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G-D HOLDS OUR HANDS IN THE DARKNESS OF EXILE AND REDEEMS US

A Jew asks: How is it possible, amidst these difficult and challenging times of exile, to properly serve G-d and prepare to usher in the era of the true and complete redemption?! * Even though “darkness shall cover the earth,” that has no bearing on a Jew at all, knowing that G-d Alm-ghty is present with him in every circumstance.

Translated by Boruch Merkur

HOW CAN A JEW REMAIN UNAFFECTED BY THE DARKNESS OF EXILE?

Toras Emes, the Torah of Truth, tells a Jew that we are presently in the final days of exile and that we have to prepare for the true and complete redemption. Yet, one’s perception may well contradict this truth, leaving him perplexed. He sees the world steeped in darkness, as in the verse, “darkness shall cover the earth, etc.” (Yeshayahu 60:2), and that we are still far removed from experiencing the revelation of G-dly light, certainly not the sublime revelation of the future era of redemption, when “G-d shall be to you for an everlasting light” (ibid 60:19). If so, he reasons, how can one remain unaffected by the darkness of the world? How is it possible, amidst these difficult and challenging times of exile, to properly serve G-d and

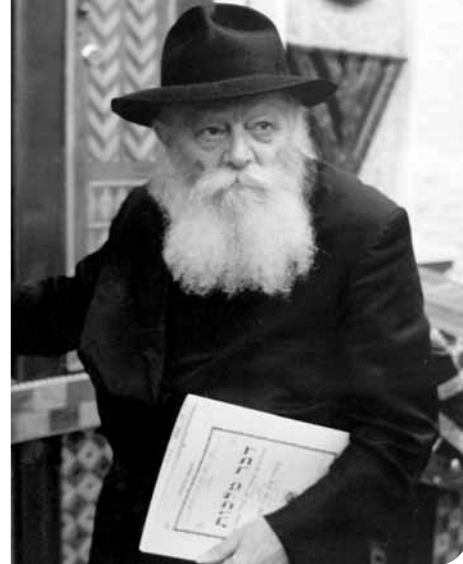
prepare to usher in the era of the true and complete redemption?!

G-D RETURNS WITH THE EXILES

In response to this, there is a lesson derived from the weekly Torah portion related to today’s daily study – the verse, “And G-d shall return (with) your captivity, etc.” (Nitzavim 30:3):

A Jew must know that the Divine presence resides with the Jewish people even as they suffer in exile (and it remains with us until the final moment of exile). And when the Jewish people are redeemed, it shall be in a manner of “‘And G-d shall return (with) your captivity, etc.’ – it does not say, ‘He shall return your captivity,’ but, ‘**He shall return with** your captivity, etc.,’ inscribing redemption for Himself, for He shall return with them” (Rashi on the verse).

Therefore, even though “darkness shall cover the earth,



etc.,” that has no bearing at all, for a Jew knows that G-d is present with him in every circumstance.

Accordingly it is understood that when G-d Alm-ghty commands the Jewish people to prepare for the true and complete redemption, and to prepare the entire world for the revelation of G-dly light, by means of illuminating one’s home and environment with the light of Torah and Judaism, it is absolutely certain (without any doubt at all) that each and every Jew can succeed in His G-dly mission, for G-d is with him. Thus, he fulfills his service with joy and with a good spirit, as it is written, “serve G-d with joy.” In fact, his joy adds to the success of his service.

In this manner, we will soon merit to go out of exile, as described in the commentary of Rashi (on the verse ibid 30:3), G-d “literally holds the hands of every single person, [taking him] out of his place, as it is said, ‘you shall be gathered one by one, O children of Israel.’ (Yeshayahu 27:12).”

(From the address to the N’shei U’b’nos Chabad, 24 Elul 5741, bilti muga)



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LEADING THE CORONATION

Who lost a note with lofty kavanos?
Why did the Alter Rebbe fool the
Mezritcher Maggid? When did the
Rebbe Rashab begin blowing shofar?
Why should we picture the Rebbe during the t'kios?
* An overview of T'kias Shofar by the Rebbeim.

By Yisroel Yehuda

A BROKEN HEART IS BETTER THAN KAVANOS

The Baal Shem Tov once told his disciple, R' Zev Kitz's, to study the kavanos (mystical intentions) of the t'kios, since he would be the designated baal tokeia (shofar blower) on Rosh Hashanah.

R' Zev learned the kavanos

and even wrote them down on a paper that he put in his pocket so he could refer to it during the t'kios. The Baal Shem Tov did not like this and the note mysteriously vanished.

When it came time for the t'kios, R' Zev began looking for his paper with the kavanos and when he didn't find it, he didn't know what to do. He was so

upset by this that he wept bitterly and blew the shofar without any kavanos.

After the davening, the Baal Shem Tov said to him, "In the king's palace there are many rooms and there are different keys for each door. Yet, there is one tool that can open all the locks and that is an ax. The kavanos are keys to the heavenly

gates, with each gate having a different kavana. However, a broken heart can open all the gates and chambers.”

HE PICTURED THE BAAL SHEM TOV

The Mezritcher Maggid was not the baal tokeia in his shul. We know this from the Rebbe Rashab who said, “Everything was mesudar (organized) by the Mezritcher Maggid. On Rosh Hashanah there were regular baalei t’filla and a regular baal tokeia, etc.”

In another source it says that R’ Menachem Mendel of Horodok blew the shofar for many years. In that source it tells about one year when R’ Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev took his place:

“For many years, R’ Menachem Mendel was the baal tokeia in the Maggid’s beis midrash. At that exalted time, as all around the talmidim pierced the heavens, the Maggid and his distinguished talmid would stand on the bima, R’ Mendele blowing the shofar and the Maggid serving as “announcer” by pointing in the machzor to the next shofar sound.

“One year, R’ Menachem Mendel was not in Mezritch. He was on a mission for the Maggid. Before Rosh Hashanah, the Maggid asked R’ Levi Yitzchok his talmid to blow the shofar. R’ Levi Yitzchok happily agreed, and immediately began preparing for the awesome moment.

“When the time came, the Maggid and R’ Levi Yitzchok stood on the bima. The Maggid’s face looked serious to the point of fearsomeness. He recited the brachos, and when R’ Levi Yitzchok put the shofar to his mouth, he fell in a faint. His

colleagues labored a long time to revive him.

“Afterward, the Maggid declaimed with a smile, ‘I don’t know what was wrong with him; Mendele sees a lot more every year, and yet he doesn’t faint.’”

In addition to the Maggid’s lofty kavanos during the t’kios, he was instructed by the Baal Shem Tov to picture the face of his rebbi. This is what the Baal Shem Tov wrote him in a letter that was found in the Charson g’niza:

“On the two holy days of Rosh Hashanah, before the t’kios, you should also picture my image as well as the holy image of my master [the prophet Achiya HaShiloni] whom you merited to see.”

From here we learn to picture the Rebbe as part of our kavanos during the t’kios. More pointedly, the mashpia, R’ Shlomo Chaim Kesselman (apparently in the name of the Rebbe Rayatz) said that the words, “yisvadeh b’lachash,” meaning to confess silently, that appears between the series of t’kios, refers to picturing the Rebbe!

THE ALTER REBBE DID NOT KNOW HOW TO BLOW THE SHOFAR

The Alter Rebbe did not know how to blow the shofar. On a certain occasion he explained that it was because a person learns to blow in his childhood, “But I was never a child.”

However, the Alter Rebbe surely knew the kavanos of the t’kios as illustrated by the following story. Once, before the Yomim Nora’im, the Maggid called his disciple the Alter Rebbe, and said, “Since on Rosh Hashanah the regular baal tokeia won’t be here, I want you to be

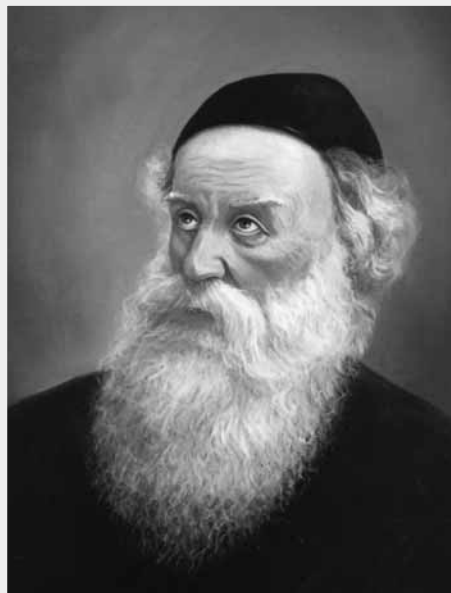
the baal tokeia.”

The Alter Rebbe replied, “I agree on condition that you give me the kavanos.”

The Maggid agreed and arranged a time for him to come and learn the kavanos with him. Only after the study session did the Alter Rebbe say, “But I can’t blow ...”

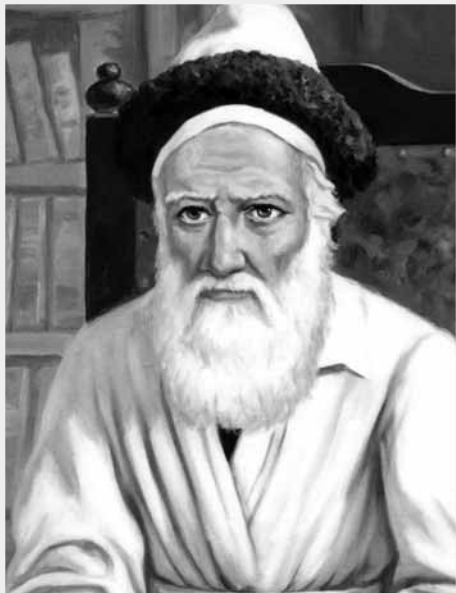
The Maggid asked, “So why did you fool me and have me teach you the kavanos?”

The Alter Rebbe replied, “I learned a lesson from Moshe



Rabbeinu. When Hashem appeared to him at the burning bush and told him to go to Egypt and redeem the Jewish people, he asked Hashem what His name is. After Hashem revealed His name to him, Moshe said he couldn’t speak well and he did not want to go.”

The Alter Rebbe would take the Tzemach Tzedek under his tallis during the t’kios until he was nine years old.



“When you think about that which is unnecessary, even in k’dusha, those are also machshavos zaros.”

We do not have other information about the Alter Rebbe and t’kios except that the t’ruos were comprised of 63 short notes. They would extend longer than the sh’varim and the first t’kia combined. This is according to what it says in Shulchan Aruch HaRav, that unlike the sh’varim, which are limited in the number of notes, one may extend the t’rua for as long as he wishes.

As for the Mitteler Rebbe, there was a brief conversation on Rosh Hashanah in the year 5720/1959, as the Rebbeim were generally very careful to greatly minimize speech on Rosh Hashanah. In a response to one of the Chassidim who said, “Regarding the t’kios, it is known

that one of the Rebbeim did not know how to blow,” the Rebbe responded, “It was probably the Mitteler Rebbe.”

“FORTUNATE IS THE NATION WHO KNOWS THE T’RUA”

The Tzemach Tzedek blew the shofar on the Yomim Nora’im in his beis midrash. One year, he could not blow, and he called over someone whom he knew could blow and asked him whether he would be willing to serve as the baal tokeia in his place. The person agreed.

The Rebbe asked him whether he knew the kavanos and the man said, “Rebbe, I only know this – Hashem commanded us to blow the shofar.”

The Rebbe said, “If so, you shall blow.”

Another story is told about R’ Chaim Avrohom, the son of the Alter Rebbe. He was very great in Torah, Chassidus and middos. His appearance was similar to his father’s, and he would daven at great length with tremendous fervor. Despite his greatness, he was supremely humble and modest in his ways and was a man of truth who hated falsehood.

R’ Chaim Avrohom accepted upon himself the leadership of his nephew the Tzemach Tzedek, and after the passing of his brother the Mitteler Rebbe, he was amongst those who urged the Tzemach Tzedek to accept the Chabad leadership. R’ Chaim Avrohom would always go to hear Chassidus from the Tzemach Tzedek despite his own greatness and genius, and he acted as one of his talmidim.

Towards the end of his life, R’ Chaim Avrohom suffered pain in his feet, and he could not go to

the Rebbe to hear Chassidus and to daven in his minyan. He had a minyan of his own in his house.

One time, on Rosh Hashanah, after finishing the t’kios in his minyan, he walked slowly to the Tzemach Tzedek’s shul to hear the t’kios from him too. Walking was extremely difficult for him, and one of the Tzemach Tzedek’s sons asked him why he went to so much trouble when he had already blown the shofar himself.

R’ Chaim Avrohom answered in great humility, “It does not say, ‘Fortunate is the nation that blows the t’rua’ but ‘fortunate is the nation that knows the t’rua,’ and that is why I have come to the Rebbe to hear the t’kios.”

A LONG BREATH

We have no information about the t’kios by the Rebbe Maharash aside from the number of t’ruos he would blow: “The Rebbe Maharash would blow a t’rua of 72 notes and the t’kia after the sh’varim and t’rua was as long as the sh’varim, t’ruos and the first t’kia combined.”

R’ Yitzchok Yoel Rafaelowitz, the rav of Kremenchug, was present when the Rebbe blew the shofar. During the t’kios, he could not fathom why the Rebbe blew as he did, and he decided to ask him.

When he had yechidus, the Rebbe Maharash told him before he could even pose the question, “What do you think – that extraneous thoughts just consist of nonsense? When you think about that which is unnecessary, even in k’dusha, those are also machshavos zaros.”

Even when the Rebbe was absorbed in the supernal realms, he knew the thoughts of every person.

It is interesting to note that in Seifer HaSichos 5698, the Rebbe Rayatz writes that the Rebbe Maharash had a “long breath in song” so that he was able to blow 53 t’ruos with the shofar of the Maharal. This shofar was hard to blow and therefore, it was quite a feat that he was capable of blowing 53 t’ruos with it.

OY GEVALD!

The Rebbe Rashab began blowing shofar only after 5660. In the early years of his nesius he was the mesader t’kios, which meant he would say the p’sukim before and after the t’kios, and he would be the announcer.

For the two prior years, from 5658-5660, his son (later to be the Rebbe Rayatz) blew the shofar while his father announced the notes. That the Chabad Nasi did not blow the shofar in the first years of his nesius is something that repeated itself with the Rebbe Rayatz and the Rebbe MH”M.

Beginning with the Rebbe Rashab we already have a detailed description of the awe-inspiring event of t’kias shofar, which applies to the later Rebbeim as well:

“After saying the Haftarah, the Rebbe prepared himself for the t’kios, his face and head wrapped in his tallis. A low voice could be heard from under the tallis humming a fragment of a well-known Chabad niggun with great d’veikus. Then, there would burst forth from deep within his holy heart the call ‘Lamenatzeiach.’ Similarly, the Rebbe would recite each of the verses said before the t’kios in a hoarsened voice suffused with deep sighs and terrible sobbing.

“The Rebbe would say the p’sukim before and after the

t’kios with a special niggun and once, they heard after the words, ‘arov avdecha l’tov’ that he said, ‘oy gevald’ - ‘al yaashkuni zeidim.’

“After the t’kios, when the Rebbe Rashab removed the tallis from his face and sat down to rest a little, he gazed upon the congregation who gazed back at him. Afterwards, I found out that gazing at the people after the t’kios has kabbalistic significance. His holy countenance shone like that of an angel ...” (Otzar Minhagei Chabad)

A FEARSOME EXPERIENCE

On Rosh Hashanah 5681, while the Rebbe Rayatz was in mourning, he did not want to blow the shofar. In general, that year he avoided any signs of being the Nasi. However, his mother, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah told him, “I want to hear the shofar blown by you.” Since his mother asked him, he recited the brachos and blew one t’kia and then gave the shofar to R’ Y. Rafaelowitz so he could continue the order of the t’kios.

Ishkavta d’Rebbi describes that year in very moving terms: “Tishrei passed with all the rituals like those of the Rebbe Rashab. The d’veikus and terrible sobbing of the Rebbe [Rayatz] during the t’fillos on the Yomim Nora’im, especially during the Haftora readings and the t’kios, were very frightening. It melted the hearts of the congregants ...”

T’KIOS WITH THE REBBE MH”M

770 was packed with Jews of all ages who stood throughout the lengthy davening, hours upon hours, under very uncomfortable conditions. Yet they did not feel hungry and they were



not bothered by the crowding because their hearts and minds were focused on something else entirely, on being with the Rebbe.

The Rebbe entered the beis midrash for Shacharis holding the shofars and two or three Siddurim. He was followed by the secretaries who held three or four bags of panim. The Rebbe’s holy face looked very somber and tense. He walked to his place, put the shofars on the lectern and the bags of panim were placed next to him or on a small table set up especially for that purpose.

As the time for Maftir approached, the tension in the room rose. Anash came from shuls all over the neighborhood, which added to the already packed room. The pushing created pulsating waves of humanity that swayed to and fro. What a dilemma – the Rebbe’s regular place was in the front and people wanted to stand as closely as possible to him; but then the Rebbe would stand at the bima (Torah reading table) for the t’kios.

The Rebbe was called up for



“One of the men who helped out at the Rebbe’s house said that the Rebbe blew the shofar later on for the Rebbetzin and never had any difficulty blowing it.

Maftir and he took the shofars and Siddurim and turned towards the bima. He looked grim and as he walked to the bima, people froze in their places.

It looked as though the Rebbe was not present, as though he was unaware of what was going on around him. The pushing stopped, as the crowd’s eyes and hearts were fixed on the Rebbe. Nobody gave a thought to their personal comfort for close to an hour. The tension in the room was palpable.

The Rebbe read the Haftora about the birth of Shmuel HaNavi. Many years, he cried as he read it. R’ Yoel Kahn wrote in his diary from one of the early years that he remembered that the Rebbe cried unceasingly at the verse, “I [Chana] am a woman of a sorrowful spirit, etc. and have poured out my soul before G-d.”

Someone else related:

“A bachur told me a frightening thing. He said that his father was once honored with hagba on Rosh HaShana. His father lifted the Torah and then remained standing there near the bima for the t’kios. Suddenly, in the middle of the Rebbe’s reading of the Haftora, he felt a hand grasping the eitz hachayim (wooden handle) of the Torah and he heard the Rebbe cry out, ‘Oy Tatte,’ though not loudly, but in a cry from the heart.”

On the Rebbe’s table were the Siddur “Torah Ohr” and the “Siddur im Dach,” and sometimes the Rebbe would also take the Arizal’s Siddur (composed by Reb Shabsi Rashkov). Two of Anash held the sifrei Torah.

