

לזכות ולרפו"ש הרה"ת ר' יוסף  
שלמה בן רישה לאיוש"ט

נדפס ע"י

הרה"ת ר' אברהם צמח הלוי וזוגתו  
מרת דבורה לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו  
ראזענפעלד

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# P I N P O I N T S

STORIES OF THE REBBE'S  
REACH AND IMPACT AROUND THE GLOBE

## ALASKA



“ALASKA HAS A NAME FOR BEING COLD,” THE REBBE TOLD AN ALASKAN JEWISH FAMILY. “DON’T USE THE COLDNESS WHEN IT COMES TO YIDDISHKEIT. ON THE CONTRARY: HAVE A SPECIAL [WARM] TEMPERATURE— ESPECIALLY FOR ALL MATTERS OF YIDDISHKEIT IN ALASKA!”

KNOWN AS AMERICA’S ‘LAST FRONTIER’, THE STATE OF ALASKA IS KNOWN FOR ITS NATURAL BEAUTY, AN ABUNDANT WILDLIFE POPULATION, AND SOME OF THE COUNTRY’S MOST FAMOUS NATIONAL PARKS.

THANKS TO THE REBBE’S BROAD VISION, ALASKA’S COLD LANDSCAPE HAS BECOME A PLACE EXUDING THE WARMTH OF YIDDISHKEIT AND CHASSIDUS.

## THE FIRST SHLUCHIM

In the summer of 5730, Reb Shmuel Langsam and Rabbi Shmuel Spritzer approached Rabbi Hodakov to request an assignment for Merkos Shlichus, specifically asking for the opportunity to travel to Alaska.

When Rabbi Hodakov entered the Rebbe’s room to discuss the various Merkos Shlichus locations, the Rebbe responded affirmatively about other locations but did not mention Alaska.

The next day, Rabbi Hodakov came out of the Rebbe’s room and said, “For the first time in history, Lubavitch is coming to Alaska!”

Rabbi Hodakov added that there were many *horaos* in connection to this *shlichus*, and that it would be quite different from a typical Merkos Shlichus trip, i.e. longer and requiring more preparation.

Interestingly, the *bochurim* were told by Rabbi Hodakov that they could take time off from their Shlichus to see the Northern Lights (that are only visible in Alaska), as they are *Niflaos HaBorei* (the wonders of Hashem).



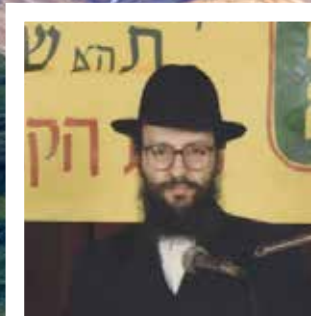


## THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Rabbi Sholom Ber Levitin, who traveled on *shlichus* to Seattle in 5733, was appointed by the Rebbe for the Pacific Northwest, which included Alaska. He held this position until 5751, when Rabbi Yosef Greenberg arrived to serve as the Rebbe's full-time Shliach to Alaska.

At the end of Tishrei 5733, before they left on *shlichus*, Rabbi Levitin went into Rabbi Hodakov's office in 770 and was told that he was being appointed as the Rebbe's Shliach to the following places: Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho, British Columbia and Alberta (in Canada) [Rabbi Hodakov mentioned that Alaska is not far from Siberia, to which Reb Shmuel Levitin (Rabbi Levitin's grandfather) was exiled by the Communists]. Rabbi Hodakov also told him that the Shliach of a state is considered the "*Baal HaBayis*" of that place.

In the summer of 5734, Rabbi Levitin traveled to Alaska for the first time, and from then on he made many such trips, connecting with numerous Jews in Alaska, especially the Green brothers, who became Chabad's primary supporters in Alaska for many years.



RABBI SHOLOM BER LEVITIN.

## THE FIRST MIKVAH

Rabbi Yisroel Haber served as a military chaplain in Alaska between the years 5734 and 5736. He merited to build the first Mikvah in Alaska, under the supervision of Rabbi Yitzchok Hendel and with the assistance of Rabbi Gershon Grossbaum.

