



# HISTORIC MISSION

*THE REBBE'S SHLUCHIM TO ERETZ YISRAEL  
5736-5738*

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

נדפס ע"י בנם  
הרה"ת ר' משה מאיר שמואל  
וזוגתו רבקה לאה ומשפחתם שי'  
גלוצקאווסקי



THE REBBE ESCORTS THE SHLUCHIM FROM THE STEPS OF 770 AS THEY LEAVE TO THE AIRPORT, 11 SHEVAT 5736.

When one of the shluchim's parents asked the Rebbe for matzos on behalf of his son, the Rebbe replied: "ער טוט דאך אין די מבצעים... זיי זיינען מיינע שלוחים פערזענליך, און איך דארף נישט אנקומען צו קיינע ממוצעים" (He is involved in the *mitzvoim*... They are my personal shluchim, and I do not need anyone to be a go-between...")

Such was the extraordinary affection the Rebbe expressed towards the special groups of shluchim sent to Eretz Yisrael.

Imagine the setting: Purim Katan *farbengen* 5738—forty years ago. The Rebbe was bidding farewell to the third and final group of shluchim to Eretz Yisrael. After he had called up the shluchim to come up to his table to receive dollars and *kuntreisim* in honor of their trip, the Rebbe said that the shluchos, too, should come down from the *vaiber shul* to the *farbengen*; when they came up to the table, he gave them dollars for their parents as well.

This unusual scene is hardly alone in the extraordinary story of the three groups of shluchim to Eretz Yisrael. This story—the effects of which continue to reverberate in Eretz Yisrael until today—takes us back two years earlier, to Yud-Tes Kislev 5736.



## THE ANNOUNCEMENT

It all began at the tail-end of a long night, as the Rebbe's Yud-Tes Kislev *farbrengen* was coming to a close. With closed eyes, the Rebbe began saying a *sicha* on the topic of the Rebbeim's connection to Eretz Yisrael. This was followed by a quite cryptic announcement:

A group of ten Yidden would be sent as the Rebbe's shlichim to the old city of Yerushalayim, and another group of ten to Tzfas. They would spend their time learning Torah *b'tahara*, fulfilling mitzvos (especially those unique to Eretz Yisrael), and influencing those around them. Those who were interested could sign up through the *mazkirus*.<sup>2</sup>

Rabbi Yitzchok Goldberg, today the *rosh yeshiva* in Migdal Haemek, relates: "The next morning I went into the *mazkirus* to sign up, as the Rebbe had said. Rabbi Binyomin Klein was there, but he told me that he hadn't received any directives from the Rebbe on the matter, so he wasn't quite sure how he could help me. I just wrote my name on a piece of paper and gave it to him. If I remember correctly, another person who had already given his name was [the venerable elder Chossid] Reb Shmuel Dovid Raichik."



No one knew what this shlichus meant—who was supposed to go? For how long? What exactly were they going to do there? But meanwhile, hundreds of Chassidim, young, old, and everyone in between, were stopping in to *mazkirus* to sign up.

Over the next few days, more details began emerging from the *mazkirus*, and two Shabbosim later

(Shabbos Miketz), the Rebbe spoke at the *farbrengen*,<sup>3</sup> defining and elaborating on the shlichus, and officially laying out a few conditions:

The Rebbe began by saying that there were those who made the following argument: why are you sending only twenty people—you should send twenty thousand! Send older people!

There is no point for elderly people to go, the Rebbe explained, because this is not an "*aliya*." The intent of the shlichus is for *binyan ha'aretz*, the building of the land—and for that, young people are required; they are there to build the land spiritually as well as physically.

Then the Rebbe defined what the shlichus would be: They would be going for at least a year, preferably two, after which it would be decided whether they should settle there. They were going to work—study *nigleh* and Chassidus with diligence, and do *hafatzas haTorah v'hamaayanos* in their free time.

The Rebbe went on to say who would be considered for this shlichus:

- It was only for couples who were a year after their marriage, or *bochurim* who were not yet contemplating marriage [—within the following year, as *mazkirus* would later explain].
- One must be healthy both physically and spiritually.
- One must go with joy and happiness.

The Rebbe added that being that a period of time had passed since it was first spoken about, an additional one or two people should be added in each group.

"שלווחו של אדם כמותו," the Rebbe declared. "A shliach is like his sender; I am taking the responsibility for them—עלי ועל צוארי, they are on my shoulders."

## WHO WILL IT BE?

Tension swirled around 770. It was very rare for the Rebbe to personally choose shlichim for a mission, and there was something very "*himmeldik*" about the fact that they were being sent to the holy cities of Yerushalayim and Tzfas. It is no surprise that Crown Heights was on wheels, with excitement mixing with nervousness as everyone waited to see who would be chosen.

Through the *mazkirus*, a couple of more conditions came out for the shlichus: it was only for those who were not already involved in a *mosad*, and for the *bochurim*, their parents had to give their consent.

