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for Sukkos.*

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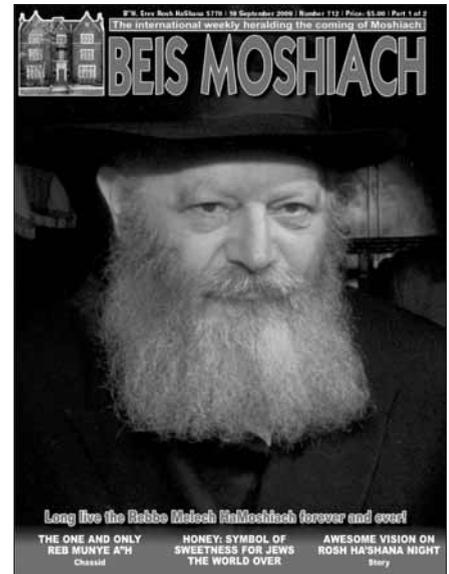
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THE ONE AND ONLY REB MUNYE A"H

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CLOSE TO THE HEAVENS

Sichos In English

TWO PROPHETS, TWO MODES OF EXPRESSION

The word Haazinu, generally translated as “listen,” literally means “give ear.”

In that vein, our Sages [1] compares Moshe’s call: [2] “Listen O heavens, and I will speak; earth, hear the words of my mouth,” with Yeshayahu’s prophecy: [3] “Hear O heavens..., listen O earth.”

They explain that Moshe was on a level of spiritual refinement which had elevated him until he was “close to the heavens, and far from the earth.” Therefore, he was able to address the heavens at close range.

Yeshayahu, by contrast, despite the heights of personal growth which he had attained, [4] was still “close to the earth, and far from the heavens.” And thus he used wording that reflected his own level.

A REFLECTION OF SPIRITUAL REALITY

The sages of the Kabbala explain that there are four spiritual worlds: Atzilus, Bria, Yetzira, and Asiya.

Atzilus refers to a realm of existence which is at one with G-d.

Although this realm contains entities whose existence is limited and defined, they do not feel separate from Him. Even as they exist as defined entities, they feel themselves as no more than an extension of G-dliness.

In the worlds of Bria, Yetzira, and Asiya, by contrast, there is a sense of individual identity and self. Therefore, Atzilus is referred to as the “heavens,” while these other realms are referred to as “earth.”

Moshe Rabbeinu is described as a neshama d’Atzilus, [5] an individual whose perception paralleled that of the world of Atzilus. Even as he existed in a physical body, he perceived everything as an extension of G-dliness.

This is possible, because the limitations of space do not apply to the spiritual realms; they are not separate and removed from our material world. As one lives in this world, one can feel the direct awareness of G-d and the closeness to Him which characterizes the world of Atzilus.

This was Moshe’s spiritual height; he could speak to the heavens with familiarity, for he was on that level himself.

Yeshayahu, by contrast, saw G-d from afar.

The angels whom he describes proclaim: [6] “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the L-rd of Hosts,” and as explained in Chassidus, kadosh, “holy” also has the implication: distinct and separate.

Within the world of Bria, even the loftiest angels feel separate from G-d, for they already have a sense of self.

As such, it was the earth which Yeshayahu addressed from close range.

FUSING THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

Questions, nevertheless, arise: Why did Moshe address the earth as well as the heavens? And why did Yeshayahu address his words to the heavens as well as the earth? Why did they not confine themselves to speaking to the realm to which they related closely?

The resolution of these questions depends on a fundamental tenant of Judaism. We must relate to both the earth and the heavens.

For, material and spiritual reality are meant to be connected, instead of being left as skew lines.

The core of Judaism is drawing down spiritual reality until it relates to worldly experience (Moshe’s contribution) and elevating worldly experience until a bond with the spiritual is established (Yeshayahu’s contribution). [7]

Indeed, the two initiatives can be seen as phases in a sequence.

By revealing the Torah, Moshe endowed every individual with the potential to rise above worldly reality and become “close to the heavens.” Yeshayahu developed the connection further and made it possible for a person to experience the spiritual heights of being “close to heavens,” while he is “close to the earth,” involved in the mundane details of material experience.

TWO PHASES IN TIME

Parshas Haazinu is always read either on the Shabbos before Yom Kippur, in the Ten Days of T’shuva, or on the Shabbos following Yom Kippur, before the holiday of Sukkos.

Herein, lies a connection to the above concepts.

Our Sages [8] describe the days preceding Yom Kippur with the verse: [9] “Seek G-d while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.”

At this time, everyone has the potential to feel close to G-d, and

Moshe Rabbeinu is described as a neshama d'Atzilus, an individual whose perception paralleled that of the world of Atzilus. Even as he existed in a physical body, he perceived everything as an extension of G-dliness.

therefore the Arizal says: [10] “When a person does not cry during the Ten Days of T’shuva, his soul is not complete.”

Reading Parshas Haazinu before Yom Kippur highlights how each of us is “close to the heavens.”

After Yom Kippur, our Divine service takes an earthward turn, following the motif alluded to in the verse: [11] “And Yaakov went on his way.”

Yaakov, a comprehensive soul, is the symbol of the entire Jewish people.

“Going on his way” refers to tending to personal matters, and in this way, fusing spiritual truth with our ordinary experience as epitomized in the verse: [12] “Know Him in all your ways.”

In particular, there are two phases to this motif:

observing mitzvos as they are encloded in material entities - this is the message of the holiday of Sukkos, [13] and then a further stage of descent, when after the holiday season is completed, we return to the norms of worldly reality.

Reading Parshas Haazinu after Yom Kippur underscores that being “close to the heavens” is only a starting point for our Divine service which must be continued throughout the coming year.

TWO PHASES IN DEVELOPMENT

In a more particular sense, the heavens can be interpreted as an

analogy for the Torah.

The Torah is G-d’s word, and through its study, a person comes “close to the heavens,” near to spiritual truth.

Mitzvos, by contrast, are often described with the analogy of the earth, for their observance involves worldly matters.

In the first stage of a person’s spiritual development, a person should be “close to heaven,” submerged in Torah study.

Afterwards, he must come to the realization that “study is not the essential, deed is.” [14] And he must take up his part in shouldering the mission of making our material world a dwelling for G-d.

These two phases are reflected in the development of mankind as a whole.

In the present era, our Sages explain that study takes precedence over deed. [15] In the Era of the Redemption, the culmination of our human experience, however, deed will take precedence. [16]

For, in that era, man’s Divine service will have established a complete connection between heaven and earth, and we will perceive the G-dliness which permeates every element of our existence.

Adapted from: Likkutei Sichos, Vol. I, p. 415; Vol. IX, p. 204; Vol. XX, p. 266

Notes:

1. Sifri, commenting on Deuteronomy

32:1.

2. Deuteronomy, *ibid.*

3. 1:2.

4. See Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*, ch. 7, which describes the level of spiritual refinement a prophet must attain. And among the prophets themselves, Yeshayahu was considered on a high level. See *Chagiga* 13b.

5. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XXIV, p. 630 and sources cited there.

6. 6:3.

7. In this vein, we can appreciate the distinction between Moshe’s revelation of the Torah, and the “word of G-d” spoken by other prophets (see Rambam, *Commentary to the Mishna* (*Sanhedrin* 10:1), the seventh and eighth of the *Thirteen Principles of Faith*).

The Torah’s fundamental contribution is the revelation of G-d’s truth. The thrust of prophecy by contrast is to exhort mankind to fulfill the truth of the Torah (see Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 9:2), *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XIX, p. 177ff).

8. *Rosh HaShana* 18a.

9. *Isaiah* 55:6.

10. See *Pri Eitz Chayim*, *Shaar HaShofar*, ch. 5.

11. *Genesis* 18:19. See the series of *maamarim* entitled *V’Kacha* 5637, ch. 96.

12. *Proverbs* 3:6. See Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Deios* 3:3.

13. See the essay entitled “Feeling at Home Amidst G-dliness” (*Timeless Patterns in Time*, Vol. I, p. 72ff).

14. *Avos* 1:17.

15. *Kiddushin* 40b. Our Sages, moreover, emphasize the connection between the two, explaining that the reason study takes precedence is because “study leads to deed.”

16. Or *HaTorah*, the beginning of *Parshas VaYigash*.

THE TENTH MAN AND THE SHLIACH

By Nosson Avrohom

Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

Everyone in the Chabad community of Eilat knows Sammy Ochana, chief fire investigator with the city's fire and rescue service. Counted among the core supporters of the local shluchim, he comes to daven in shul every day, participates in farbrengens, and his children even learn in the Chabad institutions. He has a strong feeling of affection for the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, and his teachings. About six months ago, this great love took on a more deep, serious, and concrete dimension. As he tell his story, which took place in the picturesque southern Australian city of Adelaide, his voice fills with emotion and his eyes glisten with tears.

* * *

“Every three years, Australia hosts a special worldwide Olympic-style tournament for firefighters in a variety of sporting events. All the various tournament competitors are full-time firemen. This year, the tournament was held in Adelaide, and I was a member of the delegation from Eretz Yisroel, appointed to be in charge of all the team's logistical and

administrative arrangements. We arrived in the city filled with vitality and a desire to return home to Eretz Yisroel with some victories. The firefighters underwent a lot of training leading up to the big day. They were chosen with the utmost deliberation, and now the moment of truth had come - to demonstrate their ability and to win.

“Indeed, success did shine upon the members of our delegation. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves, the atmosphere was marvelous, and the Australian hospitality was complete. One day followed another, and soon it was Friday. Within our extended delegation, I was the only one who strictly observed the Shabbos. Never once in my entire life has there been even one Shabbos when I didn't make Kiddush and HaMotzi or daven in shul on Friday night and Shabbos morning. Now what do I do?

“After contemplating briefly on the matter, I left the rest of the delegation, went down into the lobby, and asked the clerk at the

front desk if he could direct me to the nearest Jewish synagogue. He immediately replied that there was one in the center of town.

“I happily left, satisfied that there was in fact a synagogue and a Jewish community in the city, where I could observe Shabbos even while in a foreign country. My enthusiasm soon turned to bitter disappointment. It turned out that this Gentile clerk didn't know the slightest difference between a 'synagogue' and *l'havdil* a Christian place of worship, and he directed me to a monastery. I retraced my steps, went back to the hotel front desk and told the clerk of his mistake, explaining that I am a Jew in search of a Jewish house of worship. He thought for a moment, and then admitted that he knew of no such place. I started to worry. Shabbos was coming, and I was concerned over the prospect that I might have nowhere to go. All of my teammates were on the athletics field, while I was searching for the Jewish community.

“I walked around for four hours in the center of town, hoping that I might come across a synagogue somewhere, but to no avail. The Shabbos Queen was about to announce her arrival. What should I do? Should I stay in my hotel room alone for the whole Shabbos? I returned to my hotel room, and tried repeatedly to call the head of the local Jewish community, whose telephone number I had obtained earlier, but there was no answer. When the time reached six-thirty in the evening, I went out on the porch of my hotel room, and said aloud, ‘Ribbono Shel Olam, all I want to do is keep Shabbos – am I asking so much?’

“I headed back to my room, sad and frustrated to an extent that I couldn't remember for many years. I knew with absolute certainty that



Sammy Ochana (center) flanked by two of his colleagues

there was a small Jewish community in the city somewhere, but I couldn't believe that it would be so difficult to find it. Then, as I returned to my room, I suddenly noticed with some amazement that the light on my room telephone was flashing. Who could be calling me? To my surprise, the wife of the head of the local Jewish community, a Mrs. Wechsler, was on the line. She had just returned home, and when she noticed on her call display that I had tried several times to reach them, she immediately called me back. She was happy to hear of the arrival of the delegation from Eretz Yisroel, and she was pleased to invite me to their home.

"She told me with great enthusiasm that she had seen on local television how firemen from Eretz Yisroel had also come to participate in the competition, and she gave me her address.

"I didn't waste a moment, and

It turned out that this Gentile clerk didn't know the slightest difference between a 'synagogue' and l'havdil a Christian place of worship, and he directed me to a monastery. I retraced my steps, and explained that I am a Jew in search of a Jewish house of worship. He thought for a moment, and then admitted that he knew of no such place.

within a few minutes, I had changed into my Shabbos clothes and excitedly went down to the lobby to call a cab. I paid the driver an extra twenty dollars to make certain that he would bring me to the home of the local Jewish community head as quickly as possible in time for Shabbos. The

woman's husband, Mark, was then already at the synagogue, where they had begun the Mincha and Maariv prayers even before the onset of Shabbos. His wife gave me directions how to find the synagogue, which I did.

"Upon arriving at the synagogue, I introduced myself to

After walking for about twenty minutes without finding the synagogue, I realized that I had taken a wrong turn somewhere. This was a well-to-do neighborhood – all of the houses and streets were amazingly identical; even the planted trees were all the same height.

the community head, who was very happy that I had come. He had another guest who had also come from Eretz Yisroel and was staying in the city.

“The Shabbos meal at his home was very interesting. I quickly understood that he was not Orthodox. He courteously explained to me what I could eat in accordance with my kashrus standards and what I couldn’t. For example, he showed me that the challos and wine had mehadrin hechsherim, while there were other things that I simply couldn’t eat. The meal itself was conducted in a very warm and pleasant atmosphere. We spoke about the weekly Torah portion and then had a nice conversation. It was all quite enjoyable.

“At the end of the seuda, I was already very tired and exhausted. While it was only half past ten, after all the running around that I had endured that day, including all the emotional tension, I was simply unwilling to walk back all the way to the hotel, a journey that had taken the cab driver at high speed twenty-five minutes to make. I waited for the appropriate opportunity, and when it presented itself, I asked with some embarrassment if I could spend the night at his home, and he gladly agreed to honor my request. He

was a very nice fellow, and he showed me the room where I would sleep. He pointed out that this was his daughter’s room, but she was now in Yerushalayim, whereas I had come from Eretz Yisroel to sleep in this room...

“In the same breath, he added that he was planning to travel the next morning to Sydney with his wife, and therefore he asked his son to wake me up in the morning and walk with me to the synagogue in order that I shouldn’t get lost on the way.

“When I entered his son’s room the following morning, I saw that he was sound asleep. I didn’t have the heart to wake him up from his slumber, and I decided to try and walk there, as I had done the previous evening. I left the house, and after walking for about twenty minutes without finding the synagogue, I realized that I had taken a wrong turn somewhere. This was a well-to-do neighborhood – all of the houses and streets were amazingly identical; even the planted trees were all the same height.

“Minutes turned into hours, and I was drenched with sweat. Every street had a certain object that reminded me of the direction to the synagogue, but after walking for a while, I realized each time that I was still lost. I tried to turn

back, but this just got me even more confused. There wasn’t a living soul outside – only me and the chirping of the morning birds. I had already considered just going back to the home of my host, but even this path had been lost to me. I stood there in the middle of the street totally bewildered and puzzled, looking around with a growing sense of panic and helplessness. While I eventually did manage to meet a few people, none of them had the slightest idea what a ‘synagogue’ was.

“I remember those moments of standing in the middle of the street in utter desperation as if it was happening right now. It is emblazoned in my memory and has never left me. I lifted my head heavenward and cried, ‘Rebbe, how it can be that you have no representative here? Anywhere in the world where I was – and I did a lot of traveling on a mission with the fire department – I saw many Chabad Houses. How is it possible for a Jew looking for a synagogue to encounter so many difficulties!?’ I didn’t intend to blurt this out. It just seemed to come from the depths of my heart. I somehow felt that the Rebbe was right there with me.

“What happened next was nothing less than an actual miracle. I get shivers up my spine every time I recall the moment.

“I walked another few steps forward, feeling absolutely beside myself and distraught, thinking that perhaps I should simply make the several hours’ walk back to my hotel, when suddenly I felt someone tapping me on the shoulder. I turned around and saw a dignified-looking Jew who said to me, ‘We’ve been waiting for you, you’re the tenth man...’ When I saw him, I burst uncontrollably into bitter tears. I stood there for several minutes, crying like a baby, not like a high-ranking rescue

worker. I simply couldn't calm down.

"He introduced himself as the Rebbe's shliach in town, and then he asked why I was crying. When I entered the shul, I saw nine Jews standing and waiting for a minyan. They heard my story in brief, and then they told me something that truly amazed me. There are usually exactly ten people who come for prayer services, but on this particular Shabbos, one of them had to be elsewhere and they thought that they would have to cancel the minyan. However, the shliach was determined, and he promised that the tenth man would come, stating that the Rebbe had sent him to this city and he would make certain to send him the tenth man as well.

"The shul was situated in a

basement, and thus it would be impossible to spot it by walking down the street. After davening, we sat down together for the Shabbos meal. At long last, I felt what a Shabbos seuda really was.

"There were other guests sitting around the table, one of whom was a former news correspondent with Galei Tzahal, the Israel Defense Forces radio network, who developed a close connection with the shliach and Chabad. The shliach urged me to stay for the Seudas Shlishis. I felt an uplifting of the spirit, reminiscent of those Shabbosim in Eilat that I know so well, the sichos of the Rebbe, the words of Torah and emuna, stories about the Rebbe – all in an atmosphere of holiness and purity. I could eat everything on the table without any concern. I thought to

myself: 'What I had to go through in order for this shliach to get his minyan... It was amazing to see how the Rebbe takes care of his shluchim and helps them every step of the way...'

"G-d Alm-ghty saw his self-sacrifice to obtain a minyan, my self-sacrifice to keep Shabbos according to halacha, and made the connection between us. I took great pleasure in sitting and listening to the shliach, mainly the stories and experiences from the period he personally spent with the Rebbe. The seuda was so interesting and captivating that it came to an end only when it was time to daven Mincha.

"When I returned that night to the hotel, the worried team members asked where I had been. I smiled and told them that while they were competing on the playing fields, I was privileged to see G-dliness with my very eyes..."

* * *

Sammy Ochana concludes his story with great enthusiasm:

"The Rebbe is *chai v'kayam*. This is not some story that happened decades ago, rather something that took place just now. This is a story that I take with me everywhere I go, and I've already told it to all my colleagues at work, my friends, and the members of my family. The most amazing part of this story is the video clip that we saw that Motzai Shabbos in Adelaide, in which the Rebbe spoke about the great importance of "*Hachnasas Orchim*" for people coming from afar – and among the things the Rebbe said was that we have to wait at the door to greet them..."

"The shliach looked at me, and we understood at that moment how much everything in this world is by Divine Providence. I came from afar, and the shliach really was waiting for me at the door."

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יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

HOW A SHEPHERD EXAMINES HIS FLOCK

By Ofer Ziv

The legendary prayer “U’nesaneh Tokef” in light of Chassidus.

One of the most moving moments in the Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur davening is when the chazan finishes the piyut, *Melech Elyon*. A tense silence then fills the shul as the chazan starts to intone *U’nesaneh Tokef* ...

The congregants concentrate on the poignant words which describe the course of the judgment taking place during these fateful moments, up Above in the Heavenly Court. Hashem is sitting on His royal throne as judge.

And then there is the sound of the shofar. The angels rush about in terror and all of existence trembles and fearfully says, “Behold, the Day of Judgment! The heavenly hosts are to stand in judgment.”

At this critical time, when it seems that the sentence has

already been passed “and they will not be found meritorious in Your eyes in judgment,” we hear the chazan, in a conciliatory tone, like a son confessing to his father, recite: “Like a shepherd examines his flock, making the sheep pass under his staff, so do You cause to pass [before You] every living soul, and You count and, reckon, and are mindful of [them], and You allocate the fixed portion for the needs of all Your creatures, and inscribe the verdict of their judgment.”

In the Heavenly Court can be heard the prayers of Israel, the holy sheep, as the “baa”ing of lambs. The bleating of sheep arouses the feeling of compassion which is able to overcome the midas ha’din (attribute of judgment), sweetening the harsh decrees, transforming them to

mercy and decreeing that the Jewish people be written into the Book of Life, “who will live ... who will be at rest ... who shall be tranquil ... who shall enjoy well-being ... who shall be rich ... who shall be exalted.”

THE POWER OF COMPASSION

Why do we need the mida of rachamim – mercy - (the mida of Yaakov Avinu) in order to overcome the midas ha’din? Doesn’t the mida of chesed – kindness - (the mida of Avrohom Avinu) have the ability to eradicate the accusing forces of the midas ha’din? And what is special about sheep that when we mention them we are able to arouse the midas ha’rachamim up Above?

The Mittler Rebbe, in his *Toras Chaim*, explains that every judgment is actually a contest between the midas ha’chesed and the midas ha’din:

The mida of chesed is infinite. It does not discern any flaw and from the perspective of chesed, goodness and kindness should be showered on all, without exception. The midas ha’chesed would even want to openly bestow goodness on the wicked.

The mida of din looks for reasons not to give, and not to acquiesce. To the midas ha’din, any little sin that man does makes him undeserving of G-dly good, spiritual and physical.

Then there is the third mida, that of rachamim. It is comes from a higher source and therefore has the ability to counter the claims of the other two middos. On the one hand, it cancels the midas ha’chesed and maintains that the person who veered from the proper path does not deserve to receive G-dly beneficence, and even deserves to be punished. On the other hand, it

cancels the midas ha'din and maintains that even though the person is undeserving, he should be pitied and his harsh sentence should be commuted, and he should even be given generously from G-d's open, full hand.

This is how the mida of rachamim is greater than that of chesed. For the midas ha'chesed, even in its full strength, cannot succeed in breaking the midas ha'din, which will continue to forcefully maintain that the person deserves severe punishment. The midas ha'rachamim, whose source is higher than that of chesed and of g'vura/din, has the ability to actually cancel the din.

