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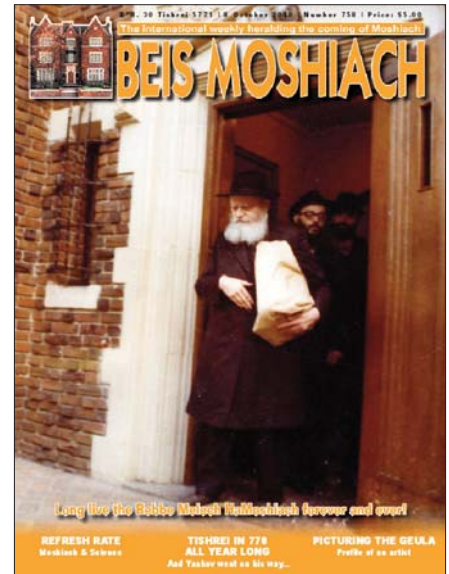
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Beis Moshiah (USPS 012-542) ISSN 1082-0272 is published weekly, except Jewish holidays (only once in April and October) for \$160.00 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and in all other places for \$180.00 per year (45 issues), by Beis Moshiah, 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY and additional offices. Postmaster: send address changes to Beis Moshiah 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Copyright 2010 by Beis Moshiah, Inc.

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# OUT OF THE DISTURBING FLOOD WATERS AND INTO A NEW WORLD

Translated by Boruch Merkur

*Although leaving the exile and entering the redemption can only be according to G-d's directive, nevertheless, when G-d sees Jews yearning for the redemption to come immediately – “we want Moshiach now!” – this itself quickens the commandment to be issued forth from G-d to “leave the ark,” to leave the exile for the true and complete redemption.*

1. It is brought in this week's Torah reading: “And it was at the end of 40 days that Noach opened the window of the ark that he had made and he sent out the raven, etc.”

At first glance, Noach's approach in determining whether the water had dried up is difficult to understand:

Since his entering the ark was on G-d's command, he should have waited for G-d's command to leave the ark. In fact, that is what eventually happened: “And the L-rd spoke to Noach, saying, ‘Leave the ark,’” and only then does it say, “And Noach left...the ark.” Thus, on what basis did Noach send the raven (and the dove thereafter) in order to determine whether the water had dried up? He

was anyway not permitted to leave the ark until he was commanded to do so by G-d!

The explanation is that Noach knew that G-d had appointed him with the responsibility of overseeing the preservation of the world. Indeed, he was commanded to exert himself in the construction of the ark, bringing within it specimens “of all living creatures, of all flesh,” and to feed them throughout the entire time they remained in the ark. All this labor, designed to preserve life in the world after they were to emerge from the ark, had to be done in a natural manner, as it is said, “And G-d will bless you **in all you do.**” Thus, when there was the suspicion that perhaps the land had dried up and they could now leave the ark, Noach did not delay; he immediately did all that was in his power – sending out the raven in order to determine whether the earth had dried, and then, a few days later, sending the dove, and so on.

In fact, the actions of Noach and his efforts – expressing his great yearning and desire to leave the ark in order to proceed with his Divine mission – resulted in G-d commanding him to leave the ark earlier than He would have otherwise instructed.

2. The application of the above with regard to man's service of G-d:

A flood (*mabul*) is symbolic of worldly matters that divert a person's focus (*ha'mevalbelim*) away from serving G-d. The advice in dealing with this problem, according to the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov, is “enter...the ark (*teiva*),” referring to the words (*teivos*) of Torah study and prayer. A Jew must bring himself into the words of Torah and *t'filla* in order to be saved from the disturbing “flood waters.”

Moreover, a person must bring with him “of all living creatures, of all flesh,” taking with him, into the *teiva*, the very best of the world; this too should be illuminated with the light of holiness.

All the above, however, still does not suffice, for the ultimate intent is (not just to bring oneself and all his worldly interests and passions into the *teiva*, but also) to impact the outside world, the world outside the *teiva*.

But this can only be done after the flood, for the entire purpose of the flood is to bring purity to the world. Only thereafter can there be effective work done to refine the world outside the *teiva*, to settle the land. In fact, the world can then be brought to a greater height than it was at its origin. That is, the world no longer remains in a state of “the world was created in its entirety” (as it was in the beginning of its creation), but rises higher, attaining the state described as a “new world,” a world that leaves no possibility for another flood (as the verse states, “I will no longer curse the earth because of man... and I will no longer smite all living things as I have done”), for the cause of the flood – “Now the earth was corrupt” – has been nullified. (Although even after the flood the concept of “on account of our sins we have been exiled, etc.,” still exists, the severity has been greatly diminished relative to prior to the flood, as is obvious.)

Even though this Divine service of transforming the outside world is only possible after the flood had ended, we learn from Noach that even prior to that point he attempted to determine whether the purity brought on by the flood had been achieved, which would permit them to leave the *teiva* in order to transform the outside world.

3. This instruction is especially relevant in the final days of exile:

The general concept of “flood” corresponds to and exemplifies the time of exile, for “*mabul* (flood)” is related to the word “*bilbul* (mixed up),” “for it mixed everything up.” The latter message is likewise expressive of the state of things in the time of exile, when everything is riddled with confusion. Nothing in the world can be seen clearly. It is impossible to perceive the creative G-dly energy within it, to see how “the entire earth is filled with His glory,” to see that the true existence of the world is a dwelling for G-d in the lower realms. In the time of exile, none of this truth is revealed. On the contrary! – as stated in Scripture, “(Woe to those who say of the evil that it is good and of the good that it is evil) those who present darkness as light and light as darkness, who present bitter as sweet and sweet as bitter.”

However, the ultimate intent of the flood, of exile, is to purify the world: “The spirit of impurity I will vanquish from the land.” And this purification must be to the extent that the sustaining of the world is in a totally new manner – “He saw a new world” – meaning to say that there remains no possibility for the world to revert to a state of exile (flood); it is a redemption that is not followed by another exile.

To this end comes the lesson from the event of the 10th of Tammuz: “And Noach opened the window of the

ark, etc.”:

Even while it is still the time of exile – a state of flooding, prior to the redemption – when a Jew speculates that perhaps the end of the flood has come, and we must leave the ark and head out into the world, verily a “new world,” redemption that is not followed by another exile – a Jew must do all that is dependent upon him in order to clarify the matter. He must send out messengers – be they beast or human being – and take other similar actions, everything he possibly can to speed up the redemption.

A Jew mustn’t sit and wait until G-d commands him to leave exile and enter into the redemption (going from a state of things in the ark to that of a “new world”). When there is room for conjecture that the time to leave the exile and enter into the redemption, one does all he can in order to hasten the redemption.

Although leaving the exile and entering the redemption can only be according to G-d’s directive, nevertheless, when G-d sees Jews yearning for the redemption to come immediately – “we want Moshiach now!” – this itself quickens the commandment to be issued forth from G-d to “leave the ark,” to leave the exile for the true and complete redemption.

*[From the address of Shabbos Parshas Chukas,  
10 Tammuz 5745, bilti muga]*

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“Fortunate is the lot of those who make efforts  
towards the purity of Israel, thereby drawing  
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Tractate Sota, purity leads to etc. and as it says,  
“And I will cast pure waters upon you etc.”

*Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe MH”M shlita vol. 14 p. 140*

# WITH THE REBBE FOR TISHREI

By Molly Kupchik

***Hundreds of families and young couples spend Tishrei with the Rebbe in Crown Heights. \* We spoke with two mothers, Mrs. Varda Fisher of Givat Shmuel and Mrs. Ruti Horowitz of Tzfas. Both have 8 children and we wanted to know how they managed. To round out the picture we spoke to the oldest daughter of a family from the center of the country who told us about her perspective on a Tishrei that has become a family affair.***

It was amazing to see over 500 couples and their families who left home in order to spend Tishrei in Beis Moshiaich -770. The Ezras Nashim was packed with mothers, some young and others just young in spirit, who came to imbibe the atmosphere and the Chassidic warmth.

The famous saying, "Chassidim are one family" came to life as hundreds of Chassidim made aliya l'regel, with their families. We spoke

with two mothers, Mrs. Varda Fisher of Givat Shmuel (8 children) and Mrs. Ruti Horowitz of Tzfas (8 children) to hear how they manage to pull this off. Where do they find the physical and spiritual energy to do this?

**How do you organize it all?**

**Mrs. Fisher:** Like any traveler, we arrange passports and visas, and pack. We just multiply all that by 10. I made sure to arrange where we would stay while still back home



since I refused to go without knowing where we would be.

I packed as little as possible and minimal clothing (there are washing machines in America!) and included a pot so I could cook something for Shabbos Chol HaMoed when I would not be able to leave the apartment because I could not carry my little one.

Hashem helped and it all worked out. We felt it was in the z'chus of the fact that we consulted with our mashpia throughout, as the Rebbe said to do.

**Mrs. Horowitz:** Better you shouldn't ask! When I started packing for ten people, I got a taste of what aliya l'regel is ... Even though there was no natural way for us to go, when we opened to an answer in the Igros Kodesh which said, "When you return to Eretz Yisroel from your stay here, report about what happened," we realized that we were going, come what may.

I had received a check for 160 shekels from the Teacher's Union and I decided that to be a keili for the bracha, I would use the money to buy new mezuzos.

**The oldest daughter:** Though the full burden of the arrangements did not fall on me, I was fully involved



throughout. Problems kept on cropping up, like a ticket with the wrong dates (especially when the decision to go was made just four days before the flight, and one of those days was Shabbos!). We didn't even have a chance to arrange for a place to stay in Crown Heights, but we didn't let obstacles sidetrack us from our goal; we pushed all worries out of our minds and flew anyway. As soon as we arrived at 770 a family friend invited us to stay in the rooms in his basement which were available just at that time.

#### **What did people think of your upcoming trip?**

**Mrs. Fisher:** People were shocked. Some of them asked – where do you get the courage from? When we returned, everybody wanted to know what we bought in America and where we went. They were so surprised to hear that we didn't "take advantage" of our trip to America for touring or shopping, but how could I explain?

It was very important to us to take all the children because it's when they are young that their purity and innocence make them especially receptive to the spiritual hashpaos and special experiences by the Rebbe.

**Mrs. Horowitz:** We heard the usual reactions of surprise and incredulity. There were even some Lubavitchers who thought we were crazy.

**Daughter:** They said "kol ha'kavod" in amazement but not all of them managed to hide their shocked reactions.

#### **What particular difficulties did you have to contend with?**

**Mrs. Fisher:** The biggest difficulty was financial. When raising a large family there are numerous daily expenses and we wondered which is more important, to go into debt for our children's material needs or for their chinuch? We quickly concluded that chinuch comes before everything, especially at this age when there is nothing that conceals the truth.

**Mrs. Horowitz:** The first problem concerns money. Two weeks before we were going to leave we wrote to the Rebbe about it, and the answer we opened to was if we have money, to use it to pay our debts. We had bought an apartment and have other debts because of it. We calculated that with the expenses of the trip, we would owe altogether 68,000 shekels.

I went to sleep in despair and two hours later I woke up to hear my husband say, "I found our life insurance papers. We should see what they're worth." The next day we found out that they were worth \$70,000 shekels.

We applied for visas and passports, and unforeseen delays with the issuing of the passports were thankfully smoothed over by our agent.

It takes a month to cash in insurance money but it took us two days to do it. On Friday we got our tickets and on Sunday we flew for Sukkos, which was that Monday night.

Things were miraculous back home but once we reached New York, our problems began. We came

from the Israeli summer to a rainy autumn day without having a place to stay. I had tried getting an apartment three months in advance but hadn't found one. In the end, someone found some faraway apartment for us. As we were all wrapped up in coats and blankets, trying to sleep for the first time in many, many hours, the person in charge of the apartment informed us that it was reserved for another family. He ended up having pity on us and we stayed in the living room. It was a very unpleasant feeling.

The lack of blankets and mattresses wasn't exactly wonderful for our health and by Simchas Torah we were all sick. We felt like the sick Chassidim on Simchas Torah by the Alter Rebbe in the famous story.

**Daughter:** There were problems at the airport, like the fact that they discovered that one of the children's passports had expired and had to be renewed immediately. In the US they confiscated our Dalet Minim although we tried explaining that it posed no threat. They were not returned to us.

#### **What did the children think about your trip?**

**Mrs. Fisher:** They were thrilled. They are all under bar mitzva so it was very exciting for all of them.

**Mrs. Horowitz:** The children were thrilled and decided to tell the Rebbe about it. They wrote a letter and put it into a volume of Igros Kodesh but to their dismay, they opened to a letter where the Rebbe told them clearly not to go! They were so disappointed and they decided to work hard and do better in their studies and behavior. **Every day** they brought notes from school about how well they did, but instead of giving the notes to me, they put them into Igros Kodesh.

When they wrote to the Rebbe again for permission to go on the trip, the Rebbe wrote, "Your coming here is a nachas ruach." They were ecstatic.

During the interview, one of the women said:

While we were in Crown Heights I considered going with the children on the ferry to visit a relative who lives in Staten Island. It seemed like a good idea to me and the children would enjoy the outing. I started figuring how much it would cost when the landlord of the place where we were staying came in. He is a well-to-do man. I asked him how to get there and he started figuring out for me how much the trip would cost. \$1.50 times ten would be \$15 for one way. Double that and you get \$30. The ferry would cost us, too. "It's a pity to spend that much," he said, "and for what?"

I said, "If I squandered tens of thousands of dollars on tickets I can squander a little more."

The well-to-do man, who just a moment before had sounded cheap, began to shout, "That's squandering?! You call going to the Rebbe squandering money? It's the soundest investment. It's something you have for life!"

That's when I understood why I was in such a distant apartment. This was the way the Rebbe had orchestrated for me meet someone to strengthen me in a moment of weakness.

**Daughter:** The little kids were excited because every year the older brothers and sisters go and come back with such special experiences to relate, and this year they were finally able to come along and see it all for themselves.

\*\*\*

**As you flew, after all the physical and spiritual preparations, was there any regret about taking this group trip?**

**Mrs. Fisher:** G-d forbid! When you know where you are going and that soon you will be reaching "the light," the flight goes quickly. The children behaved just fine and even slept, except for the youngest who was over-excited and stayed awake the entire trip.

At first I was nervous about reactions from other passengers but to my surprise nobody said a word. At the end of the trip one lady who had sat nearby even came over to me and she said that she greatly admired my patience.

**Mrs. Horowitz:** There was no time for regrets because most of the passengers were not Lubavitchers and there were plenty of mitzvaim to

do. People helped me with the children and we helped them strengthen their emuna in Hashem and His anointed one. They were amazed by our emuna and even thanked us for encouraging them and giving them chizuk.

