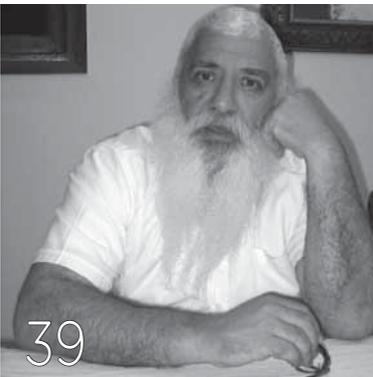




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THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION: SURE, AS IF IT HAD ALREADY OCCURED

How is it possible to say that, prior to the exodus, when the Jewish people were still entrenched in exile, from the time of Rosh Chodesh Nissan (“This month shall be for you”), Nissan is referred to as the Month of Redemption? Security was so controlled at the Egyptian border, throughout the entire country, that the Torah testifies, “Not a single slave was able to escape Egypt.” So how is it possible to say that from the time of Rosh Chodesh it was the Month of Redemption?

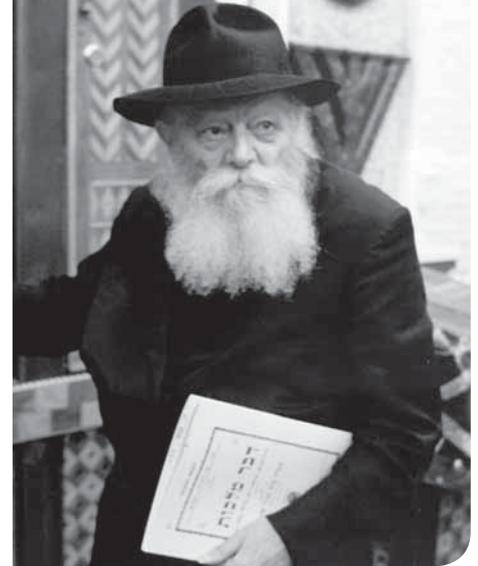
Translated by Boruch Merkur

THE MONTH OF REDEMPTION

We are presently in the month of Nissan, the Month of Redemption. [At that time, however, the Jewish people were still steeped in exile, imprisoned in a foreign land, in Egypt. It wasn't until the fifteenth of Nissan when they were actually redeemed. Nevertheless, the entire month of Nissan is referred to as the Month of Redemption, a curiosity that requires further analysis.] At what point exactly did Nissan begin to be known as the Month of Redemption?

It is written in the Midrash, “When He [G-d] chose Yaakov and his descendants, He established the Rosh Chodesh of redemption.” G-d “established”

within Creation – that is, He founded within the world – various cycles, amongst which is the concept of months. To that end, “When He chose Yaakov and his descendants” from among all the nations, “He established the Rosh Chodesh of redemption,” as it is said, “This month shall be for you the first of months,” referring to the month of Nissan. This concept – that “when He chose Yaakov and his descendants, He established the Rosh Chodesh of redemption,” as well as, “This month shall be for you the first of months” – took place prior to the Giving of the Torah, when the Jewish people were still in Egypt.



BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN - OF EGYPT

Now, the exile in Egypt was the harshest of all exiles, to the extent that the Torah says, “All the kingdoms are called by the name ‘Egypt’ (Mitzrayim), for the Egyptians were the tormentors (*meitziros*) of the Jewish people.” Thus, if there is a Jew in a certain region who has difficulties and tribulations, irrespective of which kingdom or which regime these problems arose from, his plight is reminiscent of the first and most difficult exile, the exile in Egypt, for “All the kingdoms are called by the name ‘Egypt,’ ‘Mitzrayim.’”

How then is it possible to say that prior to the exodus [when the Jewish people were still entrenched in exile], from the time of Rosh Chodesh Nissan (“This month shall be for you”), Nissan is referred to as the Month of Redemption? Security was so controlled at the Egyptian border, throughout the entire country, that the Torah testifies, “Not a single slave was able to escape Egypt.” So how is it possible to say that from the time of Rosh Chodesh it was the Month of Redemption?

This was still at a time when Pharaoh and his ministers stated

unequivocally that they would not emancipate the Jewish people in any way. Even when it came to the 10th of the month, just four days before the exodus from Egypt, Pharaoh and his administration put their lives on the line [to keep the Jewish people enslaved]. And this was despite their witnessing that G-d had brought about [a civil war, as it is said] “To smite Egypt with its firstborn.” Out of concern for Pharaoh and his regime, the Egyptians, along with their children, urged them to free the Jewish people, nevertheless Pharaoh remained steadfast in his resolve not to let them go.

As discussed above, the severe stance Egypt took against the Jewish people was not an empty threat. Rather, the Torah states that until the moment the Jewish people left Egypt, on the fifteen of Nissan – “On that very day” – Egypt maintained such secure borders that not even a single, solitary slave could escape.

In what sense then is it possible to call [the entire month of] Nissan the Month of Redemption?

BANKING ON THE WORD OF G-D

The explanation is as follows.

In the midst of even this type of harsh exile [even when there is no end in sight, no way to escape], when Moshe Rabbeinu proclaims (on Rosh Chodesh Nissan) that the redemption will come and they will leave exile, “with our youth, our elders, etc., our sons and our daughters,” saying that they will leave the Land of Egypt all together in one instance – then it is indeed called a Month of Redemption.

As stated in the verse (Bo 12:28), immediately when the

“Irrespective of the state we find ourselves in today, “The Torah promises that the Jewish people will (certainly) repent and immediately they will be redeemed.” ... Therefore, every Jew must be certain of this guarantee, exactly as if the matter has already come to pass.

Jewish people heard this news, “*va’yaasu*,” “(The Jewish people went) and they did (as the Lord commanded Moshe and Aharon, so they did)” – meaning that the event had already taken place, and Rashi elaborates that this was [prior to its actual occurrence] on Rosh Chodesh. [That is, Rashi writes: “But was it [i.e., the commandments regarding the Pascal sacrifice, etc. (and by extension, the exodus that would follow)] in fact done [at that point]? Rather, from the moment they accepted it upon themselves, it is considered as if they had done it.”]

The exodus took place on the fifteen of Nissan. So, at first glance, what is meant by saying that it had already transpired on Rosh Chodesh Nissan?

The answer is that the faith and certainty of the Jewish people in the fulfillment of the words of G-d, precisely as they were stated by Moshe Rabbeinu, was with such strength that, from their perspective the events had already occurred. Thus, it is written in the Torah, “and they did,” meaning that the exodus had already taken place on Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

NOTHING LESS THAN A GUARANTEE

Of course, the Torah does not relate these events for the sake of storytelling. Rather, this story

contains a significant message and a lesson in our service of G-d.

Irrespective of the state we find ourselves in today, there is the promise and the assurance of the Torah – the Written Torah as well as the Oral Torah – [as Rambam writes in *Mishneh Torah*] that “The Torah promises that the Jewish people will (certainly) repent and immediately they will be redeemed.” That is to say, when Jews turn themselves around to face G-d, G-d certainly brings them from one extreme to the other, from a doubled and redoubled darkness of an extremely harsh exile to the true and complete redemption, which will never be followed by another exile. Therefore, every Jew (“our youth, our elders, etc., our sons and our daughters”) must be certain of this guarantee, exactly as if the matter has already come to pass.

It is just that it takes a few moments [before the redemption is fully realized, in the literal sense], as it was “in the days of your exodus from the Land of Egypt,” for at that time they got word of the exodus on Rosh Chodesh Nissan but it wasn’t until the fifteenth of Nissan that they actually left Egypt “marching out triumphantly.” ■

(From the address of 11 Nissan 5736, bilti muga)

NISSIM FOR NISSIM

By Nosson Avraham

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

“**T**he story I am about to tell is the only reason why we became Chabad chassidim.” With these words, R’ **Yitzchak Baruch** of Bat Yam begins the miraculous and incredible account of what he experienced with his eldest son, HaTamim **Nissim Baruch**. I heard this story for the first time at a sheva brachos celebration for the Navon-Marom families held recently at the Chabad academy for girls in Bat Yam. A few days later, after much urging and after receiving the permission of the subject of this story, R’ Yitzchak agreed to reveal its full details, as he recalled the events together with his wife.

Anyone who was sitting at the sheva brachos feast and heard this moving story couldn’t help but be moved to tears. This was not just another miracle story, rather one that seemed totally out of this world. The boy whom every medical expert that looked over his file – and there were many of them – determined that he would be unable to walk, hear, or speak, was given the honor of reciting one of the blessings at the sheva brachos.

Nissim is an outstanding

student, blessed with tremendous abilities, which he utilizes in his studies at Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Ramat Aviv.

DEPRESSING FORECASTS FROM THE DOCTORS

“Our son Nissim was born on the 14th of MarCheshvan 5748. We still weren’t observing Torah and mitzvos in those days – not that we had anything against it, but we hadn’t been educated according to the values of Jewish education. My parents emigrated to Eretz Yisroel from Bulgaria, and my wife and I had established our home in Bat Yam, where I owned a successful printing business for print jobs on silk paper. Until Nissim’s birth, we ran our lives in a state of relative calm and order. We had already been blessed with a daughter, and as any other young Israeli couple, we tried to live as well as we possibly could. The birth of our second child was not a normal one. He was born prematurely in the Wolfson Medical Center with a serious lack of oxygen.

“On the first day after his birth, we still didn’t understand how serious his condition was. We thought that this



was a problem that would go away with the passage of time, something that happens with many children born prematurely and underweight. Yet, he was still a long way off from going into an incubator, receiving standard treatment, and eventually being released home after gaining sufficient weight. The day after his birth, the doctor came and informed us of his serious condition. ‘He can’t hear, he can’t see, and he surely can’t walk,’ he stated tersely, leaving us absolutely stunned. The doctor added that in his opinion, the child’s complicated ailment did not allow for him to remain in the hospital, as they lacked the necessary expertise to deal with this problem. He suggested that we have him moved to the Tel HaShomer Hospital, and so we did.

“We left the doctor’s office with a feeling of dread. Words are totally inadequate to describe the emotions that filled our hearts at that moment; it was as if someone had placed a huge weight upon our chests. Our two-day old baby boy was placed in the neurosurgery ward, where he was hospitalized for three months. During that period, the child underwent numerous operations and medical treatments, but he still weighed only four pounds. Here too, the medical staff was very upfront and gave us a clear diagnosis. They spoke about the difficult situation, and that according to the prognosis, he won’t be able to walk, hear, or speak. From their vantage point, there was absolutely no basis for the possibility that he will ever be able to do any of these three activities. This was a most difficult time for us, filled with deep sorrow and anguish.

“On the floor underneath our apartment lived Rabbi Shimshon

Greenberg. He noticed my crestfallen appearance and asked to know why. I opened up to him and told about the bad tidings that had befallen us, how we had turned from young parents filled with joy into parents going each day to the hospital in anticipation of discharging our child who will never be able to function as a normal human being. It was something that just broke our hearts to pieces. Rabbi Greenberg informed me in unmistakable terms that there is a Rebbe in the world, and as he proceeded to share a list of miracles that the Rebbe had performed, he suggested that I write the Rebbe a letter.”

FOUR LETTERS WITHOUT A RESPONSE

“He gave me the address of the Rebbe’s secretariat in New York, and I wrote a letter describing our son’s health condition and everything that we were feeling as parents as a result of this situation, and asking for the Rebbe’s bracha. I sent the letter that very day. Days and weeks passed, but no answer arrived. Four times I wrote to the Rebbe in the hope of receiving an answer or a bracha, but the anticipation turned into disappointment when no answer was forthcoming. Each time when I asked my neighbor, Rabbi Greenberg, for an explanation why there had been no answer, he urged me not to give up and to try and write again.

“After four times writing without receiving an answer, I came to Rabbi Greenberg with a complaint: ‘If you claim that the Rebbe is a true Jewish leader, then why haven’t I merited any attention from him?’ ‘I don’t know what to tell you,’ he said shrugging his shoulders, and

he suggested that I accompany him to see the local shliach of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, Rabbi Zimroni Tzik. When we arrived at Rabbi Tzik’s office, I told him everything we had endured in recent months and the fact that I had already written to the Rebbe four times, but had yet to elicit a response. Rabbi Tzik asked me several questions and then said, ‘How did you write your letters? With pen and paper?’ I replied that I didn’t understand what he meant.

“Did you make spiritual preparations before you wrote?” he asked. “Did you make a proper ‘vessel’ to receive the bracha?” I told him the truth; I hadn’t done anything except to write the letter. He suggested that I should go to the mikveh and prepare myself spiritually to write it. He spoke with such complete confidence that I didn’t waste a moment, as I grabbed a towel and went to the mikveh. After I had recovered from this initial experience, I proceeded to write a fifth letter. I sent the letter via the fax machine installed in Rabbi Tzik’s office.”

