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Pulling Up the Shades

ONE FAMILY'S SPECIAL
EFFORTS IN SPREADING THE
WELLSPRINGS OF CHASSIDUS

UNBENDING TRUTH

THE REAL MENORAH



KISLEV 5786
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DECEMBER 2025

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מרת דבורה
בת הרה"ת ר' זאב שו"ב ע"ה
קרינסקי
נלב"ע יו"ד כסלו ה'תשע"ג
ת'נ'צ'ב'ה'

נדפס ע"י בנה
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WHAT'S THE STORY?

Kislev is a joyous month on the Chassidishe calendar, filled with special dates of celebration. Most famously, we mark Yud-Tes Kislev, Rosh Hashanah L'Chassidus—in addition to the many other dates like Rosh Chodesh, Tes & Yud, Yud-Daled, and others.

While these days are certainly worthy of joy and celebration, commemorating major milestones in the history and revelation of Chassidus, the Rebbe teaches us that they are also days of reflection.

The Torah places great emphasis on storytelling, the Rebbe says.

As you will read in the “Step Inside” column in this issue, the Rebbe draws parallels from the Torah’s mandate to retell the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim to our experience of Yud-Tes Kislev. Retelling and reliving the story are an important step to inspire action, the Rebbe explains.

In a similar vein, you will read in “*The Yud-Tes Kislev Storyteller*” column about Reb Nochum, son of the Mittlerer Rebbe, and how meticulous he was to retell the story every year in all its details.

The main lesson from the story, the Rebbe says, is to learn from the Alter Rebbe how vital it is that we teach and spread Chassidus, to the point of *mesirus nefesh*.

Taking this lesson to heart, we too will be inspired to spread Chassidus beyond all measures, defying any odds that might stand in our way. We can rest assured that we will be successful; that ultimately the light of Chassidus will chase away the darkness of *galus*—both our own personal darkness, as well as the darkness of the world around us.

With that, we will merit the coming of Moshiach, with the *geulah ha'amitis v'hashleima*, Amen!

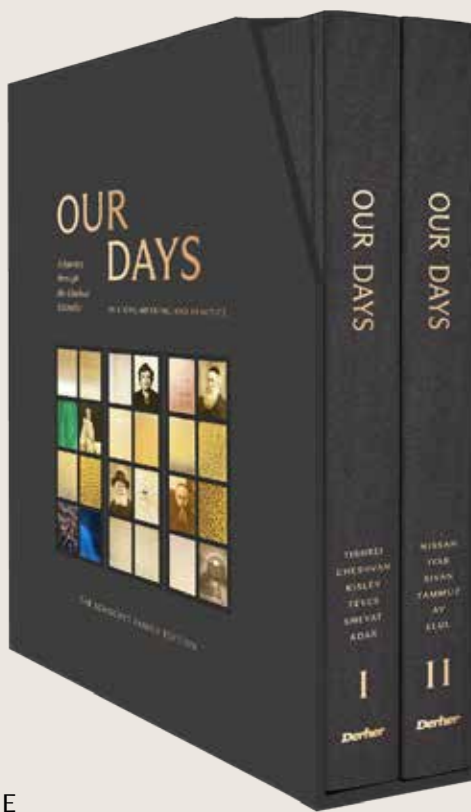
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“In addition to thanks, I would like to add the blessing of ‘mazal tov’ for your merit in taking part in such an important project, bringing merit to the masses, illuminating their souls with the light of the words of my father-in-law, the Rebbe Shlita, inspiring them to Torah, Avoda, & Gemilus Chasadin...”

(THE REBBE'S LETTER, 10 MENACHEM-AV 5703)

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ביסטאן

כ"א כסלו Yom Har Gerizim

COMPILED BY: RABBI MENDEL VOGEL

On 21 Kislev of the year 3448 (ג'תתמ"ח), occurred the historic meeting between Shimon HaTzaddik and Alexander ("the Great") of Macedonia: When Alexander the Great conquered Eretz Yisroel, the Kutim (Samaritans), bitter enemies of the Yidden, attempted to gain control of the Beis Hamikdash from Alexander, who initially granted their request to buy the land on which the Beis Hamikdash was built.

When Shimon HaTzaddik, the Kohen Gadol, found out, he dressed in the *bigdei kehuna*, and he and his entourage traveled through the night to meet Alexander (wearing the *bigdei kehuna* outside the Beis Hamikdash was allowed in this instance because of the life-threatening situation).

After sunrise, the two camps met. When Alexander the Great saw Shimon HaTzaddik, he stepped down from his chariot and bowed respectfully.

He was asked, "Why does a king of your stature bow to this Jew?" and he responded, "I see his face before I go to battle and I am victorious."

He asked the Yidden why they came, and they said, "How can you allow these people (the Kutim) to fool you into giving them the place where we pray for you and for your kingdom's stability?"

Alexander granted the Yidden authority to do with the Kutim as they pleased, and they did to the Kutim as the Kutim had planned to do to them—the Yidden plowed and sowed the land on Har Gerizim, the place where the Kutim worshipped. The day on which this occurred—21 Kislev—was declared a Yom Tov.

From this story, we can learn the following lessons:

1. We should not mistakenly think that as long as we have the true Beis Hamikdash, it doesn't matter if a false one (א"פאלשן בית) "coexists" (המקדש) with it. This is a mistake, since לא נתמלָא צור אלא מחרבָנָה של "ירושלָים"—Tzor became full [gained power] only from the destruction of Yerushalayim.¹ Therefore, in order for the authentic Beis Hamikdash to truly endure, its counterfeit counterpart must be eliminated.

2. One could ask: If all the military victories of Alexander the Great were credited to Shimon HaTzaddik ("I see his face when I go to battle and I am victorious"), then clearly he had the ability to defeat the Kutim without the help of Alexander. Why, then, did he come to Alexander for assistance?

The answer is that, granted, the integrity of the authentic Beis Hamikdash must be preserved, and anything that threatens it must be destroyed. However, there are different methods, or *avodos*, to accomplish this. The *avoda* of Shimon



HaTzaddik as a Kohen Gadol is to wear the *bigdei kehuna*, and when he fulfills the *avoda* specific to him, then all the other pieces fall into place—the opposition is defeated, and the integrity of the Beis Hamikdash remains fully intact.

In terms of our personal *avodas Hashem*, the “*bigdei kehuna*” refer to the teachings of Chassidus, the inner dimension of Torah (Hashem is referred to as a “*kohen*,”² and His “garments” is the Torah in general, and its inner dimension in particular).

Our *avoda* is to “wear” the “*bigdei kehuna*”; to immerse ourselves in the teachings of Chassidus—and not just within the “Beis Hamikdash” or “Yerushalayim.” Also when venturing out into the world, like when Shimon HaTzaddik went to meet Alexander the Great, one does so while wearing the “*bigdei kehuna*.” The wellsprings of Chassidus are not to be reserved or safeguarded for certain individuals, but rather disseminated to all four corners of the world—“פוצו מעינותך” חוצה.” It is specifically through this *avoda* that we eradicate falsehood and unholiness.



The Gemara³ asks: How was Shimon HaTzaddik allowed to go to Alexander the Great wearing the *bigdei kehuna*; the *halacha* is that “[with regard to] *bigdei kehuna*, it is prohibited to go out to the country, [i.e., outside the Beis Hamikdash, while] wearing them”?

The Gemara offers two explanations; the second one quotes the *possuk*, “עַתָּה לַעֲשׂוֹת לַה'” —It is time to act for Hashem, they have nullified your Torah”; i.e. when the time comes to act for the sake of Hashem (such as preventing the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash), one is allowed to violate the Torah in order to do so (Rashi).

In other words, not only is the violation of *halacha* in this instance not an issue, it is, in fact, *mandated by halacha*.

This attitude applies to *hafatzas hamaayanos* as well: In previous generations, the study of *pnimiyus haTorah* was reserved for an exclusive category of individuals, and it was forbidden to reveal it to the “outside.” However, this system only works as long as the general state of Yiddishkeit is stable. When we are in “crisis mode,” however, and the situation is critical,

then “it is time to act for Hashem”; one must put on the *bigdei kehuna* (i.e. study Chassidus oneself) and go outside the Beis Hamikdash (i.e. bring Chassidus to the masses) in order to eliminate the falsehood that conceals *Elokus*.

There is a well-known *moshol* from the Alter Rebbe about a king whose son fell ill, and the king ordered that the most precious stone in his crown be ground into powder, mixed with water, and poured into the prince’s mouth in the hope that at least one drop would make it in. Now, it is self-understood that under normal circumstances, no one would even dream of crushing this precious stone. But in a situation where the life of the crown prince is on the line, all the rules change and there is no step too drastic.

So it is in the *nimshol*; as the *galus* becomes darker and *Elokus* more concealed, the *avoda* of *hafatzas hamaayanos* must increase. In our generation, we are tasked with bringing the wellsprings of Chassidus to every individual.

Takeaway:

The *avoda* of *hafatzas hamaayanos*—which is a necessity now more than ever—carries with it both great responsibility and great privilege. For if the *maayanos* are not disseminated after all the work that was done to make them accessible, that means that the “grinding of the crown jewel” was for naught, *chas v’shalom!* At the same time, the *zechus* that comes with spreading Chassidus is tremendous, as evidenced by the fact that the King is even willing to pulverize the crown jewel in the hope that some of it will reach His only son—the Yidden.

(Adapted from *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Va'era* 5717)

1. Pesachim 42b.

2. Sanhedrin 39a.

3. Yoma 69a.



Compiled By: Rabbi Levi Greenberg (OH)

Written By: Rabbi Mendel Jacobs

Have a Drink?

At the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5742, the Rebbe mentioned in passing during the Rashi *sicha*, that although when Avraham Avinu fed the *malachim* who had come as his guests, he offered them both food and drink, nevertheless the *possuk* only explicitly mentions the word “ויאכלו” (and they ate), because the term “*achila*” includes drinking as well.¹

After Shabbos, Rabbi Michoel Seligson wrote a note to the Rebbe asking:

In a recently published *maamar* from the Alter Rebbe,² he says: “For this reason, [the Torah] does not mention ‘drinking’ when the *malachim* were eating by Avraham... When Avraham isolated only the spiritual element of the food and gave it to them, they did not need to drink...”

It seems from the Alter Rebbe’s words that the *malachim* did not actually drink anything, which would contradict the Rebbe’s assertion at the farbrengen.

The Rebbe’s reply:³

Next to the words (quoted from the farbrengen) “he offered them both food and drink,” the Rebbe noted:

חמאה וחלב.

Butter **and milk** [i.e. the *possuk* explicitly states that he served them milk as a drink].

Then the Rebbe circled “recently published [maamar of

the Alter Rebbe]” and noted:

עדיפא הו"ל להקשות על הש"ס (ב"מ . .) כמו שאכלו **ושתו**

You could have asked a stronger question on the Gemara (Bava Metzia . . [86b]), [where it states explicitly that the *malachim* made it look] as though they ate **and drank**.

[I.e. the question is not so much from what the Rebbe said at the farbrengen, but from the Gemara itself, which says that the *malachim* drank as well!]

In response, the Rebbe circled the words quoted from the Alter Rebbe “they did not need to drink,” and added: ויל"פ - אבל שתו מפני טעם **טפל** ולכן לא **נזכר** בפי' (שיהי' לישראל גם הבאר עי"ז דוקא וכו')

We can explain it [as follows:] — [Although they did not need to drink, nevertheless] they drank for a **secondary** reason, which is why [drinking] was not **mentioned** explicitly. ([The secondary reason was that in the merit of offering the *malachim* to drink,] the Jewish people had the well [of Miriam in the desert] etc.[])⁴

As a general note on the question, the Rebbe added:

הרי המדובר בפרש"י בפשוטו של מקרא.

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To See and Be Seen

Kislev—Chodesh Hageulah—in
the Rebbe's presence, in the
year 5751: the year of wonders!

COMPILED BY: **RABBI YANKY BELL**

WRITTEN BY: **RABBI MENDEL JACOBS**

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Kinus Hashluchim

This month began in the midst of the International Kinus Hashluchim (the first part of which we read about last month).

On Sunday morning, Rosh Chodesh Kislev, as the Rebbe was leaving the shul after Mussaf, the *gabbai* announced that a special event would take place later in the day: Beginning a *sefer Torah* in honor of the Rebbe and in memory of the Rebbetzin, sponsored by the Jewish community of Morocco.

The shluchim's banquet took place later that evening at Oholei Torah hall, emceed by Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky. A special moment was when they welcomed the large delegation of shluchim from the dissolving USSR who were proudly bringing Yiddishkeit out into the open in the formerly hostile environment. The crowd spontaneously began singing "*Nyet, Nyet, Nikavo*" and broke out in a joyous dance.

On Monday, 2 Kislev, after Maariv, the Rebbe announced: "*Yiten v'yachzor v'yiten* [based on a *possuk* in this week's Parsha, meaning that the *brachos* will come in doubled measure], we will now distribute two dollars to each person, as a continuation of the Kinus Hashluchim."

When Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky passed the Rebbe during

the distribution, the Rebbe notified him that he would be sending a check of \$1090 to each of the shluchim, to be used for their personal expenses.

With that, the International Kinus Hashluchim of 5751 came to a close. One of the important takeaways was that the shluchim would work together to establish 90 new Chabad institutions before the upcoming Yud-Aleph Nissan, when the Rebbe would begin his 90th year.

The Kinus Continues

The next Shabbos, the Rebbe continued the theme of the Kinus Hashluchim. At the farbrengen, the Rebbe mentioned that the large sign reading "Kinus Hashluchim Ha'Olam" was still hanging on the wall [attached to the building of 788 Eastern Parkway, next door to 770]. "May the organizers be blessed for doing this," the Rebbe said. The sign reminds the shluchim, and everyone else, that the *shlichus* still continues, and that it is "*olami*" [lit. International] which means it is everlasting. It will also remind the shluchim of the inspiration they gathered at the *kinus*, giving them a boost to fulfill all the *hachlatos* they undertook while there.

The Seforim in Russia

On Monday of the following week, 9 Kislev, four shluchim left for Russia to work on redeeming the *seforim* belonging to our Rabbeim, being held captive in Moscow: Rabbis Yosef Yitzchok Aharonov, Shlomo Cunin, Yitzchok Kogan, and Sholom Ber Levine. The four of them waited near the Rebbe's car as he left for the Ohel in the afternoon, and the Rebbe blessed them with a safe trip and much success.

The next Shabbos, Parshas Vayishlach—Yud-Daled Kislev, the Rebbe spoke about the *seforim*, expressing the hope that they would be returned already on this Shabbos!

With Yud-Tes Kislev only a few days away, the Rebbe also spoke about ensuring that all the proper preparations are in place for the upcoming Yom Tov. "Being a year of wonders," the Rebbe added, "the farbrengen this year will certainly be a '*niflaos'dike farbrengen!*'"

After the first *sicha*, Reb Zalman Gurary approached the Rebbe to offer blessings on behalf of all Chassidim in honor of Yud-Daled Kislev—the Rebbe and Rebbetzin's wedding anniversary. Towards the end of the farbrengen the Rebbe acknowledged the day, saying, "Today is a day connected with a wedding," and instructed that this time should be utilized for strengthening *hafatzas hamaayanos* in one's own home and in the world at large.



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES DOLLARS ON 2 KISLEV 5751, AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL KINUS HASHLUCHIM.

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Tanya Distribution

On Thursday, Yud-Tes Kislev, the Rebbe went to the Ohel with the recently published *maamar*—“*Kuntres Yud-Tes Kislev*”—in hand.

Meanwhile, a pleasant surprise was announced: The Rebbe would be distributing a special edition of Tanya to everyone that evening.

The shul at 770 quickly filled to capacity with people who had heard the good news. At 5:45 p.m., the Rebbe returned from the Ohel and entered the shul for Mincha and Maariv, after which he immediately began distributing the Tanyas.

This edition was a large-print Tanya with a blue paperback cover. At the bottom of the cover, it read: “Chag Hageulah—Yud-Tes Kislev 192 (קצ”ב) years. 5559—5751. Forty Years of the Rebbe Shlita’s leadership.”

The Rebbe distributed thousands of copies for more than four hours, finally leaving the shul at 10:10 p.m.

The next Shabbos, Parshas Vayeshev—21 Kislev, the Rebbe spoke about the distribution.

The Rebbe entered the farbrengen on Shabbos



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SCENES FROM THE TANYA
DISTRIBUTION ON 19 KISLEV 5751.





THE REBBE WATCHES AS CHILDREN RECITE THE PESSUKIM AROUND THE WORLD.

afternoon with the new Tanya in hand, and he kept it on the table in front of him throughout the whole farbrengen.

“Yud-Tes Kislev is the day we begin a new cycle of learning Tanya again,” the Rebbe explained. “For this reason, we chose to give out a new large edition of the Tanya on Yud-Tes Kislev to everyone; men, women, and children. Copies of this edition are still available, and whoever did not yet receive one on Yud-Tes Kislev will be able to receive one tonight, on Motzei Shabbos [from the *Mazkirus*].”

Addressing the special year that was inscribed on the cover of the Tanya, the Rebbe said: “This year marks 192 (קצ"ב) years since the Alter Rebbe’s release, which is the *gematria* of ‘קבץ’—meaning: gathering in, because the ingathering of all the Jewish people towards the time of redemption has already begun!”

Mikeitz: Aha!

On the next Shabbos, Parshas Mikeitz—Chanukah, the Rebbe held an unusually joyous farbrengen. As the Rebbe was sitting down at his place, the crowd stopped singing (“*Al Nisecha*”), but the Rebbe waved his hand as if to indicate that they should continue. The Rebbe’s encouragement of the singing this week was way out of

the ordinary, bringing the joy to great heights.

Near the Rebbe was the attorney general of New York, Mr. Robert Abrams, who sat on a box together with his young daughter and received much attention from the Rebbe.

Speaking about the obligation we have to await the coming of Moshiach every day, the Rebbe said: “When a Yid hears the name of this week’s Parsha, **Mikeitz**, the first thing that comes to mind is, ‘Aha! This reminds me of the **Keitz**—the end of *galus* and the coming of Moshiach speedily!’”

When discussing the story of Yosef Hatzaddik, who left prison only to become the ruler over the whole Mitzrayim, the Rebbe explained that a Yid is never subject to the limitations of the place where he finds himself. For example, if the Attorney General [a hint at the presence of Mr. Abrams] comes to him and says, “You are not following the local laws,” the Yid can explain that as long as he is following the ways of Torah, he is certainly following the local laws as well. We need only to figure out how the two of them align and reveal where there may have been some mistake or misjudgment.

Towards the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe encouraged everyone to get involved in Mivtza Chanukah, spreading the miracle and message of Chanukah all



over the world. “Especially considering the incredible success of previous years,” the Rebbe said, “it shouldn’t be too difficult to replicate that success this year, and even surpass it!”

Chanukah with the Rebbe

On Tuesday, 24 Kislev, the first Chanukah candle was lit in the Rebbe’s presence in the big shul after Mincha.

Chazzan Moshe Teleshevsky was honored to light the Menorah, followed by the singing of Haneiros Halalu. Throughout the entire ceremony, the Rebbe faced the Menorah, and at times the crowd, with a very serious face. When the crowd reached the final stanza of “*Al Nisecha*” the Rebbe could be seen counting the number of times it was repeated with his fingers (five times), and then turned around to face east in preparation for Maariv while waving his hands in encouragement.

