

IGNITING SOULS

*Five moving stories about Jewish souls which were awakened by men and young students who traveled to distant parts to make a seider for tourists from Eretz Yisroel. * Stories from Peru, India, and Turkey – Pesach 5762*

BY SHNEUR ZALMAN BERGER



THE LONELINESS OF A JEWISH FAMILY

More than 200 Israelis joined a *seider* which took place in the tourist city of Intalia, Turkey. They were all tourists from Israel except for one local Jewish family. The *seider* was organized by *shluchim* Alon Chakshur and his wife Iris, together with Chemdi Gantz and his wife, who came because of the *seider* which had been made there for the first time last year by Eliyahu Segal.

During their stay in Intalia, the *shluchim* made it their business to strengthen this one Jewish family which was alone all year. On one of the days of *Chol HaMoed*, the *shluchim* and their wives went to visit the Alys family, where they were greeted by the father, Eli, his wife and two sons, ages 10 and 14, the father's sister and two cousins in their twenties.

In the course of the conversation which ensued, it turned out that the adults spoke fluent *Ivrit*, while the children didn't know a word of Hebrew. They talked about themselves and it turned out that Eli

and his family had left Istanbul, Turkey twelve years ago and made *aliya*. But making a living was tough, and they returned to their birthplace, Turkey, where he worked in one of the hotels that catered to Israelis. An employee who spoke *Ivrit* was in demand in the hotels of Intalia.

Two million Moslems live in Intalia, and every month about 100,000 tourists visit from all over the world, among them around 7000 Israelis. Although many Israelis visit the city, there is no Jewish community or *shul*. There is no kosher food to be had, so the Alys family were cut off from Judaism. The little they remembered was from the time they lived in Istanbul and Bat Yam.

The *shluchim* describe the rush of emotions in the intimate conversation with the Alys family: "We divided into two groups, the older ones sat with Chemdi Gantz and Iris Chakshur, while the cousins and the children spoke with Alon Chakshur.

Eli and his wife spoke about how much they missed Eretz Yisroel and

how they wanted to leave everything and go back. Eli's sister expressed her pain over being married to a Moslem, who made her life miserable until she left him. One of the cousins admitted that he was married to a Moslem woman and had children.

The *shluchim* hung a picture of the Rebbe in the living room, and taught the family how to prepare a Shabbos table, light candles and make *Kiddush*.

Alon sat on the porch with Eli's two sons and taught them the Alef-Beis with the help of one of the cousins who translated. He taught them how to say *Krias Shma* and the importance of saying it, and then he explained why they were different from the two million Moslems living in Turkey. He explained to them the severity of marrying a Moslem, since the Torah forbids it. The cousin who translated, burst into tears. He was studying in a local Moslem university and knew this Moslem woman a long time.

When he had calmed down, he asked, "How are we different than Moslems?" Alon explained that every

Jew has a holy soul that is literally a part of G-d Above, and that every Jew is the son of the Creator of the world. The young man accepted what he said and decided to leave the Moslem woman.

In the meantime, the young boy sat at the end of the room and studied the first line of *Shma* by heart. It was so moving to see how he accepted the importance of the verse wholeheartedly and decided to memorize it.

“Before we left Intalia for Eretz Yisroel, we went to say goodbye to Eli at work. We gave him two *mezuzos* so he could put them up on the door of the house and the store. Choked with tears, he thanked us, ‘You don’t know what an inspiration

you’ve been to my family. We were completely cut off and now, you’ve breathed new life into us. May G-d bless you.’

“Before we left, we asked him when the last time was that he had put on *t’fillin*. He didn’t even know what *t’fillin* were! After explaining the *mitzva*, he put on *t’fillin* for the first time in his life! We parted with hugs and great emotion, and knew that a few more souls had been ignited in the *z’chus* of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach.”

AWAKENING

The Israelis who travel to India, don’t go merely to tour. Many of them go to search for spiritual meaning. Their souls are parched, but they don’t know why, so they try

to find peace in cults and mysticism, *r”l*. In recent years, *shluchim* in India have been working on *schlepping* out Jewish souls from impurity, and returning them to their Jewish roots.

