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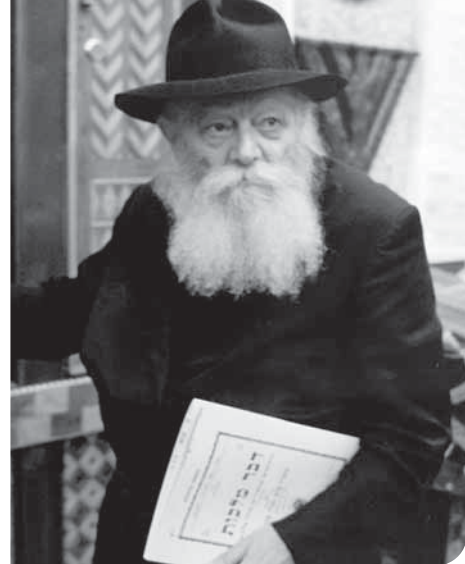
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BASI L'GANI 5712

In honor of Yud Shvat, Beis Moshiach presents a selection of the maamer the Rebbe MH"m delivered on Yud Shvat 5712, in accordance with the custom established by the Rebbe to review each year a section of the Rebbe Rayatz's maamer "Basi L'Gani" of 5710. • This year we focus on the second section of the profound and foundational chassidic discourse. • Part 3



Translated by Boruch Merkur

"FIRE FROM ABOVE" EVEN WHEN BELOW IN THE WORLD

3. Now, as stated above, the animal sacrifices offered upon the altar were absorbed within "the fire from above"; they were consumed by Heavenly fire. The same is true of the service of *korbanos* as it applies to each individual: the sacrifices a Jew offers – that is, the devotion of his faculties and sensibilities to the service of G-d – must be absorbed within "the fire from above."

When we speak about "the fire from above" in the context of the individual, we refer to the "flaming fire" of the G-dly Soul. Its fire is its burning desire, its yearning for G-d, as expressed in the verse (Song of Songs 8:5), "Its flame is the flaming fire, the blaze of the L-rd." In virtue of its Heavenly source, even after the G-dly Soul has descended into the physical world, after it has been invested within a physical body – its love of G-d is still referred to as "the fire from above." [...]

[To elaborate, consider the analogy of burning embers. Its fire can be discussed in terms of both the flame that emerges from within the coals, as well as, when speaking about the source of this flame, the fire within the burning embers, the fire within the coals themselves. Now, although the flame outside the coals can be identified as such, discussed in terms of it being separate from its source, the burning embers, it nevertheless has no (independent) existence, no tangible reality (unto itself). For this reason the Mishna (Beitza 39a)

teaches us that were one to bring a flame out from one domain to another on Shabbos, he is not liable for transgressing the Sabbath; no real, tangible substance was carried. (See also Rambam Laws of Shabbos 18:5.)

[The two aspects of the analogy of the burning embers correspond to two levels of G-dliness: the Ten Hidden S'firos, hidden within the Creator Himself, and the Ten S'firos of Atzilus, the first identifiable emanation from G-d. Despite appearances to the contrary, the Ten S'firos of Atzilus – although they have emerged and emanated from their G-dly source, the Ten Hidden S'firos – have no tangible reality independent of that source, just as the flame that emerges from the embers cannot be said to truly exist independently of its source, the burning embers. The "fire" of the Ten S'firos of Atzilus, insofar as it is rooted in and connected with its source, is also called "the blaze of the L-rd."

BRINGING OUT THE FIRE OF MEDITATION

[Now, everything that exists On High has its parallel in this world, within the Jew. Thus, the Jew also possesses within him "the blaze of the L-rd," a love of G-d that can be discussed in terms of the two perspectives cited in this analogy: the fire within the embers and the flame that extends beyond its source. That is, the love of a Jew can be described in terms of two stages in *hisbonenus*, meditation, the contemplation of G-dliness. The intellectual process of meditating upon G-dly concepts results

in the love of G-d, an emotional experience. However, when one is steeped in contemplation, united with the G-dly concept, there is no emotional response to speak of; at that moment the resultant emotion is absorbed within the thought, its source, and has no existence independent of it. It is only after one detaches his focus from the deep concentration on the concept, the domain of the intellect, and brings it into the domain of emotions, that the love of G-d is experienced as such. Then, it is the emotional experience that reigns, although its existence is utterly dependent upon maintaining its union with its hidden, intellectual source, the meditation that preceded and engendered it.]


OFFERING THE ANIMAL WITHIN

4. Now, it was explained above that the *korbanos* reach a transcendent level of G-dliness that the Torah calls “before Havaya,” meaning “beyond Havaya.” Similarly regarding the “flame from above,” within which the sacrifice is consumed – it too is “beyond Havaya.” In terms of our personal

“When we speak about “the fire from above” in the context of the individual, we refer to the “flaming fire” of the G-dly Soul. Its fire is its burning desire, its yearning for G-d, as expressed in the verse, “Its flame is the flaming fire, the blaze of the L-rd.” In virtue of its Heavenly source, even after the G-dly Soul has descended into the physical world, after it has been invested within a physical body – its love of G-d is still referred to as “the fire from above.”

service of G-d, this amounts to serving G-d in a manner that transcends reason.

Just as in the Beis HaMikdash, the Holy Temple, animals were sacrificed on the altar, so too in our times, for our “prayers were established to correspond to the Tamid sacrifice,” the daily offering of an animal sacrifice. Indeed, the service of the G-dly Soul must be specifically in interaction with the Animal Soul, not the G-dly soul acting on its own. It is specifically this manner of Divine service that transcends reason, transcends the intellect, reaching beyond the *Seider Hishtalshlus*, the natural order of G-dliness in the world.



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






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CHABAD AT THE KOSEL

At this holy location which attracts over a million visitors a year, Chabad is a vital presence. This is a place where people are inspired. Their inspiration is channeled into putting on t'fillin and making a Jewish connection.

By Nosson Avrohom

Thousands of Jews visit the remnant of our Beis HaMikdash, the Western Wall, every day. People pour out their hearts, each in his or her language and style. There are Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Chassidim, religious Jews of all kinds, bar mitzva boys, students, Jewish senators, presidents, heads of state, celebrities, tourists, politicians, and those who know nothing about their Judaism, young and old.

Most of them will encounter the t'fillin stand of Tzeirei Chabad which is manned by Chassidim twelve hours a day, seven days a week. It is there even when the sun burns, when the rain pours, on Shabbos and Yom Tov including Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av. From early in the morning until nightfall, nine men

are at work. More than twenty pairs of t'fillin are used hundreds of times a day. Kippot are provided and there are brochures about Judaism.

You can hear the Shma recited in numerous accents throughout the day. For many Jews, this is the first time in their lives, or one of the first times. Here, facing the stones of the Kosel, in an atmosphere of k'dusha, hearts open up and there are often tears.

"When I hear someone excited about putting on t'fillin on a karkafta (someone who has never put on t'fillin) I don't see what's so exciting about that. There are days that we have ten or more karkaftas," says Rabbi Yossi Halperin, director of the Chabad house at the Kosel for the last six years. "Sometimes, after t'fillin, we arrange a bris

mila for them."

They come from all over the world. Gentiles come too. There's never a moment of quiet at the Kosel. The Sh'china does not budge from here. It makes sense that Chassidim of the Rebbe MH"M are here and ready to be of service.

THE SIX DAY WAR

What is the history of the Chabad stand at the Kosel? When was it first set up?

The answer is, the day the Kosel was liberated during the Six Day War. The Rebbe's instruction on the eve of the war to begin Mivtza T'fillin got Chabad Chassidim out on the street and putting t'fillin on with people. R' Ben Zion Grossman, then a resident of Yerushalayim,





Students from Taglit Birthright

Right: Rabbi Yossi Halperin with Mivtza Lulav at the Kosel

scion of an old Yerushalmi family, tells about the first Mivtza T'fillin at the Kosel:

“People were eager to see the Kosel which had been under Jordanian rule and off-limits. The war broke out on Monday, 26 Iyar 5727/1967. Two days later, on Wednesday, the Old City was captured. The Temple Mount and the Kosel were liberated by the IDF. Jews worldwide were ecstatic. However, the IDF did not immediately allow access because of mines and Jordanian snipers.

“Despite the danger, Rabbi Moshe Aaron and I decided to try and get in. Our initial attempts



failed. Policemen and soldiers ordered us to leave. One time, we managed to reach Shaar Sh'chem (Damascus Gate) before we were caught and put on a police jeep. We didn't give up. We tried again and were finally successful. We reached the Kosel. Fortunately, it was chaotic and nobody asked us

what we were doing there.

“We decided to carry out the Rebbe's instruction, but since we hadn't brought t'fillin with us, we borrowed a pair from some religious soldiers. The soldiers were tremendously moved (as were we). Hardly anyone refused to put on t'fillin, thus expressing



Mivtza T'fillin after the liberation of the Kosel

“This is the holiest place in the world, the site of the Beis HaMikdash. People ask me to hold a place for them in the plaza for when the Geula comes.”

thanks to Hashem. The soldiers stood on a long line to put them on. We read the Shma with them and the t'fillin immediately went on the next person. That was the inauguration of the t'fillin stand at the Kosel.

“On Shavuot 5727, the general public was allowed to enter. The day after Yom Tov we set up a t'fillin stand which we manned from early morning until sunset.”

A couple of weeks later, on 21 Sivan, the Rebbe sent this instruction to the leadership of Tzeirei Agudas Chabad in Eretz Yisroel:

This following is a copy of the wording of a telegram which was sent to you today: The Rebbe suggests that if it is possible, a permanent booth be set up at the Kosel for the putting on of t'fillin; of course, with permission from the appropriate authorities. It

would be worthwhile printing the t'fillin blessings and Shma in a small format and giving it out for free. Also, to sell t'fillin that has been properly checked at a minimal cost.”

Regarding a permit mentioned above, even if it doesn't seem to be necessary, it is worthwhile obtaining it so no one can protest, and mainly, because of the fear that those who are jealous should not consider looking for excuses, etc.

It would be good and right for you to distribute a brochure that explains the importance of putting on t'fillin and very importantly, to add... that this does not exempt them from saying the blessings that go with Krias Shma and davening in general [...]

Obviously, it would be good that Siddurim and T'hilim are there too (small format),

Tanya, etc. And there must be yarmulkes [...]

With blessings for all good always,

Rabbi CMA Chadakov

Rabbi Yisroel Leibov, director of Tzach of Eretz Yisroel, provided the funding, since Tzach of Yerushalayim at that time was funded entirely by central Tzach. In later years, the mashpia R' Moshe Weber a"h ran the stand.

About seven years ago, Tzach looked for someone to undertake the running of the Chabad house at the Kosel. Rabbi Yosef Halperin was picked. He is a young man who had been looking for shlichus:

“When I first showed up, I could not believe my eyes. So many people can be saved in this holy place! We immediately sent the existing t'fillin to be checked and bought some new pairs. Over time, we expanded and now we have nine steady workers plus volunteers.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE KOSEL

It is hard to describe the work of Chabad at the Kosel both because it encompasses such a broad range that is hard to distill into a magazine article, and because the outreach workers are not always aware of the repercussions of their work. It is not a rarity for someone to come over to the stand who looks religious, with a beard, who says that the impetus for his return to Judaism began right here, at the t'fillin stand. These stories are commonplace and I asked R' Halperin how he merited such an incredible opportunity.

“After I married, I looked for a place to go on shlichus. I checked out a few places and then came

the offer from Tzach. They were looking for somebody to run the activities here, as per the request of the Rav of the Kosel, Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz. Since the passing of R' Weber, the stand continued to operate but not in an organized way.

"I accepted the offer and since then we are working to expand the work that we do here. When we started, there were only two of us. Today, we have one person who speaks Spanish, another English, another French, another Russian, etc. and even this is not enough and we desperately need more volunteers.

"Over the years, we have published brochures with Shma and other Jewish content in nearly every language. This gives us something tangible to hand to people that they can take home so that there is some continuity to their moment of inspiration."

What are your daily activities?

"Our main focus is t'fillin. In the summer months we can put t'fillin on 1,500 people a day! I doubt there is another place in the world like it. Since our people are multilingual, that's helpful in interacting with people who come here from all over the world. There are people who want to talk and seek advice but there isn't always time for that and we refer them to shluchim where they live. In a place as spiritual as the Kosel, this simple activity of putting on t'fillin can bring about a tremendous change in a person and can have repercussions for years to come.

"Since I began working here, we have also started holding bar mitzva parties. Shluchim from all over the world send me bar mitzva boys and we make a ceremony here. The most moving thing is to see adults celebrating



Inspired souls



Soldiers putting on t'fillin at the stand

“In the summer months we can put t'fillin on 1,500 people a day! I doubt there is another place in the world like it.”

their bar mitzva. Today, a top doctor from the United States, a man of 63, came here and put t'fillin on for the first time."

What makes this t'fillin stand unique?

"I think there are two special things about it. First, there is the spiritual experience. At this holy

site, Jewish souls are inspired. It's easier to convince people to do a mitzva. Holocaust survivors, who refuse t'fillin everywhere else, put t'fillin on here for the first time since the war. People from kibbutzim have softened up here and I ask you, is there another place where 1,500 Jews put on



A Holocaust survivor, a former officer in the Navy



Chief Education Officer Brig. Gen. Eli Shermeister



Chief of the IDF's Civil Administration

t'fillin a day including those who have never done so before in their lives?

