

Derher

A Chassidisher

א חסידישער דערהער

ה' רוזע לא אחר

**I Will Show
You Wonders**

THE GULF WAR

**Transplanting
the Warmth**

THE STORY OF FREE -
FRIENDS OF REFUGEES
OF EASTERN EUROPE

THE SERENITY
OF BITACHON



ADAR 5781
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APRIL 2021

לזכות
ר' יצחק יעקב שיחי'
מינקאוויטש

לרגל יום הולדתו השבעים
כ"א שבט ה'תשפ"א

לאריכת ימים ושנים טובות
מתוך בריאות הנכונה ביחד עם זוגתו תחי'
ורוב נחת חסידותי מכל יו"ח שיחיו
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Rabbi Tzvi Altein

Publisher

Rabbi Yossi Kamman

Editor in Chief

Rabbi Mendel Jacobs

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Circulation and Marketing

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Photo Research/Editing

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Editors

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Advisory Committee

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Design

Rabbi Mendy Weg

Contributors

Rabbi Yanky Bell • Rabbi Yossi Bendet • Rabbi Koppel Chaiton • Rabbi Levi Danow • Rabbi Levi Dubov • Rabbi Tzemach Feller • Rabbi Levi Greenberg • Rabbi Menachem Mendel Greenberg • Rabbi Mendy Greenberg • Rabbi Zevi Kaplan • Rabbi Levi Katz • Rabbi Levi Levertov • Rabbi Mendel Misholovin • Rabbi Mendy Shemtov • Schabse Soffer • Rabbi Mendel Vogel

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Submit your questions and comments:

(718) 305 6859, Feedback@Derher.org

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לזכות
הרה"ת ר' שלום וזוגתו מרת שרה
וילדיהם ישראל, ריסא, חי' מושקא,
אמונה מלכה, יעקב יהודה, ולאה שיחיו
אייזיקוביץ

בקשר עם יום הבהיר כ"ה אדר, יום הולדת הרבנית הצדקנית נ"ע זי"ע

Derher **Editorial**

This month, on the *yom habohir*, Chof-Hei Adar, we celebrate the birthday of the Rebbetzin.

This year marks a special milestone birthday—120 years! The Rebbe explained on several occasions that the number 120 is special in that it represents the completion of a person's life. Additionally, Hashem promised that he would restrain his wrath for 120 years, allowing time for people to do *teshuva* before bringing the *mabul*. In other words, the number 120 has the power to eradicate a bad decree, and even transform the flood waters of the *mabul* into *gishmei bracha*.¹

It was in the Rebbetzin's honor and memory that the Rebbe introduced the *mitvza* of celebrating a *yom huledes*. The Rebbe asserted that this would be the "greatest *zechus* for her *neshama*."

When examining the Rebbe's launch of this *mitvza*, it is interesting to note that the concept of marking one's birthday had already been standard practice in Chabad for some time.

In previous generations, the Rabbeim are said to have celebrated their birthdays with an additional *maamar* of Chassidus, but the matter was kept hidden from the public.

Only in the Frierdiker Rebbe's time did he begin to reveal the meaning of a birthday, in reference to Chai Elul, the birthday of the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe.

Sometime later, the Rebbe publicized a mandate for everyone in Hayom Yom (on Yud-Aleph Nissan) to utilize their birthday as a day of introspection and reflection; to take some time in seclusion.

As the years progressed, the Rebbe built on this and added many *minhagim* to be practiced on a birthday: receiving an *aliya* on the Shabbos prior, reciting extra Tehillim, learning an extra Torah lesson, reviewing a *maamar* in public, and giving more *tzedakah*.

The Rebbe also instituted the practice of having *yechidus* in connection with one's birthday.

The underlying theme of these *minhagim* was that the Rebbe emphasized the seriousness of the day. A birthday marks the date that Hashem put you into this world and entrusted you with a mission, and so it calls for deep thought and contemplation. It is a time to thank Hashem for giving you that *shlichus*, and to think about how well you've done and how to do better going forward.²

Then the Rebbe brought it all one level further.

On the first birthday of the Rebbetzin following her *histalkus*, the Rebbe revealed a whole new element in marking one's birthday.

“מִזֵּאל אֲנֵהוּיֵבן פֶּרְאוּעֵן יוֹם הוֹלָדֹת—We should start celebrating our birthdays...”

A birthday is not only supposed to be a time for seclusion and reflection, but also a day for celebration!

The Rebbe called for birthdays to be celebrated publicly, together with friends and family; to make a joyous farbrengen and to say a hearty and Chassidishe “I’chaim” with one another.³

In the *sichos* that followed over the next few weeks, the Rebbe added that a person should even try to make a *bracha* of “*Shehchiyanu*,” demonstrating true *simcha* and thanks to Hashem. The farbrengen should be spirited and with joy.⁴

Also during the distribution of dollars, many children who told the Rebbe about their birthdays were told to make “a party” and celebrate their birthday with their friends.

This is seen as a major shift in perspective from any previous approach. True, the birthdays of some great *tzaddikim* may have been celebrated, but for the average person, joy and celebration on one’s birthday is quite a *chiddush*.

Chazal say that people mistakenly celebrate a birth and mourn a death, when logic should really dictate the opposite: When a person is born, we don’t know if they will live a productive life or not. So why should we celebrate it?⁵

The Rebbe explained that although this was all not known in the past, everything has a proper time. Our generation finds itself in the final moments before the *geula*. We can therefore celebrate the birth and life of every Yid in this generation, because we know that ultimately every person will follow the right path in life. As the Rambam says, the Torah promised that at the end of days all the Yidden will do *teshuva*.

So in addition to the assurance that כל ישראל בחזקת כשרות — every Yid is assumed to be in good standing and we can therefore rely that he or she will indeed fulfil their life mission properly—we have an extra assurance in our time that ultimately every will follow the right path.⁶

And that time came specifically after the Rebbetzin’s *histalkus*, in a way that this new *mitvta* would be taken on by everyone in her honor and *zechus*.

Like so many other areas of *avodas Hashem*, the Rebbe wanted our *cheshbon hanefesh* and reflection, as well as the *hachlatos tovos* done on our birthday, to be done with *simcha*, with joy and celebration.

As we celebrate the Rebbetzin’s 120th birthday this year, it is an appropriate time to properly understand and appreciate the Rebbe’s innovation of celebrating our birthdays with *simcha*. Especially in this month of *simcha*, the month about which the Megillah proclaims: לַיהוּדִים הִיטָה אֹרֶה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשִׁשּׁוֹן וִיקָר.

May we all experience this once again with the coming of Moshiach, when we will be reunited with the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin, the *baalas yom huledes*,

כן תהי לנו!

A Chassidisher Derher

עשתי עשר יום בעשתי עשר חודש ה'תשפ"א

1. Likkutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 401.

2. See Sichas Chai Elul 5742, sichos 1-2.

3. Sichas Chof-Hei Adar 5748.

4. See Sefer Hasichos 5748 vol. 2, p. 398.

5. Koheles Rabba, 7:1.

6. See *ibid.* fn. 78.



The Shortcut

רמב"ם הלכות נזקי ממון, ה:ג

He [Yehoshua] also established that any person who loses his way in a vineyard or the like may break through the vines and ascend, or break through the vines and descend until he is able to find his way.

וְכֵן הִתְנָה שְׂפָל הַתְּוֹעָה
בֵּין הַכֶּרְמִים וְכִי־יֵצֵא בָּהֶן
מִפֶּסֶג וְעוֹלָה מִפֶּסֶג וְיֵרֵד
עַד שְׂיֵצֵא לְדַרְכּוֹ.

When Yehoshua divided Eretz Yisroel amongst all the *shevatim*, he made them all agree to ten conditions before each received their plot of land.

One of those conditions was that if a Yid gets lost and finds himself in someone else's vineyard he is allowed

to tear through the vines so that he can quickly find his way out. We don't make him walk around to the end of the column of the vineyard; instead he is allowed to cut straight through.

Eretz Yisroel had been promised to Yidden for centuries. They had

just gone through 40 years of ups and downs in the desert to reach that point. Now they were finally in the promised land, at the final phase where every Yid was to be given his part of Eretz Yisroel, thereby fulfilling the ultimate plan and vision of Hashem for the Jewish nation. Is there really nothing more important at this moment than sparing someone from the extra inconvenience of circling a column in his neighbor's vineyard? How common is this and how big of a disruption is it already, to the extent that Yehoshua decided to make it a priority at this great moment?



מחזור הארבעים 40 CYCLES OF LEARNING RAMBAM

לזכות
הרה"ת ר' שניאור זלמן שיחי'
ליפסקער
בקשר עם יום הולדתו
ח"י אדר שני
נדפס ע"י משפחתו שיחיו

And what is the logic of this rule anyway? Someone lost his way and to save him a few extra steps we let him ruin someone else's vineyard, without being responsible for the damages?

From here we learn how dear and special a Yid is. His feelings are so important to us, that even to save him a bit of pain and bother we are willing to let him crush someone else's vineyard.

But this puts the question the other way: What about the pain of the Yid whose vineyard is wrecked? Why don't we care about his predicament?

The answer is, that by making this condition, Yehoshua instilled in the

Yidden such *ahavas Yisroel*, that from this day on they would be willing, and even happy, to have their property ruined just to spare a fellow Jew from experiencing a little bit of pain.

This is also why we don't make the wayfarer pay for the damages. We are so sure that the owner of the vineyard is not only not upset about it but he is actually happy to have saved this Yid some pain.

A deeper lesson that we can learn from this halacha: What is the significance of being lost in a vineyard?

Some Yidden are lost in the wilderness, void of Torah or

Yiddishkeit. This Jew is not lost in a desert or even a plain field. He is lost in a vineyard, a place full of *kedusha*. The only problem is that it's not *his* vineyard; it's a holy *avoda*, just not his. He is lost doing the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Even for such a Jew who is not in a life threatening situation—in fact he is in a wonderful place like a vineyard, it's just not his—even to help him out we are willing to go the great length of absorbing some material loss to help him find his way quickly. **7**

(Adapted from the *sicha* of the third night of Sukkos 5748)



לעבן מיטן רבין

SHACHARIS, PURIM 5743.

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ת"נ'צ'ב'ה

Moshiach Now!

ADAR 5742*



SUNDAY, 12 ADAR

A Tzivos Hashem rally was held today in 770. The Rebbe joined the children for Mincha, after which the children recited the Twelve Pesukim followed by the singing of the Tzivos Hashem anthem "We Want Moshiach Now!" The Rebbe clapped along to the children's singing.

The Rebbe then spoke a few *sichos* to the children. In the second *sicha*, he encouraged the

importance of learning Torah, referring to the *possuk* of "Veshinantam" which the children had just recited, which states explicitly the need to always be preoccupied with words of Torah.

Practically, this means that when you are going home after learning in *cheder* or in the *talmud Torah*; when walking home from school, from the yeshiva or Beis Rivkah, you should carry something that you can learn from. The child may wonder how someone so young like himself can actually

behave like this, and he may feel discouraged. But, the Rebbe continued, the *parsha* of this week tells us how every child from Shevet Levi was counted from 30 days and up together with all the other Yidden, including, of course, those much older than him. This teaches us that a child has the capability and resources to accomplish things which may seem large in his or her eyes.

The Rebbe also encouraged the need for every single girl and boy to have their own letter in a *sefer Torah*. The Rebbe mentioned the *siyum sefer Torah* of the *Sefer Torah Hakloli* taking place today in California, and how even though we are not with them physically, but being as we are all a part of one nation, it is therefore a *simcha* for Yidden all over the world!

(Rabbi Shlomo Cunin related that initially, the Rebbe had said to make the *siyum* on Purim. When he asked the Rebbe if the *siyum* should be on Sunday, or on Tuesday—Purim—the Rebbe responded that he meant around the time of Purim.)

After the third *sicha* finished, the Rebbe requested that the children sing “*Utzu Eitza*” and he clapped along with an intensity and joy that is hard to describe. Afterwards, the Rebbe distributed dimes to the *madrichim* and *madrichos*, and smiled at many of them as they passed by. While the dimes were being distributed, the children sang “*Al Tira*.” At the conclusion of the distribution, the children began to sing “We Want Moshiach Now.”

The Rebbe placed his *siddur* under his arm and began to clap along, continuing to clap along to the children’s singing as he left the shul, all the while his face beaming with pleasure.

A child’s yarmulke fell off his head as the Rebbe was walking by. The Rebbe bent down to pick it up and handed it to the child.

The Rebbe left to go home at about 5:30 p.m. Rabbi Avraham Shemtov was in the corridor as the Rebbe was leaving, and the Rebbe smiled at him while motioning with his hand, seemingly surprised to see him there. The Rebbe asked him a few questions to which he responded and then the Rebbe went home.

MONDAY, 13 ADAR, TA’ANIS ESTHER

At the conclusion of *selichos*, the Rebbe looked towards the *aron kodesh*, waiting for it to be opened for “*Avinu Malkeinu*.” Rabbi Binyomin Klein



AT THE CHILDREN'S RALLY, 12 ADAR 5742



THE SIYUM SEFER HATORAH HAKLOLI IN CALIFORNIA.

informed the Rebbe that there is a *chosson* present (in such an instance *tachanun* and “*Avinu Malkeinu*” are not recited) and the Rebbe acknowledged this with a nod.

The *aron* was opened and the *sefer Torah* that had just been completed the previous day in California was taken out. The Rebbe kept his gaze fixed on the *sefer Torah* until it was placed on the *bima*.

As the Rebbe was walking back to his place after *kriah*, someone’s hat fell on the floor. The Rebbe stopped walking and looked at the hat. Rabbi Groner immediately picked it up and the Rebbe gave the hat’s owner a penetrating look before continuing on to his place.

While the *sefer Torah* was being carried back to the *aron kodesh*, the Rebbe faced the *sefer Torah* the whole time as usual. Rabbi Shlomo Cunin started the niggun “*Sisu Vesimchu*” and everyone began to sing, but the Rebbe did not make any signs of encouragement. When the *sefer Torah* came closer to the *aron* the Rebbe approached the Sefer Torah, touched it with his *siddur* and then, uncharacteristically, kissed his hand.

On the way back to his room, the Rebbe stopped to look at a large sign that was put up providing

details for those going to do *mitvza Purim* in various schools.

Following Mincha, the Rebbe said a *sicha* (*divrei kibushin*) for about 35 minutes. During the *sicha*, the Rebbe told a *bochur* who had touched the inside of his ear to go wash his hands. At first, the *bochur* did not realize the Rebbe meant him, and only understood after the Rebbe repeated himself a second time and pointed at him.

The Rebbe came downstairs for Maariv at 6:30 p.m., wearing his Shabbos *sirtuk* (which is silk) and



YITZCHOK ZEVI GOLDSHMID

THE REBBE RECITES THE HAFTARAH AFTER HIS ALIYA DURING A FAST DAY MINCHA.

holding his *siddur* as well as a Megillah in a silver case. The Rebbe set the Megillah down on a table that was set up next to his *shtender*.

After *shemoneh esreh* and *kaddish*, the Rebbe opened his *siddur* to the *brachos* for *krias hamegillah*. Then, he removed the Megillah from its case and unrolled it on the table. While spreading it out, the Rebbe straightened a crease in the parchment, taking care that the entire parchment should be almost perfectly straight.

After *krias hamegillah*, the *minyan* continued davening Maariv. When the *chazzan* finished *Aleinu* out loud, the Rebbe turned and motioned with his hand in surprise: The *chazzan* had forgotten to say *Vata Kadosh*.

As the Rebbe was leaving the shul, he started to sing “We Want Moshiach Now” in a soft voice, and encouraged the singing on his way out.

TUESDAY, 14 ADAR, PURIM

While the Megillah was being read, the Rebbe stood straight in his place and did not move. When it came to making noise by Haman’s name, the Rebbe gently tapped the floor with his foot.

The Rebbe arrived for Maariv at 6:45 p.m.

When the Rebbe entered the shul for the Purim farbrengen, the crowd was singing Napoleon’s March.

The Rebbe began the *farbrengen* by addressing the idea of *הימים האלו נזכרים ונעשים*; that the events of this day that have occurred in previous years are *reoccurring now*. With this in mind, we look at everything differently and can be enthused with a greater *chayus*. The Rebbe added that one must also bring along the *simcha* of Purim so that it should affect the rest of the year as well.

In the second *sicha*, the Rebbe asked a question on the story of the Megillah:

Why does the Megillah have to go through all the details *leading up* to the actual miracle? It would have seemingly made sense for all the “irrelevant” details to be left out, and to just tell us about the events that have to do with the actual miracle of Purim.

The Rebbe explained that the Megillah includes the other details in order to teach us a lesson in how to behave as a Yid: The Megillah begins with describing Achashverosh’s feast, where every person was granted whatever food he requested. When a Yid sitting at this party requested kosher food, he

revealed to everyone around him the truth, that he is a Yid and he is not embarrassed or ashamed with the truth.

When a Yid acts in accordance with the truth, the non-Jews around him trust and respect him. But if he tries to pretend to be like those around him by eating the same food as them, then not only does he not *gain* their admiration, but on the contrary, he loses any respect and trust they did have for him. This applies not only in religious matters but in all dealings they have with him. When they see that on the one hand he is a Jew, and on the other hand he says “I am just like you,” they know he is lying to them. And if he could lie in one area, who is to say he will not lie in other areas...?

This is especially important for someone who “sits at the king’s gate,” someone in a position of power and influence. Such a person carries a greater responsibility to behave in the proper manner since everyone will learn from his behavior how they should conduct themselves. If one does not act in accordance with the truth, rather he pretends to be that which he is not—he is denying *his own true self*—his *neshama*—which regardless of any circumstance will always remain pure.

