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THE GIFTED GIVING THEMSELVES OVER TO G-D

At first glance it is difficult to understand how the narrative of the production of the covers of the Sanctuary, which were spun from goat hair, is relevant to us. This was strictly a onetime activity necessary for the construction of the Sanctuary in the desert. It is something that is not even applicable to the Third Holy Temple (which won't need to be fashioned on our part at all, for "it is built and stands ready, etc."). * These wise women devoted their talents to making G-d's Sanctuary notwithstanding the fact that it was within their capacity to utilize their special talents for their personal concerns instead...

Translated by Boruch Merkur

THE GIFT OF EXTRAORDINARY CRAFTSMANSHIP

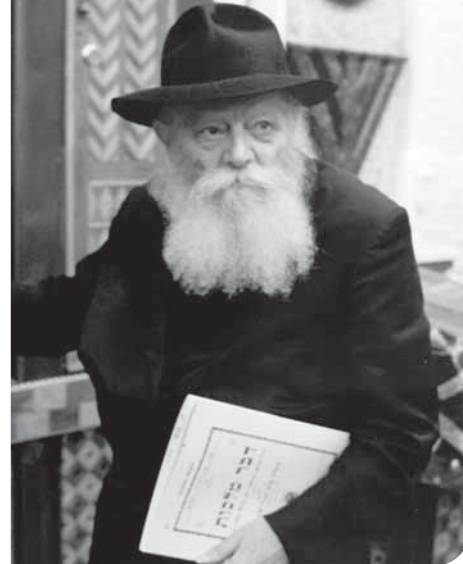
On the verse, "And all the women whose hearts uplifted them with wisdom spun the goats' hair," Rashi comments that the intent of "spun the goats' hair" is that "this was extraordinary craftsmanship, for they spun the hair from upon the goats [i.e., prior to it being shorn, a very difficult process but one that preserves its luster]."

Now, this verse comes in continuation of the verse, "And every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands," adding that there were women "whose hearts uplifted them with wisdom,"

meaning these were not typical "wise-hearted" women; these were women "whose hearts **uplifted them** with wisdom." That is, there wisdom exceeded that of the other women mentioned (in the previous verse, described as being "wise-hearted") with respect to the craft of spinning. To that extent, their spinning was in a manner of "from upon the goats." [...]

The lesson from Rashi's commentary, understood at the inner dimension, emerges from a general question on our Torah portion:

At first glance it is difficult to understand how the narrative of the production of *yerios ha'izim*, etc., the covers of the Sanctuary,



which were spun from goat hair, is relevant to us. This was strictly a onetime activity necessary for the construction of the Sanctuary in the desert. It is something that is not even applicable to the Third Holy Temple (which won't need to be fashioned on our part at all, for "it is built and stands ready, etc.").

But this process teaches us the following lesson. The women "whose hearts uplifted them with wisdom" understood that since G-d had granted them a special talent that other women did not possess, surely the purpose for which they were given this talent is for the sake of the construction of the Mishkan, G-d's Sanctuary.

Notwithstanding the fact that they were not commanded, *per se*, to do [work that can only be described as] "extraordinary craftsmanship," nevertheless, they knew that they had a rare gift, superior wisdom [in a very specialized craft], and that the intent of this gift is for them to contribute something special to the Sanctuary. Thus, they sought a means whereby they could contribute to the Sanctuary, utilizing their unique craftsmanship, resulting in their spinning the goats' hair.

So too, when a person

perceives that G-d has given him something special, unique, certainly the intent is not for him to enjoy it on his own but in order for him to contribute something extra special to G-d's Sanctuary, to make the world into a dwelling place for G-d Alm-ghty.

These wise women devoted their talents to making G-d's Sanctuary notwithstanding the fact that it was within their capacity to utilize their special talents for their personal concerns instead. For example, to cook tasty meals, or to buy themselves exquisite dresses. (Naturally, a dress that is in accordance with the Code of Jewish Law, free of *shaatnez*.) And since such a woman is gifted with talent, she can select a beautiful outfit, or she knows which type of carpet to buy – what to buy and how to set it up in the home. And thereafter she can show all her neighbors how ... “The wisest of women built her home” (Mishlei 14:1). The Torah teaches here that women should seek out how to utilize their talents in order to contribute to the Sanctuary. They do not suffice with using the goats' milk for breakfast or for lunch. Rather, they “spun the goats' hair” and make of it the coverings for the Sanctuary. [...]

This is the lesson learned from the production of the goat hair coverings. One must know that everything that G-d gives is intended to be used for making of it a dwelling place for G-d. The well-known story about the chassid of the Alter Rebbe (printed in *HaTamim*) illustrates this. As the story goes, the chassid, a merchant, once earned an unusually high profit from his business dealings. He knew, however, with certainty that the

“There is an emissary of the Rebbe within each of his chassidim, who pushes the chassid, and if he is sleeping he comes to him in a dream, demanding: What have you done today, yesterday, and the day before, in order to disseminate the wellsprings of chassidus?!”

money was not intended for him. Rather, immediately a fundraiser for the Rebbe would arrive and the chassid resolved that he would give him the money to give to the Rebbe. The chassid knew that if he profits in his business in an unusual manner, certainly it is incumbent upon him to give it to the Rebbe.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO SPREAD THE TEACHINGS OF CHASSIDUS?

Indeed, there is an emissary of the Rebbe Rayatz within each of his chassidim, who pushes him, and if he is sleeping he comes to him in a dream, demanding: What have you done today, yesterday, and the day before, in order to disseminate the wellsprings of chassidus?!

It is vital to know that the intent of everything that G-d gives is to make of it a dwelling place for G-d. It is just that since G-d is good, and the nature of those who are good is to be benevolent, “leftovers” remain for one's personal matters. From the fact that one gives “a fifth to Pharaoh” – [an allusion to G-d Himself, as mentioned in the Zohar (Chelek 1 210a)] “in whom all revelations shine” – “four parts shall be for you.” Within the realm of holiness, G-d reciprocates in a manner of “from whence **all revelations** are emitted and shine.” However, with regard to material concerns, only “four parts” are “emitted,”

etc. The main thing is what one gives up for holiness. And as it is explained in the Midrash (Shmos Rabba 35:1): Gold was created only for the sake of the Holy Temple; it is only in the sense of “leftovers,” etc., that gold is also used by the entire world.

THE EVIL INCLINATION AGREES

At first glance, one could argue that since he gives a fifth to charity, why should he give more than that? In particular, the Evil Inclination comes and tells him that from his perspective, he doesn't care and he agrees that he should give, but in so doing he is going to deprive his household... In other matters he slights his household for the sake of his own benefit but here all of a sudden he says that what he is personally lacking doesn't bother him. What does bother him? That his household will lose out... Thus, he is told [in order to end the debate with the Evil Inclination] that the intent is not for himself but to make for G-d a dwelling place.

In everything one must find a means whereby it can be used to add to the Sanctuary, to the extent that we take a “naughty goat” and make of it *yerios*, covers which Moshiach will use for the Holy Temple. ■

(Selections from the address of Shabbos Parshas VaYakhel 5736, *bilti muga*)



THE REBBE ON MUSIC

A compilation of stories about song and niggunim of the Rebbe. *
Presented for the month of Adar, the month of simcha.

By Lev Leibman

From his book "Negina L'Or HaChassidus"

MUSICAL INSTRUCTIONS

On Motzaei Simchas Torah 5729/1968, after Havdala, R' Shmuel Katan, a violinist from Yugoslavia (who now lives in Kfar Chabad) was present at kos shel bracha in 770. He took his violin, with permission and the encouragement of the Rebbe, and began playing the niggun, "Essen Est Zich."

The Rebbe turned to him and to everyone's surprise, told the violinist, "*Pianissimo!*" (Italian for very soft).

Then he played "U'faratzta." R' Shmuel was used to playing this niggun at performances for "Evenings With Chabad" with certain creative variances. Now too, he played with slight changes and each time he made a change,

the Rebbe motioned to him with his hand and said, "*Dos iz nusach Eretz Yisroel*" (that is the version of Eretz Yisroel). Then the Rebbe told him that R' Zeira fasted one hundred fasts in order to forget Talmud Bavli (in order to learn Talmud Yerushalmi) and concluded, "Now play U'faratzta nusach Bavel." R' Shmuel felt that the Rebbe was hinting to

him to “forget” what he was accustomed to doing.

Then the Rebbe instructed him to play “Ki B'Simcha Seitze'u.” Here too, the Rebbe used a word from the musical lexicon to instruct him how to play, “*Crescendo*” (a gradual increase in volume).

R' Shmuel did not hear this because of the loud singing so the Rebbe said, “**The opposite of *pianissimo*!**” Nobody present (aside from him) understood what the Rebbe was saying.

THEY COPY US

At the 15 Tamuz 5745/1985 farbrengen, the Rebbe said that when they sing, “Sh'yibaneh Beis HaMikdash” down here, in this world, they are singing it up there, in Gan Eden!

The Rebbe Rayatz, at the Purim 5709 farbrengen said:

When a niggun of the Rebbe is sung (referring to the Alter Rebbe), he is singing at the same time with the Chassidim in Gan Eden.

On another occasion he said: The singing of the “Dalet Bavos” is a knock on the door of the Alter Rebbe in Gan Eden HaElyon.

THE REBBE TEACHES A NIGGUN FROM GAN EDEN

The night of Simchas Torah 5722, the Rebbe taught “An'im Z'miros.” The Rebbe spoke briefly about the origin of the niggun and R' Reuven Dunin a”h heard the complete story from the Rebbe in yechidus at that time. He related:

There was a wealthy man who owned a large piece of property that was surrounded by large open areas and which bordered on the land of Polish noblemen.

Every Shabbos he would walk for hours in the afternoon on the grounds surrounding his property until it became time for Mincha and the third Shabbos meal and then he would return to his property.

One Shabbos, as he strolled deep in thought, he ventured further than he usually did. When he emerged from his thoughts he found himself on the edge of his property. The border between his property and the neighboring Pole's property was marked by a stream over which there was a small wooden bridge. On the other side of the stream he saw a hut that looked like it was about to collapse and he thought he heard the sound of crying. His compassion was aroused and he decided to see if he could be of help.

He crossed the bridge and approached the hut which had a mezuzah that let him know the occupants were Jewish. He knocked on the door and when he entered the ramshackle dwelling, he saw a few little children crying on the floor with their mother sitting nearby. He introduced himself as the owner of the property next door and apologized, “I never knew that Jews lived right nearby. Can I help you in some way?”

The woman replied sadly, “No, our situation is such that no one can help us. We owe the nobleman an enormous sum of money. Our debt grew month by month and the nobleman imprisoned my husband in the pit. If, by Sunday afternoon, he won't get all his money, he will take my husband out and kill him and evict us!”

The wealthy man was taken aback but then he said, “Perhaps I can help you nonetheless. I know the nobleman and I am

well to do. Please tell me the sum of money that is needed to free your husband.”

The woman grimaced and said the amount was huge and amounted to tens of thousands of rubles. The man went back home and when Shabbos was over he began working feverishly for the poor man's release. He made a precise accounting of his net worth and saw that all he owned was not worth much more than the amount that was needed. He then sold all his fields and a sizable amount of his property and by Sunday morning he had the ability to pay off the debt.

He immediately went to the nobleman and said he wanted to redeem the prisoner. The nobleman laughed and asked him if he knew what amount of money was involved. The wealthy man said he did and the deal was quickly concluded. The surprised nobleman released the unfortunate prisoner. The man's health was extremely poor and the wealthy man escorted him home where his happy family rejoiced.

The wealthy man returned home and soon realized that his now small property was not profitable. With his remaining money he rented a small house on the edge of the nearest town and began trying his luck once again in business.

One night, a few days after he had settled in to his new home, the poor man he had rescued came to him in a dream. “After suffering for a few days, I died today. Since in my lifetime I was a hidden tzaddik, they decreed in heaven that I should immediately enter Gan Eden. However, in Gan Eden they did not allow me to enter before I paid back what I owe you. So I've come to repay the debt and I am ready to ensure

“The dead man began pleading, “Please, ask me for something else you want and I’ll make sure to fulfill your request. Because it is only after I pay you back for what you did that they will allow me into Gan Eden!”

that you will get back all the money you paid for me.”

The wealthy man responded in his dream, “I don’t want anything from you. I don’t feel that I did anything special and I certainly don’t want to be paid back for a mitzva that I did wholeheartedly!”

The dead man began pleading, “Please, ask me for something else you want and I’ll make sure to fulfill your request. Because it is only after I pay you back for what you did that they will allow me into Gan Eden!”

“But I lack for nothing,” said the wealthy man.

“Still,” he urged, “have Ahavas Yisroel and think about how you can help me and ask me for something so I can enter Gan Eden!”

The man thought a bit and finally said, “The truth is I would really want the z’chus of being able to sense Gan Eden on Yom Kippur.”

(R’ Reuven Dunin added here that he did not know whether this meant that the man wanted to feel what they feel in Gan Eden on Yom Kippur or that on Yom Kippur he wanted to get a general sense of what Gan Eden is like).

“You’ve asked a great thing,” said the departed man. “But since I made a promise to you, I’ll keep my promise.”

In the morning the man woke up and dismissed his dream. He went about his business and soon forgot about the dream.

