

Crown Community Newspaper heights

כאן צוה ה' את הברכה

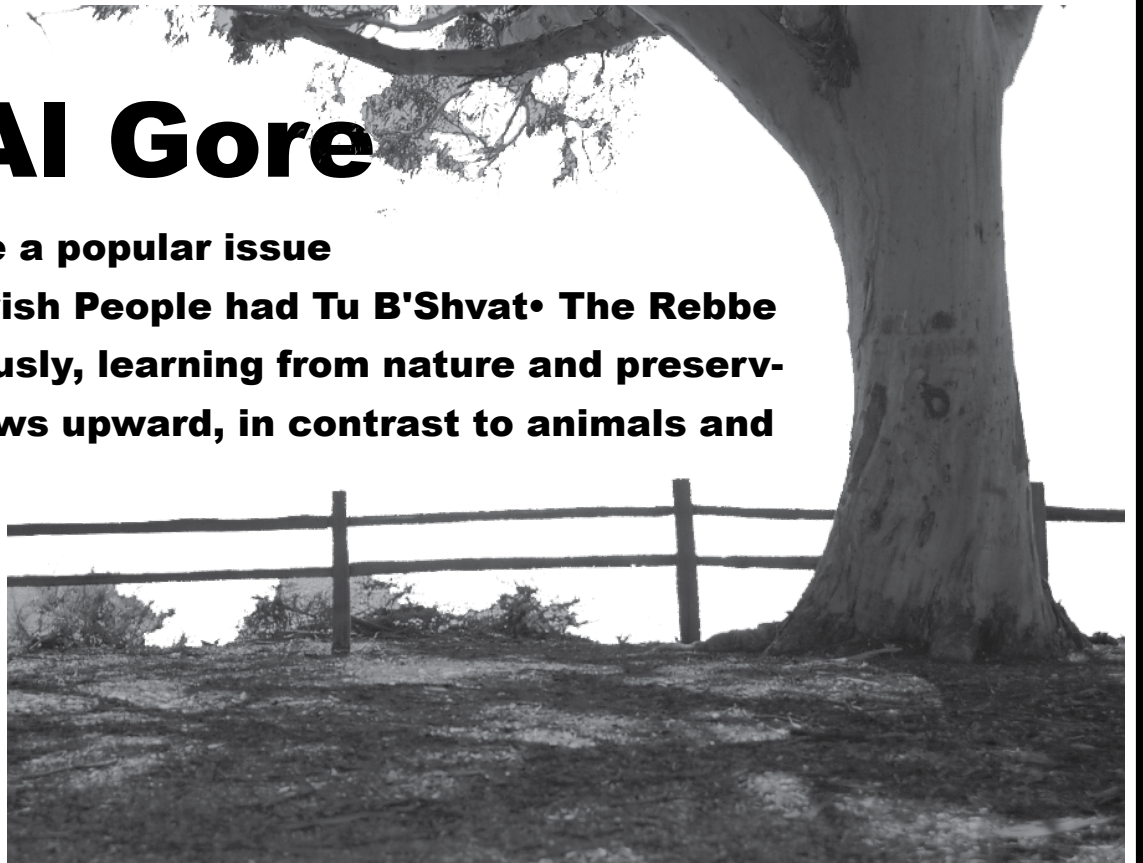
JANUARY 18, 2008 | SHEVAT 11, 5768

WEEKLY VOL. I | NO 11

פרשת בשלח | יא שבט, תשס"ח | בס"ד

Long Before Al Gore

Years before global warming became a popular issue or campaigning and awards, the Jewish People had Tu B'Shvat. The Rebbe teaches us to take G-D's world seriously, learning from nature and preserving. "Though a plant continually grows upward, in contrast to animals and humans which move freely, it must remain firmly rooted in its source of nourishment, the earth," In honor of the New Year of Trees, we publish a talk of the Rebbe on page 17 and insights of 15th of Shvat on page 18



CHANCING UPON A CURE

When Chaim David was diagnosed with 'yene machala', the RCCS came to the rescue and cure • 32 Crown Heights residents have been helped with medical costs and treatment guidance.

Page 6

Rebbetzin Chana

Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson courageously stood by her saintly husband and his teachings in darkest hours of communism



Page 13

Tzviki's Rhythm

Musings on music on page 10

Don't forget the 'shvartze kashe': Shabbos Shira customs on page 18

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Rabbi Y. Heller is available daily 10:30am - 11:30am ☎ 718-604-8827 at 788 Eastern Parkway #210 - 2:30pm - and after 8:00pm 718-756-4632

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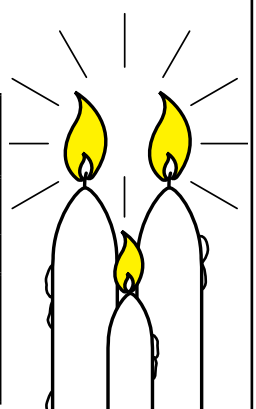
RABBI A.. OSDOBA: 718-771-8737 9:30PM TO 11:00PM

RABBI Y. ZIRKIND: 718-604-8000 EXT. 39

RABBI S. SEGAL: 718-360-7110

Candle Lighting

Jan. 11	Lighting	Jan. 18	Lighting
Brooklyn	4 : 37	Brooklyn	4 : 46
Yerushalayim	4:20	Yerushalayim	4 : 20
~ שופטים ד' ה' ~ ודבורה אשה			



THE VAAD HAKOHOL

RABBI SEGAL ON BENCHING GOMEL

By Rabbi Shlomo Segal

Member of the Bais Din of Crown Heights

Question: Does one who flies on an airplane without crossing the ocean need to bench Gomel?



Answer. The Talmud (Brochos 54b): "Reb Yehuda said in the name of Rav that four need to thank Hashem. One that travels by sea; one who goes in a desert; one who was ill and recovered; and one who was in prison and was released. This is derived from the verse, "They will thank Hashem for his generosity and wonders for the people." This is also stated in the Shulchan Aruch chapt. 219.

“ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, writes that when one travels by plane even if it is over land, he needs to bench Gomel. A person finds himself in danger from which he needs to be saved in 2 situations. While being in a boat, it is impossible to live in water except for a short time, and therefore he needs the boat to save him. . . .The same and even more so applies when flying in a plane which is worse than traveling in a boat, because a person cannot live even one minute in the air. . . .Therefore, there is a need to bench Gomel.”

But there are poskim who write that the people who travel by sea and go in the desert need to bench Gomel only when a negative incident involving danger took place during the trip. These poskim say that if the trip went through peacefully without incident or danger, there is no need to bench Gomel.

In the Sdei Chemed (Maareches 5, chapt. 38), he compromises like most of the Poskim. This is also the widespread custom--to bench Gomel for all trips.

In Shulchan Aruch (chapt. 219, verse 9) and also in the Birchas Hanenin of the Alter Rebbe (13:17) two opinions are mentioned regarding whether there is an obligation to bench gomel only for the four above-mentioned trips, or for other situations as well? For example, if he experienced a miracle like being saved from a wall that fell on him, or saved from being hurt by an ox or a lion or from an attack by robbers etc.. The Alter Rebbe writes: "All these people need to bench gomel."

The Alter Rebbe continues: "There is another opinion that only the four above-mentioned trips should bench Gomel. The final Halacha is not to bench the Gomel with Hashem's name." (For those experiencing some other miracle)

But the Taz (ibid, verse 7) and the Ramo (ibid, verse 10) write that the custom is according the first opinion-- someone that has experienced a miracle should bench Gomel with Hashem's name. This is also the opinion of the Alter Rebbe.

In the responses of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (Orach Chaim chapt. 29), he writes that when one travels by plane even if it is over land, needs to bench Gomel. He writes the following: "Flying in a plane is like sailing in a boat (traveling by sea). In both situations, a person finds himself in danger from which he needs to be saved. While being in a boat, it is impossible to live in water except for a short time, and therefore he needs the boat to save him. . . .The same and even more so applies when flying in a plane which is worse than traveling in a boat, because a person cannot live even one minute in the air. . . .Therefore, there is a need to bench Gomel."

But in a letter from the Rebbe (published in Likutei Sichos vol. 12, pp. 152), the Rebbe writes that when a person is traveling in a plane overseas, he surely needs to bench Gomel because he is in a similar situation as someone who sails in a boat (who needs to bench Gomel). But, when one flies over land, it is doubtful since he is not in a dangerous situation in which he experienced a miracle like in the different situations mentioned earlier, such as being saved from a falling wall etc.

NIGHTLIFE!

Upcoming Events

Thursday, Jan.17th, YUD SHEVAT, 8pm
The Rebbe and Me
Guest Speaker: Rabbi Mendel Samuels

Motzei Shabbos, Jan.19th, 8pm
Fondant Cake Decorating
with Mrs. Shaina Dubroff

Monday, Jan.21st, 8pm
JLI class
Instructed by Shimona Tzukernik

Thursday, Jan.24th, 8pm
The Transition From Singlehood To Married Life
Guest Speaker: Mrs.Chana Rochel Shusterman

All programs are held at
The NIGHTLIFE Lounge:
Rubashkin Residence
1349 President Street

email: CrownHeightsNightLife@gmail.com
check out our Blog: www.CHnightlife.wordpress.com

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Talmidei HaYeshivos from around the world are cordially invited to the annual

International Kinus HaTmimim and Farbrengen

Celebrating 58 years of the Rebbe's Leadership

Thursday, Yud Shevat - 7:00 PM
At The "Rosa Hall"
Campus Chomesh, 470 Lefferts Avenue

PROGRAM:

- YUD SHVAT – The collective power of the Bochorim
- "LHOVI LI'YMOIS HAMOSHIACH" – How does a Bochor live with Moshiach?
- VIDEO OF THE REBBE – Now it is more real than before
- TMIMIM – The way they were meant to be

Festive Seudah will be served

Followed by Farbrengens with renowned Rosh Yeshivas and Mashpi'im

Speakers in both English and Yiddish
Anash of Crown Heights are encouraged to join

With the hope that we merit the coming of Moshiach immediately and a Yud Shevat Farbrengen with The Rebbe

לע"נ הרה"ת ר' נחום טענדל בן הרה"ח שד"ר ר' בן-ציון ע"ה

FROM SHEDLITZ TO SAFETY



A YOUNG JEW'S STORY OF SURVIVAL

By Rabbi Shimon Goldman

*Excerpted from the book with the author's permission
Continued from last week*

My Family

Yakov, my older brother, experienced much tragedy in his life. His wife, Bracha, was expecting a child and began labor on Shabbos when complications suddenly arose. People quickly ran to get the doctors of Shedlitz, hurrying them along to examine the patient. Meanwhile, a large crowd of people gathered outside Yakov's home, murmuring words of tehillim as they waited for the doctors.

After evaluating her condition, the doctors decided that it was imperative for Bracha to travel immediately to nearby Warsaw, where she could get the medicines needed to save her baby. The Halachic restrictions normally associated with Shabbos are negated by life-threatening situations like these, and Yakov quickly summoned a wagon to take Bracha and himself to Warsaw. Tragically, disaster struck during the journey, and both Bracha and her unborn baby passed away.

Yakov later remarried and moved to Warsaw, where his wife ran a grocery store in the courtyard adjoining their home. The store brought in considerable profit, providing enough income so that Yakov and his family could live comfortably. They lived at 10 Pavva Street.

Chana, my older sister, supported herself by selling various kinds of perfumes, gloves, and assorted hairdressing items. Years later, when I became older and went to learn in various yeshivas in Warsaw, Chana often came by to visit me. My hectic learning schedule did not allow enough time to visit my relatives, so Chana made it her business to spend time with me. Needless to say, I appreciated these visits tremendously. (Though Chana became engaged during the war, I never learned if she actually married her intended husband. Evidently, the Nazis deported them both before their wedding.)

Yosef, my other older brother, married Dina Scheinberg of Warsaw. His father-in-law owned a factory that manufactured hatboxes, shoeboxes, and other common cartons. My brother stayed in Warsaw, learned the trade from his father-in-law, and opened up a smaller factory. This new business brought in ample income, and Yosef began thinking how to help our parents with these new profits.

Yosef decided to mail five zlotys home every week. Five zlotys were a considerable amount of money in those days and it certainly alleviated the sorry situa-

tion back at home. My mother eagerly anticipated her weekly stipend; every Thursday, she waited impatiently for the mail to come. Caught up in the excitement, the children sat outside the house to watch for the mailman. When he finally did come, we children scampered off to hand my mother the money, and she quickly went to the stores to bargain with the merchants, trying to stretch the five zlotys for all they were worth. She was thus able to buy everything we needed for the upcoming Shabbos and the following week.

Later, when I went to learn in Warsaw, these five zlotys once caused me consid-



My sister Chana and her fiancé wearing the dreaded yellow armbands in the ghetto. This is the only photograph I possess of any member of my family

erable heartache. Yosef had sent me alone to the post office, and I was trying to send the five zlotys off to my parents. I had to fill out a lengthy form specifying the amount of money being sent, my address, the address of the recipient, and other petty details. As I stood there engrossed in the form, a lady came by and asked me a quick question. I responded, turned back to the form, and forgot about her. However, when I finished the form and went to stand in line, I could not find the five zlotys anywhere.

I knew that Warsaw fairly teemed with roguish thieves and accomplished pickpockets, and I quickly realized that I had just fallen prey to one of these criminals. "Thieves are most expert in Warsaw," went a popular saying. "Hold your money tightly, even if the thieves are far off in the distance." Now too, the seemingly innocent woman had stolen the five zlotys intended to help feed my poor family. I could hardly believe my misfortune. Worst of all, my family would have nothing to eat for Shabbos, and I still had to tell Yosef about the incident. I knew how hard Yosef worked for every zloty, and how much he sacrificed to provide our parents with this much-

needed stipend.

Crestfallen and embarrassed, I went to Yosef's home and told him about the calamity. Yosef was beside himself with anguish. Although I was a young boy, he could hardly forgive me for not exerting more care. The entire incident took its toll on me, and it was a few days until I returned to my normal self.

The Rebbe of Shedlitz

Shedlitz was home to two distinguished Chassidic figures. The first was the Rebbe of Shedlitz — Reb Yehoshua Asher Roitblatt, a descendant of the Yid Hakodosh.

Since our family shared his lineage, people viewed us as an extended part of the Rebbe's family. In fact, my paternal grandfather shared the same name as the Rebbe, both being named after a son of the Yid Hakodosh.

Reb Yehoshua Asher Roitblatt

The Jewish population of Shedlitz greatly revered the Rebbe. Local Gerrer Chassidim also showed the Rebbe tremendous respect, even the few Chassidim notorious for their sharp tongues. The Rebbe lived on the outskirts of Shedlitz, near the dirt roads that connected Shedlitz with Sokolov — a city some thirty kilometers away. I can still remember the small, modest hut the Rebbe called his home, and the perpetual swamp of bog and mud surrounding his house. The mud was thick and viscous, a slimy muck that clung to our clothing and boots.

I visited the Rebbe periodically and once brought him some of my father's shemura flour so the Rebbe could bake his own matzos. On another occasion, I was in the Rebbe's home to celebrate the sheva brochos of his eldest son Reb Eliezer (today of Borough Park, New York). Reb Eliezer had married the daughter of the Schinitzer Rav and later succeeded his father-in-law.

The Rebbe's neighborhood was decidedly non-Jewish. Despite this, the Rebbe maintained a study hall near his home, where many young men blossomed under his personal attention and guidance. The Rebbe's sons also learned there. (The Rebbe's youngest son — Reb Avraham — survived the war and lives in Kfar Chabad, Israel. Two of his daughters also survived the Nazi inferno. One of them, Devorah, married Dovber Kievman and also lives in Kfar Chabad.)

My father had tremendous respect for the Rebbe. Though he frequented one of the three Gerrer shtiblach in Shedlitz — a shtibl whose worshippers were known for their fiery zealotry and quick wit — he still showed great deference to the Rebbe. Every year, on the night of

Rosh Hashana, my father joined many other Gerrer Chassidim and walked to the Rebbe's home on the outskirts of Shedlitz. They did this in order to receive the Rebbe's blessing for the upcoming year. This was hardly a comfortable walk, particularly since roaming bands of Polish gentiles posed a considerable threat to the group. Despite the danger, the group had no misgivings about their yearly trek, and this arduous journey underscored their great adoration for the Shedlitzer Rebbe.

I met the Rebbe again many years later, during the Second World War. By then, the Germans had already conquered Poland and I joined the thousands of refugees fleeing towards Russia. At one point, my group had stopped to rest in the village of Semiatish, and it was there that I met the Rebbe again.