Although the midas ha'rachamim cancels the mida of chesed too, for it agrees with din that by rights, the person deserves a punishment and not a reward, it inclines towards chesed. In the final judgment, chesed will triumph over din. From the verses, "The merciful One, for Your chesed has not ended," and "Remember Hashem, Your mercy and kindness," we learn that after the mida of rachamim gets involved in judgment, the sentence will be inclined towards the mida of chesed.

The Mittlerer Rebbe explains that the midas ha'rachamim has a special power which the mida of chesed does not have, and that is the power to **sweeten** the midas ha'din. After it sweetens the midas ha'din, the midas ha'rachamim can incline the final judgment towards chesed.

SHEEP AROUSE MERCY

When we are being judged,
"with the mighty holiness of the



day, for it is awe-inspiring and fearsome,” the author of *U’nesaneh Tokef* wants to arouse the trait of mercy. He does this by comparing Hashem to a shepherd and the Jewish people to sheep.

Sheep are considered merciful by nature and therefore, their bleating arouses the mercy of those who hear them, more than the sounds of other animals. So too, the Jewish people are merciful by nature for we are “*rachmonim b’nei rachmonim*,” and the voice of Israel which is called the “kol Yaakov,” arouses the *mida* of *rachamim* in the upper worlds.

Another similarity between sheep and the Jewish people is the utter *bittul*, the nature to submit:

Sheep are unique in their nature of submission. Although the ox allows a yoke to be placed upon it, it sometimes gores, and a cow sometimes acts contrary. Even goats occasionally butt with their horns. They all have a streak of rebellion. Sheep, though, are very soft and submissive and even when they are being shorn of their wool, “as a sheep before the shearers, it is silent.” Other animals would not be quiet while being shorn.

Yisroel also submissively accepts the terrible *galus* in which the nations of the world oppress it. So too spiritually, the source of the souls of Yisroel in the *s’fira* of *malchus* is called “*Rochel*” (sheep). When *malchus* descends and it is possible for external forces to be nourished from it through the highly constricted channels of spiritual energy that split off from it, this process is parallel to the shearing of wool from the sheep. The divine aspect of “*Rochel*” (*malchus* as it descends into the lower worlds) does not wish to provide nourishment for the forces that oppose *Eloku*s. It does not want to be channeled to the outside

forces but it is silent and bears its suffering quietly, humbly accepting the decree of the king.

This comparison of the Jewish people to sheep arouses mercy up Above, and as mentioned earlier, it is only the *mida* of *rachamim* that has the ability to sweeten judgment so that the power of *chesed* triumphs and the person emerges meritorious.

MATAT WITHOUT THE TAT

It says, “All created beings pass before You [one by one], like a flock of sheep.” In *Mishnayos Rosh HaShana* it says that on *Rosh HaShana*, all people pass before Him like a flock of sheep, as it says (*T’hillim* 33:15), “He forms their hearts all together, He perceives all their doings.” The *Bartenura* explains, “Like the sheep that are led out through a small door, one after the other, in order to tithe the flock, and two may not exit as one, as it says, ‘He forms their hearts all together, He perceives etc.’ Even though they pass before him one by one, they are still all viewed with one look.”

Why are the Jewish people referred to here as “*b’nei maron*” and not as “*b’nei tzon*,” a more direct way of referring to sheep?

Chazal say (*Chagiga* 13) that there is an angel by the name of *MaTaT* and he ties knots for his maker with the prayers of the Jewish people. He is the angel appointed to raise up our prayers on high. This angel is also called *Matatron*, and it is explained in *Chassidus* that the two letters *tes* (“*tat*” which are each numerically equivalent to 9) in the name of the angel correspond to the 18 *brachos* in the *Shmoneh Esrei*. That is because this is his job, to take our prayers and refine them so that they are worthy of

rising before the Heavenly Throne.

However, there is a down side to this. On the one hand, it’s a great thing that this angel refines the prayers and makes them worthy to rise before the Heavenly Throne. On the other hand, we know that when Hashem told *Moshe* He would send an angel before the Jewish people, *Moshe* refused and said, “If You do not lead us, do not take us up from here.” *Moshe* did not want an angel to be the intermediary between the Jewish people and Hashem, for angels are particular about judgment, looking to see whether a person is worthy that his prayers be accepted in mercy. Hashem is not as particular.

This is why the Jewish people are referred to as “*b’nei maron*.” We are asking Hashem in this prayer that since we are in the *Ten Days of Repentance*, regarding which it says, “seek Hashem when He is found,” i.e. Hashem Himself accepts our prayers, then “today You will accept our prayers with mercy and willingness.” You Hashem will accept them directly Yourself, and not through an angel.

This is hinted at in the word “*maron*,” which is comprised of the letters *Matatron* without the “*tat*.” On this day, our prayers go up directly to Hashem without the help of the angel who remains with the name “*maron*.”

When our prayers are accepted willingly, then the *mida* of *rachamim* is aroused and it sweetens judgment and increases *chesed* in the world. Before *Rosh HaShana* may we merit the increase of *chesed* and *rachamim* in the world with the *hisgalus* of our king, our *Moshiach*, now!

Based on a concept in the Siddur MaHaRiD, which is explained at length in Toras Chaim of the Mittlerer Rebbe, Parshas VaYeitzei and Parshas VaYishlach

HONEY: SYMBOL OF SWEETNESS FOR JEWS THE WORLD OVER

By Yitzchok Wagshul

Some *mitzvos* have universal appeal. Jews of all backgrounds proudly light Chanuka candles, for example, or participate—on some level—in a Passover *seder*. And who doesn't remember, if only from childhood, dipping an apple in honey on Rosh HaShana?

This age-old custom is so beloved because of its simple message of goodwill: the honey is understood by all to symbolize our wish for a good and sweet new year. Not surprisingly, the practice evokes warm smiles from Jews of all stripes—and can easily open the door to discussion about Judaism in general.

No one is better qualified to tell us so than the Schneerson family of Kfar Chabad. Because of its health benefits, the family used honey extensively in place of sugar, and, with 23 children (*kein ayin hara*)—the family is renowned for its size—this quickly became an expensive proposition. Around 28 years ago, Rabbi Moshe Zalman



“It’s amazing how a tiny bit of honey—I usually give out the smallest size, which only contains about 1/3 oz.—nevertheless opens people up so much.”

Schneorson z”l, a staunch Lubavitcher chassid and relative of the Rebbe, bought bees and began producing his own honey to save money. He gradually expanded the operation until today, the family business, Schneorson Honey, is Israel’s largest producer of organic, natural honey. The family runs a visitors’ center called Me’achorei Hadvash—“Behind the Honey”—with a fun program that attracts several busloads per day of schoolchildren and tour groups, who come from all over the country to visit the educational exhibits and learn how honey is produced. Along the way, the family has discovered many ways to teach about *Yiddishkait* and *Moshiach*.

Shoshi Rivkin, Reb Moshe Zalman z”l’s daughter, runs Me’achorei Hadvash. She feels the very fact that such an interesting and impressive operation—there is something inherently appealing and family-friendly about watching bees make honey—is located in a *chareidi* setting like Kfar Chabad and run by a chassidic family makes a positive impression on the exhibit’s many secular visitors. Beyond that, though, there is much about the lives and behavior of bees that suggests lessons for life in general, especially life as chassidim.

Here are some facts that help us to see these lessons, as well as to appreciate that, as the *pasuk* says (*T’hillim* 104:24), “How numerous are Your creations, O Hashem! You have made them all with wisdom”:

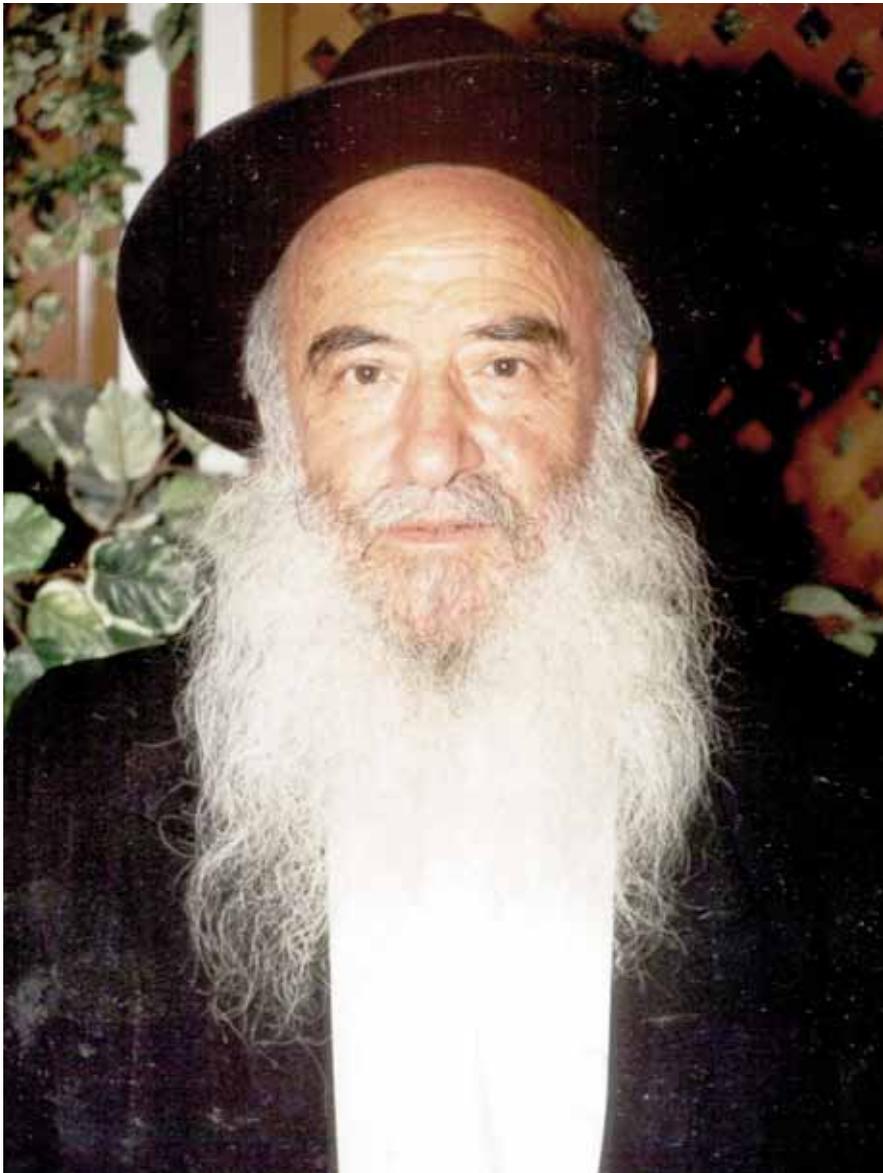
A typical beehive contains 30,000-50,000, sometimes up to 80,000, bees, all working together in perfect harmony. Every bee knows its function, and performs its task—cleaning honeycomb cells, feeding larvae, making wax, gathering food—on a fixed schedule. A single worker bee lives no more than around six weeks, producing only about a teaspoon of honey in its brief life; on any given food-gathering flight, a bee brings back to the hive less than 1/10 gram of nectar. But because of the unity and industriousness of the whole hive, the colony as a group functions with great efficiency and produces much honey. This in itself is a lesson in life: bees have no ego, and do not allow personal agendas to interfere with their goal. Each of us, too, has his or her own mission in life and in *avoda*, as well as our collective goal of accomplishing Hashem’s will and bringing *Moshiach*. If we could only work together with the same single-minded devotion and unity as bees, how much better could we accomplish our purpose?

Another noteworthy fact: It takes over 12,000 foraging flights by bees to produce enough honey for a one-kilogram jar (about 2.2 lbs.). Since an individual bee lives only about six weeks in the summer, and the seasonal output for an entire hive can reach up to about 40 kilograms (about 88 lbs.), it turns out that most of a bee’s work is actually done for the benefit of the next generation.

All the bees in a hive are ruled

by one “royal” bee: the queen. She is the most important bee in the hive, because her function is to lay eggs and perpetuate the life of the entire colony. In fact, every single one of the 80,000 other bees is her child; they are literally all siblings! Without a queen, the hive would die out, and the bees are all utterly devoted to her. Now, here is a fascinating fact about this royal bee: she is essentially no different from any other bee in the hive, and is selected by the ordinary bees to become their queen. Bees whose function it is to nurse the larvae feed one larva extra amounts of a special substance called “royal jelly,” and this causes the selected larva to develop into a queen. Thus, the queen is “anointed” by the colony, and the colony derives its very life from the queen. What a parallel to the concept of a Rebbe, to the concept of *Melech HaMoshiach*! In fact, perhaps this is another reason why we eat honey on Rosh HaShana, the holiday whose theme is the acceptance of Hashem’s *malchus* over us all.

Yedidia Flint, Reb Moshe Zalman z”l’s oldest daughter, lives in Crown Heights, where she is extremely active in *mivtzaim* and educating people about *Moshiach*. A true soldier, Mrs. Flint is one of those energetic people who always carries a supply of *Moshiach* and *Sheva Mitzvos* cards, never missing an opportunity to hand them out and discuss them. She distributes Schneorson honey, which comes in various varieties and in beautiful jars and gift packages, to local purchasers, and, since they are on hand, gives out small containers in her pre-Rosh HaShana *mivtzaim*. “It’s amazing how a tiny bit of honey—I usually give out the smallest size, which only contains about 1/3 oz.—nevertheless opens people up so much,” she says. “Everybody takes it with a broad



Rabbi Moshe Zalman Schneerson z"l

Recently, for example, she was doing *mitzvaim* on the boardwalk near Coney Island. A Russian gentleman shared his story. He himself did not appear particularly *frum*, but he told Mrs. Flint that, before the Soviets tried to wipe out Judaism (*r"l*), his grandparents and other relatives had had a connection with Lubavitch. Some thirty years ago, he recalled, when Rabbi Berel Lazar—the Rebbe's *shliach* and chief rabbi of Russia and the C.I.S.—first came to Russia from Italy, the latter did not speak Russian. The man befriended him and helped him learn the language; he remained close with the rabbi and gave him a good deal of assistance for some time thereafter. Eventually, this individual left Russia and came to New York. Before his departure, Rabbi Lazar gave him a letter—it seemed to Mrs. Flint that it was in the nature of a letter of introduction, written in Yiddish—to show to the Rebbe. The man valued that letter (and, no doubt, his meeting with the Rebbe) so much that he carried it with him ever since, and actually showed it to Mrs. Flint on the boardwalk. When the Rebbe read the letter, he was so pleased that he told the man, "Ask me whatever you want and I'll do it for you."

May we all receive that *bracha*, especially for that which we all want more than anything else—*Moshiach* now!—and may we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year.

smile, and they are then willing to talk and accept other items as well."

Mrs. Flint says she has met

many people over the years who have related interesting stories after she gave them honey and wished them a sweet new year.



AWESOME VISION ON ROSH HA'SHANA NIGHT

By Menachem Ziegelboim

PART I

The sun had already set over the rooftops of Rostov and the stars had begun to twinkle. It was the first night of the New Year, 5685/1924.

Someone with a sensitive heart and a refined soul could have discerned, in addition to the festive atmosphere, a subtle feeling of sadness, as though sensing the removal of the G-dly light which sustains the world. It's no small thing, a world without Elokus, so to speak, until the next morning when His children coronate Him again, willingly, thus arousing His desire to rule again over this physical world.

For our Rebbeim, Rosh HaShana night was a night of trembling and trepidation. This originated when the Alter Rebbe saw his teacher, the Mezritcher Maggid, davening Mincha on Erev Rosh HaShana at great length, in an inspiring tone and with copious tears, like someone taking leave of his loved one.

The Maggid said the Maariv prayer on the first night at great length, for many hours, with intense sobbing. Then he ate the Yom Tov meal, in the course of which he did not utter a word, not even divrei Torah. At the end of the meal he said the Birkas HaMazon over a cup of wine and distributed the remaining wine to his students.

Then he added wine to his cup so as to drink the required amount for an after-blessing.

He would spend hours over the bedtime Shma on the first night of Rosh HaShana and recite T'hilim throughout the night.

What the Alter Rebbe received from his mentor and teacher he passed along to his children and grandchildren, and this is how our Rebbeim conducted themselves throughout the generations.

PART II

Rosh HaShana night for the Rebbe Rayatz was also one of tears. His davening took three to four hours and each word was spoken with a deep, soulful and fiery tune, awash in warm tears. All who heard him would feel themselves melt in heart-jolting inspiration.

That year, 5685, something happened during the davening Rosh HaShana night. The Rebbe Rayatz was deeply immersed in his prayers when he suddenly saw the image of his father, the Rebbe Rashab, who had passed away four and a half years earlier. His face shone and he was wearing Shabbos clothing as he used to do in the glory days of Lubavitch.

The Rebbe Rayatz trembled and gazed upon the kindly visage of his father as he listened humbly to what he said. On this night, in the middle

of such lofty prayer, this wasn't merely a conversation between the two N'siim, but it was a dialogue that dealt with the leadership of the Jewish people and particularly the leader, the Rebbe Rayatz.

This is what the Rebbe Rashab said in the vision:

"At this time, we pray and ask of Hashem:

"Remember us for life, oh King who desires life' – the remembering us for life is only because it is the nature of the Good One to do good, solely because of Hashem's generosity and kindness.

"And write us in the Book of Life' – writing Jews into the book of life entails an actual drawing down and shining forth of life, such that it be a good life and manifest in the garments of peacefulness.

"For Your sake, G-d of life' – so that Jewish souls, through their avoda in Torah study and the fulfillment of mitzvos, will transform 'Elokim,' which is the attribute of severity and constriction, into 'life,' light and revelation, and that is 'Elokim Chaim' (G-d of life).

It is not clear whether the continuation of this wondrous vision was during that same t'filla or later that night, but on that awesome night the Rebbe Rashab continued to instruct his son:

"Be strong and make good

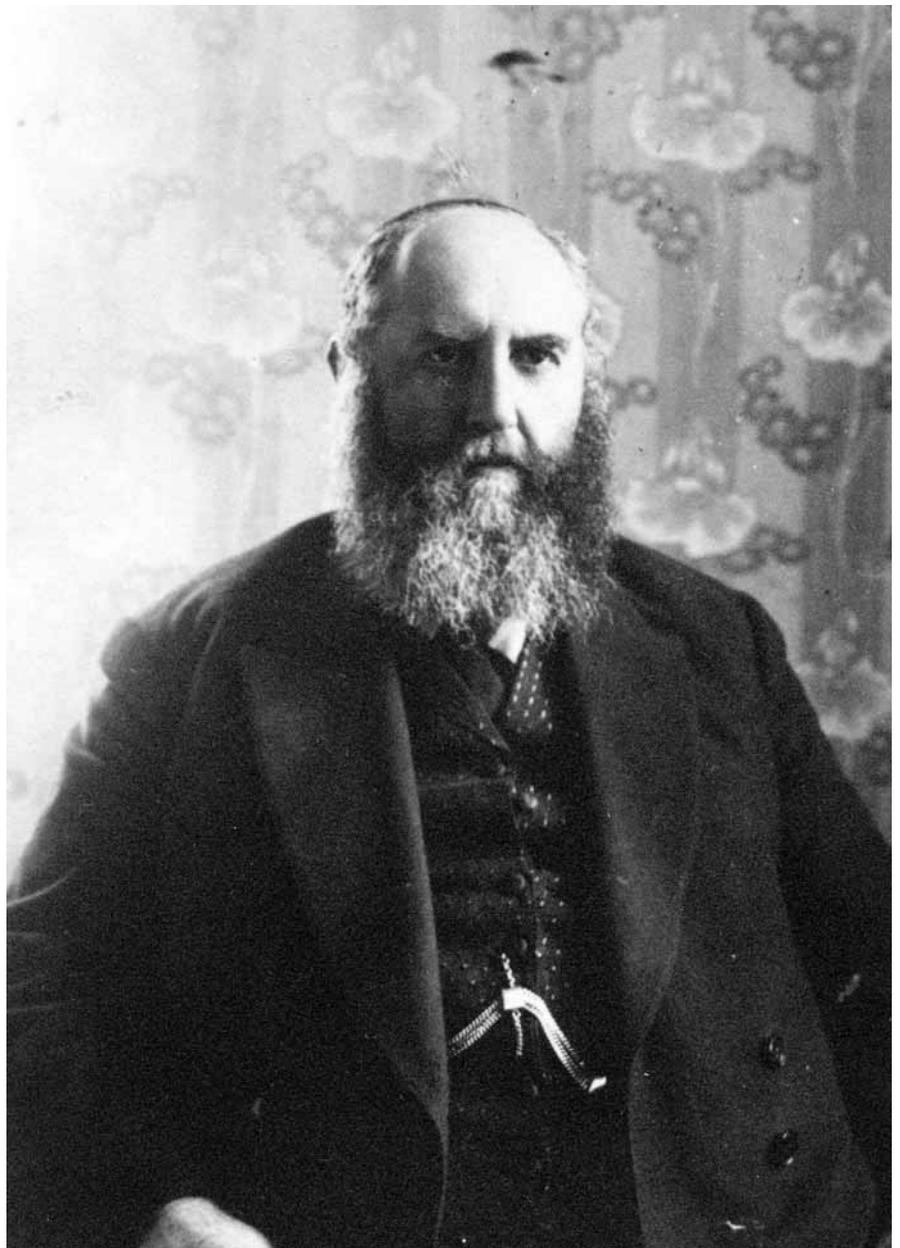
resolutions and think only positively about yourself, all the members of our house, and all the mekusharim who obey my directives. Hashem will connect a good thought to action, so that it will actually be so in a revelation of kindness and mercy.

“Explain the Mishna of *shnayim ochazim* and think, as you say it, about the two who are involved in a Heavenly court battle and you should declare Chaim Avrohom the winner because his soul is in the right. You should affect with your words those who still have the ability to make a rectification before their time comes to return the deposit that was given to them.”