A few months went by and it was Tishrei time. On Erev Yom Kippur the man went to the mikva and after preparing for the holy day he rushed off to shul. Since he did not have the wherewithal to buy a seat (as he did the year before when he was wealthy), he sat down on the side, in the place designated for guests. After sitting there for a while, he felt himself in an elevated state. He closed his eyes and began singing a niggun.

Immersed in the niggun as he was, he felt a light tap on his shoulder. He thought: I’m probably sitting in the man’s seat. And he moved to a nearby seat. Once again he felt the tap. Thinking it was also someone’s seat, he moved once again to a nearby seat. After some additional taps and several moves, he was up against the wall of the shul. When he felt another tap he realized something else was going on. He opened his eyes and to his amazement he saw that the shul was empty except for the old sexton who was standing next to him and pleading with him to go home since the fast was long over and he had to clear out the shul before locking it.

The man realized that throughout the holy day he had been deeply immersed in negina. While singing “An’im Z’miros” he had gotten what he asked for, a taste of Gan Eden.

TOO LOFTY

In the Yoman “Hakhel 5741” it says:

A baal t’shuva couple from South Africa had yechidus with the Rebbe. The woman, a composer by profession, told the Rebbe that she wanted to prepare a musical work based on the Dalet Bavos of the Alter Rebbe or on the Cappella niggun of the Mitteler Rebbe.

The Rebbe told her that the Dalet Bavos is too lofty but something based on the Cappella would be fine.

TORAH, NOT NIGGUNIM

When Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Goldman, shliach in Johannesburg, was a bachur, he attended yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Montreal. The mashpiim taught the bachurim that when they walked down the street they had to review chapters of Tanya or maamarim of Chassidus by heart, as it says, “and when you go on the way.”

Back then, on his birthday, every bachur had the privilege of yechidus with the Rebbe. When R’ Goldman had yechidus, he asked whether it was all right to sing a niggun when walking down the street (instead of reviewing Torah).

The Rebbe said that if he would sing as he walked down the street, people would think he wasn’t quite normal.

Although I meant singing quietly so passersby wouldn’t notice, said R’ Goldman, from the Rebbe’s answer I understood that the idea of singing a niggun was just an excuse for not reviewing Tanya, as reviewing Tanya is definitely a bit harder.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGGUN

R’ Yosef Shmuel Gerlitzky, shliach in Tel Aviv, related that

when he was in 770 in the 60's, there was a farbrengen one day in the summer. Many people were away in the mountains and the bachurim were away on Merkos Shlichus, so this was a good opportunity to be close to the Rebbe.

In those days, the farbrengen always began with the farbrengen niggun. On several occasions, those present noticed that the Rebbe murmured something in the middle of the niggun, but they did not know what. This time, when R' Gerlitzky sat close by, he was able to hear that the Rebbe was saying, "Boruch Sholom ben Bunia, a refua shleima."

LEARNING A NIGGUN ON THE WAY

Mr. Yeshaya Sherr of Yekaterinislav, a close friend of the Rebbe's brother, R' Yisroel Aryeh Leib Schneersohn, told about visiting the Rebbe's childhood house:

On Shabbos and Yom Tov they would spice the talks with Chassidus and with niggunim of the Rebbeim with *d'veikus* and an outpouring of the soul and a divestiture of physicality ... I am correct when I say that a Chabad song is generally outstanding in its deep and penetrating style, as is fitting for tunes of chochma-bina-daas.

When I visited them, especially after I stopped singing in the choir of the Choral Synagogue because my voice had begun to change, I would linger in their home. When I would say goodbye and head for home, and the distance from them to my house was great, my friend Leibel (the Rebbe's brother) would walk with me. He was taller than me and he would hold the nape of my neck and that is how we

would walk a long way until I would continue on alone to my house.

One such night, as we walked towards my home, Leibel said to me: Listen Yeshaya, I want to teach you the niggun of the Alter Rebbe, the founder of Chabad, R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi. It's a very special niggun. It's a conversation between two men about a topic in Gemara or Chassidus and the form is question and answer with one asking a question and the other trying to answer it and demolish it. Since you Yeshaya have a voice and an excellent ear, and being that these are tumultuous days for Judaism and who knows what will be, I want to immortalize the niggun through you to the public.

As we slowly walked, and with stops in between, I learned the niggun which I really enjoyed. I particularly remember Leibel's emphases as he taught it. I took this niggun with me to Eretz Yisroel and at every party or social gathering, whether holidays in my village (Kfar Bilu) or among fellow teachers, in music lessons in my classroom, and even for those who attended the reading classes that I ran in Rechovot and in my k'far, I sang the Alter Rebbe's niggun as Leibel, descendent of that Rebbe, taught it to me.

I recorded the niggun on a tape and when my daughter and my son-in-law spent time in the US on business I sent the tape to them and asked them to give it to the Lubavitcher Rebbe with my blessings if they would see him, telling him I had learned it from his brother Leibel. I was sorry that my children did not see the Rebbe and they gave the tape back to me when they returned home. ■



THE END!

By Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

Founder and Director of the Jewish Discovery Center of Buffalo



THREE AXIOMS

The conclusion of the Book of Exodus is this week's parsha entitled *Pikudei*, which provides a summation of and accounting for all the resources and actions that went into the construction of the Mishkan, the portable Sanctuary in the desert. It is also the parsha that concludes the Mishkan narrative, a story that spans five consecutive Torah portions!

It is axiomatic in Judaism that there is no superfluous word in the Torah. It is also axiomatic that every detail of Torah must provide us with guidance and direction in our lives. And a third axiom is that the previous two premises are even more pronounced with respect to the conclusion of a theme or Torah book, as the Talmud states: "everything follows the conclusion."

MOSES' REACTION

After all had been completed, the Torah records Moses' reaction to the achievements of the builders of the Mishkan:

"The children of Israel did all the work in accordance with everything which G-d had commanded Moses. Moses saw the entire work, and behold, they had done it as G-d had commanded. They had done it, and Moses then blessed them."

Rashi reveals to us that the blessing Moses gave was: "May it be the will [of G-d] that the

Divine presence rests in your handiwork."

What so impressed Moses about their compliance with G-d's will that he was moved to bless them? And why did Moses choose this specific blessing?

TWO MODELS OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

The following is an explanation that is based on the book, *Divrei Shaarei Chaim* by the nineteenth century Hungarian Rabbi Chaim Sofer, (the author of the *Responsa Machane Chaim*) with additional elucidation based on the teachings of Chabad Chassidus:

There are two models of craftsmanship. There is the artisan who shapes and molds different materials to produce a piece of art. And though the finished product has a function for which it will be purchased and used, the artisan's primary focus is on the degree to which his handiwork enables him to express his creativity and artistic prowess. Even if the artist never gets to use his handiwork his sense of satisfaction is not diminished. His work is all about revealing his own creative potential.

There is a totally different, utilitarian model of craftsmanship where self-expression and self-actualization is not the goal. The overriding concern of this craftsman is to create something

that will serve its function. If the artist is an architect his objective is not focused on his own need for self-expression but, rather, to provide a decent home for someone.

And herein lies the uniqueness of the craftsmen who designed and built the Mishkan and its vessels. To the secular mind, which values the world of aesthetics—and certainly to the spiritually inclined—the first approach to creative craftsmanship is by far a superior model. Our society—both secular and religious—is conditioned to think that life is about personal achievement. These approaches vary only as to the definition of personal growth and achievement. To the more sophisticated, achievement is measured not by utilitarian benefits that one provides but by the aesthetic pleasure that one's work engenders.

To be sure, Judaism values the aesthetic and the world of spirituality. Judaism, especially as it has been articulated in its Mystical literature, emphasizes the role of the soul and the spiritual journey it follows from the time it enters the body and beyond. Judaism "wrote the book" on the need for the person to grow spiritually through the practice of the Mitzvos, Torah study, and prayer. Yet Judaism asserts that the ultimate goal of our actions is not self-

actualization. Rather, the objective is to create a dwelling place for G-d by constructing a Sanctuary for Him.

SINGLE-MINDED

The craftsmen who designed and built the Mishkan were undoubtedly brilliant artists who exhibited great creativity. But they were single-minded about their goal—to fulfill **G-d's** desire to have a place where His presence will be felt and channeled to the entire world.

When Moses beheld the finished product he realized two things: First that they had performed their work admirably, faithfully complying with all the instructions he had given them in G-d's name. But there was a second realization that impressed Moses even more. Their work was devoid of personal ambition and self-expression. They had one exclusive thought that permeated their work: to create a Sanctuary for G-d. The Torah thus exclaims: "Moses saw the entire work, and **behold**, they had done it as G-d had commanded." The term "behold" implies that he was not only impressed but that he was surprised with the result. The surprise was the extent to which they suppressed their own egos and agendas—even positive and noble ones—to allow for G-d's agenda to prevail.

We can now understand why Moses' blessing to the craftsmen was: "May it be the will [of G-d] that the Divine Presence rests in your handiwork." His blessing was more than a "pat on the back" to them for a job well done. He was acknowledging how they understood the import of their task; it was not about them but about G-d dwelling in their handiwork. And the greatest blessing for an altruistic person


is that his or her efforts will bear fruit.

The above will also serve to answer another question that has been raised as to the need for this entire verse. A few verses earlier the Torah stated virtually the same thing: "All the work of the Mishkan was completed. The children of Israel had done everything that G-d had commanded Moses. They did it." Why does the Torah have to repeat the fact that "they did all the work in accordance with everything which G-d had commanded Moses?"

The answer is that the initial mention of the completion of

we were told. For example, we cannot change the shape or the number of compartments of the T'fillin that we wear. They must be square and consist of four sections. The way we rest on the Sabbath must conform precisely to the requirements of the Torah, not to our own subjective notion of rest. The same is true with all of the Mitzvos; they must all conform to G-d's will and be performed meticulously.

Second we must make our Mitzvah observance revolve around G-d and not about ourselves. To be sure, the Talmud teaches that one should perform a Mitzvah even if it is for ulterior

 **The Torah thus exclaims: "Moses saw the entire work, and behold, they had done it as G-d had commanded." The term "behold" implies that he was not only impressed but that he was surprised with the result.**

their work deals with the integrity of the project itself. The second mention of the completeness of their work deals with the integrity of their thoughts and objectives. They had succeeded in producing an impeccable product with impeccable intentions as well.

THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF OUR MITZVOS

The above applies to us, particularly in this present day and age.

We have been commissioned by G-d to be the architects of a world that conforms to G-d's specifications. In complying with His will there are two imperatives:

First we must see to it that we do all that we have been commanded to do precisely as

motives. But we must also know what the ultimate goal is. Our Judaism is not egocentric but G-d-centric.

Now the definition of G-d centric can also be understood on two levels: one may think of our Mitzvah observance as a way to get closer to G-d, and that is fine. A Mitzvah is a means for expressing the latent spiritual energies of our soul. A higher level, however, is to do the Mitzvah thinking about how to fulfill **G-d's** desire for a dwelling place in our world. In the former approach, the focus is still on our own ambitions, albeit noble and lofty ambitions to get closer to G-d. In the latter, the focus is on G-d's "ambition."

In truth, the two forms of completeness are intertwined.

When a person seeks personal gain, even if it is spiritual in nature, the desire for self-gratification gets in the way of executing the Mitzvah with perfection. Invariably self-interest and ego will consciously or subconsciously alter one small detail of the Mitzvah to conform to one's nature and desire.

When, however, the sole preoccupation is to fulfill G-d's will and to conform to His plan we cannot deviate one iota from the instructions He gave us.

One of the major achievements of the Messianic Age is that, as we say in our prayers, we will observe the Mitzvos "in accordance with Your will." What does that mean? Surely we perform many of the Mitzvos properly even today.

However the point is that

in the Messianic Age our observance of the Mitzvos will follow the model of the craftsmen of the Mishkan: our observance of the Mitzvos will be motivated by an abiding desire to conform to G-d's will to make the world a dwelling place for G-d.

When we ask G-d to bring Moshiach and the final Redemption, it is not just about universal peace. It is about allowing for G-d's plan—the construction of a world which is in its entirety a Sanctuary for G-d—to be realized by our actions.

In truth, we do not have to wait for the Redemption to follow the higher model for the observance of the Mitzvos. As we stand on the threshold of Redemption, our focus should be to complete the process of

transforming the entire world into a Sanctuary for G-d. In earlier periods of exile our Mitzvos may have focused less on the ultimate goal and more on subjective goals. In times of exile, there might be other considerations for the observance of the Mitzvos that were geared to help us cope with a specific need that arose due to exile conditions. Mitzvah observance in exile thus, by definition, is lacking in perfection.

