



8



16



22

FEATURED ARTICLES

8 RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD ON MOTZAEI PURIM

Menachem Ziegelboim

16 NASI AND CHASSID ON PURIM

Menachem Ziegelboim

22 FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE AND DEVOTION

26 WHEN YOU REALLY WANT IT

Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz

29 YIDDISH AND/OR YIDDISHKAIT

Rabbi Levi Goldstein

34 THE PURIM MAAMER THAT WAS SAID TWICE

WEEKLY COLUMNS

4 D'var Malchus

13 Parsha Thought

21 Viewpoint

37 Young Chassid

38 Moshiach & Geula

Beis Moshiah (USPS 012-542) ISSN 1082-0272 is published weekly, except Jewish holidays (only once in April and October) for \$160.00 in Crown Heights, USA \$180.00. All other places for \$195.00 per year (45 issues), by Beis Moshiah, 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY and additional offices. Postmaster: send address changes to Beis Moshiah 744 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409. Copyright 2012 by Beis Moshiah, Inc.

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POURING OUT THE BLESSING OF REDEMPTION

The Zohar's statement begs the well-known question: How can it be said that women are "exempt from Mitzvos"? Women are actually obligated in the majority of the Mitzvos! * The Kos Shel Bracha of the Future Era entails the revelation of the essence of G-d, which is connected with the essence of a Jew, a Jew's inner core which transcends Torah and Mitzvos.

Translated by Boruch Merkur

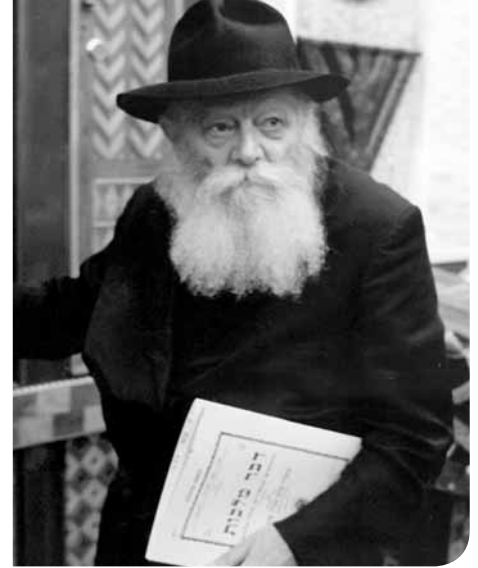
EVERYONE IS OBLIGATED IN KOS SHEL BRACHA

1. My revered father, in his notes on the Zohar, devotes much attention to the verse, cited in the classic mystical text's commentary on this week's Torah portion, "And it shall be at the end of days that the mountain of the House of G-d shall be firmly established at the top of the mountains, and it shall be raised above the hills, and all the nations shall stream to it" (Yeshaya 2:2). The Zohar asks: "Who is the 'top of the mountains (*rosh ha'harim*; literally "head" of the mountains)'? This refers to Avrohom, etc. Since he is the head, it is proper that the *Kos Shel Bracha* (Cup of Benediction, the cup of wine upon which *Birkas HaMazon*, Grace after Meals, is said) shall be 'at the top of the mountains, etc.'"

The Zohar continues (expounding on the continuation of the verse, "And it shall be in the end of days, etc."): "All the nations shall gather towards him' – to what does this refer?" The Zohar answers, the intent here is to include [in answering "amen" to *Birkas HaMazon*] "even women and children, as well as the one who serves the meal. That is, even though the servant did not partake of the meal, he needs to listen and answer 'amen,' etc." The Zohar offers an alternate interpretation: "All the nations shall gather towards him' – although women and children are exempt from Mitzvos, everyone is obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*, etc."

WOMEN ARE EXEMPT FROM MITZVOS?!

2. The Zohar's statement, "although women (and children) are exempt from Mitzvos,



everyone is obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*, etc.," begs the well-known question: How can it be said that women are "exempt from Mitzvos"? Women are actually obligated in the majority of the Mitzvos!

It is impossible to say that by, "[they] are exempt from Mitzvos," the Zohar is only referring to children and not women, for then it would not have been necessary to mention women at all here. By the same token, men are not mentioned in this context inasmuch as there is nothing novel in saying that men are obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*.

The resolution to this difficulty is as follows. "Exempt from Mitzvos" is only said here with regard to the requirement of *Birkas HaMazon*. That is, there are two opinions proposed in the Gemara as to what extent women are obligated in *Birkas HaMazon*. According to one opinion, the obligation is of Biblical origin, whereas another opinion maintains that it is a Rabbinical decree.

Thus, the statement, "although women...are exempt from Mitzvos, everyone is obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*," can be understood in two ways: a) The Zohar follows the ruling that women are **not** Biblically

obligated in *Birkas HaMazon* [nevertheless, they are still “obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*”]; b) the opinion of the Zohar is that women **are** Biblically obligated in *Birkas HaMazon*, nevertheless, even according to the second Talmudic opinion – that women are **not** Biblically obligated in *Birkas HaMazon* – “everyone is obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*,” in precisely the same manner as those who are Biblically obligated in *Birkas HaMazon*. That is, *Kos Shel Bracha* is [equally] applicable to all Jewish people – men, women, and children.

It remains to be explained, however, why this is so, why “women and children are exempt from Mitzvos” yet they are obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha* just like men. [...]

KOSI REVAYA: THE CUP OF MOSHIACH

3. This topic will be elucidated in light of a discussion of the general concept of *Kos Shel Bracha*, the Cup of Benediction, which can be observed at various spiritual levels.

When we speak about a regular cup, the cup in question can, of course, vary significantly in size. It can be a small cup, a medium-sized cup, a large cup, or the greatest cup of all, “*kosi revaya* (my cup quenches thirst)” (of Moshiach the King), which holds 221 *lugin* (221 being the numerical equivalent of “*revaya*”).

So too regarding *Kos Shel Bracha* – it can be observed at a variety of levels, including the greatest level, the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era, which will also be the *kosi revaya*, holding 221 *lugin*, numerically



“Jews are “a veritable part of G-d above,” and “the essence, when you grasp part of it, you grasp it all.” Therefore when you “grasp” a Jew here in this material world, you “grasp,” as it were, the very essence of G-d!

equivalent to “*arich* (long, great),” which alludes to Arich Anpin, a level of Divinity that transcends all other concepts, including the intellect. [...]

In fact, it is from this level [the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era, the unparalleled height of Arich Anpin] that the future redemption emerges.

Since the Zohar on this week’s Torah portion speaks about the state that will be in “the end of days,” in the future redemption, it is logical to say that when the Zohar speaks about the *Kos Shel Bracha* in this context, the intent is with regard to the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era.

WHY CHILDREN ARE OBLIGATED IN KOS SHEL BRACHA

4. Accordingly we can explain why the Zohar says that although children are exempt from Mitzvos they are obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*:

Children [as well as women; see footnote in the original text] accelerate the advent of Moshiach, as is written in the Zohar on the verse in Shir HaShirim, “The blossoms have appeared in the land, the time of singing has arrived, and the voice of the turtledove (the redemption) is heard in our land’: ‘The blossoms have

appeared in the land’ refers to Jewish children.” Thus, they are also obligated (they have a portion) in the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era (which the Zohar is speaking about here).

BUT HOW DO THEY HAVE AN EQUAL PORTION?

5. However, at first glance it remains to be explained:

The general principle that all the revelations of the Future Era are dependent upon our deeds and our service throughout the duration of the present era is a well-known concept. But since “women and children are exempt from Mitzvos,” they therefore don’t have “our deeds and our service” per se.

(It is true that they are involved in all the Mitzva Campaigns. (Women even participate in the T’fillin Campaign by influencing men to wrap t’fillin.) And through “our deeds” – especially general, central activities, such as the Mitzva Campaigns – they bring our righteous Moshiach. This merit, however, extends to women and children only insofar as they influence others; it is not fulfilled in them personally.)

On this basis [i.e., since their “deeds and service” are not equal to those of men], how is it possible to say that women and children have an equal portion in (the revelations of) the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future?

THE HUSBAND FULFILLS MITZVOS ON BEHALF OF HIS WIFE

6. With regard to women, it is possible to answer according to what is discussed in the works of the Arizal – that the reason why women are exempt from positive,

timely Mitzvos is because their husbands fulfill them on their behalf. For a woman embodies Malchus [Kingship, the lowest of the ten Divine Attributes, which serves as a recipient from the higher Attributes] and a woman’s husband embodies Zeir Anpin [the six emotional Attributes, which channel G-dliness into Malchus]. Since the husband fulfills Mitzvos at the level of Zeir Anpin, this automatically affects Malchus. (In fact, it is thus done in a more profound manner – by way of Zeir Anpin, which transcends Malchus.)

However, regarding children, who are likewise exempt from Mitzvos, the question still stands: how are they privy to the revelation of the Future Era?

But also regarding women:

From the very fact that the Zohar emphasizes this concept – that women (and children) are exempt from Mitzvos – it is understood that their obligation in *Kos Shel Bracha* is not because Mitzvos pertain to them as well (through their husbands) but that their exemption from Mitzvos does not interfere with this revelation.

KOS SHEL BRACHA: THE REVELATION OF THE VERY ESSENCE OF G-D

7. The resolution of the matter:

This concept (of the *Kos Shel Bracha*) of the Future Era entails the revelation of the essence of G-d (as explained in several places in Pri Eitz Chayim, in the Future Era the inner aspect of Atika Kadisha will be revealed), which is connected with the essence of a Jew, a Jew’s inner core which transcends Torah and Mitzvos, for the connection and unity of a Jew with the

very essence and being of G-d entirely transcends revelations. It is impossible for G-d’s essence to be grasped through the intellectual faculties of Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge, through the Emotional Attributes, nor through the three garments of the soul, thought, speech, and action. Rather, this is a connection and unity of essence to essence [the essence of a Jew with the very essence of G-d]. Jews are “a veritable part of G-d above,” and “the essence, when you grasp part of it, you grasp it all.” Therefore when you “grasp” a Jew here in this material world, you “grasp,” as it were, the very essence of G-d!

Thus, the revelation of this connection, which comprises the concept of the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era, is present in every Jew equally – including woman and children, who are exempt from Mitzvos – for this is a connection that entirely transcends Torah and Mitzvos.

As discussed above in the *maamer* (beginning with the words “V’Ata Im Matzatzi Chein B’Einecha, etc.,” which is founded on the *maamer* of the same opening words of 5678, as well as the *maamer* of the Tzemach Tzedek on the same verse, which speaks about these concepts (and they have other *drushim* connected with this, as well)) regarding *chein* (grace), which is even higher than an initiative from below (and the service of Torah and Mitzvos). Thus, the concept of *chein* extends even to children and babies.

In fact, since there is no concept of Mitzvos regarding children (as well as women), the concept of *chein* is more revealed in them, stemming from the very essence.

THE ZOHAR: DISPELLING MISCONCEPTIONS

8. The following lesson in serving G-d can be derived from the Zohar discussed above:

Since the redemption is dependent upon “our deeds and our Divine service” in the present era, one may be led to believe that this detracts from the importance of working with children, for children are “exempt from Mitzvos.” Similarly regarding women: They say that Mitzva T’fillin, for example, brings the redemption, but women have no obligation to put on *t’fillin*. A woman’s connection with the redemption, therefore, appears to be limited.

To dispel these misconceptions, the Zohar teaches that even though women and children are exempt from Mitzvos, “everyone is obligated” in the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Messianic Era, for everything related to the redemption is in fact equally relevant to all Jews. The redemption is connected with a Jew’s essence, which transcends even Torah and Mitzvos, and when we speak about a Jew’s essence, all Jews are equal. Moreover, since children (as well as women) have the power to dramatically speed up the redemption, it is actually incredibly important to devote one’s efforts towards them.

The same lesson applies to adults. When a Jew is approached and encouraged to participate in singing “we want Moshiach now,” for he will thereby speed up the redemption – he argues that it is first necessary to accumulate Torah and Mitzvos to prepare to welcome Moshiach Tzidkeinu. We must tell this Jew that in essence, Moshiach is beyond

“It is irrelevant whether he sat and struggled for three hours at the farbrengen to stay awake... The fact is that even if he sleeps during the farbrengen, he will still get a portion of Kos Shel Bracha. And what a Kos Shel Bracha – Kosi Revaya!

all considerations of Torah and Mitzvos. In this respect, when Moshiach comes, it is irrelevant whether he had put on *t’fillin* on the eve of Shabbos, whether he made Kiddush by day (on Shabbos), whether he sat and struggled for three hours at the farbrengen to stay awake... The fact is that even if he sleeps during the *farbrengen*, he will still get a portion of *Kos Shel Bracha*. And what a *Kos Shel Bracha* – *Kosi Revaya*!

(Similarly with regard to what Rambam writes at the conclusion of the Laws of Kings and their Wars – that in the Future Era there will be “delicacies commonly available, like dust.” As a result of this great, universal abundance, every single person will have a share in the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the redemption.)

THE JEWISH SPARK - IN THE WAITER

9. An additional lesson is derived from this teaching in the Zohar:

Prior to saying, “although women and children are exempt from Mitzvos, everyone is obligated in *Kos Shel Bracha*,” the Zohar relates: “Even...a servant who serves food – even though he doesn’t partake of the meal – he too needs to give voice and say *amen*, etc.” Every Jew has a connection to the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era, even the person who serves the meal, the waiter. The reason for this is,

as above, on account of the fact that he too – the waiter – has the *etzem*, the essential Jewish spark.

From here we learn a simple lesson: Even if there is a person whose role it is to simply serve the meal— He doesn’t [participate in the meal, meaning he doesn’t] serve G-d at all; he only endeavors to provide others with food and drink, so that they should be able to imbibe Torah and Mitzvos, etc., in a manner that Rashi says, “like a table that is set and prepared, from upon which people may eat.” Even this person has a connection with the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era.