The Rebbe applied this to the Jewish mother as well. She should not worry about her child wearing *tzitzis* while playing with non-Jewish children, for it is specifically when he does not hide his true identity that they will befriend him. Behaving in any other way will bring the opposite result, because in their eyes he will be seen as a double-faced liar. The same goes for educating one’s child to make a *bracha* before putting food into his mouth even when he is with non-Jewish friends, and for the same reason.

But here, the Rebbe said, there is another advantage as well. When they see a Jewish child making a *bracha* before eating the candy, and they ask him what he is saying, he replies straightforwardly that he is thanking Hashem for the candy and for bringing everything else into existence! This will have a strong effect on the non-Jewish child and he will realize that he also needs to thank Hashem for the things he has, much like he says thank you to anyone who gives him something.

There are those who think that such behavior is for “fanatics.” The Megillah shows us that it is only when we conduct ourselves in a way of “גאון יעקב”—with pride and without shame of our lifestyle and heritage—that the rest of the world will come

to respect us and listen to us. The Rebbe added that all of this is applicable even in a country like America—that only through the above mentioned style of behavior will non-Jews respect Yidden.

During the *farbrengen*, Rabbi Mordechai Ashkenazi of Kfar Chabad went over to the Rebbe holding a small cup of *l'chaim*. The Rebbe *bentched* him, “You should have a *refuah sheleima*.”

In the seventh *sicha*, the Rebbe spoke about the example Mordechai set for all future generations by not bowing to Haman: Every Yid needs to know that “ה' ניצב עליו”. Hashem is, so to speak, “leaning” and depending on him to make the right choices in עשה טוב and סור מרע. Any given thought, word or action on his part can literally tip the cosmic scale for the good, and bring about a complete redemption for the entire world!

There are those, the Rebbe continued, who say that this is all only a “*pshetel*” in Tanya, but where in *nigleh* does one find such a concept? The source, the Rebbe said, can be found in an explicit Rambam: The Rambam writes how a person should constantly view both himself and the world as being a perfectly equally balanced scale and the very next move he will make—be it in action, in speech or even in thought—can literally tip the scale, thereby bringing a “*yeshuah vehatzalah*” for the entire universe!

Just as in the story of Purim, the salvation Mordechai brought about came through the king together with the assistance of his loyal soldiers—so too now. We have to be soldiers whose only concern is to carry out the will of the king—“מאן מלכי רבנן”—even up to a point of self-sacrifice. And why is the soldier willing to sacrifice himself to reach his goal? Because he knows that it is something about which the king cares deeply.

In order to accomplish the mission, the king releases all of the royal treasures which until now have been kept hidden away. Being as we are now in the last and final stages of our battle to defeat this *galus*, we have been granted access to the most precious of the king's treasures.

This is all true for a child, as well as for the “child with a white beard.” Everyone should know that we mean *him*: Hashem is depending on *you* and with even *one positive thought* you can bring Moshiach right now, at this very moment of Motzei Purim, at the start of Shushan Purim, 5742*, right here in 770 Eastern Parkway! This is the ruling of the Rambam! Especially if he reaches a state of *ad d'lo yada*, which



then he will not be able to keep track of how many thoughts he had...

The Rebbe asked that someone volunteer to fulfill the obligation of *ad d'lo yada* on everyone else's behalf (making it clear that he means only one person and no one should think that he has a *heter* now to say *l'chaim* more than four times). Afterwards the volunteer should make a *kuleh*—whereby the head and the feet are on the same level—and everyone should dance towards



Moshiach Tzidkeinu, who will come and redeem us *lemata me'asara tefachim*.

After waiting a bit, the Rebbe said that we live in a country where everything is decided based on votes, everyone casts their votes in private, and then they have to count all the votes to see who was chosen to be the “*moser nefesh*.” There is something called an *olas nedava*; someone should volunteer himself, and he should not worry that he is pushing himself where he does not belong.

Finally, an individual by the name of Motty Steinberg from Nachlas Har Chabad said *l'chaim* to the Rebbe on a large cup of *mashke*. The Rebbe pointed at him and asked, “*Dos iz dee 'olas nedava?*”

Afterwards, Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky approached the Rebbe holding a small *l'chaim* cup in his hand and said to the Rebbe “*kol haposhet yad nosnim lo*,” repeating the word “*kol*” for extra emphasis. “So what should I do for you?” the Rebbe asked him. The Rebbe picked up a bottle of *mashke* which had been brought over from a gathering

of Yidden in Russia that was on the table, poured from the bottle into Rabbi Kazarnovsky's cup, said to him, "*Lchaim velivracha*" and *bentched* him with *arichus yomim*. After that Rabbi Berel Levy approached the Rebbe as well.

The Rebbe turned to the "volunteer" and asked him if he is also able to make a *kuleh*. After the man made a *kuleh* on the table, the *olam* started to sing the lively Russian song, "*Eevadye mee neya..*"

The Rebbe started to clap his hands and every time the *niggun* went back to the beginning the Rebbe clapped with greater emphasis. At one point the Rebbe began to encourage by swinging his hand, and then he started encouraging with both hands. Eventually the Rebbe began to swing both of his hands in the air continuously without stopping! The *simcha* felt in the room at this point was literally over the top, and cannot be put into words at all. People described this *simcha* as greater than anything seen in 770 for years!

In the middle, the Russian words of the song were replaced with "We Want Moshiach Now." By now, everyone without exception was on their feet dancing in their place, swept away by the incredible energy and joy in the air.

After the singing eventually stopped, the Rebbe said that since Purim is the time when we completed what we started by *Matan Torah* (קיימו מה), a *Simchas Torah niggun* should therefore be sung.

Afterwards, the Rebbe began singing the *niggun* "*Tzama Lecha Nafshi*" with several variations in the order of the words. After that, the Rebbe began singing "*Nyet Nyet*."

The Rebbe then spoke about the *hachanos* for *mitzta Pesach*, and suggested that gatherings be made for children to discuss these preparations, since they were the first to recognize the hand of Hashem at *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The Rebbe then asked where the *sofrim* for the *Sifrei Torah Hakloli'im* are. Rabbi Hoenig from Eretz Yisroel came up and the Rebbe asked if he is the one who wrote the *sefer Torah* for California. The Rebbe also asked him if he already started the second one, and he answered that he did. The Rebbe poured him *lchaim* and gave him a *bracha*. Rabbi Zirkind, the *sofer* from New York also came up, and the Rebbe gave him *lchaim* and *bentched* him as well.

Afterwards the Rebbe asked if there were any more *sofrim* present who were involved with the



Sifrei Torah Hakloli'im. Someone by the *farbrengen* said the name of another *sofer*, and the Rebbe asked if he is involved in the above *sifrei Torah*, and if yes, which one. The person answered that this *sofer* is writing for Buffalo. The Rebbe asked, "Where is he?" When no one came up, someone said that he is in a state of *ad d'lo yada*.

Before leaving the *farbrengen* the Rebbe reminded those present to make a *bracha acharona*, and then encouraged the singing of "*Ki b'simcha*" while leaving the shul.

When the Rebbe left to go home, the crowd sang "We Want Moshiach Now" to the tune of the Russian song that was sung at the *farbrengen*, and the Rebbe motioned with his hand in encouragement. ❶

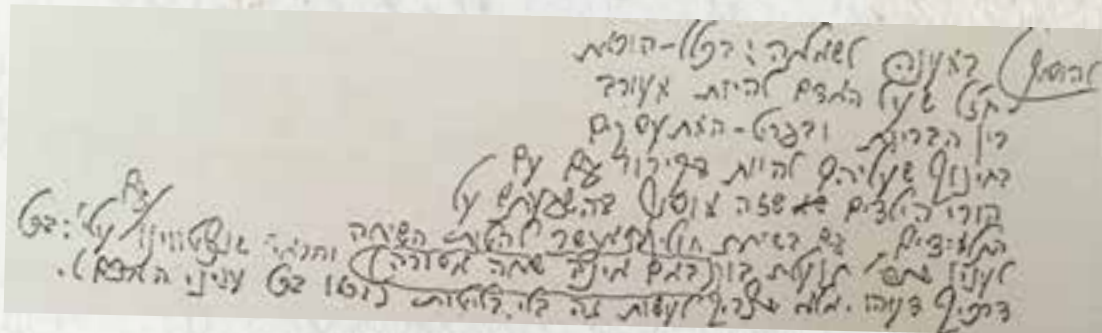


כתב יד קודש

לע"נ
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' ראובן צבי יהודה
בן הרה"ח ר' אברהם ע"ה
פייגלשטאק
גלב"ע ט' כסלו ה'תשפ"א
ת"נ צ"ב ה'
נדפס ע"י ולזכות
הרה"ת ר' חיים וזוגתו מרת ביילא מינדל
בניהם ובנותיהם
מנחם מענדל, ח' מושקא, לוי יצחק,
חנה דינה, משה אליהו שיחיו
גרייזמאן

Just Talk

An important note from the Rebbe written in Shevat 5727*
about how a teacher should use her position to have the optimum positive affect on her students..



In response to your question:

In general, Chazal instruct us that a person must be sociable with others, especially those that are engaged in education; they must have good relations also with the parents of their students, as this increases their ability to influence the students.

Additionally, even small-talk (as long as it is not forbidden talk) can also be channeled and steered in the direction of something worthwhile. Proof for this [that even a mundane conversation can be used for holy purposes] is the fact that there is a mitzvah in this regard: Know Hashem in all your ways. But this should be done inconspicuously (like all things a person does).

במענה לשאלתה: בכלל - הוראת
חז"ל שעל האדם להיות מעורב בין
הבריות ובפרט - המתעסקים בחינוך
שעליהם להיות בקירוב גם עם הורי
הילדים שזה מוסיף בהשפעתם
על התלמידים. גם בשיחת חולין
(באם אינה שיחה אסורה) אפשר
להטות השיחה לענין שתהי' תועלת
בו והראי' שנצטוונו גם עלי': בכל
דרכיך דעהו. אלא שצריך לעשות זה
בלי בליטות (וכמו בכל עניני האדם).

לע"נ
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' אברהם יעקב
ב"ר חיים מרדכי ע"ה
נלב"ע כ"ה תשרי ה'תשנ"ו
ולע"נ זוגתו האשה החשובה
מרת פריידא ראצא
בת הרב יחיאל אפרים פישל ע"ה
נלב"ע ט"ז אדר-שני ה'תשע"ו
תנ"צ'ב'ה'
נדפס ע"י בנם
הרה"ת ר' משה מאיר שמואל
וזוגתו מרת רבקה לאה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
גלוצאווסקי

Safe and Secure

*Having
Bitachon
in Hashem*



THE SNAKE WAS ONCE ASKED:

“Why are you so depressed? Of all creatures on earth you are the last one that needs to worry about anything; your food is the dust of the earth, you will never go hungry.” The snake responded: “I worry what will happen after I eat up the entire earth...”¹

When one lacks *bitachon*, absolute trust in Hashem that all will be good, they are bound to find something to worry about, even when it is utterly irrational.²

Based on What?

Strong belief in *hashgacha pratis* is the bedrock of *bitachon*; knowing that Hashem is totally informed of your situation should give you peace of mind that He will make sure it all works out in the best way possible.³

Hashgacha pratis also means that Hashem is with you at every moment. With Hashem at your side, nothing is too difficult to accomplish and no situation is too terrible or too complicated to turn into good. “Even when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me,” these are the words of Dovid Hamelech in Tehillim.

[In several letters, the Rebbe points to this *kapitel* as a source of *bitachon*, and in some instances⁴ the Rebbe even recommends learning it.]

The question now arises: Granted that Hashem is with me and sees everything I do and knows everything I need, but who says He wants to help me? Maybe I am unworthy; maybe I am deserving of punishment!

In *kapitel* 23, we read about Dovid Hamelech’s most difficult moments—“in the shadow of death”—and yet he is confident that Hashem is with him, which leads him to the conclusion that “only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life.”

True, we are not nearly as great as Dovid Hamelech. But the fact that this *avoda* was included as part of Torah implies that we can and should have the same confidence, that Hashem is with us at all times and we have nothing to worry about.

If we awaken within ourselves Dovid Hamelech’s confidence that Hashem is with us and we have no worry, then we can be certain that “only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life.”⁵

But if Hashem is truly so good and so informed of my situation and so trustworthy and powerful, shouldn’t we accept everything that Hashem sends our way? He obviously knows what He is doing, while we on the other hand will not and cannot know the full picture. If we are in a tough situation why do we hope it will change for the better? It is not for us to concern ourselves with what seems to us as good or bad, we should simply strengthen our belief in Hashem

POSTSCRIPT IN THE REBBE'S
HOLY HANDWRITING TO
RABBI MENDEL SHEMTOV,
DATED 15 MENACHEM-AV 5711.

שלום וברכה!

זה עתה שלחתי לו מברק: "אתפלא
במאד על נפילת רוחו. יעשה כהוראת
שני רופאים מומחים ויתחזק בבטחונו
בהשי"ת אשר בודאי יחזירו לאיתנו.
ואחכה לבשורות טובות. בברכת רפואה
קרובה. חתימתי."

מ'לערנט, מ'לערנט - און אז עס קומט
לפועל, וואו איז דער בטחון?

ילמוד ג' או ד' פעמים שער הבטחון
ב"חובת הלבבות". כמובן, שאין כוונתי
שילמוד זה בפעם אחת, אלא במשך
איזה שבועות..

בברכת רפואה קרובה, המכחה
לבשורות טובות בבריאותו בגשמיות
ובבריאותו ברוחניות,

מ. שניאורסאהן

Greetings and Blessings!

Just now I dispatched a telegram to you: "I am most surprised at your low spirits. You should follow the directive of two medical specialists, and muster strength in your trust in G-d, Who will definitely restore you to your former health. With blessings for a speedy recovery. My signature."

People study, and study — but when it comes to practical application, where's the *bitachon*?

You should study Shaar HaBitachon in Chovos HaLevavos three or four times. It goes without saying that I do not mean that you should study it all at once, but in the course of a few weeks.

With blessings for a speedy recovery, and awaiting good news of your physical and spiritual health,

[...]



that everything he does is the ultimate good!

In other words, in a world of *emuna* there seems to be no room for *bitachon*. If we truly believe that Hashem knows what is truly good for us and the world at large, why would we hope for our own version of good over Hashem's?

Why We Always Need Bitachon

True, we commonly think of *bitachon* as something that comes up only when one is going through a hard time. At times like that, when our regular sources of confidence seem not to be delivering, we feel the need for reassurance and want something to fall back on. However, *bitachon* is also a way of life, even when times are good. We should always ask ourselves: Do we really feel and sense Hashem's presence in our lives or are we just reading and learning about it in the books?⁹

When breaking into a home, a thief davens to Hashem that he not be caught. He believes that Hashem could help him, but does he really feel Hashem's presence? Would he be stealing if he knew Hashem was paying close attention to him?

Similarly, *bitachon* tells us that it is not enough to believe in Hashem only technically, in a removed way, without allowing the feeling to have any bearing on how we do our *avoda* and how we actually feel physically.

An example of this is the generation that left Mitzrayim and journeyed in the desert. These people witnessed with their own eyes the greatest miracles ever seen in history—the ten *makkos*, the splitting of the sea, they saw and ate the *man* from heaven—and yet

Bitachon Defined

The idea of *bitachon* as explained in the sources is that one feels reassured and convinced that Hashem will help overcome all difficulties in life, both material and spiritual, since “G-d is my light and my help.”

The first work in Jewish history to elaborate on *bitachon* is Dovid Hamelech's *Sefer Tehillim*, the most popular work on the Jewish bookshelf. Throughout its chapters, we are introduced to a new approach in serving Hashem: Dovid not only davens and begs Hashem to provide for him and save him from his enemies, but he consistently follows it up by expressing utmost confidence that Hashem will surely fulfill his prayers.⁷

More than 2000 years later, Rabbeinu Bachya Ibn Pekuda authored the seminal work called the *Chovos Halelvavos*, (Duties of the Heart). For the first time, a comprehensive compilation on how a Yid should think and feel was introduced. He devoted a full chapter in his book (the 4th) to the subject of *bitachon* and since then, for close to a thousand years, it remains the most exhaustive work on the subject.

The core of the chapter comes to explain that if we would only know how much Hashem loves us and cares about us and every other creature, we would not doubt that He will be there for us and we would confidently turn to Him for everything we need.

Also discussed is Hashem's supernatural ability to come through for us no matter the situation and no matter who stands in the way.

At the same time, Hashem is also completely aware of all our needs.

Rabbeinu Bachya goes into great detail to truly bring all these points home.

He also discusses how to reconcile going to work and putting in our own effort while trusting that Hashem will ultimately take care of everything. [The Rebbe deals with this at length in *Igros Kodesh* vol. 2 p. 179 and on. See also *Likkutei Sichos* on Purim, vol. 31 p. 170.]

At the end of the chapter he goes through 10 levels of *bitachon*, the first being similar to the trust an infant has that his mother will nurse him and take care of him, and the highest level being a full-grown mature adult who fears and worries about nothing because of his trust in Hashem and his appreciation for G-dliness as well as his lack of interest in material matters.

On countless occasions, the Rebbe urges people who are struggling with *bitachon* to properly study the Shaar Habitachon of *Chovos Halelvavos*.⁸

[For further reading on *Bitachon* see *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 26, p. 95 and vol. 36, p. 1.]



Bitachon is meant to change the way you live, by not carrying all the worry and anxiety in your heart.

they tested Hashem ten times(!) to see if He was really looking out for them, and whether He really paid attention to them.

Of all people, shouldn't they have had the strongest sense of *bitachon* simply because it was so obvious?

The problem was they did not internalize these miracles and translate them to mean that Hashem is actually paying attention to every detail of their lives.

