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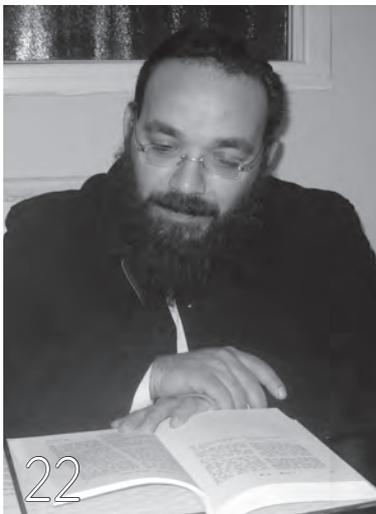
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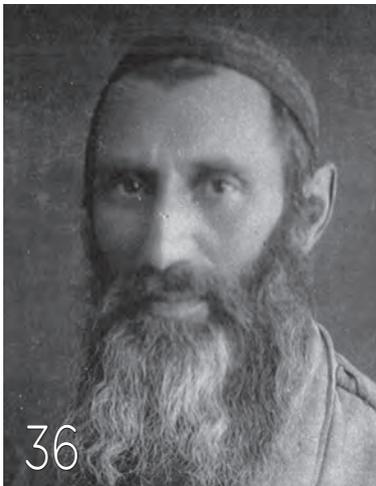
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Beis Moshiach (USPS 012-542) ISSN 1082-0272 is published weekly, except Jewish holidays (only once in April and October) for \$160.00 in Crown Heights, USA \$180.00. All other places for \$195.00 per year (45 issues), by Beis Moshiach, 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY and additional offices. Postmaster: send address changes to Beis Moshiach 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Copyright 2013 by Beis Moshiach, Inc.

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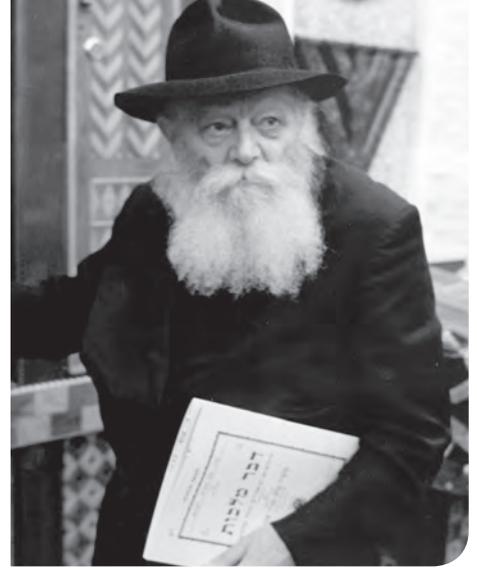
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FORETELLING THE IMMINENT RELEVANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE



In order to clarify his intent, the Rebbe qualified the term by saying, “long life – chayim aruchim.” Everyone knows that “chayim aruchim” means “life” in the literal sense, physical life (as the term is used in nusach ha’t’fillos, in Slichos, and the like). * Source materials compiled by Rabbi Majeski. (Translations appear in bold. Underlining is the author’s emphasis.)

Translated and presented by Boruch Merkur

The Rebbe Rayatz’s discussion of eternal life on 13 Tammuz 5709, referenced above:

The Alter Rebbe received the tradition from his master, the Mezritcher Maggid, who had received as a tradition from his master, our teacher, the Baal Shem Tov, of asking others, “*What do you remember?*” [encouraging them to recall and learn from all they were taught or had experienced throughout their life].

This saying, “What do you remember?” enlivened the Chassidim of that generation with the vitality of *T’chiyas HaMeisim*, the Resurrection of the Dead. *T’chiyas HaMeisim* is described as being “*chayim aruchim* – long life.” true

life. Death is an interruption, whereas “*chayim aruchim*” is life free of interruption, which is true life. No absence of life; it is only life. In terms of *avoda*, the service of G-d, it is not only the fact that one lives but that he enlivens others as well.

The point here is that true life is holiness and holiness is *ein sof* (endless, eternal).

(Seifer HaMaamarim 5710, pg. 262)

The Rebbe MH”M continues speaking about this theme on Chag HaGeula, 12 Tammuz 5710:

We spoke earlier about what my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, said on 13 Tammuz of last year on the topic of

“*chayim aruchim* – long life.” He called it true life, life without interruption – for matters of holiness are *ein sof*, eternal. We had mentioned that – being that this was his last Chag HaGeula prior to Yud Shvat 5710 [when he was *nistalek*] – the reason for his speaking about this topic on 13 Tammuz of 5709 (but not on 5708 or 5707) is because then there was a need to clarify the concept of eternal life (foretelling its imminent relevance).

To elaborate:

The word “life” can be “conveniently” interpreted to refer to Torah and Mitzvos, which are said to be “our life” (“*heim chayeinu*”). Or it can also be interpreted to refer to

other things that are called “life,” as our Sages say (Avos D’Rabbi Nosson Ch. 34, end), “ten are called ‘living” [i.e., G-d, Torah, Yisroel, a tzaddik, Gan Eden, the Tree (of Life), Eretz Yisroel, acts of kindness, wisdom, and water]. In order to clarify his intent, the Rebbe qualified the term by saying, “long life – chayim aruchim.” Everyone knows that “chayim aruchim” means “life” in the literal sense, physical life (as the term is used in nusach ha’t’fillos, in Slichos, and the like).

The Rebbe further added: “true life, life free of interruption”:

Even “long life,” including “life free of interruption,” can be *happenance*. That is, it just *so happens* that there was no interruption, but an interruption could have taken place. In our case, we are talking about a situation where it appears to the naked eye to have been an interruption. In fact, according to *Shulchan Aruch* there must presently be several matters attended to, etc. [the saying of Kaddish, for example]. Thus, the Rebbe was precise in saying, “true life, life free of interruption,” to mean true, eternal life that *bears no connection* with the concept of interruption.

The reason why true life has nothing to do with interruption – as the Rebbe goes on to state and conclude – is because true life is *k’dusha*, holiness, and holiness is *ein sof*, eternal.

The truth is that this concept is understood from what is written in *Igeres HaKodesh* – that “The life of a *tzaddik* is not physical life but spiritual life, which

is faith, and [the] fear and love [of G-d].” For, everybody knows (even the less astute) that spiritual life in general, and particularly faith and fear and love, has no connection to death, bearing absolutely no relevance to it. But this was written many years ago, and no one gives it much thought, whereas my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, spoke about this in recent times and it has only now come out in print.

From the above it is understood that it is still necessary to continue to fulfill the Rebbe’s *shlichus*, as before.

There are those who think that there is a difference now: Before, it was necessary to fulfill the *shlichus* the Rebbe charged him with, since the Rebbe was able to call him in for *yechidus* or to write him a letter, saying: “How can this be? I have sent you on a particular *shlichus* and granted you *kochos* [the capacity to succeed], so why don’t you fulfill the *shlichus*?!” Whereas now – the person thinks to himself – he can do what he wants...

Preempting this attitude, the Rebbe says that it is *chayim nitzchiim*, eternal life, and of consequence, all matters of *shlichus*, as well as the capacity to succeed in it, are in full force. The Rebbe continues to enquire even now, with all the same concern, the same strength, about the fulfillment of the *shlichus* that he has charged the person with already, and which he continues to charge the person with!

Some people, of course, are bewildered about what I’m

saying. However, the truth is that we find in Tanach [a similar phenomenon], “The letter arrived to him from Eliyahu HaNavi” (Divrei HaYamim II 21:12) several years after he had ascended heavenward in a tempest! Thus, what is the wonder that even now the Rebbe continues to send Chassidim on *shlichus*?! Regarding the mode of communication – the Rebbe has his methods. We don’t have to worry about the manner by which the Rebbe gets his message across; you can rely on him! [...]

Each and every student, adherent, and Chassid must know that he is one of “*anshei Moshe* – Moshe’s men” (see *Torah Ohr Tetzaveh* 83b, *Seifer HaMaamarim* 5709 pg. 51 ff., among other sources). This is something that is eternal, forever, for the individual and for his generation, until the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

Moreover, those who have not had a connection to the Rebbe still have the opportunity to be Chassidim of the Rebbe.

The point of the matter is that there is no change whatsoever between before and now.

If there were a change, it is only an *improvement*, as explained in *Igeres HaKodesh* – that after the *histalkus*, it is *easier* to receive influence from the life of the *tzaddik*, since his life is no longer contained within a physical vessel or garment.

(*Toras Menachem* 5710 pg. 129-131, 12 Tammuz)

SHLUCHOS TALK ABOUT MIRA

Mushka Sudri of Delhi and Shaindy Berstein of Cochin write about their fellow shlucha, the unforgettable Mira Scharf, may Hashem avenge her blood. * Little stories about a great woman

Mira: She Put Her Self Aside

By Mushka Sudri, shlucha in Delhi, India

The wound is still fresh; the void she left cries out.

Our eyes have yet to get used to the darkness after the light was extinguished.

I will never forget the wise advice and encouraging words.

Mira.

We arrived in Delhi to fill in for the Scharfs while they were in Eretz Yisroel and we got straight to work. A woman called the Chabad House wanting to use the mikva. It occurred to me that I – yes, I – would be the one to supervise her.

I immediately called Mira for guidance. I had never done this before. Mira explained all the halachic details to me and said that she personally was particular about learning with any woman who came about the role of the

Jewish woman and the mission the Rebbe gave to every woman.

If you know the kind of women who come to use the mikva at the Chabad House in India, you know that this is not realistic. These women are religious and know the halachos and are not interested in Chassidus. Aside from that, as far as Mira was concerned, this required taking care of technical as well as spiritual details, a super-human task.

In this conversation, Mira basically laid out for me my path on shlichus. She did not allow herself any leniencies, but carried everything out with mesirus nefesh and simcha. It demanded a lot of me, but for Mira, I made the effort.

She always called to find out how we were doing, what was happening at the Chabad House

and whether we needed anything to be sent from Eretz Yisroel. She listened to us as though this was her entire world at that moment. The Chabad House was her life's project. She and her devoted husband, Shmulik, started it all from nothing and made it grow into a flourishing shlichus providing the Rebbe with endless nachas.

It was hard for me to acclimate and Mira faithfully stood by my side as though her situation was just fine; it wasn't easy for her either. But she set aside her wants and desires and viewed anything having to do with the Chabad House as of the utmost importance. She stayed alone for days and nights, with her children, as her husband went to fundraise for their shlichus.

Mira entered the picture in the past five years. Until they came,



the Chabad House in Delhi was located in a guest house for ten years in sub-conditions. In your wildest imagination you could not picture how hard it was.

Everyone dreams of a home, of furniture. Who doesn't think of this? And yet, where did Mira go, four months after her wedding? To a room with nothing! Every shekel they brought in went towards the Chabad House with nothing left for them.

Whoever dreamed that the day would come when the Chabad House in Delhi would have its own building? As soon as Mira entered the picture, her life's dream was realized and she was able to move to a new and (relatively) spacious building with a mikva and kosher restaurant.

What makes it especially painful is that when she finally

“ I still have this feeling. Whenever I open the closet I think: Mira will be so happy to return to a furnished bedroom with an organized closet, to live like a human being. Then I remember: Mira is not coming back.

had a home of her own, with a room for the children and even a place to hang her laundry, which made her so happy, she barely had time to enjoy it.

We arrived here during the initial stages of the new building and worked continuously on its development. We are here for half a year already and constantly, from the start, the feeling we had which energized us was how great it will be for Shmulik and Mira when they return after years of living in sub-human conditions. Finally!

Whenever I bought something, I thought of Mira. I knew she would enjoy it, when she returned.

I still have this feeling. Whenever I open the closet I think: Mira will be so happy to return to a furnished bedroom with an organized closet, to live like a human being. Then I remember: Mira is not coming back.

In my last phone conversation with her, two days before the tragedy, we spoke at length. I told her excitedly how we were

preparing a surprise for her. I had decorated the walls of the restaurant floor with beautiful pictures and she was so excited and she laughingly said she wanted to see it already. We didn't dream of what would happen, so soon.

People think that life in India is cheap, but the price of renting is close to what is paid in Tel Aviv. In general, all our activities demand endless money.

Mira gave up a comfortable life in Eretz Yisroel with three little children and sent the little bit of money that they got to the Chabad house.

In one of our difficult times, we reached the point where we had to borrow money from tourists for the Shabbos meals to buy tissues. Creditors came to ask for their money back. We called Shmulik, and Mira answered the phone. When she heard about the situation, she immediately forwent her family life and called a travel agent to buy a ticket for her husband so he could go on a fundraising trip.

To her everlasting credit let it be said that this took place so soon after a recent fundraising venture, but she always put the Chabad House at the top of her list of priorities and set herself and her needs completely aside.

Shmulik returned sooner than planned because of bad weather in the US and the cursed rockets caught him.

As I write this, I am reminded to take care of our plane tickets. We were supposed to return to Eretz Yisroel, changing places with Shmulik and Mira, but now our future is murky. We don't know what will be with us.

Whoever was here when the tragedy occurred – tourists, businessmen, members of the local community – all came

crying and mourning, feeling like one big family and wanting to know how they could help. We took the opportunity and designated a corner for good hachlatos in memory of Mira and for a refua shleima for her husband and children. Everyone felt the need for chizuk, to lean on something stable for support, and there was a big response.

EVEN THE INDIANS CAME TO CONSOLE US

The ones who surprised me the most were the local Indians who came to console us, to share in the sorrow. A man by the name of Biji, an electrician, came and sobbed like a child. I tried to talk to him, but he couldn't deal with the bad news and he fled. After a few hours he returned and spoke about Mira, that she was such a sensitive woman, how she always smiled at him and asked how he was and offered him a cup of water.

Then came Dhrampa, one of the security policemen who are stationed here ever since the attack in Bombay for the past four years. With tears pouring down his face, he couldn't believe the news.

One by one, they all came. Prins, the travel agent; Aji, the manager of the guest house; Abi and Ransi who sell fabric on the street, and others.

I'll never forget the reaction of Gopal, who has been working in the Chabad House now for three years, and his shocked face that expressed his inability to digest the terrible news. "What?!" he screamed. "Mira?!"

It is truly hard to believe. Yes. Mira.

It is so painful that it seems like it will never pass. The picture of Mira here on the wall affects

people deeply. People come in and ask questions. Tourists, who started their trip when Shmulik and Mira were here, came back and saw us and listened and couldn't believe it. They all took part, sharing the pain. We can't put the pieces back together.

CONTINUING MIRA'S WORK

The Rebbe says in the D'var Malchus of Tazria-Metzora: We find it difficult to live Geula because we are galus-people. We were born into galus and unfortunately we got used to terrible tragedies. So yes, we are shocked at the news, it is hard and painful, but we have learned to move on.

