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# BEIS MOSHIACH

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In honor of Yud Shvat, Beis Moshiach presents a selection of the maamer the Rebbe MH"M delivered on Yud Shvat 5712, in accordance with the custom established by the Rebbe to review each year a section of the Rebbe Rayatz's maamer "Basi L'Gani" of 5710. • This year we focus on the second section of the profound and foundational chassidic discourse. • Part 1



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Translated by Boruch Merkur

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### KORBANOS: A SPIRITUAL SERVICE

1. [...] One of the main services performed in the Mikdash, the Holy Temple, was the offering of *korbanos*, the sacrifice of animals. Underlying the very physical process of offering animals upon the altar, however, is a spiritual service. The proof for this assertion is the participation of both the Kohanim, who prepared and offered the sacrifices, and the Leviim, who would sing and play music as the sacrifices were being offered. The Zohar elaborates on the spiritual role the Kohanim and Leviim played in the Temple service: The Kohen, in silence and with devotion of heart, draws down [spirituality into the world by means of the sacrifices], whereas the Leviim serve G-d with singing and with music, which is the concept of rising from below upward [using the physical medium of music to ascend towards spirituality and G-dliness].

### GIVE OF YOURSELF TO G-D

Now, every Mitzva alludes to a personal, spiritual approach in the service of G-d, independent of the physical fulfillment of the Mitzva. Having established then that the Mitzva of offering sacrifices in the Mikdash constitutes a spiritual service, certainly the same can be said of the personal counterpart of this Temple service, which is applicable [even today, when the Holy Temple is not standing] to every single Jew [even those who are not Kohanim or Leviim].

Thus it is written, in the beginning of the section that deals with sacrificial offerings, "*Adam ki yakriv mi'kem korban l'Havaya* – A man who offers, among you, a sacrificial offering to Havaya [to G-d]." It is well known how the Alter Rebbe elucidates this verse, for the verse should have read, "*Adam mi'kem ki yakriv korban l'Havaya* – A man **among you** who offers." Why then does it say, "*Adam ki yakriv mi'kem* – A man who offers, **among you**"? The explanation is: "*Adam ki yakriv* – A man who **offers** [i.e., who **draws close**]" – when a person "draws close," in an attempt to approach G-dliness... Indeed, a *korban*, a sacrifice, embodies a person's approach towards G-dliness, as it says in Seifer HaBahir: "Why is a called '*korban*'? For [by means of offering a *korban*] one is '*mekarev* – he draws close' [to G-dliness]." More specifically, *korbanos* are the embodiment of the *kiruv*, the offering and devotion, of one's faculties and sensibilities. Thus, the verse states, "*mi'kem korban l'Havaya*" – one must offer **of himself**, devoting himself to G-d.

The latter explanation is brought to light upon considering the physical procedure of offering a sacrifice. The sacrificial process entails taking a living animal, one that is whole and without blemish, and slaughtering it, extracting from it its life-force. Next, the parts of the animal are offered; the fat is burned in the fire upon the altar. Regarding the *korban ola*, for example – the burnt offering, the first offering in the daily Temple service – it is entirely burnt upon the altar.


## OFFERING OURSELVES AS KORBANOS

The spiritual significance of this process is as follows. When offering an animal on the altar, one must ensure that it is whole, without blemish. In spiritual terms this means that one must examine himself and ascertain whether the animal within him, as it were, is whole and complete, without blemish, referring here to both his body and animal soul.

Of course, the examination must be genuine, not by rote. For, merely going through the motions results in an incomplete and insufficient examination. However, when one appreciates the fact that this process is pertinent to his very life, literally, then he examines himself in every corner of his soul, mind, and character, and especially the three garments of the soul: thought, speech, and action. Then he will successfully determine all matters that require correction and he will fulfill the prescribed corrective measures, so he will be utterly free of blemish.


After this examination is completed, the person is deemed to be a “desirable offering,” fit to proceed to the next stage, when the sacrifice is slaughtered. The flesh of the carcass, etc., remains intact and whole after it is slaughtered but its life is drawn out of it. In the spiritual sense this amounts to removing vitality from physical things [i.e., tempering one’s attraction towards materialism and physical pleasure]. The body of the physical things remain, however, these things are utilized strictly in order that they provide additional energy to his service of G-d, as the Talmudic sage proclaims, “Wine and aromatic spices made me wise”; “as I had not yet partaken of any beef,” “I was not able to precisely determine the reason underlying the matter.”

The foregoing relates to non-obligatory activities, but it is especially true of Mitzvos, such as eating on Shabbos and Yom Tov, or *tzitzis* made out of physical wool, or *t’fillin* made of physical parchment. That is, physical things which are themselves used for a Mitzva – not just in fulfillment of the commandment “in all your ways you should know Him.” Thus, the service of sacrificial offerings involves “removing vitality” from physical things, using them instead strictly for serving G-d. Then, one has achieved “*mi’kem korban*,” offering of himself to G-d, and then he is a “*korban l’Havaya*,” for he has approached and united with G-d.




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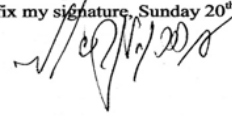
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Upon this statement I affix my signature, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Tamuz 5766

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# TANYA FOR THE MASSES

Rabbi Nadav Cohen from Tzfas, an experienced teacher of Tanya classes for the general public, decided to take action. He summarized the entire Tanya and prepared it in a clear and flowing manner, enabling each person to take the seifer and learn from it without the need for constant tutelage. In honor of the Alter Rebbe's 200<sup>th</sup> yahrtzeit on Chaf-Dalet Teves, we bring an interview with Rabbi Cohen about his work in arranging this seifer and what it provides to today's reader.

By Sholom Ber Crombie

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry



**R**abbi Nadav Cohen's first encounter with the teachings of Tanya was during his personal search for the meaning of life, far from the world of Judaism. He had decided to go to India and receive the knowledge of the Far East firsthand. By Divine Providence, he met his cousin, who was starting the process of getting closer to his Jewish roots, and he received a Tanya from him. As he read the Tanya, he felt himself drawn to

its teachings. "During that time, I thought to myself that even if I never do t'shuva, and regardless of how I conduct my life, I will remain faithful to this seifer for my entire life," he says.

## I WAS DRAWN INTO THE WORLD OF THE TANYA

Nadav Cohen grew up on the southern moshav of Nir Yisroel, living a most routine existence. After his military service, he took

a tour of the Far East, as did all his friends. But this particular trip was not for spiritual purposes, and he returned to Eretz Yisroel to continue his everyday life. Shortly thereafter, he began taking an interest in matters of spirituality and self-awareness, and decided to go back to India – this time for a little soul searching.

"In a case of open Divine Providence, just before leaving for my trip, I went to say

goodbye to my cousin, who had just begun the process of kiruv. He gave me a Tanya with commentary by Rabbi Adin Even-Yisroel (Steinsaltz) and told me that everything is found in this seifer. Because I had been looking during this time for answers to many questions about the meaning of life, I was open to new ideas and I started reading the seifer. The deeper I got into it, the more it appealed to me. I felt that I had found the truth.”

Over a period of several months, Nadav traveled throughout India, as he kept learning Tanya. “I felt that I had to be connected to this seifer. While I was still continuing to check out other forms of mysticism, I was constantly getting more and more attached to the Tanya. Studying this seifer had a great influence on me and helped me develop a strong connection to my Judaism. At a certain point, I decided that I wanted to visit the Chabad House, and I resolved that if they would suggest that I put on t’fillin there, I would agree to do so – something that I hadn’t done since my bar-mitzvah. The Tanya study had instilled within me a strong appreciation for Torah and mitzvos.

“When I finally reached the Chabad House in Pushkar, it was Chol HaMoed Sukkos. I went in and immediately told Rabbi Shimshon Goldstein that I wanted to put on t’fillin, but he explained to me that it would have to wait until after Simchas Torah. Since I was so determined in my desire to put on t’fillin, I decided to stay at the Chabad House until after Yom Tov and learn with Rabbi Goldstein in the meantime. During that time, I felt that I was building my spiritual world, although I still didn’t know which path I would choose.



Even though I had decided to give Yiddishkait a chance, I continued on my search.

“As I read the Tanya, I felt that despite the inner resistance within me, I was drawn into the world of this seifer, which possessed that point of truth that I could not find anywhere else. For example, I remember how Rosh Hashanah of that year marked the first time I had been bothered by the fact that I hadn’t gone to synagogue. Later, on Yom Kippur, I decided to fast for the first time in my life. During the entire Yom Kippur service, I sat in shul without a siddur, just listening to the prayers. I was

unfamiliar with the siddur, and everything seemed foreign to me. Yet, it was most important to me to be in shul.”

### **FROM A WEEKLY INTERNET CLASS TO A WEEKLY E-MAIL SUMMARY**

Nadav felt a need to share the feeling he was experiencing in those days with all his friends. He was troubled by the thought that there were people who knew nothing about the marvelous seifer that he had discovered. “During the first few months of my trip, I learned only the first three chapters, but I felt that I

was entering an amazing new world. I would read the seifer, engulfed by the growing feeling that I had found a guide for how to live my life.”

Nadav pressed forward with this thought in mind, even in the years after he had done t’shuva and became a full-fledged Chabad Chassid. He continued to think of ways to spread Tanya to all Jews, and he tried in every way possible to advance the cause of Tanya study among the general public through his work as “Director of Seminars” at the Ascent Institute of Tzfas.

Rabbi Cohen got his breakthrough when he began giving over a weekly Tanya class

unique writing ability, and he worked tirelessly in preparing the written shiurim.

At first, only the more regular Ascent members would receive the written classes, but within a short period of time, hundreds more had requested the weekly Tanya shiur via e-mail. The project soon became an extensive campaign, as the number of subscribers reached into the thousands. “The initial plan was to make summaries for the first twelve chapters,” Rabbi Cohen recalled. “But after we completed those first chapters, hundreds of responses came in from people who wanted us to keep sending the weekly classes. As a result, we

which accepted the job of editing and arranging the lessons in proper text form. This was an historic precedent for the Chabad bookshelf. Until now, there have been many commentaries on the Tanya, but there hasn’t been a seifer that made Tanya study accessible to the simple man in the street who had never encountered the profound ideas of chassidic teachings. This new seifer, named ‘Muda’ut Yehudit’ (Jewish Awareness), gives everyone the opportunity to become closely acquainted with the Tanya.

A seifer has finally been published that enables each person to learn Tanya without the need for a class or constant tutelage. This new seifer explains all the concepts of chassidus, such as “garments,” “speech,” and many abstract models, thus enabling each person to handle the relevant text on his own without the need for prior knowledge.

**“I resolved that if they would suggest that I put on t’fillin there, I would agree to do so – something that I hadn’t done since my bar-mitzvah. The Tanya study had instilled within me a strong appreciation for Torah and mitzvos.”**

to hundreds of Ascent friends throughout Eretz Yisroel via the Internet. “Since the class was transmitted over an Internet line, I decided to send a summary of the learning material after the conclusion of the shiur, making it easier for those watching at home.

“The enthusiastic reactions to the summaries intensified my desire to invest more effort in them, and we eventually decided to forego the shiur altogether and concentrate more on the chapter summaries for the written class sent each week to a circulation list of hundreds of people.” The summaries were composed in clear and easy language in the form of a concise synopsis of the relevant chapter of Tanya. Rabbi Cohen has been blessed with a

continued with the subsequent chapters, until we finally finished summarizing the entire Tanya.”

The shiurim themselves were adapted to meet the needs of the general public. Each lesson combined chassidic stories with all relevant interpretations and explanations on the Tanya to provide better understanding of the subject matter. Throughout the work in preparing these lessons, Rabbi Cohen sought advice from mashpiim.

It’s no wonder that after the summary project had been completed, and thousands of people read the weekly shiurim with great enthusiasm, the call went out to compile all the lessons in book form. The proposal came to the attention of the Chish Publishing Company,

## ANSWERS TO THE MOST ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS OF LIFE

When asked what is written in the Tanya that particularly grabs people, Rabbi Cohen explained that it is not a specific chapter or idea, rather the entirely new perspective on Judaism and living that Tanya provides that inspires them.

“People have many questions about life. Who am I? What is my role in this world? Do I have a specific mission? How does one deal with life’s difficulties in matters of faith and trust in G-d or the troubles in making a living? What does it mean to connect with G-d?

“The Tanya has the answers to all these questions. The Tanya is a guide – from Alef to Tav –

on how to conduct one's life in this world, how to look upon the world around us, and how to act in situations of personal trial and tribulation. Therefore, we have also tried to include summaries of the central point within each chapter. There are many people who are simply unwilling to sit for a whole year and learn the entire Tanya at great depth. However, they do want ready access to the seifer's essential content in terms they can easily understand."

This exemplary text also provides an answer for those who regularly give classes in Tanya. Rabbi Cohen states that he has received responses from rabbanim and lecturers thanking him for preparing such an orderly outline for giving over Tanya classes.

**Viewing this as a shlichus, how is this related to the only remaining shlichus, greeting Moshiach Tzidkeinu?**

"To put it in simple terms, properly understanding the subject of Moshiach and the Redemption requires that we learn chassidus. It's impossible to explain the whole concept of Moshiach to relative newcomers to Chabad teachings without learning with them the relevant chapters of Tanya dealing with the subject. The Tanya is the most fundamental work of Chabad chassidus and it includes all relevant subject matters. Therefore, in order to learn things connected to Moshiach with beginners, you first have to learn the more basic concepts included within the Tanya.