On Wednesday afternoon, the first day of Chanukah, a large gathering was held at 770 for the members of Kolel Tiferes Zekeinim Levi Yitzchok—senior men and women who participate in regular Torah classes. The Rebbe joined the gathering for Mincha and then addressed the crowd with a *sicha*, after which he distributed small plastic packets of dollar coins. An imprint on the packet read, “Chanukah 5751.”

1. THE REBBE ENTERS THE SHUL FOR MINCHA AND THE CHANUKAH LIVE PROGRAM.

2. ENCOURAGING THE SINGING OF HANEIROS HALALU.

3. THE SCENE AT 770 DURING THE EVENT.

4. CHAZZAN TELESHEVSKY KINDLES THE MENORAH ON THE SECOND NIGHT OF CHANUKAH AT A GATHERING FOR THE MEMBERS OF KOLEL TIFERES ZEKEINIM LEVI YITZCHOK.

It was later announced that the Rebbe would distribute the same packet to everyone who wanted it on the following evening.

The next evening after Maariv, the Rebbe held *yechidus klalis* for the guests who had arrived from out of town. First, the Rebbe addressed the groups of guests, bar and bas mitzvahs, and *chassanim* and *kallos*, and received their *panim* while giving each of them the same dollar coin. Then, at 9:30 p.m., the *yechidus* had concluded, and everyone else was invited into the shul to receive this packet of Chanukah gelt as well.

The Rebbe distributed thousands of packets to men, women, and children, until well past 1:00 in the morning.



CHIE NISHIO

THE REBBE HANDS A PACKET OF DIMES TO A NON-JEWISH JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPHER, STANDING IN THE WOMEN'S SECTION, AS SHE SNAPPED THIS REMARKABLE PHOTO.



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES CHANUKAH GELT AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE YECHIDUS KLOLIS, 26 KISLEV.



THE ('EISENHOWER') DOLLAR COIN GIVEN AS CHANUKAH GELT BY THE REBBE.

Chanukah Live

For the second year in a row, a grand international Chanukah children's rally was arranged, simultaneously linking up Menorah lightings across the globe with the Rebbe at 770.

The event took place on Tuesday, 1 Teves, the final light of Chanukah.

At 2:35 p.m., the Rebbe entered the shul for Mincha. Several screens placed throughout the shul displayed scenes from around the world. After Mincha, children from around the world were honored with reciting one of the Twelve Pesukim, including: Hong Kong, Yerushalayim, and Moscow. Then the screen showed live Menorah lightings in: Hong Kong, Melbourne, Moscow, Buenos Aires, London, Sydney, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Paris, and Montreal.

Finally, the Menorah was lit in the Rebbe's presence at 770. The Rebbe encouraged the singing of Haneiros Halalu very strongly throughout the entire *niggun* (not waiting until the end, as he usually does). In general throughout the program, the Rebbe's face was shining with a special radiance, and he was visibly in high spirits.

The Rebbe then addressed the children around the world with three *sichos*, telling them that they have a unique responsibility to light up the world with the light of Torah and *mitzvos*, increasing each and every day—as the Chanukah candles teach us.

At the conclusion of the event, the Rebbe gave out packets of dimes to the chaperones to be given to all of the children. Then the Rebbe gave packets to all the photographers who were present as well. Noticing a woman photographer standing in the window of the women's section, the Rebbe turned to her and lifted his hand all the way up, handing her a packet of dimes as well.

Dollars

Each Sunday, the Rebbe was visited by thousands of people from all walks of life who came to receive a dollar and a *bracha*.

On Sunday, 1 Kislev, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, came to see the Rebbe.

"It's been a long time since I've last seen you," the Rebbe said.

"I've come to ask for your blessing," Mr. Netanyahu said.

"In all matters," the Rebbe answered, and then continued: "Many things have happened since we last met. But the one thing that stayed the same is that Moshiach has not yet come. You must do something to hasten his coming!"

"We are doing," Mr. Netanyahu said.

"But obviously not enough," the Rebbe replied, "because we are already several hours into the day and he's still not here. There are still a few hours remaining. Try to do something in this direction. May we hear good news, and with joy. Chassidim are careful to do everything with joy!"

An individual came to the Rebbe and said that he'd gotten involved in witchcraft, and it was disturbing his peace of mind. The Rebbe told him that the Rambam already ruled that nowadays, witchcraft is meaningless. There's no need to take it seriously. The Rebbe added that he should check his tefillin and *mezuzos*.

A *chosson* and *kallah* who would soon be married came to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe wished them many long, healthy years together, then asked, "Will you send me an invitation? You don't have to worry about preparing a plate for me because I won't be able to come. But you should certainly send an invitation!"

Sit On Their Heads!

As this Sunday was during the Kinus Hashluchim, many of the shluchim came to the Rebbe to receive a dollar, and then Mr. David Chase came by as well. The Rebbe told him, "The shluchim have already come by."

Mr. Chase answered (in Yiddish): "I have the honor

of coming together with the shluchim."

The Rebbe said, "Amen. But you should be at their head. 'Sit on their heads' and make sure everything is done properly." The Rebbe then asked him about his various business ventures in Poland and in other places, and wished him much success in everything.

As many of the shluchim passed by, the Rebbe gave them an extra dollar in honor of their respective locations.

A woman came to the Rebbe saying that she had been very sick, and the Rebbe told her to check her *mezuzos*. When she told the Rebbe that she had already checked them and they were all kosher, the Rebbe said, "If so, then they weren't checked properly. There were some *mezuzos* that were not kosher. Either way, may all go well, and may you have good news."

Health and Happiness

On Sunday, 8 Kislev, a woman asked the Rebbe if she should buy a lottery ticket. "Should you buy a lottery ticket?" the Rebbe asked. "Yes, it's a good idea. May Hashem grant you success."

Another woman came to the Rebbe asking for a *bracha* for her daughter, who had been born sick. The Rebbe told her to leave a note with the girl's name and her mother's name, and wished her a complete recovery. When the woman asked what she could do to help her daughter's situation, the Rebbe said, "You should strengthen the Yiddishkeit in your home. You are the mainstay of the home (*"akeres habayis"*), so many things are dependent on you. Do it with good health and a good spirit, and Hashem will bless you with good news..."

Another woman came with a girl who had cancer and asked for the Rebbe's *bracha*. "Should we change her name?" she asked the Rebbe.

"Yes," the Rebbe answered. "Add the name Gila or Simcha."

The woman then asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* to have more children, and the Rebbe gave her another dollar for her husband, and then an additional dollar to give to tzedakah when she gets pregnant.

"Will this girl be ok?" she asked once more. "Yes," the Rebbe answered.

Don't Short It

On Sunday, 15 Kislev, the Rebbe was asked by an individual for an answer to a letter he had written.

"The answer is," said the Rebbe, "that I will mention everything that you ask for at the *Tziyun*."

The person then told the Rebbe that he wants to learn

Chumash with Rashi.

"What's the question?" the Rebbe asked.

"I don't have a Chumash," he explained.

The Rebbe told him to leave his address with Rabbi Groner, and he would send him a Chumash in time.

A woman came to the Rebbe, presenting her baby daughter named Chaya Mushka, saying that the child was born with the Rebbe's *bracha*. The Rebbe blessed her to raise the child to Torah, *chuppah*, and *maasim tovim*, and gave her an additional dollar to be given to tzedakah when she becomes a *kallah*.

The Rosh Yeshiva of Tshachnov, Rabbi Berkerman,

told the Rebbe that he has 400 students in his yeshiva, but they are experiencing great financial difficulties, and he's therefore thinking about cutting back on that number.

"No, *chas v'shalom!*" the Rebbe said. "Now is not a time to cut back." The Rebbe then gave him an additional dollar to place in the yeshiva's tzedakah pushka.

Reb Berel Weiss from Los Angeles came to the Rebbe with a few of his acquaintances. One of them asked the Rebbe for a bracha to have "a bit of *nachas* from my children."

The Rebbe replied: "Not a bit. A lot of *nachas!*"

When they began to leave, the Rebbe told them that California has a reputation for having a warm climate, so they say. Make sure it becomes a place that is warm with Yiddishkeit.

An Illuminated Chanukah

On Sunday, 22 Kislev, the Rebbe wished many of the passersby "*Ah lichtenkin Chanukah!*"

Reb Zalman Gurary passed by, and the Rebbe asked him if everything went well last night [at the Melaveh Malka for Mivtza Neshek].

He answered: Boruch Hashem.

The Rebbe said, "I usually get reports. It's been 12 hours already, and I haven't yet received a report."

Reb Zalman said he would write one, and the Rebbe smiled broadly, saying, "I'm sorry for the trouble."

An individual approached the Rebbe and asked: There's a *shidduch* proposal for his son, but the girl is here in the United States, and his son is in Eretz Yisroel. Should he bring his son here?

The Rebbe replied that this is something he must ask his son. "The Midrash says," continued the Rebbe, "that there are some people who go to find their match, while others have their match come to them. Your son must decide which category he belongs to."

Dr. Marvin and Mrs. Susan Shuster approached the Rebbe.

Mrs. Shuster thanked the Rebbe for praying for her father. "He had his surgery, it went easily, and he's home now. We know your prayers meant a lot to us."

When she wished the Rebbe a happy Chanukah, the Rebbe said:

"Not only happy, but it must be a lighted Chanukah. It must shine on the outside also. That is the message of Chanukah: to light at the front door in such a manner that it brings light to the street around your home!"

"Thank you, Rebbe," she replied. "I need it in my neighborhood!" **T**



MR. BENJAMIN NETANYAHU VISITS THE REBBE, 1 KISLEV.

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MR. DAVID CHASE VISITS THE REBBE, 1 KISLEV.

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THE GREATEST JOB IN THE WORLD

TRUE EQUALITY AND THE WOMAN'S RIGHT TO BE A MOTHER.

Compiled By: Rabbi Levi Greenberg (OH)

Written By: Rabbi Shneur Itzinger

לזכות חייל בצבאות ה'
מאיר שלמה שיחי' סלונים
לרגל חגיגת האפשרניש
שלו י"ד כסלו ה'תשפ"ו

יה"ר שיגדל להיות חסיד, ירא
שמים ולמדן כרצון כ"ק אדמו"ר

MOTHER FIRST, PROPHET LATER.¹

Word spread throughout the town of a strange sight: an entire extended family, parents, sons, daughters, and more, all sleeping in the street. "Are they poor?" wondered the townspeople. Not at all. Elkana, the family's patriarch, was known for his abundant resources. As the murmurs grew and the group of curious onlookers gathered, the family split up, men speaking with the men and women with the women, explaining their actions. They were traveling to the Mishkan in Shiloh, to be *oleh regel* for Yom Tov. To see and be seen, and experience *Elokus* firsthand.

Over time, their excitement was contagious, with more and more people joining the pilgrimage. First it was five, then ten, and eventually sixty families, people who might never have

considered leaving their homes for the long journey to Hashem's House, came to walk alongside Elkana's family.

And it wasn't just one town. Elkana would frequently change his itinerary, bringing his growing entourage through different places where Jews lived. In each city they passed through, the traveling family sleeping under the open sky made a scene. "Come join us," they urged, "to the house of Hashem in Shiloh, from where Torah and good deeds flow."²

One year, however, an important member of the family was missing. Chana, Elkana's wife, was not among the travelers. After many long and painful years of waiting, she had finally given birth to her son.

Could the wealthy Elkana not bring along servants and childcare staff to help mother and child on the road? This was certainly within his means. Were

נשי
ובנות
חב"ד
N'SHEI
U'BNOS
CHABAD

there no babysitters available to watch young Shmuel at home while his mother made the trip, so that mother and son could both benefit from Chana soaking in the atmosphere of the Mishkan?

When Elkana packed his bags and set out, he accepted her explanation as to why she would not join him: her mission now was to watch over her son, the offspring Hashem had granted her. She would do so in the best way possible: by raising him at home. Going to the Mishkan and sparking a renaissance of *aliya l'regel* along the way is important. So was experiencing *Elokus* in Shiloh, especially for Chana, a *neviah* herself. But Chana saw the bigger picture. No matter how many helpers or comforts could be arranged on the road, it would not compare to a child being raised by his mother, in the steady environment of a Jewish home.

“When the boy grows up, then I will bring him,” she told her husband, who understood and accepted. Prophecy could wait. Raising her child was her priority now, her role as a mother came before all else.



Women can follow the example of Chana *Haneviah*. Rather than feeling inferior or seeking to imitate men by pursuing a career, the Jewish woman can embrace her equally important yet distinct life's mission: building a home on a Torah foundation and raising her family within it.

“[T]hose who think that the Torah places the woman in an inferior role to that of the man labor under a misconception...” wrote the Rebbe to a woman. “Man and woman are like the head and the heart in the physical body: both are equally vital, though each has entirely different functions, and only the normal functioning of both together ensure a healthy body. The same is true of the role of the man and woman in Jewish life, and, indeed, in any healthy human society.”³

Why strive to be like a husband who comes home weary after a long day's work? Copying someone else's mission is not equality; it is a loss of self-worth. True equality is recognizing the greatness of your own path. Women have a role in the most extraordinary mission in the world—let's embrace it.

FROM SINAI TO TODAY⁴

Three thousand, three hundred and thirty-seven years ago, a nation some three million strong gathered at the foot of a desert mountain, awaiting the most important event in history—both before and after: Hashem communicating directly with human beings, and giving them the rules for life.

The guide He gave us that day has been passed down through the generations in an unbroken chain. Such an inheritance is not preserved only by wise men cloistered in study halls, nor can it endure through a nation of career-driven individuals hustling for a living—noble as those pursuits may be.

It is the Jewish woman, compassionate and nurturing, who takes credit for the growth of future

generations, ensuring Torah is still in our hands. It is she who ensures the unbroken chain of sweet children studying its teachings, generation after generation, from Sinai until today.

From the moment the child is formed, the mother bears the primary responsibility for the child's growth and development. It is she who nurtures, educates, and encourages the child to follow the path of those who came before us, raising the next generation of the Jewish people.

DIFFERENT BUT EQUAL

Torah certainly assigns different roles to men and women. But different does not mean unequal, equality is not sameness. In the divine plan for creation, men and women have distinct missions, which work in harmony, complementing one another and bringing the

divine plan to fruition. The role of one is neither higher nor lower than the other's: they are simply different.

If we *were* to measure tasks, that of the woman would rank highest, in terms of self-fulfillment, importance, and almost any other criteria. Is there anything in the world loftier than bringing another Jew into the world, guaranteeing the perpetuation of the Jewish nation, and thereby guaranteeing also the perpetuation of Torah and its teachings?

Yes, Torah teaches that the woman's role is primarily to raise the children and to be the *akeres habayis*. For it is a sacred mission, the importance of which dwarfs any other. It is a perversion of our times to perceive having children, raising them in the ideals of our heritage, and setting the tone for the entire household, husband included, as being inferior to earning money, making a name for oneself, or anything else seen by society as being the ultimate goal in life.

Women have been given Hashem's most precious gift, and they are being told to throw it away in exchange for worthless baubles. The Creator, in His infinite wisdom, has granted the woman the ability to carry a fetus in her womb for nine months and to give birth to a new member of the holy people. No man, no matter how wise or capable or willing, can do it: only the woman. Can there be greater self-fulfillment than when she carries out this magnificent G-d given mission?

PRIORITIES

In fact, the cry of equal rights is a tragic corruption of the very concept of 'rights.' To bombard girls with propaganda that they will be fulfilled only if they imitate men is to *deprive* them of their natural right to be mothers, the perpetuators of Jewry and Torah! It is a swindle to convince women to exchange *their* most holy of missions for things that are meaningless in comparison.

It is wrong to persuade girls that they should first enter the business or professional world and only afterwards, if they want to, should they establish families and homes. It is wrong to impose such a warped set of priorities on a young woman, implying that raising children and running a home is a secondary course of action, applicable only after one has first established a business or professional career. Becoming an *akeres habayis* doesn't happen overnight; it necessitates adequate

preparation, and the firm conviction that being so is one's primary function.

This is not to say that for women to work is always wrong. It is a question of priorities, of knowing what one's primary mission is. What is false is to replace women's sacred mission with the ideal that having a business or professional career is a goal in *itself*.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

- » Fire and water can work in harmony to create the perfect meal—when a pot separates them. A wall between two distinct identities is not a division, but a safeguard to bring about harmony in the proper way. When men and women perform their separate, distinct tasks, true peace can exist between them.⁵
- » In recent times, a previously unheard-of phenomenon has become so commonplace that reversing it would seem like “a decree the Jewish people cannot uphold.” Unmarried girls go out to work, with the claim that their income will enable their future husbands to study Torah. In truth, the opposite is the case: a girl living in the spirit of *bas melech p'nima* is a support for her future husband's Torah study.⁶
- » Regarding your question about pursuing a career in your profession: Torah gives us two directives, which are certainly possible to reconcile. On the one hand, “*Kol kevuda bas melech p'nima*,” and on the other, “Everything—including your unique talents—was created by Hashem for a purpose.” Seek guidance from a *rav*.⁷

CAREER COUNSEL:

SHOULD I BE A DENTIST?

I am in receipt of your letter in which you write about your wife, asking advice whether she should take up dentistry, in connection with the opportunity she has to enter Dental School, the problem being how it may affect the care that is due to your child.

In general you are of course both right that the upbringing of children has priority, especially a mother's love and care that should be given to a child of tender age. In your case, there is no indication in your letter as to what would be the hours that the Dental School would require of your wife, which would take her away from her child. You should ascertain whether there is a possibility that her taking up a course at the Dental School would or would not be in conflict with her motherly duties, then decide accordingly.

There is surely no need to point out to you that since all blessings come from G-d and the channel to receive them is through the everyday life and conduct in accordance with His will — every additional effort in matters of Torah and *mitzvos* in the everyday life, including also participation in activities to spread Yiddishkeit in your environment, widens the channels to receive G-d's blessings in all matters, including also the making of the right decision in important questions such as the one under consideration.⁸

CAN A WOMAN BE A JUDGE?

With reference to the subject matter of your letter namely, your seeking a judicial appointment in the City Courts, mentioning, *inter alia*, that you are orthodox, married and mother of

three children — I trust you will appreciate the fact that — in this matter as in all others — I can only be guided by *halocho*. The *halocho*, however, does not approve of a woman holding the office of *Dayan* (Judge). As has amply been explained, this is in no way a reflection on the status and importance of womanhood, but is based on the fact that the Creator has given the Jewish woman a superior and more vital task of *Akeres Habayis* (“Foundation of the Home”) and mother — a task which requires her undivided attention for the wellbeing of her family and children, etc. For this reason the Creator has endowed her with a generous measure of emotional qualities — gentleness, compassion, tolerance, indulgence, etc. — all of which are essential in the raising of the children and conduct of the household.

Of course, as in all things, there may be exceptions to the rule and there may be women who take a strictly objective view in all situations, just as there may be men whose emotional disposition predominates over their judgments. But the *halocho* is of course based on the rule, not on the exception.

Thus, while you may have legitimate personal reservations and exceptions, the fact of an orthodox Jewish housewife and mother holding the position of Judge would strengthen the inimical forces undermining the *halocho* and further enlarge the breach in their clamor for women Rabbis, Dayanim, etc.

