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# MOSHIACH FOR THE CHILD IN YOU

How is it appropriate to include in the description of the Messianic Era the concept that “delicacies will be commonly available, like dust”? Delicacies are things that are connected with the body viewed in its most despicable capacity, “the skin of a snake”!

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Translated by Boruch Merkur

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## HOW DO DELICACIES DEFINE THE FUTURE GLORY OF GEULA?!

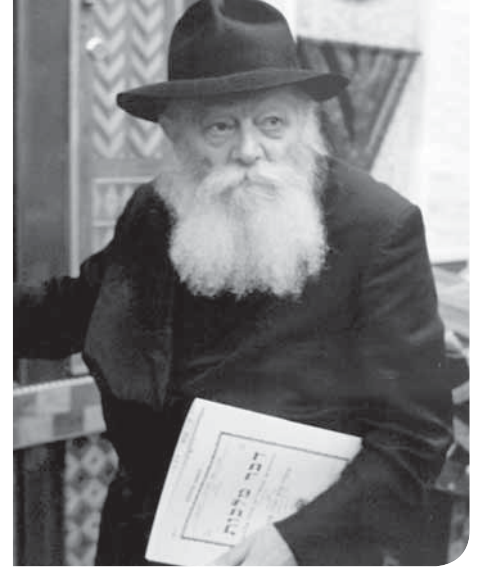
At the conclusion of *Yad HaChazaka*, Rambam rules as a Torah law that when Moshiach comes there will be “delicacies commonly available, like dust.” In referring to “delicacies” the intent is in the literal, material sense – tender beef and aged wine, for example.

At first glance, the context of this law is in describing how things will be when Moshiach comes. In the Messianic Era, Rambam rules, the Jewish people will be engaged in the pursuit of comprehending G-dliness: “they will grasp knowledge of their Creator.” How then is it appropriate to include in this description the concept that “**delicacies** [will be] commonly available, like dust”? Delicacies are things that are connected with [the body viewed in its most despicable capacity, described in Chapter 31 of *Tanya* as] “the skin of a snake”! And the reason why delicacies will be “commonly available, like dust” is [not that they have any intrinsic value or virtue but] simply in order

that Jews should not have to inconvenience themselves to acquire them. [So how does the vast availability of delicacies contribute to defining the future glory of the Messianic Era?]

However, in light of what has been explained earlier, when Rambam writes that when Moshiach comes “delicacies [will be] commonly available, like dust,” he means to explain the concept of Moshiach even to the likes of children, to whom “delicacies” are coveted. It would be futile to attempt to inspire a child by pointing out the breadth of Torah knowledge he will attain when Moshiach comes, for he does not yet understand the virtue of this knowledge; he must first grow up and mature before he can appreciate it. In order to truly engage and inspire a child, it is necessary to speak to him specifically about “delicacies.” It is for this reason that Rambam writes that with the advent of Moshiach “delicacies [will be] commonly available, like dust.”

Nevertheless, upon closer analysis it is apparent that Rambam is qualifying the value attributed to “delicacies.” That is, he is suggesting that they will



be perceived as being superfluous and irrelevant, considered “like dust,” for the sole objective of the Jewish people in the Messianic Era will be to fathom knowledge of their Creator (as above). Thus, Rambam specifically uses the term “dust” [with all its connotations of being something superfluous and undesirable].

## MOSHIACH IS SWEET AS CANDY: NOT JUST LIP SERVICE

Having said that, for the time being “delicacies” are indeed coveted by a child, for which reason Rambam tells him that they will be “commonly available, like dust” (in the simple sense, in great abundance), because it is specifically in this manner that his heart can be won over [and he will come to long for the Messianic Era].

This also sheds light on what was said above about educating children about Moshiach – that it is necessary to tell them that in Future Era, candies and the like will be very plentiful. For at first glance, it is understood and obvious that the Torah would not command us to tell a lie of any sort. How can the Torah command us to educate a child in this manner – that in order to influence him, he is to be told

that when Moshiach comes there will be an abundance of candy?! But since Rambam writes that with the advent of Moshiach there will be “delicacies commonly available, like dust,” it is understood that that is actually the way it will be – in truth. When we tell a child this, it is not just lip service, empty words, but the truth. (It is just that they will not be steeped in the desire for candies then, as above.) [...]

### G-D SEES IT AS AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE!

Regarding children in particular, there is a profound Midrash:

On the verse in Shir HaShirim 2:4, “*v’diglo alai ahava* – his banner over me is love,” the Midrash says: “even the child who repeatedly jumps (*m’daleg*) upon the mention [of G-d’s name] ... the Alm-ghty says, ‘*v’dilugo alai ahava* – his jumping upon Me is love.’” It is the nature of children to skip and run around, prior to their

“ This Midrash shows to what extent one must take pains for the sake of Jewish children – to the point that even G-d Himself forgoes His dignity for their sakes, permitting them to jump and dance upon His Divine names, even proclaiming that for Him this is seen as an expression of their love!

learning or thereafter. But even when children frolic and jump upon Divine names written on parchment, or in our times, upon holy books (being ignorant of their sanctity, or even if they are aware, they cannot help themselves from doing so) – the Alm-ghty [in His mercy] says that although they are jumping “upon Me,” He perceives it as an expression of “love.” That is, not only is it permitted for them to do so, the Alm-ghty says that for Him it is considered to be an expression of “love,” for it is being done by Jewish children, “*tinokos shel beis rabban*”! Indeed, “Yisroel [the Jewish people] is a lad and I love him” (Hosheia 11:1).

The emphasis here is that the Oral Torah goes so far as to elaborate on and enhance the Written Torah’s phraseology, changing, as it were, the written word from “*v’diglo* – his banner” to “*v’dilugo* – his jumping”! This Midrash shows to what extent one must take pains for the sake of Jewish children – to the point that even G-d Himself forgoes His dignity for their sakes, permitting them to jump and dance upon His Divine names, even proclaiming that for Him this is seen as an expression of their love!

(From the address of Shabbos Parshas Truma 5741, bilti muga)

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# RESTORING JEWISH LIFE

IN THE ANCIENT COMMUNITY OF KOCHI, INDIA



Zalman and Shaindy Berenshtein set out on shlichus to Kochi, India. Despite their previous experiences in India, they did not anticipate how difficult it would be to get started, but a letter from the Rebbe about shlichus helped them make their decision.

By Nosson Avrohom

**K**ochi is a popular city for Israelis touring southern India, whether because of the tropical climate or the beautiful beaches. In addition to the abundance of ancient buildings, a tourist can see Chinese fishing nets, a Portuguese style palace, and Dutch streets against a British landscape. One can go out for an evening of antiques shopping in the area of the local

shul or simply wander about the streets or enjoy the beach.

The Jewish community in Kochi is famous among Jewish communities in India. It is 2000 years old and once consisted of about 5000 Jews who zealously observed Jewish life. Most of them made aliya in the fifties and since then, only a few dozen families remain. Those who left thought this was the Geula and insisted on paying the cost of the trip (rather than have the Israeli government pay for them).

There are different versions about how the Jewish community came to be. One version says that the Jews came by ship in the time of King Shlomo. Another version says they came during the Babylonian exile. All agree that the k'hilla was already in existence by the time of the Assyrian exile.

During the community's glory days, there were eight shuls in Kochi. Unlike other distant communities, the Jews of Kochi preserved Jewish tradition and customs. There is early written testimony about the existence of a Jewish community in Kochi one thousand years ago in which the Hindi ruler gave copper engraved tablets to Rabbi Yosef, the Jewish leader whom he respected.

Over the past sixty years or so, most of the community made aliya, the elders have passed on, and the community shrank. Six out of the eight shuls were turned into museums and visitors' centers. T'fillos took place only rarely in the two remaining shuls. The passing of the spiritual leader of the community three years ago marked the end of an era. Just before the formerly magnificent community was about to become a fond memory, Rabbi Berenshtein and his wife arrived.

"One of the nice things about

the community here," said Rabbi Berenshtein "is the fact that the Jews are very proud of being Jewish even though their Jewish knowledge isn't extensive. In Kochi there is much respect for any member of the Jewish people. Our job is to educate people. The first thing we did is revive t'fillos in the shul. With the help of the Jewish tourists, we have begun having regular minyanim.

"We gave some people t'fillin and they began using them every day. Many mezuzos were put up, and we have kosher sh'chita here. Every few months, a shochet

shlichus.

"The work is nonstop, unlike in any other place I had seen before. Every day, from morning till night, I learned Tanya and sichos with tourists and had discussions about hashkafa and emuna. After we married we decided to start married life on shlichus and we went to Dharamsala.

"Our plan was to return to Eretz Yisroel after three months, at the end of the season, and to seriously plan for the future. Since we had a six month visa, we couldn't decide whether to



**"Even though we are careful to close the windows, there are days that our home turns into a sort of zoo with all sorts of animals, bugs and winged creatures taking up residence. One morning, a few weeks ago, we woke up to the sound of loud cries. We went to the living room and saw six kittens that had somehow gotten into the house."**

comes to Kochi and people buy kosher chicken."

Another important element in restoring Jewish Kochi to its former glory is the construction of a mikva. The mikva was built in the yard of one of the shuls and is almost completed.

### THE REBBE'S ANSWER

"I'll tell you the truth. We had no intentions of going on shlichus to a city of our own."

Rabbi Berenshtein was familiar with India from before his marriage, from when he was a bachur after his year on K'vutza. He spent several months helping Rabbi Dror Moshe Shaul in Dharamsala and he enjoyed the atmosphere and the style of

remain another three months somewhere else in India or to open a new place. I felt I wasn't cut out to be an independent shliach. We wrote to the Rebbe that we were inclined to return to Eretz Yisroel but we wanted to be sure that we were doing the right thing.

"We opened volume 19 to page 265 and read it again and again, amazed by what it said. We had not expected such a clear, detailed answer. It took us a few days to digest the answer in which the Rebbe suggested that we do not think of leaving, but should go on shlichus for life and to do this not with kabbalas ol but with simcha.

"India is not an easy country for shlichus. I had already

## THE REBBE KNEW AHEAD OF TIME!

As they do in many other Chabad houses, at the Chabad house of Kochi everyone is asked to say something about themselves during the meal. Rabbi Berenshtein relates:

Naftali Tal of Bat Ayin visited us recently. His daughter was touring in India and he came with his son to visit her and travel with her for a week. During the Shabbos meal he told us a story that happened with the Rebbe's Igros Kodesh.

He had become religious in the 80's through chavrusa learning with some of the young men in the Kollel Tzemach Tzedek. That year, he and others had the idea of opening a program in Yerushalayim for people new to Judaism. He was willing to organize the program. When they asked him to write to the Rebbe, he refused. He said everything was fine and he had nothing to write.

The Lubavitchers pressured him and said, "If everything is fine for you, that's rare enough and worth writing to the Rebbe." He wrote a few questions and the Rebbe answered each of them.

"What amazed me was that at the beginning of the letter it said my name and an address: Tal – Harei Yehuda (Judean Hills), but I live in Yerushalayim and not Harei Yehuda. I assumed the Rebbe had erred and forgot about the whole thing.

"The years went by and the project we had tried to get off the ground, fizzled. I tried looking for the letter I had written (with the Rebbe's response), going through all my s'farim, but couldn't find it. Some years later, when Bat Ayin was founded, some other families and I decided to be the pioneers and move there.

"As I arranged my s'farim in my new home, the letter I had written years before fell out of one of them. I picked it up and what caught my eye was, 'Tal – Harei Yehuda.' The yishuv Bat Ayin is located in the center of the Harei Yehuda.

"It occurred to me, so the Rebbe hadn't erred! Those Chassidim who had told me that the Rebbe does not make mistakes, who I thought of as fanatics, were 100% right."

been on shlichus here so it was somewhat less daunting, but for my wife it meant setting aside her dreams and ambitions. A few more days went by and we discussed our next move until we finally decided: We are Chassidim and have to do this, with simcha!"

The couple still didn't know where to go on shlichus. In India there are many locations that don't have a permanent shliach.

"As soon as we made our decision, I got a phone call from Rabbi Shmuel Sharf, the shliach

in New Delhi. After asking how we are, he said that he had someone at his Chabad house from Eretz Yisroel whose family's roots were in Kochi. The man had made a visit to Kochi but was disappointed that there was no Chabad house. 'How about it?' he asked.

"Your timing is impeccable," I said, and I told him about the Rebbe's answer and the decision we had made shortly before he called."

Rabbi Berenshtein and

his wife attended the Kinus HaShluchim in 770 some time later. Before heading back to India, they wanted to draw on the Rebbe's kochos. They did some fundraising and were helped by two bachurim who had worked in Kochi for a few months. They filled him in on what he needed to know. The Berenshteins bought some supplies and headed out.

## A DIFFICULT JOURNEY

The first stop in India was Pushkar where they were hosted by Rabbi Shimshon Goldstein and his wife.

"After three weeks we left for Kochi by train. It was a few days before Chanuka 5769. We had forty hours of traveling ahead of us. Rabbi Goldstein gave us a goodbye present of a machine that makes Indian flatbread (chapatis).