"There are also many people for whom when you say 'Moshiach' to them without explaining what it means, it tends to leave a 'negative' impression. The issue of Moshiach sounds rather abstract, but when you

learn the subject in depth with someone and he thereby understands that the days of Moshiach represent the ultimate purpose, he naturally connects with the idea. For him to develop an inner bond with the concept, he must learn the more comprehensive chapters in Tanya on Moshiach and the Redemption.

"I can also say from my own experience that people often came to Ascent who didn't want to hear anything about Moshiach. However, when I start learning Tanya with them, from Chapter 36, it brings down the barriers of opposition on the subject. We want to explain to someone about the whole purpose of the Creation and our Divine service – and how everything leads to Moshiach. This is the basis of the Tanya.

"There's a maamer from the Rebbe, in which he explains that we need to speak with the animal soul in its own language, in order that it can properly internalize the influence of the G-dly soul. To convey the subject of Moshiach and the Redemption in terms that each person can understand, one simply cannot evade a thorough and deep spiritual avoda, requiring that he/she learns about the purpose for the world's Creation in great depth from the teachings of chassidus."

## UNDERSTANDING THE SEVEN TYPES OF LOVE IN TANYA

The process of arranging the seifer in a proper and orderly fashion required a great deal of time and effort in order that the reader can understand the subject matter in proper sequence. As part of this process, the seifer is divided into 'gates,' which include all the chapters of the book:

1. "The Long Way," covering Chapters 1-17, explains in great detail the Chabad approach regarding Torah and mitzvos, meditation, prayer, what a beinoni is, and how to follow this path.

2. "The Short Way," covering Chapters 18-25, deals with the question of what a person does when he is unable to meditate, how he reveals self-sacrifice, and how he fulfills Torah and mitzvos in his daily life.

3. "To Be B'simcha," covering Chapters 26-34, explains how to be joyous, how to deal with material problems, spiritual concerns, dullness of the mind and heart, and the importance of the mitzvah of Ahavas Yisroel.

4. "Action Is the Main Thing," covering Chapters 35-37, deals with the subject of Moshiach, and the demands and the ultimate purpose of our avoda in this dark world.

The section covering Chapters 38-40 discusses the relationship between kavana and action, followed afterwards by sections dealing with each of the required intentions in Avodas Hashem and drawing down the Sh'china into this world.

Here too, there was an investment of much time and effort. For the reader's convenience, there is a series of detailed tables presenting all the types of love and the different kavanos according to Tanya. They explain the differences between the various kinds of spiritual contemplation, the differences between the types of love and fear, joy and sadness, discussed in the Tanya.

In addition, the seifer includes a table dealing with the type of meditation necessary for getting a person out of his sorrow. What is the mistaken



viewpoint that causes a person to become depressed, as opposed to the proper attitude that gives him motivation for his Avodas Hashem? These tables make it possible for the reader to understand the Tanya's practical advice regarding the correct path in positive thinking and his outlook towards his spiritual avoda. People taking their first steps in Avodas Hashem often encounter such phenomena, and they still don't understand the proper way for measuring their success or failure. Many of them fall into a state of deep melancholy simply due to this mistaken way of thinking, and it's here where the Tanya creates some semblance of order regarding how a person should conduct his own self-examination.

Rabbi Cohen shared with

us some details about the work he did in preparing the seifer. He reveals that he often received reactions from Chabad Chassidim with whom he spoke about Tanya study, and they candidly admitted that they had never invested much effort in studying Tanya.

"People meet me and say that this is the first time that they clearly understood the concepts in Tanya, thanks to the way that all the explanations from other s'farim have been integrated into this seifer. I received reactions from Lubavitchers who said that they finally understand the seven types of love brought in Tanya and how one passes from one level to another. Even in Shaar HaYichud V'HaEmuna, we invested a great deal of work in order to explain the innovation within each chapter over the

previous one. When you learn Shaar HaYichud V'HaEmuna in a superficial manner, it appears that the Alter Rebbe is repeating himself. However, we actually see that there are numerous levels discussed in the seifer in relation to the limited vitality within the world, and the power of G-d within the world, as He limits Himself in order to give it its vitality."

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The attractive edition of this new seifer came out shortly before Yud-Tes Kislev and is now being distributed throughout the world. Rabbi Cohen hopes that the seifer will bring the concepts of the Tanya to the general public and make its study accessible to tens of thousands of Jews seeking to quench their thirst for the teachings of chassidus.

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# FACT, FANTASY, AND FREEDOM



By Rabbi Akiva Wagner

A peasant once sinned against the king. The king was angered, and ordered the man, along with his entire family, to be thrown into the dungeon. The dungeon was actually a very deep pit, where the hapless family was surrounded by the bare stone walls. Someone from the palace was assigned to lower a basket to them once a day, containing enough food to sustain them for that day. Time passed in this manner, with the family having ample opportunity to regret their actions, as they recalled wistfully the happy life they led before their incarceration, and bemoaned the tragedy of their current suffering.

Years went by, and the parents died in captivity, while the children and their families aged, and new generations were born in the dungeon. Gradually, the older generations passed on one by one, and the dungeon came to be inhabited by descendants who had never known any other existence. To them the world consisted of four imposing stone walls. They knew that somehow food supplies came to them every day from above in a basket; they didn't necessarily understand how this worked, but they all knew that this was a fact; they saw it for themselves. This was their reality.

Of course, they were all able to recall the "*bubbeh maases*," the tales that used to be told by the ancient great-grandfather and great-grandmother before

they died, that described a great big world, with trees and oceans, and fields and animals and heavenly bodies and vast open spaces. They had described it all very vividly and claimed to have witnessed it all themselves before they had arrived. Much of this was corroborated by their grandparents, and great-uncles and aunts. But by then, they did not have such clear memories of their own any more, and relied on the patriarch.

But, as interesting and fascinating as these tales were, the new generation knew to take it all with a grain of salt. They considered themselves to be rational and intellectual, and they reached logical conclusions based on what they could see with their own eyes. It was obvious that their ancestors were rather fanciful, and not very well grounded. Even those who gave some credibility to these stories believed that they were surely greatly exaggerated, even if they did have some basis, but many others dismissed them out of hand as absolute fabrications and figments of their imaginations.

In the meantime, in the royal palace, the identity and transgression of the original peasant was long forgotten; there, too, the younger folks took the place of their elders, but the old traditions continued, with someone always being assigned the important task of lowering daily rations into the dungeon.

Many years passed, and one day a new king was crowned. As he was reviewing some old documents, he chanced upon the story of this unfortunate family. The king immediately decided that they had suffered long enough, and he signed an executive pardon, allowing them to be liberated. However, the various courtiers, along with the royal psychiatrists, expressed some concern. The current prisoners had spent their entire lives in the prison; to them this was their entire universe. To abruptly yank them out and hurl them into the real world could prove catastrophic; they may not be able to make the adjustment. After lengthy consultation, it was decided to send the chief psychologist to them, to help prepare them for the great change in their lives.

Thus it was that, the next day, as they waited for their food to descend from above as it naturally did every day, they suddenly saw a human being appear with it! Overcome with curiosity, they immediately surrounded him, trying to discover from where he had materialized. He told them all to listen carefully, for he had important news to share with them. Slowly he began describing to them the "real world" that exists "out there" — the world from where he had come to them, and to which he belonged, the world to which very shortly they would all be returned.

The fact of his having just arrived from the outside world was to them a living vindication of their ancestor, and a validation of his archaic stories. Hearing the descriptions from this man who stood before them in the flesh caused all of their doubts to melt away like flax before a burning flame, and they couldn't hear enough from him. In no time they discarded the foolish notions that they had acquired during their lengthy stay in the prison, and began thinking like free people once again.

Chassidim would use the above mashal (or a variation of it) to illustrate what a Rebbe is: Our neshamos, which are *Cheilek Eloka Mi'maal Mamash*, had to descend "*Mei'igra Rama L'Bira Amikta*," from a lofty mountain to a deep dungeon. If that isn't bad enough, we find ourselves in a world where the truisms that were ingrained in the neshama since time immemorial are at risk of being eradicated and substituted by the modern, rational ideas of the societies in which we reside. Our constant exposure to the workings of nature inevitably deceive us into believing in it more than in "*Ein Od Mivado*," until ultimately – if only in a subtle way – we begin to worship this very nature as the source of our livelihood (while paying only lip service – at best – to the old-fashioned ideas with which we were raised, that of a different reality).

But the Eibeshter, the King of kings, wants to liberate us, to allow us to rehabilitate, and to ease our adjustment. To this end, the ideas we learn in s'farim don't always suffice. We are all too familiar with these (old-fashioned) concepts, yet, all too often, the (so-called) reality that appears in front of our eyes can

prove more convincing.

Therefore, the Eibeshter sends us a Rebbe!

For the Rebbe is a living breathing representative of the "real world." He comes down to us, to our dank and dirty dungeon, to share with us firsthand information of the real world, to exhort us not to allow the pitiful dungeon to become our reality! He comes to us saying: "Come on, get with it, making a few dollars isn't a life, and watching a movie or going to a restaurant isn't a pleasure!" He tries to liberate us from our narrow-minded, confined existence, in which we can't see beyond the prison walls, and to help us realize that there is a whole world out there – a real world, with real life and real pleasures and worthwhile pursuits!

The purpose of a Rebbe is not (merely) to instruct is, to give us brachos, or even to teach us. The Rebbe is our link to reality, to enable a smooth adjustment from our deprived and pitiful life of deceit and falsehood to a life of G-dliness, of Truth and of Life. If we listen and pay attention, then the "natural" world will lose its hold on us.

This is what we learn in this week's parsha, regarding Moshe Rabbeinu (who was the Rebbe of his generation): Pharaoh's evil design against the Jewish nation consisted of – specifically – having all of the baby boys thrown into the Nile River. The Nile was the *avoda zara* of Mitzrayim. Since it was their natural source of livelihood, they attributed their sustenance to it and they worshipped it (similar to the way people today may worship the stock market, the internet, or the almighty dollar).

Pharaoh, the embodiment

of *klipa*, wanted to drown the Jewish babies there as well. He aimed to have them lose their "old-fashioned" beliefs and mindsets, and have them replaced by the "realistic" and "practical" outlook of treating the world as reality and worshipping nature. In fact, the chances for success were very good r"l.

Enter: *der Rebbe Reb Moshe* (Rabbeinu). Moshe was a Rebbe from the moment of his birth. He was a representative of the real word, who came to bring regards from there to the Jews languishing in galus. Thus, Chazal teach us, from the moment of his birth he spread light. Moshe brought with him the light of truth and life, the light of G-dliness that dispels the darkness of galus.

Thus, Chazal teach us, with the birth of Moshe the decree of Pharaoh was annulled. With the arrival of Moshe, the misconception of the laws of nature being perceived as the source of sustenance lost its influence, and subsequently, the risk of Jewish children being drowned in the foreign ideologies of Mitzrayim was averted.

• • •

It's that time of the year again. We're within 30 days of Yud Shvat, and all of us are scrambling to figure out what Hachanos we should make for that special day. From bachurim to shluchim to balabatim, from the more Chassidish to the more "veltish," everyone is at least conscious of the necessity to be involved in some way in preparing for Yud Shvat.

But, rather than just filling out a hachana checklist, and joining the most attractive Mivtza, we should take some time to contemplate for what exactly we are preparing.

Yud Shvat is the day that

the Rebbe formally accepted the *nesius*, the day that he officially became our Rebbe. It is a day to renew and strengthen our *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe, to re-commit ourselves to following his instructions and directives (in fact, it is a day that eltere Chassidim named “Rosh HaShana l’hishkashrus”). And, we have to remember what a Rebbe is all about:

The Rebbe comes to us to illuminate our darkness by exposing us to the truth. In the Eibeshter’s great mercy for us, over the fact that we’re languishing in this pitiful dungeon, He sent us the Rebbe to help us realize that this is a despicable dungeon, that there’s another reality, a better life.

Unfortunately, all too often, we stubbornly cling to our *galus* mindset. This is a wonderful life, these four walls are all that exists in the real world, and all that I need is for my stock to go up a little more (if only Madoff would let me invest some more with him, with his spectacular returns ...) and everything will be just fine and dandy.

WRONG! This is an intolerable prison, and not (only) because of the suffering in the world, but because of its very existence, its very nature.

History is repeating itself. We are once again in danger of drowning in the idolatrous epicurean-pursuing ideologies of the society we reside in, and losing all sense of truth and real life. But, history is repeating itself, and we once again have a Moshe Rabbeinu who is here to avert the danger, to annul the decree. It’s up to us to take advantage of this opportunity.


The conclusion is, therefore, that the essence of all of the Hachanos for Yud Shvat – their

*neshama*, regardless of what specific form they take – is to allow ourselves to be rescued from the river that is engulfing us, to grab onto the lifeline that is being extended to us. Whatever additional learning and actions we undertake at this time should be focused and aimed to getting into the world that the Rebbe is showing us and sharing with us; to place ourselves into his *Daled Amos*, and since they are *kanos lo*, this draws us into his world and mindset.

The mayor of B’nei Brak, a Gerer Chasid, was once by the Rebbe for dollars. During the course of the conversation he remarked to the Rebbe, “*Men pruft ton vifil es iz meglech*”

that way, then we would/will approach everything differently. The most basic example, as in the above anecdote, is that this perspective doesn’t allow us to view anything – that the Eibeshter expects of us – as beyond our means.