In a matter of such importance, affecting public opinion and public office, one must be very circumspect even in a case of doubt.

In light of the above, I hope you will understand my position in this matter.⁹

However, as a means to further Torah study, for example, there is a long Jewish tradition of women working, in a *tzniusdike* manner, to allow their husbands to devote themselves entirely to studying Torah. Even then, of course, it was not allowed to prevent raising a family.

THE TRUE “ASCENT”

In a similar vein, the fact that women are not called up to the Torah for an *aliya* or are not counted as part of a *minyan* is irrelevant to their worth. To demand such ‘rights’ is a total misunderstanding of what they mean.

Having an *aliya* and being part of a *minyan* are indeed lofty matters. *Aliya* literally means ‘ascent,’ referring to both the physical ascent on steps to the platform where the Torah is read and to the spiritual ascent that accompanies it. Through a *minyan*, Hashem is sanctified in this world and in all the spiritual worlds, too. But sanctity and spirituality are not man-made matters, to be toyed with as one desires. Holiness is attained by cleaving to Hashem, and it is He who has established how one becomes sanctified and how one sanctifies.

There is not just one way in which to approach Hashem. Hashem has given men one path and women another; the underlying condition for all is to carry out Hashem’s will in the manner set for that particular person or persons.

Hashem has indeed said that He is sanctified in a *minyan*, and that having an *aliya* produces a spiritual ascent for the person. But the same *Aibershter* has said that this is the way for men *only*; women have different ways to be spiritually uplifted and to sanctify Hashem.

LIBERATION, NOT DEBASEMENT

Ironically, the movement to *liberate* women does the opposite: it *debases* women. A person who is sure of her own value and worth, secure in the conviction that she is equal to others, will not attempt to imitate anyone else. It is only the person who views herself as inferior to others and has no values of her own who will try to imitate another person.

Jewish women have their own mission, their own identity, their own worth. Why the frenetic endeavors to adopt those of men? It is debasing and betrays an astonishing lack of self-esteem, an inferiority complex

that compels one to junk everything and anything that may be construed as marking women different from men.

Torah says emphatically that the diverse missions of men and women does not mean inequality. Just as Torah commands that ‘A man shall not wear a woman’s garment,’ so equally it commands ‘A man’s garment shall not be on a woman.’ Neither men nor women carry out their G-d given tasks or achieve self-fulfillment by imitating the other. A woman has no reason to feel inferior to a man, and therefore she has no need to try to be like a man.

It is time to restore sanity to a world where light is called darkness and darkness light. Time to restore to women the dignity and worth of their sacred role of being the *akeres habayis*, the raisers, molders, and perpetuators of Yiddishkeit for the future. **1**

1. Adapted from 6 Tishrei 5734. Toras Menachem vol. 74, pp. 40–45.

2. *Tanna D’vei Eliyahu Rabbah*, chapter 8. *Yalkut Shimoni* on Nach remez 77.

3. English letter of the Rebbe dated 13th of Iyar, 5737. *My Story* vol. 2, p. 348; chabad.org/887542.

4. Adapted from 6 Tishrei 5745. *Hisvaaduyos* 5745 vol. 1, pp. 128–132. The majority of this translation was prepared by Sichos in English and is accessible at SIE.org/2514076. It is presented here with minor edits and some additional sections incorporated from other parts of the original Sichas.

5. Adapted from Likkutei Sichos vol. 18, pp. 210–211.

6. Adapted from Chamisha Asar B’Av 5743. Toras Menachem *Hisvaaduyos* 5743 vol. 4, p. 1869.

7. Adapted from a letter of the Rebbe dated 17 Sivan 5742. Weekly Lahak publication, Shabbos Va’era 5783, p. 37.

8. Excerpt from a (unsigned) English letter from the Rebbe dated 1 Sivan, 5741.

9. Excerpt from a (unsigned) English letter from the Rebbe dated 21 Tammuz, 5737.



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WOMEN’S RIGHTS



לזכות
הרה"ת הרב שלום דוב בער וזוגתו
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הבהיר ראש חודש כסלו
ולזכות ילדיהם ברכה לימשא, עליזה,
שיינדל, ומנחם מענדל שיחיו
שוחאט

UNBENDING TRUTH

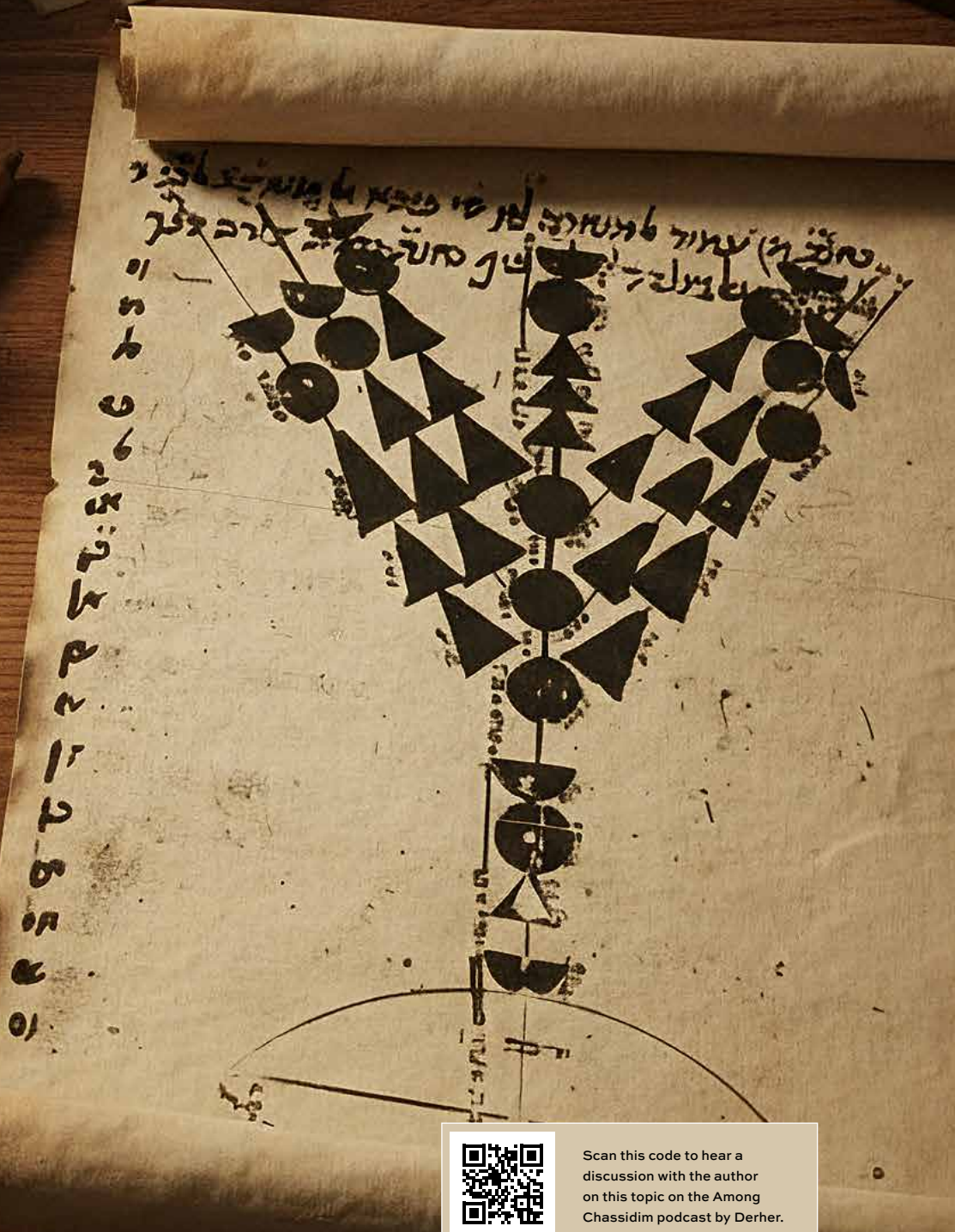
THE REAL MENORAH

Exploring the authentic shape of the Menorah's
branches—as illuminated by the Rebbe.

By: **RABBI MENDY GREENBERG**
(Twinsburg, OH)

AMH

Handwritten text in Hebrew script, likely a manuscript or letter, partially visible at the top left of the page.



Scan this code to hear a discussion with the author on this topic on the Among Chassidim podcast by Derher.

The Great Spectacle

The streets of Rome were overflowing. The entire city turned out to watch the celebratory parade. The Judean revolt had finally been suppressed. Rome had triumphed again.

Emperor Vespasian and his son, General Titus, appeared crowned with laurels, greeted with thunderous cheers. Soldiers marched festively in silks and gold. Jewish slaves were led in chains, followed by massive artistic renditions of the images of war.

Finally, came the spoils of the Beis Hamikdash itself.

Josephus Flavius, a Jew standing in the crowd, describes what he saw in careful detail—a sight later etched for generations on the infamous Arch of Titus:

“The candelabrum, also made of pure gold—this candelabrum differed from the design of those candelabra we made use of. From the base rose the trunk in the middle, and from it extended thin branches, shaped like a three-pronged fork. At the top of each branch was a copper lamp. And the number of the branches was seven, in honor of the Jewish seven-day week.”¹

Is he describing the Menorah of the Beis Hamikdash? Did the Menorah make it to Rome? Is the depiction on the Arch of Titus accurate? Finally, does it even matter?

Get it Straight

At Shabbos farbrengens during the Three Weeks, the Rebbe would often dedicate *sichos* to *Hilchos Beis HaBechirah*.

On Shabbos Matos-Masei 5742, the Rebbe turned his attention to the Menorah. After a lengthy discussion regarding another aspect of its construction, the Rebbe



IN HONOR OF THE CHANUKAH RALLY WITH THE REBBE ON THE FIFTH NIGHT OF CHANUKAH 5743, A SIMPLE MENORAH WITH DIAGONAL BRANCHES WAS FASHIONED OUT OF PLASTIC.

briefly addressed the question of its shape.

“There are those,” the Rebbe remarked, “who depict the Menorah with round branches and a wide metal base instead of legs. This image appears on the coins of Eretz Yisroel and in similar places. Many Chanukah Menorahs are made this way as well, and even the Menorah in 770 has rounded branches!”²

Which was it—curved or straight?



ARCH OF TITUS.



DEPICTION OF THE MENORAH AS IT IS CARRIED AWAY, ETCHED ALONG THE INSIDE OF THE ARCH.



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The Rebbe pointed out that the Kapach edition of the Rambam's *Pirush Hamishnayos* included a sketch of the Menorah in the Rambam's own holy handwriting (!), clearly showing straight branches. Contrarily, the most prominent example of a rounded Menorah was displayed on the Arch of Titus—built specifically to glorify the destruction of Beis Hamikdash.

And yet everyone makes rounded Menorahs!

In the weeks that followed, the Rebbe returned to the subject several times.³ Some had pointed out that the rounded-branch Menorah was not only found on the Arch of Titus—it appeared in Torah sources as well. Most notably, in the *Maaseh Choshev* and *Chochmas HaMishkan*, both authored by saintly kabbalists of earlier generations.

The Rebbe explained that those opinions rested on the assumption that the Rambam himself had understood the Menorah's branches to be curved. At the time, the Rambam's handwritten sketch had not yet been known—but now that the *ksav yad* has been publicized, the Rebbe said, "*batel hayesod, batel kol habinyan*—once the foundation is gone, the entire

structure falls."

The Rebbe further noted that the idea of curved branches was difficult to reconcile with the Torah's own wording. The branches of the Menorah are called *kaneh*—a reed—and reeds are by nature straight. Nowhere in Torah does the term carry a rounded connotation. Rashi indeed calls them *alachson*—diagonal. Why, then, would we assume that the Menorah's branches were anything but straight?

Arch Rivals

As the summer continued, the topic faded. Soon, Tishrei had passed, and a few bochurim in 770 suddenly realized—Chanukah was approaching, and nothing had been done about 770's Menorah! Rabbi Chaim Nisselevitch and Rabbi Zalman Scharf—bochurim in 770 at the time—decided to take matters into their own hands.

"The official 770 Menorah belonged to Reb Hirshel Chitrik," Rabbi Nisselevitch related to *A Chassidisher Derher*. "So I visited him at his home



THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE INTRICATE GOLD-PLATED MENORAH, COMMISSIONED BY THE BOCHURIM, ARRIVED AT 770 AND WAS USED THE SAME EVENING. IN THIS PHOTO, FROM THE EIGHTH NIGHT OF CHANUKAH 5743, THE ORIGINAL SHAMASH HOLDER CAN BE SEEN, ALONG WITH THE TALLER CANDLE USED FOR THE SHAMASH.



IN THIS PHOTO FROM 5747, THE NEWER SHAMASH HOLDER IS SEEN, FASHIONED FOR THE MENORAH, SIGNIFICANTLY TALLER THAN THE OTHER BRANCHES.

on President Street and asked whether he was planning to fashion a new one. His answer was no.”

Hearing that, the bochurim resolved to commission a new Menorah themselves. However, bochurim in 770—especially Israelis—often felt like they didn’t have enough authority to alter things in the Rebbe’s *daled amos*. They also knew that the Rebbe was quick to strike down new projects if he suspected even a hint of *machlokes*. So they decide to proceed in absolute secrecy. They would simply change the facts on the ground.

“Reb Hirshel Pekkar was a skilled silversmith with a shop in Manhattan. He told us that a solid gold Menorah was financially out of the question, but he could make one from copper and coat it in gold. The cost: three thousand dollars.

“As Israeli bochurim in 770, we didn’t have two pennies to rub together. But I thought of Rabbi Mordechai Nagel, a Crown Heights businessman with a keen interest in the Rebbe’s *inyanim*. He even dressed similarly to the Rebbe, with the same style hat. Surely he would be interested in sponsoring a ‘Rebbe’s Menorah.’ We met him—again, in secret—and he immediately agreed to cover the entire cost.”

There was only one step left: How would the Menorah look? The bochurim delved into the *halachos* of the Menorah, carefully sketching what they felt would be the closest replica of the Beis Hamikdash Menorah. Soon, all details were figured out, except for one aspect:

“We weren’t sure how to space the cups and other designs on the branches; should they be clustered near the top, or spread along the branch?”

Rabbi Nisselevitch desperately wanted to know the Rebbe’s view on the topic, but writing directly to the Rebbe was obviously out of the question, so he came up with a solution:

“I disguised my questions as an innocent inquiry in the *Kovetz Ha’aros*. I hoped the Rebbe would respond—but unfortunately, my ploy didn’t work, and we were forced to make our own decision.”

Chanukah was already nearing when Reb Hirshel Pekkar got to work, and it soon became clear that he wouldn’t finish on time.

“We saw that it was simply a problem of manpower, so we decided to jump in and help. Every day we traveled to his workshop in Manhattan and worked with him around the clock. Chanukah began, and we were still at work. But we didn’t let up—and on the fifth day, we were finally ready. The Menorah was finished.”

The Rebbe's Gaze

That day was Erev Rosh Chodesh. As the Rebbe was at the Ohel, the new Menorah arrived in 770. The *shamash* Reb Asher Sasonkin had taken apart the old Menorah and stored it away. That evening, the Rebbe arrived for Mincha.

“As usual, Reb Asher Sasonkin lit the Menorah,” writes Rabbi Uri Holtzman in his Yoman. “In the middle of *Haneiros Halalu*, the Rebbe gazed intently at the Menorah, clearly scrutinizing some detail. A moment later, he turned to Rabbi Leibel Groner and instructed that the shamash be removed.”

The new Menorah's shamash was at the same level as that of the other candles, but protruding outwards. Later the next day, when Rabbi Groner asked the Rebbe about the directive, the Rebbe explained that there had been seven candles (six plus the shamash) on the Menorah [i.e., it was similar to the Beis Hamikdash Menorah]. Therefore, the shamash should be raised higher. The Rebbe added to Rabbi Groner that overall, the new Menorah was very good.

The shamash was soon changed to its current form, and everyone was pleased. Rabbi Nisselevitch related that he was still very nervous when Shabbos came; that's when the *balebatim*—among them, Rabbi Chitrik—would show up. Perhaps they would be indignant that the bochurim had taken matters into their own hands. However, his fears were unfounded; everyone was happy with the beautiful new Menorah—most importantly, the Rebbe himself.

“Rabbi Groner told us that the Rebbe was very pleased,” says Rabbi Nisselevitch, “and for us, that was more than enough.”

The Straight Path

Later that year, as Parshas Terumah approached, the editors of *Likkutei Sichos* prepared a *likkut* on the Menorah. The main *sicha* centered on the cups in the Rambam's sketch, but an addendum of several pages included the *sichos* from the summer about the shape of the branches.

There was something new as well. In the *sichos*, the Rebbe had not issued a formal *hora'ah* regarding the design of Menorahs in general. Here, however, the message was explicit:

“It is proper...that all those who draw images of

the Menorah (for the purpose of illustrating how the Menorah of the Mishkan and the Beis Hamikdash appeared) should depict its branches as diagonal, in accordance with the view of Rashi...and the Rambam...”

In a footnote, the Rebbe added, “This being the case, there is reason to say that Chanukah Menorahs should have straight branches as well.”⁴

Perhaps the publication of the *likkut* brought the issue back to the forefront, because at the very next farbrengen, on Parshas Tetzaveh, the Rebbe again raised the issue.⁵

This time, the Rebbe focused on the *tzitz* of the Kohen Gadol. The Gemara records a fascinating dispute over how the *tzitz* was fashioned. Rabbi Eliezer testified, “I saw the *tzitz* in Rome—and it was different,” while the Chachomim insisted otherwise.⁶ Incredibly, the Rambam rules according to the Chachomim, not Rabbi Eliezer.

Why not? Wasn't Rabbi Eliezer an eyewitness to the actual *tzitz*?

The Rebbe's explanation was a foundational concept in his approach:

The Rebbe quoted the Me'iri's sharp words: “*The Chachomim did not change what they knew to be true, even with an eyewitness.*”⁷ An eyewitness does not change the truth. Who knows what Rabbi Eliezer actually saw in Rome? Was it truly the *tzitz* of the Beis HaMikdash? Was it perhaps a replica, or made



A COIN MINTED BY
MATISYAHU ANTIGNOS.



DEPICTION OF A
MENORAH UNCOVERED
IN THE HOME OF
KOHANIM, JUST NEAR
THE BEIS HAMIKDASH.



in a different context?

No inanimate object or image has any bearing on our *mesorah*. Archeology or even testimonies are by nature unreliable—we cannot know their origins or even whether we understand them correctly.

So it is with the Menorah. Yes, the Arch of Titus in Rome bears the image of a candelabrum, but there is no certainty about its origins. One thing, however, is certain: the Torah calls the branches *kaneh*—and the Rambam himself drew them as straight.

Bending Back the Record

Rabbi Yehoshua Mondshine, the famed Chabad researcher, was a bibliographer at the National Library of Israel. When the Rebbe began speaking about the Rambam's Menorah, he wondered whether additional manuscripts might contain similar sketches.

He began searching through the Rambam's writings in manuscript form, and he made a discovery.

Today, it is well known that in *Hilchos Beis HaBechirah* the Rambam included several renderings, introduced with the words “*vezu hi tzurasa—this is its image*.” But in the classic printed editions of the *Mishneh Torah*, these sketches were omitted along with the introductory words, leaving no hint that any drawings had ever existed.