"Second, I think this location has Jews coming from literally, everywhere in the world. This creates a unique opportunity to start a connection that can be followed up properly through the shluchim in their various locations."

Is there anything difficult about outreach here?

(Smiling): "We have the 'tzaros of the wealthy' ... Chabad houses have their busy times and their quiet times, but here at the Kosel there is never a quiet day. Every day, every hour, is intense. We have more than twenty pairs of t'fillin, yet, we still do not meet the demand. The outreach workers give every visitor whatever Jewish help they need. Jews hear basic Jewish concepts here for the first time and are referred to their local Chabad house to continue learning. People constantly come and go here and we don't keep in touch so what we say is extremely important. It has to be brief and meaningful. The responsibility we have is to make use of every moment because we won't have a second chance."

There must be some people who refuse. What do you do to convince them?

"Even if someone refuses to put on t'fillin, I continue talking to him rather than 'lose' him. On our staff is Rabbi Shmuel Weiss who spent time traveling to many shluchim in the US. The familiarity that he has with different parts of the US is attractive to young people. When a young man hears a line like, 'Hey, I was there and I know that place,' this creates an immediate bond. The cold types can be warmed up with regards from their own town. 'You're from that Russian city? Where Rabbi X is?' That sometimes works."

You mentioned bar mitzva celebrations. How many are we talking about and how are they done?

"These are people who come from abroad, usually in the summer, but even in the winter there are people who come. There are months when we have five bar mitzva celebrations a day; at the

end of the day we are exhausted.

"There are also entire classes of bar mitzva boys who come to the Kosel for their aliya. Four years ago, the principal of a school whose sixth grade was about to make the trip to Yerushalayim called me. He had asked the shliach in his city to come up with an idea for the girls in the class. What should the girls do while the boys put on t'fillin and have their aliya to the Torah? He referred the principal to us and since then, we have also gotten involved with girls who come here. There is no reason to miss the opportunity."

You must have many stories ...

"We have endless numbers of stories here. If a writer would collect all the stories, we could publish a book every month.

"I'll tell you a story that moved me very much. Two Jewish tourists came here, one French and one Turkish. The Frenchman put on t'fillin but the Turk refused. He went over to the Kosel and when he came back he was willing to put on t'fillin. When he finished taking them off, he asked for a picture to be taken with me. A few minute after he left, he returned with tears in his eyes and said he wanted to tell me something.

"He said that on his previous visit to Eretz Yisroel, he went to the hospital because he had felt weak and the doctors diagnosed a problem with his heart. After he was released with the results, he was supposed to undergo a series of other tests. His pains grew worse and he was sure the problem had grown more serious. At his first visit to the hospital's outpatient clinic he met a handsome looking man with penetrating eyes in the elevator. This man encouraged him,

promising that everything would be all right.

“The tests showed that the doctors had erred and his heart was fine. ‘When I saw your eyes, I was reminded of him. That is what made me change my mind and put on t’fillin,’ he said.”

EVERYBODY GOES TO THE KOSEL

R’ Halperin constantly refers to his staff. “All the credit goes to them. They do the work.” The regulars are: R’ Shmuel Weiss, R’ Dovid Cohen, R’ Aharon Naakah – who works with Spanish speaking people, R’ Yehuda Tilles, R’ Chaim Goldstein, R’ Dovid Kopolik – who works with Russian speaking people. He also mentions R’ Yakobovitch who comes every day with other Lubavitchers from Yerushalayim.

“In the summer, when the tiled walkways of the plaza reflect the heat and it’s hard to keep your eyes open, we split up into groups of two or three, but we are desperate for more manpower.”

There are also regular volunteers like Gil Locks who is over 70 years old and has been coming to the Kosel for nearly twenty years.

“He helps by telling people his fascinating life story.

“Until a year ago, a man about 95 years of age would come to our stand. He had been an American soldier who liberated Jews from the Nazis. He would come nearly every day for three to four hours and ask people to put on t’fillin. Sometimes, when we encountered Holocaust survivors who refused to put on t’fillin, we would send them to him.”

I wanted to watch the men at work. It’s quite amazing. There is hardly a free moment. Between removing the t’fillin and putting



R’ Halperin (in costume) reading Megillas Esther at the stand

“Three years went by and he received no response. Then he received a response which said, ‘Your letter was received, blessings.’ The very next day the hospital called to say that his wife was expecting a baby. Within a few years, they had a number of children. A few years later, they went to the Rebbe for dollars. The Rebbe gave each one of them a dollar and before they left the Rebbe asked the wife to come back and gave her another dollar. Soon after, she realized that she was expecting another baby.”

them on someone else, two of them, R’ Yehuda Tilles and R’ Dovid Kopolik, had a little time to talk. I asked them how it feels to work near the Kosel.

“I’ve been working here for over a year,” said Dovid. “I work with anyone who comes over but I focus on those who speak Russian. I am from Nizhny Novgorod and I know the language and the mentality. I became religious after being raised in a non-observant home. After my year on K’vutza and receiving smicha, I married and lived in Tzfas. When we moved

to Yerushalayim, I learned in the Tzemach Tzedek kollel in the Old City and now I man this t’fillin stand.”

Are Russian-speaking Jews different from other Jews?

“Very different, though there are differences even among those who speak Russian. They don’t all come from Russia, but from many other countries and each one has his own background and nature. What characterizes them all is their paltry Jewish education. Russian speaking Jews who live in the US or Eretz Yisroel might know a little

more about Judaism, but their opposition is stronger than those who know next to nothing but lived all their lives in one of the countries of the Soviet Union. The only mitzva that almost all of them know about is eating matza on Pesach. To them, putting on t'fillin is not an authentic mitzva."

So how do you convince them to roll up their sleeves?

"Their strong point is their intellect and not so much faith and emotion, and therefore, we have to explain things. Throughout each day I am kept busy explaining why we put on t'fillin. Many of them have no idea what this mitzva is and when they are given a rational Jewish explanation, they do it. Only a few refuse. A few days ago we had two Russian Jews, one a department head of a university and the other a senior worker in the Knesset. Both put on t'fillin for the first time in their lives after hearing me explain the significance of the mitzva of t'fillin and how it is no less a mitzva than eating matza on Pesach."

How do you feel about working here at the Kosel?

"To be honest, I come every day and I've gotten used to it, but this doesn't take away from the k'dusha here; it fixes it firmly in the soul. It's very encouraging to us that Jews are constantly coming over and sharing the moving moments in their lives and their Jewish experiences. There's no question that the location has a special impact, as opposed to an encounter in Tel Aviv, for example.

"Here at the t'fillin stand I have heard some miracle stories of the Rebbe that I never read or heard before. Recently, an American Jew came over and after removing the t'fillin he

said, 'I don't want to bother you but I must tell you a story that happened to me with the Rebbe.' And he told me that he wrote to the Rebbe after not having children for a number of years. Three years went by and he received no response. Then he received a response which said, 'Your letter was received, blessings.' The next day the hospital said his wife was expecting a baby. Within a few years, they had a number of children. A few years later, they went to the Rebbe for dollars. The Rebbe gave each one of them a dollar and before they left the Rebbe asked the wife to come back and gave her another dollar. Soon after, she realized that she was expecting another baby. He was so emotional when he told me this story that he cried.

"We had an Israeli tour guide here who brought a group of gentiles. At first he refused to put on t'fillin but he was finally convinced. After he took them off, he asked whether we knew the organization Kollel Chabad. We told him we did and he said that in this organization there is a nice man by the name of Rabbi Duchman whom he knows. When he and his wife went to New York, Rabbi Duchman took him to the Rebbe. The Rebbe gave some dollars to him and to his wife and said, 'this is for the children.' When they left, they counted the dollars and saw that his wife had two dollars which corresponded to the two children he had with her, and he had three dollars because he also had a child from a previous marriage.

"There was an Israeli who told us that he had seen the Rebbe several times and he showed us a dollar that he had gotten from the Rebbe with a bracha before his marriage. He said that he had lived in Raanana for many years

and when his daughter was born, the doctors diagnosed a problem with one of her eyes. When she grew older, they recommended glasses despite her young age. He and his wife wrote to the Rebbe about the problem and the Rebbe wrote, 'm'shaneh makom, m'shaneh mazal' (change your location, change your fortune). They did nothing at the time but when they finally had to move, they also ended up changing pediatricians. The new doctor said her eyesight had improved and there was no need for glasses."

STORIES HEARD AT THE KOSEL

One of the veterans at the Kosel is R' Yehuda Tilles who has been working there for three years. "Every day at the Kosel is special. Not a single day is like any other. The Kosel is a very special place. Jews who come here feel spiritually elevated and are more receptive and accepting. Even those who are tough, soften up when they come here."

R' Tilles has many stories. "When Rabbi Gutnick of Australia came here, he told us a special story. He heard it from an older man in his community who told it to him during the break (between Musaf and Mincha) on Yom Kippur.

"This man had gone to Eretz Yisroel for his daughter's wedding. Before the wedding he went to the Kosel and people at the t'fillin stand tried to convince him to put on t'fillin. At first he had refused but he finally agreed. A few days later, as he was dancing at the wedding, he turned very pale. His daughter was the first to notice this. An ambulance rushed him unconscious to the hospital. The doctors said he had had a stroke

and might not come out of the coma. Even if he awoke, half his body would be paralyzed. But Hashem had other plans. As the worried family members stood around his bed, he saw a man with a shining countenance ask him whether he had put on t'fillin. He remembered that a few days earlier he had put on t'fillin at the Kosel. He told the man, yes, he had put on t'fillin and the man went over to him and touched him, and he woke up.

"Needless to say, he related this story a few days later. His condition continued to improve and a few days later he was released from the hospital with no need for rehabilitation. The doctors changed their diagnosis and said it was a minor stroke. He identified the man who came to him in the coma as none other than the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"We heard this story from R' Gutnick who heard it from the man. We concluded that we must not easily give up on any Jew. We have to insist, in a nice way, that they put on t'fillin.

"A few days ago I heard a story from a Litvishe fellow who lives in Lakewood. He told me that when he was in yeshiva, he and another nine bachurim were chosen by the rosh yeshiva to do kiruv in the summer. He was sent to the Chabad house run by Rabbi Volovik. He worked primarily with students and was very successful with them. He would bring a group of students every week to the Rebbe. He saw how, each time, their hearts opened and it became easier to work with them. Out of all the students, there was one who insisted he had no reason to go along. 'There is nothing to see,' he said. This Litvishe guy kept trying to convince him until he finally joined them.



A bar mitzva boy at the Kosel

"Years passed and the Litvishe guy nearly forgot about it, until one day when he met a religious Jew who looked very familiar. Their eyes met and he realized that this was the student who had not wanted to go to the Rebbe. What had happened? He asked, and was astonished by the answer.

"Before the student saw the Rebbe, he made a deal in which he included the Rebbe – if he would be accepted to law school, he would do t'shuva. A few days later, he was informed that he had been accepted. He forgot completely about the deal he had made.

"One day, his mother called and asked him whether he had made any sort of deal with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. 'Me? A deal? What are you talking about?' Then he remembered his private deal. Utterly shocked, he rushed to his parents' house to find out how she could possibly know about it. His mother told him that she had seen the Rebbe in a dream and he told her that her

son had made a deal with him. The Rebbe had done his part, but her son had not done his.

"After this revelation, the student went to yeshiva and became a baal t'shuva."

WE HAVE TO FINISH THE JOB

We went back to R' Halperin who runs this empire which is way more than an active t'fillin stand; it's a lighthouse that spreads the wellsprings and is mekarev Yidden. He said, "On the one hand, this is the holiest place in the world, the site of the Beis HaMikdash. People ask me to hold a place for them in the plaza for when the Geula comes. On the other hand, being here every day cools off the excitement. The one thing that fans the flames is the knowledge that we are working here, in the holiest place to the Jewish people, on the Rebbe's shlichus. Until we see (he says pointing) the Beis HaMikdash coming down from heaven, we haven't finished the job."

PUTTING A HALT TO THE WAVE OF DESTRUCTION

The worst blow was inflicted upon the residents of the Mitzpeh Avichai outpost in Kiryat Arba, home to eight families. “At two-thirty in the morning, I heard someone pounding at the door. Soon after, the police broke the door down and burst in,” said Aryeh Davis.

By Sholom Ber Crombie

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

During the previous week, the Civil Administration in Yehuda and Shomron demolished buildings in three Jewish outposts: Gal Yosef near Shilo, Givat Aryeh near the Itamar settlement, and Mitzpeh Avichai in Kiryat Arba for the tenth time.

Each of these outposts has its own story of incomprehensible agony. In Gal Yosef, the demolition was carried out while its case was being presented to the Supreme Court. However, the Civil Administration inspectors didn't wait for the litigation to end. In an act of sheer cruelty, they happily took the opportunity to demolish the outpost greenhouses, built with great toil over a period of two years, thus destroying the local residents' ability to make a living. The destruction at Givat Aryeh was no less cruel, as just twenty-

four hours after its owner, Yedaya Shoham, had been released from an extended imprisonment on suspicion of espionage, hundreds of police officers equipped with heavy machinery arrived and demolished his home. The security forces also destroyed the local synagogue, and after finishing the job, they found the Seifer Torah rolling among the wreckage.

But the worst blow was saved for the residents of the Mitzpeh Avichai outpost in Kiryat Arba, home to eight families and other single occupants in ten structures. “At two-thirty in the morning, I heard someone pounding at the door. At a certain point, the police broke the door down and burst in,” said Aryeh Davis. “They forced us to go outside into the freezing cold with our small children while they demolished our home. We

remained in the area with our children, woken out of a sound sleep, until they brought us into Kiryat Arba.”

