

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

From 770 we're Marching Out

In honor of the Kinus Hashluchim, we present the story of a Shliach, among thousands, in whose shlichus the Rebbe was personally involved; guiding and leading every step of his way.

By 5716 a few Shluchim had already moved out far and near, upon the Rebbe's appointment, although the "Shlichus Revolution" had yet to begin. The Rebbe began addressing the topic incessantly; seeking to entrench in the hearts and minds of chassidim just how imperative it was for them to heed the call. Rabbi Nachman Sudak, head Shliach of the U.K., was among the first to stand up to the challenge.

In an exclusive interview with "A Chassidisher Derher", Rabbi Sudak relates the fascinating story behind the beginning of his Shlichus, with the Rebbe's guidance at every turn.

Good evening Rabbi Sudak, and thank you so much for your precious time. Let's start from some background information. When did married couples start going on Shlichus?

In the early years the only sort of Shlichus that existed was summer Merkos Shlichus. Pairs of bochurim would be dispatched to different cities across the nation to spread Yiddishkeit. Starting in 5716 the Rebbe began speaking vehemently about a different type of Shlichus. Ideally it was along the lines of Merkos Shlichus, but with one major difference: Bochurim were going on Merkos Shlichus, for a short amount of time, two months at most, and then return to 770 for the year. Whereas here the Rebbe was demanding of couples to move out some time after their chassuna, and remain there permanently.

How did this new system work?

The guidelines were as follows: Bochurim who were willing to go on shlichus after their wedding, would look for potential destinations on their own. It wasn't rare for a couple to move into a city, where the husband had previously been on Merkos Shlichus and thus gotten to know in some way.

Is that how your Shlichus destination was chosen, as well?

No. I was privy to an uncharacteristic personal attention on the Rebbe's behalf; he

was completely involved from beginning to end.

How so? Can you tell us the details of how you departed on Shlichus?

During Kislev of 5720 I became a *chosson*. Shortly thereafter, along with a few more Bochurim, I wrote to the Rebbe with a unique request. Instead of us looking for cities to settle in, we wanted the Rebbe himself to direct us, and tell us where to go, himself.

Thus began a long series of subtle tests, the Rebbe (through Rabbi Hodakov) put us through, to determine the extent and seriousness of our commitment. You see, in that period when the entire Lubavitch community was comprised of a handful of families, every bochur felt a special kind of closeness to the Rebbe; he took interest in every part of our lives, how we were learning, how we were eating, and even where we were sleeping.

For instance, one time, Rabbi Hodakov summoned me into his office, and asked me what I thought of going to Turkey; I replied that wherever the Rebbe will send me, I'll go. Showing no sign of whether my answer pleased him, or not, he just dismissed me, and sent me back to my studies.

Only later did I realize that that too, had been one of the several steps the Rebbe was taking, to measure just how serious we were

On 16th Av 5719, the Rebbe wrote to a fellowship of Lubavitch associates in London, led by Mr. Shlomo Perrin, a short period before Rabbi Sudak was to move there on Shlichus:

“...In the next few days Rabbi Nachaman Sudak will be traveling to settle in London. While he was here in New York he worked hard, and accomplished many great things exhibiting positive results. I have spoken to him, and I see it fit for many reasons that he utilize his knowledge and talents to strengthen and spread Yiddishkeit in general, and specifically the teachings of Chassidus, in London and the surrounding areas.”

about going on Shlichus, and the suggestion about Turkey was merely an outlandish question, posed for that purpose, and it obviously wasn't a concrete option.

Meanwhile, months were going by and I had yet to set a date and place for my chassuna, because I was waiting for the Rebbe to let me know where I would be moving to. Towards the summer I finally received my orders: I should get married in London (where my Kallah resided), and I would move somewhere in Europe shortly thereafter. I was naturally somewhat disheartened to hear this, because that inevitably meant that the Rebbe wouldn't be Mesader Kiddushin by my Chas-

sunah, as he did very often at that time. (See page 30 for an extensive review on the topic.)

The matter wouldn't stop bothering me, since this was my dream as a Bochor, it had always been clear in my mind, that when the occasion would arise, the Rebbe will be mesader kiddushin, and here, all of this was singlehandedly dismissed, in the Rebbe's one line instruction to get married in England. I thus decided to write to the Rebbe asking him to grant me permission to hold the chassuna in NY. I included in my letter, that apart for everything, this arrangement was going to be easier for both sides, as far as technical arrangements were concerned. The Rebbe's replied in no uncertain terms, and his response unwavering:

“מנהג ישראל לעשות החופה במקום דירת הורי הכלה. זאת אומרת בלונדון. וגם עליהם לעשות כן.”