Yet in manuscript after manuscript, Rabbi Mondshine uncovered sketches of the Menorah. Though not in the Rambam's own handwriting, they were very credible copies. One particular manuscript was copied from a version that bore the Rambam's own signature, attesting to its accuracy.⁸

One detail immediately stood out. In the Rambam's sketch in *Pirush Hamishnayos*, the ornaments on the Menorah's branches are drawn scattered along the length of the branch (apparently due to a lack of space). In these newly discovered renderings, however, they are carefully clustered near the top. The renderings are perfectly proportionate.

Perhaps this difference relates to another: in *Pirush Hamishnayos*, the Rambam explicitly noted that the drawing was not exact, serving only to indicate the general placement of the knobs, flowers, and cups. In the *Mishneh Torah*, however, no such disclaimer appears. There, the Rambam simply states: “*This is its image*.”

Rabbi Mondshine published his discoveries in *Kfar Chabad Magazine* almost exactly a year after the *sicha* about the *tzitz*, for Terumah 5744. Providentially, the next week's *likkut*—Tetzaveh 5744—discussed the *tzitz*, with an



THE LETTER FROM TZACH IN ERETZ YISROEL TO THE BANK OF ISRAEL REGARDING MINTING A SPECIAL COIN FOR CHANUKAH GELT.

entire section devoted to the Menorah. Rabbi Mondshine merited that the Rebbe added his discovery into the *sicha* shortly before publication: “*He’irani chacham echad*, a certain scholar pointed out to me that it was recently publicized that this also appears in the manuscript of the Yad HaChazakah.... See further details and renderings in Kfar Chabad magazine, Parshas Terumah 5744.”⁹

Room to Bend?

During this same period, Tzach in Eretz Yisrael was in discussion with the Bank of Israel to issue a special celebratory coin which would be distributed on Chanukah from the Rebbe to IDF soldiers. One suggestion was for it to contain an image of the Menorah, and another option was to have the image of the *Luchos*.

The Rebbe's response was very informative:

The Rebbe wrote that if there was a possibility that rounded *Luchos* would be included, the option shouldn't even be discussed. There was no room for compromise, because it contradicted a clear Gemara. Regarding the Menorah, however, “*try to make it in accordance with the Rambam*. But since several *gedolei yisrael* (even in his own time) disagreed—this can be compromised.”¹⁰

Regardless, the Rebbe's view of the matter was very clear.

A round Menorah evokes memories of an arch built to humiliate the Jewish people. But a straight Menorah reminds a Jew of his role to be a “light unto the nations.” It's the Menorah which is עדות הוא לכל באי עולם שהשכינה שורה בישראל, a testament to all peoples of the world that the *shechina* dwells among the Jewish people.”¹¹

The choice is obvious.

The Menorah Polemic

The Torah Arguments

*Much ink has been spilled on the topic of the Menorah's branches, with many articles being written to support either side. Here are a few pointers from those discussions.*¹²

THE WORD KANIM:

Kaneh means “reed,” and is used to denote a rod or shaft. Nowhere does Torah indicate that it refers to anything other than a straight stem. Some suggest that the word emphasizes not straightness but hollowness,¹³ but this explanation cannot apply to the Menorah, which was *miksha*—hammered from a single block of gold, and therefore solid.

THE WORD ALACHSON:

Rashi writes that the branches were *alachson*—diagonal. Some argue it could mean rounded, but there is no such indication in Rashi. In two other instances in Torah, he uses the word to describe the Jordan River's *alachson* descent from west to east into the Kinneret, and Eretz Yisroel's southern border's *alachson* descent from the bottom tip of the Dead Sea into the Negev desert. Both could be translated as diagonal.¹⁴

AN ASMACHTA:

The words of the Torah describing how

the branches emerged from the middle are: “וכפתור תחת שני הקנים ממנה,” that a bulb was *below* the two branches. Had the branches been round, emerging sideways from the bulb, the word באמצע (in between)—not תחת (under)—would have been more accurate.

THE RAMBAM'S DRAWING:

In his *Pirush Hamishnayos*, the Rambam drew the Menorah with straight branches, and the most reliable surviving manuscripts indicate that he did the same in *Mishneh Torah*.

Some point to his disclaimer: “The purpose...is not for you to know the exact form of the goblet—for I have already explained that to you—but rather for you to recognize the number of cups, knobs, and flowers...”¹⁵ Yet this disclaimer clearly refers only to the details of the ornaments, which he already described differently in the text (and makes no disclaimer at all in *Mishneh Torah*). The Rambam immediately concludes: “*Vezuhi tzuras kol zeh*—this is its general form.” Did the Rambam believe the branches were round, yet still (a) use the term *kanim*, (b) sketch them as straight lines, and (c) never suggest otherwise?

Perhaps circles are simply harder to draw, or take up more space? In the very same sketch, he rendered a perfectly rounded base for the Menorah, and in the manuscripts of *Mishneh Torah*, there is plenty of space—and yet they are straight as well.



THE REAL MENORAH

UNBENDING TRUTH

RABBI AVRAHAM, THE RAMBAM'S SON:

He writes: “The branches extended like branches from the body of the Menorah toward its top, in a straight line, as *Abba Mari z”l* drew them—not curved, as others have depicted them.”¹⁶ Reb Avraham also writes in his commentary that the base was round—a detail found only in the Rambam’s sketch. Clearly, Reb Avraham sees every detail as exact.

THE DISSENTING VIEW:

Famously, the Ibn Ezra writes “ונכון הוא להיות טעם” יערוך בעבור היות הנרות כחצי עגול, the word *yaaroch* is appropriate [in the *possuk*] because the lights were in a half circle.”¹⁷ Rather than round branches, this seems to mean that the tops of the branches formed a half circle (in a form that would be *possul* for Chanukah). A similar concept is found in Sifri Zuta, which says that the branches were חוזרין חלילה כמין עטרה, seeming to imply that the branches surrounded the central branch—clearly not the classic view.¹⁸

THE PLANETS:

Midrashic (and historical) sources explain that the Menorah’s seven lights symbolize the planets known as *shatza”m chancha”l*, with the central branch representing the sun.¹⁹ This interpretation is quoted by several Rishonim as well. Some have argued that such descriptions suggest the Menorah’s branches were round.

However, those sources consistently speak of the *neir*, not the *kaneh* (Rabbeinu Bachya, for example, cites this explanation for the *neiros*, while giving a separate explanation for the *kanim*).²⁰ Should this be referring to the *kanim*, the central branch would presumably also be round, which it obviously is not.

The Historical Arguments

As explained above, historical arguments are irrelevant when set against a Torah tradition. Questions arising from archaeological discoveries or the Arch

of Titus have no real bearing on this discussion. They are presented just to broaden the discussion.

DID THE MENORAH COME TO ROME?

Very likely. The Gemara relates that Titus fashioned the *paroches* into a sack and used it to collect all the *keilim* of the Beis Hamikdash.²¹ Avos D’Rabbi Nasan says that the Menorah is still in Rome.²² Similarly, the *Sifrei Zuta* records that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai saw the Menorah during his visit to Rome.²³

However, Yosifun says that more than one Menorah was brought to Rome.²⁴ This is entirely logical; the Beis Hamikdash surely contained many candelabra. If so, any Roman depiction becomes suspect—there is no certainty that it represents *the* Menorah of the Beis Hamikdash at all.

THE ARCH OF TITUS:

The round Menorah on the Arch of Titus has a large pedestal base—rather than the three legs required by Halacha—adorned with idolatrous images. Some suggested the Menorah was damaged on its journey to Rome and that this new base was later affixed. But if we accept that the Menorah was altered, the entire depiction becomes unreliable.

JOSEPHUS:

The historian describes the Menorah in the parade, saying that “this candelabrum differed from the design of those candelabras we made use of.” At first glance, this seems to mean that the Menorah was just not an ordinary candelabrum, but interestingly, a newer translation from the original Greek changes it slightly: “The candlestick... though its construction was *now changed* from that which we made use of.”²⁵ This might mean that the Menorah in the parade was actually *not* the Menorah of the Beis Hamikdash, or that it had been altered. He also says that the lamps were made of copper, not gold.

ARCHEOLOGY:

Many archaeological findings portray the Menorah with rounded branches (though a minority show it straight), with some depictions originating from *kohanim*. A coin with a round Menorah was minted by Matisyahu Antignos, the

final Chashmonai king, himself a kohen. Another depiction of a rounded Menorah was uncovered in a home of *kohanim* located just near the Beis Hamikdash. It seems difficult to argue that these individuals did not know what the Menorah actually looked like.

However, it is noteworthy that none of these portrayals align with the Torah's requirements. The Menorah found in the *kohanim's* home, for example, features bulbs and ornaments along the entire structure—details that are halachically inaccurate (like many other discoveries of those times).

One of two things is possible:

One could argue that, since the Tzedokim were a dominating force in the final period of the Second Beis Hamikdash, the portrayals of the Menorah—and perhaps the actual shape of the Menorah itself—may have reflected their sensibilities. Rounded candelabra were common motifs in Roman architecture of the time. (Interestingly, the non-golden Menorah used right after the Chanukah victory was

made from שפודין של ברזל—clearly denoting straight branches²⁶).

One could also argue the opposite—that the Menorah was straight, but the Yidden of the time preferred not to depict it accurately, as a *chumra* of the halacha that one should not recreate the *Keilim* of the Beis Hamikdash.

GOLDMAKING:

Some argue that since gold is a soft metal, it cannot support long, straight extensions without bending. Others disagree.²⁷ This is beyond the author's expertise.

Perhaps we can suggest that this very challenge is what the Midrash and Rashi refer to when they describe Moshe's difficulty in constructing the Menorah: “Moshe was struggling; Hashem said to him, ‘Throw the gold into the fire, and it will form on its own.’”²⁸

This may also suggest that the Menorah in the Second Beis Hamikdash perhaps had curved branches, simply because the original was too difficult to replicate. This would resolve the images that emerge from archeology.

1. Translated from the Hebrew, *The War on the Jews* Book 7, Chapter 5.

2. Toras Menachem 5742 vol. 4, p. 1917.

3. The following section is from Devarim 5742. Toras Menachem 5742 vol. 4, p. 1962. The Rebbe continued in Re'eh, Ibid., p. 2073.

4. Likkutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 168 & fn. 44.

5. Toras Menachem 5743 vol. 2, p. 1051.

6. Shabbos 63b.

7. Ibid.

8. Oxford 602.

9. Likkutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 201 ft.

15. The earlier *sicha* on the Menorah, when later printed in Likkutei Sichos vol. 21, likewise included similar footnotes, in Footnotes 11* and 40*.

10. Hiskashrus issue 18, p. 11.

11. Menachos 86b.

12. See Rabbi Nachum Greenwald's articles in Or Yisrael issues 18 & 22. *El Mul Pnei HaMenorah* by Rabbi Peretz Blau, and 'Knei HaMenorah' in Heichal Menachem vol. 1, p. 270. Special thanks to Rabbi Shmuel Super.

13. *B'orcha Nir'eh Or* 5764.

14. Rashi on Bamidbar 34:4 “V'Yatza Chatzar Adar” & 34:11 “Yam Kineres Kedma.” See also Yechezkel 47:1 “El Pesach Habayis,” Kiddushin 72a “Amar Abaye,” and Eruvin 100a “D'damu.”

15. Menachos 7:3.

16. In his commentary on Parshas Terumah.

17. Tetzaveh 27:21.

18. Beginning of Parshas B'haalosecha.

19. Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus,

Mercury and the Moon (all visible to the naked eye). See Baraisa D'Maseches Midos M. 6, Yalkut beginning of B'haalosecha. Targum Yonasan, Shemos 39:37. Yalkut Shimoni Pekudei remez 419. Yerushalmi Chagiga 3:8.

20. Shemos 25:31.

21. Gittin 56b.

22. 41:12.

23. 8:2:1.

24. Chapter 95.

25. Translation by William Whiston.

26. Rosh Hashanah 24b.

27. <https://asif.co.il/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/%D7%91%D7%93%D7%9323-%D7%9E%D7%90%D7%9E%D7%A82-%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%95%D7%93%D7%A8.pdf>.

28. Shemos 25:31.



The Yud-Tes Kislev Storyteller

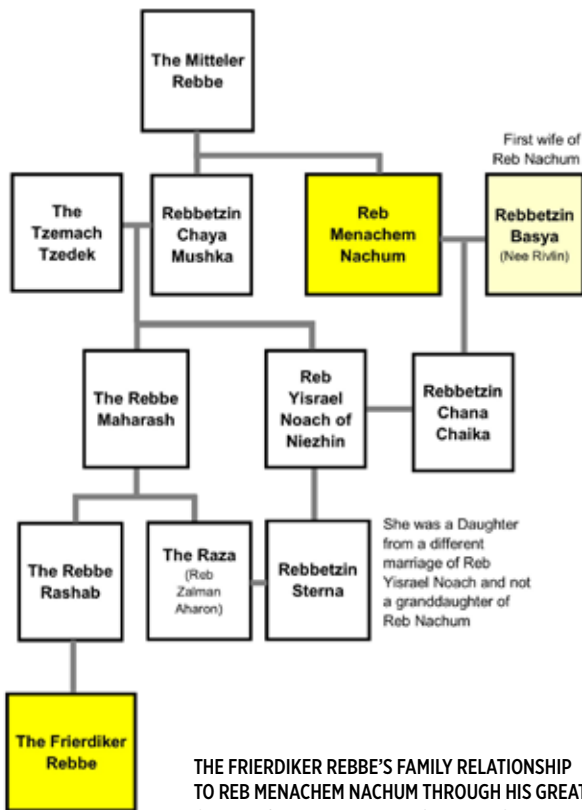
The life of the Mittler Rebbe's eldest son—
and the unique story of his progeny

By: **Rabbi Mendy Greenberg (Twinsburg, OH)**

Special thanks to Rabbi Shmuel Super for his assistance in the preparation of this article.

לזכות
הילד שניאור זלמן נ"י בועז
לרגל יום ההולדת י"ג כסלו

יה"ר שיגדל לתורה לחופה
ולמעשים טובים מתוך בריאות
נכונה ושפע בגו"ר לנח"ר
כ"ק אדמו"ר והוריו הי"ו



The Famous Description

"Der Zaide iz geven tzen yahr a talmid baim Mezritcher Maggid, my grandfather was a disciple of the Mezritcher Maggid for ten years..."

This is how the famed storyteller of Yud-Tes Kislev, the holy Reb Nachum—eldest son of the Mittler Rebbe—would begin his account each year. He would start from the very beginning, the Alter Rebbe as a student of the Maggid, and go on to describe the Alter Rebbe's *nesius*.

Then, he would move on to the story of Yud-Tes Kislev itself. In a low, tear-choked voice, he would recount the story of the imprisonment, and when he reached the account of the liberation, his voice would joyfully rise to a crescendo. It was like a Megillah reading—and if an important personage would show up a little late, Reb Nachum would restart from the beginning.

This description of Reb Nachum is famous in its own right.

In one of the opening *kuntreisim* of Likkutei Dibburim, the Frierdiker Rebbe begins a Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen with a lengthy description of *der feter* Reb Nachum (in Hebrew, *Kevod Kedushas haRav haKadosh Reb Nachum*), and his Yud-Tes Kislev storytelling.¹

The Frierdiker Rebbe himself never met Reb Nachum,

who had passed away around the time of the Frierdiker Rebbe's birth. How did the stories of Reb Nochum reach him?

The obvious family relation between Reb Nochum and the Frierdiker Rebbe was great-great-uncle. He was the brother of the Frierdiker Rebbe's great-grandmother, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, wife of the Tzemach Tzedek. However, there was another relationship that brought the traditions of Reb Nochum to his great-great-nephew.

In those days, it was the custom of *Beis Harav* to arrange *shidduchim* within the family (and indeed most of the Rabbeim were married to their cousins).

The Frierdiker Rebbe's uncle, the Raza (Reb Zalman Aharon, brother of the Rebbe Rashab) married his first cousin, Rebbetzin Sterna, daughter of Reb Yisroel Noach of Niezhin.² After the Raza's marriage, he spent considerable time in Niezhin and had the opportunity to spend time with Reb Nochum, who was Reb Yisrael Noach's father-in-law.³ The Raza later recounted many of the stories to the Frierdiker Rebbe.

The Raza spent a lot of time with Reb Nochum. Already in his eighties, his hair and even his eyebrows completely white, he moved around like a young man. He told stories with intricate detail, remembering people and dates with remarkable clarity.

The Tziyur Near the Tziyun

Throughout the *nesius* of the Mitteler Rebbe, his son Reb Nochum had remained close at his father's side, and when—after his arrest and liberation—the Mitteler Rebbe embarked on a journey to visit the Alter Rebbe's Ohel in Haditch, Reb Nochum joined as well. Although the Mitteler Rebbe had been released, the case was still ongoing, and the Mitteler Rebbe therefore wanted to visit the Ohel in Haditch.

Haditch is very far from Lubavitch. Lubavitch is in the north, in “White Russia,” while Haditch lies in the south, in what they called “Maleh Russia,” “Little Russia” (the two areas are approximately the equivalents of modern-day Belarus and Ukraine). On the way to Niezhin, the Mitteler Rebbe passed through the city of Homel to visit the famous chossid Reb Eizik Homiler, and during that visit, Reb Nochum received a bad omen about the future.

In Reb Eizik's home, the story goes, the Mitteler Rebbe spoke very sharp words to Reb Eizik. Reb Nochum was surprised to hear his father speak in those terms to such an exalted chossid, and on their way out, he asked his



AT THE SITE OF THE MITTELER REBBE'S TZIYUN IN NIEZHIN, THERE ARE TWO MATZEIVOS. IT IS UNCLEAR WHICH ONE IS THE MITTELER REBBE'S AND WHO IS BURIED ALONGSIDE HIM, WHETHER IT IS HIS SON REB MENACHEM NACHUM OR HIS GRANDSON, REB YISRAEL NOACH, WHO WERE BOTH INTERRED IN THE VICINITY OF THE OHEL.

father why he had done so. The Mitteler Rebbe replied, “Don't worry, you will see how he will honor you when you return.”

Reb Nochum was shocked. “When *you* return”? Why did the Mitteler Rebbe imply that he would not be returning with him?⁴

His premonition proved correct. After spending several months in Haditch, the Mitteler Rebbe began the journey back to Lubavitch, but as they passed through the city of Niezhin, he fell ill, and, on Tes Kislev, passed away.

The Chassidim began looking for a new Rebbe.

When some Chassidim approached the Tzemach Tzedek and asked him to accept the *nesius*, he refused, and told them to ask either Reb Chaim Avraham—second son of the Alter Rebbe—or Reb Nochum.⁵ Reb Nochum had also received a hint in the words of the Mitteler Rebbe upon leaving the home of Reb Eizik, when he said, “*You will see how he will honor you when you return.*”

But Reb Nochum refused to contemplate the idea, and even seems to have pushed for the Tzemach Tzedek to accept the *nesius* immediately.⁶ As for himself, he decided to remain in Niezhin.⁷

The Chassidim in Ukraine quickly became attached to him.

Traveling to the Rebbe in Lubavitch was prohibitively expensive and difficult. For this reason indeed, Reb Hillel Paritcher was appointed to the Rabbeim to travel to the distant colonies in the south of Ukraine, where he would become famous as a “half-Rebbe.”