The Rebbe Rashab, ensconced in the chambers of pure light in the supernal realms, comes down to this world and asks his son to find meritorious the soul of Chaim Avrohom “because his soul is in the right.” What a Jew can do in this world cannot be done by a soul up Above, since only down below we can rectify matters. This is why the Rebbe importuned his son to have an effect on those in this world “who have the ability to make a rectification,” before they died and it was too late.

The vision was not yet over.

“Whoever sees t’fillin in his dream should anticipate *g’dula* (greatness). T’fillin are *mochin d’gadlus* and one who is on the level of *mochin d’gadlus*, should anticipate *g’dula*/greatness. *G’dula* is made up of the word ‘Gadol’ and the letter ‘Hei,’ alluding to *Gadol Havaya* (great is G-d). This indicates that he will be granted the power to make great and known His blessed name amongst His creations so that all of them will recognize His greatness; and be strengthened in Torah and mitzvos. Similarly, one who is engaged in the work of ‘*g’dula*’ to disseminate Torah and avodas Hashem should anticipate t’fillin, which are *mochin*



Rosh HaShana night for the Rebbe Rayatz was also one of tears. His davening took three to four hours and each word was spoken with a deep, soulful and fiery tune, awash in warm tears... That year, 5685, something happened during the davening Rosh HaShana night.

“My avoda is truth and peace and this is what I wish for you, my son - that you know that the power of Torah is an essential one and the power of zikna (lit. old age, an allusion to a long and ongoing line of tzaddikim) is an essential one, and the G-d of good will be of help to you and you will illuminate all your mekusharim with the light of Torah and mitzvos.”

d’gadlus.”

The Rebbe then blessed his son, the sixth Nasi:

“As for what you pleaded before Hashem in the pidyon nefesh that you wrote, Hashem will fulfill your heart’s desire for good and blessing with great success, and you will merit that Hashem’s name will be magnified and sanctified through you.”

The Rebbe Rashab even guaranteed these words to his son and gave him a clear sign:

“This is the sign: That in everything you do to disseminate Torah and the study of Chassidus and the strengthening of mitzvos, Hashem will make you unusually successful and you will find favor in the eyes of Hashem and man, and no fear of flesh and blood will hold sway over you. Chazak, and be strengthened and the G-d of our

fathers will help you.”

Ah, an abundance of blessings from father to son on this exalted night – what more could the son want than that?

PART III

Eight nights later, “on the night beginning 8 Tishrei,” the Rebbe Rashab once again descended from the rarified worlds to appear to his son, the Rebbe Rayatz. As before, his face was radiant and he was wearing his Shabbos clothing. These were the fateful days between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, when our Rebbeim work on obtaining a good decree for the Jewish people wherever they are, for all their needs.

This time too, the Rebbe Rashab had encouraging words for his son who led the Jewish people during those dark days when clouds of

heresy and totalitarianism gathered over the Russian sky:

“My avoda is truth and peace and this is what I wish for you, my son - that you know that the power of Torah is an essential one and the power of zikna (lit. old age, an allusion to a long and ongoing line of tzaddikim) is an essential one, and the G-d of good will be of help to you and you will illuminate all your mekusharim with the light of Torah and mitzvos. May Hashem give you and your entire household a chasima and a g’mar chasima tova among all the Jewish people.”

As the Rebbe Rashab said these final words, he placed his hands over the head of his only child and concluded with the priestly blessing.

The Rebbe Rayatz recorded these visions in writing himself and he wrote in wonder that “I do not know the meaning of the events.” He expresses his hope that “these blessings from my holy father be fulfilled with chesed and mercy.”

The Rebbe Rayatz concludes these visions with the prayer:

“May Hashem grant me the privilege of seeing my honorable, holy father, while I am awake, when he can explain topics in Chassidus to me, whereupon I can ask on behalf of all of Anash that Hashem fulfill all their needs, materially and spiritually, and may I have the strength to make great Torah and prayer and may I succeed in whatever I do, spiritually and materially.”



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Boruch Hashem, Elul 5769, Year of Hakhel

Mivtza: HELPING THE NEEDY

To every member of the Lubavitcher community:

During this month of preparation for Rosh Hashonoh, the "head" of the New Year, we fondly recall our Rebbe's words that this is an especially auspicious time for strengthening our deep bond of Hiskashrus with the "Rosh Bnei Yisroel," the "head" of the Jewish people and leader of the generation.

Our Rebbeim explain that **an important way to strengthen Hiskashrus is by participating in the Rebbe's activities and concerns, consequently, by supporting an organization that brings together a number of these activities, the Hiskashrus is greater and stronger.** Such an organization is Kupas Rabbeinu, which seeks to continue many of the Rebbe's activities and concerns without change from the way he would conduct them himself.

Every year at this time, the Rebbe would call upon us to contribute generously to help needy families with their extra expenses for the coming month's many Yomim Tovim. This also coincides with the special emphasis during this month of giving extra Tzedokah, (indicated in the Hebrew letters of the word "Elul," as explained in many Sichos etc.), as a vital way of preparing ourselves for the new year and arousing Divine mercy upon us. See sicho in the Hebrew text of this letter.

We therefore appeal to every individual man and woman to contribute generously to Kupas Rabbeinu, enabling us to fulfill the Rebbe's desire to help all those who anxiously await our help. The greater your contribution, the more we can accomplish.

Your generous contribution to Kupas Rabbeinu will be the appropriate vessel for receiving the abundant blessings of the Rebbe, who is its Nasi, that you may be blessed with a Ksiva Vachasima Tova for a good and sweet year, materially and spiritually. May it help to bring the full revelation of Moshiach - our Rebbe - immediately now!

Wishing a Ksiva Vachasima Tova for a good and sweet year,

In the name of Vaad Kupas Rabbeinu

Rabbi Sholom Mendel Simpson

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Groner

P.S. Of course, you may send to Kupas Rabbeinu all contributions that you would send to the Rebbe; all will be devoted to the activities to which the Rebbe would devote them.

You may also send Maimad, **Keren-Hashono** (this coming year 5770 - 355 days), Vov Tishrei, Yud Gimmel Tishrei Magbis etc. to Kupas Rabbeinu.

P.S. Please send all correspondence only to the following address.

KUPAS RABBEINU / P.O.B. 288 / BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11225

Eretz Yisroel address: KEREN KUPAS ADMU"R / P.O.B. 1247 / KIRYAT MALACHI / ISRAEL

SHABBATONS THAT TIP THE SCALES

By Nosson Avrohom

The shluchim are out there doing outreach and providing a taste of Torah and mitzvos, but from tastes alone, people don't make radical changes in their lives. That sets the stage for Eshnav (window/skylight), an organization led by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Cohen that organizes Shabbatons and seminars in Kfar Chabad that are transforming lives.

R' Yosef Yitzchok Cohen's eyes were already half closed. The sleep deprivation of the previous nights was having an effect on him. He had been extremely busy organizing another Shabbaton for mekuravim in Kfar Chabad and this took a lot of mental energy and physical stamina.

He worried about how many people would show up. Would they enjoy the program? Would the messages conveyed over the Shabbos by lecturers and mashpiim penetrate and get them to make a positive commitment? Would they come back again?

All these questions raced around his brain whenever he organized a Shabbaton or seminar for mekuravim. People came from all walks of life representing a vast array of views and lifestyles.

After two years of experience and hundreds of satisfied participants, including about twenty bachurim who continued on to Chabad yeshivos and are Chassidim today, you might think that R' Cohen would have the system down pat and could organize things 'with his eyes closed.' But R' Cohen never rests and the days preceding a Shabbaton

are still very stressful. Often, when he thought everything was ready, he discovered that it wasn't so at all and things weren't going according to plan. Sometimes he has to rearrange everything at the last minute to satisfy everyone.

He started to wonder whether he was the man for the job. This thought nagged at him and he asked the Rebbe to give him a sign that he was doing a good job. Everyone else thought he was doing fine and Eshnav has built an excellent reputation in a relatively short time. Many of the shluchim call, wanting their mekuravim to join the program. But still, R' Cohen was not sure of himself and needed feedback from the Rebbe.

One day he got a message from R' Boruch Wilhelm, one of the shluchim in Nahariya. He had a mekurav but in addition to Chabad this mekurav was close with lecturers in Hidabrut. On the Shabbos of Eshnav's seminar, Hidabrut also had a seminar, and the mekurav wasn't sure which one to attend. The mekurav himself had called R' Cohen to ask which lecturers would be speaking and on which topics. R' Cohen felt that no matter how much effort he invested to convince him to attend his Shabbaton, the guy would go to the other Shabbaton where he knew all the lecturers and regularly listened to their lectures online.

R' Cohen told R' Wilhelm that he didn't think he succeeded in persuading his mekurav to come to his Shabbaton. This failure exacerbated his feelings of inadequacy.

All the negative thoughts flew out the window though after another phone call that he got from R' Wilhelm a few hours later. R' Wilhelm told him that he had called his mekurav and spoke to him directly, saying it would be proper for him to ask the Rebbe where he should spend Shabbos.



The mekurav couldn't refuse since he loved the Rebbe and after putting his letter in volume 13 of the Igros Kodesh he opened to page 352 where the words that appeared on the top of the page stood out, **"To the committee for founding a high school-seminar in Kfar Chabad."** That was clear! He had been deliberating between going to the seminar in Kfar Chabad or a seminar somewhere else.

He went to Kfar Chabad for Shabbos and enjoyed his stay very much and he returned the following Shabbos. Today he is a Lubavitcher bachur in yeshiva in Tzfas.

THE REBBE'S BRACHOS

R' Cohen's goal is to bring the "chutza" to the "wellsprings." This is the reason that he organizes seminars and Shabbatons every month in Kfar Chabad which are highly praised by the shluchim who

send their mekuravim. The name given to the organization, Eshnav (which means window/skylight), expresses the goal which is to provide a powerful yet brief immersion in the wonderful world of Chassidus.

"There might be a mekurav who is involved with Chabad's activities in his area but he hasn't made a change in his lifestyle. One Shabbos with us can make all the difference.

"I am amazed by how the Rebbe makes sure each time that things work out in the best possible way. I feel this especially at the end of each seminar when people come over to me and say how much they enjoyed it and that they plan on coming for the following Shabbos. Over thirty young people are in mosdos Chabad today, thanks to these Shabbasos.

"Whenever I meet someone who decided, as a result of the Shabbaton, to take a decisive step in

his commitment to Chabad and the Rebbe, I ask what motivated them. After all, they were familiar with Chabad and its work for a long time. None of them have a clear explanation but we know that a Jew who is exposed to a Lubavitcher way of life up close, sees the uniqueness, the simcha and the p'nimius, as well as the positive interactions between parents and their children, and they want to be a part of it."

Another proof of success, besides the many who have become Chassidim, is the fact that shluchim who send their mekuravim to the program time after time. To R' Cohen, this is the greatest compliment and it gives him the positive energy to face the challenges of the work.

A SHABBATON

We asked R' Cohen to describe a Shabbos and he was happy to oblige.



“On Friday afternoon, the mekuravim – who come from all over – gather in Beit Shazar in Kfar Chabad to get acquainted. They register and bit by bit begin to cast off the world they come from. On the table are refreshments and they can watch interesting video clips of scenes in 770.

“Then they go to their hosts, who were arranged ahead of time, whose compatibility is decided based on age and occupation. Some time before Shabbos we meet again. We hold an orientation to explain how the Shabbos will be conducted and then everybody goes to hear a lecture on the parsha which is given by a different speaker each time. Some of our speakers have been R’ Tzvi Greenwald, R’ Tuvia Bolton, R’ Michoel Taub, R’ Dovid Abba Zalmanov, R’ Yaakov Zecharia Kattan, R’ Omer HaLevi and others.

“Then the men go to tour the Beis Menachem shul and the women have a Seder Niggunim. We then go for Kabbalas Shabbos in yeshivas Tomchei T’ mimim with lots of people and lots of simcha.

“From there the guests return to their hosts and after the Friday night meal we meet again at Beit Shazar for a farbrengen with a different mashpia each time. By this point, people have usually loosened up and ask questions and the farbrengen is extremely interesting.

“On Shabbos morning we meet

for coffee and cake, and before davening there is a lecture on t’filla and its importance as seen through the eyes of Chassidus. We daven together and “sell” the aliya based on good hachlatos. It’s heartwarming each time to hear what people commit to doing.

“After the davening full of Chassidische chayus we sit down to a farbrengen that ends with dancing. It’s an amazing and moving sight every time. Later in the day we walk to 770 where the guests are told about the construction of the building and the open miracles that took place during the construction and many people are very amazed by it all.

“Then we sit down to the third Shabbos meal and sing niggunim. I often sense how the guests want this powerful experience to never end. On Motzaei Shabbos they ask me when the next Shabbaton will take place. We take their email addresses in order to be able to send them divrei Torah and Chassidus every week. We are planning on putting up an Internet site with lectures that were given at Eshnav seminars.”

THE SHABBOS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

How did this all begin?

“I began my journey to Judaism through a Shabbaton. Like many

Israelis who come from a similar background as me, I always had a strong faith but it never got translated into action until one Shabbos, I was a guest of a family in Yerushalayim and I was blown away. That Shabbos changed my entire worldview. For the first time in my life I saw what a real Shabbos is, starting with the Shabbos candles that convey a feeling of calm and holiness, the achdus in the family, the respect, the patience.

“Someone raised in a religious home, even in a Chassidic home illuminated by the Rebbe’s sichos, doesn’t sufficiently appreciate what a treasure he has. When I returned to my parents’ home in Rishon L’Tziyon after Shabbos, thoughts of the marvelous Shabbos in Yerushalayim did not leave me. I knew that I could no longer continue to live in darkness.

“I got to know the shliach in the neighborhood, R’ Uri Keshet who had started giving shiurim in sichos and maamarim. These gave me an enormous connection to Judaism. I started changing my way of dress and my insides too and began learning in yeshiva in Kfar Chabad.

“As a young bachur, new to the magical world of Chabad, I began organizing Shabbatons with a shliach in a Chabad house. At first, ten to twenty people would come and later on the Chabad house became too small for us.



“I was fixated on the idea of Shabbatons because it was a Shabbos that was mekarev me and I knew it would be mekarev many other people. You can give people a taste of Judaism and Chassidus but people don’t always change their lives because of a taste. If you give them something beyond that though, their G-dly soul begins to ask for serious change.”

R’ Cohen married in 5776/2006. During his first year of marriage he wondered where he belonged on the map of shlichus to hasten the Geula.

“I came to the conclusion that I wanted to organize Shabbatons and seminars. It was my passion. But when I started analyzing it I saw that it was a complicated venture comprised of thousands of little details. I began to think that maybe another shlichus would be better.”

In Tishrei 5767 the Cohen couple hoped to travel to the Rebbe. Things didn’t work out and their plans fell through. R’ Cohen was downcast but his wife encouraged him, saying it was meant to be. The first sign came a week later when he got a call from a friend, R’ Nadav Cohen, who told him that he was looking for a lecturer for mekuravim for the entire Sukkos at Ascent in Tzfas.

“I felt it was a shlichus from heaven. I was wondering how to organize a successful Shabbaton or seminar and here I was being invited

On Shabbos morning we meet for coffee and cake, and before davening there is a lecture on t’filla and its importance as seen through the eyes of Chassidus. We daven together and “sell” the aliyos based on good hachlatos. It’s heartwarming each time to hear what people commit to doing.

to experience a seminar where I could observe how it is done. Of course I happily agreed to do it.

“We spent three weeks at Ascent and I learned how to organize a Shabbaton, the logistics, arranging host families; both the spiritual and the material end of things. I thought my idea was a good one and I have written to the Rebbe many times since then and I always open to amazing answers of encouragement. More than once I opened to a letter which said he was happy that I was organizing Mesibos Shabbos. I feel that the Rebbe is with me.”

WHERE WERE YOU UNTIL NOW?

Before I got involved at Kfar Chabad, there had been some years with excellent Shabbatons nearly

every Shabbos run by various organizations, but then there were years when with no Shabbatons whatsoever. Shluchim wished someone would undertake it in a more consistent way.

“Many shluchim feel that their work goes to waste. They make the first contact which is the hardest, whether it’s by putting t’fillin on with someone on the street, a successful farbrengen, a good shiur, etc. and then a relationship is formed between the mekurav and the shliach. But after all that hard work, when the mekurav has started becoming religious, someone comes along and says ‘don’t abandon the ways of your mother,’ and other such statements and takes them to lectures of other organizations. The mekurav gets drawn into other groups before he has a chance to understand what Chabad is about.

HOMECOMING

“Attending a Shabbaton in Kfar Chabad got me to return to my roots,” said Menachem Mendel Kadosh who is presently learning in the Chabad yeshiva in Ramat Aviv. Mendy, born to a Lubavitch family, went to Chabad yeshivos but during his teens he went off to check out other places to the dismay of his parents and friends. The only mitzvos he kept were kashrus and t’fillin.

“The explanations in Chassidus about the *timtum* (dulling) of the heart and mind that is caused by non-kosher food, was deeply ingrained within me.”

Mendy said that during the five years he was out of the system, he did not stop feeling an emptiness and he did not understand why this was so when he was doing whatever he pleased.

“Every morning that I put on t’fillin I felt a strong connection to Hashem and the Rebbe and all the ideals I had been raised with. I tried to ignore it but it didn’t leave me. These thoughts and feelings danced around in my head all the time as I was involved with klipos and the sitra achra. It may sound strange but throughout this time I felt that the Rebbe was with me.”

Mendy recalls an incident that took place during the war in the north when he and his family were living in tents that were set up for the residents of the north in Nitzanim. One day he went into the Chabad tent that Lubavitchers had set up.

“A strong feeling drew me there although another part of me didn’t want to go in. In the tent I met some Lubavitchers and before I opened my mouth they identified me as a Lubavitcher. One of them said, ‘You should know that no matter what you do, the Rebbe is still with you.’”

The Chassidim in the tent communicated the sense of belonging to him. He slowly began to return to his roots and to attend shiurim in Chassidus.

“It wasn’t easy to get rid of the dirt that stuck to me throughout that period but when I got back to the Rebbe’s sichos I couldn’t help but be moved. I always loved the Rebbe and the thing that gave me the final push was the Shabbos at Eshnav.”

Mendy’s brother registered him for that Shabbos, following which he decided to make an about-face and embrace his Chassidic upbringing.

“When you experience Shabbos as you remember it from home, you can’t help but be moved. It brought back sweet memories. That Shabbos inspired me. You see a group of young people from varied backgrounds and they all have a thirst for Chassidus, the same Chassidus that I abandoned...”

What we do on these Shabbatons is enable mekuravim to experience a Chassidic Shabbos and study deep Chassidic ideas, like I did.

“There are even Shabbasos when we are unable to handle the demand for registration. Shluchim constantly

ask me where we were until now, why we woke up now. The very first Shabbos we had forty mekuravim and that shows how much an organization like this is needed.”

How do you plan a program for a crowd that is so varied in its

ideas and level of spirituality?

“It’s the infinite power of Chassidus which adapts itself to every Jew, as he is, and everyone can find what they need in it.

“We have them spend Shabbos meals with families rather than have a communal meal and this is to enable them to experience Chassidic life in real time, beyond what it says in Chassidus or what they hear in shiurim and lectures.”

The connection is kept up after Shabbos.

“Every Erev Shabbos we send emails with a d’var Torah based on the Rebbe’s sichos and people send us enthusiastic feedback. Some forward it to their friends. Some respond with questions about Judaism and we respond and deepen the connection.”

From where do you get the strength to organize more and more Shabbatons despite the logistical problems you encounter every time?

“First of all, from the answers of the Rebbe which give me the motivation to endure the tough times and start over every Motzaei Shabbos in planning the next Shabbaton. The results give me lots of energy. With some activities you don’t see results right away but we get to see them.

“I remember one of our first Shabbatons when I was feeling down. The difficulties, the fact that it was taking a toll on my family, were wearing me down. I wondered – who needs this chaos? A short while afterwards I participated in a 28 Nissan gathering organized by Matteh Moshiach and a Lubavitcher bachur came over to me and gave me a hearty ‘shalom aleichem.’ When he saw that I didn’t recognize him he told me he had attended a Shabbaton and as a result he decided to go to yeshiva. Now he’s learning in Ramat Aviv and has become a Tamim.

“So if you ask me what drives



GOING ALL THE WAY

Amir Rachmanfou is a Tamim who learns in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas. He always had a feeling for Judaism. He has two aunts who are Lubavitchers. He delivered his bar mitzva speech in a Chabad shul and the one who prepared him for his bar mitzva was the shliach, R' Chanan Kochanovsky.

“Everything was fine and I kept mitzvos here and there. I even participated in some Tanya classes given by Rabbi Moshe Gruzman but I had no further religious ambitions. I wanted a taste, not to delve deeper. I was very afraid of change.”

Then one fine day, when his mother decided to keep Shabbos, he got angry.

“My worldview was that you didn’t have to make drastic and dramatic steps. I put on t’fillin and attended some Chassidus classes occasionally and I didn’t need more than that. It was hard for me to understand that Torah and Judaism are absolutes in life. I first understood this idea when I attended an Eshnav Shabbaton in Kfar Chabad. For the first time I felt the magic and k’dusha of Shabbos, the inner beauty, the peacefulness and sweetness.”

Shabbos in Kfar Chabad was the first time that Amir understood and internalized the polar difference between the world he grew up in and the world of Chasidim.

