

A Chassidisher **Derher**

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Sacred Seeding

CHABAD SETTLEMENT
IN ERETZ YISROEL

A Calling Cast in Gold

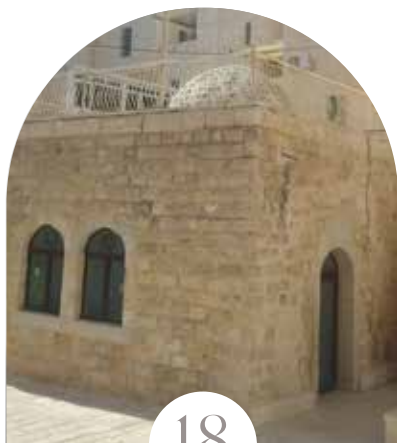
AN INTERVIEW WITH
RABBI YOSEF YITZCHAK
HAKOHEN GUTNICK



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“AND I SAY...”

The Rebbe Maharash, whose birthday we mark on Beis Iyar, was famous for his motto of “*Lchatchila Ariber*”; taking the high road over obstacles.

In this issue we read about a special coin that the Rebbe asked to be minted, engraved with the phrase, “*Un ich zog, l’chatchila ariber*,” (And I say, to begin with, go over it). The Rebbe then distributed thousands of coins to men, women, and children, empowering them with this important message.

Other articles in this issue tell stories about Chassidim who, with the Rebbe’s brachos and guidance, were able to take the leap and implement the approach of “*Lchatchila Ariber*” in their lives.

Like a group of young *yeshiva bochurim* who traveled across the sea to learn in their Rebbe’s presence, when the whole world screamed fears of war in their ears. The many assignments undertaken by Rabbi Yosef Gutnick on *shlichus*

from the Rebbe—in the business world, politics, and other areas, likewise inspire to fulfill the Rebbe’s *shlichus* with the approach of “*Lchatchila Ariber*.”

All of this, alongside the usual line of content you’ve come to expect in a Derher magazine.

The *mitvza* highlighted in this issue is Kashrus—ensuring that every Jewish home has a kosher kitchen, and that every Jew is afforded the opportunity to eat only kosher food.

The Rebbe explains that the word “כשר” stands for “כמוצא שלל רב”—the *possuk* that compares observance of Torah and *mitzvos* to the excitement of finding great spoils.

This refers to all the sparks of holiness gathered by the Jewish people with our *avoda* throughout the time of *galus*, leading to the ultimate *geulah*, *teikef umiyad mamash!*

The Editors

יום הבהיר יא ניסן ה'תשפ"ו

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(מכתב יום ד' י' לחדש מנ"א תשנ"ה)

“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 Chasadam...”

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

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ברכה והצלחה רבה, בכל מכל כל!

Thank you for bringing the teachings of Chassidus & the Rebbe's message to so many around the world, every day. Your impact is felt & inspires action—paving the way for the Geulah now!

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ב' אייר

Journey From Har Sinai

COMPILED BY: RABBI MENDEL VOGEL

On the 20th of Iyar 2449 (ב'תמו"ט)—nearly a year after the Giving of the Torah on Har Sinai—B'nei Yisroel departed their encampment near the mountain. They resumed their journey when the pillar of cloud rose for the first time from over the Mishkan—the divine sign that would signal the resumption of their travels throughout their encampments and journeys over the next 38 years, until they reached the eastern bank of the Yarden River on the eve of their entry into Eretz Yisroel.

Since Torah denotes “hora'ah,” meaning instruction or guidance, and since the Torah is eternal, it follows that every detail recorded in it contains a lesson that applies at all times, and to every Yid. What can we learn from the twentieth of Iyar, a date mentioned explicitly in the Torah?

In Parshas Beha'aloscha, the Torah describes how “on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year, the cloud rose up from over the Mishkan... B'nei Yisroel traveled from the Sinai Desert... this was the first journey at Hashem's bidding through Moshe” (Bamidbar 10:11–13). This was the day on which the Yidden were shown that they must move forward—away from Har Sinai and toward Eretz Yisroel, the Holy Land.

Leaving Har Sinai did not mean distancing themselves from Torah or *kedusha*, *chas v'shalom*. Rather, even as they departed from Har Sinai, they remained firmly connected to Torah and *mitzvos*, because their journey itself was directed by Hashem through Moshe Rabbeinu.

This contains a powerful lesson for every Yid: There are times during the day when a person is “at Har Sinai”—whether studying Torah, davening, or standing before Hashem with an awareness of *אתה מי אתה* “לפני מי אתה”—before Whom you are standing. At other times, however, a person must eat, drink, sleep, or attend to other physical needs. During those moments, it might seem as though one is detached from *ruchniyus*.

The Torah teaches otherwise. Even when a Yid is not



actively studying Torah or *davening*, he is never detached from “Har Sinai.” If these activities are done according to the Torah’s directives—eating what the Torah permits, sleeping in order to have strength to serve Hashem—then this, too, is part of a journey “according to the word of Hashem.” One never departs from “Har Sinai”; one simply carries it into every area of life.

This idea is further emphasized by the role of the *Aron*, which held the *Luchos*. As the Yidden traveled, the *Aron* went before them, leading the way. The Torah tells us that whenever the *Aron* set out, Moshe would declare: “קוּמָה וְיִפְצְצוּ אֹיְבֶיךָ וְיִנָּסוּ מִשְׁנְאֵיךָ מִפְּנֶיךָ—Arise, O G-d, may Your enemies be scattered and may those who hate You flee from You” (Bamidbar 10:35). Even though the Yidden were traveling through a wilderness, there was no need for war. Hashem Himself went before them and ensured their safety.

Chazal explain that the enemies of the Jewish people are, in truth, Hashem’s enemies—“Whoever hates the Yidden hates the One Who spoke and the world came into being” (ibid. Rashi; Sifri). When the *Aron* with the *Luchos* leads the way, all opposition is nullified before it even appears.



In the same *parsha* in which the Torah tells us about the Yidden’s departure from Har Sinai, it first discusses the mitzvah of the kindling of the Menorah (Bamidbar 8:1–4).

Avodas Hashem consists of two seemingly contradictory dimensions: 1. Making ourselves a dwelling place for Hashem’s presence by kindling the light of our *neshamos* through Torah and *mitzvos*, similar to the Menorah’s light in the Beis Hamikdash. This involves nurturing our inner spark, making our *neshama* a beacon of *Elokus*. 2. Radiating the light of Torah to the world, infusing our daily activities with G-dly purpose. Just as the Menorah’s light shone outward, our actions should impact the world around us.

The sequence matters: In order to reach out to others, one must first focus on one’s own spiritual growth; as reflected in the order of the *parsha*—the Menorah’s kindling comes before the Yidden’s journeys.

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that our life’s journeys mirror the Yidden’s journeys in the *midbar*. There are periods in our lives when we are “at Har Sinai,” and then there are times when we “journey forth” into the world. In both, our paths are guided by Hashem’s *hashgacha pratis* and our goal remains the same—to reveal Hashem’s presence in all aspects of life.

Practically speaking: When embarking on a trip, one needs to balance two seemingly opposing approaches: 1. Prepare practically, like anyone would, without relying on miracles. 2. Trust that Hashem is guiding us. The truth is that these are not contradictory, since Hashem works through natural means, leading us to specific places for a specific purpose. Conducting oneself in accordance with this mindset turns one’s life into a suitable vessel for Hashem’s *hashgacha pratis* to manifest. And just as Hashem smoothed the desert path for the Yidden and removed all obstacles and dangers from their way, so too now, He will clear all the obstacles that are in our way.

Takeaway:

The lesson is clear and eternal: When a Yid follows the path of Torah, allowing it to guide not only moments of holiness but the journey of daily life itself, then all obstacles are removed. One can proceed calmly, securely, and joyfully, as a Yid should—confident that Hashem goes before him, leading the way toward the ultimate destination: The true and complete *geula*, speedily in our days, *Amen*!

(Adapted from *sicha to talmidim and talmidos*, 20 Iyar 5740)



לזכות החיילים בצבאות ה'
שמעון בן ח' מושקא
לרגל יום הולדתו ל"ג בעומר
שיינא בת ח' מושקא
לרגל יום הולדתה י"ב אייר

מנחם מענדל בן ח' מושקא
אסתר הנ' רחל בת ח' מושקא
אלי'הו שמואל בן ח' מושקא
צבי הירש אייזיק בן ח' מושקא
שיחיו

יה"ר שיגדלו חי"לים
בצבא כ"ק אדמו"ר
מתוך שמחה, בריאות והרחבה

Compiled By: Rabbi Levi Greenberg (OH)

Written By: Rabbi Mendel Jacobs

Seven Before Six?

When the Torah instructs the Jewish people about the mitzvah of Shemitta,¹ the *possum* says:

כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשָׁבַתָה הָאָרֶץ שְׁבַת לַה' . שֵׁשׁ
שָׁנִים תַּזְרַע שָׂדֶךְ וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְמֹר כְּרָמְךָ וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת תְּבוּאָתָה.
וּבַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית שְׁבַת שְׁבַתוֹן יְהִי לָאָרֶץ שְׁבַת לַה' וְגו'.

When you come to the land that I am giving you, the land shall rest a Shabbos for Hashem. For six years you may sow your field, and for six years you may prune your vineyard, and gather in its produce. But in the seventh year, the land shall have a complete rest, a rest (Shabbos) for Hashem...

The *meforshim* ask an obvious question:

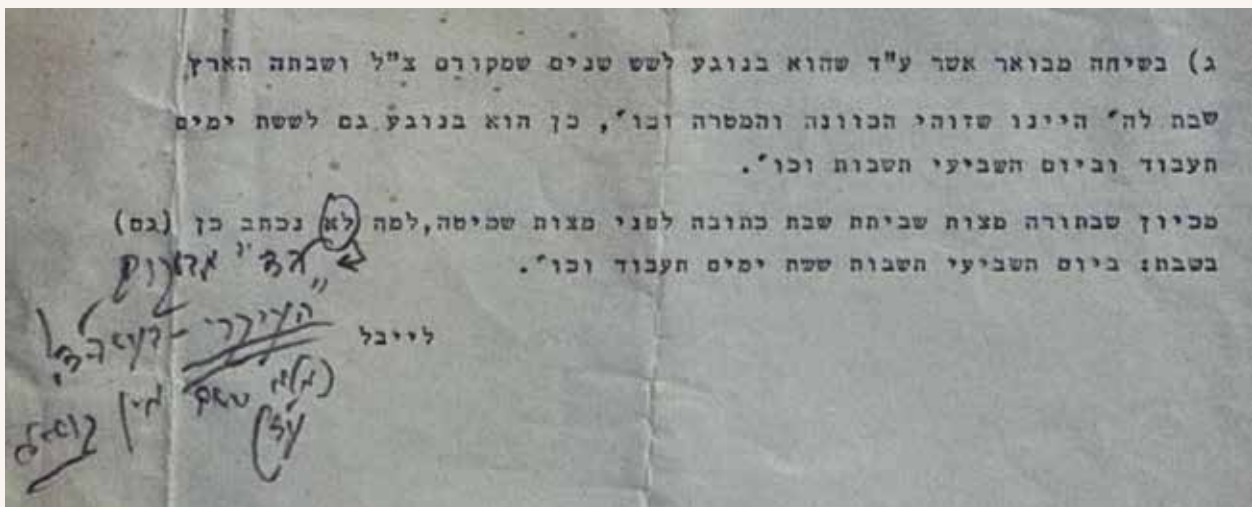
Why does the Torah begin by speaking about the seventh year of rest, before mentioning the six years of agricultural work? After all, chronologically, the six years come first!

The Alter Rebbe addresses this question in Likkutei Torah,² and explains that the whole purpose of the six years of work is in order to reach the spiritual level of "Shabbos La'Hashem" in the seventh. For this reason, the Torah first speaks of the seventh year, indicating that the six preceding years are merely its preparation.

In a *sicha* spoken to the N'shei Chabad convention in 5735,³ the Rebbe added that the same sentiment applies to Shabbos and the six days of the week:

It's important to remember that the whole purpose of the six work days is only to reach the holiness of Shabbos. With this in mind, a person will act differently throughout the whole week, thus even the mundane, everyday activities are all imbued with the sanctity of the seventh day.

Following the *sicha*, Rabbi Leibel Groner asked the Rebbe the following question:⁴



Based on the Rebbe's explanation, the Torah should have used a similar order when instructing about Shabbos. Why doesn't the Torah first write about keeping Shabbos, and only then mention that for six days we should work?

The Rebbe replied by circling the word "[why does the Torah] not [write in the same way about Shabbos]" and wrote:

לכד" ממקום העיקרי - בעשה"ד!

(אלא ששם אין קושיא ע"ז)

"Aside" from the main time [that the Torah speaks about Shabbos] — in the Aseres Hadibros!

(But there, this **difficulty** does not apply.)

[In the Aseres Hadibros, the Torah indeed begins with "זכור את יום השבת לקדשו"—Remember the Shabbos day to keep it holy," and only then continues with "ששת ימים תעבד וגו'"—Six days you shall work..."]

However, the Rebbe notes that in this *possuk*, the

meforshim do not ask a similar question as to why the Torah mentions Shabbos before the six days of the week, because the difficulty does not exist.

The reason may be because the Torah is not implying that we should mark Shabbos before the other days of the week. The Jewish people are not commanded to create the date of Shabbos; it comes automatically every seven days. Shemitta, on the other hand, is created by the Jewish people's counting of six years and proclaiming the seventh holy. In that case, it would have made sense for the Torah to mention the six years first before telling us about Shemitta.]

1. Behar 25:2-4.

2. Beginning of Parshas Behar.

3. Likkutei Sichos vol. 12, p. 248. This *sicha* was edited by the Rebbe in English as well, and published as a standalone booklet.

4. B'Chadrei Torasecha vol. 2, pp. 28, 127-129.

טור 'לעבן מיטן רבי'ן הוקדש לזכרון
ולעילוי נשמת
ר' שמואל ב"ר יהושע אליהו ז"ל
ואשתו מרת שרה ע"ה
בת ר' יקותיאל ומרת לאה הי"ד
תנ"צ'בה'

ע"י בנם
ר' יקותיאל יהודה
וזוגתו מרת פעסל לאה ומשפחתם
שיחיו
רוהר



Moshiach Is On His Way

IYAR 5751

The month of Iyar with the Rebbe in the Year of Wonders was marked by a sense of urgency, following the Rebbe's desperate call for everyone to do all they can to bring Moshiach right away.

Throughout the farbrengens and interactions with the Rebbe, the theme of *Geulah* and Moshiach remained at the forefront.

COMPILED BY: RABBI YANKY BELL

WRITTEN BY: RABBI MENDEL JACOBS





The Straight Path

The first Shabbos of the month, Parshas Tazria-Metzora, 6 Iyar, was enveloped by the theme of *Geulah* and Moshiach.

Even the *niggunim* during this farbrengen took on a very “*Moshiach’dike*” tone. As soon as the Rebbe entered the farbrengen and after he made *kiddush*, the crowd sang “*Ad mosai*” with the Rebbe’s vigorous encouragement. The *niggun* “*Sisu v’simchu b’simchas haGeulah*” was also sung with vigorous enthusiasm.

Above all, the Rebbe addressed what was on everyone’s minds:

We have recently been speaking about the coming of Moshiach much more than in the past, the Rebbe said, emphasizing that every single person—man, woman, or child—can and must do their part to bring Moshiach closer.

Of course, there are many ways to go about doing that, but there is also, in the words of this week’s Pirkei Avos, the “straight path” (“*derech yeshara*”), which is increasing Torah study, especially *pnimiyus haTorah*.

Within Torah subjects, emphasis should be placed on those areas that discuss *Geulah* and Moshiach. Today, these subjects are easily accessible by utilizing the many indexes found in *seforim*, under entries of “*Geulah*” by the letter Gimmel, or “*Moshiach*” by the letter Mem.

Additionally, we can hasten the coming of Moshiach by improving our performance of *mitzvos* to the level of *hiddur*, especially the mitzvah of tzedakah, known for its special quality of bringing *Geulah* closer.

Towards the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe once again reiterated his call to action: Everyone should establish fixed times to study Torah on the subjects of *Geulah* and Moshiach, especially from the Torah of *Nessi Doreinu*—in his *maamarim* and *Likkutei Sichos*. Best would be if the study takes place in a communal setting, gaining the additional quality of “*Asara sheyoshvin v’oskin ba’Torah*,”—ten Jews sitting together in study, as well as the added enthusiasm of communal fellowship.

No Need to Worry

On the following Shabbos, Parshas Acharei-Mos—Kedoshim, the Rebbe continued on the same theme.

When the Rebbe entered the farbrengen, the crowd sang “*Zol shoin zein di Geulah*,” and the Rebbe immediately followed this with strong words about the imminent coming of Moshiach.

“Some people are worried,” the Rebbe said, “they’ve been here in this country for so many years and developed successful businesses, cultivated good relationships with their non-Jewish neighbors, and so on. How can we leave all of

this here and head to Eretz Yisroel with Moshiach?

“But the truth is, they have no reason to be worried. All the good elements developed over our time in *galus* will be taken along with us...”

Towards the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe reiterated his call to action, that everyone should increase in Torah study on the subject of *Geulah* and Moshiach.

“There are already signs posted on the walls about this,” the Rebbe said.

A similar thing occurred on the next Shabbos, Parshas Emor. After the Rebbe made *kiddush*, the crowd sang “*Zol shoin zein di Geulah*,” and the Rebbe began:

“We always connect everything with the *Geulah*, especially with *niggunim* about *Geulah*...”

Towards the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe turned to a group of guests that arrived from Tzfas, Eretz Yisroel, and said: “There are guests here. They will certainly say *l’chaim*, and everyone else will join!” Then the Rebbe looked around for the group’s leader, Rabbi Aharon Eliezer Ceitlin, and said, “Where is their supervisor?”

When everyone in the group said *l’chaim*, they began singing “*Bar Yochai*,” and the Rebbe encouraged the singing.

On the final Shabbos of the month, Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, the Rebbe held a long farbrengen filled with deep insights into the time of year, the weekly Pirkei Avos, and much more. Concluding the farbrengen with a call to action, the Rebbe encouraged everyone to uphold the longstanding custom of gathering Yidden on Shabbos for communal Torah study, and mentioned the importance of bringing everyone—including small children in strollers—to hear the Aseres Hadibros on the upcoming Yom Tov of Shavuot.

Despite All Odds

Throughout the month, the Rebbe made many visits to the Ohel as per his usual custom.

On Tuesday, 9 Iyar, when coming back from the mikvah in preparation for a trip to the Ohel, the Rebbe waved at members of the construction crew working on 770’s expansion.

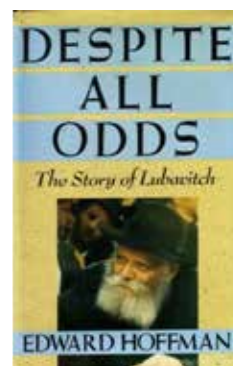
A short while later, the Rebbe left for the Ohel, holding the newly released book, “*Despite All Odds—The Story of Lubavitch*.”

Two days earlier, on Sunday 7 Iyar, the Rebbe had met with the author, Mr. Ed Hoffman, who came to dollars together with Rabbi Feivish Vogel. The Rebbe wished them much success in disseminating the book in the best possible manner.

On Friday, 12 Iyar, the Rebbe once again visited the Ohel, greeting members of the construction crew as he left. The



THE REBBE LEAVES FOR THE OHEL, HOLDING THE NEWLY RELEASED BOOK, "DESPITE ALL ODDS."



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Rebbe returned to 770 at 7:25 P.M., just minutes before *licht-bentchen*.

Yahrtzeit

Shabbos Parshas Acharei-Mos—Kedoshim was also the *yahrtzeit* of the Rebbe's youngest brother, Reb Yisroel Aryeh Leib.

The *mashpia* Reb Shia Korf davened at the *amud* at the Rebbe's behest, as he would every year, and the Rebbe recited all the *Kaddeishim*.

At the Shabbos afternoon *farbrengen*, the Rebbe dedicated the second *sicha* to the topic of the *yahrtzeit*, drawing lessons in *avodas Hashem* from the names Yisroel, Aryeh, and Leib.

Dvar Malchus

On Monday, 15 Iyar, Chassidim were delighted by an unprecedented surprise:

As the Rebbe was leaving his room for Mincha, he gave a copy of the latest issue of the "*Dvar Malchus*" booklet and said, "This should be printed, along with the dedication (*'hakdasha'*), for distribution after Maariv this evening."

The "*Dvar Malchus*" is a weekly publication distributed over the past few months in Eretz Yisroel by Rabbi Tuvia Peles, containing the most recently edited *sichos* from the Rebbe and other selections of the Rebbe's Torah.

This current issue was a special edition—number 12—published in response to the Rebbe's call to study Torah on the subject of *Geulah* and Moshiach. The booklet featured



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THE REBBE IS PRESENTED WITH THE BOOK.

four of the Rebbe's *sichos* with insights on the final two chapters of the Rambam's Mishneh Torah, all about the coming of Moshiach. The back page featured a dedication in memory of the Rebbe's brother, Reb Yisroel Aryeh Leib.

Excitement abounded when news of the distribution spread throughout the Chabad community. Whoever was able made their way over to 770, filling up the shul from end to end.

After Maariv, an announcement was made that the booklets had not yet arrived from the printer and the distribution would take place after a short break, at 9:00 P.M.

In the meantime, the Rebbe went back upstairs to his room, returning to the shul at around 9:30.

Throughout the distribution, the Rebbe was in very good spirits, smiling at many of those passing and offering *brachos*. After over three hours, during which the Rebbe distributed some 6,500 booklets, the Rebbe asked if everyone had received their copy, and then left the shul. Outside the

Rebbe's room, there were a few individuals who had not yet received a copy, and the Rebbe handed out booklets to each of them.