We can glean from here that having strong *bitachon* is not necessarily easier when you see open miracles, and it's not necessarily any harder for those who feel they don't see open miracles.

In truth, the Rebbe points out on several occasions, if one will stop for a moment and observe even just a few recent events in his or her life, they will easily see many examples of Hashem's incredible *hashgacha pratit* on him or her specifically, making *bitachon* an easy and obvious conclusion.¹⁰

Bitachon is not just the best way to get what you want; it is also the most truly empowering mindset you can have. And it is not just a mindset, it actually takes

Hashem with you on the ride to help you accomplish your goals.

Obviously, when health issues or financial difficulties arise, *chas veshalom*, that is no doubt a stronger test of one's *bitachon* (see the letter of the Frierdiker Rebbe at the end of this article). However, *bitachon* plays a major role all day every day; it enhances the quality of everyday life, not just the moment of escaping disaster (due to one's *bitachon*), rather, it is meant to change the way you live, by not carrying all the worry and anxiety in your heart.¹¹

More than Emuna

To fully appreciate the power of *bitachon* it is important to properly understand the meaning of *emuna*.

We believe that Hashem created the world and continues to recreate it every second. Whatever happened to you one second ago was directly orchestrated by Hashem, and whatever will happen to you in the following second is also specifically planned out by Hashem.

Hashem is much smarter and has far more foresight than us. Whatever He does is right. We don't worry about what happened or what will happen because we know it is all in the hands of Hashem and He will arrange things in the way He sees best. If things go sour for us, we might not enjoy it, but we are not worried that we have been abandoned by Hashem; we know with



Think Better

P.S. You write that there is reason to argue that you should be at home during the upcoming Rosh Hashanah, even though a number of [your fellow] students will remain in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim during those auspicious days. And the reason given is that your father's health is not as it should be.

I was amazed and shocked by such a lack of trust in Hashem—so late in the month of Menachem-Av, one states as a fact, and regards as certain (G-d forbid), that in a month his father's health will not be as it ought to be, and that one therefore accepts the argument that he should invest less time in the *avoda* of davening, and so on. It would have been preferable—and more in the spirit of the teaching of our holy Rabbeim, “Think positively, and things will be positive”—to be certain that your father's health will improve, and that you will certainly be able to increase your Divine service, “the service of the heart,” as fully as required.

(*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 9, p. 281)



**POSTSCRIPT IN THE REBBE'S
HOLY HANDWRITING,
DATED 21 ADAR 5732**

אזכיר עה"צ לכ"ז. והוספה בבטחון
ושמחה (אמיתית) מלמטה - מוסיפה
בכ"ז מלמעלה כהוראת הזוה"ק (תצוה
קפד, ב): **תא חזי** אי איהו קיימא בנהיר
דאנפין מתתא כדין נהרין לי'
מעילא כו' חדוה דב"נ **משיך לגבי** חדוה
אחרא עילאה.

I will mention all this [that you wrote in the letter] at the Ohel. Increasing your trust in Hashem and (true) joy on your own part from below—will bring about a similar increase [in positive energy] emanating from Above. As the Zohar instructs: **"Come and see**, if a person is in a state of illumination down here, so, too, will an illumination shine upon him from above... The joy of a person **draws down upon him** an additional higher sense of joy.

Igros kodesh vol. 27 p. 360

utmost confidence that He is behind it. And we are obviously deserving of some punishment or in need of some *kapara*.

On a higher level,¹² *emuna* is not just accepting whatever Hashem throws our way and believing that it is the *right* thing, rather that it is really a *good* thing.

Because Hashem is the ultimate good, and naturally does good, we must conclude that anything that happens to us is truly good. It is only that sometimes we cannot see *how* it is good; but it most definitely is good. And since our very existence every second is from Hashem, it must be that everything in our life is absolutely good, even if it is not always revealed as such.

But we don't have to just *believe* that it is good. We have the power to *make* it good. By truly believing that it is all good, we have the power to bring about the *revelation* of the good.

Before introducing *bitachon*, it's important to point out that the idea of not just accepting what Hashem gives us actually comes from Hashem Himself.

He clearly tells us in His Torah that even when we find ourselves in the most dire situations, when bad seems inevitable, we must beg Him for mercy that He should change the course of events. In fact, every day we are commanded to daven to Hashem for all our needs which incidentally Hashem has not yet given us...¹³

So what is the *bitachon* approach?

Bitachon is all about looking forward, it does not seek to address the past, it is not concerned with revealing the good in the current or past situation, nor does it seek to explain it.

Bitachon exercises like this:

Person: Hashem made it bad for me yesterday, an hour ago, a minute ago, wasn't it for a reason, a good reason?

Bitachon responds:

Step 1: Stop thinking about that, look forward not back.

Step 2: Stop worrying about the future or even the next minute. Hashem is with you and taking care of you.

Step 3: Think only about the *next* moment and hope and pray and be confident that it will surely be 100% good.¹⁴

But what happens when we do not merit to see the results? The next moment comes and the revealed good is not yet manifest. How do we reconcile this with this that Hashem is only good?

Here we fall back on *emuna*. We need to reveal Hashem's good so that we can see it and feel it as well. By having strong *emuna* that only good comes from Hashem, we reveal the concealed good.¹⁵

We Sit At the Controls!

While it is true that Hashem is with us, and He knows everything we need, and He naturally does good, the “natural” conclusion is that He will provide all the good that we need from Him.

We must keep in mind that Hashem's natural goodness is sometimes not apparent and requires our display of confidence to “bring it down” into our physical life. Based on how solid your *bitachon* is, that is how solidly Hashem will come through for you.

This was experienced first hand in the *Midbar* with the *man*: There were those Jews who lacked in their *bitachon* that Hashem would provide for them, and for them, Hashem in turn did not adequately provide. Instead they had to go out to the field and collect the *man*, which they would then grind up and prepare for consumption.

Then there were those who had stronger *bitachon* but not complete. They had to go out and collect but they did not need to prepare it. Lastly, those who had absolute *bitachon* that the *man* would fall the next day, received their *man* right on their doorstep, ready to eat.

The same is true today with our *parnassa*—the stronger our *bitachon* the more of the work Hashem will do.

This is illustrated by a story the Rebbe repeated many times:¹⁶

The Baal Shem Tov once was in need of money so he went over to the home of one of his Chassidim and knocked on the door, announcing how much money he needs, and walked away without even waiting for the homeowner to answer. Soon after, the Chossid came chasing the Baal Shem Tov with the money in hand.

The Baal Shem Tov later explained that his *bitachon* was so strong, he was sure that just knocking on the door alone was already enough effort on his part and Hashem would do the rest.

The lesson for us is not that we should decrease the work we do. The Rebbe points out that those who are not on the level of the Baal Shem Tov need to do more than just announce how much money they need. Rather we learn from here that the stronger the mindset of *bitachon*, the greater the results.

What about someone who continuously and repeatedly gets in their own way? Can one just count on having *bitachon* that everything will be great? Isn't it expected that one will suffer at least some of the consequences of their actions?

The Alter Rebbe addresses a similar sentiment in *Igeres Hateshuva*: There are those who wonder if Hashem will really forgive them for a sin they commit repeatedly every day and every year.

The Alter Rebbe explains that Hashem's mercy and forgiveness are unlimited, hence the question of repetitious sins is not relevant when it comes to the Creator of the world.

[However, we do need to express remorse and ask for forgiveness.

In G-d we Trust

Bitachon is very important for non-Jews to adopt as well, as is evidenced from the story of Yonah: Hashem told him to go to Nineveh, a city of non-Jews, and rebuke them. The intended result was that they do *teshuva* and then daven that they not be destroyed. This form of prayer, asking Hashem to change His mind and spare us, is only possible with *bitachon* as explained above.²⁰

But how do I know I am truly and sincerely asking for forgiveness? Maybe I just don't want to suffer the consequences of my actions and wrongdoings?

In Igeres Hateshuva (*Mahadurah Kama*) the Alter Rebbe dismisses this concern, pinning it as an evil plot of the *yetzer hara* to make the person feel depressed and despondent.]

In the same vein: If we find ourselves in a tough situation spiritually or physically and it is already after the fact, we need to understand and appreciate that this was ultimately Hashem's doing. He personally oversaw our descent.

Why would Hashem be interested in the descent of a Yid?

The same question could be asked about why Hashem would create such a lowly world when there are so many more spiritual ones. The reason is that it is a "ירידה צורך עליה"—a descent for the purpose of an elevation.

So when you realize how dire your situation is, by exercising the proper faith, you can dictate that there is a great ascent to follow. There are only two options: Either Hashem was not with you on your descent—which is blatant heresy, or Hashem was indeed with you on your descent in which case it is part of a plan for a much greater ascent.¹⁷

Spiritual or Medical?

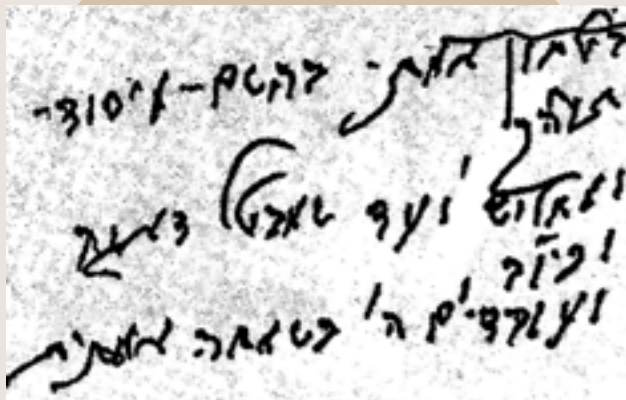
How is someone with *bitachon* different from a regular non-believer who has confidence that he will live long, be strong, and succeed in all his endeavors? Is *bitachon* merely a form of Jewish therapy for those who have anxiety or lack confidence?

The Rebbe teaches us that in most cases, and for most people; these issues could be traced back to a lack of trust in Hashem.

On more than one occasion, when a person wrote to the Rebbe about being diagnosed with anxiety, depression or the like, the Rebbe specifically says, "I prefer to refer to this as a lack of *bitachon* in Hashem."¹⁸

This is well understood based on the Rebbe's stance on many occasions that the health of the body is dependent on the health of the *neshama*. This is true for

What about
someone who
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repeatedly gets in
their own way?
Can one just count
on having *bitachon*
that everything
will be great?



בטחון אמתי בהשם - מיסודי תוה"ק,
ומחליש ועד שמבטל דאגה וכיו"ב,
ועובדים ה' בשמחה אמיתית

True *bitachon* in Hashem is one of the foundations of our holy Torah, and it diminishes until it annihilates [any] worry etc. [and allows a person] to serve Hashem with true *simcha*.

all of mankind.¹⁹ In this case, true and healthy confidence is only one that is built on trust in Hashem.

Tips for Bitachon - Mind Control

Naturally when things are good, most people trust that the good times will continue. Specifically when things are tough is when we wonder if it will ever get better or how we can get out of this situation or, better yet, change the situation.

Torah says that when a Yid is fighting as a soldier in battle and he sees the mighty enemy armies, he should not fear them at all. If he does, he is transgressing a *lav*. How could the Torah expect a person not to experience a natural human reaction?

The Rambam and the Tzemach Tzedek both explain that a person has the ability not to think about his fears, but instead to focus on the battle at hand.²¹

When All Else Fails

Here is an excerpt from a letter of the Frieddiker Rebbe, published by the Rebbe in a footnote to Likkutei Sichos (vol. 3 p. 883), describing the truest form of *bitachon*:

“Perfect trust in Hashem [means trusting] even when there is no apparent source from which one’s assistance can come. To refer to a common expression, when a person is sinking in the sea, Heaven forbid, he will grab even a straw to try and save himself.

“As long as there is a straw to grab onto, i.e., there is a shadow of an expectation of salvation within the material world, [this does not call for] perfect faith in Hashem. Instead, when there is a shadow of an expectation, the term hope, *tikvah* in Hebrew, is appropriate, as reflected by the phrase (Yehoshua 2:18): “thread (*tikvas*) of scarlet cord.”

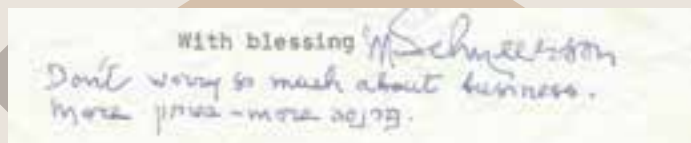
“The scarlet cord was the sign given for Rachav’s home. This sign notified the Jewish soldiers to save the members of this household, and it was called a ‘thread of scarlet cord.’

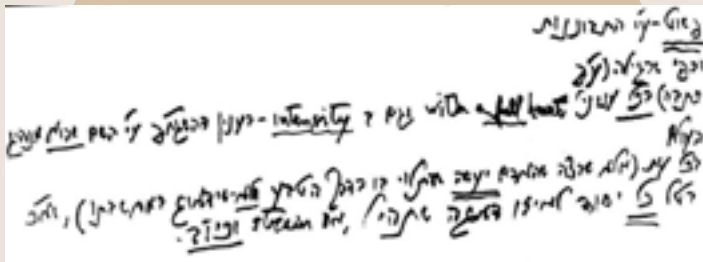
“[Why this name? On one hand,] the sign was visible, but it was subject to different hazards: The thread could snap; it could be blown away, or something else could happen. There was, however, the *tikvah*, hope, that everything would be well, and the scarlet cord would remain in its place.

“For the word “hope” refers to a [redeeming] factor within this world, [be it as unlikely a chance as] a straw clutched by a drowning man. *Bitachon*, trust,

POSTSCRIPT IN THE REBBE'S
HOLY HANDWRITING ON A
LETTER TO REB ZALMON JAFFE,
DATED 26 NISSAN 5724

Don't worry so much about business.
More בטחון - more פרונסה.





פשוט - ע"י [=על ידי] התבוננות וכפי שרגילה (ע"פ [=על פי] כתבה) **בכל** עניני' with a full heart וגם **intensity** - בענין השגח"פ [=השגחה פרטית] ע"י [=על ידי] השם **שהוא** מנהיג העולם בכל עת (אלא שרצה שהאדם **יעשה** התלוי בו בדרך הטבע **ולא** - שידאוג במחשבתו), וא"כ [=ואם כן] בטל כל יסוד לאיזו דאגה שתהי', או strain **וכיו"ב** [=וכיוצא בזה].

[The solution is] **simple**: By contemplating, with a **full heart** and with **intensity**, as you usually do with all your undertakings (according to your letter), into the concept of *hashgacha pratis* by Hashem, who is the leader of the entire world at all times. (Hashem only wants that a person should do what they can within the means of nature [to rectify a troubling situation]. **Not**—that they should have worry in their minds).

With this, there is no longer **any** cause for worry at all, or any **strain** and the like.

Igros kodesh vol. 28 p. 351

by contrast, applies in a situation when there is not even a shadow of hope for a person to be saved, not even a straw to grab onto, and still he trusts in Hashem.

“Moreover, even when a person trusts in Hashem, but his soul is bitter and he is depressed, and his countenance bears witness to unexpressed grief, he is not expressing complete trust in Hashem as taught by our master, the Baal Shem Tov. For when a person trusts in Hashem with complete *bitachon*, even when his situation is not good, or bad, Heaven forbid, it does not affect his heart, nor does it cause him sorrow or gloom. He does everything possible according to the Torah's [guidelines] and [those of] human wisdom, and then he trusts in Hashem, without having a shadow of doubt that Hashem will help him. For Hashem's providence encompasses every single creation.

“All of our affairs, even our slightest movements, are controlled by Divine Providence. [Indeed,] it is His Providence that grants life and power to every living being in the heavens and the earth.” **T**

1. Toras Menachem vol. 22 p. 46.
2. Toras Menachem 5747 vol. 1, p. 386
3. Igros Kodesh vol. 23 p. 38, vol. 18 p. 408
4. Igros Kodesh vol. 22 p. 81, vol. 25 p. 136, 256.
5. Ibid. vol. 10 p. 134
6. Tehillim 27:1.
7. See Biurei Hazohar from the Tzemach Tzedek vol. 1, p. 190.
8. See for example Igros Kodesh vol. 4, p. 319. vol. 11, p. 162. vol. 21, p. 131. vol. 31 p. 275.
9. Igros Kodesh vol. 6, p. 147.
10. Ibid. 5748 vol. 1 p. 490.
11. Likkutei Sichos vol. 9 p. 491-492. Igros Kodesh vol. 4 p. 256. 467.
12. Igeres Hakodesh siman 11.
13. Toras Menachem 5745 vol. 5 p. 2719. Igros Kodesh vol. 9 p. 281.
14. Ibid. vol. 1 p. 619.
15. Tanya Igeres Hakodesh ch. 11. Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, p. 284, vol. 3 p. 883.
16. See for example Sichos Kodesh 5734 vol. 2, p. 336. Likkutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 344. Toras Menachem 5747 Vol. 1 P. 290.
17. Sefer Hamaamarim 5735 p. 292.
18. Igros Kodesh V. 10 P. 133.
19. Likkutei Sichos vol. 6 p. 326.
20. Toras Menachem 5745 vol. 5 p. 2721-2722.
21. Toras Menachem 5742 vol. 1 p. 325. Igros kodesh vol. 11 p. 162.

The background features a collage of images including people, a sign, and a building, all overlaid with a teal gradient. The main title is written in a mix of script and serif fonts, with decorative flourishes.

Transplanting THE WARMTH

Two small, stylized leaf icons are placed above the text.