On the reading table were the bags of pidyonos and in the center of the table were the shofars. Generally, the Rebbe had three shofars, one from the Rebbe Maharash, a black shofar from the Tzemach Tzedek, and a third shofar. There were also about three white handkerchiefs and one red one, and another (red) torn one that had apparently belonged to the Alter Rebbe, and one could only see the edge. The Rebbe would spread out one of the handkerchiefs (usually a white one), put another one on top of it, place the shofar on them, and cover it all with another handkerchief. All this could take five minutes!

Then the Rebbe in an abrupt motion “threw” his tallis over his face covering his face together with the pidyonos and the shofars. In 770 a tense silence reigned, as the congregation closely followed the Rebbe’s every move.

“One could see that the Rebbe was crying a lot, the tallis was completely wet, I don’t know whether from sweat or tears; maybe both,” wrote R’ Yoel Kahn in his description of the t’kios in 5712. “In the middle, I heard a quiet niggun in the midst of the tears as he was covered by his tallis, but I could not discern which tune fragment and those who stood nearby said that it was a Rosh Hashana’dike tune that they sang on Parshas Nitzavim. This took a long time. I did not look at the clock but it was a long time.”

THE REBBE SEES ON ALL PLANES

R’ Tuvia Blau related:

A certain Chassid told me how his father once had yechidus after Tishrei and the Rebbe suddenly asked him, “What’s with your son? How are his eyes?” To his great surprise, the Rebbe explained that he had noticed at hakafo that his son was not wearing his glasses, but during the blowing of the shofar he had been wearing glasses.

“It was unbelievable. During the t’kios, when the Rebbe does battle with the heavenly accusers and brings blessing upon the Jewish people, he noticed that a child was wearing glasses and later, on Simchas Torah, he noticed that the child was not wearing his glasses.

“The Rebbe sees all that is happening on the heavenly and earthly planes simultaneously.”

R' M. M. Groner, son of the Rebbe's secretary, relates: "I heard from my father that during those awe-inspiring moments, the Rebbe would silently sing a few niggunim. He always sang the "Three Tenuos" and then some other niggunim, as he cried a lot. Those moments felt like an eternity. Picture it: utter silence in the huge room, with everybody following every move of the Rebbe. During this time, people did not think of themselves. The feeling was that the Rebbe was elevating everyone together with him to another world. People suddenly cried; nobody paid attention to those around them; you did not even know who was standing next to you."

From R' Yoel Kahn, 5712:

The tense silence was broken when the Rebbe lifted his tallis till his eyes and began the familiar tune for Laminatzeiach. Then he threw the tallis over his face again. There was something entirely different with that Laminatzeiach. On a weekday, the Rebbe would

daven in an ordinary fashion and his inner feeling was not externally expressed. However, when the Rebbe began reciting Laminatzeiach with the special tune, you could clearly hear the emotion bursting forth. The same was true afterward, when the Rebbe said the p'sukim with great emotion.

There were years that the t'kios were blown easily and years that they weren't, and the shofar was exchanged for another one. When the Rebbe tried to blow and it didn't "go," the crowd tensely followed the proceedings, realizing that a heavenly war was being waged and the difficulty was not a technical matter but had its source up above. One of the men who helped out at the Rebbe's house said that the Rebbe blew the shofar later on for the Rebbetzin and never had any difficulty blowing it.

A t'kia ... shevarim ... t'rua ... t'kia ... and once again, the Rebbe threw the tallis over his face and from among its



folds one could hear dreadful crying, and then another t'kia ... shevarim ... t'kia, and so on, until the t'kia g'dola.

A silent sigh of relief is felt in the crowd. The King has been crowned once again. Surely the Rebbe effectuated a good year for the Jewish people.

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FEELING THE REBBE'S PRESENCE IN 770

When a bachur looks at the Rebbe's chair and shtender, and pictures how the Rebbe sits on the chair facing the shtender and davens, he immediately experiences awe and trembling. * A farbrengen with R' Menachem Mendel Groner, mashpia and mashgiach in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Kiryat Gat, before the K'vutza of 5757 left for 770. * Although this talk was directed towards bachurim, the content applies to every Chassid, especially as we prepare for Tishrei with the Rebbe.



Rabbi Menachem Mendel Groner

this with the mashpia R' Mendel Futerfas who explained that those who come from Eretz Yisroel have a distinct advantage over those who were born in Crown Heights and are used to seeing the Rebbe.

R' Mendel remarked, "You remember all the Yomim Tovim with the Rebbe, the t'kios, the hakafo, all the farbrengens, but what you are missing is traveling to the Rebbe. You lack the preparations for the trip, the special emotions that go along with the preparations, and the trip itself, and of course, you are missing that inner feeling that a Chassid experiences the first time he sees the Rebbe."

THE FEELINGS OF THE TRIP

As I begin talking about the importance of going to the Rebbe, I recall those days when I learned as a local bachur in 770. Back then, the K'vutza year began in Nissan and ended in Nissan of the following year. I remember how I looked forward to seeing the K'vutza talmidim whose behavior during their first days in 770 left an indelible impression on me.

This was in the 70's, when a trip from Eretz Yisroel to the Rebbe was expensive and it was unheard of for a bachur to be able to afford to travel there for Tishrei every year. So when the bachurim came to "Beis Chayeinu" to spend their year on K'vutza, for most of them it was the first time they were seeing the Rebbe in person.

Their excitement during those first times they saw the Rebbe is indescribable. During those years, the Rebbe did not come out for every t'filla, but when he did come out for the davening or the Torah reading, they kept their eyes glued upon him. They followed every move the Rebbe made. When the Rebbe finished davening and returned to his room, all the bachurim on K'vutza, about thirty of them, would escort him, trying not to miss a moment that they could possibly see the Rebbe.

As someone who grew up living near the Rebbe, I regarded their enthusiasm with some astonishment. It seemed strange to me that a Lubavitcher Chassid would look at the Rebbe as a stranger, as though he never saw the Rebbe before.

In later years, I discussed

BITTUL TO THE REBBE

One of the immediate effects of staying in Beis Chayeinu is the utter hisbatlus (self-negation) to the Rebbe. Someone can be considered a Chassidishe bachur, a maskil, a lamdan, and all the other good qualities that the talmidim of Tomchei T'mimim are blessed with, but the inner bittul to the Rebbe will be lacking until he goes to the Rebbe.

When a Chassid travels to the Rebbe, in that first moment that he sees the Rebbe, he becomes utterly battul. The bittul is so

absolute that in the presence of the Rebbe there is no place for differences in status and position. When the Rebbe entered the room for a farbrengen or t'filla, there was no difference between a bachur and a married man, an askan or a rosh yeshiva. All of them experienced equally an intense inner tension that testified to their utter hisbatlus in the presence of the Rebbe.

In one of the maamarim of 5711, the Rebbe explained this with an analogy of a courtroom with a prosecutor, defense attorney, judges and lawyers, an array of people with differing views. When the king enters the room, they all immediately drop their personal views and affirm whatever the king says.

Hisbatlus to the Rebbe was one of the great advantages of learning and staying in 770. As bachurim, our feeling was that notwithstanding the importance of seeing the t'kios, hakafos, and more, the truly important element was the utter bittul to the Rebbe. This happened as a result of the simple fact that we were in the Rebbe's presence.

EXPERIENCING REVELATION

When we arrived in Eretz Yisroel for the first time, on the Rebbe's shlichus, we were surprised to hear that in the yeshiva in Kfar Chabad there was never an announcement before the Rebbe would hold a farbrengen. This was because the yeshiva did not hear about the Rebbe's farbrengen until a few days after it had already taken place. If a hanacha (unedited written record) of the sicha arrived within the week, or if someone would send a recording of the farbrengen, then that was something special.



In later years, I discussed this with the mashpia R' Mendel Futerfas who explained that those who come from Eretz Yisroel have a distinct advantage over those who were born in Crown Heights and are used to seeing the Rebbe.

We expressed our surprise but not one of the bachurim, of those who had still not been to see the Rebbe, understood us. They didn't see what was so urgent about knowing what the Rebbe farbrenged about.

When the big farbrengens were broadcast live – in audio only – to Eretz Yisroel, we who had previously been with the Rebbe were very excited to hear the Rebbe's voice. However, those bachurim who had yet to see the Rebbe did not understand why we were so excited. They would question us about it.

It was only after they went to the Rebbe and spent a year there and then returned to Kfar Chabad that they came back to us and said, "Now we understand why you were excited to hear the Rebbe's voice on the live broadcast."

It is readily apparent how the great giluyim/revelations that one experiences in 770 strengthen the hiskashrus between Chassid and Rebbe.

TODAY TOO!

After that introduction, bachurim can think that since today we are in such a frightening galus that even in 770 there are no giluyim, i.e. we don't see the Rebbe for davening and farbrengens, that there isn't any difference between learning in 770 and learning elsewhere.

They would be right if they lived twenty years ago. In those times, a Chassid would not feel

bittul just from being in 770 if the Rebbe was not present. Today, however, specifically because of the difficult situation we are in, the Rebbe endows us with special kochos so that just being in 770 inspires the same bittul that we felt when we saw the Rebbe at davening and farbrengens.

When a bachur today walks into 770 and sees the Rebbe's chair and shtender, and pictures the Rebbe sitting in the chair and davening, he immediately experiences awe and trembling and is utterly battul to the Rebbe!

It is said about the Rebbe Rashab that he would enter his father's room and stand facing the Rebbe Maharash's chair and would cry as though he was standing in front of him. The Rebbe treated the Rebbe Rayatz's place as though he was still sitting there, even after the histalkus on Yud Shevat 5710, making sure not to change his place at the table. Surely, all the more so is the Rebbe present in 770 during the set times for davening and farbrengens!

We need to know that when it is time for Shacharis, the Rebbe is present in 770, sitting in his place facing the shtender! Contemplating this will bring a person to the level of utter bittul to the Rebbe.

HOW TO SENSE IT

I know that not everybody will naturally feel this way, but it's not out of our reach either. If you think deeply and picture how

“It is said about the Rebbe Rashab that he would enter his father’s room and stand facing the Rebbe Maharash’s chair and would cry as though he was standing in front of him.

the Rebbe enters 770 at 10:00 for Shacharis and how during the davening he sits in his place, then with the help of the kochos given especially to this generation, you can achieve the ultimate bittul to the Rebbe.

I’ll give you an example. When I was in 770, it was customary for every bachur who had a birthday to have yechidus with the Rebbe. During the yechidus, the bachur was alone with the Rebbe, of course. You can well imagine the fear and feeling of insignificance that a bachur felt when the Rebbe finished reading his note and looked up at him.

I remember that one time, a bachur who was not so Chassidish had yechidus. When he met the Rebbe’s gaze he fell down in a faint. The Rebbe rang the bell and one of the secretaries came in, aroused the bachur from his faint, and took him out of the Rebbe’s room.

After a time, the secretary was asked whether the bachur could have another yechidus since, after all, he had fainted in the middle. The answer was: that was his yechidus.

He knew before whom he stood and where he was standing, and contemplating this caused him to faint. If only each of us

had such a yechidus. That would seemingly be the appropriate response for anyone who had yechidus with the Rebbe, and yet most people came out of the Rebbe’s room without such a drastic reaction. Why? Because we are coarse material beings and our physicality conceals the spiritual within us so that we can stand facing the Rebbe and not faint on the spot.

From the Rebbe’s perspective, nothing has changed, including his hashpaa (influence, effect) on us. The Rebbe is in 770, and knowing this ought to make us tremble a bit every time we daven in 770 in the Rebbe’s minyan or we are there on Shabbos at 1:30 when the Rebbe’s farbrengen begins. The only reason we don’t sense it is because we are coarsened! If we were more refined in the spiritual sense, we would surely tremble as we stood next to the farbrengen bima at the time of a farbrengen, or near the bima where the Rebbe davens during davening. When we feel that we are next to the Rebbe we are battul to the Rebbe’s wishes.

PROPER PREPARATIONS

Boruch Hashem, the bachurim, the Chayolei Beis Dovid, know that despite the

terrible concealment, we must go to 770. It is very important to know what we are going for, how to prepare, and on what we should place the emphasis while we are there.

The Rebbe often quoted the p’sak din of the Rambam that on principle, one is not allowed to leave Eretz Yisroel aside for a few exceptions. One of these exceptions is when the Torah learning outside of Eretz Yisroel is better than learning in Eretz Yisroel.

There is only one reason why bachurim in Eretz Yisroel are permitted to travel to 770: because that is the only place where one can be utterly battul to the Rebbe, becoming utterly mekushar to him. Obviously, there is no comparison between the Torah learning of just any bachur and that of a bachur who is battul to the Rebbe!

So when a bachur goes to Beis Chayeinu, he needs to know that he is going in order to be battul to the Rebbe. When he is in 770 during the set times for davening and farbrengens, he should picture the Rebbe sitting there, davening or farbrenging until he experiences that feeling of bittul that bachurim of years gone by felt when they saw the Rebbe walk into 770.

May we immediately merit seeing the hisgalus of the Rebbe at which time we won’t need any explanations about the Rebbe’s presence in 770, for all will see it.

ADD IN ACTS OF GOODNESS & KINDNESS
TO BRING MOSHIACH NOW!

THE POWER OF

Tishrei With The Rebbe

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz

Shliach, Beit Shaan

In the HaYom Yom for 25 Elul, the Rebbe Rayatz writes in the name of the Alter Rebbe, the Maggid of Mezritch, and the Baal Shem Tov that Hashem blesses the month of Tishrei himself. Thus, Tishrei is a month blessed by Hashem and which blesses the entire year, a month which is sated with kochos and brachos – “it is sated and in turn satiates all Israel with an abundance of good for the duration of the (coming) year.”

There is no need to explain to readers of Beis Moshiach or in general, to Chassidim of the seventh generation, about the seventh month. We were there for Tishrei with the Rebbe, and we all felt how the seventh month sates and accompanies us with kochos from the Rebbe and with Chassidus for the entire year to come.

Throughout the year, the T'mimim study Nigleh and Chassidus by way of preparation for the trip to the Rebbe, so that Tishrei sates them not only for the eleven months to follow but in the eleven months prior as well.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Let me describe to you my first Tishrei with the Rebbe and how it “sates” me till this day.

The first time in my life that I went to the Rebbe was for Tishrei 5742/1981. To be more precise, I arrived on 24 Elul 5741. Since then, I say the entire Hallel every 24 Elul. The truth is that there are many other Jews who say the entire Hallel on this day since this is the shiur of T'hilim for the 24th of the month, but for me it serves as a reminder that I arrived on 24 Elul; my life has been completely different since then.

Tishrei 5742. What can I say about that exhilarating time? Slichos with the Rebbe, the quintessential chazan R' Yosef Wineberg shouting “B' Motzaei Menucha,” everybody singing “Rachmana D'Anei,” and the Rebbe encouraging the singing – these are images that are forever engraved in my memory. I will never forget standing on line and giving the Rebbe a pidyon nefesh on Erev Rosh Hashanah. Nearly every moment of the two days of Rosh Hashanah was spent close

to the Rebbe. The t'fillos, Maftir, the crying, the P'sukim, the T'kios, Tashlich, farbrengen, Kos shel Bracha – we were in seventh heaven.

Shabbos Shuva with the Rebbe, Vav Tishrei the yahrtzait of Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe as chazan for all the t'fillos, the farbrengens, sichos, and seeing and hearing the Rebbe every day several times turned each moment into a gem. At night we farbrenged and summed up the “giluyim.” We were in the clouds.

Erev Yom Kippur was complete with the k'dusha of Kaparos with the Rebbe, t'fillos, and the blessing of the T'mimim. When the holy day arrived, it was filled with all the t'fillos we said with the Rebbe, hearing the Rebbe read Maftir Yona, seeing the Rebbe dance Napoleon's March and uplifting the world, and Kiddush Levana.

Sukkos with the Rebbe was a string of endless simcha. Every night, we heard a sicha about the greatness and joy of the Beis HaShoeiva. Every morning I said a bracha on the Rebbe's lulav and esrog. Davening with the Rebbe, Hoshanas, and dancing



Arriving for Tishrei with the Rebbe.

(Right) R' Moshe Yaroslavsky, founder of the Hachnasas Orchim organization, helping guests with their suitcases

all night ... it is all vivid as if it was yesterday.

The utter ecstasy of Sukkos reached its pinnacle in the forty-eight hours of Tahalucha, t'fillos, farbrengens and nonstop dancing on Simchas Torah. How did we go back to daily routine after all that, to yeshiva, home and work? My heart still cannot make sense of it.

Tishrei 5742 was over, and Tishrei 5743 was approaching. One day, I told my father that I wanted to go the Rebbe for the upcoming Tishrei. His reaction was, "Why go again when you saw it all last year?" I replied that I felt that if I didn't go to the Rebbe for Yom Tov, I would not have Yom Tov.

That was too much for him. My father brought to me a number of elders and distinguished members of the Polish Chassidic community in our neighborhood who, of course, did not go to the Rebbe for Tishrei, and chastised me. "How are you not ashamed to speak that way? Rav Zilberberg doesn't have Yom Tov? R' Shaul Rokeach doesn't have Yom Tov? Only you in 770 know how to

“Of course, R' Zilberberg fulfills the mitzva of t'kias shofar and R' Shaul Rokeach dances on Simchas Torah, but there is no comparison to celebrating Yom Tov in 770. It's completely different.”

celebrate Yom Tov?”

I realized I had exaggerated, but I couldn't take back what I had said. I saw I would have to explain how Yom Tov without the Rebbe is really not Yom Tov. I said, "Remember when you were in the Reserves? Remember Shabbos in the Reserves? Ima prepared all the food for you in containers; you took challos, wine, a tallis, and a Siddur. You had a proper Shabbos of course, but could you compare Shabbos in the army to Shabbos at home, with family and friends in shul? There is no comparison!

"The same is true for Yom Tov," I said. "Of course, R' Zilberberg fulfills the mitzva of t'kias shofar and R' Shaul Rokeach dances on Simchas Torah, but there is no comparison to celebrating Yom Tov in 770. It's completely different. Only someone who was there would understand."

Our debate was over. He remained silent. I had no way of knowing whether I had successfully explained myself. I began making preparations for the trip, and I experienced miracles such as the IDF allowing me to leave the country, reserving the last ticket to New York, money from heaven and a ride to the airport. I arrived at the airport, and lo and behold, I saw my parents in line for the flight amidst all the Chassidim who were traveling to the Rebbe for Tishrei 5743!

LESSONS FOR LIFE

Since then, I spend Tishrei with the Rebbe every year, whether physically or on a neshama plane. Even when I am in Beit Shaan, in shul on Rosh Hashanah, when I have to prepare for the t'kios, I close my eyes and see the Rebbe the way I saw him then. I picture Tishrei

with the Rebbe and receive the kochos to do what I need to do.

Former Israeli president Zalman Shazar once said that the Rebbe asked him to help the hanhala of the yeshiva get permission for the K'vutza to travel to New York for an entire year. Shazar asked, "Why do they need to be with the Rebbe for a year?"