The shocking destruction of the outposts last week didn't make the headlines, as the papers were too busy dealing with the growing list of celebrities preparing to run in the upcoming Knesset elections. They prefer to cover the glitz and glamour, instead of condemning the vicious punishment inflicted upon the settlers of Yehuda and Shomron.

A fixed pattern is appearing within the media. They report about the outposts only when they can excoriate the settlers with their libelous slander. But when small children find themselves thrown out of their beds in the middle of the night into the freezing cold, the media shirks all journalistic obligations and doesn't bother to point an accusing finger at the authorities.

THE DEFENSE MINISTER IMPERILS THE LIVES OF THE SETTLERS

The ones who are responsible for the destruction of the outposts are the prime minister and his defense chief. They hide behind the Civil Administration – the authorized body ostensibly in charge of maintaining civil

order in Yehuda and Shomron. Under prevailing circumstances, until the State of Israel officially annexes Yehuda and Shomron, the responsibility for administering matters pertaining to the liberated territories is in the hands of the military – headed by the Minister of Defense. All construction in Yehuda and Shomron requires the signed permission of the defense minister – and that includes the destruction of settlers' homes. In this instance, Defense Minister Ehud Barak won't lift a finger without permission from his benefactor, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. Both of them are ultimately responsible for taking children out of their beds into the freezing cold of Kiryat Arba to destroy their homes. They operate mercilessly, as they meet their objective of advancing the government's public relations campaign at the expense of the settlers.

They ignore the horrific tragedy of demolishing the homes of eight families. But worse than that is the fact that the minister of defense – the person authorized with the task of protecting the lives of the residents of Yehuda and Shomron – sends his soldiers to destroy hilltop outposts, all established to secure the region's main traffic arteries and Jewish settlements. The hills of Yehuda and Shomron have strategic importance at the highest level. Experience has proven that all locations settled by Jews are transformed into security strongholds for the large population residing in these longstanding settlements. This is a position also shared by senior IDF officers who look positively upon the establishment of Jewish control over as many of these strategic points in Yehuda and Shomron as possible. Up



Rebuilding the Mitzpeh Avichai outpost in Kiryat Arba, after being demolished for the tenth time

“When the outposts became the joint interest of all the religious parties – from the National Union to Shas, the prime minister understood that he cannot continue to advance this policy of destruction, forcing him to put it to a halt.

until just a few years ago, there had been cooperation between the army and the settlers on this matter.

The story of the Yesha outposts is not just some trivial aspect to the settler movement. Ever since negotiations with the terrorist organizations went into high gear, no new permanent settlements have been established in Yehuda and Shomron. Outposts have taken their place instead, erected with the tremendous self-sacrifice of the settlers. In recent years, the outpost phenomenon has turned into a response against the freeze on settlement construction in Yehuda and Shomron. Every location classified as a security problem was privileged to have several families establish their homes there, and the army came in as a result. In the case of Migron, for example, the settlement was established after drive-by murders took place on the road between Beit E-I and Ofra. Since the settlement's

founding, the highway has been peaceful, and settlers can travel quietly along this route.

Back in the very early days of the settlements, the Rebbe spoke about the security aspect within the Shomron region. Even before Beis Lechem and Sh'chem were transformed into nests for terrorist cells, the Rebbe discussed the issue of “defensible borders” designed to protect the millions of Jews living in Eretz HaKodesh. The Rebbe demanded from successive Israeli governments that they settle Yehuda and Shomron, thereby creating facts on the ground that will preserve Jewish sovereignty throughout the region. In conversations with policymakers and army officials, the Rebbe touched upon the importance of establishing firm borders, noting that this can be achieved through the “wall and tower” approach. The Rebbe urged them to tighten the Jewish presence in the territories with as many settlements as possible.

Today, we see how every vital location throughout Yehuda and Shomron where settlements were established have assisted the defense community in protecting Raanana and Kfar Saba.

A DANGEROUS ROUND OF TALKS

While the state-run media ignored the personal anguish of the outpost families, the headlines were filled with reports of a new round of negotiations between the representatives of the prime minister of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. After Netanyahu begged Abu Mazen in his speech before the United Nations General Assembly to agree to meet with him for the purpose of advancing the establishment of a Palestinian state, the prime minister began taking steps to try and re-start direct negotiations. Netanyahu apparently forgot that just a few years ago, there had been another Israeli prime minister who offered the arch-murderer from Ramallah virtually everything he wanted – yet he refused to sign an agreement. There probably hasn't been a prime minister who went further than Olmert did, when he even agreed to relinquish Jewish sovereignty over Yerushalayim. In the present situation, not even the extreme leftists believe that there's a chance for negotiations with these terrorists to bring a true peace agreement. In practical terms, there is no chance whatsoever that the negotiations will produce any agreement between the two sides.

The terrorist leaders are unwilling to give up the negotiations option, but on the other hand, they are also not prepared to make any real compromises. They cynically take advantage of the prime minister's

longing to find favor in the eyes of the Israeli left, thus dragging him into another round of talks that will achieve nothing except to wear down the remaining strength of the country's political leadership.

It would seem that we're talking about yet another empty round of negotiations between representatives of the prime minister and, l'havdil, representatives of the terrorist organizations. It's a pity that Netanyahu doesn't remember the fact that every time negotiations are held, it ends with murderous terrorist attacks r"l. Every time that Israeli leaders made a gesture towards the Palestinians, they got a wave of terror in return.

It was learned only recently that the IDF had serious concerns that if the talks on establishing a Palestinian state failed, the terrorist organizations would unleash a new cycle of violence. While there may have been a need in the past to explain why the Rebbe cried out that merely talking to terrorists led to bloodshed, today there's no need to explain the connection between the two. The Rebbe's words are now clear to all military experts, who understand that speaking with terrorists about concessions and capitulation lead to murder and devastation.

BLESSED COOPERATION

Anyone who needs proof of the power of unity can simply look at what was accomplished in recent weeks, when the demolition at the Migron settlement and the neighborhoods adjacent to Beit E-l were halted because of the cooperation among the Knesset's religious factions. When the outposts became the joint interest of all the religious parties – from the National Union to Shas, the

prime minister understood that he cannot continue to advance this policy of destruction, forcing him to put it to a halt. The fact that the demolition forces have not visited the Migron settlement for the time being represents the fruits of the joint labors of the faith-filled Knesset factions, giving birth to a new front for effective activity. Last week, the leaders of the 'Bayit HaYehudi' (Jewish Home) Party informed the prime minister that if the law on hesder yeshivos is not advanced and the Migron settlement is harmed ch"v, the party will resign from the governing coalition.

The proper response to the government's dangerous policies is the formation of a united religious front, thereby giving the religious parties a significant amount of influence upon the next Knesset elections and the resulting governing coalition. Furthermore, if they wage a serious campaign, they could even lay claim to the office of prime minister. It wasn't for naught that the Rebbe invested such supreme efforts and wrote so many correspondences on this matter. It's enough to consider the fact that the Torah leader of the generation put a hold on his holier pursuits and devoted so much time to this subject. We can now clearly understand that this is not merely a political issue; it is a vital proposal necessary to save the Jewish People.

In the last Knesset, many of its members proved that they know how to work together on behalf of the Jewish People when the need prevails, as they rise above their narrow personal interests. We must hope that this unity will continue among the religious politicians and bring significant change to the Israeli political map.

ARE WE MISSING THE POINT?

By Rabbi Akiva Wagner



Mottel the g'vir, as he was known, was one of the wealthiest people in his country. He possessed huge forests and many assets. Mottel was very generous with his wealth, and many a Jew and institution benefitted from his philanthropy. In addition, he had close connections in the royal palace, which he also utilized to the benefit of his less fortunate brethren.

Mottel had a childhood friend named Yankel, whom he loved like a brother. Once, Mottel made a pact with Yankel as an expression of their deep friendship. He promised to always care for Yankel and all of his descendants, and to assist them whenever they needed, in any way that he is able.

Many years passed, and Moshe, a grandson of Yankel, who lived in great poverty, came upon hard times. He was unable to honor a promissory note that he had written, and his creditors decided to take a cruel revenge against him. They denounced him to the king, accusing him of treason. Moshe was immediately arrested and was sentenced to death by hanging r"l. To make matters worse, Mottel, his grandfather's dear friend and benefactor, was away from the town at the time on a distant journey.

The townspeople were heartbroken. It appeared that Moshe, regarding whose innocence no one had any

doubt, would lose his life due to a cruel twist of fate. When the designated day arrived, the townspeople gathered with tears in their eyes and heavy hearts to the center of the town, where a scaffold had been erected. The noose was placed around poor Moshe's neck, and the executioner prepared to kick out the chair from beneath him.

Suddenly, a great commotion was heard from the distance. While everyone craned their necks and strained their eyes, they saw clouds of dust announcing the swift approach of a horse and carriage. This unexpected interruption held everyone's attention, and within a few moments Mottel's wagon, which had caused the commotion, screeched to a stop, and Mottel himself jumped off and yelled to the hangman to stop what he was doing, and await further instructions. The hangman complied, and Mottel hurried to the royal palace to intercede on Moshe's behalf with the king. Indeed, within a few minutes he returned with the official pardon, signed and sealed by the king himself. The townspeople were overjoyed by the salvation that took place, literally, in the nick of time, and in their great feeling of thanksgiving, they showered Moshe with gifts. Thus, not only was his life spared, but his poverty was eased as well.

For days, the only topic of conversation was Moshe's miraculous rescue, and in the

house of Yankel, too, the story was recounted. However, when the aging Yankel himself was told the story, he seemed noticeably unimpressed, and appeared to belittle Mottel's good deed. The family members were shocked at his reaction, and thought that perhaps his mind had been affected by his old age.

Yankel himself explained to them his perspective: "You do not know Mottel as well as I do," he told them, "and therefore you are duly impressed by his efforts to save my grandson's life. However, I am intimately familiar with Mottel's selfless and generous nature. Therefore, I am only surprised that he himself didn't provide my grandson with a significant monetary gift at the same time."

. . .

In Parshas Bo, Rashi quotes the words of Chazal, who explain that the reason that Hashem said to Moshe Rabbeinu "Daber Na b'Oznai ha'Am" – "Please, I beg of you to instruct the Yidden to borrow gold and silver utensils from the Egyptians" was because Hashem was begging him to **please** see to it that this would take place, in order that Avrohom the Tzaddik shouldn't come and complain that "with regards to the suffering of the Jews He (Hashem) kept His word, while with regards to their leaving with great wealth He did not keep his word."

Many mefarshim question

this Chazal. Firstly, why is it only on account of the complaint of Avrohom that Hashem is – so to speak – obligated to keep His word? Secondly, why is Avrohom described in this particular Chazal as “that Tzaddik?” And last but not least, what basis could there be for the complaint of Avrohom, when they would in any case acquire great wealth at Bizas HaYam following Krias Yam Suf?

In the seifer Shailos U’T’Shuvos Lishad HaShemen on Yoreh Deia, the author answers these questions by way of the above moshel. Just as with the townspeople, so too the Yidden

• • •

As we stand together at the threshold of another Yud Shvat, and we ponder the astounding fact of this marking 62 years of the Rebbe’s leadership, our attention will inevitably be on the Rebbe. Much will be said and written about the Rebbe, about his vision, his leadership, his scholarship and his miracles. We will think about the Rebbe’s unmatched Ahavas Yisroel, and the shlichus revolution that he initiated. As always, the more that we learn about the Rebbe, the more that we study him, the more we are left in awe of every aspect of his personality.

visible throughout the universe.

His mission is Moshiach.

To be sure, many G’dolei Yisroel throughout the generations spoke incessantly about Moshiach, all of them awaited his coming, and hoped and davened for him constantly. But that was in addition to their other virtues, their great strides in learning or teaching, their leadership or their self-sacrifice. With the Rebbe, the revelation of Moshiach, the drawing down of the Sh’china, is his defining purpose. It is only when we view all of the other above-mentioned qualities **within** this context that we are truly understanding and appreciating the Rebbe.

In other words, it’s not as if we can say that the Rebbe is a great leader, who **also** was very outspoken about the coming of Moshiach. Rather, Moshiach is the central theme, the all-encompassing goal, around which all of the other activities of the Rebbe revolved.

The bringing back of countless thousands of Yidden to Yiddishkait is not merely the practice of “kiruv rechokim” (a term that the Rebbe rejected), rather it is part of a greater mission of revealing the Sh’china on this plane, of revealing the G-dly spark that is inherent within every Jew. The establishment of Chabad houses in every part of the globe is not merely a means to an end, a way of reaching the lost Jewish people who reside in those places, but it is also an end in itself, part of transforming every corner of this world from a mere physical entity into a vehicle of spirituality. The Rebbe’s work is to take all of the philosophies of chassidus that enable one to understand intellectually how the world is not apart from Hashem and to

“It may be that those of us who “know” the Rebbe, those of us who benefitted from 62 years of his instruction and guidance, will be left decidedly unimpressed.

would have no thoughts of complaining against the Eibeshter following Yetzias Mitzrayim, with or without the Rechush Gadol. On the contrary, having just witnessed the wondrous nissim of the Makos, coming to a climax with the amazing miracle of their actually leaving Mitzrayim, there would be no room in any heart for anything but thankfulness and awe of the greatness of the Eibeshter.