FREE - FRIENDS OF REFUGEES
OF EASTERN EUROPE

לזכות
הילד חיים לוי יצחק שיחי'
לרגל יום הולדתו ט"ז אדר
יה"ר שיגדל לתורה לחופה ולמעשים
טובים מתוך בריאות נכונה ושפע בגו"ר
לנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר והוריו הי"ו



For over four decades, the Soviet Union had imprisoned the millions of Yidden within its borders. It was excruciatingly difficult to live a Jewish life and impossible to leave. Since the legendary escape known as the Eshalonen in 5707, the Iron Curtain was virtually impregnable and barely a handful of Yidden succeeded in leaving the accursed country.*

For years, the Rebbe remained in close contact with the Yidden there and constantly spoke of their plight publicly and bentedched them that they merit to leave imminently.

In the late 5720s the situation began to change. Through various secret channels of communication, the Rebbe instructed Russian Chassidim that the time was ripe to apply for exit visas from the USSR. To everyone's amazement, a steady stream of Yidden started immigrating to Eretz Yisroel and the United States.*

Their newfound freedom in the western world introduced a new set of challenges. Aside for the obvious difficulties of finding their bearings in a new and strange environment, these heroic Yidden who had sacrificed everything to be connected to Yiddishkeit behind the Iron Curtain were woefully uneducated in Yiddishkeit and since the regular Jewish educational systems at the time were not equipped to cater to them, the threat of assimilation was very real.

In 5729 the Rebbe charged a group of recently immigrated Russian bochorim with the mission of creating an organization that would translate the heroic self-sacrifice of Soviet Jewry into vibrant Jewish life in the free world.*

Following is the story of FREE - Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe as told by Rabbis Meir and Hirshel Okunov.

"IN THE FULLEST MEASURE"

Rabbi Hirshel Okunov: I was born and raised in the Soviet Union during the darkest periods of Stalinist persecution. After the great escape of Lubavitcher Chassidim following World War II, the remaining Chassidim organized various underground communities with *yeshivos* and *chadarim* which served as resources for Jewish life for Jews across the Soviet Union.

Living in Samarkand during the 5720s*, my brother Meir and I learned in the underground Tomchei Temimim yeshiva there. At the time, there was a Soviet immigration policy known as "Reuniting Families"—families who can prove that they had relatives outside of the USSR would be granted permission to emigrate to be reunited with them.

In 5726*, after my mother passed away, my father Reb Dovid was unsure how to proceed. My mother's sister Chaya Rubinstein lived in Eretz Yisroel and could serve as a good reason to immigrate there, but on the other hand, most of our family was still in the Soviet Union and it was doubtful the authorities would grant our family reunification with those relatives over the large extended family remaining in the USSR.

The question was posed to the Rebbe and my father received the following response.

I was happy to hear regards from you. Also happy to hear that an invitation was received to live together with relatives. I wish you much mazel. May it be Hashem's will that all that you want should be fulfilled, with no difficulties and in the fullest measure...
[signed] M. Zeidy

My father submitted a request for emigration and received the necessary permissions and documents with no trouble at all. The first part of



RABBI VELVEL NISENEVICH LEADS A FARBRENGEN AT THE OPENING OF A CENTER FOR REFUGEES FROM THE CAUCASUS, 5747.

"...Happy to hear that an invitation was received to live together with relatives. I wish you much mazel... M. Zeidy."

the Rebbe's *bracha* had already been realized.

I was 19 years old at the time and Meir was 20. Both of us had previously received an exemption from military service, but one day after procuring the exit visas, a soldier showed up at our home with a summons for us to present ourselves for the military draft!

Although we were both home at the time, my father remembered the Rebbe's *bracha* that our emigration will happen with no trouble "in the fullest measure," so with a straight face he told the soldier that we no longer lived there and refused to sign the summons. Miraculously, the soldier accepted his explanation and left. We arrived in Eretz Yisroel days before the Six Day War began.

"AMERICA IS DIFFERENT"

Rabbi Meir Okunov: That first Tishrei of our freedom, 5728*, the Chassidim who had recently emigrated from Russia were invited to

spend the entire Tishrei by the Rebbe, with all of our travel expenses paid. At the end of Tishrei, I asked the Rebbe for permission to remain in 770 but was told to return to the yeshiva in Kfar Chabad for the time being. Six months later I joined the *kvutza* that arrived in 770 just before Pesach 5728* and have remained ever since.

In the spring of 5728* there was an uprising in Czechoslovakia and Soviet troops occupied the country. As part of the unfolding drama, thousands of Czechs fled the country and numerous Jewish families were settling in Brooklyn with relatives. A mother and two sons, one 14 years old and the second 11 years old, were staying with an uncle and both wanted to learn in yeshiva. Since they spoke only Russian and Czech and had absolutely no previous *chinuch*, none of the *yeshivos* in New York were willing to accept them.

It was in the winter of 5729* when the uncle showed up with his



RABBI HERSCHEL OKUNOV RECEIVES KOS SHEL BRACHA.

two nephews at the Tzach office and asked that Lubavitch find a way to educate them. I was asked to serve as a translator for the two boys and they shared with me their sincere desire to learn Torah. Together with some of the other Russian *bochurim* and with the *hanhala's* permission, we arranged a space for them in the yeshiva dormitory and created a full day program to teach them Torah, starting with Aleph Beis and reciting simple *brachos*.

Shortly thereafter, a Hungarian boy, a Romanian boy, five Polish boys and several from the Carpathians joined our fledgling program and slowly but surely, the message went around that Lubavitch was the address to turn to for all Yiddishkeit matters pertaining to the new immigrants from Eastern

Europe, although there was no official organization dedicated to this purpose yet.

In the underground yeshiva in Samarkand, Reb Chaim Zalman Kozliner would teach us Gemara and he always told us that we need to dedicate time to learn with the younger bochurim. "What will you gain by learning more pages of Gemara when a younger bochur doesn't know basic halachos in Kitzur Shulchan Aruch?" he would say. Plus, we were painfully aware that of the millions of Yidden in the Soviet Union, only several hundred families had the good fortune of being connected to Torah and Mitzvos. We felt so lucky that we had an overwhelming urge to share it with others, but in Russia it was impossible.

When we came to America and had the opportunity to help our fellow Russian immigrants to learn more about Yiddishkeit and to do Mitzvos we grabbed the opportunity without asking permission or guidance or crafting any strategy. But the Rebbe envisioned the need for an official *mosad* to properly service the many tens of thousands of immigrants that would eventually come out.

Rabbi Hirshel Okunov: I returned to 770 for Tishrei 5729* and that summer, on 3 Av, I had my first birthday *yechidus*. After the Rebbe read my note he said to me, "*Since there are many Yidden emigrating from the Soviet Union now, there is a need to create an organization that will cater to their spiritual needs.*"



STUDENTS IN THE FREE YESHIVA, 5737. ON THE LEFT IS REB YOSKE VOLOVIK, ON THE RIGHT IS RABBI LOZIK VILEINKIN, AT THE TOP IS RABBI VELVEL NISENEVITCH



RABBI ZALMAN SHIMON DWORKIN OFFICIATES AT THE WEDDING OF A RUSSIAN COUPLE.



REB VELVEL NISNEVICH SUPERVISES STUDENTS LEARNING AT THE YESHIVA, 5737.

I stood there with a blank expression as I was unsure of what this all meant for me.

The Rebbe continued with a smile. *"You are accustomed to the way things work 'over there' (in Russia) where everything is done in utmost secrecy. Here in America it is exactly the opposite. Everything must be done with the maximum publicity."*

I understood that the Rebbe was giving me the mission of creating this

organization but I had no idea where to begin.

"Speak with Rabbi Hodakov and he will guide you."

Rabbi Hodakov advised me to create two committees. One committee of activists should be comprised of newly immigrated Russian *bochurim* in 770 who would strategize and get the *peulos* done. The second committee should be comprised of Russian *yungerleit* who

still retained the *"Rusishe varemkeit"*—the warmth and passion of *mesiras nefesh* from their life in Russia—to deal with the finances of this new organization.

My brother Meir and I recruited Naftoli Estulin and Berl Chaskelevitch for the activist committee; the financial committee consisted of Reb Abba Pliskin, Reb Zalman Shagalov, Reb Refoel Wilshansky, and Reb Mottel Chein.

Not everything was smooth sailing and whenever I had an issue I would speak with Rabbi Hodakov who almost always told me to come back the next day for an answer. It was clear to me that he was reporting everything to the Rebbe and that all his instructions were coming from the Rebbe as well.

שלח את עמי - ויעבדוני!

Rabbi Meir Okunov: Shortly after our organization started to organize, Rabbi Hodakov called us in and said that while the many *peulos* are important, the time has come for the organization to have an official office where the fresh immigrants can come by and receive advice, financial help and encouragement. He told us to



COURTESY OF FREE



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD

A LARGE CHANUKAH PARTY ORGANIZED BY FREE, 5738.

rent a space and that Merkos would pay the rent for the first while. We immediately rented an apartment at 711 Eastern Parkway and set up shop.

Rabbi Hirshel Okunov: Our first order of business was to create an official yeshiva for the Russian immigrants. The building at 711 Eastern Parkway served as a dormitory and a learning space for several dozen young men in that first year alone and there were several offices there as well.

In those years, the *hanhala* of Tomchei Temimim would have a *yechidus* with the Rebbe every month to discuss matters of the yeshiva and the *talmidim*. During one such *yechidus* in the winter of 5730* the Rebbe clarified the specific role this new yeshiva had.

Rabbi Elya Simpson shared with me that someone suggested that our yeshiva for Russians should operate under the auspices of Hadar Hatorah, since it served newcomers to the yeshiva setting in a similar fashion. The Rebbe rejected the idea since the approach to the Russian immigrants needed to be very different from that of Hadar Hatorah and instructed that the *hanhala* of Tomchei Temimim

“Continue working in the holy mosad Friends of Refugees,” and then the Rebbe smiled and said “or as others call it now—FREE.”

undertake a large portion of the financial burden and the rest of the budget would be covered by *anash* that had the *Rusishe Varemkeit*.

The Rebbe wanted it to be an independent branch of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim and said, “This is connected to taking all of the Yidden out of the Soviet Union.”

I find it interesting to note that during those years there was a major movement for organizing demonstrations against the Soviets for their terrible emigration policies and the fact that millions of Jews were trapped behind the Iron Curtain. The Rebbe was vehemently opposed to these demonstrations. He spoke openly and forcefully against them on numerous occasions, pointing out that while many of the young people involved had good intentions, the strategy was flawed and the demonstrations were causing terrible trouble for the Russian Jews.

The slogan of these demonstrations was “*Shalach Es Ami — Let My People Go*” and the Rebbe pointed out that while the slogan was borrowed from the Torah, it omitted the most important part of the *possuk*: “*V’yaavduni — so that they [Bnei Yisroel] may serve me.*” Rescuing the Yidden from behind the Iron Curtain comes with the obligation to ensure that they are enabled to learn Torah and observe Mitzvos properly.

This new organization was created to do just that, to provide for the Yiddishkeit of these immigrants and a proper *chinuch* for their children.

Rabbi Meir Okunov: In those early years the Rebbe received lists of the newly arrived immigrants who were staying in hotels for a period of time. As I mentioned earlier, our overwhelming desire to help these Yidden motivated us to visit them without seeking specific guidance or advice. We spent almost every evening in these hotels meeting with them and

**PROMINENT
RABBONIM AND
PHILANTHROPISTS
WERE OFTEN
HONORED TO
SERVE AS THE
SANDEK FOR A
RUSSIAN JEW'S
BRIS.**



**RABBI GERSHON MENDEL GARELIK SERVES
AS SANDEK AT A BRIS.**



**RABBI SHLOMO GALPERIN SPEAKING AT A
CELEBRATION FOR FREE'S 85TH BRIS, 5735.**



**RABBI SHOLOM CHARITONOV SERVES AS THE
SANDEK AT A BRIS.**



THE PUPA REBBE SERVES AS THE SANDEK AT A BRIS.



TO DATE, FREE HAS ARRANGED OVER 14,500 BRISSIN FOR RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS.



RABBI MEIR OKUNOV BRINGS A GROUP OF RUSSIAN JEWS WHO RECENTLY HAD BRISIN TO THE REBBE FOR DOLLARS.

figuring out ways to help them get settled.

For example, someone who was a programmer in Russia had an extremely difficult time finding a job because the systems were different and he did not speak English. We put him in touch with a Lubavitcher owner of a company who hired him without payment to hang around the workplace to get a handle on how programming worked in America. Later when he was ready to get a job elsewhere, he was able to write on his resume that he worked in a previous company and wasn't just a "greener." For those who were tailors by trade we arranged sewing machines for them so they could start a business and other trades.

Obviously we worked very hard on arranging a proper *chinuch* for their children and provided them with

mezuzos and other *tashmishei kedusha* that they needed.

These visits turned out to be very time consuming and at one point I started wondering if it was the proper thing for me as a yeshiva *bochur* to do. When I was in *yechidus* for my birthday I asked the Rebbe about this and the Rebbe said to me that for these fresh immigrants an American or British *bochur* who doesn't speak Russian would have a very limited influence on them. It was crucial for me to continue this work, but it should be at designated times during the week and with the *hanhala's* permission.

Later, when I started dedicating half the day to teaching the Russian children, initially without anyone's specific permission, I eventually asked the Rebbe if it was right for me to sacrifice so much of my own learning for teaching and the Rebbe responded "ומתלמיד יוֹתֵר מְכוּלָם" ("From your

students you can learn more than from anyone else").

THE NAME

Rabbi Meir Okunov: During those years the Rebbe called upon everyone to do everything within their power to help the fresh immigrants physically and spiritually. Mrs. Rosenbloom, the wife of Professor Paul Rosenbloom,¹ was an energetic activist and when she heard one of these *sichos* on the hookup, she wrote to the Rebbe that she would like to begin working diligently to help the new immigrants in every way possible. The Rebbe notified her that there was already a group of Lubavitchers working on these matters in an organized fashion and suggested we work together.

Rabbi Hirshel Okunov: I remember our first meeting with the Rosenblooms in their home. They lived on the Upper West Side



COURTESY OF FREE

A BAR MITZVA CELEBRATION IN CAMP FREE - GAN ISRAEL, LOCATED IN GAN ISRAEL, PARKSVILLE, NY.

SEATED L - R: RABBI GOROWITZ, RABBI, YEHOASHUA KORF, RABBI ZALMEN AZIMOV, REB ABBA PLISKIN, REB ASHER SOSONKIN, REB DOVID OKUNOV. STANDING AT LEFT: RABBI ZALMAN SHAGALOV. STANDING AT TOP, THIRD FROM LEFT IS REB MEIR OKUNOV, FIFTH FROM LEFT IS RABBI MENDEL OKUNOV. TOP RIGHT IS RABBI SHLOMO GALPERIN, SECOND FORM RIGHT IS RABBI MOSHE CHAIM LEVIN, FOURTH FROM RIGHT IS RABBI YOSKE VOLOVIK.

of Manhattan and were very well connected in the New York Jewish establishment. Reb Zalman Shagalov suggested that Professor Rosenbloom serve as the honorary president of our organization and Mrs. Rosenbloom wrote up a protocol of that first meeting giving our organization the name "Society for Helping Russian Immigrants."

Upon receiving the protocol, the Rebbe circled the name in a manner of deleting it and replaced it with "Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe," explaining that "friends" is a better term to use than "helping," because when you commit to "helping," nothing you do is ever enough, but when you are a "friend," anything you do is most appreciated. Associating the organization with "refugees" instead of "immigrants" would resonate better and the Yidden we were charged to deal with were coming from all of Eastern Europe, not exclusively from Russia.

When I filled out grant forms, the line available for the organization's name was often too short for the words "Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe" so I started writing the acronym F.R.E.E., and that's how we got our nickname.

In 5736*, when I was in *yechidus* before my wedding, the Rebbe instructed me to "continue working in the holy *mosad* Friends of Refugees," and then smiled and said "or as others call it now—FREE."

Rabbi Meir Okunov: In the original group of young men in our yeshiva there was a fellow from Ukraine who did not yet have a *bris*. After some time we were finally able to broach the subject and influenced him to have the *bris* and his parents to agree to it. We made arrangements with a mohel at Maimonides Hospital and the hospital scheduled the *bris* in a week's time on a Thursday.

We notified the Rebbe that the *bris* would happen the next Thursday and asked for a *bracha* that it should be

successful. The Rebbe responded that delaying a *bris* is not a good idea, and in general there is a halachic problem doing a delayed *bris* on Thursday, because then the most painful day would be on Shabbos. Therefore, we must do everything within our power, even if it means paying a fortune, to do it as early as possible - at least one day earlier on Wednesday. *Baruch Hashem* we were able to arrange an earlier *bris* and it was the first of some 15,000 *brissim* we merited to facilitate over the coming years.

As the flow of immigrants increased, the demand for adult *brissim* skyrocketed and there was a long period of time that we were doing over 20 *brissim* a week. During the years the Rebbe gave dollars on Sundays we would bring the men who had a *bris* the previous week to the Rebbe, and it caused a tremendous *nachas ruach*.

Rabbi Hirshel Okunov: That first year, we arranged a Chanukah party in a large Young Israel shul in Brooklyn



FREE EVENT IN THE SUKKAH AT 770.

with around 200 Yidden in attendance. This huge success was reported in a newspaper and when we submitted a *duch* of the event together with photos and a copy of the newspaper article the Rebbe was very pleased.

For Pesach we were instructed to provide new dishes for the Russian immigrants and to make sure they all had food for Pesach. We recruited *bochurim* to *tovel* the dishes and to help the families *kasher* their homes for Pesach.

A short time before the summer, a venerable Chossid asked me if I was arranging for the Russian children to go to Camp Gan Yisroel. I told him that I did not have the money for their camp tuition and he advised me to send them anyway. "If you have the money, great. And if not..."

Following his advice, we arranged for a group of Russian children to join Gan Yisroel in Parksville that summer in a special program led by some of the Russian 770 *bochurim*, and this continued for many years.

