

**4**

## **THE WAR OF THE HOUSE OF DOVID**

D'var Malchus

**6**

## **IN THE HILLS OF BINYAMIN**

Shlichus | Nosson Avrohom

**12**

## **DID YOU FIX YOUR MIDDOS YET?**

Chinuch | Menachem Ziegelboim

**16**

## **STORIES FROM THE REBBE'S ROOM**

Stories | Menachem Ziegelboim

**22**

## **LIFE OF A CHASSID**

Profile | Shneur Zalman Berger

**26**

## **THE SECRET NETWORK OF EMISSARIES IN EUROPE**

Memoirs | Rabbi Schneur Zalman Chanim

**30**

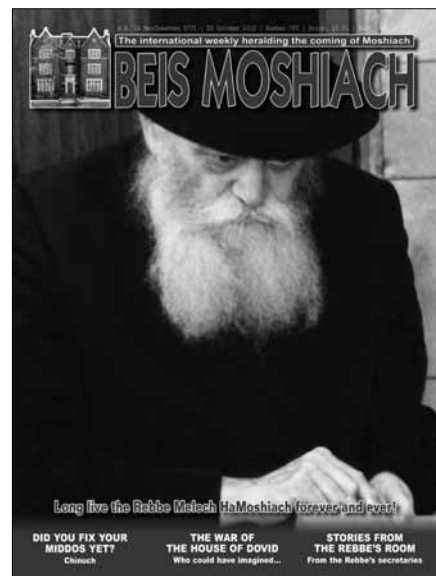
## **SPECIAL CHILDREN**

Feature | Sarah Rivka Lifsh

**36**

## **EVEN THE WALLS CRIED**

Memoirs | Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz



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# THE WAR OF THE HOUSE OF DOVID

Translated by Boruch Merkur

***More than eighty years ago the Rebbe Rashab foresaw in a Divinely inspired vision the particular quality of our times – literally an overt prophecy! \* Who could have imagined, eighty years ago, that a creature such as this should exist, a Jew who “believes in G-d and His Torah” but who laughs at and scorns the “heels of Moshiach”!***

1. When there is an apparent “mighty tempest at sea” (Yona 1:4), “kingdoms clashing with one another,” it is necessary to know that the reason for this is not because one nation is provoked and enraged by another nation. Rather, “because of me, this mighty tempest is upon you” (ibid 1:12). That is, in order that a Jew should know that the advent of our righteous Moshiach is imminent – “Behold, he stands behind our wall” – as it says, “If you have seen kingdoms clashing with one another, anticipate the footsteps of Moshiach”!

Since we know that “he stands behind our wall,” we should be quick to “polish the buttons of the uniform” (as the Rebbe Rayatz, the leader of our generation, would say).

What a shame it will be, if, when Moshiach comes and all 600,000 Jews stand at attention with “polished buttons,” there is an individual with the unfortunate distinction of being the only person who didn’t have the opportunity to polish his buttons! ...

All that remains to be done is a single Mitzva, in accordance with the ruling of Rambam, “if one does a single Mitzva, he inclines himself and the whole entire world to the side of favor, bringing to himself and to others salvation and deliverance.” If the redemption was supposed to come two moments in the future, by means of this action one brings the redemption to be but a moment away, in the words of the Rambam, “immediately they are redeemed,”

this very instant! Bear in mind that we are speaking about a Torah law, where there is no room for humor! Law and humor are polar opposites!

2. As has been said, this is an urgent matter, for “he stands behind our wall” [ready to bring on the redemption]; we cannot simply wait patiently any longer! Even in Talmudic times they said that “all the appointed times have passed.” How much more so is this true of our times! Regarding all the events that had to transpire, the birth pangs of Moshiach and the like – the Mitteler Rebbe wrote, in his time, that we have already suffered through all of them. Thus, we have long since fulfilled our obligation, as it were, our fate – to say nothing of all the horrors of our generation, “may the travails never recur.”

Therefore, it is absolutely certain that the true and complete redemption should already be upon us, in a manner of “With tranquility and restfulness shall you be saved.”

The fact that there are those who laugh about this, etc. – this very fact proves that we are indeed in the final generation of exile, the generation that shall merit the redemption, in accordance with the words of the Rebbe Rashab, whose birthday we are celebrating, in the famous address about “the war of the House of Dovid.”

But first to preface: There is something most unusual detected with regard to this matter,

something that has not been given the attention that it is due. Namely, that more than eighty years ago the Rebbe Rashab foresaw in a Divinely inspired vision the particular quality of our times – literally an overt prophecy!

In the speech the Rebbe Rashab delivered, mentioned above, he predicts that prior to the redemption there will be two degrees, two generations of cynics. The first level (or generation) is comprised of “those who have scorned, Your enemies, O G-d” (T’hillim 89:52). That is, those who oppose G-d, His Torah and His Mitzvos. The second level (the second generation) are “those who scorn the heels of Moshiach” (ibid). The latter refers to Jews who are described as “believers in G-d and His Torah,” to the extent that among them are “fine *b’nei Torah* (those who exemplify the tradition of Torah observant Judaism), but they are, nonetheless, weak in faith in the redemption – to the extent that they scorn and make fun of it!

This second generation is truly a great wonder. Who could have imagined, eighty years ago, that a creature such as this should exist, a Jew who “believes in G-d and His Torah” but who laughs at and scorns the “heels of Moshiach”!

Moreover, in that speech, the Rebbe Rashab adds that besides the very fact that there will be “those who scorn the heels of Moshiach,” they justify the matter with reasons dressed up in the guise of fear of Heaven. The truth is that this second generation is actually a continuation of and a result of the [plainly heretical] generation of “those who have scorned, Your enemies, O G-d,” but they dress it up in a cloak of fear of Heaven! ...

It is indeed a conundrum. Faith in the coming of Moshiach is one of the foundations of the Jewish religion, the Thirteen Principles of Faith. And the ruling of Rambam is

well known – that “anyone who does not believe in him (in the Messianic King), or one who does not yearn for his arrival, denies not only the teachings of the Prophets but also the Torah itself and Moshe Rabbeinu.” Yet still there comes along a Jew, who believes in G-d and His Torah and laughs at and scorns the “heels of Moshiach,” and not only that but he dresses it up in a guise of fear of Heaven!

However, in our times, the matter has indeed come to pass and has become an established fact. There are Jews who observe Torah and Mitzvos yet they “scorn the heels of Moshiach.” When a Jew asserts that we are presently in the times of the “heels of Moshiach,” “behold he stands outside our wall,” they cannot tolerate it – to the point that they even ridicule and laugh at it! They even educate Jewish children in this spirit, to scorn the “heels of Moshiach,” may G-d help us.

When they are asked: How can this be? Faith in the coming of Moshiach is a fundamental principle of the Jewish religion! They have an answer prepared: Certainly they believe in the coming of Moshiach. How can it be otherwise?! They are religious Jews who say, “I believe, etc., in the coming of Moshiach.” But according to their opinion, it is still not the time of the “heels of Moshiach”; we must wait many more years for the redemption (may G-d have mercy upon us) ...

Certainly – they say – eventually, in the distant future, the redemption will be here, but what’s the rush? ... And certainly we mustn’t petition G-d to take the Jewish people out of exile. We must, rather, sit and wait. In the meanwhile, Jews remain stuck in exile, may G-d have mercy on us! What should we do? Dance before the Gentile!

They even dress this argument up in “the fear of Heaven”: Since, centuries ago, Jews were forced to

dance, wearing a bear skin, before the Gentile ... this is a clear proof that this must be the correct conduct of Jews! ... Therefore, they argue, when Jews ask, and especially when they petition G-d that the redemption should come immediately – “Moshiach now” – this is in opposition to the path that Jews have been accustomed to in earlier generations, to dance before the Gentile! ...

This approach, even when veiled in the fear of Heaven, can only come from *der Kluginker* (the Crafty One), the evil inclination, who is infamous for donning a “cloak of holiness” ... As is well known the saying of chassidim that “Eisav wore a silk kapote with a gartel” ...

A Jew who behaves in accordance with Torah is well aware that a Jew and exile are antithetical! A Jew is the son of the King, King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed Be He. Therefore, his rightful place is at the table of his Father, the King. And when a Jew is in exile, it is said of him in heaven, “woe is to the children who were exiled from their Father’s table!”

Regarding their claim about how to relate to a Gentile, there is the clear ruling of Rambam on the matter, delineating how one may relate to a Gentile. Namely, a Jew must strive – in a pleasant and peaceful manner – to encourage the Gentile to fulfill the commandments incumbent upon the descendants of Noach, and to emphasize “that he should do them because thus did G-d command in Torah”! One mustn’t dance before the Gentile simply because that’s the way it was done three hundred years prior to the generation of the “heels of Moshiach”! ...

The fact that he argues that the time of the redemption has not yet arrived – it is explicitly mentioned in the Gemara that “all the appointed times [for the advent of Moshiach]

[Continued on page 42]

# IN THE HILLS OF BINYAMIN

By Nosson Avrohom

***Rabbi Refael Salomon serves as shliach in the Religious-Zionist yishuv Eli, from which he reaches out to eleven other yishuvim in the Matteh Binyamin regional council area. His travels bring him in direct contact with many IDF soldiers and security personnel, and all the unique challenges that go along with that. \* A shliach's life story, including his spiritual journey to Chabad***

## THE REBBE IN NEW YORK CARES ABOUT A JEW IN ALON MOREH

Rabbi Salomon is a successful shliach in the Yehuda-Shomron area but up until thirty years ago he knew nothing about Chassidus Chabad and about the greatness of the Rebbe MH"M.

"I was born in Kiryat Eliezer in Chaifa and received a religious-Zionist education

along with some right-wing Orthodox aspects. In fact, I attended an "ultra-Orthodox" elementary school. For high school I attended religious-Zionist yeshivos. I had heard about the Chabad movement here and there but knew nothing concrete about it."

He learned in Shaalavim but did not feel like one of the crowd there:

"I felt I was searching for a deeper and more authentic approach. The combining

of Jewish and secular studies did not appeal to me and I didn't see myself continuing in this way. One day I decided that I was going to devote myself to Limudei Kodesh and would no longer take secular studies.

"The principal called me to his office to ask me about this but I remained determined. I told him he could send me home or punish me however he liked, but this is what I was going to do.

"A few months later I switched to the yeshiva in Kedumim and then went to yeshivas Mercaz HaRav in Yerushalayim. These yeshivos are considered the 'frumest' of their kind in terms of Torah outlook.

"I sought ruchnius and p'nimius and I wouldn't compromise. I studied many Breslover s'farim as well as other musar works. I attended shiurim given by Litvishe rabbanim. It was a period of constant searching that lasted years. My friends warned me that I was jumping too high and would suffer a painful fall.

"I did my army service in the Hesder program in the armored division. After the first part of my army service I experienced a serious spiritual crisis. On the one hand, I was looking for something that would quiet down this inner longing for eternal truth; on the other hand, I wasn't finding it anywhere.

"After another stint in Shaalavim, a friend from Kedumim by the name of Eliezer Bronstein told me about a yeshiva at Kever Yosef in Sh'chem and Rabbi Yitzchok Ginsburgh. When I went to check it out I knew I had found what I was looking for. Chabad Chassidus was IT. I remember having to leave yeshiva in order to complete my army service and it was in the middle of

a farbrengen. I hated having to walk away from it in order to hitch a ride to the army base. In the yeshiva I found other bachurim like myself who were looking for spirituality and found it, and this made me happy.

“When it came time to decide to become a Chassid, it was very hard. Although I had already internalized that Chassidus is a taste of the teachings of Moshiach, and that it is the path of truth, and that the Rebbe is the Nasi Ha’dor. Still, the transformation into a Lubavitcher Chassid was extremely difficult. I remember sitting in Rabbi Ginsburgh’s home in Kfar Chabad and raising questions and complaints about Chabad practices while he patiently responded.

“A few hours after leaving his house, I decided to put on Rabbeinu Tam t’fillin and to accept Chabad customs and start dressing as a Chassid. This happened 19 years ago. The amazing thing is that I had written to the Rebbe a few times and had not received a response but when I made this commitment and wrote to the Rebbe, I quickly received a response about a problem I was dealing with at the time.

“I was married already and living in Alon Moreh where I worked as a counselor in special education.” R’ Salomon preferred not saying what the problem was. He chose to tell me what R’ Ginsburgh said which led to his commitment to Chabad:

“R’ Ginsburgh told me – you should know that the one who is with you throughout this time is the Rebbe himself. That shook me up. The Rebbe sits in New York and has plenty on his mind and yet he cares about some Jew who lives in Alon Moreh!? The



concept of the Rosh B’nei Yisroel struck me; he cares about every Jew and not only that but he goes out of his way to help.”

## THE RAV OF THE YISHUV GIVES A DAILY SHIUR AT THE CHABAD HOUSE

He adopted a Lubavitch hat and sirtuk. For half a year he learned in the Ohr Zarua kollel in Rechovot and in the kollel in Kfar Chabad. He

wanted to absorb Chassidus in a Chassidishe atmosphere which was so new to him.

For a few years he helped Rabbi Yehuda Rubin in the regional Chabad house that the latter opened at the time. Ten years ago, he was called by Tzeirei Agudas Chabad which was looking for a shliach to yishuv Eli. After writing to the Rebbe in the Igros Kodesh and consulting with his mashpia, he accepted the offer.

Eli is located on a hillside on Highway 60 on the section between Yerushalayim and Tapuach



Junction. It is in the Binyamin Mountains, 700 meters above sea level.

About 700 families live in Eli which was founded at the end of 5740/1980. It was named for Eli the Kohen, the last Kohen Gadol who served in the Mishkan in Shilo, where the Mishkan was for 367 years in the time of the Judges. The community at Eli was founded as a residential urban yishuv, a center for the yishuvim around it. It has a variegated population – recent immigrants alongside longtime Israelis, young couples, families, and seniors.

Eli is home to a strong nucleus of the intensely nationalistic wing of religious-Zionism. When the Salomons arrived they met some families from France and Russia who were drawn there for the quality of life. Their first activity was opening a Chabad house that serves as a shul on Shabbos and Yom Tov, where shiurim in Chassidus are given to men and women.

“In the early years people were highly skeptical about us. Today we see how the ice melted and even the rav of the yishuv gives a daily shiur at the Chabad house.”

When we went to the Chabad house we met Yehuda Stupniker, a Russian immigrant who became interested in Judaism at the beginning of the 90’s and now belongs to the Chabad k’hilla which is forming around R’ Salomon. Each member of the k’hilla sees himself as a partner in the work. R’ Stupniker is the gabbai of the shul. Within a few minutes of conversation it became obvious that he is worthy of an article himself. We heard about the shul, the shiurim, the mekuravim, and how he came to Chassidus:

“Our shul was founded a decade ago, as soon as R’ Salomon arrived at the yishuv. There is a special atmosphere at the t’fillos on Shabbos and Yom Tov as well as at the

farbrengens and shiurim. We have a large library of Chassidus which attracts many people including those who are not part of the k’hilla. Many people are interested in Chassidus and they sometimes sit for hours in the library looking into s’farim.”

R’ Stupniker is the kind of person that you can sit and listen to for hours. He was born in Dnepropetrovsk, the Rebbe’s city:

“Unlike many other Jews, my mother persisted in maintaining our tradition and so I knew about matza, Kiddush and Shabbos. The goyim at school also made sure to remind me of my origins. Anti-Semitism was rampant. When I went to university to study astronomy I failed in my first interview. The non-Jewish administrator, a man of conscience, quietly advised me, ‘Go somewhere else because the reason you failed was anti-Semitism.’

