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LIGHTING UP THE GLOOM OF EXILE - WITH JOY!

Translated by Boruch Merkur

Yomim Tovim, holidays, are all about joy. For example, the eight days of Chanuka are referred to as “days of joy.” Chanuka, of course, comes at the end of the month of Kislev. And since “everything goes according to the closing,” which in this case is “days of joy,” it is understood that throughout the entire month of Kislev there must be an increase in joy. In fact, this emphasis on joy begins even prior to Kislev, with the preceding Shabbos, Shabbos Mevarchim Chodesh Kislev, which blesses the month of Kislev.

This increase in joy throughout this period should be with greater strength and with greater force, *marbim b’simcha* (increasing in joy, which is said of the month of Adar), until an abundance of joy is achieved. The result of this additional joy is profound: it brings about the nullification of all things undesirable.

WHY MUST WE ADD IN JOY NOW?

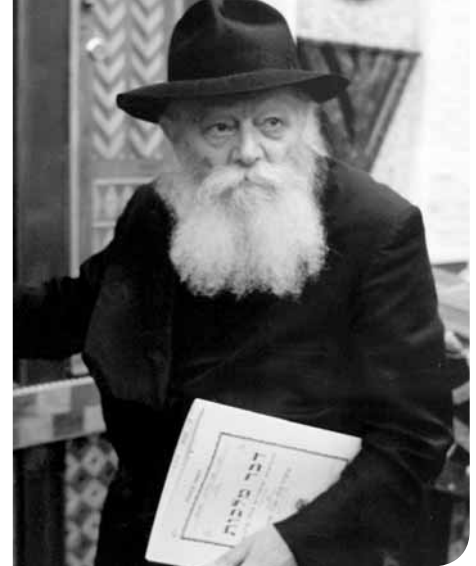
The reason why the main emphasis of serving G-d with joy was revealed specifically in recent times is in order to counter the increase in the forces that oppose holiness that has likewise taken place in recent times, the darkness of exile, etc. In order to nullify this darkness, there needs

to be a greater increase in the joy of Torah and the joy of Mitzvos.

To whatever extent the gloom of exile has increased in recent years, joy must also be increased. In the time of the Baal Shem Tov there was an increase of joy that surpassed the level of joy associated with the time of the Arizal. Similarly, in the time of the Alter Rebbe the joy exceeded that of the time of the Baal Shem Tov. And when speaking about the doubled and redoubled darkness of this generation, the final generation of exile, the great need for increasing in joy was publicized by the Rebbe Rayatz, leader of this generation. Indeed, the Rebbe did so in a manner of “*hafatza*,” publicizing this message in the common tongue, even instructing it to be translated into “seventy tongues,” all the languages of the world.

From this it is understood that when we see that the opposing forces, the realm of darkness, is still visibly vibrant, to the extent that one may “point with one’s finger and saying ‘this’” (here referring to the forces that oppose holiness), it is proof that the joy that was achieved up until now was not sufficient to nullify the existence of darkness. Thus, there is a need to add even more joy.

How much more is this the case when we see that in recent times the forces that oppose holiness (not only still exist but



they) have actually strengthened, one should not be affected by any obstacles or obstructions, etc. On the contrary, one must further add – with greater strength and greater force, as mentioned above, “*marbim b’simcha*” – in all expressions of joy.

The joy spoken about here is, of course, the joy of holiness. And when this joy is achieved it effects the eradication of the evil of the Plishtim [i.e., frivolous rejoicing, the polar opposite of the joy of holiness], as elucidated in the teachings of chassidus (see *Toras Chaim* Vol. 2, pg. 3 ff; *Likkutei Sichos* Vol. 15, pg. 119) on Parshas Toldos, the section of the Torah that we begin to read publically during today’s Mincha prayer.

Simply put, there should be an increase in joy connected especially with the month of Kislev, the days of Chanuka, and prior to that, Yud-Tes Kislev, Yud and Tes Kislev, and how much more so, Rosh Chodesh Kislev, and even prior to that, Shabbos Mevarchim Chodesh Kislev, when additional blessings are drawn down for all matters pertaining to the month of Kislev (i.e., in addition to the blessing that each day in Kislev has on its own).

(From the address of Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sara, Mevarchim HaChodesh Kislev 5746, *bilti muga*)

ARE YOU MESSIANIC?

By Rabbi Yisroel Harpaz

Despite the multiplicity and diversity of voices clamoring to assert their exclusive claim to being the true path, you can fit them all into one of two groups. One group seeks to explain the world as a random series of events, a chaotic tapestry of experience that is not heading anywhere specific. The other group believes there is a plan, a purpose, and an ultimate goal behind the collective history of humanity. I call the first group dystopians, and the latter group Messianists.

But what difference does it really make? How does this impact our lives in a practical way?

According to the dystopians, human action matters very little beyond the context of how it affects others. Because nothing really matters, I can do whatever I want as long as it doesn't harm you; my right to stretch out my arm ends at your nose.

The Messianists believe that all of humanity is on a train, heading toward an era of peace. Therefore, it is up to each individual to make sure the train stays on track and speeds toward this goal. If so, everything I do matters because

every action I take affects the train's velocity and direction. My ability to stretch out my arm is not a discretionary right. It either contributes to the ultimate goal, in which case it is an obligation, or detracts from it, in which case it should be avoided. Your nose, if it's in the wrong place, should get out of the way (no offense intended).

The train travels by our will. Our job according to the Messianic worldview is to keep the train on track and reach the destination as swiftly as possible. This task encompasses every aspect of life, including how we think, how we speak, how we consume and how we treat our fellows – everything is significant. It also demands that we be super-conscious of the times we live in within the context of the greater journey, and prepare ourselves for the train's arrival by anticipating and understanding the world we are approaching.

The Messianist's approach to life stands in sharp contrast to the dystopian's. Whereas the dystopian can go through an entire lifetime without ever making the connection between why we're here and what we're doing with our lives, the Messianist's every moment is

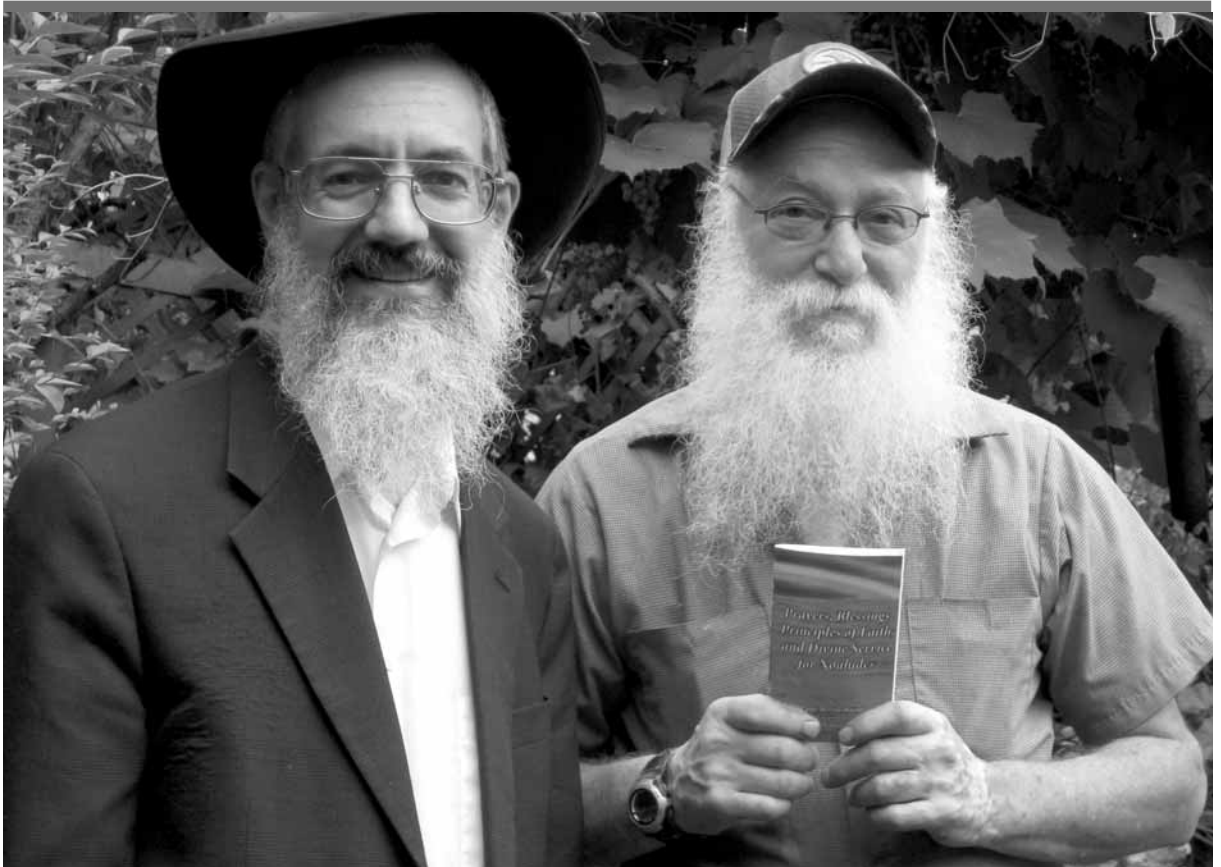
infused with meaning. In terms of attitude, the dystopian is, at best, uncertain about life, if not downright pessimistic. The Messianist lives with a sense of optimism that is driven by knowing that life has a purpose.

The passengers on the train anticipate the arrival at a new destination, preparing themselves for the arrival and studying the landscape and customs of the new place; they don't want to disembark all disheveled and feeling lost. Since it is a place full of joy, they arrive with a sense of optimism. Some are so happy to be there they have left their baggage behind.

The passengers are also not discouraged by the obstacles along the way. The hills and valleys and technical difficulties along the way are part of the journey. And as the destination approaches, the obstacles increase; switching stations, rail yards, side tracks, obsolete tracks and dead tracks can be misleading, and threaten to derail the journey. At this time, those on the train must be discerning enough stay on the right track and reach their destination.

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ASK NOAH INTERNATIONAL



Dr. Michael Schulman (L) & Mr. Chaim Reisner (R). Photo by L. Tessmer

At the forefront of the mitvza for sheva mitzvos b'nei noach.

By N. Davidovitz

We all know about the Sheva Mitzvos for the B'nei Noach; we can all list them. But these Sheva Mitzvos are actually a broader foundation for the way Hashem wants the Non-Jews to live. Big questions underlie the broad strokes of these seven precepts. What about end of life issues? Birth control methods? Is it permitted to download pirated

music from the Internet? We must be ready to answer these and many more questions if we are really serious about encouraging Non-Jews to take on observance of a Torah-based Sheva Mitzvos lifestyle.

To fill in the details, a work of groundbreaking scholarship on the fundamental principles and practical applications of the Noachide precepts has been published over the span of the past few years: *Sheva Mitzvos Hashem*, by Rabbi Moshe Weiner, who is a Lubavitcher Rav in Jerusalem. The three-volume set is published by the Sheva Mitzvos outreach organization *Ask Noah International*, and to date, volumes I and II are distributed through Kehos and several Judaica bookstores in the U.S., Canada and Israel. The English translation of this series is titled *The Divine Code*, which is also available on amazon.com.

The following is our interview with Dr. Michael Schulman, a former industrial physicist now living in Pittsburgh, PA, who serves as Executive Director of the *Ask Noah International* (A.N.I.) organization. **Chaim Reisner**, also of Pittsburgh, is the Founder and Co-director. In this interview, Dr. Schulman clarifies many details of their work on this mitvza, which the Rebbe spoke about on numerous occasions including during the Kinus HaShluchim of 5752 (1991).

BEIS MOSHIACH: WHEN AND WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO START WORKING ON THIS PROJECT?

The organization was founded by my dear friend Chaim Reisner, also of Pittsburgh. It started with a few simple web pages, an email address, and an on-line guestbook. That's how I first got involved in 1999, when



“Big questions underlie the broad strokes of these seven precepts. What about end of life issues? Birth control methods? Is it permitted for a Noachide to download pirated music from the Internet?”

I volunteered to be the web-master. It was a natural evolution from my enthusiasm for the Rebbe's Moshiach campaign. I was working then as an advanced product development engineer, but by the time I was ready for a change of employment in 2006, I was already putting in full-time hours “on the side” as *Ask Noah's* director. So I decided to devote myself to work full time on the Sheva Mitzvos outreach, while doing a little teaching and tutoring in physics and math on the side. With Hashem's help, asknoah.org has become a major resource for worldwide Sheva Mitzvos outreach and learning on-line.

The core of the matter is that in the 1980s, the Rebbe said the time had come for his devoted followers and all Jews in relevant situations to publicize the Sheva Mitzvos to Non-Jews, because

it was no longer a danger for Jews to do so. This signaled the renewed opportunity for Jews to teach the Sheva Mitzvos and Torah-based morality, openly and broadly, for the first time since the days of the Second Temple, and even back to the days of Avraham Avinu and Sara Imeinu. When I got involved in this outreach and I discovered that there were already some groups established that were taking the Sheva Mitzvos away from the derech of Torah, and teaching disinformation, it really pushed me to get more involved than I had originally planned.

BEIS MOSHIACH: WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF A.N.I.'S MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERATURE ON THE SHEVA MITZVOS?

MS: When Chaim Reisner and I found out that the Rebbe had instructed that there should be a “Shulchan Aruch” for the Sheva Mitzvos, it was immediately obvious to us that it had to be a primary goal for A.N.I. After a fitful start, our efforts to recruit an international team of scholars for the project converged to Rabbi Immanuel Schochet, Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, Rabbi Shimon Cowen, and Rabbi Moshe Weiner whom Rabbi Touger brought on board. At a high-level meeting in Jerusalem, we all decided that the work on the project should be put in the capable hands of Rabbi Weiner, to produce a “Shulchan Aruch”

in the style of the *Beis Yosef*, and that the main *haskama* would be requested from the Gaon HaRav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg of Jerusalem. Rabbi Weiner naively estimated that he would be able to complete the project in less than a year, but as it turned out, it has taken five years of his dedicated work, supported by a modest stipend from A.N.I., to cover all the *Sheva Mitzvos* and the *yesodei emuna* (principles of faith) for B'nei Noach. A.N.I. published his *Sheva Mitzvot Hashem* Volume I in 2008 and Volume II at the end of 2009, and Volume III on *dinim* – the last mitzvah to be covered – has just been completed.

In between, we published *The Divine Code* Volume I as the English translation, which now covers the first two Hebrew volumes. To make the English seifer more useful for a general audience, we shortened the length of the more technical footnotes, and we added introductions to each section, including contributions from some important experts in the respective areas. Using the chapter on Prayer, which Rabbi Immanuel Schochet significantly contributed to, we also produced a pocket-size booklet called *Prayers, Blessings, Principles of Faith, and Divine Service for Noahides*, which has thus far been published in English and Russian. It is very popular with Noahides, and as soon as the funds become available, we have plans for an edition in Spanish. We also asked Rabbi Weiner to write a *Seifer Mada* – a book of fundamental spiritual knowledge specifically for Non-Jews – which would be inspired by Rambam's *Seifer Mada* that is the beginning of the *Mishneh Torah*. This has been written in Hebrew and translated, and we are now

editing it for publication.

Another unique resource is the very extensive Question-and-Answer forum on asknoah.org. With Noahides sending in questions about the issues they face on the front lines of switching to a Noachide faith and lifestyle in the midst of the deepest spiritual galus, a lot of details get attention that haven't yet been addressed from a halachic perspective in any other place. Beyond that, I spend a great deal of time answering questions by email, and generally filling the role of mashpia and networking assistant for Noachide individuals and communities around the world. We also have a section of recommended books and selected sichos posted with permission from Sichos in English.

BEIS MOSHIACH: WOW! THIS IS FASCINATING. WHERE DOES THE TORAH DISCUSS ALL THE HUNDREDS OF HALACHOS OF THE NOACHIDE CODE THAT RABBI WIENER HAS CODIFIED?