"We had eight large suitcases and at nine in the morning we were on a jeep for a five hour ride to Kota in the south of Rajasthan. From there, we had to take a train that left in the afternoon and was supposed to arrive at a city near Kochi at two in the morning. Then we had to get to Kochi by taxi without knowing where we would be living and where we would be putting our luggage.

"The trip was exhausting but interesting. In Goa, a nice Indian fellow got on the train and wanted to sit near us. After he settled down, he took out his laptop. I asked him if I could borrow it for a few minutes to respond to emails and the like.

"It turned out that he lived not far from Kochi and he was able to help us out. Since we would be arriving late at night, we asked him whether he knew a reliable taxi driver who would wait for us at the station and drive us to



Kochi. After a few phone calls he had it arranged. Since the dialect spoken in Kochi is different than in other parts of India, we asked him to teach us some key words.

“We got off the train at two a.m. and were an hour’s drive from Kochi. A taxi driver was waiting for us. We arrived in Kochi early in the morning. Since at that time of year there are hardly any hotel rooms available, and those that are available are very expensive, we had to spend a few hours until we found a guest room at a reasonable price. Utterly spent, we allowed ourselves a brief nap.

“It was Thursday morning and we got to work on shopping for Shabbos. We met Jews along the way, and without knowing how we would manage, we invited them to join us for the Shabbos meal.

“In the shul we met two Jewish couples, one from Johannesburg and one from London. Both were happy to hear there is a Chabad house and together with them, we planned on davening Friday night in the shul. We walked back down the Jewish street to the bazaar and on the way we met another Jewish family. They lived locally and were very happy to hear that we had come to Kochi to open a Chabad house.

“Friday afternoon, we were still making the rounds of the shops to buy ingredients for Shabbos: flour, vegetables, rice and beans. The hardest item to locate was kosher oil. In India there is only one type of oil that one can use.”

The Berenshteins remember those first days in Kochi in detail, as though it happened a few days ago.

Friday morning, they asked the manager of the guest rooms whether they could cook in his



Rabbi Berenshtein giving a pair of t'fillin to a man who committed to using them every day

apartment. They were told it was a holiday for them and so they couldn't allow that; they suggested asking those who lived across the way. The new shluchim went to the house across the street and the people were accommodating. Within a few hours the meal was ready – the chapatis were baked in the machine they had been given in Pushkar and the salads were made.

The shluchim set up another table and took chairs from other rooms that were not rented. They used the lobby as the dining room of the new Chabad house that had been founded that day.

“After Kabbalas Shabbos, I left the shul with an entourage of ten men. We walked together in the street, with me in my Shabbos sirtuk. It was a sight to behold. There were children who were sure I was a wizard.

“The Shabbos meal was special; the first Shabbos meal of the Chabad house of Kochi. Everybody enjoyed the uniquely improvised Shabbos. We did not go to Shul on Shabbos day because there was no minyan due to the unbearable heat and humidity. Nevertheless, about

ten people showed up at one o'clock for the meal that we ate in the yard. A few more Israelis who hadn't heard about the new Chabad house the day before joined us as well.”

On Sunday, the new shluchim took a walk to get acquainted with the area. They met a few Israelis with whom they put on t'fillin. Monday and Tuesday were devoted to buying the supplies they needed:

“Shopping is very hard. I don't think there was a store in Kochi that we did not visit.”

Tuesday of that week they devoted to mitvzaim in the shul and visiting Jewish families:

“We visited one of the distinguished families of the community, Salam. We learned that there was occasionally a minyan on Shabbos morning in the shul and we had come just in time because the head of the community, who used to read from the Torah, had recently passed away.”

They needed to find a building where they could host all their activities. After a marathon search, they found a nice, furnished apartment with a



Rabbi Berenshtein putting t'fillin on with a tourist on the beach

**“What amazed me was that at the beginning of the letter it said my name and an address: Tal – Harei Yehuda (Judean Hills), but I live in Yerushalayim and not Harei Yehuda. I assumed the Rebbe had erred.”**

large living room that could hold twenty-five people, a respectable kitchen with cabinets, and an air conditioned bedroom. These are things that are hard to find in India. The owner was even willing to let them use a large balcony on the upper floor.

“On our second Shabbos in Kochi, we had a proper Shabbos meal. I went to buy fresh fish and we brought all our own equipment and cut and cleaned the fish on the spot. I noticed a woman standing not far off who was watching us. She turned out to be a Jewish woman who lives in Chicago and was visiting with her husband. I invited them to come to the Chabad house before Shabbos to talk a bit. They were visiting India as part of a trip around the world to visit synagogues.

“When they showed up at the Chabad house, and I asked her husband when the last time

he had put on t'fillin was, it turned out the only time had been 22 years earlier! Of course I immediately took out t'fillin which he put on. At the Shabbos meal they talked about their two children, fifteen and seventeen, who had bar mitzvahs without t'fillin. They promised to buy their sons t'fillin upon their return home.

“That Shabbos we had a minyan in the shul on Shabbos morning too. It's a half hour walk each way in blistering heat but we were happy there was a minyan. In addition, we hosted three more couples who were visiting from Eretz Yisroel.

“During the next week, we met the new head of the community, the brother-in-law of the previous head. He is 86 and was very happy to hear that we were setting up a permanent Chabad house. He told us how they kept kashrus to the best of

their abilities and had never eaten treif. It should be noted that despite all the travails they went through, many of them eat only kosher which is quite astonishing. Previously, they would bring a shochet, but when he died, they began ordering kosher meat from Bombay. Now we bring a shochet and things are returning to the way they once were.

“I checked the Sifrei Torah in the shul and that which needed fixing was fixed. We hold evenings of chizuk and make many house calls.

“At a later point, he agreed to hang a sign in the shul that invites Jews to visit the Chabad house on Shabbos and for shiurim. Any Jew who visits Kochi visits the shul, which is why this sign is so important.”

## BRINGING A JEW TO HIS FINAL REST

The Chabad house of Kochi quickly became the place to go for all one's Jewish needs, both for tourists and the local k'hilla. The shliach is also the chazan, the one who blows the shofar, the one who organizes minyanim and who brings a shochet.

“During the tourist season, we are flooded with tourists. Every year, about half a million people visit the shul. I devote about five hours a day to the shul where I sit and learn and do mitzvaim.

“During those five hours I meet many men who have never put on t'fillin. Who knows whether they would have ever put on t'fillin in their lives if not for meeting us? This year, we celebrated five bar mitzvahs for men whose Jewish identity was lost not by their parents but by their great-grandparents!”

Rabbi Berenshtein heard





Rabbi Berenshtein near the new mikva

## THE CROWN TIPPED HIM OFF

One busy Friday, I couldn't find my Chitas, one of the few s'farim in the Chabad house. After turning the place upside down, I still couldn't find it. We finally gave up.

A week and a half later, I was walking opposite the fish market when one of the merchants who offered his wares to tourists, came over to me. The man was a deaf-mute and he motioned to me to wait. I thought he wanted me to buy something and I decided to keep walking. Two minutes later he ran after me and caught up with me. He was holding my Chitas!

I was thrilled and I asked him where he had found it. He pantomimed to me that on a rainy day he had seen the Chitas on the rocks near the promenade. It seems we had forgotten it there. It was pouring and he took the Chitas and put it under some shelter.

Then he tried to find out who it belonged to. He opened it from left to right and on the first page he saw the words "40 Years of the Rebbe Admur shlita" in the shape of a crown. He remembered that he always saw me with a Moshiah flag pin with a crown on my lapel. He put two and two together and looked out for me.

As a sign of my appreciation I gave him a flag pin which he always wears on his shirt!

about a young American who lives in Kochi with a gentile woman. The man had decided he hated being Jewish and left America for India, met a local woman and married her. Rabbi Berenshtein called him and arranged to meet him.

"He is a lost soul. Even in his assimilated state, I can see the depth of the Jewish neshama. He told me that he and the woman went to a church to get married, but the priest told them he would marry them only on

condition that he converted to Christianity which, of course, he was unwilling to do. He could not even explain why.

"At the end of my visit, I asked him whether he had had a bar mitzva and he said no. I asked him whether he was willing to have a bar mitzva now. He was surprised that he could celebrate it at his age and happily agreed. After he put on t'fillin for the first time in his life, we agreed to stay in touch.

Rabbi Berenshtein has many

unusual stories to tell. Here's one:

"In Shvat of a year ago, someone called and asked me to contact a woman in a nearby village because she had a problem. I called her and learned that her friend, an American Jew, had died of a heart attack in the middle of the tour and she was beside herself with grief.

"The man, around sixty years old, had lived completely alone after cutting off ties with his

## AYEKA - WHERE ARE YOU HOLDING?

We had a “Baalshemske story” happen to us. When we were in Pushkar, before heading out on shlichus, we met an older Indian Jew who had left India and was back on a visit. Rabbi Shimmi Goldstein noticed him on the street and asked him to join the minyan. At first, the man refused but then he changed his mind. His name was Sasson.

That Shabbos, Rabbi Goldstein’s son had his bris. Shluchim from Poona and New Delhi had come and it was an especially joyous occasion. Sasson participated in the Shabbos davening and the meal and then went back to his hotel.

On Motzaei Shabbos, Rabbi Goldstein received a phone call from the man’s sister. She said that she had heard from the hotel receptionist that Sasson said he had been at the Chabad house and she wanted to hear how he had been, since the next day, Shabbos morning, he had died of a heart attack. She said they had been born in India to a religious family but when they left India, each went their own way and had stopped being religiously observant. Recently, her brother had decided to go on a trip to explore his roots in order to strengthen his faith. By divine providence, he came across the shliach and spent the final hours of his life davening from a Siddur, hearing Kiddush and divrei Torah. His quest had been fulfilled before he died.

A year later, on Yud-Tes Kislev 5770, we were sitting in our Chabad house in Kochi and I was reviewing a sicha about the question “Ayeka,” which the minister had asked the Alter Rebbe and the Rebbe had replied with “Ayeka? What have you done to fulfill your mission in the world?”

Three women were at the table and I saw them talking amongst themselves. I asked them where they were from and they said, New Jersey. The mother of the youngest one wanted to join them but because she had been born in Karachi, which presently belongs to Pakistan, the Indian authorities refused to give her a visa.

When she said Karachi, I was reminded that the older man we had met in Pushkar had also said he was originally from Karachi. I told them that they reminded me of a story that happened the year before. Before I got too far, one of them burst into tears and finished the story. The man had been her uncle. She said she heard me talking about every Jew having a mission in the world and had thought about how in his final hours he had been in a Chabad house despite not having been religiously observant for many years.

This year, the woman published a booklet in his memory with the title “Ayeka.” In the introduction she mentions her meeting with us.

family, and nobody wanted to help at this point. The American consulate couldn’t help fly him to the US because no relative there was willing to take responsibility for his body. Of course we got involved with this *Meis Mitzva*.

“As a last resort, I called the ZAKA organization in Eretz Yisroel. Within a day, they had

managed to locate his brother who gave permission to bury him, but he himself did not want to get involved. I spoke with members of the community in Kochi who agreed to have him buried in the local Jewish cemetery. For the first time in my life I did a *tahara* and took care of all aspects of the burial.

“With great difficulty, we managed to get ten Jews to escort him on his final journey. He was very far from Jewish observance. The woman told us that as far as he was concerned, his body could be donated towards research. Who knows whether, if he had died somewhere else, he would have merited a Jewish burial. An interesting postscript to this story is that she sent us a photograph that had been taken a few days before he died when they were in Kochi. In the picture, he is standing in front of the gate to the cemetery where he is buried. It’s eerie, as though he saw the future. His desire to be photographed there is surprising, particularly when his Jewish roots did not interest him.”

As to the difference between working with the local Jews as opposed to tourists, Rabbi Berenshtein says:

“Working with the community is very different than working with tourists. When we arrived in Kochi, we found out that the head of the k’hilla had died the month before. When we wrote about this to the Rebbe, we opened to two interesting answers. One was in connection to someone who began working in a certain place, and although it’s known that all beginnings are difficult, for him it was easy and the Rebbe wished him success. The second letter was sent to the father of Rabbi Akselrod who lived in Ramat Gan and was the rav of the Chabad shul there. The Rebbe blessed him to be a fitting successor. We were very excited by these answers.

“The Jewish k’hilla here is divided between two neighborhoods with one part of the community living near us. We are there every day. There is another small community

further away which we visit once every two weeks and where I am accepted as a rabbinic authority.

“We have a good relationship with the members of the community. The people in the community are very warm Jews. We try to build connections between them and the tourists.

“Before we came here, minyanim were a rarity. We, who work with the tourists, bring them to the shul and there is a minyan every Shabbos. There are many Jews originally from India who live in Eretz Yisroel and come back here to visit. This helps a lot. Every Shabbos we have about fifty guests of all backgrounds and from all points on the globe.”

## 90% HUMIDITY AND CREATURES IN THE HOUSE

The Berenshteins are working on building a mikva, a project they started on immediately. It's not simple and it's very expensive, but it is vital when you consider how far away the nearest mikva is.

