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POURING OUT THE BLESSING OF REDEMPTION

The Zohar's statement begs the well-known question: How can it be said that women are "exempt from Mitzvos"? Women are actually obligated in the majority of the Mitzvos! * The Kos Shel Bracha of the Future Era entails the revelation of the essence of G-d, which is connected with the essence of a Jew, a Jew's inner core which transcends Torah and Mitzvos.

Translated by Boruch Merkur

EVERYONE IS OBLIGATED IN KOS SHEL BRACHA

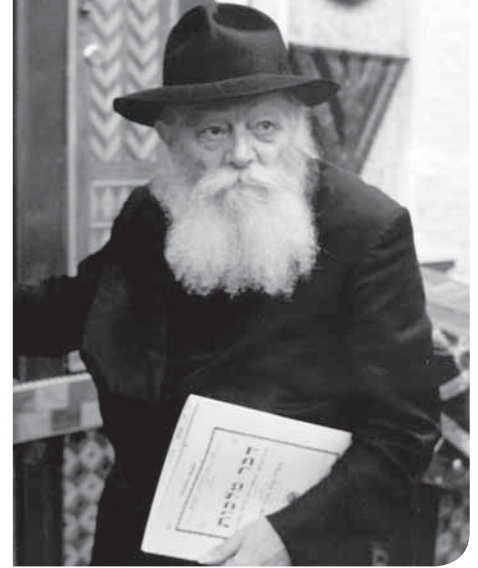
1. My revered father, in his notes on the Zohar, devotes much attention to the verse, cited in the classic mystical text's commentary on this week's Torah portion, "And it shall be at the end of days that the mountain of the House of G-d shall be firmly established at the top of the mountains, and it shall be raised above the hills, and all the nations shall stream to it" (Yeshaya 2:2). The Zohar asks: "Who is the 'top of the mountains' (*rosh ha'harim*; literally "head" of the mountains)? This refers to Avrohom, etc. Since he is the head, it is proper that the *Kos Shel Bracha* (Cup of Benediction, the cup of wine upon which *Birkas HaMazon*, Grace after Meals, is said) shall be 'at the top of the mountains, etc.'"

The Zohar continues (expounding on the continuation of the verse, "And it shall be in the end of days, etc."): "All the

nations shall gather towards him' – to what does this refer?" The Zohar answers, the intent here is to include [in answering "amen" to *Birkas HaMazon*] "even women and children, as well as the one who serves the meal. That is, even though the servant did not partake of the meal, he needs to listen and answer 'amen,' etc." The Zohar offers an alternate interpretation: "All the nations shall gather towards him' – although women and children are exempt from Mitzvos, everyone is obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*, etc."

WOMEN ARE EXEMPT FROM MITZVOS?!

2. The Zohar's statement, "although women (and children) are exempt from Mitzvos, everyone is obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*, etc.," begs the well-known question: How can it be said that women are "exempt from Mitzvos"? Women are actually obligated in the majority of the Mitzvos!



It is impossible to say that by, "[they] are exempt from Mitzvos," the Zohar is only referring to children and not women, for then it would not have been necessary to mention women at all here. By the same token, men are not mentioned in this context inasmuch as there is nothing novel in saying that men are obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*.

The resolution to this difficulty is as follows. "Exempt from Mitzvos" is only said here with regard to the requirement of *Birkas HaMazon*. That is, there are two opinions proposed in the Gemara as to what extent women are obligated in *Birkas HaMazon*. According to one opinion, the obligation is of Biblical origin, whereas another opinion maintains that it is a Rabbinical decree.

Thus, the statement, "although women...are exempt from Mitzvos, everyone is obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*," can be understood in two ways: a) The Zohar follows the ruling that women are **not** Biblically obligated in *Birkas HaMazon* [nevertheless, they are still "obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*"]; b) the opinion of the Zohar is that women **are** Biblically obligated in *Birkas HaMazon*, nevertheless, even according to the second Talmudic opinion – that women are **not** Biblically obligated in *Birkas HaMazon* – "everyone is obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*," in precisely

the same manner as those who are Biblically obligated in *Birkas HaMazon*. That is, *Kos Shel Bracha* is [equally] applicable to all Jewish people – men, women, and children.

It remains to be explained, however, why this is so, why “women and children are exempt from Mitzvos” yet they are obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha* just like men. [...]

KOSI REVAYA: THE CUP OF MOSHIACH THE KING

3. This topic will be elucidated in light of a discussion of the general concept of *Kos Shel Bracha*, the Cup of Benediction, which can be observed at various spiritual levels.

When we speak about a regular cup, the cup in question can, of course, vary significantly in size. It can be a small cup, a medium-sized cup, a large cup, or the greatest cup of all, “*kosi revaya* (my cup quenches thirst)” (of Moshiach the King), which holds 221 *lugin* (221 being the numerical equivalent of “*revaya*”).

So too regarding *Kos Shel Bracha* – it can be observed at a variety of levels, including the greatest level, the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era, which will also be the *kosi revaya*, holding 221 *lugin*, numerically equivalent to “*arich* (long, great),” which alludes to Arich Anpin, a level of Divinity that transcends all other concepts, including the intellect. [...]

In fact, it is from this level [the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era, the unparalleled height of Arich Anpin] that the future redemption emerges.

Since the Zohar on this week’s Torah portion speaks about the state that will be in “the end of days,” in the future redemption, it is logical to say that when the Zohar speaks about the *Kos Shel Bracha* in this context, the intent is with regard to



“Jews are “a veritable part of G-d above,” and “the essence, when you grasp part of it, you grasp it all.” Therefore when you “grasp” a Jew here in this material world, you “grasp,” as it were, the very essence of G-d!

the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era.

WHY CHILDREN ARE OBLIGATED IN KOS SHEL BRACHA

4. Accordingly we can explain why the Zohar says that although children are exempt from Mitzvos they are obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*:

Children [as well as women; see footnote in the original text] accelerate the advent of Moshiach, as is written in the Zohar on the verse in Shir HaShirim, “The blossoms have appeared in the land, the time of singing has arrived, and the voice of the turtledove (the

redemption) is heard in our land’: ‘The blossoms have appeared in the land’ refers to Jewish children.” Thus, they are also obligated (they have a portion) in the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era (which the Zohar is speaking about here).

BUT HOW DO WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE AN EQUAL PORTION IN THE KOS SHEL BRACHA OF THE REDEMPTION?

5. However, at first glance it remains to be explained:

The general principle that all the revelations of the Future Era are dependent upon our deeds and



“The revelation of this connection, which comprises the concept of the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era, is present in every Jew equally – including woman and children, who are exempt from Mitzvos – for this connection entirely transcends Torah and Mitzvos.

our service throughout the duration of the present era is a well-known concept. But since “women and children are exempt from Mitzvos,” they therefore don’t have “our deeds and our service” per se.

(It is true that they are involved in all the Mitzva Campaigns.

(Women even participate in the T’fillin Campaign by influencing men to wrap t’fillin.) And through “our deeds” – especially general, central activities, such as the Mitzva Campaigns – they bring our righteous Moshiach. This merit, however, extends to women and children only insofar as they influence others; it is not fulfilled in them personally.)

On this basis [i.e., since their “deeds and service” are not equal to those of men], how is it possible to say that women and children have an equal portion in (the revelations of) the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future?

THE HUSBAND FULFILLS MITZVOS ON BEHALF OF HIS WIFE

6. With regard to women, it is possible to answer according to what is discussed in the works of the Arizal – that the reason why women are exempt from positive, timely Mitzvos is because their husbands fulfill them on their behalf. For a woman embodies Malchus [Kingship, the lowest of the ten Divine Attributes, which serves as a recipient from the higher Attributes] and a woman’s husband embodies Zeir Anpin [the six emotional

Attributes, which channel G-dliness into Malchus]. Since the husband fulfills Mitzvos at the level of Zeir Anpin, this automatically affects Malchus. (In fact, it is thus done in a more profound manner – by way of Zeir Anpin, which transcends Malchus.)

However, regarding children, who are likewise exempt from Mitzvos, the question still stands: how are they privy to the revelation of the Future Era?

But also regarding women:

From the very fact that the Zohar emphasizes this concept – that women (and children) are exempt from Mitzvos – it is understood that their obligation in *Kos Shel Bracha* is not because Mitzvos pertain to them as well (through their husbands) but that their exemption from Mitzvos does not interfere with this revelation.

THE KOS SHEL BRACHA OF THE REDEMPTION: THE REVELATION OF THE VERY ESSENCE OF G-D

7. The resolution of the matter:

This concept (of the *Kos Shel Bracha*) of the Future Era entails the revelation of the essence of G-d (as explained in several places in Pri Eitz Chayim, in the Future Era the inner aspect of Atika Kadisha will be revealed), which is connected with the essence of a Jew, a Jew’s inner core which transcends Torah and Mitzvos, for the connection and unity of a Jew with the very essence

and being of G-d entirely transcends revelations. It is impossible for G-d’s essence to be grasped through the intellectual faculties of Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge, through the Emotional Attributes, nor through the three garments of the soul, thought, speech, and action. Rather, this is a connection and unity of essence to essence [the essence of a Jew with the very essence of G-d]. Jews are “a veritable part of G-d above,” and “the essence, when you grasp part of it, you grasp it all.” Therefore when you “grasp” a Jew here in this material world, you “grasp,” as it were, the very essence of G-d!

Thus, the revelation of this connection, which comprises the concept of the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era, is present in every Jew equally – including woman and children, who are exempt from Mitzvos – for this is a connection that entirely transcends Torah and Mitzvos.

As discussed above in the *maamer* (beginning with the words “V’Ata Im Matzatzi Chein B’Einecha, etc.,” which is founded on the *maamer* of the same opening words of 5678, as well as the *maamer* of the Tzemach Tzedek on the same verse, which speaks about these concepts (and they have other *drushim* connected with this, as well)) regarding *chein* (grace), which is even higher than an initiative from below (and the service of Torah and Mitzvos). Thus, the concept of *chein* extends even to children and babies.

In fact, since there is no concept of Mitzvos regarding children (as well as women), the concept of *chein* is more revealed in them, stemming from the very essence.

(From the address of Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa 5741)



AMENDING A MYTH; NOT MINIMIZING A MIRACLE

Thank you for a wonderful magazine full of authentic chassidishe toichen! I thought you would appreciate the following clarification regarding a certain often-misstated point that was mentioned in a recent issue.

In issue #772, in the article "Torah, Reality, and the Rebbe," the author writes that during the years 1977-78, the Rebbe's heart monitor showed that the Rebbe's heart had stopped beating. However, this is a myth, as the doctor who was present stated that, on the contrary, the Rebbe's heart was totally normal during the recitation of the maamer. Dr. Ira Weiss says:

"On his first post-recovery Farbrenge, Yud-Tes Kislev, Dr. Larry Resnick and I watched in private horror as a hidden heart rhythm monitor demonstrated

some very threatening cardiac arrhythmias during each of the Sichos but not during the Maamar."

The monitor showed that the Rebbe's heart was 100% normal during the maamar and later on, the Rebbe commented to the doctors, "You enjoyed the maamar, right?"

Please see the following webpage for a first-hand account of that special night: http://aussieecho.blogspot.com/2006_11_01_archive.html

I would like to point out that this in no way minimizes the miracle. Whether the story was as the author reports or as Dr. Weiss said, there was unmistakable change in the Rebbe's heart rhythm while saying the maamer.

May we see the Geula HaAmitis V'Hashleima immediately!



S. Schechter

The Rebbe MH"M on Hoshana Rabba 5738, just hours before the heart attack



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Rabbi Jacob Schwei
Member of the Rabbinical
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APPROBATION

I strongly recommend the esteemed project of Radio Moshiah, which operates here in our neighborhood of Crown Heights, "Here has Hashem commanded His blessing," as well as in other surrounding neighborhoods. Radio Moshiah enables countless individuals to listen to the Rebbe's Farbrengens, to divrei Torah in the concepts of Geulah and Moshiah, to nigguni Chabad and more, which generates a holy, uplifted atmosphere in the homes of all listeners.

Radio Moshiah is constantly growing - and there is still room for expanding and further developing this unique project. Therefore, it is a mitzvah to support Radio Moshiah and assist its development in any way that you can. All those who assist and support this project, will surely merit to be blessed from Hashem, the Source of all blessings, with visible and revealed goodness, both physically and spiritually.

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



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י"ח אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד



HOW DO YOU SAY **'D'VAR MALCHUS'** IN FRENCH?

For years, the Rebbe's landmark "D'var Malchus" sichos have been completely unavailable to the French public due to the language barrier. Rabbi Menachem Valika is changing all that. For over a year he has been translating the Rebbe's edited talks of 5751-5752 into French and distributing them by the thousands every week.

By Nosson Avraham; Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

In recent years, the “D’var Malchus” revolution has also reached the French-speaking community in France, Eretz Yisroel, and elsewhere throughout the world. The great irony is that specifically in France, which was the subject of an entire sicha in those years – a claim that no other country in the world can make – these sichos had not been translated into the native language nor publicized on a wide scale.

The one who put an end to this irony is Rabbi **Menachem Valika** from Nachlat Har Chabad. In the framework of a special institute he has founded in Nachlat Har Chabad, he deals with the translation, printing, and distribution of the “D’var Malchus” sichos. “The sichos translated in French reach about fifty centers in Eretz Yisroel and another fifty in France and throughout the world.”

We made our way to Nachlat Har Chabad recently, and met a chassid whose entire existence is a fiery flame of hiskashrus to the Rebbe. Administratively it’s a small operation to this day. Such a project requires a great deal of money, however, and Rabbi Valika is the type of chassid who gets into things in a manner of *L’chat’chilla Aribber*. “Whenever we encounter difficulties, I always remind myself that they are put there by the sitra achra, which tries with all its strength to interfere,” explains Rabbi Valika. “The Rebbe explains in Parshas VaYeishev that France is the lowest level of klipa. Once this klipa is nullified, the time of exile will come to an end, and we will see the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach redeeming us.”

THE REBBE’S SMILE

We first asked to hear from where Rabbi Valika draws his

“The Rebbe explains in Parshas VaYeishev that France is the lowest level of klipa. Once this klipa is nullified, the time of exile will come to an end, and we will see the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach redeeming us.”

unlimited energy to deal with all the financial hardships to press forward with this holy work. “The truth is that it began when I was about twelve years old, when I traveled to ‘Beis Chayeinu’ for the first time with my father and my brother, who had come to celebrate his bar-mitzva with the Rebbe,” Rabbi Valika recalled, as he struggled over whether he should reveal the personal moment he was privileged to have with the Rebbe during the distribution of the Tanya on Yud-Alef Nissan 5742.