The Rebbe answered, "These are bachurim who will, in the near future, marry and go live somewhere. Each of these bachurim, come Rosh Hashanah time, has to know how the Rebbe conducts himself on Rosh Hashanah. He needs to know how the Rebbe conducts himself on Yom Kippur and Sukkos, and then Chanuka, 19 Kislev, Purim, Pesach, Lag B'Omer, Shavuot, and the days of Slichos."

That is the purpose of spending an entire year with the Rebbe, to see how the Rebbe marks all these dates.

TISHREI MITZAIM

Whatever is done in 770, especially in the month of Tishrei, has special significance. It is imprinted on one's memory forever and has an impact on the rest of your life. Davening with the Rebbe, farbrengens, a Chassidishe niggun, and the mitzvaim done in New York while one is with the Rebbe are life-altering experiences.

R' Dovber Farber, shliach in the Krayot, told me about a major street in Queens full of stores and lots of people,

including thousands of Jews. He arranges transportation to the area for dozens of bachurim who spend Tishrei in 770 so they can do Mitzva Lulav in Queens.

The first group leaves on the first day of Chol HaMoed at 6:00 in the morning as soon as the dancing of Simchas Beis HaShoeiva is over. Every hour after that, another minibus leaves with fifteen bachurim and brings back the earlier shift. The bachurim set up stands and enable thousands of Jews to do the mitzva of the four minim.

This mitzva goes on from sunrise to sunset with an average of 5000 Jews reciting the bracha every day! The bachurim also report that even on the last day of Chol HaMoed, they encounter hundreds of Jews who also say the SheHechyanu bracha since this is the first time they are doing the mitzva that Sukkos, and for some, in their lives.

THANKS TO TAHALUCHA ON SHMINI ATZERES

R' Dovber also told me:

On Shmini Atzeres afternoon, men and bachurim walk all over New York to bring simcha and reinforcements for the dancing at Hakafo to as many shuls and Jews as possible.

Eight or nine years ago, R' Dovber went with a group of bachurim on Tahalucha to Queens. They dispersed to several shuls, danced and brought simcha to the dozens of people who joined in. When the davening and dancing were over,

the bachurim were preparing to walk back to 770 when a local young man said he wanted to join them. They explained to him that it entailed a three-hour walk, but nevertheless he was determined to go. "I have to see the source of all this, from where you get the strength for this simcha."

He arrived at 770 and was swept up in the Simchas Torah dancing. After Yom Tov, he said that he wanted to remain. He registered in Hadar Ha'Torah and later married and established a Chassidic home.

MILITARY CODE OF HAFATZA

Shluchim know about the special kochos one can receive during Tishrei with the Rebbe. They send people from their Chabad houses who later return to their community more Chassidish, with greater commitment, and who uplift the entire community.

One of these shluchim is R' Yisroel Halperin, shliach in Hertzeliya. R' Halperin himself brings a group of mekuravim for Tishrei or just for Sukkos. His group is noticeable because they all stand together, next to their devoted shliach, and at the end of every t'filla they slowly shout, word by word, "Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu, Melech HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed."

R' Halperin accompanies all his mekuravim not only to davening and shiurim but also to meals, mitzvaim, and Tahalucha.

Two years ago, my son Mendy joined their Tahalucha and enjoyed a spiritual experience that stayed with him even after he returned to Eretz Yisroel. He excitedly told us about the special Tahalucha with R' Halperin. Before they left, he related, R'

“They explained to him that it entailed a three-hour walk, but nevertheless he was determined to go. “I have to see the source of all this, from where you get the strength for this simcha.”

Halperin gathered the dozens of people and stood on something high, asked for silence, and then gave military orders: "In another minute the mission begins! We will be marching with powerful singing! We will be firing songs as we move! Nonstop artillery! The objective is clear: total conquest of the target, rectifying the world with the kingdom of Moshiach. We are now setting our course and will be advancing on the target!"

After walking for about an hour, they arrived at their target neighborhood. R' Halperin once again stood on something high and gave orders. "We are going into shul with hats on our heads and lively singing and dancing. We won't talk with anyone, but will invite them to join the dancing with a little tug of the hand. After four minutes, upon a signal from the commander, we will go from all-out artillery bombardment to targeted fire. You can adopt one of the regulars there and tell him divrei Chassidus. Draw him close to the Rebbe. If the instructions are clear, let us advance!"

LIFE CHANGE AT DAWN

This past year was Moshe Kulaker's year on K'vutza. If he passed you on Eastern Parkway, you would never guess that he used to wear a knitted yarmulke. It was thanks to Tishrei and dancing at the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva that he approached his mashpia and informed him that he was making the switch to

“As the dancing at the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva intensified, so did his desire to be a Chassid in every respect.

a hat and jacket.

Moshe grew up both in the United States and Eretz Yisroel. He learned in a yeshiva high school, a hesder yeshiva with rabbis from the Religious-Zionist sector, but his Chassidic soul was drawn to something deeper. Moshe had many debates with his rabbis, some of them lasting till dawn, and he finally enrolled in the Chabad yeshiva in Rishon L' Tziyon.

Moshe went to 770 for one Tishrei, and then another Tishrei, but his mashpia told him to keep wearing his knitted yarmulke. Thanks to his way of dress, Moshe got special attention from R' Avrohom Meizlich who got hold of him in 770 and learned Chassidus with him every morning. It was only several weeks later that R' Meizlich learned, to his surprise, that the bachur with the knitted yarmulke learned in a Chabad yeshiva.

R' Meizlich rebuked him, saying, "Why did I invest so much time in you when you are a bachur like everyone else?" Yet he continued to learn with Moshe in a spirit of great friendship and had more and more of an influence on him.

Even when Moshe was assigned the job of pouring wine for thousands of Chassidim in the Hachnasas Orchim sukka

near 770, he did it while wearing his usual garb. Outwardly, he seemed not to have changed, but inwardly he was in turmoil. As the dancing at the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva intensified, so did his desire to be a Chassid in every respect. One night, during the dancing on Kingston, he decided the time had come.

When the dancing was over, as the police urged them to clear the street and they all marched off to 770, Moshe met with his mashpia. Moshe said, "I need your approval for me to return to Eretz Yisroel with a hat and jacket." The mashpia gave his approval.

I had a talk with Moshe when he was on his way to K'vutza. I asked him what caused him to switch to Chassidic attire. What motivated a bachur to ask his mashpia permission to switch to a hat and jacket? Moshe explained that it was all a result of Tishrei.

"For the first Tishrei I didn't know what to expect, but by the second time I was looking forward to that incredible Tishrei experience. Before I arrived in 770, I knew that I had to make a significant change during Tishrei. The hat and jacket are merely the outer results. The real change took place internally with the decision to become a Chassid, going all the way."

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STEP BY STEP

We can't forget that we are being guided and led by the Rebbe. If we just remain focused on the steps that he wants us to take, then he will lift us up to heights that we never imagined possible or reachable.



By Rabbi Akiva Wagner

The following story was related to me by a Gerer yungerman, who heard it directly from the Rabbi Alefsky mentioned in the story.

Rabbi Alefsky, a Gerrer Chassid, was in an airport late one night, and was surprised to notice an obviously Jewish family camped out in a corner on the airport floor. When he inquired as to what they were doing there, he was informed that they were en-route from Paris to New York, and that they had somehow missed a flight or perhaps it had been cancelled, and they were awaiting the next flight which would be leaving the following morning.

"Why don't you find a place to stay overnight?" asked Rabbi Alefsky, surprised that a family with young children would choose to bed down in the midst of such a public place. The family explained that they were penniless, and any cost for accommodations would be beyond their means.

Rabbi Alefsky made a quick calculation. "Listen," he informed them. "I don't live in a big house, but I can't leave you here on the floor. I have a 2 bedroom apartment, so I'll move my family into one bedroom, and make the other one available for

all of you."

The family gratefully accepted his offer, and happily joined him on his trip home. On the way they struck up a conversation, and Rabbi Alefsky learned that they lived in France. They were on their way to Crown Heights, to spend the upcoming Yomim Tovim with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Rabbi Alefsky, himself a Chassid, appreciated the importance of spending Tishrei with his Rebbe, yet he found the lengths to which this family was going to achieve this – making the overseas trip despite having no money – to be rather extreme.

The next day, after he had returned them to the airport and they thanked him for his kindness, he expressed his wonder. "I know that going to the Rebbe is important, but does it really warrant such self-sacrifice as you are displaying?"

In response, the father called over his youngest daughter, and pointed her out to Rabbi Alefsky. "Do you see this girl?" he asked him. "Let me tell you her story.

"When she was about 3 years old she became ill, and lost the function of her feet. We ran from doctor to doctor, but to no avail; she was unable to take even a single step!

"Heartbroken, we came to the

Rebbe for Yechidus, and begged for his bracha that her health should be restored. The Rebbe looked at her, and commanded: 'Go, and kiss the mezuzah!' We were flabbergasted, and began to explain to the Rebbe again that this was impossible for her, because of the condition of her feet. However the Rebbe disregarded our words, and repeated to her: 'Go, and kiss the mezuzah!'

"She got up, and hesitantly took a step. While it was only one step, it was the first of many – literally as well as figuratively – until gradually her ability to walk was fully restored.

"Now do you understand?" the man concluded his amazing tale. "Having been the personal recipients of such a wondrous miracle performed by the Rebbe, how can we even consider not spending Yom Tov with him, regardless of the hardships involved!"

Actually, in a spiritual way, this is what the Rebbe does for all of us. He constantly commands us, instructs us, cajoles us and entreats us: "Get up! Move forward! Take another step!"

Even if at first it is only that, just one step, nonetheless this simple act is all that is needed to

be worthy of the defining title of a human being – a “mehalech,” a goer. No matter who you are, and regardless of what your current level is in Yiddishkait or in Avodas Hashem, the most important thing is to grow, to move forward and increase. A person can never remain stationary, because when he is not moving forward he will regress ch”v.

In fact, this is the primary theme of the second Parsha of this week as well. The name of the parsha, VaYeilech, implies the need to always be progressing, always moving forward.

It’s not important how far we may be from what we may perceive as our ultimate goal. The important thing is to be constantly in motion, struggling to take one more step, to grow one more inch in our Yiddishkait.

“Go, and kiss the mezuzah,” the Rebbe demands of us. Identify the next mitzvah on your horizon, and struggle towards it, whatever it may be. This, ultimately, is the surest way to break free of our natural limitations, of the nature of our own bodies and nefesh ha’bahamis, and to take that impossible step, to be transformed into a mehalech, a “mover.”

An Israeli guest once visited the Rebbe for the first time and attended his first farbrengen. After the farbrengen was over, his host noticed that he was very excited.

“What so impressed you?” he asked him. “I didn’t think that you understood any Yiddish.”

“I don’t,” was the visitors reply, “but there was one Hebrew phrase that the Rebbe was constantly repeating, from which I gathered what his entire philosophy is, and this was enough to excite me. The



“There was one Hebrew phrase that the Rebbe was constantly repeating,” the visitors replied, “from which I gathered what his entire philosophy is...”



Rebbe continuously repeated the phrase “VeOd VeHu Halkar.” From this I understood that the Rebbe’s philosophy is that the Ikar, the main thing, is “VeOd” – to always increase, to do a little more and a little more!”

The Israeli guest may have mistranslated the words that he heard from the Rebbe, but he definitely derived the right message from them! Indeed, the basic message of the Rebbe is to just take a step forward. Make the effort to do a little bit more, and you may just find that the limitations by which you imagined that you were constrained disappear!

And, if we really get down to it, isn’t that the purpose of traveling to the Rebbe? It’s all about breaking free of our own world, marked as it is with its limitations and boundaries, and becoming a part of the Rebbe’s world, a world of limitless growth and improvement.

This Shabbos Mevarchim Tishrei is Shabbos Slichos as well. It is a time when we all need to break out of our spiritual slumber; it has to be enough of a waking up that encourages us to go shokel’dig to Slichos. Especially for the procrastinators amongst us, some of us may still be scrambling to begin our preparations for Rosh Hashanah that we ought to have begun in the beginning of Elul.

It is a time to focus on the main requirement: keep moving forward. The best and most genuine hachana for Rosh Hashanah is to put in the effort

to become a little bit better. We ought to take those daunting steps, towards holiness, towards a mitzvah, towards tzavsa v’chibur – being better connected to Hashem.

It is a time when we, inevitably, must pay attention to our limitations and failings, to all the mistakes, decisions or choices that we now regret. Yet, we must remember that, like the girl in the story, the main thing is to struggle to take that sometimes difficult step forward, and the shortcomings and problems will then disappear on their own.

We can’t forget that we are being guided and led by the Rebbe. He is the one instructing us to grow in our Avodas Hashem. If we just remain focused on the steps that he wants us to take, then he will lift us up to heights that we never imagined possible or reachable.

And that, unquestionably, is a first step towards spending Yom Tov with the Rebbe!

L’chaim! A Freilichin Shabbos Mevarchim and Shabbos Slichos, may we all go shokel’dig to Slichos, shaking away our complacency in remaining the way we’ve been until now, with a renewed commitment to move forward. May the Oibershter come shokel’dig to Slichos as well, shaking away all of the last remnants of galus that have clung to us, so that we can dance together happily into the era of Geula HaAmitis VeHashleima, Teikef U’miyad Mamash!

*From a written farbrengen
directed to alumni of Yeshivas
Lubavitch Toronto*

RETURN FROM COMMUNISM

Rabbi Shlomo Galperin a"h recorded the following story in which his father, the Chassid R' Chanoch Hendel Galperin, was a key protagonist. * It is about a Jew who had a high-ranking position in the communist party and one day, upon his arrival home, he found three Chassidim farbrenging! * Presented for the Aseres Yemei T'shuva.

In his youth, he learned Mishna and Gemara. However as he grew up, under the influence of the irreligious environment, he became distant from Judaism and began desecrating Shabbos. Only on Yom Kippur did he go to shul, and that sufficed for the entire year.

When his wife gave birth to a boy, his mother Chaya Basha convinced him to have the baby circumcised. She threatened to commit suicide if he did not have a bris performed. Since Avrasha Kahanov loved his mother, he conceded, albeit grudgingly.

The neshama always remains intact even as it lies dormant within a Jew who does not observe mitzvos. The proof that this is so becomes apparent when a Jew is moser nefesh al

Kiddush Hashem, even if he suffers greatly for it and it makes no logical sense. This is because the neshama cannot part from Hashem.

So it is possible that when our Avrasha saw his mother's tears and her pleading, his soul was aroused. This is perhaps another reason why he agreed to a bris, albeit on condition that it be performed with utmost secrecy and without his presence. Thus, if the authorities discovered that a bris had been performed, he would be able to say that his old mother did it without his knowledge.

The great fear over performing a bris was due to the government's efforts to eradicate every vestige of religion, particularly Judaism. A bris was a

major crime. Oftentimes, parents were punished severely for such an offense, spending years in jail and suffering tremendously.

Since R' Chanoch Hendel [Galperin, the father of the author] was a shochet and a mohel, Chaya Basha asked him to arrange the bris. Nobody else would endanger himself for something that entailed such mesirus nefesh. If the government found out about it, the mohel would be the first one held accountable, and he was likely to be sent away and never return. Sometimes they didn't even bother with that, but merely killed the unfortunate person in one of the cellars of their prisons. However, R' Chanoch Hendel was one of those who had absorbed the holy light of Chassidus and the kochos of the Rebbeim who, through their holy avoda, made the fire of mesirus nefesh burn in their mekusharim.

So he agreed to go with Chaya Basha and said to her, "Praise G-d that I have merited the opportunity to go and maintain the eternal bond between a Jewish neshama and G-d." He did not hesitate, although he had good reason to say no, as this put him and his family in danger. He



Illustration from All Art Direct

“When his wife gave birth to a boy, his mother Chaya Basha convinced him to have the baby circumcised. She threatened to commit suicide if he did not have a bris performed.”

considered it a privilege and was happy to do it. He sent Chaya Basha to prepare the baby with diapers and warm water.

On the way to the house, he told a few of his fellow Chassidim of his plans and asked them to join him to fulfill the role of sandak and to recite the brachos and say l'chaim. They all happily agreed to join him but went two by two, instead of all together, so as to avoid suspicion.

The apartment that Avrasha lived in was on a side street. Other communist party members lived in the building, but most of them were Jews like Avrasha who had government jobs as engineers, drivers for senior officials, salesmen in large government stores, etc. Although they were communists, they stopped by the shul for a few minutes on Rosh HaShana to hear the shofar, visit briefly to hear Kol Nidrei or to say “Shana Tova.”

Fortunately, they married Jewish women whom they knew from school. A Jewish marriage was another story; some went to an old rabbi for him to perform a hasty kiddushin while others just registered their wives' names at the government office. Nearly all of them had a father or mother

who still prepared his or her own food. They ate it under the pretext that they needed special food for their health and could not eat what everyone else ate. The real reason was that the parents kept kosher.

There were many Jews like this who lived together with their communist children, but secretly they visited private homes that served as shuls and kept kosher. When their son and his wife went to work, the grandparent would remain with their grandchildren. They would take out an old T'hilim and tearfully say the verses, saying to themselves, “What a sad old age this is without a shul, without an Ein Yaakov, without Torah ...” And they would cry about their situation and the state of religion in the country. When the grandchildren asked, “Grandpa, why are you crying?” he would say, “The day will come when you will know why I cry.” When they would not leave him alone, he would say that he lived through many wars and tzaros and that is why he cried.

An old man in such a predicament would always tell his son, “My son, remember to say Kaddish for me! Don't forget to

pay someone to recite Kaddish.”

The children generally tried to see to it and would pay someone to say Kaddish for their parents, no matter what the cost. It was hard, though, to find someone who would promise to say Kaddish, because it entailed great difficulty to gather a minyan. Therefore, they would seek out locations where, for a hefty bribe, ten Jews would be allowed to gather and daven. Let it be said in praise of these Jews that they spared no effort to pay someone to recite the Kaddish.

In the building that Avrasha lived were many of these communist Jews as well as some gentile families. The building was surrounded by a yard and a stone fence with a nicely decorated iron gate. The concierge would peer through a small window set in the gate to see who it was who wanted to enter, and then he would inform the tenant that he had guests or visitors. Only after obtaining permission did he open the iron gate and lead the people to the floor and apartment they sought.

This concierge was called “the guard” by everyone and would generally be questioned by secret agents as to who visited so-and-

so. However, since the tenants occasionally gave him gifts, and since his government salary was not enough to support him and his family, he would help them and would be willing to turn a blind eye to visitors as necessary. They all knew the guard by name and would ask him, in a friendly manner, how he and his family were faring, and would chitchat with him.

