



## ענינים במדינתם עתה הפצת היהדות בהמדינה



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”נשיא דורנו האמ  
אויפגעטאן און  
אנגעזאגט צו כל  
אנשי ונשי הדור  
אז מצוות הדור  
איז אין דעם ענין  
השליחות...”

“The Rebbe *nesi doreinu* established and mandated each and every man and woman in this generation that the ‘mitzvah of our generation’ is *shlichus...*”  
(ש”פ וישלח תשמ”ז)

**W**e merited to move on the Rebbe’s shlichus to Johannesburg in Adar 5736\*.

After spending two years in kolel, we started scouting out various options for shlichus. For a while, Rabbi Mendel Lipskar, the head shliach to South Africa, had been encouraging us to join him in Johannesburg. Although we were most eager to start a Beis Chabad of our own in a “new” community, Rabbi Lipskar asked us to at least include the Johannesburg option in our *tzetel* when we wrote in the options to the Rebbe. Indeed, the Rebbe underlined Johannesburg, appointing us as shluchim to South Africa.

Along with our family, two other couples had also been appointed as shluchim to Cape Town at the time.

Six months passed and we all waited anxiously as we endeavoured to obtain visas to the country. At the time, the apartheid government in South Africa was highly discriminative. The Christian clergy in the country would speak out against the government on moral grounds and as a result the government feared religious leaders. Eventually, a few days after Purim, we finally received our visas.

As Pesach was just a few weeks away and we had already waited so long, our families suggested we should stay in New York until after Pesach. We asked the Rebbe and he responded in no uncertain terms that we should leave right away. The Shabbos before we left, the Rebbe announced at the farbrengen: “*S’do di vos fohren in merchakim*—there are individuals here that will be travelling to far away places.” The Rebbe instructed us to say *l’chaim*.

In our first years in Johannesburg, I was the director of what was then the only Chabad House in South Africa. We merited to innovate many new activities. These included the Gan Yisroel day camp, the giant menorah, Lag B’omer parade, and Africa’s only Jewish radio program, “The Jewish Sound,” which I produced and hosted weekly for over 20 years and which Rabbi Hodakov often expressed a particular interest in.

After seven years had passed, it was time for Chabad of South Africa to expand. I had been considering moving to open a new Chabad House in an area further north where many young Jewish couples were living and there was no shul. Meanwhile, the Lubavitch Foundation bought a property for our Chabad school, The Torah Academy, in a different suburb. Some members of *anash* who lived in that area asked me if I would start a Chabad shul there. We wrote to the Rebbe about the two options, stressing that we were more interested in opening the new Chabad House but we would follow the Rebbe’s directives. The Rebbe’s answer was that we should start the shul on the school campus. So in 5743\*, in addition to being director of the central Chabad House, I now became the founding rabbi of the Torah Academy Shul.

Three years later, in 574\*6, the rabbi of the Sydenham Shul, the largest congregation in the city, left his position. Many *rabbanim* in town applied for the job, but as a shliach leading the activities in the central Beis Chabad, this position was not even on my mind. To my surprise, the shul approached me and invited me to take up the position. In those years, this was an unusual offer to be made to a Chabad shliach, as it is Nusach Ashkenaz with a *chazzan* and choir. With more than 1,000 members—over 1,000 Yidden coming to shul every Friday night!—it was a major opportunity for *hafatzas hamaayanos*. I wrote to

לזכות  
 החייל בצבאות ה'  
 חיים לוי יצחק שיחי'  
 לרגל יום הולדתו ט"ז אדר א'  
 שיגדל להיות חי"ל לנח"ר  
 כ"ק אדמו"ר ולנח"ר הוריו הי"ו  
 מתוך בריאות נכונה בגו"ד

the Rebbe asking whether we should consider it.

The Rebbe answered:

”צריכה להיות ההחלטה על ידי היודעים בזה היינו עסקני אנ"ש ורבניהם שיחיו על אחר ושצריך להיות בהסכמת כל הצדדים ובשלילת פוליטיקה ככל האפשרי.

The decision needs to be made by those knowledgeable in this arena, meaning anash activists and their local *rabbanim*, and it must be subject to everyone's agreement, avoiding politics to the furthest extent possible.”