For at first glance, he has done nothing to improve his spiritual condition. He did not repent and return to G-d, he did not fulfill Torah and mitzvos, and he is, at first glance, lacking in the concept of “our deeds and our Divine service” of the present times! However, from here we see how the revelation of the Future Era will entirely transcend the concept of Torah and Mitzvos, and how at that time, the very essence of a Jew’s soul will be revealed, the Jewish spark that is connected with the essence and being of G-d Himself, and it will be revealed how the essence entirely transcends Torah and Mitzvos. Thus, he too will participate in the *Kos Shel Bracha* of the Future Era.

(From the address of Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa 5741)

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD ON MOTZAEI PURIM

By Menachem Ziegelboim

“When a Jew opens his eyes and sees the miracles and wonders Hashem does for him, surely he should feel grateful and thank and praise Hashem. This is why I am publicizing my personal story, in order to give thanks and praise to Hashem, especially now, Purim time, when we praise Hashem for the miracles He did for us,” began Rabbi Benzion Korf of Miami.

The experience Rabbi Benzion refers to was a tremendous miracle in which his and his brother’s lives were saved. Every year, on the day marking the miracle, he retells the story.

PESACHYA WAS IN THE BURNING HOUSE

Purim 5749.

Purim is a day packed with mitzvos, acts of chesed, and mishloach manos, in addition to the mitzvos of the Megilla and feasting and going on mitzvaim. For those living in Crown Heights in the Rebbe’s presence, there were also t’fillos and the Megilla reading with the Rebbe.

That year, Purim fell out on a Tuesday. There were two sichos from the Rebbe and then, with an especially glowing countenance, he distributed dollars for tz’daka.

That was, more or less, the busy day that Benzion had. He was a young boy at the time of this story, about half a year after his bar mitzva. Following the morning reading of the Megilla in the Rebbe’s minyan, he delivered his family’s mishloach manos. Then, as the class representative, he delivered mishloach manos to his teacher, Rabbi Nachman Yosef Twerski. Later in the day he enjoyed the Purim seuda with his family.

The Rebbe said two sichos, one after Mincha and another on Motzaei Purim after Maariv. Then his family went to Flatbush to attend another Purim seuda with Mrs. Korf’s family.

No wonder then, that when he returned home he recited Krias Shma and fell exhausted into bed. His father, the mashpia Reb Pinye, and his older brothers, went to farbrengens in the neighborhood in order to

continue to draw upon the great spiritual treasures available on Purim.

Benzion doesn’t know how long he slept when he heard his mother screaming, “Fire!” He hadn’t heard the smoke alarm that began chirping loudly a few moments earlier. His younger brothers continued sleeping. It was only their mother who woke up to the sound of the alarm and saw the flames.

Benzion jumped out of bed. “I just got up and ran. I didn’t think anything, just about fleeing the flames. I left my glasses on the table as well as my new t’fillin.”

His five year old brother Berel woke up and ran out of the house. It all happened extremely quickly. “At a time like that, there isn’t much time to think. It was only after we had left the house that we realized to our horror that my eight year old brother Pesachya was still indoors. We wanted to go back in and get him, but the house had filled with smoke and it was impossible to enter.”

The Korf family knocked on their neighbors’ door.



Illustration

Their neighbor Rabbi Yehuda Benchemhoun tried to enter the house, but the smoke made it too dangerous to enter. Reb Pinye and the older brothers were at farbrengens and nobody knew precisely where they were.

Fire engines soon filled the street along with people from Hatzalah. Mrs. Korf reported to them about her eight year old who was still inside.

"I was standing on the street in my pajamas. It was very cold. My neighbor, Yossi Piamenta, gave me his coat. I was a skinny thirteen year old while he was many sizes bigger than me, but at a time like that who thinks about such details. My younger brother Berel was taken to the home of Ben-David across the street. I wanted to go to my sister's house, not far away, but someone dissuaded me, saying I shouldn't tell her the news so late at night. He took me instead to the home of Rabbi Leibel Groner across the street. The firemen worked a long time on dousing the flames until they finally put it out.

“People who knew the story would point at Pesachya and say to his father, ‘He’s not your child; he’s the Rebbe’s child.’”

"Rabbi Leibel was a gracious host but how could I sleep after what had happened? Early in the morning I went with him to my house to see what was going on there. I was shocked to see that the fire had been in my room, very close to my bed. Until that point I hadn't known that, because when I had fled the burning house I hadn't even seen the fire. I ran out only because of my mother's screams. Now I saw that the fire had started in my room due to an electrical short. I realized what a miracle it was that I had been saved.

"I was allowed to go inside and I saw that my room was completely burned; nothing remained. Not my new t'fillin, nor the many s'farim I had received as gifts just half a year earlier. That really upset me, as well as the loss of the letter from the Rebbe I had received for my bar mitzva and

the diary I had written over the past year and a half which had all the Chassidic stories I heard during that time. (My brother-in-law in Eretz Yisroel called me after the fire to console me. In his subtle humorous way he said that the Chabad Rebbeim and big Chassidim had also suffered fires in which their handwritten manuscripts were destroyed.)

"I called my uncle who lived nearby and asked him to bring me his son's clothes so I would have something decent to wear. Then I went to Shacharis wearing clothes that didn't exactly fit me, without my t'fillin and without my glasses. I could hardly see where I was going.

"Later on, Rabbi Groner told me that when he told the Rebbe in the morning what had happened, the Rebbe was very interested in the details, especially about my brother Pesachya."

THE DOCTORS DESPAIRED

What happened to Pesachya? The Hatzalah members who were there at the time call it an open miracle. Rabbi Pesachya himself had this to say:

“I was also woken up by my mother’s screams. I even saw the fire and began to run. Afterward, we realized there was a series of miracles. That night, it ‘so happened’ that I did not sleep in my bed but in the room next door. The fire had started because of an electrical short, which was right where my head usually was. If I had been in that room, I would have been immediately burned by



Rabbi Benzion Korf

despaired, we insisted they continue treating him and do all they could to save him. At a certain point, they said that the only way to remove the smoke and soot from his lungs was by means of a special machine that exerts pressure on the lungs and extracts the junk. It was available only at a hospital in the Bronx, which is forty minutes away. In Pesachya’s precarious condition, it wasn’t possible to drive him there.”

Despite the late hour, Yingy called Rabbi Gluck in Williamsburg and asked him to use his connections to get a helicopter to take Pesachya to the hospital in the Bronx.

“When the doctors saw I had been able to arrange for a helicopter, they informed me that they had another two patients in the hospital that were in critical condition due to smoke inhalation. They asked for a helicopter big enough to take three patients.

“I made some more phone calls and it was arranged. Within a short time, a large helicopter had landed in the park near the hospital where three ambulances were waiting. After a flight of a few minutes, the helicopter landed at the hospital in the Bronx and Pesachya was quickly taken to be hooked up to the machine.

“The treatment stabilized his condition somewhat but the doctors were still pessimistic.”

THE REBBE’S DOLLARS

On the evening of that first day, Wednesday, Motzaei Shushan Purim, the Rebbe said a sicha and then gave out dollars. Most unusually, the Rebbe gave out three dollars to whoever passed by. Among those who were there was Reb Pinye Korf

“The doctor who had treated him was invited to his bar mitzva. He described the hours when none of them believed he would survive, but G-d willed otherwise and he received his life as a gift. The gentile fireman who brought Pesachya out of the burning house was also invited. He was asked to speak but he declined, saying that it was not he who had saved the child but the Rebbe.

the flames.

“For some reason, although I ran with the others, I held back for a reason I am not sure about till this day. Then the house suddenly filled with black, choking smoke. You could not see anything. The second miracle is that I went under my mother’s bed without knowing why. It turned out that this location saved my life.

“I quickly lost consciousness. I don’t know what happened next, but they told me later that the firemen arrived long after the fire began. They burst into the house and after extensive searching they found me under the bed. When they took me out,

they could not find a pulse. A long time had passed from the time the fire began until they found me.”

The neighbor, Rabbi Yehuda Benchemoun, said that when he saw them take Pesachya out, he knew it was all over. The doctors who were there also said he was a goner.

Hatzalah immediately put him on oxygen. He was brought to Kings County hospital but the doctors said there was nothing they could do.

NIGHT FLIGHT

Yingy Bitritzky of Hatzalah relates:

“Although the doctors

who asked for a bracha for a refua shleima for his son. The Rebbe said, “Refua shleima, u’refua krova” (a complete recovery and a speedy recovery).

After distributing dollars, the Rebbe (as usual) put the identical number of dollars that he had given out into his Siddur. He then waved his hand to encourage the singing and began walking out of the shul. Near the Aron Kodesh two people who had come late stopped the Rebbe. The Rebbe turned to Rabbi Groner who gave him dollars from the bundle he had. The Rebbe continued walking towards the exit.

On the side, not far from the exit, stood Reb Pinye davening Maariv and here is where something extraordinary took place:

When the Rebbe noticed him, he veered from his normal path, turned to Reb Pinye and asked, “Did you take [dollars] for your son?” Reb Pinye, who was in the middle of davening, shook his head no. The Rebbe opened his Siddur and took out the three dollars and gave them to Reb Pinye and said, “Your son should put them in a pushka.”

“That is when my father knew that I would live,” said Rabbi Pesachya.

HE’S ALIVE!

Reb Pinye arrived at his son’s bed in the middle of the night. It was silent except for the whoosh of the respirator.

“I suddenly heard a voice calling me,” said Rabbi Pesachya. “It said, ‘Pesachya! The Rebbe sent you dollars for you to give to tz’daka.’ I heard this as though in a deep dream, from a faraway world **and I got up!** I opened my eyes and saw my father standing there with the dollars in his hand.



Pesachya and his father receiving dollars from the Rebbe



Rabbi Pesachya with his father, Rabbi Pinye Korf

In 5762, about thirteen years after the fire, Pesachya went to downtown Brooklyn for jury duty. He encountered a gentile fireman who was putting out a fire that had broken out in a building in the area. Pesachya asked him whether he knew a fireman by the name of ... and the man said he did. Pesachya told him that the fireman in question had saved his life and requested that the man should convey Pesachya's regards. The fireman asked, "You're the one the rabbi saved?"

For many years, when Pesachya was a boy, he joined his father on mitzvaim on Utica Avenue. People who knew the story would point at Pesachya and say to his father, "He's not your child; he's the Rebbe's child."

Rabbi Pesachya relates:

In 5762 there was a Kinus Achdus in honor of 11 Nissan, and Eastern Parkway was closed for the occasion. As chairs were being set up, I overheard a conversation between two gentile policemen. One of them was apparently newer to the area than the other and he said, "It's a shame that they are putting in all this effort when it's going to pour soon." The veteran replied, "I've been working here for many years and I attended many of their parades (referring to Lag B'Omer). When their Rebbe wants it, no rain falls despite the weather forecasts."

It was two in the morning. With my father's help, I put the dollars in a pushka.

"Then I heard voices exclaiming, 'He's alive! He's alive!'"

Doctors rushed in and examined him. Then they anesthetized him in order to remove the respirator and on Friday, 17 Adar, he was completely conscious, to the joy of his parents, family, and residents of Crown Heights who had heard the frightening story.

"When I woke up, I remembered that my birthday

was the following Thursday. I told my parents that I wanted to go for dollars on Sunday and to get a bracha from the Rebbe for my birthday, as I did every year. My family as well as the doctors and nurses tried to dissuade me, but I insisted. I told my parents that on Sunday I would get a bracha from the Rebbe. The doctors warned me that if I left the hospital, it would be against their medical advice and I would not be allowed to come back for further treatment. I said that it was the Rebbe who had saved my life and not the doctors, and I relied on him.

"My parents had no choice but to sign the form, and Sunday morning I was there for dollars and I asked the Rebbe for a bracha for my birthday. The Rebbe said, 'Zolst zain a groiser Chassid, a groiser lamdan, a groiser yerei Shamayim' (You should be a big Chassid, a big scholar, and a big Yerei Shamayim)."

Within a short time, Pesachya had fully recovered. He went back to yeshiva right after Pesach. The doctor who had treated him was invited to his bar mitzva. He spoke and described the hours when none of them believed he would survive, but G-d willed otherwise and he received his life as a gift. The gentile fireman who brought Pesachya out of the burning house was also invited. He was asked to speak but he declined, saying that it was not he who had saved the child but the Rebbe.

Rabbi Benzion concluded the story:

"We need to pay attention to see how Hashem, with His great kindness, fulfills our requests and gives us what we need. If we just open our eyes a bit, we will see divine providence and how, with Hashem's help, everything ultimately works out. We need to be grateful and thank and praise Hashem for all the good He does for us."

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FROM ROSH YESHIVA TO REBBE

By Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

Director of the Jewish Discovery Center of Buffalo, NY



MOSES' RADIANT FACE

Moses' return from his forty day stay on Mount Sinai to receive the Torah was fraught with great disappointment and grief. The Jewish people had degenerated into idol worship just forty days after they had heard G-d's direct command to them to not have other gods. In dismay and shock, Moses shattered the tablets. He then ascended the mountain a second time to appease G-d's anger. G-d acceded to his pleas and agreed to give the Jewish people another chance. Moses thus descends to hew the sapphire stone for G-d to engrave in it a second set of Ten Commandments and then ascends for a third time. At the end of a third period of forty days Moses descended with a second set of Tablets. That day was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

In this week's parsha—which chronicles these events—we are told that when Moses descended from the mountain with the second set of tablets his face shone. The radiance that emanated from Moses' face was undoubtedly a reflection of the Divine energy that entered into him and exuded this incredible radiance.

The question has been raised, if Moses' stay on the mountain to receive the Torah was the source of his radiant face why didn't his face shine the first time he

descended from the mountain with the first set of tablets?

THE LIGHT OF G-D'S "HAND"

Rashi, whose commentary is geared to providing us with the simple and straightforward understanding of the text, says the following, most likely in response to this question:

"From where did Moses [now] merit these rays of splendor? Our Rabbis said: [Moses received it] from the cave, when the Holy One, blessed is He, placed His hand on his face, as it is said: 'And I will cover you with My hand' (Exod. 33:22)." This is a reference to G-d's response to Moses' request, "Show me Your glory." G-d acceded to his request by covering Moses with His "hand." This G-dly revelation is what caused Moses' face to shine. This event occurred before he received the second set of tablets.