Rabbi Meir Okunov: During the summer of 5734* there was a tremendous campaign of Mitzvah Tanks going to Manhattan every day to do *mivtzoim*. Mrs. Rosenbloom was disappointed that there was no official FREE tank, catering exclusively to Russian immigrants. She wrote to the Rebbe about this and the Rebbe responded to her that the *bochurim* of FREE were currently involved with camp, "and camp is a big tank."

Rabbi Hirshel Okunov: In 5733* we had a surplus in the budget and I asked the Rebbe which area of our programming we should invest in developing. The Rebbe instructed us to enlarge our publication department. We had already been publishing Jewish literature and paraphernalia in Russian for Yomim Tovim, but we now needed to think in broader terms. Thus began a new era in Russian language Jewish publication under the directorship of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Levin. Millions of these publications were distributed around the world, even in the USSR, and untold numbers

of Yidden were *niskarev* to Yiddishkeit as a result.

Rabbi Meir Okunov: Once, in the 5740s, a Russian woman did some work in the Rebbe's home and in conversation with the Rebbetzin shared that she was soon traveling back to Russia to visit a cousin. The Rebbetzin suggested that she go to FREE and take various Russian language brochures and booklets about Yiddishkeit to bring to her family back in Russia.

She came to us and we gave her copies of everything we had. As a tourist she was allowed to bring any type of literature with her to the USSR. Years later, a son of this woman's cousin emigrated from Russia and when he arrived in the US, he refused to eat non-Kosher food and sought out a yeshiva. He told us that he was educated and inspired by the booklets and brochures from FREE that his mother's cousin brought with her on her visit. Today he is a Lubavitcher *yungerman* living in Crown Heights.

An interesting anecdote of how the Rebbe viewed the work of FREE: Once, during the Three Weeks, we offered a certain *yungerman* a position at FREE. Although he was seriously considering accepting the job he did not want to give a final answer until after Tisha B'Av since it is not proper to start something new during the Three Weeks.

It was around the time of his birthday and when he was in *yechidus*, he included this job offer in his note to the Rebbe, explaining why he was delaying accepting the job. The Rebbe told him that the work of helping Russian Jews *bgashmiyus* and *bruchniyus* was started by the Frierdiker Rebbe many decades ago, so he is not starting anything new, and can accept the position even before Tisha B'Av.

Rabbi Hirshel Okunov: In 5731*, three families who had recently

immigrated to Eretz Yisroel from the Caucasus (a mountainous region in the eastern USSR) were being brought to the United States by HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) and requested to settle in a *frum* community.

Rabbi Hodakov instructed me to find proper housing for these families in the Crown Heights area. Several months' rent would be provided by HIAS but everything else was on us.

"They need to have brand new furniture," he said. "If it's a family of three they need to have at least five chairs, in case visitors come to their home."

He advised me to shop for the furniture by wholesalers in order to get a better price, but under no circumstances was I to put used furniture in these homes. If there was a deficit, *mazkirus* would foot the bill for the new furniture.

When the apartments were all arranged and furnished, he asked me if the refrigerators work. "Be sure to fill the refrigerators with several days worth of food. These people are coming to these apartments straight from the airport and need to have something for those first few days."

Rabbi Hodakov also instructed me to hire a Russian speaker to be in the FREE office throughout the day so that when a Russian immigrant had an issue there would always be someone to listen to them. "If their problem can be solved, that is wonderful. But even if there is no solution in the office, just hearing someone out can make them feel alot better."

PERMANENT HOME

Rabbi Meir Okunov: In 5733* it became apparent that a permanent home was needed for FREE. After searching for suitable buildings in Crown Heights we settled on 1383 President Street. For many years the Kozlover Rebbe lived in that house and had a yeshiva/kolel there with a



COURTESY OF FREE

REB ITCHE MISHULOVIN WELCOMES A RUSSIAN FAMILY AT THE AIRPORT. THIS FAMILY WAS LATER REVEALED TO BE WORKING FOR THE KGB, REPORTING ON FREE'S ACTIVITIES.

*Again the Rebbe hesitated and asked,
"But it will reach them today?"*



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD

PURIM 5738

large library of *sefarim*. In fact, the Rebbe would visit the building in the early years to peruse through, and at times even borrow, some of the *sefarim*.

We asked the Rebbe whether to purchase the building or not and the response was:

שייך לרב והיכולת שלכם

This is [a question] for a rav, and depends on your [financial] capabilities.

The first part of the answer was puzzling to us but when we approached Rabbi Zalman Shimon Dvorkin he understood the problem immediately.

Since there was a permanent *minyan* in that house for many years,

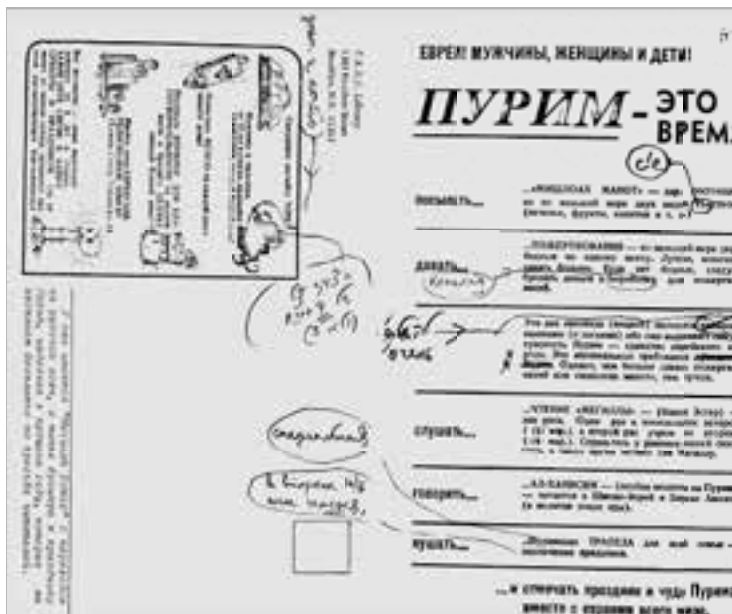
Initially we had a *minyan* for the Russian Chassidim and eventually the many Russian immigrants settling in the area started attending and the davening was done in a way that would be more accommodating to them.

Rabbi Meir Okunov: Some time before Purim 5730* we submitted a *duch* to the Rebbe of the *peulos* we were doing and the the Rebbe responded to us:

Many thanks, I will mention it at the Tziyun. Certainly you will arrange a special activity for Purim.

This was before the Rebbe had launched Mivtza Purim and shlichim at the time were not arranging grand Purim events. After some discussion, we decided to arrange a grand *seudah* for Russian families on the Sunday before Purim, with live music and entertainment. We arranged elaborate *mishloach manos* packages for them so that they would appreciate the gift and during the event we would explain the meaning of Purim and encourage them to properly observe the Purim mitzvos at the right time.

The Rebbe approved of the plan and instructed us to prepare a Russian language brochure about Purim to give out to the participants. This turned out to be a unique challenge since we had no idea where to find a Russian language typewriter. Through some of our acquaintances who worked at the offices of the *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*—the oldest Russian language newspaper in New York City—we were granted access to their typewriters and prepared the brochure.



BEFORE PURIM 5735, FREE PREPARED A BOOKLET ABOUT PURIM IN RUSSIAN, INCLUDING SICHOS AND LETTERS FROM THE REBBE ABOUT PURIM. THE REBBE RESPONDED THAT 1) IF POSSIBLE, THEY SHOULD GET TWO PEOPLE TO REVIEW IT, 2) TO ADD THE LAWS OF PURIM IN BRIEF. A BROCHURE WITH THE DINIM WAS PREPARED AND SENT TO THE REBBE. THE REBBE RESPONDED WITH THE FOLLOWING (SEE PICTURE):

הוגה. עכ"פ. המוכרח להחזיר אזכיר עה"צ

IT WAS EDITED [BY THE REBBE], AT LEAST IN A BASIC MANNER. SEND THIS BACK [TO THE PUBLISHERS]. I WILL MENTION THIS AT THE OHEL.



ONE OF THE PRE-PURIM PARTIES AT 770.



RABBI MEIR OKUNOV DISTRIBUTES FOOD PACKAGES FOR PESACH, CIRCA EARLY 5730S

In addition, the Rebbe said that the *mishloach manos* we had prepared for each family was too large and instructed us to separate them into two packages; the larger one as a gift for the family and the smaller one with instructions for them to use as *mishloach manos* to give to others.

The event was held in the Yeshiva of Crown Heights (now Beis Rivka) on Crown Street, and we had over 500 participants. The next year we moved to a larger hall and a year later we had no choice but to hold the event in 770. The large shul was emptied of all tables and benches and we set up a beautiful *seudah* with round tables from wall to wall. There were 1000 participants at this party. To my knowledge this was the first time such an event was held in 770 and we did it at least one other year as well.

During the event, the Rebbe entered the *ezras nashim* and gazed briefly at the proceedings with noticeable pleasure. The Rebbe then sent a package of dollars to be distributed to the participants on his behalf and instructed us to have a *minyan* for Mincha. At the conclusion of the *seudah* we set up a *mechitza*,

and although there were no Russian language *siddurim* and most of the participants were unable to daven, we guided them through answering “amen” and “Yehei shmei rabba,” as well as reciting some of the *tefillos*.

PESACH

Rabbi Meir Okunov: When the Russian immigrant community in Crown Heights started growing, we began hosting a public *seder* at FREE. From 5735* to 5741*, the Rebbe visited the public *seder* at FREE before conducting his own *seder*. We invested a lot of effort in beautifying the room where the *seder* was held and when the Rebbe arrived he walked through every room in the building. We did not expect the Rebbe to enter any of the other rooms and many of the lights were off, but the Rebbe wanted to see the entire building. When he reached the last room on the top floor he asked, “Is there anywhere else to look?”

Each year the Rebbe said a special *bracha* to the participants in Russian, always emphasizing that soon they will be reunited with their family and friends still back in “*yener lender*—those lands,” and many of the

participants *bentched* the Rebbe as well. The atmosphere was very joyful and warm and the feeling everyone felt that the Rebbe is a loving father was palpable in the room².

Rabbi Hirshel Okunov: In 5737*

Pesach began on Motzei Shabbos and I was leading a public *seder* for Russians in Boston. Several days before Pesach, my wife and I went to Boston to prepare all the logistics and on Friday morning I flew back to New York to receive matzos from the Rebbe for the public *seder*. I arranged for an ambulance to drive me to the airport to catch a flight to Boston before Shabbos. When the Rebbe gave me the two pound package of matzah, I said that *anash* in Boston are requesting matzah from the Rebbe as well.

The Rebbe handed me another package of matzah but held on to the string and asked, “Will it reach them today?” I responded that I was on my way to the airport to catch the flight to Boston before Shabbos. Again the Rebbe hesitated and asked, “But it will reach them today?” I was unsure of how to respond but the Rebbe let go of the string and I hurried to catch my flight.

There was a traffic jam on Atlantic Avenue and I missed the flight by minutes. Left with no choice, I caught the next flight to Boston which landed before Shabbos but without sufficient time to reach my hotel by taxi. On the flight, I was sitting next to a journalist from the New York Times who was familiar with Lubavitch and he agreed to bring the two packages of matzah to my hotel. I made *simanim* on the packages and I walked several hours from the airport to the hotel.

Anash in Boston did not receive the Rebbe’s matzah for the first *seder* but on the first day of Yom Tov I walked to the Lubavitcher Shul and delivered the matzah, much to their delight.

Several years earlier, Reb Shlomo Galperin and I went to Manhattan

to lead a *seder* in the Lincoln Square Synagogue. When I received matzah for the *seder* on Erev Pesach, the Rebbe asked me how many *sedarim* would be held at the shul. I responded that the condition set forth by the Lincoln Square Synagogue was that we would host a *seder* only on the first night.

“A condition that is contrary to Shulchan Aruch is not a legitimate condition. See to it that there are two *sedarim*.”

Hours before Yom Tov there was no time to prepare anything for the second *seder* and we hoped that by rationing the first night we would be able to scrape together a second *seder*. However, such a large crowd joined us for the first night, that it was impossible to save anything. At the end of the *seder* I invited everyone to join us the next night at the same time and same place, but I had no idea how it was going to happen. There wasn't even any matzah or wine left over.

The next morning we visited all the surrounding shuls and made an appeal for *seder* provisions. We asked people to bring whatever they could spare for that night's public *seder* back to shul for Mincha and it was a major success. An equally large crowd joined us for the second *seder* and there was plenty of matzah, wine and food for all.

A SHUL IN BRIGHTON BEACH

Rabbi Hirshel Okunov: Each year on Sukkos we arranged a large *simchas beis hashoeva* event on the boardwalk in Brighton Beach. One year there were close to 5000 people in attendance and after the Rebbe saw the photo of the event we were told it is time to set up a permanent shul and community center in Brighton Beach for the thousands of Russian Yidden living there. Although there were many shuls in Brighton, the Rebbe explained that the Russians needed to have their own space and would not



A FREE EVENT AT THE HEBREW ALLIANCE SHUL, CIRCA 1940S.



SIMCHAS BEIS HASHOEVA ON THE BRIGHTON BEACH BOARDWALK, EARLY 1940S. SOON AFTER, WITH THE REBBE'S CLOSE GUIDANCE, FREE ESTABLISHED ITSELF IN BRIGHTON BEACH.

feel comfortable participating in the typical American shuls.

After unsuccessfully seeking a shul that would allow us to use their social hall to arrange a separate *minyan*, the Rebbe instructed us to search out a shul that was closing down and find ways to use it for this important purpose.

The Hebrew Alliance shul had been severely damaged in a fire and they were only using the small *beis medrash* for their Shabbos *minyanim*. We

offered to complete the renovations of the main shul and assume responsibility for the maintenance and utilities on condition that we be allowed to use it for a separate *minyan* for Russian Yidden and the longtime rav of the shul, Rabbi Dovid Hollander, was very supportive of the idea.

The new *minyan* became very popular and serves the Russian Jewish community in Brighton Beach until today.



REB DOVID OKUNOV, BOTTOM LEFT.



A MASS BAR MITZVA CELEBRATION IN THE LATE 5730S. SEATED THIRD FROM LEFT IS REB ABBA PLISKIN. STANDING AT RIGHT ARE RABBIS MENDEL OKUNOV, MOSHE CHAIM LEVIN, MEIR OKUNOV. FROM THE LEFT ARE RABBIS SHLOMO GALPERIN, ITCHE MISHULOVIN, LOZIK VILENKIN, ZALMAN SHAGALOV.

OHEL DOVID

Reb Dovid Okunov, known as Dovid Ramener, (the father of Rabbis Meir and Hirshel Okunov) was educated in the network of underground Yeshivos Tomchei Temimim that spanned the USSR in the early years of the Communist regime under the tutelage of many legendary Chassidim.

When he was called to the military draft he asked the Frierdiker Rebbe (who had already left Russia) how to dodge the draft and was told to claim his health problems with his eyes, "ובטח ישמיעני טוב" - certainly you will notify me of good things." He was exempt from military service during peacetime but told he would be called up in wartime. When Germany invaded the USSR, Dovid was drafted

and sent to the front in Stalingrad. That pivotal battle proved to be the most deadly and Reb Dovid survived through many miracles which he attributed to the Frierdiker Rebbe's *bracha*.

Towards the end of the war he married Basya Rivka Zubarovsky in Tashkent and together they raised their children to be staunch Chassidim in Communist Russia. They were forced to send their children to the Communist schools but sacrificed everything to ensure they never went on Shabbos or Yom Tov. At the end of the school year many of the tests were held on Shabbos and Basya Rivka went to a local doctor to obtain a letter for her daughter to be exempt from school, due to the increased level of stress the exams were causing. The doctor refused to provide any such letter. This caused a tremendous heartbreak. On her way home she collapsed from heartbreak and passed away five days later, on Erev Shavuot, leaving behind a family of young orphans.

In 5727* the Okunov family emigrated to Eretz Yisroel and for Tishrei 5728* Reb Dovid finally merited to see the Rebbe. The organization Ezras Achim which did tremendous work on behalf of Soviet Jewry appealed to Reb Dovid to remain in America to serve as a model for their cause, to relieve the plight of Russian Jewry trapped behind the Iron Curtain and with the Rebbe's agreement he stayed until Shavuot. Only after he found a proper replacement did the Rebbe allow him to return to Eretz Yisroel where he ultimately found employment as a *mashgiach* in the Israeli Army and was extremely dedicated to the Rebbe's *mivtzoim* and many other Chabad *peulos*.

In 5737* he travelled to New York for his son Hirshel's wedding and the Rebbe instructed him to stay in



RABBI MEIR OKUNOV

America to find a shidduch for his daughter. He found employment as a *mechanech* in the Lubavitcher Yeshiva on Ocean Parkway and was instrumental in helping many weaker talmidim develop a *geshmak* in learning Torah.

In the early morning hours of Thursday, 4 Cheshvan 5740*, weeks before his daughter was to marry, tragedy struck. On his way to Shul, Reb Dovid was murdered on the streets of Crown Heights in cold blood.

The shock was felt throughout the world, and a few days later on Motzei Shabbos Parshas Noach, the Rebbe held a farbrengen and said a *maamar* with the *dibur hamaschil* וירח הוי' את ריחו הניחוח. The *maamar* discusses the idea of the *mesirus nefesh* of Yidden

throughout *galus* and in a voice choked with bitter tears the Rebbe referenced the most recent tragedy.