This time it cannot happen! We cannot continue our normal routines without making a positive commitment. Each of us must add more light because Mira deserves it! And this is what we can do in her merit.

And yes, every article or personal column like this ends with a request for help, donations. Our galus mindset got used to this too, but this time we cannot go on without making a donation because Mira deserves it for being moser nefesh for the Chabad House in Delhi.

We will guarantee that the work at the Chabad House will continue and in a bigger way than before.

The pain is still fresh. It is still hard to get a proper perspective on her luminous personality, and it is about her that the verse says, "Strength and glory are her raiment and she laughs at the final day."

The world stands in silent respect and bows before her fresh grave.

May we meet her again today, with the Geula.

MIRA: A LIFE OF MESIRUS NEFESH

By Shaindy Bernstein, shlucha to Cochin, India

I first met Mira in Beis Chana High School in Yerushalayim. I remember being impressed by her vast knowledge and her Chassidishe chayus. I was amazed by her seriousness and the depth with which she approached every inyan in Chassidus, every story, sicha and maamer. I remember her davening with hisbonenus and with avoda, concepts that we assume are reserved for Tomchei T'mimim. These are things that are far from the world of the average Bas Chabad.

Girls from school did not believe she did not come from a Lubavitcher home, that there was a time when she said her Chitas under the blanket so no one would know. When she won the raffle to go to the Rebbe, everyone said, "Mira deserves it!"

Our relationship deepened when she went on shlichus and we became close. When we passed through Delhi on our way to Cochin, Mira and her husband were in Eretz Yisroel and they let us stay in their "home." When I saw how she lived, I was shocked. Their home consisted of one room in a hotel without a kitchen! She, her husband and her baby at the time, Yosef Yitzchok, lived in this little room with furniture that included beds and chairs. It is hard to believe that a couple lived like this.

Mira was a model of bittul of the shliach to the meshaleiach and of absolute kabbalas ol. Mira was very shy by nature, but when she realized that the Rebbe wanted her to be involved in hafatza she decided to work on

herself and change. Whenever she went on mitzvaim and asked a stranger whether she would like to light Shabbos candles, she was overcoming her reticent personality. It is not easy to change one's basic nature, but when Mira saw the need, she just did it. The same was true for her decision to go to India with her husband. She did the right thing because it needed to be done, without considering what was comfortable and convenient for her.

“He lived there with her children and the children of another family or two, of shluchim who were traveling, and Mira was happy. Things that other people complain about were reasons for Mira to be thankful.”

THE TOURISTS WERE IMPRESSED BY HER

I remember the tourists talking with her and being so impressed. Her refinement and bashfulness served to highlight her strength, bitachon and faith in what the Rebbe said. I think that the power that she radiated came from the fact that she attained everything on her own, that she really worked on it! Even when religious girls asked her questions about the Besuras Ha'Geula and the Goel, she answered with fire and confidence.

A few days after the tragedy, a few of us shluchos in the Far East met to farbreng. Each of us told things we learned from and saw

in Mira. The first thing that stood out in our conversation was her mesirus nefesh, which filled her shlichus, under the hardest of conditions. Her constant motto was: It needs to be done, so we do it.

They all said, "Although we are also shluchos in backward primitive India, Delhi is the hardest, most challenging of all!" All were in agreement that compared to Delhi their place of shlichus was a treat (that is with the filth, the stench and all the rest).

SIMPLY, WITHOUT COMPLAINTS

Mira did not act like a martyr. She did not complain and did not

seek to be admired. Within all the chaos and filth in the Main Bazaar, she worked hard to raise Chassidishe children and to do her shlichus. Without schools, without family, without a community, with water stoppages and power outages, in the heat and the cold, she persevered. Even when other shluchos expressed their amazement, she reacted with equanimity.

Until last year, she did not even have a normal place to live and she crowded into a room of the guest house, for three years! The Chabad House in those days was also small and crowded, and the neighborhood was filthy and crowded with streets teeming with traffic, tourists and rickshaws, bicycles and cows. It

was not at all a suitable place for young children to be. The only place she could go to air out with the children was the municipal park.

A shlucha related that a while back, Mira happily told her about how thrilled she was to finally move to her own home with a place where she could hang the laundry. Tears came to my eyes, said the shlucha, because she was happy about having a place to hang her laundry. She lived there with her children and the children of another family or two, of shluchim who were traveling, and Mira was happy. Things that other people complain about were reasons for Mira to be thankful.

SHLICHUS - NOT AT THE CHILDREN'S EXPENSE

Another special thing about Mira which came up at the farbrengen was her approach to chinuch. All shluchos in India and places like it have to deal with the challenges of chinuch, maintaining a routine and providing children with everything they need. This responsibility comes along with the shlichus work.

To Mira, her children were always top priority. Nothing prevented her from providing her children with a pure, Jewish chinuch. She once said to me, "In the evening when the tourists come, I need to be with the children and put them to sleep." I remember her keeping her children occupied with a daily routine: Davening, tz'daka, breakfast. Everything was done with explanations and very pleasantly. I remember how impressed I was by her ability to create the atmosphere of a

nursery school where one child, her son, learned.

To be alone in the Main Bazaar without anyone to help you is indescribable mesirus nefesh, but Mira said, "To let someone else care for the children? Who – the tourists? To let a girl who is not 100% suitable? I prefer being alone with three children so they see proper Chassidische role models without compromises." She always spoke to her children in Yiddish. The sight of an authentic Yiddishe Mama speaking to her children in the language of our Rebbeim touched the hearts of the tourists deeply. I once complimented her on the children's clothing and with her characteristic guilelessness, she said: It's important to me that the children look well cared for because the tourists look at them and it affects their attitude towards Judaism.

That was the purpose of the clothing that Mira bought for them, to make a Kiddush Hashem!

She was utterly devoted to whatever she believed in: to the chinuch of her children, to the Rebbe, to doing it 100%. Beyond that, the shlichus itself was a shlichus of nonstop giving of oneself. In that location, one doesn't even have the privilege of giving shiurim and learning with a chavrusa. One doesn't have the opportunity to get to know people. Delhi is a way station, where the travelers land and take off. Most of the tourists are not interested in staying there. People come and go. Often, on their return, tourists don't have the patience and state of mind to sit down. As a shlucha, I see this as being very difficult because in Cochin also, tourists don't tarry. We can't create a significant

relationship with them, and yet we need to smile at everyone and give them all attention.

HELPING OTHER SHLUCHIM

Delhi is also a way station for shluchim. Every couple who comes to India stays with them. Mira hosted and guided shluchos in how to manage, where to buy clothes, and more. Mira and her husband would prepare food and arrange for a discounted rate in the guest house. Every time we passed through Delhi on our way to Cochin, we left there with a feeling of the greatest admiration for someone who could survive in a place like this.

One of the challenges of a shlichus like this is the frequent traveling every year, the need to switch off and get used to being in India and then again back in Eretz Yisroel. Another hardship is sending your husband to fundraise and to be alone. Recently, Shmulik traveled to raise funds and Mira was left alone with her three little ones. She was moser nefesh on "vacation." One of the shluchos said that when they were in Eretz Yisroel, she asked Mira to pick up her child from nursery which Mira did for a few days. It was only afterward that the shlucha realized how much effort Mira put in to help her friend while she was alone in Eretz Yisroel.

Mira's pure faith in the Rebbe MH"M and the path of Chabad affected whoever knew her. Her father (a Sadigerer Chassid) said he remembers the couple, with the children and suitcases, sitting with their eyes closing from exhaustion ... and saying Chitas, and he concluded, "I know this was her path. Continue in her path and may Hashem give you strength!"

TWO RIGHT HANDS

Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

THE MOTHER OF ALL MIRACLES

The miracle that stands out among all miracles is arguably the splitting of the Red Sea (or the Sea of Reeds as some would translate it). Proof of this is that whenever the Talmud seeks to describe something that appears “difficult” for G-d it refers to this miracle. The most familiar example of this comparison is the statement in the Talmud (Sota 2a) that for G-d to match a couple together in marriage is “as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea.”

Obviously, no miracle is difficult for G-d. Chassidic thought explains that the meaning of difficulty in this context means that the miracle involved G-d’s unconventional powers. Whereas nature is also G-d’s power and handiwork, it is His power as it is cloaked in natural “garments.” It is said to come from the Divine name Elokim, which has the numerical value of the word HaTeva, which means nature. This is the G-dly force that is contracted and screened so that its true intensity and luminescence is obscured and it appears as if it is limited and finite. This is G-d’s conventional power that we call nature.

When G-d performs a miracle—and the greater the miracle the more so—we

experience G-d’s unfiltered power. The world could not endure this power on a continuing and protracted basis. This aspect of G-dly revelation is associated with the name of G-d that we cannot and may not pronounce—the Tetragrammaton that is colloquially referred to as the name Havaya.

Concerning these two manifestations of G-dly power the Psalmist states: “For G-d [Havaya] Elokim are like the sun and its shield.” Chassidus explains that Havaya is the unfiltered light of G-d and compares it to the intense light of the sun that we could not endure but for the sun’s sheath that shields us from its powerful rays. This shield is identified by the name Elokim.

But even with respect to miracles, some stand out as unique and therefore express an even more sublime and unfiltered G-dly energy. The splitting of the Red Sea is such a miracle.

In light of this analysis, the question may be asked, why is making a marriage considered so difficult? Isn’t it quite natural for two single people to get married? Why make the radical comparison to the Splitting of the Red Sea, the “mother of all miracles?”



SPLITTING THE SEA AND MARRIAGE

To answer this question it is necessary to understand the thematic connection between the miracle of the splitting of the sea and marriage.

When the Torah describes the splitting of the sea it states, “the water was for them a wall on their right and on their left.” G-d could have performed this miracle—which allowed the Jews to escape and the Egyptian pursuers to drown—in any number of ways. What symbolism is there in choosing to have the water stand like a wall on both sides? Indeed, when Joshua split the Jordan on the way into the Land of Israel some forty years later, the Biblical text describes the water as piling up on one side. Why was it necessary to have the water form two walls?

The Midrashic work, Mechilta, explains that the walls that were on the right and on the left represent the two modalities of Torah and prayer, or T’fillin and Mezuzah. We merited this miracle, according to the Mechilta, because of our fidelity to these diverse Mitzvos.

Now we can easily understand how Mezuzah and T’fillin are connected to right and left. The Mezuzah is placed on the right doorpost and T’fillin are worn on

“In the realm of spirituality, right and left are both positive, although they come from different directions and involve opposite traits. When these two modalities manifest themselves in the material world, however, the right and left become more divergent, and degenerate to the point where the right may symbolize goodness and kindness and the left may represent the negative forces in our world, including outright evil.

the left arm. But how do Torah and prayer fit into the right and left configuration?

TORAH - RIGHT, PRAYER - LEFT

Chassidic thought explains that Torah represents G-d's flow of wisdom from its Divine source down to our human intellect. Torah is thus compared to water that flows downward. This trait of flowing downward is also an expression of kindness where the one more fortunate—"above"—showers his or her resources on one who is less fortunate—"below." Torah is thus also referred to in the Book of Proverbs as *Toras Chesed*, the Torah of kindness.

Prayer, by contrast, represents the effort of the human being to raise himself or herself to a higher level. The ladder in Jacob's dream, the Zohar states, is the ladder of prayer that enables a lowly human being to rise upward to the heavens. The process of prayer is one of self-judgment and refinement. These qualities are associated with *g'vura* – severity or judgment – the trait that is the opposite of *chesed*/kindness.

Torah and prayer, which represent *chesed* and *g'vura*, and similarly *T'fillin* and *Mezuzah*, are therefore symbolized by the

two parallel walls that were a result of the splitting of the Red Sea.

DUALITY

We can now see that the splitting of the sea into walls on the right and on the left reflected G-d's system of duality – between *chesed* and *g'vura* – in the spiritual realm which translates imperfectly in the physical world as the disparate and opposite forces of right and left.

In the realm of spirituality, right and left are both positive, although they come from different directions and involve opposite traits. When these two modalities manifest themselves in the material world, however, the right and left become more divergent, and degenerate to the point where the right may symbolize goodness and kindness and the left may represent the negative forces in our world, including outright evil.

These two opposite forces of right and left provide us with two separate challenges. The positive or prescriptive *Mitzvos* we perform are designed to generate positive energy associated with the right. The negative or proscriptive *Mitzvos* are the means by which we resist, fight and negate the negative—symbolized by the left.

UNIFICATION OF RIGHT AND LEFT

This explains the greatness of the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea. This was not just a means to save the Jewish nation from the Egyptian pursuers. G-d could have done that in so many other ways. It was also not simply a way of punishing the Egyptians for centuries of barbaric torture of the Jews. The splitting of the Red Sea was the divine combination of right and left. It was the ultimate act of kindness and compassion for the Jewish people, who might not have been quite so deserving at that time. Simultaneously, it was a time when G-d unleashed the ultimate forces of destruction associated with the left-handed attribute of *g'vura*.

For these two diametrically opposite attributes to coexist defies our understanding of the natural order. Right and left cannot coexist unless a Higher Power – which transcends both right and left – unifies them. That was the aspect of the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea that is described as "difficult." It was not just a miracle where the laws of nature were suspended; it was a miracle that confounded our belief that opposites such as right and left cannot possibly coexist.

A similar dynamic is true of marriage. The successful union of the two opposite spiritual forces that are male and female can only exist when there is an overarching Divine Force that brings them together in a most harmonious fashion.

TWO DIMENSIONS OF MARRIAGE

But even in marriage there are two dimensions.

In a discourse delivered for

this Shabbos (forty years ago) the Rebbe elaborated on how the dual modalities of right and left will change in the Messianic Age. In that era evil will cease to be. The prophet Zecharia prophesized, "the spirit of impurity I will obliterate from the earth." Yes, there will still be two modalities. But rather than opposing forces of right and left, both entities will be associated with the right. There will be no evil and we will no longer need to negate it. Both of our forces will be directed to spiritual growth and elevation.

In truth, even today the two

disparate forces that we have are in their root and source truly one. However that unity is not evident in most areas of life. In the Messianic Age, that will change. We will be able to see that what appear as separate forces are actually one and the same.

We can now appreciate more deeply the blessings recited at a Jewish wedding. One of the blessings in the Sheva Brachos refers to the first wedding of Adam and Eve. The blessing concludes with the words: "He Who brings gladness to the bridegroom and the bride," as if they are separate entities linked

together by marriage. The next blessing describes marriage in the future. This blessing concludes with the phrase, "He Who gladdens the Bridegroom with the bride," suggesting a total or completely bonded union.

A wedding today possesses aspects of both features: It is a re-enactment of the first union of Adam and Eve that miraculously brought together two opposites, just as in the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea. It is also a portent, a sample and a taste of the wedding of the future, where the unity of opposites will be experienced on the highest level.