From a practical viewpoint, the Hachanos are the same – increasing in Torah, both in *nigleh* and in *chassidus*, increasing in *avodas ha’t’filla*, and increasing in *gemilus chassadim* and *Ahavas Yisroel*. But we need to bear in mind and keep in sight where we’re going with this. Each of these is, and can be, a means of extricating ourselves from our confinement and of advancing our adjustment

 History is repeating itself. We are once again in danger of drowning in the idolatrous pleasure-pursuing ideologies of the society we reside in, and losing all sense of truth and real life. But, history is repeating itself, and we once again have a Moshe Rabbeinu.

[‘We try to do as much as we’re able’]. The Rebbe looked at him in amazement, and exclaimed (approximate): “*Meglech?! Dos iz al pi teva, vos far a shaychus hot a Yid mit teva?!*” [‘As much as possible? “Possibility” is associated with nature; but what kind of a connection does a Jew have with nature?!’]

Freeing ourselves from our prisoner mindset includes living with the real perspective and outlook that “**Hashem Hu HaElokim Ein Od milvado.**” That’s not a slogan or a party line or a chassidishe expression. That’s the only truth and the only reality. And this realization needs to affect every aspect of our life, because if we truly see things

into the real world.

We’ve been drowning long enough! It’s high time that we get the executive pardon and that we take advantage of it so that it can be properly implemented!

L’chaim! As we read in the Torah about how Moshe illuminated the darkness and dispelled it, so too *Bizman HaZeh* may the Eibeshter send Moshe, *Goel Rishon Hu Goel Acharon*, to dispel the horrible darkness of these final moments of *galus*, and replace it with the infinite light of Moshiach Tzidkeinu Teikef U’miyad Mamash!!!

*From a written farbrengen  
directed at Alumni of Yeshivas  
Lubavitch Toronto*



# SHIDDUCHIM IN THE SHADOW OF THE KGB

In those days, every Jewish activity had to be done secretly. Even the most basic aspects of human life such as a wedding were affected by considerations of, “What will the KGB say?” \* This is the reason why my brother had his Tanaim and wedding on the same night, and is also the reason why I don’t have a single photograph of my wedding. \* R’ Hillel Zaltzman tells of how his brother Berel’s shidduch and his own shidduch came about.

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Rainitz

**I**n continuation of the previous chapter in which I told you of the difficulties in finding a Chassidishe shidduch in the Soviet Union under communist oppression, I will tell you now of my brother Berel's shidduch and my own.

My brother's shadchan was R' Berke Chein. As I related in previous chapters, for many years he was on the run until he finally arrived in Samarkand. One of his hiding places was in Malachovka on the outskirts of Moscow in the home of his aunt Bat-Sheva, the daughter of R' Simcha Chein. She was married to R' Yehuda Butrashvili (known as Kulasher for his city Kulashi in Georgia). There, he saw her daughter Chaya Esther who was a Chassidishe young lady.

When he came to Samarkand and spent a long time in our home, he was impressed by my brother Berel who was a Chassidishe bachur with good middos and was also a talented and handsome chazan. He recommended that Berel travel to Moscow to see Chaya Esther.

Berel was involved in a business partnership at the time with R' Dovid Mishulovin and R' Bechor Molknadov to open a factory for producing blankets in Stalinbad (today Dushenba). R' Bechor was a Bucharian religious Jew and he knew how to keep away from suspicious people. He was considered a trustworthy person who could be relied upon and with whom one could do business.

R' Bechor brought the necessary money into the partnership, R' Dovid brought his knowledge of machinery since he had worked for a while in a similar field, and my brother Berel was supposed to travel to Moscow to obtain the essential



R' Hillel, his brother R' Berel, and their brother-in-law, R' Eliyahu Mishulovin

**“After he landed, he became a celebrity and was famous throughout the world. Said R' Mendel, what's great about Yuri Gagarin? It was the space engineers who built the rocket and the spacecraft that could take a man to outer space and enable him to survive there who are the real heroes!**

equipment needed to construct the machines.

When R' Berke suggested the shidduch, R' Bechor and R' Dovid traveled to Stalinbad to set up the business and my brother headed off for Moscow. Of course, this was an opportunity to meet the girl.

### HOW RUMORS GET AROUND

The Gemara says, “There is no marriage contract without dispute.” Someone told my parents that the girl's father was a peculiar man who had cried a lot over nonsense in his youth. The source was someone they considered reliable and since when it comes to shidduchim everything is examined under a magnifying glass, my parents

decided to drop the shidduch. They informed my brother not to bother visiting the home of R' Yehuda Kulasher.

Berel was staying at the home of R' Wolf Nissinevitch who lived in the Moscow suburb of Perlovka, where he met R' Yaakov Notik. R' Yaakov said: Berel, you aren't in yeshiva now – why don't you get married?

Berel asked him: Do you have an idea for me?

R' Yaakov said: Yes, the daughter of R' Yehuda Kulasher.

When Berel told him about the information his parents had gotten about R' Yehuda, R' Yaakov dismissed it and said: He is a smart man with a good temperament, a big yerei Shamayim and a genuine Chassid. In his youth he was one

of the outstanding bachurim in Nevel and now he serves as the rav of the Chabad community in Malachovka. He is highly respected by Anash of Moscow. How could he be suspected of something that is so farfetched?

My brother could see that R' Yaakov knew what he was talking about and wondered out loud how a baseless rumor such as this got started.

R' Yaakov thought about it and then laughed and said the rumor must have developed from a story that happened when R' Yehuda was a bachur. When R' Yehuda arrived at Tomchei T'mimim in Nevel, he did not know a word of Yiddish. Since all the shiurim were in Yiddish, he did not understand anything. He was a very emotional person and he began to cry. The other bachurim wondered at this display of emotion and said: Why is he crying so much? Within a short time he will learn Yiddish and will understand it like any of us.

It seems, said R' Yaakov, that someone heard this story and decided that R' Yehuda is a peculiar person who cries over nonsense.

After ascertaining that the rumor was baseless, my brother went to R' Yehuda's house to meet with his daughter Anya (Chaya Esther).

### **TANAIM OR A WEDDING?**

In those days, making an inter-city telephone call was complicated. Aside from every phone conversation being tapped by the KGB, in order to make the call you had to go to the post office and order a time slot. The post office clerk would send a telegram to the post office in the designated city where it was delivered to the recipient and a

time arranged when he could go to the post office. Then they sent another telegram back with the information and only then could a conversation be held. This took a number of days to execute.

This is why, even though it is a tense time when a couple meets for a shidduch, and the parents want to know what's going on and what their son thinks of the girl, no phone contact was made with my brother Berel. Out of the blue, a telegram arrived from him, which said: "Anya seems most suitable, in ruchnius and in gashmius. All of the concerns proved baseless. I decided to make Tanaim and await your consent and arrival here. I am wiring money to you."

My parents did not have money for a trip to Moscow and R' Yehuda, who greatly desired this shidduch, sent money to my parents for the trip.

This was 5714 (1954), and in Russia of those days it was understood that when a wedding took place in a distant city, the entire family did not attend the wedding. The rest of us remained in Samarkand while my parents traveled to Moscow. The trip by train from Samarkand to Moscow took three days and so R' Yehuda sent money for plane tickets. These were not jet planes. They were old prop planes, and since they made several stops along the way, this "quick" trip took about 28 hours. They left Samarkand on Wednesday at eleven in the morning and arrived in Moscow on Thursday at three in the afternoon.

When my parents met my brother at the airport in Moscow, and heard his positive impressions of the girl, my father said to him: If everything looks good, why should we only make the Tanaim now and postpone

the wedding for a few months? Let's do the Tanaim and wedding now!

Berel thought it would be better to make the wedding in Samarkand where the entire family could participate. However, my parents quoted our uncle, R' Boruch Duchman, who said it was not a good idea to make a wedding in Samarkand since two weddings had recently taken place there in our family. Another wedding might arouse a dangerous degree of interest on the part of the authorities.

Berel explained my parents' position to the kalla and to his surprise, she immediately agreed. Later on, she told me that her parents had been pressuring her to convince him to make the wedding early and she didn't know how to convey their wishes to her chassan.

It was arranged that the Tanaim seuda would lead directly into a wedding seuda which is why, when my parents arrived at the mechutanim's house, they saw a huge challa (it was an old Jewish custom that when mechutanim arrive at a wedding, they are greeted with a large challa). My mother realized that the mechutanim had assumed the wedding would take place right away. So all the guests who arrived for a Tanaim found themselves attending a wedding.

Berel squeezed in all the spiritual preparations he needed to make within the few hours remaining until the Tanaim-wedding seuda. When he davened Maariv the night before the sudden wedding, he was very emotional. He davened at length as he would on Yom Kippur. He closed the door and davened in tears until they started knocking at his door worrying why he wasn't coming out.

## GOING INTO BUSINESS

After the wedding, my brother bought the machinery for the business back in Stalinbad. With the help of R' Yaakov Krichesky, he was able to get all the necessary equipment and then immediately left with his new wife for Samarkand.

I missed my brother very much during the weeks he was away and when a telegram arrived that he would be arriving in Samarkand, I inquired as to what time the plane would be landing. It turned out that it had already landed and I would not make it on time to meet them at the airport. Nevertheless, I rushed to call a taxi and traveled in the direction of the airport so as to meet him along the road. Indeed, as I was traveling I noticed a taxi containing Berel and his wife. I told my driver to stop, and Berel having noticed me told his driver to stop too, and we met in the middle of the road.


After a brief stay in Samarkand, Berel went to Stalinbad where R' Dovid and R' Bechor were anxiously waiting for him and the equipment. Later on, the bachurim Elimelech and Yosef Lehenhartz also went to Stalinbad so that they now had a tiny Chassidishe community. There was no kosher mikva in Stalinbad and a trip of 36 hours by train had to be made to the mikva in Samarkand. They decided they must quickly build a mikva.

A Jew by the name of Yechiel Samochvalovitcher (for his city Samokhvalov) arrived in Samarkand at this time. He was an expert at constructing ovens and the guys convinced him to go to Stalinbad in order to build them a mikva.

They built the mikva in the yard of the shul and since they

were afraid of the KGB, they arranged with him that if they came and asked him why he was building a mikva, he should tell them that his old grandfather came to him in a dream and told him to go to Stalinbad in order to build a mikva using his life's savings. Fortunately, the KGB did not get involved at all and the mikva was ready by the summer.

Now they had to fill the "reservoir" with rainwater. Since it does not rain in this area during the summer, R' Eliyahu Levin (Paritcher) ruled to allow them to fill the pit with ice. After bringing a truck full of blocks of ice, they wiped down each block

 **If you've ever tried plucking the feathers of a single chicken by hand, you can imagine how hard it was to pluck feathers all day. But they did this lovingly, knowing that it brought them a double profit; the ability to keep Shabbos and enable hundreds and even thousands of Jews to eat kosher chicken, as well as earning them some money.**

so that it would be dry of any condensation and that is how they filled the reserve pit.

They thought the ice would quickly melt in those warm summer days, but it didn't. Since you cannot melt the ice with warm water, as the water will invalidate the mikva, they got a blowtorch and used that to melt the ice. The ice was very cold and the fire wasn't powerful enough and the entire process took a long time. How disappointed they were when they discovered that the melted water was absorbed by the floor of the mikva and went into the ground. It turned out that the oven expert wasn't a mikva expert and the cement floor wasn't sealed. They had to start all over again and with

Hashem's help, they eventually built a kosher mikva.

They also put in prodigious efforts into the factory, but the business was not as successful as they had anticipated. There wasn't enough of a demand for their merchandise and they had to close the factory. They understood that their stay in Stalinbad was so that a mikva be built there.

Shortly before they returned to Samarkand, Berel saw a very nice blanket in the market. After examining the weave, he understood how it was made. He told R' Dovid who had the

necessary technical knowledge to manufacture a blanket like that, and they offered to sell the idea and plans to R' Bechor for a nice fee. R' Bechor agreed, but since he didn't have enough cash on him after investing all his money in the factory in Stalinbad, they agreed that if the new enterprise would be successful, he would pay them their share. It turned out that R' Bechor's new business was very successful and he kept his promise to R' Dovid and R' Berel and paid them 5000 rubles.

By the way, the manager of the government office through which they worked in Stalinbad was a Jew by the name of Dolgenosov who had recently returned from a Siberian labor camp. He told them that he had met a Jew

there who had baked matzos for Pesach. The man himself did not eat from those matzos, but baked them for others so they wouldn't eat chametz on Pesach. When they asked him the name of the prisoner, he said his name was Nannes. Apparently this was the Chassid, R' Lazer Nannes.

## MY SHIDDUCH

I was in no rush to marry. I always longed to leave Russia and I assumed that it would be much easier for me to leave as a single fellow than with a family. When I discussed this with R' Mendel Futerfas, he tried to convince me not to wait since, when the time came that Hashem decided we could leave Russia, we would be able to leave with our families.

As usual, R' Mendel had a mashal for this. In 1961, the Soviet Union had been able to send the first manned rocket into space. Yuri Gagarin was the first astronaut in space and the first to orbit the earth. After he landed, he became a celebrity and was famous throughout the world. Said R' Mendel, what's great about Yuri Gagarin? It was the space engineers who built the rocket and the spacecraft that could take a man to outer space and enable him to survive there who are the real heroes!

