

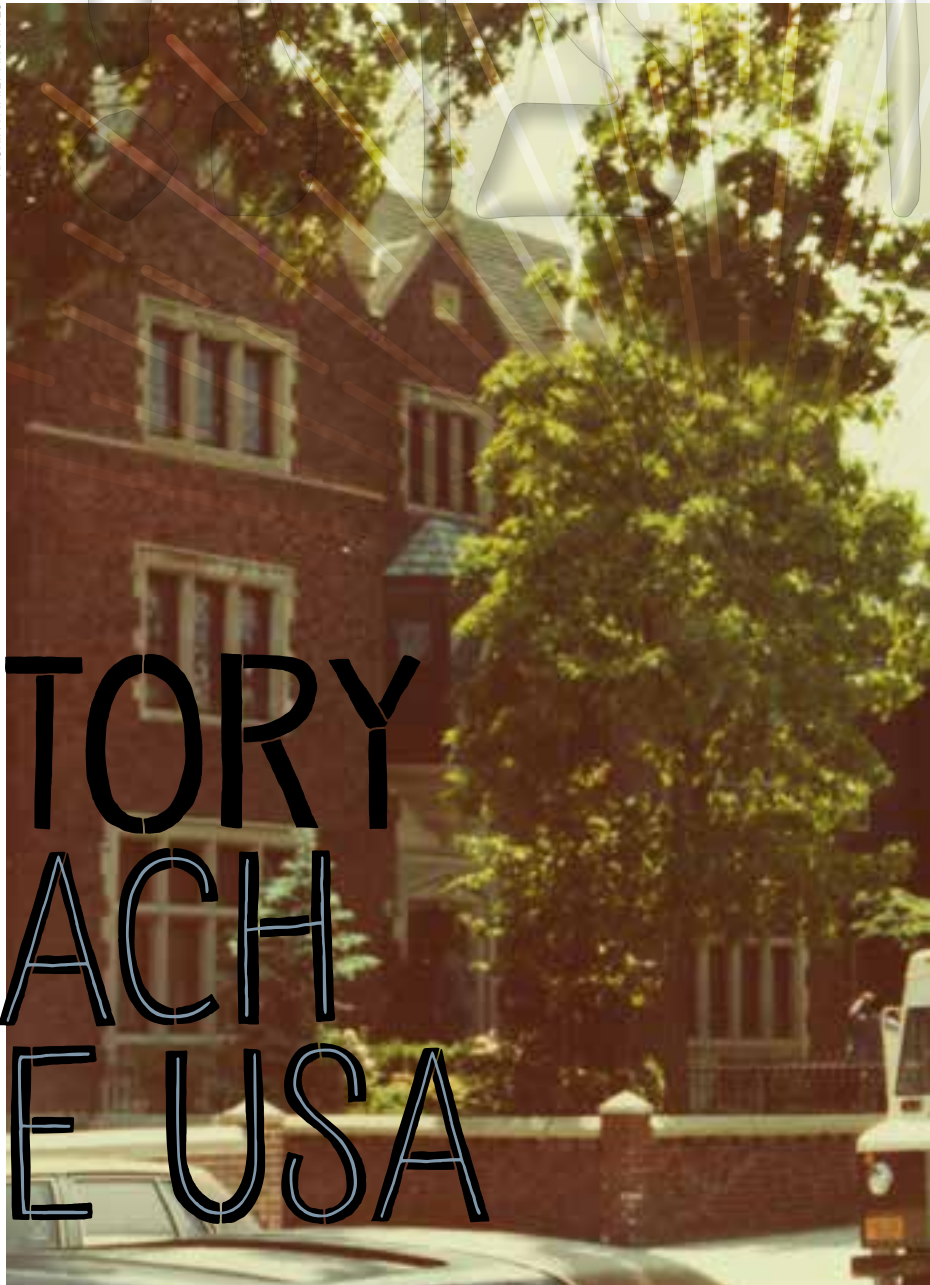
לזכות החייל בצבאות ה'  
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נדפס ע"י הוריו  
הרה"ת ר' לוי יצחק  
וזוגתו מרת יהודית חנה  
גייסינסקי



# THE STORY OF TZACH IN THE USA

RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES



A TZACH MITZVAH TANK PARKED IN FRONT OF 770.



# The story of Tze'irei Agudas Chabad—or Lubavitch Youth Organization—is perhaps synonymous with the story of *dor hashvi'i*.

Throughout the early years of Lubavitch in America, the Rebbe strived to educate a new generation of Chassidim to take Yiddishkeit and Chassidus to the streets. A Chassid could not suffice with his personal *avodas Hashem*; he was called upon to dedicate his life to the public as well.

The primary channel for all this work was Tzach.

Tzach was the address for all matters of *hafatzas hamaayanos*. Whether when the Rebbe announced a new *mitvza*, demanded a new *hanhaga* for Chassidim, or even when Chassidim wanted to give the Rebbe a present or initiate a project on their own—the central address that would organize, arrange, encourage and pull it all through, was Tze'irei Agudas Chabad.

Today, we take *mitvzoim* for granted, but in those days, everything had to be created from scratch. Chassidim themselves had never heard of such concepts. An entire generation of the Rebbe's Chassidim received their first education in *hafatzas hamaayanos* through the hard work of Tzach.

Reb Dovid Raskin<sup>1</sup> was the legendary chairman of Tzach from the day it was founded.

This article is a (translated) preview from an upcoming book about Reb Dovid, called

## וַעֲבַדִּי דָוִד

*V'avdi Dovid*. The authors have created a masterpiece, spending thousands of hours combing through archives, interviewing individuals, and piecing together the full story of Tzach and Reb Dovid Raskin's life in general. This article is only a synopsis of their thorough research.

We thank his grandson, Rabbi Bentzion Pearson, who is directing the project, for graciously sharing the material and assisting us throughout the preparation of this article.