Over the next week (Parshas Vayigash), the names of the couples that had been chosen as shlichim to Tzfas started coming out one by one: Rabbi Levi Bistrisky *a"h*, and, יבלחט"א, Alter Eliyahu Friedman, Shmuel Greisman, Yochanan Gurary, Yisrael Yosef Hendel, Yitzchak Goldberg, Yosef Rosenfeld, and Yosef Yitzchak Wilshansky would be going with their wives (and small babies) as the Rebbe's shlichim to Tzfas. Three *bochurim* were also added to the group: Aharon Eliezer Tzeitlin, *a"h*, and, יבלחט"א, Yosef Kramer and Yosef Raitzes, all three having spent two years as *talmidim hashluchim* in Melbourne. [The Rebbe said that since they were already accustomed to being around *baalei batim* in Australia, they could join the married couples.]

The shlichim to Yerushalayim, who would only be *bochurim*, began finding out on Friday. By Shabbos day, everyone in 770 had found out which *bochurim* had the great *zechus* to be chosen. The final list was: Shalom

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THE SHLUCHIM  
DANCE IN THE  
TERMINAL BEFORE  
DEPARTING.



THE SHLUCHIM  
ARRIVE AT  
CUSTOMS.



THOUSANDS GREET THE SHLUCHIM AT THE AIRPORT, 12 SHEVAT 5736.

YEMETEMIMIM ARCHIVES

Dovber Shur, א"ח, and, יבלחט"א, Sholom Duchman, Yehuda Leib Eidelkop, Shneur Zalman Goodman, Yosef Yitzchak Gurewitz, Sholom Ber Labkowsky, Menachem Mendel Lieberman, Chaim Nochum Yonasan Luria, Avrohom Boruch Pewzner, Yitzchak Yaakov Rosenshein, and Zev Avraham Slavin.

## GETTING READY TO GO

Up until this point, the Rebbe had not said when the shluchim were supposed to set out, but now that everyone was chosen, they were told that they had a month to prepare for their trip. When asked whether the shluchim would enter *yechidus* before their departure, the Rebbe commented to someone in *yechidus* that "מ'וועט"ן שבת "געזעגענען מיט זיי יו"ד שבט"; implying that the official goodbye would take place at the Yud Shevat *farbrengen*. The trip was officially arranged through the Israeli embassy; they initially planned on putting the shluchim on different flights, but the Rebbe wanted them to all leave together on 11 Shevat.

## FAREWELL

Time passed quickly, and soon the trip was around the corner. Yud Shevat, which was when the official goodbye from the Rebbe was to be, was on Monday. The Rebbe made the annual *siyum* (in honor of the *yahrtzeit*) on *Maseches Kesubos*, the end of which discusses the greatness of going to Eretz Yisrael as well as the

► Crown Heights was on wheels, with excitement mixed with nervousness as everyone waited to see who would be chosen.

importance of staying and working in Bavel.

Later in the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe spoke again<sup>4</sup> about the shlichus, and, among other things, he discussed a novelty in this shlichus: that men, women, and children were being sent as his shluchim. The Rebbe explained that this—working with women and girls, and also with children—was one of the great innovations of the Friediker Rebbe, which was why he—the Rebbe—had ensured to choose men, women, and children, representing all three of these segments. [It should be noted that the Rebbe's letters to the shluchim after they left were addressed to, "The Shluchim: men, women, and children, *shlit"a*"]. This *farbrengen* was also the historic occasion when the Rebbe made a *sanhedrin* of the rabbonim present to rule that Eretz Yisrael belongs to the Yidden.<sup>5</sup>

Rabbi Shmuel Greisman, today director of the Children's Sefer Torah, relates: "A few *yungeleit* from Crown



Heights had gotten together at the time to buy a new mitzvah tank and they presented the key to the Rebbe as a gift at the *farbrengen*. When they approached to give the key, the Rebbe instructed them to send it with the shluchim to Eretz Yisrael, and added: אבער גיט זיי א צווייטען שליסל, ווייל מיין שליסל גיב איך ניט אפ. —But give them another key, because I'm not giving up mine..."

Finally, the big day of 11 Shevat arrived—the day the shluchim were scheduled to depart. *Mincha* was held downstairs due to the large crowd that had come to see the shluchim off. After *Mincha*, the shluchim all congregated in *Gan Eden Hatachton*. At about 4:30, Rabbi Mentlik and his wife went into *yechidus* with the Rebbe. A few minutes later, Mrs. Mentlik emerged holding a Tanya and money for *tzedaka*, after which Rabbi Hodakov went in. Meanwhile, the shluchim and their families waited eagerly and nervously right outside.

(Rabbi Mentlik later related that at this *yechidus*, the Rebbe had told him the conditions for future shluchim to follow: "If you [the shluchim] are satisfied with them [the people in Eretz Yisrael], and they are satisfied with you, we will send more." Rabbi Mentlik repeated this numerous times throughout the trip.)