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חי אדוננו מורינו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

MELECH HA'MOSHIACH ON THE SMALL SCREEN

Two weeks ago, on the 24th of Teves, about half a million people watched a special television program on Israel's Channel 10 about the Rebbe and the faith of his Chassidim that he is Melech HaMoshiach. Beis Moshiach Magazine presents a review of this film, which includes a discussion with its director, Yoav Shamir. We asked him how he came to be so excited about this project and what he would personally ask the Rebbe if he were only able to do so.

By Menachem Mendel Arad

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

A week ago on Tuesday, I received an e-mail message from a close friend of mine. "You must check this out," he wrote to me. He had attached a link to a preview for a film that would be broadcast on Sunday, the 24th of Teves, entitled "The Lubavitcher Rebbe – We Are Ready for the Coming of the Moshiach."

My curiosity had been aroused. Enhanced by the dramatic high-quality camera work and professionally

arranged music, the preview was breathtaking. "*We Are Ready For the Coming of the Moshiach*." He was born a hundred years ago, but for many believers – (cut to Rabbi Yosef Carlebach, New Brunswick, NJ: "We pray every day, sixty-five times a day, for one thing – Moshiach") – he never died..."

After a few thrilling clips of the Rebbe encouraging the singing of his chassidim in 770, leading into the film's illuminating title, it turned out

to be far more than just "We Are Ready For the Coming of the Moshiach."

The promo then concludes with a defining invitation to its viewers: "A fascinating and moving film about the man whom the whole world believes is the Moshiach."

My excitement was at a fever pitch. I couldn't believe my eyes. Israel TV's Channel 10, not known for being overly religious, had gone through the trouble to invest considerable resources, or



at least gave its permission to a producer, to spend several days on a journalistic research project complete with interviews, filming, editing, etc. in order to bring the message of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach to the world! If that isn't a sign of the Redemption, then what is?

Overwhelmed with tremendous excitement, I proceeded to call several of my friends and share my feelings with them. I know very well that the Rebbe is asking us, Chabad Chassidim, to prepare the whole world to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu, to bring the Rebbe's message that Moshiach is coming and that the Rebbe is Melech HaMoshiach, despite the trial of Gimmel Tammuz. The Rebbe has even revealed to us the best way to achieve this, "the lights of Tohu in vessels of Tikkun." In

“As for us, instead of using the media to instill unvarnished messages of Redemption, we tend to vacillate. And what does the Rebbe do? It is as though the Rebbe is telling us, “No problem. Continue with your regular activities. I’ll make certain to send other good Jews to bring the most intense lights of Tohu into vessels of Tikkun.”

other words, the most powerful messages will be properly accepted if we know how to use “vessels of Tikkun.” And there are no better “vessels of Tikkun” than the visual medium of television and the like!

According to the situation prevailing today, someone whose uniqueness lies in being an actor known to the public as a screen star can suddenly turn into the one being interviewed to give his

opinion on issues of peace, war, and security. And his words make banner headlines, as if he were the army chief of staff.

As for us, instead of using the media to instill unvarnished messages of Redemption, we tend to vacillate. And what does the Rebbe do? It is as though the Rebbe is telling us, “No problem. Continue with your regular activities. I’ll make certain to send other good Jews to bring the



most intense lights of Tohu into vessels of Tikkun.”

In fact, it turns out that the general public in Eretz HaKodesh, who live off empty and shallow radio and television programs, are simply longing for something of quality with real depth, content, and positive messages on the Redemption. Thus, when a film such as “The Lubavitcher Rebbe – We Are Ready for the Coming of the Moshiach” comes along, it receives a serious and proper platform with a lot of positive and encouraging reactions.

I must point out that my friends tried to temper my enthusiasm. “Let’s wait until we watch the entire film,” they cautioned, “and then we’ll see if its objective is merely to smear those who believe in the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach!”

As did many others, I waited with much anticipation for the film to be broadcast. On Monday morning, the film was posted on the Chabad.info website. I immediately began to watch it for the purpose of making a study of the film and to prepare for a brief interview with its producer, Yoav Shamir. The results are before you now.

WHY ARE THEY SO HAPPY?

Divine Providence established the connection between Yoav

Shamir, the producer of this television special on the Rebbe, and the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. As with many others during their military service, “I served alongside a Chabad baal t’shuva. He wanted me to put on t’fillin for a long time, and when I finally agreed to do so, he was simply overjoyed. His reaction amazed me and I became quite curious: why had this made him so happy?”

Yoav Shamir’s second encounter with Chabad was during his work on a film dealing with Israelis who had traveled to the Far East after their military service. “I met one of the Rebbe’s shluchim in India, Rabbi Danny Winderbaum, and I was most impressed by him and other Chabad Chassidim who didn’t withdraw from society,” says Shamir. “In contrast, when I made a film in Mea Sh’arim, I saw a closed community that had no desire to be in contact with the outside world. I met people in Chabad who were interested in me and are familiar with my culture. Theirs is a community that is an integral part of Israeli society.”

At the conclusion of the film’s production, what was your feeling about the Rebbe and Chabad chassidus?

“I don’t know, I’m still digesting it all,” said Shamir frankly. “A small window has

opened for me, but there are still many things that I don’t understand. What the Rebbe has done is amazing enough. He led a relatively small community to the position that it holds today. In this respect, I can compare him, *l’havdil*, to [the late founder of Apple Computers] Steve Jobs, who invented something totally new. It is most impressive in a very insightful manner how the Rebbe laid the foundations for things to move forward. This is not something self-explanatory.”

Shamir says that what aroused his curiosity more than anything else was how Chassidim deal with the trial of Gimmel Tammuz.

If you would meet the Rebbe in 770, what would you ask him?

“There’s nothing to ask, only to see, to experience and to understand, to film and to document. When you ask a question, the answer itself already represents a kind of barrier to the truth.”

In an article written about him by media critic Yirmi Amir, Shamir declared that “the film on the Lubavitcher Rebbe does not show a lot of new material, but it reminds all of us that there’s no more appropriate time to show it than during this period, two weeks before the election, when we all need Moshiach more than ever.”



Even while many viewed the film “among those who believe in the Rebbe, certain that he is the Moshiach – may he come speedily in our days, Amen – others think differently. Be that as it may, everyone longs for the charismatic leader with the piercing blue eyes, radiant smile, and long white beard, who continues to attract millions of Jews worldwide through his emissaries spread throughout the globe.”

AN INDESCRIBABLE LOVE

The program opened with a most moving scene, which was included in the promo. Many of the media critics felt that it summed up the film quite adequately. The interviewer made a simple request of Rabbi Avraham Shemtov: “Please describe the Rebbe for me.” Rabbi Shemtov tries to respond, but he eventually just covers his face with his hand and begins to cry. The message that comes out of the film despite, yes despite, the wide spectrum of Chabad personages interviewed for this production is that everyone feels that the Rebbe is here now, not just someone tucked away in our memories of a time long ago. It was amazing to see how not a single person who was asked the question “Do you think that the Rebbe is Moshiach?” gave a negative reply.

“However, the Rebbe didn’t just place the faith in the imminent coming of the Moshiach and the Redemption on the front burner; he put the dial on high.”

In one of the film’s early scenes, the reporter accompanied a group of T’mimim on mitzvaim. In a most clear-cut manner, he gives the viewer an opportunity to experience the repeated efforts to find a Jew, and the great joy they express when they find one who agrees to enter the Mitzvah Tank and put on t’fillin. It turned out that Shamir got a real flashback as he recalled the first time he met with Chabad Chassidim.

The film editors went through hours of footage, and they chose precisely those images that conveyed a message of Redemption. Quite simply, the main message that the average viewer understood from the film was that the Rebbe himself encouraged and kindled the flame of tremendous anticipation for the coming of Moshiach, and did more than just allude to the possibility that he is Melech HaMoshiach.

Before setting out on their mitzvaim route, the head Tankist, R’ Yishai Eliefja, declared, “We are going out with the Mitzvah Tank. This is a campaign to bring Moshiach, to spread Yiddishkait, and the holy light of Torah and mitzvos among all

Jews throughout the world.” For example, filming inside the tank included a special focus on a scene in which the loudspeakers proclaimed the words “We Want Moshiach Now!” Similarly, at a later point in the film, as the Rebbe and his Chassidim are highlighted on the screen, Shamir purposely chose the moment when they sang before the Rebbe for the very first time, “Am Yisroel, have no fear, Moshiach will be here this year. We want Moshiach now, we don’t want to wait!” as the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, encouraged the children’s singing with animated handclapping.

Some of the more inspiring moments in the film came during the scenes of children at Camp Gan Yisroel L’Yaldei HaShluchim. The campers sang with great fervor: “Gan Yisroel is our camp; to bring Moshiach is our task.” All of the interviewer’s questions to the children focused on the Rebbe, the Redemption, and Moshiach. It was most stirring to see how children, who had never seen the Rebbe, assert that they love the Rebbe more than anything else in the world. When the interviewer tries to

request from one of the children, “Describe this love for me,” the boy thinks for a moment and says, “It’s impossible to describe the love.”

Another fascinating scene depicted last year’s Gimmel Tammuz farbrengen at the Beis Menachem Synagogue in Kfar Chabad. Yoav Shamir brought excerpts of the chassidic niggunim, enthusiastic dancing, even pictures from the shul’s women’s section. However, the only words brought from the farbrengen, or if you prefer, what the film’s producer understood from the farbrengen were the final words from the speech by R’ Ami Pikovsky: “The main objective is to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu – *Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L’Olam Va’ed!*”

“I DON’T THINK SO - I KNOW SO!”

One of the main interviewees in this film, who also appeared in the brief promo, was Rabbi Yosef Carlebach. After receiving a powerful first impression of this charismatic and creative Chassid, the Rebbe’s shliach at Rutgers University in New Jersey, director of one of the largest Chabad Houses in the world, the viewer understands the message with a sense of true recognition. Before entering the large facility built according to the same design and with the same bricks as 770 Eastern Parkway, Rabbi Carlebach points to his cornerstone as shliach, the main objective for every day of his shlichus: a brick from the original 770 structure adorned by the words “Welcome Melech HaMoshiach: Humble Ones, The Time of Your Redemption Has Arrived.” “We know that Moshiach is coming, and we

also know that Moshiach will stop over here when he comes to pick up the Jewish people,” Rabbi Carlebach said with much conviction.

At the conclusion of the tour of this immense building, Rabbi Carlebach describes how much the intense longing for Moshiach came from the Rebbe himself. “We have a tremendous role in the history of mankind, but more importantly, a tremendous role in the future of mankind through this concept of Moshiach. Moshiach is a campaign that the Rebbe started. It’s not that the Rebbe invented something new. Moshiach is at the very heart of Judaism. We pray every day, sixty-five times a day, for one thing. What is that one thing? Moshiach. Neither health, nor parnasa... these are all important, but not sixty-five times a day.”

Throughout much of Jewish history, the faith in Moshiach was a hope for the unknown future, never referred to as something actual and real. Now, Rabbi Carlebach proceeds to elucidate this point with a metaphor straight out of the kitchen. “The Rebbe took it from the back burner to the front burner. However, the Rebbe didn’t just place the faith in the imminent coming of the Moshiach and the Redemption on the front burner; he put the dial on high. So now that it’s on the front burner, you say, ‘What are you doing?’” Rabbi Carlebach asked in a form of explanation.

Towards the end, the film deals quite obviously with the issue of whether or not Chabad Chassidim still think that the Rebbe is Melech HaMoshiach. During the search for answers, the viewer goes inside 770 and is captivated by the fervent yearning and intense faith that

the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach will enter at any moment and reveal himself for all to see. The Rebbe’s holy chair and the sound of the Chassidim singing “Yechi Adoneinu” bring even the most skeptic observer into the experience of 770 in all its majesty. The Tankist R’ Yosef Yitzchak Abelsky, who was in 770 at the time, explained to the photographer in the clearest possible language that the faith in the Rebbe as Melech HaMoshiach is the actual inheritance of every Chabad Chassid in the world.

Among all those interviewed for this production, the one who brought the message home with the most precision was Mrs. Leah Kahn, the wife of the chozer R’ Yoel Kahn. Shamir asked her, “Did you think that the Rebbe was Moshiach?”

Mrs. Kahn replied, “I didn’t think – I *do* think. I think so now. I’m certain. I’m sorry to have to tell you this if you have any questions – *Certain.*”

“That he’s the Moshiach?” Shamir probed, trying to be absolutely sure that he didn’t misunderstand her.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Kahn, as she began to elaborate. “Understand that the four or five thousand people who were here yesterday are not crazy, all right? They know something. They feel something. It speaks to them. They’re not out of touch. They’re connected.” In order to explain herself clearly to both the viewer and interviewer, she uses terms that everyone can understand: “You have to connect. You have to put the plug into the outlet to be connected in order to begin to understand a little.

“But just know that that’s it. This is the fact, whether you understand it or not...”

IN ANOTHER THIRTY YEARS, ALL OF JUDAISM WILL BE CHABAD!

Within a day after the film's presentation, Yoav Shamir was the subject of articles by some of Eretz Yisroel's leading journalists. He received dozens of complimentary phone calls, SMS messages, and e-mails.

This is not Yoav Shamir's first film. Along with a film in India (where he also encountered Chabad shluchim and their activities) which documented the condition of Israelis who emigrated there and became involved with drugs, Shamir touches upon a variety of Israeli themes in his productions, e.g. the Arab-Israeli conflict and anti-Semitism towards Israelis living in the Diaspora. I took the opportunity during our interview to ask him:

What caused Channel 10 to invest such tremendous resources and airtime and to bring in a producer such as you to create a film about the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Chabad, and Moshiach?

"As I have already said, Chabad had aroused my interest for some time already. I really think that Chabad is Israeli in its purest form. Israelis meet up with Chabad in Eretz Yisroel and all over the world, and in most cases the encounter with Chabad takes

up a sizable portion of their trip.

"If I were to look at myself as a Jew and ask myself, 'In what direction is religion heading?' I have no doubt that Chabad is the most meaningful force in Judaism today. I am also certain that thirty years from now, all of Judaism will be Chabad. This is my appraisal, and I'm sorry if I've been exposed as a prophet.

"In fact, especially after the production of this film, Chabad and the Rebbe through his Chassidim and shluchim have tremendous influence over a vast number of powerful associations and individuals, including philanthropists, politicians, celebrities, presidents, prime ministers, etc. While Chabad is not raucous and strident like some political party, under the surface it is a movement with a great deal of power and impact.

What surprised you the most in the production of this film?