The Chassidim in Ukraine clearly felt very lonely, and having Reb Nochum there was like a breath of fresh air. People would travel to see him from throughout the region, to farbreng and hear stories from someone who had been so close with the Mittlerer Rebbe and the Alter Rebbe. In later years, he even had a “*shadar*,” a personal shliach who would travel the area and raise funds for his support; this was “Reb Shalom Reb Hillel’s,” the close *talmid* of Reb Hillel Paritcher. He was first a *shadar* for Reb Hillel, and after Reb Hillel’s passing, became a *shadar* for Reb Nochum.⁸

Reb Nochum would never say Chassidus, however. “I could say Chassidus like all the others,” he once said, “but like my father, I cannot. So I came to the conclusion that I should not say anything.”⁹ He would only repeat the short *maamarim* the Alter Rebbe had shared in the early years of his *nesius*, which he had himself heard from elder Chassidim of previous generations.

“The main thing they would learn from him,” the Friediker Rebbe said, “was *midos tovos*.”¹⁰

Stories were told of miraculous events in his presence.

One wealthy man in Niezhin once spoke negatively about Reb Nochum and his father, the Mittlerer Rebbe.

When the man arrived home and sat at his table to eat, a cat jumped onto his lap. When he threw the cat off, it parked itself on the table. When he tried to chase it off the table, it began to attack him, and soon dug its nails into his neck.

The man realized that there was something spiritual afoot, so he quickly sent a messenger to Reb Nochum asking for forgiveness. Reb Nochum replied that his own *kepeida* wasn’t meaningful; he needed to ask *mechila* from the Mittlerer Rebbe himself.

Left with no choice, the man walked to the Ohel of the Mittlerer Rebbe with the cat wrapped around his neck, and as soon as he asked *mechila*, the cat jumped off.¹¹

Reb Nochum himself would sometimes deny the stories of *mofsim* that were being told, but one story he would himself relate:

“A fire once broke out in the Ohel of my father, the



THE SECOND VOLUME OF THE MITTLER REBBE'S TORAS CHAIM, FIRST PUBLISHED BY REB MENACHEM NACHUM (AS SEEN ON THE TITLE PAGE) IN 5626 DURING HIS LIFETIME.

Rebbe. People ran to put out the flames, and I ran to save the *sefer Torah* that was there. The flames were so strong that I couldn't reach the *aron kodesh*. As I stood there, looking for a way to save the *sefer Torah*, my father suddenly appeared before me, holding the *sefer Torah* in his hands. He handed me the Torah, and immediately disappeared.”¹²

The Wrong Turn

In his elder years, Reb Nochum hoped to move to Eretz Yisroel (he was actually seen as one of the leaders of Colel Chabad; there is a letter from Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel regarding the Colel addressed to the Tzemach Tzedek, Reb Chaim Avraham, and Reb Nochum¹³).

When his sister, Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, moved to Eretz Yisroel at the advice of the Tzemach Tzedek, Reb Nochum wanted to go along—but the Tzemach Tzedek told him not to. “You should be no different from your forefathers,” the Tzemach Tzedek told him.¹⁴ Later, he expressed his desire once again in the preface to *Toras Chaim*, which he published shortly after the passing of

the Tzemach Tzedek, asking for Chassidim to come to his support to help him achieve his goal. However, this desire never came to fruition.

In those years, he began to spend considerable amounts of time in Haditch, near the Ohel of the Alter Rebbe. He had a small room in the caretaker's structure, and he lived there for extended periods each year, remaining there for longer and longer.

Chassidim in the area were perplexed. People from all over came to see him in Niezhin; why would he suddenly, in his elder years, choose to remain closeted in Haditch?

The widespread assumption was that it was associated with an incident with the Alter Rebbe, during the escape from Napoleon:

When the Alter Rebbe decided to escape the advance of the French army, no experienced wagon drivers were willing to take the job. It was a large entourage of people, many wagons and horses, but due to the lack of wagon drivers, it was decided that Reb Nochum—then a *yungerman*—would lead the journey. Whenever he reached a fork in the road, he would get out of the first wagon, go back to consult with the Alter Rebbe, and then—based on the Alter Rebbe's guidance—continue on his way.

At one point, Reb Nochum mistakenly directed the wagons in the wrong direction. By the time they realized, it was too late to turn back; the French armies were too close. Reb Nochum ran to consult with the Alter Rebbe, and the Alter Rebbe gave a big sigh and said, "It's wonderful when grandchildren follow in the grandfather's direction. The opposite when he is forced to follow them..."

The Alter Rebbe had planned to travel southward and reach Poltava before Rosh Hashanah, but due to the error, they were forced to travel deep into the Russian interior in the midst of a brutal winter. That Teves, the Alter Rebbe fell ill and passed away.

The events of that winter weighed heavily on Reb Nochum's heart, and when he began spending more and more time in Haditch, many assumed it was related to that story.

Then, on one occasion, a group of the last living Chassidim of the Alter Rebbe visited Haditch—close to fifty years after his *histalkus*—and they were sitting at a farbrengen with Reb Nochum himself. As they discussed *divrei Chassidus* and memories of years gone by, they gathered the courage to ask Reb Nochum: Why did he leave his household in Niezhin and settle alone in Haditch?

That's when he told them the story of the coat.

The Chosson's Kapota

This story was told by the Frierdiker Rebbe and the Rebbe—as well as by Chassidim—in several versions. In Likkutei Dibburim, the Frierdiker Rebbe says the story as follows:

When Reb Nochum was preparing for his wedding, a beautiful new silk *kotinke* (an overcoat) was sewn for the young *chosson*.

Soon, the Alter Rebbe summoned him. "Nochum, would you consent to your silk *kotinke* having a patch on it?"

Reb Nochum was surprised. "No," he told the Alter Rebbe, "I don't want my *kotinke* to have any patches at all!"

"What would you want in return?" the Alter Rebbe asked. The Alter Rebbe offered to learn with him privately, but he refused. Finally, the Alter Rebbe said he would promise him *imi bim'chitzasi*, that Reb Nochum would dwell alongside him in Gan Eden...

"That really 'took' me," Reb Nochum related, "and I consented."

But then he asked his grandfather a question: "Must I really want it, truthfully, or is it enough to agree *b'kab-balas ol*?"

"Of course *mit an emes*," the Alter Rebbe replied. "*Mit an emes fun Yechida*."

To this, Reb Nochum didn't respond—and the patch was never put on.

Reb Nochum's *kotinke* had a long collar, and when he entered the Alter Rebbe's room to receive his *bracha* before the *chupah*, the Alter Rebbe tore off one little piece of fur from the collar, and in exchange for this, promised him *arichus yomim*. Reb Nochum's dwelling near the Alter Rebbe in Haditch, the Frierdiker Rebbe explained, was to rectify the event of the *kotinke*.¹⁵

The Rebbe's Hora'ah

In the Rebbe's *sichos*, Reb Nochum often appears—specifically in relation to this final story. The Rebbe added a postscript that he heard from the Frierdiker Rebbe at the time:¹⁶

The reason the Alter Rebbe wanted him to change the manner of his clothing—to the point of promising *imi bim'chitzasi*—was because he saw that a *taavah* was spreading: the *taavah* of *levushim*. Spiritually, he wanted to 'break' that new *taavah*.

The lesson the Rebbe learned from the story was about

the importance of being able to break a *taavah* specifically where it seems most powerful. Instead of surrendering to the tide, face it head-on and overpower it.

The new American *taavos* the Rebbe spoke about were the excessive engagement in materialism—the creature comforts, wall-to-wall carpets, summers in the country which families could barely afford—and also regarding the idea of *tachlis*; the American determination that children, from the earliest of ages, should think about and

actively plan for their careers, instead of immersing themselves in Torah alone.

“If we were able to ‘break’ this concept here,” the Rebbe said, “specifically in the country which is more engaged in this than in any other country, in the past or even in the future—it would mean that it would be broken from its greatest and most powerful place...”¹⁷

POSTSCRIPT:

A Tale of Two Families

The Unclear Chapter

By all accounts, Reb Nochum lived in Niezhin for approximately the final fifty years of his life, from the passing of the Mittler Rebbe and onward. There is a fascinating and obscure chapter of his life which took place during that time, and yet we know next to nothing about it.

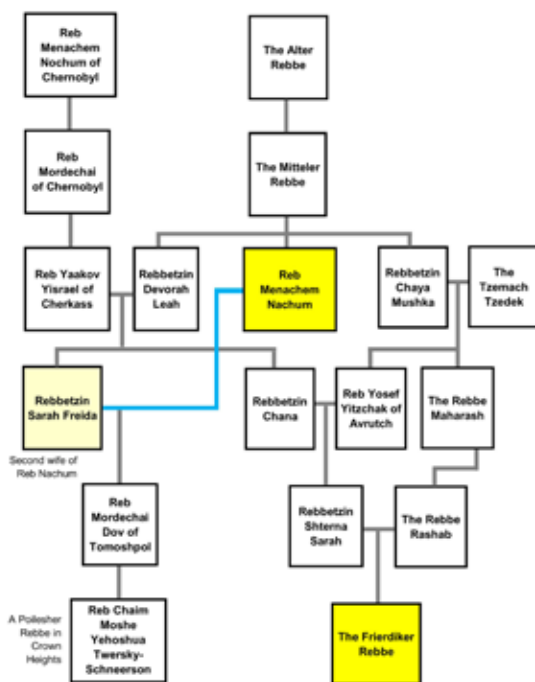
The following introduction is in order:

When the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived in America and purchased the building of 770, a small *shtiebel* was already functioning just down the block from 770 (at 922 Eastern Parkway, between Albany and Troy), also led by a chassidic rebbe, Reb Chaim Moshe Yehoshua Twersky-Schneerson, known as the Rebbe of Tomoshpol.

The Tomoshpoler was a scion of the Chernobyl and Koidinov dynasties and followed in their traditions. However, one astounding fact brought him very close to Lubavitch and the Frierdiker Rebbe: his paternal grandfather was none other than our Reb Nochum, son of the Mittler Rebbe.

How is it that the grandson of Reb Nochum—a *ben-achar-ben* only four generations removed from the Alter Rebbe—becomes a *poilisher* rebbe?

To answer this question, we need to examine the history of Reb Nochum’s family—or, rather, *families*.



THE FRIEDIKER REBBE'S FAMILY RELATIONSHIP TO REB MENACHEM NACHUM THROUGH HIS MOTHER'S SIDE AND THE CONNECTION WITH THE CHERNOBYLER DYNASTY.

The Apparent Contradiction

In the volume of *Igros Kodesh* chronicling the letters of the Frierdiker Rebbe to the Rebbe and Rebbetzin (vol. 15), there is a letter in which the Frierdiker Rebbe mentions a plan to publish an article about Reb Nochum in the forthcoming *Hatomim* (unfortunately, World War II broke out in the interim and that issue never appeared). The Frierdiker Rebbe asks the Rebbe to compile a list of sources from his *sichos* where stories of Reb Nochum had

already been told.¹⁸ A short time later, the Rebbe sent a response.¹⁹

A few pages later, there is an interesting paragraph in the Frierdiker Rebbe's letter to the Rebbe.

*"Regarding Reb Nochum, I don't know what you mean by 'a contradiction.' At the time of his marriage, he was surely 14 or 15 years old—as evident in the well-known story of the collar and the patch. In my youth, I heard that the chossid Reb Hillel was called Chol Hamoed, because he wore a tallis even before his Bar Mitzvah, when he began wearing Tefillin."*²⁰

The Frierdiker Rebbe seems to be explaining an apparent contradiction the Rebbe had noted between the date of Reb Nochum's birth and the date of his marriage:

The Frierdiker Rebbe had written in a letter that Reb Nochum was born in 5558, several months after the passing of Reb Menachem Nochum of Chernobyl, and was named after him.²¹ However, in a *maamar* in Derech Mitzvosecha,²² the Tzemach Tzedek quotes an explanation he heard from the Alter Rebbe at the wedding of "my brother-in-law and cousin Reb Nochum," in the winter of 5572—some 14 years later!

To this the Frierdiker Rebbe responded—as above—that this was indeed standard in *Beis Harav*.

Interestingly, there is a story passed down by Chasidim about how the story of Reb Nochum's *shidduch* began even earlier.

The Young Chosson's Protests

When Reb Nochum was only seven years old, offers of *shidduchim* began arriving from all directions. As the eldest son of the Alter Rebbe's eldest son, many had their eye on him, and some began taking not-so-subtle actions. One *gvir* would openly bring gifts for Reb Nochum whenever he arrived in Liadi, and send gifts with others as well.

At the time, a chossid named Reb Zalman Rivlin arrived in Liadi to seek the Alter Rebbe's advice. He had recently lost all his wealth, and he had no way of marrying off his two young daughters. He poured out his heart to the Alter Rebbe in *yechidus*.

The Alter Rebbe told him that he had nothing to worry about. "I will take one of your daughters as a *shidduch* for my grandson, and the second will no doubt find a worthy match as well..." It was determined that during the Alter Rebbe's next visit to Shklov, he would determine which of the daughters would be chosen for Reb Nochum.



ROSH YESHIVAH IN NIEZHIN, REB LEVI YITZCHAK SCHNEERSOHN, SON OF REB MENACHEM NACHUM.

When the young 'chosson' returned that day from cheder, he was welcomed with "*mazal tov*" wishes... Hearing who his future father-in-law was, the seven-year-old *chosson* protested; he didn't like the choice at all!

Being—after all—seven years old, his opinion wasn't taken very seriously, and his father brought him into the Alter Rebbe's room to receive his grandfather's *bracha*. When the Alter Rebbe heard the child's protests, he noted that he would be receiving gifts—a sum of money, or even a *Shas*, but the *chosson* was unconvinced; "a *Shas* we already have at home," he told the Alter Rebbe.

The Alter Rebbe didn't continue the argument. This was the *shidduch*, and that was it. The Mittlerer Rebbe hinted to Reb Nochum that he should leave the room.

Some time later, the Alter Rebbe visited the home of Reb Zalman Rivlin in Shklov. The two young daughters were brought before him, and the Alter Rebbe put on his glasses and looked at the two of them, and asked the *gabbai* which one he should choose for Reb Nochum. The

gabbai pointed to the one with a more pleasant physical appearance, but the Alter Rebbe waved him off. “*Gey—di iz shener*, Go—the other is nicer.” They proceeded to write the Tnoim. (When they grew up, it was noted that the *kallah’s* *midos tovos* were far superior to those of her sister.)²³

Some seven years later, when both the *chosson* and the *kallah* came of age, the wedding was finally held. We don’t have the name of his wife, but we know of three children who were born to them: his son Reb Shneur, who later became the son-in-law of the Tzemach Tzedek, his daughter, Chana Chaika, who became the daughter-in-law of the Tzemach Tzedek (wife of Reb Yisroel Noah of Niezhin, mentioned earlier in this article), and his son Reb Levi Yitzchak, who became a well-known Rosh Yeshivah in Niezhin.

But then, at some point, his wife passed away—and soon, a new *shidduch* was proposed.

The Chernobyl-Chabad Connection

Chassidim relate that the Maggid once expressed himself that Moshiach would come from “either his eldest

talmid or his youngest *talmid*.” The eldest was Reb Menachem Nochum of Chernobyl, and the youngest was the Alter Rebbe.

With Reb Menachem Nochum’s agreement, the Alter Rebbe entered the room where Reb Menachem Nochum’s grandchildren were sleeping, and chose a young boy named Reb Yaakov Yisrael (son of Reb Mottele of Chernobyl). He was chosen to marry Devorah Leah, the daughter of the Mittlerer Rebbe.²⁴

When they grew up and were married, Reb Yaakov Yisrael merited to spend significant amounts of time with his father-in-law and his grandfather-in-law, the Alter Rebbe. Afterward, he returned to Ukraine, to the areas of Chenobyler Chassidim, and began serving as a Rebbe in the city of Hornsteipel and later in Cherkass (thereby becoming known as Reb Yaakov Yisrael Cherkasser).

Now, with his brother-in-law Reb Nochum widowed and living in Niezhin (not far from Hornsteipel), a *shid-duch* was proposed between his daughter Sarah Freida and Reb Nochum.

(This brings the Frierdiker Rebbe into a second family connection: another of Reb Yaakov Yisrael Cherkasser’s



SITTING THIRD FROM THE LEFT AT THE REBBE’S FARBRENGEN (IN A BALLROOM), 19 KISLEV 5714.



THE TOMOSHPOLER REBBE WHO RESIDED IN CROWN HEIGHTS.



TZIYUN OF THE TOMOSHPOLER REBBE NEAR THE OHEL.

daughters was Rebbetzin Chana, who married Reb Yosef Yitzchak of Avrutch, the son of the Tzemach Tzedek. She was the mother of Rebbetzin Shterna Sara and grandmother of the Frierdiker Rebbe. Thus, Reb Nochum was also the Frierdiker Rebbe's great-uncle.)

Two children were born from this marriage; the first was Reb Mordechai Dov of Tomoshpol, and the second was Reb Moshe Zalman of Tchimichleh. The Tomoshpoler Rebbe in Crown Heights, mentioned at the beginning of this segment, was the son of Reb Mordechai Dov.

The Last Surviving Ben-Achar-Ben

Very little is known about Reb Nochum's second marriage. There is one vague letter in the Rebbe's library, in which Reb Yisroel Noach of Niezhin writes a letter to his father-in-law Reb Nochum, and he sends greetings to his wife Rebbetzin Sarah Freida and their son Reb Mordechai Dov.²⁵ Aside from that letter, not much is known.

The children from this marriage were raised in Hornsteipel and Cherkass, in the court of their grandfather, Reb Yaakov Yisrael, and later became *poilisher rebbes* of the Chernobyl tradition. They even used the last name Twer-sky; the Tomoshpoler Rebbe in Crown Heights only added the last name Schneerson when he arrived in America.

In America, the Tomoshpoler became quite close with Lubavitcher Chassidim; he was even considered for the position of chairman of Agudas Chassidei Chabad. His home and *shtiebel* were just a block away from 770, between Albany and Troy; he would often come visit the Frierdiker Rebbe, his second-cousin, and in later years, the Rebbe, and farbreng with the *bochurim* as well. The Tomoshpoler was very active in strengthening *shmiras Shabbos* and *taharas hamishpacha*, and was one of the main forces behind the construction of the Crown Heights Mikvah, celebrated as one of the first modern *mikvaos* in America, built "with all sanitary and hygienic needs,"²⁶ so that all women would be comfortable using it.

When he passed away in 5719, the *levaya* passed 770; the Rebbe personally participated in carrying the *aron*, and he was interred in the Chabad section in Montefiore, just a few rows behind the Ohel.²⁷

The Tomoshpoler had in his possession a *sefer Torah* used by the Mitteler Rebbe, which is housed today in the shul of his descendants in Flatbush. Fascinatingly, when all the dust settled after the wars, revolutions and the Holocaust, many of the descendents of *Beis Harav* were lost—and it is quite possible that the Tomoshpoler and his progeny are the last surviving *ben-achar-ben* descendants of the Alter Rebbe. **1**

1. Likkutei Dibburim vol. 1, p. 22.

2. After the Tzemach Tzedek's passing, several sons became Rebbes in various locations. Reb Yehudah Leib in Kopust, Reb Chaim Shneur Zalman in Liadi, and Reb Yisroel Noach in Niezhin. Reb Yosef Yitzchak served as a Rebbe in Avrutch as part of the Chernobyl dynasty, to which he was connected through his father-in-law.