“The secretariat had printed a special edition of the Tanya in honor of the Rebbe’s eightieth birthday, a decorative burgundy-colored seifer, and the Rebbe gave it out to the thousands of chassidim who had come to 770 from all over the world. My father put me in line along with everyone else, and I saw people passing, taking the seifer, and quickly proceeding away. When I came before the Rebbe, I took the seifer, tensed myself as a soldier standing before a high-ranking general, kissed the seifer, and said, ‘*Merci beaucoup, Rebbe!*’ The Rebbe heard me and smiled broadly. I literally saw light emanating from the Rebbe’s face. I was happy that I had succeeded in bringing a smile to the Rebbe’s lips, and I moved on.

“I had reached the end of the table on the platform, when suddenly one of the chassidim turned me back in the direction of the Rebbe. I then noticed that the Rebbe was looking in my

direction, smiling broadly, and all 770 was standing and looking at me...

“My father, who was watching me from the side the whole time, met me at the exit in a state of great joy. He shared with me the fact that from the moment I passed and said ‘Thank you’, the Rebbe stopped giving out the Tanyas and looked at me with sheer satisfaction.

“To this day, I don’t know why I had been so privileged that the Rebbe stopped the Tanya distribution and showed me such affection. One thing for certain was that when I returned home to France, I was already an entirely different person. My connection to the Rebbe grew and intensified. Since then, I have been privileged to be in 770 several more times.”

TRANSLATING INTO FRENCH

One of his visits was in 5753, a most special year during which the Rebbe made some unique revelations before the chassidim regarding Moshiach and the Redemption. The Rebbe’s unending expressions of encouragement to the singing of “Yechi Adoneinu” and the tremendous vitality in all things pertaining to the spreading of the announcement of the Redemption led R’ Valika to the decision that when he returns to Eretz Yisroel, he would make a powerful *shturem* and do all within his power to hasten the Redemption.

In the early years, Rabbi Valika spread Judaism at the Yerushalayim pedestrian mall, and afterwards he made great strides with the French-speaking community in Beit Shemesh. In later years, he went to live in Nachlat Har Chabad and dealt with spreading the “D’var Malchus”.

“Anyone who was in 770 during those years could not remain indifferent,” he stated. “The events people witnessed penetrated deeply into their souls. We all saw what the Rebbe was demanding from us. The sichos from the latter years were distributed in Hebrew and English, and there was almost no community that did not learn these sichos, whether with study partners or in organized classes. Since I came from France, I constantly resented the fact that these sichos were inaccessible in my native tongue. The Rebbe had transformed France, yet this revolution had not come there.

“The students of Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Brunoy accepted the challenge. They took the initiative and collected money to translate most of the sichos from the years 5751-5752. The task of doing the translations was given to a chassid living in Paris well acquainted with the hidden mysteries behind these sichos. The intention was not only that the translations should be done word by word, but they should be made to be understood and comprehended, such that

even a Frenchman who has never learned in the yeshiva world, even one considered non-Torah observant, can understand and internalize their meaning. Each week, one sicha was produced, copied with a simple copy machine, and distributed to synagogues throughout France.

“My friend Moshe Katan is counted among the king’s soldiers in France. He emigrated a few years ago to Eretz HaKodesh, and has now settled in Yerushalayim. Yet, he decided not to rest on his laurels, and he began to operate an official Chabad House in his place of residence – Givat Shaul. He has a very close connection with the mashpia, Rabbi Zalman Notik, who urged him to expose his many contacts to ‘D’var Malchus’. He acquired a portion of the translated sichos from Brunoy, printed about two hundred copies, and distributed them to the members of his local community. When I heard about this, I felt that the time had now come for these sichos to receive proper distribution in French. I thought to myself that if I learn these sichos every Thursday night at Rabbi Cheruti’s regular class and become imbued with great enthusiasm, why shouldn’t more French speakers be given the same opportunity?

“I contacted the chassid in Paris who translated the sichos, and after he sent me the translations, I reprinted them in a more attractive and decorative

format. I knew a chassid in Kiryat Malachi who dealt with print jobs and had several machines, and so we got to work on printing the sichos. We sent the sichos to more and more places each week throughout Eretz Yisroel and the world.

“In addition, I wrote about this to the Rebbe, and I received some exciting and encouraging answers. We reached about fifty centers all over Eretz Yisroel. Any place where we knew there was a French-speaking community, we came to them. Similarly, we also reached Francophone communities throughout France, Morocco, Canada, Belgium, and other countries. People started to contact us and make a weekly subscription. While costs began to grow, nevertheless, the excited responses from people caused us to press forward on the project with even greater fortitude.”

This chassid from Paris translated twenty-eight out of the fifty-two “D’var Malchus” sichos from the years 5751-5752. “This was when we entered the stage that we would not only distribute the sichos, but translate them as well. It turned out that specifically the sicha from Parshas Shoftim, one of the most powerful and arousing sichos from this period, had still not been translated. We turned to Rabbi Gavriel Bakush from Yerushalayim, who has helped us out a great deal by accepting the responsibility of working on further translations. He speaks fluent French, and has put out a very special and beautiful translation. In the coming months, we will be placing considerable emphasis upon translating all remaining sichos from the ‘D’var Malchus’ series.

“In addition to the weekly printing, we produced three

“The Rebbe was looking in my direction, smiling broadly, and all 770 was standing and looking at me... From the moment the I passed and said ‘Thank you’, the Rebbe stopped giving out Tanyas and looked at me with sheer satisfaction.

editions of the translation from Parshas VaYeishev about France and its significance.

“At every new stage that we developed, we merited to receive wondrous answers from the Rebbe. Here is just one example among many:

“Once someone advised that I make improvements to the cover, making it more appealing to the eye, and he suggested adding the sign of a crown. Thus, the new design appeared more impressive. When I placed the first printing in ‘Igros Kodesh’, the Rebbe replied with an answer that he was pleased to receive the seifer ‘Kesser Torah’, and the Rebbe showered numerous brachos upon those involved with the printing along with their families, noting that the matter gave him a great deal of satisfaction...”

THE REBBE SENDS HELP

After nearly a hundred thousand copies, financial problems started to develop. “We began work in Nissan, and we stopped after Tishrei. During 5770, the enthusiasm was at its height, but I couldn’t deal with the high costs. While I found a donor who would provide us with considerable financing of this project, I was still in a serious dilemma. On the one hand, distributors were calling to say that they wanted more sichos, but on the other hand, the debts reached such exorbitant dimensions that the printers were unwilling to print any more. There were those who suggested that we cut back on the quality of the printing, thereby significantly reducing the cost, but every time I wrote to the Rebbe, I received answers indicating just the opposite.

“One week, I felt myself in a state of total despair. I wrote to



the Rebbe, and the reply was that the role of a chassid is to spread the wellsprings, and thereby G-d will help in his personal matters. After such an answer, I was simply beside myself. On the one hand, the Rebbe is pushing me to continue, but on the other hand, there was no money. Then, an amazing miracle came along that tipped everything into balance.

“As was mentioned earlier, I am a dedicated attendee of the regular ‘D’var Malchus’ class in Nachlat Har Chabad. Once towards the end of a class, after several weeks of not putting out any sichos due to the heavy debts, the *maggid shiur*, Rabbi Cheruti, and the other participants started to urge me to resume my work. I replied that as things stand now, I simply can’t continue. I eventually wrote to the Rebbe, and I received a very special answer. In the first letter, the Rebbe wrote that G-d will

actually fulfill all your heart’s desires to spread chassidus. The Rebbe wrote in the second letter to a Jew who works with immigrants to Eretz HaKodesh that this is a tremendous thing, and the Rebbe enclosed his share in covering expenses. I read these answers, and all those present strengthened me with words of encouragement.

“I never imagined that I would see the Rebbe’s bracha materialize so quickly. A Jew suddenly came into the class and gave a bank check to one of the chassidim, telling him that he wasn’t able to give it to the person as he requested. When he left the room, the chassid turned to me and asked how much I want, and he signed the check over to me right there in the amount of several thousand shekels...

“While this was all very well and good, a few thousand shekels didn’t solve the problem

of all the debts. One of the shiur's participants gave me the telephone number of a very well-to-do Frenchman who, in his words, loves the Rebbe. As Divine Providence would have it, I knew this gentleman, who had previously asked me to join him on one of his business ventures, but I had eventually decided not to accept the offer.

I called him on Sunday and told him about all our activities. 'We just now printed a large quantity of sichos from Parshas VaYeishev 5752 that have been distributed throughout the world,' I noted. 'I know all too well what you're talking about,' I heard him say to my utter disbelief. 'On the Shabbos when that sicha was delivered,' he continued, 'I was in 770, and I heard it from start to finish. I even had the privilege of receiving special attention from the Rebbe, when he turned around and said *'Lchaim'* to me.'

He then proceeded to tell me with great excitement about that unique sicha and the effect it had upon him. There was no need for me to continue my explanations, and he immediately made a very sizable contribution for the resumption of our activities. I was completely overwhelmed. The Rebbe had just given me a bracha, and everything was already working out. He introduced me to other supporters, and at the end of Kislev, we printed several thousand more 'D'var Malchus' sichos translated into French, and we continue these activities until today."

A MESSAGE OF JOYOUS ENCOURAGEMENT

The institute's financial situation was not particularly rosy, as large sums of money were still needed to continue the

printing, and particularly in order to continue work on those sichos that had yet to be translated.

"When I was on shlichus in Beit Shemesh, I dealt with (among other things) the distribution of chassidic s'farim, but I didn't always find much success in this project. I would write to the Rebbe for advice and a bracha, and quite often the answers I was privileged to receive were addressed to Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak Hecht from New Haven. At first, I didn't attribute any importance to this, but I saw that it happened on more than five occasions, I decided to call his son, the Rebbe's shliach and the chief rabbi of Eilat, Rabbi Yosef Hecht.

"I told Rabbi Hecht about the letters, and he replied that while he couldn't provide any financial assistance since he runs his own institutions which also require a sizable amount of funding, he did have some spiritual advice to give me strength. He told me about his father, who spent his whole life working on shlichus, yet he didn't always see progress in his activities. While he also had tremendous debts, nevertheless, he was totally devoted to shlichus. Once when he wrote to the Rebbe about his difficulties, he received an answer that he should be *b'simcha*, and things will thereby work out in a most unnatural fashion.

"These words of Rabbi Hecht have accompanied me to this day. When I experience difficulties in my shlichus, I awaken the attribute of joy."

'BUT THE REBBE LOVES THEM'

Towards the end of the conversation, we asked Rabbi Valika to offer his own explanation

of the changes in France and the fact that the French are famous the world over for living with Moshiach and the Redemption without any reservations whatsoever. Thousands of young French baalei t'shuva have now discovered the world of chassidus, and proudly wear 'Yechi' kippot, and it's hard to find a soul who doesn't know about the holy proclamation of "Yechi Adoneinu".

"Before they printed the sichos from 5751-5752, they asked the Rebbe if they could call them 'D'var Malchus', meaning that they are the words of the king. The Rebbe gave his consent and even took the sichos to the Ohel of the Rebbe Rayatz. We have been privileged to receive sichos that represent the teachings of Moshiach. We must spread these revelations to every Jew and in every language.

"With regard to your question about France, this has been explained and expounded upon by the Rebbe in the sicha from Parshas VaYeishev – France is the lowest of all places. When France is purified, then the whole world is made pure. For just as when we want to raise an entire building, we lift it from the bottom, so too the whole world. When we wish to raise it, we do so at its lowest point – and this is France. It wasn't for naught that the Rebbe paid half the airfare for people who came from France to 770.

"I heard from Rabbi Shneur Yeruslavski that he once went around with his grandfather on Erev Yom Kippur, trying for several hours to arrange lodging for a pampered French couple. When he asked his grandfather how he doesn't give up, he replied: 'But the Rebbe loves them...'"

SHLUCHIM AND THE REBBE'S PROPHECIES

The Rebbe MH"M said about himself that his words were prophecy. Thousands of stories have been publicized, in print and orally, about the Rebbe's prophecy and ruach ha'kodesh (prophetic spirit). This week we present stories of shluchim who do their work based on the Rebbe's instructions and see wonderful things happen because of the Rebbe's ruach ha'kodesh.

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz, shliach, Beit Shaan

In the HaYom Yom entry for 6 Shvat the Rebbe says in the name of the Alter Rebbe that all authors until and including the Taz (Rabbi Dovid Segal, author of *Turei Zahav* 1586-1667) and Shach (Rabbi Shabsi Cohen, author of *Sifsei Cohen* 1622-1663), wrote their s'farim with ruach ha'kodesh. The Taz and Shach are commentators to the Shulchan Aruch who lived about 400 years ago and are associated with a number of miracle stories.

In *Shmuos V'Sippurim*, R' Refael (Folya) Kahn brings from Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac of Homil that the Alter Rebbe regularly had ruach ha'kodesh. By the Mittlerer Rebbe, it was only when he wanted it. By the Tzemach Tzedek, only when they wanted it

from Above.

They asked R' Isaac: How do you know this? Do you have ruach ha'kodesh?

He answered (humbly): I don't have ruach ha'kodesh but I'm a maven in ruach ha'kodesh.

We could say that possibly, the reason the Rebbe quotes the HaYom Yom in the name of the Alter Rebbe is because only he, with his constant ruach ha'kodesh, is authoritative and can tell us who wrote their s'farim with ruach ha'kodesh.

I am not a maven in either ruach or kodesh ... but when it comes to the Rebbe, Nasi Doreinu, the Rebbe testified that what he says is prophecy, and thousands of stories about his

prophecy and ruach ha'kodesh have become part of the public record.

RUACH HA'KODESH THAT BROUGHT MILLIONS

Rabbi Shlomo Cunin, veteran shliach in California, had a private audience with the Rebbe many decades ago in which he told the Rebbe about his enormous debts. The Rebbe blessed him and said: You wrote that you need \$200,000.

The Rebbe then opened a drawer in his desk and took ten \$100 bills and said: Sell each one for \$20,000 and you'll have \$200,000.

R' Cunin returned to California and told all the wealthy supporters that he had dollars from the Rebbe and each one could be purchased for a donation of \$20,000 to the Chabad house. He also said that whoever bought one of these bills could make any request he wanted and be sure that it would be fulfilled.

Within two days R' Cunin had sold all the bills and he soon found out that the brachos were fulfilled. Women had children, businesses were successful, sick people recovered and everybody was satisfied.

News spread among the friends of the Chabad house and they flocked to him and asked to buy these amazing bills. One needed a shidduch, another one children, parnasa, shalom bayis, etc. R' Cunin told them he'd be happy to help them but all the bills from the Rebbe were sold.