“When we first came here, we were determined to build a mikva. It is not something that can be postponed. We spent a lot of time looking for a place to build it. At first, one of the locals agreed to have it in his yard, but when the contractor showed up to start the work, he got cold feet.

“We tried getting the consent of the president of the k'hilla for the mikva to be built in the yard of the shul, but he adamantly refused. We wrote to the Rebbe about this and the answer we opened to was interesting. The Rebbe wrote that a believing Jew knows that until he sees the hashgacha pratis in an incident, he did not see anything. In the



Havdala on Motzaei Yom Kippur in the shul

second letter it said that since they have a share in the shul, it is necessary to have shiurim there. Indeed, since we opened to that answer, we started a shiur in the shul.

“One day, I decided the time had come. Some of the young members of the community joined me and we headed towards the home of the president of the k'hilla. When he heard my request, he began shouting, ‘What do I need a mikva here for? As long as I live, I won't allow it.’

“His answer took all the wind out of our sails. The president is actually a good friend of ours, but for some reason, he was opposed to a mikva. My gloomy mood changed when I remembered the Rebbe's answer – so long as you haven't seen the hashgacha pratis in the incident, you haven't seen anything. As a last resort, I decided to send my wife to talk to him. I figured I had nothing to lose.

“Surprisingly, when she told him about why it was important to have a mikva, he accepted what she had to say and was no longer opposed. ‘If the rest of the community agrees, then I agree too.’

“We decided to strike while

the iron is hot. We signed all the papers and within a few days there were tractors on the site. It will be the biggest mikva in India. The skeleton is in place and they are working on completing it.

“Rabbi Yoel Kaplin, shliach in Kasol, helped us tremendously. He has experience in building mikvaos. He guided us in how to work with the contractor and engineer and which materials to buy and where.

“Rabbi Boaz Lerner, an expert on mikvaos from Nachalat Har Chabad, will check the kashrus of the mikva and give it his approval. Since we didn't want to delay the construction, we took loans from friends. We were only able to raise a third of the money that we need and I take this opportunity to ask whoever is able, to make a donation towards our mikva. It is vital for the community and for the many tourists who visit.”

I asked Rabbi Berenshtein what difficulties he has had to contend with on shlichus. He said:

“There are certain hardships that we got used to and others that are hard to get used to. Even though we are careful to close the windows, there are days that our home turns into a sort of zoo with all sorts of animals, bugs



and winged creatures taking up residence. One morning, a few weeks ago, we woke up to the sound of loud cries. We went to the living room and saw six kittens that somehow got into the house. We manage with the animals but the hardest part of living here is the 90% humidity, day in and day out. It's unbearable.

"When I was in Eretz Yisroel last Purim, I brought my t'fillin for checking to an expert in Yerushalayim. They needed a lot of work because leather is very sensitive to humidity. It looks like I will have to have my t'fillin taken care of every year. A damp item of clothing turns moldy within hours.

"Another thing which is hard for me personally, is the lack of Chassidishe farbrengens with friends. It is only when you are cut off from Chassidishe life that you realize how important it is. I had a dream recently in which I was at a farbrengen and I was crying tears of joy."

As for the Besuras Ha'Geula in Kochi:

"That is our shlichus. Every evening at supertime we show videos of the Rebbe and there are always segments on Moshiach. People write to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh and many people become connected to the Rebbe. Every Shabbos, we talk about Moshiach with our guests. We have not encountered

anyone who refused to cooperate because of the topic of Moshiach; on the contrary, it's something that gives hope, and people yearn for hope.

"I occasionally hear pessimistic talk from people in the community when they compare life today to the glory days of the community. It is only the topic of Moshiach, and the fact that I promise them that Moshiach is coming imminently, and the shul will go along with all the other shuls in the world to Eretz Yisroel, and it will be filled from end to end, that encourages them and makes them yearn for the Geula."



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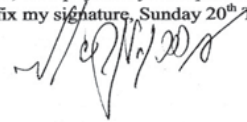

**APPROBATION**

Rabbi Jacob Schwei  
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Upon this statement I affix my signature, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Tamuz 5766

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# THE BUCK STOPS HERE!

## PART VII

By Rabbi Gershon Avtzon



Dear Reader sh'yichyeh,

The Rebbe — the leader of this generation — has told us a prophecy! These are his words (Shoftim 5751): “One must make known to all members of the generation that we have merited that G-d has chosen a person endowed with free choice, who is incomparably higher than the members of his generation.”

In the course of our previous articles, we described the activities of each of the Rebbeim to bring Moshiach. We explained that the entire purpose of those activities was to bring the Sh'china back to this world. This is accomplished by the seventh Rebbe and the seventh generation, just as Moshe Rabbeinu as the seventh leader from Avraham Avinu was the one to bring the Sh'china down by Mattan Torah.

After explaining that “all the seventh are cherished,” the Rebbe stated: “This is what is demanded and expected from the seventh generation, starting from the Alter Rebbe: to bring the Ikar Sh'china back to this world with the coming of Moshiach!”

### THE SEVENTH GENERATION

There are those who laugh at the concept that “All seventh are cherished” and think that it is just a slogan repeated in order to make us feel good. To help imprint the truth of this concept in the minds of our readers, I will share with you a very interesting

experience I had.

In the summer of 5761 I was a learning teacher in the Yeshivas Kayitz in Portland, Oregon. One day, we went on a trip to the neighboring Seattle, Washington. Seattle is the location of the largest indoor factory plant in the USA; it belongs to Boeing Enterprise. For a small fee, anyone can get a walk-through tour and see first-hand how planes are put together. We took advantage of this fantastic opportunity.

In the course of the tour some of the Bachurim asked a very simple question: Why are all the planes named with the number seven? There are the Boeing 747, 757, 737, 777 etc. The tour guide did not know, and he called a manager to find out. The response we got was an eye

opener: Boeing wanted the names of its planes to engender positive feelings among its costumers. They made a survey to find out which number people like most. An overwhelming majority said the number 7! We then told them to make a new plane, the Boeing 770!

Yet, there are still many people who wonder if this goal of the Rebbe is a reality or wishful thinking. We all must realize and internalize the following: Hashem has given us a chosen leader in our generation, to be ‘your judge,’ ‘your counselor,’ and the prophet of the generation.

“This chosen leader will provide the instructions and advice relevant to the service of all Jews and all people of the generation. This advice will encompass all matters of Torah



and mitzvos, as well as daily conduct in the manner of ‘in all your ways, know Him’ and ‘all your deeds should be for the sake of heaven.’ His counsel has extended to the essential prophecy —not just as a sage or judge, but as a prophet — of ‘immediate redemption’ and ‘Behold he — Moshiach — comes!’”

It is important to note that there is a tremendous difference between a prophecy about the arrival of Moshiach and an announcement from a holy man. Throughout the generations,

things are said as a prophecy, they must occur as the prophet said. A prophet is foretelling that which will be the true reality of this physical world. (For an in depth discussion on this, see *Seifer Ha’keitz* by Rabbi Shneur Z. Hertzel.)

### HOW DO WE SEE THAT THIS WORLD IS READY FOR MOSHIACH?

In modern times, Judaism is accessible to every Jew. In past generations, Jews faced many obstacles to learning Torah.

through the city of Chernigov, leaving shock and sorrow in its wake. Reb Yekutiel, a wealthy businessman and pillar of the community, had been arrested on charges of tax evasion and misappropriation of government funds.

All who knew Reb Yekutiel had no doubt of his innocence. Reb Yekutiel was known for his honesty, charity and modesty. Despite his immense wealth and influential position, he regarded every man as his equal and was always ready to lend a helping hand and attentive ear. For this, he had earned the respect and trust of all Chernigov’s residents, Jew and non-Jew alike. But this was Czarist Russia, where a man could be arrested on a bureaucratic caprice or by the stroke of a vengeful commissioner’s pen.

Inexplicably, Reb Yekutiel was convicted. Nothing – not his connections in the government, not the numerous appeals by his expensive lawyers or the prayers of the community – could stave off the fate ordained for him. Reb Yekutiel was sentenced to ten years of hard labor in distant Siberia.

On the day before Reb Yekutiel was sent east, a man knocked on the door of Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Chein, Rabbi of Chernigov. “Rabbi,” said the visitor, who was none other than the warden of the local jail, “Reb Yekutiel requests that you come see him. Special permission has been granted for you to visit him in his cell, should you desire to come.”

“Certainly,” said the Rabbi, “of course I’ll come,” and hurried to get his coat.

Tears filled Rabbi Dovid Tzvi’s eyes at the sight that met him upon entering the cell. Reb

“And so, now I’m on my way to Siberia. I thought that the Rebbe was dispensing business advice, but he must have seen that there is something there, in Siberia, that I must achieve, some part of my mission in life that must be played out in the frozen east. I could have gone in comfort, as a wealthy businessman and government contractor. Now I am going in chains...”

many Tzaddikim have told us — based on different verses — that certain years are auspicious times for Moshiach. These dates, known as “Kitzin,” either actualized in a positive spiritual sense (like the printing of special s’farim on Kabbala and Chassidus in those years) or in negative physical effects such as pogroms and terrible destruction of Jewish communities r”l.

The reason it is so (see Maamarim HaK’tzarim of the Alter Rebbe, pp. 354-355) is because those sages saw “on high” that these were special dates, auspicious times for positive things to happen. However, when these dates need to be actualized in this physical world, things can change. When

All books were in Hebrew, a language that not everyone understood, and many people did not have access to them. In addition, there were countries whose governments established rules forbidding the learning of Torah.

Today, there are no countries with such rules. There are Judaic books in all languages – including Braille. There are rabbis living in almost every country and city that can speak and teach in the native tongue. And of course, today with the Internet, there is literally no limit to how much Torah one can access instantly.

I would like to conclude this series with the following story:

The news passed swiftly



Yekutiel, too, was overwhelmed with emotion. The two men embraced and wept silently for some time. Finally, the prisoner began to speak:

"I asked you to come, Rabbi, not because I have any personal request to make, but because I want to tell you why I am here. Perhaps others can learn a lesson from my story.

"Several months ago, I was traveling to Petersburg for a series of meetings regarding my dealings with the government. As usual, I obtained a compartment in the first-class section of the train – a crucial necessity for any businessman seeking potential contacts among government officials and fellow merchants. It was then that I learned that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was on the train.

"I passed by the Rebbe's compartment, hoping to catch a glimpse of his holy face. The door was ajar, and suddenly I found myself gazing into his eyes – eyes that looked deeply into mine and seemed to know the innermost reaches of my soul. For a long moment I stood there, rooted to the spot. It was a while before I realized that the Rebbe was motioning to me to enter.

"With awe and trepidation I entered the Rebbe's compartment. But the Rebbe soon put me at ease, inviting me to sit and offering me a cigarette. He expressed great interest in our community, as



well as in my personal life and business dealings. In parting, the Rebbe said to me: 'I'm sure you've heard of the railway that the government is planning to build across Siberia. I think this is a perfect business opportunity for you. As one who has close connections with Minister Potysukshnikov, you should be able to obtain a sizable contract as a lumber supplier.'

"I returned to my compartment in a state of confusion. The last thing I expected from the Rebbe was a business tip. On the one hand, I felt that the advice of a tzaddik should be followed. On the other hand, the proposal held no attraction for me, despite its great financial potential. My business affairs were going well, thanks to G-d; why should I leave

my family and community and spend many long months, if not years, in far-off Siberia? At the end, I hesitated long enough for others to avail themselves of the opportunity – to my considerable relief, I must confess.

"And so, now I'm on my way to Siberia. I thought that the Rebbe was dispensing business advice, but he must have seen that there is something there, in Siberia, that I must achieve, some part of my mission in life that must be played out in the frozen east. I could have gone in comfort, as a wealthy businessman and government contractor. Now I am going in chains..."

We will all reach the Rebbe's goal and destination. Our generation will bring Moshiach. The question is only in what manner we will make the journey there. Let us all strengthen our emuna in the Rebbe and his words, add in learning the concepts of Moshiach and Geula, and together we will merit the immediate Hisgalus NOW!

*Rabbi Avtzon is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Lubavitch Cincinnati and a well sought after speaker and lecturer. Recordings of his in-depth shiurim on Inyanei Geula u'Moshiach can be accessed at <http://ylcrecording.weebly.com/moshiach-what-we-believe.html>. Weekly shiurim on Moshiach topics given by Rabbi Avtzon can be viewed at [chabad.info](http://chabad.info).*



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# JUSTICE BEYOND THE LAW

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For more than a year, Chabad Chassidim throughout the world have followed the story of Rabbi Eliyahu Hecht from Tzfas. In an exclusive account, Rabbi Ze'ev Yisroel Crombie, chairman of the rescue committee, shares his personal recollections of the many miracles that ultimately led to the final acquittal.

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

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## THE MEETING WITH ATTORNEY TRIAS

More than a year has passed since Rabbi Eliyahu Hecht was arrested in Spain, a time full of anxious waiting until the day of his trial, which was finally set for the 15<sup>th</sup> of Teves. A few days before the hearing, Attorney Angela called me to find out if I was coming, explaining that my testimony on Eli's responsibilities, his numerous trips overseas, and his financial conduct, was of critical importance. I told her that, G-d willing, I would come to testify and give as positive a testimony I possibly could.

