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TO KNOW G-D: IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO BELIEVE

LIKKUTEI SICHOS, VOL. 26, PG. 114-123
TRANSLATED BY BORUCH MERKUR



[Continued from last week]

3. We may assert that it is the Zohar that is Rambam's source

(that the Mitzva of Belief in the Divine entails: a) not only the general knowledge that "the Deity exists," but also the details regarding the completeness of G-d's existence; and b) that this itself must be in a manner of **"to know"** – notwithstanding the fact that the verse states only, "I am the L-rd, your G-d").

[FN 20: Indeed, it is known that Rambam derives many laws from the Zohar. See *The Rambam and the Zohar* (Sinai, Vol. 32-34) by Rabbi Margalios for elaboration on this topic.] This is the text of the Zohar [from which the Rambam derives the above laws]: "You shall know that I am the L-rd, your G-d, etc." [VaEira 6:7]. This Commandment precedes all other Commandments...to know Him, the Holy One Blessed Be He...that there is a Supernal Ruler Who is the Master of the world, Who created all the worlds, heaven, earth, and all their hosts" [Zohar II (Raaya Mehemna) 25a].

The wording of Rambam in his first law, in terms of content, is the [same as that] of the Zohar: "The foundation of the foundations and the pillar of wisdoms ("This Commandment precedes all other Commandments") is **to know** that there is a primordial Being (**"to know Him**, the Holy One Blessed Be He") and that He is the cause of the existence of **all** that exists, and all the existents **of the heaven and the earth and that which is between them**, etc." ("Who created **all** the worlds, **heaven, earth, and all their hosts**"). The same is true regarding the wording of the Rambam (in Law 5): "This Being is the G-d of the world, Master of all the earth" parallels the wording of the Zohar,

"that there is a Supernal Ruler Who is the Master of the world."

From this passage in the Zohar, the Rambam derives that "This Commandment" is connected with knowledge, **"You shall know...to know**," and that it is not sufficient to have a general knowledge "that the Deity exists," but we must know details regarding His existence, may He be blessed (from which we understand that "His existence is more primordial and more complete, etc."). [FN 24: However, with respect to the knowledge that "Havaya is HaElokim" (the Mitzva of the **Unity** of G-d), this knowledge is "in general...in a general manner (Zohar ibid).]

Although the Zohar brings the verse, "You shall know that I am the L-rd, your G-d" [VaEira 6:7], as support (and not the verse, "I am the L-rd, your G-d" [Yisro 20:2, which Rambam brings, thereby seemingly detracting from this parallelism]), that is simply [explained on the basis of the particular context in which the passage appears in the Zohar]. Namely, the Zohar speaks about how Moshe Rabbeinu taught the Jewish people about the knowledge of G-d before the exodus from Egypt (in order that the Jewish people would believe "in all those miracles and acts of might that He wrought on Egypt" [see *Nitzuztei Oros LaZohar*, ibid]). Thus, the verse, "You shall know that I am the L-rd, your G-d," was stated in the context of [events that were transpiring] **then**:

However, **our** obligation to fulfill the Mitzva is (according to the well known words of the Rambam [*Perush HaMishnayos*, Chulin Ch. 7, End]) in virtue of "the Mitzvos of the Holy One Blessed Be He through Moshe Rabbeinu, peace unto him (on Mount Sinai)." Thus, the **Commandant** regarding Belief in the Divine is derived from

the verse, "I am the L-rd, your G-d." Indeed, we find in the **Zohar itself** (in another place [Zohar III (Raaya Mehemna) 256b]): "**The first Commandment is 'I am.'**"

(Of course, the fact that we learn the details regarding the **manner** by which the Mitzva is fulfilled from the verse, "You shall know that I am the L-rd, your G-d" (stated **before** the Giving of the Torah) is not a quandary, because in several places [see FN 30] we find that the concept of "the revelation of a matter" or details of a Mitzva are also derived from before the Giving of the Torah. [FN 31: See, for example, **Rambam**, end of Laws of Circumcision: Circumcision is greater than all the Mitzvos of the Torah, for thirteen covenants were made in its regard (all of which were said **before** the Giving of the Torah), whereas [only] three covenants were made [regarding the other Mitzvos] (all of which were made **after** the Giving of the Torah).]

4. According to all the above we can resolve a seemingly puzzling matter in the Rambam:

In the second chapter of Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, Rambam begins to speak about the Mitzvos of Love of G-d and Fear of Him, and he continues as follows: "What is the path to love Him and fear Him? That one should contemplate His great and wondrous deeds and creations and see in them His incomparable and infinite wisdom. Immediately he loves, etc., to know the great G-d, etc., and he will fear, etc. In accordance with these matters, I elucidate great principles of the acts of the Master of the Worlds, in order that they should be an entranceway for the understanding individual to love G-d."

Thereafter, throughout the course of **three chapters**, Rambam expounds on, "His great and wondrous deeds and creations": one chapter [Chapter 2, Laws 3, end, through 8] about angels (which is a portion of the Description of the Supernal Chariot), and the two subsequent chapters about "the Description of Creation." He then concludes: "At the time when a person contemplates these matters and he recognizes all the creations...it increases love for the Omnipresent, etc., and he will be in awe and fear, etc."

At first glance, it is not understood: It is true that "the path to love Him and fear Him" occurs "At the time when a person contemplates, etc.," but the Rambam is a book of

The law is that one must contemplate "His great and wondrous deeds" and the like. However, the description of "His great and wondrous deeds" does not pertain, at first glance, to the law of the Mitzva of Love of G-d, and hence, not to Seifer Mishneh Torah.

"*halachos halachos*" [i.e., it is strictly a legal work]. How is it appropriate, in *Seifer Mishneh Torah*, [to include] a lengthy discussion of details concerning "His great and wondrous deeds and creations"?

Irrespective of the fact that Rambam's choice of words in *Seifer HaMitzvos* [Positive Commandant 3] suggests that the concept of, "one should contemplate His great and wondrous deeds, etc.," defines (not only a means to prepare for the fulfillment of a Mitzva, but it is) the **act** of the Mitzva of love [of G-d] – that is, the commandment incumbent upon the person, *gavra* (subject), whereas the *cheftza* (object) is "that one should engage in thinking and contemplating His Mitzvos and His Utterances and His Deeds, etc.," following which, "love will result **performe**" –

Nevertheless, this explanation is not sufficient, at first glance, to justify Rambam's inclusion of it – a discussion of **matters** pertaining to the

kind of contemplation that may arouse in a person the *cheftza*, "Love of G-d and Fear of Him" – in his work *Mishneh Torah* (*halachos halachos*). It belongs, rather, in philosophical texts and etc. The **law** is that one must contemplate "His great and wondrous deeds" and the like. However, the **description** of "His great and wondrous deeds" does not pertain, at first glance, to the **law** of the Mitzva of Love [of G-d], and hence, not to *Seifer Mishneh Torah*.

[To be continued be"H]

"Es iz nit do kein farfallen"
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TIMELESS

Beis Moshiach is pleased to present a compilation of short “Rebbe stories” from the bar mitzva t’shura of Shmuel Nagel.

PROFESSOR BRANOVER HOW TO BE MEKAREV RUSSIAN JEWS

The Rebbe once told me in yechidus that the first thing to do for a Russian Jew is find him a job and then you can be mekarev him.

ABOVE TIME

After founding SHAMIR, the Rebbe told me in yechidus to start printing Jewish books translated into Russian. I received a list of specific instructions about this. The Rebbe wanted all the books to be written in a modern style (the Rebbe said “journalistic style”). Only the Siddur and the Chumash were to be written in the old-fashioned formal style so that people would feel that these are holy books. The Rebbe asked that every book be submitted to him before printing.

The first book I submitted to the Rebbe (I don’t remember the title now) was 700 pages long. The next day I was given back the book and I was astounded to see that the Rebbe had reviewed the entire book, from beginning to end. Not only that, but he had written instructions on certain paragraphs, what to print and how. Furthermore, the Rebbe corrected all writing mistakes and also gave instructions about how to translate words like “*neshama*,” “*ruchnius*,” etc., that fell into disuse under communist

rule, to the extent that these words don’t exist in Russian anymore.

The Rebbe continued to edit the books we put out, but before we submitted them we carefully reviewed them ourselves so as to save the Rebbe the job.

IN THE ALLEYWAYS OF YERUSHALAYIM

When the Rebbe told me to build a neighborhood in Yerushalayim for Russian immigrants, he emphasized that the essence was speed, even if it would entail building only fifty apartments.

When I spoke to the city council and the departments that dealt with this, they told me it was impossible since there wasn’t a suitable place at that time for a neighborhood like that. Only after exerting pressure, did they find a neighborhood that they had nearly finished building that contained 52 apartments!

After this amazing offer, other offers came through and things became more complicated. I decided to travel to the Rebbe and present the options to him. I took a map of Yerushalayim and studied the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

When I entered for the yechidus and began to explain the various options, I put my hand into my pocket to take out the map but the Rebbe

motioned that it wasn’t necessary. The Rebbe began to explain to me the various details in each of the options. “If they build in area W, then when the owner will want to go to a kinus at Binyanei HaUma he will have to walk via streets X and Y, which will take him Z minutes. If you build in area A, then when a woman wants to go to B and will walk through streets C and D, it will take her E minutes, etc.” The Rebbe went through each of the options, by heart, without a map.

I couldn’t believe what was taking place, because the Rebbe had never visited Yerushalayim and I visit Yerushalayim about three times a week, but the Rebbe showed greater familiarity than me in all these places which till this day I am unfamiliar with.

RABBI GERSHON MENDEL GARELIK NOTE ON THE WALL

After coming from Eretz Yisroel, where I had learned in the Chabad yeshiva in Lud, I thought I had learned a lot and that my friends and I were on the level of great maskilim. In the first yechidus, the Rebbe said to me, “Did you see the note on the wall with the yeshiva’s s’darim?” and that was the end of the yechidus.

MATTERS OF THIS WORLD

One of the T’mimim was fluent in many maamarim, davened at great length, and was particularly Chassidish in his conduct. One time, when the Rebbe was on his way home, this bachur ran to the Rebbe and said, “Rebbe, why is it all so difficult?”

The Rebbe answered, “You know what it says in *Tanya* – that all matters of this world are hard and evil and the wicked prevail in it.”

WHAT ABOUT CHASSIDUS?

It was after the fast of 17 Tamuz at eleven o'clock at night. I was sitting in the small zal upstairs and writing a letter. One of the T'mimim went to wash his hands for a meal. Suddenly I heard the Rebbe reprimand him, “Washing so late?!”

By the time I realized what was happening, the Rebbe was standing in the doorway of the small zal and he said to me, “Now's the time to write letters? What will happen tomorrow morning with learning Chassidus?”

From then on, the T'mimim were careful about coming to the Chassidus session on time.

R' CHAIM CIMENT

ETERNAL HORAA

As a bachur, I was given instructions from the Rebbe about buying a car (see facsimile):

Regarding your question about buying a car, it is proper [to do so]. It should be a good one, in its external appearance too, but it does not pay to waste money on a new one – on the contrary.

So I bought a second-hand car but a few years after I married, when I was already principal of Yeshivas Achei T'mimim in Boston, I thought the Rebbe had been referring only to when I was a bachur, when I didn't have enough money for a new car. Now that I was a menahel of a yeshiva, I felt I needed a new car and I bought one.

About a month after I bought it, I was in a car accident and the car was

slightly damaged. I repaired it immediately and didn't think about the cause of the accident. Another month went by and I was in another accident in the same place. A car speeding by on my left, hit my left door near the driver's seat where I was sitting. The impact caused the car to turn full circle. The door next to me was smashed and I had to get out through the other door. Baruch Hashem I made it out in one piece, but the new car was ruined.

Right after the accident I reminded myself about what the Rebbe had told me, how it didn't pay to waste money



The P.S. in the Rebbe's letter is about buying a car

on a new car – on the contrary. Since then I don't buy new cars and baruch Hashem everything has been fine.

REBBETZIN CHANA A”H, THE REBBE’S MOTHER

DERLEBEN MOSHIACH

Whenever the Rebbe visited his mother, before he parted he wished her, “*kol tuv*” or “*derleben Moshiach*” (may we live until Moshiach). Even when she was sick, he did not wish her, “*refua shleima*.”

R' BINYAMIN KLEIN KNOWING THOUGHTS

Often, it was readily apparent that the Rebbe knew what I was thinking. For example, in the car when we traveled to the Ohel, when I would think whether to ask the Rebbe a question or not (on the way to the Ohel the Rebbe would learn Rambam or would edit a sicha, maamer, or general letters), the Rebbe would lift his head and ask a question or say something about what I was thinking.

When I noticed this phenomenon a number of times, I was afraid to think because I knew that the Rebbe literally read my thoughts.

THROUGH THE HANHALA

When I came to 770 on 18 Av 1955, at the farbrengen on Shabbos (20 Av), the Rebbe gave me two pieces of cake. He put one in my hand and one he gave through R' Mordechai Mentlik a”h who was part of the hanhala of the yeshiva.

In yechidus, the Rebbe explained that all the *hashpaos* of a Tamim come through the hanhala.

FULL CUP OF WINE

One Shabbos in 5738, between Simchas Torah and Rosh Chodesh Kislev, I poured wine for the Rebbe for Kiddush so that the cup was full but didn't spill over. Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka a”h immediately said, “It is customary for us to pour so that it spills over the sides.”

THE REBBETZIN’S SIDDUR

In the Rebbe's house was a Siddur of the Rebbetzin's that she had gotten from her father, which said on the flyleaf, “May our prayers be accepted.”

THE RIGHT APPROACH TO WRITING TO THE REBBE

*Avrohom Raynitz interviewed four mashpiim and asked them: Who do these answers from the Igros Kodesh apply to? What can we understand on our own from the sichos and when do we need a mashpia's guidance? What if giving a shiur on inyanei Moshiach and Geula disturbs someone? * Part 2 of 2*

DOES YOUR ANSWER OBLIGATE SOMEONE ELSE?

What happens when you write to the Rebbe and you get a clear answer which a mashpia verifies you understood, but the situation doesn't just concern you (for example, registering at a certain yeshiva). Does your answer obligate others?

Rabbi Korf: The Rebbe said more than once, that when two sides are involved, his answer to one does not obligate the other. It happened more than once that the Rebbe gave one side a "yes" and the other side a "no," because for one of them it was good but for the other it wasn't!

In the *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 17, p. 223, the Rebbe writes the hanhala of the Kfar a "general note" that: **My**

answer to whoever writes me personally does not at all obligate the hanhala of the mosad or any organization or hanhala of the Kfar in any way.

So in the case of registering in yeshiva, if the Rebbe tells a talmid to learn in a certain yeshiva, this answer does not obligate the hanhala to accept him! The talmid who received this answer has to do all he can so that the hanhala will want to accept him, but he cannot present his answer from the Rebbe and say they must take him.

Rabbi Lipsker: In 5721, the mashpia Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Kesselman came to the Rebbe for the first time. In yechidus, he suggested that he take American bachurim to learn for a while in Lud, while bachurim from Kfar

Chabad would go to learn in 770. The Rebbe agreed to his suggestion.

After the yechidus, R' Shlomo Chaim began looking for bachurim who would agree to go to Lud. The bachurim who agreed went to the secretary Rabbi Chadakov and told him that the Rebbe had accepted R' Shlomo Chaim's idea and asked whether they could go to Lud.