Rather, Gagarin is a hero because he successfully survived in a place that nobody had been before. We too, said R' Mendel, have a similar task. We must lead Jewish family lives in a place and time where others did not succeed in doing so.

I had some shidduch suggestions and one of them was with the daughter of R' Efraim Fishel Demichovsky from Minsk. My father said that he knew him from the time that he learned in Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch

and that he knew that he was the son of the Rogatchover Gaon's sister. My father had *essen teg* at the home of his paternal grandmother Feige, who was the main breadwinner of her household while her husband sat and learned.

(R' Ephraim's mother died a few days after she gave birth to him. His father R' Yaakov Moshe remarried. Since he wanted to start anew, he did not tell his second wife that he had a son from his previous marriage. He gave the child to his mother to raise. R' Efraim grew up in his grandmother's home and when he was a bit older, he went to live with his uncle, the Rogatchover Gaon.

When he became 16, his uncle sent him to learn in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch. Growing up without a mother affected him deeply and he felt the lack all his life. He would often gaze upon his daughter and yearningly say: Maybe she looks like my mother. I did not get to know or see her, and I don't have a picture of her.)

We also heard that R' Efraim Fishel himself was a shochet in Minsk. His oldest son, nicknamed "Leibke Fishel's," was a good friend of my brother-in-law, R' Eliyahu Mishulovin. He remembered him as a Chassidishe, warmhearted bachur with a good head. In short, it sounded like a Chassidishe home.

As I described in the previous chapter, many of Anash who lived isolated in big cities were unable to convince their children to remain observant. It was very common to meet a Chassidishe G-d fearing father whose sons and daughters were as different from him as east is to west. So despite all that I had heard about R' Efraim Fishel, I wondered

about his daughter.

That summer, I had a communal mission to attend to in the center of Russia and I decided to use this opportunity to travel to Minsk. My plans went somewhat awry and I got stuck in Vilna until Friday morning. A flight from Vilna to Minsk takes less than an hour, but during the summer all flights were booked because everyone was on vacation and it was hard to get a ticket. I decided that if there was room on a flight, this would be heaven's way of telling me I should go to Minsk and meet with the girl. When I arrived at the airport I found out that there was one seat left on a flight to Minsk.

I arrived in Minsk in the afternoon and took the first taxi I saw and asked the driver to take me to the address that I had: 29 Dobrolyubovski Proezd. To my dismay, none of the drivers knew where it was. There was a street with Dobrolyubov in the name but no Proezd (Drive). The drivers started looking through their books that contained all the addresses as well as maps. I began to worry about where I would spend Shabbos. I knew nobody in Minsk and the only address I had was one nobody could identify.

Finally, one of the drivers said he thought that the Drive was near the larger street with that name where there was a little lane. Having no choice, I went with him and it turned out that he was right. When we entered the lane I noticed a bearded Jew up ahead. He was walking with pails to draw water, because not everybody had running water in their homes. I asked the driver to stop, paid him for the trip, and rushed to catch up with the Jew while calling out, "R' Efraim!"

He turned around and when



he saw me with two suitcases, he quickly brought me into his house and only then did he greet me. I realized he was afraid lest he be seen for too long in the street in the company of an uninvited guest. His vigilance was familiar to every Jew who lived in those days in the Soviet Union.

I felt that R' Efraim was more frightened than what one would expect. He began interrogating me about where I was from, the purpose of my visit, what I worked at, and what was in my suitcases. It was like a KGB interrogation and I couldn't understand it. At a certain point I had no choice but to open my suitcases and show him the contents. There were some volumes of Tanya and T'hillas Hashem siddurim, items which I tried to get on all my trips to Moscow, as well as a thick volume of Chassidus that I had obtained on my trip in order to send it to the Rebbe (as I related in a separate article). After this "search" he calmed down and told me why he had felt so tense.

Rosh HaShana night, an unfamiliar Jew had come to shul and after the davening he had asked where he could have the Yom Tov meal. They all referred him to the shochet who invited him. After a few days, police detectives came and wanted to know where the guest was, where Comrade Demichovsky knew him from, and other pertinent questions. The guest had finished a prison sentence after being implicated in the mass exodus from Russia in 1946-7. It was Aharon Friedman, the brother-in-law of R' Yitzchok Zilber. In Russia of those days, close tabs were kept on former prisoners. This is why, when they discovered he was staying at the Demichovsky family, their suspicion was aroused. What



R' Aryeh Leib Demichovsky

connection was there between Comrade Demichovsky and the released prisoner?

Another incident had taken place shortly before my arrival. A Lubavitcher who had been released from prison had spent a few days in their home. After he left, policemen came and inquired about him and the nature of their relationship. It turned out that he had dealt in gold and foreign currency, something that was considered a terrible crime in Russia back then.

This is why R' Efraim was very nervous about any guest who "landed" in his home and the reason he wanted to ensure that he wouldn't get entangled with the authorities.

Parenthetically, Berel Silverman, a friend of my brother-in-law Aryeh Leib, later told me that a short time after my wedding they called him down to the KGB. They asked him whether he knew the son-in-law of Comrade Demichovsky – who was he, where was he from, and what did he do. Berel did not know me and knew nothing about me and that was the end of that.



R' Efraim Demichovsky  
with his oldest granddaughter

R' Efraim and his family had tried their luck in escaping from Russia in 1946-7, but they had failed. Since, even during the great exodus, there were times that the border was closed and then opened again, they hoped that the day would come when the border would be opened once again. They decided to move to Minsk, which was relatively close to Lvov.

They arrived in Minsk without anything. Even the suitcases that contained their clothes and a few personal possessions had been stolen on the way. In the winter they had no shoes and R' Efraim had to wear galoshes which he tied with string so they wouldn't fall off his feet. Regarding those years he would say, "In one way I was like Yaakov Avinu – I was consumed by heat during the day and by frost at night."

(His oldest son, Aryeh Leib, wanted to help support the family but could not find a job. He did not know any Russian since he had never gone to public school and without an education you could not get a job anywhere. He decided to do some studying. Instead of learning for ten years,

he managed to finish high school in two years. After another two years he completed professional school as an expert on wood which was a sought-after field in Belarus (White Russia) which is heavily forested).

Since everybody had to work in an official capacity, R' Efraim was registered to work in a recycling factory. This was work that enabled him to observe Shabbos.

In the Soviet Union there was a shortage of feathers out of which they made pillows, quilts, etc. Since he was a shochet (having learned sh'chita from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin as his uncle, the Rogatchover Gaon, had told him to do), R' Efraim told the factory management that he had an idea of how to obtain feathers. He said he would open a store to clean chickens in the central marketplace. Whoever would buy a chicken and wanted to slaughter it, would come to him. Afterwards, his wife would clean the chickens and he could give the feathers to the government.

If you've ever tried plucking the feathers of a single chicken by hand, you can imagine how hard it was to pluck feathers all day. But they did this lovingly, knowing that it brought them a double profit; the ability to keep Shabbos and enable hundreds and even thousands of Jews to eat kosher chicken, as well as earning them some money.

Although he officially worked for the government factory, the KGB knew that he had a spiritual-religious agenda and wasn't merely "killing chickens." Although they approved this special business, he was under constant surveillance. This made him exceedingly wary. The two stories with the guests that led

to his being interrogated only increased his constant fear. This is why, when he saw me, he thought – oh no, here we go again.

## UNCOMFORTABLE ENCOUNTER ON THE TROLLEY

As I said, I arrived in Minsk on Erev Shabbos. When I entered the house, I saw R' Ephraim's wife standing in the kitchen and cooking for Shabbos. She was dressed modestly as a Chassidishe woman, despite the summer heat.

I did not notice that their daughter Mussia Shoshana Esther, my "intended bride," saw me as I got out of the taxi and ran towards her father. After I underwent the "interrogation" by R' Efraim and the atmosphere became congenial, I noticed her standing near her mother and telling her that she had bought shoes but she wanted to exchange them. Since it would be Shabbos soon, she wanted to go right away.

I intended on staying in Minsk until Sunday and so I decided that we would go together and get to know one another. On the way back home, I had an unpleasant experience. As we sat on the trolley, a young man got on at one of the stops whom I recognized as a Jew. When their glances met they blushed. I realized they knew one another, but although I was interested in knowing what their relationship was, I didn't dare to ask her. However, this discovery raised all sorts of doubts in my mind.

When we arrived back home, I was even more surprised to see the young man in the house. That is when I realized he was none other than her brother, "Leibke Fishel's," as he was known in Tomchei T'mimim

of Samarkand. He explained that upon seeing his sister with a bachur, he realized she was meeting for shidduch purposes and did not want to introduce himself and disturb our meeting.

Before the revolution, there had been 96 shuls in Minsk. By 5724 (1964) there was only one shul, half-official, in a rented apartment. In friendly conversations later on, my future father-in-law told me how hard it was for him to attend this minyan that was comprised of Jews without basic yiras Shamayim. On Shabbos he tried to finish davening quickly and leave before the davening was over, because after the davening they collected money from whoever had bought an aliya and they used it to buy vodka for kiddush. In general, he said, I try to finish davening Shmoneh Esrei before everyone, because when I take a long time, they start grumbling about the "Chassid" who davens a long time.

On Shabbos, I saw they had a guest. Afterwards, my father-in-law told me that he was a simple, quiet Jew who did not tell what he knew. In those days, that was considered a "level" ... My father-in-law always complained that he had nobody with whom to share divrei Torah and Chassidus, and he was even afraid to discuss current events with other people. "I am alone in a spiritual desert."

During Shabbos and until I left on Sunday, I was favorably impressed by the girl and her family and I saw that although they lived alone, they were not drawn after the winds that blew in the street. The Chassidishe atmosphere was as it should be. She was also favorably impressed by me and since she and her brother planned on traveling to their relatives in Samarkand for



**R' Hillel's Sheva brachos.** Sitting from right to left: R' Chaim Zalman Kozliner, R' Dovber Yaffe, R' Hillel Zaltzman, and his father R' Avrohom, the little child is R' Benzion Mishulovin, the son of R' Dovid Mishulovin

the Yomim Nora'im (her brother was very close with R' Mendel Futerfas and since he hadn't seen him for many years, he yearned to see him) it was decided that we would continue meeting there.

When I arrived in Samarkand and told my parents about my visit to Minsk, they were very pleased. R' Mendel was also very satisfied by the shidduch since he knew her brother from his youth. They came to Samarkand in Elul 5723 and after some more meetings I still couldn't decide. I thought we would maintain a connection after she returned to Minsk by writing letters. However, my father, who was practical and very decisive, said that it wasn't proper to drag things out and if we were interested, we should make Tanaim with a kinyan so we would know we were committed to one another.

That's what we did. We wrote to the Rebbe about our decision

**“My father-in-law didn't know what to tell them, and when they realized that the chassan had not attended university and did not have a degree, they looked askance at the shidduch and said, “You have such a talented daughter and you're giving her to someone who doesn't have a profession? How will he support his family?”**

to marry and some time later we received the Rebbe's bracha.

### **A WEDDING WITHOUT PICTURES**

The wedding was set for the summer, and in the meantime, my kalla returned home. In Shevat of that year, R' Mendel received permission to emigrate and he told me, “If the wedding is in the winter, I would be very happy to attend.” Of course, he immediately used the opportunity

he had been given and he left Russia.

A half-brother and two half-sisters of my father-in-law through his father lived in Minsk; they were not religious. Before leaving for Samarkand, my father-in-law made a goodbye party and they were very interested in hearing about his new son-in-law — which university did I attend and what profession did I have.

My father-in-law didn't know what to tell them, and when they

realized that the chassan had not attended university and did not have a degree, they looked askance at the shidduch and said, "You have such a talented daughter and you're giving her to someone who doesn't even have a profession? How will he support his family?"

My father-in-law responded curtly, "He has nothing but he can do everything!"

His siblings did not bring it

went to him for advice.

I caught a cold before the wedding and when the kalla and her parents announced their arrival, I could not go to meet them. I asked my childhood friend, Yaakov Lerner, to go instead of me. I gave him all the information, the number of the train, the number of the compartment, and the time the train was due to arrive, around seven o'clock in the morning. I described what the family members looked like, with the main point being that when he saw a Jew with a beard that was the man.

We all waited anxiously but he returned home alone two hours later. He said that nobody got off the train compartment number I had given him. He even went inside to look but found nobody with a beard. When he asked the conductor, the man had no idea what he was talking about.

A few hours later, they arrived. Since they had traveled all night and the train arrived in Samarkand early in the morning, they had asked the conductor to wake them up when they arrived but the conductor had forgotten. When they woke up, it was too late. They had to get off at the next stop and travel back to Samarkand.

The wedding took place on 11 Sivan. It was a Chassidishe,

happy wedding which lasted well into the night as a Chassidishe farbrengen. My uncle Shimon Zaltzman came from Tashkent and made us rejoice as a true badchan (jester).

We did not have pictures of course, since there was always the fear that the pictures would end up in the hands of the KGB, who would want to know who had attended the wedding and would interrogate us about who was there and what was spoken about. It was only at the Sheva brachos meal that took place in a family setting with very few Chassidim that we dared to take a picture.

Back then, there was a black humor joke people would tell about the Jew who went to the KGB offices and said he was planning to marry off his daughter. Since he didn't want to be called in for an interrogation after the wedding, when he would be asked who was there and what they spoke about, he was requesting that they send one of their men to write a full report. They asked him: Do you by any chance have a guest list? He said yes, he did, and he gave them the list.