Not so in the case of Avrohom Avinu: Avrohom, the great **Tzaddik** Avrohom, knew the Eibeshter much more intimately than anyone else. The Tzaddik Avrohom — due to his great tzidkus — would be unimpressed by all of these miracles, knowing as he did that for the Eibeshter, with His infinite Goodness and Kindness, the act of saving the Yidden would be incomplete without the Rechush Gadol.

And yet ...

It may be that those of us who “know” the Rebbe, those of us who benefitted from 62 years of his instruction and guidance, will be left decidedly unimpressed. While it is unquestionable that these virtues in any other person, in any other tzaddik, would be praiseworthy, we nonetheless “know” the Rebbe, and know, therefore, that these are not the achievements that define the Rebbe.

The Rebbe himself defined the uniqueness of his position in the very first maamer: as the leader of the Dor HaShvii, charged with completing the return of the Sh’china into our physical world. His purpose is to remove the final barriers to G-dliness being revealed in this world, to pave the way for the era in which the Kingship of Hashem is clearly

bring them into actualization and practice.

For us who “know” the Rebbe, any description or appreciation of the Rebbe that doesn’t emphasize the aspect of Moshiach, of finalizing the revealed dira ba’tachtonim, falls short.

All this has much bearing on the nature of our own Hachanos for this day as well: After 30 days (or more or less) of readying ourselves for the big day, everyone is coming fortified with some type of extra learning and davening, of increased effort in fulfilling the Rebbe’s directives. One can’t help but be overwhelmed by the vast amount of learning and additional mitzvos that have been taking place these past three weeks throughout the world. Any leader or group would undoubtedly be filled with pride over such a remarkable achievement.

Despite this, we who “know” the Rebbe, have to wonder whether the Rebbe will be satisfied with learning alone. We, who heard and studied the message of the Rebbe, must be aware that the expectations of “Oiso! Tzaddik” are nothing short of Moshiach, and all of the additional learning and davening have to revolve around that point. The Rebbe wants us to not merely **do** a little more, but to live up to our charge as the Dor

HaShvii, as those who are living with the complete union between the Sh’china and tachtonim. Not for us is a life with mundane priorities, interspersed with occasional extra effort in spiritual matters. We are expected to live with the new reality, in which the superficial physical matter no longer hides the reality of G-dliness. Anything less would presumably leave him unimpressed.

When a group of bachurim wrote to the Rebbe about a hachlata that they made to learn certain parts of Tanya by heart, the Rebbe responded, “This is ashir, a wealthy person, who brought a Minchas Oni, a korban of a poor man.”

Every Chasid is an ashir, and true ashirus is found only in the revelation of Elokus in the entire world. Anything less is an attempt to shirk our responsibility.

Rabbi Kahane from Mir (the son-in-law of the Einayim L’Mishpat) once visited the Rebbe. After a long conversation (about sleeping in the sukka etc.), he asked the Rebbe for a bracha for his learning. Now, one would think that this may be interpreted as impressive; he didn’t ask for a bracha for any material pursuits or the like, but only for success in learning!

The Rebbe, however, appeared very unimpressed. “You

want that we should struggle in this dark galus in which chutzpah abounds,” the Rebbe responded to him. “And for yourself you are seeking a conducive atmosphere to succeed in your learning?!”

As we get closer to the special day of Yud Shvat, we have to contemplate that which we have learned in these past 62 years. We are expected to be different people. We should have a different mindset, a Moshiach mindset. We can’t be satisfied running after the same physical indulgences as other people, and then pat ourselves on the back for learning a Blatt Gemara or a maamer chassidus. We have to internalize the primary message of the Rebbe, with sixty years of elaboration and elucidation: that this world is not a separate entity from the Sh’china, and all of our avoda is designed to reveal this, until it’s clear for the whole world to see!

L’chaim! May the Eibeshter not leave us unimpressed any more this year, but provide us with the ultimate rechush gadol, the restoration of all of the nitzutzim to their source, and with it the final hisgalus of Moshiach Tzidkeinu Teikef U’miyad Mamash!!!

*From a written farbrengen,
directed towards Alumni of Yeshivas
Lubavitch Toronto*

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LOVE CONQUERS ALL

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz

Shliach, Beit Shaan

In the sicha from 5747, the Rebbe emphasizes that the horaa to be learned from Shabbos Parshas Bo in which “the armies of Hashem left Mitzrayim” and Yud Shevat, “this was the avoda of the baal Ha’hilula,” is to increase unity and Ahavas Yisroel in order to hasten the Geula.

At the end of the sicha which was edited by the Rebbe, it states: **The horaa from all that was said above, practically speaking, is: To increase with greater strength in all activities of Ahavas Yisroel and Achdus Yisroel ... May the very commitment in these areas immediately bring the Geula.**

This week’s column is about the power of Ahavas Yisroel.

12 YEARS PLUS ONE

CL is a shlucha as well as a teacher in a Chabad school in Northern Israel. Fourteen years ago, CL attended a personal training workshop that took place over a period of several weeks. It was a closed-door course and the first condition for participation was discretion and not leaking any personal information about any of the other participants.

Well, CL said something to her friend about Tzameret who was taking the course. CL was sure that Tzameret would never know she was spoken about but, surprisingly, word got back to

Tzameret that very same day. She complained to the moderator about the serious breach in confidentiality.

At the next session, the moderator said the workshop would not begin until information on who had breached the privacy of the participants was forthcoming. CL did not have the courage to confess and the investigation continued. The moderator asked the participants, one by one, “Did you leak information?” CL said she did not. The atmosphere was tense.

That night, CL could not forgive herself. Her conscience bothered her terribly. To confess or not to confess, that was the question. She finally got up, called for a taxi, went to Tzameret’s house, burst into tears, and confessed that she was the one. She apologized, she was contrite, and she promised it would not happen again. They reconciled and became friends. CL invited Tzameret and her daughter to her home for the first night of Chanuka.

Although Tzameret is not overly religious, and she had never lit a menorah, she accepted the invitation and joined CL for the menorah lighting, and the singing of HaNeiros HaLalu with all the children. Tzameret and her daughter were so affected by this that they remembered that moving evening throughout the rest of the year.

The following year, and in years to come, it became the practice of the two families to join together on the first night of Chanuka. In addition, Tzameret studied Judaism and Chassidus, and when she had to submit a research paper she chose the topic of mitzvos.

For ten years, Tzameret did not miss a Chanuka with the L’s. In the eleventh year, Tzameret and her family moved to Eilat. When Erev Chanuka came around, the distance did not daunt her. She ordered a taxi and took the long trip to CL’s northern city and joined the L’s for the menorah lighting. Once again, she was moved and inspired to get more involved in Jewish observance.

Another year passed and Tzameret had become so settled in Eilat that she didn’t even realize that it was the first night of Chanuka. That evening, Tzameret and her daughter went out shopping at the local mall. They strolled about and came across a menorah surrounded by some people. A young man stood there and spoke about the meaning of the holiday and then he lit the menorah. Tzameret thought she recognized the bachur from somewhere. After studying his face she realized he was the son of CL!

The thought went through her mind: We forgot it was Chanuka tonight, but CL did not forget.

She sent her son to us, all the way to Eilat, so we would meet him and participate in the menorah lighting once again.

You can imagine the scene in the mall as Tzameret went over to the bachur to thank him for her personal Chanuka miracle. She was so excited by what happened that she called up CL and told her about the divine providence she experienced. This increased Tzameret's faith and strengthened her commitment to Torah and mitzvos.

TRANSFORMING THE YISHUV FROM WITHIN

Rabbi Avrohom Prodanshetsky is a shliach at Yishuv Ganei Yochanan near Rechovos. The main tool at his disposal is Ahavas Yisroel – lots of it. This is the only way he is able to enter every house on the yishuv and befriend the residents, even though some of them openly declare that they are not interested in any connection with a rabbi or Judaism.

He occasionally makes the rounds of the houses, smiling, giving out matza, offering mezuzos and help with any aspect of Jewish observance.

Rabbi Avrohom recently came up with another idea of how to reach every house in the yishuv. He got a donation to print a new edition of Tanya, which took place in the center of the yishuv. Even though he had the money he needed, that did not mean he couldn't ask the residents for money so more s'farim could be printed and more shiurim in Tanya could be started in the homes of the yishuv. He went from house to house and suggested that every family donate 50 shekels for the dedication that would be printed



“She sent her son to us, all the way to Eilat, so we would meet him and participate in the menorah lighting once again.”



in the volumes of Tanya, as a merit or in memory of someone.

In one house on the yishuv lives a man who doesn't particularly like religious Jews. It was his wife who politely listened to what the rabbi had to say, but she said she could only donate 20 shekels. As the rabbi sat down to write a receipt, the husband began angrily shouting, “What are you doing here? Who let you in?”

The shliach tried to calm him

down but it didn't help. The man kept on screaming and finally evicted the shliach from his home.

Two things happened after Rabbi Avrohom left the house. He noticed that, out of habit, he had written a receipt for 50 shekels instead of 20. He decided to overcome his trepidation and humiliation and go back to the house to correct the mistake. He figured that they felt bad about expelling him.

The couple was still talking

about the nice rabbi they had thrown out for no reason when he returned. The man of the house greeted him with a smile this time. “Come in. I'm sorry I yelled at you. I didn't realize...” When he heard the reason for the rabbi's return, he said, “How much money do you need for the receipt to be accurate – 30 shekels? Okay, here's 30 shekels and you don't have to correct the receipt.”

A wonderful atmosphere prevailed and the man is now a close friend of Rabbi Prodanshetsky, to the point that at a committee meeting at the moshav, it was he who convinced the rabbi's opponents to support him.

The Rabbi continued making house calls, collecting 50 shekel donations and dedications for the printing of the Tanya. Along the way, he also collected more and more friends and more and more Tanya classes at homes on the yishuv and at places of business.

One of the women, who at first had challenged the rabbi and the Chabad movement, changed her mind. She got to know the rabbi better and heard what he had to say, and she now hosts a Tanya class in her home. She told him that she would put all the services of her law office at his disposal, pro bono.

IN MEMORIAM

It is one year since the passing of the Chassid and shliach of the Rebbe, Rabbi Avrohom Dunin a"h (see the 7 part series on him starting in issue #777). He was a principal and teacher in many schools. I knew him well for the past 25 years. He adopted my family and me with tremendous love, so I will share some anecdotes about this special man who was a tremendous Ohev Yisroel.

When I arrived in Beit Shaan 26 years ago, I got to know Rabbi Avrohom Dunin who was a shliach to the moshavim of Taanach. He had taught for decades already and been principal of schools in the Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchok in Brosh and Taanach, but he had no intentions of retiring. He spent days and nights on chinuch and in helping people.

When I first met him, I recognized him as a genuine Chassid, full of Ahavas Yisroel and simcha. This immediately fostered a friendship that grew over the years. I had the surprise of my life – in connection with Rabbi Dunin – when I visited his home on the moshav. The original house and yard were full of hundreds of boxes and packages. They contained food, pictures of the Rebbe, brochures, sichos and more. It was only as the years went by that I understood what the secret of all those items were.

Rabbi and Mrs. Dunin had a hobby. They would send as many things as they could, to as many people as they could. It became a way of life and something that occupied them day and night.

At a certain point in his life, Rabbi Dunin became a mashgiach of the kashrus at the Tenuva Beis Yosef plant near Beit Shaan. I suddenly began to receive dozens of inquiries, from people who worked at the factory, about mezuzos, shiurim, chinuch in Chabad preschools, etc. I soon realized where this tremendous interest was coming from. The “new rabbi” at the factory was referring them to the Chabad house for religious services.

One day, Rabbi Dunin noticed that in the yellow cheese department there was a machine that sliced the blocks of cheese into thin slices which left the two ends. When you're talking about hundreds, if not thousands, of blocks of cheese a day, those ends add up to a lot of cheese! Rabbi Dunin got permission from the management to take all the cheese remnants and distribute it to needy families. From then on, Rabbi Dunin took on this mammoth national project of “marketing” and transporting

large quantities of cheese all over the country.

Rabbi Dunin got rare permission to take out full boxes without their having to be checked by the guard. This was as opposed to the policy regarding all the employees of the factory who were not allowed to take any products, and every bag was checked by the guard before they left. Then Rabbi Dunin used his connections with all the factory's truck drivers. Every driver was asked where he was going and whether he could take a small box or two for the Chabad preschool in Ofakim, for example, or to a needy family in Ashkelon.

Since the huge factory sold its products everywhere, and since the yellow cheese was produced under superlative hashgacha, and since all the drivers loved and admired Rabbi Dunin and acceded to any request he made, boxes of yellow cheese made their way all over the country. Rabbi Dunin would call shluchim in distant cities and suggest that they meet the truck driver to pick up their delivery and distribute it to those who needed it.

ONE-MAN, NATIONWIDE CHESED PROJECT

One day, Rabbi Dunin noticed large numbers of empty crates that had been used for one of the cheese products. He saw that the crates were sturdy and many preschools would be able to put them to good use. He got the truck drivers involved and the new project got underway. Whatever did not get sent out that day was brought to his yard on the moshav where it waited along with hundreds of other boxes to be sent out on the next shipment.

