

SINGING FROM SOUL TO SOUL

By Nosson Avrohom
Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

Singer and actor Gilli Shushan is well known to the Israeli public, but despite his fame, there was an inner pain and unexplained yearning that nestled within him.

The highest aspiration of every actor in the world is to receive a role in a film made in the motion picture capital of the world, Hollywood, U.S.A. The actor R' **Gilli Shushan** began his creative journey as a gifted musician, soon realizing his dream. At the height of his career, when he was performing leading roles in television series, stage performances and films, he made his way to Hollywood, where he arranged sound track recordings for an award-winning Hollywood film. Gilli Shushan took the Israeli entertainment world by storm. His artistic talents became apparent when he participated in leading roles on television.

His artistic career began when he was still a lad of fourteen years of age. He learned to play drums from one of the legendary drummers in

Eretz Yisroel, David Ritz. During his career, he made numerous compositions. Yet, despite his success, he always felt a sense of emptiness that constantly nagged away at him, as he searched for a much deeper meaning to his life. While on the outside, Gilli enjoyed much adulation and honor, he was privately afflicted by great sadness.

"Somehow, I always felt that I was lacking something – something that I couldn't describe in words," he said as he recalled those days of puzzlement and confusion. "Even when I was at the height of my success, playing roles on stage and television, I always asked for something else – another dimension. I know that ninety percent of the world would gladly trade places with me. My salary was quite high, and my work was deemed of great value

and significance. Personally, I didn't understand why I felt this way, but it was an existing fact. Today, at the end of this process, I can safely say that I have found what I was searching for, and nothing has ever been the same since."

SEARCHING FOR A DIFFERENT FRAMEWORK

Gilli was born and raised in a capitalistic Zionist family based in North Tel Aviv's Shikun Lamed neighborhood. "At home, I received an education in which money was the basis for success in life. The more a person earns, the greater his status and importance. Judaism in our home was more symbolic than a source of inner spiritual content. I loved every opportunity I had to read books and to write songs and



stories. One of my relatives was the author Shoshana Segalowitz, whose family in the Bilu Movement was among the founders of the city of Gedera.”

He didn’t like his studies in school, because he didn’t find them interesting. From a very early age, he was searching the spiritual world, without knowing that it even existed. While other students were carrying out instructions to please the school faculty, Gilli rebelled against all symbols and values.

His parents were very upright and honest people who held respectable positions. They sent him to psychologists for a diagnosis of the motivating forces behind his behavior, but they were unable to determine what led him to act in such a fashion. In all the intelligence examinations, the results gave him

above average marks, showing that he had been blessed with good understanding and ability in expression. However, when he came to a set learning framework – it all came apart. As a result, he was tossed out of one school after another.

“Today, I know that my soul refused to accept the path upon which they were trying to lead me. It simply would not agree to walk according to the guidelines that society had set for it.”

When he went out into the big wide world, he met like-minded young people who despised set frameworks and were looking for another set of values. Looking to express their artistic talents, they put together some successful bands. He had no connection whatsoever to Judaism, not even in a casual way.

The first time that Gilli turned to Heaven and cried out for help was when he was sixteen. “This was after I had been expelled from another school. I felt that no one understood what was going through my heart. I lay down on the carpet and cried out loud. I couldn’t stop the flow of tears streaming down my cheeks. I didn’t know exactly to whom I should turn, but I asked for a different way, a better way. My soul was yearning for self-expression, crying out from its very depth. Today, I know that this crying came from the essence of my soul, without any logic or reason.”

BLINDING SUCCESS

Upon reaching the age of military conscription, Gilli decided to go for the best, and he enlisted in the Givati Orev reconnaissance patrol. The service in this unit was hard to bear. Discipline was absolute, and before long he found himself transferred to the education corps. “My talents were in the performing arts, not as a warrior.” At the same time that I was serving in the military, I enrolled in the prestigious Nissan Nativ Acting Studio. Only a scant few were ‘privileged’ to be accepted to this school and even then, on extremely rigid conditions.

Even though the world of acting was not foreign to him, he simply couldn’t believe how his success increased so sharply. “At the time, I didn’t believe I could be a successful and well-known actor. I was the youngest actor in the school. Those around me, including the children of famous authors, had already made several films and stage performances. Yet, while I was the least experienced in the acting field, it was willed by Divine Providence that I should succeed. My lack of experience proved beneficial. I accepted everything that I learned in the school as Torah from Sinai.”

Gilli’s efforts reaped much

MY SHABBOS

In the past several years, Gilli has been interviewed by dozens of media figures, and all of them ask the same question: How did this happen? What happened and why? The following is an excerpt from one of the interviews, in which Gilli talks with great enthusiasm about how he spends his Shabbosim today:

“From my vantage point, Shabbos is...a supreme pleasure – Gan Eden in a physical body. You experience a physical-spiritual satisfaction, a wonderful sensation in both body and spirit. This is a spiritual feeling that you don’t experience during the week, something you can feel in the trees, on the streets, on the sidewalks, in the heavens, and in the people before you. It’s a pure sweetness that seems to engulf all open spaces. Many emotional barriers come down, creating an indescribable vastness.

“My daily schedule for Shabbos is...I immerse myself in the mikveh on Friday, nullified in existence, experiencing how the ‘*ayin*’ is the real ‘*yesh*’. I daven as I fuse with the Blessed and Infinite Creator. Afterwards, I eat the evening seuda with my wife and two children, and get a taste of true happiness and wealth. I sing chassidic niggunim at the table, niggunim of devotion, yearning, and joy, together with people whom I enjoy inviting to my home. This sometimes continues until one o’clock in the morning. I then go to sleep and dream sweet dreams. I wake up the next morning, prepare a cup of coffee, and learn a chassidic maamer from one of the Chabad Rebbeim.

“After getting a taste of the maamer, I slowly make my way back to the yeshiva, where I again immerse myself in hot water that no spa or country club can match. Then, I proceed to daven, slowly and pleasantly. Afterwards, I return home for the daytime meal, where we sit at the table together, sing together, and contemplate on the Blessed and Infinite G-d. Later, I go back to daven Mincha, cleaving to the unfathomable essence of G-d’s existence. Mincha is followed by the third and final Shabbos meal, including the order of chassidic niggunim of the various Chabad Rebbeim from all the generations.

“My shul is...both a yeshiva and a very open place of prayer, which invites anyone and everyone. There are many goodhearted, gentle, and loving people there. It is filled with much simcha, lots of niggunim, great love, and pleasantness.

“My reading material is...comprised primarily of kabbalistic and chassidic maamarim on the weekly Torah portion, or maamarim from the Lubavitcher Rebbe and the Alter Rebbe, *Baal HaTanya*.

“Now, when Shabbos goes out, the first thing I do – it used to be to get a cigarette – is to say ‘*VaYiten Lecha*’ with my wife – a joint prayer recited on Motzaei Shabbos in which we bless one another.”

success in receiving some leading roles, earning him considerable praise and appreciation. He invested a great deal in the development of his talents. Throughout the three years of his thespian studies, he didn’t miss a single day. He stood

up against all external scrutiny. “It wasn’t easy at all. There was a lot of competition and jealousy but I made it through because I had an objective,” said Gilli.

His big break came at the conclusion of his acting studies,

when he was offered a role in a highly rated comedy series about a group of Tel Aviv youngsters who left their parents’ homes, as they tried to “find themselves”. The success was far greater than expected. “Within a short period of time, I became a well-known personality, and people constantly recognized me on the street and asked for my autograph. Everywhere I went, I felt that people were staring at me. All of my privacy had vanished in an instant. I didn’t understand the meaning of all the tremendous appreciation that had come my way. But as strange as it sounds, I started to feel a great sense of emptiness. I saw in all the music and dance around me a lot of superficiality and ignorance. Once again, I sought to find something beyond that.

“It’s impossible to lie to the Jewish heart. I felt rejected by the world and myself, totally worthless despite the fact that I wasn’t lacking anything in a material sense. I was earning large sums of money and living a good life. Yet, despite all the luster and brilliance, surrounded by people of great stature and prominence, I couldn’t lie to myself. My heart was crying out. My parents and friends didn’t understand why I was so sad, and what I was missing in life. I had no answer, but this was a fact.”

“EXCUSE ME, RABBI, BUT I DON’T UNDERSTAND. WHAT’S ‘SHABBOS’?”

Despite a deep thirst for the inner truth, Gilli continued his success in numerous acting roles in his field. He performed dozens of roles in successful films, dramas, series, and also commercials for some leading companies on the market. “The first click with the truth was when I went to New York for a screening of a film in which I had participated. It was there that I

met Lior Shulman, a talented drummer and a good friend of mine from the Ankori School in Tel Aviv, where we had studied together. He took me with them to the Kabbala Center, and I felt that I had found something to quench my spiritual thirst.”

Gilli first began to understand that the Torah is not a book of history or a nice and interesting little story, rather a way of life. “The lecturers at that center knew how to convey the messages of the inner teachings of Torah in a manner that even people with no previous knowledge of the religious world, and surely not the world of the esoteric, could understand. They showed us how the Torah is something both profound and sublime, with mysteries and hidden meaning that restored my heart. I returned to Eretz Yisroel an entirely different person; I felt that I had discovered something I had to explore.

“When I arrived back in Eretz Yisroel, I learned that one of my good friends, Michoel Veigel, with whom I learned at the Nissan Nativ Acting Studio, was in the midst of a process of t’shuva. At the time, we would sit together and learn Rambam’s ‘Guide for the Perplexed’, not in order to understand or internalize, but primarily to dabble in Jewish philosophy. I now realize that by this time, Michoel had apparently made the decision already to change course. We spoke a great deal during this period, and then one day, he suggested that I join him for a Shabbos at the home of Rabbi Yosef Gerlitzky, the Rebbe’s head shliach in Tel Aviv. I had my share of doubts, but I eventually accepted the offer, mainly because he had asked me.”

It turned out that the experience at the Kabbala Center paled in comparison to what he encountered at the home of the Gerlitzky family. “True Jewish joy reigned at the



seuda stemming from someplace real. The marvelous niggunim aroused within me some long dormant emotions, and anyone who understands music would easily melt upon hearing them. I was both amazed and moved to see a Jew sitting together with his whole family, young and old, singing, talking, and taking an interest. In secular society, I never saw a father sit together with his children with such devotion and intensity. The whole scene attracted me like a magnet, even more than thousands of people applauding in a theatre. I

already had the feeling that no honor or applause would be more gratifying to me. This was a powerful experience I had never known before.

“A couple of months later, at Michoel Veigel’s wedding, I met Rabbi Gerlitzky again, and this time he was soaking in sweat from all the joyous dancing. I saw him in the middle of the platform, making his half-century old body leap with delight, not to mention the more than two hundred Chassidim he excited around him. Suddenly, as he saw me looking at him from the

seats near the bar, he reached his hand out in my direction and invited me to join the dancing. When I approached him, he said, 'I want you to come to us for Shabbos.' I was such an ignoramus in everything connected to Judaism, I thought he was talking to me in acronyms. I figured that when he said 'Shabbos', he meant *Sherut Battei HaSohar*, the prison chaplain service where he served, and he wanted me to come as a famous actor to entertain the inmates.

"Forgive my ignorance, Rabbi, but I don't understand. What's 'Shabbos'?" He smiled and immediately explained, '*Shabbos Kodesh*'.

"Of course I'll come, Rabbi! Just tell me when," I said, never intending to carry this out.

"He went back into the center of the dancing, and I went back to my barstool, pondering over this chassidic invitation for Shabbos. Then, my heart suddenly began to talk: 'This man can be my 'simcha' teacher. Maybe it would be a good idea to take a few private classes from him! From that moment, I spent not one, not two, but many Shabbosim with him.

"Over a period of several years, I took classes in simcha from him. At the start of my spiritual journey, I had already learned that nothing of truth comes easily without toil, and we all have a long way to go to become truly happy. Thus, 'the long and the short way' is preferable to 'the short and the long way', the latter of which leads to the sudden realization that you really haven't gotten anywhere and you're still way off.

"Despite the points of light that I received from Rabbi Gerlitzky, my klipa proved to be a particularly hard nut to crack. What finally aroused me at the end of this path and made me feel that I must make a change in my life was when I came across the seifer '*Eitz Chayim*'. I opened the

seifer, and on one of the first pages I saw, I read the sentence; 'Know that before emanations were produced and creatures were created, there was a simple supernal light that filled all existence'. I read this sentence again and again, and I stood frozen in my place. In a single moment, it gave me understanding that this was a work of great profundity.

"My heart was crying out. At long last, I had found what I had been searching for all my life. I had finally discovered the tool to express everything I felt within me, but I had been totally unable to put it into words. I had always believed with all my heart that there was a Creator of the World, that there was something beyond human intellect, yet I didn't know how to find it or put it into expression. This sentence marked the first meaningful path within a chain of paths that led me to start observing Torah and mitzvos."

DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN THE ALLEYWAYS OF YERUSHALAYIM

In hindsight, Gilli realized that he had received answers to the questions that had been troubling and bothering him ever since he came of age, even if he didn't always know how to define them. "No one ever spoke with us about what existed prior to the Creation of the world, and thoughts of what was here beforehand always flickered in my mind: Who gave life to everything? Who's responsible for all this? I felt that this sentence I had read was the absolute truth. It touched me to the depth of my soul. I felt that this was a real discovery."

What brought these "lights" into "vessels" for Gilli was his participation in the Tanya classes with Rabbi Gerlitzky. "I initially came to these shiurim as a favor for my friend, Michoel Veigel. Today, I thank him for saving me. I didn't alter my life that quickly; I didn't

believe the day would soon come that I would turn into a religious Jew like him. While I considered this possibility to be highly unlikely, Rabbi Gerlitzky didn't relent and he continued with great patience to have an influence on me."

Several years passed of one foot in and one foot out, until that day he commemorated Yom Yerushalayim. Very early that morning, he boarded the first bus for Yerushalayim in order to daven Shacharis at the Western Wall and then meet with a rav who lived in the Old City's Jewish Quarter. "I had heard a great deal about him and I asked if I could seek his advice," Gilli recalled. "I melodiously sang the morning prayer from start to finish. My musical davening turned into a lament lasting more than an hour and a half. When I finished Shacharis, I had some time left to tour the Jewish Quarter, something I had never done before.