The Rebbe of Biala

The other Chassidic luminary residing in Shedlitz was Reb Yechiel Rabinowitz, the Rebbe of Biala. His house shared the same courtyard as the Gerrer shtibl on 51 Dlugah Street. A large and varied segment of Shedlitz Jewry adored the Rebbe — including simple merchants, businessmen, and unlearned common folk. The Biala Rebbe held every Jew dear, exhibiting such genuine concern and love toward everyone that the general population reciprocated with warm reverence of their own. The Chassidic community, however, did not hold the Biala Rebbe in such great esteem.

After the onset of war, I once witnessed an incredible act that showed some of the deep influence the Rebbe had on the simple Jews of Shedlitz. After the German invasion, hundreds of Nazis arrived in our hometown and in the surrounding villages. Late one night, during the week between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur of 1939, the Nazis rounded up thousands of Jews, and chased them into a large open space adjoining the prison house of Shedlitz. Though still a young boy, I was caught up in the mad frenzy and ended up standing near my father in the crowded jail yard.

The Biala Rebbe was also among the gathered crowd. During the ensuing pandemonium, a group of Jewish women from Shedlitz decided to help their beloved Rebbe escape. With great courage and self-sacrifice, the women managed to distract the German soldiers sufficiently, enabling other women to pull the Rebbe out from the crowd. I could hardly believe my eyes, and felt overawed at the extent of their reverence for the Rebbe. The women carted the Rebbe off and hid him in a secluded location. Their act of heroism saved the Rebbe from suffering with the rest of the group in their forced march and other ordeals.

OUR HEROES

RABBI SHMUEL DOVID RAICHIK OBM - PART ONE

*Head Shliach of California
In honor of his tenth yearzeit on the eighth of Shvat (1918-1998)*

By Rabbi Michael Seligson

Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik was born on the 2nd of Iyar, 1918 in Mlava, Poland. His grandfather, Hagaon Reb Chaim Shmaryou Segal, was the dayan in the city and his father Reb Shimon, a distinguished Amshinover Chassidim. At the age of 18, the Amshinover Rebbe suggested to his father that Shmuel Dovid study in the Yeshiva Tomchei Tmimim in Otwock. The Amshinover Rebbe also wrote to the Previous Rebbe and primarily on the strength of the letter, Shmuel Dovid was accepted to the yeshiva in Elul, 1936.

Reb Shmuel Dovid in Otwock

In Otwock, Reb Shmuel Dovid studied with great diligence and learned Torah from the great Rosh Yeshiva, Hagaon Hachossid Reb Yehuda Eber, and the mashpia the HaChossid Reb Boruch Friedman, HY"D. Already, at that time, Reb Shmuel Dovid was known for his diligence in learning, scholarship and piety. One of his friends recalled, "When Shmuel Dovid learnt a certain topic in the Talmud, he would clarify it in an excellent way. His way of learning was as he received from his teacher: 'To study all the commentaries, Rishonim and Acharonim, on the Talmudic topic and thereby, clarify the whole topic with all its details.'"

In addition, Reb Shmuel Dovid benefited from the influence and closeness to the Previous Rebbe. He accelerated in Torah and Chassidus to the point that he was known as uniquely pious Chossid. His friends remember the manner in which he would chazer or repeat a Maamor, a Chassidic discourse. It was obvious that he understood the Maamor perfectly and delivered it in a way that made it absolutely clear. Over the course of the years, the Rebbe instructed Reb Shmuel Dovid to chazer a Maamor in every city that he would visit.

Reb Shmuel Dovid was a Tomim in the fullest sense. Physical matters were not of great significance to him. This was not because he was removed from worldly matters. On the contrary, he understood these things, but they were of little importance to him.

From day to day, he merited becoming closer to the Previous Rebbe and to increase in Torah and Chassidus. This wonderful yeshiva setting was interrupted with the outbreak of WWII on the 17th of Elul 5639 (1939). Four days later, the Previous Rebbe left Otwock for Warsaw with the intention of leav-



ing Poland and traveling to Riga. Reb Shmuel Dovid merited serving the Previous Rebbe and carrying his packages to the car. Reb Shmuel Dovid recalled later that when the Rebbe left Otwock, it was obvious that he was very broken, and his expression was "terrifying" to visualize.

The escape to Vilna

A relatively large group of the students from Poland had discovered, by Hashgacha Protis, an escape route. They ran to Vilna which was then under Latvian control. Originally, entering the country was easy, but shortly after the war began, the border was closed. At this point, groups of students and Jews from all different circles passed through the Polish borders with the help of refugee smugglers whom they hired. When they already were short of money, they promised to pay once they will reach Vilna. In most cases, they were trusted. They would cross the border late at night under the cover of the darkness, when the moon was not shining fully. In this way, they hoped to evade the border guards.

Reb Shmuel Dovid joined one of these groups heading to Vilna. This was after the Previous Rebbe had advised him, his friend Rabbi Mendel Tenenbaum obm, and Rabbi Gringlaz, may he live long years, to escape to Vilna. The Rebbe gave his blessings to each of them and supplied them with money to cover their expenses. And indeed, in the merit of the Rebbe's blessings, the difficult trip was successful.

Already at the beginning of the trip, an open miracle took place. They were stopped by German soldiers when they got on the train, and their belongings were searched. The soldiers found their Tefillin and asked what there were. Reb Shmuel Dovid responded that Jews put on Tefillin every day and pray in them. The Germans ordered them to put on the Tefillin. However, the bochorim were not fully dressed, and according to Halacha were unable to. Suddenly, Reb Shmuel Dovid took an earthenware vessel and hit one of the German soldiers in his face! The soldier asked his comrade, "What do you suggest I should do to

this Jew?" A miracle took place, and his friend answered, "I suggest we let him go." The soldiers left, and the students thanked Hashem for being saved from the teeth of the sadistic Nazis.

An additional episode occurred crossing the border. Rabbi Tenenbaum recalled: "Crossing the border was not simple. During our walk a heavy snow was falling, and we did not have warm clothing. Miraculously, we did not freeze to death. In addition to this, we needed to walk under very difficult conditions. There was a terrible frost, thick darkness, and the smugglers were pressuring us to walk faster. At one point, Shmuel Dovid realized that one of his shoes fell off. He went back to look for it and lost contact with the group. He found his shoe but was alone near the border and didn't know where to go. He was scared that the border guards would catch him. He began calling my name and after a while, the sounds got to us. I remember very well how we heard these calls of distress from a distance. 'Mendu! Mendu!' Reb Shmuel Dovid could not pronounce an L, so this is what it sounded when he called 'Mendel'. Contact between us was reestablished, and we crossed the border successfully. When we reached Vilna in the beginning of Shvat, we turned to the Yeshiva Tomchei Tmimim that was located in the Optov's Kloyz. We rejoiced over being reunited with the other students that had already reached Vilna and thanked Hashem who brought us to this point."

On the eighth of Shvat, the Previous Rebbe sent a letter to Vilna in which he wrote: "I hereby bless my distinguished students Mr. Menachem Mendel Tenenbaum and Mr. Shmuel Dovid Raichi, sheyichyu, with greetings of blessings. Your arrival should be blessed with your brethren, the cherished students who are studying Torah with diligence and preserving the time schedules and learning consistently."

In the same letter, the Previous Rebbe requested that they should also influence Lubavitch students from other places to immediately go to Vilna. Reb Shmuel Dovid rewrote the version of the Rebbe's letter: "Please have pity on your souls, and come learn in the yeshiva in Vilna." This letter was sent to Lubavitch students everywhere. Many students responded to this call, and their lives were saved from the jaws of the Nazi machine.

Reb Shmuel Dovid's activities in Shanghai

In the following years, Reb Shmuel Dovid continued learning diligently. When the students needed to move from Vilna to Japan, Reb Shmuel Dovid joined them. After a year, the students needed to move once again, this time from Japan to Shanghai. Reb Shmuel Dovid traveled with them and continued to be engrossed in his studies. In Shanghai, Reb Shmuel Dovid was revered by the Litvishe bnai Torah who had escaped there as well.

The gaon and Tzadik Reb Yechezkel Levinshtein, the mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva, and the Rosh Hayeshiva, the gaon Reb Chaim Shmulewitz, expressed a special fondness for Reb Shmuel Dovid and were inspired by his way of serving Hashem and his noble character traits. Reb Shmuel Dovid would stay up late at night and study. He would sleep for just a short time on a bench in the Yeshiva. Reb Shmuel Dovid had a bed in his room but did not see a need to use it. For Reb Shmuel Dovid, a bench was sufficient.

After nine students had received visas allowing them into Canada, Reb Shmuel Dovid's organizational talents in communal affairs became clear. From this point on, Reb Shmuel Dovid became the person who represented the students at the Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Shanghai in all matters: receiving scholarship funds, making efforts to obtain visas for the students, researching possible ways for traveling from Shanghai to the United States, and more.

Previously, the students knew that when a Torah personality came to the Yeshiva and there was a need to be represented by one of the best students to discuss learning with the guest, Reb Shmuel Dovid was the appropriate person. Now it was revealed to them that in addition to being a lamdan, a great scholar in

Nigleh of Torah and a Maskil in Chassidus, Reb Shmuel Dovid was also a sharp and savvy representative for them in communal affairs.

Reb Shmuel Dovid became a very unique communal person who worked vigorously to enhance the physical well-being of his fellow students in the yeshiva. At first, he was in charge of the money that the Previous Rebbe dispatched for the students in Shanghai. He was a steady guest in the homes of the Gaon and Chassid Rabbi Meir Ashkenzai, the chief Rabbi of Shanghai, and of Reb Meir Shmulewitz, who were amongst the administrators responsible for distributing the money sent by the Vaad Hatzola in the U.S. for the benefit of the students in Shanghai.

Rabbi Shimon Goldman, one of the students in Shanghai, related, "I remember as Reb Shmuel Dovid returned to the Yeshiva occupied with different calculations. It is interesting to note that Reb Shmuel Dovid did all the calculations orally and remembered them without using a pen and paper. It was clear to us that Reb Shmuel Dovid was gifted with a mathematical mind in its fullest meaning."





The benefit of having a Rebbe

Twenty years later, in 1965, Reb Shmuel Dovid traveled to Israel, and he visited Reb Meir Shmulewitz who joyously greeted him and said, "Praised are you Chabad Chassidim. We are flooded with doubts, but you have belief in Tzadikim, and everything they tell you is accepted by you without any doubt. There is no joy as that of solving one's doubts."

In the remaining five years of their stay in Shanghai, Reb Shmuel Dovid would conduct all the students' business matters. When a problem arose, they all knew to go to Shmuel Dovid to resolve it. Shmuel Dovid was good for spiritual matters and for physical matters. With the war ending, contacts began so that the students could obtain visas to leave for the United States. Reb Shmuel Dovid was the person who coordinated activities with Reb Shmaryahu Gurary, the Previous Rebbe's oldest son-in-law, and the American foreign embassy. He also raised money for the trips and arranged the students' travel plans. Reb Shmuel Dovid was so involved in every detail that at a certain point his activities came under suspicion of the local government authorities, and he was arrested.

In the end, his efforts bore fruit, and in the summer of 1946, the students, including Reb Shmuel Dovid, arrived in the United States. Their close connection with the Previous Rebbe was reestablished. Reb Shmuel Dovid merited having a special relationship with the Rebbe. Reb Shmuel Dovid's acquaintances relate that in addition to and beyond his hiskashrus to the Rebbe, there was a somewhat of a friendly relationship between the Rebbe and Reb Shmuel Dovid.

Reb Shmuel Dovid appointed as emissary of the Rebbe

A short time after his arrival, Reb Shmuel Dovid was appointed by the Previous Rebbe as his emissary. His function was to visit certain cities and strengthen the spiritual state of the local Jews, bringing them closer to Judaism and also con-

necting them to Chassidus. From then on, Reb Shmuel Dovid carried this title and as some people point out, the name for emissary in Hebrew is shadar which is also an acronym of Shmuel Dovid Raichik.

The first time that Reb Shmuel Dovid's name is mentioned in the Previous Rebbe's letters as an emissary is on the 4th of Adar 5706 (1946): "I request that you write in detail about the awakening that you have accomplished in your trip, relating to the Anash and to their married children--in their development and their progress in the fear of Hashem, and remembering their ancestors and how all was done with a special closeness and inward awakening. In the wording of the Mittlerer Rebbe, 'When a person reminds himself of his situation, he breaks down and cries bitterly, and then awakens to better his ways.'

"The Rebbe Maharash told my father [the Rebbe RaShaB] in the name of his father the Tzemach Tzedek, that at all times and in all places, a person who is from the ancestry of Chassidim should awaken himself in his observance of Torah and Mitzvos and in strengthening the ways of Chassidim physically and spiritually."

In a letter written to the famous mashpia Reb Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, the Previous Rebbe wrote: "I saw in reality the great benefit from the trip made by my cherished student, Reb Shmuel Dovid, one of the refugee students in Shanghai. He has traveled on my missions in this country and Canada to visit selected places, which includes communities not from Anash, to awaken them to follow the Torah, set up Torah classes, and insure a good education is provided for their children. Thank G-d, he is greatly successful, and Hashem should help him physically and spiritually."

During this time Reb Shmuel Dovid married a daughter of the famous renowned Reb Avli Rappaport of Lodz of the prominent Rappaport family. After his marriage, Reb Shmuel Dovid contin-

ued learning and davening with diligence. He treated the nights like days and conducted himself with Chassidus and personal stringencies which were very unique even at that time.

The Previous Rebbe wrote a letter to Reb Shmuel Dovid on the 17th of Sivan 5709 (1949) that expresses the pleasure he derived from Reb Shmuel Dovid's activities: "Your letter has reached me, and I

was very pleased with your good activities and awakening words in public and in private. Hashem shall grant you success in your great and pleasing work to Hashem, and you should exert yourself to broaden your contacts with more baalei batim, to find in every one of them a quality. The main principle amongst all the main principles of a Chabad Chassidic

oved, one that refines his midos, is to have the potential in actuality to bring a Yid closer, to love a Yid and guide him in a smart way, and format how he can, on his own, accelerate in goodness, and how he will guide his family members. HaShem should strengthen your health and the health of your wife the Rabonis."

Together with his work as a Shadar visiting other communities, Reb Shmuel Dovid would also collect money for Maamod which was for the use of the Rebbe's household. When he would discuss this project with people, he would tell them that Maamod both in meaning and outcome is to lift a person to a higher level. Reb Shmuel Dovid always had in mind the words from the Rebbe's letter to him: "The main function of a Shadar is to collect gashmius (money) and plant spirituality."

In his trips to communities of Anash in the United States, it was obvious that he was investing a lot of energy in being a mashpia, providing spiritual influence, to the yungeleit, young married men, to bring them closer to the Rebbe and to strengthen their Hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

בית הכנסת רעים אהובים 1614 קארול סט.
Cong. Reim Ahuvim 1614 Carroll Street

"וישכם אברהם בבוקר"

We are pleased to announce the following schedule of Reim Ahuvim.

- Monday thru Friday- מנינים for שחרית at 7:00 and 7:45.
- Sunday שחרית begins at 7:45

Shiurim:

- Monday night- Shiur on שולחן ערוך from 8:00- 9:00
Followed by מעריב. Given by Rabbi Zirkind.
- Wednesday night- Shuir on any topic in נגלה from 8:30- 9:30.
Followed by מעריב. Given by Zalman Moshe.
- Friday Night- Between מנוחה and מעריב, the ליקיד of the week.
Given by Avraham Sabbagh.
- Morning- from 8:30- 9:30. Given by Rabbi Weinberg.
- Afternoon- Between מנוחה and מעריב, a שיחה of the Rebbe. Given by Yisroel Shimon Kalmanson.

ALL ARE WELCOME; PLEASE COME!

The Shul Gaboim

RCCS

THE MIRACLES OF RCCS

By Yosef Kanofsky and Binyamin Weiss

"I can't tell you how it tears a family apart. I saw it with my own family—my father-in-law passed away after 3 months." The eyes of Mendel Coen tell a deep, sad struggle that only one who has been through it can truly understand.

Mendel is the Director of Development for the RCCS, the Rofeh Cholim Chayim Society, an organization dedicated to providing all the support needed for victims of the dreaded malady of our times, "that disease", as it is called.

RCCS has chapters in many major Jewish communities in the US, 12 in all including Crown Heights. To date, 32 Crown heights residents ranging from

ages 16 to 64 have been assisted by the Bedford Avenue-based organization. The amount spent on these 32 alone is over \$450,000, much of which was raised outside of the community.

Hershel Kohn, a former payroll business owner, founded Rofeh Cholim after losing three of his friends to cancer. "When the doctors find something," he says, "a person's life turns over. Everything becomes a question. Life becomes an uncertainty."

In the midst of this uncertainty, RCCS assumes the daunting task of providing a range of support to victims of this dreaded disease.