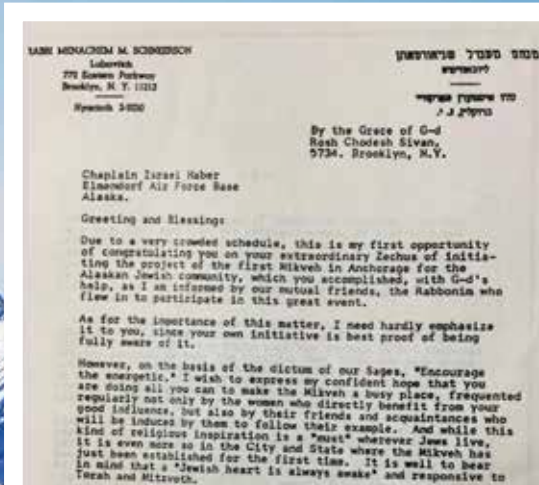
Due to their involvement with the Mikvah, the Habers merited to become close to Chabad and especially the Rebbe, receiving many letters in connection to the Mikvah and their work with local Jews. They also merited to go into Yechidus several times.<sup>1</sup>

They arrived in Elul 5734. One of the first issues they encountered was the lack of a proper Mikvah for them to use. They raised the issue with Air Force higher ups, and

after consulting with Washington, the Air Force agreed to build a Mikvah for the Habers. The Habers reached out to several Jewish organizations to seek assistance and guidance in constructing the Mikvah, but no help was forthcoming.

*B'Hashgacha Pratis*, they decided to drive to Alaska from New York, stopping in S. Paul, Minnesota to visit a family friend. That week, a *Chanukas HaBayis* was held for a new Chabad building. The friend invited them to the event, where they were introduced to the local Shluchim, Rabbi Moshe Feller and Rabbi Gershon Grossbaum.

When they met the Shluchim, the Habers told them about the challenges they were experiencing with the Mikvah project. Rabbi Feller immediately informed them that Rabbi



THE REBBE'S LETTER TO RABBI YISROEL HABER REGARDING BUILDING THE MIKVAH.



BUILDING THE FIRST MIKVAH IN ALASKA. RIGHT TO LEFT: RABBI GERSHON GROSSBAUM, RABBI YITZCHOK HENZEL AND RABBI YISROEL HABER.

Grossbaum was an expert on Mikvaos, and that he would be happy to travel to Alaska to assist.

Two weeks later, Rabbi Grossbaum sent a letter to Rabbi Haber with a general plan for the Mikvah so that he could show it to the Air Force engineers stationed there. Before Purim of that year, the Air Force officially invited Rabbi Grossbaum to Alaska to help with the construction of the Mikvah.

On Rosh Chodesh Sivan, Rabbi Haber received a letter from the Rebbe – written in English – where the Rebbe wrote that “Due to the weight of my work I have been unable to bless you for your great zechus to build the Mikvah in Anchorage until now...”

The Rebbe added that he should do everything in his power to ensure that the largest number of women come to use the Mikvah, both people over whom he had direct influence

as well as their friends and acquaintances.

The Rebbe also wrote that though one is always obligated to influence the Jews in his area, it is doubly true in a case where one is in a remote place. It is important to remember that Jews are always receptive to Yiddishkeit.

The Rebbe concluded: “May you go from strength to strength in all that has been said above, in all aspects of Yiddishkeit, which includes also influence to promote among non-Jews the observance of the basic Seven Mitzvoth, with all their numerous ramifications, which are incumbent upon all mankind and the foundation of human society...”

The Rebbe finished off by wishing him a Gut Yom Tov and “Kabbolas HaTorah B’simcha Ube’Pnimiyus”.



## EVEN ONE HOUR...

In 5740, Rabbi Haber, who had moved with his family to Eretz Yisroel, came back to the US on an Air Force assignment. He was supposed to spend some time in Alabama and then return.

Since they were in the country, they merited to go into *yechidus* with the Rebbe. In the beginning of the Yechidus the Rebbe heard Rabbi Haber say something to his son in English. The Rebbe asked, “Why do you speak to a child who grew up in Eretz Yisroel in English and not in *Lashon Hakodesh*?”

Before they left *yechidus*, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Haber to fly to Alaska. The reason the Rebbe gave was to “Check the Mikvah there and fix whatever needs to be fixed.”

Rabbi Haber asked the Rebbe, “How long must I be there?” The Rebbe responded, “Even for one hour.”

The Rebbe’s response was puzzling; Rabbi Haber did not understand why the Rebbe needed him to go, as there were Shluchim in the Seattle area who could have gone instead.

Rabbi Haber nevertheless booked a flight to Alaska for Friday morning, and stayed with the Green brothers for Shabbos.

On Sunday morning he traveled to the Mikvah to inspect it and make sure everything was in order. He found nothing wrong and still couldn’t understand why the Rebbe had sent him.

An hour before he was to depart to the airport for his return flight, two people approached him. They were brothers, traditional Jews from Philadelphia. They said that they





heard that an Orthodox Rabbi was in town and they wanted to seek his counsel.