"As I was slowly walking down the alleyways of the Old City, I started to think about how the Jewish People walked down these very same streets throughout the generations. Despite the devout and conservative appearance of the bearded and black-clad ultra-Orthodox Jews who were passing there at the same time, I suddenly felt a spiritual closeness and connection to them that I had never felt before. I suddenly identified with them and with their peculiar way of life.

"I sat down at one of the small restaurants in the Jewish Quarter and pondered over certain things. Suddenly, a young man, about my age, came up to me, said 'Hello', and asked if he could speak with me. I noticed that he was wearing a Chabad yarmulke. 'You look familiar to me, but I can't seem to remember from where,' he said. I invited him to sit down at my table, as I somehow felt that there was something that this young man

wanted to tell me, something I needed to know.

“He began by saying that he had been learning for the past several months in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas, and he was quite satisfied there. He spoke with great enthusiasm about the yeshiva, which contains several divisions for young Lubavitchers, young baalei t’shuva, and those like him who discovered the light of truth at a more mature age. I sat there frozen as he discussed the yeshiva’s great qualities. What amazing Divine Providence, I thought to myself. Here I’m about to meet with a kabbalist to find out which yeshiva I should attend, and G-d sends me a sign from Heaven with a clear message as to where to go.

“As we made the short walk together to the rav’s home, I told the bachur, ‘Look how marvelous are the ways of G-d. I thought that I might go to Yerushalayim and ask the rav a question, and then suddenly I realized that G-d has sent me the answer through you...’”

THE “D’VAR MALCHUS” SICHOS SIMPLY UPLIFTED ME

The more Gilli progressed along the path of Yiddishkait, the more his friends began to distance themselves from him. Close friends would see him from a distance and then cross to the other side of the street to avoid meeting him. These are people who appreciated, respected, and praised his work, but from the moment that they realized that he had become a baal t’shuva, they were afraid to be seen in his presence. “The gossip columnists followed my every step. At the start of my journey, I went to the remnants of our Beis HaMikdash and put on t’fillin. The following morning, my picture was spread on a full page of a highly regarded magazine. Friends told me,” Gilli, do



everything, just don’t become a baal t’shuva.”

On the auspicious day of his wedding, Gilli felt that he had to find some way to express his newfound spiritual insight. “It’s interesting that during the period when I made this decision, I also began for the first time to connect to the Rebbe’s maamarim and sichos. Until then, I had settled for the study of ‘Torah Ohr’ and the

maamarim of the Alter Rebbe. When I became a Chassid in an external sense, I started learning the Rebbe’s teachings as well.”

What completed the kiruv process for Gilli were the “D’var Malchus” sichos, which he had first heard about from Rabbi Yosef Chaim Ginsburgh, the head of the Chabad yeshiva in Ramat Aviv. “I encountered issues that I never would have believed that Judaism

would discuss so openly in the truest and most modern terms. Everything I sought in meditation appears clearly in the Rebbe's sichos with unquestioned sources in Judaism.

"What really got me into the whole matter with full force was the Rebbe's statement that our job today is merely to open our eyes and see the Redemption. When I read this, I cried out in my heart: This is the truth. We can and must fulfill mitzvos, put on t'fillin, observe Shabbos, but the Rebbe also said that if you want to see the Redemption now already, it exists, it's here. Just open your eyes and look deep inside. It's not something in Heaven; it's right in front of you. It no longer matters what you do, the essence of your life is Moshiach. When I read this again and again, I realized that this was the absolute truth.

"I try to convey the message of opening one's eyes during each of my performances. I remember the moment when I began to understand how much power and strength were contained in the "D'var Malchus" sichos. It was Rabbi Ginsburgh who made the suggestion that I should learn these sichos. At the time, I had a kind of yeshiva at home, where I studied together with several friends, and it would uplift us each time anew. These sichos are a cure and a remedy for life in our times. Filled with great emotion over the personal redemption I had experienced, I would go into coffee houses, learn with the pleasure seekers, and try to open their eyes..."

ON THE FRONT SPREADING THE WELLSPRINGS

In recent years, Gilli has been found everywhere, harnessing his acting talents for spreading the wellsprings of chassidus and serving as a bridgehead for Jews coming closer to their roots who want to

become more familiar with Judaism and chassidus.

In recent months, he has produced his first disc, entitled "Rishon V'Acharon" (First and Last). Gilli wrote the ten songs that appear on this disc himself, save for one taken from one of the Rebbe Rayatz's maamarim on the art of song. He divided the composition work with Chabad musician Nadav Bechor, who had already participated in numerous Chabad musical productions. "At first, I never dreamed of putting out a disc. I didn't think that I would be a suitable performer for such a project. We produced renditions of all the songs I had written, and we made a series of about one hundred and twenty performances from Dan to Eilat, which met with tremendous success. We appeared before people of all age groups and from every sector, and each time we saw many in attendance who were deeply moved by the songs, each of which was preceded by a background explanation. I never considered myself to be a great singer, and therefore, the disc was not part of my plans. Yet, when I internalized the fact that if this will be my life's shlichus, the Rebbe will want us to move forward, and we soon began work on the disc."

The disc was sold at Steimatzky shops and other record stores with a very high sales percentage. R' Gilli was also requested to provide explanations to the various media networks on the new product. The

interviewers made comparisons between the past and the present, determining that the style and sound had not changed, only the message had become more Jewish and chassidic.

Nowadays between performances, Gilli also finds time for lectures. Recently, he completed a series of successful lectures with the "Shorashim" Center for baalei t'shuva. He also was a guest lecturer at the Chabad café in Rishon L'Zion and the "Mi'maal Mamash" Chabad House in central Tel Aviv, but his big dream is to present his doctrine on



television. "I don't think that we fully understand the power of the medium of television. In a matter of minutes, it can bring many Jews back to their roots. You can't always reach such a wide audience on the street or in a Chabad House, whereas it is much more accessible through the television networks. We must do more in order that many young people, walking confused in search of a path in life and disbelieving that it is within their grasp, will realize that it's all very close to them, and all they have to do is open their eyes."

THE ALTER REBBE REVEALS THE KEITZ

Edited by Y. Ben Boruch

In connection with 24 Teves, the hilula of the Alter Rebbe, we present a compilation of stories from the notes of R' Avrohom Weingarten a"h, l'ilui nishmas his son, R' Matisyahu Aryeh Leib Hy'd

NOT IN THE HEAVENS!

A halachic question was posed to the Alter Rebbe and he *paskened* (ruled) like the Mirkeves HaMishna (another version: like the Noda b'Yehuda). He said about this: Even though the Pri To'ar decided the din (law) differently and the Pri To'ar writes in the introduction to his book that in every p'sak halacha he searched Above in the source of the neshama in order to know what the din truly is, I still did not pasken like him because the Torah came down to this physical world into physical objects so that the physical intellect would exert itself and arrive at the p'sak din.

A REVELATION OF THE NESHAMA IS LOFTIER THAN A REVELATION OF ELIYAHU

When[1] the Alter Rebbe went to Rabbi Boruch of Mezhibuzh, R' Boruch's gabbai did not want to let

him enter – the gabbai was a man of stern character and had *gilui Eliyahu* (Eliyahu the Prophet appeared to him).

The Alter Rebbe said: I have a *yungerman* (young man) here with me who, during the Shmoneh Esrei has *gilui neshama* (revelation of the soul level of neshama) and it says in the writings of the Arizal[2] that *gilui neshama* is loftier than *gilui Eliyahu* and *ruach ha'kodesh* (prophetic spirit).

When he related this, R' Shmuel Levitin said: I heard two versions as to who the *yungerman* was, either R' Pinchas Reizes or R' Binyamin Kletzker.

IN THE DAYS OF THE TANNAIM HE WOULD BE A TANNA!

The Tzemach Tzedek said about his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe[3]:

If he lived in the days of the Gaonim, he would have been a

gaon! If he lived in the days of the Amoraim, he would have been an Amora! If he lived in the days of the Tanaim, he would have been a Tanna!

YOU WON'T EVEN FIND THE DOOR

The Tzemach Tzedek once said[4]:

My grandfather (the Alter Rebbe) once said to the Chassidim: What are you doing? You won't even find the door [to my Gan Eden]!

When he related this, the Tzemach Tzedek cried a lot and said: R' Yochanan ben Zakai said, "I don't know which way they will lead me [to Gan Eden or Gehinom]," while my grandfather was sure he would be in Gan Eden.

THE REBBE'S DOORKNOB

The Rebbe Rayatz once said:

When the Chassid R' Yitzchok Isaac of Homil held the doorknob of the [Alter] Rebbe, *dem Rebbe's kli'amka*, that is when the concept of "there is no place devoid of Him" became settled in his mind

WHY ARE THEY CALLED CHASSIDIM?

The Alter Rebbe once met Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin. R' Chaim had some questions and complaints

THE CHASSID WHO DID NOT WANT TO REVEAL THE KEITZ

The following is from R' Mordechai Perlow (from his book Likkutei Sippurim) where we see the attitudes of the talmidim of Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch and what they concluded based on this maamer:

It is known that the Alter Rebbe once said a maamer Chassidus and spoke about when Moshiach would come. He quoted many verses and sayings from Chazal about this and his calculation worked out to 5603/1842-3. I did not see the maamer but I heard from R' Shmuel Gronem that the maamer was available among Chassidim.

The famous Chassid, R' Gershon Dovber of Pahar said that he heard from his great-grandmother that she heard that the calculation in the maamer was actually for 5603 but when the Alter Rebbe said the year, he said a different, later year. Since the year that he said was later and the Chassidim naturally did not want this, it was decided by all of them that the Alter Rebbe said 5603.

When R' Gershon Dovber heard this he was amazed, for how was it that not one of those present reacted to the discrepancy! And since R' Gershon Ber was a shadar (fundraiser appointed by the Rebbe) and he traveled to many places and towns, he looked for someone who knew about this. He finally found R' Dovber Zev Wolf, Av Beis Din in Yekaterinislav (now Dnepropetrovsk) and R' Dov Wolf told R' Gershon Ber that he heard from his father (or grandfather) that he heard from a Chassid of the Alter Rebbe who was present when the maamer was said, that all the calculations and verses and sayings from Chazal were all about the year 5603, but in the end, when the Alter Rebbe had to verbalize the year, he said a different year. He also heard which year it was that the Rebbe said, but he refused to say what it was.

R' Gershon Ber concluded: This Chassid who heard it from the Alter Rebbe and did not disclose it, lived a long life and he attributed his long life to his not revealing the year that the Alter Rebbe said.

When we talmidim of the yeshiva heard this story from the mashpia R' Shmuel Gronem (between the years 5665-5670), we wanted to say that the year that the Alter Rebbe said was 5673/1912-13, because 5603 and 5673 are pronounced similarly (Tarag) and it is very easy for a listener to make a mistake between them. Those listening to the maamer certainly wanted to bring the keitz closer, not further, and so they didn't pick up on this and thought he said 5603, except for a few who actually realized. But since 5673 was closer to us, this is why we thought he probably said 5673. Unfortunately though, that time has passed.

After a few years I thought that the year that he said was 5703 but now that time has passed too.

However, the matter seems to be that since it came from the mouth of the Alter Rebbe when he said the maamer in public, a time when the Sh'china speaks from his throat, therefore he said a completely different year, but since this is one of those matters which are hidden, it remained hidden until Moshiach comes, may it be in our days, amen.

about Chassidim and the Alter Rebbe answered his questions.

R' Chaim then said: It's all fine and good but why do Chassidim call

themselves Chassidim when the level of "Chassid" is a very lofty level and there are many levels before you reach that level?

The Alter Rebbe answered R' Chaim Volozhiner with a smile: The truth is that the way of Chassidus of the Baal Shem Tov is the idea of t'shuva and so we should really be called baalei t'shuva. But then those opposed to this approach would be called reshaim (wicked) and so better that they call us Chassidim.[5]

SHE MERITED TO SEE THE ALTER REBBE

R' Shmuel Levitin related:

My great-grandmother merited to see the Alter Rebbe in the year 5567/1797, when he traveled to Zhlobin for the famous wedding. My great-grandmother said that she heard that the Alter Rebbe once said a maamer (starting with the words "and a thousand, seven hundred") and the calculation in the maamer (as to when Moshiach would come) came out to a particular year but the Alter Rebbe said a different year, however, she did not remember the year.

WITHOUT THIS, YOU CANNOT LIVE?

My father, R' Zev Wolf (Levitin, who was mashgiach in yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch) asked my grandfather, the Chassid, R' Gershon Ber of Pahar whether he knew which year the Alter Rebbe had said, but he pushed him off, saying: Without this, you cannot live?

HE SPOKE AND SPOKE BUT DID NOT REVEAL IT

When I was in Lubavitch I related what my great-grandmother told me to R' Ber Wolf Koznikov, rav of Yekaterinaslav and he said: I also heard about this from a soldier

of Nikolai (a cantonist).

I asked R' Ber Wolf whether he knew what the year was that the Alter Rebbe said but he began talking about this at length, as was his way, and did not reveal the year.

In general, R' Ber Wolf was an extremely talented speaker[7]. The doctor once warned him that speaking was harmful for him. After that, R' Ber Wolf spent an hour and a half explaining why speaking was harmful to him!

THE ALTER REBBE REVEALED THE KEITZ

On Simchas Torah 5680/1919 at the meal, the Rebbe Rashab related[8]:

The Alter Rebbe once said a maamer on the verse, "and the thousand and seven hundred" and the calculation he made in the maamer came out to the year 5603/1842-3, but he actually said that Moshiach would come in 5608/1847-8. R' Pinchas Reizes tried correcting him but that wasn't possible to do.

In the year 5608 R' Leib[9], Maharil of Kopust, the son of the Tzemach Tzedek, asked him: Where are the giluyim (revelations)?

