story), an old friend of his who left Russia about twenty years earlier and moved to Crown Heights. Since it was Sukkos, R' Chitrik invited him into his sukkah along with another friend from Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Berel Kesselman.

The three friends sat and fulfilled the mitzva of eating in the sukkah. At the end of the meal, R' Chitrik honored R' Kozliner with the zimun. R' Mottel wanted a cup of wine in honor of the bentching. R' Chitrik said it was not customary to do so when there weren't ten men bentching. R' Mottel was very surprised. "But it says in the HaYom Yom (14 Kislev) that you say the Birkas HaMazon over a kos shel bracha even without ten."

The others were amazed that a Chassid who had just left Russia was able to quote from the HaYom Yom so readily. R' Mottel modestly said that the difference between himself and American Chassidim like themselves was that when the HaYom Yom was published (in 5703), the Chassidim in America and all over the world simply went to the store and bought a copy, but in Russia they could not buy it anywhere.

One day they heard that in a certain city there was a single copy of the new book written by the Rebbe Rayatz's son-in-law. R' Mottel dropped everything, got on a train and traveled two entire days until he arrived in that city. Then for two days he sat and copied the entire book into a notebook he had brought with him and then he traveled for another two days back home. "That is why I remember every word of the book," he concluded, "because I wrote it."

Hearing that in a certain city, there was a single copy of the new book the Rayatz's son-in-law had written, R' Motel dropped everything for a week to travel there by train and transcribe the HaYom Yom into a notebook. "That's why I remember every word."

carried out as written. He refused to discuss a compromise or a postponement of the demolition. A final date was set for the demolition, and the police put

together a plan to ensure its speedy and quiet implementation.

It was only in the end that the lawyer agreed to meet with the shluchim. He surprised the two of

them when he began speaking highly of Chabad and declared that he wouldn't harm the Chabad shul.

After that meeting the city dropped its plans for demolition. Not only that but it recently allotted a spacious piece of land in the center of the neighborhood for a new Chabad shul.

PERSONAL RAV

No discussion of "giving" and "receiving" is complete without mention of individual missions the Rebbe sends his Chassidim on. The Rebbe never remains a creditor. Whoever devotes himself to the Rebbe's inyanim merits special brachos. There is a "benefit" for the giver and the recipient. The Rebbe "pays" abundantly, materially and spiritually.

I think every shliach has examples to illustrate this point. When he devotes himself and works hard to carry out the Rebbe's horaos, he immediately sees the Rebbe's bracha accompanying him in a supernatural way.

That's what happened in this story:

Rabbi Shmuel Rainitz is a shliach in Beit Shaan for seven years now. Every day he goes to the industrial and business area, meets Jews, put t'fillin on with some of them, learns with others, takes mezuzos to be checked, registers children for Chabad camps, etc.

A few days ago I spoke to him about efforts to deepen ties with these people so that these visits of a few minutes could turn into a real personal connection so people would feel comfortable asking him any Jewish question they had.

Two days later, R' Rainitz told me the following story. In the western part of the industrial sector there is a mechanic who he has been trying to be mekarev for six years without success. The man is always "busy" and he refuses to put on t'fillin. That day something interesting happened. When he walked in holding a shofar, the man agreed to stop and listen and he looked visibly moved. Then he happily agreed to put on t'fillin. A moment before R' Rainitz left, he said, "Rav Shmuel, I want you to be my personal rav. I will take down your phone number and whenever I have a question I will call you and ask you. If you agree, that is ..."

PUT ON YOUR GARTEL, I HAVE AN ANSWER FROM THE REBBE FOR YOU

Rabbi Avrohom Dunin, shliach in yishuvei Taanach relates:

About 40 or 50 years ago, Chabad Chassidim worked hard starting schools for the Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchok. Every Chabad yungerman tried to pass his teaching qualifications so he

could be a teacher in the Reshet schools. At first, schools were opened in the center of the country – Yaffo, Rechovot, Lud etc. – and then schools also opened in more distant places such as Kiryat Gat, Tivon etc.

One day, a farbrengen was held in the home of the director of the Reshet, Rabbi Dovid Chanzin a"h. R' Chanzin announced a plan to open two new schools far away in Taanach in the north and moshav Brosh in the south. Now who was going to jump in and venture forth to those distant places? Before the farbrengen ended, the teachers wrote a letter to the Rebbe that they were willing to go anywhere the Rebbe directed them.

Several days later, an answer arrived. The Rebbe appointed R' Avrohom Pariz to travel to Kiryat Gat to inform certain teachers that they were chosen to go to Brosh and Taanach.

R' Pariz met with the teachers and told them, "Put on a gartel because I have a shlichus from the Rebbe to tell you." Then he read the answer which said, in part, **whoever devotes himself to the Reshet will be blessed, also in personal matters, materially and spiritually.**

R' Dunin concludes by saying that dozens of years have passed since then and boruch Hashem all those teachers were blessed by the Rebbe, materially and spiritually, till this day.



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BELIEVERS, THE CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS

By Aryeh Gotfryd, PhD

If you were to stand outside a church on a Sunday and ask the people there if they believe in G-d, what would they answer? “Of course,” “Halleluka,” “Why else would I be here?”

And if you were to ask people attending a mosque on a Friday if they believe in G-d what would they be likely to say? “Obviously,” “G-d is great!” “Absolutely.”

And if you were to stand outside a synagogue on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year on the Jewish calendar, and ask someone walking in the same question, what kind of responses do you think you would get? “What do you think I am, a philosopher?”

“So if you don’t believe in G-d, what are you doing here?”

“It’s Yom Kippur, where else should I be?”

Someone once defined a Jew as someone who believes without knowing it. If that is true, it would explain a lot of things. For example, why is it that throughout history so many non-practicing and even irreligious Jews chose to suffer death rather than convert to another religion? Subliminal faith could account for that.

But how did we get that way? Is

it nature or nurture? It’s hard to pin this “Got G-d” gut feeling on education or indoctrination when the atheists, agnostics, skeptics and secular among us, including even those who grew up that way, wake up when the pressure is on to sacrifice their lives for their faith.

Where do they get that conviction? For those who believe in a soul, the answer is ready at hand. The Jews are “believers, the children of believers.” Via our Jewish souls we have inherited our faith. It may be eclipsed under normal circumstances but when challenged to the hilt, it won’t back down.

On the other hand, those skeptics who doubt the existence of the soul may have a somewhat harder time accounting for such behavior. What’s driving the urge to connect to G-d at all costs?

Enter the scientists. As usual these days, science provides a bridge between secular skepticism and traditional faith, as has been prophesied in kabbala for our very times. Increasingly, scientific studies have been coming to the conclusion that people, in general, are hard wired to believe in G-d. In other words, faith is innate.

Dr Justin Barrett, a senior

researcher at the University of Oxford’s Centre for Anthropology and Mind, claims that children have a predisposition to believe in a supreme being because they assume that everything in the world was created with a purpose. He says that young children have faith even when they have not been taught about it by family or at school, and argues that even those raised alone on a desert island would come to believe in G-d.

In one study, six and seven-year-olds who were asked why the first bird existed replied “to make nice music” and “because it makes the world look nice”.

Another experiment on 12-month-old babies suggested that they were surprised by a film in which a rolling ball apparently created a neat stack of blocks from a disordered heap. Dr Barrett said there is evidence that even by the age of four, children understand that although some objects are made by humans, the natural world is different.

He added that this means children are more likely to believe in creationism rather than evolution, despite what they may be told by parents or teachers. Dr Barrett claimed anthropologists have found that in some cultures children believe in G-d even when religious teachings are withheld from them.

“Children’s normally and naturally developing minds make them prone to believe in divine creation and intelligent design. In contrast, evolution is unnatural for human minds; relatively difficult to believe.”

So here we have it. Faith is natural to the human condition from childhood. So why is it that as adults, so many of us drift away from it? I think that among the reasons for this, intelligence must rank highly.

The very same brain that naturally assumes that there is a

cause and purpose for everything can also be indoctrinated into the very opposite notion – that things can simply exist uncaused and order itself is one of those things. Order, some clever adult might say, simply exists and no ordering causal principle needs to be evoked.

Never mind that the logic here is elusive (if there is any here at all). The point is that only a clever adult brain could come up with such a thesis – that abandoning cause-and-effect reasoning makes more sense than keeping it.

Tradition has it that when the Almighty intervened in ancient times to take the Jews out of Egypt, it was the children who recognized Him first. In our times once again redemption is in the air, and once again it's time for the sophisticated adult minds to take note of the children and the elegance of their logic: That there is purpose and meaning to everything that happens and we are the focus of the One Above's plan.

To some, it may look too good to be true, but is the alternative really

better – to say that reality must be without purpose? The scientific method, all things being equal, seeks the simplest explanation to cover the facts and that simplest explanation is G-d. The only complexity that arises from that fact is rising to the occasion to accept it. There was a time when faith needed pressure to emerge. Today, it's enough that reason gives permission to believe. After all, we are hard wired for faith, being believers, and children of believers.

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EDUCATOR PAR EXCELLANCE

In a lecture given at a Yom Iyun for women of Gush Katif that took place in Kfar Chabad, renowned educator, Mrs. Rochel Weissman offers important chinuch lessons that we can learn from a number of stories with the Rebbe MH”M.

CHINUCH IS MY BUSINESS

A big businessman, before closing any deal, would go to the Rebbe Rayatz to consult with him and gain his approval. He did not make a move without the Rebbe’s bracha. One of the times that he asked the Rebbe for advice concerning a big deal, when the Rebbe finished what he had to say and the man was about to leave, the Rebbe suddenly asked him, “How are your children?” (He had a son and a daughter.)

The man said that all was fine. The Rebbe asked, “Where do they learn?”

The man began to feel uncomfortable and he shrugged and said, “In public school.”

The Rebbe raised an eyebrow and commented, “It would be very worthwhile if they switched to a Jewish school.”

The man listened, paused for a moment and then said, “I hear. I’ll

think about it.”

The Rebbe, who read his body language, said, “It’s an amazing thing. I never had anything to do with the lumber business and I have no understanding of it, and still you listen to me and accept whatever I say. Yet, when it comes to chinuch which is ‘my business and the business of my ancestors’ you are skeptical?! Carry out my instructions in this matter, at least as much as you do in the lumber business.”

The dream of every parent is that when they ask their children to go to sleep that they say, “Good night” and do just that. If there are guests in the house to witness it, the parent’s heart would swell even more for there is no greater nachas. I told them what to do and ... they did it!

Well, not only do we have this dream but Hashem says about korbanos, “a pleasing scent, a fire offering to Hashem” which Rashi explains as “nachas ruach before Me

in bringing sacrifices that I said something and My will was done.” For Hashem, too, the greatest nachas is when He says something and it is done. We all pray for this kind of nachas.

HOW CAN WE GET A CHILD TO LISTEN?

Before we get to answers, let us define the concept of “parental authority” which refers to a parent giving an instruction which is carried out. The mother tells the child, “Shut the computer and go do your homework” and instead of shutting it the child says, “Just another minute ...” She got words, not action.

Authority is not measured so much in how things are said but more in how the person feels that the instruction needs to be carried out. The child considers a parent an authority when they reckon with what they are told. When you ask him to clean his room or to do





anything else, and you are an authority figure whose word is of the highest import, that is what will get a child to do as he is told.

We are not interested in the child listening because he is afraid he will be punished, he will get a prize or you will raise your voice. The only reason to listen should be because you said something. For a child that should be reason enough.

HOW CAN WE BE IMPORTANT FIGURES TO OUR CHILDREN?

In order to be an important figure we have to give our child his dignity and constantly convey to him that he exists and is important. Here are three examples from the Rebbe:

STORY #1

A child from northern Israel wrote a letter to the Rebbe in the 80's and said that he included some dirt from Eretz Yisroel as a gift.

After some deliberation, since it was known that the Rebbe opened all his mail and the dirt could fall all over his desk, the parents still decided to send it as is. The child received a personal response in which the Rebbe thanked him for the gift.

What can we learn from the Rebbe's answer?

The first lesson is from the fact that the Rebbe sent a response. Second, the Rebbe did not just thank him for the dirt but elevated the simple dirt and the giver of the gift. A child who received an answer like this from the Rebbe – wherever the Rebbe would send him, whatever the Rebbe would tell him, even if it would be shlichus to the ends of the world – he would do it. I am important to the Rebbe and therefore the Rebbe is important to me.

STORY #2

In the autumn, when the Rebbe walked home from 770, he saw a group of children playing outside. Since it was chilly he went over to each child and asked him to go inside the beis midrash and put on a coat.

The Rebbe didn't address the group: "Children, go inside and put on coats," but spoke to each one individually. We often speak to our children as a group, "Children, bath time," or "Come in for supper," but did you ever consider how special it would feel to a child if you called him or her by name and personally asked them to do what you wanted them to do?

The Rebbe teaches us: give the child a sense of his own place in the world, treat him with dignity, and give him the time he deserves. A child like this realizes he is important and consequently, his actions are, too, and it's obvious to him why it's important to his father that he bentch from a Siddur. A child says to his mother, "Come and

see what I made out of the Lego," and she says, "In a little while," and by the time she goes to take a look (if she ever does) the tower is no longer standing ... But if she drops everything and goes to take a look and she is impressed and she says something to her child, that will do so much for him! His eyes will sparkle and he will give a big smile and he will understand why it matters to her that he say a bracha or talk nicely because whatever he does is important to her.

STORY #3

A Jew from Texas remembers that when he was in first grade, he and his friends decided to start a gemach for writing implements. Little Chaim'ke told his father how they were planning on raising money for the gemach. The father could have given him two dollars to buy pencils but the child told him they were planning on doing what the adults do: "We are going to put on a performance and all the parents will come and buy tickets and we will use the money to buy pencils." The father nearly fired off a rejoinder that it would be easier to give him the two dollars and not show up to a play, but he kept quiet.

The performance took place on Motzai Shabbos. That Shabbos morning the mailman knocked at the door and said he had a registered letter. It was an express letter from the Lubavitcher Rebbe and was addressed to six year old Chaim.

They all asked Chaim, "Why did the Rebbe send you an express letter?!"

He replied simply, "We do what you do; when you make a dinner, you write to the Rebbe. I also wrote to the Rebbe for a bracha."

The Rebbe gave him a bracha that it should be very successful. In fact, instead of the \$18 they hoped to raise, they raised \$19!

My father hugged me and with tears in his eyes he said, 'I have been with you for over 12 years and never found the opportunity to tell you that you give me nachas. The Rebbe was with you for two minutes and he found the opportunity to tell you that you are a good boy and that you give him nachas, that you are a boy who can learn and give him nachas in your learning!'

The Rebbe bothered to tell his secretary to send the letter by express mail since time was short and it was very important. The children were planning something and one of them had written to him about it and he had to get his answer in time. Obviously, children who grow up with such close attention have their way paved for them, and when a parent asks them for something it will be done without opposition.

FAITH IN THE CHILD

Another example from the Rebbe:

A child who is not a Lubavitcher lived in a neighborhood near the Rebbe at a time when you could still have yechidus. The father told his son, "I arranged for yechidus with the Rebbe, which means to go to the Rebbe's room and the Rebbe talks to you personally. No one else is there, not even the secretary."