When the Chassidim approached the building, R' Chanoch Hendel knocked on the gate. The guard opened the little window and peered out and when he saw R' Chanoch Hendel whom he knew, he quickly opened the gate and said, "Gendel (the Russian pronunciation of Hendel), hello! What made you come out in this cold with the snow falling this long while, and the water in the pails frozen, and not a creature in the street? It's hard to breathe in this bitter cold, so what brings you here today?"

R' Chanoch Hendel said, "My friend Ivan, please go and tell the family of Peter Avrasha that the old man with his friends came, and they want to visit because it's very cold outside."

The guard went quickly and returned with the response that they should go upstairs. "Avrasha is not home because he went away, but his mother and wife are home and they are happy to see you."

When R' Chanoch Hendel and the Chassidim began going to up to Avrasha's apartment, Ivan shouted, "I almost forgot to tell you that they had a baby boy!"

R' Chanoch Hendel said, "Thank you Ivan."

They opened the door of the apartment and walked into the first room, a large room with a place to hang coats; the walls

were decorated with pictures of government ministers. There was plenty of light coming from the chandeliers. In the middle of the room was an oak table with nice chairs, apparently from abroad.

The Chassidim remained standing near the door and Chaya Basha soon came to greet them with tears of joy and a warm welcome, asking them to take off their coats and follow her to the next room which was also spacious and well appointed, with an expensive stove that provided much heat, and a large mahogany table and leather chairs. Avrasha was apparently well to do.

R' Chanoch Hendel placed his worn bag with his tools for the bris on the table. Chaya Basha brought a bottle of vodka that she had recently bought as well as new cups, a plate with apples and pears, and another plate with fresh salted fish.

R' Chanoch Hendel took out cake he had brought from home. Although Avrasha's kitchen was full of delicacies, meat and fish and all sorts of beverages, the Chassidim could not enjoy this bounty because of kashrus concerns. Chaya Basha said that Avrasha's wife, a Jewish woman by the name of Sonya, would soon bring in the baby.

R' Chanoch Hendel asked for water and soap so he could wash his hands, and he donned his kittel that he used on Yom Kippur and for brissin. He also wore a white hat. When he went to the kitchen to wash up, he saw all sorts of shiny, expensive appliances. Chaya Basha gave him soap and a towel, and after washing he returned to the big room. In his white get-up he looked like a doctor or, more accurately, like an angel.

One of the Chassidim put on a tallis and sat down and held the

baby. He placed the baby on his knees as the sandak is supposed to do, and the mohel recited the bracha. After all was done according to Halacha, a drop of mashke was placed on the baby's lips.

Chaya Basha joyously picked up the baby and R' Chanoch Hendel said, "Wait; first let's give him a name." They named him Yisroel, and then Chaya Basha took the baby as she cried tears of joy and danced off with him to the mother in the other room.

She returned and said that the mother wanted to come out and bless them. The Chassidim sat down, poured some mashke, said l'chaim, and ate the cake that Chanoch Hendel had brought, as well as the fruit and fish. R' Chanoch Hendel said, "Friends, we have had a z'chus, Boruch Hashem, to bind a G-dly soul with Hashem. I am certain that all the souls up above, and even the supernal beings, are looking at us at this moment and wishing they could do a big mitzva like we are doing, creating a dira ba'tachtonim. Right here, in Avrasha's home, which is not a home of Torah and mitzvot, there are Jews who circumcised their son despite the danger. If the government discovered what was done here, in the best-case scenario they would send the "criminals" to join the polar bears in Siberia. Yet here we are, celebrating the performance of this tremendous mitzvah. Ashreinu ma tov chelkeinu!"

Then the mother of the baby came in, with her eyes reddened from crying. She emotionally said, "Although I cannot speak Yiddish or Lashon Kodesh, I am Jewish and my forebears were great rabbis, but due to the times, I became distant from religion. My husband Avrasha is a Jew at

heart even though he has a high position in the communist party.

“Thank G-d I listened to my mother-in-law and agreed to have a bris done on my son. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. This child will be a Jew and remain a Jew.”

She left the room and the Chassidim spoke about the great power of mesirus nefesh for another Jew. The foundational teaching of the Baal Shem Tov and those who followed him is that every Jew, no matter his standing in Torah and mitzvos, has a holy fire burning within him which is never extinguished. One only needs to remove the cover from this G-dly fire and then the Jewish neshama can shine in all its glory.

There are times in a person's life that he is inspired, whether on his own or if he is inspired from Above, sometimes by great abundance and sometimes by poverty. In other words, sometimes Hashem gives a person much success and blessing to inspire him in his avodas Hashem, and sometimes Hashem sends great tribulations, which break a person's heart and body in order to cause him to do t'shuva.

The Chassidim farbrenged, said l'chaim, and sang softly so the neighbors wouldn't hear them.

When it grew late, they got ready to leave, and as they did so, they heard the doorbell ring. Frightened, they listened as Chaya Basha went to the door. It was Avrasha! He walked in and greeted the Chassidim and apologized for having been kept away for a party matter. The Chassidim asked him to sit down and drink l'chaim with them. Avrasha sat down, and R' Chanoch Hendel gave him a cup



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of mashke and said, “Nu, say l'chaim in honor of your son's bris.”

Avrasha was about to drink when R' Chanoch Hendel put a yarmulke on his head and asked him to say a bracha. Avrasha repeated the words after the Chassidim and said, “L'chaim and to health.” The Chassidim

responded with, “L'chaim V'livracha (to life and blessing), materially and spiritually.”

R' Chanoch Hendel said, “Avrasha, remember the Chassid R' Avrohom Yaffe, his davening and his wise, noble face?”

“Yes, of course. He was my late father of blessed memory.”

“Say l’chaim in memory of your righteous father so that he will pray for us in heaven.”

After a few glasses of mashke, Avrasha’s heart opened, and he began to talk about his childhood and religious upbringing. He remembered his childhood friends as well as the davening of his stepfather R’ Yaffe who raised him as his own son, who even on weekdays would daven until midday. His davening was an outpouring of the soul accompanied by many tears. Many came to listen to his davening. Some of them shed tears when they heard R’ Yaffe’s heartfelt prayer, because it was accompanied by tremendous sobbing. R’ Yaffe davened as though he was pleading for his life before a king as he asked to be forgiven.

He conducted himself with great pleasantness and graciousness in his interactions with others. He knew many stories about the Rebbeim and was expert in Talmud Bavli and the works of the commentators. Whoever met him was impressed by his personality, which inevitably led to changes for the better in the person’s life. Sometimes, he influenced people to put on t’fillin, and sometimes it was another mitzva such as kashrus or family purity that he focused on. All of his efforts were with Jews who were communist party members for whom religion was forbidden. Nevertheless, a man like R’ Avrohom Yaffe found a way to reach their hearts.

He was wont to say that the G-dly soul is like a diamond that is sometimes found in the garbage. You need to pick it up and clean it off and then its value is revealed to all. So too with a Jew, when you remove the dirt that clings to the surface, you

reveal the good and eternal holy light which is within.

Now, R’ Chanoch Hendel reminded Avrasha of his stepfather, his davening and the songs he sang on Shabbos and Yom Tov. R’ Chanoch Hendel began singing those deep, holy songs with tremendous feeling as the other Chassidim joined in.

Avrasha thought about his childhood, when he had learned from G-d fearing Chassidim. He remembered his friends and his father, his davening and manner of speech, how he would say a bracha carefully and with concentration. He also remembered how he himself had dropped Jewish practice and became a member of the communist party, and tears fell from his eyes.

After a few more glasses of mashke, Avrasha had loosened up even more, and R’ Chanoch Hendel said to him, “Nu, we don’t reach your father’s ankles, for he was moser nefesh through his efforts and with his money. He did everything to help another Jew materially and especially spiritually. You, Avrohom, should from now on give nachas to the soul of your father who is surely suffering because of your estrangement from Torah and mitzvos. Remember your father’s tears that he would shed each day in sorrow. Beginning from today start putting on t’fillin, keeping Shabbos and family purity, especially since you learned Gemara and Midrash and know what it means to live as a Jew. We will help you. We will try to see to it that you find work that makes it easier to keep a religious life. And don’t forget that the mikva is by R’ Chaim Dov the Lame.”

It was 5:30 in the morning. Avrasha, now Avrohom, forgot that he hadn’t eaten supper and

that several hours had already passed in the company of the Chassidim. Avrohom ate from the apples, tomatoes, cucumbers and salted fish, as well as the cake that R’ Chanoch Hendel had brought for the bris. He forgot that he was in his own home, because it seemed as though he was sitting in some shul and farbrenging like in days gone by.

Finally, the guests observed that it was almost six o’clock and it was time to go and daven and start a new day. Avrohom sat there and began humming a niggun. He became very inspired, and he got up to dance with great joy.

He danced there alone in his room, crying tears of joy, until his wife and mother came in to calm him down in fear of the neighbors. His mother said, “My dear Avrohom, I thank G-d that you decided to return to the Jewish people in t’shuva, and your wife also decided to throw out her kitchen utensils and to keep kashrus from now on, to light Shabbos candles and keep the other laws a good Jewish woman keeps. Come, let’s see the baby.”

“Ah, I almost forgot. He had his bris yesterday.” He went to the other room, staggering under the influence of the drinks, and saw the baby asleep. He said to his wife, “It is like we were born anew and from now on, we will live a life of Torah. I spilled enough of my father’s blood.” Then turning to the baby’s crib he said, “Yisroelik our son, you are a symbol of Am Yisroel. Despite the evil decrees and tzaros that the Jewish people have suffered for thousands of years, you symbolize mesirus nefesh and you will keep the Torah proudly and with mesirus nefesh.”

“Enough Avrohom,” said his

wife and mother. "Go and rest." They were afraid that his health would be adversely affected by his emotional state. But he remembered that he couldn't just go to sleep; he had to recite the bedtime Shma. Other than Shma and the following line, "Boruch Sheim," he knew nothing by heart. Although in his youth he had known many pages of Gemara along with the Maharsha, he had forgotten it all. Where would he get a Siddur now?

Chaya Basha had an old "Korban Mincha" Siddur, which she guarded like the treasure it was. It provided her with comfort, and in the most trying times she would take the Siddur and pour out her heart to Hashem.

She gave her son the Siddur, and Avrohom washed his hands. He took the Siddur with as much care as he took his infant son and began reading the Shma while remembering how far he was from Torah and mitzvos and a life of Shabbos and Yom Tov. While concentrating on his t'fillos with tears pouring down his face, he fell asleep. His father came to him in a dream, dressed in white and with a shining face and said, "My son Avrohom, you have revived me!" and he blessed him with the priestly blessing and then vanished.

Avrohom called out in his dream until he woke his mother. She began calling his name until he woke up. "What happened? What did you dream?"

"I saw my father in a dream, and it has been many years since I've seen him."

"It's a good sign," said his mother.

"He blessed me."

"That's wonderful and a very good sign," said his mother.



"Now lie down, because I think you have a fever."

After everything he had experienced that night, the l'chaims, the excitement, and the dream, Avrohom was a bit warm.

"Stay home today and rest and I will send for a doctor who will write a note excusing you from work for a few days. In any case, you will have to leave them and find a job that enables you to live a Jewish life."

It was ten o'clock and Avrohom did not feel well. As it soon became apparent, it was all orchestrated from Above to pave the way for his leave of the communist party.

At 10:30 Dr. Liminov, a doctor for members of the party, arrived. "Comrade Kahanov, how are you? Your comrades sent me to see how you are. Do you have a fever? I heard you

had a son. Oh, you do have a raised temperature. And you look exhausted. Don't worry, you'll recover within a few days and be able to go back to work. In the meantime, I will prescribe some pills for your nerves and expensive syrup for your throat and weakness. Rest and drink hot drinks and don't do anything to exert yourself. You can read the paper, but not more than that. I will write that you need to rest for a week. If your condition changes, let me know."

When the doctor left the room, Avrasha's mother and wife eagerly asked him how the patient was. They also seated him and served him fine cakes, fruit and wine and provided him with a box of cigarettes available only to select members of the party.

The doctor said that the patient's physical condition did not concern him, but his mental state was of some concern. He saw it as the beginning of a nervous breakdown after working too hard and attending meetings that lasted for hours. "But we will send him to a convalescent home for rest and relaxation."

"I've told him to get checked by a doctor," said his wife, "because I saw that he was acting differently than usual. He doesn't speak much and he seems dispirited. I suppose his work has weakened his nerves."

In the meantime, Chaya Basha gave the doctor an expensive box of chocolates and said, "These are for your wife."

The doctor got up to leave and said, "Make sure he rests and that he eats at regular intervals. Then we shall see whether he should change jobs for something requiring less exertion."

Later it was discovered that his condition made such an

impression on the doctor that at a meeting on that very day in the Lenin Hospital with top doctors from many fields, he felt the need to mention the case and recommend that the official medical board of the party arrange for a lighter workload.

After efforts made on his behalf by his friends and others in high places, Avrohom was transferred to a less important position that required less of his energies and required him to work for only six hours a day. Thus, he was freed from all sorts of dinners and consultations that did not fit well with a Jewish lifestyle.

He was able to devote himself to educating his son Yisroel and himself. He bought t'fillin from R' Chaim Ber the mikva Yid, and took his tallis down from the attic where it had been kept since he married. From an old shul he got an old Siddur, and he also obtained a T'hilim. Every day, he davened in his tallis and t'fillin.

He eventually began learning Gemara and Tanya and recited T'hilim at home in secret, especially on Shabbos when he would take his wife and mother along with his son to visit R' Chanoch Hendel. There, he would learn Likkutei Torah and consult about his daily schedule.

R' Chanoch Hendel told R' Avrohom, the new baal t'shuva, that there was a minyan on a certain street. He described a large room that one reached by climbing down some stairs, where there was a Torah and benches. On Shabbos they davened and read from the Torah.

R' Avrohom davened there and was called up to the Torah for the first time in decades. After the davening they had a

Kiddush and drank l'chaim to R' Avrohom.

Day by day, R' Avrohom grew in Yiras Shamayim and Avodas Hashem. Since he was on friendly terms with all the top officials, he was occasionally able to do favors for Jews thrown into jail on various pretexts, especially those who were religious.

Since he was a gifted person with a keen mind, he made great strides in Nigleh and Chassidus. He also undertook a number of penitent practices to atone for his past.

Dear reader, this is the way of the Baal Shem Tov – to reveal the G-dly fire that lies within every Jew. Just as a son is always connected with his father, so too – and far more – the neshama is always connected with our Father in heaven. It's just that sometimes, the son distances himself from Hashem, but that is only externally. The truth is that a Jew does not want, nor is he able, to separate from G-d.

Whether through abundance or trials, as mentioned above, one way or another, a person will return to Hashem. The Father wants to show His child His love and lead him to return through positive means, and not, G-d forbid, through punishments and suffering. However, when a father who loves his son wants to ensure that his son does not distance himself, he might use negative means if the positive ones don't work. The son should have the good sense to return to his father when life is good.

The way of Chassidus is to try to arouse the G-dly fire within every Jew with Ahavas Yisroel, to look for ways of inspiring others and to mekarev them to Torah and avodas Hashem.

Kupas Rabbeinu

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Boruch Hashem, Elul 5771

**URGENT
REQUEST!**

HUNDREDS OF FAMILIES ANXIOUSLY LOOKING FORWARD FOR YOUR GENEROUS ASSISTANCE!

To every member of the Lubavitcher community:

During this month of preparation for Rosh Hashonoh, the "head" of the New Year, we fondly recall our Rebbe's words that this is an especially auspicious time for strengthening our deep bond of Hiskashrus with the "Rosh Bnei Yisroel," the "head" of the Jewish people and leader of the generation.

Our Rebbeim explain that **an important way to strengthen Hiskashrus is by participating in the Rebbe's activities and concerns, consequently, by supporting an organization that brings together a number of these activities, the Hiskashrus is greater and stronger.** Such an organization is Kupas Rabbeinu, which seeks to continue many of the Rebbe's activities and concerns without change from the way he would conduct them himself.

Every year at this time, the Rebbe would call upon us to contribute generously to help needy families with their extra expenses for the coming month's many Yomim Tovim. This also coincides with the special emphasis during this month of giving extra Tzedakah, (indicated in the Hebrew letters of the word "Elul," as explained in many Sichos etc.), as a vital way of preparing ourselves for the new year and arousing Divine mercy upon us. See sicho in the Hebrew text of this letter.

We therefore appeal to every individual man and woman to contribute generously to Kupas Rabbeinu, enabling us to fulfill the Rebbe's desire to help all those who anxiously await our help. The greater your contribution, the more we can accomplish.

Please do not forsake them!

Your **generous** contribution to Kupas Rabbeinu will be the appropriate vessel for receiving the abundant blessings of the Rebbe, who is its Nasi, that you may be blessed with a Ksiva Vachasima Tova for a good and sweet year, materially and spiritually. May it help to bring the full revelation of Moshiach - our Rebbe - immediately now!

Wishing you a Ksiva Vachasima Tova for a good and sweet year,

In the name of Vaad Kupas Rabbeinu

Rabbi Sholom Mendel Simpson

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Groner

P.S. Of course, you may send to Kupas Rabbeinu all contributions that you would send to the Rebbe; all will be devoted to the activities to which the Rebbe would devote them.

You may also send Maimad, **Keren-Hashono** (this coming year 5772 - 354 days), Vov Tishrei, Yud Gimmel Tishrei Magbis etc. to Kupas Rabbeinu.

P.S. Please send all correspondence only to the following address.

KUPAS RABBEINU / P.O.B. 288 / BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11225

Eretz Yisroel address: KEREN KUPAS ADMU"R / P.O.B. 1247 / KIRYAT MALACHI / ISRAEL

MY FATHER'S PRE-ROSH HA'SHANA IMMERSION

In this chapter, Reb Heishke tells of how he learned a powerful lesson from his father about what to do when the demands of a Chassidic lifestyle are challenged by life situations. • “I had never seen my father look so pleased.”

By Rabbi Yehoshua Dubrawski



I BECOME “INTELLIGENT”

When I was about nine or ten, my father R' Lipa took ill with heart disease. Despite his illness, he continued to work as chief bookkeeper. The few doctors in town could not do much to help him. They healed him, if you could call it that, with primitive healing methods.

For a while already there had been no mikva in the town. The communist government had destroyed the mikva along with the Jewish bathhouse, so that only a few rotten beams jutted from a small pond near the stream, a zecher l'churban of the mikva. For Chassidishe Jews like my grandfather and father, a mikva was sorely lacking. In the good years, before the revolution, they regularly visited the mikva. After the mikva was closed, they would immerse in the stream near the former mikva in the summertime.