"Without a doubt, it was seeing children who had never seen the Rebbe, yet every word they uttered was about the Rebbe. When a child explains to you that he loves the Rebbe with deep adoration, this is quite moving and it proved to me how dominant the Rebbe's influence is over every Chassid and anyone who has a connection to him, even now."

In summation, would you



The film's producer, Yoav Shamir

like to convey a message to the readers of Beis Moshiach?

"First of all, it's important to emphasize that throughout the production, I thought about the Chabad community. In the final analysis, I wanted the film to be something that even Chabadnikim could see.

"Apart from that, the film has whetted my appetite for more. I feel that I want to delve into this subject more deeply, and I believe that this will continue. You can expect some secular nudnik to ask more and more questions in the future..."

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VICTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Musician Yishai Lapidot was in Ulm, Germany. He was invited by a shliach to visit there to celebrate a Chanukas HaBayis. He shared his impressions with the listening public on his “Ishi B’Shishi” radio program.

By Yishai Lapidot

The city of Ulm is situated on the Danube River. The houses aren’t high and it is known for its picturesque peace and quiet. Ulm is a favored destination for tourists from all over the world who visit Germany, particularly the part on the river which is called “Little Venice” for the streets that are small canals that flow between the houses.

About 700 Jews lived in Ulm at the turn of the 20th century. A beautiful shul was situated in the middle of the city. Then, on Kristalnacht, the shul was burned down. Since then and up until fifteen years ago, Ulm had no Jewish-spiritual presence. Most of the Jewish residents got the message on that night of destruction and fled for their lives. The rest escaped in the weeks prior to the enactment of the Final Solution. After the war, very few Jews returned to Ulm, most of them not religiously observant.

Then came a young, dynamic bachur named R’ Shneur

Trebnik, who decided that his shlichus would be in this modest city. The beginning wasn’t easy. In his first year in Ulm there was no minyan, not even on Yom Tov and the Yomim Nora’im.

His friends, some of them shluchim in Germany in prestigious cities near Ulm, often advised him to leave and find a place with more potential. “Isn’t it a pity,” they would say. “You put so much energy into a place with so little Jewish potential.”

But R’ Shneur is made of standard stuff and “I can’t” is not in his arsenal of excuses and reasons. “If one Jew returns to his heritage or even learns the basics of what it means to be Jewish and what Torah is, that is enough for me,” is what he always replied.

With quiet devotion and modesty and uncompromising mesirus nefesh, he and his wife Chani managed to build a small, religious community, offering shiurim and the celebration of significant Jewish events.

THE CHILDREN’S MESIRUS NEFESH

It all came at a price. When we sat down to the large Friday night meal (like most Chabad houses in the world) we spoke with the children of the shluchim. We learned that Mendy and Levi get up at five o’clock every morning in order to get to school in Stuttgart on time. It takes several hours to get there. The girls attend the virtual online shluchim school every morning where they learn all the Jewish and secular subjects. The school is “attended” by children all over the world who sit at their computers wherever they live.

The next day, at the end of the lunch meal when we remained alone, the grandfather and grandmother asked Mendy, Levi and the little girls to sing the new songs they recently learned in school. The words to the song they sang were in praise of the children of the shluchim and the enormous sacrifice they make in



Right: R' Shneur Trebnik, shlich to Ulm, Germany; Middle: The new shul; Left: The president of Germany with the Rebbe's shlichim

being part of a family on shlichus. These are children whose social circle usually consists of their own brothers and sisters.

As they sang, I noticed how tough Shneur, who seems ready and able to tackle anything, broke down and cried. I saw that unsentimental shluchim are sensitive too; it's just that they know how to hide it behind their smile and friendly demeanor.

THE MAIN EVENT

Last Sunday, some of the streets of Ulm were closed off and dozens of policemen and ushers could be seen. The quiet city took on a festive air.

Then we found out that the simcha and excitement were operating overtime that day. The municipality of Ulm had decided to invite, at its expense, all Jews who had been born in Ulm to convene in their hometown for the dedication of the new shul.

The German media outdid themselves in covering this event. Dozens of reporters and photographers were there on the block of the shul to document the historic event. When the official guest of honor, no less than the President of Germany himself, walked in, the media frenzy

reached fever pitch.

The silver-haired president, wearing a big, black kippa, cut the red ribbon to the sounds of dozens of cameras and flashbulbs clicking away. R' Shneur, holding a large mezuzah, explained to him why a mezuzah is put up in the doorway of a Jewish home.

When R' Shneur recited the bracha as he put up the mezuzah, there weren't many dry eyes in Ulm. The crowd roared a loud "Amen."

In our role as musicians at the event, there we stood, Amiran Dvir with his keyboard and me, at the honorable Mizrach wall with the president and his entourage.

I watched them for a long time. Although I had already participated in a Siyum HaShas and the dedications of a mikvaos in other cities in Germany, it was clear to me that the scene I was now witnessing was unusual. For beyond all the Kavod HaTorah given by the presidential retinue, the dozens of photographers and people from the media, and the many guests and residents of the city who now had a beautiful, new shul, there was something taking place here that was not given to dissent, interpretation or debate:

75 years after the Final Solution was implemented and the Jews of Germany, including those from Ulm, were sent to their deaths, dozens of years after the burning of the shul on Kristalnacht in that precise spot, the president of Germany, with a big, black kippa on his head, sat with ministers of the country and a large presidential entourage, facing the Aron Kodesh in the new shul, and listened to the speeches, Divrei Torah, and the recitation of Psalms.

There aren't many other clear examples of the fulfillment of the G-dly oath that "the eternity of Israel will not come up false." And you don't have many opportunities in life to witness the sweet revenge of the Jewish people, as grandchildren and descendants of the holy martyrs, who were killed for being Jewish, are honored by the president of a country with a cursed past, who wears a black velvet kippa at the Chanukas HaBayis of the shul of Ulm.

This astounding miracle did not take place only there, for we must give credit to all the shluchim of the Rebbe who have become part of this unnatural, wondrous process of "and we were like dreamers."

FROM HATE TO LOVE FOR CHABAD

By R' Asher Chaviv

I was born and raised in the northern town of Beit Shaan, to parents from Edot HaMizrach (of Sephardic origin). Nevertheless, we were given a Litvishe education. My parents had become ultra-Orthodox in their youth and were staunch supporters of Degel Ha'Torah (an Ashkenazi, ultra-Orthodox, anti-Chassidic, Israeli political party). They did a tremendous amount for chinuch in Beit Shaan. My father eventually became the deputy chairman of the Degel Ha'Torah party in Beit Shaan. My father developed good connections with prominent rabbanim and askanim in the Litvishe world and we were raised in the Litvish-yeshivish tradition.

When I finished elementary school in Beit Shaan, I went to a small Litvishe high school, Ohel Moshe, in B'nei Brak. It would be correct to say that I was thoroughly Litvish in my outlook. When I finished high school, I went to Yeshivas Zecher Yitzchok in Kiryat Sefer.

The only time I had heard about Chabad was in 5755 when

I was a young boy. The shliach in Beit Shaan, Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz, got some of us kids excited about attending a Gimmel Tammuz rally at the Yad Eliyahu stadium. When I asked my mother permission to attend she adamantly refused.

I absorbed great enmity towards Chabad and the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov at the yeshiva in Kiryat Sefer. It is there that I heard hate-filled statements which today I know stemmed from complete ignorance and envy.

After three years of learning in beis midrash, a friend suggested a cousin of his, a girl from a Lubavitcher family, as a shidduch for me. He said he knew us both and we would no doubt make a good match. When I told my parents about the idea my mother asked me to ask the rabbanim in my yeshiva for their assistance in making the necessary inquiries.

One of the rabbis in the yeshiva made the inquiries for me. A Lubavitcher Chassid might not relate to this, but in the Litvishe yeshiva world

in Eretz Yisroel the rabbis are very involved in their students' shidduchim. After several days of inquiries, he told me that as far as middos, she sounded suitable, but there was one problem: she came from a Lubavitcher family. "Does that bother you?" he asked me. I immediately said it didn't, on condition that I set the tone in the house so that, G-d forbid, no "heresy" entered the house.

After we met a few times and decided to marry, the news reached one of the rabbis in the yeshiva who was a loyal follower of the famous Chabad-hating rosh yeshiva in B'nei Brak at that time. He began warning me about the dangers of Chassidim, especially Lubavitchers.

"How will your children turn out?" he argued. "What minhagim will you observe in your house? Who will be the spiritual authority?" However, the shidduch was already a done deal, though not without some reservations on my part. We married and for the first year we lived in Tzfas. In yeshiva they

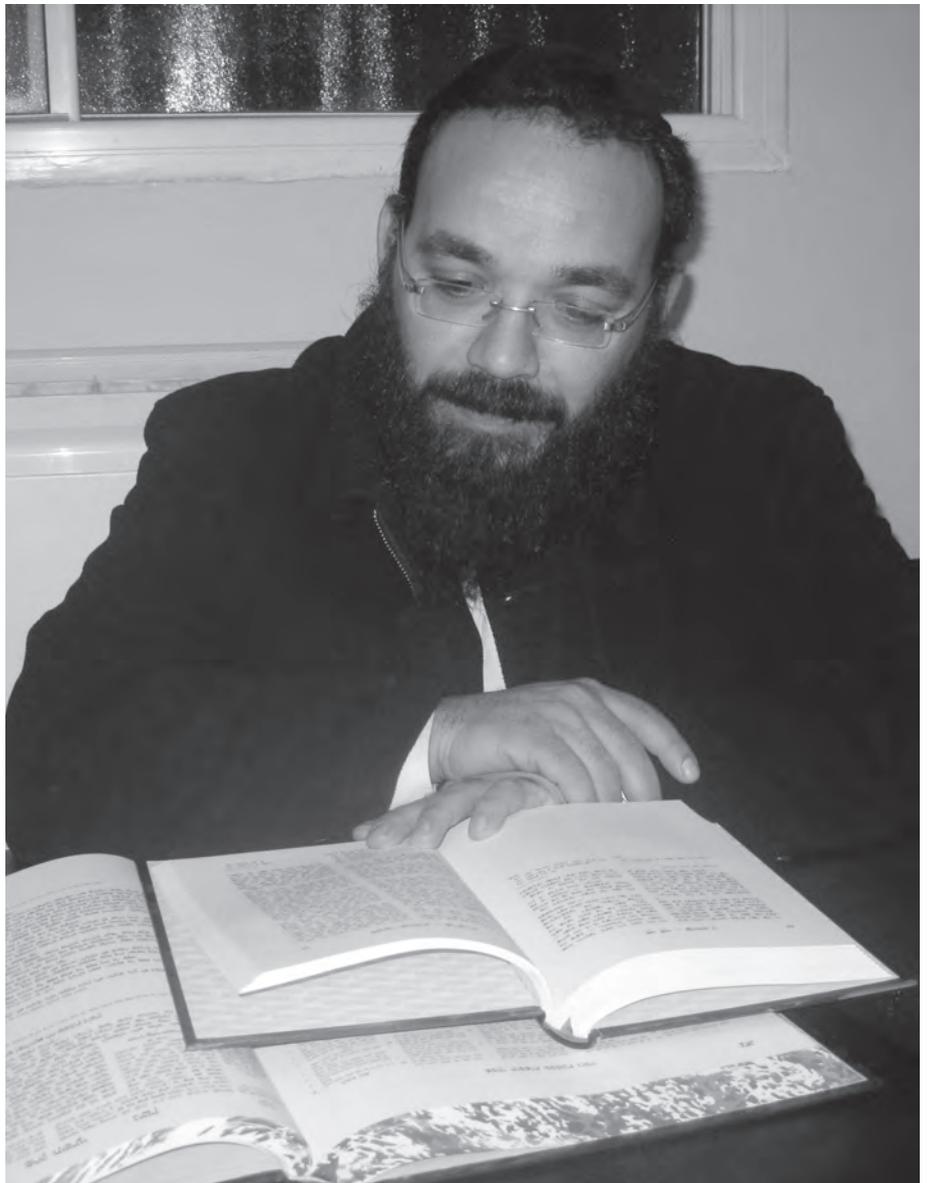
spoke about the “dangerous step” I had taken. It went so far that when I brought the Chitas that my kalla had given me as a gift to yeshiva, one of the bachurim angrily threw it on the floor, claiming it contained heresy and apostasy.

You can imagine how I felt at that time, as I was setting up a home with a girl who came from a Lubavitcher family. She herself wasn’t a Lubavitcher but her family was a fine Chassidische family.

GROWING HATRED

At this time in my life I was learning Gemara and Halacha for hours on end with Rishonim and Acharonim. This provided me with all the fulfillment I needed. I was sheltered and my world was very limited. “Secular” Jews were not Jews, Chassidim were heretics, and only the holy Torah could save me from the fires of Gehinom. My goal was to be the Gadol HaDor. Nothing else mattered. Everything else was falsehood and nonsense.

After about a year in Tzfas the yeshiva in Kiryat Sefer started a high school program and the hanhala asked me to teach there. I was thrilled. As a Litvishe young man devoted full time to learning Torah, this was my dream life. The yeshiva closed a year later due to lack of funds and I went to learn in the yeshiva’s kollel. My chavrusa was the same Litvishe rabbi who denounced the Rebbe and Chassidus. He gently began inquiring how my home life was, wanting to set me straight. He asked me whether I had any conflicts with my father-in-law. I told him no. My father-in-law never argued with me and never tried to make me into a Chabadnik. He accepted me as I was, and in retrospect, perhaps



this was what brought about the change.

“Are you ever guests of your in-laws for Shabbos?” he asked. I said yes. “Do you say Kiddush on the wine?” he asked. I didn’t grasp what he was getting at and replied in the affirmative. When he heard that, he shuddered. “You may very well be transgressing the prohibition of *Yayin nesech*,” he said in a tone of voice that shocked me to the core.

I thought: all the Torah that I learn is worthless if I transgressed this aveira. The next

day my chavrusa told me that he was sorry to tell me that he had asked one of the Litvishe roshei yeshivos who also thought I had transgressed the terrible sin of *Yayin nesech*.

From then on, when I went to my in-laws I made Kiddush on grape juice. My father-in-law could have been offended and angry, but instead he just smiled and acceded to my request. “The main thing is that you feel comfortable,” he said, and he meant it. Whenever we were guests there in Rechovos, I did

not go near the Chabad shul. I davened in a nearby Litvishe shul.

We lived in Kiryat Sefer for six years. At one point my wife decided to decorate the walls of our apartment with pictures of tzaddikim. The children were getting older and it was important for them to see righteous people. Of course I agreed, and among the pictures she included were some pictures of the Rebbe that we had received as wedding gifts. That was too much for me. Any other rabbi could adorn the walls of my home, but not the Rebbe. I did something for which I can never stop doing t'shuva – I took down those pictures and ripped them up. “This is not for our home,” I informed my shocked wife.