MS: In the Rebbe's sichos over the years, he discussed many detailed points about the *Sheva Mitzvos*, including some very foundational principles that impact on the whole understanding of the subject. Rabbi Weiner thoroughly studied those sichos and the sources on which they were based, and he identified the guiding principles of the Halacha for Non-Jews. He searched out an immense number of references in the Talmud and the writings of the Rishonim and Acharonim that relate to the Torah-based Noachide Code. He worked long and hard over five years, in consultation with some world-renown Torah scholars, to identify and codify the practical modern Halacha from all those

sources and different opinions.

In order to determine the Torah Law for Gentiles more comprehensively than had been done in the past, Rabbi Weiner used the rulings in Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* as the main foundation, since Rambam is the principle Torah-law authority in this area – as stressed by the Rebbe in a number of sichos. Rambam is nearly the only *Rishon* who took responsibility for a broad range of authoritative teachings in this area. There are of course exceptions that can be found, and in *Sheva Mitzvot Hashem*, Rabbi Weiner has extensively reviewed and explained the broad spectrum of rabbinical sources. In the cases where a majority of the other *Rishon* authorities and the *Shulchan Aruch* differ from Rambam, Rabbi Weiner identified that the Torah Law follows their teachings, and not the opinion of Rambam. All of this was a great step forward, because the few books on the *Sheva Mitzvot* that were published earlier were overviews that did not consider many important but lesser-studied sources.

BEIS MOSHIACH: WHO GAVE HASKAMOS ON THE FINISHED HEBREW SEIFER?

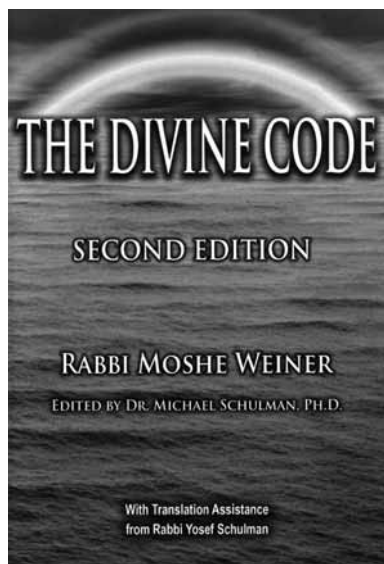
MS: Because of the highly sensitive nature of a project to codify the Torah Law for Non-Jews, *Ask Noah* and Rabbi Weiner approached several high-level rabbanim for their *haskama* and endorsement. Rav **Zalman Nechemia Goldberg**, a renowned Gaon and a member of the Supreme Rabbinical Court of Israel, reviewed the work in detail and had numerous halachic discussions with Rabbi Wiener. The text includes many *haaros* that he provided along with his

haskama. The other halachic authorities who were approached, and who also gave enthusiastic haskamos, were Israel's Chief Rabbis – Rav Yona Metzger and Rav Shlomo Moshe Amar – and Rav Yaakov Y. Eliezrov (Av Beis Din in Yerushalayim) and Rav Gedalya Dov Schwartz (Av Beis Din of the Chicago Rabbinical Council and the Rabbinical Council of America). Obviously, we sought and received very broad acceptance.

BEIS MOSHIACH: TO WHAT DEGREE HAS THE SEIFER BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GREATER ORTHODOX JEWISH COMMUNITY?

MS: The word is getting out, including to key rabbanim, and most importantly, it has had a definite positive impact on the worldwide Noachide movement. One challenge we are facing is how to bring the seifer to the attention of Orthodox Jewry world wide, because our funds are very limited, and the extensive advertising that's needed hasn't yet been possible. Baruch Hashem, it has been consistently very well accepted by the Orthodox rabbis and laypersons who have read it.

It's important for the Chabad community to know about a significant difficulty we ran into, that we weren't expecting at all. In the spring of 2008, Rabbi Weiner was satisfied that he had finished the first volume of *Sheva Mitzvot Hashem*, and we thought it was ready for publication. I had been in contact from time to time with Rabbi J. David Bleich, who is a leading scholar at Yeshiva University, the Cordoza School of Law, and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. He has published extensively on challenging issues in modern Halacha, including timely aspects



just be looked at as a theoretical academic exercise.

This really surprised us. From our perspective as Lubavitcher Chassidim immersed in the Rebbe's Sheva Mitzvos campaign, it never occurred to us that it wasn't obvious to all Orthodox rabbis outside of Lubavitch that the Sheva Mitzvos discussed in Torah Sh'b'al Peh actually represented a real halachic obligation – for Jews to teach and Non-Jews to follow. Rabbi Weiner took up this challenge, and for that entire summer he worked on

“The Rebbe explained that a Noachide who pursues in-depth study of the Noachide Code – lishma – earns the distinction of Kesser Torah. The book The Divine Code makes that accessible for the Noachides of our generation.

of the Sheva Mitzvos. I sent the manuscript to him to review, and the response we got back was a shock, to say the least. He had a lot of praise for the work that was done, but he raised some absolutely fundamental questions. How do we know that Non-Jews have any obligation to keep the Sheva Mitzvos as commandments from Hashem, since the only source is from the *Jewish* Torah? Why do Jews have any obligation to teach those mitzvot to Non-Jews? Why do Non-Jews have any obligation to accept what the Orthodox rabbis' pasken about the Sheva Mitzvos? Rabbi Bleich wasn't disputing those things, but he advised Rabbi Weiner that if those questions could not be convincingly answered for the overall Orthodox rabbinical community, the seifer would

the explanation of these issues, drawing heavily on the landmark sicha of Likkutei Sichos Cheilek 26, Yisro sicha 3, and the sources it was based on. This additional work was then added into the seifer as the “Mavo” section.

Beyond that, a few rabbis have had difficulty accepting, or aren't willing to accept, one thing that's explained in detail in Volume I – that the *majority* opinion of the Rishonim, and hence the halacha, holds that the doctrine of a so-called “trinity” is an idolatrous concept, and that even if a person also believes in Hashem, he commits a type of avoda zara if he does an act of worshiping any imagined power other than Hashem Himself. It's very telling that the Noahides I've corresponded with who left that upbringing, and accepted

the truth of Hashem Echad, are 100% in agreement with that assessment.

BEIS MOSHIACH: HOW IS A HEBREW SEIFER USEFUL TO THE NON-JEWS?

MS: The Hebrew series, *Sheva Mitzvos Hashem*, is provided as the foundation from which to move forward. It is being used by rabbis, including many shluchim, who have Gentiles coming to them, wanting to learn and asking questions about how to do the right things in the eyes of Hashem. It is also there for anyone who knows how to learn and wants to delve into this fascinating, and long neglected, dimension of Hashem's Torah.

Nevertheless, the main goal all along was to have this translated into English, so it could be learned and put to use by the B'nei Noach themselves. My older son, Rabbi Yosef Schulman, took on the immense task of producing the basic translation, which Rabbi Weiner and I painstakingly edited for *The Divine Code*. It says in the Gemara that a Noachide who becomes a Talmud-Chacham in his Sheva Mitzvos is worthy of as much respect as a Cohen Gadol who served in the Beis HaMikdash. The Rebbe explained that a Noachide who pursues in-depth study of the Noachide Code – lishma – earns the distinction of Kesser Torah. The book *The Divine Code* makes that accessible for the Noachides of our time and future generations.

BEIS MOSHIACH: WHAT IS THE NOACHIDE MOVEMENT LIKE ACROSS THE WORLD? TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE PLACES WHERE NOACHIDES LIVE WHO ARE

IN CONTACT WITH YOU. DESCRIBE THE DYNAMICS OF AN AUTHENTIC NOACHIDE COMMUNITY.

MS: Noachides from all parts of the world have contacted A.N.I. The movement is growing, and it's becoming more widely recognized and accepted. There are some local Noachide learning groups that have been solidly established for a few decades, mostly with guidance and teaching from shluchim. To facilitate that trend, we have posted a list of worldwide rabbis, mostly shluchim, who have agreed to be available as local contacts, with *Sheva Mitzvos Hashem* as a primary resource for answering questions from Noachides.

In places where it's available and they have the ability, it seems that most of the Noachides go to the Internet for learning and for connecting with other Noachides. Still, A.N.I. puts a lot of emphasis on getting Noachides connected locally with each other, so they can start meeting and learning together. Once I was contacted by a Noachide woman who lived alone in a cabin in a very isolated little village in Alaska. When she told me where she lived, I was shocked when I realized that I had corresponded some time earlier with another Noachide woman from the same little village. So I introduced them to each other, and they were thrilled, because neither one had imagined that they would ever meet another Noachide in person.

In a few countries, such as the Philippines, Noachides have been successful in building large, well-organized communities. Those that have affiliated with A.N.I. look to Rabbi Weiner and Rabbi Schochet for advice and consulting, and they are

learning and following the halachos and principles in *The Divine Code*. *Ask Noah* provides some short courses by email for their local study groups. It has been fascinating to help these Noachides to develop life-cycle and community resources, including marriage contracts, wedding ceremonies, baby naming ceremonies, and weekly prayer services. Another shining success is The Noachide Society of Great Britain, which has a large monthly shiur in London, led by Rabbi Yitzchok Sufrin. Members of the community in England are making progress toward establishing a Noachide day school for children. Another rabbi who we've consulted closely with is Rabbi Nachman Bernhard in Johannesburg, South Africa. I'm not going to mention all the local Noachide groups around the world that have affiliated with *Ask Noah* or who are making use of our books and other resources, but to give an idea and show some inspiring photos, we have featured some of these groups on asknoah.org.

BEIS MOSHIACH: DO NON-JEWS WANT TO CONVERT AFTER BEING EXPOSED TO THE TRUTH OF TORAH?

MS: While some Noachides aspire to eventually convert, and a few do, most are focusing on living as righteous Non-Jews. Of course we don't encourage conversion, and we stress that non-Orthodox "conversions" should not be considered at all.

BEIS MOSHIACH: WHERE CAN THE BOOKS OR OTHER OUTREACH MATERIALS BE PURCHASED?

MS: The main on-line distributors for our books are asknoah.org, kehotonline.com, judaism.com, amazon.com, and

chish.co.il.

Our Noachide outreach materials, such as cards, brochures, bumper stickers and prayer booklets, are available from asknoah.org and judaism.com.

**BEIS MOSHIACH:
IN TERMS OF HOW A
NOACHIDE CONDUCTS
HIS LIFE, WHAT IS THE
MOST IMPORTANT
QUESTION THAT HAS BEEN
ANSWERED?**

MS: I think that one of the most significant impacts on our understanding of what a Noachide may or may not observe has been Rabbi Weiner's clarification of halacha 10:10 in Rambam's *Laws of Kings*, which says, "If a Ben Noach desires to perform one of the Torah's other mitzvos in order to receive *s'char*, we do not prevent him from doing so in the manner of halacha." It had been assumed by many in the Noachide movement that this meant that if a Ben Noach has in mind that he wants to get a "spiritual reward" from Hashem, it would be permitted for him to perform almost any of the ritual Jewish Mitzvos – for example, keeping a strictly kosher diet, affixing a mezuzah, wearing a tallis, or waving a lulav and esrog – with the exception of a few specially designated Mitzvos that are in the general categories of writing a mezuzah scroll, putting on t'fillin, holding back from doing any m'lacha on Shabbos, or delving deeply into Torah study.

About this misunderstanding, Rabbi Weiner clarified that beyond the Sheva Mitzvos, if a Non-Jew observes any of the 613 Mitzvos that represent a purely religious/spiritual obligation (which applies for all the Chukim and Eidus



“The Rebbe advised that when you are introducing the Sheva Mitzvos to a Non-Jew, don't start by confronting him about what he is doing wrong. Rather, let the person know that he is already doing numerous good things in his life, but these are his Seven Commandments from G-d. . .

Mitzvos), this is forbidden based on the prohibition of adding a commandment, and a Non-Jew derives no spiritual reward from observing them. Rather, a Noachide is permitted to perform any Jewish commandment for which one understands that the person, or his family, or the general society will have a logical reason and a logical benefit – and that practical benefit received is the *s'char* that Rambam is referring to.

**BEIS MOSHIACH:
DO NOACHIDES HAVE
HOLIDAYS?**

MS: Non-Jews are definitely permitted to celebrate and commemorate secular holidays and historical events. Two examples in the U.S. would be the national Independence Day on July 4th, and Memorial

Day at the end of May to honor the fallen soldiers. It's also permissible for them to have days that are set aside by their nation for strengthening their logically incumbent precepts, such as remembering to give thanks to Hashem on Thanksgiving, or honoring parents on Mothers Day and Fathers Day, or national days for doing acts of goodness and kindness. But halachically, they should not religiously observe any "Yom Tov" for themselves, in the sense of turning its observance into their own "mitzvah" that they would have to keep, because that would violate the prohibition against adding to or subtracting from Hashem's mitzvos that were given at Har Sinai. For Noachides, that is the prohibition against making a "chiddush das."

So in regard to the connection that Noachides could have with the Jewish Yomim Tovim, it needed to be clarified. They aren't allowed to dedicate a "Shabbos" type of rest day, or observe the Jewish ritual mitzvos that don't bring them any logical, practical benefit. It's a challenge to give over that message, because when a Non-Jew realizes on his own that the Torah is Hashem's eternal Truth and the other religions are false, his first reaction may be to open the Chumash and start trying to do whatever he sees commanded there – starting with the Yomim Tovim, because he has abandoned the holidays of the false religions, and that leaves a void in his life and certainly in the lives of his children. So the person may start doing things like observing a Seder on the first night of Pesach, or building a sukkah to dwell in during Sukkos.

Rabbi Shochet has provided a lot of guidance in that area. He explained that Noachides can choose from positive activities of their regular lives, and enhance those in honor of Shabbos or a Jewish Yom Tov. So for example, it's permitted for them to make a nice dinner on Friday night, and light candles on the table at the start of the meal to enhance the atmosphere, and take that time to learn and discuss the weekly parsha. In terms of any connection to the Yomim Tovim, the Rebbe stressed that Rosh HaShana is the annual Day of Judgment for all mankind, so during Elul and on Rosh HaShana, Noachides also need to make a cheshbon ha'nefesh, do t'shuva, accept Hashem as their King, and pray that Hashem will give them life and provide for their needs in the coming year. Shavuot is also significant for them, because the Sheva Mitzvos

were commanded at Har Sinai. It's also logical that a Noachide can be involved with publicizing knowledge of G-d, which includes His open miracles, and an auspicious time for doing that is during Chanukah. Putting Chanukah candles in public view to publicize the miracle doesn't have to be restricted to Jews only, but of course a Noachide shouldn't make a bracha on lighting a menorah, because he's not commanded to do so.

**BEIS MOSHIACH:
TELL US ABOUT HOW
NOACHIDES CAN
CELEBRATE LIFE EVENTS.**

MS: *Ask Noah* welcomes questions pertaining to a Noachide lifestyle, and how they can honor milestones in their lives, and in their families and communities – while staying clear of traditions and ceremonies from a false religion. There is a lot of latitude there that Noachides can develop for themselves, as long as they don't go to the other extreme and create ceremonies that are just like the Jewish tradition, or turn a particular ceremony they innovate into a new fixed religious precept. We have helped Noachides with ideas for ceremonies of naming new babies and conducting weddings. Rabbi Prof. Michael Broyde of Emory University School of Law approved our legal Living Will for Noachides, and the Rebbe explained that according to the way of the world and human nature, it's very appropriate for Non-Jews to observe a seven-day period of mourning for their dearly departed relatives and friends, as the generation of the mabul mourned for Mesushelach. Since Noachides have an obligation to advance the awareness and observance of the Sheva Mitzvos in their societies,

they can very appropriately honor a life event or a departed loved one by making a donation to support Torah-based Sheva Mitzvos outreach.