A SPEEDY ANSWER TO THE FIFTH LETTER, WRITTEN AFTER PROPER SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

“The letter was sent on a Thursday, and on the following Sunday, the Rebbe’s answer had already arrived!... Rabbi Segal from Afula called us to say that the Rebbe had replied that he would mention us for a bracha at the Tziyon of the Rebbe Rayatz for miracles beyond nature.

“This was a most unique answer – so I understood from the chassidim. If the Rebbe is giving me such a clear bracha, we will surely see marvelous

developments with our son. Nothing can be more certain.

“However, the reality of the situation turned out to be anything but a bed of roses. Year after year passed, and until Nissim turned three, he was in and out of hospitals for countless operations and intensive treatments designed to improve his condition.

“When he finally reached the age of three, we put him into a kindergarten for special children, where he continued his treatments, physiotherapy, regular visits to doctors, and medications prescribed to help strengthen his development. In fact, the boy started to speak a little and could even hear to a certain extent, but we still had to take him in a special carriage due to his inability to walk. The doctors gave little hope for any possibility that he would be able to use his legs someday, and we were already resigned to the fact that he would apparently need a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

“In the meantime, I become stronger in my observance of Torah and mitzvos. My acquaintance with Chabad chassidim had revealed a magical world of Jews filled with joy and faith in G-d, and I quickly became attached to them. Slowly but surely, my wife and I began to participate in chassidus classes at the Chabad House. Similarly, I was more disciplined about coming to synagogue. I would bring my son Nissim with me in a carriage, as if he was just a few months old.

“In 5751, I wrote to the Rebbe again. I was at the stage when I wanted to come to the Rebbe, but every time an opportunity presented itself, my son required an operation or a treatment. This



The day after his birth, the doctor came and informed us of his serious condition. ‘He can’t hear, he can’t see, and he surely can’t walk,’ he stated tersely, leaving us absolutely stunned.

led to numerous postponements of our flight and constant disappointment. I had made all the necessary preparations, taken vacation from work, but the Hand of G-d arranged for something to happen with the boy. When it happened again around Lag B’Omer time, I couldn’t restrain myself any longer. I wrote an anguished letter to the Rebbe, noting that I had received an answer from the Rebbe four years ago via Rabbi Segal from Afula, in which the Rebbe had blessed me with miracles beyond nature – but in the meantime, I don’t see those miracles.

“The answer to this letter also came through Rabbi Segal, who called us at home. The Rebbe replied that he had blessed us already, and we should check the t’fillin and the mezuzos on the front door and the porch. It was interesting that the Rebbe noted exactly which mezuzos to check.

“We received the answer on Friday morning, and on that very same day, I sent the mezuzos to be checked. Needless to say, they were totally pasul.”

“THE REBBE BLESSED YOU WITH MIRACLES BEYOND NATURE - SO THROW AWAY THE CARRIAGE!”

“On Erev Shabbos, I made my customary walk with my son in the carriage to the Chabad shul, where I met Rabbi Zimroni Tzik, who already knew that I had sent the letter to the Rebbe. He inquired whether I had been

privileged to receive an answer, and I replied that I had. When I told him what the answer was, he turned to me and said with sharp clarity, ‘I don’t understand. Why don’t you conduct yourself according to the Rebbe’s wishes? The Rebbe blessed you with miracles beyond nature – so throw away the carriage!’

“I was shocked and rather annoyed, and I gave him an angry look. ‘What does he want from me?’ I thought to myself. ‘I’m suffering over my son’s disability. I have no peace, and my wife has been enduring hardships since the day of his birth. She tended to him with tremendous self-sacrifice, devoting all of her free time to his growth and development. What does he want from me now?’ I felt that no one understood what I was going through. I left the synagogue and returned home in a very depressed state.

“About a hundred and fifty meters from the synagogue was a large garbage bin. Just as I was passing it, I heard a grating noise coming from the carriage. I bent over to check what had happened, and I saw that it had simply broken apart. ‘That’s all I need right now,’ I said to myself, as if what I had just gone through in the shul wasn’t enough... I spent a few minutes trying to repair the carriage, but to no avail. It had broken into several parts. The long years of usage had taken their toll, and since it wasn’t in such great shape in any case, I threw it into the garbage

bin. I picked my son up and carried him all the way home...

“I had already made up my mind that I would not come to the Chabad shul again.”

“ABBA, I KNOW HOW TO WALK ALREADY!”

“Our son woke up on Sunday, and as we did every weekday morning, we sent him to kindergarten in a minivan. I was off from work that day, and when he came home, I came downstairs to take him out of the vehicle. As I picked him up, he called out joyfully, ‘Abba, do you know that I walked in kindergarten today. I already know how to walk!’

“What?” I cried out, momentarily stunned, but only for a moment, as I immediately realized that he must have been imagining things. I didn’t believe for a minute that he could actually walk. I didn’t want to break his spirit, and I casually said, ‘Good for you.’ After pondering for a moment, I decided to test him. ‘Nissim, you can walk? Let’s see. Why just in kindergarten? Walk in the house too...’

“What happened next before my very eyes I will never forget for as long as I live. The boy simply got up from his place and started to walk – one step, five steps, twenty steps. When it became hard for him to continue, he stopped for a moment, and then started walking again. I was absolutely shocked, as my eyes filled with uncontrollable tears of joy. As unbelievable and

unimaginable as it seemed, my son with his medical history and after all the declarations from learned and experienced physicians – really could walk!!

“I wanted to run to Rabbi Tzik and kiss him. I understood at that moment what he had told me: If the Rebbe gives a bracha, it must take place. We only have to make a ‘vessel’, and if I don’t want to throw the carriage out myself, the spiritual forces of Heaven will force me to make the proper vessel and throw out the carriage...

“By the time the boy turned four, he could already hear, speak, and even walk – what every doctor said would never happen. But there is a Rebbe in Israel, and just as the doctors’ job is to heal, so too it is his task to give a blessing and change an irreversible situation.”

THE REBBE REPLIED BY SHAKING HIS HEAD: DON’T DO THE OPERATION!

“This was not the last miracle. Not long after Chaf Zayin Adar Rishon 5752, Nissim required another operation, and the doctors explained to us that we must do it as quickly as possible. But since I had already been convinced of the Rebbe’s amazing power, I would not agree to sign any document before we received the Rebbe’s bracha and consent. I called the Rebbe’s secretariat and made my request. The secretary told me that now was not an appropriate time due to

the state of the Rebbe’s health, but I remained adamant and unyielding. ‘If anything happens to the child, it will be on your shoulders’, I said with a touch of impertinence. He asked me to call back in an hour. I asked if we should do the operation, and if not, if we should do some other medical treatment. An hour later, the secretary told me that when he asked the Rebbe about the possibility of doing an operation, the Rebbe firmly shook his head, but when he asked about another form of treatment, the Rebbe nodded in agreement.

“I went to the surgeon, who was the head of the hospital ward, and told him that I would not agree to an operation. I requested instead that he look into the possibility of a different method of treatment. He responded most scornfully, questioning how the Rebbe sitting in New York could possibly understand the situation without seeing a medical file or consulting with medical experts, but I was steadfast in my position. He promised that he would not do the operation, but he asked me to sign all the relevant documents. Afterwards, I discovered that the doctors took no regard of my demands and decided to do the operation from eleven o’clock at night until six the following morning! Shortly after it was finished, the surgeon came out with a look of humiliation.

“I was seized by panic. This was a place where doctors walked around with immense pride and heads held high. I realized that something may have gone wrong. The doctor approached me, and was honest and brave enough to say, ‘You should know that your Rebbe was right. We did the operation at the advice of the entire medical staff, but we now understand that a small medical

“The secretary told me that now was not an appropriate time due to the state of the Rebbe’s health, but I remained adamant and unyielding. ‘If anything happens to the child, it will be on your shoulders.’”

treatment would have been sufficient to bring the results that we wanted to achieve...'

"This marked the second time that I had seen the power of the Rebbe's bracha.

"Over the years, the boy continued to get stronger, and we took him out of the special education program where he had been and registered him in a Talmud Torah.

"In 5761, when he reached the age of bar-mitzvah, I wanted to make a big event as a sign of thanks to G-d for all the miracles He had done for us. We rented a large hall and ordered top-notch catering, but when I wrote to the Rebbe on the matter via 'Igros Kodesh', we received an answer in which the Rebbe replied: Why doesn't he come here for his son's bar-mitzvah celebration?

"These words were clear enough, and with my wife's consent, we decided to cancel the event, despite the fact that invitations had already been sent out. Instead, we ordered airline tickets for the entire family and boarded a flight for Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel – '770'. We understood from the Rebbe's answer that he wants us close to him.

"In 770, we made a bar-mitzvah farbrengen, the likes of which had never been seen there before. All of the bachurim on 'k'vutza' participated, the food was plentiful, and the mashke flowed like water. They lifted our son on their shoulders, leaping and dancing with great strength for many long hours well into the night.

"Before we left for our return trip to Eretz Yisroel, I went with my son to the Rebbe's platform for davening near the Aron Kodesh. This was an intensely emotional moment when my son



R' Yitzchak Baruch and his eldest son, HaTamim Nissim, at the entrance of 770

and I thanked the Rebbe from the depths of our hearts for fighting the battle for us against the laws of nature."

*

As R' Yitzchak Baruch finished his story at the sheva brachos celebration, everyone sat silently for several minutes. No one was expecting to hear such a powerful narrative.

"This story has never been publicized," R' Yitzchak revealed in a voice filled with undisguised emotion.

"Now, would you like to meet this boy who isn't called Nissim for nothing? Nissim?" he called out as everyone present tensed with anticipation. "Nissim, stand up and let everyone see you." The boy sitting near him stood for all to behold – a Chabad Tamim in every respect, a fine young man, who can hear, see, and surely walk like anyone else.

Nissim does not waste valuable time, and he is now studying most diligently for his rabbinical ordination. ■

THIS YUD-ALEF NISSAN:

BE A CHASSID, RAISE A CHASSID

When 11 Nissan approaches, a Chassidishe Yid starts thinking about the Rebbe and what he is about. Of course, who are we to understand the Rebbe? But the truth is that even thinking, “I don’t understand the Rebbe” is also a “hisbonenus” that leads to inspiration. * Thoughts about chinuch and hiskashrus. * An interview with Michael Mishulovin, mashpia of Anash in Nachalat Har Chabad-Kiryat Malachi. * Part 1 of 2

Interview by Mendel Tzfasman

Pictures by Shlomo Neimark

The Rebbe’s birthday is a special day for every Chassid. The natural feeling one has is to be more mekushar (connected) and to make sure that the day doesn’t pass unnoticed by one’s household. What preparations can we make so our homes are more Chassidish?

It was always said that if the father of the family lives it himself, there is no need to talk about it, for everybody will feel how he “lives” with the upcoming Chassidishe date and this influences everybody to be

like him. A Chassidishe young man needs to demand of **himself** that he be more Chassidish, more “into” his learning – both Nigleh and Chassidus, more involved in his avodas Hashem. When his children see him greet guests warmly, when he talks animatedly with other Jews, etc. it makes an impact on them.

Alternatively, when the focus is on, “how to influence the children” and not on “how to influence myself,” the results will be commensurate.

Now, a *dugma chaya* (role

model) is not enough because that is still in the category of *makif* (like an environmental effect) and there also needs to be a *hashpaa p’nimis* (direct influence). The father, even though he is Chassidish, needs to provide his children with spiritual food, i.e. he needs to sit with his child, learn with him, tell him stories, review Tanya by heart with him, arrange special projects for a Chassidishe Yom Tov, etc. and of course, to have a good relationship with him.

Our examples for chinuch



are how the Rebbeim were raised when they were children. We know stories about what the Rebbe Rayatz did with the money he received for learning Mishnayos by heart, about the watermelon he got and shared with a friend and how his father, the Rebbe Rashab, told him he had not done it wholeheartedly, as well as about the learning they did together. Such stories are models for us to follow.

Obviously, when the father sees that his child is not behaving properly, he has to point this out and take care of it in a pleasant

way. But he can't rely on, "Since I'm a Chassid and the house is Chassidish, and we talk about the Rebbe at home, and whatever is inappropriate for me and the home can't possibly suit my child," and hope and believe that things will work out on their own.

There can be a situation, which is not that rare, in which children grow up in a Chassidishe, mekushar home, to Chassidishe parents, but the although the child sees Chassidic living in his home and he is even a good child, still, he can be swept along by the street and his friends

who pull him in an entirely different direction because often the biggest influence on a child is his peer group. Kids sometimes think their parents are "out of it" and don't relate to their world, and so the parents' example is certainly not enough.

So we have to keep a watchful eye on their friends and see how our children spend their free time and what they are "into." The Rebbe says we need to think at least **half an hour a day** about the chinuch of children and this is a mitzva just as putting on t'fillin on every day. Being

BIO

By Mendel Tzfasman

Rabbi Michael Mishulovin grew up in Samarkand where he lived the life of a Chassid with mesirus nefesh. A few years after he left for Eretz Yisroel, he lived in Kfar Chabad until the Rebbe founded Nachalat Har Chabad and asked people to move to this neighborhood. The Rebbe gave R' Mishulovin a bottle of mashke "for shlichus in a way of *hisyashvus* (settling in a new place)."