Lag B'Omer

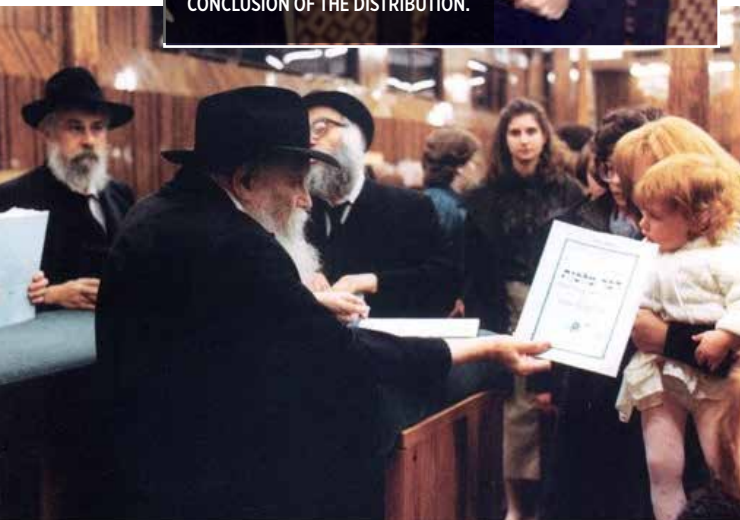
While in the car on the way to the Ohel on Tuesday, 16 Iyar, the Rebbe said that he would soon distribute the special minted coin in honor of Beis Iyar and Lag B'omer.

The Rebbe also agreed to a live satellite broadcast of the Siyum Sefer Torah Haklali, sponsored by Beis Rivkah, to take place in 770 on Lag B'Omer morning.

On the night of Lag B'Omer after Maariv, the Rebbe said a short *sicha* speaking about the greatness of the day and instructing all who would receive the coin to give its value, and then some, to tzedakah.



LEAVING THE SHUL AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE DISTRIBUTION.



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES THE KUNTRES 'DVAR MALCHUS', 15 IYAR.

The distribution lasted three and a half hours, as the Rebbe gave out some 8,000 coins to men, women, and children.

On the morning of Lag B'Omer, the shul was prepared for the scheduled Siyum Sefer Torah ceremony. During Shacharis, a *mechitza* was erected in the downstairs shul, allowing the students and staff of Beis Rivkah to join.

In the early afternoon, when the Rebbe went to the mikvah, a group of about forty women stood nearby, all hoping to receive the Rebbe's *bracha* to be blessed with children. The Rebbe blessed each one of them, handing each a coin for tzedakah.

On the way to the Ohel, the Rebbe's car took a detour and drove through the children's Lag B'Omer rally at Troy Ave. and Maple St. The car circled around the whole park while the Rebbe smiled and waved at all the children with a look of satisfaction on his holy face.

N'shei Chabad

At the end of the month, on 28 Iyar, the Rebbe addressed the conference of N'shei U'bnos Chabad as they gathered in the big shul at 770.

When the Rebbe arrived at his place, he motioned for all the women to take their seats and was given a folder containing the conference program. The Rebbe flipped through the folder, then opened the box situated near his place, filled with *pidyonos* from women.

Before beginning the *sicha*, the Rebbe once again asked that all the women should be seated, then addressed the crowd for close to an hour.

Standing just a week away from Shavuot, the Rebbe discussed the special role that women played in receiving the Torah, and how this role continues to this day through the Torah education that Jewish mothers instill in their children.

At the end of the event, the Rebbe distributed packets of dollars to the organizers for distribution to all participants. Just before standing up to leave, the Rebbe wished everyone a good Shabbos, a good Yom Tov, and *kabbalas haTorah b'simcha ub'pnimiyus*.

Before leaving the shul, the Rebbe picked up the box of *pidyonos*, as well as the folder with the program, and then saw the centerpiece prepared by the women on the theme of *Geulah*. With his other hand, the Rebbe carried the centerpiece, twice refusing the offer from *mazkirim* that they carry it out instead. The women were extremely touched to see this gesture from the Rebbe, and they broke out in thunderous applause as the Rebbe smiled on.

Dollars

GOOD DREAMS!

On Sunday, 7 Iyar, a woman approached the Rebbe regarding a complex health challenge. The Rebbe told her to consult a *rav* and follow his advice.

“But I’ve already spoken with a *rav*,” the woman said, “and he wasn’t able to answer me.”

“Then speak to another *rav* who can answer you,” the Rebbe replied.



An individual told the Rebbe that he would be going to the hospital the following day for surgery.

The Rebbe gave him an additional dollar and said, “Bring this to the hospital, and bring along a tzedakah box. Give tzedakah at the hospital and have others give as well—this will ensure that you’ll leave the hospital quickly...”



An elderly man approached the Rebbe and said he had a dream in which he and his entire family came to visit the Rebbe. The Rebbe replied:

“May Hashem help that you should have not only good dreams, but also good news to report.”

“Was that a good dream?” the man asked.

“Certainly!” the Rebbe replied.



FROM INSIDE THE CAR, THE REBBE ENCOURAGES THE SINGING OF THE CROWDS ON THE BLEACHERS, CIRCLING THE PARK AT THE LAG B'OMER RALLY.



GIVING COINS FOR TZEDAKA OUTSIDE OF THE MIKVA BUILDING, LAG B'OMER.



THE NEWLY-MINTED COIN DISTRIBUTED BY THE REBBE.

THE REBBE ENTERS THE SHUL FOR SHACHARIS, LAG B'OMER 5751.





THE REBBE POINTS
TO THE CENTERPIECE
BEFORE CARRYING
IT OUT OF THE SHUL.



THE REBBE ENTERS THE SHUL
TO ADDRESS THE CONVENTION.

CASH IN

An individual came to thank the Rebbe for the *brachos* he received, and the Rebbe said:

“The main thing is to make sure to cash in on the blessings, and to receive many more blessings...”



An individual from Eretz Yisroel approached the Rebbe and reported that he had recently been in Hong Kong. “It’s unbelievable what the Rebbe’s shliach has accomplished there!” he remarked.

The Rebbe replied:

“You saw it; you obviously must believe it. Now see to it that in Eretz Yisroel, twice as much should be accomplished!”

BECOME A CHOSSID!

On Sunday, 14 Iyar, a woman told the Rebbe that she gives a weekly Torah class, and the Rebbe told her to place a *tzedakah* box on the table. “Place this dollar in the *tzedakah* box at the class,” the Rebbe said.



A woman cried to the Rebbe that she wished to be blessed with children. The Rebbe told her to make sure she is scrupulous in keeping all the laws of *Taharas Hamishpacha*.

“We’ve been to many rabbis, none of them were able to help us,” she continued.

“As I said,” the Rebbe replied, “be more careful with the laws, and Hashem will bless you and your husband in all that you need.”

The woman asked if she should see a doctor.

“You haven’t been to a doctor yet?” the Rebbe asked in surprise. “You should go see an expert doctor.”



A man asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* to have *nachas* from his children. The Rebbe replied:

“*Yiddishe nachas* and *Chassidishe nachas!*”

As the man turned to leave, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Groner, “Is he a chossid?” then turned to the man again and said, “Either way, you should become a chossid!”



A woman came to the Rebbe in tears, asking for a *bracha* to find her *shidduch*. “When will it happen?” she asked the Rebbe.

“I am not a prophet,” the Rebbe replied. “It shouldn’t make a difference to you if you know the exact date today or tomorrow. The main thing is, a good *shidduch* will come very soon.”

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

On Sunday, 21 Iyar, a man came to the Rebbe and said:

“Can I ask you a question?”

“Yes,” the Rebbe answered.

“How can I stop myself from my instinctual behavior of pulling out hair from my beard?”

“You can train yourself to stop,” the Rebbe said, “by always wearing gloves. The gloves will stop you from pulling, and eventually, you will



RABBI YOSEF GREENBERG INTRODUCES
A SUPPORTER TO THE REBBE.

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break this habit. This may seem like an overly simple solution (*'ballebatish'*), but it works. At one point, there was an idea that people had: to smear mustard on their fingertips. But that would cost you a lot of money. Gloves won't cost you any money..."



A woman told the Rebbe that her husband was recently killed, *Rachmana litzlan*, and her husband's brother was considering marrying her, but she was unsure whether this was what her late husband would have wanted.

The Rebbe gave her a *bracha* that she should go in the right direction, and asked whether she belonged to the Sephardic community. When she said that she did, the Rebbe said that nowadays, most people don't do *Yibum*; they do *Chalitzah* instead. The Rebbe advised her to ask a *rav* and follow his instructions.

"What does the Rebbe say I should do?" she asked.

"I am not a *rav* who issues halachic rulings," the Rebbe replied. "Ask two *rabbanim* what should be done in your case, and Hashem should bless you to make the right decision."

SHINING BRIGHTLY

On Sunday, 28 Iyar, a father and daughter came to the Rebbe, and the father asked for a *bracha* for her.

"Does she light Shabbos candles?" the Rebbe asked.

The father said that she doesn't.

"Is it not your custom?" the Rebbe further asked.

"It's not our custom," the father answered, "unless the Rebbe instructs us to do it."

"I shouldn't have to instruct you to do it," the Rebbe said. "It's something that makes a person's *mazal* shine. She should want her *mazal* to shine. May it be in a good and auspicious hour."

The Rebbe gave her an additional dollar and said:

"We have a custom to give *tzedakah* before lighting candles. You should adopt this practice, and you will have an illuminated *mazal* and illuminated news. It says about [the upcoming Yom Tov of] Shavuot that the Torah was given in the merit of the Jewish women..."

Turning to the father, the Rebbe concluded, "You will explain all of this to her."



Rabbi Yosef Greenberg of Alaska presented a newly converted *ger-tzedek* to the Rebbe, saying that this individual is very helpful with all of Chabad's activities in Alaska.

The Rebbe blessed him with good news and much success, then gave him another dollar and said, "This is for the help that you've offered until now. May you have good news and much success."

Turning to the man's wife, the Rebbe said, "This is for your help with your husband. Together, you should work to spread Yiddishkeit, especially in Alaska, which is far away and known for its cold climate. Don't use the coldness for Yiddishkeit; on the contrary, you should have a special [warm] temperature for all matters of Yiddishkeit in Alaska."

The Rebbe then turned to Mrs. Greenberg and asked, "Are you also going to Alaska?" and gave her another dollar. Turning to their one-year-old boy, the Rebbe asked, "Is he also going to Alaska? *Bracha v'hatzlacha!*" ①

BY: MOTTI WILHELM

Sacred Seeding

CHABAD SETTLEMENT
IN ERETZ YISROEL

From the earliest days of Chabad Chassidus, at the very beginning of the Alter Rebbe's *nesius*, the question of *yishuv Eretz Yisroel* and its support stood at the forefront, both in the study of Chassidus and in practical action. A substantial portion of *Igeres Hakodesh* in Tanya is devoted to supporting those living in Eretz Yisroel, and each of the Rabbeim invested significant time, effort, and much-needed funds to sustain those who chose to build their lives in Eretz HaKodesh.

We will review a summary of these efforts and teachings, and then step back to situate that support within its historical and conceptual context.

לעילוי נשמת
ר' פינחס שמואל בן ר' שמעי' ע"ה
נלב"ע כ' אייר ה'תש"ע
ולע"נ זוגתו מרת פערל בת אברהם ע"ה
נלב"ע י"ג שבט ה'תשס"ט
קרינסקי

נדפס ע"י בתם וחתנם
הרה"ת ר' יוסף וזוגתו מרת חנה
רחל ומשפחתם שיחיו
סערעבריאנסקי
דענווער, קאלעראדא

The History

The earliest Chassidim to travel to Eretz Yisroel did so during the lifetime of the Baal Shem Tov. Among them were leading figures such as his brother-in-law, Harav Gershon of Kitov, Harav Nachman of Horodenka, and others.

The first large, organized aliya took place in 5537, following the *histalkus* of the Mezritcher Maggid. A group of his foremost *talmidim* set out for Eretz Yisroel under the leadership of Harav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, Harav Avraham of Kalisk, and Harav Yisrael of Polotzk. The Alter Rebbe joined them with the intention of settling in Eretz Yisroel as well.

As the journey progressed, the group continued to grow, eventually numbering over 300 individuals, approximately five percent of the entire Jewish population in Eretz Yisroel at the time.

When the group reached Mohyliv-Podilskyi (on the Dniester, in present-day Ukraine), the Chassidim who had accompanied them until that point, together with the

talmidei haMaggid who were continuing onward, urged the Alter Rebbe to remain behind and assume leadership of the Chassidim in White Russia. After repeated requests, the Alter Rebbe acceded and returned.

From that point forward, the Alter Rebbe, and each of his successors, played an active role in sustaining and supporting the *yishuv* in Eretz Yisroel.

To understand the role of the Alter Rebbe and the Rabbeim who followed, some background is necessary regarding the state of the Yidden in Eretz Yisroel at the time.

The total Jewish population in Eretz Yisroel numbered only a few thousand, concentrated primarily in central cities such as Yerushalayim, Tveriah, and Chevron. The vast majority devoted themselves to *avodas Hashem*, spending their days immersed in Torah and *tefillah*. Their material needs were provided for by their brethren in *chutz la'aretz* through the system of *chalukah*, organized distributions of financial support.

This support operated through a framework known as *kollelim*. Jews from a particular region in *chutz la'aretz* would contribute to a designated fund that supported former residents of their area who had settled in Eretz Yisroel. As additional groups arrived, the number of *kollelim* expanded. Among the most prominent were Kollel Ungaren (Hungary), Kollel Vohlin (the Volhynia region, today western Ukraine and eastern Poland), and Kollel Hod (Holland and Deutschland), among others.

Following the aliya of the Chassidim, a dedicated *kollel* was established in Reisin (White Russia) to support them. Leadership of this *kollel*, then known as the *maamados Eretz Yisroel*, was entrusted to Harav Yissochor Ber of Lubavitch, the Alter Rebbe's early teacher, the Alter Rebbe himself, and Harav Yisrael of Polotzk, who had traveled to Eretz Yisroel with the group and later returned as a *shadar* (*shlu-cha d'rabbanan*) to raise funds in White Russia on behalf of the *yishuv*.

The three *tzaddikim* instituted several *takanos*. Among them was the directive that every family place a *tzedakah* box in their home designated specifically for *maamados Eretz Yisroel*, into which money would be contributed weekly. Each city appointed a representative responsible for collecting these funds several times a year or even monthly. The collections were then consolidated and sent to the heads



KEHOT PUBLICATION SOCIETY

IN 5556, SOME ADMORIM ALREADY WISHED TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN KOLLEL. IN THIS LETTER, PENNED BY THE ALTER REBBE, HE WRITES ON BEHALF OF RABBI AVRAHAM OF KALISK, BESEECHING THAT THEY NOT GO AHEAD WITH IT. ULTIMATELY, REB AVRAHAM HIMSELF ESTABLISHED A SEPARATE KOLLEL IN 5565 (LETTER NO. 49 IN THE NEW EDITION OF THE ALTER REBBE'S IGROS KODESH).



THE AVRAHAM AVINU SHUL IN CHEVRON. A PORTION OF THIS SHUL WAS PURCHASED BY THE MITTELER REBBE IN 5583. THE BUILDING WAS RENOVATED AND LATER REBUILT (AFTER BEING DESTROYED BY ARABS IN 5708) AND IS THE OLDEST CHABAD SHUL IN THE WORLD.



of the *kollel*, the three *tzaddikim*.

Within a few years, Harav Yisrael of Polotzk passed away, and Harav Yissochor Ber, though older than the Alter Rebbe and his childhood teacher, became *mekushar* to him. The Alter Rebbe was consequently recognized as the sole *Nasi* of the *kollel*. Funds collected throughout White Russia were directed to him, and he assumed responsibility for forwarding them to Eretz Yisroel.

The Alter Rebbe sent *shadarim* to gather support in cities across White Russia and even in Vohlin. He also authored letters to reinforce the importance of regular contributions; many of these letters were later incorporated into *Igeres Hakodesh* in Tanya.

Indeed, this financial support of Eretz Yisroel was cited as one of the reasons for the Alter Rebbe's arrest by the Czarist authorities. Since Eretz Yisroel was under Ottoman rule, and the Ottoman Empire was an enemy of Russia, the transfer of funds there was viewed as aiding a hostile power. During his interrogations, the Alter Rebbe explained that it was a longstanding Jewish practice to support the poor of Eretz Yisroel, so that they might pray there on behalf of the entire Jewish people.

On Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5548, Harav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk was *nistalek*. In the aftermath, some supporters of the *kollel* considered withdrawing their contributions, claiming that their support had been given solely in his honor. The Alter Rebbe firmly opposed this position and urged continued commitment. In a letter to *anash* of Reisin, he wrote:

"I reiterate my request before my beloved friends and companions: that they not, *chas v'shalom*, reduce

even a single coin from the established sum."¹

In the years that followed, a series of developments led Harav Avraham of Kalisk, who was in Eretz Yisroel, to separate from the Alter Rebbe's *kollel* and establish one of his own. This new *kollel* was represented in White Russia by Harav Mordechai of Lechovitz.²

As a result, the original *kollel* established for the Chassidim was divided into two. The Alter Rebbe continued as the head of what became known as Kollel Chabad, supporting the Chabad Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel. The split among the Chassidim also led the Alter Rebbe's Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel to move from Tveriah, where they had lived until then, to Tzfas.

Building Chevron

Some years later, the Chabad Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel decided to relocate the center of their community to Chevron. There is some debate regarding the exact year this occurred, but it is generally agreed that it took place after the *histalkus* of the Alter Rebbe and during the early years of the Mittlerer Rebbe's *nesius*.

The transition did not happen all at once. In a letter dated 5575, the Mittlerer Rebbe advised the renowned Chassidim Reb Moshe Meizlish and Reb Boruch Mordechai of Babroisk not to travel to Eretz Yisroel. He wrote:

"Regarding their repeated appeals to me to respond to their request about traveling to Eretz HaKodesh: if you are truly mine and heed my voice,

my faithful counsel is that they refrain from this... If they do not rely on me and nevertheless choose to go, then they should go, and Hashem will be their help... At the very least, however, they must not imagine that I will provide from our tzedakah fund even a single coin for their travel expenses. Only once they arrive and establish a dwelling in Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh will they receive support, up to approximately fifty *adumim* (copper coins) for the two of them, and no more under any circumstances.”³

In later years, however, after the Mitteler Rebbe formally established the Chabad community in Chevron, he instructed certain Chassidim to settle there. With them were these two Chassidim, who emigrated to Chevron several years apart.

Around that time, the Mitteler Rebbe also addressed general letters to *anash*, urging them to continue supporting the tzedakah of Eretz Yisroel as his father, the Alter Rebbe, had done. He encouraged Chassidim to maintain designated pushkas for this purpose and to contribute at set times during the day, such as before meals.⁴

After the relocation to Chevron, the Mitteler Rebbe called upon Chassidim to strengthen the new settlement, writing: “Therefore, whoever is for Hashem should not be sparing with his money, but should cherish the resting place of our holy forefathers with heart and soul, and strengthen himself to support the settlement of *anash* in the place of our holy fathers.”⁵

He also supported the efforts of Shadarim who traveled to raise funds for the Chevron community. One such shadar was Reb Shimon Menashe Chaikin, who recorded that he saw in the Mitteler Rebbe’s holy handwriting the following: “I found written in the name of the Radbaz that whoever has an estate in Chevron Ir HaKodesh will be spared from *chibut hakever*.”⁶ This was written as an encouragement for Chassidim to acquire their own *daled amos* in the holy city.

The Mitteler Rebbe himself purchased property there: a room adjacent to the Avraham Avinu Shul designated for use by Chabad Chassidim as a Chabad shul. This small shul was reestablished after the Six-Day War and remains accessible today.

He also worked to secure broader support for the nascent community, lobbying organizations in Europe and, during their meeting, asking Harav Akiva Eiger to advocate on their behalf.

Chevron would go on to serve as the primary center of Chabad Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel for over ninety years, and the main focus of the Rabbeim’s efforts on behalf of the *yishuv* in Eretz Yisroel.

Supporting and Building

After the Mitteler Rebbe’s *histalkus*, the Tzemach Tzedek continued the efforts to sustain the *yishuv*. He wrote to *anash*:

“I, too, have come to urge the already diligent in the mitzvah of tzedakah, to strengthen their efforts and to strive to expand the scope of this undertaking. For it is well known how precious and gracious this mitzvah is, and how great its value.”⁷

Like his predecessors, the Tzemach Tzedek was deeply involved in supporting the *yishuv*. Funds collected by *shadarim* throughout White Russia were directed to him, and he oversaw their transfer to Eretz Yisroel. He also sent several members of his family to settle in Chevron, including Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel Slonim, the Mitteler Rebbe’s daughter, together with her husband, Reb Yaakov Kuli Slonim, and their sons; as well as two granddaughters of the Alter Rebbe, daughters of his son Reb Moshe.

The Slonim family became central figures in the Chabad community of Chevron, which continued to grow despite significant hardship and the relocation of some families to Yerushalayim.

A new phase in the life of Chabad Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel emerged during the *nesius* of the Rebbe Rashab. He devoted considerable time, financial resources, and personal attention to strengthening the struggling community. Numerous letters from the Rebbe Rashab to Chassidim in Chevron appear in his *Igros Kodesh*, addressing matters ranging from questions in Chassidus and *avodas Hashem* to financial support and practical guidance.

The Rebbe Rashab also invested significant effort in acquiring homes in Chevron in which members of Kollel Chabad could reside without paying rent, similar to the arrangements other *kollelim* maintained in Yerushalayim.

In a letter describing the conditions in Chevron, he outlined the pressing need for such housing:

“One of the factors that strengthens the *yishuv* in Eretz HaKodesh is the availability of free housing. Several philanthropists have built homes there and allocate apartments by lottery for a three-year term. A fair number of such homes exist in Eretz HaKodesh. The *kollelim* themselves own similar residences, and some benefactors provide free apartments to all members of certain *kollelim*, even when the donor is from Poland or elsewhere.