Rabbi Chadakov said: As talmidim in yeshiva here, you can only be told what to do by the hanhala or directly by the Rebbe by way of the secretariat. If the Rebbe told R' Shlomo Chaim to organize a group of bachurim, that doesn't mean you need to be in that group.

In the end, the hanhala decided who would be in the group, and there were bachurim that the Rebbe himself put on the list. And in the group that went, there wasn't even one bachur from those who told R' Shlomo Chaim directly that they were interested.

Obviously, even if the Rebbe's answer does not obligate others, it should be taken into consideration by the other party. If it's possible to coordinate and enable the other side to fulfill the answer they got from the Rebbe, it's right to do so. I know someone who asked the Rebbe

about a shidduch and after receiving the Rebbe's positive answer, he told the other side and the shidduch went through. The father on the other side was a Chassid, who, despite knowing that the Rebbe's answer didn't obligate him, took it into consideration and decided to go ahead with the shidduch. The shidduch was not finalized though, until both sides received the Rebbe's answer, as is customary.

WHEN SHOULD WE REALIZE THAT WE DON'T UNDERSTAND?

Unlike an answer in the *Igros Kodesh*, when people understand from a sicha that something specific should be done, they see it as a *hooa l'rabbim* (instruction for all), for the sicha was said publicly. Here too one needs to be careful. When can you understand on your own, from a sicha, what needs to be done and when should a mashpia explain what the Rebbe meant?

Rabbi Lipsker: As soon as your understanding of a sicha leads you to practices that contradict halacha, it is obvious that you doesn't understand the sicha! As mentioned

PANELISTS:

RABBI CHAIM SHOLOM DOVBER (BEREL) LIPSKER – Mashpia, Tomchei T'mimim

RABBI SHLOMA MAJESKI – Mashpia, Machon Chana

RABBI PINCHAS (PINYE) KORF – Mashpia, Oholei Torah

RABBI NACHMAN SHAPIRO – Mashpia, Oholei Torah

earlier, the Rebbe himself said: **It is foolish to say that I said, Heaven forbid, to do something against a p'sak din in *Shulchan Aruch*.**

A Chassid who doesn't want to be called a "fool" better speak to those greater than him who will explain what the Rebbe actually meant in his sicha.

Rabbi Shapiro: It sometimes happens that people understand from a sicha that you have to do things a certain way that doesn't go against halacha but doesn't fit with what it says in *Seifer HaMinhagim*, or with horaos of the Rebbe from earlier years, or even with accepted practice by Chassidim.

These situations are also cause for alarm. It's true that it's possible

that at a certain point the Rebbe changed a minhag that Chassidim were accustomed to doing for years, but in such a case everybody would know that the Rebbe changed the custom. So if someone on his own thinks that the Rebbe is saying that a custom should be changed, he cannot rely on his own understanding and must present his thoughts to rabbanim and mashpiim.

Just as you must be careful in "do not diminish," you must also be careful in "do not add." When Chassidim take on certain practices based on allusions in the sichos, even when these practices are not halachically problematic, they are not comparable to Chassidic customs that have been accepted for generations. It ought to be clear that this is a personal practice that is done based on one's personal understanding, and is open to question. Sometimes people forget what the source is for what they are doing and are willing to wage war on a practice that has no basis.

Rabbi Korf: These problems are likely to arise with those people who think they are the only ones



From left to right: Rabbi Majeski, Rabbi Lipsker, Rabbi Shapiro, Rabbi Korf

who understand what the Rebbe meant and when they understand a certain p'shat in a sicha, they immediately run to implement it as they understand it. That wouldn't be so bad if there weren't cases where people understood things wrong and did things contrary to the way Chassidim did it for generations, and even worse, against halacha.

"This Torah will not be exchanged" and it is absolutely forbidden to pasken halachic questions on your own. The only ones who can pasken halacha are practicing rabbanim.

Rabbi Majeski: Halacha has rules and only a rav who knows the rules can pasken. Furthermore, when people needed a halachic decision, the Rebbe always emphasized that they should ask a practicing rav. That means that a person could be a great Torah scholar who even received ordination for rabbanus, but if he doesn't serve as a practicing rabbi, he cannot pasken. Why? Because a practicing rabbi has siyata d'Shmaya. And that, along with the rules that he knows, will enable him to pasken correctly.

Even if you look into *Shulchan Aruch*, you can make a mistake. All the more so if you are learning the sichos that are not written in halachic style and you try to extract halachic conclusions! Certainly, only a practicing rav has the authority to arrive at halachic conclusions from a sicha.

For example, a person who hears the Chazal that mitzvos will be abolished in the future, might understand this literally and conclude that in Yemos HaMoshiach you don't need to do mitzvos, Heaven forbid. A rav who knows how to pasken knows that the Torah never changes and that mitzvos will be observed in the future too. The explanation for this surprising Chazal can be found in the sichos



As soon as your understanding of a sicha leads you to practices that contradict halacha, it is obvious that you doesn't understand the sicha!

--Rabbi Berel Lipsker

where the Rebbe explains that we will continue to do mitzvos but not as "one who is commanded and does," but automatically.

This example illustrates that sometimes, something that seems to be talking about actual practice is referring to a spiritual level while the practice remains the same.

Another example, the Rebbe said that the avodas ha'birurim is over. Does that mean there is no need to do mitzvos any more? Chas v'shalom! Of course, we continue to do the mitzvos, but the mitzvos that we do now are not for the purpose of refining the sparks but for another avoda: to prepare the world

to greet Moshiach.

It's like what it says in *Tanya* – that in Yemos HaMoshiach the fulfillment of mitzvos will not be to refine the sparks but to make supernal unifications. That means that the actual fulfillment of mitzvos remains the same and only the kavana changes. Any rav would know this, but a person who is not a rav is liable to err and think that our practice of mitzvos has changed, Heaven forbid.

Some quote the sicha where the Rebbe says that we are now in the era in which *m'ikar ha'din* (according to the fundamental law), "if they want, they fast; if they want, they don't fast," and derive from this that there is no obligation to refrain from eating on some of the fast days, Heaven forbid. Again, this is a mistake which can only be made by people who have no understanding of basic halachic premises.

"Ikar ha'din" doesn't mean that the din is that way today. Regarding fast days, the *Shulchan Aruch* says that all the fasts must be observed "and one shouldn't make a breach [and not fast]." The commentaries to the *Shulchan Aruch* explain the use of the unusual expression here, "and one shouldn't make a breach." Namely, that this in order to clarify that although *m'ikar ha'din* – i.e. from the din in the Gemara – at certain times, there is no obligation to fast, the Jewish people accepted to fast even in those times when there are no gentile decrees, and nobody has the authority to decide not to fast.

Other commentaries say that even though *m'ikar ha'din*, "if they want, they don't fast" – this is not up to every individual, but has to be a decision made by the Sanhedrin. After learning this, you understand that when the Rebbe says in a sicha that we are in the era in which there is no "g'zeiras ha'malchus," so that

m'ikar ha'din, "if they want, they don't fast," this does not mean that you can stop fasting. Rather, it is emphasizing the inner meaning of the fast, the revelation of Hashem's love for the Jewish people. What more do we need than "maaseh rav" – the Rebbe himself fasted after saying this sicha!

(In *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 18, p. 316, after the Rebbe explains that in our generation the inner significance of the Three Weeks has been revealed as "days of rejoicing" and an expression of Hashem's love for the Jewish people, the Rebbe says that obviously we must keep all the laws of mourning of the Three Weeks, as required by *Shulchan Aruch*. However, we ought to find ways, within the framework of Torah law, to add in simcha during this time period, for example, by making siyumim.)

Those who quote various expressions from the Rebbe suggesting that we are at the start of Yemos HaMoshiach are not permitted to draw halachic conclusions from this. We don't have the tools to establish when Yemos HaMoshiach is here as far as the various testimonies which are said regarding the Messianic Era.

Just to illustrate, it's brought in *Machatzis HaShekel* that the abolishment of fasts depends on the building of the Beis HaMikdash, because the reason for fasting is the churban of the Beis HaMikdash. This means that it's possible to be in Yemos HaMoshiach according to all opinions, even if we witness the resurrection of individual tzaddikim, but as long as the Beis HaMikdash is still not rebuilt, we still must fast!

The sad thing is that there are people who are not practicing rabbanim, and are even utter ignoramuses when it comes to halacha, but they insist on fighting,



When Chassidim take on certain practices based on allusions in the sichos, even when these practices are not halachically problematic, they are not comparable to Chassidic customs that have been accepted for generations.

--Rabbi Nachman Shapiro

with mesirus nefesh, to support their mistaken halachic notions. They call it "mesirus nefesh for the Rebbe," but it's really a display of arrogance to think that they can make these decisions on their own. As the Rebbe Rashab said, "I didn't know that it's possible to have a frum animal soul, not to mention a Chassidishe one..."

Rabbi Shapiro: In the case where

understanding a sicha leads to undertaking certain activities that cause serious disturbance to other people, or cause them to infringe on other people's activities, they must stop and ask a mashpia if they understood the sicha correctly or not.

AHAVAS YISROEL VS. EXPLICIT HORAOS

What should a Chassid do when he wants to have a shiur in inyanei Moshiach and Geula in shul and other people oppose it. Should he conclude that he didn't understand the Rebbe's sicha about the direct way to bringing the Geula is through learning about Geula?

Rabbi Korf: I don't believe there are people who prevent others from having shiurim in inyanei Moshiach and Geula. If I was giving a shiur in inyanei Moshiach and Geula and people said it disturbed them, I would immediately leave that shul! A Lubavitcher shul that doesn't allow people to study the Rebbe's sichos? Whoever heard of such a thing?

I can understand that if I speak about my feelings and I'm asked to refrain. As long as it isn't a sicha, even if it's what I understood from the Rebbe, I won't speak about it if it bothers other people. But if it's the Rebbe's sichos and an explicit directive from the Rebbe to learn inyanei Moshiach and Geula, anyone who asks you not to give the shiur is actually saying he doesn't care about what the Rebbe said. I would not hold in esteem what such a person thought and would not give up or give in regarding a shiur in inyanei Moshiach and Geula in a Lubavitcher shul!

Rabbi Majeski: Even if it's about saying "Yechi" after davening – and there's no sicha about the need to do that – since the Rebbe encouraged the singing of "Yechi"

(and for such a long period of time), anyone who says that the fact that the Rebbe encouraged it is no proof that the Rebbe agreed with it is in denial!

Obviously, even in such a case you have to look for ways to avoid arguments. In my experience, when you look for ways to resolve something peacefully you can continue to give the shiur and say “Yechi” and it doesn’t bother anyone.

As far as saying “Yechi” on other occasions like after Krias HaTorah or at the end of a shiur, this is based on the sicha of 28 Nissan 5751 in which the Rebbe complained bitterly about the fact that ten people gathered and did not demand the Geula. Nothing special had happened, it was just Maariv, but the Rebbe maintains that an “ordinary” Maariv needs to be used for inyanei Moshiach.

All special gatherings should be used as a hisorerus for inyanei Moshiach, so many Chassidim proclaim “Yechi” at kinusim, etc. This proclamation of “Yechi” is not a clear directive from the Rebbe, because you can talk about inyanei Geula and Moshiach without saying “Yechi.” So if saying “Yechi” causes arguments and disunity, it’s worth foregoing it and sticking to inyanei Moshiach and Geula.

In general, we ought to behave as the early Chassidim did when hafatzas Toras HaChassidus encountered serious opposition. They continued to disseminate Chassidus while trying with all their might to refrain from arguing.

However, when we’re talking about things that are in the category of explicit directives, if they bother someone you have to look a little deeper. Some people are very confident about their understanding of the sichos and when they



It’s possible to be in Yemos HaMoshiach according to all opinions, even if we witness the resurrection of individual tzaddikim, but as long as the Beis HaMikdash is still not rebuilt, we still must fast!

--Rabbi Shloma Majeski

conclude that the Rebbe wants them to behave in a certain way they aren’t willing to think twice: maybe there’s something they missed...

So whenever a certain activity engenders opposition by Chassidim, you need to listen to their complaints and open up the sichos again and clarify the inyan with your mashpia, in order to be sure you are doing the right thing.

CONFLICT AT THE CHABAD HOUSE

What should a Chassid at a Chabad house do when the shliach asks him not to talk about certain things since he thinks his mekuravim will be turned off?

Rabbi Shapiro: There are many topics that the Rebbe feels very strongly about, but unfortunately it takes a long time for mekuravim in far-off places to get it. I’m not just talking about Moshiach. With all of the Rebbe’s mivtzaim, the bachurim were the first to carry them out, but Anash who lived far from 770 took time to get it. After all, they weren’t here in 770, they didn’t attend the farbrengen, and they didn’t experience the Rebbe’s fervor. So it takes them longer. Also with Moshiach, there are still some people till this day who have a hard time conveying the Besuras HaGeula to their mekuravim.

When a Chassid is a guest in a Chabad house, he must remember that when it comes to publicizing the identity of Moshiach, the Rebbe said, “it depends on Chabad at that location” or “a judge [can rule] based only on what he sees.” So one should take the shliach’s opinion into consideration because he knows his mekuravim better than anyone else.

Rabbi Korf: If a shliach would invite me to farbreng with his mekuravim on condition that I don’t speak about inyanei Moshiach, I would tell him: Thanks, but no thanks.

But if it’s not a Chabad shul but religious people, and certainly if it’s nonobservant Jews, you have to use your brains. You can always find a way to talk about inyanei Geula and Moshiach to meet the needs of your audience.

I heard about a certain lecturer who was asked to speak at a school

on condition that he didn't speak about inyanei Moshiach and Geula. He went to the school, and in the middle of his speech took out a picture of the Rebbe and asked whether anybody recognized the man in the picture. One of the students got up and said it was Moshiach. Naturally, this led to a nice discussion about Moshiach.

Rabbi Shapiro: A few years ago, I went to a Litvishe shul in Flatbush on Acharon shel Pesach. When I asked who the gabbai is in order to arrange when to speak, one of the people got up and said: You can speak here on condition that you don't speak about Geula.

When I started speaking, that man stood next to me to make sure I didn't, G-d forbid, say anything about Geula. I reviewed a deep Nigleh sicha, and after a long time in which this man was engrossed in the sicha, I began to speak about the significance of Acharon shel Pesach and the connection to Moshiach.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the man listening. In the meantime, a big crowd had gathered for Maariv and it turned out that the part of the speech about Moshiach was heard by everybody who came to shul. When I finished speaking, the man came over to me to thank me and even asked whether I would make Kiddush there with them.

Rabbi Korf: That's also a way of handling it. I haven't yet spoken in a shul where the people didn't want to hear a word about Moshiach. It's one of the principles of our faith!

Rabbi Lipsker: In the summer of 5751, a Lubavitcher went to a shul on Ocean Parkway and asked the rav permission to speak about the need to prepare for Moshiach's coming. The rav said to him: Moshiach? That's an angel who will come down from heaven. What do you have to prepare for?



I haven't yet spoken in a shul where the people didn't want to hear a word about Moshiach. It's one of the principles of our faith!

--Rabbi Pinye Korf

The Lubavitcher said: With all due respect, in the Rambam it says otherwise. The rav was a serious person and when he heard that his understanding was different than the Rambam's he wanted to learn the halachos in the Rambam.