# PART I THE LIGHT OF CHASSIDUS

## THE ESTABLISHMENT

As the Shabbos Mevorchim Iyar farbrengen in 5715\* was about to draw to a close, the Rebbe surprised everyone with the following statement:

“Regarding the following matter,” the Rebbe said, “I waited to be asked about it, but I see that there is no reason to continue waiting, so I decided to bring it up myself:

“In Eretz Yisroel, there is an organization called Tze’irei Agudas Chabad. I don’t know why this organization was established in Eretz Yisrael and not here. But be that as it may, it should be founded now.

“The purpose is not for there to be another name, another letterhead and another stationary. Rather, there should be activities—they should begin doing the activities that are appropriate for Tze’irei Agudas Chabad.

“...There should be a meeting tonight, or at least tomorrow, and they should get to work...”<sup>2</sup>

Tzach in Eretz Yisroel had been founded by the Rebbe several years earlier, and it was responsible for all matters of *hafatzas hamaayanos* in the Holy Land. Now, the Rebbe wanted a similar organization in the United States.

That night, a meeting was held in Beis Rivkah on Eastern Parkway, with many *yungeleit* in attendance. After a lengthy discussion, a temporary committee was chosen to establish the new institution: Reb Dovid Raskin, Reb Avrohom Zvi Landa, Reb Berel Baumgarten and Reb Moshe Pesach Goldman.

At the close of the meeting, Reb Dovid reported the results to the Rebbe and asked for the Rebbe’s

guidance going forward. What was this young organization supposed to do?

The answer arrived a few days later, in the form of a letter.

The Rebbe explained that their task was to implement all the various initiatives of *hafatzas hamaayanos*. In general terms, the Rebbe outlined their mission as “divided into two—work with oneself and work with others,” to strengthen one’s own Torah, mitzvos and *avodas Hashem*, and also strengthen the same within others.

Specifically, the Rebbe noted several areas where they could begin: Reviewing Chassidus in shuls, building relationships with non-Chabad *bochurim* and teaching them Chassidus, making contact with former students of Tomchei Temimim, and spreading the *sichos* and *maamarim* of the Rebbeim.

The Rebbe closed the letter with the founding principal of Tzach:

“Youth have two characteristics—additional energy, and less involvement in the mundane. Therefore, they should take the lead in the activities.”<sup>3</sup>

## THE FOUNDING PRINCIPAL

With this letter, the Rebbe set a foundation for Tzach’s activities.

The mission of Tzach was to be from the ground up. Other institutions already existed as Chabad leadership—Agudas Chassidei Chabad as an umbrella organization, Merkos L’inyonei Chinuch in the field of spreading Yiddishkeit—but there was no organized framework for regular Chassidim and *bochurim* to engage in the Rebbe’s work.

At each farbrengen, the Rebbe would speak incessantly about spreading Chassidus and Yiddishkeit. Every time, the initiative would be picked up by individuals who did their best to accomplish the Rebbe’s mission. Now the Rebbe wanted an



RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

REB MOSHE PESACH GOLDMAN SPEAKS AT ONE OF THE EARLY KINUSEI TZACH.

official organization that could take the reins. Each *mitvza* and initiative would have a proper address, and every Chossid would be able to get involved.

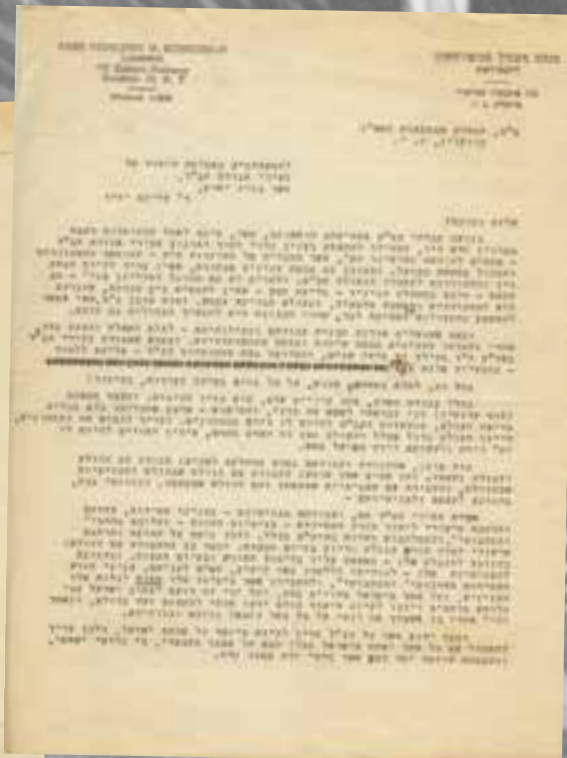
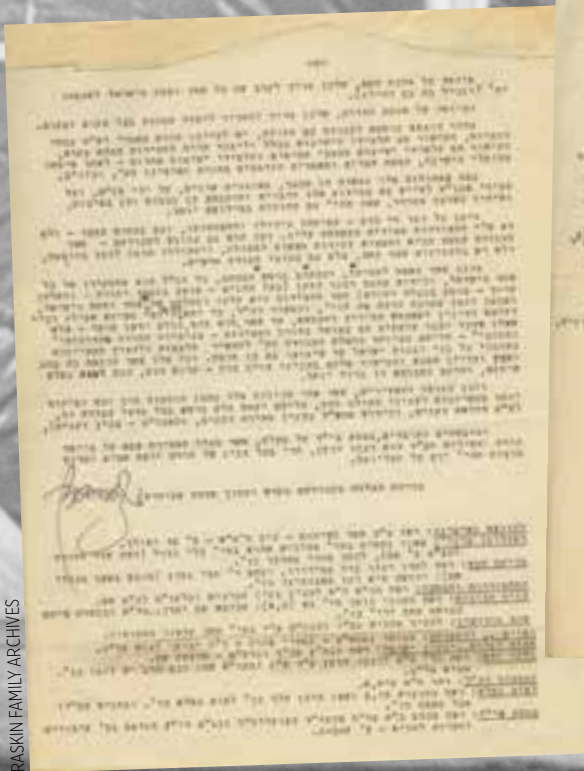
Soon after receiving the Rebbe’s letter, Tzach organized its first plan of action.