When we arrived in Madrid, we went to meet with Attorney Trias in his center city offices. I

had spoken with him frequently over the past year, and with his associate, Attorney Angela, who did a most thorough job in representing Eli before the courts. I provided them with dozens of documents, later submitted to the court in a bulging file.

Attorney Trias has a very strong connection with the Spanish Jewish community, and has already represented Jews and Israelis previously before the courts. A few years ago, he won a famous case in which he represented a Jewish woman who had sued a neo-Nazi for denying the Holocaust. As a result of this case, when Attorney Trias won a seat in the Spanish parliament, he passed a law against Holocaust deniers.

After so many telephone conversations with someone, it's always interesting to meet that person face-to-face. We held a lengthy meeting with the defense team, which had gone through every detail of the testimonies Eli and I would present to the court the following day.

After davening, we headed for the courthouse. We waited for some time outside the courtroom with great anxiety. People suggested that I should say T'hillim, but I replied that many Chassidim throughout the world were surely saying T'hillim for Eli at that very moment. For my part, I felt that it would be far more important if I spent my time focusing on the mission that lay before me. Over and over again,



Speaking with the attorney at the conclusion of the trial

I practiced in my mind everything that I was about to say in my testimony, until I had prepared my statement accordingly. I mentioned to a friend the words of Yehuda HaMaccabi: “Is G-d limited in His ability to save many or few?” We hoped for the best.

### HOPING FOR A MIRACLE

About a thousand people are caught in Spain each year with drugs in their luggage, and when brought to trial, all of them claim that they knew nothing about it. How could we possibly convince the judges that Eli was different?

Attorney Angela told me that out of the thousands of people who had thus far been caught on charges of drug smuggling, only

three had been acquitted. The narcotics that had been planted in Eli’s valise were of an unusually large quantity. It seemed that any hope of securing Eli’s release was almost totally unrealistic!

I recalled one of the Rebbe’s sichos from Parshas Shmos (Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 36), in which he explains “And this is the essence of the command ‘Trust in G-d’ (etc.) – that the person puts his trust in G-d, who will bestow His revealed good upon him, and when he relies upon G-d alone (without considering whether he can possibly be saved, etc.), then His conduct towards him is higher than ‘measure for measure,’ i.e., G-d protects him and has mercy upon him, even if he really hasn’t proven worthy

of such revealed good. And this is the explanation of the words of the Tzemach Tzedek, that the trust itself will bring good results, which is not merely a side issue to the trust, rather this is within the realm of the trust regarding which we have been commanded.”

The period of Eli’s incarceration in Spanish prison was particularly difficult. Because he had no access to kosher food there, he could only eat some vegetables, tangerines, and hard-boiled eggs. When Rabbi Benzaquen managed to convince the warden to allow Eli to eat kosher food, the warden then asked a female Israeli prisoner to cook for him. This prisoner also had a sad story. She and her male



companion had landed at the Madrid airport, when her friend was caught trying to smuggle drugs. Everyone arrested with drugs usually claims that they knew nothing about it, but this person immediately admitted that the drugs were his in order to save his friend. Nevertheless, the girl was also arrested, and she has been in prison now for a year. To this day, there is no trial date in sight. The thought that Eli would be in a similar situation was far more than we could bear.

A few months ago, we contacted a judge in Spain who was familiar with cases of this type, and he told us, “Folks, I don’t want you to despair, but you have to consider the fact that there’s going to be a sentence of several years in prison.”

Nevertheless, we hoped for a miracle. Eli had traveled to Madrid as the shliach of “Kollel Chabad,” and out of the goodness of his heart, he had agreed to take a suitcase for a destitute woman as a personal favor. We believed that the brachos of our Rebbeim, the presidents of Kollel Chabad for generations, would come to his aid in this crisis.

### THE POLICEMAN’S HELPFUL TESTIMONY

After a long wait, Eli’s turn came to enter the courtroom for the first time. The other witnesses were asked to wait outside. We wished him well, and we davened that G-d would have mercy upon him, help him to say the right words, and find favor in the eyes of the judges.

Until we were called in to testify, we passed the time speaking with the Spanish policemen who had arrested Eli at the airport and had come to offer their own testimony. Since

I don’t speak Spanish, I could only give them a pleasant smile and make a few signs with my hands, while Rabbis Benzaquen and Libersohn had a lengthy and friendly discussion with the policemen. Their efforts definitely paid off. After the officer testified, the interpreter told Eli, “You ought to kiss him for the very sympathetic way he gave his testimony.”

### THE PRESIDING MAGISTRATE’S CORDIALITY

After Eli and the police officers had completed their testimony, I was called in to testify. I had prepared myself for this fateful moment for a whole year. The thought of those months that Eli had already spent in prison tormented me to no end. I prayed that we merit doing G-d’s Will and that we succeed in releasing Eli. Since the lawyers had told me that my testimony was most critical to the trial, I tried during those moments to forget everything around me and to focus all my strength upon the task that lay before me. Despite the fact that I was experiencing tremendous inner turmoil, I tried to exude a sense of trust and confidence.

I entered the courtroom. Sitting before me was a panel of three judges. We knew that the presiding magistrate was very devout in his religion (a fact that proved most advantageous for Eli), and was also a most pleasant and upright individual. The woman judge sitting to his right gave the impression as someone open-minded, whereas the judge to his left did not.

The prosecutors and defense attorneys sat facing one another, with Attorneys Trias and Angela seated at the defense table. Attorney Trias explained to me

that the Spanish legal system is based on the Inquisition approach, where the prosecutor holds a much higher-ranking position than the defense lawyer. Attorney Angela began her presentation, and then asked me to speak about the activities of “*Beit HaTavshil Eshel Binyomin*” and Eli’s role with the institution. I sat before the judges, but at first, the words wouldn’t come. I eventually managed to regain my composure and gave my testimony. The interpreter sat near me and translated what I said into Spanish, and then he translated the prosecutor’s and court’s questions into Hebrew. As he was interpreting, he said to me with much excitement, “The presiding judge is being unusually receptive. I’ve never seen a judge respond in such a manner.” Even Attorney Trias said to me at the end of the proceedings that in his forty years since becoming a lawyer, he had never seen such understanding shown by a Spanish magistrate. But they didn’t know the secret behind it all – and here it is:

After Eli’s imprisonment, I spoke with dozens of people about the imprisonment and pending trial, and I heard various ideas. One of them was from an Anash member who had been imprisoned in South America many years ago. He told me that the Rebbe spoke at a farbrengen about the need to help him. A simple Jew from Yerushalayim who heard what the Rebbe had said made a special trip to attend his trial. He stood before the judge and repeated the name of Avraham Avinu’s mother, Amaslai bas Karnevo, as is mentioned in the seifer *Avodas HaKodesh* (by the *Chid”a*): “It is a segula for someone going before a king, a minister, or a governor to say seventeen times *Amaslai bas*

*Karnevo.*” The man was actually released from prison!

When the judge spoke with me most respectfully, and I courteously smiled back, I mentioned the name *Amaslai bas Karnevo* – and it worked!

At the conclusion of my testimony, the judge asked them to have the entire transcript of the trial translated for me (something most unusual), since “such an important person has come to the court.” In his summation, the presiding judge also noted the unique and remarkable atmosphere that reigned in the courtroom. The friendly mood that prevailed was most uncharacteristic for a normal court case. Even the prosecutor noted this in his statement before the court, and how Eli was not the type of person one usually encounters in a court proceeding. Yet, while the overall reaction was indeed special, the most important thing was for Eli to be found innocent of all charges and return home.

After I finished testifying, I asked if I could say a few words in closing. I said that I was absolutely convinced of Eli’s innocence, referring specifically to his goodhearted nature. I mentioned how the previous day, after we had already disembarked from the train, Eli went back to help an elderly woman with her packages. I also remarked that Eli, good-natured person that he is, gave the t’fillin that he had in prison to another Jew in order to encourage him to start putting on t’fillin regularly, and he thereby had to use other people’s t’fillin. During the ten years he has worked with us, Eli has shown great concern for the needy people who came to make use of our public soup kitchens in Tzfas. I explained that it was

## A CHAIN OF MIRACLES

The absolutely miraculous acquittal of Rabbi Eliyahu Hecht marked the final link in a chain of miracles that took place during the legal process: Even the release on bail before Pesach was a real miracle. The court’s decision to release Eli on bail had been made due to repeated errors by the prosecutors, the clerks, and the judges. We had previously tried five times to secure his release without success.

As the Pesach holiday approached, I told the attorney that it would be impossible for Eli to spend Pesach behind bars, and I asked him to try again. At the end of the hearing, Attorney Trias told Rabbi Benzaquen, “Now you’ll see for yourself that there’s no chance to free Eli.”

Rabbi Benzaquen replied: “We believe in G-d.”

The following morning, when we learned that the judge had agreed to release Eli on bail, despite the fact that there was no precedent for releasing a prisoner in Eli’s circumstances until the trial, Attorney Trias told Rabbi Benzaquen, “Now even I believe in your G-d.”

It was Friday morning when Rabbi Libersohn called me with the update that the judge had agreed to release Eli on bail, adding that this would require us to secure a deposit of 36,000 Euros (180,000 shekels). I immediately pointed out that we did not have this large sum of money, and I asked him to wait a little while until I could see how, with G-d’s help, I could raise these funds.

But the Rebbe’s shluchim have boundless Ahavas Yisroel for every Jew, and Rabbi Libersohn couldn’t bear the thought that Eli would have to spend one more Shabbos in prison. He quickly went out and accepted the responsibility by borrowing this huge amount of money, just as long as Eli could be released before Shabbos. Now all that remained was to find a way to explain to the prison authorities why Eli had to be released promptly in order to get him to far-away Madrid before sundown. To our great joy, our efforts were successful, and Eli arrived in the Spanish capital shortly before the onset of Shabbos.

Over a period of several months we had to deal with the debt incurred to cover the bail, until finally, with G-d’s help and the help of some generous donors, the loan was repaid to Rabbi Libersohn in full.



A pre-trial meeting with the lawyers



Talking with the presiding judge

only because of his goodhearted nature that someone was able to take advantage of him without his knowledge.

Afterwards, Rabbis Libersohn and Benzaquen entered and gave their own testimony. With the court's permission, they explained the widespread custom among ultra-Orthodox to assist others in delivering parcels of kosher food from one community to another. The Gentile judges had difficulty understanding such conduct. One of the displays presented to the judges was a series of pictures of the piles of suitcases at the entrance to 770 during Tishrei.

It was most helpful that the presiding magistrate was a very religious man. At the conclusion of the court proceedings, he told us, "We are Christians, and in essence, we all come from the Jews." The manner in which he related to us was very touching, but it wasn't the main thing. We were anticipating that the truth would come to light, and the court would be convinced that Eli was completely innocent.

## THE LAWYER CALLED AND CRIED, "YOU'VE BEEN ACQUITTED!"

We returned to Barcelona with mixed feelings. When we traveled to Madrid, Eli brought a large satchel with him. I didn't ask him why, but it seemed to me that he had been prepared *ch"v* to go back to prison at the end of the trial. To our great joy, at the conclusion of the proceedings Eli was released on his own recognizance to wait in Barcelona for the court ruling. We were all left with one big question in our hearts: Had the judges been convinced of Eli's innocence? We returned to Barcelona very late at night, totally drained and exhausted.

Two weeks later, on Friday afternoon, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Shvat, the attorney called Eli and cried into the telephone with great emotion, "You've been acquitted! You've been acquitted!"

It's hard to describe the elation I felt when Eli called with the news. We had asked ourselves thousands of times during the past year: Would we come to this joyous moment? Here it had come. Despite all the obstacles, justice had been done!

## THE MIRACLES KEEP COMING

But neither the tension nor the string of miracles had come to an end. According to Spanish law, after the court decision is signed, the opposing side has five workdays during which they can file for an appeal. To put it simply, if the prosecutors would decide to appeal the decision, Eli would not be released until another trial was held. We waited with great anxiety, as the court ruling ran against all legal reasoning, and we were very concerned that the

prosecutors would appeal. As a result, Eli would then have to stay in Spain for another lengthy period of time until the matter would be settled.

Eli traveled to Madrid on Tuesday to sign the court decision. The attorney made it very clear to him that there was no chance that he would be released before the passage of five days. However, she apparently didn't yet understand who runs the world.

Eli tried to explain to the attorney that we had a most auspicious day on Thursday night – Yud Shvat – and it would be very important to him if he could participate in the festivities. The attorney, in turn, made it clear that there was no way to bypass the law, but Eli pleaded with her to request permission from the judge for his release. She eventually agreed to try.

When they arrived at the courthouse, they discovered that the judge was busy with another deliberation, due to last for some time. As the wait took longer than expected, the lawyer explained to Eli that she simply couldn't stay and she had to leave. Eli asked her to wait for just another fifteen minutes. Incredibly, exactly fifteen minutes later, the hearing went into recess, and the judge came out.

The attorney approached the judge and explained Eli's irregular request. Then, unbelievably, the judge turned to Eli, and in the profusion of words he said to him in Spanish, Eli understood only one word: "Liberté! Liberté!" – You're free!