“At the beginning of the 90’s, with the dissolution of the communist empire, Lubavitcher Chassidim came to revive Judaism in the former Soviet Union. One of the first cities they went to was my city. Three young bachurim came. I became friends with them and they taught me a lot. When I went to Eretz Yisroel I found that some of my friends had become baalei t’shuva and were learning in the Mercaz Gutnick in Yerushalayim. They enthusiastically urged me to join them and I agreed. I began learning Chassidus and learned how within Chassidus lies the secret to a happy life.”

R’ Stupniker is an expert in the TRIZ method, a problem-solving, analysis and forecasting tool. He learned it from its originator, Soviet engineer and researcher Genrich Altshuller. There are only 64 people worldwide who have obtained a master’s certificate from him. Not surprisingly, he is invited as a guest of honor to events on the subject.

“When I delved into Jewish studies I saw that the method I had

learned mimics how we learn Torah. Take learning a topic in Gemara for example. It all revolves around resolving contradictions. The TRIZ method I studied does the same thing in an almost likewise manner. I decided to show, through scientific research, how everything is derived from Torah and what we think was invented in recent years was thought of by our Sages thousands of years ago. That is what I am working on now.”

Towards the end of the interview R’ Stupniker explained what brought him to Chabad and to his cashrus to the Rebbe:

“During my wife’s first pregnancy, at the end of 5751, complications cropped up and she went to the hospital. After tests were done the doctors determined that the fetus was no longer alive. My friends at the kollel at Mercaz Gutnick guided me in how to write to the Rebbe and I received an answer that same day: I will mention it at the gravesite.

“I rushed to the hospital where one of the doctors told me that they had done new tests and everything was fine.”

## THE HEAD OF SHIN-BET PUT ON TEFILLIN

R’ Refael Salomon’s work with security forces and IDF soldiers takes place year-round. During holiday season the work intensifies thanks to the bachurim who augment his staff of regulars, who visit every blockade, position, and base in the area. R’ Salomon has numerous stories and he shared a few with us:

“We were informed on one of the days that we went out to soldiers that in a few minutes a group of important people would be visiting one of the blockades. When they arrived I saw five young fellows who looked like Tel Avivians. They were relatively young except for one who

looked older than them. I suggested they put on t'fillin which they declined, some politely and some in annoyance. It was the older one who was willing to put on t'fillin. He murmured the prayer and I saw tears in his eyes.

"When he removed the t'fillin he told me that his son would soon be marking his bar mitzva and now he would be able to tell him that he too put on t'fillin after many years. After the group left I found out from one of the soldiers that the five men were from Shabak (the Shin-Bet) and the man who had put on t'fillin was none other than the head of Shabak at the time, Ami Ayalon.

"One day a group of Russian Jews visited our yishuv. They were led by a Russian speaking guide. I suggested that they put on t'fillin but most of them declined. One of them, an older man, indicated that he wanted to put on t'fillin but he was sorry that he did not speak Ivrit. I helped him with the t'fillin. He merely began reading the first words of the Shma and he burst into tears. At one point he leaned against the wall and sobbed.

"When I saw that he wasn't calming down I called over the guide who spoke to him and relayed the man's story to me. He had been born in Poland before the outbreak of World War II and grew up in a frum home. He had celebrated his bar mitzva and put on t'fillin like all his friends but then the German army entered Poland which was the beginning of the end. He was saved by the skin of his teeth and never discovered the fate of his family members. At the end of the war he lived in Russia and since that time he had not put on t'fillin.

"Speaking of t'fillin and soldiers, many of them put on t'fillin with us for the first time in their lives. It used to be that these were young people from the CIS but now we are encountering many Israelis and even those whose grandfathers came from



Outreach to soldiers



North African countries [who are more traditionally observant].

"These young people have an enormous interest in learning and knowing about their roots. I recently met a soldier in Reserves at base 773 near Eli who said he was willing to put on t'fillin because of the hospitality he enjoyed when he toured in the Far East."

## ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO WRITE TO THE REBBE

At the Chabad house in Eli they aren't embarrassed to openly proclaim "Yechi."

"We see that there is great interest today, including among the religious-Zionists, in hearing about the Rebbe and Chassidus. In the

past, it was regarded as a contradiction to their worldview but today it is warmly accepted. We talk openly about the Rebbe as Moshiach, chai v'kayam. We give out the *Ha'Geula, M'Anyein V'Achshavi* weekly booklet which people really enjoy. There is a guy here who became more involved at the Chabad house because of this publication and today he regularly attends the shiurim, farbrengens and t'fillos."

People know who to turn to when they have a problem:

"One day a woman came and said that the doctors told her she could not become pregnant again because of an illness. She wrote to the Rebbe about the illness and

## THE REBBE'S CHILD

After our oldest daughter was born at the end of 5749 some months went by and we wanted more children, which didn't happen as quickly as we would have liked. In 5752 we wrote to the Rebbe several times but did not receive a response. Before we sent each letter we made a good hachlata but a lot of time went by and we made peace with the fact that we wouldn't receive a response.

Then, Erev Shabbos, my wife woke me up in excitement and told me her dream. In her dream she saw the Rebbe farbrenging in the yishuv we lived in at the time, Yitzhar, and in the course of the farbrengen everybody passed by the Rebbe including her. She held the baby of one of the people there and when she stood before the Rebbe he blessed her saying within a month we would have a yeshua. She asked the Rebbe what he was referring to since we needed a yeshua in a number of areas and the Rebbe said he was referring to a child. The Rebbe added, "My request is that you be careful about saying the daily shiurim of Chitas."

My wife believed with all her heart that her dream would come true and that is, in fact, what happened. During the pregnancy she had another dream in which she saw the Rebbe. She happily told him that she was expecting a child. The Rebbe smiled broadly and said, "Well, I promised."

Since he was born, this child has been accompanied by the Rebbe's blessings throughout. When he was only five years old he came down with a dangerous virus. It was Erev Shabbos and his temperature climbed rapidly and he showed signs of apathy. As we called for an ambulance my wife wrote to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh and opened to an answer which said we should merit to go and return before Shabbos. We couldn't understand the answer since just traveling to the hospital and the minimal time it would take for tests would take us into Shabbos, but we didn't have time to think. The ambulance arrived and for no apparent reason his condition took a drastic turn for the better.

The paramedic didn't understand why we had called for him but suggested that we go to the hospital anyway. At the hospital he improved even more and the doctors who examined him didn't see any reason to hospitalize him. A few days of high temperature, vomiting and seizures disappeared within a few hours, from the moment we wrote to the Rebbe. We see that this child, born with the Rebbe's bracha, had special protection.

Another story we had with him took place when we wanted to register him for first grade in a Talmud Torah (elementary school without any secular studies) and not in a school and the nearest Talmud Torah was in Ramot. Before making the final decision my wife wrote to the Rebbe and added that there was a lot of stone-throwing on the roads and whoever lived in Yehuda-Shomron was afraid. The answer we opened to seemed to have been written then and there, just for us. The date was in Elul and the letter was all about the great z'chus of learning in mosdos associated with the Rebbe Rayatz.

about her desire for children. A few days later she was healed of her illness and despite the doctors' skepticism she became pregnant and had another son.

"There was a family that considered removing their son from the Chabad school and sending him to the school in Yitzhar. After visiting the place, the father didn't feel good about it because on the walls of the classrooms were many pictures of g'dolim but none of the Rebbe. He told his wife that they had to write to the Rebbe about it. The answer they opened to was addressed to a father who wanted to remove his child from a Chabad school! The Rebbe asked him not to be angry with him and noted that it was a great pity on him for removing the child from a school that the Rebbe took responsibility for ..."

R' Salomon's past enables him to walk between the raindrops and to promote Chabad teachings even in situations that are delicate and complex.

"I spent Shabbos in Ofra and reviewed a sicha from the D'var Malchus in the Sephardic shul. After the davening one of the people came over to me and complained that Chabad focuses more on the individual and less on the nation as a whole. I told him about myself and my background and then told him what Chabad's approach is and how it is the most inclusive. The man chose to come to the third Shabbos meal too in the course of which I spoke about the greatness of Jewish souls and about the Neshama Klalis. I explained what a Rebbe is and why we need to connect to him. When they asked who the Rebbe is now, I said it's the same Rebbe. When they continued questioning me, I explained the subject thoroughly and when you do so, you can easily move from there to other topics such as Igros Kodesh. You cannot spout demagoguery but neither can you avoid saying the truth."

## THE MAIN MESSAGE: STRENGTHENING THE REBBE'S INYANIM

Towards the end of the interview we asked R' Salomon how the government's building freeze affected Jewish settlement





Working with children at the Chabad house. In the picture on the right, R' Chemdi Ganz, who works at the Chabad house

in his area and the work of the Chabad house. We were surprised by his answer:

"It all depends on us. There is a relatively new settlement called Givat Asaf. On the same highway on the way to Ofra where Aryeh Hershkowitz was murdered in a shooting, a year later his son Asaf was murdered which is why the residents decided to set up this squatter's settlement in their memory. A year ago they spoke a lot about expelling the residents and it looked as though it was all over.

"Every year we have a Lag B'Omer parade in the surrounding yishuvim like Ofra and Beit El, along with the Bakush family. After the parade we took the whole crowd to that point, 'Givat Asaf.' We recited T'hilim and said the p'sukim. To our surprise, right after Lag B'Omer they stopped talking about destroying this specific area. The same thing happened with Givat HaRoeh. We had a farbrengen there

on 3 Tammuz and the next day they stopped talking about it even though the topic of evacuation was a top priority of the civil command in Yehuda-Shomron. Where we brought in light, the darkness disappeared.

"Because of the building freeze a number of people, together with R' Rubin of Yitzhar, took on all the expenses of checking mezuzos in the new squatter's camps in the hills: in Givat Asaf, Givat HaRoeh, and Givat Yovel. We see how the politicians readily cave in to the dictates of America and only Hashem saves us. This is the main message – to strengthen the Rebbe's inyanim."

\*\*\*

R' Salomon runs four preschools, a shul, an evening Kollel, Tzivos Hashem clubs, and shiurim. For many a Shabbos he goes to other yishuvim where a program has been arranged ahead of time.

He is helped by some Chassidim who live in the various yishuvim who

serve as his contact men.

"We recently spent Shabbos in Ofra and were joined by two bachurim from yeshivas Toras Emes in Yerushalayim. We gave shiurim in a few shuls and made Mesibos Shabbos for the children. The women farbrenged with my wife. This Shabbos program was facilitated by R' Ilan Ben-Tzion who holds the Cultural-Torah portfolio and is a big admirer of our work. He is always happy to take care of the logistical details of our visit."

In this manner, R' Salomon is able to work at each of the yishuvim. He tries to keep the intervals between visits short, and serves as a mobile shliach.

This interview took place on a Motzaei Shabbos right after he returned from Ofra. He said this was the only time he could free for us since he had a tight schedule of activities the very next day.

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# DID YOU FIX YOUR MIDDOS YET?

Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim

*Rabbi Yekusiel Green has published three new s'farim recently on the topic of chinuch and tikkun ha'middos, providing a much needed resource for Chabad educators. \* The author shares his insights with us.*

## CHINUCH OF SELF

"Tikkun ha'middos is only through the ways of Torah and mitzvos for then we are certain we will not fall into the net of errors and justifications that come from self-love since a person's ways are straight in his own eyes and he fools himself in highlighting his good qualities over his deficiencies. Chazal have already decided as halacha that a person sees all flaws except for his own flaws because self-love covers over all sins."

--Igros Kodesh Rayatz,  
11 Iyar 5702, letter #1783

Rabbi Yekusiel Green of Kfar Chabad has published a few new s'farim in recent months. That's not surprising, if you know him. What

did raise some eyebrows is his newest book, *Tikkun HaMiddos*. Tikkun HaMiddos? It's a topic that may be more popular in the derech of Novarodok and Musar, but it's just as relevant for those who focus more on learning Chassidus than on correcting character specifically.

People comments to him about this and this was definitely a good reason to visit with him and discuss chinuch, especially – as he himself said at the start of the interview – that a new year is beginning and a new school year, with the winter being the "backbone of chinuch" of the year while the summer is a freer atmosphere.

R' Green also published two other s'farim on the topic of chinuch and hadracha: *Shma B'ni* with excerpts from sichos that are

vowelized, in which the Rebbe educates children to good middos ("the Rebbe speaks to children, telling them how to conquer the yetzer and to expand their good middos and reveal the strength of a Jew") and *Klalei Chinuch v'Hadracha* that was written by the Rebbe Rayatz with his father's guidance. This kuntres is vowelized and is explained and divided into main chapters and review chapters. So chinuch was our main topic of discussion with R' Green.

R' Green began with some history. "Generally speaking, the Rebbe Rayatz differentiates between chinuch/education and horaa/instruction as they are two different realms that for some reason are often confused. There is horaa and there is chinuch and they





are complementary but different.

“When the Rebbe Rashab started the yeshiva in Lubavitch, the talmidim were about 18-20 years old. It was only in later years that they started yeshivos k’tanos for younger talmidim as well as talmudei Torah and other branches of the yeshiva. When the Rebbe started the yeshiva for older bachurim, the learning was done independently. Each bachur chose to delve into a subject of his choice and each of them developed his own learning abilities.

“Two outstanding mashpiim were appointed to promote the study of Chassidus, R’ Chanoch Hendel and R’ Shmuel Gronem. Aside from being melamdin and mashpiim of Chassidus, the Rebbe Rashab wanted them to be

mechanchim too and he provided them with guidance in the kuntres *Klalei Chinuch v’Hadracha*.

“The Rebbe Rashab laid down the principles contained in this kuntres to his son, the Rebbe Rayatz who was the menahel of the yeshiva. The Rayatz put it into writing and gave it to his father for editing and the material underwent numerous revisions until the finished product was pleasing to the Rebbe Rashab and it became the kuntres we are familiar with today.”

**Is the issue of character refinement a matter of chinuch or horaa?**

We are dealing with chinuch in the realm of middos, the proper tikkun to attain good middos, one of the basics in avodas Hashem. Generally speaking they are divided

into two: middos between man and G-d and middos between people. The need for proper middos is not just a matter of manners but something vital in avodas Hashem.

**You can find good middos by, l’havdil, goyim too. So what is unique about chinuch for good middos by Jews generally and Chassidim specifically?**

Every Jew has three souls: the G-dly soul, the intellectual soul, and the animalistic soul. The animalistic soul consists of various animalistic tendencies – a person can be irritable by nature or bombastic and another could be full of physical desires etc. The G-dly soul opposes it and there is a constant battle between them.

While Musar sees the Evil Inclination as something that needs to be overcome in order to be able to learn and daven, Chassidus sees the animalistic soul as something Hashem gave us in order to work with it and transform its tendencies in a positive direction. This is the challenge in every Jew’s life; this is our personal avoda, to look for our animalistic middos and know how to work with them, not in a superficial way but with hard inner work through self-chinuch. This is the **chinuch atzmi** that every person needs to do.

We are used to thinking of chinuch in terms of children but the Rebbe Rashab gave educational material to mashpiim for them to guide older bachurim in Tomchei T’mimim in how to educate themselves and fix their middos.