"How is it possible that after being in such a long and painful galus, it is not enough... and from time to time terrible things happen that have no explanation at all. The galus is so dark, to the point that these tragedies happen to Shluchei Mitzvah..." [Reb Dovid was on his way to Shul when he was murdered. -ed]

Towards the end of the farbrengen the Rebbe said that a yeshiva for immigrants from Eastern Europe should be established in his memory and concluded:

"Certainly this farbrengen and especially the new mosad will be a cause for tremendous nachas ruach and is connected to his aliya haneshama, as he already finds himself in Gan Eden

together with Raboseinu Nesieinu... And this should all translate into revealed goodness here in this world... To the ultimate goodness when we will finally say about the entire galus אודך ה' כי אנפת בי."

In accordance with the Rebbe's instructions to the family later on, new classes were organized for Russian immigrants in Lubavitcher Yeshiva, Oholei Torah and Beis Rivka under the auspices of FREE and the program was named Ohel Dovid. **T**

1. See *The Rebbe's Man in Mathematics*, Derher Adar 5781.

2. The *sichos* the Rebbe spoke in F.R.E.E. on the first nights of Pesach 5739, 5740 & 5741, were edited by the Rebbe, and published in Likkutei Sichos, vol. 17 pp. 461 and 464, and vol. 22, pp. 285-286. They are the only Russian language text in Likkutei Sichos.

Work!

אדם לעמל יולד



The Jewish world was abuzz. The Rebbe was reaching his seventieth birthday. Having already transformed the face of world Jewry over 22 years of the *nesius*, many people speculated about the Rebbe's plans for the future.

As the Rebbe later attested, he received many suggestions to consider taking a more relaxed approach going forward.

Of course, the Rebbe used this milestone as an opportunity for a major expansion of Lubavitch activities, famously calling for the establishment of 71 new *mosdos* all over the world.

Much of the Rebbe's Torah from this period is dedicated to the theme of "עמל"—a person's charge in this world to constantly work and strive for higher and higher achievements. The Rebbe's farbrengen on Yud-Aleph Nissan, as well as the *michtav-kloli* dated that day discuss this in great depth.

Speaking of the birth of *am Yisroel* to be celebrated on Pesach, the Rebbe

opens the letter with an overarching question of how the newborn nation is supposed to see itself:

"Should this nation strive towards a state of life in which it can enjoy the maximum pleasure with the minimum effort; or, should it prefer a life of toil and maximum achievement, a life of much action and much accomplishment?"

"The question is just as pertinent to the individual and his personal life as an individual."

The Torah already prescribed the answer to this question, the Rebbe continues. The *posuk* states, "אָדָם לְעֵמָל"—*man was created to toil*.¹ When Hashem created the first man—even before his downfall and sin, Hashem gave him the stated purpose of "לעבדה"—*to work and to guard it [the land]*.² Only after that did He tell him that, "Of all the trees in the Garden you may eat..."

But doesn't this seem to contradict the basic tenet that Hashem is always good and only ever wants to do good?

Wouldn't that mean that all He wants for his creations is to experience maximum pleasure with little or no effort?

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Hashem's desire is that man should enjoy the good in its perfection and human nature is such that a person derives true pleasure only if he is a partner in its attainment, through his own exertion and travail. Good in its perfection is enjoyed only when a person earns it through hard work, and the harder the effort, the sweeter the taste of the fruit of achievement.²

At the farbrengen, the Rebbe dedicated the better part of five *sichos* to expounding deeper and broader on the idea of אדם לעמל יולד, even explaining why Hashem put this trait into our very nature as humans, as we shall soon see.

Being such a major cornerstone of life, the Rebbe points out that the concept of עמל is always there at every major milestone in history.

caught up in the currents of the day. Our job is to change things—to make the world better, nicer, elevated to a higher and more spiritual level than before.⁸

The real toil and exertion of our lives is the ability to utilize and not waste any of the time or any of the resources given to us by Hashem. Every single moment and every single

thing we have is precious, to be used for holy and spiritual purposes, as the *possuk* says, “בכל דרכיך דעהו”—Know Hashem in all your ways.”⁹

Why?

As mentioned, Hashem created our nature that we only appreciate something if we work for it. Getting something for free without expending any effort is frowned upon by human nature and referred to as *נהמא דכסופא*—bread of shame.

But why couldn't Hashem program our nature differently? After all, Hashem is the essence of goodness and He wants only what is best for us. Why wouldn't he want us to appreciate the good He gives us even when we don't work towards it?

The answer, says the Rebbe, lies in a deeper understanding of why we were created in the first place.

Hashem wanted to give us the opportunity to become His partners in creation. If we never had to work on fixing and perfecting the world, we would all only stay at the level of *נובראים*—created by Hashem and receivers of His bountiful goodness. But Hashem wanted us to be able to reach the level of *בורא*—to have a part in creation as well. To be a partner, we need to put in the work.

This is also the answer to why so many of us encounter challenges in our lives that sometimes make following the Torah properly difficult for us. Hashem wants us to put in the extra effort, making our *avoda* all the more precious—both for ourselves and for Him.¹⁰

With toil and hard work, the deepest and often most hidden

For Life!

Rabbi David Hollander was a New York-based rabbi for many decades. In an interview with JEM's My Encounter team, he related:

Every year, on the day before Yom Kippur, I would visit the Rebbe to receive a piece of *lekach*, the honey cake he handed out on that day, and also for his blessing for the new year. In 5745, the Rebbe invited me into his room. Once inside, the Rebbe said to me, “I give you a blessing that you should be successful as a rabbi and as a private citizen.” When I heard that, I latched onto the words “private citizen,” and I said to the Rebbe, “Your blessing for me as a private citizen interests me, because I am just on the verge of doing that very thing . . . of becoming a private citizen.”

The Rebbe responded, “What?! What right do you have to have such ideas? I am older than you are and I am taking on additional burdens!”

He didn't leave it at that.

Later that month, I was standing in line after *havdalah* when the Rebbe was handing out wine from his cup. As I reached him, he reached across the table and poured some wine into my cup, and in a loud and clear voice he called out, in real Brooklynese English, “Remember—*rabbonus* (the rabbinate) for life!”

Rabbi Hollander heeded the Rebbe's instructions and passed away at age 96 as the “Oldest practicing rabbi in America”—still at his job of more than 60 years.

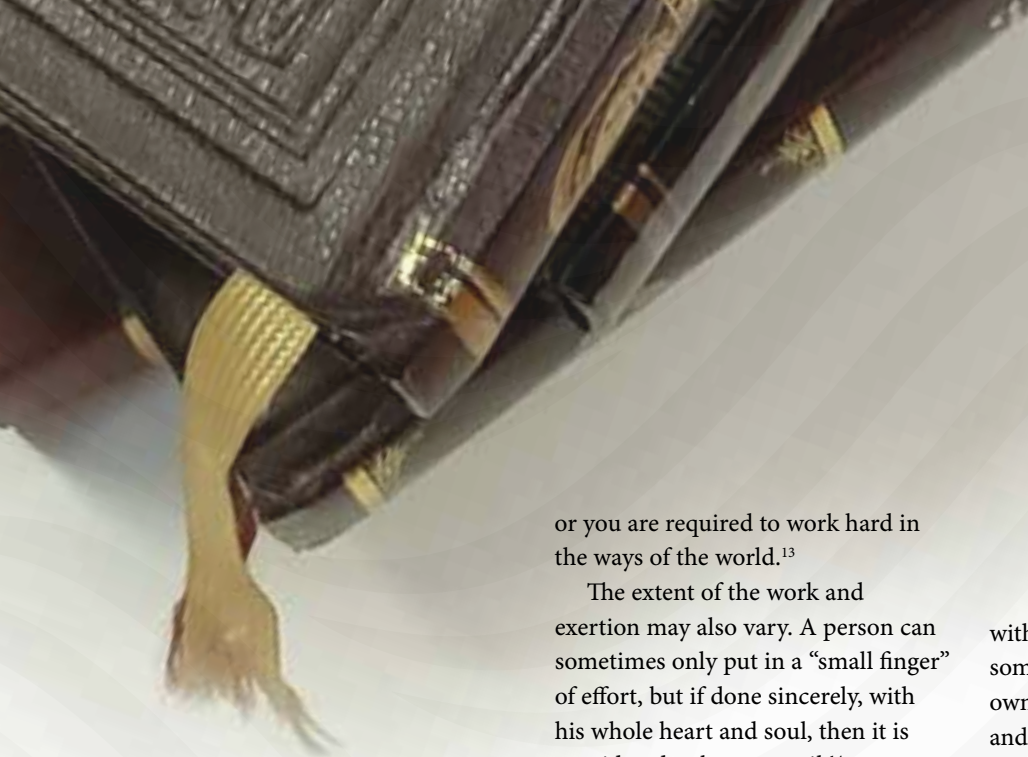
(Here's My Story, Erev Yom Kippur 5774)

In a similar vein, Rabbi Pinchus Feldman of Sydney, Australia, relates:

I recall one occasion when the Rebbe urged me to encourage my wife's grandfather, Rabbi Osher Abramson, not to retire from community work, including his position as the presiding rabbi of the Australian Rabbinical Court, although he was elderly and not well. I protested, “But he is already over 70 years old!”

As soon as I said it, I realized who I was talking to—the Rebbe was also in his 70s. I was very embarrassed, but the Rebbe gave me a big smile and said, “I am also 70 but I have plans for 10 years, and after that, for another 10 years.”

(Here's My Story, Erev Shabbos Haazinu 5776)



strengths of a person are brought to the forefront and revealed. The Midrash tells a story about a man who came to a new town and no one knew what his strengths were. Until one wise person suggested: “מִן אֲבָנָא דְהוּא מִתְגֹּשֵׁשׁ” —From the type of stone he exerts himself with, you will know how strong he is...”¹¹ Similarly, explains the Rebbe, when a person is faced with troubles and challenges, and instead of giving in, he fights the darkness and overcomes it, only then does he maximize the potential of his tenure here in this world.¹²

Details?

What sort of hard work is a person expected to perform in this world?

The Rebbe points to an interesting lesson from the Mishna: “כֹּל הַמִּקְבֵּל” עליו עול תורה מעבירין ממנו עול מלכות ועול דרך ארץ—Anyone who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah is exempt from the yoke of the government and the yoke of worldly affairs.”

We see from the Mishna that no matter what, a person must always be working hard, with a “yoke” on his back. Either you work hard in Torah,

or you are required to work hard in the ways of the world.¹³

The extent of the work and exertion may also vary. A person can sometimes only put in a “small finger” of effort, but if done sincerely, with his whole heart and soul, then it is considered to be great toil.¹⁴

Additionally, the Rebbe emphasizes that when we seek to make things easier on ourselves, it is not because we shy away from hard work, *chas v’shalom*. Rather, we are freeing ourselves from a lower-grade *avoda* by getting it done in an easier manner, so as to be able to use our strength for even greater tasks.¹⁵

End in Sight?

Our job in this world never ends, so long as we are still here. A person could think: I have already toiled so much and worked so hard, now is the time for someone else to step in! This is the wrong approach, says the Rebbe. Your *neshama* came down here, enduring all the pain and suffering from being sent down to this lowly world. The only way to make that pain worthwhile is by you working hard at your job as long as you are still here in this world.¹⁶

In this regard, the Rebbe points out that the concept of “retirement” is unthinkable! The fact that your *neshama* is still here in *olam hazeh* is proof that there is still much work for you to do. True, you may feel that your physical strength is waning, but if you connect yourself to Hashem

with true *bitachon*, you become part of something so much greater than your own self. Your *kochos* become limitless and you can carry on working hard for many more years.¹⁷

The time to sleep is after 120 years. Until then, a person must constantly be busy, constantly working. Every day is precious! And even after 120 years, when a person is supposed to enjoy the reward for his labor, he will still not be “asleep,” because a reward needs to be good and enjoyable. Just resting as an end to itself certainly doesn’t qualify...¹⁸ **T**

1. Iyov 5:7.
2. Michtav-Kloli 11 Nissan 5732.
3. 11 Nissan 5732, *sicha* 2.
4. Motzei Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5728.
5. Sefer Hasichos summer 5700, p. 57. See also *sichas* 19 Kislev 5722.
6. Footnote to Michtav-Kloli 11 Nissan 5732.
7. Shabbos Parshas Noach 5745.
8. Yud Shevat 5735, *sicha* 2.
9. 11 Nissan 5733, *sicha* 2.
10. 11 Nissan 5732, *sicha* 3. This idea was later added by the Rebbe into the Michtav-Kloli as well.
11. Yalkut Shimoni Nach, Remez 673.
12. 12 Tammuz 5743, *sicha* 2. See also the *maamar* Boruch Hagomel at this farbrengen.
13. Shabbos Parshas Vaera 5711.
14. 11 Nissan 5732, *ibid*.
15. Yechidus Kholis 26 Nissan 5746.
16. Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5714.
17. 11 Nissan 5742, *sicha* 3.
18. Shabbos Parshas Matos-Masei 5747.

שׁוֹשׁ לַלֵּלָה

The Gulf War



לזכות
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק שיחי'
גופין
לרגל יום הולדתו השבעים
שיצליח בהצלחה רבה ומופלגה
בשליחותו הק'
לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות
נדפס ע"י
הרוצה בעילום שמו

پیامِ شوم

AS WE MARK 30 YEARS FROM THE INCREDIBLE MIRACLES OF THE GULF WAR, WE PRESENT THE FOLLOWING STORY OF THE FIRST GULF WAR AND THE REBBE'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE UNFOLDING EVENTS. SPECIAL THANKS TO RABBI MENACHEM BROD AND RABBI MENACHEM DUBRUSKIN FOR SHARING THEIR RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EVENTS!

I Told You So

It was 2 Shevat 5751*, the first day of Operation Desert Storm (now known as the First Gulf War). In an unprecedented display of unity, the two Israeli radio channels had joined for one united broadcast.

“And now, we will present an ‘I told you so’ moment,” broadcaster Roni Daniel dramatically announced. “Our reporter Michael Tochfeld just spoke with the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s secretary; he also says that the Rebbe has predicted the end of the fighting.”

Months of tension in the Persian Gulf had finally reached a boiling point. A massive coalition of international soldiers had attacked Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi forces. Israeli citizens were extremely on edge; Saddam had promised to retaliate by attacking Eretz Yisroel and there was little reason to doubt his intentions.

“I just spoke with the Rebbe’s secretary,” the reporter explained, “and he related that when the fighting broke out, the Rebbe repeated his opinion that G-d watches over the Land of Israel, and that these are the final days of exile and the first days of redemption. It is interesting to note that the Rebbe has also predicted the end of the fighting. One of his Chassidim, Yaakov Goldstien, who serves in the United States Military, came to receive the Rebbe’s blessing before his departure to the Persian Gulf and shared that he planned to take a Megillah for Purim. The Rebbe laughed and said that by Purim he will already be home. Purim, let me remind you, is just a month-and-a-half away...”

With this radio announcement, the Israeli public ushered in the first day of a tense and aggravating six weeks. In fact, the Rebbe had made no such promise,² but this was only one in a series of incredible statements emanating from 770...



COL CHAPLAIN YAAKOV GOLDSTEIN GOES BY THE REBBE FOR DOLLARS AFTER HIS RETURN.

Backtrack

The story of the Gulf War really begins half a year earlier, in the summer of 5750*, when Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi forces overran their small neighbor, the oil-rich country of Kuwait, and declared it Iraqi territory. The international community saw the invasion as a severe breach of international law-and-order and warned Saddam to retreat. At first, the situation did not seem especially relevant to the residents of Eretz Yisroel.

Rabbi Menachem Brod was the spokesman for Tzeirei Agudas Chabad in Eretz Yisroel at the time, and he shared his memories with *Derher*.

“My first encounter with the war was shortly after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. We were in the midst of the Yaldei Chernobyl project, evacuating children from the area of the nuclear disaster to Eretz Yisroel. We had experienced considerable setbacks, but we finally arrived in Minsk with a large group of children ready to leave the country. Then, suddenly, we heard that our planes were stranded in Kuwait. A war had broken out, and they were not able to make it to Russia.”

Saddam had long threatened to attack Israel but it was seen mostly as mere rhetoric. Soon, however, events took a surprising twist. After his invasion of Kuwait, he declared an ultimatum: If he was attacked, he would launch ballistic missiles at Eretz Yisroel. According to intelligence reports, Iraq had missiles loaded with chemical and biological warheads. Saddam was a real *meshugener*; this time, his threats could not be taken lightly. Frightened residents of Eretz Yisroel and Jews around the world began to follow the situation very carefully.

Standing on the Rooftop

Even before the invasion, Iraqi-Kuwaiti tensions had been in the news for some time. Iraq’s expanding influence over the world’s oil supply worried many governments and the conflict was followed carefully.

Rabbi Menachem Dubruskin was a *bochur* learning in 770, where he served as one of the *chozrim* and *manichim*. He shared his recollections of that period in 770:

“One regular Tuesday night, as the Rebbe left the shul following Maariv and dollars, he suddenly paused for

30 NISSAN 5751, CB HALBERSTAM VIA JEW 7237

a short moment to look at a sign hanging on the door. It was a quote from Yalkut Shimoni that had been hung up by Reb Yosef Yitzchak Kazen, due to its seeming relevance at the time.”

The quote read as follows:

א"ר יצחק שנה שמלך המשיח נגלה בו
כל מלכי אומות העולם מתגרים זה בזה, מלך
פרס מתגרה במלך ערבי והולך מלך ערבי
לארם ליטול עצה מהם וחוזר מלך פרס ומחריב
את כל העולם וכל אומות העולם מתרעשים
ומתבהלים ונופלים על פניהם ויחזו אותם
צירים כצירי יולדה, וישראל מתרעשים
ומתבהלים ואומר להיכן נבוא ונלך להיכן
נבוא ונלך להיכן נבוא ונלך, ואומר להם בני
אל תתיראו כל מה שעשיתי לא עשיתי אלא
בשבילכם. מפני מה אתם מתיראים? אל תיראו
הגיע זמן גאולתכם, ולא כגאולה ראשונה
גאולה אחרונה כי גאולה ראשונה היה לכם צער
ושעבוד מלכיות אחריה אבל גאולה אחרונה אין
לכם צער ושעבוד מלכיות אחריה.