The child relates: "The yechidus took place late at night and I wasn't surprised that of all the children my father picked me to come along. I knew he didn't have much nachas from me. Not a week went by that I started and ended in peace. Any problem in school that arose –

somehow, I was involved. I wasn't learning and my father was very worried. I was 13 and what would become of me? So my father hoped that the Rebbe would succeed where the parents and all the teachers had not.

"My father asked me to prepare a Mishna or Gemara because the Rebbe would surely ask me where I learned and what I was learning. 'At least learn during these two weeks,' he said. I sat down to learn and did everything but learn. I was hungry, then thirsty, it was too warm ... My father would walk past me and see me with an open book and relax, but as soon as he turned around I stopped. Maybe if he knew that all I knew was one Mishna he wouldn't have taken me in the end, but he assumed I had learned many Mishnayos.

"We went to the yechidus. The Rebbe spoke to my father and then it was my turn. 'What is your name?' Suddenly my father tensed up. The Rebbe asked me where I learned and what Mishna we were up to. My father braced himself and the Rebbe asked, 'Perhaps you can tell me what the view of the "Tanna Kama" is, on a Mishna I had learned. My father turned white and I took a deep breath and answered

the Rebbe. The Rebbe had asked me about the only Mishna I knew!

"The Rebbe smiled warmly. He opened the drawer and took out two dollars and said, 'One dollar is for you and the other dollar is for the nachas you gave me with your learning.' A few minutes later we left and my father hugged me and with tears in his eyes he said, 'I have been with you for over 12 years and never found the opportunity to tell you that you give me nachas. The Rebbe was with you for two minutes and he found the opportunity to tell you that you are a good boy and that you give him nachas, that you are a boy who can learn and give him nachas in your learning!'"

Of course we are not the Rebbe and we would be unable to hit upon precisely the Mishna that the child knows, but we can find those moments when the child is behaving nicely and we can convey this important message: "You are a good boy and I believe in you." It could be that at this point in time he is not learning and not open to learning; maybe his friends are an influence, but you have to find the opportunity to tell him, "I am happy with you and proud to be your father (or mother)."

That is part of how you establish authority. When I tell a child that I believe he is capable, he will be so. Harsh words like, "You are an embarrassment to the family," and "I don't deserve this," negate a child's very being. "I was so embarrassed when the teacher said this is what you did." The parent is focusing on self and the child is peripheral. With lines like these you convey the message that you don't believe in him; it's a confusing message that questions his very existence.

The child wants us to be on his side. When a child loses a key and you automatically say, "I knew it," the child no longer hears you because at the moment when he is

so disappointed in himself. If that is what you tell him when he is upset in such a case, then you are only patting yourself on the back but to him, it's a slap.

But if instead you said, "You must have felt terrible when you lost the key," you are looking at things from his perspective. He will realize he has someone there who understands him, someone he can talk to.

Faith in the child also needs to be expressed in the idea that we **believe in what we are teaching.**

A 4 year old Yerushalmi girl was sick and her parents had to find a treatment in America. The family moved to a basement apartment near an American hospital. The parents were busy and the children were sent to school. Life went on. The mother wasn't always home and when the children came back from school they sometimes ate at a neighbor's. They also got clothing from a neighbor.

The Rebbe gave out dollars for tz'daka every Sunday along with a bracha. People would usually exchange the Rebbe's dollar for another one and give that other one to tz'daka. The child related:

"One Sunday I went with my mother to the Rebbe for dollars. On the way we passed a pizza store. I wanted pizza but my mother didn't have the money for it. I kept quiet.

"We got on line. The Rebbe gave my mother a dollar and a bracha for a refua shleima and my mother felt that this gave her the strength for another difficult week ahead. Then I received a dollar and continued walking. I held the dollar and said, I guess rather loudly, 'Now I have money for pizza.' Someone called out to me to come back. My mother didn't understand why the Rebbe was calling us. He bent over to me and pointed at the dollar and said, 'This dollar is for tz'daka and (taking out another dollar) this dollar is for pizza.'

We constantly remember that we have to be mechanech our children and it's true, chinuch guidelines are tremendously important, but do we remember to be mechanech with warmth and love like the Rebbe showed us?

"That's what happened every week! Each time we passed by the Rebbe I received two dollars, one for tz'daka and one for pizza."

She told this story when she was in seminary at a farbrengen with friends and her face lit up. She had gotten money from the Rebbe for pizza!

The Rebbe showed her he cared about her. He was saying: It's important to me that you eat pizza. It's not just your chinuch that is important to me. I hear what you need. At the same time, it's important to teach values – this dollar is for tz'daka.

A 4 year old doesn't understand all this. Any rav would have said that she could use the dollar to buy pizza since everything they had was from tz'daka anyway, but the Rebbe was concerned about her chinuch. In another twenty years, if she would sit down with her friends and say, "I got a dollar from the Rebbe and instead of giving it to tz'daka, I bought pizza with it," we would have a problem. The Rebbe didn't compromise, not even for a child whose parents are not that involved with her chinuch because they are preoccupied with other things.

To the Rebbe, this child needs to grow properly and the values that she needs to grow up with have to be absolute. This is the way to be mechanech her because otherwise, she herself will have regrets! So the Rebbe brought her back to the line,

clarified matters for her and then showered her with warmth and love. If the Rebbe had asked her to come back and then said, "Little girl, this dollar is for tz'daka, not for pizza," what would have happened? She would always remember that the Rebbe corrected her. She would be offended.

We constantly remember that we have to be mechanech our children and it's true, chinuch guidelines are tremendously important, but do we remember to be mechanech with warmth and love like the Rebbe showed us?

CHINUCH – AN INVESTMENT

Is there such a thing as remote control chinuch? Imagine sitting in an armchair and pressing buttons for bath, straightening children's room ... and the darling little ones do what they're supposed to do. Could this be invented? The Rebbe showed us that it's not so simple.

(We *can* influence our children by remote control when we sit and think about them every night or every day for half an hour without their knowledge, and also by reciting the chapters of T'hillim that correspond to their ages. Things can be done to influence them, such as supporting those who learn Torah. Playing Chassidische music can affect them, even when they're asleep.)

When I tell a child that I believe he is capable, he will be so. Harsh words like, “You are an embarrassment to the family,” and “I don’t deserve this,” negate a child’s very being. With lines like these you convey the message that you don’t believe in him.

Practically speaking, we cannot sit there and press buttons. When it comes to chinuch you must invest effort! Just providing advice to your children is not chinuch. The child might do what you say because you are bigger, but that’s superficial obedience. In order for chinuch to penetrate deeply it takes work.

A girl went to the Rebbe for dollars. She wasn’t from a Chassidishe home but she had heard about “dollars” and was curious. The Rebbe gave her a dollar and said, “The next time, when you come dressed modestly, I will give you two dollars.” Meaning, you will make the effort and I will pay you back. I don’t just say – it’s not right to come that way to the Rebbe. Rather, you make the effort and I’ll do my part.

At home they discussed it and debated whether the Rebbe would remember or not. Her mother said

that there was no way in the world that he would remember. The child said, “Mommy, he is a tzaddik, come and see.”

The mother agreed to get her modest clothing and said she would go along with her. They went and stood on line. Before it was their turn the mother left the line and stood off to the side in order to watch. The Rebbe gave her daughter a dollar and she continued walking. Then the Rebbe asked for her to come back and he said, “What about our agreement? I thought you would remind me but since you did not remind me, I will remind you!” And he took another dollar and gave it to her and took a third dollar and said, “This is for your mother.”

In addition to the Rebbe acknowledging, loving and knowing, this is greatness. The Rebbe wanted progress from her and so he took it upon himself to remind her and give

her another dollar.

At kos shel bracha, a little girl, the daughter of Chazan Tzatzkes who would come regularly and sing into a microphone while the Rebbe poured wine for each person, began to sing next to her father along with the crowd. It wasn’t appropriate for her to sing when 770 was full of men. The Rebbe was busy but he took the time to quietly point this out to the secretary and to make sure he wouldn’t tell her in a way that would be insulting. He was instructed to tell her in a positive way that she should clap. Then the Rebbe began clapping vigorously (you can watch it on *Livot et Malkein*) and the entire shul clapped along with her.

In summary, it should be chinuch with warmth. Authority is built on faith in the child and faith in the values we are imparting.

Don’t make comparisons between your children! Ask of each child what is proper to ask of him or her at this time and with Hashem’s help, the child will progress and you will be able to ask for more.

Don’t get preoccupied with what is not good but focus on the good, on what can be done so that the child does things happily.

May we merit the building of our personal and collective Beis HaMikdash speedily in our day.

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BAAL SHEMSKE TALK IN THE REBBE'S SUKKAH

Prepared for publication by N. Sofer

In memory of his son R' Matisyahu Aryeh Weingarten H"yd

In honor of Sukkos we present part of a farbrengen of the Rebbe which he said during the lifetime of his father-in-law, at the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva of 5707/1946. Notes of the farbrengen were taken from the archives of R' Avrohom Weingarten.

In this sicha the Rebbe tells how the Rebbe Rayatz revealed *Balshemske reid* that on Shabbos Chol HaMoed we don't say *Shalom Aleichem* on Friday night or *V'yitten lecha* on Motzaei Shabbos. This is what was printed in the first edition (Kehos 5703) of the HaYom Yom for 19 Nissan:

"Shalom Aleichem, Eishes Chayil, Mizmor L'Dovid, Da Hi Seudasa, V'yitten Lecha – all this **is not said** on Shabbos Chol HaMoed and Shabbos Yom Tov."

But in the next edition (Kehos 5717) the Rebbe amended this and instead of the words "is not said" it says, "**is recited quietly.**"

This is somewhat amazing, for just as the instruction not to say them was suddenly revealed in a manner of "*Balshemske reid*," so too, the instruction to say them quietly was revealed suddenly (in 5717) in a manner of "*Balshemske reid*."

Part of what was said by
Ramash [the Rebbe MH"m] at a
Simchas Beis HaShoeiva
farbrengen on Motzaei Shabbos
Chol HaMoed, 5707/1946 – I
wrote down just a little of what he
said and the stories he told besides

the divrei Torah

HOW A PNIMI SITS IN A MAKIF

The Rebbe, my father-in-law,
said:

The Alter Rebbe yearned to spend Sukkos with the Rav HaMaggid, saying: I want to see an interesting thing – how a p'nimi like the Rav HaMaggid sits within a makif (the sukkah).

DEMONS SWARM IN A RUIN

A Chassid went to the Tzemach Tzedek and complained that he had distracting thoughts. The Tzemach Tzedek told him: Demons swarm in an abandoned ruin.

R' MORDECHAI HORODOKER WITH R' MOTTEL OF CHERNOBYL

The Chassid, R' Mordechai of Horodok was a mashpia in Horodok and he was the teacher of the Chassid, R' Shmuel Ber of Borisov.

One time, R' Mottel of Chernobyl went to Horodok. He was beloved by the (Chabad) Chassidim since the Alter Rebbe praised him highly and also because the Alter Rebbe was his *mechutan* (relative by marriage, because his son R' Yaakov Yisroel was married to the daughter of the Mitteler Rebbe).

Despite that, R' Mordechai of Horodok, being a Chabad Chassid, a real "Chabadnik," got into a debate with R' Mottel of Chernobyl.

Their debate was that R' Mordechai of Horodok said that everything needs a *birur* while R' Mottel of Chernobyl contended that there are things that do not need a *birur*. As they argued they couched their words in obscure terms.

Afterwards they spoke about whether Elokus needs *birur* and R' Mordechai of Horodok said even Elokus hidden and garbed within the worlds needs a *birur*, as Chazal say on the *pasuk*, “that Hashem made to do” – “to do, to rectify.”

(Ramash concluded) This is what the Rebbe, my father-in-law explained in the *maamer* on the verse, “*B'Reishis bara Elokim*,” that the word “*bara*” (created) is from the same root as “*brius*” – health, that we need to make the name of Elokim healthy!

THE ROGOTCHOVER WOULD NOT PAY TAXES THAT WERE NOT ACCORDING TO TORAH

Those whose conduct is completely according to Torah – it works for them materially, too. (The Rebbe spoke about this and then told a story about it). When the Rogatchover Gaon was in Petersburg, he was sent two bills of taxes to pay.

He asked his grandson to read what it said in the bills and then he said:

The first bill for taxes is according to the *din* in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat since “*dina d'malchusa dina*” (the law of the government is the law) and it should be paid. The second bill doesn't meet the criteria of “*dina d'malchusa*” and as such, is nothing more than plain theft and it should not be paid.

Once he paskened this according to Torah, it became so *b'gashmius*. The next day he was sent a notice which said he only had to pay the

RABBI YAAKOV TZEMACH: THE CONVERT WHO EXPLAINED THE WRITINGS OF THE ARIZAL

In this *sicha*, the Rebbe tells about a convert who explained the writings of the Arizal. Apparently he is referring to R' Yaakov Tzemach, one of the disciples of Rabbi Chaim Vital.

As is related in the *sicha* of Shabbos Parshas B'Shalach, 5738:

It is explained in the history books that the author of the glosses on the Arizal, simply known as “Tzemach,” came from the Anusim (the forced converts to Catholicism). He had fled from those places where there were decrees against the Jewish people, went back to observing Torah and mitzvos openly, and became one of the disciples of Rabbi Chaim Vital. There are a number of kabbalistic *inyanim* whose only source is these notes, “Tzemach.” Many of his comments are brought in *sifrei Kabbala* and a number of them are referred to in *sifrei Chassidus*.

See about him at length in the encyclopedia *Otzar Yisroel* (Eisenstein) under the entry “Tzemach,” where it says he was born in Lisbon, Portugal to a family of Anusim, and was raised in the Christian religion. When he was about 35, for reasons unknown to us, he went to Salonika, where he converted and began learning Torah and *lashon ha'kodesh*. He studied Talmud, Rambam and Shulchan Aruch for six years and Kabbala for eighteen years.

The writings of the Arizal that were written by Rabbi Chaim Vital and hidden and buried by instruction of Rabbi Chaim Vital were revealed by R' Yaakov Tzemach.



first tax and the second tax was an error.

LEARNING CHASSIDUS – LIKE MEDICINE

Ramash spoke a lot about the necessity of learning Chassidus, saying:

The Rebbe my father-in-law once responded to what many ask: What is Chassidus?

He gave an analogy to a doctor who gives medication for a critically ill patient and the patient insists on knowing what kind of medicine it is and how it is made. When it comes to the study of Chassidus we should not ask what it is, for when you learn it, you will know.

A CONVERT WHO EXPLAINED THE WRITINGS OF THE ARIZAL

One of those who explained the writings of the Arizal was a convert

(from the Anusim) who converted when he was twenty or thirty. When you want to learn p'shat in the writings of the Arizal his commentary is the main one.