**Can you really still educate bachurim who are 18 already?**

This is chinuch that the talmidim need to do **for themselves**, and it’s definitely possible. Educating ourselves never ends, at any age. However the mashpiim were appointed to help the bachurim, to guide them in how to educate themselves. First and foremost, chinuch atzmi is for good middos

and only after that comes chinuch as it relates to others.

**Is there a difference in approach between educating ourselves and educating others?**

The Rebbe in this kuntres tells us how to educate ourselves and how to educate others as a talmid.

## CHINUCH VERSUS HORA'A

**“The main point of chinuch is not about acquiring much knowledge (even if it’s good knowledge) but to focus on everything having to do with the nature of the middos – that the disciple become an ‘Adam’ worthy of that appellation, one who conducts himself as a mentch in his daily life, so that he uses all his knowledge for purposes of righteousness, uprightness, peace etc.”**

--From a sicha of 11 Nissan 5742

When speaking of chinuch and horaa, people are not equal. There are people who are born with a natural talent for chinuch and horaa and they can develop their talents. And there are some who are talented in other ways. Even those who are not talented in chinuch can learn the techniques of how to do it. Today it’s possible to study and acquire many techniques. Even someone with innate talent needs to develop it.

**If I don’t have the talent for a certain field, I don’t have to go into it but can work for my parnasa in fields that suit me, but when it comes to chinuch, even if I wasn’t born with talent in this area I still have to educate my children; it’s my obligation. What can I do then, if I’m not talented in this way?**

The obligation of chinuch falls on every parent and for this we have Chabad literature, the *Klalei Chinuch v’Hadracha* of the Rebbe Rashab, which is now available in a

more readable revised format and with the addition of commentary and examples.

Parents have the roles not only of parents but also of educators and to a certain extent, also teachers who teach their children. When a child comes home from school and tells what he learned, it can’t be something the parents are hearing for the first time in their lives. When a child wants to review a Mishna that he learned that day, the father has to know what it’s about and not just listen passively.

**That is an example of horaa, not of chinuch ...**

Horaa, says the Rebbe Rayatz, must be combined with good middos. Parents are teachers and educators and they must prepare themselves according to the *Klalei Chinuch v’Hadracha*. That is the minimum that parents need to start with in order to know how to raise and teach their children.

A father once sadly told me that his son slept in until two in the afternoon. I asked him how he reacted and he said, ‘I exploded and I turned him over with the bed.’ Or take this for example, ‘My son doesn’t behave properly and I deal with him as necessary.’ This is neither horaa nor chinuch. It’s a form of bullying. Do I really want to get my child back on track or is my reaction merely because I was personally offended; he hurt my ego ...

## THE REBBE AS PEDAGOGUE

**“Even if Hashem gives one success ‘like the opening of a banquet hall,’ a person still needs to open ‘an opening like the hole of a needle,’ especially in the area of tikkun ha’middos. This inyan is one of the main reasons the soul descended from the greatest heights to the lowest depths.”**

--Igros Kodesh #3004

After publishing *Klalei Chinuch v’Hadracha*, R’ Green rounded out the topic with two other books, *Tikkun HaMiddos* (“an essential part of avoda in Chassidus is chinuch for good middos and mentchlich behavior”) and *Shma B’ni* which targets children.

R’ Green responded to my question about what Chabad has to do with tikkun ha’middos when our focus is Chassidus in the following way:

In Judaism there are three approaches: Musar, Chakira, and Chassidus (Chabad). In Novarodok (Musar) they emphasized **bittul ha’chomer**, i.e. nullifying my physical side, the pleasures of this world, a person’s nice exterior. This is why they would deliberately go to a pharmacy and ask for a package of nails and would endure humiliation.

Books of chakira emphasized **hagboras ha’tzura** (supremacy of the form/spirit) – the qualities of the nefesh, the positive, “It’s beautiful that you learn,” “How beautiful are good middos.” They stressed the light within man.

Chassidus emphasized **hagboras ha’tzura al ha’chomer**, i.e. not hagboras ha’tzura in and of itself, but in governing the material. With the light within Chassidus we take the chomer and transform it to k’dusha. Every person is chumri (coarsely materialistic); everybody has his chumrius, and this needs to be corrected.

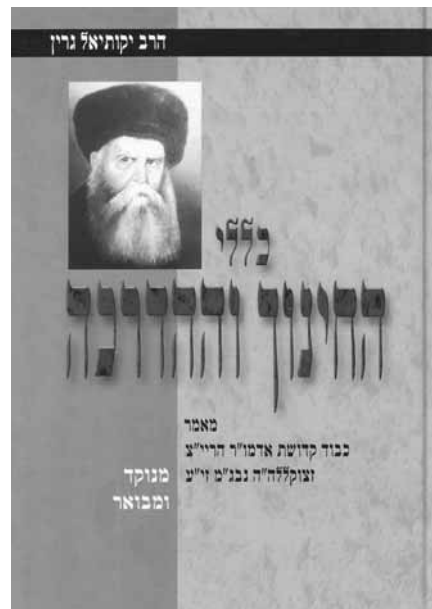
So whoever says Chabad is not about fixing middos is mistaken!

**Can one’s nature be changed?**

Of course, and it’s not optional. It’s obligatory.

**I meant, can one completely change one’s nature or just direct it towards positive ends?**

All of avodas ha’t’filla, according to Chassidus, is about changing and uprooting the middos of the animalistic soul. It’s not only



possible, it's the purpose of a Jew in his lifetime.

**If a person is born with a tendency towards anger, can he only work on not becoming angry or can he really change himself so he no longer has the internal tendency towards anger?**

"The avoda is to uproot the bad from the root. At a later stage of personal avoda it is possible to transform bad tendencies and to use them for k'dusha."

R' Green's s'farim talk about ordinary bad middos that many of us, make that – all of us, have. He talks about stinginess, anger and other bad traits.

The book *Tikkun HaMiddos* contains ideas from all the Rebbeim about man's nature and how to change it.

**Have you gotten any feedback?**

The first thing a person does when looking through the book is see whether it's about him. Does the Rebbe mean me? When talking about correcting middos and various negative situations, is it that way with me too?

The other book, *Shma B'ni*, contains sichos of the Rebbe that were said to children at rallies out of which I took excerpts having to do with chinuch in which the Rebbe himself, as it were, guided the

children and educated them. The Rebbe guides the children in how to wean themselves of negative middos. For example, there is a sicha (on p. 29) in which the Rebbe guides the children in saying the truth. The Rebbe tells them about the ways of the Evil Inclination and how it devises means to trip up the child in saying what is not the truth and how to get rid of it, and even how the Evil Inclination reacts when it sees that the child is avoiding it.

"There is a chapter about how to help others (p. 37), how a child can avoid being arrogant, etc."

## SPREADING THE WELLSPRINGS

**"In order to find favor in the eyes of the King of kings, HaKadosh Boruch Hu, you need to increase in Torah study and the fulfillment of mitzvos, i.e. in addition to learning Torah and doing mitzvos as per compulsory obligations, you need to add of your own good will, an addition through which you will find favor in Hashem's eyes. The Evil Inclination, of course, opposes this addition, but Tzivos Hashem has the task of conquering the Evil Inclination in this war too. Know that if you vanquish the Evil Inclination today, it will be easier to vanquish**

**him in the war he will wage against you tomorrow."**

--Sicha 6 Iyar 5742 to the children of Tzivos Hashem

R' Green has published sixty s'farim so far. When I commented that he might publish another book as we speak, he smiled and said that in fact, he has two books at the printer.

**One gets the impression that you took on the topic of chinuch in particular in your s'farim.**

R' Green was involved in chinuch and horaa for many years, back in the days when he worked as a teacher in the vocational school in Kfar Chabad. One day, he relates, they were instructed to study education professionally.

"I wondered why I had to study education when Chassidus is full of educational ideas, ways of teaching, ways of learning etc. If you learned only a little Chassidus you know how many times examples of the teacher-student relationship are brought."

**But not everybody knows how to extract the information from a maamar and apply it in the classroom.**

"That is precisely why I worked on editing and writing these s'farim based on the teachings of our Rebbeim," concludes R' Green.

# STORIES FROM THE REBBE'S ROOM

By Menachem Ziegelboim



*What did the Rebbe say to the emissary of the King of Morocco who wanted a yechidus? What did the Rebbe “invest” at every yechidus? How did the Rebbe react to the Chassid who refrained from having a yechidus because he wanted to protect the Rebbe from additional worries? What happened with the woman who did not know when she was supposed to get up and leave the Rebbe’s room? Does the Rebbe ever make a mistake? \* A selection of stories as related by the Rebbe’s secretaries in first person as witnessed by them, from the book “Sippurim M’Cheider HaRebbe”*

Many books have been written about the hours in which the Rebbe was seen in public, but not much has been written about the Rebbe's work in *Gan Eden HaElyon* (i.e. the Rebbe's office). All know that the Rebbe's room is the "Holy of Holies" and nobody can enter, not even in thought. They are the Rebbe's "four cubits" and who would dare to encroach and touch the "holy mountain?"

However, during the thirty years in which the Rebbe received people for yechidus – private audiences (twice or three times a week), the room was open to people who would wait in the nearby hallway (which Chassidim called *Gan Eden HaTachton*) or the nearby room that was the foyer or in the small beis midrash on that floor. They would wait anxiously for their name to be called by the secretary which is something Chassidim prepared for, days, weeks or even months in advance.

One by one, they walked in to face the Rebbe. Chassidim stood in awe the entire time. Guests, who were not Chassidim, were invited to sit down. These encounters sometimes lasted a few minutes and occasionally took hours.

It's fascinating to read the description written by Peter Kalms, who was not a Lubavitcher Chassid but became very close to the Rebbe and even carried out many missions for him. Mr. Kalms had many private audiences with the Rebbe:

"It was my good fortune to have met the Rebbe in the nineteen sixties when he was under less pressure and able to give more time to individual relationships. Occasionally, he even directed the private audience, known as *Yechidus*, into a kind of relaxed conversation as between trusted colleagues with common interests. At every stage, even in the later years when thousands competed for his attention, he never showed the slightest hint of impatience. Indeed,

his whole attitude was always total identification with the interest of the visitor with time being of no significance.

"The Rebbe would have private audiences three times a week that would begin at around 8 p.m. and often continue throughout the night to the early morning hours. The atmosphere at Lubavitch World Headquarters, addressed 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, was a combination of apprehension and excitement which increased in intensity the nearer one came to the Rebbe's room on the ground floor.

"A list was compiled by the Rebbe's chief aide, Rabbi Chadakov, assisted by the aides Rabbi Groner or Rabbi Klein. They created a certain order of when the individuals would enter for their audience, but since it was never possible to be sure how long – seconds, minutes or hours – the visitors would stay, they were divided into two groups: The more immediate in the corridor outside the Rebbe's room and the rest in the main hallway or other study rooms, where the rabbinical students were learning at all times, day or night, Jewish scholarly subjects.

"Usually the first to enter were engaged couples or young disciples. They would emerge quickly, backing out respectfully and overcome with emotion. Then, local families would go in for a birthday or special occasion, followed by visitors, mainly from abroad, who would be brought two or three at a time to wait outside the Rebbe's office prior to their audience.

"There were men and women of every type and from every country, poor and prosperous, soldiers, politicians, intellectuals, businessmen and workmen, all waiting in silent tension for their call. Sometimes, when visitors would emerge from particularly long sessions, still somewhat shaken by the experience, friends and

acquaintances would surround them, asking in urgent whispers for some explanation for the unusual length of time spent with the Rebbe.

"For my audience, I always took with me a small notepad and, accepting the Rebbe's invitation to sit, would scribble key words and phrases during the conversation. The door was always left slightly open and, as the minutes passed, a buzzer would sound on the Rebbe's desk. From time to time, one of the Rebbe's aides would put his head round the door silently reminding the visitor of the lateness of the hour and indicating that he should have some consideration for the Rebbe's well-being – but the Rebbe, and usually the visitor, would appear not to notice ..."

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An encounter with the Rebbe, aside from the spiritual advantages, was also a balm to the soul. The Rebbe gave people the strength to go on. Problems were solved and doubts resolved. You were able to unburden yourself without fear and leave knowing what Hashem wanted of you.

One of the Chassidim who went to the Rebbe year after year stopped going for a few years. One day he appeared for yechidus once again and the Rebbe asked him whether something had happened. He told the Rebbe that he hadn't come in order to shield the Rebbe from additional worries.

"Do you see this room?" asked the Rebbe as he pointed around. "This room is full of stones that came off the hearts of Jews who spoke about their situations. In this room are thousands of stones and this room can contain the tzaros of all the Jewish people."

"The Rebbe is above all limitations," said the Rebbe's secretary, R' Groner, after relating this story. "Therefore, nothing is too hard for him."

## OMNISCIENT

R' Leibel Groner relates:

One year, Moshe Sharett called me. He said he was an emissary of the Israeli government and he had come to the United States to ask the Rebbe about a problem they had. The prime minister and members of the government had sent him as their representative to the Rebbe to find a solution. This was on a Wednesday and he had to leave the next day, Thursday night. With the Rebbe's agreement I arranged a meeting for him at two o'clock that same afternoon.

When he left the yechidus he came into the secretaries' office and said to me, "Rabbi Groner, the Rebbe sits in Brooklyn and knows what is going on with us behind closed doors. I told the Rebbe the problem. The Rebbe smiled and said, 'For such a little thing you had to come overseas?' He analyzed the problem which was between the Housing Ministry and the Interior Ministry and did this so simply that I felt like a child ...

"When we finished I began to leave and the Rebbe asked me to stay, saying, 'Since by divine providence you are here, I want to make you an emissary to two government ministers.' The Rebbe went on, 'There is an argument between them – and the Rebbe told me what the dispute was about – the problem needs to be solved and peace made between them.' Then the Rebbe gave suggestions as to how to do this in the most effective manner."

Mr. Sharett told me, "These two ministers have no connection to the Rebbe. Only they and I know about their disagreement and so I say that the Rebbe sits here in Brooklyn and knows what is going on with us behind closed doors."

R' Groner added the following thought:

"Let us think about how many

hours a day the Rebbe devoted to us. I'm not referring to those matters the Rebbe took care of in his room but to those things that everybody saw. Let's take yechidus for example. For decades the Rebbe would receive people three times a week and he would sit from eight o'clock at night until five in the morning.

"One time, the Rebbe received people from eight at night until 10:30 in the morning without a break – fourteen and a half hours! The following night there was supposed to be yechidus again and I asked permission to postpone it till the next night so the Rebbe could rest but he refused. He said he did not want to delay those who were waiting on line.

"That night yechidus began at eight and concluded at eleven in the morning – fifteen hours in a row. The Rebbe said a number of times that as far as he was concerned he could stay closed up in his room and at most send out instructions from time to time. If the Rebbe goes out to the public for many hours, while forgoing his personal matters, it's only for us. The question then becomes what are we giving back to the Rebbe as a sign of gratitude?"

## UNTIL THE LAST DROP OF BLOOD

Yechidus is something extremely lofty. In order to illustrate what yechidus meant to the Rebbe here is the following story:

In 5711/1951, when Rebbetzin Nechama Dina found out that yechidus is from eight in the evening until five in the morning, she called three senior distinguished Chassidim, Rabbis Levitin, Kazarnovsky, and Simpson and told them, "You are shedding blood. I heard from my mechutan [i.e. the Rebbe Rashab] that when a Rebbe receives people for yechidus he gives of himself until his last drop of

blood. I don't know what will happen to my son-in-law if these yechiduyos continue like this."