**Daughter:** No. Although the children did not get kosher meals on the plane and were exhausted (to the point that they slept through takeoff and landing and when they woke up in the middle they asked why the plane wasn't moving), they behaved nicely. People sitting near us told us at the end of the flight that they had been sure the children would be noisy and they were very pleasantly surprised by how quiet and obedient they actually were. We were happy to have made a Kiddush Hashem on the way to the Rebbe.

**What was it like to be at the Rebbe as a family?**

**Mrs. Fisher:** The children made me feel like a girl again. When they came back to where we were staying from 770 and told me their experiences, I was reminded of what it was like to be at the Rebbe when I was a girl. One of the little ones said, "I saw the river of people

dancing down below and how they all looked simultaneously towards the Rebbe ..." As a family – it was a fantastic experience.

**Mrs. Horowitz:** It's a wonderful time to be together, which doesn't happen that often in daily life. There's always one away in yeshiva or another one at a friend. Even though we didn't have a table or a refrigerator and we brought the food from Eshel and ate the meal like at a picnic, on the floor, it was fun. When you are together at the Rebbe without leaving anyone behind, everybody absorbs it and is inspired together. True, if I would go to the Rebbe alone I would "climb the ladder" by ten rungs, but this way we all got an "aliya." Fewer rungs, perhaps, but as a family we were greatly elevated.

**Daughter:** When I came for Tishrei alone I didn't have to worry about anybody but myself. This year I had to take care of my brothers and sisters – take them to Simchas Beis HaShoeiva and farbrengens, try to get them into things as much as possible, etc. It took me more time since I had to help out, wake them up, dress them – especially when they weren't used to the times – but who says the Rebbe is only for me?

**Did you gain what you expected to gain?**

**Mrs. Fisher:** To begin with, we did not expect any drastic change or that the children would turn into "angels." I am sure they gained a lot. I don't think there is a way to measure it. I *do* know that the children were very sad on the plane back home. It was hard for them to leave, but we explained that their sadness resulted from the soul's delight at being near the light and giluyim and the difficulty in leaving, but the Rebbe is happy that we came and now he is happy and proud of us in our place of shlichus.

The children are "unpacking their bags" and recalling their

Tishrei experiences like the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva, Hakafof, etc. and I hope they'll hold on to it. I hope they will take what we got in Tishrei and hold on to it until we see the Rebbe.

**Mrs. Horowitz:** While we were still there, I could already see in the children's behavior that our investment was worthwhile. The children knew we were going to the Rebbe even if we didn't actually see him and not seeing him did not take an iota away from their emuna. So they were particular about being present at the Rebbe's minyan. One of the moving moments of our visit was when our ten year old was sick and I left him home and he cried at being prevented from davening in the Rebbe's minyan.

I have no idea how my 13 and 14 year old boys had the strength to walk on Tahalucha to one of the furthest places and to return at 3 in the morning to 770 and, although exhausted, to dance at Hakafof until dawn. During our stay, 770 was their de facto home and they only came by the apartment occasionally to eat and sleep.

**Daughter:** The children "live" more with the Rebbe and with Moshiach. Now we hear the kids constantly singing around the house, Yechi and V'Hu Yigaleinu. Even my 3 year old sister, who I was sure had already forgotten our trip, asks: When are we going to see Abba dancing at the Beis HaShoeiva?

Throughout our time there, my brothers anticipated seeing the Rebbe. They kept asking - Where is the Rebbe? Why don't we see him? We explained that the Rebbe is in 770 but we cannot see him since he wants to see whether we really love and believe in him.

I'll tell you two anecdotes to illustrate this. One day, one of the children asked: Where does the Rebbe prepare the food for us? He explained why he was asking, since "We are his guests."



It was nice to see one of my sisters at a Simchas Torah farbrengen. She was tired and nodding off but when they began singing she wanted to be picked up so she could see what everybody was looking at and sing along. That is what finally calmed her down.

**What message did you internalize this Tishrei?**

**Mrs. Fisher:** I learned that you cannot hold back from any physical or emotional exertion when it comes to Chassidische chinuch. It's an investment that you earn back many times over. Nevertheless, you can't "break the vessels" and travel on your own cognizance. Before making a trip like this you have to consult with a mashpia or rav to weigh the different factors and make the right decision.

Now, after the fact, I can see that all the effort was worth it. Every moment, every second that we were with the Rebbe bore fruit. I pray that we won't have to fly again to New York but that the Rebbe will be nisgaleh very soon.

**Mrs. Horowitz:** I saw that when you believe with all your heart, then Hashem removes the obstacles. Our trip was completely unrealistic but our emuna and ratzon split all the rivers and seas that stood in our way. Against all the odds, we went and demonstrated our emuna. It's

disappointing, though, that after all our big efforts we did not hear or see the Rebbe. When we went, we were absolutely sure that this Tishrei would be the end of galus. We did our part and now it's Hashem's turn ...

This Tishrei strengthened my emuna. At Hakafof, when I saw the intensity of the bachurim, I concluded that with memories of what we used to have you might be able to preserve what you've got, but that's not enough to break new ground. There is no doubt that the Rebbe is chai v'kayam and is giving kochos.

**Daughter:** I learned not to look out just for myself. This Tishrei, my responsibilities were greater and I had less time for myself, but I was very happy that my younger brothers and sisters took part in the experience. Now, even my mother, who never understood why we insisted on going every Tishrei, understands exactly what all the fuss is about.

Yesterday I heard my mother talking with another mother of a family who also went for Tishrei and the two of them concluded that going to the Rebbe is more worthwhile than going on any other family vacation; the ruchnius you get is worth the cost.



# MIRACLE AFTER MIRACLE

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated by Michoel Leib Dobry

***I watched the Rebbe as tears streamed down my face. I felt that no one understands me. On the contrary, they're ridiculing me. What am I asking for? Just a mezuzah! I sobbed uncontrollably with a flood of emotion. "Rebbe, just let there be one mezuzah on the entrance to the house!" I begged. Suddenly, we heard someone knocking on the door. "Come in," my mother said. The door opened... Three thrilling and exciting miracle stories from Tzfas resident Efrat Shochetman.***

Here are three awe-inspiring miracle stories from Efrat Shochetman from Tzfas. Three times she bore witness to the precision of the words of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, and how nothing he says goes for naught.

"I experienced for myself what the Rebbe's bracha really is. Many

years can pass after receiving the bracha, but it must be fulfilled. The Rebbe foresees and predicts the future that we neither see nor understand," said Efrat emphatically.

Efrat was born and raised in a home that was quite far from Torah and mitzvos, a home unfamiliar with

the fast of Yom Kippur, kashrus, or even the Jewish holidays. Her father wanted to discard the path of Torah by which he had been educated as a young boy. "In many non-religious homes, there were certain symbolic elements of Jewish tradition," Efrat mused. "The seder on Pesach night was celebrated as a family meal, kiddush was made on Friday night, and other such symbols. But in my parents' house, there was nothing! My father was repelled by anything that even smelled of Jewish tradition, and he opposed it with open expressions of cynicism and estrangement."

## **"EFRAT, YOU WANT TO SEE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE?"**

As a preface to her fascinating stories, Efrat briefly revealed her journey to the world of Torah and mitzvos, and her exposure to the great light of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach.

"I was born in Afula in a blatantly secular home. My father emigrated to Eretz Yisroel from Romania, and my mother from Iraq. My mother's roots go back as far as the Ben Ish Chai, but his teachings and his spiritual strength did not take expression in our home – to put it mildly. My father went through chilling and heart-rending experiences during his childhood in the frightful period of the Holocaust, and he decided that he would never follow the path of Torah and mitzvos again. He didn't believe in anything that symbolized holiness or spirituality.

"When I finished elementary school, I really wanted to continue my studies on a kibbutz. During those days, kibbutzim had a relatively good reputation, and many city residents would study in the kibbutz high school, where they acquired a high level of education while they worked in the local farm



economy, agriculture, or in the barns. This was my dream.

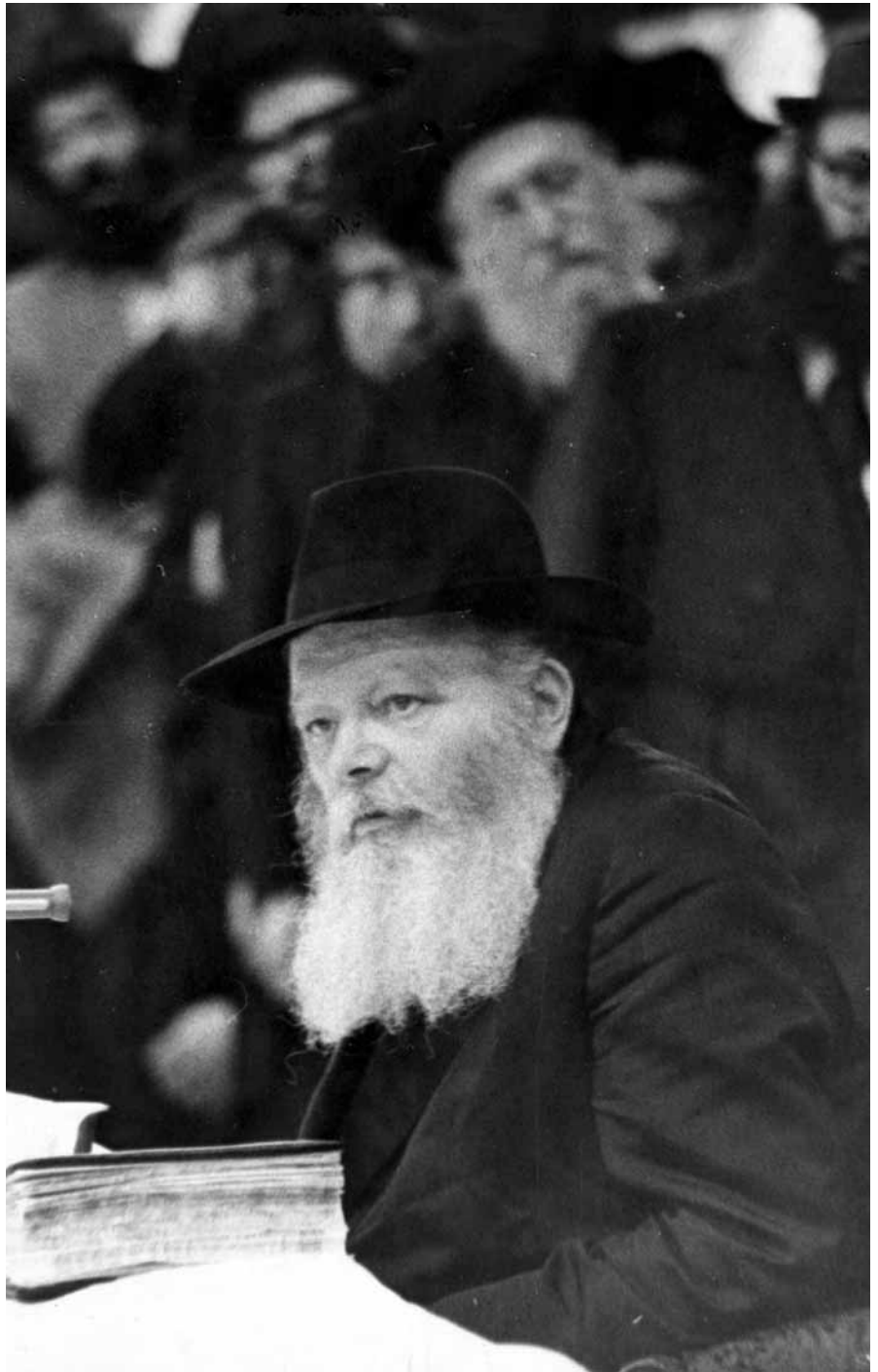
"I completed my elementary school studies with excellent marks, and as a preparation for life on the kibbutz, I worked during the summer vacation as a camp counselor at Kibbutz Dovrat, giving me a little background on the new world I would soon enter. After taking the entrance exam to Kibbutz Ir HaKarmel, they informed that I had been accepted.

"Looking back, I think that my desire to work on an agricultural kibbutz, in addition to my studies, stemmed from an inner yearning for another kind of life, an urge that had been pulsating within me from a very young age.

"One day, during the vacation, I heard someone at the front door. My mother opened the door, and standing there were two young chassidim. They said that they had been sent from Tzfas, where they had opened two excellent educational institutions for boys and girls. They wanted to register the girl, me, in the new institution. My mother raised her eyebrow, and looked towards me and my father sitting in the front of the television.

"She glanced at me and asked, 'Efrat? You want to see some religious people?' Impulsively, I said yes. I didn't have the slightest idea what 'religious people' were, and how they were different from us. I was simply bored. It was summertime, hot, and I was ready to agree to any offer.

"They promised to come back in a few days, when they would take all the neighborhood girls who registered with the Tzfas institutions to a camp they had organized. This way, we could get an impression of the place and make a final decision whether to continue our studies there the following year. I nodded my head in agreement without really understanding what I was getting myself into.



"A few days later, they came to pick us up with several taxis, and we went up to Tzfas. Most of the girls came from traditional homes that observed a few mitzvos. They knew some concepts, they had a little background, but in my case, anything connected with Torah and

mitzvos was new and unfamiliar territory. To me, the whole journey was nothing more than a pleasure trip. I never dreamed what this trip would do...

"Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Chitrik was waiting for us on the school grounds. He cheerfully greeted each

***As soon as I took the mezuzos down, I realized that they were not kosher. After four years in Beis Chana, I knew that mezuzos must be written on parchment produced from animal hide, but what I found was nothing more than pieces of paper with fading ink.***

girl with a warm and heartfelt Sholom Aleichem, and then held entrance exams. Many things were quite strange to me, but I tried to enjoy the trip and the whole experience.

"I was totally out of my depth. I was dressed like an average Israeli girl, but suddenly my wardrobe just didn't fit in. I noticed that everyone washed their hands before meals, but it took me a little time to understand that this is done only before eating bread. The whole concept of making blessings before and after was an innovation to me. It all served to arouse my curiosity, and what I learned seemed relevant; it spoke to me.

"Accompanied by such thoughts, I returned to my parents' home after two very full weeks, full not only with trips and other exciting experiences, but also with considerable insight and emotion that I had not known previously.

"At the start of the year, my feeling of indecision was quite real and most difficult. I had to decide between Beis Chana and the kibbutz. I had originally been planning to go to. I struggled over the matter for a while, but I eventually decided to go to Tzfas and learn in Beis Chana. To this day, I don't know how I made this decision. G-d put the words in my mouth and the power in my legs to move in the proper direction. My mother was certain that I'd be on a bus heading back home within a few

days, but the reality was quite different. I stayed a week, then another week. Together with housemother Mrs. Noga Dobkin, I went and bought an appropriate wardrobe.