But not only that, the judge himself personally went with Eli and the attorney to the office and made all the necessary arrangements. When they told Eli that he had to come back the next



day to receive the contributions that had been confiscated at the airport and sign that they had been returned to him, the judge intervened. He arranged for the money to be deposited directly into the "Eshel Binyomin" bank account, thereby preventing any further delays. Eli called me with the news: "I'm on my way home!"

Eli landed in Eretz Yisroel on Wednesday evening, and arrived at his home very late at night. G-d answered his prayers and enabled him to participate in the Yud Shvat farbrengen.

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In the name of the members of the rescue committee, I want to thank all those who gave their financial support, enabling us to raise the hundreds of thousands of shekels necessary to cover the legal expenses. Special thanks go to the executive director of Kollel Chabad, Rabbi Shalom HaLevi Duchman, who invested much toil and effort in helping us with our fundraising activities. There were many nights when I asked myself: How will I be able to meet the overwhelming financial obligations that I agreed to take on?

A big Yasher Ko'ach goes to

all the many people who called to offer their encouragement and advice. The tremendous support that we received from them and their genuine concern for Eli's welfare touched our hearts. It gave us the strength we needed to carry on during the very difficult moments, and there were many of those. It was most moving to see how Eli's story affected so many people – not just in Lubavitch, but throughout world Jewry.

I also want to thank those who davened and said T'hillim on Eli's behalf. There is no doubt in my mind that it was only in the merit of these prayers and the holy blessings of the Rebbe, that salvation came to Eli above and beyond all nature. Together with all Anash, we pray that Reb Sholom Mordechai HaLevi Ben Rivka Rubashkin should soon have his own miracle of personal redemption.

Our deepest heartfelt thanks go to our fellow rescue committee members, Rabbis Libersohn and Benzaquen, with whom we made this long journey. We never would have reached where we did without the exceptional sacrifice and Ahavas Yisroel of these two dear rabbis and all that they did



R' Eliyahu in the Barcelona Chabad House

for Eli. May G-d bless them with all the goodness only He can bestow in its most revealed sense. Together, as emissaries of the Jewish community as a whole, we were privileged to fulfill the mitzvah of pidyon shvuyim.

In the merit of Eli's personal redemption, we should merit the overall Redemption with the revelation of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, immediately, mamash!

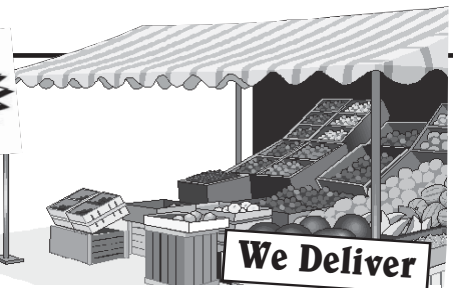
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# THE MODESTY AND BITTUL THAT HID EVERYTHING

## PART I

### INTRODUCTORY BOX

In the world of Chassidus, it has been said about a certain tzaddik that he managed to conceal his tzidkus (righteousness) by being famous as a baal Nigleh; whereas another tzaddik managed to conceal his scholarship with his great tzidkus. It can be said about Rabbi Yaakov Friedman a”h, who passed away eleven years ago, that with his modesty he concealed his entire personality.

Rabbi Yaakov, one of the outstanding individuals of our time, was multifaceted, but he hid it all with his anava (humility) and bittul (self-abnegation) that were part and parcel of who he was.

Anyone who knew him would say, “*Er iz geven a gehobener Yid*” (he was a spiritually elevated Jew). Although quite true, such a general statement could only be made by one who did not have the privilege of knowing him up close. With that phrase, they express the enormous distance they felt when they came in contact with him for even a few minutes. However, those who spent time with him got a glimpse of his true greatness.

“*V’ha’chaI yiten el libo*” – may the living take it to heart and may this article be a z’chus L’ilui Nishmaso.

at him as he davened saw the t’filla of an elevated Chassid. He davened aloud and with an outpouring of his soul. He was completely immersed in the words of the davening as in the saying of the Baal Shem Tov on the words, “*bo el ha’tiva*” – enter the teiva, enter the words of t’filla. Every word of his davening was measured, illuminated and polished, as though he was counting precious stones. Just by watching him daven one would absorb Yiras Shamayim.

If that was the case on weekdays and during a *pashute* (ordinary) Mincha, then it was all the more so the case on Shabbos, Yom Tov and the Yomim Nora’im. Every year, before Yom Kippur, he would ask his family members and even his young grandchildren, “Daven for me that I be able to daven.”

All his life he made great efforts to carry out the

### SERVANT OF G-D

The Rebbe Rayatz often repeated the line, “You say that

you learned Torah; what did Torah teach you?” It was evident what Torah taught Rabbi Yaakov Friedman. Whoever looked

(numerical value of the) acronym of the word “tzaddik” by saying every day 90 (Tzaddik) amens, 4 (Dalet) k’dushas, 10 (Yud) kadaishim, and 100 (Kuf) brachos.

He would get up before dawn and after immersing in a mikva, which he was very particular about, he would make the rounds of shuls to collect tz’daka. For many years he davened in a vasikin minyan in Boro Park; he was one of the founders of that minyan.

### IS HE STILL SAYING T’HILLIM?

T’hillim is one of the things about which he was very particular. He always tried to say T’hillim, aside from the set times that he dedicated for its recital. For example, every night he had the practice of getting up after midnight and saying T’hillim for a long time. He would say it with an unusual outpouring of the soul.

Once, at a farbrengen, the Rebbe looked for Rabbi Yaakov among the crowds of people in order to tell him to say l’chaim. He looked right and left and then loudly asked, “Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Friedman is here? Is he still saying T’hillim?”

### A G-D-FEARING MAN

Rabbi Friedman earned the title, “Ish Yerei Elokim” (a G-d fearing man) in the fullest sense of the term. What greater proof is there than the reason that he drew close to the world of Chabad Chassidus was only because he saw greater Yiras Shamayim there, more than in all other groups with which he was familiar. As he once said to his son-in-law, Rabbi Sholom Horowitz, “I saw that Lubavitch is the most frum.”

Rabbi Yaakov was born in Kovno, Lithuania to a Litvishe family and in his youth he learned in the famous Yeshivas Slabodka. Moving from one world to another requires a valid reason. Indeed, Rabbi Yaakov met the mashpia, Rabbi Yehoshua Isaac Baruch (may Hashem avenge his blood), as well as Reb Itche der masmid (may Hashem avenge his blood) who were sent as the Rebbe







Rayatz's *shadar* to Kovno. He saw their tremendous Yiras Shamayim, got a taste of Chabad Chassidus, and began to grow close to the Rebbe Rayatz.

"What drew me in particular," said Rabbi Yaakov, "was the netilas yadayim of Reb Itche der masmid," and he would go on to describe it. It necessitated several towels and took a long time.

Practices such as these became his daily practice. Rabbi Yaakov "related" to Yiras Shamayim. He took a great interest in every expression of Yiras Shamayim.

hearing about some expression of Yiras Shamayim on the part of his little grandchildren. You could see that this gave him chayus and simcha.

Not surprisingly then, he had the practice of looking in the Siddur throughout the entire Chazaras HaShatz, which is the Rebbe's practice.

### WE MUST DO T'SHUYA

"All his days in t'shuva" (Gemara Shabbos 153a). This statement of Chazal was imprinted on his soul. He would constantly repeat, while sighing

### MESIRUS NEFESH FOR ANOTHER

Chazal say that a Chassid burns his nails, signifying his caring about others more than himself. Rabbi Yaakov constantly forwent his personal good for the sake of others. He did this not only in good times but even in times of great deprivation when tremendous mesirus nefesh was needed to maintain this level.

His nephew Rabbi Dovid Schweitzer relates:

"I heard from the Klausenberger Rebbe zt"l, that he was in Auschwitz with Rabbi Yaakov and how he was outstanding in his conduct at that terrible time. He said that the Nazis distributed small rations of bread to the inmates for which they had to stand on a long line and wait. Sometimes they would announce that there was no more bread. This meant that the lives of a number of Jews were in danger since they had not eaten anything following a day of backbreaking labor. This is why, as soon as someone received his piece of bread, he ate it immediately out of fear and starvation. But not Rabbi Yaakov. He took his meager piece of bread and walked away. They asked him: Why don't you eat it? Why are you waiting? He said, '*Efshar vet a Yid nit bakumen*' (maybe a Jew won't get any)."

This entailed danger to his own life but his focus was on another Jew who might need the bread more than he did.

### A CHASSID CREATES AN ATMOSPHERE

The Rebbe Rashab said, "A Chassid creates an atmosphere." Wherever Rabbi Yaakov went, you would see his impact on that place. This was in addition

**"The owner of the hall asked him: How much will you collect? I am willing to give \$300 (a large amount in those days), but do me a favor and don't collect here."**

### A CHASSID IS ONE WHO FASTS

As a Chassid of an earlier era (before the change in our generation following what the Rebbe said on this matter) he would fast a lot. He fasted entire days without anyone knowing. Fasting the customary Monday-Thursday-Monday following Pesach, Shavuos and Sukkos, was a matter of course.

When a family member took note of this, Rabbi Yaakov remarked, "It's just fasting a little," and went on to another topic as though nothing had happened. This practice of his fits with what the Rebbe Rayatz said, "A Chassid is one who fasts."

His Yiras Shamayim was ingrained in his soul. This was apparent in seemingly little things. For example, he always enjoyed listening to a little child say a bracha nicely or even

heavily, "We must do t'shuva." His family couldn't take it, for if *he* had to do t'shuva, what should *we* say? In his final years he sighed over this a lot and he would search and ask, whether in s'farim or of friends, with the simplicity of a child: How is t'shuva done?

Within the year that he passed away, he was visited by his mechutan, Rabbi Pinchas Leibush Hertzel. As Rabbi Hertzel was about to leave, Rabbi Friedman took him aside and with the utmost seriousness asked him, "How do we do t'shuva?" His mechutan, who didn't know how to respond said, "Nu, Moshiach will come to bring the righteous to t'shuva."

If we needed additional proof of his great Yiras Shamayim, this seems to be it: A holy Yid who was distraught over his spiritual state and wanted to do t'shuva all his days.

to those things he worked to disseminate everywhere. Here is a sampling:

-Wherever he could he would encourage people in their avodas Hashem.

-At every family gathering, whether on Shabbos, Yom Tov, or a Melaveh Malka, he would learn Tanya with all the participants.

-At every simcha where he was asked to speak, he would raise the issue of the three pillars of Torah, T'filla, and Tz'daka, and made sure these things were actually done.

-He published a number of inspirational booklets on various topics with which he was regularly involved. One of them was on the topic of 100 brachos a day. He constantly brought up this inyan. When the Rebbe spoke about it in 5751, he worked hard to publish an entire booklet on this subject. He published a calendar schedule for the T'hilim that is said in the month of Elul according to the takana of the Baal Shem Tov. The Rebbe reviewed this calendar for him.

-He always urged his grandsons to learn Mishnayos, and especially Tanya, by heart.

His character fit what the Rebbe Rayatz said regarding a Chassid (see the sicha of 9 Nissan 5700), "I conjured up a multifaceted image in response to the question of what is a Chassid: A Chassid is ... a one who davens, a person with middos tovos, one who fasts, one who practices silence."

## A MAN WHO SUFFERED

Unfortunately, our generation does not lack people who suffered. However, accepting suffering with love is no small matter, especially when speaking of a life such as Rabbi Yaakov



lived. He went through the horrors of the Holocaust and found it hard to speak about this period of his life. He lost his first wife and children and constantly saw death all around him. All his life he suffered greatly, physically and emotionally, due to what he experienced during the war.

Those years merely served to strengthen him and fanned the fire of faith within him. Rabbi Yaakov wondered sorrowfully, "Why did I not have the tremendous z'chus that my family had, to be moser nefesh al Kiddush Hashem?"

## SAVING JEWISH CHILDREN

Upon Rabbi Yaakov Friedman's arrival in the Fernwald DP camp in 1945, he established a school for the children. The new school grew until there were dozens of students. There were 17 teachers including his friend, Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Roitblatt a"h. Rabbi Friedman would go

from house to house to collect donations for the school. He corresponded with the Rebbe Rayatz and received instructions from him about how to run the school.

When he arrived in the United States, he heard from his friend Rabbi Yona Eidelkopf a"h about an opportunity to continue to provide chinuch for children in Eretz Yisroel, and together they starting an organization called Chadrei Torah Ohr (a network providing after-school religious instruction). At first, it was called Chadrei Torah but the Rebbe added the word "Ohr." The Rebbe always inquired about how it was doing and how it was growing. He even spoke about it at some farbrengens.

Rabbi Yaakov did not only support chinuch with the money he raised but he himself was a teacher for many years in Yeshivas Darkei Noam and Klausenberg in Brooklyn.

## DEVOTED TO HELPING THOSE IN NEED

During one of the most difficult experiences he had in the Holocaust, Rabbi Friedman resolved, “If Hashem saves me, I will always be involved in tz’daka and chesed.” Indeed, he was an Ish Tz’daka V’Chesed with all his might, not only in the practical sense, which occupied most of his day, but emotionally too. He was absolutely devoted to helping others. At all hours, even minutes before candle lighting on Erev Shabbos, you could see people knocking at his door.