T'SHUVA POWER

The Rebbe (*Seifer HaSichos* 5752, volume 2, p. 433) provides a deeper explanation. In simple terms the Rebbe explains that the second set of tablets was a product of the T'shuva (repentance or return) of the Jewish people. The power of their T'shuva initiative elicited a deeper and more esoteric level

of Torah knowledge. This higher dimension of Torah knowledge that was revealed through Moses was thus the source of his radiance.

FROM ROSH YESHIVA TO REBBE

One of the Lithuanian sages of the twentieth century, Rabbi Yoseph B. Soloveitchik, approached this anomaly by distinguishing between the role of Moses the first time he descended with the second descent: The first time Moses descended from the mountain with the first tablets he descended as a "Rosh Yeshiva-the Head of a Talmudic Academy," i.e. a Torah scholar whose mission it is to impart the knowledge of Torah to receptive students.

The second time Moses descended from the mountain he descended as a Rebbe; a Jewish leader who puts his own life on the line for the sake of his people.

Moses, the Torah tells us, asked G-d to erase him from the Torah if He did not forgive the Jewish people for their involvement in the construction of the golden calf. This self-sacrificing leadership generated the light that shone from Moses' face!

OUR IMPAIRMENT

There is yet another possible

way of understanding why the Torah speaks of Moses' face shining only after he descended the second time. Perhaps the first time it also shone but the people were unable to see the light because their involvement with the golden calf desensitized them and rendered them spiritually resistant to seeing such pristine light.

A story is told of the illustrious chassid, Reb Itche Masmid, who upon discovering that the Previous Rebbe's speech was impaired and unintelligible due to serious illness, he remarked: "We have become so desensitized that we cannot understand the Rebbe..."

CONVERTING REISH AND DALED

And yet another explanation based on the Chassidic work *B'nei Yissaschar*:

Moses—upon learning from G-d of the indiscretion of the Jewish nation in their construction of the golden calf—was told by G-d, "Descend!" Our Sages explain that G-d's order for him to descend was not just a physical order. G-d was informing him that he, Moses, was now diminished because of their sin. G-d gave Moses his greatness only for the sake of the people he was to lead. If they were diminished so was Moses!

As a result of this diminution his face didn't shine. However, when he brought down the second tablets that followed their T'shuva and their return to grace, the light was restored to Moses' face as well.

B'nei Yissaschar explains that the Hebrew word for descend "*reid*" captures the essence of what occurred at that time. This word consists of the letters *reish*

and *daled*: These two letters are quite similar in their shape but they are light years apart when they are connected to the letters *aleph* and *ches*. When we add a *reish* to these two letters, the word is *acher*, which reads and means "another," as in the verse: "Do not have **another-acher** G-d." When we add the *daled* to the same two letters it yields the word ***echad***—one, as in the verse, "G-d is one-***echad***." In those two verses, these two letters are actually enlarged to underscore the danger of substituting the *daled* for the *reish* or vice versa, with catastrophic results.

This is precisely what happened when they worshipped the golden calf. They took the *daled* of *echad* signifying G-d's absolute unity and converted it into the *reish* which stands for the very opposite notion of idolatry. They perverted the *daled* and *reish*—"one" became "another." Hence the word *reid* that connotes degradation consists of these two letters because it is precisely this perversion of these two letters which is the cause of degradation.

This, *B'nei Yisachar* says, is what the rabbis meant when they said "Descend from your greatness." This has a dual meaning. First it means that Moses was diminished. Second, it also can be translated as "the greatness was degraded," suggesting that the "great" or large letters of the *reish* and the *daled* that underscore the integrity of these two letters were compromised, diminished and perverted.

These two explanations are actually complementary: Moses was diminished because the people took the "great" letters of the world *reid* (the *reish* and the *daled*), and reduced and

confused them. It thus resulted in Moses' descent as well. His light could not be revealed.

The second set of tablets however remedied this and restored the *daled* and the *reish* to their rightful places and allowed Moses' concealed light to be fully restored; nay, to even become more powerful than before, as the Rebbe explains, because of the power of T'shuva.

ADAR AND THE RECTIFICATION OF THE LETTERS REISH AND DALED

It is providential that this Torah portion, with the entire saga of Moses' descent, occurs in the middle of the month of Adar. The word Adar consists of the two letters *reish* and *daled* with an *aleph*—that stands for G-d who is one—in front of those two letters.

It is no coincidence then that the two heroes of Purim are Esther and Mordechai. Esther derives from the word *hester* that means concealment and alludes to the hidden light that was caused by the spiritual degradation of the Jews at that time. They had experienced the same degeneration represented by the word *reid*—descend. Their descent was caused by their "bowing down to an icon," reminiscent of the worshipping of the golden calf.

Mordechai, whose name contains the letters *reish* and *daled* in it, was able to reverse that process of degeneration and decline. This power he possessed is alluded to by the other letters of his name: The two letters *reish* and *daled* are prefaced by the letter *mem*, which stands for Moses and Moshiach. Mordechai, the Moses and Moshiach of his generation, was

able to turn the *reish* of idolatry of the Jews at that time who bowed to the icon into a *daled*, an affirmation of G-d's unity.

The other two letters of Mordechai, the *chof* and the *yud*, are an acronym for *Knesses Yisroel*—the Jewish nation. Mordechai was able to reveal the hidden light of Esther—who symbolizes the Jewish people—and reverse their downward spiral. In the words of the Megilla: The Jews had *light*, joy, happiness, and glory. All of the light that was concealed (Esther) was now fully revealed. The catalyst for this reversal was the T'shuva of *Knesses Yisroel*—the Jewish people who were inspired by Mordechai.

REVEALING THE LIGHT OF MOSHIACH

We are living in the days of Moshiach. Moshiach's face is radiating G-dly light, but this light is unfortunately still in a state of Esther-concealment. Moshiach's role as the one who ushers in the final Redemption has yet to materialize. The world is still shrouded in darkness even as we anticipate the Redemption every day. What can we do to see his radiant face and translate that light into the end of the darkness of exile?

From all of the above explanations as to why Moses' face shone only after receiving the **second** tablets it is obvious that our ability to see Moshiach's

radiance is also connected to **our** efforts at T'shuva and self-refinement. We must strive to live an "Adar" life; a life in which our *reish* and *daled* are in the right place—preceded by the *Aleph*. It then becomes Adar, which is a composite of two words: *Aleph Dar*—the Aleph dwells, connoting that G-d who is the "*Aleph*" of the world feels comfortable dwelling in it. Knowing that this light is here ready to be revealed generates the joy, happiness and glory that follow the word light in the Megilla. And this joy of Adar that derives from the knowledge that G-d dwells comfortably in our midst will be the catalyst that will enable **us** to see the radiant face of Moshiach imminently!

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ב"ה

NASI AND CHASSID ON PURIM

The President of Israel, Mr. Shneur Zalman Rubashov (Shazar), visited the Rebbe on Purim 5731/1971. He was present for the Megilla reading, followed by a lengthy private audience. The entire event was simultaneously regal and congenial, both festive and somber, and made a deep impression on all present.

By Menachem Ziegelboim

PART I

Many Chassidim will remember Purim 5731/1971 as a special Purim because of the visit of Mr. Shneur Zalman Rubashov (“Shazar”), the President of Israel at the time, with the Rebbe. It was a royal visit in every respect, both due to the official character of the event as well as the importance with which the Rebbe regarded the arrival of his illustrious guest. This visit, which occurred on Purim night, was arranged according to the schedule unique to this day. In addition, the gifts the Rebbe gave him were in the spirit of the day.

It was the winter of 5731

when Shazar made a ten day visit to the United States. He was the guest of honor at an Israel Bonds dinner in Florida and was the personal guest of President Nixon.

Those were tension-filled days in the Middle East. Two days earlier, on Shabbos 9 Adar, the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Egypt had seemed about to come apart as a result of the Egyptian President’s statement that the ceasefire would not last very long. It was under this cloud that Shazar’s visit to the White House took place.

Shazar actually accorded great importance to his visit to

a different Nasi, the leader of the Jewish people and the entire generation, the Rebbe. Despite the efforts of Israeli government officials to dissuade him from visiting the Rebbe – claiming it wasn’t dignified for the State of Israel – Shazar said the visit should take place as planned. He said it was out of the question for him to visit America and not see the Rebbe, since he was one of his Chassidim.

“I will go to the Rebbe not as the president of a country but as a Chassid to a Rebbe, and I never heard of a Rebbe going to a Chassid rather than a Chassid going to the Rebbe,” he said.

He conveyed his desire for a

visit to the Rebbe beforehand, through the Chassid Rabbi Ezriel Zelig Slonim. Shazar expressed his desire to be with the Rebbe for Maariv and the reading of the Megilla. Rabbi Slonim conveyed this request to the Rebbe.

PART II

On Friday, Erev Shabbos Parshas Zachor, the preparations went into high gear. The Rebbe said everything should be done in the most dignified way with all pomp and ceremony. He told Rabbi Chadakov to prepare two Siddurei T'hillas Hashem with leather bindings and to have the words "Purim 5731" engraved on them. The Rebbe also asked for another fifty Siddurim with the same inscription though not in leather but another nice binding. These would be distributed to Shazar's entourage as a memento of this special occasion.

Likewise, the Rebbe instructed that they bind *Likkutei Levi Yitzchok* of his father on the volumes Shmos through D'varim, with some in leather.

The Rebbe asked that the Alter Rebbe's maamer "Ashrei Yashvei Veisecha" be printed, bound in a cloth binding and have "Purim 5731" written on it. He also ordered a Megilla in a silver case from Rabbi Sholom Hecht.

In honor of the occasion, the Rebbe said a special committee should be formed whose purpose would be to arrange and oversee the visit. The members of the committee were the secretaries, gabbaim, and askanim including: Moshe Pinchas Katz, Binyamin Klein, Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky, Dovid Raskin, Leibel Groner and Yudel Krinsky. A few days before the visit, the committee presented a detailed program to the Rebbe for his



“The committee also suggested that after the reading of the Megilla the people in shul should sing “Shoshanas Yaakov.” The Rebbe was surprised by the very thought of delaying people at the end of a fast, and he wrote: It’s a fast day.

approval. The Rebbe returned it with many fascinating comments.

For example, the committee suggested that representatives (in Heb. *Bo’ei ko’ach*) of the mosdos

stand at the entrance to 770 as the welcoming committee. The Rebbe wrote: **or perhaps men of strength** (in Heb. *baalei ko’ach*) **so that there be order (and not**



"I would also daven in a Siddur like that, but it's twenty years now that I am davening with my father-in-law's Siddur."

like the last time) (apparently referring to Shazar's previous visit).

They wrote about arranging ushers. The Rebbe added: **men of strength (and polite too) and it should be obvious that they are assisting.**

The committee also suggested that after the reading of the Megilla, the people in shul should sing "Shoshanas Yaakov." The Rebbe was surprised by the very thought of delaying people at the end of a fast, and he wrote: **It's a fast day.**

Regarding the idea that the entire front area of the shul should remain empty, the Rebbe responded in astonishment: ... **opposite of the din that the Megilla should be [read] with a multitude of people.**

The Rebbe also negated the idea of leaving benches just for the dignitaries and removing the rest of the benches from the shul:

Where will they sit? Then there won't be any order at all; just pushing and grabbing.

As for the idea of the shluchim living in the tri-state area bringing their wealthy supporters and introducing them to Shazar, the Rebbe said: **That will certainly engender envy and a commotion.**

The program was finally arranged. Shazar would arrive at 770 for Maariv; he would spend a few minutes in the Rebbe's room along with his entourage; then they would all go to daven Maariv and hear the Megilla; this would be followed by a personal yechidus.

The Rebbe said a festive meal should be prepared by Mermelstein catering of Crown Heights. He asked that the meal be attractively presented.

PART III

On the afternoon of Taanis Esther, the American Secret Service came to thoroughly check 770. They wanted to examine the Rebbe's room, but the Rebbe asked that the secretariat try to dissuade them since he did not want them looking into the drawers with the letters. Rabbi Groner made this request of them and they agreed not to conduct a thorough search of the room, but instead would suffice with a brief, cursory look around.

In the afternoon, a special delegation of elder Chassidim went to welcome Shazar at his hotel. The delegation included: Eliyahu Simpson and Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky and the driver Rabbi Yudel Krinsky. The entourage left the hotel at 5:30 for 770.

At 6:00 excitement ran high as a convoy of diplomatic cars entered Eastern Parkway. Shazar sat in an armored car. A huge

throng of Chassidim waited outside to welcome the guest and the crowding was intense.

One of the secretaries informed the Rebbe about Shazar's imminent arrival and the Rebbe went out to welcome the guest. Shazar, who shook hands with those who came out to greet him, looked up and saw the Rebbe standing there in all his glory. His excitement was boundless. The Nasi and Chassid kissed twice while the crowd watched in astonishment at the rare kiruv.

The Rebbe took Shazar by the arm and the two of them entered the Rebbe's inner sanctum. The Rebbe said to Shazar (referring to the tensions with Egypt), "Most likely it is 'and the fear of the Jews fell upon them.'"

Shazar: "Without fear."

The Rebbe: "If necessary, the fear of the Jews is upon them."

Shazar said he heard a tape of the Rebbe's Yud Shevat sicha in which the Rebbe spoke very sharply about several matters concerning Israeli politics. Shazar asked, "Why is it necessary to become angry? Chassidim don't have this way of getting angry; only Misnagdim have this way of becoming angry."

The Rebbe smiled and said, "I am happy you say that."

Shazar gave the Rebbe a gift, a photocopy of handwritten maamarim, most of them from the Alter Rebbe. He also presented photocopies of a maamer containing allusions to the Geula. It said they were written by the Tzemach Tzedek or the Alter Rebbe. The Rebbe commented, "It's very interesting since in Chabad they did not speak of allusions at all, and although there is one maamer of the Alter Rebbe (or the Tzemach Tzedek) about this, it is one of

the maamarim they did not try and publish. They set it aside even though, generally, they tried very much to publish and publicize maamarim. It will be interesting to analyze this and to see whether it should be printed and publicized.”

