



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

לזכות החייל בצבאות ה'
שמעון שיחי'

לרגל הולדתו כ"ג תמוז ה'תשע"ט
ולזכות הוריו

הרה"ת ר' ארי' לייב

וזוגתו מרת אריאלה ליבא שיחיו
לבנר

נדפס ע"י זקיניו

ר' מנחם שלום זוגתו מרת שושנה יפה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
סיגלשטיין

A Working System

AS TOLD BY LEV YAAKOV VOSKOBOYNIK (LOS ANGELES, CA)

Growing up, my family was not really involved in Yiddishkeit and we would attend our Conservative synagogue only on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. As I made my way through high school I succeeded academically, socially, and with playing competitive-tennis, but my Jewish identity was not very important to me.

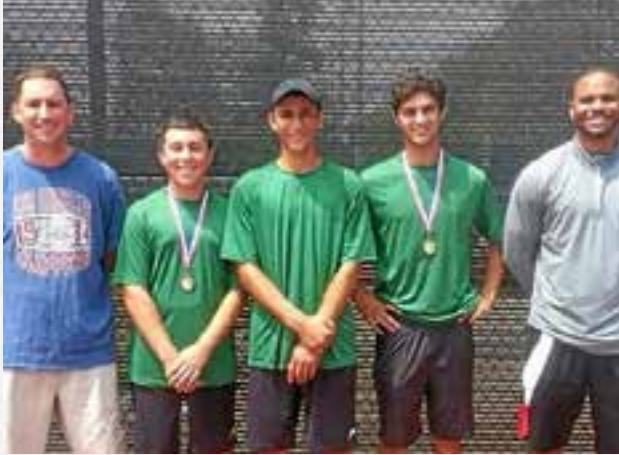
Although my parents had never provided me with a Jewish education, they still were bothered by my lack of care for Jewishness, so during the summer of my sophomore year in high school (5773) they signed me up to the Cteen Xtreme travelling camp.

Those two weeks were life-changing for me and they opened my eyes to the beauty of Yiddishkeit. When I

came home I was so inspired that I started keeping the few mitzvos I had learned about in camp. I started wearing a yarmulke and tzitzis all the time, wrapping tefillin every day and refrained from using my cell phone on Shabbos.

My parents were not so excited about this development. Their intention in sending me to Cteen Xtreme was for me to be more proud of my Judaism but not to this extent of observance. My grandfather's reaction, though, was far worse.

Both my parents and grandparents are immigrants from the former Soviet Union and for my grandfather, anything religious was anathema to him because of the terrible persecution his family had endured.



My grandfather was very unhappy about my new commitment to Yiddishkeit to the point that it was putting a terrible strain on our relationship.

I was terribly hurt by this, but my commitment to Yiddishkeit only grew, and the local shliach, Rabbi Eli Rivkin, continued to inspire me and guide my path towards more mitzvah observance and was very helpful and supportive.

That winter (5774), after much discussion my parents allowed me to attend the Cteen Shabbaton in Crown Heights.

For a non-religious boy, the first time entering 770 is an awe-inspiring experience. Everything you see, every *bochur* and every Chossid is holy. When we went to the Ohel on Sunday we were told that we could ask the Rebbe for whatever it is that we needed.

It was the first time in my life that I really thought about what is important in life, and with great sincerity I wrote a long letter to the Rebbe with requests that I be successful in my studies and with my tennis playing and that I should have good friends. I specifically mentioned the fallout I had with my grandfather and asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* that I should have a normal relationship with him.

I had learned that whenever asking the Rebbe for a *bracha*, one needs to make a *hachlata* as well, and I therefore committed to start keeping *kashrus*. Writing my *pan* and then davening at the Ohel truly made a deep impression upon me.

When I returned home my new *hachlata* was met with displeasure from my parents but I managed to stick with my commitment and life went on.

A few months later I was in Hawaii for vacation and while I was waiting in the airport for my return flight to Los Angeles I started making a mental checklist of all the *brachos* I had requested from the Rebbe at the Ohel to see if they had been fulfilled.



Going through the list I was happy to note that I was succeeding academically; I was in the top 50 students of a 5,000 student body and my sports life was doing exceptionally well as I had recently won the title of Los Angeles Tennis Champion. My social life was also on a high and I was blessed with solid good friends. But one *bracha* had not yet materialized: My grandfather was still ignoring me. Nothing had changed in the last few months since I had written to the Rebbe.

The thoughts continued festering in my mind and I was truly bothered by them.

It was literally two minutes later when my cell phone rang and my grandfather was on the line.

“Lev Yaakov, I must apologize to you,” he began. “I was unfair to you these past 10 months and this is not how a grandfather should behave with a grandson. When you come back to Los Angeles we should start rebuilding our relationship.”

I was ecstatic and overcome with a deep emotion. I was blown away at the fact that at the exact moment I started doubting the veracity of the Rebbe’s *brachos* the Rebbe ensured I should have no more doubts.

Per the Rebbe’s *bracha*, my relationship with my grandfather blossomed and today he joins our family every Friday night for *seudas Shabbos*.

Baruch Hashem, today I am a full-time *yeshiva bochur*, my grandfather has decided to buy for me all of the *sefarim* that I need in yeshiva, and my father, who is now *frum*, has begun learning Chitas daily. My sister goes to Cteen and is coming closer to Yiddishkeit. My mother is also on the road to complete *shmiras hamitzvos*. ①

YOUR STORY

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