A year went by with many Chabad house activities and once again he was in debt, even more than the year before. R' Cunin had yechidus once again and at the end of the letter that he submitted to the Rebbe he wrote: We had a successful year and now we need \$250,000.

When the Rebbe read the end of the note he gave a bracha and then said: Shlomo, you need more money? How much do you need?

R' Cunin remained silent and the Rebbe said: \$250,000, then asked: What did you do last year?

R' Cunin remained silent and the Rebbe asked: I gave you bills and you sold them for \$200,000.

R' Cunin confirmed this and the Rebbe said: You promised brachos, what happened in the end?

R' Cunin said that all the brachos were fulfilled and each person who had purchased a bill was pleased.

The Rebbe's face turned very serious and he said: My father-in-law will help me out – you can make the promise.

To R' Cunin's amazement, the Rebbe told him to get money from the secretary, R' Chodakov.

Then R' Cunin gave the

Rebbe, as he always did, a list of dozens of Jews in California with some details about their involvement with Judaism.

Before he left the room, the Rebbe suddenly asked him: What happened with the money that Mr. Freier left in his will?

Mr. Freier was a Jew from Los Angeles who had died some years before and had left \$250,000 in his will. In the preceding years, R' Cunin had received all the funds and used them. He did not understand why the Rebbe was bringing it up. Then the Rebbe continued, answering his own question: The money from the will was already spent.

The Rebbe went on to say: But there were other assets. I remember that the will was contested but in the end the sides came to a compromise.

The Rebbe concluded with a bracha that it should all be successful and wished him a good trip.

R' Cunin did not understand why the Rebbe said what he did about the will. He went to R' Chadakov and received ten \$100 bills from him. He decided he would sell each one for \$25,000 this time to cover his \$250,000 debt. He told his mekuravim about the opportunity but to his dismay, nobody came to buy a single bill. He told his fellow shluchim about this unpleasant surprise and explained the dire consequences if a miracle did not take place.

The shluchim asked him to review precisely what the Rebbe

said in yechidus. Maybe they would be able to understand why this campaign was unsuccessful and what he needed to do. R' Cunin repeated the entire dialogue, how he had submitted a list of mekuravim, about the Rebbe's interest in the old man, etc. and one of the shluchim, R' Avrohom Levitansky a"h jumped and said: What?! The Rebbe spoke to you about the will?

R' Cunin said yes, not understanding what the excitement was about. Then R' Levitansky said, "What don't you understand? The Rebbe spoke to you about a will from a few years ago in order to remind you about Sammy's will. He died before Purim and bequeathed everything to us."

R' Cunin remembered Sammy who was known as a pathetic pauper to the point that he had to be buried at the expense of the Chabad house. He had written in his will that he bequeathed everything he owned to the Chabad house but they hadn't even gone to see whether there was anything in his house that was worth any money. Now, R' Levitansky insisted that if the Rebbe spoke about a will, they had to look into it.

The distance between the Chabad house and Sammy's house wasn't far and the two of them walked over and knocked at the door of one of the neighbors. They asked: Who is the landlord of the house Sammy lived in?

The neighbor said: What do you mean? Sammy was the landlord!

That is the moment they realized that Sammy wasn't the pauper they thought he was. He asked the neighbor: How can we get into the house?

They walked in and saw utter chaos. In the midst of the



Within two days R' Cunin had sold all the bills and he soon found out that the brachos were fulfilled.

Women had children, businesses were successful, sick people recovered and everybody was satisfied.

mess they found many stock certificates which showed that Sammy was quite wealthy.

R' Cunin rushed to the bank to redeem some of the certificates in the amount of \$250,000 which he so urgently needed. At the bank they told him that certain legal proceedings had to take place before the money would be transferred to the Chabad house. However, the bank agreed to lend him the money until the legal work was taken care of.

You will remember that the Rebbe said there were other assets. They had the house to deal with and it turned out that there were in fact other properties that Sammy owned. R' Cunin approached the legal authorities and said that he wanted to arrange probate of the will since there were no children. At first it seemed all was well but then on the last possible day that someone could submit a claim in court, a lawyer showed up to represent Sammy's brother who lived in Eretz Yisroel. The brother had heard the news and he decided to demand some of the inheritance.

R' Cunin sat down once again with his fellow shluchim and said: The Rebbe told me something about a compromise. From this I understand that now too, a compromise is needed. I have an idea. In any case we will have to spend money on lawyers which can cost us \$50,000. Let's give that amount to the brother as a compromise.

R' Cunin did just that. He told the brother's lawyer: Take the money or you won't get anything. To his surprise, the man was satisfied with this sum of money.

When R' Cunin told this amazing story he concluded: I would never have thought of checking to see whether the Sammy we knew as a pauper left



Rabbi Shlomo Cunin

a will and a home and a lot of other possessions. But the Rebbe said a few words at the end of the yechidus and thanks to that, we received \$650,000. We received \$250,000 on the spot, and this was the amount that I told the Rebbe I needed immediately, and the rest carried us for another few years. When you go with the power of the Rebbe, with simple faith and absolute trust, you receive incredible brachos from the Rebbe that are fulfilled in a miraculous way.

THE REBBE SAW THE COURSE OF THE STORM

A number of years ago there was a hurricane in the Pacific Ocean and it was rapidly approaching Hawaii. The government instructed residents to leave. The Rebbe's shluchim received a bracha from the Rebbe and were told to remain.

The hurricane was predicted to hit Friday night. Millions of people had already left. The shliach, R' Itchel Krasnjansky put a message on his answering machine about what the Rebbe said and that he was staying home. The hundreds of people who called him heard that all were invited to a thanksgiving meal that would take place

Shabbos morning!

That is what happened and it caused a tremendous kiddush Hashem and kiddush sheim ha'Rebbe.

THE REBBE PLANNED AHEAD

Rabbi Shimon Lazaroff, veteran shliach in Texas related that many years ago the Rebbe told him to build a mikva in a small city with very few Jews.

Some years later, the government decided to transfer its scientific and technological center to this city which resulted in tens of thousands of engineers, researchers and students going to this city, including numerous Jews. Thanks to the Rebbe's vision, there was a mikva ready for them.

THE REBBE KNEW ABOUT THE TRAGEDY

Among the soldiers killed during the Six Day War was R' Dovid Morosow. His widow, Shifra (Golombowitz) is known for founding, by the Rebbe's instruction, an organization for wives and children of war heroes.

A few weeks before R' Dovid was killed, his wife gave birth to a boy. She wrote to the Rebbe and asked for a bracha for the baby. The bris was delayed for a few days and in the meantime, a letter came with the Rebbe's bracha. Surprisingly, both the envelope and the letter were addressed only to her, in the singular, unlike the thousands of letters the Rebbe sent upon the birth of a baby. And this was five days before the father was killed as can be seen on the date stamped by the American postal service on the envelope.

DOES THE FUTURE GUIDE THE PAST?

By Aryeh Gotfryd, PhD

Classic concepts of time are flying out the window as scientists report on effects that precede the causes that made them. What does this all mean for us?

A Torah ruling can also impact situations at an earlier time and that is because Torah is above time.

– Likkutei Sichos,
Vol. 28, p. 154.

Have you ever walked into a test situation wishing that you had studied some more? There may be a solution. New research suggests that you might be able to score higher marks today if you make up those study hours... tomorrow.

Daryl Bem, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Cornell, has published a major study in a mainstream journal demonstrating exactly that. He conducted nine well-controlled trials on 1,000 experimental subjects and found conclusive evidence for precognition – that people on the whole have some ability to access information from unforeseeable future events.

For instance, students were given lists of words to learn after which they took a memory test. After that test was complete, half the students were randomly assigned to study the words again. Bem found that those that were randomly selected to study again afterwards actually got

higher scores on the test they had taken previously.

How could this be, you may ask? How does the brain of student on Tuesday come up with answers he only will learn on Wednesday?

Bem's results are controversial to say the least but his methods are anything but. Bem himself is highly regarded in his field and everything about his experimental design and methodology was squeaky clean. But what theoretical basis is there for things like this to occur?

One place to look is physics. For almost a century it has been known that electrons seem to magically jump across space, time and energy levels on a continuous basis. Today physicists talk about timelines being a two-way street.

More than that, it is now widely accepted among physicists that there exists some transcendent realm of consciousness called the "field" where past, present and future impose no limitations at all. In fact it has recently been discovered that all matter in the universe is constantly being recreated from this field by a process called "vacuum fluctuations."

One of the fingerprints of this timeless quality that reality has shows up in what is called a "delayed choice" experiment. An electron gun is fired at a barrier with two narrow slits. After the electron crosses the barrier,



the observer makes the choice whether to observe the electron as a wave or as a particle. If he chooses to observe it as a particle, then its history was that it traveled through one slit and not the other. If he chooses to observe it as a wave then it must have gone through both slits. Experiments have verified that this works. The later observation creates the previous reality.

Psychology is not the only field that's having fun with the power of mind over matter. Other studies have been done in medicine. An Israeli study published in the British Medical Journal reports on the effects on health outcomes of one person praying for another. An earlier study of 990 heart patients showed that on average, those that were randomly assigned to be prayed for recovered more quickly and with fewer complications. The Israeli study of 3000 bloodstream infection patients goes much further. They have shown that when a purely random selection of these patients were prayed for *several years later*, that group's past recovery rate was significantly greater.

* * *

I love living in a Lubavitch community.

Between prayer services one day, I took these findings to three of my more knowledgeable friends and asked, "Do we

find anything like this in Torah sources?” One of them said, “Ridiculous.” Another cited various examples of retroactive reality from the Talmud and Midrash.

The third quoted me a fascinating case described in Likkutei Sichos (Vol. 28, p. 154, footnote 26) in the context of the liberation of the Previous Rebbe from Soviet prison. He had been incarcerated and even sentenced to death for promoting Jewish education and observance, which was considered counterrevolutionary activity.

The Rebbe comments on the fact that while his predecessor was in jail, a number of Soviet Jews risked their lives to demand his release. Considering the political climate of the time, their protestations should have proved ineffective and moreover should have cost them their lives or at least their liberty. Yet we find that the authorities at the time were sympathetic and even later no harm came to any of those Jews, which was really quite miraculous as anyone intimately familiar with Soviet Russia will attest.

How did they all get away with it? The Rebbe explains this by asking and answering another question. Upon his release, the Previous Rebbe first said the discourse entitled “*Hashem li b’oz-rye* – G-d is with me through my helpers” and only on a later occasion said the



discourse “*Baruch HaGomel* – Blessed is the One who delivers”. One would think that the Rebbe should have first said the discourse focused on thanking G-d for saving him and only after that acknowledge the indirect aid through his helpers.

The Rebbe explains: With the discourse “*Hashem li b’oz-rye*” the Previous Rebbe was channeling the revelation of the Divine Name that transcends time into his helpers retroactively. By investing timeless G-dliness into their souls at the later time, he empowered them with this very same divine energy at the earlier time too, so they could stand up effectively to the hostile

authorities and not be harmed in the process.

The Rebbe says, “*M’darf leben mit di tzait* – we have to live with the times.” The best way to bring Moshiach is to start living today as we will tomorrow when the redemption is already here. This will create a triple bond between the present and the future. Our good behavior will bring it on, our brighter future will shine back upon us and light up our lives. And that synergy will propel us to greater heights yet until the ultimate joy with the coming of Moshiach NOW!

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THE IMMEASURABLE ZALMAN ZEZMER

The life of the Chassid R' Zalman Zezmer, one of the great Chassidim of both the Alter Rebbe and the Mittlerer Rebbe after him. * Part 2 of 2

By Y. Sofer

“MY CHASSID IS R’ ZALMAN”

HISKASHRUS TO THE MITTELER REBBE

After the passing of the Alter Rebbe, R’ Zalman Zezmer became mekushar (spiritually bonded) to his son, the Mitteler Rebbe. He was also mekarev R’ Hillel of Paritch to the Mitteler Rebbe.

One time, at the start of the Mitteler Rebbe’s nesius (leadership) there was a Chassidic wedding which was attended by all the great Chassidim of the Alter Rebbe. Many of them were mekushar to the Mitteler Rebbe but there were some elder Chassidim who did not want to recognize him as Rebbe and they said that after the passing of the Alter Rebbe, there was no Rebbe. R’ Zalman Zezmer attended this wedding as did R’ Hillel.

A debate ensued among the Chassidim and some of them said there was no Rebbe and their proof was that you don’t see young men growing into Chassidim.

R’ Hillel, who was a young man of about 28, stood at a distance. R’ Zalman got up and said to them: Do you see that young man standing over there? He will yet beat us all over the head!

PROFOUND WISDOM

In one of his sichos, the Rebbe Rayatz spoke about R’ Zalman:

The Chassid R’ Zalman Zezmer was the disciple of the Mitteler Rebbe. By the Alter Rebbe, he was one of the young ones. R’ Zalman was a maskil (intellectual) by nature and a baal mochin (man of profound intellect) in his very essence.

When my father [the Rebbe Rashab] would speak about the concept of “*chacham b’etzem*

The Rebbe writes about R’ Zalman:

One of the great students of the Alter Rebbe and then of the Mitteler Rebbe, a rav in Deneburg (Dvinsk) and in Krislava where he was laid to rest.

In *Beis Rebbe* it says:

The holy and famous Chassid R’ Zalman Zezmer, one of the great students of the Alter Rebbe and then of his son, the Mitteler Rebbe. His knowledge of Chassidus was awesome and his avoda was incredible.

After the passing of the Alter Rebbe, R’ Zalman was in the town of R’ Hillel and R’ Hillel became close with him and he explained to him what Chassidus is about and then he greatly desired and determined to travel to the Mitteler Rebbe.

R’ Hillel was also a student of R’ Zalman and was very attached to him and quotes him a number of times in his writings, and R’ Zalman was also very fond of him.

R’ Hillel said: Every person needs a rav (Rebbe) who impacts on him and a Chassid to explain what the rav said in a comprehensible manner, and my Chassid is R’ Zalman.

ko’ach chochmaso” (one whose revealed power of wisdom expresses the very essence of his power of wisdom) he would say: Like R’ Zalman Zezmer!

THE IMPACT OF A PIYUT

R’ Zalman, being an incredible baal mochin, would delve into Chassidic teachings for hours. It is related that on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, as he concentrated on his holy thoughts, he was so removed from this physical world that he would not see if someone was standing in front of him and he would not hear what was going on around him. They had to put up a barrier around his place in shul so that he wouldn’t bump into people due to his intense spiritual bonding on high.

But when the congregation said a *piyut* (liturgical piece) out loud like U’Nesane Tokef, R’ Zalman would be roused from his thoughts as though in shock and tears flowed from his eyes.