"She patiently explained about the modesty of Jewish girls, and I really understood, agreed, and most importantly, internalized the idea. I'll never forget the first 'off Shabbos' when I came to my parents' house with my new attire. My brothers looked at me and wouldn't stop laughing; they thought I was wearing a costume. My studies in Beis Chana had a powerful influence on me. I loved the place, I connected with the people and the ideals, and I felt that it was good for me there. When I would come home for Shabbos, I had no one to make Kiddush for me, so I would make it myself and eat some challa with a can of tuna.

"That year marked the first time that I had ever fasted on Yom Kippur or even seen people fasting... Due to the delicate situation, there were still instances where I did things or acted without knowing what was forbidden and what was permissible.

### **WHO CALLED YOU TO PUT UP MEZUZOS?**

Efrat's first story took place four years after her exposure to Judaism began.

The year was 5748, the first days of her studies in tenth grade.

"One day, when I was sixteen years old, I woke up and noticed a small abrasion on my pinkie. There didn't appear to be anything to get too worried or concerned about, and I shrugged it off and continued my daily routine. When I woke up the next morning, however, I felt very strong pains in my head and had a high fever. Furthermore, a rash had begun to spread all over my body. I began to get very nervous and I quickly went to tell my father.

"When he felt my temperature and saw the spreading rash, he rushed me to the local health clinic. They immediately referred us to an expert dermatologist but this doctor, too, didn't have a clear answer for us. The fever remained high, and the rash continued to spread, but none of the physicians with whom we consulted could make a proper diagnosis. The uncertainty was the most frightening thing of all. My father spared no effort to find good doctors. Thus, we went from one doctor to another, all of whom made their examinations, but none of them could determine the source of the problem.

"In the meantime, I was suffering, totally beside myself due to the agonizing pain.

"Then I suddenly had the flash of an idea: What about the Rebbe!? I had been learning in Beis Chana for years, and had heard much about the power of the Rebbe and his blessings that had been fulfilled, one by one. Why don't I write to him?

"I immediately called the Segals, the shluchim in Afula. They had access to a fax machine, and many people throughout northern Eretz Yisroel would write to the Rebbe through them, and have the merit to receive answers. I told Mrs. Segal about what I had been going through the past several days, and I

asked her to send a letter to the Rebbe for me.

“Within just a few hours, an answer arrived from the Rebbe: ‘Check the mezuzos. I will mention it at the *Tzion*.’ To ask my father to check the mezuzos was simply not relevant. He would ridicule the very suggestion. I asked my mashpia if I could take the mezuzos off the doorposts myself and send them to be checked, and she gave her approval. As soon as I took the mezuzos down, I realized that they were not kosher. After four years in Beis Chana, I knew that mezuzos must be written on parchment produced from animal hide, but what I found was nothing more than pieces of paper with fading ink.

“I went back to bed, and wondered what I should do next. By the following morning, I already felt better. The headache pains were gradually dissipating, and the rash was clearing and forming scabs. It seemed that it was all going away as quickly as it came. This whole experience strengthened my faith in the Rebbe and intensified manifold my process of coming closer to the teachings of chassidus. I saw the power of the Rebbe’s bracha with my own eyes. Now the only thing left was to acquire kosher mezuzos.

“When I told my father what had transpired, he naturally mocked the whole idea and would not agree to put up new mezuzos. Weeks passed and turned into months, and each time I returned for an “off-Shabbos” from Beis Chana, I was disturbed anew by the absence of mezuzos at home. I was deeply anguished by all this. I had no way of paying for new kosher mezuzos for all the rooms of the house, all by myself, and all my pleas for my father’s help in this matter fell on deaf ears. He simply didn’t understand the power of mezuzos and didn’t think it worthwhile to spend such a considerable amount

***Impulsively, I said yes. I didn’t have the slightest idea what ‘religious people’ were, and how they were different from us. I was simply bored. It was summertime, hot, and I was ready to agree to any offer.***

of money for them.

“One day, I was organizing the kitchen, and I came across a small picture of the Rebbe which my mother had asked me to bring to her for a bracha. I looked at the Rebbe and tears streamed down my face. I felt that no one understands me; on the contrary, they’re ridiculing me. What am I asking for? Just a mezuzah! I sobbed uncontrollably with a flood of emotion. ‘Rebbe, just let there be one mezuzah on the entrance to the house!’ I begged.

“After I had calmed down, I resumed my cleaning work. Suddenly, we heard someone knocking on the door. ‘Come in,’ my mother said. The door opened, and in walked an ultra-Orthodox looking Jew, and based on his attire, he appeared to be a Chabad chassid. He didn’t ask any questions, he simply declared that he had come to put up mezuzos. He had a hammer in one hand and mezuzos in the other. When he finished affixing the mezuzah to the front door, he proceeded to put other mezuzos on the doorposts of each of the rooms.

“My mother and I looked at him totally dumbfounded. He neither asked nor said a word; he simply got right to work. ‘Who called him here, anyway?’ I asked my mother, who said that she had no idea. I was shocked in a way I had never been before. It was a feeling of stunned disbelief. I had asked the Rebbe just a minute ago to make

certain that our house would have mezuzos, and suddenly someone walks in and starts putting them up.

“I told my mother about the silent prayer I had made just a few moments earlier, and she too was overcome with emotion. She then turned to this chassid and asked who had called him.

“He furrowed his eyebrows in puzzlement, as if he didn’t understand the question.

“‘You called me!’

“‘We didn’t call you,’ my mother replied. The young man put two and two together, and he realized that he had confused us with one of our neighbors. He was looking for the address of the house that had invited him, and when he saw no mezuzah on our doorpost, he simply assumed that it was us.

“Now the young chassid was a bit embarrassed, but my mother quickly calmed him down. ‘You made no mistake,’ she told him, as she detailed what had happened just minutes before he arrived. He was very thrilled, and he made a deal with my mother to sell her the mezuzos at cost value.

“When my father came home, my mother told him the whole story, and he accepted it as a done deal.

“And me? It took several days for me to calm down from this miraculous occurrence. There’s a Rebbe and leader in the world. This knowledge had permeated my mind at last.”

## “REBBE, I WANT MY FATHER TO DO T’SHUVA”

“The second and third stories occurred when I was in twelfth grade, during Tishrei 5750.

“This marked the first time that I traveled to Beis Chayeinu to see and to be seen, the first time I saw clearly for myself everything that they had taught us all those years.

“Like many other things connected to Judaism, getting on to that flight to New York was no simple matter. My mother consented, as she understood the feelings within my heart and gave her permission, but my father categorically refused. From his vantage point, there was nothing to look for with the Rebbe. He suggested, instead, that I join him for his scheduled trip to Romania to visit his country of origin.

“Only recently, he had told me why he was so determined in his opposition to the path of Jewish tradition, particularly when I asked to go to the Rebbe. He said that during the Second World War, when he was only nine years old, he saw how the Nazis (may their name be erased) grabbed the local rabbi and pulled out his hair until they had killed him. According to my father, all the rabbi’s Torah and mitzvos were of no use to him at that moment, and therefore, it would be better to educate us to be complete atheists. The root of my soul had apparently drawn me to the truth.

“Yet a fervent desire burned within me to travel to the Rebbe. Throughout those years, ever since I had been exposed to the teachings of chassidus, I believed in the Rebbe and tried to fulfill his directives. Now was my opportunity to at last meet with the Rebbe, and I wasn’t about to give it up. My father, however, maintained his opposition and, needless to say, his firm refusal to finance the venture. The

atmosphere in school was one of ‘Tishrei with the Rebbe or bust!’ Rebbetzin Rochel Hendel did this with a great *shturem*. We learned about the Rebbe and lived with the impending trip. Among the ninety girls who learned in Beis Chana that year, forty flew to the Rebbe for Tishrei, and they spoke about it as the culmination of everything.

“By Divine Providence, a wealthy benefactor donated a large amount of money that year to Beis Chana for this purpose, thereby subsidizing a considerable percentage of the airfare and making the cost of a ticket far more reasonable and affordable. My mother had given her consent, and after persistent appeals, my father reluctantly conceded and I boarded the plane to New York.

“Tremendous excitement engulfed me and the rest of the girls. The overall atmosphere and the image of the Rebbe were simply overwhelming.

“When I stood in line for dollars the very first time, it was clear to me what I was going to ask the Rebbe: I wanted my father to do t’shuva. But how would I manage to get the words out of my mouth? I simply didn’t know. I constantly felt an inner struggle going on as I stood in the long line. It wasn’t easy dealing with my family; they didn’t accept that I had changed my way of life, and I was compelled to stand as firm as a wall on every little thing. I decided that when I came before the Rebbe, I would only say that which came from the heart.

“Thus, my turn came, and I made my request. ‘Rebbe, I want my father to do t’shuva.’ My whole body was shaking from excitement.

“The Rebbe smiled and replied, ‘Amen,’ and he then made an upward gesture of encouragement with his hands and gave me two dollars – one for me and one for my father.

“I had already started on my way

out when the Rebbe called me back. I went back in, and the Rebbe added in a clear voice, ‘*U’b’karov mamash*’ (and very soon indeed). I was absolutely ecstatic. After such a bracha, I was certain that I would return to Eretz Yisroel and see my father wearing a chassidic fedora and a kapote...

“In truth, it didn’t happen quite so fast, but the initial signs were soon in coming. From the very day I returned to Eretz Yisroel, I noticed that my father had started to soften. He came to Lod Airport to pick me up, and old Jewish melodies were coming out of the tape player in the car... I was very excited by this, but it would take another eleven years until my father called me one day and told me in these words: **‘I’m already seventy years old, and I want to get back to my roots.’** I was thunderstruck that my father would say such a thing! At first, I thought that he was making a joke. By his nature, he was the cynical type, and I never could really be sure whether he was being serious or mocking me. But I quickly realized that he was quite serious, expressing that he was ready and willing to make a real change in his life.

“I knew and believed all those years that if the Rebbe gives a bracha for something, it is bound to happen. Within a short period of time, I had enlisted the help of Rabbi Moshe Tamari from Tzfas, who acquired a stringently kosher pair of t’fillin for me to give to my father. Rabbi Kratz from Afula immediately went to my father’s house and helped him put t’fillin on for the first time in his life. At the first opportunity, I brought to my father the dollar that the Rebbe had given me for him. I felt that this was the most appropriate time to present it. Who knows what he would have done with it if I had given it to him immediately upon my return to Eretz Yisroel? ‘Abba,’ I said to him,

‘the Rebbe already knew that a one hundred and eighty degree change would take place in your life, and he has already blessed you...’

“I’ve already done my t’shuva,” my father whispered in my ear. He left it at that, without elaboration. From then on, the non-kosher food disappeared from my parents’ home, and my father ceased his Shabbos morning trips to Nazareth to buy meat. Today, you would never hear of such a thing in their house. The change was fundamental and all-encompassing.

“Even my mother went through a significant transformation. Today, she and all of her sisters light Shabbos candles. Over the years, I would call my mother every Friday. I wouldn’t tell her to light Shabbos candles, rather just to ‘update’ her on the time for Shabbos candle lighting. I didn’t give up, and it eventually penetrated – first her and then her sisters.

## DILEMMA BY DOLLARS

“During that visit to the Rebbe in Tishrei 5750, I passed by again for dollars, and this time I was very uncertain about whom I should ask for: myself or my older sister. I didn’t want to take up the Rebbe’s valuable time with extra requests. On the one hand, I really wanted to get married as soon as possible. I longed for a home of my own where I could conduct myself freely in accordance with proper halachic standards.

“On the other hand, I had a sister who was a year and a half older than me, living a lifestyle that reflected the secular education she had received. My serious indecision was over whether I should request a bracha for her to begin conducting her life as a proper young Jewish woman, or for myself to find a shidduch right away. In the end, I decided to ask for my sister. I had already been privileged to become a Chabadnikit, ‘protected’ to some



extent, whereas my sister was still very far from the path of Torah and was much more in need of a bracha.

“The line was long, and the excitement merely grew as my turn to stand before the Rebbe came closer. Anyone who has taken part in this event surely remembers the sensation of intense anticipation. I felt that the Rebbe was waiting for me.

“As it turned out, I was in for an incredible surprise: The Rebbe handed me two dollars – one for me, and the second for my sister!

“As I took the dollars, the Rebbe blessed me with *‘B’suros tovos’* (good news). I didn’t have the chance to say a single word to the Rebbe, and I was already being pushed outside. How did the Rebbe know!? I was taken aback by the obvious revelation of ruach ha’kodesh. I didn’t ask for a thing, yet the Rebbe read my thoughts.

“Similar to my father, the change within my sister didn’t occur that quickly. To my great regret, she remained far from a life of Torah and mitzvos for quite some time. How long would it be until the Rebbe’s bracha would be realized? Yet, I continued to believe, to anticipate, and to yearn – and it eventually came to pass. One day,

she met a young Jewish man, and together they decided to get married and establish a kosher Jewish home.

“Shortly before the wedding, she called me and said that she wanted to have a Jewish wedding – and not just any Jewish wedding, but a chassidic one just like mine, with the ‘Niggun of Four Stanzas’ and all the required halachos. I was in shock. When I came back to my senses, I took responsibility for organizing a proper wedding, according to all the appropriate Chabad customs and stringencies. The wedding took place in Tzfas, and she and her husband have taken a new path in life since then – the path of our forefathers.

“Many chassidim from Afula are familiar with her husband, an auto electrician known all over town. A large picture of the Rebbe hangs in his shop window.

“Twenty years have passed since the Rebbe blessed my sister with *‘B’suros tovos,’*” Efrat concludes her account. “Sometimes, you have to take a look back to understand how the Rebbe’s every word came to fruition. The Rebbe promised, and the Rebbe fulfilled. At times, it took several years for the bracha to be realized, for reasons known only in Heaven, but it always came to be...”

# LIVING TISHREI IN 770 ALL YEAR LONG

Interview by Sholom Ber Crombie

*In an interview suffused with Chassidic flavor, mashpia, R' Elozor Kenig pleausurably reminisces about his Tishrei experiences in Beis Chayeinu, all the while farbrenging and guiding us in how to bring these experiences to those around us and the other people we come in contact with throughout the year. \* A post-Tishrei interview.*

Thousands of Chassidim have returned from Beis Chayeinu, saturated with Chassidishe chayus, and perhaps you included. Every person takes from Tishrei a collection of uplifting. We'd like to hear about Tishrei from your perspective.