The Rebbe once told his secretary, R' Sholom Mendel Simpson, that he wanted to stop yechidus since the whole point of yechidus was for spiritual matters while material matters were a side thing, but now, most people asked only about material matters.

The Rebbe did not in fact stop yechidus and this was because of Rabbi Shmuel Levitin's initiative. He arranged for a group of fifteen bachurim to have yechidus and ask only about spiritual matters.

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R' Menachem Mendel Groner, son of the secretary, relates:

My father told me that one year the Rebbe suddenly told him that he doesn't want to respond to questions about material concerns because he was extremely busy. My father dared to say that in one of the Rebbe's sichos he told about the Alter Rebbe who asked that no further questions about material concerns be asked of him since these matters pertained to a prophet and not to someone who was supposed to teach Torah, and then the Rebbe went on to relate that the Alter Rebbe's disciples did not listen and continued asking about material matters and the Alter Rebbe did in fact respond. In that sicha, the Rebbe explained that from this it is understood that the Alter Rebbe was a prophet.

The Rebbe responded: Are you comparing me to the Alter Rebbe?

My father said: Of course!

The Rebbe did not respond directly but immediately went back to responding to questions that also concerned material matters.

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The secretary R' Nissan Mindel a"h wrote in one of his reshimos about the Rebbe's holy work with the Chassidim and he also points out the enormous spiritual effort that the



Rebbe invested in every yechidus:

“One of the most fundamental characteristics of the Rebbe’s leadership is the ongoing and personal relationship between Rebbe and Chassid. This relationship found a tangible expression, although not exclusively, through yechidus, which is the privilege of a personal meeting for those who sought the Rebbe’s counsel and blessing in a spiritual or material crisis. The concept of yechidus originated with the founder of Chabad, the Alter Rebbe. At first yechidus was intended for those who sought spiritual direction but soon after Chassidim began using the opportunity in order to gain the Rebbe’s direct guidance and bracha for worldly issues like health, parnasa and so on. When the number of requests for yechidus grew and it became physically impossible to accede, the Rebbe transferred the same concept into the form of personal correspondence.

“With guarantees of confidentiality, correspondents could open their hearts to the Rebbe and receive the same answer they would have received in yechidus. Actually, with certain answers, the written answer had important advantages over yechidus, advantages enjoyed by both the Rebbe and the Chassid; the advantage for the Rebbe being both in terms of time and in terms of workload.

“At first the Rebbe designated three nights a week – without exaggeration – for these encounters. Most of these meetings continued until dawn. Each one lasted a few minutes and only rarely were they longer than ten minutes so that as many people as possible could meet with the Rebbe and discuss their problems. Only the very few recognized the burden placed on the Rebbe as the night progressed, with people coming in one after the other quickly, each one telling his or her story.



“The Rebbe had to first concentrate on the problem of the person who had just walked in and give his advice and bracha. Then, when the person left, he had to completely remove himself from that matter and without a long break receive the next visitor and go through the same process. Being such a sensitive person, the Rebbe surely was deeply affected by people’s suffering and he had to conceal his feelings in order to appear involved and give the impression that matters were not as severe as they seemed and encourage the person to have strong faith in Hashem and bitachon that Hashem would help. In other words, even though the Rebbe’s natural inclination was to cry with the visitor, he had to radiate positivity in order to strengthen their emuna and bitachon. The difficulties inherent in this process are illustrated by the following story:

“The daughter of the Rebbe Rayatz, who walked into his room after yechidus, once told me that she had to give her father a change of undershirt since his was soaked through with sweat.”

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An emissary of the King of Morocco once came to the Rebbe. He asked R’ Klein what the protocol

was and R’ Klein told him to enter and see ...

Apparently the bachurim who met him outside told him not to sit and not to extend his hand in greeting to the Rebbe. When he entered, the Rebbe extended his hand and the man said, “The young men told me not to extend my hand.”

The Rebbe smiled and said, “Don’t worry, I won’t tell them that you shook my hand.”

That is how the Rebbe gave people a good feeling when they came to talk to him.

## A MAVEN OF SOULS

As related by R’ Groner:

One night of yechidus there were hundreds of people waiting to see the Rebbe. The Rebbe said that only guests who came for Yom Tov were allowed in and so we did not allow others to go in.

At a certain point a bachur came who had recently arrived from Russia. He heard that the Rebbe was seeing people and he wanted to go in. We told him that the Rebbe was only receiving guests and he could see the Rebbe another time.

One of the guests, who had also come from Russia and knew the bachur from there, apparently spoke to the Rebbe about him when he had

yechidus for when he came out of the Rebbe's room he said, "The Rebbe asked that this bachur be sent in for yechidus." It was no simple matter. So many people were waiting to go in and the Rebbe was asking specifically for him, upsetting the existing procedure.

I went to the Rebbe's room and the Rebbe told me to send him in. The Rebbe noticed my surprise and said, "Are you a maven in neshamos? This bachur has to come in now!"

## TREMENDOUS SENSITIVITY

At the end of one Tishrei there was a list of about 1500 guests who had come for Tishrei who wanted yechidus before they went home. At that time, yechidus took place on Tuesday and Wednesday nights. Tuesday night, yechidus lasted from eight at night until ten in the morning. I said to the Rebbe that perhaps it would be better to postpone yechidus on Wednesday night to Thursday to preserve the Rebbe's health.

The Rebbe said, "If we postpone yechidus, the people from Eretz Yisroel and Europe who are waiting for yechidus will have to stay here until after Shabbos because they cannot leave New York on Friday and they won't be with their families for Shabbos and they will miss a day of work as in Eretz Yisroel Sunday is a workday, and all that because of me ..."

The Rebbe held yechidus Wednesday night and it lasted until 11:30 in the morning!

## PATIENCE FOR EVERY JEW

One of the things we can learn from the Rebbe is patience. The Rebbe's patience for every Jew is astounding. When the Rebbe gave out dollars for tz'daka, hundreds

and thousands of people came and told him their problems and whatever was on their mind. The Rebbe never interrupted anyone. He always allowed the person to finish talking and only then responded. There were people who repeated themselves, thinking that the Rebbe did not understand them, and the Rebbe always heard them out.

The Rebbe's time was extremely precious and nevertheless, he listened. The Rebbe never "kicked anyone out" of his room from yechidus even if he was a nudnik.

R' Klein relates:

A woman came for yechidus at the time allotted to her. She was willing to allow others to go before her and so she was the last yechidus that night. She began talking to the Rebbe and it didn't look as though she planned on finishing any time soon. It was very late and the Rebbe continued listening.

Having no choice we went in and told her: It's late and the Rebbe needs to go home, but she continued talking. When the yechidus ended, the Rebbe stood up and continued answering her and talking to her as he took his coat from the nearby alcove and got ready to leave. She continued talking. When the Rebbe started leaving his room she followed him and spoke to him until he left the building.

As soon as the Rebbe arrived home he called the office and asked that two bachurim escort her in a taxi to her home and that the secretaries should pay for it.

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Many years ago, a group of students visited the Rebbe. When they were told that the Sh'china speaks from the Rebbe's throat, one of them asked whether that meant the Rebbe never made a mistake.

When they entered the Rebbe's room for yechidus, one of them asked: If the Rebbe never makes a mistake, why does the Rebbe have

an eraser on his pencil?

The Rebbe responded: A Rebbe does not err but today he is greater than yesterday and today he adds to what was written yesterday.

In other words, it's not in order to erase a mistake but to erase what was correct yesterday. Today he is of a different, higher stature.

R' Klein:

We saw this with the Rebbe when he edited sichos. When they brought a sicha to him before it went to print, the Rebbe worked on the editing for several hours, sometimes four and more, and when he finished he called the secretaries on the in-house phone to come and take the pages to the editors and from there to the printer.

Sometimes, after going in, we may have waited in the room for another three quarters of an hour as the Rebbe continued to add and correct. Once, on such an occasion, the Rebbe told me, "Take this to the printer because otherwise I will never finish."

After all the corrections were made the sicha was submitted a second time and once again the Rebbe made corrections because the Rebbe was making additional chiddushim.

## "IF YOU BELIEVE ME"

R' Groner relates:

One day a woman came to 770 and asked to be able to see the Rebbe in order to request a bracha for her sick father. The doctors said he was in critical condition. Since it wasn't the time for yechidus, I could not allow her to go in, and I told her the Rebbe wasn't receiving people at that time, especially when it was in the middle of the day. I suggested that she write a note that would be submitted to the Rebbe.

She insisted on seeing the Rebbe. She ran to *Gan Eden HaTachton* and stood near the Rebbe's door and started to scream.

The Rebbe called on the in-house phone and asked me to come. When I went to the Rebbe's room he asked me what was going on with the woman. I told the Rebbe what she wanted and said that it looked as though she wouldn't leave until she heard a bracha from the Rebbe.

The Rebbe said, "Tell her in my name that if she puts her faith in me, and apparently she does as she came here for a bracha, that she should also believe me when I say there is no need to come in and no need to hear this directly from me; what I relay through the secretaries is sufficient. The Rebbe said to tell her that her father's condition was not the way she described.

I relayed this message to the woman but she wasn't satisfied and she took out a telegram that she had received from Israel which said that the doctors said her father's condition was critical. I kept repeating to her what the Rebbe said and she finally calmed down and left.

Two weeks later the lady came and asked that we convey her thanks to the Rebbe. The doctors had erred and her father's situation wasn't that bad and he was recovering rapidly.

## THE REBBE RUINED OUR VACATION

There was a story with a family that was given a gift by their community to travel to Eretz Yisroel on vacation. The husband asked for an appointment for yechidus so he could get a bracha from the Rebbe. He and his wife had yechidus and when they left, the wife said to me, "Oy, why did we have to come here for?"

I asked her what she meant and she said, "The Rebbe ruined our vacation."

"What happened?" I asked in astonishment.

She said, "In yechidus the Rebbe said, 'You are going to Eretz



Yisroel? That is very good but before you go there, deter to Yugoslavia (or Czechoslovakia) where there is a town (and the Rebbe specified which one) that has a Jewish old age home. I found out that there is no kosher food there. Since you are traveling, if it isn't difficult for you to make a stop there, go to that town and speak with the head of the community and ask him to arrange kosher food for the people in the home.'

The woman concluded, "Do you understand what this entails? This is a town that nobody knows about but the Rebbe found out that there is an old age home there without kosher food and he asked someone who wants to go on vacation to ensure that there is kosher food in that establishment."

## ACCORDING TO YOUR ABILITIES AND MORE

I once had yechidus, not as a secretary but as a Chassid, and the Rebbe demanded something of me. I did not respond. I did not understand how I, with my limitations and abilities, could carry this out.

Although I remained silent the Rebbe realized that I did not understand how I could do as he

asked and he said, "Don't think how much I'm asking of you; I demand ten times more of myself."

\*\*\*

We will conclude with an amazing and touching story from R' Klein:

The Rebbe's work was done very discreetly so that often, people that the Rebbe helped did not even realize it. Someone once called me and said he had to have yechidus concerning a matter of life and death. He was not a Lubavitcher Chassid but he had been told that if he needed a yeshua (salvation), he should ask the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

He had yechidus on Sunday night during the course of which he told the Rebbe that in a distant country he had a brother who had gotten entangled in debt and his business was about to fold and he might end up in jail. The Rebbe did not really respond.

When the man left the Rebbe's room I asked him how it went and he said, "I am more despondent now than before I went in. Before I went in, I had hope that the Rebbe would save me but the Rebbe listened and did not react to what I said but went on to talk about other things."

I couldn't help him other than to

[Continued on pg. 42]

# THE LIFE OF A CHASSID

By Shneur Zalman Berger

*Rabbi Menachem Mendel Raskin of Kfar Chabad passed away one year ago on Parshas Chayei Sarah. His life as a child and young man was one of mesirus nefesh for Torah and mitzvos. \* He had the privilege of serving Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn, the Rebbe's father and then made aliya where he was a prominent figure in Kfar Chabad from when it was founded. \* We interviewed him over a decade ago but the interview is being published now for the first time. \* Part 1 of 2*

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Raskin passed away on Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah. He was one of the founders of Kfar Chabad and served as gabbai of the main shul there for decades.

He grew up in the former Soviet Union under oppressive communist rule and was raised to mesirus nefesh (self-sacrifice) by his father, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef. During World War II he fled to Alma Ata with his family where they lived near the mekubal Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn and helped him a great

deal. At the end of the war he was able to leave Russia for Eretz Yisroel, marrying his cousin Sarah, daughter of Rabbi Yitzchok Raskin. His chinuch for mesirus nefesh in every situation and under all conditions was something he retained to his final day.

R' Mendel did not talk much about his life in Russia, but ten years ago he agreed to an interview and told me his story but for technical reasons, the story wasn't published at the time. Now that R' Mendel has passed away it is my privilege to

share his memories.

## GROWING UP IN A CHASSIDIC HOME

I was born in 5681/1921 in Bobruisk. My parents, R' Yaakov Yosef and Mrs. Droiza (nee Kaplan) Raskin instilled me with a Chassidishe chinuch even in those harsh times with danger around every corner.

When I was 8, in Elul 5689, my father was arrested under various



pretexts and was sentenced to jail. That left my mother, younger brothers and me consumed with worry. When my father returned he said he had kept mitzvos with mesirus nefesh while in jail.

When I was 10 we moved to Leningrad where many Lubavitchers lived. We were five children. I was the oldest, Tzivia (who later married R' Dovid Bravman a"h), Dovid (who lives in Crown Heights), Sholom Ber (who lives in London), and Yehuda Leib a"h, who was the shliach in

Morocco.

My father refused to send us to public school and he hired a *melamed* (teacher) who taught me, my brothers and other Lubavitcher children. Together with us was R' Sholom Morosov who lived far away, and his father R' Elchonon Dov Morosov (Chonye) Hy'd would bring him to our house every day.

The *melamed* who taught me and my friends with *mesirus nefesh* was caught one day by the KGB and his trial was scheduled for Shabbos



morning. The Yevsektzia (Jewish communists) made sure to schedule it for that time, during Shacharis, when every Jew in Bobruisk was in shul. The community was determined to show their open support for the *melamed* despite the danger. They surprised everybody by showing up at the courthouse instead of going to shul.

On the judges' desk a red tablecloth was spread upon which was the newspaper *Emes* (the Yiddishist version of the communist party paper *Pravda*). One by one the

*melamed's* students were called up. When it was my turn to testify I was very nervous.

"You learn with him?" they asked me. I said that I did.

"What do you learn with him?"

"We learn the letters but we haven't yet learned them all," I answered, hoping that the judges would believe that I was only learning *alef-beis*. The judge sneeringly asked, "You still haven't learned all the letters?" and I thought: You fool, we are learning Chumash with Rashi, but I answered, "I only know some of the letters."

The judge deliberated about whether to believe me and they finally accepted my testimony. They said mockingly, "If he hasn't managed to even teach the letters he's a failure and therefore he isn't a *melamed*." To the joy of his students and the community the *melamed* was immediately released.

My father worked as a photographer but when they asked him to come and work on Shabbos he quit. They didn't want to lose him and so they offered that he come in to work on Shabbos but not actually do anything. However, my father did not even want to make it appear as though he was working on Shabbos.

Like many Lubavitchers at that time, my parents obtained weaving and knitting machines and they worked at home without desecrating the Shabbos.

