

An
Exclusive
Interview
with
Rabbi
Moshe
Herson

**HEAD SHLIACH
OF THE STATE
OF NEW JERSEY**

Step by Step

**GUIDANCE FROM THE REBBE
AS BOCHUR, MENAHEL
AND SHLIACH**

Throughout the years Rabbi Moshe Herson was privy to innumerable and outstanding interactions with the Rebbe; beginning as a bochur in 770 and subsequently serving as a menahel of a Yeshiva and as a Shliach to the state of New Jersey.

We hereby present you with an exclusive interview with Rabbi Moshe Herson.



מוקדש לזכות
החיל בצ"ה לוי יצחק שי' חייטאן
ע"י הוריו שיחיו
יהי רצון שיגדלוהו להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן כרצון ולנחת רוח כ"ק אדמו"ר

PART I – 5710'S A BOCHUR IN 770

Good evening Rabbi Herson, thank you for having us. Let us begin from your earliest memories growing up in Brazil, how was your connection with Lubavitch forged?

I grew up in a relatively *frum* home, albeit in no way connected to Lubavitch and at the time I was learning in a Jewish day school in Rio de Janeiro called Talmud Torà. In the 5700's many Chassidim used to travel to distant locations around the globe to raise funds for the Frierdiker Rebbe's causes; one of them was Rabbi Yossel Wineberg, of blessed memory. Remarkably, before he set out to Brazil in 5709, the Frierdiker Rebbe told him that he shouldn't simply take [money] during his visits; rather, he should also contribute. During his stay in the city he paid a visit to our class. That was the first time I met him. Later on we met again, and he asked me if I'd be interested in attending a yeshiva – quite frankly I had no interest in going to yeshiva, my mind was long made up to continue on to high school education and pursue a career in medicine, but I didn't have the chutzpah to tell that to a rabbi, so I answered that perhaps it would be an idea. Before

returning, he left me the necessary paperwork to apply for a student visa for the United States. I didn't make much of it at the time, and the papers remained sitting in my house for several months. A year later approximately, the idea began taking shape in my mind, and I seriously considered making the trip. For my



mother who was a widow, it was difficult to accept, but eventually she consented.

When did you arrive in New York?

I arrived in the United States around Shavuos 5710, a few months after the Frierdiker Rebbe's Histalskus. I was a young fifteen-year-old bochur from

abroad, and my grasp of Yiddish and Loshon Kodesh wasn't the best, but I learnt. My original intention was to study in Yeshiva for a short period and eventually return to Brazil to continue my studies, but that notion dissipated quickly...

When did you first see the Rebbe?

The only occasions I had to see the Rebbe were during the tefillos; during the weekdays the Rebbe davened in the Frierdiker Rebbe's apartment on the second floor, while on Shabbos he davened in the small zal on the main floor of 770, which at the time was all there was. Seeing the Rebbe davening made a strong impression on me and I gravitated towards him. Months passed, and in the weeks following Simchas Torah 5711 I asked the principal of the Yeshiva, Rabbi Yosef Tenenbaum, to allow me to go into *yechidus* to the Rebbe!. Initially he resisted, and asked me why I felt it necessary to see the Rebbe, and I on my part didn't want to disclose the true reason, but eventually he allowed me to go. At that period of time I was still trying to adjust to the new lifestyle and rigorous study level of yeshiva, and quite frankly not very successfully; every time I heard the rumble of a plane flying overhead my mind drifted away with it, and I longed

THE FIRST FARBRENGEN – YUD SHEVAT 5711

The Farbrengen of Yud Shevat was something of extraordinary as is well known.²

In the days preceding Yud Shevat, it had been advertised in several media outlets that on the upcoming first yahrtzeit of the Frierdiker Rebbe, the new Lubavitcher Rebbe would be crowned. The news attracted people from far and wide, and 770 was packed like never before. Audio speakers had been installed in the hallways for those who weren't able to get into the *zal*, which itself was so congested that the ceiling was dripping from the high concentration of humidity in the room. People were fainting and there wasn't an inch of free space. When the Rebbe arrived, they tried to open for him a path in the midst of the human ocean, but to no avail; the Rebbe didn't wait, and before anyone could realize, he placed one foot on the bench, another on a nearby table and he was on the other side of the table!

The Rebbe had insisted that the farbrengen be held in 770, notwithstanding the multitudes that were expected to attend. In later years however, large farbrengens were held in nearby ceremony halls to accommodate the large crowds.