The trip to the Rebbe every year is like the aliya l'regel to the Beis HaMikdash in Yerushalayim. When the Mikdash stood, all year parents would tell their children about it and about the miracles and the revelation of G-dliness that was apparent there. Children were in a state of excited anticipation to experience it for

themselves, to see the place of the Sh'china. The parents would say, we will go there soon for Yom Tov and you will see everything we spoke about all year.

When they went to the Beis HaMikdash they would see the things they had heard about and thanks to the preparations, i.e. talking about the Mikdash all year, the children would be ready and would want to see the avoda and experience the loftiness of that holy place.

The same is true today. We see the power of the preparations that the bachurim make before their trip

to the Rebbe. As they would always say – your preparations will affect the outcome. Like in the time of the Mikdash, if you go without preparing then you see a slaughterhouse with a floor full of blood but if you prepared properly then you see the revelation of G-d.

Never before has there been so much preparation for this aliya l'regel. Thousands of bachurim and hundreds of girls prepared all year; being tested on hundreds of Mishnayos and lines of Tanya by heart, increasing in their Chassidishe behavior and strengthening their bond with the Rebbe. Even the summers spent working in summer camp is to save up their hard-earned money for their trip to the Rebbe. The desire to go to the Rebbe begins at the start of the year and even when they are at the Rebbe, a raffle is held for the bachurim for a ticket for the next year's trip. Hundreds of bachurim participated throughout Tishrei in Beis Chayeinu in Mivtza Limud in order to participate in this raffle for a ticket to the Rebbe for next year!

In Chassidus it explains that preparations for something are loftier than the thing itself. These bachurim come and spend their whole Tishrei in and around 770 – and then the rest of the year, too, they are there all the time because a person is where his thoughts are.

Thanks to preparing for traveling to the Rebbe – as we see these past years how it is done in such a special way – we see things today that we never saw before. Many people wonder, what do they see over there in 770? Once upon a time, we had the z'chus to see the Rebbe and hear him and participate in his farbrengens, but today what motivates the thousands of bachurim and hundreds of girls to go?

Then they go to 770 and are shocked by the unusual zeal of the thousands of bachurim and girls as they sit all day in 770 and learn, and

they concede, we didn't have such enthusiasm to learn when we went to 770 ...

Throughout Tishrei we see very lofty kochos by the bachurim, whether it's walking for hours on Tahalucha – which we didn't have in previous years – or dancing all night on Sukkos. It occurred to me that even at the wedding of a good friend when you really want to rejoice with him, you don't dance as much as that.

When you are at the Rebbe, you feel that you are receiving special kochos, kochos of the Essence of the soul, of the Yechida, of Melech HaMoshiach. There, everything is done with simplicity, as thousands of bachurim dance until 6:00 in the morning without tiring. Even the guests who come from other neighborhoods in the area get swept up in the dancing, although they start out as observers from the sidelines, because something **emes** is contagious.

At weddings you always see that there are those who dance, who are within the simcha, and those who came just to stand on the side, but here everybody joins a circle. You see the closeness among people; a chassid joyously exchanging his shtraimel with the down-hat of a bachur he's never met. And you suddenly feel that this is what the Rebbe always wanted people to feel, "as one man with one heart." You see how the barriers that separate us come down.

Sometimes I am even surprised at myself, at how I manage to stay strong for seven entire nights. Under other circumstances, a full night of dancing would leave people far too tired for mivtzaim the following day, but these bachurim are on time for the Rebbe's minyan the next morning and then off on mivtzaim, with nary a yawn in sight.

When you go to the Rebbe today you see how special the Tmimim are, and instead of declining



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generations we even see an opposite trend. Long ago, the mashpiim R' Shlomo Chaim Kesselman and R' Mendel Futerfas would demand that the best bachurim learn 12 prakim of Tanya by heart. Today, we see that children before bar mitzva do this too! The Rebbe once referred to children as *mishichoi* (my anointed ones) and said, you look at a child and see Moshiach. The Rebbe said that this is the case even in superficial things, such as that he sings "We Want Moshiach Now" and it says those words on his yarmulke. But today we see *mishichoi* in the kochos of the Essence of the soul, in everything. When we are in Beis Chayeinu we see that today the kochos are much

loftier; we never had this before.

The bachurim today are *neiros l'ha'ir* not only in their davening and learning but in the simple sense – when you look at them, you see Moshiach. It's like a person who goes to the palace and sees the pomp and the ministers and he feels he is in the presence of the king because this is an extension of the king's own life force. The chayus of the Tmimim today is the chayus of the king.

Another thing we see at Beis Chayeinu is the idea of a "yoetz" (advisor). Nobody is meting out punishments to bachurim who don't learn but 770 remains full every day with bachurim who are sitting and learning. Every bachur feels that the



***Nobody is meting out punishments to bachurim who don't learn but 770 remains full every day with bachurim who are sitting and learning. Every bachur feels that the Rebbe loves him, and so he gives back to the Rebbe.***

Rebbe loves him, and so he gives back to the Rebbe, and everybody goes about with a smile and simcha; it's not about kabbalas ol but about simcha.

Another wonderful thing you see which is really outstanding is the hospitality of the residents of Crown Heights. I had to arrange a place for a family on Erev Simchas Torah and I called a family who hosted me one time, to see whether they could have this family stay with them. The woman told me that she could not have more people since she had thirty girls sleeping there!

This special atmosphere of Tishrei adds to the chayus of the people in Crown Heights. When they host a couple and see their mesirus nefesh, that they came to the Rebbe without knowing where they would stay, it gives them the chayus for 770 too.

In recent years it has become the practice for young women and their children to come Simchas Torah night to 770, when the bachurim and men are on Tahalucha. This enables the women of the community to go to 770 and to kiss the Rebbe's Torah with their children. It's very moving as thousands of local children call out the p'sukim of the Hakafo in 770. This way, every child in the community feels that he is also a part of what is taking place in Beis Chayeinu. He kissed the Rebbe's Torah, he did Hakafo in 770, and he feels that there is a Rebbe

**How do you take the "koch"**

**and chayus we had in Tishrei, when the atmosphere was full of chayus, and carry it over to daily life throughout the year wherever we live?**

In the sichos of the D'var Malchus of 5751-5752, the Rebbe speaks a lot about names of various parshiyos and their content. He shows how the names don't seem to match the content, but then he explains that since we are in the time of Moshiach, there are special kochos so that these inyanim fit together because we have the power of Etzem.

To take the month of Tishrei and bring it down to Cheshvan, that takes the power of Etzem. This great power is revealed in 770, and is evidenced in the aforementioned amazing phenomena that we see today, the tremendous diligence in learning of the bachurim and their devotion to all of the Rebbe's inyanim. Sometimes you are taken aback by it and wonder – how can all these great things be done with such matter-of-factness? But when the Etzem of the neshama shines, you don't make a big deal about anything. That's the way it was in the Beis HaMikdash when they went and stood crowded together and then had plenty of room to prostrate themselves before Hashem. In 770 you see abnormal achdus with everyone crying out for the Rebbe's hisgalus, everyone feeling the Rebbe's presence. All love the Rebbe and all feel that he is here and want to see him.

770 can be brought anywhere you go. The Rebbe showed us how every place in the world can be made into a 770. Even France, such a lowly place, can be made into 770-*u'faratzta*. The inyan of 770 needs to be brought everywhere; there are Chabad houses in many places that are built to look like 770 and there have even been some private individuals who have built their homes as a replica of 770. This is how people begin to feel a personal connection to 770. You simply need to bring the great chayus of 770 wherever you go and to promote the inyan of traveling to the Rebbe in your place of shlichus, where you live year-round.

Some parents told me they went to 770 because they were jealous of their children who came home full of simcha and chayus. They saw how their children came back from the Rebbe and were "living" with 770 all year and were keeping the s'darim and learning with new kochos, and they wanted this for themselves.

Throughout the generations, people sought to prepare for Geula. Today the Rebbe is telling us, live in Geula already! Behave with Ahavas Yisroel like in the era of Geula; live in all aspects of your life as in Geula. Taste the Geula on the eve of Geula. We just need to open our eyes and see; if you open your eyes you see that the bachurim today are living with the Rebbe, and living with the Rebbe is living with Geula. Today, we are living with Etzem. We don't have the outward expressions of receiving a dollar and hearing a maamer or sicha from the Rebbe. Today we don't have those things which you apprehend with your senses; we connect to Etzem. And it's done with such simplicity, i.e. in a natural way.

All this needs to be brought home. We need to open our eyes and be amazed by what we see in 770, the tremendous kochos. Today there are Geula phenomena that are

taking place before our eyes; we just need to open our eyes to see that they exist. It's not a matter of anticipating something that will happen, it's simply a question of being enveloped in the warmth of 770 and you find yourself smiling in pleasure over what we already have. During Tishrei there were also tears and yearning but these are overpowered by the feeling that the Rebbe is here and the drive to give him nachas. This is what we need to bring everywhere as we "live with 770."

**There is a talk of the Rebbe Rayatz where he tells about one of the Rebbeim who said to his Chassid: "Since you love me, I want you to make me Chassidim in your city." The Chassid said he wasn't capable. The Rebbe explained: "I mean that you should behave as a Chassid of mine ought to behave and then people will want to copy you." How do we convey the chayus we experienced in a way that other people will want it too?**

Wherever you are, whether at work or in Kollel or teaching, you need to hold a gathering of the other employees or talmidim or the other people in the Kollel who were not able to go to the Rebbe and make a farbrengen. Tell them about your trip to the Rebbe. This is something that the Rebbe wants every returning Chassid to do.

Today we are all shluchim to bring 770 to the world and to get the entire world to live with the chayus of 770. We went to the "gas station" and now we have "fuel" to go on our way. As *nivra'im*, created beings, our nachas is the tremendous inspiration we got from being with the Rebbe. The nachas of the Borei is to "bring this down" and "to make a dwelling down below" for Hashem.

The Rebbe says in one of the maamarim that the Levites were secondary to the Kohanim because



Rabbi Elozor Kenig farbrenging with young men who came to the Rebbe for Tishrei

***Thanking Hashem opens your eyes so you can continue to live with it. If you thank Hashem in 770 that you had the z'chus to arrive, then you are living there with thanks. But you need to continue living with this the rest of the year... Talking about this all the time revives the chayus we got there.***

their service was to "raise up," i.e. to transcend the physical, while the avoda of the Kohanim was to "bring down" G-dliness and holiness into this world.

Hashem's nachas is to bring the Sh'china down, to give nachas to the Rebbe; His nachas is not that of the Chassid but of the Rebbe. We learn this from Yaakov Avinu. Specifically in Charan he established the Tribes who were all complete and it is there that it says that it became "easy" for him to go. The main avoda is to bring down the chayus and kochos which we received from the Rebbe because the main thing is not the "ratzo" but the "shuv." We seek our pleasure; we seek to rise up and to feel the sense of inspiration, but the

nachas for Hashem is when we build a dwelling down below for Him and picture His smile – how much nachas He has right now.

In previous generations, when someone came back from the Rebbe, even if he was just a wagon driver, they would make a farbrengen and seat him at the head of the table and everyone would look at this person who had come back from the Rebbe. He was the main speaker and he would relate what took place in Lubavitch. Even if he was a simple man who could only repeat the pasuk he heard from the Rebbe in the maamer – "*tik'u ba'chodesh shofar*" – everybody gathered to hear him repeat the pasuk and they would sing in honor of the Chassid who

returned from the Rebbe.

Whoever wants to hold onto his feeling for 770 should ask himself how many people he farbrenged with about the trip to the Rebbe and what took place there, how many people he got excited with the chayus of 770. The minimum that the Rebbe asked of those who returned from 770 was to repeat what they heard. This means that the point that the Rebbe instilled in us, when we return from him, needs to give life to our environment so others can also live with the chayus of Beis Chayeinu. If you give life to another Jew, with the warmth and atmosphere of 770, you too will live with 770. The Alter Rebbe writes that through learning with someone, your mind and heart become refined a thousand times over, and obviously this also applies to returning from the Rebbe.

#### **How can one continue to live with 770 all year?**

I'll answer you on a personal note. At many farbrengens I repeat the miracle that happened to me with my heart 23 years ago, when Hashem saved my life. Although I told this story many times, I tell it every Shabbos. My grandchildren say, "Saba, we heard that many times already ..." I tell them that their grandfather (me) could have spoken to them from heaven and the fact that I am here is thanks to this miracle and so I must continue to thank Hashem all the time.

Each of us experienced many miracles. The Rebbe says we need to contemplate the miracles and the problem is that we don't farbreng about it and don't live with it enough. Thanking Hashem opens your eyes so you can continue to live with it. If you thank Hashem in 770 that you had the z'chus to arrive, then you are living there with thanks. But you need to continue living with this the rest of the year, thanking Hashem for our being able to go to the Rebbe, to live with what

***It says "rejoice and make others joyful" - the two go together. If you want to keep the good feelings to yourself, they will dissipate. If you excite others, then it will remain with you.***

we experienced in 770. Talking about this all the time revives the chayus we got there.

There is the inyan of the **nosein** ha'Torah, that Hashem constantly gives, constantly renews the life force of the universe, and so too, we can be moved every moment anew. Someone who is not moved enough in Cheshvan by his trip to the Rebbe, wasn't moved enough when he was there.

In one of the shiurim I told the girls that someone who truly wants to feel 770 should make a call after the shiur to a sister or aunt and excite her and tell her what's going on in Beis Chayeinu. It says "rejoice and make others joyful" - the two go together. If you want to keep the good feelings to yourself, they will dissipate. If you excite others, then it will remain with you.

My wife works as a preschool teacher and during her stay in Crown Heights, she called the school and the substitute teacher put her on speaker-phone and she held a gathering for the children from the Rebbe's house. The children were so thrilled to hear their teacher talking to them from the Rebbe's house but the one it had the greatest effect on was my wife herself. She was more moved than the children because in order to really be moved by 770, you need to move others. Think about your mother who remained at home, about siblings and friends, and then the kochos of 770 will remain with you throughout the year.

We don't go to the Rebbe for a **month**; we want to be with the Rebbe for the entire **year**. The Rebbe

brings this regarding a halacha in the Rambam about how to rejoice on Yom Tov. You buy jewelry and clothes for the women, nuts (nosh) for the children and meat and wine for yourself. The Rambam says that if you drink wine and eat meat on your own, then you're just filling your belly. How should you *really* rejoice? You do it by inviting guests, by sharing it with others. The Rebbe brings this deep idea in halacha and explains that this is even before Chassidus, it is basic halacha. As is often the case, the deepest ideas are revealed within the "simplest" halachos.

Regarding Moshiach, the Rebbe brings this in an even deeper way and asks, "Why is the other person at fault because it [Moshiach] is not yet settled in your mind?" The Rebbe takes the opposite approach from "adorn yourself first and then adorn others." He says speak to others and you'll be positively affected. Even someone who knows just one letter should teach others what he knows.