Shazar also gave the Rebbe a document reporting about a meeting of rabbanim in Petersburg that took place in 5670/1910 and they discussed the events of that time.

The Rebbe gave gifts to Shazar including a maamer that was published especially for the visit. The Rebbe explained that there is a big chiddush in this maamer for it explains every single pasuk in Ashrei until *“karov Hashem l’chol kor’av.”* This is not typical of maamarim which usually focus on one verse.

“Is there one thread that goes through all the verses or are they separate points?” asked Shazar.

“There is one theme but they are separate explanations,” replied the Rebbe.

At the conclusion of the first part of the visit, the Rebbe took the Megilla that had been prepared for the occasion, in its beautiful silver holder, and gave it to Shazar. He said, “Since we are going to read the Megilla, this is timely ... In order for you to have a memento, the Megilla case has ‘Purim 5731’ engraved on it.”

Shazar was very touched by the gift and by the gesture that expressed the Rebbe’s special appreciation, and he shook the Rebbe’s hand and thanked him for the precious gift.

The Rebbe said, “My father-in-law had an outstanding memory and nevertheless, when it came to davening, even Mincha or Maariv, he would daven from a Siddur. And so I also prepared a Siddur ...”



The Rebbe and Shazar kissed twice when they met



The Rebbe stood up and took a gartel and put it on. Then he took his Siddur and said, “I would also daven in a Siddur like that, but it’s twenty years already that I am davening with my father-in-law’s Siddur.”

Shazar politely said, “You need not change.”

Shazar then suggested that since after the davening and the reading of the Megilla, the Rebbe

would have to break his fast, he would wait. When the Rebbe would be ready, he would let him know and Shazar would come in for yechidus. The Rebbe said, “No, we will both come back here after davening.”

The Rebbe and Shazar entered the elevator with the Rebbe’s hand linked in Shazar’s. Rashag, Rabbi Chadakov, and a member of the Secret Service went with them.

“Of course, the police were informed of the custom to make noise during the Megilla reading. Still, when Haman’s name was read for the first time and the graggers made a racket, the police nervously pulled out their guns.

That is how they entered the shul packed with Chassidim, with arms linked. The entire affair was exceedingly royal. Three tables and chairs were set up, for the Rebbe, for Shazar, and Rashag. Rabbi Groner opened and folded the Megilla for Shazar according to Chabad custom. Rabbi Groner continued to stand next to him throughout the reading and held the Megilla for him.

Before the Rebbe and his guest had come in, the children had been warned not to use cap guns and explosives when Haman’s name is mentioned, just the usual graggers. This request was made due to the large number of policemen and agents protecting Shazar and his entourage who would react suspiciously at anything like that in Shazar’s presence. Of course, the police were informed of the custom to make noise during the reading. Still, when Haman’s name was read for the first time and the graggers made a racket, the police nervously pulled out their guns.

For additional security, the gabbai, Rabbi Yaakov Lipsker, stood at the entrance of the shul together with the police in order to ensure that only Chassidim

entered and no outsiders.

PART IV

After the reading of the Megilla, the Rebbe once again linked arms with Shazar and they left the shul and took the elevator upstairs. This time, it was only Shazar and the Rebbe in a private yechidus. Rabbi Groner went into the room a few minutes later with tea and cake, mashke and fruit.

The yechidus lasted four hours. It ended at midnight and Shazar left the Rebbe’s room for the secretaries’ room where he gave Rabbi Chadakov a *pidyon nefesh* and money.

They say that the Rebbe did not eat during the yechidus and remained fasting. It was only while Shazar was in the office of the secretariat that the Rebbe ate something.

When Shazar left the office, the Rebbe was informed of this and he left his room to escort him. A large crowd of Chassidim waited outside and when the Rebbe and his guest appeared, they burst into song, “Ki Elokim Yoshia Tziyon.” The Rebbe stayed with Shazar for another five minutes.

Shazar asked, “When will I

have the honor of hosting you in Yerushalayim?”

The Rebbe looked serious when he answered, “It would be fine to come to Yerushalayim. Who will give me permission to leave Yerushalayim?”

Then Shazar entered his car while the Rebbe stood in the doorway and watched until Shazar could no longer be seen.

Mr. Tzvi Kaspi, then the Israeli consul in the United States, who was present at the meeting, wrote in his memoirs, “On the way back to the hotel, Shazar did not say much. He was very moved after the excitement of meeting the Rebbe and perhaps, sad too, as every Chassid is when parting from his Rebbe.”

PART V

The next day, Purim, the Rebbe sent mishloach manos to Shazar. Rabbi Dovber Junik and Rabbi Dovber Alenick along with Rabbi Binyamin Klein made the delivery. Shazar sent back eighteen bottles of mashke of various kinds and the Rebbe said trumos and maasros should be taken since they were products of Eretz Yisroel, and a bottle of each type should be brought to his room.

That is what happened on Purim 5731. It was an exciting and moving occasion, in a Purim atmosphere touched with solemnity and ceremony.

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CONFESSIONS OF A CHAOS ADDICT

By Rabbi Yisroel Harpaz

It is the suspense of knowing something big is going to happen, but not knowing exactly what. It shoots me up, knocks me down, and spins me around and upside-down. It can make me sick. It can be exhilarating and terrifying at the same time. It can make me lose my sense of self, and plays tricks on my center of gravity. It's only fun if I'm looking forward; looking backwards can be dangerous. It makes me want to scream. It makes me want to barf. If I want to survive, I have to know the rules. It goes way too fast. And when it's all over, I'll end up back at the same place I started.

Life is like a roller coaster. This might mean different things to different people, but I think we can all relate one way or another.

Once in a while I find a little peace and manage to escape the incessant chaos, take a break, and resolve to find a quiet place, to make plans that would enable me to stay there for a while. But, for some reason, when the train comes around again I can't resist. It convinces me that my escape plans are audacious, even contemptuous. I jump back on and ride it again. Part of me is addicted to the chaos, to the possibility that I can somehow tame it, that the next time around the ride I will finally be able to assert my control over it. Driven like an egomaniac mad

“But, for some reason, when the train comes around again I can't resist. It convinces me that my escape plans are audacious, even contemptuous. I jump back on and ride it again.”

magician, I keep thinking that one more small adjustment to my calculations, one final tweak to my routine, one last hurdle to overcome, and I'll finally get it right.

But the ride is alive, and it is smarter than I am. It keeps evolving and changing as I do, but remains one step ahead, forever twisting, adding another unexpected loop here, another surprising, gut-dropping fall there. It denies and resists my attempts to tame and control it; just when I am about to feel secure in my mastery of a certain aspect of life, it shifts, forcing me to retreat, regroup and re-evaluate before I jump back on the ride to try again. It keeps that elusive state of absolute certainty and security just beyond my grasp—close enough to tempt me into thinking I can get there, but far enough to keep me honest, if I want to be.

It toys with me. When things are propelling forward beyond my control, I desperately want to jump off and escape. It's when things finally slow down, when I

convince myself that I'm stuck, frustrated by my inability to get back on the ride, that I have to wait in line for the train to come back around my way. The insanity does not take a vacation.

At the end of the day, it seems like a crazy ride that goes nowhere. The linear progression of it is difficult to discern, and matters only to its architect. So it is not the destination that is most important, but how I live my life along the way. Happiness, therefore, is not a goal I live my life in order to attain, and life is not the road I happen to traverse on my way to achieving happiness. Happiness is a state of mind, a state of being. Happiness itself is the road I need to be traveling on. Happiness is the means through which goals and dreams are achieved, not the result of them. Don't live life in order to enjoy the ride.

Enjoy the ride in order to live life. Enjoy the ride.

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ADD IN ACTS OF GOODNESS & KINDNESS
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FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE AND DEVOTION

In memory of a special woman, Mrs. Fania Branover a"h, wife of the devoted Chassid and celebrated scientist, Professor Herman (Yirmiyahu) Branover.

A LIFE OF MESIRUS NEFESH

Mrs. Fania Branover's childhood was similar to that of her husband. During World War II, Jews were sent to Siberia. In retrospect, that which seemed terrible at the time is what saved them from the Holocaust. At the end of the war, the Jews who survived the bitter cold and starvation returned home. Among these Jews were the families of Fania and her husband. They were raised with a high level of culture, intellectualism and ambition. This was in stark contradistinction to their minimal knowledge of Judaism. All that remained with them of Jewish life was the observance of Yom Kippur and matzos on Pesach.

They met and married. Fania studied and eventually taught anatomy in university. Suddenly, her husband took an interest in Judaism and life was no longer the same. They decided to look

for a way to leave Russia. It was the 1950's, when another opportunity arose (aside from the great opportunity to leave in 1946/7) in which Polish refugees were allowed to return home. They became acquainted with a brother and sister from Poland who agreed, in exchange for a lot of money, to "marry them" in fictitious matrimony. The plan was for him to marry the sister and for his wife to marry the brother and this would enable them to escape to Poland.

The plan failed and in addition to losing a lot of money and the danger that the authorities would discover their ruse, they were stuck in Russia with no way out.

When their son Daniel was born, Prof. Branover went to the synagogue to find a way to have a circumcision performed. There he met with the Chassid Rabbi Nosson (Notke) Berkahan a"h who was mekarev him and began learning Torah and

Chassidus with him. Prof. Branover turned into an ardent Chassid. As an intellectual and scientist, he wanted to delve into every inyan in Chassidus and he threw himself into his learning. Considering his standing as a professor in a university under Soviet rule, this was not easy.

Fania was an intelligent, rational person and had married a perfectly normal young man. He was a scientist, an engineer, he understood music and ... he went nuts. Although her husband's transformation wasn't easy for her, she went along with it.

Living a Jewish life in Russia wasn't simple and nearly every detail was complicated and required mesirus nefesh, such as with kashrus. A Jewish kitchen is the woman's realm and Fania accepted this. She believed that if G-d gave us mitzvos, we need to accept them and implement them. She believed that everything we do in Yiddishkait needs to be done in the nicest, most dignified way that will attract people. For a woman with a weak background in Judaism who strove to do everything perfectly, it wasn't easy; but she did it and was devoted to her husband in a most impressive way.

In the meantime, they renewed their efforts to leave Russia until they finally found a way out. Prof. Branover paid a fortune in order to leave since at that time the law stated that those with academic degrees who left the country had to compensate the government for their degrees. He had to pay more than \$30,000 (which was a small fortune in those days) so the government would have no excuse to turn them down.

In 5732, when Fania was almost forty, the Branovers



“Fania was an intelligent, rational person and had married a perfectly normal young man. He was a scientist, an engineer, he understood music and ... he went nuts.”

finally arrived in Eretz Yisroel. She became a pediatrician in the Negev at the Soroka Medical Center and also worked for the Ministry of Health. She was very successful in her work and was a familiar and esteemed figure both professionally and on a personal level.

TOTAL DEVOTION

The first time Fania went to the Rebbe, for Pesach 5732/1972, the women in the group from Russia received a bouquet of flowers. Nobody knew why or where it had come from. They found a note which said, “From Rebbetzin Schneersohn.” When they called to thank her, she invited the women to her home (for some reason, Fania wasn't there). The women spent two hours with the Rebbetzin who inquired about the state of Judaism in Russia. Before they left, the Rebbetzin explained the

reason for the special invitation. “The Rebbe told me, ‘If you want to see genuine Chassidim, you must invite them.’”

Whoever did not experience it, cannot truly understand what tremendous mesirus nefesh was required of Fania. Suddenly, midlife, her husband became a baal t'shuva. The man she had married had become a fanatic who was hardly ever home and was constantly busy with rescuing people with his time and money. Although she highly respected her husband, at first she was very uncomfortable with the changes, but she was nevertheless moser nefesh to support him.

Although she was an independent thinker, she submitted to her husband and the Rebbe. Consequently, when they left Russia and went to the Rebbe, she had a very special connection to him. She had very interesting conversations with

TRUE PARTNER



Rabbi Betzalel Schiff with Prof. Branover
in the offices of Shamir

Rabbi Betzalel (Talk) Schiff, chairman of Agudas Shamir, who worked alongside Prof. Branover for many years and helped us as a family friend in writing this article, relates:

“I met Prof. Branover for the first time when I was a law student. When I went with some other religious fellows from Tashkent, where I lived, to Riga, we had a secret minyan on Shabbos. Someone walked in wearing a beret and afterward, they said it was Prof. Branover who was a famous Russian scientist.

“The professor and his wife had a special relationship. One time, at the beginning of spring, when we were still in Moscow, we vacationed at a resort in the forest and went on an outing. I was amazed by the special relationship they had, two intellectuals with a broad range of knowledge, permeated to the very marrow of their bones with a Jewish faith that seemed to burst forth from their beings. They identified the trees, the plants and birds. They took in the tremendous beauty of nature and got

me to look at things differently. I suddenly saw how the creation came to life after the winter, how ants work in unison. I was bowled over by this special bond, how despite the differences, they were involved with one another and saw G-dliness within everything.

“Shamir was founded by the Rebbe in 5733 for observant Russian Jews. The Rebbe appointed Prof. Branover as president of the organization and me as the chairman. We were among several dozen Lubavitcher families who were unable to leave Russia in 1946/7 and were forced to remain there for decades. That is where I met Prof. Branover and since then, we have worked together.

“The most important work of the organization is translating s’farim into Russian. As of now, Shamir has translated about 300 s’farim, starting with the basics such as the T’hillas Hashem Siddur, Chumash, Tanya, and HaYom Yom.

“The Rebbe considered this organization vital in the aid of Russian Jews so they could adopt a new identity of proud Jews, which had been taken from them by the Soviets. The Rebbe said that the Russians had taken away G-d and so they created a different god called science and academia. Shamir is distinctive in that it first and foremost targets religious academics so they can become a positive influence on other Jewish academics. This is in addition to restoring their true identity which had been robbed from them, by providing Torah material in Russian. The Rebbe said that since we are both academics and religious, other academics will listen to us more readily than to other people.

“Living with a professor is not easy, especially someone like Prof. Branover who was a 24 hour a day public figure. His wife was a strong woman, independent, as well as devoted to her husband. She was involved in his wide-ranging activities.