“However, all of this is limited to Yerushalayim, may it be rebuilt and established. As a result, many residents of the other holy cities have relocated to Yerushalayim, specifically



PORTRAIT OF THREE GENERATIONS OF THE SLONIM FAMILY OF CHEVRON AND YAFO TAKEN CIRCA 5670 IN YAFO.

SITTING ON THE LEFT IS THE SON OF REBBETZIN MENUCHA ROCHEL, REB MORDECHAI DOVBER (WHO IMMIGRATED TO ERETZ YISROEL AT THE AGE OF FIVE IN 5600). HE SERVED AS ONE OF THE ADMINISTRATORS OF KOLLEL CHABAD, AND HIS APPEARANCE WAS SAID TO BE SIMILAR TO THAT OF HIS GRANDFATHER, THE MITTLER REBBE. SITTING ON THE RIGHT IS HIS SON, REB SHNEUR ZALMAN, WHO SERVED AS THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S MELAMED FOR A SHORT TIME, AND AS THE CHABAD RAV OF TEL AVIV-YAFO FOR ALMOST 40 YEARS.

STANDING IS HIS SON, REB MENACHEM MENDEL SHMUEL SLONIM.

because of the free housing available there and the large number of yeshivos that provide substantial financial support to their students. Furthermore, Yerushalayim provides greater opportunities for commerce and trade. For all these reasons, it has drawn many settlers, whereas in Chevron there are no such homes and no yeshiva. This has contributed significantly to the decline of the community there.”⁸

This vision was later realized with the purchase of Chatzer Romano, a large mansion built by the wealthy Turkish merchant Chaim Yisrael Romano and sold after his passing. The acquisition took place in 5668.

Four years later, in 5672, the Rebbe Rashab founded Yeshivas Toras Emes in Chevron and sent a *mashpia* together with seven outstanding *Temimim*



CHATZER ROMANO, A SHORT TIME AFTER IT WAS ACQUIRED BY THE REBBE RASHAB.

from Lubavitch to study there. They remained until 5674, when World War I broke out and the Ottoman authorities, who ruled Eretz Yisroel at the time, expelled them as citizens of Russia, with which they were at war.

Alongside Chevron, a Chabad *yishuv* was developing in Yerushalayim and in other cities, including Tzfas, Tveriah, and Tel Aviv–Yafo. Many of these families were supported by Kollel Chabad distributions. For example, a Kollel Chabad ledger from the years 5648–5653 records thirty-eight individuals in Tzfas and twenty-two in Tveriah who received allocations. These communities established shuls and *yeshivos*, some of which endure to this day, including the well-known Tzemach Tzedek shul in Yerushalayim.

Over time, however, the *shadar* system began to weaken, both the emissaries who traveled from Eretz Yisroel to *chutz la'aretz* and those who operated within Russia itself. The Rebbe Rashab was dissatisfied with this development and stressed that the *shadar* system was essential for sustaining support for Eretz Yisroel.

In a letter to Reb Shmuel Gurary, he wrote:

“When you were with us, we discussed the matters of Eretz Chefetz, whose incoming tzedakah has declined sharply in your region. You told me that in your view, the most practical solution would be to appoint a dedicated representative, as was done in earlier generations, to travel there specifically for this purpose, to collect what has already been gathered, and to strengthen the effort going forward. This would include encouraging donors and appointing



collectors to gather funds at fixed intervals, such as monthly, from the pushkas and deposit them in a central location, where the money would remain until the emissary arrives. In this way, with Hashem's help, the entire undertaking would be considerably strengthened.”⁹

The Rebbe Rashab then identified the *shadar* who was to be appointed for this task.

Clarifying the Goal

During the Rebbe Rashab's *nesius*, the landscape in Eretz Yisroel began to change significantly. What had once been a small population of several thousand Yidden devoted primarily to Torah and *avodas Hashem* gave way to a broader ideal: that Jews should settle in Eretz Yisroel regardless of occupation.

As a result, the Jewish population of Eretz Yisroel grew dramatically, from approximately 18,000 in 5643, the year of the *histalkus* of the Rebbe Maharash, to about 85,000 by 5674, on the eve of the First World War. In Zionist historiography, this period is identified with the “First Aliya” (5642–5664), during which thousands emigrated from

Eastern Europe, Iraq, and Yemen, followed by the “Second Aliya” (5664–5674), when additional waves arrived from Yemen and Eastern Europe.

The changing landscape in Eretz Yisroel also raised fundamental questions about the purpose of the *kollel* support system. Was it intended to sustain all Yidden living in Eretz Yisroel, or specifically those who embodied the earlier ideal, a life devoted primarily to Torah and *avodas Hashem*?

The Rebbe Rashab was unequivocal in his position that the latter was the true intent. He wrote numerous letters to the heads of Kollel Chabad in Eretz Yisroel pressing this distinction. In one such letter, he stated:¹⁰

“As for what you write regarding the welfare of the poor of Eretz HaKodesh—I know their welfare better than you do, and their well-being touches my heart far more deeply than it touches yours... You will not build nor strengthen Eretz HaKodesh. Rather, through your methods and stratagems, you will only bring destruction. Our holy forefathers established Eretz HaKodesh through their toil and actual *mesirus nefesh*. And we, who follow in their footsteps, thank G-d, desire Eretz HaKodesh with all our heart and soul, as it is the land uniquely suited for Torah and *avoda*. This was the entire purpose and intent of our holy forefathers, not for businessmen and tradesmen upon whom there rests no yoke of Torah and *avoda*...”

Despite this clear directive, tension persisted. The heads of Kollel Chabad in Eretz Yisroel argued that they could not restrict the *chalukah*, while the *gabboim* in Russia insisted that support remain limited to those aligned with the *kollel's* original mission. In another letter, the Rebbe Rashab expressed his shock that among those receiving support were individuals who sent their children to modern schools and others who shaved their beards.



MAP DETAILING ALL THE NEW CITIES ESTABLISHED DURING THE WAVE OF THE FIRST AND SECOND 'ALIYOS'.



GRAPH SHOWING THE EXPONENTIAL GROWTH OF ERETZ YISROEL'S JEWISH POPULATION ON THE EVE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

The dispute continued for several years. The Rebbe Rashab sought to appoint new representatives to oversee the *kollel* in Eretz Yisroel but faced resistance from the administrators in Yerushalayim and opposition from his cousins, the Rebbes of Liadi and Babroisk.

This dispute, and other tensions, ultimately led to a formal split within Kollel Chabad. In 5673, the Rebbe of Babroisk broke away and established a separate body known as “Kollel Chabad HaMeyuchad.” The division continued for nine years. During that period, the Rebbe Rashab was *nistalek*, and the Frieddiker Rebbe assumed the *nesius* of Chabad–Lubavitch.

A Visit and a Village

In the early years of the Frieddiker Rebbe's *nesius*, the dispute over Kollel Chabad was resolved, and the two factions were reunited. At the same time, however, Russia was undergoing sweeping upheaval, culminating in the Communist takeover and the establishment of the Soviet Union.

In the years that followed, the Frieddiker Rebbe was forced into a fierce struggle against the Yevsektzia, risking his life to establish *chadorim*, *yeshivos*, and *mikvaos* throughout the Soviet Union. Under such conditions, sustained support for Eretz Yisroel could no longer remain a primary focus.

Following the Frieddiker Rebbe's arrest, imprisonment, release, and eventual departure from the Soviet Union, the relationship between the Rabbeim and the *yishuv* in Eretz Yisroel entered a new phase.

In 5689, the Frieddiker Rebbe visited Eretz Yisroel, the only one of the Chabad Rabbeim to do so. During his stay, he worked to recover the properties purchased by the Rebbe Rashab in Chevron and sought to strengthen both the Chabad communities and the broader *yishuv*.¹¹

While there, the administration of Kollel Chabad in Eretz Yisroel requested that he assume the *nesius* of the organization, a role he formally accepted several weeks later.

More fundamental changes followed in the years ahead. As Eretz Yisroel rapidly filled with hundreds of thousands of Yidden, the structure of Kollel Chabad no longer sufficed as an umbrella framework for Chabad's activities in the country. In response, the Frieddiker Rebbe founded Agudas Chassidei Chabad of Eretz Yisroel in 5701, establishing a central body to



A 'KOL KOREH' BY KOLLEL CHABAD OF YERUSHALAYIM SHORTLY AFTER BEING PLACED BACK UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE FRIEDDIKER REBBE.

oversee and strengthen Chabad institutions throughout the land and to encourage Chassidim to gather, study Chassidus, and reinforce their adherence to *darkei haChassidus*.

In 5709, the Frieddiker Rebbe introduced another major shift with the establishment of Kfar Chabad,¹² a formal agricultural village where Chabad Chassidim could live, work the land, earn a livelihood, and create a central base for Chabad activity in Eretz Yisroel.

This marked a significant departure from earlier policy. As will be discussed, the Rabbeim had previously opposed settlement initiatives. From this point onward, however, such structured communal settlement became an approach that was actively encouraged.

During the Rebbe's *nesius*, this development continued. The Rebbe reinvigorated and expanded Chabad communities in Tzfas,¹³ Yerushalayim, and Kiryat Malachi (Nachalas Har Chabad¹⁴); he also established Kfar Chabad Beis.

The Rebbe assumed a far more expansive role in

shaping the direction of Jewish life in Eretz Yisroel, particularly through his strong involvement in matters of *shleimus ha'aretz* and broader public affairs. As will be discussed

PART II

The Context

When discussing *yishuv Eretz Yisroel* and the Rabbeim's support, an important distinction must be made, and context is essential.

For centuries, the number of Yidden living in Eretz Yisroel was very small, several thousand at most. The overwhelming majority were not engaged in economic enterprise, which in any case was extremely limited. As noted earlier, they devoted themselves to Torah and *avodas Hashem* and relied on the generosity of their brethren in *chutz la'aretz* through the *chaluka* and *kollel* system.

It was only in the late nineteenth century that this reality began to shift. This was a period of intense persecution for Yidden in Russia and parts of Europe, and at the same time, the idea of a Jewish national state in Eretz Yisroel began to take hold.

Although the movement initially emerged as a secular nationalist initiative, it gradually made inroads into segments of the frum world as well. One major development was the beginning of mass migration to Eretz Yisroel across diverse segments of the Jewish population. Along with this came a redefinition of the concept of *yishuv Eretz Yisroel*. Previously understood primarily as a lofty spiritual ideal, it increasingly came to mean the physical act of settling the land: working its soil, building infrastructure, and establishing the material framework for Jewish life.

In contemporary usage, it is almost exclusively this latter definition that prevails. Therefore, when discussing *yishuv Eretz Yisroel* and the Rabbeim's strong support for it, we must first clarify precisely what they were supporting.

The earliest relevant reference to this idea appears in a statement of the Rebbe Maharash, as quoted by the Frierdiker Rebbe.¹⁵

"My grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash, once told my father, the Rebbe Rashab, that he had considered telling the representatives of the Russian government:

"If you do not improve your treatment of the Jews, I will travel to Eretz Yisroel and take with me one hundred thousand Jewish families."

"And," he added, "I would have carried this out. But at

later, however, this represents a category distinct from the institutional support and settlement efforts described above.

that time the BILU movement had begun, and I did not wish to lend it additional strength."

The Rebbe Maharash was referring to BILU, one of the earliest Zionist movements, whose aim was the agricultural settlement of Eretz Yisroel. The name was an acronym for the *possuk* in Yeshaya, "*Beis Yaakov lechu v'nelcha*." The Rebbe Maharash drew attention to that very point.

In the same *sicha*, the Frierdiker Rebbe continued:

"My grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash, concluded: 'If they had had the "*be'or Hashem*" [the continuation of the verse], I too would have gone.'"

From this account, we see at least a theoretical openness to large-scale migration to Eretz Yisroel, but only on condition that it be entirely detached from the secular nationalist movements.

The issue came to the forefront during the *nesius* of the Rebbe Rashab, as nationalist movements were gaining momentum. His position on the matter is clear and unequivocal.

In one letter, he writes:¹⁶

"...There are preachers of the aforementioned sort who, in order to mislead our brethren, dare to attach themselves to a great tree, namely, the Alter Rebbe, citing what he wrote in *Igeres Hakodesh*, where he extolled and magnified the mitzvah of giving tzedakah for Eretz HaKodesh.

"However, there are also among our upright and sincere brethren those who understand the holy letters of the Alter Rebbe as a foundation for the contemporary idea of "settling" Eretz HaKodesh, meaning, as it is presently understood, working its soil and the like.

"However, any person of understanding will recognize that the true intent of the Alter Rebbe was directed toward those engaged in Torah in Eretz HaKodesh, for that is its genuine settlement. The study of Torah in Eretz HaKodesh is certainly greater and more elevated than in *chutz la'aretz*, for 'the air of Eretz Yisroel makes one wise,' as explained in *Igeres Hakodesh*, *siman* 14, beginning with the words *Le'orer es ha'ahavah*, concerning the verse "The eyes of Hashem your G-d are upon it."



SETTLERS WORKING THE FIELD AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY, IN ONE OF THE MANY VILLAGES THAT SPRANG UP IN ERETZ YISROEL.

“Anyone who examines the matter will see that all that is written in *Igeres HaKodesh* regarding the greatness of Eretz HaKodesh refers to the lofty and wondrous spiritual lights hidden within it. These are what grant a person the capacity to serve Hashem there in a far more elevated manner, and through this, the Divine lights are drawn down in revealed form....

“Consider: would *tzedakah* and *chesed* in Eretz HaKodesh given to those who are not worthy of it be greater than *tzedakah* in *chutz la'aretz*? Those who are worthy are those who serve Hashem in Eretz HaKodesh, not those engaged there primarily in agricultural labor. Nor is that the essence of the land's true settlement at all.”

It should be emphasized, however, that the Rebbe Rashab was not declaring such settlement to be inherently forbidden. Rather, he was asserting that it did not constitute the authentic *yishuv Eretz Yisroel* envisioned by the Rabbeim.

That distinction could still leave room for a fully frum, self-sustaining settlement, independent of the *kollel* framework. Indeed, such a proposal was presented to the Rebbe Rashab by his nephew by marriage, Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg, the well-known writer often regarded as the founder of cultural Zionism. He wrote to inquire whether reports were true that the Rebbe Rashab supported the establishment of a frum *moshav* in Eretz Yisroel.

The Rebbe Rashab responded unequivocally:¹⁷

“Today, Mr. ... showed me a written response from you to his inquiry made in my name regarding the establishment of a settlement in Eretz Yisroel.

“I hereby inform you that these statements were written without my knowledge. I did not speak with him even a single word about this matter.

“Just as in the past, so too now, I am in absolute opposition to the establishment of settlements in Eretz Yisroel. Let this therefore serve as a clear and public notice: if any further statements in my name regarding this subject should appear, they have no foundation whatsoever.”

Here too, the context is essential. This was a period when the nationalist movement for a Jewish state in Eretz Yisroel was gaining significant traction throughout the Jewish world. The Rebbe Rashab stood among the foremost opponents of its ideology and direction. In that climate, he would not permit any initiative that might be perceived as lending it legitimacy or strength, much as the Rebbe Maharash had refrained from acting on his own theoretical plan so as not to bolster a harmful movement.

A Chidush

In the years that followed, particularly after the First World War and the Soviet takeover, conditions for Yidden in Russia worsened dramatically, while the Jewish population in Eretz Yisroel continued to expand. In the writings of the Frierdiker Rebbe, one finds a nuanced response to this changing reality.



On the one hand, with regard to Jews trapped in the Soviet Union and facing severe hardship, he acknowledged that travel to Eretz Yisroel was the only viable option, and therefore approved of it. He wrote:¹⁸

“As is well known, my position regarding travel to Eretz HaKodesh, may it be rebuilt and established, has always been negative. And even now, this remains my view with regard to [traveling from] other countries as well.

“However, concerning our brethren who are suffering, there is no other counsel. Entry is not permitted to other countries, with the exception of Latvia. And in Latvia, there is little that can be done, the country is small and impoverished. The rabbis and *shochtim* who arrive there endure deprivation and humiliation... Therefore, in order to escape, there is no other path but Eretz HaKodesh.”

At the same time, when prominent *gedolim* promoted migration and settlement in Eretz Yisroel under the banner of *yishuv Eretz Yisroel*, the Frieddiker Rebbe rejected the framing.¹⁹

Then, in 5709, the Frieddiker Rebbe established Kfar Chabad. While this might be viewed simply as a practical response to urgent needs, the Rebbe later made clear that it represented a genuine shift in approach.

On Yud Shevat 5728, in a *sicha* discussing the unique

chidushim of the Frieddiker Rebbe, the Rebbe addressed this development in relation to Eretz Yisroel. After reviewing the longstanding efforts of the Rabbeim to support Eretz Yisroel within the framework of supporting Torah, he stated:²⁰

“In this matter lies the *chidush* of the *ba’al hahilula*, that at his directive Kfar Chabad was established... There, they would engage in plowing, sowing, and all thirty-nine *mela-chos* in their simple, physical sense, but in a manner befitting Eretz HaKodesh, ‘a land upon which the eyes of Hashem your G-d are fixed from the beginning of the year until the end of the year.’

“For this purpose, not only elderly individuals were sent, nor only yeshivah students, but entire families, ‘with our youth and with our elders... with our sons and with our daughters.’

“This was undertaken despite the fact that there had previously been strong opposition to such endeavors, as is well known and recounted. But this is not the place to elaborate further.”

One could suggest that a similar approach characterized the Rebbe’s perspective. He strongly encouraged the establishment and growth of Chabad communities, and more broadly, Jewish life, throughout Eretz Yisroel, even where this was not limited exclusively to purely spiritual pursuits.

At the same time, the Rebbe did not present aliya or *yishuv Eretz Yisroel* as an ultimate objective in and of itself. On the contrary, he consistently advised *rabbanim*, community leaders, and private individuals to remain in their existing communities and strengthen them, rather than leaving to settle in Eretz Yisroel.²¹

A third factor that emerged during the Rebbe’s *nesius*, and in truth began developing even earlier, was the safety and security of the Yidden already living in Eretz Yisroel. This concern was framed squarely in terms of *pikuach nefesh*. Under that banner, the Rebbe called for maintaining Jewish presence throughout the entirety of Eretz Yisroel, including the territories captured during the Six-Day War. Here again, however, a clear distinction must be made: this was not a question of *yishuv Eretz Yisroel*, but of *pikuach nefesh*.

This distinction is evident in a *yechidus* the Sadigura Rebbe, Harav Avraham Yaakov Friedman, had with the Rebbe in 5740.²² The Sadigura Rebbe asked whether the territories should be classified as *kibush yachid* or *kibush rabbim*, halachic categories with distinct legal implications. The Rebbe responded that the classification was not relevant to his position. The issue, he explained, was one of *pikuach nefesh*, as addressed in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, *siman* 329, and that alone governed his opposition



A UNIQUE LETTER FROM THE FRIEDDIKER REBBE TO A CHOSSID IMMIGRATING TO ERETZ YISROEL IN 5709. THE FRIEDDIKER REBBE TELLS HIM OF THE BRACHA THAT THE RABBEIM WOULD OFFER TO ANASH MAKING THE JOURNEY TO ERETZ YISROEL, THAT THEY EXPERIENCE THE SAME HOLY YEARNING TO THE LAND THERE AS THEY HAD FELT IN CHUTZ LA'ARETZ.



THE SADIGURA
REBBE IN
YECHIDUS WITH
THE REBBE, 5740.

to relinquishing the territories.

A full treatment of this topic would also need to address the halachic question of *yishuv Eretz Yisroel* as a mitzvah. Already among the Rishonim, there is debate whether it is counted among the 613 *mitzvos*; there is further discussion as to whether and how it applies in the time of *galus*; and whether it is an obligation incumbent upon each individual.²³

A comprehensive analysis of this *sugya*, in all its dimensions, is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, we conclude with the Rebbe's words from

the last farbrengen before 27 Adar I, on Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel 5752²⁴:

"When we look at the past few years, we see a literal 'Vayakhel' unfolding before our eyes, a true gathering together, as Jews from every corner of the globe are ascending to Eretz Yisroel. And the scope of this aliya is incomparable to the waves of immigration seen in earlier generations."

May this serve as the prelude to the complete Geulah, speedily and in our days. ⑦

1. *Igros Kodesh Admur Hazaken*, Letter 17 (Letter 11 in the previous edition). This letter, a portion of which was also sent to *anash* in Eretz Yisroel, forms the basis of the well-known *siman* 27 in *Igeres Hakodesh* of Tanya.

2. For more about these events, see *Journey Toward Peace*, Derher 159, Tishrei 5786.

3. *Igros Kodesh Admur Ha'emtzai* letter 19 (letter 10 in the previous edition).

4. *Ibid*, letter 21 (14).

5. *Ibid*, letter 39 (32).

6. *Ibid*, footnotes for letter 39.

7. *Igros Kodesh Tzemach Tzedek* letter 11 (3).

8. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab* vol. 2, p. 422.

9. *Ibid* vol. 4, p. 126.

10. *Ibid* vol. 1, p. 332.

11. For more about that historic visit, see *A Royal Visit*, Derher issue 146, Av 5784.

12. See *The Rebbe's Capital City*, Derher issue 73, Tishrei 5779.

13. See *Restoring the Crown*, Derher issue 96, Av 5780.

14. See *A Mountain of Pride*, Derher issue 86, Tishrei 5780.

15. *Sefer Hasichos* 5705, p. 32.

16. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab* vol. 2, p. 913.

17. *Ibid*, p. 634.

18. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz* vol. 3, p. 77.

19. See *Tikun Olam (Munkatch)*, p. 42.

20. *Toras Menachem* vol. 52, p. 79.