Naturally, she was upset, but I was consumed with hatred for anything associated with Chabad and I did not stop to think about whether my actions were sensible or not.

CHABAD HAS NO HORNS

After four years in kollel my income wasn't enough to support my family and so, with my rabbis' blessings, I began working in a management position in a chain of food stores. I was soon appointed assistant manager of the local branch. When they announced a large construction project offering new apartments at fantastic prices, I registered for it. I first had to pass a review by the residents committee and send them various documents that proved that I, my father, and grandfather, were religious. I also had to include information about my wife and to what group we belonged.

My friends warned me not to write that my wife was from a Lubavitcher home. They told me to lie but I refused. I wrote

that although my wife was born to a Lubavitcher family, our home was Litvish and my father even served as deputy chairman of the Degel Ha'Torah party. I guess I was naïve because we soon received a rejection letter. The fact that my wife was from a Lubavitcher family was serious enough and outweighed all other considerations. My father tried to use his connections with his friends in the party but they said nobody had control over the people in the committee and their decisions were final. I felt like I had been slapped in the face.

Today, I know this was all providential so that I could discover the path of Chassidus. We moved to Rechovos, to live near my in-laws, and every morning I traveled to Kiryat Sefer. Out of respect for my father-in-law, I decided to try the Chabad shul one Shabbos, to see what a Chassidishe davening looked like.

The davening began at ten in the morning. I arrived much earlier, of course, in order to learn Gemara and the commentaries, but I couldn't find any Rishonim in the shul. I found a Rashi sicha of the Rebbe's on the table and having no other choice, I opened it and learned it. I was flabbergasted. “This is ingenious,” I thought, but I quickly dampened my enthusiasm by reminding myself that this wasn't Toras Emes (G-d forbid).

The truth was though, that I was fascinated by it. It took time for me to draw closer, but I knew already then that there was something far deeper here than what I had thought and what they had force-fed me. I began learning Likkutei Torah. I didn't understand it all, but I was inspired. Chassidus is sweet and

when you begin learning it, it's hard to stop. After that Shabbos, I began going to the Chabad shul more often, and before davening I learned sifrei Chassidus and sichos of the Rebbe. In order to reassure myself that I wasn't becoming a Chassid, I debated with Chassidim and bachurim in the community. However, the reality was stronger than anything. I realized that the Rebbe and the teachings of Chassidus were not what I had been brainwashed to think.

I joined the dancing at the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva in the Chabad shul and felt that this was genuine simcha, not contrived merely to fulfill an obligation. I felt that I was among people who truly loved the Torah and were really happy. I began wondering from where they derived this. There was dancing in Kiryat Sefer and B'nei Brak too, but not with this chayus and simcha. This was a matter-of-fact joy, without any poses, simply real.

I met G-d fearing people who were particular about halacha, but did this with simcha and chayus. They were people who loved Hashem and weren't merely afraid all the time; they didn't feel choked by serving Hashem. I did not share my thoughts with anyone, not even my wife, but I was in a turmoil. The hatred I had been taught melted in the sea of love and simcha that I experienced that Sukkos and Simchas Torah. Over here, nobody was out to debate me; on the contrary, they embraced, understood, loved.

After Yom Tov, we moved back to Tzfas, and there too, I continued learning Chassidus. I drank in many maamarim and sichos. Chassidus changed my mindset. I remember learning that the Alter Rebbe says that

when a Jew does a mitzva, he connects with Hashem. “What is meant by connecting?” I wondered. I had grown up learning that when a Jew does a mitzva, he earns reward in the World to Come and is saved from Gehinom. Apparently, the relationship between the Creator and we created beings was much deeper than what I had been led to believe.

I soon discovered that Chabad has no horns. Actually, Chassidus makes doing mitzvos sweet. I began rejoicing and felt as elated as a fresh baal t’shuva. I remember the moment when I told my wife that I had made a mistake regarding Chassidus and about the truth that I found in it. That same day we went to a Chabad s’farim store in order to buy some sifrei Chassidus so there would be something to learn at home.

WRITING TO THE REBBE FOR THE FIRST TIME

There were volumes of Igros Kodesh at the entrance to the store. I remembered an argument I’d had with my mother-in-law who had suggested that I write to the Rebbe. I said that this was a serious prohibition of *lo sinachashu* (not to do divination). Yet now, I asked the sales clerk for permission to write to the Rebbe and ask for a bracha. I opened to a letter in vol. 26 p. 155 that left me open-mouthed:

... Following the connection through letters I was pleased to meet your husband when he visited here for a relatively long period of time. Based on the conversations we had a few times, in which he told me highlights of his life, I was happy to see that he found tranquility of the soul through



“Secular” Jews were not Jews, Chassidim were heretics, and only the holy Torah could save me from the blazing fires of Gehinom... My goal was to be the Gadol HaDor.

his coming close, even more, to the world view derived from our Torah of life, Torah of truth. A tranquility that borders on, and brings to, inner blissfulness, blissfulness of the soul.

Of course, the aforementioned coming close, whose results are tranquility, harmony and bliss, are possible with the help of the “eizer” as the verse says, i.e. the wife, a view which was verified for me through what your husband related about the eizer that he found in you and the assistance in general and particular.

It is unnecessary to go on at length about the necessity for inner tranquility and harmony so that a person’s life is worthy of that name, especially nowadays with the

many upheavals in public life in general and also within the life of the individual.

I firmly hope that just as in the past, so too in the future, you will stand at your husband’s right side both in the aforementioned coming close and the progress in this, as like every living thing it will surely grow and progress. What I mean is that the two of you together will go and ascend in a life according to our Torah, the Torah of life.

Despite this, I decided that there is room for writing about this matter explicitly, a writing whose intent is to convey hope along with encouragement and fortification, since at times a person encounters difficulties etc. on his path in

the aforementioned progress. Especially (as per the teachings of our sages of blessed memory) when he encounters people who have not yet attained the aforementioned state, and attempt to bolster themselves in their own eyes and in the eyes of others by mocking and putting down those that have progressed further than them, and have reached a higher rung in the world view – of our Torah and our faith. Much have our sages of blessed memory warned not to be ashamed before those who mock, from their knowledge of human nature that this is no simple challenge.

I felt as though the Rebbe was standing by my side and supporting me in my new path that was creating more harmony within me. It was incredible. If I hadn't experienced it myself, I doubt whether I would have believed that something like this could happen.

People close to me who heard about my enthusiasm about Chabad tried to dissuade me from growing a beard. "Do it all, but not a beard," they said. "There are big rabbis who don't have a beard. Learn Chassidus but leave your appearance alone." In light of this, the Rebbe's words in the Igros left me open-mouthed:

... My intention is also for a specific detail in this matter, and this is regarding growing a beard as it appears that your husband, during his time here, had started growing a beard. In the words of our sages, it is "G-d's garment" and endows a Jewish man with the image of G-d as is related in several Midrashim, something which wasn't easy for your husband (mainly for the aforementioned reason, because of those who mock) and nevertheless, and

with no outside influence, he began this. It seems that this also added in the reinforcement of inner tranquility and the awareness that he is standing on a firm foundation of Torah and mitzvos. This is the main purpose of this letter of mine, to ask and express my hope that in this too, you will be of help to him and encourage him to continue, and with joy and peace.

Obviously, I know that there are those who fulfill Torah and mitzvos who do not grow a beard, and there are differences of opinion in this and views in the poskim. But in this situation, it is not just a matter of the p'sak din, but mainly the resulting effects in the life of the individual under discussion – that not only provide satisfaction but far more, adding the matter of growing a beard to the other positive phenomena in his life during the past few years, including the relationship with you etc. – to increase light and life in his life, which will certainly lead to an increase in your life as well.

It is obvious that this attainment and ascension in life is beyond equivalence – in counterpoint to the mockery of the few from the surroundings, whose substance is as stated the self-justification of the mocker in a matter that his conscience disturbs him about from time to time, and the easy path is to denigrate those that in his assessment are loftier than he. Certainly, there is no need to go on at length about the foregoing.

Just to add one point, one that in the aforementioned matter is also primary, citing the words of the Tzemach Tzedek that growing a beard

is a special segula for him to draw down the blessings of Hashem in a bountiful fashion, both in quantity and quality. It is understood from this that whoever is in need for an increase in blessings from Hashem, whether in matters of health or money matters, and even more so in spiritual matters, it is incumbent upon him to grab onto this progress all the more. Especially as in such matters we were promised that whoever comes to purify, he is assisted from Above with great assistance.

And yehi ratzon that they settle down also in the matters of their possessions – the house etc. – in a satisfactory manner, and they should be blessed by Hashem Yisborach in all that they need in the spirit and in the physical, and you should report good news in all the matters discussed.

I went about for days in a daze over this answer. Of course, I bought this volume on the spot. With time came the gartel and the sirtuk that my father-in-law bought for me as a gift, and I became a Lubavitcher Chassid through and through.

At a certain point, I began working at the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas.

I BEGAN LOVING HASHEM

Not all of my relatives accept the changes I made, but the fact is that Chassidus has made me a happier Jew. The mitzvos are the same mitzvos but they are done with more enthusiasm and simcha. As a yeshivish person, I knew that doing a mitzva meant getting a reward and doing a sin meant being punished. When I began learning Tanya, I stopped living in fear of Gehinom. I simply began loving Hashem

more.

The truth must be proclaimed without embarrassment: learning Tanya makes you a better Jew and more connected to Hashem. When I learned the first chapter and realized what a tzaddik really is, I was ashamed. There had been times in my past when I thought I was a tzaddik. It was when I learned the daily quota I had set for myself. That's when I walked around like a peacock showing off its feathers. Now I learned, "halevai a beinoni." And besides, this ambition to be a gadol ba'Torah is frustrating. You are constantly competing and under pressure. You don't think about Hashem and you don't talk about Him. You are constantly running without stopping to ask where and why am I running. The one who stops to ask questions, falls.

One time, after feeling exhausted after hours of learning, I wanted to take a break. The mashgiach called my father and reported to him that I wasn't completely immersed in learning as was expected of one whose goal was to become a gadol ba'Torah. I wanted to reject it all; the burden was too heavy. There was the constant battle with the Evil Inclination and after many victories you finally break. The Alter Rebbe teaches you not to fight the evil but to increase the light, increase in d'veikus in Hashem by understanding what your mission is in this world. As a natural result, you will use every moment for learning.

I recently met a Litvishe bachur who was and still is close to me. He asked to speak privately with me and told me he had doubts when it came to

emuna. I was shocked. I knew he was a big masmid who was destined for greatness. He told me that he was immersed in Gemara but someone had asked him a question which had shaken his emuna. "Learn Tanya," I advised him. "It will save your emuna." I thank Hashem that I did not reach a state like that before being exposed to the teachings of the Alter Rebbe.

WHEN THE TRUE LEADER SPEAKS THE TRUTH

Relating to the idea of "chai v'kayam" and the Besuras Ha'Geula happened when I began learning the sichos of 5751-5752. Chassidus is the best way to "live" with the subject; it's the truth. The Rebbe is the leader of truth. So these sichos and his instructions are the road map that we need to follow.

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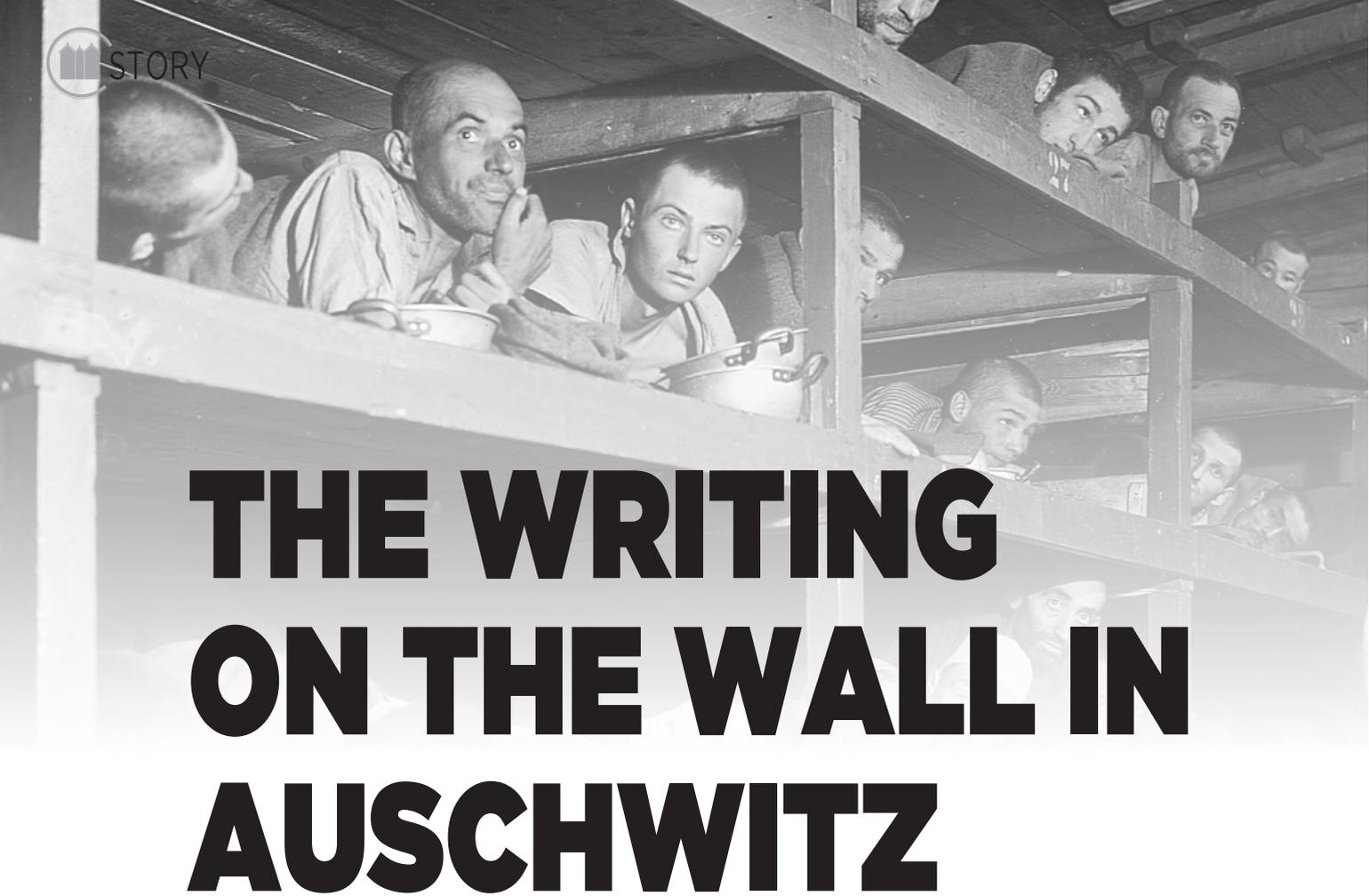
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THE WRITING ON THE WALL IN AUSCHWITZ

By Menachem Mendel Arad

Tishrei 5759/1998: Simchas Beis HaShoeiva on Kingston Avenue in Crown Heights. It was 3:00 in the morning, yet the dancing Chassidim looked as though they could go on endlessly.