“Rebbi Yitzchak said: In the year of the revelation of Moshiach, kings of all nations will provoke one another. The King of Persia will provoke an Arabian

king, and the Arabian king will consult with Aram, and the Persian king will return and destroy the entire world, and all nations will tremble and be gripped with fear... and the Jews will become afraid and ask, ‘Where shall we go, where shall we go, where shall we go?’ And Hashem says to them, ‘My children, do not be afraid, everything I have done has been for your sake. Why are you afraid? The time for your final redemption has arrived...’

The next day, Rabbi Groner contacted Rabbi Kazen, saying that the Rebbe had requested the next two lines in Yalkut Shimoni be added to the quote.

”שנו רבותינו, בשעה שמלך המשיח בא
עומד על גג בית המקדש והוא משמיע להם
לישראל ואומר ענוים הגיע זמן גאולתכם.

“Our Rabbis taught: When Moshiach will arrive, he will stand on the roof of the *Beis Hamikdash* and declare to the Jewish people, ‘Humble

ones, the time of your redemption has arrived.”

Rabbi Dubruskin continues his account:

“As the tensions began to rise, the Rebbe began to quote this Yalkut Shimoni often, saying that the Jewish people had nothing to fear. To the contrary, the Rebbe said, it was a harbinger of the *geulah*. As an aside, it is interesting to note that the same quote had been hung in 770 in 5741*, during the Iran-Iraq war, but the Rebbe didn’t mention it at all.

“The Rebbe publicly declared that there was no reason to fear. At dollars, many non-Chassidim were lining up to hear the Rebbe’s words for themselves, and every Motzei Shabbos the phones would ring with people wanting to hear what the Rebbe had said at the farbrengen. The Rebbe said there would be no war in Eretz Yisroel, and began speaking about the year, to which he had earlier ascribed the acronym *Ar’enu Niflaos*, explaining that this year’s miracles were going to be much greater than the previous year’s. With the backdrop of the miracles of *Tehei Shnas Nissim*—when the Iron Curtain fell after 70 years, among other miracles—it was quite an exciting declaration.”

With the rise in tensions and fear throughout the Jewish world, some of the Rebbe’s actions in the previous few months began to fall into place.

“One early hint had come in Iyar, when the Rebbe had announced the *roshei teivos* for the new upcoming year — *Tehei Shnas Ar’enu Niflaos*. It was unusual for the Rebbe to announce the acronym so early.

“As events in the Persian Gulf began to play out, there were more unique occurrences. On 15 Tammuz 5750*, the Rebbe went to the Ohel and returned at the shockingly late hour of midnight. On Rosh Chodesh Av, the Rebbe went to the Ohel — something he had never done before (the Rebbe

THE NEXT DAY, RABBI GRONER CONTACTED RABBI KAZEN, SAYING THAT THE REBBE HAD REQUESTED THE NEXT TWO LINES IN YALKUT SHIMONI BE ADDED TO THE QUOTE.



THE REBBE RETURNS FROM THE OHEL.

ROSH CHODESH TAMMUZ 5750, CB HALBERSTAM VIA JEM 49286

almost never went to the Ohel on Rosh Chodesh). We heard that the Rebbe had explained to Rabbi Klein that it was the *hilula* of Aharon Hakohen, and 'Why is it Aharon's fault that he passed away on Rosh Chodesh?' By the time the next Rosh Chodesh came around, panic had begun to set-in in Eretz Yisroel, and the Rebbe went to the Ohel on Rosh Chodesh Elul once again."

The Ultimatum

As Saddam Hussein entrenched himself in Kuwait, the United Nations condemned the attack and threatened retaliation. In Kislev of 5751*, after failed attempts at negotiations, the UN issued an ultimatum. If Saddam would not withdraw by January 15, 1991, corresponding with 29 Teves 5751, they would declare war.

"As the date drew closer," relates Rabbi Brod, "President Bush arranged an international coalition of armies, and Saddam continued to threaten Israel. People began to become very

afraid. The government started preparing for biological attacks, distributing gas masks and so on. Families were instructed to buy plastic and tape and to close up one room in the home to protect them from the gas. They began to prep everyone for what to keep in the room — transistor radios with batteries, food, etc. All this talk about biological attacks did not help to calm anyone's nerves, and people began to panic.

"Meanwhile, the Rebbe kept repeating the Midrash and saying that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place in the world, that there was no need to hoard food or shave beards for the masks. In my capacity as *dover Chabad*, I began to publicize the Rebbe's words and, from the very beginning, it received widespread attention in the press. Even Prime Minister Shamir publicly said afterwards that he had been very encouraged by the Rebbe's words."

Rabbi Brod shared with us a number of newspaper clippings that he collected at the time. *Hatzofeh* ran

a headline, "The Lubavitcher Rebbe: Publicize that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place." *Yediot Acharonot* declared, "The Rebbe: These are the times of Moshiach." Jerusalem Post wrote, "Schneerson: Have no fear, Gulf crisis heralds the messiah."

One unique news bulletin by A. Kohen in *Hamishmar Hachotem* put it succinctly:

"Rabbi Yosef Ralbag of Kiryat Yovel... was told by the Rebbe that there is no reason to fear a gas attack on the Holy Land. From my perspective, this is the most calming message that has been received until now. All the information from intelligence agencies and governments, however accurate, pale in comparison to the Lubavitcher Rebbe's assessment which is based on reliable sources. If anyone doubts this fact, he should check out how the Rebbe's assessment was correct before the Six Day War..."

Rabbi Dubruskin relates:

"The impact of the Rebbe's words need to be taken into proper context



THE REBBE'S REASSURANCES WERE REPORTED IN MANY OF ISRAEL'S NEWSPAPERS.



ISRAEL GPO

PEOPLE FLEEING ERETZ YISRAEL BEFORE THE WAR.

of the time-period. Although we know of countless stories of miracles from the Rebbe, there were essentially two times when the Rebbe made massive predictions about world events and took responsibility for the lives of millions of people in tandem. Those were the events of the Six Day War and the Gulf War.

“For decades, the Rebbe had been very publicly involved in all the affairs of Eretz Yisroel, meeting with its leaders and impacting their policy decisions, and it had all been widely publicized in the press. Just months earlier, the Rebbe had shaped the composition of the Israeli government during a story known as the *Targil Hamasriach*, and just two years earlier, the Rebbe had wielded major influence over the Israeli elections, so by 5750*-51*, during the Gulf War events, the Rebbe was the most well-known and beloved living Jewish leader.

The newspapers in Israel reported—sometimes in awe and sometimes with exasperation—about the irony that a rabbi in Brooklyn was running the country.

“So when the Rebbe gave his assurance that everything would turn out well, it made major waves throughout the Jewish world and beyond. From our perspective, it was a time of unprecedented *malchus*, and it even seemed to be expressed in the Rebbe’s shining countenance during those times. We clearly saw—as the Rebbe said—that it was a new period, it was Moshiach’s times.”

Holocaust vs. Miracles

“As war became imminent,” relates Rabbi Brod, “many frum Jews began fleeing the country. Israeli television played videos of the airport packed with religious yeshiva *bochurim*. These reports brought greater prominence

to the Rebbe’s words; in countless conversations and *maanos*, the Rebbe remained adamant that there was no reason to leave the country and whoever planned to travel there was encouraged to continue.

“In the beginning of Teves, one *rosh yeshiva* said that Hashem keeps a *cheshbon* of *aveiros*, and when the cup fills up, he brings a major punishment to the Jewish people, such as the Holocaust. There was no telling, this *rosh yeshiva* said, whether the cup filled up or not.

“The Rebbe was very pained by this statement. He addressed it very sharply during the *sicha* on Asarah b’Teves and the following Shabbosim. The Rebbe said that it was an insult to the *kedoshim* of the Holocaust, and more importantly, an insult to our beloved Father in heaven. We made sure the Rebbe’s words were widely publicized.”

"BY MORNING, THE PHONE WAS RINGING OFF THE HOOK. 'WE THOUGHT THE REBBE PROMISED THAT MISSILES WOULDN'T FALL? DOES THE REBBE STILL MAINTAIN HIS POSITION?'"

As the date for the ultimatum drew closer, the United Nations intensified negotiations with Saddam Hussien. However, it became quite clear that war was inevitable.

Every time there was another setback in the negotiations, the phone lines would ring at 770. "What does the Rebbe say? Does he still maintain his position?"

Time and again, the Rebbe would respond that his position is based on the *possuk*, "עיני ה' אלוך בך," and no, that *possuk* never changes. These statements came directly from the Rebbe's office. With the the cost of international phone calls significantly dropping, news stations in Eretz Yisroel—instead of sufficing with the statements from Chabad in Eretz Yisroel—began to call the *mazkirus* phone and speak directly with Rabbi Groner, to hear the Rebbe's words from the closest source possible.

Nachash Tzefah

On the day after the ultimatum, the coalition forces attacked Iraq. In what was code-named Operation Desert Storm, they subjected Baghdad and the entire country to one of the most intensive air-bombings in history. In Eretz Yisroel, everyone sat tight, expecting missiles to come flying their way. But the skies remained calm.

"By Thursday night," relates Rabbi Brod, "the night after the war began, people began to think that perhaps the threats had been a farce.

"At around one or two in the morning, I was listening to the radio broadcast when suddenly there was a jarring noise and two words were recited over the air. '*Nachash Tzefah, Nachash Tzefah.*' Nobody knew what those words meant. Literally, it refers to a poisonous snake known in English as a Eurasian Viper. Even the radio broadcasters didn't understand

where the voice had come from.

Waiting for information, they began to play music. It was surreal; something was clearly amiss, and yet the radio was just playing music. People became very nervous.

"It turned out to be an army code to set off the alarms all over the country. Within minutes, we heard the alarms ring out and we were instructed to enter our protected rooms. Suddenly, we heard frightening booms. We were sure that we were being attacked, but the radio broadcasters declared that the noise had been thunder. It was quite obviously not true—we later found out that Tel Aviv and Chaifa had been hit by missiles—and the fact that they were so misinformed definitely added to the panic.

"By morning, the phone was ringing off the hook. 'We thought the Rebbe promised that missiles wouldn't fall? Does the Rebbe still maintain his position?'"

"In truth, the Rebbe had never promised that missiles wouldn't come to Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe had simply stated that Eretz Yisroel was the safest place. But people on their



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 180524

THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES THE MAAMAR "BARUCH SHE'ASA NISSIM 5664."



own had deduced that if the Rebbe said Eretz Yisroel was the safest place, it must mean that missiles would not be coming. After all, a missile attack is not a very safe thing at all. We, in Tzach, were also partially responsible for this assumption. For example, in the Sichat Hashavua the week before, I had ended my article by saying, ‘Instead of waiting for missiles, let’s wait for Moshiach...’ We were all convinced that Saddam’s threats were empty.

“We nonetheless insisted that the Rebbe’s position remained the same. We continued to say that Hashem is watching over Eretz Yisroel and that everything will be fine. Indeed, within just a few short hours, we were able to point to miracles. The massive missiles had wrought significant material damage, but no lives had been lost. It was quite miraculous indeed.”

Rabbi Dubruskin relates what happened in New York:

“After the first missiles fell in Eretz Yisroel, there were conflicting news reports; some reported massive deaths and terrible tragedies. Nonetheless, the Rebbe kept to his position. Before Shabbos, he sent a very encouraging message to Eretz Yisroel, telling them to be joyful. Dancing broke out in Kfar Chabad and around the country, and it was widely reported in the news.

“Some people still felt tension. At the Karastirer *mikveh*, the radio was left on over Shabbos, so that people could hear the news. However, we already understood—after hearing the Rebbe’s words for so long—that immense miracles were on the way. When the Rebbe came into the farbrengen, we sang with a *lebedikeit*, ‘*Ki gadol atah v’oseh niflaos*.’ The Rebbe was very *oifgeleigt* at the farbrengen and again he assured us of the safety of Eretz Yisroel.

“Throughout that entire period, the Rebbe kept repeating the same points. On Yud Shevat, he even gave out a



APARTMENT BUILDING DESTROYED BY A SCUD MISSILE.

kuntres called ‘*Boruch She’asa Nissim*,’ a *ksav* of a *maamar* of the Rebbe Rashab that had been in the Rebbe’s room for many years. Now, as missiles were falling in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe publicly distributed the *kuntres*.”

I Will Show You Wonders

“After the first Shabbos of the war,” relates Rabbi Brod, “we anxiously awaited the Motzei Shabbos broadcast of the *chazarah* of (Rabbi) Yossi Jacobson—a young *bochur* at the time—to hear what the Rebbe said. The Rebbe gave us an immense feeling of safety. Although we continued to follow the government’s instructions, as per the Rebbe’s *hora’ah*, we were very comforted.

“As the weeks passed, people began to see that unbelievable miracles were taking place. They had been expecting huge numbers of dead. I had been enlisted in the army with 200 others where we were taught how to do *taharos* with bodies that were contaminated with gas—but the calls never came. Still, Eretz Yisroel was basically on lockdown. Schools were shuttered. People rarely left home and

when they did, they were obligated to carry a large gas mask with them. An intense nervousness lingered.

“Over the next few weeks, 39 missiles fell. The American government provided a system that was supposed to shoot down the missiles, but it turned out to be an abject failure. Nonetheless, the missiles failed to wreak the havoc they were intended to. Over the weeks, the government also helped lower the tension. They began to focus the alarms in the specific places where the missiles were falling, instead of throwing the entire country into panic. Slowly, people began to return to normalcy.

“In an amazing turn of events, the war actually came to an end on Purim. On Israeli radio, they replayed their broadcast from day one of the war where they had reported, erroneously, that the Rebbe had promised the war’s end by Purim.”³

Miracles of Miracles

“Following the war,” says Rabbi Dubruskin, “the Rebbe released a series of three *michtavim kloli’im*

where he emphasized the greatness of the miracle and explained that it was really all a harbinger of Moshiach's times. The Rebbe used particularly strong language in the *yechidus klolis* after Pesach, even mentioning Saddam by name. He explained the greatness of the miracle where the Yidden didn't have to defend themselves at all, and instead had the non-Jews doing the work among themselves — *I'makeh Mitzrayim bivchoreihem*.

"The Rebbe also encouraged dancing during that *sicha*. Some time earlier, an interviewer had asked a certain prominent Chossid why a Yom Tov wasn't being established, and this individual responded that 'we don't need to dance, but we surely should be happy.' It seemed that the Rebbe was hinting to that statement."

Throughout the entire period, the Rebbe made it clear that these weren't just random miracles. All these events hinted to the coming of Moshiach.

"In light of the aforementioned events and miracles," the Rebbe writes in the *michtav kloli*, "one should become even more cognizant that this is the time of urgent preparedness for the fulfillment of the prophecy, 'and the kingdom shall be Hashem's,' when all nations will recognize that 'this mansion (the world) has a Master,' a recognition that will lead 'all of them to call upon the Name of Hashem, to worship Him with one consent.'"

May it be speedily in our time. **T**

1. For a more in-depth article on the topic, read *Biregah Haemet* ch. 13. See also *Miracles In Our Times*, Derher Adar I 5774.

2. The Rebbe did tell him that a Megillah would not be necessary, and then he was redeployed to Eretz Yisroel. To read the full story, see *Here's My Story*, Tzav 5774. jemedial.org/email/newsletter/My_Encounter/3-15-14.pdf.

3. At the time, the story circulated in 770 that when the Rebbe heard that Israeli radio was reporting his 'prediction,' he asked Rabbi Krinsky about it in surprise, and then waved his hand, "Nu..."



PURIM 5751.

YITZCHOK ZEVI GOLDSHID



A Promise Almost Broken

The Russian revolution left cities across the Soviet Union ravaged and in shambles.

Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Rostov was not spared this fate. The *bochurim* in yeshiva, although diligently applying themselves to their studies, did not have food to eat and also lacked other basic necessities and commodities.

Baruch¹, a friendly and talkative Chassidisher young man, had befriended many of the *bochurim*. He became involved with them and decided he wanted to do what he could to alleviate their situation.

Contemplating the best avenue to take, he concluded that it would be wisest if he solicited the help of Meir¹. Meir, a local in town who was very well connected in significant

places, agreed to help under one condition.

"I will help and use out my contacts if you promise me that I will be blessed with a child."

Baruch realized and appreciated the effort Meir would be expending on behalf of the yeshiva and so he boldly agreed to the deal. "In response to your dedication and selflessness, I am promising that you will be blessed with a child — a son!"

These words were an immediate source of joy and hope for Meir who had not been blessed with children for many, many years. Baruch constantly pushed him to do more and to do everything in his power to assist. Sure enough Meir kept his part of the deal and the improvement for the *bochurim* was visible.

As the months and years passed along and the promise was still not fulfilled, Meir turned to Baruch questioningly. "Why have you deceived me? I am still childless!"

Not quite sure how to respond to Meir's valid accusations, Baruch turned to the Frierdiker Rebbe and shared the whole story with him. The Rebbe's response was clear, "Why did you promise something you can't fulfill?!"

"But Rebbe," cried Baruch, "I did it for the benefit of the yeshiva..."

The Rebbe, however, repeated his original response. "You can't guarantee something you are unable to carry out."

Meir simply did not accept no for an answer and continued to press Baruch to keep his part of the deal. With no other choice, he

went back to the Frierdiker Rebbe to once again plead his case on Meir's behalf.

"Rebbe," he beseeched, "Meir refuses to let up on this matter and raises it up to me very frequently."