21. For a striking example, see the Rebbe's exchange with the South African Zionist Federation.

22. *Sichos Kodesh* 5740, *Hosafos*, p. 1147.

23. For a collection of the Rebbe's *sichos* and letters on these topics, see *Shulchan Menachem*, vol. 7 (*Choshen Mishpat*), p. 138 and onward.

24. *Sefer Hasichos* 5752, vol 2, p. 440.



לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' משה בהרה"ח דוד העניך ע"ה
זאקליקובסקי
נפטר בשם טוב ליל ש"ק פ' תזו"מ
בדר"ח אייר, גבורה שבתפארת, ה'תש"פ
תנ"צ'ה

The American Bochurim to Otwock - Part I

By: Rabbi Mendy Greenberg (Twinsburg, OH)

In the tense days leading up to World War II, as thousands fled Europe in search of safety, a small group of American bochurim set out in the opposite direction. Their destination was Otwock¹—to enroll in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim, to be near the Frierdiker Rebbe.

The journey seemed reckless, but armed with the Frierdiker Rebbe's explicit bracha and encouragement, they made the long trip—only to spend a mere two weeks in Otwock before the war erupted and they were forced to flee.

Months later, the deeper purpose of their journey became clear: when the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived in the United States, it was these very bochurim he gathered to form the foundation of the new Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim on American soil.

What follows is their story, told in the voices of four members of that group—Rabbi Mordechai Fisher, Rabbi Avraham Hecht, Rabbi Meir Greenberg, and Rabbi Mordechai Altein (in Part II).²

Part I recounts their early connection to Chassidus and their journey to Otwock. Part II (appearing in the Sivan magazine) continues with their experiences in Otwock and their dramatic escape.



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The Seeds of a Journey

Rabbi Fisher: The story of our journey to Otwock begins in our Mesivta Torah Vodaas days. A good friend of mine, Avraham Barnetzky, had gotten to know Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, and he began telling us about Rabbi Jacobson's weekly Tanya class. "You should come. You'll enjoy it. It's something special," he told us. He spoke to one friend, then

another, and word slowly spread among us. The classes took place once a week, and he would hold farbrengens on special occasions such as Yud-Tes Kislev, Yud-Bais Tammuz, Purim, and others.

The first time I joined, I immediately felt at home. It felt good to be there. You felt something genuine and elevating in the air. I probably understood twenty percent of what was being taught; the other eighty percent went over my

head. But the *heimishe* feeling, the friendliness, the stories, the singing at the farbrengens—it all made a powerful impression.

We became the extended family of Rabbi Jacobson. His Rebbetzin treated us like her children; the *bochurim* felt like they were part of the household. It was a very warm and loving environment.

Then, after some years, a new era began for our little Chassidic community. The Frierdiker Rebbe started sending *shluchim* to the United States, and they all lived in the home of Rabbi Jacobson—the official and unofficial headquarters of Chabad in the United States at that time.

One of the earliest Chassidim he sent was Reb Itche “Masmid.” He was a historic figure, one of the most devoted Chassidim, completely dedicated to the Rebbe. Then the Frierdiker Rebbe sent others—after Reb Itche Masmid came another whose name I can’t recall³—and later on Reb Shmuel Levitin arrived. He remained for quite a while, and we developed a very close relationship with him.⁴

These Chassidim made a remarkable impression on the *bochurim*. They carried a certain *tzidkus*, a purity and sincerity, in the way they spoke and how they conducted themselves. It was something entirely different. Their presence strengthened us tremendously. Each one of them injected a “booster shot”—a renewed warmth and appreciation for what Chassidus is, and what it seeks to create within a person.

“We Are Going To See the Rebbe!”

Rabbi Fisher: Rabbi Jacobson would speak about the Frierdiker Rebbe in a very, very special way. He had a certain manner of describing the Frierdiker Rebbe that made all of us—boys who had never seen the Frierdiker Rebbe—feel profoundly attached to him. Somehow, through Rabbi Jacobson’s words, we sensed that it would be a *zechus* just to be connected to the Frierdiker Rebbe in any form—even if only through writing a letter.

He would share stories about the Frierdiker Rebbe and his own personal experiences with him. He told us about the terrible experiences the Frierdiker Rebbe endured in prison. Hearing those stories—and later, reading them—made a tremendous impression on me.

I had read a great deal of Jewish history and biographies of great *rabbanim*. But I had never come across any Jewish leader—no matter how great in learning—who had literally risked his life to that extent. The more I heard about the Frierdiker Rebbe, the more amazed I was. Naturally, we



REB AVRAHAM HECHT AND REB MOTTEL FISHER REUNITING AT 770, SEVENTY ONE YEARS AFTER THEIR JOURNEY TO OTWOCK.

wanted to go and learn near the Rebbe.

I truly can’t remember the exact moment or the circumstances when the desire to go suddenly took root among us. But somehow, almost without realizing it, the idea of going to Europe—of going to ‘Lubavitch’—began to grow within all of us.

Rabbi Hecht: At that same time, the Frierdiker Rebbe evidently felt that we were already “well-cooked,” as the saying goes—that we were ready to come learn in Otwock, and he, therefore, was just as interested in our arrival.

In 5698, my brother Reb Shlomo Zalman married Rabbi Jacobson’s daughter, and they moved to Otwock to be near the Frierdiker Rebbe.⁵ Berel Levy was the next to go.

Around that time, the Frierdiker Rebbe sent Reb Mordechai Cheifetz from Riga to America to meet us and see what kind of boys we were. He held beautiful farbrengens with us. After this chossid spent a couple of weeks with us, we made a unanimous decision. There must have been six or seven boys at that time, and all of us agreed: we were going to Otwock. We are going to the Rebbe.

Rabbi Jacobson had been updating the Frierdiker Rebbe on our progress, and at this point, after hearing these reports, the Rebbe granted permission.

It was 5699. We planned to leave that summer on the *Île de France*.

Rabbi Fisher: Naturally, our parents didn’t want us to go. They had been happy to flee Europe’s poverty and persecution. More importantly, they were happy to be far from the winds of war. Hitler hadn’t yet attacked Poland, but tensions were high and the fears of war were real.

But we insisted. My mother pleaded with me, my father was going crazy—and the same was true with all the other *bochurim*—but we had the Frierdiker Rebbe’s *bracha*. “Come to Otwock,” he told us, “there is nothing to worry about.”

Rabbi Hecht: One of the mothers wrote a letter to the Frieddiker Rebbe, “Rebbe, I can’t send my son into the lions’ den. I don’t want him to go.” The Frieddiker Rebbe answered her with four words: “*Ein lo ma lira*”—he has nothing to worry about. He will go and return, and everything will be good.

When we heard that, it wiped away whatever doubts we still had. But I had a slight problem: I didn’t have a passport, and my parents weren’t going to help me obtain one...

Because I was young, I needed someone to vouch for me. I found a friend of Rabbi Jacobson’s who agreed to vouch for me, saying he had known me for the last fifteen years. In truth, it was more like the last fifteen minutes, but it was good enough for the State Department.

Our trip was scheduled for Tuesday, and Monday morning arrived, and my passport hadn’t shown up. I was devastated. I woke up at six in the morning, ran to the post office, and began banging on the door. After fifteen minutes—my knuckles aching—a man finally came to the door and yelled, “Hey, you crazy kid! You’re nuts. Why are you banging?”



RABBI JACOBSON
WITH HIS FAMILY.



HOME OF REB YISRAEL JACOBSON IN BROWNSVILLE.

I said, “My friend, do me a favor. I’ll promise you the World to Come.” I wasn’t a rabbi yet, but I promised anyway. “Look for my passport. I’m not leaving. I’ll keep knocking. You must get it for me—it’s life and death.”

He saw that I was serious, and he began to look—and he found it! He handed it over, and I think I ran ten blocks in thirty seconds—a minute or two at most.

I ran to my mother, “Ma, I got the passport! But don’t get too close!” I was afraid she might grab it. She woke my father up with the news, and my father said—I think these were his exact words—“This *meshugener*, this crazy boy... if he wants it so badly, let him go.”

We raced to procure visas, we bought some clothes and a big knapsack, and we were on our way.

On Tuesday afternoon, all the Lubavitcher Chassidim of New York came to the boat to see us off. Rabbi Jacobson would be escorting us all the way to Otwock. We danced, we sang *niggunim*, and it was a very grand moment for us all—“We’re going to see the Rebbe!”

The First Encounter

Rabbi Fisher: The ship didn’t provide kosher meals, so we took food from home, and the crew put everything into their refrigerators or freezers for us. Each day, they would give us a portion of the food we had brought from home.

It wasn’t an easy trip, but we had a wonderful time. We talked and sang together as if we were on our way to meet the President of the United States. We were full of excitement. There was a strong feeling of camaraderie, love, and friendship. It was almost like we were one family.

After a number of days—five, maybe seven—we arrived at Le Havre, the French port. In Paris, we had dinner at the home of Reb Zalman Schneerson, and then we proceeded to the train station, where we were met by a special guest—the Rebbe, then known as Ramash.

He didn’t have a long beard then. His beard was curled under, he wore a regular suit and a modern hat, and he looked very young. He certainly didn’t look like a Rebbe. But of course, he was the Rebbe’s son-in-law.

I remember one or two points from what he said. He quoted a *possuk*, “*Ki . . . vasem el ha-menuchah v’el ha-nachalah*,” and he said to us: “You are now on your way *el ha-menuchah v’el ha-nachalah*,” referring, of course, to the *daled amos* of the Rebbe. He wanted us to feel the greatness of going to Otwock; it was like being *oleh regel* to the *Beis HaMikdash*. He wanted us to feel something of what a Jew felt when he ascended to Yerushalayim for Yom Tov.

Rabbi Hecht: I remember how the Rebbe greeted us. He gave each of us a warm *shalom aleichem*, he shook our

hands, and he introduced himself—and of course, although we didn't know him, it was extraordinary. The Lubavitcher Rebbe's own son-in-law had come down to the station just to greet a bunch of young boys! It was the equivalent of the Secretary of State coming down to say hello to a few shleppers.

Thirty years later, I mentioned this moment to the Rebbe—the first time we met. He said to me, “Do you remember what I said?” I was embarrassed to admit that I did not.

All I remember was that he spoke about the Friediker Rebbe's greatness. He tried to impress upon us the holiness of the Rebbe, and how much the Rebbe was investing in us, even telling us to come at such a dangerous time.

As we drove through Paris, we saw how tense it was. Chamberlain had already carried out his self-destructive dealings with Hitler, and everyone knew that war was only a matter of time. In our taxi, half the windshield was blacked out. All the streetlights were blacked out. They were expecting war any day. The whole city was in blackout mode.

But we didn't pay any attention, and we continued our journey from Paris to Poland on an international train.

Rabbi Greenberg: The Rebbe also gave us something important:

The Friediker Rebbe needed medicines that could not be obtained in Poland, so arrangements were made for the medicines to be delivered to us by the Rebbe. It was just a small bag, a little package of medicine—and whose baggage did they put it into? Mine.

I had no permit for transporting medicine across borders. I don't know if anyone else had one either. But I was happy to be able to bring the medicine to the Rebbe, and *Baruch Hashem*, the medicine had the good fortune of reaching him safely.

Something did happen with the medicine on the trip. To reach Poland, our train had to cross several borders, including Germany. And when you crossed into Germany in those days, the Nazis inspected everything.

All our valises were stacked near the seats. The Nazi soldier walked over, pointed straight at the one which held the Rebbe's medicine, and barked, “Whose is that? *Ich vill zehn. Efent.*” He wanted it opened.

I had no choice. I opened the case, and inside was the little white paper bag with the medicine. He looked at it and asked, “*Vos iz dos?*” I answered, “*Gornisht.*” He asked again. Again I said, “*Gornisht.*”

He opened the bag, glanced inside, put it back exactly where it had been, and walked off. That was it. We didn't have to do anything—the *Aibershter* did everything.

Rabbi Hecht: When we reached the border of Poland, we got our first real taste of antisemitism. The passport



THE BOCHURIM ARE SEEN OFF BY FAMILY AND CHASSIDIM ABOARD THE SHIP TO FRANCE. RABBI AVRAHAM HECHT IS THE YOUNG BOCHUR FACING THE CAMERA, SECOND FROM THE RIGHT.

inspector, a big, tall official, looked at us with utter contempt and said, in German, “*Vos tuen ze do?*”—What are they doing here?

Rabbi Jacobson answered, “*Zey furen lernen*—They're going to learn.”

The officer shot back, “*Zennen ze farukt? Es kumt a krieg!*” Are they crazy? A war is coming! “*Vu furen ze? Fur tzurik!*” Where are they going? Go back! He threw in a few choice words that are not worthy of repeating. “Go back home! You'll be a headache for your government and for ours!”

That was our introduction. We quickly learned that this was exactly what we were going to experience over and over again; Poland was unbelievably anti-Semitic.

Finally, he inspected our passports and barked, “Get off the train!”

We all let out a huge sigh of relief.

We had finally arrived.

To be continued. ❶

1. In Polish phonetics, “w” corresponds to an English “v,” while “c” is pronounced “tz.” Accordingly, the name is pronounced “Otvotzk.”

2. This is not a verbatim transcript; the material has been edited for clarity and flow, with careful attention to preserving each speaker's voice. For additional resources on the topic, see *Toldos Chabad B'Polin, Lita V'Latvia* p. 181.

3. Reb Mordechai Cheifetz.

4. See “Unique Even In Previous Generations,” *Derher* Cheshvan 5782.

5. See “A Wonder Among The Tmimim,” *Derher* Tishrei 5785.

By: Rabbi Mendy Greenberg (Twinsburg, OH)

A CALLING CAST *in* GOLD

An interview with
Rabbi **Yosef Yitzchak**
HaKohen **Gutnick**

נדפס ע"י ולזכות
הרה"ת ר' משה פינחס
וזוגתו מרת עלקא ומשפחתם שיחיו
וואלף



Known for his close connection with the Rebbe, Rabbi Yossel Gutnick is famous for his philanthropy and his missions on the Rebbe's behalf on matters of Shleimus Ha'Aretz.

Today, he serves as head shliach of Chabad Houses of Australia (excluding NSW), alongside Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Groner. This is his story, as told to A Chassidisher Derher.



The Special Chanukah Gelt

It was Chanukah 5747.

I had arrived in New York with my father, Rabbi Chaim Gutnick, for a visit to the Rebbe, as we had done on numerous occasions.

It was an ordinary visit, as far as I was concerned. But then something special happened. One day, with no prior notice, Rabbi Groner told us that after *krias HaTorah*, the Rebbe would meet with us in *Gan Eden Hatachton*.

For my father, this wasn't unusual. My father always received tremendous *kiruvim* from the Rebbe. In the earlier years, his *yechidusen* were so long that *mazkirus* would put him at the end of the line, when all other visitors had left. He would remain in the Rebbe's room until the wee hours of the morning.

I had nothing of the sort. My interactions with the Rebbe were ordinary—in earlier years, I had *yechidus*, and I still received letters and answers on occasion—but being called to an unexpected *yechidus* was unprecedented.

We waited in *Gan Eden Hatachton*. The Rebbe came out of his room with a wide smile, and said, “*men lebt in a modner velt, az a Yisroel darf beten ba a Kohen chanukah gelt*, we live in a strange world where a Yisroel must request from a Kohen Chanukah gelt.”

The Rebbe gave my father a silver coin and asked him to publish a *sefer* with his speeches and his *chiddushei Torah*. With a smile, the Rebbe added, “If you don't have the money, I will pay for it.”

Then the Rebbe turned to me with a smile, handed me a silver coin, and said, “*Fun dir vil ich oichet Chanukah gelt*.”

What could the Rebbe want of me? I had no *chiddushei*



Torah or speeches to think of. I instinctively thought the Rebbe would ask that I give several million dollars to *tzedaka*.

But the Rebbe asked for nothing of that sort. My Chanukah gelt, the Rebbe said, was to be *mosif in limud haTorah*.

This was a continuation to a few days beforehand. When we had arrived in New York, the Rebbe had asked for a report of my *shiurei Torah*. Apparently, the Rebbe was not satisfied, and now he asked for an addition.

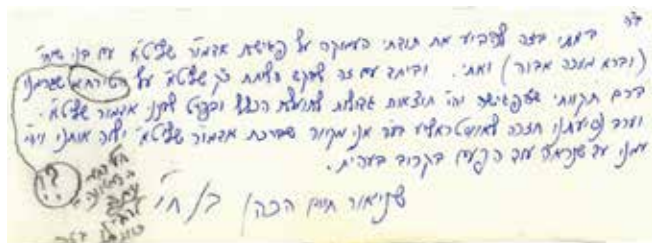
This marked the beginning of my unique connection with the Rebbe.

But Let's Start from the Beginning...

Our roots in Lubavitch go back generations.

My grandfather was Reb Mordechai Zev Gutnick, a Tomim from Lubavitch, who had a very close connection with the Frierdiker Rebbe. He was a tremendous *iluy* and *talmid chochom*, well educated in secular subjects, and the Frierdiker Rebbe pushed hard to appoint him as the *rav* of the Chabad community in London.

Unfortunately, he served there only for a very short



ON ZOS CHANUKAH 5747, AFTER RECEIVING CHANUKAH GELT ON FROM THE REBBE WITH HIS SON, RABBI CHAIM GUTNICK WROTE THIS LETTER, THANKING THE REBBE FOR THE ENCOUNTER AND APOLOGIZING FOR THE 'TROUBLE' HE CAUSED THE REBBE. THE REBBE CIRCLED THE WORD טִירָחָא, WROTE A LARGE EXCLAMATION MARK AND QUESTION MARK, AND CONTINUED:

הַטִּירָחָא הָרֵאשׁוֹנָה - עֵתָּה לְהִבִּין כּוֹוֶנְתּוֹ בַּזֶּה
THE FIRST 'TROUBLE' [IS ONLY] NOW, TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HE MEANT BY THAT.



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RABBI CHAIM GUTNICK STANDS BEHIND THE REBBE AT THE LAG B'OMER PARADE, 5730, WEARING HIS AUSTRALIAN MILITARY CHAPLAIN'S UNIFORM.

time, because he soon fell ill with pneumonia and passed away at the young age of 33. There were remarkable circumstances surrounding his passing. First of all, he passed away on Yud-Tes Kislev, in the midst of *chazering* a *maamar*. But even more remarkably: There was a Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen taking place in his shul at those very moments, and when he passed away, all the lights in the shul suddenly went out.

My father, Rabbi Chaim Gutnick, was only twelve years old. Dayan Yechezkel Abramsky took him under his wing, and he sent my father to the Telz yeshiva in Lithuania, where he learned for three or four years. Like his father, he was very successful in his studies; he had nearly photographic memory—a trait I unfortunately did not inherit.

Although he looked very much like a Telzer (he didn't grow a beard until his first visit to the Rebbe in the 5720s), he never lost his connection with Lubavitch. When the Frierdiker Rebbe visited the area, my father and Reb Efraim Wolff—who also learned in Telz—came for a *yechidus*. The Frierdiker Rebbe told my father, “Your father was *boki* in Shas, Taz, Shach...” He pointed to my father and asked, “What are you *boki* in?”

The connection to the Frierdiker Rebbe was also the beginning of our connection to Australia.

As a British subject, my father was able to escape World War II by boarding a ship to Australia with a number of fellow Telzers. They all ultimately went to the United States and Eretz Yisroel, but my father received a telegram

from the Frierdiker Rebbe telling him to remain. After the war, he would be needed in Australia.

Indeed, he was.

Everyone knew him as the chief rabbi of Australia. Although no such position officially existed, he was the leader of several rabbinic associations and one of the country's most high-profile rabbis.

However, in Melbourne, he was known as the ‘survivor's rabbi’. His shul, the Elwood shul, was packed with survivors from the old country, and he would listen to them, cry with them, laugh with them—he was able to connect with them and give them hope. They all loved him dearly. These are some of the strongest memories of my childhood.



RABBI CHAIM GUTNICK.



RABBI MORDECHAI ZEV GUTNICK.

LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD.

The Culture Shock

My first visit to the Rebbe was for Tishrei when I was eighteen years old.

Back in Australia, I had become a bit of a *farbrente bochur*. After the first group of Shluchim came, Melbourne developed a small group of *chassidishe bochurim*—Rabbi Yitzchok Dovid Groner’s children, for example—and I had become part of that group. Soon, a friend and I excitedly headed off for our first Tishrei with the Rebbe.

Coming to 770 was a bit of a culture shock. There was no communication like today, so I didn’t really know what to expect. I had no idea where to go or what to do. I had heard a bit from the *Talmidim Hashluchim*, but until you experience it, you don’t really know. My new friend Rabbi Sholom Duchman pulled me in front of the *bima* on Rosh Hashanah, and I remember being utterly squashed to death by the Haftorah.

My trip wasn’t limited to Tishrei. My partner for the trip was Shlomo Bendet, and he planned to remain and learn in New York afterwards, so I decided to try and enroll in 770 as well. I asked for and received the Rebbe’s approval, and everything was set. I became a part of the yeshiva.

However, it was a very rough start. I didn’t feel comfortable; I wasn’t ‘part of the crowd.’ Very soon, I regretted my decision, and I wanted to go home. I wrote to the Rebbe again, and the Rebbe responded, “יעשה כהוראת חז”ל” — he should follow the instructions of *Chazal*, to learn in the place where his heart desires.”

It seemed like a straightforward approval, but my father—who was in New York at the time—was perplexed by the Rebbe’s terminology for the word “desire.”

Chazal say במקום שלנו חפץ רוצה. Why did the Rebbe change it?

He posed this question during his *yechidus*, and the Rebbe explained that my true inner desire (my “חפץ,” as explained in Chassidus) is to remain near the Rebbe. The desire to return home was only a “רצון,” an external want. After receiving such an answer, I obviously decided to remain.