A few years later, when the Rebbe said mashpiim should be appointed in Nachala, R' Mishulovin was appointed along with Rabbi Sholom Eliyahu Vilenkin a"h.

You might encounter R' Mishulovin, who is known simply as "R' Michael" (or R' Michael'ke among Russian Jews), on his bicycle, pedaling through the streets. He contains within himself a wonderful combination of a genuine Chassid, a p'nimi, a mekushar, and a beloved mashpia – to the point that some call him "a Chassid and mashpia from the previous generation." He is treated with great respect and deference by the *Mara D'Asra* Rabbi Yitzchok Yehuda Yaroslavsky as well as the rest of the community without exception. And yet, he is amazingly modest and humble before all. He greets everybody first, even children, with fiery Ahavas Yisroel. All this together comprises this special man who is called R' Michael.

One of the "Chassidishe taavos" of Anash in Nachala is to listen to R' Michael's davening, even on an ordinary weekday morning. Each word is weighed and said with such chayus, d'veikus and enthusiasm. Also, to listen to him reviewing a maamer of the Rebbe with chayus and sweetness, "living" every word. How special it is to hear him regularly proclaim "Yechi" at the end of a chazara of a sicha that is said publicly or at the end of a public t'filla, with such emotion.

His farbrengens, oy, his Chassidishe farbrengens, are a spiritual delight. To hear him tell a Chassidishe story with a lesson to be learned, to see how he says l'chaim and wishes Jews brachos from the depths of his heart, and to sing a niggun with him that takes you to Geula destinations ...

If, in this interview, I was able to convey just a little of R' Michael's special chayus at his farbrengens, let that be my reward. And if not, you are always invited to Nachala ...

Chassidish myself is not enough of an investment of thought into the chinuch of children.

All this does not contradict the fact that the internal educational process needs to go along with the work on self-improvement and personal example of the father. The child has to see that his parents demand of him what they demand of themselves. This is all obvious and well known and

not a chiddush, but it must be mentioned.

How can a Chassidishe man bring himself to that point if he is not yet holding there?

That is why there are Yomim Tovim and yemei segula. The truth is, someone who learns Chassidus, even half an hour or less, and he doesn't learn superficially but gets involved in what he learns – doesn't look

forward to a Chassidishe day as an escape from daily drudgery but as a day of upliftedness and strengthening of hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

Sometimes the inspiration comes from ourselves but even when we aren't quite holding where we ought to be, Hashem helps us and a Chassidishe date comes along like the Rebbe's birthday, and our Chassidishe conscience niggles at us and doesn't let us treat the day as routine. It's an auspicious time to approach G-dliness, to approach the Rebbe.

The Rebbe says in the sicha of Simchas Torah 5752 that the chinuch of Jewish children needs to be in such a way that when you merely look at them, you see Moshiach! How do we do this?

When you attend a Kabbalas Shabbos organized in Nachala by R' Bomi Friedland for the children of Tzivos Hashem, you can understand it because you just glance at them and see Moshiach. The chayus he conveys to them in inyanei Moshiach and Geula is reflected in the children's eyes.

The children are the mirror of their parents and their teachers. So when the father is completely involved in inyanei Moshiach and he broadcasts this to his children, you see it in their eyes, in their entire being. Children convey their emotions much more than adults and so you can really see the "mishicho" (anointed ones).

Yud-Alef Nissan is approaching and we all love the Rebbe and want to be mekusharim. The question is, what should we be thinking about that will lead to actual results?

At the Kinus that took place at Yad Eliyahu, I watched the video



and saw the Rebbe, mamash a king. I thought, how is it possible that there is such a tzaddik in the world and the entire world doesn't flock to him? How is it possible that evil exists in the world and is not nullified before him? Apparently, Hashem wants us to have free choice and for things to come from within us and as a result of our own work.

When Yud-Alef Nissan approaches, someone who is a Chassidishe Yid, even a little bit, starts to think about what the Rebbe is about. The truth is: who are we to understand the Rebbe? It is impossible to talk about him and understand; we all know that. But the truth is that even thinking, "I don't understand the Rebbe" is also a "hisbonenus" that leads to inspiration. Still and all, the impact of our understanding – that we don't understand the Rebbe – is makif and merely understanding the

“ They found someone who had said to G-d, “If it is important to you that I eat matza this Pesach, then send it to me.” The man was utterly shocked to suddenly see Chassidim approaching him with matza just for him, from the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

distance in relativity doesn't necessarily lead to action.

And then you start contemplating the inyan of Rebbe, even the “smallest” things, or the most famous things – to be more precise, starting with his greatness in Torah, his hiddur mitzva and care for every detail, his devotion to all, the miracles done for thousands of Jews all over the world, etc. Each person can meditate on that which “grabs” him. For example, when I hear the voice of the Rebbe, even a short, ten minute broadcast between Mincha and Maariv, it revives me, mamash like it was

given on Mt. Sinai. Just hearing the Rebbe's voice, thinking about how we have a Rebbe who is a soul of Atzilus here in this world who brings down the voice of G-d to this world, and we are connected to him and he cares about us – is a great z'chus and is definitely inspiring.

The way of Chassidus is that in order to affect the animal soul, you have to contemplate the greatness of G-d. In “Basi L'Gani” it says that at first the animal soul has no feelings for G-dly things but when a person starts explaining things in terms the animal soul can understand,

then even the animal soul is influenced and it can attain love and fear of G-d.

So too, in order to arouse love for the Rebbe, we need to simply sit down and think about the Rebbe's greatness. Before a day as special as Yud-Alef Nissan, even a simple Chassid can think and meditate upon the Rebbe's greatness.

We can talk all night about the miracles and amazing things the Rebbe does in the world like the story of "Hu Ra" in which the Rebbe eliminated the evil Stalin, the fall of the Iron Curtain; and in general, Russia which was such a klipa in earlier generations has turned into a supportive entity for Chabad. Or, as the Rebbe himself explains the birur of France, that in the time of the Alter Rebbe it was a strong klipa but through the shluchim, the Rebbe refined France entirely. And the story of the hurricane that the Rebbe waved away so it left the city where the shluchim were, and the Rebbe's prophecies, etc. There is no end to what we can talk about. Just look at what you tell mekuravim when you want to explain how great the Rebbe is.

Then on the personal level, each of us has stories with the Rebbe. Rabbi Wilschansky told an amazing story about the bachurim who gave out shmura matza on their t'fillin route. Since they had leftover matza, they looked for Jews to give it to until they found someone who had said to G-d, "If it is important to you that I eat matza this Pesach, then send it to me." The man

was utterly shocked to suddenly see Chassidim approaching him with matza just for him, from the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It was a miracle from the Rebbe, the father of mivtza t'fillin and mivtza matza.

Or the story of that dear fellow from the north, Dovid Marciano, who after 28 years of faith and trust, had a son, thanks to the Rebbe's bracha and promise. Stories like these and thinking just a bit about them, leads to great love for the Rebbe.

It's not just in a general sense. Each of us knows how much the Rebbe did for him, for his family, for his children, and thinking about this increases our love and hiskachrus. When you know that you are beloved and you love, you are willing to be "kvetched" a bit, and to do what will please the Rebbe.

All the above is the balabatish method. Now for the Chassidish approach. When you contemplate the inyan of Rebbe that he is "I stand between G-d and you," that the Rebbe is the Moshe Rabbeinu of the generation through whom all the bounty of the world goes, i.e. thanks to the Rebbe we have life, physical and spiritual, like the generation of the desert had. When you contemplate the Rebbe's care for us, his devotion to us, all the divrei Torah, the sichos, the maamarim, the letters and farbrengens, the dollars for tz'daka, the kos shel bracha – it was all done for us. The Rebbe gives us the ability not to be fazed by all the hoopla of this world.

Let us take for example

the following wonderful phenomenon. The Gemara says that if the people of the earlier generation were like angels, we are like human beings, and if the people of the earlier generation were like human beings, we are like donkeys – and not like the donkey of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair. Tzaddikim said this in earlier generations, so what are we? And yet, you sometimes see in a "small footnote" of the Rebbe in a sicha how you get such deep concepts that you accept so matter-of-factly. It's incredible how the Rebbe showers us with the most hidden treasures, and with the utmost simplicity. These contemplations bring a Chassid to feelings of gratitude and to want to do what the Rebbe wants of him.

I remember that the first time I went to the Rebbe after I left Russia, I was hosted at "Hachnasas Orchim" by R' Moshe Yaroslavsky. Together with us was a Sefardic Jew who said in wonder that this was his first time at the Rebbe and when he had yechidus he told the Rebbe emotionally, "Rebbe, you are my father." The Rebbe raised himself up a bit and said, "Both materially and spiritually."

The truth is, this applies to every Chassid. And what wouldn't a loving son do for a beloved parent!

What cheshbon nefesh (spiritual accounting) should a Chassid make for the Rebbe's birthday?

The cheshbon ha'nefesh should be, how is it that the Rebbe demanded that we bring Moshiach and we are still apathetic?!

There is the story about the Rebbe Rayatz, that when his father, the Rebbe Rashab wrote something as "b'derech efshar"

“When he had yechidus he told the Rebbe emotionally, “Rebbe, you are my father.” The Rebbe raised himself up a bit and said, “Both materially and spiritually.”

(a possible explanation), the Rebbe Rayatz would take this as a certainty and quote it as fact not as a possibility. When the Rebbe Rashab saw this, he said, "But I wrote that it's only b'derech efshar?" The Rebbe Rayatz replied, "What to you is a possibility is a certainty to me."

In numerous sichos, the Rebbe tells us that our generation is the last generation of galus and the first generation of Geula, do all that you can to bring Moshiach, etc. The Rebbe says Moshiach is here but we still have questions.

The Rebbe wants us to want Moshiach, to dream of the hisgalus. The Rebbe wants the hisgalus to take center stage in

“The Rebbe wants the hisgalus to take center stage in our lives and not that we do it just for appearance’s sake or to be able to check it off on some list.

our lives and not that we do it just for appearance’s sake or to be able to check it off on some list. If we still lack this hergesh because of our animal soul, along comes a day like Yud-Alef Nissan in which we strengthen our hiskashrus to the Rebbe and think about how the Rebbe is moser nefesh for us. We can even look at it not from the standpoint of a Chassid but just as a mentch, so that we are not ingrates, G-d forbid, and we do all we can to

bring about the hisgalus of the Rebbe immediately.

R' Mendel once said to me, when we were still in Russia, that a Chassid needs to want to reach a point where whatever he does, he does so that the Rebbe has nachas from him. After everything the Rebbe put into us, he deserves some nachas from us ... ■

[To be continued, G-d willing]



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יחי אדונוני מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

ABRAHAM PRINCIPLE

Scientists speak of “The Field,” an indivisible wholeness beyond space and time that is the ultimate ground of reality. Does this sound familiar? Another thinker, long ago, got there first. Part 3.



By Dr. Aryeh Gotfryd, PhD

Man’s avoda according to Chassidus: to accustom himself to perceive *hashgacha pratis*, how G-d, in His goodness, renews the universe and all creations every moment with His particular Divine Providence, which constitutes – to the exclusion of all else – the reality, life force and sustained existence of all creations.

–*The Rebbe, HaYom Yom for 29 Sivan.*

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

Let’s rewind the cosmos back to the beginning, and then just a little bit more, to get an inkling of how to resolve the Are We or Aren’t We paradox.

Choose your beginning.

Many people believe in a big bang creation, a “singularity” that started the universe with an immensely powerful infusion of primordial light in the distant past. Others believe in a six-day creation that started the universe with an immensely powerful infusion of primordial light in the distant past.

In either case there was a beginning to the physical

universe, a beginning to time and space, a first event that emerged from absolute nothingness. But how could that be? How could something come from nothing?

Thirty-eight hundred years ago, Abraham had not heard of a six-day creation. He also hadn’t heard of the big bang. But he did figure out using causal reasoning that there must have been a beginning. Even if, for argument’s sake, time were infinite or cyclic, in which case it would have neither beginning nor end, it would still be subject to causality.

In any case, from observing and contemplating nature, Abraham deduced a number of things, including that the universe did not make itself and that prior to the first defining moment of creation, there had to be an undefined Creator. He also reasoned that this Creator could not be a thing. In fact the most cogent thing one might say about this Creator is that He is the consummate example of no-thing-ness.

But wait a moment. What’s the difference between saying that the Creator is no-thing and saying that the Creator is nothing? We are basically using the same terms to define monotheism and atheism! But these are obviously not the same,

for in one scenario, the world and everything that’s in it is an exquisitely planned and executed masterpiece while in the other it’s a colossal, uncaused, accidental, cosmic hiccup (without a hiccupper, no less!)

Abraham knew the difference between no-thing-ness and nothingness. He empathized with those who felt that they are real and the Creator is zero. Yet he knew that actually he was the zero while the Creator is the Real One, strange as that might be.

