

# BESURAS HA'GEULA – IN LONDON

REB CHAIM YITZCHOK COHEN OF STAMFORD HILL, LONDON IS A MAN WITH THE WORLD ON HIS SHOULDERS; THE DUTY TO BRING MOSHIACH NOW IS A REALITY TO THIS CHASSID THAT PRESSES ON HIM CONSTANTLY. HE ISN'T PUT OFF BY THE OFTEN RESERVED CHARACTER OF ENGLAND AND ITS INHABITANTS. HE TELLS THE STORY AS IT IS, TRUSTING THE REBBE MH" M COMPLETELY WHEN HE SAID THE WORLD IS READY.

In the course of interviewing Reb Chaim Yitzchok Cohen, he insisted, "I'm nothing special. I'm just a simple soldier of the Rebbe MH" M *shlita*. And like every other Jew in the world, I was appointed by the Rebbe, in the *sicha* of Chayei Sara 5752, as an emissary to bring about the *hisgalus*. All my accomplishments were achieved only through the miraculous power of the *meshaleiach*."

Once, at a meeting about a project Reb Chaim Yitzchok had suggested, somebody said that perhaps it should wait until the following year. It was indeed inspiring to hear Reb Chaim Yitzchok's decisive tone of voice and to see the steely look in his eyes when he responded, "The Rebbe said 'ker a *velt haint!*' (Turn the world upside-down today!) 'Haint' means today,

not next year!

When the Rebbe first announced, "The world is ready," the Chabad community of London, especially in Stamford Hill, internalized the instructions. Rabbi Dovid Nachshon, who received numerous answers from the Rebbe regarding *kabbalas ha'malchus*, recently related how the *askanim* of London showed great interest in all the answers he received. They asked for permission to make copies of the written responses to publicize them. They truly lived with

the Rebbe's instructions. The years of 5753 and 5754 and the singing of "Yechi," which the Rebbe greatly encouraged, intensified the enthusiasm. Nobody was perturbed by what others might say, and they all publicized the good news happily and proudly. Then came Gimmel Tammuz and the situation changed somewhat...

We know that if a situation begins to change, even only a little bit, sooner or later the world perceives the change in a negative light. That's where Reb Chaim Yitzchok comes into the picture.

He was, perhaps, the only one who adopted the following resolution: We will prove to the world that "Moshe is true and his Torah is true," and that nothing has changed. We are in the times of *Geula*, the Rebbe is *chai v'kayam*, and no test will succeed in budging us

from this position. We have *horaos* to follow and a mission to accomplish.

Not only in the present but in the past as well Reb Chaim Yitzchok had taken part in Chabad *askanus* in the city. He is a businessman who somehow makes plenty of time for the Rebbe's work. For example, the English branch of the project Fax-a-Sicha and the immediate distribution of the Rebbe's talks around the world was taken care of by him. He was always the first to report the newest excerpts of the latest *sicha*, especially in the years 5751-5752.

For two years Reb Chaim Yitzchok served as principal of the *mechina* for Lubavitch students. He acquired a reputation as a methodical person and a perfectionist, but mostly as a loyal Chassid who was prepared to take responsibility for the school. For a long period of time, when for various reasons the school's funding was held up, Reb Chaim Yitzchok borrowed money to pay the employees. It wasn't easy, and ever since then, people know him as a determined person with *mesirus nefesh*.

Cohen's unique qualities stood him in good stead when he began, almost alone, to stand in the breach. Today, when he is asked about his first *hafatzas besuras ha'Geula* project, he quickly responds with, "It began with disseminating the book *And He Will Redeem Us*, an anthology of articles published by 770's *chayalei beis Dovid* immediately after Gimmel Tammuz. Reb Chaim Yitzchok was joined by a group of *Anash* who resolved to stand by the Rebbe's final *horaos* regardless of the opposition. By Divine providence the group's resolve was bolstered by a special *shliach* sent to them from Above, none other than the famous *mashpia*, R' Mendel Futerfas, who would stop off in England every year, on his way to 770. At that time, over six years ago, his state of health was quite poor and he felt very weak. He stayed with his son, R' Berel, and was unable to walk to *shul*. A

group of *Anash* was asked to help organize a *minyan* at his son's house. Naturally, they all absorbed the fiery atmosphere that emanated from R' Mendel's simple faith in all matters pertaining to the dissemination of *besuras ha'Geula v'ha'goel*.