A Dream Coming True

I received very surprising news when I was 21 years old. My mother had been in *yechidus* and had told the Rebbe that she wanted me to start with *shidduchim*—and the Rebbe had agreed.

That was not supposed to be the plan. I had no intention of getting married, and my father was concerned that I had not yet finished *semicha*, but the Rebbe had given his approval, so that was that. My parents looked into several names, and soon they sent a list of offers to the Rebbe. The Rebbe circled my wife’s name—Shterna New, at the time—and said that I should go to Australia to meet her. It didn’t take long for us to receive the Rebbe’s *bracha* to become engaged.

My mother later told me that my father was a bit disappointed that I wasn’t marrying into a *rabbonishe* family, but the Rebbe had told him in *yechidus*, “*Vos iz shlecht mit mein yichus*, what’s wrong with my lineage?” My wife’s grandfather was Rabbi Isser Kluwgant; he was a Yanovsky through his mother, which made him the Rebbe’s relative. My wife’s *yichus* was the Rebbe’s own.

After we were married, Rabbi Groner offered me the role of *menahel* of Ohel Chana, the seminary he wanted to open. My wife was interested in *shlichus*, so we wrote to the Rebbe about the offer and received the Rebbe’s



RABBI GUTNICK DURING HIS TIME AS A BOCHUR IN 770.



RABBI GUTNICK
AT HIS WEDDING.

approval (on condition that “המשכורת מספיקה, the salary is sufficient”). So we accepted the job.

I didn't last very long. Ohel Chana wasn't getting off the ground, and I didn't feel like the job was for me. Then, my father-in-law, Reb Mendel New, fell ill and asked me to join his business. I wrote to the Rebbe about the situation, and the Rebbe responded, “כעצת ידידים מבינים, follow the advice of wise friends.” It wasn't exactly a positive answer, but I consulted friends and decided to join the business.

It wasn't my first foray into that world. I always had a knack for business, and I had begun playing the stock market when I was just sixteen years old. I made some large sums of money even back then. Somewhere in the back of my mind was a dream to become the Rebbe's *gvir*; there were so many people to be the Rebbe's *shluchim*, but Lubavitch didn't really have any major supporters in those days. Maybe that could be me...

On the Rebbe's Shoulders

My first major philanthropic gift was around 5741, when I paid off the mortgage of Yeshiva Gedolah in Melbourne. When I was in *yeichidus* that year with my family, the Rebbe said, “*Ich hob gehert az du tust in askanus tziburis*, I heard that you've become involved in public activism. *Zeyer a glaiचे zach*, it's a very positive thing.” That was the first positive message I received from the Rebbe about my business activities.

Over the next few years, my businesses were blessed with great success, but I didn't interact with the Rebbe much about it. There were some letters with some *maanos* on specific issues, but nothing out of the ordinary—until the Chanukah *yeichidus* that I spoke about earlier.

Then, everything changed.

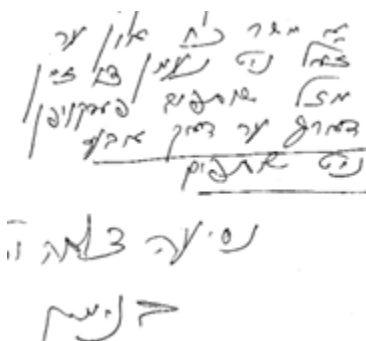
From that period onward, I merited the Rebbe's constant guidance and *brachos*. The Rebbe wanted a report about my activities every single Erev Shabbos. When I failed to submit a *duch* one Chol Hamoed, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Klein why it was missing.

I would write detailed reports on my business activities and on all the *tzedakah* I gave. About the *tzedakah*, I would often receive a short *maaneh*, “*Niskabel v'tach*, it was received and many thanks,” but for business activities, I would often receive far more detailed instructions, and endless *brachos* and encouragement.

One of the earliest directives was “no partners.” Hashem had granted me success, the Rebbe said, and I shouldn't ‘dilute’ my *mazal* by involving others. I could



RABBI GUTNICK AT WORK, 5747.



THE REBBE'S
DIRECTIVE, (AS
WRITTEN BY REB
BINYOMIN KLEIN):

א יישר כח און ער
זאל ניט נעמען צו
זיין מזל שותפים
פארקויפן דארף
ער דאך אבער
ניט שותפים

involve investors, of course, but I should not cede control over any of my companies. The Rebbe once said these words: “*Er zol nit nemen tzu zein mazal shutfim*, he should not take partners into his *mazal*.”¹

This was incredibly challenging, especially following the 1987 stock market crash. The exploration business—searching for gold and diamonds—is very speculative and costly. You could spend tens of millions of dollars without finding anything and without seeing a single penny of profit. The normal course of action, therefore, is to bring in major partners who can take on a large share of the cost, but investors are much harder to find.

At one point, a very wealthy Belgian Jew named Mr. Kasirer wanted to partner with me. He offered me tens of millions of dollars. He knew that I was wary of “bad *mazal*,” so he argued with me that he had good *mazal* as well; he, too, had the *brachos* of big *tzaddikim* like the old Satmar and Vizhnitzer Rebbes. I don't wish on anyone the *nisayon* of turning down an offer of tens of millions of dollars, but I told him, “*Loi mit a groisen aleph*” (a very big ‘no’) and immediately reported it to the Rebbe. The Rebbe circled my question about whether I had made the right choice, and wrote, “כפשוט, obviously.”²

פרסום ראשון

In connection with this article, Rabbi Gutnick shared with us some Maanos he received in the Rebbe's handwriting that have never been published.

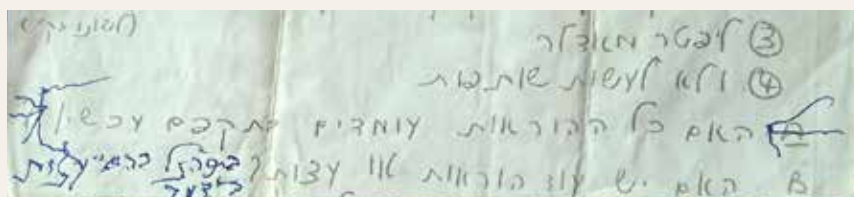


IN CONNECTION WITH THE LOAN FROM LARRY ADLER, RABBI GUTNICK ASKED THE REBBE REGARDING: (A) EXTRICATING FROM ADLER, (B) NOT DOING ANY PARTNERSHIPS, (C) WHETHER ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS ARE THE SAME AS IN THE PAST AND (D) WERE THERE ANY NEW INSTRUCTIONS OR ADVICE.

AT THE TOP OF THE LETTER, THE REBBE WROTE IN ROSHEI TEIVOS:

מכופנ"ג [מכתבו ופ"ג (פדיון נפש) נתקבל]
REGARDING (C) THE REBBE DREW AN ARROW SHOWING THAT THE INSTRUCTIONS REMAINED THE SAME. REGARDING (D) THE REBBE WROTE: בכהנ"ל בהתייעצות בידמ"ב [בידידים מבינים]

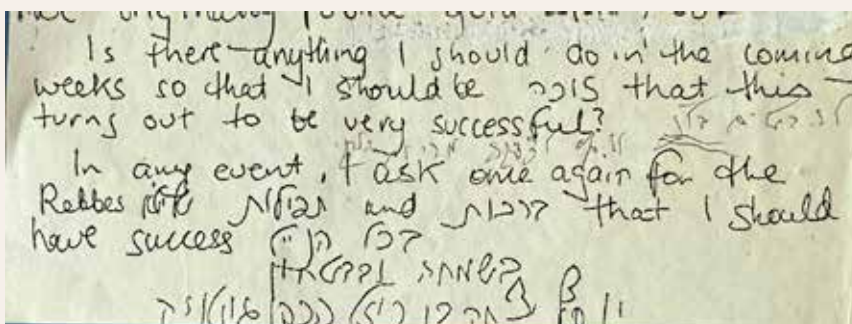
REGARDING ALL THE ABOVE, CONSULT WITH FRIENDS WHO ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THESE MATTERS.



IN A LETTER FROM 5748, RABBI GUTNICK ASKED THE REBBE "IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO IN THE COMING WEEKS SO THAT I SHOULD BE זוכה THAT THIS TURNS OUT TO BE VERY SUCCESSFUL?"

THE REBBE ANSWERED:

להבטיח בל"ג 11% לצדקה מריוח הנקי TO COMMIT BLI NEDER TO GIVING 11 PERCENT OF THE NET PROFIT TO TZEDAKA.



The Rebbe 'poured' *brachos* on me during this period, but one extraordinary moment took place at the end of 5748, when I was called to New York for another special *yechidus* with the Rebbe.

The Second Yechidus

One Thursday night in the month of Elul, I was at home in Australia when I received an unusual telephone call from Mazkirus. "Es volt geven a glaiचे zach," it would be worthwhile, the Rebbe had told Rabbi Klein, that I come to New York for a visit. The Rebbe wanted to see me.

I arrived in New York on Sunday. In those years, the

Rebbe went to the Ohel on Sundays, so the Rebbe asked Rabbi Klein to apologize to me (!) that he could not see me yet. The next day, I received a message: the Rebbe could see me after Mincha or after Maariv. Naturally, I chose the earlier option: Mincha. This took place during the year of *aveilus* for the Rebbetzin, and the Rebbe was davening all the *tefillos* in his home. The *yechidus* would take place there as well.

As Mincha concluded and the Rebbe began to head up the stairs to the second floor, Rabbi Groner turned to me and motioned for me to follow. People were puzzled—not everyone had noticed Rabbi Groner's gesture—and some even began yelling at me. Rabbi Zalman Gurary started



THE REBBE ASCENDS THE STAIRCASE
TO THE SECOND FLOOR OF HIS HOME.

calling out, “What’s going on over here...”. Obviously, I continued to follow the Rebbe.

What followed was a very special and *ruchniusdiker yechidus* in the Rebbe’s private study. Only I and Rabbi Krinsky were present. For much of the time, the Rebbe was not even looking at me; he looked out the window while speaking to me.

“S’iz shoin gekumen di tzeit az Lubavitch zol hoben eigene gvirim, it’s about time Lubavitch had its own philanthropists,” the Rebbe said, “ubifrat tzvishen zei a Kohen, and especially a Kohen among them.”

What followed was a string of amazing *brachos* and numerous directives. This was during a low period for my businesses, when I was drowning in debt. Some of what transpired during this *yechidus*, truth be told, has remained private, and I’ve never shared it with anyone.

One directive was to publicize the Rebbe’s call regarding *Shnas Habinyan*—that institutions (and private people) should endeavor to purchase, build, and expand their facilities. The Rebbe told me to publicize it even if not in his name. “There are places where if they hear a directive from me,” the Rebbe commented with a very wry laugh,

“not only do they not listen—they do the opposite.”

At the very end, the Rebbe spoke about the importance of *simcha* in the year of *Tismach Ut’samach*. The Rebbe looked at me and said something very personal: “*Ba mir felt oichet di simcha*, my joy is lacking as well...” The Rebbe said that I should always report *besuros tovos*, and that would increase his *simcha* as well.

The Rebbe’s Business

I felt as if the Rebbe was carrying me on his shoulders. The Rebbe would often remind me of the spiritual side of things.

The Rebbe reminded me that business is supposed to be done not with your mind and heart, but with your hands—כ”א ידיך, “ל בלא לב ולב,” “כ”א ידיך, “ל בלא לב ולב,” the Rebbe once wrote.³

The Rebbe reminded me about set times to learn Torah, *nigleh* and Chassidus. I once reported that we had begun finding gold and asked how to continue meriting success. The Rebbe wrote “מהיר, urgent” on his response: “להוסיף, עכ”פ שיעור אחד בחסידות ושיעור אחד בנגלה” that I should add at least one *shiur* in Chassidus and one in *nigleh*.⁴

The Rebbe would also remind me regarding tzedakah. The Rebbe once told me to give *maaser* plus one *perutah*,⁵ once eleven percent, and another time the Rebbe told me to give *chomesh*, one fifth of the profits of one specific transaction to tzedakah.⁶

The Rebbe also gave me an education in *bitachon*.

Once, when I was feeling very despondent, I wrote to the Rebbe and received no answer. This was unusual; the Rebbe always answered me. I called Rabbi Groner, and he soon brought me a message from the Rebbe: when I would write positively, he would answer, but he wasn't going to answer negative letters. That was a very important lesson for me.

On a similar note, I once wrote to the Rebbe that I don't know who to turn to in my distress. The Rebbe answered, “?! מִקְרָא מֵלֹא כו' בְּכָל קְרָאוֹנוֹ אֵלַי, it is a clear *possuk* that Hashem is close to all those who call to Him. Then the Rebbe added an amazing line: “הֵעֵרָה דֶּרֶךְ אֲגֹב! גַּם אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה כֵן—a side comment! I do the same as well.”⁷

The Physical Side

On the physical side, the Rebbe focused on my search for gold and diamonds. The main focus was gold, gold, gold. The Rebbe once said at dollars to me and Professor Branover, “פֶּאֶר אִים לִיגֵט אֲנִיגֶרִיטֵעַ גַּעֲלֵט בַּעֲוִי הָאֲדָמָה, there is money lying ready for him in the depths of the earth.” Professor Branover said to the Rebbe, “Maybe he doesn't have enough *bitachon*,” but the Rebbe responded that he doesn't know what I have, but “אִיךְ הָאֵב בִּטְחוֹן, I have *bitachon*.”⁸



RABBI GUTNICK AND PROFESSOR BRANOVER WITH THE REBBE.

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There are rumors that the Rebbe pointed to a map and told me where to drill, but they are untrue. The Rebbe always said, “יַעֲשֶׂה כְּהוֹרָאוֹת מוֹמָחִים, follow the instructions of the specialists.” My geologist did come to dollars with maps of the area, and we showed them to the Rebbe, but the Rebbe gave many *brachos* and that was it. He didn't point at any specifics at all.

The *brachos* were indeed fulfilled. It took years, but we found lots of gold, to the point that I was the second largest producer of gold in Australia. At one point, I was producing eight hundred thousand ounces of gold per year, until an unfortunate time in 5761, when I was under immense pressure, and I did take on a semi-*shutaf*. From that time on, we had our successes and our failures, but it was never the same. Today, my companies are focused on critical minerals and gold in Tasmania, and it is a private company—there is no thought of even a semi-*shutaf*.

The Rebbe's focus on gold wasn't as understood in its time, but today gold is worth far more than ever before. Gold is twenty times more valuable than it was in 5761, for example. The Rebbe once told my father that he's not a Kohen, about whom it says “עַד מָהֵרָה יִרוֹץ דְּבָרוֹ, His words come quickly to fulfillment.” The Rebbe's view was long-term. *Divrei tzaddikim chaim kayomim lo'ad*. His *brachos* went deep into the future—and gold today is indeed far more valuable than it ever was.

Walking the Tightrope

There was one instance where I was reminded that receiving such close guidance and *brachos* from the Rebbe came with serious responsibilities. It wasn't something to be played around with.

Larry Adler was one of the wealthiest Australians. He was a Jewish immigrant from Hungary who made his money by purchasing failing businesses and helping them turn a profit. Because of the difficulties we were experiencing, we had begun some business dealings with him, but the Rebbe told me to withdraw from them and become independent again.

This turned out to be far more difficult than I imagined. We tried various strategies, but nothing seemed to work. We owed him one hundred million dollars. At some point, under severe stress, I reported to the Rebbe despondently that I don't see how, *b'gashmius*, how I could extricate myself from this problem.

I was expecting another encouraging *maaneh*, but instead I received a very sharp response. The Rebbe wrote that he didn't realize just how intertwined we were with him—and if that was the case, he saw no reason to continue giving detailed directives; I should do as I see fit.



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AFTER RECEIVING A BRACHA FOR 'FINDING DIAMONDS AND PRECIOUS STONES' ON 20 SIVAN 5751, RABBI GUTNICK AND A TOP AUSTRALIAN GEOLOGIST PRESENT THE REBBE WITH A MAP OF THE PLANNED DIGS TO DISCOVER DIAMONDS AND GOLD. THE REBBE WAS VERY ATTENTIVE TO ALL THE DETAILS, ASKING MANY QUESTIONS, AND CONCLUDED BY GIVING THREE DOLLARS TO GIVE TO TZEDAKA AT THE LOCATION OF EACH DIG.

I immediately understood my mistake. I needed to fulfill the Rebbe's directives to the fullest with no ifs or buts. Otherwise, the Rebbe would wish me well, of course, but this close connection would not continue.

Being in New York at the time, I immediately told Rabbi Klein to go back to the Rebbe and say that I was committed to extricating myself from his investments in my companies, no matter what. The Rebbe smiled and said, "*Ich halt oichet azoi, zeyer a glaiche zach*, I think so too. This is a very sound thing." *Boruch Hashem*, he continued to give his guidance. A short time later, we received a miraculous offer from George Soros; he bought out Adler's loan, and we put an end to the saga.

The Rebbe Looked After Me

As a well-known wealthy individual, I naturally received many requests for tzedakah. Some people, however, went so far as to ask the Rebbe to instruct that I give them money!

The Rebbe never did anything of the sort.

In one early instance, the Rebbe responded to someone sharply: "מפורסם שלהג'ל יש קשר ישר אתי ומה נשתנה דוקא בכל? הנה?" It is well known that the above-mentioned person

[that is, me] has a direct connection with me. Why would this case be any different? מהי' מי שיהי' לאף אחד יהי' מי שיהי' להציע הצעות בשמי להג'ל, from now on, nobody, regardless of who they are, should make suggestions in my name to him [i.e., to me]."

Afterward, the Rebbe told Rabbi Klein that he had written sharply because, to quote Rabbi Klein's transcript of the Rebbe's words, "*Lacharona b'chabad, ka'asher mishehu matzliach, kumt men un men reist fun ale zeiten...* Recently in Chabad, when someone is successful, people come and tear from all sides..."

The truth is that I had once explicitly asked the Rebbe for guidance regarding tzedakah, and the Rebbe did not make any determinations!

During my *yechidus* in 5741, mentioned earlier, the Rebbe spoke positively about my philanthropy, so I asked the Rebbe where I should direct my tzedakah funds. The Rebbe said: "*Der Aibershter zol dir geben di seichel vu du zolst geben*, Hashem should give you the wisdom where to give."

However, there was one instance in which I received the Rebbe's guidance.

When the Reichman brothers' wealth took a hit, they asked me to participate in their support of the Lakewood Kolel to the tune of three hundred thousand dollars.

That was quite a sum in those days. I was aware that the Rebbe was quite displeased with Lubavitch institutions that had taken money from Reichman initiatives in the past, because of their public alignment with a certain rosh yeshiva who had virulent anti-Chabad views.

I asked the Rebbe if I should acquiesce to their request, and the Rebbe said that I should—but with the caveat that I should not become an honoree at any of their events.

I always understood that the Rebbe wanted me to support not only Lubavitch but also a wide range of institutions, and I was sought out by *rabbanim* and rebbes of all types. If an important *rav* came to solicit a donation, I would often ask him to go to the Rebbe for dollars and be *mazkir* me for a *bracha* upon his return to New York. At the time, many *rabbanim* were afraid to come to the Rebbe because of the anti-Chabad elements, but this opened the door for them and gave them the opportunity to come.

Soon, I became very close with numerous *gedolim*—and this became the catalyst for the next important shlichus I received from the Rebbe.

The Dirty Trick

On Chol Hamoed Pesach 5750, there was a major political shakeup in Eretz Yisroel known as the *Targil Hamasriach*. Shimon Peres brought down the right-wing coalition of Yitzchak Shamir with the intent of erecting his own left-wing coalition. But when the time came for his votes to be cast, he discovered that two members of the Agudas Yisroel party—which had cooperated with his machinations—had suddenly pulled out, leaving him with insufficient numbers.

It soon became known that this was based on a directive from the Rebbe. Peres was a left-wing politician who wanted to establish Palestinian autonomy. When *Mazkirus* confirmed the Rebbe's opposition to his becoming Prime Minister, two Knesset Members pulled out.

Shamir tried to rebuild his coalition, but most of Agudas Yisroel wasn't enthusiastic about joining. Shimon Peres had made broad promises to the Chareidi community, but Shamir was less forthcoming. That's where I thought I could play a part.

As a major donor, I had relationships with all the *rabbonim* on the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of Agudas Yisroel. If the Rebbe wanted a right-wing government to be established, perhaps it would be useful for me to travel to Eretz Yisroel and try to help the various sides come to an understanding.

On Isru Chag, I asked the Rebbe whether I should go, and the Rebbe immediately responded, *באם יעשה כפי שאומר* - יסע בשטומ"צ, *הנני במשך כל הזמן* - If he will act based on what I've been saying the entire time — he should travel in a good

and auspicious hour."

I quickly headed off to Eretz Yisroel.

The Constant Guidance

In my business dealings, I had always received quick answers from the Rebbe, but this was something else entirely. When I was dealing with political matters in Eretz Yisroel, I would receive answers within minutes, two or three times a day. I would call Rabbi Groner, he would enter the Rebbe's room, and soon return with an answer. The Rebbe wanted to know everything, and often gave very detailed instructions.

My initial role was to try to bring the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of Agudah to an agreement with Shamir, but the Rebbe quickly expanded my responsibilities. There was talk at the time of a unity government, a broad coalition combining the left and the right. The Rebbe was vehemently opposed to the idea because it would give leverage to the left-wing to impose its agenda. I once wrote to the Rebbe that Ariel Sharon was concerned that a unity government was about to form, and the Rebbe wrote, "*Rachmana litzlan*."

In that light, the Rebbe sent me to meet with Shamir and all the other politicians, and encouraged me to remain in Eretz Yisroel as long as necessary.