They told him that their father had recently passed away. For business reasons they had to be in Alaska for the year. They wanted to say Kaddish for their father, and they wished to consult with Rabbi Haber about the possibility of organizing a Minyan in Anchorage, at least for Shabbos.

Rabbi Haber responded that this would be a great opportunity to make a regular Minyan in Alaska. He said that he could arrange for the Minyan to be held in the living room of the Green brothers. Rabbi Haber said that he would arrange the Torah and Siddurim for this Minyan.

The Green brothers agreed to host this Minyan, but they pointed out to Rabbi Haber that his flight was departing soon, and he would be unable to arrange this Minyan before he left.

Mr. Green suggested that he call the manager of the local airport, who was a friend of his, and ask him to push off the flight for an hour. Mr. Green asked if this would be sufficient, and Rabbi Haber responded that he thought he would be able to arrange a Minyan within the hour.

Rabbi Haber called several of his friends in Anchorage and asked whether they could come help make the Minyan on Shabbos. Soon enough, he had collected enough commitments for them to have a regular Minyan every Shabbos.

Thus, the first Orthodox Shul in Alaska was founded. When Rabbi Greenberg came, he transformed it into a Chabad House. This was all arranged in one hour, exactly as the Rebbe said...

## Youthful Rabbis Bring Message To Area Jews

By CONNIE GODWIN  
Women's World Editor  
Two young men, representatives of an ancient tradition, are in Anchorage this week bringing their message to area Jewish families. Rabbinical students Lipa Brennan and Nechemia Kessler, both 22, are among 10 of their colleagues at Central Lubavitch Yeshiva in Brooklyn, N. Y., who have landed out across the world this summer "on assignment" but to bring "spiritual security" to Jews.  
Yeshiva, derived from the Hebrew word for seat, is a school providing religious and secular education for Jews, with emphasis on the Torah, the collection of Jewish law.  
Lubavitch students Brennan and Kessler are Hasidic Jews, members of a group devoted to the strict observance of religious rules. "But it is a Hasidic group with a difference," Rabbi Brennan says. "We are a 20th century group."  
Explaining that Lubavitch translates as "brotherly love," the young rabbis have met with local Jewish families since their arrival Tuesday to describe a five-point campaign aimed at "securing and protecting the Jewish people from unanticipated harm and danger."  
With schools throughout the world, Lubavitchers stress their history in Rabbi Schneur Zalman's 200-year-old Bnei Brava. Their leader now is Rabbi Menachem Schneerson at the Brooklyn headquarters.  
The five-point campaign taught by

Rabbi Schneerson and his followers stresses the practice of traditional Jewish rituals and "abundant better than Jews'" spiritual defense" — the young rabbis say.  
"We make no differentiation, we cannot not see differences," Rabbi Brennan says, indicating the three basic "branches" of Judaism in America — Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. "We are here to visit and help Jews know about their heritage, to aid in their morals and spirit. We are accepted."  
The five traditional points include study of the Torah; affixing measurable (small prayer parchment) in a decorative way (tapestries to doorways at the home); daily during the affixing (whether things affixed to the wall) by Jewish males 13 years of age or older; contributing to a charity box in each home; and keeping sacred books in each home.  
Both rabbis carry suitcases full of reading material describing the symbols of their religion and the five-point campaign. "We travel heavy," Rabbi Brennan says. The booklets and pamphlets help Jews in know how to be an orthodox Jew," Rabbi Kessler says.  
"We are not missionaries," Rabbi Brennan adds. "We are here to help physically and to increase the spiritual awareness of Jews here, as in the other cities we have visited."  
The first Jewish families in Edmonston, Ala., and the 1,100 in Calgary "received us warmly, also," Rabbi Brennan says.



THEY TRAVEL 'HEAVY'

Rabbi Nechemia Kessler, left, and Rabbi Lipa Brennan, representative of the Lubavitch Yeshiva in New York, have brought literature to Alaska Jewish families explaining traditional orthodox rituals and their applications in the 20th century. "We travel heavy," Rabbi Brennan says, indicating the suitcase full of books, pamphlets and Kessler books they carry.  
The Perry Greens are the rabbi's hosts in Anchorage. A gathering for Jewish youth at the Green's home is scheduled for tonight.  
After visits later this week to Fairbanks and Juneau, the rabbis will head back to New York. Next year, they say, they will be fully qualified to "take a pulpit," but neither is sure that is the direction he wants to go.  
Brennan, whose Irish mother is far real — his father was born in Dublin and his parents now live in Manchester, England — and Kessler both say they might decide to go into business. Rabbi Kessler's father is a Montreal carpenter and carpentry is one of his hobbies.  
The young men point to a revival in interest among young Jews in the traditional orthodox concepts of the