After perusing it, they said: Don't worry, we won't call you for an interrogation. Half of your guests are our men.



R' Hillel Zaltzman with his friend,  
R' Yaakov Lerner

up again but amongst themselves they said: Nu, if Efraim did this shidduch, no doubt he knows what he's doing.

This was because they considered my father-in-law to be a smart man. They always

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# THE REBBE SENT US TWO SIFREI TORAH

The Chabad house in Kiryat Gat, headed by Rabbi Shlomo Butbul, has been in operation for over twenty years. Rabbi Butbul shared some delightful stories with us.

By Menachem Savyon

**I**n the southern city of Kiryat Gat they don't rest for a minute. Rabbi Shlomo Butbul has been directing shlichus in the city for 25 years and, more recently, his son Aharon Ben Zion has joined him.

The Chabad House which was

in an older building for the last 20 years has recently outgrown the space and moved to a more convenient location. Minyanim for Mincha-Maariv take place there every day. The Tzivos Hashem club started up again, and there are shiurim for men

and women. This is in addition to mivtzaim visits to army bases and a ST'aM institute. They recently inaugurated a mini-tank, a Chabad house vehicle that is decorated with pictures of the 10 Mivtzaim and is used for outreach.

Many people ask Rabbi Shlomo Butbul for his help in writing to the Rebbe. Thus, he has plenty of Igros Kodesh stories to relate:

## WHO WILL LIVE . . .

One evening, I received a phone call from Mrs. Rochel

Berg who has been giving shiurim for women at the Chabad house for twenty years. She worriedly told me that one of the women who attend the shiurim told her that her daughter-in-law was expecting and the doctors said the fetus was seriously impaired. They wanted her to do an immediate abortion, because waiting could endanger her life.

Since this entailed danger to life, I called the expectant mother's house even though the hour was late. I told her that I had heard about her situation and said, "If you want a healthy child, ask the Rebbe for a bracha. With G-d's help, everything will be all right." I briefly explained what writing to the Rebbe entails. I also asked her to make a commitment in some area of Torah and mitzvos. She committed to dressing modestly, and her husband committed to making Kiddush every Shabbos and to checking his t'fillin and mezuzos.

I wrote to the Rebbe on their behalf and opened to an encouraging answer. I calmed them down and said they should absolutely not abort even if the doctors insisted.

She gave birth to a boy with a hole in his diaphragm. In light of his critical condition they operated the next day. Although the couple had received the Rebbe's bracha, the baby's critical condition greatly disturbed them. They called to tell me the dire news. I calmed them down and said they had to make a *pidyon nefesh* so the baby would live.

The husband asked me in surprise, "How did you know about that?"

He had heard from some mekubal that he needed to make a *pidyon nefesh* to save the child's life. I explained that I was



Rabbi Shlomo Butbul

talking about a *pidyon nefesh* that Chabad Chassidim write to the Rebbe. I suggested that he donate 18 shekels to tz'daka as well. After asking for a bracha, the doctors did the operation. Fortunately, they were much more successful than they had predicted. When the happy father told me the good news, I told him that when someone writes to the Rebbe about worrisome news, he needs to write about happy news too.

After a few days I saw him with tzitzis. I asked him how he was doing and he told me that he was going to check all the mezuzos at the police headquarters where he worked.

A few days later, the baby was released from the hospital and had a bris. A week later I met the father with his wife and baby. The parents were beaming. I told them, "You had an open miracle. You have a live, healthy baby. Thank the Rebbe."

## TWO SIFREI TORAH

It was the winter of 5769. I went with Rabbi Yehuda Maman to visit some moshavim around

Kiryat Gat. At the end of a visit to one of the homes, as we turned to leave, I continued talking to Rabbi Maman about the many expenses we had and said, "We need a paroches for the Aron Kodesh in the Chabad house."

The homeowner, who heard what I said, surprised me when he said he wanted to donate a paroches in memory of his parents. That is how our Chabad house received a gift of a beautiful paroches with Yechi on top and a straight-branched menorah with 770 embroidered on it.

So we had a paroches, but we still did not have a Torah of our own. Rabbi Shabtai Suissa, a sofer who davens at our Chabad house, had a completed Torah scroll. I asked him to donate it to the Chabad house, although obviously he preferred selling it.

When he wrote to the Rebbe about it, he opened to a letter dated the same day he wrote, and was addressed to the first mayor of Kiryat Gat. The Rebbe asked him: "What about the two Lubavitcher Sifrei Torah?"

In light of this answer, he and his wife decided to send the Torah for a final checking. Then, on Erev Rosh HaShana two years ago, we had a Hachnasas Seifer Torah. Throughout the year, whenever the topic of the Torah came up at farbrengens, everybody asked, "What about a second Torah?" All were certain that we would ultimately obtain a second Torah, just as the Rebbe had written.

Half a year later, around Pesach time, Rabbi Elya, the one who had donated the paroches, passed away. A short while later, Rabbi Asher Chaziza — one of our congregants — went to daven at what is known as the Cave of Eliyahu HaNavi. There he met

the brother of Rabbi Elya and his two sisters. They told him that they wanted to donate a Torah in memory of their departed brother. Rabbi Asher told them that it would be fitting for this Torah to be donated to the Chabad house.

Three days before Simchas Torah, they contacted us and said they wanted to bring the Torah before Hoshana Rabba. Just as we concluded the reading of the entire Torah, the parsha of V'Zos HaBracha, we began reading the Torah anew from B'Reishis in the second Torah scroll. Needless to say, this second Hachnasas Seifer Torah was extremely joyous.

## A GOOD AND HAPPY SHABBOS

Rabbi Shlomo's son, Aharon Benzion, relates:

Last Adar, as I was walking home Friday night after the davening in the Chabad house, I met a neighbor of ours. Since I know him from t'fillos at the Chabad house and as a regular participant at the shiurim, I was surprised to see him looking downcast. I was even more surprised to see him without the kippa that he always wore.

I asked him what was going on; he said he had decided to stop attending shul. I asked him why, and he said, "I had a bad experience, which to you might not sound like the end of the world, but for me it posed a personal crisis of faith. I decided to cut my ties with G-d.

"It all began two months ago when I moved to a new apartment and I lost a book of checks. I don't know who found it but from the handwriting it looks like that of a woman who is living it up at my expense. She has written checks to the tune of



Rabbi Shlomo Butbul with his son Aharon Benzion

thousands of shekels. It has put me in a very difficult situation with the bank."

He's an orphan who survives on national insurance and this was truly a crisis for him. He was so upset that he even relinquished Shabbos observance which he had always kept. He felt all alone without help from Above.

We concluded the conversation, and I joined my parents for the Shabbos meal. An hour and a half later, he came to the house and asked to speak to me. He wanted to know what spiritual steps he should take, since our conversation earlier that evening "had moved me," he said.

I told him what t'shuva is, returning to Hashem and suggested that he come on Motzaei Shabbos to write to the Rebbe and ask for his bracha. "If you want, you can ask for a bracha now. Take a volume of Igros Kodesh from the library and make a request. Let's see what page you open to."

He put the kippa back on his

head and asked the Rebbe for a bracha in his thoughts, while looking at a picture of the Rebbe, as I suggested. He opened volume 15 to page 266. The first letter on the page that caught our eye ended with a special bracha: **with a bracha for a good and happy Shabbos.** I told him that this was a very unusual bracha and he should be happy as everything would work out well.

The letter also referred to a certain written work: **It is known that some modifications (and even deliberate forgeries) were placed therein. These matters require the review of an expert in the field.**

In light of this most relevant answer, he realized it would all end well, with Hashem's help. The next day he came to a farbrengen at the Chabad house and told everybody his story and the Rebbe's answers. The miracle took place and a short while later he was able to identify the person who had taken his checks. She confessed and even paid back whatever she took.

# THE REBBE'S CONTACT MAN

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Rabbi Sholom Mendel Kalmanson a"h was an outstanding model of an elder Chassid. He headed Mosdos Shneur in Aubervilliers, France. Raised to a life of mesirus nefesh and putting aside one's own desires, that is how he lived throughout all the years of his shlichus in France. \* With the help of his family, Beis Moshiach presents a profile of a special Chassid who left thousands of spiritual orphans with his passing.

By Shneur Zalman Berger



## OUR MAN IN PRAGUE

The year: 1947. The location: Prague, Czechoslovakia under communism. Twenty-five year old Sholom Mendel was alone in an unfamiliar city by request

of the g'dolei ha'chassidim who were in Peking. He was assigned two important tasks: 1) to be the refugee Chassidim's contact man with the Rebbe Rayatz, with his son-in-law Ramash, and with the

European office run by Rabbi Binyomin Gorodetzky, and 2) to help get out as many Chassidim as possible from communist countries to Western countries in accordance with instructions



from the Rebbe Rayatz.

Letters from the Rebbe and his son-in-law arrived one after the other. He was the only person in the area who coordinated all the activities; transmitting instructions and helping hundreds of Chabad Chassidim who had escaped from Russia via Lvov. Chabad Chassidus at that time consisted mainly of these groups of Chassidim, and one young man was charged with this weighty task. Although this entailed a great deal of danger, Rabbi Sholom Mendel was someone for whom mesirus nefesh was a way of life.

### THE SIDDUR REPRINTED UNDER HIS NAME

Rabbi Sholom Mendel Kalmanson a"h was born in 5682/1922 in Vitebsk. His parents were Rabbi Shneur Zalman and Menucha Kalmanson. The family moved to Pushkina, a suburb of Leningrad (today Petersburg) where a Chabad k'hilla was growing.

When Rabbi Sholom Mendel was a baby, his father agreed to do something which entailed great mesirus nefesh. All the Siddurim in Nusach Ari were gone and there was an urgent need to reprint them. The usual procedure was to ask the government for official permission to print the Siddurim, but they knew that whoever did so would be a marked man. In Leningrad and other cities there lived distinguished Chassidim, but the only one who was willing to have the Siddur published under his name was Rabbi Zalman Kalmanson. Thanks to him, thousands of Siddurim Nusach Arizal were printed in 5684-5686 with his name prominently displayed on the first page.



The Kalmanson family in Samarkand. From right to left: Rabbi Sholom Mendel Kalmanson and his friend, Rabbi Heschel Tzeitlin, his brother-in-law, the mashpia Rabbi Berke Chein, his brother Rabbi Yekusiel Kalmanson. In the center of the picture are seated his father, Rabbi Shneur Zalman Kalmanson and his brother Rabbi Yisroel Shimon. The children from right to left are: Mottel Chein, Mottel Kalmanson, Meir Simcha Chein, Miri Blizinsky (daughter of Rabbi Yisroel Shimon)

His mesirus nefesh for Judaism burned strongly. In the years to come, he did much to ensure that mikvaos would be built in the Vitebsk area. He even traveled to Vitebsk and stayed there for three months to oversee the construction of mikvaos in Vitebsk, Nevel, etc.

### HIS MOTHER WASN'T TOLD

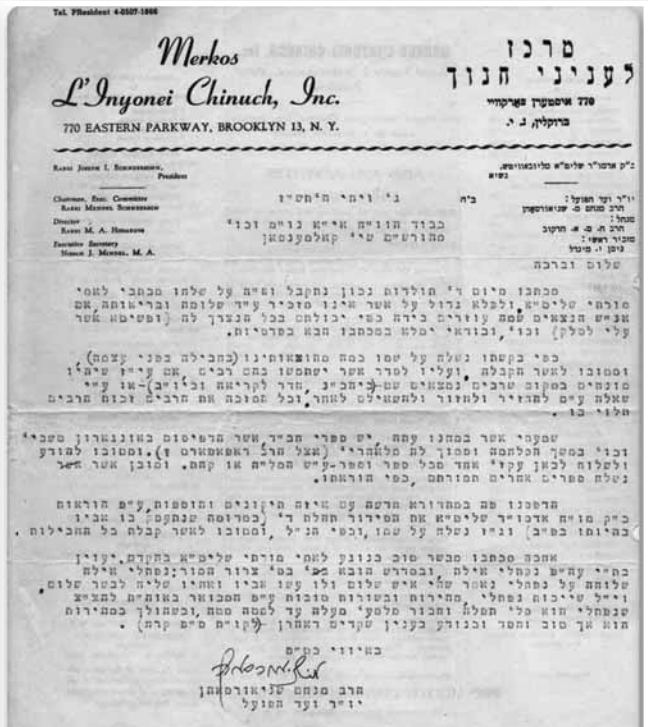
Sholom Mendel was only 15 years old when he was sent to learn in the secret Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Kursk. In those crazy times, talmidim wandered from city to city because of communist persecution. This was also his fate. He had to leave Kursk for Klinetz. At a certain point, a branch of the yeshiva was opened in Melitopol in the Crimea and

he went there.

His father, who feared lest his mother not allow her son to leave home, accompanied his son to the train station. It was only when he returned home that he informed his wife that their son had gone to learn thousands of kilometers away from home.

In Melitopol, Sholom Mendel learned with five or six other bachurim. He stayed there for about two years, from 5698 until the winter of 5700 when he traveled to the Tomchei T'mimim branch in Kutaisi, Georgia where he learned by Rabbi Yosef Goldberg. He was then appointed to be a maggid shiur in the yeshiva when he was only 18 years old.