The first priority of the RCCS is insuring that each patient has the appropriate medical insurance policy matching the intensive treatment demands of the disease. While many people have regular medical insurance, their poli-

cies don't provide the kind of coverage necessary to take the most aggressive and proactive treatment approach. With the top coverages, patients can be assured that they will receive the finest and most cutting-edge treatment, accessing the top doctors and specialists at the best hospitals. Since these policies are extremely expensive, RCCS helps to subsidize patient's premiums, so the individual can focus on their treatment and not how they are going to pay for it. "Every dollar we invest in covering a policy helps us to leverage thousands of dollars in treatment," Cohen relates.

These policies simply provide the best chances for survival. Rabbi Yosef C. Golding, Executive Director of RCCS, points to numerous, confidential patient records that attest to this. "The impact of receiving the right insurance coverage can't be overstated," he relates. In fact, says Golding, Rofeh Cholim has subsidized over 1,000 health insurance

policies since then, with close to 300 over a span of the past eighteen months alone.

Perhaps even more important than their financial assistance, RCCS becomes a powerful advocate and support resource for patients and families. The organization has connections to access the top specialists and doctors, expediting appointments and getting appointments with highly sought out experts in the area of concern. These connections have been built up over time with much hard work and cooperation. No money in the world can pay for the kind of assistance that RCCS is able to ensure their clients.

"We literally see miracles every day!" says Mendel Cohen.

Below is a personal story of one such miracle that, Baruch Hashem, a couple experienced with the help of RCCS

FIGHTING FOR A CHANCE AND CHANCING UPON A CURE

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Golding, as told by Mrs. Rachael Hess

Life seemed so perfect, baruch Hashem. I was newly married, my husband, Chaim Dovid, was learning in kollel, and we were looking forward to building a future with our soon-to-be-born baby.

Then I got the phone call from my husband: "I'm calling from the doctor's office..."

I knew he hadn't been feeling great. He'd been complaining of pain in his ankle that kept getting worse. Over-the-counter painkillers didn't seem to help much. He was very athletic, so I thought he must have sprained his ankle running, or something like that. Nothing could have prepared me for his next words: "The doctor says I have cancer. The constant pain in my foot is coming from a rare, cancerous tumor in the joint. He says it is malignant. And he says there is nothing much we can do about it."

Cancer. When I thought of cancer... I thought of death. I couldn't — or wouldn't — understand what he was saying. My dream world suddenly came crashing down. *What does he mean, "There is nothing much we can do"? We have a whole future to look forward to... we have a family to build! We are just getting started!*

When I finally came to my senses, I blurted out, "Let's get a second opinion. Let's find a specialist. We can't accept this diagnosis!"

Unfortunately, our health insurance at

the time was not the best. It was an HMO that limited us to certain doctors, none of whom were experts in this particular cancer. Nevertheless, we researched their list and made several appointments, hoping that one of them would help us. Each doctor told us that they had never seen such a tumor, and since the tumor was on a joint, they felt surgery was out of the question. And without surgery, standard chemotherapy and radiation would not be enough. The best advice they could offer us was to immediately have his leg amputated and hope that the cancer had not yet spread throughout his body. One of the doctors actually told us that it was not worth the effort to amputate, as the chances of his survival were minimal; why not let him die in peace!

I visualized my young, strong husband with only one leg, and I visualized raising my baby as a single mother. My dream of building a bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael was quickly turning into a nightmare. It's difficult to describe the stress we were under. We were 21 years old and felt incredibly lost and vulnerable; we had nowhere to turn.

No one could help us.

As Jews, we know that it's Hashem Who is in charge of everything, but He sends us shelichim, doctors, to show us the way

and take care of us. So we were relying on them to be our resources — but they couldn't do anything for us! One doctor after another gave a grim prognosis, or

בס"ד

רוֹפֵה חוֹלִים

RCCS
ROFEH CHOLIM CHAYIM SOCIETY
והסירותי מחלה מקרבך

2 Surprise Stars
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VALET PARKING
THIS MOTZEI SHABBOS JANUARY 19, 2008
7:30 PM - THE RAZAG BALLROOM
FREE ADMISSION

"A chassidic melody fortifies hope and trust, brings joyousness, and places the home and family in a state of "light."
The Rebbe - (Hayom Yom, 22 Tamuz)

Crown Heights/Lubavitch
Patients served in 07: 26
Dollars RCCS paid out in
insurance premiums: \$453,323.64



turned us away altogether, because they just didn't know how to deal with it. It was so frightening; it was like saying to a doctor, "I'm here to have a baby," and having him look blankly at you and say, "I'm a podiatrist; I can't help you."

People ask me now how I functioned through it, and I tell them honestly that I don't know. We had no one to rely on, and we were so afraid. In desperation, I took action and became an expert in this disease. I did research on hospitals, doctors and rare tumors. I read books and made phone calls. The majority of the research I unearthed was not promising. Most sources advised amputation, and the success rate in such cases was still very low. But I closed my ears to these reports and forged on ahead. I wanted to save my family.

One name that kept popping up was a Dr. Brennan in Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. He had actually performed surgery on a rare sarcoma like the one in my husband's ankle. I requested an exemption from our insurance carrier and asked — no, begged — them to allow my husband to see this specialist, but our HMO refused to allow us to go there. Sloan was not on their network and they would not pay for any doctors or hospitals out of their network. I explained to the lady from my insurance company that none of their network doctors had ever seen such a tumor; she told me that their criteria for doctors being familiar with various diseases only warrants them knowing about a particular disease; they don't have to actually have had experience with it. Holding back my tears, I said to the woman, "After 6 weeks of research, I know more about this type of cancer than your doctors; but would you allow me to operate on your husband if he had such a tumor?" She hung up on me and I hung up in tears.

Then a miracle occurred. One of our friends heard about RCCS, the Rofeh Cholim Cancer Society, and contacted them on our behalf. Before I knew what was happening, our insurance was switched to Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and they, RCCS, were paying for the policy! We couldn't believe the turn of events.

Dr. Brennan and Sloan accepted my husband as a patient. Meeting Dr. Brennan was a light of security, a breath of fresh air. Finally, we were given a bit of reassurance. He was confident and kind, and although he was a busy, high-ranking doctor, he took the time to sit and talk with us. He remained with us throughout our ordeal. After days of intense testing, Dr. Brennan informed us that it would be possible to save my husband's leg — and his life.

His approach to dealing with my husband's illness was revolutionary — he felt the best course of action would be not to amputate, but to try to eliminate the cancer through surgery and radiation instead. It would not be easy — there was

a long, uphill battle ahead, but we would try anything to save my husband.

Throughout my husband's treatment, RCCS was there for us. Everything was paid for: the surgery, the radiation, and the hospital stays. If not for RCCS, I'm afraid to think about what might have happened. But beyond their financial aid, there was another dimension of care that went above and beyond anything I could have imagined.

It's very hard for a family with illness to be on the receiving end of financial aid, because you feel as though you need to constantly monitor how things are going and ask yourself, "Do we still really need this?" You know others need the same help, and that the help you receive could be detracting from theirs. But RCCS never once made us feel any anxiety. It was guilt-free giving; unconditional, without periodic questions or probing or subtle hints.

Members of RCCS called every once in a while to see how we were doing, and they always asked out of genuine care and concern. Never was there an ounce of pressure. This was an incredible, much-needed chessed during that stressful time in our lives.

The surgery was performed first, followed by six weeks of radiation. My husband endured unbelievable suffering, but he was very brave. We weren't about to give up now that we finally had a glimmer of hope. Five days after the treatment was finished, I gave birth to our first child, a daughter. It was overwhelming. We were both laid up in bed — he from the pain in his foot, and me from having had a baby. But we were overjoyed. Finally, the prognosis seemed good, and we had a lifetime ahead of us to look forward to.

After the treatment was over, my husband got a job offer in Baltimore and we left New York to go there. Dr. Brennan found a new doctor for my husband, as he had to go for continual check-ups. If this type of cancer resurfaces, it is most likely to do so within the first two years after treatment is finished. After two years the patient is considered to be in a more risk-free zone. Meanwhile, my husband was very meticulous about going to these checkups and exams. He was very paranoid and fearful after having been misdiagnosed for six months before we found out what he had.

When he had begun experiencing the mysterious symptoms, we had gone to one doctor after another. He told them, "Something's in my foot; I feel like I'm walking on a rock." He begged for an MRI, but no one agreed to do one. They dismissed his concerns — how could he think he knew better than a doctor?

Because of all this, now he was always on the alert, and looked forward to each check-up that would assure him of a clean bill of health. He often felt sensations that worried him, but they were usually

due to scar tissue from the surgery. As time went on, we hoped and prayed that we were nearing the time when we would be "free." Two months before the two-year mark, at a routine check-up, the doctors saw something suspicious in the area. This time, there was no hesitating. They immediately did an MRI, which confirmed their suspicions; within a month, my husband was back in the hospital for surgery.

This came as a total shock. I had just had our second daughter; we'd been thinking of moving back to New York, and now our normal, busy lives were being overturned — again. My husband wanted to have the surgery done by Dr. Brennan — he was the one we both trusted the most — but Dr. Brennan convinced us to stay in Baltimore to do it with the doctor there, who was very qualified. He told us to be strong. RCCS told us not to worry about the insurance. They would pay for it as long as we needed it — and they did.

At all times, we had the best medical care in the world, thanks to RCCS. We decided that as soon as the surgery was done, we were moving back to New York. We wanted to be close to our old medical staff and needed more family support; we couldn't do it on our own. I packed up our house and belongings while my husband was at the hospital, and as soon as he was discharged, I picked him up — our car was loaded with all of our things — and we drove up to New York.

We stayed at my father's house until we eventually moved to our current home in Far Rockaway, where we could be closer to our children's schools and a frum social network. In New York, we discovered that my husband would also have to undergo chemotherapy. That was the harshest treatment of the whole process. He was hospitalized over a period of seven months. He stayed in the hospital for five to six days of treatment at a time, and then came home for a couple of days.

But those days in-between chemo sessions were nightmares in and of themselves; he got fevers and infections as a result of the chemo, and suffered terribly. It was a difficult, heart-wrenching period for all of us. I was spread completely thin. I put my two daughters in school and day-care so I could devote myself to my husband's care.

Every morning, I left the house at nine, dropped my kids off, went to the hospital to be with my husband, and came home at five or six. It was like working full-time. Throughout all of this, RCCS was there to relieve the financial strain and to boost our morale.

When a family member is sick, financial strain intensifies in every way, even beyond the medical care costs. For example, a normal part of housekeeping is buying groceries and making dinner. But I was so busy caring for my sick

husband that I couldn't afford to take the time to do all that. I needed quick and easy meals, and often that meant spending more money. And if buying things at a closer, more expensive store meant I would be able to spend more time at my husband's bedside — so be it.

RCCS really helped us stay afloat. They also understood that the whole family was affected by the illness, and they were sensitive to that. They sent our kids Chanukah presents. They were with us every step of the way, until at last my husband's health was restored.

Today, bli ayin hara, my husband walks around on his own two legs. He even recently played 18 holes of golf at the RCCS Charity Golf Tournament. This is not to say that the hard times are completely behind us; he still suffers from a lot of pain and can't walk long distances. We are constantly turning down Shabbos meal invitations because he simply can't walk that far. He takes heavy painkillers often, and they have their own side effects. But this is the tradeoff we made when we decided to avoid amputation. It's a small price to pay for his life.

The reason I agreed to tell our story is that my husband and I want to do whatever it takes to enable RCCS to help other cancer-stricken families. It is a miracle that my husband was cured; it is a miracle that RCCS exists, and we want to help RCCS fund other miracles. I'm a very private person and it's completely against my nature to share my private life with the public and open myself up to pity and speculation. But my gratitude to RCCS runs so deep that I'm willing to forgo that. If having our story in an RCCS article or video or fund-raising event will get them more money to help others, we're grateful. We believe in this wonderful organization and we thank Hashem for providing them as the messengers to save our lives. And my three beautiful children all agree.

The Rofeh Cholim CHAYIM Society

The Crown Heights chapter of the RCCS has a slight difference in its name that reflects the philosophy of the Rebbe. The change was made after Rabbi Moshe Klein in conjunction with Mendel Coen approached the close to 40-member board of the RCCS with the request to change the "C" word in the title to Chayim. The Rebbe mentioned on several occasions that we shouldn't mention this word in order to not give any life to negativity. Although it was an unusual request, the board voted favorably, welcoming the idea to honor and follow the Rebbe's words. People involved in the organization in Crown Heights were very grateful for the change.

YUD SH'VAT



THE BEGINNING OF THE REBBE'S NESIUS (5711-1951)

By: Rabbi Michael Seligson

(adapted from the book "A Day To Recall A Day To Remember" authored by Rabbi SB Avtzon and more additions)

After the histalkus, chassidim turned to the Rebbe, beseeching him to accept upon himself the nesius (mantle of leadership). Although the Rebbe initially declined (until the following Yud Shevat), some changes were immediately noticeable. Not only did he continue to farbreng every Shabbos Mevorchim as he had started doing in 5702 (1942) on the instruction of the Previous Rebbe, he also began to farbreng on Yomim Tovim and other major days in the calendar. In addition, he began answering many people's personal questions that until then had been answered by the Previous Rebbe.

During that year, many interesting episodes took place relating to the Rebbe's acceptance of the nesius, a few of which we will mention here.

Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson, who was the mazkir (secretary) in charge of yechidus with the Previous Rebbe from 5700-5710, 1940-1950 (since the Previous Rebbe came to America), had a dream.

In his dream, the Previous Rebbe appeared to him and asked, "Why are the spirits of chassidim depressed?"

Rabbi Simpson answered, "Because we have no one to go to!"

The Previous Rebbe replied, "Isn't my son-in-law [mentioning the Rebbe by name] with you?"

Rabbi Simpson said, "But he refuses to accept the nesius upon himself."

To this the Previous Rebbe replied, "He [the Rebbe] was already commanded to do so."

At the first opportune moment, Rabbi Simpson told this dream to the Rebbe, who said, "I have not received such an instruction..."

Immediately, Rabbi Simpson and other elder chassidim went to the tzion (grave-site) of the Previous Rebbe and read a pidyon nefesh, requesting that the instruction come.

Indeed, from then on, the Rebbe never said that he did not receive such an instruction.

Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik, of California, would tell the following story every Sukkos:

Rabbi Aharon Kazarnovsky was one of the three chassidim who placed a notice (on the 26th of Teves) in some of the most prominent Yiddish newspapers, announcing that on Yud Shevat, 5711 (1951), the Rebbe would accede to the request of the chassidim and would accept the mantle of the nesius upon himself.

The next day the Rebbe called him into his room and told him that he must put in, in the very next publication, a notice of retraction.

Rabbi Kazarnovsky asked the Rebbe if he might say something, to which the Rebbe said yes.

Rabbi Kazarnovsky then said: "Last night I had a dream in which the Previous Rebbe came to me and said: 'Tell my son-in-law, [mentioning the Rebbe by name] the following [explanation]. It says in the possuk, 'And Hashem spoke to Moshe [the leader of the Jewish nation], 'Why are you crying out to Me; speak to the Jewish nation and they shall travel onward.'" Tell my son-in-law: "Why are you telling everyone that I [the Rebbe Rayatz] am the Rebbe? You should speak to the Jewish nation and they will travel and be elevated with you until the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu."'"

The Rebbe then said, "Thank you for the good tidings, and since you told me good tidings, I shall give you good tidings."

The Rebbe then showed Rabbi Kazarnovsky a telegram which he had just received from Rabbi Herzog, the Chief Ashkenazic Rabbi in Eretz Yisroel, congratulating and blessing the Rebbe on becoming the seventh Rebbe of Lubavitch.

On Wednesday, Yud Shevat 5711 (1951), the Rebbe went to the tzion of the Previous Rebbe and read many letters of request, that the Rebbe pray on their behalf. The last one to be read was the michtav hahiskashrus, the letter signifying the total bonding of a chassid to the Rebbe, which was signed by thousands of chassidim throughout the entire world. The letter declared that they are accepting the Rebbe as their Rebbe and committing themselves to energetically fulfill all his directives. When the Rebbe began reading this letter, he broke out in deep sobs.

When he returned from the Ohel, everyone davened Mincha, and then they ate something. After Maariv it was officially announced that the Rebbe was going to farbreng at 8:00 in the shul upstairs. At the time, the "downstairs" where the big shul is located, was a big yard.

This was no surprise, as the Rebbe farbrenged throughout the year on all special occasions, and it was publicized in the newspapers that he would be doing so.

The suspense was whether or not the Rebbe would accept the nesius.

An interesting anecdote took place prior to the Farbrengen: The distinguished Rabbi, Rabbi Ephraim Yolles was in the Rebbe's room. When Rabbi Yolles saw the crowd assembled, he asked the

Rebbe how he will manage to get in to the Farbrengen. The Rebbe answered: "You will hold onto my gartel!"