After the davening, the rav got up and said he wanted to speak. He taught the Rambam and then said: After we see that Moshiach is a human being who does these things, who can it be?

And one of the people present said: the Lubavitcher Rebbe!

Rabbi Majeski: Sometimes we forget that the same Rebbe who said that learning inyanei Moshiach and Geula hastens the Geula is the

Rebbe who spoke sharply against machlokes and often said that we can hasten the Geula with achdus. So when fulfilling a horaa in the inyan of Moshiach causes dissent, we have to examine our motives: Are we doing it because we live with the horaos of the Rebbe in inyanei Geula or because we disparage the Rebbe's horaos about achdus and Ahavas Yisroel.

So too with regard to the question about whether something turns people off from Chabad: The same Rebbe who said we should publicize the Besuras HaGeula is the Rebbe who told us not to publicize certain things when they can turn Jews off to Chabad. When it came to publishing something, the Rebbe often said the presentation should be changed or whole topics should be deleted so as not to cause certain Jews to be turned off.

Therefore, along with knowing that the world is ready to accept inyanei Moshiach and Geula and that we need to publicize it, we can't have the approach of not caring whether people are turned off or not. The Besuras HaGeula and the Goel must be publicized in all its details and at the same time, we must make every effort to ensure that people are receptive to our message.

In conclusion, we must strengthen our hiskashrus to the Rebbe Adoneinu Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach by learning his teachings and fulfilling his horaos, with an emphasis on everything being permeated with inyanei Geula. We need to connect other Jews to the Rebbe through spreading the Besuras HaGeula and all the mitzvaim with Ahavas Yisroel. And all this will lead us to the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH"m now!

Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach Lolam Va'ed!

THE REBBE SETS THE DATE

HEARD AND TRANSCRIBED BY L. MAGEN

That night wasn't just any night. It was Yud-Tes Kislev, when I went to my computer to check whether the results had come in.

Cheshvan is the month when you unpack the spiritual treasures you amassed during Tishrei with the Rebbe. My husband and I sat down to write to the Rebbe to thank him for everything, for a wonderful month. We were a young couple, married less than a year and unconcerned about any addition to our twosome. We put the letter into volume 8 of the *Igros Kodesh* and opened to page 193.

In the first letter on the page, the Rebbe was asking for another shiur in Chassidus. (Only later did I notice that the entire second letter was a bracha and advice for children, which included adding a shiur in Chassidus.)

We thought of ways to add a Chassidus shiur. My husband is very busy and each evening is packed with shiurim and activities. It didn't seem possible to add another shiur, but I insisted. If the Rebbe said so, we could do it; we just had to see when and how.

In the end, we arranged a shiur with a group of religious-Zionist bachurim who wanted to learn *Tanya*. My husband began to learn with them and this was in addition to a very new shiur that took place in our home, with someone interested in Chassidus.

A short time later, I went for a blood test to verify a suspicion that the Rebbe's bracha had come true. I waited to receive the test results via an Internet site used by my health care provider.

That evening wasn't just any

evening. It was Yud-Tes Kislev, the Chag HaChagim. The man who came to learn was farbrenging with my husband and I went over to the computer to check to see if the results had come in. On my first attempt, I didn't see the results. My husband, who was very curious, tried through hints to query me about the results. I motioned "no" to mean that there was no answer yet but he understood it to mean that the result was negative.

I went back to the computer and there was the result! The number I had to check was 770 – what answer could there be for #770 on Yud-Tes Kislev, after such a bracha from the Rebbe?

So I went to a doctor and he

checked the results and he said the numbers were high for this stage of pregnancy. He sent me for an ultrasound test. Knowing the Rebbe's opinion about this test, I didn't follow through, at this point.

As the pregnancy advanced, I had to undergo tests at the hospital. I had no choice but to take an ultrasound and I agreed to do it. The doctor pointed at a tiny, beating dot and said, "That's the heart. Now please call your husband."

My husband came in and the doctor showed him, "Here's one dot which is one heart and here's a second dot, a second heart!"

"Two hearts? What does that mean?"

"Two hearts means two babies," said the doctor.

Then came week 35. Everything was terrific, baruch Hashem. I went for



(for illustration purposes)

a routine monitoring test done on mothers with multiples and the doctor said that Baby A was too small. He said it might not be getting enough nourishment or another problem was possible. I had to be seen by specialists at Ichilov hospital.

The series of tests I did verified the previous doctor's findings. One baby was smaller than the other, which indicated some problem. What do you do? I remained under observation and they wanted me to deliver in four days. After much discussion, I was released to go home and wait.

Back at home, I turned the pages of a calendar to the month of Tamuz and noticed something. I had made a little notation on 20 Tamuz. Ah yes, I remembered. In the first letter that I had written to the Rebbe to announce the pregnancy, and again, when I had told the Rebbe about there being twins, the answer I opened to was in volume 11, p. 262 (where the Rebbe spoke about pregnancy) and the Rebbe wrote: **The letter about the birthday was received on time.** The date of that letter was 20 Tamuz. At the time, I had marked the day on the calendar as my due date. [It was a leap year, L.M.] I was sure the birth would be natural and would take place on 20 Tamuz.

Week 37, I went to the hospital and underwent examinations every other day. Nothing had changed. When 38 weeks had passed, which according to the doctors is considered full-term for multiples, I went to the hospital. The date was 20 Tamuz. In my heart, I knew I had come to give birth because to me, the date in the *Igros Kodesh* was definitely my due date.

I was connected to the monitor to see if labor had begun. Nothing. There wasn't the slightest indication that labor was beginning. In a more thorough examination, the doctor verified the previous findings: there was no indication that birth was imminent. He sent me for some blood tests and when I returned from the lab sent me home.

I left the hospital and felt some

back pains. I wanted to know whether perhaps this was labor. The nurse said, "Just ten minutes ago you were on the monitor!"

More blood tests, and one of them wasn't quite in order. I was not released. In the meantime, I didn't feel well and asked to be put back on the monitor. It was 20 Tamuz after all, the day marked on my calendar.

I was connected to the monitor and lo and behold, labor had begun! The small baby presented head down but the second baby was breech. In such a case, the doctors do a Caesarean section because of the second baby. The doctor explained that if an operation had to be done for the second baby, it

He asked what the Rebbe had said in the letter and I told him, "the body follows the head." The doctor said, "I'm an obstetrician not a psychiatrist!"

didn't pay to deliver the first one naturally.

We consulted with doctors, specialists and a doctor-friend (as the Rebbe suggests), and reported to the Rebbe and asked for advice and a bracha. Rebbe, you've been with us until now, from the very first moment!

The answer we opened to was in volume 9, page 140, where the Rebbe speaks about "the body follows the head," and explains there, "when you have to take someone out of captivity, **you pull him and first raise him up and the head is redeemed**, and following the head, the body goes." Now our final doubt had vanished. No

operation. I knew that the babies would enter the world headfirst despite their current positions. The doctor gave in and agreed to wait for the natural birth of the first baby.

Baby A emerged headfirst, as we expected. Baby B was sideways. The doctor prepared to operate. He asked what the Rebbe had said in the letter and I told him, "the body follows the head." The doctor said, "I'm an obstetrician not a psychiatrist!"

Before operating he tried turning the baby. The baby cooperated and without much effort was on his way out, naturally!

* * *

I am a student at a religious college where I started my studies before I got married. I was sure that now, with twins, the Rebbe would tell me to stop or to take a break. I didn't doubt it for a moment, for how could I manage with twins and a work load from school, projects, internship, etc. Who would run my home?

I wrote to the Rebbe and opened to an amazing answer in volume 16, page 150, which said: **After a long break, I received your letter in which you write about the events of the previous months and weeks since your last letter.**

After all this, my opinion is that you should try very much to finish your course of study so that you will be a recognized teacher or a recognized preschool teacher. Aside from the benefit in and of itself, it will affect your parnasa, for naturally, you earn more if you have finished your schooling and work afterwards as a teacher or preschool teacher than if you stop your schooling in the middle... If you really try, you will surely succeed.

I had my answer!

* * *

I try to publicize my miracle stories wherever possible to increase the emuna in our king, Moshiach, and to get other women to be mekushar to the Rebbe and receive his brachos.

SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES 5766: INTERNATIONAL REGIMES

BY PROF. SHIMON SILMAN, RYAL INSTITUTE AND TOURO COLLEGE

It is now 14 years since the famous sicha in which the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach announced that the era of Swords Into Plowshares – as per Isaiah’s powerful prophecy – had begun with the declaration of heads of state of the major world powers at the U.N. that a new era of arms reduction and international cooperation would begin.

The sicha begins with the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach saying:

“It is well known that everything that happens in the world is through Divine Providence...Yesterday, there was a meeting between the heads of state of some of the major world powers, led by the leaders of the two superpowers. At that meeting they decided upon and announced a new era in international relations – an era when warfare would be abandoned, weapons would be reduced or destroyed, and peace and unity, cooperation and mutual aid would prevail among the nations of the world – for the good of all mankind.”

Cooperation among nations necessitates the development of systems through which the nations can carry out the details of their cooperative efforts. Indeed, this new era of cooperation among the

nations has given rise to such systems called “international regimes.” In this paper we will explain the concept of an international regime and consider some areas of application.

Political scholars have proposed several definitions of international regimes and have attempted to analyze them. One simple definition is that international regimes are “institutions with explicit rules agreed upon by governments, that pertain to particular sets of issues in international relations.”

From the perspective of regulations, there are two kinds of international regimes: those founded on negative regulation and those based on positive regulations. Negative regulations are “all regulations which enable new, larger social and economical interaction by making political boundaries permeable and prevent state-protectionist policies.” Positive regulations can be understood as “all policies that subordinate a social interaction to a collective regulation to prevent the unwanted effects of these interactions.” Basically what this means is that under a regime of negative regulations participating governments have to refrain from doing something, whereas in the

case of positive regulation regimes they are obliged to do something. In general, positive regulations are harder to implement than negative ones. But if the positive regulations are cleverly designed they have a chance of being implemented. The environmental sphere is one such area where this can and has been achieved.

For example, it was recognized long ago that environmental pollution and destruction has a global character. Several nations realized that pollution doesn’t stop at national boundaries and thus couldn’t be managed by national legislation and measures alone. Since the ecological problems had become trans-boundary in character, the reaction had to be of a trans-boundary nature too. Only through multilateral action could the problem be solved. Examples of such a global or continental character of pollution are acid rain, the destruction of the Ozone layer, reduction of bio-diversity, desertification (productive land being reduced to a desert), and the controversial global warming. During the 1990s, several international environmental regimes were enacted and came into force. Examples are the Framework Convention on Climate Change

1992 (later Kyoto Protocol), the Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer 1985, Convention to Combat Desertification 1994, or the Convention on Bio-diversity of 1992.

Although some of these international regimes have not been fully implemented due to a lack of commitment by some nations, there are others which have been more effective in being able to change governmental policies and redirect the interests of nations for the common good, such as the regime to combat the phenomenon of acid rain in Europe caused by trans-boundary air pollution.

In studying the various modes of cooperation – or lack of cooperation – between nations, scholars have identified three kinds of behavioral models based on assumptions made concerning the nature of the nations involved and their motivation. In the first, the power-based model, it is assumed that the relative power between the nations creates obstacles for effective cooperation. The more powerful nations will call the shots. (Power can be militarily or economically based.) International regimes play a minor role in this model. The second, the interest-based model, presupposes that nations are self-interested and their preferences and interests are constant, unaffected by outside institutions. In this case, however, international regimes can help those states to coordinate their behavior in such a way as to avoid outcomes that are bad for everyone. The third model, knowledge-based, focuses on the origin of interests as perceived by states. It views interests as being subjective, the formation of interests being a dynamic process influenced by practices and institutions.

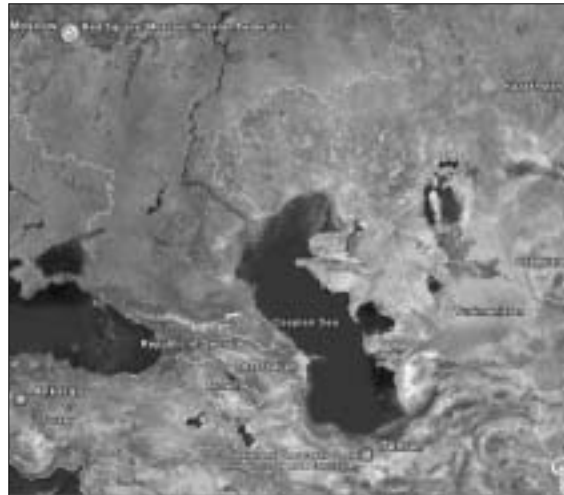
International regimes would be most effective here.

Thus, in order for international regimes to emerge, a change of behavior from the power-based model to a combination of the interest-based and knowledge-based models has to be achieved.

THE CASPIAN SEA

In some cases, the Era of Moshiach itself has given rise to new situations which require international cooperation. One such example is the case of the Caspian Sea which we will now consider.

The Caspian Sea is the largest



inland body of water with a surface area of 436,000 square km. From north to south it extends about 1200 km, and is between 204-566 km wide, east to west. Since the fall of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, there are five nations with shores on the Caspian Sea: the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan.

The sea can be roughly divided into 3 parts with various resources. The northern part has large oil deposits and is also a breeding ground for several fish species. The middle part serves as a source of

brine for chemical production. The southern part has large offshore oil deposits. These are also considerable gas deposits under the sea.

Until the collapse of the Soviet Union the Caspian Sea was bounded by only two states, the USSR and Iran. The extreme imbalance in power between these two countries led to a de facto control of the entire sea by the Soviet Union. The sudden increase from two to five sovereign states on the shores of the sea after the fall of the USSR highlighted the complex nature of issues and problems that transcend international borders under these new conditions. Oil and gas deposits don't adhere to lines on a map, nor do pollutants. And fish don't have a nationality. Thus, the effective cooperation between the nations on the Caspian sea would require an international regime.

* * *

We have given a brief view of the structures that political scholars are working on to implement the new "unity, cooperation and mutual aid among the nations of the world for the good of all mankind." May we immediately see the complete fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah when the nations of the world will come to Melech HaMoshiach for instruction as he says:

*And many nations shall go
[to consult with each other]
and they shall say one to another,
"Let's go up to the mountain of Hashem
to the house of the G-d of Yaakov
and [Melech HaMoshiach] will teach
us of G-d's ways
and we will follow His paths."
For out of Tziyon shall go forth Torah
and the word of Hashem from
Yerushalayim.*

CITY OF REFUGE

RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN CHANIN

*It seemed as though all sicknesses and suffering converged in Tashkent. * The refugees who had fled the Germans were starving and lacking everything, including papers and living permits. They were sick with typhus and other diseases and were candidates for the army and being sent to the front. * R' Chaikel was there to help.*

A NEW PLACE, NEW FRIENDS

After a few months in Tashkent, my father managed to get himself on a firm financial footing and my mother stopped working and devoted herself to others. She found a place for the cheider and secretly began to run it, taking on all the expenses, including paying the teachers. Her home was open to everyone and many refugees were her regular guests. She also prepared food for needy Jews and brought it to their homes. She ended up becoming the unofficial treasurer of Tomchei T'mimim, as I will relate.