ALL YOM KIPPUR

One time, R’ Zalman went to Kremenchug for Yom Kippur and on Erev Yom Kippur, close to sunset, he took his tallis and put it around his shoulders and began delving into holy thoughts as he walked back and forth. That is how he spent the entire night of Yom Kippur and nearly the entire day, with his tallis still over his shoulders.

LIKE A STONE COMPARED TO A BRAIN

His closest disciple, R’ Hillel, once tried to describe just how amazing R’ Zalman’s exceedingly great intellect was and he said: R’ Isaac (of Homil)’s intellect compared to R’ Zalman Zezmer’s intellect is like an inanimate object compared to intellect!

When R’ Shmuel Gronem related this he explained that he didn’t mean just any inanimate object since this was R’ Isaac’s intellect he was talking about; he meant the aspect of inanimate object that is in Gan Eden, like the Alter Rebbe once said that it

says in the s'farim that in Gan Eden there are precious stones and gems (inanimate objects).

THE CAT AND I ARE EQUAL

On another occasion, R' Hillel said: Relative to R' Zalman's intellect, the cat and I are equal.

R' Hillel added: You might think that I mean that the distance between me and a cat is like the distance between me and R' Zalman. No, that's not so. Compared to R' Zalman the cat and I are equal!

A HEART LIKE A LION

In a note of approbation that R' Hillel wrote about helping R' Zalman's son, he said:

If you knew his late father z"l, you would certainly expend all energies to be of assistance, as it is an explicit verse, "I have not seen a tzaddik who is abandoned (and his children seeking bread)" because **before him there were none like him and after him I have yet to see such an oved Hashem with mind and heart, his heart was like that of a lion, and a broad mind with the depth of G-dly light in endless elevation upon elevation!**

WORLDLY CARES

The Chassidim were once speaking amongst themselves and one said about a certain rav that he wasn't affected by worldly travails. R' Hillel said: I have seen tremendous baalei mochin like R' Zalman Zezmer and even he was affected by worldly cares.

HE BEGAN WITH AVODA

Although R' Zalman was a great maskil and an incredible amkan (deep thinker) in Chassidus, nevertheless, he began with avoda and only then dealt with the haskala (intellectual component).

In one of his sichos, the Rebbe Rayatz relates what he heard from his father, the Rebbe Rashab in the name of the Rebbe Maharash:

The Alter Rebbe had two groups of Chassidim, both of which were maskilim as well as ovdim. Like the gaon and Chassid, R' Isaac of Homil and the Chassid ha'gaon R' Zalman Zezmer:

R' Isaac began with haskala and then went on to avoda but R' Zalman began with avoda. Haskala is cold and avoda is warm, and the difference between them in actual avoda is: by a maskil, even in his avoda you sense the coldness of haskala; as for the oved, even in his haskala you can sense the heart in full measure!

PITY ON YOU!

R' Zalman began his avoda with the service of the heart but then he was involved in haskala until he became one of the great maskilim and his intellectual service was still no comparison to his service of the heart.

It is told that one time R' Hillel, R' Zalman, and R' Pesach of Malastovka met in Lubavitch unexpectedly and they sat down

and farbrenged and enjoyed each others' company tremendously. R' Yitzchok Isaac of Homil walked in and the simcha increased and they farbrenged very well together.

R' Zalman, the great maskil and amkan, would say brief, deep things. R' Pesach was an oved with lofty character. In the middle of this farbrengen R' Pesach got very excited and he hugged R' Zalman and kissed him and burst into tears and said:

Zalman, Zalmanke, oy, if your heart was a true vessel for your head, it would be altogether different, what a pity on you!

R' Hillel said: I was amazed by R' Zalman's middas Chassidus [as he seemed to accept R' Pesach words] and by R' Pesach's midda of truth!

WHAT DID CHASSIDUS INNOVATE?

When R' Zalman wanted to arouse his heart he would tell the following story:

In R' Zalman's city lived a great scholar of good character – his character was outstanding but he knew nothing about Chassidus. He once asked R' Zalman: What did Chassidus innovate?

R' Zalman replied: Chassidus elevated the mind over the emotions!

Later on, this scholar went to the Alter Rebbe and he asked the same question: What did Chassidus innovate?

The Alter Rebbe replied: Animals also have emotions but with them, these character traits are instinctual like a raven which is cruel and an eagle which is merciful, but the middos of human beings are according to their intellect. Although it would seem that middos according to

“Although R' Zalman was a great maskil and an incredibly deep thinker in Chassidus, nevertheless, he began with avoda and only then dealt with the haskala.

WE'VE BROUGHT A NICE PRESENT!

intellect would also be instinctual in people, it is like our Sages say, "Hashem wanted to give merit to Yisroel and therefore He gave them much Torah and mitzvos." Hashem wanted to give us merit in avoda and that is why human middos are based on conscious intellect and are not instinctual, but for this you need avoda!

When the scholar heard this, he thought about it and saw that with all his avoda throughout his life, his middos were merely animal-like [i.e. instinctual], and he fainted.

When he recovered from his faint he understood only the negative aspect but he still did not know what positive path to take, so he asked the Alter Rebbe: So what is Chassidus?

The Alter Rebbe answered: Chassidus is Shma Yisroel – "Shma" is an acronym for "*se'u marom eineichem*" – lift your eyes on high. It says marom (on high) and not shamayim (sky) because marom is much higher (as the Ibn Ezra explains). That is, to reach above the intellect and to understand even that with one's intellect, as the verse concludes, "*u're'u mi bara eileh*" (and see who created these).

It was with this story that R' Zalman would arouse his own emotions.

"LAVAN" IS A NAME OF HASHEM!

R' Zalman would travel to cities and towns to spread Chassidus. He would enter the town as a Maggid and he had a tallis as maggidim had (so they wouldn't think he was a Chassid) and he would go up on the bima and darshen (lecture).

One time, he arrived in Volozhin, where the famous R' Chaim lived. R' Zalman received

In the previous installment we learned about how R' Zalman was brought to Chassidus by the Chassid R' Binyamin Kletzker. Another version with additional details is told by R' Yehuda Chitrik (in his *Reshimos D'varim*):

R' Binyamin Kletzker was a businessman and when he went on business trips he always used the same wagon driver. One time, on one of his trips, he calculated that by the time he would arrive in the town he would have missed the proper time for prayer. Chassidim of the Alter Rebbe were particular about davening on time even though they spent hours on it, and so he put on his tallis and t'fillin and began davening in the wagon, at length, as was his way.

As they approached the town, R' Binyamin was up to Shmoneh Esrei and he stood up in the wagon and began to daven. In the meantime, the wagon arrived at the inn and the wagon driver unharnessed the horses and took the baggage inside, but R' Binyamin was oblivious to all this as he continued davening.

The townspeople finished davening and were walking home. On the way they passed the inn and they saw a peculiar sight – a man was standing in the wagon and davening! They laughed at him and said – couldn't he get off the wagon and daven in the inn?

In this town lived the Chassid, R' Zalman Zezmer and when he saw this sight he also stood there and wondered about it, but he looked at it differently. He was amazed that R' Binyamin could daven while being oblivious to what was going on around him.

When R' Binyamin finished davening and entered the inn, R' Zalman approached him and asked: Where can one learn to daven that way, without realizing what is going on all around?

R' Binyamin responded with a question: What do you do?

R' Zalman answered: I am a melamed (teacher).

R' Binyamin said: I will send you to Vilna and there you will be a melamed, and R' Binyamin went with R' Zalman to Vilna where R' Zalman became a melamed for R' Meir Refael's sons.

While R' Zalman sat and learned with his pupils, Chassidim convened in the next room and reviewed maamarei Chassidus of the Alter Rebbe. R' Zalman tried to listen in but the Chassidim yelled at him and said: You are a "day worker," so why are you listening to what we are saying here?

Until one time, as they reviewed a maamer, R' Zalman could not restrain himself and he took his tallis and t'fillin and entered the other room and said to the Chassidim: Please don't push me away. I'm not budging until you tell me where you get these teachings from.

When they told him it was maamarei Chassidus from the Rav, the Maggid of Liozna, he ran outside to go to Liozna. The Chassidim grabbed Reb Zalman and said: Come with us.

When they arrived in Liozna they told the Alter Rebbe: We've brought a nice present with us!

permission from R' Chaim to darshen on Shabbos Parshas VaYeitzei in the big shul. The time for the drasha was in the afternoon before Mincha. In his drasha, R' Zalman spoke about

the parsha and explained the verse, "and Lavan got up in the morning" as he heard it from the Alter Rebbe. At the end of his talk he explained that there is a "Lavan" of holiness which is the

“One time, he arrived in Volozhin, where the famous R’ Chaim lived. R’ Zalman received permission from R’ Chaim to darshen on Shabbos Parshas VaYeitzei in the big shul.

Supernal Whiteness. Since white is a simple color that alludes to the essence of a thing, thus “Lavan” of holiness, the Supernal Whiteness, refers to Hashem in His Essence (as explained at length in Torah Ohr).

(According to another version, R’ Zalman darshened on Parshas VaYishlach that Yaakov in his avodas Hashem would sift out the sparks of holiness from the physicality of the world and elevate them to holiness. This is what is meant by “and Yaakov sent angels,” the angels are sparks of holiness that Yaakov sifted out and sent “to Eisav” – referring to Hashem!)

When he finished the drasha, even before he had a chance to get down from the bima, the people fell upon him and beat him and held on to him until R’ Chaim came for Mincha and would tell them what to do with him.

When R’ Chaim came, they told him what the drasha was about and how he referred to Hashem as “Lavan.” R’ Chaim asked him: Why did you give such a blasphemous speech calling Hashem “Lavan?”

R’ Zalman answered: It’s an explicit statement of Chazal!

R’ Chaim thought for a while and then said: As far as I can remember, there is no such Chazal, not in Talmud Bavli or in Talmud Yerushalmi, not in the Midrash nor in the Sifra, Sifri and Mechilta, nor in the Zohar. Go ahead, tell me where this Chazal is!

R’ Zalman said with a smile:

It’s a famous Chazal, “The entire Torah is comprised of names of Hashem,” and so the word “Lavan” which is written in the Torah is a name of Hashem!

When R’ Chaim heard this, he told them to release R’ Zalman and appease him.

R’ ZALMAN’S RABBINIC POSITIONS

R’ Zalman’s first rabbinic post was in Zezmir in Lithuania which is between Vilna and Kovna, which is how he came to be known as R’ Zalman Zezmer. From Zezmir he went to serve as rabbi in Deneburg (Dvinsk) where he suffered a lot from the Misnagdim. Among other hateful things they burned his family tree which showed that he was a descendent of the Sifsei Cohen and even higher, and then they informed on him to the authorities and he was forced to flee from there to Krislava.

HEARTBROKEN FROM HIS DAVENING

R’ Shmuel Levitin would say about R’ Zalman’s rabbinic positions:

When people would come to him for a din Torah and he was still in the middle of davening, he would motion to them to wait until he finished. In the meantime, the two sides would hear him daven and it would break their hearts (and it would make it easier to pasken the din). It was only when he finished davening that he would address their case.

REBBI, I HAVE ALL THE MONEY

One time, two people came to him for judgment. The defendant partially admitted his guilt and R’ Zalman said he had to swear, as the din says to do when you make a partial admission. The man agreed to do so immediately and he said: I am already swearing!

When R’ Zalman saw how eager he was to swear he said: Wait, it’s not so simple. First you have to learn what the Gemara says about this.

R’ Zalman began learning with him this topic in the Gemara called *modeh b’miktzas* and he explained it according to Chassidus:

Why is it that the Torah says that one who admits partial guilt has to swear? Because “*chazaka sh’ein adam mei’iz panav bifnei baal chovo*” – there is an established rule that a person does not have the nerve to completely deny his creditor – because a person is comprised of body and soul and each component is incomparably far from the other. So when they come together, as a neshama in a body, the body wants to deny everything to do with the neshama, i.e. Torah and mitzvos *she’hai b’chulei ba’i l’michperei lei* – he would really want to deny the entire debt.

The reason it does not deny everything to do with the neshama is because “a person does not have the nerve to deny his creditor” – since the neshama is within him and is giving life to him, he cannot completely deny it. *V’hai de’lo oidi, ishtamuti hu d’ka mishtamit lei, savar ad d’hava li zuzi u’perana lei* – the reason that he does not admit to the entire debt is because he is trying to push him off (buy

time), because he thinks I will wait until I have the money and then I will pay him back – i.e. the reason the body does not admit to everything having to do with the neshama is because the body tries to get out of doing its work in Torah and mitzvos and thinks it will pay its debt later on.

V'amar Rachmana rami shavua alei ki heichi d'lodi lei b'chulei – the Torah says, impose an oath on him so that he will admit to the entire debt – thus the Torah says you have to make it swear, “he is made to swear – be a tzaddik and don’t be a rasha” and then he will admit to

all the matters of the neshama.

R’ Zalman’s enthusiastic learning had a great effect on the defendant so that when R’ Zalman finished learning this topic he immediately exclaimed: Rebbi, I have all the money!

QUIZ



Which of these is your greatest asset? —

Which of these is currently uninsured? —

Your ability to earn an income is by far your greatest asset.

If that income stream is interrupted...even for a brief period...what would happen to the rest of your lifestyle? Even if you are young and careful, the odds of becoming too sick or injured to work are greater than you might think. Research shows that men have a 43% chance of becoming seriously disabled during their working years, while women have a 54% chance¹.

To learn more about flexible, high quality disability income protection² to protect your greatest asset, please contact:

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¹ “Why Disability” booklet, published by National Underwriter.

² Disability income products underwritten and issued by Berkshire Life Insurance Company of America, Pittsfield, MA, a wholly owned stock subsidiary of The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, New York, NY, or The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, New York, NY.

CHIEF RABBINATE OR RUBBER STAMP?

A letter from twelve Chabad rabbanim against the automatic approval given to “IDF conversions” has joined the halachic opinions of other leading rabbinic figures in Eretz HaKodesh. there is based on the fact that the converts are not required to accept the yoke of Torah and mitzvos.



By Sholom Ber Crombie; Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

Recently, twelve prominent rabbanim from Chabad communities all over Eretz HaKodesh publicized a stinging letter against the process being led by the “Rabbinical Committee on the Conversions in the Israel Defense Forces”, a process which has arbitrarily declared that all conversions performed by the army rabbinate are valid and kosher l’mehadrin.

This decision was preceded by a saga that lasted for a number of years, after it was clear beyond all doubt that those soldiers who underwent a quickie “conversion” as part of their enlistment program did not accept the yoke of mitzvos, and therefore, all the conversions

were done solely for the purpose of registering them as Jews. The publicized testimonies were very damaging. It turns out that even at the official “conversion parties” that the IDF made for these soldiers after completing their course study, there was mixed dancing where the men didn’t wear kippot and the women were dressed immodestly.