**BEIS MOSHIACH:
HOW HAS ASK NOAH
CONTRIBUTED TO THE
GROWING PHENOMENA OF
NOACHIDE WEDDINGS?**

MS: Early on after I started working on asknoah.org, I received a request from a young Noachide couple to help them make a Noachide wedding in Buffalo, NY. For this I turned to our North American overseeing rabbi, Rabbi Immanuel Schochet. He set down the guidelines, which you can find on the Noachide Wedding page on asknoah.org. There is no kiddushin for Non-Jews, so a rabbi who officiates should only do so as an authorized agent of the secular government, to certify the marriage in accordance with the requirements of the secular law. Beyond that, the rabbi can infuse messages into the ceremony about the religious significance of marriage, homemaking and fidelity, in the context of the Noachide Code. It seems that Rabbi Hershel Greenberg in Buffalo was the first rabbi to officiate a Noachide wedding in accordance with those guidelines. After that, Rabbi Yisroel Miller of Poale Tzedek Congregation agreed to officiate at Noachide weddings in the Pittsburgh area, and I know of at least one that he officiated at before he relocated to Canada. Since then, I've consulted at one level or another for a number of Noachide weddings around the world.

Another very important thing that Rabbi Schochet contributed was a text for a Noachide wedding contract. That is posted


on asknoah.org, and printed in *The Divine Code*. A requirement is that the language of the contract needs to be verified as acceptable and binding according the secular law of the land in the place where the couple will live.

BEIS MOSHIACH: DO YOU INTRODUCE THE REBBE AND MOSHIACH, AND IF YES, HOW? HOW DO NOACHIDES REACT TO THE CONCEPTS OF A REBBE AND MOSHIACH?

MS: Those who come to the Noachide path should recognize that it was the Lubavitcher Rebbe who initiated the modern Sheva Mitzvos campaign. With thanks to Jewish Educational Media for their helpful cooperation, some key videos of the Rebbe's sichos on the Sheva Mitzvos are linked to in the video section of asknoah.org. Non-Jews generally have great respect for the concept of a holy person, and when they learn about the Rebbe and see his pictures and videos, they see and feel that real holiness.

The Rebbe said that the obligation of educating Non-Jews in the Sheva Mitzvos now includes teaching them about Moshiach ben Dovid and that the Geula that is coming soon. The concept of a Messiah was always in the Torah, and with the Jews going back to Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov. Any other religions that have some concept of a Messiah or a Messianic Era took that from the Jews, and reformulated it in some different way. That's an opening for explaining the actual Torah-based concepts about the Messiah.

BEIS MOSHIACH: CAN YOU TELL US ANY SPECIAL HASHGACHA PRATIS OR MIRACLE STORIES THAT

 **She told me where she lived, and I was shocked when I realized that I had corresponded some time earlier with another Noachide woman from that same little village.**

YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED IN YOUR WORK, OR PERHAPS STORIES ABOUT THE REBBE AND NOACHIDES?

MS: From time to time, someone writes in who has lived their whole life as a Non-Jew, practicing whatever faith they were raised in, and they have just discovered that their mother was really a Jew. In most of those cases, the person relates that all along they had an unexplained interest in Torah or anything Jewish, and maybe as a result they were drawn to the Sheva Mitzvos. Of course when this happens, we answer the person's questions, and do what we can to encourage and help the person to get connected with his or her Yiddishkait.

Over the years with *Ask Noah*, I have corresponded with many hundreds of Non-Jews, including many devout Noachides. I have encountered a few Non-Jews whom the Rebbe has visited in a dream. In some cases the person had no idea who the dream-visitor was, because he or she had never seen or heard of the Rebbe. When I show these people a photo of the Rebbe, it is really a shock (to them) that this is the "Rabbi" who appeared in the dream. That strengthens my understanding of the Rebbe as the Nasi Ha'dor not just for the Jewish people, but for the whole world.

I have heard stories of Non-Jews who have shared with a shliach about some difficult

personal issue or trouble, and the shliach opened an Igros to give them the Rebbe's answer. Some very clear and successful answers were delivered that way. And likewise for those who were persuaded to send in a letter to the Ohel – some have been answered with the hoped-for change in their situation, almost immediately.

Non-Jews are encouraged to give proper charity, and a good way for them to do that is by having a pushka and putting in coins every day. If the person needs something in his or her life, like a shidduch or parnasa or help with a problem child, etc., advise them to move in the direction of the Sheva Mitzvot, and to put coins for proper charity into a pushka every day, along with a prayer to Hashem for what they need. There have been Non-Jews who have done this and seen miracles in their lives.

BEIS MOSHIACH: WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT SHLUCHIM AND LAY READERS CAN IMPLEMENT OUTREACH TO THE NON-JEWS IN A PRACTICAL MANNER?

MS: Obviously one can hand out or post information, but it's a good idea to first consult on the content with those who are established and endorsed for Sheva Mitzvos outreach, or make use of the resources they provide. People are very sensitive to first impressions, and it's possible that something

in a card or a flyer could make an unintended bad impression or get taken negatively out of context, despite all of the good intentions. In all probability, the Non-Jew one meets has no prior education to look with a Torah-based perspective at the scanty information that's being handed to him. The important thing is to make it acceptable and even appealing, to stir the person's interest, and include an easily accessible source for more information. That's where asknoah.org comes in.

The Rebbe advised that when you are introducing the Sheva Mitzvos to a Non-Jew, don't start by confronting him about what he is doing wrong. Rather, let the person know that he is already doing numerous good things in his life, but these are his Seven Commandments from G-d that will never be changed or nullified, and if he adds them on to what he is doing, he will develop a more personal relationship with his Creator. As the person goes on from there to learn more, the Truth of Torah and the Noachide path will probably become obvious.

If shluchim or your readers in general want to make a shiur in the Sheva Mitzvos, the level of the material that's taught should be appropriate for the level of the students. And of course the instructor needs to have a good understanding of the material. It's important that the tznius and general propriety of the shiur should be kept at a high standard. If someone wants to make a shiur but doesn't know of any interested Noachides within commuting distance, by all means, contact A.N.I. It's quite possible that I've been in contact with some Noachides in your area.

One should not forget how much the Rebbe stressed that everyone, Jews and Non-Jews should be doing more acts of goodness and kindness as we get closer and closer to the Geula. Shluchim can approach the administrators of public schools, and give them the idea to make programs for students in all the grades to get involved in doing acts of goodness and kindness in their communities. These types of programs have shown great success. Children get very inspired by contests, and the school can ensure that it's educational by awarding prizes for essays that the children submit about their "goodness and kindness" projects.

**BEIS MOSHIACH:
HOW DO YOU SEE THE
FUTURE OF ASK NOAH?
WHAT ARE FUTURE PLANS
OR PROJECTS FOR THE
ORGANIZATION?**

MS: In the short term, we are inviting sponsorships for printing, shipping and distribution of our Noachide outreach brochures in different languages — including distribution at the Kosel! There are many thousands of Non-Jews from all over the world who pass through the Kosel each year as tourists to Israel, and almost all of them are feeling a rush of spiritual inspiration when they visit that holy site where the Sh'china resides. So it's a great opportunity to present them with present-day information on the authentic Biblical Noachide faith that Non-Jews were taught about at that very same place, over two thousand years ago, when they came to worship Hashem by the First and the Second Battei HaMikdash.

Another important direction for Noachide outreach that is

limited only by our available manpower and resources is outreach to Non-Jews in prison. I try to keep up with answering letters from inmates who have heard about *Ask Noah*. Most of them are searching for spiritual truth, and want to try taking on Judaism, but of course that's neither possible nor appropriate in their situation. So either they have been referred to the Noachide Laws, or I introduce that to them. This truth often resonates with them very strongly, and certainly so if they are able to obtain a copy of *The Divine Code*. Rest assured that as a result, there are a good number of inmates who are now planning their future lives as law-abiding observant Noachides after they are released. I think it will greatly reduce recidivism if resources can be developed to bring this into the prisons on a larger scale.

Without giving away too much information, I'll share in closing that we are working on the continuing upgrade and expansion of our Internet-based capabilities, and this includes moving toward pre-recorded and live video shiurim. But in our vision for *Ask Noah International*, we can't be only Internet based, so the number of local Noachide classes that we facilitate is continuing to grow. All of these Noachide education activities are within the branch of our work that's designated as United Noachide Academies®.

**BEIS MOSHIACH:
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR
YOUR TIME. WHERE CAN
SOMEONE WHO WANTS
MORE INFORMATION
REACH YOU?**

MS: The email address for *Ask Noah International* is Sevenlaws@asknoah.org.

IS CHABAD STILL 'CHABAD'?

Is it okay to promote whatever you wish in the Rebbe's name? Is there truth to the claim that there is no ideology in Chabad anymore? What is the distinction between "sociology was victorious" and "there is no split in Lubavitch?" This and more in a response to a controversial "Haaretz" article.

By S. Pariz

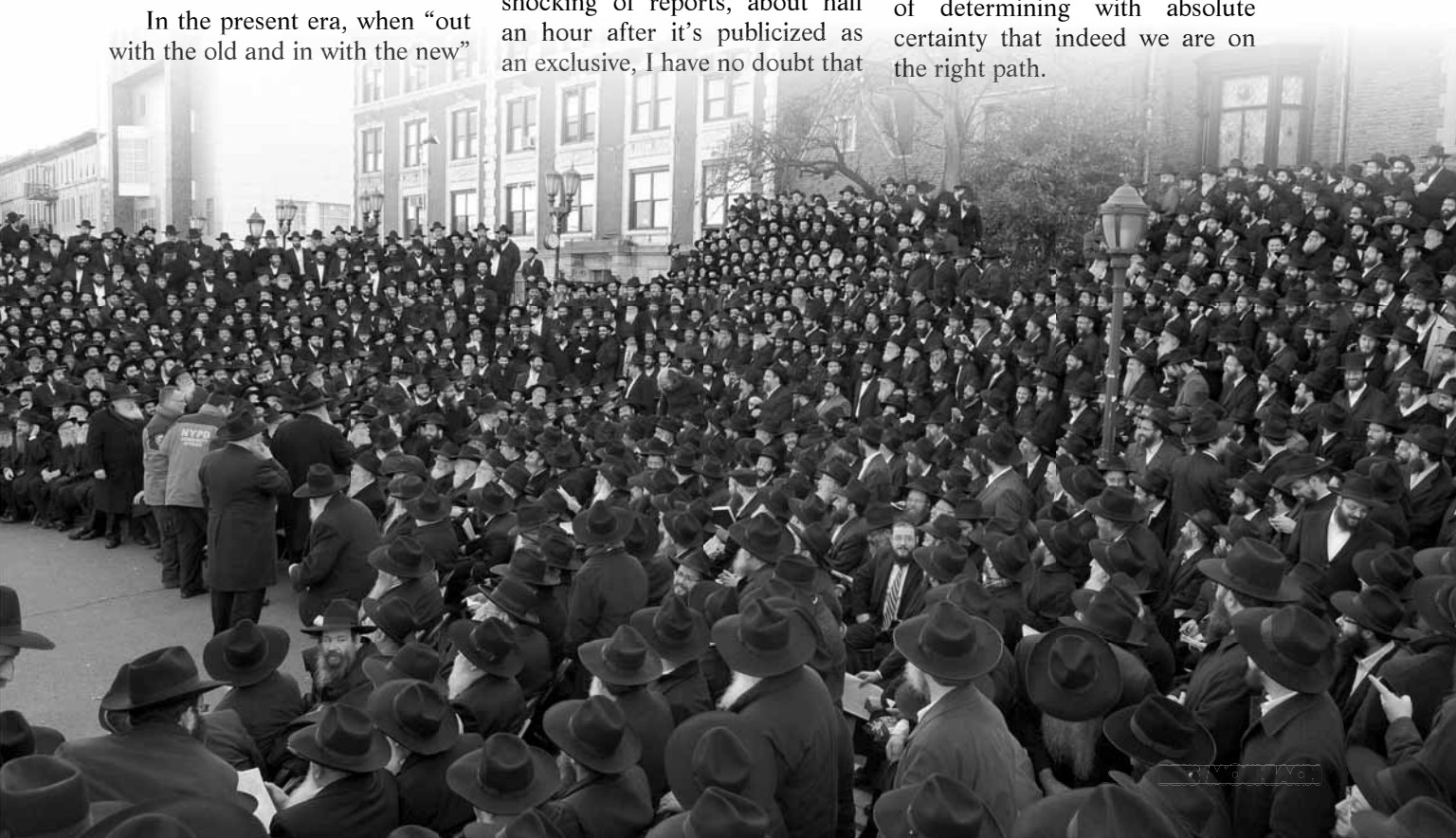
OLD NEWS

In the present era, when "out with the old and in with the new"

is the rule even for the most shocking of reports, about half an hour after it's publicized as an exclusive, I have no doubt that

many people will be surprised to read the following article, a reaction to an article of a year ago which has long since been classified as old news.

I agree that there is no purpose in dealing with old stuff as long as the impetus has long since dissipated. However, when the underlying impetus remains and continues to try to make its voice heard, it calls for an appropriate response – a response that is not a counter-attack, but a reasoned and objective analysis and self-inspection for the purpose of determining with absolute certainty that indeed we are on the right path.



SOCIOLOGY WAS VICTORIOUS

The article I am responding to was written by Yair Ettinger and appeared in Haaretz in December 2010. The author spent time in Crown Heights during the Kinus HaShluchim of 5771 and he presented his impressions of the shluchim along with quotes from people he interviewed. He wanted to avoid the usual superficial reporting and give readers a picture of what really drives Chabad and what lies behind the facts and numbers.

And so, along with the fascinating impressions of the powerhouse that he witnessed, Ettinger devoted an entire segment of his article to what he entitles “End of Ideology.” He introduces us to people within and outside the movement who provide an inside view of things. Before responding to what was said, here is a quote from the article:

“Today in Chabad there is a spiral of fund-raising, and the emissaries have become a kind of elite, but they are engaged in a narrow world of providing Jewish services. The Chabad Hasidic movement, which was always extremely intellectual, is today preoccupied with the most technical aspects of Judaism. We took talented young men and made them mediocre.”

“Chabad’s scale of success has absolutely nothing to do with messianism or with the theological side, but is proof that sociology was victorious. There is no ideology here. The Lubavitcher Rebbe changed the face of Chabad. In the past, the two heroes of Chabad were the maskil, the educated person who is well versed in the writings of the great teachers, and the oved, the worshipper, who prays long

and with great intensity. During the period of the seventh rebbe – “Menachem Mendel Schneerson” – those two models disappeared almost completely. These days it’s the emissary, the mission, that’s important. That reflects the new conditions that evolved in the Jewish world in the second half of the 20th century and in the 21st century, in which Jews are no longer seeking the answer to the problems of existence, but are in need of essential services. Chabad is very generous in this way and will give you all the services, but they do not provide intellectual answers. It’s no longer about wisdom, understanding and knowledge [for which “Chabad” is an acronym] but about rhapsodizing over a Seder night they held somewhere.”

IN PROTEST

Other quotes, no less startling, elicited a few words expressing reservations from Chabad platforms, but for some reason, these key statements that took such prominent place in the most significant part of the article, did not call forth even the slightest protest; surprisingly (or not), they were even acclaimed.

Instinctively, we internally question whether or not there is any truth to what was said, it is an irrepressible voice of protest in the sharpest terms that insists on being heard. The truth is that this tempest is not merely our own matter, and it is not to preserve our personal honor that we cry out.

We do so for he who stands at the head of our camp, our Nasi upon whom this calumny is heaped. He is the one in whose name they spew their poison. It is upon his shoulders that they place the blame for the failure of the realization of the vision of all

the Rebbeim, for it is the Rebbe, it is claimed, who cheapened and rendered extinct the holiest values of Chabad Chassidim.

This is a most serious matter since it is not being presented as one person’s opinion, but rather as a general outlook reflecting an internal positional shift **in the name of the Nasi of the seventh generation.**

Upon reading that which casts aspersions upon the foundation of Lubavitch under the Rebbe’s name, how can we remain silent?

How did the Rebbe react to the article written by Shlomo Shamir in the *Algemeiner Journal* who dared to question what the Rebbe had to say at the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen 5740 about “dire happenings” taking place in the world, and that if rabbis declared a part-day fast the Rebbe said he would join them? Shamir did not understand what was so dire that necessitated a fast.

The Rebbe reacted publicly, sharply attacking the article (after which Shamir felt terrible for aggravating the Rebbe and sought to make amends). It shows us how much weight the Rebbe attributes to the meanderings of a columnist who, after all, needs new material to fill his column. To the Rebbe, words that Jews utter are significant.

