

UNWANTED IN *this* TOWN

*In an interview with
A Chassidisher
Derher **Rabbi Shmuel
Glitzenstein**, Shliach in an
Israeli yishuv called 'Tzur
Yitzchak' related
the following story:*

In the year 5773, shortly before we arrived in the *yishuv* as Shluchim, someone referred us to friends of his who lived in the *yishuv*. We contacted the family, introducing ourselves as new potential residents of the neighborhood, and asked if we could meet with them to find out more about the place.

We were pleasantly received and the conversation lasted for nearly two hours. In the midst of our conversation the wife received a text message from the board of the *yishuv*, requesting that the couple arrange a community – wide memorial service commemorating the fallen soldiers.

The entire settlement had only been established a few years before which meant that there was no set tradition as to how such an event was meant to be held. Also, she herself had grown up in a larger city, and had no idea how these events were held in a small *yishuv* like Tzur Yitzchak. I told her that I grew up in a *yishuv* myself (Ma'aleh Efraim), and that generally the community organized the event, while the Rabbi would usually be invited to recite the 'Keil Malei Rachamim' prayer and officiate.

A while later she called to confirm that they would be organizing the event, and that I would recite the prayer and officiate. A week before the event, there were rehearsals which I was required to attend. As I entered the hall, I saw a group of people whispering, and I could sense that they were not too happy to see me.

At the end of the rehearsal, a man approached me and introduced himself

as Alex, one of the board members of the community. “You plan on settling here as a shliach of Chabad?! No such thing will ever happen in this *yishuv*”, he declared rather emphatically. He then proceeded to really give me over the head: “I know you and I know what you want to do here. I’ve seen your website, and I know your financial supporters.” At this point I was thinking “Wow, this guy is good. Even I don’t know where the money will come from. I should hire him...”

“Listen,” he continued, “I cannot stop you from moving here. Any person is free to buy property here, and nobody can stop them. But you should know, the minute you start making activities, beginning with your first program, I will personally make it my business to harass you until you will regret the day you came here...” During his entire monologue, all the big shots of the *yishuv* were standing by and it seemed they were all in agreement. As soon as he finished his diatribe, he turned around and left.

This definitely was not the welcome I had imagined...

Two days later, I received a call from Ofrah, the woman who had originally invited me as the officiating rabbi. “Personally, I really like you and I enjoyed your visit and would be very happy for you to stay in our community. However, there is tremendous opposition to you coming, and I think that it’s

pointless for you to move here, as they won’t let you achieve anything. In addition, I am getting criticism for inviting you to next week’s program and asking you to officiate.” I told her that there was no problem and that, understanding her predicament I would not at all take it as a personal affront if she would revoke her invitation.

As much as I tried to push away the negative feelings and imagine that everything was fine, I wasn’t really able to ignore it. I hadn’t even arrived yet and already the war had begun!

ABOUT-FACE

At every step of the way, we were writing detailed duchos to the Rebbe, sending them by fax to the Ohel. However after the latest happening I felt particularly despondent, and uncertain of what the future held. Yearning for the Rebbe’s brocha, I penned an emotional *tzetel* describing everything that had occurred.

On Friday, I received another call from Ofrah. She said that there seemed to be a sudden change of plans, allowing me to be able to preside over the event. When I asked what changed, she said I should call the president of the *yishuv*. When I asked him about the sudden change, he said that as someone who planned on moving to the *yishuv*, he thinks it would be appropriate for me to deliver the *Keil Malei Rachamim* and officiate. I told him that I’d like to move to the community,

but I wasn’t looking to make problems. If speaking there would rustle some feathers, then that was not something I wanted.

“The *yishuv* currently consists of about 400 families” he replied. “We think that you will be a major help for the community and we would very much like you to move here. The fact that there are a couple of people who don’t want you here doesn’t necessarily reflect the view of everyone else here.”

What a sudden change of heart!

The relief I felt after that call is difficult to describe. From a reject, unwanted and unwelcome, I had somehow become a presence very much desired by the community. Sure, there were a few exceptions but the general public was interested!

SOOTHING THE SORE

Later, after having finally settled down in the *yishuv*, I decided it was time to meet Alex personally. His determination to hinder all my activities was not something I wanted to deal with and I decided to try to work things out with him.

I called him and said “Listen, I don’t know you, and you don’t know me. Let’s meet and get to know each other.” Surprisingly, he agreed to come meet me in my home where we spoke for an hour and a half. He went on a long monologue, explaining all his problems with religion while I sat and listened. We parted on much better terms than before.

Over the next few months, I made a point of calling him from time to time for his ‘advice’ on various matters, and slowly his attitude began to change. This year he was one of the 400 people to attend my Yom Kippur service.

Who could have fathomed the incredible turn around that occurred here? From a natural perspective there was no way that this could have been the final outcome. Clearly the Rebbe had answered the problems I faced, in the ultimate way. **D**



RABBI SHMUEL GLITZENSTEIN DIRECTS A CHANUKAH EVENT SHORTLY AFTER MOVING ON SHLICHUS.