The Rebbe says that regarding your own conduct, an accounting will be made about how you did things – whether you did mitzvos properly or not – but no accounting is made as far as your helping another Jew, about whether his davening was proper or not. Today we are living in a time when we need to "live Geula" and not just live for ourselves. The same applies to our traveling to the Rebbe – this chayus needs to be instilled in our environment and that is how we will "live with the Rebbe" all year.

# THE REBBE GAVE HIM A HAND

By Nosson Avrohom



Many people in Tzfas know Rafi Peretz, a middle-aged fellow who wears a large knitted kippa and runs a taxi company for a living. Not too many people, though, know about the amazing miracle story of the Rebbe that happened to him.

“My hand would not be capable of holding the wheel today if not for the Rebbe’s bracha. Thanks to the Rebbe my hand works normally.

“The story began about half a year after I got married, in 5748/1988. I was born and raised

on moshav Avivim on the Israel-Lebanon border, in a home with a strong feeling for Jewish tradition. My wife came from a somewhat less traditional home. We lived in Afula, the capitol of the Emek region. I found work as a foreman in a cement factory which manufactures construction material and cement. My wife also found work and we thought we were nicely settled. We were a young, happy couple with a nice flow of cash and with our lives ahead of us. Unfortunately, however,

I deteriorated significantly in my observance of mitzvos.

One Thursday at work, I felt that the conveyor belt that moved things from the cement mixer was working too slowly. I decided to go down behind it, to the machine itself, and check things out. It’s a place that workers usually don’t go because they are all standing in front of the machine, receiving materials and arranging them. When I went down in the back I saw that a lot of sand had collected and realized that this was what was slowing it down. I figured that a little cleaning up would enable it to work properly, but inattention for a second is what caused a terrible accident.

My nail got caught in the conveyor belt and dragged my entire hand along. The machine was moving in a circular motion and it shattered my hand. The bones in my hand became bone fragments. Two nerves were torn to shreds and stopped working. Only Hashem knows why the machine suddenly came to a halt. The conveyor belt is capable of pulling sixty tons and so the likelihood is slim, zero actually, that a person’s hand could stop it.

Later I found out that in the past a young boy had worked there who also accidentally got his hand caught in the jaws of the machine. His hand was cut off and he remained handicapped for the rest of his life.

I went into shock. I couldn’t utter a sound. I stood there with my hand caught in the belt. It took some time until people realized that something had happened in the machine room. They found me in a pool of blood. With every passing second I lost more and more blood until I felt my strength ebbing away and was about to lose consciousness. As soon as I saw the first worker, I fell unconscious. He rushed to call an ambulance that took me to the hospital. From there they called my wife.

She was in the early months of

pregnancy and you can well imagine how shocking this news was to her. She wasn't even 19 years old at the time. They rushed me into surgery while the doctors asked her to sign that she gave permission for them to amputate my arm. They told her that there was no way my hand could be restored and leaving it as it was would only endanger my entire body. My wife felt compelled to sign. The doctors were experienced and they were absolutely certain that further delays, even minutes, could be harmful to me.

My wife stood in the corridor and sobbed for it was she who had signed to my fate. Nobody had prepared her for this horrifying and painful decision.

An hour or two went by and a woman who was passing by stopped when she saw my wife crying. She introduced herself as a Lubavitcher and asked what was wrong. My wife tried to avoid answering her, figuring it was a waste of time since nothing could be done. The woman didn't give up. She came back and asked again whether she could be of any help.

My wife decided to tell her what happened just to let her know that there was nothing she could do. She told her about my severe injury and how hard it was for her since she had been the one to sign to the fate of my hand. The Lubavitcher woman suggested that she write all this and fax it to the Rebbe's office. She asked for my name and my mother's name, as well as my wife's name and her mother's name, and asked her to make a good *hachlata*. My wife committed to *tz'daka*.

In her heart of hearts she did not believe that anything could change but she felt she had nothing to lose. The Lubavitcher woman went on her way and my wife stood there alone in the corridor and cried.

A few hours later the Lubavitcher woman returned to the hospital and smilingly said, "Don't worry. The

Rebbe blessed you that there should be good news and there's nothing to worry about. You'll see that they won't amputate his hand."

My wife didn't know whether to laugh or cry. She was sure that the Lubavitcher was making a joke at her expense.

"Believe in the Rebbe's *bracha* and you will see that they won't amputate his hand," the woman repeated assuredly.

My wife didn't say anything but was annoyed by the woman's claims. With all respect to the Rebbe, how could he, in New York, know what would happen to her husband's hand? He was not a doctor and he had no connections with the doctors here.

## THE SURPRISING INTERVENTION OF THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

After many hours of uncertainty, I was taken from the operating room. My wife approached my bed and to her amazement she saw that both my hands were there! She didn't know what to think – was this some hallucination or could it be reality? She stopped one of the doctors and asked him what had happened in the operating room. He recounted how they had planned on amputating the hand, and had already prepared the operating room to do so. A tourniquet was tied on the on the arm and surgery was about to start when the chief surgeon happened to walk into the operating room. He had forgotten his cell phone and had returned to get it.

The doctor took his phone and glanced over at the medical staff and asked what operation they were about to begin. They told him the situation in brief and that they were about to amputate the hand since all the bones had been shattered and

the nerves torn. He said he wanted to look things over. After carefully examining me he said not to do the amputation yet. I was a young man and could handle a long rehabilitation period. "It would be a pity to amputate," he said. "Let's save the hand." He set his cell phone aside, put on sterile clothes and got involved in the operation.

For my wife this was a major lesson in *emuna*. She had not been raised in an orthodox home and yet she recognized this as not merely "the finger of G-d" but "and the Jews saw the great hand." The Rebbe in Brooklyn knew what would happen to my hand! She did not stop praising the Rebbe to whoever came to visit and she told the doctors about the Rebbe's involvement.

The next morning the Lubavitcher woman visited the orthopedic ward looking for my wife, Sigal. She was sure that the hand had been saved. She met my wife and asked her, "What happened?" My wife burst into tears, though this time they were tears of joy. "They didn't amputate!" she exclaimed. She told her about the doctor who had forgotten his cell phone and the rest of the story.

"When the Rebbe gives a *bracha*," the woman explained, "logic and rational thinking disappear and you just have to believe."

My wife became an ardent Chassida of the Rebbe.

During the operation the doctors had connected the bones with metal plates, sewing whatever they could sew. My recovery period took a year and a half.

After the bones, the doctors went to deal with the tendons, and then they began physical therapy to try to stimulate the nerves that remained whole, in order to get the entire hand to work. From time to time the hand showed signs of improvement until finally it was completely better!

"It's really incredible," says Rafi.  
 "I fully recovered and today I drive  
 with that hand."

\*\*\*

"My wife became committed to  
 Torah and mitzvos and got me  
 involved too. With every subsequent  
 operation and every sign of  
 improvement, she made additional  
 good resolutions until we became a  
 religious family.

"Of course we suffered a serious  
 financial setback when we moved to  
 Tzfas. After many chapters of  
 T'hillim I found work. Then I  
 opened a taxi company. We built our  
 home in the Menachem Begin  
 neighborhood in Tzfas and we sent  
 our children to religious schools. Till  
 this day, when I look at my hand I  
 know that it's only thanks to the  
 Rebbe that I have it!"



Rafi Peretz by his taxi

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ב"ה

# REFRESH RATE

By Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd, PhD

**Just as a miracle, which has no place in nature at all, undoubtedly stems directly from G-d's changing the natural laws, so too all of nature itself exists solely because such is the direct will of G-d.**

—*The Rebbe*  
*Mind over Matter*, p. 152

It's that time of year again, when Jews the world over celebrate new beginnings: A new year, a clean slate, and a new start to the annual cycle of Torah readings. The ultimate in new beginnings is the opening scene of the Torah - Genesis - the beginning of the universe courtesy of G-d Himself. Talk about starting off with a bang, and a big one at that.

But how new is all that, really? 5,771 years is a long time ago and the apparent 13.7 billion years is even longer. Rewinding the Torah and re-reading the beginning of the story doesn't re-enact the events. It's a one-time, old story is it not?

Well not according to Chassidus. One of the most powerful and innovative concepts introduced by the Chassidic movement's founding father, Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov, is the doctrine of continuous creation. According to this notion, the entire world in all its detail is constantly brought into existence from nothing to something, *ex nihilo*.

The implications are profound. If

the world is in fact being continuously renewed, then the whole idea of cause and effect may be brought into question.

Imagine for instance that you are trying to sink a three-banks-to-the-side shot on a pool table. Your cue hits the cue ball just so, which in turn strikes the target ball, which then ricochets off one bank, hits a perpendicular one, bounces from there to a third side and then traverses the table to plunk itself straight into the side pocket. Would you upon completing that move successfully, consider yourself the master of a strictly mechanistic, predictable and manageable process? Of course, why not? The balls and the banks behave exactly the same every day. Hit the ball too hard and the target ball bounces off the table. Hit it too soft and the target ball stops short. Cut the ball a hair too much and it misses the pocket altogether.

Now imagine that the moment you hit the cue ball it disappears only to be instantly replaced with a different one, and that the bank that it hits is not the same one that framed the table when you first took your shot, and that the other banks keep disappearing and being replaced between one rebound and the next. How would you view your sinking the shot now - as a feat of prowess, or as a divine miracle?

And how would you view life

itself, the fact that your eyes can see, that your lungs can breathe, that you woke up this morning, knowing that every detail has been freshly renewed in precise beneficence out of absolutely nowhere?

Surely that's great cognitive therapy for the pious and the mystics but what about the modern, rational, and scientifically astute among us? Well for the first two hundred years, they laughed it off, but science itself has now come full circle and embraced these very same concepts.

Of course you will not find "hashgacha pratis," "yesh me'ayin" or even "continuous creation" in the lexicon of the physicists. But if you probe into "vacuum energy" you will find ideas that are hauntingly similar.

When physicists and cosmologists speak of the "vacuum" they refer to space devoid of all physical matter and electromagnetic waves. One would think that the "vacuum" would be therefore absolutely empty, completely still and abysmally featureless, but surprisingly, the opposite seems to be the case.

Scientists now believe that empty space contains a literally infinite amount of energy and that all matter derives from fluctuations in this vacuum.

Just about all matter in the universe is made up of protons and neutrons and these in turn are made up entirely of quarks. As it turns out, the quarks only provide about 1% of the mass of the proton and so the scientists have been wondering what generates the other 99%? The answer is Gluons.

Gluons are virtual particles that hold the quarks together and one of their special qualities is that they are constantly popping in and out of existence at every time and place. Even the quarks themselves are rooted in this random annihilation / recreation behavior and that makes it



official that all matter is in fact virtual.

Think about it. Science itself is telling us that all matter comes into existence from a vacuum that really isn't a vacuum at all since it has infinite energy, just in a virtual or intangible form.

Doesn't his sound like *creatio ex nihilo*, the age old concept of *yesh me'ayin*, where the *ayin* is the *tzimtzum* or withdrawal through which a ray of the *or ein sof* or infinite energy radiates to create a physical world in a dynamic of continuous creation?

Open a Hebrew prayer book to the blessings of the morning Shma, the declaration of Unity, and read the praise of the One "who in His goodness daily renews the entire work of creation" and realize that a supposedly atheistic physicist writing

an ode to the infinite energy of the vacuum field might use the same words.

For those of you who are totally baffled by the physics gobbledygook, try looking at it this way.

Physical reality is like your computer screen. The pictures it displays aren't substantial physical objects, they are only dynamic images. They, like protons in the vacuum, have a refresh rate, a re-creation rate, in this case, of sixty cycles per second, meaning that sixty times per second the image is completely regenerated. Scientists now believe that all physical matter is created in a similar way.

In the Alter Rebbe's Tanya there is a discussion of what to tell skeptics who deny divine providence and the wonders and miracles of the

Torah. He says talk about creation of something from nothing, and it works. When you realize that matter is just a dynamic download from the infinite light, why think that anything is impossible. Even Moshiach is possible and even now!

The modern convergence of Torah and science is a megatrend foreseen by the kabbalists millennia ago as a harbinger of the Days of Moshiach, the imminent time when the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as waters cover the sea. And when that happens, I, for one, will be refreshed.

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# SECURE IN THE MOUNTAINS OF SHOMRON

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

*The center of the former kingdom of Israel, a place mentioned dozens of times throughout the Tanach, the very ground where our holy ancestors once walked – Sh’chem – is the burial place of Yosef HaTzaddik. Not far away, soldiers posted on Mt. Eival or Mt. Grizim put on t’fillin, the spot where the People of Israel received the blessings before entering Eretz Yisroel. \* This is where Rabbi Yehuda Rubin conducts his activities. He’s always on the go, traveling from place to place, between one settlement and another, from mountain to outpost. He knows the map of the Shomron like the palm of his hand.*



We conducted this interview at the most inconvenient time for holding interviews – Friday afternoon, Erev Shabbos. But what can you expect when Rabbi Yehuda Rubin’s schedule is so full? The shliach from Elon Moreh gives at least twenty-five classes in chassidus each week in virtually all of the settlements that extend throughout the region of his shlichus. Rabbi Rubin impressed us as the classic example of a typical shliach with no free time to himself. His every waking hour finds him busy, running from one task to the next. “Here on the yishuvim, we don’t have to give out Shabbos candles or man t’fillin stands, as these settlements have a religious character. However, there is a lot of work to do in spreading the wellsprings of chassidus.”

Twenty-five years after he founded one of the first Chabad Houses in Yehuda and Shomron, Rabbi Rubin can look back with much satisfaction. Then, as a brand-new resident on a brand-new settlement, when he had just begun local activities – Shabbos gatherings, children’s rallies, and the like – he personally couldn’t believe that from such a small Chabad House, there



**The Elon Moreh settlement in the background of Mt. Grizim**

would come forth a vast, all-encompassing, and ever-growing array of outreach activities, covering so many yishuvim. “Back in those years, we founded numerous Torah classes, but had only a few participants. The Zionist movement was still in its heyday, and the Zionist pioneering collided with the path of Chabad-Lubavitch.”

It wouldn't be all that pretentious to say that after decades of activities, there isn't a resident in the area who doesn't know Rabbi Rubin, the smiling shliach with the American accent. Everyone meets him on a different occasion – the men at classes in chassidus and farbrengens, the soldiers on Chanukah with a fresh jelly donut or on Purim with Mishloach Manos and the Megilla reading, or just on a regular day when he invites them to roll up their sleeves and put on t'fillin. The children meet him at the Chabad summer camps, bar-mitzvah trips, Lag B'Omer parades and rallies, while others encounter him preparing cooked food for the sick and for new mothers, distributing food packages before the Jewish festivals, or other charitable activities.