R' Mendel, of course, didn't suffer from any doubts on this topic! Proclaiming "Yechi" at this *minyan* wasn't just routine; it was said powerfully and freely. In fact, says Reb Chaim Yitzchok, that *minyan's* "Yechi" was the progenitor of the Beis Moshiach Center and its present activities.

The *minyan* with R' Mendel was truly special. The house constantly reverberated with *farbrengens* and Chassidic stories. It was in the four cubits of this true Chassid that the core group of Chabad *akshanim* (stubborn

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Reb Chaim Yitzchok Cohen

ones)

came together.

Reb Chaim Yitzchok and his family had been closely connected to R' Mendel even years before. The connection was particularly strengthened during this difficult time, during which R' Mendel did not cease demanding that the Rebbe's *horaos* be fulfilled. Reb Chaim Yitzchok had a special relationship with his son, Eli, who attended to R' Mendel at the end of his life.

R' Mendel passed away on 4 Tammuz 5755. The *minyan* ended at the son's house, and it was decided to continue the *Minyan* elsewhere. "A distinguished member of *Anash*, Reb Chaim Chwatu Nemni, *a'h* passed away. He had been a *mekurav* of Chabad in Tunisia. His wife Esther agreed, *l'ilui nishmas* her husband, to divide the ground floor of her home for our *minyan*, which had continuously studied Torah in that room throughout the duration of his illness. "Their son, Reb Shimon Nemni, whose home is next to the home of his parents, was among the first members of the group who continued to display his belief in



At the European Moshiach Congress



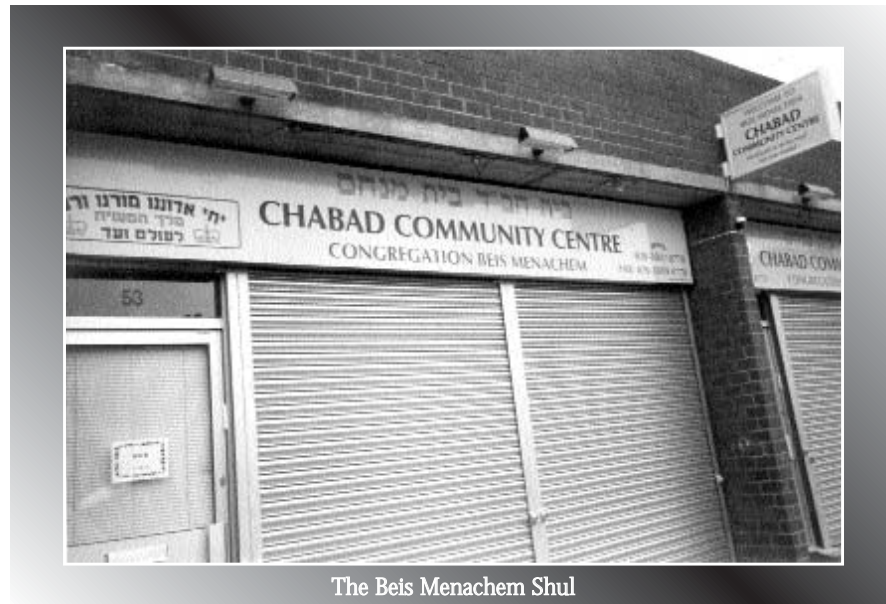
the seventh generation. To this very day, he is an active participant at the *minyán*. *Baruch Hashem*, we try to withstand all the tests, the main thing being that we see the Rebbe's *hisgalus* already."