THE THIRTEEN WORDS IN THE VERSE "V'HU RACHUM"

We see in the commentary (of the Mittlerer Rebbe) on the words of the pasuk, "*V'Hu rachum yechaper avon v'lo yashchis v'hirba l'hashiv apo v'lo ya'ir kol chamaso*" (And He, the Merciful One, will cleanse sin and not destroy, and He persists to withhold His anger and will not arouse His full rage) that there are thirteen words which correspond to the thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the thirteen *tikkunei dikna*.

The connection between them (between "*v'Hu rachum*" and the thirteen *tikkunei dikna*) is that that mercy goes beyond the letter of the law and the thirteen *tikkunei dikna* are also beyond the letter of the law, i.e. through this (the 13 *tikkunei dikna*) comes that (the atonement of sins – "*v'Hu rachum yechaper avon*").

THE ALTER REBBE ATE THE MAGGID'S PORTION OF FISH

The Rav HaMaggid of Mezritch would distribute the portions of fish to his talmidim at the Shabbos meals and he would take the head of the fish for himself.

One time, the Maggid gave the Alter Rebbe the head of the fish, which was his own portion. The Alter Rebbe realized this and immediately took it and ate it. When the Maggid turned to the Alter Rebbe to ask him to give it back because it wasn't meant for him, he saw that the Alter Rebbe had already finished eating it.

According to the order of hishtalshlus, the Alter Rebbe did not

deserve that piece (and the proof is that Maggid wanted him to give it back) but this was in a way that was above the order of hishtalshlus, and therefore the Alter Rebbe needed this piece which he received and he ate it immediately.

BALSHEMSKE TALK

(Ramash concluded): In general, now is the time which is above the order of hishtalshlus. The Rebbe, my father-in-law told me that on Shabbos Chol HaMoed we don't say *Shalom Aleichem* on Friday night

and we don't say *V'yitten lecha* on Motzaei Shabbos.

I asked the Rebbe my father-in-law: Why and how was this inyan not to say it revealed now? He answered that he, too, had asked this question of his father, the Rebbe Rashab, who replied: "*Balshemske reid*," i.e. these are matters that are beyond the intellect.

Since now is the time that is above the order of hishtalshlus, these inyanim are being revealed now.



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



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THE SCROLL FROM HEAVEN

By Nechama Kreisman

The classic story of the Torah Scroll of Reb Meir of Rothenberg (Maharam). Presented in honor of Simchas Torah.

It was Thursday night and the familiar pain filled R' Meir's heart. There was no chance that the pain would pass or even diminish.

The sound of the roaring waters of the river which passed beneath his window had become the constant background noise, day and night. The light of a pale moon cast a diagonal light through the barred window of the prison cell where he had spent the past few years now. You could not learn in that light. But even when it was daytime R' Meir could not learn from any printed works. The evil government did not allow "luxuries" such as s'farim in his cell, since he would find them comforting.

However, he did not need s'farim. The entire Torah was in his mind and heart, flowing in his bones. He learned unceasingly, by heart. His davening was also by heart, with eyes closed.

He could have been freed long before to rejoin his family, to learn in peace, but he refused. He would not allow the Jewish community to pay the enormous sum of money that King Rudolph demanded as a ransom for the great spiritual leader, the Rishon, Rabbi Meir of

Rothenberg (Maharam). His reasoning was that if they knew that the Jews would capitulate and pay the amount demanded of them, they would conclude that this was a profitable arrangement. They would kidnap rabbanim and imprison them and release them only upon the payment of exorbitant sums of money. He thought it would be better to live out his days in the cell than to open the door to such dastardly acts.

They allowed him to have his tallis and t'fillin and he smuggled in parchment and ink. He thanked Hashem for enabling him to write down his chiddushei Torah that he innovated as he learned by heart.

The one thing that pained him the most from all that he lacked was not having a Torah scroll to read from on Mondays, Thursdays, Shabbos and Yom Tov. He yearned to read from the Torah on these days, if not with a minyan then at least on his own.

That Thursday night he was particularly anguished. Another Thursday had gone by in which he had not read from the Torah. Shabbos was approaching and it did not look as though anything would

change. He so longed to hold a Torah, to hug it with all his might, to kiss it. His emotions stormed within him to the point that he fainted.

In his faint he beheld a vision. It began with a most pleasant fragrance that excited the senses to the point of intoxication, which approached slowly until it filled the entire narrow and damp room with a glowing and perfumed cloud. It was an otherworldly fragrance, one that expanded the mind and heart, and it was overpowering. Its source could only be Gan Eden.

He wanted to continue drawing in the scent but before he could enjoy it to its fullest, a majestic figure appeared in the glowing cloud, misty at first and then taking form. The figure was all in white and carried a Torah scroll.

R' Meir trembled, unable to remove his eyes from the angel that appeared before him. The Torah scroll drew him forward and aroused his yearning once again. Ah, if only he could have that Torah!

The angel's eyes burned and its aura embraced him with a pleasant warmth. Then, from the figure a clear voice could be heard. "My dear son, Meir ben Boruch. Your deep pain rent the heavens and reached the Heavenly Throne. So from the Heavenly Academy they sent me to you to bring this Torah. You should know that this isn't just any Torah scroll. It is one of the thirteen scrolls that Moshe wrote on the day he died."

The angel gently laid the Torah scroll on the table in the corner of the room and disappeared. R' Meir's eyes opened suddenly. The scent still teased his nostrils and suffused his entire being. It seemed to have become absorbed within the walls of the room.

R' Meir immediately glanced over at the table and his heart skipped a beat. There was a Torah scroll there, precisely where he had

envisioned the angel putting it. Was the vision then a reality? The Torah proved that it was.

R' Meir washed his hands and approached the Torah with awe. He hugged it and burst into tears.

All day Friday, R' Meir prepared for Shabbos, sanctifying and purifying himself for the holy day when he would be able to read from the Torah.

He could not sleep on Friday night. He eagerly anticipated the dawn, the moment when he would be able to read from the Torah. With the first light of day he began to daven Shacharis. He had not had a t'filla like this in years, since he had been imprisoned; perhaps never.

When he finished his heartfelt t'filla he approached the Torah and stood there for a long moment, eyes closed in d'veikus. He carefully opened the Torah and was about to unroll it when, to his amazement, he saw that it was open to that week's parsha.

His reading of the Torah that Shabbos lasted a long time. He enunciated each word, every letter, lingering over each one, extending the spiritual pleasure. It was no trifling thing to be reading from a Torah written by Moshe Rabbeinu!

When he finished reading he rolled up the Torah, hugged it and kissed it and placed it on the table, giving it a place of honor. With sacred awe he would occasionally look at the Torah and when he did his heart overflowed with thanks to G-d for seeing his pain and sending him this wondrous gift that revived

his wretched soul.

From that Shabbos onward, R' Meir's soul was calmed. Every Monday and Thursday, every Shabbos and Yom Tov, he would read from the Torah and his soul was sated.



One day, R' Meir had a flash of inspiration. He now had the perfect opportunity to clarify, once and for all, all the slight variances in the sifrei Torah that various communities had. He could definitively determine what, if any, mistakes were the results of the

wanderings in galus and the exigencies of the times that had made people forget the precise tradition for writing a Torah scroll. What could be more reliable than a Torah written by Moshe Rabbeinu?

He had parchment as well as a quill and ink and he managed to make connections amongst the other unfortunates who landed in prison to open supply channels to provide additional material as the need would arise. He could not miss out on this wonderful opportunity! He spent days and nights copying the Torah from Heaven. He labored with great care and awe. His goal was 100% precision, for otherwise what was the point?

The work took a long time and when it was finished, R' Meir had a Torah that was identical to the one he had gotten from Heaven. The size of the columns and rows, the spaces and indentations, the letters and crowns, it was complete. R' Meir reviewed the Torah a number of times, comparing it letter by letter and crown by crown with the original until he was certain that he had done the job right.

He connected the pages of parchment and made a place of honor for it on the table next to the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu.

His joy did not last long. At night he had another vision in which the angel appeared in a cloud, smiling at him in great joy. But this time, to the great sorrow of R' Meir, he approached the table and took the heavenly Torah away. R' Meir cried out and woke up. Once again,

Your deep pain rent the heavens and reached the Heavenly Throne. So from the Heavenly Academy they sent me to you to bring this Torah.

his vision matched the reality for indeed, the Torah he had been given was no longer there.

He remonstrated with himself, "This is because of my sins. It was because I was not allowed to copy the Torah that I had been given from heaven."

Now he wondered: If he was not supposed to copy the Torah, was it permissible for him to use it? Being uncertain he made a *sheilas chalom* (asking for a Heavenly response through a dream). The answer he received calmed his tortured soul.

"You acted properly. The Torah that you wrote is fit to be used by all scribes. They will see it and use it as their prototype."

R' Meir sat in jail for six years, determined not to allow the Jews to pay the ransom fee. The prolonged confinement affected his health and he felt that his end was approaching.

Through various means he obtained sturdy boards that were waterproof and he constructed a box that the Torah scroll could fit in. As an extra precaution he smeared the inside and outside with a waterproofing material. When the box was dry and ready, he took the Torah scroll he had written and hugged it with great emotion. It was hard for him to part with it but, cognizant of the great mission he had yet to conclude, he overcame his personal feelings and placed the scroll gently in the box, like a mother putting her dear infant in its cradle. He secured the box, tied it with rope that he had prepared, and moved the table under the small

window. Grasping the box, he climbed up on the table and placed it on the windowsill. He gazed at the river for a long moment before gingerly pushing his treasure between the bars of the window. Slowly, he lowered the rope until he finally let go.

The box landed in the water with a splash and was immediately carried downstream by the current. R' Meir lay on his pallet, trembling in a mix of relief and sorrow. One thing he was absolutely certain of – he had done the right thing.

He passed away a few days later (in 1293), alone in his final moments with none of his disciples and admirers present.

The box floated in the river, making its way to the shore of the city of Worms, Germany. Freidrich the fisherman put his fishing tackle into his boat, untied the knot of the rope which held it to the pier, and headed for the open water. He was joined by many other fishing boats. They all spread out their nets and waited for their catch with the learned patience of fishermen.

Freidrich noticed an unusual looking "fish" in the distance. It was the well-constructed wooden box with a long rope tied around it.

"A box!" he exclaimed. "Who knows what sort of treasure it might contain!" He steered his boat over to the box and began rowing furiously, anxious to be the first to get to it.

He was not the only one to have noticed the box. Other fishermen had seen it and they also rowed towards it. Freidrich made it to the

box first, yelling a victory cry when he was two meters away. One more pull on his oar and he could reach out and grasp the box. But the box slipped between his fingers. How odd! Then it circumvented another boat that was nearby, and as the astounded fishermen watched, it moved away from them.

"It ran away!" Freidrich cried in disappointment as he tried to follow the box. His fellow fishermen did the same but the box seemed to be playing "tag" with them. As soon as a fisherman was convinced the box was within his grasp, it moved out of reach.

Now the fishermen wanted to grab the mysterious box not only because of the treasure they thought it contained but to meet the challenge. They did no fishing that day. From the moment they laid eyes on the box they devoted all their time and energy to pursuing it. In vain.

As darkness descended the fishermen gave up and made their way dejectedly back to the shore. The story about the mysterious box became the topic of the day. Some called it "the wonder box" while others said it was under a spell. One thing was clear; the next day there would be double the number of people out on the water trying to catch the box.

A large crowd of onlookers stood on the shore the next morning and watched the fruitless chase. They alternately cheered, encouraged, and mocked those out in their boats. Noontime approached and it looked as though it would be yet another day wasted. The fishermen wouldn't catch anything, no fish and no box.

Among the bystanders on shore, a group of Jews stood and watched the proceedings. One of them suggested, "Perhaps the box contains a holy object and that is why it does not want to fall into the hands of the gentiles."

After much deliberation they hired a boat and joined the pursuit of the box. They did not have to exert themselves as the boat was pulled by the current and quickly brought them close to the box, as though the box was drawing them in its direction with an invisible rope.

The gentile fishermen gaped in wonder at the astonishing scene. The boat with the Jews on board touched the box and the box did not move aside! One of the Jews reached out for the box and a big wave lifted it and dropped it right into his hands. The boat then returned to shore, followed by a long line of fishing boats and their curious occupants. The fishermen understood that the box belonged to the Jews and undoubtedly contained a Jewish sacred item. It was agreed that the box would be taken to the shul and opened there, in the presence of the rav of the city.

Tremblingly, they removed the cover and peered inside. They were taken aback to see a Torah scroll lying there in peaceful majesty. "Look!" cried one of the men. "I see words etched into the side of the box!"

The writing said, "This Torah scroll, written by me, Meir of Rothenberg, is a gift to the holy community of Worms. This holy scroll is a precise copy of a Torah written by Moshe Rabbeinu on the day he died and all who approach it will be sanctified. Read from it only twice a year, on Shavuot, Z'man Mattan Toraseinu, and on Simchas Torah, when we conclude and begin the Torah.

Stunned by the gift and the revelation of its origins, the Jews closed the box and placed it reverently in the Aron Kodesh. The story of the wondrous Torah spread throughout the city and all agreed that a grand Hachnasas Seifer Torah should be held as such a special Torah deserved.

Donations and gifts for the



It was an otherworldly fragrance, one that expanded the mind and heart, and it was overpowering. Its source could only be Gan Eden.

special scroll were contributed. On the appointed day, the Jews of Worms held a grand parade. The Torah, wrapped in a special mantle embroidered with fine gold threads and decorated with silver pomegranates and crowned with a resplendent golden crown, was brought to the shul. All the Jews of the city, men women and children, accompanied it. The men danced and sang as the women wiped tears from their eyes.

The Torah was placed in the

Aron Kodesh and the Jews of Worms read from it only on those days that R' Meir had instructed them.

For hundreds of years, this Torah remained in the Aron Kodesh of the shul in Worms. Generations came and went and recounted the story, and then came the years of terror of World War II and the destruction of European Jewry. The Torah disappeared and till this day nobody knows what happened to it.

THE CUP OF WATER WHICH SAVED THE MIKVA

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

*The health department officials, who came for the purpose of preventing the mikva from opening, claimed that the water was unsanitary and people could not be allowed to immerse in such water. When R' Refael heard that, he protested mightily and insisted that the water was perfectly clean. To prove his point, he drew a cup of water from the pit, made a loud bracha, and drank the water... * Another chapter in the memoirs of Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman.*

COMPLICATIONS

The informers who regularly davened at the shul and whose job it was to report anything unusual to the government soon reported about the mikva to the KGB. R' Refael received a summons to the KGB offices where the head of the Jewish department, the accursed Tatar, Aktchurin, met him. He forbade him to continue building and even threatened him with negative repercussions.

R' Refael was unafraid. "I have a permit from the head office for culture and religion in Moscow and

the head of the local department also gave me permission to build," he said confidently, "and you do not have the authority to stop me."

R' Refael knew that the two entities – the department for culture and religion and the Jewish department of the KGB – were at odds with one another. The officials in the department for culture and religion considered themselves officially responsible for all religious matters in the city, while the KGB considered themselves in charge of all aspects of life in the country and thought of themselves as above

official laws.

Aktchurin of the KGB decided to stir up the local populace against R' Refael and he published a nasty and slanderous article in the local paper under the heading, "The charlatan refuses to desist." In the article he wrote about all sorts of sins and crimes that R' Refael supposedly committed, from religious activities to his ties with Zionists (which was completely fabricated but accusations such as these were standard fare and turned the subject into a political criminal) and so on and so forth.