Since my father enjoyed unusual success in his business dealings, he got to know key figures in government offices, and the aristocrats and the elite of Tashkent. He had good connections with those in power, especially with the police and N.K.V.D., most of whom were

Uzbeks, locals. They were warm, open, and easily befriended. With Hashem's help, these friendships saved many of Anash during their stay in this city, until the great "smuggling" operation out of Russia.

Among these people was an internist who was a heart specialist. He was famous in Moscow, but after the revolution was exiled from his city, as were many others. He wandered here and there until he came to Tashkent, where he found a good position in the local hospital. As time went by and the directors of the hospital realized that he was a top doctor, he was promoted until he became chief doctor and head of a department.

The friendship with this doctor helped my father help Jews who arrived in Tashkent sick with typhus or other diseases. Many were afraid to go to the hospital because they weren't legal residents of the city. The doctor, after getting a nice gift

from my father, accepted these patients in his home and even gave them medications, which were hard to obtain during wartime and usually reserved for soldiers. The doctor earned more from my father than he earned at the hospital.

RUSSIAN BREAD

When the war intensified and claimed many dead, they began to draft even those with a white card (which signified an exemption). Only the new opinion of a doctor recognized by the government could exempt someone as unfit to serve immediately.

In those days, many of Anash were fit to serve in the army but they avoided the draft or fled from the front and not because of their health. Many of them who had come to Tashkent lived in fear that they would get caught. The military police conducted searches at certain key checkpoints in the city. They also went from house to house to see whether anybody was evading the draft.

If someone was found avoiding being drafted into the army, he was sent to Siberia. And those who had been on the front but had gone AWOL were punished even more severely.

The head doctor, my father's friend, was also the government's official doctor who made the decisions about who would be sent to the front and who would be exempt. My father had convinced him with hefty bribes to help Anash

and give them exemptions for health reasons.

At first, the doctor was afraid and he said that it would endanger not only him and his family, but all of Anash and the T'mimim who would get a fictitious exemption from him. However, my father told him that in the merit of helping Jews, Hashem would protect him from anything untoward and he would also enjoy the fruits of his labor in this world.

The doctor thought it over and after a few days agreed. He was willing to risk the great danger but on condition that they would listen to his instructions. Firstly, he asked that the matter remain top secret; even those who came to him to be examined would not know that it was he who had told them how to prepare for the exam. Secondly, he didn't want any of those being examined to know about the others.

When my father told me how Hashem had helped him release boys from the army he mentioned the names of two Chassidim: R' Zusman Rivkin, who was a tall bachur, good looking and healthy, and Rabbi Yosef Slavin who was also healthy and for whom there was no reason why he should be exempted from the army.

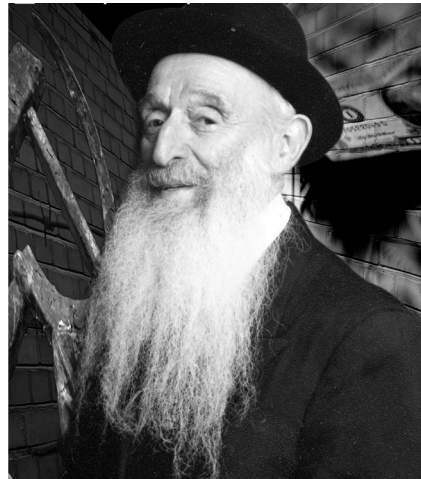
The doctor told my father to tell each one separately to go to the draft office and make an appointment for an exam. Half an hour before the exam they should take *lipshke*, Russian bread, when it was half-baked, and form balls out of it and swallow them whole. When they would be X-rayed it would look like an ulcer and if you had an ulcer you were immediately exempt from the army.

R' Zusia and R' Yosef Chaim were the first to get their exemptions this way and this was a method that saved many others.

MERCY OF A JEWISH POLICEMAN

R' Yisroel Kook, a friend of my father's from Moscow, arrived in Tashkent. He was thirty years old but in order not to be taken to the army and sent to the front he arranged papers that said he was fifty-one. That would make him too old to serve in the army. To support himself he would buy various products on market day and sell them during the rest of the week.

One time, while in the middle of a transaction, the market suddenly filled up with police who were looking for draft evaders. They set



up blockades in every corner to check everybody's papers.

R' Yisroel was fortunate. A Jewish officer approached him, and asked for his papers. The policeman didn't have to examine them for long to see that the papers were forged. R' Yisroel was a tall, strong, and muscular and looked even younger than his real age. He certainly didn't look twenty years older!

The officer looked at him from head to toe and then whispered in Yiddish, "Reb Yid, we are brothers, run away from here as fast as you can. They will arrest you for forged papers!"

R' Yisroel said, "How can I run away and where should I run? I've run enough already and don't have the strength to wander anymore. And anyway, I'm not afraid of them..."

The Jewish policeman pleaded with him, "Reb Yid, have pity, save yourself and run!" But since R' Yisroel didn't answer, he left him alone.

A few days later R' Yisroel was asked to show his papers again but this time he was thrown in jail.

TZITZIS IN JAIL

My father came to the rescue thanks to his good connections. He met with the chief of police, a man who loved money, bribed him, and after "agreeing" that R' Yisroel deserved to be punished, he asked that it be arranged that R' Yisroel remain in jail in Tashkent. The point was that at least this way, his friends and family would be able to be in constant contact with him and could send him food.

My father miraculously managed to convince the police to take R' Yisroel to work at a military factory in Tashkent (where 40,000 people worked), and so it was considered that he worked for the army, i.e. drafted. The judge considered the recommendation of the police and R' Yisroel got only three years in jail.

But R' Yisroel was a stubborn and zealous man who said, "I should go and work for these wicked people?" By way of protest he would wash his tzitzis every day and hang it to dry in the sun in front of everyone. The police were powerless in the face of his chutzpa and left him alone to do as he pleased in jail.

Although at that time, a person's life was worthless and R' Yisroel's crime was severe, my father with

other Lubavitchers were able to bribe the right people and obtain his release.

MY UNCLE ARRIVES AND IS CAUGHT

As I wrote, my grandmother Itta Mera and her son, my uncle R' Refael Nimotin were exiled from Leningrad and settled in Yaroslava. When my parents fled with their family from Leningrad, they asked them to join, but they refused. After a year in which the war intensified, the Nazis shelled and destroyed the city. Hunger prevailed, and they had no choice, so they traveled to Tashkent to join the family.

They lived with my parents until my father found them their own apartment. My uncle married in Tashkent, began to do business, and earned a bit of money. Someone tattled on him that he, Refael Nimotin, had fled from his place of exile and lived with forged papers (because by law he was supposed to remain in Yaroslava). When my uncle saw the earth burning beneath his feet, he left Tashkent and wandered for years until he was caught and sent to a distant city in Siberia.

In that distant place, far from civilization, they did not even allow him to live in a house but in a shed. He was freed after Stalin's death in 1955 when all political prisoners were released. After a few years he was allowed to reunite with his family and return to Leningrad, where he became a shochet and taught many talmidim who continue to shecht until this very day.

Many refugees continued to arrive in Tashkent because of fear of war, cold, and starvation. My father made it a practice to go to the train station every day to see whether he'd find any Lubavitchers or Jews who needed help. He first advised the refugee to remain in Tashkent,

and then would take him home, give him bread to eat, clothes to wear, and revive him. He did all this with all his heart and with simcha (as the Gemara says, the one who **comforts** the poor merits eleven blessings more than if he just gives tz'daka).

My father said that often he had no place to sleep at home and he would sleep in a chair, on the floor, or didn't sleep at all because the house was full of guest-refugees. He

*Half an hour before
the exam they should
take liposhke, Russian
bread, when it was
half-baked, and form
balls out of it and
swallow them whole.
When they would be
X-rayed it would look
like an ulcer and if you
had an ulcer you were
immediately exempt
from the army.*

figured that after all they had gone through, their sleep was more important than his own.

"A FIND" AT THE TRAIN STATION

One day, when my father went to the train station as usual, he found a Jew with three children who looked as though they would breathe their last at any moment. In addition, they were swollen from hunger, they wore rags, and had lice. My father,

shaken up by the look of them, asked the man what his name was and invited them to his home. It turned out that the man was the rav of Krenitz, R' Yisroel Isser Friedman, with two sons (R' Yaakov Moshe a"h and R' Ben-Tzion) and a daughter.

Despite all the suffering they had endured by the Nazis, starvation, and disease, my father recognized by his distinguished face, his behavior, his speech and walk, that this was a refined person.

Their first stop was a bathhouse where my father wanted to alleviate them of the terrible plague of lice. Afterwards, he took them to his home and gave them bread to eat, clothes to wear, and restored them to life. They lived with my father for a few weeks until they regained their strength somewhat and when they found a place to live, they moved out.

I know that Rabbi Yisroel Isser Friedman and his son R' Yaakov Moshe remained good friends of my father. When they met on the street, they always stopped to talk. Their "good morning" was hearty and heartfelt.

R' Yisroel Isser greatly admired my father, and even though he was older, I saw the respect he gave to my father. All those years I didn't know the connection between them until one time, R' Yaakov Moshe told me the story.

A CHASSID'S GRATITUDE

R' Ben-Tzion Friedman told me that when they arrived in Tashkent during the war, he was too little to remember what had happened, but one thing was etched in his memory. While in Tashkent, a package from Tehran came for his father, which had been sent by one of his friends who had fled from the Nazis. The package contained a blanket and shoes, which were valuable items during the war.



My uncle, R' Refael Nimotin

When my father found a siddur hidden in the folds of the blanket,

he was thrilled. The siddur was valuable and for R' Yisroel Isser it was incomparably more precious than the blanket and shoes.

He said to his children: Ah, I will give the siddur to R' Chaikel. I am sure he will enjoy the gift and this way I will be able to express my thanks for what he did for us. Baruch Hashem, he has a blanket and shoes, but I'm not so sure he has a siddur.

R' Ben-Tzion told me that being a child he didn't understand what R' Chaikel had to do with the package they had received, and why the siddur was being given to him. The end of the story was that my father didn't want to accept the siddur as a gift and said he should give it to his children (maybe because it wasn't

Nusach Ari).

When he grew up, they told him what had happened and how my father saved them from dying of hunger. His father once said that a Jew with good middos like my father was a precious commodity, not only today but in those days too.

I must mention that R' Yaakov Moshe was a man of good deeds and did outstanding chesed. He officially worked for the yeshiva but unofficially he lent money and did chesed. Even if he was sure that someone would not repay the loan, he didn't know how to refuse. Words like "no," "I can't," or "I don't have," did not exist for him. May his memory be for a blessing.

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EVERY WOMAN IS A SHLUCHA!

BY RABBI NAFTALI ESTULIN, SHLIACH, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

A most enlightening story about the special strength that the Rebbe has bestowed when he appoints us as his emissaries, and an actual instruction for our times.

When my mother, Mrs. Raizel Estulin, of blessed memory, would tell us the following story, she would become quite emotional, with tears flowing down her cheeks:

At the conclusion of one of her visits to the Rebbe, she had a yechidus just prior to her return to Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe turned to her and asked if she is involved in the Shabbos Candles (Neshek) Campaign.

My mother, of blessed memory, replied that she has not yet had the opportunity since she is still in the midst of her absorption process in Eretz Yisroel, and she lacks the strength of a more permanent resident that is required in order to approach veteran Israelis with such suggestions.

When the Rebbe said that she should nevertheless be involved in the Shabbos Candles Campaign, my mother proceeded to claim, "I don't even know the native language so well, and with the delicate political situation in Eretz Yisroel, when people are persecuting the chareidim

and making such harsh accusations against them, how can I possibly manage without a sufficient grasp of the Hebrew language?"

The Rebbe listened to her words and then responded with the utmost seriousness, "If someone comes to you with complaints, say that you are an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe."

After that yechidus, my mother tried not to miss a single opportunity for Shabbos Candles Campaign activities, not even on Fridays. She felt a unique honor in being the Rebbe's personal emissary, and she would go out every Friday to the Tel HaShomer and Beilenson Hospitals to give Jewish women the privilege of lighting candles.

Until one ordinary Erev Shabbos. My mother was passing from room to room in the hospital, when she came across an embittered middle-aged woman. In her customary manner, my mother suggested to the woman that she light Shabbos candles. However, before my mother could finish her sentence, the

woman poured out all her wrath in a torrent. "You religious people are all bloodsuckers!" she spat, "and you still come to us with complaints..."

My mother, who was not accustomed to such a "welcome," and certainly not in such a place, quickly stepped back. "That's all I need," she thought to herself, "that they should blame me for giving a heart attack to a hospitalized woman."

Then, as she was standing by the entrance to the room, she saw in her mind a vision of the Rebbe in his office, telling her, "If someone comes to you with complaints, say that you are an emissary of the Lubavitcher



Rebbe.”

From the woman’s ranting in a heavy Russian accent, my mother understood that she was a Russian immigrant. She returned to the room, looked directly at the woman, and said, “You should know that I am an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe!”

Then, the unbelievable happened right before her eyes. The woman began to get confused as she mumbled the words, “*Lubavitcher Rebbe. Lubavitcher Rebbe...*” Suddenly, she began to cry in a flood of uncontrollable sobs.

My mother stood in astonishment at this new and unexpected development, and then started to calm the sobbing woman down. Only after several long minutes, in a voice choked with emotion, the woman began to tell her story – or more correctly, her brother’s story:

“We grew up in Russia as a small but respected family – two parents and two children. We didn’t have many friends due to our being Jewish, which caused us to hate and be estranged from it all, which strengthened the connection between my brother and myself. After the death of my parents, the two of us were left – alone. We were each other’s whole life. My brother studied medicine, and was successful in his field. Yet, despite the fact that life went rather smoothly, my brother was not calm. He heard that in the great United States, a doctor can get rich, while in Mother Russia, all of his many degrees would earn him only a few kopeks. While it’s true that compared to others he was making a decent living, it was still a far cry from being wealthy.

“He succeeded in arranging all the necessary documents and emigrated to America. My contact with him was cut off for a number of years, while I emigrated to Eretz

Yisroel.

“One day, I received a letter from him, detailing everything that had happened to him in the ‘*goldene medina*.’ ‘On the airplane,’ he wrote, ‘I still had dreams, but they fizzled out very quickly. When I arrived at the terminal, there was no one waiting for me. I didn’t know where to go. Days passed, and I tried to offer my professional services at a variety of hospitals and health clinics. However, I quickly realized that the degrees I had received in Russia were inadequate for modern medicine, and I would have to pass several more expensive courses.

The Rebbe listened to her words and then responded with the utmost seriousness, “If someone comes to you with complaints, say that you are an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe...”

“My world had become dark. I had no bread to eat, and I lived as an outcast in the street. I had gone from a honorable position with a respectable name to a situation where I was considered of no value. Going back to Russia was simply not a viable option, as Soviet law obligates someone who left the country to give up all his rights of citizenship.

“From day to day, the feeling grew within me to put an end to my life. Once I had finally reached this decision, I proceeded to walk in a daze towards the famous Brooklyn

Bridge, where it was quite easy to jump into the river.

“I still don’t understand how, but just before reaching the bridge, two chassidic young men standing near a t’fillin booth came up to me. I’m not sure how they knew I was Jewish. Maybe it was my nose or something. When I didn’t immediately say ‘no’ to their offer to put on t’fillin, they interpreted it as a ‘yes.’ Before I knew it, my sleeve was being rolled up, and I felt myself muttering the words of the *Sh’ma* after them. I almost didn’t feel what was happening in my body.