[It is Jewish tradition to hold the Chupah in the place where the Kallah's parents live. This means in London. And so must they do.]

After receiving this answer, the reality that the Rebbe wouldn't be Mesader Kiddushin by my chassuna, began to sink in. Now it was time to set a date. The Rebbe said I should get married in either Av or Elul, so of course I chose Elul, which would enable me to remain in 770 for as long as possible.

I still didn't know where in Europe I

would be moving, until one day I was called in and told that I would be moving to London. The Rebbe even showed me a letter he had written to the board of associates founded by my father-in-law (Rabbi Bentzion Shemtov), recommending me for the position.

It finally dawned upon me that the Rebbe wanted my Shlichus to begin with my chassuna in London, thus easing my transition into town, rather than landing there later as a perfect stranger.

Did you know exactly what you would be doing in London? Did the Rebbe give you clear directives?

In those days the definition of shlichus was still somewhat vague, so I wasn't exactly sure of what my job would entail. So I asked the Rebbe during that Yechidus, what I should do once I arrived in London. The Rebbe lifted up both hands and said:

“וואס זאל איך דיר זאגען, ס'איז פאראן טויזענטער זאכען וואס צו טאן”

[“What should I tell you; there are thousands of things to do”.]

The Rebbe then told me that I should open a branch of Merkos Linyonei Chinuch, and that we would eventually touch base again, to plan my next move. The Rebbe concluded by saying that were I to have any



questions, I should write straight to him, opening a channel between us for mutual correspondence, and finished off saying "מיר וועלן זיך זעהן".

I saw these final words as a pledge on the Rebbe's behalf, and understood to mean that although he was sending me far away, he will nonetheless allow me back from time to time.

I moved to London and did precisely as the Rebbe instructed me: I opened a branch of Merkos and started giving shiurim and doing other activities. The Rebbe assisted me every step of the way; over the years, whenever a problem arose, the Rebbe always found out about it somehow, even when I had deliberately chosen not to bother him with it, he always knew and came to the rescue.

Can you tell us about the first time you came back to the Rebbe after having moved on Shlichus?

After being in England for a year I wanted to come and see the Rebbe so I asked permission to make the trip. The Rebbe told me that not only was the permission granted, but that he would also pay for the entire ticket; half the price as a gift and the other half would be a loan. This was on one condition: that I would return to London in time

for Rosh Hashonah,



From right to left: Rabbi Pinchas Feldman (Sydney, New South Wales, Australia), Rabbi Leibel Raskin (Casablanca, Morocco), Rabbi Shlomo Maidanchik (Kfar Chabad, Israel), Rabbi Nachman Sudak (London, England), Rabbi Zushe Wilimovsky - the Partisan (Kfar Chabad, Israel), Rabbi Avraham Shemtov (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania).

which meant that I would be by the Rebbe for two weeks in Elul.

On a different occasion, still in the early days of my work in London, I went for a visit to New York. During Yechidus, the Rebbe again offered me the ticket as a gift. Seeing that this time I was hesitant to accept it, the Rebbe told me, "You are happy being here, and I am happy when you come, so I want to take part."

You spoke about the closeness of the Rebbe to the Bochorim, can you share with us a personal story where you experienced this first hand?

The first time I actually experienced this, was on my second day in

New York, during my first visit ever.

I came to the Rebbe from yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel, on Monday Rosh Chodesh Shvat 5715. Reb Shlomo Chayim Kesselman, the mashpia of the Yeshiva in Lod, instructed us that upon our arrival we should go into the Rebbe to introduce ourselves, and inform him that we'd arrived safely (not as a formal Yechidus). So the next day, I went into the Rebbe's room to convey the message. The Rebbe asked me where I was sleeping, to which I replied 'Doh' [here] meaning in 770. At that point I had no idea yet where the dormitory was or anything like that. The Rebbe told me to speak to the bochur Leibel Raskin to arrange myself a pillow. "It's not a time for Sigufim" [lit. afflictions], he told me.

Think for a moment: with the fate of world Jewry on his shoulders, the Rebbe busied himself to make sure a young bochur in yeshiva had a pillow to rest his head upon...