Reb Chaim Yitzchok named a few other dedicated individuals. One of them is Rabbi Gershon Tzvi (Herschel) Gluck, a *rav* in a local shul in North London, who was appointed as the Rebbe's emissary and representative to a number of European countries. (He inherited this role from his father, the unforgettable *shliach*, R' Avrohom Yitzchok Gluck, *a'h*). He is greatly involved in disseminating the *besuras ha'Geula* in London, thanks especially to his strong ties with *rabbanim* and well-known *talmidei chachomim*. The *rav* of the *minyán* is Rabbi Daniel Kahn, who is very articulate and an eminent *talmid chochom* and distinguished Chabad Chassid who specially enjoys explaining the *Dvar Malchus* to English speakers. Among the other members of the shul include Rabbi Dovid Partouche who is an active *shliach* to the Islands in the Pacific, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Liberow, Rabbi Muli Liberow, and Rabbi Yechezkel Moses.

The "old Beis Moshiach," as they called the former *minyán*, moved to Mrs. Nemni's house. It was always crowded, but the group quickly became a very active force.

Activists would go out on *mitzvaim* every so often in a *mitzva tank* R' Chaim Yitzchok had bought. Cohen organized the *farbrengens*, bringing in well-known *mashpiim*, such as Rabbi Sholom Mendel Simpson, Rabbi Yigal Pizem, Rabbi Sholom Ber Kalmanson, Rabbi Sholom Jacobson, Rabbi Dovid Nachshon, Rabbi Zushe Silberstein among others. Not all the *mashpiim* made it to London, though. Some of them *farbrenged* via speakerphone! The *farbrengens* took place in Reb Chaim Yitzchok's house, and about fifty or sixty people attended.

Says Reb Chaim Yitzchok: "The



The Beis Menachem Shul

Rebbe's words, '*ker a velt haint*,' constantly guide us. They don't allow us to rest, which is why we constantly look for new ways to expand, grow, instill *emuna* in the Rebbe MH"M, and bring about the *hisgalus*.

"We realized that with *davening* in one place and *farbrengens* someplace else, with neither place having room for more than a few dozen people – we just couldn't continue! We knew we had to acquire a large building for our activities. We began our search, and this past Elul, 5760, we finally found a building that met our needs. It consisted of two connected stores and was suitable in size and location (it was in the center of the district, on the main street of the Chassidic area, which also has a commercial section). The price though, was way beyond us."

We already mentioned that Reb Chaim Yitzchok is a man who operates *l'chatchile aribber*. When he heard the amount of rent that was being asked for, he wrote to the Rebbe and asked for a *bracha*. When he got the Rebbe's approbation he went ahead to close the deal. How would he pay for the rent, renovations, construction, and maintenance? He didn't know. But there was one thing he did know – with the Rebbe's *bracha* he would certainly

succeed. He planned on having a large *minyán* for Rosh HaShana, which was fast approaching, and that is exactly what happened: "The building was in a shambles after two and a half years of neglect. I knew that turning the place into something nice for the *Yomim Nora'im* would necessitate a huge outlay of money. The first thing I realized is that I could get short term cash through my credit card. In England you can get a cash loan of \$15,000 via a credit card, but the loan must be returned within a month.

"When I saw that the credit card was the only solution, I went to the bank and borrowed the full amount. I used it to pay the costs of renovations, the salaries of the workers and all the things we needed to set up the place. I wondered where on earth I get that amount of money within a month.

"Two weeks went by and I still had no idea where to begin. At exactly that point, the manager of my bank, a gentile, asked me for a favor. I did it, and when I told him I had done it, the Rebbe suddenly put a thought into my head. I said, "You know, I also need a favor..."

"The manager said, "Gladly. What can I do for you?" I described the

invaluable function of the Beis Moshiach Center until he began getting enthused about the project, and then I said I needed a small loan. When he asked me how much, I didn't know how much to say. I didn't want to ask for less than I needed, but I didn't want to exaggerate either. I finally told him \$25,000. When he wanted to know for how long I would need the loan, I asked him how long he would let me have it. Incredibly, he offered the loan to Beis Moshiach for three years!

"What happened next was no less miraculous. I admitted that I didn't have anything to offer as a guarantee, as the building was only rented. "Your good name is guarantee enough for me," he said. It was really an open miracle. At the time, Beis Moshiach's account was almost inoperative, and there was no logical reason for him to approve such a large loan on such easy terms – but that's the *ko'ach* of the *meshaleiach*.