faith. They attribute their own days of faith to the "stress on Judaism in the family."  
"They were brought up, they say, I grew whatever they have in other and this is one way for them to share."  
While women in Orthodox Judaism do not sit with men in worship services, Rabbi Brennan says does not mean that Jews in women in this country. "They are important. Where they sit in a temple is not meant to say they second class. In fact, they usually sit in a gallery, above the men conducting a higher plane," he suggests.  
Since both men adhere to Jewish dietary laws, not eating fish, pork or shellfish and not mixing dairy with meat products in the same meal they travel with canned food since it is impossible to find a Kosher home or restaurant.  
They live in a dormitory at 100 Avenue C in Brooklyn and lead a "learning" or "religious" life.  
"We don't get out from our work."  
It is such commonality they only local Jews to aid them. It does mean to be religious. They arrive Anchorage not knowing anyone in the Jewish community, aside they had met Edmonston's R. Capt. Israel Haber. "We heard about of homes where Jews live we're always welcome," a Brennan says.  
Lubavitcher schools are "all the country," he says. The best is Seattle.  
With their heads the young link like many other Alaskan difference is in their custom blue suits and quiet tone as message they carry.

# The Anchorage Times

ALASKA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER  
THE NEWSPAPERS REPORT ON THE ARRIVAL OF RABBI NECHEMIA KESSLER AND RABBI LIPA BRENNAN WHO CAME ON MERKOS SHLICHUS TO ALASKA.



## “WE WILL THINK ABOUT THEM...”

In the summer of 5736, Rabbi Nechemia Kessler and Rabbi Lipa Brennan traveled on Merkos Shlichus to Alaska. Before they left, they asked Rabbi Hodakov how to behave with regard to the *zmanim* of Shabbos in the summer in a place that has no *Tzeis Hakochavim*. Rabbi Hodakov instructed them to ask Rabbi Zalman Shimon Dvorkin.

Rabbi Dvorkin told them that since Rabbi Hendel and Rabbi Grossbaum, who were involved in building the Mikvah in Alaska, were in 770 at the time, they should ask them.

Rabbi Hendel instructed them to keep the *zmanim* of the closest Jewish community, i.e. Seattle. If they were in Anchorage, where there is always *shkiah* even in the summer, they should keep the local *zmanim*.

However, with regard to the northernmost regions, which have neither sunset nor sunrise, he did not have

a satisfactory answer.

They returned to Rabbi Hodakov and asked him what to do about the *Zmanei Tefillah* and what they should do when they were in the northern region of Alaska.

Rabbi Hodakov said he would ask the Rebbe, and the Rebbe said that they should daven at the times of the minyanim in 770: Shacharis at 9:30, Mincha at 3:15 and Maariv at 9:30. The Rebbe added: “[If] they will think about us, we will think about them.”

At a certain point they wanted to travel to a remote town in the north of Alaska. It was only reachable by traveling on a small airplane. They called Rabbi Hodakov and asked whether they should go, and Rabbi Hodakov told them that they should not fly on a plane that had only one engine.



RABBI YOSEF  
GREENBERG AND HIS  
TWO YOUNG CHILDREN  
RECEIVE DOLLARS  
FROM THE REBBE, 28  
SHEVAT 5752.



## WARM IT UP!

On 28 Shevat 5752, Rabbi Yosef Greenberg, who had recently moved to Alaska as the first permanent Shliach in the state, came to the Rebbe with his family for dollars. The Rebbe gave a dollar to their son Mendy. Rabbi Groner said that these were the Shluchim to Alaska and that they would be returning in a few days.

Rabbi Greenberg relates: “The Rebbe gave me a dollar and then turned to my son and gave him another dollar. The Rebbe said, ‘He should give it’ and then stopped and asked, ‘Is he also traveling to Alaska?’ The Rebbe gave me another dollar and said to give it to tzedakah in Alaska.

“My wife was holding our daughter Chaya Mushka. The Rebbe took two dollars and placed them on her, saying, *‘Bracha V’Hatzlacha’*. He then gave my wife two dollars, and said, ‘One dollar here, one dollar in Alaska, *Hatzlacha Rabbah U’Muflaga’*...

“After we had already moved on to Gan Eden Hachtaton, the Rebbe began to give a dollar to the person behind us, and suddenly stopped and called out to us, ‘You should make over there...’, so we turned around and came back. The Rebbe proclaimed in a loud voice, with a radiant smile, ‘You should make it warm over there!’”<sup>2</sup>

1. See "A Rabbi's Northern Adventure" by Yisroel Haber.  
2. Teshura Greenberg-Hertzel 3 Nissan 5781.