As a result of these harmful testimonies, the chief rabbinate of Eretz Yisroel ruled that it would not accept further “conversions” performed in the IDF. It was also decided that every “conversion” would be checked individually, and the rabbinate would choose which ones to approve. The subsequent result was that a sizable majority of these

“conversions” were not accepted.

In such a situation, it was clear that if even the chief rabbinate – not known as particularly reliable in the area of conversions – would not sanction these false “conversions”, then surely no one who adheres to the Word of G-d would take these IDF “converts” seriously.

But there were those who decided not to allow these facts to confuse them. The Russian immigrant party – “Yisroel Beiteinu”, which has raised the banner of warfare against halachically kosher conversions, decided to compel Israelis to accept as Jews, albeit by force, those who are not Jewish by any definition.



Does the uniform make them Jews?

Knesset Member David Rotem decided to pass a law in the Knesset that would remove the exclusive right to approve conversions from the chief rabbinate of Eretz Yisroel and enable the army rabbinate to issue conversion certificates recognized by the State of Israel, even without the approval of the chief rabbis of Eretz Yisroel.

To make matters even more absurd, this process began to take form just as the IDF was completing its reforms to the army rabbinate, transforming the IDF chief rabbi into a type of “chief religious officer”. Under these circumstances, the rabbinate of the Israel Defense Forces was entrusted to former pilot Rafi Peretz, someone

who did not serve as a rabbi on a daily basis. The members of the “Yisroel Beiteinu” party decided to place the gates of entrance to the Jewish People in his hands.

RUBBER STAMP COMMITTEE

When the proposed law reached the Knesset, it greatly angered the leaders of the ultra-Orthodox factions. The Shas party – and even “Yahadut HaTorah” – rose up on their hind legs and declared that granting approval to false “conversions” made in the IDF will be cause for a coalition crisis and their resignation from the government.

While the law did pass its first reading before the Knesset, at

the initiative of Bibi Netanyahu, together with the chief Sephardic rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo Amar, a compromise was reached: An independent rabbinical committee would be established to examine the “conversions” and make a decision if they could be approved. The assured profit to the ultra-Orthodox was that if the committee would approve the “conversions” now at issue, the legislative process would come to a halt, and the granting of conversion certificates would once again fall within the exclusive control of the chief rabbinate of Eretz Yisroel.

The declarations on the establishment of this committee were conflicting: On the one hand, the prime minister

declared that the committee was founded in order to **approve** the “conversions”, in other words, an automatic rubber stamp that will determine that all the “conversions” are valid, no matter what they reveal as far as the level of these “conversions” is concerned. In contrast, Rabbi Shlomo Amar announced that the committee will carefully examine the “conversions” and decide what action to take regarding them.

At this stage, Rabbi Gedalia Axelrod, former av beis din of Haifa and a leading Chabad posek, wrote a fervent appeal to the committee members. “I call upon the committee members to sanctify G-d’s Name and resign your memberships in order not to be written in the pages of history as those who publicly desecrated G-d’s Name and assisted tens of thousands of Gentiles to assimilate into the People of Israel,” wrote Rabbi Axelrod. “It’s quite clear that the committee is a ‘tool’ whose conception and birth was unholy and was designed to validate Reform conversions in the fullest sense of the word.”

In his letter, Rabbi Axelrod quoted an answer that he received from the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach when the chief rabbinate began conducting wholesale “lightning conversions” in 5744, and he asked the Rebbe if he should take action against these conversions, despite the fact that it will likely result in his

dismissal from his position as av beis din of Haifa. In his reply, the Rebbe wrote: “Since he is a rav and initiated this mitzva, where is there room for a question now?”

The very next day, another Chabad rav, Rabbi Yosef Simcha Ginsburg from the Omer settlement, sent a sharp letter to the committee members. Rabbi Ginsburg’s letter was very insightful. He demanded that the committee members fulfill the verse “You shall not fear any man” and announce that the IDF “lightning conversions” are totally invalid, since even the Israel Defense Forces don’t demand that the “converts” accept the yoke of Torah and mitzvos. “I support you as messengers of Heaven to rule decisively as clear halacha that there is no room for approving these conversions, etc.,” wrote Rabbi Ginsburg.

IDF CONVERSIONS - WORSE THAN REFORM

Regrettably, the committee members did not stand up to the heavy pressure. They decided to turn to the former chief Sephardic rabbi, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, to receive halachic support for approving these “conversions”. Rabbi Yosef decided to give his stamp of approval, and afterwards, he got the current chief Sephardic rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo Amar, to sanction them as well.

By deciding that the

“conversions” are kosher, they crushed at one shot the entire long struggle conducted in recent years by all the relevant political and rabbinic bodies against the IDF conversion system. The calls by the leaders of the Shas Party that if the IDF “conversions” will be approved, they will resign from the government, became a target for scorn and ridicule, when their rabbanim failed to stand up to the heavy pressure placed on them. Thus, despite all the solid and unrefuted arguments, they ruled in favor of approving the “conversions”.

While the rabbis on this committee received considerable praise from the secular media, rabbinical figures from all sectors of Judaism came out in force against their decision, declaring that it has caused a serious breach in G-d’s Torah. The rabbanim explained that the decision set a dangerous precedent – more than all other severe precedents until today.

If the struggle had previously been to grant recognition only to those conversions sanctioned by the chief rabbinate and against recognizing Reform “conversions” from overseas, now the rabbinate itself is giving approval to “conversions” worse than those performed by the Reform movement upon people who have no connection to Judaism and who cannot be called Jews by any possible definition. The tens of thousands of Gentiles who have been registered as Jews with the help of the Israel Defense Forces pose a danger of rampant assimilation and confusion, and the decision of this rabbinical committee giving them halachic status must be fought uncompromisingly.

Most prominent among the reactions was the letter from

“Rabbi Axelrod asked the Rebbe if he should take action against these conversions, despite the fact that it would likely result in his dismissal from his position as av beis din of Haifa. In his reply, the Rebbe wrote: “Since he is a rav and initiated this mitzva, where is there room for a question now?”



Rabbi Gedalia Axelrod



Dovid Meir Druckman



Rabbi Yisroel Hershkowitz



Rabbi Yitzchak Shlomo Frank



Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo



Rabbi Yosef Simcha Ginsburg



Rabbi Baruch Boaz Yurkowitz



Rabbi Yisroel Yosef HaKohen Hendel



Rabbi Asher Lemel Cohen



The letter from Chabad rabbanim against the approval of IDF "conversions"

the Chabad rabbanim, which was especially harsh. The endorsement given to these "conversions" was defined as "an attempt to cause harm, undermine, and destroy the wall of the Jewish People, and bring frightful assimilation to a holy nation among the nations of the earth." The media publicized the letter, emphasizing that this was a unique cross-sector collaboration, as this was one of the rare instances of cooperation between Litvaks and Lubavitchers.

The rabbanim mentioned that leading halachic authorities examined the issue, dug through hundreds of documents, heard hundreds of testimonies, and eventually concluded that the learning program for conversion in the IDF "includes words that deny the holiness and eternal nature of Torah." Thus, it was claimed that the rabbinical judges who performed the army conversions omitted the most basic conditions for accepting converts – their acceptance of

the mitzvos out of a true desire to lead a halachic lifestyle.

The rabbanim wrote that "the approval of the conversions is a terrible desecration of G-d's Name, unlike any other", mentioning that the Rebbe was stringent in this matter, protesting for decades against similar actions, and stating that this is "a frightful decree, the likes of which there hasn't been since the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash".

According to the rabbanim, giving sanction to the "conversions" for the soldiers is specifically an expression of ingratitude towards them, because "in order to appear pleasant and friendly to them, they deceived them and made their lives miserable with a conversion certificate that has no halachic value."

IDF CONVERTS? A SOURCE OF GRIEF

More recently, Rabbi **Ze'ev Ritterman** from Nachlat

Har Chabad provided strong testimony based on his own personal knowledge of what is happening in the Israel Defense Forces, as someone who comes each day to IDF bases for outreach activities among the soldiers:

"Today, on every central base, there is awareness in connection with the conversion course (a euphemism for a course in Judaism that concludes with a conversion procedure). It would be appropriate to mention first that the army is built on courses. With all progress up the ladder of duties and promotions, you first have to take a course – company commander course, officers' course, cooking course, driving course, and... conversion course. The course is accompanied by various bonuses, among them the simple right to study for several months at good conditions – at the expense of their regular army service – instead of standing days and nights on watch or in other duties.

In addition, the IDF engages

in massive propaganda towards its Gentile soldiers, explaining why it would be appropriate for them to convert, including the better conditions they would receive on several levels – against the halacha stating that when a Gentile wants to convert, you should say to him: What have you seen that made you want to convert, etc. (see Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Dei'a 268:2, and Birkei Yosef, Tractate Geirim: One who wishes to convert is not accepted immediately, you say to him: Why do you want to convert, etc.)

“Recently, I had an opportunity to speak with one of these soldiers, who told me about the personal problems he claimed he was having. I noticed that since he had been educated in the Ukraine, his opinions had remained as they were. He even told me that he went to church – but it did no good. It stands to reason that if the rabbanim who approved these conversions would have known that not only didn't these ‘converts’ observe any mitzvos, they were still connected to the religion of their youth – they would have thought twice before giving their consent.

“As mentioned earlier, not only are they deceiving Jews, they are also deceiving (*l'havdil*) these Gentiles who think that they are Jewish. Incredible as it may sound, it's quite conceivable that a Ukrainian Gentile whose mother's father participated in the pogroms during the Holocaust, etc., will be accepted (*l'havdil*) – as a Jew, and who knew about this afterwards? Furthermore, there have been many known instances in which IDF soldiers from the former Soviet Union wrote neo-Nazi articles, caused untold destruction, and yet they also receive a rabbinic “stamp of approval” proclaiming that

they're Jewish.

“Thus, what we have is a simple case where ninety-eight percent of those soldiers who have been converted so far do not observe even one mitzva, and the two percent for whom there was no mitzva to ‘convert’ them, as mentioned earlier, they maybe fulfill easy mitzvos, but surely not the ‘hard’ ones, such as keeping Shabbos.”

THEY LOOK LIKE ISRAELIS AND ACT LIKE GOYIM

Another testimony recently publicized is that of R' **Shraga Crombie**, a Lubavitcher chassid currently serving in the Israel Defense Forces:

“The first shock I received was in the first days of my military service, when during an introductory talk with the army chaplain, he suggested that the Gentiles among us undergo a ‘short conversion process’. Afterwards, I heard from a number of soldiers exactly what that meant. The Gentile soldiers already knew and were familiar with the process, as they had heard from some of the thousands who had gone through it before them. There was no need to attempt a lengthy conversion process and attain citizenship; rather it's preferable to wait until the army and go through a much quicker and easier procedure.

“Ever since then, I have met many who went through this ‘conversion’ process, and not a single one of them observes a life of Torah and mitzvos. I didn't have any complaints with any of them, as they told me things honestly and truthfully: *We live in Eretz Yisroel and we want to be like everyone else. We have no connection to Judaism; we just want a proper registration in*

order that we can live as all of our friends do.

“The thing that shocked me more than anything else was to see how much these soldiers appear and act like Israelis in every respect. Before my induction, when I had heard about the IDF conversions, I had visions of young people with heavy Russian accents and a non-Jewish look, but in reality, the exact opposite is true. We're talking about young people who look just like the rest of their friends, speak fluent Hebrew without the slightest accent, read Hebrew newspapers, and act in identical fashion to Jews of similar age. But there's one difference: they're 100% Goyim. They understand the difference and they want to wipe it out, and the IDF provides a simple, easy, and above all – non-obligatory process.

“I understood to what extent the process carries no obligation when I was drawn into a private conversation with my commanding officer, a young man who still knew when sunrise was in order to compute our hours for sleep and times for davening. He said that he underwent conversion in the army, and in the same breath, he told about what he does on weekends: he works at ‘Tiv Ta'am’, a chain store that runs a delicatessen for non-kosher food items, including *chazir*.”

THE MEDIA: THE COMMITTEE GOES AGAINST THE REBBE'S POSITION

The media in Eretz Yisroel has realized that there is an unsettling problem here: A small group of rabbis, appointed to a “committee” in name only, approves “conversions” that are

not recognized by all Orthodox rabbanim. One of the national newspapers even queried as to how a Chabad rav, Rabbi Shimon Elitov (who surely held a minority position on the committee and opposed the approval of the conversions), could sit on this committee “despite the known positions of the Lubavitcher Rebbe,” the article stated. While this is merely one “marginal” paragraph, it nevertheless brings testimony more than anything else that even the media realized that the committee’s decision was a slap in the face to the Rebbe’s battle on the issue of “Who is a Jew”.

These events served as an incredible reminder of what had happened in the past regarding the “Law of Return”. During a sicha on Purim 5745, the Rebbe cried out bitterly over the “frightful decree” of “Who is a Jew?”, saying that while this is not something appropriate to speak about on Purim, the intention is for some benefit in order that people should really do something on the matter. “Not only are they not trying to nullify the decree, they’re giving this decree ‘hechsherim’! And who are those inventing these ‘hechsherim’? – Rabbanim! They dress it up in ‘a silk kapote’, create distortions, claim that this isn’t what I meant, the reality of things is in a different manner, etc., such that the matter is not so terrible...”

In a surprising development, Rabbi Amar received the backing of the rav of Kfar Chabad, Rabbi Mordechai Shmuel Ashkenazi. In a letter that he made public, Rabbi Ashkenazi wrote that the Rebbe relied upon the chief rabbinate, and it is an established fact that a fellow scholar would not issue an improper ruling. He concluded by stating that in his

“Ever since then, I have met many who went through this ‘conversion’ process, and not a single one of them observes a life of Torah and mitzvos.

opinion, the Chabad rabbanim should not intervene in this matter whatsoever.

The Chabad rabbanim who signed the letter against the sanction of “IDF conversions” responded with a storm of protest against Rabbi Ashkenazi’s letter.

Rabbi Gedalia Axelrod publicized a letter in response, in which he writes in part that “when the Rebbe wrote in 5731 about the conversions made each day in Eretz Yisroel not in accordance with halacha, it is clear that it is in reference to the conversions made by rabbanim with the approval of the chief rabbinate. And if this is the case, then the conclusion that the Rebbe gave authority to the chief rabbinate to decide on the issue of conversion – is absolutely incorrect! And such matters can lead to the assimilation of Gentiles into the People of Israel r”l.”

The rabbanim also presented the Rebbe’s letter (Igros Kodesh, Vol. 26, pg. 213) on the question of the authority of the chief rabbinate of Eretz Yisroel in the area of conversions. In the letter, the Rebbe relates to the question of why the law is not changed so the conversions should be “according to the chief rabbinate”, explaining that due to the deterioration in this area even in our Holy Land, it can be surmised that the future composition of the chief rabbinate is placed in doubt. The Rebbe also relates to the claim that soldiers who risk their lives for the security of Eretz Yisroel have the right to be considered as



“The role of the vaad is to stand firm.”