“Those who were born into this world won’t understand what’s unique about it; the family togetherness around the Shabbos table, the brotherly love, the caring for one another. It’s an amazing thing that doesn’t exist elsewhere. It won me over. I realized that it wasn’t that learning and actions were separate things but ‘great is study for it leads to action.’ I finally understood that Judaism is life and that paved the way for me to the yeshiva in Tzfas.”

me, it’s seeing the results. In moments like that all my negative feelings disappear. We had a soldier from Intelligence come to a Shabbaton. He wasn’t sure whether he wanted to come and in the

middle of Shabbos he insisted on leaving. The following Shabbos he came again to ‘atone’ for the previous time. Today he is one of our big masmidim in our telephone shiurim and he is on his way to

becoming a baal t’shuva. That’s the feedback that energizes me to keep going.”

What place does the topic of Geula have at these Shabbatons?

“It’s a topic that people want to hear about, the great anticipation for the hisgalus of Moshiach, not as a distant wish but as something very imminent, as the Rebbe speaks about in his sichos. There is no lecture or farbrengen that we don’t speak about Moshiach openly, without withholding or hiding anything. Today people are ‘keilim’ to hearing about Moshiach.

“At the beginning of Shabbos I personally talk about and mention the Rambam which says that a person should see himself on the scale with one mitzva moving himself and the entire world to the side of merit. I say that it’s possible that by their coming to Kfar Chabad they will bring Moshiach. People understand that it’s not a pipe dream or a distant hope but something real and immediate.

“What are these Shabbatons organized for if not to hasten the hisgalus of the Rebbe? Each Shabbos that passes and the Rebbe still didn’t come – I didn’t get my reward. People feel that this is the gasoline that gets the wheels moving. We sing songs of Geula and our hope and prayer are that the Rebbe comes.”

YOU ARE STUDENTS OF MORDECHAI HA'YEHUDI!

By Rabbi Chaim Levi Yitzchok Ginsberg

*Is it possible that Mordechai himself sat and taught 22,000 children all at once? There were teachers, melamdin, morim, mechanchim, roshei yeshivos and mashpiim, and each of them learned with his own class. But all of them taught and guided their students on shlichus and with the guidance of Mordechai ha'Yehudi. This is why all of them are called the students of Mordechai so much so that Chazal say Mordechai himself taught 22,000 children. * A biographical snapshot of R' Munye Shneur a"h, a Chassid and longtime Maggid shiur who exemplified this point.*

We were saddened when we heard of the passing of one of the outstanding elder Chassidim, R' Mordechai Shneur, fondly known as "R' Munye." In the days following Yud Shvat, 5710, the Rebbe stated that although we do not eulogize Chassidim, we tell stories about them.

I had the privilege of learning by R' Munye in shiur beis of the yeshiva k'tana in Tomchei T'mimim Lubavitch in Lud, about half a year after I entered the yeshiva. (Before that I learned with the head of the yeshiva, R' Elimelech Kaplan, who was known by his fellow Chassidim as "R' Meilich der Shvartzer").

I got a lot from R' Munye, both in the learning of Nigleh and how to learn in general. He would always spend time to closely examine the wording of Rashi and thoroughly explain the simple meaning of the Gemara. He absolutely did not allow us to go further, to chiddushim and pilpulim, questions and answers, before the simple meaning was clear to us.

R' Munye also personally helped me a lot. I can say that he set me on my feet. I entered the yeshiva in Lud after Pesach, 1972. The shiurim and farbrengens in yeshiva were all in Yiddish (there were some shiurim in Ivrit but they were for beginners on a very low level) and it was tremendously hard for me because I didn't know a word of Yiddish (I remember that when someone said "zai gezunt" to me, I asked what that meant).

At first, in the shiurim with R' Meilich, I did not understand a word of the shiur despite my many attempts to learn Yiddish – the bulk of the subject matter was the Rebbe's sichos, which were almost all in Yiddish at that time. I would read the sichos without understanding much and would



R' Munye giving a shiur in Gemara to talmidim in Lud

only occasionally ask someone what a word meant. Until this day, there are many simple Yiddish words that I don't know because they aren't commonly found in sichos.

In Elul, when I entered R' Munye's class in Nigleh, I still didn't really understand Yiddish and I was very frustrated, especially since the shiur in Nigleh was analytical and I was completely at a loss. R' Munye calmed me down and told me that when I didn't understand something I should ask and he would repeat it in Ivrit. He said that since the other boys knew Ivrit it wouldn't hurt them to hear the material repeated.

I doubted whether this would work since I knew almost no Yiddish, but I decided to try. I couldn't just sit there in shiur and not understand anything. So I became a nudnik and I asked about everything I didn't

understand. At first it seemed intolerable, but R' Munye was endlessly patient with me. He never told me it was too much, even when I often asked nonstop almost throughout the entire shiur. Bit by bit, I finally began to understand something, then gradually a little more.

On top of all the help I got from R' Munye in learning, the main thing I got from him was in the area of Chassidishkait and hiskashrus to the Rebbe, even though this was not his official job in yeshiva.

My first Purim as a talmid in yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim Lubavitch in Lud, in 1973, is unforgettable. As is the custom among the talmidim, especially in high schools, my class went to our teacher, R' Munye's house in Kfar Chabad on Purim night to farbreng with him.

A farbrengen like this is especially joyous and as young

bachurim, almost children, are wont to be, we were somewhat wild. This included drinking (in the proper proportion as befitting T'mimim) almost to the point of "ad d'lo yada." Things were said in Purim jest even with our teacher and mashpia. Some things that one doesn't dare to say all year were said. After all, it was Purim. Nobody was offended and even if some comments were inappropriate, they were quickly forgiven and forgotten.

So there we were, at R' Munye's house. If we had been a little nervous at first, the feeling vanished right away as R' Munye welcomed us with open arms. The tables were set with all sorts of goodies and we sat down to farbreng, sing, and say l'chaim and natural inhibitions diminished until they were completely gone.

The atmosphere warmed up. Someone got up on the table. Someone else began to scream

about something that bothered him. A few of us began dancing around the table, pulling in R' Munye, who quickly joined the Purim'dike dance.

R' Munye had drunk plenty by then himself. He suddenly stopped the dancing and began speaking to us; actually it was more like shouting, fire and brimstone, in his unique style and deep voice.

"Chazal say," said R' Munye, "that when the Jewish people in Shushan heard about Haman's decree, they immediately abandoned their activities and began the spiritual process of t'shuva and prayer in order to annul the decree. Mordechai gathered 22,000 children and taught them the halachos of bringing the Omer in the Beis HaMikdash.

"When Haman saw this, he knew that his end was near. He realized that the children were not afraid of him and his decree and were unwilling to part from Mordechai to the extent that they shouted, "We are with you whether in life or in death." These children represented the eternal power of the Jewish people that nothing would vanquish.

"Haman in his anger said, 'I will kill the children first.' Even Haman knew that these children were the nucleus of the Jewish nation which could not be broken. As long as they endured, he would be unable to harm the Jewish people.

"Now I'm asking you," questioned R' Munye, "what do you think – is it possible that Mordechai himself sat and taught 22,000 children all at once? He didn't have a microphone and where would they find a hall large enough for so many people to learn Torah? It doesn't sound possible and yet it doesn't say that a miracle occurred.

"Rather," continued R' Munye

as his voice thundered, "there were teachers, melamdim, morim, mechanchim, roshei yeshivos and mashpiim, and each of them learned with his own class. But all of them taught and guided their students **on shlichus and with the guidance of Mordechai ha'Yehudi**. This is why all of them are called the students of Mordechai so that Chazal say that Mordechai himself taught 22,000 children.

"Today too," said R' Munye getting to his point, "there are roshei yeshivos, mashpiim, melamdim, mechanchim, and madrichim but you should know that **you are all the students of Mordechai Ha'Yehudi**. You are not the talmidim of Mordechai Shneur [i.e. R' Munye] but of **Mordechai Ha'Yehudi!**

R' Munye repeated this again and again, getting louder and louder.

"The Rebbe," concluded R' Munye, "supervises and pays attention to all of us, especially his children, the T'mimim. He thinks about each one individually. He knows each one in depth, far better than you know yourself. The Rebbe extends a hand to each of you and leads you. Sometimes you need a *potch* and sometimes a caress. The Rebbe demands and he encourages and calms. He blesses, advises and directs and he gives you the feeling that you're doing it all on your own even though this is not the case. The Rebbe is the one who is doing it but he wants you to put in the effort and not receive it as a gift."

The dancing and singing that Purim night 1973 continued. A chair was broken and curtains were torn, someone vomited and a few fell asleep on beds and tables, but what we heard at the farbrengen was seared into our

minds and hearts and the depths of our souls: **You should know that you are learning from Mordechai ha'Yehudi, the Rebbe. He is your melamed, mechanech and madrich, your rosh yeshiva and mashpia. Not Mordechai Shneur but Mordechai ha'Yehudi!**

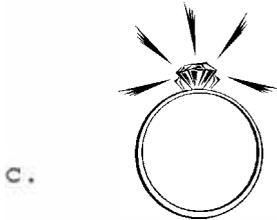
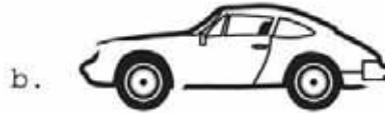
We too are like little children who don't know anything, don't understand and don't feel. Yet there is one thing we do know, which is what the children back then knew, namely "We are with you, whether in life or in death!" We belong exclusively to Mordechai Ha'Yehudi and we want the Mordechai Ha'Yehudi of our generation, the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach.

One expression of our d'veikus to the Mordechai Ha'Yehudi of our generation is to travel to 770, to the Rebbe. Going to the Rebbe demonstrates how all the details of our lives are guided by the Rebbe, as he is our Shofet and Yoetz, i.e. our mochin and middos, that lead us in accordance with Hashem as He reveals Himself to us through the Nasi of our generation.

Especially when the Rebbe said (see kuntres Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel) that whoever goes to Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel today, Beis Chayeinu, Beis Moshiach, 770, increases the "glory of the king."

So let us gather - men, women, and children, young and old - this Tishrei in 770 and may we celebrate with the Rebbe in the third Beis HaMikdash which will be attached to 770, and sing a new song of our Geula, a song which we have already started to sing – Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu, Melech HaMoshiach L'olam Va'ed!

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Which of these is currently uninsured? —

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¹ "Why Disability" booklet, published by National Underwriter.

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CHASSIDIC LIFE INSURANCE

By Nosson Avrohom



R' Avrohom Blecher

I met Avrohom Blecher for the first time in Tishrei, three years ago, in 770. He was walking around there like any Tamim who wants to take it all in. On Rosh HaShana he pushed to hear the t'kios and on Simchas Torah he stood on a long line to be able to kiss the Rebbe's Torah scroll. His youthful energy amazed me. When I asked who he was, I was told he's a fresh baal t'shuva from the "melting pot" of Chabad in Ramat Aviv.

When we met this week and I got to know him, I found him to be a fascinating person and nice to talk to. He built up a large and successful insurance company just to show his father, a Holocaust survivor, that he could succeed. His longstanding reputation in Tel Aviv was of someone into vacations and pleasure trips, but deep inside he always sought the truth, which he hoped would provide him with satisfaction and serenity.

There were many way-stations in his life. At first he found satisfaction in the deals he managed to swing and the large profits they earned him. When that stopped exciting him he flew to Europe every year to ski and enjoy other sports. When that also began to bore him he studied Eastern religions. At every station in life the pleasure he had was fleeting. He kept looking, certain that what he was seeking could not be found at home in Judaism.

Then he remarried and his wife Vered, who had also done some searching, directed him towards Toras HaChassidus.

Avrohom Blecher was born over sixty years ago to survivors from the Nazi extermination camps. His father was born in Ostreah in the Ukraine, where he lived until the war. After much

suffering he met his future wife in a transit camp in Italy, where they married. A few months later they boarded the HaTikva and set sail for Palestine. When they finally reached the coast after a difficult journey, the British did not allow them to enter their land.

The passengers were interred in a camp in Cyprus. A short while later, in Tamuz 1948, the couple were the parents of twins, Avrohom and a sister. Later on, when the establishment of the State of Israel was proclaimed, they were among the tens of thousands of people in Cyprus who made aliya.

In the early days, the parents and their little children lived in transit camps in Chaifa and Yaffo. They finally settled in moshav Shadmot Devorah in the north. Avrohom was raised with love for his homeland, the Israeli ideal which at that time seemed unshakable.

"It wasn't easy being a child of war survivors. All of their extended families perished and I was raised with denial of the Creator of the world. My father wasn't the type to keep the horrors to himself. He told us of the things he witnessed in the concentration camps. On many occasions he told me that his relatives were religious and G-d fearing and yet that didn't help them against the Nazi killing machine.

"His pain went deep and the question he asked every religious person he met was where was G-d during the war. Yet on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur we would walk to shul together and pray. Even then, when my father saw the congregants full of faith and joy he would whisper to me, 'They still believe because they didn't live through the war.' It constantly nagged at him and he always sought an answer to why

there was a Holocaust.

"Even after I became a baal t'shuva at an advanced age, my father was still searching for peace of mind. He asked me to take him to big rabbis because he couldn't bear the loss of his family and he yearned to hear an explanation that would satisfy him. I took him to mashpiim and rabbanim and I told him what the Rebbe answered to this question. Perhaps he was intellectually somewhat mollified, but he was far from satisfied. I was born and raised under this shadow all my life. It's interesting that when he realized I was becoming religious, not only wasn't he angry, he was very happy and gave me his blessing.

"His pain went deep and the question he asked every religious person he met was where was G-d during the war. Yet on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur we would walk to shul together and pray."

Some place deep within him he apparently missed an authentic Jewish life.

"In my youth I lacked the capacity for personal expression and I constantly wanted to show my father that even though I represented the next generation that did not go through such trauma, I could succeed and thrive. When I was of draft age I volunteered for a tank combat unit in the Seventh Brigade during the Six Day War, under the command of Avigur Kahalani.

"Despite the miracles of the war, the significance of which I failed to realize at the time, our unit suffered painful losses. Our unit commander was killed by a direct hit during fierce fighting in El Arish. Many other friends fell in those battles, the worst of that

war. Yet I still remember that we felt fearless. We charged forward like lions, as though someone was guiding us.

"One day, an Egyptian plane flew overhead and began to strafe us. Many of my friends around me were hurt but I wasn't even scratched.

"At that time I didn't talk in terms of miracles since I was so far from being religious, but I felt that a hidden hand was protecting me so that I would not be harmed. Nearly all of my buddies were wounded and I came out just fine. Many times I was close to getting hurt but somehow the bullets skipped over me. Today I know that that hidden hand was the

hand of Hashem who saved me.

"I did the rest of my army service in the Sinai Desert during the War of Attrition. That was a war with many casualties. Time after time I participated in charges through Egyptian lines and it was a miracle that I remained alive."

When he had finished his army duty, Avrohom looked for a business that would utilize his talents, make him a lot of money, and give nachas to his parents. His father had instilled in him the belief that in order to make something of himself, he had to take himself in hand because there was no one else in the world that would do it for him.

"I believed that in order to succeed I had to know how to make lots of money. I was convinced that money was the

yardstick that measures how much you're worth and the key that opens all possibilities to you."

Avrohom smiled as he said this, indicating his drastic change in thinking since then.

A few months after being discharged, he started an insurance company. It began as a small business and before too long it had grown into a well-known name in the competitive insurance industry.

"We were also raised with wonderful values such as truth, justice, integrity, diligence, chesed, and the importance of family. I had a constant feeling that I had to show my father how successful I was, and capable. I decided to be independent and make a fortune in order to win people over, and so I did. I chose a career in insurance and finances and my G-d given ability to connect with people and be well-liked earned me many clients. What motivated me at that time was concern over my own pocket and I looked at clients as a source of profit.

"I garnered many awards and won many competitions. I was very successful but at the end of the day I looked around and wondered – what's next? Is this the whole story?! But I was devoted to my work and I was immersed in it from morning until late at night. I saw my family mainly on weekends. I was busy providing solutions to hundreds of clients, running from meeting to appointment."

Avrohom expanded the business to real estate and other investments. He built his image of a successful businessman and was also known as a man who loved the good life.

"I spent my vacations traveling abroad. I have been almost everywhere in the world. I traveled twice every winter to ski resorts.

Sports made me feel that I had what it takes. It gave me a feeling of pride that I could contend with the challenges of nature. On Shabbos I would go to the beach with friends. Our conversations always centered on financial success - which car I would buy or what house my friend bought and how someone went bankrupt and all sorts of stories that we took an interest in.

"I had whatever money could buy – investment properties, cars, fun and entertainment. I felt good that I could live in a fancy villa and spoil my children with things I didn't have when I was a child. We often traveled to the US and I bought them whatever they wanted. I felt like a good father. I bought them every new thing that came out. I signed the kids up to any and all possible extracurricular classes and we went together to plays and movies.

"But I began to feel an emptiness. There had to be something beyond what I was familiar with that I had to give to my children aside from fun and acquisitions, but what?

"On one of the ski vacations, I examined my life and decided to return to Eretz Yisroel and study Judaism. Unfortunately, the intensity of life pushed this decision aside. The change in my thinking finally became serious when I realized that I was capable of making a change in my life. It started when, after twenty years of smoking, I recognized that this was damaging my health. One fine day I quit smoking. I threw away my cigarettes and stopped smoking forever. When I did that, I knew I could change.

"The feeling that I could change was intensified by another decision I made. From the time I committed to dieting, I stuck to it and I watch myself all the time. I came to the conclusion that I

could make changes and I began a long journey. I wasn't going to push my feelings into a back corner anymore. I was going to take them out and examine them. I wasn't a youngster anymore and these feelings kept coming back to me and disturbing me. I had money and enjoyed life but I still wasn't really happy.

"I wanted to find the truth. I went to numerous seminars on self-development and self-actualization in order to find out what I was missing in life. I registered to study Buddhism, where they spoke about the vacuum within us, the emptiness, and about meditation, serenity, and happiness. There were many confused people there, like me, who sought true happiness. But I soon felt that this wasn't truth; it wasn't Jewish.

"I felt estranged from Eastern teachings. Something was telling me it wasn't for me. I remember that at one seminar the lecturer explained that each of us can realize their dream. If we pictured it vividly and really wanted it, we would get it. Everyone present had to say something they dreamed of doing and I threw out the idea that in one year I would do an art exhibition of paintings that I drew and art critics would say they were good paintings.

"You have to understand that I had never touched a paintbrush, but that's what I decided and that's what I did. I hired a teacher, bought canvas and brushes and began painting. Within a year I had drawn some oil paintings and I held an exhibition that garnered praise from the experts.

"I saw that there was some truth in Eastern teachings and these seminars but I was looking for something beyond that. I searched for eternal, pure truth. Eastern culture brought out my



R' Avrohom Blecher with Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger

spiritual side but it wasn't enough. I studied leadership skills at a modern psychology institute for three years, but that too did not fully satisfy me.

"It was my wife who guided me towards the truth. I met her for the first time while studying Buddhism.

"I attended a big social event and noticed her there. She was different than I remembered her from study groups we had done together years before. When I questioned her she told me that she had become interested in Judaism. She said that after a long period of searching and digging she had concluded that the truth could be found in authentic Judaism."

Vered's words made a tremendous impression on Avrohom and he resolved to abandon the other diversionary activities and examine what Judaism had to offer, that 2000 year old tradition that was an inseparable part of his world.

I garnered many awards and won many competitions. I was very successful but at the end of the day I looked around and wondered – what's next? Is this the whole story?!

"Vered said she was studying the psychology of the soul according to Chassidus. She gave me the address of Rabbi Yitzchok Arad and recommended that I take a course in therapy according to Judaism, where I would also learn about the Jewish home and relationships according to Chassidus.

"At the first meeting I knew this was it. R' Arad discussed the Avos and spoke at length about Avrohom being a man of chesed. His lecture affected me personally. At that time I had people calling me 'Avi' since I didn't like the name Avrohom, which seemed exile-like to me. I even changed

my name legally.

"Suddenly, during the class, I realized my mistake. I was Avrohom. I felt connected to my original name and saw how the name 'Avi' was something external to me that I had latched on to. The very next day I went to the government office and switched my name back to Avrohom. I called to thank Vered for sending me to R' Arad and told her about the change I had made. To my surprise she told me that she had added the name 'Sarah' to her name one year before.

"I began to get used to the idea that Judaism is the right thing for me. At every class in Chassidus or

In Avrohom's office there is a huge picture of the Rebbe and shiurim on Chassidus. Every Friday, the female employees who are not yet religious are given Shabbos candles. Avrohom told me that one of the most moving times is before he makes a trip to the Rebbe when he sees how excitedly his employees write their pidyon nefesh to the Rebbe.

Judaism that I took, I felt that what I was learning was uplifting me. Not much time elapsed before I decided to make a real change and become a baal t'shuva."

Avrohom's mentors throughout that time were R' Yitzchok Arad and R' Yossi Ginsburgh, roshei yeshivas Chabad in Ramat Aviv. They answered his questions with endless patience and directed him to the truth.

"At a certain point, Vered and I attended a seminar on 'The Second Soul,' given by Rabbi Yuval Baranes, and we told him that we were considering marriage. He said he would arrange a wedding according to Chabad custom and suggested that we get the Rebbe's bracha. After opening to a bracha we set a date for the wedding. R' Ginsburgh suggested 18 Adar.

"The wedding took place in a spacious home we bought in Hertzliya. R' Ido Rahav and his wife guided us through every detail of the wedding."

Avrohom doesn't stop seeing divine providence in every detail of his life. He is the kind of Lubavitcher who is openly proud of having the privilege of being one of the Rebbe's Chassidim.

"When I first became religious,

I traveled to the Ukraine with a group and visited the gravesite of the Baal Shem Tov. I felt tremendously inspired. Every morning I immersed in a mikva and had a stupendous spiritual experience. Later on, we met Rabbi Meir Gabbai, one of the founders who established the local institutions. He told us about dozens of graves and shuls that he supported for the purpose of protecting them after the Holocaust.

