

# RESTORING THE CROWN

The Chabad  
community  
of Tzfas



## THE TZEMACH TZEDEK SHUL

“1 Menachem-Av 5730. K”K  
Admu”r Shlit”a.”

Reb Efroim Wolff, the head of  
Agudas Chassidei Chabad in Eretz  
Yisrael, wrote a short bulletin to the  
Rebbe.

“The city-council of Tzfas reached  
out to us regarding their local Chabad  
shul. The structure is about to collapse

and they want to know if we are  
interested in renovating it together  
with them. If not, they will be forced  
to demolish it. We requested they send  
us a detailed plan and budget, etc.”<sup>1</sup>

The shul seemed insignificant.  
Tzfas had little to no Lubavitcher  
Chassidim, and the shul was attended  
primarily by Sephardic Jews.

However, the Rebbe instructed  
them to oppose the demolition and

to see what could be done to rebuild  
it. In a series of meetings, the city-  
council made it clear that they didn’t  
want to invest money. In fact, when a  
Chabad delegation arrived in Tzfas to  
deal with the issue, they discovered a  
worker in the midst of demolishing  
the structure. They quickly demanded  
that he suspend his work.

“The mayor claims that there is no  
historic significance to the structure,”

לזכות  
הנערה עטא תחיל' ויגלר

לרגל הגיעה לגיל שנים עשרה  
היא עונת בת מצוה  
ה' תמוז ה'תש"פ

נדפס ע"י הוריה  
הרה"ת ר' דוד צבי  
זווגתו מרת חנה ומשפחתם שיחיו  
ויגלר  
פאלם ביטש גארדענס, פלארידא



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD



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PARTIALLY DEMOLISHED TZEMACH TZEDEK SHUL.



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD

THE TZEMACH TZEDEK SHUL IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE INITIAL RENOVATION, 5733.

Rabbi Wolff reported to the Rebbe. "He said that a family lived in the building before it was turned into a shul in 5696\*.

"We spoke to Reb Ezriel Zelig Slonim [the head of Colel Chabad which had actually supported the upkeep of the shul], and he insisted that he recalled it as a Chabad shul already in the year 5666\*. Reb Tuvia Blau also says that according to the

reports he collected, a Chabad shul in Tzfas has existed since the time of the Tzemach Tzedek and there is no documentation of a Chabad shul in a different location."

The Chassidic community of Tzfas actually dates back even earlier than the Tzemach Tzedek. It was established by the first *aliyah* of Chassidim to the Holy Land, led by Reb Mendel Horodoker. However,

due to strife with the local rulers and the existing Sefardic community, Reb Mendel soon moved to Teverya. Some years later, the Chassidic community of Tzfas was established once again, but then disagreements arose between Chabad Chassidim and the followers of Reb Avraham Kalisker. The Mittlerer Rebbe soon instructed his Chassidim to move to Chevron, where they were joined by a new group of Chabad

Chassidim, led by his daughter Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel and her husband Reb Yaakov Culi Slonim.

In the days of the Tzemach Tzedek, the Chabad community of Tzfas was established once again. It was made up primarily of Romanian Chassidim, students of Reb Yitzchak Moshe of Yas (Iași), Romania, a Chossid of the Alter Rebbe. The Tzemach Tzedek also sent his niece, Rebbetzin Beila Horowitz,<sup>2</sup> to settle there with her five sons after her husband passed away.

“A short time after they arrived in Tzfas,” recounted Rebbetzin Beila’s grandson, “my grandmother wrote to the Tzemach Tzedek that the Chabad Chassidim of Tzfas were suffering from harassment from the other Chassidim in the city and needed their own shul. The Tzemach Tzedek supported the idea. He sent 100 ruble towards the cost of the building and asked a local kolel to contribute as well.”<sup>3</sup> According to a *reshima* of the Frieddiker Rebbe<sup>4</sup> this took place in 5601\*.

The Rebbe made it clear that the shul should be preserved at all costs, instructing Reb Efroim to argue that it is a historic site which must not be demolished. Reb Efroim dispatched Reb Ezriel Zelig Slonim and Reb Tuvia Blau to speak to the mayor.

“He repeated his claim that there is no historic significance,” Reb Efroim reported to the Rebbe, “but Reb Ezriel Zelig argued and said that he met with the mayor’s own father-in-law, who had confirmed that the shul had stood even before he was born. Reb Yeshaya Hurvitz also confirmed that the building was erected in 5605\*.