The secret police kept tabs on the Chabad yeshivos in Georgia



Letters from the Rebbe

too, and persecuted them. They eventually raided the yeshiva and took all of Sholom Mendel's papers. He somehow managed to escape and he hid with gentiles for a few months until he got his papers back. When things had quieted down somewhat, he traveled to Senaki in Georgia where he ran the division of Tomchei T'mimim there until the war was over. Then he went to Samarkand where his family had fled from Leningrad. Their reunion was extremely joyous.

## AT THE CROSSROADS

Sholom Mendel went to Lvov, a border city, and from there he escaped Russia in the famous exodus. At the beginning of the winter in the year 5707, Anash in the DP camp in Poking decided they had to have people in Prague in order to save the Chassidim in Poland and other countries under communist rule. Unlike

Poking, in Prague he could make telephone calls and be in close contact with the Rebbe Rayatz who lived in New York.

Anash in Poking, led by the mashpia Rabbi Nissan Nemanov, sent three Chassidim to Prague: Rabbi Sholom Mendel Kalmanson, Rabbi Hillel Pevsner (later rav of the Chabad k'hilla in France), and Mrs. Hadassah Garelik (Perman). Before long, Rabbi Sholom Mendel was alone (except for a limited period of time when his old friend Rabbi Moshe Morosov was with him). He worked in Prague for the "Lishka" run by Rabbi Binyomin Gorodetzky under the guidance of the Rebbe Rayatz.

In a letter from 15 Kislev 5707, the Rebbe Rayatz wrote to him:

**"I hereby inform you that I appointed my friend [...] Rabbi Binyomin Gorodetzky as my representative in my office in**

**Paris to aid the refugees and to settle them. I request of you to remain still in Prague to organize the matters of the refugees. Regarding all these matters, let me know and write it in two copies with one copy sent directly to me and the other, send to my friend, your fellow, Rabbi Binyomin to Paris. Do as they tell you from my office in Paris. May Hashem help you succeed materially and spiritually."** (*Igros Kodesh Admur Rayatz* Vol. 13, letter #4909)

Rabbi Sholom Mendel remained to help the Chassidim continue on their way to countries such as France and Germany. He even helped found a school "Beis Sarah" for refugee girls and ran it for a period of time. He was also the contact person between Ramash and his mother, Rebbetzin Chana a"h who had arrived in Paris.



A letter to the Rebbe



Preparing for sh'chita

Upon instructions from the Rebbe Rayatz and the Rebbe, he also handled other matters including printing Kehos s'farim. As we can see in the Igros Kodesh, Rabbi Sholom Mendel received many letters from the Rebbe during those years which contained numerous instructions regarding printing and the refugees. Much of the correspondence to Europe went through Rabbi Kalmanson, who wrote to the Rebbe Rayatz in the winter of 5707, "My role is that of a connector and I do that to the best of my ability."

At the beginning of the



With his father, Rabbi Zalman

## ONE MITZVA LEADS TO ANOTHER

Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman, known to *Beis Moshiach* readers for his memoirs, shared this wonderful story about Rabbi Sholom Mendel:

It is not Chabad custom to eulogize; rather, we tell stories about the departed. I will call this story, "Rabbi Sholom Mendel's Miracle." I don't think Rabbi Sholom Mendel himself knew about it.

It was at the beginning of the 90's, before the Soviet Union had completely collapsed. The Chamah organization (of which I am one of the directors) arranged a summer camp in Gorky. We knew that many children were not yet circumcised. We asked Rabbi Sholom Mendel to come to Gorky to do the brissin. He did about fifty circumcisions on children and a few on adults.

Upon leaving the camp, he went to Moscow where he went to the Chamah office that had been recently opened. He sat there and wrote a report of his activities and prepared to leave. The local director of Chamah then asked her son to take Rabbi Sholom Mendel to the airport.

The director, Mrs. Gerta Ellinson, came from a family of famous scientists who had invented liquid fuel for missiles. She had been close to Stalin and Beria (the head of the KGB). Her son Alexander, who took the mohel to the airport, was a scientist with an unusually good memory. Of course, Rabbi Sholom Mendel knew Russian, and on the way he befriended the driver who poured out his heart to the mohel. He told him that he was married to a Jewish woman for six years, but they had not had children yet.

Rabbi Sholom Mendel suggested that he start putting on t'fillin, something which the man had never heard of. When they got to the airport, the man put t'fillin on for the first time in his life. Following the brief prayer, Rabbi Sholom Mendel told him that when he returned to Moscow, he should go to Rabbi Dovid Karpov, one of the directors of Chamah, and ask him for a pair of t'fillin.

As soon as the man returned to Moscow, he met with Rabbi Karpov, got a pair of t'fillin with instructions how to use them and put them on every day.

His wife was soon expecting a baby. Although he and his family were not at all connected to Jewish practice, he was absolutely convinced that it was because he had listened to Rabbi Sholom Mendel and put on t'fillin that he was blessed with children.

That is just one of Rabbi Sholom Mendel's good deeds. There are probably thousands more like it that we remain unaware of due to his humility.

summer 5707/1947, Rabbi Sholom Mendel asked the Rebbe Rayatz whether he could leave Prague. He did not receive a positive answer until 15 Cheshvan 5708 when the Rebbe wrote him, **"As for the question regarding yourself, you should move to Paris."**

He moved to Paris where many Chassidim from Russia had already settled. He married his wife Basya in 5709. She

is the daughter of the Chassid Rabbi Uziel Chazanov a"h. He studied sh'chita and mila, holy professions that he worked at devotedly for decades to come.

## TWO MONTHS AND A DAY

After a long period of time, refugee Chassidim from Russia started settling in various areas of Paris and its environs. Rabbi Binyomin Gorodetzky had several Lubavitcher families

settle in Aubervilliers near Paris, including the Kalmanson, Wilschansky, Menkin, Belinov, and Edelman families.

The Rebbe instructed them to reach out to the Jews in Aubervilliers. The Chassidim said there were hardly any Jews there, but the Rebbe said there were at least 200 Jews! Rabbi Sholom Mendel began going door to door, looking for Jewish names on mailboxes and doors. Slowly but surely, he located more and more Jewish families whom he was mekarev.

This work was done in a low key manner. The dramatic change occurred in 5722/1951 when Algeria began its struggle for independence. As a result, thousands of Jews left the country for France and many of them settled in Aubervilliers. Rabbi Kalmanson met thousands of Jews who knew nothing about Judaism. Following instructions from the Rebbe, he founded the Shneur K'hilla (community) in 5723. He opened a shul where Chassidim davened alongside Algerian Jews. The emphasis was put on t'fillos and shiurim that drew in the immigrants.

The mosdos he started were called Shneur because that year, 5723, was 150 years since the passing of the Alter Rebbe and the Rebbe said activities should be done in honor of the Alter Rebbe. The Rebbe once said, in a rare moment, that the mosdos Shneur were worthy of their name.

Aubervilliers is only seven kilometers from Paris and about 70,000 people lived there at the time with very few Jews and even fewer Lubavitchers. This is why the children traveled every morning to Chabad schools in Paris and Yerres on the outskirts of Paris. Due to the distance

and the schlep, the children did not return home every day, but remained in dormitories instead. Only the little children, up till the age of 5, attended local schools.

When Rabbi Kalmanson wrote about this to the Rebbe, he received a very sharp response the gist of which was – in Russia you had mesirus nefesh for chinuch and now, with nobody persecuting you, you send your children to gentile schools?!

Then and there, Rabbi Kalmanson resolved to open a preschool. In 5725 he sought to open a Jewish school. Although he was no longer in the Soviet Union, he still had to contend with the communistic hurdles created by the municipality of Aubervilliers. They could not forbid Torah study outright, but they made his work difficult.

Seeing this, Rabbi Kalmanson decided to go *l'chat'chilla aribber*. The protocol was to go to the city and ask for permission to open a school. After getting the permits, he would have had to go to the Ministry of the Interior to gain their approval too. Instead, he went directly to the Ministry of the Interior who approved his request, but sent the plans and request to the city, noting the fact that it had the right to contest the decision within two months.

Seeing that he had circumvented them, the city officials were furious and prepared to present an appeal. However, for a reason nobody could understand, the appeal wasn't presented until after two months and one day. Rabbi Kalmanson asked that the appeal be rejected since it was late. The Ministry of the Interior agreed that this was the law, and the Shneur School was a fait accompli.

As the years passed, even the



The beginning of mosdos Shneur

**“The answer shocked her. She had explained that she was collapsing under the workload and the Rebbe was telling her to start a new project...Over the years, Gan Israel brought more and more students to their school and this increased the money they received from government sources. Thanks to Gan Israel they were also given a budget for a bus driver, a cook, and a cleaning person and Mrs. Kalmanson was relieved of some of the burden.**

municipality began to appreciate his work and began to help the mosdos.

### HASHEM IS HAPPY WITH YOUR WORK

The burden of work on the Kalmanson couple was enormous. They would get up at five in the morning to begin a busy day while simultaneously raising a family of nine children. They received no government assistance for the mosdos. In order to save money, Rabbi Sholom Mendel and his wife Basya did all sorts of jobs, including ones that were unbecoming people of their stature.

Things were so difficult that Mrs. Kalmanson, a Chassidishe woman who was a role model



The school bus

for Chassidishe girls and women, had to drive a school bus to bring the children from all over Aubervilliers to school. With the Rebbe's bracha and encouragement, she passed the driving test and became the first female bus driver in France. This novelty was reported in the newspapers. She picked up the students in the morning and



From left to right: His brother Rabbi Yisroel Shimon Kalmanson, Rabbi Sholom Mendel, his father-in-law, Rabbi Uziel Chazanov



Rabbi Sholom Mendel (marked by an arrow) with members of the Shneur k'hilla in the early years

**“Seeing that he had circumvented them, the city officials were furious and prepared to present an appeal. However, for a reason nobody could understand, the appeal wasn’t presented until after two months and one day. Rabbi Kalmanson asked that the appeal be rejected since it was late.**

brought them home at the end of the school day. She also worked as the cook and sometimes cleaned the school.

Rabbi Sholom Mendel worked as a shochet and mohel. He divided the money he earned between the school and his family. This was all in addition to the many obstacles that arose in the beginning and threatened to topple Chabad’s control of the mosdos and the k’hilla. It was only thanks to the answers and advice from the Rebbe that Chabad was successful and the Shneur institutions remained in Chabad’s hands.

In the early years, the Kalmansons received numerous instructions, brachos and encouraging answers. At one yechidus, the Rebbe told Mrs. Kalmanson, “You ought to be

happy because Hashem is happy with your work.”

### DO MORE

The burden of work was so great that it became unbearable. Mrs. Kalmanson poured out her heart to the Rebbe in yechidus, describing her workday from early morning till late at night. She worked hard while at home there were nine children. The Rebbe gave her a brief response, “The mosdos need to open a Gan Israel.”

This answer shocked her and the family. She had explained that she was collapsing under the workload and the Rebbe was telling her to start a new project! Who would run it? Where would the money come from to finance a Camp Gan Israel when they weren’t managing to cover the

budget of the school?

The Kalmansons didn’t argue. Gan Israel was founded in Aubervilliers the next summer. Jewish students who attended other schools came to the camp. Some of them were favorably impressed by Chabad and the directors of the camp, i.e. the Kalmansons, and registration for their school grew. Over the years, Gan Israel brought more and more students to their school and this increased the money they received from government sources. Thanks to Gan Israel they were also given a budget for a bus driver, a cook, and a cleaning person and Mrs. Kalmanson was relieved of some of the burden.

That was just one miracle out of many that the Kalmansons and the mosdos Shneur experienced over the years.

Rabbi Kalmanson was a baal chesed by nature and he had no interest in power and control. As the mosdos grew and he saw he could not handle it all, he wanted a young menahel to take over. He suggested various possibilities to the Rebbe, but received no response. He and his wife ran the mosdos for over



a decade. It was only when he suggested his son-in-law Rabbi Menachem Mendel Deitsch as a menahel that the Rebbe gave the okay. Rabbi Kalmanson handed over the reins to his son-in-law who immediately got to work expanding the mosdos and obtaining funding.

Eventually, the rest of their sons, daughters and in-laws began working at the mosdos and in the k'hilla in addition to others. Rabbi Sholom Mendel certainly didn't retire. He knew that the responsibility as the founder of the mosdos rested on him, and he continued to work on various fronts on behalf of the mosdos. This helped their expansion despite the difficulties and obstacles that stood in their way.

Rabbi Kalmanson saw much nachas from the mosdos in which over 500 students are presently learning. This is aside from the Chabad houses, shuls and other mosdos that operate within the Shneur community.

He had a sterling reputation. The authorities in France awarded him a special prize for his life's work on behalf of the Aubervilliers community. He also received a gold medal from the French government.

The Rebbe's relationship towards the work of Rabbi and Mrs. Kalmanson was very special. The family says that when their daughter Feige Levitin who lives in New Haven was about to give birth to her first child, her mother went to help her. Right after the birth, Mrs. Kalmanson went directly to 770 and had yechidus. Before she had a chance to tell the Rebbe the good news, the Rebbe wished her "mazel tov" and asked her how long she intended on remaining in the US.



A bracha from the Rebbe

When she said she planned on staying until after the bris, the Rebbe told her to leave for France right away. She was happy that the Rebbe so valued her work at the mosdos Shneur and the very next day she flew back to France.