Rabbi Goldberg relates: "At 5:00 the door opened. The Rebbe stood at the door to his room, and the *yungeleit* began walking by together with their wives and children. The Rebbe gave each man a Likkutei Sichos vol. 11, the weekly *likut* on *Beshalach*, and a number of different denominations of money in American and Israeli currency. Each woman received a *siddur*, a Tanya, and also the various bills. Children received a Tanya, in which the Rebbe put money for *tzedaka*. The families were followed by the *bochurim*.

## HONORED GUEST



Rabbi Shneur Goodman, today the head shliach of Ashdod, relates: "Rumors started circulating that Rabbi Mentlik, the famed *rosh yeshiva* of 770, would be joining the trip as well, but no one knew whether or not it was true. One day, I went to the passport office in Manhattan to get ready for the trip, and who do I see but Rabbi Mentlik... I came back to 770 and said "Rabbosai, I saw him standing in line at the passport office. He's coming."



“The fact that the Rebbe gave us a volume of Likkutei Sichos was a huge *chiddush*; it was revolutionary! Until then, if the Rebbe ever gave someone a *sefer* in *yechidus* it was a *siddur* or a Tanya, but he never gave out his own *sefer*.

“In fact, volume 10 of Likkutei Sichos had been recently published, but the Vaad Lehafatzas Sichos had not had in mind to publish volume 11 so soon afterwards. Only a few days before our departure, the Rebbe had instructed that volume 11 be published, as he wished to distribute it to the shluchim. Somehow, with miraculous speed, they managed to put it together in time, and it arrived the very day we were leaving. The printer hadn’t even had the time to finish the cover, and the Rebbe gave out the volumes with a handmade cover. It was a great *giluy* and *kiruv* to the shluchim that the Rebbe was giving out his own *sefer* for the first time.”

### WITH JOY!

Standing in line, one of the shlichos began crying. The Rebbe said, “Why are you crying? You are going to Eretz Yisrael; you must be joyous!” She proceeded to ask for a *bracha* for children. Nine months later, the couple had a child.

Soon after, the Rebbe went out to the steps of 770 to personally see the shluchim off to their shlichus. Busloads of Chassidim went off to the airport as well, where several of the shluchim and Israeli officials addressed the crowd before boarding the plane—all of which was covered by the media.

## WELCOMING THE SHLUCHIM

The Rebbe’s words over the last few weeks made waves throughout Eretz Yisrael, and people from all over the country streamed to the airport to greet the shluchim. The entire arrivals area in Ben Gurion Airport filled up, and the crowd began filling the outside as well. The most prominent Lubavitcher rabbonim and *askanim* were there, and all students in Chabad yeshivos across Eretz Yisrael were present as well—as per the Rebbe’s instruction (via Rabbi Hodakov) to Rabbi Efraim Wolf. The crowd swelled to the thousands. At 5:00 p.m. on 12 Shevat 5736, the shluchim and shlichos along with Rabbi Mentlik emerged. Trumpets were blown to give them a royal welcome, followed by “Napoleon’s March” led by Reb Zushe “the Partisan” Wilmovsky.

Rabbi Mentlik said a few words, followed by Reb Zushe. Reb Zushe completed his speech with the *bracha* and wish that these shluchim would represent “*Es Yehuda shalach l’fanav*”—the first step for when the Rebbe will himself come to Eretz Yisrael with the *geula ha’amitis v’hashleima*. The sound of “*Amein!*” resounded from all directions.

Although the original plan had been that some of the shluchim would stay in lodgings for new immigrants in Kfar Chabad while they were finding places to stay, they now found out that the Rebbe had instructed that they should all go directly to their respective cities. After a short stop for something to eat at the yeshiva in Lod, the shluchim traveled directly to Tzfas and Yerushalayim.

Notwithstanding their long trip, almost immediately after the shluchim to Yerushalayim arrived in Toras Emes—where they would be lodging—they set off with Rabbi Mentlik for the Tzemach Tzedek shul in the old city, where they *chattered*

sections of a *maamar* and *sicha* (Torah), davened (*avoda*) and gave *tzedaka* (*gemilus chassodim*), as per the Rebbe’s instructions.

A few days later, all the shluchim and their families went to the Knesset, where Rabbi Mentlik and Rabbi Shlomo Maidanchik were scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin, as per the Rebbe’s instructions. In a report to the Rebbe, Rabbi Mentlik described the meeting:

“I went into his room wearing a *gartel*. He welcomed us affectionately and asked us to sit down. Maidanchik told him that I wished to give over a shlichus, which was why I was wearing a *gartel* and had remained standing. I began with giving him regards from the Rebbe, and then I continued: The Rebbe *shlit”a* asked me to tell you: When you visited the Rebbe (for his seventieth birthday, 11 Nissan 5732) the Rebbe spoke to you about הן עם לבדד ישכון ובגוים לא יתחשב, A nation that will dwell alone, and will not be reckoned among the nations.” This was when you were an ambassador; now that you are the prime minister, this must be even stronger.”