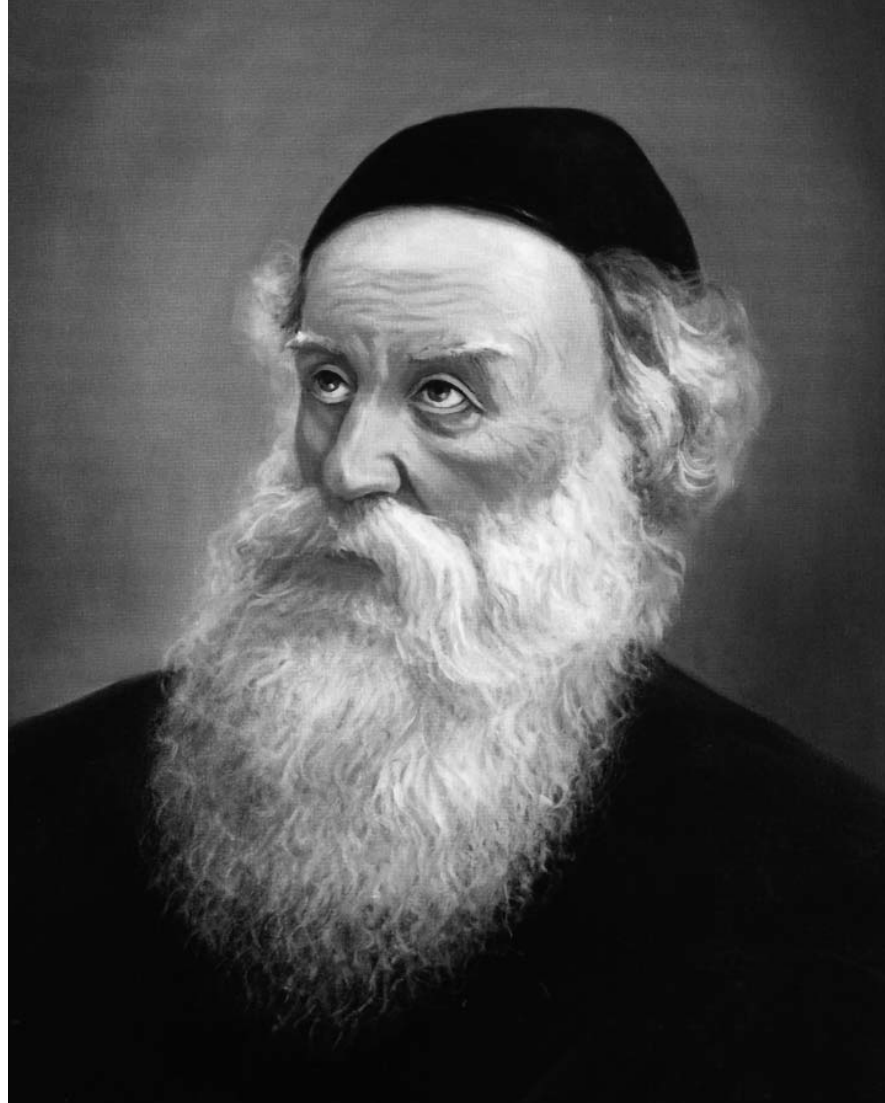
He answered: Isn't it enough that in this year Likkutei Torah was printed?

WHAT IS MOSHIACH AND WHAT WILL HIS ACTIVITIES CONSIST OF?

R' Shmuel Levitin also related that he heard from the Rebbe Rayatz that the Rebbe Maharash also asked his father, the Tzemach Tzedek, and this is what R' Shmuel Levitin said:

One time, when I had yechidus with the Rebbe Rayatz I asked: Who is Moshiach and what will he do?

The Rebbe answered me: Generally speaking he is as the Rambam wrote (at the end of the Laws of Kings).



The Rebbe looked outside through the window and said: When Moshiach comes, a woman won't walk in the street with her head uncovered because the atmosphere won't allow it.

MELECH HA'MOSHIACH, BELOW TEN HANDBREADTHS

The Rebbe Rayatz concluded: The Tzemach Tzedek would say that the year 5608/1842-3 is when our Redeemer will come. When that year came and went, the Rebbe Maharash asked him: You said Moshiach will come in 5608!

The Tzemach Tzedek replied: The Likkutei Torah (whose substance is that of the ultimate redemption) was printed in this year!

The Rebbe Maharash said: I

want the Moshiach who is below ten handbreadths (i.e. in the physical realm) and not above ten handbreadths (i.e. in the spiritual realm). (3)

1) see *Reshimos V'Sippurim* vol. 1 p. 38; *Likkutei Sippurim*

2) see also *Likkutei Torah Teitzei* 36, 4

3) see also *Seifer HaSichos Toras*

Sholom p. 171

4) see also *Beis Moshiach* issue 302 p. 36 (Heb.)

5) printed in the *maamarim* of the *Alter Rebbe parshiyos* vol. 1 p. 419

6) see *Beis Moshiach* issue 194 p. 38

7) printed in *Seifer HaSichos Toras Sholom* p. 237

8) as per the original publication in 1946 (in the 1957 edition it was changed to *Reb Levik*, and back again in the 1993 edition)

9) see *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 6 p. 80, footnote 70; *Sichos Kodesh* 5710 p. 14 and p. 113

SITTING ON THE FENCE

by Aryeh Gotfryd, PhD

Greg is a Jewish college student in living in Brooklyn, part of a very intellectual crowd, and he looks at everything through the prism of reason. That's why he has so much trouble with Judaism – so many things don't make sense! Why accept miracles when the world we know operates according to physics? Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd turns the question on its head by revealing the supernatural within nature.

“The physical world... can and must be fully and completely utilized for a deeper understanding of Torah and a deeper connection with it”

The Rebbe, Mind Over Matter, pg. 63.

Hi Greg,

I was happy to hear from you and have read with interest your reflective paraphrase of my last letter to you, as well as your many counterpoints which all essentially leave us back where we started from, and I think that is basically the following:

You feel that accepting the Torah as G-d's word demands rejecting mountains of verified scientific

evidence and rational opinion to the contrary. You accept that Torah and science do share some common ground about how nature works, but so do other faith systems which differ dramatically from ours. You acknowledge that the “Kuzari argument” (mass revelation and unbroken chain of tradition) speaks in Judaism's favor but not at the expense of trashing science, logic and competing histories. And of course you give copious examples.

So in light of all this, Greg, why not just walk away saying, “Bah, forget about it, I'll have none of this fairytale mythology posing as sensible religion!”? You don't

actually raise this question explicitly but it is hovering there between the lines. Allow me to venture an answer: It is just as hard to reject the truth of the Torah as it is to accept it.

Essentially, both sides of the fence have pluses and minuses so one may feel that it is better to hedge one's bets and sit on it. Problem is, the fence is narrow – too narrow for comfort. For if the Torah is true, every day that goes by without growing in Torah and Mitzvos is an incredible waste of time. And if it's false, every day spent celebrating it is a colossal stupidity.

Of course, we can apply Pascal's Wager and say that if Torah is true you gain infinitely more by following it and lose infinitely more by neglecting it. On the other hand, if it's false and you keep it your loss is minimal, while if you don't keep it you gain, but not so much. The upshot is it makes more sense to keep it. But that's a philosophical argument and I think that such debates are endless.

I would like to start with where we have common ground – the usefulness of quantum physics for describing how nature works. Several aspects of quantum theory are relevant to our discussion:

1. The Uncertainty Principle – One of the only things that science is sure about is its uncertainty about phenomena. There are only probable, not definite causes. The implication: Those mountains of hard evidence negating Torah's claims are fuzzy clouds of likelihood, not the categorical reality checks we used to think they were. Hence, where Torah says yes, science at best says maybe not, and where Torah say no, science counters maybe so.

2. Matter is intangible – Physicists calculate that atoms are approximately 99.999999999999% empty space. Our perception that matter is hard has nothing to do

with the deeper reality. The implications include that things are not what they seem and invisible forces are what it's all about – "May the Force be with you."

3. The matter that does exist, doesn't really – One of the biggest and most respected of science news websites, Science Daily, reported recently that it's official, there is no such thing as matter. The atomic core, the nucleus, comprised of protons and neutrons, has mass because of the quarks and gluons that make it up. But these are actually ripples in the quantum field and not particles at all. The upshot – one of the pillars of 19th Century science, the notion of material realism, is not merely marginal – it is in fact dead. And if material explanations can't challenge Torah truth, what kind can?

4. Vacuum Fluctuations – this is the quantum physical equivalent of the Baal Shem Tov's doctrine of Continuous Creation, explained so well in the Tanya.

Everything is continuously being recreated from nothing to something in all places at all times. Reality isn't a static, it's a dynamic. It's all fresh again now... and now... and now... The implication – history is a mystery. Time as we experience it gives the impression of a linear flow, but we now know there is a constant infusion of a new and independent reality from some great beyond.

5. Non-locality – That great beyond is now part of physics and it basically amounts to finding "G-d" in the laboratory. Well, more precisely, the existence of an indivisible wholeness beyond space and time which is conscious and interacts with human consciousness

to bring physical reality from a potential to actual state at all places and times. This is not some poetic distortion of the physics. It is, rather, a mainstream interpretation of hundreds of experiments done since 1982.

6. Observership – Nature and its laws have been set up in such a manner that human observers are necessary for physical phenomena to exist in any particular form. The implication is that we are as important to the existence of the universe as the universe is important for us.



Are you really concerned about caving in to some fairytale mythology posing as sensible religion? And believe what instead pray tell? That all science is uncertain, that matter is empty space, that reality is the continuous renewal of random ripples in the field of cosmic consciousness, that transcendent conscious unity is the ultimate reality and we discovered it 30 years ago in a French physics lab, and that without human beings, physical reality would not exist.

Greg, whichever side of the fence you get down on, you are dealing with the same thing – a magical world that is nothing more than a stage for acting out the relationship

between G-d and man. And why man? What is it about him that earns his special position in the quantum universe? It is his faculty of free choice.

That's why I'm perfectly fine with you sitting on the fence. It's a great spot from which to view miracles unfolding wherever you turn. And the fence you are sitting on? That's a miracle too.

It's not by chance that the soul of science is emerging specifically at this time. The modern convergence of faith and science was presaged by the Zohar nearly two millennia ago

and pegged to commence around the year 5600, corresponding to 1840 on the secular calendar. It was around that time that modern science really took off – statistics, physics, chemistry, electromagnetism, atomic theory, the list goes on. And the purpose? To prepare the world for the coming of Moshiach, when the fence will melt away and those two great solitudes,

faith and reason, will again reunite in a perspective greater than either alone.

But wait, you may ask, wouldn't that be a paradox? And the answer would be yes for sure! But why should you worry? Quantum theory is replete with paradox, and that doesn't stop you from embracing it. Expand your embrace and have it all – faith and science, nature and the supernatural, Moshiach and me and you.

Sincerely,
Aryeh Gotfryd.

(to contact email
info@arniegotfryd.com
or call 416-858-9868)

“AND THEY CAME TO EGYPT”

By Menachem Ziegelboim

We have been reading about how the brothers and then Yaakov went down to Egypt, a good time to write about the delegation of Lubavitcher rabbanim from Eretz Yisroel who go to Egypt every year. The organizer of the groups, Rabbi Yosef Hecht, rav of Eilat, speaks about the purpose of these trips and the Rebbe's guidance.



The delegation of rabbanim at the Menorah lighting at the Pyramids

The descent to Egypt, whether Yaakov Avinu's trip or even earlier, Avrohom Avinu's, was never a Jew's ambition. It is not for naught that the trip there is called a "descent." Comparing Eretz Yisroel, with all its special qualities, versus Egypt, with all its deficiencies – why would any Jew want to be there?

A Jew's purpose is to ascend, not to descend; and if the place he goes to is termed a descent, there is no reason to go there unless he is instructed to do so by G-d and fortified with a blessing, "do not be afraid from descending to Egypt." Because a Jew has a mission, and if he needs to descend to fulfill this mission, he must do so; for then it is not a real degradation but rather a momentary one for the purpose of later ascending.

This is the reason that the idea for going down to Egypt came to the shliach, Rabbi Yosef Hecht, rav of Eilat. He already had experience taking care of the delicate and important task of printing editions of the Tanya in Jewish communities in Egypt, work that greatly pleased the Rebbe. He received a series of answers and encouragement for this project.

The idea of going down to Egypt yet again came about following the first siyumei ha'Rambam in 5745, which the Rebbe personally oversaw. A few weeks before the conclusion of the learning cycle, the Rebbe began asking for siyumim and celebrations in every location with many participants. It was obvious that these siyumim had a spiritual significance to them, for the Rebbe's instruction was to hold them in every place where Jews could be found, even if it was highly doubtful whether anybody there actually completed the cycle of learning in Yad HaChazaka, three chapters a day, never mind learning it in depth.

If there was a spiritual reason, why not include the Jews of Egypt? Although they were not in the

category of “suffering and captivity” like their brethren in neighboring Arab countries, this was hardly the golden age for Jewry in Egypt.

“I asked the Rebbe whether it was a good idea to make a siyum ha’Rambam in Egypt too, holding the celebration in the Rambam’s shul,” said R’ Hecht in a conversation I had with him between one mitvza Chanuka and another. “The answer was yes, and we set out.”

R’ Hecht spoke with the Egyptian consul in Eilat, with whom he had a friendly relationship, and the latter was happy with the idea and was willing to help.

“When we met, we spoke a lot about the Rebbe as leader of Jewry worldwide and he was very enthusiastic.”

It was no simple matter to just show up in Egypt as an official delegation to hold celebrations. Permission was needed, as well as visas and connections with the Egyptian authorities so they would protect the delegation of rabbis.

After the logistics and other details were arranged, the rabbinic delegation set out for Egypt. They met at Ben Gurion airport and flew together to Cairo. A Police escort was waiting for them when they landed, and ensured their security wherever they went.

Were you in contact with members of the Egyptian government about this visit?

“We weren’t personally in contact with the Egyptian government to acquire our visas, as this was done through the Israeli embassy in Egypt who had the necessary connections. We did, however, have government representatives in attendance at the siyum celebrations – one time it was someone from the Ministry of Education, another time from the Ministry of Culture or the Antiquities department.

“Aside from the contact with the



Posing before boarding the plane for Cairo

people at the embassy, I was in touch with a local Arab who arranged all the technical details for us such as renting a bus, booking rooms, etc. He too kept in constant contact with the local police and together they determined and checked the route and our schedule down to our minutest detail.”

The trip itself wasn’t long; only two days. The location for the siyum was the ancient Rambam shul where, according to tradition, the Rambam studied and wrote his great work.