Space constraints prevent me from quoting numerous times the Rebbe protested sharply against even raising the suggestion that “times have changed,” all the more so, when it was attributed to him. It is enough to know that the Rebbe referred to all those claims as “the view of those who err” and called what they said **“nonsense and foolish talk”** (Sicha Ki Sisa 5740).

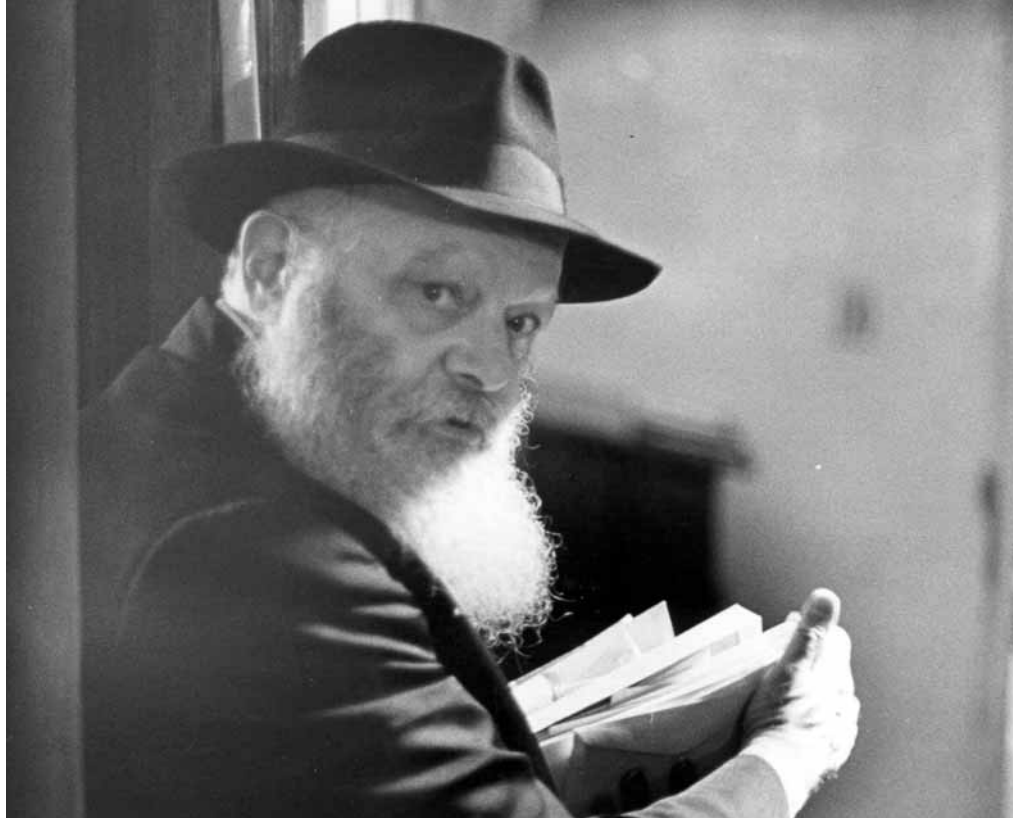
THE ULTIMATE ABSURDITY

Upon investigation, in the attempt to dig through to the core issues, we immediately find ourselves confronted with the ultimate absurdity. It is an absurdity that is neither the fault of the writer, who simply reported what he was told, or even the interviewees, who reached their conclusions based on the public statements of our own people. In fact, this perspective has been actively promoted in numerous Chabad forums, and even under the heading of pride, which would seem to proclaim that this is who we are.

The ultimate absurdity and what is truly painful is the fact that yes, it's true. Even if we were to determine that the inner service that distinguishes Chabad is alive and well, **and even in a most remarkable way**, his closing words about what inspires rhapsody are correct.

In other words, why is it that when we want to show the enormity of Chabad, we immediately refer to the number of shluchim and Chabad houses all over the globe, while, for some reason, we do not tout the **inner chein** and light that fills all those buildings as being the secret behind the success?

Why don't we tell all those gawking journalists about the "well of living waters" that is inside every one of those Chabad houses, about Chassidus and hiskashrus to the Rebbe? By the same token, why don't we tell them about that which motivates all those dear shluchim and keeps them going — those moments of eternal import in which they connect with the Rebbe, the nasi and the meshaleiach? The hours they spend in their office learning a maamer Chassidus in the attempt to divert themselves



“The Rebbe hesitated for a moment. “I hope you will not take offense, but something tells me you don't sleep well at night, and this is not good for ‘length of days.’”

from everything and connect with G-d's oneness, as well as the hours after that of davening at length as a servant before his master ought not be kept a secret.

Ettinger could have been brought into 770 on a Shabbos afternoon and shown the secret of how future shluchim are forged. He ought to have been directed to an authentic scene of "inside Lubavitch" in which hundreds of bachurim are all engrossed in one effort, climbing the ladder of prayer, Chabad style, where you can hear a quiet *niggun gaaguim* here and there. To the skeptics among us — this is for real!

However, when within our own ranks that which is primary is not given its proper place of honor and is substituted for something secondary to it, then

what remains is not the number of maamarim and sichos that are thirstily swallowed by thousands, and not the thousands of shiurim in Nigleh and Chassidus that are given in all those Chabad houses, but, to our great sorrow, the number of chefs and waiters who worked at the "Gala Banquet" event, as he referred to it.

It doesn't end with that. There are ramifications that are quite serious. When the neshama and the inner significance of things don't get their due because of the constant involvement with the body and the "vessel," what happens is that the young child who grows up exposed to a coarse world whose corporeal attractions become ever more pressing, loses the true value of the soulful. He is left adrift,

showing off the colorful designs engraved on his plate, because there is no food there. Has this become the new reality? You tell me.

NO SPLIT IN LUBAVITCH

In order to see how the proper approach produces completely different results, let's look at the work of another writer, Herbert Weiner, who described his private meetings with the Rebbe that took place in the 1950's (in his book *9 1/2 Mystics*). He visited 770 several times in order to understand what Lubavitch is about. He was told that in order to start understanding anything, he needed to learn Tanya.

After he was shown the proper approach, while he was still caught up in his intense efforts to divine the secret of the movement's success, he did not hesitate to state openly, "I knew that I had not yet begun to understand the inner dynamic of Lubavitch."

Despite this disclaimer, and this shows what a chasm exists between him and Haaretz, Weiner was able to say at least part of the secret is, "Schneur Zalman, however, had constructed a system whereby the delicate and ephemeral grasp of the unworldly could be captured in 'vessels' of rational formulation — vessels which could on demand be made to pour forth their supply of 'living waters.'"

In other words, he discovered the key components of "chochma, bina, daas," and he **knew how to highlight them as the main thing**. He successfully zeroed in on what makes Chabad, Chabad, i.e. the inner avoda of each individual to implant the essential and unadorned spark of faith into all the vessels of intellect and consciousness until, "every

created thing will know that You created it," in a way of daas and hiskashrus.

Along with his exposure to the principle of independent Avodas Hashem, he knew to identify the driving force that stands "between you and G-d," namely, the secret of incontrovertible hiskashrus that exists between Chassid and Rebbe.

He asked the Rebbe in yechidus, "Isn't the fact that Hasidim turn to the Rebbe for almost every decision in their life — isn't this a sign of weakness, a repudiation of the very thing that makes a man human, his b'chira, freedom of will?"

By seeing how the Rebbe responded, we will see how the Rebbe views his talmidim/Chassidim. The Rebbe said, "A weak person is usually overcome by the environment in which he finds himself. But our Chassidim can be sent into any environment, no matter how strange or hostile, and they maintain themselves within it. So how can we say that it is weakness which characterizes a Chassid?"

Weiner goes on to write:

"I pressed my question from another angle and told him that I sensed a desire in Chabad to oversimplify, to strip ideas of their complexity merely for the sake of a superficial clarity. As a matter of fact, I blurted out, all his Hasidim seemed to have one thing in common: a sort of open and naive look in their eyes that a sympathetic observer might call t'mimut (purity) but that might less kindly be interpreted as emptiness or simple-mindedness, the absence of inner struggle.

"I found myself taken aback by my own boldness, but the Rebbe showed no resentment. He leaned forward. 'What you see

missing from their eyes is a kera!'

"A what?" I asked.

"Yes, a kera," he repeated quietly, 'a split.' The Rebbe hesitated for a moment. 'I hope you will not take offense, but something tells me you don't sleep well at night, and this is not good for 'length of days.' Perhaps if you had been raised wholly in one world or in another, it might be different. But this split is what comes from trying to live in two worlds."

That is the answer for all those who seek to define what is the wonder product being produced in the manufacturing plant that is Lubavitch. It is the forging of personalities saturated with much substance and meaning, with a deep internal element that unifies all aspects of his being.

That is how the Rebbe characterized his Chassidim because this is how he sees them. It is through this looking glass that he wants his talmidim to be presented to the whole world, **from the innermost point of view possible**, not merely with an external view.

"Indeed, I thought, there is no split at Lubavitch. It offered its followers a world in which the mind was never confused by contradictions; where life was not compartmentalized; where the tensions between heart and mind, flesh and soul, G-d and His creation were all dissolved in the unity of a higher plan. And any doubt or confusion that arose might be clarified by making oneself 'as nothing' before the Rebbe, who in turn made himself 'as nothing' before the will of G-d."

WHO DOESN'T NEED EXISTENTIAL ANSWERS?

The interviewee says, "These

days it's the emissary, the mission, that's important. That reflects the new conditions that evolved in the Jewish world in the second half of the 20th century and in the 21st century, in which Jews are no longer seeking the answer to the problems of existence, but are in need of essential services."

Excuse me Mr. Ettinger, but you are gravely mistaken. There is a tremendous yearning for Jewish and Chassidic values among our Jewish brethren today. They are not only interested in services such as a Pesach Seder. It is the **shluchim** who are witnesses to this phenomenon and who devote their lives towards providing an authentic Jewish answer by way of the teachings of Chassidus that infuse all of superficial existence with the **spirit of life**.

Furthermore, it is very possible that the image you have of the search for answers to the problems of existence in the first half of the 20th century specifically was nothing more than the smokescreen behind which the "enlightened ones" hid

“I am outraged by the term ‘Chabad emissaries.’ We are not Chabad emissaries, we are not the B’nei Akiva youth movement. . . . We are the emissaries of the Rebbe. What is the strength of an emissary? It is the rebbe’s strength. The atmosphere today is leaning toward the emissary mission, because the main objective rings less nicely, but the central pillar is the messianic one!”

their diabolical schemes to erase completely the true golden path of the secret of Jewish existence.

HAPPY ENDINGS

I cannot conclude without quoting another excerpt from Ettinger’s article, something that he heard from Menachem Ziegelboim which balances the picture somewhat and presents things as they truly are:

“We have to remember the primary mission the Rebbe imposed: to prepare the world for the messiah. It’s nice and it’s fine to be concerned. My feeling is that the trivial has become the

essence. I am outraged by the term ‘Chabad emissaries.’ We are not Chabad emissaries, we are not the B’nei Akiva youth movement and we are not the Jewish Agency. We are the emissaries of the rebbe. What is the strength of an emissary? It is the rebbe’s strength. We are on a mission of the exalted one of the generation, of the messiah of the generation. The rebbe draws his powers from the infinite. The atmosphere today is leaning toward the emissary mission, because the main objective rings less nicely, but the central pillar is the messianic one!”

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קמץ א א T Or...



Compiled by Rabbi Levi Goldstein

The Alter Rebbe once summoned a young disciple of the Maggid and said to him in his customary chant, “I have the mitzva of ‘ושונתם לבניך’ (Teach them to your children). You have the mitzva of sustaining and providing for your family. Let us make an exchange. I will give you what you need to fulfill your mitzva and you will teach my son (who later became the Mittlerer Rebbe).”

Then the Rebbe explained the method of instruction. “The first thing is to teach the letters: Alef, Beis and so on.

“What is an Alef? A dot above, a dot below and a line between – this is an Alef. A child must know that the Alef of Torah is a Yud above, a Yud below, and a line of faith that joins them. Another version: A Yud above – this is the soul; a Yid (Jew) below – this is the body; a line of Yiras Shamayim (fear of Heaven) in the center.” (HaYom Yom, 8 Adar-I)

With these words the Alter Rebbe defined the goal of teaching Alef-Beis to a child. The goal is not merely to provide the child with a reading tool, but rather to teach him the inner significance of the Alef as well, thereby instilling Yiras Shamayim

into the delicate mind and heart of the child.

Consequently, we must choose the correct method of teaching the Alef-Beis to the child, so that the desired goal will be achieved.

INTRODUCTION

The Alef-Beis letters are holy. Just as the Torah was written with the letters of the Alef-Beis, so too the entire Universe was created by means of Ten Utterances of Creation that are comprised of the same holy letters.

The very first thing that a child is taught when he enters the Cheider (Hachnasa L’Cheider) is the Alef-Beis, which will serve as a foundation for all the Torah that he will study during his lifetime.

After learning the Alef-Beis letters, the child is taught the Nekudos (vowels), as well as how to combine them with the letters, and then finally how to read Lashon-HaKodesh.

Now, one might assume that teaching a child how to read is merely a means to reaching the more important thing, reading and learning Hashem’s Torah. And if so, it really shouldn’t matter how one accomplishes

this task. And for that matter, the sooner it gets accomplished, the better.

However, our Rebbeim have taught us that it is most definitely not so.

Firstly, learning to read the Aleph-Beis is not merely a means to reach another goal. It matters very much how we approach the holy task of teaching this important skill to our children and which methods are used to teach the children how to read.

Secondly, time is not at all of the essence! This means that we should not be concerned about how much time it will take the child to master the skill of reading, for the actual process of learning how to read is a *goal in itself*, and is an extremely important stage in the child’s spiritual growth and development (as will be explained later in detail).

This is why G’dolei Yisroel throughout the generations, as well as our Rebbeim, put so much focus and emphasis on this matter, namely to teach the Alef-Beis exclusively Al Pi Mesora.

The process of learning to read Al-Pi-Mesora is comprised of three separate stages:

1. Learning the letters of the Alef-Beis by their respective names (Alef, Beis etc.)

2. To separately learn each of the Nekudos by their respective names, Komatz, Patach, etc.

3. Then, finally, the child learns how to join them together – “Komatz Alef Aw,” “Komatz Beis Baw,” etc.

There have been educators who have tried to introduce other methods for teaching children how to read Lashon HaKodesh that are different from Mesora, thereby skipping the three above-mentioned crucial stages.

In their Maamarim, Sichos Kodesh, and Igros Kodesh, the Frierdike Rebbe and the Rebbe both wrote extensively that the method of teaching children how to read Lashon HaKodesh must be exclusively Al-Pi-Mesora. This is a very holy matter, and it is not allowed to be changed whatsoever.

The following is an exploration of the teachings of our Rebbeim on this subject.

ALEF-BEIS, NEKUDOS AND THEIR NAMES ARE FROM HAR SINAI.

The Rebbe writes¹: “The holiness of the Alef-Beis letters, the Nekudos, and their names as well, originate from Moshe Rabbeinu who received it from Hashem at Har Sinai. The names of the Nekudos are the acronym (Roshei-Taivos) of the names of Malachim etc.”

THIS WAY INSTILLS YIRAS-SHAMAYIM

The Frierdike Rebbe writes in a Maamer²: “By learning exclusively in this manner, there is a K’dusha and a G’dly Ko’ach that awakens the inner strengths



“We should not be concerned about how much time it will take the child to master the skill of reading, for the actual process of learning how to read is a goal in itself.

of the Neshama. The children who learn in this manner have an inner Yiras-Shamayim and are sensitive to G’dly matters. The case is not so by those children who are taught by means of other methods; it is actually מוטטם their brain and heart.”

THE ALTER REBBE’S HORAA: TEACH KOMATZ ALEF AW

In a holy manuscript³ the Frierdike Rebbe writes: “The Alter Rebbe has specifically instructed that we should teach children by the method of Komatz Alef Aw etc.”