Among the thousands of people were two young bachurim, Daniel and Ronnie, both of whom learned in Chabad mosdos in Italy. They were fervent Chassidim and mekusharim, heart and soul, to the Rebbe. Ronnie is now Rabbi Ronnie Canarutto, shliach in Viale Libia in Italy, and Daniel, a close friend, was and still is a Lubavitcher Chassid, though externally, you would not know this. He would look like a

mekurav to you, until you heard his special story.

The band began to play a Chabad niggun that starts off slowly and then picks up speed, “S’iz duch altz hevel havalim, ein od milvado” (it’s all vanity of vanities; there is naught but Him). Ronnie grasped Daniel’s shoulders, and then lifted his hands energetically with the words “ein od milvado.” He began to dance.

But Daniel didn’t get caught up in the dancing. His reaction to the niggun was emotional instead.

“Hey Daniel, what’s up with you?” asked Ronnie, turning to his friend. “Simchas Beis

HaShoeiva is a time for simcha, not for melancholy ...” He tried drawing Daniel into the dancing and simcha, but Daniel’s tears became heartrending.

“You don’t understand ...” he mumbled through his sobs. “Let’s leave the circle for a quiet corner and I’ll explain.” Ronnie, full of curiosity, readily followed him.

As they neared one of the public Sukkas, Daniel said, “Please repeat the words they were singing before and explain them to me.”

Ronnie repeated and translated them and explained: “Everything that happens in this world is nonsense, transient,

false. There is nothing but G-d, everything is G-dliness.”

Daniel could not stop crying. “Do you know these words?” wondered Ronnie. “Why are you crying? Can you explain what’s going on?”

SHLICHUS TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Daniel was a gifted child. One year, the Jewish Federation of Europe organized a trip to Eretz Yisroel for gifted children from all over Europe. Daniel was chosen to represent Italy.

The State of Israel accorded great honor to this young delegation and they were invited to visit the prime minister, ministers, Knesset members, and the president. Shortly before that, Daniel visited shluchim and Chabad rabbanim who had been informed by Rabbi Gershon Mendel Garelik and his son Moshe about this delegation’s visit to Eretz Yisroel. When Daniel met with the shliach R’ Yosef Shmuel Gerlitzky of Tel Aviv, he was given written information about the Torah’s view on giving away parts of the holy land.

Astonishingly, the young boy resolved to share this information when he visited with Yitzchok Rabin and his Oslo partner in crime, Shimon Peres. It was an extraordinary shlichus in which he used the prestigious event to promote the Torah’s view and the Rebbe’s fight for shleimus ha’aretz.

The reactions of the two men were different. Peres put the paper aside, publicly expressing his dissatisfaction with it, while Rabin politely thanked Daniel and put the page in his pocket.

Daniel merited many kiruvim from the Rebbe, but that would



R’ Ronnie Canarutto on Mivtza T’fillin

require a separate article and a personal interview with him. In the meantime, let us return to the streets of Crown Heights and to the two friends, Roni and Daniel.

WRITING ON THE WALL

“It was in the midst of a harsh winter,” Daniel said to Ronnie, “when my friends, teachers and I went on the March of the Living to Auschwitz in Poland.

The temperature had dropped to five below zero; in our hearts, it was much colder. Images passed before our eyes, from the not-so-distant past, of Jews like us, young people like us, who were butchered, shot, tortured and degraded, just because they were Jews.

“My friends continued to walk around with the organized tour, while I decided that looking

at the exhibits and crematoria, as horrifying as they were, were not enough for me. I wanted to try and feel what it must have been like for a Jewish boy my age to be in this place. I quietly left the group and entered one of the barracks where the Jewish prisoners had been housed. I took off my coat and lay down on one of the bunks. I closed my eyes and began to imagine.

“I felt the freezing cold penetrate my bones and the hardness of the bunk under my back, the terrifying quiet which, at any moment, could be broken by the bloodcurdling shriek of a Nazi officer, with the brief thud of a bullet hitting a Jew, or the door being broken down by an SS officer with orders to get out and head for the gas chambers. I imagined that I smelled the awful stench rising from the crematoria.

“My visualizations caused me to cry like an older person, soundlessly leaving my cheeks wet. When I opened my eyes I noticed some writing etched into the wall. I managed to read it but found it odd. I had never read these words before. I read it again and again and engraved the words into my heart, ‘S’iz duch altz hevel havalim, ein od milvado.’”

Ronnie, who was listening closely to every word, apologized, “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to hurt you”

But Daniel interrupted him and said, “Wait, listen to what happened next.

“I turned to get off the bunk when I suddenly saw an older man. I was frightened. I didn’t know where he had appeared from. ‘Boy, are you normal? What are you doing here without a coat? Do you want to get sick?’ he yelled at me.

“I said, ‘I wanted to feel what the unfortunate Jews who were here felt.’ The man sighed and whispered, ‘My dear boy, you will never, ever be able to feel what a Jew in Auschwitz felt. I, who was here and was saved by miracles, can tell you that nothing can help you feel, even minimally, what the hell on earth that was Auschwitz was like.’

“My curiosity aroused, I asked, ‘You were here in Auschwitz?’ He replied, ‘Here, in this very room. Every corner, every bunk, every step, brings me back to those moments of terror.’ I asked him, ‘Do you know who slept here, in this bunk?’

“He replied, ‘Of course. A Lubavitcher Chassid slept there. I will never forget how, in the hardest times, in the midst of hard labor or terrible hunger, he always had a smile on his refined though pained face. Even when we were all broken, he would sing an old Chabad melody. He was the very spirit of life in Auschwitz. Not only was he never broken in spirit, but he made sure

we were all uplifted, above our surroundings, so that we could look upon the Nazis as a passing shadow.

“‘They can only break our bodies, enslave and mock us, but they can never touch our spirit, our neshama, our faith. ‘S’iz duch altz hevel havalim, ein od milvado’ he would say and sing. This niggun didn’t leave his lips. I’ll never forget that cursed day when the Nazis took that Chassid to the crematoria. He walked upright and with his niggun on his lips, ‘S’iz duch altz hevel havalim, ein od milvado.’”

Daniel finished his story in a neighborhood light years away from the barracks of Auschwitz. “In those moments I experienced an intense spiritual upheaval. It struck me in an instant that Chabad is my path. I knew that I am a Chassid of the Rebbe. I had not a shadow of a doubt that only someone who learns Chassidus and is mekushar to the Rebbe can rise above the most difficult of circumstances and remain a believer, trusting, and happy.”

The band had, by then, moved on to other niggunim. On the edge of one of the circles, two young bachurim danced with a hand on each other’s shoulder. “S’iz duch altz hevel havalim, ein od milvado,” they sang and they danced and cried. Nobody watching would understand why.



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MIRACLE WORKING CHASSID

The life story of R' Boruch Sholom Schneersohn, the Rebbe's grandfather's grandfather; the great-grandchild whom the Alter Rebbe loved exceedingly; the great-grandchild who was with his great-grandfather until he passed away and was a broken man from then on. The tzaddik whose behavior was so modest that he was the only one of the Tzemach Tzedek's children who did not take on an Admorus. As a reward for this, he was promised that the Admorus would come back to his descendants. In honor of his yahrtzait, 16 Shvat.

By Refael Dinari

R' Boruch Sholom Schneersohn, the Tzemach Tzedek's oldest son, and the Rebbe's grandfather's grandfather, was born sometime between the years 5564-5566 (1804-1806). The Alter Rebbe loved him dearly and from the time he began going to school he would regularly visit the Alter Rebbe. When he was six, the Alter Rebbe taught him dikduk (Hebrew grammar) and when he was seven, the Alter Rebbe taught

him how to lain. The Alter Rebbe told him how he became a talmid of the Mezritcher Maggid as well as other things he heard in Mezritch.

From the day that the Alter Rebbe left Liadi (because of the war with Napoleon) until his passing on 24 Teves 5573/1812, Rabash (R' Boruch Sholom) was with him. He sat with him in the wagon and slept in his room. Rabash said that he spent 142 days and nights with the Alter

Rebbe, from 25 Av when the news came that Napoleon was headed for Liadi until 24 Teves. For the rest of his life Rabash was a broken man, because he could not bear the passing of the Alter Rebbe.

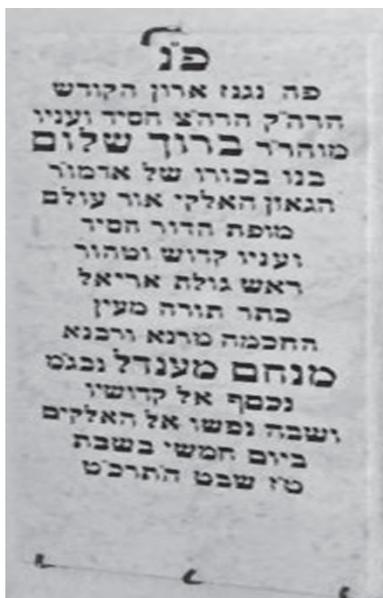
After the passing of the Alter Rebbe he was mekushar to his grandfather, the Mittlerer Rebbe, and then to his father, the Tzemach Tzedek. He would travel to various towns and

villages and review maamarei Chassidus. He was a modest person and throughout his life he acted with incredible humility. During his father's lifetime he lived in the adjacent house abutting the wall of the estate. His father would call him "the balabus" and learned Kabbala with him.

When the Chassidim wanted to convey something to the Rebbe they would sometimes ask Rabash to do it. The Rebbe Rayatz related that when a certain Chassid from Horodok who had the custom to travel to Lubavitch exclusively by foot continued to do so even after reaching the ripe old age of 90, the Chassidim asked R' Boruch Sholom to tell his father, which he did. The Tzemach Tzedek instructed that Chassid in yechidus to take care of himself.

In Cheshvan 5600/1839, R' Boruch Sholom, with his father's consent, entered a partnership with a new person who had come to Lubavitch by the name of Lipmann Feldman. He was a leading craftsman in the candle business. As a result, Feldman visited the Beis HaRav many times. Not long after it was discovered that he was a spy for the Maskilim and he was planning to inform on the Rebbe to the police. Fortunately, he found nothing about which to tattle, and Binyamin the Apostate, the leader of the Maskilim moles, told him to come back. One of the Chassidim in Lubavitch bought out his share of the candle business.

Rabash was the only child of the Tzemach Tzedek who did not lead a flock of Chassidim and did not serve as an Admur. He remained in Lubavitch and was a Chassid of his younger brother, the Rebbe Maharash.



Nevertheless, the Rebbe Rayatz refers to him as an Admur.

He was a great oral historian and the Rebbe Rayatz quoted many stories from him. When the Rebbe Rashab was a boy, he regularly went to him to listen to stories. The Rebbe referred to his writings as "precious and dear to me." He passed away in 5629/1862 and is buried in Lubavitch. He had three sons: R' Levi Yitzchok, a rav in Podobaranka; R' Mordechai, a rav in Vitebsk; and R' Leib. His son-in-law, R' Meshulam (Shilem) Reich was a mekurav of the Kotzker Rebbe and was often the shliach between our Rebbeim and the Admurim of Kotzk and Ger.

After his passing, many of his writings were found, as well as a will. When they read it, his brothers were amazed by his wisdom. When the Rebbe Rayatz called out an invitation to his deceased ancestors at the wedding of his daughter, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, he also invited the ancestors of the chassan, the Rebbe, and mentioned R' Boruch Sholom, saying that he would repeat some

of his teachings in the wedding maamer, Lecha Dodi.

POWER OF SPEECH

When R' Boruch Sholom was born, he was missing part of his right hand. His mother was extremely upset about this. The Alter Rebbe told her that it happened because when she was pregnant, a young pauper came collecting. When she saw him she said: You are young and healthy. Go and work. Why are you asking for handouts?

This is why her son was born without a part of his right hand.

GREAT GAON

When the Alter Rebbe was sick in Piena, he told his grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek, "Do you have anything to ask? Ask now."

The Tzemach Tzedek had no idea what his grandfather was alluding to and he did not ask anything. When his son, R' Boruch Sholom, grew up, he had a question about how he should put on t'fillin since R' Boruch Sholom did not have separate fingers on his right hand as most people do, yet he felt that his right hand was stronger than his left.

The Tzemach Tzedek asked the gaon, R' Nechemia of Dubrovna, to write up the question to send to the gaon, R' Shlomo Kluger, and then to show him the text to which he would insert his own comments.

When the question was brought to R' Shlomo Kluger, he said that a great gaon had written the question, but between the lines had written one who was a gaon amongst gaonim.

The shliach said that the one who wrote the question was not a rav but a businessman (this was

“Rabash reassured him and said: May it be Hashem’s will that he start getting drunk on vodka and you will be rid of him. This was immediately fulfilled. The gentile began drinking to the point of drunkenness until he lost his business.

while the Mittler Rebbe was still Rebbe, and the Tzemach Tzedek was a businessman for a while before he became Rebbe). R’ Kluger was amazed and he said: You have businessmen like that?!

THE SONGS OF MALCHUS OF ATZILUS

The Alter Rebbe told R’ Boruch Sholom: You revived me by listening to the *trop* and learning them.

[The verse states]: “In order that you relate this to your son and your son’s son” – this means, not only to your grandson but to the end of time. However, it is only possible for a person to give over something orally to his grandson, and I would greatly desire that the tunes that you heard from me, which are according to the way that *malchus* of *Atzilus* intones, be sung to the end of time.

When Rabash was eight, the Alter Rebbe taught him all the nuances and liturgical tunes of davening. R’ Boruch Sholom was distressed all his life for forgetting one of the nuances in the davening that the Alter Rebbe taught him (a musical nuance that came from the songs of the Levites in the Mikdash).

When his younger brother, the Rebbe Maharash, was twelve, he learned the *trop* with him as he had learned it from his great-grandfather. The Rebbe Rayatz said that although the Rebbe

Maharash had an unusually long breath, learning the notes affected his heart.

I WANT TO HEAR IT

As mentioned previously, Rabash was a broken man because he could not bear the passing of the Alter Rebbe. The Tzemach Tzedek once told him: Why can’t you get over it? Zeide is sitting in Gan Eden and revealing p’nimius ha’Torah!

R’ Boruch Sholom said: I want to hear it.