The activities were divided into six parts:

1. Arranging *chazaras Dach* in shuls.
2. *Shiurim* in Chassidus for yeshiva *bochurim*.
3. Maintaining contact with former students of Tomchei Temimim.
4. Contact with *bochurim* of other *yeshivos*.
5. Disseminating Chassidus *sefarim*.
6. Establishing *shiurim* in Chassidus and *nigleh* among members of Tzach.

The first activity took place just a few days later, on Lag Ba’omer. Tzach representatives spread to all the shuls in the area, to encourage Jews to study Chassidus and to buy *sifrei Chassidus* as well.

“Often, when we would arrive in a shul,” related Reb Dovid Raskin, “we weren’t necessarily welcomed. This time however, when they heard why we came, every shul allowed us to speak without exception.



THE REBBE'S RESPONSE TO THE INAUGURAL MEETING ESTABLISHING TZACH.



“IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE THE ENORMOUS SURPRISE AND JOY WE HAD WHEN RABBI HODAKOV RETURNED THE SICHA WITH THE REBBE’S EDITS.”

“In several shuls, the members invited us to establish classes, saying, ‘Instead of just talking about the importance of Chassidus and selling us *sefarim*, why don’t you send us people who could teach us what those *sefarim* say?’”

In his report to the Rebbe, Reb Dovid describes how Tzach planned to establish more *shiurim*:

“The plan is for a pair to enter a shul and begin learning Chassidus there *bchavrusa*, and automatically, some *mispaalelim* will be attracted to hear what they are studying.

“Thus far, the Ahavas Achim shul on Empire has a Tanya *shiur* each evening, Chevras Shas has a weekly Chassidus *shiur*, and the shul on East New York has a Tanya *shiur* for an hour before davening on Shabbos morning.”

Over a short period of time, over 50 *shiurei Chassidus* were established throughout the New York area through the efforts of Tzach. All the *bochurim* and *yungeleit* of Crown Heights were enlisted to help with the new activities.

Disseminating *sifrei Chassidus* and *chinuch* books from Merkos also became a prime focus. Whenever Chassidim would speak in other shuls on weekdays, they would bring along *sefarim* for sale, and whenever the Rebbe held a large farbrengen in a hall outside of 770, Tzach would set up a display of those *sefarim* near the entrance and sell to the many Jews who would participate.

## I ENVY THEM

That year’s Shavuos *tahalucha* was Tzach’s first major event. Reb Dovid

Raskin suggested that instead of having pairs of *bochurim* walking on their own to review Chassidus, everyone—including *baalei batim* and *yungeleit*—should walk together to a single neighborhood from where they would split up to the various shuls.

“Before we left,” described Reb Dovid about the first *tahalucha*, “we saw that the Rebbe was very happy about the idea. We noticed the Rebbe watching us getting ready to leave from the window of his room.

“When we arrived in the shuls, we had tremendous success. In some shuls, the rabbis were in middle of a sermon, but they paused and said, ‘Since the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s representative arrived, we will honor him to say a few words.’ Such a welcome was unprecedented.”

At the farbrengen the following day, the Rebbe said powerful words about the new enterprise: “For the first time, Tzach has performed *mesiras nefesh*—by going on *tahalucha*. Therefore, those who went yesterday should say *lchaim*.”

The Rebbe then continued with a sentence that demonstrated his profound appreciation for the *tahalucha*:

“I myself did not go. But I envy those that did, therefore, I too will say *lchaim*.”



THE UFORATZTO JOURNAL, A PERIODICAL BY TZACH WITH ARTICLES, NEWS AND UPDATES.

“Likewise, [arrange a *tahalucha*] on the other Yomim Tovim,” the Rebbe wrote to Reb Dovid Raskin the next year. Thus, the custom of *tahalucha* each Yom Tov was born.<sup>4</sup>

Another important *tahalucha* milestone took place in 5718\*.

“For Shavuos 5718\*,” Reb Leibel Raskin related,<sup>5</sup> “there was a *tahalucha* to Boro Park. Before Shavuos, I submitted to the Rebbe a list of the shuls where *sichos* would be *chazzered*, together with a *sicha* we had selected for the *bochurim* to repeat.

“It is impossible to describe the enormous surprise and joy we had when Rabbi Hodakov returned the *sicha* with the Rebbe’s edits. We immediately printed 500 copies by stencil.

“That Shavuos and its *tahalucha* were very special. Even though it was raining like a *mabul*, the *hisorerus* of *anash* and the *temimim* was tremendous. This was particularly thanks to the *muga’dike sicha* (with



the theme of ‘our children are our guarantors’).”

For the next year, the Rebbe edited a *sicha* each week. Several years later, the Rebbe once again edited a full year of *sichos*, and those constituted the first four volumes of *Lekutei Sichos*. (The books too were, in fact, published by Tzach.)

## TAKING OFF

Tzach, or as it was known in English, Lubavitch Youth Organization, began to get involved in all the Rebbe’s activities. When Tishrei 5716\* arrived, Tzach arranged the parade to *tashlich*, ensuring that it proceed in a respectable manner, just as the Rebbe had personally arranged when he had first arrived in America.

Likewise, they arranged *mitzva daled minim* on a much greater scale than ever before. Each evening, they also arranged transportation for Chassidim to visit outlying areas and hold *simchas beis hashoevah* events for the local Jewish community.

“The Rebbe asked several times,” Reb Dovid related, “whether the guests who had arrived for Tishrei had participated. It was very clear that the Rebbe wanted them to have an integral part in the Tzach activities.”

On Simchas Torah, the *tahalucha* set out to bring joy to shuls in the area.

“As important as the regular *tahaluchos* were,” Reb Dovid explained, “we saw the amazing effect of the Simchas Torah *tahalucha*. Over the years, dozens of shuls would reach out to us before Yom Tov and arrange for the *bochurim* to come.”

Tzach also began to connect with Chassidim in other cities. After farbrengens, they would send out a notice with the *tochen* of the Rebbe’s *sichos*, and they also published a news bulletin for a period of time. Additionally, they helped Chassidim arrange their own activities of *hafatzas hamaayanos* throughout New York and other locations.