The *mohel* of Leningrad at that time was my uncle, R' Yitzchok Raskin Hy'd, who did as many *brissin* as possible. My father, who was also a *mohel*, occasionally circumcised babies. This was done secretly, far from prying eyes. From those years I remember instances in which Jews came to my father in order for him to shecht a chicken and this too entailed danger.

There were times when Anash organized minyanim in private

homes but it was during the difficult times, when I lived in Leningrad, that we davened in shul for it was feared that the hosts of minyanim would be caught and sent to Siberia.

They took my father for interrogations many times. An order to appear at the offices of the KGB would come to the house, and when he complied they interrogated him for hours. He was asked about his acquaintances and other questions but my father kept quiet and didn't reveal a thing.

When pressure to send me to school intensified, I was sent to the city of Starirus to my aunt and uncle, Mumme Sarah (my father's sister) and her husband R' Michoel Katzenelenbogen, may Hashem avenge their blood. I lived in their home for a while and learned together with other Lubavitcher children. One of our *melamdim* was R' Peretz Mochkin.

## THE YESHIVA IN BERDITCHEV

In 1937, when I was 16, I began learning in yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Berditchev. There were 22 shuls and we learned in the Mishnayos-Kloiz. We were fifteen *bachurim*. Together with me were Shmuel Itkin, Yechezkel Tzeitlin, and older *bachurim*: Nissan Pinson (later to become my brother-in-law), Yeshaya Gopin, Hillel Pevsner, Moshe Aharon Geisinsky, and Moshe Binyamin Kaplan.

At first, one of the older *bachurim* served as *Mashpia* and *Maggid shiur* but after a while R' Moshe Karolevitz (Robinson) came to Berditchev and took these roles. At night we slept in the homes of upstanding Jews who were Ruzhiner Chassidim. They agreed to host us even though our being in the city was illegal. One of them was R' Berel, and he helped us, with *mesirus nefesh*, obtain food and other things we needed for daily

***On the train there was a three-tiered bunk. People generally did not use the uppermost bunk since it was hard getting up there. I chose that bunk and every morning I put on t'fillin lying down and I davened that way too, so I wouldn't be caught.***

living.

We studied assiduously even though we knew that the secret agents were searching for those who studied Torah. Since we were only fifteen bachurim, we were able to conceal the existence of the yeshiva for some time. After Pesach 1937, about forty Lubavitcher bachurim came to us from all over the Soviet Union, who had heard about the yeshiva in Berditchev and wanted to learn there. We were afraid that such a large group would quickly be caught by the authorities and so some of them were sent to learn in Tomchei T'mimim branches in other cities.

I went home to my parents in Leningrad for Tishrei and on 18 Elul I participated in a farbrengen that took place in one of the homes of Anash with the main speaker being R' Chonye Morosov, the Rebbe Rayatz's secretary. R' Chonye energized the participants to continue working and doing in support of Judaism. I remember that he said:

"Today marks forty years since the founding of Tomchei T'mimim. I am, today, in Tomchei T'mimim, for I never left it. Tomchei T'mimim nowadays is enduring very hard times and some people go, with mesirus nefesh, to teach and support the branches of the yeshiva. The T'mimim are scattered throughout the Soviet Union and are learning Nigleh and Chassidus."

Then he suddenly pointed

towards me and said, "Here is one of those who is in one of those places and they don't have the means to subsist."

During the farbrengen he raised money for the yeshiva in Berditchev. He asked me to give the money to the hanhala of the yeshiva. That was no simple task but in the end, the money reached its destination and it helped the yeshiva continue to exist.

After about a year of learning in Berditchev, it was decided, due to the numerous talmidim, to send me with some of my friends to the yeshiva in Krivorog. After a brief period I realized the hashgacha pratis for on 24 Teves 5798, in the middle of a farbrengen with R' Moshe Karolevitz, they were caught. The older ones were imprisoned while the younger ones were sent to a government school which they could not leave until R' Michael Teitelbaum extricated them in a daring escapade.

This was a terrifying time. Many of Anash were arrested, imprisoned, and sent to Siberia. Some were shot. I was a young bachur whose beard was starting to come in and when I walked in the street I hid my beard in a scarf. I protected my beard with mesirus nefesh all my life.

In Krivorog we were a small group of bachurim which included Yechezkel Brod, Herschel Breslover and others. We learned in the shul with R' Yisroel Levin as Maggid shiur and R' Sholom Vilenkin as Mashpia. R' Sholom's farbrengens

made a tremendous impression on me. One day we sensed that they were starting to pay attention as to what was going on in the shul and we were afraid to continue learning there so we learned in private homes.

After a short period of learning in Krivorog I continued learning in the branch of Tomchei T'mimim in Maritopol, Crimea. My friends went elsewhere. In Maritopol, we did not have a Maggid shiur or Mashpia. We were a small group who learned on our own. For Chassidus we studied Tanya, Derech Mitzvosecha and maamarim of the Rebbe Rayatz. Since there weren't any printed maamarim, we would copy maamarim by hand and learn from that.

## OPEN MIRACLE

The following incident took place in Adar I 1938 as we sat and learned in the women's section of the shul. NKVD agents came in and asked to see our papers. They asked me too. Having no choice I took out my documents. They examined them and asked me what I was doing in that city when I lived in Leningrad. I told them that I came to the Crimea (which was known as a resort area) to recuperate after a prolonged illness. They conferred about whether to arrest me or not. I heard one of the policemen say to another, "He's probably one of the guys who ran away from Leningrad." At that moment I realized that something bad had happened in Leningrad and my heart sank. Then a miracle happened when one of the policemen returned my papers and said, "Take your passport. You have 24 hours to get out of here." It was an open miracle.

Despite this miracle, I did not leave the city since my cousin, Zalman Kazen (Katzenelenbogen), who was learning with me in yeshiva, was sick and I didn't want

to leave him alone. I rushed to send a telegram to his mother, Mumme Sarah, and asked her to come to Maritopol since her son was sick. When she came, she told me about the mass arrests that took place in Leningrad, arrests in which many dear Chassidim had been arrested. I heard from her the names of the Chassidim who had been arrested and I knew them all. I was especially worried about my uncle, Yitzchok Raskin. I didn't need to be reminded that at the beginning of that year my other uncle was arrested, Mumme Sarah's husband, Michoel. These two dear uncles never returned home and were not given a Jewish burial.

Having no choice I returned to my parents' home in Leningrad and from there I went by train to Kutaisi in Georgia. The trip took a week. Traveling by train is difficult in itself. I managed with food since I took along kosher food from home. The most difficult problem was putting on t'fillin in such a way that I wouldn't be noticed. I found a daring solution. On the train there was a three-tiered bunk. People generally did not use the uppermost bunk since it was hard getting up there. I chose that bunk and every morning I put on t'fillin lying down and I davened that way too, so I wouldn't be caught.

## WE DECIDED TO KILL ITCHE THE INFORMER

In Kutaisi I continued to learn in the local shul. The fear of the communists in Georgia was less than in Russia and Ukraine; however, there too the Soviets forbade religious studies. The surveillance and arrests were less. The local Jewish community protected us and helped us tremendously so we didn't get caught.

We were taught by Chacham Yitzchok "Petra," together with R'



His father, R' Yaakov Yosef Raskin, blowing the shofar near the Rebbe

Yosef Goldberg. My chavrusa (study partner) was R' Yechezkel Brod. Berel Kievman and Yeshaya Gopin learned there too. At a later point my brother Sholom Dovber also came to Kutaisi.

The Lipsker family lived in Kutaisi and R' Aryeh Leib and R' Yaakov helped tremendously in supporting the yeshiva. I eventually learned the Georgian language and grew accustomed to the mentality of the Georgian people.

The relationship with Anash in the city was good. We farbrenged together with our host community and our main concern was to fulfill the Rebbe Rayatz's will. He was living in Riga at the time and the connection with the Chassidim in Russia was minimal.

During the years that I was far from my parents it was always hard for me to think about what was happening over there, in Leningrad. During those years when they arrested nearly all of Anash in Leningrad, concern over the welfare of my family was paramount. In letters that I wrote home I hardly wrote anything in fear of the censor. I would ask how they are and that's about it. Likewise, in letters from home I was not told about the terrible situation and I could only guess about the suffering the KGB was putting Lubavitchers through in Leningrad.

The worst thing at this time was the existence of *mosrim* (informers) and the worst of them all was Itche the Moser. He was a Jew who

transferred money from Russia to Poland and was caught by the police who threatened to kill him. They offered him a way to save himself – to cooperate with them. He was not able to withstand the test and he traveled amongst communities where Anash lived. He looked like a Chassid which is why nobody suspected him. He would feel out the situation and sniff around and Chassidim trusted him and opened their doors to him. Then he would give their names to the authorities.

In one night the police would descend on several homes of Chassidim and arrest them all. By divine providence, one of the daughters of the Chassidim discovered that he was a KGB agent and from then on, they knew to avoid him but until that point he caused dozens of people to be arrested, exiled and even killed.

When we heard that Itche the Moser would be arriving from Moscow we decided to kill him as in the law of a *rodef* (pursuer who intends to kill), thus preventing the arrest and deaths of many Jews. We spoke about this to the Jews of the local community to whom the concept of a moser was the worst of all. We somehow were able to trace his journey and we found out that he had arrived in Baku in Azerbaijan which is near Georgia. Then he surprisingly returned to Moscow, thus saving his life at the last moment.

[To be continued, G-d willing]

# THE SECRET NETWORK OF EMISSARIES IN EUROPE

Written by Rabbi Schneur Zalman Chantin  
Translated by Menachem Har Zvi

*The story of the secret network of emissaries established by Rabbi Jacobson after the Second World War for the rescue of the chassidim.*

Rabbi Jacobson did not rest nor remain silent. He attempted to accomplish all the missions placed upon him by the Rebbe Rayatz. The Rebbe, who understood the present situation and foresaw the future state of affairs, desired that Rabbi Jacobson urge *anash* to leave accursed Poland before it was too late.

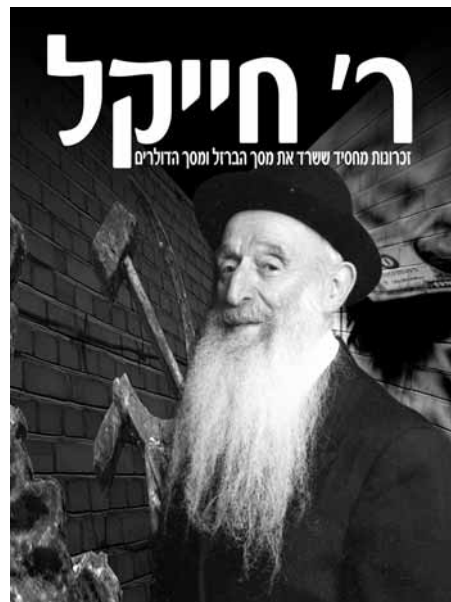
On Friday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of Menachem Av, Rabbi Yitzchok Goldin, who was at his post in Lodz, Poland, sent a telegram to Rabbi Jacobson in Prague, Czechoslovakia, notifying of a transport of *anash* due to arrive in Bratislava. The telegram was written in Polish. The following is a translation:

**Rabbi Jacobson, Prague, Hotel**

**Zalata Rosa**

**August 9. On Monday or Tuesday we will meet at Bratislava. Goldin.**

Bratislava is located in the southwestern corner of Slovakia on the Danube River, bordering Austria and Hungary. Until the conclusion of the First World War, the city was called Pressburg or *Preshburg* (Jewish pronunciation) and renowned for the Preshburg Yeshiva, established by the Chasam Sofer – R. Moshe Sofer, who served as its rabbi from 5563-5599/1803-1839. Bratislava was an important transfer point for Jewish refugees after the war. With the aid of the Joint, the HIAS, and ORT, the Jewish community established a guest



house and a public kitchen. From Bratislava the refugees would travel to Austria and from there to Germany.

On that day, an additional number of families of *anash* arrived in Prague. A telephone notification reported that a group of *chassidim* arrived in Czechoslovakia via “Brama” and that an additional group arrived via “Achad.”

The group that arrived at “Achad” was the group including my parents and the *chassid* R. Nisan Neminov. This group had forty-six people. That Shabbos was “a time of sorrow for Yaakov.”<sup>1</sup> While the group awaited the arrival of Rabbi Jacobson, a prominent member of the group, Mrs. Ita Sasonkin Levitin (daughter-in-law of R. Nachum Shmaryahu Sasonkin) was killed. To the best of my knowledge, despite the efforts of Rabbi Jacobson to meet with the group, he was unable to meet them until they arrived in Peking, in the American Zone.

When Rabbi Jacobson perceived the situation up close, that the Chabad *chassidim* were so isolated and that no help could be expected from the Vaad Hatzalah – Rescue Committee, he resolved that “If I am not for myself, who then?”<sup>2</sup>



Consequently, he proceeded to build a network of emissaries of *anash*. By directive of the Rebbe, he appointed individuals in each country whose function was to maintain contact between Lubavitcher *chassidim* and the central command. The first link in the network was R. Mendel Futerfas, who remained behind the Iron Curtain in Lvov. He was in contact with R. Yitzchok Goldin, who was in Lodz, then on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Rabbi Reisman was the emissary in Chechin. The *T'mimim* R. Sholom Mendel Kalmanson and R. Hillel Pewzner, and Ms. Hadassah Garelik Perman were sent back from Peking by Rabbi Jacobson to be the representatives of *anash* in Prague.

## THE PASSPORT BUSINESS

R. Sholom Mendel Kalmanson, R. Hillel Pewzner, and Ms. Hadassah Garelik Perman re-entered Prague with the aid of Bericha [literally “escape” – a clandestine Zionist immigration organization], who provided them with the proper documents to pass through the German, Czech, and Polish borders. In the same measure that the American Vaad Hatzalah rejected their brethren, the Lubavitcher *chassidim*, the members of the Bericha, who were not necessarily observant, embraced *anash* and attempted to provide all possible aid.

The *chassid* R. Moshe Marazov described to me the state of affairs during these months. After a group of *anash* crossed the border from Soviet Russia to Poland with the papers of Polish citizens, they no longer needed their Polish papers. The papers actually became burdensome. A number of Jews with expertise at stealing across borders and a highly developed sense of business, otherwise known as swindlers, bought the passports for a meager sum. They then brought the



The Polish-Czechoslovakian border in the city of Chechin.  
The countries are separated by a river.

passports back to Russia and sold them at an expensive price to Jews who desired to leave the country.

The *anash* activists quickly understood the situation. It made no sense to buy the passports from the swindlers. A much simpler approach was to take the Polish passports of *anash* after they crossed the border and bring them back to Poland. This was one of the reasons that Rabbi Jacobson (by directive of the Rebbe Rayatz) placed R. Yitzchok Goldin in Lodz. Through R. Yitzchok Goldin, passports and thousands of rubles were sent to Russia for travel expenses. He would contact R. Mendel Futerfas in Lvov and give directives, hear the latest news, and then pass the news on.

R. Sholom Mendel Kalmanson returned to Prague, together with R. Hillel Pewzner. R. Moshe Marazov explained to me why they were sent to Czechoslovakia: during that period Czechoslovakia was still an independent country, as the Communists had not yet succeeded in taking control. In Czechoslovakia it was possible to establish contact with the free world and with those who remained behind in Poland and Soviet Russia. Rabbi Jacobson kept the two young men in Prague. One maintained contact with Communist

Russia and Poland, while the other maintained contact with the free world. As a security measure, the one who communicated with Poland did not communicate with Germany, and vice versa. Consequently, if they were being shadowed, the same voice would not be heard speaking to the two sides.