The Rebbe’s full answer with a clear message: Even though the chief rabbinate is responsible, it is impossible to rely upon them sight unseen, and there must be a firm stance!

Jews, explaining that while they are entitled to great merit, this clearly can not change anything dependent upon the result.

The Rebbe also discusses in this letter the murky political considerations that sneak into the decisions of the chief rabbinate. “War should be waged to prove that conversion is what is determined in halacha,” the Rebbe writes, “similarly, a Jew is what is determined in halacha, etc., etc., against those who have no use for all the proofs in Torah sources, except for one that proves decisive for them, i.e., which party is the strongest, and who among that party’s leaders has the most connections, etc., for this war will last many years, and it’s absolutely impossible to know what the results will be.”

THE APPROVING RABBANIM ARE IRREPARABLY NAÏVE

This past week, Rabbi Dovid Meir Druckman, the chief rabbi of Kiryat Motzkin and the rav of the Chabad community in the Krayot, was asked for his reaction to the Rebbe's reply regarding those matters given over to the chief rabbinate, and he too responds with a flood of emotion:

"When they asked me, I still hadn't seen the entire text of the Rebbe's answer. But now when I see it in full, I ask in amazement: Isn't the Rebbe's answer literally on the level of a contradictory proof? The Rebbe writes that 'after the recent law, the aforementioned law on "Who is a Jew" – is the law of the entire country, and at its head, the 'chief' rabbinate. And from this moment on, the aforementioned committee will publicize that *from now on, the role of the committee is to stand guard that it will fulfill what has been placed upon it.*'

"Notice the end clause: 'From now on, the role of the committee is to stand guard that it will fulfill what has been placed upon it.' In other words, in the Rebbe's opinion, a body outside of the chief rabbinate must stand guard that the chief rabbinate will fulfill its duty! And who is fit to do this if not the Chabad rabbanim in Eretz HaKodesh?"

Rabbi Druckman emphasized that "on the essential issue of "Who is a Jew", it is the Rebbe's clear opinion that in the event that it turns out that was no true acceptance of the yoke of mitzvos – the "conversions" are not worth the paper upon which they were written."

In relation to the rabbanim who approved the conversions,

Rabbi Druckman wrote in a letter at the beginning of last week that they are "irreparably naïve".

"It turns out," Rabbi Druckman wrote, "that already on the day after the conversion, when they were equipped with an official conversion certificate, the converts changed their guise, they don't keep Shabbos, etc. And we're not talking here about a minority, as even a beis din compared to administering angels can be unsuccessful in this, rather to our regret, this is a sizable majority. In such a case, in my humble opinion, the beis din must disqualify itself from relying upon its judgment, as it turns out that it is not sharp enough and/or is detached from the reality of today's life, to the point of incredible naïveté. In fact, they are wholeheartedly pious rabbanim, great Torah scholars – but what can you do? They're also irreparably naïve... (As we found back then, great and true rabbanim in Torah and yerei Shamayim, scholars and community leaders, but what can you do? Naïve people, who simply believed in their naïveté that they could make peace agreements with the Arabs, and that giving away territory will make things good for the Jewish People)".

RABBI DRUCKMAN: WHERE IS OUR HISKASHRUS IN LIGHT OF THIS SITUATION?

In a conversation with Rabbi Dovid Meir Druckman, the chief rabbi of Kiryat Motzkin and the rav of the Chabad community in the Krayot, he sounds pained and agitated.

Rabbi Druckman tells us a story that he heard just that morning: "This morning, I met an IDF army chaplain who

told me that they had asked him to join a military court in order to arrange "conversions", promising him that in return, he would receive a promotion and a car. However, when he saw the manner in which the army "conversions" were conducted, he decided that he would not be a party to this process and refused the offer. In reaction to this refusal, his commanding officers decided to undermine him. Despite the fact that he is a highly trained, respected, and most successful rabbi, he was not promoted in rank – simply because he refused to be a rubber stamp on invalid "conversions". Today, the army rabbinate has the atmosphere of a Mafia.

"We must realize that even with judges comparable to administering angels, there are instances when a beis din makes mistakes. However, under such circumstances, you don't disqualify an entire court due to unusual cases. But if you have an overall situation as there exists today, where any child knows that the army "conversions" are not being done seriously whatsoever, and tomorrow after the process has been concluded, "it was not known that they had gone inside of them", and none of the "converts" fulfill any of the mitzvos, in the language of halacha, this is a situation of "umdana d'muchach" (relative certainty) that there is no truth to any of these "conversions". The situation today is such that the "converts" know what they have to say during the ceremony, and they do it only for the purpose of receiving their certificate."

How can it be that great rabbanim give approval to these conversions?

"When there are rabbanim who determine matters while

WHO IS A JEW? - THE HISTORY OF THE STRUGGLE

totally cut off from reality, it's possible to give the benefit of the doubt to great rabbinical authorities who don't live among the common folk, and therefore, they surely don't recognize the situation appropriately. But I, for example, as a rav among the people, sit with couples who come to me to get married. Sometimes, one of them has undergone conversion – and I can see through a quick examination that the 'convert' never kept Shabbos to begin with, and therefore, the 'conversion' is totally worthless. How is it possible to hide one's head in the sand and rely upon such halachic concepts as 'presumed to be kosher' or 'he can not make judgment except according to what his eyes see'? Here, we're talking about a situation where from the very outset, everyone knew that they had to go before the military rabbinical court and proclaim that they accept the mitzvos. Even a 'convert' in the IDF course doesn't take the process seriously.

"Another point is that according to halacha, someone who makes a commitment to fulfill all the mitzvos, yet doesn't believe that the Torah derives from Heaven, his commitment is of no value and he is not considered a convert. Most regrettably, together with its 'conversion course', the IDF conducts courses for 'converts' on Judaism with Reform lecturers (!) who don't believe that the Torah came from Heaven. Here too, the preparation for conversion is not linked to the belief that Torah was Heaven sent.

"In the Kiryat Motzkin

The war of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach to amend the law on "Who is a Jew?" began in 5730. This was a stubborn and continuous battle. The conflict was to amend the law establishing that a Jew is someone born of a Jewish mother or one who converted. The Rebbe's war to establish that Judaism by conversion must be according to halacha.

The Rebbe's war on the issue of "Who is a Jew?" is also known by the name "*shleimus ha'Am*" – preserving the integrity of the entire Jewish People, without mixing in Gentiles who were not converted in accordance with the laws of Torah.

To this very day, the battle continues to change the law, something which still has not taken place.

Rabbi Yehuda Feldi was the chairman of the Committee for the Preservation of the Integrity of the Jewish People. Shortly after Rabbi Feldi's passing, the Rebbe appointed Rabbi Nachum Trebnik as the new chairman.

In 5737, when the Likud Party under the leadership of Mr. Menachem Begin took power in Eretz Yisroel, there were those who thought that now the opportunity had come to amend the law, and Agudat Yisroel made its entry into the governing coalition conditional upon changing the law. Begin promised that he would try and pass the amending legislation, but in fact, he didn't do anything. Chabad chassidim battled for six years in various ways, as per the Rebbe's instructions, to amend the Law of Return, but without success.

On the 19th of Elul 5743, just two weeks before the passing of Rabbi Trebnik, Menachem Begin suddenly submitted his resignation as prime minister. Rabbi Trebnik felt that this created yet another possibility to obtain government support for amending the "Who is a Jew?" law, and he opened a renewed campaign on the issue.

As soon as the prime minister's resignation became known, Rabbi Trebnik sent an urgent telegram to the religious Knesset Members: "After six years of personal promises that were not kept, the opportunity has now been given to stand for a clear and unambiguous commitment to amend the law on 'Who is a Jew?'" Several days before his passing, he wrote a sharp article regarding the obligation of every Jew to work towards the amendment of this law.

A RARE EXPRESSION

On Lag B'Omer 5730, the Rebbe participated in the parade in front of 770 Eastern Parkway. In the sicha that the Rebbe delivered on this occasion, he referred to the War of Attrition, saying that the deaths of the soldiers in battle were the result of Gentiles who emigrated from Russia being registered as Jews. The Rebbe's statement caused a great public outcry in Eretz Yisroel. It even led to an official protest in the Knesset by the prime minister, Mrs. Golda Meir. Israeli newspapers attacked the Rebbe for using the lives of soldiers as a means of attaining success in the political battle (as it were) to amend the law on "Who is a Jew?"

The Rebbe referred to these attacks during the farbrengen that took place on Shabbos Parshas B'Haalos'cha (content): Just as it's clear to me that now we are on Shabbos Parshas B'Haalos'cha at half past three, similarly, it's clear to me that the deaths of the soldiers in battle were the direct result of Gentiles being registered as Jews. The Rebbe continued to say: What can you do? That's how he sees it. Do they expect him not to say things, even when he sees it?

(from Chabadpedia, the Chabad encyclopedia)

community, there was a young woman who had been 'converted' through the rabbinate, and after a few years, a pure spirit began to awaken within her and she decided to come closer to Judaism in a truer sense. She then came to me and begged me to do another conversion! This was because when she did the previous 'conversion', she had never intended to accept the yoke of Heaven. And so it was that this time she underwent a strict halachic conversion.

"I don't want to get into the details out of respect for the rabbanim, but today, there exists a clique of officials, legal advisors, and other outside factors – and the rabbanim are afraid for their positions. Until the tenures of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and Rabbi Avraham Shapira, it could generally be said that the rabbanim were not subservient to the High Court of Justice.

"I remember as if it were today when the chief rabbinate, led by Rabbis Unterman and Nissim, ruled on the holiday of Shavuot 5730 regarding the question of 'Who is a Jew?' that the National Religious Party must resign from the government. Then, the party's chairman said – literally – that the chief rabbinate thinks that it's living according to the conditions of British mandated Palestine *r"l*. The

continuation of the story is that the NRP naturally didn't listen to the chief rabbis, and as a result, the party proposed legislation that the chief rabbis could only serve for ten years, thus forcing them to submit their resignations from their positions."

"Even on this issue, the Rebbe conducted an all-out war, and we see today how right the Rebbe was, when the chief rabbis became threatened by various outside forces. Today, if the chief rabbis would make such a halachic ruling, they wouldn't get out alive."

There are those who claim that since we are in the times of "the exiles of Tziyon", we should be lenient in conversions.

"This is an absolutely groundless and illogical claim, and the Rebbe had already referred to it in the past, bringing proofs from what occurred during the period of Ezra, when there was great excitement about a return to Tziyon, to the point that Ezra called upon the throngs to return to Eretz Yisroel. There were those who came with Gentile wives – and it would seem that they had to make 'quickie conversions' for them and joyfully accept them back to the Jewish People with their shikshas. Yet, what do we find actually happened in the Tanach? Ezra had a firm precondition for anyone who wanted to return:

First and foremost, they must get rid of their Gentile wives."

What is the message for us, Chabad chassidim, in this situation?

"First of all, as Jews, our souls are bound to the idea that no foreign seed should enter and assimilate into the Jewish People, for tomorrow that same son of a Gentile woman will come to learn in yeshiva, eventually will want to marry our daughters, and there will be a problem with such a marriage. There have already been some very unpleasant cases where people who had lived their whole lives as ultra-Orthodox Jews suddenly discovered that they had to undergo a halachically valid conversion.

"However, the main point as it pertains to our *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe on this matter naturally is that we must stir the heart of every chassid. The issue of 'Who is a Jew?' was the Rebbe's very soul, as he cried over it for years from the depths of his heart. We also see here the Rebbe's *ruach ha'kodesh* by his refusal to agree to any compromise, such as the possible suggestion that a Jew can be defined as 'someone converted by the chief rabbinate' – because the Rebbe said that it's impossible to know what the composition of the chief rabbinate will be – and we see what's happening today."

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LOST T'FILLIN IN GUATEMALA

By Binyomin Tanny

After an eight-hour journey I got off the bus. The boy who handled the bags tried offering what he thought was my US army khaki duffle bag. It almost looked like mine. However, it was missing my name, which was written in small letters along the side. Slowly we worked out what had happened.

A woman had gotten on the same bus in Guatemala City with an identical US army bag, and gotten off the bus with my bag at the previous stop. Things like this do not shock me. I try to stay amused by *Hashem's* sense of humor. I have been traveling around the world for years and had never met anyone with the same bag as me, but now in Guatemala of all places?

The boy and I jumped into a cab and rushed back to the previous bus stop. We checked all over but could not find the woman or my bag.

"Maybe she take van from here and go another place?" the boy suggested pointing to the vans that serviced various parts of the country.

It was Friday afternoon. I was hoping to catch a bus to one of the national parks before Shabbos. By late afternoon there was still no sign of the woman. I resolved to find a guesthouse. I walked through the local market scanning the area for a sign that offered accommodation. The local indigenous people sold fruit and vegetables. It was a colorful affair but my mind was focused on a backpacker's worst nightmare: The disappearance of



the backpack.'

My backpack is my home, containing everything I need to survive: clothes, a toothbrush, and juggling balls. It also has things like cables to recharge my camera and my Mp3 player, medication, contact lenses and other small things that are impossible to replace in a third world country village. But the most valuable items in the pack were my *t'fillin* and *siddur*! For the first time on my trip I put the *t'fillin* in my pack. I had never done so before. I know always to carry the *t'fillin* with me in a small bag along with things like the camera and other valuables. The one day I put my *t'fillin* in the pack is the one day that a woman in Guatemala gets on the same bus as me, with the same bag, and then gets off with mine!

I bought some bananas, avocados, and some candles to light for Shabbos. After

walking around a bit, I found a guesthouse.

"You've only got a small bag with you?" The guy running the guesthouse asked in a heavy American accent. "Is this all you travel with?"

"Today it is, because some woman has my stuff. In exchange she has left behind a bag of old clothes."

"By the way my name is Tom,"

"Ben," I said, and we shook hands.

"I've lived in Guatemala for seven years," said Tom, "If you have one electronic item in your bag forget about it. It's not coming back. The contents of your bag are worth more than the woman can make in a few years!"

Tom smiled when I mentioned that I also had \$100 US in cash hidden in the pack. I kept it there for an emergency.

"She's struck gold!" Tom continued, "But I know something that will cheer you up. My dad and I make the best banana pancakes in Guatemala and tomorrow I'll make you one for breakfast. Then we can go out and I'll show you where to find some new clothes and a new backpack. Maybe you'll even find your original pack and clothes for sale!"

I did not bother to explain to Tom that I would not eat a pancake cooked on Shabbos and that I would not do any clothes shopping either.