After the delegation returned to Eretz Yisroel, R’ Hecht wrote a detailed report to the Rebbe and he received an encouraging response. The main encouragement, though, was the Rebbe’s public acknowledgment in the middle of the farbrengen on Shabbos Parshas B’Chukosai, 5745, when he spoke about the siyumei ha’Rambam:

In connection to the aforementioned about a siyum ha’Rambam, bottles of mashke will be distributed to those who will be holding siyumim on the Rambam in the days to come. This will be done after they mix it with mashke that was brought here from the siyum celebration in the home of the Rambam in Fez, Morocco, as

well as at the siyum in the Rambam’s shul in Cairo, Egypt. As we note from the allusion of the Rambam’s name: the first letters of the words “revos mofsai b’Eretz Mitzrayim” (increasing My wonders in the land of Egypt), i.e. the Rambam’s life in Egypt, along with all the decrees and enactments and customs he enacted – these are the wonders in the land of Egypt.

Obviously, great is the advantage of a siyum of the Rambam’s work in those places where he lived and worked – according to the Yerushalmi on the verse, “*ach b’tzelem yishalech ish*” - that “whoever repeats something that someone said, should see the one who said it as though he were standing there facing him.”

As was said a number of times, by giving mashke – all the people farbrenging here are included with the participants of the siyumim, including the siyumim mentioned before that were made in the Rambam’s place.

The Rebbe distributed bottles of mashke to some shluchim, including those shluchim who participated in the siyum in Cairo, led by R’ Hecht, R’ Levi Bistritzky and his father R’ Yehuda Leib, R’ Mordechai

IN SEVENTY LANGUAGES

What language should you use when speaking at a siyum ha'Rambam in Egypt? The answer was complicated: some of the speakers spoke in English, some in French, and some in Arabic. R' Hecht spoke in English, R' Elituv in Arabic, and R' Goldberg in French, which many people understood.

At the end of the first siyum ha'Rambam, with the Rebbe's approval, a booklet was printed with photocopies of the first and final halachos of the Yad HaChazaka, in Arabic. It also contained a brief biography of the Rambam which was written in Arabic as translated by the Egyptian consul in Eretz Yisroel who translated what he learned from R' Hecht. He even added a complimentary overview about the purpose of the delegation's visit to Egypt. This booklet was given out every year.

Even the symbolic act of the Egyptian police closing the roads in our honor and escorting us with great fanfare, and the entire area of the shul being closed off to foot traffic with only participants allowed to enter, made them feel proud.

Ashkenazi, and R' Shmuel Greisman, who was also one of the regular members of the group that went every year.

"It is interesting that in the sicha itself the Rebbe used an unusual expression, 'shluchei klal Yisroel,' referring to the members of the group who made the siyumim, but this wondrous expression was omitted in the printed sicha," says R' Hecht. "We understood that the Rebbe considered this shlichus not as something localized but as something that pertains to all the Jewish people."

For the second cycle of Rambam, in 5746, the Rebbe pushed the idea of siyumim more strongly and asked that siyumim be held in a way of "kiflayim l'tushiya" (double the strength). That was the slogan of the siyumim that year, both in quantity and in quality – to double the number of participants and the quality of the content.

When R' Hecht asked the Rebbe in the second year about going to Egypt to conduct a siyum ha'Rambam, the answer here, too, was to do it in a way of "kiflayim l'tushiya."

"We decided to celebrate not only in Cairo, but also in Alexandria," said R' Hecht.

An interesting and surprising change in the structure of the celebrations in Egypt took place in 5750 (or 5751). That year, the cycle of three chapters came out in the month of Cheshvan. When R' Hecht asked the Rebbe for a bracha for the trip, the answer was to postpone it and to have the siyum during Chanuka.

What was the reason?

"I can't tell you the Rebbe's reason, but as one who participated in the siyum during Chanuka, there is no doubt that it was held in a much more powerful way. The celebrations began with lighting the

Menorah, and we brought not only the simcha of a siyum but also the joy of the holiday to all the participants, along with enthusiastic singing and dancing. It was a tremendous chizuk (strengthening) for the Jewish community that was in a state of shrinkage."

If R' Hecht and the organizers thought that this was a one-time instruction, particular to that year, they were mistaken. The next year, too, the Rebbe said they should hold the siyum during Chanuka.

"From then until 5759, the siyum ha'Rambam in Egypt always took place during Chanuka, even if the actual conclusion of the learning cycle took place in the summer."

As part of the visit, the rabbanim also went to the famous pyramids where they lit the Menorah. "I don't remember that this was an instruction from the Rebbe, but we lit over there as part of the spiritual symbolism – the light which overpowers the darkness."

For the Jews of Cairo and Alexandria, these siyumim were very refreshing. Their communities had dwindled and these siyumim were an annual "pick-me-up."

"People waited all year for us to come, to dance and rejoice and sing with them. We always took musical instruments and the event was moving for everybody who attended."

The local Jews, for the most part, remembered the community in its heyday, when thousands filled the shuls. At this point, most of the members had made aliya and only a few of them remained.

"Even the symbolic act of the Egyptian police closing the roads in our honor and escorting us with great fanfare, and the entire area of the shul being closed off to foot traffic with only participants allowed to enter, made them feel proud. Look, the authorities gave them honor ... esteemed them ... It made them stand tall. When an honorable

delegation of rabbanim from Eretz Yisroel arrived, they felt that here were people who treated them with respect.”

Well, the man who thought of them and treated them with respect was the Rebbe, leader of the Jewish people, who felt for the isolated Jews in Egypt. He knew how to uplift them as he did with all of world Jewry. The Rebbe thought of even the smallest details.

“According to an explicit instruction from the Rebbe, we printed special invitations for the siyum celebration and made sure they reached every member of the community. The invitations were sent to the head of the community, who sent them out individually.

“Not only that, but the Rebbe himself paid for all the expenses of the trip every year, as though testifying that this was a personal matter of his. The Rebbe responded in detail to the reports I sent and it was apparent that this was something close to the Rebbe’s heart.”

In the pictures publicized over the years, I noticed that there was always a core group and every year a few more individuals joined. Were there instructions from the Rebbe about who should be part of the delegation?

“Yes. At first I and R’ Glitzenstein were going to go. The two of us worked on the project of printing the Tanya in Egypt. After that, we suggested taking a rav who speaks Arabic and the Rebbe approved of this idea. That is how Rabbi Shimon Elituv of Yerushalayim was chosen to join us. We received explicit instructions to include R’ Mordechai Shmuel Ashkenazi of Kfar Chabad and R’ Levi Bistritzky a”h. The Rebbe gave a reason for R’ Bistritzky’s participation saying he held siyumim in Teveria next to where the Rambam is buried. In addition to these rabbanim, each time other



people joined who helped in the preparations. We always took a Chassid who knew how to play an instrument.

Was it always exciting or did the enthusiasm wane over the years?

“Each time it was moving. First, because of the fact – as the Rebbe said in 5745 – that holding a siyum in Egypt is a shlichus of Klal Yisroel. We knew that the Rebbe paid for it, which was another indication that this was something significant. And there was always excitement and some tension because we were going to a place that isn’t the greatest friend of the Jews.”

When you walked around in your distinctive clothing, did you

get negative reactions?

“The moment we got off the plane in the airport in Cairo, thousands of eyes looked at us in astonishment, curiosity, and perhaps with enmity, but we weren’t afraid. We knew Hashem was with us and besides the police were escorting us everywhere with patrol cars and motorcycles, front and back. They closed roads and cleared the way for us. They did not take any chances that someone would try and harm us. The security intensified when we had to walk through the market teeming with thousands of Arabs on our way to the Rambam’s shul in the Jewish quarter of old Cairo. There too people treated us nicely and the



locals blessed us with the greeting of 'Salaam.' The authorities wanted the visit to go smoothly.

"The Israeli ambassador to Egypt, each time someone else, helped us a lot. He was in touch with the community on our behalf and assisted with myriad other details. He was usually asked to speak during the celebration."

What was your daily schedule?

"As I said, we visited Cairo and Alexandria, the only two cities where a Jewish community remained. We usually landed in Cairo in the afternoon and traveled to Alexandria, where we made a siyum ha'Rambam in the large *Eliyahu HaNavi* shul, with the attendance of the members of the local community. The shul today stands on the location of the great shul of Alexandria that was in existence since the time of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and where, according to legend, so many hundreds and even thousands davened that they could not all hear the chazan and the people had to respond with 'amen' and 'amen yehei shmei rabba' when the shamash held up a cloth as a signal.

"We visited other shuls in

Alexandria, shuls that were long closed and were inactive.

"Then we returned to Cairo, where we held a siyum ha'Rambam in the old shul named for the Rambam. We also held siyumim in a few other shuls – even though they were inactive, we knew that these siyumim had a spiritual effect even when nobody was there, not even one Jew. Among other shuls, we visited the shul where the Cairo Geniza was discovered.

"One year, they asked us to hold the siyum in a different shul, where the Ibn Ezra davened. Both are ancient shuls and there is a dispute between the researchers as to which one was the one the Rambam studied and davened in. This shul was renovated at the end of the 80's. Our official celebration was moved there.

"In the end, the celebration was moved to the big shul of Cairo, the only remaining active shul.

"The visits generally took two days, a little less, and then we returned home."

What special moments do you remember?

"Since our trip was during Chanuka, which is vacation time

back home, we met quite a few Israeli tour groups. One year, on the way to Alexandria, we stopped to buy water in a roadside restaurant near a gas station. When we walked into the restaurant we suddenly met about eighty Israelis who had just arrived and who were also on their way to Alexandria. According to the original plan, they were going to eat in the restaurant, but then we walked in. They were in shock. 'You came all the way here? How on earth did you get here?'

"They were too taken aback to eat there and they decided to skip the meal. Not only that, they went with us to the big shul in Alexandria and participated in the celebration of the siyum and in the dancing that took place afterward and they were very moved by it all.

"I remember that in 5747, before we went to Egypt, I got a phone call from the Israeli ambassador in Egypt with a special request. For a long time the community, with the help of the ambassador, had collected all the Jewish books from all the shuls in Egypt that had been closed and brought them to the big shul. The bulk of the work was done by local Arab students who knew Hebrew. When they completed this project they arranged for a special day to dedicate the library – the only Jewish library in Egypt. The ambassador wanted us to stay an extra day in Egypt to participate in their celebration, which would bolster the ceremony, as he put it. The governor of Cairo and other government representatives would be participating.

"Since I am a shliach of the Rebbe, I couldn't make this decision on my own and I asked the Rebbe, who said the delegation could stay one more day. And so we attended the dedication of the library and they even asked me to speak. The media which reported the event referred to the Chabad presence and our work among the Jews of Egypt."

GEULA – WHAT WE BELIEVE

Part 4

By Rabbi Gershon Avtzon
Menahel and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Lubavitch in Cincinnati

Dear Reader sh'yichyeh:

In our previous article, we wrote about the eternity of the Torah. We explained how the seemingly “new laws of Torah” that will be in the times of Moshiach are not a contradiction to this principle. However, we were left with a question:

Does not the Gemara (Nida 61b) write that “All Mitzvos will be nullified in the times of Moshiach”?

To appreciate the answer, we must quote and explain the entire passage from the Gemara. The Gemara there discusses the laws of Jewish burial. Jewish people are to be buried in shrouds. Is one permitted to bury someone in shrouds that are made of “Kilayim” (a garment that has mixed material of wool and linen, a transgression for the living to wear)?

Our Rabbis taught: A garment in which kilayim was lost (mixed somehow) ... may be made into a shroud for a corpse. R. Joseph observed: This implies that the commandments will be abolished in the Hereafter. Said Abaye (or as



some say R. Dimi) to him: But did not R. Manni in the name of R. Jannai state, ‘This was learnt only in regard to the time of the lamentations but for burial this is forbidden’? — The other replied: But was it not stated in connection with it, ‘R. Johanan ruled: Even for burial’? And thereby R. Johanan followed his previously expressed view, for R. Johanan stated: ‘What is the purport of the Scriptural text, Free among the dead? As soon as a

man dies he is free from the commandments’.

The above passage from the Gemara - that seems to be implying that there will be no Mitzvos in the times of Moshiach - directly contradicts other quotes of our sages :

1) The Talmud (Sanhedrin 90b): “How is resurrection derived from the Torah” — As it is written, And ye shall give thereof the Lord’s heave offering to Aaron the priest. But would Aaron live forever; he did not even enter Palestine, that *truma* should be given him? But it teaches that he would be resurrected, and Israel give him *truma*. Thus resurrection is derived from the Torah.” This Gemara directly implies that we will be doing Mitzvos in the times of Moshiach!

2) The Rambam (Hilchos Megilla chapter 2) quotes the Talmud Yerushalmi (Megilla 1:5): “All the books of the Prophets and all the Holy Writings will be nullified in the Messianic era, with the exception of the Book of Esther. It will continue to exist, as will the five books of the Torah and the **halachos of the Oral Law, which will never be nullified.**”

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Sichos Tishrei 5752) gives a revolutionary explanation:

When Moshiach comes the world will be very sensitive to spirituality. We will follow Hashem’s will without having to be “told” to do so. If one has to be told to do something, it shows that there are two separate existences which are communicating with each other.

Compare a bad marriage to a good one and an excellent one:

Bad - The wife asks the husband to take out the garbage and he ignores her.

Good - The wife asks the husband to take out the garbage and he listens.

Excellent - The wife does not

When Moshiach comes the world will be very sensitive to spirituality. We will follow Hashem's will without having to be "told" to do so. If one has to be told to do something, it shows that there are two separate existences which are communicating with each other.

have to tell the husband to take out the garbage, he is sensitive to her needs on his own.

When Moshiach comes the "Mitzvos - the commandments" will be annulled, meaning that we will not have be commanded to do the Mitzvos, we will be doing them naturally.

Some examples of the above:

The **Midrash** (Yalkut Shimoni on Yirmiyahu 315) writes: If - in the Times of Moshiach - one will want to do the forbidden act of picking a fig on Shabbos, the fig will "scream" at him to stop.

The HaYom Yom (15 Adar 1) writes: "It is said of the Time To Come: "A stone in the wall will cry out and a beam from the tree will respond." At present, inert creations are mute; though trodden upon, they remain silent. But there will come a time when the revelation of the Future becomes a reality that the inert will begin to speak, relate and demand: "If a man was walking along without thinking or speaking words of Torah, why did he trample upon me?"