Rabbi Mentlik went on to talk about the shlichus, and also gave Rabin a 10,000 *lira* check from the Rebbe, which was for the purpose of “the building of Eretz Yisrael.” After Rabbi Mentlik finished conveying the formal shlichus, he sat down, and they began conversing. Afterwards, Mr. Rabin came out to shake hands with the shluchim, welcoming them to the land and wishing them success in fulfilling their shlichus.

Then they were off to visit the president, Mr. Efraim Katzir, in his home, where they were greeted with great ceremony. A few days later, a huge welcoming event was held in the Binyanei Ha’uma, a hall in Yerushalayim, with the participation of thousands of people.

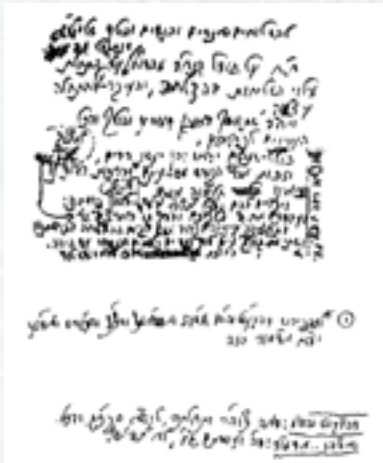
YEVEI TEMIMIM ARCHIVES



THE WELCOMING EVENT IN THE BINYANEI HA'UMA HALL IN YERUSHALAYIM.



THE REBBE GREETS THE FAMILIES OF SHLUCHIM BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE, 11 SHEVAT 5736.



THE FIRST TELEGRAM THE REBBE SENT TO THE SHLUCHIM OF 5736. INTERESTINGLY, ALL OF THE REBBEIM ARE MENTIONED HERE.



THE TZEMACH TZEDEK SHUL IN THE OLD CITY OF YERUSHALAYIM.



A LETTER TO THE SHLUCHIM IN TZFAS DATED 11 NISSAN 5736. THE REBBE ADDRESSES THE LETTER "TO THE SHLUCHIM, MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN - SHLIT" A".

## PORTRAIT OF DEVOTION

Throughout the trip, Rabbi Mentlik fulfilled his shlichus with an astonishing level of dedication, and at every stop, he would give over the Rebbe's words with precision, exactly as he had been told. "Rabbi Mentlik demonstrated to us what it means to be a shliach," Rabbi Goodman says. "His entire being was one with the *meshaleiach*—for these weeks, he was nothing on his own. Some of us felt that this may have been why the Rebbe had sent him with us, to give us on-the-job training of what it means to be a shliach..."

"Rabbi Mentlik wore a *gartel* the entire time he was in Eretz Yisrael," Rabbi Sholom Ber Labkowsky, today the *rosh kolel* in Kfar Chabad adds, "and he didn't take a step if he wasn't instructed to do so by the Rebbe. For example, although he had a relative in Tel Aviv, he didn't go to visit her—it wasn't part of his shlichus..."

The Rebbe had given Rabbi Mentlik a bottle of *meshke* for the shlichus, and from when he received it from the Rebbe's hands he didn't let it out of his sight. Wherever he went, he was accompanied by the hand-bag holding the bottle, and when he would go to the *mikvah* he would entrust it with one of the shluchim with the warning not to set it on the ground.



## GETTING STARTED

The shluchim quickly settled in. The living conditions in the old city of Tzfas, which was still a primitive village in its earliest stages of development, were not necessarily the best—some of the shluchim did not even have working bathrooms in their apartments!—but the powerful feeling of being on the Rebbe's shlichus overrode any physical difficulties. They would study all day in the Tzemach Tzedek shul, doing *mitvzoim* between the *sedorim*. At night they would take the mitzvah tank, which had come with them from America, and drive around to different *moshavim* to visit people and do *mitvzoim*.

The shluchim in Yerushalayim stayed in Toras Emes, but, as per the Rebbe's instructions, they had their own *seder* separate from the yeshiva, and they would drive back and forth every day to study in the Tzemach Tzedek shul in the old city of Yerushalayim. In addition to the

*mitvzoim* and activities, they managed to publish a volume of *ha'aros ubiurim* within a few days.

After a couple of weeks, Rabbi Mentlik returned to America, and the shluchim to Yerushalayim accompanied him to the airport. He kissed each one of them, and told them, "You should know that you are no longer *baalei batim* over yourselves—you are the shluchim of the Rebbe. You must be careful in every thought, word, and deed." These words, spoken with quiet sincerity, left a lasting impression on them all.

In New York, Rabbi Mentlik was picked up at the airport by a mitzvah tank and driven directly to 770. He went into *yechidus* with the Rebbe, where he gave a full report on the shlichus, and also the volume of *ha'aros*. [The Rebbe asked him whether a non-Jew had been involved in its publication. Rabbi Mentlik replied that the shluchim had told him that it was printed in a Jewish print house. The Rebbe didn't react, but the shluchim

later realized that although the print house was owned by a Jew, the actual person who had done the printing was not...]