Hours passed and some people left; until at one point, in between sichos one chossid, Reb Sender Nemtzov stood up and 'demanded' that the Rebbe say a *maamor chassidus*, which was to unambiguously seal the Nesius. Not too much after that, in the middle of a sicha the Rebbe began the maamor Basi Legani.

The maamor wasn't delivered in one time as customary, rather the Rebbe stopped a few times, cried profusely, and started over.

When the Rebbe left the farbrengen the chassidim were on "a different planet"- People made the Brocha of Shehechayinu and others danced through the night....

for my family and friends left behind in Brazil. This made it hard for me to devote my all to learning as I was supposed to do, and I felt I needed the Rebbe's advice on the matter.

I went in to the Rebbe, and in retrospect those few minutes changed my stay for good. The Rebbe addressed my issue and asked me whether I carried a picture of the Friediker Rebbe with me, to which I replied in the affirmative. He continued to say that I should keep a picture either in my pocket or in my wallet at all times, and gaze upon it from time to time, and that will help me cope.

I did so and I even carried two pictures with me (i.e. the Friediker Rebbe's and the Rebbe's), and as time progressed, my condition improved of course.

We know that in those days the Rebbe farbrenge once a month, on Shabbos mevorchim, as per the Friediker Rebbe's directive; What do you remember of the Rebbe's Farbrengens during that period?

The Rebbe would farbreng in the *zal* on the main floor of 770. I remember the table formation was rectangular; the table stood along the windows of the *zal* and the Rebbe sat at its head. The farbrengens were well attended but not overcrowded. To the best of my recollection there weren't many people standing around.

The first farbrengen after my *yechidus* felt very much as a continuation of it. The Rebbe was conscious of the fact that here was a young foreign boy who needed some extra attention, and of course delivered.

I remember standing at the corner of the table next to the Rebbe, just a few feet away. At one point the Rebbe turned to me and said "Efshar vet Herson zogen Lechaim?!", immediately someone handed me a small cup of wine and I said Lechaim. From then and on everything became far better for me, and I also began writing regularly to the Rebbe.

Any particular stories stand out in your mind about your written correspondence from that time?

Sometime after I had undertaken to write regularly to the Rebbe, I started



RABBI HERSON RECEIVES KOS SHEL BROCHO MOTZEI PESACH 5744.



RABBI HERSON IN CONVERSATION WITH REB SHMUEL DOVID RAICHIK.

worrying for my sister whom I had left in Brazil, and was already of marriageable age. I had an idea to bring her to New York to study in Bais Yaakov, but the path to this was fraught with obstacles. Her journey and her tuition would be a very costly endeavor which I didn't want to impose on my widowed mother, and just about everything seemed impractical: considering that Bais Yaakov didn't have a dormitory facility for out-of-town students, where would she stay? Would she adjust to the American system? Also,

she had a fairly good job in Brazil, and pulling her away seemed a risky move. So I decided to write to the Rebbe. The Rebbe answered that I should indeed follow through with the plan, and not be intimidated by the difficulties. I followed these instructions and she soon was in the United States. After consulting with some friends of mine, I found a suitable place for her to live, and every week I would go to her house and study with her, in order to help get her up to par with the academic level of the school.

With time, she too began writing periodically to the Rebbe, and eventually even sent her report cards for the Rebbe to see. Incredibly enough, the Rebbe always replied. On one occasion – I recall – upon receipt of one of her report cards, the Rebbe made a remark that her previous grades had been better!

Something extraordinary that I had the privilege of being involved with, was with letters the Rebbe received from Spanish-speaking writers.

I was about 19 years of age, and one day Rabbi Hodakov called on me, and told me that since I was from Brazil I most probably spoke Spanish, which I did although not fluently. He told me that the Rebbe received many letters from

Southern and Central America, and asked if I was available to translate them into English. When I agreed, he emphasized the importance of the duty I was undertaking, and the crucial importance

that the content of the letters remain strictly confidential.

I began receiving letters, some had already been opened, some hadn't; in



FOUR SENIOR SHLUCHIM POSE DURING THE FIRST MENORAH LIGHTING HELD OUTSIDE THE WHITEHOUSE, COORDINATED BY RABBI AVROHOM SHEMTOV. R-L: RABBI SHLOMO CUNIN, RABBI AVROHOM SHEMTOV, RABBI MOSHE HERSON, RABBI YISROEL SHMOTKIN.

some cases the Rebbe would write on a Spanish letter the word “*leha’atik*” in pencil, which indicated to the *mazkirus* that the letter was to be forwarded to me for translation.