After a brief period, R. Hillel Pewzner's mother emigrated from Russia and arrived in Prague. She requested that her son join her and the family and travel together to Germany. Subsequently R. Moshe Morozov was chosen to replace him. He traveled from the American Zone with tremendous self-sacrifice on his return mission to Prague.

## CONVERSING OVER THE RIVER

However, I am introducing events which take place later. Currently in our story we are in the month of Menachem Av 5706-1946. In Poland there were still *anash* who waited and refused to leave. Rabbi Reisman, who was appointed by Rabbi Jacobson as “our man” in Chechin, was the contact person between *anash* and Rabbi Jacobson. He spoke with those that remained

on the other side of the river (a telephone was not needed, since it was possible to shout across the river), and he helped them pass the border.

I related in a previous article that the city of Chechin was divided into two sections. The eastern section of the city belonged to Poland and the western section belonged to Czechoslovakia. The Oder River, which divided the city, was the border between the two countries. The city of Chechin was an important point of escape. During this period, between thirty-five and forty thousand Jews passed through the city. The majority arrived on foot; however, many utilized other means of transportation such as trucks, trains, boats, rafts, and fishing boats. Rabbi Jacobson described the passage point in one of his letters:

“The city of Chechin of Czechoslovakia is located on the border. On the other side of it is the city Chechin, Poland. There is a bridge upon which one crosses . . . there are those who cross the river by foot because the water is not deep and the river is not wide.”

On Sunday the 14<sup>th</sup> of Menachem Av, Rabbi Reisman reports to the “commander.” His letter is written on both sides of a lined sheet of paper.

**B”H 1 Eikev 5706**

**Chechin**

**His Honor HaRav HaGaon HaTamim V’Chassid, G-d-fearing, praised with superior qualities and fine attributes, faithful communal activist,**

**HaRav Jacobson, Shlita.  
Abundant Peace!**

**I received your letter of Thursday of VaEschanan. I did everything I possibly could do to notify *anash* in Poland regarding their travel from there. Similarly, if there will be the need to borrow money, I will give my own. May Hashem grant that all of *anash*,**

**together with all Jews, leave this accursed land.**

**While here, Rabbi Binyomin Gorodetzky gave his fur coat as collateral for twenty-five thousand. They want to return the collateral if I send this sum. They say that coat is worth far more than this sum. Therefore, convey your opinion regarding this matter, and where to send the coat. Perhaps you will meet R. Binyomin and discuss this with him.**

**I would like to send money to the United States, but I do not know in what manner you will arrange this. How much can you receive and do you require a percentage? I have places without a percentage.**

**I request that you arrange my travel to the United States when you are with the Rebbe.**

**I only have a visa to Stockholm. There is a visa for me there. Perhaps it can be sent to Paris. In addition, I cannot travel without my wife. Perhaps one can be sent for her too.**

**I request that you discuss this when you are with the Rebbe and notify me in a letter.**

**Regards to you from all of *anash*.**

**With feelings of esteem,  
Herschel Reisman**

## **LACK OF TRUST IN THE VAAD HATZALAH – RESCUE COMMITTEE**

A report written by Rabbi Jacobson to the Rebbe was published in *Toldos Chabad in Soviet Russia*.

“On Tuesday morning, 17 Menachem Av, I was invited by a taxi sent to me, to visit Mr(s). Shternbuch in Hotel Palace. Shternbuch informed me that they phoned from Kattowitz that 120 of *anash* arrived there from Lodz, and that I should pay for tickets for their travel. Since I wasn’t sure of the accuracy of this phone notice

**and of the entire mode of conduct there in financial matters, I refused to give the money.”**

Kattowitz is the regional capital of the province of Silesia in southern Poland. Because Kattowitz was not destroyed during the course of the war, Jewish survivors streamed there from various places, primarily from Russia. Although it served as a transit point, many Jews remained there for long periods of time.

Unfortunately the above report was not found in the archive of Rabbi Jacobson at my disposal. The report is significant; however, it is possible that there are errors. According to the Hebrew calendar, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Menachem Av was on a Tuesday, not Wednesday. It is also possible that the parentheses in the word Mr(s), which are apparently an addition of the author, are superfluous. Mrs. Shternbuch’s husband, R. Yitzchok Shternbuch, was a Hatzalah activist and the right hand of his wife. It is possible that Rabbi Jacobson met Yitzchok Shternbuch and not Recha Shternbuch.

Whether the meeting took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> or the 17<sup>th</sup>, with Mrs. Shternbuch or with Mr. Shternbuch, is not important. It is important to note that even kind people such as the Shternbuchs, who saved thousands during and after the war, were influenced by the one who led the Vaad Hatzalah in New York. They did not give the Lubavitcher *chassidim* the full support that they gave other Jews.

That evening (17<sup>th</sup> of Menachem Av), sixty-nine Lubavitcher *chassidim* arrived in Prague via Kattowitz. They entered a transit camp near Prague and Rabbi Jacobson spent a Shabbos with them. (I related the details of this Shabbos in the previous article.)

On Sunday the 21<sup>st</sup> of Menachem Av 5706 – 1946, many of the *chassidim* traveled to the Maharal’s shul in Prague. There they

Blattnummer Cislo listu 69	Gattung Druh TELEGRAMM TELEGRAM	Zustellnummer Dodací čís. LIST 2*	Übermittlungsnummer Cislo výpravu
Aufgenommen - Prijat F			Übermittelt - Vypravu
Bestimmungsort - Adresní čísl. Aufgabensort - Původní čísl. Nummer - Číslo. Wortzahl - Počet slov. Tag - Den. Uhrzeit - Hod. Dienstliche Angaben - Leitweg. Státní údaje - dopravní cesta.			
FRANKFORT RABBI SPITZ KORNBLOT IN KATOWICZ CONTACT THEM CABLE IMMEDIATELY ALL DETAILS WRITE FREQUENTLY = AGUDAS CHABAD +			

Blattnummer Cislo listu 70	Gattung Druh TELEGRAMM TELEGRAM	Zustellnummer Dodací čís.	Übermittlungsnummer Cislo výpravu
Aufgenommen - Prijat F	NLT = RABBI ISRAEL JACOBSON HOTEL METROPOLE PRAHA =		Übermittelt - Vypravu
20/8 1415 LVA			
Bestimmungsort - Adresní čísl. Aufgabensort - Původní čísl. Nummer - Číslo. Wortzahl - Počet slov. Tag - Den. Uhrzeit - Hod. Dienstliche Angaben - Leitweg. Státní údaje - dopravní cesta.			
RF431 BROOKLYNNY 105 VIA AU 19 SH P1/55 =			
WE NEED PARTICULARS INFORM ALL DETAILS WRITE OFTEN INFORM IF ALL OUR PEOPLE ARRIVED DID YOU SPEND MONEY HOW MUCH INFORM NAMES AND PLACES OF ALL OUR PEOPLE RECEIVED CABLE FROM VAAD HATZALA SWITZERLAND SAYING THEY HAVE SPENT MUCH MONEY FOR OUR PEOPLE REFUSE TO GIVE OTHER HELP + UNLESS WE ARRANGE WITH NEWYORK VAAD HATAZALA PLEASE EXPLAIN THIS SITUATION TELL US WHAT TO DEMAND FROM NEWYORK JOINT DISTRIBUTION RABBI ROSENBERG FROM HARTFORD NOW IN UNRRA EUROPE INFORMS US THERE ARE FIFTY THIMIM NEAR			

The telegram Agudas Chassidei Chabad sent to Rabbi Jacobson

met the Gaon Rabbi Herzog and heard a sermon from him. Later in the day, Rabbi Jacobson traveled with *anash* by truck to escort them to the train station. The train was scheduled to travel to the city of Asch near the German border.

R. Yisroel Levin records the following in his memoirs. “In the station, Rabbi Jacobson met a Jewish chaplain from the United States Army who was formerly his student. He requested that he help us during our travels. We traveled to Asch located on the border of Czechoslovakia and Germany under American occupation. During the trip, he offered us beer that he bought at the station.”

This was the first group of *anash* that traveled directly from Czechoslovakia via Asch to the American zone in Germany. Prior to this, it was necessary to travel through the Russian zone and obviously, the *chassidim* feared passing through there.

#### “We Did Not Receive Support from the Vaad Hatzalah – Rescue Committee”

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Av (August 20, 1946), Rabbi Jacobson received a telegram from Agudas Chabad at the Hotel Metropole in Prague.

#### Rabbi Israel Jacobson Hotel Metropole Praha [Prague]

We need particulars. Inform all details. Write often. Inform if all

our people arrived. Did you spend money? How much? Inform names and places of all our people. Received cable from Vaad Hatzalah Switzerland saying they have spent much money for our people. Refuse to give other help unless we arrange with New York Vaad Hatzalah. Please explain this situation. Tell us what to demand from New York Joint Distribution. Rabbi Rosenberg from Harford now in UNRRA Europe informs us there are fifty T’mimim near Frankfort. Rabbi(s) Spitz Kornblut in Kattowitz. Contact them. Cable immediately all details. Write frequently – Agudas Chabad

Apparently, Rabbi Jacobson’s response was delayed. Consequently, five days later on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, 1946 (28<sup>th</sup> of Menachem Av), Agudas Chabad sent another telegram with the very same words to the house of R. Zalman Schneerson in Paris. It is interesting to note that in the first telegram there is no punctuation at all. [The punctuation in the above telegram was added by the editor.] In the second telegram the word “stop” appears instead of a period.

Rabbi Jacobson prepared a response telegram to Agudas Chabad. The draft of the telegram which I found in his archive does not have a date.

Agudas Chabad 770 Eastern

#### Parkway

Brooklyn N.Y.

Almost all of *anash* about three hundred people have left. I am traveling to meet about eighty people that are leaving today. About two hundred are already in the American zone. The expenses amounted to about five hundred dollars including my expenses. We received no support from the Vaad Hatzalah. We paid them for everything. The telegram from Switzerland has no significance. The telegram of Kornblut Spitz was sent without our knowledge. Yesterday I sent a detailed list of everything. No effort is currently required in the Joint.

The implications of Rabbi Jacobson’s response are that the New York Vaad Hatzalah sabotaged aid efforts for the Lubavitch *chassidim*, received payment for minimal funds that they did give, and had the audacity to request money not owed to them.

In the next issue, I will, G-d willing, relate the story of the conclusion of Rabbi Jacobson’s trip to Europe and his mission which continued back in America

#### NOTES:

1 Yirmiyahu 30:7.

2 Avos 1:14.

# SPECIAL CHILDREN

By Sarah Rivka Lifsh

*It happens suddenly, without prior warning, to hundreds of Lubavitcher families, when their child is discovered to have certain problems and special needs. At first, it seems as though the world has come to an end. \* Mrs. Sarah Rivka Lifsh tells her personal story about her son and about the wonderful organization “Yad L’Yeled HaMeyuchad” which helps with events and programs.*

## WE HAVE AN AUTISTIC CHILD

On 3 Tammuz 5754 we went on shlichus to Kiryat Eliezer in Chaifa where we have been working for over sixteen years. Our son Shneur Zalman was born seven years after we arrived there. He was a cute baby with a captivating smile. When he turned one and a half we gradually noticed some disturbing signs. On the one hand, he was a happy and smiley baby. On the other hand, something about his behavior seemed off. Whenever music played in the house he would run over to listen, but when we called him he wouldn't react and it seemed he

didn't hear us. He loved playing on his own with a limited number of toys and did not interact with his siblings in their games.

We took him for hearing tests and to doctors who specialized in child development. We went from doctor to doctor without finding out what was wrong with our child. A year and a half later we were staying with relatives and our host referred us to a special clinic that deals with autistic children. We didn't understand why we should go there when it seemed obvious to us that our son did not have that problem but we listened to her advice and we had him evaluated. The results were

unequivocal – Shneur Zalman was labeled as having PDD (Pervasive Developmental Disorder). Autism is a form of PDD.

We felt as though the sky had fallen. I don't wish anybody such news. Life before the news and after the news is not the same life. Our home underwent a dramatic change.

When I go back to that terrible morning, the worst feeling was mainly due to the reason that we didn't know the significance of the label and how to deal with it. We had no background in this and it sounded like some kind of illness. From then on, our focus was on trying to hide the autism and





davening that the “illness” pass. At the same time we tried finding a way to help Shneur.

In the following months our entire family was enlisted in the child’s medical treatment and in the attempt to help him develop, particularly in relating to those around him. We were told what we needed to do at every stage.

The hardest part was dealing with the emotional end of things. It was difficult for us to talk about it and we considered it of the utmost importance to keep this “illness” under wraps. What would people say? How would they react? These questions bothered us greatly and we

looked for someone to talk to, someone who had dealt with a similar difficulty.

One of the main hardships at the time was feeling powerless to lead the household in a normal way. For a long period of time we were all busy with this special needs child. From morning till night the entire family was focused on his special needs and the desire to help him progress. Consequently, it was extremely hard to continue giving attention to his five brothers and sisters, each of whom wanted the attention that they needed and deserved. The problem was exacerbated when, for a long time,

we refrained from leaving the house on Shabbos and did not attend family events that could put Shneur on public display. The fear of what people would say along with the child’s fear of crowds, kept us home.

## FINALLY EMERGING

We made contact with a Lubavitcher family whose child was diagnosed as being autistic two years earlier. These dear people helped us tremendously with the things we had to contend with on a daily basis and the bureaucracy that we needed to work with in order to get government aid. They also helped in guiding us in what to tell the children and the extended family and how to deal with the k’hilla.

With the support of this family we gradually began to expose our child, at first to relatives and then to our k’hilla. Through this Lubavitcher family we reached other Lubavitcher families who were dealing with similar challenges and we became aware that this is a phenomenon that has grown tremendously over the past thirty years. Statistically, the percentage of children with special needs (which includes those on the autistic spectrum – the largest group of children, as well as those with Downs Syndrome, brain damage, retardation etc.) is one out of about 100 children. This means there are a lot of Lubavitcher special needs children in Israel alone.

We soon realized that these hundreds of Lubavitcher families needed a supportive organization. At this time, Rabbi Shlomo Maidanchik a”h, director of Aguch, started a phone line for parents to be able to call for chinuch advice. When we called, we immediately received support and help. Then R’ Maidanchik appointed R’ Menachem Mendel Blinitzky, director of projects, who started *Yad LYeled HaMeyuchad* (Lend a Hand to a Special Child), who directs it very

## THE REBBE'S LETTER

By the Grace of G-d  
9 Kislev, 5741  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To All Participants in the  
Major Conference for the Jewish Community  
On Issues and Needs of Jewish Retarded  
New York City.

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming Conference. I trust it will mark a turning point in the attitude of community leaders to Jewish education in general, and to so-called Special Education in particular.

In any discussion relating to the wellbeing of the Jewish community, the primary, indeed pivotal, issue should surely be Jewish Identity — that which truly unites our Jewish people and gives us the strength to survive and thrive in a most unnatural, alien, and all too often hostile, environment.