“Once, during a *yechidus* in the late 5710s\*,” relates Rabbi Nissan Mangel,

“the Rebbe asked how I planned to return to yeshiva in Montreal. I told the Rebbe that I planned to go by bus. Hearing that, the Rebbe advised that during a stop, I visit the local shul and speak before the congregants. I was a bit bewildered, so the Rebbe said, ‘Don’t worry, Tzach will arrange it.’

“After the *yechidus*, Rabbi Hodakov directed me to Reb Dovid Raskin, who instructed me to get off the bus in Albany, where there was a Lubavitcher *shochet*, Reb Isser Brikman. He brought me to the local shul, and in between Mincha and Maariv, I spoke before the congregants. Then I continued on my journey.”

When an official branch of Tzach was established in Rio De Janeiro in 5717\*, they reported to the Rebbe that a Chassidus *shiur* had been established every Shabbos morning and during *seudah shlishis*. When the Rebbe received the letter, he passed it on to Tzach in New York.

Reb Yoel Kahan recalls that when elections were held for the Tzach



RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

REB DOVID RASKIN SPEAKS TO BOCHURIM AND CHASSIDIM IN 770.

committee, three individuals were suggested, one of them being Reb Dovid Raskin. One person received all the votes: Reb Dovid Raskin.

The Rebbe instructed, Reb Yoel recalls, that one committee member be an American born Chosid. For that position, Reb Moshe Pesach Goldman was chosen. Reb Berel Baumgarten was the third committee member.

## THIS WAS JUST PREPARATION

Even as the activities picked up steam, the Rebbe expected more. Half a year after the establishment of Tzach, on Simchas Torah 5716\*, the Rebbe said the following:

“Regarding Tze’irei Agudas Chabad—until now they were occupied with preparations, and it seems that the preparations stretched from days to weeks and then to months. May Hashem help them to start doing *b’poel mamash*...”<sup>6</sup>

Following the Rebbe’s *sicha*, Tzach decided to expand the activities, primarily in the field of *shiurim* in shuls and homes, and the house-visits in New York and beyond. They also began planning for over 40 Yud-Tes

Kislev farbrengens throughout the New York area, and arranged for *yungerleit* to visit local colleges.

One month later, on Shabbos Mevorchim Kislev, the Rebbe once again encouraged everyone to get involved.

“There are some individuals who—besides for Shabbos Mevorchim—are nowhere to be found, because they are afraid of being asked why they aren’t involved in spreading Yiddishkeit.

“What point is there in the pushing and sweating throughout Tishrei, if afterwards you remain the same person that you were previously? Why do you want to come to the farbrengen? The effect of a farbrengen must be to influence others—to bring a boy or girl closer to Yiddishkeit, and to spread Chassidus as well...”<sup>7</sup>

Reb Dovid Raskin described the impact of the *sicha*:

“We understood that the Rebbe was demanding of every single *yungerman*: Why aren’t you involved in spreading the *maayanos*? Why don’t I hear about your activities? The Rebbe had spoken very forcefully; it seemed that it was impacting his health...”

“We held several meetings with *yungerleit*,” relates Reb Moshe Pesach Goldman, “to help them get involved in Tzach’s activities. We met with diamond cutters, textile workers and also teachers, and encouraged them to establish Torah classes in their workplaces.”

At one diamond cutters’ meeting, a report was given on progress:

Reb Nochum Wolosow reported that they had finished the entire Tanya in their daily *shiur*, in addition to the already existing *shiur* in Shulchan Aruch, while in Reb Shmuel Spalter’s workplace a Mishnayos class had been established. In Reb Shmuel Plotkin’s office they learned Mishnayos each day and Tanya once a week, and in Reb Berel Junik’s workplace they learned Mishnayos each day following Mincha. Reb Berel Junik also studied Tanya and Chumash with individuals, and always kept a pair of tefillin in his office.

Similar reports came in from the meetings of the butchers and the textile workers, although each report was unique to the style and situation of its field.



REB DOVID RASKIN PRESIDES OVER A MEETING WITH SHLUCHIM.

RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

## PART II INTERNATIONAL

### NEW HORIZONS

“Before Purim 5716,” recalls Reb Dovid, “we came up with a novel idea: Instead of just meeting Jews in shuls, we would also try to meet Jews who never went to shul at all.

“How so? We’ll hold a farbrengen for them in the middle of the street!

“We rented a car, put up a loudspeaker that played *niggunim*, and drove through the streets of Brooklyn. We spoke words of inspiration over the loudspeaker, and we literally held a farbrengen for those Jews, right in the middle of the street. Nothing like it had ever been done before!”

In Reb Dovid’s report to the Rebbe, he asks whether to arrange a repeat of this early version of a mitzvah tank on Chol Hamoed Pesach. The Rebbe’s answer isn’t extant, but Reb Moshe Pesach Goldman remembers that similar cars were arranged in honor of the following Yomim Tovim.

This initiative marked an important milestone for Tzach. Until then, Tzach’s primary activities focused on Torah observant Jews who were present in shuls and Jewish gathering places. This was the first time that Tzach reached an entirely new crowd—the thousands of Jews who were unfortunately disconnected from their heritage to a greater degree.

Just a short time later, the Rebbe spoke about distributing *shemurah matzah* for the first time. Tzach took on the challenge and gave out vast amounts of *shemurah matzah* to the Jews of New York.

### LUBAVITCH’S FIRST “INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE”

Today, everyone takes the Kinus Hashluchim for granted. Thousands of shluchim gather from all over the world to share advice and



ALEVSKY FAMILY

REB LEIBEL ALEVSKY (SITTING LEFT) AND REB DOVID RASKIN (STANDING CENTER) MEET WITH A LOCAL OFFICER.

“BEFORE PURIM 5716,” REB DOVID SAID, “WE CAME UP WITH A NOVEL IDEA: INSTEAD OF JUST MEETING JEWS IN SHULS, WE WOULD ALSO TRY TO MEET JEWS WHO NEVER WENT TO SHUL AT ALL.”

encouragement, and to update their peers on their achievements.