Keeping my work discreet wasn't easy since I didn't have a room for myself in the dormitory, so on occasion I would go back to 770 at times when I knew all the bochurim to be in the dormitory, and I would sit in a corner and get to work.

On one occasion, on the eve of bedikas chometz, when everyone would be busy with their preparations, and there was no seder, I figured it would be the perfect time to do some work, so I headed for 770, and sat by a table in *zal*.

Suddenly I heard the door of the Rebbe's office, which wasn't too far away - open, I didn't even know the Rebbe was in 770! On the way out of the building, the Rebbe walked directly across his office, towards the door of the *zal*, and looked around. I rose to my feet as the Rebbe

watched; it wasn't longer than a few seconds, but I felt that something had happened there.

The next morning around the time of *biur chometz*, again I was working on the

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MERKOS SHLICHUS

One summer I made up with a friend of mine in 770, [Rabbi] Binyomin Klein, to go together on Merkos Shlichus. Merkos had given us directives to visit a few towns in Cuba, a few in Colombia and then to go to Caracas, Venezuela.

In those days a bochur was accorded the opportunity to go into *yechidus* once a year, on his birthday, exceptions aside. Since my birthday falls out during the summer, I went into *yechidus* shortly before setting out on our trip and wrote on my *tzetel* what our itinerary was. The Rebbe sat sideways at his desk, with his side parallel to the width of the table, as he read my note. After finishing to read, he picked up his holy head and asked why were we only going to visit one city in Venezuela; I hadn't the foggiest idea- we'd been given a route and I'd never thought of questioning it, so replying to my silence, the Rebbe finished off that we should see to it to visit more towns in Venezuela.

I went back to my *chavrusa*, and we tried calling the airline to change our ticket, but as hard as we tried, and to our great

dismay they told us our ticket wasn't mendable and that nothing could be done. We figured that we might as well get on with our trip and perhaps once at the airport in Colombia, they will be able to better assist us. But alas, there too our plight fell on deaf ears and we returned to our hotel disappointed and at a loss as to what to do next- the Rebbe had instructed to do something and we saw no way how that was going to happen. Just as we sat there scratching our heads in our hotel room, the phone rang. After apologizing profusely, an airline representative informed us that there were technical problems in the airport of Caracas, and our plane would need to stop-over in a little town called Maracaibo for a few hours or, even a day- whatever we preferred, and then continue to Caracas. Needless to say we were ecstatic and dumbfounded all at once...what we hadn't managed at the ticket counter, the Rebbe secured from 770!

Sure enough the hotel they put us up in, in Maracaibo was owned by a Jew whom we put on tefillin with...

“Gentlemen,
the Rebbe just took us
out of our limitations!”



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RABBI HERSON IN HIS OFFICE AT RABBINICAL COLLEGE OF AMERICA.



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RABBI HERSON LOOKS ON AS THE REBBE PUTS TZEDAKA IN A PUSHKE BEFORE DAVENING.

letters, except this time I sat in a ‘blind spot’; I was hidden away in a little corner of space between the *amud* of the *baal tefilah* and the *aron hakodesh*.

The usual procedure of biur chometz was that along with actual *chometz*, many other items were burnt at the Rebbe’s discretion. Rabbi Groner would help the Rebbe carry the bags to the basement level of 770, where there was an incinerator.

On that fine morning, when the time came, the Rebbe walked out of his office and headed for the *zal* door which was across the hallway, looked around, and when he had apparently not found what he was looking for, the Rebbe walked down the hallway to the second door of the *zal*, looked around again, and when he had still not found what he was look-

ing for, the Rebbe went back to the first door, and walked into the *zal*, until the *bimah*. From there, the Rebbe noticed me in my corner, and pointing at me he said: “Herson kum mit mir.” Shivers ran down my spine as I followed the Rebbe into his office. When I entered the Rebbe’s room, the Rebbe told me in Yiddish: “If it isn’t too difficult for you, please help me carry the bags downstairs.” On the way out of the Rebbe’s room I noticed that the Rebbe waited a few seconds, and shortly thereafter he walked out, with me following behind. I followed into the hallway, closed the door, and I entered the waiting elevator with the Rebbe.