It’s all a matter of perspective. From the Divine perspective, we are like the creatures in our dreams, vivid, yet ephemeral, constantly subject to the creative imagination of the dreamer. Were G-d to remove His mind from us, we would vanish.

The difference however is that our dreams and imagination can only conjure up images of reality. G-d’s imagining makes a real world! Now that’s a trick. The No-Thing which is the true Something makes a something which is really a nothing but is nonetheless a Divine creation and therefore Real!

The no-thing-ness that precedes creation is the great divide, the Big Block, the curtain that hides the Divine presence from the Creations. That curtain allows us free choice, allows evil

to exist, allows us to relate to G-d, and Him to us. It allows the created to seek the Creator in an ultimate game of hide-and-go-seek, and it provides a context for reward once the game is up.

(Further reading.. Likkutei Torah, D'varim. Maimonides, Laws of Torah Foundations 2:10, esp. English commentary, Moznaim ed. p. 174)

THE LOOKING GLASS

The curtain dividing Divine and human perspectives operates like a one-way mirror, or like the tinted glass on some automobile windows. The Creator sees us up close and personal, but no one looking back can see in.

As a result, human knowledge and Divine knowledge are utterly different. When I come to know something, that knowledge adds to me incrementally. There is me, the thing outside of me, and my knowledge of it. Three separate things.

When G-d knows something, He doesn't change. He, His Knowledge, and what He

“ In one scenario, the world and everything that's in it is an exquisitely planned and executed masterpiece while in the other it's a colossal, uncaused, accidental, cosmic hiccup (without a hiccupper, no less!)

knows are all one thing. And his knowledge adds nothing to Him, because He knows things by knowing Himself.

To explain, there is a story that's told about the famous Alter Rebbe, author of the classic chassidic text, the Tanya, who traveled to console the family of a colleague who had passed away. One of the children, aged six, who later became the saintly Yisroel of Ruzhin, posed a question to the Alter Rebbe, as follows.

“The verse states, ‘Hear O Israel, the L-rd is G-d, the L-rd is One.’ If so, there is nothing else but G-d. The next verse says ‘You should love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your possessions.’ What is going on here? Is G-d telling G-d to love G-d?”

The Alter Rebbe, who was noted for short explanations at that time in his life, gave the child a lengthy explanation of some two hours. The gist of his explanation was based on the fact that when a Jew says this prayer, he interjects a third verse between these two. That verse emphasizes the kingship of G-d, and the consequent gulf between the king and the people. Having effected such a separation, it then becomes possible to love G-d.

Not all of us today are as spiritually attuned as that six-year-old, but we are all able to achieve a comparable degree of elevated consciousness. By meditating on the one-way mirror, that great divide that separates us, unites us even more. ■

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THE WEDNESDAY FLIGHT

Hostile Arabs, an emergency landing, a car bomb at the front door, and endless wandering through the streets of Paris – Is this what the Rebbe had in mind?

By Nosson Avraham

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

At a sheva brachos celebration in which I joyfully took part a few weeks ago, several of the participants began to tell stories about their own personal experiences spent with the Rebbe in Beis Chayeinu. One told about a “yechidus” that has remained close to his heart and has accompanied him all his life; a second mentioned a fascinating instruction he received; a third recalled a farbrengen that he remembers with the utmost clarity and accuracy, and yet another about a bracha that was fulfilled. But the one that stood out most prominently was the story of R’ **Yechezkel Gazit**, who used to belong to the religious Zionist sector.

The appearance of R’ Yechezkel Gazit is a most familiar one to the residents of the Kiryat Chabad community in the Holy City of Tzfas, at his job in the Chabad supermarket for more than twenty years. He is a friendly and sensitive chassid who chooses not to stand out.

“In the early years of my association with Chabad chassidus and the great luminary, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, I had already experienced for myself how every word the Rebbe utters is absolutely precise,” said R’ Yechezkel, as he began his exciting story before his attentive listeners.

WEEKLY TORAH CLASSES WITH RABBI CHANZIN

“When I completed my compulsory studies in the religious school system of Petach Tikva, the city where I grew up, my parents enrolled me in the yeshiva high school on the Nechalim settlement. I knew virtually nothing about Chabad chassidus. The first time that I became aware of Chabad chassidim was when all the students of our school traveled one year to the Kfar Chabad matza bakery. When I was in ninth grade in the Nechalim yeshiva, I became friends with a

bachur named Daniel Kaye, now a shliach in Sydney, Australia, who had a connection with Chabad from his days living in America. One day, he came to me with a suggestion that I join him for a Torah class with an elderly rav in the yishuv’s synagogue.

“This elderly rav was none other than Rabbi Dovid Chanzin, of blessed memory, one of the senior Chabad rabbanim in Eretz HaKodesh, who was replacing Rabbi Meir Bostomsky in giving over shiurim in Nechalim. In that year, 5737, the yeshiva still didn’t see the existing chassidus classes in a positive light. What was most ironic was that we had to dress in exercise clothes, as if we were on our way out for a jog... Several other bachurim also participated in that class, and while I didn’t comprehend any of the learning material, the image of Rabbi Chanzin left a powerful impression upon me. It was clear that this was a Jew of tremendous stature, similar to the figures appearing in chassidic



An Air France jet with Paris' Rue 'Pletzel' in the background

stories. With great fervor and devotion, we would take part in these classes on a weekly basis.

“Later, we started coming to Rabbi Chanzin’s house every Friday, and without even noticing it, we became Chabad activists in every respect. One day, Rabbi Chanzin shared with us about the great importance the Rebbe attributed to Jewish women and girls lighting Shabbos candles each week at the proper time. We took the matter very seriously, going out with a taxi every Friday afternoon and proclaiming the times for the start and conclusion of Shabbos with a microphone throughout the city streets. The following year, Rabbi Bostomsky resumed his teaching of the chassidus classes. He would give over shiurim in Tanya and the weekly Torah portion, and all with a special magic and charm. He wouldn’t settle for just study, giving us activity assignments after each shiur.

“The yeshiva still didn’t see the existing chassidus classes in a positive light. What was most ironic was that we had to dress in exercise clothes, as if we were on our way out for a jog.

“In this fashion, we began to go out on T’fillin Campaign activities. Each Erev Shabbos, we would visit the IDF base in Kfar Sirkin and put on t’fillin with the soldiers and commanding officers. I remember one Friday when not a single soldier wanted to put on t’fillin, because their friend had been killed in a road accident the previous Friday, just a few hours after putting on t’fillin with us. The soldiers had criticisms and complaints against the Creator. While we were still a bit ‘green’ in the area of spreading the wellsprings of chassidus, we promised them that we would come back next week with answers. When we raised the issue with Rabbi Bostomsky,

he cried out with great emotion: ‘What a great privilege you have that this soldier did t’shuva before he passed away!’

“His words gave us spiritual strength, no less than they did the soldiers. He had instilled a new and more proper outlook within us in perceiving our role as Jews on this earth.

“When I completed my studies in the Nechalim yeshiva, it was clear to me that I would go learn in a Chabad yeshiva, and in 5741, I arrived at the central ‘Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim’ in Kfar Chabad. Then, in 5742, after briefly learning in Yeshivas ‘Hadar HaT’mimim’ in Bat Yam, Rabbi Gruzman called me in and told me about instructions that

the yeshiva administration had just received from the Rebbe, requesting that the yeshiva send a shliach to the yeshiva of Rabbi Mordechai Kozliner in Kiryat Malachi – and I was the choice.

“In 5743, I joined a group of student shluchim from Kfar Chabad to learn in the yeshiva in Kiryat Gat, and when they traveled to the Rebbe for Tishrei, I went with them. I left Eretz Yisroel without permission from the army, and I hoped to stay in Beis Chayeinu after the holidays for a year on ‘k’vutza’, but my parents thought otherwise.

“My orphaned mother had been rescued from the fiery Nazi killing fields during the Second World War. With great self-sacrifice, she had managed to escape to the United States with several members of her family, while the rest of the extended family, including her own parents, were murdered in the Holocaust. It was important to her and my father that I should know how to hold a weapon in case of need, and that I will have a proper job in order to make a good living. Therefore, they pressured me to return to Eretz Yisroel.”

TWO INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE REBBE

“When they realized that I was determined to remain in the Rebbe’s *Dalet Amos*, they informed me that they are writing a letter to the Rebbe to ‘complain’ about me. I promised them that if they wrote a letter, I would submit it to the Rebbe’s secretariat, and I would do whatever the Rebbe said. In fact, they did write a letter and they sent it to me, and I brought the letter to the mazkirus. It was Tuesday when the telephone rang, and one of the secretaries

was on the line to tell me that an urgent reply had just come from the Rebbe.

“I went into the office, and the secretary showed me the answer, which had been divided into two parts: In the first part, the Rebbe wrote that I should board a flight to Eretz Yisroel on Wednesday, and in the second part, in connection with my parents’ request that I should enlist in the army, the Rebbe wrote that I must ask a practicing rav in Eretz HaKodesh.

“The Rebbe’s words were puzzling but clear: Not only should I return to Eretz HaKodesh, I should already do so on Wednesday, in other words, within the next few hours. I immediately called Air France, the airline company where I had an open return ticket, but they were unable to help me. Eretz Yisroel was then in the midst of a general strike, and there were no flights. They suggested that I fly to Europe and wait there, but I politely declined.

I decided that I would spend the coming Shabbos with the Rebbe, and then I would board a plane at the start of the following week.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

“On Thursday, I met Rabbi Dovid Chanzin, who was also spending Tishrei with the Rebbe. When I told him about the Rebbe’s instructions to board a flight on Wednesday, which had been the day before, he exclaimed, ‘So what are you doing here? The Rebbe told you to fly!’ I replied that there was a strike in Eretz Yisroel, and the only thing I could do was to fly to France and wait there. ‘So that’s what you should have done!’ he

stated in absolute terms. ‘If the Rebbe says something, you must swiftly carry it out. The Rebbe didn’t specify a certain day for nothing.’

“On that day, I learned that the strike had ended, and if I would have listened to the Rebbe and flown to France, I already would have been in Eretz Yisroel by then.

“I didn’t waste a moment. I quickly ordered a place on the next Air France flight to Eretz Yisroel, and in the meantime, I waited with my suitcases at the entrance to 770 to receive the Rebbe’s customary blessing before he returned to his room after Mincha. While I was waiting, I suddenly decided to call my parents to inform them that I’m on my way. I went down to the basement of 770, where public telephones were set up, and I spoke with my parents in a conversation that apparently took about a minute too long. When I returned to the entrance of 770, I was informed that the Rebbe had already gone back to his room. Feeling that I just missed a golden opportunity, I made my way to the airport.

“The flight destination was Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, and from there I had a connecting flight to Eretz Yisroel. The flight itself was not a pleasant one, as most of the passengers were Moslem fundamentalists. Air France had a subsidiary called ‘Air Africa’, and numerous flights originated from Paris headed for Arab countries throughout the Middle East. During the journey, hate-filled looks were directed towards me, but I tried to keep to myself. There were other Israelis among the passengers, but they succeeded in concealing their Jewishness. The only one who wore a kippa was an air force

pilot traveling with his wife, but he covered his head with a hat, keeping him from being identified as a Jew.

“At a certain stage, the flight crew realized how much I stood out among those around me, and they moved my seat to a back row usually reserved for them. When we were already over France, the cockpit announced that a mechanical problem had been discovered in one of the plane’s engines, and as a result, the passengers were requested to fasten their seat belts and prepare for an emergency landing. The pressure everyone was under showed clearly on the people’s faces. The fear and concern was great, and it grew with each passing moment. Ominous thoughts entered one’s mind during those critical moments. After circling the Marseilles airport several times, the captain announced that we were about to land.

“We waited for several hours inside the plane while the ground crew repaired the damage. We then took off again, this time heading for the Paris airport. However, we were then regrettably informed that we had missed the connecting flight already en route to Eretz Yisroel, and we had to wait until Friday afternoon. The meaning was clear – desecrating the Shabbos. While we argued with airline representatives in the terminal, I realized that there were twenty-five Israelis on the flight who had managed to conceal their identity. We were transported to a hotel located near the airport. Most of the Israelis got on a flight that left on Shabbos, while only I along with two other Shabbos observant couples remained in the hotel for another night.

“The wife of the religious air



force pilot succeeded in getting some fresh vegetables from the hotel kitchen and cooked some hard-boiled eggs.

“On Shabbos afternoon, when the hotel management informed us that we had to vacate our rooms, because the airline had only paid for them until then, I moved into the hotel lobby. On Motzai Shabbos, the airline told us that they had arranged a flight to Eretz Yisroel via TWA, scheduled for the following day.