From time to time, Rabbi Dunin discovered some owner of chicken coops with a surplus of several dozen trays of eggs. Sometimes it was a wholesaler with boxes of fruits and vegetables or a dairy owner with yogurts, a bakery with surplus cookies and cakes, containers of unprocessed tahini, bottles of wine and grape juice, and this is a partial list. All this stuff was sent to Rabbi Dunin's home. He sat on the phone and offered the merchandise to shluchim, and from there it went to the needy. Rabbi Dunin himself packed the merchandise in boxes according to the amounts that were requested, tied string around every box, marked it with the person's name, and the shipment was sent out.

Before holidays, Rabbi Dunin outdid himself. He increased the quantities, varied the products, and came up with creative ideas of how to reach more and more people who would be willing to accept the food and distribute it. He often called me with odd questions – did I know someone who would be interested in hundreds of hamantashen two weeks after Purim ... Did I know anyone who would be willing to take some boxes of good apricots, tomatoes or onions. Sometimes, it got to be a pain in the neck, but when I saw how happy it made Rabbi Dunin when he discovered a new client, I rejoiced along with him and continued to be a partner in his chesed venture.

THE MOST SPECIAL MISHLOACH MANOS IN THE WORLD

Every year, before Purim, the house would be overflowing with boxes, empty and full, with which he would send mishloach manos. I don't know from where

and how, but before Purim, Rabbi Dunin would obtain huge amounts of hamantashen, small boxes of raisins, lots of mashke that was divided into small, closed cups, all kinds of chips and a lot of candy. Any family that got on his list never left it; only the quantities changed.

In his unique way, and with his network of connections, Rabbi Dunin found out how many children and grandchildren there were currently, and then he prepared a box of mishloach manos for every family on his list, for every single child and grandchild.

Sometimes, due to the large numbers of people, the box would arrive a week or two after Purim. Sometimes, the head of the family had to ship off some of the delivery to married children who lived far away, but this became a beloved tradition. Everybody rejoiced and looked forward to this unusual practice.

How did you get on his list? That too is a story of Ahavas Yisroel. Here's an example:

When we opened the Chabad preschool in Beit Shaan over twenty years ago, Rabbi Dunin agreed to come twice a week to teach the boys and acquaint them with the Alef-Beis. On his own, as was typical of him, he also volunteered to give talks to the boys and girls and he got to know all the children. Before Purim, he asked me for the addresses of all the children. That is how, for many years after the children graduated preschool, they continued to receive mishloach manos from him.

The Shmuelevitz family of Beit Shaan was also on his list. We had the privilege of receiving, every year, I think until his final year, personal mishloach manos for every child in the family. It

was as though he was their dear grandfather who knew each of his grandchildren and sent a package of raisins, a hamantash, a bottle of mashke, and a handful of candies.

SPREADING THE LOVE

One of Rabbi Dunin's students was my son, Rabbi Sholom Ber, who was three at the time. Rabbi Dunin taught him Alef-Beis and Nekudos. Two years later, my son was attending the Chabad elementary school in Migdal HaEmek and he knew how to daven the morning blessings from a Siddur.

One day, five year old Sholom Ber and I met Rabbi Dunin. I reminded Rabbi Dunin that my son was once his talmid. He immediately got into a conversation with the little boy. He took his HaMesores book and opened to the page of the easiest words and asked him whether he could read them. My son read them quickly and fluently. His former rebbi complimented him profusely, pinched his cheek and patted his back.

I quietly asked him why he was quizzing my son on such easy words when he was reading entire t'fillos from the Siddur. Rabbi Dunin drew me off to the side so my son shouldn't hear and said, "What do you think – that I don't know that? Do you think I need to test him? I just wanted him to feel successful; to give him the feeling that he is an excellent reader who can easily read what I ask him to read. That's why I chose the easiest line."

That was another lesson in Ahavas Yisroel from a veteran and wise teacher about how to encourage a young child and make learning beloved.

Oy, who can replace him!

RECALLING A TRUE CHASSID AND MASHPIA

The great Chassid, Rabbi Moshe Nisselevitz a”h passed away this year. His talmid and mushpa, Rabbi Berke Shiff nostalgically recalls his spiritual mentor. He tells about his life and work with Rabbi Nisselevitz along with three Hashgacha Pratis stories.

Interview by Nosson Avrohom

The mashpia, Rabbi Moshe Nisselevitz of Nachalat Har Chabad passed away this past year. The Chassidic community and the world lost a mesirus nefesh Jew, a Chassid who was very particular when it came to mitzva observance, and an outstanding Yerei Shamayim. Rabbi Moshe devoted himself heart and soul to the chinuch of Jewish children. He did so in Russia behind the Iron Curtain, at the risk of being exiled to Siberia, and continued in Eretz Yisroel under the auspices of Chama which he founded back in Samarkand.

He was modest, hartzig, and a pleasant person. In an emotional interview, Rabbi Berke Shiff, founder and director of mosdos



Ohr Simcha in Kfar Chabad, spoke about his mashpia, “my personal tzaddik,” as he referred

to him. “It’s thanks to Rabbi Nisselevitz that I am a Chabad Chassid and mekushar to the Rebbe. For five years I was his right hand man in Chama. In the early years in Eretz Yisroel too, he was one of those who pushed hard to create educational opportunities for immigrant children.”

When Rabbi Shiff speaks about Rabbi Nisselevitz, you hear the pain in his voice. “I knew many magnificent Chassidic figures, but none like him. I knew quite a few Chassidim during the hard times, but to have such mesirus nefesh, to put oneself aside for others – I saw no one like him. We worked very closely together and I spent days observing him, and this



A secret meeting of Chama: Sitting from right to left: Michoel Mishulovin, Yosef Shagalovitz, Gershon Ber Shiff. Standing from right to left: Hillel Zaltzman, Aryeh Leib Shiff, Berel Zaltzman, Moshe Nisselevitz, Zalman Friedman, Mordechai Goldschmidt

transformed me completely. I was taken by his deep commitment to truth; thanks to him I remained on the Chassidic path and wasn't swept away by the evil winds of Soviet education."

WARTIME CHILDHOOD

The two met in the Chabad community in Samarkand. "I was born in Voronish. When World War II began, the Russians drafted many men, my father Rabbi Yosef Chaim among them, in order to halt the advancement of the German army into the Soviet Union. My mother remained alone for the duration of the war with me and my brothers. When the German army reached Voronish, we fled like many other Jews, by the

skin of our teeth, to Uzbekistan. Hundreds of thousands of Jews fled there in fear of the Nazis and their henchmen.

"I remember those black days. The trains were packed with people as though they were cattle. The German planes continuously bombed the city with their goal being to destroy the train tracks so that civilians would not be able to flee. Together with our mother we went from one train to another. We walked a lot, and had hardly any food. After much wandering, we arrived injured and beaten, starving and thirsty, and physically and emotionally exhausted, in Samarkand.

"I was very young, but I remember quite a bit. In Samarkand, many

Jews congregated from all backgrounds and groups including Misnagdim and many Polish Chassidim who were able to escape their countries and told of the atrocities the Germans had perpetrated. Many Lubavitcher Chassidim also came there and although they were relatively few compared to the other groups, they stood out. 'A Chassid creates an atmosphere,' and the Chassidim did indeed create an atmosphere. They influenced others not to break, and to cleave to Hashem, Torah and mitzvos, despite everything they had been through.

"During those dark times, the communists were occupied with the war against the Germans and Jews felt free to be religiously

observant. It was ironic that Judaism in Samarkand flourished during the war. Minyanim opened, yeshivos were founded, and mikvaos were built and renovated. There was no fear. Obviously there wasn't open defiance, they didn't want to announce anything, but they did these things without the constant fear of arrest.

"I was seven years old towards the end of the war. I remember my mother putting me into one of the (many) yeshivos that opened. There were many other boys, some of them Chassidim. We learned Torah and Chassidic practices from a Chassid by the

remained in France as the Rebbe told them to do.

Most of the Chassidim in Samarkand were able to cross the border for free countries while we remained behind, a few families. Some were unable to obtain the papers needed and some had been in the process of leaving but did not make it in time. Shortly after the end of the war, the secret police bore down hard again. The KGB was now able to devote their time to fighting the "real enemy" of the Russian nation, i.e. the persecuted Jewish people. Religious persecution began again.

Those who did not send their

Chassidishe families went astray because they did not get a proper chinuch and were brainwashed by the atheism taught in public school where they studied among gentiles.

In 1953, a wave of hatred flooded the Soviet Union. It was inspired by the government and came in the guise of the famous Doctors' Plot. The government made despicable accusations against Jewish doctors and held a show trial. Everyone was terrified. All prayed that this terrible decree be rescinded.

In fact, it was rescinded in a miraculous way. On Purim 5713, Stalin's sudden death was announced and the Jews rejoiced. The Doctors' Plot was dismissed and they were freed after their innocence was publicly declared. After that, persecution of Jews diminished somewhat.

"I was fifteen. My father, who had returned from the war a few years earlier, had come back sick and worn out. His right hand had been injured and he couldn't use it. He managed to survive a few more years, but his health deteriorated and the burden of supporting the household fell on me.

"My father was known as a Chassid who always helped his fellow Chassidim. His job was running a network of factories. In Russia of those days you could not buy food with money alone, you had to have the papers of a working man. If you did not work, you could not buy food. My father issued work papers to many Chassidim. Thanks to him, they were able to bring home food for their families.

"Until 5713 I went to public school, although I did not desecrate the Shabbos. Then I left school and began working in a sign factory run by Rabbi

"I always shared my thoughts and doubts with Rabbi Nisselevitz. He handled this in an interesting way. He did not negate what I did or said. He encouraged me while also instilling the Chassidishe approach. He would say: Fitness is good for your health, but it can't be all that you are..."

name of Rabbi Zushe. We would be given black bread and butter at lunchtime for our efforts. We considered it food from Gan Eden."

CONSTANT DANGER

When the war ended with Allied victory, the Germans left all the areas they had conquered in Russia. Civilians returned to their countries of origin. Many Chassidim took advantage of this opportunity to leave the Soviet Union under the guise of Polish citizens returning to their homeland.

After residing temporarily in Europe, mainly in Germany and Austria, some of them left for Eretz Yisroel, some for the United States, and a few

children to public school were visited by members of the KGB. There were Chassidim who refused to send their children to public school, despite the intimidation and persecution. Other Chassidim sent their children to public school, but quietly made agreements with the school's administration or with the teachers to excuse their children from attending on Saturdays or to refrain from asking them to desecrate the Shabbos. They provided their children with a Jewish education at home.

There was nobody willing to establish secret yeshivos as there had been before the war. People were afraid to make illegal Jewish schools. Many children from



R' Moshe Nisselevitz



Secret meeting of Chama: Standing from right to left: R' Moshe Nisselevitz, R' Zalman Friedman, R' Hillel Zaltzman. Sitting from right to left: R' Aryeh Leib Shiff, R' Yosef Shagalovitz, R' Gershon Ber Shiff, and R' Berel Zaltzman

Eliyahu Mishulovin. I met Rabbi Moshe Nisselevitz for the first time. He was several years older than me. From then on, he was my mentor and guiding light.”

A CHANGED MAN

Attending public school did nothing positive for Rabbi Shiff's spiritual state, even though he davened three times a day and learned when his father wanted him to learn. There were other things that interested him aside from Torah and mitzvos like weightlifting and handball. He did well in these latter pursuits and he became a fine athlete:

“I worked next to Rabbi Nisselevitz in the sign factory for hours every day. I could not help but be influenced by this special man. He changed my entire approach to life; he made me into a Chassid. Everything he did reflected his Yiras Shamayim, the likes of which I had never seen before in others.

“We ate lunch together every day, a meal that inevitably turned into a Chassidishe farbrengen. Rabbi Nisselevitz did not berate me and did not ask me to change my way of life; on the contrary, he understood me. Nevertheless, he did, in fact, change me.

“Most of my spare time I spent weightlifting and playing handball. When I finished working at the factory, I would go and train. At the age of 16 I was lifting 140 kilos (308 pounds)!

“I always shared my thoughts and doubts with Rabbi Nisselevitz. He handled this in an interesting way. He did not negate what I did or said. He encouraged me while also instilling the Chassidishe approach. He was on fire with it. He would say: Fitness is good for your health, but it can't be all that you are. Continue with it while recognizing the truth.

“Until I met him, I was not in a secure place when it came

to Judaism and Chassidus. I remember the upheaval he wrought in me. On Rosh HaShana, he influenced me not to speak of mundane things, but to only recite T'hilim or daven throughout the duration of the holiday.

“It did not happen overnight, but when you spend so much time with a Chassidishe man like him, it naturally has an effect. He was truly a Ner L'Ha'ir (an illuminating candle) and it was all done in a refined, sweet way.

“I got a lot from him because I saw that he did not ask anything of me before asking ten times as much of himself. He would collect money in order to help other Jews and didn't use a penny of it for himself. I remember how one day, he came to work with his feet soaking wet. He wore torn shoes. I offered him money a number of times and told him to go and buy boots but he did not accept. He put his socks on the oven and walked barefoot in the



“I remember that at the beginning of the trial, before they sent us out of the room, Rabbi Nisselevitz called out to my father, ‘Yoske, picture the Rebbe Rayatz whom you knew, and he will help you!’”

factory until they dried.

“On another occasion when we were talking, he said, ‘I never took public funds. I don’t have the right to take from it for myself even for essentials.’

“When he spoke, his words made an impact. You sensed that they were coming from a place of truth, from his p’nimius, that he believed in what he said. One time, we sat and farbrenged and he said this world is nothing. We said l’chaim and brought up various topics that seemed significant but are really nothing. At a certain point, I was so affected by this that I burst out crying, and I’m not the type who cries, but it happened. His outlook of ‘ein od milvado’ got through to me.