Now that we are on the very cusp of the Redemption we must redirect our energies and concentrate on the ultimate goal. By doing so we imbue our Mitzvos with perfection, and we begin to experience the sublime energies associated with the Messianic Age in these last moments of exile. ■



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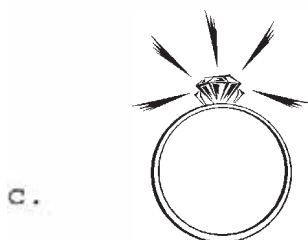
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THE PURIM STORY

“The rich felt very confident in their wealth, and not only did they readily criticize the Rabbanim and Torah Jews, they also oppressed them at every opportunity, in any way they could.” *

In the following series, Beis Moshiach presents a translation of a poignant and electrifying sicha delivered by the Rebbe Rayatz in the year 1941. Beginning with a detailed account of the story of Purim, the Rebbe addressed the crisis facing the Jewish nation in his time. * Originally said and published 70 years ago, the sicha is uncannily relevant to our times. * Part 1

Translated and adapted from the original sicha

In the year 3392 – during the Babylonian exile – the Jews were dispersed throughout many lands. Many of them lived in the kingdom of Achashverosh. More than 50 years had already passed since the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, when the Jews were torn away from their sacred homeland, where they witnessed the daily miracles of the Beis HaMikdash and heard the words of the prophets.

Of the many lands where the Jews settled, some were evil nations, where they were abused, while in other lands the Jews were recognized for their superior qualities and were allowed to live peacefully in the best interest of the government and in exchange for the benefit that they brought to those lands. In such countries they were treated well.

Achashverosh was by nature

fickle and very egotistical. Wise in his own eyes and easily angered, the contradictory traits of good and evil, wisdom and foolishness, were all combined together within him, as we are told by the Chachomim (Tractate Megilla 12a): “Achashverosh was a wise king and a foolish king.”

In the era of his father Darius, as well as in the beginning of his reign, Jews throughout his kingdom readily assimilated and made a good livelihood.

Slowly the Jews tore themselves away from Torah and mitzvos, and they sank deeper and deeper into a materialistic lifestyle. They sought out material excess, Shabbos became mundane, their keeping of kashrus became lax, and their family life – family purity – became almost non-existent. The Jews began to forget that they were the Chosen Nation; they

ignored that fact that Hashem “chose us from all the nations and exalted us over all languages”. They began living a secular and undisciplined life like that of the gentiles.

Mordechai the Jew (“HaYehudi”) and Malachai the Prophet admonished the Jews unceasingly, and warned them that G-d does not tolerate such a lifestyle and would severely punish those who chose such a path. Mordechai HaYehudi and Malachai the Prophet tried to impress upon the Jews that if, G-d forbid, Hashem’s punishment were to take effect on them and their families, their fraternization with the gentiles would not save them in any way, nor would their wealth save them. But alas, their blocked and apathetic hearts prevented the Jewish people from accepting these prophetic words. And notwithstanding the fact that Mordechai was one of the most influential figures in the king’s palace [a quality that would naturally bear weight with those who were assimilated], his words regarding the importance of keeping Torah and fulfilling the mitzvos went unheeded.

Achashverosh fought great battles with a number of countries, and was victorious. The Jews from Achashverosh’s kingdom were heavily involved in the war effort and played an important role in the battles’ success. For this they were amply rewarded, and they received many acknowledgments of gratitude and awards of recognition.

At that time, among the people whom Achashverosh

brought into his inner circle of officers was a man from very lowly origins. He was a barber and a bath attendant, and his name was Haman the son of Hamdassa. Haman was a man with great ambitions, a great ego, and a beguiling nature. He was thus successful in getting himself appointed to Achashverosh's group of select confidants.

When Achashverosh returned from war with great victory, he made elaborate feasts for all his subjects. The Jews were also invited by the committee the king had set up for this purpose. The guiding rule established by the king's edict was that every guest should be entertained with food and drink according to his predisposition.

The non-kosher meals, full of wild frivolity, made the Jewish people's spiritual status even more untenable. And despite the fact that the time of the redemption — according to the predictions of the prophets — was already speedily approaching, the Jews did not want to hear of it; they mocked the message of redemption with derisive words.

The great loot from the battles accompanied by the king's letters of gratitude intoxicated them. They lived in the most majestic and palatial mansions. They had a very freewheeling life without Shabbos, without kashrus, without mikva, and without t'fillin. They continued to enjoy their materialistic lifestyle to the extreme.

Every rebuke and admonishment was quickly shrugged off. It was a time of *shfot ha'shofim*, the nation judged its judges. That is, the rich felt very confident in their wealth, and not only did they readily criticize the Rabbanim and Torah Jews, they also oppressed them at



every opportunity in any way they could.

After that "day of reckoning" when Achashverosh put his wife Vashti to death, five years passed. During that time, Esther had been made queen. At the command of Mordechai the Jew, she did not reveal her ancestry, and no one knew her origin or lineage. During those five years

there were many Jews living in Achashverosh's kingdom, content and happy. They lived in great luxury and freedom without Torah and fulfilling mitzvos. They desecrated Shabbos and Yom Tov and ate non-kosher food. They assimilated into the other nations, thus weakening the true Jewish morale. ■

[To be continued be"H]

STIRRING SOULS WITH MUSIC

Violinist Oren Tzor and guitarist extraordinaire Nadav Becher are an unconventional pair in the music world. They combine authentic Chassidic music with uncompromising professionalism and successfully bring Chabad niggunim to the masses in Tel Aviv. * For the month of Adar in which we “increase the joy,” we present this interview.

Interview by Sholom Ber Crombie

I made my way to yishuv Beit Meir, near Yerushalayim, to the home of Chabad violinist Oren Tzor. I met Nadav Becher there too, an expert guitarist who is highly regarded in the world of Jewish music. The two of them granted me two hours in which we discussed the world of Chabad niggunim from the perspective of professional musicians who are familiar with all kinds of music and choose to work with niggunei Chabad.

Nadav and Oren are an unconventional pair in the music world. They combine authentic Chassidic music with uncompromising

professionalism, and successfully bring the deepest Chabad niggunim to the masses in Tel Aviv. At their performances you will find many men without yarmulkes passionately singing along with the niggunim of R' Hillel Paritcher and R' Sholom Charitonov.

Their first album, *Peshita*, consists of their own instrumental versions of niggunei Chabad and it sold like hotcakes. Since then they have formed a band called *A Groise Metzia* and have put out another album, this one with vocals.

They view their musical careers as a shlichus, a kind

of auditory Chabad house. The main shlichus, welcoming Moshiach, is something that permeates all aspects of their work. Their songs include Geula motifs and with their niggunim they draw people into learning Chassidus in anticipation of the Geula. They may not have chosen this as shlichus but since they're in it anyway, they give it all they've got.

As artists who view music from a professional standpoint, how do you categorize the phenomenon of Chabad niggunim in the world of music?

Oren: Niggunim in general





are in a special category. As a baal t'shuva I was completely unfamiliar with niggunim and being exposed to this kind of music was an extremely significant experience for me. Niggunim are not music; they are something else entirely. On a basic level, these are songs that were composed by people who were not musicians but rather by Chassidim who in general did not know the rules of music.

A niggun is a connection to the soul. It is completely spiritual. In every niggun you can feel how it brought something down into the world. If they are niggunim composed by Chassidim who formulated them

“At their performances you will find many men without yarmulkes passionately singing along with the niggunim of R' Hillel Paritcher and R' Sholom Charitonov.

in a state of *d'veikus* (spiritual ecstasy), you can get a sense of spirituality from them. And then there are the *niggunim ha'mechuvanim* (meaning both exact and intentional) of the Rebbeim, niggunim from the upper worlds that were brought down into melodies and notes, which is, of course, an amazing accomplishment.

When I began playing at

Chassidic weddings, they gave me four CD's of niggunim so I could learn them. I remember the moment I stood at home, with violin in hand, and heard the niggun “Tzama Lecha Nafshi” (the upbeat one) and I suddenly felt for the first time, that I was truly connecting to my role as a musician. It was the first time that I felt that I understood why I was playing all my life, so that

I found myself in the world of music. Until then, I went about and played all kinds of music, but I did not successfully connect with any particular form. I had not found my place as a violinist and I constantly felt an inner voice telling me that there was something else in music and I would only find myself in that. The moment I stood there with my violin and began playing Tzama, I felt I had become a klezmer and that my purpose in life was to be a Jew who played Jewish niggunim. From then on, I have only played niggunim.

How did this affect your t'shuva process?

Oren: As a result of everything that Groise Metzia does and what Nadav and I do with Peshita, the work with Chassidic niggunim makes me feel an inner power which makes me feel more connected.

With niggunim you can reach anywhere. Niggunim don't need any mold or pattern; they completely transcend any musical rules or style, and that's why you can touch anyone with them.

Nadav: There are many references from the Rebbe about the avoda with a Chassidic niggun. Since this is something sacred, it isn't right to arrange a niggun with every possible musical arrangement; you need to preserve the neshama of the niggun. That's the most important thing. I know someone who produced a CD of reworked niggunim that had musical changes made to the niggunim and his rabbi told him to put a sticker on each CD that said "arrangements based on niggunim" so as not to mislead anyone. That's how careful you need to be when working with niggunim because every niggun has its specific "chord"

that draws the spirituality of the niggun.

I feel it when working with niggunim, that it's a completely different kind of avoda. Now I know that Chabad niggunim require a certain "fanaticism." There are certain immutable principles for a niggun so it remains an authentic niggun. Only in this way will it be able to reach people and move something inside. We are dealing with the Heichal HaNegina.

Oren: There's the story with the Alter Rebbe about how all the Misnagdim's questions fell away when he sang a niggun and he said it's the quill of the soul. You have to approach a niggun with the proper reverence to feel that it's the quill of the soul. If you approach a niggun that way and truly connect with it, it is stronger than any other bond because in a niggun there is true connection with honest spiritual yearnings.

How can one connect with a niggun?

Oren: You have to play the complete niggun, and not concentrate on the technical aspects of it but on the soul of the niggun. You need to allow the niggun to take you without thinking about how you are playing.

Nadav: They say that when you want to say over an idea, you need to learn it at least four times. Perhaps we can say that when you want a niggun to "say" something to you, you need to play it at least four times.

But the most important thing is to connect with the content of the niggun. A Chabad niggun is not just another tune; every niggun has very specific meaning. There are, for example, many niggunim that have a story behind them, and through

the story you can connect to the niggun. For example, in the niggunim mechuvinim of the Rebbeim, the Rebbe says to think about each Rebbe when you sing or play his niggun. This helps you connect to the composer of the niggun.

Oren: It's all about Daas. In Chabad, even the niggunim are in Chabad – chochma, bina, daas and when you play a niggun you have to connect to it with daas.

Nadav: The whole idea of *hisbonenus* (meditation) is to create a feeling through the workings of the mind. A niggun is avodas Hashem, precisely like avodas ha't'filla, and real avoda is needed to connect and for it to really move us. Just as during davening you need to remove all distractions and be completely focused and that is the only way you will connect, the same is true when you sing at a farbrengen. You can't press a button and move the heart with a niggun. It doesn't happen on its own; it requires work.

Oren: Sometimes, when a niggun doesn't move me, I feel I need to make a spiritual accounting ... like after davening when you weren't successful in your davening ... you need to do t'shuva for that. When you work on playing holy niggunim, it sometimes becomes exhausting and then you're not always into the niggun. There are times, when I've played hours of niggunim at a wedding and I feel that I need to do t'shuva for the way I played ... because I wasn't "into" the niggunim. It's *mamash* avodas Hashem. By the way, the only niggun that never causes a feeling of exhaustion is the "Niggun Arba Bavos."

Do you see any difference between Chabad niggunim and other Chassidic niggunim like

those of Breslov, Karlin, or Modzitz, for example?

Oren: With Chabad niggunim you really sense the chochma-bina-daas, the Chabad. Aside from the precision, the greater the spiritual content, the deeper it will be. Chabad niggunim have depth.

Like after a farbrengen when you sit for hours and sing and don't say a word and you ask someone how the farbrengen was and he says in amazement, "What a farbrengen!" Because the niggunim – and a niggun is generally *makif* (encompassing – affecting a person from the outside) – manage to reach the *p'nimius* (the inner workings of the person). It's not merely the style of Chabad negina; it's the cry from the soul that is felt in every niggun. With a niggun it comes out most directly. It says in Chassidus that with a niggun you connect to the Chaya-Yechida. A d'var Torah is more p'nimi which is why it requires more avoda for it to penetrate. It's a niggun, which is *makif*, that can more easily penetrate.

On one hand, a niggun requires avoda in order to truly connect to it; on the other hand, it's makif and can reach someone even without any avoda.

Oren: In order for a maamer Chassidus to affect us, we need to learn it *aliba d'nafshei* (in a deeply personalized fashion) and then daven with it and live with it, and only then can you feel that it has accomplished an inner shift. A niggun has the power to connect. Through a niggun you connect to the Rebbe or to the soul-inspiration of the Chassid who composed the niggun while davening or in a state of d'veikus.

Oren: It says in Chassidus that everything in creation says



Electric simcha

shira (song) to Hashem. That means that this is an elemental stage of connection to Hashem that exists even within creation. Chassidim call a niggun *tenu'os* (movements) because in every niggun there is the specific *tenuas ha'nefesh* ("movement" of the soul) of that niggun. The *tenuas ha'nefesh* of Chassidus is a thirst for the revelation of G-dliness and the fulfillment of the Creator's desire. Therefore, a niggun arouses us immediately to avodas Hashem – to get up and do some mitzva. We find this *tenuas ha'nefesh* specifically within Chabad niggunim because they don't "caress" you but arouse you. Peaceful niggunim are rare in Chabad. Most of the niggunim are niggunim of tremendous *hisorerus* (inspiration) and that is Chabad. In a Chabad niggun there is a call to avoda, to serve Hashem. It does not caress you and enable you to remain static.