Once the door of the elevator closed, the Rebbe asked me if I had closed the door to his office. At that point I realized why the Rebbe had hesitated before

walking out of his office, perhaps because he wanted to be sure that the door be closed. I replied that I had double-checked, and indeed it was closed. I was so overwhelmed by what was happening, that before I could realize the Rebbe pushed the button in the elevator to go downstairs.

Given the peculiar nature of this incident, since that was always the job of the *mazkirim* to fulfill, I always felt that the Rebbe had deliberately changed his schedule in order to have me help, as some form of retribution for working on his letters. It seemed that when the Rebbe saw me the night before, he had decided to ‘reward’ my efforts this way.

This story taught me an enormous lesson; one who fulfills the Rebbe’s *rotz-son*, will surely be repaid. Moreover I saw a glimpse of the Rebbe’s sensitivity in this episode; the Rebbe on his part felt that this bochur is occupied with his work on the busy eve of pesach, it is right that he be shown appreciation.

Wow! What a story! Were there other South American students in 770 at the time?

There were indeed some more bochurim from Argentina and Brazil. Actually, sometime later on, I received permission from the Hanholo of the Yeshiva to visit the yeshiva for younger bo-

churim, located in the iconic “Bedfor and Dean” to learn and speak with them there, and to help them in their studies. I remember the Rebbe often glanced at me quickly by farbrengens after that, with a broad smile, which indicated his satisfaction with what I was doing.

How often did the Rebbe visit the Ohel? Did the chassidim go with the Rebbe?

In the months following the Frieddiker Rebbe’s *histalkus*, the Rebbe visited the Ohel every Erev Rosh Chodesh, and there was usually one full coach bus - or more - of chassidim as well.

On several occasions the Rebbe too travelled on the coach bus, sitting somewhere in the first few rows with a sefer. On other occasions he would be driven alone by car.

One particular story is still vivid in my memory. It was Yud Beis Tammuz 5710 there was a bus that went to the Ohel, and the crowd was scant. I was from the first people to get off the bus, I walked behind the Rebbe towards the Ohel, and stood right near him throughout the recital of Maane Loshon. Upon its conclusion, the Rebbe closed the Maane Loshon, and whispered in so low a voice, I doubt anyone standing further away than myself was able to hear it: “A Gut Yom Tov Rebbe!” Then he took a few steps backwards and cried bitterly.

**PART II – 5720’S
MENAHEL IN NEWARK**

When did your involvement with the world of Yeshivos begin?

Sometime during my time in 770, Rabbi Berel Baumgarten, the Rebbe’s shliach to Argentina sent a few *mekurovim* to learn in 770, and it was arranged that I would learn with them, since I spoke Spanish. In the same period I was approached by Rabbi Mentlik who told me he needed to speak with me. He told me that some time earlier the *hanholo* had written to the Rebbe about sending me to New Haven and work in the Yeshiva there. I was surprised to hear that all this had transpired unbeknownst to me, but



THE FIRST LOCATION OF RABBINICAL COLLEGE OF AMERICA, IN NEWARK, NJ.



RABBI HERSON MENTORS A NEW TALMID AT YESHIVAS TIFERES BACHURIM.

evidently there was a reason why they couldn’t disclose it to me earlier on.

At any rate, they wrote to the Rebbe that *hagam* - despite the fact that I learnt with the bochurim from South America, and *hagam* - despite the fact that I learnt with my sister once a week, they felt it could be overcome, and saw it fit to send me to New Haven. The Rebbe crossed out the words *hagam*, and substituted them with *ki* - because; in other words due to my responsibilities here in New York, I was to stay and not go to New Haven.

As far as your appointment as menahel of a yeshiva, what could you tell us about your move to Newark?

Around 5720, yet as a bochur in 770,

Rabbi Mentlik called me over, and told me that they were thinking of sending me to lead the Yeshiva in Newark New Jersey. We deliberated, and among other things I asked if they felt I was appropriate for the job. Rabbi Mentlik wisely replied: “We think you are, and if you are not, you will become appropriate for the position!”

After we agreed, we wrote to the Rebbe, and I ‘recruited’ Rabbi Yisroel Friedman to teach *niglah*, whilst I was to teach *chassidus*, and we were on our way. We didn’t get your typical welcome; there was no heating or lighting when we arrived and we had to get the place running again.