I spent three months in Eretz Yisroel, driving around from politician to politician and rebbe to rebbe, wheeling and dealing. The Rebbe saw extreme importance in my presence. My wife was pregnant with twins, and business meetings were happening without me, but the Rebbe told me to remain in Eretz Yisroel. "*Ein tzorech b'nochechuso*, your presence is not needed [in Australia]," the Rebbe said (in the end, the babies were born after my return).

It's Basic Logic

With the coalition formed and sworn in, my initial mission was accomplished, yet I continued to receive directives. I once wrote to the Rebbe asking whether I was fulfilling the Rebbe's *ratzon* with my activities in Eretz Yisroel, and the Rebbe responded, *ויוסיף ויתוסף בהצלחתו בזה ובכלל*, he should add, and it should be added in his success in this, and in general."¹⁰ In other words, the job wasn't finished.

In the following years, the big question was "autonomy." The Americans were pressuring Shamir to give the Palestinians the right to self-governance, which included their own security services and de facto control over those territories. Shamir—who had immense respect for the Rebbe—asked me what the Rebbe thought.

Thinking that perhaps "autonomy" isn't as bad as handing land over to an enemy state, I wrote to the Rebbe asking



RABBI GUTNICK
WITH MR. SHAMIR.

whether there was an agreeable middle ground that could satisfy the Americans. I really got a telling-off for that question.

“יותר מארבעים שנה שהנני מכריז שכל זה – פקו”נ דבנ”י בא”י, ושואל אותי בפשטות אולי ידבר הנ”ל ע”ד ויתורים כנ”ל וכיו”ב!!”¹¹

Over forty years I’ve been declaring that all of this is — life-threatening danger for the Jews of Eretz Yisroel, and you ask me simply whether he [i.e., the Prime Minister] should talk about relinquishing land etc.!!”¹¹

On another occasion, the Rebbe wrote, “כמדומה כבר, I believe I’ve announced my position in the central [point] which is the foundation of [the issue] one hundred and one times.”¹²

The Rebbe didn’t tell me to give the politicians a *shiur* in Hilchos Shabbos 329. Autonomy was a terrible idea, even by simple logic. “זה ע”פ שכל אפילו או”ה,” it’s logical [to oppose autonomy] even according to the logic of a gentile,” the Rebbe wrote.¹³ Giving away critical land would embolden the terrorists and give them closer access to carry out attacks. When a book was released making this case (called “Can Israel Survive a Palestinian State”), the Rebbe told me to distribute it. I gave it to all the ministers, and I translated some parts into Hebrew for the *gedolim* as well.

I became very close with leaders of Agudah’s Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah—the Gerrer Rebbe Rav Pinchas Menachem, and his current-day successor. I would sit with them for hours talking about the Rebbe’s *shita* (the Rebbe once told Rabbi Klein about me, “*Zein gantze inyan dorten iz tzu mutchen menshen*, his entire role there is to bother people...”). One time, after going off on a long speech to

Reb Pinchas Menachem, he smiled and said, “*Ich bin nisht a tipesh vos du darfst iberchazeren yeder mol*, I’m not a fool for whom you need to constantly repeat yourself.”

In Modern Times

Although there were disappointments from the Right and the Left in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe saw the Left as a far greater threat, because they always spoke about a “new Middle East,” one that would include a Palestinian state—and the Rebbe always said that even *speaking* about it endangers Jewish lives, because it emboldens the enemy.

The Rebbe was very supportive of Shamir and always encouraged him to remain resolute. Shamir was not a politician in the normal sense of the word. If he didn’t like what the Americans were saying, he would say so clearly—or drive them crazy with delaying tactics. He would always tell me, “Tell the Rebbe autonomy *is not going to happen*.”

When the Americans arranged the Madrid conference to hold peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, the Rebbe said that Shamir should go himself, not Foreign Minister David Levi, who was a more compromising figure. “צריכים להדגיש שמאד נחוץ שהוא בעצמו ישתתף, ולא לסמוך על מי שהוא אחר, He must emphasize that it is critical that [Shamir] himself should personally attend, and not rely on anyone else.” When I asked the Rebbe what Shamir should talk about, the Rebbe said that he should talk about the weather. Nothing serious.

Later, when Shamir began to waver under American pressure, the Rebbe sent very sharp messages to him. On

Yud Shevat 5752, the Rebbe famously said to Moshe Katzav that he would personally fight to bring down Shamir's government if he continued speaking about autonomy.

Unfortunately, the current Israeli administration openly supports autonomy, or as they call it, a “demilitarized Palestinian state.” At the time of this interview, Israel has failed to take control over the entirety of Gaza; they publicly negotiate with Hamas and are allowing foreign powers to run the parts of Gaza that they do control. They have already let in the Americans (they control the war from a center in Kiryat Gat), and are talking about allowing in hostile countries like Qatar and Turkey. Suffice it to say that none of this reflects the Rebbe's views in the slightest.

I once asked Prime Minister Netanyahu, “How will you ensure the *next* Prime Minister doesn't give weapons to this demilitarized state?” Giving away land is dangerous because it leaves the door open to danger in the future. The ceded territory could be turned into a terrorist asset within a short time, and it will be too late to walk back the concessions. He answered, “I am going to be Prime Minister for the next twenty years.”

That's obviously not a satisfactory plan-of-action. I asked him, “How are you going to stop the Islamic jihadists from coming into this demilitarized state?” He said, “I haven't figured it out yet.”

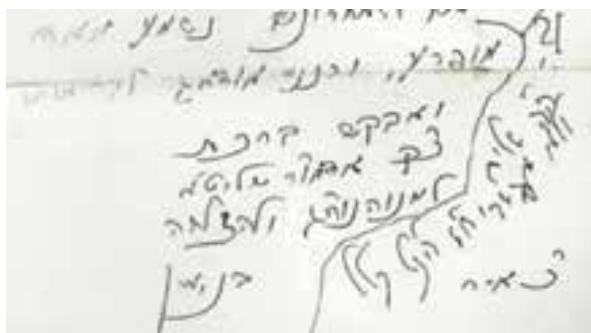
Bibi once told me that if he were able to have a conversation with the Rebbe today, perhaps things would be different. Of course, that's laughable. In fact, the Rebbe already gave me the answer to that: I once asked whether there was any change to the Rebbe's position toward a particular issue in Shleimus Haaretz, and the Rebbe responded, “הרי השו"ע לא, נשתנה ח"ו, ומהו הספק The Shulchan Aruch hasn't changed—so what is the question!”¹⁴

Postscript

I was once nominated to receive Australia's highest civilian award, the Order of Australia. It was supported by former prime minister Bob Hawke and other important dignitaries. But someone in the government spoke with the then-Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who told them what a terrible person I was. He said that I had personally destroyed the prospects of “unity” of Eretz Yisroel (i.e., the unity government the Rebbe prevented), and it would be a slap in the face to the State of Israel if I were granted this award. The offer was withdrawn, and I never received the honor.

But that's alright, because I already have a much better designation.

Several years after Gimmel Tammuz, Rabbi Binyamin



Klein visited Australia and gave me a special *maaneh* from the Rebbe, one I had never seen before.

It was a letter Rabbi Klein had personally written to the Rebbe when I was in Eretz Yisroel after the *Targil Hamasriach*. He wrote that I sounded very stressed. “בימים האחרונים נשמע מאוד מופרע, והנני דואג לבריאותו in recent days he sounds very unsettled, and I am concerned about his health,” and he therefore asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* on my behalf.

Now, I have no recollection of being “*mufra*.” In my understanding of the story, Rabbi Klein thought I was being rash in Eretz Yisroel and wondered whether I needed to be reined in.

But I couldn't possibly be offended, because of the amazing *maaneh* I received from the Rebbe as a result:

The Rebbe pointed to the word “*mufra*” and wrote a big question mark and exclamation mark — ?!. Then the Rebbe wrote, “ה' שליח, ולא אפשרי ח' ה' כלל,” he is a shliach, and that is not possible, *chas veshalom*, at all.”¹⁵

There, in black and white, in the Rebbe's own handwriting, I had the Rebbe's *shtempel*: I am his shliach. There's no greater honor than that. ①

1. Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5752, *Likut Maanos Kodesh Horaos V'Hadracha*, 5782 p. 73.

2. Erev Shabbos Bereishis 5752, *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 69.

3. 19 Iyar 5751; *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 93.

4. 9 Sivan 5749; *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 89.

5. 25 Elul 5746; *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 87.

6. 24 Tammuz 5749; *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 57.

7. 6 Tammuz 5750; *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 53.

8. Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5751.

9. 21 Iyar 5750; *Viy'shavtem Lavetach Bartz'chem* (Unpublished).

10. 10 Sivan 5751; *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 12.

11. 4 Kislev 5752; *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 14.

12. 16 Shevat 5752; *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 15.

13. 5 Kislev 5752; *Viy'shavtem Lavetach Bartz'chem* (Unpublished).

14. 21 Elul 5750; *Viy'shavtem Lavetach Bartz'chem* (Unpublished).

15. 20 Iyar 5750; *Likut Maanos Kodesh* p. 6.

CHASSIDUS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

THE OBLIGATION AND MERIT OF
WOMEN STUDYING CHASSIDUS

Compiled By: Rabbi Levi Greenberg (OH)

Written By: Rabbi Shneur Itzinger

לזכות
מרים מינדל שתחי' בת רייזל
שתקוים בה ברכת כ"ק אדמו"ר אליה:
ביחד עם בעלה שי' לגדל כיו"ח
שי' לתחומע"ט מתוך שמחה
והרחבה. אזכיר עה"צ "וכ"ז
באופן לכתחילה אריבער" -

CHASSIDUS UNDER FIRE

At the crossroads of an old world under fire and a new world still uncharted, in 5700, just months after the outbreak of the Second World War, an unusual gathering took place in Riga.

Only weeks earlier, the Frierdiker Rebbe had escaped the bombardment of Warsaw under dramatic and miraculous circumstances, narrowly saving his life. He returned temporarily to Latvia, where he enjoyed protected status as a citizen, while awaiting the opportunity to board a ship to the New World, this time to settle permanently.¹

In this temporary residence, while on the run for his own life and for the future of Chabad, the Frierdiker Rebbe agreed to an extraordinary request. On the eve of Purim Katan, the Frierdiker Rebbe met with a group of Chabad girls, members of *Achos Tmimim*, a movement led by his guidance, encouragement, and deep personal involvement.

For years, the Frierdiker Rebbe had invested immense effort in bringing women and girls to the forefront of Yiddishkeit in

general and the study of Chassidus in particular. He published *Maamarim* and *Sichos* in Yiddish specifically to make them accessible to women and girls,² and he called for the formation of women's groups and societies both in Europe and during his 5689–5690 visit to the United States.

In 5694, a remarkable event took place that would prove to be a harbinger of what was to come. The Frierdiker Rebbe personally delivered a *sicha* to women during a visit to Riga.³ At the time, for a Rebbe to address women and girls directly was unprecedented.

Yet *Achos Tmimim*, a girls' group devoted to learning and internalizing Chassidus, held a particularly special place in his heart.

And now, on that Adar evening in Riga, an astonishing scene unfolded.

The girls of *Achos Tmimim* were granted a *yechidus* with the Frierdiker Rebbe. During the *yechidus*, the Frierdiker Rebbe suggested that representatives of each class summarize the most recent *maamar* they had studied, *chazering* Chassidus in front of the Frierdiker Rebbe himself.

To be a *chozer* who memorizes a *maamar* and repeats it in the Rebbe's presence was a role that belonged to a very small handful

נשי
ובנות
חב"ד
N'SHEI
U'BNOS
CHABAD

of Chassidim. Now, young women were filling that role, diligently repeating to the Rebbe two of his own *maamarim*, which had been published in Yiddish for their benefit.

"I keep all the reports submitted to me by the *ro'im*, the 'shepherds' of the group, and I am well aware of the activities of *Achos Tmimim*," the Friediker Rebbe told them. He expressed great pleasure in the group's present standing and shared his hopes for their future.

He explained the purpose of *Achos Tmimim*: to strengthen the observance of *mitzvos* by infusing them with the warmth of Chassidus. Certain *sifrei Mussar* should be studied too—as was always done—albeit with a *Chassidish'n gefil*, Chassidishe feeling and warmth. It is essential to be familiar with the *halachos* that guide everyday living. But through the study of Chassidus, the Jewish woman—and the Chassidishe woman in particular—is elevated and fortified, gaining the inner strength to stand firm against winds and influences foreign to Yiddishkeit.

Sefer HaSichos 5700 records the details of the *yechidus* and the rest of the *sicha* the Rebbe delivered to the

girls, including a fascinating explanation on the last two *pessukim* of *Eishes Chayil*.⁴ At its conclusion, the Rebbe bestowed upon them a heartfelt *bracha*:

"...May you be worthy bearers of the holy banner of *Achos Tmimim*, to illuminate the Jewish street and build the Jewish home. May your parents educate you to Torah, *chuppah*, and *ma'asim tovim*."

A representative of the girls responded with a *bracha* of her own, thanking the Friediker Rebbe for establishing a movement that had already borne such beautiful fruit, and wishing him a *refuah sheleima* and success on his journey ahead.

The Rebbe replied with a *bracha* to hear "good news from you, and you from me." He concluded the *yechidus* with a powerful statement: "Your relationship to me should be like children to their father, because I consider all those connected to me as children."

Some ten days later, the Friediker Rebbe departed Riga. Less than a month afterward, on Tes Adar II, he arrived in the United States.

This remarkable milestone in the history of the Rabbeim, encouraging and assisting women and girls

A GROUP OF ACHOS TMIMIM IN RIGA WITH TWO OF THEIR 'ROIM', ON THE RIGHT, REB ELYE CHAIM ALTHAUS AND REB MORDECHAI CHEIFETZ.



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD



A GROUP OF ACHOS TMIMIM IN RIGA WITH REBBETZIN SHTERNA SARA, WINTER 5700.

in learning Chassidus, was a beginning. From the shores of America, the Frierdiker Rebbe continued to request updates from the growing branches of *Achos Tmimim* across Europe and the US. The Rebbe expanded these efforts even further, establishing new frameworks and ensuring that women remained firmly on the front lines of learning, living, and spreading Chassidus.



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READ MORE



THE UNTOLD
STORY OF
ACHOS TMIMIM

CONSTANT MITZVOS COMPANION

Of the six hundred and thirteen mitzvot, six are recorded by the *Sefer HaChinuch* as constant and ongoing obligations—“*chiyuvan temidi*.” They are: believing in Hashem, not believing in any other being, believing in Hashem’s oneness, loving Him, fearing Him, and not following the wayward desires of one’s heart.⁵

These foundational tenets of Yiddishkeit are not dependent on age, scholarship, or circumstance. Old and young, learned and simple, men and women alike are equally obligated. While there are many *mitzvot* from which women are exempt, these six apply to all.

How does one bring oneself to love and awe of Hashem? The Rambam addresses this question and explains that the fulfillment of these *mitzvot* comes through contemplating Hashem’s greatness.⁶

To fulfill these *mitzvot* properly, one must therefore study Chassidus, knowledge that animates these essential areas. The *halachos hatzrichos* of a woman, the necessary knowledge required to properly observe the *mitzvot* and *halachos* relevant to her, include knowledge of Chassidus.⁷ In fact, the Frierdiker Rebbe declared it a Halachic obligation: every individual, men and women alike, must learn *Pnimitiyus HaTorah* as explained in Chassidus Chabad in order to possess the clarity needed to fulfill the *mitzvot temidiyos*. Knowledge of *Pnimitiyus HaTorah*, a deep understanding of *emuna*, *ahava*, and *yira* of Hashem, *hashgacha pratit*, belief in Moshiach, and more, are

EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

Towards the end of the farbrengen of Yud-Aleph Nissan 5742, the Rebbe announced that he was going to distribute a special edition of the Tanya to each and every person who came to participate in this farbrengen. “After all the men have received their Tanyas and exited the shul,” the Rebbe explained, “the women will enter and have a chance to receive Tanyas as well.”

The Rebbe explained that according to the Rambam’s ruling, women must study Chassidus—including Tanya—because it teaches them how to have *ahavas Hashem*, *yiras Hashem*, and so on.⁹

Before the distribution of the *kuntres* containing the Tzemach Tzedek’s *biurim* on Tanya on Erev Rosh Hashanah 5750, the Rebbe announced what would become a new precedent: the distribution would be for men, women, and children.¹⁰ This was one of the first of many distributions of *kuntreisim* of Chassidus that would follow, and each time the Rebbe ensured that women received the *kuntres* as well.



NISSAN 5700, IN LAKEWOOD, N.J.

all absolutely relevant to women, just as to men.⁸

The study of Chassidus by women—starting with *Tanya*, the *Torah shebiksav* of Chassidus—should be more than superficial, nor should it be limited to those aspects of Chassidus that are commonly understood even on the street. On the contrary, a woman possesses *bina yeseira*, an additional measure of understanding, and can therefore engage deeply with the profound areas of Chassidus.

CHASSIDUS FOR ONE

Throughout the generations, our Rabbeim encouraged women to learn Chassidus, beginning with the Alter Rebbe. A story involving the first two *Nesi'im* of Chabad illustrates this clearly.

The Alter Rebbe would at times say Chassidus specifically for, and in the exclusive presence of, his daughter Rebbetzin Freida—known among Chassidim as Freid'ke. She held a special place in the Alter Rebbe's heart and is buried adjacent to his holy resting place in Haditch.

There were occasions when the Mittler Rebbe deeply desired to hear Chassidus from his father, but was unsuccessful. On some occasions, he would ask his sister Freid'ke to request Chassidus on his behalf, and he would hide nearby to listen.¹¹

During one of these private recitals, the Alter Rebbe spoke to her about the significance of the various *bigdei kehunah*, while the Mittler Rebbe listened from his hiding place. As the Alter Rebbe neared the conclusion of his Torah, the Mittler Rebbe realized that the meaning of the *avneit*, the Kohen's *gartel*, had not yet been explained. Without revealing his presence, he removed his own *gartel* and gently threw it toward his sister, hinting to her to ask their father to elaborate on that final *begeid*.¹²

TIMELY OBLIGATION

A woman's true job is not the study of Torah,¹³ but raising Tzivos Hashem—children dedicated to Torah and *mitzvos*, who will stand on the front lines to greet Moshiach. This important responsibility requires utmost devotion and complete dedication of heart and soul. Yet specifically in our times, no Jew, man or woman, can properly fulfill their *avoda* without Chassidus.

Firstly, external influences such as *chochmos chitzoniyos* increasingly seep into daily life, and only a strong inner world grounded in Chassidus can keep them at bay. It is therefore an obligation, a *mitzvah*, and a great merit for women and girls to attain an understanding of Chassidus that goes beyond the basics. When challenges to Yiddishkeit arise, a woman needs real answers and spiritual tools. Telling her that understanding is unnecessary is neither sufficient nor effective.

Furthermore, effective *chinuch*, whether of one's own children or of students, requires Chassidus. Familiarity with the

details of Yomim Tovim or *mitzvos* being taught to the children alone is not enough. Experience shows that to educate successfully, a mother or teacher must possess a strong grasp of the foundations of Torah: knowledge of Hashem, belief in Hashem, *Ahavas Yisroel*, respect for fellow Jews, and the inner meaning behind *mitzvos*, all of which are deepened through the study of Chassidus.

As young children in schools are primarily taught by women, they must have knowledge of Chassidus to gain the respect of the children, who will see that their teachers are strongly grounded in the foundations of Torah and Yiddishkeit.¹⁴ **T**



WATCH:
MANDATE FOR A
WOMAN

HASHEM CREATED THE KITCHEN

Excerpt from a yechidus with Hillel students.

Question: I understand that Chasidism elevates the woman to a state higher than she had before in Judaism. Could you explain this?

Rebbe: Traditionally, women were not taught Torah except those laws that were directly relevant to herself and her duties. Chasidus however, teaches and demands of every one, man or woman, that the *Mitzvos*, all of them, must be done with joy and inspiration, not automatically. But we cannot expect someone to be inspired unless he understands or feels. The woman has a right, more — must know of the individual providence, of the omnipresence of G-d Almighty that He created not only the heavens but also the home and the kitchen, and then she can be inspired by the *Mitzvah* to make the home and kitchen a Jewish home and kitchen. We must explain to her in detail the teachings of the Jewish religion and the reasons why of Judaism. Especially as the woman has a great effect on her children and her husband. It is necessary, then, that she be taught the basic ideas of Chasidus.¹⁹

ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

On the galleys of Sefer Haminhagim being prepared for print, the Rebbe added a lengthy addition in his holy handwriting on the section of women learning Chassidus. The following is an adaptation:

» The “constant mitzvos” include *Yichud Hashem* – awareness of Hashem’s unity, and love and fear of Him. Proper perception of Hashem’s oneness is attained when one’s heart and tongue are aligned [i.e. when it includes understanding, not just lip service]; *ahava* and *yira* are realized through contemplation of Hashem’s greatness. In our diminished generation, achieving true contemplation of these concepts and thereby love and fear of Hashem requires strenuous effort. It therefore follows that women, who are equally obligated in these *mitzvos*, must learn the parts of Torah that explain *ahava*, *yira*, and *Achdus Hashem*. Doing so is certainly within reach.¹⁵

» I was informed of your question regarding studying Tanya with your older *talmidos*. In Riga, at the instruction of the Frierdiker Rebbe, there was a study group of girls [learning Chassidus], taught by Reb Mordechai Cheifetz HY”D, and there is even a letter from the Frierdiker Rebbe encouraging and strengthening him in these efforts. It is understood that the learning need not follow the original order of Tanya, and that it is preferable to begin with the sections that are easier and more *avodahdike*.