“Since I didn’t have anything else to do in the airport, I asked the hotel staff if any Jews lived in the vicinity. They said that they didn’t know, but they did tell me about the Goldberg Restaurant, a Jewish eatery where a terrorist attack had occurred some time ago. The windows had been riddled with bullets, but miraculously no Jews were injured. The nine people murdered were Gentile

workers who were eating their lunch there at the time. The hotel gave me a detailed map, and I headed for the subway. When I reached the restaurant, I quickly realized that while it may have been under Jewish ownership, it was not a place suitable for Torah observant Jews. The restaurant cashier explained that at nearby #17, there are people similar to myself – Leibowitz.

“I was tired and confused, and I didn’t fully understand her. I continued wandering through the streets of Paris until I arrived at the building she told me about. I walked up several flights, and then I heard the sound of people washing their hands. I walked in and saw before me a synagogue, where a Gemara class in Gittin was taking place, the same tractate being studied that year in Chabad yeshivos. I suddenly realized that these ‘Leibowitzs’ were actually *Lubavitcher*

“A car bomb had been discovered downstairs. The family turned pale and became hysterical.”

chassidim, and this place was the famous ‘Pletzel’ where the Rebbe davened during his stay in Paris. I joined the shiur, and when Shabbos ended, a lottery was held to determine who would have the privilege of taking me to his house for a Melaveh Malka. When I arrived at the home of my host, I made Havdala, and then his wife proceeded to serve me a meal fit for a king.

“I had just sat down to eat when suddenly the sound of a police squad car was heard outside, warning the building’s residents to remain in their homes because a car bomb had been discovered downstairs. The family turned pale and became hysterical. My host began to feel uncomfortable over the situation, and he urged me not to pay attention and continue eating, but I was no longer able to do so. For me, this represented one unpleasant event too many. ‘Call the Rebbe’s mazkirus, and ask for a bracha,’ I told my host, but we had momentarily forgotten that it was still Shabbos in New York. We were literally in a panic.

“It was only then that it finally hit me. I asked myself: *What am I doing in Paris at this hour on a Motzaei Shabbos?* My mind went back to the events of the past few days – the unpleasant flight, the emergency landing, the lengthy

mechanical repairs, a Shabbos without anything, and now in the home of a chassidic family, all petrified over a car bomb right beneath their window, while the police try to defuse it. I thought about all this in a matter of moments. I felt that this was what I had coming to me for not listening to the Rebbe’s instructions to board a flight on that Wednesday. If I had followed orders as I should have, I would have been spending this Shabbos with my parents.

“This realization shocked me deeply, to the point that I couldn’t even think about eating in spite of my intense hunger. There is a Rebbe in Israel! Until then, I had heard many descriptive stories from chassidim, but this was my first personal experience with the Rebbe, an experience that intensified my feelings of hiskashrus. For the first time in my life, I not only learned and heard – I also felt.

“Even after the police cruiser announced that the bomb had been successfully defused, I was still immersed in my own thoughts.

“I told my story to the amazed family, and from that moment, everything really did work out in the best possible way, as if they knew in Heaven that I had gotten the message and understood it

properly. I spent the night in their home, and the following morning, I came to the flight terminal, where the two couples were already waiting. After a flight lasting several hours, I safely arrived at Lod Airport.”

DIFFERENT ANSWERS TO THE SAME QUESTION

R’ Yechezkel concluded his thrilling story with a second instruction he received from the Rebbe:

“I traveled to Kfar Chabad to speak with Rabbi Ashkenazi, and there I met my friend, R’ Erez Karlstein. In an incredible case of Divine Providence, we both came with similar questions. He was already in the armed forces and he was about to start a pilot’s course, but he wanted to leave everything and fly to the Rebbe, whereas I was about to be inducted. The Rebbe had instructed both of us to seek the advice of a rav in Eretz HaKodesh, and so we had come to Rabbi Ashkenazi in Kfar Chabad.

“The rav told R’ Erez that since he is important to the security of the state, he should stay in the army. To me, the rav said that the army won’t lose anything if I don’t join its ranks, and he warmly suggested that I go to learn in the yeshiva run by his brother-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Wilschanski. I have been living in Tzfas ever since...”

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CHABAD UNITES

One fine morning, Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel got up and discovered a new campaign for achdus within Chabad. Many an eyebrow was raised. There were skeptics and cynics and just plain incredulity, but when dozens of letters were written by an array of rabbanim and mashpiim, it was a happening event! Hundreds of farbrengens took place on 27 Adar in genuine unity. * One of the people who worked behind the scenes was Rabbi Matti Gal, shliach in Ramat Gan. In this interview he told us all about it. He believes in this campaign and wants everybody else to hop on board. * Achdus? Yes! They set a good example for Anash in other parts of the world to follow.

Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim

Yellow signs were seen everywhere with one word, “Ayeka?” (where are you) as the heading. For many days people didn’t know who was behind this campaign. It took time until people found out that it was a group of Anash, from both ends of the spectrum. One of the main figures is none other than Rabbi Matty Gal. R’ Gal runs a Chabad house in Ramat Gan and is one

of the veteran shluchim in Eretz Yisroel, a man of action with connections to a wide array of people both in the larger society and within Chabad. It’s hard to confine him to one particular group even though he is a smart, knowledgeable person with strong opinions (which usually leads directly to being branded and labeled).

If you know R’ Gal and

follow his work over the years, and I have done, you know that his main efforts are with people outside of Chabad. He runs many surprising initiatives that were they to be publicized within the Chabad community would be the source of great amazement, and that’s an understatement. And this same person who studied communications and knows a thing or two about





Geula specifically with achdus, love and devotion. It took a real hisorerus (spiritual awakening) and tremendous efforts to bring the idea to fruition. I literally felt the Rebbe pushing me to do this; a kind of *isarus d'eila* (spiritual arousal from above).

Still and all, on a more practical level, what made you suddenly make the decision to see this achdus campaign through?

Listen, it's many years now that I've been teaching the Rebbe's sichos, the D'var Malchus. Twenty years have passed since the Rebbe said these sichos, sichos which are all about the urgency in bringing the Geula. It will soon be twenty years since the sicha of 28 Nissan which shook us up at the time, twenty years! It's very frustrating that "doing all you can" did not bring about the desired results. Differences of opinion led to a kind of emotional detachment to the point of hatred and rejection, heaven forbid.

I thought it important to do something to rectify this: on the one hand, to do all that we can to bring Moshiach; I truly believe that this is an auspicious time. Chazal use the term "ben esrim, 20 years of age – to sell one's father's possessions." In other words, a minor is not allowed to take over his father's financial matters until he reaches the age of twenty. Now, when it is twenty years since that sicha was said, and it's a heightened time in general, I feel "the time has come to sell his father's possessions," the possessions we received from our father, the Rebbe. We need to "sell" them further, to the public. The term "father's possessions" is also used an expression of revealing that which is hidden; all the treasures the Rebbe gave us

public relations, knows how to operate quietly.

What happened so that after years of working on the "outside" you have returned to work within Chabad k'hillos?

It's hard for me to put my finger on what caused the change but I felt greatly inspired to do something and push this achdus campaign forward. I can tell you that I have felt this way a few times in my life and each

time I did unusual things for the Rebbe's inyanim, and each time I received direct encouragement from the Rebbe. Today we don't get that kind of open, direct encouragement from the Rebbe but when I see how enormously successful the campaign was, there is no greater indication that this is the Rebbe's ratzon (desire). This is the most important thing to the Rebbe: achdus and love, doing all we can to bring the

in the years 5751-5752. This is my Chassidishe hergesh.

In thinking about this, I concluded that what is stopping us is two camps, two languages; since 3 Tammuz there has been a sort of progressive entrenchment with each taking a position, to the point that the situation turned into a matter of fact that there are two distinct labels attempting to define what is traditional Chabad and what is not... (pained:) this is sacrificing the main thing, *mivtza Ahavas Yisroel*.

I figured that the first thing that needed to be done is to heal us, to find the common denominator, that which we all agree upon. I believed, and still believe, that it is possible to set into motion an approach that would be seen as something that should obviously be embraced. There is a type of yearning of the soul that can direct us to “do all that you can,” men, women, and children. I know my fellow Chassidim and there is no question that this is what Anash really want; this is what every Chassid yearns for, to see the Rebbe’s prophecy fulfilled. As long as this “*ratzon elyon*” of the Rebbe did not happen, we cannot avoid taking full responsibility.

I want to emphasize another point which is – I have many friends who have opposing views and yet I am seen by them as being a practical person whom they can speak to. I’ve talked with many people whom I call “the silent majority,” those who live their lives and are not involved with the *machlokes*. Their views are really different but today I

see a readiness and a maturity after all the fights over the years. People want to do things together. In the conversations I conducted, a number of educational and faith issues came up. Many of our conclusions were that these problems resulted from the fact that we were not unified and completely devoted to that which we all agree is what the Rebbe wants, and instead of doing what the Rebbe wants, we were busy entrenching our positions over who is right and who isn’t right. Instead of creating an energy which moves us forward, we got bogged down. *Machlokes* silenced us.

So the idea was proposed to call upon all Chassidim to dedicate 27 Adar I, the day that reminds every Chassid of his desire to see the Rebbe, to *farbrengens* to remind us of what was said in that *sicha*, to make a *cheshbon nefesh* (spiritual accounting) of our conduct to date, and come up with a plan for the future of how we can really change direction and bring *Moshiach*.

MORE THAN TOKEN ACHDUS

Then one morning, the yellow signs appeared. The ads had an excerpt from the *sicha*, “do all that you can,” and that was it. Nothing else. Just a one-word question to shake us up.

So the first reaction was shock which was followed by raised eyebrows. Nu, yet another naïve attempt at *achdus*. The truth? After so many years of digging

in of positions, skepticism was in order. But R’ Gal doesn’t have *naiveté* in his makeup. He was already involved in the next phase. Along with an Internet site and an ad campaign, when the next phase began it was no less surprising. One after the other, letters from *rabbanim*, *mashpiim* and influential figures in Chabad began to be publicized which called upon people to unite for 27 Adar I, the day that marked twenty years since the Rebbe’s stroke after which we did not hear the Rebbe address us again.

The list of *rabbanim* who publicized letters was impressive. They were from all circles, all communities and most importantly – from an array of views. The *rabbanim* called upon Anash to unite on this day with *farbrengens* in every location in the course of which they were to make a *cheshbon ha’nefesh* and come up with a plan of how to bring *Moshiach*, based on what the Rebbe said in the *sicha*, “if only they find one, two, or three who will come up with a plan of what to do and how to do it ... so it will be the true and complete *Geula*.”

The idea is based on the firm belief that in the heart of every Chassid there is something that awaits a call like this; knowing that the Rebbe put his faith in us that we would indeed take responsibility for bringing the *Geula*. We are ready to finish the job.

Boruch Hashem, *rabbanei Anash* responded as one and behind the scenes there was a rare cooperation between people with various views who loved the idea and agreed to work to see it through.

Tell us honestly, is this *achdus* significant, substantial?

“It shows that we have an

“Instead of creating an energy which moves us forward, we got bogged down. *Machlokes* silenced us.”

generally gets positive reactions from people who encountered it abroad where it is greatly admired for various reasons but not much beyond that. Is it true that Lubavitch, the most powerful movement in the Jewish world has become “irrelevant?” We, who have a Rebbe like we do, who have Chassidus that can wake up the sleeping souls of our generation, that has such a rich Torah? Are we not relevant anymore?!

It’s a fact that the mission we were given by the Rebbe was not carried out. Our impact is not felt among the youth or among the intellectuals, nor among the vast majority of the Jewish people. Chassidus is not learned, academics don’t talk about Chabad, the messianic idea that the Rebbe promulgated is not only not a central idea; it’s not even spoken about.

Maybe we needed this period of time to mature; as a break from the fights over who is right, who is a Meshichist, who thinks A and who thinks B, and whether there is a difference of opinion.

A Lubavitcher is a soldier of the Rebbe, a shliach of the Rebbe. Every shliach and every Chabad house knows what the Rebbe wants and the time has come to internalize his teachings and act accordingly, but it’s at this point that there is a disconnect. And yet, this is our job, the job of the mashpiim, the rabbanim, the soldiers and officers of the Rebbe, to overcome the obstacles and do what we know is right. This is what we hope for.

We are sitting here in Ramat Gan and talking about all of Anash and Chabad communities throughout Eretz Yisroel. Do you think there really is machlokes in Chabad or is it only a legitimate difference of

opinion? After all, most of us daven in the same shul, learn in the same schools and donate to the same causes, more or less.

There are stark differences of opinion about the goal of “do all that you can,” however, there is a strong enough common denominator that needs to be translated into joint activity, as opposed to the current state where the demand that was made of us to bring Moshiach has sort of stagnated, with each person doing his own thing or nothing. The Rebbe wants achdus and this will create a tremendous force. The sum is definitely greater than the parts and when we work in unison, the energy is incomparably greater.

There’s another problem with machlokes in that the differences of opinion about inyanei Moshiach have become intertwined with politics and jockeying for communal positions. So what happens is that someone says one thing and another person says just the opposite. As soon as someone takes on one position, the other person automatically takes the opposite one without even checking to see whether he actually believes it. This depletes our energy. Instead of constantly upgrading our activities, we end up neutralizing one another and we all pay a steep price for this.