Following the report, the Rebbe sent a telegram to the shluchim, which he wrote by hand. The warmth and directness with which the Rebbe was writing to the shluchim—young couples and *bochurim* who only a few weeks earlier had been regular people going about their lives in Crown Heights—is incredible, and provides some insight into the esteem with which the Rebbe viewed the shluchim, and the level he expected them to live up to.

"To the Shluchim; the men, the women, and the children, *shlit"a*:"

"Thank you for the great *nachas* that I received from the report of how you began the shlichus with success... May it be Hashem's will that this continues, in an increasing manner, in all areas, including that others should follow your example. May the merit of the Eretz Hakodesh assist you, and may the *brachos* of *Rabboseinu Nesieinu* accompany you...with true peace and serenity, and very soon, may our eyes witness the promise of our *parsha* [regarding the *geulah*]... Blessings for a good Shabbos, a good month, and great success forever."

Over the years, the Rebbe would often send letters to the two groups of shluchim encouraging their activities and thanking them for their reports.

## FULL SPEED AHEAD

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



► Any time there was a possibility that there might be a *farbrengen*, I would stand by a public phone in the middle of the night calling different people and waiting to see if there would be any developments

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

The shluchim threw themselves into their work, taking the lead on each of the Rebbe’s *mitvzoim* as they were instituted, and bringing another level of energy to the existing initiatives. On the Purim shortly after they arrived, one of the shluchim famously drove through a dangerous crowd of armed Arabs to reach a military base for *mitvza Purim*, an incident that the Rebbe discussed with great emotion by the *farbrengen*.<sup>6</sup> When the Rebbe announced *mitvza chinuch*,<sup>7</sup> he specifically mentioned the shluchim as those who would be leading the *mitvza* and pulling everyone else with them. Indeed, the shluchim and shluchos went around to

schools all over the country to speak to the children and their teachers about education. At a rally for Eretz Yisrael in Yerushalayim held by the Eidah Hachareidis—the central *beis din* of Yerushalayim—they convinced the rabbonim to teach the newly instituted *pesukim* to the tens of thousands of children.

In the lead-up to Yud-Aleph Nissan, the shluchim arranged seven tanks to travel around Eretz Yisrael doing *mitvzoim*. In preparation for Pesach, over ten-thousand matzos were distributed to students in schools. During Chol Hamoed Pesach, the Rebbe asked that the shluchim direct the implementation of Seudas Moshiach in Eretz Yisrael—since they had experienced it themselves in 770—and Seudas Moshiach meals took place throughout Eretz Yisrael, headlined by a high-profile event at the Kosel.

The Rebbe expressed extraordinary affection for the shluchim on many occasions. One of the shluchim’s parents asked the Rebbe for matzos on behalf of his son. The Rebbe replied: ער טוט דאך אין די מבצעים... זיי זיינען מיינע שלוחים פערזענליך, און איך דארף נישט אנקומען צו קיינע ממוצעים. He is involved in the *mitvzoim*... They are my personal shluchim, and I do not need anyone to be a go-between...”

When Reb Berke Chein visited 770 from Eretz Yisrael around that time, the Rebbe asked him, “וואס מאכען די? How are the shluchim doing?”

Perhaps more than anything else, their impact was felt in the sheer energy they brought with them. The shluchim were fresh from their years

in 770, and wherever they went, they made a *shturem* about the Rebbe’s *inyanim*—about traveling to the Rebbe, writing to the Rebbe, doing the Rebbe’s *mitvzoim* and fulfilling his *hora’os*. And it wasn’t only about *what* they were saying, it was the *koch* and *hiskashrus* that was so clearly evident in them—*anash* in Eretz Yisrael were uplifted in a manner not seen since the shluchim sent by the Rebbe in 5716,<sup>8</sup> two decades earlier.

## THE SECOND GROUP—5737

One year later, on Yud Shevat 5737, the Rebbe announced that he would be sending a second group of shluchim. Unlike the previous time, the group would only consist of *yungeleit* who would be joining the previous group in Tzfas. Of course, many couples signed up.

The group was chosen about a week later: Rabbis Sholom Ber Brod, Yosef Chitrik, Yosef Hecht, Yehuda Yirmiya Shildkraut, Yosef Yitzchak Wolosow, Yosef Yitzchak Piekarski, and their wives, would be moving to Tzfas as the Rebbe’s second group of shluchim. But a surprise was in store for them: they only had one short week to prepare for their flight to Eretz Yisrael—only one week from when they heard that they would be going on this life-changing mission until it began.

On the day of the trip, the shluchim once again had the *zechus* to go into *Gan Eden Hatachton*, and the Rebbe gave each of them a number of gifts similar to the previous group (with an addition, *maalin bakodesh*). The Rebbe also thanked each of the parents for allowing their children to go on the shlichus.

Then there was an astonishing turn of events. The Rebbe said: “Being that ‘*mgalgelin zechus*’ [i.e. one positive thing leads to another], I will also give [dollars] to everyone who is here. This is *tzedaka* in the *zechus* of the shluchim.”