At 8:45, the Rebbe came to 770, which was packed with chassidim, and at 9:45 he came out to farbreng. The Rebbe began by saying two sichos. In the first sicha, the Rebbe expressed the need of strengthening our bond to the Previous Rebbe. Then in the second sicha the Rebbe said, "Following the American custom of beginning a new era with a statement of intent, my statement is "The love of Hashem, the love of His Torah and the love of every Jew is one thing and inseparable. If a Jew is lacking in one of these loves, it should be strengthened, and through this love for every Jew, we will go out of this bitter golus."

Reb Avrohom Sender Nemtsov, an elder chassid, then stood up and said, "The sichos are very good, but chassidim want to hear a maamar." Silence reigned as everyone stood with baited breath. The Rebbe's expression became very serious, and after a few moments the Rebbe began saying his first maamar, which was based on and explained in great detail the ideas contained in the first chapter of Basi LeGani, the last maamar given out by the Previous Rebbe.

In the middle of the maamar, the Rebbe stopped and said, "We will now pause and say l'chaim." Reb Nemtsov stood up in great happiness and exclaimed to all, "Let us say the blessing of Shehechyanu that we have a Rebbe." He then led the assembled in saying this blessing using Hashem's name.

The Rebbe then instructed that the niggun Beinoni be sung, followed by the Rebbe Rashab's niggun known as the Niggun Rostov. After continuing the maamar, the Rebbe instructed that a niggun of the Rebbe Maharash be sung, followed by three niggunim of the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek.

The Rebbe then concluded the maamar and tearfully related how the love of the Rebbeim for their fellow Jew was unlimited. The Alter Rebbe, for example, on Yom Kippur left the shul and chopped wood in order to prepare warm food for a women in need. He then mentioned an incident of extreme ahavas Yisroel of every one of the Rebbeim.

He explained that, as this was the last maamar the Previous Rebbe gave us, undoubtedly there was guidance in it to help us during these last days of golus.

The Rebbe further explained: The Previous Rebbe's maamar says that because Moshe Rabbeinu was the seventh generation from Avrohom Avinu, he was able to bring down and reveal Hashem's glory in this world.

So, continued the Rebbe, it is our obligation and merit to bring the ultimate revelation of G-dliness into the world, since we are the seventh generation from the Alter Rebbe, who began the dissemination of Chassidus in order to bring Moshiach.

When the Rebbe finished saying the maamar, Reb Nemtsov stood up one last time and blessed the Rebbe. The Rebbe replied: "Now please listen. The Rebbeim always demanded from their chassidim that they should work on their own and not rely on the Rebbe to accomplish everything for them. Therefore, now that I accept to help you in every way possible, don't become complacent in your duties and obligations. You must fulfill the mission that my holy father-in-law, the Rebbe, gave you."

Thus began the tradition of explaining and expounding one chapter of Basi LeGani each year on Yud Shevat. It continued for the next twenty years until Yud Shevat 5730 (1970) when the Rebbe said a maamar on chapter twenty, the last chapter of the hemshech of Basi LeGani. The following year, 5731 (1971), the Rebbe started the cycle anew, explaining a chapter a year, beginning with Chapter One.

After the Farbrengen, Reb Yudel Chitrik obm approached and told the Rebbe told him that the Maamor was very positively accepted and Chassidim are very pleased.

The Rebbe said to Rabbi Chitrik: "Give me a Brocha." Rabbi Chitrik said: "To give a Brocha, we need mashke."

The Rebbe ordered to bring mashke and when Reb Yudel said l'chaim, he continued: "Everything that all the Rebbe'im intended and worked to accomplish in all the generations should be fulfilled through the Rebbe."

The Rebbe answered: "Omen. Lang leben zolt ir" (you should have a long life).

Today, we have witnessed the fulfillment of the Rebbe's Brocha. Rabbi Chitrik lived up till 106!



THE PREVIOUS REBBE: A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Adapted from "Timeless Patterns" by Sichos In English

Yud Shvat (the Tenth of Shvat) is the Previous Rebbe's *yahrzeit*, the anniversary of his passing. On the day of a *tzaddik's* passing, "all his effort... for which he toiled throughout his life... becomes revealed and radiates downward... at the time of his passing." Accordingly, Yud Shvat is an appropriate day to focus on the message of the Previous Rebbe's life, for every year, these same spiritual qualities are revealed on this anniversary.

This revelation affects all of "his children, the work of his hands," those who "will walk in his paths for eternity." This is particularly true in regard to the *yahrzeit* of a *nasi*, a leader of the Jewish people. For a *nasi* is connected to every member of his generation; as Rashi states, "The *nasi* is the entire people."

The divine service of every man, but particularly that of a *tzaddik* and *nasi*, is multifaceted. Nevertheless, in considering the Previous Rebbe's divine service as a whole, there is one quality that stands out distinctly, and which enhances the nature of all his other contributions, namely, his unbounded *mesirus nefesh* ("self sacrifice").

The Previous Rebbe's *mesirus nefesh* was not limited to a particular situation or mode of expression. Despite the radically differing settings in which he lived and the varied nature of the obstacles with which he was confronted, he showed an unceasing commitment to the well-being of his fellow Jews, and to their connection with their Torah heritage.

Challenging the Iron Fist

His resolution and unbounded concern may be seen in his responses to three challenges that marked the three decades during which he served as leader of the Chabad *chassidic* movement. The Previous Rebbe assumed the mantle of

leadership in 5680 (1920). At that time, the majority of the Chabad community - and the largest Jewish population worldwide - was located in the Soviet Union, exposed to the full brunt of the Communist effort to stamp out religious practice.

For the Previous Rebbe, every day presented a life-and-death struggle to maintain the observance of Torah throughout the country. He dispatched rabbis and *shochtim* to communities throughout the land, built *mikvaos*, and most important - and most fiercely opposed by the Communist regime - he established an extensive network of underground *chadarim* and *yeshivos* to educate Jewish youth. (This network continued to operate for decades, until the *Glasnost* allowed these schools to emerge into the light of day.)

The Previous Rebbe was arrested several times for "counter-revolutionary" activities. At one point, he was sentenced to death; only through international intervention and a series of miracles was the sentence averted. The most difficult part of the Rebbe's situation, however, was the threat to his followers who joined him in risking their lives for these goals. Whenever one of his followers was exiled to Siberia for teaching young children, the Previous Rebbe had to shoulder the responsibility of sending a replacement with the full knowledge of the danger awaiting him.

In the Twilight Before the Night

The Rebbe Rayatz was forced to leave Russia in 5688 (1928). For the next few years, he established his base in Riga. Although he visited several Jewish communities throughout the world during this time, his energies were still primarily focused on Russia and the operation of the *chassidic* movement there.

In the summer of 5693 (1933), he settled

in Poland. There, he was confronted by challenges of a different nature. Although there were no political obstacles to the spread of Jewish education or practice, the lack of resources presented difficulties which were compounded by the fact that the leaders of the local Jewish community did not understand his approach.

The Previous Rebbe did not allow these impediments to stand in the way of his efforts. With relentless energy, he established a chain of *yeshivos* and *chadarim* that enabled thousands of youth to devote themselves to the study of Torah. These activities continued until they were halted by the Nazi invasion. Together with thousands of other Jews, the Previous Rebbe spent the High Holidays of 5700 (1939) in bomb shelters in Warsaw. Shortly thereafter, on the last passenger ship to leave, he set out for the United States.

"America is No Different"

Immediately upon his arrival, he announced that he had come not for his personal benefit, but to prove that "America is no different." The spiritual vitality that had nurtured Jewish life in Eastern Europe could be transplanted to the American continent. Though its manner of expression might change, the traditional devotion to the Torah's teachings and the observance of the *mitzvos* would not.

Physically broken by the ravages of ill-health and Soviet interrogators, the Previous Rebbe could have retired to a more private life, leading his own small group of followers. Instead, he revolutionized American Judaism. Every single area of American Jewish life - day schools, *kashrus*, Jewish publishing, *yeshiva* study, and the beginnings of the *baal teshuvah* movement - was radically influenced by his activities.

His ability to practice *mesirus nefesh*

in these three very different situations indicates that this quality was of his essence. Himself the epitome of *mesirus nefesh*, he was able to inspire others likewise.

Continually Advancing - and with Joy

The very name Yosef Yitzchak speaks volumes about the Rebbe Rayatz.

In Hebrew, Yosef means "increase". The Previous Rebbe's *mesirus nefesh* constantly impelled him to further commitment and increased activity. Moreover, the name Yosef was first given in the verse, "May G-d add on (yosef) to me another son (ben acher)." Implicit in this verse is the ability of Yosef to transform a person who has hitherto been *acher* ("another" - estranged from his Jewish roots) into the closeness of *ben* ("a son"). This ability was exemplified by the Previous Rebbe, who inspired countless Jews to return to Jewish practice.

The name Yitzchak was first given in the verse, "Whoever hears will laugh (yitzchak) with me." Joy should be radiated to the point that "whoever hears," even someone who does not consciously intend to hear, "will laugh with me."

In keeping with this verse, the Previous Rebbe possessed a unique ability to impart happiness to others. Even when he was physically broken, the atmosphere around him was never one of despair. Quite the contrary, he radiated joy.

Both these names share a connection to the Redemption. The name Yosef is associated with the verse, "G-d will again (yosif) extend His hand... to take possession of the remnant of His people." The joy inspired by the name Yitzchak anticipates the overwhelming joy our people will experience at the Redemption, as it is written, "Then will our mouths be filled with laughter." May this take place in the immediate future.

Milan, Italy



Argentina



Kfar Chabad, Israel



MUSINGS



TZVIKI

I love to sing. In fact, the first time I sang for the troops...yes, I really did! I was about 5 years old and performed for the Jewish War Veteran's Post #18. The organizers of the Children's Chanuka Talent Show were very clever--each of the performers won a little prize...

Anyway, as you know, venues for frum women who sing are few and far between. I have to settle for kvelling when I listen to the men in my family daven for the amud.

Then again, I can always go to a concert, and that is what I did this past motzei Shabbat.

I attended the Shwekey concert. There were several developmentally disabled young adults and children who also attended. I couldn't help noticing a particular young man, whom I will call Tzviki.

When the ushers instructed each guest to hand in his ticket, Tzviki was given his to hold, and he duly handed it in. He stood for most of the performance, swaying to the music. At times, he walked up to the front of the stage and waved to the percussionist who was happy to return his greeting.

His rhythm was perfect, and he sang

along with the performers who encouraged several of their "special guests", as well as the yeshiva bochorim who attended to participate with them.

My eyes filled with tears as I watched Tzviki and the other special folks. For a few moments, the joy on their faces mirrored the soaring of their neshamas. For those few minutes, they forgot their daily existences which are a struggle both for them and for their families.

There is not one family that does not have, or who does not know a family experiencing these special challenges.

We struggle to understand Hashem's cheshbonos.

Sometimes, it is possible to accept that each neshama returns to fulfill some special tafkid that needs to be completed.

Yes, we know that.

But we are basar v' dom. We are human. We try and try, and we cry too, as we watch our kids/young adults struggle to do the normal, everyday things that most can do without missing a beat.

Imagine, a baby too weak to cry (hypotonic)...how we beg Hashem to make the baby strong enough to cry and to please keep his parents up at night!

Oy, the things we sometimes take for granted!

When I was growing up, I had a neighbor named, Angel. She had Downs Syndrome. Her parents kept her locked up in a basement apartment. They were elderly and left specific instructions that Angel should always have a home. She was an "angel", alright, yet she was kept caged, like an animal!

We, as a society, have come a long way, since the 1950's when Angel was born, but we still have a long way to go....

Yes, there are many wonderful fundraisers today for special folks and in fact, the

Rebbe told us in many sichas that "Raising up many students"(Pirkei Avos, Perek Alef) means that it is the yerusha of each and every Jewish neshama to have a proper Yiddish chinuch. The Rebbe continues that running a school for only the best and the brightest is unacceptable! Not only must we teach our newborns, "Torah Tziva", from the cradle, but the Rebbe expects us to bring all of Hashem's Kinderlach to Torah and to Mitzvos.

I return to the lovely music, the excitement, the clapping, and I am good. I keep my mouth closed (but it is hard!).

Music is the expression of the soul. Music frees the neshama from all bodily limitations.

Our buttons are polished, yet the tambourines are gathering dust...

WE ARE READY Hashem....we are ready to make that final trek to the Beis HaMikdash Hashlishi with each and every one of your precious kinderlach, walking upright, whole and healthy to serve you with joy UNIMPEDED!

THE TIME IS NOW!!!

Good Shabbos!

Dedicated with love to Ahuva Esther bas Rivka....



MASSIVE SCHOOL CHOICE DRIVE PLANNED

PRESS RELEASE

January 11, 2008

National Committee for the Furtherance of Jewish Education

824 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213

Contact: Israel Teitelbaum: 973-820-6121 or Israel@SchoolChoiceVoter.org



Community leaders and school principals came together on Tuesday, January 8, at the headquarters of the National

Committee for the Furtherance of Jewish Education (NCFJE) to address the current crisis in education. After hearing from a cross section of community activists, it was decided to organize a massive "phone-in" to the leading presidential candidates urging them to support The Civil Rights Act for Equal Educational Opportunity. This proposed legislation

would provide equitable educational funding for children in both public and non-public schools, while respecting the liberty of schools in hiring and provision of services.

Phone calls are scheduled to be placed on January 23 and 24, shortly prior to major primary elections across the United States. Florida will hold theirs on January 29; Maine on February 1; and on February 5 primaries will be held in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Utah.

Rabbi Shea Hecht, Chairman of the Board of NCFJE, opened the meeting by pointing out that despite the fact that passage of this legislation appears to be politically impossible to achieve, we need to do all that we can, and have faith that our Creator will do the rest. He pointed out, "In study after study, wherever school choice has been tried, it was of great benefit to all; the children benefited, the parents benefited and so did the private and public schools... Although the challenge is great, school choice has the support of many people, and we need to make the effort."

Denise Fox, of the New Jersey Family

Policy Council, reported on the usurping of parental control by school officials. The law in Massachusetts now provides for the removal of children from their home when the values taught at home conflict with school policy. "A child can go to their teacher, a guidance counselor or a coach and say that their statement of belief that they made to their parents has not been warmly received. The school board then says that the child can be removed from the home."

Larry Cirignano, of CatholicVote.org, a long-time activist on behalf of family values, reported on his trial on trumped up charges of assault, for preventing an ACLU activist from disrupting a pro-marriage rally in Worcester, Massachusetts. After a week long trial Cirignano was found not guilty by a jury of his peers. "We need to fight back and reclaim the right of parents to raise their own children."

Bob Schundler, brother of school choice leader and former Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler, spoke of the founding of the United States and how the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution placed great stress on individual liberty. "How is it liberty when the government does not allow you to raise your own children? And how is it 'pursuit of happiness,' when children are not graduating high school?" He is leading the national effort for legislation that would require

school choice in all 50 states.

Maurice Hedaya, of the Sephardic Voters League, long-time activist on behalf of the downtrodden, is reaching out to all segments of the community to support this effort. "We need to form alliances with leaders in minority communities, who are desperately in need of improved educational opportunities," he said.

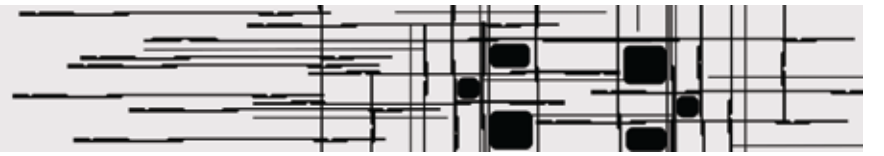
Rabbi Sholem Ber Hecht, Chairman of the Executive Committee of NCFJE, called upon religious leaders, school principals and concerned parents to reach out to their constituencies and call the presidential candidates, urging sponsorship of school choice legislation.

Additional organizations supporting The Civil Rights Act for Equal Educational Opportunity include Torah Communications, Americans for Tax Reform, Center for Equal Opportunity, Family Research Council and Parents for Free Choice in Education.

Further information is available at Israel@SchoolChoiceVoter.org or 973-277-4213.



PARSHAS HASHAVUA



VEDIBARTA BAM ~ BESHALACH



Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky

“ויקח משה את עצמות יוסף עמו”

“Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him.” (13:19)

QUESTION: In the Gemara (Sotah 13a) there is a dispute as to where Yosef was buried. According to one opinion he was interred in the crypt where the Kings of Egypt are buried, and according to another opinion he was buried in the Nile river. Yosef was definitely one of the greatest personalities of his time. It would be logical to assume that his burial place was a national monument; how then is it possible for such diverse opinions as to where he was buried?