TEACHING THE ALEF-BEIS AND NEKUDOS SEPARATELY

The Rebbe writes⁴ to an educator who asked the question

about how to teach children to read: “It is obvious that one must teach children how to read by first teaching them the letters and the Nekudos **separately**, as it is a well known fact as to how much the G’dolei Yisroel as well as our saintly Rebbeim “waged wars” for this purpose, to engrave into the children the holiness of the Alef-Beis letters and the holiness of the Nekudos.”

THE ADVANTAGE OF TEACHING THE NEKUDOS BY THEIR NAMES

In one of the Igros Kodesh⁵ the Rebbe explains the advantage of the Alef-Beis Chart as it has been printed by Merkos L’Inyanei Chinuch (included in every T’hillas Hashem Siddur):

“The Nekudos (in our publication) are printed along with their name: Komatz, Patach



“These teachers are our biggest enemies, despite their claims that they are seeking our children’s benefit.”

etc. This is in contrast to other publications that do not have the names, in which case not only will the child never learn the true names of the Nekudos, but there is also another problem. The Nekudos are not pronounced by themselves, but rather, as they are connected to other letters. The significance of this, for the sake of the child’s Chinuch Al Taharas HaKodesh, is self-understood.”

WHAT’S THE RUSH?

Now, there are those who believe, or have actually experienced, that sometimes there are children who display confusion, or a delay, in the developmental progress of learning how to read by using the Mesora-method.

There are, however, several important points to be made in this matter, based on the words of the Rebbe.

In a Purim Sicha⁶ the Rebbe addresses the issue of delay and says:

“We are to gather Jewish children and teach them Toras Hashem in the ways of Hashem, namely, in the manner that Hashem commands us to teach them Torah. This should be as my father-in-law the Rebbe would say ‘Komatz Alef Aw, Komatz Beis Baw.’”

“And we are not to be concerned about saving time for Hashem’s sake, regardless of what other people so wrongly say. They suggest that in order to insure that the child gets to learn to read as quickly as possible, we must turn to other methods (different from

“Komatz Alef Aw, Komatz Beis Baw”), and thus not to tell the children about the holiness of the Alef-Beis letters and the holiness of the Nekudos. They claim that it is all worth it, just for the sake of having the child read sooner. . .”

EVEN THE EXPERTS ADMIT

The Rebbe adds, in a Sicha of Simchas Torah⁷:

“This was actually the approach of the Maskilim, who did not want to follow the Mesora. Their goal was to shorten the time it would take for the child to learn how to read.

“However, now that we are on the threshold of Moshiach, when everything becomes much clearer, the methodology experts too have come to the realization of the truth in this matter, that by teaching the child in the old Mesora’dike way one will succeed much more.”

IT DOES NOT SLOW THEM DOWN - IT IS QUITE THE CONTRARY!

Furthermore, says the Rebbe, in another Sicha⁸:

“It is the Horaa of our Rebbeim to teach children the letters and the Nekudos separately, and only afterwards may we blend them together. It is not as those who mistakenly claim that by using the Mesora’dike method we slow down the child’s development and progress in learning how to read. This is not true, but it is quite the opposite!”

KOMATZ ALEF AW - INSTILLS IN THE CHILD THE “ALEF” OF YIDDISHKAIT

“It is specifically through teaching the child in the correct way (Komatz Alef Aw etc.) that we will succeed in instilling in the child the “Alef” of Yiddishkait in general.”

KOMATZ ALEF AW - ITS CONNECTION WITH THE אָ of אָנֶּכִי

“When we teach the child ‘Komatz Alef Aw,’ this is actually related to the Komatz Alef Aw’ of the first letter of the first word of the Ten Commandments, אָנֶּכִי, and therefore, by teaching him so, we connect this child with the entire Torah!”

THE BEST GUARANTEE THAT THE CHILDREN REMAIN YIDDEN

In several Sichos as well as in his Igros Kodesh⁹ the Frierdike Rebbe speaks very sharply against the Maskilim who teach children how to read by “the new method” (emulating the manner that the Goyishe languages are taught) and do not use the Mesora-method of “Komatz Alef Aw” etc.

The Frierdike Rebbe says:

“The letters of the Torah are holy: Komatz is Kesser, Patach is Chochma, and the holiness of these letters and Nekudos actually radiate into the Neshamos of the children who are learning this way, so that they will always remain ערליכע אידן (loyal Jews).

“Those teachers who do not teach in the proper way are profaning the הדרת קודש and are breaking and destroying the naturally pure and genuine hearts of the children, in regard to the

holiness of the Alef-Beis letters and Nekudos. These teachers are our biggest enemies, despite their claims that they are seeking our children's benefit.

"These children will, sadly and painfully, grow up as Apikorsim, חס ושלום.

The only way we can be assured that our children grow up and remain as Yidden, believers in Hashem, is by teaching them

in the proper way Al-Pi-Mesora, 'Komatz Alef Aw' etc."

In the coming article BE"H we will discuss some practical applications of these instructions from the Rebbeim.

- 1) Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe, vol. 13 page 93
- 2) Seifer HaMaamarim 5680 page 200
- 3) Published in Beis Moshiach #431

- 4) Igros Kodesh Vol. 8 page 82
- 5) Vol. 1 page 188
- 6) Sichos Kodesh 5716 page 184
- 7) Sichos Kodesh 5729 page 48
- 8) Hisvaaduyos 5782 Vol. 4 page 2123
- 9) See Seifer HaSichos 5689 page 44 ; Seifer HaSichos 5691 page 159 ; Seifer HaSichos 5701 page 88 ; Seifer HaSichos 5704 page 157 ; Igros Kodesh Vol. 2 page 490; Vol. 7 page 142; and Vol. 8 page 323



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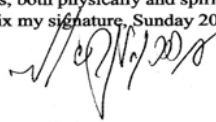

APPROBATION

Rabbi Jacob Schwei
Member of the Rabbinical
Court of Crown Heights

I strongly recommend the esteemed project of Radio Moshiah, which operates here in our neighborhood of Crown Heights, "Here has Hashem commanded His blessing," as well as in other surrounding neighborhoods. Radio Moshiah enables countless individuals to listen to the Rebbe's Farbrengens, to divrei Torah in the concepts of Geulah and Moshiach, to niggunei Chabad and more, which generates a holy, uplifted atmosphere in the homes of all listeners.

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

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TORAH: THE LINK TO THE PAST AND FUTURE

By Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

Founder and Director of the Jewish Discovery Center of Buffalo, NY



“The conversations of the servants of the Patriarchs are more pleasing before G-d than the Torah of the children.”

The Torah is known for its brevity. Many of the laws of the Torah are mentioned ever so succinctly. Others are merely hinted in the Torah. Often one word, or even letter, of the Torah can be the basis for the derivation of a Torah law. In short, the Torah is extremely economical when it comes to the use of language.

Yet this week’s parsha is a glaring exception to this rule. In this parsha we read about how Abraham asks his servant Eliezer to travel to his homeland to find a suitable wife for his son Isaac. The Torah relates, in vivid detail, how Eliezer prayed to G-d and stipulated that the first girl whom he will ask for water and who will offer to bring water to his camels as well is the one that he will select as Isaac’s bride. And, indeed, this is exactly what happened. The Torah recounts in detail how he gave Rebecca jewelry after she offered to supply water for his camels. The Torah then describes how Eliezer repeats the entire story to Rebecca’s father and brother, as well as describing how they finally consented to the marriage. All of this is reported in vivid detail with many points repeated two or three times. This is quite uncharacteristic for the same Torah that insists on brevity even

in the most important areas of law.

Rashi cites the Talmudic sage Rav Acha who anticipated this question and answered with a startling statement: “The conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs is more pleasing before G-d than the Torah of the children, for the narrative of Eliezer is doubled in the Torah while many essential elements of the Torah were given only by allusion.”

This statement, at face value, is difficult to understand. How could a “mere” story be more important than the laws of the Torah? Moreover, the Torah is divided into the Written Law and the Oral Law. Despite the fact that many of the laws are merely hinted in the Torah, they are expounded upon at great length in the Oral Torah (much of which was subsequently committed to writing in the Talmud and Midrash). Why was the Written Torah chosen to detail the stories of the Patriarchs (and their servants) while the intricacies of the laws of the Torah are reserved for the Oral Law?

“THAN” OR “FROM?”

One novel way of understanding Rav Acha’s statement is to use an alternate translation of his words. In Hebrew the letter *mem* is a prefix that can be translated as “than” implying that the

former (the conversations of the servants of the Patriarchs) are more beloved by G-d than the latter (the laws of the Torah given to the children). There is, however, another possibility. The letter *mem* can be translated as “from.” This will yield the following rendition: “[That] the conversations of the servants of the Patriarchs are pleasing before G-d is **derived from** the Torah of the children.” The Torah of the children informs us of the greatness of the conversation of the servants of the fathers.

In other words, we can only fully appreciate the value of the conversations of the servants of the Patriarchs because we have access to the Torah given to the children.

According to this novel way of understanding Rav Acha’s message, there is no suggestion that the laws are of minor significance. Rather, it is to suggest that when we examine the incredible wealth of knowledge that is implicit in even one small letter of the Torah we will begin to appreciate the importance of the stories of the Torah as well. We will then not view these stories as mere historical accounts or interesting anecdotes but, rather, as eternal messages.

If even one letter of the Torah can form the basis of an elaborate edifice of laws, it tells

us that every letter of the Torah contains unfathomable depth. There is no limit to the number of ideas and applications that can be derived from the slightest nuance of the Written Torah. We can then infer that all of the Torah, including the casual conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs, contains profound and timeless messages.

The reason why the details of the commandments are not fleshed out in the Torah is to underscore the infinite value of Torah. The deeper something is the more we have to resort to hints and allusions to convey their transcendent nature. By giving us only sketchy and cryptic information to convey intricate teachings we are exposed to the true G-dly nature of Torah. When we realize its true nature, it instills within us great respect and reverence for the Torah.

The Talmud relates (Sota 49a) that when Rabbi Akiva died the “honor of Torah” ceased. Rashi explains that Rabbi Akiva was known for his ability to demonstrate the significance of even the slightest nuance of the Torah. He was able to interpret even the “crowns” above the letters, and certainly the words and letters themselves. No detail is superfluous nor is anything in the Torah devoid of meaning.

THE TORAH AND THE CHILDREN

We can take this analysis a step further. Not only do the **laws** of the Torah given to the “children” provide us with insight into the depth of the Torah inherent in the conversations of the servants of the Patriarchs, but the full meaning goes beyond that.

The emphasis should not

“The deeper something is the more we have to resort to hints and allusions to convey their transcendent nature. By giving us only sketchy and cryptic information to convey intricate teachings we are exposed to the true G-dly nature of Torah.”

just be on the Torah; it should also include careful attention to the children, for Rav Acha did not just mention the Torah; he specifically referred to the Torah as “the Torah of the children.” Perhaps his intention was to highlight the degree to which the Jewish people (“children”) have realized the significance of every minute detail of Torah and, in fact, have been prepared to sacrifice life and limb for their observance. Just as the intricacies of Torah inform us of the deeper meaning in the conversations of the servants of the Patriarchs, so too the dedication of the children to what might at first glance seem the minutiae of Torah tells us something about our origins. It directs us to search for the root of this phenomenon. Children like this do not grow in a vacuum.

LOOK TO THE ROCK

Thus when we look at the Jewish people and their dedication to Torah it informs us of our Patriarchs, Matriarchs, and even their servants.

Indeed the prophet Isaiah (51:2) states: “Look unto the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bore you. For when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him and made him many.”

By reflecting on the intricacies

of Torah we get a glimpse into the true profundities of the lives of our Patriarchs.

A NEW TORAH

When we examine the foregoing citation from Isaiah it is noteworthy that shortly after pointing us to the past, exhorting us to “look unto Abraham,” the prophet changes direction to talk about the future Messianic Age at which time “Torah shall go forth from Me.” According to the Midrash this refers to the novel teachings of Torah that will be revealed by Moshiach in the Messianic Age, in relation to which, our Sages tell us, the Torah we are in possession of now is merely “*hevel*-vanity.”

What, we may ask, is the connection between looking to our past and, at the same time, to the new dimension of Torah that we will be taught by Moshiach in the future?

When the reverence for our Torah reflects the superior and more exquisite beauty of our Patriarchs we thereby prepare ourselves for the Torah study of the future. The Torah we study today is the precursor to the Torah of the future.

When we appreciate the profound depth of the stories of the Torah, and particularly the miracles of the Patriarchs which are highlighted, for instance,

Continued on page 42

END THE APATHY!

There's a time to pray, there's a time to offer gifts, and then there's a time to wage war. Now is the time for a holy war – the war of Melech HaMoshiach. It is forbidden to remain indifferent in the face of the reckless policies of the Netanyahu government, which is trying with all its might to destroy the Jewish settlements of Yesha. “Mr. Security” who has spoken so much about the missile threat from Gaza now wants to turn all of Yehuda and Shomron into one big Hamastan ch”v. We have a responsibility to stop him – before it’s too late.

By Sholom Ber Crombie

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

1.

Take a look at the exposé prominently publicized in the ultra-Orthodox media the previous week: Among the two thousand housing units that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu announced that the government will construct in the “settlements,” seven hundred and fifty of them will be built in the ultra-Orthodox Yerushalayim neighborhood of Ramot. Netanyahu announced the construction in the settlements so that every child would understand that he is a patriotic right-wing prime minister determined to

settle Yesha. However, he is actually building homes that are only ten minutes away from the Machane Yehuda marketplace in an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood in Yerushalayim, which no one had ever dreamed of calling a settlement before.

In addition, they will build another 940 housing units – among the two thousand apartments under proposal – on the other side of Yerushalayim, in the neighborhood of Har Homa. While this is a neighborhood embroiled in a dispute, we are also not talking about a settlement. Har Homa is located

within the official boundaries of the Municipality of Yerushalayim, although its final status remains a subject for debate with the Government of the United States of America.

After we realize that 1,700 of the 2,000 housing units Netanyahu announced will be built in “settlements” such as Ramot and Har Homa, we find that there are only three hundred remaining. These will include more new homes in Maale Adumim, which is also not some isolated settlement. This is a full-fledged Israeli city, well within the national consensus and part

of the “settlement blocs.” This leaves only a few homes for the Gush Etzion settlement of Efrat.

Once again, the prime minister has managed to fool everyone. He tried to show the country how he’s really a right-winger, but in fact, it turned out that this was just another cheap public relations trick to win another round at the expense of the right-wing politicians.

And while Bibi was proclaiming the construction in the “settlements,” he also continued to advance his “peace” initiative in the framework of his plans to establish a “Palestinian” state *r”l*. But worst of all, during that very same week, he sent his soldiers in to destroy a Jewish neighborhood on the settlement of Bat Ayin.

2.

This recent exploit from the Netanyahu ‘school of political chicanery’ should come as no surprise to anyone who knows him. Bibi has developed a sort of acrobatic methodology for himself, as he succeeds in maintaining his base of support among right-wing voters. He presents himself as Netanyahu the hero, the leader of the right wing, while he simultaneously carries out left-wing policies by waging unrestrained war against the settlements.

Just like the animal known for wallowing in the mud while he shows his split hooves, such is the conduct of the prime minister – literally and figuratively. He uses his slick PR specialists to produce headlines on right-wing government policies, and then afterwards, he can drag families out of their beds in the middle of the night and send bulldozers to destroy their homes.



We don’t want to repeat the same chain of mistakes that led to the Gush Katif expulsion. Photo: Yisroel Berdugo.

“ This recent exploit from the Netanyahu ‘school of political chicanery’ should come as no surprise to anyone who knows him. Bibi has developed a sort of acrobatic methodology, as he succeeds in maintaining his base of support among right-wing voters while simultaneously carrying out the left’s greatest dreams.

Only recently, the Netanyahu-Barak duo bulldozed three Jewish homes on the Migron settlement, evicting a new mother and her two-week old child in the process. The government destroyed homes in Bat Ayin occupied by young couples. Cabinet ministers receive weekly reports on the neighborhoods destroyed that week and those expected to meet the same fate in the immediate future *r”l*, but none of them dares to stand before the bulldozers and stop them.