"He showed us pictures of the places and I saw the name Ostreah, the city where my father was born and where he lived until the war. All my life my father had told me about this town and the handful of friends who remained there after the war.

"I was moved by this and once again felt how providence had brought me on this trip, perhaps to meet those Jews who were still alive. I asked R' Gabbai to tell me how to get to that town and how I could meet the Jews there.

"R' Gabbai said he would take us himself and the next day, at 3:30 in the morning, we set out. First, we went to the famous 'mass grave' that I had heard about all my life from my parents, where thousands of Jews were buried.

We found the home of a Jew, my father's good friend, who was married to a gentile woman. When I explained who I was, he was overjoyed. I felt that if I had gone to the Ukraine just to awaken his Jewish spark, it was worthwhile.

"As a result of that trip, our connection to the Rebbe grew stronger. Upon my return I bought a ticket for New York. As soon as I walked into 770, I knew that this was my true home. Although I still looked like I belonged in the secular world, I was welcomed with open arms and great love. I felt that I was meeting my large family after many years, a feeling I had never experienced before.

"I davened all the t'fillos and for the first time my heart was opened. I cried like someone coming home after being held in captivity for years. From that day on, I live with the Rebbe constantly, both in my private life and in my business life.

"I returned to the Rebbe for Tishrei, this time with my wife, and we stayed for all the Yomim Tovim. On that visit I bought a hat to complete the change and on our return to Eretz Yisroel we looked for a Chabad community to join. We wanted to live in Rechovot, next to R' Yitzchok Arad, and we wrote about this to the Rebbe. In the answers we opened to, we understood we were to live in Tel Aviv. We asked three times and three times we opened to Tel Aviv. We found a home close to the yeshiva in Ramat Aviv."

Thanks to his involvement with Judaism and Chassidus, Avrohom has made a big change in how he approaches business. Now he is particular about seeing the side of the insured person and not just his own narrow interests.

"Clients feel the difference in approach and amazingly, this has only served to make me more

successful with less effort.”

In Avrohom’s office there is a huge picture of the Rebbe and shiurim on Chassidus. Every Friday, the female employees who are not yet religious are given Shabbos candles. Avrohom told me that one of the most moving times is before he makes a trip to the Rebbe when he sees how excitedly his employees write their *pidyon nefesh* to the Rebbe.

“I considered leaving the world of insurance and devoting myself to learning in yeshiva so I could catch up, but the Rebbe has other plans. A clear answer from the Rebbe said that I am supposed to bring spiritual light into my work and not to neglect my business.

“In general, since I brought the Rebbe into my work, I have expanded the offices and have gotten inquiries from Chabad houses, mosdos, and Chassidim for me to be their insurance agent. I have been invited to speak to shluchim and directors of mosdos about insurance plans that are appropriate for Chabad’s special needs. I feel that I am serving the family. When the Rebbe decided that my shlichus is for me to take care of his Chassidim, he opened the heart of the insurance companies who agree to every request that I make of them.

“One of the employees, 36 years of age, gave me a *pan* before I went to the Rebbe in which she wrote that she wanted a bracha to find a shidduch. She gave some coins to tz’daka and made a good resolution. When I returned from 770 she told me she had met someone and they had decided to get married!

“Another employee who gave me a *pan* before I went to 770 wrote about her mother who was going to have an operation that the doctors warned was dangerous but essential. When I returned from 770 she told me that at the



Avrohom Blecher (right) in the early t’shuva stage

I was Avrohom. I felt connected to my original name and saw how the name ‘Avi’ was something external to me that I had latched on to. The very next day I went to the government office and switched my name back to Avrohom.

last moment the doctors changed their minds about the necessity of the surgery and since then her mother is doing fine.

“I think the Rebbe wants me to continue working and not to retire so that I can help shluchim and Chassidim. I am constantly looking for good insurance deals for them.”

When I asked Avrohom whether he saw a contradiction between the anticipation for the Geula and insurance, he said, “Although they seem like opposites because in Geula we won’t need insurance, our avoda during galus is to deal with the material world and make physical vessels. Chassidim must insure themselves and we do this to show Hashem that we live in His world responsibly. Our job is to see

Geula and hashgacha pratis, i.e. that everything that happens in the world is run by Hashem.”

The Blecher home has become a Chabad house in every way. Every week there are Tanya classes there for residents of the neighborhood and farbrengens are held in the building’s social hall. Their home is open on Shabbos and Yom Tov to the T’mimim who learn in the neighborhood yeshiva, and to other guests from the family and their past lives.

“This Tishrei we are going with Rabbi Rosenthal on shlichus to Manali, India, for all of Yom Tov,” Avrohom concluded the interview excitedly.

TEN YEARS OF ISOLATION

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Reinitz

R' Hillel Zaltzman movingly describes R' Berke Chein's years of solitude in Samarkand, his refusal to hint to his wife that he was alive lest the KGB find out; the attempt to forge identity papers for him and the discovery of the group of forgers by the police; the poignant meeting with a Chassid suspected of being a collaborator of the KGB and the decision to go back to using his original name and papers, until his emotional meeting with his wife after ten years of being cut off and their subsequent aliya.

** Part 2 of 2.*

In the first chapter of my memories of R' Berke Chein, I told about how the NKVD was after him, his fleeing from his home in the dead of night and his wanderings throughout the Soviet Union until he found refuge in Samarkand with the Mishulovins and our family, the Zaltzmans.

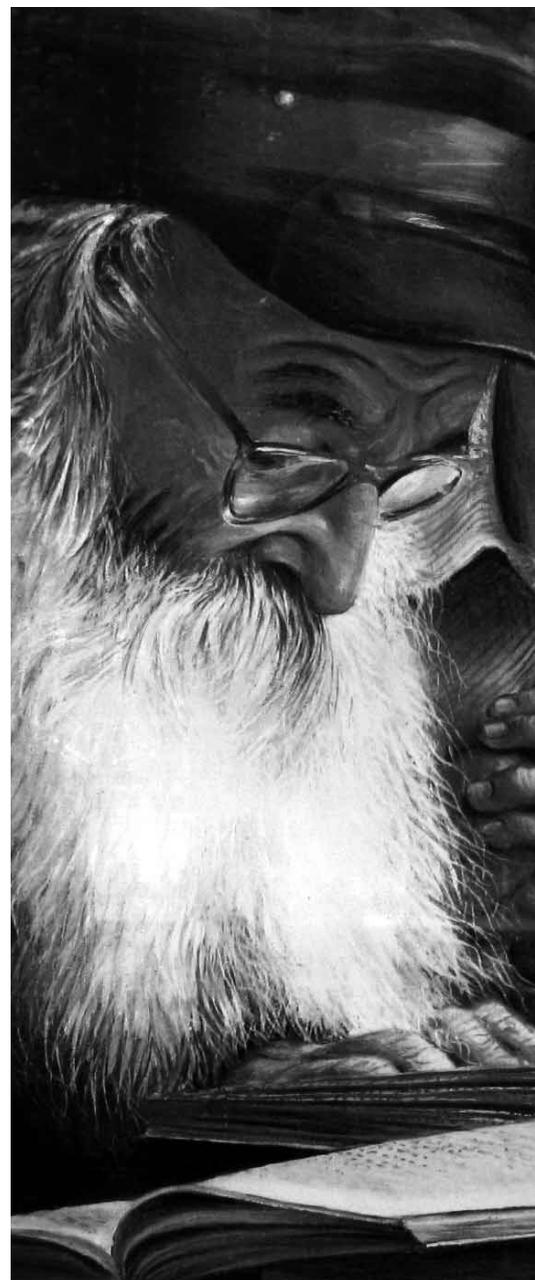
Throughout those years, his wife Feigel remained in Lvov as a "living widow." She had no idea

what had happened to her husband and where he was. Had the NKVD caught him? If he hadn't been caught, where did he go? Where was he hiding? R' Berke assumed that the secret police examined all the mail that his wife received and he did not dare to send her any information about himself lest they both get into trouble.

After R' Berke felt comfortable

in our home, my mother began speaking to him about the necessity of updating his wife about his situation. At least, said my mother, let her know you are alive and are not in jail but with Jewish families. R' Berke did not agree because he said all letters were examined by the KGB and they were liable to discover that he was in Samarkand.

My mother pleaded with him to have mercy on his wife who





A drawing of R' Berke learning Torah in hiding

was living for years without any information about her husband, but R' Berke insisted. He said he was sure that even his wife did not want to know where he was, for it was possible that she was being subject to periodic interrogation by the KGB to extract some information from her about his whereabouts. "She would certainly prefer not to know so she won't be able to tell anyone," he stated firmly.

However, my mother did not give up and she came up with a new idea. Her brother, R' Dovid Pevzner, lived in Lvov and R' Berke's wife would visit his home often. So my mother thought of writing a letter to her brother and asking how R' Berke's daughter Freida was, who had been born three months before he fled from Lvov. She assumed that her brother would understand why she was asking because what

other reason would she have for asking about a child she had never seen and about whose birth she could not have know?

This way, his wife would realize he was in Samarkand among Chassidim. However, R' Berke did not agree to this either. He was afraid that the KGB would figure it out and they would all be lost. That's how great the fear was in those days when Stalin ruled.

The following story shows how R' Berke felt in those days:

One night, R' Berke went to see R' Moshe Nisselevitz, who was involved in all his affairs. He very seriously said, "I want to consult with you about a crucial matter which needs to remain a secret." After R' Moshe promised to keep it a secret, R' Berke began to share his deep pain about his wife with him.

"I cannot describe the great pain I have regarding the suffering Feigel is undergoing these past years, when she doesn't even know what happened to me. I don't see an end in sight to my sorrows, or when I can reunite with my family. Perhaps I should be divorced from her ..."

There was a dreadful silence. R' Berke and R' Moshe stood there with tears in their eyes. R' Moshe's head was bent over in deep anguish. He couldn't bear to hear things like that and was unable to utter a word. Many years later, he told me that he felt his insides twisting within him and if the earth could open its mouth, he would have wanted it to swallow him up.

R' Berke continued to speak as though to himself, "I hope she will find a good man and get married and with time, forget about me and have a normal life. Do I have permission according to Torah to cause her so much suffering day in and day out?"

“I cannot describe the great pain I have regarding the suffering Feigel is undergoing these past years, when she doesn’t even know what happened to me. I don’t see an end in sight to my sorrows, or when I can reunite with my family. Perhaps I should be divorced from her...”

R’ Moshe was choked by tears and he could not respond. He finally managed to say, “I cannot advise you ... What can I say? We will think about it together and we will see.”

The next day, R’ Berke went to R’ Moshe again and said, “I didn’t sleep all night and I tried to think about what I should do. I finally decided that according to Torah I am forbidden from doing this, for where is the trust in Hashem? Hashem can change the situation so that we can reunite!” R’ Moshe was very happy to hear this change in R’ Berke’s thinking and greatly encouraged him.

AN ATTEMPT TO FORGE IDENTITY PAPERS

R’ Berke continued to hide in our house and in the Mishulovin home, immersed in his spiritual world and busy all day with t’filla, Torah and avodas Hashem. No resolution of his situation could be seen on the horizon.

Throughout this time, there were meetings in our families about what to do for R’ Berke. His present situation could not continue! They came to the conclusion that the only thing that could be done would be to change his identity papers so that he became a “new” man.

At that meeting, three members of the family decided that as a “beis din,” they could issue a decree as a divine mandate, and they ruled to begin work along these lines. At first they thought of changing his name from “Chein” to “Shein,” because that would entail changing just one letter. Then they decided it was too similar. They had to give him an entirely new name and completely erase the name “Chein.”

It wasn’t enough to change the identity papers. In the Soviet Union each person had a work ledger where it stated all the places he had worked and his reason for leaving (so the KGB could get information on every person from his place of work, both present and past). It was necessary to obtain a work ledger of someone who had died which would be suitable for R’ Berke. They located a work ledger of a Jew by the name of Goldberg who had died. They decided to adopt that name, but in order to act on all these ideas they needed someone with connections in the Interior Ministry.

A completely irrational idea was proposed. A 25 year old woman by the name of Zena worked for R’ Tzvi Hirsh Lerner. She had arrived in Samarkand

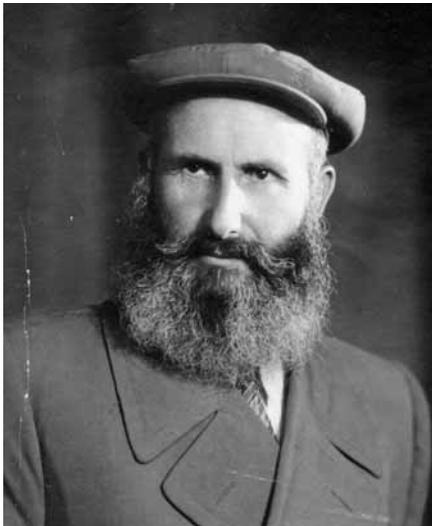
during the war, after her entire family had perished in the Holocaust in the city of Vilna. In Samarkand she was able to get to know some of the clerks in the Interior Ministry and they wanted to use her connections to help R’ Berke.

Aside from the danger in forging papers and preparing new documents, there was another danger. They would be putting the fate of R’ Berke into the hands of this simple woman from the street. However, they had no other choice and they decided to tell R’ Tzvi Hirsh all about it and to ask his opinion.

R’ Tzvi Hirsh, a great Ohev Yisroel, was told the secret. They told him that there was a very Chassidic Jew who needed to flee from the authorities for various reasons, etc. They were after him for years and he had to part from his family and hide with Lubavitcher families in Samarkand. Only one thing could save him and that was new documents from the Interior Ministry. Since they had heard that his employee, Zena, knew clerks at the Interior Ministry, they wanted him to convince her to help out.

Although he knew the danger involved, R’ Tzvi Hirsh agreed to get involved. He went to Zena and told her about an unfortunate Jew who needed new documents and he promised her a nice sum of money for her help. To his great surprise, Zena said she would help but she wanted to do so without receiving a cent for her efforts. When R’ Tzvi Hirsh conveyed her answer, they were all surprised. In Russia of those days it was very rare that someone would do that without getting handsomely rewarded.

Within a short time they prepared the data that was needed to construct a new identity and



R' Hillel Zaltzman's uncle,
R' Dovid Pevzner



R' Hillel Zaltzman with the courthouse in Samarkand in the background

gave it to Zena. We all prayed that thing would go smoothly.

THE POLICE CATCH THE FORGERS

According to their plan, the entire process was supposed to be concluded within two months. Zena began working on it and everybody anxiously awaited the results. Each day seemed like a year. Then they suddenly heard bad news. The police had caught those involved in forging the identity cards.

We were all terrified, especially R' Berke. R' Tzvi tried to contact Zena to find out if she knew what had happened but he could not locate her. We began to fear that she too had been caught. We soon found out that unfortunately, she had indeed been arrested, along with some other Jews from the Bucharian community who were involved in a counterfeiting operation. You can imagine how shocked we were by this. Our first reaction was that R' Berke had to flee. Although Zena did not know where R' Berke was, during her interrogation she was likely to say she was asked to deal with the

“Please tell the Jew that he can remain in the city in peace and quiet as he did until now, because nobody will be able to get anything out of me. Even if they cut me to pieces, I won’t reveal a thing.”

matter and they would finally be able to get him.

However, after some consideration, we decided to try and contact Zena and find out whether they had caught her with R' Berke's documents. As it was legally possible to visit people in jail, R' Tzvi went to see her. His visiting her would not arouse any suspicion since she was his employee and he certainly wanted to know how she was.

Zena realized how frightened we all were and when R' Tzvi visited her she asked him to convey a calming message. She said, “Please tell the Jew that he can remain in the city in peace and quiet as he did until now, because nobody will be able to get anything out of me. Even if they cut me to pieces, I won’t reveal a

thing.”

We rejoiced at this message, but of course we couldn't fully rely on her. Would she really be able to withstand the torture of the interrogators? Nobody knew what to do.

In the meantime, we got information about the arrest of the forgery ring and slowly were able to piece together what had happened. There were some people who had connections in the Interior Ministry and they used these connections to forge documents in exchange for good money. Zena knew them and persuaded them to help her forge documents for R' Berke. In order to get the new identity card they had to fill out a form with all the personal information of the owner. She got the form from the

Interior Ministry and filled it out.

It was precisely at this time that the police discovered the forgers. A wave of arrests began, in the course of which they arrested people red-handed. Zena was among those arrested. They had found the form in her pocket with the false information that she was preparing for R' Berke. The police realized that the form was intended for someone who wanted false papers and they tried to get this important information out of Zena. However, she was a tzadekes and she kept her promise and didn't give anything away. Despite the torture in the interrogations she repeated her claim that she did not know the person. She said she had been walking down the street and someone approached her and said he did not know how to fill out legal forms and he asked her for help. She helped him and then mistakenly put the form in her pocket and walked away. She had no further information about who it was for.

A public trial was announced that would take place in the local courthouse. I was 13 years old and they decided to send me and my brother Berel to be present so we could find out whether Zena was in the defendant's chair, and if she was, what she was accused of. Also, whether the name "Goldberg" would be mentioned or whether she would be accused of something else entirely.

Since it was a public trial, my presence there was not strange. I sat down in the front and listened in fear to the court proceedings. On the defendants' bench I could see Zena (whom I met previously since we all lived in the same neighborhood) and another three Jews from the Bucharian community. Although I did not understand everything, I listened to every word. Among the

"I am in a situation worse than a dog. A dog can roam freely on the street while I have to hide all day and can't go out the door."

documents they confiscated they had found one with the name Goldberg and they noted that Zena had been involved with these documents.

At the end of the trial, the judge read the sentence: The two Bucharian Jews who admitted their guilt were sentenced to seven years in jail. The third Jew was sentenced to three years in jail. Zena, who had denied everything, was sentenced to six years in jail. When we told R' Berke he was beside himself. "All my life I will be indebted to this Jewish woman who was moser nefesh for me and stood up to the police interrogators!" he exclaimed. "Oy! Who can measure the power of a Jewish neshama?"

Zena was sent to six years of hard labor in Siberia, but because of her good behavior she was released after three years. R' Berke wanted to meet her in order to pay her and thank her personally for saving him from falling into the hands of the Soviet angels of destruction, but she refused. She said she did not want a Jew to feel uncomfortable because of her and she did not want to be paid. She had done what she did for the sake of heaven. A short while later we heard that she had left Samarkand and returned to Vilna.

FIRST SIGN OF LIFE

During that terrifying time, we were all in despair. We thought, "Why did Hashem do this?" and we did not know how to proceed.

A short while later the situation became bleaker with the Doctors' Plot and the outbreak of anti-Semitism it caused. The newspapers were full of propaganda against the Jews and the atmosphere in Jewish communities was depressing.

You can imagine how R' Berke and all of us felt. We knew that we were hiding a traitor, a counter-revolutionary, who wanted to cross the border illegally. In those days they sought to besmirch the Jews and any revelation like this was immediately blown up to enormous proportions and designated as counter-revolutionary.

It was only after Stalin's sudden death on Purim, 1953, and the release of the doctors that things lightened up. The situation had eased to the extent that R' Berke finally acceded to my mother's pleading and agreed that she could write a letter to her brother in Lvov to give regards to Freida'le, R' Berke's daughter. As my mother anticipated, R' Berek's wife understood the hint and quickly sent a letter in response. You can imagine how excited R' Berke was to see his wife's handwriting. He read line after line as he cried.

My mother had a bit of prophecy when she encouraged R' Berke, "Don't be sad. The time will come when your wife Feigel will come to you and both of you will travel to Eretz Yisroel and join your sons."

This seemed so outlandish at

the time, so removed from reality, and R' Berke replied sorrowfully, "Oy Bracha, I am here in a situation worse than a dog. A dog can roam freely on the street while I have to hide all day and can't go out the door. I have no identity papers and I'm trapped with no hope on the horizon. I don't know what tomorrow will bring – will I remain here, will I be in a Jewish home, or will they arrest me? If they arrest me, they will send me to Siberia. Then what? Feigel will remain an aguna forever."

At this time, my mother's optimism seemed like salt on an open wound.

SECRET MEETING IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT

In the meantime, life got easier. The new Premier of the Soviet Union decided to grant a pardon to the hundreds of thousands of political prisoners, including those who tried to illegally cross the border. We thought that perhaps R' Berke would benefit, for if the prisoners had been released, maybe his file would be expunged and he could be legal. If so, it was time to give him back his old papers with his real name.

But it was still hard to shake off the feeling of terror that had prevailed for so many years. R' Berke was afraid to use his real name after so many years of hiding. He consulted with Eli Mishulovin and Moshe Nisselevitz and R' Moshe came up with a radical idea – to check in the offices of the KGB to see whether they were still looking for him.

In those years there were Jews who were called to the KGB offices from time to time, where they were grilled for information about the Jewish community. Of course we were very afraid,



especially of those who circulated in our community and were one of us. I can't describe the fear of those years. As R' Chaim Zalman Kozliner once put it, the situation that we are living in is such that if they would say about someone that he belonged to the KGB, he was "deleted" as far as Anash were concerned. No excuses would help. It should be noted that often it was against their will that these Jews were used by the KGB. It was very hard to get out of their clutches.

(To show you how far this went, once, before Rosh HaShana, R' Berke called us to

his inner sanctum and, looking grim, he said, "I have found out that they suspect me of belonging to the KGB. I thought: 'Heaven knows that I am innocent of having anything to do with them and what do I care what they think about me?'" But since the Torah urges us to be innocent before G-d and Israel, I am telling you that I have never had anything to do with them and there is not a shred of truth to this."

It was painful to hear this from R' Berke. We told him that we hadn't heard anything and of course we did not suspect him,

‘You should know that we have other people who work with us and they are honest and devoted. They will surely tell us the truth. If you try to lie to us, you will suffer forever.’