**Rabbi Rubin at the Chabad House entrance**

## FROM THE HIPPIE GENERATION TO CHABAD

Rabbi Rubin was born about sixty years ago into a Zionist family living in the borough of Bronx, New York. “My mother was born in the United States and my father emigrated there from Poland, when the winds of war started to blow. They spoke Yiddish at home, and we identified ourselves noticeably as a Jewish family. But this identity was only on an external level, as we did not keep Torah and mitzvos at home. On Pesach, we would conduct a ‘Seder Night’ ceremony, but no more than that.

“However, the total assimilation that was becoming rampant deeply disturbed my mother, and she founded a private Jewish school that exists to this very day. The education was rich in Zionist

spirit, but there wasn't even a drop of observant Judaism. The main thing was missing. This was the education that I received and upon which I was raised: strong Jewish identity, but without any depth or essence.

“In my youth, I was a member and counselor in the HaBonim youth movement. Later, when America became entangled in the quagmire of the Vietnam War, and soldiers started coming back from the battlefield in body bags, I became involved in the Students for a Democratic Society anti-war movement. This was an extreme left-wing organization, joined by many students and young people who were part of the famous hippie generation that rebelled against all forms of authority and anyone over 30.

I regularly took part in their demonstrations, an anarchist in every sense of the word. We publicly

***Only the truth can be so encompassing,  
only the truth can reach every detail  
without skipping a thing, and only the  
truth has an answer to every problem  
and a reply to every question.***

burned our draft cards and the American flag – actions which were both against the law. Our hair grew wild, and our clothes were quite different from the accepted norm. The longer the war went on, the more and more people from other states joined the rebellion that we had started.

“Years later, I learned that the Rebbe often spoke about these rebellious movements, deriving relevant instructions in Avodas Hashem. All that the hippies themselves got out of this, however, were drugs and an incredible level of idleness. Today, I understand that this was a profound expression of soul-searching. During those years, I wrote many songs about the age of maturity, the connection with parents, and naturally, the unnecessary conflict in Southeast Asia. I remember once that I flew to Los Angeles to meet with other hippies, and at the airport, I saw a copy of the popular Time magazine with a cover story on the hippies. It was then that I realized what a trend this phenomenon had truly become.

“When the war finally ended, I wanted to go and volunteer in Eretz Yisroel, the popular thing for Jewish young men to do at the time, but I discovered that my friends weren’t interested in my joining them. I was too extreme for them, and they preferred to go without me. I made the trip alone. I was deeply hurt by this, but today I understand that it was all for the good. I read a lot of books on philosophy, in search of greater inner depth. One day, I came across a fascinating book written by

a Reform rabbi, a Mr. Weiner, on the unusual phenomena of Eretz Yisroel. Among other things, he wrote about Moshav Yodfat, a magical and exciting cooperative village in the Lower Galilee.

“While Mr. Weiner was a Reform Jew, he was a very deep and introspective person who aroused much inspiration. He noted that at the time, all the moshavim in Eretz Yisroel were party-affiliated, and this was the only moshav that had refused to identify with any political party. Forty years ago, this represented a lonely voice of courage.

“My first stop in Eretz Yisroel was at a kibbutz, where I stayed for a period of seven years. I found some very special people there – spiritual, warm, and caring people – but there was neither Torah nor mitzvos. On the one hand, they were sharply repelled by any form of Judaism, but on the other hand, they were looking for depth and meaning in a variety of places. Their idealism brought all the local residents to join forces in making this desolate place blossom, which at the time was virtually empty of Jews.

“There were seventeen Jewish families amidst the sea of Bedouins and Arabs living in the surrounding region. In a classic paradox, it was while living on this moshav, of all places, that I started thinking about G-d for the first time in my life. Until then, I had devoted all of my time and effort to politics and science, and now in the merit of those friends who didn’t want me to join them, I had begun to channel

my interests in a direction I might never have taken if I hadn’t come to this wasteland.

“During my work in the fields, I had plenty of time to think about the past and to plan out the future. Then, something strange happened that I could only explain after I had learned chassidus.

“I had made the decision to establish permanent residency in Eretz Yisroel and not return to the United States. I knew that this was where I wanted to live, and where I wanted to raise my children and grandchildren. One fine day, when I was standing in the middle of the field – enveloped by a deep state of tranquility, just me and G-d – I decided that I had to learn Tanach. I had never opened this seifer before. I simply knew that it was connected to the Land of Israel, and if I wanted to stay and live here, I had to learn Tanach, as this was the land of the Tanach. What brought me to reach this decision? I couldn’t explain it then, but today I know that it was a Heavenly voice coming to awaken me.

“As I started learning Tanach, I understood how important G-d’s presence is for every Jew in all things. Hour after hour, I avidly read the stories of the Bible. At a certain stage, I decided to arrange meetings with rabbanim, as I was most curious to hear and learn the wisdom of Torah from them. Shortly thereafter, I was inducted into the army as part of the Nachal brigade, where my interest in Yiddishkeit and Jewish leadership grew and intensified.

“During my military service, I met my wife, and after we got married, we made our way together to Yerushalayim for a meeting with Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, about whom I had heard a great deal. He made a very good impression upon me, despite the fact that I didn’t understand a single word he said since he spoke with a heavy

Ashkenazic accent.

“One day, I decided to travel to Tzfas. All the books I had read lauded it as the City of the Kabbalists, and I thought that I would meet a mekubal or two, and I would hear something innovative from them... However, as I walked through the narrow lanes, I didn’t meet anyone special, just a lot of regular Israelis. When I came to Kikar Maginim, the central square of Tzfas’ Old City, a tall Jew with a long beard and a striking appearance suddenly passed by me. I asked him if I could learn Torah with him. He smiled and told me to follow him, and we made our way down to the Ari Synagogue. He pulled a thick seifer with a wooden binding off the bookshelf, opened it, and started to learn with me. This was the ‘Tur’ on the Laws of Rising in the Morning. I recall that we learned about the need to put the right shoe on first and only afterwards the left shoe...

“When we parted from one another, I said to myself: This is the Torah of truth. If it can get down into such details as tying one’s shoes, that’s the truth. Only the truth can be so encompassing, only the truth can reach every detail without skipping a thing, and only the truth has an answer to every problem and a reply to every question. This Jew, who lives in Tzfas to this day, is a rosh kollel in the Old City named Rabbi Feivelson. During a visit to Tzfas, I met him again and he was very happy to see me.

“For a period of six months, I lived on Kibbutz Tirat Tzvi, where I learned the ways of the Torah. I continued to live my day-to-day life and tried to observe whatever I possibly could.

“After my army service, I decided to devote myself more to Torah study. It had already begun to burn within me. I took a two-month vacation from the kibbutz, rented an apartment in Yerushalayim’s Beit



**Rabbi Rubin at Chanukah activities with IDF soldiers**



**Lag B'Omer children's rally**

HaKerem neighborhood, and I would come each day to learn at Yeshivas Merkaz HaRav. The one who ‘grabbed’ me there was Rabbi Tzvi Tau, who today serves as the rosh yeshiva in Har Hamor. He taught me the foundations of religious Zionism and I was most impressed. He spoke about very deep concepts, about the kingdom of Israel, the Redemption, the need to

believe, and the inevitable experiences of life.”

## **A GENUINE SEARCH**

As he describes it today, Rabbi Rubin’s feeling was twofold: On the one hand, he felt tremendous excitement over the concepts that he had learned and connected with, while on the other hand, he realized

that this was not the end, not the ultimate – for his search was far from over.

“We moved to Mevasseret Yerushalayim, and then someone told me about Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh from Kfar Chabad. He spoke about him in such glowing terms, and I was still seeking, so I made my way to Kfar Chabad. Upon meeting Rabbi Ginsburgh, I asked him if I could learn Torah from him, and he happily agreed. It was he who exposed me for the first time to the teachings of chassidus, and my enthusiasm was overflowing. I felt that this was something loftier than anything else I had ever heard. For the next six months, I would hitchhike from Yerushalayim to Kfar Chabad, and we would learn together. This continued until I was suddenly called up by the army due to the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. I remained on active duty for half a year, serving on the Syrian battlefield in the Golan Heights as a tank signal operator. At every break in the fighting, I would say T'hillim over the radio, and my friends would respond after me.

“While the enemy inflicted heavy losses upon us, you could still see Jewish faith in all its power and strength. It was a very harsh and bloody conflict. By the fourth day of the war, a third of the tanks in our battalion had been completely decimated.

“On the day before Purim, 5734, six months after my call-up, I was released and proceeded to resume my studies with Rabbi Tzvi Tau at Yeshivas Merkaz HaRav, while I continued learning with the mekubal, Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh. I understood rather quickly that I wanted to deepen my knowledge in the teachings of chassidus, which had turned me into an entirely different person. My wife and I decided to move to Kfar Chabad. At that stage, I realized that Zionism was not for me. I was searching for

greater depth, and I had found it in chassidus. I went to learn in the kollel of Kfar Chabad, while I made a living working in the orchards.

“While work in agriculture was not entirely foreign to me, I was forced to leave my job after a few months for various reasons. I then started working in the barns of Rabbi Zusha Rivkin, of blessed memory. R' Zusha was a paradigm of a chassid and he had a great influence upon me. I had a deep feeling of affection for him. Everything that I had read in the Rebbe Rayatz's memoirs about Jews of the previous generation, I saw right before my eyes. A truly *p'nimiusdik* and chassidic Jew, without any haughtiness or self-love, and filled with a faith that I had never seen before. He would do his work with the animals quietly and with great diligence.

“Despite my growing kiruv process, I still had a hard time connecting to the concept of ‘Rebbe’ and ‘leader of the generation’. I studied his teachings, but I had some difficulty bonding my soul to him.

“Then, the Rebbe started talking about settling Yehuda and Shomron quickly and quietly. Many people in Kfar Chabad who heard the Rebbe speaking again and again on this topic decided that the Rebbe was talking to them, and Chabad must erect a settlement in the Shomron. R' Moshe Schneerson and R' Meir Freiman led the charge among those taking this position. They signed people up who were willing to leave Kfar Chabad for this purpose. They also came to my house, but I wasn't home at the time.

“As it turned out, the Rebbe's answer was that people should not leave Kfar Chabad because they were needed there. Since I didn't sign up, I saw this as a clear sign of Divine Providence.

“Around this time, the Elon Moreh settlement was established.

All of my good friends were part of the core founders, very special people, deeply ideological and with much self-sacrifice. I decided that I would join them somehow. I quickly understood the truly special nature of life among chassidim, something that I still hadn't appreciate enough. Knowing that I did not know only strengthened me more to go in the direction of Chabad.

“During that year (5746), Yeshivas Od Yosef Chai was founded at the gravesite of Yosef HaTzaddik in Sh'chem, and I was chosen as its administrator. In the framework of this job, I met the Rebbe for the first time, when I came to New York on a fundraising trip for the yeshiva. Rabbi Lieberman, whose son Hillel (may G-d avenge his blood) was living in Yitzhar and was one of the yeshiva's students, was head of New York's Chalabi-Syrian community, and he hosted me during my stay. He promised to arrange meetings for me with potential donors, and he arranged my Shabbos hospitality with Rabbi Yitzchak Springer from Crown Heights. For his part, Rabbi Springer put me, of all places, right behind the Rebbe on the farbrengen rostrum.

“I participated in the farbrengen and davening that took place that Shabbos. During those hours, I was mesmerized by the Rebbe's appearance. With Rabbi Springer's guidance, I had brought a bottle of mashke into the Rebbe's secretariat before Shabbos, and I received it from the Rebbe during the farbrengen.

“When I returned to Eretz HaKodesh, the rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Ginsburgh, asked me what my impressions were. I told him, ‘I have seen the king. The national religious community talks about malchus all the time, but I've actually seen it...’

“As of that visit, I had become a chassid, connected to the Rebbe with all my heart and soul.”

## THE VOICE OF CHASSIDUS HEARD IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE SHOMRON

From that visit, the Chabad House of Elon Moreh was born. “If you know who the king is, you have to listen to his instructions and fulfill his demands. Thus, the decision was made to open a Chabad House in Elon Moreh. At the time, I thought that I would set up a relatively small operation. Since then, the activities have even spread out as far as Itamar, to the point that the Chabad House has become regional, covering several yishuvim. Over the past three or four years, Chabad House activities have grown and intensified to vast dimensions.”

Try and detach yourself from your *Eretz-Yisroel* 'dike existence. Take a step back for a moment and look from afar –

You have the ability to work on the shlichus of the leader of the generation in... the Shomron. The center of the former kingdom of Israel, a place mentioned dozens of times throughout the Tanach. The very ground where our holy ancestors once walked. Sh'chem – the burial place of Yosef HaTzaddik. Not far away, you put on t'fillin with soldiers posted on Mt. Eival or Mt. Grizim – the spot where the People of Israel received the blessings before entering Eretz Yisroel. Here is also the ancient (and modern-day) site of Beit E-l, where Yaakov Avinu stayed... Biblical figures at arm's length, you just have to reach out and touch them...feel them...

The name “Elon Moreh” appears in the Torah, “And Avram passed through the land, until the place of Sh'chem, until the plain of [Elon] Moreh”, in other words, a noteworthy place near Sh'chem. Today, Elon Moreh is located on the southern slopes of Mt. Kabir Ridge, a distance of a few kilometers from Sh'chem, looking upon Biblical



**Rabbi Rubin on activities with IDF soldiers**

Sh'chem (“Tel Balata” today).

Mt. Kabir Ridge stretches for a length of about five kilometers from the southeast to the northwest. Its western summit rises to a height of 792 meters above sea level. The Elon Moreh settlement is located from 650 to 750 meters above sea level. It's no wonder that this yishuv possesses a breathtaking and awesome view. Nachal Tirtza runs from the north to the foot of the ridge, drawing forth water all year round, from the Jordan Valley until Geshar Adam. This is “in the direction of the sunset”, where the Jewish People passed en route to entering Eretz Yisroel and to build the altar on Mt. Eival. From the north one can see to the river of Tamon Ridge, from the east to Mt. Gilad, from the west, the yishuv from which you can see Mt. Eival and Mt. Grizim, and all within range of the city of Sh'chem.

The Elon Moreh of today was founded by the first core of settlers who went out to erect Jewish settlements in the mountains of the Shomron. Their work was difficult, and the pastoral atmosphere was dimmed by impure political considerations. It was only after numerous contacts and eight attempts to settle, reaching their



**Rabbi Rubin having a private conversation with a soldier at one of the outposts**

high point with the attempt to settle Sebastia during Chanukah 5736, that they were given permission to settle in Machane Kedum.