What’s the idea of the farbrengens?

First, we took an emotionally charged date like 27 Adar. It’s the date that both strokes occurred. Second, the idea that the farbrengens are happening simultaneously all over the country with the encouragement of those in leadership positions. This created a momentum with everybody encouraging one another. We got hundreds of

reactions from people that this opened a door and brought them back to a very warm place that they hadn’t visited in a long time.

Chassidim are yerei Shamayim (G-d fearing) and who wants machlokes? When someone comes along and says: We can talk, we can unite, we can overcome our differing opinions and devote ourselves to the Rebbe’s work, the excitement is enormous. People were willing and ready. They discarded their incendiary rhetoric, and this was the perfect opening for sitting together.

These farbrengens are the result of the planning of a few Chassidim with the hope that we would be directed to do the right thing. Perhaps we will merit that this will mend tears in the fabric of the Chabad family and restore our self-confidence which in turn will intensify efforts to bringing the Geula. It would be wonderful if this idea was the catalyst for other Chassidim to come up with other good projects that will extricate us from the mud and stand us on our feet once again.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Please tell us some of your personal feelings about this mivtza.

I was surprised. Despite the warnings of smart people, people who are familiar with the larger world of Chabad, people who tried to dissuade me by telling me I was walking in a minefield and “it’s pity to waste time on this,” and it’s “opening up old wounds,” and “it’s hopeless” – I have to say that not only did I discover wonderful people in Chabad, not only did I discover that the mashpiim and rabbanim enthusiastically joined in despite differences of opinion, I saw that they are united with one heart for

the Rebbe. Even if sometimes you hear someone being critical, it's a form of klipa and Evil Inclination, but it is not relevant to the true desire of every Lubavitcher, to see our king.

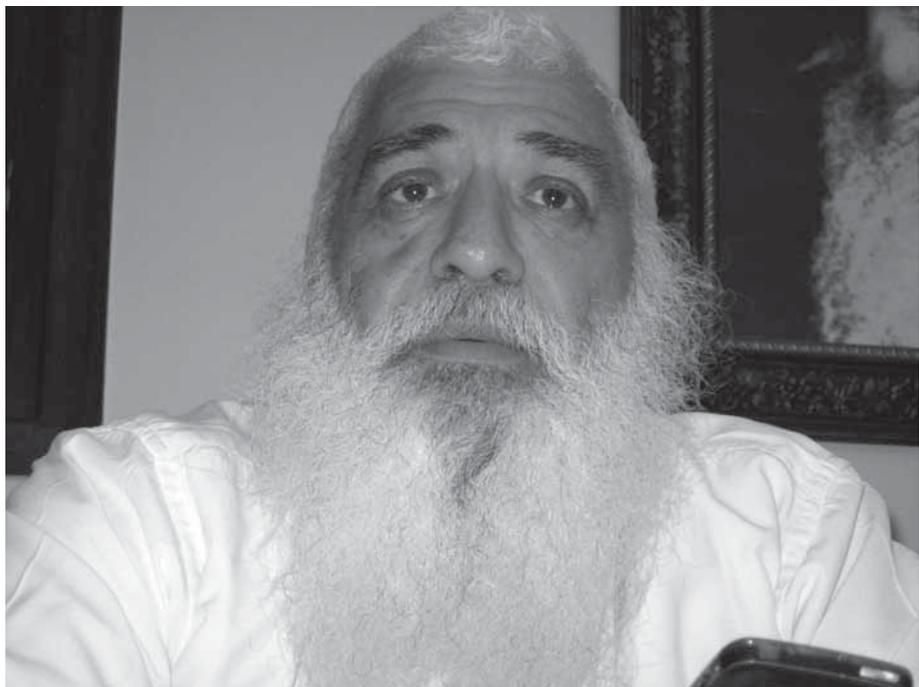
G-d willing, there will soon be other ideas to bring the inspiration into practical terms, to unite to bring the Geula, because there are so many topics we can rally around while circumventing differences of opinion.

Considering what I saw and heard after the farbrengens, nothing will deter me from following up this mitvza. I feel that the Rebbe is running things. Period.

Concluding remarks:

I know that this mitvza, which is not a one-time thing, is sacred and as always, there will be opposition. I am addressing what I called the "silent majority," those who really want achdus, want love, and believe that Chassidim are one family – *make your voices heard!*

You will, no doubt, encounter



negative reactions. When you do, take a stand. I know that you, the majority of Lubavitchers, stay away from machlokes and truly seek achdus (and this does not contradict having various views on the topic of Moshiach and other subjects).

"Bless us our Father" happens

when "we are as one," and who doesn't want blessings in his house, in parnasa, in the chinuch of his children? Who doesn't want to see brotherly love in his family? So please help this mitvza along until it overtakes us all and this will definitely give us much nachas to the Rebbe. ■

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SEVEN PARADIGM SHIFTS

By Rabbi Heschel Greenberg,
Founder and Director of the Jewish Discovery Center of Buffalo



SKIN DEEP

This week's parsha—entitled Metzora—continues with the topic of tzara'at that was introduced in last week's parsha. Tzara'at is a skin disease that would render the person ritually unclean and require a period of quarantining. Once the person was "cured" from this malady the afflicted person would follow a prescribed purification regimen that would allow him to thereafter rejoin his community and family.

Our Sages have stated that this disease was actually a physical manifestation of a spiritual deficiency.

In the Talmud (Sanhedrin 98b), the title Metzora—the person afflicted with tzara'at—is employed as a metaphor for Moshiach!

How can the Talmud describe Moshiach as a Metzora, a person who is apparently afflicted with a diseased body and a diseased soul?

Chassidic thought explains that the appellation Metzora applied to Moshiach is actually a reflection of the world's state of near perfection in the last moments of Galut/exile. This is exemplified by the way tzara'at manifests itself. It shows up only on the most external organ of the person—his skin. This suggests that the only vestige of evil that is left appears on the most exterior part of the person. According to

the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidut tzara'at therefore only afflicted people who were very spiritual and sensitive to the slightest imperfection.

THE BAD NEWS AND THE GOOD NEWS

This, surprisingly, is an accurate description of the current state of affairs. The world, through centuries and millennia of good deeds, has refined itself to the point that all of the evil has already been purged from within. Whatever evil still exists has now been pushed to the surface where it still rears its ugly face and wreaks havoc on us and appears to be more potent than ever before.

How can we reconcile this astounding claim with reality? Haven't we seen the worst—even unprecedented—atrocities committed precisely in this past century?

The answer can best be illustrated by way of a simple analogy to a swimming pool that is filled with grease and grime. When a chemical is added to the water, all of the filth rises to the top. The filth that was previously distributed evenly through the entire pool has risen to the surface in a concentrated form. It is true to claim that the pool is cleaner than ever before even as we assert that the filth is now far more concentrated and potent.

To the uninitiated eye the pool is filthier than ever. To the more discerning eye the pool is pristine pure except for the surface which is dirtier than ever and all efforts must be directed to skim that dirt from the surface.

The bad news is that the evil still exists and is even more lethal than in the past. As a result, we cannot let down our guard against these malevolent and insidious forces that threaten the Jewish people and the entire world. The good news is that the world has been refined and that all that is needed is for someone (i.e. each and every one of us) to come and skim the surface and remove the concentration of filth that has risen to the top.

This explains the current state of affairs of our world. All of the positive efforts of the past have succeeded in removing all of the internal evil and have pushed it to the surface.

The rationale for this assertion is that positive energy never dissipates. Negative energies, by contrast, do dissipate with the passage of time. Hence, the world has accumulated incredible amounts of positive energy that have penetrated the surface and permeated the "subterranean" world, pushing the negative energies, slowly but surely, to the top.

Today's challenge—the challenge for Moshiach and all

of the Jewish people and indeed the entire world in this pre-Redemption era—is to finally rid the world of the skin deep evil that is the last impediment to an ideal world—the world of Redemption. Moshiach—and by extension, the entire Jewish people—is therefore compared to the Metzora, whose challenge is to remove the peripheral vestiges of evil.

THE SEVEN REMEDIES

The Talmud teaches us that the tzara'at disease was caused by seven transgressions. According to the Midrash, the number is expanded from seven to ten sins.

The seven are: Slander, bloodshed, oaths made in vain, illicit relations, inflated egos, theft and stinginess (literally: jaundiced eye).

It stands to reason that in the present positive climate where, as stated, the evil is peripheral and the internal positive energies have become more accessible it behooves us to dig beneath the surface to expose these positive forces. Once that is accomplished the surface evil will also be removed and the world will experience complete Redemption.

Thus, to counter these seven transgressions that result in tzara'at we must uncover and instill seven parallel positive forces.

To counter the sin of Lashon Hara (speaking ill of others) one must develop the talent to see the hidden good in the other and assist that person to elicit and actualize that good by speaking positively about them. The most effective way of changing the way we see the other is to study the texts of Torah—specifically the teachings of Chassidut—that



How can the Talmud describe Moshiach as a Metzora, a person who is apparently afflicted with a diseased body and a diseased soul?

focus on the preciousness of the G-dly soul we all possess. By appreciating the other person's G-dly soul it will surely enhance our appreciation of the other's potential.

According to the Talmud embarrassing another is a form of bloodshed. To embarrass the other is a sign of disrespect for them. Even if we respect their inner goodness because they possess a soul we might focus on their errant behavior and try to expose it. That is a form of bloodshed which destroys that person's self esteem. To counter that tendency we must learn to see not only the hidden qualities of the other but also their revealed qualities. It does not suffice to tell someone you have potential. We must also focus on their actual good. Again, it is in Chassidic literature, that we discover the way we are to view a person's faults and virtues. We only see their faults to the extent that we are motivated to help them. It does not cause us to lose respect for them.

Uttering an oath in vain—which involves taking G-d's name in vain—evinces a lack of reverence and respect for G-d. The cause of this trivializing of G-d is the world's materialistic and mechanistic mindset. We can effectively counter the indifference to G-d by studying the teachings of Chassidut that help us gain a greater understanding and awareness of G-d's reality, presence and relevance to our lives.

By enhancing our modesty

we negate the sin of illicit relationships. This we accomplish by developing a healthy and refined attitude towards the sanctity and beauty of the human body and its role in marriage. Here too Chassidic teaching sheds new light on the holiness of the body. Not only is the soul a G-dly entity. Even the body is a holy treasure; and its holiness is revealed through modesty and the way we conduct our most intimate aspects of our relationships.

Countering egocentricity is achieved by acquiring an awareness of G-d's greatness through the study of Torah, specifically through the mystical teachings of Chassidut. With this realization our egos are in check because our world becomes a G-d-centric one.

We counter the sin of theft by respecting another's possessions. Chassidut explains that we are composites of souls, bodies and worldly possessions, which are extensions of our bodies in terms of the soul's mission on earth. The soul's descent into the world is to refine the body as well as the extended body that are our worldly possessions—our share of the world. To steal from someone, in a spiritual vein, is tantamount to ripping off a pound of flesh from the other person's body. Each of us was given possessions for us to elevate and transform from their physical state to a G-dly state. This we accomplish by using our resources for higher spiritual

Continued on page 42

MOSHIACH NOW: MAKING IT REAL

Part 2

Rabbi Gershon Avtzon, Dean of the Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Cincinnati

Dear Reader sh'yichyeh

Each individual mitvza of the Rebbe is a key in our hands that the Rebbe has handed us, with which we can make Moshiach a real part of our lives. However, there is still one point that needs clarification.

What is the difference between a “**Mitzvah**” and “**Mivtza**”? The answer is that a *Mitzvah* is a commandment from Hashem, of which we have 613. A “*Mivtza*”, on the other hand, is a campaign that the Rebbe started by emphasizing a certain Mitzvah that everyone should be encouraged to do. For many unaffiliated Jewish people, these mitvzaim are a gateway to a fully Torah-committed lifestyle.

I am sure that there are those who question the Rebbe’s method of outreach. Would it not seem more logical – and less aggressive – to first learn with someone for a while until he is comfortable with the ideology of Judaism, and only then to ask him to don T’fillin or perform any other Mitzvah?

However, this was never the perspective of the Rebbe. Of course, that is the ultimate vision of Jewish outreach, that Jewish people should embrace Yiddishkait in its entirety. However, it is self-understood that a Jew is not an “outreach project” and one should never think that if the person whom he

is influencing does not become observant, then all his efforts are a waste of time. On the contrary, the Torah teaches that every Mitzvah that a Jew performs is very precious to Hashem.

This is evident in the words of the Rambam (Hilchos T’shuva 3:4); “Accordingly, throughout the entire year, a person should always view himself as equally balanced between merit and sin and the world as equally balanced between merit and sin. If he performs one sin, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of guilt and brings destruction to both.