During Tishrei, it was already cold in the Ukraine, but how could one not immerse before Rosh HaShana and Erev Yom Kippur? I would go with my

father and grandfather and shiver uncontrollably seeing them run quickly into the cold river and immediately come out.

Once my father became sick, the doctor firmly warned him that it was dangerous for him to immerse when the stream was cold. When my clever grandfather (known in the family as the Zeide Rav) suspected that my father wanted to immerse on Erev Rosh HaShana in the river, he told my father that he was forbidden from endangering his life. “You must obey me like one obeys both a rav and a father,” said the Zeide Rav to my father (while telling him that he would arrange nine kavim for him. I had no idea what this was about).

Zeide knew his son well and so he told me, before he himself went to the river, “Zai a mentch (be a man), you and your mother keep watch and don't allow him to immerse in the stream in such cold weather.”

When I said this to my mother she sadly said she knew all about it and had discussed it with my father, but apparently it was all in

vain.

“Do you know what?” she asked me, half seriously. “You talk to him. He considers you an intelligent person.”

I was astounded by this revelation. My father thought I was intelligent? I had always thought my father saw nothing but my flaws, arrogance, cowardliness, shallowness, and just a foolish child. Could I be the one to tell him not to immerse?

Somewhat encouraged by this praise from my father (and if my father said so it was probably correct), I began to think about how I would get up the courage to talk to him.

I even thought about which “intelligent” words filled with wisdom I would use, seasoned with prime “Gemara flavor,” but as soon as I pictured myself talking to him face to face, all my bravado dissipated.

ONE AUTUMN DAY

The day before Erev Rosh HaShana, my father came home earlier than usual. He announced

that it was quite warm outside. I immediately realized what he was getting at. My mother also realized and she cast a pleading look at him and then said, "You really want to go Lipa? I'm asking you for the tenth time, have pity on your wife and children! The water is already too cold for your heart; it's autumn!"

My father said it wasn't at all cold outside and Dr. Orlov did not say it was so dangerous for his heart. He calmed her down by saying he would go to the river to take a look, to touch the water to see if it was cold, and Heishke (that's me) would go with him. It would all be fine, for I would be his "guard."

My father took his stick (in those days and in that area, people used walking sticks before they were forty) and winked at me, "Come Heishke!"

It didn't take long to get to the river. The quasi-street we lived on ended only a few houses away (from ours) with quite a steep incline. After a short walk through grass, the stream could be seen quietly flowing. It was hidden behind thick underbrush and I could never tell whether it had a bank or not.

I was all aflutter and somewhat petrified as I went with my father. Would my father immerse? If he did, what would happen? But I couldn't say anything to him since I was afraid. In my mind I had a good excuse, how could I say anything when I didn't know whether he would immerse? I thought about what he would say about such an instance in which his own father issued his ruling that you had to listen to a father and obey a rav.

In any case, my father spoke the entire time and I couldn't interrupt him. Although I didn't listen to everything he said, I absorbed the gist of it, which

“I even thought about which “intelligent” words filled with wisdom I would use, seasoned with prime “Gemara flavor,” but as soon as I pictured myself talking to him face to face, all my bravado dissipated.

was, that we religious Jews, Chassidim, are always in danger. He looked this way and that as if to indicate that the danger of immersing was negligible (although there didn't seem anything to compare it to).

It really was a quiet, clear summer afternoon, not cold. The truth is that the trees in the nearby sparse woods were already bare and prickly, without leaves, and stood there as though frozen. They seemed a bit "dejected." Ever since I was a child, bare trees aroused melancholy feelings within me. Yet, the clear blue sky, the golden horizon shining with the setting sun over the distant forest on the mountain, gave me the sense that this wasn't an ordinary time: Hashem had arranged the weather ... nu, maybe for my father's sake.

A COLD MIKVA AND A WARM PRAYER

We arrived at the stream and my father looked for the bank that was hidden behind some tall bushes. He then went immediately to feel the water. He exclaimed joyously, "See, the water isn't cold! Come Heishke, touch the water. It's amazing! It's not cold at all!"

I touched the water and I thought it was quite cold. Maybe it was because I immediately began to tremble, feeling that my father would soon immerse himself in the cold water. My father suddenly stopped and took his pulse. A moment later he felt my pulse while simultaneously checking his own. He seemed

satisfied and only said, "Nu, boruch Hashem, not bad, not bad." And he began getting undressed.

When I saw that my father was getting ready to immerse, I aroused myself as from a fog and felt I must say something and try to stop him since the water was cold. I began loudly and nervously saying: Zeide said ... the Rav paskened ...

Whoops! My father had already immersed and had quickly dried off and gotten dressed. My eyes were suddenly moist from tears that overcame me. Perhaps that is why it seemed to me that I had never seen my father appear so pleased. Furthermore, his face, which had been so pale of late, did not look pale. Was it my imagination? Maybe ...

After my father took his pulse again he said dismissively, "Nonsense," and he turned to me with a smile, "Nu Heishke, what did Zeide Rav say?"

I stood mute and then, I blurted out something that went completely against my nature. "You surely know what Zeide said."

"Yes, yes, I know."

By the way, that Rosh HaShana, my father was the Baal T'filla in a private minyan in the home of Messel Konvalov. One of the congregants, a pseudo-sophisticate (a surviving remnant of the old time "Enlightened ones") said, "This time Lipa, you davened especially well, much better than you are capable of."

DEALING WITH **DIFFICULT COMPANY**

It can happen. Despite your desire to emulate Avrohom Avinu and the preparations you made, the hosting has caused more pain than joy. Who is to blame? The guest, of course. So what do you do? You read this article by Mrs. R. Gershovitz who discusses a couple of common hospitality challenges and solutions.

You had looked forward to their coming, prepared, cooked, cleaned, shopped, and arranged things. You opened all the rooms in your home and your heart to them. And they arrived. However, the guests ruined your rosy dreams of acting as the honored hostess. They sorely disappointed you.

Before you run off to your bedroom for a good cry and resolve never to invite guests again, take a deep breath and take heart. It has happened to many of us in the past and will presumably happen again. Why does it happen? It is all because of one simple though significant reason. "Just as their faces are dissimilar, so too, their views are dissimilar." Just as there is no perfect host, there is no perfect guest. What to you appears to be horrifying behavior may seem perfectly acceptable to someone else. While you become hysterical over your guest's lack of consideration, it is possible that the guest considers himself polite. It would be interesting to know what your guests think of you when you are their guest!

If you think that the following situations would not happen to hosts who are more adept than you are, you are mistaken. Even experienced hosts or those who talk about how easy it is for them to entertain guests and how nothing ever goes wrong, have been faced with the same dilemmas. The big difference is in how they react to these situations. Although it is true that life situations come our way by Divine Providence, without our choosing them or wanting them, our reactions to them are within our control as are the actions we can take to overcome the challenges.

Think of your problems

differently; instead of terrible mountains of trouble, think of them as "challenges" or "tests," and you will be surprised to discover that they become less scary and insurmountable. A problem remains a problem, but a challenge has various solutions. Instead of wasting your energy on tears and moaning, take control of the situation. It is not for naught that the Rebbe Rayatz said: One action is worth more than a thousand sighs.

DEALING WITH GUESTS WHO DON'T LEAVE

"It's not a disaster if a guest sometimes forgets to come, but it's definitely a disaster if he forgets to leave." If this song brings a smile to your lips, that proves you haven't been tested by a guest like that. For those of us who have hosted a guest who forgot to leave, the memory is still accompanied by unpleasant feelings.

You invited him for a Shabbos and he stayed for several. You hosted him for Pesach and he's still around for Pesach Sheini. Two of your daughter's friends left the dormitory and need a place "for the meantime," but it looks as though the address of their new dormitory is your house.

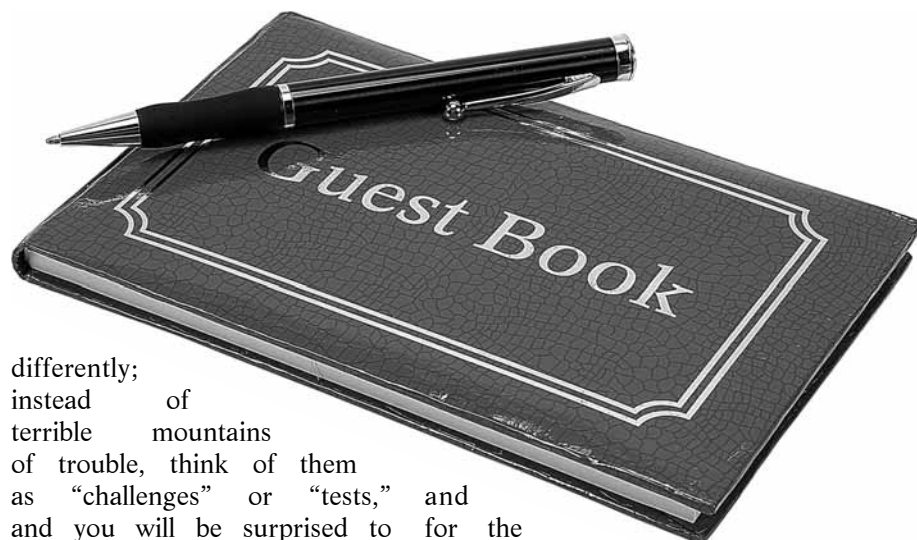
Dealing with a guest like this is so hard because it is so confusing. After all, everyone wants her hosting to be successful

and for the guest to be happy. Nu, so that's precisely what happened! You did a terrific job! You hoped that the guest would be grateful for the efforts made on his behalf, and he is complimenting you by not wanting to leave. So, the hostess asks herself, why am I so unhappy with this situation?

Furthermore, no one wants to offend a visitor in his home. Inviting a guest is so "Ahavas Yisroel'dig," but how can a guest be told to leave without hurting his feelings?

Finally, there are hosts who feel that there is something wrong with them if they want their guest to leave already. Something must be lacking in my middos, such a host will say, berating himself. Hachnasas Orchim is such an important mitzva, why shouldn't I allow the guest a few more days of pampering in the best tradition of the Jewish people?

Let's start with the last rationalization, which is the most misguided. There is no reason to feel guilty for what you are about to do. Until now, you did the mitzva beautifully, but your house is not an institution, hotel or youth hostel. Your children gave up their rooms and your attention for the guests, you put in a lot of energy making everyone feel good, the cooking



and laundry take up more time than usual, and the only conclusion is – the party is over. Unless, of course, you like the new arrangement with the guests, and there is no opposition on the part of your husband for permanent free boarders. In that case, continue hosting them.

We are talking about extended hosting that is a burden on the wife, husband, and the children and which upsets the household routine. In a case like this, your guilt feelings are out of place. If you don't take action now, you will feel even guiltier later on account of your family whom you sacrificed for the guest.

The question is: How do you get rid of a guest in the nicest way?

The Rebbe Rayatz compares giving Musar to an injection given by a doctor. The doctor doesn't suddenly stick his patient with the syringe. He first takes cotton dipped in alcohol and cleans the area where he will insert the needle. When he injects the needle he does so gently, slowly and compassionately. When he is finished he doesn't just walk away from the patient. He takes cotton and swabs the area again to soothe it. Only then is the patient ready to leave.

We need to act the same way when we want to inform a guest that it's time to leave. We have to prepare him by talking to him about their stay and stressing how we are glad he enjoyed his stay. Then we can gently tell him that the children need their room, and you need to rest up, and your husband wants you to do less cooking. If you do not work outside the home and your husband is not home most of the day, your husband should tell him that there are many laws of yichud involved, and even if

the door is open all day, it is not always comfortable or possible to keep on hosting him.

Remember, don't end the conversation this way! As in the example given by the Rebbe Rayatz, conclude with some kind words about him and his family and promise that with Hashem's help, when you regain your strength you will invite him again. Compliment him on his middos, his help or generosity and then say goodbye.

On a personal note, we did this with a guest who did not leave our house and the five-day invitation turned into five weeks. He understood what my husband explained to him and packed his bags. The room was vacated and the children went back to their beds, and the house went back to normal.

Incredible as it sounds – two days later there was a knock at the door. The guest was back and he wanted to know whether I had regained enough strength to host him again. I shook my head in a sad, negative gesture and he left.

THE GUEST WHO SPEAKS ALL LANGUAGES BUT YOURS

With many new immigrants from Russia, Ukraine, and similar such Eastern European countries arriving in Eretz Yisroel, we are sometimes asked to host guests who don't know our language. This sort of hosting is disappointing because there are no deep conversations or even ordinary conversations for that matter. It's hard to know whether your divrei Torah were understood or not.

This is a true story that happened to my friend whom I will call Shoshie. Shoshie was asked by her local Shluchim to

host a couple with two children for the Yom Tov and Chol HaMoed of Pesach. She gladly agreed. She began preparing for the meals as her husband reviewed a sicha of the Rebbe and her children wrote a play about the Exodus from Egypt that they would be performing for the guests.

The guests arrived Erev Yom Tov. Shoshie warmly welcomed them in. "How are you? Did you find our house easily?"

"We don't speak Hebrew," they said quickly in Russian.

Shoshie was taken aback. "What are your names?" she asked.

"We don't speak Hebrew."

Shoshie felt faint and she nearly fell into the nearest chair. She and her husband did not know a word of Russian!

They said something to her but she had no idea what it meant. Till today, she still doesn't know what they wanted to tell her, but at that moment it dawned on her: this family was going to be her guests for a week!

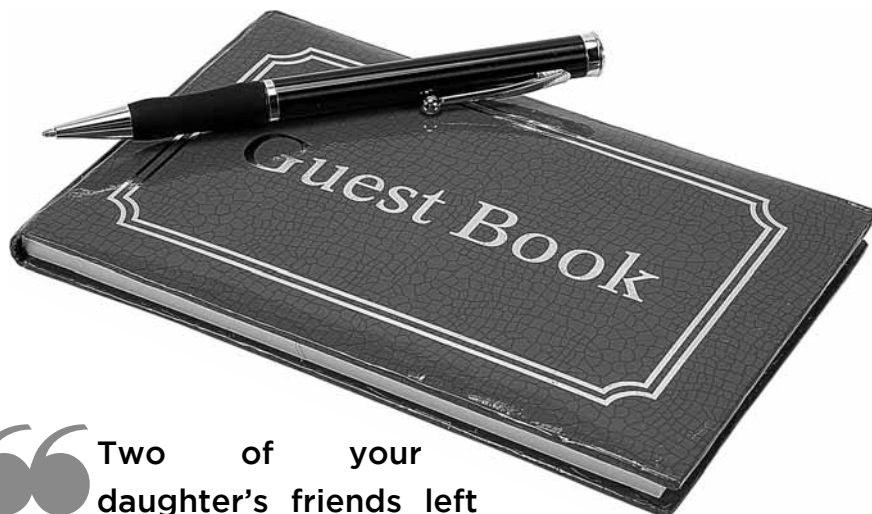
If you have also been faced with this challenge, first of all, quickly bring the guests into the house! It's certainly not their fault that they arrived in the country a month ago and their host family does not speak Russian. Believe me; they are as uncomfortable as you are. If you invite them in and they still stand there looking bewildered, put out your hand and gesture to show them that they are welcome to come in. As you pantomime, keep smiling and asking them to come in. They will understand what you mean!

Second, for the duration of their stay you will have to star in a special movie in which you are the main actor. The movie is unusual in that it is a silent

film. Have you ever seen a film like that? There are lots of hand motions. There are subtitles if matters are unclear. There are glances that can convey a message that is not said with words. You don't think you can do this? Nonsense. What did you do when your children were too little to talk? You acted things out and they understood you just fine. There is no reason you can't do this with adults. It's possible that the people in shul will be mesmerized by your grandiose hand gestures, but they will all understand why you had to resort to this method instead of talking.

There is a bonus to this kind of hosting, and that bonus is humor. When you don't understand what the mother wants and you bring a blanket for the baby instead of the slippers she was asking for, the result is usually laughter. A relaxed atmosphere is the most important condition for successful hosting, even more so than speaking a common language.

Another suggestion that can help under these circumstances is having an English-Russian dictionary or whatever language your guests understand. If you don't have one, ask the neighbors and see if you can borrow one for a while. The Chabad house might have a dictionary or maybe you can find one in the local library. The dictionary will come in handy not just for you but for the guests; don't think it's just you who are having a hard time. Think for a moment what happens when their baby cries nonstop. The father points to the baby's mouth and you don't know what he means. Does he want a pacifier? Tylenol? A bottle? A lock? By looking in the dictionary you can figure out what he means. Although a dictionary can't help you with



“Two of your daughter's friends left

the dormitory and need a place “for the meantime,” but it looks as though the address of their new dormitory is your house.

long sentences, when you need an important word it can do wonders.

The guests aren't eating anything? You are hosting a child and he is lying in bed looking sick? You must find a neighbor who speaks Russian or call someone who speaks the language and hand the phone to your guests. You can't push this off. You can take action only after you find out what's going on. Maybe they're allergic to certain foods. Maybe the child has a stomachache. Don't play around with health matters.

I enjoy watching how children work things out when there is a language barrier. They enjoy acting things out and will help you if you are embarrassed to ask certain questions. Sometimes they understand what the guests mean better than we do.

Another tip – a guest who is shy with you might be ready to take a risk with his broken English or Hebrew and tell your little child what he wants. Children are often the bridge between the guests and the hosts.

You will be surprised to

know that the most popular children's games like Monopoly, chess, checkers, and computer games are played internationally. Without much effort, your children will enjoy sitting with their new friends and playing these games.

You and your spouse also have an international language with which to communicate with your guests, and that is the language of smiles – the more, the better.

A final tip: If you are asked to host a recent immigrant, see whether you can have another guest too, even if he doesn't speak your language either. It sounds peculiar, I know, but it makes it easier on you and your guest. It makes it nicer for both of you when the guest has at least one other person with whom he can talk freely. It's also reasonable to assume that between the two of them, they will have some minimal knowledge of your language, and you will be able to communicate more effectively.

Much Success!

AND THE WINNER IS.....

By M. E. Gordon

The campers had just finished dinner, and were waiting to hear about night activity. The camp director stood at the microphone. "Before the head counselors tell you about the night activity, the camp nurse has a very important announcement to make. Please give her your utmost attention."

The nurse took the director's place at the microphone. "A number of campers have been complaining that they are unusually itchy. At first we assumed that this was due to the multitudes of mosquitoes that come out every evening."

She paused and looked around the room. A few campers were swatting mosquitoes that had landed for a snack. Many had started scratching. The nurse continued. "Then we suspected poison ivy."

At this, half the campers were already scratching. "Neither of these turned out to be the main source of the unusual itch, which it seems is spreading quickly. The problem seems to be...fleas."