“The mayor agreed to contribute 20,000 *lirot*, but he was mainly worried about filling the shul—currently, there aren’t many congregants. Reb Ezriel Zelig promised to bring new residents to Tzfas, and the mayor said that in that case he would definitely help.”

## THE RIGHT PLACE, THE RIGHT MAN

Reb Ezriel Zelig promised to bring more residents to Tzfas, but it’s not clear if he was speaking on the Rebbe’s behalf or on his own. Tzfas of those days was a sleepy town, far from the center of Eretz Yisroel. It had a weak economy; the bad conditions of the roads made it a long trip, and moving to Tzfas was considered like moving to the moon.

Some 20 years earlier, after World War II, dozens of *anash* families were immigrating from Europe, and Zalman Shazar had actually proposed to settle them in Tzfas—due to its close proximity to Meron, the cradle of *p’nimius hatorah*.<sup>5</sup> However, as Reb Leibel Motchkin related, they quickly dissuaded him of the idea:

“The older Chassidim at the meeting were tempted to accept his offer, but I couldn’t agree with it. The situation in the north of Eretz Yisrael was very bad and I couldn’t imagine settling the new families of *anash* there, so far from the center of Chabad which at the time was in Tel Aviv.

“I was sitting next to Reb Pinye Althaus. I whispered to him that we needed to do something quickly. He immediately understood, and quickly persuaded Shazar that the idea wasn’t practical. Instead, Shazar suggested Safaria, which later became Kfar Chabad.”<sup>6</sup>

Shazar, apparently, never gave up on the idea. In 5724\*, he wrote to

the Rebbe suggesting that Chabad Chassidim settle in the Tzfas-Meron area, and he received an encouraging reply from the Rebbe.

“Obviously, I was generally excited by the proposal for a Chabad settlement in the Tzfas-Meron area, but I still do not have all the details of the matter. Primarily: What type of people are suited to settle there—perhaps Russian immigrants? Moreover, Mr. Shlomo Madainchik is utilizing his visit here for the benefit of the current Chabad village, *‘vein marvin simcha b’simcha*.’ [Lit.: we don’t mix one celebration with another.] I hope to correspond with you further on this topic in the near future.”<sup>7</sup>

The suggestion seems to have remained on the ‘back-burner’ until a proposal arose while the Tzemach Tzedek Shul was being renovated. A piece of real estate next to the shul was offered to Chabad for purchase. Reb Efroim Wolff, unsure if it was a worthy investment, asked the Rebbe if he should purchase it.

The Rebbe sent a surprising response through *mazkirus*: “Why should you let it slip away? ...We need to make a Chabad center with a big *farnem*; a shul, *yungerleit*, immigrants, and perhaps something for tourists; there is potential for impact on the entire Tzfas.”

As it soon became apparent to Chabad in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe wanted a large scale project to take shape. Tzfas was to become a major



THE AREA SLATED FOR CONSTRUCTION OF APARTMENT BUILDINGS, 5734.

center for Chabad Chassidim, a second Nachalas Har Chabad.

A young and energetic *askan* was needed to spearhead the effort. They began searching for the appropriate individual in Eretz Yisrael, but then the Rebbe informed them that a choice had been made.

Rabbi Leibel Kaplan was a newly married yungerman learning in the kolel of Crown Heights. A bright

learner and talented *askan*, he had been chosen to lead the first group of shluchim to Australia several years earlier. Rabbi Cunin of California asked the Rebbe to send Rabbi Kaplan as a shliach to the West Coast, but the Rebbe responded, “I am holding him for myself.”

“After a year-and-a-half in kolel, according to the Rebbe’s instructions,” relates Mrs. Kaplan, “the Rebbe

directed us to look for shlichus opportunities in a new location. We wrote several suggestions to the Rebbe, but the Rebbe’s answers were either no, or maybe.

“One day, after Pesach 5733\*, Rabbi Hodakov called my husband to the office and said that the Rebbe wants to know if we were willing to go to Tzfas. Of course, we immediately agreed. But then the Rebbe asked, *Hahisbiru*

## THE FRIERDIKER REBBE’S VISIT

During the Frierdiker Rebbe’s visit to Eretz Yisrael in 5689\*, he also visited Tzfas. The following account is printed in Sefer Hasichos:

In honor of the Arizal’s *yahrzeit* on 5 Av, the Rebbe decided to visit his gravesite in Tzfas, accompanied by the *hanhala* of Toras Emes, his entourage, and many of *anash*, Chabad Chassidim.