ANSWER: The name “Yosef” can refer to the Jewish people. As the Psalmist says, “O Shepherd of Israel (Hashem), You who leads Yosef (the Jewish people) like a flock” (80:2). Since Yosef provided for his brothers and their families throughout the years of the Egyptian famine, all of Jacob’s descendants who survived by Yosef’s benevolence are called by his name (Rashi).

The views expressed in the Gemara can be explained as a metaphor for the survival of the Jewish people throughout the galut.

The issue is what is the source of strength of the Jewish people. What secret power is “buried” within them that helps them endure and survive all the persecutions they encounter throughout their lengthy exile? One opinion is that it is due to the “crypt of Kings” — their political connections to the highest officials in government. Fortunately, often the intelligence, wisdom, and contribution for the betterment of the country made by members of the Jewish people has been recognized, gaining them access to government. In turn, these individuals used their influence on behalf of their brothers.

Another view claims that their source of strength is the “Nile river” — a body of water completely separate from the land. This symbolizes that the Jewish people have nothing to do with the inhabitants of the country in which they dwell. Their absolute detachment and isolation from Egyptian society helped preserve their identity and ultimately enabled them to survive the alien forces which sought their destruction.

In reality, both views are correct. Even when the Jew rises in government circles and in the eyes of its leaders, he must always remember to maintain his identity and his unique Jewish spirituality. This was actually “Atzmut Yosef” (lit. the bones) — the “essence” of Yosef, and the philosophy he embodied. Moshe “carried” this legacy and imparted it to Klal Yisrael.

(מצאתי בכתיבי אבי הרב שמואל פסח ז”ל באגמילסקי)

“וישם את הים לחרבה ויבקעו המים”

“Hashem made the sea dry land and the water split.” (14:21)

QUESTION: Water normally flows, and only Hashem can alter the laws of nature and split the sea. The Gemara (Sotah 2a), says, that pairing two people in marriage is as difficult as splitting the sea, and the Gemara (Pesachim 118a) says that earning a parnasah — livelihood — is as difficult as splitting the sea (Pesachim 118a).

In what way is marriage, and parnasah analogous to the splitting of the sea?

ANSWER: When the Children of Israel saw Pharaoh pursuing them into the wilderness, they formed a number of plans of action. One group favored a battle with the Egyptians, another group advised leaping into the sea, a third said to surrender and return to Egypt, and a fourth advocated crying to Hashem for help. Nobody dreamt of the possibility that the sea would split and that they would march through valiantly on dry land (see Mechilta 14:13).

Frequently, young people fantasize about their most suitable match. However, despite their plans, they meet their “bashert” in a totally unanticipated way, and often one marries someone from a distant place never originally envisioned. Similarly, in earning one’s livelihood, an individual may have many plans and calculations, but ultimately Hashem often provides him an unanticipated source of income.

(שמעתי מדודי הרב ברוך הכהן ז”ל כהן מח”ס קול תודה)

“ותקח מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן את התף בידה”

“Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aharon, took the tambourine in her hand.” (15:20)

QUESTION: 1) Instead of saying “et hatof” — “the tambourine” — indicating a specific one — could it not have just said “tof” — “a tambourine”? 2) Why does the Torah mention here that she

was a prophetess?

ANSWER: Eighty years before Kriat Yam Suf — the splitting of the Red Sea — Pharaoh issued a decree to drown all the Jewish baby boys. At that time, Amram, apprehensive about being married and having children, divorced his wife, Yocheved. His daughter Miriam implored him to remarry Yocheved and also prophesied that her mother would give birth to a child who would take the Jewish people out of galut. Due to Miriam’s insistence, he remarried Yocheved at a very happy wedding celebration in which Miriam and her younger brother, Aharon, danced and entertained (Sotah 12a). Throughout all the years Miriam cherished the tambourine she used at the wedding and carried it with her.

When Moshe crossed the sea with the Jewish people, the redemption from Egypt reached its fruition. Experiencing the fulfillment of her prophecy, Miriam joyously took out the wedding tambourine and called on everyone to rejoice.

(שמעתי מהרב מנחם מענדל שיחי אלפערין)

“ויראו בני ישראל ויאמרו איש אל אחיו מן הוא כי לא ידעו מה הוא ויאמר משה אלהם הוא הלחם אשר נתן ה’ לכם לאכלה”

“The Children of Israel saw it, and they said one to another, ‘It is mann,’ for they did not know what it was. Moshe said to them, ‘This is the bread which G-d has given you to eat.’” (16:15)

QUESTION: Why did they name it “mann” if they were unsure what it was?

ANSWER: The Gemara (Ta’anit 24a) relates that when the gabba’ei tzedakah (people in charge of charity collecting) would see Elazar of Birta, they would run away because he would donate everything he had. Once he went to the market to buy a wedding gift for his daughter. When the gabba’ei tzedakah tried to avoid him, as he ran after them and asked what cause they were collecting for. They told him that they were raising money for a poor bride and groom, so he gave them all his money but one coin, with which he bought some wheat. He put the wheat in his storeroom and went to the Beit Midrash to learn.

When his wife came home, she asked her daughter, “What did your father bring?” She replied, “Whatever he brought is in the storeroom.” They were unable to open the door because the storeroom was filled with wheat from corner to corner, so his daughter ran to the Beit Midrash and excitedly told him, “Come see what the G-d who loves you did.” He immediately said, “I forbid you to use it for anything more than your bare necessities.” Rashi explains that he was harsh to his daughter because he realized that the wheat had multiplied miraculously and it is forbidden for a person to derive benefit from a miracle.

When the Jews went out in the morning and saw on the ground “something fine and scaly,” they did not know what it was. Puzzled, one said to the other, “Undoubtedly, this is something which was derived through a miracle.” Therefore, they called which is the abbreviation (מן) “it ‘mann some-’” (מעשה נסים) “for ‘ma’aseh nissim thing made miraculously” — and they resolved not to benefit from it.

Moshe told them, “This is the bread which Hashem has given you to eat — since in the wilderness there are no means of obtaining food, without this bread from Heaven your lives are in jeopardy. In a case of mortal danger it is permitted to benefit from a miracle.”

(בית יעקב)

“ובני ישראל אכלו את המן ארבעים שנה”

“And the Children of Israel ate the manna forty years.” (16:35)

QUESTION: In the wilderness, all the needs of the Jewish people were provided by Hashem. Food came from Heaven, and their clothing grew with them. How was one able to fulfill the mitzvah of tzedakah (helping those in need)?

ANSWER: The manna that the Jews received in the wilderness tasted like the particular food each eater had in mind (Yoma 75a). A poor person had never tasted expensive foods, so the tzedakah of a rich person was to recommend to a poor person what to have in mind while eating so that his palate would enjoy hitherto untasted delicacies.

(פון אוזער אלטען אוצר, דברים)

“ויבא עמלק וילחם עם ישראל”

“Amalek came and fought with the Jews.” (17:8)

QUESTION: How was Amalek able to attack the Jews when they were protected from all sides with ananei hakavod — Clouds of Glory?

ANSWER: According to the Midrash Tanchuma (Parshat Teitze 10), some members of the tribe of Dan worshipped idols which they took with them from Egypt. The clouds cast out these people, and thus, they were vulnerable to attack. Moshe instructed Yehoshua “choose anashim — strong and G-d fearing people so that their merits will aid them” (Rashi), and fight Amalek on behalf of these Jews.

From this we can learn a lesson of great importance: Even when a Jew has stooped, G-d forbid, to the extent of worshipping idols, it is incumbent even on tzaddikim to do everything possible to help save him and return him to the Jewish fold.

(לקוטי שיחות חכ”א)

HUMAN INTEREST

By Chana Ginsburg

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Part Two

Part 1 of this article talked about one of the issues that plague our generation: lack of true self worth. It mentioned the perspective of Chassidus on this matter—that every Jew is precious to Hashem just because he exists, not because of anything he does or doesn't do. As such, we need to find the balance between the motivation to grow and achieve, and that deep, inner anchor that generates the secure feeling of being just fine the way we are. Following are practical ways to implement this:

Making It Happen

What can we do to fulfill this desired goal?

1. Learn Chassidus. Chassidus nurtures, activates and reveals the Yechidoh sheb'Nefesh, the core of the soul, which is strong and stable, peaceful and secure. It enables us to celebrate life passionately instead of just surviving life.

Learning Chassidus is not just about surviving golus; it's about experiencing Geuloh and enjoying life. A lady in one of my Chassidus classes told me, "Our learning affects the way I talk to my children. They listen to me differently." Another one said, "I feel my neshomoh resonating – my whole week is uplifted." Let's take our seforim out of our bookshelves and make them part of our daily lives. Let's delve into their illuminated depths and discover how relevant Chassidus is in experiencing a rich and meaningful reality.

2. Realize and learn about the important task of being your own caretaker. Just like a good parent provides an atmosphere of understanding, support and encouragement for his child, you, too, need to provide such care for yourself. Make sure to be attentive to your own vulnerabilities and needs. For instance, if you find yourself afraid to undertake a new project, allow yourself to ask for support from a person who can provide you with useful information as well as encouragement. Find someone who will tell you, "You can do it!" After you have accomplished a task or project, it's okay to ask someone who cares about you to listen and acknowledge what you accomplished and tell you some words of appreciation. When you find yourself resisting doing more after investing yourself in a certain activity, allow yourself to take a break and engage in a different activity that gives you pleasure. Look for that place within you that appreciates you just because of what you are, not because of anything you do.

In Relationships

Poor self image can generate all kinds of challenges to relationships. One woman was drawn to her husband because of his integrity, high morals and keen ability to focus and be organized. However, problems arose when he

started to express doubts about his own value and his ability to do things well. He constantly pursued unreachable perfection and pointed out his own faults. The wife, who initially respected her husband so much and looked up to him, began to lose respect. I worked with the couple, and it took a few sessions to help him realize that by putting himself down, he undermines what he really wants to achieve; instead of gaining respect for being excellent, he is disrespected for the flaws that he himself points out.

We need to love ourselves in order to love and be loved. We need to respect ourselves in order to respect and be respected.

While Parenting

Your child comes home crying because other kids picked on him. You want to give him advice to ensure it won't happen again, but is that what he needs right now? His sense of self worth was shaken. Hold back your advice. First help him understand his feelings of rejection and worthlessness, and legitimize his pain. Communicate your unconditional love and support through actions and words. Make sure your child's sense of worth and comfort is restored. Only then can you discuss various options to solve the problem. As a parent, make sure to engage your children in conversations which help them become aware of their feelings and put them in words. Help them to connect with their own, inner sense of Am Seguloh, that they're a precious treasure just because they are G-d's children.

In Education

A student once failed to prepare for a test. When the test was given, he realized that he was unable to write reasonable answers, so he signed his name and handed in a blank paper. When the tests were returned the student was surprised to see the mark 12 written as his grade. "What did I get 12 points for?" he asked the teacher. "Neatness!" she answered.

In a classroom setting it is important to focus on the strengths of each student, allowing creative thinking and legitimizing different perspectives. Each student has to be fully appreciated for his unique talents so that his sense of self worth can remain intact. A child who is not doing well in Chumash might have a great sense of humor that can be cultivated rather than suppressed. Acknowledging his sense of humor can provide him with the confidence to keep trying and to develop better Chumash skills.

Working With Youth

Respect the struggles of adolescents and their need to process things their own way. When a teenager struggles with issues of self worth, it is much harder for her to stand up to peer pressure, make intelligent decisions and maintain healthy boundaries.



When working with young people, it is important to show that their opinions are significant and that you trust their ability to make good decisions. If a teenager comes up with an idea that you view as ridiculous, control your impulse to dismiss it. Instead, lead a rational discussion that helps her see the matter from other angles. Point out factors that she may have overlooked. Allow her to come to the right conclusions on her own. Rather than rejecting the teenager for coming up with such a ridiculous idea, you can end the encounter with a statement like, "That was a great discussion – you're a good thinker," which leaves her with the feeling that she matters and is worthy of respect.

In Careers

Sometimes people settle for jobs that don't reflect what they can really achieve. A client came to consult with me whether or not she should make a long-term commitment to her job. After a few short questions I realized that the pay was almost as low as a babysitter's and the work itself was not that interesting to her. It had no future. In one session she fully realized how far she had gone in not doing justice to herself, a creative and intelligent young woman. After connecting to her inner sense of self worth, she took a leap of faith and left her job to look for one better suited to her abilities. She made a commitment to present herself confidently in job interviews. Within a couple of days she called me to let me know that she had a few job offers that very much matched her interests. One of them pays more than double her previous salary.

When you present yourself with confidence and self respect, people treat you accordingly. Being in tune with you own worth helps others see the good that is in you.

On Shlichus

The yetzer hara for negative self-worth preys especially well on Shluchim and Shluchos. No matter how much one does, it's never enough. I have spoken to Shluchos who felt like quitting (ch"v) because, for them, Shlichus had become an impossible battle to win. They have a hard time keeping up with the high standards they set for themselves. In taking on the mission of Shlichus, some felt that they had abandoned their individuality and personal needs. Is this what Shlichus is about?

There are times when sacrifices are made for the sake of achieving a goal. For example, a Shlucha will occasionally give up her own much needed rest to help a family in need, or skip learning a

Sichoh in order to organize a program. But how can one distinguish between working hard towards a desired goal versus depriving oneself of needs that are essential for maintaining a healthy, vibrant Shlichus life?

When someone is working hard towards a goal, she makes choices that reflect who she really is and what she believes in, thereby increasing her vitality. When someone is depriving herself in order to meet impossible expectations, she is making choices that reflect her lack of self respect, thereby exhausting her energy and decreasing her simchas hachayim. What will the Shlucha's community see? Will they see a woman who is struggling to survive, carrying a heavy burden, or will they see a woman radiating joy and happiness doing the will of G-d?

Are We Being Arrogant?

I find that people often confuse healthy self esteem with arrogance. In order to make sure that they maintain Chassidus standards of bitul and humility, they promote and hold on to low self esteem. This causes them to be self-conscious; confined to their own prisons of self. In fact, there is a crucial difference between low self esteem and bitul. Low self esteem is a psychological dysfunction, while bitul is the awareness that who we are is an expression of our Maker. As such, we recognize that our greatness and talents come from G-d's benevolence and are meant to be used in His service.

Now Is the Time

Tu B'Shvat is coming up, and with it the possibility for a new cycle of growth. Like a tree, we can deepen the roots of our commitment to a life filled with the awareness of being G-d's treasure and let our branches spread wide to inspire others as well.

Let us join forces and run the Satan out of business for good!

Mrs. Chana Ginsburg is a well known teacher and lecturer in Kabbalah, Chassidus and Jewish philosophy, conducting ongoing classes in advanced Jewish learning. She is the designer and facilitator of a series of workshops on personal transformation. She has been a therapist, spiritual mentor and personal growth counselor for over 25 years. She currently has a practice with an office in Brooklyn, NY and counsels couples, coaches individuals and also lectures worldwide via the telephone.

Chana has recently launched an expanding website for spreading the treasures of Kabbalah and Chassidus around the world, providing practical, transformational guidance for a richer and more effective life. You are welcome to join her Chassidus classes in-person and on the phone.

Visit www.KabbalahofLife.com or call (718) 756-1485 for more information.

THE REBBETZIN CHANA OBM

(1880-1964)

In honor of her birthday on the 28th of Teves

[Adapted from the book "Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson"]

By Shmuel Marcus and Avraham D Vaisfiche]

Birth

Rebbetzin Chana was born in 1880, on the 28th of Tevet, in Nikolayev, Ukraine, to Rabbi Meir Shlomo and Rachel Yanovsky. She was the eldest of four children: two sisters, Gittel and Ettel, and a younger brother, Yisrael Leib, who passed away as a youth. Rabbi Meir Shlomo was chief rabbi of Nikolayev; indeed, the Yanovskys were known as a prestigious rabbinical family of scholars and leaders.

Early Years

The Chasidim of Nikolayev would fondly recall Chana's scholarship as a teenager. When a maamar (Chasidic discourse) would arrive from Lubavitch—either repeated by a Chasid who was present at the Rebbe's discourse, or by notes sent to her father's home—she would meticulously and faithfully transcribe it, making it available for the eager Chasidim.

Bright and talented, Chana had an excellent ear for music—a quality she shared with her father

In 1900, at the age of 20, Rebbetzin Chana married Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson. The great-grandson of Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the "Tzemach Tzedek" (the third of Chabad-Lubavitcher Rebbes), Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was a renowned scholar and brilliant kabbalist. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneerson, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, had suggested the match. The wedding took place on the 13th of Sivan, in Nikolayev.

Rebbetzin Chana gave birth to three sons: Menachem Mendel, DovBer and Yisrael Aryeh Leib.

Her eldest son, Menachem Mendel, was born on the 11th of Nissan 1902. On that day, Rabbi Shalom DovBer sent six telegrams to the child's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, each with blessings and various instructions.