By now the whole camp was in an uproar. Just about everyone felt itchy. Some girls were crying, others were giggling hysterically. One of the Head Counselors blew her whistle for everyone to quiet down. When the room was silent, the nurse resumed her announcement. "To get rid of the problem and prevent infestation, the camp is supplying every girl here with a flea collar, to be worn all day for the next five days. The collars will be distributed to each bunk after today's night activity."

Zahava, the activity director, started screaming at the nurse. "I'm not wearing any flea collar! You can't make me!"

The nurse tried to pacify her. "I'm sorry, but for the sake of everyone's health, each camper and staff member must wear a flea collar. There will be no exceptions!"

Zahava screamed back, "NO, I WON'T WEAR ANYTHING OF THE SORT!"

"Zahava, please calm down! You don't understand, if everyone doesn't co-operate the problem will get worse."

"I'M NOT WEARING A COLLAR."

"Zahava, please! The only way to get rid of something like fleas is to declare an all out war! That's why you need the collars – it's....it's.... collar war."

The camp dining room erupted in wild cheering. "COLOR WAR IS HERE!" After five minutes of excited mayhem, Suri and Chaya, the two head counselors, signaled for quiet. Everyone obeyed immediately, as all were anxious to hear about the division of teams and captains. The head counselors went through their lists efficiently, until all the bunks were divided. "Now," said Suri, "I'm sure everyone is itching to find out the names of the teams. We are going to act them out, and whichever team guesses their name correctly will earn their first points."

The room was absolutely silent, everyone focused intently on the two Heads. Suri stood like

a statue. She didn't even seem to breathe. Chaya, on the other hand was pacing across the room, as if she was going somewhere. "Lot and his wife?" suggested the camp clown. "Angels and people?" called out a CIT. "Ratzo V'shuv (ebb and flow)?" "Sun and moon?" No one seemed to get it. One camper, Chani, was thinking very hard. "Nitzavim..."

"...VaYeilech," finished her cousin Sheini.

Chaya smiled and said "You've guessed correctly, Chani, ten points for your team. Five points for Sheini's team, as well; as you were half a second behind Chani!"

Each captain assigned tasks to their team members. Chani and Sheini, both known to be talented artists, were each asked to work on their respective team's banner. Chani sat down with her two assistants, Dassie and Hudi, to plan a design. "What can we draw that illustrates the theme of Nitzavim? There is no story in that Parsha."

"What about the word Nitzavim itself? It means standing, as in standing upright, standing strong, immovable, like a pillar."

"Like the three pillars: Torah, avoda (prayer), and g'milus chassadim (kind acts)?"

"Hey! I think we've got something here!"

The three girls consulted with the camp's learning director, who happened to be on their team. She helped them develop their idea. The girls worked day and

night on the project, stopping only for davening and meals. They took turns dozing off on a bench in the room where the banner was slowly taking shape. On the second morning of color war, it was nearly finished. Chani stepped back to look at the result of their intense labor, taking care not to tip over any of the assortment of paint pots lying open on the floor.

The banner was three-dimensional to give the impression of strength and permanence. At the base, were three pillars that looked as though they were made of concrete, thanks to paper mâché. Above the first pillar was a cube. On one side was a picture of the Giving of The Torah, and on the opposite side someone reading from a Seifer Torah. On the two remaining sides were written quotes from Chazal and Rambam about how the Written Torah is exact and never changes. The Torah is “Nitzavim,” standing strong and unshakable.

The second pillar supported a pyramid. At the top was a gateway surrounded by clouds, with the caption: Shaarei T’filla – Gateway of Prayer. There were words of prayer constructed to look like they were going upwards, while gift wrapped packages of good health, wealth, and other blessings were drawn to look like they were floating down from above. Each of the three sides depicted a different T’filla – Shacharis, Mincha, and Maariv. Around the bottom edge of the pyramid on these three sides was a clear explanation of the concept that prayer is instead of the daily sacrifices, which is why they are consistently the same structure every day. The Jewish people are basically repeating the same words daily as did their parents and grandparents for



“Neither of these turned out to be the main source of the unusual itch, which it seems is spreading quickly. The problem seems to be...fleas.”

many generations. The structure of prayer is “Nitzavim,” standing strong and constant.

The third pillar held a sphere. It was almost completely covered with illustrations of all types of mitzvos. Although the sphere was crowded, each mitzvah was in its own definite border, which looked somewhat like lines of latitude and longitude, as if it was a globe. Across the middle, where the equator would have been, was an explanation. “Each mitzvah has its parameters, its rules and regulations. Mitzvos are “Nitzavim,” standing strong and defined.”

“It looks great,” Dassie commented. “I think the message comes across very clearly.”

“I agree,” said Hudi. “Nitzavim – strong, structured, solid, and immutable – describes the Jew’s service of Hashem.”

“I don’t know,” Chani responded. “Something seems to be missing.”

Meanwhile, on the other side of camp, Sheini was busy supervising her own team’s banner. She had obtained shimmery material and special paint. The effect was dazzling; the images seemed to be in constant movement, fitting in well with the meaning of “VaYeilech – going.”

The banner had three curvy paths winding their way from the bottom right hand corner to the top left. Along the first road were signs designating the stages of the process through which the Oral Torah was published, namely the Mishna, Midrash, Gemara, Rishonim, and then

the Acharonim. There was an illustration of two young scholars learning animatedly. Under them were p’sukim like “and you shall toil in it by day and by night” and sayings of Chazal such as “the new ideas that a seasoned scholar will figure out.” On the first road itself was written, “Torah learning is vibrant, constantly being revealed at new levels to those who go in its path – VaYeilech.”

The second path was actually a flight path of a jet plane. In the windows of the plane were all different types of people praying. On the wings of the plane was written: “Love and awe of Hashem are the wings that lift prayer to the Heavens (from Tanya)” and “What is service of the heart? This is prayer.” In the jet stream behind were the words “Prayer requires you to channel the energy of your emotions that will provide thrust and lift to reach the Heavens – VaYeilech.”

Lastly, a railroad track came bearing a train of Mitzvos. On it were quotes about beautifying Mitzvos, going beyond the letter of the law, and about doing Mitzvos with enthusiasm. On the engine at the front was written, “We all follow the same track but our unique contributions power the Mitzva train – VaYeilech.”

The banner had lights worked into it, connected to a battery at the back. The result was absolutely stunning, but Sheini was still dissatisfied. “Something is still missing,” she mused.

Chani and Sheni continued perfecting their respective pieces until it was time to present them to the judges in front of the

“Structure needs movement, and movement needs structure.”

whole camp. All the campers were waiting with bated breath as the curtain on the stage started to rise. The spotlight was focused on the entry from team Nitzavim. Everyone oohed and aahed at the professional looking exhibit. Chani hoped that no one could hear her pounding heart as she began explaining the different features and their meaning. Everyone looked very impressed, but Chani couldn't rid herself of that gnawing feeling that something was still missing.

Now it was the turn of team VaYeilech. The spotlight dimmed

a bit, so everyone could see the full effect of the miniature lights. Once again, the audience was overwhelmed by the stunning creation. Sheini took a deep breath and started to explain her banner. When she finished, she felt like there should be something more to it, but she didn't know exactly what.

The judges conferred for what seemed to be a long time, while the two teams had a singing contest. Finally, one of the senior judges called for silence. “The artists on both teams have done an outstanding job. Their works

are simply stunning, and at the same time full of meaning. It is a hard task to choose between them. Nitzavim illustrates the importance of firm structure in serving Hashem, and VaYeilech the importance of movement. Hashem Yisborach provides the structure; we provide the movement based on that structure. Both are vital.”

“So that is what's missing,” Chani and Sheini cried out together. “Structure needs movement, and movement needs structure.”

Which side won Color War? I'll leave that to the readers to decide.

This article is based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 29 p. 173-181.
The story is fictional.



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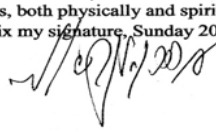

APPROBATION

Rabbi Jacob Schwei
Member of the Rabbinical
Court of Crown Heights

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

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

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

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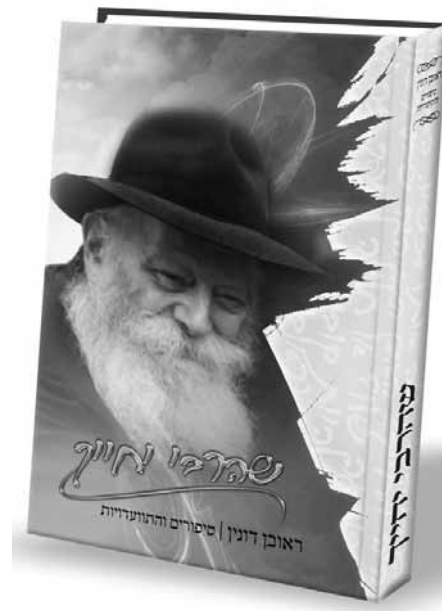
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REUVEN DUNIN ON EDUCATION AND PROPER CONDUCT

Beis Moshiach is pleased to present yet another excerpt from the seifer *So That The Rebbe Should Smile*, containing more than five hundred brief stories and recollections on the illustrious chassid, R' Reuven Dunin of Haifa. Part II

Collected and Arranged by Chanoch HaLevi Shachar

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry



PROPER MANNERS PRECEDE... THE PRINCIPAL

When I was working for an educational institution on Moshav Nahalal, I managed to convince a principal to come to Reuven's house for Sukkos "to show the children what a sukka looks like." I called Reuven and told him about the group that was scheduled to come. Reuven consented, but on the condition "that I do the talking." I was forced to agree, and we all came to his sukka. I planned to start talking, but Reuven sat next to me, and I just couldn't open my mouth in his presence out of the sense of respect that I had for him. Reuven quickly took the reins and gave over a marvelous shiur for the group, as the refreshments were enjoyed around the table.

At a certain point, the principal looked at her watch, and quickly started to prepare the children for their return trip. As she walked outside, Reuven ran after her and called out, "Are you

the principal?" When the puzzled woman said yes, Reuven turned red and replied, "In that case, may there be no one else like you among the Jewish People!"

The principal was stunned. "Why? What happened?"

"Did you like the food?" Reuven asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"Did you enjoy yourself?" Reuven asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"Then you should know," Reuven said, "that there's a woman standing and toiling in the kitchen, sweating and preparing and..." Reuven wouldn't let her go until she and all the children passed by the kitchen and thanked Rivka (Reuven's wife) for the refreshments.

(Shlomo Gross)

SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE

"I wanted to tell you something – rather simple in my estimation – since we've been

learning a sicha from Chanukah, and we're already discussing the concept of the candles and increasing in matters of holiness. When the Rebbe established the Chinuch Campaign, he repeatedly emphasized that this is a matter of educating ourselves, as well as educating others. Thus, the best possible way to fulfill the Rebbe's inyanim is simply to set a living example."

(audio transcript – courtesy of 'Kol Mevasser' Institute)

BETTER HEALTH THAN APPETITE

When a bochur in the Ramat Aviv yeshiva passed by Reuven and saw that he was eating, he said, "BeTeiavon (good appetite)."

"Thank G-d, I have an appetite," Reuven said. "What I need is my health." (Our custom is to say "Livriut" – to health – as opposed to "BeTeiavon.")

(R' Eliezer Wilschansky)

“When the puzzled woman said yes, Reuven turned red and replied, “In that case, may there be no one else like you among the Jewish People!”

WHERE'S THE DOORMAN?

It's safe to say that when one is admonished gently, he'll probably soon forget it. This is perhaps the reason why Reuven tended to use a form of shock treatment that lasted a lifetime when delivering a scolding.

One day, one of the bachurim in a shiur knocked on the door and came in, but he neglected to close the door behind him. Reuven turned around and asked “Where's the doorman?”

The stunned bochur didn't understand. “What doorman?” he asked.

“The one who always closes the door after you...” Reuven replied.

That was enough in most cases.

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

BEING NORMAL

Once a bochur said to Reuven, “I'm not normal, and I'm proud of it.”

Reuven immediately understood where he was coming from, and he asked, “What do you call ‘normal’?”

The bochur replied, “Normal is defined by the norms established by the majority, and since I don't think as most people do, I'm not normal in their opinion.”

Reuven told him, “Shulchan Aruch determines what the norm is, and therefore, anyone who goes according to Shulchan Aruch is normal!”

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

GO WHERE YOU CAN GET MORE

During a lengthy car ride with Reuven, one of the passengers said, “Reuven, we're from Haifa, and today is an auspicious day in the Chabad calendar. Maybe we should have stayed in Haifa and helped make the farbrengen there.”

When Reuven agreed that he had a valid point, the bochur asked Reuven if he could get a ride back to Haifa, and he suggested that perhaps I should come back with him. I asked Reuven where I should be, and he replied, “A Jew has to be where he can get more.” The bochur obviously got out of the car alone, while I continued on with Reuven to the farbrengen in Migdal HaEmek.

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

APPOINTING A RAV

When the Rebbe's instruction to appoint a personal mashpia was first publicized, I got up the courage and went to ask Reuven to be my rav. “But you live in Tzfas, and I'm in Haifa,” Reuven said. “Look for a mashpia nearby with whom you can consult at any opportunity, not someone ‘beyond the sea’ who sometimes isn't home, sometimes his line is busy, and an opportunity might thus be lost.”

I tried as best I could to show how important this was to me that he agree to grant my request, and I said, “The Rebbe said to choose, and I choose you.”

Reuven replied, “All right,

if that's the way it is, then I'll be your mashpia. My first instruction is: Look for a mashpia in Tzfas and report to me as soon as you find one.”

I realized that I had been defeated, so I continued, “At least give me some guidance as to how to find a mashpia in Tzfas.”

Reuven then told me, “Look for the mashpia whom you like the least – that will be your ‘Aseh Lecha Rav.’”

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

I THINK

In a conversation I had with Reuven, I started to say, “I think...”

Reuven cut me off and said, “Everything you think – is wrong. If a chassid's way of thinking starts with ‘I think,’ there's something wrong here. You can go and tell your mashpia that you have an idea, he can accept it or not accept it, and you then act accordingly. (Thus, it's no longer ‘your’ idea, since you gave it over to the mashpia. He decided, and it now comes from him.) However, if your ‘I’ is the decider, then you are on the wrong track. If you ask your mashpia everything, you'll never reach a state of ‘I.’”

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT THAT AMUD

Reuven once retold, “One of the first things I asked when I came to the Chabad yeshiva in Lod was: Why doesn't Chabad write the words ‘I have set G-d before me at all times’ on the amud for davening? One of the bachurim there gave me the answer. ‘The reason is because in Lubavitch, it has to be written within you.’

What's the whole purpose behind a person exempting himself from the spiritual avoda of "I have set G-d before me at all times" and placing all the responsibility on the amud? Should it be the one to contemplate on G-dliness? Does a person think that he can fulfill his obligation that way? I thought about this concept when I saw something else hanging on the amud, a beautiful and illuminating sign with the words 'It's forbidden to speak during t'filla and Krias HaTorah.' But I'm not worried about that amud, for it surely won't talk. So why did they put up the sign?"

(audio transcript – courtesy of 'Kol Mevasser' Institute)

A PERSONAL INSTRUCTION

"In all things that I have been privileged to see and hear from the Rebbe, I see them as



Reuven then told me, "Look for the mashpia whom you like the least – that will be your 'Aseh Lecha Rav.'"

personal instructions, even when they are conveyed publicly... If I was privileged to hear it, it has relevance for me."

(audio transcript – courtesy of 'Kol Mevasser' Institute)

thing. "I was privileged to hear the Rebbe say that it is written in the Zohar that a Jew does not place his hands behind him."

(Efraim Bernstein, Mendy Ashkenazi)

NOT PLACING HANDS BEHIND THE BACK

Once a bochur happened to come over to Reuven to ask a question with his hands behind his back. Suddenly, Reuven fired a harsh rebuke at him: "It's written in the Zohar that we don't do that. So how do you go around with you hands that way?" On another occasion, he told someone else doing the same

INTERLACING THE FINGERS

I once saw how Reuven rebuked someone during a farbrengen without looking at him. "Thus, the Alter Rebbe writes in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 91:6) that when you interlock your hands in this manner, you bring stern judgment upon yourself. So why do you keep doing that?"

(Efraim Bernstein)

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THE CONVERGENCE OF KABBALA AND SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT

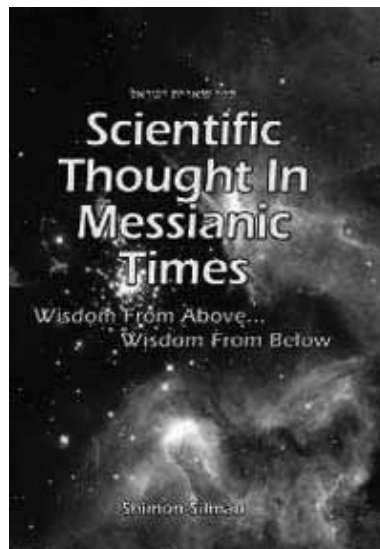
A Review of the Book *Scientific Thought in Messianic Times* by Professor Shimon Silman

By Rabbi Dovi Goldberg, J.D.

Finally, religion is on the offensive. Science not only does not debunk religion, quite on the contrary, it helps us understand and prepare for the coming of Moshiach, as Professor Shimon Silman, Professor of Mathematics at Touro College and Director of the RYAL Institute, asserts in his new book *Scientific Thought in Messianic Times*.

Kabbala calls it “Unification.” Science calls it “The Theory of Everything.” But regardless of the disparate nomenclature, the two terms represent the epicenter of both Kabbalistic and (current) scientific thought. Science is finally coming around to support the mainstay of Kabbalistic and Chassidic thought.

Myriads of books and articles have been published attempting to explain – to various degrees of success – why science does not conflict, contradict, or disprove religion. Science used to be, and is still considered by many,



a foe of religion and everything Divine. Religion has seemingly been on the defensive since time immemorial; even the Rambam, living in the 12th century, had to respond to challenges made by advocates of the scientific disciplines.

Professor Silman, turning the tables on religion bashers, shows how science is currently

coming of age and is rapidly trending in the direction of actually proving the central theme of Kabbala and Jewish Mysticism—the absolute unity of G-d. Not that Kabbala needs support or approbation from science, quite to the contrary. But showing how science supports the central notion of kabbala, and furthermore, prepares us for the *raison d’être* of our existence—the coming of Moshiach—is, for the understatement of this millennium, revolutionary.

The book’s title *Scientific Thought in Messianic Times* should not frighten away science-phobes. In fact, everyone, from the layman with no prior scientific knowledge, to the advanced theoretical physicist, from the scholar of Judaism to the neophyte, will find many chapters of interest in this 721-page opus.