A couple of weeks ago, a protest tent was erected in front of the home of Science

Minister Daniel Herskovits, chairman of the Bayit HaYehudi Party. The demonstrators were young couples from Givat Asaf, a Binyamin regional settlement outpost established ten years earlier in memory of Asaf Herskovits, who was shot to death in a terrorist attack near Ofra. Today, it is home to twenty-five families. Due to a petition submitted by Peace Now before the Israeli High Court of Justice, the outpost (together with others) was slated for eviction by the end of the secular calendar year – in another six weeks. The Givat Asaf settlers

asked Minister Herskovits to learn from the mistakes of the Gush Katif expulsion and make a commitment to leave the coalition if Netanyahu uproots more settlements. The science minister refused.

The members of the National Religious Party (NRP) – or as it's now called, "The Jewish Home" – attach greater importance to preserving the coalition than preserving the country. They simply haven't learned from the mistakes of the Gaza disengagement. They continue to place their trust in Bibi and give him the benefit of the doubt, as if there's any difference between him and Tzippi Livni. They seem to forget that Bibi and Tzippi came from the same political party, as Ms. Livni was once an avowed member of the Likud Party, who used to sing about the "two banks of the Jordan River." They both announced an ideological revolution and their support for the establishment of a Palestinian state and uprooting settlements. Both of them also supported the Gush Katif expulsion. When Knesset Member Uri Ariel stood at the Knesset podium and asked Netanyahu if he would support the disengagement, the then-Minister for Foreign Affairs replied clearly, "You should have no doubt – I will vote for the plan." Bibi speaks in explicit terms about uprooting settlements, but the minister from the National Religious Party still thinks it's more important to sit in the coalition and keep it afloat.

3.

The true encouragement is found in the reawakening among the public in Eretz Yisroel. They have learned their lesson. After the "happening" that the Yesha

Council held that summer when Gush Katif was destroyed, the people are truly ready to fight for every settlement. The protest tent erected in front of Minister Herskovits's home is an indication of a change in strategy. Perhaps if they had put up such tents in front of the homes of the NRP Knesset Members during the winter seven years ago, the expulsion plan could have been prevented. During that winter, a protest tent was erected in front of the official government headquarters in an attempt to influence public opinion, but the NRP simply continued to serve as a solid bridge of support for Ariel Sharon until the disengagement plan secured Cabinet and Knesset approval. Once this was achieved, Sharon tossed the NRP out the government and left them without Cabinet seats and without Gush Katif.

However, the people are more mindful this time around, and they are demanding honesty from their elected representatives. The settlers who are now fighting for their homes understand that if they don't speak up with a clear voice, no one will go to battle for them. The slogans of "We'll win with love" met their bitter end in Gush Katif, proving that the struggle must be fought not with love, but with determination. Anyone who thought that you could stop a prime minister from the ideological right-of-center by embracing him quickly discovered that a hug is not a tactic for political struggle. The hugs at Gush Katif merely laid the groundwork for discussions on uprooting all the settlements of Yehuda and Shomron *r"l*. Before the Gaza expulsion, no politician would have dreamt of speaking publicly about such a possibility. Yet today, such discussions have become the national consensus

in Israeli politics, with Bibi and Tzippi competing over who will promise to uproot the most.

The residents of those neighborhoods facing eviction promise that they have learned from Gush Katif. They have announced that there will be a fight this time, at least like there was in Amona, perhaps even more. They won't sit with their hands folded and embrace the soldiers who come to destroy their homes. From their vantage point, this is a wake-up call for the entire settler movement. The residents of Migron have made the same promise. They realize that this is not just a matter of saving their own personal property; this is an issue pertaining to all the settlements throughout Yehuda and Shomron. Prime Minister Netanyahu is exerting all his might against the settlers to prepare the foundation for more expulsions. It's no coincidence that he's granting Defense Minister Ehud Barak full freedom of action in all matters pertaining to the settlements. Bibi left the defense portfolio in his trusty hands for him to do all the dirty work of clashing with the settlers. But in practical terms, he is a full partner in everything Barak does.

4.

Other settlements are now up for consideration before the government and the High Court of Justice, and their continued existence is in serious danger. Bibi knows that if he succeeds *ch"v* in uprooting three settlements now, this will mark the start of the uprooting of all Jewish neighborhoods classified as "outposts" – and from there the path to the destruction of all settlements *r"l* will be a short one. "If there will be a national trauma

from the expulsion here,” Givat Asaf residents said recently, “it will deter the government from destroying other locations.” This is exactly what is required – “a national trauma” that will put a halt to the destruction and bring down the government.

When then-Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir went to the Madrid Conference twenty years ago and spoke far less than what Netanyahu is actually planning to do at this time, the Rebbe declared that he would fight with all his might to topple the Shamir government. Despite the fact that the alternative would be Shimon Peres and the Labor Party, the Rebbe did not consider the “lesser of two evils” argument. His only concern was that a prime minister of Israel acting contrary to the Torah must be brought down in order to stop his plans. The nationalist camp eventually woke up and brought Shamir down, but it was too late. The autonomy train had already left the depot under Likud auspices on its short journey to Oslo. In fact, it has recently been publicized that one of the PLO leaders said that the Madrid Conference paved the way for the Oslo Accords, and these wretched agreements never would have been made without it.

The nationalists are constantly fearful of the alternative, but they forget that when the official left-wing parties try to carry out policies harmful to Eretz Yisroel, the Likud Party stands firmly against the left to oppose its proposals. Yet, when the Likud tries to advance the exact same measures, there’s no fighting opposition to stop them. For example, Netanyahu was deputy foreign minister and served as a member of the Israeli delegation to the Madrid Conference to advance the “peace” talks. Yet,



The autonomy train had already left the depot under Likud auspices on its short journey to Oslo. In fact, it has recently been publicized that one of the PLO leaders said that the Madrid Conference paved the way for the Oslo Accords, and these wretched agreements never would have been made without it.

four years later, when he was opposition leader, he stood on the balcony at Kikar Tzion and cried out against the Oslo Accords, which were essentially a continuation of the process initiated at that conference. Then, during his first tenure as prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu implemented the Oslo II agreement – and afterwards he added the accords at Wye Plantation and delivered Chevron to the terrorists.

5.

Anyone who follows the straight path of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, has no need to be concerned about any alternatives. The Rebbe provided us with a clear course of action on how to put a stop to the government’s dangerous policies through the power of protest. In hundreds of sichos, private audiences, and correspondences, the Rebbe requested and encouraged strong protest against proposals that harm the security of Eretz HaKodesh and its inhabitants. The Rebbe never relented nor tired in his efforts on behalf of preserving the wholeness of Eretz Yisroel, even when it seemed that the protests were not bringing about any positive change in the situation. He often spoke about how he knew from his own experience that the protests had an effect upon the policymakers, even

though the public doesn’t always see the change.

There’s a time to pray, there’s a time to offer gifts, and then there’s a time to wage war. Now is the time for a holy war – the war of Melech HaMoshiach. It is forbidden to remain indifferent in the face of the reckless policies of the Netanyahu government, which is trying with all its might to destroy the Jewish settlements of Yesha. “Mister Security,” who has spoken much about the missile threat from Gaza, wants to turn all of Yehuda and Shomron into one big Hamastan. We have a responsibility to stop him – before it’s too late.

The public has not given up and it’s ready for the struggle. Netanyahu’s plan can be stopped. It is imperative that we arouse ourselves to action now and not sit by idly wringing our hands. If every city would establish a protest watch, if every city would hold an emergency protest meeting, if each of us would feel a sense of obligation and responsibility, this would also arouse the prime minister to the realization that the People of Israel will not tolerate the destruction of any more Jewish settlements. This is the way to stop the expulsion: the clear influence upon public opinion that will eventually bring pressure upon the prime minister and his government ministers.

With G-d’s help, we will prevail!

THE REBBEIM'S PREPARATION OF THE WORLD FOR MOSHIACH

THE REBBE RAYATZ * PART VIII

By Rabbi Gershon Avtzon

Dear Reader Sh'yichyeh,

In this week's article, we are going to focus on the activities of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, the Friedike Rebbe.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn was born on 12 Tammuz 1880 in Lubavitch, Russia, the only son of Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneersohn (the Rebbe Rashab), the fifth Rebbe of Chabad. He was appointed as his father's personal secretary at the age of fifteen; in that year, he represented his father in the conference of communal leaders in Kovna. The following year (1896) he participated in the Vilna Conference, where Rabbis and community leaders discussed issues such as the furtherance of authentic Jewish education, permission for Jewish children not to attend public school on Shabbat, and the creation of a united Jewish organization for the purpose of strengthening Judaism.

On 13 Elul 5657 (1897) at the age of seventeen he married a distant cousin, Rebbetzin Nechama Dina Schneersohn, daughter of Rabbi Avraham Schneersohn, (the son of Rabbi

Yisroel Noach of Nizhyn, who in turn was the son of the Tzemach Tzedek). Together they had three daughters.

After his father's passing on Beis Nissan 1920, he assumed leadership of Chabad Lubavitch. The Friedike Rebbe led the movement – and the entire Jewish world – until his passing on 10 Shvat 1950.

THE FRIEDIKE REBBE'S HALLMARK

The Friedike Rebbe's love and self-sacrifice for every Jew was legendary. In his first Maamer, the Rebbe tells stories of each of the Rebbeim's Mesiras Nefesh for Klal Yisroel. Regarding the Friedike Rebbe, he just says that "there are many stories that relate how the Friedike Rebbe sacrificed his physical and spiritual comforts for the sake of one Jew who could have been far-away from observance of Judaism."

The following stories are classic examples:

It was during Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's younger years, when the Czars still ruled the Russian empire. A new decree against the Jewish community was in the works, aimed at forcing

changes in the structure of the rabbinate and Jewish education. Rabbi Sholom Dovber (the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe) dispatched his son Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak to the Russian capital of Petersburg to prevent the decree from being enacted. When Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak asked how long he was to stay in Petersburg, his father replied, "To the point of self-sacrifice."

Upon his arrival in Petersburg, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak learned that the decree had already reached the desk of Stolypin, the interior minister of Russia and arguably the most powerful man in the Russian empire. The Czar's intelligence (or lack thereof) made him a virtual rubber stamp for whichever minister the prevailing political climate favored; at that particular time, His Highness was led by the nose by Interior Minister Stolypin, a heartless tyrant and rabid anti-Semite who was personally responsible for many of the devastating pogroms that were purposefully planned and carried out against the Jews of Russia in those years.

At that time, the former teacher and mentor of the interior minister lived in Petersburg. He was an elderly scholar, and Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak succeeded in befriending this man, who was



greatly impressed by the scope and depth of the young Chassid's knowledge. Many evenings passed with the two sharing each other's company, sitting and talking in the old man's study.

One day, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak told his new friend the purpose of his stay in Petersburg, and pleaded with him to assist him in reaching the interior minister. The old scholar replied, "To speak with him would be useless. The man has a cruel and malicious heart, and I have already severed all contact with this vile creature many years ago. But there is one thing I can do for you. Because of my status as Stolypin's mentor, I have been granted a permanent entry pass into the offices of the interior ministry, which I am willing to lend you. I need not explain to you the consequences, for both of us, if you are found out. But I have come to respect you and what you stand for, and I have decided to help you."

When Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak presented the pass at the interior ministry, the guard on duty was stupefied: few cabinet-level ministers were granted such a privilege, and there stood a young Chassid, complete with beard, side locks, chassidic garb and Yiddish accent, at a time when to even reside in Petersburg was forbidden to Jews. But the pass was in order, so the guard waved him through.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak entered the building and proceeded to look for Stolypin's office. Those whom he asked for directions could only stare at the strange apparition confidently striding the corridors of the interior ministry. Soon he located the minister's office at the far end of a commanding hallway on the fourth floor of the building.



The Czar's intelligence (or lack thereof) made him a virtual rubber stamp for whichever minister the prevailing political climate favored; at that particular time, His Highness was led by the nose by Interior Minister Stolypin, a heartless tyrant and rabid anti-Semite.

As Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak walked toward the office, the door opened and Stolypin himself walked out and closed the door behind him. The rebbe's son and the interior minister passed within a few feet of each other. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak made straight for the office, opened the door, and walked in.

After a quick search, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak located the documents pertaining to the decree on Stolypin's desk. On the desk sat two ink stamps, bearing the words "APPROVED" or "REJECTED" above the minister's signature and seal. Quickly, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak stamped the proposed decree "REJECTED" and inserted the papers into a pile of vetoed documents which sat in a tray on the desk. He then left the room, closed the door behind him, and walked out of the building.

Another story demonstrating the Frierdike Rebbe's open mesiras nefesh involved one of the Maskilim ("enlightened" Jews who fought the established tradition of Orthodox Judaism), who were working tirelessly to convince the Russian government to make a decree against the Jews. The man who was writing the decree was Mr. Karpos, a Maskil. The Rebbe Rashab heard about the decree and sent his son the Frierdike Rebbe to Petersburg to do all he could to prevent it from materializing.

After a few days, the Frierdike

Rebbe went back to Lubavitch because he was unable to accomplish anything. He came to his father when his father was checking the Tzitzis on his Tallis. He told his father how he was unsuccessful with Mr. Karpos and all his efforts were in vain.

The Rebbe Rashab then told him a story. Once, the Alter Rebbe sent the Mittlerer Rebbe on a mission. The Mittlerer Rebbe came back empty handed because he was not able to do it. He came back when his father was checking the tzitzis on his Tallis, getting ready for Shacharis. The Alter Rebbe said "See, this is a Tallis. This goes beyond evil forces." Then the Mittlerer Rebbe gave the Tallis a kiss and went and succeeded. The Frierdike Rebbe then gave his father's Tallis a kiss and returned to Petersburg.

When he arrived, he had an idea. He went to Mr. Karpos' hotel and asked to speak to Mr. Karpos himself. He went in, and they started talking. The man said, "Soon the Maskilim will get rid of Yiddishkeit. In a few days the decree will be ready to be given to the government."

The Frierdike Rebbe then asked to see the document. Because he was so confident that nothing could happen to it, Mr. Karpos gave him the document. The Frierdike Rebbe took it and began tearing it to shreds. The man became furious. It took so long to write that document, and now it was being shredded before

his eyes.

Out of anger he smacked the Frierdike Rebbe across the face. Undeterred, the Frierdike Rebbe continued until he was done. Then he left and went back to Lubavitch.

THE FRIERDIKE REBBE AND MOSHIACH

Before we describe in detail the activities that the Frierdike Rebbe did to draw down the Sh'china in a revealed manner in this world and prepare it for Moshiach, we will first see how his name Yosef Yitzchak is connected with Moshiach. The Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya (Shaar Yichud chapter 2) that "The Hebrew name of something – or someone – brings out and reveals its essence." We will see that the essence of the Frierdike Rebbe is Moshiach.

The name Yosef means adding or once again. This reminds us of the Pasuk (Yeshaya 11:11) "And it shall come to pass in that day (in the times of Moshiach), that the L-rd will set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people that shall remain from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." The name Yitzchak also means "you will be joyous." This reminds us of the Pasuk (T'hilim, 126:2) "Then, in the times of Moshiach, our mouth will be filled with laughter and our tongue with singing."

The following are some of the major activities that the Frierdike Rebbe was involved in that brought Moshiach closer:

1) In our previous article about the Rebbe Rashab, we described at length the

accomplishment of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in bringing Moshiach. The first principal and administrator of the Yeshiva was the Frierdike Rebbe.

2) The Frierdike Rebbe was the first to start "Achos T'mimim," an organization designed for young girls and woman to study the ways and basic teachings of Chassidus. While his father brought down the lofty concepts of Chassidus to Bachurim, the Frierdike Rebbe made these teachings accessible to woman and girls.

3) Today everyone marvels at the exodus we have seen of Jews leaving Russia to Eretz Yisroel. It reminds everyone of the in-gathering of the exiles that will transpire in the time of Moshiach. This is all in the merit of the Frierdike Rebbe. The Frierdike Rebbe fought and pushed his Chassidim to fight the communist culture and regime. He established underground educational systems and kept the flame of Judaism alive in the former USSR.