Before nursing her son, Rebbetzin Chana would wash her hands in the ritual manner, and do the same for her infant. She had a yarmulke and tzitzit made for him, and took great care to raise her son—who would eventually become the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe—in a holy environment.

In 1907, when Rebbetzin Chana was 27 years old, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak became rabbi of the Ukrainian city of Yekatrinoslav—known today as Dnepropetrovsk.

He served the community for 32 years, eventually assuming the position of chief rabbi, until 1939, when he was arrested by the NKVD (a precursor of the KGB) for his activities on behalf of strengthening yiddishkeit in the Soviet Union.

The Jewish community of Yekatrinoslav included many non-religious professionals, who also held Rabbi Levi Yitzchak in great esteem. Rebbetzin Chana, who was fluent in several languages, contributed to her husband's success and influence as a communal leader. She was an



elegant and personable woman whose home was a constant hub of communal activity. She communicated especially well with Jewish university students, in whom she took a special interest as she tried to draw them close to yiddishkeit. She frequently visited the congregants in their homes, counseling and conversing with them on matters personal, academic and spiritual.

A celebration in Yekatrinoslav

On the 14th of Kislev in 1928, Rebbetzin Chana's oldest son, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, married Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, the daughter of the then Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson. The wedding took place in Warsaw, Poland. Rebbetzin Chana and her husband were unable to attend the wedding, because the Soviet government had severely restricted travel outside the country. Yearning to participate in her son's joy, Rebbetzin Chana organized a festive celebration in her own home while the wedding was taking place in Warsaw.

Despite the danger in organizing a public gathering, and expecting only thirty guests, she was overwhelmed when some three hundred people bravely showed up. As someone played the violin and Chasidic music filled the apartment, the Jews of Yekatrinoslav celebrated with their beloved Rabbi and Rebbetzin.

All who were present shared in Rebbetzin Chana's joy, yet sensed her longing to be with her eldest son at his wedding. Despite the sadness in his heart, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak danced with the guests, moving them deeply. Bittersweet tears

flowed freely.

Arrest and Exile

While the Soviet government claimed that it allowed religious freedom, it contrived ever more complex laws that made religious observance impossible. In 1939, after fiercely battling the authorities, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak won approval to bake special kosher-for-Passover matzah. Word of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's matzah production quickly spread, and Jews from all over the Ukraine and White Russia joyously purchased the matzah. The joy of this achievement was cut short, however, by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's sudden arrest.

On the 9th of Nissan, at 3:00 a.m., four NKVD agents appeared at Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana's home on 13 Borigodna Street. The agents conducted a search through the apartment, scrutinizing all of the Rabbi's letters and responsa, as well as many of his personal papers. They left nothing untouched.

Three hours later, the officer in charge ordered the Rabbi to get dressed and come with them. When Rebbetzin Chana asked where they were taking her husband, she was told that on the following day at noon the Military Police Headquarters would inform her of her husband's whereabouts. The next day came and went, but she was not given any information, despite her pleas.

Not knowing where her husband was being incarcerated or how he was faring, Rebbetzin Chana began her courageous campaign for his release. She was 59 years old.

In a false trial staged by the Soviets, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was found guilty of anti-Soviet propaganda and sentenced to five years of exile in the Central Asian region of the Soviet Union. In Kislev of 1939, some eight months after he was first arrested, the NKVD summoned Rebbetzin Chana to their headquarters and informed her of the sentence. They gave her a list of items her husband had requested, which included a tallit, tefillin, gartel, Chumash, Tehillim, and Tanya. She was also informed that she would be allowed a few moments to bid him farewell, before he was to be exiled.

When she was finally permitted to see him in prison, Rebbetzin Chana was saddened by how weak and frail her husband appeared. Fearing he would not have the strength to survive the difficult journey, the Rabbi asked forgiveness of his wife, as one does when nearing death. The couple parted, with Rebbetzin Chana returning home.

Weeks passed with no word as to her husband's destination. One night, at about 1:00 a.m., a young Jewish woman who worked in the post office knocked on Rebbetzin Chana's door. She bore a telegram stating that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak

had been exiled to the far-flung village of Chi'ili, in the republic of Kazakhstan.

Rebbetzin Chana immediately resolved that, come what may, she would journey out to that remote location to join her husband in exile. In the spring of 1940, she traveled to Moscow, and from there took a train to Chi'ili, an arduous journey of five days. She managed to take matzah, wine and some cooking fat with her for the upcoming holiday of Passover. At last she arrived, and was reunited with her husband

Chi'ili

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana's first home in Chi'ili was a single room in the dwelling of a crude Tatar couple who had a young child. The room had no door, and was damp, muddy and filled with swarms of mosquitoes. They lived in extreme poverty and discomfort, with no privacy.

On the 2nd of Nissan, shortly after Rebbetzin Chana's arrival, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak woke up feeling weak. However, as this was the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneerson, he wanted to honor the day by writing some Chasidic thoughts. But alas, there was neither paper nor ink to be had.

Deeply troubled by her husband's predicament, Rebbetzin Chana traveled to the nearby city of Kazil-Orda and returned with two notebooks, some powder that could be made into ink, and a small jar to serve as an inkwell. When this ran out, she somehow managed to obtain additional ink and paper for her husband, despite the shortages and the extreme poverty. When ink was not available, Rebbetzin Chana would secretly manufacture her own by soaking herbs she gathered in the fields. Paper was so scarce that her husband wrote in the margins of the books that she had brought with her and on the small scraps of paper that she managed to gather. The ability to write his Torah thoughts, she would later observe, brought her husband greater pleasure than the bread she would serve him after days of hunger.

Gradually, the provisions that Rebbetzin Chana had brought were depleted. The specter of starvation loomed. Though they never discussed it, pangs of hunger tormented them. Once, they did not taste a piece of bread for an entire month.



SHIDUCHIM

VEDIBARTA BAM ~ MARRIAGE

By Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky

When the Jewish people left Egyptian slavery forever, the Torah tells us that “Vayikach Moshe et atzmot Yosef imo” — “Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him” (13:19). Our Rabbis (Sotah 13a) comment that all Israel was busy with the new-found wealth from the drowned Egyptians and Moshe busied himself with Yosef’s remains. What connection is there between Israel’s riches and Yosef’s mortal remains? Moreover, we are told that the bodies of all Yosef’s brothers were taken out of Egypt. Why, then, is only Yosef’s name singled out?

Yosef’s career was strikingly different from that of his brothers. Generally, they were always together — in warfare, in work, in traveling to Egypt, in Goshen — while Yosef spent many years alone. The brothers lived fairly stable lives, with few ups and downs in their fortunes. Yosef, in contrast, was the favored son of his father, then a slave and a convict,

and finally a supreme ruler of a mighty kingdom. Despite the vicissitudes of his life, Yosef himself never changed. In his father’s house or in Potiphar’s, in prison or palace, Yosef staunchly maintained his identity and his ways of Torah observance.

Moshe saw his people leaving the land of oppression, the land of the Goshen-ghetto, the land of the bread of poverty and affliction. In all their troubles they never forgot who they were. Their names were Jewish names, their clothing was distinctive, their language — the Sacred Tongue. Now they were en-route to a new land — one where they would dwell in peace and tranquility. They were loaded heavily with gold and silver. Here was a new temptation, one Moshe feared they could not cope with properly.

He could hear the arguments: Judaism survived as a result of anti-Semitism;

exclusion forced the Jews to seek within themselves and among themselves; poverty and ignorance of the world kept the Jews pious and forced them to concentrate on their own culture. He feared the erroneous argument that “Torah Judaism was viable in the closed society of Eastern Europe, but cannot survive in the free world of democracy, opportunity, and culture.”

Moshe had to demonstrate — not with words but with an example based on experience — that Torah and Yiddishkeit are not meant only for the small shtetl Jew of Europe, not only for poverty, not only under oppression and isolation, but equally for those blessed with material wealth, with recognition and honor. Yosef, he showed his people, was the same loyal devout Jew whether unjustly imprisoned or at the summit of power. Whether under the shadow of a saintly father or in a licentious Egyptian household, Yosef never compromised his standards and ideals.

Homiletically, the words “atzmot Yosef” which literally mean “the bones of Yosef,”

can also be explained as the atzmiyot — the essence — of Yosef. Moshe showed the people Yosef’s true nature, what he represented and the model he had left for posterity to emulate.

Moshe did not attempt to discourage the people’s pursuit of wealth. He did not admonish them for being immersed in materialism. On the contrary, he wished them well in their endeavors but beseeched them to never let the essence of Yosef out of their minds. Hashem is not envious of His children and wishes them the very best of everything. He has just one request: that they not forget Him and His Torah.

My dear Chatan and Kallah, may your married life be blessed with an abundance of success. May you reach the heights of royalty. But at the same time may it be evident in your behavior that “od Yosef chai,” you are conducting your life in accordance with the essence and spirit of the righteous Yosef.

(הרב זלמן יצחק שי' פויזנער עם הוספות)

FINDING A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

By: Sarah Junik

Continued from last week

Your S/D should look at themselves and figure out what are their talents and best character traits. It will be much easier to articulate who they are looking for once they know themselves better. They may not realize how good they are at solving problems, or that they are peacemakers, great with children, or are very sensible. They may belittle their own talents and take them for granted. Encourage them to realize how much they have accomplished and what direction they want to take with their lives. What are their goals, and are those goals realistic and compatible with their talents? Which talents do they want to develop further.

Discuss the goals they have for their future, and by extension the goals they see for the family they want to build. Both Chosson and Kallah must have similar goals and values for the family they will build IY”H. Their understanding of what is meaningful to them should be similar. If he wants to be a Chazzan, and she hates Chazzonus, there might be serious issues to overcome when he is not home on Rosh Hashana for example.

If this one wants to go on shlichus and this one wants to pursue a career, etc. each set of circumstances comes with its baggage, and both parties must be ready to accept it.

If your daughter wants a boy that will go on shlichus, she has to know that there will be sacrifices she will have to make. She may encounter hardships — real ones, not no pizza on Motzaei Shabbos!

There are few opportunities for Shlichus nowadays, and going on shlichus might entail starting a Chabad house in a new city. That has its own challenges and needs a certain character and talent. All this has to be discussed. When our girls write they want someone who will go on shlichus, do they realize all the qualities that a person has to have to succeed? All the input they themselves will have to give?

Do not use the phrase “going on shlichus” for a shortcut to a certain type of bochur. Spell it out.

Comparable challenges will exist if one is looking for a working bochur. If he is going into his family business, that is one thing. If he does not have such a possibility, what skills does he have? Are they compatible for the work he wishes to do? Does he have to get a GED? Does he have a college degree?

Again, when saying one wants a working boy, there are a lot of levels. Let our children be specific with their needs.

When your child describes their ideal match, have them look at themselves realistically, and have them ask themselves, “Would such a person want to marry me?”

In some cases your child might choose someone who is almost completely different from the person he/she had on paper. This may happen because the list was not based on the realistic needs of the child but more on wishful thinking. Your S/D should look at their own qualities

and base their list on complementary aspects for his/her partner.

Sometimes a person thinks that they will change their prospective mate. They do not realize that both will change in the course of their marriage but not fundamentally. If our child does not like a particular characteristic, they will not be able to eradicate it. If they like a particular quality, they will be able to enhance it.

Make sure when you discuss with your S/D what they want in a mate that such a spouse actually exist. A thought to ponder: “I spent my life looking for the perfect woman, and I finally found her....but she was looking for the perfect man.”

Someone who wants a partner who is giving, sensitive, ambitious and decisive, will rarely find such a person. Sensitive, decisive and ambitious rarely come together.

They may not realize how their wishes contradict one another. This makes fulfilling those wishes impossible because no such combination exists. Or if it does exist, it is extremely rare.

Therefore the qualities our children choose for their spouses have to make up a real person. Imagine a face made up by a very skilled surgeon with the best eye shape and nose shape and mouth, cheekbones etc. Just because each individual feature is the “best” or the most admired by the world at that time, this does not mean that the face will be beautiful. Sometimes we see in magazines people who have changed their nose, and they looked better before!

Our children should not pick and choose random qualities. Rather, based on their own characteristics, they should come up with a possible real person.

Another contradiction is when our children look for someone very chassidish that is totally immersed in learning but who will not mind if they go out to movies or have all kinds of magazines around the house or maybe a TV in the closet.

It is not reasonable to expect a chassidish bochur to accept that. What about the influence on future children. One cannot change at the drop of a hat.

I have heard girls say that they will stop watching videos or going to movies when they are expecting. Or that they will only watch when the husband is not home. That is not reasonable. It is not the movie alone that is the problem, it is the entire atmosphere and way of thinking that comes into the house with it.

So, if she wants to be able to do that, look for a boy who is able to accept that and realize that he will not be the most chassidish of boys. He cannot be.

A Needle in a Haystack is a book of advice for parents starting to look at shidduchim written on the occasion of one of Mrs Junik’s daughters wedding.

Any constructive comment is welcomed by the editor. Write to CHP5768 @ gmail.com or directly to the author at Mazaltov@junik.us.

SHLEIMUS HAARETZ



Published by Sichos In English

This is a synopsis of the Rebbe's many public addresses on the subject, translated and adapted by Rabbi Yosef Loebenstein. While it is but a synopsis, every effort has been made to give as accurate a representation of the Rebbe's views as possible

I have created this people for Myself; they shall relate My praise" (Isaiah 43:20).

Each and every Jew, man, woman, or child, in every generation, by virtue of his very existence, expresses the praise of G-d. Not only is every Jew's soul an "actual part of G-d," so to speak, but also, each Jew as he exists in this world, body and soul, is a unique Divine creation and a member of "G-d's nation."

This applies to every single member of the Jewish people without distinction. We are "one nation," sharing a fundamental equality regardless of our different spiritual levels. This applies even to those Jews who -- at present -- do not observe the will of G-d as expressed in the Torah. For, as our Sages teach, "A Jew even though he sins remains Jewish."

Furthermore, the innate desire of every Jew (even one who is not observant), because he was born of a Jewish mother or converted according to the Halachah, is to serve G-d through Torah and its commandments, the mitzvos. Maimonides writes that every Jew, even one who protests to the contrary, desires to be part of the Jewish people, to fulfill

mitzvos, and to separate himself from sin. If he does not do so, it is only because his evil inclination forces him to act otherwise.

Throughout the centuries, this essential desire has been revealed by the many Jews -- even those who were not observant -- who actually sacrificed their lives to sanctify G-d's name.

Surely, efforts must be made to reach out to all the members of our people and develop this innate potential. Nevertheless, even before those efforts are completed, the very existence of the Jewish people expresses the praise of G-d. Though they have long been "one lamb among seventy wolves," the Jewish nation has endured throughout the course of history, while nations greater and more powerful have vanished. This is not a result of any socio-political factors, but is rather an open expression of Divine power.

In particular this applies today, only a generation after the awesome Holocaust which threatened to utterly annihilate our people. The fact that our people (regardless of their spiritual level) continue to exist at present reveals G-d's presence within our world.

The above concepts should affect the manner in which we approach our fellow Jews. Criticizing or speaking unfavorably about them is no less than making such statements against G-d Himself. Zachariah (2:12) the prophet warns that

a person who strikes a Jew is like one who strikes G-d in the eye, so to speak. Since "a king cannot exist without a people," the appreciation of G-d as king of the world is dependent on His people, the Jews, and an attack against them, heaven forbid, is an attack against Him.

When such statements are made, particularly when they are made in public, (and publicized even to the extent that they are relayed in the non-Jewish press,) they have to be corrected. We find that when Isaiah criticized the Jews -- even though they were deserving of such criticism -- he was punished. The Bible relates this incident in order to "open the way to repentance," so that anyone who makes such statements should appreciate the need to correct his behavior.

Surely the above applies when a person questions the Jewishness of certain of our brothers and sisters whom the Torah itself defines as Jews. The Jewish people are compared to a Torah scroll. A blemish in a single letter of a Torah scroll disqualifies the entire scroll, including even the Ten Commandments. Similarly, disqualifying a single member of our people affects the people as a whole.

The essential nature of any entity always seeks to express itself. Thus, the appreciation of a Jew's essential nature should motivate efforts to have that nature realized -- through the fulfillment of the Torah and its commandments.

This will bring the Jewish people not only

spiritual benefits, but will also strengthen their position in the world, particularly in the Land of Israel.

Just as the Jews are G-d's chosen people, the Land of Israel is G-d's chosen land. It is a holy land given as an eternal inheritance to the entire Jewish people, those living in the land at present, and those presently living in the diaspora. Hence, no one is entitled to surrender any portion of Eretz Yisrael to gentiles.

Maintaining possession of this land is the only path to peace.