The book begins with a detailed overview of the identity, personality, and function of Moshiach, extensively

referenced with citations ranging from Talmudic and Midrashic, to Kabbalistic and Chassidic sources. It also gives comprehensive contextual “Cliff notes” in both Chassidus and science necessary for understanding the central concepts discussed in the book. Concepts such as the rationale of mitzvos and tzimtzum, the role of axioms, Euclidian geometry, and quantum mechanics are elucidated and explained in terms accessible to every reader.

Professor Silman does not shy away from controversial issues. Major questions relating to Torah and Science are dissected and analyzed. Issues such as proving the scientific viability of creation while exposing the theory of evolution for the sham it is, are tackled head on. The tentativeness and non-absoluteness of scientific theories are also explicated in clear and unambiguous terms.

The fulcrum of the book is the lectures given at the annual Moshiach and Science Conference of the RYAL Institute. The conference, as well as the publishing of the lectures given there, was encouraged by the Rebbe. Lecture notes and essays from well known Jewish scientists such as Professor Alvin Radkowsky a”h (nuclear physicist and chief scientist at the U.S. Navy nuclear propulsion division), Dr. Tzvi Yehuda Saks a”h (internationally renowned topologist with the IBM Corporation), and Dr. Naftali Berg a”h (director of the Advanced Technology Office of the U.S. Army), and many others are included.

And given the fact that the



RYAL institute was founded to preserve the memory of R' Yisroel Aryeh Leib Schneersohn, the Rebbe's brother, a full chapter is devoted to giving a detailed biographical sketch of this man who fused a profound understanding of Chassidus with tremendous mathematical insight and creativity.

Bifurcated into different chapters, Silman first demonstrates how science, across a wide range of disciplines, is moving towards transforming military technology initially developed for battle and bloodshed into tools of peace, health, and prosperity, thus actualizing Isaiah's prophecy of “turning swords into ploughshares.”

But even more avant-garde, the author then shows how the current scientific vogue, with “string theory” and “the theory of everything” being all the rage, actually prepares us for the

Messianic era! In the Messianic era we will see the unity of G-d, and these theories give us a mindset of unity of the entire universe! The book concludes with an impressive and inspiring view of the nature of science in the era of Moshiach.

This book is obviously not exclusively for those who are passionate about science, or only for those who anticipate the imminent coming of Moshiach. It is for anybody who is ready for a fresh, profound, and novel vision of a world that we are all currently living in, and the world that we will soon see! If you are ready to view reality, Moshiach, and the Torah from a fresh, enriching, and true perspective, this book is for you.

Scientific Thought in Messianic Times can be purchased at **RYAL.org**, at **Judaic bookstores and (soon) at Amazon.com.**

POLICY SHIFT

We hope that the Israeli government's firm stance against Turkey is an indication of how its future relations with other nations will develop. If Netanyahu has enough common sense to take action in this fashion on all fronts, the Israel government can restore its honor and dignity and save itself from the current diplomatic crisis.

By Sholom Ber Crombie

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

MIGRON AND AMONA ARE ONE AND THE SAME

A week after the destruction of Jewish homes on the Migron settlement, we hear the first sounds of reawakening within the nationalist camp. A few small symbolic protests have suddenly appeared against the backdrop of the government's destructively reckless behavior, reminding the Likud ministers of the platform upon which they received the nation's mandate. A woman living in Migron sent recorded messages at four o'clock in the morning to all the Likud ministers. In the message, she told them how it feels when someone wakes you up at such an hour. She said that they should try and think about what would happen if they would discover their homes surrounded by policeman dressed in black, who proceed to throw them and their children out of the house, and then destroy the house and all its contents.

But that's not enough. None

of them has yet to feel his chair around the Cabinet table getting wobbly. None of them has expressed any remorse for his support of the eviction in Migron, nor does it appear that any of the government ministers has any reason to do so – for the time being. No one has threatened them with a loss of electoral backing or fiery demonstrations in front of their homes.

It's enough to recall how things looked at the Amona eviction six years ago. After the deep frustration following the Gush Katif expulsion, the young orange-clad activists were determined to do everything to make certain that the destruction of Jewish homes by the government of Israel would not pass quietly. Then, it was just a matter of destroying seven houses with a warning in advance that lasted for two weeks. Yet, the prevailing post-disengagement atmosphere created serious repercussions, and with each passing day, several hundred more young protesters joined

the forces against the eviction. Eventually, the numbers reached into the thousands, and their struggle shocked the entire country.

In Migron, the destruction of homes was carried out secretly to prevent masses of people from coming there to take action against the operation. After the family dwellings were demolished, not a cry was heard. The eviction was accompanied not by demonstrations and protests, but by a deafening silence.

The Netanyahu government has created a situation where the determining factor for those who make the policy decisions is its "rating" before the court of public opinion. Everything depends upon what they say in the media. No military operations are taking place on the border with Gaza, because the public has agreed to accept the government's policies of "restraint." On the border with Lebanon, the Hezbollah continues to establish terrorist strongholds right under the nose of the Israel Defense Forces. However, no one seems to be interested because the residents of northern Eretz Yisroel are sleeping peacefully. The deal for the release of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit keeps vacillating between "full steam ahead" and total rejection. Everything depends upon the "ratings."

Yet, Netanyahu's failure to make any move without a favorable standing in the polls is also a potential springboard. We simply have to change people's perception of things. Instead of

public preoccupation with the student protests, we should deal with the denial of social justice for residents who built homes with their hard-earned money.

The problem is that those who should be leading the struggle are suffering from an acute case of battle fatigue. The Yesha Council no longer feels relevant since the Gush Katif expulsion – and rightly so. In their place, numerous action committees have been established throughout Yehuda and Shomron designed to represent the local residents, but they lack authority.

In such a situation, there remains only one voice to speak the truth. On many occasions, the Rebbe spoke about how every Jew has an inheritance in Eretz HaKodesh, and therefore, every Jew has an obligation to express his opinion in this matter. The Rebbe also discussed the issue in more practical terms, i.e., the need to remind the politicians about the voters and to explain how they will have to answer for their actions at the ballot box.

We can learn a most useful lesson from the student demonstrators about what the voice of one individual can do. When each person feels as one among many, you can plan an active form of civil dissent. When three people are standing at an intersection with signs

“The Rebbe also discussed the need to remind the politicians that they will have to answer for their actions at the ballot box.

against expelling Jews from their homes and against conducting negotiation with terrorists, this represents a powerful expression of protest. It's forbidden to quit simply because the protest doesn't immediately take center stage. We have to start with one action, one deed. That's what the Rebbe taught us.

STANDING TALL

But there are also a few points of light. While Netanyahu did send his troops to demolish Jewish homes, his resolute position against Turkey deserves praise. This is particularly so when you consider the fact that all the members of the inner Cabinet, including Ministers Benny Begin and Eli Yishai, supported the Israeli government's public apology to the Marmara terrorists who tried to cause bodily harm to our soldiers.

The refusal to issue an apology to Ankara clearly demonstrates that the reality can be changed. Perhaps it is possible that the government of Israel will regain its sanity.

Such matters take on even greater significance as we get closer to the vote in the United Nations General Assembly on the recognition of a Palestinian state¹. We hope that the Israeli government's firm stance against Turkey will be an indication of how its future relations with other nations will develop as it tries to show the world's leaders that there's now a new and better way to handle such matters. If Netanyahu has enough common sense to take action in this fashion on all fronts, the Israeli government can restore its honor and dignity and save itself from the current diplomatic crisis.

As the UN vote on the establishment of a Palestinian state rapidly approaches, Netanyahu and his government ministers must strengthen their firm stance against pressure tactics, both from within and without. We can see positive signs in relation to the clear position of firm and steadfast opposition taken by the Israeli government in Yerushalayim regarding the declaration at the United Nations.

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THE REBBEIM'S PREPARATION OF THE WORLD FOR MOSHIACH: THE MITTELER REBBE



Part III

By Rabbi Gershon Avtzon

Dear Reader sh'yichyeh,

This week's topic is the activities that the Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch, the Mitteler Rebbe, did to bring Moshiach.

BRINGING CHASSIDUS CLOSER

On 9 Kislev 5534, a son was born to the Tzaddik Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe. He named him DovBer after his mentor and teacher Rabbi Dovber, the Maggid of Mezritch.

Rabbi Dovber was a tremendous scholar and devoted his time to the study of Chassidus and davening. He was appointed by his father to direct the younger Chassidim, and after the passing of the Alter Rebbe he succeeded him as Rebbe. It was during his leadership that Chassidus Chabad was brought for the very first time to the city of Lubavitch.

Rabbi DovBer would spend hours teaching Chassidus. His Maamarim are long and

deep. There is a saying that the Mitteler Rebbe's Chassidim did not need Moshiach. The whole purpose of Moshiach is to reach the realization of "Umalah HaAretz Deah Es Hashem - The world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem." As the Mitteler Rebbe would often give over chassidus for ten hours at a time, the Chassidim felt as if they lived in the times of Moshiach.

The Rebbe often repeated that one of the lessons that could be learned from the Mitteler Rebbe's life – from the fact that he was born and ascended on high on the same date of 9 Kislev – is the idea of perfect harmony and synthesis between body and soul and between the teachings of Chassidus and the actualization of those teachings in everyday life. The way to achieve that harmony and synthesis is through complete immersion in the study of Chassidus and in spreading those teachings to others less fortunate than oneself. The

life story of the Mitteler Rebbe personifies total immersion in the study of Chassidus and in the teaching of Chassidus. It was as the Tzemach Tzedek framed it, "If one were to cut the finger of my father-in-law, blood would not run out, but Chassidus."

The Mitteler Rebbe also brought the concepts of Chassidus "from a higher heaven to a lower heaven." In the times of the Alter Rebbe, only advanced scholars would learn Chassidus in depth. The Mitteler Rebbe established the concept that young married men should also learn Chassidus. The Mitteler Rebbe also used meshalim extensively; a mashal brings a sublime thought to a level where it can be more readily understood. Moreover, he published a seifer in Yiddish so it can be accessible to a wider audience. This obviously brought the Sh'china closer to the world.

In 5576/1816, Reb DovBer established the first settlement of Chabad Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel, in the holy city of Chevron. He encouraged the Chassidim already living in other parts of Eretz Yisroel to resettle in Chevron. In addition, his own daughter and son-in-law moved with their family from Russia to Chevron. This was clearly a step in the process of settling Yidden in Eretz Yisroel with Moshiach.

“There is a saying that the Mitteler Rebbe's Chassidim did not need Moshiach.

CHASSIDUS IN THE TIME OF MOSHIACH

In addition to the above, the Rebbe teaches us (VaYitzei 5752) that by learning certain parts of the Mittlerer Rebbe's Chassidus, we hasten Moshiach's arrival.

The reason for this is as follows. The Torah (B'Reishis 25:18) tells us that Hashem made a special treaty with Avraham, promising that his descendants would inherit the Land of Eretz Yisroel. The Torah states that Hashem promised Avraham ten lands, but in reality, the Jewish people only received seven!

Rashi, the foremost commentator on the Chumash, explains:

"There are ten nations [enumerated] here, but He gave them only seven nations. The [other] three are Edom, Moab, and Ammon, and they are [here referred to as] the Kenites, the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, which are destined to be [our] heritage in the future, as it is said: 'Upon Edom and Moab shall

they stretch forth their hand, and the children of Ammon shall obey them.'"

The Alter Rebbe writes (Tanya Perek 36) that everything that will happen when Moshiach comes depends on our Avoda in the times of Galus. How do we prepare to conquer those extra three lands?

In Chassidus it is explained that the seven lands represent that Avoda of the seven emotions (Middos) of the heart, while the remaining three lands represent the Avoda of the three parts of the mind (Mochin).

In order to conquer the three lands when Moshiach comes, we must conquer our mind and have it be devoted entirely to the service of Hashem. The Mittlerer Rebbe's Maamarim are very deep and intellectually challenging, and they also discuss

these concepts at length. By learning those Maamarim, we are preparing for Moshiach.

In the siddur with Chassidic commentaries of the Mittlerer Rebbe, it is written, "The reason this final exile of ours is lasting so long is because the light that will be revealed at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead and the World to Come is the greatest, most elevated light."

Rabbi Avtzon is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Lubavitch Cincinnati. Recordings of his in-depth shiurim on Inyanei Geula u'Moshiach can be accessed at <http://ylcrecording.com>.

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A NO-BRAINER

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton



Towards the end of the first chapter of this week's section G-d tells the Jews, "I am making the heavens and the earth witnesses today that I am putting before you the life and the death; the blessing and the curse...and you should choose life in order that you and your offspring will live." (D'varim 30:19)

Does this make sense? What type of witnesses are the heavens and the earth? Furthermore, why does G-d need witnesses at all?

What did G-d intend with the words "choose life?" Do we need the Torah to tell us this? Everyone wants to live. Even animals want to live! If one would assume that the Torah is speaking here about spiritual life, then why does it mention offspring? Spiritual life is mostly in the "hereafter." There are no offspring in the hereafter!

Finally, there are many situations beyond our control. Consider the sick, handicapped, and oppressed people that never had, or ever will have, the opportunity to decide or choose their fate. The Torah is supposed to be applicable to all times and all situations, but the millions of suffering people who share this world with the rest seem to be an exception to this privilege of choice.

To understand this, here are three stories from the Talmud.

Rabbi Akiva was one of the greatest Torah scholars ever. He lived about 1,800 years ago, shortly after the destruction of the second Temple and at one point had some 24,000 pupils!

Once he journeyed alone, and before nightfall he entered a large village to spend the night. However, every house rejected his request for lodgings. Perhaps they hated Jews, or perhaps they were simply cruel, but in any case they ordered him to leave.

Rabbi Akiva, instead of getting angry, cheerfully said, "Whatever G-d does is for the good!" and exited the gates of the town.

He found a small clearing a good distance away and settled down under a tree to rest, together with a rooster, candle and donkey that he had brought with him. The rooster was to awaken him, the candle to provide him the light necessary to learn Torah at night, and the donkey would take him to his destination.

It wasn't easy to light the candle, but he got it lit before nightfall, tied his donkey to a tree, gave some grain to the rooster and prepared for sleep.

Then suddenly a wind swept through his little encampment, extinguishing the small flame and leaving him in almost total

darkness.

"What G-d does is for the good," said Rabbi Akiva and continued his preparations in the quiet night.

Suddenly the silence was broken by insane cackling and wild flapping. Rabbi Akiva turned and let out a startled cry; a weasel was dragging away the quivering body of his rooster. "Whatever G-d does is for the good," he said calmly. Instead of getting depressed and cursing the darkness, he again lay back down and closed his eyes.

Only moments later the air shook with an awesome roar and then the frantic braying that followed it. He sat bolt upright to see a lion crouched on the thrashing carcass of his donkey; digging its teeth and claws into its flesh and finally dragging it too into the night.

Instead of being filled with fear and gloom, Rabbi Akiva confidently repeated, "Whatever G-d does is for the good," closed his eyes, and again went to sleep.

The next morning he woke to the smell of smoke. He sat up, looked in the direction of the town, and was shocked by a frightening sight; it was totally in flames! Apparently, a large band of robbers had raided the town that night, killed most of the men, took everyone else as slaves and

put the entire city to the torch.

“Aha!” he said to himself. “Truly everything that G-d does is for the good! If I had stayed in that town, if the candle had been lit, the rooster had crowed or the donkey brayed, I certainly would not be here now.” (Brachos 60b)

The second story is about Rabbi Akiva’s teacher Nachum Ish Gam-Zu.

Once, the Rabbis in Jerusalem got wind of an anti-Semitic edict that was about to be passed by the wicked Roman government. After much deliberation they decided that the rumor was true, and the only way they could have it rescinded was to bribe the emperor of Rome.

With great self-sacrifice the Jews gave literally all they had – many even borrowed large sums of money – and finally prepared a small chest full of fine precious stones and handcrafted jewelry.

And Nachum Ish Gam-Zu, being the most impressive, wise and optimistic of the Rabbis, was picked to deliver it. In fact his name “Gam-Zu” was derived from his custom to say “Gam Zu L’tova – This too is for the good” in even the worst situations.

But here the plot thickens.

At the last inn that Rabbi Nachum stopped over on his long journey, the owner of the place somehow sensed that he was carrying valuables and managed to get his hands very briefly on the treasure chest. But that was all he needed; a few seconds later it was back in its place, emptied of riches but full of dirt from his yard!

Rabbi Nachum never suspected a thing.

The next day he stood proudly dressed in his best garments before the emperor, the chest on a small marble table before him.



A wind swept through his little encampment, extinguishing the small flame... a weasel was dragging away the quivering body of his rooster... a lion crouched on the thrashing carcass of his donkey...

Then, after a few words about “his majesty’s loyal servants the Jews,” with a wide smile on his face and a theatrical sweep of his hand, opened the box before the entire court of ministers and generals.

A gasp went up from the crowd! The king frowned. Everyone began murmuring. Instead of a breathtaking view of startlingly impressive diamonds and gold, the chest was full ... of dirt!

“Gam Zu L’tova,” said Rabbi Nachum with the certainty of a true believer.

Suddenly a well dressed stranger appeared, approached the King’s throne, bowed deeply and spoke very quietly so only the king could hear. “Certainly, your majesty knows that this is the magical dirt that the patriarch of the Jews, Abraham, defeated all his enemies with.”

“Ehh?” murmured the king, raising one eyebrow, as the frown faded from his face. “What is Magical Dirt? What does it do?”

“Ah,” answered the stranger a bit louder so the crowd could hear if they listened, “When it is thrown, it turns into spears and arrows that never miss their mark.”

Immediately the emperor commanded his generals to use it against his bitterest enemies, who, when they saw what the dirt could do, surrendered unconditionally.

The emperor filled many chests with gems and gold for the Jews and sent Nachum home

with an honor guard (Taanis 21a).

The final story is also about Rabbi Akiva, which took place shortly after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash by the Romans. Once, he and three other holy Torah scholars had to walk past Jerusalem. When they reached the point from which they could see the ruins of the once beautiful holy city, they tore their garments in mourning.

But when they got even closer and saw a small fox jump out from the rubble of the very place where there had once stood the Holy of Holies, it was too much for them to bear, and three of them burst out into bitter tears.

To their shock, Rabbi Akiva began laughing! Not the laughter of one insane from grief but genuine, happy laughter. “Akiva! Why are you laughing?” they demanded.

“And why are you crying?” he replied.

“Why are we crying? Oy!” they replied, “The holiest place in the world, a place so pure that anyone other than the High Priest on Yom Kippur would die if he entered! And now foxes are walking there! How can we not cry?”

“That is precisely why I’m laughing,” Rabbi Akiva told them. “If we see before our eyes the fulfillment of Micha’s prophesy (3:12), ‘Jerusalem will become a ploughed field,’ then certainly the prophesy of Zecharia (8:4) will be fulfilled – ‘Again will sit elders in the streets of Jerusalem each

with a staff in hand.' Moshiach will come and raise the dead." (Makos 24b; see Tosafos)

These three stories illustrate the same point: Even in impossibly terrible situations we can choose life... and even transform it to good.