3. Reb Yisroel Noach was married several times, and it seems that Raza's wife was a daughter from a previous marriage.

4. *Likutei Sippurim* p. 145. *Sippurim Nora'im* p. 96.

5. Reshimas Hayoman 288.

6. See *Bnei Hatzemach Tzedek* p. 485.

7. *Sippurim Nora'im* p. 96 implies that Reb Nochum made a return journey to Lubavitch, which would mean he made a return trip to settle in Niezhin a short time later.

8. *Zichron Tzadikim V'Chassidim* p. 121.

9. *Lishema Ozen (Yiddish)* p. 48.

10. *Likkutei Dibburim* vol. 1, p. 13.

11. *Likutei Sippurim* p. 147.

12. *Likutei Sippurim* p. 146.

13. *Migdal Oz* p. 519

14. *Migdal Oz* p. 192.

15. See also Reshimos Devarim p. 97.

16. 20 Kislev 5717; Toras Menachem vol. 18, p. 285. 19 Kislev 5723; Toras Menachem vol. 35, p. 287. Yud Shevat 5715; Toras Menachem vol. 13, p. 244.

17. Yud Shevat 5715; Toras Menachem vol. 13, p. 26.

18. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz vol. 15, p. 328.

19. Ibid., p. 334.

20. Ibid., p. 342.

21. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz vol. 4, p. 466. See Ho'oros Hatmimim (Nachalas Har Chabad) vol. 9, p. 78 regarding alternative versions.

22. Derech Mitzvosecha p. 274.

23. *Migdal Oz* p. 181.

24. *Yiras Hashem Otzro* p. 125.

25. מו"ס כרטיס 364 מדור ומדף: לד. Thanks to Rabbi Shmuel Super for the discovery.

26. *Rishon L'Rishonim* vol. 4, p. 43.

27. For more about Reb Nochum, see *Bnei Hatzemach Tzedek* p. 481.

ONE FAMILY'S SPECIAL EFFORTS IN SPREADING
THE WELLSPRINGS OF CHASSIDUS

PULLING UP THE SHADES

The information in this article, with some minor stylistic variations, first appeared in the recently published book, *Legacy of Resilience, The Remarkable Journey of the Schapiro Family*, by Nuchie Schapiro—ch. 12 and 14.

לעילוי נשמת
ר' שמואל דוד בן הרב יעקב
יוסף ע"ה גורקאוו
נלב"ע י' אלול ה'תשס"א
תנ"צ'ב'ה'

נדפס ע"י בנו
הרה"ת ר' מיכאל יצחק וזוגתו
מרת חנה ומשפחתם שיחיו
גורקאוו

In honor of Yud-Tes Kislev, Rosh Hashanah L'Chassidus, we present the following unique story about Reb Lipa Schapiro and his family's activities in spreading Chassidus throughout Cleveland's post-war Jewish community, with the Rebbe's encouragement and advice. We hope that this story will inspire greater commitment to the task of *yafutzu maayanosecha chutza* and hasten the coming of Moshiach.

Yud-Tes Kislev in Cleveland

After escaping the Soviet Union and spending some time in various cities in Europe, Reb Lipa Schapiro and his family were settled by the Joint Distribution Committee (a leading Jewish humanitarian organization) in Cleveland, Ohio.

In the 5710s, Cleveland's Jewish community comprised approximately 10,000 individuals, with around one-quarter identifying as *frum*. This vibrant community was served by several key shuls, including Shomre Shabbos, Taylor Road Synagogue, and Young Israel of Greater Cleveland. The Hebrew Academy played a significant role in Jewish education, with a student body almost equally comprised of children of refugees and first- and second-generation Americans. Smaller schools, like the Kaliver Yeshiva, also provided a Torah education for local children. Educational institutions like Telz Yeshiva provided a strong foundation in higher learning. As Cleveland adapted to the post-war landscape, *frum* families strove to preserve Yiddishkeit in a rapidly changing world while navigating modern American life.

The Jewish community in Cleveland held Reb Lipa in great esteem. Although he served as a shochet, he was regarded as the unofficial *rav* of the Shomre

Shabbos shul on Taylor Road in Cleveland Heights at a time when there was no appointed rabbi. When a *rav* was subsequently appointed and given a *shtender* to the right of the *aron kodesh*, another *shtender* was set up to the left for Reb Lipa.

Instead of traveling to the Rebbe for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Reb Lipa officiated in nearby shuls that lacked an official *rav* or *chazan*. Once in *yechidus*, Reb Lipa remarked to the Rebbe about the strain of davening on these exalted days with many who lacked basic knowledge of davening.

"The fact that they are children of Avraham does not find favor in your eyes?" the Rebbe replied.

One year, when Reb Lipa was asked to be *chazan*



REB LIPA SCHAPIRO WITH HIS FAMILY
SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVING IN CLEVELAND.



A 19 KISLEV FARBRENGEN AT THE
EDDY ROAD SHUL IN CLEVELAND
WITH REB LIPA SPEAKING AT
THE HEAD OF THE TABLE.

on Rosh Hashanah for a shul in a neighboring city, he wrote to the Rebbe for advice. The Rebbe encouraged him to take the position, adding that he should endeavor to speak as many times as possible over Yom Tov, but to keep his sermons short.

As a compliment to his oratory abilities, the Rebbe once said to him from Tehillim, “*Pe’sach picha v’ama-leihu*—Open your mouth wide and I [Hashem] will fill it.”

Reb Lipa organized a big annual Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen at the Eddy Road shul, establishing it as a significant citywide event that attracted many *baalei batim* and *rabbanim* from diverse backgrounds. Reb Lipa served as the main speaker, alongside other local *rabbanim* who were also invited to address the crowd.

Sensitive to the city’s many Litvaks, Reb Lipa used the gentler term “*menagdim*” when recounting the Yud-Tes Kislev story, fostering unity and respect among all who attended.

While still in Cleveland, Reb Lipa’s father-in-law, Reb Zalman Vilenkin, would *chazar a maamar* for the crowd at these farbrengens. He mesmerized the audience with his incredible clarity, explaining even complex concepts in Chassidus in a way that everyone could understand. After he moved to New York, the Rebbe told Reb Lipa, “Now you will have a double responsibility: to speak at the event and to deliver a *maamar*.”

Over the years, Reb Lipa developed a close relationship with Rabbi Yisroel Poras, the esteemed chairman of Cleveland’s *Merkas HoRabbanim*, who served three congregations in Cleveland for nearly five decades. Known as

a prolific *talmid chacham*, Rabbi Poras authored a comprehensive seven-volume set titled *Movoy HaTalmud*.

The Rebbe showed keen interest in Rabbi Poras, often asking for updates about him in *yechidus*.

“I have his *seforim*,” the Rebbe once told Reb Lipa. “Tell him this. I want him to know.”

Rabbi Poras would also speak at the annual Yud-Tes Kislev community event. One year during his talk, he raised an intriguing question: Why did the Alter Rebbe spell the word “*me’od*” with a vov on the front page of Tanya, when in the *possuk* “*Ki Karov*” it is spelled without one? Interestingly, a printer had once “corrected” this so-called error, but the Rebbe later reinserted the vov in his *luach ha’tikkun*.

Several weeks later, when Reb Lipa traveled to New York for Yud Shevat, he stood before the Rebbe in *yechidus*, and the Rebbe asked about the Yud Tes Kislev farbrengen.

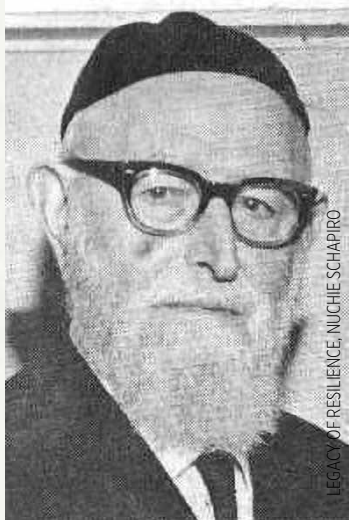
“Was Rabbi Poras there?” the Rebbe asked.

“Yes.”

“Did he speak?”

“Yes.”

“What did he say?”



RABBI YISRAEL PORAS.



REB ZALMAN VILENKIN IN CLEVELAND.



REB LIPA RECEIVES A BOTTLE OF MASHKE FROM THE REBBE.

Reb Lipa repeated Rabbi Poras's question to the Rebbe, who smiled and responded, "Tell him that we learn from the Gemara that when a *shtar* is written, each word is spelled out *molei* [in full] even if it appears shortened in the Torah."

When he returned home, Reb Lipa quickly contacted Rabbi Poras and communicated the Rebbe's answer.

Chassidim Live In This City

Throughout the years, Reb Lipa occasionally inquired about the possibility of moving to New York, but the

Rebbe insisted that he remain in Cleveland.

"*Vos reiszt men zich aher? Doh vert men tzuriben, b'gashmiyus uv'ruchniyus.*" (Why is there pressure to move here [to Crown Heights]? Here one becomes worn down, both physically and spiritually.)

Reb Lipa's direct, incisive way of thinking endeared him to local scholars and the wider community. He understood the various paths of the Jewish community, and people respected him all the more for it. At times, when the Rebbe distributed bottles of *mashke* at farbrengens, Reb Lipa would be given a bottle as a mark of appreciation for his efforts.

Reb Lipa worked hard to implement what the Rebbe once told him: "The community needs to know that there

SHATTERING THE PROBLEM

When the Schapiros lived on Phillips Avenue, their home was across the street from a public school. The younger children slept in the front room of the house, a sunroom that faced the school. One night, a rock came crashing through the front window where the boys slept, shattering glass everywhere. Frightened, the family called the police, who canvassed the area but found nothing.

The police filled out a report, and Reb Lipa found some wood to board up the window. A few nights later, another stone rocketed into the bedroom, covering the terrified children in glass again. The police conducted a much more extensive search but still found nothing.

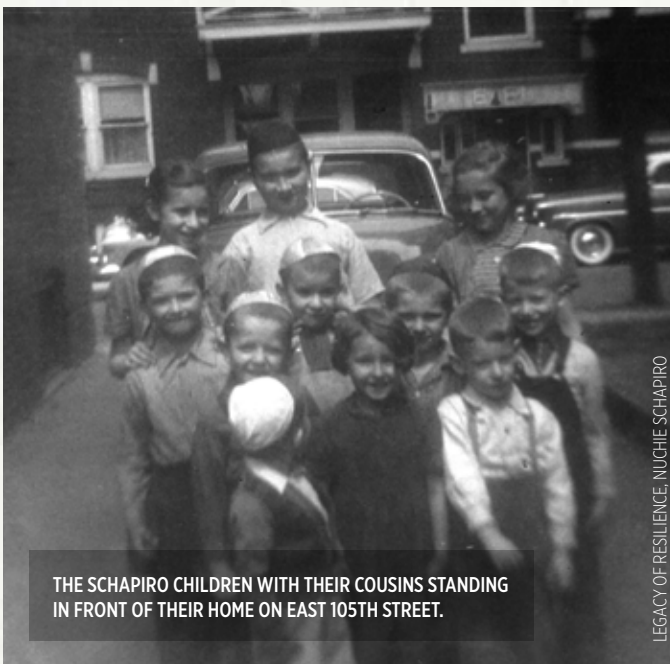
Reb Lipa resolved that family members would take turns staying up to catch the culprits. However, the nights they stayed up, everything was quiet. When they finally chose to sleep, the trouble started again. Even when he immediately ran out the door, Reb Lipa never caught anyone. Exasperated, Reb Lipa wrote about the incident to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe responded by annotating a *michtav kloli-proti* (“general letter”) with three handwritten words: “*Kedai livdok hamzuzos.*” (Check the *mezuzos.*) Indeed, one mezuzah was found to have issues. Reb Lipa replaced it, and the stone throwing stopped.



HARAV BARUCH SOROTZKIN.

LEGACY OF RESILIENCE, NUCHIE SCHAPIRO



THE SCHAPIRO CHILDREN WITH THEIR COUSINS STANDING IN FRONT OF THEIR HOME ON EAST 105TH STREET.

LEGACY OF RESILIENCE, NUCHIE SCHAPIRO



REB LIPA WITH BOCHURIM FROM THE TELZ YESHIVA.

LEGACY OF RESILIENCE, NUCHIE SCHAPIRO

are Chassidim living in the city.”

A former student of Rabbi Yonasan Steif once turned to Reb Lipa when personal issues arose at home. After writing to the Rebbe, all the issues were resolved without further heartache. Feeling profoundly indebted to the Rebbe, the young man traveled to Crown Heights for Simchas Torah.

Through the efforts of Reb Lipa, another young man, Aharon Wohlman, traveled from Cleveland every year to spend Simchas Torah with the Rebbe.

The Highest Standard

The Rebbe wanted Chalav Yisroel to be available in Cleveland, but Reb Lipa faced significant challenges. He had no financial backing for the project, spoke little English, and had only a handful of interested individuals. Despite these obstacles, he remained undeterred. Facilitating Chalav Yisroel was easier said than done, and education was essential, as most *frum* Yidden at the time, including those studying in Telz, did not fully appreciate its importance.

After some research, Reb Lipa traveled to a farm run by a Mr. Greenwald and tried explaining Chalav Yisroel to him in broken English.

“Rabbi, did you come from the moon?” the exasperated farmer said. “This milk is good! What do you want?”

Reb Lipa persisted. With the help of a few friends, the farm agreed to let them *kasher* the equipment. However, water at 212 degrees Fahrenheit was too hot for the machines. During a *yechidus*, Reb Lipa mentioned this obstacle to the Rebbe, adding, “Can we *kasher* the equipment using steam?”

The Rebbe answered in the negative.

“Maybe we can *kasher* at a lower temperature?”

“Nu, do it at 211 degrees,” the Rebbe said.

“We can’t get it that high either.”

“Do it at 210.”

Reb Lipa got the message and didn’t press anymore. Eventually, they were able to figure out a way to *kasher* at the right temperature. Reb Lipa later changed to a different dairy plant, where it was a lot easier to *kasher* the equipment.

During that time, the Rebbe gave Reb Lipa a bottle of *mashke* at a farbrengen and said with a smile, “Mix the *mashke* with milk.”

SAVED FROM DISASTER

When Reb Lipa and his brother Levitché lived with their families in an apartment building on 105th Street, they were located across from a row of stores that included a kosher bakery. Levitché heard that the bakery owner wanted to sell and, sensing a business opportunity, offered to buy the store. The two sides began negotiating a contract of sale. Levitché sent a letter to the Rebbe asking for a *bracha*. To his shock, the Rebbe replied not to go ahead with the purchase.

Everyone was surprised. The deal had seemed promising and was sure to bring a tidy profit. A few weeks later, all the stores on the street went up in flames. The fire burned so strongly that the street was cordoned off, and the fire department evacuated everyone from surrounding buildings. Had the bakery been bought, it would have resulted in a tremendous loss!

The Idea is Paramount

While attending a *sheva brachos* with some members of the Telz Yeshiva faculty, as well as the esteemed Rabbi Eliezer Silver—one of American Jewry’s foremost leaders—Reb Lipa heard his name called.

“Reb Lipa!” Rabbi Silver called out. “Aren’t you going to say a *maamar*? You say it well, with *geshmak*.”

Reb Lipa did not let the opportunity pass. “Rabbi Silver asked me to *chazar* Chassidus,” he announced, and then proceeded to explain a *maamar* to the crowd.

During *yechidus*, Reb Lipa was once asked if he shared Chassidus in shul.

“Yes,” said Reb Lipa. He spoke every Shabbos in the shul of Rabbi Boruch Zuckerman, usually for more than a half-hour.



“Do the Telzer sit there when you are speaking?”

“Yes.”

“You do not need to emphasize that you are saying Chassidus,” the Rebbe said. “*Der inyan darf zich heren.*” (The main thing is that they are hearing Chassidus.) It is less important to specify where the material comes from.”

A Veil Is Lifted

Through Reb Lipa’s position in Cleveland and his *shiurim* with *bochurim* from Telz, he developed a close relationship with Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, the Telz *rosh yeshiva* who taught thousands of students over fifty-five years. As a result, Reb Lipa became somewhat of an intermediary between Rabbi Gifter and the Rebbe.

During a *yechidus*, the Rebbe remarked to Reb Lipa on how Lubavitch and Telz always had a close relationship. “Before the war, Rabbi Shmuel Levitin taught Tanya in the yeshiva.”

Shortly after the Schapiros arrived in Cleveland, Rabbi Gifter sent his son Binyomin to Reb Lipa after school to be tutored in Chumash and Mishnayos. Rabbi Boruch Sorotzkin, a second *rosh yeshiva* in Telz, sent his son, as well.

Binyomin Gifter would later say that, aside from his father wanting him to learn with a *gaon* like Reb Lipa, he also wanted to help give *parnassa* to a new immigrant.

When at a wedding on the Telzer campus, Rabbi Gifter called Reb Lipa over and said, “You know how much we respect the Rebbe? We say that he is among the *gedolei hador*. Recently, I overheard one of our students speaking negatively about the Rebbe. You know what I did? I called him over, scolded him roundly, and told him he should

go to 770, take off his shoes, and accept *nezifa* [a form of rebuke] from the Rebbe.”

“Next time you will be by the Rebbe,” Rabbi Gifter added, “I ask that you tell him this.”

The next time Reb Lipa was in *yechidus*, he told the Rebbe, “I have a *shlichus* from Rabbi Gifter.”

Reb Lipa immediately noticed how the Rebbe leaned all the way back in his chair. (During *yechidus*, the Rebbe sat forward, almost leaning on the desk.) The *mazkir* rang the bell and later opened the door to signal to Reb Lipa to finish, but the Rebbe motioned with his hand not to interrupt anymore. The Rebbe listened with great satisfaction as Reb Lipa repeated his conversation with the *rosh yeshiva*.

After asking for more details, the Rebbe declared, “*Nishta a gresere taanug as s’kumt arop a helem v’hester oif Chassidus.*” (There is no greater pleasure than removing the concealment of Chassidus!)

Reb Lipa taught Tanya classes in his home for Telz bochurim. He recalled, “The yeshiva knew about it; it didn’t bother them. They seemed very happy about it.”

The *bochurim* would also discuss with Reb Lipa what they were learning and came away impressed by his vast knowledge and incisive reasoning.

One year, when the Rebbe distributed Chanukah gelt in 770 to *bochurim* who excelled in learning Chassidus, the Rebbe also sent a package of coins to Reb Lipa for the *bochurim* of Telz who learned Chassidus with him.

This demonstrates how much the Rebbe appreciated the fact that Yidden of all communities learn Chassidus, representing another step in the wellsprings of Chassidus reaching the entire world, towards the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days! **1**

לעילוי נשמת
השליחה הצדקנית מרת
אסתר הני' בת ר' מנחם
מענדל הכהן ע"ה ז"ל
הויכברג
תנ"צ'ב'ה'
בקשר עם יום הולדתה השישים
יום הבהיר ר"ח כסלו

By: Rabbi Shneur Itzinger

Step Inside

Farbrengen with the Rebbe — A Companion

A guide to the Farbrengen of
Yud-Tes Kislev 5742.