“Although she was an elegant, royal woman, she was also well-liked and got along easily with people. She was particular when it came to matters of Yiddishkait and was a *T’hillim zoger* (one who said a lot of T’hillim).”

the Rebbe on many subjects and merited a special closeness. She asked the Rebbe about the things that were hard for her to accept and the Rebbe explained it all in a special, personal way which spoke to her mind and heart.

For example, fashion was

important to her. She asked the Rebbe why a woman had to wear a skirt and not pants. The Rebbe asked her why she cared. She said it was the fashion. The Rebbe asked her, “Why do you have to follow what so-and-so in Paris decided is fashionable?” She

accepted this. Her relationship with the Rebbe was on a personal level, not just as a Chassid and Rebbe.

After several years, when her husband had yechidus and asked for a bracha before returning home, the Rebbe asked him

whether he had bought a gift for his wife. He said that he hadn't, and the Rebbe said, "You should know that it is very important! You must go and buy a gift for your wife." It did not end there because Prof. Branover had no idea what kind of gift to buy. The Rebbe advised him, "You know, an electric dishwasher is a very good gift for a wife."

Theirs was a unique relationship and some people explained it as resulting from Fania's great devotion and willingness to forgo her comfort and desires for the ideology of her husband, the ideals of the Rebbe.

From the outset, Prof. Branover related to the Rebbe as Moshiach and was absolutely convinced of this. She followed him and said that most Chassidim are "Misnagdim" who don't understand this issue and don't realize they ought to relate to the Rebbe completely differently; and it's impossible to compare him to anything else at all.

Perhaps it was because both of them had strong scientific backgrounds that their assessment was very precise and hit the mark even many years ago.

ROYALTY

Mrs. Branover was a very elegant, refined woman, dignified and well-groomed. She had a unique brimming personality highlighted by a terrific sense of humor, with an opinion about everything.

She was gifted with a keen sense for beauty, aesthetics, and design. She always knew how to match and arrange things: flowers, clothing, and in her home. People were always amazed, "How did you do that?"

It wasn't a matter of money; she had the uncanny ability to take simple things and make them beautiful. She moved several times, to Tel Aviv, Yerushalayim, and Beer Sheva, and she transformed each home into something artistic.

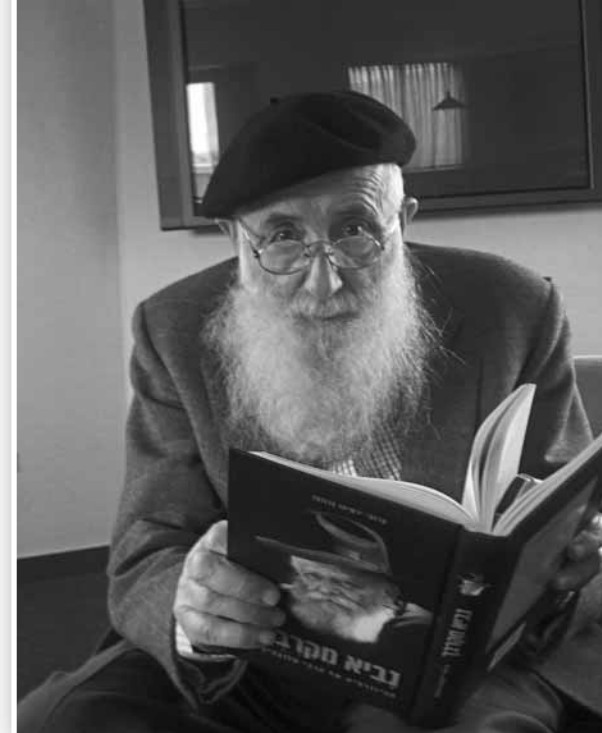
She used this talent for holy purposes, to make Hashem a dwelling down below. Whatever had to do with Shabbos and kashrus was done in a beautiful manner, aesthetically pleasing, with stunning designs. When her son opened a restaurant near 770, she would go there to help with the food, to stress the uniqueness of a Jewish kitchen; that the food produced in a kosher kitchen ought to be rich, professional, with a variety of spices, tastes, flavors and colors.

RUTH

Fania was a charming woman, young at heart and very charismatic. When her husband turned eighty, she organized a birthday celebration and asked her son to buy special foods that are ethnically Russian, like goose fat and chopped liver, and she prepared it all.

Her son Danny, chairman of SATEC, spoke about a mother and a grandmother who was very involved, loving, and family-oriented. She wanted to know about how her grandchildren were developing and did not forget a single birthday. She pampered them with gifts and cakes and it was always something special and thoughtful. She never seemed old in her style and behavior; she was young in spirit and full of life.

People sought her out. At the age of 75 she had new friends in their forties. She gave a lot of attention to people who were far younger than she was. She was



involved with people and was liked by all.

Fania saw herself as a shlucha and said that wherever a person goes, he has to know that the Rebbe made him a shliach. He is obligated by this position and cannot allow himself to do whatever he feels like.

She was always well-groomed with an appearance that bespoke careful thought and consideration. She would say that this is how she expresses herself and displays her Jewish royalty.

In the final years of her life, due to her illness, the family lived in the US. She was told it would be a good idea to have a name added and she chose Ruth. Why Ruth? She said, "I followed my husband like Ruth followed Naomi."

Fania-Rus was sick for nine years. She was a fighter and did not lose hope; on the contrary, she was full of life. She passed away at the age of 75. Up Above, she is surely crying out for Moshiach, whom she had identified long before it became public knowledge and with whom she enjoyed a special association.

WHEN YOU REALLY WANT IT

Stories about shluchim and their friends in which, thanks to their strong desire to do what was important to them, they were successful.

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz

Shliach, Beit Shaan

A DESERT SPRING

Yoram D. was a soldier in the Tzivos Hashem club in Beit Shaan 26 years ago. He kept in touch with the Chabad house even when he outgrew the club and was drafted into the army. He eventually was appointed to fill a position of importance and great responsibility. Today, Yoram is responsible for the nationwide network tasked with enlisting suitable soldiers for special intelligence missions, including men from the religious sector.

Yoram called me and asked me for the number of Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac Landau of the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas. He told me about a Lubavitcher who had recently enlisted for these kinds of missions. The fellow had begun his service but had a little problem. Where he served, somewhere in the south, there is no mikva and the man was unwilling to begin any activity (including davening and/or eating) without immersing every

morning. The commanders discovered that his personal rabbi was Rabbi Landau, and now Yoram wanted to speak with Rabbi Landau. Maybe he would be willing to explain to this fellow that he could manage a few days without a mikva.

Several hours later, Yoram reported to me that Rabbi Landau had said he would speak to the man. A few days after that, I met Yoram and asked him what happened with the Chassid-soldier. Yoram said they ended up finding a spring of water in the vicinity of the army camp and the man immersed there every morning. I was happy it had worked out.

THE SAME STORY FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

We had a guest for Shabbos – my married son who lives in Tzfas. At the Shabbos table, he said something interesting that he had heard at a farbrengen from his friend, Mendy Gruzman. Mendy had recently been drafted

into the army (he had no choice; the situation warranted it).

Mendy said that he had been told this was a special, personalized draft in which the needs of every soldier are taken into account. The army would supply him with all his religious needs in the best possible way (which is not done for those inducted into “regular” army service). They had food with the right hashgacha, times for davening and learning, and absolute separation between men and women. All was well until Mendy realized there was no mikva. There were dozens of religious soldiers and all were satisfied. It was only Mendy who refused to join any activity until he would be able to immerse in a mikva.

Some of the highest ranked commanders got involved in Mendy’s “issue.” They were somewhat stressed over the fact that he would not eat or daven until he had a mikva. One of them explained to him that if he did not participate, they would



The yeshiva in Eilat (photo from the archives)

have to remove him from this special division and he would end up in the regular army without special consideration for his religious needs. Mendy politely but firmly insisted that he could not participate without first immersing in a mikva.

It seemed to become a contest of wills, and there could only be one winner. The dozens of religious soldiers were curious about how the story would end. Then one of the commanders discovered a pool near the camp. But it was surrounded by fences and locked gates, so that possibility petered out. As a last resort, the commanders suggested that Mendy consult with his rabbi and explain that under the circumstances, he could not immerse in a mikva. Could he make do with a shower (*tisha kabin*) instead of a mikva?

Mendy wrote to the Rebbe and opened to a letter in the Igros Kodesh which said not to be fazed and not to be downcast because of what had happened

“With special permission from their mashpiim, they wait outside and go over to every young man that exits the club and engage him in conversation. They ask for phone numbers in order to invite them to events at the yeshiva.

lately, since with Hashem’s help the situation would improve.

One of the commanders spoke with Rabbi Landau who asked to speak to the bachur. He explained that it was possible the army would not find a solution and he would be transferred, but Mendy was confident that the army would make every effort so that he could immerse each morning.

This went on for another full day, and then another, until the commanders took another look at the maps and at aerial photographs of the area they were in and discovered a small spring a few kilometers from the camp. It was arranged that every morning, a military jeep would come and

take Mendy to the spring so he could start his day by immersing.

Now that I heard the same sort of story from another perspective, I was even happier. I saw that it was thanks to standing strong that all-out efforts were made and a solution was found. I called Yoram and got his permission to write his story though not before he made sure to mention that the army is under no obligation to provide a mikva for every soldier in every army camp.

YOUTHFUL DETERMINATION

In Eilat there is a Chabad yeshiva which, some time

ago, experienced a diminished enrollment. Efforts were made to recruit new students. For this purpose, a number of bachurim from the yeshiva in Tzfas who had finished their year on K'vutza went to Eilat.

I attended a farbrengen on Hei Teves in this yeshiva and the following are a few stories showing the determination of a number of these young shluchim:

In order to reach a large number of youth, you need to go where they hang out. In the evening, the bachurim from the yeshiva go to the area where the clubs are. With special permission from their mashpiim, they wait outside and go over to every young man that exits the club and engage him in conversation. They ask for phone numbers in order to invite them to events at the yeshiva.

Before every event phones begin to ring and the guys show up to a farbrengen where they hear about the Rebbe and Chassidus, about Gemara and fulfilling mitzvos. Many of them register to learn in the yeshiva. With my very own eyes, I saw dozens of bachurim, the invitees and those who invited them, sitting side by side and participating enthusiastically in the discussion and niggunim.

MANAGER OF THE CLUB AS WELL AS A SHUL

Levi Lifsh, shliach at the yeshiva in Eilat, related:

Yaniv is a young fellow who manages a very large nightclub in Eilat. Twice a week, the evening ends with about 150,000 shekels (over \$40,000) in the register.

Yaniv sleeps about four hours a night and he is really a "chassid." There is a shul that he runs. He donates a lot of tz'daka to fund the shul's activities and other good things that we don't yet know about.

Today I went to help Yaniv complete a minyan for Mincha-Maariv and to give a shiur. The shiur began with these words of wisdom from Yaniv:

Question – you earned \$100 and donated maaser. How much do you have left?

\$90.

No. You have \$10.

Why?

Because \$90 goes to waste on silly things and the maaser remains with you forever.

TRUE GIVING

Rabbi Shimshon Tal, shliach in Hod HaSharon, relates:

"Several years ago, an insurance agent who davens at

the Chabad house wanted to donate several thousand shekels towards renovating the Chabad house. We needed to replace some of the furniture and do some painting, and it added up to about 40,000 shekel. The insurance agent said he would donate half that amount and so we made some of the renovations.

"A few weeks after the work was completed, I got a call in the middle of the night, telling me there was a fire at the Chabad house. I rushed over and when the firemen had finished their work, I assessed the damage. Furniture had been burned, the walls were blackened, and the firemen had doused the place with water, causing a lot of damage to s'farim and property.

"The insurance agent showed up bright and early and asked, 'Do you have insurance?' Before I could reply, he said, 'There is insurance. I insured the Chabad house.'"

When he had made a donation, a certain amount was left over and without telling Rabbi Tal, he had paid for an insurance policy for the Chabad house. The insurance paid a significant amount towards covering the damages, which enabled them to complete all the renovations they had not been able to do with the previous donation.



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Yiddish and/or YIDDISHKAIT

A compilation of the Rebbe's teachings about educating in Yiddish.¹

By Rabbi Levi Goldstein

Chazal say² that one of the merits by which the Jewish people left Egypt was that “They did not change their language.”

In a sicha³ by the Rebbe Rayatz, he explains that this refers to “der Yiddishe galus shprach” (the Jewish language of exile), which in recent generations has been Yiddish.

The Rebbe explains⁴ at length in a sicha⁵ that there are indeed qualities that are unique to Yiddish which are not found in other languages.⁶ For hundreds of years, Jewish practice in chadarim, yeshivos, and Battei Midrash has been to speak, learn

and translate words into Yiddish.

As related in the HaYom Yom,⁷ “The Baal Shem Tov used to teach his Talmidim a Shiur in Gemara... The Baal Shem Tov would translate the words (of the text) into Yiddish.”

In addition, in Tanya⁸ the Alter Rebbe says: “...The Baal Shem Tov z”l would say divrei Torah in Yiddish and not in Lashon Ha’kodesh...” Likewise, all of the Rebbeim have spoken (and taught Chassidus) in Yiddish.

So it is understandable why the Rebbe has so strongly urged that the language spoken in chadarim be specifically Yiddish and not another language.

We see this in the following letters:

B”H, 20 Cheshvan 5714

The Hanhala of the Yeshiva and Talmud Torah in Kfar Chabad:

... In response to your question that until now you had classes where the language of instruction was Yiddish and

you are uncertain about this concerning the upcoming term because of a number of reasons that you mention in your letter and you ask my opinion.

Despite the reasons you mention, you *must* continue speaking in Yiddish in these classes as it was until now...⁹.

B”H, 6 Shevat 5714

“... In regard to learning “Ivrit B’Ivrit” – it is known how greatly the Rebbeim fought against this (despite the “claims” of the “educators” who sought, as it were, the “benefit” of the Talmidim, which are the reasons cited in your letter).

It is better and easier that the candidates for teachers should learn the Yiddish language.¹⁰

We see from these letters how teaching in Yiddish is imperative.

