



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

מוקדש
לחיזוק ההתקשרות
לכ"ק אדמו"ר
נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר
וזוגתו מרת לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו
שפאלטר

Transform the Desert

AS TOLD BY RABBI SHMULI SCHLANGER (BAKERSFIELD, CA)

From when I was a young *bochur* I dreamed of being the Rebbe's shliach. A year after my marriage, I was very much enjoying teaching a Pre-1-A class in Oholei Torah, especially since I was being mentored by my father-in-law, Rabbi Shmaryahu Katzen, a veteran *mechanech*. However, when it came time to renew my contract for 5763* I refused to do so because I was set on going on shlichus.

I had a connection with a Yid in a city in California that did not yet have a shliach and my eyes were set on opening a Chabad House there. Every Shabbos Mevarchim

I approached Rabbi Shlomo Cunin and inquired about moving on shlichus to that location. Each time he advised me to call his office on Monday morning, yet it never materialized.

After a while I approached Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, who in turn formally introduced me to Rabbi Cunin who, once again, told me to call his office on Monday morning.

Instead of calling, I was standing in the second floor hallway of the Chabad West Coast Headquarters on Gayley Avenue when Rabbi Cunin arrived on Monday morning



at 8:00 a.m. Surprised to see me, he greeted me with a “Shalom Aleichem” and invited me to wait outside of his office.

After an hour, he sent his son Rabbi Yossi Cunin to tell me to drive to a place called Bakersfield to explore the city and see if I was interested in going on shlichus there.

Although it was not the location I was seeking, I got into my rental car and made the two hour drive to Bakersfield. I spoke with a few people and even met a Jewish fellow who told me about the local rural Jewish community. I noticed grapes growing on both sides of the road and told my wife that we will certainly not go hungry here...

The next morning Rabbi Cunin asked me what I thought of Bakersfield and I replied that I would rather check out the coastal town I had been asking him about for some time.

“Yungerman,” he said with a warm smile, “today I am looking to fill a position in Bakersfield. I think it will be good for you.”

With a firm handshake he bid me farewell and asked me to get back to him after going to the Ohel and asking for the Rebbe’s *bracha*.

My wife, our three-month-old daughter and I went to the Ohel shortly afterwards and wrote to the Rebbe that we are ready to go out on shlichus to the “desert of California.”

After leaving the Ohel, we noticed that on the video screen in the Welcome Center there was a video of a *farbrengen* and these were the words we heard:

“די גאנצע וועלט איז א מדבר און וואו א איד געפינט זיך דארף ער

מאכן פון אן ארץ לא זרועה א מקום זרוע.”

“The whole world is a [spiritual] desert and wherever a Jew goes in the desert, he or she must transform their place in the world from a [spiritually] barren desert into a [spiritually] blossoming place.”

Overjoyed, my wife and I saw this as a clear and direct answer to us and our children to open a Beis Chabad in the spiritual desert of Bakersfield, California.

Six weeks later we moved out.

There is no official census of the Jewish community in Bakersfield. Over these past 18 years, with the Rebbe’s *brachos*, we have experienced much success in our activities, we built a *mikveh* and established a Chabad House which perfectly suits our needs in servicing the community. We are very active with reaching out to Yidden in the surrounding area and in prisons, and thus far have touched the lives of thousands.

We are always mindful that in these last days of *galus* our mission is ואתם תלוקטו לאחד אחד, to reach out to every single Yid, not to rest until we find every Yid and light up their neshama with Torah and mitzvos, preparing the entire world to be מקבל פני משיח צדקנו **1**

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