THE SPECIAL QUALITY OF CHAI ELUL WAS REVEALED THANKS TO HIM

Said the Rebbe Rayatz:

This matter, that the beginning of the avoda of the new year is on Chai Elul, became known by happenstance through something that occurred with my great-uncle, Rabash, on Monday, 16 Elul 5589, in Lubavitch. The inner, essential bond with which the Alter Rebbe was mekarev my great-uncle had a great effect on him. When the Alter Rebbe passed away, Rabash was broken, and for the twelve years following 5573 he would fast on Chai Elul, the Alter Rebbe’s birthday. When Chai Elul fell out on Shabbos he would fast on the previous Thursday.

When my great-uncle heard the sicha said by his grandfather, the Mittler Rebbe, on Shabbos Parsha Ki Seitzei 5585,

describing the great celebration up Above on the birthday of a Tzaddik, and especially that of an inclusive-soul, along with the explanation of his father the Tzemach Tzedek, he regretted having fasted on this day. He had his vow annulled and fasted on a different day.

My great-uncle was a closed person and all of his avoda was done with the utmost modesty. That year, 5585, he fasted on Monday and celebrated Chai Elul on Thursday.

My great-uncle was sick in the summer of 5589 and the doctors told him to be exceedingly careful about eating breakfast. That year Chai Elul was on a Wednesday. He fasted on Monday and due to his weakness he fell several times and had to lie in bed. Even then, nobody knew the reason for his weakness.

On Wednesday, Chai Elul, he lay in bed with a high fever. The Tzemach Tzedek went to visit him. When he walked into the room he said: Good Yom Tov. Today, Chai Elul, is the birthday of the Alter Rebbe. Chai Elul is the beginning of the avoda of the new, upcoming year. For the last 32 years starting in 5557/1797, my grandfather the Alter Rebbe says before me a maamer Chassidus and the maamer is mostly about the avoda of the upcoming year. As we know, every year of a person’s life has a different avoda.

HOW TO LEARN A MISHNA

The Rebbe Maharash once sent his son, the Rebbe Rashab, to his uncle, R’ Boruch Sholom, to be tested. The Rebbe Rashab was seven years old and had learned the Mishna in the tractate Bava Kama about four “fathers of damages,” i.e. four main categories. R’ Boruch Sholom

told him that he remembers how the Alter Rebbe taught him that Mishna when he was seven and explained each of the categories in the spiritual sense.

A FOOT HERE, A FOOT THERE

The Rebbe Rashab related:

Once, when the Tzemach Tzedek said Chassidus, his oldest son R' Boruch Sholom stood above the stove on one foot and wanted to put his other foot there too but could not because of the tremendous crowding. He remained like that throughout the recitation of Chassidus with one foot on the stove and one foot lower down.

REVIEWING HIS FATHER'S CHASSIDUS

The first Pesach after the passing of his father, on 13 Nissan 5626, Rabash said the maamer, "Ki Yishalcha Bincha." Before saying the maamer he said that the maamer wasn't his, but his father's. In the days to follow his brothers spoke, each saying their own maamarim.

The Rebbe Rayatz said about him that he took double from his father over his brothers by not becoming a Rebbe.

Before he passed away, his father said to him that as a reward for not conducting himself as Rebbe he would merit that Admorus would come back to his descendants. He concluded with a quote, "The fourth generation will return here."

When the Rebbe MH"M became engaged, his father said that now the meaning of that line was understood, if you start counting from the Rebbe Maharash.

MIRACLES OF RABASH

In the book *Reshimos Inyanim V'Sippurim* that was written by his grandson, he brings miracle stories of his grandfather as follows:

SOUP AND SPIDERS

R' Boruch Sholom once attended a bris mila in Salavat. After the bris they served him a plate of meat soup. A moment later, a spider descended on the bowl. Rabash said to remove the bowl with the spider and to bring another bowl. Surprisingly, a spider descended on the next bowl too and Rabash asked that it too be removed and that they bring a third bowl.

When a spider landed on the third bowl, Rabash asked what was the source of the meat in the soup. When he was told that they had slaughtered a lamb in honor of the bris, he asked: Where did you buy the lamb? They said, from one of the gentiles in the village.

Rabash asked for the gentile to be summoned so they could find out what happened with this lamb. They called for the gentile and when he stood before Rabash, Rabash said to him: Tell me the truth – what is unusual about this lamb?

The gentile said: I will tell you the truth. After this lamb was born, its mother died and I had a pig suckle it.

Rabash said that the utensils that had been used for the meat should be broken.

A WASHING CUP

Rabash's custom was to be from those that are shamed but never shame others and to keep his mouth closed regarding any dispute. He once went to a bathhouse and took a cup which he used. Someone else told him that the cup was his and he

spoke sharply against Rabash.

Rabash did not respond but when he went home he repeated what happened. He allowed one expression of annoyance to escape his lips.

The following week, on the same day of the week and at the same time, that man bathed at the bathhouse and although he was a tall, hefty fellow, he drowned in the bath. This inspired fear in everyone.

SNOW FOR 25 RUBLES

A man once went to Rabash and complained about his parnasa. His entire business depended on snow, as he needed wintry roads to ship his merchandise by sled, and no snow had fallen yet. He said he would give 25 rubles to Rabash if he would bring down snow through his prayers.

That night it snowed heavily. The man kept his promise and gave the rav 25 rubles.

GOOD RIDDANCE

Someone went to Rabash and said he had a store in the village and that recently a gentile came and opened a store opposite his and was siphoning off his parnasa. He asked Rabash to write a pidyon nefesh to the Tzemach Tzedek. Rabash reassured him and said: May it be Hashem's will that he start getting drunk on vodka and you will be rid of him.

This was immediately fulfilled. The gentile began drinking to the point of drunkenness until he lost his business.

CHALLA WITHOUT CHALLA

Once, on Simchas Torah, Rabash was served challa but he refused to eat it. They discovered that they had forgotten to do the mitzva of hafrashas challa and it was only after they removed a piece that he ate it.

A CHASSID WHO LIVED FOR OTHERS

R' Hillel Zaltzman, known to our readers for his fascinating memoirs of life in Samarkand, shares another chapter, this time about his uncle. R' Benzion Pil was so outstanding in his tz'daka and chesed that even R' Itche der Masmid was amazed by him. R' Mendel Futerfas admired him and said that from him he learned how to dispense tz'daka freely. * Chassidim of a previous generation.

By R' Hillel Zaltzman

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

I got to know my uncle, R' Benzion Moshe Pil, the husband of my mother's sister, only in the latter part of his life, when he lived in Samarkand. I was a young boy and I don't have many memories of him. In a long conversation that I had with his daughter, Sarah Mishulovin, she was able to tell me her father's story in great detail even though he had died sixty years earlier. Some of the stories I had heard from my mother too.

When he first met my aunt Aidele, R' Benzion arrived wearing a new suit, a tie, and

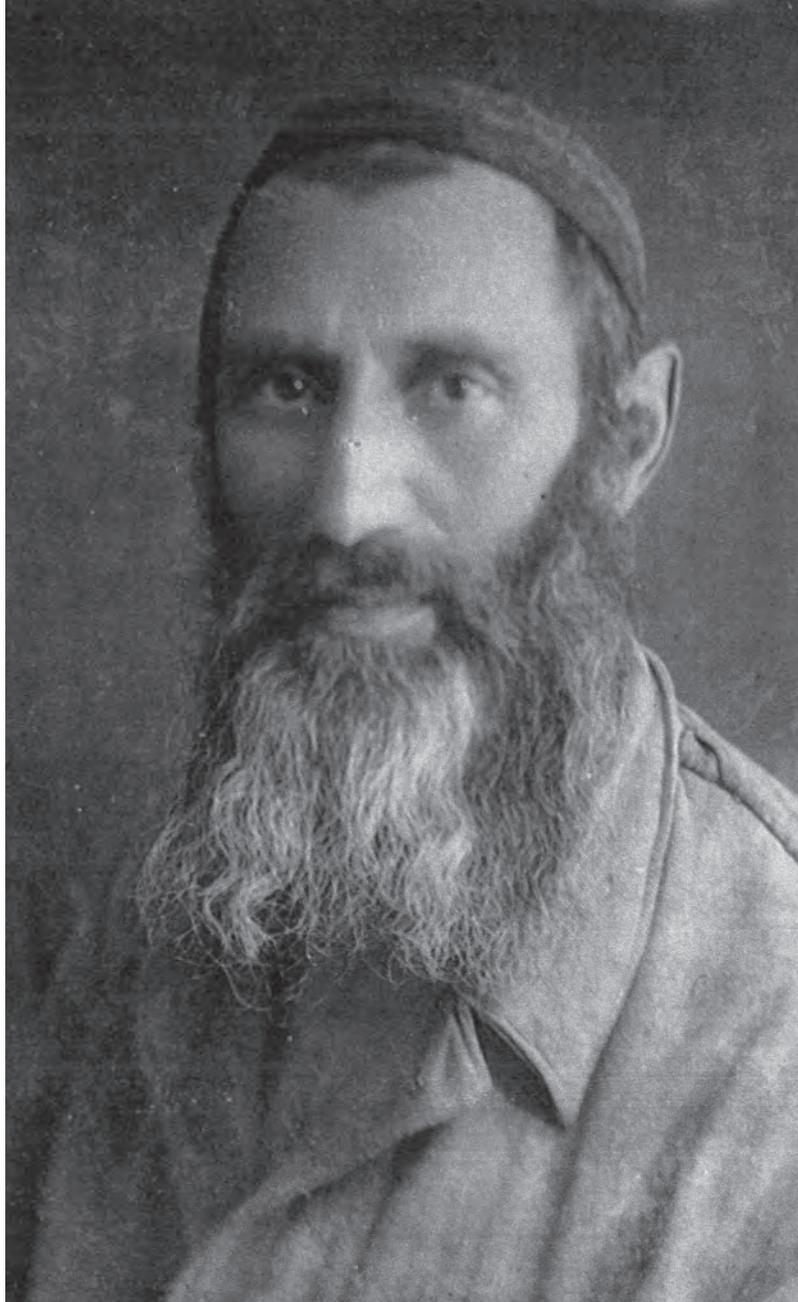
a hat. In those days, this way of dressing was reserved for successful businessmen and the family got the impression that they had acquired a rich son-in-law. After the wedding they found out that his financial situation was so bad that he could not show up wearing his own clothing, which is why he had borrowed his entire wardrobe from a friend.

Fortunately for him, shortly after he married he was successful in business and became wealthy, this time for real. He did not keep his wealth to himself, but was a

tremendous baal tz'daka who generously gave away his money to those in need. I heard that R' Mendel Futerfas would mention him with great admiration and say that he learned about tz'daka from R' Benzion Pil.

THE ANGEL WHO SAVED MY AUNT'S LIFE

After they married, the couple lived in Charkov. About a year later their oldest son was born, my cousin Yaakov a"h. After he made aliya, he lived in Shikun Chabad in Lud and was



child at home? I will not go with you and I ask you to leave me alone!

She argued with her mother for quite some time until her mother left. But soon after, she had the same frightening dream two more times. She again asked her mother how she could do this to her and her mother said tearfully: They forced me to come and take you and if I did not come myself, they would have sent someone else.

After the dream repeated itself three times, she fell asleep and had another dream. In this dream she saw an old man with a long, white beard walking in the market with two pails full of water. There were many shops in the market and the thirsty merchants left their stores and asked him for a bit of water to drink. The old man refused them all and said: I have no time. I am rushing to the hospital where there is a sick lady who needs to be healed. I am taking the water to heal her. He went to the hospital and gave my aunt a drink. In her dream she immediately felt her condition improve.

When she awoke from the strange dream, she began to feel much better. Her condition slowly began to improve until she was healed and left the hospital.

According to medical statistics, only one out of 250,000 people in her condition live. The doctors who treated her wanted to give themselves the credit for the rare success and asked whether she would come to an international medical convention that would be taking place outside of Russia. They wanted to present her before their peers. Her husband though, refused outright.

After she was completely cured, she asked her brother,

the gabbai in the Chabad shul. About two years later, my aunt was expecting another baby and when it came time to give birth they called for an ambulance. The driver said that because of the gentile holiday there weren't doctors available at the hospital and they should call him again the next day.

My aunt had to give birth at home. Tragically, the little girl died a few days later and my aunt came down with blood poisoning. She was taken to the hospital in critical condition and due to the poor sanitary

conditions at the hospital in those days her condition continued to deteriorate. At a certain point they put her in the ward designated for patients they had given up on.

While there, she saw her mother in a dream coming with a nice coffin with a gold seal (as though sealed by the Heavenly Court) and she said tearfully: They sent me to take you, come with me.

My aunt was terrified and she said firmly: How could you call me there when I have a small



R' Itche der Masmid

R' Itche once asked him: Why don't you count the money before you give it to me?

R' Benzion answered: Is it my money? Hashem gave me the money and I just pass it along.

R' Itche enjoyed this response and said: You have a wife and children that you have to support ... but since you act this way, I bless you that you should have so much money that money won't mean anything to you.

This bracha was fulfilled and R' Benzion began making a lot of money. He did not keep it to himself, but did much chesed with it as the following stories will illustrate:

In the years 1920-1930, a large community of Lubavitchers developed in Charkov and

During the difficult periods, when one could only obtain a bit of food with coupons, many of Anash who did not have coupons, such as the yeshiva bachurim, starved. R' Benzion was acquainted with those in charge of the "Turgasin," the state controlled trading centers, and after bribing them, he got boxes of fruits. He went to the yeshiva, put the boxes of fruits on the table, and said: Eat, eat, you are learning Torah!

Then he went to the shul and gave fruits to R' Mendel Futerfas, R' Zalman Serebryanski and the other men there.

My uncle Benzion was once walking with my other uncle, R' Dovid Pevsner, and they saw a man selling candies and chocolates on the street. R' Benzion stopped and bought large boxes of sweets from him. R' Dovid was surprised by how much Benzion bought and said: Who is all this for? You only have two children!

R' Benzion said: When guests come, I will be able to offer this to them, but the main thing is this was an opportunity to support a fellow Jew. He has a family for whom he needs to provide.

As a little boy I remember that there was an old lady by the name of Esther who came with us to Charkov. We called her "Grandma Esther" even though she wasn't actually our relative. How did she come to join us? Her young son wanted to marry someone whom his mother objected to. Despite her begging him not to marry her, he married her anyway and moved to Poltava. At a certain point, Esther went to Poltava and wanted to live with her son but her daughter-in-law threw her out of the house and said: You didn't want me, and now I don't want you! She gave

“ R' Itche enjoyed this response and said: You have a wife and children that you have to support ... but since you act this way, I bless you that you should have so much money that money won't mean anything to you

R' Avrohom Boruch Pevsner, who lived in Snovsk, to ask the Rebbe Rayatz for a bracha that they have another child. Upon receiving the Rebbe's bracha, they had a daughter and they named her Fruma Sarah. She later became the wife of R' Dovid Dov Mishulovin. For years to come, they regretted having asked the Rebbe for a child, rather than children.