In the position of Menahel I wrote regularly to the Rebbe about the yeshiva, and anything that was on the table at that particular time.

At some point, I was encouraging the bochurim to read *Likkutei Diburrim*, and other ‘easier’ texts in bed, before falling asleep. A fellow *hanholo* member disagreed with me, and felt it was disrespectful to lie in bed reading holy texts. In the next report I wrote, I shared with the Rebbe this discussion I had had, and asked to be shown which way was right. In his response, the Rebbe wrote: “*Yamshichu bezeh kmo ad atoh* - continue in this [issue] as until this point”, namely as I had instructed.

Did you receive any hora’os as menahel of the Yeshiva?

At one point I felt like I could no longer carry the burden of the Yeshiva entirely on my shoulders. Functioning as both *menahel ruchni* and *menahel gashmi*, seemed to be more than I could do, so I wrote to the rebbe about this issue, and I stated that if the Rebbe agreed, I would hand over the *ruchniyus* aspect of the hanholo to someone else, and take care of fundraising and the other material aspects of the yeshiva, though it wasn’t a work I was very fond of doing. The Rebbe replied saying:

נישט כדאי זיך אראפ-גליטשען אויף אזעלכע דרכים. דאס וואס עס שטייט דײַך אהן לדור, איז געזאגט געווארען נישט נאר אויף א דור נאר אויף א מוסד אויך.

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RIGHT: MR. DAVID CHASE IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH THE REBBE, DURING THE YECHIDUS FOR THE MACHNE YISROEL DEVELOPMENT FUND 20 ADAR II 5749. ABOVE: MR. DAVID CHASE ADDRESSES FELLOW SUPPORTERS OF THE MACHNE YISROEL DEVELOPMENT FUND BEFORE THE REBBE'S YECHIDUS WITH THEM.



For more than twenty years I used to come to the Rebbe on Zois Chanukah with two very important *balabatim*, who would make a very large contribution to Chabad, and receive Chanukah *gelt* from the Rebbe's holy hands. On one occasion, one of them had donated an enormous sum, and when thanking him, the Rebbe said: "My appetite is till here!" While motioning with his hand over his forehead, and causing the hat to fall slightly backwards!

"It isn't worthwhile to allow oneself to 'slip' in such avenues. The statement that says 'There shall be one speaker for each generation [and not two speakers for a generation]', is not only referring to literal generations, but to institutions as well."

Thus unequivocally stating that I must remain at the helm of both aspects of the organization.

PART III

SHLICHUS IN NEW JERSEY

And now moving on to your work in *hafotzas hama'ayonos*; how did your relationship with Mr. David Chase develop?

The city of Newark had a flourishing Jewish community, and throughout our permanence there we developed close relationships with several people.

Among them was a gentleman who

took a keen interest in the yeshiva, and wanted to help. He was the manager of a few department stores in Newark that belonged to his brother-in-law, a wealthy entrepreneur who lived in Connecticut; his brother-in-law was Mr. David Chase. Over a period of about three years we developed a very close and intimate connection, and Mr. Chase offered his help in any way he could.

Some ten years after we had arrived in

Newark, around 5729, we wanted to move and I felt it was time to take some *balabatim* to see the Rebbe, so I wrote in before pursuing the idea, to see if the Rebbe agreed with it.

The Rebbe replied that the time had not yet come, so at that point I abandoned the project.

About a year later, again I wanted to bring people to the Rebbe, but thought that it would be more likely to be accepted by the Rebbe if a *balabos* wrote in himself rather than I. So I suggested to the chairman of our board to write to Rabbi Hodakov to arrange a meeting. Shortly thereafter I received a phone call from Rabbi Hodakov who told me to pass on the message to the board that they had been accepted to come to the Rebbe in *yechidus*, but the chairman was to be in touch with the Rebbe's secretariat to establish a time. On the designated evening – it was a Sunday – we went in for *yechidus*; the Rebbe's office had been furnished with several chairs alongside the walls, and everyone took a seat. The chairman, Mr. Ravin, introduced each member of our group to the Rebbe, and when he finished, the Rebbe pointed at me and smiling, asked him: "What about him?"