Nadav: Notes have a non-physical existence. It is an existence that is separate from

good and evil. The Rebbe Rayatz says that when he was a child he would sit and watch his father, the Rebbe Rashab, davening while singing until he thought that t'filla is about sitting and singing! In t'filla you are inspired to connect with your true being and niggun expresses that because it is the quill of the soul. Every Chabad niggun has a sort of a "point," a specific message. There is no such thing as a "stam" niggun.

Oren: You can actually sense the ovoid (one who serves Hashem) behind every niggun. I feel it the most with the niggunim of R' Hillel Paritcher. In every niggun you feel the depth, the chochma-bina-daas.

Nadav: One acquires a feeling for prayer through niggun. Otherwise, there is no way to really reach the levels expressed in certain niggunim. When you hear a niggun of a Chassid, you can actually feel that he is trying to accomplish something with himself, to reach something within him. It's as though the



Chassid

is sitting and trying to connect and out comes a niggun ... You hear the Chassid trying to daven, trying to get close to Elokus, to connect his soul with G-d. It's something that cannot be expressed in words. Only the soul can express that which needs to be said without words.

How have niggunim influenced your musical careers?

Oren: Once I started working with niggunim, I cannot listen to any other music. Other music sounds coarse to me, as opposed to spiritual niggunim.

A niggun is not music. There is nothing in the world of music like negina. You feel how it's a different world and this is why a niggun is so elevated.

As part of their shlichus in the world of negina, Oren and Nadav and other friends have a band called *A Groise Metzia* and they perform before audiences that are not religiously observant. They convey messages from Chassidus through niggunim.

Tell us some stories from your shlichus.

Nadav: Through music, we have been able to reach many Jews and expose them to Chassidic ideas. For example, I

composed a song called "Echad Elokeinu" which is in the style of "Echad Mi Yodeia" according to Chassidus with kabbalistic concepts. This niggun conveys the message that there is a multiplicity of things in the world but they are all part of the one G-d.

By the way, our songs are not niggunim. They are mostly upbeat songs because there is no greater revelatory force than simcha to bring people close to the truth.

Oren: I recently visited the yeshiva in Ramat Aviv and a guy came over to me and said that at some point during his t'shuva process he wanted to drop it all and run away but then he heard our CD and today he is a Chabad bachur.

What is your shlichus in music?

Nadav: My shlichus is to convey the Jewish experience. You can talk to someone for hours but with a niggun you can give him a "portion" of Judaism in a "capsule." The shlichus the Rebbe gave us is to help every Jew get out of where he is and take another step towards Geula. Niggunim are a great way of doing this.

All our songs are concepts gleaned from Chassidus. Through music you can contain two hours of learning within four minutes.

Oren: Music is the strongest *oros makifim* to soften someone up so he is more receptive to Elokus. A Jew who never heard about Judaism will have a hard time relating to it on his own. He needs softening up and this is our shlichus.

How does all this lead to the main shlichus, kabbalas p'nei Moshiach Tzidkeinu?

Nadav: Our entire musical

shlichus is about Geula and Moshiach. On the CD we produced there isn't even one song that doesn't have – whether openly or subtly – a message about Moshiach. Each song leads to Geula. We have one song whose refrain is "Ha'Geula HaAmitis V'HaShleima" and at the end of the song you repeat this refrain a number of times. At concerts we see audiences that are often comprised of people who are not yet religious, and they enthusiastically sing along, saying "HaGeula HaAmitis V'HaShleima" over and over. On the simplest level, this causes Jews to ask for Moshiach.

We have another song whose refrain is, "Hayiti b'Mattan Torah." We once performed at a club and at the end of the concert the not-yet religious audience got up and sang, "I was at the Giving of the Torah." These were people with long hair and earrings. It was a moving sight. That's when I understood what this musical shlichus is about.

As musicians that are baalei t'shuva who came from the secular music world, we had no choice – and even if we didn't want to, we have to be involved in this musical shlichus. The Rebbe taught us that each one of us has a shlichus that he was brought to by Hashem, so if we were in the musical profession, we had to use this in our shlichus work.

Oren: Everything leads to Geula. All our playing is a rehearsal for the music in the third Beis HaMikdash. I feel that music is our tool with which to accomplish our shlichus. Geula is about establishing the Light of G-d as King in the world and this is done through music when we are able to reach the most distant places which ordinarily are extremely hard to reach. ■

CHABAD WOMEN AND GIRLS ON THE FRONTLINES OF SHLICHUS

In the HaYom Yom the Rebbe Rayatz is quoted as saying, “It is the duty of Chassidic wives and daughters (may they live and be well) to stand in the front line of every activity dedicated to strengthening religion and Judaism ... as prevalent from time immemorial in Chassidic homes.” This week we will focus on the N’shei U’Bnos Chabad who are part of the revolution led by the Rebbe.

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz

Shliach, Beit Shaan

I’ll begin with a Chassidic “vort” in a light vein, a vort that comes from the Ezras Nashim (women’s section) of 770. There is a constant tension in the women’s section over who will manage to get a place in the “shura rishona” (front row). In the front row you can see the goings-on downstairs without the brown glass. In Tishrei, for example, you need to grab a spot hours in advance in order to have it for the davening and farbrengens. Those devoted women and girls quote the HaYom Yom mentioned above about the obligation of women and girls to stand in the shura rishona... Was that what the Rebbe meant? Hmm.

BITTER TEARS IN THE SHURA RISHONA

I heard the following story after Tishrei of this year:

One of the counselors in 770 went to the Ezras Nashim one evening where she saw a young

girl, about 15, sobbing. She asked the girl why she was crying and finally, after a long time, the girl calmed down and said that it was her last night in 770 before she returned to Eretz Yisroel and she had come for Maariv in the Rebbe’s minyan but she had made a mistake and thought Maariv was at 7:15 and she had arrived just as Maariv was over. That’s why she was crying.

What happened next is remarkable. The devoted madricha began to cry along with the girl and when the madricha’s friend passed by and heard the story she was very moved and resolved: From now on, I won’t miss a single t’filla with the Rebbe’s minyan.

This friend wasn’t the type to stay in 770 round the clock; she occasionally went shopping in various parts of New York. The next day, she was in middle of shopping when she suddenly realized the time for Mincha was approaching. She dropped

what she was doing and went to 770 and only after the davening was over did she resume her shopping.

MACH DA “SHURA RISHONA”

It’s not only in 770 of course. “Shura Rishona” is not only a concept in the Ezras Nashim of 770 but has become an educational project that began in Beis Rivka in Kfar Chabad and now has branches throughout the country and on five continents, wherever there is a Chassidic girls’ school.

I asked Mrs. Sterna Alperowitz, coordinator of HaShura HaRishona in Kfar Chabad, to tell us about the goals of this wonderful project. She first thanked the principal of the high school, Mrs. Tzipora Vishedsky as well as the excellent staff, since it is thanks to their work that the project is flourishing.

14 years ago, said Mrs. Alperowitz, we felt that something needed to be done to increase Chassidic pride among the girls. The school accepts many girls who are not from Chassidic homes along with B’nos Chabad, and in this atmosphere some Chassidic practices got pushed a bit to the side. There were hardly any farbrengens for the girls. Learning Chitas was a private matter for a few of the girls who usually did it at home. It wasn’t something that was discussed. Chabad was underground.

There was a high scholastic



Seeing how successful HaShura HaRishona is in Kfar Chabad, other similar organizations were started in Chabad high schools in Krayot, Tzfas, Kiryat Malachi, Yerushalayim, Australia, South Africa, Europe and America.

level and girls stood out in t'filla and good middos, but not necessarily in the ways of Chassidus. This is why we started HaShura HaRishona and thank G-d, it has been very successful, far more than we imagined.

We told the girls we were starting a "youth movement" with big challenges and worthwhile rewards. The program is open to all but you have to work hard to stay in. Every age level has a mashpia who personally knows all the girls in her level. Only those girls who submit a monthly report to the mashpia about their progress, remain in HaShura HaRishona. Each girl has to fill out whether she learned Chitas and Rambam, participated in the monthly farbrengen, and met with her mashpia for a personal talk. Did she visit her regular mitzvaim spot each week? Did she participate in the Chassidische recess (more on that later)? On every page of the form it says Yechi.

HaShura HaRishona has had wonderful results. Hundreds of girls, not only from Chassidische families, registered and brought along other girls who didn't seem like the type to join. Today, more than half of the students are in Shura HaRishona. Each of them learns Chitas and Rambam and a sicha on inyanei Moshiach and Geula daily, goes on mitzvaim once a week, attends a shiur – outside of school on a weekday and on Shabbos, does chesed, talks with her mashpia, farbrengs, etc.

For those who excel there are

special trips like a Chassidische evening in another city, including a farbrengen in the Chabad house and davening at Kever Rochel or a trip to Mt Chermon with a nighttime farbrengen in the Golan Heights, etc.

Once a week there is a farbrengen in the home of one of the girls. Once in two weeks there is a "Chassidische recess," and once a month the mashpios assemble all of the girls for a special gathering where they announce the new assignments for the upcoming month. In Nissan, for example, the girls order many sets of three handmade matzos, which they distribute to thousands of families in honor of the Rebbe's birthday on Yud-Alef Nissan. In Kislev they distribute menoros, in Adar it's mishloach manos, and in other months there are special learning contests on a maamer. Each activity adds points in Shura HaRishona.

PROVIDING MANPOWER FROM SHURA RISHONA

There are certain times of the year that the directors of many Chabad houses call the staff of Shura HaRishona and ask them to send girls to help out, "but only from Shura HaRishona." The shlichim know that the girls from Shura HaRishona will do the work in the most dedicated and Chassidische way. The rest of the year, a Chabad house operates within the school where young shlichos sell sets of Neshek to give out on Fridays, matzos, brochures, s'farim for

Didan Natzach, volumes of Igros Kodesh, and tables and chairs so people can sit and write to the Rebbe. Hundreds of girls go out on mitzvaim and return with touching stories.

One of these "shlichos" had the following story:

"I made a club for some girls in a neighborhood of southern Tel Aviv. I told the girls that the Rebbe asked each child to have his and her own Chumash, T'hilim, Tanya and Siddur. I offered my help in buying a Chitas for each child who gave me 50 shekels. One girl mumbled to herself, "Fifty shekels, that's a lot ..." But two weeks later she came with a fifty-shekel bill and asked me to buy a Chitas for her. She said that for two weeks she had worked at home until late at night stringing beads on chain necklaces. She earned one shekel for each chain until she finished fifty chains and got the money and brought it to me so she could have her own Chitas as the Rebbe wants."

At the Chabad house within Beis Rifka there are also farbrengens with mashpiim and shlichim from Eretz Yisroel and around the world. Rabbi Shneur Zalman Blumenfeld, shliach to Peru, came to farbreng with the girls. They were fascinated by his stories and this inspired them to do more and to be ready for shlichus when they get married.

A CHASSIDISHE WEDDING WITH ... SHURA RISHONA

HaShura HaRishona has an impact on the girls that lasts for the rest of their lives. Sometimes, ten years later, girls who are themselves mothers come and say how Shura HaRishona still affects their lives. There are women who say that the main impetus for them to go on shlichus was the

period of time they were in Shura HaRishona. One woman said that even her decision to carefully cover her hair was made at a farbrengen of Shura HaRishona. They say, "Thanks to those Chassidishe activities, we are now educating our children on a higher Chassidishe level." The most amazing thing is that there are girls from homes that are not at all Chassidish and thanks to Shura HaRishona they opt for the darchei ha'Chassidus and end up establishing chassidishe homes. There was a girl from a Litvishe home whose parents registered her in Beis Rivka solely because of the high academic level and they got themselves a Bas Chabad with Chitas, Rambam, Igros Kodesh and Yechi! The girl excelled in all the assignments and won a trip to the Rebbe. Her parents opposed the trip for years until they saw that she was more determined than they thought. She ended up flying to the Rebbe where she stood in the front row (literally) and now, she is looking for a Chassidishe bachur to marry.

SHURA RISHONA EXPANDS

Seeing how successful HaShura HaRishona is in Kfar Chabad, other similar organizations were started in Chabad high schools in Krayot, Tzfas, Kiryat Malachi, Yerushalayim, Australia, South Africa, Europe and America. That's not to say that all Shura Rishonas are identical, for every school's staff sets the goals and the rules according to the educational needs of that place.

There was a Kinus not long ago for girls from Shuros HaRishonos all over the world and there were representatives from Canada, Australia, the US, Europe and Eretz Yisroel too!

Since Shura HaRishona was originally a program for high school, there was a demand for a similar program for other ages and programs were started for elementary school girls (Nachas Chassidi) and seminary students (B'nos Chayil).

This *kinas sofrim* (competitive spirit) has the girls starting other organizations and activities outside of school. Nearly every week there is an announcement about a new national or local initiative. The goal of them all is to prepare the world and hasten the Geula.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS

Some women from Tzfas and Kiryat Malachi, among others, have been organizing gatherings for years now on 28 Nissan and other significant dates. They started a number of years ago and 700 women responded. Each year more women participate and last Chaf-Ches Nissan about 2000 women convened in a huge hall in Tel Aviv. Their gatherings are planned for the purpose of increasing shiurim for women especially in inyanei Moshiach and Geula.