His son-in-law Rabbi Sholom relates:

“Once, while distributing money to the needy, many people showed up and there wasn’t time to listen to each one, so I decided to give the money out quickly without listening to their stories. My father-in-law said, ‘There are two aspects to tz’daka, first you have to listen to what the poor man has to say and then you give him money.’”

Rabbi Yaakov felt other people’s pain. It was not surprising that on practically every occasion (even an unexpected visit by his grandchildren) he would sing the niggun, “Hoshia es Amecha...” (Save Your people and bless Your inheritance, tend them and exalt them forever). This niggun was such a part of him that on the Shloshim after his passing, everyone present at his gravesite spontaneously began singing it.

## GIVING TO WHOEVER PUT OUT HIS HAND

The rule, “whoever puts out his hand is given [tz’daka]” was an inviolate principle of his. Whenever people knocked on his door and asked for help, he

gave them money. If anyone tried telling him that certain individuals were not in need, he didn’t want to hear it. He would firmly say, “We can’t say that [about a Jew].”

Rabbi Dovid Schweitzer related:

“I remember an incident from sixty years ago, back in Germany, when someone came and asked for a big loan for a few days, leaving a valuable deposit, a gold watch. Someone present quietly commented that it was probably a stolen watch. Rabbi Yaakov immediately shushed him and gave the loan. Not long afterward, the police came looking for the stolen object.”

Since chesed was what he was all about, he did not wait for people to come to him, but he went looking to see how he could help people. One day, he was in shul when he heard two men talking. One said to the other: X is extremely poor. Rabbi Yaakov heard that short sentence and that was enough for him. He did not know who X was and being modest, he did not ask the men who they were talking about. He left the shul and went home and opened a phone book and began looking for that name. He found it. He called the person up and said, “If it’s not difficult for you, please come to 1020 56<sup>th</sup> Street.”

The man came and Rabbi Yaakov gave him a sealed envelope and wished him well. The man was stunned when he opened the envelope and found a check for \$500.

This story was related at the Shiva by the man himself, and there are many more such stories.

## BRINGING MERIT TO JEWISH PEOPLE

We all know that fundraising

is difficult. Giving away money is one thing; raising money from others is another thing entirely. To Rabbi Yaakov, the avoda of enabling others to give tz’daka was as important as giving money to the needy. He made the effort to provide the z’chus of giving, even if it was only a dollar or less.

His son-in-law, Rabbi Yehuda Wolf, once asked him: Why do you schlep around to little shuls that barely have a minyan. It would be better for you to go to a big shul where you will collect more money. Rabbi Yaakov answered: What about providing an opportunity for tz’daka for those other Jews?

His son-in-law, Rabbi Yeshaya Hertz, related another incident:

“Rabbi Yaakov went to a wedding and wanted to collect money. The owner of the hall asked him: How much will you collect? I am willing to give \$300 (a large amount in those days), but do me a favor and don’t collect here.

“Rabbi Yaakov, to whom the mitzva of enabling others to do mitzvos was so dear, asked him: How can you take such a great responsibility of preventing Jews from doing a mitzva?”

This mesirus nefesh is what gave him his reputation in all religious communities in New York. Everyone, no matter what group they affiliated with, allowed him into their shuls where they treated him with utmost respect. They learned that it pays to give Rabbi Yankel Friedman; it was guaranteed tz’daka. Many people pursued him to give him money and receive his blessing. All knew that he was a genuine gabbai tz’daka.

*To be continued...*



# IMPETUOUS

By Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

Director of the Jewish Discovery Center of Buffalo, NY



## A PUZZLING MIDRASH

The opening verse of this week's parsha contains the key phrase, "They shall take for Me an offering." This was G-d's commandment to the Jewish people to contribute to the construction of the Mishkan, the portable Sanctuary in the desert.

One enigmatic Midrashic comment, when deciphered, will assist us in understanding the significance of this structure.

The Midrash states, "When the Jewish nation said *naaseh* – 'we shall do' before *nishma* – 'we shall listen,' G-d said, 'They shall take for Me an offering.'"

There is an obvious need for us to understand what the connection is between their enthusiastic acceptance of the Torah—mentioned at the end of last week's parsha—and G-d's commandment to contribute to the building of the Mishkan.

And since both our acceptance of the Torah and the building of the Mishkan are ongoing processes—we must accept the Torah and construct a Sanctuary in our own hearts everyday anew—the explanation of the foregoing Midrash must have relevance to our own lives as well.

## INSPIRATION TRANSLATED

A simple but relevant approach is that when the Jewish people expressed such exuberant acceptance of the Torah it was

necessary for them to quickly translate their excitement into something concrete.

Inspiration comes often to each and every one of us. The question is: what can we do to make the inspiration endure? The Midrash's approach here is simple: Take your life and turn it into a sanctuary for G-d. Do concrete things so that the inspiration becomes the soul of your actions. A soul by itself cannot stay grounded; its nature is to fly away and connect to its source. A soul-less body cannot survive. Likewise, inspiration without commensurate action is like a soul without a body and so will "fly away," while action that is not infused with spirit and devotion will not endure.

We must still look for additional insight as to why this message of harnessing the inspiration to action is specifically connected to the Jewish people's prefacing *naaseh* before *nishma*, "I will do" before "I will listen." There are many ways one can show enthusiasm, and there are many ways one can translate that enthusiasm into practical deeds. Why specifically does the Midrash pick on their prefacing "*naaseh* – we will do" before "*nishma* – we will listen" as the inspiration that needed to be concretized? And second, why did G-d select this specific approach—contributing to the construction of the Sanctuary—as the means of concretizing that inspiration?

## MOUTH BEFORE EARS

The Talmud relates that a heretic once observed how the great Sage Rava was studying Torah and was oblivious to the way his fingers were bleeding. The heretic criticized Rava by saying that he was a member of a people who "put their mouth before their ears." He meant that when we were informed that we would receive the Torah we were so enthusiastic about it that we impulsively responded with our mouths, "we will do" even before we heard what accepting the Torah would entail. Similarly, the heretic implied that Rava too was impulsive and so eager to study Torah that he was not aware of his own hand bleeding.

From this passage in the Talmud we can gather that their reciting *naaseh* before *nishma* was an expression of impulsive behavior which nonetheless the Talmud considers to be a great virtue.

The question arises, isn't impulsive behavior a negative trait? Haven't we read in the Torah that Jacob criticized his son Reuven for his impulsiveness?

The answer can be derived from the analysis in a Chassidic discourse (entitled *Basi L'Gani*) the previous Rebbe issued to be studied on the day of his passing and has since become the major Chassidic classic of our generation. Since 1950 the Rebbe has devoted at least one



**Our observance of the Mitzvos should not be confined to our limited human faculties. We must always endeavor to reveal the inner Shtus D’k’dusha, the inner voice that comes from our soul’s essence that inspires and enables us to go beyond our boundaries.**

discourse a year elucidating the landmark discourse of his predecessor.

of introduction concerning the nature of the revelation at Sinai:

### FOLLY: GOOD AND BAD

One of the central themes of these discourses is that there are two forms of folly. There is a median level of rational behavior and logic. Deviating in any direction from this mean is called *shtus* – folly in Hebrew. Deviating below the line of normality is referred to as *Shtus D’Klipa*, or negative folly, that is generally associated with immoral behavior. A positive form of foolishness is when a person goes beyond the limits of their rational mind to do good. This is also called folly, but with the additional qualifier: *Shtus D’k’dusha* – holy folly.

This can also explain the difference between the two forms of impulsiveness. When impulsive behavior causes a person to perform an action that goes against the will of Jacob, who was the spiritual leader of his generation, as was the case with Reuven, it was deemed improper and therefore criticized by Jacob. When impulsive behavior brings a person closer to Sinai, i.e., to acceptance of and dedication to Torah and Mitzvos, it is laudable.

We can now understand why the Midrash links the words “and take for me an offering” with the Jewish people’s uttering the words “we will do” before “we will listen.” But first a few words

### A MOUNTAIN OF LOVE

At Sinai they were under the “spell” of G-d’s unprecedented revelation. Our Sages tell us that G-d covered them with the mountain and threatened to bury them if they did not accept the Torah. Chassidic thought explains that this is a metaphor for the overwhelming G-dly love that was showered upon them and which smothered them to such an extent that they could not possibly refuse to unconditionally embrace all of the Torah. G-d’s passionate love for them elicited a reciprocal feeling of love for G-d and His Torah which transcended the bounds of logic—*Shtus D’k’dusha* – holy folly.

This clearly was not good enough. There were two dangers that had to be addressed: The first is that when the mountain (read: G-d’s passionate love for them) would cease to hover over them, their enthusiasm would fizzle out. The second, and, perhaps an even greater danger, was that they might take their supra-rational love and the impulsive behavior it would engender and channel it away from a *Shtus D’k’dusha* and convert it into *Shtus D’Klipa* – from holy folly to its negative counterpart.

To forestall these two potential problems, G-d instructs them to contribute towards the construction of the Mishkan.

This instruction had two functions that addressed both of the concerns.

First, as stated above, it gave them an opportunity to channel their passion into concrete action so that the energy would not dissipate.

Second, it reinforced the idea that their supra-rational passion should remain above the line and not be diverted into irrational and negative impulsiveness.

### FOOLISH WOOD

Indeed, the Mishkan was built from *shittim* wood. The word *shittim* is related to the word *shtus* – folly. As discussed in the discourse referred to above, the reason the Mishkan was constructed of this material was to underscore its function and objective. It was not just a place to come and worship G-d, but a place that represented the transformation of the negative folly into *Shtus D’k’dusha* – holy folly.

In other words, this supra-rational approach to Judaism that does not allow us to **limit** ourselves to rational modes of dedication to Torah, notwithstanding the importance Judaism places on logic, was to be institutionalized and enshrined in the Sanctuary. It was not intended to be a onetime experience at the time we stood under the influence of the Sinai event. The building of the Mishkan demands that this approach become a permanent fixture which would guarantee the survival of Judaism.

### MOSHIACH: TRANSCENDING LOGIC

As we prepare for the final Redemption it is necessary for us to apply the above lessons

to this process. The Chassidic classic *Tanya* teaches us that the future Messianic Age is the time when the spiritual effects of the Sinai experience will become permanent and will permeate the entire world. It follows then that the lessons that applied to the giving of the Torah and the construction of the Mishkan must be applied to our generation which has been told by the Rebbe, "it is the last one of exile and the first of Redemption."

In recent years, due to all of the incredible changes that have occurred, both positive and negative, the Jewish people have been inspired with the realization that Moshiach's coming is imminent. The miracles that we have witnessed have left us awestruck and profoundly moved. But all of this does not suffice. The lesson of

G-d's instruction to contribute towards the construction of the Mishkan as a response to their saying "I will do" before "I will listen" is that we must take this inspiration and translate it into concrete action. By doing one more Mitzvah we will succeed in internalizing that inspiration, perpetuate it, and hasten the process of Redemption.

The second lesson is that we should not allow our enthusiasm to be diverted into doing things that serve our own interests that are out of the bounds of logic. Everything we do must reflect supra rational passion of our divine soul and not the egotistical, irrational desires of our animal nature. Our observance of the Mitzvos should not be confined to our limited human faculties. We must always endeavor to reveal the inner *Shtus D'k'dusha*,

the inner voice that comes from our soul's essence that inspires and enables us to go beyond our boundaries.

This has a special connection to Moshiach in consonance with *Tanya's* explanation of the enigmatic Talmudic statement that seems to suggest that Moshiach comes when we are distracted from his coming. The actual literal translation of that statement is that Moshiach's coming transcends our knowledge and goes beyond our expectations. No matter what we imagine it will be like, it will be much more than that. Moshiach will introduce us to an utterly transcendent level of G-dly awareness.

Accordingly, our preparation for this time must also involve reaching the limits of knowledge – and then transcending it.

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ב"ה



# SEEING GEULA IN MOSCOW

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**Rabbi Michoel Mishulovin, shliach of the Rebbe at the Chabad house near the Bolshaya Bronnaya shul, tells about Yidden in Russia who are becoming religiously observant after seventy years of communism.**

By Menachem Savyon

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In Eretz Yisroel, everyone knows the mashpia Rabbi Michoel Mishulovin of Nachalat Har Chabad in Kiryat Malachi. In Moscow, on the other hand, if you say “Rabbi Michoel Mishulovin,” they will refer you to the shliach of the Chabad house Bolshaya Bronnaya, whose name is also Michoel Mishulovin. The identical names were the reason for an amusing incident that took place recently.

Some people in the community in Moscow approached the shliach and mentioned that they heard he would be farbrenging on Yud-Tes Kislev. At first, he said he hadn’t heard anything about it. Upon second thought, he laughed and explained that although the signs said that Rabbi Michoel Mishulovin would be farbrenging, it was referring to his uncle, the mashpia from Nachalat Har Chabad.