This year, Boruch Shinhav, his wife Rochel Tova and their two children, went to Manili in India for Pesach, in order to run a public *seider* for Israeli tourists. Tamim Daniel Kalev and Chaim Zaklos went with them.

The trip entailed endless difficulties. When they woke up on their first day in India, they realized to their horror, that the case holding their money, tickets, and passports had been stolen.

“Without money you can’t even begin to think about acquiring what



you need for the *seider*,” says Boruch. “It was the Rebbe’s answer that cheered us up: **‘We just don’t know why a test is arranged for a Jewish man or woman, but when they decide with conviction to overcome it, Hashem helps, as it is explained by the Sages in a number of places, and surely, as far as you are concerned, the difficulties are fewer than in another place, and may Hashem give you the right idea with blessings for good news in all the above.’**”

There was only one telephone in their village, and getting outside help seemed an impossibility. But they made their efforts and managed to get monetary aid from abroad through the local bank, thus enabling them to begin organizing the *seider* with the help of young Israelis.

The *seider* in Manili was a tremendously spiritual experience. Many of the Israelis who were in India for long periods of time and were cut off from a life of *mitzvos*, were inspired to do *mitzvos*. For example, there was a group who took it upon themselves to eat *kosher l’Pesach*. They were the *shluchim*’s guests for the entire holiday, eating *matzos* and also learning a lot about Judaism and *chassidus*. Needless to say, parting was most difficult.

A MOVING CONFESSION

During the *seider* in Manili, Tomer got up and asked to be allowed to tell a bit about himself. All listened silently as he began his tale. He was obviously not religious, “but half a year ago, I decided to put on *t’fillin* every morning, no matter what. I sometimes lose track of time on the long hikes I take in the mountains, and one morning, which I thought was Friday, I put on *t’fillin* only to realize that I had made a mistake and it was Shabbos!

“I was miserable about this, and

just put my head down between my knees and cried like a child. When Shabbos was over, I decided to fast for 24 hours to atone for this sin. However, I still didn’t feel right, and after the fast I helped two Israelis cross a wide river, something that was personally dangerous for me to do. I felt that in the merit of this, perhaps the Creator of the world had forgiven me, but now that I’m

meeting religious Jews – tell me – did G-d truly forgive me?”

The question was met with utter silence. All were moved by his story. We told him that he was certainly forgiven, and we encouraged him to continue and be sure to put on *t’fillin* every single day. We could see that our answer reassured him.



Cooking for the *seider* in Manili, India



R’ Shimshon Goldstein (second from the left) with the *bachurim* who came to help out

Chaim Zaklos at a seudas hoda'ah for a family who was saved from a terrible accident



FROM WHENCE WILL MY HELP COME?

The T'mimim Mendy Dubravsky, Shmulik Greenfeld, and Tomer Rotem had nearly despaired. They were standing at check-in in Kennedy airport, trying to get their luggage on the flight to Peru. Their luggage contained bottles of wine, grape juice, *matzos*, *Hagados*, and all they would need for the public *seider* they planned on making in Peru. The problem was their luggage was overweight and they were asked to pay extra for it, yet they had no money.

Mendy relates, "We saw no success from our explaining how this luggage was meant to enable Jews to celebrate their holiday. We were pressured because we were told that the flight was leaving and if we didn't pay, the luggage couldn't go, and we would remain in the U.S.

"I went outside and had a strong feeling that the first Jew I would see would help me. Not a minute passed and a car pulled up and a distinguished looking man got out. I didn't know if he was Jewish or not, but I decided to try my luck. "Are you Jewish," I asked. He said he was, and so I said, "Then please help us!" and I told him what was going on.

"The man looked at me quizzically, thought for a moment, and then took out his wallet and give

me the money I needed."