In light of these developments, R' Refael decided to travel to Moscow and consult with his brother Tziyon. His brother was well acquainted with someone named Lifschitz, who was the right hand man of the head of the communist party and the president of Uzbekistan, Mr. Rashidov.

Rashidov was busy all day living a life of indulgence. As for the running of the government, he had Lifschitz do the actual work so that he was the de facto leader. Tziyon called Lifschitz and after briefly telling him about the mikva, Lifschitz promised to help R' Refael. He called the heads of the local committee of the communist party and censured them: "What do you want from this Jew? Leave him alone!"

Because of the besmirching of R'

Refael, the financial future of his son Bechor was adversely affected. He was studying neurology in Moscow at the time and he had just been sent to serve as the head of the department of neurology in Samarkand's central hospital. When he showed up with the written appointment he had been given in Moscow, the hospital administration told him that they couldn't accept someone whose father was reputed to be actively against the government.

He tried to appease them and said his father belonged to the old generation and how could they hold him back because of his father's views? After all his attempts failed, he tried his connections through his uncle Tziyon with Lifschitz. When they met, Bechor began apologizing and saying it wasn't his fault that his father was religious. Lifschitz didn't like this apologetic tone and he responded sharply: "You apologize for your father's actions? You ought to give him a medal for his contribution to the economy of the Soviet Union! In the first years following the Revolution he started a number of Soviet *kolkhozes* and we owe him our gratitude!"

In the end, the KGB prevailed and Bechor had to leave Samarkand.

APOLOGY-NO; VISA-YES

Apparently something started to move. The rebuke that came down from the highest echelons frightened the head of the communist party. He met with R' Refael and wanted to conclude the matter peacefully. R' Refael said: "I am ready for peace but you first have to write a retraction in the paper stating that all the accusations about me were lies." The man would not agree. "You want the communists to say they are sorry and declare that they were mistaken and you were right? That's not happening!"

R' Refael saw things had ended



R' Refael (second from the right) sitting at a Chassidishe farbrengen



R' Refael (on the right) at a family simcha

in a stalemate. Once the KGB had publicly opposed the mikva, they could not allow the mikva to be built, even at the expense of conflict with other government officials, and so he figured he would try benefiting from the situation in another way. He said: "If you are unwilling to apologize, at least grant an exit visa for me and my family. How can I live here after you blackened my name?"

The party head, who wanted to conclude the matter as soon as

possible, agreed to his request and promised to give precedence to his request and grant him a visa.

UNUSUAL AHAVAS YISROEL

R' Refael was a rare Oheiv Yisroel, to a degree that I have not seen with anyone else. He related to everyone of Anash like a member of the family. When he was told of a mazal tov about someone in the community, whether in Samarkand, Tashkent or somewhere else, he was

R' REFAEL'S SON-IN-LAW

R' Refael highly esteemed b'nei Torah. During the war, when he hosted hundreds of Holocaust survivors, he realized that one of them was a ben Torah. He was a bachur by the name of Yosef from a yeshiva in Poland. R' Refael held highly of him and, although he was a stranger and did not know the language, neither Bucharian nor Russian, R' Refael decided to suggest his daughter as a shidduch. Although he knew nobody in Samarkand, he agreed and R' Refael considered it a special z'chus.

Although as a Polish citizen, he had the right to leave Russia in 1946, when an agreement was signed by the Russian and Polish governments that enabled Polish citizens to leave Russia, for some reason he did not leave at that time. It was first in 1955, when the Iron Curtain opened again for those who had not left in 1946, that he tried his luck and presented his papers. Within a short time he got his visa and passport.

One Friday, right before sunset, R' Yosef came to our house and whispered with my brother-in-law Eliyahu Mishulovin a"h. He said he had gotten a summons from OVIR (the emigration department) to come the next day, on Shabbos.

He wondered whether to go or not. He was afraid of what they might have in mind and what they wanted to talk to him about when he already had his passport. R' Eliyahu told him unhesitatingly that this was a matter of pikuach nefesh and he should not be afraid of chilul Shabbos; he should go to Moscow immediately, where he would meet his family and from there he would leave Russia as soon as possible.

Indeed, that is what he did and he left Russia with his family.

genuinely happy. A pleased smile spread across his face and tears of joy glistened in his eyes. He would bless Hashem for the simcha of that Chassid. Likewise, when he heard news that wasn't good about a family of Anash, he would start to cry. When he attended a funeral he would go right over to the coffin and ask forgiveness and say chapters of T'hilim with bitter tears as though it was a close relative.

All who knew him remember his fine custom that when he went to someone's house he would ask to eat something. He explained that he wanted to leave a blessing in the house. He would do this everywhere, even in shul. Everybody in Nachala remembers this custom because he continued doing it when he made aliya and settled in Nachalat Har Chabad.

R' Refael was not a born and bred Lubavitcher Chassid. He was close to R' Simcha Gorodetzky during his years of shlichus in Samarkand and to Anash in his youth, but he did not learn in Tomchei Tmimim. Nevertheless, his Chassidishkait and hiskashrus to the Rebbe were amazing. For example, all his life he dreamt of moving to Eretz Yisroel and living the remainder of his life in Yerushalayim. When he arrived in Eretz Yisroel he had relatives already living in Yerushalayim and even his wife wanted to live there since their daughter was attending university in Yerushalayim. They waited impatiently for R' Refael in the Bucharim neighborhood of Yerushalayim. But when he heard that the Rebbe wanted new immigrants to live in Nachalat Har

Chabad, he did not hesitate. With astounding simplicity he changed all his plans and ambitions in life and moved to Nachala. He did not settle in a place that he found suitable and comfortable but did what the Rebbe wanted.

I'll never forget how when he came to Eretz Yisroel, representatives of all sorts of k'hillos, parties and movements visited him, including Agudath Israel. They invited him to speak at conventions and gatherings and asked him to work for them. They explained the importance and holiness of what they wanted him to do and promised him a lot of money and honor. R' Refael, who was not up on the differences between parties, honestly admitted to all of them that it all sounded holy and necessary but since he would soon be travelling to the Rebbe, he would ask the Rebbe and do what the Rebbe told him.

Like many Bucharian Jews, R' Refael was a Jew with simple faith in miracles and the like. When he arrived in Eretz Yisroel he knew that his grandfather had bought a plot for the family on the Mt. of Olives in the 1920's, long before the establishment of the State, and was buried there. Relatives explained to him that after the Mt. of Olives had been in the hands of Jordanians for so many years, the graves were desecrated and unidentifiable, and it would be impossible to locate the plot. They said they had already looked for it and did not find it and after giving up they had bought a new plot in another cemetery.

R' Refael decided to check things out for himself. Although more than fifty years had passed he was undeterred. This is what he said afterwards:

"I arrived at the Mt. of Olives and walked among the graves. I looked for some indication but I found nothing. After several hours I was tired and feeling despondent. I continued walking among the graves

and cried. Suddenly I saw an old man. I did not know where he came from. He asked me: 'What happened? Why are you crying?'

"I told him that I was looking for my family's plot. To my great surprise, he told me: 'Don't cry. I know where it is.' He took me by the hand and led me to the right section. Of course I fell upon the graves in tears but then I remembered the man who had brought me there and I wanted to thank him. When I looked for him he was nowhere to be seen. He had disappeared."

After examining the plot he



R' Refael (center) at a bris mila

saw there were two gravesites available, for him and for his wife Rochel. This is a good time to mention that his G-d fearing and intelligent wife who never spoke badly of others and had truly outstanding middos. She often spoke of her desire to be buried with her husband but R' Refael did not commit to the idea. However, after he found the plot where his grandfather was buried and there were two empty spaces he realized that this was an indication that she was right.

[Continued from page 58]

two forms. The former, "the love of a kiss" – comes from meditating upon Hashem's kindness to us. He gives us life, family, parnasa etc. On the other hand, the "love of a hug" – is an essential love which is not derived from intellectual contemplation but from the inner bond between a Jew and Hashem, as the Alter Rebbe says in Tanya that a Jew is "a part of G-d above, literally." The existence of a Jew connects and unites with the existence of Hashem.

Hashem's love for Yisroel also takes two forms: When the Jewish people are spiritually elevated and they are devoted to Torah and mitzvos, then the love is for their good qualities. This is what the pasuk means when it says, "Yisroel is my firstborn son," that Yisroel has special qualities, over and beyond those of other nations, and that is why Hashem loves them.

Even without this, there exists an "essential love" that Hashem has for us, as the pasuk says, "for Yisroel is a lad and I love him." This is the

love for a young child (not the firstborn) who does not have special qualities. It is this essential love that expresses the bond of oneness between Hashem and the Jewish people.

When a Jew uses his mind and talents in the service of Hashem because of the G-dly command, with bittul and kabbalas ol and not for the sake of ego, his qualities will not conceal the essential love that Hashem has for him; on the contrary, it will bring it out even more.

(A certain food was served at the table of a descendent of the Baal Shem Tov and he said "I love this food." He immediately regretted this and said, "G-d forbid. I love Hashem and tolerate the food because it says, "And you shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart" – there can be no room left in the heart to love anything else, just love for Hashem!)

LOVE FOR HASHEM IN YEMOS HA'MOSHIACH

In the future, the tremendous

love between Hashem and the Jewish people will be revealed, both the essential love and the rational love.

The essential bond between us and Hashem – the G-dly soul, "a part of G-d above, literally" within every Jew – will not be hidden but will be revealed and visible to all of creation. Hashem will remove all the screens that cover over and hide Him from His creations, as it says, "and your teacher will no longer garb Himself," "He will no longer be covered from you with the edge of His clothes, i.e. He will not hide His face from you."

All the qualities and tremendous merits that we accumulated over the millennia from Avrohom Avinu until now will be gathered together and visible. All will see the great qualities of the Jewish people and consequently, Hashem's love for us because of these traits will also be revealed.

We are promised by the Rebbe that our generation is the last generation of galus and the first generation of Geula, may it be now!

Source: HaBayis HaYehudi p. 263 ff

SIMCHAS TORAH WITH JOY AND TEARS

By Menachem Ziegelboim

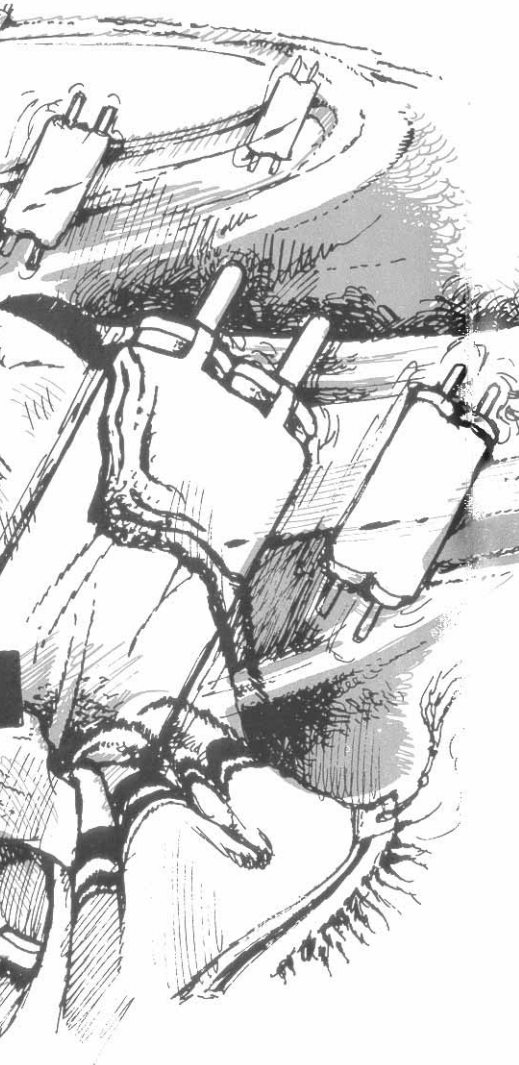
Simchas Torah, 5688: Hundreds of Chassidim came with mesirus nefesh to Leningrad in order to be with the Rebbe Rayatz for Simchas Torah. The joyous dancing was mingled with tears of sorrow. They all knew that this was the last time they would see the Rebbe, as he was leaving Russia for good and they would be left behind. The Rebbe was also emotional, finding it hard to part from his beloved children, the Chassidim. The day after Simchas Torah the train left and the Chassidim remained bereft at the train station, crying.



The news of the release of the Rebbe Rayatz was received on 12-13 Tammuz, 1927. This news concluded the affair of the arrest of the Rebbe which had kept world Jewry on edge and working hard on his behalf to obtain his release from those who sought to eliminate him.

The Rebbe was freed and he returned to his home in Leningrad on 15 Tammuz, but it was clear that the GPU in Leningrad would not rest until it had taken revenge on the Rebbe.

The Chassidim were ecstatic at the news of his release and masses of people wanted to go to the Rebbe's house, see him, and bless him upon his release and in general,



to bask in his presence. However, the Rebbe refused to meet with anyone. He didn't want them to endanger themselves by coming. There was the constant fear of the GPU and therefore, the Rebbe moved to Malachovka, a sort of resort area in a suburb of Moscow where he hoped he could bide his time quietly, far from prying eyes.

He remained there for six weeks in "exile in Malachovka," as he put it, describing it as "days of pressure and stress, terrible yisurim and great fear." The Rebbe did not write letters from there except for those which were absolutely necessary.

Rabbi Avrohom Godin, who was the right hand of the great askan, R'

Mordechai Dubin, relates:

"After the Rebbe's release, R' Mordechai met with the Rebbe in Malachovka, a suburb of Moscow. The Rebbe was very broken and he told R' Mordechai that he wanted to leave Russia. R' Mordechai told the Rebbe that he should go to Riga and that he would prevail upon the ambassador of the Soviet Union in Latvia to release the Rebbe. The Rebbe said, "First I want to go to the Ohel of my father and only after the Yomim Tovim will I leave." R' Mordechai knew the great danger the Rebbe was in, that the Russians could change their minds at any moment and retract their agreement to release him from jail, but he accepted what the Rebbe said."

As though to validate their fears, an article was published in the Yevseki paper that attacked the Rebbe sharply and called for his arrest. The Yevsekim (Jewish communists), who had been the reason for the Rebbe's arrest, were not taking his release lying down.

The circumstances demonstrated that the Rebbe had to leave Russia. The government could re-arrest him at any moment and who knew what would be then. However, his leaving Russia was only a dream, since nobody imagined that the Russians would allow him to leave.

In the meantime, the tension grew. All knew that the Rebbe had but one course of action, to leave Russia.

This is what the Rebbe's secretary, R' Yaakov Zecharya Moskolik, who was with the Rebbe in Malachovka, wrote to the representatives of the Chassidim in the United States:

"... It is clear that if you would know the danger at present you would work with the utmost diligence and would not rest for a moment from taking all sorts of action in order to move his residence. You must publicize that this is not solely a matter of concern

to the Chassidim but of general import that affects all of Klal Yisroel, no matter the party."