It is so successful that as soon as a Kinus is over, the women board organized buses and there are women in charge who collect good resolutions for new shiurim, which they immediately report to base in Tzfas and Kiryat Malachi.

Before the last big Kinus the organizers met with the owner of the auditorium. He stated his price and the women asked for a discount. He said that it would be difficult for him but he would reduce it by 10%. The women asked for a bigger discount. He thought for a bit and then said, "I haven't given a discount like that to anyone but I'll do it for you

because I don't want to delay the Geula."

TAMBOURINES FOR THE GEULA - NOT JUST FOR CHABAD

I heard about a large group of women in the national-religious sector who have a weekly gathering with t'filla and yearning for the Geula. It started with t'filla gatherings to daven for Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu z"l and continued in many other places.

Lately, they also have the wonderful practice of buying tambourines in order to be ready for the miracles of the imminent Geula. At one of these gatherings that took place in Kiryat Moshe in Yerushalayim, they announced that Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu said to distribute as many of these tambourines as possible and the Geula should come even before they finish giving them out.

This may be the true meaning of "HaShura HaRishona," that Chassidishe women and girls are the first to distribute tambourines and other women follow them as they prepare for the Geula. Many women are familiar with the picture of Mrs. Chavi Cohen giving the Rebbe a tambourine for the Geula with Yechi written on it.

Women have arranged a mass production of these tambourines to speed the Geula, and the explanation given is that when a woman carries it around in or attached to her handbag, every time she hears it rattle she will be reminded to prepare and to pray for the Geula. At these gatherings they've given out thousands of tambourines and we, along with them, hope that the women will soon go out with them to celebrate the true and complete Geula. ■

SECRET AGENT, RABBI, AND CHASSID



As a child he suffered under communist rule. In the army he took his personal revenge on the communists who had persecuted his father and family. • He acquired smicha, learned mila, safrus and sh'chita and served as Chief Rabbi of Chile. • Now, as a rav in Cholon, he promotes Family Purity. • Profile of Rabbi Mordechai Nachimovsky

By Shneur Zalman Berger

It's hard to picture Rabbi Mordechai Nachimovsky with his rabbinic appearance as working for Intelligence in the IDF. He was drafted and served in the paratroopers but a few months after he enlisted he was called for a special interview

at the secret intelligence base in the center of the country. This interview led to subsequent interviews and other hurdles until he was finally given the job which remains secret till today, along with six other soldiers, out of 5000 who had been interviewed!

"The unit I served in had a 'red telephone' to Prime Minister Golda Meir's office," which goes to show how tremendously important they were.

He served in this unit for four years despite the difficulties inherent in the job for a religious soldier. All those years he did not eat cooked food because of kashrus concerns. This was during the War of Attrition. It happened on more than one occasion that the security situation required his being taken by military jeep on Shabbos from his home to the military airport from which he went directly to the Sinai. After several hours of secret activities they were allowed to go home to continue their weekend off but this Lubavitcher soldier remained on base until after Shabbos.

R' Nachimovsky doesn't speak much about that period:

"The work I did was extremely sensitive and was undertaken after grueling training. One of the reasons I was accepted by Intelligence was the fact that I spoke Russian. During the War of Attrition the Soviet Union was fully involved on the side of the Egyptians. The Russians supplied them with ground to air missiles that limited the IAF's freedom of movement. The Soviets supplied the Egyptians with MiG 21 supersonic jet fighter aircraft which were a serious threat to the Israeli planes. These planes were flown by Russian pilots who were trained and experienced in aerial combat. Facing Russian pilots and planes proved quite dangerous for the Israeli air force and sometimes impossible.

"We worked around the clock. We barely slept as we worked on sabotaging their systems. Six MiG planes with Russian pilots were downed which was a tremendous success for the Israelis. The thanks went to our group!

"For me personally it was a great victory over the communists who fought me and my family in my childhood."

CHILDHOOD UNDER THE SOVIETS

R' Mordechai Nachimovsky remembers life under the Soviets well. He is a grandchild and scion of the Nachimovsky family of Vilna. This family produced generations of wealthy rabbanim who used their money to support yeshivos in Lithuania.

The grandfather, R' Moshe Hy"d, learned for fifteen years in the beis midrash of the Vilna Gaon together with dozens of geniuses from Vilna and its

environs. After assiduously studying Shas and Poskim he served as rav in several towns in Russia with his wife supporting the family. Although he was a Misnaged he had a correspondence with the Rebbe's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn.

In his final years (the 1930's) he lived in a suburb of Moscow and would sometimes visit his son Yaakov who was living in Malachovka at the time which is near Moscow. Many Lubavitcher families lived in this area and they invited him to join their secret Chassidische farbrengens. They called him "the Litvishe rav" but they knew that during the many years that he studied Torah he also studied many sifrei Chassidus and was as knowledgeable in them as he was in Shas and Poskim. They would ask him to say Chassidus.

His grandson, R' Mordechai Nachimovsky relates:

"My grandfather and father had a strong connection with Anash and over the years many Jewish activities took place in my father's home such as secret

them out. My mother, Elka, was a courageous woman who wasn't afraid of anyone. When she thought that the Russian authorities were going overboard in their mockery of Jews, she wrote letters of complaint to Stalin and Khrushchev. She continued this practice when she arrived in Eretz Yisroel and wrote many letters to people like Prime Minister Ben Gurion and ministers and *l'havdil* to the Rebbe. They all wrote back interesting letters.

"World War II began and



With his father R' Yaakov in Kfar Chabad

“The Soviets supplied the Egyptians with MiG 21 supersonic jet fighter aircraft which were a serious threat to the Israeli planes. These planes were flown by Russian pilots who were trained and experienced in aerial combat. We worked around the clock on sabotaging their systems.

weddings and brissin. My father set up a bakery for matzos and produced a lot of matza for Anash and many other Jews in Malachovka and Moscow.

"My mother, who was a great tzidkanis (righteous woman) would stand near the oven and put in the matzos and take

the Germans quickly advanced towards Moscow. In the course of battle my grandfather was killed. My parents with their seven children survived the war and starvation with the help of Hashem.

"In 5707/1947 they moved to Lvov which is near the border and I was born two years later.

“We had to attend school even on Shabbos but I would always show up with a bandaged finger so I did not have to write. The teacher laughed at me – ‘I bet you will hurt your finger next Saturday too,’ she would say.

My birth was a surprise since my mother was an older woman by then and people even considered it a miracle.”

KNOCKS AT THE DOOR

R' Nachimovsky's father, R' Yaakov, worked as a photographer which enabled him to avoid working on Shabbos. He used his profession to help Chassidim who had to obtain various documents in order to leave the country. Chassidim knew that Yankel the photographer, as he was known by the Chassidim, could help them.

He was constantly under surveillance by the KGB and was occasionally taken for interrogation in their offices. Thankfully, he emerged in peace.

R' Mordechai relates childhood memories:

“We lived in Lvov in the Ukraine. My father worked most of the day and my mother raised us. We did not learn much about Judaism even though my parents were strictly observant, because they were afraid to explain too much to us children. They feared lest we get caught and be compelled to reveal things.”

What did you know about Judaism?

“We knew that my father went to shul on Shabbos and Yom Tov and on weekdays we saw him daven at home in tallis and t'fillin even though I did not understand much about tallis and t'fillin. My mother said brachos with us before we ate and we said the

Shma. That, more or less, sums up our knowledge of Judaism.

“We knew what Shabbos is, because the atmosphere at home was completely different. I remember an incident that infuriated me. My mother and sisters had lit candles for Shabbos and a short while later a gentile girl, my sister's friend, came to visit. She derisively asked, ‘Why are there so many candles lit? Did someone die?’ When she was answered in the negative she went over to the candles and put them out. I was furious because I knew that she didn't want us to observe mitzvos. I was a little boy but I thought, if I was able to, I would hit her and throw her out of the house.

“We went to school and Shabbos was a problem. The authorities exerted much pressure on my parents and we had to attend school even on Shabbos but I would always show up with a bandaged finger so I did not have to write. The teacher laughed at me – ‘I bet you will hurt your finger next Saturday too,’ she would say.

“At school I was a Jewish child among many gentile children. I often had to endure anti-Semitic remarks and insults, especially when the teacher gave out the marks and I got good marks. That's when they called me dirty Jew. Sometimes they hit me. I could have hit them back because I was strong but the insults were hard to bear.

“Like I said, I remember my father standing every morning in a corner and davening with

tallis and t'fillin. I knew that this was a secret that nobody on the outside could know about. One morning, as my father was in the middle of davening, there were powerful knocks at the door. We were very frightened. Who could be knocking so early in the morning? We quickly learned the bitter truth, that it was the secret police. In another minute they would break down the door and find my father davening.

“Then we suddenly heard screams, ‘I'm giving birth, help me! Take me to the hospital!’ We immediately identified the voice of our neighbor who was a family friend. The knocking stopped. A few hours later the neighbor told us what happened. ‘Out my window I saw three tall men dressed in long coats knocking at your door and I knew that they were the secret police. I had a brainstorm about how to get rid of them and started shrieking that I was about to give birth. They rushed to take me in their car to the hospital. After they left I came home.’”

YECHIDUS WITH THE REBBE

“In 5717/1957, when I was nine years old, my parents were able to leave Russia. My brother-in-law, my sister's husband, had Polish citizenship, and when they left for Poland my parents asked to join them under the rubric of reunification of our families. So we were all able to leave for Poland from where we continued on to Eretz Yisroel.

“We settled in Kfar Chabad and I was sent to yeshiva. My knowledge of Judaism was minimal and I was put in the lower grades to make up what I had missed. Every few weeks I was promoted a grade until I was put in an age appropriate class.

“My parents worked in Kfar Chabad in farming and my mother devoted a lot of time to her job as mikva lady until she passed away in 5724. In the period before she died, she asked me several times to become a rav. So after I completed my studies in Tomchei T’mimim in Kfar Chabad and my army service, I decided to become a rav.

“In Tishrei 5732/1971 I was in 770 and after Simchas Torah I had yechidus. I wrote a three-page letter in which I included details about shidduchim ideas that had been presented to me, as well as the possible places where I could learn for smicha. There were suggestions from the US and Eretz Yisroel.

“When I entered for yechidus I handed the letter to the Rebbe. The Rebbe glanced at each page and I thought that was all it was, a cursory look. However, when the Rebbe spoke I was surprised to discover that he had read every word. His answer was clear and surprising. I was to return to Eretz Yisroel and learn in Machon Harry Fischel in Yerushalayim. The Rebbe blessed me with success in my studies and in finding a shidduch.

“I considered the Rebbe’s answer as ‘holy of holies.’ I did not stay even a single night longer in America but flew home that night. Within a few days I had started learning in Machon Harry Fischel and I waited to see how a shidduch would work out. (Emotionally): Till today, when I remember those days, I am overcome by emotion. Just three weeks went by from when I returned home and I had become engaged to my wife Esther, daughter of R’ Yitzchok Hecht who was a rav of the Ruchama neighborhood of Yerushalayim.”



Shacharis in the Jewish school in Santiago, Chile

“When I arrived in Santiago, there were about 35,000 Jews with most of them estranged from Judaism. About 1400 children attended the Jewish school which had no Jewish curriculum at all.

SHLICHUS TO CHILE

“I studied Shulchan Aruch and the commentaries for over three years while my wife supported us. I also studied mila, safrus and sh’chita.

“Towards the end of my studies I was made an offer by the Jewish Agency to serve as Chief Rabbi of Chile. After agreeing to the offer I attended a special program for rabbanim going abroad. We learned all the necessary halachos – holidays, mourning, mikvaos, etc.

“In 5736/1976 we packed our suitcases and prepared to leave on shlichus to Chile for two years. We had a little boy by then. I felt that before going to Chile I had to get the Rebbe’s bracha and so we made a stop in the US.

“Before having yechidus I spoke at length with the Rebbe’s

secretary, Rabbi Chadakov. When I asked him how I would manage there being the only fully frum Jew, he said, ‘Avrohom Avinu was one man and you know what he accomplished.’ During our conversation he asked who was sending me to Chile. I told him the Jewish Agency. He looked at me and exclaimed, ‘No!’ I took out my contract signed by the Jewish Agency and showed it to him. He said, ‘No’ again. For the third time I told him that I was being sent by the Jewish Agency and he said, ‘You are going on the shlichus of the Creator. You are His shliach, not that of the Jewish Agency.’ I understood the message. When it came to Jewish observance I shouldn’t be fazed by the Jewish Agency people nor by members of the local community.

“I had yechidus in the course

WORDS ERASED

In Chile I checked many t'fillin and mezuzos and I was a witness to many moving stories. There was an older man who was stricken with terrible pains in his feet to the point that he couldn't stand. I went to his house and when I took down the mezuzah from the front door and checked it, I saw to my amazement that the words "and when you walk on the way" were erased.

I had another story with an Israeli teacher who worked in Chile who told me that the previous year she had been expecting a child but had miscarried. I visited her home and suggested that we check the mezuzos. It turned out that the mezuzah on the front door was put in upside down and the mezuzos on the other doorways were made of paper.

of which the Rebbe asked questions about my shlichus and then blessed me.