The earth trodden upon has been waiting for millennia, ever since the Six Days of Creation. All kinds of living creatures have been treading upon it all this time, but it is waiting for a Jew (or two Jews) to walk on it while discussing Torah. But if they do not say words of Torah, the earth will protest: "You too are just like an animal!"

Now one may ask, if the above is true,

How is it permitted to bury someone in Kilayim if when he comes back - with the resurrection of the dead - he will be wearing forbidden garments?

1) Some opinions (Tosafos K'subos 111) hold that the dead will be resurrected in the clothes that they wore in their lifetime.

2) Alternatively the Kilayim may miraculously disappear in the era of Moshiach.

We have clarified and explained the different laws that will take place in the era of Moshiach. Many are still wondering about the eternity of the Laws yet the new revelation of Torah, hence the question:

How will Torah will taught in times of Moshiach?

The first thing that we have to establish is that Moshiach - in addition to being a King - will be a true Torah scholar. As a matter of fact, the first qualification for Moshiach (see Rambam Hilchos Melachim chapter 11) is that he is involved - in a serious way - in learning Torah. In addition to that, he will be a true teacher to Klal Yisroel. In the words of the Rambam (Hilchos T'shuva 9:2):

"For these reasons, all Israel, [in particular,] their prophets and their Sages, have yearned for the Messianic age so they can rest from the [oppression of] the gentile kingdoms who do not allow them to

occupy themselves with Torah and mitzvos properly. They will find rest and increase their knowledge in order to merit the world to come.

"In that era, knowledge, wisdom, and truth will become abundant. [Isaiah 11:9] states, "The earth will be full of the knowledge of God." [Jeremiah 31:33] states: "One man will no longer teach his brother, nor a man his colleague... [for all will know Me]." And [Ezekiel 36:26] states: "I will take away the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

"These changes will come about because the king who will arise from David's descendants will be a greater master of knowledge than Solomon and a great prophet, close to the level of Moses, our teacher. Therefore, he will teach the entire nation and instruct them in the path of God.

"All the gentile nations will come to hear him as [Isaiah 2:2] states: "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of God's house shall be established at the peak of the mountains... [and all the nations shall flow to it]."

We see clearly that Moshiach will teach the entire Jewish people. This includes all the Jewish people that have passed away and had been learning Torah in Gan Eden and have then been resurrected. This includes all the Patriarchs and prophets of previous generations.

We now have to clarify a few things:

1) What will be the role of the Sanhedrin?

2) Does the Talmud (Yuma 5b) not say that Moshe and Aharon will teach?

3) What can Moshiach teach the great sages and prophets of old?

The answers to the above (Seifer HaSichos 5752 page 456):

The questions regarding laws of direct oral tradition ("Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai") will be directed

to Moshe Rabbeinu - as he was the one that received the tradition. The practical Halachic questions - that are learned out with the 13 methods that were given to us to learn out the laws from the Torah - will be answered by the Sanhedrin. Melech HaMoshiach will teach the mystical hidden secrets of the Torah (see Rashi Shir HaShirim 1:2).

We still have to answer one final question on this topic:

How will Moshiach be able to teach all of Klal Yisroel? There are so many different people and on so many different levels.

The answer (Toras Menachem vol.19 pg. 280): Moshiach will teach in a revolutionary way. He will not explain to us the secrets of the Torah, he will **show us** the secrets of the Torah and the spiritual world. When you show an audience a visual film, you can show it to thousands of people at once. You don't have to explain to them the details - as that takes a long time and also depends on their intellect - as it will be grasped at once with the power of sight.

(Is it not true, that the use of "power-point" visual presentations

are becoming more popular? Do you think that it is a foretaste of the times of Moshiach?)

From the above it is clear that Moshiach will teach all the Jewish people, including those who are resurrected from the dead. I am sure you - the reader - are asking:

Can you share more details on the resurrection?

This we explain in our coming article IY"H.

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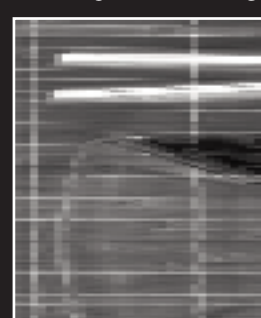
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SHLICHUS – WRITING, SPEAKING AND GIVING

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

Shluchim tell their stories.

In the HaYom Yom for 23 Teves, the Rebbe writes that with sighing (or groaning) alone, we won't be saved. Sighing is only a first step for avoda (work), and the avoda needs to be done by each of us, according to our abilities, "One person might do this through his writing, another with his oratory, another with his wealth."

If I can farbreng a little on a personal note; since this HaYom Yom comes out on my birthday, I view this aphorism as a sort of personal motto for life and shlichus. For many years now, I strive to do my utmost "with writing, speaking and money." I'm not always successful, but I try. I also have a directive and bracha from the Rebbe, in his handwriting, for success in those things that come from the heart. This is what happened:

When I first got involved in Chabad and was still attending a

Litvishe yeshiva in Yerushalayim, we (the group of secret Lubavitchers in the yeshiva) found out that we need to do "mivtzaim." From then on, every Shabbos afternoon we would go to a nearby neighborhood and make Mesibos Shabbos for children. After a few months of this, I naively wondered how it was possible that after four months in which the children were connected to the Rebbe at Mesibos Shabbos, not one of them had become religious, not one of them had switched to a religious school, and their parents weren't yet registered as card-carrying Lubavitchers.

I wrote to the Rebbe about my surprise and received this encouraging answer:

That you write that sometimes you don't see tangible results from spreading Judaism and the mivtzaim is quite surprising, for how do you know what is

happening in someone else's heart, which Chazal say is concealed like the restoration of the kingdom of the house of Dovid (P'sachim 54b), and furthermore, Chazal promise that words that come from the heart enter the heart.

Naturally, I considered this letter as a bracha and the Rebbe's conferring me with the ability to accomplish things with words that come from my heart, and this is what I try to do on shlichus in Beit Shaan.

This is not only pertinent to me, of course, for every shliach I've spoken to has told me success stories and results – sometimes surprising ones – in their activities, writing, or speaking.

FROM THE LOCAL PAPER TO A SHABBOS MEAL

Rabbi Mendy Klein, shliach in Eilat, does a lot of speaking and writing. He writes divrei Torah every week, for years now, and these were published in two local newspapers in Eilat. Then one of the newspapers closed down.

R' Klein was visiting the financial district when a stranger approached him. He had recognized R' Klein from the picture that appeared in the paper with his article. Sadly and dramatically, the man sighed, "You should know that it is several weeks now that we don't have a Shabbos meal in our home."

At first, R' Klein thought the person was poverty-stricken but the man explained that for years he had read his d'var Torah from the newspaper, but now that the paper had shut down, he had no d'var Torah and his Shabbos meals were just not the same.

R' Klein was happy to hear this because he didn't even know that these people were faithful readers of his divrei Torah. He recommended that the man buy the other paper or that he attend shiurim at the Chabad



house, where he would hear plenty of divrei Torah.

A SHIUR FOR 300 PEOPLE

R' Klein gives two shiurim every Friday night in the huge shul in the Club Hotel in Eilat. This hotel runs on a timeshare system where people buy vacation time slots for one week a year. Every week there are hundreds of people in the hotel, including many religious Jews from all walks of life. About 300 people attend the Friday night davening and R' Klein gives one shiur before Kabbalas Shabbos and another, deeper shiur after the davening, to those who are interested.

R' Klein says an amazing thing happens nearly every week when he finishes speaking. When people realize that the one giving the shiur is a Lubavitcher, they start telling about their personal connection with Chabad, whether in London, Yavneh, Caesarea or Venice. "It's unbelievable how so many Jews have a close connection with the Rebbe and with the Rebbe's shluchim."

For example, R' Klein told about a doctor from Kiryat Tivon who came to the hotel on vacation. He "happened" to attend the davening and heard R' Klein speak. After the



shiur he went over and spoke to the rabbi, saying he knew the shliach in Kiryat Tivon, R' Menashe Altheus, and sometimes treated the shliach's children. R' Klein invited the doctor to attend the davening during the week at the Chabad house. The man showed up, participated a bit in the shiurim, and when he returned home, he was a warm friend of Chabad.

A year went by and the doctor went to the hotel in Eilat again. He was in the year of mourning for one of his parents and he went to the Chabad house as soon as he arrived and attended all the t'fillos.

The following year when the doctor showed up, he was wearing a big yarmulke and a full beard. He went to the Chabad house and gave R' Klein a report on his year's progress in religious observance.

"The beginning of all this was with you; it's all thanks to you," he said.

One person might do this through his writing, another with his oratory..

THANKS TO A VIDEO AND IGROS KODESH

Another story from Eilat:

Our Chabad house, says R' Klein, is located in an office building that has many floors. A few years



ago I set up a viewing corner in the lobby of the building with a huge plasma screen on which I show videos of the Rebbe 24 hours a day – farbrengens, dollars, etc. Whoever enters the building knows that on their way in and on their way out they can see the Rebbe.

There are two women who are not religiously observant, from the center of the country, who come to this building often. They work in real estate and they do business with the real estate office here. Each time they come to Eilat to close a deal, they first come to the Chabad house, put a note in a volume of Igros Kodesh, and only after they receive an answer with a bracha from the Rebbe do they conclude the deal. Based on the luxury car they drive up in, they seem to have success with this custom...

Some time ago they came again in order to close a deal that entailed buying a very large commercial property. As usual, they came to the Chabad house to ask the Rebbe for a bracha but to their sorrow, they did not get a clear answer. I explained to them that sometimes there is no answer in the Igros Kodesh but the Rebbe would find a way to respond to them.

They went downstairs to get coffee in the lobby and as they sat

“Your emails are my only connection here to Judaism. Every week begins with a d’var Torah ‘from my Jewish home,’ and I read every word you write with great interest. Please continue writing because I draw life from every word.”

there, they watched the video screen and saw an American couple with the Rebbe in a yechidus for wealthy people. The couple told the Rebbe about a certain investment and asked whether it was a good idea to pursue it. The Rebbe told them: **It is not worth investing now because of the political upheavals in your country.**

The women were deeply affected by what they had seen, changed their travel plans, and returned home immediately. The deal was postponed indefinitely.

Three months later the women returned to check out the deal again. This time, conditions seemed right and the price of the property was much lower because of the drop in the value of the dollar. The women asked the Rebbe for a bracha and opened the Igros Kodesh where it said: **It should be in a good and auspicious time.** The ladies signed on the deal. They then made a point of returning to the Chabad house to thank the Rebbe. Because of the Rebbe’s guidance, the deal had been postponed by a few months and they profited tremendously as a result.

THANKS TO MISUNDERSTANDING AN AD

At the Chabad house in Nes Tziyona they use writing, speaking and money to spread the wellsprings, as the shliach, R’ Sagi Har Shefer tells us:

We advertised a list of shiurim and activities in the local paper. One of the items said, “Machon Bar Mitzva on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday between the hours of 4-7.” What I meant was, you have to call and make an arrangement, pay, and come to a one-hour session, but that is not how Yuval, a 13 year old who is not religiously observant, understood it. He showed up on Sunday at 4:00 and said he wanted to learn from 4 until 7.

The person who works with the bar mitzva boys was busy with another boy and didn’t know what to do with Yuval. Fortunately, R’ Sagi was there, but he was about to leave for Kfar Chabad. “Come with me,” he suggested, “and we’ll learn for three hours on the way.”

With his parents’ consent, Yuval went to Kfar Chabad and on the way he learned some important and interesting things. He also visited yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim.

One visit led to another and now Yuval is in a yeshiva.

TORAH AT THE PRESS OF A BUTTON

Among his other activities, R’ Sagi regularly writes divrei Torah and sends them via email to hundreds of friends of the Chabad house. Occasionally, people respond with feedback, a question or an addition to what he wrote.

One time, he received a moving

response from the Far East. A girl from Nes Tziyona was in the Far East for many months and checked her email every so often in order to keep in touch with the world. She wrote to R’ Sagi, “Your emails are my only connection here to Judaism. Every week begins with a d’var Torah ‘from my Jewish home,’ and I read every word you write with great interest. Please continue writing because I draw life from every word.”

One person might do this through his writing, another with his oratory

KIDDUSH IN A COFFEE CUP

A few years ago, added R’ Sagi, I arranged a chuppa in a kibbutz for a pair of mekuravim who are donors and long-time friends of the Chabad house. I brought a silver cup as a gift and when the chuppa began, I told the guests that I had a silver cup over which I would say the brachos and which the bride and groom would take home to use every week for Kiddush on Shabbos. I added a few words about the importance of Kiddush over wine on Shabbos and then continued the wedding ceremony.

Three years later, someone came to the Chabad house wanting to buy a silver cup. The salesgirl said the Chabad house did not sell silver cups, which could be bought in a silver store, but had other cups. The person explained that he wanted one made out of silver and said, “Three years ago I was at a friend’s wedding and R’ Sagi explained how important it is to make Kiddush every Shabbos. Since then we make Kiddush every Shabbos but we still don’t have a silver cup. Sometimes we use a disposable cup, sometimes a coffee cup, and we recently decided the time has come to buy something nice out of silver like the rabbi said.”

REB SIMCHA

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

*The first time I saw R' Simcha Gorodetzky I was very excited. I felt as though this man had come to life out of the legends told about him. To me he was a symbol of mesirus nefesh and yet he acted with such simplicity. When I greeted him, all the stories I heard about him raced through my head and I couldn't look directly into his face because I was embarrassed to do so. * Another chapter in the memoirs of R' Hillel Zaltzman.*

I did not see R' Simcha Gorodetzky until 5716/1956 after he was released from a long imprisonment. During my childhood in Samarkand R' Simcha was in Siberia, serving time for his "crimes" of spreading Torah and Judaism.

Although I did not see him throughout most of my childhood years, R' Simcha was a central figure in my life. From the stories that I heard from my mother a"h and Chassidim about him, the image in my mind was of a legendary figure, a genuine Chassid and mekushar, completely devoted to the Rebbe.

Many years after R' Simcha's passing, I saw what the Rebbe Rayatz wrote about him and I realized that everything I had heard



R' Simcha Gorodetzky during his imprisonment

about him was just a fraction of his praise. The Rebbe Rayatz wrote this

to the renowned scholar and Gerrer Chassid, Rabbi Menachem Ziemba (1888-1943) in his efforts to raise money for his holy work for Russian Jews:

"Who is the one who put himself in danger and came to Bucharina and with Hashem's help founded schools in Samarkand and for three months gathered about 800 young children under 45 teachers and created a great spiritual arousal by the parents so that they paid for their children's tuition and the rest was the responsibility of the community through a special committee. And who worked and made Tiferes Bachurim (a group of young men from ages 20-30, businessmen, factory managers and workmen) and about 150 students gathered.