G-d forbid, and after much effort we succeeded in reassuring him that we did not suspect him.)

R’ Moshe was in touch with one of them and this is how it happened:

In 1946, when many Lubavitchers succeeded in sneaking out of the country to Poland via Lemberg, R’ Moshe also tried his luck but he was too late. He miraculously avoided imprisonment; however, since they continued looking for him, he had to change his name on official documents. His new papers said his name was Sholom Friedman.

When he arrived in Samarkand, he told everyone that his name was Moishke Friedman. Although it said “Sholom” on his papers, everyone knew him by the name of Moshe and he couldn’t change that. Furthermore, if he was ever caught and questioned about this, he could have explained that he had two names, Sholom and Moshe. One name was used on his documents and one was the name he used in everyday life. Most of Anash, including me, did not know that his family name was actually Nisselevitz. Only a few people, who knew him from before the war, were privy to this information.

This man, whom we were all wary of, knew R’ Moshe well and was aware of his past, including his failed attempt at crossing the border and that he had changed his name from Moshe Nisselevitz

to Sholom Friedman. After Stalin died, when this man was released from jail and came to Samarkand, R’ Moshe saw him and was very afraid that the man would inform on him.

However, after some years went by and R’ Moshe was never called in by the KGB, his impression was that the man was not the informer he had been suspected of being, and that although he had fallen into the KGB’s net, he had remained G-d fearing and hid from the KGB whatever information he could. Once he came to this conclusion, R’ Moshe decided to meet with him and talk to him.

When they met, the man told R’ Moshe about his guilty conscience over his visits to the KGB office. He said that every Wednesday morning, when he had to go to them, it was a terrible day for him. He explained, “You cannot imagine what I go through in the interrogations. The interrogator attacks me like a wolf. He bangs with his fist on the table and frightens me with threats about what they will do to me if I don’t talk.

“When I say that I have nothing to tell them, he orders me to go to a certain house and to see whether there is a minyan there on Shabbos and he warns me, ‘You should know that we have other people who work with us and they are honest and devoted. They will surely tell us the truth. If you try to lie to us, you will suffer forever.’”

R’ Moshe empathized with the man and assured him that he believed him.

None of us in Samarkand knew of the connection between the two of them, because R’ Moshe kept it to himself. He knew that if he told someone about his trust in this man, they would all be on guard against him (R’ Moshe).

Now, when they considered having R’ Berke go back to using his original papers, R’ Moshe thought of consulting with this man, of asking him to find out whether the KGB was still interested in R’ Berke and his location. Naturally, before doing this, he had to get R’ Berke’s approval.

When R’ Moshe asked R’ Berke, he nearly fainted. “Are you serious?” asked R’ Berke. “You’ve lost your mind!” But R’ Moshe had excellent powers of persuasion and he managed to convince R’ Berke that this was the right move.

Having gotten R’ Berke’s consent, R’ Moshe wasted no time. He left immediately to speak to the man and after proper preparations – which only R’ Moshe knew how to do – he began to slowly and carefully check to see whether the KGB was interested in R’ Berke. The man told R’ Moshe that they had never asked him about R’ Berke and he added that he was sure that if the KGB were looking for R’ Berke, they would have asked him about him.

After R’ Moshe returned with this information, R’ Berke was very happy but he was still a little nervous. R’ Moshe decided to have R’ Berke meet with the man himself so he could hear it from him directly. Arranging a meeting like this was complicated and dangerous, for it would reveal R’ Berke’s hiding place. At that time,

R' Berke was hiding in the Mishulovin home and they certainly would not agree to have this man come to their house to meet R' Berke. Doing so would endanger not only R' Berke but them as well.

R' Moshe decided to keep the meeting a secret from everyone and to have it late at night, after everyone went to sleep. The Mishulovin family lived in a house with its own yard and R' Berke hid there in a small room. They arranged between them that at a certain time at night, R' Berke would open the gate and they would enter the house where he hid during the day. They would speak by the light of a candle and not the electricity.

When the man heard from R' Moshe that R' Berke wanted to meet with him in order to hear the information from him directly, he was very excited, for they knew one another very well and had not seen each other for many years, since their arrest in 1946.

Late at night, R' Moshe brought the man to the gate of the Mishulovin home. A few minutes earlier R' Berke had opened the gate, and the two were able to immediately enter R' Berke's hiding place, which was weakly lit by the light of a small candle. I cannot describe that moving meeting on paper. They fell upon one another and cried. They kissed with Chassidic brotherly love and cried some more. Then they kissed again and cried.

The man knew the bitter circumstances that R' Berke was in. He did not need to be told about his sons and wife, etc. He knew everything because he had been personally involved in the forging of R' Berke's documents in 1946. They reminisced for a long time and they hugged, kissed, and cried.



“You surely remember that when we met and decided to marry, we decided that wherever we lived and wherever we would be, we would never forget one another.”

After R' Berke heard directly from him that his name had never been mentioned in the KGB interrogations, he was convinced of the veracity of his words. The man advised him to use his old documents.

After that meeting, R' Berke decided to use his original papers. He registered as a resident of the

city, which made him legal after years of hiding.

PERSONAL REGARDS FROM R' BERKE

After becoming a legal resident, R' Berke was more relaxed. He finally agreed to write a letter to his wife in his handwriting and to inform her

Mordechai was aghast. Nobody had considered this possibility. When he expressed his reservations to the Rebbe, the Rebbe smiled and dismissed his fears. "They won't catch on [as to who he is]," the Rebbe assured him.

that he was living among Lubavitchers and was doing well. He refrained from writing his location since he was afraid that the authorities in Lvov were still looking for him. He also refused to send the letter through the post office because he was afraid the KGB would read it. He insisted on finding someone who would deliver it personally.

After he married, my brother Berel lived in Stalinabad and at just this time (around 1955) he was passing through Samarkand to attend a conference in Moscow where he was being sent by his work. Eli Mishulovin considered it vital that one of us give R' Berke's wife the letter and personal regards from him, and so he arranged with my brother to meet at the train station in Samarkand.

When they met, Eli gave him two missions: 1) to travel to Riga and raise money for R' Berke, 2) to travel to Lvov and give R' Berke's wife the letter and regards. He gave him the letter in an open envelope and told him that R' Berke had given Berel permission to read the letter, if he so wished.

Berel did not dare to read the letter but since the letter was open he could read one line, written in Russian, which gave him the chills. R' Berke had written, "You surely remember that when we met and decided to marry, we decided that wherever

we lived and wherever we would be, we would never forget one another."

Today too, as I write these lines, I am amazed by the mesirus nefesh required in those years. A young couple met and decided to marry and what did they talk about? Not about buying a house, not about furniture, but asking one another to keep the faith wherever they would end up.

Berel first went to Riga, where he met Anash like R' Yisroel Pevzner, R' Mulle Pruss, R' Notke Berkahan and another Lubavitcher by the name of Shlomo (I don't remember his last name). They welcomed him warmly and gave him generous donations. From there he went to Lvov.

Since he did not want to go directly to Feigel's house lest they kept the house under surveillance, the meeting took place at my uncle Dovid's house. Feigel met him there with her daughter Freidel. What joy there was when Feigel heard that Berel had a letter from her husband. She took the letter and as soon as she saw his handwriting, she began to cry tears of joy. She read it and wept.

Despite her strong desire to know more information about her husband, she did not ask my brother who he was or where he came from. She knew that you don't ask these questions in Russia. The only question she asked was, "Did you personally

see my husband?"

When Berel said he had seen R' Berke, she couldn't believe her ears and she asked him again and again, in several variations, to make sure that Berel had indeed seen her husband. My brother told her that not only had he seen R' Berke but he had even shared a room with him. He said that R' Berke asked him to send his regards and to tell her that he was healthy and living among Anash and that he believed they would unite again soon.

His wife's joy was boundless. My brother felt that his trip to Lvov was well worth it.

Another year passed before R' Berke dared to tell his wife where he was and to ask her to come to Samarkand with their daughter. I went to the train station to meet the two of them and to bring them to R' Berke's new home. I cannot possibly describe how excited R' Berke was to meet his wife, whom he hadn't seen for ten years, and his ten year old daughter who had been three months old the last time he saw her.

The entire Lubavitch community in Samarkand welcomed R' Berke's wife with great honor. We knew how much this woman had gone through over the years when she was left alone, with no news of her husband. In addition, she was a distinguished woman, very refined and with tremendous yiras Shamayim.

THE TRIP TO ERETZ YISROEL

After the family united, R' Berke began to think about the possibility of submitting a request to emigrate. In those years, hardly anyone dared to submit such a

request because of the fear that prevailed. The few who asked to leave knew that a year would pass before they would get an answer and the answer would almost certainly be negative. That was the answer everyone got.

Submitting papers to OVIR with the request to leave the country was completely out of the question for R' Berke, especially when for the crime of trying to leave the country he had been arrested and pursued for years, yet he thought his wife should submit the request in order to reunite with her parents, who had made aliya a few years earlier. Perhaps he would also get permission to leave after that.

R' Berke sent a letter to his father-in-law, written in hints, in which he asked them to convey the question to the Rebbe. His father-in-law conveyed the question to his grandson, R' Berke's son Mordechai, who was in yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim - 770 at the time, and asked him to ask the Rebbe. The question he asked was whether his mother should ask permission to leave. The Rebbe's answer was clear and surprising: "Your father should submit a request to leave for the entire family, and Hashem will help them."

Mordechai was aghast. Nobody had considered this possibility, for R' Berke was "treif" and "pasul." When he expressed his reservations to the Rebbe, the Rebbe smiled and dismissed his fears. "They won't catch on [as to who he is]," the Rebbe assured him.

Indeed, R' Berke got permission to emigrate only half a year after he submitted his request. Another half a year later they received the necessary papers. This was Sukkos time and R' Berke did not want to spend one extra minute in the Soviet

Union. On Chol HaMoed Sukkos they packed their bags and left for Moscow, and from there they left for Eretz Yisroel on Hoshana Raba. We all felt we had been spiritually orphaned.

JOY AND TEARS TOGETHER

After R' Berke left for Moscow, R' Moshe Nisselevitz confided to me that he had come up with an idea about how to get s'farim and the Rebbe's sichos, but in order to carry out his plan we had to travel to Moscow immediately and speak to R' Berke before he left. This was not a message that anyone else could be trusted to convey.

In those days we hardly ever got sichos from the Rebbe. The s'farim and booklets that tourists would occasionally bring and leave in the shul were immediately taken by the KGB to the "Ministry of Culture." There was another way to get sichos, maamarim etc. In those days, the few people who got permission to emigrate had to go to the Israeli embassy in Moscow in order to arrange their papers. When they entered the embassy, they would be shown a sign which said, "The walls have ears," and they would motion to them to be quiet. Then the embassy workers would show them the bookcase and motion to them to take as many s'farim as they wanted and to leave them with relatives who remained in Russia. These s'farim would be distributed throughout the Soviet Union. But this didn't happen often.

As usual, R' Moshe had come up with an original idea. Samarkand was an ancient city and a tourist center. A Jewish tourist who visited the city would visit the shul. R' Moshe wanted to take advantage of this point.

Although we were afraid to pray there, if we had an agreed upon hiding place where tourists would leave s'farim, we could go there occasionally to retrieve them.

R' Moshe was enthusiastic about his plan and convinced me to fly to Moscow to meet with R' Berke, and to ask him to convey the idea in 770 so that when someone reliable would travel to Samarkand, they could inform him of the hiding place. We could rely on R' Berke to repeat this only to the right people. So I flew to Moscow and told R' Berke the idea.

By the way, on that short visit I saw an interesting sight that I had never seen before in my life – a sukka with snow on it. The sukka had a special roof which they removed when they ate.

I also met R' Michel Vishedsky of Chernovitz, who had come to Moscow to give something to R' Berke. In those years it was exceedingly rare for a Lubavitcher, someone you could trust, to leave the Soviet Union for the West.

When I flew back to Samarkand I thought: "I am landing in Samarkand while R' Berke is landing in Eretz Yisroel!"

That Shmini Atzeres we fulfilled the saying, "joy on this side [of the heart] and tears on this side [of the heart]." On the one hand, we were thrilled for R' Berke but on the other hand, we cried. I will never forget that Shmini Atzeres farbrengen, when we three friends – Mottel Goldschmidt, Michael Mishulovin, and I – sat and drank three bottles of vodka. We drank, sang, and cried. I don't remember how we went to hakafos but I remember that we woke up on Shmini Atzeres morning...

THE ONE AND ONLY REB MUNYE A”H

By Shneur Zalman Berger

He was an outstanding talmid chacham and a Maggid Shiur who taught boys how to learn Gemara. For thousands of T’mimim he was a role model of a gaon and a masmid, a mekushar to the Rebbe, someone who ran away from honor. This was R’ Mordechai Eliyahu Shneur a”h, known as R’ Munye, who taught in yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Lud for over fifty years.

The truth is that for me, this is not just another article. I have never before written about someone who taught me how to learn Gemara, because there is only one such man: Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu Shneur, known by all as R’ Munye. He wasn’t just another Maggid Shiur from whom I learned one masechta or another; he was the man who taught me and thousands of others, **how to learn.**

He taught, by personal example as much as by logical explanations, what it means to be particular about keeping to the yeshiva schedule. We also saw him as a genuine mekushar. It

was enough for me that when I went on Fridays to mitzva t’fillin in Nes Tziyona, I would see R’ Munye in the center of Rishon L’Tziyon, a man over 70, busy with mitzva t’fillin.

Words are not enough to describe this unique personality and therefore, I made special efforts to get details from those who knew him personally for decades, those who worked with him and were also close to him. They are the mashpia, Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi, who learned by R’ Munye in his youth and served for decades as mashgiach and mashpia in Tomchei T’mimim in

Lud where R’ Munye taught, and the mashpia, R’ Zushe Posner who held key positions in the yeshiva in Lud and in Kfar Chabad. R’ Zushe was happy to tell me about the man who, in his opinion, “is a model of the seventh generation, more than all the young guys.”

In order to complete the portrait, his son R’ Moshe Shneur, related childhood memories, and repeated what he heard during the Shiva about his father, a man who rarely spoke about his pain-filled past.

I will begin with an analogy about a train which I heard from him. R’ Munye told us this mashal one day when two classes of shiur beis listened to his shiur together because the teacher of the other class was absent. You can well imagine that it’s no easy task to teach many dozens of 15 year olds, but R’ Munye delivered his shiur while paying attention to each talmid. He proved this awareness of every single talmid when he suddenly stopped talking and roused one talmid who had closed his eyes.

Then he uncharacteristically told us about a difficult experience he underwent during World War II:

“When we fled from the Nazis, the trains were packed with people who were trying to escape.

The train compartments were quickly filled and having no recourse, some people climbed onto the last car and held onto the knobs and iron bars. As the train sped on its way, they clung on tightly, outside the train, lest they fall. Sometimes the trip took days.

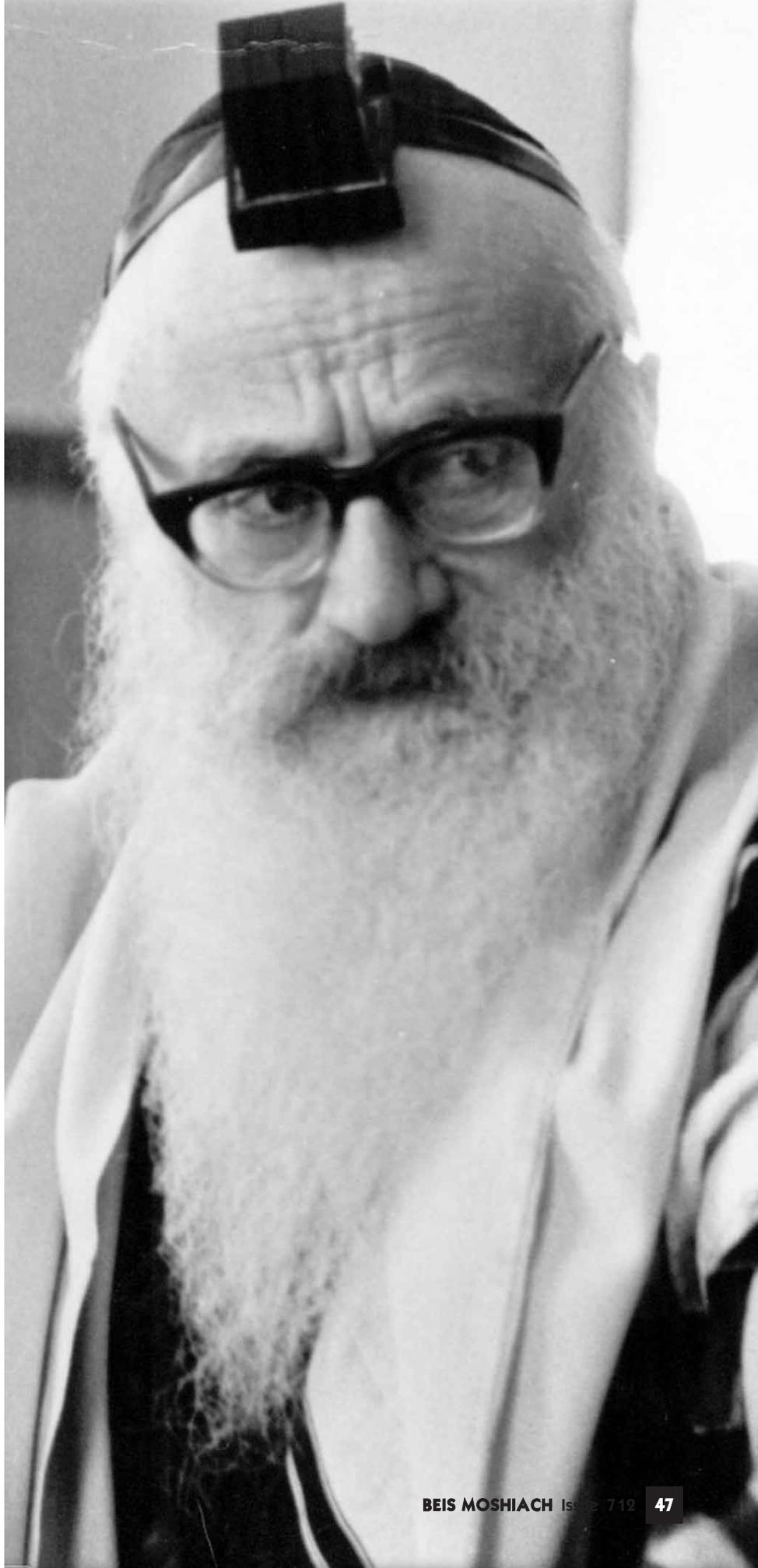
Just try to picture – R' Munye raised his voice – what would happen if one of the people holding onto the train got tired and dozed off for a second? He would be killed instantly. So these people did not close their eyes for a moment, even when they were exhausted. You too, when you learn Gemara, have to imagine that you are holding on to the outside of a train and you can't close your eyes for a minute.

R' Munye followed his own advice. He always held on to the train and didn't snooze for a second. The yeshiva could be in an uproar, there could be a new rosh yeshiva, his salary might not be paid, but R' Munye was unaffected.

R' Chaim Ashkenazi, who worked alongside him for decades, says that R' Munye was never absent even when he did not feel well, and he continued this practice into his golden years.

Thousands of talmidim know that R' Munye spent many hours in yeshiva, more than other teachers, for he taught iyun and then was a meishiv for girsa. He always stood in his place, ready to help anybody who had a question.

As for the time in between s'darim, R' Ashkenazi relates that during the afternoon break, when the rest of the staff rested, R' Munye remained alone in the office and learned. In the staff dining room he was always one of the last ones there. He ate little and went back to his precious learning.



HIS FATHER WAS EXILED AND DIED IN SIBERIA

R' Munye did not like to talk about his personal history. He rarely spoke about his father and brother who were arrested and exiled to some unknown place. His brother Shmuel was an underground melamed in Moscow. He was arrested and exiled but returned home. His father was arrested on 4 Cheshvan, 1938, when he lived near Moscow, in a wave of arrests in which eight Chabad Chassidim arrested.

The arrests began with three Chassidim on Chol HaMoed Sukkos and continued two and a half weeks later with the arrests of another five. Among the famous men arrested were R' Zalman Pevzner (Buber), later rav of the Chabad k'hilla in Tashkent, and R' Aharon Eliezer Tzeitlin.

In the prosecution brief that was recently publicized, it says the eight were accused by the NKVD of Jewish, anti-Soviet activities such as opening an illegal shul, encouraging aliya, working with youth and children, and founding a school for Jewish children.

The eight were sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. They did not all return from Siberia. R' Meir Yitzchok Shneur died on 3 Iyar, 1942, may Hashem avenge his blood.

Some people climbed onto the last car and held onto the knobs and iron bars. As the train sped on its way, they clung on tightly, outside the train, lest they fall. They couldn't close their eyes for a second, or they would be killed instantly. When you learn Gemara, imagine that you are holding on to the outside of a train and you can't close your eyes for a minute.

When his illness overcame him and he could not go to yeshiva one day, his son says that some relatives who heard that he had been absent from yeshiva were afraid that something terrible had happened, and they hurried to his house in Kfar Chabad. They were astounded to hear from him that he had been sick for a week but had continued to teach as usual. It was only on the seventh day of his illness that he no longer had

the strength and stayed home that one day.

"Being absent," said R' Ashkenazi, "was a big punishment for him, since he desired, more than anything, to learn and to teach."

EXILE YOURSELF TO A PLACE OF TORAH

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu Shneur (R' Munye) was born on

16 Shvat, 5677/1917, in the town of Klimovitz in Belarus. The Communist Revolution took place when he was a child and the Reds began persecuting religious people. His father, R' Meir Yitzchok, and his mother, Ida, who were mekuravim to Lubavitch, raised him in the way of the Torah and when he was a young bachur he went to Shomyatz to learn Torah from the town rav, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Eidelstein.