"HOLINESS DOES NOT MOVE FROM ITS PLACE"

"I couldn't believe it," says Tomer Roten, "when I saw Nir among the Israelis who came to greet us in Coscu, Peru. I had to rub my eyes in order to see the *bachur* who, just half a year ago, had begun getting involved in Judaism, and now wore a *kippa*, *tzitzis*, and had even grown a beard. He still continued working at a popular restaurant in Coscu, and also did guided hikes in the mountains.

"Nir's story begins half a year ago, on Erev Rosh HaShana 5762. I had gone to Coscu on *shlichus*. On the night before Rosh HaShana, my friends, Israeli tourists, and I went to Nir's restaurant to prepare the place for the Rosh HaShana meal that would take place the next day for hundreds of Israelis. We cooked and *kashered* the place.



Mivtza T'fillin on the streets of Coscu

"It was towards morning when we were in middle of our work, that I suggested to Nir and some others that we say *Slichos* together. They agreed, and I was the *chazan*. I remember thinking how this was the first time that *Slichos* were being said in far-off Coscu.

"Nir seemed to read my mind, for at the end of *Slichos* he said to me, 'Did you know that this place is a *beit kneset*?' I said, yes, now that we've *davened* here the place is sacred and with G-d's help we would also make it a place where *t'fillin* are put on and Torah is taught.

"But he said, 'No, you don't understand. This place was a *beit kneset* 400 years ago! An archeologist came here recently. Her specialty is the Spanish conquest of Peru at the time of the Spanish Inquisition. According to her findings, this building served as a *beit kneset* for the *anusim* (forced converts) who lived in Peru.

'Would you look at this! I rent this restaurant from the church, which still benefits on account of the Jews who were *moser nefesh*, but now we have transformed the place once again into a Jewish *beit kneset*.. Holiness does not move from its place.'

"Nir was very moved by the fact that we said *Slichos* in his restaurant, and on the spot he decided to keep the restaurant kosher!

"The holidays of Tishrei passed, and my friends and I left Coscu, but Nir has kept up his connection with the Chabad *shliach* in Peru, Rabbi S.Z. Blumenfeld. So it's not surprising that when I returned to Coscu a half a year later and saw a different Nir, that I was very excited. Needless to say he helped us with our preparations for the *seider*, which was attended by hundreds of Jews."



AN URGENT PLEA FOR HELP

The renowned *mashpia* in Jerusalem, HaRav **Nota Shlomo z"l Wilhelm**, was all of 53 years of age when his body succumbed to the treacherous *machala* with which he was afflicted.

During the course of a year, his condition worsened daily, and on Erev Shavuos he passed away, leaving behind an *almana* and unmarried *y'somim*. In accordance with the directive of Lubavitcher Rabbanim in Jerusalem, a fund was established to aid and succor the family of the late Rabbi Wilhelm z"l.

Rabbanim in charge of the fund:

HaRav Avraham Michoel Halperin,

Rav of the French Hill

HaRav Z'ev Dov Slonim,

Rabbi of Central Jerusalem

HaRav Shimon Elituv,

Rabbi of the Binyamin Regional Council

HaRav Binyomin Zilbershtrom,

Rabbi of the *Shul* in Shikkun Chabad

HaRv Tuvia Blau,

Principal of Beis Chana H.S.

HaRav Levi Rosenberg,

member of the Bnei Brak Chabad Yeshiva's *hanhala*

HaRav Asher Solomon,

Lubavitcher *askan* in Jerusalem

The committee members are asking all Lubavitchers to donate \$10 a month for 36 months by way of a standing bank order. Forms are available with committee members.

FOR CONTRIBUTIONS & FURTHER INFO.

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* Telephone in Eretz Yisroel: 052-770-600

* By mail: Wilhelm Fund, POB 57400, Jerusalem

* Credit Card: Tel # 1-800-22-36-36 number 1273

* Direct Deposit: Mercantile Discount Bank, Jerusalem, Bank 17, Branch # 635, Account # 294-411

* Wire Transfer: Bank Code: bardilita xxx, Branch Name: Mea shaarim, Acct. Name: Keren-vilhelem No: 294-441