"We arrived in Santiago the capitol which has several Jewish groups divided into the German, Hungarian and Sephardic communities. The heads of all these communities welcomed me. They expressed their joy over having a Chief Rabbi after eighteen years without an Orthodox rabbi in Chile which is why the state of Judaism there was abysmal."

What was the state of Judaism in Chile?

"There were some shuls but they only had small minyanim of the elderly. All the Sifrei Torah were pasul and I worked hard to fix ten of them. The young people in the Jewish community knew nothing about Judaism.

"When I arrived in Santiago, there were about 35,000 Jews with most of them estranged from Judaism. About 1400 children attended the Jewish school which

had no Jewish curriculum at all.

"The Jews in Chile were divided into two groups – communists and non-communists. The school belonged to the communists which is why they taught no religion. Not long before we came to Chile the communist regime headed by the dictator Allende fell, and the military led by Augusto Pinochet grabbed the reins. He was good for the Jews."

COFFEE AND CAKE WITH THE RABBI

"Upon our arrival in Chile we tried to acclimate as fast as we could. We did not have a problem with the language since we had studied Spanish before we left and this made our work easier."

You went to a spiritual wasteland. Where did you begin?

"At first I met some people in the various communities in Santiago and they gave me the telephone numbers of Jewish students. My wife called dozens of students and invited them for coffee and cake with the rabbi."

"The first night a few dozen came. I thought it would be a brief conversation but it lasted for hours in the course of which they became exposed to Judaism and were fascinated by it. They wanted to know more and more.

"Due to the poor security situation it was illegal to have activities in the evening. Since I lived in the area where many ambassadors lived, I managed to hide our group – which gathered from nine until midnight – from the eyes of the authorities. But then someone tattled and it was only after the intervention of the Israeli ambassador that I was allowed to continue.

"Additional participants were

constantly joining our weekly meeting and after a few months it became an established gathering that was attended by 120 students. These students who lived among masses of non-Jews knew nothing about Judaism. Not surprisingly, the assimilation rate was very high. I soon made it my goal to do all I could to prevent the students I met from marrying a non-Jew. Boruch Hashem, my tremendous efforts were successful and we attended dozens of weddings of students who married Jews."

What is daily life like for a rabbi in Chile?

"There is plenty to do. In addition to being the rav, I was also a shochet, mohel and sofer. When a Jewish child was born, I circumcised him. I also checked t'fillin and mezuzos for all members of the community and I shechted on certain days. We had to contend with many difficulties but the bracha I received from the Rebbe gave me the kochos to overcome all hardships.

"My work extended to all the different kinds of people – Yekkes, Hungarians and Sephardim. They all welcomed me except for the Reform rabbi. The day after I arrived in Chile he came to visit me. I was gracious and explained that I wanted to 'live and let live.' But he wanted war, so as an officer in the paratroopers in the IDF I knew how to fight him..."

"He didn't fight me openly but he tried to thwart my every move. When I asked the k'hilla (community) for a place to hold our Jewish students meeting, he exerted pressure on the heads of the k'hilla and they told me they didn't have the budget for it."

How did you manage with kosher food?

"Since I am a shochet we had

no problem with meat. With time we came to an arrangement about chalav Yisroel but we did not have dairy products throughout our stay there.”

SUCCESS IN THE JEWISH-COMMUNIST SCHOOL

“One day, I decided I needed to bring Judaism into the Jewish school even though it was affiliated with the communists. I spoke with the heads of the community and asked them to allow me to lecture at the school. They told me that if they allowed me in, the Reform and Conservative rabbis would also ask to lecture in the school. ‘Think about whether you want the situation to remain as is, with the children not knowing about religion, or whether they should hear about all forms of Judaism,’ they told me.

“I thought about it a lot and came to the conclusion that I wanted to lecture at the school. I figured the other two rabbis would soon give up on lecturing to children, especially if they weren’t paid for it. Aside from that, I relied on Hashem to give me the ability to win in my war for the hearts of the students.

“My lectures began and as the community heads anticipated, the Reform and Conservative rabbis immediately came and asked to lecture too. So the three of us lectured. Once or twice a week I lectured on various Jewish topics and I saw how the children were receptive. Nevertheless, I was concerned about the other lectures. The denouement came sooner than I expected.

“One day, the Conservative rabbi left town which was rather surprising. A short while later, the Reform rabbi had his downfall too. He lectured in one



R' Mordechai Nachimovsky
with his son Shlomo a"h

of the upper classes about the prohibition of eating forbidden foods. He focused on the severity of eating creeping creatures. One of the students got up and began shouting – ‘You eat creeping creatures! Last week I saw you in a restaurant eating them!’ The rabbi was taken aback. The other students also got up and began shouting and insulting him until he had to leave the classroom in shame. He never came back to lecture at the school.

“I eventually became friendly with the school’s administration and so was able to make a suggestion that I did not believe would be accepted – to have a minyan for Shacharis in the school. I was given the green light and we immediately began. At first, only boys over the age of 13 participated. Every morning I would go and daven with them. After a while I was able to get their permission to include all the students in the school! It was an unbelievable sight. Hundreds of students davening every morning in the communist school together with the Orthodox rabbi.

“Over the years we developed additional programs like clubs for the students in which they became familiar with Judaism. I gave classes and boruch

Hashem, many of them became more involved in Jewish life and practice.”

One lone Lubavitch family in Chile – how did you do it?

“I received the kochos for it every time I visited the Rebbe. I was in Chile for four years and each year I visited the Rebbe.

“We initially planned on staying for two years. At the end of that period, when we wanted to leave, the leaders of the communities in Chile did all they could to get us to stay. The heads of the Jewish Agency extended our contract for another year. When that year was over the same scene repeated itself. They pressured us and the Jewish Agency to get us to stay and we remained for another year.

“In the meantime, we had another two children for a total of three in all with the oldest old enough for yeshiva. There was no Chassidishe chinuch so we left Chile.

“On our way back to Eretz Yisroel we stopped off in 770. As soon as I arrived, the secretary R' Klein told me that Rabbi Ellison of the Jewish Agency had seen the Rebbe and the Rebbe had spoken to him about me.

“When I entered for yechidus the Rebbe asked me, ‘Why did you leave Chile?’ I explained that it was for the chinuch of our children. The Rebbe did not respond and he blessed me with success in Eretz Yisroel.

“A friend of mine who served as a military chaplain in an officers’ school asked me to replace him since he had taken the year off to study. I agreed and got back into uniform and served as rabbi at a large military base.

“When that job was over I studied dayanus for four years in the ‘Shevet Mechokek’ Kollel

headed by the well-known dayan Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. Each day Rabbi Goldberg gave a shiur which we reviewed for four to five hours!

"After four years of study I was given smicha for dayanus. A short while later, Rabbi Yochanan Gurary (then the rav of the Kiryat Sharrett neighborhood in Cholon and now the Chief Rabbi of Cholon) asked me to serve as rav in Cholon. I accepted his offer and was appointed as rav and made responsible for kashrus. A year later I was appointed as a member of the rabbinic bureau and director of the mikvaos department in Cholon."

BUILDING MIKVAOS IN CHOLON

Cholon is the fourth largest city in Eretz Yisroel but the mikva situation was terrible. There were only four mikvaos in the city at that time and they were old and run-down. None of them were according to the shita of Chabad.

The first thing R' Nachimovsky did was to finish the construction of the mikva in Kiryat Sharrett. The skeleton had been standing for a long time. R' Nachimovsky is an indefatigable worker and he pressured the right people and in a relatively brief time the permits and money came and within a short time the mikva was finished. It was made *bor al gabei bor*.

Since then, he has worked tirelessly to build mikvaos throughout the city with his goal to build a beautiful mikva in every neighborhood. Over twelve mikvaos are in operation now.

R' Nachimovsky tells us about the difficulties he encountered in having mikvaos built:

"The first problem is finding a place to build a mikva. It's

harder and more complicated in old neighborhoods. In the plans registered with the city engineer, the older neighborhoods are densely populated with every plot of land already taken. Until recently, they hardly ever allocated space for mikvaos. Even in recent years it is still hard for the rabbinate to insist on a plot to be designated for a mikva. The ones who helped us out in finding space and in financing the mikvaos were the mayors of Cholon, Motti Sasson and his successor Mr. Rinat.

"When land is finally allocated to the rabbinate for a mikva, you have to start looking for funding. The Ministry of Religions, the municipality, donors – these are the sources we turn to. Beautiful mikvaos cost a lot of money and the fundraising takes a long time."

How do you know about mikvaos?

"Before I went to Chile I studied mikvaos with Rabbi Mintzberg who was in charge of mikvaos in Yerushalayim. Together with him we went from mikva to mikva and studied the halachos as well as the practical aspects of how to build them and how to maintain them in the best possible way.

"When I get involved in building a mikva, I feel that I'm building my own personal home. In the planning stages I sit with the architect and go over every detail to ensure the comfort of those who will use the mikva. In the construction stage, I personally go and supervise it so it will be done in the best manner possible from both a technical and halachic perspective. When the mikva is finished, it's a real simcha for me. I rejoice with the residents of the neighborhood in which the mikva is built."

R' Nachimovsky can write a book about building mikvaos. Each mikva has its stories about how they obtained land and money, the course of construction, etc. We asked him for one example, the story of the mikva in the Tel Giborim neighborhood.

"It was in 5753 that I decided that it was unacceptable for an old neighborhood like Tel Giborim not to have a mikva. After despairing of finding a suitable property for it, I met with the mayor and demanded that he find a location as soon as possible. His brief response was, 'You can rely on me; all will be well.' Being experienced, I knew that he would be of no help.

"I decided to go 'I'chat'chilla aribber.' Early the next morning, before davening, an idea popped into my mind. I went to the Ashkenazi shul which is in the center of Tel Giborim and measured the yard and saw that it was large enough for a mikva. I immediately went to the offices of the religious council which were still closed and I waited there a long time until the director showed up. I asked him to get into my car and I quickly drove over to Tel Giborim. He was taken aback and asked, 'Are you kidnapping me?' I told him he would soon see why I was doing this.

"I showed him the area and simply stated, 'This is where a mikva will be built, next to the shul.' As I anticipated, obtaining permits and plans took a long time but the final result is a beautiful complex which consists of a shul (named for my son Shlomo a"h who was killed in a car accident) and a mikva that is the most modern in the Gush Dan area, with all the special touches and halachic hiddurim."

MIVTZA TAHARAS HA'MISHPACHA

R' Nachimovsky doesn't just build mikvaos. He builds public awareness of the mitzva of Family Purity. He has run a broad array of classes and refresher courses for all those who run a mikva.

Tell us about your work in promoting Family Purity in Cholon.

When the Rebbe spoke about Mivtza Taharas HaMishpacha, the purpose was to get as many Jews as possible to observe this mitzva. I do my utmost in promoting this mitzva.

"I start with young people. We developed lectures and tours for boys and girls in schools. They get to see what a mikva is so that years later, when they marry, they will know what it's about. I prefer initiating people into this as early as possible, as opposed to working with couples who are married for years.

"At the same time, as rav in Cholon I saw the need to present a two hour lecture for brides and grooms. Every couple who marries through the chief rabbinate of Cholon has to attend a lecture that takes places once a month. About 150-200 brides and grooms attend a lecture on Family Purity in the Jewish Home. People are made aware of this very important topic and there is a great response. I am not surprised that in Cholon there is an increasing demand on the part of the public for more and more mikvaos.

"The work isn't easy but when you see how many couples decide to observe Family Purity it keeps you going.

"People frequently come to me with problems and I can often successfully convince them to keep Taharas HaMishpacha

THREE DOLLARS FROM THE REBBE ON 26 ADAR I 5752



Giving out dollars on 26 Adar I 5752

In Adar I 5752 I saw waking visions of the Rebbe on several occasions in which he stood facing me. Since this repeated itself I felt the Rebbe was asking me to come to him. I arrived in New York on Friday 24 Adar I 5752. That day I circumcised my nephew in Flatbush and then went to Crown Heights for Shabbos.

At the farbrengen I sat behind the Rebbe and on Sunday I went for "dollars." Rabbi Kutli Rapp introduced me to the Rebbe as the director of the mikva department of the rabbinate in Cholon that did tremendous work for Taharas HaMishpacha and someone who works with Russian immigrants. The Rebbe gave me a dollar and said, "bracha v'hatzlacha;" another dollar and "special success with new immigrants, good news;" a third dollar and "hatzlacha rabba, besuros tovos."

Shabbos and Sunday passed and I had no idea why the Rebbe wanted me to come to him. The next day, Monday, the afternoon of 27 Adar I, the Rebbe left 770 for the Ohel. I waited on the side with other people and saw the Rebbe give coins to children for tz'daka and then wave goodbye in my direction. A few hours later we heard the sad news about the Rebbe.

It was only a few days later that we heard what happened. I felt that the Rebbe wanted me to come to him so he could give me the strength to go on. Why me? I have no idea.

when I tell them that this is the way to solve their personal problems. Over the years I've been witness to many incidents in which couples who did not have children for many years, had children after they committed to Family Purity."

What are you doing for the new immigrants?

"It's not easy. At least the old-timers have a smidgen of knowledge but the immigrants know absolutely nothing. The problem gets more complicated when the Russian family who takes an interest in Judaism and wants to keep the laws of tahara but can't read Hebrew well. This bothered me until I finally

decided to publish a book in Russian on the subject.