Historically — from the birth of our nation to this day — Jewish identity, in the fullest sense of this term, has been synonymous with traditional Torah-Judaism as our way of life in everyday living. Other factors commonly associated with a national identity, such as language, territory, dress, etc., could not have played a decisive role in Jewish survival, since these changed from time to time and from place to place. The only factor that has not changed throughout our

long history has been the Torah and Mitzvos which are “our life and the length of our days.” The same T’fillin, Tzitzis, Shabbos and Yom-Tov have been observed by Jews everywhere in all generations. Clearly there is no substitute for the Torah-way as the source and essence of our Jewish people.

Recognizing this *prima facie* fact, means recognizing that Jewish survival depends on the kind of Education that develops and nourishes Jewish identity in the fullest measure. And this must surely be the highest priority of all communal services.

With regard to Jewish retarded — parenthetically, I prefer some such terms as “special” people, not simply as a euphemism, but because it would more accurately reflect their situation, especially in view of the fact that in many cases the retardation is limited to the capacity to absorb and assimilate knowledge, while in other areas they may be quite normal or even above average — the Jewish identity factor is even more important, not only *per se* but also for its therapeutic value. The actual practice of Mitzvos in the everyday life provides a tangible way by which these special people of all ages can, despite their handicap, identify with their families and with other fellow Jews in their surroundings, and generally keep in touch with reality. Even if mentally they may not fully grasp the meaning of these rituals, subconsciously they are bound to feel at home in such an environment, and in many cases could participate in such activities also on the

successfully till this day.

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

The first project was to get parents of special needs children to meet one another and to start talking and sharing without covering up and without shame. The initial hesitation was normal. Only three couples (including us) parents of autistic children, showed up to the first meeting in Kfar Chabad. We received guidance and a professional lecture. It was decided to hold monthly meetings and ten couples attended the second meeting. Word got around and more parents of special needs children joined.

The support that we parents got at those meetings was enormous. We

received useful information and no less important, mutual support from parents. The one who organized and led the meetings was Sarah Greenberg, a member of the *hanhala* of the organization and one of its founders. She provided a listening ear and a shoulder to lean on for all the parents.

## WHAT A SPECIAL SHABBOS!

We quickly learned that the ones who need similar meetings as much as we did were our other children who bravely handled this challenge in their lives. Four months later the organization held its first Shabbaton for 35 Lubavitcher families with special needs children at the guest

house of Kibbutz Chafetz Chaim.

That Shabbos was the first opportunity of its kind for our children to get out of the home routine and to meet children their age who were dealing with the same things they were. With the help of a staff of volunteers who ran a program for the special needs children and with their siblings, we parents were free to attend fabulous lectures and to relax.

Since then there have been fifteen Shabbatons and the number of participants has been growing. At the last Shabbaton there were about 600 men, women and children!

These Shabbos get-aways are the best part of this organization's work since it was founded. Each time it is so moving to see the families sitting

conscious level.

To cite one striking example from actual experience during the Festival of Sukkos this year. As is well known, Lubavitch activists on this occasion reach out to many Jews with Lulov and Esrog, bringing to them the spirit of the Season of Our Rejoicing. This year being a year of Hakhel, I urged my followers to extend this activity as much as possible, to include also Nursing Homes and Senior Citizens' Hotels, as well as other institutions. I was asked, what should be the attitude and approach to persons who are senile or confused, etc. I replied — all the more reason to reach out to them in this tangible way. Well, the reports were profoundly gratifying. Doctors and nurses were astonished to see such a transformation: Persons who had spent countless days in silent immobility, deeply depressed and oblivious to everything around them, the moment they saw a young man walk in with a Lulav and Esrog in his hand suddenly displayed a lively interest, eagerly, grasped the proffered Mitzvah-objects, some of them reciting the blessings from memory, without prompting. The joy in their hearts shone through their faces, which had not known a smile all too long.

One need not look for a mystical explanation of this reaction. Understandably, the sight of something so tangible and clearly associated with the joy of Sukkos evidently touched and unlocked vivid recollections of experiences that had permeated them

in earlier years.

If there is much that can be done along these lines for adult and senior Jews in special situations, how much more so in regard to special children, when every additional benefit, however seemingly small, in their formative years will be compounded many times over as they grow older. In their case it is even more important to bear in mind that while they may be handicapped in their mental and intellectual capacity, and indeed because of it, every possible emphasis should be placed on the tangible and audio-visual aspects of Jewish education in terms of the actual practice of Mitzvos and religious observances — as I have discussed this and related aspects at greater length in my correspondence with Dr. R. Wilkes of the Coney Island Hospital.

There is surely no need to elaborate on all above to the participants in the Conference, whose Rabbinic, academic, and professional qualifications in the field of Jewish Education and social services makes them highly sensitive to the problems at hand. I hope and pray that the basic points herein made will serve as guidelines to focus attention on the cardinal issues, and that this Conference will, as mentioned earlier, mark a turning point in attitude, and even more importantly in action vis-a-vis Jewish Education, long overdue.

With prayerful wishes for Hatzlacha, and with esteem and blessing, [sig.]

together like one big family. Throughout the Shabbos there are meetings with professionals as well as mashpiim who counsel, guide and support the parents.

The greatest support is gained from the extraordinary atmosphere at these Shabbatons. There is no need to hide; we are not alone. We can speak about everything and get support and encouragement. People understand us. At the Shabbos meals, parents get up spontaneously and talk about their challenges and give other parents a new perspective on raising a child with special needs.

I'll never forget how, one Shabbos, Rabbi Chaim Sasson told about how he felt when he first found out that his daughter had Downs Syndrome. They were

moments of tears and tremendous worry. He and his wife Penina eventually made a determined decision to view this as a gift from Hashem which they needed to receive with joy and thanks. That completely changed their approach and this outlook also affected the rest of the family who all pitched in to help.

I'd like to point out that the high costs of such a Shabbos are mostly subsidized by the organization so that parents who cannot afford it can attend anyway.

### YEMEI IYUN

With more parents joining the organization, our meetings turned into Yemei Iyun attended by

hundreds of people from all over Israel. We have lectures from first-class speakers along with a creative program on the topic of the special child. All lectures and shiurim are preserved and recorded and can be purchased at the organization's library in Kfar Chabad.

In addition to the monthly meetings and Shabbatons special outings are arranged for families throughout the year, especially on Yomim Tovim. Our children meet their friends and slowly, from meeting to meeting, we have become one big family that keeps closely in touch.

The Simchas Beis HaShoeiva run by the organization every year in Kfar Chabad is a wonderful example of this. The special needs children,

## BAR-MITZVA CELEBRATIONS

The special needs children include all ages and when a boy or girl reaches bar or bas mitzva, it is the simcha of the entire organization. While in other typical families they are busy with choosing a hall, a photographer etc. when it's a special needs child the parent don't always know how to go about celebrating the event.

This is where the organization comes into the picture with all the organization's member families invited to celebrate on the child's special day. The day begins with the child putting on t'fillin which are given to him as a gift, an aliya to the Torah at the Kosel, and a seudas mitzva in the Old City with friends and family of Yad L'Yeled HaMeyuchad. The organization brings a Chassidishe singer who volunteers his services. The event is special and moving every time with nary a dry eye.

who generally love music and singing, have an opportunity to rejoice with their families and they are the focus of the simcha. They even get to realize their dreams and appear with famous singers. The Lubavitcher broadcaster and disc jockey, Ami Maimon, arranges the evening, bringing performers who volunteer their services.

## FROM RECEIVER TO GIVER

Two years after Yad L'Yeled HaMeyuchad began, during which time we were beneficiaries, I was given the opportunity to give back. The event was the national conference of N'shei U'Bnos Chabad and the theme that year was giving and chesed. I addressed thousands of participants and told them that I was a mother of an autistic child and about the activities sponsored by the organization. My speaking was a milestone event for me in which I went from being a recipient to a giver. Since then, I have the job of coordinator of activities for Yad L'Yeled HaMeyuchad.

The work has expanded so that professional support is provided individually, for every family. There are special Shabbatons for sisters of

special needs children, Shabbatons for mothers, and for parents without their children. Families look forward to these events which they say provides them with the strength and energy until the next event.

## CHESED CIRCLE

Everybody has heard of the Friendship Circle which operates in Chabad houses around the world, helping special needs children. In Israel we were the first to get involved and as part of our desire to create a sense of mutual responsibility within the Chabad community we started, together with Beis Rivka, a project called the Chesed Circle which is run by Mrs. Chedva Segal and Mrs. Dr. Yehudis Landau. Girls majoring in special education are assigned a particular special needs child and conduct weekly activities with the child for two hours. These few hours enable the parents a chance to breathe and to devote their attention to their other children.

Working with the children benefits the volunteers themselves for it gives them firsthand experience. We hear many stories about the special relationship that is formed between the students and the children. Mrs. M related that her son practically did not speak since he

was born. The girl who worked with him decided to try and talk to him in a natural way. To her surprise, he responded and began talking freely. When he returned home and continued talking, the parents regarded it as a miracle and this time it was they who had difficulty talking ...

This volunteer program is especially necessary when a family is making a simcha and needs additional help with their special needs child. The same is true, r"l, in times of mourning. One of the special needs girls lost her father during the school year. Her volunteer took care of her throughout the Shiva, watching her and helping the family a lot.

On another occasion, Shmulik – a child with Downs Syndrome – ran away from home and could not be found anywhere. After frantic searching he was found in the home of his volunteer. He had walked to her house since he missed her.

Every year in Adar there is a day of fun and games for the special needs children and their volunteers at an amusement park which strengthens their relationship.

## CAMP FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

With summer camp too, we were pioneers and we started a camp for Lubavitcher children with special needs. It is called *Mitzuyanei Gan Yisroel* (based on the Rebbe's talk about *Mitzuyanei Tzahal*).

The camp, which took place this year for the fourth time, operates within the Oro Shel Moshiach camp. It gives the children a chance to be in a Lubavitcher camp atmosphere, for two weeks, and to come in contact with Lubavitcher children which is especially necessary since most of them are in special programs during the year that are not necessarily Lubavitch. It also does a lot for the other children in



the camp. They get to meet special needs children and to learn how to get along with them.

For the parents of these children, these are two precious weeks of rest and mustering of strength for the new school year.

## BREAKTHROUGH YEAR

One of the goals of the organization is to constantly come up with new activities for the families and the children. With the end of 5770 we have made significant strides in starting a nationwide network of clubs and treatment centers for children with special needs.

With the start of the new year, the network, called Regesh, inaugurated its first treatment center which is called "Beis Mendy and Goldie." In a quiet, green corner of yishuv Beit Dagan which is near Kfar Chabad, under the dedicated leadership of Mrs. Sigal Gat, there are impressive treatment rooms which will serve the residents of the area, with a significant subsidy for those who need it.

In addition to the center, the organization runs afternoon clubs that offer fun and enjoyable activities for the local children. It services about one hundred families of Anash with special needs children, and we plan to incorporate professional therapists who will help the children advance in many important areas.

As far as we know, this is the first Chabad treatment center in the world for children with special needs. It operates in the spirit of Chabad in every area, be it kashrus, k'dusha, tznius or Chassidus.

Another innovation for this year is a three-day mini-vacation, a few times a year, that is intended for special needs children who function on a low level, whose treatments require a great deal of energy. The first one took place at the end of Elul with thirty children aged one



**Rabbi Blinitzky with bar mitzva boys and friends of the organization**

year to bar mitzva, and each child had a counselor. The children, who came from all over the country, enjoyed the long weekend – from Thursday morning until Sunday evening, and the many attractions and outings.

Over the years, the organization bought useful items like climbing equipment, trampolines, pools, sea of balls etc. which the children enjoy throughout the year.

## THE CHILDREN OF US ALL – AND IT'S NOT JUST A SLOGAN

Along with their increased activities the organization has started a massive fundraising drive with the motto, "The Children of Us All." They make a heartfelt plea to the public to take part in this work and help families and children with special needs that live amongst us in every community and neighborhood.

Today, **over 200 Lubavitcher families** are united with Yad L'Yeled HaMeyuchad and the list continues to grow. Help from the broader public is vital so we can continue to operate and even add important projects. R' Menachem Mendel Blinitzky asks everyone to be partners in this endeavor with a

regular monthly contribution of any amount.

## A FEW WORDS ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Today, after six years of belonging to this organization, we thank Hashem for all the chesed He does with us, especially with Shneur who made much progress in his abilities to communicate with those around him.

I think that the organization has created a revolution amongst Anash. Today, a family who discovers they have a child with special needs turns to us, in most cases from the very start, and we provide both moral and financial support. We have many ways to help a child and his family, far more than when the organization was first started. Nevertheless, raising a special needs child is still a great challenge for the entire family but also an opportunity to raise a lofty neshama and a happy child, thereby revealing within ourselves abilities we did not know we have.

I am sure that very soon, when we will march forth to greet Moshiach, Shneur and his friends will be in the front row and we will merit to proudly say, "See these children we have raised."

# EVEN THE WALLS CRIED

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

*R' Hillel Zaltzman dedicates this chapter of his memoirs to his brother, the well-known chazan, R' Berel Zaltzman. R' Berel was a chazan in the Rebbe's minyan and sang for the Rebbe during the distribution of Kos shel Bracha for many years. The Rebbe encouraged him to be a chazan, and told him to produce a recording. The Rebbe even promised to cover the expenses. \* The moving story of R' Berel Zaltzman and the special consideration that he received from the Rebbe over the years. All the kiruvim conveyed the Rebbe's message of using his talent for chazanus to spread Judaism. \* Part 1 of 2*

My brother Berel was gifted with a beautiful voice and superlative musical abilities. He loved to sing. When we were children he would sing at every opportunity. When he grew older he studied with a voice specialist who promised him a great future.

Interestingly, in the year of

mourning after the passing of our mother a"h, Berel was in Moscow. When it was time for Mincha he had no choice but to go to the main shul on Archipova Street and daven from the amud. All the people were amazed by his chazanus and nusach ha't'filla: "Not only does he know chazanus but he seems to know the

meaning of the words, too. He knows what he's saying," they declared, impressed.

In the free world we know of many instances in which the Rebbe encouraged Chassidim to develop their natural talents since these are gifts from Hashem and we need to use them in the service of Hashem





**R' Berel Zaltzman (right)  
standing at the entrance to 770**

and to be mekarev our brethren to Him. However, in the Soviet Union of those days, over involvement in singing and chazanus was an indication that one was starting to veer off the path of Chassidus.

This is why my father did not like my brother's music lessons at all. He repeatedly said that the singing

profession was not suitable to a frum Jew. Berel maintained that when he went to Eretz Yisroel he would be a chazan, but our father was unimpressed. "Long before you will become a chazan in Eretz Yisroel you are liable to become a goy here in Russia!" he warned.

As I related previously about my father a"h, he was completely devoted to the chinuch of his children and was not afraid to take extreme measures when he found it necessary. For example, when he discovered that an unobservant boy was trying to be friends with my brother Berel, and he didn't think it was a good idea, he bluntly told that boy: "I don't want you to be my son's friend." He simply expelled him from the house and did not even allow him to enter the yard. The boy was greatly offended by my father's direct approach. In those days it was dangerous to offend a boy like this, who had no fear of Heaven and could have informed on us to the secret police. Although my father was nervous by nature, he ignored the danger because chinuch meant everything to him.