At 2:00 p.m., they arrived in Shechem. At 3:00, they reached Afulah, where he was greeted at the central hotel by Tel Aviv Chief Rabbi Shlomo Aharonson, who was spending time in Haifa for health reasons. They spoke for a while about communal affairs, especially on the topic of Russian Jewry whose welfare is the focus of the Rebbe’s work. They parted warmly.

At 5:30, the Rebbe arrived in Tzfas. It was a surprise visit; the Tzfas residents were notified only a half hour earlier via a telephone call from Teverya, when the Rebbe had passed through, yet they nevertheless managed to pull together a honorable reception in the central hotel where the Rebbe was to stay.

All the elders, rabbis and dignitaries of Tzfas came to greet him, led by Chief Rabbi A. Y. Zilberman. The Rebbe only had enough time to greet them briefly. He davened Mincha and at 6:15 departed for the cemetery.

A massive crowd had gathered there and when the Rebbe arrived, the area was packed with onlookers. He approached the Arizal’s resting place and recited a prayer from a *siddur*, and then lifted his eyes to the heavens and remained still with wondrous *dveikus*. Only his heart-rending cries were heard by the participants.

He read the *pidyonos* he had brought along and then walked around the *kevarim* of the Arizal, the Ramak and Reb Shlomo Alkabetz, who are buried near each other.

He was also *mishtateach* at the resting place of the Beis Yosef, where he remained for some time, and then

he walked alone to the resting place of Reb Moshe Alshich, “where I spoke *baal peh* and cried profusely,” remaining there for some time as well.

Late at night, with superhuman power, the Rebbe climbed the mountain—a trek that is difficult even for a young healthy individual, no less after the tiring journey. Nonetheless, he climbed with measured steps, with strength and a holiness which surprised everyone present.

He paused to rest for a moment on a chair that had been brought from the city and he said to those around him: “My first visit in these holy places is very meaningful; *Olam Ha’asiyah* has totally disappeared.”

At the gate of the cemetery, the Sefardic *chachamim* welcomed the Rebbe. He asked whether the Sefardic shuls have public Torah classes. They answered in the affirmative and the Rebbe was very pleased. He warmly and lovingly encouraged them and gave them his blessing.

When he arrived at the hotel, a large crowd had gathered. He received them graciously, greeted them all and gave them his blessing.

He then went to rest. As per his request, he was brought a small table on the porch where he sat for three hours and wrote until 11:00 p.m. He left a certain amount of money for the Torah institutions of the city, and at 4:15 in the morning he proceeded to Meron with his escort.



NEWSPAPER AD WELCOMING THE FRIERDIKER REBBE BY REB SHOLOM SHACHNE HOROWITZ, A GREAT NEPHEW OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK.

*lahem hakshayim hakruchim bikach*— were they explained the difficulties it would entail?

“Rabbi Hodakov explained to my husband that his task would be to build a new neighborhood for Chabad, a ‘Kfar Chabad’ — a very daunting task indeed.

“He wrote back to the Rebbe that we understood the difficulties involved. But then we didn’t hear from the Rebbe. Rabbi Hodakov told us that we would probably be sent off after Tishrei.

“As the summer approached, we planned a trip to Detroit to visit my parents. A day before we were supposed to leave, on 16 Tammuz, Rabbi Groner suddenly called my husband and informed him that the Rebbe wanted to see him. He was instructed to simply knock on the Rebbe’s door and wait for the Rebbe’s call to enter. Needless to say, he was tremulous with fear and awe.”

During this *yechidus*, the Rebbe explained to him the basic points of his mission, and then asked him,

“Do you speak Hebrew?”

“A little,” Rabbi Kaplan responded.

“With Sefardic pronunciation?”

“A little.”

“Have you ever spoken it before?”

“Yes, to the Sefardim in Montreal.”

“How did it go?”

Rabbi Kaplan motioned that it had been so-so.