4) The Frierdike Rebbe was the only Chabad Rebbe to visit Eretz Yisroel. He davened in Eretz Yisroel and was preparing it for Yemos HaMoshiach.

5) He was the first Lubavitcher Rebbe to visit and settle in America. This was a major step in preparing the world for Moshiach. In the words of the Rebbe (9 Adar 5750 – 50th anniversary of the Frierdike Rebbe's arrival in America):

"The Previous Rebbe's imprisonment in 5687 initiated a series of events which brought about his departure from Russia in 5688 and ultimately his settling in America in 5700. Since everything is controlled by Divine Providence, it is clear that the Previous Rebbe's coming to

America was not merely to find refuge from the troubles which beset the Jews in Europe, but rather had a self-contained goal, that he should live and work in America.

"The Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid, and the Chabad Rebbeim all lived in Russia. Thus, that country, and later the village of Lubavitch in particular, became a center from which the light of Chassidus was spread throughout the entire world. Nevertheless, Hashem intended for the Previous Rebbe to leave those surroundings and come to America.

"In Chassidic thought, America is referred to with the expression, 'the lower hemisphere.' It is stated that 'the Torah was not given in the lower half of the earth.'

"Nevertheless, 'Lubavitch underwent ten exiles,' until ultimately, in the last and most difficult of these exiles, the Previous Rebbe transferred the center of Chassidus to America, 'the lower half of the world.'

"He sought to spread Torah in America despite the tremendous difficulties that this task involved. He proclaimed, 'America is no different' – even though the attitude of the overwhelming number of Jews at that time was that America is different – and sought to transform it into a Torah center.

"Coming to 'the lower half of the earth' was one further step in a series of exiles (from Lubavitch to Rostov, from Rostov to Petersburg, from Petersburg to Latvia, from Latvia to Poland and ultimately, to America). Certainly, this transition involved a descent that posed obstacles to the Previous Rebbe's work. Nevertheless, this descent fulfilled the intent of the giving of

the Torah, that a dwelling place for Hashem be established within the lower worlds.

“As we approach the Messianic redemption, the entire world must be made fit to serve as a dwelling for Hashem. Thus, we see that originally the Jews lived together in Eretz Yisroel and from there, ‘light emanated to the entire world.’ Afterwards, a Torah center was established in Bavel to serve a similar function. In the present exile, the exile of Edom (Rome), the Jews have been spread throughout the entire world. With each passing year, the dispersion has become greater. Nevertheless, until the previous generation, the dispersion had only been within ‘the upper half of the world.’ However, as Moshiach comes closer, a large amount of Jews – and the Previous Rebbe among them – came to ‘the lower half of the world’ to refine this portion of the world as well and demonstrate the all-encompassing influence of the giving of the Torah.

“The service of disseminating Torah throughout the world associated with ‘the lower half of the world’ did more than bring Torah to places it had never reached before. It had a contributory effect as well. The recipient (mekabel) became a source of influence (mashpia), contributing new dimensions that did not exist previously. After settling in America, the Previous Rebbe sparked the transformation of America into a center of Torah for the entire world. His settlement in this country stimulated new activities, disseminating Torah, disseminating Chassidus, and spreading ahavas Yisroel in a manner which surpassed the activities of the previous Rebbeim in ‘the upper half of the world.’



From the Previous Rebbe’s center in ‘the lower half of the world,’ the wellsprings of Chassidus have spread out ‘westward, eastward, northward, and southward,’ encompassing the entire world.

“These activities, which began in 5700 and continued for the ten years in which the Previous Rebbe lived in America, are being perpetuated by his students and emissaries. In particular, they have reached a new peak in the present year, the fortieth year after the Previous Rebbe’s passing, when ‘Hashem grants you a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear.’ It is possible to ‘attain the understanding of one’s teacher’ and then continue to proceed and add further light.

“The service of the present age, which directly precedes the Messianic redemption, reflects the service of the Messianic Age. Therefore, by coming to America, the Previous Rebbe began a new path of service, different from his service and that of the Rebbeim who preceded him in ‘the upper half of the world.’ There, the service involved ‘drawing down

from above to below.’ In contrast, through his service in America, the Previous Rebbe revealed how the mekabel, ‘the lower half of the world’ – in which ‘the Torah was not given’ – could become a center of Torah from which the entire world derives nurture.

“In order to make this service possible, it was necessary for the Previous Rebbe to come to America. In general, the phase of drawing down influence from above to below must precede the phase where the mekabel itself becomes a source of influence. Similarly, within the service of the mekabel itself, the first stage must be the service of ‘a priest’ (the Previous Rebbe), a person who gives instructions and generates power. The intent is, however, that this will inspire and motivate others to carry out the service of disseminating Yiddishkait and Chassidus.”

6) In Sivan 1941, the Friedike Rebbe started a global campaign “Do T’shuvah to bring Moshiach.” He sent out many letters to world Jewry to awaken and inspire them for the arrival of Moshiach.

One may ask: What happened in Sivan 1941 that motivated the Friedike Rebbe to begin this campaign? On 28 Sivan 1941, a very special person arrived in America. It was the Friedike Rebbe’s second son-in-law and future successor, the Rebbe, who will eventually lead the Jewish people out of Galus. This we will IY”H explain in our coming articles.

Rabbi Avtzon is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Lubavitch Cincinnati and a well sought after speaker and lecturer. Recordings of his in-depth shiurim on Inyanai Geula u’Moshiach can be accessed at <http://ylcrecording.com>.

THE ZEIDE-RAV

PART 3: HIS RABBINIC CAREER IN LATER YEARS



Towards the end of the life of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Dubrawski, his rabbanus had to go underground, and he was forced to engage in various menial jobs. However, even then, his Chassidic leadership was apparent in everything he did.

By Rabbi Yehoshua Dubrawski

RAV IN FOUR TOWNS

Zeide-Rav had his own unique way in life. He did not seek, nor did he have ambitions, to serve as a distinguished rav in large, important communities. Although that is something that other rabbis strove for who did not reach his ankles in Torah knowledge, oratorical prowess and other qualities.

Everything is by Divine Providence and our Sages say (Brachos 58a) that “even the person in charge of a well is appointed in heaven.” Despite that, there are instances in which man “helps a bit” in that heavenly appointment so that it is carried out here on earth. However, in our case, the principle “there is no mazal for Israel” worked overtime. Zeide-Rav served in four rabbinic positions, in Strashon, Borozna, Zhlobin, and Krolevets, not necessarily moving

from a smaller community to a bigger and better one.

In my childhood I heard his stepbrother, Uncle Moshe Chaim (whom I’ve mentioned before) say to Zeide: Oy dear Mendel, when will you stop being a batlan (good-for-nothing) and learn something of the halachos of diplomacy?

At the time, I didn’t know what he was referring to and I even wondered how he could accuse my grandfather of a paucity in his knowledge of some area of Halacha. Many years later though, I understood what my uncle meant and I eventually came to sadly agree with him.

THE WEALTHY MEN AND THE CAT

Zeide had a very sharp mind as well as a sharp tongue. That could have been a good thing, but he tended to utilize this

talent against his own interests rather than to his benefit. In short, not only couldn’t he speak flatteringly, with silken gloves, to the wealthy men and the powerful community askanim, he treated them precisely like (or maybe with even less consideration than) the simple people.

I was once sitting at the table when two important balabatim (householders) came in. As they sat at the table Zeide heard the wailing of our cat in the kitchen. He exclaimed, “Oy, where is compassion for an animal? I didn’t feed her today.” And he went to find something with which to feed the cat.

The balabatim surely felt offended that Zeide abandoned them for a cat and they told me to tell Zeide that they were in a rush. I went and told him. Zeide responded, “Giving food to an animal is in a sense a mitzva, as it is an issue of ‘the suffering of living creatures,’ whereas to sit and talk to them might be in the category of a sin.”

In general, Zeide-Rav epitomized force of character and individuality in thought and deed. Flattery was altogether foreign to him. He was not capable of uttering expressions of feigned enthusiasm, exaggeration, putting on a show of pretentious humility or grandiosity and the

like. Just as he made no attempt at all to take on the trappings of greatness, so too, he would bluntly express his opinion about himself and others if he saw a need to do so. He did not reckon with the reactions of petty minded and cynical critics.

WHEN A CHASSID EATS

Zeide was an exceptionally structured individual; I almost never encountered anyone else like him. This was particularly apparent when he prepared something to eat late at night. This was after the passing of Bubbe Aidel, when he lived in our house and he did his best not to put my mother out. He slowly prepared his meal. I emphasize the word “meal.” To Zeide there was no difference between good times when there was more or less of something to accompany the bread, and the bad times when there was hardly any bread and water. He would spread something out on the table, if not a tablecloth than at least a piece of newspaper. He always placed salt, bread and a knife on it. Then he went to wash his hands. I noticed that he was particular about all the halachos; each time he broke off a piece of bread and never took a bite out of it. As hungry as he was during the days of famine, he did not deviate from his preparations for a meal and did not devour the food as starving people do.

Zeide wasn't stringent for the rest of the family. We never drank non Chalav Yisroel milk but he allowed us to eat non Chalav Yisroel butter (in accordance with the din in Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deia 115b, that “one does not protest” about those who rely on the leniency that milk from a non-kosher animal cannot curdle; and in those days, there

were no additives, Ed). However, he himself did not use that butter.

I remember how, in the better times, when we could permit ourselves to buy some chalav Yisroel, we would collect some cream in the cup and stir it vigorously until some butter emerged which we gave to Zeide. When my father was sick and worked very hard, he refused to eat non Chalav Yisroel butter but Zeide ordered him to eat it, and my father obeyed.



“There is a custom among wood choppers that every time they strike with the ax they shout, ‘Ah.’ They say it makes the work easier. So let’s make a deal. Every time I strike with the ax, you say ‘Ah.’”

UNDERGROUND

When the cruel NKVD in the era of Yezhov (who stood at the head of the NKVD during the period of the Great Purge) arrested and sent away rabbanim, shoctim, along with the rank and file religious Jews, Zeide disappeared from Krolevets in fear of uninvited “guests” who came in the middle of the night. When the arrests diminished somewhat, and they no longer came to “visit” Zeide, he returned to the town.

In the interest of verisimilitude, it is worth mentioning a certain “positive” phenomenon in the wickedness and despotism of the Soviet government. The wave of brutal persecution of religious people was carried out in a non-systemic fashion; there were “islands,” albeit few in number, which the red destroyers skipped over. Our family and the town of Krolevets is an example: In surrounding towns the NKVD arrested for

religious activity Jews who did not have beards and did not do much to maintain Judaism. However in our case, although the “four letters” (a reference to the NKVD) in our town knew that Zeide was the unofficial rav; that my father had a long beard and side locks for religious reasons; that he did not work on Shabbos and Yom Tov; that his children did not attend public school, and that he was involved in Jewish and Chassidic matters, and furthermore, they called

my father down to the NKVD and warned and threatened him with arrest and being sent to the “polar bears” in Siberia and all the most terrible things – after all that, they did us no harm!

This inconsistency worked to the good fortune of Chassidim in other places too. The NKVD’ers chased after one talmid from the Chabad underground yeshiva for thousands of kilometers, while in Moscow, the secret leader of the yeshiva walked freely. He, with his big beard, even walked the three kilometers to the mikva daily. There are many other examples.

When Zeide became an underground rabbi, his income, already paltry, shrank even more and he looked for work by which he could earn a few rubles. Zeide, the great scholar and Chassid, had to work at various “proletariat” jobs which were far from “glatt kosher” as far as the government was concerned. Actually, everything there was “not kosher,” especially for a

former rabbi who lost his rights as an ordinary Soviet citizen and was called a “*lishenets*” (a citizen deprived of rights).

I remember from my childhood the “machine” that attached small pieces of metal to the ends of shoelaces, one of Zeide’s jobs. They would color the shoelaces black, cut them to the desired length, and with the “machine” would stamp the metal tips on both ends.

The machine was nothing but a semicircular piece of wood with two ring shaped grooves, something you couldn’t find today even in a museum. However, just as shoes were a rarity in town, there came a time when it became impossible to find material for the shoelaces, and the *mashinka* languished amidst the scrap iron in the storage room as a useless item.

FINDING WORK

Zeide learned how to “cook soap.” Cooking soap in that country, said Zeide, was not just a craft, a profession, but also a *chochma*. In order to manufacture a genuine piece of soap, you needed certain chemicals like caustic soda and other things that were either valuable commodities owned entirely by the government and illegal to sell, or simply weren’t to be found. The *chochma* entailed using substitute ingredients so

that a hard, square bar of soap emerged, which was cut with the aid of a strand of wire into regular sized square bars. Zeide also knew the secret of how to give the soap a marbled look. The soap was sold on the black market to villagers who longed for a product that they couldn’t possibly buy in the store.

All is good and well, Zeide would say, the soap was hard and pretty, but ... it was afraid of water! It would melt quickly, so go scream about it. But the villagers were so “hungry” for a piece of soap that they bought it, despite knowing it was far from being the real soap they once had.

I don’t remember exactly why Zeide suddenly stopped cooking soap. Something niggles in my brain, something about a wicked policeman who was unwilling to accept the bribe from the woman who sold the soap in the market. He locked her up at the police station where she was interrogated. They wanted to know how she became a middleman and from whom she had bought the soap. I am pretty sure I heard something to that effect. Zeide became afraid that the woman would tattle on him and have him arrested.

Zeide looked for another source of income from which he could earn a few rubles. He learned how to tan hides of animals. This, once again,

entailed treating the skins with chemicals, stretching it out on boards for a long time, and other steps in the process. With all the convoluted underground dealings involved, the whole thing had to be done secretly. I remember that my Zeide would stretch the skins along the underside of his bed in his bedroom, but the pungent odor reached the kitchen in any case. This endeavor came to a quicker end than the soap-cooking enterprise and Zeide remained with almost no income at all.

Regarding Zeide it could be said that despite being rav in four towns he fulfilled Chazal’s mandate to “love work and hate rabbanus.” Even when he was elderly he would always do the difficult chores in the house. We had to buy logs in the market to heat the stove. We would buy whole logs that were cheaper than wood that was cut into small pieces and Zeide would chop them himself.

Like any child, I would tell Zeide I wanted to help him chop the wood. He would always say, “If you really want to help me, get as far away as possible from the ax.” Sometimes he would add, “There is a custom among wood choppers that every time they strike with the ax they shout, ‘Ah.’ They say it makes the work easier. So let’s make a deal. Every time I strike with the ax, you say ‘Ah.’”



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TURNING BITTER TO SWEET ON SHLICHUS

In a sicha on the topic of Galus and Geula, the Rebbe quotes the Mishna in Maasros that draws a distinction between bitter almonds and sweet almonds. The Rebbe points out that even the sweet almonds start out bitter and only later become sweet, and even the bitter almonds can be made sweet by roasting them over fire. The lesson is that although Galus is bitter, the goal is to quickly reach the sweetness of Geula.

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz
Shliach, Beit Shaan

BITTERSWEET ILLNESS

I will start with a personal story. As I told you in the previously, half a year ago I was diagnosed with that illness that people don't like to refer to by name. I won't go into detail about all the unpleasantness. On this occasion, I will point out some of the sweeter things I experienced as a result of having to face such a painful challenge.

As soon as I was diagnosed and began visiting the hospital frequently, I focused on what the Rebbe said about how the Creator sends a Jew to a specific place in order to carry out a mission there. The sooner he carries out the mission, the sooner he can get out of there. In this spirit, I tried befriending the doctors who treated me and directing the conversations to Jewish topics.

A few minutes before the surgery on 15 Shvat, the surgeon told me he would be opening up my chest cavity as they do for heart surgery, in order to remove the tumor. I told the doctor that if he was working near my heart already, he might as well remove my Yetzer Hara. He said he would try. A few days after the operation I asked him, "Nu, did you remove the Yetzer Hara?"

He said, "Your Yetzer Hara is so small, it was hardly visible. We could not remove it." Now, isn't that sweet?