Rabbi Sholom Mendel Kalmanson passed away a few weeks ago on 23 Kislev at the age of 89. Streets were closed off for his funeral which was attended by a large crowd of former students and people of all walks of life who, thanks to him, are religiously observant.

He is survived by his wife Mrs. Basya Kalmanson; and his children: Mrs. Baila Gansburg (Milan, Italy), Mrs. Rivka Lipsker (Crown Heights), Mrs. Rochel Bruchstat (Crown Heights), Mrs. Faige Levitin (New Haven, CT), Mrs. Leah Raskin (Australia), Mrs. Sterna Deitsch (Migdal HaEmek, Israel), Mrs. Chaya Nisselevich (Aubervilliers, France), Rabbi



A Pesach Sheini farbrengen in 5751 in Aubervilliers. From right to left: his sons-in-law, Rabbi Eliezer Nisselevich, Rabbi Belinov, his son Rabbi Meir Simcha, Rabbi Sholom Mendel, his son-in-law (partially obscured) Rabbi Menachem Mendel Deitsch

Meir Simcha Kalmanson (Aubervilliers, France) and Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Kalmanson (Aubervilliers, France).

*With thanks to the family and my friend, Rabbi Sholom Ber Friedland who helped me prepare this article.*

# HIJACKED!

By Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

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



## PHARAOH AND THE MIDWIVES

Pharaoh saw the incredible growth of the Jewish people in Egypt and conspired to reduce their numbers. His first strategy was to oppress them with back-breaking, slave labor. When that did not stunt their explosive growth he went to plan B. The Torah, in this week's parsha, then recounts how he attempted to get the Hebrew midwives to kill the newly born males. The two midwives—Shifra and Puah—defied Pharaoh and let the targeted babies live.

This story is replete with anomalies.

First, why did Pharaoh choose to murder only the male children? If his goal was to enslave the Jewish people he would have fared better to kill the females, which would prevent further births, and compel the males to become his slaves.

Second, even should Pharaoh have spared the girls, this would not have guaranteed the reduction of the population. All of the newborn females could have conceived from the multitude of boys and men who were already born. If he would have eliminated the female population it would have had a greater effect on reducing the population.

Third, why did Pharaoh ask the Hebrew midwives to murder the Jewish babies? He could have

sent in his own soldiers to carry out his bidding, which, indeed, he eventually resorted to when he decreed that all the male children be thrown into the Nile.

Fourth, when the Torah introduces the story of Pharaoh and the Hebrew midwives it repeats the words “he said”: “The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one who was named Shifra, and the second, who was named Puah. He said, ‘When you help the Hebrew women give birth, and you look on the birth stool, if it is a son, you shall put him to death, but if it is a daughter, she may live.’”

Fifth, according to our Oral tradition—which was subsequently recorded in the Talmud, and later cited by Rashi—these two midwives, Shifra and Puah, were actually Yocheved and Miriam, Moses’ mother and sister, respectively. Why does the Torah go out of its way to emphasize these “nicknames” rather than state their real names?

Sixth, as Ibn Ezra asks, surely there must have been more than two Hebrew midwives to serve all the Jewish women? Why then did he only summon these two?

## THE MODEL FOR FUTURE REDEMPTION

To answer all these questions it must be borne in mind that the Egyptian bondage and the

Exodus are recounted to help us deal with our own exile situation and to teach us the dynamics of exile and Redemption.

Pharaoh, the physical monarch, also represents the power vested in exile which does everything in its power to keep us ensconced in this exile mindset. To keep us in the exile mode, Pharaohs of our history initially believed persecution would suffice. Distract us from our spiritual pursuits by forcing us to think about our survival. Dampen our spirits by making life difficult.

In the modern context this approach is referred to as the “turbulent waters” which threaten to engulf us and extinguish our passion for G-d and for our need to extricate ourselves from exile.

## FLOURISHING IN EXILE

This approach failed miserably. Despite all of his efforts to subjugate the Jewish people and thereby decrease their numbers and their prospects to ever emerge from Egypt, Pharaoh realized that these people have an uncanny ability to flourish in times of persecution. The more they are oppressed the more they can elicit hidden powers that enable them to survive and even thrive.

In the modern day context, the distractions that come from



our need to survive economically are not enough to crush us. In the words of King Solomon, as explained in Chassidic thought, “The turbulent waters cannot extinguish the love.” On the contrary, these pressures elicit even deeper soul powers and passion for G-d which empower us to endure and to grow.

When Pharaoh sees that we can flourish in exile, empowering us to exercise control over exile and then subsequently break out of its mold, he has to come up with a new and “creative” idea to strengthen the grip of exile over us.

Pharaoh’s mind finally recognizes that there must be some external force that assists us in persevering and flourishing. If he could only tap into this force and harness it for his own nefarious objectives he would finally succeed in aborting the nascent process of Redemption.

### ENLISTING THE POWER OF REDEMPTION TO KEEP US IN EXILE!

Pharaoh’s ingenious and diabolical plan thus was to enlist the power of Redemption itself as an agent in continuing and deepening the exile.

What is the power of Redemption and where is it vested? Redemption is the power to resist. Redemption is the power to rebel against any and every power that tells us what to do. It is not so much the form of rebellion where one demonstrates in public but rather an inner fortitude that is impervious to all outside influences. So why not employ the rebellious spirit in the cause of staying in exile?

Pharaoh therefore enlisted the two most defiant individuals he could find, the women

whose lives were dedicated to bringing more Jewish life into the world and whose very nature and profession were all about liberation.

Pharaoh, therefore, chose midwives to carry out his plan, because women in general and midwives in particular are associated with the power of Redemption.

### THE POWER OF WOMEN

In Kabbala and Chassidic thought we are told that women in general are more in tune with Redemption and less affected by the outside world. The Talmud states, “Women are endowed with greater *bina* (understanding) than men.” The Divine attribute of *bina* is referred to in Kabbala

in the Talmud suggesting that Moshiach’s coming is dependent on the birth of all the souls that are destined to be born. Thus, the literal birth of a child is the physical medium through which the spiritual power of birth is channeled.

From all the Jewish midwives in Egypt, Pharaoh selected the two who personified the qualities of transcending exile conditions more than any other. Shifra and Puah, as stated, were actually Yocheved and Miriam. Yocheved was born as they entered into Egypt. She was the link between the world of freedom and the world of exile. She had the power to synthesize the two so that even in exile one is able to transcend it. Miriam, on the other hand,



**Pharaoh therefore cunningly (and ironically) asked the two most prominent and exile-defiant women to use their power to abort the entire process of Redemption!**

as “the world of freedom.” The Talmud explicitly attributes the exodus from Egypt to the merit and power of women. And the future Redemption, in particular, is deemed as the age in which the spiritual feminine characteristics will dominate.

But midwives in particular personify the idea of Redemption. The prophet Yechezkel describes the Exodus from Egypt as the birth of the Jewish nation. Our suffering in the last years of exile are said to be the “birth pangs” of Moshiach.

A midwife therefore symbolizes the liberating power of emerging out of exile into the world of freedom. This idea is buttressed by the statement

was a product of exile conditions; her very name means bitterness because she emerged at the time the bondage reached its harshest and lowest point. But despite these bitter conditions she was the prophetess who predicted the birth of Moses, the liberator of the Jews from bondage.

Pharaoh therefore cunningly (and ironically) asked the two most prominent and exile-defiant women to use their power to abort the entire process of Redemption!

What cleverer tactic could anyone have contrived? What more effective way to strengthen the exile than by enlisting the most powerful forces of liberation

in the cause of keeping the Jews in exile?

Pharaoh therefore asked to spare the women. He specifically wanted to keep the women (read: the forces of birth and liberation) alive to re-educate them to rebel against any emerging spirit of defiance. Rather than try to suppress the dynamic of liberation by taking it on directly, he would “hijack” it and direct it to destroy its own power.

### ENLISTING SHIFRA AND PUAH

This explains why the Torah uses the names of Shifra and Puah; these names reflect these midwives’ incredible life-sustaining powers which Pharaoh sought to enlist in his plan. Shifra, our Sages tell us, was so named because she would beautify the children at birth and Puah refers to her talent to soothe the children when they cried. These two traits are the two most exile negating traits. Beauty, in Kabbala teachings is the power of synthesis; it represents the dynamic of Redemption which blends the highest spiritual forces within the lowest realms of existence. And soothing the child refers to the power of women to take away the pain of exile.

But Pharaoh failed in this regard as well because, as the midwives told him, “The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are skilled as midwives. Before the midwife comes to them, they have already given birth.”

The question arises, if the Hebrew women gave birth before the midwives came, why was there a need for the midwives at all?

Obviously the midwives’ role was to assist in the birth

process and to help the mother and baby after the birth, but the actual birth did not require the midwife’s expertise.

### EVERY JEW(ISH WOMAN) A MIDWIFE

On the spiritual plane, the midwives’ response to Pharaoh was to refute his premise that Jewish resiliency and spiritual creativity emanated from an external source. In fact, the Hebrew women have an **innate** spiritual force that enables them to rise above the exile constraints and to bring a newborn into the world. The midwives are our spiritual mentors who assist us in recognizing our own potential. They might even be needed to assist in the birthing process. In addition, the spiritual midwives bring more beauty to our spirituality (Shifra) and comfort us with soothing words when exile conditions depress and discourage us (Puah). But when push comes to shove, it is the unique, innate G-dly energy that all Jewish women possess, in greater measure than men, which empowers them to release themselves and all of us out of exile.

### THE LESSONS

One of the lessons from the above is that there is a Pharaoh mentality that threatens to undermine the process of Redemption that we are now in.

A second lesson is that when this Pharaoh discovers he cannot beat us with the conventional method of distraction through oppression and anxiety associated with surviving he will attempt to get us to use our own natural resistance to exile and our rebellious spirit (our spiritual midwives) to abort the process of

Redemption.

This undermining dynamic can manifest itself by using Moshiach as a way to draw a wedge between one Jew and another. Moshiach is all about the unification of the Jewish people. We may have a solid belief in the imminence of the Redemption and be involved in efforts towards this end. But at the same time we may take these commendable traits to justify looking condescendingly at others who have not yet joined in this effort or who may have other ideas, right or wrong, to achieve our goal. This is Pharaoh’s attempt at using the midwives to abort the very process of Redemption.

Alternatively there are some whose level of Judaism is compromised because they feel incorrectly that the Messianic Age will no longer require Mitzvah observance. This mindset effectively takes the very force of liberation and places it in shackles. Moshiach itself then becomes a hostage to the forces of exile.

A third lesson is that every Jew, and particularly the women, is innately involved with the process of “birth” and of bringing Moshiach. Moshiach is not a foreign influence; it is an integral part of our consciousness that just needs to be awakened and cultivated properly.

A fourth lesson is that despite our natural desire for Moshiach, we do depend on the spiritual “midwives” or mentors, those whom the Rebbe directed all of us to follow. These mentors enhance our preparations for the Redemption and provide us with comfort and succor when the burdens of exile bear heavily on us—the Shifras and Puahs of the world.

# A CALL FROM RABBONIM TO SAVE YESHIVAS TOMCHEI TMIMIM LUBAVITCH – HA'KRAYOT

Dear Anash שיחיו,

This is the 15<sup>th</sup> year that Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim Lubavitch Ha'Krayot has been in existence. Today, it consists of a yeshiva ketana (high school) and a yeshiva gedola where it teaches the bachurim the way of pure faith in Hashem and His anointed one. It is a source of material and spiritual parnassa for dozens of families and through them, for the entire area.

Unfortunately, the yeshiva has fallen into dire financial straits. This not only makes the continued existence and expansion of the yeshiva difficult; it endangers the very existence of the yeshiva!

**Therefore, we turn to you with a heartfelt plea:**

**Please don't allow  
this holy mosad to collapse!**

Please donate generously and convince your friends to do likewise. Whether you give a lot or a little, every dollar adds up to a significant sum. With your help, we will be able to put the yeshiva back on its feet and provide tremendous nachas ruach to the Rebbe MH"M.

In the merit of your participation in saving the yeshiva through the mitzva of tzedaka, to support Torah and those who teach and learn it, Nigleh and Pnimityus Ha'Torah, may we all merit to be blessed from the Source of all blessings, with everything we need, with "children, life, and livelihood," in a generous way, and most importantly – the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH"M and the true and complete Geula, now!



Donations can be given to the Menahel of the yeshiva, Rabbi Eitan Pizem 050-464-6774 [chabadks@netvision.net.il](mailto:chabadks@netvision.net.il)  
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# REMEMBERING MY FATHER'S 'OY'

My grandfather's Gemara learning, my father's Shma ("Oy, Oy"), the chavrusa they had in Chassidus on Shabbos morning as the grandchildren listened avidly, especially when accompanied by a hot drink and cookies. \* Another chapter describing Heishke's childhood in which he did not cease fearing his father and yearning for him.

By Rabbi Yehoshua Dubrawski a"h

## TREMENDOUS FEAR AND GREAT ADMIRATION

Ever since I can remember, my father worked a lot. He worked as the head bookkeeper in a shoe factory called "Star of October," and he had no time to learn with me. When he was able to carve out some time on Shabbos or Yom Tov in order to learn with me, the learning was very brief. That was my fault. What interfered with our learning was my great fear of my father. I was so terrified that I became confused and scattered so that even he didn't know what he was saying.