In hindsight, I think that my father's insistence on preventing Berel from studying singing, out of mesirus nefesh for the chinuch of his children, is what refined his voice and made it more pure, more Jewish and more Chassidish. Later on, when we left Russia and Berel went to the Rebbe, the Rebbe enjoyed his clear and emotional voice and told him to use his talents to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus and to publicize the name of Chabad in the world. The kiruvim that Berel got from the Rebbe on his first visit were amazing to all, for they went well beyond the usual.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. As I related in earlier chapters, in 5729/1969, the Iron Curtain parted slightly for a few years, and many Chabad Chassidim left the Soviet Union for Eretz Yisroel. Of course,

right after they landed in Eretz Yisroel the Chassidim yearned to go to New York to see the Rebbe. This feeling of pining for the Rebbe which had remained hidden within the depths of their neshamos, bursting forth only occasionally at secret farbrengens with the niggun to the words "May Hashem give us health and life, we will yet meet with our Rebbe again" – now burst forth like lava from a volcano.

And to whatever extent the Chassidim yearned to see the Rebbe, you can just imagine, or better yet – it is impossible with our puny intellects to imagine how much the Rebbe yearned to see the Chassidim who had left Russia. The Rebbe shed rivers of tears over the Jews in Russia in general and over the mesirus nefesh of Chabad Chassidim in particular, those who were born and raised under the despotic communist regime without chadarim, without yeshivos, and without shuls, who, although they had to learn and daven secretly, had not only remained frum but were Chassidim and mekusharim, involved in spreading Judaism and Chassidus. They had finally emerged from the vale of tears and the Rebbe could see them!

As a direct expression of the Rebbe's desire to see the Chassidim, the Rebbe invited all the new immigrants to come to him for Tishrei and he told the secretaries to pay for their tickets. During Tishrei these Chassidim enjoyed special kiruvim from the Rebbe.

My brother Berel arrived in Eretz Yisroel at the end of the summer in 5731/1971, and immediately began inquiring about how to go to the Rebbe for Tishrei. I came shortly after him in the middle of Elul and did not manage to join him on his trip to the Rebbe, so my description of the trip and the kiruvim he received from the Rebbe are based solely on his recollections.

## A SURPRISE VISIT IN THE OFFICES OF THE YESHIVA

My brother Berel related:

When I began inquiring about traveling to the Rebbe for Tishrei 5732, they told me that I first had to settle things with the army. The Israeli government did not allow new immigrants to leave the country before they did their military duty because they were afraid that they would take advantage of the absorption benefits from the State and then leave the country without contributing their talents towards the fledgling country.

Askanei Chabad, who knew how greatly the Chassidim wanted to go to the Rebbe, discussed this with government ministers and senior military figures and managed to arrive at an agreement in which every Chassid that R' Efraim Wolf personally guaranteed would return to the country, would be allowed to go on this visit.

I went to R' Efraim Wolf's office in Lud to get his letter. When I arrived there R' Efraim asked me to wait since he was expecting a distinguished rabbi from Europe and he would be busy with him.

I sat and waited. A young man with a small black beard wearing a nice sirtuk walking into the office in a dignified manner. All the employees in the office, led by R' Efraim, came out to welcome him with great honor and I was suitably impressed.

A few minutes after they all entered R' Efraim's office, the guest suddenly came back out as though he had forgotten something. He looked at me and then exclaimed in a tear-choked voice, "Berele! Oy Berele ..."

As soon as I heard his voice I immediately realized who he was. Forgetting about the official manner in which he had been welcomed I gave him a hug and shouted happily, "Oy, Gershon Mendel!"



**The chazan R' Berel Zaltzman**

It was R' Gershon Mendel Garelik, shliach in Milan, but to me he was Gershon Mendel, my childhood friend in Samarkand during the Second World War. We had learned together by R' Michoel Teitelbaum a"h. It felt to good know that my good friend is a shliach of the Rebbe and a distinguished rav.

After he left and I received my letter from R' Efraim, I bought tickets for myself and my wife and prepared for our trip.

### MEETING WITH R' MENDEL FUTERFAS

When we got to the airport in Lud I saw that many other Chabad Chassidim who had recently come from Russia were flying with us. I cannot begin to describe how excited we were every time our minds again returned to the thought, "We are going to the Rebbe!"

Our flight was via London, where other Chassidim joined us on their way to the Rebbe. I suddenly noticed R' Mendel Futerfas boarding. Seeing him evoked mixed feelings in my heart. I was thrilled to see him again after not seeing him since he left Samarkand in 5724, but at the same time, my joy was tempered with sadness for him. He had recently

lost a daughter in a car accident. He had just gotten up from Shiva a day or two before and was already on his way to the Rebbe. I loved R' Mendel and I wanted to run towards him but didn't know how to approach him and what to say.

R' Mendel noticed me from the distance and instantly got up and walked over to me. "Berele!" he exclaimed happily. "You got out of Russia and we're going to the Rebbe together!"

I thought – how great is the Ahavas Yisroel of this genuine Chassid, whose friendship with me distracted him momentarily from his tzaros. We spoke emotionally about what we had been through in recent years and about our upcoming meeting with the Rebbe. I was delighted that he would be at my side during my stay in Beis Chayeinu and could guide me when necessary.

### "GO OVER TO THE AMUD, THE REBBE WILL ENJOY IT"

We arrived on a Thursday, just in time for Mincha with the Rebbe. As was customary back then, they davened Mincha in the small zal of the yeshiva upstairs. The Rebbe stood and looked at each one of us. I am not eloquent enough to describe my feelings during those lofty moments when I saw the Rebbe for the first time.

On Shabbos, before Musaf, someone came over to me who apparently knew that I am a chazan and he asked me to daven for the tzibbur. I refused, thinking – Am I crazy? Am I going to stand there as the shliach tzibbur right next to the Rebbe? (In those days there was no elevated platform and the Rebbe stood with his lectern right next to the chazan).

R' Mendel, who was standing nearby, convinced me to go, saying: "The Rebbe will enjoy your nusach as someone who was born and



**R' Berel Zaltzman placing a crown on the Torah in the Rebbe's minyan**

raised without yeshiva and received all his Chassidishe chinuch in secret. You have an opportunity to give the Rebbe special nachas!"

So I went over to daven. To tell you the truth, by Kaddish before Musaf, I felt completely lost and I regretted that I had agreed to do this, but it was too late. It was only as I began the chazaras ha'shatz, before Kesser, that I relaxed a little and began to sing a tune that is used among Anash.

After the davening, when I left the chazzan's lectern to go back to my place, Rashag came over to me, patted me on the back in a friendly manner and said, "Bachur, bachur, you sing well but where is your beard?"

I didn't answer him but the people around me, who knew that I had no hair, smiled.

Afterwards, R' Mendel said: "You can't imagine what nachas ruach you gave the Rebbe. Throughout the davening he looked at you the way a father looks at his son who returned from captivity after many years. It was apparent that the Rebbe greatly enjoyed your davening."

## **THE REBBE GAVE ME HIS OWN BOTTLE OF WINE**

That Shabbos was my first farbrengen with the Rebbe. I stood on the bench together with the crowd of Chassidim with my eyes fixed on the Rebbe. Occasionally I couldn't help but glance over at R' Mendel. I wanted to see how a Chassid like him behaved in the Rebbe's presence. I was tremendously excited. I couldn't believe that I was sitting there among Anash at a farbrengen with the Rebbe, something that just a year ago had been an impossible dream.

I tried to concentrate on what the Rebbe was saying and on his movements so as not to miss a detail of the farbrengen. I suddenly noticed the Rebbe motioning to R' Mendel to come over. R' Mendel immediately jumped up from his usual spot near the table and to my amazement, within a moment he was standing next to the Rebbe with great humility. This sight, which demonstrated to me what bittul from a real Chassid is like, so moved me

that I spontaneously began to cry. I wanted to wipe the tears but it was so crowded that I couldn't move my hand upwards.

Since my eyes were filled with tears I didn't see that the Rebbe was motioning to me to come over. The people next to me pushed me and said: "The Rebbe wants you!"

I immediately yanked my hands out and, after wiping my eyes, I saw the Rebbe smiling at me. They cleared a place for me to be able to walk to the Rebbe. I jumped on the table and within seconds I was standing next to the Rebbe.

R' Leibel Groner handed me an empty cup and the Rebbe poured from the bottle he was holding. While doing so he looked at me with a big smile and said l'chaim.

I answered with l'chaim but I was so nervous that the cup spilled before I could drink from it. The Rebbe smiled, took the bottle and filled my cup again. I said l'chaim again and drank. Then the Rebbe gave me a bottle of mashke and said: "Since you are a shliach tzibbur, take this bottle and give it out to those who came here with you."

I took the bottle and began pouring from it right away as I walked back to my place. I gave to whoever held out a cup and of course the bottle was emptied within seconds. More Chassidim held out their cups and I stood there with the empty bottle. Those standing next to me suddenly pulled on me and said: "The Rebbe is calling you back!"

When I turned around I saw the Rebbe smiling at me again, as though reading my thoughts. I hurried back to the Rebbe and then the Rebbe took his bottle of wine which was always covered by a paper bag and poured the remnants from the cup he had used and gave me the bottle and said: There is a lot here and that will be enough for everyone. I returned to my place, pouring wine for others as I went.

## THE NUSACH OF R' YECHIEL THE CHAZAN

After the farbrengen I felt that something was "cooking" with the bachurim. I didn't understand what was going on but from their glances at me I felt that it pertained to me. I saw that a "war" was taking place: R' Yisroel Duchman and his son Sholom were standing there and heatedly stating their position. R' Sholom Ber Levitin was also among the "fighters."

When I asked what the commotion was about, I heard that it was because of me. When the bachurim had heard the Rebbe call me a "shliach tzibbur," they decided that the Rebbe wanted me to be the shliach tzibbur on the Yomim Nora'im too, and since the following Monday would be Rosh HaShana, they thought I should daven Musaf on Rosh HaShana.

But there were baalei t'filla who had "chazakos" for many years. The regular chazan for Musaf on the first day of Rosh HaShana was R' Yosef Wineberg and on the second day R' Mordechai Teleshevsky. They finally

decided that they had to make a lottery to see who would daven and when. The lottery worked out that I would daven on the first day of Rosh HaShana and R' Wineberg, who had davened for many years for the Rebbe on Rosh HaShana, would have to forego his chazaka.

On Sunday, Erev Rosh HaShana, Sholom Duchman said: "Since you will be davening on Rosh HaShana for the Rebbe, you have to look right."

I had come to the Rebbe the way we went about in Russia: with a simple suit, a gray plastic cap and a black string for a gartel. He took me to the store and bought me a sirtuk, a gartel and a black hat and I "became a Chassid."

The next day, as I got ready for Musaf, I was both excited and apprehensive, but compared to Shabbos I was a little calmer. After all, I had experienced my first "trial by fire" at Musaf on Shabbos. I led the Musaf with chazanus and with the original nusach ha't'filla of the Yomim Nora'im as I had learned it from my father, who heard the t'fillos from R' Yechiel, the chazan who davened on the Yomim Nora'im for the Rebbe Rashab in Lubavitch.

Although I was a veteran of seventeen years at leading the davening on the Yomim Nora'im, from the secret t'fillos in Samarkand, davening with the Rebbe was completely different both because in terms of the clarity of the voice and the emotions. Afterwards I heard that people really liked the davening. They said that not only the people cried, even the walls cried.

I believe that people felt this way because years after most of Anash had left Russia in 5706/1946 and the few who were left behind remained without an educational framework – suddenly more Chassidim had come who were not only frum but even a chazan and a baal t'filla had come from there who

could move them with a soulful davening.

## THE REBBE SAID: TEACH THE NIGGUN

After Havdala on the second day of Rosh HaShana, during Kos shel Bracha, I stood in the center facing the Rebbe. On the sides, the bachurim and men stood in pyramids and sang. Then suddenly they informed me: "The Rebbe is looking for you!"

When the Rebbe saw me he motioned to me to climb the pyramid. There was a hush as I went up. I was quiet too, like the rest of them. The Rebbe looked at me and said: "Nu ..."

I realized that the Rebbe wanted me to sing and I began a niggun.

When I finished the first niggun, the Rebbe motioned to me to continue and that is what happened after every song I sang. I sang songs in Yiddish, in Lashon HaKodesh, in Russian, in Ukrainian, chazanus and more. The crowd knew some of the songs and sang along with me. The other songs I sang solo. The Rebbe didn't let me alone for a moment. As soon as I finished one song, he encouraged me to sing another song, as though the Rebbe wanted to hear my entire repertoire and how I sang. Among other songs I sang the Chassidic song "Tchumashtok" and the Rebbe said I should teach it so that at the next farbrengen they could all sing it together.

The next day the secretariat printed the words of the song and I stood in 770 surrounded by bachurim and men holding photocopies of the song. I sang the song again and again until I became hoarse, but the Rebbe had given me instructions and I continued teaching the niggun. One of the bachurim was impressed and he commented to his friend: "He is more of a Chassid than a chazan."

[To be continued, G-d willing]

[Continued from pg. 5]

have passed, and the matter depends solely upon repentance.” Thus, one should simply repent and the redemption will arrive! .... That is what is holding back the coming of Moshiach! ... It is just that this honor [of holding back the redemption on his account] they don't have to grant him! ...

As said above, eighty years ago it was unimaginable that there would be such a condition that there would be religious Jews “who scorn the heels of Moshiach.” The fact that this behavior is undeniably present in our times, therefore, provides further proof that this generation is indeed the second generation the Rebbe Rashab references in his speech, the very last generation, which means that we must overcome

***The fact that this behavior is undeniably present in our times, therefore, provides further proof that this generation is indeed the second generation the Rebbe Rashab references in his speech, the very last generation.***

this concept of “those who scorn the heels of Your Moshiach”! ... As our Sages say, “If you have seen generation after generation who scorn and ridicule, anticipate the footsteps of Moshiach”!

Furthermore, it is certain that eventually, “a spirit [will] be poured upon him from On High,” and he will repent, be it in accordance with

his will or not... In the familiar words [of Rambam in the Laws of Divorce], “He is forced until he is compelled to say, ‘I want it,’” and that is considered as if “he offers it willingly,” meaning that he slaughters his evil inclination and his animal soul, and returns to G-d with sincere repentance, etc.

*[From the address of Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sara 5745]*

[Continued from pg. 21]

try and encourage him.

The way it worked was, R' Chadakov went to the Rebbe's room every night before the Rebbe left for home. Even on days when the Rebbe received people for yechidus all night, R' Chadakov waited in his office until it was over, even if it was four or five in the morning. That night, yechidus ended at three o'clock and R' Chadakov went to the Rebbe's room as usual before the Rebbe left for home.

That night it was my turn to drive the Rebbe home, so I waited for R' Chadakov to come out of the

Rebbe's room. When he came out he said, “Binyamin, come back afterwards because the Rebbe gave me something to take care of.”

I returned to the office after driving the Rebbe home and R' Chadakov told me, “This is a secret matter. The Rebbe told me to call someone. The Rebbe said, ‘I don't know whether this person ever saw me but you have to ask him to help this other Jew who is in debt and might be thrown into jail.’”

After making some calls I found the right person and gave him the Rebbe's message. I was moved to see how the person accepted the Rebbe's instruction even though he

wasn't a Chabad Chassid and he had never personally met the Rebbe, but when the Rebbe was asking him for something at three in the morning he was happy to oblige.

Later on the man was told that the Rebbe wanted to know what had been done and at eight o'clock I got a phone call from him in which he said, “Tell the Rebbe that the matter was taken care of.”

From this story we can learn a lot but the most important lesson is – the Rebbe's great Ahavas Yisroel for every Jew to the point that the recipient did not know what the Rebbe did for him.

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