I lit Shabbos candles and a candle for the first night of Chanukah. I tried to daven what I could from memory. I sang a few Shabbos songs, and had my bananas and avocados.

Having nothing was incredible. I tried to embrace the experience and savor the feeling. It was something I could not put fully into words. It brought me to some sort of place where I could sense my true self and feel some of the divine inside of me.

Tom was curious about the Shabbos and Chanukah candles and we spoke about Jewish stuff. I also told him about the *t'fillin* that cost \$1200 and that this was the most valuable item in the backpack.

"If you have this special spiritual item in the pack, G-d will get you your bag back."

"From your mouth to G-d's

ears," I replied.

I gazed intently at the burning Shabbos and Chanukah candles. The lost *t'fillin* came to mind. They were a special pair; a gift from *Hashem*.

At my bar mitzva I received a very large and heavy pair of Chabad style *t'fillin*. Since then I became active with outdoor adventure; running trails, climbing mountains, and bicycling long distances. Carrying a large and heavy item like the *t'fillin* on these outdoor treks was annoying especially if I were doing a 24-hour adventure race. One night I made a decision that on the next adventure trip I would not take my *t'fillin*.

The following morning my mother called.

"Guess what! You won a raffle."

This did not surprise me because I seem blessed at winning raffles. Maybe this time it was dinner for two at a non-kosher restaurant or some other useless thing. I usually forget when I even buy a raffle ticket.

"Remember two months ago you gave me money to put in a Chinese auction? Well I put in for the stuff you wanted but there was some leftover money so I put in for *t'fillin*. You won the *t'fillin* of your choice valued at up to \$1,200!"

I emailed the scribe in Israel who was responsible for organizing the prize.

"I want the smallest and most *mehudar t'fillin* that you can make with every *chumra* (stringency) possible." He wrote back, "For \$1200 we can make you very good *t'fillin*!"

"I will miss these *t'fillin* – the ones I have lost," I said to myself as I gazed at the candles. "They were special to me, but if *Hashem* gave them to me in the most unusual way, then he can take them back in a most unusual way.

Later after saying *Shma* I spoke to *Hashem*. It is one of the few times in my life that I truly felt like I was talking to G-d and that he was listening. It seemed like one of the only times that I really prayed.

"*Hashem* you can keep the backpack, all the cables and the rechargers, malaria medication and contact lenses. You can keep the \$100, and even my five favorite juggling balls, but since my Bar Mitzva I have not missed a day of putting *t'fillin* on. When Sunday morning comes, if you want me to put on *t'fillin*, you better get me a pair, because it is up to You. Even if I try to get to Guatemala City where I can find *t'fillin*, the chances of me getting there by sunset on Sunday are not high. It's a long trip away. There needs to be a bus going, I need a seat, and you need to arrange that there will be no landslides that block the roads, bus breakdowns, riots, wars, or rebel activity. So between you and me, it is probably easier for you *Hashem*, to organize my *t'fillin* to come back, than to organize a miracle where a bus will not break down in a third world country!"

It is the only time in my life I felt I davened with complete bittul. There was absolutely nothing I could do about the

“Hashem you can keep the backpack, all the cables and the rechargers, malaria medication and contact lenses. You can keep the \$100, and even my five favorite juggling balls... but when Sunday morning comes, if you want me to put on t'fillin, you better get me a pair, because it is up to You.

situation other than ask Hashem for His help.

Shabbos morning after davening what I could by heart, I walked to the bus station. There was still no word or sign of my bag. The man working there tried to comfort me, "This is Guatemala, no bag ever come back. You can have this bag of woman's clothing," He said, offering me the duffle bag belonging to the woman.

"No thanks," I said. I had no use for the women's bag of old clothing.

I found Tom at the guesthouse

and asked him if he could help me with a police report. His Spanish was better than mine.

"I don't get it," Tom said, shaking his head. "You've got these *t'fillin* things, so G-d has to get them back to you"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I'm not giving up," Tom continued, "We're going back to the bus station."

Twenty minutes later we were standing in the station again. The man working there smiled at us and presented my bag fully intact.

"This is first time I see in Guatemala! Yesterday woman

travel five hours. Come home late at night and see she have wrong bag. So she travel back five hours and hope she find her bag still here!"

I was happy and about to explain that I could not carry the bag back because it was Shabbos.

"It will be an honor to carry this bag," said Tom. He lifted it over his shoulder and we walked back to the guesthouse.

"Do you still want that banana pancake?" Tom asked me when we arrived at the guesthouse.

"Maybe tomorrow," I smiled.

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OUR DEFENSE STRATEGY

By R' Heschel Greenberg,

Founder and Director of the Jewish Discovery Center in Buffalo, NY



When Moses pleads with G-d to spare the Jewish people for having worshipped the golden calf, he presents several arguments in their defense, the first of which is:

“Why, O G-d, should Your anger be kindled against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand?”

What defense exactly is Moses presenting here on behalf of the Jewish people?

Presumably, his argument is: Why would G-d perform such miracles for a people He was going to destroy? Or in other words: Why would He destroy a people in whom He had invested so much? However, if that was a valid defense it could also be used to debate any and all punishment for sin. Why would G-d perform miracles for a people and then punish them?

In addition, the defense that G-d took them out with “great power and with a strong hand” could work against them. It can be presented as a strong argument to magnify their guilt. G-d could have replied to Moses, ‘Look at the ungrateful nation who returned My kindness to them with unfaithfulness!’

We can answer this question and understand the import of Moses’ defense in light of the

Rebbe’s analysis of the paragraph in the Hagada that describes G-d’s role in the Exodus from Egypt:

“We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. And G-d took us out of there with a powerful hand and an outstretched arm. And if G-d had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt we, our children and our children’s children would still be subservient to Pharaoh in Egypt.”

The Rebbe cites the following question raised by commentators:

How can it be said that if G-d had not taken us out of Egypt “we and our children and children’s children would still be slaves in Egypt?” Wasn’t our father Abraham told that his descendants would be slaves for 400 years? That means that after 400 years they would be free even without any special act of Divine intervention. Why then do we attribute our freedom to a special act of G-d?

The Rebbe answers that when the Jewish nation was liberated from Egypt they had not fulfilled their mission there. Their objective was to refine the world that had been tainted by the sin of Adam and Eve’s partaking of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the persecution they endured, the Jewish people had so assimilated the Egyptian life style that they had become essentially indistinguishable from the Egyptians.

Logic and justice would have demanded that they remain as slaves in Egypt until such time that they succeed in achieving their goal of refinement. This means that we would have to remain in Egyptian exile until the Messianic Age. The 400-year deadline was based on the assumption and premise that they would have succeeded in their mission of refining the world. Failure to do that would seem to demand that they remain in exile indefinitely.

In order for G-d to liberate them then, He had to “pass over” and override His own attribute of justice, which still demanded that they remain slaves in Egypt until “mission accomplished.”

G-d did not pay any attention to the legitimate demand of strict justice to have them remain in Egypt. Instead, He used His “great power and strong hand” to overrule that demand of justice, and He liberated them from Egyptian bondage prematurely despite the “objection” of His attribute of justice.

However, as a result of their premature departure they were still under the influence of the Egyptian exile. This meant that while they were physically out of Egypt, the Egyptian mindset had not been expunged from their system.

We can now understand the import of Moses’ defense of the Jewish people. By stating that

G-d had liberated the Jews with “great power and with a strong hand” Moses was not attempting to underscore the great miracles that accompanied the Exodus. Rather he was suggesting that G-d could not have any real complaints against them for having regressed, considering the fact that they were taken out of Egypt prematurely by G-d’s exercising “His great power and strong hand.” If not for G-d’s intervention at that time we would not have left Egypt, and we would have essentially assimilated totally into the Egyptian way of life.

Moses’ argument thus was that their behavior was the result of G-d’s having taking them out of Egypt prematurely and that they could not be held totally accountable for their misbehavior. When they left Egypt they took the Egyptian galut mentality with them, and it was this that influenced them to stray from the Torah. Moses thus argued successfully that under these circumstances their sin was pardonable and that they deserved to be spared.

We can now understand how the next verse follows on and flows from this one. In the next verse Moses advances what seems to be a second defense of the Jewish people: “Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out with evil intent to kill them in the mountains and to annihilate them from upon the face of the earth.’” The question can be raised, why would they assume that G-d took them out of Egypt to destroy them? Would not the average observer consider that He destroyed them because they sinned after their liberation?

However, in light of the above explanation of Moses’ defense, this charge of the nation follows

“Moses’ argument thus was that their behavior was the result of G-d’s having taking them out of Egypt prematurely and that they could not be held totally accountable for their misbehavior.”

logically from the preceding defense of Moses. If the Jewish people were not ready to leave Egypt and required a special show of strength by G-d, why then did G-d liberate them? The answer that they might have offered could have been that G-d liberated them not because He chose them as His nation but, on the contrary, that it was because they were so evil that they had to be separated from Egypt and destroyed.

But such an argument would have led to a terrible distortion since it really would have implied that the Jewish people were worse than the Egyptians and, thus, would have given them license to continue in their evil ways with impunity.

What lesson can be derived from Moses’ argument to G-d in our own day and age?

The fact that G-d accepted Moses’ argument can also serve as a defense of our behavior as a people throughout our existence in exile. Exile is a stifling and debilitating experience. Exile, and the mentality it engenders, desensitizes us to everything spiritual and G-dly. G-d cannot therefore hold our inadequacies against us as long as He keeps us in exile.

To be sure, as individuals, we cannot look for excuses to justify our errant behavior. The fact that we know that we are in exile and that we are well aware of exile’s effects on us should motivate us to resist exile and get it out of

our system. This we can do by learning about Moshiach and living our lives in consonance with Moshiach ideals. However, as a people we have a right, even an obligation, to come before G-d and defend our/His people by citing the destructive force of exile.

And while G-d does not threaten us with annihilation as He did then—G-d forbid—we are going through an unprecedented period of spiritual devastation by virtue of the high rate of assimilation that has plagued the Jewish community in the last century, and particularly in the last few decades.

We therefore must approach G-d now as did Moses then and plead as we do in our daily prayers, “Why is He allowing us to lose so many of our brethren because of exile conditions? Bring an end to the destructive forces of exile that threaten to consume large segments of the Jewish nation.”

If we are guilty of creating our own “golden calves” it is because we are products of millennia of exile. And it is only by virtue of G-d’s “great power and strong hand” that we have survived at all. Therefore, we respectfully “demand” of G-d that He take us out of exile by simultaneously taking the exile out of us and keeping the promise He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to bring us back to our land with the true and complete redemption, now!

THE SHLIACH WITH A HEART OF GOLD

The Chassid R' Avrohom Dunin a"h passed away on 21 Teves at the age of 73. He was a modest, humble Chassid, yet accomplished so much.

* The following article is based on a series of interviews several years ago. * Part 1

Interview by Chaim Cohen

BIGHEARTED ASKAN

Tell us a little about your family background.

My roots are in the Chassidic town of Pahar in Belarus, which is in the same region as the famous town of Homil. The Chassidic families Levitin and Gorelick are among the families whose roots go back to my family's hometown, which was known for its great Chassidim. The original name of my family was Danin, but here in Eretz Yisroel it was changed to Dunin.

My grandfather a"h was a balabus (working man). He came to Eretz Yisroel via Manchuria and Egypt. My father, R' Tanchum a"h was about thirteen when his parents immigrated. They settled in Haifa and soon began working the land. I remember that they had a large chicken coop and barn.

R' Tanchum had two brothers and three sisters. At that time, religious life in Haifa wasn't

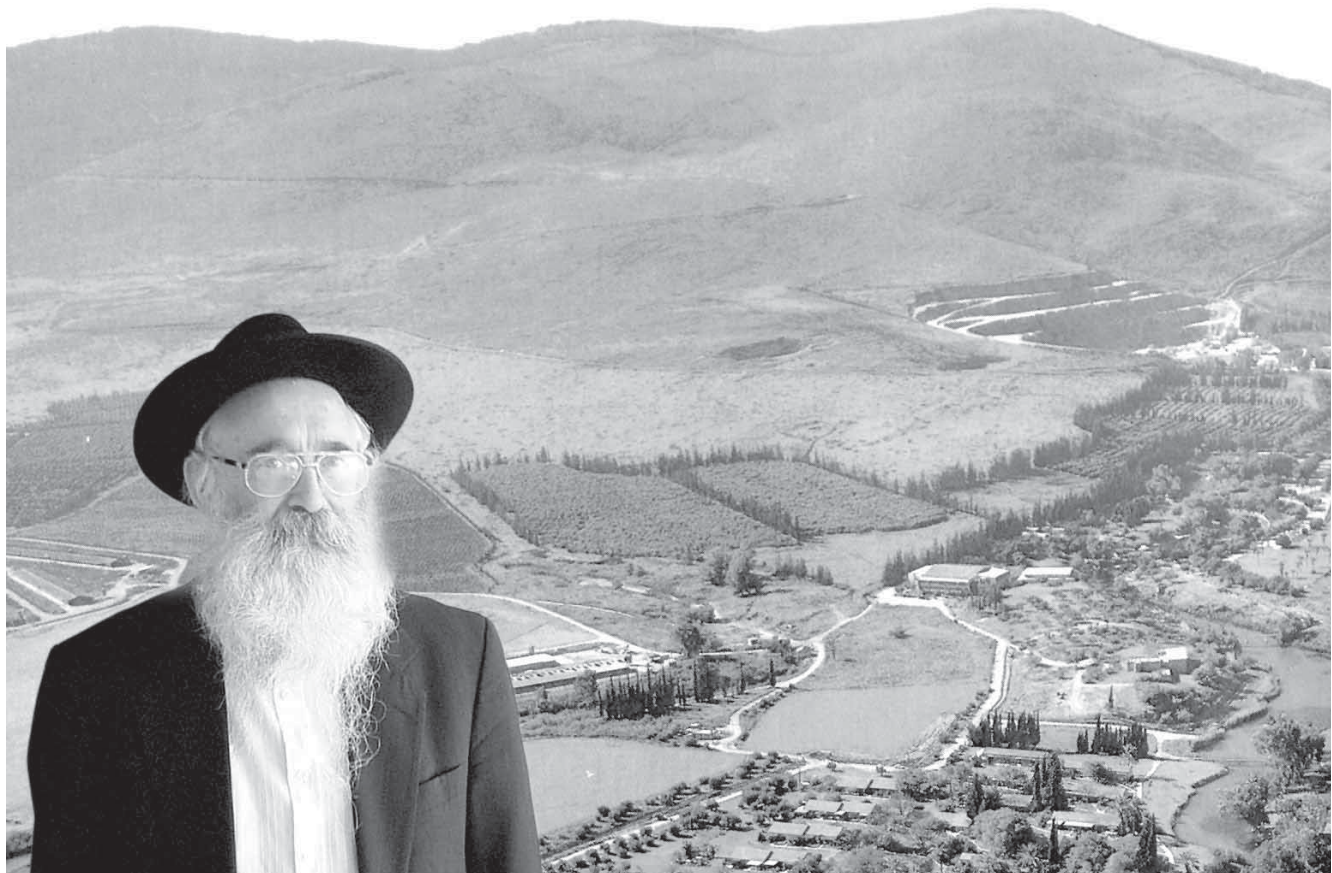
that great. When you look at how things are today, with Haifa full of shluchim and outreach activities, it's hard to picture how it was back then, in the years before the establishment of the State. Some of R' Tanchum's children veered off the path. One of the sisters moved to the United States, where she spent a few years and then returned.