“I literally fell to the floor crying. He looked at me and did not understand why I cried. To him, things were so clear that he had no need to cry over them. His conduct, his davening ... He was so connected to Hashem, like a son petitioning his father.”

R’ MOSHE SAW THE FUTURE

After Stalin died, the Jews felt some relief and Rabbi Nisselevitz took action. The chinuch of Jewish children was something he cared about deeply. He couldn’t bear to see the children of Chassidim being educated in public school. When he looked for people to help him, one of those people was his mushpa, Berke Shiff:

“He knew that the future

depended on these children learning Torah. If the children did things by rote, it wouldn’t last; we had seen much deterioration already. He literally lost sleep over this. He came up with an idea that sounded farfetched to me; to start an organization called Chama (Chaburas Mezakei HaRabbim) whose goal would be to teach Jewish children.

“He invited me, my brother Aryeh Leib and Berel Zaltzman to the first meeting. We sat in a restaurant and decided on this revolutionary move – a new organization of secret chadarim, in addition to other religious activities like chesed shel emes (providing for the deceased) and chesed. Later on, I got my friend Rabbi Yosef Ladaiov involved too. He helped us enlist children from the Bucharian community with whom we had less of a connection at that time.

“Rabbi Yosef got the children from the Bucharian community and we found them places to learn and teachers. Word spread quickly among Anash, so that Chassidim in the area as well as those who lived in distant cities sent us their children. Rabbi Nisselevitz was the director and everything was done under top secret conditions. None of the people involved shared any details with the other. If one of us would get caught we knew it was better if he didn’t know about the others. I know many Chassidim today in key positions in Chabad, raising Chassidishe families, who owe their Yiddishkait and Chassidus to Chama.”

BREAKING THE FAST AT HOME

Working together for Chama deepened the relationship between Rabbi Shiff and his mashpia, Rabbi Nisselevitz. The following are three stories that Rabbi Shiff experienced while he lived in Samarkand:

“My cousin, Rabbi Aryeh Leib Demichovsky who lived in Minsk got engaged to a Lubavitcher girl from Samarkand. We prepared the Shabbos Sheva Brachos. In those days, there was no kosher caterer or stores where you could buy baked goods and prepared foods like you can today. My wife had to stand on her feet for hours and prepare the entire meal. I planned on helping her by buying the ingredients and working in the kitchen.

“A day before Tisha B’Av, Rabbi Nisselevitz gave me a secret mission to carry out. He asked me to go with the Chassid, Rabbi Refael Chudaitov to villages and towns where Chama had secret chadarim, in order to check up on them. Since the students and their teachers were Bucharian, he had Rabbi Chudaitov join me, as he was the one who arranged their curriculum and knew the people involved. My job was to write down what I saw and my general impression of the k’hillos and the people.

“I was inclined to refuse his request, but Rabbi Nisselevitz promised that I would be home by Thursday night. I found that hard to believe, but I could not refuse my mashpia’s request. He gave me a notebook and pens and we set out.

“We visited school after school and I wrote down my impressions. It was Tisha B’Av that night but we continued on our trip. We arrived in Margilan

at night and I was thrilled to meet a big, beautiful, united community.

“The next day, Thursday, was Tisha B’Av. That day we visited another three cities, arriving in Andijan in the afternoon. That was our final stop. I was exhausted, but I let Rabbi Chudaitov rest while I went to the airport to buy tickets to Samarkand. I was sure I would find tickets for flights that would leave that evening or later that night.

“I hadn’t even considered the possibility that my wife would go by herself to buy all the food and start cooking for Shabbos on her own with our three small children underfoot. I was taken aback when the clerk told me that all three daily flights to Samarkand had already left and the next flight was the following morning, early Friday. He was quite solicitous and when he saw that I was disappointed, he suggested I buy a ticket for Tashkent where there would surely be flights for Samarkand that night or earlier Friday morning.

“Since I wanted to get to Samarkand as early as possible, I bought two tickets for Tashkent. I figured I would visit my mother who lived in Tashkent, and I would be able to break my fast there. When I returned to the place where we were staying, Rabbi Chudaitov did not understand why I had bought tickets for Tashkent. As far as he was concerned we should have waited until the next morning.

“I thought he might be right and that I had been hasty, but there was nothing I could do at that point. A few hours later, we went to the airport and took the flight to Tashkent.

“The pilot said the flight would take an hour. I was



R' Berke Shiff with his children when he left Russia

“When Rabbi Nisselevitz read the telegram, he jumped for joy. “Moshiach is coming!” he exclaimed. The next day he came to work with a bottle of mashke and announced that there was no need to work anymore. We said l’chaim and danced and rejoiced as though there were no contracts to be honored or orders to be filled. Moshiach had already come...”

impatient to get home as quickly as possible and began to count the minutes. Forty-five minutes went by and I waited to hear the pilot’s announcement to fasten our seat belts for landing, but there was none. Time passed quickly and the fast was over. Rabbi Chudaitov, who was known as a Chassid who thumbed his nose at the world, got up, put on his gartel, and davened Maariv while ignoring the stares of all the people on the plane.

“When he finished davening, he took out some food that he had with him and broke the fast. I was more nervous and preferred davening Maariv and breaking

my fast in my mother’s house. In the meantime, my stomach growled, my head hurt and the flight continued. After an hour and a half, the pilot announced that we would be landing shortly. After the plane touched down and came to a stop, the stewardess asked the passengers not to get up because the pilot had flown to Samarkand instead of Tashkent (due to inclement weather).

“In another ten minutes we will be taking off for our original destination, Tashkent,” she said.

“We were stunned by the miracle. We ran to the door of the plane and explained that we wanted to get off in Samarkand.

We told her we had missed the earlier flight, which is why we had bought tickets to Tashkent in the hopes of more quickly finding a flight from there to Samarkand, and now, here we were!

"She and those listening were amazed by the turn of events. 'It's the hand of G-d,' she murmured. Rabbi Chudaitov corrected her, saying it wasn't the deity that they believed in, but the G-d of the Jews.

"A debarkation ramp was brought to the plane specially for us and we got off the plane. A few minutes later, the plane took off for Tashkent.

"When we arrived home and I helped my wife cook for the Shabbos Sheva Brachos, I was reminded of Rabbi Nisselevitz's promise: You will be here by Thursday night. One hour earlier, when I was on the plane to Tashkent, I did not believe that his promise would come true. After this incident, my esteem for Rabbi Nisselevitz grew."

ONLY RABBI MOSHE KNEW

Rabbi Shiff has another two stories of *Siyata d'Shmaya* (Heavenly assistance) involving his *mashpia*, Rabbi Nisselevitz.

"One not-fine day, policemen knocked at my parents' door and told my father he was under arrest. The reason given was mismanagement and filing unclear reports, based on documents they had found in the factories over which he was responsible. We were all frightened and out of our minds with worry. My father was not a well person and we prayed that he would be able to stand strong in the face of the malicious and despicable libel cooked up by those who were jealous of him and his position.

"Bribery was the key to obtaining everything in the Soviet Union of those days. Rabbi Moshe Nisselevitz, who knew the family well, helped us collect money from amongst Anash in order to bribe the chief judge. There were people who had already worked on the judge from the other side. As expected, he agreed to take the bribe and to judge in my father's favor. However, he insisted that he could not exonerate him completely, since the police would then appeal his sentence and the case would be re-examined. In light of the facts, they would not understand his sentence and he could be fired. He said he would significantly reduce the punishment, especially as my father had already sat in jail until the trial began. He would stay in jail a little longer and then be released. The judge also said that along with him sitting on the bench there would be two 'representatives of the people,' and their opinions had to be given considerable weight and he could not make himself a laughingstock.

"Many of my father's friends, who heard the judge's reasoning, agreed with him. 'Even though this whole case is a wicked libel, you can't do anything about it,' they said. 'These are the rules of the game. You have to grit your teeth and accept what he says.'

"That's what everybody but Rabbi Nisselevitz thought. He firmly maintained that my father should not sit in jail for a single day and we had to demand of the judge that he release my father in exchange for a bribe. I tried to explain to him what my father's friends had said but he didn't want to hear it. 'Hashem is great. Tell the judge to do what he has to do and the Creator will do as He sees fit.'

"Since he had helped so much in collecting the money, we conveyed this message to the judge and hoped for the best.

"The day of the trial we were very surprised to see that the two 'representatives of the people' were none other than two Bucharians who knew my father well and greatly admired him. We, the family members, were not permitted to enter the room since the trial was held behind closed doors. However, I remember that at the beginning of the trial, before they sent us out of the room, Rabbi Nisselevitz called out to my father, 'Yoske, picture the Rebbe Rayatz whom you knew, and he will help you!'

"The turn of events that unfolded in the courtroom turned out to be a big miracle. Despite the seemingly concrete evidence that the police submitted, the two people's representatives dismissed it all. They said they knew my father and his acts of kindness and they completely exonerated him. When the judge saw this, he changed his mind about giving a mild sentence and also exonerated my father. Whoever was there in the courtroom testified that they had never seen such a strange case with a complete dismissal for such a serious crime against the government. Rabbi Nisselevitz was right when he insisted on a complete exoneration.

"After the trial, my father was released. People counseled us to keep him away from home until things quieted down. That is what we did, and he took a trip to Tashkent. This turned out to be good advice since the police came knocking at the door a while later and wanted my father to stand trial again in a higher court. The fact that he had left town saved him. After a few



Chama in Nachalat Har Chabad



R' Berke Shiff with children of the Yeshivas Bucharim in the early years

months, we managed to have his file expunged. This absolved him of any crime, and only then did he return to Samarkand."

HE MARRIED SIMPLY

Rabbi Shiff has a third story that conveys the tremendous bitachon of Rabbi Nisselevitz.

"Rabbi Nisselevitz was known for his stubborn faith and his great bitachon in Hashem. For many years, he lived in a small apartment on the second floor. It was an old house that was falling apart and had big holes which he would stuff with rags to keep the cold out. He never sought a nicer home even though he worked and earned money and could afford a more normal dwelling. He preferred using his money for mitzvos.

"He devoted all his energy to others. If he heard about people who were living under conditions like himself, he would raise money for them and help them. People knew him as a modest Chassid, very discreet, who did not share his private life with others. He never spoke about himself.

"When he turned thirty, he looked for a wife with a good

heart who would not stop him from his chesed activities. He wanted a woman who would encourage him to continue. Many Chassidim who knew him helped him in his search. They heard of a woman who lived in Frunze in the Ukraine, whose friends spoke highly of her good heart and acts of kindness. Research was done and the two sides agreed to meet. Rabbi Nisselevitz went to see her. We prayed that the shidduch would work out.

"Rabbi Nisselevitz was so unworldly that if my mother hadn't ironed his shirt and prepared him for the trip, he would have been shabbily dressed.

"A while later we got a phone call from him that the shidduch was successful and he was about to marry. I was thrilled. The mashpia I so loved and admired was getting married!

"A few weeks later we got a phone call in which he said he was returning to Samarkand with his bride. Upon hearing this, we convened to discuss this. He just could not bring his wife to his hovel. We had to find him a nice home, and we did. We found an apartment, bought furniture,

tables, chairs, beds and linen so he could move into a proper home.

"After picking up the couple at the airport, we brought them to their new home which we had cleaned. Rabbi Nisselevitz was satisfied with his old accommodations and he was so busy with others that he forgot about himself, but Hashem did not forget about him. Hashem arranged for his good friends to set him up in a new home."

HE DID NOT ONLY EXPLAIN, HE HELPED

The close relationship between Rabbi Berke Shiff and Rabbi Nisselevitz became even stronger when they made aliya. Until his final day, Rabbi Shiff considered him his mashpia and asked him whatever questions were on his mind as well as whatever problems arose in connection with the school he founded, Yeshivas Ohr Simcha.

"When we made aliya, some people knew us and about our work behind the Iron Curtain. Many people made aliya in those days including quite a few Bucharian students who learned in the chadarim we had founded.

Unfortunately though, when they wanted to be accepted into frum schools in Eretz Yisroel, they were not accepted.

“When I first visited the Rebbe in 5732, my wife and I had yechidus. The Rebbe told my wife to work in her field as a dentist and he told me to continue what I had started “over there” and to work with immigrant children, making sure they went to religious schools.

“When I returned to Eretz Yisroel, at first I did not know what to do about the Rebbe’s instruction to me. I barely knew anyone and did not know the mentality. I went to consult with my mashpia, Rabbi Nisselevitz. I saw that he was already preoccupied with the immigrant children and he asked me to help him continue the work of Chama in Eretz Yisroel.

“We started working in Ashdod where there was a great concentration of immigrants. Rabbi Nisselevitz found a donor who was willing to give us the women’s section of the shul that he owned, as well as a sizable sum of money for the sake of Torah study.

“When the number of students increased, we moved our operation to the Chabad yeshiva in Rishon L’Tziyon and from there, with the help of Rabbi Mendel Futerfas and others, we moved to Kfar Chabad where we established ourselves and grew. This was written about already in other articles. During the first two years, Rabbi Nisselevitz funded a large portion of the expenses until I got on my feet and understood how to run a school in Eretz Yisroel. He not only explained what the Rebbe said to me in yechidus; he helped me fulfill it.