He became good friends with the Chassid, R' Zalman Leib Estulin from the town of Shomyatz. R' Munye and R' Zalman Leib learned together until, due to the communist threat, R' Eidelstein stopped teaching.

R' Munye returned home. Some time later, R' Eidelstein was widowed and his young sons, Gershon and Yaakov, were sent to live with their aunt, the wife of R' Chaim Chuna Shneur, his father's brother. They all lived in one building. R' Munye was asked to teach these boys. They learned with him for two years and then they and their father made aliya.

Years later R' Munye became a central figure in Tomchei T'mimim in Lud, while R' Gershon Eidelstein is one of the roshei yeshivos in Ponovezh, in B'nei Brak, and his brother R' Yaakov is a rav in Ramat HaSharon.

On Chol HaMoed Sukkos and Pesach, R' Yaakov Eidelstein would visit R' Munye with his children, quoting the Gemara which says, "A person must greet his rebbi on Yom Tov."

ENTERING THE WORLD OF CHABAD CHASSIDUS

R' Munye's family left Klimovitz for Mozayesk, a suburb of Moscow. His uncle, R' Zushe

Paz, a gabbai of the Lubavitch shul Marina Roscha, got the young R' Munye to learn in the Chabad shul, where he renewed his friendship with R' Zalman Leib Estulin, who was learning there at the time. They learned together and regularly asked questions of Rabbi Abba Dovid Goldfine, the son-in-law of the Rogatchover Gaon who lived in Moscow.

Along with the study of Gemara, they both began to enter the world of Chabad Chassidus.

During World War II, R' Munye escaped from the frontlines to the interior of Russia and arrived in Uzbekistan, where there were many Chabad Chassidim. Loving Torah, he continued to learn Nigleh and Chassidus in one of the branches of Tomchei T'mimim that was founded in the area during the war.

At the end of the war, he left the Soviet Union with the passport of a Jew named Berel Shermer. When he arrived in Poland he did not continue onwards, as the others did, to Western Europe, but tried to get his brother Shmuel out. He was unsuccessful. After staying for some time in Europe he arrived in Eretz Yisroel, where he was received with open arms by his friends from Moscow, the family of R' Berel Gansburg who lived in Tel Aviv.

At the end of the winter of 5708, he was hired by yeshivas Achei T'mimim in Tel Aviv. Despite his modesty, people quickly realized how talented and smart he was. Therefore, when yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lud was founded in Shvat, 5709, Rabbi Dovid Chanzin, who was Maggid Shiur in the yeshiva in Tel Aviv, recommended that they hire R' Munye as Maggid Shiur. They accepted his



R' Munye on the left with his class, during a visit of shluchim in 1956



R' Munye is marked with an arrow. He is with the roshei yeshiva and talmidim of the yeshiva in Pardes in 1954.

recommendation and the bachur who had persisted in learning under difficult conditions in the Soviet Union became a Maggid Shiur in the new yeshiva in Lud.

A few years later he married Ginesia, the daughter of R' Zalman Feldman a"h, and the young couple settled in Kfar Chabad.

Although he was young, he was well-liked by the talmidim. For over fifty years he taught thousands of students, who benefited from his brilliance, his knowledge, and his depth. He

was able to speak the language of young boys despite his genius.

His approach to learning was principled and orderly. He did not explain the p'shat and suffice with that. R' Munye was extremely particular that the talmidim delve into the topic, but first focused on the p'shat.

He put a tremendous amount of time and effort into the material that they learned. His son Moshe relates that in his younger years, when he went to sleep he would see his father sitting in the living room and

R' Ashkenazi once asked him when it was a greater test, during the communist rule in Russia or now, after 3 Tammuz. His answer on the spot was, "Of course, now it's harder. Then you knew you were either keeping Shabbos or you weren't. Now you can think that you are a Chassid either way."

preparing his shiur with great concentration and effort.

He was very orderly and was particular about time. His son says that on the day his children got married he stayed in yeshiva to learn until noon.

His constant interest in learning to the exclusion of all else, amazed people. Till today, the yeshiva staff members recall the terrible days following the tragic death of his 12 year old daughter in a road accident. You couldn't see anything on R' Munye, for he continued to teach as usual, without speaking about the tragedy.

R' MUNYE'S APPROACH

R' Munye's shiurim were well-constructed. He would begin by explaining the p'shat of the Gemara in depth. He incorporated the ideas of the commentators in his explanation. Every *dibbur ha'maschil* of Rashi was precious to him and every word was well explained, as was the Tosafos.

Although, at first glance, some thought he was a teacher of p'shat, a more careful look reveals that he had a unique approach. He himself learned all the commentaries but when he gave a shiur, instead of

presenting lots of pilpulim he preferred to explain the Gemara clearly with the explanations of the commentators as part of the p'shat.

His brilliance and extensive knowledge amazed his talmidim as well as other Maggidei Shiur.

"There were Maggidei Shiur who were not Lubavitchers who could not understand how a genius like R' Munye did not get the honor due him and was hidden away like an ordinary teacher," said R' Ashkenazi.

"In age he was old, but he understood his students, and not only the students in his own class. He would sit at the edge of the zal and from there he would sometimes notice a talmid who wasn't doing well in his learning or in his Chassidishkait.

"Since it wasn't his job to get involved, he would approach the Mashgiach or Maggid Shiur and quietly tell them that it would be a good idea to talk to that talmid and encourage him."

A RECORDING OF MATTAN TORAH?!

The mashpia, R' Zushe Posner knew R' Munye for many years and he highlighted an important point about him:

"R' Munye was a true model

of the 'seventh generation.' He was the seventh generation more than me and you and most other young people. There is no other way to explain it. By him, there was only the Rebbe and nothing else. He would constantly think about how to fulfill the Rebbe's ratzon."

He was very particular about going to the Rebbe for Tishrei. Despite his age he pushed and sweated in order to stand in the front rows. When there was a live broadcast of the Rebbe's farbrengen, he regarded it as "Holy of Holies." Not only did he run to attend, but he also took his young children along. He would say, "The Rebbe is speaking and you will sleep at home? Come to the broadcast, at the very least you will listen and fall asleep there."

In the early 90's there were frequent live broadcasts of sichos and the bachurim in yeshiva would get up for each one. Naturally, the next day's schedule was somewhat "off." It reached the point that the hanhala considered telling the bachurim not to get up for the broadcasts so that they would have an uninterrupted night's sleep, and they would hear a recording of the sicha in the morning.

When R' Munye heard this idea he said sarcastically, "It's too bad that Hashem woke up the Jewish people for Mattan Torah early in the morning. They could have slept and heard the Ten Commandments later on in a recording!"

The idea was shelved.

The following is an episode that is engraved in my soul from the days that I learned in his class:

It was evening and time to learn girsa. Many of the bachurim were tired after a long day and they tried to learn as

quickly as possible. That day, R' Munye looked particularly preoccupied. He sat in his chair, learned a little and then went out to the library and returned with a volume. A few minutes later he went out again and returned with another few s'farim.

"Look at the s'farim he is bringing to the table during girsa," noted a friend, pointing at the pile of s'farim that were accumulating. There were sifrei Nigleh and sifrei Chassidus, N'viim, and others. My friend told me to take a good look at R' Munye's Gemara and I saw that on it there was an open maamer that the Rebbe had recently edited. The s'farim on his table were to enable him to look up the footnotes that appeared on the bottom of the maamer.

I was amazed by this elder Chassid, already 73 at the time, who after teaching young, lively bachurim since early in the morning was now learning a maamer with all the footnotes, a project that even young people don't find time to do properly.

His faith in the Rebbe and that the Rebbe is Moshiach was firm. After 3 Tammuz, he did not want to talk about this bizarre era we are in and he just repeated that we have to get through this. R' Ashkenazi once asked him when it was a greater test, during the communist rule in Russia or now, after 3 Tammuz. His answer on the spot was, "Of course, now it's harder. Then you knew you were either keeping Shabbos or you weren't. Now you can think that you are a Chassid either way."

Whoever learned in the yeshiva in Lud remembers that R' Munye would sometimes yell at a talmid or a group of talmidim who were not learning properly or misbehaving. When he yelled, it affected him deeply. Everybody



Shiur beis of Tomchei T'mimim in Lud 1989



On Tisha B'Av this year, three weeks before R' Munye passed away
(photographed by Meir Dahn)

knew that he did it because he really cared about proper learning and conduct.

Mikva was all-important to him. In later years, when his medical condition did not enable him to go to the mikva, he looked forward to the days when his condition would improve somewhat. On those days he would immediately go to immerse before davening.

On Shabbasos he davened at length and would regularly attend every farbrengen. Despite his knowledge and standing, he was a listener at farbrengens and only rarely spoke up when he felt it was necessary.

A MODEST FUNERAL FOR A MODEST MAN

Many generations of talmidim learned by him and owe him their ability to learn Gemara, but R' Munye never sat on daises. He was modest and humble and did not look for positions and honor.

So too with his funeral, which took place on an Erev Shabbos afternoon, when his former talmidim were busy preparing for Shabbos and the present talmidim in the yeshiva in Lud were mostly on mivtzaim in the Tel Aviv area. The modesty that was part of him all his life accompanied him on his final journey.

The funeral left his home in Kfar Chabad, passed the main shul where he davened and learned, continued to yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lud, and from there to Yerushalayim where he was buried.

He is survived by his wife Ginesia, his sons: R' Meir Shneur of Canada, R' Moshe Shneur of Kfar Chabad, his daughters: Mrs. Perla Volosov of Ramat Yishai, Mrs. Ida Liberov of Kfar Chabad and Mrs. Esther Raskin of Crown Heights.

A SHLIACH'S PERSISTENCE TIPS THE SCALES

By Goldy Kom

The story of Lelach, a young Israeli who lit a fire in a military Intelligence Center, spent a year in Philadelphia, and ended up in the Far East with Rabbi Shimi and Zeldy Goldstein in Pushkar, India.



GROWING UP

My name is Lelach and I was born in Netanya. My parents are second generation settlers in Israel and they lived like regular, secular Sabras, but the older members of the family gave us lots of warmth and faith. My grandfather brought holy books from Iraq and whoever needed something turned to him for a bracha. I saw that the Torah has real power and I knew it was true.

From the age of 16 I started keeping Shabbos as I understood it. While everyone else went out Friday night, I sat with the candles and read books until I fell asleep. The next day, around noon, I would crawl out of bed and check the clock-the calendar-the color of the sky-and the clock again, to see when Shabbos would end.

Yes, it was a day of rest, but how much rest did I need? I was unaware of the beauty of Shabbos but I continued to keep it nonetheless.

I finished high school and was drafted. I served in Intelligence and was responsible for a unique and secret Intelligence Center. We were a clearing house for underground transmissions and our job was to respond to queries, handle crises, and in general, to oversee the system.

I kept Shabbos in the army too, without any fights or problems.

One Shabbos, I lit candles in the control room, and since it was quieter than usual I went off to sleep, as was my practice. I suddenly jolted awake in fright. I heard a siren and smelled the acrid smell of burning plastic. It was my candles.

I had to face a military court for negligence – lighting candles in such a sensitive place and leaving them unsupervised was a

very serious matter.

I was very afraid but an inner voice soothed: Don't worry. In the merit of the mitzva you won't be severely punished. Indeed, boruch Hashem, my father spoke to the commander and convinced the man to give me a relatively light sentence – two weeks in military prison – and even that was conditional in the event that it happened again. I really got off easy.

A year went by, at the end of which I was happily released from the army. I wanted to see the world!

I flew to Philadelphia, where I spent a year. I worked in a clothing store and from morning till night I served an inner city clientèle. I stayed with Israeli “yordim” who hosted me nicely from a material standpoint. Spiritually was another story. When I announced that I don't work on Shabbos and the boss will understand that, they laughed at me.

They turned out to be right. In America, I worked on Shabbos. Unfortunately, kashrus also went by the wayside as everything became kosher enough to put into my mouth. (By the way, at first, when I tried to eat kosher, I thought, as many Israelis do, that all types of fish were okay; “Fish – that's fine, the main thing is no pork.”)

After a year, Hashem had mercy on his estranged daughter and returned me to my homeland.

A COURSE ON KABBALAS OL

I went back to Israel but I was itching to travel again. Within three months I had flown off to India. After working in Philadelphia, this trip was perfect because I wanted to relax. And India was the just the right place,

The next day, around noon, I would crawl out of bed and check the clock-the calendar-the color of the sky-and the clock again, to see when Shabbos would end.

with the beautiful scenery, cheap living, and most importantly – I wanted to see how the world stops (at least until a “sacred” cow passed by).

I spent the first month touring with a girl who flew with me. Since in India it is customary to travel alone, we split up after a month. That same day I felt unwell and I frantically looked for a doctor.

There I was, alone in Bombay, in the middle of the filthy street, looking out for someone of normal appearance. I finally went over to a man of about 50 who was in India on business. He had pity on me and helped me a lot. He gave me a ride to the government hospital and even gave the doctor some *bakshish* so that I wouldn't leave there even sicker. I considered this wondrous help from Above and you will hear more about him later.

When I recovered, I traveled to Pushkar. I passed by the Chabad house and a flyer announcing a course in Kabbala at 8:00 caught my eye. I showed up that evening, famished and covered with dust from the road (and from *avoda zara* too).

The meal I was served was excellent and apparently, judging by the empty plates, everybody else thought so too. After we ate, Rabbi Shimi Goldstein gave a shiur. Although they had written the “ten s'firos” and “the devolvement of worlds,” on the flyer, it was actually a basic class

on Judaism and Chassidus. R' Shimi spoke about “Moshe is true and his Torah is true.” He told hair-raising miracle stories about the Rebbe and the Igros. This is a story that really got to me:

Two years ago, an Israeli tourist dropped into the Chabad house. It didn't take long to discover that the distance between him and Torah and mitzvos was, more or less, like the distance between Varanasi and Bombay – which are on opposite sides of the vast country. The shliach tried to convince him to put on t'fillin but the Israeli wasn't interested. He told the shliach that a malignant tumor had been found in his head and the doctors gave him a few months to live “so I came here to India to end my life by having a good time.”

The shliach was taken aback by this information and he immediately took out a volume of Igros Kodesh. They requested a bracha and opened the book, to an answer stating that a neshama that comes to this world and doesn't accomplish its mission has nothing to do here so it's taken back.

The tourist was so dumbfounded by this answer that he immediately agreed to put on t'fillin. A month later he went for a checkup and the miracle had occurred – all the tests came back showing he was fine. There was no tumor! Lacking faith in the Indian doctors, he sent his file to his doctors in Israel. Their

Since it was quieter than usual I went off to sleep, as was my practice. I suddenly jolted awake in fright. I heard a siren and smelled the acrid smell of burning plastic.

response wasn't long in coming: "As far as we're concerned, you can live until 120, but only with t'fillin!"

After I heard this story, firsthand, I didn't need anything more. I was touching truth, it was that palpable.

Throughout my trip I kept a diary where I wrote about my experiences. This is what I wrote that night, "Today I took a course which changed my life from one extreme to another. Forever. Among other things, they said that with each passing day, science proves what the Torah knew thousands of years earlier. You can't argue with truth like this. And another thing, the Lubavitcher Rebbe is a real tzaddik."

From that point on, when I spoke to the shluchim I asked them about specific things, in order to understand, and I stopped trying to philosophize with them as to whether it was true altogether.

I became a regular at the Chabad house and saw that every question had an answer.

MAKING A COMMITMENT

After taking that course in kabbala, I felt, "Wow! What amazing truth!" I continued to debate heatedly, but this time I was already on the side of the teacher.

The shlucha Zelda wanted to get me grounded. She suggested

that I daven and patiently showed me when to stand, bow, bang the chest, etc. It was a bit difficult for me but I made a lot of progress in other areas.

I struggled a little with Shabbos. After all, I had gone to India to have a good time, and how could you tour without desecrating the Shabbos? One Shabbos I went with a friend to a restaurant and debated what to do when we got the bill. In the end I decided to wait for her to offer to pay for me. She knew that I usually refused but this time, when she made the offer as usual, to be polite, it cost her 100 rupees.

For two Shabbosos I vacillated: I won't turn on a light and I won't touch money but I will carry and take a rickshaw. Then I decided, "enough slacking off and desecrating Shabbos! You're going to start keeping whatever possible! No exceptions!" And that's what I did.

I wore modest Indian clothing as I understood it: wraparounds that were similar to skirts and scarves. I only ate cooked meals at the Chabad house and the rest of the day I ate vegetables, fruit and Pringles with an OU. I spent a month at the Chabad house. At this point I felt righteous and holy and I wanted to move on to Thailand.

I said to a bachur who was helping out by the name of Yaniv that I had heard there was a course in kabbala in Thailand and I wanted to go there. He said the

course was for beginners and I was already advanced. The answer satisfied my mind but not my heart. I had planned a six month trip to the Far East; was I going to return home after two months?

I ended up listening to him and ordered a ticket to Israel for two weeks later. I planned to attend Machon Alte. In the meantime I stayed at the Chabad house for a truly unforgettable Pesach. In India, which is full of idols, we celebrated our being servants **only** to Hashem. There were so many people and each one had a ke'ara, matzos, wine, a Hagada – amazing.

I felt fortified with spiritual energy.

LANDING

The day of my flight I said goodbye to the shluchim, feeling inadequate as I tried to express my thanks and admiration for them. They gave me the address of Machon Alte in Tzfas and matzos and hardboiled eggs for the trip.

When I took the train from Pushkar to the airport in Bombay, I thought about the last thing they said. They told me that it was important to keep in touch, because while in India people often did mitzvos with enthusiasm, once you returned home and the plane landed, you generally "landed" spiritually, too, and it was often hard to "fly" again.

The train ride took twenty hours. I slept, and when I woke up I found that my food had been stolen by the locals.

We got to the station and a quick glance at the clock let me know that I was very late and that I might miss my flight. I suddenly remembered the man who had taken me to the hospital. I called him and thank G-d, he answered

and took me to the airport. We arrived moments before the gate to my flight closed.

On the plane I was ravenous but I managed to eat only fruit. During a stopover in Ethiopia I called my family and asked them for matzos and cottage cheese for my welcome. They weren't surprised; "She's coming back from India ..."

We landed four hours later. When we met, my mother looked me over from head to toe to assess damages. "You've gotten very thin, your clothes are a bit odd, but aside from that you are the same sweet Lelach!" She sighed in relief and gave me a hug.

On the way home, my father asked me what my plans were. I mumbled something about a seminary and he interrupted me to remind me about my plans to study law. "And until the semester begins, I found you a job in a restaurant."

Oh no. A waitress! I would be likely to serve ice cream instead of coffee and when they would remind me about the coffee I would spill it ...

That night I was exhausted and confused. In my diary I wrote, "I feel that my life's journey began in India and when I went to Pushkar I understood what it's about. I returned to Israel with a feeling of supreme confidence and quickly came down to earth. Suddenly there are all sorts of things that beckon to me, whether it's a good job or studying to be a lawyer. I am at a critical juncture of my life. Every decision will have eternal ramifications. I know they are enticements whose goal is to divert me from the path and yet, it is so hard to give them up. I feel so alone. I have no one to talk to, no one who would understand me and what I'm



Lacking faith in the Indian doctors, he sent his file to his doctors in Israel. Their response wasn't long in coming: "As far as we're concerned, you can live until 120, but only with t'fillin!"

going through. It's so frustrating!"

I was raised to obey my father and so right after Pesach I showed up at my new job, the perfect waitress.

The spiritual obstacle course was working overtime, and so, despite my gloomy expectations, they were very happy with me. I got into the routine and my inspiration dissipated. All the excitement over discovering the purpose of life faded away. I went back to all the clothes that still hung in my closet and I kept Shabbos with a lot of fits and starts. Then R' Shimi called me.

I was so excited. When I spoke to him I reverted to the holy Lelach at the Chabad house. I agreed with him that the most

important thing was for me to go to seminary and that I could work later in life. But after the conversation the Evil Inclination came to life. "If you ask your boss for time off in order to go to seminary, she will fire you, and the job is too good to let go," it argued.

The shliach called me every few days. When I spoke to him, I was convinced and strengthened, but after we hung up I would think: "Oh forget about it. You know that Abba will never agree."

ISKAFIA AT MACHON ALTE

A few days before Lag B'Omer, Shimi called again. He tried suggesting, "In honor of Lag B'Omer, maybe you can take off

from work?” (Later on, Zelda told me that he had decided that this was my last chance. “If she goes to seminary, wonderful; if she doesn’t go, I’m not nagging her anymore.”).

I spoke to my boss and she immediately gave me five days off. On Lag B’Omer I went to Meron and from there I went to Tzfas and Machon Alte. It was a very special and spiritual place. I was welcomed by a girl named Amy (also a “product” of Pushkar with whom Zelda had conspired to make my adjustment pleasant).

She was very charming and she helped me with my bags and arranged a room for me. Then she showed me around, showing me where we learned, ate, where the phones were, etc. She also gave me a skirt, “So you’ll feel comfortable in class,” she said.

I slept like a log that night. I was excited over the step I had taken but my tiredness won out.

The next day I woke up refreshed and was happy to join Amy for shiurim. This is what I wrote that night:

“The first day in seminary was hard. What can I say ... but little by little I understand more. I know that I need to be here because this is the only truth. I have one last thing to take care of – my father – and then I can go full-speed ahead. He was so disappointed by my decision. Hashem, give me the strength to make it through this. Give my father strength to accept me as I am.”

Then I wrote to the Rebbe about my difficulties with my father and opened to an amazing and encouraging answer. The Rebbe wrote that my father was trying to divert me from the path but the Torah precedes respect for a father.