The Rebbe smiled and said, “If so, that is a good thing. Speaking a completely good Hebrew isn’t necessarily a positive thing, because they will suspect you are Israeli. I don’t know why it is, but many people totally lose themselves to Americans, so it won’t be so bad if you’ll speak with an Ashkenazic pronunciation. Obviously, grammatically correct, but the accent is not so bad, so they’ll know you are American.”

The Rebbe didn’t give him a departure date, but the *yechidus* did

give him a hint. The Rebbe instructed him to begin packing his suitcases before *shkiah*, thus beginning his travels before the Three Weeks ensued.

A day or two later, Rabbi Kaplan asked Rabbi Hodakov when he was to embark on his journey. Rabbi Hodakov asked the Rebbe, who responded, “Why is he waiting?”

With that *hora’a* in hand, Rabbi Kaplan quickly finished his preparations and headed off to the Holy Land on Erev Rosh Chodesh Av (his family would join 10 days later). The Rebbe came out to see him off, and gave each family member a *michtav klali* and a dollar. Baby Mendel Kaplan too, received a letter and a coin. The Rebbe explained that he too was going on shlichus and he should be explained its significance when he gets older.

## THE KOLEL

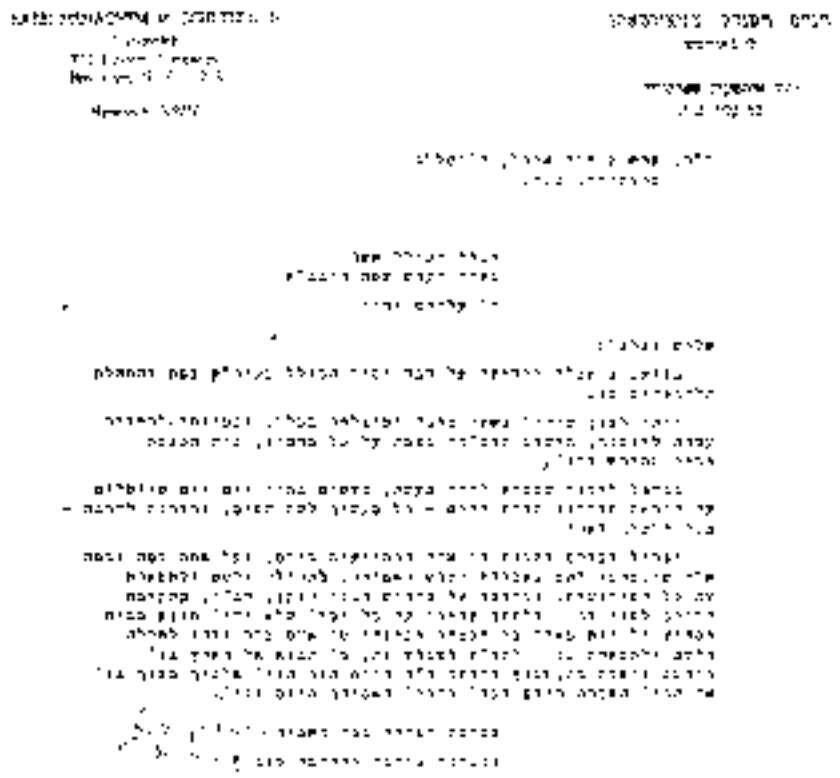
In his *yechidus*, the Rebbe explained to Rabbi Kaplan that his mission was

to spearhead the building of a Chabad neighborhood. However, it would take a while to get done so the Rebbe instructed that he begin with opening a kolel.

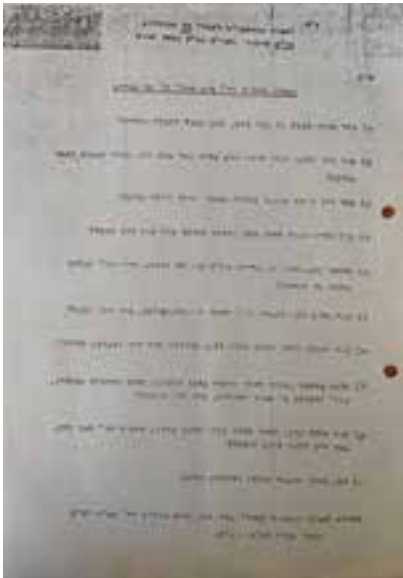
Ten kolel *yungerleit* were quickly recruited. Within a short time, apartments were rented, jobs were procured for the women, and a temporary location was found for the kolel—which was to be in the Tzemach Tzedek Shul when it was ready.