On the other hand, however, there are many teachers and mechanchim that question this concept in a situation where the

1) See also the article (which was edited and corrected by the Rebbe) titled: “YIDDISH: VOS VET ZEIN MIT DIR?” *Di Yiddishe Heim* – Summer 5748 Vol. 28 No 1 (103). Available online by visiting www.chinuch.co/more.

2) Mechilta Bo 12:6.

3) Likkutei Dibburim vol. 3 p. 406.

4) See Likkutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 446 and the footnotes there.

5) That was said in connection with the siyum of Tanya on the radio in 5741.

6) See also Igros Kodesh vol. 10, letter #2987, “The Rebbe, my father-in-law would say, that deep and heartfelt [feelings] express themselves in Yiddish...”

7) 13 Cheshvan.

8) Igeres Ha’kodesh 25.

9) Igros Kodesh vol. 8, letter #2271.

10) ibid letter #2388.



“As for your mentioning special qualities of the Yiddish language, it bears looking into whether acquiring these advantages is the task and responsibility of the school or the obligation of the parents and the atmosphere in the home.”

students are not familiar with the Yiddish language. Should the teacher's language of instruction still be Yiddish? Or should he rather teach it in the language that is most familiar to the students?

The Rebbe answered this question, as we shall see in the following letters and oral answers:

YIDDISH - “WHO’S RESPONSIBILITY?”

B”H, 15 Iyar 5728

The honorable representatives of the parents of the students of the Talmud Torah in Kfar Chabad:

... I acknowledge the receipt of your letters and its point... the question about the language of instruction with the talmidim of the Talmud Torah.

... My opinion is: We must consider the fact that the main purpose of the Talmud Torah is to be mechanech the students to fear of Heaven and love for Him, and to teach them the Toras Hashem and its mitzvos whose “measure is longer than the earth and is wider than the ocean.”¹¹ Thus our Sages have therefore warned us¹² about interrupting the learning of the Tinokos Shel Beis Rabban (school children) to the extent

that we are even forbidden to do so for the purpose of building the Beis HaMikdash.

Based on this, it is obviously clear, that the language they should use to teach the talmidim is not the main thing, rather it is the points that were mentioned – the effectiveness and the increase in quantity and quality in the knowledge of Torah and the mitzvos.

Obviously, in a place where the language has an impact on matters of Yiras-Shamayim and the like, this must be taken into account when determining the language of instruction.

..As for your mention of the special qualities of the Yiddish language, it bears looking into whether acquiring these advantages is the task and responsibility of the school or the obligation of the parents and the atmosphere in the home.¹³

B”H, 28 Nissan 5717

R’ Dovid...

...You wrote asking what the language of instruction should be for the bachurim and talmidim.

Since it is most important to inform them of the Mitzvos of Hashem and those things that we may not do, as this relates to actual practice, obviously there is no time to wait in these lessons until they understand a language other than the one

they are accustomed to, and therefore, you need to teach them in the language they presently understand and use the entire time at your disposal to influence them and not for teaching a language, but rather to instill them with a spirit of Yiras Shamayim, Ahavas Hashem, and Ahavas HaTorah.¹⁴

B”H, 13 Iyar 5717

You write asking whether the learning with your son should be done specifically in Yiddish and not in English.

Since you and your wife know Yiddish, and the hours your son spends in school are very limited as is the practice in this country, therefore, the accustoming your son to speaking and understanding Yiddish should rather be something you and your wife are involved in, and in school, until he is used to Yiddish, he should learn in the language that he is more used to, so that he acquires greater knowledge.¹⁵

B”H, 5 Kislev 5704

To the outstanding young man, R’ Yehuda Tzvi Fogelman, Buffalo:

Regarding the question about the language of instruction –

As you describe the situation, our advice is to teach the children, temporarily, entirely in English, and at the same time to make an effort, over time, for them to learn Yiddish too, and then you can switch the language of instruction to Yiddish.¹⁶

11) Iyov 11:9

12) Shabbos 119b, Shulchan Aruch Hilchos Talmud Torah (Admur HaZakein), Chapter 1, Halacha 10.

13) Igros Kodesh Vol. 25, letter #9491.

14) Igros Kodesh vol. 15, letter #5404.

15) ibid, letter #5444.

16) ibid volume 21, letter #7787.



Let us now summarize the above Horaos, which at first glance may seem contradictory:

1. Sometimes we should insist on speaking/teaching in Yiddish.
2. Sometimes we should not insist on teaching in Yiddish; on the contrary, one should not compel the students to learn in Yiddish, but in the language that is easiest and most understood by them. However, over time Yiddish should also be taught and then you can switch to teaching in Yiddish.¹⁷

In truth, however, these two Horaos are not contradictory, but are dealing with entirely different scenarios, as follows:

1. When the Rebbe says the language should not be switched from Yiddish to another language, it is *(as it says in the letter)* because until that time, they had classes where the language of instruction was Yiddish, and this should obviously *not be changed*.

2. When the students do not understand Yiddish, they should absolutely not be taught in

Yiddish, but in the language they understand.

Yet, simultaneously, the Rebbe instructed that **“at the same time to make an effort, over time, for them to learn Yiddish too.”**

To illustrate this distinction more clearly, I would like to share what Rabbi Cousin *Shlita*, former principal in the Chabad yeshiva in London, related:

“In the 1970’s, most of the students in our school spoke exclusively in English and the question arose regarding the language of instruction in school, whether to teach in Yiddish or English, since some of the parents demanded that Yiddish be used even though most of the students did not (yet) understand Yiddish.

“When I had yechidus with the Rebbe, I asked what to do. The Rebbe told me:

“If they want the students to be taught the Yiddish language, then speak Yiddish with them in the lunchroom and in the yard at recess but don’t use the Chumash as the tool to teach them Yiddish. They should study

Chumash only in the language that they understand.”

Similarly, the Rebbe stated his opinion on this matter in yechidus with Mr. Frank Lautenberg in 5732 (the following is a transcript from an actual recording¹⁸):

“I am not (in favor) of ... the Yeshivos who are very enthusiastic about forcing the people to teach all subjects in Yiddish, Gemara etc.

“I am not enthusiastic about it. We are spending a lot of time to learn a new language and after they have learned it, they have a language barrier, they cannot speak fluently, then are thinking in English, and it is a pity on the time lost, as I said before, ‘The building is burning!’ It is not a normal time. And to say it in a good way, it is a computer era; a computer must have the results in one second.”

18) To hear a recording of this yechidus, please visit www.chinuch.co and click on “More,” then choose “Teaching in Yiddish” at the bottom of page 11, and click on the audio button.

17) Ibid.

YIDDISH VS. YIDDISHKAIT!

Let us not forget the mistake of the infamous “Yiddishisten” who erred in this area, placing their primary focus on the language of Yiddish and not on Yiddishkait. This is similar to the shita of “Ivrit-B’Ivrit,” against which the Rebbeim waged many wars. Their mistake was that they focused primarily on learning the language and not on learning the Torah!

So too, *and in even stronger language*, the Rebbe responded to Rabbi Aron Dov Sufrin a”h, who served for nearly forty years as Director of Education of Lubavitch Foundation, London UK.

The following are notes from Rabbi Aron Dov Sufrin’s Yechidus with the Rebbe, 20 Adar II 5725:

Issue:

Most of the children in our school (the school referred to is Lubavitch House School in London UK) speak English at home. However, in each class at least half the parents would like their children to be taught in Yiddish, and one child has left because of this.

... We therefore wish to know what our policy should be for running the school, to teach in Yiddish or English.

The Rebbe’s Response:

“Tell the parents who want everything taught in Yiddish that they most probably also want their children to grow up to be Shomrei Torah U’Mitzvos, Torah observant Jews.

“If their children will be taught in Yiddish, which is a strange language to them, they may develop distaste for everything they learn. This will affect them in the future development of their personal Yiddishkait.

“It is appropriate to speak to them in Yiddish during their playtime, recess, breaks, or

when telling them a story as this will help expand their familiarity with the language; however, not when teaching them formal Yiddishkait subjects.”

* * *

So, the Rebbe’s view is clear.

The sole responsibility of the teacher is to use every moment for *teaching Torah and Yiras Hashem*, thus, they must speak in the language the students understand best, whether it’s Hebrew, Yiddish, English, French etc.

Hence, it is obvious that when you speak in the language which the children understand best, you will be more successful in instilling Yiras Hashem. Conversely, when you speak in a language unfamiliar to them you will have the opposite effect r”l.

What a pity for every day and every lesson that the student does not understand. It’s a loss that can never be regained.

Let us add another point:

When 90% of the English-speaking students are struggling to understand Yiddish, it adds another obstacle to their success in learning.

This is because while it is obviously quite challenging for a teacher to teach 20-25 students at different comprehension levels, this foreign language component adds more to the misery. While the teacher is drilling the Yiddish taitchen (20 or more times!!) to the English-speaking students who anyway don’t grasp it well,

they are consequently turned off.

At the same time, the Yiddish-speaking kids are extremely bored, because they’ve already understood the point after the first or second explanation! So, they are simply wasting their time hearing the taitch an additional 18 times! Thus, they too get turned off (and in many cases, they become the trouble-makers of the class). It is a total lose-lose situation.

Yet, to our dismay, many of our schools still insist on teaching (and taitching) in Yiddish, although for most of the students, this is not their language.

Isn’t this diametrically opposed to the Rebbe’s clear instructions?!

A French proverb says: Don’t attempt to be more royal than the King himself!

A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION: HOW TO FOLLOW THE REBBE’S APPROACH?

Option A:

I have had the z’chus of teaching Yiddishe kinderlach Chumash for over thirty years. I have by default insisted on speaking and teaching in Yiddish, with a bit of English here and there. Taitchen were also exclusively in Yiddish (with English explanations, of course).

However, after attending several teacher-training seminars (from Rabbi Meir Pogro and Rabbi Rietti) during the past summer, I adapted a revolutionary approach in teaching Chumash, in sync with the Rebbe’s Horaos.

In a nutshell, my method is as follows:

Step A) We read and review the new pasuk many times with

the Ta'amei-HaMikra;

Step B) I taitch and explain the pasuk, phrase by phrase, *only* in English (**no** Yiddish) and then review it a few¹⁹ times with the children, till they know it well;

Step C) I teach in a cheider whose policy it is to taitch in Yiddish. Therefore, once they fully understand the pasuk and are able to recite the pasuk in their own words in English, I introduce the Yiddish Taitch.

(And, by the way, they grasp the Yiddish-Taitchen much more quickly, since they already understand it in their own language, namely, English.)

The amazing results: 100% success rate!

The children are able to recite the p'sukim on their own, with Taamei-HaMikra, followed by an English translation in their own words and then finally with the Yiddish taitch.²⁰

In all of my teaching years, I have never had such full participation of my class in learning and understanding the Chumash as this year! All of the children²¹ are full of Chayus and excited to learn. They beg me to learn more and more. Some children are even able to go ahead and "teach me" the next pasuk!

And to top it off: This year, I have B"H succeeded in covering far more Chumash material (quantitatively and qualitatively) than in most other years (and if I

hadn't spent time on the Yiddish, they would obviously have learned even more).

Let me add:

Three out of my 21 students speak a fluent Yiddish (from their home, obviously).

After learning and reviewing the Chumash in English, I asked the three Yiddish-speaking boys if they can taitch the pasuk for me in Yiddish (before I teach it to the whole class). And to my utter enjoyment – they did a perfect job!

So, if any parent is annoyed by the fact that their child knows their Chumash in English much better than in Yiddish, there is only one response... Yep! You've guessed right, speak with him at home (exclusively) in Yiddish, and allow the school to teach the child Torah, though in English.

Again, remember the Rebbe's words:

"It bears looking into whether acquiring these advantages (of speaking Yiddish) is the task of the school or the obligation of the parents and the atmosphere in the home."

Option B:

The adults in the children's lives should accustom the children (at home, or at least) in preschool to the Yiddish language by speaking with them exclusively in Yiddish, a process that is termed "Total Immersion."

Consequently, by learning in Yiddish in preschool for two years (nursery and kindergarten), the children (ages 3-4) will quickly pick up the language, and much quicker than they would when they are older (age 5-6 etc.).

Again, this is still only a second choice. For, as the Rebbe says: **"... Even after they have learned the language, they still**

have a language barrier; they cannot speak fluently, they are thinking in English, and it is a pity on the time lost."

SUMMARY

Considering all the above, it is clear from the Rebbe's Horaos that we only have one of two choices:

A) We must teach our children in Yeshiva in their native language, namely – English, French, and Hebrew etc.

As far as learning Yiddish language, the children will acquire this by means of a separately designed curriculum (workbooks etc.).

B) Those who nevertheless insist on teaching in Yiddish, then in order to (rightfully) teach our Talmidim in Yiddish, and succeed in raising them to be Erliche Yidden, Shomrei Torah U'Mitzvos, then, it must begin with total Yiddish immersion at home and in Pre-School, resulting in having the children understand and speak fluently in Yiddish.

By exclusively following the Rebbe's horaos, we will surely see, with Hashem's help, a remarkable advancement on the part of the students, including their behavior, so that they become true and loyal Chassidim of the Rebbe, ready to march to the Geula!

Rabbi Levi Goldstein is a veteran educator of over 30 years. His stimulating CD's for children of stories culled from the Chumash, Midrashim, and Chassidic sources can be purchased at www.thelivingsidrah.com. His essays on chinuch based on the Shita of our Rebbeim can be accessed at www.chinuch.co.

19) It's not necessary to repeat it 10 or 20 times!!

20) To listen to these Kinderlach, please visit: www.chinuch.co, click on "More," then click on "Teaching in Yiddish," bottom of page 7 and double-click on the audio button.

21) There are obviously some cases where a child may have a learning disability, disabling him to "jump onto the bandwagon," which must be addressed in particular.

THE PURIM MAAMER THAT WAS SAID TWICE

A compilation of Chassidic stories about the Rebbe Rayatz from the notes of Rabbi Avrohom Weingarten a”h • L’ilui nishmas his son, Reb Matisyahu Aryeh Leib H”yd.