My father would look at me with big eyes, in surprise, as though he had no idea what had happened to him. Sometimes, he would try to convey to me a deep concept, namely how Chassidus explains the traits of indulgence and self-importance that are characteristic of the "I." What tricks and convolutions the "yesh" uses in order to justify

concessions to the self and so on, until I would burst into tears of self-pity, and my father would sadly close the book.

Sometimes, with words of exceptional wisdom, my father would try to extract from me what made me so afraid. He would say that surely he was to blame, "Nu, tell me without fear, what makes your father so frightening?"

Very moved by this, I would burst into tears once again, out of great pity for my father.

Being someone with a highly developed tendency to ponder endlessly and to feel intensely, I thought a lot about my fears until I made a dismissive motion of my hand as one would do for a lost cause. But more than that, I thought about my father. I constantly observed him and the more my fear of him grew, so did my admiration of him, as I came to see his great Yiras Shamayim, his Chassidishkait and his authenticity.

I've already told you about an



incident with relatives who came from Leningrad and brought a rare treat that we couldn't dream about in our town – chocolate. My mother Malka (Monye) was afraid that the chocolate contained gentile milk. She asked Zeide-Rav, who allowed her to give some of the treat to my younger sisters. As for Heishke who was eight and had already reached the age of chinuch, "He would manage without the chocolate."

Despite my nonstop crying, my father did not allow me to have any chocolate and he added brusquely, "Such a little man with such a big yetzer ha'ra."

I'd like to add a detail to round out the picture:

When I did not cease wailing and repeating the word "chocolate" over and over, my father slapped me in the face. Just one slap, but my crying stopped instantly. I remember that in that slap I felt my father's pain and his pure Yiras Shamayim.

My wise grandfather made a joke that dispelled the tense atmosphere. "Nu, it's a topsy-turvy world. Usually the tears follow the slap and here the tears preceded the slap."

## WHO DESERVES A KISS

More than anything else, my father demanded that I be

G-d fearing: "Fear the Ribbono Shel Olam! The Ribbono Shel Olam is here!" As strange as it sounds, when my father stood and davened, without knowing why, I would feel more fearful that Hashem is here. I would daven better, skip less, more "*vi a mentch*" (like a mentch).

My father, like my grandfather, did not kiss often. He would seldom kiss his children. I heard that my father kissed the children when they were very young. He often kissed his t'fillin and tzitzis. I was not jealous of the t'fillin, but every so often I thought: How would I feel if I was a kid like other kids and my father would give me such a strong noisy kiss?

Zeide-Rav, Rabbi Mendel Dubrawski was also a big Yerei Shamayim. That's what all the Jews in town said, and I felt it as well. But I felt my father's fear of the Ribbono Shel Olam more powerfully and palpably.

In my small hometown, the house we shared with my grandparents wasn't small but my sister and I had to sleep in the kitchen. Zeide would sit and learn until very late at night, usually until well after midnight. I would also drift off to sleep very late. I was lazy about learning, but I loved to hear Zeide-Rav learn. The niggun he hummed as he learned, the Gemara that he read with such excitement, or the words of the Zohar, hypnotized me and sometimes seemed to rock me with a Gan Eden-like sweetness as I fell into a deep sleep.


During those nighttime hours on weekdays, in my improvised bed, I often saw my father reading the bedtime Shma. He did not take a long time, but as he stood facing a corner of the room and he whispered, I waited for

his "Oy." After he said, "Shma Yisroel .... Echad," he would lift his head with an "Oy," and when he said, "Ashamnu, Bagadnu ..." he would sometimes grasp his head with two hands and once again, sigh, somewhat differently, "Oy, Oy."

However, my father's learning maamarei Chassidus on Shabbos morning made a much stronger and sweeter impression on me in those formative years.

## SHABBOS MORNING AT HOME

On weekdays my father had little time to learn. When he managed to grab some time it was Gemara or Shulchan Aruch.

 **I was not jealous of the t'fillin, but every so often I thought: How would I feel if I was a kid like other kids and my father would give me such a strong noisy kiss?**

---

On Shabbos though, he only learned Chassidus; since I can remember, he learned Hemshech 5666 of the Rebbe Rashab out of handwritten copies. Why those maamarim? I don't know.

Whether or not my father had as nice a voice as I thought he did, I don't know, but either way, his learning Chassidus on Shabbos morning rang in my ears with all the notes and charm of distant, illuminated worlds. Included were Chassidic words and expressions that seemed especially moving and awe-inspiring such as "*malchus d'Atzilus*," and "*leis machshava tefisa bei*," and the like.

It also had another effect on me, not so spiritual, and perhaps it is childish and foolish

to mention it. In the better years of my bitter childhood, Shabbos morning before davening was the nicest and best time in my life and the lives of my sisters. All the children loved to hear how my grandfather and father learned Chassidus, but in those "better" years there was, on the (dairy) tablecloth something else which they loved.

In our great poverty they barely heard of real coffee. On Shabbos we permitted ourselves to drink "chicory" (ersatz coffee made from oak tree acorns). Bubbe would serve a jar of chicory and whiten it with a drop of the little bit of boiled, tasteless milk. If luck was shining on us, there would also be some sugar

and Bubbe (or my mother) would have baked cookies. We children could not imagine that there was something tastier and more Shabbos'dig than a cup of sweet chicory and cookies.

When my father learned Chassidus out loud, his appearance changed. His dark, big eyes had a warm expression that was full of life. It was another face. A lot of my constant fear of him dissipated at this time. If I would not have been shy (I was as shy as I was fearful, and perhaps these traits were one and the same) I would have caressed my father's hand on the table.

## THE MAVEN ON "FRUMMIES"

In town there was a Jew,

**“When my father learned Chassidus out loud, his appearance changed. His dark, big eyes had a warm expression that was full of life. It was another face.**

a remnant of the haskala era intelligentsia with the comportment of a wealthy man from the period preceding the communist revolution. How does a Jew preserve his wealth at a time like this? Apparently, he had buried a treasure of *chazeirim'lech* (the Yiddish vernacular for golden ten ruble coins), but another reason and the main reason is that his children were big wheels in the

NKVD in Moscow.

The man, Bereh Slutch was his name, even during the miserable 30's, when a pair of pants was a significant "possession," would wear white shirts with stiffly starched collars and golden cufflinks.

He had a sharp mind and the "tongue of Bilam," and he would mock religious Jews and Chassidim of which there were so few surviving in Russia.

However, he was impressed by my father: "What a smart man! What a successful person! What a good bookkeeper! Even today's big-shots admire him so much! He is very knowledgeable in Russian, Ukrainian and more."

I also heard that he told one of his fawning admirers, "More than anything else, I am amazed by his honesty. Lipa is the embodiment of truth. He is truly G-d fearing, a big Yerei Shamayim. I am a big maven in 'frummies.' You know the joke – he is actually shaven but his beard hides it, but by Lipa, his dark eyes are full of Yiras Shamayim, genuine piety, which is reflected in his long beard that is black as coal."

#### Continued from page 42

his accomplishments. In other words, Mommy and I love you just because you are our child, but we'd be awfully disappointed if you acted like a two year old instead of an eleven year old. In fact, I think *you* wouldn't feel too good about it either. Of course, if you insist, we can give you a pacifier and a crib to sleep in..."

Moishy snorted, "No thank you! I don't really want to be a baby!"

"That's good," interjected Mommy. "Somehow I don't think you would fit in the crib."

"Since you mentioned the

phrase from the parsha, what I just told you applies to the Jewish People as well. There are other p'sukim that refer to B'nei Yisroel as a small child, portraying Hashem Yisborach's unconditional love for the Jewish people. 'My son my firstborn, Yisroel' expresses Hashem Yisborach's pride in the accomplishments of His people. The Rebbe explains that just as both aspects are true in a grown child, they are also found in small children. Small children are always asking 'How' and 'Why' because they are future scholars, and for the same reason, they can never sit still, as it says 'talmidei chachomim have no rest; they go

from strength to strength."

Tzvi, who had wandered out of the room, came back at this point. He had a towel over his head and was singing "ay yay yay" like an experienced Kohen. Moishy laughed along with everyone else at the table.

With Moishy still on his knee, Tatty gathered up Tzvi on to the other knee.

"I think that I'll soon need a wider tallis, what do you think, Moishy?"

"Tatty, I'm sure the three of us will fit just fine."

*The above story is fictional. The lesson is based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 21 p. 20-26.*

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# SPEAKER ON SHLEIMUS HAARETZ

Want an interesting speaker on the controversial topic of “Peace in the Middle East?”



**W**e recommend Attorney Mark Langfan as an expert who can explain the fallacies of Israel’s Peace Plan.

Recently, New York Attorney Mark Langfan addressed shluchim who came from around the world to attend the annual Lubavitch conference of Shluchim.

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Mark is a crusader with

an irrefutable point that the Lubavitcher Rebbe has brought home again and again: Land for Peace will never work. He doesn’t blame Arabs. He doesn’t blame Jews. He doesn’t even blame Obama or Iran.

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Process has no answer for and totally ignores.

He describes what is being given away. He shows you what cheap World War II vintage weapons are being smuggled in. He illustrates, based on press reports, what they are presently being used for. One is left wondering how it is that Israel cannot possibly be unaware of the danger of giving away land.

Our staff was very impressed with Mr. Langfan. We highly recommend Mr. Langfan as a speaker for your Chabad House. At great personal expense, Mark has produced his descriptive materials in Hebrew, French, Spanish, Russian, Portuguese and even Indian. Mark encourages people to “steal my material” by going to his website: [www.MarkLangfan.com](http://www.MarkLangfan.com).

To schedule a speaking engagement call: (212) 832-0200 or email: [Mapmun@aol.com](mailto:Mapmun@aol.com) or [IsraelTopographicMap@mac.com](mailto:IsraelTopographicMap@mac.com).

Raanan Isseroff – [Raanan@chabad4israel.org](mailto:Raanan@chabad4israel.org)



# MY SON MY FIRSTBORN

By M.E. Gordon

Outside was dark, cold, and windy. Moishy had just come home from shul with his father. He rubbed his frozen hands together before attempting to unbutton his Shabbos coat. At the sound of their voices, little Tzvi came toddling into the hallway. Tzvi reached out his arms to his father, babbling excitedly, “Tata, ood Abas.”

Tatty laughed, picked up Tzvi and gave him a hug. “Good Shabbos, to you, too, Ziskait.”

Moishy put away his coat, and stepped into the dining room. His mother and sisters were already at the table, waiting for Kiddush. Tatty came in, still carrying Tzvi. “Good Shabbos, good Shabbos. Moishy, are you ready to help me sing Sholom Aleichem?”

Moishy was the eldest child, and until Tzvi was born two years earlier, he had been the only boy. He enjoyed being his father’s ‘right hand man’ as his mother put it, going with him to shul, singing at the Shabbos table, and helping him pick out a lulav and esrog for Sukkos. Most special of all was standing next to his father, at the front of the shul, with their hands raised to bless the people with the priestly blessing. Moishy wondered how long it would be before Tzvi would be old enough to join them. He couldn’t imagine how they would both fit under his father’s tallis.

After Kiddush and Challa, Tzvi climbed onto his father’s lap. Tatty smiled at Tzvi, and Tzvi responded with a babbled version of his father’s favorite niggun. Tatty winked at Moishy and

started singing along with Tzvi. Moishy grimaced and held his hands over his ears, to block out the discordant noise. He couldn’t understand why everyone else at the table was either singing along or smiling.

The song ended when the soup was brought in. Tatty gave Tzvi a gentle squeeze and a kiss on the top of his head before putting him into his own chair. “There you go, Ziskait, time for some Shabbos soup.”

Tatty turned to Moishy. “Moishy, you didn’t sing with us, but maybe you could tell us what you learned about the Parsha this week.”

“I’m in the parsha!” answered Moishy.

“You’re being silly,” piped up Chani. “You may be Moishy Katz, but you’re not Moshe Rabbeinu!”

“No, besides Moshe Rabbeinu. The parsha talks about ‘my son, my firstborn, Yisroel,’ and I’m your son, your firstborn, aren’t I?”

“Of course you are!”

“Then why do you love Tzvi more than me?” At this Moishy burst into tears.

Tatty looked bewildered. “Do you really think that I love Tzvi more than you? Come, Moishy, come sit on my lap.” Tatty held Moishy close to him and Moishy buried his face in his father’s shirt, embarrassed that he was acting like a baby, but enjoying his father’s embrace.

“Now tell me, Moishy, why do you think that I love Tzvi

more? Parents love each of their children as if he or she was their only child.”

“...But you’re always picking up Tzvi and smiling at him when he does the silliest thing. Even when he makes trouble, you just laugh. If I would pour cereal all over my head like he does, you would make me clean it all up! And you never expect Tzvi to know the parsha, or to learn Mishnayos by heart. You don’t even expect him to share his toys!”

Tatty rubbed Moishy’s back for a few minutes before attempting to answer such a serious accusation. Finally, he cleared his throat and began. “Moishy, what I said before is true. A parent loves each child uniquely; however, that love is expressed differently at different stages in that child’s life. A parent feels a deep, unconditional love for his child, because of their essential connection to each other. This love is more obvious when the child is a baby. A parent shows deep affection for the baby, who is not yet capable of doing anything to earn affection. As a child grows older, parents show appreciation for the things the child can do, like learning, and developing good traits.

“No matter how old the child is, the essential, unconditional love is still there, although it may not always be expressed. As the child develops, his parent’s love for him is usually expressed in connection with

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