"R' Simcha worked for an entire year and all his activities were done secretly. When it became known who was in charge and doing all this work, they came to arrest him. By Divine Providence, just then someone came from Tashkent to invite him there to found schools as he did in Samarkand, so he left that night which is what saved him.

"For three months the Yevsektzia (Jewish communists) destroyed the vineyard of Tzivos Hashem that R' Simcha planted with his heart's blood and the sweat of his brow, in trembling and great fear. Twenty teachers were taken to jail and they tortured them mightily and meted out judgment. About eight teachers fled and escaped and the rest remained until, with great effort and much expense, they extricated those who were jailed, thank G-d.

"R' Simcha sat for four months in those outlying cities and worked with his heart's blood to found schools and thank G-d he was successful. Even today, about eight months since he had to leave that region altogether (because the order was given that wherever they found this man (based on a picture they circulated to all GPU offices in the

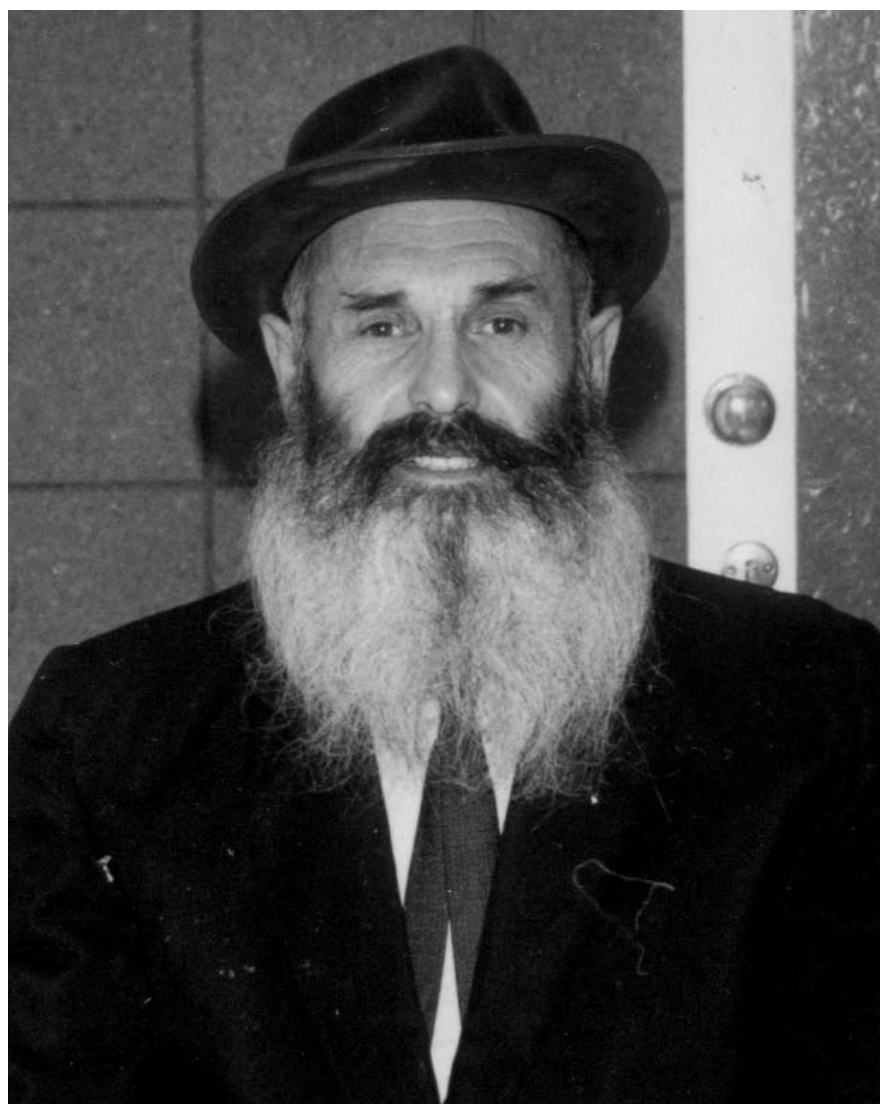
country) his fate is sealed) the sound of Torah can be heard, thank G-d, in Samarkand among the 400 students, may they live and increase. And there are dozens and dozens of students in other towns but the problem is - there is no money to support them, may Hashem have mercy.

“R’ Simcha did not slacken from his work, Heaven forbid, and he traveled to the border of our Jewish brethren who dwell in the Caucasus mountains and he went to the city of Darbent and found there about thirty young students learning with a teacher; he did tremendous work there and with Hashem’s help 360 students are learning today. Four months they have worked there and the secret committee that he created there says that they have the ability to increase the number of those learning to 500 but they need outside help, not much aid, just 150 rubles a month, which amounts to fifty shekels, but how painful it is that their request can’t be met. The conditions of the place require great care, and he was in much danger, so he traveled on to Kuba, a large city full of G-d fearing people and those who know Torah.”

ON SHLICHUS FOR THE REBBE RAYATZ

R’ Simcha was born in 5663/1903, about seventeen years before the passing of the Rebbe Rashab, but he did not see him. It seems he was meant to be the Chassid of the Rebbe Rayatz.

In his youth, R’ Simcha learned in underground yeshivos of Tomchei T’mimim in Rostov and Cherson. While learning in yeshiva he did not feel well one day. He had a headache and he felt generally weak. The mashgiach, R’ Chatshe Feigin, took him to the doctor and after he was examined he was told he needed to rest and recuperate. For some reason, the doctor said he should



R’ Simcha Gorodetzky

not stay on in yeshiva but should go home.

R’ Simcha refused to listen and said he would not leave yeshiva until they asked the Rebbe. R’ Chatshe agreed and they went together to the Rebbe. R’ Chatshe went inside and R’ Simcha remained outside. After R’ Chatshe told the Rebbe about R’ Simcha’s condition and what the doctor said, the Rebbe said R’ Simcha should enter the room.

R’ Chatshe quickly left and told R’ Simcha the Rebbe was waiting for him. When R’ Simcha entered the yechidus room, the Rebbe told him: “I heard from Chatshe what the

doctor said about your health and that you should go home. The truth is that you are not able to learn full-time in yeshiva, eight hours of Nigleh and four hours of Chassidus. At the same time, however, you should remain in Tomchei T’mimim and I will give you another *derech* (path). If you listen to me, I promise you that you will recover and live long.”

“I will send you,” said the Rebbe, “to visit Lubavitcher settlements. Ask how they are doing and see where they lack a shochet, a mohel etc. and report back to me.”

Those were the most difficult

WHY DID THE INTERROGATORS INQUIRE ABOUT R' DZURA NIASOFF?

The main crime R' Simcha was accused of was that he organized underground learning of Torah in Samarkand. The interrogators wanted to know who the teachers were and they mainly asked about R' Dzura Niasoff. They said: "He disturbs us the most and we will do everything so that he no longer teaches Torah to children, because he instills fear of heaven in every student!"

R' Dzura was a very unusual G-d fearing Chassid and Oheiv Yisroel. When Lubavitcher refugees came to Samarkand, he would go from house to house and convince Bucharian Jews to take in at least one family. He would ask, "how can you leave a Jew outside?"

When many of the refugees became sick with typhus, it was dangerous to have them in the home since the disease was contagious and many died of it. He continued persuading people to take them in as guests. He himself was a role model and, although he had young children for whom it was particularly dangerous, he took R' Notte Paharer into his home when he was sick with typhus. As expected, his children came down with it too and even R' Dzura himself became sick. The children recovered but R' Dzura died of the disease. That was how far his Ahavas Yisroel went, literal mesirus nefesh.

years after the Bolshevik Revolution. Starvation and fear were the lot of all citizens and the Lubavitchers who lived in the settlements founded by the Rebbe Rayatz, suffered in particular. The Chassidim in those places were extremely poor and they felt cut off from the Rebbe. Now the Rebbe was asking R' Simcha to be his special emissary to these places and to cheer them up and then report back to him.

As a loyal Chassid, R' Simcha did not hesitate for a moment. He immediately accepted the Rebbe's shlichus. He later recounted that as soon as he got on the first train he began to feel better. As he traveled he felt that the headache was dissipating and his body was getting stronger.

THE REBBE CRIED

R' Simcha did his mission faithfully. He went from one settlement to the next and gave the Chassidim regards from the Rebbe and asked how they were doing. The Chassidim, thrilled to get regards

from the Rebbe, asked him to convey their requests. They poured out their bitter hearts to him and told him of their daily troubles.

"The Rebbe told me to be involved in Maos Chittim (the fundraising drive for food before Pesach) but I couldn't do anything since my son died and I had other health problems in the family," said one of the Chassidim apologetically.

R' Simcha listened to the misfortunes and problems of the Chassidim and chills went up his spine as he remembered that at the end of his trip he had to repeat it all to the Rebbe.

When he returned to the Rebbe and had yechidus, he began giving his report. He started to tell about that Chassid who was supposed to raise Maos Chittim but "because of unfortunate circumstances" he was unable to do so. R' Simcha, who did not want to cause the Rebbe sorrow, did not want to say that the man's son died but he couldn't find the right words and he began to stammer. The Rebbe noticed this

and said: "Nu, nu...continue, continue...you are the shliach and you have to tell me everything."

R' Simcha told the Rebbe about the requests of another man and about the difficult situation of another Chassid. Hearing this, the Rebbe suddenly burst into tears. R' Simcha, who could not bear seeing the Rebbe's sorrow, could not continue and he just stood there. The Rebbe understood him and he said: "If it is hard for you to say it all, put it in writing and give it to me."

R' Simcha left the Rebbe's room and remained standing there, feeling brokenhearted and helpless. The Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah a"h saw him and asked: "Simcha, why do you look so sad and pale?"

He told her what had happened in yechidus a few moments before and how the Rebbe had cried after hearing him report about the sorrows of the Chassidim. She listened and whispered: "I don't know what has happened to him lately... Sometimes, I enter his room after yechidus and I see the floor wet with his tears."

LOVE FOR SIMPLE JEWS

R' Simcha continued to carry out other missions the Rebbe assigned to him. Even during the first period after he got married he continued his missions as always. When he would be away from home for a long time, his wife would stay with her parents in Kremenchug.

In those years there were no telephones and even transportation was complicated because of the Revolution. Letters did not arrive in a timely fashion and the fear that prevailed during those years nearly broke the ties between people. No wonder, then, that when R' Simcha's wife gave birth to a daughter, he did not know about it until a long time later, when he went to the Rebbe in

Rostov where he heard the good news.

On that visit, in 1926, when he had yechidus, the Rebbe said: "You have been traveling from place to place and after marrying this work is hard for you. Now I will send you to Samarkand, to the Jews of Bucharria, where you will be their spiritual leader and will stay in one place."

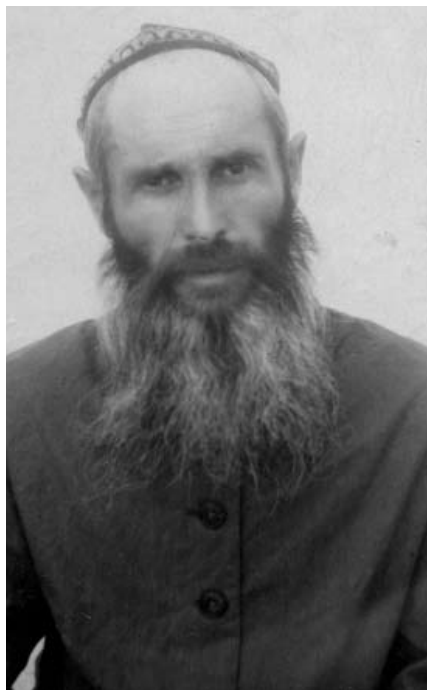
With *kabbalas ol* (lit. acceptance of the yoke) R' Simcha undertook this new mission, to go to a foreign land, far from the Rebbe and other Chassidic communities, and work with Jews whose nature he was unfamiliar with. He only asked that since he had a new baby daughter, he wanted to first travel to Kremenchug to see his wife and baby and from there he would go to Samarkand.

However, the Rebbe, to whom the spiritual state of the Jews of Samarkand was all-important, told R' Simcha: "Why should you go to Kremenchug now? It's not a boy that you need to be at the bris. Go directly to Samarkand and your wife will follow you there."

(R' Mordechai Gorodetzky once speculated that that perhaps the Rebbe was afraid that if R' Simcha would go first to Kremenchug, the family would complain about a shlichus so far away and that is why the Rebbe told him to go immediately).

For a Chassid who lived all his life in a Chassidic community in the center of Russia, Samarkand was considered the ends of the world, further than a trip to Australia nowadays. But R' Simcha went directly to Samarkand. Upon his arrival there, he rented an apartment in the old city where most of the Bucharrian Jews lived. After a while his wife and daughter joined him.

R' Simcha was very impressed by the warmth and devotion of the people in the local community towards the Rebbe (or "Admur" as they called him), which resulted



from the guidance of Chassidim who preceded him, who had been there on shlichus from our Rebbeim.

The Jews' *t'mimus* (simplicity, wholehearted faith) won his heart. In the shul in the old city he met a very simple Jew who said T'hillim with great *chayus* (enthusiasm). His name was Reuven Akilov and everyone knew him. R' Simcha asked him: "Do you know what the words mean?" The man said he did not. "Do you know the meaning of at least the first words of T'hillim, 'Ashrei ha'ish?'" The man said he did not. "What about the words, 'asher lo halach?'" R' Simcha continued to ask. The man did not know. R' Simcha pressed on. "What about the words, 'b'atzas reshaim?'" At this point, the man's eyes lit up and in an angry voice he said: "A rasha is very wicked and should be beaten!"

R' Simcha enjoyed going to the shul and watching how this man said T'hillim. He absolutely loved the *t'mimus* of this simple Jew. He recalled how before one of his missions the Rebbe Rayatz had told him: "If you happen to see a simple

Jew who believes with simple faith and you love him – you will know that you have a talent in communal work and you are fit for shlichus."