Succumbing to the pressure to surrender any part of it will only invite additional pressure, weakening the security of the Jewish people and exposing them to danger. The government in Eretz Yisrael must follow the path of peace, but also must realize that the path to peace depends on maintaining possession of every portion of the land which G-d has granted us.

May the above hasten the coming of Mashiach who will lead our entire people to Eretz Yisrael. Our Sages declared, "In the month of Nisan our people were redeemed from Egypt, and in Nisan they will be redeemed by the Messiah."

The name Nisan is also related to the Hebrew word Nes, meaning "miracle," which is of particular relevance in the present year, a "year of miracles." May we merit the most essential miracle, the coming of Mashiach, and may this take place in the immediate future.

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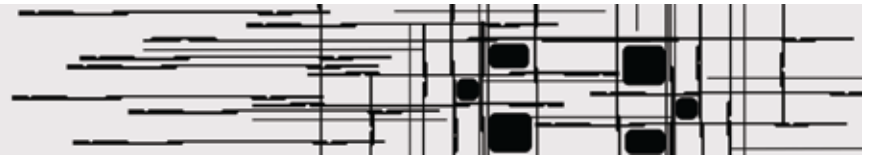
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REBBES FARBRENGEN



YUD SHVAT 5738

From every farbrengen, a Jew should derive a new lesson which will aid him in his service of Hashem. Hence, from the Yud Shvat farbrengens of the previous years, a lesson was derived. Bearing in mind that one must not allow himself to be complacent with his present (spiritual) position, but must constantly strive to elevate himself, he must now derive a new lesson from this Yud Shvat farbrengen.

This new lesson will not only elevate the Jew through its application, but it will also enhance the spirit of, and add life to, the lessons already derived in previous years.

The reason for this farbrengen is the Yahrzeit of the Previous Rebbe, of blessed memory, the successor of the chain of Chabad Rebbes before him. The Hebrew word for successor is "Mamaalei Makom", literally, "one who fills the place of". This term, like all terms used in Torah, is exact. It infers the "filling" of a place left vacant in its entirety. In other words, all the undertakings of the earlier Rebbes were continued by the Previous Rebbe, of blessed memory, in their fullest measure. In addition to this, however, each Rebbe — in response to the directive to constantly strive to greater heights — undertook and initiated additional tasks to fulfill the needs of his generation.

The order of succession of the Rebbeim is referred to as a "chain." Just like one link of a chain is connected with the other, so, too, (the activities of) one Rebbe is connected with (the activities of) the other Rebbeim. Hence, the new undertakings of a succeeding Rebbe were actually engaged in before by his predecessors. However, whereas the previous Rebbeim put their major emphasis in other areas (although they certainly emphasized the importance of all areas of Torah and its fulfillment), their successor put greater efforts and emphasis on this area.

This can be clarified by relating a story from the Talmud. The Talmud recounts one sage asking another: "In which Mitzvah was your father most careful?" The Alter Rebbe explains this question: "It is obvious that our sages fulfilled every mitzvah in its entirety. However, there was always a specific mitzvah that each sage was most careful with, and upon which he placed greater emphasis. Hence, the question, 'Which mitzvah did you father perform most carefully?'"

The Previous Rebbe further expounds upon this: "The Hebrew word for careful is 'Zahir', etymologically related to the word 'Zohar', meaning 'shining — illumination'."

Through the fulfillment of this mitzvah in which he was most careful and the subsequent revelation of his soul, all Torah and Mitzvos fulfilled by this person were consequently illuminated and elevated. (This is so, because this Mitzvah was connected more directly

to the natural expression of his soul.) That is why he placed greater stress on this mitzvah.

One of the basic doctrines of the Baal Shem Tov is that everything that occurs in the world does not happen by coincidence, but rather, as a result of Divine Providence. Anything a Jew sees or hears was shown to him by G-d for a purpose — that he should derive a lesson from it to apply to his service of G-d. Similarly, in the activities of the Previous Rebbe, there was an underlying theme which permeated his activities that was clearly observable to all. Hence, every Jew and Jewess must derive a lesson from it.

The salient characteristic of the Previous Rebbe was that he always applied even the most abstract and theoretical portions of the Torah to practical deed. Although "Chabad" (the Lubavitch philosophy — 'Chabad' is an acronym for "Chochmah" — wisdom, "Binah" — understanding, and "Daas" — knowledge) emphasizes (the development of) the intellectual powers, as evident from the deep content of the Chabad discourses and talks, nevertheless, the Rebbe placed great emphasis upon the practical deed. Even in Torah learning (the "intellectual" aspect of Torah as opposed to the actual practice of Mitzvos), he applied himself to its practical aspect — the act of teaching it to others.

This is quite evident from his tremendous efforts in the publication and dissemination of the teachings of the earlier Rebbes, as well as his own teachings (which expound on the teachings of the earlier Rebbes). He went to great lengths to ensure that this "Torah should reach even unto 'others,'" i.e., that it should be explained by any means possible even to those whose approach and opinions (of the world and of Torah) were not only different but also contrary to his own. Hence, even in the intellectual part of Torah, he stressed its practical aspect — teaching it to others. However, his greatest emphasis was on action per se. Immediately after assuming leadership in 1920, he set up Chedarim (yeshivas for younger students) and built mikvehs (ritual baths) in even the most remote corners of Russia.

He also devoted much time and effort to aid Jews in financial straits, by creating jobs for them. He set up cooperatives allowing people to work in their homes, thereby enabling them to observe the Shabbos with much greater ease even while under communist rule. Although this as well as all other work involving the dissemination of Torah endangered his life, he nevertheless risked his personal well-being to ensure the physical as well as the spiritual welfare of the Jews.

Hence, the lesson to be derived from the Previous Rebbe's life's work and from this farbrengen is the emphasis on action. Beginning with the dissemination of Torah — its teachings should reach even those who are in the category of "others" (as explained earlier). Suitable jobs should be found for people to facilitate

their observance of the Shabbos. However, Shabbos observance should not be a prerequisite for hiring the person. Rather, after he has already obtained the job, he should be approached, and it should be explained to him that maintaining a job and remaining a religious Jew do not conflict with each other; on the contrary, they complement each other.

There is an additional aspect of his activities from which we must derive a lesson: Many of the activities which he had personally accomplished could have been accomplished through others. However, in conformance with the Talmudic dictum: "It is greater that the mitzvah be fulfilled by the person himself than it be fulfilled through his employment of a messenger", the Rebbe placed emphasis on directing and fulfilling as much as he could personally. He was personally involved in the establishment of the cooperatives, and he wrote his discourses in such a style that they would be easily translated. He traveled around the country disseminating Yiddishkeit although this endangered his life. And all this was in opposition to the government which at that time, employed aggressive means to curb 'subversion'. He did all that was in his capacity, completely disregarding personal safety and needs, in order to ensure the fulfillment of these projects in their entirety.

This concept of personal involvement (i.e., not to rely on others) is illustrated by an incident in the Gemara. The Talmud relates the greatness of Rav Chiyah and says, "Great are the deeds of (Rav) Chiyah." His greatness was expressed in his deeds. To ensure the continuation of the study of Torah in the coming generations, he went out into the fields, trapped a deer, skinned it, prepared the skin for parchment, and wrote upon the parchment the five books of Chumash and the six orders of the Mishnah. He then taught each child a particular book of Chumash, or order of the Mishnah and had the children teach each other that portion that they were familiar with.

The question arises: Did Rav Chiyah have to go catch the deer himself and prepare it? Could he not have sent his students, or for that matter, any person to do it; especially since he had to leave his own students behind in the Beis HaMidrash (the study hall) in order to go out and catch a deer?!

Nevertheless, Rav Chiyah did not rely on any messenger; he did it all himself. The Talmud says that this constituted the greatness of Rav Chiyah! Although he was one of the giants of learning in his time, (in fact, he organized the "Beraisos" supplementary laws, not included in the Mishnah), nevertheless, in intellectual achievements there were others who compared with him. His outstanding greatness was that he himself taught the children Chumash and Mishnah, and not only did he teach them, he also infused in them the ability to teach other students as well.

With this deed, Rav Chiyah surpassed

all the other sages of his time. He even surpassed Rav Chaninah who said, "If Torah would be forgotten (G-d forbid), I would restore it with my Talmudic dissertations and methods of derivation." Rav Chaninah's method would only serve to restore the Torah if, G-d forbid, it would have been forgotten. Rav Chiyah's method, however, ensured the continuation of Torah study by the Jewish people, preventing the Torah from being forgotten.

The reason for this is obvious: The messenger may be faithful and fulfill his mission in its entirety. He may catch the deer, skin it and fulfill all the other jobs as well. However, since the messenger lacks Rav Chiyah's understanding and appreciation of the greatness of the Torah (and therefore, he cannot fully evaluate the tragedy and loss of its being forgotten, G-d forbid) his fulfillment of the mission consequently lacks the vitality and the perfection that would be accomplished if it were done by Rav Chiyah himself. It was this reason that compelled Rav Chiyah to leave his students and the confines of the Beis HaMidrash to catch the deer himself.

As mentioned earlier, we find a similar mode of conduct by the Previous Rebbe. He did not rely upon others. However, the lesson to be derived from the Previous Rebbe is far greater than the lesson derived from Rav Chiyah. The Previous Rebbe personally fulfilled his mission and not only disregarded the fulfillment of personal wishes and the loss of his time for Torah study, but also, he constantly endangered his very life! Nevertheless, overlooking all obstacles and disregarding his personal safety, he involved himself personally, to ensure the complete and unblemished success of his mission.

This is the lesson that we must learn from this farbrengen: When one becomes aware of the need to initiate a given project to further the cause of Yiddishkeit, he should not rely on other people to carry out for him. Rather, he should rather take responsibility for it himself, even though he may think that he can be involved with more important things at the time.

This lesson is particularly relevant in our times when there are so many Jewish sons and daughters being lost every day. We must act resolutely to counter this great threat. There is no need to elaborate on why this is the task of the hour.

Yet a person may say to himself that he acknowledges the importance of the work, but he does not have any time — he is busy doing other important things. Such a person ought to consult a competent Rabbi, for the Rabbi is certain to have a sensitive appreciation of that individual's problem, and the problems of Jews today, in general, and will be able to advise him accordingly.



THE FIFTEENTH OF SHVAT – NEW YEAR FOR TREES

[Adapted from the Rebbe's talks published by Sichos In English]

“Is Man a Tree of the Field?”

Tu B'Shvat, “the New Year of the Trees,” has its own customs, which our Rabbis associate with the phrase, “Is man a tree of the field?” Because the tree-metaphor is so fundamental to our divine service, we celebrate the New Year of the Trees.

A tree can be divided into three parts: (a) roots; (b) trunk, branches and leaves; and (c) fruit. Though the roots of a tree are not visible, they serve two vital functions: they support the tree, enabling it to withstand strong winds, and they deliver most of its nourishment. The trunk, branches and leaves constitute the bulk of the tree's body, reflect its growth, and make the tree attractive to the onlooker - but they are not its ultimate purpose. It is the fruit that benefits others and contains the seeds which bear the species' promise for posterity.

These components of the tree symbolize aspects of our personalities. The roots represent faith, the spiritual quality which connects man to G-d, the source of his nourishment. As a person develops spiritually, he learns to rely on his strong foundations of faith for support.

The trunk, branches and leaves represent our study of Torah, observance of the mitzvos, and the expression of Jewish values in our daily conduct. These enable a person to develop himself and they generate an inner beauty which makes him attractive to others.

The ultimate fulfillment of a person, however, is his fruits. These are his involvements - first with his own family, the seeds he has planted, then also with the people around him. Through his efforts to become involved with others, one tree can bring another into being. For example, a person might inspire a colleague to emulate his example and establish a foundation of faith, grow in the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvos, and ultimately take on a role in reaching out to others with sincere concern.

Constant Growth

Men and trees are linked by more than merely structural parallels. The Hebrew word describing the plant kingdom, *Tzomeiach*, also means “growth”. On one hand, this name reflects a deficiency; it is given to the plant kingdom, because growth is one of the few signs of life that plants exhibit. On the other hand, there is something unique about the growth of plants. As opposed to animals or humans, whose physical growth ceases at a particular age, plants continually grow; their life and growth are intrinsically related. This is particularly true

of trees which rise heavenward to great heights. This should likewise be true of us. Though our physical growth may cease, we should strive to continue growing intellectually and spiritually, never ceasing to develop.

Rooted in the Source

Though a plant continually grows upward, in contrast to animals and humans which move freely, it must remain firmly rooted in its source of nourishment, the earth. As a Jew is continually growing, he too must remain connected to his roots, his Torah heritage. Most people need to spend most of their time in occupations and concerns that are beyond the immediate sphere of Torah. Under these circumstances, we can only flourish if our faith keeps us firmly rooted to our Torah heritage.

Furthermore, unlike other plants, trees not only remain alive throughout the year and endure its changes of climate, but they continue to grow. This quality can teach us to endeavor to see every situation as potentially contributing to our growth. We need to develop the flexibility and the resilience that enable us to respond positively to change.

As Seedlings Grow and Thrive

Tu B'Shvat, like other Jewish holidays, has a special meaning for children, who fulfill the custom of eating Tu B'Shvat fruits with gusto. The connection between Tu B'Shvat and children brings to mind another lesson applicable to our lives. Just as a small improvement in a seedling produces a greatly improved tree, so too, a small improvement in a child's education can affect him throughout his entire life thereafter.

Our prophets use the metaphor of trees to describe the Jewish people in their ultimate state of fulfillment, the Era of the Redemption: “In days to come, Yaakov will take root; Yisrael will blossom and bud and will cover the face of the earth with fruit.” The coming of Mashiach is described similarly: “A shoot shall emerge from the stem of Yishai, and a branch shall grow out from his roots.” May these prophecies be fulfilled in the immediate future.

New Year of Trees

Tu B'Shvat, in addition to being the New Year of the Trees, is also the fifteenth of the month, the day on which the moon shines in its fullness. This is particularly important in the month of Shvat, the eleventh month of the year, a number which has unique significance as explained on previous occasions.

The month of Shvat is connected with the *yahrzeit* of the Previous Rebbe and the *maamar* associated with that day entitled, “Basi LeGani - I came into My garden.” Herein, there is a connection to “the New Year of the Trees,” for trees are a fundamental element of a garden.

“The New Year of the Trees” provides us with lessons applicable in our service of G-d. Furthermore, the Hebrew phrase translated as “New Year,” *Rosh*

HaShanah, literally means “the head of the year.” Just as the head contains the life-force for the entire body, every day which is referred to as “the head of the year” contains the life-force for the days that follow until that day is commemorated again. There is a question regarding “the New Year of the Trees.” On one hand, as its name implies, it is relevant to trees and not to other types of produce. On the other hand, we find a unique connection between this date and the seven species of produce with which Eretz Yisrael was blessed: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. The first two of these species, wheat and barley, are grains not fruit.

The explanation is that since the majority of the species mentioned in the verse are fruits, this indicates that the primary blessing is associated with fruit. Nevertheless, since Tu B'Shvat conveys blessing to the species of produce with which Eretz Yisrael is blessed, it also has relevance to the species of wheat and barley.

Every Jew is an “Eretz”

The lessons which we can derive from Tu B'Shvat are associated with the word “*eretz*” meaning earth or land. In a spiritual sense, “*eretz*” is associated with the service of “running to do the will of the Creator,” —, that a person should eagerly devote himself to the fulfillment of G-d's will. This relates to every Jew as the Baal Shem Tov explains the verse, “you shall be a cherished land unto Me,” — every Jew is a cherished land. Just like in the depths of the earth, there are gems and jewels, so too, every Jew has gems within him. Nevertheless, just as in the world at large, gems are not usually strewn over the face of the earth but must be dug out from the depths, so too, within each Jew, effort must be expended -- “I labored and I found” -- for these jewels to be uncovered. Similarly, to reveal the spiritual fruits of our souls, plowing, sowing, and other activities are necessary.

This is alluded to in the verse, “The earth which produces bread.” Needless to say, the earth does not produce bread or any of the other types of produce alone. Man is required to perform various activities, plowing, sowing, and the like, for the earth to yield these products.

The fact that a Jew is required to perform such labors is a descent, for in truth, a Jew is an only son to G-d Himself as it were. Therefore, he should always be together with his Father. The descent into exile is definitely out of character. This descent, however, is for the purpose of an ascent: to lift the Jew to a higher level than before.

The Seven species for which Eretz Yisrael is praised parallel our spiritual service (Devorim 8:8)

Wheat -- Wheat is described by our Sages as “food for humans.” Thus, it refers to service involving the aspect of our beings which is human, the G-dly soul. The use of the term “food” implies that this service, like actual food, must be assimilated into our being.

Barley -- Our Sages refer to barley as “food for animals,” i.e., the elevation of the animal soul. Since this service is more difficult than the first, it follows it.