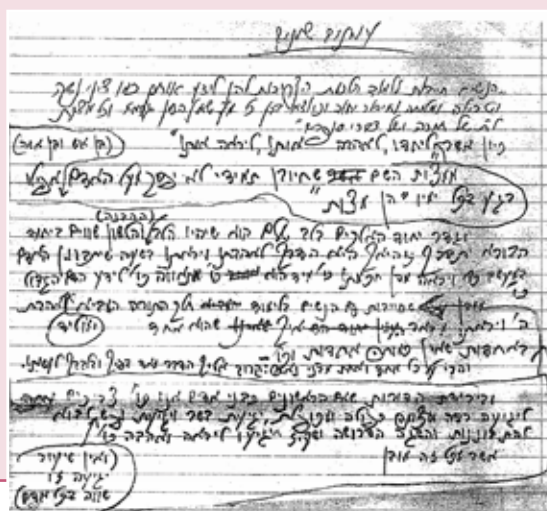
—Letter from the Rebbe to the principal of Beis Rivkah of France¹⁶

» The Frierdiker Rebbe did not limit himself to founding educational institutions for boys; he ensured that girls were included as well. He specifically published *sichos* and *maamarim* in Yiddish to make them more accessible to women. The deeper concepts of Chassidus are meant for women no less than for men; the difference lies only in the manner in which they are presented.

—Sicha, Noah 5717¹⁷

» The Frierdiker Rebbe wrote that one of his primary intentions in publishing his *sichos* [not just in Yiddish but altogether! —editor’s note] was to provide educational material for the benefit of, and suited for, *N’shei u’Bnos Chabad*, both to strengthen their own *avoda* and to enable them to share these teachings with others.

—Letter from the Rebbe to N’shei Chabad¹⁸



THE REBBE'S EDITS TO SEFER HAMINHAGIM REGARDING THE DINIM APPLICABLE TO WOMEN.

1. For the full story of the Frierdiker Rebbe's rescue from the Nazis and arrival in the United States, see "The Miraculous Rescue"—Derher Adar II 5779.

2. See Toras Menachem vol. 18, p. 191, et al.

3. Published in Likkutei Dibburim vol. 3, pp. 1099–1113.

4. Sefer Hasichos winter 5700, pp. 401–404 (new edition). Also translated by Sichos in English and published in Sefer Hasichos 5700, and accessible at SIE.org/3150463.

5. Letter of the Chinuch before the *Hakdama*.

6. Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 2:2.

7. Likkutei Sichos vol. 7, pp. 268–269.

8. Shavuos 5746: Sefer Hasichos (*Hanachos Hatmimim*) 5746 vol. 3, pp. 736–738; Toras Menachem 5746 vol. 3, pp. 520–522.

9. Hisvaaduyos 5742 vol. 3, p. 1246.

10. Hisvaaduyos 5749 vol. 4, p. 384.

11. Beis Rebbe vol. 1, ch. 24. Told over by the Rebbe on Shabbos Ki Savo, Chai Elul 5747: Yiddish *hanacha* p. 22; Hisvaaduyos 5747 vol. 4, p. 347.

12. Likkutei Sippurim p. 79.

13. For more on women learning Torah, see this column in Derher Tishrei 5786.

14. Shavuos 5746 *ibid*.

15. Sefer Haminhagim pp. 84–85.

16. Igros Kodesh vol. 8, pp. 133–134.

17. Toras Menachem vol. 18 *ibid*.

18. Igros Kodesh vol. 6, pp. 225–226.

19. chabad.org/392177.

By: Rabbi Shneur Itzinger

Step Inside

Farbrengen with the Rebbe — A Companion

A guide to the Parade of
Lag Ba'Omer 5743



Likkutei Sichos
vol. 37, p. 126–141



Sources

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

לזכות
כל נכדינו שיחיו
שיגדלו לתורה לחופה ולמעשים
טובים לנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר זוזגתו
מרת לאה שיחיו
שפאלטר



Speaking to children at a televised Lag Ba'Omer Parade, the Rebbe teaches two lessons, one in each of two sichos, drawn from the two figures most closely associated with the day: Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his teacher, Rabbi Akiva. The Rebbe shows the children how they can follow in the ways of these great tzaddikim in both *asei tov* and *sur meira*.

Sicha 1: Two Lessons from Rashbi

The first lesson of Lag Ba'Omer: Learning from Rashbi on his day of celebration.

1. Two Stories, Two Lessons

[10:00]

Today's lessons come from the two people connected to this day: Rabbi Akiva and his student, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

There are **two reasons** for the celebration of Lag Ba'Omer:

- 1. **Rashbi proclaimed today as his celebration** [the focus of this *sicha*]
 - and requested that all rejoice with him.
- 2. The **students of Rabbi Akiva** – Rashbi's teacher – **stopped passing away** [the focus of *sicha* 2].⁴
 - **The plague came about** because they had not treated one another respectfully.
 - **The plague's end meant** they began to treat one another respectfully.

What are the **lessons** from these events?

- Everything is a lesson,
- in our main *shlichus: ani nivreisi l'shamesh es Koni*—to serve Hashem and bring Him *nachas*.
 - Having an opportunity to bring Hashem joy means doing our part joyfully,
 - and, in the spirit of *v'ahavta l're'acha kamocha*, helping others do the same,
 - bringing joy to Hashem, and to Rabbi Akiva and his students.
- Torah's lessons are eternal, teaching us how to fulfill *l'shamesh es Koni*.

“MY DAY OF REJOICING”

The *sefer* Mishnas Chassidim, authored by Reb Immanuel Chai Ricci, is an orderly and concise compilation of the teachings of the Arizal. The Rabbeim write that he “quoted only the words of the Arizal.”¹ Here, and often on Lag Ba'Omer, the Rebbe quotes the *sefer* that it is “**a mitzvah to rejoice in Rashbi's *simcha* [on Lag Ba'Omer] ... a *simcha gedola*.**”²

“REJOICE WITH ME”

The Rebbe shows here how Rashbi expected all to celebrate with him on his day of celebration, by quoting a story told by Rabbi Chaim Vital. A student of the Arizal, Reb Aharon HaLevi, was accustomed to reciting *nachem* daily, mourning the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. On Lag Ba'Omer, at Rashbi's *kever*, he recited it as well. The Arizal told him that Rashbi himself had come to say that he was not pleased that someone had brought mourning into his day of celebration, and Reb Aharon was punished.³

Step
Inside

Farbrengen
with the Rebbe
— A Companion

2. Career in Torah

[15:05]

The first lesson from Rashbi is how to learn Torah:

Specifically, what do we learn from **Rashbi**?

- [Although Rashbi is very great —
 - only Rebbi Akiva and Hashem know to what extent⁵ —
- we can still learn from him, because he wanted to influence us all,
 - if we only try.]
- The Gemara teaches that Rashbi was **Toraso um'naso**—his **occupation** was Torah.
 - He also ate, drank, etc., but his **main** “job” was Torah,
 - teaching his students, and us, to do the same.
- While busy with other, secondary matters,
- our main **occupation and true passion** should be **Torah**.

A specific lesson for children:

- **Adults** have **other responsibilities**, such as earning *parnassa*,
 - though work can create opportunities to speak to others about Torah.
- **Children** have **all their needs met**; nothing must distract them from Torah.

3. Camping with Torah

[21:22]

A timely request connected to the above lesson.

- As your parents look for summer camps for their children,
- ask them—and they are now asked in the name of Rashbi—
- to **choose a camp that dedicates every spare moment to Torah**.

TORASO UM'NASO FOR ALL

Toraso um'naso refers to someone—like Rashbi and his colleagues—whose only occupation is Torah. Such a person is not obligated to interrupt Torah study when the time for davening arrives. Others, the Gemara teaches, even while engaged in Torah study, must stop to daven. “If we pause learning to go to work, then certainly we must also stop to daven.”⁶ Speaking to children, the Rebbe demands this same level of dedication, seen only in Rashbi and a few select others. With no other obligations, all that remains is to dedicate every spare moment to Torah.

- **All children** —
 - in any school,
 - with proper effort —
- can decide to **dedicate all their free time to Torah**,
 - (*um'naso* can also mean *o'men* — *chinuch*.)
- as you just did now with the 12 *pessukim*.

- This applies to those who have not yet chosen a camp,
- and, in the spirit of *v'havta l're'acha kamocha*, influence your friends
- so they too choose such a camp, thereby bringing Hashem *nachas*.

4. Torah and Action

[23:50]

The second lesson from Rashbi is how to do mitzvos:

Torah leads to **action**:

- **Rashbi sets an example** in action as well.
- After 13 years of hiding,

- he immediately **looked to help other Jews**, acting at the first opportunity,
- thereby fulfilling the **mitzvah of tzedaka—helping another**.
- **The lesson:** strive to fulfill *v'havta l're'acha kamocha*.

- Not only in thought and speech,
- but in **action**, investing effort to help another,
- wherever an opportunity arises.

5. The Power to Act

[26:32]

Conclusion

- This gives Hashem *nachas*,
- as Tanya teaches that *tzedaka* is equal to all other mitzvos.
- We therefore have the **strength to carry out** both lessons: *Toraso um'naso* and *v'ahavta l're'acha kamocha*.
- A proper *hachlata* leads to Hashem's help in fulfilling it.

FIX THE WORLD

Rashbi was forced into hiding for thirteen years because of his efforts to strengthen Yiddishkeit. Upon emerging from the cave, he immediately set out to help other Jews, asking, "Is there anything that needs fixing?" He was shown a path whose *tahara* status was in doubt, forcing *Kohanim* to detour. Rashbi investigated the matter and established that the path was indeed *tahor*.⁷ From this story, we learn of Rashbi's diligence in *Ahavas Yisrael* and *tzedaka*, in addition to the earlier lesson of *Toraso um'naso*.

Sicha 2: Respect for One Another

The second lesson of Lag Ba'Omer: Learning from the story of Rabbi Akiva's students.

1. A Sur Meira Lesson

[28:30]

Another lesson of the day.

We now move to the second lesson of the day: **Rebbi Akiva's students stopped dying**, signaling that they had begun to respect one another again.

The lesson for children:

- The previous lesson from Rashbi, [last *sicha*], was an *aseh tov* lesson.
- We now learn a **sur meira** lesson: **be extremely careful with the kavod of another**—*v'ahavta l're'acha kamocha*.

Special diligence is necessary:

- Doing someone a favor can sometimes lead us to think we are then entitled to act less carefully.
- The story of **Rebbi Akiva's students teaches how careful we must be to respect our friends**.

How do we ensure proper respect? The next two sections offer two answers.

2. Your Friend's Teacher

[32:05]

Source of strength #1: Your friends are **Rebbi Akiva's students**.

How can this level of respect be expected from everyone—even children?

- Every one of your friends—**anyone who has learned Torah—is a talmid** of Rebbi Akiva.
- The entire Torah is based on his teachings, one link in the chain of Torah's transmission.
- Your fellow is also a *talmid* of Rebbi Akiva—perhaps even greater than you.
- If you did someone a favor, that merit creates an **even greater responsibility** to respect them.

Step
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Hashem stands in His assembly; among the judges, Hashem will judge.	תהלים פב, א. אֱלֹקִים נֹצֵב בְּעֵדֹת אֶ-ל בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹקִים יִשְׁפֹּט:
When Hashem revealed Himself to Avraham, Avraham was sitting. He wished to stand, saying “Is it proper that I sit while Hashem stands?” Hashem replied, “Do not trouble yourself; you are old, a hundred years old—sit.” Hashem said, “I promise you, because you sit and I stand, in the future, your descendants, three and four-year-olds, will sit in study halls and shuls while I stand over them, as it says: ‘Hashem stands in His assembly.’”	מדרש תנחומא כיון שנגלה עליו הקב"ה הי' יושב. בא אברהם לעמוד, א"ל הקב"ה אל תצטער לעמוד שב לך. א"ל אברהם וכי כך הוא דרך ארץ שאני יושב ואתה עומד? א"ל הקב"ה אל תצטער, זקן אתה בן מאה שנה, שב. א"ל הקב"ה חייך בשביל שאתה יושב ואני עומד, עתידין בניך בני ג' שנים, בני ד' שנים, לישב בבתי מדרשות ובבתי כנסיות ואני עומד עליהם, שנאמר אלקים נצב בעדת א-ל.

- **Knowing that every Jew** is a *talmid* of Rabbi Akiva,
- and a **creation of Hashem**,
- **helps ensure proper respect** for one another.

3. Hashem's Promise

[34:40]

Source of strength #2: Hashem is standing over you.

- **How can I ensure** proper respect for my friend, **avoiding hasagas gvul**?
 - Such as taking what is his, or outsmarting him to get something he wants.
- A wondrous *Midrash* shows us the way.
- **The *passuk* says:** Hashem stands amongst a gathering of those connected to Him.
- **The *Midrash* gives the background:** Hashem appeared to Avraham
 - —from whom we all descend—
- after his *bris*. **Avraham was weak and sitting**, while **Hashem stood over him**.
 - Avraham asked, “Is it proper that I sit while Hashem stands?”
 - Hashem replied that He is content to stand in Avraham’s presence, who had performed *hachnasas orchim* and many *mitzvos*.

WHO IS YOUR TEACHER?

When we encounter a *stam Mishnah*, a teaching in the Mishnah with no *tanna* named, the Gemara tells us it is attributed to Rabbi Meir and follows his teachings. Likewise, specific names are given for an anonymous *Sifra*, *Tosefta*, or *Sifrei*.

“And all of them,” the Gemara continues, all of these teachings, “are in accordance with the teachings of Rabbi Akiva,” the master teacher and transmitter of *Torah She’baal Peh*.⁸

COMPLAIN TO MY CREATOR

The Gemara⁹ relates a story of Rabbi Elazar, the son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who once insulted someone. The man said, “I will not forgive you until you go to the Craftsman who created me—Hashem—and take your complaints to Him.”

Here, the Rebbe references this story, involving Rashbi’s son, to show how careful we must be with every Jew, each one a creation of Hashem.

- **Hashem then promised:** Your descendants, even when they are **three and four years old**, will sit and learn Torah, and **I will stand over them** and protect them.
 - He emphasizes even very young children,
 - and the word *nitzav*—standing strong.

Completion Times Three

[40:50]

Fulfilling shleimus ha'am, haTorah, and ha'aretz.

- All this leads to Jews being as one, which leads to Hashem's blessings,
- starting with **taking us all**, children, parents, grandparents etc.—*shleimus ha'am*,
- with **Torah and mitzvos**, *Toraso um'naso*—*shleimus hatorah*,
- on clouds **towards the geulah**, to the land Hashem calls His “palace.”

Every Single Jew

[44:25]

Rashbi taught us that Hashem is with us in galus.

- Rashbi taught¹⁰ that **Hashem remains in galus until the last Jew leaves**, based on the *possuk*:
- “**V'shav Hashem Elokecha**”—Hashem leaves *galus* only when we do.
- “**V'richamecha**”—He does so with mercy, because we show mercy to one another.
- He takes us out immediately—He does not need trains or planes.
- We will immediately find ourselves at the door of the Beis Hamikdash.

1. Source 3.
2. Source 1.
3. Source 2.
4. Source 2.
5. Source 4.
6. Source 6.
7. Sources 7–9.
8. Source 10.
9. Source 11.
10. Source 13.

- This gives us strength to stand firm against the *yetzer hara*,
- which urges us to take what belongs to others,
- because **Hashem stands over us**—*nitzav*.

- It is the land He gave to the eternal people, as an eternal inheritance.
- Certainly, no part of it will ever be given away.
- By protecting it, we recognize the miracles Hashem did by giving us all the parts of Eretz Yisroel that Jews now control,
- and, through Moshiach, **He will give us the entire land**—*shleimus ha'aretz*—peacefully.

TRIPLE EXPRESSIONS

When speaking about Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe frequently highlights two “triple expressions.”

ETERNITY:

Hashem is called Eternal. We are the *am olam*, the eternal nation. The Land was promised to Avraham as a *nachalas olam*, an eternal inheritance.

COMPLETION:

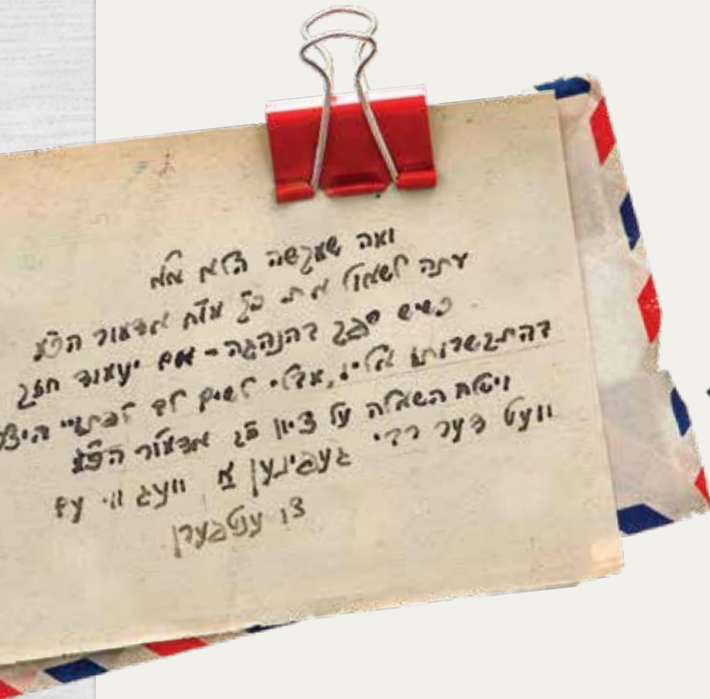
The Rebbe connects the Torah, the Jewish people, and Eretz Yisroel. All three must be complete. Just as every Jew matters and every part of Torah is important, every part of Eretz Yisroel is crucial.

Step
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Farbrengen
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— A Companion



Story



לזכות
השלוחה מרת פערל גאלדא שתחי'
לרגל יום הולדתה א' אייר,
הבחור הת' השליח גבריאל נח שיחי'
לרגל יום הולדתו ט' אייר
הרה"ת השליח ר' לוי שיחי' לרגל
יום הולדתו י"ב אייר,
הבחור הת' השליח מאיר שיחי'
לרגל יום הולדתו כ"ט אייר,

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' דוד ומשפחתו שיחיו טייכטל

דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

WRITTEN BY: RABBI LEVI GREENBERG (TX)

Signed and Dated



AS TOLD BY
JAKE ROSENFELD
(West Hempstead, NY)

I grew up in the Five Towns, a very short trip to the Ohel, but I had never visited until I was in high school. The first time I was there, I realized it is a special place; a place one can breathe, so to speak. After my years of learning in Eretz Yisroel and growing in my Yiddishkeit and my connection to Chassidus and Chabad, I started

visiting more often. Whenever life felt overwhelming or if a situation arose in which I needed special Divine assistance, I often ran to the Ohel, even late at night.

After my wife and I were *Baruch Hashem* blessed with three boys, *bli ayin hara*, we moved to a community even closer to the Ohel. Joining the local Chabad shul and

frequently visiting the Ohel has increased my *hiskashrus* in ways I never imagined.

I do not take for granted my proximity to the Ohel in the slightest. It is both a sense of comfort and an “*Ir Miklat*” of sorts (a spiritual safe space) when needed most, and it is my long-standing custom to visit the Ohel every Friday.

This year, one of our children was going through a particularly difficult period. We faced unique challenges that left us feeling stuck and uncertain. In discussions with his teachers, the suggestion was made to seek outside intervention. But we were at a crossroads: was this a situation that required outside help, or was it a stage or phase that we needed to navigate with patience and a different approach at home? We wanted to do what was best for him, but the “right” path wasn’t clear, and the weight of the decision was agonizing. I decided to bring this question to the Rebbe, so that the Rebbe would be part of this decision.

Although I do not write a *Pan* on my brief Friday visits to the Ohel, on Erev Shabbos Shemos, 20 Teves, I felt the need to write out the question regarding our child. For the past few visits, I had been feeling a bit distant, but this time I felt the urgent need to be “seen and heard” by the Rebbe.

Since I was strapped for time, I wrote my letter briefly, but with much emotion and hope.

As I entered the Ohel with my *Pan*, I thought to myself that it would be really amazing if I could just get some kind of sign that I’m being heard... a response to this issue that’s been weighing on me so heavily. To be seen. But I immediately tried to push the thought away. I told myself that’s not how it works; we do our part, and we don’t demand signs. I davened, ripped my letter, thereby also ripping up my anxieties on the matter, and felt a slight sense of relief as I headed home for Shabbos.

Every week, I print out the *hiskashrus* booklet published by Chabad in Eretz Yisroel to read in shul on Shabbos morning. That week, I opened the section that features a letter from the Rebbe, and after reading the first two sentences of the first letter, my heart simply skipped a beat.

The letter was a direct, specific, and incredibly helpful

answer to the exact question I had written in my *Pan* just the day before. The topic of the letter was obscure enough that it is not a common question. The answer and advice the Rebbe gave was not exactly what I had assumed the Rebbe would “hold” necessarily. Perhaps that was part of what was weighing on me. I had felt that seeking professional help would be contrary to the Rebbe’s opinion on the matter.

His letter to this individual with the same question as mine spoke directly to my heart. I felt a huge wave of relief and happiness. I felt the Rebbe’s presence in my life, and I choked with emotion. The details of the letter were so precise to our predicament that I felt as though the paper were vibrating.

The Rebbe wasn’t just addressing the topic; he was addressing my situation. It was the “sign” I had asked for, but in the moment, I was simply grateful for the clarity. This is certainly not the first time something like this happened to me. I truly believe that if we open our eyes, signs like these are everywhere, but there was something different about this one, though.

I only truly appreciated the magnitude of this sign after Shabbos, when I decided to look up the original letter as published in *Igros Kodesh*. As soon as I opened the volume, my eyes went straight to the date at the top of the page: Tes Zayin Iyar.

I felt a chill run down my spine. Tes Zayin Iyar is my child’s birthday. Not only did the Rebbe answer my question, but he had “signed” the answer with the one date that gave me the feeling it was a personal response to our situation. At a time when I felt a bit disconnected, the Rebbe found a way to show me that not only was I heard, but every detail was being handled with fatherly precision. 