With great devotion, R' Simcha bolstered Torah and Judaism in Samarkand. He organized Talmudei Torah, yeshivas Tiferes Bachurim, and even sent about ten bachurim from Samarkand to the secret yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Poltava who later on became "illuminating candles" (i.e. these bachurim in turn illuminated others with Torah and Chassidus). He also supervised the kashrus of the sh'chita (ritual slaughtering) and the mikvaos. In short, he took responsibility for all the Jewish needs of the place. It would be correct to say that he implemented a real spiritual revolution.

Obviously, a spiritual revolution would not go unnoticed by the communist authorities. The secret police, which fought against those who championed religion, constantly looked for ways to entrap him, and catch him red-handed in his religious activities. R' Simcha lived through many frightening experiences, and threats and intimidation were his lot once he arrived in Samarkand, but he did not relax for a moment and continued working on his shlichus.

WHAT MOTIVATES CHABAD CHASSIDIM?

What motivated R' Simcha? What made him put himself and his family aside in order to pursue his shlichus, even as the secret police dogged his footsteps and kept a watchful eye on the Talmudei Torah and activities he organized?

One thing, and one thing only, motivated him – that he had to fulfill what the Rebbe wanted! For the sake of this goal he was ready to go through fire and water. **This is a shliach; this is a Chassid; this is a mekushar** (one bonded to the

Rebbe)!

It's worth noting that these many years later, after the communist regime is no more, there are other groups who want to copy the Rebbe's shlichus system and they send young couples to work in Russia. The vast majority don't last long. They stay for a few months, with difficulty, not more than a year. They don't know what shlichus with real mesirus nefesh (self-sacrifice) means. Only Chassidim of the Rebbe who, from the day they are born are raised with the idea of shlichus, or baalei t'shuva who became bonded with the Rebbe, can travel to the ends of the world with the determination to remain there until Moshiach comes.

Even the many years since Gimmel Tammuz have not weakened the desire to go on shlichus. It is the ambition of every student in Tomchei T'mimim – to go on shlichus and fulfill the Rebbe's wishes. Nothing stands in their way. Sometimes the families find it hard to understand the power of shlichus and they plead with the couple to stay near their parents, promising to support them and bringing up chinuch of their children and the enormous array of products and services available in religious areas. Their answer is: NO. They want to do what the Rebbe wants them to do and even "out there" they will somehow be sure to have only chalav Yisroel (milk production supervised by a Jew) and pas Yisroel (grain products cooked or baked under the supervision of a Jew) etc.

As I write these lines about the mesirus nefesh of Lubavitcher Chassidim for their work, about the concern that Chabad leaders have for every Jew in the world (as the Rebbe Rayatz once said, it's harder to send someone else to mesirus nefesh than to do it himself), without considering the danger involved, when the only "prize" they anticipated was jail and expulsion to

Siberia, and many of them did not merit Jewish burial –

(R' Mendel Futerfas once said to me: Some people are concerned about Jewish burial. I never worried about that; the main thing is to fulfill the Rebbe's wishes while we are alive).

I cannot refrain from quoting here from the last letter of my uncle, R' Avrohom Boruch Pevzner, which we recently found in a family archive. My uncle was the mashpia in Minsk and because of his communal involvement in spreading Torah, he was persecuted by the NKVD. He was ultimately jailed and sent to Kazakhstan and they did not allow his family to join him. This was shortly before Pesach and throughout the holiday he sustained himself on some sugar cubes.

The letter is old and not all of it is legible but you can definitely understand the contents. This is what it says:

"If this is my last letter ... I inform you, I ask in truth ... from Hashem, that He forgive me for all kinds of inadvertent, deliberate and rebellious sins, even rabbinic transgressions, whether in positive mitzvos or negative ones, even minor rabbinic details, because I truly repent for having transgressed them (and it was never deliberate in order to anger, G-d forbid, nor in order to cast off the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, G-d forbid. On the contrary, I have confirmed many times that Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One, and that includes myself to be unified in His unity). Since it was actually in thought, speech and deed which is not from the side of holiness, therefore Hashem should forgive me for all that was not-good on my part and send me, in his great mercy from heaven, a complete recovery in all 248 limbs and 365 sinews, along with the other sick people amongst the Jewish people. Please Hashem, please heal in actual deed...

"And if my end has come, I justify the judgment and request of Him one thing, that my death be an atonement for all my sins so I will not have to be reincarnated again, G-d forbid. Hashem is one, Hashem is singular, Hashem is Elokim in the heavens above etc. there is no other, there is none besides Him. This is something eternal.

"My sons should recite Kaddish as is customary; they just should not quarrel with one another, G-d forbid. Hillel and Sholom Ber should try and learn in the evenings in public if that is easily done... Yitzchok Shlomo should be careful to pray with a quorum and to say the Orphan's Kaddish – the main thing is Kaddish Yasom. That is what I request of all my sons, to listen to the meaning of the words that they are saying... Yitzchok Shlomo should not spend extra time on Shabbos etc. All my children should conduct themselves in the proper way in which they were raised. And surely with peace and harmony with all...and Hashem should come to their aid materially and spiritually, amen, may it be His will.

"The matter of Jewish burial and within a Jewish cemetery, that is an inyan...but that does not compare to other matters that Hashem already took from us in our lives and in our deaths to which we have already grown accustomed, but on the surface that is not a great flaw or impurity etc. and that is sufficient for the wise...and I am certain it will all be an atonement. In brief, it is a good sign for someone who was not properly eulogized and buried. All is good, good, good.

"I am also confident in the merit of K"K Maran, crown of our heads, our father and Rebbe [Rashab] zt"l to whom I was devoted heart and soul, in his life and his death...may it be so. Today the sun warmed things up, and the frost of the last week dissipated. This is an opening

of the door, and Hashem should help that it should already be warm and joyous materially and spiritually in all respects, so may it be. It is already a number of days that I drink a glass of milk daily, eat butter and drink a lot of sweet tea. Sugar and candy I have plenty of...these are the birurim I have to contend with. And who can tell Him what to do for all eternity.”

My uncle was one of hundreds and thousands of Lubavitcher Chassidim who, by instruction of our Rebbeim, was *moser nefesh* (sacrificed) for Klal Yisroel. Unfortunately, the other great rabbis and Jewish leaders, after seeing the danger, were only concerned about how to save themselves and their immediate community.

In our days, every person tries to grab a place in the sun. There are impudent people who publish books about *mesirus nefesh* of “Jews in Russia” without mentioning or even hinting at who these Jews were – Lubavitcher Chassidim. They ignore the tremendous work of Chabad Chassidim, distort the facts, and grab for themselves the halo of *shlichus* even as they know good and well that every reader will know who those Jews were who ignored the danger and spread Torah and the wellsprings (or as they put it, “*kiruv rechokim*” – an expression we did not hear from the Rebbe since to the Rebbe, no Jew is far from Hashem, G-d forbid).

I’ll take this opportunity to point out that when the Rebbe began agitating for spreading knowledge of Judaism among Jews who are not observant, there were *g’dolim* (highly respected rabbis) who opposed this who asked how we could get involved with these Jews who are “far.” The Rebbe’s response was – there will come a time that they will copy our work and that is what I want.



Today we see how all types of groups copy nearly all of the Rebbe’s holy mitzva campaigns and the Rebbe’s approach has become everybody’s approach.

R’ SIMCHA’S AMMUNITION

R’ Simcha’s first arrest because of his communal work happened before he went to Samarkand. As they usually did, the government had a file on him with dozens of incriminating paragraphs. During his trial the judge read paragraph after paragraph. In one of them, the judge said, “Rabbi Gorodetzky organized propaganda against the Soviet government and had live ammunition in his possession.”

R’ Simcha asked him: “What ammunition are you talking about?”

The judge took out a Tanya from his drawer, threw it angrily on the

table, and said: “That’s your ammunition!” (They were right, the Tanya is our ammunition.)

The two years he spent in jail did not break his spirit and did not affect his *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe Rayatz. As soon as he left prison he went back to work in the service of the Rebbe.

His longest and most severe imprisonment was in 1946. He was arrested for the crime of spreading Judaism but they added on other fictitious accusations. A group of Bucharian Jews had recently crossed the border via Iran and escaped to Israel, and they accused R’ Simcha of organizing it and they demanded that he admit to it.

The interrogators reached a nadir of contemptibility when they told R’ Simcha that his wife had also been arrested and was sitting in a nearby cell. He heard a voice that sounded very much like hers whispering to

LEVELS IN HOSPITALITY

R' Lipa Klein, whom I knew in Tashkent as someone who was very hospitable, once told me a saying about *hachnasas orchim* (hospitality) that became etched in my mind: What is outstanding *hachnasas orchim*? When a guest comes and you give him a cup of tea with sugar and not with honey since you figure that the jam is up high on the shelf and you would have to go up and get it and sugar is sweet too – this is not outstanding *hachnasas orchim*!

I saw outstanding hospitality done by a Chassidic woman named Mrs. Dvonya Gorodetzky (the wife of Mordechai). It was after I got married and my wife and I went to Tashkent for the wedding of a relative. Since R' Lipa was at work, I did not want to bother him and I went to stay with the Gorodetzky family.

It was summertime and R' Mordechai's wife had us sit outside at a table in the yard in a shady place under a grape vine. She spread out an ironed white tablecloth and served us lunch and tomato salad. In Russia there were no paper napkins and we ate carefully so the salad wouldn't stain the tablecloth.

Dvonya noticed this and she tried to convince us that she was happy to have us and she didn't care if the tablecloth got dirty. The main thing was for us to feel comfortable and at home. When she saw that we continued eating carefully and were not feeling "at home," she took a spoonful of tomato salad and deliberately allowed it to drip on the tablecloth.

Of course, after seeing that the tablecloth was dirty anyway, and that she really did not want us to be careful at all, we began to eat freely and I saw how she enjoyed this. That is outstanding hospitality, the memory of which remains with me till this day.

him from beyond the wall: "Simcha, Tell them everything and it will go easier for me."

When the interrogators saw that R' Simcha was unimpressed by this, they arranged for him to be brought from place to place in the course of the interrogations so he could come across a note, as though by happenstance. He picked up the paper and saw that it was written in his wife's handwriting: "Simcha, what are you thinking? The children are likely to remain complete orphans, bereft of father and mother. Tell them everything."

The note was signed "Rashke." Everybody called his wife, "Raya" and only her parents and her closest relatives called her Rashke. They even knew this detail and managed to forge her signature.

After a long period of exhausting interrogations, they sentenced him to death at first and then commuted his sentence to many years in prison.

I remember that at the beginning of the 50's, my brother-in-law R' Eli Mishulovin told me that his friend Mottel Simcha's (that is how they referred to R' Simcha's son Mordechai) showed him a letter that his father sent him from his place of exile in which he told him how to behave. Among other things, he wrote that as the only son in the family he had to see to his family's livelihood and to marrying off his sister and that they should not wait until he returned from exile. R' Simcha ended the letter with words of inspiration, that he should know that all the concealments were like passing clouds while Torah and

mitzvos are eternal.

My mother told me that after R' Simcha's imprisonment, his wife Raya could not make peace with the situation. She was so devoted to him that she said that if Simcha was not home, why should she live? The doctors warned her that she had to make peace with her lot because otherwise it could adversely affect her health, but Raya could not do otherwise. She left her children with her sister and went from place to place, trying to help her husband. She did what she could but nothing helped and he was sentenced to 25 years of hard labor at the North Pole. When she realized that she could do nothing to change his sentence, she returned home in despair. All efforts to console her were to no avail and in the end, the doctors' warnings were borne out and she had a stroke that caused half of her body to be paralyzed.

After the death of Stalin, thousands of prisoners were released, including R' Simcha in 5716/1956. When he returned home he was devastated to see that his wife was paralyzed.

MY VISITS WITH R' SIMCHA

After returning from prison, R' Simcha and his wife lived in their son Mordechai's house in Tashkent. In the course of my travels for communal purposes I occasionally visited Tashkent and I always tried to visit R' Simcha.

The first time I saw him I was very excited. I felt as though this man had come to life out of the legends told about him. To me he was a symbol of *mesirus nefesh* and yet he acted with such simplicity. When I greeted him, all the stories I heard about him raced through my head and I couldn't look directly into his face because I was embarrassed to do so.

Usually, when I went to their

house, his son and daughter-in-law were at work and only he and his wife were home. He himself would go out of his way to make sure to make my stay a pleasant one. As soon as I came he would tell me to wash in order to eat and serve me a meal himself (the truth is that I was always hungry on these trips for fresh, homemade food because I couldn't buy food in the stores and had to suffice with what I brought from home). He always addressed me respectfully, using the plural form, which made me feel very uncomfortable. I was just a 20 year old bachur while R' Simcha had passed the 50 year mark, most of that spent with mesirus nefesh including interrogations and a lengthy imprisonment, and after all that he spoke to me using the plural form ... But that was R' Simcha. He was refined and modest and greeted you first and treated everyone with respect.

When I visited him he would always receive me in the guest room. One time, when I went out to wash my hands for the meal, I saw someone who looked poor and unfortunate enter a side room and take food out of his bag. It seemed to me that he was asking R' Simcha about me and I quickly entered the dining room so he wouldn't see me.

R' Simcha asked me: "Who are you hiding from?"

I asked him: "Who is that poor man?"



R' Simcha said: "That is Asher Sossonkin."

I had never heard that name and I remained in my place in fear of the guest.

R' Simcha realized that I didn't know who this was and he said: "It's R' Asher Batomer ..."

Aha! Now I knew who it was and all my fears vanished.

A few minutes later R' Asher came into the dining room and I saw this special Chassid for the first time. I humbly went over to him and greeted him. R' Asher asked me: "Are you the son of Avremel Zaltzman?" When I said that I was, he asked me how my father was.

I remembered stories that I had heard about him from older bachurim about his davening with avoda and about his outstanding Ahavas Yisroel, and how he had arranged parnasa (a livelihood) for my father, etc. I heard that his traits of goodness and kindness were so great that when he would go to the mikva and see a Jew who did not have clean clothes, he would leave his own clean clothes for that person and take the other man's old clothing.