However, the International Kinus was established in 5748\*. In earlier years, reports about international Chabad activities came at a different venue: the International Conference of the Lubavitch Youth Organization, on Chol Hamoed Sukkos in 770.

Rabbi Moshe Pesach Goldman relates:

“During Aseres Yemei Teshuvah 5717\*, Rabbi Hodakov called in Reb Dovid Raskin and me, and informed us that the Rebbe wanted Tzach to arrange a conference on Chol Hamoed Sukkos. The Rebbe wanted the conference to have two components: A meeting for Tzach activists, and a reception for the guests who came to the Rebbe for Tishrei.

“We immediately began preparations, and Rabbi Hodakov

constantly asked about our progress. On the morning of the conference, Rabbi Hodakov shared with us that the Rebbe had said that he really would have liked to join the conference himself, but for certain reasons, he would not be able to participate, so Rabbi Hodakov would participate in his stead. Later that day, Rabbi Hodakov repeated the same message again.”

During that first conference, Reb Dovid announced the statistics of Tzach’s activities: Over 50 shuls were added to the list of *chazaras Dach*, 120 farbrengens were arranged, and another 20 *shiurei Torah* were established, and so on and so forth.

Rabbi Hodakov spoke as well. He mentioned that the Rebbe intended to “continue” the conference through holding the *simchas beis hashoevah* farbrengen that night (this news had





THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN RESPONSE "נת' [קבל] ות"ח" ON THREE REPORTS FROM TZACH OF THOSE WHO WALKED TO SHULS ON SHABBOS TO CHAZZER CHASSIDUS. THE REBBE REMOVED THE TOP PORTION OF THE LETTER TO BE RETURNED, AND BROUGHT THE REST TO THE OHEL.



"TOCHEN INYONIM B'DACH" WAS THE NAME OF THE FIRST PAMPHLETS OF THE REBBE'S MUGADIKE SICHOS, PREPARED BY TZACH TO CHAZZER IN LOCAL SHULS.

been made public sometime earlier), and he focused on the mission statement of Tzach:

"It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the members of Tzach, with the youthful energy and the talents they received from the *Aibershter*, aren't merely the 'Lubavitch youth,' they are the army which live to carry out the tasks assigned to them by their commander..."

Later that night, the Rebbe farbrenge in the sukkah. The *simchas beis hashoevah* farbrenge were a staple of Sukkos throughout the early years. However, it now became a part of the Tzach conference.

Rabbi Moshe Pesach Goldman relates:

"During the farbrenge, the Rebbe spoke about the *kinus* of Tzach and asked that we deliver a brief report

about it. From the way the Rebbe spoke about it, it was clear that the farbrenge had itself become a part of the conference. So, in essence, the Rebbe actually did participate."

After the report, the Rebbe spoke about the difference between a *milchemes tenufah*—a war of conquest, and a *milchemes haganah*—a defensive war. The task of a Chosid isn't to wait around until he is on the defensive; he needs to initiate contact and go out to "conquer" yet another Jew and another Jew.

"This is the task of the youth in general," the Rebbe declared, "and Tze'irei Agudas Chabad in particular: Don't calculate how many soldiers we have, and how many soldiers they have; 'A single youth will be worth one thousand.' Even one who is part of the

enemy forces—deep in his heart, he is on our side..."<sup>8</sup>

## UFARATZTA

On Yud-Beis Tammuz 5718\*, the Rebbe declared the motto of Chabad's activities: *Ufaratzta*—You Shall Spread Forth. The Rebbe demanded that all the activities of *hafatzas hamaayanos* take on new and greater dimensions.

After discussing the concept in the *maamar*, the Rebbe requested that the *bochurim* announce "*Ufaratzta*" out loud and sing a *lebedike niggun*, and in middle, the Rebbe rose and asked them to announce *Ufaratzta* once again.

Over the next period of time, Reb Dovid toiled to expand Tzach's activities. In the Tzach report, they note over 100 members who deliver Chassidus in the shuls—a project that



THE FIRST KINUS OF TZACH, CHOL HAMOED SUKKOS 5717\*.



was strengthened significantly by the new *sichos* that were being published.

## THE PEGISHA

One of the central activities in Tzach of those years was the Pegisha.<sup>9</sup> Starting in the middle of the 5720s\*, Tzach would arrange a Shabbaton for students to experience a Shabbos by the Rebbe. Thousands of Jewish youth participated in these events over the years, and for many, this was the harbinger that brought them to greater Jewish observance.

The predecessor to the Pegisha began in the early years of the *Ufaratzta* campaign. Tzach arranged Shabbatons where *yungerleit* and *bochurim* would spend Shabbos at a college campus, usually at the invitation of the local Hillel, and offer “a full Hasidic experience” to participants.

Those turned out to be a spectacular success, so the next stage was to bring those students to 770 for the Pegisha weekend by the Rebbe. One of the first *ba'alei teshuva* from these Shabbatons was the legendary Dr. Yaakov Hanoka, who was instrumental in starting the Pegisha.

As the project grew, it was spearheaded by Rabbi Kasriel Kastel, who began to arrange special Pegishas for professors, families, and other groups of people as well.

“The Pegisha was essentially the opening phase of *hafatzas hamaayanos* in our generation,” relates Rabbi Manis Friedman. “This is without exaggeration. Until then, most of our activities focused on observant Jews. This was our first significant foray into the world of non-observant Jewry, and it was a smashing success.”

Many of these activities were arranged by Rabbi Leibel Alevsky,<sup>10</sup> who coordinated Tzach's activities from 5722\*-5732\*.

Rabbi Alevsky relates how he got involved:



ONE OF THE FIRST “PEGISHA IM CHABAD” PROGRAMS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS, TEVES 5725.

RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES



MITZVAH TANKS ORGANIZED BY TZACH HIT THE STREETS OF NEW YORK.

RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

“At the conference on Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5722\*, the topic discussed was disseminating the Rebbe's *sichos*. In one speech, Reb Bentzion Shemtov declared with his inimitable lisp, *‘M'darf nemen a mensch, cholen gelt, un s'vet zein shichos.’* Tzach, he said, needed a permanent employee whose job would be to publicize the Rebbe's *sichos*. After the Rebbe received the *duch* of the *kinus*, Rabbi Hodakov told Reb Dovid Raskin that he would pay a beginner's salary for an employee to work for three hours a day, and Reb Dovid offered me the job.

“My job in Tzach was to take responsibility for everything that had previously been organized on a volunteer basis. *Hakhalas kehillos, tahalucha*, Shabbosim in outlying

cities, *shiurim*, printing *sichos*—they were all my responsibility.

“The Rebbe was involved in everything that happened. He would see every piece of mail that arrived or went out. Whenever I wrote a letter, I would send it in to the Rebbe with a carbon-copy, and the Rebbe would often write comments on the carbon-copy and return them to me, usually within minutes.

“In those years, we also initiated the first *mitvza* for Chassidim to bring the Rebbe gifts in honor of Yud-Alef Nissan 5722\*, the Rebbe's sixtieth birthday. The Rebbe received a stream of gifts in the number sixty—money, *shiurei Torah*, and so on—and the Rebbe actually gave the campaign a name: *Keren Hashishim*.”<sup>11</sup>

# CARING FOR HOME

## MECHNEH YISROEL HOUSE

Rabbi Alevsky relates:

“In 5726\*, I suddenly got a *tzeitl* from the Rebbe; ‘Does Tzach have anything more important to do, than to deal with the *shechuna*?’”

In the later 5720s\*, Crown Heights experienced a population shift and most Jews fled the neighborhood. The Rebbe spoke strongly against the flight, and maintained that it was forbidden to abandon a Jewish neighborhood, leaving the poor and elderly behind.

“Beforehand,” Rabbi Alevsky relates, “we were involved in *chinuch* and *hafatza*, but now I worked very hard to make connections with City Hall. The neighborhood needed more security, better sanitation, and all sorts of things. We formed the Crown Heights Community Council, because we needed an official representation to be eligible for all sorts of grants.

“A joint acquaintance introduced me to a Jew named Sid Davidoff, whom I brought to the Rebbe’s farbrengen on Simchas Torah 5728\*. He was very influential in City Hall, and he invited all the Jewish commissioners of the city to the Rebbe’s farbrengen on Yud-Tes Kislev. At the farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke two *sichos* for them.

Following the cue of his commissioners, Mayor John Lindsay also came for a *yechidus* three days later.

“The most pressing issue was property. Jews were leaving in droves, and non-Jews were quickly buying up all their property. The local Lubavitchers were poor, and they couldn’t stop the trend.



REB LEIBEL ALEVSKY BRINGS SID DAVIDOFF TO THE REBBE DURING THE SIMCHAS TORAH FARBRENGEN 5728\*. THIS PHOTO, TAKEN AFTER NIGHTFALL, WAS CAPTURED BY A NEW YORK TIMES REPORTER, AND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY PRINTED IN THE NEWSPAPER.

JEM 104298



THE MECHNEH YISROEL HOUSE, CORNER OF PRESIDENT STREET AND KINGSTON AVENUE IN CROWN HEIGHTS.

TISHREI 5736, LEVI FREDIN VIA JEM 142758



YECHIDUS WITH NYC MAYOR JOHN LINDSAY, 5 KISLEV 5729\*.

V SCHILDKRAUT VIA JEM 108713



“There was a doctor that lived on the corner of President and Kingston, who wanted to sell his home. When we contacted him and began negotiations, he suddenly gave us an extremely generous proposal: He would donate the building to us for just ten thousand dollars, far below the market value of \$120,000.

“Once we received the Rebbe’s approval, I needed to obtain ten thousand dollars. I didn’t have a single penny... I approached Rabbi Hodakov and asked for a loan which I would pay back over time. He instructed me to return the next day, so he could consult with the Rebbe.

“The next day as I entered his office, he opened his drawer and handed me ten thousand dollars in cash. You need to understand that this was unheard of; Rabbi Hodakov was extremely careful about money, and never handed out such large sums to anyone. It was clear that the Rebbe had instructed him to do so...

“Later, we brought the doctor to the Rebbe’s farbrengen, and the Rebbe spoke a *sicha* about donating buildings for college students (at the time, the building was used for student-related activities).”

## THE FARBAND

Another well-known building that Tzach acquired is still known among Crown Heights elders as the “Farband.”

Rabbi Alevsky relates:

“When arranging the Pegisha, we would often rent the hall across the street from 770 (today the Kolel), which was owned by the Yiddishe Farband, an association of secular Jews who spoke Yiddish.

“Their organization was then on the wane, and at some point, we were tipped off that the Farband was about to sell the building to local non-Jews. When we reached out to the central Farband office in Manhattan, they informed us that the price is one hundred thousand dollars. We held a long negotiation with them and explained the negative effect it would have on the community if they sold it to anyone else, and in the end they agreed on the lower price of sixty thousand dollars.

“But where would we get sixty thousand dollars?

“Ultimately, the bank agreed to give a mortgage for fifty-seven thousand, and we needed to provide a down payment of three thousand, which was difficult enough. Reb Dovid wrote the details to the Rebbe, and once we received the Rebbe’s approval, we immediately got to work.

“As soon as we worked out the details, we headed to Manhattan to pay the downpayment and receive the deed. I handed the chairman of the Crown Heights Farband a check for three thousand dollars, but he argued that he couldn’t

CHESHVAN 5736, LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 143236



THE “FARBAND” BUILDING, CORNER OF KINGSTON AVE. AND UNION ST. IN CROWN HEIGHTS.

be sure the bank would respect it. ‘I don’t know your organization...’

“Seeing that he wouldn’t budge, we began to worry that he might renege on the deal and sell it to the non-Jews for a higher price. Seeing the situation, Reb Leibel Mochkin, who had joined me for the negotiation, took out his wallet, and counted out three thousand dollars in cash. We walked out with the deed.”