“When I think about Rabbi Nisselevitz, I feel the enormous loss, the void that cannot be filled. He was permeated with every word and instruction of the Rebbe. He did not go easy on himself when it came to anything having to do with Torah and mitzvos, even if it was difficult.

“Regarding his hiskashrus to the Rebbe and his great faith, I can say that in 5730, the year that they finished writing the Torah of Moshiach, we got a telegram in Samarkand from Rabbi Eliyahu Mishulovin in which he hinted to us that Moshiach is coming

and this is what was being said in 770. When Rabbi Nisselevitz read the telegram, he jumped for joy. “Moshiach is coming!” he exclaimed, and he stopped going to work at the factory.

“A few days later, when I asked him why he was absent from work, he shouted, “Moshiach is coming!” The next day he came to work with a bottle of mashke and announced that we had finished working and there was no need to work anymore.

“If Rabbi Eli writes that, then it’s true,” he said. For days, we said l’chaim and danced and rejoiced as though there were no contracts to be honored or orders to be filled. Moshiach had already come ...

“I am sure that he is in the World of Truth now together with all the celebrated Chassidim that I knew, Rabbi Simcha Gorodetzky, Rabbi Mendel Futerfas and others. Together, they are demanding the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH”M. These were true soldiers of the Rebbe. I am sure they aren’t resting but are doing all they can, as they did in their lifetimes, to bring Moshiach.”

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THOU SHALL BE STIFF-NECKED

By Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

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



WHY PUNISH PHARAOH?

One of the most frequently asked questions by students of the Torah concerns the way G-d dealt with Pharaoh. G-d tells Moses that He has hardened his heart, yet G-d tells him to warn Pharaoh before the plague. This prompts the obvious question: why would G-d punish Pharaoh for not letting the Jews leave when it was G-d Himself who did not allow him to have a change of heart? And this leads to a follow-up question: why did G-d tell Moses to warn Pharaoh? Why was a warning necessary if He knew that Pharaoh would not heed his warning?

Rambam answers that the hardening of his heart was Pharaoh's own doing. When a person desensitizes himself through repeated violations of G-d's will he or she will reach a point of no return. According to the Rambam, that hardening process is the punishment for transgressing.

But the second question still remains. Why then did Moses have to warn him if he knew that Pharaoh was incapable of having a change of heart? Rambam addresses this question and answers that this itself is the lesson that there are certain people whose wickedness is so profound that they cannot help themselves anymore.

G-D-GIVEN OBSTACLES ARE MEANT TO BE OVERCOME

The Rebbe (Likkutei Sichos volume 6, p. 67), after establishing that Rashi concurs with Rambam's approach of Pharaoh's hardened heart, proceeds to qualify their approach. While it is true that the sins Pharaoh committed were creating the greatest impediments to his free choice and that G-d's hardening of his heart was the most formidable obstacle one could ever place before a human being, Pharaoh still had the ability to break out of the shackles of his hardened heart. Free choice is never denied anyone. Even the apostate "Acher" who heard a heavenly voice declaring that he was beyond the point of returning to G-d, was able to overcome even that obstacle, albeit with much more effort expended than for others.

The lesson from this approach is powerful. No matter how far we think we have become submerged in exile and its numbing effects on our spiritual lives, we can break out of it. Consider these facts: Pharaoh lived before the Torah was given with its powerful Divine energy; did not possess a G-dly soul; was a tyrant; was the leader of the most morally depraved nation on earth; committed repeated atrocities in the way he

enslaved and tortured the Jewish people, and, added to all of these negative character traits of Pharaoh, G-d Himself hardened his heart. Yet even after all these things, he nevertheless still had the ability to change. How much more so, we, the Jewish people, have that capacity to overcome all obstacles hindering us.

We have a Divine soul. We have received the Torah at Mount Sinai at which time G-d said to each and every one of us, "I am G-d **your** G-d," in the singular, to indicate that G-d is the life-force and the essence of each individual. All of us, even those who are classified as "the sinners of Israel," the Talmud states, "are filled with Mitzvos as a pomegranate is filled with seeds." We have thousands of years of cumulative holiness which was generated by our forbears and has left an indelible mark on the Jewish and world landscape. And we are now living in the dawn of the Messianic Age, where some of that light can already be seen on the horizon. Certainly all the formidable obstacles, both man made and the one's planted by G-d, are not sufficient to prevent us from breaking out of the shackles of our exile mentality so as to become receptive to the energies of Redemption.

CHANGE FOR THE RIGHT REASON

Ramban has another

approach to the two questions as to why Pharaoh was punished and why a warning was necessary if G-d had already hardened his heart.

G-d wanted Pharaoh to have a change of heart, but he wanted him to have that change of heart not because of the fear of the pain he endured and the prospects of being subjected to even more pain. Rather, G-d wished that his change of heart should be induced by his realization that there is one, omnipotent G-d. Even an animal will recoil in fear from the threat of punishment and behave as its master wants, but it has no appreciation for the master's superior intellect. That is why G-d hardened his heart: to teach him that his change of heart inspired by his fear of more suffering was not going to succeed. Only if he changed his entire way of thinking, if he would recognize the plagues as "signs" that there is a Higher force—then the plague would not have to happen.

OUR CHOICE: BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

The lesson we can derive from this is that in this day and age we have witnessed countless miracles. We have seen tremendous suffering and tragedy and also phenomenal miracles from the Six Day War to the collapse of the Soviet Union. These events should inspire us to recognize their true Source. We must see the hand of G-d in all that is happening today as a means of breaking out of our internal exile.

If Pharaoh would have had a change of heart in that he would have fully recognized G-d's power he would have been part of the solution to the Egyptian exile and shared in the glory of

“Stubbornness, like most other human traits, is neither good nor bad. It depends on the way it is applied. Pharaoh could have used his stubbornness to insist on letting the Jews go despite all the arguments, economic and otherwise, to keep them enslaved.”

the Exodus. Instead he chose the path of having the Exodus occur in spite of him and not because of him.

Similarly we have the choice of failing to see the “signs” and what they represent, or we can recognize G-d's hand in everything and read the signs carefully and so become the very forces of liberation. Either way the Redemption will happen. The only question is: will it happen in spite of us or because and through us?

RESPOND TO THE MESSAGES

A third approach, offered by S'forno, is that if Pharaoh would have surrendered to G-d's will immediately, his recognition of G-d's power would have been minimal. G-d's hardening of his heart guaranteed there would be more plagues and wonders. These might finally enable him to develop a more sophisticated appreciation for G-d. G-d did not want to deny him the opportunity to do T'shuva; He wanted him to grow spiritually. But in the end, Pharaoh neither changed nor grew and thus his punishment was fully deserved.

The lesson from this approach for our day and age is that every moment of exile is painful. Even when we enjoy the comforts of modern life the fact that there is still pain and suffering in the world should be intolerable to every sensitive human being. The fact that G-d's presence is not

felt by everyone and that evil is still rampant is unacceptable to us. The more spiritually sensitive among us are therefore constantly clamoring for Moshiach and the final Redemption.

Nevertheless every moment that we endure this exile, is intended for us to increase in our awareness of G-d and to see His hand in all that happens. Obviously, we are not justifying the continuation of the exile nor are we giving G-d an “excuse” to prolong the agony. We do not understand **why** all of this is necessary, but we do know **what** G-d wants us to do and **how** to respond to exile. We must humbly protest the continuation of the exile, as we do continually in our daily prayers, even as we simultaneously search for and respond to the messages that are being conveyed by the events that surround us.

The Baal Shem Tov taught us that we must learn a lesson from everything we hear or see. We certainly have to learn lessons and grow from the events that we are living through in these last moments of exile, as we stand on the threshold of Redemption.

TEN STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE

A fourth approach taken by some commentators is that, in truth, Pharaoh's free choice was not taken away from him. Pharaoh was endowed by G-d with the trait of stubbornness.

Continued on page 39

ZEIDE APPEARS IN A DREAM

Great-grandfather Chaim Benzion Karasik would say that the brilliant intellectual gifts of his own father, the great gaon Rav Dovber Karasik, had skipped him and were endowed to his son, Zalman Mendel. * Physically and spiritually powerful, with elevated middos, a modest genius – that was Heishke’s grandfather, Rabbi Zalman Mendel Karasik. * After his passing, they learned that indeed, he was special.

By Rabbi Yehoshua Dubrawski a”h

SILENT WISDOM

My maternal grandfather Zalman Mendel Karasik was tall, serious and solid as an oak tree. When we little grandchildren would visit my grandparents’ house, he would pick up each child and give him a firm kiss on the forehead. Everything about him exuded strength. I felt it when he picked me up to kiss me. In that movement, I felt strength that I did not feel with anyone else. Another thing: even as I delighted in his kisses, I felt that the hairs of his mustache and beard were also strong.

He was extremely healthy. As a child, I wondered how he could be so healthy when he ate so little and even then, the food wasn’t particularly nutritious. In the morning, before he went to work at the mill, he drank tea with a crust of black bread which, after a few days, became even harder, and that was all! Why didn’t he

eat a normal slice of bread with butter? I couldn’t understand it. And in general, he could have permitted himself to eat more as an important bookkeeper at the mill.

My father, Rabbi Lipa Dubrawski a”h, would say that Zeide Mendel (that is what they called him, just “Mendel”) was very smart. He did not say much at the table, but when he did, everybody listened to what he had to say. Even back then, I was uncertain whether his minimal speech was due to his wisdom or because in general he was careful not to talk about another Jew, not only lashon ha’ra (negative speech) but even positive things.

A REASON TO CRY

There was a man by the name of Shmuel Ber Zakorsky. Before the revolution he had a Judaica store in which he sold talleisim, tzitzis, siddurim



and other s’farim and Jewish items. In my childhood, he was obviously afraid to sell “counter-revolutionary” merchandise such as this, but since he had many of these items left over, the few religious families would buy a pair of tzitzis, a gragger, etc. from him.

Shmuel Ber was no fool and no idler, but he had the odd habit of saying “kumen tzu gein” (Yid. lit. coming to go, idiomatic usage for – about to arrive) after every few words. For example, he would say, “I heard it said, kumen tzu gein ...,” “I passed by the bakery, kumen tzu gein ...”

We little kids enjoyed making fun of this. Each of us found a way of imitating him and Zeide Mendel couldn’t take it. He didn’t lecture us, but in a few words would say that Jewish children ought not imitate and mock another Jew. Making a mockery and lashon ha’ra were serious sins. And that’s all Zeide Mendel said. He himself never spoke lashon ha’ra or made jokes at anyone’s expense.

My mother said about her father that she never heard him raise his voice when he spoke to her mother. Not only did they not argue, she never even heard an annoyed tone in his voice.

Bubbe was the embodiment of refinement. When my

mother matured and became acquainted with other homes where the peace was disturbed by unpleasant exchanges and even curses, she was astonished. She wondered why it was necessary to quarrel, for in her house they managed without it. My mother often recounted how her parents lived together, as the expression goes, like lovebirds.

Things went so far, maybe too far, as my mother related. For Zeide once said something very “odd” to Bubbe. When he was sick with typhus from which he did not recover, he said slowly and quietly to her: Whatever happens, I don’t want us to be separated for too long... Sadly, this wish was fulfilled, as Bubbe died not long after him.

MASTER OF MODESTY

If I wished to attempt in a few words, objectively, to characterize Zeide, I think it would be correct and accurate to say that he was possessed of a healthy soul; he was as powerful and stalwart as an oak in ruchnius as he was in gashmius. Once, at the mill, he lifted a sack of flour that the most robust gentile at the mill could not lift. However, he was discreet about his power and strength and never stood out.

Nor did he display his genius. His father, great-grandfather Chaim Benzion Karasik would say that the great intellectual gifts of his own father, the great gaon Rav Dovber Karasik, had skipped him and were endowed to his son, Zalman Mendel. Yet, he never boasted about this and he did not let it show when learning a page of Gemara, Shulchan Aruch, and the like.

When I would go to my grandfather’s house at a time when he wasn’t busy with his paperwork from the mill, he

“My mother said about her father that she never heard him raise his voice when he spoke to her mother. Not only did they not argue, she never even heard an annoyed tone in his voice.”

was always learning Mishnayos, quietly, in an understated way, with his sweet, gentle voice. When I would sometimes ask him something in Chumash or “beginner’s Gemara,” he would always send me to my other grandfather, “the great rav and lamdan,” Rabbi Mendel Dubrawski.

In my childhood, I did not understand why he did that. My parents shrugged when I asked them, but my father would say: This grandfather also has a very good head and is very good in learning.

As I mentioned, Zeide Mendel Karasik was the grandson of the gaon, Rabbi Dovber Karasik, author of many s’farim that were printed with the approbations of the gaonim of his time. He was known in the Torah world as “Baal Halichos Olam,” for the first book that he wrote.

THE BOOK AND THE MIRACLE

His magnum opus was his huge work on the four parts of Shulchan Aruch, Pischei Olam and Maatamei Shulchan. Of this work, only two volumes on Orach Chaim were published while the rest remained in manuscript form.

He also published many Sifrei Halacha and chiddushim that were very well received in the Torah world of his time. However, as Chazal say, “everything depends on mazal, even a Torah scroll in the Sanctuary,” and this

mazal was the province of other authors.

Rabbi Dovber Karasik served as rav in our town for over 45 years. He himself wrote the Torah scroll that was in the Aron Kodesh of the Alter Shul. As I already related, out of all the Sifrei Torah in this Shul, it was the only one not desecrated in the pogrom that took place by the Denikinite gangs.