A few days later the Rebbe's new secretary, R' Chatshe Feigin wrote:

"It's not every day that a miracle takes place, may Hashem protect us. Chazal instruct us not to rely on a miracle. Therefore, this is only due to Hashem's kindness to us, but we must now do what we can and certainly to try to extricate him [the Rebbe] completely from his illness [imprisonment] so that G-d forbid, it should not recur ..."

Massive efforts were made with distinguished people and lawyers, the most outstanding one being R' Mordechai Dubin – delegate to the Sejm in Latvia, to exert pressure on the Russian government.

At this time, significant political upheavals began to take place. England severed diplomatic relations with Russia and consequently, Russia needed a friendly country with which to do business and began negotiating with Latvia. The elderly Chassid, Rabbi Avrohom Godin explained what happened:

"Latvia had no commercial ties with Russia at that time because the parties on the Right were afraid of Russia. They wanted to see Latvia independent and wanted no connection with Russia.

"Russia wanted a business agreement with Latvia but since they had no official commercial ties, it had to go through the Parliament. The Parliament had 100 delegates and only 49 supported it while 21 delegates firmly opposed the signing of a contract. The votes of two delegates, those of the delegates from Agudath Israel – R' Mordechai Dubin and R' Shimon Yitzchok Wittenberg – tipped the scales.

"When they arrested the Rebbe, I remember, we were on vacation, and that is where we heard about it. A short time later R' Mordechai traveled to Russia, where they had a welcoming reception in his honor.

YECHIDUS AT ANY PRICE

The Chassid R' Zalman Bronstein of Kfar Chabad relates:

On Motzaei Simchas Torah, 5688/1927, when large crowds came to say goodbye to the Rebbe despite the danger and tense situation, my father wanted yechidus. We stood next to the door of his room and waited. At 12:00 at night the Rebbe came out of his room and said, “*zai gezunt, zai gezunt*” to those standing there and he went to his mother’s room.

It looked as though we would not have yechidus but my father felt he had to have yechidus, no matter what. He wanted to move from Nikolayev to Moscow where there were more opportunities to give children a proper chinuch but he would not move without permission from the Rebbe. Writing a letter was not option.

My father suddenly said to us, “I will go to the Rebbetzin (the Rebbe’s mother) and see if she can help.” The Rebbetzin was very friendly with my father from the time he learned in Lubavitch. We went to Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah’s room and when she saw my father she smiled and asked him, “Are these the grandchildren?” meaning that someone who learned in Lubavitch was called a “son” and so his children were called grandchildren.

My father told her his situation and how it was very hard and he had to have yechidus but it did not look feasible. She said, “Chaim Ezra, stay here for a few minutes and I will go to the Rebbe to speak to him.”

We thought she would present my father’s question to the Rebbe but about ten minutes later, she came back and said that at 1:30 at night the Rebbe would open the door of his room again “and try to be near the door at that time.”

At the appointed time the Rebbe opened the door. Other people were standing there too. We entered the Rebbe’s room and she had apparently told him everything. The Rebbe smiled and asked my father, “Grandchildren?” and my father nodded. Then my father asked whether he should move and the Rebbe agreed. Then my father asked whether he should learn mila and the Rebbe agreed and even told him with whom to learn it. Then we left.

This was on Motzaei Simchas Torah. The next day the Rebbe left for the train station, where crowds were waiting for him.

Senior officials in the Foreign Ministry were invited, the kind who appear only at affairs made for ministers or heads of state. They tried to win him over so he would vote for the contract and this created the right circumstances for him to work on the Rebbe’s behalf.”

R’ Mordechai put his deciding vote to work. He met with Dubronitzky, a Polish Jew who headed the department for the countries of Lithuania, Latvia and

Estonia. The answer was a flat-out no. Seeing this, R’ Dubin gave an ultimatum to Dubronitzky who represented Russia:

“You want us, the Sejm in Riga, to help you with the signing of a commercial contract with our country and yet, when we come to you with a request for a favor, you turn us down. We want the Lubavitcher Rebbe as the rabbi of the Jewish community in Riga and you do not agree.”

The veiled hint was obvious – it’s not worth getting people in the Jewish community of Riga angry for they are likely to undermine the signing of a commercial contract with Soviet Russia.

The committee of the community in Riga prepared an official written appointment of the Rebbe as chief rabbi of the city. They noted that they were asking that the Rebbe Rayatz bring with him “the writings of his holy ancestors and his own writings so he can influence us with the light of his Torah and the teachings of his holy ancestors.” Presumably, this request was added in order to make it easier to gain permission to take out the s’farim.

The written appointment and the political efforts were partially helpful. Dubronitzky agreed to allow the Rebbe to leave Russia, albeit with the condition that his mother, wife, daughters and the entire family, as well as the furniture and the library, remain in Russia. This was meant to guarantee that the Rebbe would not wage any anti-Soviet activity outside of Russia.

The fact that the Rebbe was allowed to leave Russia was a tremendous victory, however the Rebbe decided not to leave unless his family was with him. This was a position of Jewish pride, characteristic of the Rebbe who battled the communists on the frontlines.

Once again, pressure was exerted by R’ Mordechai Dubin and others. When R’ Dubin saw that his efforts were fruitless he finally threatened, “Don’t count on my help in signing the agreement with Latvia.”

On the second day of Rosh HaShana, 5788/1927, the Soviet Foreign Ministry had a special meeting for the purpose of discussing granting the Rebbe a visa. All those present, with the exception of one individual, were Jews. After a long meeting it was decided to allow the Rebbe to leave with his family.

The permits were given in Leningrad. The Rebbe and his family were given visas, as were six additional people who were mekuravim of the Rebbe. The Rebbe was also granted permission to take out his furnishings and huge library. However, Russian law stated that before books were taken out of the country they had to undergo inspection and be approved by a representative of the "Literary Committee."

They sent a Jew by the name of Stein who was knowledgeable about the value of s'farim. When he saw precious s'farim and ancient manuscripts in the library he refused to grant permission to take them saying, "These valuable items cannot be taken out of the country – I will never allow it."

R' Eliyahu Chaim Altheus, who was staying in the Rebbe's house at the time, related in his memoirs that the Rebbe told the official that if he left a single book behind he would not leave Russia. When the Rebbe was told by someone present, "Rebbe, this is Soviet Russia and you have to speak more gently to them," he replied, "You have started teaching me too late, my son."

After additional lobbying, the Literary Committee sent someone else to examine the s'farim. This time he was a gentile who didn't know much about the value of Jewish books and after a cursory examination he granted his approval to take them.

The Russians constantly tried to place obstacles and tiresome negotiations had to be held over every detail. The Russians checked the list of belongings one item at a time, as well as the people traveling with the Rebbe. They tried to negotiate over the Rebbe MH"M's inclusion in the trip as the Rebbe's intended son-in-law saying that a son-in-law could be found elsewhere. The Rebbe responded, "A son-in-law like this cannot be found



They all wanted the Rebbe to leave Russia because they knew of the danger hovering over him and that this was the final escape, but the knowledge that they wouldn't see the Rebbe again broke their hearts. Nobody could bear the thought that they would no longer be able to be blessed by him face to face.

anywhere in the world."

The entire time, a great fear was felt by the Chassidim in Russia. Nobody knew what the morrow would bring, what the communists would do next, after the leader of the Jews and the Chassidim slipped

through their fingers.

The Rebbe's health was very poor following the travails of his arrest and especially upon hearing terrible news about the Yevsektzia's persecution of the Chassidim throughout Russia.

EREV SIMCHAS TORAH 5688 IN THE MARKET OF LENINGRAD

Erev Simchas Torah, 5688/1927, in Leningrad were days of darkness and terrible oppression.

It was Sunday, Hoshana Raba, and the market was very busy when suddenly word reached Beis Rebbe in Leningrad that two Chassidim were walking the bustling streets of Leningrad holding a bottle of mashke and asking passersby, "Are you Jewish?" When someone said he was, they would give him l'chaim and exclaim, "Ein Od Milvado," "Hashem Hu HaElokim," and "Tzon Kadoshim." Although it looked as though they had imbibed a considerable amount of mashke, they were not drunk at all.

A sensitive time: It was Simchas Torah and the Rebbe Rayatz had recently been released from exile in Kostrama and in two days' time would be leaving Russia forever. Great miracles occurred and now ... at just the last minute was someone ruining the plans?

One of the Chassidim rushed to the Rebbe's room to tell him about the crazy Chassidim who were shouting in the street. The Rebbe smiled, "Ah, it must be Chaim and his son Mulle."

They were the Chassidim R' Chaim and R' Shmuel (Mulle) Berzin, who were known for their great Chassidic character and their courage.

The situation was a difficult one. That is how R' Chatshe Feigin describes it in one of his letters:

"If you would know the situation as it is, you would know that this [the Rebbe's freedom] was "pulled out" as a result of Yiddishe T'hillim and fasting which rent the heavens with the cries of Jews wherever the bad news, *lo aleinu*, spread its wings, for there is no man or woman faithful to Hashem who did not feel the impact on them and on their hearts."

The Rebbe found it very hard to leave the country that served as the cradle of Chassidus from the Baal Shem Tov through the Maggid and the Alter Rebbe and on down to him. He knew that the tremendous work in preserving Jewish life in Russia lay on his shoulders and it was difficult for him to leave behind the flock of Chassidim who fought valiantly and were in daily danger.

Apparently the Rebbe did not want to make the decision on his own. He traveled to Rostov, to the gravesite of his father, the Rebbe

Rashab. Sometime before Rosh HaShana, 5688, he made a special trip to Rostov and only upon his return did he give his final consent to leave the country. It wasn't a willing exit but a forced one. "I had to leave our country," he wrote in a letter.

Only few knew of the feverish efforts that were constantly being made behind the scenes to get the Rebbe out of Russia. Finally, however, word of the Rebbe's leaving the country forever began to spread rapidly among the Chassidim scattered throughout Russia.

With all the rejoicing over the Rebbe's rescue, the hearts of the Chassidim were heavy over his imminent departure. They felt that the Rebbe was abandoning them – physically – and that they would were not likely to ever see him again in their lifetime. The Iron Curtain in those days was firmly closed, with no possibility for leaving or even being in contact with those abroad.

The Chassidim knew that Simchas Torah was their last chance

to see the Rebbe. Disregarding the danger, they did all in their power to be in Leningrad for Sukkos so as to be together with him during his final days in Russia and to say goodbye to him. (The Rebbe M"HM, the future son-in-law traveled to spend Yom Tov with his parents in Yekaterinislav. This was when he parted from them).

The Chassid R' Zalman Bronstein of Kfar Chabad related:

"We lived in Nikolayev at the time and when we heard that the Rebbe was leaving the country for good, everybody wanted to go and say goodbye. At that time it was very hard to travel from Nikolayev to Leningrad since it was not possible to obtain tickets. In Nikolayev there were three Chassidim who wanted to travel to the Rebbe to take leave of him: R' Sholom and R' Aharon Charitonov and my father, Chaim Ezra Bronstein. After much effort they managed to get one ticket. They held a lottery and my father won. He arrived in Leningrad on Chol HaMoed Sukkos.

"At that time I was learning in Nevel. The hanhala of the yeshiva did not allow the T'mimim to travel to the Rebbe because of the great danger, but I couldn't restrain myself and I snuck off to Leningrad for Yom Kippur. My brother Michael had come from Polotsk, and on Chol HaMoed Sukkos my father arrived, so the three of us met after a long time of not seeing one another."

Numerous Chassidim made every effort to be in Leningrad for Simchas Torah. The large hall meant to hold 600 people was full beyond capacity. Chassidim packed into every corner and all of them were dripping with sweat from the crowding.

The parting was unbearably difficult. For the Chassidim it was hard to part from the Rebbe and for the Rebbe it was harder still to part from his Chassidim, his beloved

children, even though he said this wasn't a parting but a "transplanting from one place to another." During that Simchas Torah the Rebbe delivered a number of emotional addresses:

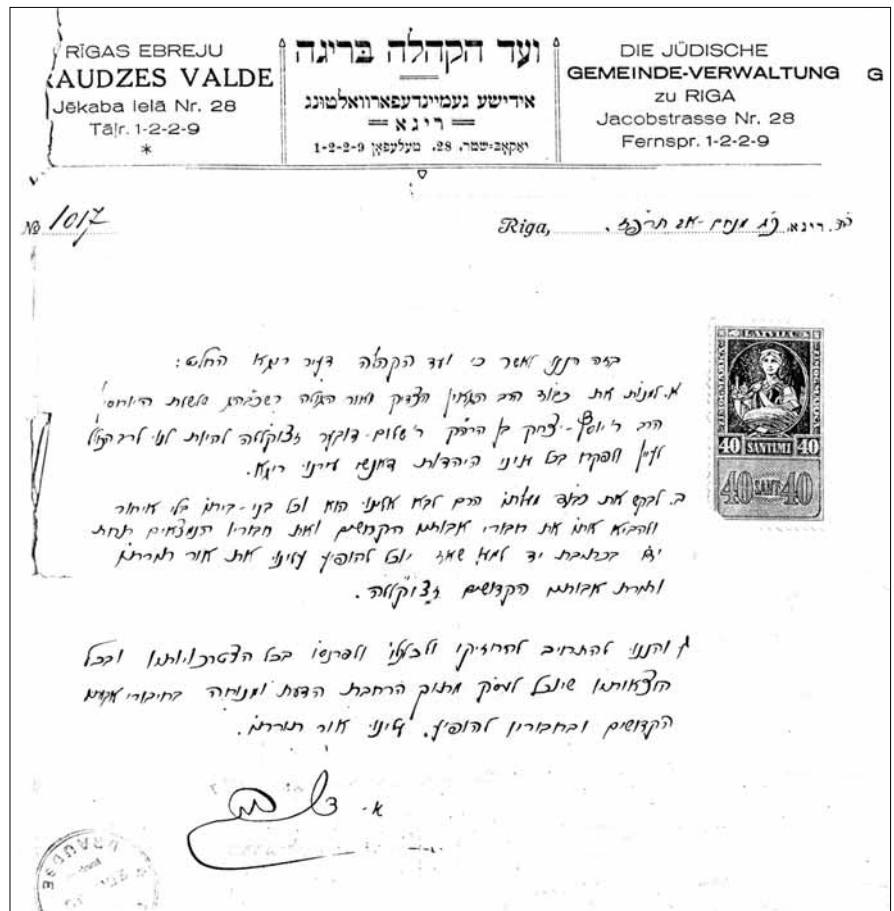
"I am always with you ... you must know that this form [referring to himself] is a neshama as it is in Gan Eden which is located in a body; it has no connection to gashmius, and only sees good."

During the Simchas Torah farbrengens the Rebbe set the policy for the ongoing work – to continue onwards without fear, with strengthen and determination:

"They [the T'mimim] should not fear anyone. Whoever joins Tomchei T'mimim will be fortunate and woe to him who harms them." Then he said to the T'mimim, "Your obligation is like that of a father to his children ... whoever teaches his fellow's son Torah it's as though he gave birth to him. You are sons [apparently referring to the Rebbe Rashab, the founder of the yeshiva] and I make demands of you out of a feeling of brotherly love...each of you must create an environment of five, six people. Even someone on a simple level of leadership must create his own environment, also businessmen and balabatim. I am not demanding mesirus nefesh. Even one hair is precious to me b'gashmius" – and he pointed to the hair of his beard.