YOUR STORY

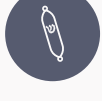
Share your story with A Chassidisher Derher by emailing stories@derher.org.



BY: RABBI MENDEL JACOBS

מוקדש לחיזוק
ההתקשרות לכ"ק אדמו"ר

נדפס ע"י ולזכות
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו
מרת רבקה ומשפחתם שיחיו
הרץ



TAKING ACTION

HEALTHY IN BODY
AND SOUL

MIVTZA
KASHRUS
HA'ACHILA
USHESIYA

THE TEN
MIVTZOIM
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Allowing a Neshama Its Shine

How have things gotten so low?

How is it possible that the spiritual state of many Jewish communities has come to such a decline in recent generations?

The Rebbe addressed this question at a surprise farbrengen in the summer of 5735.

In the previous installment of this column, we explored the first explanation that the Rebbe offered, concerning neglect of the mitzvah of *Taharas Hamishpacha*.

Later in the same *sicha*, the Rebbe offered an additional explanation:

It's a known fact, both from Torah as well as from a scientific perspective, that the food a person consumes has a profound impact on their character. The food consumed becomes part of a person's makeup. Of course, it will impact a person's physical health, but it can also affect their personality, nature, and inclinations.

For this reason, many *seforim* explain, the Torah prohibits us from consuming predatory animals, lest their evil habits corrupt the individual who eats them.

A person's cognitive ability is also affected by the

food he eats. Eating coarse, unrefined foods can limit the ability to understand refined topics. Eating refined foods facilitates clearer thinking and a deeper understanding of concepts.

Ingesting non-kosher food causes one to think in a non-Torah manner.

This gives us a better understanding as to why the spiritual state of many Jewish people has declined in recent generations:

While neglecting *Taharas Hamishpacha* causes *neshamos* to be born without the necessary tools that assist the Yid in living a Torah life, a Yid still has free choice and should be able to push through this challenge. The real problem is that by constantly consuming non-kosher food, a person erects barriers, preventing their *neshama* from shining through.

The Rebbe called on Jewish women to recognize the great responsibility they have in this matter:

As those who prepare food for all members of their household, Jewish women have the power to shape the character of everyone in the family. By ensuring that the kitchen is strictly kosher, women can restore Torah thinking and Torah behavior for all Jewish people.



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Participation

Obviously, transforming a previously non-kosher kitchen comes along with its own set of challenges. Addressing this issue, the Rebbe made a groundbreaking announcement:

“A fund has been established by a group of generous donors to help defray the costs for anyone, throughout the entire world, who will switch to a kosher kitchen—*kasher* the stove and other utensils, purchase two new sets of dishes, and whatever else is necessary. Half of all these expenses will be reimbursed by this special Kashrus Fund upon receipt of a letter from the local rabbi certifying that the kitchen has been kashered and the amount of the expenses incurred. This will, of course, be kept in the strictest confidence.

“I call upon all communities, organizations, and societies to follow the example of these generous donors; to set up more funds to encourage as many Yidden as possible to begin observing this important mitzvah.”¹

A Mivtza is Born

The “call to action” of this mivtza, in the Rebbe’s words, is:

To ensure meticulous observance of kosher with regard to all food and drink, both at home and everywhere else, and to actively engage in koshering every Jewish home. By observing the laws of kashrus, the body (and heart and mind) of a Jew becomes more refined and holier.²

The mivtza quickly spread worldwide.

Anash and shlichim took to the task, as many Jewish homes undertook the transition of their kitchens to kosher status.

An important message was conveyed on the telephone by the Rebbe’s chief *mazkir*, Rabbi Hodakov, to Rabbi Efroim Wolf of Eretz Yisroel:

“All of the frum world should be persuaded to join the campaigns of *Kashrus* and *Taharas Hamishpacha*. These are not copyrighted by Lubavitch...”³

In a letter to a woman around that time who was trying to come closer to Yiddishkeit, the Rebbe wrote:

“You are certainly aware that Chabad representatives in every country will participate in up to half the expenses of koshering the kitchen, the utensils, etc.”⁴

A New Frontier

In early 5732, members of Junior N’shei Chabad discussed publishing a community cookbook that would



PHOTOS FROM AN
EARLY BROCHURE
ON MIVTZA KASHRUS
EXPLAINING
THE PROCESS
OF KOSHERING
A KITCHEN.

include information on *hilchos kashrus*.

A committee was organized to collect recipes and to write short articles on various areas of *kashrus*, Shabbos, and Yom Tov. The work was fairly amateur, intended only for the community, with the *halacha* articles meticulously reviewed by Rabbi Marlow.

In the winter of 5734, a draft of the cookbook was submitted to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe advised the editors that the project must assume the highest quality, enabling the book to compete with (and surpass) other books in the broader cookbook market: “שהרי זה—נוגע לכשרות כ”כ בתים דבני” the *kashrus* observance of many Jewish households...”

After the Rebbe launched *Mivtza Kashrus*, with the cookbook project still ongoing, the Rebbe wrote to the editors:

“אזכיר על הציון להצלחה רבה ל'קוקבוק' במילוי תפקידו העיקרי - הגברת הכשרות בכל מקום.”

“I will mention this at the *tziyun* for much success with the ‘cookbook,’ [that it should] accomplish its main purpose—strengthening *kashrus* in every place.”

The cookbook was to become an integral element of *Mivtza Kashrus*.

In the summer of 5737, three and a half years after the Rebbe instructed the committee to produce a game-changing kosher cookbook, *The Spice and Spirit of Kosher-Jewish Cooking* was published. At the Yud-Beis Tammuz farbrengen, Rabbi Marlow presented the new cookbook to the Rebbe. The Rebbe was visibly pleased and said, “Much *hatzlacha* in *Mivtza Kashrus* and in all the *mivtzoim*.”

During the concluding *sicha* of the farbrengen, when discussing *Mivtza Kashrus*, the Rebbe made special mention of the new cookbook. “...Especially in light of the fact that on the *yom hageulah* a beautiful book was published and released—which in addition to recipes includes important information about *kashrus*...”⁵

This is Success!

In many instances, the Rebbe advised people who sought his *brachos* to be more careful about *kashrus*, as a channel to draw down Hashem’s blessings.

An individual once wrote to the Rebbe that his wife was due to undergo a liver transplant, and he asked for the Rebbe’s *bracha*. The Rebbe responded:

“החלטה תקיפה לדייק בכשרות האכילה והשתיה. אזעה”צ.”

“Make a firm resolution to be meticulous about the *kashrus* of food and drink. I will mention this at the Ohel.”⁶



We conclude with the Rebbe’s powerful words, written to an individual who had helped sponsor the Rebbe’s fund to cover 50% of the kashering expenses for Jewish homes.

The donor wrote to the Rebbe of his intention to move to a different city due to financial difficulties he was facing. The Rebbe replied:

טוב עשה שלא העתיק מעירו עתה - בטוב הנראה והנגלה.
גם" הליכת יו"ח שי' בדרך היהדות - הצלחה היא (וכפרט בתקופתנו).

"וגם" בריאות - הצלחה היא (שלו ודב"ב שי') "וגם" - זה שמכספו נלקח למבצע העולמי דכשרות - הצלחה היא, ובמיוחד שנוסף ע"ז יבואו גם רווחים בממון כפשוטו

אזכיר עה"צ

You did **well** by not moving from your current city—**open and revealed good**.

The fact that your children go in the ways of Yiddishkeit is “also” good, especially today.

The good health (of you and your family) can “also” be considered a success.

The fact that some of your money was used for the **international kashrus** campaign can “also” be considered a success.

Especially considering the fact that monetary gains will also **come**, in the most **literal** sense.

I will mention this at the Ohel.

AN ENTRYWAY TO YIDDISHKEIT



An interview with

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Eizenbach

Yerushalayim, Eretz Hakodesh

By: Rabbi Bentzion Pearson

Please tell us how you got involved in Mivtza Kashrus.

It started about 10 years ago, when we marked 40 years since the Rebbe's launch of Mivtza Kashrus.

I was living in Yerushalayim and working for Tzeirei Agudas Chabad. At the time, there were a few individuals around Eretz Yisroel who kashered kitchens for people, a few shluchim and some members of *anash*.

The individual who ran this program in Yerushalayim was getting older, and he felt that he couldn't do it any longer, so his children reached out to me and asked if I would take his place.

I remember thinking: I know how to do nine out of the Rebbe's ten *mivtzoim*, but I have not yet learned how to kasher a kitchen. I was intrigued.

We brought Rabbi Twardowitz to the main Chabad shul in Ramat Shlomo to give a class on how to do it, and we decided we'd take it from there.

Rabbi Twardowitz spoke for a few hours, going through all the *halachos* in great detail.

Then we took action: a group of *anash* went out to kasher our first kitchen. Then a second. Then a third. We ended up kashering around 35 kitchens that year.

The next year, we kashered around 70 kitchens. The year after that, we kashered 140. In the fourth year, we totaled 280 kitchens.

We quickly realized that we were onto something great. There was strong demand for kashering

kitchens, but there weren't enough members of *anash* involved.

Slowly, I recruited more people to join, forming a group of over 100 members. With small groups each going out a few times throughout the year, we were able to reach 300 kitchens a year.

Then I thought: for this project to be sustainable, this whole system needs an upgrade.

We worked with Tzeirei Agudas Chabad, which reached out to the shluchim in each region, proposing that they each start a special division of their Chabad houses to take care of kashering kitchens.

We set up an online dashboard listing all shluchim in Eretz Yisroel, where anyone can search for the closest shliach in their area. They can request a tefillin or mezuzah checkup, or for information about getting their kitchen kashered, and the local shliach immediately receives a WhatsApp message.

The kashering system itself also got a major upgrade. At the time, it would take between three and seven hours to kasher a kitchen because most people didn't know exactly how to do it, and the equipment wasn't up to date.

We put together an easy-to-use kit with all the tools needed to kasher a kitchen (a burner, a large pot, a stone, gloves, etc.) and made it available on a large scale for all the shluchim.

We got it down to a system where it takes under an hour to kasher a kitchen.

This was five years ago.

Today, we can proudly say that every area in Eretz Yisroel is fully covered. If any family reaches out to have their kitchen kashered, it gets done within a week. In all of Eretz Yisroel, we now average more than 2000 kitchens a year, which is some 30 to 40 kitchens every day of the year (excluding Shabbos and Yom Tov)!

When you think about it, Mivtza Kashrus should not be treated any differently from the other *mivtzoim*.

Any 13-year-old Lubavitcher boy has no problem approaching a soldier on the street and asking him to roll up his sleeve and put on tefillin.

Where does he get the confidence? Is the 13-year-old so well versed in the halachos of tefillin? Not necessarily. But he knows how to put on tefillin from doing it every day, and he can easily replicate that for another Jew.

Mivtza Kashrus can be the same way. Most people are missing only the practical application of the *halachos* of how to kasher a kitchen. This can be easily learned through a few short classes and by watching it done in real time.

Once you get over this hurdle, it's smooth sailing from there on.

The Home

Mivtza Kashrus is unique because it affects the entire household in ways few other *mivtzoim* do.

Koshering a kitchen is not like putting up a mezuzah on a door or putting tefillin on someone. It's much, much more than that. It's not a one-time act. It changes the whole home.

I always tell the shlichim I'm in touch with: before kashering someone's home, the most you could do was knock on the door and give the family *Mishloach Manos*. After kashering the home, you can go in and "make a Purim party."



The whole relationship between the shliach and the family changes. We've seen many times that after kashering their home, a family will begin sending their kids to Chabad schools, to *frum* camps, attending shul more often, and attending classes. It influences all other areas of their lives.

Mivtza Kashrus also offers an opportunity to reach more families.

All the other organizations in Eretz Yisroel—*Hidabroot*, *Lev L'Achim*, *Yad L'Achim*, and many others—send their clients to Chabad for kashering kitchens. No one else does this. This presents a golden opportunity to gain access to Jewish homes and to share the light of Yiddishkeit and Chassidus.

I once heard a *vort* that the Rebbe told a *rav* in *yechidus* (although I have yet to find a reliable source for it):

The Rebbe asked the *rav* why he isn't putting more effort into kashering his congregants' homes, and the *rav* explained that he didn't see the point. "We kasher their homes," the *rav* said, "And then they just go out and eat non-kosher outside the home."

The Rebbe explained that when a Jew eats kosher at home, he'll look for kosher food outside the home too. Everything starts in the home.

I once got a call from a shliach asking what he should do: A member of his community was ready to kasher their kitchen, but the



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woman of the home said she was still planning to cook on Shabbos. Wouldn't that render the food and all the utensils non-kosher anyway? What was the point of kashering the kitchen?

The truth is that the prohibition of eating food cooked on Shabbos is only a rabbinic penalty ("kenass"); it's not as severe as having non-kosher meat cooked in your kitchen. So I told him to go ahead with the kashering.

Then an amazing thing happened. The woman of the house overheard the shliach asking the question on the phone, and it made an impression on her. She went over to the shlucha (who was also present), and she said, "You know what? I'm not going to cook on Shabbos anymore."

You must not underestimate the impact of kashering a home. The family comes closer to Yiddishkeit in ways once thought impossible.

"Kashering" the Family

Obviously, for a family to kasher their home is a big change, and it can't come upon them suddenly.

So I always tell the shluchim, the first thing you need to do is to prepare the family. In Hebrew, we call it "*mach'shirim et hamishpacha*" and then we can move on to "*mach'shirim et hamitbach*."

We start with a phone call to discuss the basics.

Here's where we share an important tip: If you want to simplify keeping a kosher home, take two cabinets on one end of your kitchen and designate them for all dairy utensils. The rest of the kitchen is all meat.

Practically speaking, people cook much less dairy, so they don't need as many utensils. This way, your kosher kitchen is well organized, and there's much less of a chance for utensils to get confused. For any guests who walk into the house, it can be easily explained that all dairy is kept in one designated area and that everything else can be prepared anywhere in the kitchen. It's a no-brainer.

I remember once asking a woman on the phone, "How does your husband feel about you kashering the kitchen?" She explained that he was less than enthusiastic.

I told her that her husband is probably afraid of coming home and being told by his wife to sit only on the right side of the couch, not the left.

You just simplify it for him: Tell him that the whole kitchen is free to use. If he's eating dairy, stick to the small designated area. If he's eating anything else, he can use the rest of the kitchen.

A Note On Payment

I firmly believe that we are not allowed to charge a fee for kashering someone's kitchen.

Think about it: The Rebbe set up a fund and gave away money to help kosher kitchens—not for the expenses of the shliach, but for the family!

How can we charge money for such a thing?

Many shluchim struggle with this, but I try to explain it to them this way:

When you build a shul, you want as many members of your community as possible to be financially invested in it. This way, it becomes “their” shul, and they always want to come and participate in activities there.

When it comes to kashering a kitchen, they will have the opposite feeling:

If you charge for your work, they see you as a handyman who came to do a job in their home, took his due pay, and left. They may not necessarily call you back anytime soon.

On the other hand, if you come and kasher their home without charging them, they feel as though you are bringing them into *your* world. *You* are doing *them* a favor.

I've heard from countless shluchim that after kashering a family's home, they began

attending *shiurim* and other programs. In fact, I just heard this story from a shliach a few days ago. He was about to go kasher the home of a family he knew could afford his services, and he felt it was wrong not to charge them. At the time, I told him firmly to resist the urge and not charge them.

The shliach tells me that since he kashered their home, the family has been participating in *shiurim*, and recently they've become the largest donors to Chabad in his city!

Spiritually Sensitive

I'd like to conclude by encouraging everyone, all shluchim and *Anash*, to get involved in Mivtza Kashrus. The Rebbe spoke so many times about the profound and lasting impact that kosher food has on the body and soul of Yid. This *mivtza* should be prioritized. With a little bit of effort, it's very doable for all of us.

I recall reading a letter from the Rebbe in the early years of his *nesius* about how to reach out to the youth in Eretz Yisroel at the time. The Rebbe says that the first step is to help them devote their hearts and minds to Hashem and His Torah by encouraging them to put on tefillin. Then we must remove all the obstacles blocking their hearts and minds from spirituality by encouraging them to eat only kosher food.

As Chassidim of the Rebbe, we put in so much effort to influence the lives of our fellow Yidden and inspire them to appreciate Torah and *mitzvos*. The Rebbe is giving us the best formula to get it done.

Try it and you'll see!

1. 16 Tammuz 5735; Likkutei Sichos vol. 13, p. 260.

2. Igros Kodesh vol. 32, p. 41.

3. Yemei Temimim vol. 6, p. 419.

4. Igros Kodesh vol. 31, p. 90.

5. Sichos Kodesh 5737 vol. 2, p. 227. For the comprehensive story

of this revolutionary cookbook, see “*Mivtza Kashrus*,” Derher, Sivan 5778.

6. 14 Shevat 5749. Likkut Maanos—Miluim vol. 2.

7. I.e., while the donor was complaining that he hasn't seen success, the Rebbe points out that in life's most important areas, he has, in fact, seen major success.



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[in which case] he needs his wife to assist with bringing in additional income for the household.

Is one of the above situations applicable to your case?

[Obviously, the words of the *possuk* are known: “A woman of valor...created fabric and sold them etc.” However, this certainly does not negate any of the above conditions, taken from the Shulchan Aruch, in the laws of *tznius* or the like.]

I will mention this at the Ohel.

EASING THE MONOTONY

Another interesting answer from the Rebbe:

Mrs. Edna Yitzchaki Navon worked as an event planner at an upscale hotel in Haifa. After giving birth to her third child in 5744, she thought about going back to work, but with such a demanding job, she would have to entrust her child to a babysitter for much of the day. As her maternity leave came to an end, she asked the Rebbe if she should continue her work with the hotel or consider quitting her job and staying home with her children. The Rebbe replied:

בכלל תפקיד הטבעי הראשוני דכל אם - הרי זה גידול וחינוך ילדי' (כולל - הנהלת הבית), וחסרון במילוי תפקיד פנימי זה - מבלבל מנוחת הנפש וכן' וכך', ובפרט כשהילדים הם בגיל רך. (ב) היש מקום (וזמן) לתפקיד טפל - תלוי במצב האינדיבידואלי של המשפחה, אבל ברוב הפעמים - לא בתור תפקיד, כי אם בשביל לגוון קצת סדר היום, להקל המתח ממחשבה בשטח אחד כל היום וכך'.

In general, the first and most natural job for every mother is—raising and educating her children (including administering the home). A deficiency in fulfilling this essential purpose of hers will disturb her peace of mind *etc. etc.*, especially when the children are very young.

Whether or not there is [still] a place (and time) for a secondary job—depends on the individual situation of the family. But in most cases, [even if she does undertake another job,] it is not done as an end in and of itself, but only to give some variety to her daily schedule, to ease the tension [in her mind] from focusing on one thing throughout the whole day, etc.

Time and again, the Rebbe reminded women about their most important role.

In this vein, Mrs. Sima Ashkenazi of Kfar Chabad relates:

“During a visit in the Rebbe’s presence for Yud Shevat 5737, I merited to enter *yechidus* with the Rebbe. The Rebbe told me that the most important role in my life as an *akeres habayis*—which is the crown and glory of the Jewish people—is the education of my children and administering the home.

“The Rebbe then added that although, as a young woman, I had been successful in communal activism, I must ensure that my primary role should not interfere with communal activity. In other words, both are needed, but with a very clear order of priorities.”

In another letter to a woman who felt unfulfilled by only taking care of her children and wished to pursue a career outside the home, the Rebbe replied:

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter and, although the time is not very convenient for lengthy correspondence, I trust that the following lines will adequately answer your letter.

You write about your present frame of mind and lack of fulfillment in having to devote all your time to domestic responsibilities, taking care of the children, etc.

*It is a matter of common sense, as well as of considerable emphasis in our Torah, that a woman finds her fulfillment precisely as the *akeret habayit*, and that this is the area where she can truly accomplish great and wonderful things, if only she desires it. It is written that "G-d created man upright, but he seeks many calculations." Thus, in the present abnormal times, it has become a prevalent, though nonetheless erroneous, view that the wife must seek employment, and that this must be outside the home. To be sure, if there were some employment that could be done at home to supplement the *parnassah*, that would be well and good, as is mentioned in the well-known chapter of *Eishet Chayil*. However, some women insist upon outside employment, so that this has become*

the established practice and has become "second nature," to such an extent that it has resulted in a complete reversal of values, making the essential secondary, and the secondary essential, as if a woman can be regarded as a real person only if she goes against her nature and against the natural order of the world.

The above would be true even if the woman had only one or two children to take care of. How much more so when there are, thank G-d, more than a minimal number of children? This is especially true when they are of an age when they are entirely dependent upon the attention and loving care of the mother. And when one lives in a place where the ability to keep a Jewish home is in itself a challenge—not as it used to be in earlier days and under different circumstances—and when one has, in addition, the great responsibility and privilege to strengthen Yiddishkeit with the light and warmth of Chasidut, all this certainly requires

the mobilization of all the woman's capacities, ingenuity, concentration and peace of mind, and there is no satisfaction greater than that which comes from being able to accomplish all of the above. It would seem rather doubtful that, after all this, there would be an excess of energy and interest to divert to outside employment, and the like.¹

In summation, it could be said that the Rebbe places the mother and the home at the heart of Jewish existence. The image of a mother who nurtures her children with the values of Torah and Chassidus is the true heroine of our generation, securing the future of the Jewish people. The sources cited above—the letters, *sichos*, and written responses—all point to the same message: there is no role greater, more influential, and consequential than that of the Jewish mother.

Thank you for all your invaluable work.

May you go from strength to strength in making the Rebbe's guidance and teachings accessible to the broader public in all corners of the world, spreading the *maayanos* of Chassidus until the coming of Moshiach, may it be very soon!

Rabbi Yossi Amar

SHLIACH, SEINE ET MARNE, FRANCE

¹ Chabad.org/821813.