Grapes -- Grapes are used to produce wine which “makes glad G-d and men.”

Figs -- The Torah relates that figs were used to make the first garments worn by man. Afterwards, G-d gave man “leather garments.” In regard to these leather garments, we find Rabbi Meir referring to them as “garments of light,” rather than “garments of leather.” This implies that a Jew's service must involve spreading G-dly light throughout the world.

Pomegranates -- In this context, we find the expression “filled with mitzvos as a pomegranate is filled with seeds.” On one hand, each of the seeds of the pomegranate is a separate entity. On the other hand, the separation is an integral part of the fruit itself. This alludes to the concept that each mitzvah has its own unique importance, but that this unique importance is endowed by the Torah, not by outside entities.

Olives -- Olives are bitter. This implies that although a Jew's life must be characterized by sweetness and goodness, he must, in times of introspection, come to a state of bitterness when evaluating his spiritual achievements.

Bitterness (*merirus* in Hebrew) is also associated with Miriam. The Torah describes her as standing on the side waiting to see what will happen to Moshe. There is a quality of Moshe in every Jewish soul. Miriam stands by that quality and helps it to develop. Furthermore, Miriam has an influence on Pharaoh, as reflected in the Torah's narrative. It was she who caused Pharaoh's daughter to care properly for Moshe.

Dates -- Dates are referred to in the verse cited above as “honey,” which refers to P'nimiyus HaTorah, the Torah's mystic dimensions. The study of these matters strengthens the inner dimensions of the Jewish soul, the aspect of our being which, in truth, controls our lives.

Dates are also associated with Devorah the Prophetess who is mentioned in the Haftarah of the previous Shabbos. For she is described as judging the people “under the date palm of Devorah” She shares a connection with the ultimate Redemption for through her efforts, “the land was at rest for forty years,” and forty is associated with the Redemption.

Through developing a spiritual service that relates to all of these qualities and by spreading these concepts with others so they can do the same, we will merit to proceed to Eretz Yisrael, to Jerusalem, and to the Beis HaMikdash. May this take place in the immediate future.

We do not recite tachanum on 15th of Shvat or in Mincha of the 14th.

It is customary on this day to eat from the Seven species for which Eretz Yisrael is praised. Where it is applicable, we also make a shehecheyonu on a new fruit.



By Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky

SHABBAT SHIRAH • שבת שירה

“ויהי ביום השביעי יצאו מן העם ללקט ולא מצאו”

“On Shabbat some people went out to pick manna and they did not find any.” (16:27)

QUESTION: The word “matza’u” — “find” — is used in regard to finding a lost object. Since no manna was lost, should not the text read, “velo hayah” — “and there wasn’t any”?

ANSWER: Moshe told the Jews that on Friday there would be a double portion of manna, one for Friday, and one for Shabbat when no manna would be delivered. Datan and Aviram, the infamous troublemakers, thought this would be a good opportunity to “prove” to the people Moshe’s dishonesty. Friday evening they secretly distributed manna in the field and invited people to come with them Shabbat morning to collect it. The birds, upon hearing this evil plan, quickly ate it up. Consequently, when Datan, Aviram, and their followers came out to the fields, they did not find any manna.

(ר' מאיר מפרימישלאן זצ"ל)

QUESTION: What is the reason for the custom to put out food for the birds on Erev Shabbat Shirah?

ANSWER: On Shabbat Shirah, when we read about the manna that Hashem provided for the Jewish people, it is customary to put out food for the birds on Erev Shabbat as a reward for the Kiddush Hashem they brought about.

(ר' מאיר מפרימישלאן זצ"ל)

Alternatively, the Maharal of Prague would instruct the teachers of young children to gather their students in the shul yard on Shabbat Shira and relate to them the story of Kriat Yam Suf — the splitting of the sea. They were also to tell the children that at that time Hashem performed a miracle and trees with beautiful fruit grew in the sea (see Midrash Rabbah 22:1). When the Jews sang the Shirah, the birds sang and danced. The Jewish children picked fruits from the trees and fed the birds. To commemorate this event, we put out food for the birds Erev Shabbat Shirah.

The teachers would give them kasha (buckwheat) to throw to the birds. And afterward the Maharal would bless the children and also the parents that they should merit to see their children embark on Torah, marriage and good deeds.

(ספר השיחות תשי"ב ע' 73 - לקוטי שיחות ח"ב ע' 522)

Some have the custom to feed wheat to the birds on Shabbat Shirah.

(מגן אברהם שכי"ד, ז' וספר תוספת שבת מר' רפאל ז"ל מייזליש)

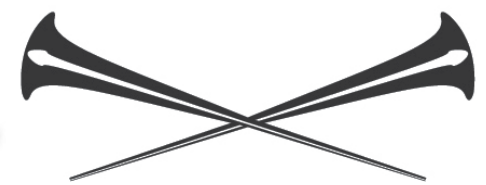
It is the custom of Chabad to eat kasha on Shabbat Shirah.

(היום יום י"ז שבט)

This custom is based on the pasuk: “Hasam gevuleich shalom cheilev chitim yasbi'eich” — “He has made peace within your borders; He satiated you with the finest of wheat” (Psalms 147:14). Thus, on Shabbat Shirah, when we read that Hashem emancipated the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage and prepared them to be in their own geographical boundaries and also the boundaries of Torah, it is customary to eat wheat (buckwheat).

The word “beshalach” (בשלח) is an acronym for the words “בשבת שירה לאכל” — “On Shabbat Shirah to eat wheat (buckwheat).”

(עוללות אפרים)



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TU BESHEVAT ט"ו בשבט

“באחד בשבט ראש השנה לאילן כדברי ב"ש, ב"ה אומרים בט"ו”

“The first day of Shevat is the New Year for the tree according to Beit Shamai. Beit Hillel says it is on the 15th of Shevat.” (Rosh Hashanah 2a)

QUESTION: The Torah states, “ki ha'adam eitz hasadeh” — “Man is like the tree of the field” (Devarim 20:19). The Jewish people have often been compared to different trees. What lesson can man learn from trees?

ANSWER: Trees teach us the following:

1) A tree is planted by first putting a seed in the ground. Afterwards, it is necessary to frequently water the ground and remove the weeds. In each and every Jew, Hashem planted a Divine seed — his soul. It is man’s obligation to water it with Torah study and protect it by weeding out bad friends and influences.

2) A healthy tree continues to grow and grow. A healthy Jew must continuously grow spiritually. This is accomplished through studying Torah and performing mitzvot.

3) To ensure that a young tree will grow straight, it is tied to two supports, one on each side. To ensure that a young child grows beautifully, the parents must always be at his side and constantly supervise him.

4) The strength of the tree depends on how well it is rooted in the ground. The root of the Jew is his emunah.

5) The beauty of a tree is the fruit it produces. Mitzvot and ma'asim tovim — good deeds — are man’s fruits.

“באחד בשבט ראש השנה לאילן כדברי ב"ש, ב"ה אומרים בט"ו”

“On the first day of Shevat is the New Year for the tree according to Beit Shamai. Beit Hillel says it is on the 15th of Shevat.” (Rosh Hashanah 2a)

QUESTION: All the different New Years discussed in the Mishnah are mentioned in the plural. Why is this New Year mentioned in the singular, “for the tree,” (לאילן) instead of

“for the trees” (לאילנות)?

ANSWER: The Torah commands that on the yom tov of Sukkot we take a “peri eitz hadar” — “a beautiful fruit of a tree” (Vayikra 23:43). Our sages say this refers to the etrog — the citron. People spend lavishly to purchase a beautiful etrog in order to fulfill the mitzvah in an exceptional way. The Mishnah tells us that Tu BeShevat is the New Year for the tree, and by using a singular term it informs us that we should pray particularly “la'ilan” — “for the tree” — namely the etrog tree, which is very important to us. On this day, one should beseech Hashem that He grant us a beautiful etrog with which to perform the Torah’s commandment.

(בני יששכר)

The word “ilan” (אילן) — “tree” — has the numerical value of 91, which is also the numerical value of א-ד-נ-י-ה-ו-ה (The L-rd G-d). This emphasizes the fact that the trees of the field are not the work of man, but that of A-mighty G-d.

(נטעי גבריאל)

“נוהגין האשכנזים להרבות במיני פירות של אילנות”

“[On Tu BeShevat] Ashkenazi Jews are accustomed to eat many different fruits from trees.” (Magen Avraham 131:16)

QUESTION: When one eats new fruits which one did not eat throughout the year, one makes a berachah shehechyanu. Should it be recited before the berachah of “borei pri ha'eitz” or after?

ANSWER: It should be recited before. The reason why “shehechyanu” precedes “borei peri ha'eitz” is the following: “shehechyanu” is made when one experiences joy. In reality, joy is experienced at the time one sees the new fruits on the trees or displayed in the store, and it would be proper to make the “shehechyanu” at that time. However, it is our custom to wait with the “shehechyanu” till we actually eat the fruit. Therefore, since the obligation to recite the berachah shehechyanu came some time ago and now, when one wants to eat the fruit, one is obligated to make a “borei peri ha'eitz,” “shehechyanu” is recited first because it is an earlier obligation.

(סדר ברכת הנהנין פני"א סעי' י"ב - פמ"ג שו"ע א"ח סי' רכ"ה)



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STORIES

“HE PRAYED FOR HIS FATHER”

The following stories are from the memoirs of the early years of the previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson.

My father (Rabbi Sholom DovBer, the 5th Rebbe of Lubavitch) began learning with me when I was a little boy. He tried to develop my mind, my strengths, and sensitivity. He was most concerned, however, with teaching me good behavior and good middos.

When my father first taught me to recite Modeh Ani, he told me that whenever I recited it, I should raise my hands, one opposite the other, and bow my head. When I grew a little older, I asked him why it was important to do it that way. My father answered, “Truthfully, the fact that I told you to do it that way, ought to have been enough of a reason. I’ll show you...”

My father then called his servant, Reb Yosef Mordechai, who was about eighty years old. “Reb Yosef Mordechai,” he asked, “how do you say Modeh Ani?”

“I say it raising one hand opposite the other with my head bowed,” Reb Yosef Mordechai replied.

“And why do you do it that way?” asked father.

Reb Yosef Mordechai answered, “I don’t know. That’s how my father taught me when I was a small child.”

My father turned to me and said, “You see, he does it that way because that’s what

his father taught him. And his father learned it from his father, and so it goes, all the way back to Moshe Rabbeinu, and even to Avraham Avinu, the first Jew. There are some things which we have to do without asking why.”

I felt ashamed, and cried apologetically, “But Father, I am still only a little boy!”

“All of the Jewish people are small children, and when we grow up, we realize that really we are still very small.”

Once when I was three years old, I lay in a deep sleep in my bed while my father was learning in the same room with his neighbor and close friend, Rav Yaakov Mordechai of Poltava. Rav Yaakov was watching me while I slept, and he commented to my father, “This child has such pure thoughts.” This made my father want to kiss me, but he decided to give me a spiritual “chassidische kiss” instead. For this reason, he composed the ma’amor beginning with the words, “How great are your deeds, Hashem.” Many years

later, he taught me the ma’amor, and that was the kiss.

Often, when I finished cheder for the day, I would run to shul to be with my father, who would still be standing in prayer. I used to wonder why it took him so long to pray, and why he was always the last one to leave the shul.

I asked my uncle, Rav Zalman Aharon, my father’s older brother, why this was so.

He said, “The reason is because your father cannot read quickly.” I was terribly upset to hear this.

Once when I arrived at the shul, my father was all alone. He was standing facing the eastern wall, begging Hashem for mercy. I could not understand why he needed Hashem’s mercy more than anyone else.

Suddenly he started to cry. I felt terribly upset seeing my father in tears, all alone in the empty shul. I listened very carefully, and heard him say the words, “Shema Yisroel.” Then he sobbed before continuing the Shema, and wept even more.

This time I couldn’t control myself. I burst into tears and ran to my mother. “Why does father always take longer over his davening than everyone else?” I asked. “Is it true that it’s because he cannot read fast, as my uncle told me?”

My mother smiled at my question. “What can I do about it?” she asked. “Should I get him a tutor who will teach him to read quickly? Better ask your grandmother. Perhaps she will know how to explain it to you.”

I hurried off to ask my grandmother, the Rebbetzin Rivka, of sainted memory (the widow of the Rebbe Maharash). When I told her what was bothering me, she was very reassuring. She said, “Your father is a very good man, and a great chassid. Before he says a single word, he thinks very deeply about what it really means. Therefore, when he davens, he spends much longer over it than anybody else.”

My grandmother’s words soothed me and changed the way I thought about my father. Now I knew that my father was a great man, and a true chossid.

In the winter of 5651 (1891, when I was 10 years old), my father fell very ill and was bedridden with a high fever. Two months passed, and his temperature didn’t fall. The doctors forbade him to study Torah with deep concentration because they were worried that the effort might make the fever worse. During my father’s illness, I did not spend much time

learning Torah. Most of the time I sat in my room crying and saying Tehillim. Although my father’s condition was not critical, I was still very worried.

One morning, when my father’s condition had still shown no sign of improvement, I got up very early. It was not yet light outside. I ran to the home of Reb Zalman. In Lubavitch, Reb Zalman was the caretaker of the gravesite of my ancestors, the Tzemach Tzedek and the Rebbe Maharash. This gravesite was known as the Ohel. I begged him to take me there. I wanted to ask my ancestors to pray to Hashem for my father to have a complete recovery.

Reb Zalman was surprised to see me so early in the morning. He saw how upset I was. Knowing that my father’s condition was quite serious, he agreed to go with me.

The weather was very bad. A deep snow covered the ground, and a strong wind almost blew me over. It was difficult to walk, and I slipped and fell many times. Reb Zalman helped me get up. Despite these difficulties, we finally reached the Ohel. Even before I opened the door, I was very upset, and began to cry. My heart was pounding furiously, and I was shivering so much from the cold, that I could hardly say Tehillim.

Still crying, I began to speak to my ancestors. “My father is sick. He is a good man and a chossid, but he is confined to bed. I am his only son, and he has been teaching me

for the past year and a half. Please pray to Hashem to send him a speedy recovery.”

Reb Zalman gave me a candle and told me to light it. Then he handed me some special prayers to say called the “Ma’aneh Loshon.” When Reb Zalman told me to ask my ancestors to pray that my father should live, I became even more emotional and cried out bitterly. “My holy grandfathers! My father is sick! Please beg Hashem to let him stay alive. Let him be healthy, and be able to teach me how to be a good Jew!”

My crying became more and more hysterical. Finally, Reb Zalman, who was himself in tears, took me gently by the hand and led me out of the Ohel.

It was already sunrise when we returned to the city. Reb Zalman walked very quickly, and I ran to catch up with him. I was shaking. All I wanted to do was get home quickly and find out how my father was. As we turned into my street, we met Reb Chaim Meir, the butcher. He told us that he had just come from my house. The doctors said that my father was getting

better. It looked like he would make a complete recovery.

I ran home. When I got there, I saw that everyone was very happy. No one knew where

I had been. In fact, no one even noticed that I had been gone. I wanted to see my father. I missed him very much. For the past two weeks I had not been allowed to see him. Even now, they would not let me enter the room.

My teacher, Reb Nissan, was at our house. I told him in a whisper where I had been. He said I had done the right thing. I asked him not to tell anybody about my visit to the Ohel.

When the doctors came out of my father’s room, I could tell by their expressions that the situation was improving. Dr. Bogorodski, who was always very friendly, came up to me and said, “Why are you so sad? Baruch Hashem, your father is getting better, and in a few days, he will have recovered completely.”

I told him that I missed my father because I had not been allowed to see him for two weeks. Dr. Bogorodski went into my father’s room, and after a few minutes, a servant appeared and told me that my father wanted to see me. I was very excited. I went into the room feeling very happy.

When I drew close to my father, I was shocked to see how pale and delicate he looked. With a weak voice he asked. “Yosef Yitzchak! What have you been doing all this time? Have you been learning? Have you been davening with a minyan?”

“Yes I have, three times a day. I have also been learning, but I was told to speak very quietly so that I wouldn’t disturb you. You probably didn’t hear me. I haven’t been allowed into your room...”

My father smiled and said, “From now on, no one will stop you from coming in to see me.” Then he asked me to bring him a cup of milk, which the doctors said he had to drink several times a day.

I was very happy to hear what my father said. All the worry of the last few weeks disappeared and I felt much better. I thought about everything that happened that day. That same morning, I had run to the Ohel and wept and prayed for my father’s recovery, and now I was seeing Hashem answer my prayers!

From then on, I could see my father every day. His health continued to improve. By the end of the week, he was even allowed to sit in a chair. I would spend most of the day with him, and I was very happy to help him with whatever he needed.

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