From what the Rebbe said it was apparent how hard it was for him to part from the Chassidim. In direct contradiction to the possibilities of those days, the Rebbe spoke clearly and with great bitachon: "We need to see one another again; we must see one another again; and we will see one another again, G-d willing, and may Hashem grant that during the time until we see one another again, Hashem will help that we see one another with plentiful good and great success."

Joy and sadness were the mixed



The letter that officially appointed the Rebbe Rayatz as Chief Rabbi of the k'hilla in Riga

emotions. They all wanted the Rebbe to leave Russia because they knew of the danger hovering over him and that this was the final escape, but the knowledge that they wouldn't see the Rebbe again broke their hearts. Nobody could bear the thought that they would no longer be able to be blessed by him face to face.

The Chassid R' Dovid Chein of Kfar Chabad relates:

"I can remember that period, of the Rebbe's arrest, release and his leaving Russia, even though I was only a little boy. When my father, R' Yehuda found out that the Rebbe was leaving he decided to go to Leningrad to part from him. My grandfather, R' Meir Simcha also went to Leningrad and both of them stayed with the Rebbe that Simchas Torah.

"The Chassidim's broken-heartedness was greater than they could bear. At the Rebbe's last farbrengen in Russia, which took place on Simchas Torah, my grandfather could not restrain himself and he burst into bitter tears. R' Mordechai Dubin, who was present, asked my grandfather, 'What happened?'

"The Rebbe is going,' said my grandfather in tears.

"What's new about that? We all know that!"

"My grandfather explained, 'The Rebbe is going and we are remaining here,' and he burst into tears again."

The day after Simchas Torah, Isru Chag, 5688, the Rebbe left Russia accompanied by his family and the six additional Chassidim, along with his furniture and huge

library which together filled four train cars.

A large crowd gathered at the train station to part from the Rebbe. They accompanied him to the last moment. R' Zalman Bronstein relates:

“While we were at the train station my father suddenly met R' Sholom and R' Aharon Charitonov, who had remained in Nikolayev. It turned out that they could not bear to stay in Nikolayev, far from the Rebbe. They felt that this was something that affected their very beings. They somehow managed to see the Rebbe at the last moment at the train station.”

The train station bustled with masses of Chassidim to the point that when the Rebbe boarded the train, the police made a human chain to bodily block the Chassidim, who naturally wanted to get as close as possible to the Rebbe.

A few minutes before the Rebbe entered the train compartment, the Chassid R' P. A., who was a young man at the time, went over to him and cried, “Rebbe, what will be with me?”

The Rebbe looked at him and said, “You are like a penned up hen; jumping and jumping but remaining in the same place.” In other words, no matter what happens, you will remain connected to the Rebbe, to Lubavitch. (As heard from R' Zushe Gross who heard it from P).

The Rebbe Rayatz himself describes it in a moving letter that he wrote:

“At the moment of parting from my brothers and friends, hundreds of people or perhaps even more, with whom I had been for over six years, knowing the depths of their hearts and their hardships; from them, these beloved friends, I part. Who knows when I will be able to see them and where I am headed with my staff and bag.

“The scene was terrible. Thousands of emotional people

pushing one another without any intention to push or crowd, it's just that each one is displaying his great emotions. His face and motions testify that he is under duress from the events taking place in those moments. And the 'I' [referring to himself] stands at the window of the passenger train, looking at all around him, standing and melting, with only his lips moving and his voice inaudible: Please Hashem, have mercy on Your flock and bless them, their homes and children and their descendants, and may I also merit to soon see in satiety of joys, amen v'amen.”

When the Rebbe boarded the train he stood on the steps and said goodbye. The final words that he said were, “Whoever wants to belong to me should not agree to any compromises. That will be extremely hard but that is the condition.”

These were very dangerous words for the Rebbe to say. A large crowd of Chassidim gathered at the train station and the place swarmed with GPU agents who could have called a halt to the trip at the last moment but nevertheless the Rebbe did not fear and said this publicly.

R' Chein continues:

“I was a little boy and I remember how my father returned home afterwards and repeated these words again and again. From then on, any time difficulties arose in Chassidishe chinuch, and sometimes it seemed as though it was necessary to compromise, he would firmly repeat, ‘The Rebbe said that whoever wants to belong to him should not agree to any compromises. I don't want to be disconnected from the Rebbe, G-d forbid.’

“The train gave a long blast of its whistle and was on its way. My father told me that five minutes after the train left the station, a Chassid came running up. He had come from a very distant city just to say goodbye to the Rebbe. (Crying): He

just managed to see the train in the distance and he was devastated. One of the Chassidim standing there took his hand and said, ‘Yungerman, you can still see the smoke from the locomotive; in another few minutes you would not have seen even that.’

The Rebbe Rayatz went on to describe the tumultuous feelings of his heart:

“After few minutes, the whistle signaling the commencement of the trip could be heard and then the shouting of the crowds with the blessing of *yivorechecha* and the Kohanim who are there spreading out their hands and the Yisroelim, men and women, waving with their hands and with white handkerchiefs and all of them blessing us with a successful journey. And the 'I' must take the **wandering staff** in his hand **and part and weep** ... oy to the son and grandson who is expelled from all that is dear to him in life.”

The Rebbe sat in the compartment, deeply emotional and with pen in hand he wrote a moving letter to the Chassidic flock:

“As waters reflect a face, my heart is alert and sensitive to the pleasantly pure intense power of the inner and essential bond of Anash to the ‘tree of life’ ... my hope will give me courage and this is my consolation, that the distance of space will not G-d forbid separate us ... I would be extremely pleased to hear how each one and his household are faring and what is happening with them in detail. As said previously, all their material and spiritual matters affect the depth of the innermost point of my heart which is devoted to their spiritual and material good. Be strong, you and your households, to go in the way paved with the light which is good, and may it be good for you and your households all the days, and may Hashem help us see one another with satiety of joys.”

The Rebbe goes on to describe the emotions he felt on the train:

“About 18 hours passed in thoughts of pain, soul pains. The darkness of night, the howling of the winds in the field, and the shrieking of the train wheels increased my feelings of sadness ...”

Throughout the trip, from Russia to Riga, masses of Jews went out to greet the Rebbe at every station and many even boarded the train and escorted the occupants for a few stops. The Rebbe continues:

“And then suddenly, at one of the stops, the sounds of a multitude roaring or cheering, frolicking and rejoicing, this one saying such and the other saying such, and above all the voices that of the conductor saying: Here, here, come here, and here you will find what you are seeking. And the ‘I’ (wandering sheep) trembles...”

When the Rebbe arrived in Riga they asked him how he felt after everything he had been through and he said, “If someone would offer to sell me one moment of suffering in the future for a billion dollars, I wouldn’t buy it. If someone wanted to buy one moment of my suffering in the past for a billion dollars, I wouldn’t sell it.”

R’ Avrohom Godin recalls:

“When the Rebbe arrived in Riga, I was a talmid in the school under the administration of Rabbi Chadakov a”h. R’ Chadakov announced that whoever wanted to welcome the Rebbe could go to the train station. Of course I went, and I saw the Rebbe.”

The Rebbe left the Soviet Union and hundreds of soldiers were left on their own (b’gashmius) in the underground battle to preserve Judaism. From then on, the relationship with the Rebbe was through letters and after a few years through coded letters, which were only sent on an absolute need basis.

R’ Mendel Futerfas, the celebrated mashpia, told about that Simchas Torah and the faith of the Chassidim that they would yet see

the Rebbe:

“That Simchas Torah the Rebbe said sichos to various audiences. There was a special sicha for Anash, a sicha for the T’mimim, for roshei yeshivos and mashpiim. Each group received a message that pertained to them, but one line kept repeating itself in those sichos and it was the theme of the entire Yom Tov: *We need to see one another again; we must see one another again; and we will see one another again!*”

When the Chassidim heard the Rebbe say that they would, in fact, see one another again, they were thrilled. Although by natural means it would be impossible to see him again, the Rebbe promised that they would!

The Chassidim danced in the streets of Leningrad and their excitement mounted. Was this a small thing? The Rebbe had promised that they would meet again!

There were a few of the great Chassidim who were unhappy about this enthusiasm. Who knew whether or how the Rebbe’s words would be fulfilled when the situation indicated clearly that there was no chance at all? When they saw the Chassidim rejoicing they thought that it could cause them to experience a crisis of faith when they would see that the Rebbe’s words were not fulfilled.

They decided to do something about this and they gathered the crowd together and told them that Rebbe’s words didn’t have to be taken literally. Maybe the Rebbe said it as a wish and an expression of hope rather than as an outright promise. Furthermore, they maintained, it was very likely that what he said would be fulfilled only in the spiritual sense because it was possible to “meet with the Rebbe” even when the Rebbe was on the other side of the world through powerful hiskashrus in thought and the like.

Since they were great Chassidim

who were saying this, they were hardly challenged. The spirits that had risen so high now plummeted. Despite what the Rebbe said, it looked as though there was nothing to prevent that they would be left alone behind the Iron Curtain with no chance of seeing the Rebbe b’gashmius.

Nevertheless, there was a group of Chassidim (including R’ Folye Kahn who would tell this story often) who were unwilling to accept the explanations of those great Chassidim. Those in this group insisted, “The Rebbe said we would see one another again and we are confident that we will see the Rebbe again, b’gashmius, literally, without *p’shetlach!*”

Many years passed and it later turned out that all those Chassidim who refused to accept “interpretations” and took the Rebbe at his word, left Russia and saw the Rebbe Rayatz. The others had to suffice with “spiritual seeing.” Some of them never left Russia, some of them left but did not see the Rebbe, and some left Russia when it was already the Rebbe MH”M’s nesius.

To sum up that era and the Rebbe’s feelings, let us look at a letter that he wrote a few days after arriving in Riga:

“Blessed [is G-d] for giving me life and sustaining me till this time so that I may correspond with my loyal beloved friends, freely and without any hindrance, because during the last three months of my stay in our country I was unable, due to watching eyes, those spies of renown, to write even a regards ... May Hashem allow me to bring the good thoughts of strengthening Torah in our country to fruition.”

Sources: Seifer HaToldos Rayatz vol. 3; Toldos Chabad in Soviet Russia; Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz; issues of Beis Moshiah, and interviews with R’ Avrohom Godin, R’ Zalman Bronstein, R’ Dovid Chein, and R’ Peretz Barzin

THE COMIC BOOK CHASSID

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

Rabbi Dror Yisroel Cohen is a one-man operation, putting out a weekly chassidic comic book for children, including stories, news, and other original ideas. He uses lots of drawings and a little dialogue, easing the acceptance of the message within the child's soul. The Rebbe encouraged the printing of such a publication even before he accepted the leadership; how much more important is it in our generation, says Rabbi Cohen, when the streets are filled with temptations. It's not only his publication that catches one's interest; Rabbi Cohen's exciting life constitutes a story all its own.

One would expect, when visiting an artist of the caliber of R' Dror Yisroel Cohen of Tzfas, to find paintbrushes, colors, and drawing boards, but the most well-known ultra-Orthodox cartoonist, perhaps in all Eretz Yisroel, had long since put aside the watercolors and oil

paints and moved on to his childhood passion – comics. The living room walls were adorned with a number of oil paintings. There was a portrait of the Rebbe surrounded by various objects connected with the prophecies of the Redemption and the sichos of

the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach. “Guests who come to our home for Shabbos call the painting ‘The Announcement of the Redemption,’ and that’s the name we have used for this picture ever since,” Rabbi Cohen explains with a smile.

For the past nine months, R' Dror has issued “Ohr” – a weekly comic book for the ultra-Orthodox community. The publication includes stories, games, and much more. All the various columns are accompanied by his personal cartoon drawings.

“To this day among the ultra-Orthodox public,” he explained to us, “comics have been limited to strips in children’s periodicals and occasional books with cartoon drawings. In contrast, the world at large produces some really exciting comic books – and not just for kids. Therefore, I decided to take on the challenge.” The visit to the Cohen family home in Tzfas by reporters from the AFP world news agency for the purpose of preparing a video report on the development of comic books within the ultra-Orthodox sector proves that he was successful.

Just a month earlier, R' Dror was invited to speak at the new museum for comic arts, which recently opened in Cholon. Those assembled also wanted to hear what innovative ideas an ultra-Orthodox comic artist could bring, and they weren’t



disappointed. In contrast to similar artists in the overall community, Rabbi Cohen's steps are guided and maintained by the educational message that the child internalizes, and not just the financial profit.

We met with him last week in his home. His eyes were bleary, as he had just finished the new weekly issue an hour earlier and sent it off to the printers. "In other comic book productions of a similar nature throughout the world, it takes five people to do the work I handle on my own," he says with a smile.

ENDLESS QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES

The third child in his family, Dror Cohen was born in Yerushalayim's Katamon neighborhood, a typical secular Israeli neighborhood for those times. His grandfather, an immigrant from Iran, observed Torah and mitzvos with particularly

great piety while living in Geula, one of the city's main ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods. His father, however, abandoned the path of his forefathers and joined the ranks of the Palmach. Dror followed in his father's footsteps. He became a counselor in the Zionist Shomer HaTzair (Young Guard). He recalls how as a boy, he would constantly contemplate and investigate. However, despite his many questions on the existence of the world and the hidden secrets in the ways of nature, the education that he received while studying in school as a boy prevented him from reaching the desired conclusion — the existence of a Creator who runs everything.

In the early years of his childhood, he did observe a little bit of tradition. The family members, including Dror, would go spend Shabbos and Yom Tov at the home of their grandparents. They would park the car on the outskirts of the

neighborhood in order to avoid arousing the wrath of local residents, and then proceed to walk the remaining distance to the house. Dror would often join his grandfather in the shul where he davened. The grandfather would tell him stories about the greats among the Jewish People and try to instill him with a little faith. But when Dror was twelve, his grandfather passed away, and Dror's connection with Judaism came to an end. The educational environment in which he was raised cut him off from Jewish traditions, and he considered ultra-Orthodox Jews to be primitive people "from the Old World".

Despite all this, he knew of the existence of a very sublime power, far greater than his own level of understanding, even if he didn't call Him "the Creator of the World".

"I was constantly looking for depth," he explained. "I would read many books on science and philosophy. I read a lot about

A FRUITFUL SHLICHUS IN AVIVIM

During Tishrei, 5747, Dror Yisroel Cohen saw the Rebbe's holy face for the first time. "I saw the Rebbe for the first time on a weekday," he relates, excitement still ringing his voice as he recalls that moment. "The Rebbe came in for Maariv, and I was standing on one of the pyramids, when I caught a glimpse of his face."

"The Rebbe entered the beis midrash, giving a strong gesture with his hand as he walked towards his place on the platform. Those in attendance immediately responded by singing with greater intensity."