The shliach in Bolshaya Bronnaya, Rabbi Michoel



Mishulovin, has some interesting shlichus stories to share with us. He began by telling me how he ended up on shlichus in Moscow, with his wife who is the daughter of Rabbi Yitzchok Kogan, chairman of Aguch in Russia and rav of the Bolshaya Bronnaya shul:

“After we married, we lived in Los Angeles. I started working

in safrus and we opened a Judaica store. Then, Rabbi Berel Lazar contacted me through my father-in-law, Rabbi Kogan, and suggested that we come to Moscow in order to write a Torah. I asked him, ‘Why should we live in Moscow when I can write a Torah in Los Angeles?’ He replied, ‘For seventy years it wasn’t possible to write a Torah in the Soviet Union, and now we want this new Torah to be written here.’ We wrote to the Rebbe through the Igros Kodesh and understood from the answer that we should accept the offer.”

## EXCEPTIONAL SUCCESS

“From the outset, we had no real concerns about such an undertaking since my in-laws live in Moscow. We called Rabbi Lazar to confirm, but when he took our call he told us, ‘I’m sorry, I can’t talk now. A bomb exploded in the area of Marina Roscha.’ You can imagine how this terrorist attempt made



A Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen at Bolshaya Bronnaya



Rabbi Mishulovin speaking at a Chassidishe farbrengen

us feel. We hadn't taken anti-Semitism in Russia into account. We even wavered a bit in our decision to go. In the end, we regained our confidence and signed a contract.

"Since we owned a Judaica store, we couldn't move overnight. First, we had to sell all the merchandise we had. It was worth a lot of money, and it was no easy task to close the store that quickly. We put up a sign announcing a going-out-of-business sale and within three days we sold merchandise worth \$15-20,000!

"I said to my wife, 'Maybe we should order more merchandise and arrive in Moscow as wealthy people,' but she said, 'Don't you see that this is a clear sign that Moscow is our place of shlichus? Sell what you have and let's go.'

"The same thing repeated itself when we moved to Moscow. Right before we went out to buy furniture and electrical appliances for our new apartment, the value of the ruble suddenly dropped drastically and our dollars tripled in value. The electronics stores were government owned at the time, and therefore the prices were in rubles. In this too we saw the Rebbe's bracha."

**“One of the times I went to shul on Shabbos, I davened along with everyone from a Siddur translated into Russian. I saw the words: ‘Nor can the uncircumcised participate in its rest [of Shabbos].’ This made me feel bad about being uncircumcised. I knew I could not show up to shul like this and I decided, on the spot, to have a bris.”**

### MAKING WAVES

"At the end of two years, in the course of which I finished writing the Torah, Rabbi Lazar suggested that we open a Chabad house at Marina Roscha, the Jewish community center in Moscow. That was the winter of 5760. We agreed and got to work. Moscow is a huge city, but at that time, outreach work was still in its infancy. The city also had just begun developing its own infrastructure with stores and business centers.

"Yud Shevat was approaching and we decided to gather 51 Jewish children and make them a bar mitzva as a gift for the Rebbe for 50 years of his leadership. We started making calls and speaking to Jews whom we met. After a lot of effort, we had 51 children who had turned thirteen in the previous year. It wasn't

easy because at that time many Jews were still afraid to publicize their Jewish identity.

"The boys attended a class twice a week as a preparation for their bar mitzva. On the Shabbos prior to the event, we made a Shabbaton outside the city for the boys and their parents. We held a festive ceremony, at which we gave each of them t'fillin, tzitzis and a yarmulke with the logo of the event.

"About 500-600 people, families and children, attended the very moving bar mitzva event. We had thirteen candles and called upon thirteen distinguished guests to light a candle and bless the bar mitzva boys. Everybody had tears in their eyes. It was an unforgettable event; all those who were present felt tremendous Jewish pride.

"For Yud-Alef Nissan we



At the entrance to the Chabad house office

wanted to give the Rebbe another present and decided to make Jewish weddings. We had five simultaneous chuppas, and we celebrated the event at the center's shul. Each marriage was officiated by a different rabbi so that the other couples would not have to wait.

"These milestone events made quite a splash amongst the Jews of Russia and I began getting phone calls from shluchim who wanted to know how we did it. Since then, the idea has spread far and wide. In the years that followed, we continued the tradition of making bar mitzvahs and weddings in larger numbers every year."

### JEWISH HEADQUARTERS

"After a number of years of running the Chabad house near Marina Roscha, my father-in-law enlarged the Bolshaya Bronnaya to four times its size. We moved the Chabad house there. By the way, Bolshaya Bronnaya is the name of a street, but everyone knows that when someone says 'Bolshaya Bronnaya,' they are referring to the shul. It is the only shul throughout Russia that is under the official leadership of the Rebbe.

"When we began working here, Russian Jews were completely unfamiliar with the concept of a Chabad house. They knew about a synagogue but 'Chabad house' was not in their lexicon. We were the first to open a Chabad house. We worked on getting the idea across that a shul is for davening and a Chabad house is for all Jewish activities.

"When we wanted to hang a sign outside, we were unsure what to write on it. If we wrote something like 'For all your Jewish needs,' then the non-Jews who help out at the Chabad house (of which there are many) would be offended. After mulling it over, we wrote 'Your Jewish headquarters for all life matters.' This way, we didn't limit the Chabad house to a particular type of person. The truth is, the Rebbe wants us to work with gentiles too, preparing them for Geula through their Seven Noachide Laws."

### INSPIRATION FOR A BRIS

"A year and a half ago, we took our children on vacation to Eretz Yisroel. While I was there, I received a phone call from the secretary of the Chabad house who said that someone had come in who wanted a bris. I said, 'What's the problem? Tell him I'm away and refer him to a mohel.' The secretary suggested that he go to the mohel on his own, but he wanted me to accompany him. He waited until I returned to Moscow.

"Two weeks later I returned to Moscow and met the man. I did not really know him, as he had come to shul only two or three times over the previous five years. I went with him to the mohel and he had a bris. When we spoke together afterward, I asked him, 'Tell me, what motivated you

to undergo a bris?' We usually have to convince people to have a bris, and here he had come on his own.

"He said, 'One of the times I went to shul on Shabbos, I davened along with everyone from a Siddur translated into Russian. I saw the words: "Nor can the uncircumcised participate in its rest [of Shabbos]." This made me feel bad about being uncircumcised. I knew I could not show up to shul like this and I decided, on the spot, to have a bris.'

"Since then, he started attending shul regularly, always to the first minyan on Shabbos and on weekdays, and has developed a very strong connection to the community.

"At some point, I suggested that he buy t'fillin. He was willing and he asked what I recommended that he buy. I had gotten to know him a little better and knew that he had the means, so I said, 'You can buy t'fillin for \$300 or for \$1500; it depends on what you're looking for. You don't buy t'fillin every day so I recommend that you buy the nicest Chabad t'fillin.'

"He asked me, 'Can I buy two pairs?'

"I wondered why he wanted two pairs. He said it was because he lived a plane ride away from Moscow but was in Moscow a lot on business. 'I prefer having t'fillin at home too so I won't need to take them with me each time.'

"From this incident I learned not to suffice with the minimum. A shliach of the Rebbe needs to go *L'chat'chilla aribber*, to try for the most, and then he will see that he is successful with the power of the one who sent him (i.e. the Rebbe)!"



## SAME-DAY SERVICE

Here is another interesting story about someone who had a bris:

“One day, a man of about forty walked into the Chabad house and asked, ‘Where can I go to have a bris?’

“Do you have documentation to prove that you are Jewish?’ I asked him. He said that he did.

“In that case, we will arrange it.’

“He said, ‘I didn’t plan on doing it right away; I just wanted to know, but I’m not ready yet.’

“I replied, ‘Fine, we will just make inquiries.’

“While he was still standing there, I called the mohel, but he didn’t answer the phone. We exchanged phone numbers and said we would be in touch.

“After he left, I decided to be persistent and continued trying to reach the mohel. After half an hour of trying, he answered the phone. I told him, ‘I have someone who wants a bris.’

“‘I’m ready,’ said the mohel. ‘Come on over.’

“I called the man who had just left the Chabad house and said, ‘I spoke with the mohel and he is waiting for us to come.’ There was utter silence on the line. I said, ‘Hello?’ but there was no response.

“After two minutes of silence, I heard him stammer, ‘Listen, I’m sorry but I just wanted the information. I didn’t think it would be this quick ...’

“I knew this was an opportunity that I didn’t want to lose. So I began explaining that the mohel is very busy and he made himself available now just for him. Postponing the bris would be very awkward. After five minutes he was convinced. He said, ‘Okay, I will be there within half an hour.’ He did indeed



Rabbi Mishulovin with mekuravim

show up and was circumcised.

“I spoke to him a few days later and asked him why he had wanted to postpone it. He said, ‘That day was March 8. In Russia it is International Women’s Day, a day on which people get together and celebrate and buy gifts for women. To a Russian, it is unheard of to remain at home on this day. So when you called and said the mohel is waiting, I didn’t know what to do. I wondered – how can I stay home today; everyone will laugh at me. It’s only because you arranged everything that I decided to go ahead with it.’

“That day, the secretary at the Chabad house did not show up because it was a Russian holiday. Even many Jews don’t work that day. That is why I was the one sitting there when he walked in, and I immediately arranged for the mohel. Otherwise, who knows how long he would have procrastinated.

“There are many Jews whom I have spent years trying to convince them to have a bris and have been unsuccessful. In this case though, the man had a bris within hours.”

## THREE HOUR MARATHON

“During the time that I ran the Chabad house in Marina

Roscha, someone came in and asked how a bas mitzva is done. I explained it to him, and then we ended up speaking for over three hours. I was plotzting, but he kept asking questions. I did not quite understand where he was going with his questions, but I figured that I am on shlichus and I’m not the one to set the agenda.

“A few months went by and the same man came back and told me that now they were ready and he wanted to celebrate his daughter’s bas mitzva.

“‘Why didn’t you do so until now?’ I asked.

“He answered, ‘I am a very sensitive person. I came first to check out the place and to see what it was all about. After seeing that you spent several hours with me without answering telephones and without my rattling you, I was won over. And after the long time that passed, I finally decided to come and make the bas mitzva.’

“I keep in touch with him and often try to convince him to have a bris. I once sat with him in a restaurant for a long time but did not manage to convince him. Someone might ask why I invest so much time in one person, but to the Rebbe, every Jew is a diamond. Nobody would throw away a diamond in the rough.”

# KADDISH FOR MY FATHER

On sharing a meal with Rabbi Dovid Horodoker.

By Rabbi Yehoshua Dubrawski a"h

## A HEARTRENDING KADDISH

During the time I said Kaddish daily for my father and sister Tziva'le, I mostly davened at a minyan not far from the clay hut that served as my home, by the Perkars who lived in a second floor apartment. The minyan consisted almost entirely of Russians from the Chabad community who were saying Kaddish. In the 40's, in the years following the war, victims of the ever present starvation and epidemics were buried daily in the mountainous cemetery of Samarkand.

Among those saying Kaddish was a Chassidic boy, Itzele, the only child of R' Chaim Sheps, a Chassidic and G-d fearing scholar, one of the elder T'mimim who had learned in Lubavitch. In all of Russia there remained just a few children who were religiously observant; most of them from Chabad areas and their environs. But I knew that among the Chassidic, religious children there was nobody like Itzele.

All those who said Kaddish screamed it more than they said it. Each of them wanted his Kaddish to be heard. All put their hearts into the saying of Kaddish and more than one burst into tears in the middle. Itzele did not shout when he said his



R' Dovid Kievman-Horodoker

Kaddish and he did not cry; yet his Kaddish was heard more than all the others since it was a pure cry from the heart; the words themselves cried.

It was not easy, among the many people obligated to say Kaddish, to be able to be the chazan, but Itzele was different. They let him daven for the amud more often and out of turn.

R' Chaim and his son Itzele would come together, and they would hold hands, which looked odd. Afterward, I found out that R' Chaim suffered from a form of blindness caused by starvation which mainly affected his eyes at night. Later, they both suffered

from the same blindness and they held onto one another even more firmly.

## A PURE KORBAN

For a while they dragged themselves to the minyan and Itzele said Kaddish. After some time, we noticed that they stopped coming. People shook their heads sadly and sighed, for this was not a good sign.

A few weeks later, I saw R' Chaim again, alone. He looked thinner, more bent over, and his eyes were red and swollen. Just as before, he made dismissive motions with his hand about everything. He said the Kaddish himself, for Itzele and his wife.

Even in my unfortunate circumstances, I very much wanted to know; such a helpless Jew, sick and alone, and such a Chassid and lamdan! Who was looking out for him? Who helped him? I was unable to find out even though R' Chaim befriended me.

Actually, it was the other way around – R' Chaim only wanted to hear from me about me and my grandfather. "I share your feelings," he would say. "I already know what it is like to say Kaddish for the two people closest to me. Now I have no one. There is only our Father in heaven."



On several occasions, R' Chaim would say to me in a fatherly way: Remember and don't forget, even when Father hits, and sometimes he really hits, don't ask any questions. Avrohom Avinu gave us this ability; he led his son to the Akeida and he did not have even the tiniest question.