Hisvaaduyos 5742,
vol. 2, pp. 506-554



Sources

This guide is designed to assist in experiencing the farbrengen on video or audio recording. Timestamps correspond to the video of the farbrengen, linked above.



The Yud-Tes Kislev story is oft repeated, and every chossid is deeply familiar with the details behind the Yom Tov. So let's dive right in—right? Not so fast. We must first pause and take time to reflect on the story itself, and to repeat it anew each year. Why?

The Rebbe doesn't simply begin a farbrengen. He guides us to first understand¹ what we are doing here. "It's 9:30 p.m. on Yud-Tes Kislev, where else would I be but at a farbrengen?" is not enough. If I commemorated the day last year, I need to know why I must be here again today, doing the same thing.

Sicha 1: What are we doing here?

1. Why waste our time?

[0:44]

- The *minhag* is to repeat the significance of the day each time.
- Even though this is not the first time we are commemorating Yud-Tes Kislev.

Why? To add to the question:

Torah values time greatly.

- Time is always precious, especially today—a *yom segula*.
- **Time** is also connected with **place**, which is also special.
- Every **word** is also precious.
 - True, action is the main thing, but speech also has power:
 - The *Asara Maamaros* created the world.
 - The *Aseres Hadibros* gave us the Torah.
 - From here, we learn the importance of every word we say.
- Not only holy speech, but even mundane words carry weight.
- *Chazal* teach [in their signature style: few words with profound meaning]: "*Lo bara Hakadosh Baruch Hu davar echad l'vatalah*"—nothing Hashem does is without purpose.
 - This includes every creation,
 - including every moment and place—also creations.
 - This is obvious: even a human being does not act for no reason; how much more so Hashem.

- As creations, we must emulate Hashem in this detail,
- including always acting with purpose in speech, deed, and thought.
 - Thought is especially important, requiring extra vigilance, as the Rambam teaches.²

Given the significance of time—

- This deepens the question: why does Torah want us to repeat the same stories?
- Pesach is the prime example—it is a mitzvah to retell the story through the Haggadah each year.
 - Even the greatest *chachamim* are obligated to do so.
- In other matters as well
 - —all of which are a *zecher l'yeztias Mitzrayim*—³
- We are told to be *nizkarim*, to remember what happened on that day.

THE HEAVENLY CALENDAR

Reb Yaakov Halevi of Maroish (Marvege), a *mekubal* from the era of the *Rishonim*, compiled a *sefer* titled *Shaalos Uteshuvos Min HaShamayim*. In it, he records questions he posed to the Heavenly Court through *shaalas chalom* (a dream-query).

One such response,⁴ received on Tuesday, Yud-Tes Kislev, included the declaration: "Today is a *yom besura*—an auspicious day." The Rebbe often quotes this wondrous heavenly hint to the events that would take place centuries later on Yud-Tes Kislev.



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- This is learned from the Megillah, where we *verbally* recount the story anew.
- Why spend so much time doing so, even when we already know it?

2. Speak, Reflect, Act.

[8:45]

The Rebbe answers this question: it's not just about the verbal repetition, it's what the remembrance leads to: action.

- The *possuk* itself tells us the reason: *nizkarim* leads to *naasim*.⁵
- By repeating it *verbally*, we increase our *actions* in that regard,
- And action is the goal.
 - Everything about us is for a purpose: to serve Hashem.
 - Especially action, which is the main thing.
- To reach *naasim*—the action—last year's *nizkarim* is not enough.
- Thought is also not enough.
- At the very least, we need a “minor action”—speech.
- When speech leads to proper reflection,
 - As we see with regard to the context of *nizkarim v'naasim*—the Megillah—we read it and thus reflect on the story,
- The reflection leads to proper action.
- Doing so is not simply a repeat of last year; it is on a whole new level.
 - We always rise to new levels in serving Hashem.
 - *Talmidei chachamim ein lahem menucha*—referring to every Jew.
 - Since *kol maasecha l'shem shamayim*, every thought, speech, and action reflects this new level.

Now that we know *why*, the Rebbe explains the *when* and *how* of repeating the story:

When:

- The best time for this is when we gather together as a group in the spirit of *va'havta l'reacha kamocha*, for it is relevant to all.
 - [We do not suspect anyone of lacking knowledge about the significance of Yud-Tes Kislev,
 - Everyone is presumed to know *kol hatorah kulah*, not just most of it.
 - Still, repeating it again brings it into the world.]

NOTHING IS FOR NOTHING

A human being does not act without cause; whenever we do something, there is some reason that motivates us, we do not simply act at random. How much more so with Hashem: every moment in time, every encounter, and every opportunity is divinely arranged with precise intent. Our mission, in emulating Him, is to ensure that all we do, even what seems mundane, carries purpose.

How:

- We do so with *chayus*, for words delivered with enthusiasm draw forth one's inner strength.
 - As illustrated in a story from the Gemara.⁶
- The listener receives it and accepts it too.
 - No matter who delivers the message, truth will be accepted.
 - Every truth reflects the ultimate truth—Hashem's eternal Torah.
- The Alter Rebbe explains similarly in Tanya: proper thought, speech, and action are *karov*, close and accessible, to every Jew.
- It begins with speech—*B'ficha*,
- which leads to increased awareness—*l'avvcha*,
- which leads to action—*la'asoso*.

3. So what is the day about?

[15:44]

With that introduction, the Rebbe turns to explaining the significance and lessons of Yud-Tes Kislev.

The *nekuda* of today's celebration:

- The Alter Rebbe was imprisoned.
 - He was a *posek* in both the revealed and inner dimensions of the Torah, which are one.
- His imprisonment was not accidental; he knew that his work could land him in jail, which was *sakanos nefashos*.
 - While generally one must follow the law of the land, in matters of *Yiddishkeit*, a Jew is not in *galus*—no one can control the *neshama*.
- The arrest came because of his efforts to spread *Yiddishkeit* and Torah.
 - His very name, Shneur, reflects *how* he spread Torah: *shnei-or*, double light,

both *nigleh* and *chassidus*,

- not as two separate entities, but united in one name.
- Once he was released from imprisonment after 53 days—
 - Chassidim note the connection to the 53 *perakim* of Tanya,
 - and to *gan* (garden), for every Jew is Hashem's garden.
- —the hidden benefit and intent were revealed:
- It led to an increase in all his activities, as light shines more strongly from within darkness.
- Where imprisonment held back his ability to spread Torah, the release brought new life —“*or v'chayus nafsheinu*.”

4. Those Days, Our Times

[20:46]

Having analyzed the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment and release, the Rebbe turns to the practical lessons for our times.

- By reflecting on the above—
 - The imprisonment came as a result of spreading Torah,
 - with *mesirus nefesh*, without regard for any obstacles.
- —We too find strength to spread *Yiddishkeit* with greater enthusiasm and joy.

THE UPPER HAND

The Mittlerer Rebbe revealed that the Alter Rebbe's printing of the Tanya faced strong spiritual opposition. Yet because of the Alter Rebbe's *mesirus nefesh* for Chassidus with the suffering he endured in prison, a remarkable decree was issued in the *beis din shel maala*: “In every matter of Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and good *middos*, all who are connected to the Alter Rebbe and follow his path—*yadam al ha'elyona*—they will have the upper hand.”⁷

- Just as **then** the Alter Rebbe was released and spread Chassidus with even greater vigor, so too **today** everyone can strengthen their efforts.
 - Men, women, and children each contribute on their own level.
- As emphasized earlier, it begins with speech, which inspires emotion, and leads ultimately to action,
- increasing our efforts in all areas for which the Alter Rebbe had *mesirus nefesh*.
- Although the darkness of *galus* is strong,
- Rather than feeling despondent, we celebrate the *geulah* with increased joy,
- and we are guaranteed success.
- This leads to the dispersion of darkness and the arrival of Moshiach—the guaranteed outcome.

Sicha 2: It's All About Peace

At the conclusion of the previous *sicha*, the Rebbe emphasized *la'asoso*—action. This *sicha* opens by identifying the *specific* actions that should be strengthened in connection with Yud-Tes Kislev.

1. Peace Above All?

[34:15]

- Each Yom Tov has unique actions—*mitzvos* and *minhagim*—associated with it, shaped by the lessons we draw from the day's message.
 - That message also influences our ordinary actions.

- On Yud-Tes Kislev, we increase in action specifically in the areas where the Alter Rebbe had *mesirus nefesh*.
 - His whole life was one of *mesirus nefesh*, yet certain areas stand out.

To identify which aspect we should learn from, we look at the first words the Alter Rebbe wrote upon leaving prison:

- The Alter Rebbe wrote: “As I was reciting in Tehillim the *possuk* ‘*Padah*



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b'shalom nafshi'... I was redeemed in peace (*b'shalom*) by the G-d of peace."

- He mentions the idea of *shalom* several times.
- The question: of all Torah's themes, why connect his *geulah* specifically with *shalom*?
 - It does not appear at the top of the list of all the—
 - 613 mitzvos,
 - 13 *ikrim*,
 - 3 general *ikrim*.
- A seemingly more fitting choice would have been the first of the *Aseres Hadibros*—*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*!

For someone who represented the entire Jewish people, imprisoned for spreading *Yiddishkeit*, one would expect his *geulah* to be tied to a fundamental precept of Torah. Why then is it associated specifically with *shalom*?

2. Torah is shalom

[39:15]

The Rebbe explains that in truth, *shalom* is indeed a fundamental aspect of Torah, as in the meaning behind the *dibbur* of *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*.

Let's examine the opening of the *Aseres Hadibros*:

- Why begin with Hashem taking us out of Mitzrayim, and not "I am Hashem who created heaven and earth"?
- The point is to show how Hashem unites opposites—*chibur hafachim*, an expression of His unity:
 - On the one hand, we have "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*," from which we learn of Hashem's unity,
 - Another source for Hashem's oneness in the *possuk* *Shema Yisrael*
 - and in the very same *dibbur*, the opposite: Mitzrayim.
 - If He had opened with "who created heaven and earth," *chibur hafachim* would not be emphasized.
 - Specifically taking us out of Mitzrayim, the lowest of all the nations, brings out this point.
- Uniting "*Anochi*" and "*Mitzrayim*" in the same *dibbur* emphasizes how Hashem brings together opposites.
 - Rashi explains that the connection is not incidental: the purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim ("*hotzeisicha*") was that we

THE FIRST LETTER

Where should we look for inspiration and meaning in celebrating Yud-Tes Kislev? The Rebbe points us to the Alter Rebbe himself, by examining how he understood the significance of the *geulah*.

Among the Alter Rebbe's own writings, special attention is given to the two letters he penned immediately upon his return from Petersburg. The first, beginning with *Katonti*, was an open letter to all Chassidim and is printed in *Igeres HaKodesh* of Tanya. The second, the focus of this *sicha*, was addressed to Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, where he concludes with the personal account of his release while reciting Tehillim.⁸

should serve Hashem ("*anochi*").

- So, the first *dibbur* highlights *shalom*—Hashem's unity expressed by joining opposites.
 - The first *dibbur* includes the entire Torah.
- When Mitzrayim is transformed, not by war but by being made holy,
- that is the ultimate expression of Hashem's *achdus* in a way of *shalom*: peace achieved by uniting opposites.

This is further illustrated in the difference between a *baal teshuvah* and a *tzaddik*:

- A *tzaddik* has never been tested by the world; we do not know how he would respond.
- A *baal teshuvah* has faced temptation and resisted. He creates *shalom* between Hashem's will and the world.

3. The Purpose of Galus

[44:58]

Continuing the theme of *shalom* and its centrality.

To connect this with the Alter Rebbe's *geulah*, first—

- Regarding *galus*, the question arises—
 - about *galus* Mitzrayim,
 - and each Jew's individual *galus*, the *neshama*'s descent from the highest heights down into this world...
 - There are two paths: one can destroy the enemy, or transform it—the idea of *pada b'shalom*.
- Why did Hashem create this situation of *galus*?



- The answer lies in the first *dibbur*: “*Anochi... asher hotzeisicha*”—to transform Mitzrayim.
- Into the lowliest nation, the Jewish people and Hashem Himself were in *galus*,
- in order to bring the *Anochi* there—the ultimate expression of unity.
- This was seen at the time of *Matan Torah*, when Hashem’s voice reached every corner of the world. Every creation was permeated with “*Anochi*”.
 - This explains the lack of an echo at *Matan Torah*—seemingly an unnecessary miracle.
 - What causes an echo? Sound being met with resistance from an object.
 - Whoever—and whatever—heard Hashem’s voice immediately became one with it, part of the unity of *Anochi*. There was nothing to deflect the sounds; all of creation simply absorbed them.
- For this purpose, a *neshamah* is sent into *galus* in this world:
- The lowest world is created so the *neshamah* can be sent there and express Hashem’s Oneness,
- which, before this world’s creation, was only potential. Our *avoda* makes it an actuality, by being a physical creation and knowing Hashem.

The purpose of galus is to bring about shalom: transforming Mitzrayim, our nefesh habehamis, and the world into good.

4. Don’t Destroy, Build!

[51:10]

Rather than “fighting” the world, we peacefully transform it. This *shalom* is represented in many ways.

The Beis Hamikdash:

- We build the world into a home for Hashem,
- using the physical elements of the world, just as the Mishkan was built from physical items saved from Mitzrayim, and its walls were built from trees planted there.
- This is the ultimate *shalom*: uniting the physical and spiritual.

Torah:

SHALOM, THE THIRD WAY

In a situation of *milchama*, two sides battle for the upper hand. The *nefesh haElohis* and *nefesh haBehamis* fight for control over the body, and only one will emerge victorious.

In a “war of *shalom*,” both sides are uplifted into a new, peaceful state. Rather than remaining two opposing sides, they become united into one, a third dimension, working in unison to serve Hashem. That is ultimate *shalom* and a true expression of *achdus Hashem*.⁹

- Brings about *shalom*.
 - even if one is not yet learning *lishma*.

The Alter Rebbe’s *geulah*:

- As he writes,¹⁰ it affected even the non-Jews [emphasizing *shalom* between all.]

Korbanos:

- The *shlamim* was so named for the peace it brought between Hashem and the world, and between people.

On an individual level:

- Uniting every moment in service of Hashem—personal *shalom* and *shleimus*.
- Uniting with fellow Jews.

The ultimate *shalom*:

- Peace between heaven and earth, physical and spiritual.
- The *geulah* which will bring peace.

1. The most famous example is that of Reb Nochum, son of the Mittlerer Rebbe. See “In the footsteps of Chassidim” in this issue.

2. Hilchos Teshuvah, 7:3.

3. See sourcesheet, sources 5–7.

4. *Shu”t min hashamayim, siman 5*.

5. See sourcesheet, sources 1–3.

6. Eruvin, 53b–54a. See sourcesheet source 8.

7. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz vol. 4, p. 264.

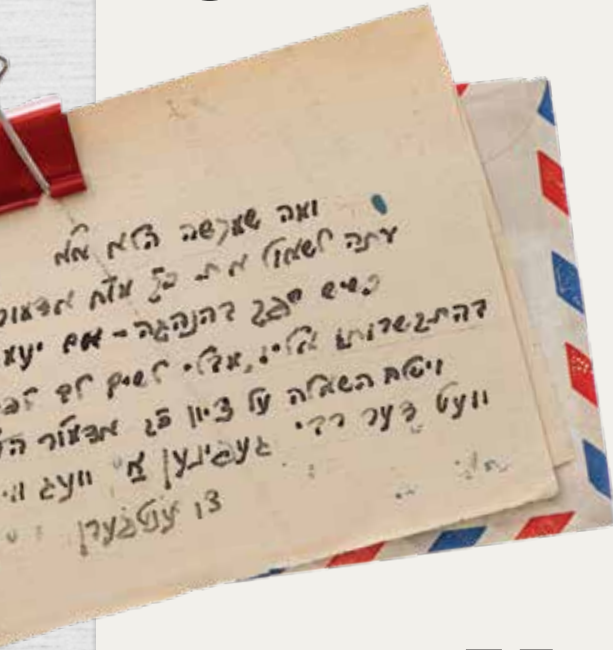
8. Igros Kodesh of the Alter Rebbe, *igeres 59*. See sourcesheet, source 11.

9. See sourcesheet, sources 9–11.

10. Igros Kodesh of the Alter Rebbe, *igeres 59*. See sourcesheet, source 11.



Story



לזכות
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' יששכר
שלמה שיח' בן ח'ל' פייגל
טייכטל
לרגל יום הולדתו לאורך
ימים ושנים טובות

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' דוד וזוגתו מרת פערל
גאלדא ומשפחתם שיחיו
טייכטל
שמפיין, אילינוי

דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

WRITTEN BY: RABBI LEVI GREENBERG (TX)

You Proved Me Wrong



AS TOLD BY
Rabbi Shmuly Haskelovich
(Hamilton, NY)

During the month of Elul 5781, our daughter Henya, who was two years old at the time, suffered a massive stroke. After an emergency surgery and intensive treatment under the care of Dr. Ghatan at Mt. Sinai Hospital, Henya was discharged and started the long and difficult road to recovery at a rehabilitation hospital in New Jersey.

Two months into this ordeal, during the week of Parshas Noach, Henya developed a serious complication. We consulted with another top pediatric neurosurgeon, Dr. Souweidane at Cornell, who recommended implanting a device that would resolve the new complication. Although it was not yet urgent, he predicted it would eventually become necessary



DOCTOR SAADI GHATAN.

for Henya's long-term treatment, and he felt there was no reason to postpone the procedure, especially since other procedures had not solved the problem.

Dr. Souweidane's recommendation came with two major drawbacks. Firstly, once this procedure was done, the patient would forever be reliant on the device. Secondly, it requires constant monitoring and upkeep. The possibility of emergencies is very high, and we would need to relocate to a larger city to be closer to top-tier doctors and hospitals who could best handle such a condition if the need arose. The thought of leaving our *shlichus* in Hamilton was an added crushing blow to an already devastating situation.

Dr. Ghatan, on the other hand, insisted that there was no reason to rush with implanting the device and strongly recommended monitoring Henya's situation for a longer period, even as the complication persisted.

Faced with two opposing opinions from equally qualified and prominent experts in the field, we consulted other doctors to establish a majority opinion, in keeping with the Rebbe's guidance in resolving medical dilemmas. However, no other doctor we consulted had a concrete opinion in either direction. They all agreed that both doctors were equally highly qualified

and had equally valid opinions, and it was up to us, as Henya's parents, to make the final decision.

As time wore on and the complication persisted, we finally decided to follow Dr. Souweidane's recommendation, and the surgery was scheduled for the end of Adar I 5782. Nevertheless, we were filled with tremendous apprehension about the unknown and still unsure if we were making the right decision, given the overwhelming consequences this procedure would have on Henya and our entire family.

Several times a week, I learn Chassidus over the phone with Rabbi Bentzion Shemtov from Chicago. The day before Purim Katan, I was feeling especially worried about the upcoming surgery, and I shared with Bentzion all the details of the excruciating saga.

"Shmuly, you can't make such a decision on your own," Bentzion insisted. "You must go to the Ohel and ask the Rebbe to send you a clear sign as to which doctor you should follow."