"Without noticing, I suddenly began to cry. This was my first look at the Rebbe, and I was completely overcome. When I realized that I was crying, I hastened to get down off the pyramid, so the Rebbe wouldn't see my moment of weakness. Suddenly, I noticed that the Rebbe was looking at me with a broad smile on his face... Without question, this was my most unforgettable moment with the Rebbe..."

This was not R' Dror's only memorable experience with the Rebbe. "On one Shabbos," R' Dror continued, "the Rebbe began to give a sicha. Since I couldn't understand Yiddish, I asked one of the chassidim standing nearby, Rabbi Menachem Mendel HaLevi Brod, to translate what the Rebbe said."

"The sicha dealt with the establishment of Chabad Houses all over the world, and the Rebbe explained that 'all those things that have prevented their establishment have been nullified, and thus, anyone who wants to act – can do so.' After this sicha, the Rebbe distributed bottles of mashkeh to chassidim involved in activities in various locations. I also decided to approach the platform, and when I stood facing the Rebbe, I said with much emotion: 'Rebbe, I want to open a Chabad House in Avivim, Eretz

HaKodesh.' The Rebbe gave me the bottle, and said with a broad smile, '*Hatzlacha rabba*' (Much success)."

R' Dror's activities began to take shape, and soon another Chabad House joined the dozens of others in locations throughout Eretz Yisroel. The settlement of Avivim is located on the sloping hills of the Galilee, near the border with Lebanon. It is home to approximately one hundred families, many of whom are Moroccan immigrants. The community elders still dress in traditional North African garb.

Upon his return from the Rebbe, R' Dror gave out the mashkeh from the bottle he received from the Rebbe to the residents of Avivim. The first woman to drink from the mashkeh had a natural and easy childbirth, much to the surprise of her doctors. R' Dror soon began to strengthen the Torah classes that he had previously established. He also founded a branch of Tzivos Hashem for local children, which continued to bear fruit in later years, as many families in Avivim elected to send their children to Chabad educational institutions. He regularly made home visits to families in the community, and even organized chassidic farbrengens.

The local residents welcomed him warmly, and even consult him as a rabbinical authority. For example, once he heard that the local shopkeeper was importing non-kosher candies. He spent the following Shabbos in Avivim, and spoke most forcefully against eating non-kosher sweets. R' Dror's heartfelt words touched the shopkeeper's conscience, as he stopped bringing these candies into his store.

On another occasion, when the Rebbe came out with his unprecedented call to vote and campaign actively on behalf of Agudas Yisroel prior to the 1988 Knesset elections, R' Dror worked with complete devotion for the cause. On election night, the results in Avivim were staggering – 93% voted in accordance with the Rebbe's directive.

animals and was most curious about the wondrous state of natural harmony in the world, seeing how all animals complemented one another, while human beings failed to achieve this. On the one hand, man can create what the animal cannot, but on the other hand, he can equally cause destruction. If so, of what value is man? Why did he come into the world? I had considered a number of theories,

but none included the concept of a Creator."

In 5736, Dror completed his studies at the Orot Electronics School, where he learned a trade. His ambition to be an air force pilot didn't materialize, and he instead joined the Israeli navy. "I was put in charge of the ship's electronics system. During that period, the Israel Defense Forces commenced Operation Litani. I participated in

numerous covert activities, some of which still remain classified more than thirty years later. The only thing I can say is that people don't know how vital the naval ships are to the security of Eretz Yisroel. We frequently delivered soldiers to the foreign shores of enemy states.

"Throughout this time, I was gripped by my determination to conduct some serious soul-searching. I knew several religious

soldiers in the army, and their influence put the process into higher gear. They gave me books on mysticism and kabbala, which awakened my soul with even greater intensity. Through this association, I made the connection to certain abstract stories I had read in my childhood.

“At the start of my military service, I had a powerful inner awakening that led to more practical steps. One day as I was sitting on the bow of the ship, I asked every passing crew member if he knew why we exist in this world and what our role in life is. The question really gnawed away at me. The first crew member thought about it for a moment, and then told me that it’s forbidden to ask such questions, because it might lead me to thoughts of suicide... I began to understand that I wasn’t the only one asking such questions. Many others ask them as well, but they’re all afraid to deal with the subject, preferring to repress their feelings.

“Then one day, I decided to start davening, and as a result, I began coming late to morning roll call. My immediate commanding officer threatened me with military trial, but I was not intimidated. I was in a state of ‘illumination.’ The base chaplain gave me backing on my actions, thus saving me from any punishment. From then on, I would wake up early in the morning and go to the base synagogue for Shacharis. What also brought me closer to Yiddishkait were the stories, agados, and tales of our Sages, of blessed memory, particularly from the seifer *Osei Feleh*, where I first read the story of the Golem of Prague.

“The process of kiruv was suddenly stopped when I realized that I was constantly scared and petrified of G-d. I was afraid to commit to this new way of life. The religious soldiers with me on the base had apparently not received a



R' Dror (center) with friends at Megilla reading last Purim

chassidic education. On the contrary, with every mitzvah that I did, they frightened me with a whole list of punishments that I might be liable to receive. This totally contradicted everything that I had learned about the Good and Benevolent G-d. In a moment, I abandoned it all. I stopped davening, and I went back to my old lifestyle. I gave it all up, except for that inner spiritual impulse, constantly whispering to me that within this world there exists a force far more powerful than anything we can see or perceive.”

CHASSIDUS PENETRATING THE SUBCONSCIOUS

After his military service, R' Dror began a new and far deeper period of soul searching. “One day, I heard about a well-known and successful theatre actor, who was about to give a brand-new stage performance, called ‘Signs and Wonders.’ Drawn by the actor’s prominent reputation and the curiously original title he had given to his show, I decided to go see it. On the scheduled evening, he stood on the platform and began to tell the story of his path to t’shuva. His

story was positively thrilling, as he also told about his visit to Tzfas, giving an exciting description of a mystical city filled with many hidden surprises. I decided to go up north to Tzfas and see it for myself, up close.”

He found the city to be exactly as that stage actor had described – a mysterious, exciting, and magical place. At first, he went to the gravesites of the tzaddikim, and afterwards he toured the alleyways of the Old City. For the first time in his life, he immersed himself in the Ari’s mikveh, known for its great spiritual attributes. By the time he left Tzfas, an idea had been firmly planted in his mind: one day he would learn in a baal t’shuva yeshiva. That day was still long in coming, though, and as time passed the resolution faded into the recesses of his mind. In the meantime, he found a job installing solar heaters, and later as a front desk clerk at a Dead Sea hotel.

“I had everything I dreamed of in my new job: a good apartment, excellent food, and a high salary. I wanted to continue at this job, make a trip to the United States, and even buy my own hotel. Yet, together with these fantasies, the urge for soul-searching would not relent. I

believed in the Creator of the World and Divine Providence with all my heart, but the big problem was I still hadn't made the connection between doing mitzvos and believing in G-d.

"I spent much time contemplating on the universe, and then courses in meditation and yoga started popping up everywhere. People who went through these courses would repeat mantras whenever we did meditation. I also learned hypnosis, and in general, I sought to learn everything that had a whiff of spirituality – everything except Judaism.

"When I was living in Arad, I was acquainted with a Jew who learned kabbala, and he showed how Divine Providence encompasses everything in the world. He gradually gave me the tools to recognize this, and I soon realized how right he was. Things that I had considered to be so simple, general, even coincidental, were actually fascinating cases of Divine Providence. When I started internalizing this point, I was awakened for the first time in a very deep and *p'nimius'dik* fashion. A whole series of incidents brought me to have the courage to fulfill more mitzvos.

"I left my job in the hotel, abandoned my travel plans, and I started moving in the direction of greater closeness to the Creator and carrying out our objectives as part of the Jewish People.

"The year was 5745. I came to the Western Wall in Yerushalayim, where I met the son of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, the 'Baal HaSulam.' At that time, all Torah observant Jews in my eyes were cut of the same cloth, and so I went to learn in Yeshivat Ohr Somayach, where everyone was a baal t'shuva like me. I didn't always accept what the lecturers had to say. On one occasion, we were learning about the mitzvah of rebuke and the

obligation to admonish those who err in their ways. Based on my own contemplation on the subject, I told the rabbi that this mitzvah meant reproving oneself before reproving others. The rabbi replied by saying that I was wrong...and this was not the only time this happened.

"I had many questions about the Creation and the role of man, but the rabbis there warned me that it was forbidden for me to dabble in the esoteric, and there were even those who called me a heretic... I was beside myself. I later found all these questions in Torah sources, so how could I possibly be considered an apikores? I would cry and pray to G-d that He should remove all these 'heretical' thoughts and questions from my mind; I was certain that I was suffering from a serious problem. Apparently, the root of my soul was connected to chassidus, even before I knew anything about this derech. I saw a G-dly message in everything. One day, I went with a friend to the bank to cash a check, and I asked him, 'Where do you see a lesson in Avodas Hashem here?' When he replied that he didn't see anything, I came along with my own insight: The check is the Jewish People, and it belongs to G-d, Who brings us down to this world to struggle and He eventually redeems and 'cashes' us.

"Even in those days, I would go out on *mivtzaim* and give other Jews the privilege of fulfilling mitzvos. My friends looked at me as some kind of strange bird. Why am I taking such an interest in other Jews, especially those who don't observe Torah and mitzvos?

"One year during the Sukkos holiday, my brothers and I were sitting and chatting together in the sukka we had built in the courtyard of our grandfather's home. Then suddenly a ruddy-looking chassid, R' Yosef Strassberg, came in with an infectious smile on his face. He

turned first to one of my brothers and gently asked if he would like to make a bracha on the Dalet Minim. My brother happily agreed, and then the chassid asked his children if they also would like to make a bracha on the lulav. I stood there in total astonishment. What I had tried unsuccessfully to do for some time, this red-headed Jew had managed to achieve within one minute.

"My brother then told him about me, my process of t'shuva, and how I only wanted to learn Torah instead of working. We opened a conversation and I told him about my insights on life, including how my perception of Judaism differs from my fellow yeshiva students. He was amazed. 'Where did you come to all this?' he asked me. He then asked that I wait a few minutes, and when he returned, he had a Tanya in his hand and he started to read. I suddenly realized that there was another approach in Judaism that contradicted the path I was trying to follow. His words were a real illumination. At the end of a lengthy discussion, Rabbi Strassberg brought me to the Judaica store of R' Gershon Henoch Cohen in Meia Sh'arim, and bought me a Tanya, kuntres U'Maayan M'Beis Hashem, and the seifer Emuna U'Mada. We parted from one another only after I promised to stay in touch with him.

"Every page that I read from these s'farim gave me an even greater feeling of quenching my thirst. After a long spiritual journey, I felt that I had finally found what my soul was craving. I read s'farim at great length, and at the advice of Rabbi Strassberg, I went to learn at Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Kfar Chabad. He made certain to help me find a suitable learning partner and a comfortable room in the yeshiva dormitory. While in yeshiva, I devoted myself relentlessly to the study of chassidus. One of the bachurim who helped me a great deal in my studies was HaTamim

Asher Gershowitz, and I was deeply influenced by the personage of the mashpia, R' Mendel Futerfas."

UNINTENTIONAL INFLUENCE

At the end of 5745, when he completed his yeshiva studies in Kfar Chabad, he married his wife Ester and started building his chassidic home. For the first years of his marriage, Rabbi Cohen went to learn in Yeshivas Shuva Yisroel, opened by HaRav Yitzchak Ginsburgh of Kfar Chabad, while he also started making a living as a teacher in the Sephardic Talmud Torah run by Rabbi Avraham Shushan. "The standards for learning in the Talmud Torah were based upon the Mishna in Pirkei Avos: 'Five years is the age for the study of Scripture; Ten, for the study of Mishna.'" From an early age, the students learned whole chapters of Chumash by heart, together with studying the accompanying commentaries. The school's principal, Rabbi Shushan, was a big Chabad supporter, and he gave Rabbi Cohen much encouragement in his activities. Much of this support stems from a most unique and unusual yechidus that he had with the Rebbe. Rabbi Shushan once complained to the Rebbe that he was sending Ashkenazic avreichim for outreach activities in Morocco. "They don't know anything about the Moroccan way of life or the makeup of its community. It would be better if you sent Sephardim!" said Rabbi Shushan.

"These are the only ones I have to send," the Rebbe responded gently. "If you can do better than them, by all means..."

Along with his work in the field of education, Dror devoted his time to the spiritual welfare of the people of Yerushalayim, distributing the Rebbe's sichos in synagogues

I gave it all up, except for that inner spiritual impulse, constantly whispering to me that within this world there exists a force far more powerful than anything we can see or perceive.

throughout the city. The successful results of these activities were only revealed several years later.

On one of his visits to Crown Heights, a chassidic-looking young man approached him and warmly shook his hand.

"I don't think I know you," R' Dror said in surprise.

"True," the man responded. "And why should you? When you gave out the sichos, I was clean-shaven and bareheaded..." There are numerous stories of this type.

DRAWING CHASSIDIC CARTOONS

After a few years, R' Dror moved with his family to Tzfas, where he was offered a job as a teacher.

He divides his time these days between his work as a cartoonist and, *l'havdil*, writing mezuzos. "We're only at the start of our involvement with making comic books," Rabbi Cohen told us sincerely. "You still can't make a living from this, but when I see the thirst and enthusiasm among young people, I believe that soon enough I'll be devoting more and more time to this vocation. It's one that has filled my whole life and occupied most of my time since I was a boy. The idea of the comic book was the dream I lived with for a long period of time.

"When I was a boy, I would go out early in the morning, rain or shine, to pick up my Popeye comic book subscription. I know that even today, there are many children – and I've heard this from parents –

who run out to the mailbox and hide the comic book under their coat to keep it from getting wet, Heaven forbid. The comic book is a marvelous tool, and when you use it for matters of holiness and include educational features, it can become quite revolutionary. You can try and explain basic concepts in Judaism to children for hours on end, but through a comic book, a glance is enough for them to understand the content.

***You loved the comics from a very young age. When did you start drawing?**

"My career in drawing, and particularly in comics, started when I was eight years old. I would sit for long hours and scribble on drawing paper. I could find myself contemplating deeply upon a human figure or his attire, and I would draw them. This was my whole world. When my friends were out playing and being mischievous, I preferred to express my thoughts on paper. I would hang the comics on the school bulletin board, and at the ten o'clock recess, many children would gather around to look at the drawings and read the accompanying text.

"My hero from my youth was the comic artist Asher Dickstein, whose drawings I really liked. Dickstein would draw the 'Booki' comic book series for youth and children, the first of its type in Eretz Yisroel. This was a kind of breakthrough in the field. He would draw on a very high professional level, and his comics contained a depth that I loved to examine. Many years later, when I

A DREAM AND ITS MEANING

R' Dror once had a most interesting dream. Initially, he didn't understand what it meant, but with the passage of time, it became clear that it was connected to his activities spreading chassidus throughout the streets of Yerushalayim.

"During those years when the Rebbe held weekday farbrengens, they were heard via live telephone hookup in various locations throughout Eretz Yisroel. In Yerushalayim, the broadcast was heard in the main hall of Yeshivas Toras Emes."