A meeting was arranged with the *rabbanim* and *askanim* and the decision was unanimous. Everyone agreed that I must take the job. Other shluchim could run the Chabad House but I was the only one being offered this position of great influence.

I wrote to the Rebbe about the decision, clarifying that this means I would no longer be able to be involved in the Beis Chabad. In my letter I asked the Rebbe if this is the correct decision. I had followed the Rebbe's guidance in asking the *rabbanim* and *askanim*, but I wanted to be 100% clear that I would still retain my shlichus status if I leave the Chabad House for this *rabbanus*.

Circling the words in the letter where I had asked if this is my shlichus, the Rebbe answered that based on the points I had written “הרי פשיטא,” it is clear that this is my shlichus.

Looking back, it became clear that had I opened a new Chabad House three years earlier, I would not have been able to move to this position now. We felt that this was a *nevua* from the Rebbe, knowing that I would be offered this job at a later point.

Let me share a few interesting answers I received from the Rebbe over the years:

During the time that we worked in the Beis Chabad, an *aliyah shliach*, who was very Chabad-friendly, came

to Johannesburg to promote *aliyah* to Eretz Yisroel. He suggested that we join together in sending young men and women to Eretz Yisroel for extended periods of time. During the week, they would visit various *kibbutzim* and IDF bases and then they would spend Shabbos at Ascent, a Chabad institution in Tzefas. I thought the idea had merit and we wrote to Rebbe about it.

The Rebbe's answer was sharp and very clear:

”כפשוט ענינים במדינתם עתה הפצת היהדות בהמדינה. והשאר כדבר גדול קטן - שייר לשאר בני ישראל שם. ולפלא הכי גדול - שלא שללו הנ"ל תיכף ומיד. אזכיר על הצינון.

Obviously your job in your country now is to spread Yiddishkeit in your country. Anything else, large or small, is the department of the other Jews there. I am greatly surprised that you didn't decline the above immediately. I will mention this at the *Tziyun*.”

A few years later, in 5751\*, the first Gulf War broke out. Eretz Yisroel and *am Yisroel* feared the worst but the Rebbe encouraged people to stay and even to especially travel to Eretz Yisroel, announcing that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place. The Zionist Federation in Johannesburg was arranging a special solidarity mission to Israel at the time, and I suggested to Rabbi Lipskar that we should ask the Rebbe if perhaps we should join them. The Rebbe responded:

”נכון מאד.”

This is a very good idea.”

A couple of years after I became the rabbi in the Sydenham Shul, I managed to persuade the board to change the shape of the *luchos* on top of the *aron kodesh* from round to square as the Rebbe had suggested. Proud of my accomplishment, I wrote to the Rebbe that we changed the *luchos* in the shul הק' in accordance with the way the Rebbe wants. The Rebbe replied:


(1) הרי כך כתוב בתורה שבע"פ!  
 (2) אזכיר עה"צ

1) This is what is says in *Torah sheba'al peh!* (meaning that it is not just the way the Rebbe wants it, rather this is the correct shape of the *luchos* based on Torah).

2) I will mention this at the *Tziyun*.”

Over the past 32 years, we have merited to inspire thousands of members in the Sydenham Shul and *hafatzas haYahadus vehamaayanos* has reached tremendous heights. My position in the shul also had a ripple effect in the community, as a number of other large Orthodox congregations in South Africa have also appointed shluchim to serve as their *rabbanim*, something that was previously unheard of.

Through my position, we were able to connect many Yidden to the Rebbe, inspiring them to write to the Rebbe and encouraging people to travel to the Rebbe, both before and after Gimmel Tammuz.

Throughout our years on shlichus, we have seen continuous miracles from the Rebbe, both in our personal lives, and with our *mekuravim* who received tremendous *brachos* from the Rebbe. One such amazing story is of a couple that suffered interfertility for a number of years and received the Rebbe's blessing to have a son. Last year, my wife and I attended this young man's wedding in Eretz Yisroel. The full story can be seen on My Encounter from JEM.<sup>1</sup> 

1. Living Torah, Disc 137, Program 548. Online at: [chabad.org/2858802](http://chabad.org/2858802)