Finally, Baruch heard the words he had been praying for. The Frierdiker Rebbe replied, "He will be blessed with a son!"

Sure enough, a short while later, Meir and his wife welcomed their healthy baby son into the world. He lived a long, healthy and fulfilling life; a walking miracle of the Rebbe and the reward for absolute devotion his father had to the *bochurim*. ¹

(Likkutei Sippurim Perlow, Admur HaRayatz, 34)

1. The names do not appear in the original. They were added here for the sake of clarity.



JEM 201925

A Malach and a Chossid

Rabbi Aharon Blesofky relates how his father, Reb Schneur Zalman Blesofsky, came to Lubavitch.

My father descended from a long line of Karliner Chassidim, but his grandfather married a woman from a Chabad Chassidus—I'm not sure if it was Kopust or Lubavitch.

When my father was growing up in New York City (he was born in 5683*), the only *yeshivos* available were RJJ on the Lower East Side and Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg, which my father attended. In Torah Vodaath, my father got to know Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, who would visit and speak with the *bochurim*, and give a Tanya *shiur* several times a week. While the *hanhala* was mostly Litvish, they allowed this—a Yid of the caliber of Rabbi Jacobson was inspiring to the *bochurim* and they appreciated that—so my father began to learn Chassidus.

The “Malach” also came to Torah Vodaath and he also learned Chassidus with the *bochurim*. They tolerated his Chassidus-learning because they had no choice, but this stopped as soon as the Litvishe *roshei yeshiva* started coming to America before the war. He passed away in 5698*, but a group of his followers—known as the Malachim—continued in his ways. They would wear their *tallis kotton* over their shirts, per the Alter Rebbe's opinion, and had long *peyos*. My father went along with them. As a Malach, my father

was meant to have no association with Lubavitch but my father wanted to see the Frierdiker Rebbe.

He came to the Frierdiker Rebbe's door—they didn't allow many people in on account of the Frierdiker Rebbe's health, so there was an individual controlling who would go in—and standing there at the door was the Rebbe, who let my father in. He entered the hallway, known as the salon, and saw the Frierdiker Rebbe for a few minutes.

That was the only time he saw the Frierdiker Rebbe.

Still, my father stayed a Malach.

The Malachim initially didn't have a yeshiva of their own, so they would learn in a *Poilishe shtibel* all day. Eventually, in 5696*, they bought a *shul* on Hewes Street, which everyone knew as the “*Malachim Shtibel*.” My father would study there each Thursday night.

One evening in 5712*, my father had been married 11 years, and was sitting in the *Malachim Shtibel*. That same night, the Rebbe came out of his room and walked into the *zal*. Moshe Gorkow, today of Boston, was in the *zal*, and he heard the Rebbe say, “There is a *shul* in Williamsburg called *Nesivos Olam*, and there are *yungerleit* sitting there whom it would

לזכות
החייל בצבאות ה'
לוי שיחי'
לרגל האפשרעניש' שלו
ח' אדר ה'תשפ"א
נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' יוסף דוד וזוגתו מרת רבקה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
שטראקס

“There is a shul in Williamsburg called Nesivos Olam, and there are yungerleit sitting there, whom it would be proper to be mekarev to Chassidus Chabad.”

be good to be *mekarev* to Chassidus Chabad.” With those words, the Rebbe turned around, left the *zal*, and went home.

It was close to 11:00 p.m., and Moshe discussed with three others who were present whether they should go right away or perhaps put it off because of the lateness of the hour—would the *shul* even be open this late?

One of them concluded, “The Rebbe said to go, and that means we should go now.” So they got on a bus, without having any idea where this shul “*Nesivos Olam*” was located. A 15- or 20-minute bus ride brought them to Williamsburg, and by now it was approaching midnight. They got off the bus at a street corner and began asking people for directions to “*Nesivos Olam*.” “I never heard of it,” people replied.

They were almost ready to give up, but they asked one more person. “*Nesivos Olam*—you mean the *Malachim Shtibel*,” he replied. “It’s on Hewes Street between Lee and Marcy.” They were on Lee Avenue, having taken the bus up Nostrand Avenue to Williamsburg. “If the shul is open, you’ll see the lights on,” he continued.

They went there, and sure enough, the lights were on and several *yungerleit* were sitting there. One of

them was my father. My father saw the *bochurim* walk in and greeted them. My father was intrigued by this group of people who had visited so late at night. They sat down and had a discussion until the wee hours of the night—3:00 or 4:00 in the morning—and then my father went home.

In those years, Friday morning was a time that the *bochurim* would make an extra effort to come to *seder Chassidus* on time, as the Rebbe had spoken to *hanhalah* about the relatively poor attendance that had been taking place.

Moshe Gurkow, however, woke up a bit late. By the time he came to *zal*, it was 8:40, and sitting near the door was a young man, with the brim of his hat up. “Aren’t you the *yungerman* I saw last night in the *Nesivos Olam* shul?” Moshe asked. “What brings you here?”

“We had a conversation last night,” my father replied. “I would like to continue that conversation.”

The rest is history. ¹

1. Chaim Avraham Dov Ber Levine.



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

לזכות
הת' השליח שניאור זלמן שיחי'
לרגל יום הולדתו י"א אדר
לשנת הצלחה בכל מכל כל, לנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר
נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' דוד וזוגתו מרת פערל גאלדא
ומשפחתם שיחי'
טייכטל

Permanence

AS TOLD BY RABBI YISROEL HECHT (SUNNYVALE, CA)

Sunnyvale is a city in the famous Silicon Valley and due to the high-tech industry, the community is very transient and real estate is extremely expensive. We moved to Sunnyvale in 5763* and for the next 15 years we rented homes to serve as the base of our operations, needing to move six times. Purchasing our own home was way beyond our means and we made the best of the situation.

Everything came to a head Erev Purim 5778*, when entirely out of the blue we were notified that the owners of the rental that we had been in for seven years—an elderly couple with no children—were moving back and it needed to be vacated within two months.

During those seven years, the real estate market had exploded, the average home price in our area had nearly doubled, and even rental homes were hard to find with landlords being very selective. We managed to find something temporary, and although the worst was averted,

we were keenly aware that the clock was ticking and we needed to buy a house as soon as possible.

With this weighing heavily on my mind, I attended the Kinus Hashluchim in 5779*, joining my fellow shluchim at the Ohel on the Friday of the Kinus. After the reading of the Pan Klali, I stood off to the side to write my *tzetel* to the Rebbe. I poured out my heart, writing all the details of the hardships we were facing in purchasing a home. This was a major challenge in our shlichus and with great emotion I asked the Rebbe for a bracha that we find permanence quickly.

On Motzei Shabbos during the Kinus Melave Malka, I met up with my brother-in-law Rabbi Zalman Lent from Dublin, Ireland. While catching up with him, he mentioned the name of someone he hosted in Dublin who said they knew me—Susan S.

That cleared up a mystery. A few weeks earlier he had told my wife (his sister) that a woman in Dublin had told him that I had officiated at her mother's funeral. This was puzzling, because I did not know *anyone* from Dublin, so the story made no sense to me. However, now I realized that I knew her parents. They were a lovely elderly couple and when Mrs. S. had been in a nursing home near our house I would visit often on Shabbos afternoon. When she passed away, her husband asked me to officiate at the funeral.

When I returned home from the Kinus I needed to rush to prepare our Chanukah mailing, but before doing so I decided to update our mailing list. The post office sends us cards with updated addresses and since we had recently moved it was a while since I had done so.

Perusing through the cards I noticed the name Harvey S. and since I had so recently been reminded of him, I decided to reach out. From the card I learned that he moved from his home to a senior home and when I called his phone numbers they were all disconnected. I called the senior home and they told me that Harvey had been with them for a while but had since moved to a different home and they could not share that information with me due to privacy laws.

Fresh in my mind was the conversation at the Kinus, and so I contacted my brother-in-law Zalman to find out more from his daughter (I would not have known how to reach her otherwise).

She replied and in short told me where her father was and that she would be coming to visit him in Sunnyvale in February. I assured her that I would visit her father and invited her to spend Shabbos with us during her upcoming trip.

After Chanukah I started realizing that the fact that the family had come to my attention during the Kinus certainly carried some deeper significance. The fact that I had noticed Harvey had moved to a senior home and was only able to reconnect with him because my brother-in-law had made the connection with his daughter, only intensified my conviction that perhaps the bracha for our new home was to be found here.

I emailed Susan to confirm our Shabbos dinner invite and also asked her what she planned on doing with her parents' home. She responded that she was planning to sell it, and would be willing to have us see it and perhaps work out a deal.

A few weeks later we toured the house, located on a busy street, with a large backyard and two floors and concluded that it was the perfect fit for our private residence as well as a Chabad House.

The market at the time was so wild that every home was sold with a bidding fight and usually fetched a sum that was often a half million dollars or more than the market value.

Susan graciously offered us the home with a generous discount, but clarified that because of a tax issue the purchase needed to happen by June. She would need to see that we had the down payment and financing plans by March or she would put it on the market.

We were elated to have landed such an incredible deal, but fundraising such a large sum of money in such a short time seemed to be impossible. Knowing that this was all clearly the realization of the Rebbe's *brachos* we jumped into a capital campaign and miraculously the donations started pouring in from many unexpected directions.

Shortly afterwards Harvey became very ill and sadly passed away. Susan notified us that the tax issue was no longer a problem and that we could take our time putting everything in order.

Procuring a mortgage for such a large deal proved to be very challenging for us and after one bank looked at the deal for close to two months, they dropped it right before Pesach and we were back to square one. I was devastated because clearly this was all a bracha and now it seemed to all be falling apart!

We resubmitted our proposal to several other banks hoping to find the right lender.

On Lag B'Omer my nephew went to the Ohel and we asked him to ask the Rebbe for a miracle for the purchase of a new Chabad House in Sunnyvale. That afternoon, as I was setting up the Lag B'Omer BBQ I received an email with a Letter of Intent from a bank expressing interest in our loan. The terms of the loan were considerably better than the first bank was offering.

I excitedly called my broker with the news, but he did not share my enthusiasm since this bank did not have a good track record for these types of mortgages. Other banks started looking into our package, but we were certain that the deal would come from the first guys.

Sure enough, that's what happened. We purchased the house and moved into the permanent Chabad House of Sunnyvale, California on Chof Av 5779*. **T**



YOUR STORY

Share your story with A Chassidisher Derher by emailing stories@derher.org.



MACHNE YISROEL YECHIDUS

In early 5744*, an initiative began with the Rebbe's encouragement, called the "Machne Israel Development Fund." Bringing together shluchim and their supporters to raise funds for Lubavitch activities worldwide, the fund would hold bi-annual meetings: between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and before Pesach in the month of Adar. The highlight of these meetings was the special opportunity for each member to have a semi-private *yechidus* with the Rebbe. We present to you a pictorial overview of these special times in 770.

For a more in depth overview of the fund and the annual meetings, see "To Greater Heights," A Chassidisher Derher - Elul 5775



4 TISHREI 5747 VELVEL SCHILDKRAUT VIA JEM 149158

לזכות
ר' שמעון וזוגתו מרת רחל
ראזענבלום
לרגל יום נישואיהם ר"ח אדר
לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות
ורוב נחת חסידותי מכל יו"ח שיחיו
נדפס ע"י בנם
הרה"ת ר' מיכאל וזוגתו מרת שרה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
ראזענבלום



4 TISHREI 5747 VELVEL SCHILDKRAUT VIA JEM 149156

On 4 Tishrei 5746*, the members of the newly established MIDF came to 770 for a planned program. Part of the event was to attend the Rebbe's *minyan* for *krias haTorah*.

At the conclusion of *kriah*, the Rebbe suddenly told Rabbi Krinsky that the *baalei batim* should remain in 770 after Shacharis. After a few moments, the Rebbe came to the foyer and each of the members had an opportunity to approach the Rebbe for a brief conversation.



3 NISSAN 5748 SAM SHLAGBAUM VIA JEM 144431

With time, these meetings evolved and moved to the small *zal*, where the Rebbe delivered a short *sicha* before greeting each individual as he stood by his *shtender*.







For the first few years the *sicha* consisted of brief remarks in English. In 5749*, the Rebbe began in English saying, “After my endeavors in English, I will permit myself, after we are meeting for so many years, to continue in Yiddish.” The Rebbe added that this “will be a good start not only not to be ashamed of it [Yiddish], but to use it in everyday life, and to influence also your family and children and grandchildren to do likewise, and to do so happily... as an example of your pride in being a Jew.”



5 TISHREI 5748 VELVEL SCHILDKRAUT VIA JEM 149218



In Adar 5749*, the meetings moved to the big shul downstairs, and the short conversations became full fledged *yechidusen*. This unique opportunity for individuals and families became a powerful motive for more people to get involved in the fund.



20 ADAR II 5749 SAM SHLAGBAUM VIA JEM 144969

775 HREI 5752 LEVI FREDIN VIA JEM 159926





7 TISHREI 5751 SAM SHLAGBAUM VIA JEM 145297



20 ADAR II 5749 SAM SHLAGBAUM VIA JEM 144914



23 ADAR 5750 SAM SHLAGBAUM VIA JEM 308409

The Rebbe spoke with each person with visible warmth and affection, counseling and guiding them in matters spanning all areas of personal life and business and encouraging each one to strengthen his involvement with local shluchim.



23 ADAR 5750 SAM SHLAGBAUM VIA JEM 145774

7 TISHREI 5751 SAM SHLAGBAUM VIA JEM 145340

Following the *yechidusen*, the Rebbe would distribute dollars (and in Tishrei, sometimes *lekach*) to the organizers and the shluchim. This was followed by a special *sicha* to the shluchim, showing a unique *kiruv* and a notable sense of *nachas ruach*, showering them with *brachos*.



5 TISHREI 5748 LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEW12991



7 TISHREI 5751 SAM SHLAGBAUM VIA JEM 145340

Derher**Letters**

A forum for readers to send their feedback, add to, or ask any questions about articles. Submit your letter to feedback@derher.org.

Submissions may be slightly modified by our editorial staff before publishing.



“מתאים לגמרי”

Dear Editors,

Yasher koach once again for your beautiful magazine which I always look forward to reading.

On page 23 in the Teves issue you wrote about a statement made in Talks and Tales that “according to Einstein’s theory [of relativity] it is possible that the earth is stationary and the sun revolves around it,” which a French translator claimed “was completely inappropriate.”

You then write that the Rebbe responded to this question in his own holy handwriting: “This is a necessary result of the theory of relativity. Einstein adds that...” (The Rebbe continues with two points that we learn from this theory, which is translated in your article in its entirety.)

Perhaps it should be noted that in the photocopy of the Rebbe’s holy handwriting which you printed below the article, before the Rebbe responds in full detail with the above, one can see that the Rebbe sectioned off the words מתאים לגמרי from the original letter which stated: שאין זה מתאים לגמרי, thus changing their meaning from “this is completely not appropriate” to “this is completely appropriate.” For emphasis, the Rebbe also added another line beneath the two words מתאים לגמרי (completely appropriate), and for further emphasis, another two lines beneath the word לגמרי (completely).

Following this, the Rebbe added the rest of the *maane*, as printed in your article.

Rabbi Yossie Alperowitz

Bournemouth, UK

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“Arrangements”

Dear Editors,

On Leil Shabbos I read לעבן מיטן רבין — “Kennedy’s Assassination and Kuntres Bad Kodesh” [issue 99 (176) Cheshvan 5781] — and was *nispoel* from what was related about the Tzemach Tzedek, how on Rosh Hashanah he would “arrange” what was going to be in Petersburg and its leadership positions in the coming year.

I have a personal *hergesh* that surely this applies to the *nosi* of every generation, too, in his respective locale. Further, it is *hashgacha pratis* to see this so soon after the recent American presidential election. Yes, it is important to vote, but we also must remember, with complete *emunah*, these outcomes were already decided well before Election Day.

Adam Leventhal

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Modern Day Stories

Dear Editors,

Yasher koach for this beautiful magazine!

I wanted to tell you how much I love the “Der Rebbe Vet Gefinen A Veg” column.

These modern day stories are a source of true *chizzuk*.

I was recently talking to my wife and we were wishing that we could have these stories in a book to read to our children.

If you could pull that off one day, we would love it!

Keep up the tremendous work!

Boruch Hoffman

Brooklyn, NY



Chupah at 2 PM

Dear Editors,

In the article “Memories” [issue 99 (176) Cheshvan 5781], on page 46, the caption under the photo says: “The Rebbe attends the *chupa* of Reb Gershon Mendel Garelik”.

As noted in a previous letter to the editor, that photo is actually of the *chupa* of Reb Avrohom Sasonkin, who married the daughter of the long-time shliach in Pittsburgh, Reb Sholom Posner. (Reb Gershon Mendel married Reb Sholom’s older daughter.)

The *chupa* took place on the 10th of Tammuz 5722, in the yard on the right side of 770

(where the sukkah is built). It is the only *siddur kiddushin* by the Rebbe that took place there. At that time the Rebbe had already stopped being *mesader kiddushin*. This *chupa* was next to the last exception. I had the *zechus* to be at the *chupa* (I appear in the photo, fourth from the upper right.)

The *chupa* was at 2:00 pm, since the chasunah reception took place a few hours later in Pittsburgh. (For the same reason, Reb Gershon Mendel’s *chupa* also took place at around 2:00 p.m., on 4 Tammuz 5718, in the *shalash*.)

In the above mentioned article (on page 49) it says that the Satmar Rebbe came to be *menachem avel* the Rebbe on Tuesday morning, Erev Yom Kippur. I clearly remember that he came Monday night at around 11:00 p.m.

Hatzlacha rabbah umuflaga in your work of regularly producing a magnificent magazine which is filled with *toichen*.

Rabbi Yosef Minkowitz

Montreal, Canada