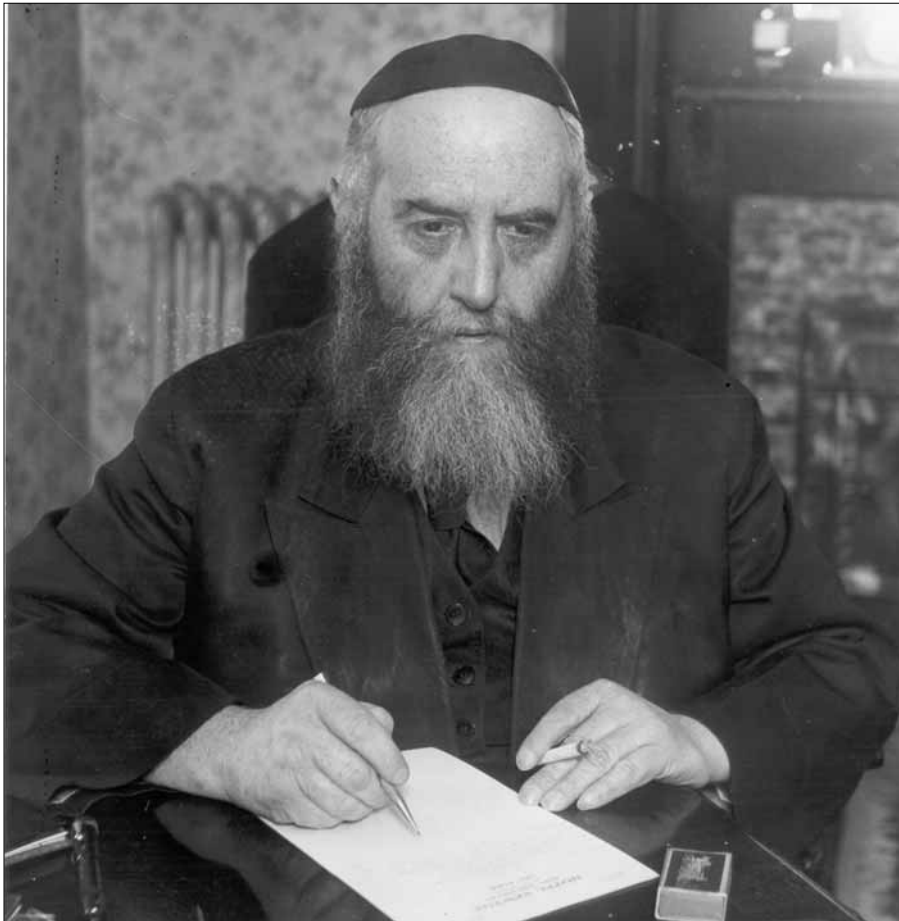
THEY ARE TEARING ME AWAY FROM THE ATMOSPHERE OF GAN EDEN!

A number of Chassidim came to the Rebbe Rayatz in Leningrad for Purim 5686/1926. Among them were Reb Itche Masmid, Reb Meir Simcha Chein and Reb Zalman Moshe HaYitzchaki of Nevel.

The Chassidim held a festive Purim meal and drank a lot of mashke and were late to the Rebbe’s farbrengen. When they arrived, the Rebbe had already finished saying the maamer.

When Reb Itche Masmid heard that the Rebbe had already said the maamer, he began to sob and said bitterly, “We (he never said “I”) came to the Rebbe and did not merit hearing Chassidus.” However, the Rebbe promised him that he would repeat the maamer the following day.

The next day, Reb Shmuel Levitin had yechidus with the Rebbe and the Rebbe spoke to him about the yeshiva in Nevel and called him to task about it. Then Reb Shmuel asked the Rebbe about his promise to say a maamer that day. The Rebbe said he would say a maamer



Chassidus now and asked Reb Shmuel to call the Chassidim who hadn't heard it.

In the middle of the maamer, his son-in-law, Reb Shmaryahu Gurary entered and said there was an urgent phone call from Moscow for the Rebbe regarding communal matters. The Rebbe had to interrupt the maamer and he said, "They are tearing me away from the atmosphere of Gan Eden into Gehinom." Upon his return he said, "Back to the atmosphere of Gan Eden!" And he proceeded to say the maamer.

A BAAL T'SHUV OF THE REBBE RAYATZ

A man by the name of Yeshaya learned in the chadarim in Lubavitch in his childhood. He later met a doctor and married her. She had a bad influence on him until he no longer went to shul even on Yom Kippur.

Erev Yom Kippur 5691/1930, he was in Riga and had plans to travel to Berlin but missed the train. The next train would travel on Yom Kippur. He thought: How can I travel when it's Yom Kippur? He decided to remain in Riga for Yom Kippur.

Remembering his childhood in Lubavitch, he went to the home of the Rebbe Rayatz to see what was happening there. He arrived the night of Yom Kippur and met Reb Chaim Meir Liss (one of the outstanding bachurim) whom he knew from Lubavitch. Reb Chaim Meir spoke to him and said, "Yeshaya, you must see the Rebbe."

On Motzaei Yom Kippur, Yeshaya had yechidus for two and a half hours. When he left the room, he fainted.

Upon recovering, he said that the Rebbe had said, "I will tell you everything that happened to

you from the time you were in Lubavitch until now." Indeed, the Rebbe detailed everything that had taken place and Yeshaya was very impressed.

The Rebbe asked him to start keeping Shabbos and to put on t'fillin every day and he committed to doing this. The Rebbe promised him that from then on, he would succeed in all his business dealings.

Yeshaya did, in fact, become observant and he became very wealthy. His wealth was estimated to be a million zlotys. Whatever he touched turned to gold.

AT THE GRAVE OF REB SHLOMO OF KARLIN

In the summer of 1932, the Rebbe Rayatz was in Ludmir and Reb Yeshaya did a lot for him. He was ready to give the Rebbe everything he had.

While in Ludmir, the Rebbe went to the grave of Reb Shlomo of Karlin. Reb Yeshaya did not allow people to approach the gravesite (so the Rebbe would have his privacy); only rabbanim were allowed to approach, but even they stood back somewhat. The Rebbe went to the grave himself.

WHAT ABOUT THE PROMISE!?

In 5699/1939, Reb Yeshaya asked the Rebbe for advice concerning a certain business deal and the Rebbe told him not to do it. He didn't listen and did it anyway and the deal fell through. He went back to the Rebbe and complained, "The Rebbe told me that I would be successful in all my business dealings!" The Rebbe said, "You won't profit from this but you won't lose

either." And so it was.

When Reb Yeshaya found out that the Rebbe had arrived in Riga (apparently when he had been rescued from Warsaw during World War II), he was extremely happy.

IN THE MERIT OF THE REBBE'S BRACHOS

Reb Yeshaya saw miracles thanks to the Rebbe's bracha. When the Russians conquered Riga he took all his money and fled. When he crossed the border they looked for him and he hid in the attic of a gentile's home. They searched but did not find him.

He asked the Rebbe whether to go to the US and the Rebbe said no.

THE REBBE LAUGHED

Reb Yeshaya then married a woman who was the daughter of Stoliner Chassidim. The Stoliner Rebbe once expressed annoyance with him in connection with his being a Chabad Chassid. Reb Yeshaya was frightened and he told the Rebbe what happened. The Rebbe laughed – in other words, there was nothing to worry about, and indeed, nothing untoward happened.

THE REBBE WAS RIGHT

Rabbi Leib Kramer related:

When I had to report for the draft in Poland, my parents disagreed with the Rebbe Rayatz. They said I should go report in Chelm where I lived, while the Rebbe said I should report in Warsaw. My parents wrote a letter to the Rebbe in which they said that my brother reported in Chelm and there was a doctor who knew him. The doctor said he knew him to be weak and the army subsequently released him.

YOU'RE CONTRADICTING YOURSELF!

The story told here about how the Rebbe Rayatz brought a Jew to t'shuva was related briefly (with some differences) by the Rebbe himself at the meal of the last day of Pesach 1941:

In Riga there was an old man from a Chassidic family who had studied medicine in his youth and became a famous doctor. Then, for various reasons, he became irreligious. He said he was "free" and did not believe, G-d forbid, etc.

While I was in Riga he would often come to see me. One time before Yom Kippur I did not see him. After Yom Kippur he came to me and I asked him: Where were you?

He said: Since I do not want to fast on Yom Kippur I go to Berlin for Yom Kippur since it's a big city. In a small city like Riga I am afraid to remain and not fast lest I be noticeable before Hashem.

I told him: You are contradicting yourself. You said you don't believe and then you said you didn't want to stay here so as not to be noticed by Hashem in a small city!

I spoke to him about this for several hours. In the end, he became a baal t'shuva.

This is why they wanted me to report in Chelm. The Rebbe said that nevertheless, I should report in Warsaw.

Amazingly, at just the time that I had to report, that doctor left Chelm.

TO THINK OF THE NAMES OF THE REBBEIM

Reb Leib Kramer further related:

The night before I had to report for the draft, I had yechidus with the Rebbe Rayatz and I asked for a bracha that they should not accept me. When I left the yechidus, the secretary, Reb Chatshe Feigin followed me and said (apparently having heard this from the Rebbe): When you report, think of the names of the

Rebbeim – the Baal Shem Tov, the Rav HaMaggid, the Alter Rebbe, etc.

When I presented myself to the doctors, they suspected I was trying to fool them and they asked me whether I wanted to be a soldier. Since I was concentrating on the names of the Rebbeim, I did not pay attention to their question and I said: Yes. This worked, since they then released me.

THE REBBE'S LEGAL ADVICE

Another story from Reb Leib Kramer:

When I was in Kobe, Japan someone who recognized me as a Lubavitcher Chassid said to me: You think you are a Chassid

of the Rebbe? The truth is I am a Chassid of the Rebbe!

He went on to tell me:

I lived in Petersburg before the revolution and I was a big businessman. With the revolution, I lost a lot of money. Later on, there was supposed to be a major trial against me. I hired top lawyers but they could not help me.

I heard that the Lubavitcher Rebbe lives in Petersburg (then Leningrad) and I thought it would be worthwhile going to see him but I couldn't decide. I finally pushed myself to go, but on the way I thought, how can the Rebbe help me? What connection do I have with him? So I went back home.

Then I went a second time and reached the Rebbe's house but could not get myself to enter. I returned home.

The third time, I went in and the Rebbe was sitting there and smoking. His sirtuk was open and I saw a gold chain on his vest. I told the Rebbe about the court case. The Rebbe thought about it and then gave me an idea that my lawyer should present to the judges.

When I left, I thought the idea wasn't that good, but I decided to repeat it to my lawyer anyway. When I told him, he said: This idea could not come from a simple person since I already thought of all the possibilities and could not come up with a solution. I told him it was the Rebbe's advice and it ended up being the legal argument that exculpated me.

ADD IN ACTS OF GOODNESS & KINDNESS
TO BRING MOSHIACH NOW!

FEARLESS FAITH

By M.E. Gordon

If you would ask Shlomie, Heshy, or Yossi which day is their favorite day, I don't think you would be surprised to hear that it is Purim. If you would try to guess what activity they enjoy most on Purim, I doubt that you would ever figure it out on your own. Sure, they enjoy the mitzvos of Purim. Listening to the Megilla and drowning out Haman's name with all types of unusual noisemakers is fun, giving and receiving mishloach manos is exciting, matanos L' evyonim is fulfilling, and the festive meal is filling in a different way.

All that is great, but the three brothers have another Purim activity which they love most. For the past few years, they would go with their older cousin, Eli, on Purim afternoon to the Jewish retirement home. After reading the Megilla, exchanging Mishloach Manos, distributing and collecting coins for Matanos L' evyonim, the boys would put on a short Purim play. Eli is the mastermind behind the whole program, and his cousins look up to him. This year is no different.

"Okay, everyone, don't leave anything behind in the car. I've got the Megilla, Heshy, you take the box of Mishloach Manos packages, Shlomie, take the bag of graggers, and Yossi, you can carry the two pushkas. Hey! Don't shake them or all of the coins will fall out!"

"Eli, are you sure that kids in Shushan wore such baggy pants? I think I look more like a Purim clown than a Shushan cheider

boy!" said Heshy.

"You look fine. Let's get started."

After the Megilla reading and the other Purim Mitzvos are fulfilled, the boys are ready to present their skit.

Eli, dressed as Mordechai, begins: "What is happening here in Shushan? Haman has just convinced Achashverosh to let him send out a decree to destroy the Jews r"l. Nothing happens down here without being decreed above. So if I analyze the situation down here and apply it up there, maybe I'll know what's doing up there and apply it down here, so that up there and down here the decree will be annulled.

"Haman is upset because I didn't bow to him, and he sees me as representing all of the Jewish people, who have faith in Hashem alone.

"Aha! This must be a test of faith from Above. Since the nation's faith in Hashem has not been so obvious lately, we are being tested to see if we can bring that faith out into the open. I know now what the people need to do, but I'd like to have some kind of sign that I will be able to get the Jews to do that. Oh, here come some cheider boys. Let me ask them what they've learned."

Shlomie, Heshy, and Yossi come up to Mordechai (Eli).

"Shalom U'v'racha, children. Where are you coming from?"

"Shalom, Rabbi, we are coming from Cheider, and we are on our way home," answers

Shlomie.

"Wonderful," answers 'Mordechai.' He turns to the youngest boy. "What is the last verse that you have learned?"

"I learned 'Al Tira: do not fear from sudden terror...'"

"Why not?"

"I dunno, I just know that because I'm Jewish, I don't have to be afraid. Not even when things look scary."

"You're a clever boy! Now," says 'Mordechai' turning to the second boy, "what did you learn?"

"I learned 'Utzu Eitza: plan your (evil) plots but they will be foiled...because Hashem is with us.'"

"Wonderful! Now let the oldest boy tell me what he has learned."

"V'Ad Zikna Ani Hu: until old age I am with you..."

"And what does this pasuk mean?"