“These young men had apparently also just emigrated from Russia, and they began to speak with me in Russian. I had nothing to lose. I asked them to leave me in peace. “Let me put an end to my life already,” I said. They would not leave me alone.

“When they saw that their words were falling on deaf ears, they suggested that just as they ask their Rebbe before making any fateful decisions, I should certainly do the same, adding that the Rebbe himself speaks Russian.

“That night, I had already been accepted into yechidus. It’s very difficult to describe in detail what I went through in yechidus, but just know that when I came out, I was an entirely different person. I understood how foolish I had been. I went in totally broken, and I left full of encouragement. The Rebbe gave me a reason for living and he referred me to people who knew how to help me in my rehabilitation.’

“At the conclusion of the letter, he wrote, ‘Just know and always remember, my dear sister, if today you still have a living flesh-and-blood brother, you have only to thank the Lubavitcher Rebbe.’”

The woman had not stopped

crying as she finished her story, and my mother sat and cried together with her. She then turned to my mother with a request: "Can you please give me the candles that the Rebbe sent me? The very person who saved my brother's life – how can I possibly refuse him?"

* * *

This enlightening story carries a powerful message for each and every one of us:

In the sicha before the 5752 International Shluchim Conference, the Rebbe said that "the leader of the generation appointed each and every member of the generation to be his shliach in the spreading of Torah and Yiddishkeit and in the spreading of the wellsprings outward, until this brings the True and Complete Redemption."

To put it simply, that special strength that the Rebbe gave my mother, when he told her that she is a shlucha of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe gave to each and every one of us.

This strength is a privilege that is

"It's very difficult to describe in detail what I went through in yechidus, but just know that when I came out, I was an entirely different person. I went in totally broken, and I left full of encouragement. In his words, the Rebbe gave me the reason for living."

also a great obligation: to utilize the unique strengths that the Rebbe bestows upon us in order to instill within all our activities the central point of Moshiach, and to do everything to hasten the immediate revelation of the Rebbe MH" M,

mamash now.

At this time, the International Shluchos Conference is taking place, and the announcement of the Redemption must go forth from there to reach all circles within the Jewish People, with an emphasis upon the duty that has been placed upon each and every one of us.

Furthermore, the bestowing of this special strength comes during these days between the 28th of Teives – the birthday of the mother of the King, the Rebbetzin Chana, of blessed memory, regarding whom the Rebbe spoke in the most extraordinary terms, "whose name is Chana, etc., named after the mother of Shmuel, whose prayer concluded with the words, 'And He will give strength to His king and exalt the power of His anointed'" – and the 22nd of Shvat, the day of the histalkus of the wife of the King, the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, of blessed memory, whose devotion to the Rebbe must serve as a lighthouse for all of us to do everything to carry out the will of the Rebbe MH" M.

(dedicated to my mother, Raizel Estulin, of blessed memory, in honor of her yahrtzeit, the 26th of Shvat)

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אגרתא דנחמתא

With much sorrow and pain we join our dear friend, in his mourning and great loss, a dedicated and untiring physician, a coordinator of Crown Heights Hatzalah, someone that is completely dedicated to the Rebbe and the Crown Heights Community.

Dr. Eli Rosen ז"ל

upon the passing of his dear mother

Mrs. Devorah bas Avrohom Rosen ע"ת

May the entire family be comforted amongst the mourners of Zion and Yerushalayim and only know of Simchas in the future until the coming of Moshiach, may it be speedily in our day

**Mr. & Mrs. Leibel Bistritzky
Jerusalem Israel**

**Yingy & Gittie Bistritzky
and family**

**Rabbi & Mrs. Sholom B. Gorodetsky
and family**

**Mony & Adina Bistritzky
and family**

**Mendy & Feige Gorodetsky
and family**

REBBETZIN OF EILAT

BY DAFNA CHAIM

*She went to Eretz Yisroel with her husband, and as a young couple, they moved from apartment to apartment. Life was challenging but permeated with a sense of purpose. When the opportunity arose, the Rebbe sent them to Eilat, where Rebbetzin Tila Hecht and her husband began their work. Today she is a principal of a school in addition to raising her large family and her myriad of activities. * An interview with Rebbetzin Tila Hecht.*

The story goes that one time, Rebbetzin Hecht left her cell phone in one of the classrooms and when she found it the next day she saw she had nearly fifty messages waiting for her!

When Rebbetzin Hecht doesn't forget her phone, it is mostly in use. Between one call and the next she manages to guide her staff at the school, speak to a student, discuss something with a woman in the community...

It's hard to reach Rebbetzin Hecht by phone but it's even harder to sit down with her without the phone constantly interrupting. As the saying goes: ask busy people to do something because they'll have the time – this is true for Rebbetzin Hecht.

Full of life, mother of twelve children, founder and principal of a

she is asked for help, and every minute is planned and used to the fullest.

When she passed by the Rebbe for dollars one time, the Rebbe gave her an extra dollar and said, "This is for your communal work."

Rebbetzin Hecht (nee Popack) grew up in Crown Heights, in close proximity to the Rebbe's great light, which no doubt spurred her on to yearn for a life of shlichus and devotion to the Rebbe. As a student at Bais Rivka, she stood out for her organizational talents, spirit, and popularity.

She married Rabbi Yosef Hecht and their plan was to go on shlichus. In 5737, when the Rebbe asked for volunteers for a second group of shluchim to Eretz Yisroel, the Hecht

Chabad school in Eilat, kalla teacher, shlucha to a wilderness, a familiar face to many in Eilat, someone who doesn't know how to say "no" when

WHAT A SMALL WORLD

Once, a woman from the community told us that her mother who lives in Connecticut was very sick and in the hospital. She was distraught, especially because she was unable to be at her mother's side. I took down the information and gave it to my sister-in-law, who lives in Connecticut.

The next day, even though it was Erev Yom Kippur, she went to visit the woman and give her lekach. The mother was ecstatic about the unexpected visit and the daughter was thrilled too.

Another story that shows what a small world it is: Three boys from Eilat went on a trip to America. It was Tishrei and the mother of one of them was worried about where he would eat the meal before Yom Kippur. She called us and we connected them with our family who lives in New York. They invited the boys to the pre-Yom Kippur meal and for Sukkos too. These meals made a wonderful impression on the boys and all three became baalei t'shuva after that trip!

couple signed up, hoping the Rebbe would pick them from the hundreds of couples who wanted to go. To their great joy, their hopes were realized. Rebbetzin Hecht tells us about her shlichus to Eretz Yisroel:

After I got married, I taught in Bais Rivka and at a Hebrew School on Long Island, where I got the good news that we were chosen for shlichus to Eretz Yisroel. It was a Wednesday and the Rebbe wanted us to leave the following Sunday. You can well imagine the pressure we were under. It was a race against the clock. Within this short time span, we had to leave our jobs (referring to the women since the men were learning in kollel), say goodbye to our friends and family, sell our furniture, pack and shop.

However, with all the difficulties, we were so excited to be making the preparations for this trip. The knowledge that the Rebbe had picked us for this special shlichus thrilled us beyond words.

I remember that on the plane, throughout the trip, Mrs. Rivka Schildkraut (who is Israeli) spoke enthusiastically about life in Eretz Yisroel and she got us into the spirit of things.

Did you know what awaited you there?

More or less. The Rebbe had sent us the year before, as a married couple, to Australia for the summer and told us to stop off in Eretz Yisroel. This was after Operation Entebbe, and in Eretz Yisroel and the world at large there was a tremendous spiritual awakening. The Rebbe asked us to raise awareness about Mivtza Mezuzah and about the mezuzah's great power of protection. Our instructions were to speak at four centers of Anash in Eretz Yisroel, and that is what we did. My husband spoke to the men and I spoke to the women.

I remember our visit to Tzfas. We walked around the alleyways of the Old City and it looked to me like something out of a storybook. To think that people lived in those houses! It was hard to believe. I certainly didn't dream that I was going to live in one of those houses myself in the near future!

The truth is that we had been thinking about shlichus in America and shlichus in Eretz Yisroel didn't come up until the Rebbe asked for volunteers. It wasn't easy at first, but all hardships were minimized in light of the great privilege we had to take part in a shlichus that

the Rebbe held so dear.

We arrived in Eretz Yisroel on 28 Shvat. We stayed in a hotel and looked for an apartment, which wasn't easy to find. For some months, we had to move from apartment to apartment until we finally settled down.

We went to the Hechts of Kfar Chabad for Pesach since we still did not have an apartment and I was in my ninth month of pregnancy. We packed our suitcases right after Yom Tov and lived for a week in the Greisman's apartment as they had stayed in Kiryat Malachi after Yom Tov. The day that we were supposed to leave the apartment is when I gave birth to my oldest son.

Since I had nowhere to go after giving birth, the doctor, who was an angel from heaven, arranged for me to remain at the hospital for a week. From the hospital, I moved into another temporary apartment that was tiny. When I invited guests, we had to eat in relays because there weren't enough dishes for all. Instead of a tablecloth, I put down a newspaper. We had a set of dishes that we had gotten from the Jewish Agency with a few more items that were suitable for just a couple. These were our material circumstances but that didn't get us down spiritually, on the contrary.

In Tzfas, there were shlichim from the first group that the Rebbe had sent. They warmly welcomed us and helped us out. In general, there was a great sense of unity among Anash then, and the k'hilla in Tzfas was very unified and supportive. I especially remember Nechama Greisman a"h, who helped me tremendously. She always said to me, "Don't give me back what I'm giving you, but pass it along. Help someone else."

On Shabbos, while the men farbrenged for hours in shul, we farbrenged among ourselves. On weekdays, we went out together on mivtzaim.

I must mention Rebbetzin Rochel Hendel who got us right into things and demanded that we go out and do all sorts of activities, house calls, shiurim, and mivtzaim without thinking about the difficulties involved. I remember that we went Erev Purim, on Taanis Esther, to distribute mishloach manos to I.D.F. widows. I was towards the end of a pregnancy, going through a difficult adjustment in Eretz Yisroel, and not comfortable with the language, but she didn't let us off the hook.

We lived in Tzfas for three years until the Rebbe told the shlichim to disperse around the country. We began



**Some of the Hecht children
in the early years**

to look into various options. When we had a number of possibilities, we presented them to the Rebbe. The Rebbe's answer was, "onward to Eilat."

The year before, the Ashkenazic rabbi of Eilat had left and a search for a Rabbi had begun there. My husband applied for the job and was chosen. We moved to Eilat in 5740 and have been there ever since.

What was Eilat like when you arrived?

When we came to Eilat it was much smaller and not really developed, as it is now. There were about 40,000 residents (today there are double that number). As the population grew, new neighborhoods were built as well as shopping centers, roads were paved and the city developed tremendously.

I remember that the neighborhood we lived in was called "the neighborhood of punishment" since the buses didn't enter and wherever we had to go, we had to

walk. Behind our house were mountains and hills where the children played "camp" in the heart of nature. Today there are new neighborhoods there.

Spiritually too there has been much growth. R' Yisroel Glitzenstein, the first shliach to Eilat, and his family lived here. He ran the activities of Tzach and started a Chabad house. Aside from this, everything we did was a "first." Today, baruch Hashem, there are Chabad schools and even a wonderful yeshiva for mekuravim. This is in addition to an active Chabad house, which recently was extended with the dedication of a new floor when we ran out of space.

Tell us about your school.

As in many places, one of the hardest things to deal with is chinuch for the children. It was only a matter of time before we had to open schools of our own. In the early years, I taught in the religious school here. At a certain point, when

I had a two-year-old at home and had no suitable place to put him, I decided I would stay home and open a daycare center. The first year I had four-five children and the following year I had twelve.

The older children learned in the existing schools and needless to say we were not satisfied with their education. My youngest son came home one day from kindergarten crying since the other children laughed at him for wearing tzitzis, and I'm talking about a religious gan!

So I had no choice but to send them away from home at a young age. When my oldest son turned nine, he was determined to learn in New York, where his grandparents live, or in Kfar Chabad. We wrote to the Rebbe and asked whether it was the right thing to do to send him away from home to yeshiva and we presented the options. The Rebbe drew a line under the words Kfar Chabad and added that it was the right thing to do.

When they poured the wine for the four cups, the mother asked for the dry wine. The little girl didn't understand what dry wine is, so she put her finger into the cup of wine and said in all innocence, "Ima, see? It's not dry!"

A STORY ABOUT DRY WINE

One year we had a family with us for Pesach from out of town. That night there was a cute thing that happened with their daughter. When they poured the wine for the four cups, the mother asked for the dry wine. The little girl didn't understand what dry wine is, so she put her finger into the cup of wine and said in all innocence, "Ima, see? It's not dry!"

Some years went by and I had forgotten the incident and the mother didn't quite remember me either. One day she came to my office and wanted to register her daughter. When I asked her why she wanted a Chabad school she said, "A few years ago I was a guest with a Lubavitcher family here in Eilat and we loved the atmosphere and the family. I'll never forget that night, thanks to which we began a t'shuva process, so I want my daughter to get a Chabad education."

Something clicked and I said, "Tell me, aren't you the one with the dry wine?"

She said in amazement, "How do you know?"

The girl has grown up and has made her entire family into baalei t'shuva. The mother is a Lubavitcher now and reads *Beis Moshiaich* every Shabbos from cover to cover.

A year later, we sent our second son who was in third grade to Kiryat Malachi, where he stayed with the Vechters. Of course sending them away wasn't easy, not for us nor for the children, but we had no other choice. I must say that although my boys were determined to leave home in order to get a Chassidische chinuch, it wasn't at all easy for them. When it came time for my daughter to leave home, the boys tried to dissuade her saying, "Don't think it's so easy..."

And it really wasn't easy. She was once interviewed for one of the newspapers and was asked what she remembered from life on shlichus and she said she remembered living out of suitcases.

* * *

Other couples joined us on shlichus in Eilat and the chinuch problem wasn't only ours any more. One evening we had a meeting and discussed what to do next. The older kids had already left home, but what about the younger ones? So two days before the beginning of the school year, we decided that come what may we were going to start a first grade. We immediately began to make phone calls to convince parents to register their children in the new school. To our delight, thirteen children were registered, only three of whom were of Anash.

Within two days, the ground floor of our house was transformed into a school. I remember spending the entire night before school started decorating the school. We had an exciting pioneering spirit and everybody pitched in. At seven in the morning the tables and chairs

arrived from a parent who donated them saying, "It reminds me of my childhood in Marrakech, where we also learned in a cellar."

At eight o'clock, the bell rang announcing the beginning of the school day. I entered the classroom after a long, hard night, but felt full of energy. The rest is history.

The following year, we added



another twenty children, and ran out of space. We moved to the Chabad house and saw miracles there too. The Chabad house building did not have a tiled floor, and without a floor, there was no way we would get the permits we needed. One of the people in our community worked day and night to get the place ready as my husband ran around to various government

offices. In one day, he managed to get the permits that allowed us to use the place for a school!

For the first two years we had to maintain the school ourselves since the Ministry of Education didn't recognize us and neither did the Chinuch Atzmai school system. Finally, after we had been successful, the Ministry of Education agreed to recognize us, and ever since then the school has grown. Today we have 150 students and in the preschool we have about 200 children!

The growth of the school contributed towards the growth of our community since every time the school grew and we needed more teachers, we brought in another Lubavitcher couple. The wife teaches in the school and the husband works with the community.