Throughout the meeting we discussed the fact that we had exhausted the re-



RABBI HERSON GREETES MR. ELIE WIESEL (LEFT) AND SENATOR FRANK LAUTENBERG (CENTER) AT AN EVENT MARKING 30 YEARS OF THE REBBE'S NESIUS IN 5740.

sources of our current facility, and that Newark was no longer suitable to host a *yeshiva*, and we discussed the need to move to a larger facility in a better area. They suggested to the Rebbe the idea of moving from our current one-family structure to a five or six-family unit, elsewhere.

The Rebbe listened carefully and said that the state of things is such that the youth of today needs space to breathe and move around; perhaps even have

access to a swimming pool. The *balabatim* immediately understood that the Rebbe had something of totally different proportions in mind...

Mr. Chase, who was the youngest of the group, turned to the other men and said: "Gentlemen, the Rebbe just took us out of our limitations!!" He went on to say that he had a property that could serve as an interim facility for the Yeshiva, until we would find a permanent home. He explained that some of the space could be rented out to a bank so that when the time would come we would even have money to pay for a down payment for a permanent property. "If the Rebbe, is interested in this, the Rebbe could have it for \$1!" – he finished off. As the Rebbe listened, I could detect a strong chemistry developing between the Rebbe and Mr. Chase. The Rebbe smiled broadly and said that if there would be a bank adjacent to the Yeshiva, a wall should be erected between the two institutions because – "If someone intending to go the bank mistakenly enters the Yeshiva, its no big deal, but if a *bochur* erroneously walks into the bank... that I don't want!" Everyone laughed with gusto, as I noticed the connection taking root deeper within Mr. Chase.

Mr. Chase readily agreed to build a partition, and the Rebbe suggested that

"HIS INFLUENCE WILL SPREAD THROUGH THE ENTIRE WORLD!"

Shortly after our move to Morristown in the summer of 5731, I went in for my birthday *yechidus* by the Rebbe, which as mentioned, also falls out in the summer.

In my *tzetel* I wrote, among other things, that Mr. Chase had asked me to send the Rebbe his regards and wanted to know if the Rebbe was happy with the most recent developments in our institutions.

When the Rebbe addressed that particular question, he gave me the most astounding and surprising answer to forward to Mr. Chase. Never in my life had I heard such terms used, let alone for a layleader!

Here is the answer in the original exact wording of the Rebbe:

דאס וואס מיסטער צײס פּרעגט, צי איך בין צופרידען, זאלט'ט

איהם איבערגעבען אז מיין צופרידענקייט איז למעלה מזה וואס ער קען זיך אמאל משער זיין. דאס וואס ער האט יעצט געטאהן, האט ער געטאהן נישט נאר פאר אידן אין ניווארק, מאריסטאון און ניו דזשערזי, נאר איך האף אז אנדערע מוסדות כשרים וועלן זעהן וואס ער האט יעצט געטאהן וממנו יראו וכן יעשו, ביז זיין השפעה וועט זיך פארשפרייטען בכל העולם כולו.

"With regards to what Mr. Chase asked, if I happy, you should give over to him that my happiness is beyond what he can possibly imagine. What he has now done, he didn't just [accomplish for those] in Newark, Morristown and [the whole state of] New Jersey, rather I hope that other appropriate institutions, will see what he has now done, and follow his example, until his influence will spread through the entire world!"

since I wasn't a real-estate maven, perhaps he [Mr. Chase] could oversee the rent of the adjacent property himself. Mr. Chase returned the Rebbe's broad smile and with a tone of strong conviction said: "Rebbe I'll do it!!"

One of the members of our board seemed to be less than excited about Mr. Chase's proposal, and the following day Rabbi Hodakov suggested I go see him in his office, which of course I did.

What other stories can you share with us about Mr. Chase's relationship with the Rebbe?

Sometime in the early 5740's I went up to Hartford, Connecticut to meet with Mr. Chase in his office. Among other things I decided to offer him to put on tefilin with me. He told me: "Moshe, I feel the time for this is coming, but I need you to be patient with me." I relented and agreed to give him more time.

In my next *duch*, I wrote this as well to the Rebbe.

A few months passed and on 11 Nissan 5742, Mr. Chase came with me to the farbrengen as was our custom from years before, and in the days following the



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THE CURRENT 82-ACRE CAMPUS OF THE RABBINICAL COLLEGE OF AMERICA IN MORRISTOWN, NJ.

The Rebbe noticed me
in my corner,
and pointing at me he said:
“Herson
kum mit
mir.”

Shivers ran
down my spine
as I followed
the Rebbe into
his office.