"I put a lot of work into it and boruch Hashem, I published the Russian language *Sod K'dushas HaAhava* which details the laws in a question and answer format. The book is in demand by Chabad houses in Eretz Yisroel, Russia and around the world. Many shluchim are interested in books like this for their Russian speaking mekuravim."

R' Nachimovsky does tremendous work in Cholon not only for Tahara but for Judaism in general. He hopes that Cholon will become a city *al taharas ha'kodesh*. ■

THE ABRAHAM PRINCIPLE

One simple concept, developed by a child some 3800 years ago, has transformed the world forever. Subtle yet powerful, Abraham's insight revolutionized religion and laid the foundation for modern science. Beyond all this, it empowers us to achieve personal wellness, higher consciousness and global sustainability.

• Part 1

By Aryeh Gotfryd, PhD



his times? And how do we know? And what relevance could any of this have for our ultramodern, hi-tech, multicultural world?

The key to all this is encoded in ancient rabbinic sources called Midrash that chronicle legends over thousands of years. Some of these sources are available in English.

According to the Midrash, Abraham was born in 1812 BCE in the ancient Mesopotamian town of Ur Kasdim. As a young child in a pagan culture, he practiced idolatry and prayed to the sun, believing it to have created the heavens and the earth. But something didn't quite click. Whenever the sun set, it was out of the picture and the

THE LEGEND

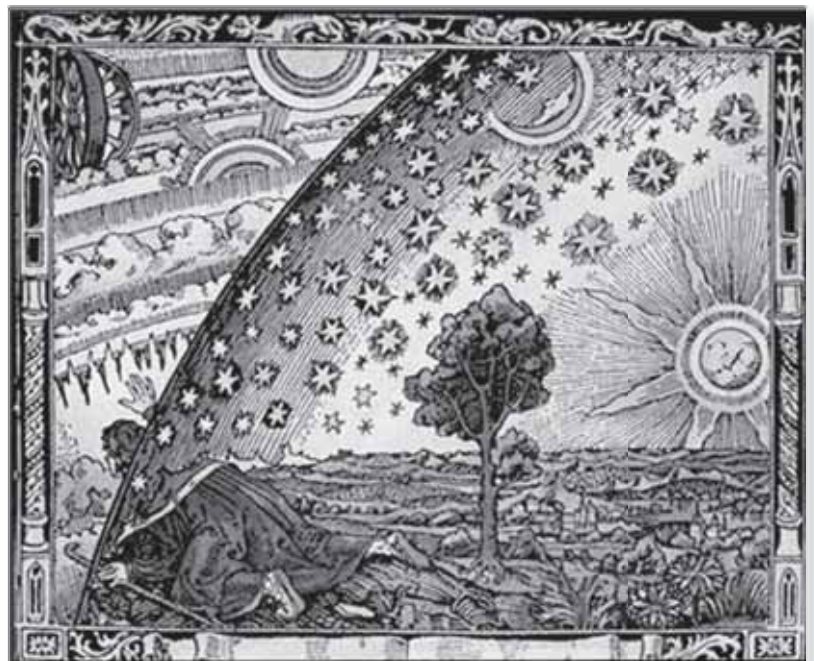
Abraham. Ibrahim. Avrohom. It's a name that carries much weight in the world, perhaps more than any other. Nearly four billion of the world's seven billion inhabitants belong to one of the world's major "Abrahamic" religions.

What makes them Abrahamic is their identification with ethical monotheism, belief in a Supreme Being, a Creator, who is involved in the world and cares about its people. About three quarters of the world's two hundred nations are dominated by religions that claim a spiritual heritage that traces back to one man – Abraham.

Indeed his Hebrew name, Avrohom, means father of many nations. But for all his fame, who was he really? Our earliest stories of Abraham come from the book of Genesis, but those tales reveal nothing of why he, of all people, should be so widely considered the father of ethical monotheism.

After all, Noah preceded Abraham by many generations and Adam was earlier still. Nonetheless, it is specifically Abraham who is branded the patriarch. Why?

What exactly did he innovate? How did he come up with his ideas? How was he received in



moon and stars dominated the night sky. Realizing the sun's limitations he prayed to the moon. With time he realized that neither is the ultimate answer, and he came to the conclusion that there must be one invisible Creator with unlimited power and knowledge.

Abraham was absolutely convinced that the prevailing pagan beliefs were wrong. He set about sharing his findings with everyone he met and successfully persuaded thousands to drop paganism in favor of his "heretical" views. Although popular with the public, Abraham was spurned by both family and the ruling class for bucking the system. After narrowly escaping martyrdom for refusing to deify the emperor, Abraham was forced to flee Babylon and took refuge in a reclusive monastery where he studied theology and kabbalah with a few other marginalized monotheists, descendants of Noah. Abraham went on to author the famed Book of Formation, *Seifer Yetzira* in Hebrew, the earliest known book on kabbalah.

Only after all this does Genesis pick up the plot with Abraham's call to the Promised Land and the subsequent history of his descendants, both Jews and Gentiles.

But questions remain, and perhaps the biggest one is – who cares? It's just history, right? Wrong.

This much-overlooked legend has encoded within it a profound philosophical principle. It is a principle that provides the key to modern science. Its conceptual core underlies quantum physics, cosmology, ecology, and information technology. But there is much more to it. This principle has the power to

unlock human potential, raise confidence, optimize wellness, harmonize relationships, advance prosperity, remove anxiety and fear, and generate peace of mind. It will even bring about sustainability and world peace.

Are these claims not overly bold, even outlandish? Definitely. But are they accurate? Over the course of this series, you be the judge.

TWO STORIES

A Lubavitcher Chassid meets up with a radical Muslim on a subway car and they get into a conversation.

If you think this is a joke, think again. This happened to my wife and I five years ago, ironically, while on our way to a huge multi-cultural event. The gala dinner that night was co-sponsored by the Canadian League for Human Rights and it was in honor of a Jew and a Sikh for their joint humanitarian philanthropy.

We were sitting on the subway, chatting, when a young man took up a position in the aisle directly in front of us, holding an exceptionally well-worn copy of "Hezbollah: Party of God." At eighteen inches, I was uniquely situated to appreciate the intimate relationship that probably existed between the Mediterranean looking youth before me and the graying, dog-eared, spine-crumbled manifesto cradled in his hand. A chill went up my spine.

As I looked up, his eyes met mine and our gazes locked. I spoke first, not quietly, but not loud. "It's one G-d for the whole world, right?"

Surprised, he hesitated, "... Yeah."

I went on, "He wants,

goodness and kindness. Right?"

His gaze shifted, he glanced at me again, and then away, "... Yeah."

Feeling hopeful, I extended my hand. "Let's shake on it."

"I cannot do that," he said, as he turned a bit away.

"Only what we agree on," and then I counted out the three points on my fingers. "G-d, goodness, and kindness. Nothing else."

"I gotta think about it." He turned and walked off. My heart was thumping. I tried not to look his way although my mind was on his jacket – was there a bulge around the waist? A few minutes later, he returned. "I thought about it ... Okay."

Pleased, I offered my hand again. This time he took it, and we shook – almost held – hands for a good long while. In my fifty-odd years I've shaken a lot of hands. I've had limp fish handshakes, bone crusher handshakes, perfunctory up-down roboticals, and mazal-tov-reception-liners. This was different. I felt love. It felt like something between a long-lost relative and an estranged son coming back home. We let go and he walked away. A few minutes later, he was back again, just as the train was slowing down.

"Good evening sir, good evening madam" he said. The train stopped, and he was gone.

To me, this is what Moshiach Now is all about. G-d, goodness, kindness, people united, a better world. Is it that simple? Maybe.

Another story.

Vladimir Putin is no great friend of Israel today. Yet his respect for Judaism, especially in its most pristine form is well known. He's an admirer of Chabad and since assuming

office has restored countless properties that were confiscated by the Soviets, and returned them to Jewish communities across the country. How did this tough, ultrapatriotic, ex-KGB boss become so friendly with Jewish orthodoxy?

The inside story was revealed by Russian Chief Rabbi, Berl Lazar at the inaugural Chabad-Israeli dinner in Toronto some years back. He told us that he and President Putin presided together at the opening day ceremony for the Jewish Community Center in Moscow. As the event drew to a close, Putin said to Lazar, "Let's say L'chaim!" Lazar said, "Fine, but better inside."

Some vodka and condiments were quickly set up but the President wanted something

more. "Do you have any gefilte fish?" he asked. You can imagine it didn't take long to serve that familiar delicacy, but again the distinguished guest wasn't satisfied. "This isn't real gefilte fish. I know what real gefilte fish tastes like." And he proceeded to tell R' Lazar a story from his childhood.

Little Vladimir usually came home from primary school to an empty house because both parents were off working. He'd run around the apartment block, getting into all kinds of mischief as energetic, unsupervised little boys are wont to do. The neighbors didn't take kindly to his pranks and let him know it in no uncertain terms.

One family in the building was different. The elderly Jewish

couple would call him in, offer him something to eat, and tell him what a good boy he was. They made an indelible impression on the President-to-be, the husband with his skullcap and bushy beard and the wife with her delicious cooking, especially the gefilte fish! He especially liked the pleasant and dignified way they spoke to each other.

From that time, he liked and respected religious Jews, and when he became President he vowed to himself to help them in any way he can.

G-d, goodness, kindness. Maybe it is that simple.

Abraham's values at work. ■

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BETTER AN OUTRIGHT ENEMY THAN A DECEPTIVE FRIEND

By Shai Gefen

NO SURPRISE - THE REBBE WAS RIGHT

Mubarak's downfall in a country considered the leading power in the Arab world and supposedly the leading moderate country, ought to wake us up from our slumber. Israel's approach has always been to support Mubarak's government. All the Israeli politicians went to Egypt to meet and greet him. The State of Israel invested a fortune to preserve ties with Mubarak and his government and to demonstrate to all that there are moderates in the Arab world, as contrasted with Syria and Iran, and we can negotiate and will enjoy peace. Mubarak was the talisman of those "peace" seekers who fostered the public belief in the loathsome slogan that a cold peace is preferable to a cold war.

How appropriate are the prophet Yeshaya's words, "the nation that goes in darkness, saw a great light." The truth must be said. It was all a lie; the agreement wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. Not for naught did the Rebbe scream against this agreement for four years in a row! The Rebbe warned us and everybody else stood off on the side. The Rebbe saw this agreement as the beginning of a *churban* (destruction) and warned of the consequences, but

they opted for "peace" with the largest Arab country.

Mubarak's fall is the realization of a prophecy and the burial of a fraudulent peace that they tried to force feed us for thirty years.

Some people ask: Well, wasn't the situation good until now? Do we want the Muslim Brotherhood to rise to power? The answer is: Yes, it is better to know that we have an outright enemy than an enemy that pretends to be a friend which spent the last thirty years arming itself with the most

advanced weaponry thanks to peace with the State of Israel. Better we should know that we have a bitter enemy that we need to fight whether in military combat or through diplomatic means.

Ever since the Camp David Accords, when we thought we would be accepted with acclaim by the world, the Arab world has drifted more and more to extremism. Iran fell to Khomeini, Turkey became more extremist, and now Egypt too.

The lesson is we cannot make



Will Netanyahu realize that Egypt is not a friend but an enemy?

“The main thing – they are returning all these things and are promising to return more and more and all this, in exchange for a piece of paper! Furthermore, the other side does not honor the terms of the agreement and 24 hours later they put soldiers in those areas where they were forbidden to do so according to the agreement they had signed!

24 hours later they put soldiers in those areas where they were forbidden to do so according to the agreement they had signed!

Despite this, the Jews acted “cleverly.” They did not announce the slap in the face that they received 24 hours after returning the land. The other side accepted the land graciously and immediately broke the terms of the agreement! They figured that hiding the facts would change the reality.

Above all else, after all this they did not refrain from expelling Jews from Eretz Yisroel and they did so by using IDF soldiers who are moser nefesh (sacrifice their lives) to defend the land and those who live there, because the agreement stated that Jews cannot live in these parts!

One cannot say there is no point in crying out about the past because there are several issues that are not in the past and so, when Jews will stand firmly they will not need to return even more land to goyim, etc.

Not only that, but after Hashem displayed a miracle, you can demand – and rightly so – the land you gave away already, and so this is not a matter of the past that cannot be corrected.

Returning land was conditional on it not adversely affecting the security of Jews since they signed a peace agreement, but now, after the change in leadership, there is nobody who can guarantee that the peace agreement will continue!

Even if you want to say that the predecessor (Sadat) truly wanted peace, it is close to certain that this step (peace accords) was only to enable him to get back the oil fields and land etc. He figured it wasn't worth trying to retake it in war when he could get it back graciously on a silver platter.

peace that is not built on Torah. A peace treaty constructed on theft while kicking at the precious gift that Hashem gave us just can't be. The Rebbe repeated this hundreds of times. The more we quote the Rebbe and make sure that his approach is used, the better for us.