Please give some tips to women who work both in and out of the home, who want to go on mitzvaim occasionally too. How do you do it all?

I do far better when committed to a schedule. This year, for the first time in years, I have one day off. I know that if I don't plan the day, the time will disappear without my having accomplished anything. So I decided that on my day off, at twelve o'clock I will teach at the new place for women that opened up here. That way, I know that I have until 12 to take care of my household tasks and then I go to the shiur. The day is not yet half over and I've accomplished a lot.

I also write a list of the things I want to do each day and try to do them, checking them off as I go. It's

also important to know how to delegate authority and give out jobs at home. I think the children are much more enthusiastic if I give them a choice of jobs. For example, they usually prefer kitchen jobs to cleaning, like my youngest son who wanted to bake a cake this week and I let him do it even though he makes a mess, because that's the only way they learn to be independent and accustomed to helping out.

A friend of mine gave me a great idea of how to get kids involved in the less-fun tasks around the house. You can mix notes from Mommy into a basket of laundry. The children love finding them as they work and it spurs them on to do things that are not as interesting to them. The idea is to be more creative and to turn a task into a surprise. Don't forget to express your admiration for a job well done and they'll be more happy and willing to help out.

There are also times that I allow myself to relax because there are times that I need to drink a cup of coffee and read quietly. This is also important and a woman must give herself a break. If you're well organized, you can definitely find the time to go out on mitzvaim a few times a week.

What are you doing in Eilat to prepare the world to greet Moshiach?

We live with Moshiach every day and it is a part of everything we do. The whole point of our shlichus is to bring the Geula. The children at school live in anticipation of the imminent arrival of Moshiach and they accept this as a matter of fact.

Among the public at large we see that they accept it naturally. When you speak from the heart, it enters the heart. I personally have not had a problem in conveying the message about Moshiach. Of course, you have to find the right way to strengthen



Rabbi Hecht at "dollars" with the Rebbe



Rabbi Hecht and some of his children at the public menorah lighting in Eilat

the emuna of mekuravim, but today we see that most of the people who are coming close with a chayus, are motivated by things connected with

the anticipation of the complete Redemption.

May we soon merit to see the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH" M!

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ב"ה

יחד אדונינו מודנו ורבנו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

THE OBLIGATION TO CELEBRATE ON PURIM

AN ADAPTATION OF THE DISCOURSE FOUND IN TORAH OR

*In Likkutei Torah (Vayikra 4c) the Tzemach Tzedek makes an editorial comment to this discourse, in which it is referred to simply as derush Purim, “the Purim discourse.” * In Likkutei Sichos Vol. 7, p. 27, note 55, the Rebbe points out that the reason this discourse is called “the Purim discourse” (despite the fact that numerous other discourses also deal with Purim) is that the subject of this particular discourse expresses the central theme of Purim; namely, the requirement that on Purim, one drink to the point that one no longer knows the difference between “cursed is Haman” and “blessed is Mordechai.” * Part 1 of 3*

CHAPTER 1

PURIM: A TIME OF UNBRIDLED JOY AND DEDICATION TO TORAH

Key topics to be presented in this chapter:

- The Jewish legal requirement of unbridled joy on Purim
- On Purim, the Jews ratified their original acceptance of the Torah.

THE JEWISH LEGAL REQUIREMENT OF UNBRIDLED JOY ON PURIM

THE HOLIDAY of Purim celebrates the miraculous salvation of the entire Jewish people from annihilation in the times of the ancient Persian Empire. It is such a joyous occasion that, as the Talmud teaches,² “A man is obligated to become so intoxicated on Purim that he cannot distinguish between ‘cursed be Haman’³ and ‘blessed be Mordechai.’”⁴

Yet this is truly puzzling, for why is Purim considered even more joyous than the major Jewish holidays known as Yom Tov? Joy on Yom Tov holidays, such as Pesach, Shavuot, and Succos, is actually mandated by the Torah⁵ and miracles were performed for the Jews on those holidays. On Pesach, for example, G-d split the Sea; on Shavuot, the Jewish people received the Torah. Furthermore, Yom Tov is endowed with a greater degree of sanctity than is Purim: on Yom Tov Jews are not allowed to engage in the category of activity known as Melachah,⁶ whereas no such prohibition exists on Purim.* There is a requirement to celebrate Yom Tov with joy, but nothing approaching the degree described above. In fact, as Maimonides writes in his compendium of Jewish law,⁷ it is forbidden to drink to excess on Yom Tov.

ON PURIM, THE JEWS RATIFIED THEIR ORIGINAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE TORAH

The above will be understood after a discussion of the teaching⁸ that although the Jews accepted upon themselves the commitment to observe the Torah when it was originally

given at Mount Sinai, it was only later, during the events of historic Purim, that they fully ratified this commitment. The Talmud elaborates⁹ that there was an element of coercion at Mount Sinai, as though G-d had (allegorically speaking) suspended the dome of an uprooted mountain over their heads and threatened, “If you accept the Torah, fine; if not, this will be your grave.” Although the Jews did accept the Torah at that time, it was not until the events of Purim that their commitment was considered one hundred percent voluntary. Yet, this too needs explanation. On Purim the Jews were faced with genocide, and consequently fasted and prayed to G-d, sincerely repented, and reaffirmed their dedication to G-d’s Torah. Inasmuch as this resulted under pressure of impending death, why was the commitment of Purim any more “voluntary” than that of Mount Sinai?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter began with a question: The Torah itself mandates that the major Jewish holidays known as Yom Tov must be celebrated joyously, and with greater sanctity than with Purim. Yet Jewish law requires even more joy on Purim than on Yom Tov. Why is this?

It was said that the answer will be understood in light of the teaching that at Mount Sinai, when the Jews originally accepted the Torah, there had been an element of coercion, whereas on Purim, the Jews voluntarily ratified the earlier commitment of Sinai.

Yet, when the Jews returned to G-d in repentance on Purim, it was in response to threatened genocide. Was their commitment, then, really so “voluntary” after all?

NOTES:

2. Megillah 7b.
3. the evil schemer behind the plot to annihilate the Jews
4. the righteous leader of the Jews of that time
5. as it is written (Deuteronomy 16:13), “and you shall rejoice on your holiday”
6. commonly translated “work” but actually a highly technical term

* Interestingly, Mordechai sought to legislate such a prohibition, but his proposal was not accepted, as recounted in Megillah 5b. Nevertheless, it is proper not to conduct business on Purim.

7. Laws of Yom Tov 6:20
8. Shabbos 88a, interpreting Esther 9:27
9. Shabbos ibid

CHAPTER 2

THE ESSENTIAL QUALITY OF TORAH

Key topics to be presented in this chapter:

Two questions:

- 1) Why is Torah Study required for admission to Heaven?
- 2) Why is there an apparent double-standard in the minimum requirement of Torah Study?
 - Torah as a parable by which we understand G-d
 - The parable is to the Or Ein Sof – G-d “as He is in

Himself”

- Countless degrees of parable
- The ultimate parable is G-d’s wisdom, the source of all Torah. It is the parable to G-d Himself.

Answer to 1):

“Fortunate is he who arrives [in the hereafter] with his Torah study in hand.”

Answer to 2):

Why neglect of Torah study is so serious

- a) People have different capacities for Torah study
- b) Neglecting one’s potential shows disrespect for Torah

TWO QUESTIONS

For the answer, we must in turn examine the nature of the Torah itself, and of its being given to the Jews at Mount Sinai. To do this, we must clarify the following two points:

First, there is a teaching that it is said of souls ascending to their Heavenly reward,¹⁰ “Fortunate is he who arrives here with his Torah study in hand (talmudo b’yado).” This Hebrew expression specifically refers to the study of practical Jewish law (halachah). It requires some explanation why study of practical law is the most important requirement for admission to Heaven, where the souls are occupied, not with legal requirements, but abstract mystical revelations.

Second, there is another Talmudic teaching¹¹ which states that anyone who could have spent some time in Torah study but did not do so is a fitting object of the verse,¹² “He has despised the word of G-d...that soul shall be utterly cut off.” However, this seems astonishing when one considers that, under Jewish law, a person who finds it impossible to engage in much Torah study satisfies their obligation with only one chapter in the morning and one chapter in the evening. If it is technically enough to get by on such a small amount of study, why should someone who may very well study much more than that, but who merely neglected a single opportunity for study, be considered so culpable as to deserve to be “utterly cut off”?

TORAH AS A PARABLE BY WHICH WE UNDERSTAND G-D

The explanation of all this is as follows:

The Torah is called¹³ “the parable of the Ancient One (Mashal HaKadmoni),” or “the parable of the Predecessor [i.e., G-d, the ‘Predecessor of the world’¹⁴].” King Solomon, too, referred to the Torah as a parable when he said¹⁵ “To understand a parable and a figure.” A parable is a device for conveying a concept which, because of its depth or because it is wholly outside the hearer’s experience, cannot be directly related. By reformulating the idea as a parable, the hearer can

extrapolate and arrive at some understanding of what is meant. G-d is certainly inaccessible to human understanding — in fact, to any understanding — and He composed the Torah, in a sense, as a great parable by which His creatures could gain some conception of Him.

THE PARABLE IS TO THE OR EIN SOF – G-D “AS HE IS IN HIMSELF”

Specifically, the expression “Predecessor of the world” refers to that aspect of G-d which totally transcends all relation to the universe. As explained elsewhere, G-d relates to the universe on various levels: on the one hand, He is “immanent within creation” (Memaleh Kol Almin) and invests each particular creature and entity with just the right amount of spiritual life force to bring that thing into being in its unique form. On the other hand, it is equally true that G-d Himself is above relating to each specific item individually and instead pervades and encompasses everything equally. In that sense, we speak of Him as “transcendent to creation” (Sovev Kol Almin). Both of these concepts, however, relate G-d to creation. They are obviously not truly descriptive of G-d as He is in Himself, for that is a level that cannot be described in terms of its relation, whether immanent or transcendent, to the world. It is this level of G-d Himself – the Or Ein Sof Baruch Hu (“Light of the Blessed Infinite One”¹⁶) — that is meant by the “Predecessor of the world.” It is that which precedes any relation at all to the universe. This is the level, otherwise utterly inaccessible, to which the Torah is the “parable of the Predecessor.”

COUNTLESS DEGREES OF PARABLE

In fact, there are countless degrees of understanding of G-d, depending on the spiritual level and capacity of the one attempting the understanding. For us relatively lowly people, for example, the Torah may serve as a parable to the way G-d is manifest in Heaven. To the spiritual beings of Heaven, however, that level, which we humans had needed a parable to comprehend, is itself nothing but a parable to a still higher degree of G-dly understanding. Because G-d is infinite, there is no limit to how high this reaches.* This concept is what is meant by the statement about King Solomon¹⁷, where it is said that he “spoke three thousand parables”: Solomon’s wisdom was so great that, for each concept in Torah, he was able to understand its meaning on three thousand successively higher levels.

THE ULTIMATE PARABLE IS G-D’S WISDOM, THE SOURCE OF ALL TORAH. IT IS THE PARABLE TO G-D HIMSELF.

Now the Torah itself, that great parable to the lofty spiritual level of the Or Ein Sof, is said to “come from [G-d’s] wisdom.”¹⁸ G-d manifests Himself in the universe in ten principal ways, which we identify by analogy to ten principal

attributes of the human personality. Of these ten Divine attributes, known as the ten Sefiros, the highest spiritual level is called Chochmah (usually translated “wisdom”) — just as in a person, the very pinnacle of the personality is the intellect. The Kabbalistic teaching quoted above, that the Torah comes from Chochmah, refers to this level. G-d’s very “Self,” as it were — the Or Ein Sof — manifests itself only within the Sefirah of Chochmah;¹⁹ and Chochmah, in turn, is the spiritual source of the Torah. The unending succession of parables which may be found in the Torah’s infinite depths all lead, ultimately, to the supreme parable of all: the spiritual level of Chochmah in which the “Predecessor of the world,” the Or Ein Sof, is manifest. In this sense the Torah is the “parable of the Predecessor” through which we are enabled to gain some conception of this supremely exalted level.

Here²⁰ we should explain something which will sharpen our understanding of the above, as well as prove relevant for our discussion later:

The ten Sefiros are, as mentioned, G-d’s manifestation in the universe, but He Himself utterly transcends all ten. In order for the Sefiros, and through them, all spiritual and physical aspects of the universe, to come into being out of the Infinite One Himself, there had to be some mediating level — the gap, so to speak, between Creator and creation would simply be unbridgeable otherwise. This intermediate level is known as Kesser (crown). If the ten Sefiros are analogous to the human personality, wherein the highest level is intellect, Kesser may be compared to a crown, which sits atop the head and encompasses from above, or transcends, even the highest aspects of the person. The sublime spiritual level of Kesser receives the G-dly life force directly from G-d Himself (something even the highest Sefirah could not withstand), and passes it on to the Sefiros.

Now, any intermediary necessarily has two aspects: the lower, or outer, aspect that relates to the recipient, and the higher, or inner, aspect that relates to the source. An intermediary between levels A and B functions because it has aspects in common with both: its inner aspect is more like A and its outer aspect is more like B. The intermediary as a whole can therefore forge a link between these disparate levels.

The same is true of Kesser, which, in addition to its analogy to a crown, is also compared to the function of “will.” A person’s will transcends even his or her intellect, as witnessed by the fact that when one wants something, one wants it whether the intellect approves or not. The more superficial, or “outer,” aspect of Kesser is called Ratzon, “wanting,” or simply “will”; the “inner” aspect is referred to as Ta’anug, “pleasure” or “delight.” In a person, this reflects the fact that Kesser is the level that mediates between the body (including even its most sublime faculties like intellect) and the soul itself. The outer aspect, “will”— what one wants — finds common ground with intellect, whereas the inner aspect,

“pleasure,” is something that relates more to the soul itself. To illustrate simply: there is no conceivable reason why one individual prefers chocolate over vanilla. One person’s pleasure in chocolate or another’s in vanilla is an innate characteristic of their respective souls. It is only because of this inherent quality that one finds oneself wanting chocolate, leading, in turn, to thoughts of how to actually obtain the desired object, actions aimed at realizing that goal, and so on. Spiritually, the so-called outer aspect of Kesser is the level that relates to the ten Sefiros and creation. It is known as Ratzon HaElyon, the “supernal will,” or the “will of G-d.” One may think of it as the very highest level, the original first step, toward creation. G-d’s will to create the universe was the first step from which all else followed. Indeed, Ratzon HaElyon is the same spiritual level as that referred to above as Sovev Kol Almin, the “transcendent aspect of G-d” over creation, just as Kesser, the “crown,” transcends and surrounds from without.

Yet, as mentioned, even this exalted level relates G-d to creation. G-d Himself cannot be categorized that way, as He is utterly beyond being even the Source of creation. By contrast, G-d as He is in Himself is referred to as the Ein Sof, “the Infinite One.” If we can possibly imagine such a thing, the so-called lowest aspect of the Ein Sof is the innermost aspect of Kesser: the spiritual level of Ta’anug, Divine pleasure. Thus, Ta’anug and Ratzon together, the two aspects of Kesser, function as the intermediary between the Ein Sof and creation. Of course, this teaching can only be understood allegorically. It goes without saying that G-d does not possess human qualities like “will” and “pleasure.” These terms are used by the Kabbalah merely in order to give us something to grasp onto in our attempt to comprehend G-d. The human faculties of Ta’anug and Ratzon (as well, indeed, as all human faculties, including those represented by the ten Sefiros) were created by G-d in their particular form specifically so that we could relate to His own holy faculties by Torah-guided analogy to them. This is the inner meaning of the verse²¹ “Let us make Man in our image.”