THE REBBE SPEAKS TO RABBI HERSON AFTER TAKING HIS PAN ON EREV ROSH HASHONA 5741.

CREDITS: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE

farbrenge the Rebbe traditionally sent out a thank-you letter to the dignitaries and guests who had attended. To Mr. Chase, in addition to the usual thanks, the Rebbe wrote, that given their closeness, he felt that though it isn't the norm for an individual to request gifts, he could nevertheless request one from Mr. Chase. And the Rebbe ensued to say that

the Rebbe accepted the money.

Another incredible occurrence took place shortly thereafter:

During one of his trips on his private yacht, Mr. Chase asked the captain of the vessel which direction was east. The question stirred the captain's curiosity and a conversation ensued between the

The balabatim immediately understood that the Rebbe had something of totally different proportions in mind...

he'd like for Mr. Chase to take on laying *tefilin* every weekday. The Rebbe added that he would personally send Mr. Chase a pair of *tefilin*.

Upon receipt of the Rebbe's reply, Mr. Chase called me and told me that though he'd turned me down for an offer for *tefilin*, he would accept the Rebbe's offer, and he hoped I wouldn't get offended! He wrote to the Rebbe, that he would gladly accept the offer, and would even ask that the Rebbe send him three pairs; one for his home, one for his office, and an additional one to have with him while traveling, he included a check in the envelope to pay for the cost of the *tefilin*.

The Rebbe thanked him for offering to pay for the *tefilin*, but refused to accept the payment, because since they were the Rebbe's gift, he wasn't to worry about paying for them. In his final reply, Mr. Chase, displaying great respect and sensitivity, insisted that the Rebbe accept the money, because otherwise it would come out of the organizations pocket and others who could've benefitted from that money, would now lose out. In the end

two men, around the fact that Mr. Chase prays every day.

Several days later, the captain approached Mr. Chase and said that he'd discussed the topic with his wife, and they'd unanimously agreed that if a busy and accomplished businessman can dedicate time each day to pray, so can he, and they committed to visit more often a house of worship of their religion.

When I heard the story, I wrote it to the Rebbe, and time moved on. Nearly a year later, by the farbrengen of Yud Alef Nissan 5743³, I was again sitting near Mr. Chase, who was listening to the sichos with the help of a simultaneous translation in his headphones, when the Rebbe began talking about a Jew who has been blessed by the Aibershter with abundant wealth, and even while aboard his yacht stops to daven, and how that conduct made a lasting impression on one of his sailors, to spur him to action as well!

Mr. Chase turned to me excitedly and said: "Hey! That's me!"

The incredible thing about this was that I had written the incident to the

Rebbe nearly a year earlier, and the Rebbe told over the story nearly verbatim from my written account!!

Going back to the yeshiva days, what prompted you into the expanded work of shlichus in state of New Jersey beyond the yeshiva? At which point did the transition take place?

We moved into our current location in Morristown in the summer of 5731, and a big inauguration ceremony of our new facilities was planned; it was publicized in the papers and the stakes were high. Our advertisement and press release to the media read that our doors were open to the wider public, beyond the yeshiva setting, although I didn't have anything specifically in mind at the time. I was in *yechidus* sometime before the grand opening and the Rebbe who seemed to have seen the advertisements gave me a *brocha* as follows:

דער אויבערשטער זאל דיר געבען הצלחה רבה ומפלגה אין דער מוסד און אין די מוסדות וואס דו האסט אנגעפאנגען בויען ארום איהם.

"The Aibershter should grant you abundant *hatzlocho* in this institution, and in the institutions which you have begun building around it."

The implication clearly was that the Yeshiva was to be the beacon around which the other Chabad institutions in New Jersey were to rise around.

Today Boruch Hashem, Chabad in New Jersey proudly boasts a shliach in each of its 21 counties, and more!

Thank you very much for your time Rabbi Herson, may we be zoche to be reunited with the Rebbe very soon, with the coming of Moshiach! ■

1. In that period, the Rebbe, who was then referred to as the Ramash, didn't formally accept people into *yechidus*; there was no line of people standing outside the Rebbe's room, as was usually the case on nights of *yechidus* through the years.

2. A detailed account of that monumental farbrengen is beyond the scope of this article, but see "A Chassidisher Derher" Issue #15 (92) - Shevat 5774 for more.

3. See Hisvaduyos 5743 Vol. 3 page 1207 and on.