## AT THE KOSEL

Rabbi Labkowsky relates: “We would often go to the Kosel to do *mitvzoim* and so on, and we decided that there needs to be a live hook-up of the Rebbe’s *farbrengens* at the Kosel. Reb Yitzchak Gurevitch, today the *mashpia* in Migdal Haemek, and I approached Rabbi Getz, who was the rav of the Kosel, and he gave us permission. The *farbrengens* would begin at about 4:30 a.m. in Eretz Yisrael (which is 9:30 p.m. in New York), and after it was over we would go up to the office of Rabbi Getz—who didn’t understand Yiddish—to speak to him about the *farbrengen* and about the Rebbe. We had the opportunity to also see him during the night as we were setting up the hook-ups and so on, as he had the custom of reciting *tikkun chatzos* at the Kosel.

“This continued for a while. The Yud-Beis Tammuz *farbrengen* of 5736 was very lengthy, and continued well into the morning in Eretz Yisrael. A certain Israeli politician (who was involved in keeping the terrible *gezeira* of *Mihu Yehudi*) happened to come by during the hook-up and began making trouble for Rabbi Getz for allowing the *shiddurim* to happen.

“We immediately passed this on to the Rebbe, and shortly afterwards, Rabbi Efraim Wolf, who was in charge of Aguch in Eretz Yisrael, received a phone call from Rabbi Hodakov: The Rebbe had written a letter to Rabbi Getz, but being that the letter would take a couple weeks to arrive, Rabbi Hodakov dictated it over the phone to Rabbi Wolf so that it could be immediately delivered to Rabbi Getz by those who were dealing with him—meaning us, the shluchim. The Rebbe wrote that he had been greatly pained to hear that Rabbi Getz had been caused *agmas nefesh* because of something that he—the Rebbe—was connected with, something that was connected with *hafatzas hamaayanos*. The Rebbe then went on to give him many *brachos*. We went to the Kosel and hand-delivered the letter.

“The *shiddurim* at the Kosel continued for a full year, and all of the *farbrengens* were heard at the Kosel. Many people participated. One time, the Rebbe spoke very sharply about the fact they want to put a flag of the PLO on Har Habayis. After the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe asked whether this *sicha* had been heard at the Kosel... These hookups were very important to the Rebbe.

“Over time Rabbi Getz developed a special relationship with the Rebbe, and this gave the Rebbe direct influence on everything happening at the Kosel. At one point, there was a question as to whether the stones of the Kosel should be coated with a certain material that would keep them from deteriorating. On the one hand, the coating was invisible to the eye and would protect the stones, but should the stones of the Kosel be treated after so many centuries? The decision was ultimately left to Rabbi Getz. I happened to be going to New York a couple of weeks later, and I asked the Rebbe on his behalf. The Rebbe’s answer was not to do it—and that’s what happened. From thousands of miles away, the Rebbe was directing what was happening at the Kosel Hama’aravi...

“The Rebbe once wrote to Rabbi Getz that he had received regards from our mutual friends—referring to us shluchim.”

Pandemonium erupted. It was rare in those days for anyone to receive something from the Rebbe’s hand—a special merit reserved for *yechildusen* and other occasions. Now, for the first time ever, the Rebbe was giving dollars to everyone who would come! As the news spread, people from all over Crown Heights came running to 770 to receive a dollar from the Rebbe.

## REINFORCEMENTS

The new shluchim joined their fellow shluchim in Tzfas, putting their hearts and souls into the Rebbe’s shlichus. Just like the previous group of shluchim, they had no way of knowing how long they were supposed to be there, or even what their long-term purpose was, but that did not inhibit their enthusiasm.



Rabbi Yossi Hecht, today the shliach and rav of Eilat, had been a *chozer* in New York, and when he came to Eretz Yisrael, he continued in this work. “After Shabbos was over in New York—three or four in the morning in Eretz Yisrael—I would go out to a payphone and call Rabbi Leibel Altein to hear a short *chazara* of the *farbrengen*. I would type it up, and by Sunday morning the entire Eretz Yisrael already had written-up points of the *farbrengen*. It was a big *chiddush* at the time.”

The shluchim continued to receive special missions from the Rebbe. For example, when Rabbi Zevin, a prestigious Chossid and an integral activist on the Rebbe’s behalf in Eretz Yisrael, passed away, it was the young

► Now, for the first time ever, the Rebbe was giving dollars to everyone who would come!

PERFORMING MITVZA  
TEFILLIN UPON ARRIVAL  
IN ERETZ YISRAEL.



PRIME MINISTER YITZCHAK RABIN  
GREETES THE SHLUCHIM IN THE  
KNESSET. RABBI MENTLIK SHARES  
THE REBBE'S MESSAGE WITH RABIN  
WHILE WEARING A GARTEL.