Even the right-wing governments, foremost among them the government of Prime Minister Menachem Begin, did not make things easy for the settlers, despite their earlier promises.

It is in this setting that Rabbi Yehuda Rubin conducts his activities. He travels from place to place, between one settlement and another, from mountain to outpost. He knows the map of the Shomron like the palm of his hand.

Rabbi Rubin's main daily activities are in the form of Torah classes. In recent years, a whole series of shiurim has developed, and he finds himself giving several daily classes at every hour of the day.



***The Rebbe's answer dealt entirely with the importance of lighting Shabbos candles. I was a bit confused. The woman was religious... When she heard the answer, her face changed color. 'How did the Rebbe know that I haven't been lighting?'***

"There are classes that take place on settlements with twenty families, and others on settlements with three hundred families. They almost always start as a result of a spiritual awakening of one of the local residents with whom we have made contact, and I come to a house or the synagogue on the yishuv to give a class. There are yishuvim where we learn Tanya or Likkutei Torah, and others where we study the Rebbe's maamarim."

**What is different about giving a class to the religious Zionist community?**

"First of all, I know that there will be questions, many questions. The people here have opened more than one seifer in their lifetimes, and they can ask you to elaborate on the subject being discussed or expand upon certain concepts. As a result, this requires more serious and detailed preparation for each class; everything must be 'covered'. If the Rebbe brings a pasuk or a topic from the Gemara, you first have to open the Chumash or the Gemara and learn it properly. In certain places, I have learned from experience, and before I even start teaching a sicha, I speak in general about the sugya that the Rebbe will explain, quoting the sources, raising the central question, developing the discussion, and only then proceeding to learn the text of the sicha."

**We hear about the ever-growing thirst for chassidus. Can you tell**

**us something about that?**

"The thirst exists primarily among the young people, and I'm not coming with any innovations here. The inner substance that has filled them over the years has been the Zionist view of the state as 'the start of the Redemption'. At present, with all that is happening around us, there is definitely a serious crisis of faith. People didn't just give their whole lives to the state and army; they honestly believed with all their heart that they are the emissaries of Am Yisroel to bring redemption to the land and the people. Then, one fine day, everything shattered before their very eyes. Every peace initiative brings this ideology closer to an end. Even the Chief Rabbinate, which had previously been a state-sponsored religious body, is now in the hands of the ultra-Orthodox. The armed forces were always considered holy, but today it drives Jews out of their homes, and there's a doubt as to whether it's friend or foe. Our young people emerge totally confused. These phenomena have deeply wounded the souls of local residents, and many of them have lost all purpose in life.

"You don't see Jews walking around bent over with forlorn expressions, but it absolutely gnaws away within them. Much of the viewpoint that they have learned belongs to the Zionist idea, and now everything has collapsed like a house of cards. Therefore, there are many

who have turned to Breslov chassidus, while some others go more in the direction of kabbalistic teachings. My job is to reveal Chabad chassidus to them as well."

**Can you get an indication of the revolution in the lives of those who learn chassidus?**

"It happens. While it doesn't take place right away, and not always on the external level, you still do see the blossoms of change. Chassidus can alter the nature of a person's attributes, and this especially applies regarding habits established over a period of years. A Jew doesn't come for a Torah class for the eighth or ninth time if it doesn't touch something within him. Someone who returns week after week understands that there's a simply amazing world here, a world he had never experienced before. Such people begin to internalize all the concepts brought in the teaching of chassidus, such as 'G-dly soul', 'animal soul', 'beinoni', 'yesh me'ayin', and 'converting evil and raising it to holiness'. In most cases, the change comes slowly, but it's a deep, internal one."

## **THERE'S A FUTURE WITH THE YOUTH OF THE SHOMRON**

Despite the great wave of activities with the older community, the youth has not been pushed into a corner, and a wide range of activities are conducted with them as well. "We have a unique project at the Chabad House, which we started about ten years ago. We began a Chabad summer camp for Yesha families, in which hundreds of children from various communities take part. We initiated this ten-day program, held in a pleasant chassidic atmosphere with Chabad counselors, after the children had experienced long months of fear and tension during the difficult period of the intifada. The idea was to take the



From left to right: Rabbi Yehuda Rubin, Rabbi Dovid Meir Druckman, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Groner



Rabbi Rubin and his team of active volunteers getting ready to go out on Chanukah outreach activities

children away from the war front to the central part of the country.

“The situation today is much better than it was before. The army finally understood that it must bring the war front into the neighborhoods and lairs of the terrorists. However, this wonderful project continues this summer as well – its tenth year of operation. Some of the children who were in the Chabad summer camps have already been inducted into the army, but they still remain in contact with their former counselors. There are even those who were so positively influenced that they continued their studies in Chabad institutions. Just a couple of days ago, I received an e-mail from a young woman who had participated in this camp. Today, she learns in Beis Chana in Tzfas, and she couldn’t stop expressing her thanks and appreciation.

“She wanted to help us in our activities, and the truth is that she was not the only girl who had become a Chabadnik in the merit of the camp (which in the words of the Rebbe is “the anvil upon which chassidim are forged”). Someone told me that what kept his brother along the path of Torah and mitzvos was the connection he still maintains with his counselor.

“From my point of view, the crowning achievement is the project

we make for the bar-mitzvah boys. We take fifteen of them and conduct a four day bar-mitzvah journey through the paths, streams, and holy gravesites of the Galilee. They are accompanied by an authorized tour guide and several Tmimim, sleeping outdoors and making farbrengens each night. The experience naturally develops into heartfelt discussions between the students and the counselors. I meet up with them at the final stop in Yerushalayim, when their parents come to collect them. It’s extremely moving to see how these boys, despite their exhaustion and fatigue, can barely manage to part from their counselors. I have often stood to the side as my eyes well with tears.”

## REACHING EVERY CORNER AND EVERY SOLDIER

A sizable portion of Chabad House activities in Elon Moreh are the massive activities with IDF soldiers and defense forces spread throughout the area by the thousands. “They are very accessible; you don’t have to go to some army base in the Negev or far up north. Every junction has soldiers stationed there, and with the help of the yeshiva bachurim who come here, we try to reach as many soldiers as possible, including those

at outposts where average Israeli citizens don’t come. The main principle that I have set for myself is to reach every soldier in the sector on Chanukah and Purim, day or night.

“There are days during Chanukah when we work around the clock, trying to get to another base, another station – the main thing is to make certain not to miss a single soldier. On Purim, we arrived home at the last moment to wash our hands for the holiday meal. There have been many moving moments during activities with soldiers. Many of them put on t’fillin with us for the first time in their lives. On Mt. Eival, I once met a soldier from Charkov, who had learned in the Chabad institutions there, but when he arrived in Eretz Yisroel, he cut off his contact with Chabad. When he saw us, it aroused sweet memories within him and he simply burst into tears. He spent a long time with me, as he longingly told about Chabad and the education he had received.”

**If we’re talking about activities with the Israel Defense Forces, I’d like to ask you about the difficult years of the intifada. How did the Chabad House function during those dark times?**

“When we first started here, it was the Arabs who were concerned about us. I would travel to Sh’chem

and walk around there freely. But soon we began to be assaulted by a hail of rocks, and eventually by gunfire. Jews were being murdered one after another, and since my activities obligated me to travel along the roads, I was in a complicated dilemma on how to proceed, as passing along the highways of the Shomron fell within the realm of literal *pikuach nefesh*. When people left their homes, they never knew whether they would return safely. But from the moment we decided that we were staying put, it became an experience that placed our entire shlichus in a special light.”

## QUESTIONS ASKED, ANSWERS RECEIVED

The widespread custom of writing to the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, via Igros Kodesh, hasn’t passed by the settlements of the Shomron either. Many people have come to write letters to the Rebbe on any problem or whenever they need advice. Some have visited Rabbi Rubin at home, while others already knew what to do on their own. “The Chabad House has a neighbor who hasn’t really connected to the path of chassidus, and he has often come with issues and his own explanations. Recently, I was stunned when he told me that he had written to the Rebbe via Igros Kodesh on numerous occasions and had received clear answers. I was sorry to hear that his rabbis had told him to stop this practice, yet this showed how much the Rebbe is penetrating the world.

“A few years ago, we experienced a very moving and amazing story. A woman of Russian descent came to our house and began to cry bitterly over her fate – a serious problem of domestic harmony. She wrote a letter to the Rebbe in Russian, and while I generally don’t read the answers that people receive, she asked me to do so and I agreed. The

Rebbe’s answer dealt entirely with the importance of lighting Shabbos candles. I was a bit confused. The woman was religious, and thus naturally already lights Shabbos candles. How was this answer relevant to her? However, as this was the Rebbe’s answer, I read it aloud to her. When she heard the answer, her face changed color. ‘How did the Rebbe know that I haven’t been lighting Shabbos candles for several weeks already?’ she mumbled in amazement.

“There’s no lack of such stories. Recently, on Gimmel Tammuz, another woman came in and asked to write a letter to the Rebbe. She placed it in a volume of Igros Kodesh, and I promised her that I would open the letter that evening and read her the answer. When I returned home and opened the letter, I was beside myself. She had placed his letter in the Appendix section... When I called her to explain what had happened, she remained steadfast in her faith. ‘Everything is by Divine Providence,’ she said, and she asked me to read out the subjects in the Appendix. ‘Fine, such is the faith of women,’ I thought to myself, but as I started to read subject after subject, she became very excited.

“What are you so excited about?” I asked her as I finished. She told me that she had asked about a charity gathering that she wanted to organize in memory of her mother-in-law, bringing all members of the family into the project. On the Appendix page that I had opened, the subjects provided clear answers: *Regarding a woman whose mother-in-law has passed away; regarding the organization of a family conference; regarding the opening a charitable organization.* Not only that, even her name appeared on the page... She wanted to make the event during the month of Menachem Av, and this too was written there. This was the purest

example of faith in tzaddikim I had ever seen. She believed with all her heart, and the Rebbe answered her...”

In the meantime, the residents’ struggle against the right-wing government’s decrees is turning into a literal war for survival. “I had a neighbor who, on Lag B’Omer a few years ago, went down with some other residents to close the entrances to one of the Arab villages due to the rock-throwers that came from there. IDF forces halted his demonstration, and charges against him were filed with the police. He wrote a letter to the Rebbe in Igros Kodesh, and he received an amazing answer, filled with brachos for his assistance on Lag B’Omer. He was very happy and he was certain that with this bracha, everything would work out. In fact, not long afterwards, he was informed that the file against him had been closed.”

\*

At the conclusion of the interview, when we began to discuss the government decree freezing all Jewish construction throughout Yehuda and Shomron, the great pain in Rabbi Rubin’s voice was quite evident. “The situation in Elon Moreh today is such that no construction is starting anywhere. When a house becomes available, everyone tries to grab it. The pressure is tremendous. People who live in the center of the country don’t understand how inhuman and unethical this decree really is. My great fear is that the building where the Chabad House operates will be sold, and we will be left with no facility.”

**In your opinion, how it is possible to fight against this decree?**

“Chabad activities against such decrees don’t have to be on the political front. In my opinion, there must be greater strengthening of the Rebbe’s mitzvaim, and a lot of light will drive out all the darkness.”

# PICTURING THE GEULA

Profile of Mrs. Esther Touson  
By Chaya Malya Kupchik

*She was born in Argentina and together with her husband learned about Judaism and the Rebbe. From that point on, she began using her artistic talents for holy paintings. She has drawn the Rebbe, the Beis HaMikdash, and the Geula. "I prefer that my work hang in other people's homes so that it strengthens their hiskashrus to the Rebbe."*

Mrs. Esther Touson, a world renowned artist, told me about her life which changed from one extreme to another through the Rebbe:

I was born to a non-observant home in South America. My father, who was a doctor, painted a lot and so did my older brother. So not surprisingly, I developed the skills for drawing as naturally as I acquired the skills for walking and talking.

I constantly drew. It was natural for me when I was only 5 to join my father and brother for art lessons. I was later sent to an international school for the arts where I built my artistic career.

I spent four years learning to be an art teacher and after another three years I became a professor of art. Throughout this time I felt I wanted to learn more and more. I went to Europe, where I joined a program for additional training.

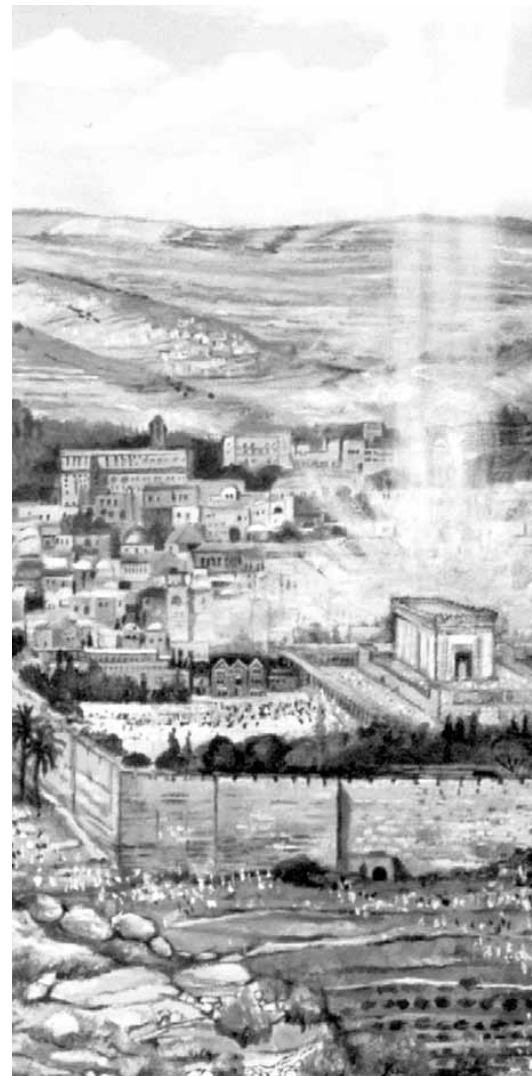
Upon returning to South America I married a man from a home which was a little traditional. We searched for a path of truth in life, though it didn't occur to us to look towards Judaism or Chassidus for the direction we sought.

The first step took place 34 years ago. We were walking down the street when two bearded men approached us and asked my husband if he would put on t'fillin.

He agreed and that day, when he put on t'fillin for the first time in his life, marked the beginning of our relationship with the Rebbe's shluchim, along with a stronger connection to Judaism. As a result, we began taking serious steps towards making aliya.

About two or three months after that encounter came Pesach. As we busily made our last minute preparations on Erev Yom Tov, there were knocks at the door. There stood a Lubavitcher bachur who presented us with two packages of shmura matza and he said, "The Lubavitcher Rebbe sent you these matzos."