Renovations were quickly underway in the shul because the Rebbe had given a due-date for the completion of the renovations: *Selichos* were to be recited in the newly renovated structure.

“The situation in Tzfas was far from ideal,” Mrs. Kaplan relates, “even in comparison to the rest of Eretz Yisroel, which was light-years behind the United States. Even Israelis thought it was like moving to the moon.



THE REBBE'S LETTER ON ESTABLISHING THE KOLEL



QUESTIONS THE REBBE SENT TO ALL THE KOLLELS.



LEARNING AT THE KOLLEL, 5734

“During the initial period after our arrival, we lived in a studio apartment in Kfar Chabad. Then one day, my husband arrived from Tzfas and said that he had rented a home for us, one that was better than our current place.

“I soon discovered that he was being overly optimistic. Granted, the Tzfas apartment was larger, but the kitchen and bathroom were separate from the bedroom and living room, and to go from one section to the other you needed to go outdoors—sometimes in the rain and cold—and down and up stairs. Obviously, there was no telephone line.”

The material situation slowly improved. The *yungerleit* settled into their learning and the women became active in *hafatzas hamaayanos*.

At some point Rabbi Kaplan felt that the kollel’s learning was somewhat lacking and he assumed the position of *rosh kollel*. This was a position which the Rebbe never allowed him to give up, even as his responsibilities grew extensively.

With the Rebbe’s encouragement, the kollel took on the responsibilities of publishing some elements of the Rebbe’s own Torah: Two sets, *Biurim*

*L’pirush Rashi* and *Biurim L’pirkei Avos*, were produced by its members.

One interesting episode sheds some light on the Rebbe’s attitude to the kollel:

One day in 5734\*, all Chabad kollels throughout the world received a list of questions on Yoreh Deah from *mazkirus* with instructions that the kollel *yungerleit* send back their answers within a week’s time.

Rabbi Kaplan heard about the challenge but was surprised that his own kollel hadn’t been sent the questions. The puzzle was soon cleared. The list of questions had been written by Rabbi Kaplan himself for the Kollel of Tzfas...

## THE KIRYAH

The ultimate goal in Tzfas was to build a full-fledged Chabad community to resemble the community of Nachalas Har Chabad which had been built several years earlier.

Obtaining the necessary funding and land was no easy task in the bureaucratic Israel of those days. Rabbi Kaplan began working on the plan shortly after the Yom Kippur War in 5734\* and somehow, by Chol Hamoed

Pesach 5735\*, the groundbreaking was held with great fanfare. In fact, the work was already significantly underway, so the event was called, “*Tekes gemar hayesodot*—ceremonial foundation laying completion.”

“Ten buses came to participate in the celebration,” Rabbi Kaplan wrote in his report to the Rebbe. “Five buses from Kfar Chabad, two from Nachalas Har Chabad, one from Yerushalayim and another from Bnei Brak . . . Altogether, some 700-800 people participated.

“...Everyone was very impressed. Several people told me that Tzfas hasn’t had such a celebration for many years. Reporters were here from all the newspapers. The main success was a three-four minute report on the 8:30 p.m. news. There is only one television station in Israel, so the entire country saw it. I became aware the next day that this indeed had been the best form of publicizing it.”

Right after the celebration, Rabbi Kaplan telephoned *mazkirus* and gave an initial report to Rabbi Hodakov as the Rebbe listened on the line. When he mentioned that Chief Rabbi Kaplan (no relation) of Tzfas had delivered

COURTESY OF RABBI CHAIM KAPLAN.



TEKES G'MAR HAYESODOT.

# חסידים חגגו בצפת גמר בניית היסודות לקרית חב"ד בכנען

מאת יעקב קטן, סופר, רבני בצפת

המסעדה קבעה את התקופה המבואה ביותר לביטוי דברי החוץ של העולם, את בניית בצפת, כדרכה, כדרכה ובמקום שליש המבנית מוכנה לנילו, כי אפרי ירושלים, המילוי יצא עם שני המרכיבים והיה זהו המרוץ למי את העסקה והמסעדה של בניית קודש, שיעשו את העם במאות העסקים בתוך בנין המילוי קיום היחיד לבנות, כי יש גם מהיחוד והמיוחד – אפרי אמנון קרי היסודות יצורנו עמנו הלוקם המענין לביטוי עמנו יצורנו המבין של קיימתיביר עמנו ענינו בצפת.