Later on, when I started chemotherapy, I needed something that would strengthen my body and my immune system. Among other things, I went for acupuncture to a man by the name of Dr. David. I found these visits to be very helpful. Dr. David ended up hearing some

sweet lectures on Chassidus. It is not likely that he would have heard them if not for my illness.

One day, he left me lying there with acupuncture needles stuck in me. Before leaving the room, he told me to use my imagination and visualize how the air I was breathing was going through my entire body and releasing blockages.

I apologized and said I had no blockages that I was aware of, but since he insisted, I focused deeply until I finally remembered that since the operation, it had been hard for me to get up early in the morning and go to the mikva before davening. It was winter and the air was cold, my body was weak, and my mind was foggy. Okay, I would try. The doctor left the room and I began breathing and visualizing. I decided I had the strength, and the next day I would get up early. No excuses!

The doctor returned twenty minutes later. I asked him whether I could tell him how I felt. He said that would be an excellent thing to do. I told him my thoughts about going to the mikva. The doctor was so excited he nearly forgot he was the doctor! He asked me what a mikva is, what t'villa is, why it's done in the morning, and how it affects one's prayers. I was happy to explain it all to him, and he was happy to show me how in Chinese medicine, l'havdil, there

exists a parallel to immersion in water in order to derive energy from nature. We delved into a number of Chassidic ideas together.

At my next acupuncture treatment, excuse me, I mean, at the next shiur, he explained something to me about energy flowing through the pathways of the body. He compared it to streams of water flowing all over the world. This reminded me of the Chassidic concept of meitzar ha'garon (the narrow channel of the throat), which prevents energy from flowing from the mochin (intellect) to the middos (emotions). I told him how difficult it is to get past this obstacle and how, with the help of a Chassidic niggun before davening, one can draw insight from a maamer Chassidus and generate a feeling of love and fear of G-d.

When I briefly mentioned the three ministers of Pharaoh who control the constriction of the throat – the trachea, esophagus, and veins – he nearly fainted. “Where is that written?” he asked. I said it is in a maamer of the Rebbe that I have in my car. I offered him that after the treatment, I could go and get it for him.

At the third shiur, he told me he had read that entire section of the maamer and it was very interesting. At the fourth shiur, he asked whether I would mind if a trainee was present in the room when he treated me, because the fellow wanted to learn Chinese medicine. I said I did not mind and even said to the trainee, “You are lucky to be a student of Dr. David. I am also his student.”

The doctor exclaimed, “No! I am your student!”

Sweet, no?

SWEET KINDNESS

Another sweet thing I discovered was the degree of kindness displayed by hundreds of wonderful Jews, who exerted and extended themselves on behalf of my family and me in all sorts of ways. Some mekuravim to the Chabad house banded together and told me that whenever I needed a ride to the hospital, they would drive me. They drew up a list of dates, volunteers and assignments for each volunteer, along with the necessary information – the time I had to leave, the destination, the route to take, how long to wait, and when to bring me back.

Aside from the tremendous help this provided me, physically and financially, it was a sweet and rare opportunity to have a one on one talk, for about five hours, with a mekurav. Some of the volunteers are teachers and rabbanim, so the conversations were on Torah topics. Some of them are blue-collar workers and our conversations were about Chassidic tales that teach a lesson. One of my drivers has shalom bayis problems and our trip together was devoted to helping him. He actually called up the organizers a week later and asked whether he might be needed again.

A SWEET MINCHA

Rabbi Shimon Eisenbach, shliach in Eilat, told me that in his youth he lived in Mea Sh'arim. Unfortunately, at that time, there was someone living there whose pastime it was to besmirch Chabad and the Rebbe at every opportunity.

Then one day, he completely stopped his derogatory comments. Friends tried to goad him, but he refused to utter even

one bad word about the Rebbe or Chassidus. When his friends asked him what had happened to change his habit, he said that he had been to the United States and had gone to 770 for Mincha to see the Rebbe.

“If you had seen the Rebbe, you would understand for yourself. After I saw the Rebbe, I can't explain it, but I can no longer say a negative word about him. I just can't.”

BITTER BUT SWEET

Rabbi Shlomo Berkowitz, shliach in Rosh Pina, shared with me some bitter experiences that turned sweet.

“One such incident was so bad at first that it nearly ruined all our plans, but in the end it turned sweet. This is what happened:

“When we began shlichus in Rosh Pina, we rented a building on the main street of the moshav and hung out a Chabad House sign. Neighbors who opposed religious activity held a demonstration outside the building. Among the demonstrators was a group from HaTzofim (a youth movement similar to the Boy Scouts), led by members of the virulently anti-religious HaShomer HaTzair kibbutzim. They stood there and chanted, ‘We won't rest until the building is closed down.’

“With Hashem's help, not only did we keep the building open, but the head of the youth group began taking an interest in some of the Chabad house programming. His interest grew even while he served in the army and on the tour of India that followed. When he returned from his trip to India, whose itinerary included visiting every Chabad house he encountered, he came straight to us. Not as a

demonstrator, but as someone eager to learn.

“Today, he is a Chassid in the Chabad community of Rosh Pina. All the energy he previously invested in demonstrations he now utilizes to organize mitvtzaim activities and whatever the Chabad house needs.”

THANKS TO THE ELECTIONS

The city council leader of Rosh Pina, Avihud Raski, used to be “not the sweetest almond.” Avihud grew up on an irreligious kibbutz and was greatly influenced by the secular, anti-religious education he received. Before he became council leader, the Rebbe’s shluchim arrived in Rosh Pina and were looking for a building. They asked Avihud if he would rent them a building he owned. When he heard that the building would be used as a Chabad house, he informed them that on principle, he would never rent it to Chabad.

Over the years, Avihud got involved in politics. At a certain point, he ran in the elections for head of the council of Rosh Pina. In his efforts to be elected, he met with the Chabad community and this worked out beautifully for all concerned. He convinced them to support him, won the election, and has been serving in this position for several years. He also discovered, to his surprise, a wonderful Chassidishe community. He learned some Chassidic ideas as well as some mitzvos, which previously, had seemed meaningless to him. So along with his advancement in politics, he advanced in his mitzva observance, Torah knowledge, and familiarity with Chassidus.

Today, Avihud generously helps the Chabad house and Chabad community. In his daily

WHEN THE REBBE RAYATZ VISITED ROSH PINA

When R’ Berkowitz went to kasher the kitchen in Netta’s new home, the seller of the home was there too. He told R’ Berkowitz that when he was a little boy, he went out to greet the Rebbe in the doorway of this very house, 81 years ago. R’ Berkowitz verified the story with some other old time residents of the moshav, and this is what they recounted:

When the Rebbe Rayatz visited Eretz Yisroel in Tamuz-Av 1929, he passed through Rosh Pina on his way to Tzfas. Rosh Pina is not mentioned in his notes about his trip, because the stop and visit there were unplanned, due to car trouble they experienced there.

The tires back then were not filled with air. They were metal rims with a solid rubber tire. What occurred was not a punctured tire, but rather the rubber wheel fell off of the metal rim. In order to restore the tire to working order, they had to call a blacksmith to reinstall the tire on the rim.

In the meantime, the car had stopped near the house. The people living in the house came out and saw a distinguished man sitting in the car. They invited him to come inside and rest until the tire was fixed. The Rebbe got out of the car and asked whether the house was kosher. When he was told that it was, he went inside and had a glass of tea.



life, he does many mitzvos. Up until a few years ago, he himself would not have believed how sweet it is to do mitzvos.

SHE KOSHERED THE HOME VISITED BY THE REBBE RAYATZ

Everybody in Rosh Pina knows Giveret Netta. She is one of the old-time residents of the moshav who, for many years, ran a clothing store on the main street of the tourist quarter. She sold shanti clothing to tourists, those gauzy Indian clothes that tourists to India and the Far

East love, and her store did well. Unfortunately though, the store was open on Shabbos. It’s hard to fault Netta. She grew up on Kibbutz Mizra in the Jezreel Valley, which has a pork factory. They say you can count the baalei t’shuva from Mizra on the fingers of one hand.

Netta is one of them.

The shluchim to Rosh Pina started a minyan in the old shul, also located in the tourist quarter. Netta would sit in the doorway of her store and watch R’ Shlomo Berkowitz with his cute children, all wearing white shirts,

walking leisurely to shul. As they passed her shop, they would say “Shabbat Shalom” to her. When they left shul for home, they said “Shabbat Shalom” to her once again.

After a few weeks of this, she began to feel embarrassed. She thought, “It’s not nice that I’m sitting here and desecrating the Shabbos while they give me such respect.” When she would see the rabbi and his children coming, she would go inside so they wouldn’t see her. After a few weeks of hiding from them, she decided it would be better if she simply closed the store on Shabbos.

Netta changed her entire way of life. Every Shabbos morning, instead of opening her store, she went to shul. She told R’ Berkowitz about the changes she had made. She became a friend and student of the Chabad house and learned to do more and more mitzvos.

She recently bought an old house on the moshav and told R’ Berkowitz about it. After making some inquiries, they learned that it was in this ancient house that the Rebbe Rayatz stayed 81 years earlier. Before entering the home, he had asked whether the kitchen was kosher (see box). When Netta heard that she would be moving into a house where the Rebbe had stayed, she was very excited. She asked R’ Berkowitz to help her kasher the kitchen before she moved in.

SWEET ALMONDS AT THE ATLIT PRISON

R’ Moshe Axelrod, shliach in Atlit, has a number of stories about bitter almonds that turned sweet both in Atlit and in the prison nearby. R’ Axelrod regularly visits the prison in order to teach Torah to the inmates,

to put t’fillin on them, and to do other mitzvaim.

Albert has known R’ Axelrod for years. Albert, from Zichron Yaakov, was in jail ten years ago where he regularly learned with R’ Axelrod. Albert was eventually released from jail, got married, then divorced and managed to find his way back into jail. R’ Axelrod never asks anyone why he is in prison or for how long. He simply goes to each cell, meets every Jew, gives him a hug and asks if he wants to put on t’fillin.

When R’ Axelrod reached Albert’s cell, he knew that he would get a warm welcome. Albert even convinced all his cellmates to stand up and put on t’fillin.

On a recent visit, when R’ Axelrod showed up, Albert announced, “When R’ Moshe goes to Gan Eden and they will put all his mitzvos on the scale, the scale will break!”

I PUT THE GLUE IN THE LOCK

When R’ Axelrod arrived in Atlit to open the first Chabad house there, the city council gave him the use of a bomb shelter. Some of the neighbors were opposed to his presence, afraid that there would be a yeshiva, noise at night, and general disturbance. Every morning, when the Lubavitchers went to open the door, they found a thick layer of glue inside the lock.

Chaim Golan, a council employee, was one of the neighbors opposed to the Chabad house and who led the fight with cries of “Get Chabad out of the neighborhood!” The Chabadniks suspected him of putting glue in the lock, but had no proof. In the meantime, R’ Avrohom Sebbag joined the Chabad house staff. He moved to Atlit after learning and

doing outreach in Ramat Aviv. R’ Sebbag began making house calls to the homes near the Chabad house, reassuring the people that there was nothing to be afraid of. He encouraged them to come and visit, assuring them that they would enjoy the davening, shiurim and farbrengens.

Surprisingly, the quickest one to join was Chaim Golan. He convinced all the neighbors to stop fighting the Chabad house, and he began using his connections at the council to help Chabad house activities.

In a candid moment, he told R’ Sebbag, “I was the one who put glue in the lock. I apologize. If I knew what great people you are, I wouldn’t have done that.” When Chaim’s son was sick, R’ Sebbag suggested that both he and Chaim commit to putting on t’fillin daily, and the son recovered.

Today, Chaim Golan is one of the main supporters of the Chabad house, and he teaches others what he learns. Every Friday, all the VIPs of Atlit congregate in Turgeman’s grocery store, as is the custom in certain cities. Chaim tells them the divrei Torah that he heard that week from R’ Sebbag. When R’ Sebbag calls Chaim on a Friday, Chaim surprises him by telling him he is on speakerphone. He announces, “Now a d’var Torah from the rabbi on the parsha of the week!”

R’ Sebbag continues to visit the Golan home, as well as other homes in Atlit, and is mekarev many people to Torah and Chassidus. R’ Sebbag’s message is that every shliach who arrives in a city needs to make house calls every day and put t’fillin on with many Jews. Ultimately, this is what binds them to Judaism and the Chabad house.

NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON

By M.E. Gordon

When Dovber woke up that morning he felt that something was different. After Modeh Ani and negel vasser, he hopped out of bed, and looked out his bedroom window. The sight that he saw was so unbelievable that he pinched himself to make sure he was awake. Everything outside, as far as his eyes could see was covered with a thick blanket of snow. This would not have been so remarkable if it would have been a month or two later, but it was still October, and the trees had not yet shed their leaves. Many of the trees and bushes were bent over from the weight of the snow and ice on their foliage, some had completely snapped, while others leaned over precariously.

Dovber turned from the window to look at his alarm clock. The time, however, was not displayed. Dovber tried turning on a light, and that is when he discovered that there was no electricity. He quickly dressed, putting on his warmest clothes, as it seemed that the heating system wasn't working either. He went downstairs and found his father in the kitchen making calls on his cell phone.

"Hello, Yossel? Have you gone in to see what the situation is at the school?"

Dovber knew that his father must be speaking to Uncle Yossel, with whom he worked. The two brothers worked together as shlichim, running the local Jewish Day School.

"Boruch Hashem, glad to hear that. No reason to take a day off if the building has power. What do you think of publicizing an open day? If all of the other schools are closed, it

might be a good opportunity to attract potential students. Even if it doesn't bring in new enrollments, it would still be a Mitzvah to give kids a warm and kosher place to be."

Dovber's father finished his call, and turned to his son. "Glad to see you up and ready. Looks like it's going to be an interesting day. The school building has power, so the minyan is davening there. Come with me, and after breakfast, I have a very important job for you."

Dovber's mother walked in to the kitchen. "Good morning, Dovber. Moshe, I've spoken to Tanta Brocho, and she is willing to work with me on cooking a communal dinner at the school kitchen. Please let people know that whoever's kitchen is affected by the blackout, is welcome to join us for dinner tonight, in the school lunchroom."

On the way to davening, Dovber asked his father what the important job was.

"Everything that Hashem Yisborach sends our way is an opportunity to take advantage of. Most of the city has no power, and almost all of the schools are closed. We have a great opportunity here to do Chesed in two ways. Since our school building has power, we can help people in a material sense; kids can come to keep warm and busy, and families can come to eat with us tonight. We can also use this opportunity for a spiritual Chesed. Jewish kids can find out what it's like to go to a Jewish school. Who knows how much we can accomplish?"

"But what do you need me for?"

"I'd like you to come with me to



visit a few Jewish families that have children your age. I think it will be easier to invite them to our school if you come with."

A short time later, Dovber found himself walking with his father through the snowy streets, detouring around the fallen trees and shrubs, passing work crews trying to restore power and repair the damage. They knocked on doors of Jewish families and told them about the open day at school and the communal dinner. A number of families were interested. One woman asked if she could come right away with her five year old son and her toddler. "It's so cold in our house that I was ready to

take them to the church across the road. They invited everyone on the block to warm up by their open fire and chat while toasting marshmallows. They have invited us in many times in the past to come join their classes and playgroup, but I've always refused. With this crazy weather and power outage, I was considering going there just this once. I'm happy that I can come to your school instead."

The woman came with her family and remained the whole day. She helped set up the lunchroom and stayed for dinner. She was so moved by the warm atmosphere and community spirit that she declared her intention

of enrolling her children in the school.

"You see, Dovber," said his father, "Hashem miraculously shortened the way for Eliezer, the servant of Avrohom, so Rivka would not have to be in a spiritually dangerous environment a moment longer than necessary. With Hashem's help we've reached this family just in time. If chas v'shalom we would not have come at that moment, they would have gone to toast marshmallows..."

Based on a true story. The theme is based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 1 p. 33-35.

Continued from page 25

in the narrative of Eliezer the servant of Abraham, it prepares us for the miracles of the future.

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searching for new ideas and continually discovering its intricacies and new shades of meaning, we will be prepared for the time when we will see the ultimate novel dimensions of

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