"We had miracles when we bought furniture, too. When I looked into purchasing tables and chairs to sit was a hundred people, I learned that in a city near London there was a man who had just such a set.

"I went to see the merchandise and it was most satisfactory. There were thirty-five tables with marble tops, and one hundred matching chairs. I and asked him the price, explaining that Beis Moshiach is a non-profit organization. He told me the price was \$20,000, since the tax alone for the imported marble cost \$7,000, and that didn't include the cost of the wood, the upholstery, and the assembly.

"Nu, what could I do? I pictured the Rebbe's face and asked him in my mind, 'Rebbe! What do you want me to do? 'Please let what I say now be effective!'

"Then I turned to the seller and said, 'I feel like a thirsty man in the desert who is offered gold and diamonds.' He seemed moved, and asked me in a softer tone, 'How much are you prepared to offer?' I said, 'I'm embarrassed to tell you the price I can pay.' We concluded that I would call him the next day.

"Meanwhile, I called a moving company to find out how much it would cost to move the furniture set. The next day I had my secretary call the store with my offer. 'Are you sure that's the amount you want to offer?' the

secretary of the store asked in surprise.

"The seller was even more shocked. 'You're kidding,' was his first reaction. 'Six hundred dollars for the whole thing?!

"My secretary explained that the cost of the moving truck was \$700, so we couldn't offer any more than we did. The seller thought for a moment and then said, 'you know what? I like Rabbi Chaim Yitzchok. If he agrees to pay \$1200 for the set, I'll bring it over myself.'

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Only five months had passed since Beis Moshiach opened, and it had already established a reputation for itself. Hundreds of Polish, Hungarian, Gerrer, Vizhnitzer, Belzer, Bobover, and Satmar Chassidim, as well as others, regularly visit the center. Some come by every evening, or even for all the *t'fillos*. Of course, no visit ends without learning *inyanei Moshiach* and *Geula*, or watching a video of the Rebbe.

In addition to Reb Chaim Yitzchok's Chassidic qualities, he is a true English gentleman, being wonderfully organized and efficient. That's why there's a coffee and tea area that looks



A mitzva tank parade in London



like it will never run out of milk or sugar in a corner of the large room. There is also a huge library that attracts many readers. It's simply a pleasure to be there.

Reb Chaim Yitzchok set up a video viewing area with a number of screens. In the evening, all good spots are taken. As soon as *Maariv* is over, the video is turned on and many people stay to watch.

"For Yud-Tes Kislev we showed a Yud-Tes Kislev *farbrengen* which lasted for hours, but even after it was over people refused to leave. Instead, they asked for more videos. When it was nearly morning and I had to prepare for the daily 7:00 a.m. *Shacharis minyan*, I gently reminded them of the time by quoting the *Mishna*, "*Rabboseinu, higia z'man...*" (The entire quote: "*Rabboseinu*, the time has come for the recital of the morning *Sh'ma*.") Still watching, they said, "Yeah, we know, *higia z'man Geulas'chem!*" When they realized I was hinting at the late hour, they said, "Nu, what's the problem? Just leave us the key and we'll lock up!"

#### How many Satmar Chassidim accept what you teach?

"I won't tell you they're immediately transformed into ardent Lubavitchers, but they do begin to understand what we're about. Many of them come in order to make fun, but after a brief conversation they actually become ashamed of their ignorance in *inyanei Moshiach* and *Geula*. Some of them can quote entire tractates of *Shas* by heart, but don't know anything about Moshiach.

"The main thing is that they drop their negativity. Many of them even express their admiration for our courage and strength in standing up for the truth.

"We have connections with people from many different backgrounds, with all the different Chassidic groups, but since you mention Satmar, I'll tell you an interesting story that happened to



me.