"That Hashem is watching over us and protecting us *all of the time*, not just when there is an emergency. Even when we are going through the natural difficulties of life, like old age, Hashem is carrying us through it, and we need not fear."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, a big yasher ko'ach to each of you! Now I know that we will succeed to activate the faith that's hidden within. The children are already glowing with faith, and they will bring their enthusiasm home and inspire their parents too."

The music starts, the lights go on and the four boys start dancing and singing Utzu Eitza.

The above story is fiction. The lesson is based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 21 p. 206-213.

30 CYCLES OF BRINGING MOSHIACH



This past week world Jewry celebrated a special milestone. The “Global Campaign for the Study of Rambam” celebrated its 30th cycle of completing the Rambam. * Rabbi Gershon Avtzon, Rosh Yeshivas Lubavitch Cincinnati, presents the story and history of the “Rambam Takana,” and the connection to Moshiach.

By Rabbi Gershon Avtzon

Dear Reader sh'yichyeh:

This past week world Jewry celebrated a special milestone. The “Global Campaign for the Study of Rambam” celebrated its 30th cycle of completing the Rambam.

Many communities around the world held large gatherings to honor the occasion. Keeping in line with our theme that everything about Dor HaShvii is connected to bringing Moshiach, I will try to outline the connection between learning Rambam and bringing Moshiach.

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE CAMPAIGN

In the spring of 1984, the Rebbe called for an innovative addition to the daily study schedule of every Jewish man, woman and child. He suggested that everyone should study a portion of Maimonides' compendium of Jewish law, known as the *Mishneh Torah*, or simply as *Rambam*.

While many people had been turning to the fourteen-volume work to supplement their study of the Talmud or Jewish law, it was not being studied as a text on its own. Maimonides' work was somewhat neglected, as the chief rabbi of Israel Rabbi Ovadia Yosef wrote at the time, “The Rebbe brought *Rambam* back from being a book for scholars to being a book for the masses from which to study.”

The Rebbe suggested that the *Mishneh Torah* should be studied straight through, from beginning to end, and that this be done according to an organized schedule.

The Rebbe suggested a three-track system:

1. For those who are capable, a three chapter per-day schedule should be followed, which completes the *Mishneh Torah* in slightly less than one year.
2. For those who lack the time to study three chapters a day, a one chapter per-day program that lasts close to three

years is appropriate.

3. For those whose level of scholarship does not allow for the proper study of *Mishneh Torah*, the Rebbe suggested that they study every day from Maimonides' *Seifer HaMitzvos*, the *Book of Commandments*. The commandments being studied in great detail by those participating in the three chapter per-day regimen should coincide with the commandments being reviewed by those following this track, concluding all 613 commandments in the same course of time.

THE NOVELTY OF THE RAMBAM CAMPAIGN

When the Rebbe came out with the campaign of learning Rambam, there was a tremendous outcry from the religious world against it. At first glance it would seem strange that religious Jews would be against additional study of the Torah. We can understand if they scream against outreach to unaffiliated Jews or spreading the seven Noachide laws to the gentiles, but to be against the study of Torah?

The answer in my opinion is very simple. By instituting a world campaign to learn Rambam, the Rebbe is also making a statement. The statement is: I am here to elevate even the orthodox Jew who does not want to learn Chassidus!

In order to clarify this point, I want to repeat a vort that I

heard by a Farbrengen from Rabbi Moshe Feller, Shliach to Minnesota. He said: "When one is on Shlichus, he is always busy and can't sleep. The only time I could ever sleep was when I was traveling on a plane.

"When the Rebbe came out with Mivtza T'fillin, I could not go to sleep on the plane if there were Jewish men there that had yet to put on T'fillin. When the Rebbe came out with Mivtza Neshek, I could not sleep if there was a Jewish woman on the plane who did not yet light candles. But if there were no Jews on the plane, I could sleep. When the Rebbe came out with the mivtza of spreading "Sheva Mitzvos" I can no longer sleep on the plane!"

In other words: The Rebbe has something to share with everyone. Before the Rebbe instituted the learning of Rambam, the average religious Jew felt "immune" to the Rebbe. "Lubavitch is helpful for those who are beginners or unaffiliated with Judaism, but not for those heavily involved," was the common sentiment. The only exception was if one wanted to learn chassidus. But if a person was satisfied with just learning the revealed part of Torah, there was no "campaign" for him. The non-Lubavitch world felt that they held the rights to Gemara and Rambam etc.

With the institution of the Rambam campaign, the Rebbe is telling us to connect to him – and get others to him – through the learning of Nigleh and Halacha. This is quite a revolution.

THE MOSHIACH CONNECTION

The daily Rambam study unites the entire Jewish people. Jews around the world, from all walks of life, learn the daily quota of Rambam. There is no other Jewish daily study program in which men, women and children can all take part. Unity brings redemption.

The Rambam is a Seifer Halacha, and learning Halacha helps bring Moshiach. This is evident by what Chazal say (Midrash VaYikra 7:3): "The ingathering of the exiles is in the merit of Mishnayos and Halacha" and "Whoever learns halachos every day is guaranteed a portion in the world to come" (Tanna d'Veil Eliahu).

When one learns the entire Rambam, he merits learning the whole Torah. Then he has the full-right to demand the "New Torah of Moshiach."

Finally, the Rambam is the only Posek to discuss the Halachos of Moshiach, Korbanos and the laws pertaining to the

Beis HaMikdash. By learning these Halachos, Moshiach becomes real and relevant in our lives.

THIS YEAR IS UNIQUE

As mentioned earlier, this year the cycle of Rambam will be finished for the 30th time. Chazal (Avos) say, "Ben Shloshim L'Ko'ach" – When one reaches the age of 30, he is at his full strength. May we all strengthen ourselves and those around us in the study of Rambam and receive the strength and Brachos from the learning of the Rambam.

In addition, this 30th completion of the Rambam will coincide with the tenth Siyum for those learning one chapter a day. This reminds us all of what the Rambam himself writes (Hilchos Para Aduma, Chapter three): "The 10th will be performed by the King Moshiach – may he speedily be revealed, Amen, so may be the will of Hashem!"

Rabbi Avtzon is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Lubavitch Cincinnati and a well sought after speaker and lecturer. Recordings of his in-depth shiurim on Inyanei Geula u'Moshiach can be accessed at <http://ylcrecording.weebly.com/moshiach-what-we-believe.html>. Weekly video shiurim on Moshiach topics given by Rabbi Avtzon can be viewed at chabad.info.



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NO, NO, MY SON! I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU ALONE!

After the passing of her husband and two daughters, Heishke's mother dragged herself to the Uzbeki hospital. But she won this battle – for Heishke.

By Rabbi Yehoshua Dubrawski a"h

It was a very hot, dry day. My mother (Malka, who was called Manye) and her escorts walked slowly along the long sand road that led to the *Respublikaner Bolnitze*, the Republican hospital. I held her hand on one side and her sister Chana grasped her on the other side as we led her to the hospital. My mother mostly walked with her eyes closed from weakness, and my eyelids became stuck together due to the sweltering heat. In any case, it was hard for me to look at her scorched, exhausted face.

In my thirteenth year, my imagination was highly developed. As we walked, I pictured what my mother was going through as she walked the same road to the same hospital where her husband, my father, had been brought a year ago. He had not returned home.

What further agonized me was that my mother's hand that I held gently in my own bore no resemblance to the warm and firm though soft hand that I once knew. Her hand, with the skin that hung on it, lay weakly in my hand. Only her sister Chana spoke a little bit and raised our

spirits somewhat.

I haven't yet mentioned how many times my mother asked to stop, to rest. "Oy, my dear ones. My feet – they don't want to move." The reason was simple. Her feet were swollen like logs of wood. The hunger disease (when the digestive system stops working because of starvation) and dysentery sapped my mother of the last of her strength.

In the reception area of the hospital there was no vacant seat or bench. It was packed with the sick and their escorts. It was with difficulty that my mother found a place to sit on the floor in some corner. That is where she rested, half lying and half sitting.

After a wait of a good few hours, it was her turn to see the doctor. Chana showed him the referral from another doctor in the old city. The doctor at the hospital did not even examine my mother or ask her anything. In a resolute, unemotional tone he said, "The hospital is not a place for sick people like these." When my mother moved away, he angrily asked her sister, "Why did your doctor send her here? The hospital is not a *kladbishtze*

(cemetery)."

Chana was momentarily stunned and couldn't utter a word. Her head whirled, but she quickly recovered and pleaded with the doctor and sweet-talked him. My mother also managed to utter a few heartfelt words and looked up with her big, sad eyes, but nothing helped.

Then I opened my mouth and was ready to yell at the doctor: You thief, wicked person, despicable man! But I immediately caught myself in fear that I would make things worse. Somewhere deep inside me, an odd, little satisfied feeling crept in that my mother would not remain at the hospital. But my mother hoarsely said to the doctor, "I cannot go back. I am staying here." He did not respond.

My mother dragged herself to a chair not far from the entrance to the hospital. She seated herself and said to Chana, "You go home and I will stay here alone. They will have to accept me here at the hospital."

Aunt Chana and I looked around for a way of taking her home. We did not have to search far. Near her chair was an *arba* (a two-wheeled wagon) harnessed to a donkey. A Bucharian Jew put a little girl on the wagon (apparently his daughter who had been released from the hospital).



Even before Chana finished asking him whether he could take my mother on his wagon too, and whether he was going to the old city of Samarkand, he answered warmly, “Ah, what’s the question? We have One Father. Of course I will help. Who else will help – the Ishmaelites?” And he helped put my mother on the high wagon.

As we went through the streets of Samarkand that were paved with cobblestones, the wagon bounced around so much it was hard to look at my mother’s face. The hard boards of the wagon must have been very painful for her skin and bones.

The alleyway where the clay hut we lived in was located was very narrow. Not only could the wagon not enter but even the donkey could not turn around within it. Chana and I carried my mother into the little room in our weakened state and she fell onto the mattress.

Her sister Chana stood near the one, crooked window and gazed dimly at the horizon, at the blinding sun which set and dipped into a sea of red. I stood near the mattress as though paralyzed, G-d forbid, because of my forbidding thoughts. I absolutely could not banish from my mind the last, nightmarish thought, how they removed my little sister a”h from this clay hut. My mother had held her daughter, unable to cry out anymore; just sobbing in a voice that burst forth from the depths of her heart, like she did now.

My grandfather was preoccupied with lighting the small kerosene lamp. He was mumbling something, maybe T’hillim, maybe finishing Mincha. Then he said in a measured, calm voice, “Listen children. I see in her return to the house, in her

not remaining in the hospital, a good sign from Heaven, a good sign! She will be well and live long.”

Zeide supported his statement, as was his wont, by saying that Hashem had enabled him that day to procure a loaf of well-baked white bread for my mother. He had even cooked something for supper for all of us, potato soup. Hashem would help!

When Zeide’s lamp began giving off light and Zeide spoke, my mother stopped sobbing. Chana turned from the window

would not refrain from eating; she would eat everything. Even doughy foods, even baked goods, even unboiled water and fruit, and she would prevail!

My mother stood by her words. Immediately, that same evening, as though with renewed strength, she ate the soup that Zeide cooked; not with the white bread but with pieces of *lepyoke* (Uzbeki bread). I was somewhat taken aback by the complete transformation of my mother’s attitude and spirits. I always knew that my mother, deep inside, was strong and possessed a tremendous willpower, but to



I always knew that my mother, deep inside, was strong and possessed a tremendous willpower, but to such an extent?



with eyes that suddenly seemed alert, and I was momentarily released from the memory of the horrifying picture in my mind. Within a short time, my mother raised herself up; seemingly with strength that was not hers. She got up and fell upon me and hugged me with her thin, frail arms. She whispered in my ear in a different, clearer voice, “No, no, my son. I will not leave you alone, no! Hashem will not allow that to happen. I will fight with all my might and Hashem will help me.”

I realized that my mother had heard what the doctor said when he did not want to admit her to the hospital, since in a strange voice and with odd clouded eyes, though with a piercing gaze, she mumbled that she would purposely spite that doctor, survive the debilitating diarrhea and remain here for her child; and to spite all the doctors she

such an extent?

Zeide-Rav noticed this too. After eating in the little courtyard, Zeide spoke to me about my mother being a great woman with mighty soul powers. She is a heroine! So I should be a *shtikel mentch* (somewhat mature) and have the brains to help her in her very difficult battle for her life; at the very least, I shouldn’t ruin things.

But what could I do? I was already greatly pained that I hadn’t done anything to save my two sisters.

I would berate myself, saying: By others, a boy of 12-13 is a *gantzer ya-tibe-dam* (important person). He does business in the market; he runs here and there and brings money home. As for me, Heishke? I’m a little worthless kid, a “mama’s boy.” I hadn’t earned a single ruble! What was worse, lately, thoughts of my father’s opinion about me

had come to mind, that deep inside I was a *yesh*, an egoistic crybaby (as described in the books), and that is where my fears and my shyness came from and who knows what else, even though I did not fully grasp the logic in this.

I did not fall asleep that night until very late. I felt I must do something to help my mother recuperate. To look for better doctors? (Where? How? Instant disappointment). To bring in money even though Zeide was already doing that himself? So I would help him. (Was I willing to go to the market to sell pieces of soap that Zeide cooked in the hallway? Oy! How would I be

able to force myself to do that?)

I tried to think of how to help my mother, at least in the house. I thought and thought – had I really done **nothing** to help her up until now? It had been many long months that my mother waited until Zeide and I were asleep at night and then she went about with a T'hilim in her hands that was tattered and wet with her tears. She would whisper and cry, say the words and cover the soft pages with warm tears. More than once I heard her cry with halting breath, sobbing and saying, "Master of the universe, where are my children? Take me to my daughters." And still I lay there like a worthless fool.

My mother's words jolted me awake in the morning, "...To spite the doctors." She explained something to Zeide; surely in response to the question as to why she was cooking a sort of soup with dumplings made of roasted pieces of dough, but I was pleased that she was still diligent and was eating with superhuman efforts and trying with all her might as Zeide put it, "to be victorious in war" – with herself, her stomach, to eat all the things the doctors said were not good for even a healthy stomach.

I managed to watch over my mother for only a few days until I fell ill with a severe case of typhus.



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



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