העיר העולה על כל את המלך של חסיד הכיר כבאר, אשר היו ראשונים לבנין של חסיד המרכז המרכז, קיימתיביר, והנה הם ראשונים מבני העולם, בצפת המבנה קיימתיביר קולט וכבר השנה יחול מבנין שלב ב' המבנה מרשימתו ובעקבות, יבנו על פשרות המבנה ולא יחולו היום – אשר העיר – ובזמן לחסיד את הקריה בן 500 יחידות דיור.

העיר מבין העולם, כי להחלטה הקריה יבנה המבנה מילוי בקיבו שלמה מניל מניאומסון, את המבנה של המרכז מלמבנין המרכז מניל חסיד בצפת חרב אריות קולט, כי נאמר מרשימתו כי בצפת המבנה המבנה יחולט.

אנחנו מניאומסון, רחוק העיר, חרף בעם מניאומסון יחיה שלם בענינו המבנה מילוי חסידים של חסיד, קיימתיביר קיימתיביר קיימתיביר, חרף חסיד, חרף חסיד, אשר לוי, כי בפעולה חרבי מלמבנין, יחולטו בצפת של 50 המבנה מניאומסון, חרף, מניאומסון 15- המסעדה יחולטו יחולטו חרף חסיד.

NEWSPAPERS REPORT ON THE EVENT.

remarks, he overheard the Rebbe chuckle and say, “We are switching this Kaplan with another...”

In a *yechidus* with Reb Yankel Katz of Chicago that same Chol Hamoed, the Rebbe shared his pleasure about the good news.

“I had *nachas* today,” the Rebbe said. “They called from Tzfas and Rabbi Kaplan related that the *hanachas even hapinah* was very successful. *Anash* from Kfar Chabad, Nachalash Har Chabad and Yerushalayim participated; people came from the entire country and many local residents participated as well.

“It was a warm celebration. Many government officials participated and they all spoke warmly about Lubavitch. The Minister of Housing said that he is sure of the project’s success because when Lubavitch takes on a project they are always successful. But he also warned that if Chabad doesn’t manage to fill all the homes he will be forced to give them to others.”

The Rebbe smiled and added, “In truth, all this should have been done by the other Kaplan who’s been in Tzfas for a long time but in the end it was accomplished by the Kaplan that I sent.”

## REINFORCEMENTS

The first phase of the Kiryah contained 109 apartments, with space for education, a *mikveh*, stores and— as per the Rebbe’s instructions—a very large shul.

At the time, it wasn’t clear who would live in the apartments. Tzfas had only 10 Chabad families. The other Chabad communities were in the process of expansion as well; 300 new homes were expected to be ready in Kfar Chabad, Nachlas Har Chabad, and other settlements, over the same period of time. And in those days, there were only 20-30 Chabad weddings in Eretz Yisroel each year.

But then a surprise took place right as the first phase of building was finished.

At the end of the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen in 5736\*, the Rebbe made a surprising announcement: A group of 10 people would be sent as the Rebbe’s shlichim to Yerushalayim and another group of 10 to Tzfas. They would spend their time learning Torah *b’tahara*, fulfilling mitzvos (especially those unique to Eretz Yisroel), and influencing those around them. Those who were interested could sign up through the *mazkirus*.<sup>8</sup>



CONSTRUCTION OF THE KIRYA.

LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES SIDURIM AND TANYAS TO THE SHLUCHIM AND THEIR FAMILIES.



THE SPECIAL GROUP OF SHLUCHIM SAY L'CHAIM WITH ISRAELI PRESIDENT EFRAIM KATZIR UPON THEIR ARRIVAL (AT A RECEPTION IN THEIR HONOR).

At the Yud Shevat farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke about their shlichus and they received a *yechidus* before their departure the next day. The Rebbe stood at the door to his room and gave each man a Likkutei Sichos volume 11, the weekly *likkut* on Beshalach, and a number of different denominations of money in American and Israeli currency. Each woman received a *siddur*, a Tanya, and also the various bills. Children received a Tanya, in which the Rebbe put money for tzedakah.

Soon after, the Rebbe personally saw them off from the steps of 770 and busloads of Chassidim went to the airport as well. Upon their arrival in Israel, the crowd at Ben Gurion welcoming them was in the thousands.