It is, then, specifically the inner aspect of Kesser — Ta’anug — which is meant by the “Ancient One” and the “Predecessor” in the expression “parable of the Predecessor or Ancient One.” It is Ta’anug that is beyond categorization even as the source of creation. It is the aspect of G-d known as Kadmono Shel Olam, the “Predecessor of the world,” that is beyond any relation to the world whatsoever, even as the One who “transcends” the world. The Kabbalah refers to this aspect of G-d as Atik Yomin, “Ancient of Days,”²² which connotes the idea of being separate and apart (ne’etak) from “the days of the world” (y’mos olam, as in the phrase in Jewish liturgy, hamisnasei mimos olam — “[G-d] Who is exalted above the days of the world”). The expression Atik Yomin also hints at the fact that the Heavenly level of Ta’anug derives from the Kabbalistic level known as Adam Kadmon,

the “Primordial Man,” which, however, is beyond the scope of this discussion.

To apply all this to our topic, it is the level of Ta’anug that the righteous experience in the hereafter where they “delight” (Ta’anug) in G-d’s pure light (tzachtzachus). The question is, in view of the utter inaccessibility of this spiritual level, how can the souls of the righteous possibly experience it? How can they be exposed to such potent G-dliness and not be overwhelmed and cease to exist? The Torah is the key. Torah is the “parable of the Predecessor,” the parable to the spiritual level of Kadmono Shel Olam; the means by which one can attain an understanding of this sublime referent.

ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION: “FORTUNATE IS HE WHO ARRIVES WITH HIS TORAH STUDY IN HAND.”

That is what our sages meant when they taught “Fortunate is he who arrives [in the hereafter] with his Torah study in hand.” The Torah that one studied in life is absolutely necessary for experiencing the hereafter because it is utterly impossible to relate to the potent revelations of that world except through the parable provided by Torah. If one has not grasped all aspects of the parable, one simply cannot benefit from the corresponding aspects of the referent revealed in the hereafter.

ANSWER TO THE SECOND QUESTION: WHY NEGLECT OF TORAH STUDY IS SO SERIOUS.

(a) People have different capacities for Torah study.

We may now return to the concept of satisfying requirements for Torah study with a chapter in the morning and a chapter in the evening. For a person who has the ability to study more and chooses not to, this concept does not apply. This holds true even if this neglectful person’s study amounts to more than the amount of study accomplished by the individual for whom the above concept does apply. Instead, that neglectful person’s “soul shall be utterly cut off” because they “despised the word of G-d.” Why this double-standard? The explanation lies in what we now understand about the spiritual nature and function of the Torah as the “parable of the Predecessor.”

If a concept is not especially profound, it may be conveyed to another person directly, with no need of a parable. If the idea is more difficult, it may require embodying the concept in a parable for the student to grasp its meaning.

Some things are, in fact, so profound that they require many levels of parable before the student can understand them: one needs the first parable to understand some necessary prerequisite, itself functioning as a parable to yet a third level, and so on. Now, not all people are equal in their capacity to understand Torah. This does not reflect on the

person's worth or virtue, for all Jews are equally dear to G-d, and someone who understands as much Torah as they personally can is considered just as meritorious as someone else who, endowed with greater capacity, understands much more. Rather, for His own inscrutable reasons, G-d created some people tall and some short, some strong and some weak, etc. In the case of Torah, one's capacity for understanding has to do with the spiritual root of his or her soul.

The point is that because G-d does not ask the impossible of us, we understand that a person who legitimately cannot possibly study any more than a chapter every morning and evening is in that situation because that is the limit of their capacity anyway; they are not losing out by missing something they could otherwise have acquired. G-d would not have prevented them from learning. Thus, this category of person—someone whose Jewish legal obligation for Torah study is genuinely satisfied by such a small quantity of learning—needs no more than that amount to derive the full benefit of his or her place in Heaven. Each soul's place in the hereafter is commensurate with its spiritual capacity, and those daily chapters provide all the “parable” they personally need to appreciate the revelations destined for them.

Alternatively, it is possible that the person does have more capacity for Torah understanding, but G-d really has prevented them (by financial constraint, illness, or other insurmountable obstacle) from achieving their potential. In such a case, G-d sees to it that the person not lose out in the hereafter, by bypassing the normal channels, as it were, and filling in what the person is missing.

(b) Neglecting one's potential shows disrespect for Torah.

On the other hand, greater capacity for Torah study means one is capable of greater revelations in the hereafter. To be able to experience these, that person must prepare by studying the amount of Torah necessary to serve as a parable for all those revelations. Studying less will leave one short, and the person will miss out on whatever revelations of G-dliness they would have been granted had they only taken the trouble to prepare for the experience. By neglecting even one bit of Torah study, they have forfeited the opportunity to relate to G-d to that extent. That is the meaning of the statement that their soul will be “utterly cut off”: that soul will have no possibility of connecting with G-d to the extent it lacks the Torah needed to do so. Since we are referring to someone who could have engaged in study, but chose not to do so, it is appropriate to say that they thereby “despised the word of G-d.”

To summarize, we have seen that the Torah is a precious and miraculous gift bestowed by G-d upon the Jewish people. It is nothing less than the means by which we can bridge the seemingly unbridgeable gap between Creator and creation. It is the key through which Jews can connect with the

Predecessor of the World—the Ein Sof Himself.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Why is study of practical law the most important requirement for admission to Heaven? Also, why should someone who neglects to study a small amount of Torah be condemned so severely, even if that person usually studies a great deal?

The answer will be understood when we consider that G-d Himself, as He cannot be described in terms of relation to creation, is utterly out of reach for us finite beings, or for that matter, any created entity. Out of His great love for the Jewish people, G-d gave them the Torah, which — impossibly, miraculously — allows finite beings to relate to Him on the level known as Or Ein Sof. The Torah is a parable by which we can understand G-d.

In the Hereafter, souls are exposed to a measure of potent spirituality appropriate for their unique capacities. It is only the laws of the Torah they have studied in life that provides them the ability to relate to these revelations. It is now clear why this type of study is required for admission to Heaven.

Similarly, we now see why a person who has neglected even one bit of Torah study is culpable. The fact that the person had been given the opportunity to study that particular Torah subject indicates that that subject is within his or her spiritual capacity, and that he or she will need it for full benefit in the Hereafter. By neglecting it, the person demonstrates indifference to what he or she will miss as a consequence, and is rightly to be blamed.

Thus, the Torah is a precious and miraculous gift bestowed by G-d upon the Jewish people. It is nothing less than the means by which we mortal Jews can nevertheless bridge the seemingly unbridgeable gap between Creator and creation; it is the key, the parable, through which we can connect with the Ancient One, the Predecessor of the World — the Ein Sof Himself.

NOTES:

10. Pesachim 50a
11. Sanhedrin 99a; see Tanya ch. 1
12. Numbers 15:31
13. I Samuel 24:13 (24:14 in some texts); see Rashi's commentary to Makkos 10b
14. Bereishis Rabbah 38:7
15. Proverbs 1:6
16. Precise translation of the term “Or Ein Sof Boruch Hu” can be problematic. For a fuller discussion of the terms Ein Sof and Or Ein Sof and some of the issues they entail, see Schochet, J. I. (1979), *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism* (New York: Kehot), pp. 50-51, and notes and references cited therein.
- * Note: According to the Kabbalistic master Rabbi Yitzchok Luria (known as the ARI, of blessed memory) this is what is meant in by the Talmud's comment, “The righteous have no rest, neither in this world nor the next, as it is written, ‘They shall go from strength to strength.’” That is, the righteous do not remain static. Instead they are constantly ascending to ever higher levels of G-dly comprehension.
17. I Kings 5:12
18. Zohar II, 121a
19. The reason for this has been discussed elsewhere; see, e.g., the synopsis of the discourse *Lehavin Inyan Lechem Mishneh* on the Torah portion *Beshalach*.
20. Note: Material from this point until the conclusion of the paragraph concluding, “understanding of this sublime referent” on page 20 was inserted by the Tzemach Tzedek as a parenthetical gloss to our discourse in Torah Or.
21. Genesis 1:26
22. see Daniel 7:9

[To be continued be”H]

WE THANKED THE OIBERSHTER 1000X OVER THAT WE'RE STILL IN CHEVRON

BY CHANA KATZ

Difficult as catching a moonbeam, is trying to put into words the thoughts and feelings of Seminary Machon Alte/Chaya Mushka after the annual Chevron Shabbaton. You get carried away with them as they gropingly and entrancingly try to transform such a powerful soul experience into the level of ordinary speech.

This year there were some surprises for the more than 100 participants, including a very-rare tour of the Casbah area, Jewish land which has been completely off-limits to Jews for many years now. There was also the retelling of many famous stories, which no matter how many times they are heard, still make you hold your breath – of a mesirus nefesh bearing such intensity that the Rebbe broke into tears.

This year's trip took place between weeks of very difficult times for Chevron, and all Am Yisroel — and the upcoming yahrtzeit (Chaf-Daled Shvat) of one of the Chevron pillars of Jewish strength, courage and wisdom — Rebbetzin Menucha Rachel, daughter of the Mittlerer Rebbe.

When Machon founder and Dean Rabbi Yosef Rosenfeld and his wife Rachel Leah embark on their annual Chevron Shabbaton, no detail is left untended, and by all accounts, the experience is unparalleled. Thus we're grateful to those Machon students and staff who, after returning from Chevron to the holy city of Tzfas at 3:30 a.m. this past Motzaei Shabbos, took the time — even though bleary-

eyed and still on quite a spiritual high — to pass on to all of us glimpses of this most special event – treasures from the entrance to Gan Eden. . .

* * *

Machon Alte housemother Bryni Popack, a direct descendent in

I thought how when we first went into Galus they were davening here that Moshiach should come right away and now we're here davening at the very end of Galus. We are ending where we started. This is the last davening before Moshiach!

maternal lineage to Rebbetzin Menucha Rachel (her great, great, great grandmother), considers Chevron as the place of her roots — although she felt “angry and sad” that she couldn't visit her ancestors' home which was taken by Arabs. Yet following these especially difficult weeks in Chevron, it

was a beautiful contrast to see the amazing positive energy this large group brought to Chevron. Unlike previous years, when a curfew was in effect, this year there was no curfew and the Arabs walked on the same streets. Yet the spirit of this group rose above the feeling of lowered security.

Mrs. Popack had already made a reservation to attend a N'shei Shabbaton that same Shabbos. When she learned of the Chevron trip she changed her plans: “How could I not go to Chevron!” Mrs. Popack shared the following impressions:

What a way to start our visit – at Kever Rachel (in Beit Lechem), then moving on straight to Rebbetzin Menucha Rachel – two great women figures with the same name. The davening the girls had at Kever Rachel carried on with the same fervor at the kever of Rebbetzin Menucha Rachel, knowing what an extraordinary woman she was. We thanked the Oibershter a thousand times over that we are still in Chevron.

As usual for Machon Alte, the wonderful girls divided the book of T'hillim so that the whole book was said. (I can't even think of how many times the book of T'hillim was divided during this trip for Shleimus HaAretz). Chevron Shliach Danny Cohen took us on the tour to the kever of Rebbetzin Menucha Rachel and at one point he wanted to get us moving because another group was waiting to come in. But the girls didn't want to go. The only way to get them to go was to use all my kochot and tell them they had to move on if they wanted to get to the M'aras HaMachpella!

We stayed at the guest house in the Avraham Avinu quarter, where some of the families who lived in the evacuated Chevron homes were re-located. What hurt so much was to see how they put together makeshift shelves in the hallways with all the toys and kids' clothes. Everyone gave a big bracha that they soon should get back into the Jewish homes where they came from.

* * *

For me, what was very beautiful and touching was to see was the new Rebbetzin Menucha Rachel shul. It had such a warm feeling. It was done with a lot of woods, and to see all the sets of maamarim and Lubavitch s'farim . . ! Before licht-bentchen, I went in there to daven Mincha. I had gone from Mother Rachel, to Rebbetzin Menucha Rachel, to her shul! I even bentched licht eight minutes early and thanked the Rosenfelds for the z'chus they gave me that I could come on the trip. Lighting candles,, a woman's mitzvah! I thought how great women are and always will be and I could see why it's said that in their merit we're going to leave Galus to Geula.

The Mushkie girls were flying high. One Machon girl ran to Rabbi Rosenfeld and begged him to make a two-week summer learning program in Chevron – they were willing to sleep on the floor just in order to learn here! (After the Shabbos seuda and tour of Chevron, we went back to M'aras HaMachpella. Again we couldn't pull the girls away. Again we had to force them to leave to sing the Seder Niggunim and hear our special, tz'nua Shlucha, Batsheva Cohen)

From licht-bentshen, it was so heart-wrenching when off we went to M'aras HaMachpella and what did we pass? The shuk – the place they emptied out. We had such a heavy heart. The nerve, the miserable government: Why did you take these holy families out of there??? It's not even pretty there. What did you take these people out for? For justice?!!

* * *

In the morning, Rabbi Rosenfeld was

teaching a deep and beautiful maamer. I came down for coffee and cake and heard words of Chassidus. What could be better before going to M'aras HaMachpella!

The wall outside M'aras Machpella is said to be the closest place one can get to Gan Eden. They said the Friederker Rebbe davened there. I said T'hillim there for hours.

Melaveh Malka. The whole Shabbos was so full of everything, how did we top it — with the cream of the crop, Sara Nachshon!

(There is the famous story of how the Rebbe cried during a farbrengen when he

He took upon himself to try to convince the Israel Defense Force soldiers to stop participating in the evacuation of Jewish land – and switch allegiances to the army that will bring the Geula!

spoke of the letter he received from Sara Nachshon, on behalf of the other women who had bravely re-entered Chevron's Beit Hadassah, where no Jews were allowed – and stayed there under horrific circumstances in order to reclaim Chevron. The Rebbe had cried when Nachshon asked how much longer should they stay in the destroyed shell of a building with some 30 young children and no heat, electricity or water) The Rebbe compared the women to the daughters of Tz'lafchad who came to Moshe Rabbeinu with their question about the inheritance of their father's portion of the land (since

he had no sons). Moshe had to ask Hashem how to answer them.

After the Shabbaton all the girls got on the bus and asked, 'How can we ever be even a quarter like these women – the Levingers, the Nachshons. . .?'

In Chevron there's not a place that's not K'dusha. Every second of your Shabbos is filled by K'dusha. The girls davened from their hearts. . . Oibershter! How could you ever do anything to Chevron?!

* * *

Chaya Hirsch of Crown Heights is a student at Seminary Chaya Mushka. This was her first trip to Chevron, and she shared a story about how she wrote to the Rebbe for a blessing – one hour before the bus began its journey!

I was very nervous because of all the things I had heard about Chevron, especially what's been going on now. I wrote to the Rebbe at 3 a.m. and asked for a blessing for a safe trip. The answer I got was just amazing. The Rebbe wrote to a group of women who were attending a Shabbaton in Eretz Yisroel! The Rebbe gave a lot of beautiful brachos and said, especially in Eretz Yisroel, Hashem's eyes are always on the land. Even when we went into the Arab shuk and it looked as if it was really scary, I wasn't feeling any fear because the Rebbe gave us a bracha!