After talking to R' Simcha I went inside to say hello to his wife, whom I knew from the time she lived in Samarkand in our neighborhood. As I mentioned, she was partially paralyzed and R' Simcha took care of her. She could not talk except with hand motions. She was happy to see me and knew who I was. She spoke with great difficulty so that a stranger could not understand her, but since I had heard her for years beforehand, I could understand what she was saying.

She pointed to herself and said: "Simcha returned home and look at what condition he found me in."

I could not refrain from crying and I left the room.

I thought: Rivers of ink and forests of pens would not be enough to describe the lives of these heroes. This righteous woman gave up her life for the Rebbe's shlichus. These legendary people are Chassidei Chabad Lubavitch!

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WHO'S WHO IN EXILE?

By Heschel Greenberg

This week's parsha introduces us to Moses, the "first redeemer" of the Jewish people, who also serves as the paradigm for the final redeemer of the Jewish people—Moshiach.

Moses' selection as the redeemer occurs at the scene of the "burning bush," which the Torah identifies as a thorn-bush.

Rashi, the principal Torah commentator—whose purpose is to provide us with the most basic level of understanding of the Biblical text—explains that G-d's choice of the thorn-bush as His venue of communication to Moses was to express His empathy for the plight of the oppressed Jewish people. Rashi applies the verse from Psalms to this situation: "I am with him in distress." This is to say that when we are in distress, G-d, as it were, also experiences "pain" and "anguish."

Why, we may ask, was it important for G-d to express His pain to Moses? Wasn't it enough for Moses to know the pain of his brethren? If Moses was insensitive to the plight of the Jewish people would he be sensitive to the more abstract notion of Divine suffering?

One explanation can be offered in light of a commentary given by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to one of our Sabbath prayers:

"Satisfy us with your goodness, and gladden our souls with your salvation."

The Rebbe explained that there



are two scenarios or reasons for the need, and our desire, for Moshiach. The first is for Moshiach to end all of the misery and pain we suffer in exile. The second reason is to liberate G-d Himself from exile. The phenomenon of G-d being in exile with us the Talmud and Zohar refer to as, "*sh'chinta b'galuta*." This implies that even if all of the Jewish people's—and, indeed, the entire world's—suffering would cease; even if universal peace and prosperity would prevail, we would still need Moshiach to "liberate" G-d from His state of exile.

And thus the Sabbath prayer is reinterpreted by the Rebbe:

"Satisfy us with Your goodness"
— Get rid of all the suffering and pain, so that our souls will be

gladdened with **Your** salvation; that you G-d will also be liberated!

To better understand the Rebbe's interpretation of the foregoing prayer it is important that we define the concept of "*sh'chinta b'galuta*." What exactly does it mean for G-d to be in exile?

To translate this concept into down-to-earth human terms a simple analogy from our own relationships can be helpful:

If you are standing next to another person and addressing him or her, while that person totally ignores you, and does not even acknowledge your presence—that would be an incredible insult and downright painful. It demonstrates that a huge gap exists between the two of you, notwithstanding that individual's close physical proximity to you.

The insult and the concomitant emotional pain are magnified when the one ignoring you is/was your friend or relative. The pain increases when you realize how much you did for that individual. The worst-case scenario would be for a parent—who gave his life and limb for this child—to receive the silent treatment from his offspring.

That is precisely what happens in our world.

We live in a world, whose very existence depends on G-d creating and sustaining it continuously. Yet, we do not appreciate G-d's role in our lives, or worse, we ignore His role. This is the equivalent of being shunned by our own children, loved ones and friends. And this is the definition of G-d being in exile.

The root of the problem is that we view the world or nature as an independent entity rather than a manifestation of G-d's creative energy. G-d can then be said to be in exile because exile is defined as being cast away from your home. When G-d does not enter our consciousness He has, for all intents and purposes, been alienated from

our world.

Certainly, when we see a world in which injustice prevails, where the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper, and where people can even deny G-d's existence, G-d is in exile.

If we had to give one definition of what it means for G-d to be in exile—in all of its forms—it would be defined thus:

Anytime true reality takes a back seat to the illusory view of reality, G-d—the essence of truth and reality—is in exile. In the first scenario of exile, G-d is obscured because of the suffering; in the second scenario, G-d is concealed because we view the world with tinted and tainted spectacles.

Thus, the Rebbe explains, we pray to G-d, "Satisfy us with our needs from Your goodness." Remove the exile conditions by giving us everything we need. When that happens, our pleas for Moshiach and Redemption will rise to a higher and more sophisticated level. Our desire for Moshiach will not be predicated on the need to escape suffering, but will be for **G-d's** sake. Hence, the second part of the prayer: "And gladden our hearts from **Your** salvation." The words, "your salvation", the Rebbe reinterprets, refer to **G-d's** own salvation. Our joy will come from the realization that G-d is no longer in exile and true reality becomes the reality we will know and feel.

With this introduction we can understand why G-d wanted Moses to know that He too was in distress. Although the primary reason for

We are living in historic times. Never before have the Jewish people been so free and prosperous. This does not mean that there are no serious problems, but relative to the rest of our history, we are living in unprecedented good times.

Moses' selection as Israel's redeemer was to liberate them from Egyptian bondage, the A-mighty wanted to tell Moses that underlying that rationale for his role as redeemer was a deeper dimension. G-d too was in exile, for the fact that there can be pain and suffering in this world is an expression of G-d's concealed state. If G-d's glory were to be fully manifested in this physical world, pain, suffering, evil and cruelty would cease.

At the time of the Exodus, the focus was on relieving the physical suffering. However, at the same time, the process for removing the "veil" that allows for pain, suffering and injustice to exist in the first place was being set into motion.

First, G-d appears to Moses in the burning thorn-bush as a symbol of G-d's empathetic pain. The secret to remove the physical manifestations of exile is to recognize that there is also a spiritual dimension to exile. And we must focus our energies on dealing with the removal of that level.

Second, G-d also reveals to Moses the key to removing the

spiritual form of exile.

G-d says to Moses: "When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship G-d on this mountain." This, of course, refers to the ultimate giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, the purpose of which was to reveal G-dliness to the world, which will pave the way for the ultimate Redemption. Equipped with the knowledge of Torah and the implementation of its dictates in our daily lives we remove—layer by layer—all that obstructs the clear view of G-dly reality.

We are living in historic times. Never before have the Jewish people been so free and prosperous. This does not mean that there are no serious problems, but relative to the rest of our history, we are living in unprecedented good times.

It is in precisely these times when we can comfortably say: "You have satisfied us with Your goodness"! So now we can truly appreciate the second part of the prayer: "Gladden our hearts with **Your** salvation." G-d for Your own sake bring Moshiach and an end to exile in all of its incarnations and manifestations!

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THAT LETTER CHANGED MY LIFE

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

Rabbi Avraham Feiner is a prominent Belzer chassid, director of Beis Malka educational institutions for women, and a member of the Yerushalayim City Council. We asked why he davens Nusach Ari And learns Chitas. Instead of a simple answer, we were privileged to hear the following miraculous story.

Rabbi Avraham Feiner is one of the more outstanding public figures of ultra-Orthodox Jewry in Yerushalayim. With great success and fortitude, he runs the Beis Malka educational institutions for Belzer chassidic women, while also serving as a representative of the Yahadut HaTorah (United Torah Judaism) faction on the Yerushalayim City Council. While he is fully occupied with work from morning until night, nevertheless, every person who asks for his help, receives a reply. "I can't always answer telephones, as sometimes I'm in a city council meeting or at some other important function. But if my

phone identifies the number, I get back to the caller as soon as I have time," he explains when I expressed my surprise that he got back to me within a few minutes of my own call.

Rabbi Feiner is no stranger to interviews with reporters about community issues. Anyone acquainted with him knows how well known he is for resolving problems discreetly with City Hall especially on behalf of his Belzer community. This time, however, he is being called upon for an entirely different type of interview.

It turns out that almost forty years ago, Rabbi Feiner experienced an exciting miracle with his second

child in the merit of the Rebbe's bracha. This miracle has accompanied him ever since, to this very day. Each morning, when he learns the daily Chitas and davens Nusach Ari, something quite unusual in the Belzer chassidic community with which he affiliates, he recalls that experience.

"I grew up in Afula, situated in northern Eretz Yisroel. My parents were the only members of their entire extended families who survived the fiery flames of Nazi barbarism. They chose to establish their residence in Afula, and as their only son, I decided to remain there



"He surely keeps the shiurim of Chumash, T'hillim, and Tanya, and davens according to our custom". Illustration.



after my wedding.

"The story I want to tell took place thirty-six years ago, several years after I got married. It began when our eldest son, the second of our children complained he was feeling unwell. When his pains continued to intensify, we quickly brought him to the HaEmek Hospital, located near Afula.

"The doctors examined and then re-examined him, and their diagnosis was far from positive. We never imagined that the situation could be so serious. The director of the hospital ward called us in to his office to present us with the one and

only available option: an immediate and complicated operation. The doctor added that even if the operation was successful, the child would sustain permanent damage. We were positively thunderstruck and disconsolate. It took us quite some time to absorb this bitter turn of events. We didn't know where to turn. To fully comprehend the severity of the situation, the doctor explained to us that any delay in the planned operation would literally constitute a danger to our child's life.

"The doctor scheduled for us to appear at the operating room in another week. In the meantime, we continued our daily routine, as fears and concerns engulfed our hearts. We felt as if a sword was hanging over our world.

"In the meantime, we had to press on with our lives, and I stringently continued to come to the daily Gemara class held in Afula's central synagogue. Among the shiur's participants were several Chabad chassidim, who had settled in the city at the command of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. They included the Segal brothers, the Rosenbergs, and the Kaminkers, and they saw all too well my crestfallen state.

"Immediately upon their arrival in Afula, they founded a kollel for young married men, and their presence was properly felt in the Torah atmosphere that pervaded in the city. When they noticed my sad facial expression and how I wasn't participating in the class as I usually did, they asked me to explain the reason for my mood. 'We can see that your head isn't into the Gemara,' said one of them sympathetically. 'Tell us what happened and maybe we can help you.' 'If there is concern in a man's heart, let him cast it down,' said another one, quoting the pasuk, and I decided to open up and tell them what was happening with our son and his serious medical condition.

"'What's the problem?' they said with eyebrows raised. 'Write a letter to the Rebbe, detailing the whole chain of events and the doctors' instructions. The Rebbe has performed many a miracle with his holy brachos.'

"I listened to their words and the tremendous faith emanating from them, and I caught the bug. Without wasting any valuable time, I composed a letter that day spelling out our son's medical condition, as expressed in his hospital file. We added the doctors' recommendation and their stated opinion on the future damage that the boy will suffer even if the operation goes well, and I asked that the Rebbe answer our plea with a blessing. The chassidim prepared me not to become dejected if I don't receive an immediate reply, encouraging me that the very fact that I sent the letter will guarantee the bracha. Furthermore, the postal services back then were not as they are today, and letters sometimes reached their appointed destination only after a lengthy period of time.

"Thus, it came as quite a surprise when just three days after sending the letter, I had already received a reply. I was stunned. I couldn't imagine that an answer would come so quickly, but the Rebbe had apparently decided to place me at the top of his list of priorities. The answer was very interesting, opening with the standard reply of 'I will mention him in an auspicious hour at the Tzion of my holy and revered father-in-law, the Rebbe', and then the Rebbe added in his own handwriting: 'Good news'. As the letter continued, there appeared another two typewritten lines. The chassidim explained to me that the Rebbe had instructed the secretaries to type something additional to the standard reply. Not a day passes that I don't regret that I no longer have the letter.

"One day, when I was standing

I was waiting at the entrance to the operating room, and I noticed the sudden commotion as they called in more doctors to review the results. At first, I didn't understand what all the excitement was about. Had the situation become worse?

in line in a Yerushalayim office, someone stole my wallet out of my trousers' back pocket. While it didn't contain a lot of money, less than five hundred liras, it did contain this valuable letter. Since receiving the letter, I had carried it with me everywhere. I put an ad in the papers that I was prepared to pay a large sum of money to that thief, if he would just give me back the letter I had received from the Rebbe. But a long time has passed since then, and no one ever contacted me.

"The typewritten sentence that the Rebbe had added was: **'Postscript: He surely keeps the shiurim of Chumash, T'hillim, and Tanya, and davens according to our custom.'** As a result, I decided to start following this custom as per the Rebbe's request.

"Every day since, I learn Chitas and daven according to Chabad custom. In the morning after Shacharis, I stringently complete all the daily shiurim even before I start my workday.

"Two days after receiving the Rebbe's answer, we arrived at the hospital, as had been prearranged. Before the doctors brought the boy

into the operating room, they made another comprehensive series of tests – and they stood stunned and incredulous! I was waiting at the entrance to the operating room, and I noticed the sudden commotion as they called in more doctors to review the results. At first, I didn't understand what all the excitement was about. Had the situation become worse? It turned out that just the opposite was true.

"The director of the hospital ward called us again into his office, where all the doctors were already standing, and he started by saying that he had never seen anything like this before. He held the results of the tests he made when we had come to the hospital the first time, together with those they had just done, and he informed us that everything had disappeared as if it had never been there... Not even a sign of a problem remained.

"When I heard the doctor's emotional words, said by someone who usually spoke with the utmost composure, I felt a tremendous relief, and I started to laugh from the release of tension. I took the opportunity, with all the doctors

present, to tell them, 'Look, I am an observant Jew, and I want to tell you the real reason for this development.'

"For the next several minutes, I laid out before them the feeling of terror that had seized us after the chief doctor's initial diagnosis, and then about the letter we had sent to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and the reply that followed shortly thereafter.

"This created a tremendous Kiddush Hashem. Doctors who are generally very realistic people and not the type that believes in such things got a lesson in the Hand of Divine Providence. The senior physician gripped my hand and said that based on his experience, ailments like this just don't disappear into thin air. Naturally, as I had shared my fears and concerns with the chassidim in Afula, I also shared the good news with them – and the joy was experienced by all."

*

"I'd just like to add," Rabbi Feiner said as he concluded his story with great emotion, "that this boy grew up, got married, and today he is the father of six children. One of the medical diagnoses was that he would be unable to have children, but there's a Great Healer who runs the world. With the help of G-d Alm-ghty, his daughter will be getting married in the month of Adar..."

"If I would have heard such a tale from someone else – that would be another matter entirely, but this was a miracle story that I experienced for myself. All of my friends have heard this story and are closely familiar with the facts involved."

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