The shluchim to Tzfas joined the kolel, doing *mitvzoim* between the *sedarim*. At night they would take a mitzvah tank which had come with them from America, and drive around to different *moshavim* to visit people, give *shiurim* and do *mitvzoim*.

One major effect of the shluchim was an added *chayus* and energy in the Rebbe's *inyanim*—after all, these were *bochurim* and *yungerleit* who had spent years in 770 at the Rebbe's farbrengens, an opportunity not available to many Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel—and they brought the live hook-ups (*shiddurim*) of the farbrengens to a new level—farbrengens that wouldn't even begin until 4:30 a.m. in Eretz Yisroel.

“From when we came,” Rabbi Greisman says, “we immediately initiated the hook-ups in Tzfas. You have to remember that there were very few phones in the old city of Tzfas so I would *schlep* wires over rooftops to the shuls in order to get a line... Any time there was a possibility that there might be a farbrengen—these were years when surprise farbrengens were not an unusual occurrence—I would stand by a public phone in the middle of the night calling different people and waiting to see if there would be any developments: now the Rebbe is at the Ohel; now the Rebbe is coming back; now the farbrengen was announced... As soon as there was definitive news, I would call up Reb Mulik Rivkin, who had the central hook-up in Kfar Chabad, and we would hear the farbrengen in Tzfas through Kfar Chabad. This encouraged the Kfar Chabad *shiddur* as well...”

Over the next two years, two more groups of shluchim were chosen to join the first. Over the ensuing years, these special groups of shluchim were instructed by the Rebbe to take up posts in *hafatzas hamaayanos* all over Eretz Yisrael. A number of them left Tzfas over the years but the large influx of families over those few years helped establish the Chabad neighborhood and indeed made an indelible impact on the entire city and entire region. Until today, much of the leadership of Chabad in Tzfas—and throughout Eretz Yisrael—is made up of those families.





BUILDING THE KIRYA, 5738



THE YESHIVA, CIRCA 5739.

## WHY TZFAS?

In the letter for the opening of the kolel, the Rebbe used the term “*lehachzir atarah liyoshnah*—to restore the crown to its former glory.” The establishment of the community was significant in the fact that it restored a Chabad community that had existed for over 100 years.

But there was more to it.

Hundreds of years ago, Tzfas was just a little sleepy town in Eretz Yisroel, which was seen as just another far-flung corner of the Ottoman Empire. But then a new immigrant arrived there from Egypt. His name was Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, known as the Ari Hakadosh.

From then on, Tzfas became famous as the home of *pnimius haTorah*, transmitted from the Ari to his student Reb Chaim Vital and others, and on to the following generations. The Rebbe pointed out that the location wasn’t by chance: The Zohar states that the revelation of Moshiach himself—the culmination of *pnimius haTtorah*—will be in the Galil, the region that Tzfas is located.

“This is the significance,” the Rebbe explained, “of rebuilding the Jewish communities of the Galil and Tzfas... To once again reveal—and with even greater strength—Torah study and the study of the inner dimension of Torah close to the resting place of the Arizal,

## FURTHER MEANING

In 5741\*, a *melaveh malkah* benefitting the institutions of Tzfas was held in New York and the organizers reprinted the Rebbe’s *sicha* on this topic (from 5738\*). At the Shabbos farbrengen, the Rebbe mentioned it and used a very interesting expression:

“In honor of the *melaveh malkah*, a *sicha* about the significance of Tzfas was republished.

“However, I think I once spoke an additional talk about the significance of Tzfas—or I intended to speak it, but it remained in my thoughts — and I’m surprised that it was not reprinted as well.

“The idea was as follows:

“Tzfas is one of the four unique cities in the Holy Land—Yerushalayim, Chevron, Teveria and Tzfas, as explained at length in a book called *Tov Haaretz*, which was written by Rabbi Nosson Shapiro . . . who is often cited in Chassidus.

“He lists several unique elements about Tzfas: It is one of the *arei miklat*. It is *mukaf choma*, surrounded by a wall. Its *gematria* (in *mispar katan* with the *kolel*) is 22—the 22 letters of Torah, hinting to the fact that Tzfas is ‘ready and prepared for the proper understanding of the secrets of the Torah, and there is no pure air like the air of Tzfas.’ It also represents *sefiras hakeser*, the source of the *yud-gimmel middos harachamim*...”<sup>10</sup>

and in a manner that it will from there spread to the entire Holy Land and to the entire world.”