My father left Haifa for Yerushalayim, where the spiritual atmosphere was considerably better. He went to the home of the famous Rabbi Aryeh Levin (whose biography is entitled *A Tzaddik in our Time*) where he was welcomed as a member of the family. After a long period in Yerushalayim, his family asked him to return home. My father, a *masmid* (diligent student) by nature, and gifted with fear of heaven from birth, looked for an appropriate place to learn Torah. When he didn't find what he was looking for, he spoke with the rav of the city at the time, Rabbi

Marcus, who agreed to take him on as a student.

After some time, a learned and dignified looking man came to Haifa from Lithuania, with the goal to start a yeshiva. His name was Rabbi Rabman. He spoke to Rabbi Marcus, who referred him to Tanchum Dunin, the first young man to learn in his yeshiva.

That is how Tanchum Dunin, descendent of a Chassidic family from Pahar, was educated as a Litvak. Nevertheless, and despite his being orphaned from his father at a young age, his Chassidic roots were deeply entrenched. He davened from a tattered Nusach Chabad Siddur which had belonged to his father. Since at that time it wasn't possible to buy new editions of the Siddur, that is the only one he used. Although he was in a Litvishe yeshiva, he continued to use the old, worn-out Siddur and furthermore, he put on t'fillin according to Chabad custom and would immerse in the river



R' Avrohom Dunin with the settlements of Chevel Taanach in the background

daily, which is definitely not what Litvishe yeshiva bachurim normally do.

A shidduch was suggested for Tanchum. Her name was Faige Raizel, the daughter of R' Shmuel Benzion Kogan, who held a rabbinic position in the Haifa yeshiva. After he married Faige Raizel, R' Tanchum worked in yeshiva, later starting the Tanchuma Talmud Torah (elementary school) in Haifa which lasted until the government passed the mandatory education law, and he continued teaching until he retired.

In general, my father was an active askan (communal worker) who had a big heart and helped everyone at no benefit to himself. I'll give you a typical example of his work. There was a time when they decided to destroy the municipal bathhouse in order to rebuild a more modern one. For some reason, the city people in

charge forgot about the mikva for men there and people in Haifa were left without a mikva.

My father sprang into action when he heard about this. Others might have done nothing, but not my father. He rushed to build a mikva in the yard of our home which served all the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in the city. There were days that he had to heat the mikva with a simple plug-in "immersion heater," and other times that he was forced to break the ice.

It's interesting that even when a mikva was built by the city, many people still came to immerse in our mikva because of my father's dedication.

My father also worked to promote the sanctity of Shabbos, and thanks to him, the city decided to begin announcing the imminent coming of the Shabbos Queen with a siren that echoed throughout the neighborhood.

This project entailed plenty of difficulties, but that didn't deter him.

Hundreds of students still remember him, whether from the Talmud Torah or from Yeshivas Tiferes Yisroel. He passed away on Shabbos, and someone who paid a Shiva call said the following interesting anecdote. That Shabbos, the Admur of Seret-Vizhnitz did not feel well, and so he did not attend the davening in shul and did not conduct a *tish*. Yet, on Motzaei Shabbos, when he heard about the passing of R' Tanchum, he said he would attend the funeral. His family firmly opposed this, in light of his poor health, but he attended the funeral anyway and also paid a Shiva call.

So is it your father from whom you inherited the "activist gene", in addition to your Chassidic roots? And that is how you came to Chabad?

MIRACLE BABY

While I was learning in Yeshivas Ponovezh, my older sister Zahava Markowitz was already married. I told her about my growing interest in Chabad. One day, something happened which convinced her to become connected to the Rebbe.

There were problems with her pregnancy, and blood tests results indicated uncertainty as to whether the fetus was still alive. My sister's condition was not good. Since I was already mekushar to the Rebbe, I convinced her to write to the Rebbe about what the doctors were saying. The Rebbe's answer was surprisingly delayed.

A few months later – and the delay in the response surprised me – the Rebbe's answer arrived, and it said: **In response to your letter in which you write what the doctors say etc. – do not pay attention to their opinion at all and her heart should be confident that Hashem will complete the days of her pregnancy and she will give birth easily to a healthy child.**

And that's what happened. The baby was born b'shaa tova u'mutzalachas, healthy and strong. This miracle baby is R' Nachum Markowitz.

what he meant when he asked whether I **learned** Chassidus. He told me about an underground Tanya shiur in Bnei Brak for bachurim like me. I decided to give it a try.

I was excited to attend, and when I got there and looked around, I saw dozens of bachurim my age, Litvish like me, sitting around a table and hanging on to every word uttered by R' Leib Zalmanov, who was a gifted teacher. We first learned Kuntres U'Maayan and then Tanya. The next day, Eli asked me what I thought of the shiur. I told him I enjoyed it very much, both the content and the delivery. I felt that I was hearing things that were different than any Musar talk I had ever heard.

I felt that what I had learned there wasn't merely a significant addition to all the Torah I had learned, but an inseparable part of it. I wanted to continue to learn and maybe even adopt this approach. Eli suggested that I learn with his father once a week.

At that time, the Lubavitchers did not have a permanent place for davening, learning and farbrenging. R' Leib was in the process of constructing an addition to his house. In the meantime, he had set aside part of his home for a Chabad shul which I would go to on Shabbos. That is how my life began to change completely, and I soon became a Lubavitcher Chassid.

I should mention that back then, aside from the underground shiurim in Chassidus, the Chassid R' Refael (Folya) Kahn would come sometimes and farbreng, and his farbrengens made a deep impression on us.

When did your connection with the Rebbe begin?

It began at that same time when I began to learn chassidus,

“In my time, in the early 50's, very few Chassidim had been to see the Rebbe. International travel was still in its infancy, and a ticket was much more expensive then than it is today.

I was raised Litvish. I attended a well-known Litvishe elementary school and then went to Ateres Yisroel for high school. Following that I learned in Ponovezh in Bnei Brak. That was in 5714/1954. I became friendly with a bachur by the name of Eliyahu Landau, the son of the previous Rav of Bnei Brak, Rabbi Yaakov Landau a"h, and a maggid shiur today in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Kfar Chabad. I knew they were Lubavitchers, but it didn't mean that much to me at the time, since Eliyahu never discussed the topic with me.

While in Ponovezh I would often visit the Chassidic battei midrash in the city and would occasionally attend Chassidic *tishim*. It's not that I was looking for any deeper meaning in life. I was simply curious to see what

their lives were like. Nor did I miss a single talk or drasha (sermon) of any Torah figure who ever came to Bnei Brak.

THE FIRST SHIUR IN CHASSIDUS

One day, I invited Eli Landau to go with me to a Musar talk given by someone from Bnei Brak. When it was over, he expressed his displeasure, saying this wasn't the right approach, but I had thought it was a good speech.

“Do you learn Chassidus?” asked Eli, in the heat of our conversation.

“Of course,” I immediately responded. “There is no tish or Chassidic event that I pass up.”

Eli explained that this is not

specifically when I wrote a letter to the Rebbe for the first time. I informed him that I was of Chabad Chassidic stock and, that I was a talmid in yeshivas Ponovezh. I explained that I had started learning Chassidus, and I asked for a bracha. The Rebbe's answer began with the words: **In response to your letter in which you write that it was awakened within you "the rock from which you were hewn," that you are of Chabad Chassidic lineage.**" At the end of the letter the Rebbe advised me to speak with Chabad rabbanim.

How did your parents react to this significant change in your life?

My father wasn't that happy about the change, and he even expressed his displeasure with my behavior, but when I said I wanted to switch to Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lud that was in Pardes, he didn't oppose that.

When the time came, I went to Lud and spent a few hours in the yeshiva. I don't need to describe to you the poor physical conditions there, which is what scared me off from learning in that yeshiva. I should mention that in those years, besides the difficult situation in Chabad yeshivos, there had been the murderous attack on the vocational school in Kfar Chabad, which added to the general negative feeling.

I wrote to the Rebbe and brought him up to date, and I didn't hide my feelings of hesitation about learning in Lud. A few days later I received the Rebbe's response, in which he advised me to learn Siman 27 in Igeres HaKodesh. After I did so, and was encouraged by the arrival of special shluchim in Kfar Chabad after the attack, I

switched to the yeshiva in Pardes in 5716.

Rumor has it that your brother, the unforgettable mashpia R' Reuven a"h, went to yeshiva because of you.

Reuven was my older brother, and his childhood was different from mine. While I learned in yeshiva, he farmed and occasionally opened a Jewish book. When he decided he wanted to get back into learning, my father registered him in Yarchei Kalla in Bnei Brak, but he didn't last there.

By this time, I considered myself a Lubavitcher, and I switched to Pardes. On off-Shabbasos, when I went home, I often met my brother. We would occasionally talk about the changes in my life, and he got to hear ideas he was unfamiliar with. I told him about the yeshiva in Lud, and because of his learning sifrei Chassidus etc., he decided he wanted to learn in Pardes too.

A few days later, Reuven and my father came to the yeshiva, and he began learning there.

HEAVENLY JOURNEY

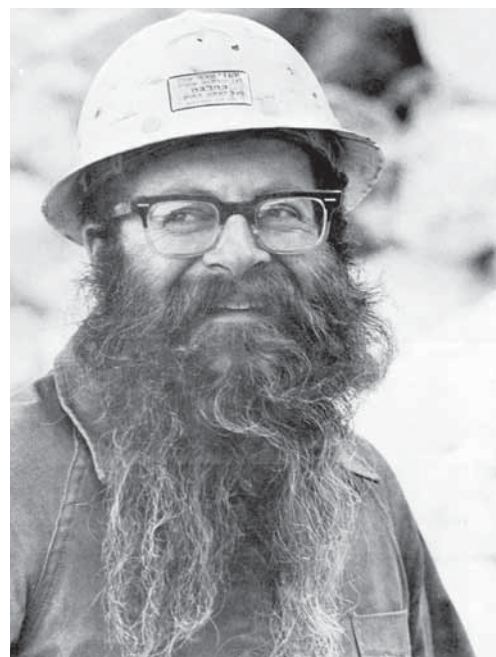
When you learned in Pardes, did bachurim yearn to travel to the Rebbe as they do nowadays?

In my time, in the early 50's, very few Chassidim had been to see the Rebbe. International travel was still in its infancy, and a ticket was much more expensive then than it is today. There was a general feeling of yearning to see the Rebbe, but there weren't many ways to realize this dream.

A bachur back then had many obstacles to overcome if he wanted to travel to the Rebbe. He needed a certificate from a high ranking official guaranteeing his return to the country by a certain date as specified in the certificate.



Rabbi Aryeh Levin welcomed me and treated me like his son



His brother, the mashpia R' Reuven Dunin

People quickly agreed to the terms, but since they wanted to spend a long time with the Rebbe, they often broke their agreement. As a result, the army stopped granting visas. Whoever wanted

to go to the Rebbe was faced with an insurmountable wall.

When my friend Avrohom Sossonkin and I were learning there, we wanted to see the Rebbe very badly. We were well aware of the problems we would face in trying to obtain visas, but we decided that we had to try anyway.

We discussed which important government official would be the most appropriate to approach. Obviously, he would have to be a distinguished person who had an appreciation for Chassidus and the Rebbe. First we thought of Shneur Zalman Shazar, who held a senior position in government circles. However, we immediately dismissed that idea since we knew that his signature wasn't worth very much after he had signed for some bachurim who hadn't returned on time.

The reality is, though, that when two bachurim decide they have to go to the Rebbe, they discover untapped resources of creativity. We decided to approach Yona Keseh, who was originally from Yeketrinislav and was also a personal friend of the Rebbe's family. He held a high position as the executive secretary of the central Mapai party, and he had connections with the right places. In order to get to him we needed a recommendation letter, and so we spoke with R' Nachum Goldschmid, also originally from Yeketrinislav.

R' Nachum referred us to R' Pinye Altheus, the indefatigable

askan, and when he heard the request he burst out laughing. I guessed we weren't the only ones who asked him this question.

"We need a visa for a year abroad," we told him. He refused to help us, saying that on too many occasions, people had given a date but then they overstayed the time by which they had promised to return. We finally arrived at a compromise in which we said we'd write to the Rebbe and ask for his advice.

I should tell you that R' Pinye was a real Chassid. He promised to help us leave the country if the okay came from the Rebbe. We wrote to the Rebbe, and a few days later the secretaries relayed the message: Help the T'mimim to the best of your ability so they can see the Rebbe.

Pinye took advantage of his connections with Keseh and asked him to allow us to leave the country for an extended period of time. Keseh on his part gave the certificate and took advantage of his connections as well, but despite this, we were still not granted permission to leave the country.

The visit to Yona Keseh was planned for the summer. During the time remaining until the visit, we submitted our papers again and again and it was only before Pesach that we received the wonderful news that we had gotten visas to leave the country and to remain abroad for an extended period of time. That is how we landed in America

on Erev Pesach 5720/1960 and headed for Beis Chayeinu, 770.

I remember my first moments in the Rebbe's presence. First, we davened Mincha with the Rebbe, and then the Rebbe gave out shmura matza to the people who were there.

Did the Rebbe give you any special attention at that time?

I did experience something special which occurred at that time. It was after I received the shmura matza from the Rebbe. I decided to remain standing there near the Rebbe in order to watch what was going on. Since I had already finished my preparations for Pesach, I remained there in *Gan Eden HaTachton* near the Rebbe. Opposite the door of the room, near the stairs that led to the second floor, was a bench, and I stood on it in this strategic location in order to watch the matza distribution.

On the other side of the hall, on the side of the door of *Gan Eden HaElyon*, were two tables, one on top of the other, with a child on top who was watching the scene, like me. Suddenly, in the middle of giving out matza, the Rebbe turned to the child and asked: Did you get already? Then why are you standing there?

As soon as I heard this, I knew whom the Rebbe was referring to, and I quickly left.

[To be continued, G-d willing]

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TO BRING MOSHIACH NOW!