"A certain Satmar Chassid met me on the street a few years ago and asked me, "Nu, so what's happening? Are there any candidates?" I looked at him and said emphatically, 'We have only one Rebbe and he is *Melech HaMoshiach* and he is *chai v'kayam*.' He smiled and went on his way. Subsequently, whenever we would meet he would make some sort of pointed remark. This went on for a while until a few months ago when he met me again and said he wanted to tell me something important. He told me had attended a Satmar wedding in the United States, in the midst of which a group of Lubavitcher Chassidim had suddenly appeared and began "making *lebedig*." They danced and danced and infected everybody else with their enthusiasm. 'I'm telling you, I know what Chassidim looks like without a Rebbe. There's nothing. It's over. But with those dancing Lubavitchers I saw true *chayus*. I saw how it's all *chai v'kayam* like before. There's no denying it. I spoke with one of them and I must tell you, I am jealous of your *emuna*, and if you need anything you can always come to me.'

"Those are the Satmar Chassid's words, not mine. By their very nature, people seek to be connected to the

truth, and they know how to identify the truth. At the end of that conversation with him, I suggested he subscribe to *Beis Moshiach* magazine. He readily agreed and now he looks forward to each new issue.

"I sensed the same receptiveness after the European Moshiach Congress, which was aimed, to a large degree, at the same type of crowd. I never dreamed how great an impact it would have and to what extent people would accept things. Right after the Congress I received a call from a local rabbi who asked to meet with me. He gave me a nice-sized check and promised to give more in the future. He said he was proud to be a soldier on the Rebbe MH"Ms frontlines. Moreover, people tell me: 'Your Congress gave *chayus* not only to us, but also to Lubavitchers... The fact is that since the Congress they've been more active.' Nu, *baruch Hashem!*

"I'll give you another example of how 'outsiders' accept the *besuras ha'Geula* when it is said in a forthright manner. Every Simchas Torah we order the special flags distributed in New York by Zev Cadaner. Do you have any idea what great a demand there is for those flags? All sorts of Chassidim come and beg for 'just one flag.' I remember how, after the first year, we had to

increase our order many times over, simply so that our *shul* would also have flags!

"What really helps tremendously in all this is the Rebbe's *brachos* through the *Igros Kodesh*. Many people come to the Beis Moshiach Center in order to write to the Rebbe. When I saw how interested people were in this, I decided to organize it. I printed papers that say, '*Pidyon Nefesh C'K Admur Melech HaMoshiach*' and built a special writing area. Some people ask for assistance in their writing, but the experienced ones just come in, take a paper and begin writing."

#### What are Beis Moshiach's regular, ongoing activities?

"We have a mitzva tank which we use to spread the *besuras ha'Geula* throughout London. We go out twice a week with a group of two or three *tankistim*, park the tank, and talk with Jews, put *t'fillin* on them, and of course, publicize the Rebbe's prophecy.

"People are constantly coming in to hear more about Moshiach. Many of them also write to the Rebbe. Just recently we put *t'fillin* on an old man who told us that this was the first time he put on *t'fillin* since his *bar mitzva*. He told me about a certain problem he had and I suggested he write to the Rebbe. He left very encouraged by the answer

he got.

"The inside and outside of the tank have Moshiach messages. The books and material we distribute are about Moshiach. The loudspeakers play Moshiach songs, and every so often the music stops for a short announcement: 'Chabad's mitzva tank, which is leading the world to immediate Redemption.' When you see people's warm reaction, you really see what the Rebbe means when he says the world is ready.

"On Sukkos, a few years ago, a Belzer Chassid came to my house to ask me for some help in an important matter. He told me that his father-in-law was in the hospital, very sick, and wanted desperately to eat in a *sukka*. He asked whether we could take the tank to the hospital.

"Of course, I happily agreed. We drove over and helped the man down to the *sukka*. He was thrilled. He said the *brachos*, ate something, and then went back to his room. He died that night. Eating in a *sukka* was one of the last *mitzvos* he did..."

"We also produce a weekly booklet which we distribute throughout London. It's an attractive paper consisting of thirty pages on Moshiach, stories about *Igros Kodesh* miracles, and more. Much of it is taken from articles in *Beis Moshiach* magazine, especially



Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Ginsberg's heartwarming articles.

"At first we sent the booklet to sixty or seventy subscribers. Now that number has tripled. Many subscribers are teachers, so the material becomes part of the school's curriculum.