With the Rebbe’s *menschen* in Tzfas, we are a step closer to the coming of Moshiach. **T**

1. Rabbi Wolff’s correspondence with the Rebbe cited here is published in the series *Yemei Temimim*.

2. She was the daughter of Rebbetzin Devorah, the Tzemach Tzedek’s half sister, the child of Reb Sholom Shachne’s second

marriage to the daughter of Reb Aharon Karliner.

3. *Zichronos Shilo - Migdal Oz* chapter 46.

4. *Tzemach Tzedek Vitnuas Hahaskala* pg. 22

5. See *Derher*, Iyar 5779.

6. *Nossi Vechossid* pg. 94.

7. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 23 pg. 27

8. For the full story of the shlichim, see “Historic Mission,” *Derher* Adar 5778.

9. *Sichos Kodesh 5738* vol. 2 pg. 571

10. *Sichos Kodesh 5741* vol. 2 pg. 768

## THE TZFAS CEMETERY

The cemetery in Tzfas is ancient, dating back at least to Hoshea Hanavi. Many famous individuals are buried there—Chana and her seven sons, the Arizal, the Beis Yosef and many others.

In the years when Har Hazeisim was controlled by Jordan, the Tzfas cemetery became a sought out location for burial. Two members of *beis harav* were buried there during those years, under the Rebbe's guidance.

### THE REBBE'S BROTHER, REB YISRAEL ARYEH LEIB.

At the time of his passing, on 13 Iyar 5712\*, Reb Leib was living in Liverpool, England. The Rebbe asked the Chassidim in England—Reb Yitzchok Dubov, Reb Benzion Shemtov and others—to handle the funeral arrangements. The Rebbe appointed Reb Yitzchok Dubov to take care of the *tahara*. “*Zolst firen mit di tahara vi a benan shel kedoshim*—you should conduct the *tahara* as befitting a person of holy lineage,” the Rebbe told them.

“We were *bochurim* learning in Manchester at the time,” Reb Berel Futerfas relates, “and Rabbi Dubov asked Avremel Shemtov, Sholom Ber Gurkov and myself to take part in the *tahara*.”

Reb Moshe Gurary of Tel Aviv was asked by the Rebbe to travel to London and bring Reb Yisroel Aryeh Leib's *aron* to be buried in Tzfas. The Rebbe told him that “the *chelek haruchni*, the spiritual part, has been accomplished and all that's left to be done in Eretz Yisroel is the *chelek hagashmi*, the physical element.”

Over the years, Chassidim began to visit his resting place, especially with the establishment of the Chabad community in Tzfas, and they merited many beautiful answers from the Rebbe thanking them for their reports.

### REB MENACHEM MENDEL, BROTHER OF THE REBBE RASHAB.

In his final years, Reb Mendel lived in Corsica, an island off of France, and was buried there upon his passing in 5702\*.

The island law states that graves are plowed through and reused after 20 years, so the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Binyomin Gorodetzky in 5715\* to transfer his body to Tzfas. For various reasons, this needed to be done secretly.

Under complete secrecy, the body was removed from the cemetery and transported to Eretz Yisrael, where Rabbi Efroim Wolff arranged its interment in Tzfas. No *matzeiva* was set up; instead, some cement was poured over the spot.

In 5739\*, Reb Levi Bistritzky—one of the Shluchei Kodesh and the rav of the Chabad community—was told of the secret. He was bothered by the situation, so he wrote to the Rebbe asking if the time had come to put up a *matzeiva*.

The Rebbe agreed and instructed them to find the proper titles for him in the *sichos* of the Frieddiker Rebbe. The Rebbe also instructed them to hold a public stone setting as customary.

When Rabbi Bistritzky arrived in New York with a report and pictures, the Rebbe repaid him the cost in full.



MATZEIVA OF REB MENACHEM MENDEL,  
SON OF THE REBBE MAHARASH.

THE OLD MATZEIVA OF REB YISROEL ARYEH LEIB, WHICH  
INCORRECTLY LISTED HIS YAHRZEIT AS 12 IYAR. IT WAS  
LATER REPLACED WITH A NEW MATZEIVA WITH THE  
CORRECT YAHRZEIT OF 13 IYAR.