I JUST PASS THE MONEY ALONG

When R' Itche der Masmid would visit Charkov on fundraising trips for the yeshiva, my uncle would take money out of his pocket and give it to him.

Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim moved there. People took jobs that enabled them to keep Shabbos and some of them worked in photography. My father also had a photography store and on his way from the store to the house he would pass by Uncle Benzion's home. One day R' Benzion asked my father: Nu Avremel, how was parnasa today?

My father sighed and said it wasn't a great day for business since it was cloudy and not many customers came. R' Benzion took out a nice sum of money and pushed it into my father's pocket saying: When you get home, tell your wife it was a good day.

her mother-in-law money for the trip and Esther returned to Charkov.

Upon arriving in Charkov she stood next to the shul with her small suitcase and with tears in her eyes she said she had no place to sleep and she was hungry. People passed by and each one tossed a donation towards her and continued on his way. When R' Benzion passed by, he invited her to live in his house. It wasn't a big house; it consisted of one bedroom and a kitchen with a dining room, but my uncle and aunt made her feel like a member of the family. When they moved to Samarkand they took her with them.

HOW MY UNCLE SAVED R' BENZION SHEMTOV

During the "great purges" under the cursed Stalin, when he ordered that all his political rivals be eliminated, tens of thousands of people were shot to death in the cellars of the GPU or were sent to Siberia without a trial. Under this terror regime, thousands of citizens became collaborators with the authorities including, sad to say, Jews who gave information about those who opposed the government. The Chassidim were considered enemies of the people and many of them were arrested. My uncle, R' Avrohom Boruch Pevsner, was one of them.

When R' Benzion Shemtov, a Lubavitcher Chassid in Charkov, heard that the police were looking for him, he needed a hiding place but very few people were willing to take the risk. My uncle, R' Benzion Pil, allowed Benzion Shemtov to stay with him during this terrifying time.

After a while, R' Benzion Shemtov felt he could no longer

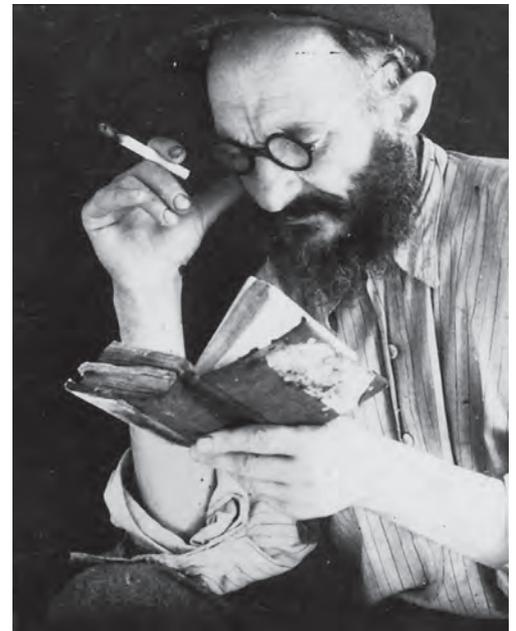
continue to hide in Charkov and he decided to leave the city. Since he was afraid to walk alone in the street, he asked my uncle to find someone trustworthy to take him to the train station. My uncle spoke with some people but although he offered a nice amount of money, they all refused. They said they were afraid to endanger themselves and their families. They all knew what the consequences would be if they were caught walking along with a "traitor" and thought: What use will the money be if my wife will become a widow and my children will be orphaned?

A few days later R' Benzion Shemtov asked my uncle whether he had managed to find someone to take him to the train station. My uncle had to tell him the truth, that everyone was afraid. My uncle then said: Don't worry. I won't abandon you. If there will be no one to take you, I'll take you!

My uncle, knowing what danger R' Benzion Shemtov was in, decided to take the chance and walk with him to the train station. It was winter-time. He gave R' Shemtov a woman's coat with a large collar, wrapped him with a woman's wool scarf in order to hide his beard, and walked with him, hand in hand, as though he was strolling with his old mother.

When they arrived at the train station, my uncle bought a ticket for him and did not leave him even when he boarded the train. He stayed with him until the train started moving and only when the third whistle was sounded and the train began picking up speed, did he quickly jump off.

Seconds later two men in civilian clothes approached him and asked him whether he had seen a man by the name



R' Avrohom Zaltzman, the author's father

of Benzion Shemtov who was supposed to be there. They asked him this question in Yiddish and he realized that they were informers. He looked at them in astonishment and said that he did not know this man. After they left, he saw them continue searching the train station.

THE MAIN THING IS SAVING A JEW'S LIFE

In 5695/1935, ninety businessmen were arrested including my uncle R' Benzion and my uncle R' Dovid. In the group trial that was conducted, my uncles were sentenced to seven years incarceration. There was another Jew in the group who apparently was accused of more serious crimes for which he was sentenced to death.

When my uncle heard about this, he decided to employ a legal tactic to help this Jew. According to the law, when an entire group is sentenced as a group, one member of the group is allowed to appeal the punishment. Then

another trial is held for the entire group. My uncle decided to appeal his sentence with the intent that maybe the other Jew's luck would improve and he would get a less severe sentence.

The legal maneuvering worked but only partially. The man was sentenced to ten years instead of the death sentence, but the judges decided to make my uncle's punishment more severe. Instead of seven years, they gave him ten years. The new sentence was very severe. Besides the additional three years, according to Soviet law back then, a person sentenced to less than ten years could have two thirds of his

after two and a half years and when World War II began, he went with us to Samarkand. But my uncle R' Benzion was in jail for ten years. At first he was held in Charkov, where his wife could visit him. During visiting hours families of inmates would go to the prison where the inmates stood on one side of the room and the families stood on the other side. They all spoke at the same time and you had to shout to make yourself heard.

Then they sent all the prisoners to Siberia where they were incommunicado. Nobody knew their fate for over eight years! His family, who did not

I'm staying in yeshiva," he said. We never saw him again. The gentile neighbors said that they saw the Nazis take him away.

LOST ON THE WAY TO SAMARKAND

My aunt Rosa Duchman was of the opinion that we must leave as fast as possible. It made no difference where we went, as long as we did not stay in Charkov. She first sent my mother, who was her younger sister, since she had little children. Then my aunt and her husband Boruch left with her sister Aidele Pil and her children, Yaakov and Sarah. R' Benzion was in Siberia.

The train system was chaotic and the journey was in freight cars, without windows and bathrooms. The Germans occasionally bombed the trains and the train traveled slowly in fear of bombed out tracks.

The train stopped at every station to enable additional refugees to board. Passengers used these stops to get off, refresh themselves, and to buy hot water, a loaf of bread or fruits and vegetables. At one of the small towns young Yaakov got off in order to buy bread. But for some reason, he tarried. The train whistle blew three long blasts but Yaakov had still not returned.

The family was frantic. They hoped he would arrive at the last moment and join them, but the train continued moving and Yaakov remained in the little town.

The family had no choice but to continue, but throughout the trip they looked at trains that passed nearby for Yaakov. On the second day, the miracle occurred. As their train stopped at a station, another train began

“The family was frantic. They hoped he would arrive at the last moment and join them, but the train continued moving and Yaakov remained in the little town.

sentence absolved for good behavior, but someone sentenced to ten years was not entitled to this privilege. He had to complete the ten year sentence.

My aunt, Rosa Duchman, who was sharp-tongued, yelled at R' Benzion and said: Why did you ask for another trial? Do you even know that man? If you hadn't asked for a repeat trial, you could have been released from jail in two and a half years! Now, you will have to spend ten years in jail and your wife and children will be alone.

My uncle replied: This man also has a wife and children and after ten years, we both can return to our families. But if he would be sentenced to death, his wife would be a widow and his children, orphans.

My uncle R' Dovid returned

know where he had been sent, tried to guess and sent letters to police stations in an attempt to locate him, but to no avail.

In the summer of 5701/1941, when the Germans broke the agreement with the Russians and began conquering parts of Russia and the Ukraine, the Russian government encouraged citizens to flee from cities on the front lines for Central Asia. Most of Anash traveled to Samarkand and Tashkent, including our family.

A few Jews remained in Charkov including my cousin, Sholom Dovber Pevsner, the son of R' Avrohom Boruch, who was 18 at the time. He heard how the Germans treated the Jews nicely in World War I and he thought that the terrifying stories were a propaganda tactic of the communists. "Do what you want,

to set out and in the door of one of the compartments they saw Yaakov holding the door with two loaves of bread hanging by his belt. He looked at the train across the way, thinking perhaps he would find his family. They all began shouting at him and when he noticed them, he did not think twice but jumped from the moving train. He landed on the ground and was injured somewhat, but he quickly jumped on to the train where his family was.

After they had calmed down, Yaakov said that by the time he had managed to buy bread, he had missed the train. When he arrived at the station, he saw another train waiting there. He figured his family was on this train which he boarded. It was only later on that he realized his mistake but he continued traveling with that train in the hopes of finding his family at a later station.

YOUR FATHER IS ALIVE!

When they arrived in Samarkand, the material circumstances were awful. My uncle Boruch Duchman was a shochet and although there were other Lubavitcher shochem, the “shpitz Chabad” (like R’ Nissan Nemanov, R’ Hillel Azimov, R’ Benzion Shemtov, R’ Mendel Futerfas, R’ Shmuel Dovid Belinov, and others) ate only from his sh’chita.

While my father was in jail (which I related in a previous chapter), I lived with R’ Boruch and I remember how the butchers would come after midnight and knock on the wall of the house to wake him up so he would come and shecht.

One time, when he returned from slaughtering, he sensed a gentile following him. He

couldn’t run, so he continued at his usual pace. This was in the Uzbeki quarter and the street was pitch black. At night people used small lanterns to light their way, especially at the end of the month. When the gentile caught up with him, he hit him in the back and fled.

R’ Boruch went home in a fright. He told my aunt what happened. She examined his back and found that in his winter coat, which was made of thick cotton, there was a deep cut. His outer shirt was cut and there was even a cut in the two lower layers, until his tzitzis.

My uncle’s sh’chita became a family business. I remember that my aunt Aidele de-veined the meat and her daughter, who was a young girl, was sent to deliver the meat. The laws of the country prohibited private enterprise, especially with meat, and since children were less suspect than adults, it became her job. After my aunt Rosa packed the meat according to the customer’s order, she would place it in a bag and put dried fruits on top of it so it shouldn’t be obvious that she was transporting meat.

Sarah said that one time, when she brought meat to R’ Benzion Shemtov’s house, his wife gently said to her: Tell your aunt Rosa that the next time she should send fewer bones.

Her husband heard this and he came in and said to his wife: If Sarah brings you even no meat with bones, even rocks – say thank you. She doesn’t know where her father is and you tell her things like that?

When R’ Benzion mentioned her father, Sarah began to cry. R’ Benzion calmed her and said: My child, your father is alive and he will return to you soon.



R’ Benzion Shemtov

REUNION AFTER TEN YEARS

During the war, many people were drafted into the army. They drafted my cousin Yaakov Pil who had to serve throughout the years of the war.

(When they called my cousin R’ Boruch to be drafted, he claimed to be much older than it said on his passport. He explained that he did this so his wife would think he was younger and marry him. He looked older than he was because his beard was white and he walked slowly. The man in the draft office believed him and wrote on his papers: Believe him and accept his claim.)

He received several more draft notices and each time he showed them the decision of the head of the draft office and they left him alone.)

In 1945, when they released my uncle, R’ Benzion, he did not know where his family was and did not know how to find them. His mind was full of frightening thoughts about his family’s fate. He knew that the Germans had been in Charkov, and he had

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heard what the Germans did to Jews in the places they conquered. He kept trying to push away these disturbing thoughts and to strengthen his bitachon in Hashem. He said later on that he constantly thought and hoped that the tz'daka and chesed he did with others surely stood by him and his family and that his family must be in a safe place.

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After a few weeks he arrived in Samarkand and finally found his family. He was weak and ill from everything he had been through in Siberia. He had four difficult years until he passed away on 25 Tishrei 5710.

RETURNING FROM THE FRONT FOR THE FINAL KADDISH

My cousin Yaakov was not in Samarkand when his father died. He was far away, in the Russian army camp in Japan. During his military service he was wounded several times, but he also experienced many miracles and was saved from certain death. In one of the battles against the Germans, he was in a bunker

and one of the gentile soldiers needed to relieve himself. He was afraid to leave alone and looked for someone to go with him. Since he knew Yaakov to be kindhearted, he asked him to join him and Yaakov agreed.

Just as the two of them went out, the Germans began a massive aerial bombardment. When the reverberations died down, the two of them returned to the bunker and were shocked to discover that a German bomb had penetrated it and killed all the soldiers. They were the only ones to remain alive from their group.

At the end of the war, the army released all the older reservists but kept the young soldiers for another few years. They sent Yaakov to Japan.

He was released at the end of 5710 and by Divine Providence he arrived in Samarkand on the last day when Kaddish could be recited for his father. The family felt conflicted. On the one hand, they did not want to tell him the sad news. On the other hand, he was an only son and he should at least recite the final Kaddish. They also wanted him to eat a little before being told the news, for he had barely eaten on the long trip to Samarkand.

Yaakov, who noticed his father's absence, asked where he was. The family told him he was very sick and was in the hospital in critical condition. They served

him food and asked him to eat and then they would take him to the hospital. Under the plate they put a note with the news of his father's death and that it was the final day for Kaddish so he should hurry to shul to say Kaddish for his father.

When he finished eating and took his plate from the table, he saw the note and read the message. He hurried to the Bucharian shul which was on the street where he lived and said the first and final Kaddish in the year of mourning.

Over the years Yaakov was granted special status by the communist government for his bravery in battle. He used this privileged status to help other Jews even when it endangered his position.

When he eventually moved to Eretz Yisroel, he stayed in a hotel in the absorption center in Kfar Chabad. When R' Mendel Futerfas saw him, he immediately gave him a mortgage without guarantors. Mrs. Sarah Raskin, the one in charge, expressed her surprise about this to R' Mendel. How could he give a mortgage without guarantors?

R' Mendel said: The son of R' Benzion Pil does not need guarantors. When he has the money, he'll return it.

When R' Dovid Mishulovin, the husband of Sarah Pil, came to the Rebbe for the first time after getting out of Russia, he was approached by Mrs. Shimonovitz who was in tears and wanted to help him in any way possible. She said that she would never forget how, when she was in Samarkand, she was sick and was hospitalized, and my uncle Benzion would bring her food. After he left the room, she found twenty-five rubles under the pillow, which was a large sum.