



דער רבי וועט געפינען אַ וועג...

Headline's Answer

AS TOLD BY RABBI SAGI HAR-SHEFER, SHLIACH IN NESS ZIONA, ISRAEL
AND HIS MOTHER DR. TZIPI HAR-SHEFER

Rabbi Sagi Har-Shefer relates:

On Gimmel Tammuz 5754 I was working in my office, when my neighbor suddenly ran in and told me the terrible news being reported on the radio. I immediately grabbed my tallis, tefillin, and passport, and ran to the airport. I joined the charter flight that had been organized, and went straight to the Ohel.

The next day when I returned from New York, I received a call from my mother. Although she isn't a Lubavitcher, she would always ask the Rebbe for advice when a question arose. She explained to me that she has a pressing issue at the moment, but now that she doesn't have anyone to ask advice of anymore, she doesn't know what to do. I reassured

her that she should write to the Rebbe just like she had always done in the past and surely the Rebbe will find a way to answer her.

Dr. Tzippi Har-Shefer (Rabbi Har-Shefer's mother) elaborates:

Just to provide some background, in the early 1990s I worked for the city of Haifa under Mayor Aryeh Gur'el. I oversaw a project called *Shikum Hashichunot*—otherwise known as “Project Renewal”—which was a program for the rehabilitation of distressed, underprivileged communities.

In 1993, Mr. Gur'el lost the elections to Amram Mitzna and it was decided to discontinue this project due to a budget problem. Mr. Mitzna offered me a new

job as director of *Beit Hagefen*, which was undergoing management changes at the time. The Beit Hagefen Center is a Jewish-Arab cultural center, which runs joint social and cultural programs for both Jews and Arabs.

I was hesitant about the new job, but time was of essence and I had to make a decision whether I was indeed interested in taking on this new job opportunity or not. I was afraid that if I declined the offer, I would be out of a job for a while, but I was also hesitant to say yes. In such a situation I would usually write to the Rebbe to get advice, but I felt that since Gimmel Tammuz, I no longer had whom to turn to. With this dilemma in mind, I called my son Sagi.

Having just returned from New York, I was shocked when he told me to write to the Rebbe! I was very hesitant and skeptical, but I really needed advice about the pending job opportunity so I decided to take my son's suggestion and write to the Rebbe anyway. With reassurance from my son, I wrote down all of my concerns and reservations. After sending the letter to be read at the Ohel, I inserted it into a Tanya that I had at home and awaited what would happen with a mixture of curiosity and skepticism.

Rabbi Har-Shefer continues:

My mother wrote her letter and I sent it to Rabbi Binyomin Klein, to take to the Ohel. By Wednesday, my mother was already calling me to find out what will be happening now that she wrote to the Rebbe. She couldn't understand how she would ever get an answer, but I told her that we must have some patience and that somehow there will be one.

That Friday, my parents came to my house from Haifa to spend Shabbos with us. After *seudas Shabbos*, my mother went to her room and suddenly I heard her screaming, "There's an answer!"

Dr. Har-Shefer explains:

I enjoyed reading a weekly column from the former mayor, Aryeh Gur'el, in the local Haifa newspaper called "*Colbo*". As a city employee, I particularly enjoyed it, as he primarily discussed local city gossip and the like. That particular week, I opened the newspaper and was surprised to see that Mr. Gur'el's column—which was usually about the ins and outs of the city—was about the Rebbe!

I was literally shaking when I read the headline, "My Encounters with the Lubavitcher Rebbe." I was further stunned upon seeing the synopsis of the article, which read:

...ומגלה ש...
התנגד הרבי בכל תוקף לקיומו של בית הגפן בחיפה..."

"The former mayor recalls his meetings with the Rebbe, and reveals that...the Rebbe strongly opposed the existence of Beit Hagefen in Haifa." (See sidebar for a summary of his article).

After reading the headline and subtitle, I immediately realized that I received my answer directly from the Rebbe. I understood that even after Gimmel Tammuz, the Rebbe can still direct me to his answers. Needless to say, I called Mr. Mitzna and told him I would not be accepting this new position. **1**

In the article, Mr. Gur'el describes the two times he had visited the Rebbe. He starts by relating how although his first *yechidus* was scheduled for fifteen minutes, "it lasted two hours," before going on to note that the Rebbe spoke to him "in four languages; Hebrew, English, Yiddish and French."

Gur'el writes with amazement how the Rebbe "knew so much about me and my background, and demonstrated tremendous knowledge about what was happening in the city." But then, Gur'el makes a shocking statement and admission: "At the Rebbe's request, the contents of this *yechidus* were never made public. Today, however, I am allowing myself to reveal some details."

According to Gur'el, at first the conversation focused on the educational needs of the people of Haifa, and notes how the Rebbe's "knowledge of the city, was amazing. . . The Rebbe knew the statistics, the programs, and to this day I can not explain it."

At one point during the *yechidus*, the conversation turned to the good relations shared between the Jews and Arabs in the city of Haifa, which the Rebbe praised, but then, Gur'el writes: "The Rebbe inquired about Beit Hagefen and spoke strongly against it. When I asked him why, he expressed concern that it could lead to intermarriage..."

Gur'el goes on to give more details of his *yechidus* and concludes that the Rebbe gave him a pair of tefillin as a gift and he gave the Rebbe the medallion of the city of Haifa.



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