He concluded all the introductions to his many s’farim with the verse in Yeshaya (55:6), “Seek Hashem where He is found, call out to Him when He is near” – thus alluding to his name “Dov.” The first letter of the verse is the first letter of his name, Dalet, and the last letter of the verse is the last letter of his name, Veis. There is a custom to say, at the end of Shmoneh Esrei, a verse that begins and ends with the first and last letters of one’s name.

At the end of his introduction to his Pischei Olam he wrote that there was a period of time when he stopped writing and he was suddenly stricken with terrible pain in his right hand. The pain was so severe that he could not even cut a slice of bread. He considered taking medication but then the idea occurred to him that maybe it had something to do with the fact that he had stopped writing. He went back to writing and the pain disappeared. This happened several times; when he stopped writing his hand hurt. The only cure was to take pen in hand once again.

“The pain was so severe that he could not even cut a slice of bread. He considered taking medication but then the idea occurred to him that maybe it had something to do with the fact that he had stopped writing. He went back to writing and the pain disappeared.

A STORY ABOUT A HORSE

As brilliant as Rabbi Karasik was in Halacha, that is how naïve he was about worldly matters, and he was repulsed by crooked people. As a result, he sometimes ended up in very problematic situations. In the family the story is told that several lowlifes came to him for a Din Torah about a horse. This took place at the time that a fair was going on. These fellows were horse traders and they did not refrain from conducting business in ways that would not stand up to scrutiny.

When the plaintiffs finished presenting their claims about a horse that one of them had sold to another, Rabbi Karasik asked them: How did this horse end up for sale? Who were its previous owners?

The horse traders glanced at each other and smirked and one of them said in the jargon of the criminal classes, “We are talking about a farlecherte ferd (Yid. lit. a perforated horse).”

The rav looked at them with confused eyes filled with astonishment and said, “Farlecherte? A farlecherte ferd? What’s that? I asked a simple question: Whom did it belong to previously?”

“Rabbi,” interjected another horse trader, “the horse was found limping on the edge of the village of Altinevke (a play on the Yiddish words alte – old, nei – new).”

Rabbi Dovber was completely ignorant of the slang of the underworld and words used for a stolen horse. When they saw that the rav just didn’t get their hints, a third one blurted a broader hint, but the rabbi still did not understand. He was so far from anything having to do with stealing and lying. He thought they came to make a laughingstock of him and he lost his patience and rebuked them, “Surely you know that a Din Torah is a serious matter and one who makes fun of it can be punished with Reish, Mem, Ches.”

MESSAGE FROM THE WORLD OF TRUTH

Zeide Zalman Mendel Karasik was young and vigorous when he suddenly became very sick. The best doctor in town declared that he had pneumonia and based on this diagnosis he prescribed medicine and a diet. But the medicine “tore his inner organs” (I remember that is what they said at the time) since he was actually sick with typhus of the stomach. The wrong diagnosis along with the medicine he was given sealed his fate.

Zeide lay there quietly, without moaning or sighing. When my father would go and visit him, Zeide would ask him the kind of questions to which my father responded that he shouldn’t worry about that now;

he had time to deal with that when he recovered. Zeide gave my father an odd look and made a weak movement with his hand and shook his head.

I remember that we grandchildren said T’hillim at night and sobbed since the adults said T’hillim and cried. The next morning though, when we woke up, we found out that it had not helped. Zeide was no longer with us.

A few weeks after his passing, he came to Bubbe in a dream and said that he had one request of her. As a bookkeeper, he would occasionally travel to the district city to submit the balance and to take care of different bookkeeping matters. There was a Chassidishe man in that town, a Tamim, who also worked as a bookkeeper, Mordechai Hersh Charitonov (who fell as a soldier on the front in World War II). He would also travel to that town with the balance.

Zeide asked Bubbe to give Mordechai 35 rubles (I think that was the amount) that he owed him for the hostel where Mordechai Hersh also stayed (the entire dream was a request to pay a debt and he said no more).

Of course, Bubbe was shaken by this dream and by the shlichus from Zeide who was in the World of Truth. The entire family was shaken by this but they thought it might just be a meaningless dream.

Bubbe brought the amount of money to Mordechai Hersh and told him the dream. Mordechai Hersh went quickly to that city and asked the hostel owner whether Rabbi Mendel Karasik owed him any money.

“Yes,” he said.

“How much?” he asked.

“35 rubles.”

Mordechai Hersh felt his heart flutter as did our entire family when they heard this report.

I once heard from my other grandfather, Zeide-Rav Dubrawski that he saw in s'farim that the opportunity to pay a debt

after 120 years in this world is only given to special people.

Continued from page 35

Stubbornness, like most other human traits, is neither good nor bad. It depends on the way it is applied. Pharaoh could have used his stubbornness to insist on letting the Jews go despite all the arguments, economic and otherwise, to keep them enslaved. Pharaoh made the wrong choice

and his obstinacy kept the Jews enslaved despite all the plagues that he endured.

The lesson for our day and age is that we are a "stiff necked people." We can use this for the right reason. No matter how long it has taken for Moshiach to come, we don't give up praying, pleading, and demanding that

G-d make good on His promise.

In the Rebbe's historic message of the 28th of Nissan 5751 (1991), the Rebbe asked for "ten stiff necked" individuals who will not rest until they accomplish the goal of bringing the final Redemption. Let us attempt to be counted among that minyan that will change the world forever.

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



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י"ח אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

REMEMBERING A TRAGEDY; PREVENTING A NEW TRAGEDY

Whoever never visited the flourishing Jewish towns and settlements of Gush Katif and northern Samaria can scarcely imagine the scale of the human tragedy and crying injustice of the expulsion of the almost 10,000 residents. Encouraged by Israeli government policies, over the course of over thirty years, to settle on land that was typically empty, barren sand dunes, they courageously labored to make the desert bloom into dozens of beautiful communities with an enviably high quality of life. Vast hothouses and orchards supplied Israel, Europe and even North America with high-quality, insect-free flowers, herbs and spices, fruit and vegetables, providing gainful employment for hundreds of family breadwinners. There were yeshivos and Torah-schools, exquisitely designed synagogues and attractive mikvas. The residents were all industrious, peaceful and law-abiding.

But then came the barrage of missiles from Gaza. Dozens of these courageous Jews were killed and wounded in these and other terrorist acts. Suddenly politicians decided, for reasons never adequately explained, that these Jews had to leave and their towns destroyed. Mercilessly, all residents were forced out of their homes, which together with the synagogues and Torah schools were destroyed. Even the dead, of whom many were victims of Arab terror and unspeakable cruelty, were torn out of their graves. Any compensation belatedly given did not recoup the financial losses,

let alone heal the psychological wounds the families endured as their lives were broken. Hardest to digest was the fact that all this was deliberately perpetrated by their own Jewish brothers.

At the time, a handful of compassionate Jews in Israel, with help from a few from abroad, toiled to avert the calamity. Unfortunately, their intensive efforts were unsuccessful. While the flames of the destroyed shuls and homes still burned, they resolved to perpetuate the memory of those once-flourishing towns to ensure that such a tragedy should never recur.

It took three years before the Gush Katif Museum became a reality. Since then, over 100,000 people have visited. Most Israelis had no understanding of what had happened there; many thought just a few extremists living in tents and huts had been swept out of Arab-owned land. As Israelis from all segments of the political and religious spectrum started visiting the Museum, they realized how wrong they had been. Even long-time leftists changed their thinking entirely after a visit there, and now oppose further concessions.

The Museum conducts activities to assist the deportees materially and emotionally. Many are still unemployed to this day, while still trying to pay off mortgages for their long-destroyed homes. So the Museum's Kindness Center brings them food and assistance before Shabbat and Yom Tov. It holds special "entertainment

days" at places like the Luna Park amusement park for deportees' children and their parents to get a chance to forget their troubles for that day, at least.

In order to move public opinion to ensure that it never happens again, the Museum is also at the center of the campaign to show the Israeli and world public why establishing an Arab state in the very heart of the Holy Land constitutes a mortal danger to the lives of all its five million Jews. Such a state would place all Israel's population centers, its airport and strategic infrastructure and military bases at the mercy of its worst enemies, who are sworn to destroy the Jewish people (G-d forbid). So the Museum issues a highly popular, multicolored, bi-weekly newsletter that presents the issues with great clarity and is grabbed off the newsstands. Occasionally, large demonstrations are held in Jerusalem and elsewhere to protest against further concessions to Israel's foes. Already all these and other activities have contributed to a strong swing in Israeli public opinion against such concessions.

Recently, Rabbi Shalom Dov Wolpo, the Museum's founder, was in New York in preparation for the Gush Katif Museum's first Dinner to be held in Brooklyn this February 22. He told us that the Guest Speaker will be the distinguished diplomat, Mr. John Bolton, the outspoken U.S. ambassador to the U.N. under the George W. Bush administration. Other important speakers will include Mr. Lee

Raymond Terry, congressman from Nebraska, who has discovered that he is Jewish, and Mr. Glenn Beck, the popular radio and TV commentator. Jackie Mason, who, besides being a popular entertainer is also a perceptive analyst of American politics and the Middle East situation, will speak live from London, England, where he will be performing at the time. There will also be a performance by the famous Jewish-Irish violin virtuoso, Mr. Daniel Ahaviel.

The Guest of Honor will be the renowned philanthropist, Mr. Sholom Ber Drizin, and awards will be given to Mr. Shlomo Marcovich of Mexico City and Mr. Ephraim Julius of Israel. Rabbi Wolpo calls on all Jews who cherish this vital cause to participate in the Dinner and in

marshalling financial support for what could well make the difference for the future safety and security of what is now the world's largest Jewish community, the Jews of the Holy Land.

To participate in the Dinner (\$250 per person) or to

contribute, please send your check to "Friends of Gush Katif Museum", 383 Kingston Avenue, #155, Brooklyn, NY 11213, or e-mail to GushKatifMuseum@hotmail.co.il, or pay by credit card at: www.sos-Israel.com, or call to 718-989-2767.

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EXTREME SHLICHUS

By M.E. Gordon

Levi couldn't wait to share the big news. "Chaim, did you hear who's speaking at the farbrengen tonight?"

"No. Some visitor, I suppose."

"Not just any visitor, Chaim! We are fortunate enough to have the inspiring Chassid, Reb Itche, as a speaker tonight. They claim that since his Bar Mitzvah he hasn't missed a day putting on T'fillin...."

"Big deal, neither does any other frum Jew, I should hope."

"Let me finish the sentence! People claim that since his Bar Mitzvah, Reb Itche hasn't missed a day without putting T'fillin on at least one other Jew, many of whom have never done this mitzvah before."

"Are you serious – Mivtza T'fillin every day? Now that IS impressive!" Chaim was now as eager to hear Reb Itche as Levi.

By the time the farbrengen was scheduled to begin, the room was packed with boys and men. No one wanted to miss even a word. Reb Itche came in, sat down, and someone started singing a slow, moving niggun.

Finally, Reb Itche began speaking. He spoke about the privilege he had as a youth to learn in the Rebbe's yeshivos and to be taught by the legendary Chassidim of the previous generation. Greatest of all, was that he merited to stand at the Rebbe's farbrengens and hear his holy words first hand.

Reb Itche had obviously been

a brilliant and talented student. He now made those days come alive for his audience.

"Reb Itche," ventured a brave listener during a pause in the farbrengen, "you are a talented educator. Why is it that instead of becoming a Rosh Yeshiva or a Mashpia, you went out on shlichus to make a Chabad House in such a far-off place?"

"Ah," smiled Reb Itche, "I was hoping that someone would ask me that question." He looked around the room, making eye contact with each person, one by one. "I always thought that I would remain in yeshiva indefinitely, eventually teaching other diligent students how to strive higher in learning. It was one Shabbos in 5736, Parshas Bo, when the Rebbe's words changed my whole perspective.

"After that farbrengen, I decided that I was going to go on shlichus to a place far in both physical distance as well as spiritual distance. Boruch Hashem, soon after I merited doing just that."

"What did the Rebbe say that Shabbos?"

"He spoke about how Hashem Yisborach Himself 'went out' to Egypt and passed through the land by the last plague, causing all of the Egyptian firstborn to die. He showed how the words of Rashi imply that the main action that Hashem Yisborach came to personally carry out was to save the Jews. He 'came down' into the corrupt land of Egypt to protect each precious individual

– even the ones who chose to be in an Egyptian home on that very night when everyone was supposed to be at home, making the Korban Pesach as Moshe had instructed!

"As I heard these words, I pictured it in my mind. I imagined following such a Jew as he knocks on the door of his Egyptian friend.

"Hey, Toichtmon, let me in, it's Mhem-tehs."

"Whew, it's just you. I was afraid it was another plague. Can't you get that Moshe of yours to lay off already?"

"I'm trying to stay out of his way, myself. He's getting all of my family and friends involved in this lamb cook-out. I had a bite before I came here, but that's enough religion for me. So I came to chill out at your place..."

"Then, at midnight, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, protects this wayward Jew, while his friend, the firstborn Egyptian is struck.

"Now imagine: Dimitri in the Ukraine, Oren sitting in an Ashram in India, Matan backpacking in Peru, Johnno living in a small town in Tasmania, Steven studying in a college far from home – are they any less precious to Hashem Yisborach?

"We have to follow in Hashem's holy ways, even if it means lowering ourselves into today's Egypt, to find and bring back those precious souls. No Jew can be left behind."

The above story is fictional. The lesson is based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 36, p. 45-52.