Reb Dovid Raskin invested a large sum of funds to renovate and refurbish the entire building. In 5730\*, Tzach wrote to the Rebbe asking for his approval to change the name of the building from “Farband” to “Ufaratzta.” From then, the building became synonymous with *hafatzas hamaayanos*.

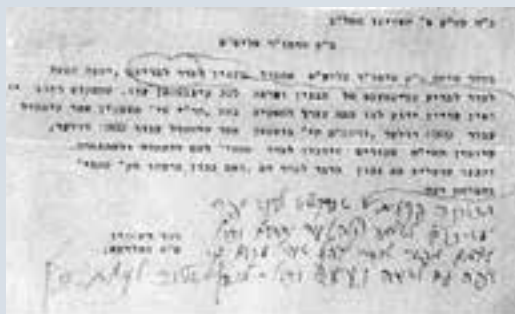
Being close to 770, it also served Chassidim in many ways. The *bochurim’s* Pesach *sefer* was held there (and the Rebbe personally visited), and it also was the center for the *hachnasas orchim* each Tishrei.

## THE LEVI YITZCHAK LIBRARY

Ufaratzta is also the home of the Levi Yitzchak Library.

On Vov Tishrei 5733\*, the Rebbe announced a new initiative, to establish Torah libraries all over the world.<sup>12</sup>

The next day, Reb Dovid wrote to the Rebbe asking if the basement of the Ufaratzta building should be renovated and become a library. The Rebbe answered in the affirmative.



THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN RESPONSE ABOUT THE PURPOSE FOR THE LIBRARY.

Work began immediately, but progress was slow. The basement needed to be rebuilt from scratch, and a large sum of money was needed, but the Rebbe constantly asked about the progress and pushed for it to be concluded.

During the library's renovation, Reb Dovid had an idea: He decided to name it for the Rebbe's father, Harav Levi Yitzchak.

When Reb Dovid asked the Rebbe's permission, the Rebbe answered that it was too early. It seemed that the Rebbe was waiting to see the results of the library when it would be fully up and running, and then he would decide.

On 19 Av 5735\*, Reb Dovid reported to the Rebbe that the next day the library would reach its final stage—they would begin lending books to be taken out of the premises. In the same letter, he once again asked for the Rebbe's permission to call it in memory of the Rebbe's father, and this time, the Rebbe drew an arrow and circled the suggestion to call it “The Levi Yitzchak Library.”

During the Chof Av fabrengen, Reb Dovid and Reb Avraham Aharon Rubashkin (who was heavily involved in the library) presented the Rebbe with a golden key to the library, and the Rebbe responded with a stream of *brachos*.

An expression of the Rebbe's appreciation for the library, is in the fact that the Rebbe sent many of his own personal *sefarim* as donations. The Rebbe even sent a full set of Shas, which remains there until this day.

Even today, some 45 years after its founding, the library continues to attract visitors and fulfill the Rebbe's vision of Jewish libraries.



THE LEVI YITZCHOK LIBRARY IN ACTION.

## PART III LUBAVITCH TO THE STREETS

### NEW DIMENSIONS

Tzach has been the conduit for *hafatzas hamaayanos* until this very day, and a mere few pages cannot possibly cover the entire story of its accomplishments. However, this article would not be complete without a brief description of the activities in the early 5730s\*.

We are referring to the “Mivtzoim Era.”

On the eve of the Six-Day-War, the Rebbe announced the first of the ten *mivtzoim*, *mivtza tefillin*.<sup>13</sup> Chassidim all over the world took to the streets, utilizing the special inspiration that arose among Jewish people in the aftermath of the victory.

However, today’s scope of *mivtzoim*, where every *bochur* participates every single Friday afternoon, where mitzvah tanks are a constant presence on the streets, and where it is difficult to find a Jew who never encountered a Lubavitcher *bochur* asking him to put on tefillin—that all began only several years later.

The beginning could be traced to Chanukah 5734\*. Several days before Chanukah, the Rebbe announced *mivtza Chanukah*, the campaign to ensure that every Jewish home lights a menorah, and that every public place has an expression of *pirsumei nisa*.

Within a few days, ten thousand tin menorahs were crafted, and *mivtza Chanukah* took off. The Rebbe showed tremendous interest in the activities and as a sign of appreciation, he gave each person that participated *Chanukah gelt*. [A full overview of this initiative can be found in “Illumination,” *A Chassidisher Derher*, Kislev 5776.]



THE FIRST YEAR OF MIVTZA CHANUKAH ON THE STREETS OF MANHATTAN, KISLEV 5734\*.

“That Chanukah was a turning point,” says Rabbi Yosef Shmuel Gerlitzky who was a *bochur* at the time. “Until then, we also went on *mivtzoim* on Chanukah, but that year was far beyond anything we had done before. Tzach sent out full buses of *bochurim* throughout New York, and we reached thousands of Jews.

“It was, in essence, the beginning of the *mivtzoim* era. Until then, we had visited specific places like hospitals and Jewish community centers, but this time we really brought Chanukah to the streets.”

### THREE MORE

Indeed, that Chanukah proved to be the “opening shot” to the rest of the *mivtzoim*.

Over the next period of time, primarily on Yud Shevat, the Rebbe announced three more *mivtzoim*—mezuzah, tzedakah and *bayis malei sefarim*. The rest of the ten *mivtzoim* followed within a short few years.

The enthusiasm for *mivtzoim* that year carried into Purim as well, when the Rebbe instructed that a *shtetum* should be made to ensure that every

single Jew fulfills all four mitzvos of Purim.<sup>14</sup>

Rabbi Sholom Duchman, also a *bochur* then, relates:

“The Rebbe said that we need to have *mishloach manos* for every Jew. Nothing was ready. Reb Dovid Raskin arranged ovens and a group of women baked thousands of hamantaschen. We printed a card with a pocket on one side for the hamantaschen, and a pocket on the other side for two pennies for *matanos le'vyonim*.”