R' Chaim once quietly added: My son Yitzchok-Itzele also went up to heaven as a perfect korban.

Following that exchange, I never again saw R' Chaim at the minyan. I fell sick with typhus, which was complicated by severe malnourishment and I did not leave the house for many months. Afterward, I heard that R' Chaim had left this pathetic world.

### IN R' DOVID'S MINYAN

There were times I went to the minyan further away, on Dunavska Street. I wanted to go there more often but I lacked the necessary intrepidity, especially if it was raining and muddy. I couldn't walk that far with my torn galoshes that were tied with string (I did not have shoes for a while already; in the house I went barefoot and outside I wore *tafkes*, a sort of shoe made of woven cotton, one of the most critical inventions in Samarkand during the war).

I went there to daven in R' Dovid's minyan, not because of the minyan as much as for R' Dovid. I was surprised at myself for wanting to see how a real Chassid davens, and how a real Chassid suffers from starvation. The biggest chiddush was that I heard and knew that R' Dovid suffered from hunger and still thought Chassidus; not about bread and butter but about Elokus, and at length, and he davened for even longer.

I remember his long, white



**“The biggest chiddush was that I heard and knew that R' Dovid suffered from starvation and still thought Chassidus; not about bread and butter but about Elokus, and at length, and he davened for even longer.”**

beard. I remember his heavenly ruminative eyes in his pale luminous face that looked at you, but seemed to wander somewhere else and not focus on you. I saw him during the starvation years in Samarkand, before typhus and malnutrition knocked me out, half-alive, for months. Then I saw him a few more times before he passed away.

R' Dovid Kievman or R' Dovid Horodoker as he was known, lived at the time in a “balcony.” It was a dilapidated clay attic that could be reached, with difficulty, by climbing a crumbling wood staircase. For a period of time there was a minyan there. I sometimes went there to say Kaddish for my father and sister. I would often wonder how

R' Dovid got up those warped steps, which those younger and healthier than he had a hard time climbing.

I knew and had heard that R' Dovid Horodoker was a special Chassid and rare oved amongst the elite of the Chassidic cadre. I got to see him up close during davening (or, to be more precise, during preparations for davening) and during meals.

### HOURS OF D'VEIKUS

After the minyan finished davening, R' Dovid remained lost in thought, in a state of d'veikus. In the small clay room it was empty and very quiet. In a corner on the side near the door was something that served R' Dovid



as a bed. There was a little table that wobbled, either because the legs were cockeyed or because the mud floor was uneven. Two or three stools were scattered in the hallway and that was all the furniture if you don't count an old, colorful Uzbeki box that contained all sorts of things and was covered with a piece of torn material.

And it was quiet there, very quiet. R' Dovid's son, an older bachur, stood with his face to the wall. He held a Siddur or some volume and shuckled slightly. Was he davening? Learning? Who knows? I was preoccupied with R' Dovid. He sat on his "bed," with his aforementioned brooding eyes and meditated on Chassidus.

On very warm days in Samarkand, R' Dovid would sit there in d'veikus with his head and arm t'fillin but without a tallis; also without a shirt, just an undershirt and tzitzis. He would sit like a prisoner in chains, without moving, not seeing, not hearing what was going on around him, not even when I purposely made noise.

It often happened that I was the only one remaining in R' Dovid's room. First, because most of the time there was no breakfast awaiting me back home. Second, because sometimes I was bothered day and night by the thought of a piece of bread or a potato, and the quiet atmosphere of d'veikus in R' Dovid's presence strangely dissipated those thoughts of hunger and the feeling of starvation (though it happened occasionally that even the sublime atmosphere at R' Dovid's did not assuage my hunger).

Next to the sort-of-bed was a wide Uzbeki pitcher with water, in which beets and sugar

were steeped. Why beets? Why steeped? Who knows? What was known at the time was that sweet beets are a good food when experiencing constant hunger. This pitcher often stimulated my cravings and aroused the constant hunger within me.

I also remained because of my insatiable curiosity even during those bitter times. I waited and waited. Maybe R' Dovid would finish "thinking Chassidus" and would stand up and daven. I wanted very much to hear how he davened. I heard it said that R' Dovid's t'filla was something special, *geshmak ahn a shiur* (immensely delightful), but I had hardly ever managed to wait until he davened. One time, I even fell asleep as I waited and when I woke up, I found that R' Dovid was in the same d'veikus as before.

### EATING "DAYS"

When the cruel hunger in Samarkand subsided somewhat, the Lubavitchers broke the cruel Soviet restrictions on profiteering, and began working and earning a living. Chassidishe askanim immediately began organizing a yeshiva for the children of Chassidim. I was among the first talmidim, as soon as I could get back on my feet that were swollen from hunger.

When I began learning, they arranged *essen teg* for me in Chassidishe homes that had something to eat. All the places I ate at were satisfactory; they provided enough food to make up for the days of starvation. But at R' Yeshaya's it was especially good since he made me take food and fruits back to yeshiva.

One time, when I went to R' Yeshaya on a Wednesday to eat lunch, I met R' Dovid and his son who had also come there to eat.

Later, I heard that R' Yeshaya's wife would bring pots of food every day for R' Dovid and his son, but R' Dovid refused to allow R' Yeshaya's "good balabusta" to shop and cook and then bring the hot food to his house. Instead, he and his son went to eat at R' Yeshaya's house.

I ate with R' Dovid and his son only one time. As far as I can remember, I hardly ate anything at the time. Why? Both then and now, I cannot explain the reason for it, but to sit and eat with R' Dovid? I just couldn't do it (maybe because I knew that the ravenous eating and swallowing after a prolonged starvation were not normal and I was embarrassed by it). It is possible that it is because of this that they arranged that I would not eat at the same time as R' Dovid.

### A CHASSIDISHE SUSPICION

That one time is engraved in my memory. They served us the food in the Bucharian courtyard of R' Yeshaya's house. R' Dovid washed his hands for the meal and then his son began examining the old, Bucharian washing cup (he was very punctilious in mitzvot and nervous and he sometimes acted as though he was older than his father). When R' Dovid saw how he ran his finger over the edge of the cup, he got annoyed and told him to stop his *vilde shtick* (i.e. extremism) and stringencies that were inappropriate. He said he should wash his hands right away and eat! At times like these you need to take care of your health and this was surely G-d's will!

Later on, in the middle of the meal, R' Dovid said to me:

"You are a bachur, a talmid in Tomchei T'mimim, right? A Chassidishe Tamim begins to learn Chassidus, to think

Chassidus, daven at length with a Chassidishe vort, definitely! That's the way it is! That is how a Tamim begins to work with himself. But I will tell you; no I am warning you, don't you dare think about fasting and self-mortification and not eating. It is possible that this is a sin and possibly a big sin, especially in times like these of hunger, diseases, and weakness. Do you

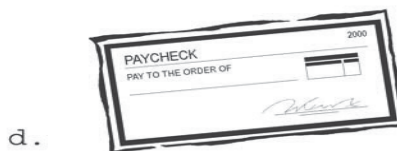
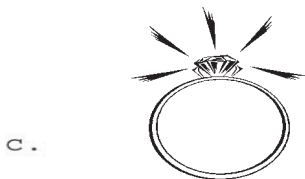
hear?

"I am telling you from experience. I myself as a bachur was foolish for a while in matters like these such as self-mortification, fasts and the like. Do you know what I got out of it? My Evil Inclination and animal soul remained as strong and healthy as a goy but my health is ruined now; I have no strength to learn and daven. You hear?

Now, I am sorry that in the past I ruined my health. Now, I am doing t'shuva for my privations; yes, I am doing t'shuva."

If I had a mirror in front of me, I would surely have seen myself blushing in embarrassment. What did R' Dovid, the great Chassid, the outstanding Tamim, suspect of me? How very far I was from seeking to break my desire for food!

## QUIZ



**Which of these is your greatest asset? —**

**Which of these is currently uninsured? —**

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<sup>1</sup> "Why Disability" booklet, published by National Underwriter.

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# HOW TO BUILD THE PERFECT HOME

By M.E. Gordon

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“Thank, you, Shternie, that was amazing!” Chaya said as she closed the seifer. “I can’t believe how much I’ve learned in such a short time!”

“The same here,” agreed Shternie. “When we started a year ago, we had to ask for help with every other word. It would take us hours to get through one short sicha, and now it goes much easier and faster!”

Chaya sighed, “I wish... I wish that carrying out the message would also come easier and faster.”

“What do you mean? I certainly try to put into practice as much as I can, and I’ve seen a big change in you over the past year, as well. You know what they say: three things have to affect a person, even if it’s not noticeable straight away, and one of them is Chassidus.”

“I know, I know, there’s no doubt that I’ve gained tremendously. It’s just... well... sometimes it seems impossible for me to actually bring the lesson into action. Today, for example, we read about building the Mishkan, and how we have to create a personal Mishkan within ourselves and within our homes. How do we do that?”

“But Chaya, we just read that the word ‘truma’ means separated and uplifted. Separate your home from negatives and uplift your home with positives – that doesn’t sound so difficult.”

“Oh, Shternie, you don’t understand, my home is not like yours. Your home is so special. As soon as you walk through

the door, you can feel it in the atmosphere. There are no worldly distractions, everything in the house seems to have a higher purpose, and everybody in your family seems to be focused on how they can serve Hashem. My house is not at all like that!”

“Whoa! Stop right there. My home is not perfect, nobody’s is, and you’ve got a wonderful family and amazing parents...”

“I love my parents, and they are truly the greatest when it comes to most things, but I feel like our home is just not the ‘holy house’ that we’ve just learned about.”

“Well, I certainly don’t think that you should be telling your parents what to do. Why don’t you get advice from someone older and wiser? Do you have a mashpia?”

“Not yet, but that is a great idea. Maybe I can call Mora Chana from your house? I really admire her. She’s so knowledgeable and genuinely practices what she preaches. I think she knows me well, and I trust her opinion.”

Later that day, Mora Chana listened carefully to Chaya, asking a few questions here and there as Chaya described her dilemma. Mora Chana then said, “Chaya, I’m very impressed with you. I’m happy to hear that you and Shternie are learning together, and that you take the Rebbe’s words to heart. You truly want to create a ‘House for Hashem’ – that is wonderful! The way to go about it, though, is to begin with yourself.

“If you will separate and uplift yourself, and dedicate yourself to be a true chassidite, then those around you will automatically be affected. Nobody likes to be told what to do, unless they ask. If you start telling your family how to improve, it will be resented, and nothing good will come of it. If you work on yourself, and are tolerant, helpful, and caring to the people around you, then the goodness will spread.”

Chana was struck by the truth of Mora Chana’s words. How many times had she herself reacted negatively when someone told her what to do, even if she knew that they were correct? Chana thought long and hard about how she could make herself and her own room into a ‘House for Hashem.’

When Chana came home, she already had an idea of the changes she could make in her own bedroom. “Hi Miri,” she said to her sister who was sitting on her own bed, reading a book from the public library. “Do you mind if I turn on some music? I’ll keep the volume low.”

“Go right ahead. I don’t mind if it’s loud. Do you want to play that wild new album?”

“Na...I’m more in the mood of something deep and meaningful. Okay if I put on Niggunim?”

“Doesn’t bother me, play whatever you like,” Miri shrugged, and went back to her book.

She looked up again a few minutes later. “Hey, Chaya, why are you taking all of your posters down?”



Chaya had decided that the first step in making her room 'a House for Hashem' would be to take down any posters that she would feel embarrassed about if the Rebbe would come visit her room. She was looking forward to drawing new posters that expressed ideas that she could be proud of. "I'm tired of these. I want to make new ones. Do you want to help me think up ideas of well known Chassidic sayings or words of Chazal that I could put up?"

"You mean like 'Think good, and it will be good,' or 'Eat in order to daven; don't daven in order to eat?'"

"Wow, Miri, those are great ideas!"

"You know what, Chaya? This book is a real bore. Do you mind if I help you with the posters?"

"Sure!" Chaya smiled. The

Mishkan was already spreading its light. Over the next few months, Chaya continued to make small steps towards building her holy home. The first Motzaei Shabbos that she chose to stay home instead of going out with the family, she felt a bit lonely, but she knew that the place they were going to was not going to add to her Yiddishkait. The next week, she asked her mother if she could invite some friends over for a Melaveh Malka while the family was out. It was such a success, that when she asked to do the same the next week, her sister Miri stayed home instead of going with the family. Then the boys were jealous, and begged to have a Melaveh Malka with their friends. Making Melaveh Malkas every Motzaei Shabbos soon became the new family custom.

Chaya asked Shternie if she would mind coming to her house to learn together each week. Also, with her parents' permission, Chaya organized a monthly Shiur for her classmates in her house. She asked a different person each time to give the shiur, to make it interesting. Somehow, other family members were inspired to do the same.

Better reading material came into the house, and Torah sites went onto the 'favorites' list on the computer. Chaya persevered with the task of 'separating and uplifting' without causing conflict. Now, when you walk in to Chaya's house you can feel the special atmosphere. It's truly becoming a 'House for Hashem.'

*This story is fictional. The lesson is based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 26 p. 167-174.*

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