We were surprised, even





**Yemos HaMoshiach: Jews thronging towards the Beis HaMikdash with 770 in the courtyard**

stunned. We had never written to the Rebbe and we certainly hadn't met him. How did he know about us? That was our first introduction to what a real Jewish leader is.

#### **And then?**

A few months later we made aliya. Our absorption in Israel was very hard at first. The language and society were foreign to us. We moved from place to place until we arrived in Emanuel, where we discovered Chabad once again.

Throughout this time, my artistic talent "burned" in my fingers. At this point, I drew the Rebbe for the first time and I sent the original

painting to the Rebbe. That was my first connection and since then, my husband has gone to the Rebbe and 770 a number of times and I have joined him.

In the summer of 5753/1993, I saw the Rebbe come out on the balcony and the crowd sang a lusty "Yechi Adoneinu." I'll never forget those spine-chilling moments in which I stood in the crush throughout Shacharis of Shabbos, but it was all worth it in order to see the Rebbe. On that visit I decided to give R' Groner three of my paintings for him to show the Rebbe and get his reaction.

One of the paintings of the Rebbe showed him holding his Torah, and another was of the Rebbe as a young child. Later on R' Groner told me that the Rebbe smiled broadly when he showed him the paintings.

I was thrilled that the Rebbe was pleased and that motivated me to continue painting.

#### **Did you also paint Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka?**

Yes. After painting the Rebbe I wanted to draw the other members of the royal family.

I drew the other Chabad Rebbeim whose pictures we have. I also painted the Mother of Royalty – Rebbetzin Chana. When I wanted to paint Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, I was unsure about whether to do so since throughout the years she kept herself out of sight. I asked a Chabad rabbi who did not negate the idea [note of the author: After the passing of the Rebbetzin, a number of photographs of her were published in the *Algemeiner Journal*, along with an article about her, and the Rebbe personally thanked the editor for the article and the pictures].

#### **What is special about drawing the Rebbe and do you need a certain emotional or soul bond as you draw?**

When I draw a portrait I have to be precise in every particular and this makes me examine every detail of the face, even the most minute lines. When I spend hours and days working on a holy face the inner bond between me and the subject naturally grows stronger.

#### **Do you also paint from real life scenes or only from photographs?**

First of all, I have never copied a picture. I paint my own pictures and use photographs when I see something nice in the street but can't sit there for long enough to paint it; it's not practical to sit on the street for hours. I take a few dozen photographs from different

## MORE ON ART ...

### **How much does an artist reveal of him or herself in their art?**

You can discern a person's character in their art, their imagination and inner world, but not all aspects of their personality. This is because a person is an entire world and is very complicated. I'll give you an example. If the artist is a happy person, you can see it in the lines, colors and subjects. If the artist is an introvert, he will emphasize his inner world more and will be less likely to paint scenery – he will emphasize emotions and thoughts that perhaps the viewer won't comprehend but to the artist it's a painting that embodies his emotions and thoughts.

### **Can every drawing be called art or are there clear rules by which a scribble becomes transformed into skilled artwork?**

Years ago there were clear guidelines. Today, in the modern era, there aren't many rules. In my opinion, in order to qualify as a good painting, technically, it needs a good foundation, good technique, as well as knowledge of how to use the materials that make up a painting. So you must study art; it's a pity on someone who is talented but doesn't improve his work.

I believe that the most important rule is that the painting should express something. Sometimes I see paintings that don't even make me want to look at them. It's important that the drawing say something.

### **Can anybody be an artist?**

Definitely. Anybody, if he loves to draw with all his heart and wants to do it can learn the various techniques. With lots of good personal guidance he will progress, each person on his level.

angles and then draw my own painting as a composite of all those photos.

For example, in the painting of a farbrengen that I drew; every person is taken from another photograph and was taken because of a certain expression or because of the request of the person ordering the painting. There are even drawings of people in the picture which I took from videos of the farbrengen or the picture of a cute child that I "stole" from the picture of the Rebbe giving out coins for tz'daka. All the dozens of details join together in one painting which never existed previously.

**You have a painting in your living room of a farbrengen and the size of the painting fills the wall! It brings the special atmosphere of a Chassidishe farbrengen into the house. How do you convey life and an atmosphere with a paintbrush?**

Like a doctor who looks at an X-ray and knows how to translate what he sees, a good artist can see something and translate it with paints and give it form and soul. An artist looks at the world differently. He or she notices all sorts of little details that other people don't pay attention to. Then when the picture is painted, the viewer notices that the place that is so familiar is especially beautiful.

Wherever I go, the artist within me goes too and discovers extraordinary scenery, ancient alleyways – anything that can be turned into an authentic painting. I have hundreds of photographs at home that I took and I refer to them when I need them for various paintings.

### **Do you also paint abstract drawings?**

I learned to paint abstract drawings and have done many of those but when I made aliya and discovered realistic things that are so beautiful such as rabbanim,



tzaddikim and scenery, I no longer felt the need to paint abstract paintings.

**Do you ever fix up your paintings?**

Paintings can always change. Sometimes, after a month or two or even a year I will find something that I don't like and fix it.

**Can art educate and convey a message?**

Through art you can convey everything. I once drew a painting with symbols for all ten mitzvaim around the figure of the Rebbe. Today I don't find it necessary to tell a story through art. We are surrounded by plenty of things that can convey that, whether it's the written word, a play or a video.

**Have you drawn the Geula?**

Yes. I have created paintings of the Beis HaMikdash with Beis Moshiach-770 next to it. I also painted a scene of the Jewish people coming out of the M'aras HaMachpella and passing by Kever Rochel Imeinu, continuing to Yerushalayim, entering through the Shaar HaRachamim, passing the Kosel and on to the Beis HaMikdash.

**What do you feel when you draw?**

Great satisfaction. I love to paint. If you don't love it, you can't paint, since it is very hard work which requires a lot of thought and



A Chassidishe farbrengen through the eyes of artist Esther Touseon

hours of effort to do it right. Some artists make sketches and are satisfied with that, but not me. I feel satisfied when the paintings are precise and complete.

**What reactions do you get about your work?**

I have always gotten positive feedback wherever I have shown my art. The encouragement contributes a lot to the work. There were also emotional reactions from women who said that when their babies saw the picture of the Rebbe in his childhood they liked it.

A woman once came to my house and when she saw the huge

farbrengen picture she burst into tears. When she calmed down she said that in the picture she saw her uncle who had died two weeks before and was a genuine Chassid and mekushar.

**Is it hard for you to part from your pictures?**

No, because many of them are ordered in advance. Today, when I don't have room in my house to hang up more paintings, I prefer that they hang in other people's homes. If it's a picture of the Rebbe I am happy to have it hang in someone else's home where it can strengthen their hiskashrus.

ב"ה

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# THE REBBE SET THE DATE

By Nosson Avrohom

## *A firsthand tale of Hashgacha Pratis.*

In the Chabad communities of Neot Afka and Tzahala, Mr. Shimon Brosh's story is making waves. "The Rebbe is chai v'kayam. I experienced this for myself," he affirms. And indeed, that's the only way to explain it.

Shimon Brosh started becoming frum three years ago. R' Chaim Rivkin, the stalwart helper of the shliach R' Ido Rahav, brought him to the Chabad House and since then he has become an integral part of the Chabad house scene. He was so far but he had a strong desire to learn and absorb the ways of Chassidus.

His is a life story worth telling, that can wait for another time. This article is about his remarriage to his wife Ronit that took place on Rosh Chodesh Elul in the Chabad house, on a date chosen by the Rebbe himself. How? Read on!

"With this amazing miracle the Rebbe received another Chassid. I had become very involved in Jewish observance but was unsure about a derech, as I am from a Sefardic home. The Rebbe resolved my doubts."

### TO MARRY OR NOT?

I met R' Rivkin one Friday afternoon at a café. He was asking passersby to roll up their sleeve and put on t'fillin. There was something

charming about him that appealed to me. He was also the right person at the right time – at that time I was searching for meaning in life. The emptiness bothered me. One of the things that bothered me was the fact that I hadn't taken part in the aliya to the Torah with my son when he was bar mitzva. I asked R' Rivkin whether my son could have another aliya and this time I could participate.

He connected me with R' Ido Rahav, and we arranged a day and a time and I came with my son for an aliya. From then on, everything changed. I met a warm k'hilla with a great mix of people and that is what I had been lacking. R' Rahav guided me at every stage. He was patient and within a few months I bought t'fillin and began using them every day.

It was a difficult time in my life. I had just been divorced and was alone, without my children, and the community provided moral support for me.

For a long time I went to daven at the shul and was R' Ido's guest on Shabbos. I heard things I had never heard before. I learned of the greatness of the Rebbe and understood what Chassidus is and its purpose in the world. I met people whose approach was

straightforward. The fact that you are a Jew - it makes no difference what your socio-economic position – was enough for them.

I also had my down times. Like many baalei t'shuva, I wanted to see whether my involvement in Judaism was right for me. I took a step forward and then a step back.

One day, I heard about writing to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh, and I was taken by the idea. I had three questions I wanted to ask the Rebbe. Foremost on my mind was a topic my ex-wife and I had broached: perhaps we had divorced too hastily... I also had a question about where to live, and one about parnasa. I was a partner in a company that sold water purifiers and I asked what was the future of this company that was experiencing difficulties. R' Ido showed me how to go about writing. I gave tz'daka, made a good hachlata and put the letter in a volume of Igros Kodesh.

When I opened the book the first words I saw were: It's good for a man to live with his wife. I was astounded. I told my ex-wife about the answer. She was happy about it and agreed to pursue it. Pesach was coming up in a few weeks, and R' Ido suggested that the wedding take place before then. Though we agreed with his suggestion, it didn't end up taking place at that time.

In the meantime, I increasingly felt that I had to make a serious change in my life as far as mitzva observance is concerned and that I had to decide where I stood.

A month ago I had a fight with my ex-wife about something that bothered her and I felt that we were going backward and not progressing towards building a new home. I called R' Ido and he warmly invited me for the upcoming Shabbos. On Motzaei Shabbos, after Havdala, R' Ido took me aside and said, "You know what you need to do. Why don't you do it?"

I knew he meant it for my own

good and accepted that indeed, the time had come to make a change. I decided that I would no longer sit on the fence but would commit to establishing a home as it ought to be, a Jewish home with Torah and mitzvos.

I called my ex-wife and worked things out and then I told her about my decision. I told R' Ido that we had a bracha from the Rebbe and we had to set a date. "In another two weeks it will be Rosh Chodesh Elul, a special date," he suggested. "We will have the wedding here."

## A DOLLAR AND A DATE

Once we set the date a feeling of excitement set in. It was no longer just talk but was really going to happen! In the meantime, things at work were picking up. More orders came in from people who wanted water purifiers and filters installed and so every day I went to another city. My partner told me that there was an order for an installation in Chadara. The name of the city rang a bell. I remembered that months earlier, a woman from Chadara had called us to check whether a water purifier could be installed in her home without breaking up the marble tiles.

I remembered the woman's name, and asked my partner to give me her phone number from the papers we had in the office. "It was half a year ago," he said dismissively. "Forget about it." But I insisted he find the number for me.

After I finished work in the first customer's house I called Miriam and told her that I was in Chadara and if she wanted, I could come and check whether we could install a water purifier. She happily agreed and I headed over to her apartment.

As I was looking for her address I came across a Chabad house on the same street. I was surprised and happy to see it. I remembered that I had not yet put on t'fillin and



Shimon Brosh (left) at the wedding that took place on Rosh Chodesh Elul. On the right are: Rabbi Binyamin Cohen of Kfar Chabad and the gabbai of the Chabad shul Yossi Franco

***On Motzaei Shabbos, after Havdala, R' Ido took me aside and said, "You know what you need to do. Why don't you do it?"***

planned on doing so after I finished with her.

It turned out that the work could not be done in her kitchen because it would involve breaking the marble, which the landlord did not allow. As I prepared to leave, I asked her to direct me to the Chabad house. She showed me the way while expressing surprise that I was interested in going there. I told her that I was a mekurav to Chabad and said I was about to remarry my ex-wife thanks to a bracha from the Rebbe. She was excited to hear it and told me she had become involved with Chabad twenty years ago.

She explained how important this mitzva is, to remarry my ex-wife, and wanted to give me a dollar she had received from the Rebbe. At first I refused. I had heard how special these dollars are and felt she shouldn't be giving one up for me; she didn't even know me. But she

was determined. She said that she felt she had to give it to me.

She had several dollars from the Rebbe but only one was laminated and she decided to give that one to me. I still tried to dissuade her from parting with it even though I was very moved by her wanting to give it to me. When I sensed that she was adamant, I accepted it and I thanked her. I told her that in return, I was going to go and fix the filters at the Chabad house for free.

When I sat down in my car and looked excitedly at the dollar, I nearly fainted. The writing on it read: **A dollar for blessing from the Rebbe, received on 1 Elul.**

I called R' Ido and exclaimed, "1 Elul is not only the date that you chose. It's the date that the Rebbe chose!"

He was as excited as I was. I felt that when I had made a serious hachlata, the Rebbe had sent me an



**Rabbi Ido Rahav (right) and Rabbi Gershom Ochana (center) during the chuppa**

indication that he was with me. R' Ido suggested that I invite Miriam Stocker to the wedding. She had no idea what this dollar meant to me.

I called her the next day and when I told her the story, she added one more fascinating detail. It was the only dollar she had with a date on it because her other dollars from the Rebbe did not say when they were received and what the occasion was. She had felt a little twinge that

she had parted with her only dollar with a date written on it.

The next day at nine in the morning there was a knock at her door. It was a rabbi from one of the yeshivos where she had donated s'farim she had in the house. He told her that in one of the s'farim he had found three dollars that she had received from the Rebbe and since he knew how precious they were to their owners, he had come to return

them. She looked at the three dollars and each one had a date on it. She was flabbergasted. She remembered that many years before she had lost these three dollars and now, here they were! Hashem had heard her prayer of the night before and returned these to her.

I invited her to the wedding and she came. There were also rabbanim, shluchim and members of the k'hilla. R' Ido was the mesader kiddushin.

\*\*\*

It was a Lubavitcher wedding with catering from Kfar Chabad, the niggun Dalet Bavos and all the Chabad customs. I wish you were there ... there was such joy ...

"The Rebbe got another Chassid today," the chassan concluded, as he recounted this story during the seudas mitzva. "Since I received the dollar, all the preparations for the wedding went smoothly, at the Rabbanut and everywhere else. This is the kind of story that – if it hadn't happened to me – I would be skeptical about whether it really happened."

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