ISRAELI PRESIDENT EFRAIM KATZIR GREETES THE SHLUCHIM AND RABBI MENTLIK.



shluchim whom the Rebbe asked to go to the *levaya* as his representatives.

“The IDF was fighting in a war in Lebanon at the time,” Rabbi Hecht says, “and at one point we received a letter—completely *mil’mala l’mata*—that we should visit the wounded soldiers in his name. In the letter, addressed “to the shluchim in Tzfas”—keep in mind that the shluchim the Rebbe is referring to are young, recently married *yungeleit*—the Rebbe sends us as his personal representatives: “Surely you will find a fitting opportunity to relay to each and every one of them my wishes for a quick and complete recovery.”

“The events of Shemini Atzeres 5738 occurred a few months after we arrived,” Rabbi Yosef Chitrik, *menahel* of Beis Chana in Tzfas, relates. “The Rebbetzin had asked that someone should go to the *mekomos hakedoshim* to *daven* for the Rebbe’s recovery. Somehow, we found out before Yom Tov was over (I remember that we were in the middle of an exciting *farbrengen* at the time...), and we immediately ran to the Arizal’s *kever*. After Yom Tov ended a few hours later, we piled into cars and taxis and went directly to the Rashbi’s *kever*.”



### THE THIRD GROUP

Yud Shevat 5738 marked two years from when the first group of shluchim had departed for Eretz Yisrael. At the *farbrengen* that year, the Rebbe announced that he would be sending yet another group of *bochurim* and *yungeleit* to Eretz Yisrael. As details emerged from *mazkirus*, hundreds of *bochurim* and *yungeleit* submitted their names; the crowd held its collective breath waiting to see who would be chosen. About two weeks later, each person was notified by Rabbi Klein.

► As per the Rebbe’s request, the women came down to the main shul—in the middle of the *farbrengen*!—to receive theirs as well, together with the children.

The eight *yungeleit* going to Tzfas were Rabbis Yehoshua Shlomo Zirkind, *a”h*, and, ביחולט”א, Avrohom Shmuel Bukiet, Yosef Yitzchak Ganzburg, Yosef Gerlitzky, Yaakov Shlomo Lieberman, Gavriel Marzel, Yehuda Leib Popack, and Menachem Mendel Rivkin. The eight *bochurim* to Yerushalayim were Zushe Alperowitz, Yosef Yitzchak Deren, Mordechai Tzvi Dubravsky, Menachem Mendel Gluckowsky, Menachem Mendel Groner, Avrohom Mordechai Kastel, Yosef Yitzchak Liberow, and Yosef Yitzchak Rivkin.

Rabbi Mendel Groner, today the *mashgiach* in Kiryat Gat, relates: “At the time, Rabbi Hodakov told my father, Rabbi Leibel Groner, that the Rebbe had said that he had certain people in mind for the shlichus, and he hopes that they will volunteer and sign up on their own...”



The departure date was set for Wednesday, 15 Adar I. The Rebbe held a special Purim Katan *farbrengen* the day before their scheduled flight in honor of the shluchim (in addition to them having a *yechidus* in *Gan Eden Hatachton* the following day).

At the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe showed tremendous *kiruvim* to the shluchim, asking that they come up to the platform to receive dollars and *kuntreisim* for their trip, and that each one introduce himself. As per the Rebbe’s request, the women came down to the main *shul*—in the middle of the *farbrengen*!—to receive theirs as well, together with the children. The Rebbe expressed special thanks to the parents of the shluchim, giving

two dollars to each of the shluchim and shluchos for their parents. The following day the Rebbe gave the shluchim the new Likkutei Sichos (vol. 13).

Like the previous groups, the shluchim flew off to Eretz Yisrael with great excitement.

Around this time, the Rebbe opened a new yeshiva in the Tzemach Tzedek shul, where the *shluchim-bochurim* in Yerushalayim would learn, under the leadership of Rabbi Sholom Duchman and Rabbi Avrohom Boruch Pewzner, two members of the first group (who were also given the responsibility for Colel Chabad).<sup>9</sup>

Rabbi Mendel Groner relates: “A few months later, on 23 Elul 5738, Rabbi Hodakov called Rabbis Duchman and Pewzner—with the Rebbe on the line!—to give a special assignment for the shluchim: In a discreet and swift manner, they should print a Tanya in the Tzemach Tzedek shul in Yerushalayim. They should try to get it done by Erev Rosh Hashanah, the Tzemach Tzedek’s birthday.

“During that conversation, Rabbi Hodakov relayed—as a side note—that the Rebbe expects that out of this group of eight *bochurim* in Yerushalayim, there should be rabbonim, *mashpi’im*, and *roshei yeshivos*. This is indeed the case today.”