When I would go home, it was much more difficult. I felt that

being at home, in the environment of my past, pulled me a few steps backwards. But afterwards, when I returned to Machon Alte, things were wonderful again. The classes were on the right level for me, the teachers were interesting, and the atmosphere was spiritual and supportive.

I wrote myself a list of things to work on: to say a Bracha Acharona; to try and daven Mincha; to learn the meaning of the words in t’filla; to eat ice cream just once a week (iskafia!).

My next list said: to learn half an hour of Chassidus and halachos every day; ten minutes of meditation every day; a sicha of the Rebbe at least once a week; a letter to the Rebbe at least once a week; to try and eat only what the body needs.

YARIV OR YANIV?

An amazing year of growth passed. My visits home were more relaxed and pulled at me less. One day, Breiny called me to her room, which was a sign that I was ready for shidduchim.

I felt ready and even wanted to tell her about someone who had been suggested for me. She said they were very pleased with my progress and her shidduch idea was a baal t’shuva from India named Yariv. She said she had checked him out and it was a great idea and he was interested.

I blushed.

“Do you know him?”

“No, I don’t know anyone named Yariv...”

A week went by and I was called into the “shidduchim department” again. Breiny told me that she had looked into it further and Yaniv really suited me.

“Yaniv?” I spluttered. “The last time you said his name is Yariv!”

She checked her papers and said, “I made a mistake. The name is actually Yaniv. He was in India and after a year in Ramat Aviv he went back to Pushkar. You were there too, right?”

This time, when I realized who she was talking about, I turned colors. “Little me should meet a bachur-shliach, Rabbi Yaniv?!”

I agreed to meet him but was very shy. A month later, I wrote in my diary:

“A year has gone by already. I had so many experiences at Machon Alte. Now I am religious. Now I have already reached the next stage. I met with Yaniv three times and we got an amazing bracha from the Rebbe.”

We were engaged. While preparing for the wedding I had a nice surprise. When I had worked in Philadelphia I had saved up money but I hadn’t touched it because I had earned some of it by working on Shabbos. I asked a rav what to do with my savings and he said I should take off maaser and use the rest. That was just what I needed as preparing for marriage is an expensive proposition. I bought a wig and after the wedding we flew to 770 for Tishrei.

When I was a kalla, Yaniv opened to a letter in the Igros Kodesh that said, “Mazal tov upon your engagement to ... who teaches at Beis Rivka.” I hadn’t thought of teaching at all. I just didn’t see myself as an awe inspiring teacher, but because of this answer I started studying to be a teacher. The first lesson I had to give (as the coordinator and my friends confirm) terrified me, but the eighth grade girls in Kfar Chabad were sweethearts and it gave me a taste for more. Now, two years later, I have experience.

We have a darling little boy, Yosef Yitzchok, whom I

sometimes think of as the Goldsteins' grandchild.

When I go out sometimes and my husband watches the baby, he says with a smile, "You had plans of going to Thailand and because of me you canceled them, so now I'm paying you back!"

Boruch Hashem, I have a good relationship with my father now. I teach in Beis Rivka and this is a consolation for him. He is proud of me even though I'm not a lawyer. He is proud that I am living a proper life.

I want to add that the shluchim don't always know how much their mekuravim admire them. I will take this opportunity to say that I feel such gratitude to them. They are so important to me! Thanks to them, and of course with the help of Hashem and the Rebbe, we are here.



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Upon this statement I affix my signature, Sunday 20th Tamuz 5766



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“A SHALIT DEAL ENCOURAGES THE KIDNAPPING OF MORE SOLDIERS”

Interview by Sholom Ber Crombie

80 percent of security prisoners released return to terror activities. 14 suicide attacks have been carried out by terrorists released by Israel. Two men who murdered a peace-loving Jew who was working in eastern Jerusalem were released in the 1985 Jibril deal. 1,160 terrorists were released in that deal, including master terrorist Kozo Okamoto. * Meir Indor, Brig Gen (res.) tells us why releasing convicted terrorists in exchange for our soldiers is a bad move.

BACKGROUND

PM Netanyahu announced that it is still too soon to announce a breakthrough in a

deal to release terrorists in exchange for the return of kidnapped soldier, Gilad Shalit. His announcement was made in

the wake of reports from German sources who are involved in the deal.

Talks such as these, as in all such cases, galvanizes the heads of Almagor Terror Victims Association (TVA) into action. They have resolved not to remain quiet when terrorists may be released. Meir Indor heads the organization. He has been fighting in recent years against deals to release murderers in exchange for the return of kidnapped soldiers. Indor has been very busy trying to thwart the deal between Israel and Hamas and it was hard to get an interview with him. He devotes most of his time to working behind the scenes for the purpose of exerting pressure on the decision-makers. He started Almagor, a political-security organization that works to influence policy setters, and his goal is to reach as many influential movers and shakers as possible.

While the average citizen hears news about a deal regarding an exchange of captives and does nothing, Meir Indor is horrified by these dangerous proceedings.

Where do you get your information about what is really going on regarding a deal?

We have two sources: the Arab newspapers and Shabak (also known as Shin Bet) press releases. The Arab newspapers have proven to be reliable sources of information. They get their information from the families of terrorists and organizations that work on behalf of imprisoned terrorists and their families, including those with official positions in the Palestinian Authority. Such organizations include various action committees that work on the Arab side to compile lists of

terrorists which Hamas will ask to release and they give them to their representatives involved in the negotiations.

When, during the negotiations, a name of a terrorist comes up, his family is told about this and from there it goes to the Arab press and to us. That is how we know which murderers the government agrees to release and based on this, we work against their being added to the list.

As for the second source, Shabak, some of the names were given to reporters who are trained by Shabak. They publicize them in order to arouse public discussion. The current list of murderers that they want to release for Shalit is mostly unknown to the public. At the end of the Olmert government, certain political sources and Shabak publicized a sample list of terrorists who were approved for release. After it was publicized, the head of Shabak, Yuval Diskin, said that he could hardly believe that he approved names like that and he rejected attempts to add more terrorists to the list.

In the end, that deal fell through. Olmert accepted the opinion of Shabak and the Mosad and refused the deal. Olmert, to his credit, did not cave in to the well-funded media campaign even though it was targeted at him in a massive way for the last month of his government.

What dangers do you anticipate with the release of terrorists?

“Every deal that releases terrorists encourages the next kidnapping. Another 10,000 Arab terrorists are sitting in

BIO \ MEIR INDOR



Meir Indor is a Brig. Gen. in the IDF Army Reserves. He also served in the elite Rimon Reconnaissance Unit. In the Yom Kippur War he was part of a Special Forces unit attached to the Central Command known as Sayeret MaTKaL. He also commanded an anti-terrorist unit of the Border Patrol. He is considered a security expert, someone with vast knowledge of defense strategy.

For years he led the settling of Yesha and fought against concessions and the giving away of land. He signed the command officers' petition against carrying out orders to expel Jews. Today he is the director of the Almagor terror victims group, which was founded in 1986. The organization's activities include working with bereaved parents, providing social networking, holiday events, Supreme Court battles against the release of terrorists, and legal aid for victims of terror attacks.

Almagor has been fighting against the release of hundreds of terrorists in exchange for one lone soldier and insists that kidnapped soldiers be released through other means that the Israeli government has at its disposal.

Israeli jails and if terror organizations see that there is a way to release them, they will continue to exploit it. When the deal of the three bodies in Lebanon (Beni Avraham, Adi Avitan and Omar Sawaed) was completed, Hezbollah was pleased with its achievement and planned the next kidnapping in Kfar Rajor. It failed thanks to a religious Nachal soldier who killed most of the group. The next time, they were successful and they grabbed Goldwasser and Regev.”

Indor maintains that a deal with Hamas will engender jealousy on the part of other groups and will lead to a competition between terror organizations as to who is more successful at kidnapping soldiers in order to obtain the release of more terrorists. This is precisely what happened with suicide bombings when Fatah (PLO), at a certain point, competed with Hamas in carrying out these despicable acts.

“Fatah will not allow Hamas to be the only one and it will allocate resources - i.e. manpower and money - to carry out even more daring kidnappings.”

Almagor has done research regarding the activities of released terrorists. According to Alex Fishman, the military reporter for *Yediot Acharonot*, this is the only research done on the subject.

“The frightening data is that 180 Jews were murdered in acts of terror that were carried out by terrorists released from Israeli jails. Most of the terrorists returned to their previous activities, some as leaders or initiators of terror acts.”

Indor stresses that the candidates for release now are “terror *machers*,” as he puts it. The terrorists who blew themselves up aren’t around anymore. The ones in jail are those who planned the big operations, the masterminds of terror. The ones they want to release now are the people responsible for thinking up acts of terror and their planning and not just their implementation.

Indor attacks the claim that jail isn’t effective and so it doesn’t matter if terrorists are released.

“Every terrorist sitting in an Israeli jail makes potential terrorists think twice about enlisting in acts of terror. If they see that whoever is arrested for acts of terror is judged and made to serve out a sentence of many decades in jail, it’s unappealing to them, but if they see that a person convicted for acts of terror spends four years in Israeli jail where he completes his education thanks to the PA and then returns to Gaza, that will only serve to encourage even more people to become terrorists. Deals to release terrorists have helped raise generations of Palestinian heroes who did acts of terror, were incarcerated for a few years, and returned to their people as heroes of the Arab

nation.

“The loss of Israeli deterrence against terror translates into danger for thousands of Jews.”

The prime minister claims he will put together a good deal.

“The prime minister has become a captive of the media. He decided not to fight the media this time because opposition to a deal supposedly would oppose his agenda of appeasement. The media presents those opposed to the release of terrorists as people who are unwilling to ever compromise. Public opinion is tremendously influenced by the media, which is taking advantage of the situation and painting the picture as it sees fit.

“If you oppose the release of terrorists today, you are described in unflattering terms because you oppose a deal that will release an Israeli soldier from captivity. The media uses these points of weakness and tells the public, ‘What do you care if the terrorist eats in an Israeli jail or in Gaza?’ The average person says, ‘I’d rather he ate in Gaza at their expense and not at my expense.’

“We don’t have the resources that the media and the families of kidnapped soldiers have. People naturally identify with their pain without thinking of what it

means. People are asked to donate ‘on behalf of the release of Shalit’ so they donate without knowing that the money will be used for a campaign to free terrorists! The sympathy people have for the kidnapped soldier is used to leverage the release of terrorists.

“The public has been brainwashed for two years now for a deal. They made a kidnapped soldier the single most important item to the Israeli government, as though dozens of soldiers weren’t killed since he was kidnapped and as though we don’t have another kidnapped soldier in Lebanon, Zecharia Baumel whom nobody talks about.

“After Shalit was turned into the most precious commodity in Israel, obviously you can’t speak against a deal to release him and you have to pay for it at all costs. Mixed into this are advertising agencies and very powerful celebrities who brainwash people.

“The media also works actively to undermine our efforts. There was a discussion on one of the channels about the unfolding deal. They promised us that our speaker will face off against one speaker in favor of the deal. In the end, they only allowed our speaker a few minutes to present his position and immediately after him they interviewed two speakers in favor of the deal, as well as the family of one of the terrorists who spoke, of course, of the importance of the deal.”

Some of the Right supports a deal too.

“That sad fact is a result of a lack of understanding of the danger, but there’s a good aspect to it, as well, in that the discussion focuses on the issue and isn’t divided over Right and Left. People automatically identify with the families of

“Every deal that releases terrorists encourages the next kidnapping. Another 10,000 Arab terrorists are sitting in Israeli jails and if terror organizations see that there is a way to release them, they will continue to exploit it.”

kidnapped soldiers and their demands and they don't try to understand what lies behind the kidnappings and why terrorists have invested so much effort into them, including digging a tunnel until the Kerem Shalom crossing near which Shalit was kidnapped.

"Behind all this is the whole platform of the terror organizations in recruiting people to their ranks. They want to be able to tell young people in Gaza that there will always be ways to release them from Israeli jail and so they shouldn't worry about endangering themselves when perpetrating acts of terror.

"I tell people, if you want to do things to identify with them, do them abroad. In Israel, it only causes damage. Suddenly people have discovered the Kosel and flocked there for mass prayer for the release of the kidnapped, but the dirty secret came out when there was a public demand at that event to release murderers. There is a lack of balanced thinking and I would say this demonstrates the superficiality and defeatism of the public."

But people say the bottom line is we have an Israeli soldier in captivity.

"If they did it right, the soldier would have been back home long ago. The Israeli government wasted three years on fruitless efforts in negotiating with Hamas, instead of trying other routes. Long ago they could have imposed harsher conditions on Hamas prisoners serving prison sentences in Israeli jails in what amounts to summer camp conditions. They have canteens, televisions, and visits from family. If they would stop all that, this would exert real pressure to release the soldier. That's just one example.

"Why hasn't the Israeli government tried to stop Arab

"Along with the soldier Gilad Shalit, Hamas took his whole family and the entire Israeli society in captivity. Suddenly, all of Israeli society is bowing and scraping before the terrorists and is asking us to give in to terror."

members of Parliament from leaving the country every two weeks through the Israeli Kerem Shalom crossing when they are holding an Israeli soldier in captivity? There are many other creative ways to exert real pressure on Hamas. In a normal country things would happen quite differently. For example, all American consulates and embassies have orders not to negotiate with terrorists in the event of a kidnapping but to be as tough as possible with them.

"There was a recent attempt by the Matteh Shalit to demonstrate opposite the jails while the families of terrorists were visiting and as a result, the prison services announced it would cancel visits that week. Fortunately, it was they who organized the protest and not us, because if we did it, everyone would scream that it was immoral... Unfortunately, it was a one-time attempt and they mostly focus on easy things like exerting pressure on the government to give in to terror organizations and to release terrorists, instead of trying more hard line ways that might provide photo ops that are not as nice."

Where are you concentrating your efforts these days?

"There are many behind the scenes efforts, as well as public activities. We are working to publicize what acts of terror were caused by previous deals, and we

hope that when people see the names of their brethren who were murdered, they will understand what we're talking about here. We are making efforts to raise public awareness despite the well-oiled celebrity studded machine which operates against us.

"For example, there was a proclamation that was publicized to free Gilad Shalit and it was signed by Minister Yaakov Ne'eman. I asked him why he signed in favor of the release of terrorists and he said that's not what he meant to do; he only wanted to support the release of the soldier.

"That's an example of taking advantage of supporting a kidnapped soldier in order to make a deal 'kosher.' Our job is to get people to understand what's really going on."

In conclusion?

"Along with the soldier Gilad Shalit, Hamas took his whole family and the entire Israeli society in captivity. Suddenly, all of Israeli society is bowing and scraping before the terrorists and is asking us to give in to terror, and this is the achievement that the terror organizations want. Whoever wants to live here securely must do all he can so that the situation changes immediately."

IF WE DO WANT A KING

By Rabbi Yosef Karasik
District Rav Bat Chefer – Emek Chefer

A penetrating analysis of Rosh HaShana from the perspective of Chazal, Kabbala and Chabad Chassidus.

DAY OF JUDGMENT AND DAY OF CORONATION

The Yomim Nora'im are days of judgment for all creations of the world. Who for life and who for death, each one is written in the appropriate book, among the "Sifrei Tzaddikim," "Sifrei Resha'im," and "Sifrei Beinonim." Nonetheless Chassidus emphasizes that the most important aspect of Rosh HaShana is none of this, but rather the coronation of Hashem as King over the world.

Chazal say (Rosh HaShana 16a, 34b), "Say *malchuyos* before Me on Rosh HaShana so that you coronate Me over you." Therefore immediately in the first t'filla on Rosh HaShana, Maariv, we say, "rule over the entire world," "King over the entire earth," and we go on to ask this in the other prayers of the day as well.

The special mitzva of Rosh HaShana is the blowing of the shofar and the primary reason for blowing the shofar is to crown

Hashem as king. In Rabbi Saadya Gaon's list of ten reasons for blowing the shofar, the first and foremost is "we coronate the Creator over us," as was customary in bygone days to blow a shofar (or trumpet) when crowning a king.

Indeed, already on the first Rosh HaShana, on the day that Adam was created, before the sin and the t'shuva, he proclaimed Hashem as king when he said, "Come let us bow and bend and kneel before Hashem, our Maker; Hashem rules, He has garbed Himself with grandeur." Ever since that time, on each Rosh HaShana we coronate Hashem as king.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CORONATION

What is the purpose of this coronation? If people did not coronate Hashem as king, would He not be the ruler of the world? He created the world and He rules



it whether or not His creations agree!

Unlike a human king who draws his power and authority from the people who chose him, Hashem is the Creator and master of the world and doesn't need us to coronate Him. So what is accomplished by our coronation of Hashem on Rosh HaShana?

"RULE AND DOMINION TO HIM WHO LIVES FOREVER"

Every word in Lashon HaKodesh has special significance. Even words with similar meaning are not merely synonyms, for each word has a precise definition. For instance "Melech" and "Moshel" both refer to "rulers" but each word has a different nuance.

A "shalit" is someone who grabs hold of the government by force. A tyrant – "Moshel" - rules his people despite their opposition and he terrorizes them with his



army and forces them to do as he says. The nation does not respect him. They are dominated by the ruler's police who violently impose his rule.

A "Melech" rules with the consent of the people as Chazal say, "They accepted His kingdom **willingly** upon them." The king derives his power from the people who chose him. The nation know the king and admire him, which is why they coronate him. The king's elevation comes from the people who elevated him and the people fulfill the king's orders happily and willingly. They sense the king's loftiness and choose to follow his commands even if they don't understand them.

That is what is meant by coronation of Hashem as king over us. Hashem does not need us in order to rule the world as He desires, for He is master of all.

Yet it is possible that the rule over created beings is against their will and without their consent, and in their minds and hearts they

oppose his rule. The avoda of a Jew on Rosh HaShana is to crown Hashem as king over the world so that in our minds and hearts we *want* Hashem to rule over us!

When created beings contemplate the greatness of the Creator, they sense his exaltedness and ask Him, with all their hearts, that He be their king. They do as He wishes not as a decree but with love and joy which comes from the desire to fulfill His commands, "they accepted His kingdom willingly upon them."

True coronation of a king is not just an external, verbal request but a desire that comes from within, in submission to the king and with the readiness to carry out his orders.

By blowing the shofar on Rosh HaShana, a Jew proclaims: I negate all my personal desires and accept Your malchus. I submit before You with all my heart and might and I am ready to fulfill Your mitzvos in thought, speech, and action.

A PLEA THAT HASHEM RULE OVER US

In Kabbala and Chassidus it explains that at the end of the year the life force that Hashem provides the world fades away. If Hashem did not reinvest the world with new chayus, there would be no world. So when Rosh HaShana comes, we need to accept His malchus, for this arouses His desire to rule. When Hashem accepts the melucha, He provides a new chayus for the world.

Bringing out Hashem's desire to rule is accomplished through our utter bittul to Him, just as a human king is inspired to lead when he sees the people submitting to him.

When the shofar is blown, a Jew feels that his real existence is his connection with Hashem. Crowning Hashem as king is not just an inner desire to cleave to Hashem but a deeper expression of his inner essence. When he pleads that Hashem rule over him

and accept him as His servant, this expresses the fact that a Jew's true existence is Elokus, and that without Elokus he cannot exist. Crowning Hashem as king on Rosh HaShana comes from our essential bond with Hashem, our being "all one," as the Zohar puts it.

Rosh HaShana is not just the beginning of the year. It is the "Rosh," the head of the year. Just as man's head is the source of life for the entire body, so too, Rosh HaShana is the source of life for the entire year.

When we coronate Hashem and accept His malchus on Rosh HaShana, we are affecting the entire year! From the coronation on Rosh HaShana we derive strength for our daily lives so that on 365 days of the year we will diligently serve Hashem.

THE COMPLETE REVELATION OF HIS KINGDOM

The two days of Rosh HaShana are an auspicious time to strengthen inyanei Moshiach and Geula, as our prayers on Rosh

HaShana are full of requests for the Geula. We say: "May everything that has been made know that You have made it; everything that has been created understand that You have created it; and everyone who has the breath [of life] in his nostrils declare that the Lord, G-d of Israel, is King and His kingship has dominion over all." The complete hisgalus of His malchus in the world will be in the time of Moshiach, through the coronation of Melech HaMoshiach.

Throughout the course of the t'fillos, the theme of Yemos HaMoshiach is constantly repeated: "And so, grant ... joy to Your land, gladness to Your city, a flourishing of strength to Dovid Your servant, and a setting up of light to the son of Yishai Your anointed, speedily in our days." "... and all wickedness will go up in smoke when You will remove the rule of evil from the earth." "Hashem, You are He who alone will reign over all Your works, on Har Tziyon, the abode of Your glory, in Yerushalayim Your holy city ..." The longing for Geula is expressed in all the t'fillos of the

day.

The Rebbe said at the Rosh HaShana farbrengen, 5752:

Rosh HaShana relates specifically to the true and complete Geula, for the inyan of Rosh HaShana is crowning the King and the completion of His kingdom will be with the revelation of the kingdom of Melech HaMoshiach in the true and complete Geula, as we conclude in the blessings of shofaros in Musaf of Rosh HaShana, "Sound the great shofar for our freedom," for then our request of "rule over the entire world in Your glory" will be fulfilled in utter perfection. When a Jew says the bracha on Rosh HaShana of "sound the great shofar for our freedom," the Geula needs to actually come.

This is particularly emphasized in this generation, which is the last generation of galus and the first generation of Geula, when "all endpoints have finished" and the Jewish people stand ready for Geula, speedily in our days, b'karov mamash.

Sources: Likkutei Torah for Rosh HaShana, Hisvaaduyos Rosh HaShana 5752.

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