[On the other hand,] if he performs one mitzvah, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and brings deliverance and salvation to himself and others. This is implied by [Proverbs 10:25]: “A righteous man is the foundation of the world,” i.e., he who acted righteously, tipped the balance of the entire world to merit and saved it.”

The Rebbe explains that this approach (Likkutei Sichos Parshas Lech Lecha Vol. 25 pg. 47) is best illustrated with the Torah’s introduction of the life of Avraham Avinu. The first of Avrohom’s experiences that we read about in the Torah was his travel from his hometown to “The land that I will show You!”

The fact the Torah introduces Avraham only at this late point in his life seems strange. At the time of that command from Hashem, Avraham was already 75 years old! He was already an accomplished scholar and was admired by all for his willingness to die for his beliefs. He had jumped into a raging fire to sanctify Hashem’s name and had stood up to the misconception of the masses around him. Why are all these stories hidden from us, only to be explained by a Midrash that is based on hints from the Torah text, and yet the story of Avrohom’s travel is so explicit?!

The answer is that a Jew’s connection to Hashem is beyond and deeper than reason. Avraham had accomplished great things in his hometown, but they were all a fulfillment of goals that made sense to him, missions that he set forth for himself on his own. Avrohom’s willingness to follow Hashem to an unfamiliar land at such an advanced age, placing his entire trust in Him when he left everything familiar, was an act that defied reason. It was this event that, as the Torah is teaching us, was the true beginning of Avrohom’s service to Hashem. Every Jew has a Neshama, a soul, which is “literally a part of Hashem above”. which is his true essence. It is a result of the power within that soul that every Jew wants to serve Hashem and do His commandments, simply



because it His desire, even if may challenge everything we understand to be true.

Another illustration of the Jew's essential connection to Hashem being present through his G-dly soul is found in a halachic application. The Rambam (Hilchos Gerushin 2:20) writes that one may use force to obtain the consent of a man to divorce his wife, in a case where he refuses to do so. This seems strange: If Torah says that a divorce must be given with genuine consent, how can the Rambam justify using force in this situation?

The Rambam explains: Why is this *get* not void? For he is being compelled – either by Jews or by gentiles – [to divorce] against his will [and a *get* must be given voluntarily].

The reason is that the concept of being compelled against one's will applies only when speaking about a person who is being compelled and forced to do something that the Torah does not obligate him to do. For example, when a person is beaten until he consented to a sale, or to give a present, the transaction is invalid. If, however, a person's evil inclination presses him to negate [the observance of] a mitzvah or to commit a transgression, and he was beaten until he performed the action he was obligated to perform, or he dissociated himself from the forbidden action, he is not considered to have been forced against his will. On the contrary, it is he himself who is forcing [his own conduct to become proper].

With regard to this person who [outwardly] refuses to divorce [his wife] – he wants to be part of the Jewish people,



A Jew is not an “outreach project” and one should never think that if the person whom he is influencing does not become observant, then all his efforts are a waste of time.

and he wants to perform all the mitzvot and eschew all the transgressions; it is only his evil inclination that presses him to do otherwise. Therefore, when he is beaten until his [evil] inclination has been weakened, and he consents [to the divorce], he is considered to have performed the divorce willfully.

[Different laws apply when] the law does not require him to divorce his wife, and a Jewish court or simple people compel him to divorce her. This *get* is deemed unacceptable. Since, however, it was Jews who compelled him, he [is advised] to complete the divorce [in a proper manner].]

In these statements, the Rambam teaches us clearly that a Jewish person's essence cannot be severed from Hashem. When his actions seem to show that he is disconnected, this is only as a result of the yetzer hara's evil work. One only needs to remind him of this essential connection in order to reveal it.

Yet, for most, this essential connection remains hidden and concealed. What we learn from the story of Avraham is that the way to reveal that connection is by leaving “Your hometown”, in other words a person must leave the confines of his comfort level and the status quo and enter “The land that I will show you”, by doing Hashem's will.

When a person does a

Mitzvah **only** after studying and absorbing the concept, he will not tap into this inner-essence that he has. However, like we say in the Shmoneh Esrei prayer: “Sanctify us with your Mitzvos and – only then – give us a portion in your Torah”, one must first begin to connect to Hashem, his soul, and his identity as a Jew by first performing the mitzvot. In this way one leaves his comfort-zone of living the way he always has to change his life by fulfilling the will of Hashem. This act reveals the Jewish Neshama.

Once the soul is inspired, it will motivate the person to perform more and more Mitzvos. This is evident from the saying of our Sages (Avos 4:2) “One Mitzvah leads into another!”

One still may ask: Why did the Rebbe pick these specific Mitzvos to be stressed in his campaigns? To ask this question is like a simple person asking the most educated doctor why he prescribed a certain medication. The Rebbe sees both the physical and spiritual needs of the generation. He understands which Mitzvos will “work better” to effect the souls of our generation, and has thus guided us.

With this clarified we will begin to discuss each individual Mitzva. ■

Rabbi Avtzon's audio classes on Moshiach and Geula can be accessed at www.ylcrecording.com

SHABBOS IN A CHASSIDIC HOME

How does one make a Chassidische Shabbos?
What should be emphasized and what should
one avoid? * An enlightening interview with
Rabbi Yosef Karasik.

Interview by Menachem Ziegelboim

The week is almost over and we often enter into Shabbos with the last of our strength after a hectic six days. We barely make it through the Shabbos meal as our body decompress into exhaustion. Eyes drooping, one can barely even make it through a *Beis Moshiach* article after the meal.

And that's how one Shabbos follows another. We feel uncomfortable about it but we just don't have the energy, and anyway, we don't know how to start leading a proper Shabbos in our homes so that everybody, all family members, will take true Chassidische delight in Shabbos.

I spoke with Rabbi Yosef Karasik, rav to the Yishuvei Emek Chefer – Bat Chefer, whose column in this magazine is familiar to our readers. He is also the author of *HaShabbos B'Kabbala u'b'Chassidus* – two thick volumes that cover all aspects of Shabbos from a Chassidic perspective. I discussed our Shabbos with him, a Shabbos of average Chassidim,

balabatim, who want to improve the atmosphere in the home and add some “Chassidische spice” to the Shabbos meals and to the general atmosphere in the home. We asked him for ideas, advice, how to circumvent traps, what to be careful of and what to be particular about. Rabbi Karasik was most obliging.

Excuse me for asking, but we do have Taryag (613) Mitzvos. What is special about Shabbos that the Rambam says it is equivalent to all the other mitzvos? Furthermore, Shabbos is just one of the 10 Commandments and not the first one either. Why should we ascribe more importance to it than to other mitzvos?

True, Shabbos is one of the 613 mitzvos but it is not merely a detail of the Taryag. Shabbos has an honored place and is fundamental when it comes to the relationship between a Jew and Hashem. Shabbos includes five mitzvos but it goes beyond that; it represents the bond between a Jew and Hashem as it says, “it is

a sign between Me and you.”

Am Yisroel and Shabbos are connected with an unbreakable bond, far more than with other mitzvos of the Torah. Shabbos is the seal of the holy people as it says, “the nation who sanctifies the seventh.” It doesn't say, “am minichei t'fillin” (a nation that puts on t'fillin) or “am kovei mezuzos (a nation that puts up mezuzos).”

In halacha too, there is a special importance to Shabbos. In Shulchan Aruch it says “The other mitzvos we were commanded merely that they not be scorned by us but regarding Shabbos we were commanded to honor it exceedingly. This is the reason why the Tannaim and Amoraim cherished the Shabbos to the point that they called it ‘kalla’ (bride) and ‘malka’ (queen), which we don't find with other mitzvos.”

There are many aspects of Shabbos that we can talk about. The very fact that in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch there is a large section on Hilchos



about Shabbos on the words “and B’nei Yisroel kept the Shabbos.” Why does it say “v’shomru” in the plural and not the singular? The answer is that Shabbos is a comprehensive, general mitzva, and that is why it is written in the plural, because when you operate alone you can’t observe Shabbos fully. In order to keep Shabbos properly, you need to be within a Jewish-Chassidische environment created with other people.

A Chassidische Shabbos is not only about being careful with the 39 Melachos. That’s the “sur mei’ra” (avoid evil) of “shamor es yom ha’Shabbos” (keep the Shabbos day). The “asei tov” (do good), as expressed in “zachor es yom ha’Shabbos” (remember the Shabbos day), is to make a Chassidische Shabbos in shul, with Chassidim, at a Chassidische farbrengen.

You will have noticed that Chabad shuls, wherever they are located, are full on Shabbos. Where is everybody on the weekdays? How come they gather together on Shabbos? The reason is that even Chassidim who, the entire week, are not particular about davening in a Chabad shul because of technical reasons like timing and such, find it important to be in a Chassidische shul on Shabbos, to daven in a Chabad minyan, to sit together and learn together and farbreng together.

You yourself, as a shliach and rav, don’t have the pleasure of a Chabad shul on Shabbos.

Indeed, and that’s a problem for me at my place of shlichus and for my fellow shluchim who are in distant places but it’s part of the sacrifice of shlichus. Twice a year I get to spend Shabbos in an authentic Chassidische community – at the Kinus HaShluchim and on the Shabbos before Gimmel

Shabbos, tells us something. I’d like to discuss a Chassidische Shabbos, the kind of Shabbos that every one of us, of Anash, wants to experience each week.

The Chassidic outlook on Shabbos is that this day is not just a day designated for resting from the labor of all week, but is an extraordinary spiritually elevated day. From Shabbos we get the strength to serve Hashem the rest of the week.

Chassidim say that Napoleon barely slept. When he was asked why he didn’t sleep as others did, he answered, “When I sleep, I am not Napoleon. I’m like anyone else.” The same is true for Shabbos. It’s a day when we are kings. If we spend Shabbos sleeping, then we are using our time in a way that doesn’t accentuate our royalty.

I’m sure you know the acronym for Shabbos, that it stands for *sheina b’Shabbos taanug* (sleeping on Shabbos is a delight) ...

Yes, but Chassidim are not particular about that ... The

idea is to make full use of the hours of Shabbos. Sheina, may Hashem avenge her blood, the daughter of the Rebbe Rayatz, once said in surprise that she understands that it’s possible to eat on Shabbos as a taanug but she doesn’t understand how it’s possible to sleep on Shabbos. (HaMelech B’Mesibo vol. 1 p. 242)

In one of his letters, the Rebbe Rayatz writes that the 26 hours of Shabbos should be used for k’dusha. Certainly we need to eat and even sleep, but the rest of the time needs to be used for davening and learning.

What does a Chassidische Shabbos look like?

A Chassidische Shabbos is made up of two components. The first is when a Chassid is in shul, learning Chassidus or farbrenging or saying T’hillim. The second is at home, bringing the light of Shabbos into the home.

Let’s focus on the first aspect you cited...

There is a Chassidic saying

ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SHABBOS IN TORAS HA'CHASSIDUS

Can you sum up what Chassidus innovated in our understanding of Shabbos?

In Chassidus we look at the essence of the mitzva and illuminate all its details and practices. There are numerous details in Torah and mitzvos and there are usually various opinions. There are also numerous reasons to fulfill each mitzva and minhag. Chassidus does not merely add another explanation which is deeper; it gets down to the root of things and illuminates any given topic by revealing its highest source.

When you learn the details of mitzvos without the Chassidic explanation, they sometimes seem like a collection of laws and practices and a collection of reasons and ideas with nothing to unify it all. The Chassidic explanation reveals the source of a mitzva and then you understand all the reasons in p'shat, remez, drush and sod, the differences of opinion and practices, and why each approach is that way.

The wondrous light of Chassidus doesn't push aside the other explanations in Torah; on the contrary, it illuminates them too. It reveals that they are not various explanations but they all derive from the core essence of the matter.

My work, *Ha'Shabbos B'Kabbala u'b'Chassidus* lays out all the myriad details in the laws and practices of Shabbos, with the hidden light of Chassidus illuminating everything and infusing simcha and enthusiasm into the "extra soul" of Shabbos.

Can you give us an example of the Rebbe's chiddushim on the subject of Shabbos?

The Rebbe's explanations about Shabbos are extensive. There are, without exaggeration, thousands of explanations on a vast array of all aspects of Shabbos, some of which were said by the Rebbe at length and in detail, some briefly, and some hinted at. But those who have delved into and mastered the topic are able to observe that even in the briefest comment of the Rebbe, one can find amazing explanations and a unique approach.

An example of an explanation from the Rebbe about Shabbos follows:

In the Zohar there is a debate about what part of Shabbos is the peak spiritual time. One view says that it is Friday night as soon as Shabbos enters and it continuously diminishes as Shabbos progresses. Another view says the spiritual summit of Shabbos is at Mincha, Shabbos afternoon (a third view, which is how the Arizal rules, and this is alluded to in the wording of Kiddush in the Alter Rebbe's Siddur, is that the loftiest time is Shabbos morning).

This debate between two giants of the holy society of Rashbi, occupied the expositors of kabbala with explanations and opinions this way and that way.