Although this was a tall order—arranging a printing press and maneuvering it into the shul was no simple matter—they managed to get it done, working twenty-four hours straight, and the first copies were immediately sent to the Rebbe. The Rebbe walked in with the Tanya to the

## KINUSEI TORAH

The shluchim brought tremendous energy to the Rebbe's Torah-initiatives as well. In the beginning of Menachem-Av 5736, the shluchim received a telephone call from the *mazkirus* instructing them to go to rabbonim and ask them to give lectures on matters related to the *Beis Hamikdash*—a *mitvza* that the Rebbe had established for the Three Weeks. Following the Rebbe's directive, annual *kinusei Torah* were established, in which many prominent Torah personalities participated, under the leadership of Rabbi Avrohom Boruch Pewzner.<sup>10</sup>

A few years later, the third group of shluchim took upon themselves the establishment of another type of *kinus Torah*. Rabbi Mendel Groner relates: "The Rebbe always encouraged people to hold *kinusei Torah* around *Yomim Tovim*, but Chabad in Yerushalayim had never had one yet. We decided to make one for Pesach 5738, a few months after our group arrived. We put up signs all over Yerushalayim, visited *roshei yeshivos* to invite them, and called *yungeleit* to encourage them to participate. It was very difficult work, as it was the first time ever, but it turned out to be a beautiful success.

"Then, a few days before Pesach the following year, 5739, the Rebbe asked my father [Rabbi Leibel Groner], "Will there be a *kinus* again this year in Yerushalayim? I haven't heard anything about it." We hadn't realized that the Rebbe appreciated it so much... Within a few days we managed to put it together for that year as well."

*farbrengen* of Erev Rosh Hashanah, and he spoke about the printing as well as the new *mitvza* of printing Tanyas throughout the world.

## SETTLING DOWN

One of the most unique elements of the shlichus was the fact that the shluchim weren't sent to a specific *mosad* or for a particular job; they were in Eretz Yisrael to be the Rebbe's shluchim! For the first while, they didn't even know how long they would be spending there! About three years after the first shluchim arrived, on Rosh Chodesh Shevat 5739, the Rebbe sent a warm, very unique letter addressed to "the shluchim in Eretz Hakodesh." In it, one sees a clear expression of the Rebbe's personal investment in and responsibility for the shluchim.

The Rebbe gave them a set of guidelines as to how to settle in Eretz Yisrael. "Being that three

years have passed since the first shluchim arrived—three years of *chazaka*—it is very much expected that every person, man and woman, will reflect on themselves and their surroundings—on the opportunities and the needs that they found in Eretz Hakodesh—[to contemplate] how they can utilize the talents that they were blessed with, and the *koach* and *brachos* given to them by the Rebbe, my father-in-law, *nesi doreinu*—for the maximum success. Even if until now they were fulfilling the shlichus in a general manner, the time has come for every family and every person to start having a specific plan."

The Rebbe went on to lay out different levels of priorities in their work: that those who are able should get *semicha* and *dayanus* and become rabbonim. The others should get involved in *mosdos Chabad* or should work in *chinuch*—and so on, a very detailed list.

"Their contemplation in this matter should be with the appropriate patience," the Rebbe wrote, "but without any laziness at all, and *bli neder* we will try to help them as well, especially since the shlichus continues now as well..."

It is impossible to truly measure the impact the shluchim have had—and continue to have—over the years in Eretz Yisrael, but the country is indisputably a different place than it would have been without them.

On the most simple level, some of the most prominent rabbonim, *mashpi'im* and *roshei yeshivos* in Eretz Yisrael today are from this group, as are many of the most prominent *mashpious*, *mechanchos*, and speakers. Many of the educational institutions are directed by them, and the first major Chabad Houses were established by them. The implementation of many of the Rebbe's *mitvzoim* were led by the shluchim, as were many of the big group trips to New York.

But it goes deeper than that. Perhaps more than anything, the shluchim were—and are—shluchim, representatives of the Rebbe, *shluchos shel adam kemoso*. They brought with them a firm pride in being the Rebbe's Chassidim, and unbridled energy in fulfilling his directives. **T**

1. Another version: זיי דארפן ניט קיינע ממוצעים.
2. Sichos Kodesh 5736 vol. 1, p. 272.
3. Ibid., p. 327.
4. Ibid. p. 445.
5. See *A Psak Din for the World*, Derher Iyar 5776.
6. See אורה ושמוחה, Derher Adar 5775 for the full story.
7. See *Children Educate*, Derher Iyar 5776, for an overview of *mitvza chinuch*.
8. See *Transforming Tragedy*, Derher Sivan 5774, for the full story of the 5716 Shluchim.
9. See *Colel Chabad – The Rebbeim's Tzedaka*, Derher Cheshvan 5778.
10. See *Building a New Reality*, Derher Tammuz 5774, for the full story of these *kinusim*.

YEMETEMIMIM ARCHIVES



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THE SHLUCHIM OF 5737 ABOUT TO EMBARK.



YEMETEMIMIM ARCHIVES

THE SHLUCHIM OF 5738 ABOUT TO EMBARK.



THE SHLUCHIM GATHER AT THE ANNUAL KINUS HASHLUCHIM. AN ENDEAVOR GREATLY ENCOURAGED BY THE REBBE.