*Mivtza matzah* that year also took on a much greater dimension, and thousands of Jews received *shemurah matzah* for the holiday.

With the Rebbe’s constant encouragement, *mivtzoim* now became a staple of every Chosid’s life. Tzach arranged for resources for the new *mivtzas*, and *bochurim* began going into the streets on a regular basis each Friday afternoon, offering passersby to put on tefillin and participate in the other mitzvos as well.

“When we would stand in the street for *mivtza tefillin*,” relates Rabbi Gerlitzky, “we would also distribute publications about mezuzah and tzedakah, and once the Rebbe spoke





REB DOVID RASKIN LOOKS ON AS A MITZVAH TANK PARADE IS ABOUT TO EMBARK.

about *bayis malei sefarim*, we would also have Chumashim, Tehillims, Tanyas and *siddurim* on hand. Those few months ushered in an entirely new phase in *hafatzas hamaayanos*.”

“The atmosphere at the time among the *bochurim* in 770,” relates Rabbi Duchman, “was that we always needed to be ready to move. If the Rebbe announced a new initiative, we felt that we needed to move into action immediately. Typically, we would go out and fulfill the Rebbe’s request that very night or, latest, the next day, fulfilling the Rebbe’s wish to the best of our abilities. There was nothing too insignificant, and nothing too hard. We didn’t calculate the hours or the manpower. We only focused on the goal; something needed to be done, and it needed to be accomplished immediately.”

## BATTLING ASSIMILATION

The Rebbe continued to push for greater levels of *mitvzoim* on a constant basis, and Chassidim were always looking for opportunities to grow the campaigns to new dimensions.

On 23 Iyar 5734\*, a group of Palestinian terrorists entered a school and took 85 children hostage. After a

two day standoff, a unit of the Israeli army broke into the school and in the ensuing chaos, 22 children were killed, r”l. The next day, a number of the mezuzos in the school were found to be *possul*, and as the death toll rose, so did the number of *possul’e* mezuzos.

The next two Shabbosim, the Rebbe spoke at length about *mitvza mezuzah*, that mezuzos are שומר דלתות ישראל, guardians of the doors of Israel. The Rebbe said that every Jewish home should have kosher tefillin and mezuzos.

The mezuzah campaign reached new heights, and soon, a new component was added. Tzach began renting trucks, decorated with messages about Yiddishkeit, to ferry the *bochurim* to the streets and to serve as a Chabad House on wheels. The Rebbe was very pleased with the development, and dubbed the trucks “tanks against assimilation.”<sup>15</sup>

(During the height of the campaign, Tzach sent the Rebbe a report of a meeting where participants donated to the cause and resolved to meet again on Motzei Shabbos.

The Rebbe answered: הרי עד אז יכולת ואפשר למבצעים שליט”א לכבוש י.ג. וסביבותיה ובדרכי נועם ושלוה. Until that time [i.e. Motzei Shabbos] the

participants in the *mitvzoim*, *shlita*, could take over New York and the surrounding areas, in a pleasant and peaceful manner.”)

At the height of the period, the mitzvah tanks went out on a daily basis, always with the Rebbe’s encouragement.

Every one of the Rabbeim had an institution which was his *zahir tefei* -My *zahir tefei* is Tzeirei Agudas Chabad.

This rare statement was said by the Rebbe to Reb Zalman Gurary during a yechidus in those early years. Perhaps it encapsulates the essence of Tzach’s mission: A place for young Chassidim to materialize the Rebbe’s ultimate vision, and, through spreading the wellsprings of Yiddishkeit and Chassidishkeit, to ready the world for the coming of Moshiach.

Over the decades that followed, Tzach’s auspices grew to incorporate more and more activities. As each mitvza took on a life of its own, they morphed into individual institutions—such as Tzivos Hashem, Mivtza Neshek, the Mitzvah Tank office, and indeed, any Chabad activities you may undertake—but they all stand on the same foundation: The Rebbe’s mosad of Tze’irei Agudas Chabad.

Today, with the phenomenal scope of mitvzoim and Chabad activities in general, it is difficult to believe that it all began with a short sicha on a Shabbos in 5715\*, in the presence of a hundred or so Chassidim.

However, as the Rebbe said during the first Tzach conference,

“Don’t calculate how many soldiers we have, and how many soldiers they have; ‘A single youth will be worth one thousand.’ Even one who is part of the enemy forces—deep in his heart, he is on our side. If we go out to a war of conquest, with enthusiasm and self-sacrifice, we will surely be victorious; it will be *didan notzach*.”<sup>16</sup> ①



RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

THE REBBE ARRIVES AT 770 AS A PROCESSION OF MAKESHIFT MITZVAH TANKS IS ABOUT TO EMBARK, TAMMUZ 5734.

1. See our profile of Reb Dovid in "Meretz L'asayah Bipoel," *A Chassidisher Derher*, Nissan 5774.
2. *Toras Menachem* vol. 14 pg. 63-64.
3. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 11 pg. 49.
4. See "Tahalucha," *A Chassidisher Derher*, Sivan 5776 pg. 16.
5. See *Ibid*, Tammuz 5777 pg. 18.
6. *Toras Menachem* vol. 15 pg. 173
7. *Ibid* pg. 225-226.
8. *Toras Menachem* vol. 18 pg. 66.
9. For a full description of the Pegisha, see "The Weekend That Changed Lives", *A Chassidisher Derher*, Adar II 5779.
10. For our comprehensive interview with Rabbi Alevsky, see "My Years in 770," *Ibid*, Iyar 5778.
11. See "Farbrengen in Response To Hisorerus," *Ibid* issue 46.
12. See *Ibid*, Teves 5777 pg. 32.
13. For the full story of Mivtza Tefillin, see "Reconnecting," *Ibid*, Iyar 5777.
14. See more about Mivtza Purim in "Mivtza Purim," *Ibid*, Adar 5775.
15. For more about the Mitzvah tanks, see "Tanks Against Assimilation," *Ibid*, Tammuz 5776.
16. *Toras Menachem* vol. 18 pg. 65.