"There's a wealthy businessman who is a close friend of mine. At first we would only speak business, but now he's a subscriber to the booklet, and he doesn't stop thanking me for the articles and stories.

"In many ways we made history in London. On Sukkos for example, with our Simchas Beis HaShoeiva in the street. London had never had anything like it before, and it became quite an event. People from all walks of life came to dance and rejoice."

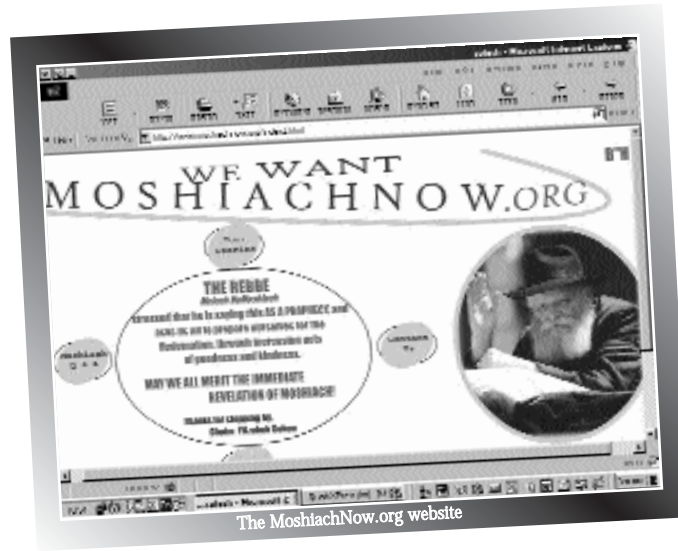
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Reb Chaim Yitzchok Cohen is very familiar with the power of advertising, as is apparent in everything he does. Even the walls of his office at work are full of signs and stickers about Moshiach, which draw people's attention. A few years ago he put up a billboard which was directed at gentiles, too. The billboard had a picture of the Rebbe and said that we should all prepare for *Geula* with more acts of goodness and kindness. The billboard drew a tremendous amount of attention and the media asked him for more information. He keeps in touch with all the journalists he meets and sends them material. He makes sure the topic is covered regularly. He has learned that even gentile journalists find the topic interesting and are happy to publicize it. In this also, he sees the world's readiness for *Geula*.

Reb Chaim Yitzchok relates: "I received a phone call from a senior journalist who asked to interview me about Moshiach. When asked why he picked Reb Chaim Yitzchok, he answered, 'I was told by the editors that when it comes to Redemption and Moshiach I should contact your center.'

Reb Chaim Yitzchok also relates, “On Chanuka we put up a large *menora* at the City Hall. Rabbi Herschel Gluck and I were standing there when a woman came up to us and said she had recently given birth to a boy, and she was so moved by the sight of the *menora* that she decided to circumcise him. Naturally the *bris mila* took place in Beis Moshiach. It was a tremendous *simcha*.”

Beis Moshiach of London has a website [www.MoshiachNow.org](http://www.MoshiachNow.org) which provides an interactive question and answer forum. Reb Chaim Yitzchok devotes a lot of time to answering questions: “It’s not a time to be complacent – we have work to do. We must bring the *hisgalus*. We mustn’t sleep during the final moments before ‘candle lighting.’”



The MoshiachNow.org website

Chaim Yitzchok’s future plans consist of turning London into the frontline of Europe. The first European Moshiach Congress he organized this year was just the beginning. The goal is for *shluchim* and *Anash* in Europe to help each other in everything connected with *hafatzas besuras ha’Geula*.

“The plan is for all new Moshiach material to come to London and from there to all of Europe. The same goes for lectures – we’ll bring in *mashpim* and *shluchim*, and from here they’ll travel to other countries. Just a few weeks ago we brought Rabbi Yitzchok Springer from Crown Heights and Rabbi S.Z. Lieberow of Flatbush. They *farbrenge*d with *Anash* over Shabbos, and we could see how ‘words that emanate from the heart, penetrate the heart.’ I’d like lecturers to travel all over Europe – to Holland, Belgium, France, and Spain.

“Soon, with the Rebbe’s *hisgalus*, we will see the results of our work. The Rebbe will find Europe standing ready!”