The Rebbe cried out about not relying on the United States which is a weak supporter and now we see it. Egypt was a strong ally of the United States and yet the US turned its back on a ruler who they supported for decades.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The Rebbe gave us the answer to this question. The Rebbe saw what would happen and he spoke about it on 18 Elul 5741/1981, two weeks before the assassination of Egyptian President Sadat. Two weeks after that, and even before they began destroying the settlements in Chevel Yamit, the Rebbe said a sicha (4th day of Chol HaMoed Sukkos 5742) that sounds as practical today as it did back then. Each word of it is prophetic. The Rebbe demanded that we immediately abrogate our agreements with Egypt and return to the previous status quo. He said:

And now Hashem – in miraculous fashion – made the world tremble in the most

frightening way. Surely, in light of this situation, they will “grasp” all the misfortunes that Jews caused to themselves by signing the Camp David Accords.

Since the signing of the accords, they gave Egypt the oil fields – which is the most important security need and not only for wartime; it is vital for the country's economy on a daily basis and they gave it away!

They gave back land that belongs to Eretz Yisroel, even though Hashem gave this land to the Jewish people with open miracles!

When they thought that by doing so they would successfully “buy” the goy, they see now that the opposite is true. By doing this they made the goy continue pressuring and demanding more and more, seeing that every demand on his part is acceded to, and so he announces that the particular territory he is receiving now is only an interim arrangement and we need to know that he is demanding more land, and there is no knowing when he will decide to cease making demands!

The main thing – they are returning all these things and are promising to return more and more and all this, in exchange for a piece of paper! Furthermore, the other side does not honor the terms of the agreement and

Based on the above, it is obvious (what they knew in the past too) that they see the errors they made by giving back those things upon which depend (in the natural way of things) the economy and security of the Jews in Eretz Yisroel. Therefore, from now on, Jews need to behave according to the dictates of Torah – to stand strong and not be fazed by the goy, especially when these are matters that affect lives!

NETANYAHU PERPETUATES THE MISTAKES OF HIS PREDECESSORS

Mubarak's resignation took place on 8 Adar (Mid-East time, though in Lubavitch headquarters it was 11:00 in the morning on 7 Adar) and a friend told me that the expulsion from Yamit and Chatzar Adar began on this date in 5742 and was completed on 28 Nissan.

The numbers are significant. The State of Israel recklessly abandoned the security of its people and the treasure it received from Hashem in order to be able to defend itself, and did so in exchange for false promises.

On 8 Adar the lie that lasted for thirty years was finally exposed. Till this day, not one Israeli leader has admitted that "peace with Egypt" was a sham, and they all perpetuated the illusion of peace. Now too, after the fall of Mubarak, Israeli politicians are not ready to concede their errors. Just this week, Netanyahu publicly thanked the Egyptian army for proclaiming that they will continue to adhere to the peace agreement, rather than taking advantage of the revolution in Egypt and taking back the gift that Hashem gave us.

The Rebbe esteemed all those

who voted and fought against the Camp David Accords. In a letter that he wrote to Yitzchok Shamir a year after the withdrawal, the Rebbe responded to a *pidyon nefesh* that he wrote: "I will allow myself – to add the following – and I hope that it will be accepted in the spirit in which it was written... He will surely be remembered for his courage and strength in openly voting against the Camp David Sadat accord. I hope that also in the future he will stand firmly in defense of Jewish pride, in addition to standing firmly on the principles that he has fought for these many years..." ■

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LEADING THE CHARGE WITH THE REBBE'S MIVTZAIM

In this chapter of his memoirs, R' Dunin tells about the early years before there were any Chabad communities in the north of Eretz Yisroel, as there are today in Tzfas, Migdal HaEmek, Natzrat Illit and so on. It was the few members of Anash who lived in the Taanach settlements that did all the Rebbe's activities in the north of the country. "Shlichus is shlichus!" * Part 3 of 7

Interview by Chaim Cohen

As the interview went on – and it was utterly fascinating – R' Avrohom spoke in the old style, referring to Chassidim by name without any titles that for some reason has become a modern day “plague”. You could almost touch the flavor of the good ol’ days when we were all brothers-Chassidim and not “HaRav HaGaon.”

You told us last time about being a teacher in a yishuv on the border. I did some “homework” and found out that being a teacher on a yishuv on the border back then, before the Six Day War, was not easy ...

True. Taanach is very close to the border with what was once part of Jordan. The two Israeli Arab villages Muqeible and Sandala constituted the border. They are very close to us as the following anecdote illustrates.

A supervisor from the Jordanian Education Ministry came from Amman to the village of Jalmi in order to visit the school. He traveled a little too far and came to Muqeible without realizing that he was within the “Green Line.” He toured the

school and the principal, sure that he was a supervisor from the Arab branch of the Israeli Education Ministry, welcomed him warmly. At the end of the visit, the principal complained that he had visited the Education Ministry in Tel Aviv about a certain matter but he hadn't yet received a response. You can well imagine the consternation on the part of the supervisor when he found out that he was in enemy territory!

Why did I tell you this story? To show how close we were to the border and how easy it was to cross from Jordanian territory to us.

During the war, enemy shells fell in the fields around us but boruch Hashem there were no casualties.

What were your material circumstances like when you first started out?

The roads in the moshavim were unpaved; there was mud throughout the winter. The house had bare floors without tiles. We had an outhouse and so on. When they renovated the house for us the plan was to add a tiled

floor and a bathroom. When the supervisor from the Education Ministry, Yosef Dor, who greatly befriended us, offered that I move to Afula, we refused. Shlichus is shlichus! He was amazed by our determination to continue living on the moshav despite the hardships.

You worked not only in the school but were the focal point for hafatza to the entire northern region. Many Lubavitchers who grow up in a world where there is a Chabad House just about everywhere, have a hard time understanding what it was like back then.

In those days, Anash in Taanach were practically the only Lubavitchers in the entire northern region. My brother Reuven was in Chaifa with a circle of mekuravim and there were a few others in the Krayot area. Reuven's work was much more on a personal level. He gave shiurim and was mekarev many people, but when the Alliance school in Chaifa wanted to hold an “Erev Chabad,” for example, they asked us.

When residents of the north,

in other words – the entire Emek, lower Galil, upper Galil all the way to the surrounding borders, wanted an Erev Chabad, we were called. The same is true for the few mitvtzaim that there were until 5734/1974 when the Rebbe announced the “five mitvtzaim” and then added the holiday campaigns (mainly Chanuka and Purim) and mitvtza t’fillin. The “Chabad house of Taanachim,” if we can call it that, did all this work. Of course we got reinforcements from Kfar Chabad, men who came in standing room only buses or trucks (nobody was spoiled back then!).

Today it’s hard to grasp what the map of Chabad in Eretz Yisroel looked like without the communities in Tzfas, Migdal HaEmek, Natrat Ilit, Ramat Yishai, Tivon, Yakneam, Teveria (and I still haven’t mentioned the smaller settlements). It’s hard to describe a situation in which only a few Lubavitchers worked in a vast area without being able to pick up the phone and call the nearest yeshiva and ask bachurim to come and help, but that’s the way it was.

In the homework I did for this interview with you, I discovered that you are identified with the Yavneh V’Chachomeha campaign, the “partner campaign” of the House Full of S’farim campaign. Even as I sit here, in your “Chabad house,” I can picture the house full of s’farim in every free space and the sweet children of the moshav coming to “Yavneh.” I think that is your personal “area of excellence.”

Yes, but some background is in order. In 5734 the Rebbe began speaking about mitvtzaim. Until then, there was the general guideline of U’faratzta with an emphasis on mitvtza t’fillin that

started at the time of the Six Day War and the seasonal mitvtzaim which enabled Jews to do the mitzvos of the holiday: shmura matza, dalet minim, mobile sukkos, shofar, Chanuka and Purim.

Like I said, there were shiurim, especially in Tanya, and there were “Evenings with Chabad.” From 5734 and on, especially after the murderous terrorist attacks, the Rebbe urged mitvtzaim. At first there were five and then another five were added. As time went on there were even more but the concept and term “Ten Mitvtzaim” remained.

The five mitvtzaim were: Mitvtza Torah, Mitvtza T’fillin – which already existed but got an additional push, Mitvtza Mezuzah, Mitvtza Tz’daka, and Mitvtza Bayis Malei S’farim (House Full of S’farim) – Yavneh V’Chachomeha. The Rebbe added the words, “Yavneh V’Chachomeha” (Yavneh and its Sages) to the Mitvtza Bayis Malei S’farim at the Simchas Torah farbrengen in 5735/1974.

In the sicha, the Rebbe told the story about Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai at length, with all the details and he explained how R’ Yochanan found favor with the Caesar and the Sages said he could have asked for Yerushalayim but he figured, *tofasta meruba, lo tafasta* (if you grasp too much, you won’t have anything). So he only asked for the city of Yavneh and the Sages there. The Rebbe explained that what caused him to find favor in the eyes of the Caesar was the power of Torah, and R’ Yochanan

didn’t realize this – that with the power of Torah he could have obtained more.

The Rebbe concluded that we need to use the power of Torah and make Torah study a regular practice everywhere, in every city, in every neighborhood, every street, every home, and then we will be saved with the power of Torah. The Rebbe even said that learning sessions should take place in private homes and this would save the Jewish people.

People asked the Rebbe afterward what the connection was between Yavneh and the Sages and the campaign for a house full of s’farim and the Rebbe answered that when there



R' Avrohom Dunin reaching out to people in the settlements of Taanachim

are many s’farim in a home, you need to learn them.

I understood from this that this is what needed to be done – to establish learning in every home, and that’s what we started doing. We gathered children from the moshav, each time in a different home, and said the 12 P’sukim with them, some Mishnayos, a prayer for the Geula, and concluded with the sh’hakol bracha and a treat. During summer break we added learning Mishnayos by heart. This mitvtza continues till this day and during the day children come in groups or on their

own, for this purpose. Some of these boys are children of the original participants in Yavneh V'Chachomeha.

Were there any reactions from the Rebbe about your work?

Something amazing happened that year. We had yechidus and the Rebbe took out an album of pictures that my brother Reuven sent him. We understood that the Rebbe was indicating that we should do the same thing, take photographs of our work and send him an album. My wife bought a camera so we could take pictures.

We sent the first albums of the Yavneh work with R' Shlomo Madar, a teacher in the school in Taanach who was going to the Rebbe for Yud-Alef Nissan. The pictures were of the mivtza that was carried out by two students in the third grade – Chanie Sossonkin (today Kalmanson) and Chanie Yadgar (today Edery) in the nearby Prazon moshav.

That year, Yud-Alef Nissan came out on a Sunday. R' Shlomo submitted the albums to the secretaries on Thursday or Friday. At the farbrengen that Shabbos, the Rebbe spoke about those involved in Yavneh V'Chachomeha and how people should see what they are doing and learn from them.

A relative, the shlucha Mrs. Sarah Rivka Sossonkin went to the Rebbe and she was instructed to ask R' Chadakov for the albums and to show them to her friends. We got at least one letter from the Rebbe about Yavneh V'Chachomeha.

After a while I myself went to the Rebbe and did a poll in 770 to see who could explain Yavneh V'Chachomeha. I was shocked to see how the best among them had no idea what it was. It seems there were two

sichos that people simply did not absorb. As far as I know – if only I was wrong – there are only two places in the world where Yavneh V'Chachomeha exists till this day and they are Avital and Meitav in Chevel Taanach!

I heard there is another mivtza that you are particularly involved in – Simchas Shabbos and Yom Tov.

[the author CC:] I wasn't surprised when R' Avrohom remained silent. He was not willing to discuss this but we know that R' Avrohom regularly visits the Afula shuk late on Thursday, soliciting donations or buying an array of products, and thanks to him, many Jews in the Emek and the area enjoy fresh produce for Shabbos. The help offered by him and his wife is not only with products but with whatever people need – moral and financial support, and it is all done discreetly and graciously.

R' Avrohom and his wife are always ready to listen, to advise, and to help. When people tell them their sorrows, they don't sigh but live the statement in the HaYom Yom that says, "one action is better than a thousand sighs." They bring to life in their daily lives all the aphorisms about helping and love among Chassidim and among Jews in general. To them, these sayings are not just in a book. They carry them out without a budget and without fanfare – with their bodies, money and souls. There is no task too arduous for them. They are not fazed by any difficulty.

Mind you, throughout the years they have been living on this little moshav with hardly any public transportation and without their own car. They hitch rides on the side of the road in all of the various difficult weather conditions of that region. When

I express my amazement they don't know why I am surprised for this is what is demanded of every Chassid.

Over the years you invested a lot into learning with and being mekarev people who eventually set up frum homes; some of them even went on shlichus. What can you tell us about that?

The Rebbe blessed us in yechidus that we should have nachas from our mushpaim and mushpaos.

One of the people we learned with is Yossi Stern. He began teaching a group of fellows what he learned with us. All those who were mekurav through us registered their children in the Chabad school in Taanach. Some of them even registered their children for the Chabad Talmud Torah in Migdal HaEmek. It was a moving sight to see their children competing in public contests, winning first place and being crowned Chassanei HaMishna and Gemara. Most of the mekuravim named their children who were born at that time by the names of the Rebbeim.

All the couples who were niskarev by us are themselves spreading the wellsprings in the neighborhoods where they live and in their places of work.

R' Avrohom doesn't name names but I know many of the people who became frum through them and are today spreading Judaism and the Besuras Ha'Geula. The influence of the Dunin family is vast. They keep in touch with every one of their mekuravim, attend their simchas and continue to serve as a source of inspiration despite the passage of years and sometimes distant locations. ■