It was just an amazing, amazing trip – especially Kever Rachel. I thought how when we first went into Galus they were davening here that Moshiach should come right away and now we're here davening at the very end of Galus. We are ending where we started. This is the last davening before Moshiach!

And visiting the Avos! Our whole childhood we learned so much about them. Avraham was the first Jew and we're following in their footsteps. Everything we learned for so many years about the Avos, the Chassidus – it suddenly all became so real!

* * *

For many of the girls in the Israeli

program at Machon Alte, the trip to Chevron was their first. Some shared very moving stories with Machon staff about how they were raised with very leftist, unfavorable views of the "shtachim" (settlements) and the Jewish settlers who live there. By the end of the Shabbaton, they had difficulty thinking that this was the same city and these were the same people they had been told about. Now their outlook had completely changed.

I grew up in Israel but hadn't been to Chevron, although I have been to India and Europe, said Aviya. The people there are amazing. They have a mesirus nefesh you don't see everyday. There's a lot to learn from these people. They're doing so much for us! And M'orat HaMachpella – only when you go there do you understand the importance and the meaning. It's really not safe in Chevron, but you feel safe inside your heart. Your father and mother are there taking care of you!

* * *

Machon Alte teacher Devorah Reizel related how the group got an unexpected tour of the Arab shopping area known as the Casbah, Jewish land which, unfortunately, Jews have been forbidden to enter for many years now.

The entrance to the casbah is around the corner from the Chabad property known as Beit Romano. (Here, the story was told of an opportunity the residents of Chevron

had to utilize this property, and Rabbi Moshe Levinger, seizing the moment, flew to the Rebbe to ask his permission to open a yeshiva there. It was Erev Pesach, and Rabbi Levinger didn't succeed at meeting the Rebbe at first and so he continued with other business in the city.

The next morning, he was contacted by Rabbi Hodakov a"h, the Rebbe's secretary, who said they were trying to reach him all day. The Rebbe wanted to see him immediately. And so it was that 9 a.m. Erev Pesach morning (!) Rabbi Levinger was granted a lengthy yechidus with the Rebbe. To this day, much of that yechidus remains untold, except that the Rebbe told Rabbi Levinger he could utilize the Chabad property if he would guard it with the same mesirus nefesh as the women had guarded Beit Hadassah! Some 200 bachurim now learn in a yeshiva there.)

We were taking an afternoon tour of the area, when a group of hesder yeshiva students were about to enter the Casbah and invited our group to go along with them. Everyone in our group quickly agreed to this sudden addition to the itinerary and we changed directions and entered the casbah. It took about 45 minutes to go through and we could see the place where the mezuzahs had been on the doors of Jewish homes.

We had at least a minyan of soldiers

escorting us and at any corner we turned they slipped in front of us and got on one knee and aimed to fire. They even stood on the rooftops and walls to protect us.

The shuk is basically empty – 30,000 Arabs fled from there for economic reasons – an abandoned Gehinom without the fire. We said p'sukim the whole way. It was really creepy.

Many years ago the Jews had gone there to do their shopping, but for years no one could enter. By allowing our group to go there we were making a statement. This was an unusual opportunity.

* * *

Although this report has offered but a small taste of the Chevron trip, it should be mentioned that once again this year, the soldiers stationed in Chevron had some very young and energetic guests – also soldiers, (but) in Hashem's Army.

Young chayalim Levi Popack, Sholom Ber Rosenfeld and Mendy Reizel spent a good part of Shabbos bringing tasty Shabbos food to the soldiers who were stationed at their posts. We even received a report that one of our young Chayalei Moshiah followed through with a pledge he took upon himself to try to convince the Israel Defense Force soldiers to stop participating in the evacuation of Jewish land – and switch allegiances to the army that will bring the Geula!

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CELEBRATING A BAR MITZVA IN 770

BY SHAI GEFEN

*Many parents and bar mitzva boys prefer to celebrate the big day in Beis Chayeinu-770 than to squander money on a hall and an event back at home. Beis Moshiach spoke with parents, principals and teachers who see this as a step forward in hiskashrus to the Rebbe. * May he be a Chassid, Yerei Shamayim, and a Lamdan!*

For most Lubavitchers, it is accepted practice for the chassan's aliya the Shabbos before his wedding to take place in 770. It is not the same, however, for bar mitzvos. Usually, the bar mitzva's aliya to the Torah takes place at the nearest Chabad shul, along with a Kiddush, and a big celebration attended by numerous guests, friends and family.

Yet a new phenomenon is developing in which bar mitzva boys and their parents forgo the hoopla of a big bar mitzva event and opt to mark the occasion of "the completion and entry of the soul of k'dusha" in the Rebbe's shul. From the survey I did (in Eretz Yisroel), I discovered that this is not just about a few individuals but something that is becoming ever more popular.

Rabbi Aharon Halperin is a seventh grade teacher in a Talmud Torah in Kfar Chabad. He says, "Two years ago only a few boys went to the

Rebbe for their bar mitzva. This year, about half my class is going to 770 for their bar mitzva."

The way it works is like this: The bar mitzva boy gets his first aliya to the Torah at the Rebbe's minyan for Shacharis and his father says the "Baruch She'petarani" bracha. Then they sit down at a table on the eastern side of the Rebbe's shul with some cake and mashke and people from the community and T'mimim gather round and sing the "Hachana Niggun" for the maamer. The bar mitzva then begins to recite the traditional bar mitzva maamer, "Isa B'Midrash T'hillim."

Once upon a time, only those who lived in Crown Heights did this, but now more and more people from abroad are coming to mark this special occasion in the holiest place to a Chabad Chassid: Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel. They forego everything else, the party back home, the

presents, the whole show, and prefer to spend the day with the Rebbe.

In a way, this is an old custom for it says in the "Yalkut Minhagim," "on that day – or on one of the days preceding it – the father of the boy and the boy go to the Rebbe for his bracha."

Over the years, bar mitzva boys would go to the Rebbe for a yechidus, and when private audiences ceased, there were group-private audiences for bar mitzva boys. Now, bar mitzva boys come with their fathers for their first aliya in the Rebbe's shul.

I tried to see how widespread this phenomenon is and discovered some interesting facts and various reasons for it, though the common feeling is that it is important to be with the Rebbe on this great day.

"Especially in this time of concealment," says Rabbi Yaakov Segal, menahel of the Talmud Torah in Kfar Chabad, "there is a strong desire on the part of the parents and the children to strengthen their hiskashrus and be with the Rebbe and the results are amazing.

"We see how a child who had his bar mitzva in 770 comes back to yeshiva having had a deep soul



Rabbi Segal

experience. They feel the Rebbe there and so there's no question that this is an excellent chinuch decision. As a menahel I encourage them to go and consider this an important step in the hiskashrus of the young generation to the Rebbe."

One of the mashpiim who brought his bar mitzva boy to 770 said at a farbrengen, "Just as every Chabad Chassid knows that before his wedding, when they begin a new

"On the day he undertakes the ol mitzvos, he belongs in the place where there is the revelation of the Beis HaMikdash, as the Rebbe explains in the kuntres, 'Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel.'"

stage in their lives, they have their aliya in 770. So too, when a child enters the ol mitzvos, it is fitting to do so in the Rebbe's presence."

I also wanted to hear what parents have to say. Rabbi Boaz Lerner of Nachalas Har Chabad made his first bar mitzva in 770 a year ago and he plans on doing the same thing for his next son this year. He describes it like this:

"My son's bar mitzva was on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan 5765. We joined the Rebbe's farbrengen that begins Shabbos afternoon at 1:30. We had

another boy with us from Nachalas Har Chabad who was also bar mitzva and his father decided that the place to celebrate it is with the Rebbe.

“We brought mashke and cake to the farbrengen and the boys reviewed the maamer. The farbrengen was very joyous. At Mincha, at the end of the farbrengen, the boys had their aliya in the Rebbe’s minyan.

“On Motzaei Shabbos we combined the bar mitzva seuda with the farbrengen taking place in 770 in honor of a siyum of halachos in the Rambam. The farbrengen lasted for hours and the special simcha was indescribable. We felt that indeed, this was the best place for a chassan, on the day he enters the ol mitzvos, to celebrate his bar mitzva and aliya l’Torah. There’s no better place.”

What made you think of the idea?

“The truth is that it was my wife’s idea. One reason was to avoid the astronomical costs of a typical bar mitzva celebration. It’s a pity to throw all that money away on one evening when it doesn’t give the child anything, especially being that recently, bar mitzva parties tend to lack spiritual content.

“A combination of these reasons made us decide to give our son something really special for his bar mitzva. This is the time when a child has to understand, ‘Know from where you come’ – the Rebbe, ‘and where you are going’ – 770. This is what a Chassid is about. This is the best place and from where we derive the source of our lives.

“On this special day, when the child’s mazal reigns, the day he undertakes the ol mitzvos, he belongs in the place where there is the revelation of the Beis HaMikdash, as the Rebbe explains in the kuntres, ‘Beis Rabbeinu Sh’B’Bavel.’”

R’ Gidi Sharon of Kiryat Tivon also told me why he decided to celebrate his son’s bar mitzva in 770:



Rabbi Lerner

“My son’s bar mitzva was on Shvii shel Pesach and I decided to take him to the Rebbe, the most fitting place to be on your bar mitzva. In addition, I have to be honest and say

that going to 770 is far less expensive than making a bar mitzva bash back at home. But putting that aside, I think that every Chassid should see to it that his son is with the Rebbe on his bar mitzva.”

Rabbi Yosef Avrohom Pizem, menahel Talmud Torah Chabad in Kiryot, also sees this phenomenon in a positive light. “The Talmud Torah definitely encourages this but it’s completely up to the parents and we don’t mix in. I know that in many instances it’s the children who ask their parents to take them to the Rebbe for their bar mitzva and who forego the celebration.”

When did this phenomenon take off?

Very recently. In the cases that I know about, the children took it very seriously and were willing to skip a celebration that revolved around them. The trip to the Rebbe and back had an impact on their seriousness. It was a first class spiritual experience. The hanhala of the school didn’t get involved but we certainly did not begrudge those who did it. The teachers and classmates also took an interest before and after the trip.

What impact does it have on the boys?

A tremendous impact. The boys returned happy and satisfied. It added a lot to their yiras Shamayim and their hiskashrus to the Rebbe. They got a practical understanding of what it means to be mekushar to the Rebbe, Beis Chayeinu, etc. Those

WITH THE REBBE RASHAB

It is said that R’ Asher Rabinowitz (Nikolaiv) a Chassid of the Rebbe Rashab, took his son to Lubavitch for his bar mitzva. When they got there they learned that the Rebbe had gone to a resort area. He didn’t think twice but made the long trip there with his son.

When they got to the place where the Rebbe was staying, the Rebbe was pleased that the bar mitzva had come and he honored him with a special maamer Chassidus. As is known, the Rebbe Rashab did not say maamarim except for Shabbos and Yom Tov, and a maamer for a bar mitzva was rare indeed.

DON’T WASTE MONEY ON A HALL

Part of an answer from the Rebbe dated 8 Nissan 5721:

In general, when arranging a bar mitzva, I am not pleased, for a number of reasons, by the bar mitzva going before the amud, his being a baal korei, and by the waste of money on a hall and the like. The proper thing is to say a d’var Torah and not a speech. I will mention it at the tziyun.

A BLESSED IDEA

One of the families came up with an original idea for their son’s bar mitzva. Since they decided that the celebration and aliya would be at the Rebbe, and they still wanted to include all their relatives in the simcha, the parents decided to send an invitation to the bar mitzva saying that it would take place with the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach. They included half a shekel with the invitation and asked, in accordance with the Rebbe’s directive, that on the day of the bar mitzva they give the money to tz’daka in the z’chus of the chassan.

who went felt more “into” things. And amazingly, they did not feel they had missed out. I know of many children who would rather make the trip but the problem is often that the father cannot take off from work for a week. There’s no question that nowadays, with the big deal made out of the bar mitzva celebration that many prefer that their children have a once-in-a-lifetime experience with the Rebbe instead. It has both qualities, “do good,” and “stay away from evil,” a double benefit.

Rabbi Yaakov Segal: **Is this really a growing phenomenon?**

Absolutely. Today, in our classes, most of the boys want to have their bar mitzva with the Rebbe. It’s interesting that the boys themselves want to help their parents financially and prefer to go to the Rebbe than have an expensive party.

There are some who go to the Rebbe for their first hanachas t’fillin, two months before their bar mitzva, and some go for the actual bar mitzva. In our seventh grades, more than 50% of the boys go to the Rebbe for their bar mitzva.

What does the hanhala think of this?

We support it and encourage it. We see how they come back from the Rebbe! They make a farbrengen before their trip with their class and then again, when they come back, and they tell their classmates what they experienced. And before the trip they write a collective pidyan nefesh to the Rebbe. It definitely instills a feeling of k’dusha and hiskashrus to the Rebbe even for these children who never saw the Rebbe, and they excitedly relate that they really felt the Rebbe is with them.

A pity that we didn’t have what these children have. I see this as something very special, which others should copy. We see the blessed results, especially the emuna of the children in the Rebbe and the

feelings they bring back with them from 770.

Do you have any idea how this started?

In years gone by it was a rarity. I remember that R’ Manny Wolf was particular about this. He was one of the first.

Mechanech Rabbi Aharon Halperin: “Many ask what the source is for traveling to the Rebbe for a bar mitzva and I say it’s simply logical. There is no better time to be with the Rebbe than the day a person enters

***Mechanech Rabbi Aharon Halperin:
“Many ask what the source is for traveling to the Rebbe for a bar mitzva and I say it’s simply logical. There is no better time to be with the Rebbe than the day a person enters into the ol mitzvos!”***

into the ol mitzvos!

I understand that financial reasons play a role here.

Rabbi Segal: It’s not something to hide. On the contrary, it’s important to say it clearly. The way bar mitzvos are celebrated lately (with parties, etc.) doesn’t add honor

or health to the parents. It’s extremely expensive and many families can’t afford it. This is definitely a reason that motivates many parents to take their son to the Rebbe for his bar mitzva instead of celebrating lavishly at home.

Aside from the money that is saved and the educational-Chassidic value, there’s another important factor, namely, the father-son bonding that takes place on a week-long trip like this. This along with the exposure to a new world is something that will remain with the child forever and enable him to grow up to be a Chassid, Yerei Shamayim, and Lamdan, rather than it just being the formal wording for the traditional blessing.

I’ve heard parents say that this week they spent with their son in such an atmosphere gave them and their child so much.

When the boy returns, he has a small celebration in yeshiva with his friends, parents and grandparents. He tells them all of his experiences and of his feelings when he put on t’fillin in 770. There’s nothing like it.

Rabbi Aharon Halperin, mechanech of seventh grade adds:

“Those who went to the Rebbe didn’t go because I suggested it, but I did encourage it. In most cases, it was the parents’ initiative. This year was a turning point with an atmosphere of ‘we’re going to the Rebbe,’ at least in my classroom. It started with a group of Chassidische boys who went to the Rebbe, and this inspired others to go too, even some who hadn’t considered going.

“I see that when the boys come back, they are completely different. Considering the showy celebrations made for bar mitzvos that are lacking in good taste, along with the inyan of being with the Rebbe, all these components together have strengthened the phenomenon and I say: more power to it!



Rabbi Halperin