Although we had been to the Ohel many times and written to the Rebbe extensively about Henya's condition, I had never asked the Rebbe for clear direction on this specific question. Heeding Bentzion's advice, I went to the Ohel on Purim Katan and wrote a lengthy letter about the current dilemma. Since I was writing

in Hebrew, I spelled Dr. Ghatan's name as "Katan." It was a surname I had never encountered before, and I figured that this was its original iteration. I asked for a clear sign for clarity on how to proceed, while at the same time begging for a *bracha* that we should be able to continue our *shlichus* in Hamilton as well.

That night, as I sat with one of my daughters during bedtime, she suddenly requested to watch a video of the Rebbe together. Her request was out of character, but it warmed my heart. I opened the JEM WhatsApp broadcast where short videos are posted daily (which I rarely followed at the time) and pressed play on the 30-second video posted for Purim Katan.

During Sunday Dollars, Rabbi Yosef Wineberg introduced a Yid to the Rebbe, saying, "This is Yosef Katan from Geneva."

"Don't forget that Katan is the description, the adjective for all Jewish people," the Rebbe said to him. "It does not mean to be 'Katan-small' in achievement—just the opposite. Every activity that was done until now is small in relation to the activity that you will do from now on."

My heart started racing and I felt chills all over my body. The Rebbe was discussing the last name "Katan" and emphasizing its importance and meaning. The circumstances of how I came to see this video just hours after asking the Rebbe for a clear sign as to which doctor to follow were a clear sign to my wife and me that the Rebbe was guiding us to follow Dr. Ghatan's recommendation. We immediately scheduled an emergency consultation with him. He graciously agreed to review the case again and reiterated his opinion that we should not perform the surgery, but rather continue monitoring Henya's situation.


My wife called the scheduling nurse at Dr. Souweidane's office and, after a brutal hour-long phone call, managed to postpone the surgery indefinitely.

At the time, we were staying at an apartment in Crown Heights to be close to Henya's rehab center in New Jersey. Two weeks later, Henya became

lethargic, and when Hatzala arrived, they discovered she had a very high fever. After reviewing her medical history, it was decided to rush her to the Emergency Room at Cornell, so that Dr. Souweidane could perform the surgery we had postponed if it turned out to be the necessary treatment.

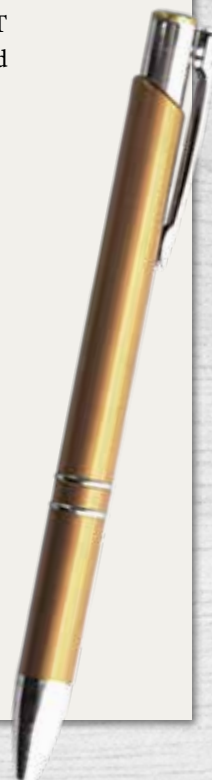
The specialists worked tirelessly to determine the cause of the fever, and even Dr. Souweidane reviewed the tests and participated in the deliberations. After many hours, they discovered the problem was a specific infection, and Dr. Souweidane approached me with a startling confession. Based on these new developments, the procedure he had recommended all along could have been completely wrong. Had it been done at its scheduled time a week earlier, Henya's current prognosis could have been much worse, and her treatment severely complicated. It was a miracle that we had postponed the procedure when we did!

A different emergency surgery was performed, and two weeks later, on Shushan Purim, Henya was discharged from the hospital, and the complication that had baffled the doctors for months was healed.

A few months later, at one of the post-op appointments, Dr. Souweidane reviewed the most recent CT scans and shook his head in disbelief. "You proved me wrong..." 

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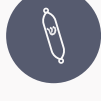
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BY: RABBI MENDEL JACOBS

נדפס ע"י ולזכות
הרה"ת ר' שרגא פייוול
וזוגתו מרת דבורה לאה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
מאן



TAKING ACTION

MIVTZA BAYIS MALEI SEFORIM

WHEN
MORALE
IS LOW

“We don’t want your singers! We don’t want your entertainers!”

It was shortly after the Yom Kippur War. Despite being caught off guard and suffering devastating losses in the beginning, the Jewish people had overcome their enemies. However, the cost of victory was steep. Morale among the Israeli soldiers was at an all-time low.

In an attempt to boost the soldiers’ spirits, many of the country’s entertainers toured the bases and did their best to help the situation. But it was clear that the soldiers needed more.

At the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen that year, the Rebbe addressed the issue:

In the “olden days,” the Rebbe said, it was accepted knowledge that the stronger an army is physically, the better chance they have at winning a war. With time, however, that perception has completely changed.

As the centuries progressed, it became clear that having a larger army in terms of numbers doesn’t guarantee victory. In fact, even having more ammunition or larger ammunition won’t necessarily help either.

Quantity became less relevant in the face of good quality. The more technologically advanced your weaponry became, the better the chances of success.

If this is true of the material ammunition used in battle, the Rebbe pointed out, all the more so is this true of the soldiers themselves. Having a greater number of soldiers, or even soldiers who are physically stronger than their opponents, is much less important than how the soldiers themselves are. Army morale is a decisive factor when it comes to winning a war.

The Rebbe went on to report that the Israeli soldiers were indeed demanding of their superiors a boost in

“YAVNEH V’CHACHAMEHA”

At the start of the year 5735, the Rebbe called for older *talmidim* to travel to other *yeshivos*, quoting the Mishnah “*Hevei goleh l’mekom Torah*” (“Exile yourself to a place of Torah”). The Rebbe also called for the founding of new *yeshivos* and places of Torah study—ensuring that every Jewish community should have a designated place for Torah study.

In doing so, the Rebbe said, we will fulfill the words of the Gemara in Gittin, “*Ten li Yavneh v’chachameha*” (“Spare Yavneh and its sages for me”). The Gemara tells the story of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai’s visit to the Roman governor, and his request to spare the city of Yavneh and its sages from destruction.

The Rebbe pointed out that Rabban Yochanan’s request implies that having *yeshivos* and houses of Torah study is almost paramount to having the *Beis Hamikdash* standing.

“Recently,” the Rebbe explained, “talks have been held of conceding the Jewish people’s hold on the newly conquered territories of Eretz Yisroel (the “*shtachim*”). In order to counteract this, we should establish places of Torah study like ‘*Yavneh v’chachameha*.’”

Eventually, the Rebbe merged this *mivtza* of “*Yavneh v’chachameha*” with *mivtza bayis malei sefarim*. When asked in a letter why these two were being connected, the Rebbe explained that they are both elements of *mivtza Torah*.⁵





FARBRENGEN, YUD-TES KISLEV 5733.

morale, but not the conventional type. They specifically said they don't need singers and entertainers.

They wanted something much more substantive; an injection of inspiration that would appeal to their hearts and minds, and leave a lasting impact.

"And that's when the real arguments began..." the Rebbe said with a smile.

Jews famously can't agree on much.

"When I was in *cheder*," the Rebbe said, "they used to say that if one Jew greets another with '*Shalom aleichem*,' the other responds, 'Well, you say *shalom aleichem*, I say the opposite: *Aleichem shalom!*'"

There were many ideas and opinions on what would bring about a true boost in morale.

The best idea, said the Rebbe, is the one that has been scientifically proven to work over millennia.

The Jewish people have been through many phases

and stages throughout the generations. They have tried all types of philosophies and ways of life. Ultimately, the only one that lasted, the only one that succeeded in keeping the identity of the Jewish people alive, is Torah and *mitzvos*. With more than three thousand years of unbroken success, we can confidently assert that Torah and *mitzvos* is the only path that keeps us together and flourishing on, from one generation to the next.

This is the "secret weapon" of the Jewish people, and it's time we allow the soldiers to enjoy it as well.

In practical terms, the Rebbe suggested:

Every army base should be given sets of tefillin, *siddurim*, Tehillims and tzedakah *pushkas*, corresponding to the three pillars on which the world stands, Torah (Tehillim) *tefilla* (*siddurim*) and *gemilus chassadim* (*pushkas*)—all equally applicable to men and women. Having them around would give the soldiers access

to these materials, as well as serve as a physical reminder to fulfill these *mitzvot*.

Providing for their spiritual needs, the Rebbe said, will give the soldiers true meaning in their lives and energy in fulfilling their mission, and then “fear and terror” will fall on all our enemies. Quantity in numbers has no import; “Others go with valor, still others with strength,” but “we rally with the name of Hashem.”¹

Later at the farbrengen, the Rebbe expanded the initiative. Every Jew is part of the army of Hashem, the Rebbe explained, so each one of them must also be given this secret weapon.

Every Jewish home should have at least some basic holy *seforim*, as well as a tzedakah pushka, serving as a reminder to daven, learn Torah, and give tzedakah every day.²

With that, “Mivtza Seforim,” or as the Rebbe later called it, “Mivtza Bayis Malei Seforim,” was born.

The Prelude

As was the case with many of the Rebbe’s *mivtzoim*, the Rebbe laid the groundwork for the *mivtza* and explained its importance sometime before its official launch.

One year earlier, at the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen of 5733, the Rebbe spoke about founding Torah libraries in every Jewish community, adding that he would personally participate in a portion of the expenses.

Then the Rebbe said:

Though every community will have a library, it’s also vital that every Jewish home should have *seforim* of its own.

The ones privileged with ensuring that this happens are the Jewish women, the mainstays of their homes. Women generally determine what the interior of their home should look like; what type of furniture to have, how to arrange it, and so on. They should also make sure that the home has *seforim*, enabling the inhabitants of the home to learn Torah at all times.

Furthermore, having *seforim* on display will turn the house into a “beautiful home.” Anyone who walks in will immediately take note and see that this is a Jewish home, filled with an atmosphere of Torah and *mitzvot*.

As to the community libraries, the Rebbe assured everyone not to worry. “Until Moshiach comes,” the



JEWISH HOLY BOOKS

An interesting edit from the Rebbe on a brochure about the *mivtzoim*, prepared by Tzach in New York:

In the place of “**Torah** books,” the Rebbe inserted “**Jewish holy books**.”

In the parentheses, several suggestions were offered (a Chumash, Siddur, Tehillim, etc.), and the Rebbe added the words “**at least**” (indicating that ideally there should be many more).

Rebbe explained, “it seems highly unlikely that every Jewish home will have every existing *sefer* of Torah Shebiksav and Torah Shebaal Peh. There’s plenty of room to build and operate libraries in each community, in addition to ensuring that each home has *seforim* too.”³

Full to the Brim

About the name “*Bayis Malei Seforim*,” the Rebbe explained at a later date that the mere fact that the home is “filled” with *seforim*, even if no one is yet learning from them, is in itself a great accomplishment.

In reality, having a house that is truly “*malei seforim*” seems impossible. Is there nothing else in the house besides *seforim*? What about a bed, table, chair, and lamp that are basic to every home? What about other furniture?



MIVTZA BAYIS
MALEI SEFORIM

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This can be understood from a ruling in Hilchos Shabbos:

If a person carries an item smaller than the prescribed amount, he is not liable for violating Shabbos. If the small item was carried in a utensil, even if the utensil is much bigger than the prescribed amount, he is still not liable, since the only reason the utensil is there is to serve the object inside it.

Similarly, when the main item in the house is the *seforim*, the whole house becomes a “house full of *seforim*,” a home imbued with Torah knowledge and values, just the way a Jewish home should be.⁴

Seforim and Moshiach

When every Jewish home is filled with *seforim*, it will generate a tremendous amount of Torah learning on an individual level, making each individual home filled with holiness and knowledge of Hashem.

With that, the phenomenon will spread to the entire

world. *Geulah* on a personal level brings about *geulah* on a communal level as well. Individual homes being filled with the knowledge of Hashem will cause the entire world to be filled with the knowledge of Hashem—*kamayim layam mechasim*—like water covers the seabed.⁶

Redemption of Seforim and the World

Speaking about the *seforim* of our Rabbeim that are still held captive in Russia, the Rebbe said that every Jew can contribute to the effort of redeeming these *seforim* by purchasing more *seforim* for his own home and broadening his *bayis malei seforim*.

This, in turn, will lead not only to the redemption of the *seforim* from captivity, but also the redemption of all the sparks of holiness all over the world, with the coming of Moshiach now!⁷



14 TISHREI 5737.

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THE UNENDING POWER OF SEFORIM



Interview with
Rabbi Mendel Shemtov
(Uruguay)

By: Rabbi Bentzion Pearson

Manifesting the Inspiration

The idea of *seforim* always spoke to me. Whenever I would visit my grandparents as a young boy, I always got a *sefer* as a gift. This had a lasting impression on me. My grandfather, Rabbi Avraham Shemtov, has a special connection with *seforim* as well. Readers of Derher will know that he was sent by the Rebbe to rescue the Frierdiker Rebbe's *seforim* that were lost in Poland,⁸ and later, to defend the ownership of the Chabad library in the Hei Teves story.

Growing up on *shlichus* in Uruguay, I ran my own lending library, making the many books in our house available to other kids at school. Little did I know this would eventually become an integral part of our *shlichus*.

After getting married and moving back to Uruguay in 5771, my wife and I started

working with different segments of the community. We immediately saw the powerful impact that books could have.

I began to gift *seforim* to people, whether for their birthdays or on other special occasions. After each crowdfunding campaign, I would send the larger donors a *sefer* along with the thank-you letter. If I went to someone's house to put up a mezuzah or for any other reason, I always tried to use the opportunity to give them a *sefer* for their home.

Several years ago, there was a family from another country who visited Uruguay over the summer. While I was helping them *kasher* the kitchen in the house they were staying at, I noticed some beautiful *seforim*. They shared something really interesting: the shliach in their home country had a custom that every year on Yom Kippur, right after *Ne'ila*, he gives each attendee a new Jewish book for the year ahead.



MIVTZA BAYIS
MALEI SEFORIM

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I thought to myself: wow! That's a great idea. The inspiration from Yom Kippur is still fresh; it's a perfect time to give them the opportunity to keep it going even further.

Right on the spot, this individual offered to sponsor books for me to do the same at the next Yom Kippur davening. Since then, I've continued this practice and seen remarkable results.

Another benefit of giving someone a book is that the book itself travels to places you might not be able to reach. The book will go places for you.

Several years ago, I gave someone a copy of *Toward A Meaningful Life* by Rabbi Simon Jacobson. Sometime later, he was traveling and he met with the president of a different country, and he gave him the book. You never know what sort of impact a small gift can have.

Likkutei Sichos In Every Home

Let me tell you about a very nice campaign we had in our community connected with Likkutei Sichos:

If I recall correctly, it was around the time of Yud Shevat—Shnas Hashivim, celebrating the 70th year of the Rebbe's *nesius*. I happened to be meeting with a shliach in Argentina, Rabbi Nassan Grunblatt, and he showed me a project he was working on: translating the first two volumes of Likkutei Sichos into Spanish, divided into five volumes.

I was so excited. This was an opportunity to give people authentic Torah from the Rebbe himself, not merely an adaptation. By giving people these *seforim*, I could genuinely bring “the Rebbe” into their homes!

At that moment, I decided to challenge myself with a commitment in honor of Yud Shevat—to bring Likkutei Sichos into 70 Jewish homes.

I started giving them out, one volume at

a time, based on the time of year (Bereishis during the Bereishis season, Shemos during Shemos, and so on).

Eventually, I created an Excel spreadsheet, and I realized that we brought the Rebbe's Torah into 101 Jewish homes!

Imagine! You walk into their home, and it is immediately identified as a Jewish home with beautiful *seforim* adorning the living room.

A Minefield of Holiness

I recall reading that the Rebbe compared *seforim* to—*l'havdil*—a minefield. The bombs could remain dormant in the field for years, and suddenly, when someone steps on them, they're immediately set off.

Similarly in the positive sense, when you have a *Yiddishe sefer* in the home, it might sit dormant for a while, but eventually, when someone stumbles upon it at the right



THE FIRST VOLUME OF LIKKUTEI SICHOS IN SPANISH.

moment, it has its desired effect.

I'm reminded of a campaign we did a few years ago with our CTeen kids. At the end of the year, we sent a gift package to each of their homes with a pair of tzitzis (or a pair of socks for the girls) and a book, *Seeds of Wisdom*, with stories of the Rebbe and lessons to be learned from them.

Fast forward several years.

A few weeks ago, I got a message from a girl. She had gotten the book from us back then, and now she sent me a photo of one of the stories with a question she had on it. This past week, she sent me another question, and it led to a more extended discussion about the ideas in the book.

I was shocked. It's a book she received three or four years ago. By now, she's a university student, and she decided to read this book in her free time. All because we planted a book in her house.

I'd like to conclude with an incredible story:

A few years ago, I officiated a wedding, and I spoke to the *chosson* about the idea of gifting

each of their guests with a *sefer* as a memento from the celebration. In our country, it's common for people to give their guests a gadget or a chocolate to take home with them, so I suggested that instead, he should give out something meaningful. He agreed, and we ended up giving out copies of *Daily Wisdom*, a book that has a *vort* from the Rebbe on each daily section of the Chumash. He had 500 copies imprinted with a dedication about the wedding, and all the guests enjoyed the gift.

As it turned out, this couple struggled to have children for a while. When they finally had a baby boy, it was a big *simcha* in our community. Before the bris, he approached me with an idea to again give out a gift to all the guests. This time, I suggested that he should give out a Chumash with the Rebbe's insights published by Kehos in Spanish.

Later, they had another child, and when they celebrated a one-year birthday party for this child, they again gave out a children's parsha book to all the guests.

It was so touching to see how they marked each milestone in their family life by gifting



RABBI MENDEL SHEMTOV AT A RECENT CHANUKAH EVENT WITH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN URUGUAY.



MIVTZA BAYIS
MALEI SEFORIM

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Torah books to others. You see clearly what kind of impact *seforim* can have, both on individuals and on a whole community.

The Rebbe Is In the Home

Perusing the Rebbe's *sichos* about *Mivtza Bayis Malei Seforim*, you can discern that there's an advantage of having *seforim* in the home, even over some of the other *mivtzoim*. While there is infinite Divine value in doing a one-time mitzvah with another, having a *sefer* in one's home serves as a constant reminder to study more Torah and has a lasting impact—even in a very tangible sense!

It's incredible when you think about it: The Rebbe himself spent hours upon hours, gifting people with *seforim*! Whether it was Tanyas or *kuntreisim* with *maamarim*, and so on. The Rebbe gave these to men, women, and children. I believe the Rebbe is teaching us how to spread Torah to fellow Yidden: in addition to teaching Torah directly, the Rebbe gave printed articles of Torah to others.

There was once a Yid who had to travel to

Minnesota from New York, but he was afraid to fly on an airplane. The Rebbe gave him a Tanya and told him: If you carry this with you, you will have the Alter Rebbe with you on the airplane and you won't be afraid.

Giving someone a Likkutei Sichos or any other of the Rebbe's *seforim* is literally like bringing the Rebbe into their home. Imagine the profound impact that will have on them, their friends, and their community as a whole.

It's a simple gesture and can be easily done by anyone.

Try it and you too will see amazing results.

1. Toras Menachem vol. 74, pp. 268–281.
2. See Motzei Zos Chanukah 5734; Toras Menachem vol. 75, p. 30.
3. Toras Menachem vol. 70, p. 276.
4. Toras Menachem vol. 78, p. 71.
5. Simchas Torah and Shabbos Bereishis 5735; Toras Menachem vol. 78, pp. 188, 217, 248.
6. Toras Menachem vol. 70, p. 278.
7. Shabbos Parshas Vayigash 5752; Sefer Hasichos 5752 vol. 1, p. 227.
8. See "Rescue of the Library," Derher Adar II 5774.