In a short sicha and in just a few simple words, "by the way," the Rebbe explained the topic and taught that there is no difference of opinion in the Zohar as they agree with one another, but each one of the Tannaim is speaking about a different aspect of Shabbos, the joy of the body and the holiness of the neshama:

"The peak moment for the body is as soon as Shabbos enters," when his work in preparing for Shabbos and the work of the six days of the week is done and he sits in tranquility to take delight in the Shabbos with delicacies and joy. As time passes and the time for Shabbos to end approaches and the weekdays and its hardships to begin, his joy and excitement diminish. Just as someone who goes on vacation for a few days feels great joy at the beginning, more than at the end when he anticipates returning to work.

But "the peak moment for the neshama is when Shabbos is waning," since the holiness of Shabbos that is channeled down from the realms of holiness, like all things, comes gradually and in an orderly fashion, and the more time passes, the more the neshama basks in the holiness of Shabbos through the t'fillos of Kabbalas Shabbos, the Shabbos meals, immersing in the mikva, reading the Torah, the Haftora, and then the highest point – Mincha.

Tammuz. These two Shabbasos, spent with Chassidim, give me the spiritual strength for all the other months.

I say this to my fellow shluchim and regarding their children too: A shliach needs to ensure that his children,

starting from the age of 11 or so, occasionally spend Shabbos in a Chassidishe shul, whether with grandparents or other relatives or friends. This is so they get to see and experience a Shabbos in a Chassidishe shul, with a Chassidishe davening.

You extol Chabad shuls. Do you mean to say that in other shuls they don't feel the atmosphere of Shabbos?

That's a good question but let's think a moment about what a Chassidishe shul is on Shabbos. The Alter Rebbe writes at the



end of Tanya that a Chassidishe davening is slow, word by word. A Chassidishe davening is from the soul. When a Chassid opens his Siddur on Shabbos, he's not just praying; he is feeling Hashem before him.

From Tanya it is clear that t'filla is not merely a sort of telephone by which we contact G-d and talk to him. T'filla is being face to face with Hashem Himself. When a Jew davens he feels Hashem Himself and when he davens on Shabbos he feels the sanctity of Shabbos. Each of us has seen the t'filla of Chassidic ovdim and ziknei ha'Chassidim, and in our minds that is what davening is really all about. It's not only to cross off our checklist of obligations that we finished davening, but it's with all our hearts and souls. Even working people who do not have time to daven slowly all week, and specifically these working people, use Shabbos for proper prayer.

The fact that in most Chabad shuls they start davening Shacharis at ten in the morning is not because that's when we should start davening. We should

“ You need to give the child reason to feel that it's great to sit at the Shabbos table. Just as he likes watching an interesting video and doesn't get up and walk away in the middle because he enjoys it, that is how the atmosphere at the Shabbos table ought to be.

really start at seven but we have to prepare ourselves for t'filla by learning Chassidus and the other preparations so that our davening is done properly.

You spoke about the second component of a Chassidic Shabbos. How does a Lubavitcher Shabbos at home differ from other homes?

The Shabbos meal in a Chassidishe home has a double significance: the physical food that draws family members close and unites them with others, and the spiritual content. Just as no one would think that the lady of the house should start looking in the pantry a few minutes before Shabbos to see what ingredients she needs for the Shabbos cooking, but rather she starts

preparing days in advance with planning, shopping and cooking – so too, the spiritual content is primarily the responsibility of the man of the house. When they are sitting down to the meal is not the time for him to start looking for something to say. Both the physical and the spiritual preparations need to be done in advance.

It ought not be done in a way of simply fulfilling an obligation; I said a d'var Torah or told a Chassidishe story. There is no point in reviewing a sicha of the Rebbe that the people at the table won't follow because it's too long or complicated, not to mention a Rashi sicha. The goal is for the family to have a Chassidishe atmosphere, for them to feel that there is nothing like Shabbos, a



the phones are shut, we are all sitting together, parents and children.

Parents often ask how much they should insist that the child sit at the Shabbos table. The question shows a fundamental lack of understanding. A Shabbos meal is not a punishment! It's the biggest prize for children and parents to be able to sit together. You need to give the child reason to feel that it's great to sit at the Shabbos table. Just as he likes watching an interesting video and doesn't get up and walk away in the middle because he enjoys it, that is how the atmosphere at the Shabbos table ought to be. If a child gets up in the middle of the Shabbos meal, that shows something is amiss.

Chazal say that just as one's parnasa all week is derived from Shabbos, so too, the spiritual parnasa of the family bond is nourished from Shabbos. Parents need to realize that their children assess them by how they act on Shabbos. The father reading the D'var Malchus is a wonderful thing but the meal is not the time for it. Everything in its right time. Just as the lady of the house would not be learning a maamer while preparing fish, so too, the head of the household cannot be delving into something, as holy as it might be, in the middle of the meal. You should be devoting your time to them when you are sitting together.

So what *should* we do?

A day or two days before Shabbos, think about the meal, what you want to say and how. Prepare a Chassidishe story that is suitable for your crowd. Prepare a few stories and choose a topic that you want to focus on, a topic with a message that is important to convey. Look into s'farim ahead of time and think

“A person who wants a Chassidishe Shabbos and learns the Chassidishe parsha without studying the laws of Shabbos is like someone wearing underwear and a tie.

day to look forward to.

In 5735/1975, the Rebbe spoke about the tremendous importance of family Shabbos meals. Every relationship needs to

be worked on whether it's among friends or relatives. A relationship doesn't happen by itself. One of the best opportunities for this is during the Shabbos meals, when we eat delicious food together,

about how you will give over the material not only in a way that they will understand it but in an engaging manner so they will all want to listen.

Don't test the children on what they learned. The meal is not the time for testing because a child who doesn't know the material well will associate the meal with the unpleasant testing and tension and it won't be surprising when he wants to leave before the end of the meal.

A Shabbos meal is the time to listen to your children. The meal needs to be festive and happy so everybody looks forward to it all week.

I imagine that as a shliach who has guests, it's somewhat different.

Definitely not. Even when on shlichus and many guests of all sorts are at your meal, you cannot forget your children at any of the meals. They are not the korban on the altar of shlichus; on the contrary, in my experience, there is nothing that makes a greater impact than seeing an authentic Shabbos meal where parents and children enjoy themselves together. You can say the divrei Torah in a simple and concise fashion. The guests' real experience is in seeing what a Chassidishe home is, what a Chassidishe Shabbos meal is like, seeing parents and children and the interactions between them. There is no greater Kiddush Hashem and more impressive sight than watching children honor parents or children enjoying Shabbos along with their parents.

In our k'hilla there is the B'nei Akiva youth group which meets on Friday nights after the meal [ed. That is where Tamar Fogel of Itamar was when her parents and siblings were murdered.]

The kids sit on pins and needles during the meal because they are anticipating getting together later on. I sat with parents and the heads of the branch and asked them to schedule it for some other time, just not Friday night. "On Friday night, children should sit with their parents," I said. The Shabbos meal is the time to build on your family relationships. In times gone by, people met during the day or more often while nowadays, people are much more busy. Even when they meet, there are another thousand things going on and gadgets buzzing, so Shabbos should be dedicated as a sacred time for family.

You mentioned the topic of learning with the children on Shabbos. It's a time when father and son can sit and review the material learned that week.

For sure. The Rebbe once described the learning of father and son on Shabbos. It's important to review what the child learned and this is a Jewish practice, and the Rebbe spoke about being careful that it be done out of love and not with anger, even when it doesn't go well. The Rebbe describes a scene in which the father gets angry because the child doesn't know the material well and might even hit him, which is why the learning must be with the "right drawing close" and not with "the left repelling."

Speaking about the Shabbos meal, I think there is a long chapter on the subject in your book.

The Alter Rebbe says an amazing thing. There is no such thing as spoiled Shabbos food and no Shabbos food that is harmful to one's health. This is the reason it is forbidden to throw out Shabbos food. This goes to show us how sanctified

the Shabbos meals are.

There needs to be *lechem mishna* at the Shabbos meal and the holy Sh'la explains that it's from the root of *meshune* – unusual bread because it is bread of Olam Haba. The Shabbos meal is like an altar which is entirely sanctified. If we speak about business or just ordinary things, it's not a halachic question – whether it's permissible or not; the very speech negatively affects the Shabbos atmosphere and the k'dusha of the Shabbos meal. The Shabbos meal is a holy time, a time of avodas Hashem!

The kabbalist, Rabbi Yisroel Najara (1555-1625) composed a poem for Shabbos, "Ma Yedidus." The holy Arizal said he saw angels coming to R' Najara's Shabbos table, wanting to hear the poem but since he had removed his Shabbos garments, they left. This is an important point – we need to wear Shabbos clothes at the Shabbos table.

We are talking at length about a Chassidishe Shabbos but before that, there is so much to learn about what Shabbos is, what is forbidden and what is allowed ...

The laws of Shabbos have literally mountains of details. There are endless halachos and in our modern world, the halachos are multiplying. The Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya, "It is obligatory for every person to be expert in the laws of Shabbos." This was true then, and that much more applicable now when so many questions have arisen concerning Shabbos.

It is very important to realize that a Chassidishe Shabbos that we spoke about earlier cannot happen without the **foundation** which is knowledge of the laws of Shabbos. A person who wants a Chassidishe Shabbos and learns

the Chassidische parsha without studying the laws of Shabbos is like someone wearing underwear and a tie. The halachos are the foundation and only once that is solid can you attain the Chassidische aspects of Shabbos. As it says in Pirkei Avos, “*lo am ha’aretz chassid*” – an ignoramus cannot be a Chassid.

Every Friday night in shul I review a sicha of the Rebbe and then I teach some laws of Shabbos. Each Shabbos I am surprised by many people who don’t know the basics and get entangled in difficult questions.

A few months ago I was a guest for Shabbos in a Chassidische place where there was a nice crowd and I saw so many questionable actions as relates to Hilchos Shabbos whether it was in the preparation of tea, adding soup nuts to the soup, the laws of selecting – knowing how to separate bones from the fish or meat. There were problems in setting the table or in preparing the salads. These are situations that come up all the time so we need to constantly review the halachos.

Every community should have an ongoing Hilchos Shabbos shiur, especially these days when there are so many user-friendly s’farim in many languages. For those who are able to, of course

it’s preferable that you look up the source in the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch.

The impression you get is that in our modern era, you can’t make a move without there being some halachic issue involved. How can we deal with this?

Just like a sick person cannot say, I am sick anyway so I may as well do what I want, the same is true here. You need to start learning. If a person has basic knowledge he should learn Shulchan Aruch and if not, there are enough s’farim available for people without a halacha background.

I was recently in a home where there is a Shabbos atmosphere, the children go to proper schools, etc. and something spilled on the floor. The woman quickly brought a towel and a rag to wipe up the floor. She didn’t know the halacha!

We really need to review it regularly, as the Alter Rebbe says to do, because we can’t keep on going through Shabbos without knowing the halachos. Even learned people get stuck on certain things like whether you are allowed to use a grater on Shabbos or what the problem is with peeling a cucumber on Shabbos; what the din is regarding squeezing a lemon on

Shabbos, whether it’s permissible to carry a key ring with house keys that also has your car key on it, etc.

There is a story about the Rebbe Rayatz who farbrenged on Shabbos afternoon. I think it was in Otvotsk. Suddenly, the Rebbe turned to R’ Chatshe Feigin and asked what time it was. It was close to sunset and they had to daven Mincha. R’ Chatshe didn’t want to tell the Rebbe the real time because he didn’t want the farbrengen to stop. So he said it was an hour earlier so the Rebbe would continue farbrenging (perhaps he found a heter based on the story about the Alter Rebbe and R’ Avrohom the Malach as they learned), but you can’t fool the Rebbe and of course the Rebbe knew what time it was.

With a serious look on his face, the Rebbe Rayatz said to him: **A Chassidische farbrengen affects Asiya, Yetzira, Beria, and Atzilus but davening Mincha on time affects Atzmus U’Mehus.**

What do I learn from this story? That observing halacha, whether the halachos of t’filla or the halachos of Shabbos, is the foundation for everything else; it affects Atzmus U’Mehus. All other *hergeshim* (spiritual sensitivities) are secondary. ■

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purposes. To steal from others is to deny the other and ourselves the ability to fulfill our G-d given mission.

The last positive trait is to open our eyes and see the world including the neediness of others in a positive, expansive and liberated light, instead of seeing things through the

prism of galut/exile, which engenders pessimism, cynicism and pettiness. Stinginess—the last of the seven sins that cause tzara’at—is a product of a person’s very constrained view of life. It is borne out of self-absorption and the narrowest view of one’s needs and the existence of others. Once more, it is the knowledge and perception

that we gain from the teachings of Chassidut that help us break out of the constraints of galut that thereby empower us to see things in a totally different light.

This is spreading the wellsprings to the outside, purifying the world from the inside out, and that, we know, is the way to bring Moshiach NOW! ■