"I longed to hear the Rebbe's voice, but since I lived in the Katamon neighborhood, which was somewhat distant from Toras Emes, it proved rather difficult to get to the broadcast. Eventually, I found a solution: I slept in my grandfather's house, which was located relatively close to the yeshiva. Thus, when the broadcast was about to begin, I could get there quickly by foot."

"At one of these broadcasts, I was particularly tired. The Rebbe was speaking in Yiddish, of course, so I couldn't understand a word. After a few unsuccessful minutes trying to comprehend something, I dozed off."

"In my dream, I saw the Rebbe in his beis midrash, giving over a sicha in Hebrew. As he was speaking, he went to the *aron kodesh*, took out three unusually large cups of drink, and approached me. When he gave them to me, I noticed that they were actually two cups. I looked inside them and suddenly I saw that they were two empty Coke cans. At that moment, the Rebbe gave me a holy and piercing look, and the cans suddenly refilled themselves. I woke up in the middle of the broadcast, but the Rebbe was speaking Yiddish."

"This was unquestionably a very strange dream. At first, he was afraid to tell his friends because they

might ridicule him. "In the meantime," R' Dror continued, "I had decided to start a Tanya class every Wednesday in the Katamon neighborhood synagogue. I was somewhat reticent about it, as I knew that practically speaking there was not much chance of many people coming to participate. Nevertheless, I decided to make a vessel, in the hope that G-d would fill it."

"My initial fears proved quite valid. I sat in the synagogue for several weeks at the appointed time, learning all by myself. I almost cancelled the class until one day, a young man walked in and asked where the Tanya class was."

Right here," I replied.

"And where's everybody else?" he asked again.

"It's just you and me," I responded. And so the class was born.

"As time progressed, other people joined the class. Two students from Yeshivas Kol Torah in Yerushalayim came in to ask if they could join the class. 'This is the place,' I told them, and we made plans to meet the following week."

"Eventually, the first young man who learned with me, the class founder, stopped coming to learn chassidus. However, the other two established proper chassidic homes. They were Rabbi Refoel Becher and Rabbi Rachamim Tzikashvili, the latter of whom serves as rav of Yerushalayim's Georgian community."

"A number of years later, I spoke with the mekubal, HaRav Yitzchak Ginsburgh, and told him about my dream. He suggested the following interpretation: "The three cups are the three young men who learned in the Tanya class. The cups that turned into cans are the two students who stayed in the class, filled up on chassidus, and even built their own chassidic homes."

came to the yeshiva in Kfar Chabad, my fellow students saw that I drew comics, and they hooked me up with the cartoonist who drew for the *B'Machane Tzivos Hashem* magazine in circulation at the time. I came for the meeting, and who did I see? Asher Dickstein...I was both stunned and deeply moved.

"It turned out that he had gone through a process similar to the one I was experiencing at the time, and I was most happy to meet him. I

naturally told him how much I admired his work, and he responded with the utmost reserve and humility."

***What would you like to do with the *Ohr* booklets that you are producing now?**

"This new *Ohr* initiative is similar to the BooKi style, except that it's designed *al taharas ha'kodesh*. This is a weekly comic book on a very high level, and with each passing week, I understood

more and more how much children love comics and how they connect with them.

"I have dealt much with the field of education throughout my life, even before I got closer to Yiddishkait, and I instill the educational insights I acquired in my art work. These are the skills with which Alm-ghty G-d has blessed me, and this represents an educational mission no less important than standing before a

classroom of students. Today, children are exposed to all the illnesses the street has to put forward. Our material world has many temptations that attract our children, and I want to use this publication to draw them towards something holy. I offer them a better form of comic book, not just from a spiritual and educational aspect, but also from a professional one. I am stringent to put a subject from the Torah in every issue and transform it into a story adventure, such as 'the Mishkan' or 'the Ten Tribes.'

"The child knows a number of these concepts, but they appear to him as dry facts. Through the comic book, however, I forge a new and thrilling life that the child can explore in far greater depth. The tzaddikim I write about serve as living examples, to the point that the child wants to emulate them. I instill this within the child's soul, creating a situation whereby he wants to identify with the comic book heroes.

"The comic book itself doesn't just have a regular story line; it also has an informational section with five news reports from the Torah world. Such information accumulates for the child, and it builds him up. We are already in the ninth month since we initiated operations, and I am surprised each time by the successes and the reactions."

***When you sketch tzaddikim in your comic strip, how do you draw the fine line between a nice and eye-opening caricature on the one hand, and something totally ridiculous on the other?**

"First of all, there are always some magical solutions. Sometimes I can liken him to another tzaddik, a family member (such as the Rebbe Rayatz, who resembled the Rebbe Maharash, etc.). However, when it's not possible to make one character resemble another, I draw an image of someone with a radiant and



"Guests who come to our home for Shabbos call the painting 'The Announcement of the Redemption,' and that's the name we have given it ever since."

These are the skills with which Alm-ghty G-d has blessed me, and this represents an educational mission no less important than standing before a classroom of students.

pleasant appearance, filled with compassion. I start this process even before getting to the story itself. On the other hand, when I have to draw evil characters, I try not to make them more frightening than is necessary, and certainly not with cruel tendencies. This is one of the differences between our comics and those in the non-religious or non-Jewish sector, where the drawings are made overly dramatic. In our opinion, this can have damaging effects upon young readers.

"I have also seen that the comics help children who don't like to read books. There are plenty children in this generation who have no patience. Looking at the drawings and reading the brief accompanying texts encourages them to read, and I personally know of several such cases.

"The comics have a tremendous educational influence upon children. The positive manner in which I describe the path of the tzaddikim leads the child to want to follow in their footsteps, even without realizing it. As I convey the story's underlying message, I include various halachos, customs, and other religious concepts in a text filled with words of Torah. Even in the event that he doesn't understand their meaning, the child turns to his parents and this further enriches his knowledge."

***How have the reactions been?**

"The positive reactions and suggestions for improvements have not stopped coming. I have just returned from a visit to Beis Chayeinu. Rabbi Aharon Yaakov Schwei, rav of the Crown Heights community, who heard about my publication, gave me much



The Tale of the Sambatyon – in the comic strip of R' Dror Yisroel Cohen

encouragement, emphasizing the great importance of the concept of education, particularly in our generation. Grandparents who subscribe to the magazine for their grandchildren tell me that they enjoy the publication themselves. This is something quite modern that had not existed previously in the ultra-Orthodox market – a weekly comic book. It requires tremendous investment. The media representatives who recently visited me left amazed and stunned by the finished product. I explained to them that we have a spiritual committee, and they couldn't seem to grasp this. They asked time after time if this didn't interfere with the freedom of creativity. It took me a while to explain to them that just the opposite was true. The criticism was meant to be helpful and constructive, not destructive.

"When I was invited to speak at the comic arts museum in Cholon, I laid out my doctrine. I asked the other artists not to draw vicious looking faces and sketch more compassionate images, as comic strips have a very powerful influence upon children. I added that while it's possible to draw a picture of an angry person, nevertheless, there is a vast difference between this and someone who breaks windows and

tears out his hair, and they surely should not draw pictures of murder and violence, as are seen in many other comic books. I was the only one who spoke about such matters, and I saw that my words were being received attentively. I feel that I am a shliach in all respects on this issue. My objective is the education of Jewish children."

*** Besides the feeling of shlichus, what do you know about how the Rebbe related to this whole subject?**

"I heard once from Rabbi Eliyahu Friedman that in 5732, Merkaz L'Inyonei Chinuch put out a children's booklet, and they brought the project in the Rebbe. When the Rebbe asked what American youth likes to see, the reply was baseball and comics. The Rebbe then asked that the booklet should include comics... Even before accepting the leadership, the Rebbe published a booklet of Torah classes for American Jewish children, and on the back page, the Rebbe chose to include a comic strip... I also know that the Rebbe was involved in the production of *Moshiach Times*, which had numerous pages of comics. This teaches me about the tremendous power and influence of comic books upon the soul of a child.

"When I wrote to the Rebbe via Igros Kodesh, the answer was that they should print the s'farim in Russian and send them to the library. We are presently working on translations of the comic books into several languages."

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This fascinating interview continued well into the night. When R' Dror accompanied me to the door, I asked about the most unique picture he ever painted in his life, and he referred me to the painting on the living room wall. The painting was a combination of dozens of basic ideas of the Redemption, alongside a picture of the Rebbe. "As you can see, there's a sun resembling a moon – the light of the sun resembling the light of the moon. There's a crown – Malchus; a Torah scroll – 'a new Torah will come forth from Me'; the Beis HaMikdash (may it soon be rebuilt), and above, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, standing and proclaiming, 'Humble ones, the time of your Redemption has arrived.' The picture contains many other elements to the Redemption."

(For further information on Rabbi Cohen's comic book productions, please call Erez at +972-54-834-9290.)

SEALED WITH A KISS (AND A HUG)

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik, District Rav Bat Chefer – Emek Chefer

About Hashem's great love for the Jewish people in the month of Tishrei in general and on Sukkos in particular – and the difference between a hug and a kiss. A fascinating look at the holidays from the perspective of Chazal, Kabbala and Chabad Chassidus.

JOY OF THE BODY AND JOY OF THE NESHAMAH

Yomim Tovim are days of simcha and *oneg* (pleasure), days of happiness and elevation for the body and the soul.

The body rejoices and takes pleasure in the relaxation, the good food, the juicy meat, the fine wine and other delicacies. The holy neshama rejoices in the special G-dly light that is bestowed upon it during these days because although Hashem is close to a Jew every day of the year, Hashem's closeness on Shabbos and Yom Tov is far greater and more significant than on weekdays.

Every Jew understands that G-dly-spiritual pleasure is far more authentic and powerful than physical pleasures. Physical pleasures are fleeting and how can they be compared to the true delight of the soul from genuine, eternal joy

– the revelation of Hashem Himself? However, because of the limitations of the physical body, it is hard to be happy solely with Hashem's closeness. That is why we were commanded to enjoy physical pleasures on Yom Tov, so that the body will also be happy and not interfere with the joy of G-dly holiness. The truth is, though, that all physical pleasures are valueless compared to the wondrous, true pleasure of Shabbos and Yom Tov, when the G-dly k'dusha draws close to every Jew.

REJOICE ON YOUR HOLIDAY

The month of Tishrei "replete with holidays," is a month of lofty delight, because most of the days of the month are special days that are blessed with extraordinary closeness to Hashem. In the first half of the month: the Yomim Nora'im, Rosh

HaShana, Yom Kippur, the Aseres Yemei T'shuva – days referred to in Kabbala as "Chol HaMoed" – and of course in the second half of the month: Sukkos, Hoshana Raba, Shmini Atzeres, Simchas Torah.

Our closeness to Hashem in each of the two halves of the month is different:

In the first half of the month, Hashem's closeness inspires fear and awe. It causes us to do t'shuva and to rectify our sins so we can feel Hashem's closeness without barriers, since it is sin that separates us from k'dusha – "your sins separated between you and your G-d." The avoda of t'shuva and the rectification of sins remove the barriers and reveals the closeness to Hashem which is prevalent during these days.

In the second half of the month, the closeness of Hashem suffuses a person with happiness, "and on the day of your rejoicing and your holidays," to the point that Chazal say that whoever did not see the simcha of Sukkos (Beis HaShoeiva) did not see simcha in his life! This is because all the other reasons for joy are no comparison to the reason to rejoice on Sukkos.

This is true not only of the comparison to material pleasures like wealth and health, but even in comparison to spiritual sources of happiness. On Sukkos there is a loftier reason. The revelation of

During Sukkos there is such a mighty revelation of G-dliness that even the physical body “forgets” all of its woes and bursts into joy and dancing, “simcha poretz geder,” with unusual simcha and oneg.

G-dliness which exists is extraordinary and it causes incomparable feelings of joy.

This was seen during the time of the Beis HaMikdash when throughout Sukkos they danced day and night. Not even on the other Yomim Tovim was there such a simcha. This unparalleled joy was because of the G-dly revelation on this holiday.

In order for a person's simcha to be genuine he needs to set aside all his needs and troubles, both material and spiritual – worries about parnasa, family problems etc. This is possible only when a person merits something very special that causes him to forget everything else, like someone who is in great pain who forgets his suffering when he receives wonderful news.

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HUGS AND KISSES

What is unique about Sukkos as compared to other Yomim Tovim?

In Chassidus it explains that Hashem's closeness to a Jew on Sukkos is compared to “a hug,” in contrast to Hashem's closeness on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur which is like a “kiss.” This is based on the p'sukim in Shir HaShirim in which the love of a man and woman is used as a metaphor for the love between Hashem and the Jewish people: “may He kiss me with the kisses of His mouth,” and “and His

right hand embraces me.” In Chassidus it says that this is (also) referring to the two distinct times in Tishrei:

On Sukkos, Hashem “hugs” a Jew in the sukka. A kosher sukka is required to have three walls: two complete walls and the third can be small. The walls parallel the arm, encircled in an embrace. From the shoulder to the elbow and from the elbow to the wrist correspond to the two complete walls, and the palm corresponds to the third wall, which can be smaller than the other two.

Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur are considered days in which Hashem “kisses” the Jewish people. Why? Well, what is the difference between a hug and a kiss? Which expresses a deeper love?

A kiss is usually given face to face, while in a hug, the arm is placed around the back. This expresses two different types of closeness. The face is where a person's beauty is, both external and internal, “man's wisdom illuminates his face.” A kiss is an expression of the love for the qualities and beauty of the beloved. The back, on the other hand, has no special qualities and that is why a hug expresses love for the beloved that has nothing to do with any specific qualities.

Hence the love expressed by a hug has a transcendent quality which makes it in a way greater.

A kiss on the face, can be viewed as an announcement that one loves the other for their beauty and fine qualities and not for themselves. If they did not have that beauty and those qualities, the love would

disappear. A hug, though, shows love for the beloved that is not dependent on beauty or any special qualities.

On Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, a Jew shows his beautiful face. He has done t'shuva and Hashem kisses Yisroel with love for their special qualities. On Sukkos, a Jew sits in the sukka, and eats and does his ordinary activities there. Then, he doesn't get a kiss (because his special beauty and qualities are not apparent) but a hug, which comes from Hashem's love for the essence of a Jew.

In Chassidus it explains that this love expressed in a hug is a deep and lofty love with which Hashem draws a Jew closer than He does with a kiss. “The aspect of Ahava Raba ... and Supernal Chesed ... which is way above.” On Sukkos a tremendous joy bursts forth, a simcha that comes from the depths of the neshama. The neshama rejoices as it feels its closeness to Hashem.

(The way this is put in Chassidic terminology is that the *hamshachos* on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur are from the *kochos p'nimiyim* and the *hamshachos* of Sukkos are *makifim*, “and His right hand embraces me.” This is like a father who hugs his young son. Although the hug does not express an inner connection like in speech or a kiss but it still draws the son close to his father and enables him to reciprocate. This is what happens on Sukkos, when a *ko'ach makif* from Hashem is drawn down to bring us close and raise us up. That is why the water drawing was joyous, like the analogy of the prince who returns from exile and captivity.)

A JEW'S LOVE FOR HASHEM

A Jew's love for Hashem takes

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