True there are many things beyond our control, but how we judge them is completely in our control; if we choose to see the good in everything we can actually change impossible situations.

For instance, the Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that by trusting in G-d we make a new vessel for blessing! Our trust can change

the entire universe.

Now the verse that was originally quoted will become clear. This is the meaning of the words "The heavens" – namely all the spiritual worlds – and "the earth" – the entire physical world – all creation will be "witnesses" on our behalf and help us if we choose the positive path of Torah!

It will be good for our offspring; indeed for the entire world as well.

If we choose life, then we will bring life. The entire world will be transformed to an even higher level than the 'heaven on earth' it initially was when it was created. Indeed, that is what we celebrate

on Rosh Hashanah.

That is why it is one of the basic principles of the Torah to impatiently desire the arrival of Moshiach. Regardless of what state the world seems to be in and why, the Lubavitcher Rebbe said we should "open our eyes" to see that Moshiach is here.

This is because our positive thoughts can make a positive world. As Rabbi Akiva said in our last story, we can actually bring Moshiach NOW!!

Wishing all our readers a healthy, happy, sweet new year with....

MOSHIACH NOW!!

Continued from page 55

essence, or the "Rosh-Head" of our soul, is, figuratively speaking detached from the body of our soul. Rosh Hashanah can thus be described as the day when our head is reattached to our body. In medical terminology, Rosh Hashanah is like recovery from a stroke which compromised the connections of the brain to the rest of the body.

REDEMPTION: RECOVERY FROM A STROKE

All this is true each and every year as we come to the end of one year and are ready to usher

in the New Year. It is especially true and relevant when we are not just situated at the end of the year but also at the end of the "old" system and are ready to enter into the new epoch of the Messianic Age.

The old system we call galus-exile, when we experience the dichotomous forces of separation, separation of one Jew from another, separation from our Holy Land which is our true Homeland, and separation from the essence of our soul. It is no wonder that the process of galus has been likened to a stroke because of the debilitating results that galus engendered. Galus is the ultimate instrument of

detachment from our true inner selves.

Geula, or Redemption, therefore, is the process by which the head or "Rosh" of our soul—the inner essence of our soul—is no longer detached from the external aspects of our lives. The inner soul thus provides catharsis and purification, stability and direction to all layers of our personalities as well as to the entirety of the nation regardless of which level one is on.

A K'siva Va'chasima Tova, L'shana Tova Umesukah!

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year; a year of genuine and complete Redemption!

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THE RETURN JOURNEY

By Rabbi Yisroel Harpaz

In the years he spent in a forced labor camp in Siberia, Rabbi Mendel Futerfas occupied himself by living with the teaching of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov that everything a person sees or hears contains a specific lesson. Needless to say, some very profound insights came from some very unusual teachers.

One of his fellow prisoners claimed to be a tightrope walker. Reb Mendel didn't believe him because he couldn't imagine why a person would waste his time walking on a rope and risk falling on his head, when he could just walk on the ground like everyone else. But when the evil Stalin died and the government eased the pressure on the camps, some of the inmates decided to make a celebration, and the tightrope walker saw his chance to prove himself. A crowd gathered around. The man removed his shoes and gingerly but unceremoniously climbed up the ladder onto a rope that he had prepared. Reb Mendel was one of the first to get interested, and he explained what happened:

"First he climbed up onto the rope, took a few steps, lost his balance and fell. But he knew how to fall, like a cat. He waited a few seconds and climbed up again and fell again the same way. But eventually he started walking, and then dancing from one foot to the other to the rhythm of the clapping onlookers. Then he got to the end, turned around, danced back to where he started, and climbed down amidst the applause and cheering of the

crowd.

"After shaking everyone's hand he walked over to me and said with a satisfied smile on his face, 'Well Rabbi, what do you think now?'

"I told him I was impressed, but I couldn't help wondering how he did it. How could he walk on such a thin rope without falling off? After much prompting he finally revealed his secret. 'I fix my eye on where I'm going,' he said, 'and never even think about falling'.

"He waited a few seconds for me to digest the answer, and then said: 'Do you know what was the hardest part? Turning around! When you turn around you lose sight of the goal for a second. It takes a long time to learn to turn around!'"

So, what can we learn from the tightrope walker?

Firstly, everyone thinks that walking the tightrope is a big deal. It is difficult to maintain a consistent ideological position, they say, especially when the concepts contained within it are complicated, and there are so many rules. It's much easier to walk on the ground, where it's safe, than to try climbing higher and risk falling on your face.

It's true, from the perspective of a ground-walker, the tightrope walker seems like a madman, risking his neck for a higher perspective on life. However, the tightrope walker reveals the truth. "I fix my eye on where I'm going, and never even think about falling." If you take the high road,

the way to stay on track is to focus on your goal. If your goal is really as clear as you think it is, then no rope is too thin and no chasm is too wide to cross in order to reach it. And you'll definitely never think about falling.

Real change requires letting go of past perceptions of self and of world, which can be scary. As our friend the tightrope walker says, "When you turn around you lose sight of the goal for a second. It takes a long time to learn how to turn around."

In the moment of change, you lose everything. In that split second when you are suspended between directions, the discontinuity can cause you to lose sight of your goal, and you suddenly sense a swelling fear of falling. And the truth is that you might fall. You are taking a leap, and leaping, by definition, means that both feet are off the ground. The lack of direction is only temporary, until you learn to turn around, until you land on your feet again. And then a whole new journey begins, with more turns and returns. Only then you can learn to dance.

During the High Holidays, we should take advantage of the new energy being infused into the world, and we should realize our ability to walk the tightrope. It should be a year of change and a year of turning – turning inwards, turning to each other and turning to G-d.

Enjoy the journey.

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Exodus Magazine

THE DAYS OF AWE

By Rabbi Levi Stolik

Translated by Yaakov Paley

ROSH HA'SHANAH

PRAYER ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF ROSH HA'SHANAH

- It is known that the Rebbe of Chabad expended an amazing amount of energy in their prayers on the first night of Rosh Ha'shanah (a fact that was clearly demonstrated by the Rebbe, my father-in-law, Leader of the generation, as well as by his predecessors). It is understood that each of us – their Chasidim – should emulate their conduct, at least to a minute degree.

ALL COME TO HEAR THE SHOFAR - INCLUDING INFANTS

- It is customary for everyone – men, women and even children – to assemble and hear the sounding of the Shofar. This includes even exceedingly small children – for although they cannot understand the blessing recited by the one sounding the Shofar, nevertheless, they too shout out 'Amen!' along with everyone else.

CONGREGANTS AND BAAL TOKEIA GAZE AT EACH OTHER

- We are required to gaze at the face of the one sounding the Shofar – just as he too is expected to gaze at the faces of the congregants – for gazing

indicates a deep, internal looking that exceeds normal sight.

DISCREET YIZKOR

- On Rosh Ha'shanah, the Rebbe of Chabad would recite 'Yizkor' discretely; a secret that has now come to be revealed. [The Rebbe smiled and continued:] Indeed, when this secret was passed on to me, it was evident that someday, sooner or later, I would reveal and publicize it to all!

L'SHANA TOVA ON THE SECOND DAY

- According to what my father [the Kabbalist R' Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn] has written, that 'the final inscription and seal for a good year occurs at the time of sounding the Shofar,' there may be grounds to continue blessing one another with the words, 'May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year', all the way until the Shofar is sounded on the second day of Rosh Ha'shanah – being that the final inscription and seal then takes place.

TAKE ON A NEW HIDDUR

- Each man and woman should resolve to take on a new Hiddur, an extra, more beautiful way of performing a Mitzvah, in accordance with what the Previous Rebbe related about his own father, the Rebbe Rashab, that he was accustomed before each Rosh Ha'shanah to accept a new Hiddur. This account, especially as it concerns the conduct of a Rebbe,

constitutes an instruction and an empowerment for every Jew to do the same.

TEN DAYS OF REPENTANCE - ASERES YEMEI HA'T'SHUVA

STUDY THE LAWS

- It is important that we study the laws we need to know for these ten days – which includes many changes in the printed prayer text as well as many special customs. We should therefore study the pertinent Halachos in Shulchan Aruch.

NOW'S THE TIME

- It would be exceedingly proper if all individuals would examine such calendars until the laws dealing with these days are engraved in their memories. After all, questions concerning these points of law may arise at a time when one is unable to interrupt from prayer and inquire as to the correct procedure or at times when there is no one around to ask – further, he may not even be aware that there is a question to begin with.

PROVIDING FOR THE NEEDY OF THE COMING YEAR

- Each of the seven days between Rosh Ha'shanah and Yom Kippur influences all of the same days of the week for the whole year. [I.e., the Monday between these two dates influences every Monday of the coming year, etc.] Therefore, we should concern ourselves with sufficiently providing for the needs of others on that same day of the week during the coming year.

SHABBOS FARBRENGEN

- Joyous gatherings should

be made on the Shabbos that occurs between Rosh Ha'shanah and Yom Kippur, on Motzaei Shabbos – which is when the meal of David HaMelech is held – and on the day before Yom Kippur.

BETWEEN YOM KIPPUR AND SUKKOS

- We should steadily increase such Farbrengens on the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos.

6TH OF TISHREI - YAHRTZAIT OF THE REBBE'S MOTHER, REBBETZIN CHANA

A BRIEF HISTORY AND INTRODUCTION

Rebbetzin Chana was born in 5640 (1880) on the 28th of Tevet, in Nikolayev, Ukraine, to Rabbi Meir Shlomo and Rachel Yanovsky. Rabbi Meir Shlomo was Chief Rabbi of Nikolayev. She demonstrated enormous self-sacrifice for Torah and Chassidus, and passed away in New York on the 6th of Tishrei 5725 (1964).

As the mother of the Leader of world Jewry, Rebbetzin Chana is also associated with the entire nation. This is alluded to in her name, Chana (חנה), which forms the Hebrew acronym of the three Mitzvos that are uniquely related to every Jewish woman:

1) חלה, Challa – the portion separated from bread-dough and Kashrus in general;

2) נדה, Nida – the laws of family purity;

3) הדלקה, Hadlakas HaNer – kindling the Shabbos candles.

As the Rebbe stated: The terms represented by the letters of the name Chana – Challa, Nida,

Hadlakas HaNer – are the three pillars on which every Jewish home is built as an eternal edifice with generations of children and grandchildren occupied in Torah and Mitzvos.

ENCOURAGE THE THREE MITZVOS

- Every man, woman and child should increase and bolster the observance of these Mitzvos – which are uniquely associated with the Jewish woman (not only is the performance of these Mitzvos associated with the woman, but even their relevance for men comes principally as a result of marriage). Ideally, this should be done in the merit of the Rebbetzin, for the sake of the elevation of her soul.

REVIEW LAWS REGULARLY

- In addition to the men's review, women should also periodically review the specific laws pertaining to these three Mitzvos – as well as all other practical Halachos they need to know.

STUDY AND SPREAD CHASSIDUS

- Woman should also study the mystical aspects of Torah as well, and – as an expression of love for one's fellow Jew – actively disseminate the wellsprings of Chassidus.¹

¹ She recorded Maamarim from Lubavitch to further Hafatza

In this matter, we can also learn from the acts of the one whose Yahrzeit is today. While still a young, unmarried girl living in the home of her father, HaRav HaGaon HaChassid Rabbi Meir Shlomo HaLevi Yanovsky, the Rabbi of Nikolaiev (which was one of the important cities that at that time served as a center and stronghold for Chabad Chassidim), she would spend her free time (amongst other things) transcribing the transcripts of all of the new

EREV YOM KIPPUR

ASK FOR LEKACH

- It is customary to ask for Lekach – honey cake and the like – on the day before Yom Kippur, and to accept the piece that is offered. The Previous Rebbe would personally hand out this cake, blessing the recipients with 'a good, sweet year.'

BLESSING THE CHILDREN

- It is customary that when blessing the children and others on Erev Yom Kippur we use the wording of the priestly blessing normally said by the Kohanim.

MOTZAEI YOM KIPPUR

WHO WANTS TO EAT AFTER N'ILA!?

- We should attempt to bring ourselves to a higher level where we will not think about food and drink right after the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

BEGIN THE SUKKA OR STUDY ITS LAWS

- It is stated in Shulchan Aruch that one should begin work on the Sukka immediately after Yom Kippur; although we see that many Jews – myself included – do not engage in physical activity, we do, however, fulfill our obligation by speaking about and studying the laws governing the construction of the Sukka.

A full version of A Call to Action can be accessed at iChossid.com

Chassidic discourses delivered by the Rebbe Rashab that would arrive from Lubavitch (either in writing or verbally, through a Chozer [one who would repeat these discourses for the public]). This she did of her own volition, simply because she wanted to be able to participate in disseminating the wellsprings of Chassidus.

BEYOND E-PLURIBUS UNUM

By Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

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



THREE PARADOXES

The Torah portion of Nitzavim-VaYeilech always coincides with the New Year. In most years (as it is this year) both portions are combined and are read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah. (In some years it is split into two portions, Nitzavim is read before Rosh Hashanah and VaYeilech is read separately on the Shabbat that follows Rosh Hashanah).

What is the message conveyed by these two Torah portions that prepares us for the New Year?

When we examine the content of these two parshiyos we are struck by their paradoxical nature.

First, the very names of these twin portions convey opposite meanings. Nitzavim translates as “standing firm.” VaYeilech, by contrast, means “and he went,” and it implies movement. How do we reconcile the message of standing firm with constant movement?

Second, the opening verse of Nitzavim reads: “You are standing firmly today before G-d your G-d.” This—as the

Baal Shem Tov, whose birthday was observed last Shabbat, the Chai-18th of Elul, states—refers to our judgment on Rosh Hashanah. We are guaranteed to be victorious in our case before G-d when we are judged on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment. The implication of this optimistic assertion is that we are all virtuous and deserving of a positive verdict in this judgment.

Yet throughout the parsha there are ample references to our rebellious and sinful nature. How, then, are we to view ourselves? Are we to focus on our righteousness and ignore all of our shortcomings? Or should we be honest about our failings and recognize the brutal truth that we are flawed individuals?

Third, Nitzavim begins with a description of our unity; how we all stand **together** before G-d. Yet immediately afterwards the Torah enumerates no less than ten distinct categories of Jews, from the heads to the water carriers! Are we truly one? Or are we a conglomerate of distinct entities? How can both statements be true?

In short, on the one hand

we are seen as standing firm, meritorious, and unified, and on the other hand we are characterized as in constant flux, flawed, and fragmented. Which is it?

A TALE OF TWO TIERS

All these apparent contradictions can be resolved with one premise that views the human condition on two levels and sees the challenge of life as one of striking the balance between them:

There is our external persona. “External” can refer to our relationships with others, our clothing, our bodies, and even the more manifest and conscious levels of our soul.

There is also an internal persona that we all possess, though we may not be aware of its existence. Unlike our relationships with which we deal with the world outside of our own, our internal identity involves the way we relate to ourselves. More specifically, it relates to our soul as opposed to our bodies. But even within our souls, there are inner precincts that rarely find expression in our routine lives. However, there are certain occasions and experiences that enable us to come face to face with our true inner being—the inner dimension of our souls.

“The ultimate challenge is to allow the anchor of our inner soul to prevent us from faltering and losing our balance, focus, and direction as we journey through the vicissitudes of life.”

SELF-EXAMINATION

When we take the time to invest the energy—as we are commanded to do in this month of Elul—to examine ourselves (as well as the way we should view others), we must recognize that there two distinct dimensions of our personalities that we must investigate:

First and foremost, we have to know who we truly are and what our essential identity truly is. We must realize that—regardless of who we are and where we think we stand—we have an intimate relationship with G-d because of the inner dimension of our soul that is always connected to its G-dly source. Because of this relationship we also know that we will inevitably end up “standing firm” in our judgment because G-d will not allow those who stand before Him to fail.

Once we reach that conclusion, we must then “roll up our sleeves” and work on our external persona that may be totally out of sync with our internal self. To change our external identity we must unleash the power that derives from our essential bond with G-d and thereby bring purity and atonement to all aspects of our lives.

BEYOND E-PLURIBUS UNUM (OUT OF MANY, ONE)

We can now understand the reason why the Torah speaks of the Jewish people as one and then divides them up into categories. When dealing with our essential identity we are indeed one. We cannot distinguish one Jew from the other. Moses, on this plane, is no more of a Jew than the simple “water carrier,” and the water carrier is no less of a Jew than Moses.

From the perspective of our external identities there are indeed differences among the various classes of Jews. There are people whose role in life are to be leaders, and they must not shirk the responsibility that goes along with leadership in the guise that after all we are all really equal anyhow. The same G-d that made our inner soul one with the inner soul of the other is the same G-d Who gave us different appearances, attitudes, personalities and diverse talents.

Just as we must allow our inner dimension to influence and inspire our outer beings, so too we are challenged to allow the unifying aspect of our inner souls to inform and impact our diversity, so that even as we express diverse and often conflicting viewpoints we never lose sight of the fundamental fact that we are truly—not just metaphorically—one!

If we think about this concept it goes beyond the motto E-pluribus Unum to, indeed, make one out of the many. E-pluribus Unum implies that we are essentially many and that we must seek to bring unity to that many. Our parsha tells us that we are essentially one and that we have to instill that oneness into our differences.

MOVING WHILE STANDING

We can now resolve the third apparent contradiction as to whether we stand in one place or do we constantly move.

Our inner soul is the part of us that is stable and in no need of growing. It is the anchor that provides for stability in an otherwise chaotic and forever-fluctuating world. But while our inner persona stands firm, our external identity is forever searching, probing,

and discovering new depth and meaning in life.

Growing and moving from one place to another is like any physical journey. It is fraught with danger. Our life journey can take us far away from our true destination. Growth can sometimes conflict with the ideals which are in consonance with who we really are and which transport us to alien places where we don't really belong.

Again the ultimate challenge is to allow the anchor of our inner soul to prevent us from faltering and losing our balance, focus, and direction as we journey through the vicissitudes of life.

PUTTING A HEAD ON OUR SHOULDERS

As we enter a new year these two dimensions come into focus. This is the time of the year when we are so much closer to realizing that we have an inner soul. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that essential bond between G-d and us is most likely to come into the spotlight. And it is therefore the time of the year when we get in touch with the anchor of our lives. That, in turn, provides us with the confidence that G-d will give us a good and sweet year because we are—in essence -- good and sweet, even as we are brutally honest in acknowledging our external shortcomings.

For the same reason, this is also the time of the year when the differences between us are much less divisive and discordant than usual, because at this unique time we are closer to the awareness of the unifying character of our inner soul.

Without the unifying force of Rosh Hashanah our inner

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